

Politics dissertations – leninsim affect russia



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There are various reasons and factors that can be used to explain the affect that Marxism / Leninism had upon Russia and why it was to achieve that affect. Some of these explanations are based around the actions of the Bolshevik Party that seized power in October 1917 and did not formally relinquish that power until the dissolution of the Soviet Union in 1991. Other reasons are based around factors that were not directly caused by the Bolshevik Party yet it was able to use them to its own advantage to affect Russia.

Marxism / Leninism would become the official ideology of the Soviet Union which was basically Tzarist Russia shorn of Finland, Poland and for a time the Baltic States. Yet history and politics could have been completely different without the combination that enabled Marxism / Leninism to affect Russia with some spectacular and arguably some disastrous results. At the end there will be a discussion of the books used as references for this work and their respective value and merit.

Lenin had pledged that he would bring about the first Marxist State at the funeral of Karl Marx's daughter and son in law in 1911. Few took him seriously although events would vindicate his confidence (Wheen, 1999, p. 386).

To start with the Bolshevik Party was a Marxist party that few outside the Tzarist secret police took seriously or knew that they existed. They were a splinter from the Russian Social Democratic Labour Party that seemed to spend more time arguing with the other half of that defunct party, the Mensheviks rather than destroying the imperial government through a successful socialist revolution (Longley 1980 p. 8). Karl Marx and Frederick

Engels had predicted that socialist revolutions would only occur in advanced capitalist countries such as Britain, Germany and the US not in backward Tzarist Russia. Russian industry had started to develop yet had not produced enough proletariat workers for most Marxists to expect a communist revolution. Lenin however believed that revolution in Russia was possible so long as the Bolshevik party could not gain support from the proletariat but the peasants that constituted the vast majority of the population as well.

Although Marx had preached that time was on the side of the workers and that history would witness their final triumph over capitalism, Lenin was of the opinion that history needed to be made rather than just waited for.

Marxism/Leninism was based on the promise that the Bolshevik party had to become the vanguard of the proletariat and achieve power in its name via revolutionary struggle. Lenin was the driving force behind the Bolshevik party he guided its strategy, ideology and was its undisputed leader. Without Lenin there would have been no Leninism and probably no Marxism in Russia. However, Lenin was only able to take power due to some opportunities that unexpectedly came along and gave the Bolshevik party its chance to enforce Marxism/Leninism on Russia.

Russia had seemed to overcoming the threat of a successful revolution, as the internal political and security situation seemed to have settled down after the 1905 revolution. That revolution had been a sign of things to come as it was set off as a result of defeat against Japan during the war of 1904-05. Instead of a straightforward victory, the Russian army was heavily defeated in Korea and Manchuria whilst the once proud Russian navy was virtually destroyed. Even such a short war had put a strain on the Russian

economy and shown it to be militarily ineffective despite the size of its army. The Tzar did nothing to rectify the shortcomings of the Russian army to the country's detriment yet to the advantage of revolutionary organisations (Roberts, 1996 p. 428). The economic reforms of Stolypin seemed to restore stability and enhance industrial development although he advised the Tzar to avoid further wars.

One consequence of the 1905 revolution had been the creation of Russia's first parliament, the Duma that in reality took no power from the Tzarist autocracy. Only the collapse of that power would make way for successful revolution (Hobsbawm, 1994 p. 58). The immaturity of Russian political parties in the democratic process, the limited franchise and power of the Duma would assist the affect that Marxism / Leninism had on Russia. That is because the opponents of the Bolsheviks could not offer a strong alternative of a constitutional monarchy or liberal republic. The Communist Party also had party members that were given jobs to get the civil service, the police and the army functioning again after the disruption caused by war and revolution. Hobsbawm mentions that the experience of underground activity against the Tzarist and Provisional governments had made the Communists more determined and effective than their opponents (Hobsbawm, 1994 p. 58).

The great catalyst for revolutionary change and a strong factor in Marxism / Leninism having the profound affect on Russia that it did was the First World War which wrought havoc on the old order of Europe. Despite the embarrassing defeat of 1904-05, Russia remained on paper as much as in reality a great power that could have altered the balance of power in Europe.

If the war had been short and victorious than perhaps things would have been different and the monarchy could have survived and successfully avoided revolution. The outbreak of war as in much of Europe was greeted with popular enthusiasm and support for the imperial regime (Hobsbawm, 1994 p. 58). Russia was allied to France and its old rival Britain and also considered itself the protector of the Slavic peoples of Central and Eastern Europe, especially Serbia (Marix Evans, 2002, p. 12).

