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LANCASTER PAMPHLETS

The Origins of the Russian Revolution 1861–1917

Third Edition

Alan Wood



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Foreword

Lancaster Pamphlets offer concise and up-to-date accounts of major historical topics, primarily for the help of students preparing for Advanced Level examinations, though they should also be of value to those pursuing introductory courses in universities and other institutions of higher education. Without being all-embracing, their aims are to bring some of the central themes or problems confronting students and teachers into sharper focus than the textbook writer can hope to do; to provide the reader with some of the results of recent research that the textbook may not embody; and to stimulate thought about the whole interpretation of the topic under discussion.

Preface to the second edition

Since the first edition of this pamphlet was published in 1987, dramatic, and at that time unpredictable, changes have taken place in the former Soviet Union, a nation which was created by the revolutionary upheavals of 1917 and the Bolshevik victory in the ensuing Civil War (1918-22). In 1985, Mikhail Gorbachev became General Secretary of the Soviet Communist Party and inaugurated a programme of farranging economic and institutional restructuring (perestroika), and a policy of 'openness' and freedom of information (glasnost) unprecedented in Soviet experience. By 1991 his reforms had generated so much social discontent, political dissatisfaction, economic chaos and ethnic unrest in the non-Russian Republics, that in August of that year a cabal of 'hard line' politicians attempted to launch a *putsch* against him, placed him under house arrest, and declared a state of national emergency. The putsch was defeated, but in the whirlwind of political transformation that followed, the Communist Party of the Soviet Union was obliterated, Gorbachev was forced to resign, and the USSR was formally abolished. The Soviet period of Russian history was over.

This situation of revolutionary change and uncertainty, which is still going on inside present-day Russia, has had a profound impact on the way in which the history of the 1917 Revolutions is now understood, studied and taught in the country where it took place. Some of the new theories, circumstances and perspectives in the rewriting of the Russian Revolutions are discussed in a completely revised final chapter. Otherwise, the text remains substantially the same as in the first edition, and the interpretation of the forces which formed the origins of the Russian Revolution stays basically unaltered. The central thesis is still that the events of 1917 itself, to which a separate chapter is devoted, can only be properly understood against the complex background of social, political, economic and intellectual developments within the Russian Empire in the period that began with the emancipation of the serfs in

1861. The last decades of the nineteenth century were a period during which the peoples of the Russian Empire went through the painful and ambiguous process of what Marxist historians would describe as a transition from feudalism—characterized by autocracy and serfdom—to capitalism—marked in what was still a basically peasant country by an imperfect modern economic infrastructure, new urban-based social forces, and the tsarist government's reluctant experiments with quasiparliamentary political and legislative institutions. It is in the volcanic soil of this transitionary era that the seeds of the Revolution were set.

A glance at the expanded and updated 'Suggestions for further reading' (pp. 71–6) will reveal that the authors of other recent treatments of the Russian Revolution, its background and its aftermath, have chosen rather different time-scales (e.g. 1900–27, 1899–1919, 1917–32) within which to set their analysis. The cut-off date of October 1917 in the present work is not intended to suggest that the revolutionary process stopped there. Obviously it did not, but the main emphasis remains on the *antecedents* of the February and October Revolutions, rather than their *consequences*, which, to some extent, have been dealt with in another pamphlet in this series.*

The transliteration, dating and nominative conventions used in the previous edition remain unchanged, as does the dedication. However, in addition to the original acknowledgements, I wish to express my thanks to those professional colleagues, both here and in the former Soviet Union, as well as to unknown readers, teachers and reviewers, who were kind enough to comment on the contents of the first edition. Where appropriate, their suggestions have been incorporated in the second.

Alan Wood Lancaster, 1993

^{*} Alan Wood, Stalin and Stalinism, Routledge, London, 1991

Preface to the third edition

At the time of going to press, ten years have elapsed since the publication of the second edition of this Lancaster Pamphlet, during which time scholarly interest in the Russian Revolutions of 1917 has continued undiminished both in the West and inside Russia itself. Many of the new studies that have appeared are based on research materials that have become available since historical archives became more easily accessible after the collapse of the Soviet Union in 1991. Although socalled 'revisionist' interpretations of the Revolutions began to appear before that date, the main change of emphasis in explaining the origins and course of the events of 1917 has been on studying the social forces which contributed to the collapse of the tsarist regime and the ultimate political victory of the Bolsheviks. Rather than dwelling on the role of prominent personalities, parties and political institutions, historians have been more concerned with what was happening in the fields and factories, the trenches and the lower decks. In other words the Revolutions have been increasingly studied from the perspective of ordinary workers and peasants, soldiers and sailors—the 'bottom-up' rather than the 'top-down' approach to the Revolution.

Although the results of this valuable research into the sub-soil of the Revolution have been taken into account in this new pamphlet, its basic thesis still remains that those dramatic events can only be properly understood against the backdrop of the complex interplay of political, economic, social, cultural and military factors during the final decades of the Russian Empire following the emancipation of the serfs in 1861. As stated in the Preface to the second edition, other authors have chosen different time-scales in which to place their interpretations of the Revolution. However, this brief study is not intended to be an analysis of the *immediate* run-up to 1917 and its aftermath, but a longer-term overview of the half-century or so of the unique circumstances and dynamic junctures which made the Revolutions of that year, if not

inevitable in the teleological sense, or historically determined in the Marxist analysis, then at least more than probable from a commonsense point of view.

It is nowadays unfashionable to quote Karl Marx, and it is also obvious that his dictum in the Communist Manifesto that 'the history of all hitherto existing society is the history of class struggle' is an inadequate tool for interpreting the entire complexity of mankind's past. However, in the specific case of the origins of the Russian Revolution, nothing that has been written in recent years, by even the most unsympathetic of scholars, can seriously challenge that assertion. The collapse of the Russian Empire and the consequent course of the Revolution was the result of generations of confrontation between the upper and the lower classes—or estates—of Russian society. On the one hand was an oppressive, tyrannical government, supported by a privileged, powerful and parasitic élite of nobles, landowners, clergymen, and state servitors. On the other, was the overwhelming majority of the Russian common people (and other peoples of the Empire), suppressed, exploited and denied any legitimate channel for redress of their grievances, and thereby driven to take direct revolutionary action to alter their situation. This underlying contention, as well as the suggestions and comments of readers of the first two imprints, have been incorporated in this new, revised edition.

Where necessary, minor amendments and elaborations have been interpolated into the existing text of individual chapters. However, in response to a number of constructive suggestions, the original Chapter 5 on 'War and revolution' has been replaced, divided and expanded into two new chapters, 'War and the February revolution', and 'Dual power and the October revolution'. The final chapter on 'Interpretations and conclusions' has been revamped in order, of course, to take account of more recent interpretations and conclusions. There is also what is hoped to be a more informative map of the Russian Empire on the eve of its collapse, and a completely new section providing 'minibiographies' of historical figures referred to in the narrative. The section on 'Suggestions for further reading' has been revised and selectively updated.

The system of transliteration, dating, and rendering of personal names remains the same as in previous editions, though some minor alterations and additions have been made to the acknowledgements.

Alan Wood Lancaster, 2002

Notes and acknowledgements

All Russian forenames have been anglicized (thus Nicholas, rather than Nikolai). Surnames, placenames and Russian technical terms have been transliterated according to a commonsense, easily recognizable pattern which combines elements of the standard international systems.

Dates are given according to the Julian calendar that was used in Russia until 1918. In the nineteenth century this was twelve days, and in the twentieth century thirteen days, behind the Western (Gregorian) calendar.

Thanks are due to my former student and now colleague, Dr John Swift, for reading and commenting on the draft of this revised edition and to all those anonymous readers who made suggestions as to how the previous edition might be improved. Thanks also to Gillian Oliver, Development Editor at Routledge, for suggesting it in the first place, and for her professional mixture of patience and persistence during its preparation.

The pamphlet still remains dedicated to staff and students of the former Department of Russian and Soviet Studies at Lancaster University, which, like the Russian Empire, though with less reason, is also a thing of the past.

Chronological table of events

Pre-1861

1584–1613	Period of social and political turmoil, the 'Time of Troubles'.
1613	Restoration of autocracy; Michael Romanov becomes tsar.
1613–96	Entrenchment of autocratic government; continuing civil, religious and military unrest.
1696–1725	Reign of Peter I (Peter the Great); Great Northern War (1700–21); Russia becomes a major European power.
1725–62	Era of 'palace revolutions'.
1762–96	Reign of Catherine II (Catherine the Great).
1773–75	The Pugachev rebellion.
1790	Publication of Radishchev's A Journey from St Petersburg to Moscow.
1801–25	Reign of Alexander I.
1825	Decembrist revolt.
1825–55	Reign of Nicholas I.
1836–48	'Westerner—Slavophil' controversy.
1848	Revolutions in Europe.
1853–56	Crimean War; Russia defeated.
1855–81	Reign of Alexander II.
1856	Alexander II announces intention to abolish serfdom.

1861-1916

1861	Emancipation of the serfs.
1861–64	Period of social and intellectual unrest; origins of revolutionary populism; first Zemlya i volya; 'era of
	manifestos'; Polish uprising (1863); trial and exile of Chernyshevsky.
1864	Introduction of local government and judicial reforms.
1866	Karakozov's attempt to assassinate Alexander II.
1866–74	'The White Terror'; further development of populist revolutionary theory.
1874	Military reforms.
1874 and 1875	The 'going to the people' movement.
1876	Formation of the second Zemlya i volya.
1879	Zemlya i volya splits over question of terror;
	formation of Cherny peredel and Narodnaya volya.
1881	Alexander II assassinated by Narodnaya volya.
1881–94	Reign of Alexander III.
1883	Formation in Geneva of first Russian Marxist group, the Group for the Liberation of Labour.
1893	Witte becomes Minister of Finance.
1894–1917	Reign of Nicholas II.
1894–1901	Programme of intensive industrialization.
1897–1900	Lenin in Siberian exile; perturbed by 'revisionist' tendencies in Social Democratic movement.
1898	First Congress of Russian Social Democratic Labour Party (RSDRP).
1900	First edition of <i>Iskra</i> ; foundation of Socialist-Revolutionary Party (SRs).
1901-05	Economic slump; agrarian and industrial unrest.
1902	Publication of Lenin's What is to be Done?
1903	Second Congress of RSDRP; split between Mensheviks and Bolsheviks.
1904–05	Russo-Japanese War; Russia defeated.

1905	Revolutionary turmoil throughout Russia following 'Bloody Sunday' massacre (January); tsar promises a constitution (August); general strike, formation of St Petersburg Soviet, imperial manifesto authorizing elections to State Duma (October); suppression of Moscow rising (December).			
1906	First State Duma; Stolypin becomes Prime Minister.			
1906–11	Stolypin's agrarian reforms.			
1907	Second State Duma; Stolypin alters electoral laws.			
1907-12	Third State Duma.			
1911	Stolypin assassinated.			
1912	Lena goldfield massacre; renewed industrial unrest; split between Mensheviks and Bolsheviks becomes final.			
1912-17	Fourth State Duma.			
1912–16	Rasputin scandal; widening rift between government and society.			
1914	Germany declares war on Russia.			
1915	Nicholas II becomes C-in-C; relations between government and Duma deteriorate; formation of Progressive Bloc.			
1916	Murder of Rasputin.			
1917				
Jan.—Feb.	Strikes and civil unrest in Petrograd.			
26–27 Feb.	Troops refuse to fire on demonstrators; garrison 'joins' the revolutionary movement.			
27 Feb.	Formation of Petrograd Soviet of Workers' Deputies.			
1 March	Order No. 1 of Petrograd Soviet drafted; election of soldiers' committees called for.			
2 March	Nicholas II abdicates; formation of first Provisional Government; beginning of 'dual power'; programme			

of democratic reform and civil liberties announced.

calls for 'All Power to the Soviets'.

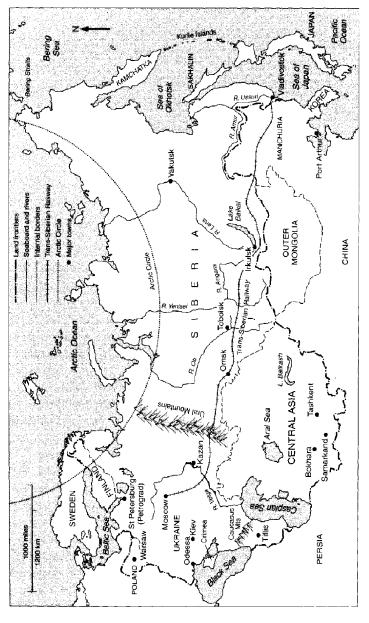
Lenin returns to Russia; formulates April Theses;

Protest against Milyukov's 'war note'; collapse of first

3 April

20 April-

2 May	Provisional Government.
5 May	Formation of second Provisional (coalition) Government; socialist ministers appointed; Kerensky becomes Minister for War.
3 June	First All-Russian Congress of Workers' and Soldiers' Deputies opens.
18 June	Launch of the Galician offensive.
2 July	Trotsky joins Bolsheviks.
3–4 July	Violent anti-government demonstrations in Petrograd.
5–7 July	Arrest of Bolshevik leaders ordered; Lenin goes into hiding.
8 July	Kerensky becomes Prime Minister.
16 July	Kornilov appointed C-in-C.
23 July	Trotsky arrested.
July-Sept.	Agrarian disturbances, working-class militancy and army desertions on the increase.
27–30 Aug.	Re-arming of Red Guards; Kornilov's attempted military coup defeated.
September	Trotsky freed; becomes chairman of Petrograd Soviet; Petrograd and Moscow Soviets obtain Bolshevik majorities; Lenin revives slogan 'All Power to the Soviets'.
10 Oct.	Lenin attends meeting of Bolshevik Central Committee; his call for armed insurrection approved.
20 Oct.	First meeting of Military Revolutionary Committee of Petrograd Soviet.
24–25 Oct.	Armed workers and soldiers, led by Bolsheviks and organized by Military Revolutionary Committee, take over key buildings and installations in Petrograd.
25–26 Oct.	Provisional Government ministers arrested; Bolshevik coup announced at second Congress of Soviets; Menshevik and SR delegates withdraw in protest.
26–27 Oct.	Congress of Soviets adopts Decree on Peace and Decree on Land; appoints first Soviet government, the all-Bolshevik Council of People's Commissars, with Lenin as chairman.



Russian Empire: late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries

I Introduction

The Russian Revolution of 1917 was arguably the most important event in the political history of the twentieth century and still has resonances in the twenty-first. A contemporary observer of the Revolution, the American journalist John Reed, entitled his famous account of those events Ten Days that Shook the World, and the tremors and reverberations of the upheaval still continue to be registered today. Eighty-five years after the event (at the time of writing) the shockwaves emanating from Russia in 1917 still have a direct or indirect impact on a whole range of political, economic, ideological, diplomatic and military problems throughout the world. Since the end of the Cold War, and particularly in the aftermath of the events of 11 September 2001 in New York and Washington, world leaders may now have different preoccupations and problems from those that concerned their predecessors towards the end of the last century. However, an appreciation of the causes, course and consequences of the Russian Revolution still remains, not merely a matter of historical interest, but also something that is important for a properly informed understanding of the political world in which we live, and in which the former Soviet Union—a state and society born of that Revolution —played such a crucial role.

This pamphlet confines itself to an examination of the origins and course of the Revolution, from the emancipation of the Russian peasant serfs in 1861 to the Bolshevik seizure of political power and the establishment of the first Soviet government in October 1917. Why begin an examination of the 1917 Revolution in the year 1861? It is not necessary to subscribe to the Marxist–Leninist view of history to agree with Lenin's own opinion that the origins of the Revolution can be traced back to the unsatisfactory legislation which abolished serfdom in Russia in 1861. The ambiguous and internally contradictory programme of administrative reform which followed the Act of Emancipation

generated new social, political and intellectual forces which were, however, confined within the rigid political framework of an absolutist, autocratic state. It is a physical, if not a historical, law that an uncontrolled steamhead of pressure building up inside an inflexible container with no room for expansion, no structural elasticity and no inbuilt safety-valves will inevitably explode and shatter the vessel. Those dangerous pressures and forces, both latent and active, were there for everybody to see and feel in the decades preceding 1917. Both for the autocracy and for the opposition, revolution was always a real possibility. Russian intellectuals constantly wrote and talked about it; activists organized for it; the government legislated against it; and the combined forces of the military and the police were constantly on the alert to suppress it. But it was the masses, the Russian people, who eventually made it. What follows seeks to describe and analyse some of the objective circumstances and subjective factors which contributed to that process, and which created those tensions and contradictions within the Russian Empire which proved ultimately unsusceptible of any other than a revolutionary solution. First, though, it is necessary to identify some of the salient characteristics of the tsarist regime and to trace the earlier traditions of revolutionary opposition to it.

Autocracy and opposition

The imperial regime: contrasts and contradictions

The Russian Empire at the time of the Revolution was a land of glaring contrasts. It was the largest land-empire in the world. From the heart of eastern Europe to the Pacific coast, and from the Arctic Ocean to the deserts of Central Asia and the Chinese borders, it sprawled—like the Soviet Union after it—over an area which covers roughly one-sixth of the earth's total land surface. A mismatch of territories and population, however, meant that whereas more than two-thirds of the country lay east of the Ural mountains in the vast, frozen expanses of Siberia, the bulk of the population resided and worked in the European provinces of Russia, Ukraine, Byelorussia, Poland (which was then an integral part of the Empire) and the Caucasus. The first Russian ruler to style himself Emperor (as distinct from tsar) was Peter I (Peter the Great, r. 1696-1725). The realm which he inherited from his seventeenth-century Muscovite forebears was already of considerable dimensions across the Eurasian landmass, but it was his most enduring achievement to establish Russia's presence as the dominant power in northern and eastern Europe as a result of his victory over Sweden in the Great Northern War (1700-21).

The significance of Russia's entry into Europe cannot be exaggerated. Equally portentous were the reciprocal effects of Europe's impact on Russia. The main thrust of Peter's reforms was to reshape the military and civilian administration of his country based on European models and to force the members of his landowning service nobility (dvoryanstvo) to adopt western-style habits, manners, education and attitudes. In this way Peter created a great division in Russian society—or, rather, he created two societies. On the one hand was the educated, westernized dvoryanstvo, which in the half-century after Peter's death

became transformed into a fully fledged, leisured, land- and serf-owning nobility enjoying most, if not all, of the privileges of a European aristocracy. On the other hand were the Russian people (narod), the enserfed peasants, who continued to be ruthlessly exploited, fleeced and conscripted, while at the same time remaining sunk in a vast swamp of ignorance, misery, superstition and periodic famine. This social and intellectual chasm separating the nobility from the narod was a manifestation of the complex and ambivalent nature of the relationship between 'modern' Europe and 'backward' Russia which was a major leitmotif of the country's history throughout the nineteenth century.

Further examples of ambiguity and contradiction may be found in the political structure, economic relationships, military power and even the cultural achievements of Russia on the eve of revolution.

In the first place, drawing on the traditions of the Byzantine emperors and the Mongol khans, the Russian emperor was an absolute autocrat. That is to say, there were no legal or constitutional constraints on his or her exercise of political power, choice of government ministers and officials, or formulation of national policies. A word from the tsar was sufficient to alter, override or abolish any existing legislation or institution. During the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, several attempts had been made to draw up proposals for some kind of constitutional reform which would limit the tsar's powers, but none of them was successful. It was not until the revolutionary disturbances of 1905 that the last Russian tsar, Nicholas II (r. 1894–1917), was forced to authorize the holding of elections for a consultative and legislative national assembly known as the Imperial State Duma. However, despite the tsar's reluctant concession to the principle of some kind of limited participatory politics, the legalization of political parties, and the promulgation of a set of Fundamental Laws, which formed a kind of quasi-constitution, the form of government still remained an absolute autocracy. This was made unambiguously explicit in the wording of the new Fundamental Laws (see Chapter 4). In other words, if the autocrat wished to abolish the constitution (and the Duma with it), then the constitution invested him with the authority to do precisely that. Indeed on two occasions, as explained in Chapter 4, the Duma was dissolved as a result of the irreconcilable confrontation between the elected delegates and the autocratically appointed government. Neither fish nor fowl, the notion of a 'constitutional autocracy' was not only impractical, it was clearly a political absurdity which was doomed to failure.

In economic terms the situation was similarly problematic. Russia's industrial backwardness in comparison with the other major European

powers had been exposed and highlighted by its defeat in the Crimean War (1853-56). Consequently, although not immediately, the government embarked on an intensive programme of industrialization at the turn of the century which catapulted Russia from being one of the least economically developed countries in Europe to one of the world's leading industrial producers. In the process, Russia rapidly took on all the appearance and substance of a modern capitalist economy. For the first time in its history the country developed a large industrial labour force, or proletariat, and an economically powerful middle class of businessmen, bankers, lawyers, financiers and factory-owners. At the same time, however, the great majority of the population, about 80 per cent, was still made up of communally organized peasants, working and living in their villages in conditions which had altered little since the eighteenth century. Even many town dwellers were officially registered as peasants, and Russia was still an overwhelmingly agrarian society. Trotsky once described this situation as a result of a process of 'combined development', which led to the simultaneous existence of two historical epochs and configurations, one-medieval, agrarian and semi-feudal, the other—modern, industrial and capitalist. This existence of a modern, industrial society cheek-by-jowl with a large, land-hungry peasantry whose economic interests were long neglected by the government is a key factor in understanding the nature of the 1917 Revolution.

