

The role of the bolsheviks for the decline and fall of the romanov dynasty.



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Modern History Research Essay: The Russian Revolution (Task 1) Assess the role of the Bolsheviks for the decline and fall of the Romanov dynasty. The beginning of the 20th century brought radical changes to the social and political structure of autocratic Russia. It was a period of regression, reform, revolution and eradication. Eradication of a blood line that had remained in rule for over 300 years; the Romanov Dynasty.

The central figure of this eradication was Tsar Nicholas II, often described as an incompetent leader, absent of the “ commanding personality nor the strong character and prompt decision which are so essential to an autocratic ruler... ” (Sir G. Buchman, British ambassador to Russia from 1910 in H. Seton-Watson, *The Decline of Imperial Russia*, 1964, p. 108) What caused or defined the decline and eventual fall of the Romanov dynasty cannot be concluded by one influencing factor but an amalgamation of Tsar’s leadership, certain events that impacted on Russia and Revolutionary groups that aided this process.

From these it is evident though that Tsar Nicholas’ role, to a major extent, was the key factor in the end of the 300-year reigning Romanov rule and subsequent execution. In exploring Russia in the early 20th Century, the revolutionary groups, mainly including the Bolsheviks, can be seen as having a minor role in that actual reason for the decline of the Romanov dynasty but rather a larger role in the events after the fall, in regards to the execution itself and shaping Russia’s future afterwards.

The early years plunging Russia into the 20th century brought humiliation and prevalent discontent and resentment towards Tsar Nicholas. The

decision to push Russia into a war with Japan unprepared and overconfident was the first fatal mistake Tsar Nicholas made. The humiliating blow of the disastrous war with Japan was felt nation-wide and led the people to lose faith in their “ little father” and “ divine ruler”. “ Russia was humiliated in the eyes of the world” (Paul Dowsell, *Days that Shook the World: The Russian Revolution*, p. 12). The outcome of this war was greatly converse to the expectations and outcomes Tsar Nicholas anticipated; a victory that was “ meant to have bound the people in patriotic fervour to Nicholas” (cited in: http://www.historylearningsite.co.uk/1905_russian_revolution.htm). This was a direct example of the Tsar’s ignorance to reality and the first noticeable sign of the ensuing road of detrimental mistakes to come for Russia.

This defeat sparked widespread displays of discontentment, rebellion and rage towards the Tsar in which had already been arising as a result of poor harvests and rising unemployment, which Tsar also remained ignorant to. His people were rebelling, demanding civil liberties and a Duma but Nicholas still remained adamant, stubborn and desperate to clutch onto his autocratic rule. This was one of the key qualities that Nicholas possessed that contributed to the downfall of the Romanov dynasty, as no matter what grievances or obstacles posed a threat to Russia, Nicholas never ceased fighting for his “ God-given right to rule. “... the one event that unleashed a fury of mass action and set Russia well and truly on the path to revolution was the cold-blooded shooting of hundreds of unarmed demonstrators in St Petersburg on 22 January 1905” (stated by Historian Peter Litwin). The ripples of the infamous “ Bloody Sunday” massacre on January 9 1905 left <https://assignbuster.com/the-role-of-the-bolsheviks-for-the-decline-and-fall-of-the-romanov-dynasty/>

the nation in shock, triggering a wave of massive demonstrations and strikes throughout the empire. A wave of assassinations occurred and in June the crew of the battleship Potemkin mutinied.

This mutiny struck the Tsar in particular as he had never doubted the loyalty of his armed forces. As stated by historians Bruce Dennett and Sepsen Dixon, “ It seemed that Nicholas II and his government would be overthrown by the revolutionary force of opponents from all levels of Russian society”(Paul Dowsell, *Days that Shook the World: The Russian Revolution*, p. 20). Although Nicholas managed the situation by granting Russia a Duma, this was only a temporary lifeline for Nicholas and his unrelenting desire for autocratic power remained evident to the Russian people, dissolving and amending the Duma four times.

The 1905 revolution can be considered as the pinnacle event that accelerated the downward spiral of Tsar Nicholas’s rule and Russia’s adherence to their “ little father”. From this point onwards Nicholas was referred to by the people as not their “ little father” but “ Nicholas the Bloody”. “ The present ruler has lost absolutely the affection of the Russian people, and whatever the future may have in store for the dynasty, the present tsar will never again be safe in the midst of his people. ” (The American consul in Odessa).

This revolution was an uprising of people from all levels of society and was not an uprising organised by any group in particular. The Bolsheviks played a minimal role in the 1905 revolution as most of their leaders were living in exile and their impact and influence on the workers in that year was weak as

well as having no Duma faction. This demonstrates that the Bolsheviks had a minor role in the pinnacle events that led to the downfall of the Romanov dynasty but rather gained support after Nicholas' abdication. The years following the 1905 revolution seemed to show a lull amongst the people but unrest soon returned to the cities.

In the months leading up to WWI, St. Petersburg was paralysed by strikes, with workers and police officers fighting hand-to-hand battles on the street. With the outbreak of WWI and the Tsar's decision to enter the war, severely unprepared as well as unindustrialised, discontent began to rapidly rise as the living conditions of the workers and peasants worsened dramatically. "... the decision to go to war sounded the death knell of the Romanov government with the hardships of war severely undermining any remaining loyalty people might have felt towards Nicholas II. " (Maureen Anderson, Anne Low and Ian Keese).

