

REVOLUTIONS

**REINVENTING RUSSIA** 3RD EDITION  
EDITION



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**HTAV**

SENIOR HISTORY REVOLUTIONS

HTAV • SAMPLE PAGES • ISBN 978-1-922481-02-3 • [www.htavshop.com.au](http://www.htavshop.com.au)

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# REVOLUTIONS—AN INTRODUCTION

*A study of revolutions is important because it allows us to look at how critical moments in history alter the function of nations and their societies, and the lives of generations of people. They allow us to examine issues of power—who has it and who doesn't—and to explore what happens when there is a radical shift in power.*

## STUDYING REVOLUTIONS

The study of Revolutions is based on the understanding that revolutions 'represent a great rupture in time and are a major turning point in the collapse and destruction of an existing political order which results in extensive change to society.'<sup>1</sup> Often revolutions involve a transfer of power from the oppressor to the oppressed, from the privileged to the less privileged. In some instances, a revolution is a response to hierarchical authority and its inequalities, while in others a revolution can be a response to colonial oppression.

Typically, revolutions are driven by strong ideological beliefs about how society should operate. Central to these beliefs are ideas about equality and control, and how a government should balance these. It is important to note that while revolutions are considered primarily political events, there are also significant economic, social and cultural factors that need to be considered. In the context of Revolutions, these are examined through the lens of key historical thinking concepts.

<sup>1</sup> VCAA, VCE History Study Design 2022–2026.

## WHAT IS A REVOLUTION?

The term 'revolution' is used widely and often loosely. Consider for example, how advertisers frequently refer to products as 'revolutionary' to generate a sense of something being special or beneficial or even necessary. Understanding what a revolution is—and what it is not—is crucial in a study of Revolutions. This is no easy feat as sometimes the term 'revolution' is used by different people to mean different things. This is evident when we consider the differences between a revolution and other forms of conflict such as a rebellion, a revolt or a coup, and the ways in which these terms are sometimes randomly assigned to different events.

## THE CAUSES OF REVOLUTION

The causes of revolution are often complex and overlapping. It can be useful to consider the long-term and short-term **causes**, and the **triggers**, of revolution. If you consider the metaphor of a revolution as a fire, the descriptions to the right outline the role of each of these.

The path towards revolution is never a smooth one. Rarely do you see revolutionary tension steadily rise; rather it ebbs and flows as those in power attempt to put an end to discontent (through a combination of repression and reform). This results in periods of escalation and de-escalation of revolutionary beliefs and action. Identifying a series of crisis points in the lead up to revolution can help you more clearly see this process.

Of course, one of the challenges in a study of Revolutions is to evaluate the various factors that cause revolution. How are these factors related? Are some factors more significant than others? To what extent? Does this change over time? Why?

## THE CONSEQUENCES OF REVOLUTION

Seizing power is only one of the hurdles a revolutionary party or movement faces. All too often, the threat of further revolution or counter-revolution drives the new government's decisions and actions. Revolutionary ideals may be compromised. Arguably, the consequences of revolution can be unintended—this study asks you to identify the intended and unintended effects of revolution and evaluate how these impacted different groups of people at the time. You should compare the perspectives of people within and between groups and evaluate the positive and negative consequences of living in the 'new society'.

## CHANGE AND CONTINUITY

Ultimately, the concepts of cause and consequence are used to understand not just the dynamics of a revolution but also to analyse the extent to which revolution resulted in change. The rhetoric of revolutionary leaders, parties and movements is often utopian—they promise a better life with greater freedom, less hierarchical control and more equality—but do they deliver? Sometimes the new regime ends up every bit (or even more) repressive than the regime it supplanted.

In comparing the political, economic and social dimensions of life in the 'old' and 'new' societies, this course of study invites an appraisal of the changes and continuities a revolution brought to society. What changes were evident? Were they positive or negative? What stayed the same (continued)? Why? Did life change for all groups in society or just for some? How do we know?

### LONG-TERM CAUSES

The sources of fuel needed to stage a revolution are long-held political, economic, social and cultural structures, often based on issues of equality and control. These act to interrupt the status quo—much like chopping down a tree interrupts the ecology of a forest system.



### SHORT-TERM CAUSES

Unresolved and growing over time, these structures generate grievances and resentments that metaphorically become the fuel for the revolutionary fire.



### TRIGGERS

The spark that ignites a revolution can be planned or unplanned; it can be an **event** or the actions, or inactions, of an **individual** or a group. Regardless, the trigger often galvanises revolutionary **movements** into action. Sometimes that action involves a mass-movement, whilst at others it offers an opportunity that smaller groups can utilise to seize power.



## SIGNIFICANCE

As you examine the causes and consequences of revolution, and the resultant changes and continuities, Revolutions also asks you to evaluate the relative significance of these. Were some movements, ideas, individuals and events more significant than others? Why/Why not? When assessing significance, consider:

Scale	How many people did it affect?
Duration	How long did it last?
Profundity (how profound something is)	What intensity of change did it produce? Deep impact or surface-level change?

## PERSPECTIVES AND INTERPRETATIONS

Significance is a relative term. One must always ask—significant to whom? In answering this, consideration must be given to:

- the **perspectives** and experiences of different groups of people at the time. Were certain movements, ideas, individuals and events seen as more significant by certain groups? Why/why not?
- the **interpretations** of others (often historians) after the time. Have views of significance changed? Why/why not?

*Ultimately, the complexities and moral dilemmas found in the study of revolutions makes for rewarding analysis and evaluation. As a student of Revolutions it is your job to grapple with these concepts and construct your own evidence-based historical arguments.*

written by Catherine Hart

# SECTION A

## CAUSES OF REVOLUTION

- What were the significant **causes** of revolution?
- How did the actions of **popular movements** and particular **individuals** contribute to triggering a revolution?
- To what extent did **social tensions** and **ideological conflicts** contribute to the outbreak of revolution?<sup>1</sup>

*'Is this stupidity?  
Or is this treason?'*

**PAVEL MILIUKOV,  
SPEECH TO THE DUMA,  
NOVEMBER 1916**



Rasputin

# 300,000

WORKERS PROTEST  
ON THE STREETS  
OF PETROGRAD

26 February 1917



**THE RUSSIAN EMPIRE**

covered over **16%**  
of the world's surface

126 million people

**82%** peasants



*'The most colossal state  
apparatus in the world making  
use of every achievement of  
modern technological progress  
in order to retard the historical  
progress of its own country.'*

**LEON TROTSKY**

*'Peace! Bread!  
Land!'*

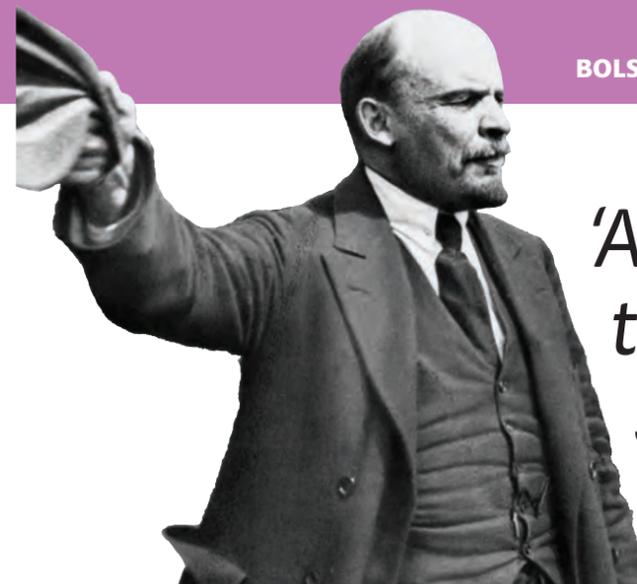
**RUSSO-JAPANESE WAR**



# 45 MINUTES

Time taken by the  
Japanese Imperial  
Navy to sink Russia's  
Baltic Fleet

**BOLSHEVIK SLOGANS**



*'All Power  
to the  
Soviets!'*

*'There is no God  
any longer.  
There is no tsar.'*

**FATHER GAPON, BLOODY SUNDAY**



**WORLD WAR I**

# 6.5 MILLION

MEN MOBILISED

# 4.6 MILLION

RIFLES AVAILABLE



*'This is not war,  
sir, it is slaughter.  
The Germans use  
up shells; we use up  
human lives.'*

**RUSSIAN OFFICER, c. 1915**

<sup>1</sup> Extract from the VCE History Revolutions Study Design (2022–2026) © VCAA, reproduced by permission.

### A word about dates

Until February 1918 Russia used the Julian calendar, which was thirteen days behind the Gregorian calendar used by the rest of the world. The Gregorian calendar is still the international calendar used today.

In this book we have used the dates that applied in Russia at the time of each event. So we talk about the 'October Revolution', even though, according to the rest of the world, it took place in November. Where an event refers to two countries that used different calendars, we have used the abbreviation NS (New Style) to show dates that follow the Gregorian calendar.

All dates after February 1918 follow the Gregorian calendar.

# TIMELINE

## PRE-1896

↓

- 1613**  
The Romanov dynasty comes to power
- 1848**  
Marx and Engels publish the *Communist Manifesto*
- 1853-1856**  
Crimean War
- 1855-1881**  
Reign of Alexander II
- 1861**  
Emancipation of the serfs
- 1881**  
Terrorist group the 'People's Will' assassinates Tsar Alexander II
- 1881-1894**  
Reign of Alexander III
- 1891-1892**  
Severe famine
- 1891**  
Construction of the Trans-Siberian Railway begins
- 1893-1903**  
**KEY EVENT**  
Rapid industrialisation known as the 'Great Spurt' initiated under Sergei Witte
- 1894**  
Death of Alexander III  
Tsar Nicholas II comes to power



## 1896-26 OCTOBER 1917

↓

- 1893-1903**  
Great Spurt
- 14 MAY 1896**  
Coronation of Tsar Nicholas & Tsarina Alexandra
- 8 FEBRUARY 1904**  
Russo-Japanese War begins
- 9 JANUARY 1905**  
Bloody Sunday
- 17 OCTOBER 1905**  
October Manifesto
- 8 JULY 1906**  
First Duma dissolved
- 23 APRIL 1906**  
Fundamental Laws passed
- 1 SEPTEMBER 1911**  
Stolypin assassinated

**1896**  
**KEY EVENT**  
**14 MAY 1896**  
Coronation of Tsar Nicholas and Tsarina Alexandra; Khodynka Field Tragedy

**1898**  
**1898**  
Social Democratic Workers' Party (SDs) founded

**1901**  
**1901**  
Socialist Revolutionaries (SRs) formally established

**1902**  
**MARCH 1902**  
Lenin's *What Is to Be Done?* published

**1903**  
**JULY-AUGUST 1903**  
Social Democrats split into Bolshevik and Menshevik factions

**1904**  
**KEY EVENT**  
**8 FEBRUARY 1904**  
Japanese attack on Port Arthur in China sparks Russo-Japanese War

**15 JULY 1904**  
Assassination of Minister of the Interior Vyacheslav Plehve

**6-9 NOVEMBER 1904**  
National Congress of the Zemstvos

**20 DECEMBER 1904**  
Port Arthur surrenders to the Japanese

**DECEMBER 1904**  
Dismissal of four workers from Putilov Steelworks in St Petersburg triggers widespread industrial unrest

**1905**  
**KEY EVENT**  
**7-8 JANUARY 1905**  
Major strikes in St Petersburg

**9 JANUARY 1905**  
**KEY EVENT**  
Bloody Sunday massacre

**FEBRUARY 1905**  
Russian defeat at Mukden

**8 MAY 1905**  
Union of Unions formed

**14 MAY 1905**  
Russian defeat in Battle of Tsushima

**14 JUNE 1905**  
Mutiny on the Battleship *Potemkin*

**5 SEPTEMBER 1905**  
Treaty of Portsmouth ends Russo-Japanese War

**12-18 OCTOBER 1905**  
Constitutional Democrats (Kadets) formed

**1905**  
**KEY EVENT**  
**14 OCTOBER 1905**  
St Petersburg paralysed by general strike

**17 OCTOBER 1905**  
**KEY EVENT**  
October Manifesto

**OCTOBER 1905**  
Octobrists formed

**21 NOVEMBER 1905**  
Moscow Soviet formed

**7-18 DECEMBER 1905**  
Moscow Soviet workers' uprising

**8 DECEMBER 1905**  
Moscow uprising suppressed by force

**1906**  
**1906**  
Factions lead to splits in the Socialist Revolutionary Party

**APRIL 1906**  
Resignation of Prime Minister Sergei Witte

**23 APRIL 1906**  
**KEY EVENT**  
Fundamental Laws passed

**27 APRIL 1906**  
First Duma opens

**JUNE 1906**  
Stolypin appointed Prime Minister

**8 JULY 1906**  
**KEY EVENT**  
First Duma dissolved

**1907**  
**20 FEBRUARY 1907**  
Second Duma opens

**3 JUNE 1907**  
Second Duma dissolved and new electoral laws passed

**7 NOVEMBER 1907**  
Third Duma opens

**1911**  
**KEY EVENT**  
**1 SEPTEMBER 1911**  
Stolypin assassinated

**1912**  
**1912**  
Bolsheviks and Mensheviks officially split

**4 NOVEMBER 1912**  
Striking workers at Lena minefield massacred by tsarist forces

**15 NOVEMBER 1912**  
Fourth Duma convened (remains in session until 1914)

1 August 1914 NS  
Germany declares war on Russia

22 August 1915  
Tsar Nicholas takes charge of armed forces

16 December 1916  
Rasputin murdered

23 February 1917  
International Women's Day marches

27 February 1917  
Petrograd garrison mutiny  
Petrograd Soviet formed  
Provisional Committee assumes authority

3–4 April 1917  
Lenin returns and presents April Theses

3–6 July 1917  
July Days  
18 June–2 July 1917  
Kerensky's June Offensive

10 October 1917  
Bolshevik Central Committee meets  
19–30 August 1917  
Kornilov Affair

25–26 October 1917  
Storming of the Winter Palace

**1914**  
**KEY EVENT**  
**1 AUGUST 1914 NS**  
Germany declares war on Russia  
**28–31 AUGUST 1914**  
Battle of Tannenburg  
**15 SEPTEMBER 1914**  
Russian army defeated at Masurian Lakes