Also vital to an understanding of the events of that year is the role of the military. And here, too, we are faced with another apparent paradox. The power and prestige of the Russian Empire ultimately rested on the strength of its armed forces. The Russian army was the largest military force in the world, and was utilized not only for fighting foreign wars but also for maintaining internal order and suppressing civilian disturbances that threatened the stability of the regime. In the wake of Russia's defeat in the Crimea, there followed a series of radical military reforms in the 1870s, which sought to reorganize and re-equip her forces for the tasks of modern warfare. Despite these changes, however, an overestimation of her strength resulted in further military disaster, this time at the hands of the Japanese in the war of 1904-05. The mighty Russian Empire was defeated by a relatively tiny Asiatic country which had, however, modernized itself more successfully and efficiently than its enormous, and apparently more powerful, neighbour. The omens for Russia's involvement in the First World War were therefore hardly auspicious. Whether her disastrous performance in that conflict precipitated the Revolution of 1917 or not is a question that will be

discussed in a later section, but the paradox is clear: on the one hand a great imperial power still with formidable military resources at its disposal, and on the other an army that seemed increasingly incapable of fulfilling its tasks, either of waging victorious war or of containing the internecine forces of civil unrest.

Culturally and intellectually, too, Russia during the reign of Nicholas II was a country which presented two different faces to the world. The two decades or so before 1917 have been described as the 'Silver Age' of Russian culture, the 'Russian Renaissance', and similar expressions which emphasize the innovative nature and high aesthetic quality of its artistic and literary achievements. Indeed, many of Russia's poets, painters and musicians formed the avant-garde of contemporary European culture. The plays and short stories of Anton Chekhov and Maxim Gorky, the poetry of Alexander Blok and the symbolist school, the music of Scriabin, Stravinsky and Prokofiev, new dramatic techniques pioneered by Stanislavsky and Meyerhold and the philosophical—religious ideas of Berdyaev and Rozanov, as well as the scientific discoveries of such scholars as Mendeleyev and Pavlov, were all characteristic of this age of intense cultural activity and attainment. The achievements are undeniable, but they were, of course, the exclusive preserve of the educated upper classes and intellectual élite. By contemporary western standards, levels of popular education and literacy in Russia were distressingly low. The majority of the peasant population was still illiterate, and in any case had far more urgent problems of sheer day-to-day survival to struggle with. There was little lyricism, learning or beauty in the life of the masses, and to many it seemed that the elegant outpourings of the intelligentsia were a selfindulgent abnegation of social and moral responsibility before the Russian people. Once again we are faced with a contradiction: that of a country whose brilliant artistic, scientific and literary achievements were in the forefront of European civilization, but the majority of whose population could not read or write its own language.

A further complicating factor in considering the state of the Russian Empire on the eve of revolution is the ethnic composition of the population. Out of a population in 1917 of 163 million, Russians accounted for only 40 per cent of the total. The rest was composed of a huge heterogeneous and multi-lingual collection of national minorities of widely differing size and levels of civilization. Throughout the history of the Empire these had periodically expressed their discontent at their subject status and at continuing Russian domination. This manifested itself in many forms, from acts of individual protest and

civil disobedience to full-scale and fully armed national insurrections calling for separation and autonomy. These were always mercilessly suppressed. The Polish uprisings of 1830 and 1863, for instance, were followed by executions and the exile of tens of thousands of Polish patriots to permanent exile in Siberia. Among the other nationalities, the Jews in particular suffered from a variety of restrictions on their residence, education, professional opportunities and economic activities. They were, too, the regular victims of officially connived-at campaigns of mob violence, arson, looting, and rape—the notorious pogroms. Apart from Poland and the 'Jewish pale', anti-Russian feelings ran high elsewhere in the Empire, and among the centrifugal forces impelling the tsarist regime towards its final collapse, the movements for national independence among the non-Russian peoples were an emotionally charged and extremely potent factor. The 'nationalities question' will be addressed at a later stage.

The Russian Empire at the beginning of the twentieth century, therefore, contained a highly volatile mixture of ostentatious wealth and grinding poverty; power and debility; backwardness and modernity; despotism and urgent demand for change. Examples were everywhere to be found of juxtaposed barbarism and sophistication; European and Asiatic traditions; advanced technology and primitive techniques; enlightenment and ignorance. This is, of course, not a situation which is historically peculiar to Russia, and is indeed to be found in many underdeveloped or developing societies throughout the world today. However, the stark contrasts and contradictions existing in Russia in the inter-revolutionary period between 1905 and 1917 led the great Russian writer, Leo Tolstoy, to remark ironically that Russia was 'the only country in the world where Genghis Khan enjoys the use of the telephone'.

The revolutionary tradition

The Romanov dynasty that was destroyed by the Revolution of 1917 was itself born of a quarter-century of revolutionary turmoil that racked Russia at the turn of the sixteenth century, a period traditionally known as the 'Time of Troubles' (1584–1613). The appointment of Michael Romanov as the new tsar in 1613, while solving the immediate political problem, did not offer any easy solution to the country's continuing social and economic difficulties, and the mid-seventeenth century was marked by so many instances of riot, mutiny, rebellion and religious schism that the Russian historian Klyuchevsky called this period the

'Time of Revolt'. From its very inauguration, therefore, the new regime was threatened with a series of potentially revolutionary challenges to its authority that set the pattern for the next three centuries of autocracy and opposition.

Most of these early disorders were elemental, savage, anarchical and not directed towards any specific political purpose. In particular, they were not directed against the tsar or, more precisely, against the autocracy as an institution. Indeed, it was a feature of many popular movements in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries that they were headed by a pretender to the throne, an imposter claiming to be the rightful tsar who would restore the people's rights and redress their grievances. Peter the Great's reign of terror provoked much popular resistance which, on the whole, he managed to contain, though only with a battery of brutal reprisals. His failure to nominate an heir before his death in 1725 inaugurated a period of political confusion which is sometimes referred to as the 'Era of Palace Revolutions'. However, the rapid turnover of unremarkable characters occupying the Russian throne between 1725 and 1762 had absolutely no revolutionary implications for the structure of the Russian state or society. It was merely a matter of exchanging one monarch for another, purely as the figurehead for this or that particular court faction, clique or favourite. One thing these 'palace revolutions' did demonstrate, however, was the importance of maintaining the loyalty of the senior military, in particular the palace guards regiments, who often acted in the role of 'kingmakers'. This eighteenth-century tradition of the regimental coup and the crucial part played by the military élite at times of political crisis will be returned to at a later stage.

One of the most significant of the palace conspiracies was that of 1762 which resulted in the installation as Empress of Catherine II (Catherine the Great). It was during her long reign (1762–96) that two portentous events took place, each representing a major strand in the fabric of the revolutionary movement as it developed over the next century and a half. The first of these was the massive Cossack and peasant revolt led by the pretender Emelyan Pugachev (1742[?]–75) between 1773 and 1775. In its geographical extent, in its numerical support, in the scope of its popular appeal and the wide range of its adherents—Cossacks, religious schismatics, factory-workers, native tribesmen and peasants—the Pugachev rebellion represented the most dangerous threat to the stability of the Russian state since the Time of Troubles. In the event the revolt was crushed, its leader's tortured body publicly butchered, and a bloodthirsty campaign of executions and

reprisals carried out in the affected regions. Pugachev was dead, but his ghost continued to haunt the autocracy, and the spirit of his rebellion to inspire those later revolutionary activists who believed in the innately anti-authoritarian and insurrectionary nature of the Russian narod.

If Pugachev was the personification of popular revolt, then the case of Alexander Radishchev (1749-1802) epitomizes the phenomenon of theoretical criticism and radical intellectual challenge to the regime that was to grow in such menacing proportions during the course of the nineteenth century. In 1790 Radishchev published a trenchant criticism of Catherine's Russia in the guise of a travel-diary entitled A Journey from St Petersburg to Moscow. Its appearance—with its bitter indictment of serfdom, militarism, corruption and tyrannical government and its advocacy of legality, human rights and individual liberty —was a literary and political bombshell. Radishchev was arrested, interrogated and banished to Siberian exile. This turned out to be the opening shot in a long-drawn-out battle between the Russian government and members of the critical—later militant, and eventually revolutionary intelligentsia. As long as the popular forces represented by Pugachev, and the intellectual challenges represented by Radishchev, remained isolated from each other, as by and large they did during the following century, then the regime was relatively secure. When, however, in the early twentieth century the intelligentsia and the narod joined forces, like two dangerous chemicals, the resultant explosion swept away the tsarist social and political order of which they were both a product.

The first open attempt at revolutionary change which combined intellectual opposition with the familiar techniques of the military coup —but as yet eschewed popular participation—was the ill-fated and abortive Decembrist revolt of 1825 (so called after the date of the insurrection on 14 December). The unexpected death of Alexander I (r. 1801-25) precipitated the plans of a group of highly educated, but middle-ranking, army officers to stage a military putsch that would overthrow the autocracy and introduce some kind of constitutional monarchy or even a republican form of government. The rebellion was easily suppressed; five of its leaders were hanged and over a hundred other officers sentenced to exile in Siberia. The major reason why the attempted revolution did not succeed was that there was no revolutionary situation. When the Decembrists decided to take to the streets there was no national emergency—merely a minor hiccup over the royal succession. There was no economic crisis, no external threat, no breakdown in the social order, no mass disturbance— in fact none of the objective circumstances that usually constitute the prerequisite for successful revolution, as was the case in 1917. But although it failed—perhaps *because* it failed—the Decembrist revolt can properly be regarded as the beginning of the nineteenth-century revolutionary movement. Its members were revered as martyrs, and the ideals and example of these 'gentry-revolutionaries' continued to inspire later generations of reformers, radicals and revolutionaries alike.

The reign of the new tsar, Nicholas I (r. 1825-55), has been described as 'the apogee of absolutism'. But despite the reactionary, militaristic and obscurantist nature of his rule, some remarkably vigorous intellectual activity did take place during his reign, one of the most significant manifestations of which was the so-called 'Westerner-Slavophil' debate of the 1840s. Put very simply, the Westerners were those intellectuals who believed that the answer to Russia's problems lay in following the example of European civilization. In particular they admired the western traditions of constitutional government, respect for the rights of the individual, rational philosophy and the rule of law. Some of the more radical Westerners were also influenced by contemporary French socialist thinkers and by the theories of the German philosopher, Hegel, which one prominent Westerner described as the 'algebra of revolution'. Instinctively rebelling against the harshness contemporary reality in Russia, and reinforced by these theories, the radical Westerners of the 1840s began to think in terms of revolution as providing the only means of changing that reality for the better. One of the most prominent and notorious Westerners was Vissarion Belinsky (1811–48), an angry young literary critic who spearheaded a journalistic and personal attack on autocracy, the Orthodox Church and Serfdom.

The Slavophils on the other hand declared that what was wrong with the Russia of Nicholas I was already too much Europeanization, too much bureaucracy and officialdom, and a breakdown in what they believed to be the traditional harmoniousness of Russian society. Taking as the starting point of their philosophy the traditions and teachings of the Russian Orthodox Church, the Slavophils thought that Russia's future greatness lay in a return to the imagined virtues of her Muscovite past. They talked about the decadence and 'rottenness' of modern European civilization and contrasted it with the unspoilt, Orthodox Christian qualities of the Russian peasant. Above all, they pointed to the collective organization of the traditional peasant commune (the *obshchinaor mir*) as proof of the inherent moral and social superiority of the Russian people over the individualism, competitiveness and socially divisive egocentricty of Europeans.

It is hard to exaggerate the impact of Westerner-Slavophil controversy on the future intellectual, and even political, history of Russia. Many of the later disputes and divisions within the Russian intelligentsia, between different factions, schools of thought and political parties, can be analysed in terms of those who sought what they believed to be a rational, logical and universal solution to Russia's problems and those who professed to be more alive to the idiosyncrasies of Russia's own peculiar cultural and social traditions. Indeed, both the dichotomy and the debate are still detectable in the political confrontations and intellectual arguments within Russia today.

Such was the oppressive nature of Nicholas's regime that, apart from the Polish insurrection of 1830 and localized instances of peasant protest, there were no manifestations of significant revolutionary opposition during his reign. Many intellectuals still continued to nurse their grievances, and occasionally voiced them in coded literary form, which, if detected, would be duly punished. For example, members of a semiclandestine discussion group, led by Michael Petrashevsky, were arrested in 1849 and exiled to Siberia, merely for discussing in private what were deemed to be subversive radical ideas. The last seven years of the reign were sometimes referred to as the 'gloomy septennium', as the censorship terror became even harsher, gagging the intelligentsia in the aftermath of the European revolutionary events of 1848. However, on Nicholas's death in 1855, a new generation of young, hard-nosed, materialistic-minded members of the intelligentsia emerged from the 'gloomy septennium', not content merely to theorize, but ultimately to take practical action to bring about fundamental change in Russia, if necessary by revolutionary means.

For the time being, however, the main focus of their criticisms, and the centre of now public debate in the wake of Russia's defeat in the Crimean War and the accession of the young Alexander II (r. 1855– 81), was the fraught question of the emancipation of the Russian serfs.

Emancipation and administrative reform, 1861–81

The emancipation of the serfs has been variously described as the 'most important single act of legislation in the entire history of Russia', and as being 'not worth the paper it was written on'. The arguments over the reasons for the government's decision to undertake this enterprise need not detain us here. What is important are the conditions and consequences of the settlement. It is, however, worth noting briefly that Alexander II did not abolish serfdom out of any altruistic desire for an improvement in the lot of the Russian *narod*. Fear, rather than philanthropy, forced him to embark on a process which, following the Crimean debacle, was seen to be essential to the economic and political survival of the Empire. The memory of Pugachev's hordes cannot have been far from Alexander's mind when he declared in 1856 that, if serfdom *were* to be abolished, 'it is better that it should be abolished from above, rather than wait until it abolishes itself from below'.

The essential features of the complex legislation were as follows. First, the serfs were given their technical legal liberty; that is, they were no longer the private property of their masters' and were free to trade, marry, litigate and acquire property. Second, after a period of 'temporary obligation' during which they continued to perform some of the duties pertaining to their former serf-status, they were to begin paying a series of 'redemption payments' to the government for the land-allotments which had been assigned to them from their previous owner's estate. The high level of the redemption dues, set at six per cent interest over a period of forty-nine years, meant that the peasants were forced to pay a price for their land that was far in excess of its current market value, and represented a 'hidden' compensation to the *dvoryanstvo* for the loss of their servile labour.

Another crucial feature of the legislation was the fact that, although freed, the peasants were still organized within, and legally bound to, their village commune or obshchina. Both the freedom and the land that they received were granted not on an individual but on a collective basis. The commune wielded extensive powers over its members, both of an economic and of a quasi-judicial nature. Taxes, redemption payments and other dues were communally collected and paid; in areas where land was periodically redistributed among the peasants rather than held in hereditary tenure, the obshchina was responsible for the reallocation of land-allotments among the individual households in the commune; no peasant was free to leave the commune without the permission of the village elders; and the commune was empowered to banish its wayward members to exile in Siberia. Peasants were still subject to corporal punishment, military conscription, payment of the poll-tax and certain other obligations from which other social classes were exempt. In other words the peasantry did not enjoy equal status with the other classes in Russian society. It was more of a separate 'caste', with its own internal structures, procedures, laws and economic arrangements. Moreover, the retention of the obshchina as an official institution, although firmly rooted in Russian tradition, meant that in effect the peasant had merely exchanged bondage to the serf-owner for bondage to the commune. Lack of capital investment, periodic reallocation of land, primitive agricultural methods, crippling financial burdens and impediments to mobility ensured that the agrarian sector of the Russian economy more or less stagnated for the next forty years. In terms of popular protest, too, the countryside remained remarkably quiescent during this period, though the obvious inequities and economic hardships imposed by the emancipation statutes were later to be dramatically highlighted by a recrudescence of mass peasant disturbances at the start of the new century.

The lack of any mass peasant protest movements in the last part of the nineteenth century may be explained by a number of factors. Among these are, first, after a scattering of isolated demonstrations, caused mainly by the fact that the bewildered peasants did not fully understand the complexities of the legislation, the majority settled down, as it were, to adjust to their new position, however wretched, as technically free citizens. Second, the speed and ferociousness with which those isolated incidents were dealt with, including floggings and shootings, more than likely dissuaded them from any further action. (These two points are addressed below, p. 18.) Third, within the confines of the communal system, there were limited opportunities for the more enterprising peasants to take advantage of the emerging new economic order to increase their land-holdings and better themselves. Fourth, the abolition of the onerous poll-tax and the reduction in the period of military service, both in the 1870s, lightened peasant burdens to some extent. Fifth, the improvement in educational and medical provision as a result of local government activities meant that, in some respects at least, rural conditions in post-emancipation Russia were marginally more tolerable than under serfdom. And finally, abolition of the seigneurial rights of the serf-owners over their peasants removed the immediate object of peasant hostility, which had traditionally been vented against their noble masters.

Some of these factors also go some way to explaining the huge increase in the peasant population of Russia, which expanded from around 56 million in 1861 to about 110 million at the time of the 1897 census. However, doubling of the population, and the finite amount of land available, led to 'land hunger' in the later years of the century, which was only partly alleviated by a certain amount of migration from the central provinces to the rich agricultural lands in southern Siberia. Also, the Finance Minister's policy in the 1890s of 'export and starve', whereby the government continued to gain foreign earnings by exporting grain, led to massive famines in the southern regions of the Empire in the early 1890s. Thus, despite the improvements listed above, peasant Russia still continued to suffer conditions of acute and longterm hardship, discrimination, land shortage and widespread poverty all of which, as mentioned earlier, flared up into a series of what have been described as 'peasant wars' between 1902 and 1907. In these respects, therefore, the emancipation settlement can hardly be deemed to have been a success.

Following the abolition of the serf-owners' seigneurial rights over their former bondsmen, the government was logically faced with the necessity of constructing some new form of local government organization and judicial procedures to replace the old feudal institutions which existed under serfdom. Accordingly, legislation was drafted which, commencing in 1864, established new organs of local government in the countryside called rural councils, or *zemstva*. These were set up at both district and provincial levels, and comprised three 'elements': elected councillors; the permanent, paid officials or civil servants of the *zemstva*; and the professional employees of the councils such as schoolteachers, doctors, lawyers, agronomists and other technical experts who actually carried out the day-to-day work in those areas of public welfare for which the *zemstva* had responsibility. Major

administrative and financial restrictions meant, however, that the work of the zemstva and urban equivalents, the town councils, were seriously impeded and undermined. The zemstva were also very limited in their geographical extent and at the time of the 1917 Revolution functioned in only forty-three of the seventy provinces of the Russian Empire. The electoral system, too, left much to be desired. Suffrage was based on property qualifications that were pitched so high as to ensure that an overwhelming preponderance of the *zemstva's* membership was drawn from the landowning nobility and the very wealthy urban classes. Despite some peasant representation on the zemstva, local affairs were still, after emancipation, very much in the hands of the local nobility, though these were now increasingly tied by bureaucratic and financial constraints imposed from the capital. Notwithstanding these drawbacks, the zemstva were remarkably successful in promoting welfare and public services in those areas where they existed. Among their most important functions were the provision of educational facilities and medical care, maintenance of roads and bridges, upkeep of prisons and asylums, promotion of local industry, poor relief and help with agricultural problems. They also provided a forum in which members of society could gain some experience of participatory politics, albeit at local level, and also an opportunity for the intelligentsia, through its professional activities as the 'third element' of the zemstva, both to serve and to gain first-hand experience of the life of the Russian *narod*.

The administration of justice in Russia before the emancipation of the serfs was notoriously inefficient, long-winded, corrupt and socially discriminatory. In 1864 a new judicial system was introduced, which for the first time in Russia strove to incorporate some of the west-European concepts and principles of 'the rule of law': trial by jury; equality before the law; irremovability and proper training of judges; the establishment of a professional bar; public reporting of trials; and the separation of the judiciary from the legislature and executive. As in the case of the zemstva, the new judicial system was a distinct advance on the inequitable and labyrinthine procedures which it replaced. Similarly, however, it was not without its imperfections. Among the most glaring was the retention of the local peasants' courts that were still empowered to mete out corporal punishments. Also, the police still enjoyed extensive powers of arrest and punishment without trial of persons considered to be socially or politically undesirable. In times of social unrest martial law was regularly imposed; this overrode the civil courts and allowed the use of corporal and even capital punishment in the suppression of popular disorder. Furthermore, Russia's long tradition of arbitrary rule and illegality meant that notions of modern jurisprudence were very slow in penetrating both the official and the popular consciousness. Nevertheless, however flawed, the reformed judicial system did go a long way to meet standards of impartial justice, and the courts provided both a forum and another opportunity for the public voicing of non-conformist and critical opinion. Many members of the newly established legal profession later played a prominent part in anti-government politics and acted as a buffer between the people and the state.

