


SSWH18: EXAMINE THE MAJOR POLITICAL AND ECONOMIC FACTORS THAT SHAPED WORLD SOCIETIES BETWEEN WWI AND WWII



ELEMENT A: DETERMINE THE CAUSES AND RESULTS OF THE RUSSIAN REVOLUTION FROM THE RISE OF THE BOLSHEVIKS UNDER LENIN TO STALIN'S FIRST FIVE YEAR PLAN

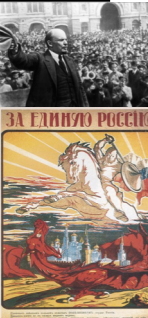
CAUSES OF RUSSIAN REVOLUTION

- Nicholas II, the last tsar of the Russian Empire spent much of his early reign highly distracted by family concerns, including his son Alexei's hemophilia.
 - This distraction was exacerbated by the royal family's close association with Rasputin, a Russian peasant priest that claimed to talk to Mary and heal the sick.
 - Rasputin was heavy drinker and a womanizer whose association with the family was exploited by political opponents.
- In addition to the personal failings of the tsar, the Russian state was severely outgunned as it faced more industrialized nations in war.
 - First in the Russo-Japanese war. Then in the First World War Russia was regularly humiliated by defeats.
- In both cases, Russia's lack of industrial infrastructure and the weak leadership of the tsar led to these defeats.
 - During World War I, military defeat was coupled with major food shortages leading to open rebellion in Russia cities.
 - These rebellions culminated in the February Revolution of 1917 during which the tsar was forced to abdicate and a liberal Provisional Government was formed.
 - While the Provisional Government attempted economic and political reform they were not enough for the Russian people.
 - The Russian people wanted peace but this government continued the fight in World War I.



CAUSES/ RESULTS OF RUSSIAN REVOLUTION

- The systemic problems of a massive peasant population, lack of industrial infrastructure, and inequitable distribution of land combined with the immediate problems of food shortages and massive war casualties to lay the groundwork for a radical revolution.
 - The radical revolution came in October of 1917 when the communist Bolshevik Party led by Vladimir Lenin seized power in a violent coup.
 - A bloody civil war ensued between the Bolshevik forces known as reds and the tsarist and republican forces called the whites.
- The Russian Civil War lasted until 1920 when the reds emerged victorious.



RESULTS OF RUSSIAN REVOLUTION

- Once firmly in power, Lenin set up a one party dictatorship and began the conversion of Russia (now called the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics) into a communist state.
 - The conversion proved difficult because Russia could not easily conform the path laid out by Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels in the Communist Manifesto.
 - The vast majority of the Russian population was made up of peasant farmers not urban industrial workers as Marx and Engels had predicted.
- In light of this, Lenin decided to slow the transition in 1921 by establishing the New Economic Policy (NEP) which was designed to gradually move the Soviet economy to centralized communist party control.



RESULTS OF RUSSIAN REVOLUTION

- Lenin died in 1924 and a power struggle emerged between two of his closest associates, Joseph Stalin and Leon Trotsky.
- In 1928, Stalin orchestrated the exile of Trotsky and consolidated his control over the Soviet government.
- Stalin rejected the gradual path laid out in the NEP and instead organized a massive and rapid conversion of the Soviet economy and society into his vision of communism.
 - This conversion was carried out through a series of Five-Year Plans.
- During the first Five-Year Plan, Stalin ordered the construction of massive industrial infrastructure including factories and transportation networks.
 - To fund these projects, Stalin ordered the collectivization of agriculture.
 - Private farms were replaced with massive state owned and managed collectives.
 - The grain produced on these collectives was sold abroad and the funds were used to pay for industrialization.
 - The export of this grain, resistance to collectivization and inefficiencies on collective farms led to massive food shortages in the Ukraine. From 1932 to 1933 more than four million Ukrainians died what was called the Great Famine.
- Stalin used propaganda to create a powerful cult of personality that maintained his popularity despite the suffering he imposed on his people.
 - Secret police rounded up political opponents, dissenters, and counter-revolutionaries.
 - From 1936 to 1938 Stalin ordered the execution of about one million of his people and sent millions more into exile in Siberia.
 - These efforts created a totalitarian communist state and made the Soviet Union into a global industrial power.