**1915**  
**KEY EVENT**  
**22 AUGUST 1915**  
Tsar Nicholas takes charge of armed forces  
**25 AUGUST 1915**  
Progressive bloc in Duma calls for reform of ministers  
**2 SEPTEMBER 1915**  
Tsar dismisses Duma

**1916**  
**KEY EVENT**  
**4 JUNE–20 SEPTEMBER 1916**  
Brusilov Offensive  
**16 DECEMBER 1916**  
Rasputin murdered

**1917**  
**KEY EVENT**  
**9 JANUARY 1917**  
150,000 demonstrate in memory of Bloody Sunday  
**18 JANUARY 1917**  
Putilov Steelworks strike  
**23 FEBRUARY 1917**  
International Women's Day marches  
**26 FEBRUARY 1917**  
Duma defies Tsar's order to disband  
**27 FEBRUARY 1917**  
Petrograd garrison mutiny  
**KEY EVENT**  
Petrograd Soviet formed  
**KEY EVENT**  
Provisional Committee assumes authority

**1 MARCH 1917**  
Soviet Order No 1  
**2 MARCH 1917**  
Abdication of the tsar  
Provisional Government formed  
**20 MARCH 1917**  
Tsereteli returns to Russia and develops Revolutionary Defencism  
**27 MARCH 1917**  
Provisional Government releases its Declaration of War Aims

**KEY EVENT**  
**1917**  
(continued)  
**3–4 APRIL 1917**  
Lenin returns to Russia and presents his April Theses  
**18 APRIL 1917**  
Miliukov puts forward his Note  
**20 APRIL 1917**  
Riots in Petrograd against Provisional Government's handling of war  
**4 MAY 1917**  
Trotsky returns to Russia  
**5 MAY 1917**  
First Coalition Government  
**18 JUNE–2 JULY 1917**  
Kerensky's June Offensive

**KEY EVENT**  
**3–6 JULY 1917**  
July Days  
**8 JULY 1917**  
Kerensky becomes Prime Minister

**KEY EVENT**  
**18 JULY 1917**  
Kornilov appointed Supreme Commander of the Armed Forces  
**25 JULY 1917**  
Second Coalition Government  
**12–15 AUGUST 1917**  
Moscow State Conference  
**19–30 AUGUST 1917**  
Kornilov Affair

**KEY EVENT**  
**2 SEPTEMBER 1917**  
Bolsheviks achieve majority in Moscow Soviet  
**13 SEPTEMBER 1917**  
Bolsheviks gain majority in Petrograd Soviet

**14–19 SEPTEMBER 1917**  
Democratic State Conference  
**25 SEPTEMBER 1917**  
Third Coalition Government  
Trotsky becomes chairman of Petrograd Soviet  
Lenin revives slogan 'All Power to the Soviets'

**7 OCTOBER 1917**  
Preparliament opens

**KEY EVENT**  
**1917**  
(continued)  
**10 OCTOBER 1917**  
Bolshevik Central Committee meets to discuss whether to seize power from the Provisional Government  
**16 OCTOBER 1917**  
First full meeting of Military Revolutionary Committee (Milrevcom)

**23–24 OCTOBER 1917**  
Kerensky orders arrest of leading Bolsheviks, closure of Bolshevik newspapers and raising the bridges of central Petrograd

**24 OCTOBER 1917**  
Trotsky's Milrevcom troops and Red Guards begin to re-take city from Kerensky's forces

**25–26 OCTOBER 1917**  
A Bolshevik-led insurrection seizes power in the 'storming' of the Winter Palace  
Second All-Russian Congress of Soviets

**KEY EVENT**



**27 OCTOBER 1917**  
Founding of the Council of People's Commissars (Sovnarkom) declared

# WAR AND REVOLUTION

(1914–1917)

# CHAPTER 5

*'I pity the Tsar. I pity Russia. He is a poor and unhappy sovereign. What did he inherit and what will he leave? He is obviously a good and quite intelligent man, but he lacks will power, and it is from that character that his state defects developed, that is, his defects as a ruler, especially an autocratic and absolute ruler.'*

—Sergei Witte



**Source 5.01** Burning of Eagles and Tsar's Portraits by Ivan Vladimirov, circa 1917. The painting depicts the burning of a portrait of Tsar Nicholas II during the February Revolution, 1917.

In February 1914, former Minister for the Interior Pyotr Durnovo warned Tsar Nicholas that a war with Germany would lead to revolution.

World War I exposed and worsened the flaws in the tsarist regime. The flood of patriotism that followed the declaration of war in 1914 was soon forgotten in the wake of successive military defeats and economic distress, for which the government got the blame.

Russia's government was plagued by poor leadership and political scandals—notably the malign influence of Rasputin. As Durnovo had predicted, military defeats and economic woes led to 'social conflict in its most extreme form'. The situation in early 1917 was far worse than it had been in 1905. Peasants, workers, high society and the military had lost confidence in Tsar Nicholas. His wife Tsarina Alexandra was deeply unpopular and the source of much outrage.

In February 1917, a largely spontaneous protest by the women of Petrograd escalated into a mass-revolutionary movement. Troops refused to put down the protest—instead, many joined the revolution. In the middle of this turmoil, new authorities emerged in the Petrograd Soviet and Provisional Committee. Tsar Nicholas agonised over his predicament but was eventually persuaded to abdicate by the High Command and Duma representatives. In what seemed like a decisive break with Russia's autocratic past, the revolution of 'Glorious February' brought 304 years of Romanov rule to an end.

## KEY QUESTIONS

- What were the causes of World War I and its immediate impacts on Russia?
- What were the limitations of Russia's preparations for war?
- How did military challenges contribute to revolutionary tensions?
- How did economic difficulties and social tensions in World War I challenge the tsarist regime?
- What roles did Tsar Nicholas, Tsarina Alexandra and Rasputin play in undermining the tsarist regime?
- What were the immediate triggers of the February Revolution?
- How did popular movements and ideas influence the development and outbreak of the February Revolution?

## KEY EVENTS

- **1 August 1914 NS**  
Germany declares war on Russia
- **13–17 August 1914**  
Battle of Tannenberg
- **August 1915**  
Tsar Nicholas takes charge of armed forces
- **4 June–20 September 1916**  
Brusilov Offensive
- **16 December 1916**  
Rasputin murdered
- **23 February 1917**  
International Women's Day marches
- **27 February 1917**  
Petrograd garrison mutiny  
Petrograd Soviet formed  
Provisional Committee assumes authority
- **2 March 1917**  
Abdication of the tsar  
Provisional Government formed

# CAUSES OF WORLD WAR I

KEY DEVELOPMENT

**Friedrich Engels:** 'War is the mid-wife of every old society pregnant with a new one.'

By 1914, there were strong indications that a conflict between Europe's great powers was likely at any time. The preconditions for war had been set:

- European popular culture glorified the greatness of war. Many people welcomed a war as an opportunity for adventure, and few understood the horrors involved.
- Aggressive **nationalism** was widespread. Governments encouraged these sentiments to secure domestic popular support, and the press commonly celebrated patriotic achievements.
- There was intense rivalry between nations keen on expanding their empires. Relations between Germany and France were tense, and their colonial ambitions in Africa had almost caused a war prior to World War I.
- Ethnic loyalties were a cause of division and conflict—especially in the Balkans and parts of the Austrian-Hungarian Empire. As a **Slavic** nation, Russia had historic and cultural ties to the Balkans and took a keen interest in the region.
- The development and build-up of armaments and navies escalated into an arms race. Major powers spent a large portion of their budgets expanding and maintaining their armies. A powerful military was seen as a deterrent to war but, as Tsar Nicholas noted, 'The accelerating arms race is transforming the armed peace into a crushing burden that weighs on all nations and, if prolonged, will lead to the very cataclysm it seeks to avert'.<sup>1</sup> Each nation had detailed plans for mobilisation in readiness for war.
- An intricate balance of treaties divided Europe. Austria-Hungary and Germany were allied by the Triple Alliance. Britain, France and Russia were sworn to mutual defence by the Triple Entente. Other treaties and agreements tied smaller nations to great powers, such as Serbia to Russia, and Belgium to Britain.

On 28 June 1914 (**NS**), Archduke Franz Ferdinand—the heir to the Austrian-Hungarian throne—was assassinated in the Bosnian city of Sarajevo. The assassin, Gavrilo Princip, was believed to be a member of the Serbian terrorist group, the Black Hand.



**nationalism** identifying with your country and national identity

**Slavic** East European ethnicity with shared culture and origin of language

**'NS'/Dates** Until February 1918, Russia used the Julian calendar, which was thirteen days behind the Gregorian calendar used by the rest of the world.

In this book we have used the dates that applied in Russia at the time of each event. Where an event refers to two countries that used different calendars, we have used the abbreviation NS (New Style) to show dates that follow the Gregorian calendar. All dates after February 1918 follow the Gregorian calendar.

## → Source 5.02

### WORLD WAR I ALLIANCES

The nations of the Triple Entente were known as the Allies, while Germany, Austria-Hungary and the Ottoman Empire were the Central Powers.

Note: Italy had been a member of the Triple Alliance but joined the Allies at the start of the war.

#### Allies

- British Empire
- French Republic
- Russian Empire

#### Central Powers

- German Empire
- Austrian-Hungarian Empire
- Ottoman Empire

Ferdinand's assassination provided the spark that inflamed Europe's tensions.

Outraged by the murder, the Austrian government sought German support for a declaration of war on Serbia. On 23 July (**NS**), Austria issued an ultimatum to Serbia so harsh it knew the Serbian government would not accept. One month after the assassination of Ferdinand, Austria declared war on Serbia.

The Serbian government appealed to Russia for support. Russia did not want to see further Austrian expansion into the Balkans and came to Serbia's aid. Tsar Nicholas ordered the partial mobilisation of his troops against Austria on 16 July (29 July **NS**), then full mobilisation on 17 July (30 July **NS**).

Nicholas had no enthusiasm for a large-scale war. His partial mobilisation order was an attempt to avoid conflict with Germany. Nicholas had been warned by advisers that the Russian armed forces could not partially mobilise—it was full mobilisation or nothing—but he persisted. Nicholas' orders confused his generals, and his advisers eventually convinced him to follow the full mobilisation plan.

In the final days leading to World War I, Tsar Nicholas and his German cousin Kaiser Wilhelm II exchanged telegrams in an attempt to resolve the impending crisis. However, Russia's mobilisation on 17 July (30 July **NS**) put enormous pressure on Germany's war strategy—as the Germans wanted to avoid fighting on two fronts by first defeating France, then attacking Russia. On 19 July (1 August **NS**) Germany declared war on the Russian Empire. By 22 July (4 August **NS**) the Great War had begun:

- Austria had mobilised
- Germany had declared war on France, and invaded Belgium
- Britain had declared war on Germany.

## INITIAL RESPONSES TO WAR

**Grigory Rasputin:** 'Let Papa not plan for war; for with war will come the end of Russia and yourselves, and you will lose to the last man.'

Tsar Nicholas—like most statesmen of his era—did not anticipate how difficult World War I would be. Few leaders expected or were prepared for a war that lasted years and required all of their nation's resources. Most imagined that it would be over within a few months—a year at most.

Modern warfare was completely new. The use of machine guns, heavy artillery and trench warfare resulted in long, bloody conflicts that had never been seen before. Durnovo, Count Witte and Rasputin all cautioned Nicholas against war with Germany. But once Nicholas had committed his nation to war, he set aside his misgivings—and put his faith in God and the military might of the so-called 'Russian steamroller'.



↑ Source 5.03 A representation of the assassination of Austria's Archduke Ferdinand.

### DID YOU KNOW?

Tsar Nicholas and Kaiser Wilhelm of Germany had been on quite friendly terms before World War I. The cousins went on holiday together, and enjoyed sailing around the Mediterranean on Wilhelm's yacht.

### ACTIVITY

#### CHECK YOUR UNDERSTANDING

- 1 Whose assassination was the catalyst for World War I?
- 2 Which Balkans nation was Russia supporting that led to it being drawn into World War I?



