

An archaic political system and incompetent czars led to the russian revolution o...

[History](#), [Revolution](#)



The Russian Revolution of 1905 was caused by an inevitable confluence of the obsolete Russian feudal system and the majority of their modern populace, who revolted because of long term issues like incompetent czars and the dilapidated social structure along with immediate causes like the Bloody Sunday massacre and the Russo-Japanese war.

Firstly, Russia's archaic political system, social infrastructure and somewhat ailing line of czars made living conditions abysmal for the common citizen and revolution the only viable solution. Russia's feudalist political system had been perpetuated for more than three centuries and as other European countries such as Great Britain flourished through their industrial revolutions, Russia was still largely agricultural, uneducated and dependent upon a primal agricultural industry. Some 90% of the Russia people were non-landlords, and those who made up the noble class were even fewer in number. Yet these noblemen and landlords held all of the right to political power, determination and the best parts of the land. The common people were seen as superstitious and ignorant serfs who only understood force and brutal oppression. Though Czar Alexander the II (1855-1881) attempted at reform, as seen in his Emancipation Edict of March 3, 1861, which abolished serfdom and guaranteed the right to own land, the liberty of the peasants was still out of reach. The autocratic bureaucracy's Edict only entitled 1/3 of the total area of agricultural land to be given to the village communities, while more than 1/3 was kept by the state and the Imperial family, was still kept by the nobles. The annual sums of the government to be paid in exchange for 'ownership' of the land were oftentimes greater than the dues that the peasants had formerly paid to the serfs. Furthermore, the land of

the village communities designated to the people was most likely infertile because the nobles were allowed to only give the worst parts of their estates to the people and the village communities kept village land as collective property, which meant that no private ownership on the part of the actual farmers was possible. In essence, the majority of the population had to slave on bad land they needed to earn, while paying even more extensive taxes to the bourgeois. With the formation of an intellectual class, industrialization which concentrated the population and revolutionary societies that could now see the discrepancy between other democratic nations, people became more aware of what kind of living standards they should be entitled to. Nicholas II (1894-1917) only fanned the flame of discontent with his dictatorial and imprudent ruling style and his German wife, Princess Alexandra, who was more than eager to guard the full autocratic power for her husband. A revolution was the only way to alter the social.

Of many immediate events that spurred the revolution on, the Bloody Sunday massacre of January 22, 1905, was one that played a crucial role in the ignition of the people's rage. Unarmed citizens were carrying out a peaceful protest in order to give a petition to Nicholas the II when the guards of Winter Palace in St. Petersburg gunned them down. Workers on strike, along with their families, had started out marching towards the palace as a quiet hymn singing procession. Women and children were placed at the front of the demonstrating throng in hopes of deterring violence, but after a few warning shots, Czar's soldiers shot directly at the crowd and as a result, an estimate of 1000 people died. Not only did the event demonstrate the

government's ruthless indiscriminant approach in the shooting, killing the strong along with the physically weak, it also displayed the fact that protest alone can never help bring about a paradigm shift within the political structure. As shown in the film Battleship Potempkin, many of the protestors were vets from the Russo-Japanese war, who had lost limbs and became crippled for the czar. The treatment they receive in return for such a thankless service, displayed in the shooting, sparked further disillusionment among the mass of fighting men. It is believed that this event capsized the remaining faith the people had in the government and triggered the revolution of 1905.

The massacre could not have happened in Russia, however, considering the sheer vastness of the country, without the rapid growth of a proletariat class in the industrial towns, which began in the Russian Industrialization initiated by Alexander II's. By 1914, the number of factory workers (or the proletariat) had reached an approximate two and a quarter million and by 1917, three million. Even though Russia had already ranked fifth among other industrial nations of the world in production, the living and conditions for the workers were inhumane, their wages exceedingly low (only 20-30% of the British workers), and their working hours at an average of 15 hours a day. No sanitary facilities were available at the tight packed barracks where they lived, thus further promoting the spread of disease. Many were exploited as a result and despite laws and regulations in labour contracts to inspect and ensure decent working conditions, the poor conditions still did not improve. In despair, the workers had organized numerous strikes in hopes of a

successful petition and hearing with the czar. After violent lashes from the government like Bloody Sunday With the concentration of such a group of upset workers in one city, under the given circumstances, the revolution was thus unavoidable.

Thirdly, and perhaps most importantly, the Russo-Japanese War of 1904-1905 in which Russia lost control over Korea and Manchuria to Japan, along with 125, 000 men (killed or wounded), mostly the czar's well trusted navy, was the last straw that prompted the Russian people to insurrection. The czar had intended to join the war in hopes of avoiding the discontent of the Russians from his despotism and in February 1904, he began the disastrous war against Japan. The Russian armies were ill-equipped, badly armed and inadequately trained, not to mention mainly comprised of peasants who saw no incentive for the war and thus had no spirit to fight. The internal corruption and ineptitude of the government were displayed in the precipitate manner the war was conducted, the poor military structure, and the czar's imprudence. Domestically, transportation across Russia (limited to the military), broke down and inflation became an immediate problem. Nicholas II's government was hated for such unsound judgment and the cruelty it had against its own people and in July 1904, not long after the Yalu defeat, Vyacheslav von Plehve, the Minister of the Interior, was assassinated by the Social Revolutionaries, as a tangible sign of the people's discontent.

The defeat in the Russo-Japanese war proved the incapability of the government, Bloody Sunday, the Czar's shattered title of ' Father of Russia'', the concentration of population, and the day-to-day troubles that the lower

class citizens had to deal with were all crucial elements to the brew of revolution. The result of the revolution was the October Manifesto, and though after the Fundamental Law the Czar merely a year later, which gave him the right to veto the existence of the Duma altogether, still proved to be one that planted the seeds of revolution and prepared the nation for the more thorough in 1917. The revolution was an inescapable accumulative force that came from a very diverse people, spread across a cross continental country, that had been denied just treatment for far too long. It showed and aspired future revolutionaries to point to it as an example of why violent revolution was the only way to completely alter a system of government.