



## **RUSSIA 1894-1918**



**IB History – Hvitfeldtska Gymnasiet  
Anders MacGregor-Thunell**

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## RUSSIA 1894-1905

**Nicholas II:** Nicholas II was an absolute ruler - an autocrat. Appointed by God - he made it clear that "any earlier legislation could simply be overruled by an oral instruction from him". There were no legal or constitutional restraints... He had been influenced by the death of his grandfather (Alexander II) and his father's Minister of Religious Affairs - the Procurator of the Holy Synod; Konstantin Pobedonostev. He sternly believed in absolute autocracy, religious orthodoxy and anti-semitism. Instruments for his autocratic rule were;

- *Secret Police - "Okhrana" and millions of informers*
- *Pogroms*
- *All trade unions and political parties were forbidden*
- *No elected parliament - all appointments and dismissals were made by the Tsar*
- *No constitution*
- *Censorship*
- *Aristocracy with privileges given by the Tsar*
- *Orthodox Church with privileges given by the Tsar*
- *The Officers were recruited from the Aristocracy - who depended on the privileges given by the Tsar*
- *Largest standing army in the world*

Morris claims that Nicholas II was "*politically incompetent*" - but he was a nice father. Nicholas was married to Alice of Hesse-Darmstadt (German Princess). She took the Russian name Alexandra. Both of them were conservative, believed in autocracy and deeply religious. Most historians claim that Nicholas II was much under his wife's influence. Morris states that unfortunately "*she shared her husband's political incompetence*"...

**Nicholas II's view of the Russian autocratic system:** When the local council (the provincial zemstvo) of Tver 1895 asked for an extension of the representative institutions (maybe a national Duma) Nicholas II responded; "let all know that I, devoting all my strength to the welfare of the people, will uphold the principle of autocracy as firmly and as unflinchingly as my late unforgettable father".

**Economy – Agriculture economy:** Russia's economy was based on agriculture. The absolute majority of the population worked within the "agriculture sector"... About 97 million people (out of 127 million people) 1997 were peasants.

### **Peasant problems:**

- *less than 1/3 could read and write*
- *the average life expectancy was under 40 years of age*
- *low prices on bread (= low income)*
- *the equipment was usually very old - often made of wood*
- *the farming methods were inefficient and gave low yield*
- *frequent harvest failures (1891, 1892, 1898, 1901...)*
- *the population increase in the later part of the 19th century decreased the land available to the peasants (the aristocracy still had huge land masses). Between 1877-1897 we saw a 25% increase in the rural population and in between 1897-1917 we saw another 25% increase. This led to subdivision of land (average peasant holding 1877 = 35 acres - in 1905 = 28 acres and it continued to decrease up to 1917)*

- *redemption payments (from the emancipation of the serfs 1861). The local peasant council of elders (the Mir) decided about the land and the payments since they were responsible to the State for the redemption payments...*
- *the peasants were not allowed to leave the commune without the approval of the Mir (internal passports)*
- *The Land Commendants (always an aristocrat) decided about local laws, taxation, etc... and he punished those who did not accept his decisions*
- *no (or very little) investments were made*

**Government initiatives:**

- *Exploit "Virgin Land" (in the east - Siberia. 750 000 peasants migrated to Siberia 1896-1900)*
- *Land Bank (1886) - Former State land was sold. Low interests on loans)*

**Survival of agrarian problems:**

- *The Mir (village council who 1861 took over the responsibilities of the redemption payments)*
- *Starvation exports*
- *Lack of direct financial investments in agriculture (very primitive farming methods - low yield)*

**Sergei Witte (Minister of Finance 1892-1903)**

**Protectionism and taxes:**

Witte strengthens the protective tariffs of Russia to guard infant Russian industries against the competition of stronger European economies. Higher taxes were also imposed (mostly on the peasants) so the government would receive enough capital for industrial development...

**Foreign investments:**

Witte encouraged foreign investment and loans in Russian industries. Between 1893 and 1896 foreigners invested 40 million roubles more than the Russians themselves (144.9 compared to 103.7 million roubles). At this time the total amount of capital lying in Russian banks amounted to only 200 million roubles. The foreign financing speeded the growth of Russian mining, industry, railroads, credit and commerce.

**Gold Standard:**

In 1897 the rouble was elevated to the Gold Standard which made it freely convertible with foreign currencies. This gave Russia greater foreign confidence but now the Russian wheat was freely exported which made Russian famines more likely. The agricultural export of necessary goods is called the "starvation export"...

WITTES' REFORMS WERE TO SOME EXTENT SUCCESSFUL!!!

**Industrialization – international comparison**

Russia was a modest industrial power before WWI. In 1912 5.6% of the world's pig iron and only 3.66% of its steel was produced in Russia. In 1910 30% of Russia's total national production was industrial. In Great Britain it was 75%, in Germany 70% and in Austria-Hungary 47%.

### **Industrialization – in Russian terms...**

In Russian terms the industrialization was more impressive. The industrial output was valued to 1502 million roubles 1890. 22 years later it was valued to 5738 million roubles (1912).

### **Major industrial regions**

The Russian industrial production was mostly concentrated to four different regions;

- 1. St Petersburg and the shores of the Baltic*
- 2. Moscow and the provinces of Nizhni Novgorod and Vladimir*
- 3. Poland*
- 4. The Donbas and Krivoi regions*

### **Different industries**

In 1910 the most common industrial output came from the textile industries (about 40%). Other growing industries were the coal (25430 thousand tons in 1910), petroleum (11283 thousand tons in 1910), iron (5742 thousand tons in 1910) and steel (3314 thousand tons in 1910) industries.

### **Russian economy – foreign investments**

As mentioned before between 1893 and 1896 foreigners invested 40 million roubles more than the Russians themselves (144.9 compared to 103.7 million roubles). In 1890 214.7 million roubles had been invested by foreigners. 1895 = 280.1 million roubles, 1900 = 911 million roubles and before 1914 = 2000 million roubles! Most of this (50%) went into the mining and metallurgical industries in the south. The next biggest foreign investments were oil production and banking.

France stood behind 33% of the total foreign investments in 1914. Then came Great Britain (23%), Germany (20%), Belgium (14%) and the US (5%).

Germany was the country that received most of the Russian export (mostly agrarian products) with Great Britain as the next largest receiver...

### **Transportation**

The roads of Russia were very poorly developed. Most of them were so called dirt roads (hard-packed earth) that turned into mud when heavy rain set in (which it often did during spring and autumn...). During winter it was possible to travel in some areas by sleds. The best way to travel before the middle of the 19th century was by boat on some of the big rivers and lakes. In the later part of the 19th century came a new way of traveling - the railroad.

The railroad development started slowly. Between 1861-1890 Russia built 5800 km of tracks. By 1905 it had increased enormously. Now Russia had 59,616 km of tracks. The most famous railroad was the Trans-Siberian railroad which linked St Petersburg with Vladivostok. It was built between the years 1891-1904. Still it was quite moderate when one compare the amount of km with the size of Russia. USA which was less than half the size of Russia had 411,000 km in 1913 compared with Russia's 62,200 km.

Since the merchant marine was small most of the Russian goods were transported on foreign ships.

### **Urbanization – development of a Russian Urban Working Class**

The agrarian problems and the emancipation of the serfs in 1861 were supposed to release workers for the slowly growing industry. Different restrictions and poor industrial development slowed this process down. When the first industrialization started in the 1890's we also saw a greater urbanization. In 1900 over 2.5 million workers were employed in

factories and workshops. If we count all the families and dependants about 10-13 million Russians relied on the industrial wages.

Half of the industrial workers worked in factories that employed more than 1000 men.

### **Urban Working Class – living conditions**

The living conditions for the workers were usually very poor. The cities were not built for this population increase. Between 1867 and 1897 Moscow increased its population 197%, Warsaw 253%, Baku 702% and Lodz 872%. Many had to live in cheap wooden lodging houses or large tenement buildings. They ate cheap black bread, cabbage soup and buckwheat porridge - and drank vodka!

In the industrial centers workers often lived in barracks next to the factory. Long dark corridors led to dormitories for up to 30 workers, or minute rooms sleeping several families. The space between each family was often a sheet so there was basically no privacy. Illness, smells, arguments, etc... were shared by everybody. Sometimes the beds were occupied by different shifts - one worker slept in it during the day another one during the night. Cockroaches, fleas, and other bugs were the only ones that truly enjoyed this environment... Father Gapon describes the situation in St Petersburg: *"They receive miserable wages, and generally live in an overcrowded state, very commonly in special lodging houses. A woman takes several rooms in her own name, subletting each one; and it is common to see ten or more persons living in one room and four sleeping in a bed."* ...

### **Urban Working Class – working conditions**

The working conditions were not better than the living conditions. Father Gapon was a priest that organized a trade union to help some of the workers. He described the conditions in the factories: *"They receive miserable wages...The normal working day is eleven and a half hours of work, exclusive of meal times. But...manufacturers have received permission to work overtime, so that the average day is longer than nominally allowed by law - fifteen or sixteen hours. ... Why do they agree to work overtime? They have to do so because they are paid by the piece and the rate is very low."*

To the working hours should be added noise, dust and many accidents. The noise came from very large machines that usually ran 24 hours a day. Most machines were belt driven and it was not uncommon that somebody got too close to one of these belts. The result could be a lost hand, arm, leg or death. Sneakier was the problem with dust. Many young workers ruined their lungs within just a few years breathing in the dust of the machines...

The living and working conditions led to demonstrations and strikes. 68 strikes were recorded in 1895, 125 in 1900 and over 14,000 during 1905...

### **Legislation for the Russian Working Class**

Some laws were made against the worst problems;

In 1892 it became forbidden to employ children less than 12 years of age

The same year saw a ban of female labor in the mines (1892)

In 1896 an eleven-and-a-half-hour working day was legally instituted. This law was widely ignored by the employers (see Father Gapon's story above)

In 1903 factory inspectors were introduced.

## POLITICAL OPPOSITION 1894-1905

**LIBERAL OPPOSITION - Background;** Russia had a very small middle class but they were still politically active. The first sign of liberalism came in with the returning officers from the Napoleonic War around 1815. They had served in the occupation army in France and they brought several ideas back to Russia. They organized some clubs to discuss the possibility of changing Russia. The "Union of Salvation" was founded in 1816. We see the development to the "Union of Welfare" (1818) and the split between the "Northern Society" and "Southern Society" (1821). Even if these groups were small they were the first organized political opposition of Russia. In 1825 they stood behind the Decembrist Revolt - a liberal inspired revolt that failed. By the end of the 19th century and the beginning of the 20th century they formed several different groups which after the 1905 revolt will become two main parties; the Octobrists and the Kadets.

**AIMS:** The liberals wanted - free elections and a national parliament - that the Tsar would become a constitutional monarch (like the monarchs of England) - Civil Rights like freedom of speech, worship and conscience

**SUPPORT:** Some members of the aristocracy supported the liberal movement but most of the supporters came from the small Russian Middle Class - teachers, doctors, lawyers and some industrialists

**TACTICS:** The aims should be reached by political work as meetings, speeches, discussions, articles in newspapers, books who would all call for a change

**OCTOBRISTS:** A group of more conservative liberals. They accepted the terms of the October Manifesto and formed the "Union of 17 October". The party was led by the industrialist Alexander Guchkov and drew support from centrist-liberal gentry, businessmen, and some bureaucrats.

The Octobrists were firmly committed to a system of moderate constitutional monarchy. At the same time they emphasized the need for a strong parliament and a government that would be responsible to it. They were generally allied with the governments of Sergei Witte in 1905-1906 and Pyotr Stolypin in 1906-1911, but they criticized the government for taking extralegal measures and a slow pace of reforms, especially after the revolution ended in 1907 and they no longer saw the need for the extraordinary measures that they reluctantly supported in 1905-1907. The Octobrists' program included private farming and further land reform, which were in tune with Stolypin's program. They also supported the government in its unwillingness to grant political autonomy to ethnic minorities within the empire, although they generally opposed legal restrictions based on ethnicity and religion.

**KADETS:** The Constitutional Democratic Party (Constitutional Democrats, formally Party of Popular Freedom, informally Kadets) was a liberal political party in Tsarist Russia. Party members were called Kadets, from the abbreviation K-D of the party name. It was formed in Moscow October 1905. Historian Pavel Miliukov was the party's leader throughout its existence. The Kadets were mainly supported by professionals, - university professors and lawyers were particularly prominent within the party - members of the zemstvo (a form of local government), and some industrialists.