Germany had feared the sheer size of the Russian army rather than its quality. That fear led to the creation of the S P that came very close to quickly knocking France out of the war and thus allowing the Germans to concentrate on defeating Russia. The Russians had high expectations of success in August 1914 when they attempted to invade Germany. However these hopes were dashed when they were routed at Tannenberg. After that the Russian army never regained the initiative. Even with only 20 % of the German army being available on the Eastern Front the Russians were completely outclassed (Colvin, 2003 p. 238). Russian loses were staggering at least 130, 000 casualties with the additional loss of between 180-500 heavy guns. Worse still was the fact that Russia could not replace the loss of its finest men and equipment as it lacked the ability to adequately train replacements and the industrial capacity to replace lost equipment (Colvin, 2003, p. 244).

Nicholas II staked the future of the Romanov dynasty upon the successful outcome of the First World War. Given the weaknesses of the Russian economy, it's backward industries and it's chronically under equipped and led army that was a recipe for disaster. To make things worse Nicholas II

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compounded that error by making himself commander in chief of the army and thus directly to blame for its failures. Being away from Petrograd much of the time meant he was not fully aware of events and unable to change policies to avert trouble. As Nicholas II was ultimately responsible for Russian policy he could have stayed out of the First World War and done much to prevent revolution and civil war. Castleden was not the first and will not be the last to suggest that the incompetence of the Tzarist government allowed Marxism / Leninism to affect Russia (Castleden, 2005 p. 216). Support for the government crumbled away as the war went from bad to worse meaning more extreme ideas such as Marxism / Leninism were seen as alternatives to the Tzarist regime. War time conditions meant civilians had to survive on lower rations. Radical groups and parties such as the Bolsheviks offered the hope of food and promised to end the war attracting support from workers, peasants and workers. Both agricultural and industrial output declined as men left for the army and were not replaced. Weapons shortages at the front when combined with food and fuel shortages brought Russia to the brink of revolution (Hobsbawm, 1994 p. 58).

The entry of Turkey into the First World War had prevented the British and French supplying the Russian war effort, making it harder for the regime to stay in the war and survive its intense hardships. The failure of the Gallipoli offensive to knock Turkey out of the war meant that the Russians were in serious risk of losing the war. Marix Evans mentions that Turkey got in the way of the British and French keeping the Russians in the war as well as threatening their oil supplies (Marix Evans, 2002 p. 111). The severity of the 1916 winter brought things to a head contributing to the strikes in Petrograd

that escalated into the February Revolution and the replacement of the autocracy by the Provisional Government.

The Provisional Government played into the hands of the Bolsheviks with the decision to continue fighting in the war. That error allowed Lenin and the Bolsheviks to make their propaganda more effective whilst planning a coup or revolution at the earliest opportune moment. Once Lenin returned from exile via Germany he and Leon Trotsky started the process of preparing their revolution by taking over workers, peasants and soldiers soviets, pledging bread, peace and land to maximise their support. Marxism / Leninism was able to affect Russia due to the astuteness that Lenin and Trotsky displayed during 1917 on the way towards, during and after the October Revolution (Lindley, 1980 p. 7).

Marxism / Leninism had an affect on Russia as the Bolsheviks were able to take over the Russian state following the October Revolution and tightened that control during the Russian Civil War. Lenin authorised the use of secret police, executions and war communism during the civil war; the ruthlessness of the new regime allowed it to survive. Trotsky formed the Red Army that won the civil war, which was then used to control the Soviet Union in the name of the Communist Party. The Communists promoted Marxism / Leninism in schools farms, in factories and in the Red Army. The people of the Soviet Union were indoctrinated with Marxism / Leninism and faced repressive measures if they acted against Marxism / Leninism and the first state too openly proclaim it. During Stalin's period of office as General Secretary of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union, Marxism / Leninism provided the ideological context for brutally imposed collectivisation and

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industrialisation even if it did not excuse his bloody purges, mass deportations and murders (Castleden, 2005 p. 245).

Marxism / Leninism in theory had extolled the virtues of the differing nationalities within the Soviet Union in an effort to keep control over the different parts of the Russian empire that sought independence after the collapse of the monarchy. The Red Army had ended the Ukraine's brief independence, been unable to regain Finland and the Baltic States whilst suffering defeat against Poland. Although Stalin was a Georgian himself brutally suppressed nationalism in the Soviet republics outside of Russia itself. This would prove especially the case in his native Georgia and the second largest republic within the Soviet Union, the Ukraine. Therefore Marxism / Leninism affected Russia by keeping the majority of the old Tzarist Empire intact in a different form until the final collapse of the Soviet Union in 1991. Instead of the monarchy binding the empire together the official ideology of Marxism / Leninism bound the Soviet Union together. Stalin was responsible for the executions, deportations or simply leaving millions of non-Russian nationalists to starve to death. He was more of a Russian imperialist than any Tzar had ever been with the facility to use as much state controlled terror as he considered apt to keep the Soviet Union under his control (Bullock, 1991, pp 30-01).