The local government and judicial reforms were the most important (the emancipation apart) of a whole series of administrative and institutional changes which affected most areas of Russian life during this period. Reforms in the secondary and higher educational system, relaxation of censorship regulations, new developments in finance, trade and communications, and a thorough overhaul of the organization, training, recruiting and equipment of the Russian army were all symptomatic of the transition that Russia was slowly undergoing from a semi-feudal to something approaching a modern capitalist society. The paradoxical consequences of that process have been discussed above. Alongside the new institutions, remnants of the old regime still survived -most obviously, of course, the autocracy-and the reforming tsar resolutely refused to listen to those progressive-minded members of the nobility who urged him to 'crown his reforms with a constitution'. The period of 'Great Reforms' was also an era of rising, though frustrated, expectations, and in the teeth of the government's refusal to alter the political structure of tsarism, and against the disappointment of the emancipation settlement, more and more members of the radical intelligentsia were becoming attracted by the prospect of popular revolution as the only means by which the Russian people might gain real 'land and liberty'. These two words—land and liberty (zemlya i volva)—later became the slogan and the rallying-cry of the Russian revolutionary populist movement which was to form the major focus of opposition to the policies of the 'Tsar-Liberator'.

Revolutionary Populism, 1861-81

Revolutionary Populism—or *narodnichestvo*—is the word used to describe both the theories and practical activities of Russia's militant intelligentsia in the 1860s and 1870s who attempted to bring about fundamental social and political change to the country in what they perceived to be the interests of the Russian *narod*. If necessary this was

to be achieved by violent revolution. Whatever their individual or group differences—and there were many—the populists (narodniki) all shared a common vision of the destruction of the tsarist social and political order and its replacement by an agrarian-socialist society based on the collectivist traditions and institution of the Russian peasant commune. All insisted, too, that a purely Russian path of social and economic development must be trodden that would avoid the pitfalls and horrors of western capitalism. The obshchina, they believed, was a guarantee that this could be achieved. The narodniki were not opposed to industrialization as such. What they argued was that the communal principles of the peasant obshchina and the workers' cooperative should be retained and translated into the organization of trade and industry without subjecting Russia to the evils of exploitation, proletarianization and pauperization which were features of the capitalist mode of production.

The father of Russian Populism was Alexander Herzen (1812-70). Disillusioned with European bourgeois civilization after witnessing the failure of the 1848 revolutions, this radical Westerner began increasingly to draw inspiration from some of the Slavophils' views, and to see the peasant commune, with its traditions of collectivism, mutual responsibility and redistribution of land, as the embryo of a future socialist society in Russia. His ideas were still amorphous and subject to frequent modification, but his amalgam of western socialism and Russian peasant collectivism certainly represents the first stage in the history of Russian Populism. The next stage was dominated by a man of altogether different character, Nicholas Chernyshevsky (1828– 89). A man of more plebeian origins than the aristocratic Herzen, Chernyshevsky became the main spokesman and ideologue of the new post-Crimean generation of the intelligentsia, composed of young men and women who were more hard-headed, materialistic, impatient, uncompromising and, ultimately, revolutionary in their outlook than the 'men of the 'forties'. In his own writings he brought to bear a more solid, scholarly and dispassionate approach than Herzen to the major economic, social and political issues of the day. Owing nothing to the Slavophils' idealized vision of the obshchina, and basing his views on firmer historical and economic grounds. Chernyshevsky nevertheless argued that the retention, even the rejuvenation, of the commune was the best guarantee of a more equitable future for the Russian people. Nor was he seduced into thinking anything good would come out of the negotiations for the emancipation of the serfs. An article which appeared in 1859, clearly reflecting Chernyshevsky's intellectual

position at the time, urged its readers not to be taken in by Alexander II's apparently good intentions, and proposed that the answer to the people's problems lay literally in the people's own hands: 'Only the peasants' axes can save us. Nothing apart from these axes is of any use... Summon Russia to arms!'

It was, however, only in the years immediately after the emancipation that any form of practical revolutionary activity took place. The immediate reaction of the liberated serfs was a mixture of bewilderment, anger and dismay that expressed itself in a number of disturbances throughout the country. These were swiftly and brutally suppressed. After the initial outrage, however, it is remarkable how quickly the countryside settled down and, seemingly, came to terms, albeit grudgingly, with the new arrangements. The intelligentsia, too, began to voice its discontent. The first revolutionary organization since the Decembrists—calling itself Zemlya i volya ('Land and Liberty') came into being, though its composition, membership, aims and objectives still remain unclear and it soon petered out with no concrete achievements. At the same time, the appearance and circulation of a number of political broadsheets and propaganda documents of a more or less inflammatory nature have led some observers to call these years the 'era of manifestos'. One of them in particular is worthy of comment. It was entitled Molodaya Rossiya, 'Young Russia', and was written by a 19-year-old student, Peter Zaichnevsky (1842–96). Despite the violent tone of its rather adolescent rhetoric, Molodaya Rossiya did set out a coherent programme of social and political objectives together with a rather gory scenario for revolutionary action which envisaged the slaughter of the entire 'Imperial party'. It also clearly identified the problem of the relationship between the revolutionary intelligentsia and the narod, a problem which Zaichnevsky tackled by proclaiming that the revolutionary masses must be led by a disciplined, centralized party organization which would, moreover, establish a post-revolutionary dictatorship to supervise the introduction of the new social and political institutions. Among these, Zaichnevsky's insistence on the paramount role of the *obshchina* places him squarely in the populist tradition, but his advocacy of an élite leadership for the revolution makes his manifesto one of the first voicings of that tendency in Russian political thought usually referred to as 'Jacobinism': that is, the belief that a popular rising must be organized and led by a centralized, revolutionary vanguard (see p. 2).

The bloody suppression of the Polish national uprising in 1863, the disappearance of Zemlya i volya, the return of relative calm to the

countryside, and the arrest, trial and exile of Chernyshevsky in 1864 marked the end of the immediate post-emancipation unrest. In 1866 things took a different turn. Dmitry Karakozov (1840-66), a member of a tiny, clandestine revolutionary cell in Moscow, decided that the fundamental cause of the people's misery was the autocratic state which in popular language meant the tsar. He therefore took it on himself to assassinate Alexander, and attempted to carry out his intention on 4 April 1866. His shot went wide, and Karakozov was arrested and later hanged. Other members of his organization were exiled to Siberia, and there set in a period of intense police repression which is sometimes referred to as the 'White Terror'. In order to escape arrest and possible exile after the Karakozov affair, many members of the radical intelligentsia fled abroad to Switzerland where they continued their studies and where, between 1866 and 1874, the ideology of Russian Populism developed along divergent lines. The three major tendencies were associated with the theories of Peter Lavrov (1823-1900), Michael Bakunin (1814–76) and Peter Tkachev (1844–86).

Lavrov believed that it was the task of the intelligentsia to engage itself in a programme of education, preparation and propaganda which would gradually raise the level of its own, and the people's, political consciousness to the point where they, the people, would rise, overthrow the state and establish a socialist society. In his Historical Letters he spoke of the moral debt of the 'penitent gentry' to the Russian narod, and of the need to redeem their debt by putting themselves at the service of the people—but only when they and the people were fully ready. Bakunin, on the other hand, believed passionately that there was nothing that the intelligentsia could teach the *narod*. 'The Russian people', he said in a famous phrase, 'is revolutionary by instinct and socialist by nature.' Invoking the spirit of Pugachev, Bakunin scorned the idea that it was the intelligentsia's task to indoctrinate the people. On the contrary, he put his faith in the spontaneous peasant insurrection—the bunt. If the intelligentsia had any role at all, it was simply that of helping the peasants to coordinate their separate rebellions into a nationwide revolution that would destroy the tsarist state and leave the people to organize themselves into a federation of autonomous, self-governing communes. 'We must not act as school-master for the people,' he said, 'but we must lead them to revolt.' Leading the people to revolt was also a central feature of Tkachev's philosophy. Unlike the anti-authoritarian, anarchist Bakunin, however, Tkachev produced the most fullyarticulated expression of that 'Jacobin' Populism which had appeared in Zaichnevsky's manifesto. Tkachev impatiently exhorted

intelligentsia to organize itself for revolutionary action and to lead the masses in both the destruction of the old order and the construction of the new. Some authors have argued that Tkachev's emphasis on discipline, leadership and organization foreshadows some of Lenin's views on party organization and the relationship between the revolutionary party and the proletariat—a topic discussed in the following chapter.

In the 'mad summer' of 1874 an amazing phenomenon occurred. Without leadership, without organization and without planning, thousands of young intellectuals, both men and women, left their homes, universities and employment and joined in a mass spontaneous movement, almost a crusade, to spread the socialist gospel throughout the Russian countryside. This was the famous 'going to the people' (khozhdenie v narod). There was no immediate signal for the movement. It represented a curious mixture of semi-digested socialist theories (both Lavrovist and Bakuninist), genuine sympathy for the sufferings of the peasantry and youthful enthusiasm to serve a noble cause, and was marked by an almost missionary commitment and zeal. The whole affair was a miserable fiasco. Many became disillusioned with the sullen, conservative and unresponsive nature of the peasants themselves; others were struck down by diseases endemic in the Russian countryside; some were arrested by the local police; and many were actually detained by the suspicious peasants and handed over to the authorities for 'speaking against God and the tsar'. Hundreds were imprisoned and later put on public trial in St Petersburg and Moscow. The intelligentsia had 'gone to the people'; the people had sent them back. Nothing could more clearly or tragically illustrate the continuing gulf that separated Russia's educated classes from the *narod*.

The failure of the 'movement to the people' actually to move the people forced the revolutionaries to reappraise the situation. They now reverted to the techniques of organization, conspiratorial plan ning and underground activities aimed at the 'disorganization' of the state. In 1876 a second Zemlya i volya party was founded. Its programme was impeccably populist in its orientation, but more and more its leading members began to concentrate on the immediate political tactics and to lose sight of the broader strategy of preparing for mass social revolution. The crisis within Zemlya i volya came to a head over the specific question of terror. A policy of armed resistance to arrest and consequent shoot-outs with police and prison authorities had escalated into preemptive assassination attempts on government and police officials. Faced with the growing wave of terrorist violence, the government

imposed a state of emergency and martial law, and the vicious circle of assassination, executions, revenge and reprisals intensified. Finally, in 1879, the party split into two factions. One, called Cherny peredel ('Black Repartition'), opposed the use of political violence as being counter-productive, a betrayal of populist principles, and not conducive to the ultimate aims of the revolution. The other, Narodnaya volya ('The People's Will'), dedicated itself to a continuation of the terror campaign, arguing that this would enfeeble the state and hasten the onset of a revolutionary situation. On 26 August 1879 the Executive Committee of the Narodnava volva solemnly condemned Alexander II to death, and after several unsuccessful attempts the Tsar-Liberator was finally blown to pieces on 1 March 1881 by a terrorist bomb. Five of the conspirators, including their leader, Andrew Zhelyabov and his lover, Sophia Perovskaya, were arrested, tried and publicly hanged. The rest of the radical intelligentsia was decimated by imprisonment, exile and emigration.

It would be a mistake to regard the execution of the regicides and the ensuing collapse of Narodnaya volya as the end of revolutionary populism in Russia. The subsequent government reaction and the growing preoccupation of more and more radical intellectuals with the revolutionary theories of Karl Marx (1818-83) did not mean that the populist tradition died out. Marx's revolutionary philosophy was based on a study of the industrial history and political economy of the advanced capitalist societies of western Europe, and many still continued to believe that his class-based ideas of 'bourgeoisdemocratic' and 'proletarian-socialist' revolution were inapplicable to backward, agrarian, autocratic Russia. How the early Russian Marxists coped with the theoretical and practical implications of this situation is dealt with in Chapter 4. The assassination of Alexander II in 1881 and the foundation of the first Russian Marxist group in 1883 did not therefore mark the end and the beginning of two separate chapters in the history of the revolutionary movement. Russian Populism and Russian Marxism were, as one writer has put it, 'two skeins entangled'. Despite the eventual political triumph of the Marxist Bolshevik party in 1917, the populist tradition with its belief in the value of the commune, the socialization of the land, and the need for a non-capitalist road of development was to remain a powerful and—from the government's point of view—dangerous force on the Russian political scene until, and beyond, 1917.

Retrenchment and industrialization, 1881-1905

Not surprisingly, the reaction of the incoming tsar to the politically futile assassination of his father was harsh. Alexander III (r. 1881–94) was by nature bigoted, authoritarian, fiercely chauvinistic, suspicious of intellectuals and also anti-Semitic. The grey eminence behind the throne was the Over-Procurator of the Holy Synod (the government minister responsible for church affairs), Constantine Pobedonostsev (1827–1907), a man who combined extreme erudition with a hatred bordering on paranoia of anything which detracted from the principles of autocratic government, Orthodox Christianity and Russian nationalism. He dismissed those who continued to talk about a constitutional form of government in Russia as 'half-wits and perverted apes', and his fanatic religiosity and intolerance of change set their stamp on the entire reign, a period sometimes referred to as the 'era of petty deeds'.

The first casualty of the new regime was the misnamed Loris-Melikov 'Constitution'. Shortly before his death Alexander II had authorized his Minister of the Interior, Count Loris-Melikov (1825-88), to prepare a project which, had he survived, might have led to the summoning of a national consultative assembly to deliberate and advise on the preparation of legislation. Hardly the draft of a constitution, it was nevertheless immediately scrapped by the new emperor who described it as a 'criminal document'. Loris-Melikov was dismissed. In a drive to purge the country of subversive and 'untrust-worthy' elements, the next Interior Minister granted the police extensive new powers of surveillance, arrest and administrative (i.e. extra-judicial) exile. Originally a temporary device, the Statute on Measures to Preserve National Order and Public Peace (14 August 1881) was systematically renewed every three years till 1917, and so sweeping were its powers that Russia was effectively turned into a police state. Lenin once described the draconian legislation as 'the de facto constitution of Russia'.

Apart from abandoning Loris-Melikov's plan and augmenting the arbitrary powers of the police, Alexander III's government sought in other ways to reverse, or at least weaken, the effects of his predecessor's reforms. More and more criminal cases were removed from the jurisdiction of the new courts as recourse was increasingly made to administrative procedures and special tribunals in which cases were often heard in camera. Likewise, the *zemstva* were made the subject of new legislation which drastically curtailed their already limited areas of competence and independence. Most importantly, the

establishment in 1889 of a new corps of centrally appointed government officials with wide-ranging administrative powers over the zemstva's activities more or less removed what little authority they had. This did not represent, as is sometimes alleged, the restoration of the landowners' rights over the peasantry so much as a reinforcement of the central government's authority over the local and regional communities as a whole.

It is hardly surprising that the regime's suspicion of local and regional initiatives should have extended to the non-Russian peoples and non-Orthodox religions of the Empire. Jews, Polish Catholics, Baltic Protestants, central-Asian Muslims and Russian sectarians all fell victim in a greater or lesser degree to the obnoxious and illconceived policies of 'Russification'. A whole battery of discriminatory legislation was aimed at eradicating various manifestations of non-Russian national identity and un-Orthodox religious practices. Even the use of native languages-for example Polish in Polish schools -was selectively banned and the learning of Russian made compulsory in some of the non-Russian borderlands. As mentioned previously, the Jewish community was singled out for particularly vindictive treatment and racialist attacks which eventually led to the emergence of a' Zionist' movement in search of a separate Jewish homeland.

It was pointed out earlier that the emergence of national liberation and independence movements against Russian imperialism and colonialism played a very important role in the eventual disintegration of the Empire. It was largely due to Alexander III's xenophobic, racist and heavy-handed treatment of the non-Russian peoples of his domain that exacerbated their resentment against St Petersburg, and increased their determination to free themselves of tsarist oppression. As will be seen, right throughout the Empire, national minorities took advantage of the revolutionary turmoil of both 1905 and 1917 to press their demands. Indeed, it is an indication of the government's insensitive attitude to the non-Russian peoples that, despite their accounting for 60 per cent of the Empire's population, and despite the heterogeneity of their composition, needs and cultures, neither the tsarist regime nor the Provisional Governments in 1917 ever appointed a minister with special responsibility for the non-Russian nationalities. It was not until after the October 1917 Revolution that the new socialist government, recognizing the crucial importance of the nationalities question, appointed the Georgian Bolshevik, Joseph Dzhugashvili, better known under his pseudonym as Stalin, as the country's first Commissar (i.e. Minister) for Nationalities.

Artistically and intellectually, the reign of Alexander III was not distinguished by any especially remarkable achievements and indeed the government brought in stricter censorship controls, muzzled the press and caused the closure of many journals. In schools and universities the reintroduction of the hierarchical principle ensured that proper educational opportunities were denied to the lower classes of society. This policy was purposefully designed—in the words of a notorious government memorandum—to prevent the children of 'coachmen, servants, cooks, washerwomen, small shopkeepers and other similar persons' from acquiring ideas above their station that might lead them to question the 'natural and inevitable inequality in social and economic relationships'.

If the overall atmosphere of the 1880s was one of stagnation, mediocrity and repression, there is one area in which some modest progress was made that paved the way for the more spectacular achievements of the following decade—and that is in the development of industry. Although the emancipation settlement had not immediately generated either the capital or the mobile labour force necessary for a major programme of industrialization, nevertheless certain important developments did take place between 1861 and 1894 which laid down the infrastructure for what was to become Russia's belated industrial revolution. The establishment of banks, joint-stock companies and other financial institutions, increasing factory and urban growth, and greater labour mobility were matched by steady industrial progress. Output of iron, steel, coal and oil rose significantly, and railway construction expanded from 1,500 kilometres of track in 1861 to 30,500 in 1890. Likewise the industrial labour force more than doubled between 1860 and 1890 to about one and a half million. Most of this expansion was the result of private enterprise—particularly in railway construction. The appointment, however, of Sergei Witte (1849–1915) as Minister of Finance in 1893 marked a crucial turning point in the industrial development of Russia.

Although many elements of the so-called 'Witte system' were in place before 1893, it was Witte whose enthusiasm forced through a programme of rapid industrial expansion that had not only economic, but also profound social and political, consequences. The distinguishing features of the 'system' were as follows: the leading role taken by the government in planning and finance; emphasis on capital goods rather than consumer goods industries; investment fundraising by increased taxation of the already over-burdened peasantry; and encouragement of massive investment of foreign capital—particularly French, Belgian and

British. Central to the programme was the remarkable expansion in railway construction—the most spectacular project being the laying of the 7,000 kilometre Trans-Siberian Railway linking the rail networks of European Russia with the Pacific coast. The enormous demands of the Trans-Siberian on the metallurgical and coal industries played an important role in the whole industrialization process, and its completion around 1901, with the consequent fall-off of government orders, contributed much to the economic slump which followed Witte's 'boom'. The following figures for output in key sectors of industry between 1890 and 1900 illustrate the scale of the upsurge: coal rose from 367 million puds (1 pud=16.38 kilograms) to 995, iron ore from 106 to 367, and petroleum from 241 to 632 million. Between 1887 and 1897 the value of textile production rose from 463 million to 946 million rubles. This rapid growth rate was characterized by high concentration of production in key geographical regions—St Petersburg, Moscow, Ukraine, the Baku oilfields and the Urals—and high concentration of workers in very large-scale industrial enterprises. In 1900 almost half the industrial labour force was located in factories which employed more than 1,000 workers—very high by contemporary European standards. Most commentators agree that living and working conditions were generally appalling, with long hours, low pay, inadequate accommodation and safety procedures and a punitive code of labour laws that heavily penalized breaches of industrial discipline. Trade unions and political parties were of course banned. It was the relative cheapness of labour in Russia, the highly lucrative interest rates and the apparently stable political situation which were so attractive to foreign investors. It was more profitable, for instance, for a Lancashire cottonmill owner to build a new factory and employ Russian workers on the outskirts of Moscow than on the outskirts of Manchester or Rochdale. This meant, of course, that a large proportion of the profits went, not into the Russian economy, but into the pockets of foreign capitalists.

However, the rapid growth, dense concentration and the dangerous and unsanitary working conditions of the industrial proletariat created a situation that was obviously conducive to the spread of mass discontent, which soon expressed itself in the formation of group solidarity, strike highly-developed proletarian consciousness movements, a increasing receptivity to the agitation and propaganda of revolutionary activists. Among these were more and more who, attracted by the theories of Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels, had begun to see the industrial working class, rather than the peasantry, as the major vehicle for revolutionary change in Russia. It is against this background of continuing political reaction, industrial expansion and the development of capitalist relationships that the origins of Russian Marxism have to be traced.

Origins of Russian Marxism

The first self-styled Russian Marxist revolutionary group was founded in Switzerland in 1883. It called itself the Group for the Liberation of Labour, and was composed of only four people, all ex-populists: George Plekhanov (1856-1918), Paul Axelrod (1850-1928), Leo Deutsch (1855–1941) and Vera Zasulich (1849–1919). It would be wrong, however, to believe that Marxism was unknown in Russia before that date. Indeed, it was familiarity with Marx's analysis of the political economy of industrial capitalism in Europe that had led many of the populists to seek an alternative Russian path to socialism. However, as faith in the revolutionary potential of the peasantry began to fade, increasing numbers of radical intellectuals and, later, industrial workers in Russia became 'converted' to Marxism. As capitalism and industrialization progressed, they gradually adopted Marx's view that society must first pass from the feudal through the capitalist stage of development before the revolutionary proletariat could overthrow its 'bourgeois' government and establish a socialist workers' state. There were, however, problems with this theory as applied to Russia. As we know, Russia was an autocratic state with no political freedom, no economically powerful, politically conscious middle (bourgeoisie), and a tiny undeveloped proletariat. At first, therefore, it seemed inappropriate to think in terms of a 'bourgeois-democratic', still less a 'proletarian-socialist', revolution in Russia. However, the social and economic changes brought about by Witte's industrialization convinced the early Russian Marxists that they were right, that capitalism would displace feudalism, and that just as surely the Russian working class would eventually destroy capitalism. In fact Marx himself had not discounted the populist notion that the peasant

obshchina might serve as the starting point for socialism in Russia, and he had great personal admiration for some populist theoreticians, especially Chernyshevsky. However, the members of Liberation of Labour, particularly Plekhanov, devoted their theoretical skills to repudiating the populists' case, arguing that the obshchina did not provide the model for a socialist society and that the development of capitalism leading to a proletarian socialist revolution in Russia was inevitable.