The Kadets were to the immediate Left of the Octobrists. Unlike the Octobrists, who were committed to constitutional monarchy from the start, the Kadets were at first ambiguous on the subject, demanding universal suffrage (even women's suffrage) and a Constituent Assembly that would determine the country's form of government. It wasn't until later in 1906, with the revolution in retreat, that the Kadets abandoned revolutionary and republican

aspirations and declared their support for a constitutional monarchy. The government, however, remained suspicious of the Kadets until the fall of the monarchy in 1917.

**SOCIALIST REVOLUTIONARIES - Background;** It started with the more intellectual "Populism" in the 1860's. From the intellectuals came the "To the People" movement (Narodniki) in the 1870's. They failed in their work and therefore they founded a political movement called "Land and Liberty" (1876). This group was split up in 1879; "People's Will" and "Black Partition". The first one used terror as a political weapon and was involved in the assassination of Alexander II 1881. These two organizations would lead to the founding of the "Socialist Revolutionary Party" in 1901 (with a small "terrorist branch" ...).

**AIMS:** The SR wanted to get rid of the Tsar and his government. They saw Russia as a huge agrarian country who should adapt the political power to this fact. All the land should be given to the peasants so they could farm it collectively in communes. To be able to do this it should be necessary to form thousands of small peasant communes.

**SUPPORT:** They often spread their propaganda among the urban workers but this was mainly the peasants party... SR gained the young peoples interest because they were a "party of action"...

**TACTICS:** They spread propaganda which promoted the idea of a revolution. A special branch within the party used violence ("terrorism") to bring about the collapse of the government. They were responsible for the deaths of many important government officials (like Bogolepov - Minister of Education in 1901, Sipyagin - Minister of Interior in 1902, Plehve - Minister of Interior in 1904, the Governor of Moscow in 1905, etc...)

**MARXISTS - Background;** The Russian Social Democrats had their roots in Marx and they were influenced by the German Social Democrat Party. In 1883 Georgi Plekhanov formed the "Emancipation of Labour". At this time Marxism was an accepted ideology by the Russian censors - they had the idea that it would weaken the threats of revolutionary populism. The Capital by Karl Marx (1867) was available in a Russian translation already 1872. In 1898 in Minsk came the founding of the "Russian Social Democratic Labour Party". All the founders were arrested since all political work was forbidden. This meant that most work took place in exile. During the Second Congress of the Russian Social Democratic Labour Party 1903 (London/Brussels) a dispute about membership led to a split between "Mensheviks" and "Bolsheviks".

**AIMS:** The Social Democrats wanted to overthrow the Tsar and create a Socialistic Republic

**SUPPORT:** Social Democracy was an urban phenomenon. Most of the supporters were workers in the cities and larger towns. We can also find some radical students in this movement.

**TACTICS:** We see a little difference in tactics between the Mensheviks and the Bolsheviks. Both of them saw a revolution coming but had several different opinions about this revolution...

**MENSHEVIKS:** The party should have a core of professional revolutionaries but membership should also be open to sympathizers, revolutionary workers and others. This mass party would grow and eventually take over power through a revolution. The Party should work together with several other groups like trade unions to improve wages and working conditions. Together with these groups a new country would be built up...

**BOLSHEVIKS:** The party should have a core of professional revolutionaries (a small, secret, tightly disciplined group) who should seize power when the time was right. The Party would then set up a system of strong centralized control and start to educate the masses (Dictatorship of the Proletariat). Sympathizers and other revolutionary groups would not be able to gain membership in this party. Membership would be based on devotion and



acceptance of the Bolshevik view. The Bolsheviks were very afraid of police spies that tried to infiltrate all political groups at this time...

**TRUDOVIKI:** The Trudoviks (Trudoviki, also referred to as Toilers, full name "The Labour Group") were a moderate Labour party in early 20th Century Russia. They were a small workers party, especially when compared to the vast number of extreme revolutionary and anarchist groups.

This agrarian socialist party was one of hundreds of small workers circles that sprang up around Russia in the aftermath of the 1905 Revolution. While the 1905 revolution did not remove the Tsar, it certainly curtailed his power — but not to the extent of the democratic, liberal society for which the Russian masses longed for. As a result, the party survived but remained small. The Trudoviks are best known for winning seats in the State Duma, a national assembly created by Tsar Nicholas II in the aftermath of the 1905 Revolution (mainly in the 1st and 2nd assemblies, in 1906 and 1907).

**“OTHERS”**

National groups, conservatives, etc...

## RUSSO-JAPANESE WAR 1904-1905

The **Russo–Japanese War**, February 10, 1904 – September 5, 1905) was a conflict that grew out of the rival **imperialist ambitions of the Russian Empire and the Japanese Empire over Manchuria and Korea**. The major theatres of operations were Southern Manchuria, specifically the area around the Liaodong Peninsula and Mukden, and the seas around Korea, Japan, and the Yellow Sea.

**CAUSES:** One of the basic reasons for the clash between "*two sets of imperialist ambitions*" was the **declining and collapsing Chinese Empire**. Suddenly there was a power vacuum that both Japan and Russia wanted to fill...

- **Russia had expanded towards the east** during the 19th century. During the reign of Nicholas I (1825-1854) and Alexander II (1854-1881) we see the Russian influence over Dagestan and the Caucasus become permanent as well as the control over the Uzbeks and the Kazakhs. The establishment of influence in the Far East was typified by the foundation of the town aptly named *Vladivostok* ("*Lord of the East*") in 1861. In the end of the century the construction of the Trans-Siberian Railroad started (tied European Russia together with Vladivostok). It was completed 1904. Russia now wanted to continue their expansion in the east. The Chinese districts of **Manchuria and Korea were their next targets**.
- Russia needed a **warm water port** for their navy (military reasons) as well as the merchant marine (economical reasons). The new Russian town of Vladivostok could only be used during the summer. **Port Arthur (Lüshunkou)** at the **Liaodong Peninsula** was such a port but it formally belonged to China.
- Russia had started **several economic ventures in the far east**, like the "*Russian Timber Company of the Far East*". Sergei Witte (Minister of Economy) and other very influential persons had invested in these ventures...
- Japan had been forced to open for Western trade and influence in the middle of the 1800's. By the end of the 19th century Japan had transformed into a modernized industrial state with advanced technology mixing its old customs with new Western ideas. **Japan wanted to be recognized as an equal to the Western powers** who colonized parts of the China. Beginning in the 1870s, Japan had moved into the previous Chinese sphere of influence

over Korea (Korea was a relatively independent part of the Chinese Empire). In the Treaty of Ganghwa (1876) Japan forced Korea to engage in foreign trade. This started a period of Japanese domination which ended in 1910 when the Japan-Korea Annexation Treaty was signed. Then Korea became part of Japan.

- After the **Sino-Japanese War 1894-1895** a Peace Treaty was signed (Treaty of Shimonoseki / Treaty of Maguan 1895) which granted Japan Formosa (Taiwan) and the bay of Liaodong together with all fortifications, arsenals and public property. It also forced China to open several cities to Japan as well as granting Korea complete independence and autonomy. China should thereafter treat Japan as the "*most-favored-nation*". This **treaty was challenged by Russia, France and Germany** just three days after signing (the **Triple Intervention**). They forced Japan to withdraw its claim on the Liaodong peninsula. Port Arthur (Lüshunkou) was too important for them – especially Russia.
- **In 1897 a Russian fleet appeared off Port Arthur**. They put some pressure on China who signed permission for Russia to lease the area (early 1898 - for 25 years). Russia now started fortifications and other constructions on the peninsula as well as a railroad to Harbin from Port Arthur. These constructions contributed to the Boxer Rebellion. The Russian reaction to that was mobilization and an occupation of Manchuria... The success against the Boxer rebels also built up a false confidence among the Russian troops - that they would be able to defeat any "oriental foe".
- The **new independent Korea** signed a **pact of protection with Russia and China** at the beginning of the 20th century. This was an attempt to hinder further Japanese influence in Korea.
- Great Britain was worried of the Russian advances in the east. Therefore she signed a pact with Japan, the **Anglo-Japanese Alliance**, in 1902. The alliance meant that both countries would respect neutrality in case they became involved in war and promise of support in case they became involved in war with more than one state. Britain thought this would restrict naval competition by keeping the Russian Pacific seaports of Vladivostok and Port Arthur from their full use. The further benefit of the alliance to Britain was the establishment of an ally in East Asia who could help contain Russia in general and protect British commercial interests in China. It helped Britain's navy by providing coaling stations and repair facilities. For Japan, it was a necessary step in achieving further recognition as a Power (if not a Great Power) and gave her the confidence to challenge Russia's occupation of Manchuria and designs on Korea.
- For **two years** (1901-1903) **Japan tried to reach an understanding with Russia** about spheres of influence in Manchuria and Korea. They failed due to Russian "apathy".
- In **1903 Russia failed to remove a temporary garrison from Manchuria** (they were there formally as a protection for the construction and work on the Chinese Eastern Railroad). The delay made it look like Russia was trying to take more control over this region (both Manchuria and Korea)...
- **Domestic tension within Russia** (strikes, political unrest, etc...) made a "foreign distraction" welcome. The Minister of Interior Plehve said "*to stem the tide of revolution, we need a successful little war*"...
- In **January (13th) 1904 Japan proposed a formula** of Manchuria being outside her sphere of influence if Russia accepted Japanese sphere of influence in Korea. This proposal was met with - silence. When Japan hadn't received an answer in **February (6th)** the Ambassador, Kurino, called on the Russian Foreign Minister to take his leave. **Japan now severed their diplomatic relation with Russia**. Two days later the war started...
- Kaiser Wilhelm II sent a personal encouragement to his cousin Tsar Nicholas II about his "*crusade against the Yellow Peril*".

**COURSE OF WAR:** Japan issued a declaration of war on February 8, 1904. However, three hours before Japan's declaration of war was received by the Russian Government, Japan attacked the Russian Far East Fleet at Port Arthur. Tsar Nicholas II was stunned by news of the attack. He could not believe that Japan could initiate a warlike act without a formal declaration of war, and had been assured by his ministers that the Japanese would not fight. Russia declared war on Japan eight days later.

**Campaign of 1904:** Port Arthur, on the Liaodong Peninsula in the south of Manchuria, had been fortified into a major naval base by the Russians. Since it needed to control the sea in order to fight a war on the Asian mainland, **Japan's first military objective was to neutralize the Russian fleet at Port Arthur.** On the night of February 8, 1904, the Japanese fleet under Admiral Heihachiro Togo opened the war with a surprise torpedo boat attack on the Russian ships at Port Arthur. The attack badly damaged two battleships. These attacks developed into **the Battle of Port Arthur** the next morning. A series of indecisive naval engagements followed, in which Admiral Togo was unable to attack the Russian fleet successfully as it was protected by the shore batteries of the harbor, and the Russians were reluctant to leave the harbor for the open seas, especially after the death of Admiral Stepan Osipovich Makarov on April 13, 1904.

However, these engagements provided cover for a Japanese landing near Incheon in Korea. From Incheon the Japanese occupied Seoul and then the rest of Korea. By the end of April, the Japanese army under Kuroki Itei was ready to cross the Yalu river into Russian-occupied Manchuria.

In contrast to the Japanese strategy of rapidly gaining ground to control Manchuria, Russian strategy focused on fighting delaying actions to gain time for reinforcements to arrive via the long Trans-Siberian railway which was at the time incomplete near Irkutsk. On May 1, 1904, **the Battle of the Yalu River** became the first major land battle of the war, when Japanese troops stormed a Russian position after an unopposed crossing of the river. Japanese troops proceeded to land at several points on the Manchurian coast, and, in a series of engagements, drove the Russians back towards Port Arthur. These battles, including **the Battle of Nanshan** on May 25, 1904, were marked by heavy Japanese losses from attacking entrenched Russian positions, but the Russians maintained their focus on defending, and did not counterattack.

The Japanese next attempted to deny the Russians use of Port Arthur. During the night of February 13-14, the Japanese attempted to block the entrance to Port Arthur by sinking several cement-filled steamers in the deep water channel to the port, but they sank too deep to be effective. Another similar attempt to block the harbor entrance during the night of 3-4 May also failed. In March, the charismatic Vice Admiral Makarov had taken command of the First Russian Pacific Squadron with the intention of breaking out of the Port Arthur blockade.

On April 12, 1904 two Russian pre-dreadnought battleships, the flagship *Petropavlovsk* and the *Pobeda* slipped out of port but struck Japanese mines off Port Arthur. The *Petropavlovsk* sank almost immediately, while the *Pobeda* had to be towed back to port for extensive repairs. Admiral Makarov, the single most effective Russian naval strategist of the war, had perished on the battleship *Petropavlovsk*.

On April 15, 1904 the Russian government made overtures threatening to seize the British war correspondents who were taking the ship *Haimun* into warzones to report for the London-based *The Times* newspaper, citing concerns about the possibility of the British giving away Russian positions to the Japanese fleet.

