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Soviet historians make up the school of historical thought established and fostered by the Communist Party of the USSR up until 1991. The role of Soviet historians was to eulogise the leadership of Lenin, celebrate the triumphs of the Revolution and legitimatise the rule of the Party.

The following are the views and interpretations are from Russian Historians P. A. Golub, G.

D. Obichkin and Édourd Nikolaevich Burdzhhalov and western Marxist historian C. Hill. Soviet historians are Marxist in their analysis of the Revolution, they believe the causes of the revolution are a result of the Bolshevik victory was inevitable and followed the general laws of history established by Marx. The believed soviet view of the Revolution was due to the leadership of Lenin and his evaluation of the Russian situation in Marxist terms: he was able to guide and lead Russia's masses in a genuine popular uprising against a corrupt, bourgeois regime¹. Revolutionary ' mass consciousness' was raised by the Party and the ' people' were led to victory by the ' vanguard' of the Revolution.

The success of the October Revolution was evidence of Lenin's brilliance in leadership and his tight, disciplined organisation of the Party; and the radical mass support of the Russian workers, peasants and soldiers². The increasing authoritarian measures that had to be taken during the Civil War were necessary responses to crises and external military threat. The History of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union short-course, written under Stalin, is the best example of this view, although it does give very biased accounts of the contributions of key figures, such as Trotsky and Kamenev, who had

fallen under the wrath of Stalin's purges. The re-evaluation of Stalinism that occurred under Khrushchev after Stalin's death led to a widening in Soviet views; however, the overriding correctness and legitimacy of the Communist Party's authority to rule and the contributions of Lenin remained unquestioned³. In analysing the February Revolution, Soviet historians place less emphasis on WWI, believing that there was an essential continuity between developments before and after the outbreak of war. The Revolution was thus a conscious assault upon tsarism from the workers who had preserved the traditions of 1905.

The Bolshevik Party played a central role in shaping the workers' protests. Soviet historians maintain that there was also continuity of mass radicalism between the revolutions of 1905, February and October 1917. October was the ultimate fulfilment of the revolutionary aspirations of the masses and the laws of history⁴. Liberal View The liberal view has been, until recently, the dominant one espoused by historians writing in the West and it continues to be a prominent interpretation championed by a number of writers. However, it must be noted that the liberal interpretation of the Revolution was shaped by the prejudices of the Cold War and is therefore fundamentally hostile to the notions of socialism, Marxist theory and Communist Party rule. In general, liberal historians have traditionally interpreted history 'from above', focussing on the 'actors' in 'high politics'.

The role of key individuals or 'principal characters' (Tsar Nicholas II, Kerensky, Lenin, Trotsky) is central in explaining the outcomes and nature of the Revolution. The masses on the other hand, were largely irrational, ignorant, passive or simply anarchic in their demands and actions. The

manipulation and exploitation of this “ chaos” and naivety were central in the Bolsheviks’ victory; whilst the failing and unpopular war effort, the rampages of the peasants and the unrealistic demands of the workers created a situation in which the democratic Provisional Government could not hold power. For liberal historians, the October Revolution was “ a classic coup d’etat” in which the Bolsheviks disguised their real aim – to build “ a one party dictatorship” 5. October was neither popular nor democratic. It was due to the superior organisation and subterfuge of the masses by a professional, dedicated elite who were intent on just one goal: the seizure and retainment of power. Events following the revolution would like-wise prove the undemocratic, authoritarian and intolerant nature of the October revolutionaries. It was in the nature of the Bolshevik Revolution to develop totalitarian tendencies from the out-set: the Bolsheviks aimed for a one-party, one-ideology state that tolerated no opposition and sought to control and manipulate every aspect of its citizen’s lives.

The early exponents of the liberal interpretation based much of their work on the writings of Russian émigrés, whose views of the October Revolution were understandably negative. It was these sources that led many liberal historians to take an ‘ optimist’ view of the February Revolution: Imperial Russia was steadily transforming into a modern, democratic, industrial society. However, WWI politically, socially and economically weakened the tsarist state and thwarted reformist tendencies. It was these enormous pressures that ultimately led to the collapse of the Tsar’s government. The February Revolution, however, again provided an opportunity for Russia to develop a western-style democracy and civil liberties. On-going pressure of

the War continued to cause problems, but the situation was ultimately subverted by the Bolsheviks, who exploited the fears and desires of the masses.

Russia's chance at democracy and a stable, civil and capitalist future was stolen by the Bolshevik's power-hungry grab for rulership. Some liberal historians have seen the collapse of the Soviet Union in 1991 as the vindication of their views: In his 2001 *Communism – A Brief History*, Pipes claimed that his work “is an introduction to Communism and, at the same time, its obituary”. Russian historian Dmitri Volkogonov, much like Pipes, is brutal in his condemnation of the outcomes of the October Revolution. Volkogonov, who has had extensive access to the Soviet archives, makes some compelling arguments that draw strong links between the actions of Lenin and the development of Stalin's ‘totalitarian’ regime.

However, it must be remembered that Volkogonov is a product of his environment: the freedom and need to expose the failings of the Communist Party and the sufferings it caused is a process of catharsis for many contemporary Russian writers. Libertarian view The growth of ‘New Left’ writers during the Vietnam War led to the development of a different view of the Revolution that rejected the arguments of both liberal and Soviet historians. These ‘libertarian’ historians see the role of the masses as the central element of causation: it was the ordinary workers and peasants, men and women, who made the Revolution. They were neither brainwashed nor led by the Bolsheviks. As summarised by Edward Acton, libertarian historians argue that the “goals for which they (the masses) strove were their own”.

Although the February and October Revolutions were genuine movements of the masses, they were later betrayed by the Bolsheviks. The libertarian view is thus sometimes referred to as 'the theory of unfinished revolution' and was influenced by the writings of Russian anarchists and the later ideas of Trotsky, who wrote *The Revolution Betrayed* 1 <http://www.tracesofevil.com/2014/03/russian-revolution-historiography.html> 2 Lenin and the Russian Revolution by Christian Hilling 3 <https://quizlet.com/24952765/russian-revolution-histiography-flash-cards/4> <http://www.tracesofevil.com/2014/03/russian-revolution-historiography.html> 5 <https://books.google.co.uk/books?hl=en&lr=&id=5WftbhaBSSQC&oi=fnd&pg=PR5&ots=-tdeD5W87n&sig=i2cVr8E9yrq5uxcEChPriRlZyZA#v=onepage&q&f=false>