

Western Civ. 2g

The Great Depression

Page 10

The Russian Revolution

Page 15

WORLD WAR I

Today we are going to begin our discussion really of the twentieth century. Historians are firmly convinced that the nineteenth century began in 1815 with the fall of Napoleon and the creation of post-Napoleonic Europe, and that it ended in 1914 with the outbreak of World War I and the end of the political system that had been evolving since 1700.

You might find it a little odd that we are going to talk about the origins of World War I in the topic on the 19th century and then the war itself in the topic of the twentieth century, but that is really not so hard to figure out. The causes of the war were nineteenth-century causes, but the results of the war were definitely 20th-century results. The First World War really created the 20th century. And that is why we are going to spend a good bit of time on it, because it seemed an event in which Western Civilization tried to commit suicide for no apparent reason.

The first thing that we are going to do is get down some facts: the war began in August, 1914 with Germany and Austria on one side (called the Central Powers) and France, Britain, Russia, and Serbia on the other (called the Allies). Other countries joined during the course of the war. In November 1914 the Ottoman Empire joined the Central Powers; in May 1915 Italy joined the Allies; in October 1915 Bulgaria joined the Central Powers; in August 1916 Romania joined the Allies; in April 1917 the United States joined the Allies; and in June 1917 Greece joined the Allies. The war lasted until 1918. Armistice Day, which we still celebrate, was November 11, 1918. That was the day on which the war ended, but the peace treaty was not signed until June 1919.

This war was unlike any before it. What made it so unusual was that it was a war of trenches. By the end of the first year, 1914, a system of opposing trenches stretched from the Channel coast in the Northwest to the Swiss Alps Mountains in the Southeast, a distance of some 400 miles. At the trenches' most sophisticated, it was possible to walk the entire distance between the coast and the Alps without ever going above ground.

Both sides simply dug in and stayed. The principal reason was because this was a time in the technology of warfare when defensive weapons had become vastly—and I mean vastly—superior to offensive weapons. The two great weapons of WWI were artillery and machine guns. You may not know much about either weapon, but they are primarily defensive weapons. That means that one sets them up somewhere and sits and waits — and hopes — that the poor fools on the other side will run at them. Then you shoot them.

In the Second World War, these weapons were put on armored vehicles and on airplanes and so became mobile not static weapons, and then the offense regained its equality with defensive weapons. But in WWI tanks and airplanes were pretty primitive, and so artillery and machine guns were most effective sitting and waiting for someone to attack.

You may be thinking, “Well, nobody is going to be nuts enough either to charge one of these things or order someone else to charge it.” *Au contraire*. Generals did not know what else to do except charge them. And, as the war dragged on and nothing seemed to change, generals became increasingly eager to charge in an effort to break the stalemate that existed between the two sides.

Well, you know what that means — men died. And the deaths are truly amazing. To give you some statistics: France mobilized for war 8.4 million men. 1.4 million were killed, and 4.8 million were wounded or prisoners. So, of all of the men put into the army, 16.2% died and 73.2% were casualties — that means dead, wounded, and missing. Germany mobilized 11 million men; 1.8 million were killed or 16% of those mobilized, and 5.3 million were wounded or missing. So, 65% of the total number of men mobilized were casualties. Austria mobilized 7.8 million, 1.2 million were killed or 15.4% of those mobilized, and 5.8 were wounded or missing, so 90% of those mobilized were killed, wounded, or missing.

The United States had 115,000 killed, almost all in 1918 — we lost 65,000 in Viet Nam. WWII? 9 million men died on the battlefields. As you can guess, these losses had a tremendous impact on post-war politics, society, economy, and, perhaps most important of all, the psychological well-being of western civilization as a whole.

Assassination at Sarajevo

The event that actually triggered the war was the assassination of Archduke Francis Ferdinand of Austria in the city of Sarajevo in Bosnia on June 28, 1914. I used to be able to say to my Western Civilization classes that most of them had never heard of the Archduke, were still not terribly certain why Austria was important, and had never heard of Sarajevo or Bosnia unless they participated in a Geography bee. But since we have today U.S. troops in part of Bosnia, and have had them there for a decade or so, some of you may have heard of it.

Anyway, let’s go through this event and see how it could have possibly led to the outbreak of war between the great powers of Europe. And to begin with, who was the Archduke?

Francis Ferdinand, Archduke of Austria, was the heir to the Austrian throne. The emperor in 1914 was a man named Francis Joseph, who had been emperor since 1848 — think about that. He had been emperor for 66 years, and in 1914 he was 84 years old. There was almost no one in Austria who could remember any other emperor except Francis Joseph. Well, that also meant that probably the old man would not last much longer, and Francis Ferdinand would succeed him.