During the 1890s, as the Russian labour force grew in size and strength, there sprang up an increasing number of workers' organizations, embryonic trade unions, Marxist discussion circles and other groups which conducted both agitation and propaganda activities and helped to organize strikes in the major industrial centres. In 1898 an attempt was made to weld these various cells, regional organizations and committees into a united, revolutionary Marxist political party. In that year there took place the first 'Congress' of the Russian Social Democratic Labour Party (RSDRP), forerunner of the later Communist Party of the Soviet Union. Very little, however, was achieved at the Congress (there were only nine delegates) and the infant party's leadership was soon arrested and imprisoned. The 'party', therefore, had no formal organization, agreed programme, proper membership or central agencies and existed in name only. In 1903 a second attempt was made to forge a unified party, though what in fact occurred was the fateful division of the RSDRP into two major and ultimately irreconcilable factions, known as the Mensheviks and the Bolsheviks.

It was during the interval between the first and second congresses that a crucial role in the party's internal history began to be played by a young Marxist intellectual by the name of Vladimir Ilyich Ulyanov, better known by his pseudonym of Lenin (1870-1924). When Lenin was seventeen, his elder brother, Alexander Ulyanov (1866-87), was hanged for complicity in a plot to assassinate Tsar Alexander III, an event which naturally had a profound impact on the youth and no doubt went some way to reinforcing his own adolescent left-wing instincts. Being the brother of an executed would-be regicide was not the most socially convenient thing to be in late tsarist Russia, but, despite this handicap, and in recognition of his brilliant school record, he was admitted to read Law at Kazan University, from where he was soon expelled for attending a political meeting. He later went on to graduate top of his class in Law from St Petersburg University as an external student. He began to practise law in the capital, but his involvement in illegal workers' activities soon led to his arrest in 1897, followed by

three years' exile in Siberia where his commitment to revolutionary change and his study of Marxism continued undiminished. Lenin was therefore in Siberian exile at the time of the 1898 Congress of the RSDRP, but while there he became increasingly perturbed by certain tendencies within the social-democratic movement, both in Russia and in Europe. First, he was alarmed at the 'revisionist' theories of the German social democrat, Eduard Bernstein, who suggested that the transition to socialism could be achieved without a workers' revolution. Second, Lenin criticized those within Russian social democracy who argued that the party should concentrate the workers' attention on the *economic* struggle against capitalism as the means of raising proletarian political consciousness. Lenin believed that this trend of 'economism' would encourage the workers to develop merely a 'trade-union consciousness' and distract them from the vital political task of overthrowing tsarism. In 1900 he left Siberia, travelled to Europe, and there, together with Plekhanov and company, founded a new revolutionary underground newspaper called Iskra ('The Spark') through the distribution of which he intended to fight the 'economist' heresy and develop a strong organizational party network. His views on party organization were further developed in his all-important pamphlet, published in 1902, entitled What is to be Done? In it he ridiculed the idea that the working class could by its own efforts spontaneously develop a socialist political consciousness, and argued that it was the party's task 'to divert the labour movement from the unconscious tendency of trade-unionism, and bring it under the influence of Social Democracy instead'. What was needed, he urged, was 'a party of a new type' that would not simply follow behind and reflect the interests of the workers, but would, on the contrary, form 'the vanguard of the proletariat'. It was above all Lenin's uncompromising stand on party organization, discipline and leadership outlined in What is to be Done? that was to cause the schism in the party at the second Congress in 1903, held, first in Brussels, and then in London.

One of the most important items on the Congress's agenda turned out to be the question of the criteria for party membership. Lenin's hitherto close comrade, Julius Martov (1873–1923), proposed that a party member must, first, accept the party programme; second, support the party financially; and, third, be prepared to work under the direction of one of the party organizations. Lenin agreed with the first two principles but objected to the third. In his formulation, a party member must work 'in one of the party organizations'. It was only a slight variation in wording, but what might seem to be merely a semantic quibble in fact exposed two widely differing views as to what type of party there should be: the one envisaged a broad party of sympathetic supporters prepared to render 'personal cooperation' with party organizations; the other a narrow, disciplined party of fully committed activists. Lenin lost the vote. On a later item, however, which also concerned the question of party leadership and centralization, he won a slender majority—largely due to abstentions by his opponents. Armed with this fragile numerical superiority, Lenin promptly dubbed his supporters the 'majority-ites'. The Russian word for 'majority' is *bolshinstvo*—hence, *bolsheviki*. His opponents, led by Martov—despite actually becoming the larger section within the party—were called the 'minority-ites' or *mensheviki*. Although, for the moment, they were technically two factions of a single party, and despite several later attempts at reunification, the split between the Mensheviks and Bolsheviks proved permanent and irreparable.

It is, however, premature at this stage in the party's history to think of Bolshevism or of Marxist-Leninist theory as a coherent and fully developed ideology. Over the coming years both Lenin and the Mensheviks responded in different ways to different circumstances and events, and many issues of a tactical, ideological, practical and even financial nature continued to divide them. The lessons of the 1905 revolution; the question of participation or non-participation in the elections to the State Dumas; the debates over whether or not to 'liquidate' the underground party network once political parties were no longer illegal, and whether or not to continue the practice of armed 'expropriations' to secure party funds; and, finally, the attitude to Russia's involvement in the First World War: all these were highly contentious and divisive issues that not only kept the two factions apart but also created sub-factions within factions. It is also a mistake to think of Lenin as being completely in control of Bolshevik theory and practice. True, he had great personal authority and an unshakeable belief in the correctness of his own position. He was not, however, either omnipotent or infallible, and he was certainly not regarded by his colleagues as the party 'leader' in the full sense of the term. In any case, apart from a brief spell when he returned to Russia in 1905, he spent the years before 1917 mostly abroad and was therefore cut off from the everyday organizational activity of party workers on the ground in Russian towns and factories. Right up until the October 1917 Revolution —and beyond—Lenin had constantly to argue, persuade, cajole or even threaten in order to make his point or defend a thesis. It was only after his death in 1924 that 'Leninism' became transformed into something

approaching holy writ. However, despite its initially shapeless and inchoate nature, Bolshevism had been born. The world-shaking implications of its obscure nativity, just off London's Tottenham Court Road, had yet to be realized.

1905

The political atmosphere inside Russia at the time of the second Congress of the RSDRP was highly charged. The Social Democrats (SDs) were not the only party to try to get themselves organized. In 1900 the neo-populist Socialist-Revolutionary Party (SRs) was founded at Kharkov in Ukraine. Its programme reflected the aspirations of the earlier narodniki, including social revolution, redistribution of the land and retention of the peasant commune. Its 'maximalist' wing also shared the Narodnaya volya's belief in the efficacy of political terror, and the party's 'fighting squads' began to carry out a wave of spectacular political assassinations, their victims including two Ministers of the Interior and one Prime Minister. Political opposition to autocracy was not, however, the monopoly of the extreme left. At the accession of Nicholas II (r. 1894–1917), representatives of the zemstva began to revive calls for a constitution. The new tsar dismissed these as 'senseless dreams', but around the turn of the century *zemstva* politicians and members of certain professional societies attempted to give some organizational shape to Russia's emerging liberal movement by founding the Union of Liberation, a body that rejected revolutionary activity, but called for the end of autocratic government and the establishment of a constitutional democracy based on representative institutions and the rule of law.

After four decades of relative calm the dormant Russian countryside began to stir once more and finally erupted in a series of violent upheavals (1902–07) whose origins lay in the injustices of the emancipation settlement. These were seen as the years of the 'red cockerel'— an image which was used to symbolize the regular sight of burning manor-houses put to the torch by the resentful and newly aroused peasantry. The strike movement continued in the factories, workers' grievances now fuelled by the economic depression that set in after the Witte boom. In the Far East, war had broken out between Russia and Japan. After a short burst of patriotic enthusiasm the war became unpopular, its motives misunderstood, and the naval and military blunders that attended its conduct became a further stimulus to anti-government feeling. All this represented a volatile mixture that

needed only a spark to ignite an explosion. It was provided, significantly, by the workers of St Petersburg. On Sunday 9 January 1905 a peaceful protest march of striking factory workers and their families ended in bloody massacre. The demonstrators, led by a priest, Father George Gapon, had planned to present a humble petition to the tsar listing their grievances; instead they were met with a fusillade of bullets and charged down by mounted Cossacks. Hundreds died, and the butchery of 'Bloody Sunday' shocked the world.

The revulsion following the slaughter soon engulfed the whole nation and there were widespread manifestations of popular grief, indignation and anger against the guilty tsar. Not just the industrial workers but the middle classes, professional organizations, intellectuals and the whole of Russian society were roused to fury. The tsar, typically, did nothing until the assassination in February of his uncle, Grand-Duke Sergei, finally impelled him to issue a decree authorizing the election of a consultative assembly. The announcement was sadly inadequate to respond to the popular mood and only served to spur both liberals and revolutionaries to intensify their activities and raise the level of their demands. Universal suffrage, a constituent assembly with full legislative powers, and the introduction of constitutionally guaranteed civil liberties now comprised their minimal programme. Unrest was reaching out to the villages and, menacingly, to the armed services. Military and naval mutinies flared up and now seriously called into question the automatic loyalty of the military to the regime. The most celebrated of these military revolts was the mutiny of the crew of the battleship Potemkin, flagship of the Black Sea fleet anchored off the port of Odessa. Recent research has shown that the political disaffection of the Russian armed forces in 1905 was far more widespread than has been traditionally supposed—and provided an ominous portent for the events of 1917.

The disturbances were not confined to the central Russian areas of the country, but swept through the borderlands, from the Baltic to the Pacific. In both Poland and Finland there were strikes, angry demonstrations, mass revolts and a clamour for independence and autonomy. In Riga over 200 protesting workers were shot down on the streets by Russian troops. Elsewhere in the Empire other non-Russian nationalities cashed in on the national chaos to voice their grievances and passionately reiterate their demands for freedom from Russian oppression. In short, the whole Empire was in uproar, both Russians and non-Russians alike united in their defiance and denunciation of the Russian government.

The promulgation in August of a manifesto containing details of the assembly promised in February was ignored by a public whose temper and expectations had radically altered since the carnage of Bloody Sunday. Towards the end of September a fresh upsurge of industrial unrest soon spread from the Moscow railworkers to other sectors of the economy, paralysed communications and rapidly brought the administration of the whole country grinding to a halt. The helpless regime was now in the grip of Russia's first political general strike, the most powerful weapon in the arsenal of civil disobedience.

There was, however, no organized leadership, no centrally coordinated plan of action, no universally agreed programme of reform behind the movement. The Great October Strike was a spontaneous expression of the whole people's pent-up frustration at the obstinacy of an intellectually and administratively bankrupt regime. An extremely important by-product of the general strike was the formation of a democratically elected workers' 'parliament' which represented the interests of the striking workers in the capital and enjoyed the support of most of the revolutionary parties. This was the short-lived St Petersburg Soviet (Council) of Workers' Deputies, an institution which was destined to play a crucial role in Russia's future history and add a new word to the political vocabularly of the world. The publication of its first news-sheet, called Izvestiya ('News'), on 17 October coincided with the promulgation of a fresh imperial decree that promised to satisfy the enhanced demands for political reform referred to above. The October Manifesto granted full civil liberties, extended the franchise and ordered immediate elections to a State Duma. It appeared to be a triumph for the forces of democratic change. The tsar was personally not enthusiastic, the revolutionary parties treated it with scepticism, but a major concession had been made.

The concession was, however, tempered by a new determination on the government's part to crush the continuing rebellions and bring the country finally to heel. Punitive expeditions flogged the peasantry into submission; strikes were countered with lock-outs; gangs of ultranationalist thugs called the Black Hundreds beat up students, strikers and Jews; and on 3 December the members of the St Petersburg Soviet were arrested, later to be tried, imprisoned and exiled. The so-called 'Days of Freedom' were over, but one last, violent act in the tragedy of 1905 had yet to be played out. In December an armed uprising of Moscow workers was brutally suppressed after weeks of murderous urban warfare and a devastating artillery bombardment of the workers' homes and factories. Hundreds died in the fighting and many more were

summarily shot after perfunctory street courts-martial. The suppression of the Moscow rising marked the end of the immediate revolutionary situation—although peace did not return to the countryside for a further two years. The convulsions of 1905, however, cannot be described as a revolution in the full sense of the term. They did not bring about any real devolution of political power, which still rested in the hands of a pusillanimous emperor and his personally chosen ministers; there was no redistribution of wealth or property; society was not restructured; and the powers of the bureaucracy, military and police remained unaltered. The revolutionary parties were in disarray and uncertain how to operate in the unfamiliar circumstances of Duma politics. Their leaders were either in prison, exile or abroad and were in any event locked in acrimonious internal doctrinal and organizational disputes. This is why Lenin described the events of 1905 not as a revolution, but as a 'dress rehearsal for revolution'. Rehearsal over, the stage was now set for the drama of 1917.

'Constitutional' politics, 1906-16

Between 1905 and 1917, having survived its first major confrontation with the revolutionary masses since the Pugachev revolt, the imperial regime now entered into a period of uneasy and ambiguous experimentation with quasi-constitutional politics. Article 4 of the new Fundamental Laws, published on 23 April 1906, stated that 'Supreme Autocratic power belongs to the Emperor of All Russia', and article 9 that 'no law can come into existence without His approval'. The sovereign emperor also had full charge of foreign policies, the armed services and all government appointments. While the power of the autocracy, therefore, remained intact, two new institutions were established, the State Council and the State Duma, which were designed to allow public participation in both the deliberative and the legislative processes of policy-making at government level. The Duma consisted of around 500 elected deputies from all classes of Russian society, and the State Council (a kind of 'upper house') contained an equal proportion of elected and appointed representatives of the major social, religious, educational and financial institutions.

The newly legalized political parties entitled to put up candidates for election to the Duma covered the whole political spectrum from the Bolsheviks, Mensheviks and SRs on the left to the extreme right-wing, proto-fascist and anti-Semitic Union of the Russian People. In the centre, the major liberal party was the Constitutional Democratic Party

(Kadets), and, slightly to its right, the Union of 17 October (Octobrists), a moderate conservative party that based its programme on the October 1905 manifesto. The SDs and SRs boycotted the elections to the first Duma and its composition was consequently dominated by the Kadets and a radical-liberal coalition called the Labour Group (Trudoviki). Over 200 deputies were peasants who failed to display the loyal conservatism expected of them by the government. The extreme right failed to gain a single seat. Despite the absence of the socialists, the deliberations of the first Duma proved to be much too radical in tone and anti-government in orientation for the liking of the tsar and his reactionary Prime Minister, Goremykin. It was accordingly dissolved after only ten weeks in existence (27 April-8 July 1906) and a second Duma convened in February 1907. This was a much more polarized body than the first. The Kadets lost ground, while the lifting of the socialists' boycott increased left-wing representation. The right also made some gains. Once more, however, the government of the tsar and the assembly of the people found it impossible to work together, and an excuse was engineered to bring about the dismissal of the second Duma in June 1907. At this point the new, tough Prime Minister, Peter Stolypin (1862–1911)—in flagrant violation of the Fundamental Laws altered the electoral procedures by narrowing the franchise in favour of the landed nobility and the wealthy urban classes at the expense of the peasants and workers. This high-handed and dictatorial action ensured that the third Duma, when it convened, was of an altogether different political complexion from its predecessors. The Octobrists, a right-ofcentre 'Conservative' party, who had had only seventeen deputies in the first Duma, now had 154. The extreme right also increased its share of the vote and the Social Democrats and Trudoviki were reduced to a rump. The third Duma therefore proved to be a much more conservative and compliant assembly that could be more or less relied on to rubberstamp government policies and stifle the few elements of radicalism left in its midst. Even this Duma was, however, temporarily suspended on occasion while the government forced through new legislation by decree. The fact that the deputies meekly resumed their seats after the suspension was lifted is a measure of their malleability — a factor which ensured the survival of the third Duma throughout its allotted five-year span (1907-12).

The life of the third Duma coincided roughly with the premiership of Stolypin, a man whose unimpeachably loyalist sympathies were combined with a vigorous commitment to the need for agrarian reform. The convulsions in the Russian countryside between 1902 and 1907

convinced Stolypin that, nearly half a century after the emancipation, the peasant land question was still one of the most urgent problems for the government to tackle. It is not necessary to dwell on the fine details of his legislation. Its central feature was an attempt to break what Stolypin regarded as the dead-grip of the peasant commune on agricultural productivity. Accordingly, in what he himself described as a deliberate 'wager on the sturdy and the strong', Stolypin authorized the consolidation of scattered allotment land, abolished compulsory communal land-tenure and encouraged the establishment of individually owned farmsteads which were 'cut out' of the collective land. Redemption payments were cancelled, the legal status of peasants improved, and financial support was given to encourage the already growing movement of peasant migration from European Russia to the rich agricultural lands of western and southern Siberia. It is difficult to gauge the success of Stolypin's reform. The legal, bureaucratic and financial complexity of the operation bedevilled it from the start, and it is impossible to calculate what the long-term effects might have been had not more cataclysmic events thrown the whole land issue once more into the melting-pot in 1917. Stolypin's 'wager on the strong' certainly benefited some of the richer peasants (the so-called *kulaks*) but did very little to alleviate the distress of the poorer villagers still suffering from shortage of land. This served to increase the economic differentials within the peasant class, the rich becoming richer and the poor poorer. The major deficiency was, however, Stolypin's failure to tackle the agrarian problem as a whole. His legislation dealt only with peasant land and did nothing to touch the property interests or the private estates of the landed gentry. This was an issue which the peasants themselves were to address by direct action in the turmoil of 1917.

The elections to the fourth and final Duma resulted in the return of an even more conservative membership than that of the third, with the Octobrists losing votes to the more extreme right-wing nationalist parties. However, it was during the lifetime of this last Duma that certain developments took place which served to open a breach not only between the government and the Duma, but also between government and society as a whole. In 1911 Stolypin was murdered by a Socialist-Revolutionary assassin (who was at the same time a police agent). In the following year the massacre of 200 striking workers at the Lena goldfields in eastern Siberia aroused public indignation and provoked a renewed outbreak of politically motivated industrial unrest which mounted in intensity over the next two years. 1912 was also the year in which the political impact began to be felt of the emperor's and

empress's personal patronage of their bizarre 'friend', Grigory Rasputin (1872[?]–1916).

Rasputin was not, as he is often described, a 'mad monk' but a member of an extreme religious sect of sexually promiscuous flagellants in Siberia known as khlysty. He was also uncouth, a drunkard and a lecher, who was nevertheless lionized by certain sections, particularly the ladies, of St Petersburg's high society. The royal couple, however, regarded him as a holy 'man of the people' sent to them by God to save the dynasty by his seemingly miraculous ability to cure the haemophiliac bleeding of the heir to the throne, the young tsarevich Alexis. Through his hypnotic healing powers Rasputin exercised a powerful hold over the tsar and was thereby able—in return for sexual favours arranged for him by ambitious politicians—to influence the emperor's choice of government ministers. There is probably no substance in the allegations that Rasputin had sexual relations with the empress, but his outrageous public behaviour and his intimacy with the royal family succeeded in bringing the court, and with it the government, into public disrepute. Though they were not all, of course, Rasputin nominees, ministers of the crown were hired and fired in rapid succession in what has been described as a game of 'ministerial leap-frog'. Between 1912 and 1916 Russia had four Prime Ministers, four Ministers of Justice, four of Education, four procurators of the Holy Synod, and no less than six Ministers of the Interior, all of them, in Professor Florinsky's felicitous phrase, 'pebbles-not milestoneson the road that led the monarchy to ruin'.

Rasputin eventually fell victim to a murder plot organized by a member of the royal family itself, Prince Felix Yusupov (1887–1967), one of the richest men in Russia and married to the tsar's niece. In December 1916 he and a handful of right-wing politicians, exasperated by the baneful effects of Rasputin's sexual shenanigans and political interference, inveigled him to a party at the Yusupov palace where they shot him to death and dumped his body in the freezing river Neva. According to the traditional account of his murder, before being gunned down Rasputin was first poisoned with Madeira wine and cakes laced with cyanide, but other reports claim there were no toxic substances found in his body during the autopsy. Two months after his death the autocracy collapsed, as Rasputin had warned it would if he were to be killed. There is, of course, no direct causal connection between the two events. In the final analysis, the Rasputin affair was a farcical side-show to the tragedy now unfolding, and the scandal which had surrounded his name merely a symptom, not the cause, of the acute malaise which afflicted an incompetent, unpopular and discredited regime now deep in the throes of a devastating international war.