Stalin arguably took the Soviet Union in a different direction than Lenin had intended to, or so those that wish to clear Lenin of any blame for the excesses of the Stalin regime would claim. Lenin's premature death meant that different factions within the Communist Party would claim to be acting in his name with their own version of Marxism / Leninism. Even before the <https://assignbuster.com/politics-dissertations-leninsim-affect-russia/>

outcomes of those power struggles was decided Lenin was made the focal point of the Soviet states propoganda and education. Thus Marxism / Leninism had an impact on Russia due to the cult of personality the Communist Party developed around Lenin after his death. In the Soviet Union, Lenin's name and image were everywhere. All his successors claimed that everything they did was done in his name and that is how he would have done things when he was living (Lindley, 1980 p. 7). The cult of Lenin began in earnest after his funeral and with Stalin later carrying out all his policies in the name of Marxism / Leninism. It was Stalin that made Marxism / Leninism affects upon Russia and the rest of the Soviet Union more deeply than may otherwise have been the case (Bullock, 1991 pp. 148-49).

Trotsky had seemed the most likely to succeed Lenin although he died without nominating his own successor, yet Trotsky would lose that power struggle with Stalin. Stalin had longer to make Marxism / Leninism than any other Communist leader especially with the dire consequences of some of his policies such as collectivisation. Stalin made the position of General Secretary of the Communist Party the most powerful position in the Soviet Union. Stalin completely outmanoeuvred his rivals to gain total control of party and state. Stalin would promote many of his loyalists followers within both party and state. The Stalinist era increased the link between party membership and being successful at work, within the civil service and the armed forces providing individuals could avoid becoming victims of the purges (Pereira, 1992 p. 16). Stalin would change the ethnic make up of the Soviet Union by deporting over a million Tartars and Chechens amongst other ethnic groups to the gulags. In the name of Marxism / Leninism Stalin

tried to ethnically cleanse the Soviet Union to ensure loyalty to his regime. Stalin therefore affected Russia and the other former Soviet republics by laying the foundations for future ethnic disputes such as the Chechen campaigns for independence (Castleden, 2005 p. 247).

Marxism / Leninism was a term originally used by Stalin in order if not to explain his policies to at least justify their consequences. Humanity was controlled by ‘ uncontrollable social forces’ that still needed to be enacted by leaders with the rare qualities of Lenin and his only viable successor Stalin. Stalin could explain his U-turns in domestic and foreign policy by keeping true to the essence of Marxism / Leninism. Such U-turns included initially supporting the New Economic Policy and then adopting collectivisation and industrialisation after defeating his rivals or Stalin’s unsuccessful attempts to counter the fascist powers in the 1930s prior to signing the Nazi-Soviet Pact in 1939. Stalin was not a man troubled by contradictions or paradox. The strength of the regime and his grip on power came ahead of any ideological consideration (Eatwell & Wright, 2003 p. 118).

All of Stalin’s successors until Gorbachev stressed their devotion to Marxism / Leninism as the guiding ideology of the Soviet Union and the centrality of the Communist Party to the Soviet state. Gorbachev tried to reform the Soviet economy and open up its society. Yet by removing the control of the Communist Party he only succeeded in accelerating the collapse of the Soviet Union. Gorbachev proved Lenin and Stalin to be correct, the Soviet Union could not Marxism / Leninism to bind it together (Hobsbawm, 1994 p. 498). The Soviet era had left behind a bloody legacy, an estimated 20 million deaths that resulted from Stalin’s excesses on top of <https://assignbuster.com/politics-dissertations-leninsim-affect-russia/>

the estimated 8.8 million deaths from the Russian Civil War (Castleden, 2005 p. 9). Soviet losses in the Second World War were horrendous at around 20 million due to Hitler's genocidal policies though the Stalinist regime survived much greater damages than the Imperial regime did not (Bullock, 1991 p. 1086).

Therefore Marxism / Leninism affected Russia because it was enforced upon the majority of the population following the Bolsheviks seizure of power in October 1917 and the consolidation of that power following their victory in the Russian Civil War. The Bolsheviks had originally been able to take power in Russia due not only to their strengths and strategy but also the weaknesses and mistakes of their immediate predecessors the autocracy of Nicholas II and short-lived Provisional Government. Perhaps the main reasons that Marxism / Leninism had an affect on Russia were the disastrous consequences of the First World War upon the Imperial regime. Defeat in the war with Japan had brought about the 1905 Revolution yet the government had done very little to modernise the army or improve the quality of its men and officers bearing in mind that the highly effective German army was its most likely adversary.

