

Stopping the fall of a superpower by the savior of russian nation, vladimir lenin...

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Eventually, empires and nations all collapse. The end can be brought about by many causes. Whether through becoming too large for their own good, being ruled by a series of out of touch men, falling behind technologically, having too many enemies, succumbing to civil war, or a combination: no country is safe. The Russia of 1910 was in a tremendously horrible situation. She had all of these problems. Russia would not have existed by 1920 were it not for Vladimir Ilich Lenin, the only man capable of saving the failing nation.

Russia in 1910 was a very backwards country. Peasants who lived in absolute poverty made up the vast majority of Russia's population (Haney 19). Russia's version of the feudal system had ended a mere 49 years earlier, but in effect it meant that peasants now owned the meager parcels of land upon which their survival rested. Their ruler, Czar Nicholas II, ruled aloof of his disorganized nation. His government of appointed officials and men in inherited positions did not represent the people (The Tyranny of Stupidity 120). Even though all of Europe had experienced the Industrial Revolution, Russia had precious little machinery. To obtain more advanced machines, the government traded grain to other countries in exchange for machinery, even though it meant that more people would starve (Haney 17). Compound this with the devastation and desperation brought on shortly thereafter by the First World War, and there was no confidence left in the government. Different political factions formed, and none got along (U. S. S. R. 63). Liberal constitutionalists wanted to remove the czar and form a republic; social revolutionists tried to promote a peasant revolution; Marxists

promoted a revolution among the proletariat, or urban working class. The people were fed up with Russia's state of affairs and ready for the change.

Change was presented in the form of Vladimir Lenin, a committed, persuasive visionary with a grand plan. Lenin became hardened in his quest at an early age when his older brother Aleksandr, a revolutionary, was executed in 1887 for plotting to kill then-Czar Alexander III. " I'll make them pay for this!" he said, " I swear it!" (Haney 28) By 1888, at the age of 18, he had read *Das Kapital* by Karl Marx, a book about socialism and the evils of capitalism. A superb speaker, he could hold audiences at rapt attention with his powerful speeches (New Generation). People became convinced of his socialist views. He formed his own political party, the Bolsheviks, a split off of the earlier Marxists. Unlike other parties of his time, Lenin limited membership to a small number of full-time revolutionaries (Haney 41). This dedication and tight organization later proved both useful and effective. From 1897 to 1917, he traveled all over Europe writing propaganda, organizing strikes, and encouraging revolution among the working class, especially in Russia (Lenin, V. I. 191). Lenin knew what he wanted, knew how to get it, and was willing to wait.

During World War I, the time was right and Lenin was the man. Czar Nicholas II remained totally focused on winning the war, and did not hesitate before committing more men and supplies to the war effort (Haney 65). But for an already starving country, every train that brought supplies to the front could not also be bringing food to peasants. With public sentiment and even the Czar's own army against him, Nicholas abdicated the throne in March of

1917 (69). A government by soviets (councils) was instated, but did not last long. After that, Alexander Kerensky seized power. In November, Lenin and his Bolsheviks, with help from armed citizens, stopped the revolving door. They took over St. Petersburg (then Petrograd) and later captured Moscow, meeting little resistance along the way (Jantzen 613). Lenin took over the government and signed a treaty with Germany to take Russia out of the war. Immediately thereafter, civil war broke out between the Communists, called Reds, and the anti-Communists, called Whites, who had help from Western nations (Johnson 43). This help from outside Russia actually helped Lenin, as it drove public sentiment against the Whites. Russian troops, scattered and dispirited, had just been through World War I. Somehow, though, Lenin and his good friend Leon Trotsky organized these troops into the Red Army and won the war (Liversidge 59). It was now Lenin's country.

Once he was fully in power, Lenin set up a true Communist government. Russia became sixteen republics subdivided all the way from districts down to soviets (committees) representing the workers, soldiers, and peasants in that area. The country would be ruled from the bottom up rather than the traditional top down (Johnson 30). Lenin wanted a society where the working class was the ruling class; a society where there is one social class, everyone has the same rights, and, eventually, there is no private property. For a short time, peasants were allowed to simply seize their former landlords' land and workers to control factories (U. S. S. R. 54). Later, however, all industry was nationalized. To jump-start the economy, Lenin instituted his New Economic Policy, which began to rejuvenate the economy by permitting small industries to operate under their own control and letting farmers keep or sell

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more of their products while the government retained control of heavy industries such as metal working (55). Lenin had earlier gained support with the simple promise “ Bread, peace, land,” (Lenin, V. I. 194) and he had begun to make good. Lenin’s goals were becoming reality.

Tragically, Lenin died in 1924, rendering him unable to see through any of his plans. He had suffered his first stroke in 1922, and it was that year that a young Bolshevik named Josef Stalin — a man whom Lenin had warned his associates about as being dangerous (Johnson 97) — began making his grab at power. Unfortunately for Russians, Stalin beat Trotsky and became Secretary of the Communist Party upon Lenin’s death, a position which was as good as dictator (100). Stalin, who was probably mentally unstable (96) , trashed the ideals of Marx, Lenin, and Trotsky in his own thirst for power. Marx had held the view that “ The key to Communism is education,” (New Generation) and the working class must be a learned people. As dictator, Stalin resorted to censorship of all media to consolidate his power (Johnson 114). Had Lenin lived longer, he could have seen Communism through to its ideal state. Nevertheless, even under Stalin, Lenin was virtually deified for having saved the nation.

Were Lenin alive today, he could stand up and truthfully say, “ Without me, a nation would not exist.” He singularly shaped the course of history. Russia was floundering, and Lenin was the totally committed visionary that it took to bring it back from the brink. He laid them foundation for what eventually became a world superpower, and had he lived longer, Russia could have been even stronger. It is no wonder Lenin became a Russian national hero.