The results of Russia's possible engagement in a European War had been eerily prognosticated by a right wing politician and ex-Minister of the Interior, Peter Durnova (1845–1915), in February 1914. In a memorandum to the tsar he predicted that war would inevitably lead to internal chaos, institutional collapse, anarchy and social revolution. He was right.

War and the February Revolution

Russia at war: the domestic front

The nature of the relationship between Russia's involvement in the First World War and the 1917 Revolution is a topic which has been mulled over and analysed by historians ever since those climactic events took place. The question is a complex one, and has generated much debate, but put very simply it boils down to this: was it the war that *caused* the revolution, or would the revolutions of 1917 have taken place in any case, war or no war? In other words, did the calamitous military situation at the front generate the domestic crisis that brought about the final fragmentation of the tsarist regime? Or were the pressures, tensions and contradictions within the Russian social, political and economic order already of such a refractory and irresolvable nature as to make revolution unavoidable, indeed inevitable?

In some historians' opinion there are grounds for believing that the political and economic progress made in Russia since 1905 would—but for the intervention of the war—have continued, and the country would have evolved along the lines of a western-style constitutional monarchy, with greater democratic freedoms based on an increasingly sound economy. After the upheavals of 1905—so this argument goes—there was already open public debate, an elected parliament, representative participation in legislative procedures, and an industrial economy now less dependent on foreign finance and recovering after the slump at the start of the century. Also, given sufficient time, there was the prospect of a prosperous, independent peasantry, freed from the collective stranglehold of the *obshchina* and benefiting from the opportunities provided by Stolypin's agrarian reforms, his gamble on the 'sturdy and the strong'. Such arguments are in the final analysis specious, untenable and based upon an unsupported, counter-factual

presumption about what *might* have happened rather than what actually *did* happen—a revolution.

Opposed to the 'no war—no revolution' camp are several schools of thought. First, there are those who argue that the war served simply to accelerate the tempo of events that were already reaching a crisis point in Russia before war was declared. The killing in 1911 of Prime Minister Stolypin, already an unpopular figure even in government circles, was simply one in a series of hundreds of political assassinations carried out by Russian terrorists in the first two decades of the twentieth century during a period of mounting social tension. In the following year, 1912, government troops shot dead hundreds of striking workers at the Lena goldfield in north-eastern Siberia. The massacre was followed by widespread protest and renewed industrial unrest. However, the remoteness of the tragedy's location meant that its immediate repercussions were not so dramatic as the aftermath of Bloody Sunday. Dead gold miners in distant Siberia did not evoke the same public reaction as the sight of countless corpses bleeding on Palace Square in front of the royal residence. Nevertheless, relationships between the government and the ostensibly loyal fourth Duma steadily deteriorated, more acutely so after the outbreak of war in 1914 and the tsar's decision to become operational Commander-in-Chief of the Russian armed forces in 1915. The political disaffection of the middle and lower classes was famously articulated by the leader of the Kadet party in the Duma, Paul Milyukov (1859–1943), who rhetorically challenged the government over its bungling conduct of the war in a parliamentary speech in November 1916 with his repeated question: 'Is this stupidity or is this treason?' (Milyukov's taunting allusion to 'treason' may have been a reference to the suspicion held by some sections of the public that there existed a treacherous pro-German faction at court and in the government, including the Empress Alexandra, née Princess Alix of Hesse, popularly referred to derogatorily as nemka—'the German woman'.)

With Nicholas away at army headquarters in Mogilev, hundreds of miles from the capital, government business was left virtually in the hands of the publicly maligned, deranged empress and the grotesque Rasputin. The latter's political machinations at the palace and his sordid antics in the bars and brothels of Petrograd (St Petersburg's new wartime name) did nothing to improve the public's perception of the royal family and its appointed officials. A reading of Alexandra's published letters and telegrams to her beloved 'Nicky' only serves to highlight the woman's state of psychotic dementia. Stolypin's

programme of agrarian reform, still continuing after his death, was stymied by an incompetent bureaucracy, insufficient cash resources, and the peasantry's own seeming inability to live and work successfully outside the collective security of the obshchina. Apart from those who emigrated, settled and thrived in Siberia, Russia's peasants failed to develop into a class of wealthy independent yeoman farmers, as Stolypin had planned. The major drawback to his legislation, as mentioned in the previous chapter, lay in the fact that his measures only affected peasant land held in communal tenure, and did nothing to address the issue of redistribution of the large private estates. Faced with similar indecisiveness on the part of the Provisional Governments in 1917, which were reluctant to legislate against the economic interests of the landed nobility, the peasants were to take the matter into their own hands in the build-up to the October Revolution. The Bolsheviks were to make much political capital out of the rural upheavals. In Trotsky's phrase, 'the peasants were the subsoil of the proletarian revolution'.

All the above factors suggest that state and society were lurching towards some kind of dramatic confrontation. More workers were on strike in the early months of 1914 than in 1905; there were barricades on the streets; there was a stand-off between the tsarist government and a society which had become increasingly aware of the failures and shortfalls of that administration. The railtrack towards revolution was already laid. The war, in the words of the Soviet historian, Lyashchenko, was the locomotive which hurtled the country into that revolution.

On the other hand, there is an argument that, far from accelerating the momentum, the declaration of war between Russia and Germany acted as a brake on the impending crisis, as a wave of primitive patriotism swept the country, impelling the tsar, government, society and the Russian people to unite briefly in defence of Mother Russia. Temporarily—as it seemed—domestic problems, economic difficulties, class antagonisms and anti-government hostilities were placed on the back burner as the country faced the foreign foe. During this surge of Russian chauvinism only the Social Democrats, and then not all of them, opposed the 'imperialist war'—a situation from which the Bolsheviks were to draw dividends as the popular mood later swung away from one of optimistic and aggressive nationalism to war-weariness, distrust of the military and political establishment, and a yearning for Russia's unilateral withdrawal from the conflict. Thus, the twin issues of 'peace and land' became a slogan which secured increasing popular support and eventual political victory for the Bolshevik Party.

And, of course, Russian Marxist historians, whose views should not be discounted, believe that the events of 1917 were historically determined by dialectical logic and bound by the iron laws of class struggle. Feudalism was dead, though autocracy survived; capitalism and the bourgeoisie were moribund; and the proletarian-socialist revolution was inevitable. To be sure, the war was an important factor in the revolutionary process, but Russia's involvement in that war was a result of her role in the international capitalist-imperialist network. Marx had predicted that a working-class revolution would first break out in one of the advanced capitalist countries of Europe. However, it was in autocratic, peasant-based, imperfectly industrialized Russia—the weakest link in the chain of international capitalism-that the first workers' and peasants' revolution took place, against the backdrop of a major continental war.

Russia was not prepared for a long drawn-out period of hostilities with a militarily superior adversary, and the early crushing defeat of Russian troops with 300,000 casualties at the battle of Tannenberg in August 1917 set the pattern for the future conflict. The Russian debacle at Tannenberg can be partly put down to poor leadership, and there were a number of later battles and engagements in which Russian forces performed comparatively well. Not well enough, however, to alter the generally deteriorating trend in Russia's military fortunes.

However, it is not the course of the war and the campaigns at the military front that concern us here so much as the domestic repercussions at the rear. Economically, the effects of the war were farreaching and fraught with disaster. Industries that produced war *matériel* obviously flourished. Huge fortunes were made out of government orders for guns, bullets, shells and uniforms. When it became clear that the fighting would not be quickly over, more and more enterprises converted to military and paramilitary production, and more and more profits were made out of the carnage at the battlefront. On the other hand, output of consumer goods plummeted, with consequent shortages and hardships for the civilian population. In an overwhelmingly rural society, even agricultural equipment was in short supply. These difficulties were compounded by problems of transportation inside a vast country whose internal communications network was notoriously inefficient, or in many areas and at certain seasons almost non-existent. Apart from the absence of reliable roads—which in Russian has a special name, bezdorozhie ('roadlessness')—most railway rolling stock was commandeered to carry men, munitions and supplies to the front, leaving little to ferry much-needed foodstuffs from the grain-growing

regions to the towns and cities. Shortages ensued, workers and their families went hungry, and bread queues became an increasingly familiar sight on the urban landscape. Undersupply of essential raw materials also meant that industry faced a crisis in 1915-16 that was partially overcome by the establishment of a non-government organization called the War Industries Committee. This was a voluntary body of businessmen, Duma politicians and workers' councils which coordinated production and, despite some perverse government obstruction of their efforts, to some extent offset the regime's increasingly obvious inability to cope efficiently or effectively with the economic strains of total war.

Financially, the country as a whole was heading for ruin. Naval blockades of the Baltic and Black Seas cut off Russia's foreign trade. Overland commerce through a war-torn eastern Europe was obviously impossible. Poland and large parts of Russia's western provinces were occupied by enemy troops, with a consequent loss not only of industrial resources, but also of a tax-paying population. Further self-inflicted injuries to the exchequer were caused by the prohibition of alcohol sales. Excise duty on the production and selling of vodka was a lucrative source of state revenue that now literally dried up (not that the Russian people ceased drinking their home-distilled and often lethal liquor). But while government income slumped, expenditure soared. The direct costs of the war rocketed from 1,500 million rubles in 1914 to 14,500 million in 1916. The government's answer to the immediate financial problem was heavy foreign borrowing and the printing of millions of worthless paper rubles, which led to galloping inflation.

The mass mobilization of 15 million conscript troops and volunteers between 1914 and 1917 also had obvious repercussions on the nation's economy. In the already overpopulated countryside, the redirection of so much manpower from agricultural to military purposes meant that there were fewer mouths to feed at home. In the villages, peasant wives, children and males beyond the age of military conscription were able to cope with the seasonal agricultural round of sowing, planting and harvesting, and suffered no more than the familiar hardships of peasant existence. The army, however—the 'peasants in uniform' could not march nor fight on an empty stomach. Conscription of agricultural labourers from the large private estates which produced mainly for the market resulted in reduced output at a time of increased demand. Productivity in industry—despite the continuing demand for weaponry and other martial requirements—also declined as skilled

workers, already in short supply, were replaced by inexperienced labourers, women, children and prisoners-of-war.

Increasingly the population began to voice its discontent, not only with military reverses at the front, but also with domestic hardships that were attributed, rightly or wrongly, to the government's and the high command's incompetence. Tsar Nicholas's own lack of military experience or expertise did nothing to bolster public confidence in his command. The short-lived mood of national solidarity at the declaration of war had now evaporated. Much of the population was at the same time both underfed and fed-up. Industry was battered by a renewed wave of strikes, some of them financed by German money. Since the war had begun, the German foreign ministry had been authorizing the payment of thousands of marks into the coffers of Russian anti-government organizations, including the Bolshevik Party, as part of its programme of Revolutionierungspolitik: that is, the policy of subverting revolutionary disturbances, industrial unrest, public disruption, etc., in the enemy country in order to undermine its war effort. Analysis of records sequestrated by allied forces in Berlin at the end of the Second World War prove beyond doubt this was not only part of German strategy, but also a useful contribution to the solvency and effectiveness of various branches of the Russian revolutionary movement.

In 1915 members of the centre parties in the Duma and State Council formed a political alliance calling itself the 'Progressive Bloc', which called on the tsar to sack his obviously inept ministers and replace them with a 'government of public confidence'. At a time of national crisis, the tsar wished that the politicians would keep their mouths shut, but the Duma deputies could see through the government's failings, and wished to take more assertive action themselves. By a 'government of public confidence' they presumably meant themselves, though why the 'public' should place its 'confidence' in an oligarchy of wealthy, selfinterested businessmen and duplicitous political careerists is far from clear, as the ultimate fate of the Provisional Government demonstrated in October 1917. The War Industries Committee and other voluntary organizations, such as the Unions of Zemstva and Municipalities, found their relief and welfare activities hampered rather than encouraged by officialdom. But a mixture of crude patriotism and accrued profits from war production prevented them from actually backing up their political demands with economic threats or sanctions.

By early 1917, a combination of military losses, political mismanagement and domestic hardships was thrusting the country to the edge of the revolutionary abyss. Heavy casualties at the front and

enhanced conscription in the rear meant that the complexion and composition of the Russian army were changing. The ranks of the demoralized draftees were composed not so much of trained and loval fighters for tsar and fatherland as hastily conscripted, barely drilled and inadequately equipped young muzhiki wrenched from their villages and forced into the trenches. Apart from the common soldiers, the traditional officer corps was also becoming increasingly diluted by the enrolment of young professional men who, but for the war and the national call to arms, would never have contemplated a military career. These may perhaps be described as the 'intelligentsia in uniform'—a body of well-educated, progressive-minded people whose political instincts were not predisposed to automatic fealty to the tsarist regime. Higher up the military hierarchy, even the general staff and Nicholas's field commanders had become exasperated by the meddling of an ineffectual emperor, who, judging from correspondence with his family, seemed to spend more time playing dominoes, dining out, and compiling amateur weather reports than leading his troops into battle. Headed by General Alexeev, Nicholas's Chief of Staff, the Generalitet had now become alienated from their sovereign, and pressures began to build up for his resignation. The tsar's abdication was now seen as the price that had to be paid if the country were not to face military defeat and national catastrophe. That section of the tsarist establishment, which had always been its staunchest and most reliable support, was now part

But, despite the disaffection of the military, however important that was, it was neither the high command, nor the Duma politicians, still less the revolutionary parties, which finally brought about the downfall of 'Bloody Nicholas'. It was caused by the spontaneous revolt of the politically radicalized masses, the Russian *narod*.

of the opposition.

February and the formation of 'dual power'

The crisis came to a head in late February 1917. In Orlando Figes's words: 'It all began with bread' (1996, p. 307). More accurately, it was the *lack* of bread which triggered the turmoil. Disturbances in food lines of freezing, frustrated and hungry shoppers in Petrograd escalated into violent protests, clashes with the police, and, ultimately, military mutiny among the restless troops garrisoned in the capital who had no desire to be sent to the front line. On 23 February, International Women's Day, female demonstrators were joined on the streets by striking workers from the giant Putilov metallurgical factory. Over the ensuing hectic

week, the Duma was prorogued, the government collapsed, the tsar was forced to abdicate, and there sprang into existence two new revolutionary organs of political authority—the first Provisional Government and the Soviet of Workers' and Soldiers' deputies. In 1905, the entire empire had been battered by a twelve-month tornado of revolts, strikes, mutinies and civil unrest. And yet the tsar and his government survived. In late February and early March 1917, in the time of one week, and in the space of one city— albeit the capital—the Romanov dynasty and the system over which it had despotically ruled for over three hundred years was shattered. The autocracy was dead.

How did this come about? On 22 February Tsar Nicholas returned to army HQ at Mogilev after a brief conjugal visit home. On the 23rd, the marches and demonstrations on the capital's streets grew out of control. By the 27th, civilian protesters were joined by mutinous troops who had now thrown their strength behind the revolutionary civilian population. Russian workers, Russian women and Russian warriors were now united in solidarity against the political establishment. Alerted to the crisis in the metropolis by the chief of the Petrograd military district, Major-General Khabalov, Nicholas set off from headquarters to return to Petrograd, maybe to try and exert his authority and establish order, or merely to rejoin his family. At all events, the royal train was diverted by rebellious railway workers and forced into a siding at the provincial town of Pskov, around 250 kilometres south of the capital. Immobilized, unassertive, and, in reality, faced with popular rebellion and a political fait accompli, Nicholas Romanov was finally persuaded by his senior officers to do the decent thing and resign both his military command and his regal office. This he did with apparent equanimity on 2 March, shortly before a two-man delegation of senior Duma politicians arrived in Pskov on a mission to persuade the tsar into taking the decision that he had already made. Such was the tsar's naïve mentality that he preferred to abdicate what he believed was his God-given right to rule the Russian Empire, rather than abrogate his autocratic powers in favour of a constitutional monarchy and a democratically elected government.

There were, however, certain personal and, allegedly, legal difficulties over the terms of the abdication act. According to the law of royal succession, the crown should have passed to the tsarevich, Alexis. However, faced with the prospect of overseas exile and separation from his sickly son, Nicholas composed a second document, passing the poisoned imperial chalice to his younger brother, the Grand Duke Michael. Having thereby relinquished the throne of the world's largest empire, he retired to his compartment, took tea and smoked a cigarette.

Some historians argue that the bequest was an illegal act, against the Fundamental Laws of the Russian Empire. But what those same historians overlook is the fact that the emperor was an absolute autocrat who had the 'constitutional' right to make or unmake any law he chose. They also fail to understand that in a revolutionary situation, by definition, the established laws, values and procedures of the state no longer operate. Whatever the legal niceties of the issue, the Grand Duke, after listening to the conflicting advice of pro- and antimonarchist politicians, prudently chose to refuse the offer. In 1613, after two decades of national turmoil, Michael Fyodorovich Romanov had been selected to inaugurate a new reigning dynasty. In March 1917, after three years' war and just eight days' civil unrest, Michael Alexandrovich Romanov ended it.

What replaced it? Already, three days before Nicholas's abdication, two organs of political authority had come into existence, which were to form the nexus of what was to be described as 'dual power'—in Russian *dvoevlastie*. The two bodies, which lasted in uneasy symbiosis over the next few months, were the first Provisional Government and the Petrograd Soviet of Workers' and Soldiers' Deputies. The Provisional Government, originally called the Temporary Committee of the Duma, was a self-appointed 'cabinet' of centre-right members of the Progressive Bloc of the fourth Duma, headed by a respected *zemstvo* politician and wealthy landowner, Prince George Lvov (1861–1925). Paul Milyukov, leader of the *Kadet* party, took on the important portfolio of Foreign Affairs, while the only socialist member was a moderate left-wing lawyer called Alexander Kerensky (1881–1970) who became Minister of Justice.

In actual fact, the self-proclaimed Provisional Government had no constitutional authority, no basis in existing law, and, despite being catapulted into office by the revolutionary activity of the workers and soldiers of Petrograd, represented overwhelmingly the interests of the privileged and wealthy classes. Over the next few weeks it did, however, implement a programme of liberal, progressive reforms mainly in the areas of political representation and civil rights. Such was the extent of the legislation that even Lenin, when he returned to Petrograd in April, was to describe Russia as the 'freest of all the belligerent countries'. But what the government conspicuously failed to do, and this was to be the major cause of its undoing, was to tackle the two chief concerns of the majority of the Russian people—the war and the land.

While the new administration enjoyed no popular mandate, and indeed soon lost any popular support, the other half of the 'dual-power' arrangement, the Petrograd Soviet, could lay a genuine claim to being both elected by, and representative of, the common people. It was, however, a ramshackle, chaotic assembly of over five-hundred workers' and soldiers' deputies, with no set procedures, no constitution, and of course with no experience of government. Nevertheless, its Executive Committee, consisting of leading socialist intellectuals, was in a powerful enough position, with its huge popular backing, to monitor and control the activities of the Provisional Government and even issue its own decrees. Despite the unwieldy, anarchic nature of its composition and activities, it was therefore the workers' Soviet, or more accurately its Executive Committee, rather than the 'bourgeois' government, that held the upper hand in the dual-power relationship. Moreover, whereas the Provisional Government's writ ran more or less only in the capital, workers' and peasants' soviets were mushrooming all over the country as the masses began to order their own affairs.

During the month of March, as the bastions of the old tsarist bureaucracy and police force crumbled throughout the country, they were replaced by a bewildering collection and variety of people's councils, soviets, factory committees, peasants' collectives and other organs of popular control which capitalized on the chaos by pursuing their own local and sectional interests. On 2 March, the Petrograd Soviet issued its notorious 'Order No. 1', which authorized the setting up of soldiers' committees in every military unit and the abolition of the traditional hierarchical relationship between officers and men. Troops were granted full civilian liberties when off duty, and demean ing forms of address were outlawed. Military commands were only to be obeyed if they conformed to policies approved by the Soviet. This of course served to weaken traditional patterns of discipline in the armed forces, and was later blamed by some for undermining the military effectiveness of the Russian war effort, leading to more humiliating defeats. Desertions, fraternization and refusal to fight anything but a defensive war, which would lead to a 'democratic peace' without annexations or indemnities, became increasingly common.

At the beginning of April, amid the mood of general post-tsarist euphoria and enthusiasm characterized by the situation of dual power, and with even the Bolshevik and Menshevik parties talking about possible reconciliation and reunification, there entered a portentous new third element in the revolutionary equation: Lenin.

Dual power and the October Revolution

From the April Theses to the 'July days'

When the February Revolution occurred, most of the leading figures in the Bolshevik party were either abroad or in exile, and taken completely by surprise at the sudden turn of events. Lenin himself was living in Zürich, and had recently given his opinion that his generation of Russian revolutionaries would not live to see the Russian revolution. As part of its continuing policy of *Revolutionierungspolitik*, the German government arranged for the Bolshevik leader and other revolutionary figures to return to their country in a sealed train that was guaranteed safe passage across the warring continent. This was done in the obvious expectation that the returning exiles would further exacerbate the revolutionary situation in Russia and thereby weaken the nation's military exertions. They were not to be disappointed.

