

The 1917 russian revolution history essay

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The 1917 Russian revolution was not as many people suppose, one well organized even in which Tsar Nicholas II was overthrown. Lenin and the Bolsheviks took power. It was a series of event that took place during 1917, which entailed which separate revolutions in February and October(with a great deal of political wrangling in between) and which eventually plunged the country into civil war before leading to the founding of the communist state.

Lenin used Marx ideology in the 1905 revolution which called for the overthrow of the government that came from the working class or what Marx called proletarial. Many need to realize that at this time, the working class was almost nonexistent in Russia . It was very small and was considered part of the peasant class, Russia had not gone through industrialization, they had factories to keep their sate going but has not gone this process which is part of the criteria for a revolution based on Marx ideology. The class structure of Russia made this quite possible for it only had two classes at the time, the aristocracy and the peasants.

The first major event of the Russian revolution was the February revolution, which was a chaotic affair and the culmination of over a century of civil military unrest. The causes of the common people towards the Tsar and the aristocratic landowners are too many and complicated to neatly summarize, but the key factors to consider were ongoing resentment at the cruel treatment of peasants by patricians, poor working conditions experienced by city workers in the fledging industrial economy and a growing sense of political and social awareness of the lower orders in general(democratic ideas were reaching Russia from west and being touted by political activists).

Dissatisfaction of the proletariat was further compounded by food shortages and military failures. In 1905, Russia experienced humiliating losses in the Russo-Japanese war and, during a demonstration against the war in the same year, Tsarist troops fired upon an unarmed crowd further dividing Nicholas II from his people. Widespread strikes, riots and the famous mutiny on the Battleship Potemkin ensued.

Such was the climate in 1905 that Nicholas saw fit, against his will, to cede the people their wishes. In his October manifesto, Nicholas created Russia's first constitution and the state Duma, an elected parliamentary body.

However, Nicholas' belief in his divine right to rule Russia meant that he spent much of the following years fighting to undermine or strip the Duma of its powers and to retain as much autocracy as possible. (modern historians might note that Russian rulers have not come a long way in the last hundred years).

When Archduke Franz Ferdinand was assassinated by political activists in Serbia in 1914, the Austro-Hungarian Empire declared war on its neighbors. Serbia turned to Russia for help. Tsar Nicholas II saw a chance to galvanize his people against a common enemy, and to atone for the humiliations suffered in the Russo-Japanese war though it did not work out however.

In many ways, Russia's disastrous participation in World War I was the final blow to Tsarist rule. In the very first engagement with the Germans (who had sided with the Austro-Hungarian Empire), the battle of Tannenberg, the Russian army was comprehensively beaten suffering 120,000 casualties to Germany's 20,000. A continuing series of losses and setbacks meant that

Nicholas St. Petersburg in the autumn of 1915 to take personal control of the army . By this time, Russia was sending conscripts and untrained troops to the front, with little or no equipment and fighting in an almost continual retreat.

In 1916, morale reached an all-time low as the pressure of waging war fell hardest on proletarian families, whose sons were being slaughtered at the front and who severely suffered food and fuel shortages at home. The Tsar and the imperial regime took the blame as civil unrest heated up to boiling point.

On 23rd Feb. 1917 the International Women's Day festival in St. Petersburg turned into a city-wide demonstration, as exasperated women workers left factories to protest against food shortages. Men soon joined them and on the following day, encouraged by political and social activists, the crowd had swelled and virtually every industry, shop and enterprise had ceased to function as almost the entire populace went on strike.

Nicholas ordered the police and the military to intervene, however, the military was no longer loyal to the Tsar and many mutinied or joined the people in demonstrations. Fights broke out and the whole city was in chaos. On October 28th, over 80, 000 troops mutinied from the army, rioting was widespread.

Faced with untenable situation, Tsar Nicholas abdicated his throne, handing power to his brother Michael. However, Michael would not accept leadership

unless he was elected by the Duma. He resigned the following day, leaving Russia without a head of state.

After abdication of the Romanovs, a provisional government was quickly formed by leading members of the Duma and recognized internationally as Russia's legal government . It was to rule Russia until elections could be held. However, its power was by no means stable or absolute. The more radical Petrograd soviet organization was a trade union of workers and soldiers that wielded enormous influence. It favored full scale socialism over more moderate democratic reforms generally favored by members of the provisional government.

After centuries of imperial rule, Russia was consumed with political fervor but the many different factions, all touting different ideas, meant that political stability was still a long way off directly after February revolution.

One person keen to take advantage of the chaotic state affairs in St. Petersburg was Vladimir Ilyich Ulyanov also known as Lenin. He had spent most of the 20th century travelling and working in Europe partly out of fear for his own safety, as he was known as socialist and enemy of the Tsarist regime. However, with the Tsar under arrest and Russian politics in chaos, Lenin saw the opportunity to lead his party, the Bolsheviks to power. He negotiated a return to Russia with the help of German authorities.

Lenin returned in April 1917 and was greeted by the Russian populace. However, far from uniting the fractious parties, he condemned the policies and ideologies of both the provisional government and the Petrograd soviet.

in his April theses published in the Bolshevik newspaper Pravda , he advocated noncooperation with the liberals and an immediate end to the war.

During the summer of 1917, Lenin made several attempts to invoke another revolution, the likes of which had taken place in February with the aim of overthrowing the provisional government when the machine gun Regiment refused to leave Petrograd for the front line. Lenin sought maneuver them instead into making a putsch. However, Kerensky arguably the most important figure of the time (a member of both the provisional government). Experienced troops arrived in the city to quell any dissidents and the Bolsheviks were accused of being in collusion with the Germans. Many were arrested while Lenin escaped to Finland.

The October revolution took part in November 1917 which is often referred to as the November revolution. With Russian's politics still in a state of constant flux, Lenin realized that it was the right time to capitalize on his party's popularity. He planned a coup d'état that would overthrow the increasingly ineffective provisional government and replace them with the Bolsheviks . On October 10th he held a famous meeting with 12 party leaders, and tried to persuade them that a revolution was required. Despite receiving the backing of only 10 of them, plotting went ahead.

October 24th was the date decided upon, and on that day, troops loyal to the Bolsheviks took up crucial positions in the city, such as the main telephone and telegraph offices, banks etc. Guards commissioned by the provisional government, who had got wind of the plot, fled surrendered without a fight.

By the 25th October, every key building in St. Petersburg was under Bolshevik control.

Kerensky fled and never returned to Russia . On the 26th, the palace was taken with barely a shot fired, and Lenin's revolution has been achieved with the bare minimum of drama or bloodshed.

Despite being allowed to seize power so easily, Lenin discovered that his support was far from absolute. His peace policy with the Germans was unpopular as it ceded large amount of Russian territory.

After the October revolution, the Russian civil war broke out between the communists and the nationalists, conservatives, imperialists after a bloody four years of struggle, Lenin and the communist won establishing the soviet union in 1922. Lenin died and Stalin took over the communist party which continued to rule Russia until 1991 when the USSR was dissolved.