The Russian Revolution:

A Triumph for A People, A Tragedy for Mankind
In the time between 1914 and 1918 a old monarchy fell to its people and a powerful dictatorship took its place. The Russian Revolution was started by an overpopulated working class that wanted more power and control over their country. With the promise of Communism and the workers controlling their factories, once the Bolshevik Party took power it wasn’t losing it. Once the new government was set it was challenged by smaller groups but retained a firm hold over Russia. Once their leader Vladimir Lenin died an even harsher ruler took his place. This outlines the Russian Revolution with the people initially achieving what they wanted but their system that they installed became warped and turned against its people.

The Working Class

The best place to start a revolution is probably with the people. The working class of Russia in 1914 was greatly oppressed with little pay and long hours. This conflict is between the capitalist factory owners and the workers. This issue started a short time before World War I and persisted until the revolution. For over the first half of 1914, 1,327,897 people were on strike, but once the war started only 9,561 people were on strike. The sharp decrease is due to both a threat of being drafted to the army and an increase in patriotism. The war also forced a disbanding of trade unions, normally done by force of the government. The strikes began to regain steam again in 1915 and returned to their original sizes in 1916 with around 951,695 to 1,172,052 participants.¹
The February Revolution

In February of 1917 the strikes became more and more prevalent due to decreasing food rations and ever decreasing wages. These protests spread and became more political, eventually becoming a political revolution. The as the strikes and riots grew in the capitol, Petrograd, more people joined the revolt. Eventually the garrison joined the riots and Czar Nicholas II was forced to give up his power. Soon after the Czar relinquished his power a provisional government was put in place. This provisional government competed with another rising power of the Petrograd Soviet of Workers’ and Soldiers’ Deputies which became popular with the working class. Under Order No. 1 made by the Petrograd Soviet of Workers’ and Soldiers’, they claimed primary military control from the provisional government. The Petrograd Soviet of Workers’ and Soldiers’ Deputy never declared itself as the new government because they feared a conservative takeover. The provisional government proceeded to run into issues. The provisional government was reorganized four times over the course of its lifetime which caused many people to lose faith in its leaders. While the provisional government lost touch with the people, the Petrograd Soviet of Workers’ and Soldiers’ became more liked. The Petrograd Soviet of Workers’ and Soldiers’ had more understanding of the people and requested the withdrawal from World War I which was a sentiment shared with the majority of the population. Due to their popularity the Petrograd
Soviet of Workers’ and Soldiers’ was the largest political party with the Mensheviks and Bolsheviks close behind.²

The October Revolution

The Bolshevik Party soon gained more authority in Russia, and became very influential within the Petrograd Soviet of Workers’ and Soldiers’ Party. The Bolsheviks eventually joined forces with the Left Socialist Revolutionaries to gain a strong hold over Moscow. The Bolshevik Party had a campaign of “peace, land, and bread”² which was very popular with the working class and deserting soldiers. With the people on their side the Bolsheviks decided in October 1917 that it was time to take control. In less than twenty-four hours the Bolsheviks conducted a nearly bloodless Coup on the provisional government. They were able to take control of government buildings, telegraph stations, and other vital facilities. The provisional government tried to defend itself but could not mobilize fast enough. The second All-Russian Congress of Soviets met on the same day as the revolution was taking place. This allowed the Bolshevik party to be announced as the new government of Russia.²
Establishing Government

The Bolsheviks established the Soviet of People’s Commissars led by Vladimir Lenin, and with other major Bolshevik leaders as members. The Soviet of People’s Commissars was a dictatorship established to impose Socialism. The first goal was to create a strong dictatorship with Lenin at it’s head. The next step was to change the structure of the country and its economy. Lenin first changed many key industries in to a socialist form. The Bolsheviks wished to spread their revolution across all of Europe. Their plan to do so was to strain it’s people and repress them until they would no longer try to revolt against the new government. Russia soon withdrew from World War I to appease the wishes of their citizens and some of its members of state. Near the end of 1917 a civil war broke out. Two sides developed with the Bolsheviks being called the Red Army and monarchist, capitalists, and democratic socialists being called the White Army.

The effort to establish industry was slow especially in the poor sectors with the government making compromises. Mid 1918 marked the instalment of pure communism and Russia’s economy was in hard times with starvation running rampant. The government abolished religion in the hard times. During this civil war the Romanov family, the previous royal family of Russia, was killed by the Soviet. The government created a red terror which called for a large amount of executions that had a huge effect on how the country was viewed internationally. The Bolsheviks control of the government and their aggressiveness to maintain control lead to them winning the civil war in 1923. After the revolution, the Bolsheviks formed a formal organization
which was named the Soviet Union. This is the start of the first real dictatorship with its first leader Vladimir Lenin.\(^3\)