Lenin's train duly steamed into Petrograd's Finland station on the evening of 3 April, greeted by a crowd of party comrades and wellwishers. More or less ignoring the welcoming committee, he mounted an armoured vehicle on the forecourt and delivered a remarkable speech that took even his closest colleagues and supporters by surprise. There were three major political issues that were being addressed by senior party officials in Petrograd in the few weeks following the February Revolution. First was the question of Russia's continuing participation with her allies in the war; second was whether the party should support the policies of the Provisional Government; and third was the possibility of renewed cooperation with the Mensheviks, and a burying of ideological hatchets possibly leading to a reunified party. Most leading Bolsheviks (in Lenin's earlier absence), rejoicing in the downfall of the monarchy, were prepared for an indefinite period of 'bourgeois' government, and equivocal in the

matters of the war and reunification with the Mensheviks. Lenin was adamant and uncompromising on all three issues. At the Finland station, his message was clear: no collaboration with the bourgeois government, no truck with the Mensheviks, and Russia's immediate withdrawal from the imperialist war. Not content with the Russian 'bourgeois revolution', which had taken place only four weeks earlier, he finished his startling philippic with a ringing peroration calling for an 'international proletarian socialist revolution'. His listeners should have had no cause for the bemusement which many obviously felt. Ever since 1905, Lenin had been talking and writing about the establishment of 'a revolutionary-democratic dictatorship of the proletariat and the poorest sections of the peasantry'. Now he wasted no time in elaborating his views in his celebrated *April Theses*, which were published in the party newspaper, Pravda, on 7 April. The revolution, he argued, was already in a transitional phase, and the party must set its sights clearly on transforming the bourgeois-democratic revolution into a full-blown proletarian uprising and the inauguration of a socialist workers' state under the slogan of 'All Power to the Soviets'. He further questioned the concept of 'revolutionary defencism', a euphemism for continuing to fight in defence of the revolutionary gains of February, as opposed to 'revolutionary defeatism' whose advocates argued that Russia's defeat by Germany would create civil chaos on such a scale as to enhance the likelihood of a socialist revolution. In Lenin's view, what was still essentially a 'capitalist-imperialist' war should be transformed into a revolutionary war throughout Europe. He also demanded the abolition of the police, army and bureaucracy, the nationalization of the banks, confiscation of all landed estates, no support for a parliamentary republic, and the renaming of the party as the *Communist Party*.

Despite his new slogan advocating 'a government of workers' and agricultural labourers' soviets', Lenin's attitude to the soviets was in fact ambivalent. On the one hand, they were an example of the kind of working-class 'spontaneity' of which he had always been suspicious and which he had disparaged in *What is to be Done?* back in 1902 (see Chapter 4). On the other hand, they now appeared to be much more representative of the radically politicized working class than the 'bourgeois' Provisional Government, and as such seemed to offer the best means of effecting the transition from the bourgeois-democratic to the proletarian-socialist revolution. Later in the year, Lenin briefly abandoned the slogan when leaders of the Petrograd Soviet seemed to be more concerned with furthering the policies of the Provisional Government—to the extent of accepting ministerial appointments—

rather than advancing the revolutionary cause of the masses. At the first All-Russian Congress of Soviets in June, Bolsheviks accounted for only about one-eighth of all the delegates. Only in September when they gained a clear majority on the Petrograd and Moscow Soviets was the slogan revived and acted upon.

For the time being, the April Theses were not party policy and indeed were editorially repudiated in the columns of Pravda and elsewhere. Lenin's call for the party to prepare immediately for a workers' revolution was interpreted by many, even among his close comrades, as opportunist, adventurist, un-Marxist, and even as a dangerous slide into Bakuninist anarchism. However, despite the reservations of party intellectuals and theorists, Lenin's programme, which he fleshed out even further over the next few weeks in his Draft platform for the proletarian party, manifestly reflected and articulated the increasingly radical temper of the party rank-and-file and the militant workers and troops. By early summer his original *Theses* had become accepted as the immediate party programme and between then and October party membership rocketed from around 10,000 to nearly half a million, with industrial workers accounting for around sixty per cent of the increased new membership. Before April 1917, Lenin and the Bolsheviks had been a relatively unimportant factor in Russian history. This was no longer the case. From its position in the side-wings of Russian politics the Bolshevik Party was soon to move to centre-stage, with Lenin as leading actor.

On 18 April, the publication of a memorandum from the Foreign Minister, Milyukov, assuring the Allies that, notwithstanding the collapse of the tsarist regime, Russia would continue to fight the war to a victorious end caused angry public protests and ultimately to the resignation of Lvov's government. A new administration was formed, still under Lvov's leadership, but now including members of the socialist parties in the Soviet. Victor Chernov (1873–1952), for instance, leader of the SR Party, became Minister of Agriculture, Kerensky moved from Justice to War, and the respected Georgian Menshevik. Irakli Tsereteli (1881–1960) took over Posts and Telegraphs. There were in all now six moderate socialists in the new 'coalition government'. Milyukov was forced out of office and ceased to play any further active role in Russian politics. The 'collaboration' of Menshevik and SR ministers with the bourgeois, pro-war government meant that the Bolsheviks were the only political faction on the left that pursued an unswervingly anti-war policy, Lenin continuing to urge the transformation of the international, imperialist war into a series of revolutionary wars within each of the belligerent countries. The antiwar stance of the Bolshevik leadership served to enhance the popularity of the party among the population, and it was the firm expectation of imminent international revolution in Europe that was uppermost in Lenin's mind when the Bolsheviks launched their own revolution in October.

In June, the new socialist Minister for War, Kerensky, ordered a new military offensive against Austrian forces on the Galician front, led by General Brusilov (1853-1926). The initial advance was checked and rapidly turned into a rout, the Russians suffering a horrific number of casualties. The military catastrophe was followed by fresh outbreaks of public disorder in Petrograd, usually referred to as the 'July days'. Angered at the launch, and then the defeat, of the June offensive, and defying orders to be sent to the front, troops of the restive First Machine Gun Regiment took to the streets where they were joined by thousands of demonstrating workers urging the Soviet to seize power from the Provisional Government. The role of the Bolsheviks in all this confusion is still a matter of controversy. Some historians, notably Richard Pipes, maintain that the Bolshevik leadership had deliberately planned the uprising, but he fails to explain adequately why Lenin urged restraint and failed to provide any revolutionary leadership to the mutinous crowds that were menacing both the government and the Soviet alike. The atmosphere in the city was more heavily charged than at any time since the February Revolution. Thousands of civilian and military demonstrators thronged the streets, Bolshevik banners abounded, and the socialist Minister of Agriculture was nearly lynched. But finally, lacking any clear political objective and bewildered by both the Bolsheviks' caution, and the Soviet's reluctance to take power when virtually offered it, the mobs eventually dispersed and returned to their factories, ships and barracks, leaving many casualties on the ground. Lenin's surprising hesitance in the face of popular militancy may be because he did not think the time was right for power to pass to a Soviet which still had a majority of Mensheviks and SRs who had compromised themselves by joining the pro-war, government. Or it may simply have been a matter of inadequate planning and organization, or pure funk at the prospect of failure.

Whatever the reason, Kerensky, who was now Prime Minister after the resignation of Lvov, condemned the role of the Bolsheviks in the July uprising; revived earlier allegations that Lenin was a German spy; and blamed their anti-war propaganda for the failure of the Galician offensive. Kerensky therefore outlawed the Bolshevik Party, sealed its

headquarters and ordered the arrest of their leaders, including Lenin. The Bolsheviks, it appeared, had shot their bolt.

The revolution from below

It did not need the exhortations of left-wing politicians or the theories of Marxist agitators to heighten the political consciousness of the revolutionary-minded masses in 1917. Despite Lenin's scepticism about working-class 'spontaneity', the industrial workers' own individual and collective experience of exploitation, poverty and oppression at the hands of factory owners and capitalist businessmen had shown them who the class enemy was. Far from lessening those class antagonisms, the February Revolution and its aftermath only served to exacerbate them and further polarize society, as the July uprising had demonstrated.

After the chaotic enthusiasm at the collapse of autocracy in February, large numbers of workers returned to their factories and, in the spirit of the times, set about introducing democratic institutions and practices in the workplace. Trade unions and factory committees swung into action in an effort to establish worker participation and control over industrial production. The trade unions, legalized in 1906, had nevertheless been subjected to various forms of official obstruction and curtailment of their activities during the Stolypin years. But in early 1914, and more particularly after February 1917, their fortunes began to revive as hundreds of new labour organizations began to flex their muscles and campaign once more for the advancement of their members' interests.

It was, however, the activities of the factory committees in individual enterprises that more forcefully articulated, asserted and implemented workers' demands. First in the committees' firing line were unpopular middle managers and overseers who were hounded out of their jobs and even subjected to physical violence or personal humiliation. Elected by democratic ballot at shop-floor level, the factory committees put forward a variety of demands including the introduction of an eighthour working day, higher wages to keep pace with wartime inflation, access to business records and accounts, participation in the process of recruitment and dismissal, workers' rights to representation during disciplinary procedures, and better safety regulations and social facilities. They also called for greater workers' control. This did not, however, signal an anarcho-syndicalist movement aimed at taking over the factories and managing them. The Russian word kontrol indicates not so much centralized directorship and management as a process of supervision, checking and monitoring. In this case the committees insisted on auditing the activities of the factory directors and administrators to ensure that their decisions and practices were in the workers' interests. And it was in the workers' interests to keep production going and the wheels of industry turning. The factory committees, therefore, for all their *political* militancy, played a positive role on the *economic* front of maintaining industrial productivity. To some extent, the watch-dog role of the factory committees *vis-à-vis* the factory management reflected the relationship between the Petrograd Soviet and the Provisional Government.

Apart from the role of the factory committees themselves, it is clear that it was the capital's industrial workers as a whole who played the leading and decisive role in all the major events of the 1917 Revolution: the popular demonstrations which led to the February crisis and the tsar's abdication; the protests which caused the collapse of the first Provisional Government in April; the street riots during the 'July days' when banners were displayed calling for the sacking of the 'ten capitalist ministers'. At the forefront of all this continuing revolutionary frenzy were the class-conscious, militant workers of 'Red Petrograd'. And in the run-up to the Bolshevik Revolution in October, it was the armed workers' militia bands, the Red Guards, that were once again to spearhead the revolt (see below).

While the urban proletariat was at the eye of the storm, an equally important element in the whirlwind of revolution was the Russian peasantry. The peasants—apart from those in uniform—had not played an important role in the February events. However, as the weeks and months passed, the countryside once more erupted in turmoil, agrarian unrest, lawlessness and an anarchical campaign of land-grabbing and redistribution of the large private estates. When the significance of events in Petrograd gradually dawned on the peasantry, it did not signal to them the onset of democratic government or universal suffrage. Such concepts were largely alien to them. Nor did it even mean principally an end to the war. What it *did* mean was the opportunity to achieve what was always closest to the peasants' heart—land; particularly the land of the large privately owned estates that they had coveted and thought to be rightfully theirs ever since the inequitable emancipation settlement of 1861. Initially the agrarian revolution started as a relatively low-key affair. Village assemblies, rural soviets, peasants' councils and other forms of popular self-administration sprang up throughout the provinces, taking local decisions and taking local action. At first, this took the form of illicit grazing, timber-felling, expropriation of arable

land and only occasional, isolated acts of looting and violence. It was a spontaneous movement, uncoordinated, leaderless elemental. Far from the fields and villages, a Congress of Peasants' Soviets was held in Petrograd during May. It appointed an Executive Committee, consisting mainly of leading SRs, whose policies largely mirrored those of the Workers' and Soldiers' Soviet, i.e. a broad programme of support for the Provisional Government, including the continuation of a defensive war and a postponement of the question of land redistribution until the convocation of a Constituent Assembly. This position hardly reflected the immediate, grass-roots demands of the peasantry itself, whose rampages gathered in extent, force and intensity throughout the summer and early autumn. The inability of the authorities to control the earlier manifestations of unrest emboldened the peasants to take even more drastic action, and instances of wholesale violence, arson, wanton destruction, pillage, forcible landseizure—even the murder of landowners and officials—became increasingly common. None of this, of course, had anything to do with party programmes, economic theory or socialist propaganda. The old populist slogan of 'Land and Liberty' (Zemlya i volya) had always been something of a tautology: for the peasants, land and liberty were synonymous. They now exercised their new-found liberty to secure their land. And there was little that the government or what was left of the local authorities could do about it. The peasants were now the local authorities. At the battle-front, too, the conscripted peasants in uniform were also taking matters into their own hands, engaging in mutinies and mass desertions, 'voting with their feet' in Lenin's phrase, to return to their villages and stake their claim in the process of land requisitioning and redistribution.

Equally as important a factor as the workers' movements and the peasant revolts in the revolutionary equation of 1917 were the campaigns for greater national autonomy or outright independence among the non-Russian peoples of the old Empire. From the Baltic to Buryatia in the Far East, the hitherto subject peoples of the supposedly 'one and indivisible' Russian state began to demand the right to control their own affairs in their own national, religious and ethnic interests. 'Mother Russia'—or rather, from the nationalities' point of view, 'Big Brother Russia'—was no longer able to govern or control its minority peoples.

Of all the different non-Russian regions and territories only Poland and Finland had any history of independent statehood. The ancient Catholic kingdom of Poland had been partitioned and absorbed into the

Russian Empire under Catherine the Great in the eighteenth century, and had voiced its discontent in two massive nationalist uprisings in 1830 and 1863. Both had been ruthlessly suppressed, and during Alexander III's campaign of 'Russification' even the use of the Polish language was banned in Polish schools. Poland's right to regain its historic independence was acknowledged in all progressive circles, and this, at least the principle—was declared by the Petrograd Soviet on 14 March, though this had little immediate effect as Poland was currently under German military occupation. Not until the end of the First World War did Poland once more become a fully independent nation-state. In the case of Finland, formally annexed by Russia in 1809, the situation was quite complex, with a variety of conflicting interests among the Finnish Social Democrats who wanted immediate independence, non-socialist members of the Diet (parliament) who took a more cautious, legalistic approach, and the Provisional Government in Petrograd. At all events the question of Finland's status was not resolved until after the Bolshevik Revolution when the country's independence was declared on 7 December.

Even more complex was the question of Ukrainian independence, where the nationalist movement was sharply divided, and complicated by the fact that a large proportion of the population, particularly in the large towns such as Kiev, Kharkov and Odessa, were Russian, Polish or Jewish. Class antagonisms and economic grievances, however, reinforced Ukrainian national sentiment, at least among the peasantry, as many of the large private landowners were Russian or Polish. The Provisional Government was, of course, unwilling to concede anything to Ukrainian separatist tendencies, fearing the loss of the territory's rich agricultural lands and valuable Donbas coalfields. The reluctance of the government even to negotiate with the Ukrainian Rada (parliament) pushed the latter towards greater intransigence, and in November it proclaimed Ukraine an independent state. The identification of nationalist and class struggle was replicated elsewhere in the country, for example in the Baltic provinces, especially Latvia, and in Georgia, Armenia and Azerbaijan, though less so in Muslim central Asia. The Provisional Government, unable to maintain a semblance of order even in central European Russia, could hardly hope to contain the passionate, fissiparous forces of separatism and national independence in its borderlands.

Despite the government's crackdown on the Bolsheviks following the July disturbances, problems continued to multiply. Working-class militancy, rural revolt, military indiscipline, the breakdown of industry,

rocketing inflation, and unrest on the periphery all swelled the tide of revolution swirling round Kerensky's boots. Reluctance to tackle the land problem, procrastination over convening a Constituent Assembly and, above all, the continuation of the war clearly demonstrated the legalistically-minded and increasingly arrogant Prime Minister's failure to respond effectively to the revolutionary mood of the masses. Only the Bolsheviks promised immediate 'Bread, Peace and Land'.

The road to October

The immediate threat to Kerensky did not, however, come from the left but from the right. The ultra-disciplinarian General Kornilov was appointed Commander-in-Chief in July, promising to restore discipline at the front by the use of all necessary measures including the restoration of the death penalty, both at the front and the rear. Relations between the Prime Minister and his C-in-C were, however, marked by a mixture of political antagonism and personal mistrust. Steady German advances through the Baltic region, culminating in the fall of Riga on 21 August, opened the enemy's path towards Petrograd, and Kornilov had no faith in Kerensky's ability to take the tough political measures necessary to halt the military reverses. What followed is still one of the murkiest episodes in the history of the Russian Revolution, but one which was fraught with ominous consequences. Although historians still argue over the details of the so-called 'Kornilov affair', what appears to have happened is this. Lacking confidence in his Prime Minster, and possibly misled by the interference of a self-appointed gobetween, former Procurator of the Holy Synod, V.N.Lvov, Kornilov demanded that he should take over supreme military and civilian power. Kerensky suspected impending treachery and sent a telegram to the general, relieving him of his command. Ignoring the message, Kornilov ordered his troops to march on Petrograd, no doubt intending to seize political power and establish some form of military dictatorship. Among other things, he is reported to have contemplated shooting the members of the Soviet. A counter-revolutionary military putsch therefore seemed to be in the offing. His troops were, however, bewildered and uncertain of their loyalties, and in any case obstructed in their advance by the disruptive action of railwaymen and armed workers from Petrograd who mingled with Kornilov's men and convinced them that the general's plan was against the interests of the revolution. In the event, not a shot was fired. Kornilov's forces dispersed, the threat of counter-revolution was averted, and the sacked Commander-in-Chief arrested and imprisoned. Faced with the menace from Kornilov's move, Kerensky had been forced to release imprisoned Bolsheviks, throw open the arsenals and supply guns to Petrograd's workers in order to defend the city. In a few weeks' time those same guns would be turned against Kerensky's own government.

Whether Kornilov's action was the result of mutiny or misunderstanding, its real significance lay in the fact that it heralded a renewed upsurge in Bolshevik Party popularity. The embattled Kerensky had been forced to beg for its support; imprisoned socialists were released from prison; and some right-wing politicians arrested. On 1 September Russia was proclaimed a republic. The Soviet began to arm detachments of factory workers—the 'Red Guards'— and by early September the Bolsheviks had gained a majority on both the Petrograd and the Moscow Soviets. After Kerensky's order for Lenin's arrest in July, he had gone into hiding in Finland where he worked on his theoretical treatise on revolutionary government, State and Revolution, and remained away from the main centre of political action. From his Finnish lair, he urged the re-adoption of the slogan 'All Power to the Soviets', and over the next few weeks, bombarded the party's Central Committee with a barrage of letters and demands for an immediate insurrection of the armed proletariat, the overthrow of 'Kerensky and Company', and the seizure of political power. Only a Bolshevik government, he argued, could satisfy the demands of the revolutionary people. Sweeping aside the hesitation of his comrades who counselled patience and wished to wait for elections to a Constituent Assembly, or at least the planned meeting of the second Congress of Soviets, Lenin retorted, 'History will not forgive us if we do not take power now...to delay is a crime.'

While Lenin was in hiding, a leading role in the unfolding revolutionary process was played by Lev Trotsky (1879–1940). He had returned to Petrograd from New York in May, and, despite earlier theoretical disagreements with Lenin, now threw in his lot with the Bolsheviks. When Kerensky ordered the arrest of Bolshevik leaders, Trotsky issued a defiant letter to the government, demanding that if Bolshevik leaders were being imprisoned, they should imprison him too —which they promptly did. However, on his release after the Kornilov affair, and with Lenin still *hors de combat*, Trotsky now assumed a commanding position in the party leadership and in the leadership of the revolution. In early September he became virtual chairman of the Petrograd Soviet, a crucial position over the coming weeks.

On 10 October Lenin left his hiding place and made his way incognito to a meeting of the party's Central Committee. After protracted and often acrimonious debate, his motion calling for an armed insurrection was passed by ten votes to two. The two dissenters were Grigory Zinoviev (1883–1936) and Leo Kamenev (1883–1936), who published their objections in an open letter to party committees much to Lenin's anger. However, from now on the proletarian revolution was 'the order of the day'. Exactly which day remained to be resolved. Lenin pushed for immediate action, but his return to hiding kept him from the epicentre of the threatening storm. More influential was Trotsky, now a leading member of a newly formed body, the Military Revolutionary Committee of the Petrograd Soviet (MRC), which effectively controlled the Petrograd garrison troops in defiance of the Provisional Government and of Kerensky who had assumed supreme military command. The Bolsheviks made no secret of their preparations for insurrection, which Trotsky proposed should take place to coincide with the forthcoming Congress of Soviets, in order that the revolution could be seen as a takeover of power by the soviets, rather than simply as a Bolshevik coup. Kerensky seemed impotent to stop it. Attempts to prosecute members of the MRC, close down the Bolshevik press and draft in troops loyal to the Provisional Government all proved ineffectual.

Lenin and Trotsky still had their differences over the timing of the revolution, but in the event things turned out according to Trotsky's strategy. It would, however, be rash to consider that the Bolsheviks' planning for the revolution was efficient, coordinated or thoroughly considered. It succeeded by default rather than design. On Trotsky's own admission in his History of the Russian Revolution, the events of 24-26 October were marked by confusion, apprehension, uncertainty and opportunism. It was by no means a smooth, surgically executed operation. Lenin arrived in disguise at Bolshevik headquarters in the Smolny Institute on the evening of the 24th. During the night, detachments of Red Guards, on the orders of the Bolshevik-dominated MRC, and commanded by party 'commissars', took control of the nerve centres of the city. Almost unopposed, they occupied the railway stations, manned the bridges, and seized the banks, post- and central telegraph offices. On the following day, the Winter Palace -formerly official residence of the ex-tsar and final refuge of the Provisional Government—was invaded by armed workers, soldiers and sailors. Only a handful of young military cadets, a few armoured cars and a loyal battalion of women remained to defend the palace. After hours of indecision, blunder and ignored ultimata to surrender, punctuated by sporadic and innocuous shellfire, the palace was finally infiltrated (not 'stormed') during the night of the 25/26th by a squadron of revolutionary guards who arrested the remaining members of the Provisional Government. They were rounded up and marched under armed escort across the bridge over the Neva and incarcerated in the dungeons of the SS Peter and Paul fortress. Kerensky was not among them. He had made good his escape in a car placed at his disposal by an official of the United States Embassy. Such, briefly, while the city slept, were the relatively unspectacular and unheroic events of the politically momentous October Revolution. Only a dozen or so people lost their lives, and most of those accidentally, during the course of a low-key forty-eight-hour crisis which was dramatically to alter the political history of the world.