The Russians learned quickly, and soon employed the Japanese tactic of offensive minelaying. On 14 May 1904, two Japanese battleships, the *Yashima* and the *Hatsuse*, were lured into a recently laid Russian minefield off Port Arthur, each striking at least two mines. The *Yashima* sank within minutes, taking 450 sailors with her, while the *Hatsuse* sank under

tow a few hours later. On June 23, 1904, a breakout attempt by the Russian squadron, now under the command of Admiral Wilgelm Vitgeft failed. By the end of the month, Japanese artillery were firing shells into the harbor.

Japan began a **long siege of Port Arthur**. On August 10, 1904, the Russian fleet again attempted to break out and proceed to Vladivostok, but upon reaching the open sea were confronted by Admiral Togo's battleship squadron. Known to the Russians as the Battle of August 10, but more commonly referred to as **the Battle of the Yellow Sea**, battleships from both sides exchanged gunfire. The battle had the elements of a decisive battle, though Admiral Togo knew that another Russian battleship fleet would soon be sent to the Pacific. The Japanese had only one battleship fleet, and Togo had already lost two battleships to Russian mines. The Russian and Japanese battleships continued to exchange gunfire, until the Russian flagship, the battleship *Tsesarevich*, received a direct hit on the bridge, killing the fleet commander, Admiral Vitgeft. At this, the Russian fleet turned around and headed back into Port Arthur. Though no warships were sunk by either side in the battle, the Russians were now back in port and the Japanese navy still had battleships to meet the new Russian fleet when it arrived. Eventually, the Russian warships at Port Arthur were sunk by the artillery of the besieging army. Attempts to relieve the besieged city by land also failed, and, after the Battle of Liaoyang in late August, the Russians retreated to Mukden (Shenyang). Port Arthur finally fell on 2 January 1905 when the garrison's commanding officer ceded the port to the Japanese without consulting his high command.

Meanwhile, at sea, the Russians were preparing to reinforce their fleet by sending the Baltic Sea fleet, under Admiral Zinovy Rozhdestvensky, around the world via the Cape of Good Hope to Asia. On October 21, 1904, while passing by the United Kingdom (an ally of Japan but neutral in this war), they nearly provoked a war in the Dogger Bank incident by firing on British fishing boats that they mistook for enemy torpedo boats.

### **Campaign of 1905:**

**Harsh winter and final battles:** With the fall of Port Arthur, the Japanese 3rd army was now able to continue northward and reinforce positions south of Russian-held Mukden. With the onset of the severe Manchurian winter, there had been no major land engagements since the Battle of Shaho the previous year. Both sides camped opposite each other along 60 to 70 miles (110 km) of front lines, south of Mukden.

The Russian Second Army under General Oskar Gripenberg, between January 25–29, attacked the Japanese left flank near the town of **Sandepu (Battle of Sandepu)**, almost breaking through. This caught the Japanese by surprise. However, without support from other Russian units the attack was stalled, Gripenberg was ordered to halt by Kuropatkin and the battle was inconclusive. The Japanese knew that they needed to destroy the Russian army in Manchuria before Russian reinforcements arrived via the Trans-Siberian railroad.

The **Battle of Mukden** commenced on February 20, 1905. In the following days Japanese forces proceeded to assault the right and left flanks of Russian forces surrounding Mukden, along a 50 mile (80 km) front. Both sides were well entrenched and were backed with hundreds of artillery pieces. After days of harsh fighting, added pressure from both flanks forced both ends of the Russian defensive line to curve backwards. Seeing they were about to be encircled, the Russians began a general retreat, fighting a series of fierce rearguard actions, which soon deteriorated in the confusion and collapse of Russian forces. On March 10, 1905 after three weeks of fighting, General Kuropatkin decided to withdraw to the north of Mukden.

The retreating Russian Manchurian Army formations disintegrated as fighting units, but the Japanese failed to destroy them completely. The Japanese themselves had suffered large casualties and were in no condition to pursue. Although the battle of Mukden was a major

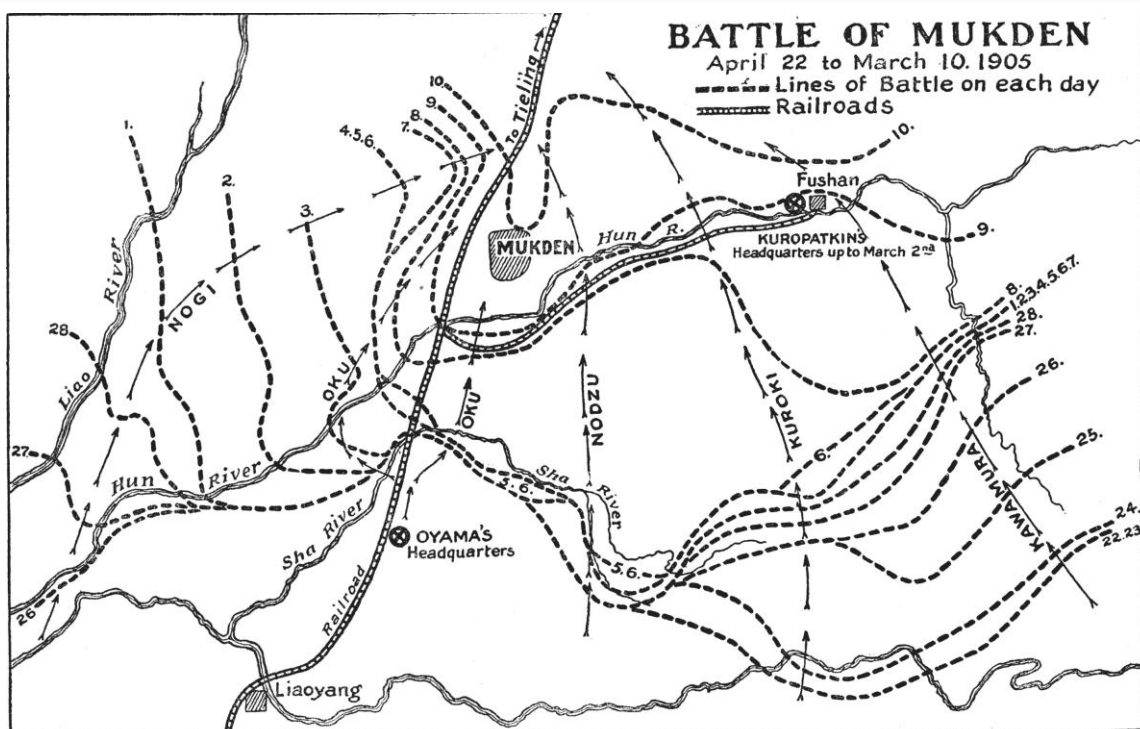
defeat for the Russians it had not been decisive, and the final victory would depend on the navy.

**Japanese victory at Tsushima:** The Russian *Second Pacific Squadron* (the renamed Baltic Fleet) had journeyed 18,000 miles (29,000 km) to relieve Port Arthur. However, Port Arthur had fallen and the demoralizing news reached the fleet while at Madagascar. Admiral Rozhdestvensky's only hope now was to reach the port of Vladivostok. There were three routes that existed to Vladivostok, but the Tsushima Straits between Korea and Japan was the shortest and most direct route, however, it was also the most dangerous as it was very close to the Japanese home islands.

Admiral Togo was aware of the Russian progress and understood that with the fall of Port Arthur, the Second and Third Pacific Squadrons would try to reach the only other Russian port in the Far East, Vladivostok. Battle plans were laid down and ships were repaired and refitted to intercept the Russian fleet.

The Japanese *Combined Fleet*, which had originally consisted of six battleships, was now down to four (two had been lost to mines), but still retained its cruisers, destroyers, and torpedo boats. The *Second Pacific Squadron* contained eight battleships, including four new battleships of the *Borodino* class, as well as cruisers, destroyers and other auxiliaries for a total of 38 ships.

By the end of May the Second Pacific Squadron was on the last leg of its journey to Vladivostok. Unfortunately for the Russians, one of their hospital ships exposed a light, which was sighted by the Japanese armed merchant cruiser *Shinano Maru*. Wireless communication was used to inform Togo's headquarters, where the Combined Fleet was immediately ordered to sortie. Still receiving naval intelligence from scouting forces, the Japanese were able to position their fleet so that they would "cross the T" of the Russian fleet. The Japanese engaged the Russian fleet in the Tsushima Straits on 27 May–28 May 1905. The Russian fleet was virtually annihilated, losing eight battleships, numerous smaller vessels, and more than 5,000 men, while the Japanese lost three torpedo boats and 116 men. Only three Russian vessels escaped to Vladivostok. After the Battle of Tsushima, the Japanese army occupied the entire Sakhalin Islands chain to force the Russians to sue for peace.



**RESULTS:** The domestic problems in Russia had become a major concern for the Tsar and his government. Under these circumstances he chooses to negotiate for peace. The US President Theodore Roosevelt offered to mediate (which gave him the Nobel Peace Prize in 1906).

The **Treaty of Portsmouth** was signed September 5<sup>th</sup> 1905 (Portsmouth, New Hampshire, USA).

- *Russia recognized Korea as Japan's sphere of influence*
- *Japan took over the 25-year lease of Port Arthur + Hinterland*
- *Japan also took over the lease of the Railroad in southern Manchuria (and its access to several strategic resources)*
- *The southern half of the Sakhalin Island was ceded to Japan*
- *Both Russia and Japan agreed to evacuate Manchuria*
- *Russia did not have to pay any war indemnity*
- The loss was very embarrassing for Russia (and Europe) who had been convinced about their superiority. Russia lost a lot of prestige...
- The loss of the war **contributed to the 1905 Revolution in Russia**
- The lost war in the Far East **made Russia change the focus on her Foreign Policy**. She now **concentrated more on the development in Europe**. Especially in the weak part in the South-East... the declining Ottoman Empire = the “**Eastern Question**”!
- Japan became a power to count on and started her domination of China as well as other areas in the Far East. She would find a new competitor in the Pacific – USA

**CASUALTIES:** Several different figures exist;

<b>Samuel Dumas:</b>	Japan:	86,100 dead
	Russia:	43,300 dead

**Japanese Bureau of Military Statistics**

	Japan:	80.378 dead
<b>Gaedke:</b>	Russia:	71,453 dead
<b>Small &amp; Singer:</b>	Japan:	85,000 dead
	Russia:	45,000 dead
<b>Gilbert:</b>	Japan:	58,000 dead
	Russia:	120,000 dead
<b>Eckhardt:</b>	Total:	130,000 dead
<b>Urlanis:</b>	Total:	139,000 dead

**So why did Russia loose the war?**

- Incompetence of officers and administrators! Contrasted by the bravery and sacrifice of the common soldiers
- Japan was closer to the war. Russia had to transport men from Europe. They used the Trans-Siberian Railroad which took a while. The Trans-Siberian Railroad was single-track and about 150 km was missing in the region of Lake Baikal. Around 35,000 men per month was a maximum.
- Japanese army and navy were better equipped and more efficient
- Japan had more men than Russia already at the beginning of the war and could get reinforcements faster.
- The loss of the naval initiative made Japan control her reinforcements as well as the landing along the coast, etc...
- The Japanese soldiers and officers fought with “semi religious fanaticism” – Nationalism!



## RUSSIA 1905

### **Bloody Sunday (January 22nd)**

150,000 people demonstrated in front of the Winter Palace. They were led by an orthodox priest - Father Gapon. The people of the demonstration wanted to present a loyal petition of "*redress of grievances*". The Imperial troops opened fire. According to the authorities of the time the official numbers of dead were 96 and wounded 331. The different newspapers and other eyewitnesses mentioned over 1000 killed. This triggered the revolt of 1905 (Revolution of 1905)

### **POPULAR REACTION**

#### **Strikes**

The events of Bloody Sunday led to an unprecedented amount of strikes. In February over 400,000 workers were striking and by the end of the year over 2.7 million workers were on strike.

Especially important were the railroad workers who joined the strike movement in October. Russia nearly collapsed...

#### **Peasant revolts**

Started in Kursk in February. In April most of the prime agricultural regions in European Russia experienced peasant revolts.

#### **Sporadic mutinies**

There were some sporadic outbreak of mutinies in some army units and in the Navy; especially at the naval base of Kronstadt (outside St Petersburg) and Sevastopol (at the Crimean peninsula). The most famous mutiny has been filmed by Sergei Eisenstein - "*Potemkin*". Most of the army remained loyal. Non-Russian troops were often used against Russians and vice-versa...