As equipment was in short supply during the war, soldiers were often left without boots or rifles once they were sent into battle, being expecting to collect those of fallen comrades. "[Even Though] Ordinary Russians may have flocked to defend their homeland when the war broke out... the course of the war made the Russian Revolution almost inevitable. " (Paul Dowswell, *The Days that Shook the World: The Russian Revolution*, p. 20) With morale at the war front and the home front reaching its all time low, Nicholas in August 1915 decided to take personal command of the army, proving to be fatally unwise.

It can be suggested that through this decision, Nicholas ran away and hid from the problems and grievances faced by his people at home, leaving his German wife, Alexandra under the influence of a “ Mad Monk”, Rasputin, in charge. “ More than any other of Nicholas and Alexandra’s failings, it was Rasputin’s close relationship with them that did the most to undermine the respect ordinary people had for their Tsar and his wife. ” (Days that Shook the World: The Russian Revolution, p. 7, Paul Dowsell) WWI was the most significant event that finalised the decline and fall of the Romanov dynasty as the combination of social unrest and the wartime grievances brought about the February revolution of 1917 and the abdication of Nicholas II. “ In many ways Russia’s disastrous participation in World War I was the final blow to Tsarist rule. ” (Cited in: <http://www.st-petersburg-life.com/st-petersburg/1917-russian-revolution>). It wasn’t until the abdication of the Tsar, that the Bolsheviks began to have an ascending influence on the people.

For the whole of the events surrounding the abdication of Tsar Nicholas, Lenin was out of Russia in exile amongst other Bolsheviks as well. Even he was unprepared for this event. During the February revolution all the preceding years’ work of the Bolsheviks did though come through to an extent with progressive workers educated by the party finding their place in the struggle, but there was still no direct leadership from the party. “... February revolution was accomplished by workers and peasants – the latter in the person of the soldiers. ” “...nobody led the revolution, it happened of itself. ” (Trotsky, op. it. Volume I, 145.)The February revolution was spontaneous and other than the Bolshevik’s influence on the people’s

opinions about revolution before the overturn, the Bolshevik's didn't have a direct role in it. This then goes to show that the Bolsheviks did not have a major role much throughout the period of the decline and fall of the Romanov Dynasty but rather after the decline and fall. The German Foreign Ministry, who hoped that Lenin's presence in Russia would help bring the war on the Eastern Front to an end, provided a special train for Lenin and 27 other Bolsheviks to travel to Petrograd.

They were eager to now help shape the future of the country as the provisional government was intact. The Bolsheviks, through Lenin's slogans such as " Land, Peace and Bread" and " All Power to the Soviets" captured the revolutionary minds of the people and began to build a formidable body of support. It was then through the October Revolution (known as the Bolshevik Revolution) that the Bolsheviks seized power and had a major role in shaping Russia's government and even then, it said by numerous historians that the Bolsheviks didn't have complete control over the October revolution. The movement had begun from below irrespective of the Bolsheviks – to a certain extent against their will. ' (op. cit. Volume II, 71.) " The masses themselves made the revolution, with or even against the party. "(historians Cohn-Bendit's , D, Cohn-Bendit's , G: Obsolete Communism, the Left-Wing Alternative) Through the perspectives of several historians during the 20th and 21st century as well as the detrimental and damaging events that occurred surrounding Tsar Nicholas II' reign, it can be concluded that the largest contributing factor to the decline and fall of the Romanov dynasty was the Tsar himself.

Tsar's incompetence as an autocratic ruler and ignorance to the obvious horrific living conditions of his people fuelled the growing resentment and revolutionary demeanour of all levels of Russian society. " For the Tsar's regime, one disaster followed another: Nicholas' conduct following the Khodynka tragedy, his inflexibility and that of his despised German wife, the ' Bloody Sunday' massacre at Winter Palace in 1905, the scandal of Rasputin, and finally the horror of the First World War" (Paul Dowsell, *The Days that Shook the World: The Russian Revolution*, p. 0). Through the events of the Russo-Japanese War, 1905 Revolution and consequent Bloody Sunday and World War I, these foundations of discontent strengthened and paved the road to an inevitable revolution. As seen, the Bolsheviks played a minor role in this decline and fall and rather utilised the surrounding events to their advantage in antagonising and adding to the already established revolutionary drive of the people, as stated by historian Alan Woods, "... individuals can only play such a role when all the other conditions are present. " And even to this a minor role. " The Russian Revolution of 1917 was an inevitable result of peasant dissatisfaction, poor leadership, an unpopular monarchy, political movements, and war" (Historian Kerry Kubilius) in which was the triumph of a population who had endured and suffered centuries of ruthless Tsarist rule. References Dennett, B, Dixon, S. (2008). *Key Features of Modern History*. OUP Australia and New Zealand. Ross, S. 2002). *The Russian Revolution*. London, England: Evans Brothers Limited. Dowsell, P,(2003). *Days that Shook the World: The Russian Revolution*. London, England: Hodder Wayland. Cohn-Bendit's , D, Cohn-Bendit's , G. (1968). *Obsolete Communism, the Left-Wing Alternative*. San Francsico, CA, Edinburgh, Scotland: Andre Deutsch. Unknown. (2000). <https://assignbuster.com/the-role-of-the-bolsheviks-for-the-decline-and-fall-of-the-romanov-dynasty/>

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