↑ **Source 5.04** Tsar Nicholas on the balcony of the Winter Palace.

↗ **Source 5.05** Russian soldiers fighting in trenches.

The declaration of war caused an immediate outpouring of Russian nationalism, which led to popular expressions of loyalty and goodwill towards the tsar. Nicholas was seen as the living embodiment of his nation, and there was a genuine feeling that everyone should rally behind him and support Russia's war effort. As a result:

- strikes and worker militancy went into dramatic decline
- barricades blocking streets in working-class suburbs of major cities came down overnight
- revolutionaries who questioned the war, such as Lenin, were seen as traitors
- many European socialists set aside their internationalist leanings and supported their own nation's war efforts.

The wave of patriotism in 1914 saw the government change the name of 'St Petersburg'—which sounded German—to the more Russian 'Petrograd'. To make sure they did not interfere in the war effort, the Duma dissolved itself until the end of hostilities.

On 20 July (2 August NS), the day after Germany's declaration of war, a vast crowd gathered in Palace Square to pay homage to their tsar and their country. Nicholas waved to the crowd from a balcony of the Winter Palace. Those gathered in the square below—one of the sites of the 1905 Bloody Sunday massacre—fell to their knees and sang the hymn, 'God Save the Tsar'.

This was an incredibly powerful moment for Nicholas, who shed tears of joy. He felt a deep bond with his people and believed they sincerely loved him. He kept believing they loved him even as his popularity declined over the course of the war. This day was his enduring memory of his subjects, with himself as their 'Little Father'.

Later that day, Nicholas signed Russia's declaration of war, which proclaimed: 'In this fearsome hour of trial let internal dissension be forgotten. May the unity between tsar and people become ever stronger, and may Russia, risen up as one, repel the impudent onslaught enemy.'<sup>2</sup>

World War I would be a trial for every fighting nation. For Russia, the war would cause revolutionary tensions, and ultimately break the bond between the tsar and his people. The patriotism of 1914 was soon forgotten when news of military defeats arrived and problems on the home front emerged.

### ACTIVITY

#### CHECK YOUR UNDERSTANDING

- 1 Why was the Russian army popularly described as the 'Russian steamroller'?
- 2 What was the immediate reaction in Russia to World War I? What was its impact?

### Pyotr Durnovo, *Memorandum to the tsar, February 1914*

KEY SOURCE

Under what conditions will this clash occur and what will be its probable consequences? The fundamental groupings in a future war are self-evident: Russia, France, and England, on the one side, with Germany, Austria, and Turkey, on the other. It is more than likely that other powers, too, will participate in that war ... Are we prepared for so stubborn a war as the future war of the European nations will undoubtedly become? This question we must answer, without evasion, in the negative ... [Russia's preparations are] quite inadequate considering the unprecedented scale on which a future war will inevitably be fought ... The network of strategic railways is inadequate. The railways ... [are] sufficient, perhaps, for normal traffic, but not commensurate with the colossal demands ... of a European war ... Lastly, it should not be forgotten that the impending war will be fought among the most civilised and technically most advanced nations ... the technical backwardness of our industries does not create favourable conditions for our adoption of the new inventions ... From this point of view, a struggle between Germany and Russia, regardless of its issue, is profoundly undesirable to both sides ... a general European war is mortally dangerous both for Russia and Germany, no matter who wins. It is our firm conviction ... that there must inevitably break out in the defeated country a social revolution which, by the very nature of things, will spread.

← **Source 5.06** Cited in Frank Alfred Golder, *Documents of Russian History 1914–1917* (New York: The Century Co., 1927), 8–9.

### ACTIVITY

#### HISTORICAL SOURCES

Using Source 5.06 and your own knowledge, respond to the following:

- 1 Outline the likely impacts of a war between the European powers.
- 2 Explain the limitations of Russia's preparedness for a major war in 1914.
- 3 Analyse the expectations for the war and its initial impact on Russia. Use evidence to support your response.

## THE GREAT MILITARY PROGRAM

Grand Duke Nikolai Nikolaevich: 'I have no rifles, no shells, no boots!'

As part of its obligations under the 1891 Franco-Russian Alliance, France had agreed to partially fund improvements to Russia's military infrastructure—such as bridges, roads and railway lines to the German and Austrian borders. In 1912, the Great Military Program was announced. This provided more funding for artillery and transport, and for administration of mobilisation plans.

The Great Military Program was due to be completed by 1917, but had made little progress by 1914. One of the limitations of the program was revealed when artillery ammunition reserves almost ran out in the first six months of the war. Russia's Commander-in-Chief, Grand Duke Nikolai, noted: 'The expenditure of shell has reached unheard-of proportions.'<sup>3</sup>

Towards the end of 1914, artillery officers were ordered to reduce the rate of firing to three rounds a day—no matter what the enemy did. Disobedience was subject to court martial. In the early campaigns of the war, the supply of boots and rifles to soldiers was grossly inadequate.

- Russia initially mobilised the largest army in Europe, with 6.5 million men—but had only 4.6 million rifles available.<sup>4</sup>
- Soldiers without guns were instructed to pick one up from a wounded or dead comrade.
- There was no coordinated collection or redistribution of rifles recovered from the field.
- The army was short of the recommended number of cartridges by a billion.
- Canvas boots issued to the first call-up of conscripts were acceptable for a summer campaign but were not suited to winter conditions or trench warfare.

There were also notable deficiencies in the quality of Russia's military leadership. Commander-in-Chief Grand Duke Nikolai was popular with the troops and supported

### DID YOU KNOW?

Grand Duke Nikolai was one of many male Romanov relatives who towered over Tsar Nicholas. Whereas Duke Nikolai's stature exuded authority, Nicholas' height and less commanding presence was the source of jokes.

↗ **Source 5.07** Tsar Nicholas and Grand Duke Nikolai.



## ACTIVITY

## CHECK YOUR UNDERSTANDING

- 1 Who was Commander-in-Chief of the Russian armed forces?
- 2 Describe the limitations of the Great Military Program. Note specific examples in your response.
- 3 What were the typical characteristics of many Russian generals?

military reforms, but he freely admitted his limitations as a tactical commander. Nikolai was despised by the War Minister General Vladimir Sukhomlinov. Sukhomlinov scorned Nikolai's complaints about his troop's lack of supplies. He claimed that mass bayonet charges and sabre-wielding cavalry were the fundamentals of warfare. Sukhomlinov boasted, 'Look at me! I have not read a military manual for the last twenty years.'<sup>5</sup>

Appointments to the Russian High Command were usually based on seniority of service and loyalty to the tsar, rather than competence. Poor leadership would be a contributing factor to Russia's appalling war casualties and territorial losses. Typical characteristics of Russian generals were:

- interpersonal rivalries
- ignorance of modern military tactics
- limited tactical initiative.

## MILITARY CAMPAIGNS

**General Alexei Polivanov:** 'The army is no longer retreating but simply fleeing ... Headquarters has completely lost its head. Contradictory orders, absence of a plan, feverish changes of commanding officers, and general confusion upset even the most courageous men.' (Polivanov replaced Sukhomlinov as Minister of War in mid-1914.)



## BATTLE OF LEMBERG, 5–21 AUGUST 1914

Russia's initial military strategy involved simultaneous campaigns against German East Prussia and the Austrian province of Galicia. The Russian military had significant success in the Galician campaign. Under the command of generals Ivanov, Brusilov and Ruzsky, the Russian army defeated the Austrian armed forces, which lost approximately 400,000 men—one-third of the Austrian army:

- 100,000 Austrians were killed
- 100,000 Austrians were captured
- 200,000 Austrians were wounded.

A substantial number of Austrian officers were lost. The Russians lost 225,000 men, but the Galician capital of Lemberg was captured. Success at the Battle of Lemberg lifted the mood of the Russian public after their German defeats. The Germans were forced to transfer military forces to support the Austrian Front from collapsing.

← Source 5.08

## BATTLE OF TANNENBERG, 13–17 AUGUST 1914

The Russian invasion of East Prussia was carried out by two armies:

- the First Army, led by General Paul von Rennenkampf
- the Second Army, led by General Alexander Samsonov.

German forces were commanded by generals Eric von Ludendorff and Paul von Hindenburg. Russian forces outnumbered the Germans, but the Russian campaign faced difficulties from the outset—which ultimately led to disaster. The East Prussian invasion was poorly planned:

- General Rennenkampf's First Army took considerable territory in the opening days of the offensive, but supplies could not keep up with the advancing units.
- The Russians failed to encode their wireless transmissions—so the Germans knew the Russian plans in advance, and manoeuvred their forces into favourable positions.
- On 13–17 August, the Germans surrounded and attacked General Samsonov's Second Army at the Battle of Tannenberg. General Rennenkampf was slow in responding to calls for assistance from his rival and did not join the battle.

In four days, 70,000 Russian soldiers were killed or wounded, and 100,000 were captured. The Germans captured 350 heavy artillery guns. A humiliated General Samsonov slipped away from his command post into the forest and shot himself. The Germans suffered 15,000 casualties.



↑ Source 5.09 Battle of Tannenberg, August 1914.

## BATTLE OF MASURIAN LAKES, 27 AUGUST–1 SEPTEMBER 1914

The Germans made effective use of railways in their defence of East Prussia. Veterans of the Battle of Tannenberg were reinforced by more troops, and moved by rail north against Rennenkampf's First Army. Hindenburg's German forces attacked and almost encircled the Russian First Army at the Battle of Masurian Lakes, 27 August–1 September.

The Russians lost 60,000 men before General Rennenkampf ordered a retreat. The Russian army was thus dealt a humiliating blow and decisively ejected from German territory. Russian defeats at the battles of Tannenberg and Masurian Lakes reflected badly on the tsarist regime.

## BRUSILOV OFFENSIVE, 22 MAY–31 JULY 1916

Austrian-German offensives in 1915 resulted in further Russian losses in Galicia, Poland, Latvia and Lithuania. A million troops were killed and considerable territory lost as the Russian army endured its Great Retreat.

Despite its victories, it was clear to the German High Command that Russia would not be defeated in the immediate future. Germany therefore concentrated its forces on the Western Front. This decision unintentionally allowed the Russian military time to recover, replenish its artillery stocks and equip every soldier with a rifle.

A Russian campaign along the Southwestern Front against the Austrians was planned and led by General Aleksei Brusilov. Brusilov was one of the few genuinely talented Russian military commanders. He was distinguished by his original thinking, preparedness and commitment to decisive action. Brusilov's tactics included heavier but shorter artillery bombardments, which gave the enemy less warning before his assaults.

↓ Source 5.10 Cossack cavalry charging.



## ACTIVITY

## CHECK YOUR UNDERSTANDING

- 1 Using statistics, outline the significant losses Russia suffered in the battles of Tannenberg and Masurian Lakes.
- 2 How did the Brusilov Offensive differ from other Russian campaigns?

Brusilov made a careful study of Austrian positions, focusing his forces at the weakest points along the Southwestern Front. He also attacked at multiple points simultaneously. The Brusilov Offensive was one of the most stunning campaigns of the war.

Brusilov's army caused the collapse of the Austrian-Hungarian Front, and in ten weeks captured 425,000 men and considerable Galician territory. The Austrian-German armies suffered 760,000 casualties—616,000 of which were Austrian alone. The Brusilov Offensive was one of the deadliest battles of the war. However, victory came at a terrible price, with 550,000 dead or wounded Russian soldiers.

The incompetent and overcautious Russian High Command failed to capitalise on Brusilov's Offensive. Brusilov had launched maximum troop numbers against the Austrians—but this meant that he had committed all of his reserve troops. Reinforcements were slow to arrive and supporting assaults were not launched. The Russian advance came to a halt.

Despite this lack of support, the Brusilov Offensive fulfilled its intentions:

- Germany was forced to transfer troops from the Western Front to the Eastern Front, which relieved pressure on French and British troops at Verdun.
- The Austrian army was effectively knocked out of the war, unable to conduct further campaigns without German support.

However, this limited success on the battlefield came at great cost—and did little to stem discontent on the home front.

## THE HUMAN COST OF WAR

**General Aleksei Brusilov:** 'In a year of war the regular army had vanished. It was replaced by an army of ignoramuses.'

In the first five months of World War I, 400,000 Russian men were killed, and a million wounded. The staggering losses continued the following year: by mid-1915, about 4 million soldiers were dead, wounded or captured.

The figures for Russian casualties vary considerably because of poor record-keeping at the time. However, it is clear that the number of Russian soldiers killed was higher than the number of soldiers lost by their allies or their enemies. The Russian High Command seemed indifferent to this appalling loss of life, and over the course of the war, 15 million men—mostly peasants—were called up to serve the Russian steamroller. The Russian generals apparently saw the peasants as an inexhaustible resource to use against the enemy.