#### **Soviet**

A **Council of Workers Deputies** was created in St Petersburg. This was a "*direct action by politically conscious workers who wanted to co-ordinate their strike actions.*" The Council consisted of 400-500 elected members representing 96 different factories and 5 different trade unions. Leo Trotsky was one of the elected delegates...

### **TSARS' REACTION**

#### **Military dictatorship?**

Nicholas II faced peasant rebellions, strikes, military disobedience and the obvious fact that the government had lost control. His first choice was to crush the revolts and set up a harsh military dictatorship. Generals, leading politicians and members of his own family talked him out of this solution.

#### **Concessions?**

Instead the Tsar chose concessions with a few different manifestos for the "people", the "peasants" and the militaries...



### **October Manifesto**

The Manifesto addressed the unrest in Russia and pledged to grant civil liberties to the people: *including personal immunity, freedom of religion, freedom of speech, freedom of assembly, and freedom of association*; a broad participation in the *Duma*; introduction of *universal male suffrage* (over 25 years of age, electing through four electoral colleges); and a decree that no law should come into force without the consent of the state Duma.

### **November Manifesto**

Concessions to the rural population. All redemption payments were cancelled if the peasants in return promised to "preserve peace and order, and not violate the laws and rights of others". The concession was finalized 1907.

### **December Manifesto**

Concessions to the soldiers. An Imperial Manifest about:

- Better pay
- Fair treatment

### **Problems:**

Tsar Nicholas II was very reluctant to the above concessions. Some big problems were not dealt with:

- the Land question. The peasants still desperately needed land
- the Autocracy. The political system had not changed. The Tsar remained in splendid complete power!



## RUSSIA 1906

### **New Constitution**

the **Fundamental Laws**, was enacted on April 23, 1906, on the eve of the opening of the first State Duma. Its Chapter I declared and defined the autocracy of the Russian Emperor, including Emperor's supremacy over the Law, the Church, and Duma.

### **Council of Ministers**

A cabinet of Ministers who were appointed, directed and dismissed by the Tsar alone.

### **Upper House (Council of State)**

Its chairman was appointed by Tsar. Initially half of its members were appointed by the Tsar and half by elections from various categories of society, separately (clergy, Russian Academy of Science, universities, guberniya-level zemstvo, Dvoryan Assembly, merchants, industrialists). After 1910, only the Tsar appointed the members. During this period it is sometimes formally compared to the upper house of the parliament

### **Lower House (State Duma)**

Just before the creation of the Duma in May 1906, the Tsar issued the Fundamental Laws that contradicted the October Manifesto in several important ways. It stated in part that Tsar's ministers could not be appointed by, and were not responsible to, the Duma, thus denying responsible government at the executive level. Furthermore, the Tsar had the power to dismiss the Duma and announce new elections whenever he wished. The State Duma was encircled by a series of restrictions. They had no control over military expenditure or the Tsar's household finances (In April 1906 the Tsar took a "personal loan" of 2250 million gold francs from France...).

### **Article 87...**

The Tsar had the power to govern by decree whenever the assembly was not in session (and the Tsar could dissolve the assembly). This article could also be used by the Premier (with the approval of the Tsar). Pjotr Stolypin used it many times...

## RUSSIA 1906-1914

### **Peter Arkadyevich STOLYPIN (1862-1911)**

**Landreforms / Agrarian reforms:** These reforms were based on recommendations from "the Needs of Agriculture Industry Special Conference" held in Russia between 1901-1903. Sergei Witte had been the promoter of these conferences...

**AIM:** The main aim was to transform the archaic backward agriculture economy to a modern capitalistic agriculture/industrial economy. Some of the **problems** were:

- *Collective ownership*
- *Scattered land allotments based on family size*
- *A stifling control by the family elder*

Stolypin also wanted to eliminate the old commune system known as the "**mir**" and he wanted to stop the relative radicalism that was common among the peasants. If he could get the peasants to develop a more modern capitalistic oriented form of farming at their private

land holdings they would probably become more conservative (like the peasants in Western Europe).

**REFORMS:** The reforms began November 9th 1906 when Stolypin introduced "*the unconditional right of individual landownership*". Some of the reforms were:

- *Development of large-scale individual farming*
- *Introduction of agricultural cooperation*
- *Development of agricultural education*
- *Dissemination of new methods of land improvement*
- *Affordable lines of credit for peasants ("Peasants' Bank")*
- *Creation of an Agrarian Party*

The reforms were implemented by the state through different campaigns between 1906 through 1914. They were the groundwork for a free capitalist enterprise system in Russian agriculture for the common people...

**SIBERIA:** Between 1890 and 1914 over 10 million people migrated freely from Russian "proper" to areas east of the Urals. This migration had been encouraged by the Trans-Siberian Railroad Committee. The Stolypin agrarian reforms included a subsidized resettlement benefit for peasants who moved to Siberia. Approximately 2.8 of the 10 million settlements in Siberia occurred between 1908-1913 under this new subsidy.

**COOPERATION:** The following new types of cooperation-assistance were developed as part of the Stolypin agrarian reforms:

- *financial-credit cooperation*
- *production cooperation*
- *consumer cooperation*

Many elements of Stolypin's cooperation-assistance programs were in fact incorporated into the early agrarian programs of the Soviet Union, however without due credit to the "tsarist" minister.

**STOLYPINS REFORMS WERE TO SOME EXTENT SUCCESSFUL!!!**

## DUMAS 1906-1917

**1st Duma 1906 (April-July):** The first elections for a National Assembly - the State Duma, took place in March 1906. They were boycotted by the socialists (except the Trudoviki), the Socialist Revolutionaries and the Bolsheviks. The first Duma therefore had a more liberal and non-Russian nationalistic profile; 179 Kadets, 121 non-Russian National Groups (mostly peasants), 94 Trudoviks, 17 Octobrists and 15 from the extreme right.

Tension between the Duma and the Ministers (the Duma demanded further liberalization and they became more and more a platform for "agitators") made the Tsar dissolve the Assembly after only ten weeks (July 1906). The new Premier, Peter Stolypin, was experienced an assassination attempt which made him establish field trials for terrorists which often led to a sentence of death. Over a thousand people were executed over the following eight months. The hangman's noose earned the nickname "Stolypin's necktie"...

**2nd Duma 1907 (March-June):** The leading party of the first Duma and some other politicians (120 Kadet and 80 Trudovik and Social Democrat deputies) retreated to Finland after the Duma was dissolved. There they issued the Viborg (Vyborg) Manifesto. In the

manifesto, they called for the citizens to stand up for their rights, for popular representation, and for an Imperial Parliament. The Manifesto included ideas as:

- *Refuse to pay taxes*
- *Refuse to join the army*
- *Support civil disobedience (passive resistance)*

The 169 delegates from the first Duma who signed the Manifesto were charged with high treason! In December 1907 they went to court and several of them received prison sentences. They were not allowed to participate in any political activities and could not sit in any future Duma.

A new Duma (Second Duma) was called for in March 1907. Now all parties participated! Stolypin used Article 87 (with the Tsar's approval) many times to be able to create new laws. He used it to have political opponents arrested under the new "anti-terror laws". Another policy to make it harder for unwanted groups to vote was Stolypin's change of time for the vote.

The main group of Stolypin's attention had been the liberals. He paid less attention on the left which led to a successful election for these groups. The Trudoviki received 101 chairs, the Social Democrat Party 65, and the Socialist Revolutionaries 34. The Kadets lost nearly half their seats compared with the first election. They went from 179 to 93 seats. The Octobrist party nearly doubled their seats; from 17 to 32 and the extreme right. We saw a polarization of politics. The Duma received a liberal-leftist majority. This kind of Assembly was of no use for Stolypin. After Purishchvitz (leader of the Right) 16 hour speech (May 30th 1907) which ended in harsh criticism of the existing Duma. Stolypin decided to ask the Tsar to once more dissolve the Duma. This was done two weeks later - June 16th, 1907.

The formal reason for dissolving the second Duma was according to Stolypin "*a plot in the Duma to discredit the tsar, a plot in the Duma to discredit the constitution and that members of the Duma were not representative of the people*"... Stolypin also announced that there would be a change in the Electoral Laws...

### STOLYPIN'S ELECTORAL LAWS 1907

**Electoral Law 1907:** The new electoral law took away the rights of towns to be individually represented in the Duma. They now had to be represented as a part of a province which then mixed rural and urban votes (Stolypin was counting on the fact that the rural population usually was much more conservative than the urban population).

Central Asia was disenfranchised in its entirety

Poland's representation dropped from 36 to 14 members.

The structure of the new system favored the dominance of the rural rich, mostly the old aristocracy, who also ruled in their own locality and ran local governments - which answered directly to Stolypin...

**3rd Duma 1907-1912:** The third Duma became what Stolypin had hoped for - a conservative Duma. The left lost two thirds of their votes and the Kadets continued to lose seats. The Octobrist Party became the big winner of this election and the extreme right continued to consolidate their amount of votes. This Duma lasted the full period - 5 years!

**4th Duma 1912-1917:** The assassination of Stolypin (1911) and the further involvement of the Tsar and his Ministers weakened the significance of the third Duma. This was also the case with the Fourth Duma who also had a conservative majority. It came to play its most important role in February 1917...

**Reforms...:** Even though the Duma became more conservative and got less attention it did produce several reforms:

- *A Zemstvo-system was established in Poland*
- *Land Commandants were replaced by the reinstated Justices of Peace*
- *Compulsory health insurance for industrial workers was introduced (June 1912)*
- *Universal primary education "within 10 years" was an adopted official policy in May 1908*

Hugh Seton-Watson mentions several more achievements;

- *Political parties were legally established (after the October manifesto 1905)*
- *Open political discussion was tolerated and was allowed to appear in the Press (also after the October Manifesto 1905)*

So;

***Could Russia have developed towards a constitutional democracy if it had not been for WWI?***

## RUSSIA IN WORLD WAR ONE

**Declaration of War:** The declaration of war was popular.

**Nationalism:** the immediate voting of war credits by the Duma, the plundering of the German Embassy by patriotic students, St Petersburg became Petrograd and the general acceptance of the ban on sale of vodka...

Several important bodies were formed spontaneously;

**Union of Zemstva** (provided medical facilities)

**Congress of Representatives of Industry and Trade** (coordinated production).

**Autocratic rule:** Would the Tsar accept the bodies described above and give any political power to them? **NO** - they got to help with the war effort but the autocratic rule remained!

In 1915 **ZEMGOR** - an All-Russian Union of Zemstva and Cities were formed. Together with the Duma they *formed the beginning of an alternative government* according to historian David Christian.

**1915 - Tsar Nicholas II becomes Commander-in-Chief:** The war minister, Sukhomlinov, was expecting to command the army, but instead it was *the Tsar's uncle, Grand Duke Nikolai, who became Commander-in-Chief*. He took as his *Chief of Staff Yanushkevich*, at forty-four the army's youngest general. He was a **disaster!** He imposed harsh regimes in areas occupied by the Russian army, dissolved the sympathy with which local populations regarded Russia's fight against the "*Teutonic threat*". His murderous treatment of the Jews seemed likely to cause intolerable embarrassments abroad. So in September 1915 Nicholas transferred the Grand Duke and Yanushkevich to the Caucasian front. Nicholas II himself assumed supreme command of the Russian Army fighting on the Eastern Front. This **linked him to the country's military failures** and during 1916 there was a strong decline support for his government. At the same time **he had to leave Petrograd which meant room for political opportunists**. One of these opportunists was Gregori Rasputin...

**Liberal Opposition in the Duma:** The Kadets, Octobrists and Progressists - the "*Progressive Bloc*" in the State Duma demanded a new government in August 1915. As an answer to their demands they were dismissed (in *September 1915*).

During the *period of September 1915 up to January 1916* several disputes about the conduct of the Ministers occur in the Duma.

The tension between liberal politicians in the Duma and the government grows even more over the year. The liberals get a much more uncompromising attitude towards the government and its failures. In *November 1916* P.N. Miliukov questions the government and he asks them if their policies represented "*stupidity or treason*" and he adds "*we have lost faith in the ability of this government to achieve victory*"...

**Rasputin:** Grigori Yefimovich Rasputin was born a peasant in the small village of Pokrovskoye, in Siberia in 1869. Rasputin married Praskovia Fyodorovna Dubrovina in 1889, and they had three children. Rasputin also had another child with another woman. In 1901, he left his home in Pokrovskoye as a strannik (or pilgrim) and, during the time of his journeying, travelled to Greece and Jerusalem.