His Imperial and Royal Highness Archduke Franz Ferdinand of Austria (1863 – June 28, 1914) was an Archduke of Austria and, from 1896 until his death, heir presumptive to the Austro-Hungarian throne. His assassination in Sarajevo precipitated the Austrian declaration of war against Serbia which triggered World War I. He is shown above with his wife, Sophie, and family.

Now, what was Francis Ferdinand doing in Sarajevo? He was on a state visit. Sarajevo was the capital of Bosnia, and Bosnia had been a part of the Habsburg Monarchy since 1878 when it was taken over by Austria with the permission of the Great Powers to calm a revolt there. So, Francis Ferdinand was making a good will visit to his own subjects.

Who shot him? A Serbian nationalist, by our standards, a terrorist, by the name of Gavrilo Princip. Why did he do it? This is the hard part, but not so hard as it used to be. Bosnia, as you all know by now, is made up of three groups of people, one of which is the Serbs. Well, when Austria took over Bosnia in 1878, after the Congress of Berlin, many Serbs believed that Bosnia should not be part of Austria but instead part of Serbia, a land of Serbs just to the East. Princip belonged to a revolutionary group that wanted Bosnia to be part of Serbia, and, to express this wish, wanted to carry out an act of terrorism against the Austrians. That act turned out to be the assassination of the Archduke.

Austrian Reaction

Well, I hope you are saying, that sounds like an internal Austria matter. Who else would care? Arrest the guy, try him, and execute him — or whatever. Well, it was not as simple as that. The events that followed are called the *July Crisis*, and we are going to go through them a little.

For years now Austria had been annoyed with little Serbia, which it regarded as a troublesome country to its south and east. The Austrian government was convinced that the Serbian government was financing and supporting terrorists like Princip and indeed Princip himself. And Austria had been looking for an excuse to send its army into Serbia and just pass out some punishment.

When the Archduke was assassinated, the Austrian government was convinced the Serbian government was behind it and wanted to get in there and punish Serbia. But here was the rub: Serbia had a protector on the international scene, and that protector was Russia. Austria could fight Serbia but it was not sure it could fight Russia.

So, the Austrian government went to its own friend and ally, Germany, and said, “Will you support us if we attack Serbia and Russia threatens to get us?” The German officials replied that, not only would they back Austria up in this matter, but they encouraged Austria to attack Serbia. The Germans told the Austrians that their status as a great power was at stake — if they did not do something, they would have no honor left.

So, Austria on July 28, 1914, one month to the day after the assassination, attacked Serbia. Russia warned Austria to back away, Austria did not, Russia mobilized its forces, and asked its good ally France to prepare for war. Germany told Russia that, if it kept its forces mobilized it would have to declare war. Russia kept its forces mobilized, so Germany declared war. But, since Russia was an ally of France, Germany had war plans to attack France first and then fight Russia, so it began the war by marching not on Russia but

on France. But to get to France, according to its war plans, it had to march through Belgium. And Belgium was protected by Britain. So, when the German army marched through Belgium to attack France, Britain declared war on Germany.

And presto, we have WWI. From the get-go, Germany and Austria were at war with France, Russia, Britain, and Serbia. And we are off and running. All because some crazy Serb nationalist shot some unknown Austrian archduke in some forgettable town in the Balkans.

Underlying Contributing Factors

Well, you should all be saying, there is clearly more to this than just shooting some political figure, and you are absolutely right. In fact, the origins of WWI had been one of the great historical debates for some time.

In 1929 an American historian named Sidney Fay put the origins in perspective. He argued that the assassination of the Archduke and the ensuing crisis was just the trigger for the war, but what created the conditions for it were really five, what he called, underlying causes, and we are going to go through them fast because I think they may be important.

First was Nationalism, and we do not have to talk about that very much. This pride in nation with its Social Darwinism which encouraged people to think of war as a test of a nation’s survivability rather than a catastrophe to be avoided.

Second was imperialism, what we talked about a few days ago. Imperialism stoked those rivalries among the great powers and encouraged confrontation and conflict.

Third was militarism. This is a little harder to understand but not that bad. All of the European powers, except Britain, which was an island, were convinced that they had to have the largest armies that their budgets could afford. The Franco-Prussian War, the last great European war before WWI, had shown that big armies that move rapidly are the key to military success. So, all of the European powers had compulsory military service, and they all had big armies. And so military values made their way into civilian society. And not only that, but Britain and Germany were engaged in a terrific naval arms race that only added to the tension between those two powers.

Fourth is the easy one, because you have seen how it worked, and that was the system of alliances that bound up Europe. Because of the big army idea, the European powers believed that their armies were just not big enough and could never be big enough to take on the countries they

thought were their enemies. So, they had to find allies so they could, in case of war, combine their armies against a common enemy. So, Germany and Austria joined, as did France and Russia. And then there were little countries — Russia and Serbia, Britain and Belgium. But this system was so tight and so brittle, that one little event in a God forsaken part of Europe — like Sarajevo — could trigger the whole system.