One officer complained to his superiors: 'This is not war, sir, it is slaughter. The Germans use up shells; we use up human lives'. New conscripts were given inadequate basic training—which sometimes lasted just six weeks, and were poorly equipped in the first year of the war. Brusilov complained that draftees were 'disgustingly untrained', which resulted in an army 'more like an ill-trained militia'.<sup>6</sup> A quarter of Russian soldiers were sent to the front unarmed.<sup>7</sup> One commander reported, 'We have no guns. Misfortune, calamity, I'll be blunt—it's a tragedy.'<sup>8</sup>

The Russian army also lost a considerable number of its officer corps in the first months of war. Where Austrian and German officers took precautions for their own safety, Russian officers were known to advance into battle standing up—even when

they ordered their men to crawl. The result was predictable—one division had 40 officers left out of 370, which was a typical predicament throughout the Russian military by 1915. Russian Quartermaster-General Yuri Danilov admitted that, 'the lack of officers was taking alarming proportions'.<sup>9</sup>

Problems with equipment and training were resolved by 1916, but the damage had been done. Russia's war efforts hindered Germany's ability to fully commit to the Western Front—but the human cost for Russia was enormous, and success against the Austrians did not compensate for Russia's losses to Germany. Vast tracts of the Russian Empire had been lost, and 23 million Russians lived under German occupation.

The loss of territory was a national humiliation, and reflected poorly on the prestige of the tsarist government. The appalling level of casualties sapped the morale of both the troops and the general public. People from all walks of life questioned how Russia could sustain its commitment to the war. The patriotic enthusiasm of 1914 dissolved into fear and anger. Revolutionary ideologies (or beliefs) attracted growing support among workers, soldiers and peasants. Many soldiers could no longer endure the horrors of trench warfare and the loss of so many comrades. By late 1915 increasing numbers of soldiers were deserting the front.



## ACTIVITY

## EXTENDED RESPONSE

Explain how Russia's military challenges in World War I contributed to rising revolutionary tensions. Use evidence to support your response.

## CREATIVE RESPONSE

A key scene in the film *Dr Zhivago* (1965) vividly depicts the change from patriotic support to mass desertion among Russian soldiers in World War I. View this excerpt and write a brief reflection on what caused this change. Alternatively, compose a creative response from a perspective of the time to one of developments depicted in the film.

← **Source 5.11** Russian troops surrendering on the Eastern Front. Despite many losses, the Russian command maintained a confident stance until 1917.

## ECONOMIC IMPACT OF THE WAR

**Mikhail Rodzianko:** 'The country has everything it needs but cannot make adequate use of it.'

Russia entered World War I unprepared for a sustained, total conflict. However, it did have two advantages:

- an enormous population
- a secure food supply.

On the eve of World War I, Russia was the world's largest grain exporter, but such advantages were undermined as the war went on. The limitations of Russia's industrial sector were soon apparent. Faced with chronic shortages of war supplies—particularly rifles and shells—the government directed industry to focus on production for the war effort. This focus aided the war effort, but came at the expense of Russia's civilian population. It led to a rapid decline in living standards for working-class Russians—particularly shortages of basic foods—and was a significant contribution to revolutionary tensions.

## RAILWAYS

Russia's railway infrastructure was unable to cope with the demands of both military mobilisation and the needs of the civilian population. The masses of soldiers, supplies and horses moving to the Eastern Front caused a significant drop in the availability of trains and wagons to deliver food to Russia's cities.

By 1916, Petrograd and Moscow were receiving a third of their usual fuel and food supplies. Factories that previously made parts for locomotives switched to armaments production. This increased delays in train repairs, and created a further factor in the supply crisis. Many of Russia's railway lines were single tracks—which meant that when a train broke down, the entire line stopped. Poor administration resulted in massive hold-ups. Food rotted in carriages waiting for transport while, on occasion, idle rail trucks were tipped off the lines to make way for incoming trains.<sup>10</sup>

Standing for hours on end in queues for bread and other dietary staples became a daily chore for workers. A third of Petrograd's bakeries and two-thirds of its butchers closed because of shortages. Sometimes there was no bread available at all. By 1916, the calorie intake of unskilled workers had fallen by a quarter, and infant mortality had doubled.<sup>11</sup>

While people were not starving, many often went hungry. In the first years of the war, the lack of food was largely a failure of distribution rather than production. The years 1915 and 1916 produced bumper crops, but the government was unable to coordinate the rail system to get food to the cities at the same time as it got its armed forces to the front. The challenges of supply equally applied to fuel. Shortages caused difficulties in industrial production and that meant that the winters of the war years were bitterly cold for ordinary people.

## INFLATION

Backed by the largest gold reserve in the world, the Russian rouble was a strong and stable currency in 1914. However, the war placed severe pressure on the tsarist treasury, which had great difficulty financing the war effort. This was partly because of the government's incompetence.

In August 1914, Tsar Nicholas banned the production and sale of vodka for the duration of the war. He introduced his ban without consulting the Minister of Finance. However, the sales tax on vodka made up about 28 per cent of the Russian government's revenue. This was an enormous amount of revenue to lose, and substitute taxes were unable to replace it.

Russia took out sizeable loans from foreign powers, but expenditure grew from 4 million roubles in 1913 to 30 million roubles in 1916. Between 1914 and 1917, over 1.5 billion roubles was spent on the war. To meet its short-term financial needs, the government abandoned the gold standard and printed more money. The result was an inflated currency—which meant the currency was worth less than the amount printed or stamped on it. By 1917, the rouble could only buy 30 per cent of what it could buy in 1913.

Shortages also led to a steep rise in the price of consumer goods. On average, wages increased by half but food prices increased fourfold. The average real worth of wages fell 65 per cent below their 1913 levels. People from the working classes and lower-middle classes were hit hard by inflation, and any savings they had were wiped out.

Inflation coupled with increased prices led to a fall in working-class living standards, and increased dissatisfaction with the government.

## AGRICULTURE AND THE PEASANTRY

The Russian army was essentially 'peasants in uniform'. Over time, the massive call-up of recruits—most of whom were peasants—reduced the capacity of the agricultural sector. Even wealthy landowners, whose large-scale commercial farms were the most productive, struggled to hire enough labourers. The armed forces also **requisitioned** millions of horses for the war effort.

In an attempt to maintain an adequate grain supply, the tsarist government fixed the price of grain, and introduced a state monopoly on purchases for the army. In 1916, a system of requisitioning set a grain quota for each province to fulfil. However, the peasants were not happy with this, and responded by consuming more of their grain and sowing less.

The war economy meant there were few consumer goods available for trade. The manufacture of tools and agricultural equipment had shifted to war supplies. Because of inflation, there was little incentive for peasants to receive payment in cash. The crisis of grain supply now became a crisis of grain production, as peasants withheld their grain from the market. Instead, they fed up their livestock, ate better or distilled their grain into illegal alcohol, which was a quick 'cash crop' they could trade on the black market.

The system for requisitioning grain was not adequately enforced, and by the end of 1916 there were acute food shortages in towns and cities, and also at the front. Ultimately, the government was blamed for the shortages, while the militant revolutionary groups were the beneficiaries.

## THE RICH GET RICHER

The war was a time of great hardship for the working classes, yet it allowed many of Russia's business elite to vastly increase their wealth. Profits soared as the demands for military orders increased.<sup>12</sup> Discerning industrialists wined and dined people in the government in a bid to secure contracts. Inflation did little harm to those with extensive wealth and financial knowhow, as Russian businessmen shifted their wealth into foreign banks, invested in gold or kept their wealth in assets rather than currency. There were also plenty of opportunities to buy businesses that were in financial difficulty at low cost.

### Leon Trotsky on war profiteering

Speculation of all kinds and gambling on the market went to the point of paroxysm [frenzy]. Enormous fortunes arose out of the bloody foam. The lack of bread and fuel in the capital did not prevent the court jeweler Fabergé from boasting that he had never before done such a flourishing business ... Nobody had any fear of spending too much. 'Society' [social elites] held out its hand and pockets ... A continual shower of gold fell from above ... All came running to grab and gobble.

Those who had the money continued to eat sumptuous meals in fine dining restaurants. The ban on alcohol only applied to vodka, which was the drink of choice for working-class people. Expensive liquors and wines were exempt from the ban—and flowed freely in the clubs of the well-to-do. War meant business, and business was good. Profiteering and the growing social divide between rich and poor contributed to the radicalisation of the popular mood.

**requisition** when a government or official body seizes and claims property or material

### ACTIVITY

#### CHECK YOUR UNDERSTANDING

- Describe how each of these economic factors contributed to rising revolutionary tensions in World War I:
  - railways
  - bread
  - inflation
  - agriculture.
- What is Trotsky's intention when he highlights the profiteering that occurred in World War I?

#### EXTENDED RESPONSE

Explain how economic challenges in World War I undermined the tsarist government and led to revolutionary tensions in Russia. Use evidence to support your response.

← **Source 5.13** Leon Trotsky, *The History of the Russian Revolution* (London: Victor Gollancz, 1934), 46–47.

Source 5.12 Women and children wait in line for milk in Russia, 1917.



## WAR AND POLITICS

**Grigory Rasputin:** 'The tsar can change his mind from one minute to the next; he's a sad man; he lacks guts.'

World War I starkly exposed the shortcomings of the tsarist regime—particularly the leadership of Tsar Nicholas. Nicholas had many personality traits that made him ill-suited to the role of autocrat and left him severely challenged by the complexity of Russia's deepening revolutionary crises. Tragedy seemed to haunt his reign, and Nicholas responded to each misfortune with a fatalistic acceptance that it was all 'God's will'.

He possessed a steadfast belief in the sanctity of the autocracy that made it almost impossible for him to accept reform. Stubborn and limited in intelligence, Nicholas was unable to respond to complex challenges effectively. His contemporaries spoke about how his blank face gave few clues to his state of mind. He was also easily swayed by strong personalities, and a terrible judge of people. These characteristics became more apparent as the war crises became more severe—as did the inability and unwillingness of the tsarist state to accept help from willing external organisations, such as the War Industries Committee and the Union of Zemstvos.

### WAR INDUSTRIES COMMITTEE AND UNION OF ZEMSTVOS

In patriotic response to the war, Russia's business elite and nobility founded several voluntary organisations.

The All-Russian Union of Zemstvos and Union of Towns—headed by Prince Georgi Lvov—made efforts to assist with the transport of supplies to the front, and to care for the wounded. However, the union was not supported by the government, and was hindered by official regulations. To Duma President Rodzianko's support of the Union of Zemstvos, Tsar Nicholas responded: 'Rodzianko is meddling in matters that are none of his business'.<sup>13</sup>

A similar predicament was met by the **War Industries Committee**. Formally convened on 25 July 1915 by progressive Moscow industrialists, the War Industries Committee recognised that the majority of government war contracts were awarded to large Petrograd firms that charged excessive prices and were unable to fulfil every order. One example that particularly frustrated the committee was the shortage in shell supplies.

The War Industries Committee was chaired by Alexander Guchkov, an Octobrist deputy in the Duma. Guchkov appealed to the government to allow a more diversified and competitive allocation of war contracts to create a more efficient and productive war economy. Significantly, the committee called for greater involvement by private business in the management of wartime industry. They also sought official support for the collaboration of the Union of Zemstvos, the Duma and the War Industries Committee.

Despite ongoing economic challenges, the tsar and his senior ministers largely rejected the support of the War Industries Committee—which continued to denounce the negligence of the government as the war went on.

**War Industries Committee**  
an organisation of patriotic businessmen who tried to assist the Russian government with the war effort

## THE PROGRESSIVE BLOC

Tsar Nicholas recalled the Duma on 19 July 1915, after being petitioned by its concerned deputies. Most of the deputies in the Fourth Duma were liberals and conservatives committed to Russia's political institutions. However, the war led many of the deputies to become increasingly critical about the government.

By August 2015, a number of Kadet and Octobrist deputies had come together in a political alliance called the **Progressive Bloc**. Prominent members included Pavel Miliukov and Alexander Guchkov. The Progressive Bloc called for administrative and political reforms, including the dismissal of incompetent ministers and the creation of 'government of public confidence'.

The intention of the Progressive Bloc was to avert revolution by persuading Tsar Nicholas to appoint a more competent cabinet responsible to the Duma. This would mean that Tsar Nicholas would be less to blame for any future misfortune in policy or the war effort. The bloc had the backing of the War Industries Committee and some members of the Council of Ministers and the State Council. Miliukov did his best to make the Progressive Bloc proposals acceptable to the tsar.

However, Nicholas rejected these proposals, and sacked the ministers who backed the reformers. According to Tsarina Alexandra, the so-called 'rebel ministers' were 'fiends worse than the *duma*' who deserved 'a smacking'.<sup>14</sup> Tsar Nicholas would not tolerate any reduction in his authority. On 3 September 1915, the Duma's session was closed until further notice. A significant opportunity to embrace reform and shore up popular support was thus lost: 'They brushed aside the hand that was offered them', recalled Miliukov.<sup>15</sup>

Further Duma sessions were granted, but relations between the government and its parliament continued to deteriorate. On 14 November 1916, Kadet Pavel Miliukov delivered a broad critique of the government in a sensational speech. As he denounced a litany of failures, Miliukov asked with great rhetorical effect: 'Is this stupidity? Or is this treason?' He spoke of the 'dark forces fighting for the benefit of Germany' and 'an enemy hand ... secretly influencing the course of our State affairs'.

#### Miliukov's speech to the Duma

When the Duma keeps everlastingly insisting that the rear must be organised for a successful struggle, the Government persists in claiming that organising the country means organising a revolution, and deliberately prefers chaos and disorganisation. What is it, stupidity or treason?