*In 1903, Rasputin arrived in Saint Petersburg*, where he gradually gained a reputation as a **starets** (or holy man) with **healing and prophetic powers**. When the young Tsarevich, while vacationing with his family, got a bruise after falling off of a horse, he suffered internal bleeding for days. The Tsaritsa, looking everywhere for help, asked her best friend, Anna Vyubova, to secure the help of the charismatic peasant healer Rasputin **in 1905**. Rasputin managed to help the Tsarevich. After that, every time the boy had an injury which caused him internal or external bleeding, the Tsaritsa called on Rasputin, and the Tsarevich subsequently got better. This made it appear that Rasputin was effectively healing him.

Rasputin soon became a controversial figure, becoming involved in a paradigm of sharp political struggle involving monarchist, anti-monarchist, revolutionary and other political forces and interests. He was accused by many eminent persons of various misdeeds, ranging from an unrestricted sexual life (including raping a nun) to undue political domination over the royal family. Rasputin was deeply opposed to war, both from a moral point of view and as something which was likely to lead to political catastrophe. **During the years of World War One, Rasputin's increasing drunkenness, sexual promiscuity and willingness to accept bribes (in return for helping petitioners who flocked to his apartment), as well as his efforts to have his critics dismissed from their posts, made him appear increasingly cynical.**

While Tsar Nicholas II was away at the front, **Rasputin's influence over Tsaritsa Alexandra increased immensely**. He soon became **her confidant and personal adviser**, and also convinced her to fill some governmental offices with his own handpicked candidates. To further the advance of his power, Rasputin cohabitated with upper-class women in exchange for granting political favors. Because of World War I and the ossifying effects of feudalism and a meddling government bureaucracy, Russia's economy was declining at a very rapid rate. Many at the time laid the blame with Alexandra and with Rasputin, because of his influence over her.

To save the monarchy, members of the aristocracy attempted to murder the holy man. **On the night of December 16-17, 1916, they tried to kill Rasputin.** The plan was simple. Yet on that fateful night, the conspirators found that Rasputin would be very difficult to kill. The accepted version of Rasputin's death states that he was poisoned, then shot, and finally drowned in the River Nevka by five disaffected aristocrats, led by Prince Felix Yusupov. Over the years historians have questioned Yusupov's version of events but failed to come up with credible alternative theories. One of the more recent theories point out the British Secret Service (a character called Oswald Rayner - said to be a friend of Yusupov's from Oxford University, did it)... No matter what, Rasputin's close ties to the Royal family did hurt them and the Russian people's trust in their autocratic leader.

**Food Shortage:** Shortages occurred mainly in large cities, more so in Petrograd than Moscow. The peasants who moved to Moscow normally kept some contact with their native

village, which often was near by. Those who moved to Petrograd were in a different situation. The capital city was much farther away from the populous central agricultural region and this made it more difficult to maintain contact. Shortages, inflated prices and general discontent were common occurrences. The gross production of cereals during the period 1914-1917 was such that **there should have been no serious shortages throughout Russia - but it was the disorganization of transport that broke the country up into several isolated areas.** The link between the food surplus areas of the south and southeast and the food deficit areas of the centre, north and northwest was broken because of the war and evacuation of civilians from conflict zones.

**Problems within the military:** The Russian army totaled **5.3 million men after the initial mobilization.** By the end of the war over 15.3 Russians had been in the military service. Compared with the other armies they were **worse armed, worse treated and worse led.** It was not unusual in 1915 that the Russian artillery would be limited to fire two or three shells a day, and that the Russian infantry had only two rifles for every three soldiers. Such factors made casualty levels very high: **By 1917 over 1,300,000 men had been killed in battle, 4,200,000 wounded and 2,417,000 had been captured by the enemy.**

#### **Military Campaigns 1914-1916:**

**1914 - August/September:** August 17th the Russian Army moved into East Prussia. General Alexander Samsonov advanced slowly into the south-west corner. The intention of this attack was to link up with the other major Russian army coming from the north-east (under General Paul von Rennenkampf).

**Battle of Tannenberg and Battle of the Masurian Lakes:** August 20th 1914 – the Russian General von Rennenkampf defeated a German force at Gumbinnen. Paul von Hindenburg and Erich von Ludendorff realized the threat and decided to **move few divisions from the Western front to the Eastern front** (around 100 000 men – **this ruined the Schlieffen Plan**). They made contact with the Russian troops August 22nd 1914. The two Russian armies were separated by 80 km. This made it possible for Hindenburg and Ludendorff to tackle them individually. Samsonov's troops were surrounded and defeated outside Tannenberg ("**Battle of Tannenberg**" August 26th-29th 1914 ) and Rennenkampf's Army was defeated two weeks later at the "**Battle of the Masurian Lakes**". Out of 150 000 Russian soldiers only around 10 000 managed to escape. General Samsonov committed suicide!

**Results: GERMAN VICTORY** but with a high price - the Schlieffen Plan failed!

**1914 September - 1915 August:** Russian troops invaded Galicia. Lvov (Lemberg) was captured by Russian troops in September 1914. This revealed the fact that the Austrian-Hungarian army was poorly organized. The **Russian army fought well but they also had some problems** which would make a difference in the long run; **poor and split leadership, not enough equipment and they were underfed!** The Austrian-Hungarian armies were forced to retreat to the Carpathian Mountains. Then German re-enforcements under General Ludendorff arrived. The German soldiers were in general better equipped, well supplied, better trained and they were often transported by trains between the different battle zones which made them arrive fairly rested. During the **German Austrian-Hungarian campaign in the Carpathian Mountains** (May 1915) and the **German campaign through Poland** (Warsaw captured August 1915) the Russian forces were forced to retreat. By the end of 1915 the Russian lines had withdrawn some 450 km.

**Results: RUSSIAN INITIAL VICTORY** against Austria-Hungary. **GERMAN VICTORY** through two campaigns in 1915; Campaign in the Carpathian Mountains and the Campaign through Poland.

**1916: Early in 1916** France called upon Russia to help **relieve the pressure on Verdun** by launching an offensive against the Germans on the Eastern Front, hoping Germany would transfer more units to the East to cope with the Russian attack. The Russians responded by initiating **the disastrous Lake Naroch Offensive** in the Vilno area, during which the Germans suffered just 1/5 as many casualties as the Russians.

**Results: GERMAN VICTORY**

In the **summer of 1916**, the British Somme Offensive designed to the same end had resulted in a quagmire, and the western Allies called upon the Russians again to help relieve German pressure on their front. In response, **General Aleksei Brusilov presented his plan to Stavka, the Russian high command, proposing a massive offensive by his Southwestern Front against the Austro-Hungarian forces in Galicia.** The **main purpose** of Brusilov's operation was **to take some of the pressure off French and British armies in France and the Italian Army along the Isonzo Front, and if possible, to knock Austria-Hungary out of the War.**

**1916 June/September - the Brusilov Campaign:** Three of General Brusilov's four armies reached an immediate success – within less than a week Russia had broken through the lines and taken over 70 000 prisoners. He **used a new tactic - "Shock troops"** were sent through the weak parts of the Austro-Hungarian lines and then the main army used the roads cleared by these troops. This is a forerunner to the Blitzkrieg Germany used in WWII. It was only in the northern sector of the Russian front where the army under General Evert stood still (General Alexei Evert, commander of the Russian Western Army Group, favored a defensive strategy and was opposed to Brusilov's offensive).

Encouraged by the positive Russian results **Romania decided to join the war on the Entente side.** By **early August the offensive came to a halt.** The Romanian forces were now in trouble and the **defensive tactics of General Evert** had resulted in an unsuccessful half-hearted offensive in the north. **Russia lacked resources; both reserve soldiers and supplies.** At headquarters **different groups of militaries tried to change the original plan** which led to **confusion** and **weakened the offensive** and then **Austria-Hungary received more German support.** Against the will of General Brusilov troops were moved from the northern sector (General Evert) to reinforce the campaign in Galicia. This together with the Romanian army problems (General Brusilov had to send some of his army to help the Romanian army that were being overrun by German and Austro-Hungarian troops) were the main factors behind the halt of the offensive.

**Results: RUSSIAN VICTORIES.** The Western front as well as the Italian front was relieved. Russian troops gained territory in Galicia. The Austrian-Hungarian poor performance had a very negative effect on its fighting forces. Russia had been very close to defeat Austria-Hungary – it was only with German assistance the Dual Monarchy stayed in the war. By the end of 1916 German troops started an offensive which resulted in Russian retreat.

**More problems:** The year 1916 was a **good year for military production;** the rifle production doubled, the heavy artillery production quadrupled **but the losses of important industries made the locomotive production go down to half the amount of 1913.** This together with the militaries constant interference in transports made **the communication and distribution system to the urban areas hard (Morris talks about a "semi-breakdown").**



Conscription caused a **shortage of both men and animals in the rural areas**. Due to the need of machinery for the war effort we also see a severe decline in the necessary modernization of agriculture. **Fuel shortages** were another serious problem. With the loss of the Polish coalfields and the need of coal for military use most urban homes lacked necessary fuel. **Food prices went up drastically, inflation increased**, and so did the wages - but much less than the prices of food and the inflation together. In early 1917 most Russians, especially in the urban areas, lacked everything!

## FEBRUARY (MARCH) 1917

**February 18th - Strikes at the Putilov Engineering Works:** The 1917 February Revolution all began in a shop in the Putilov engineering works in Petrograd on 18 February 1917 when some men came out on strike for higher pay and the re-employment of some sacked workers.

**February 22nd - Lock-out:** The strike spread until on 22 February the management locked the factory gates - a fatal mistake. **This transformed all Putilov workers into strikers.**

**February 23rd - International Womens Day - Mass demonstrations:** the 23 February, was International Women's Day. Tens of thousands of women went out to protest. Women had much to complain about, **the imperfect rationing system which often led to fruitless queuing, all this in a bitter Petrograd winter, low wages, food shortages and harsh working conditions.** They met the strikers from the Putilov factories. Together they numbered nearly 240 000...

**February 25th - The Tsars' reaction:** On 25 February an order to end the disorder came from the Tsar.

**February 26th - Uprisings/Military mutinies:** .The day after troops fired on crowds in the centre of Petrograd. This could have been the end, but **the same evening a company of the reserve battalion of the Pavlovsky guards mutinied.**

**February 27th - More mutinies / Temporary Committee of the State Duma / Petrograd Soviet:** Some guards followed the next morning, shot one of their officers, and poured out on to the streets where other military units joined them. **Training detachments of the Volynsky Regiment mutinied and was quickly followed by the Semonovsky, the Ismailovsky, the Litovsky and even the legendary Preobrajensky Guard**, the oldest and staunchest regiment founded by Peter the Great. **The arsenal was pillaged, the Ministry of the Interior, Military Government building, police headquarters, the Law Courts and a score of police buildings were put to the torch. By noon the fortress of Peter and Paul with its heavy artillery was in the hands of the insurgents. In the evening about a third of the Petrograd garrison was disaffected.** By nightfall it was all over. It was almost bloodless, only 1315 persons "*sealed the victory of the revolution*" with their blood.

A **Temporary Committee of the State Duma** had been called into existence on 27 February and it represented some continuity. The other institution was a mass organization - the **Petrograd Soviet of Worker's and Soldier's Deputies**. It had also emerged on 27 February. It took its name from the body which had been so popular in 1905! It consisted of deputies elected directly by workers in their factories and soldiers in their garrisons and its authority encompassed the whole city.

## MARCH 1917

**March 1st - Order No 1:** After some disputes between the two temporary bodies the Petrograd Soviet issued "Order No 1" on March 1st. **This order clearly indicated that the Soviet was superior to the Temporary Committee in military issues were they had different opinions. It also states that the military branch is subordinated to the Soviet of Workers' and Soldiers' Deputies in all political actions!**

**March 2nd - Tsar Nicholas II abdicates:** The members of the **Temporary Committee** and the **temporary Petrograd Soviet** had formed the nucleus of a new Government and **decided that Nicholas must abdicate**. Faced with this demand, which was **echoed by his generals**, deprived of loyal troops, with his family firmly in the hands of the Provisional Government and fearful of unleashing civil war and opening the way for German conquest, Nicholas had no choice but to submit. **He firstly abdicated in favour of Tsarevich Alexis**, but swiftly changed his mind after advice from doctors that the heir would not live long apart from his parents who would be forced into exile. **Nicholas drew up a new manifesto naming his brother, Grand Duke Michael, as the next Emperor of all the Russias**, but Michael declined the throne the day after... or Grand Duke Mikhail declined to accept the throne until the people were allowed to vote through a Constituent Assembly for the continuance of the monarchy or a republic. Contrary to popular belief, **Mikhail never abdicated, he deferred taking up power..**

**March 3rd - Grand Duke Mikhail refuses the throne / Provisional Government / Petrograd Soviet:** On March 3rd (after Tsar Nicholas II had abdicated and his brother had refused the throne) the **Temporary Committee became the Provisional Government** under the **leadership of Prince Lvov**. It was a **liberal government with a majority of Kadet Ministers** (5 Kadets, 1 Octobrist, 1 Centrist, 1 Socialist and 2 "non Party"). The only socialist was Kerensky who became "Minister of Justice". The reason why the successive four governments between February and October 1917 were called "Provisional" was that their members intended to hold on to power only until a permanent form of government was established by the Constituent Assembly.