Defeat at Tannenberg got the Russians off to a disastrous start to the war made worse when their allies were unable to succeed at Gallipoli in opening supply routes to reinforce the Russian army and its over-stretched industry. Worsening wartime conditions led to the collapse of the Tzarist regime in February 1917 yet staying in the war hampered the chances of the Provisional Government surviving. Lenin and Trotsky planned the successful October Revolution that brought the Communists to power yet had to rebuild <https://assignbuster.com/politics-dissertations-leninsim-affect-russia/>

the Tzarist state to win the Russian Civil War and secure its own future.

Marxism / Leninism as such was the concept of Joseph Stalin who used it to justify the bloody consequences of collectivisation, industrialisation and his purges. Stalin made sure Marxism / Leninism affected the entire Soviet Union and not just Russia. In a sense industrialisation saved Russia following the German invasion of 1941. It survived dire losses and to turn the tide with victories at Stalingrad and Kursk. Above all the concepts of Marxism / Leninism affected Russia as it bound it to the other republics of the Soviet Union and delayed the break up of the Russian Empire for 75 years.

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Bullock's book 'Hitler and Stalin – Parallel Lives' is a joint biography of the two men that shaped the world more than anybody else is during the 20th century. As such it is an excellent study of the lives, careers and ideas of both men. Bullock provides a sound analysis of the Communist Party's rise to power and the subsequent emergence of Stalin as the murderous leader of the Soviet Union. Chose to use a biography of Stalin as he is arguably the man most responsible for Marxism / Leninism affecting Russia in the forms that it did. Personal copy of the book obtained a couple years ago at a charity shop.

Castleden's The World's Most Evil People contained three relevant chapters on Nicholas II, Lenin and Stalin. These were the men that deliberately and accidentally allowed Marxism to affect Russia and the other parts of the Soviet Union. Aptly enough Nicholas II is in the section describing evil by incompetence whilst Lenin and Stalin are included in the section on evil tyrants. Over all it is a book that could be used for varied pieces of academic work due to the range of people included in it. It is good for brief overviews of people although access to more detailed sources would be recommended. Personal copy obtained from a discount bookshop.

Colvin's book was used to explain the Russian defeat at Tannenberg in August 1914 as the central theme of the work was that the First World War was the main cause of Marxism / Leninism being able to affect Russia. Colvin's book has the merit of describing all the battles discussed in a

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concise and succinct manner. The dismal performance of the Russian army at Tannenberg could be compared to the Red Army's hard fought victory at Kursk. Personal copy of the book that was a birthday present.

Joseph Femia's chapter on Marxism and Communism in Eatwell and Wright's 'Contemporary Political Ideologies' proved to be a useful point of reference for the completion of this piece of work. Femia clearly examines how Lenin and Stalin developed their ideas from Marxism and also where they differed from Marx.

Eatwell & Wright remains a useful book overall as it other highly relevant chapters on the other main political ideologies such as liberalism and fascism. Have a personal copy of this book, as it has not always been easy to borrow a copy from the university and public libraries.

Eric Hobsbawm's 'Age of Extremes, the Short Twentieth Century 1914-1991' is a very useful book to have available as a reference as it explores the economic, political and historical contexts of the period 1914 to 1991 which roughly equates to the period that Marxism / Leninism had its affects on Russia. 'Age of Extremes' is the last of the four book series that started with 'Age of Revolution' in the early 1960s. It also yet again demonstrates Hobsbawm's skills as a writer, analyst and historian. Have personal copies of all four books in the series.

Longley's 'Makers of the Twentieth Century: Lenin' was taken from History Today in April 1980. This is an article that focuses on Lenin's role in promoting the October Revolution and his problems with maintaining control of the Bolshevik Party whilst in exile. The article also describes the cult of

Lenin as it was in the Soviet Union in 1980. The article was down loaded from the Historytoday. com website.

Marix Evans' ' Over the Top – Great Battles of the First World War' was consulted to help explain the effect that Russian defeat in the First World War had upon the chances of Marxism / Leninism affecting Russia. The most relevant parts of the book were about why Russia joined the war and the consequences of Turkey joining the war on the side of the Central powers. If interested in military history this is an excellent book, book obtained from the public library.

Pereira's Stalin and the Communist Party in the 1920s is a History Today article from 1992. This article describes the ways in which Stalin took over both the Communist Party and the Soviet Union and the ways in which he developed Marxism / Leninism to gain total control of party and state. The article was down loaded from the Historytoday. com website.

Roberts' ' A History of Europe' was mainly used as reference for the Russo-Japanese War of 1904-05 and its influence on the 1905 Revolution. Roberts is a very readable history of Europe from the Greeks and Romans to 1995. Chose to use other sources for main part of the work although Roberts would have proved more than adequate. Obtained copy from university library.

Wheen's Karl Marx is an inspired and enlightening biography of the man responsible for developing the basic concepts of communism. Only chose to use the part about Lenin speaking at the funeral of Marx's daughter, as there was only passing references to Lenin, Stalin and Russia in the rest of the book. Personal copy of the book brought from a charity shop.

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