KEY SOURCE

The speech was banned from publication, but contraband copies were widely distributed. Miliukov's speech articulated the intolerable political crisis unfolding in Russia, and even conservative supporters of the monarchy agreed with his sentiments.

#### ACTIVITY

##### CHECK YOUR UNDERSTANDING

- 1 What were the aims of the War Industries Committee?
- 2 What were the intentions of the Progressive Bloc?
- 3 Describe Tsar Nicholas' response to offers of support from liberal groups.
- 4 What question did Miliukov ask in his November 1916 speech to the Duma?

**Progressive Bloc** an alliance of liberal Duma deputies who petitioned the tsar for political reform during World War I, particularly the creation of a government that had public support



↑ Tsarina Alexandra.

← **Source 5.14** Cited in Frank Alfred Golder, *Documents of Russian History 1914–1917* (New York: The Century Co., 1927), 164.

## COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF TSAR NICHOLAS TURNING POINT

The most disastrous political decision ever made by Tsar Nicholas came on 22 August 1915, when he dismissed Grand Duke Nikolai and appointed himself Commander-in-Chief of Russia's armed forces. The grand duke was sent to command the war effort in the Caucasus—far away from political influence. Nicholas took on the role of commander with the best intentions: his country faced great wartime difficulties and the tsar should therefore be with his troops at the front.

Although Grand Duke Nikolai was not a very effective military commander, he was popular with the troops. Nicholas lacked charisma, and did not make a good impression on the soldiers even when he performed simple ceremonial duties. General Brusilov recalled: 'Faced with a group of soldiers, he was nervous and did not know what to say'.<sup>16</sup>

Tsar Nicholas had no experience in military command, so all major battlefield decisions were made by the new chief of staff, General Alekseev. However, any military failures would now be attributed directly to the tsar. All of Tsar Nicholas' advisers—except for the tsarina—had urged him not to go to the front.

The Council of Ministers warned: 'Sire ... to the best of our understanding, your adoption of such a decision threatens Russia, yourself, and the dynasty with serious consequences'.<sup>17</sup> Rodzianko expressed the will of the Duma—as well as the popular mood—when he wrote to the tsar urging him to retract his decision.

However, Nicholas remained stubbornly committed to his new appointment. On 23 August 1915, the tsar arrived at Mogilev and assumed his duties at the Russian High Command.

### Letter from the president of the Duma, Mikhail Rodzianko, to Tsar Nicholas II, August 1915

The nation longs for and impatiently awaits that authority which will be capable of instilling confidence and leading our native land onto the path of victory. Yet at such a time, Your Majesty, you decide to remove the supreme Commander-in-Chief, whom the Russian people still trust absolutely. The people must interpret your move as one inspired by the Germans around you, who are identified in the minds of the people with our enemies and with treason to the Russian cause.

Your Majesty's decision will appear to the people to be a confession of the hopelessness of the situation and of the chaos that has invaded the administration.

Sire! The situation will be even worse if the army, deprived of a leader enjoying its complete confidence, loses courage.

In this event defeat is inevitable, and within the country revolution and *anarchy* will then inevitably break out, sweeping everything from their path.

Your Majesty! Before it is too late, revoke your decision, no matter how hard it may be for you.

Retain Grand Duke Nikolai Nikolaevich at the head of the army.

Reassure troubled and already alarmed minds by forming a government from among those who enjoy your confidence and are known to the country by their public activities.

Sire, it is not yet too late!

On bended knees I beg you fervently not to delay the decision that will protect from approaching harm the sacred person of the Russian tsar and the reigning dynasty.

Sire, give heed to this truthful, heartfelt word from your loyal servant.

The President of the State Duma, Mikhail Rodzianko

### DID YOU KNOW?

The popularity of Grand Duke Nikolai during World War I displeased Tsar Nicholas. The tsar was irritated that churches prayed for the health of his 'Uncle Nikolasha' and that common people hung his portrait in their homes.

➔ **Source 5.15** Cited in George Vernadsky, ed., *A Source Book for Russian History From Early Times to 1917* (London: Yale University Press, 1972), 844–845.

*anarchy* a state of disorder and lawlessness due to the breakdown or absence of government authority

### ACTIVITY

#### HISTORICAL SOURCES

Using Source 5.15 and your own knowledge, respond to the following:

- 1 Outline Rodzianko's perspective of the likely consequences of Tsar Nicholas' decision to take command of the armed forces.
- 2 Explain how political challenges emerged for the tsarist regime during World War I.
- 3 Evaluate the leadership of Tsar Nicholas during World War I as a cause of revolution. Use evidence to support your response.

## THE TSARINA AND RASPUTIN

The absence of Tsar Nicholas from Petrograd substantially increased the role of Tsarina Alexandra in day-to-day politics. Nicholas readily sought her support as he left for the front: 'Think, my wifey, will you not come to the assistance of your hubby now that he is absent?'<sup>18</sup> The tsarina assured Nicholas that she was fit for the task as his lead representative in the capital: 'Lovey, I am your wall in the rear. I am here, don't laugh at silly old wifey ... she has "trousers" on unseen.'<sup>19</sup>

What made this development extraordinary, tragic and farcical all at the same time was the influence of a peasant faith healer named Grigory Rasputin. Either through his knowledge of traditional healing, or perhaps hypnotism, Rasputin was able to ease the symptoms of Tsarevich Alexei's *haemophilia*. Alexei's condition was a state secret, so a significant factor in the royal family's reliance upon Rasputin was not widely known.

For the tsarina, Rasputin was a man of God, who she affectionately called 'Our Friend'. Over time, Rasputin became her spiritual and political confidant. Giving advice based on visions he had 'seen in the night', Rasputin exerted a powerful sway over the devout tsarina. His influence increased further once Tsar Nicholas left for the front. In turn, the tsarina pestered Nicholas to approve the recommendations that she and Rasputin had made on policy and ministerial appointments.

The tsar did not always grant their requests, replying to one letter from Alexandra: 'Our Friend's opinions of people are sometimes very strange ... therefore one must be careful'.<sup>20</sup> However, Alexandra was persistent, and she often got her way. Nicholas admitted that 'one Rasputin' was preferable to 'ten fits of hysterics every day'. Concerned that her husband lacked political will, Alexandra urged him to comb his hair with Rasputin's comb before meeting with his ministers.

## MINISTERIAL LEAPFROG

The appointment and dismissal of government ministers became commonplace under Tsarina Alexandra, and was described by people from the time as 'ministerial leapfrog'. Between September 1915 and February 1917, Russia had:

- four Prime Ministers
- four Ministers of Education
- three Ministers for Foreign Affairs
- three War Ministers
- three Ministers of Transport
- four Ministers of Justice
- five Ministers of the Interior.<sup>21</sup>

Few ministers had the time to develop substantial policy initiatives, or to fully understand their portfolios.

*haemophilia* a rare inherited bleeding disorder where blood does not clot properly

### MINISTERIAL LEAPFROG: SEPTEMBER 1915–1917

Four Prime Ministers

Four Ministers of Education

Three Ministers for Foreign Affairs

Three War Ministers

Three Ministers of Transport

Four Ministers of Justice

Five Ministers of the Interior

Tsarina Alexandra—like Tsar Nicholas—distrusted strong personalities and was fleeing in her support of figures in the cabinet. She also accepted Rasputin's advice unconditionally. She endorsed any candidate that Rasputin put forward as a potential appointee. Most candidates gained Rasputin's patronage through bribery, with vast sums of money changing hands in sometimes depraved settings.

Some appointees were notable for their incompetence and poor character. Boris Stürmer was made Minister of the Interior in January 1916. He was totally out of depth with his responsibilities and had a well-known passion for all things German. His German name did little to alleviate this unwelcome perception. Stürmer was replaced by Alexander Protopopov in September 1916. A conservative Duma deputy, Protopopov had no previous ministerial experience and was mentally unstable—he had candid conversations with a religious icon on his desk, and attended government meetings dressed in a police uniform.

Tsarina Alexandra was not a well-liked public figure, and her German background made her the subject of scorn—she was often referred to as the *nemka* ('German woman'). Alexandra was not a traitor, but her background and poor judgement in ministerial appointments caused enormous damage to the popular perception of the tsarist regime.

Russia's political degeneration during World War I was noted by many political contemporaries. French ambassador to Russia, Maurice Paléologue, wrote to his government: 'I am obliged to report that, at the present moment, the Russian Empire is run by lunatics'. In his assessment of the political situation in Petrograd after August 1915, Grand Duke Nikolai admitted, 'It is now a reign of chaos'.<sup>22</sup>

### ACTIVITY

#### CHECK YOUR UNDERSTANDING

- 1 When did Tsar Nicholas appoint himself Commander-in-Chief?
- 2 Why was the Tsarina Alexandra close to Rasputin?
- 3 Explain the term 'ministerial leapfrog'.

#### EXTENDED RESPONSE

Explain how political instability during World War I contributed to a revolutionary situation in Russia by late 1916. Use evidence to support your response.

## THE MURDER OF RASPUTIN TURNING POINT

Rasputin's apparent healing abilities were a divine blessing for the tsarina. She never doubted his worth as her trusted spiritual and political adviser. Yet Rasputin also had a dark side that Alexandra refused to acknowledge. He was likely a member of the banned Khlysty sect. The sect believed that spiritual enlightenment could be achieved through frenzied dancing and sexual orgies—after which devotees would repent and feel closer to God.

Despite his role with the royal family, Rasputin continued with his drunken debauchery and seedy behaviour. He gathered a following of women from high society—with whom he allegedly had affairs. Many were apparently attracted by his charm and his remarkable eyes.

Rasputin's behaviour was the source of scandalous rumours, and there was even talk of an affair between himself and Alexandra. Postcards featuring pornographic depictions of the tsarina and her 'mad monk' created quite a public sensation. Political corruption aside, Alexandra's supposed affair with Rasputin was nothing more than rumour—but the gossip was often believed, and it damaged the reputation of the royal family.

Public figures in the Duma and people in high society despaired of the so-called 'dark forces' at work in Russia's government. Many aristocratic men were further incensed by rumours that Rasputin was having sexual relations with ladies of high social standing. Many men spoke of killing Rasputin, and it was widely hoped that, in the event of his death, the tsarina would retreat to a nunnery and Nicholas would listen to more reasoned advice.

In late 1916, Prince Felix Yusupov—a member of one of Russia's wealthiest families—hatched a plot to murder Rasputin. Conspiring with Yusupov were:

- Grand Duke Dmitri Pavlovich Romanov—a cousin of Tsar Nicholas
- Vladimir Purishkevich—Duma deputy
- Sergei Sukhotin—family friend and army officer
- Dr Stanislaus de Lazovert.

On the night of 16 December, Yusopov lured Rasputin to his palace with the promise of meeting his beautiful wife Irina. Yusopov had prepared a room in his basement with comfortable furnishings, plus wine and cakes that Dr Lazovert had laced with poison. The other conspirators waited upstairs and made cheerful noises to give the impression there was a party, playing Yusupov's one record on the gramophone over and over (the record featured only one song: 'Yankee Doodle Dandy').

The murder did not go to plan. Rasputin drank many glasses of wine and ate the cakes—which supposedly contained enough poison to kill a man many times over. He complained of having a heavy head and burning throat, but was very much alive. Rasputin suggested that he and the prince should move their party to a salon featuring gypsy entertainers.

Yusupov was alarmed by this suggestion, excused himself and briefly consulted with his conspirators, who passed him a pistol. Yusupov returned to the basement, asked Rasputin to bless a large ornamental crucifix—and then shot him in the back. Rasputin let out a roar and fell to the ground, unconscious. Yusupov's conspirators rushed downstairs, and Dr Lazovert declared Rasputin dead. The elated murderers went back upstairs to get curtains to conceal the body, while Yusupov returned to inspect the murder scene. Upon examination, Rasputin opened his eyes, called out 'Felix!' and clutched at Yusupov's jacket.

Yusupov was horrified, and ran out of the room screaming for help. Rasputin crawled outside on his hands and knees crying 'Felix! Felix! I will tell the Tsarina everything!'<sup>23</sup> As Rasputin stumbled towards the palace gates 'roaring like an animal', Purishkevich shot him twice more. Then Purishkevich, Dmitri Pavlovich, Sukhotin and Yusupov kicked and punched Rasputin as he was dying. They wrapped his body in a curtain and pushed it through a hole in the frozen Neva River.

However, the murder of 'Our Friend' did not have the desired result. The police learned of the crime and recovered the body a few days later. Tsarina Alexandra was grief-stricken—but made no plans to retire to a nunnery. Minister for the Interior Alexander Protopopov tried to boost his standing with the empress by claiming that he spoke with Rasputin's ghost each evening.



**Source 5.16** A pornographic postcard that was circulated in Petrograd in 1916. The original image included a caption: 'Holding', which was a pun on Rasputin's influence in Russian politics, as well as his alleged affair with the tsarina.

### DID YOU KNOW?

Purishkevich was a popular but infamous Duma deputy. He was well known for his right-wing and anti-Semitic views. In November 1916, he delivered a controversial speech to the Duma: 'The tsar's ministers ... have been turned into ... marionettes whose threads have been taken firmly in hand by Rasputin and the Empress Alexandra ... the evil genius of Russia ... who has remained a German on the Russian throne and alien to the country and its people.'

