

The Russian Revolution

The Provisional Government

- The March Revolution in Russia was the result of the collapse of the monarchy's ability to govern. Despite the country's eagerness to enter the war, the conflict put too many demands on Russia's resources and the efficiency of the tsarist government.
- Nicholas II was weak and incompetent and was suspected of being under the domination of his German wife and Rasputin. In 1916 the tsar adjourned the Duma, Russia's parliament, and ruled alone.
- March 1917: strikes and worker demonstrations erupted in Petrograd (St. Petersburg) where the ill-trained Russian troops refused to fire on the protestors. The tsar abdicated on March 15 and the Russian government fell into the hands of members of the reconvened Duma.
- At the same time, the various socialists (including the Social Revolutionaries and Social Democrats of the Menshevik wing) began to organize the workers into soviets, councils of workers and soldiers. The Mensheviks (orthodox Marxists) believed that a bourgeois stage of development must come to Russia before the revolution of the proletariat could be achieved.
- The provisional government decided to remain loyal to the existing Russian alliances and to continue the war against Germany.

Lenin and the Bolsheviks

- Ever since April, the Bolshevik wing of the Social Democratic Party had been working against the provisional government.
- The Germans had rushed the brilliant Bolshevik leader V.I. Lenin in a sealed train from his exile in Switzerland across Germany to Petrograd. They hoped that he would cause trouble for the revolutionary government.
- The Bolsheviks demanded that all political power go to the soviets, which they controlled, where Lenin fled to Finland where his collaborator, Leon Trotsky, was imprisoned.
- Trotsky, released from prison, led the powerful Petrograd soviet. Trotsky organized the coup that took place on November 6 and concluded with an armed assault on the provisional govt. which put the Bolsheviks in control of Russia.

The Communist Dictatorship

- The provisional govt. had decreed an election for late November to select a Constituent Assembly. The Social Revolutionaries won a large majority over the Bolsheviks. When the assembly gathered in Jan. it met for only a day before the Red Army dispersed it.
- In November and January, the Bolshevik govt. issued decrees that nationalized the land and turned it over to its peasant proprietors, factory workers were put in charge of their plants, banks were taken from their owners and seized for the state, and the debt of the tsarist govt. was repudiated.

- The Bolshevik govt. also took Russia out of the war, which they believed benefited only capitalism. They signed an armistice with Germany in December 1917.
- March 3, 1918: They accepted the Treaty of Brest-Litovsk, where Russia yielded Poland, the Baltic states, and the Ukraine. Some territory in the Transcaucasus region went to Turkey. The Bolsheviks also agreed to pay a heavy war indemnity.
- Russia was incapable of renewing the war effort, and the Bolsheviks needed time to impose their rule on a devastated and chaotic Russia. Lenin believed that communist revolutions would soon occur across Europe as a result of the war and the Russian example.
- Until 1921 the new Bolshevik government met major domestic resistance. A civil war erupted between the “Red” Russians, who supported the revolution, and the “White” Russians, who opposed it. In the summer of 1918, the Bolsheviks murdered the tsar and his family. Under the leadership of Trotsky, the Red Army eventually overcame the domestic opposition. By 1921, Lenin and his supporters were in firm control.

The End of WWI

Germany’s Last Offensive

- The collapse of Russia and the Treaty of Brest-Litovsk were the zenith of German success. The Germans controlled eastern Europe and its resources, especially food, and by 1918 they were free to concentrate their forces on the western front.
- And Allied attempt to break through in the west failed disastrously. Losses were heavy and the French army mutinied. The deadlock continued, but time was running out for the Central Powers.
- March 1918: The German army pushed forward and even reached the Marne again, but got no farther. The Germans were running out of supplies, the entire nation was exhausted. The Allies, on the other hand, were bolstered by the Americans and launched a counteroffensive that proved to be irresistible.
- Ludendorff (German quartermaster-general) was determined that peace should be made before the German army could be thoroughly defeated in the field and that the responsibility for ending the war should fall on civilians.
- Ludendorff now allowed a new govt. to be established on democratic principles and to seek peace immediately. The new govt. under Prince Max of Baden asked for peace on the basis of the Fourteen Points that Wilson had declared as the American war aims.
- Wilson insisted that he would deal only with a democratic German govt. because he wanted to be sure that he was dealing with the German ppl. And not merely their rulers.

German Republican Government Accepts Defeat

- The disintegration of the German army forced William II to abdicate on Nov. 9, 1918.
- The majority branch of the Social Democratic Party proclaimed a republic to prevent the establishment of a soviet govt. under the control of their radical, Leninist wing, which had earlier broken away as the Independent Socialist Party.
- 2 days later, this republican, socialist-led govt. signed the armistice that ended the war by accepting German defeat.
- Battle casualties from WWI counted 4 million dead and 8.3 million wounded among the Central Powers and 5.4 million dead and 7 million wounded from their opponents. Among the casualties also were the German, Austro-Hungarian, Russian, and Turkish empires.