## Changing of Power

Lenin created a new economic structure that was less intense to try to fix its issues. After all of his years of stress in leadership positions he fell ill in late 1921. He was urged to leave his position as leader by his advisors. Lenin died in mid 1924 and was recognized a genius in the Soviet Union but he was seen as merciless and a fanatic in other countries. One of Lenin’s advisors by the name of Joseph Stalin looked to become the new leader. Joseph Stalin was a miscreant who frequently got arrested but was liked by Lenin for his devotion and became part of the high ranks of the Bolshevik Party. By the time of Lenin’s death Stalin was Lenin’s successor since he held the position of chairman. To ensure his success Stalin killed all of his possible competitors. Trotsky, Rykov, Tomsky, Bukharin, Rakovski, Radek, Zinoviev, and Kamenev were killed by order of Stalin. Stalin then making plans to keep his power, made himself popular with the country's youth.\(^4\)

## Stalin’s Russia

Stalin created the Five-Year Plan in 1928. The Five-Year Plan was designed to transform Russia from a moderately poor nation to an industrial superpower. The Five-Year Plan was met by large protests by farmers who didn’t like their role in the plan. The Soviet Union killed
millions of the farmers that protested. The plan worked well if you look at just it’s accomplishments. Where the Five-Year Plan fails is in the fact that it caused a famine that killed millions of peasants. Stalin enacted the Five-Year Plan again in 1934 with the same effect. Stalin also imposed an attack on everyone in the Communist Party who opposed his views, killing millions.

A Triumph, and a Tragedy

With the worsening treatment under the rule of the Czar the working class wished for better conditions. With the new promise of Communism and Socialism they rallied together to get rid of the Czar and find a better system. This event is a triumph because the people found what was wrong with their society. They then decided that this new idea would be much better than what they had with the Czar. This revolution was successful and achieved their wish to remove the old government and that they were able to do so without with very few casualties. Though after it was installed as intended it only operated under the true idea of Communism for a short time.

The time after the Russian Revolution became a tragedy, specifically after Lenin decided to create a Dictatorship. With the straying path from the promise told to the people they wished to remove the new government, but the Soviets had learned. After the fall of the Czar the Soviets knew not to let the people get too riled up and to stomp out the beginnings of new opposing groups. With little threat from it’s people the Soviet Union could transform itself into any form it
wanted. The biggest tragedies were seen under Stalin's rule with his plans to reform the Soviet Union. In his two implementations of his Five-Year Plan many millions of people died due to government repression and starvation. Many more people died after Stalin’s ridding the Communist Party of people who opposed his views. It’s almost ironic, a population of working class people and peasant rising up against a monarch that was repressing them. To then create a government that eventually killed many more people under similar but harsher conditions than they had before, and worse yet it would be extremely hard to revolt again. The Russian Revolution was a triumph for the people of Russia but turned into a tragedy for the same people who triumphed.

Endnotes

1. Albert, Gleb J. "Labour Movements, Trade Unions and Strikes (Russian Empire)."
   1914-1918-online. International Encyclopedia of the First World War, version 1, 8 Oct. 2014,
   encyclopedia.1914-1918-online.net/article/labour_movements_trade_unions_and_strikes_rus sian_empire. Accessed 25 Jan. 2019. The article was written by Gleb J. Albert and is a compilation of events of the labor movement to the Bolshevik revolution. This helps to supply information for the events for the Russian Revolution.

   Encyclopædia Britannica, Encyclopædia Britannica, inc., 23 Jan. 2019,
This article was written by the Encyclopedia Britannica and gives a fairly large amount of details on the Russian Revolution.

4. Columbia University, compiler. The Columbia Encyclopedia. Edited by Columbia University and Clarke F. Ansley, New York, Columbia University Press, 1939. This book was written by Columbia University and has a extremely vast amount of information about many subjects. even though it was written in 1939, my topic takes place not long before then allowing me to get the information I need.

Annotated Bibliography

Primary:

Reed, John. "Appendix to the Report of the Fourth Session." Baku Congress of the Peoples of the East. Speech. This speech was presented by John Reed at the Baku Congress of the Peoples of the East. The speech is giving reasons why people should back the plight of the Russian working class against the capitalist owners.


Secondary:

Albert, Gleb J. "Labour Movements, Trade Unions and Strikes (Russian Empire)."

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encyclopedia.1914-1918-online.net/article/labour_movements_trade_unions_and_strikes_russian_empire. Accessed 25 Jan. 2019. The article was written by Gleb J. Albert and is a compilation of events of the labor movement to the Bolshevik revolution. This helps to supply information for the events for the Russian Revolution.

This book was written by Columbia University and has a extremely vast amount of information about many subjects. even though it was written in 1939, my topic takes place not long before then allowing me to get the information I need.

The Editors of Encyclopaedia Britannica, editor. "Russian Revolution of 1917."


This article was written by the Encyclopedia Britannica and gives a fairly large amount of details on the Russian Revolution.


This Book written by Harold H. Fisher and discusses the tactics that were employed during the Russian Revolution.