### DID YOU KNOW?

The post-mortem examination of Rasputin found water in his lungs, which suggests he was still breathing when pushed into the Neva River.

### DID YOU KNOW?

As Russian was not Alexandra's first language, the tsar and tsarina wrote letters to each other in English. English was also the language spoken among the immediate Romanov family.

### DID YOU KNOW?

In late 1914, Rasputin offered to visit the High Command and give his spiritual support to Russia's troops. He wrote to Grand Duke Nikolai: 'I will come and console you'. Commander-in-Chief Nicholas II replied: 'Come and I will hang you!'

Source 5.17 Caricature of Grigori Rasputin clutching Nicholas II and Tsarina Alexandra. The cartoon is commenting on the control Rasputin held over the royal family.



Nicholas reacted to Rasputin's murder with quiet fury. As a result:

- Grand Duke Dmitri was exiled to Persia
- Yusupov was banished to one of his family's provincial estates
- Purishkevich avoided serious punishment, but only because of his popularity.

After Rasputin's death, the tsar and tsarina became even more isolated from their advisers, ministers and extended family. Nicholas often appeared dazed and apathetic. He spent many evenings completing jigsaw puzzles.

In January 1917 British ambassador George Buchanan asked Nicholas how he intended to regain the public's confidence. Nicholas replied, 'Do you mean that I am to regain the confidence of my people, or that they are to regain mine?'<sup>24</sup> The tsar seemed oblivious to the revolutionary situation unfolding around him. Ten weeks later the reign of the Romanov dynasty was over.

#### DID YOU KNOW?

One of Rasputin's most devout followers was Tsarina Alexandra's lady-in-waiting Anna Vyrubova. Many contemporaries blamed Vyrubova for encouraging Alexandra's devotion to Rasputin.

#### DID YOU KNOW?

Rasputin prophesied that if he were murdered by workers or peasants, his death would be of little consequence. However, if he were killed by the aristocracy, a great disaster would engulf Russia.

### ACTIVITY

#### CHECK YOUR UNDERSTANDING

- 1 Who murdered Rasputin?
- 2 How did Nicholas and Alexandra react to the death of Rasputin?

#### CREATIVE RESPONSE

The song 'Rasputin' (1978) by disco group Boney M is a colourful and entertaining account of the Rasputin legend. Watch a performance of the song and take note of the lyrics. Identify details of the song that:

- accurately highlight elements of Rasputin's influence
- are based on rumour or gossip from the time
- are historically inaccurate.

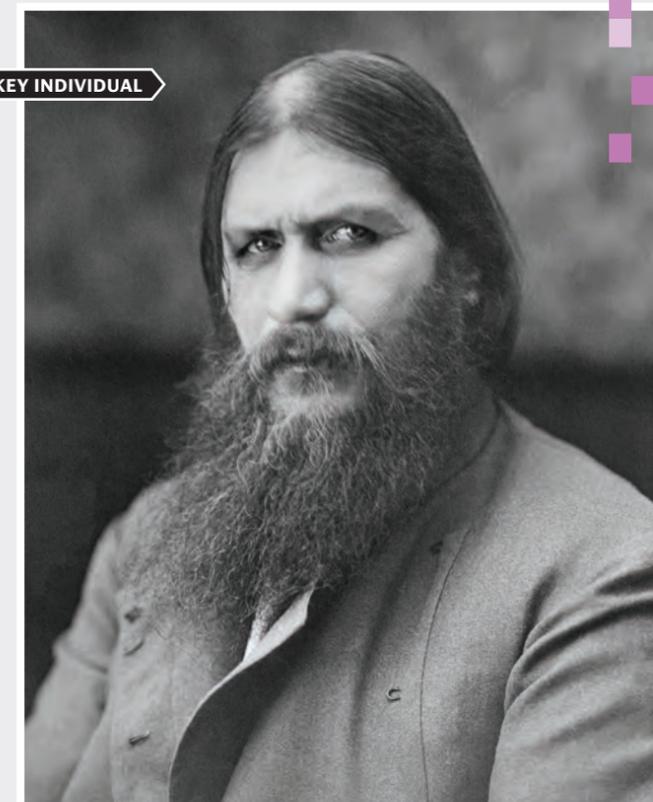
#### HISTORICAL SOURCES

Using Sources 5.16 and 5.17 and your own knowledge, respond to the following:

- 1 Outline Rasputin's influence over the tsar and tsarina.
- 2 Explain how the Rasputin scandal contributed to revolutionary tensions by late 1916.
- 3 Analyse how political developments in World War I challenged the tsarist regime. Use evidence to support your response.

## GRIGORY RASPUTIN, 1869–1916

#### KEY INDIVIDUAL



Source 5.18 Grigori Rasputin.

Grigori Rasputin was a self-proclaimed holy man (or *starets*) from the village of Pokrovskoye, in western Siberia. As a young man he had a reputation for unruly behaviour, including petty theft and heavy drinking. He married a local woman and had several children before leaving Pokrovskoye on a religious pilgrimage. He returned a changed man: dishevelled, but with a deep commitment to spirituality. Rasputin spent the next years as a wandering preacher (or *strannik*), and would sometimes leave his village for months at a time. It is alleged that he adopted the Khlysty doctrine of 'redemption through sin'.

Around the start of the twentieth century, it was common for members of high society to seek spiritual guidance and traditional healing from peasant mystics. So when, in 1903, Rasputin came to St Petersburg, he was able to meet people in influential aristocratic circles, including members of the extended Romanov family.

In 1905, Rasputin was introduced to Tsar Nicholas and Tsarina Alexandra. His success in treating their son Alexei's haemophilia convinced Alexandra that Rasputin was close to God. On one occasion Alexei was very sick and the royal doctors had little hope. Rasputin reassured Alexandra: 'God has seen your tears and heard your prayers. Do not grieve. The Little One will not die. Do not allow the doctors to bother him too much'. Alexei recovered, and this led Alexandra to believe that Rasputin could perform miracles.

But by 1912 Rasputin's influence over the royal family was the source of malicious gossip, and his behaviour and corruption considered scandalous. During World War I, when Tsar Nicholas left Petrograd for the front, Rasputin's hold over Alexandra became a political crisis.

Historians generally agree that Rasputin's influence highlighted inherent flaws in the Russian autocracy—that is, the flaws already existed before Rasputin arrived in Petrograd. Historian Alan Wood argues that, 'the scandal which had surrounded Rasputin's name was merely a symptom, not a cause, of the acute malaise [sickness] which inflicted an incompetent and unpopular regime now deep in the throes of a devastating war'.<sup>25</sup>

In December 1916, Rasputin was murdered in a plot that was almost a farce. One of Russia's wealthiest aristocrats, a Romanov grand duke and a conservative Duma deputy were involved. Rasputin's body was buried outside the Romanov's Tsarskoe Selo palace but was exhumed by soldiers after the February Revolution and burned to ash.

### KEY POINTS

- Rasputin was a Siberian peasant who was considered to be a holy man.
- He was a valued member of the royal entourage because of his ability to ease Tsarevich Alexei's haemophilia. (Alexei's condition was not public knowledge.)
- He became Tsarina Alexandra's spiritual and political adviser.
- Political corruption worsened due to Rasputin's influence, including so-called 'ministerial leapfrog'.
- He brought the royal family into popular disrepute, and was murdered in a conspiracy by patriotic nobles.

# ALEXANDRA FEODOROVNA ROMANOV, 1872–1918

## KEY INDIVIDUAL



↑ Source 5.19 Tsarina Alexandra Feodorovna Romanov.

## KEY POINTS

- From the beginning of Nicholas' reign, Tsarina Alexandra was unpopular across Russian society.
- She was Nicholas' closest adviser, but gave him poor advice.
- Alexandra's reliance on Rasputin damaged the integrity of the tsarist regime. This became worse in 1915, when Nicholas became Commander-in-Chief.
- Alexandra's influence over her husband—and corrupt political appointments—made people angry with the government. This contributed significantly to a revolutionary situation by 1917.

Alexandra Romanov was from German and British royal heritage, and her original title was Princess Alix of Hesse. Her grandmother was Queen Victoria of Great Britain. Alix was betrothed to Nicholas Romanov in 1894. Because the couple married shortly after the death of Tsar Alexander III, people who did not like Alexandra dubbed her the 'bride in black'. She took the Russian name Alexandra Feodorovna, and became a devout follower of the Orthodox Church and defender of the autocracy.

Nicholas and Alexandra were a true love match. They were each other's closest confidants. Alexandra was painfully aware of her husband's gentle manner and how he was unprepared for leadership. She took it upon herself to boost Nicholas' confidence, urging him to be '... more autocratic than Peter the Great and sterner than Ivan the Terrible.'<sup>26</sup>

However, Alexandra was unpopular with both the Russian general public and high society. She was the *nemka* (German woman) who arrived in Russia 'behind a coffin' and spoke Russian with a noticeable accent. She was very shy, but rather than being seen as socially awkward, Russian high society considered her arrogant and aloof. She had a particularly strained relationship with her mother-in-law Dowager Empress Marie Feodorovna. Apart from her husband, her only real friend was lady-in-waiting Anna Vyrubova.

Nicholas and Alexandra had five daughters and a son, whom they adored. Alexandra was a devoted mother, but the general public looked down on her because it took her years to have a son (the heir to the throne).

Few people outside the immediate family knew that Tsarevich Alexei had haemophilia, which he inherited from Alexandra. His condition led to the tsarina's reliance and trust in the peasant faith healer Rasputin. This relationship caused enormous public dissent and political instability after August 1915, when the tsarina assumed a greater political role.

Alexandra repeatedly called on Nicholas to be tougher with his critics—and even suggested that outspoken members of the Duma should be hanged or imprisoned. She made many poor judgements—notably when she advised Nicholas at the outbreak of the February Revolution that the troubles were because of a change in the weather and were of no concern.

After Nicholas abdicated the throne in March 1917, Alexandra was placed under house arrest, along with the rest of the Romanov family. The Provisional Government was unable to exile the Romanovs, as foreign governments—including Great Britain—refused to accept the former royals. The conditions under which the family were held became more difficult after the October Revolution.

On 17 July 1918, the Bolsheviks executed Alexandra, Nicholas and their children.

## ACTIVITY

### ESSAY

Write a 600–800-word essay on the topic below. Your essay should include an introduction, paragraphs supported by relevant evidence from primary sources and historical interpretations, and a conclusion. Use your Extended Responses from this chapter as the basis for your paragraphs.

- 'World War I made a revolution in Russia inevitable. By 1917, all that was required was a trigger.' To what extent do you agree with this view?

## THE FEBRUARY REVOLUTION TURNING POINT

**Tsarina Alexandra:** 'This is a hooligan movement, young people run and shout that there is no bread, simply to create excitement, along with workers who prevent others from working. If the weather were very cold they would probably all stay at home. But all this will pass and become calm if only the Duma will behave itself.'

In October 1916, Petrograd's chief of police reported: 'We are on the eve of big events, compared with which 1905 was child's play.'<sup>27</sup>

By early 1917, people across the political spectrum were expecting a revolutionary crisis of some sort:

- Liberals—including Alexander Guchkov and Georgi Lvov—had spoken of replacing Tsar Nicholas with a constitutional government. They hoped to put Tsarevich Alexei on the throne.
- Petrograd's Bolsheviks planned for a mass demonstration in late April to coincide with international May Day celebrations.

The mood in the capital was explosive. The winter of 1916–1917 was one of the coldest on record, with temperatures regularly sinking to  $-35^{\circ}\text{C}$ . The average February temperature in Petrograd was  $-14^{\circ}\text{C}$ . Because of the weather:

- private rail travel was temporarily banned as the government prioritised all trains for food deliveries
- heavy snowfalls made deliveries difficult
- supplies of food and fuel became critically low.

As a result, working-class people were cold, hungry and angry. On 9 January 150,000 workers demonstrated in commemoration of Bloody Sunday. Further strike action unfolded in late January and early February.

Tsar Nicholas had spent Christmas with his family at Tsarskoe Selo, a few kilometres from Petrograd. On 22 February he headed back to the front. No one predicted that within a month he would return to Petrograd as a private citizen. The developments that led to Tsar Nicholas giving up the throne were spontaneous, and were not led by recognised revolutionaries. However, soldiers and militant workers were critical in establishing a popular revolutionary movement that successfully challenged the existing order.

## ACTIVITY

### CREATIVE RESPONSE

Carefully examine photographs of the February Revolution. Choose a number of people from these images, then compose speech and thought bubbles that illustrate their thoughts and feelings as the revolution unfolded.

## FEBRUARY REVOLUTION TIMELINE

This is how the February Revolution unfolded.

### 18 FEBRUARY

Workers of Petrograd's Putilov Steel Factory go on strike over pay and conditions. The Putilov workers were well known for their militancy, and their workplace was one of the largest in Petrograd. Their strike brings 40,000 workers onto the street.