Shortly before the arrest of the Provisional Government, the delegates to the delayed second Congress of Soviets had begun their deliberations. Bolshevik delegates were in any case in a majority, but the decision of the Mensheviks and right SRs to withdraw in protest at the announcement of the coup ensured that the *fait accompli* would be formally endorsed by Congress. As the non-Bolshevik delegates shuffled out of the hall, they were followed by Trotsky's famous taunt: 'Go where you belong—into the rubbish-bin of history.' Events had fortuitously fallen in with Trotsky's strategy, giving the outward appearance that the seizure of power by the Bolshevik-led MRC was in fact an assumption of power by the soviets. In his *April Theses*, Lenin had demanded 'All Power to the Soviets'. Now, it appeared, they had it.

At a later session Congress also unanimously approved two crucial resolutions, the Decree on Peace and the Decree on Land, published respectively on the front pages of the Soviet's newspaper *Izvestiya* on 27 and 28 October. The former called for an immediate armistice and a negotiated peace settlement, the second more or less rubberstamped the process of land redistribution without compensation, which the peasants had in any case already accomplished by their own efforts. The Bolsheviks had therefore redeemed, at least on paper, the two major promises—Peace and Land—on which they had campaigned and which had clinched their mass support. Congress also established a new revolutionary government, consisting entirely of Bolsheviks, with Lenin as chairman—the Soviet of People's Commissars, in its Russian acronym *Sovnarkom*. The first Soviet government had been born. The Bolsheviks' victory has often been portrayed by their detractors as a cynical seizure of power by a tightly-knit group of power-hungry, gun-

toting fanatics with no popular support. While there was certainly an element of opportunism in the. manner in which the coup was conceived and executed, most recent research points to the fact that by October, so discredited had the other political parties become, that it was the Bolsheviks who most clearly reflected, voiced and implemented the will of the revolutionary-minded workers and peasants. It was not the case that the people craved for 'Bread, Peace and Land', because they were duped into doing so by Bolshevik propaganda and smart slogans. What the Bolsheviks did was to interpret the popular mood and the people's longings and carry them through into decisive revolutionary action. To paraphrase Trotsky, the people had not read Lenin, but Lenin had clearly read the thoughts of the people.

In the space of only eight months, the mighty Russian Empire, ruled over by an absolute autocrat, had been dramatically transformed into a revolutionary republic headed by a government of Marxists dedicated to the establishment of international socialism. Lenin himself had leapt from relative obscurity, lurking on the fringes of Russian politics in his self-imposed Swiss exile, to the leadership of that government. The Bolsheviks had achieved power, but in a real sense the Revolution had only just begun. Their position was by no means secure. They were still, despite their massive support, a minority party. Large sections of society opposed them or were ignorant of their intentions. The new 'People's Commissars' had no experience of government, public administration, or managing a national economy. The conflict with Germany still ground on, notwithstanding the Decree on Peace, and was soon to be superseded by an agonizing fratricidal Civil War that spilled oceans of Russian blood and created conditions of unspeakable chaos and suffering. Despite the immediate struggles and uncertainties, however, the Bolshevik Revolution of October 1917 had opened a new chapter in the history, not just of Russia, but the entire planet Earth.

Was the Revolution inevitable? Could it have been avoided or prevented? The question is, of course, purely hypothetical, and the historiographical, philosophical and aetiological issues involved in an attempt to answer it are far too complex and profound to be addressed at this juncture. One point, however, is worth considering. There was clearly much more behind the Bolsheviks' success than ideological or organizational superiority over other political forces. As implied above, the Bolsheviks were simply much more in tune with popular gut feeling than either the constitutionally-minded liberal politicians or the moderate socialists. In particular, Lenin's adamant stand on peace and land, and his intuitive appreciation of the revolutionary power of the

peasantry, contributed greatly to his party's popularity and its immediate success. Some historians have argued that if Kerensky had adopted a similar programme, if he had held out the promise of an immediate end to the war and been prepared to give legislative effect to the redistribution of non-peasant land, then it is just possible that he would have received sufficient mass support to stay in power. But, as Florinsky has not entirely facetiously pointed out, *if* Kerensky had espoused such policies, then Kerensky, too, would have been a Bolshevik.

Interpretations and conclusions

The Revolution promised, even if in the medium term it did not achieve, a resolution of the social, economic and political contradictions described in the opening chapter. It also marked the culmination of the earlier revolutionary traditions that combined the forces of popular insurrection, intellectual opposition and military defection, and in which elements of Westernism, Slavophilism, Populism, Marxism and anarchism could be identified. Not surprisingly, the highly charged political nature of the events of 1917 has given rise to a wide variety of interpretations and historiographical approaches that span the entire ideological and intellectual spectrum.

In the former Soviet Union, a strictly orthodox Marxist-Leninist (that is to say Stalinist) approach predominated—was indeed obligatory - in the interpretation of Revolution. According to this view, the October Revolution was the inevitable climax of a process of historical development governed by scientific laws, inexorable economic forces and the dynamics of class struggle. The Russian working class was led to victory in this struggle by the Bolshevik Party—the 'vanguard of the proletariat'—with Vladimir Ilyich Lenin at its head. 'The Great October Socialist Revolution' ushered in a new era in the history of mankind, the era of Socialism, which would in turn develop into full Communism. From the late 1920s until the late 1980s all professional historians, researchers, writers, teachers and students of the Revolution inside the USSR were compelled to operate within this ideological and methodological framework that condemned all other interpretations as 'deviationist', 'counter-revolutionary', 'white-guardist', 'bourgeoisreactionary' and generally 'unscientific'. The writing of history thereby played a legitimizing role in the monopoly of political power enjoyed by the Communist Party of the Soviet Union. History was the handmaiden of the State.

In the West, too, interpretations of the Revolution have also been coloured by political expediency and considerations that are not without their own ideological sub-text. At the time of the Revolution knowledge in the West of the political, social and economic forces that had brought it about was minuscule. Bolshevism itself was an unknown quantity, and it is the unknown that usually excites the greatest fear. Foreign governments were understandably hostile to the infant socialist state whose leaders were openly committed to the goal of international revolution and the destruction of capitalism. A contemporary British politician, Winston Churchill, declared that Bolshevism must be 'strangled in its cradle'. But apart from political antipathy, cultural and even linguistic obstacles caused early western perceptions of the Revolution to be heavily influenced by the translated accounts, memoirs and analyses of Russian émigré writers and scholars—some of them, like Milyukov and Kerensky, leading, though losing, actors in the drama —who of course had their own personal and political axes to grind in their opposition to the Soviet regime. A 'liberal' counter-orthodoxy became established, which postulated that, had it not been for the intervention of the First World War, Russia would have continued along a reformist road to greater political freedom, real constitutional economic prosperity. and Some commentators, government intellectually unable to admit that oppressive governments are on occasion overthrown by the spontaneous action of the masses, questioned whether a revolution in the proper sense of the term actually did occur in February 1917! According to this line of thinking, most controversially articulated by George Katkov, the abdication of Nicholas Romanov was precipitated by a conspiracy orchestrated by a 'freemasonry' of self-seeking businessmen and treacherous liberal politicians, and by the machinations of the German Foreign Office and military High Command, which financially underwrote the subversion of Russia's war effort as part of their Revolutionierungspolitik. Others argue that once the war-battered regime had collapsed, the opportunity for establishing full civil freedoms and parliamentary institutions was greatly enhanced in Russia, and that, when the war was over, the country was set fair to develop along the lines of western-style democratic politics, a pluralistic civil society, the rule of law and a successful capitalist economy. The optimistic scenario was then undermined by the appearance on mid-stage of the wicked Bolsheviks, who, led by a dogmatic and power-thirsty zealot, hoodwinked the gullible masses and snatched political power at gunpoint, thereby inaugurating a reign of ideologically motivated terror that plunged Russia into a new

Dark Age of totalitarian oppression. There have even been some contemptible and deranged efforts to explain the Revolution as a Jewish plot.

Whatever their claims to 'objectivity', the most influential representatives of western liberal scholarship in the mid-twentieth century continued to analyse the Revolution 'from above', or as the result of some form of conspiracy. That is to say, they concentrated their studies on the activities of leading individuals (e.g. Nicholas II, Kerensky, Lenin) or principal groupings—such as the fourth Duma, the Petrograd Soviet, the Provisional Governments, the Bolshevik Central Committee and so on—without undertaking a proper analysis of what the ordinary people of Russia—factory workers, land-hungry peasants, conscript soldiers, radicalized sailors, women in bread-queues —were thinking and doing in 1917. In the words of the eminent British historian, E.H.Carr, speaking in 1961 of recent western scholarship on Russia:

Much of what has been written in English-speaking countries during the last ten years...has been vitiated by this inability to achieve even the most elementary measure of imaginative understanding of what goes on in the mind of the other party.

Those few foreign writers, left-wing intellectuals and so-called 'fellowtravellers' who did try to evince some sympathy and understanding for the popular movements and elemental forces unleashed during the Revolution were often guilty of painting exaggeratedly glowing pictures of a nation which had overthrown tyranny and was now struggling to build a just and equitable society in which the interests of the toiling masses, rather than those of the exploiting classes, were the principal consideration. Their accounts, although well-intentioned, were often naïve and ill-informed. Typical of this genre was the astonishingly jejune and whimsical work of Hewlett Johnson, 'the Red Dean of Canterbury', The Socialist Sixth of the World, published in 1939. Such writers were also condemned by both orthodox Marxists and western liberals: the former because those interpretations often laid too much emphasis on the spontaneous, popular nature of the Revolution, and not enough on the vanguard role of the Bolshevik Party; and the latter because they offered a vision of the common man able to take charge of his own destiny an uncomfortable concept for many representatives of the traditional western 'establishment' to grasp.

Since E.H.Carr delivered his lecture, quoted from above, a new generation of western historians, less beholden to the old 'émigre liberal' school, but still rejecting the institutionalized falsehoods of Soviet-style historical writing, has conducted an impressive amount of research and published a formidable array of works in which the Revolution has been investigated using a combination of traditional historiography, economic analysis, sociological enquiry and the methodology of political science. In Britain and the United States, the works of such enterprising and respected scholars as Steve Smith, Diane Koenker, Sheila Fitzpatrick, Edward Acton, Ronald Suny, Robert Service, Orlando Figes and others have brought fresh light to bear on a popular revolution that was to undergo a grotesque metamorphosis into what Figes in his major study called A People's Tragedy. What has emerged is a refreshingly dispassionate and meticulously documented view of the Revolution 'from below' which demonstrates the full social complexity, the fluctuating rhythm, and the regional variety of the cataclysm which overtook the Russian Empire in 1917. Much of this research demonstrates that after the collapse of the autocracy, rather than unifying in some kind of common purpose, Russian society became increasingly polarized along class lines, with the workers, peasants and conscript soldiers becoming more and more alienated from a government which continued to defend the interests of the propertied classes. Lenin's slogan of 'All Power to the Soviets', adopted in April and revived on the eve of October, simply articulated the feeling of the hoi polloi that a government of the Soviets—the elected representatives of the plebeian masses— rather than a government of self-appointed middle- and upper-class conservative politicians and financially privileged businessmen with no popular mandate was the preferred alternative. The American historian, Ronald Suny, has put it as follows:

The Bolsheviks came to power, not because they were superior manipulators or cynical opportunists, but because their policies, as formulated by Lenin in April and shaped by the events of the following months, placed them at the head of a genuinely popular movement.

On the other hand, another prominent American scholar, Richard Pipes, has stated unequivocally that: 'The Russian Revolution was made neither by the forces of nature nor by anonymous masses but by identifiable men pursuing their own advantages' (1990, p. xxiv).

The controversy over the origins of the Russian Revolution, therefore, still continues unabated, and no less acrimoniously since the disintegration of the State which it engendered. Inside Russia itself, the breakdown of Communist Party control over the historiography of the Revolution has opened up a new vista of opportunities and created a whole gamut of fresh interpretations which, based on recently released archive material, offers exciting prospects for further study of 1917 and its antecedents. During the late 1980s, it became increasingly apparent that the traditional Marxist-Leninist orthodoxy was no longer acceptable. Society and the mass media ran ahead of the professional historical establishment in demanding a complete break from the halftruths and official gobbledegook of the past. Many erstwhile Communist historians now suddenly turned 'democrat', and joined in the often unseemly rush into resurrecting fallen idols of the old regime, into rehabilitating dishonoured figures of the past, and plunged into a wave of misplaced nostalgia for the symbols and totems of the historically bankrupt tsarist social and political order. The return of the imperial double-headed eagle as Russia's national symbol, the renaming of St Petersburg in 1991 (known as Leningrad since 1924), the rise of Russian nationalism, the upsurge of Orthodox Christianity, and even the renaissance of Romanov-monarchist sympathies in the ex-USSR are all symptomatic of a new, and not necessarily always helpful, reinterpretation of Russia's pre-revolutionary and revolutionary history. In the words of the Russian historian V.P. Buldakov: 'The writing of Russian history, long accustomed to the role of handmaiden of the state, now appears as a prostitute walking the streets of political pluralism.'

Perhaps the most public symbol of the Russian people's reappraisal of its revolution, and of its victims and its victors, was the official canonization of the last tsar by the Russian Orthodox Church in the year 2000. Earlier his exhumed bones and those of his family who had been executed by Bolshevik guards in 1918 had been solemnly interred in a special side-chapel in the SS Peter and Paul cathedral in St Petersburg. Attending the service of committal was the then Russian president, Boris Yeltsin, the same man who years before, as Communist Party boss of the Urals town of Sverdlovsk (since renamed Yekaterinburg), had ordered the demolition of the 'lpatiev house' in the cellars of which Nicholas and his family had been killed. Thus, the ruler who was reviled by his subjects as 'Bloody Nicholas', the butcher of 'Bloody Sunday', is now revered as 'Saint Tsar Nicholas', martyr and member of the Orthodox Church's canon of saints. At the other extreme, whereas Nicholas Romanov's memory has been formally sanitized and

sanctified, that of Vladimir Ilyich Lenin has been subjected to a different form of reappraisal, which has ranged from sober, sensible re-evaluation to downright abuse and vilification. One recent commentator, for instance, described him as 'a criminal psychopath of minimal intelligence'. Recurrent rumours and press reports regularly appear that his mummified corpse, on public display in the mausoleum on Moscow's Red Square since 1924, is to be ejected and buried near his mother's grave in St Petersburg. This would be a huge symbolic political statement on the part of the present Russian government, but at the time of writing, there are no signs that such a move is imminent. There is no doubt that the figure whose name is most closely identified with the October Revolution, and the leader of the world's first socialist state, needs both de-mythologizing and de-demonizing, but the process should be kept in proper historical perspective and not distorted by current ideological fads, as happened in the past. What is important is that the central importance of the Russian Revolution in shaping the history of the twentieth century should not be marginalized as a result of possibly ephemeral political trends and misplaced popular emotions. It is no good looking at the Revolution through the distorting lens of Stalin's terror of the 1930s, or the stultifying effects of the Soviet Communist Party's dead-grip on historical research. In properly condemning the grim aftermath of the 1917 Revolution, its detractors must be careful not to misinterpret or wilfully ignore the misery and degradation, as well as the genuine aspirations and ideals of the Russian people, that was its driving force.

Since the disintegration of the Soviet Union in 1991, Russian scholars and their western colleagues have been engaged in a process of detailed re-examination of Russia's revolutionary experience. A designated new section of the Russian Academy of Sciences' Institute of History in Moscow has recently been established under the leadership of Dr V.P.Buldakov to research Russia's revolutionary traditions. There is also a whole range of collaborative projects, joint conferences, publishing ventures and combined research programmes that are helping to draw new maps of the revolution, though the contours have yet to emerge in clearly identifiable relief. As one Russian author recently put it: 'Russia is a country whose past is impossible to predict.'

Suggestions for further reading

The literature on the Russian Revolution is vast, running to thousands of volumes in English alone. What follows is a brief, highly selective list of suggestions for further reading, which omits some of the older titles referred to in the first edition of this pamphlet, but contains newer works based on the results of more recent scholarship. Although the pamphlet covers the years 1861–1917, the works recommended below concentrate on the revolutionary period itself, i.e. 1905– October 1917. Most of the volumes listed contain their own extensive bibliographies, to which reference may be made for an indication of more in-depth, specialized reading.

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Readers are also referred to the twice-yearly journal, *Revolutionary Russia*, organ of the British Universities Study Group on the Russian Revolution, which publishes the results of the most up-to-date research in this field.

Glossary of Russian technical terms

Bolshevik 'majority-ite': member of Lenin's 'hard line' faction of the Russian Social Democratic Labour Party

bunt spontaneous peasant uprising; riot

Cherny peredel(pronounced 'chorny') Black Repartition: populist revolutionary party opposed to use of political terror

Duma Assembly or Council: especially the State Duma, an elected quasiparliamentary institution, 1906–17

dvoevlastie dual power: used especially of the sharing of political power between the Provisional Government and the Petrograd Soviet, March-October 1917

dvoryanstvo land-owning (and before 1861 serf-owning) nobility; also 'service nobility'

intelligentsia radical intellectuals

Iskra 'The Spark': Marxist revolutionary newspaper founded by Lenin in 1900

Izvestiya 'News': newspaper of the St Petersburg and Petrograd Soviet *Kadet* member of the moderate Constitutional Democratic Party (from the Russian initials K-D)

khlyst literally, 'a whip': member of self-flagellating religious sect to which Rasputin belonged

khozhdenie v narod 'going to the people': mass crusade of young populists to the peasantry, 1874 and 1875

kulak literally, 'a fist': derogatory term denoting, imprecisely, a rich peasant

Menshevik 'minority-ite': member of the moderate, antiBolshevik faction of the Russian Social Democratic Labour Party

Molodaya Rossiya 'Young Russia': inflammatory revolutionary manifesto circulated in 1862

muzhiki vernacular term for a male peasant

narod the people: in nineteenth-century usage, usually referring to the peasantry

Narodnaya volya The People's Will: revolutionary terrorist organization responsible for the assassination of Tsar Alexander II

narodnichestvo Populism: a body of social and political ideas and organizations claiming to represent the communal interests of the peasantry

narodnik (pl. narodniki) a populist: member of the populist movement obshchina Russian peasant commune or community

pogrom violent attack on racial or social minority group; especially those directed against Jews

Pravda 'Truth': Bolshevik party newspaper, founded 1912

pud unit of weight: 36.1 lbs or 16.38 kilograms

soviet council: especially the Soviet of Workers' Deputies established first in 1905 and again in 1917

Sovnarkom acronym for Council of People's Commissars: revolutionary government of Bolsheviks, set up in October 1917

Trudovik (pl. Trudoviki) member of the Labour Group, a liberal-left coalition in the State Duma

Zemlya i volya Land and Liberty: revolutionary populist organization, 1861–64 and 1876–79

zemstvo (pl. zemstva) organ of rural local government, established in 1864

Biographical notes

(names in bold typeface indicate cross references)

Alexander I (1777–1825), Emperor of Russia (1801–25), grandson of **Catherine the Great.** The early years of his reign were marked by the promise of liberal constitutional reforms. After the defeat of Napoleon, in which Russia played a major role, Alexander's policies became increasingly reactionary in both domestic and foreign affairs. His death in mysterious circumstances in 1825 created a dynastic crisis of succession, during which the abortive Decembrist uprising took place. The attempted military revolt is often regarded as the beginning of the nineteenth-century revolutionary movement. Succeeded by his youngest brother, **Nicholas I.**

Alexander II (1818–81), Emperor of Russia (1855–81). His accession coincided with Russia's defeat in the Crimean War (1853–56), which prompted him to embark on a series of major administrative reforms, the most important of which was the emancipation of the serfs in 1861. This was followed by local government, judicial, military and economic reforms that caused a limited degree of modernization in Russian society. A failed attempt on his life in 1866 (see Karakozov) led to a period of police repression (the 'White Terror') directed against members of the revolutionary intelligentsia. The final decade of his reign was marked by increasing populist revolutionary activity, which culminated in his assassination in 1881 by the *Narodnaya volya* ('People's Will') terrorist organization. Succeeded by his son, Alexander III.

Alexander III (1845–94), Emperor of Russia (1881–94). Following his father's assassination in 1881, Alexander III embarked on a policy of reaction and repression by which he sought to reverse some of the effects of his predecessor's liberalizing reforms. Police powers of surveillance, arrest and 'administrative exile' to Siberia were greatly increased and his reign was marked by severe oppression, extreme Russian nationalism and anti-Semitism, and is sometimes referred to as 'the era of "petty deeds". Some economic progress did, however, take place, which laid the foundations for the industrial revolution of the late 1890s (see Witte). Succeeded by his son, Nicholas II.

