



## The Russian Revolution and the Rise of Joseph Stalin

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### The Russian Revolution



In 1917, two events changed Russia's future forever: the overthrow of the imperial government in February, followed by the Bolsheviks' rise to power in October and November. These events resulted from deteriorating relations



between the vast majority of the people of Russia and the Tsar. The final straw was the Tsar's handling of WWI, particularly because he took full control over the army as opposed to letting his generals make strategic decisions. Russia suffered overwhelming casualties under the Tsar's leadership. The war also caused great economic loss for Russia. The people of Russia were suffering and desperate

for change. What had been one of the most powerful nations for almost three hundred years, under the Romanov dynasty, was on the brink of collapse under the new leadership. Tsar Nicholas II was forced to renounce his throne and a provisional government put in place. He and his family were executed. Immediately, tensions rose between the provisional government and Petrograd Soviet, a local City Council that was gaining authority.

## **The Bolsheviks**

In October/November of 1917, the Bolsheviks and Left Socialist Revolutionaries staged a coup. Hardly any resistance was met from the Provisional Government, which was headed by Aleksandr F. Kerensky. Under Kerensky, the left wing split and formed the Socialist Revolutionary Party (SRP). The SRP and Mensheviks, the opposing party of the Bolsheviks, would make up the majority in Petrograd and



Moscow Soviets. Behind the scenes during the October Revolution, and one of its most avid spokesmen, was Vladimir Lenin. In Lenin's writings, he called for the Bolsheviks to halt their support of the Provisional Government. He called for the party to come together with peasants, workers, and soldiers, thus uniting the Soviets against the Provisional

Government. The Party's slogan became "All Power to the Soviets." The Bolshevik wing of the Russian Social Democratic Workers Party had gained a monopoly over the entire political system in 1917. The Bolsheviks changed their name twice before WWII: The Russian Communist Party, and then the ALL-Union Communist Party. Still, their ideology remained the same.

## **Joseph Stalin**

Joseph Stalin was a Georgian from the town of Gori. In 1903, following the break between Bolshevik and Menshevik, Stalin became a dedicated follower of Lenin. In 1912, Lenin promoted Stalin to serve on the first Central Committee of the

Bolshevik Party. He also became editor of the Bolshevik newspaper *Pravda* before being exiled from July 1913 to March 1917 for political reasons. Stalin was involved in the October Revolution, but not as much as he would claim to have been in his later life. Stalin became the most prominent figure when he became Secretary-General of the Central Committee, despite the fact that he strong-armed his way into the position. Before Lenin died, he called for Stalin's removal. Stalin had gained a bad reputation, but it did not deter him from seeking more

power. Lenin died in January 1924. From his death rose something reminiscent of a cult following. The term "Leninism" was coined and Stalin was its leader. Stalin had all of his rivals either exiled or murdered, including his chief rival, Leon Trotsky, who was assassinated in 1940. Quickly, Stalin drifted from Lenin's economic ideals to more state-organized industrialization (fascism), whereas Lenin had a little more capitalism in his economic plan for Russia. By 1928, Stalin had become a dictator by definition. His reign consisted of famine and genocide. Despite the crimes he committed against his own people, the



Soviet Union was one of the chief Allied powers, along with Great Britain and the United States, helping to thwart the rise of Nazi Germany during the Second World War.