At **the same day** as the first Provisional Government was formed **the elections to the Petrograd Soviet ("Petrograd Soviet of Workers' and Soldiers' Deputies") was done**. In the beginning it was dominated by the individuals elected, no specific party, but several Mensheviks and Socialist Revolutionaries had been elected. Some weeks later several Soviets all over Russia are being formed (much an urban and military phenomena).

Russia now had two independent bodies who both claimed some right to rule Russia. This **DUAL POWER SYSTEM** would cause problems in the future!

## APRIL-OCTOBER 1917

**Lenin returns to Russia - April Theses (Pravda):** After the February Revolution Lenin and several other Russian socialists in exile sought to return to Russia as soon as possible. The Swiss communist Fritz Platten managed to negotiate with the German Government for a safe passage through Germany for Lenin and his company (this is often referred to as the "**sealed train**" - even though it was not sealed). Germany had agreed to this since they had the hope that Lenin and his company would create such a disorder in Russia that the countries war

effort would weaken and she would capitulate. **Not only did the German government help the revolutionaries home they also financed their work through secret funds...**

The **April Theses** were a series of directives by **Bolshevik leader Vladimir Lenin** issued upon his return to Petrograd (Saint Petersburg), Russia from his exile in Switzerland. The Theses were **mostly aimed at fellow Bolsheviks in Russia and returning to Russia from exile**. He called for soviets (workers' councils) to take power (as seen in the slogan "all power to the soviets"), denounced liberals and social democrats in the Provisional Government, demanded all land to be nationalized and then given to the peasants (by the local "Soviets of Agricultural Laborers' and Peasants' Deputies"), called for peace and told the Bolsheviks to not cooperate with the government, and called for a new communist policies. The April Theses influenced the July Days and October Revolution in the next months and are identified with Leninism. Here we can clearly see the Bolshevik slogans:

*"All power to the soviets!"*

*"End the war!"*

*"Distribute all the land to the peasants!"*

*"No co-operation with the Provisional Government!"*

As mention above - Lenins theses were mostly for the Bolshevik Party in April. **The Party was small, weak and split in the question about their relation towards the Provisional Government. Some members like Kamenev and Stalin recommended cooperation while other members were against it. Lenin had been living in exile for many years and he therefore first of all needed to establish his own leadership. After he released the April Theses and started to agitate the party united under its main principles. Lenin was now the undisputed leader of the party!**

**April - Government Crisis:** A note from the Minister of Foreign Affairs P.N. Milyukov to the Allied Powers stating that Russia would fulfill her obligations **"until victorious"** caused problems since he had not informed and got the approval of the Petrograd Soviet. His note was against the Petrograd Soviet Order No 1.

**May - First Coalition Government:** The first government was dissolved and a second one called the **"First Coalition Government" still under the leadership of Prince Lvov** was set up (May 5th). In an attempt to calm the Petrograd Soviet the new government also **included several socialists** (3 Socialist Revolutionaries, 2 Mensheviks and 1 Popular Socialist). It was still a little majority for the liberals (5 Kadets, 1 Octobrist, 1 Centrist and 2 "non-Party"). Kerensky now became the "Minister of War and Navy". **The Bolsheviks refused to cooperate with the Coalition Government.**

**June - First All-Russian Congress of Soviets:** This first All-Russian Congress of Soviets lasted 19 days. It opened on June 3, 1917 and was attended by some 1,090 delegates (784 with full vote). Approximately: from 53 regional/provincial soviets (106 deputies), 305 local soviets (610 deputies), and 34 military organisations (68 delegates). The following political parties were represented;

*285 Socialist-Revolutionary (20 sympathetic to this party)*

*248 Mensheviks (8 sympathetic)*

*105 Bolsheviks*

*111 Various other small parties (presumably 7 delegates did not answer)*

The congress allowed every speaker to present their views, and lasted until June 24, when the delegates withdrew distraught over the lengthy debates. Here are some of the resolutions the Congress took:

**1. The Congress voted (with only 8 dissents) to convince the Allies to end the war with Germany and conclude a general peace as soon as possible (without annexation and indemnity).** Meanwhile the country should continue to increase the armies fighting power.

**2. To summon a All-Russian Constituent Assembly**

**3. The right of minority nations and peoples in Russia to self-determination**

**4. The need for state control of the economy**

**5. Relation to the Provisional Government.** Tsereteli (Menshevik) stated that the soviet must support the Provisional government, for he claimed that no party in Russia was capable of forming a government otherwise. Lenin shouted from his seat in the Congress: "There is!" The Congress voted 543 to 126 (52 abstentions) to **support the Provisional government**, though the socialist ministers in the Provisional government (SRs and Mensheviks) were told to be obliged to decisions made by the Soviets.

**6. Election of a Central Executive Committee (CEC).** The Congress resolved to elect a Central Executive Committee (CEC) to act in the interim of its absence, for the Congress was not to meet for another three months.

**June - Military Offensive (WWI):** It was **decided by Alexander Kerensky, Minister of War and Navy, and led by General Brusilov.** Such a decision was ill-timed, because, following the February Revolution, there were strong popular demands for peace, especially within the army, whose fighting capabilities were quickly deteriorating.

**Discipline within the Russian Army had reached at a point of crisis** since the Tsar's abdication. The Petrograd Soviet's "**Order Number 1**" **tremendously weakened the power of officers, giving an overriding mandate to "soldier committees"**. The **abolition of the death penalty** was another contributing factor, as was the **high presence of revolutionary agitators at the front** including Bolshevik agitators, who promoted a defeatist agenda. **Riots and mutineering at the front became common**, officers were often the victims of soldier harassment and even murder. Furthermore, the policy of the new government towards the war effort was one of fulfilling obligations towards Russia's allies, as opposed to fighting for the sake of total victory, thus giving soldiers a less credible motivation to fight. However, **Kerensky hoped that an important Russian victory would gain popular favour and restore the soldiers' morale**, thus strengthening the weak provisional government and proving the effectiveness of "*the most democratic army in the world*", as he referred to it.

**Starting on June 16th, 1917** the Russian troops attacked the Austro-Hungarian and German forces in Galicia, pushing toward Lviv. The operations involved the Russian 11th, 7th and 8th Armies against the Austro-Hungarian/German South Army (General Felix Graf von Bothmer) and the Austro-Hungarian 7th and 3rd Armies.

After an **initial success, the offensive was halted because the Russian soldiers soon mutinied and refused to fight. It collapsed altogether by July 3rd . On July 5th the Germans and Austro-Hungarians counterattacked, meeting little resistance and advancing through Galicia and Ukraine as far as the Zbruch River.** The Russian lines were broken on July 7th, and by July 10th, the Russians had retreated about 240 kilometers (150 miles).

The Russian **Provisional Government was greatly weakened by this military catastrophe**, and the possibility of a Bolshevik coup d'état became increasingly real. Far from strengthening Russian army morale, **this offensive proved that Russian army morale no longer existed.** No Russian general could now count on the soldiers under his command actually doing what they were ordered to do. This offensive also helped the start of the July days.

**July Days - Riots in Petrograd:** The July Days refers to events in 1917 that took place in Petrograd, Russia, between **July 4 and July 7** when **soldiers and industrial workers in the city rioted against the Russian Provisional Government**. It was sailors from Kronstadt, radical workers with Bolshevik slogans like "All Power to the Soviets", "*Peace, Bread and Land*", etc... who initiated these riots. The **All-Russian Executive Committee of the Soviet of Workers and Soldiers' Deputies** (with Menshevik and Socialist-Revolutionary majority) **told their members to not support the revolt**: In an appeal from July 5, 1917, the All-Russian Executive Committee of the Soviet of Workers and Soldiers' Deputies pleads with the workers and soldiers of Petrograd to stay at their jobs. Only the All Russian or Petrograd Executive Committees has the authority to call a strike or demonstration. Implied, but not stated, in this appeal is that the Bolshevik Party does not have the authority to call strikes or demonstrations. **There is very little evidence though that the Bolsheviks had planned a revolt in July.**

Anti-war feelings were rife among the populace at that time. These feelings intensified with the news of the failed offensive. Discontented workers started protests which soon spiraled into violent riots. Lenin believed that while the workers in Petrograd were radicalised, the country as a whole was not ready for revolution, therefore if the workers tried to seize power in Petrograd alone they would be defeated. According to some historians the Bolshevik party was behind the revolt attempt. This seems unlikely. Lenin was not in Petrograd when the riots broke out (he was taking a short rest in Finland). The Bolshevik central committee were divided. They had a choice to either throw their weight behind the demonstrations and possibly be crushed, or abstain and risk the possibility that many workers would lose faith in them. **In the end the Bolsheviks joined the demonstrations, but did not to push for outright revolution.** The goal of this was that their credibility would not be damaged in the future. The failed offensive in Galicia together with these riots made Prince Lvov and the First Coalition Government resign. Kerensky now took over. One of the first things he did was to order the arrest of Lenin and the other leading Bolsheviks, accusing them of inciting revolt with German financial backing. Lenin and Zinoviev successfully fled and went into hiding in Finland (Viborg), but many other Bolshevik leaders were arrested, including Trotsky (who now had decided to join the Bolshevik party), Kamenev and Lunacharskii. They remained in prison until Kerensky released them in response to the Kornilov Affair. The outcome of **the July Days represented a temporary decline in the growth of Bolshevik power and influence** in the period before the October Revolution.

**July - Government Crisis:** The failed offensive in Galicia together with the riots in Petrograd ("July Days") made Prince Lvov and the First Coalition Government resign.

**July - Second Coalition Government:** On July 24th Kerensky became the new Premier and he gathered 5 Kadets, 3 Socialist Revolutionaries, 3 Mensheviks, 2 Popular Socialists, 1 Progressive and 1 non-Party Minister. We now have **a socialist majority**. **One of the first orders the new government gave was to arrest Lenin and other leading Bolsheviks accused of treason. They had received pay from the German government.** Since the military offensive had failed General Brusilov was forced to step down as Commander-in-Chief. **Kerensky appointed General Lavr Kornilov as the new C-in-C.** He also **restored the death penalty at the front** in attempt to restore order (this had been accepted by the central executive committee). Alexander **Kerensky also declared Russia a republic and begun preparations for elections in the "Pre-parliament"**, later named the Council of the Russian Republic. When the first Provisional Government had been formed they claimed that they would organize elections to a Constituent Assembly after the war and then discuss if Russia should become a Republic or a Constitutional Monarchy. Now Kerensky went ahead

and founded the Russian Republic before the agreed date. **This triggered criticism from both left and right.** Monarchists saw the declaration of a republican form of government in Russia as unacceptable, while the left considered the declaration a power grab intended to weaken the influence of the soviets... Kerensky was loosing support!

**August - Kornilov Revolt:** The Kornilov Affair was a **confused struggle between Commander-in-Chief of the Russian army, General Lavr Kornilov and Aleksandr Kerensky.** Kerensky was later to claim that the affair was a turning point in the revolution in the sudden revival--and eventual triumph--of the Bolsheviks. In Soviet historiography, the events have been known as the **Kornilov Mutiny.** There are several different theories on the background to the revolt attempt:

**Theory 1:** Kornilov shared the widespread belief of many Russians that the country was descending into anarchy and that military defeat on the Eastern Front against the Central Powers would be disastrous for Russian pride and honour. Lenin and his 'German spies', he announced, should be hanged, the Soviets stamped out and military discipline restored. Therefore Kornilov **planned to seize the power through a coup d'etat. He would march on Petrograd and establish a military dictatorship in Russia with himself as the ruler.** Several historians support this theory.