The Settlement at Paris

Obstacles Faced by the Peacemakers

- 1919: representatives of the victorious states gathered at Versailles and other Parisian suburbs; representatives were Wilson (US), David Lloyd George (Britain), Georges Clemenceau (France), and Vittorio Orlando (Italy), made up the big four.
- The 14 points set forth the right of nationalities to self-determination as an absolute value; but in fact, the map of Europe could not be drawn to match ethnic groups perfectly with their homelands. All of these elements made compromise difficult.
- The British and French people had been told that Germany would be made to pay for the war. Russia had been promised control of Constantinople in return for recognition of the French claim to Alsace-Lorraine and British control of Egypt. Romania had been promised Transylvania at the expense of Hungary.
- Although the agreement seemed to work out, some were contradictory. Italy and Serbia both had claims to the islands and shore of the Adriatic. The Arab hopes of an independent Arab state out of the Ottoman Empire had contradicted the Balfour Declaration (1917) which gave the Jews a national home in Palestine (given by Britain).
- The victors had continuing goals even after the agreements were over. France looked to make Germany inferior to France despite France's low birthrate and population. Italy continued to seek the acquisition of *Italia Irredenta*, Britain kept up its imperial interests, and Japan kept going after Asia.
- The greatest threat to the free world appeared to be the spread of Bolshevism. Because Lenin was busy with the civil war, the Allies were able to land troops in small parts of Russia to overthrow the Bolshevik regime. Berlin also went through a risky communist uprising led by the "Spartacus group."
- Fear of the spread of communism was apparent in the diplomats and Versailles so Germans played on the fears to get better terms, but the Allies (especially the

French) would not hear of it.

The Peace

- The Paris settlement consisted of five separate treaties between the victors and the defeated powers. Sessions began on Jan. 18, 1919 and ended on Aug. 10, 1920. When the Soviet Union and Germany were excluded from the meetings, the notion of a “peace without victors” went down the drain.
- The League of Nations was not to be an international government but a body of “sovereign states that agreed to pursue common policies and to consult in the common interest, especially when war threatened.” If differences arose, the countries would go to an international court. If the countries refused to abide by the notion set by the court, league actions would take place that would result in economic sanctions and even military interventions.
- The league from the get-go was to be ineffective because of had no armed forces at its disposal and any military action required the unanimous consent of its council.
- The colonies were dealt with as well and were placed under the “tutelage” of one of the great powers under league supervision and encouraged to advance toward independence. Provisions for disarmament were equally ineffective because countries remained sovereign and into their interests.
- The main territorial issue in the west was the fate of Germany. France wanted protection from Germany and wanted the Rhineland set up as a buffer state. George and Wilson would not permit this but they could not ignore France’s call for help. **France got Alsace-Lorraine and the right to work the coal mines of the Saar for fifteen years.** Germany west of the Rhine and 50 kilometers east was to be a demilitarized zone; Allied troops could stay on the west bank for 15 years.
- Also, the further protect France, Britain and the US agreed to aid France if it were attacked by Germany. Germany’s army was limited to 100,000 men on long-term service, its fleet was reduced to a coastal defense force, and it was forbidden to have warplanes, submarines, tanks, heavy artillery, or poison gas.
- Germany lost part of Silesia, and East Prussia was cut off from the rest of Germany by a “door” carved out to give Poland access to the sea. The Austro-Hungarian Empire was cut up into 5 successor states.
- The German-speaking people of the former Austro-Hungarian Empire went to the Republic of Austria, the Magyars went to Hungary, the Czechs of Bohemia and Moravia joined with the Slovaks and Ruthenians to the east to form Czechoslovakia. The southern Slavs were united in the Kingdom of Serbs, Croats, and Slovenes, or Yugoslavia. Italy got Trentino and Trieste. Romania gained Transylvania and Bessarabia (from Russia). Bulgaria lost land to Greece, Romania, and Yugoslavia. Finland, Estonia, Latvia, and Lithuania became independent states.
- France and Britain wanted Germany to pay for their war debts including pensions to survivors and dependents. The US disagreed because Germany would never be able to pay so much so Germany was made to pay 5 billion until 1921. Germany was resentful because they felt that they were not the sole cause of the war, to

make things worse, they were forced to admit to a war guilt that they did not feel they were guilty for. They were also forced to accept the entire treaty written by the victors.

Evaluation of the Peace

- John Maynard Keynes (from Britain) was disgusted by the peace conference and wrote a book attacking it (*The Economic Consequences of the Peace*). Keynes argued that the Treaty of Versailles was both immoral and unworkable. He also argued that such a peace would bring economic ruin and war to Europe unless it were repudiated.
- The book had a profound impact on the American people and so the US was out of the League of Nations.
- The elimination of the A-H Empire created several economic problems, it separated raw materials from manufacturing areas and producers from their markets by new boundaries and tariff walls, disputes over territories in eastern Europe promoted further tension as well because so many ethnic groups had a hard time living together.