### 22 FEBRUARY

The Putilov strike escalates when management locks workers out. Workers from neighbouring factories join the strike. The strikers denounce the government in their protests. A thaw in the weather sees temperatures rise to 8°C, and many workers are keen to be outdoors after sheltering from the bitter cold in previous weeks.

### 23 FEBRUARY

Thousands of Petrograd's working-class women march from their factories to the city centre to commemorate International Women's Day. (Women suffered greatly because of food shortages, as they had to get up at 3.00 am to queue for bread before working long shifts in factories.) The women's march includes banners with anti-war and anti-government slogans, as well as demands such as 'Give us bread!' As they make their way past different factories, the women call out to men working in heavy industries to join them. They throw snowballs at windows to gain their attention. In solidarity, thousands of working men join the protest march, arming themselves with makeshift weapons in preparation for the clashes they expect to have with police. By evening, 90,000 workers have joined the movement.

### 24 FEBRUARY

The strikes and demonstrations gather momentum, and soon there are over 200,000 workers on the streets. No leading revolutionaries direct the action, but grassroots activists work hard to keep the workers militant. The protesters demand an end to the war—and an end to autocratic rule. Troops make efforts to disperse the crowds. There is fighting between workers and police. At night, Minister for the Interior Alexander Protopopov seeks advice from Rasputin's ghost.

### 25 FEBRUARY

It is Saturday. Workers not already on strike join in—as do office workers, teachers and students. The main roads are full of people, as virtually all industries close.

Cossacks are sent to suppress the movement. However, unlike Bloody Sunday—when Cossack units used their whips and sabres with deadly effect—some Cossack soldiers smile and wave at the crowds. One Cossack unit charges up to group of protesters with their sabres held high—then they pull up short, wink at the workers, and ride off. This encourages the protesters to become bolder.

Rumours spread that Cossack soldiers chased off police who were beating up protesters. Some Cossacks hold their horses in formation across key streets, as ordered, but then allow workers to slip underneath. Workers remove their caps and approach groups of soldiers, calling for them to join the workers' protest.

Tsar Nicholas is informed by Tsarina Alexandra that Petrograd is in the grips of a 'hooligan movement' incited by speeches in the Duma and the warmer weather. Nicholas cables General Sergei Khabalov, commander of the Petrograd garrison, and

orders him to suppress the protests: 'I command you tomorrow to end the disorders in the capital which are not permissible in a time of difficult war with Germany and Austria'.<sup>28</sup>

### 26 FEBRUARY

The protests swell to 300,000 people. There is considerable fighting along Petrograd's main thoroughfares, including Nevsky Prospekt. Officers order soldiers to fire directly into the crowds, causing up to 200 casualties. However, some soldiers disobey orders, and shoot into the air instead, or not at all.

Late in the afternoon Rodzianko cables the tsar: 'The situation is serious. The capital is in a state of anarchy. The Government is paralysed. Transport service and the supply of food and fuel have become completely disrupted. General discontent is growing ... There must be no delay. Any procrastination is tantamount to death.'

That night, soldiers hold heated debates in their garrisons. Their morale is low. Many soldiers regret firing on workers—and vow not to do it again. Mutinies erupt among some **regiments** overnight—with some declaring their support for the protesting workers.

However, Tsar Nicholas is unwilling—or unable—to accept the dire predicament facing his government and orders the dismissal of the Duma.

### 27 FEBRUARY **TURNING POINT**

In the morning Rodzianko again cables the tsar: 'Situation deteriorating. Imperative to take immediate steps for tomorrow will be too late'. After reading Rodzianko's telegram, Nicholas remarks, 'That fat Rodzianko has again sent me some nonsense to which I will not even reply'.

Instead, Nicholas repeats his order for the dismissal of the Duma. A general strike paralyses the city and there are 400,000 workers on the streets. During the day more and more soldiers fraternise with workers, refusing to obey orders. Mutinies spread throughout the Petrograd garrison. One soldier, Feodor Linde, remembered shouting as he ran through his barracks, 'To arms! To arms! They are killing innocent people, our brothers and sisters!'<sup>29</sup>

Companies of supposed loyal troops are deployed, but simply 'melt away' into the crowds. By the end of the day, about 70,000 soldiers have joined the revolutionary movement, as police stations throughout the city are attacked and overrun by revolutionary crowds.

Members of the Duma dutifully agree to officially suspend meeting, but twelve of them—including Rodzianko, Miliukov and Alexander Kerensky—meet privately to discuss the unfolding crisis. They call themselves the Provisional Committee, and hope to achieve the 'reestablishment of order in the capital'.

Soldiers arrive at the Tauride Palace—where the Provisional Committee meets—and demand that the Duma condone their mutinies. Kerensky delivers a speech in praise of the soldiers' actions, which satisfies them. Reluctantly, the Provisional Committee find that they have become a recognised authority, as government ministers resign from their posts, and some flee the capital.

Another group also meeting at the Taurida Palace is the Provisional Executive Committee of the Soviet of Workers' Deputies. The Soviet's Executive Committee (or leadership group), which is made up of SRs and Mensheviks, invites workers to elect



↑ **Source 5.20** Working-class women protesting during the February Days in Petrograd.



↑ **Source 5.22** Barricades on the streets of Petrograd, 1917.

**regiment/s** military unit containing two or more battalions

### DID YOU KNOW?

Mikhail Rodzianko liked to boast that he was the fattest man in Russia.

### KEY MOVEMENT

↓ **Source 5.23** A crowd at the entrance of the Tauride Palace during the February Revolution, 1917.



↓ **Source 5.21** Soldiers attack the tsar's police during the first days of the February Revolution.

and send delegates to their assembly scheduled for the evening. The committee vote Menshevik Nikolai Chkheidze its chairman and Kerensky vice-chairman.

The first issue of the soviet’s newspaper *Izvestia* (News) is the only source of published information available in Petrograd, and is widely distributed. Many soldiers also arrive for the assembly, making up a sizeable number of the soviet deputies. Early in the proceedings it is decided to call the assembly the **Petrograd Soviet** of Workers’ and Soldiers’ Deputies.

Late in the day General Khabalov cables the tsar: ‘I beg to inform His Imperial Highness that I am not able to carry out his instructions about the restoration of order in the capital’.<sup>30</sup>

**28 FEBRUARY**

There is widespread surrender of police and tsarist officials across the city, including ministers of the government. Workers and soldiers control the streets. Red flags fly from many buildings, and red ribbons and red armbands are worn by many among the revolutionary crowds. The election of workers’ and soldiers’ deputies to the soviet continues throughout the day. That night, Tsar Nicholas decides that his presence will bring order to the capital, and he sets off for Petrograd by train. However, his train is unable to reach its destination as revolutionary troops control sections of the line. It is decided to head instead to the small town of Pskov, where a better telegraph will allow for faster communication.

**1 MARCH**

The Provisional Committee resolves to take power as a Provisional Government. When certain conditions are agreed to—such as a general amnesty for mutinous troops—the Petrograd Soviet accepts and supports this development. For the orthodox Marxist leadership of the soviet, Russia’s revolution had now correctly entered its bourgeois-democratic stage.

Alarmed that some officers refuse to back the revolution, soldier delegates respond by issuing Soviet Order No. 1: soldiers of the Petrograd garrison will obey the orders of the new government so long as they do not ‘contradict’ the will of the soviet. Despite their initial agreement, the Provisional Government and Petrograd Soviet have become alternative centres of power.

**2 MARCH**

At Pskov, Tsar Nicholas is met by generals of the High Command and representatives of the Provisional Committee. Alexander Guchkov and Vasili Shulgin—on behalf of the Provisional Committee—outline the situation in the capital to Nicholas, including developments at the Tauride Palace. They impress upon the tsar that it is too late for reform, and that only the formation of a new government will avert further revolutionary turmoil. General Ruzsky implores Nicholas to abdicate. He shares with the tsar telegrams from frontline commanders who insist that Russia can no longer successfully fight the war with Nicholas as head of state. Nicholas frets and delays his decision, but reacts with little emotion. The tsar mutters that he had been ‘born for bad fortune’. Around 2.30 pm Nicholas declares: ‘If it is necessary that I should abdicate for the good of Russia, then I am ready for it’.<sup>31</sup>

Back in the capital, the Provisional Government is formally announced. Pavel Miliukov decides on the cabinet ministers, scribbling their names on a napkin. That evening Nicholas summons the royal physician and inquires after Alexei’s health.

**Petrograd Soviet** workers’ council established after the abdication of Tsar Nicholas II; a rival power base to Provisional Government



↑ Source 5.24 Petrograd garrison soldiers during the February Revolution.

↓ Tsar Nicholas II.



The doctor tells Nicholas that the prognosis is not good. Abdication would mean that Nicholas will likely go into exile, but separation from his family is unacceptable. Nicholas decides that he will abdicate on behalf of himself and his son. Going against Russian Imperial laws of succession, Nicholas announces that his younger brother Mikhail should be the new monarch. In the final hours of his reign, Nicholas puts his family before all other matters.

**3 MARCH**

The morning after Nicholas’ abdication, all members of the Provisional Government meet with Grand Duke Mikhail. Guchkov and Miliukov hope Mikhail will agree to head a constitutional monarchy, but Kerensky argues that there should be a decisive break with the Romanov dynasty. Mikhail asks whether his safety can be guaranteed by the new authorities; Kerensky replies that it cannot. At this, Mikhail declares his support for the Provisional Government and offers his abdication.

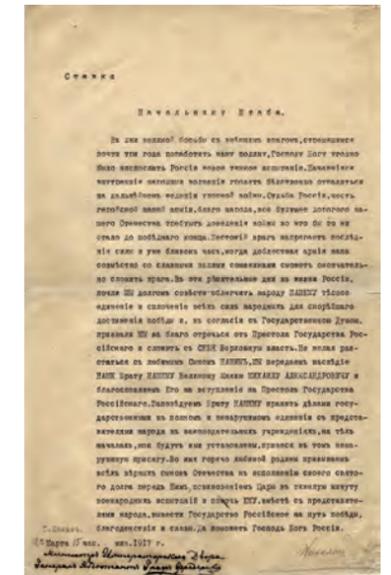
Over ten days, the February Revolution has brought over three hundred years of Romanov rule to an end.

News of ‘Glorious February’ spread throughout the empire. There are scenes of mass jubilation as the now citizens of Russia celebrate the beginnings of what they assume is a new democratic era. National flags are flown in the non-Russian capitals. Symbols of the tsarist regime—such as statues and crests bearing the double-headed eagle—are defaced or destroyed. Many former police are brutally murdered and dozens of former high officials and ministers are imprisoned.

The new self-proclaimed interim government of Russia was soon given recognition by international governments. The first country to recognise Russia was the United States.

**DID YOU KNOW?**

Nicholas Romanov typically recorded quite trivial details in his diary. The day after his abdication he noted the weather and that overnight ‘I had a long sound sleep’.



↑ Tsar Nicholas II’s abdication statement.

**ACTIVITY**

**TIMELINE**

Analyse the chronology of the February Revolution and create your own annotated timeline of the key events. Your timeline should note and explain the following:

- Significant developments that contributed to the escalation of the revolution.
- Contributions by workers and soldiers.
- Actions by significant individuals.

**CHECK YOUR UNDERSTANDING**

Identify the dates that correspond to the following developments in the February Revolution:

- Tsarina Alexandra assuring Nicholas that the protests in Petrograd were merely a ‘hooligan movement’
- the tsar dismissing the Duma
- the abdication of Tsar Nicholas
- International Women’s Day marches
- widespread mutinies by soldiers
- Rodzianko warning the tsar that the ‘situation is serious’
- first meeting of the Provisional Committee
- proclamation of Soviet Order No. 1.

**DID YOU KNOW?**

In one of his last meetings with the tsar before the February Revolution, Duma President Rodzianko tried to convince Nicholas of the mass discontent towards his government. Nicholas asked, ‘Is it possible that for twenty-two years I have tried to act for the best, and for twenty-two years it was all a mistake?’ Rodzianko replied, ‘Yes, your Majesty, for twenty-two years you have followed the wrong course!’

## ACTIVITY

## EVALUATION OF HISTORICAL SOURCES

## Report by General Alexei Polivanov, Minister of War, July 1915

I consider it my civic and official duty to declare to the Council of Ministers that the country is in danger ... The soldiers are without doubt exhausted by the continued defeats and retreats ... cases of desertion and voluntary surrender to the enemy are becoming more frequent. It is difficult to expect enthusiasm and selflessness from men sent into battle unarmed and ordered to pick up the rifles of their dead comrades ... there is yet one other development especially fought with danger ... there is growing confusion at General Headquarters. It is seized by the fatal psychology of retreat ... back, back, back—that is all that is heard from there.

← **Source 5.25** Cited in Ronald Kowalski, *The Russian Revolution 1917–1921* (London: Routledge, 1997), 20.

## Historian Orlando Figes

... whereas the other European powers managed to adapt and improvise, the tsarist system proved much too rigid and unwieldy, too inflexible and set in its ways, too authoritarian and inefficient, to adapt itself to the situation as it changed. The First World War was a titanic test for the states of Europe—and one that Tsarism failed in a singular and catastrophic way.