Alexandra Fyodorovna (1872–1918), born Princess Alix of Hesse, married (1894) to Tsar Nicholas II. Empress of Russia (1894–1917). Alexandra gave birth to five children, four daughters and one son, the haemophiliac heir to the throne, Alexis. Her involvement with the notorious Rasputin brought her and the royal family into public disrepute, especially after the outbreak of World War I. Popularly referred to as 'the German woman' (nemka), she was accused of pro-German sympathies and of having undue influence (with Rasputin) over government appointments and even military decisions. Following Nicholas's abdication in March 1917, she was kept with her family under house arrest, and finally executed by Bolshevik guards in July 1918 at Yekaterinburg.

Alexeev, Michael Vasilevich (1857–1918), General, and Nicholas II's military Chief of Staff, 1915–17. Influential in persuading the tsar to abdicate in March 1917. Commander-in-Chief of Russian armed forces, September-October 1917. After the October Revolution, founded the anti-Bolshevik 'Volunteer Army', and until his death in November 1918, was one of the leading 'White Generals' during the early stages of the Civil War.

Axelrod, Paul Borisovich (1850–1928). Marxist activist and cofounder with **Plekhanov** of the Group for the Liberation of Labour. After the second congress of the RSDRP, Axelrod became a leader of the Menshevik faction and one of the most vehement opponents of Lenin's theories of party organization.

Bakunin, Michael Alexandrovich (1814–76). Russian revolutionary activist and leading European anarchist; one of the foremost radical 'Westerners' of the 1830s. Participated in some of the revolutionary events in western Europe (1848–51). Arrested, imprisoned and exiled to Siberia, from where he escaped and returned to Europe in 1861 and continued his practical and theoretical revolutionary activities. He helped to found a number of short-lived revolutionary organizations including the First International. In 1873 he wrote his tract, 'State-ism and Anarchy', and was a major influence on the development of the Russian revolutionary populist movement of the 1870s, insisting that the Russian people were 'revolutionary by instinct and socialist by nature'.

Belinsky, Vissarion Grigorevich (1811–48). Leading radical literary critic and theorist during the 1830s and 40s; regarded as the founder of the school of 'critical realism', which urged that writers had a moral duty to serve society by exposing its vices through creative literature. He passed through a number of intellectual phases, ending as one of the

most vociferous and uncompromising radical 'Westerners' of the 1840s. His famous 'Letter to Gogol', written just before his death, contained a vehement criticism of the contemporary Russian state and society, in particular the system of serfdom. Died of consumption.

Catherine II ('the Great') (1729–96), Empress of Russia (1762– 96). Born Princess Sophia of Anhalt-Zerbst, in 1745 she married the heir to the Russian throne, the future Peter III (r. 1761-62). In 1762 she participated in a palace coup which led to her husband's murder and her own accession. Highly educated and intelligent, she was also ruthlessly ambitious, and her professed liberal ideas were belied by her increasingly despotic policies, both at home and abroad. She was also notorious for the sexually promiscuous nature of her private life. Despite her encouragement of Enlightenment ideas, in 1775 she mercilessly suppressed the huge popular revolt against her led by Pugachev and in 1790 exiled the writer, Radishchev, to Siberia for criticizing her regime. In her foreign policies, she extended the Russian Empire south to the Black Sea, and in the west participated in the partitions of Poland.

Chernov, Victor Mikhailovich (1873-1952). Russian revolutionary activist and theorist; co-founder and leader of the neo-populist Socialist Revolutionary Party (SRs) (1901). After the February Revolution, member of the Petrograd Soviet, and Minister of Agriculture in the second Provisional Government. Elected Chairman of the Constituent Assembly in January 1918. Opposed the new Soviet government and emigrated in 1920. After fighting in the French Resistance during World War II, he died in New York.

Chernyshevsky, Nicholas Gavrilovich (1828–89). Political theorist, economist, philosopher, writer and journalist, Chernyshevsky was the main ideologue and spokesman of the populist revolutionary intelligentsia during the 1860s, and one of the tsarist regime's leading critics. Although not a political activist himself, he advocated popular revolution as a means of establishing a socialist society based on the example of the peasant commune. Arrested in 1862, he was sentenced to hard labour and exile in Siberia where he remained until allowed to return to European Russia in 1883. The title of his novel, What is to be Done? (1864), was later adopted by Lenin as the title of his pamphlet on party organization, published in 1902.

Deutsch, Leo Grigorevich (1855–1941). Revolutionary populist activist in the 1870s, Deutsch later became one of the founders of the Marxist Group for the Liberation of Labour, 1883. He spent sixteen

years in Siberian exile, after which he became a prominent member of the Menshevik faction of the RSDRP.

Durnovo, Peter Nikolaevich (1845–1915). Reactionary statesman and politician, Head of Police Department (1884–93), and Minister of the Interior (1905–06). He fiercely suppressed revolutionary opposition, and in February 1914 wrote a memorandum to Tsar **Nicholas II** giving a remarkably accurate forecast of the revolutionary consequences of Russia going to war with Germany. Most of his predictions were borne out by events.

Gapon (Father), **George Apollonovich** (1870–1906). Priest and police agent; in 1903 he helped to organize the 'Assembly of Russian Mill and Factory Workers' in St Petersburg. During a mass strike in January 1905 he led a demonstration to present a loyal petition to the tsar seeking redress of workers' grievances. The demonstrators were fired on by troops, which led to the massacre of 'Bloody Sunday' (9 January). Gapon immediately escaped abroad, but after the suppression of the 1905 revolutionary events he returned to Russia, only to be killed by hanging, though sources differ as to who instigated and carried out the execution.

Goremykin, Ivan Logginovich (1839–1917). Reactionary statesman and politician, Minister for Internal Affairs (1895–99), and Prime Minister (April-July 1906 and 1914–16). Strong opponent of the 'Progressive bloc' of the fourth Duma.

Herzen, Alexander Ivanovich (1812–70). Dubbed the 'Father of Russian Populism', Herzen was one of the most influential revolutionary writers and thinkers of mid-nineteenth-century Russia. During the intellectual controversies of the 1840s he was a prominent 'Westerner', but after his emigration to Europe in 1847 and disillusionment at the outcome of the 1848 revolutions, he developed an amalgam of European socialist thought with Slavophil ideas about the unique nature of the Russian peasant commune, which formed the embryo of Russian revolutionary populism (narodnichestvo). While living in London he founded and edited the newspaper, Kolokol ('The Bell'), which argued for revolutionary change in Russia and was widely distributed and read by the radical intelligentsia. He died in Paris.

Kamenev, Leo Borisovich (1883–1936). Leading Bolshevik activist and editor of the Party's newspaper, *Pravda*, in 1917. On the eve of the October Revolution, he and **Zinoviev** argued unsuccessfully on the Central Committee that the uprising should be postponed until elections were held for a Constituent Assembly. During the early 1920s he was a

member of the Party politburo, but was later expelled and finally executed during Stalin's purges of the 1930s.

Karakozov, **Dmitry** Vladimirovich (1840-66).revolutionary, responsible for a failed assassination attempt on Alexander II in 1866. Executed by hanging.

Kerensky, Alexander Fyodorovich (1881–1970). Russian lawyer and politician, leader of the Trudovik (Labour) faction in the fourth Duma. After the February Revolution, Kerensky became a member of both the first Provisional Government (Minister of Justice), and the Executive Committee of the Petrograd Soviet. He later became Minister of War and Navy, and finally President (Prime Minister) of the third Provisional Government that was overthrown by the Bolsheviks during the October Revolution. He spent the rest of his life in emigration.

Kornilov, Lavr Georgevich (1870–1918). Infantry General, appointed by Kerensky as Commander-in-Chief of Russian armed forces in July 1917. In August he staged an abortive military coup against the Provisional Government in an attempt to establish a military dictatorship. Although the circumstances of his 'rebellion' are still shrouded in controversy, its defeat by armed workers from Petrograd marked a rise in the popularity of the Bolshevik Party and formed the prelude to the October Revolution. After October Kornilov became a leader of the anti-Bolshevik 'White' forces during the Civil War. He was killed in 1918.

Lavrov, Peter Lavrovich (1823–1900). Radical philosopher, sociologist and revolutionary thinker; member of the first Zemlya i volva ('Land and Liberty') organization (1861-3). In 1868-69 he published his Historical Letters, in which he argued that it was the duty of the intelligentsia to atone for the exploitation of the masses by raising the political consciousness of the people to the point of revolutionary action through a process of education and propaganda. His theories partly inspired the populist 'movement to the people' in 1874/5. Died in emigration.

Lenin, Vladimir Ilyich (1870–1924). Born V.I.Ulyanov, he became a revolutionary Marxist leader. At the second congress of the Russian Social Democratic Workers' Party in 1903 he caused a split between the Bolshevik and Menshevik factions by his insistence on strict party discipline, centralization, and the role of the Party as 'vanguard of the proletariat'. In April 1917 he returned to Petrograd from exile in Switzerland and immediately called for the overthrow of the Provisional Government by a 'proletarian-socialist' revolution and the transfer of 'All Power to the Soviets'. Together with Trotsky, he

organized the October Revolution which brought about the collapse of the Provisional Government and the formation of the first Soviet socialist government. After the end of the Civil War in 1921, he introduced the 'New Economic Policy', which some of his colleagues regarded as a compromise with capitalism. After his death at Gorki, his body was embalmed and placed on public display in a mausoleum on Red Square, Moscow, where it still lies.

Loris-Melikov (Count), Michael Tarielovich (1825–88). General and statesman, hero of the Russo-Turkish War (1887–88) and Minister for Internal Affairs (1880–81). While ruthlessly suppressing revolutionaries, he drafted a plan for limited public participation in central government, which was abandoned after the assassination of Alexander II. He was dismissed from office by the anti-reformist Alexander III.

Lvov, **George Yevgenevich** (1861–1925). Wealthy landowner and *zemstvo* politician. Prime Minister of the first and second provisional governments, March—July 1917.

Martov, Julius Osipovich (1873–1923). Born J.O.Tsederbaum; Russian Marxist socialist, leader of the Menshevik faction of the Russian Social Democratic Workers' Party after the party split in 1903 (see Lenin). Advocated political and economic activity within the legal framework through agitation and propaganda among the working class. Continued to oppose the Bolsheviks after the October Revolution (though he supported the Soviet government during the Civil War), emigrated, and died in Germany.

Marx, Karl (1818–83). Revolutionary theorist and political economist. Author (with Friedich Engels (1820–95)) of the *Communist Manifesto* (1848) and *Capital* (1867). Marx argued that the history of all hitherto existing society is the history of class struggle. Basing his ideas on 'scientific' principles he believed that the conflict between the working class (proletariat) and the owners of industrial capital (bourgeoisie) would lead to the revolutionary overthrow of the latter by the former, leading to the establishment of a socialist workers' state. Died in London.

Michael Alexandrovich (1878–1918). Grand Duke and younger brother of **Nicholas II.** After Nicholas's abdication in March 1917, Michael Alexandrovich refused the succession and thereby effectively brought the Romanov autocracy to an end.

Michael Fyodorovich (1596–1645). First Romanov Tsar of Muscovy, elected by a popular assembly (*Zemskii sobor*) in 1613. Grandfather of **Peter the Great.**

Milyukov, Paul Nikolaevich (1859–1943). Historian and politician, leader of the Constitutional Democratic Party (*Kadets*). An admirer of western constitutional government, he became a member of the 'Progressive Bloc' during the fourth Duma, and, after the February Revolution, Minister of Foreign Affairs in the first Provisional Government. He resigned in May 1917 after public protests over his memorandum to allied governments, assuring them that Russia would continue to stick to the former tsarist government's war aims. Emigrated after the October Revolution and resumed his academic career.

Nicholas I (1796–1855), Emperor of Russia (1825–55). Youngest brother of **Alexander I**; his accession coincided with the failed military revolt of the Decembrists in December 1825. Nicholas's reign (known as the *Nikolaevshchina*) was marked by a harsh brand of military authoritarianism, strict discipline and intellectual obscurantism, based on the principles of 'Orthodoxy, Autocracy and Nationalism', which caused his regime to become known as the 'apogee of absolutism'. Despite tight censorship controls, the period saw the development of a vigorous creative literature and radical intellectual activity. His death coincided with Russia's defeat in the Crimean War.

Nicholas II (1868–1918), last Emperor of Russia (1894–1917). During the first years of Nicholas II's reign Russia underwent a process of rapid industrial and economic change (see Witte), creating new social and political tensions which, against the background of Russia's defeat in the Russo-Japanese War, erupted in the revolutionary situation of 1905. Consequently, although an unflinching upholder of autocratic government, Nicholas II was forced to make a number of constitutional concessions, including the establishment of a State Duma, with which relations were always strained. During World War I, Nicholas became Commander-in-Chief of Russia's armed forces, thereby bearing the brunt of public criticism for Russian military defeats. The reputation of the royal family deteriorated further as a result of its intimacy with the religious charlatan, Rasputin. Faced with mounting popular unrest and military defection, he was forced to abdicate in March 1917. Placed under house arrest, Nicholas and his family were shot by Bolshevik guards at Yekaterinburg in July 1918.

Perovskaya, Sophia Lvovna (1853–81). Daughter of a leading politician and general, became a revolutionary populist in the 1870s, and helped plot the assassination of **Alexander II**, for which she was publicly hanged with four other regicides, including her lover, **Zhelyabov.**

Peter I ('the Great') (1672–1725), Russian Tsar (1682–1721) and first Emperor of Russia (1721–25). After the death of his half-brother and joint-tsar, Ivan, in 1696, Peter became sole ruler and introduced a programme of far-ranging military, administrative, fiscal, cultural and social reforms based on western models and aimed at 'Europeanizing' Russia. All classes of society suffered from the effects of the reforms and the brutality of their implementation. After an inconclusive war with the Ottoman Empire, the majority of his reign was dominated by the Great Northern War against Sweden (1700–21), which ended with Russia's victory and the Treaty of Nystadt. In the same year Russia was declared an empire, and Peter adopted the title of Emperor and was named 'the Great'. Russia was now a major European power with a maritime exit on the Baltic coast, where Peter established his new capital, St Petersburg, in 1703.

Petrashevsky, Michael Vasilevich (1821–66). Radical intellectual and writer, leader of a clandestine discussion circle during the reign of **Nicholas I.** The group's members were particularly interested in the theories of the French socialist thinker, Fourier. In 1849, the group was infiltrated by the police, arrested and several of its participants sentenced to death, though the sentence was commuted to exile in Siberia. Among those convicted was the young writer, Fyodor Dostoyevsky.

Plekhanov, George Valentinovich (1856–1918). Revolutionary Marxist theorist and activist, known as the 'Father of Russian Marxism'. After playing a leading role in the populist revolutionary movement of the 1870s, he emigrated in 1880, renounced his populist beliefs, and turned towards the study and propagation of Marxism. Co-founder with **Lenin** and others of the revolutionary newspaper, *Iskra* ('The Spark'), he later sided with the Mensheviks after the split in the Russian Social Democratic Workers' Party in 1903. He adopted a 'defencist' stand during World War I, opposed the Bolshevik Revolution, believing the Russian economy was insufficiently developed for the introduction of socialism, and finally emigrated to Finland.

Pobedonostsev, Constantine Petrovich (1827–1907). Influential statesman and jurist, tutor to the future emperors **Alexander III** and **Nicholas II**, and Over-Procurator of the Holy Synod (1880–1905). Pobedonostsev was known for his extremely reactionary political and religious views, and was a staunch champion of absolute autocracy and the Orthodox Church. He was opposed to all forms of liberal, progressive or constitutional ideas, and, with his blend of arch-

conservatism, ultra-nationalism and anti-Semitism, heavily influenced the counter-reformist policies of Alexander III.

Pugachev, Emelyan Ivanovich (1742[?]-75). Don Cossack and leader of a massive popular revolt against **Catherine the Great.** Announcing himself as the rightful tsar—the murdered Peter III—Pugachev aroused thousands of Cossack, peasant and non-Russian native supporters in a rebellion, which seriously threatened the stability of the Russian state. He was finally defeated, arrested and executed by quartering in Moscow. The uprising was followed by savage reprisals. In later years, Pugachev became something of a folk-hero and an inspiration for advocates of mass, popular revolution.

Radishchev, Alexander Nikolaevich (1749–1802). Enlightened writer and thinker, author of *A Journey from St Petersburg to Moscow* (1790), in which he provided a trenchant critique of contemporary Russian life, in particular the institutions of autocracy and serfdom. **Catherine the Great** was outraged by his work and had him exiled to Siberia. He was pardoned by her son, Tsar Paul (r. 1796–1801), but after his return to European Russia, Radishchev committed suicide.

Rasputin, Grigory Efimovich (1872[?]-1916). Siberian peasant and self-declared religious elder (starets) and faith-healer, Rasputin became an intimate of Tsar Nicholas II and his wife Alexandra through his apparently miraculous ability to relieve the suffering of their son, Alexis, the haemophiliac heir to the throne. At the same time, Rasputin created a public scandal by his notorious sexual escapades, and by his political influence, which he used to secure government appointments for his cronies. He was murdered by a group of right-wing, monarchist conspirators led by Prince Felix Yusupov, husband of the tsar's niece.

Rodzyanko, Michael Vladimirovich (1859–1924). Politician, landowner, leading figure in the Octobrist Party after 1905, and President of the third and fourth State Dumas. His warnings of the danger to the royal family posed by Rasputin were ignored, and after the collapse of the monarchy in February 1917, he was a member of the Provisional Committee of the State Duma, though never held office in the Provisional Government. He went into emigration and wrote his memoirs entitled *The Reign of Rasputin: An Empire's Collapse* (1927).

Stalin, Joseph Vissarionovich (1878–1953). Born J.V. Dzhugashvili; Georgian Bolshevik and member of the Party's Central Committee; expert on nationality affairs and close follower of Lenin. Did not play a prominent part in the revolutions of 1917, but after his appointment as General Secretary of the All-Russian Communist Party

in 1922, and Lenin's death in 1924, became totalitarian dictator of the Soviet Union.

Stolypin, Peter Arkadeevich (1862–1911). Statesman and politician, President of the Council of Ministers (Prime Minister), 1906–11. Notorious for harsh suppression of peasant unrest (1905–07) and the extensive use of capital punishment by hanging; also the author of a programme of agrarian reforms aimed at encouraging independent peasant farming and voluntary migration to Siberia. Assassinated in Kiev by a socialist revolutionary who was also a police agent.

Tkachev, Peter Nikitich (1844–86). Revolutionary theorist and activist, influential in the populist movement of the 1870s. Editor of the journal *Nabat* ('The Tocsin'), in which he advocated popular revolution organized by a centralized, élite leadership.

Trotsky, Lev Davidovich (1879–1940). Born L. D Bronstein; Marxist revolutionary polemicist and activist, developed the theory of 'permanent revolution'. Joined the Bolshevik Party in July 1917, and became leader of the Military Revolutionary Committee of the Petrograd Soviet, playing a major role in the organization of the October Revolution. Commissar for Foreign Affairs in the first Soviet government, Commissar for War and organizer of the Red Army during the Civil War. His political rivalry with **Stalin** after the death **of Lenin** led to his expulsion from the Soviet Union (1929), and his later assassination in Mexico by one of Stalin's agents.

Ulyanov, Alexander Ilyich (1866–87). **Lenin's** older brother. He was hanged in 1887 for his part in a terrorist plot to assassinate **Alexander III.**

Witte (Count), Sergei Yulevich (1849–1915). Statesman and politician, Minister of Finance (1892–1903), responsible for farreaching programme of economic reform and industrialization, including building of the Trans-Siberian Railway. President of the Council of Ministers (Prime Minister, 1905–06), and author of the October 17th 1905 Manifesto promising political reform and civil liberties.

Yusupov (Prince), **Felix Felixovich** (1887–1967). Wealthy aristocrat, married to the niece of **Nicholas II**; leader of the plot to assassinate **Rasputin** in 1916. Exiled, and died in emigration.

Zaichnevsky, Peter Grigorevich (1842–96). Student revolutionary activist, author of an inflammatory proclamation, *Molodaya Rossiya* ('Young Russia') (1862), calling for the violent overthrow of the regime and the slaughter of all supporters of the 'imperial party'.

Zasulich, Vera Ivanovna (1849–1919). Revolutionary populist in the 1870s; attempted to assassinate the Governor of St Petersburg, General F.F. Trepov, in 1878, for which she was tried and acquitted. In emigration she abandoned her former populist beliefs and in 1883, along with Plekhanov, became a founder of the Russian Marxist revolutionary movement.

Zhelyabov, Andrew Ivanovich (1851–81). Son of a peasant serf family, leading populist revolutionary activist in the 1870s. Member of the Executive Committee of the terrorist Narodnava volva ('People's Will') party, organized the plot to assassinate **Alexander II.** He and his fellow conspirators were publicly hanged (see also Perovskaya).

Zinoviev, Grigory Evseevich (1883–1936). Marxist revolutionary and close associate of Lenin, with whom, however, he disagreed, along with Kamenev, over the staging of an armed insurrection in October 1917. They later settled their differences and Zinoviev became President of the Communist International. After Lenin's death in 1924, he sided with Stalin in opposing Trotsky's possible succession to the leadership. He was later accused by Stalin of counter-revolutionary activities, convicted in a public show trial and executed in 1936.

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