

RUSSIA - 1800s Through the Russian Revolution

I. What is Marxism?

- A. In the mid-19th century *Karl Marx* and *Friedrich Engels* exposed and analyzed the capitalist system -- well-developed in England and emerging in the other European countries, which were beginning to industrialize. Marx and Engels wanted to help factory workers who labored under harsh conditions and low wages.
- B. Marx developed an economic theory of history based on his study of the economic development of countries all over the world. He argued that throughout history two groups had always been in conflict:
 - 1. One group -- *the bourgeoisie, the capitalist middle class* -- controlled all of the wealth, political power, and means of production.
 - 2. The other group -- *the proletariat, the working class* -- did all of the work.
- C. According to Marx, labor was the most important factor in production -- *the real value of goods or services is the amount of labor used in producing them*. A worker, Marx thought, should be paid the full value of the labor that goes into the job.
- D. Marx predicted that workers would revolt against the factory owners because the working conditions were so bad. Marx also thought that the fight between capitalists and workers would be the last class struggle in history. He reasoned that since England was the most industrialized country, workers would rise up there first.
- E. After the bourgeoisie capitalists were overthrown:
 - 1. the leaders of the revolution would set up *a dictatorship of the proletariat* to help their worker friends (comrades) learn how to run the country.
 - 2. All land and means of production (factories) would be owned by the workers, which is an intermediate stage called *socialism*.
 - 3. Eventually, there would be no need for government, because everyone would work as much as they could and only take as much they needed.
 - 4. The last stage of history, according to Marx, would have no class structure, everyone would be equal, and cooperation would replace competition. This ideal society Marx called *communism*.

II. How did Marxism Come to Russia?

- A. The Russian people were devastated by the constant fighting against the Ottoman Turks and grew increasingly hostile toward their czar.
- B. In order to consolidate his power, the czar adopted a *Russification* policy which forced non-Russians to speak Russian, adopt Eastern Orthodox Christianity, and adhere to Russian customs and culture.
 - 1. The Jews living in Russian-controlled territories especially were targeted as a group which needed to become more Russian. Young Jewish boys were taken from their families at birth and forced to convert to Christianity, and older Jewish boys were forced to join the army unless they were the only males in their family.
- C. The Russian serfs finally got relief in 1861 when Czar Alexander II emancipated them. In 1881, Alexander II was assassinated by members of a terrorist, revolutionary movement influenced by Marxist philosophy called the People's Will.
- D. Czar Alexander III continued Russification by the "one czar, one church, one language" policy. He also did nothing to discourage pogroms (massacres against the Jews), because anti-Semitism gave Russians a scapegoat for the economic and political problems their country was facing.

III. What reforms did Nicholas II offer?

- A. After another military defeat in the 1905 Russo-Japanese War, a group of workers on strike walked to Nicholas II's palace to present him with a petition of grievances. The czar's troops opened fire on the unarmed strikers. This slaughter on Sunday, January 27,

- 1905 (*Bloody Sunday*) led to a general work stoppage throughout the country.
- B. Nicholas II then allowed the formation of a Russian parliament, called the *Duma*. However, he was really still committed to absolutism and did not abide by the constitutional powers of the legislature.

IV. What groups formed to oppose Nicholas II in 1917?

- A. 4 groups worked toward change in Russian society -- including the removal of the czar:
1. Narodnik - oldest opposition -- included Lenin's older brother (hanged for trying to kill Alexander II) -- known later as the Social Revolutionary Party.
 2. Republican party - Bourgeoisie who desire a republic.
 3. Anarchists -- students, some radical peasants, some industrial proletariat -- violent terrorism is their means.
 4. Marxists - divided into two parties: Mensheviks and Bolsheviks (Lenin)

V. What happened in 1917?

- A. Russia suffered enormously in the beginning years of WW I, losing many men in battle and resources needed for industrial development.
- B. In early 1917, all four of the groups listed above participated in the February / March Revolution. The army joined the rioters in the streets and the Duma refused to be disbanded. On March 15, 1917, Nicholas II abdicated his throne and czarism was abolished in Russia.
- C. A provisional government based on the Duma took control.
- D. In the spring of 1917, when the Germans gave Lenin safe passage back from Switzerland (where he had been publishing a Bolshevik newspaper for the other Russian exiles from the czar's secret police), he led the charge for a more radical change into a Marxist / Communist society.
1. Lenin knew that Marxist doctrine required that the progression into socialism and then communism needed to come from a capitalist, industrialized society. Russia's industries were still just growing and over 80% of the population still worked in the countryside as emancipated serfs.
 2. Lenin decided to alter the philosophy Marx developed and "force the Revolution" without a real proletariat (industrial working class).
- E. Lenin and a small group of revolutionaries (Bolsheviks) overthrew the provisional government. The slogan of the Bolsheviks was "land (land reform for the peasants), peace (withdrawal from WW I), and bread (ending the massive food scarcity)"

VI. Lenin's Rule

- A. Lenin and his Bolsheviks (Politburo), calling themselves Communists, took control of Russia and put power in local areas in the hands of worker and soldier soviets (which is the Russian word for council). He maintained the centralized system of the czars, outlawed all other groups, and seized control of the factories.
- B. Lenin also withdrew Russia from fighting in WW I by signing the Treaty of Brest-Litovsk with the Germans.
- C. Many groups were upset by the Communists' decision to rule without their participation. Soon, civil war broke out between the communists (reds) and the other groups (whites). The Whites received support from the WW I Allies who feared the spread of communism and who were angry about Lenin's withdrawal from fighting in the war.
- D. The Russian civil war ended in 1921 when the communists won.

Communism in the new Soviet Union started with the philosophy developed by Marx and modified by Lenin. In some ways, communism in the Soviet Union more closely resembled the centralized, authoritarian, militaristic dictatorship characteristic of czarist rule.