**Theory 2:** This theory could be called the "**misunderstanding theory**". A messenger (V.N. Lvov - no relation to the previous Prime Minister Prince Lvov) **gave unclear and perhaps deliberately distorted communications from Petrograd, that Kerensky had authorized Kornilov to impose order in the capital and restructure the government,** and ordered the Third Cavalry Corps to Petrograd with support of British equipment and instructors to place it under martial law. **Kerensky was at the same time told that General Kornilov planned to revolt and establish himself as the new ruler.** Under these circumstances **Kerensky dismissed his commander-in-chief from his post, claiming Kornilov intended to set up a military dictatorship.** Kornilov, convinced Kerensky had been taken prisoner by the Bolsheviks and was acting under duress, replied by issuing a call to all Russians to "*save their dying land.*"

**Theory 3:** Historian **Richard Pipes** points out Kerensky being behind the plot: "*Was there a 'Kornilov plot'? Almost certainly not. All the available evidence, rather, points to a 'Kerensky plot' engineered to discredit the general as the ringleader of an imaginary but widely anticipated counterrevolution, the suppression of which would elevate the Prime Minister to a position of unrivaled popularity and power... A commission appointed in October 1917 completed in June 1918... an investigation into the Kornilov Affair. It concluded that the accusations leveled at Kornilov were baseless: Kornilov's military moves had been intended not to overthrow the Provisional Government but to defend it from the Bolsheviks. The Commission completely exonerated Kornilov, accusing Kerensky of 'deliberately distort[ing] the truth in the matter of Kornilov from lack of courage to admit guilt for the grandiose mistake' he had committed.*"

**Theory 4: "Bolshevik theory" - Kerensky planned to use General Kornilov in a coup d'etat - to get rid of the Bolsheviks.** This theory was promoted by Kerensky. He argued that the net result of the aborted revolt was a tremendous opportunity for the Bolsheviks, who began to spread propaganda based upon a rumor that Kerensky betrayed Kornilov in what was to have been a rightist coup engineered by elements within the Provisional Government: "*This slanderous invention was immediately taken up by the Bolsheviks, who used it as dynamite with which, within a few days, they succeeded in destroying the confidence of the rank and file of the Army in the Provisional Government. The Korniloff uprising destroyed the entire work of the restoration of discipline in the army, achieved after almost superhuman*

*efforts. Lenin, still in hiding, immediately grasped the significance of the service performed for him by the organizers of the Korniloff rebellion."*

Uncertain of the support of his army generals, **Kerensky was forced to ask for help from other quarters** – He asked the **Petrograd Soviet** who called in the only paramilitary group of substance - **the Bolshevik Red Guards**. Kornilov's attempt to seize power collapsed without bloodshed as his soldiers deserted the cause. He and some 7000 supporters were arrested. Although Kerensky survived the Kornilov coup, **the event weakened his government substantially and paved the way for the Bolsheviks to seize power shortly thereafter in the October Revolution**. The fact that Kerensky had also armed the Red Guards meant that when the October Revolution came the Red Army was more powerful than it perhaps could, and should have been.

**August/September - Crisis:** The **lack of discipline within the army, the Kornilov revolt with the Bolshevik accusations against Kerensky, escalated take-over of the estates in the provinces** (which made peasant soldiers desert in even higher numbers so that they could get back to their villages) and **the continuing inflation** (which reduced the value of the rouble to about one-tenth of the 1914 value) **led to more demonstrations, strikes and lockouts**. When the Bolsheviks gained the majority in the Petrograd Soviet the Red Guards were under direct rule of them.

**August/September - Election to the Petrograd Soviet:** On the 31st of August a local election to the Petrograd Soviet was held. The **Bolsheviks achieved the majority** of the votes. A few days later **they won the majority in the Moscow election and several other major Russian industrial centers** saw similar results. At September 23rd **Trotsky was elected chairman of the Petrograd Soviet...** Lenins slogan "**All Power to the Soviets**" had now become a real opportunity for the Bolshevik Party...

**September - Third Coalition Government:** Kerensky had lost power. He tried to save the situation by calling for a **Democratic Conference** which opened in Petrograd on the 14th of September. He had arranged that the Bolsheviks would be a minority group at this conference. The **Bolshevik delegates under the lead of Trotsky came and denounced the conference and the government (in a mocking way) and then they walked out**. One of the main reasons of this conference was for Kerensky to receive a mandate to reorganize the coalition government. This failed. The left saw them as allies of Kornilov.

**Kerensky then went ahead on his own, without a broad support, and formed a new government**. This "**pre-Parliament**" included 4 Kadets, 4 Mensheviks, 2 Socialist Revolutionaries and 7 non-Party ministers. **He also declared that elections to a Constituent Assembly would be held in November**. Kerenskys new government was powerless - they had very little support both from the right and the left. It would be other forces that made a difference in Russia...

## OCTOBER 1917 – JANUARY 1918

**October Revolution:** After the Kornilov revolt where the Bolshevik Red Guards got to play an important role and the Bolshevik success in the election of the local soviets in Petrograd/Moscow plus the general lack of confidence in Kerensky and his government **Lenin was convinced the time was ripe for the party to take over the power by force.** He bombarded the Bolshevik central committee with demands of action from his various hiding places in Finland. The Bolshevik Party had to seize the opportunity because:

- *The masses were impatient and the Bolsheviks might lose support if they waited*
- *There was a danger of a counter-revolutionary attack from the right*
- *The date of the second All-Russian congress of Soviets was getting closer and Lenin wanted to act before the meeting*
- *Lenin was convinced that Russia was not the only country on the edge of a revolution. All of Europe, especially Germany, was ready for a proletarian rising. A Russian Revolution would be the spark Europe needed to start the creation of a Socialist world. Lenin used this argument a lot...*

The **critiques within the party, especially from Kamenev and Zinoviev** feared that a revolt in October would be too big of a risk because:

- *To carry through a proletarian revolution that failed would be disastrous. The party would not get a second chance*
- *It would be safer to wait for the second All-Russian congress of Soviets since the Bolsheviks now had a great chance to get the majority of the votes and thereby being able to use the soviet for their own purpose*
- *According to the critiques there were very little indications of revolution in the rest of Europe*
- *According to the Marxist doctrine Russia was just in the beginning of the bourgeois stage...*

Under these circumstances **Lenin arrived secretly in Petrograd (October 10<sup>th</sup>).** After hours of argumentation within the Bolshevik central committee Lenin managed with ten votes against two to win support for the insurrection. Kamenev and Zinoviev voted against the suggestion. During this struggle Lenin had great support from the new Bolshevik – Leo Trotsky. He had a sharp mind and was a gifted agitator. He made the difference in October but he did not agree with Lenin in all matters;

- *Lenin wanted the Red Guards to start the insurrection right away and they did not need to begin in Petrograd.*
- *Trotsky wanted to postpone the insurrection to the eve of the second All-Russian congress of Soviets and then present them with a fait accompli.*

Since Lenin was wanted he had to go back into hiding and **Trotsky** therefore **became the big organizer of the Bolshevik insurrection.** It was Trotsky's ideas that were used. He **started by assuring military support.** At the 12<sup>th</sup> of October the executive committee of the Petrograd Soviet set up a **Military Revolutionary Committee** with the purpose of defending the capital in case the Provisional Government would give it up to the Germans. It was **the Red Bolshevik Guards** that **gained this new authority.** This was a **perfect screen** for the chairman of the Petrograd Soviet, Trotsky, and its Bolshevik majority. By the 21<sup>st</sup> of October the regimental committees of Petrograd had accepted the Military Revolutionary Committee as their supreme authority. Two days later the troops in the Peter-Paul fortress were won over (after a visit by Trotsky). **100,000's of rifles as well as the military garrisons of Petrograd were now under Bolshevik Command.**

Kerensky had not acted against the growing threat of a Bolshevik insurrection. It was not until **the 24<sup>th</sup> of October** he tried to do something – he closed the editorial offices of two



Bolshevik newspapers and ordered the cruiser Aurora to put to sea (she was very close to the Winter Palace). The following day the second All-Russian congress of Soviets was going to start. Trotsky decided it was time to act:

- *The editorial offices were re-opened*
- *The cruiser Aurora was given counter orders so she remained on her place close to the Winter palace*
- *The Smolny Institute, HQ for the Bolshevik central committee was fortified against attacks*

**Kerensky tried to address the “pre-Parliament” (third Coalition Government) to gain support.** He found out that the Mensheviks and Socialist-Revolutionaries had lost their confidence in him and they now demanded the same thing as the Bolsheviks;

- *Start Peace negotiations right away*
- *Immediate settlement of the Land question*

During the evening of the **24<sup>th</sup> of October Trotsky ordered his troops to act.** Lenin arrived in disguise to the Smolny Institute. **Red Guards took possession** over the **stations, telephone exchanges, post offices, the national bank and the Tauride Palace.** Kerensky had nothing to put up against them . He fled from Petrograd in the morning of the 25<sup>th</sup> of October by car. He was going to try to raise troops from the front.

In the afternoon of the 25<sup>th</sup> of October **the “pre-Parliament” (third Coalition Government) was forcibly dispersed** by Red Guards. Lenin and Trotsky declared to the Petrograd Soviet that a new Soviet government would be formed.

The **Second All-Russian Congress of Soviets** met on October 25-26, 1917, at 22:40, in the Smolny Institute. Of the 649 delegates elected to the Congress of Soviets, representing 318 provincial/local soviets, 390 were Bolshevik, 160 Socialist-Revolutionaries (about 100 were Left SRs who were supportive to the Bolshevik cause), 72 Mensheviks, 14 Menshevik Internationalists, and 13 of various groups. **The Bolsheviks had gathered the majority!** . The retiring central executive committee was replaced by a praesidium largely Bolshevik. **Kamenev became the chairman.** The leaders of the **Mensheviks together with the Right Socialist Revolutionaries** demanded that the bombing of the Winter Palace should stop (the cruiser Aurora was bombarding the Winter Palace with blank shots...) and that a left-wing coalition should be formed. If the Bolsheviks did not agree to this they threatened to walk out of the Congress. The Bolsheviks did not give in so **the leaders of these parties walked out.** Trotsky spoke to them as they were leaving *“You are bankrupt. You have played out your role. Go where you belong: to the dust heap of history”*.

- In the early hours of the **morning the 26<sup>th</sup> of October the Winter Palace was captured** (with very little actual fighting). The Congress now declared that the Soviets had assumed power throughout Russia.

Lenin showed up to the second sitting of the second All-Russian Congress of Soviets, in the **evening of October 26<sup>th</sup>.** He declared that they should now proceed to construct the Socialist order. The Congress established three decrees;

**Decree on Peace:** The *“Decree on Peace”* called for an immediate truce and a just peace, and could be interpreted as an appeal to foreign peoples over the heads of governments. Lenin claimed that there would be an end to secret diplomacy and negotiations should start right away with the Central Powers – without any annexations or indemnities.

**Decree on Land:** The *“Decree on Land”* sanctioned what was already happening, the take-over by peasants of private land, but specified that the distribution should be arranged by the agriculture worker and peasant soviets. The guiding principle should be every peasant family

should have as much land as they could till without the use of hired labor. The final agreements for the distribution of land should be settled by the Constituent Assembly. Lenin did deliberately not mention to much about the plans of the nationalization of land...

**The Council of Peoples Commissars (Sovnarkom):** The third Coalition Provisional Government under Kerensky had worked as a "pre-Parliament" for the long-awaited and long-postponed elections to the Constituent Assembly planned to take place November 25. When the Red Guards had forced them to close down Russia needed another "pre-Parliament". Lenin and Trotsky put together a "Council of Peoples Commissars" (Sovnarkom). They were all Bolsheviks with Lenin as the Chairman, Trotsky as Commissar of Foreign affairs, Stalin as Commissar of Nationalities, etc...

This meeting ended five in the morning with the election of a new central executive committee. Two thirds of the places in the new central executive committee of the All-Russian Soviet went to the Bolsheviks!

The following appeal was accepted by the Congress and sent out to "All workers, soldiers and peasants" after this late meeting.



## РАБОЧИМЪ, СОЛДАТАМЪ и КРЕСТЬЯНАМЪ!

Второй Всероссийскій Съездъ Советовъ Рабочихъ и Солдатскихъ Депутатовъ открылся. На немъ представлено громадное большинство Советовъ. На съездѣ присутствуютъ и рядъ делегатовъ отъ крестьянскихъ Советовъ. Полномочія соглашательскаго Ц. К. окончены. Оспаривая на волю громаднаго большинства рабочихъ, солдатъ и крестьянъ, оспаривая на совершившемся въ Петроградѣ победоносное востаніе рабочихъ и гарнизона, Съездъ беретъ власть въ свои руки.

Временное Правительство изложено. Большинство членовъ Временнаго Правительства уже арестовано.

Советская власть предложитъ немедленный демократическій миръ всему народу и немедленное перемиріе на всѣхъ фронтахъ. Она обеспечитъ безвозвратную передачу помещичьихъ, удѣльныхъ и монастырскихъ земель въ распоряженіе крестьянскихъ комитетовъ, отомститъ права солдата, проведетъ полную демократизацію арміи, установитъ рабочий контроль надъ производствомъ, обеспечитъ своевременный союзъ Учредительнаго Собранія, освободитъ достаточное количество хлеба въ города и предметы первой необходимости въ деревнѣ, обеспечитъ военныя надѣлы, населяющія Россію, подлинное право на самоопредѣленіе.

