

How far was the first world war responsible for the downfall of the romanovs 1917...



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Nicholas ruled Russia from 1894-1917 and was to be its final tsar. Nicholas accepted the throne under the impression he would rule his whole life as its undisputed leader as it was believed that he had been chosen by god and therefore had divine right to the throne. Nicholas had been determined to rule as harshly as his father; however, he was very weak and did not possess qualities capable of guiding Russia through its time of turmoil. The World War One alone did not cause the Romanovs to fall, it did however play a major part in the collapse of the monarchy.

Many historians believe that Russia was on the brink of collapse in 1914, and therefore the war didn't matter as the tsar would have fallen very soon in any case. However I agree with the view that the war simply accelerated the revolution, speeding up something that would have not occurred for a while, or possibly no at all, had the war not occurred. Before the war many problems faced the country, including issues stemming from their economic situation and the political problems. Together the country and the autocracy were left in a very unprotected and unstable position. Due to the rapid industrialisation and the overall growth in the Russian economy, there were several negative social issues that were only increasing in the years leading up to 1917. These included rapid growth, dense concentrations of people in small areas leading to crowded and unsanitary living conditions, dangerous and unhygienic working conditions, and low wages.

All of which resulted in a growing mass discontent and disorder spread, finding expression in strikes and protests. It was only in the summer of 1914, however that there were " huge demonstrations against the monarchy", showing for the first time that the tsar had lost the respect from the majority

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of the Russian people. Both political and entirely non-political activities were suppressed by Tsar Nicholas nevertheless suppression only increased anti-government feelings, as in the case of the university protests of the 1890s. However, unlike the revolution of 1905 political activity against the government was beginning to recognize the way it must work to bring about change and began to do so slowly. The reputation of the Romanovs had been declining as the controversial peasant, ' Rasputin', made his way into governmental affairs due to his ability to ease the pain of the tsar's sick young prince.

Alexandra gave him great political control in the affairs of the state. Rasputin had dismissed twenty-one ministers and replaced them with men of great incompetence. He was eventually murdered by the damage to the tsar's image had already been done. By beginning of World War I, Russia can be seen as being at a point of crisis. There were popular demonstrations and strikes calling for a democratic republic, politicized youth, and even people within the government, the Duma, were beginning to work against the Tsar. Revolution, some historians write, was now inevitable because of this situation.

World War I began at the beginning of August 1914; to begin with there was a surge of nationalism took the people of the country, unifying them and appeasing their demonstrations and strikes so that all could be devoted to fight Germany and defend Russia. This however was short lived and before long people attitudes towards monarchy was greatly changing. Indeed, the war affected the popularity of the government in a hugely broad and

negative way and had massive economic impacts that can all be seen as <https://assignbuster.com/how-far-was-the-first-world-war-responsible-for-the-downfall-of-the-romanovs-1917/>

accelerators of the revolution. After the start of the war and after nationalism had worn down, the popularity of the government started to plummet. In 1915, Russia lost to Germany, losing Poland and other lands. Russians could not believe that they lost and so blamed the loss on treason.

The wife of the Tsar, a German, though fully devoted to Russia, took the blame. There were more suspicions of treason in high places when a Russian with a German name was appointed Prime Minister in 1916. While none of the beliefs of treason were true, they created much hostility toward the Crown, eventually leaving it unpopular and vulnerable. Economic troubles began in 1914 when the government suspended the ability to convert rubles into gold and gave the treasury permission to print paper money without any regard to the amount of gold that was in the vaults in order to repay loans and pay for the war.

As a result, there was the huge issue of uncontrollable inflation. Inflation did not hurt the peasants too much as they controlled the food. They hoarded what grain that they produced, and were reasonably comfortable. In contrast, inflation was very much felt by those who lived in the cities, and it hurt. As more were being printed and as inflation rose the actual value of the wages dropped from 85.5 gold rubles 1913 to 38 gold rubles in 1917.

Prices increased with inflation, and many people could not afford to buy what little food was available. Long bread lines formed in the cities. Large numbers of poor people waited in line for hours in the cold to purchase a little bit of bread. The output for the national market suffered with the emphasis on war goods. There was little a peasant could buy and the

shortage of goods prompted the farmers store their food. Peasants received money that was declining in value.

They could not buy the products that they required, and therefore did not bother to sell their produce. As these problems grew, the citizens of the towns grew more and more irritated. They began to voice their anger at those who they believed were at the root of the problem; the government. Labour unrest began again and waves of strikes crushed Russia in late 1916. Internally the government, by 1917, had been significantly weakened because of the power that it had given the Dumas. Political opposition was so great that, when the feelings of the nation were released in the riots that began toward the end of February, the Tsar could do nothing but abdicate.

There was unrelenting hostility between the government and the opposition. Liberals and socialists took the war as an opportunity to criticize the government and claim that they were the real enemy. Dangerous speeches, such as Kerensky's on the first of November 1916, were given under protection of parliamentary immunity. In that speech he called for the removal of those who 'ruin, humiliate, and insult'.

The conservatives started to believe that the only way to save the monarchy was to remove the monarch. Political activism was escalating. Radicals from within the Duma and from without openly encouraged the country to rebellion. All of the political parties united against the monarchy in face of its increasing weakness.

Calls were made to the workers to strike and to call for the removal of the autocratic regime. On 23 February 1917, a women's procession organized by <https://assignbuster.com/how-far-was-the-first-world-war-responsible-for-the-downfall-of-the-romanovs-1917/>

socialists marched in Petrograd. The following day, workers began to strike. Then the soldiers mutinied as they had had enough of war and no longer had any faith in their officers and the regime because of continued defeats. Neither the majority of the people of Russia or the military groups wanted autocracy to be preserved.

After being pressured by an unofficial group of politicians from the Duma, Nicholas II abdicated on March 2, 1917. It was the end of the autocracy in Russia. World War I, even though it started out by pacifying the nation and creating a sense of nationalism, ended up bringing about large anti-governmental feelings from all aspects of society, from the peasants to the workers, from the army to the nobility. It is believed by many that the conditions in Russia before the war were so severe that the revolution was inevitable. It is true that by August 1914, Russia had reached a point of crisis with the large number of strikes and demonstrations that called for change; there was a massive anti-governmental feeling in Russia.

Even the Dumas that had begun to work subtly against the government. But the revolution would not have happened as quickly as it did had the war not occurred. There were still many in society who supported the Tsar and the anti-government feelings were really only limited to the revolutionaries, students, and some workers. The Duma had only begun to work in such a way as to take power away from the government, revolutionary groups were weak as they had been penetrated heavily by the police, and the Tsar could still rely on the army to put down any disturbances. The war, however, changed that.

Though there was a brief period of relative calm, anti-Tsarist feelings began to arise again after situations on the home and real fronts, including losses and the lack of food and consumer goods, became increasingly prevalent. It was not only the workers, students, and revolutionaries: there was no group that wanted the Tsar to stay. The economic problems faced by Russia were certainly not around before the war, and they had huge effects. During the course of the war the Duma had begun to take power away from the government. Revolutionaries began to provoke the population even more, eventually bringing about the strikes and demonstrations of February and March 1917. In addition, the Tsar could no longer count on his army for support in suppressing the population, as moral dropped lower with each recurring defeat.

They no longer wanted to fight and showed this by joining with others who did not want the government to remain in power. Therefore it can be concluded that the revolution was accelerated by the First World War.