

Vladimir had ended a  
mere 49 years



**ASSIGN  
BUSTER**

Vladimir Lenin and his Rise to Power Eventually, empires and nations all collapse. The end can be brought about by many causes. Whether through becoming too large for their own good, being ruled by a series of out of touch men, falling behind technologically, having too many enemies, succumbing to civil war, or a combination: no country is safe. The Russia of 1910 was in a tremendously horrible situation. She had all of these problems. Russia would not have existed by 1920 were it not for Vladimir Ilich Lenin, the only man capable of saving the failing nation. Russia in 1910 was a very backwards country. Peasants who lived in absolute poverty made up the vast majority of Russia's population (Haney 19). Russia's version of the feudal system had ended a mere 49 years earlier, but in effect it meant that peasants now owned the meager parcels of land upon which their survival rested. Their ruler, Czar Nicholas II, ruled aloof of his disorganized nation. His government of appointed officials and men in inherited positions did not represent the people (The Tyranny of Stupidity 120). Even though all of Europe had experienced the Industrial Revolution, Russia had precious little machinery.

To obtain more advanced machines, the government traded grain to other countries in exchange for machinery, even though it meant that more people would starve (Haney 17). Compound this with the devastation and desperation brought on shortly thereafter by the First World War, and there was no confidence left in the government. Different political factions formed, and none got along (U. S. S. R.

63). Liberal constitutionalists wanted to remove the czar and form a republic; social revolutionists tried to promote a peasant revolution; Marxists promoted a revolution among the proletariat, or urban working class. The people were fed up with Russia's state of affairs and ready for the change. Change was presented in the form of Vladimir Lenin, a committed, persuasive visionary with a grand plan. Lenin became hardened in his quest at an early age when his older brother Aleksandr, a revolutionary, was executed in 1887 for plotting to kill then-Czar Alexander III. "I'll make them pay for this!" he said, "I swear it!" (Haney 28) By 1888, at the age of 18, he had read *Das Kapital* by Karl Marx, a book about socialism and the evils of capitalism. A superb speaker, he could hold audiences at rapt attention with his powerful speeches (New Generation).

People became convinced of his socialist views. He formed his own political party, the Bolsheviks, a split off of the earlier Marxists. Unlike other parties of his time, Lenin limited membership to a small number of full-time revolutionaries (Haney 41).

This dedication and tight organization later proved both useful and effective. From 1897 to 1917, he traveled all over Europe writing propaganda, organizing strikes, and encouraging revolution among the working class, especially in Russia (Lenin, V. I. 191). Lenin knew what he wanted, knew how to get it, and was willing to wait. During World War I, the time was right and Lenin was the man. Czar Nicholas II remained totally focused on winning the war, and did not hesitate before committing more men and supplies to the war effort (Haney 65). But for an already starving country, every train that brought supplies to the front could not also be bringing food to peasants.

With public sentiment and even the Czar's own army against him, Nicholas abdicated the throne in March of 1917 (69). A government by soviets (councils) was instated, but did not last long. After that, Alexander Kerensky seized power. In November, Lenin and his Bolsheviks, with help from armed citizens, stopped the revolving door. They took over St. Petersburg (then Petrograd) and later captured Moscow, meeting little resistance along the way (Jantzen 613). Lenin took over the government and signed a treaty with Germany to take Russia out of the war.

Immediately thereafter, civil war broke out between the Communists, called Reds, and the anti-Communists, called Whites, who had help from Western nations (Johnson 43). This help from outside Russia actually helped Lenin, as it drove public sentiment against the Whites. Russian troops, scattered and dispirited, had just been through World War I. Somehow, though,