← **Source 5.26** Orlando Figes, *A People's Tragedy: The Russian Revolution 1891–1924* (Sydney: Pimlico, 1996), 254.

## Historian Alan Wood

The tsar foolishly added to his own isolation by assuming personal command of the Russian army in 1915. His unhelpful presence at military headquarters in Mogilev left the conduct of affairs in the capital ... in the hands of his neurotic wife—contemptuously known by the public as nemka ('the German Woman')—and the abominable Rasputin.

← **Source 5.27** Alan Wood, *The Origins of the Russian Revolution: 1861–1917* (London: Routledge, 1993), 40.

Using Sources 5.25–5.27 and your own knowledge, respond to the following:

- 1 Outline the significant challenges that faced the tsarist regime during World War I, as presented in the sources.
- 2 Explain how World War I contributed to a revolutionary situation in Russia by 1917.
- 3 Evaluate how flaws in the tsarist regime were made worse by World War I, leading to revolutionary tensions. Use evidence and details from the sources to support your response.

## KEY SUMMARY POINTS

- Russia entered World War I largely unprepared for a long and substantial conflict.
- There was an initial upsurge of patriotism and loyalty towards the government in response to the war.
- Russia experienced some success against Austrian forces, such as the Battle of Lemberg and the Brusilov Offensive.
- The German military inflicted terrible defeats on the Russian army, including the battles of Tannenberg and Masurian Lakes. By 1915, the Great Retreat had seen Russia lose substantial territory and men.
- Russia's railways were unable to cope with the demands of the war and the needs of the civilian population. Poor economic management and poor financial planning led to widespread shortages of fuel and food by 1916. Living conditions for working-class Russians deteriorated, leading to heightened discontent.
- Non-government bodies—such as the War Industries Committee and Progressive Bloc—tried to support the war effort and improve the government's popular standing. However, Tsar Nicholas rejected all offers of support and reform.
- In August 1915, Tsar Nicholas appointed himself Commander-in-Chief of the Russian army. This increased the influence of Tsarina Alexandra in political matters. The empress was very unpopular, and her decisions led to the government becoming unstable.
- Tsarina Alexandra's closeness to faith healer Rasputin damaged the public perception of the government. However, Rasputin's murder in late 1916 did not improve the political situation.
- A spontaneous revolutionary movement unfolded in February 1917, building from protests at bread shortages and strikes by militant workers. The mutiny of Petrograd soldiers escalated the revolution, and the government lost control of the capital.
- In the midst of the February Revolution, the Provisional Government and Petrograd Soviet emerged as two rival centres of authority—although they had different interests, priorities and representatives.
- Having lost all support, Tsar Nicholas abdicated on behalf of himself and his heir Alexei. Grand Duke Mikhail also rejected the crown, ending three centuries of Romanov rule.

## ACTIVITY

## ESSAY

Write a 600–800-word essay on one of the topics below. Your essay should include an introduction, paragraphs supported by relevant evidence from primary sources and historical interpretations, and a conclusion.

- 'Russia was headed to a revolution with or without World War I. The war simply accelerated the inevitable.' Discuss.
- 'Tsar Nicholas' decision to leave for the front in August 1915 was a significant contribution to his downfall.' To what extent do you agree?
- 'The workers and soldiers of Petrograd brought Tsar Nicholas' government to the brink of collapse; however, it took the High Command and Duma to ensure his abdication.' To what extent do you agree?
- 'By February 1917 the tsarist regime was so unpopular that even a leaderless, spontaneous protest movement was able to topple the government.' Evaluate this statement, with reference to the events of the February Revolution.
- 'Rasputin was a symptom of the failings in the Romanov autocracy, not a cause.' Discuss.
- 'Tsarina Alexandra deserves significant blame for the end of the tsarist regime.' To what extent do you agree?
- 'Tsar Nicholas probably found it easier to abdicate than accept reform.' How did Tsar Nicholas contribute to his own downfall?

# EXPERIENCES OF REVOLUTION

Note: These fictional characters are based on historical research.



**Aleksandr, a Chekist, c. 1919:**

'Like my comrades in the Red Army, I serve on the front—but my front is perhaps more dangerous. The Whites are in uniform, yet not all enemies of the revolution are so easily seen. I am a sword and shield of the revolution. If I uncover a threat to our Soviet government then my pistol will be drawn and I will shoot! Up against the wall! Yes, in this fight for a new world terrible things must be done and the bourgeoisie will suffer. This is a fight to the death!'



**Masha, socialist artist, c. 1920:**

Red, red, red! A new world! Workers march! The burzhooi tremble! Lenin, Trotsky, Kollontai, Lunacharsky ... heroes all! See the calloused hands of the worker? His hammer? With these a new world is built. How can I capture this excitement on a canvas?



**Ilya, Moscow industrial worker, c. 1923:**

'The winter of 1918 and 1919 ... those were cold, hungry days. We searched for anything to burn in the stove, there was little bread and we ate horsemeat. If I'd been able to get my hands on a dog or cat I'd have eaten that too! I thought the revolution would bring freedom, but then all I remember is cold and hunger. Today, there are markets open and I have steady work. I can't complain about my lot. I would not say critical things of the government—that is dangerous.'



**Vanya, Kadet politician, c. 1918:**

Usurpers! Thieves! The Bolsheviks have stolen power! They betray Russia and have sold out to the Germans. They shoot down the people. They are not even true Russians! We must rouse the Cossacks and rally behind true patriots like Kornilov and Denikin. Stern leadership is required. We must save the Empire from the Lenin-Trotsky gang of criminals!



**Fedor, former lawyer, c. 1918:**

Once I had a successful career, a fine apartment ... all gone! I've been attacked in the street by hooligans and my home is filled with stinking workers. Today I was forced at gunpoint to sweep the streets. Where is the law? I would leave my precious Russia but I fear being jailed or worse...



**Elena, Petrograd factory worker, c. 1924:**

I cried when I heard that Comrade Lenin was dead. The revolution changed my life. My mother was one of those who called for bread in February 1917. The tsar cared nothing for the people. But life is still a struggle—I work long hours in the factory. But at night I go to reading classes. My mother would not believe the rights we women have now.



**Ivan, Kronstadt sailor, c. March 1921:**

Hear that? Artillery and rifles! The so-called 'red' troops commanded by the murderous Trotsky are coming to get revolutionary Kronstadt! What was the Civil War for? Russia is a prison: they starve peasants, shoot workers and throw opponents in jail. Down with Commissarocracy!



**Lev, Menshevik politician, c. mid-1917:**

The bourgeois revolution has been accomplished and a new democratic age has dawned. We must unite the forces of democracy to build this new Russia! But comrades, beware the false promises of the Bolsheviks! They talk of bread, land and peace but offer no sensible policies. To even consider a socialist revolution so soon after Glorious February is to invite a Civil War. This is irresponsible and false Marxism!



**Sergei, peasant, c. 1922:**

In 1917 my fellow villagers and I took what was rightly ours: the land. We loved the revolution! When the Civil War came, it was said the Whites would bring back the landlords. But the Communists took our grain—many starved. With the NEP we can trade our grain again. Still, I am suspicious of the government.



**Tatiana, aristocratic landowner, c. 1916:**

Russia must be governed by a stern hand. This is as God commands. How could anyone other than the Holy Tsar rule this vast land? But dark forces have gathered around the throne. I worry day and night how the war has stirred up the anger of the common folk. I hear that estates in neighbouring provinces have been attacked by peasant soldiers. My husband served valiantly as an officer, but I have been burdened with fear and despair since his death. What will become of me? What will become of Russia?

## ACTIVITY

### DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

Consider the perspectives portrayed here then discuss the following as a class or in small groups.

- Which person's experience do you connect or empathise with the most? Why?
- Identify one or more historically significant events or developments that impacted on each person's experience.
- Select the person whose experience most highlights to you the ways that revolutionary ideas were achieved or compromised. Be prepared to justify your response.

# IMAGERY AND SYMBOLISM IN THE RUSSIAN REVOLUTION

The Russian Revolution saw a dramatic increase in the production and distribution of visual propaganda. The political poster was a direct, potent and effective means to get ideas across in a society where literacy was low. The Bolshevik regime was particularly good with visual imagery, and some Bolshevik posters have become iconic images of the revolutionary era.

Here is a brief introduction to some of the key imagery and symbolism typically used in the art of the Russian Revolution.

## BLACKSMITHS AND METAL WORKERS

Blacksmiths and metal workers were usually shown wearing protective leather aprons and using a hammer and an anvil. Metal workers were seen as representing the proletariat: they were icons of the revolution. The use of metal workers in visual propaganda symbolised the importance and role of workers in the revolution.



## PEASANTS

Peasants were the largest of Russia's social groups. Men were usually shown dressed in a traditional tunic, high boots and with a long beard. Women were shown with a long skirt and a headscarf. As a key revolutionary class, peasants were often depicted alongside industrial workers, listening to someone giving a revolutionary message or engaged in farm work. They would usually be shown holding a farm tool.



## CHAINS

Chains represent how working people were oppressed by imperialism, capitalism and the old ruling classes. Images commonly showed chains being broken—particularly by industrial workers. The *Communist Manifesto* reminds workers that 'you have nothing to lose but your chains'.



## THE BOURGEOISIE

Capitalist businessmen were shown as fat—and therefore greedy—and often wearing expensive suits and top hats, and either with a gold watch chain or a fistful of gold. They often had faces like demons, which was a way to dehumanise them—that is, separate them from the human race. Other 'former people', such as priests, were similarly depicted as exploiters. Webs and pictures of spiders suggested to viewers that these people were dangerous and that their behaviour was 'parasitic'.



## SYMBOLS OF THE OLD REGIME

Symbols of Russia's tsarist past included the double-headed eagle, crowns, thrones and the Russian Orthodox Cross.



## DRAGONS AND BEASTS

The 'monstrousness' of capitalism and imperialism was depicted by fearsome beastly creatures with dragon-like features. Often revolutionary leaders, working people or Communist soldiers were shown valiantly fighting these beasts.



## SPIDERS AND WEBS

The bourgeois or *burzhooi* were commonly depicted near spider webs to suggest that they preyed on working people.



## INDUSTRY AND FACTORIES

Factories were the foundations of the socialist economy, so factories with smoke coming out of their chimneys were used to show the resources and modern industry that the new society was creating.



## RISING SUN

The sun was symbolic of warmth, light, a new day and enlightenment. A rising sun often featured in positive depictions of Soviet society.



## SOLDIERS AND SAILORS

Soldiers and sailors played key roles in a number of iconic events: the February Revolution, the October Revolution and the Civil War. They were usually shown in uniform and holding rifles, and sometimes in crowd scenes such as storming the Winter Palace, the Second All-Russian Congress of Soviets or welcoming Lenin at the Finland Station. Red Army soldiers and cavalry are common sights in posters that have Civil War themes.



## WOMEN

As the Sovnarkom government explicitly tried to address women's rights, posters were produced to celebrate International Women's Day and the contribution women were making to the new society. Women might be depicted working alongside men, or feature in crowds of revolutionary masses.



## REVOLUTIONARY CROWDS (MASSES)



Many representations feature crowd scenes of workers, peasants, soldiers or sailors. Crowd scenes symbolise the ideal of a 'people's revolution', and mass support for the revolutionary regime. Some depictions show the suffering experienced under the Old Regime, while others show working people battling a symbol of imperialist capitalism, such as chains or a fearsome beast. Masses of people would also be shown in depictions of events such as the storming of the Winter Palace to suggest popular involvement in the revolution.

## WARRIORS AND KNIGHTS



Rather than a realistic depiction of Communists fighting the forces of counter-revolution, heroic figures from the past were used, such as knights or brave warriors. Trotsky was often shown as St George fighting the dragon of counter-revolution. These more traditional depictions appealed to ordinary people and the cultural references were easily understood.

## HAMMER AND SICKLE



The hammer and sickle is the symbol of the Communist Party and the Soviet Union. It represented the alliance of workers (the hammer) and peasants (the sickle).

## RED



Red is a very symbolic colour. Red flags are historically associated with socialism, as they symbolise the blood of workers who have given their lives in revolutionary struggles. Blood is also vital for life. The Russian word for red is *krasny*, which means beautiful, honourable and good. For example, Moscow's Red Square is not red in colour, and its name actually pre-dates the Communist regime.

## BOLSHEVIKS CARICATURED WITH ASIATIC OR JEWISH FEATURES



White propaganda often used anti-Semitic elements in its depictions of Bolsheviks and revolutionary leaders, especially Trotsky. Groups that were opposed to the Bolsheviks tried to stir up popular hatred of the new regime by suggesting that its leaders were not 'Russian'—that is, 'they' were not like 'us'.

## REVOLUTIONARY LEADERS



Lenin features prominently in revolutionary propaganda. He was often shown speaking to crowds while making certain iconic gestures, such as one hand raised forward while the other hand holds his jacket lapel. He would often be depicted at key events, such as arriving at the Finland Station or at Soviet Congress. Other times his image was shown much larger than life size and in front of a thriving factory.

## COUNTER-REVOLUTIONARY LEADERS



Opponents of the new regime were depicted with silly faces and fat bodies, and were often shown holding hands with capitalists, priests or foreign imperialists. White army generals were commonly treated this way.