Съездъ постановляетъ: вся власть на вѣсткахъ переходитъ къ Советамъ Рабочихъ, Солдатскихъ и Крестьянскихъ депутатовъ, которые и должны обеспечить подлинный революціонный порядокъ.

Съездъ принимаетъ солдатъ въ основу изъ добротности и стойкости. Съездъ Советовъ увѣренъ, что революціонная армія сумеетъ защитить революцію отъ всякаго посягательства империализма, пока новое правительство не добьется заложения демократическаго мира, который оно непосредственно предложитъ всему народу. Новое Правительство приметъ все мѣры къ тому, чтобы обеспечивать революціонную армію всѣми необходимыми, путемъ решительной политики реквизицій и обложения извѣстныхъ классовъ, а также улучшить положеніе солдатскихъ семей.

Корниловцы — Керенскій, Валедикъ и др. дѣлаютъ попытки вести война на Петроградѣ. Нѣсколько отрядовъ, обманывая путемъ диктуютъ Керенскаго, вернутся на сторону воюющаго народа.

**Солдаты, окажите активное противодѣйствіе корниловцу Керенскому! Будьте на сторожѣ!**

**Железнодорожники, останавливайте всѣ эшалоны, посылаемые Керенскимъ на Петроградъ!**

**Солдаты, рабочие, служащіе, — въ вашихъ рукахъ судьба революціи и судьба демократическаго мира!**

**ДН ЗДРАВСТВУЕТЪ РЕВОЛЮЦІЯ!**

Всероссийскій Съездъ Советовъ  
Рабочихъ и Солдатскихъ Депутатовъ.  
Делегаты отъ Крестьянскихъ Советовъ.

First page of the newspaper *Rabochy i Soldat* No. 9  
October 26 (November 8), 1917

# To Workers, Soldiers, and Peasants!

[October 25]

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The Second All-Russia Congress of Soviets of Workers and Soldiers' Deputies has opened. The vast majority of the Soviets are represented at the Congress. A number of delegates from the Peasants' Soviets are also present. The mandate of the compromising Central Executive Committee has terminated.<sup>[a]</sup> Backed by the will of the vast majority of the workers, soldiers, and peasants, backed by the victorious uprising of the workers and the garrison which has taken place in Petrograd, the Congress takes power into its own hands.

The Provisional Government has been overthrown. The majority of the members of the Provisional Government have already been arrested.

The Soviet government will propose an immediate democratic peace to all the nations and an immediate armistice on all fronts. It will secure the transfer of the land of the landed proprietors, the crown and the monasteries to the peasant committees without compensation; it will protect the rights of the soldiers by introducing complete democracy in the army; it will establish workers' control over production; it will ensure the convocation of the Constituent Assembly at the time appointed; it will see to it that bread is supplied to the cities and prime necessities to the villages; it will guarantee all the nations inhabiting Russia the genuine right to self-determination.

The Congress decrees: all power in the localities shall pass to the Soviets of Workers', Soldiers' and Peasants' Deputies, which must guarantee genuine revolutionary order.

The Congress calls upon the soldiers in the trenches to be vigilant and firm. The Congress of Soviets is convinced that the revolutionary army will be able to defend the revolution against all attack of imperialism until such time as the new government succeeds in concluding a democratic peace, which it will propose directly to all peoples. The new government will do everything to fully supply the revolutionary army by means of a determined policy of requisitions and taxation of the propertied classes, and also will improve the condition of the soldiers' families.

The Kornilov men — Kerensky, Kaledin and others — are attempting to bring troops against Petrograd. Several detachments, whom Kerensky had moved by deceiving them, have come over to the side of the insurgent people.

*Soldiers, actively resist Kerensky the Kornilovite! Be on your guard!*

*Railwaymen, hold up all troop trains dispatched by Kerensky against Petrograd!*

*Soldiers, workers in factory and office, the fate of the revolution and the fate of the democratic peace is in your hands!*

*Long live the revolution!*

***The All-Russia Congress of Soviets***

***Of Workers' and Soldiers' Deputies***

***The Delegates from the Peasants' Soviets***

**The first phase of the Bolshevik take-over**, the insurrection in Petrograd with the establishment of a Bolshevik leadership, **was now over and it had been successful!** The brain behind it had been Leo Trotsky! Problems the new Bolshevik “pre-Parliament” now faced were the reactions of the rest of Russia, eventual counterattacks from Kerensky, general dissatisfaction and disorder based on the harsh economical situation, and the election to a National Constituent Assembly (planned to be held the 12<sup>th</sup> of November). Lenin was not sure that this election was a good idea but Trotsky advised him strongly to not change it.

The next decree that the **Sovnarkom** established was a “decree of censorship”:

**Decree on the Press:** Lenin and the Bolsheviks had made great use of the press in their climb to power, but they had no intention of leaving this weapon available to the anti-Bolshevik groups. So at the 27<sup>th</sup> of October **Sovnarkom** established the *Decree on the Press* (this sporadically banned non-socialist press) and persecuted the Constitutional Democratic Party press.

Two days later Sovnarkom released the next decree which was more popular. It tied into the international **8-hour day movement** or **40-hour week movement**:

**Decree on 8-Hour Working Day**

**Kerensky** was desperately looking for troops who could advance on Petrograd and try to put the insurrection down. He **did not receive any real support – Why?** Mostly because few soldiers were really willing to fight for his government and those who were willing were led by officers who themselves were not. Several officers had seen what they considered to be Kerensky’s betrayal of Kornilov in August/September so they now refused to lift a finger to help him. A small company of Cossacks tried to help him but they were defeated at the “*Pulkovo heights*” just outside Petrograd. (Eventually Kerensky got away and he later made an academic career in the USA, where he died in 1970).

The struggle in Moscow lasted longer and it was not until the Bolsheviks shelled the Kremlin it ended (November 2<sup>nd</sup>). By this time most industrial areas had recognized the new Soviet power but voices of a leftist coalition was heard. The second phase, to get the insurrection accepted all over Russia, was now over and once again the Bolsheviks had been successful.

The **Sovnarkom** had to deal with more problems:

- *None of the new Commissars had any previous experience of government*
- *The country was in a state of chaos; Petrograd (and several other cities) had a shortage of food and the civil servants of the departments were on strike...*
- *The officials of the State bank refused to release any funds*
- *In many cities the Bolsheviks were forced to work together with other left-wing groups in local Soviets and committees of public safety*
- *The Railwaymen’s Union refused to let the Bolsheviks use the railroads as long as the Bolsheviks refused to form a left-wing coalition*

at the same time **they had the advantage of:**

- *The split among the Socialist Revolutionaries where the Leftist SR supported the Bolsheviks*
- *The split among the Mensheviks (did not unite until May 1918)*

The **Bolsheviks** also **faced problems within their own ranks**. Kamenev and some other leading Bolsheviks were convinced that the Bolsheviks could not manage on their own. They should accept some kind of coalition with other leftist groups. More critique came after the decision to use the Decree on the Press to close down bourgeois newspapers. Kamenev, Zinoviev, Rykov, Milyutin and Nogin resigned from the Bolshevik central committee (three of them were Commissars) November 4th.

The day before the election to the Constitutional Assembly, the 11<sup>th</sup> of November, a **congress of peasants deputies** opened in Petrograd. The most influential group in this congress was the **Socialist Revolutionary Party** but they were now **split**. **Lenin exploited this situation by letting some of them enter the government on the Bolsheviks’ terms**. Three of them became Commissars in **Sovnarkom**; 108 peasant delegates were added to the central executive committee as well as 100 from the army + navy and 50 from the trade unions. This pleased the Railwaymen’s union so much that they declared that they now were satisfied and other unions ended their strikes as well. This also took care of the critique within the

Bolshevik party (as well as the fact they were under the threat of being expelled from the party). In the Soviets **in the provincial cities** were the Bolsheviks still had to share power **another strategy** became evident. **Commissars from Petrograd set up provincial congresses of Soviets which claimed higher authority and for some reason happened to have Bolshevik majorities.** They were also helped by the general practice of the Rightist SR's and Mensheviks to walk out in protest...

**Election to the Constituent Assembly.** On the 12<sup>th</sup> of November this election finally took place. Lenin and the Bolsheviks tried to influence it by arresting some leading Kadets and try to make some electors revise the lists of candidates. This did not work. **The Right Socialist Revolutionaries gained 370 seats out of 715 possible** (21 million votes). The Bolsheviks gained 175 seats (9 million votes) and the Left Socialist Revolutionaries only gained 40 seats. The Mensheviks and Kadets received even less... It was now very clear that the Bolsheviks could not let the Constituent Assembly survive.

Lenin lost no time in establishing the new Bolshevik order. A **flood of decrees** issued from **Sovnarkom** and the Central Executive Committee of the All-Russian Congress of Soviets (the Sovnarkom met 6 hours every day under Lenins chairmanship). These decrees included:

*Decree Abolishing Classes and Civil Ranks*

*Decree on Courts*

*Decree on the separation of State and Church*

*Decree on the Election of Officers and on the Organization of Authority in the Army*

*Decree on the Equalization of Rights of All Serving in the Army*

*Decree on the State Independence of Finland*

*Decree on the Clock Change*

**More important Decrees were:**

**Decree on the Formation of the Supreme Economic Council of National Economy**

(*Veshenkha*) (December 2<sup>nd</sup>) In December 1917 it was obvious for Lenin and the Bolsheviks that they needed to progress faster. Lenin formed the "*Supreme Economic Council of national Economy*" (*Vesenkha*). The Council was established to supervise the economy and to operate nationalized enterprises. This was a first step towards a state controlled economy. It was still hoped that nationalization would be initially limited to a few key industries (fuel, transport, banking, foreign trade etc..).

**The establishment of a secret political police – the CHEKA:** *The All-Russian Extraordinary Commission for Combating Counter-Revolution, Speculation, and Sabotage.* The first Bolshevik secret police was created immediately after the October Revolution, during the first days of Bolshevik government.

The immediate precursor was the "*commission for the struggle with counter-revolution*", established on November 21 by the *Military Revolutionary Committee* of the *Petrograd Soviet* on the proposal of Felix Dzerzhinsky.

The **Cheka** was established on December 7<sup>th</sup> by a decision of the Sovnarkom. It was subordinated to the Sovnarkom and its functions were, "*to liquidate counter-revolution and sabotage, to hand over counter-revolutionaries and saboteurs to the revolutionary tribunals, and to apply such measures of repression as 'confiscation, deprivation of ration cards, publication of lists of enemies of the people etc.'*" Originally, the members of the Cheka were exclusively Bolshevik; however, in January 1918, left SRs also joined the organisation. The Left SRs were expelled or arrested later in 1918 following their attempted rebellion against Bolshevik rule. The head of this organization was **Felix Dzerzhinsky**.

In 1922, the Cheka was transformed into the State Political Administration or GPU, a section of the NKVD of the Russian SFSR...

The problems with funding was solved the 14<sup>th</sup> of December when the banks were occupied by Red Guards. The central executive committee declared banking to now be a state monopoly... **Decree on the Nationalization of the Banks**

In some cases **Lenin's strategy was to adapt his policies to existing conditions**. This was **especially true within the economy**. Russia needed to regain as much economical stability as possible. It was under these circumstances that Lenin had released the "**Decree on Land**" which **seemed to encourage certain private ownership of land** (since Lenin did not mention nationalization and/or collectivization of land). For this he received a lot of criticism within the party (Bukharin, Radek, Smirnov – "leftist Bolsheviks"). In the industries another problem had occurred. The workers committees often expressed the willingness to become their own masters so in October 1917 several factories were run by its own committee. The old managers and technical specialists had often been dismissed. Production numbers took a deep dive... Lenin advocated control over each factory by a single director rather than an elected committee and he therefore reinstated former managers and technicians (often with high salaries). The other big reform was the establishment of the **Vesenkha**. This first period of Bolshevik economy is called **STATE CAPITALISM** and it lasted to the summer of 1918.

On the first day of the new Constituent Assembly (January 5<sup>th</sup>) the chairman of the All-Russian Central Executive Committee of Soviets Yakov Sverdlov met the delegates and read a statement from the Central Executive Committee that the Assembly must regard itself as subserviant to the Congress of Soviets and the decrees of Sovnarkom. This was rejected by a majority of the delegates. Then the Bolsheviks and the Left Socialist Revolutionaries walked out. The next day the deputies found the building locked down and the Constituent Assembly declared dissolved by the Bolshevik government. A Decree was ratified by the All-Russian Central Executive Committee late on January 6 – this was the **Decree on the Dissolution of the Constituent Assembly**. This is the date and time when the Bolsheviks seized power!!!