And Fay's final long-range cause — yellow journalism. Newspapers would fan the flames of conflict so they could sell more newspapers. Hard to believe, isn't it? But, there you are.

The War Begins

By the summer of 1914, the general staffs of every country in Europe had been devising plans for a European war. Every nation except Britain had universal conscription, and so every European nation on the continent possessed an enormous potential army, and were prepared to use it. The difficulty was mobilization — that is the calling up and training of troops — which would be difficult and slow. But Europeans believed that the nation that mobilized first would win any war. Russia recognized that had only a primitive industrial base, and would therefore mobilize very slowly. For that reason the Russians began to mobilize their military immediately after declaring war. This rapid mobilization frightened the Germans who decided as a result, to declare war on Russia and prepare to implement the Schlieffen Plan. The Schlieffen Plan was Germany's war contingency plan, and it worked like this:

The Germans assumed that if war came it would probably be either against Russia or France. If either nation went to war with Germany, the other would be obligated by treaty to also attack Germany. The Germans knew that it would be extremely difficult to fight a two-front war against both France and Russia. They also knew that Russia would have difficulty mobilizing quickly. So, the Schlieffen Plan called for Germany to attack France very quickly, defeat France, and then reverse direction and attack Russia.

The success of the Plan depended on speed. Germans would need to make a lightning strike to defeat France before it could mobilize completely. There could be no delays or setbacks. The Germans had to make a beeline for Paris, attacking the French border at its weakest point, on the Belgian border. Belgium was a neutral nation, but the Germans believed that if enough diplomatic pressure were brought to bear, Belgium would allow the German military to travel through Belgium to get to France. Here the Germans miscalculated badly. The Belgians refused. But, the Plan was in place, so Germany invaded Belgium anyway. On the 2-3 of

August, Germans rolled through Belgium, thus challenging the nations that had sworn to protect Belgian neutrality.

The big question at this point was what will the British do? Britain had no real formal military commitment to Belgium, so the Germans hoped that the British would stay out of the war. But the combination of the new relationship between Britain and France, and the blatant "In-your-face" nature of the German invasion of Belgium tipped the scales. On August 4th, 1914, Great Britain declared war on Germany. So, within six weeks of a minor incident in the Balkans, Europe has the first general war in a century. The only major power not involved in 1914 was Italy, which was still living up to its obligations created by the triple alliance with Germany and Austria. But the Italians were offended because Italy had not been consulted by either Germany or Austria. As a result Italy would soon enter the war on the side of allies, that is Britain and France. Over the next few months Europe squared off. The two sides in the war would be the Allies—Britain, France, Russia and Serbia; and the Central Powers—Germany, Austria, the Bulgarians and the Turks.

What had happened was a classic case of "war by timetable." Once plans were put into action by the various nations involved, other nations reacted automatically where good sense might have dictated a safer course of action. The Schlieffen Plan as much as anything made war inevitable once the first move was made. France had never really been involved in the July crisis in the Balkans, but the German plan made war between Germany and France inevitable if Russia made any move. And since Russia was obligated to protect Serbia, Russia would have to respond to Austria's hostilities. The German timetable for the invasion of France, and Belgian resistance, guaranteed that the rest of Europe would be willing to turn a blind eye to a German invasion of neutral Belgium. So, a war that began as an attempt by Austria to teach Serbia that it's not nice to assassinate princes would soon become European in scope.

An Enthusiastic Reception

By and large, the reaction to the war was enthusiastic. Austria was eager to crush nationalism in the most nationalistic region of the multinational Habsburg Empire. The Germans were always excited about achieving military glory. France wanted a chance to pay Germany back for the humiliating defeat that she had received in 1870, and to regain the Alsace-Lorraine from Germany, and, of course, longed for military glory. In fact, many people throughout Europe shared an enthusiastic attitude toward the war. It was seen as a new beginning for Europe. Part of the problem was that everyone was deluded about the coming

hostilities. Everyone expected it to be a very short war — six months at the most. Each nation expected a quick victory. Recent wars in the late 19th century had been quick and decisive, and the victors had achieved strategic gains from war that outstripped the cost of the hostilities, so why should this one be any different? The Germans looked forward to “a fresh and joyous war” that would clear the air and wash away tensions between the great states of Europe.

As is often the case, the war pulled the populations of various states together. It caused nationalist excitement and enthusiasm. This was important because communists, in keeping with the call of Karl Marx in the Communist Manifesto, had been able to forge the beginnings of a “brotherhood of workers” throughout Europe to make common cause against capitalists. By 1914, there existed a nascent sense of unity between European workers that threatened nationalism, capitalism, and order. In the wake of the war, this movement collapsed. Workers and industrialists in every country put aside their differences to support their nation’s war efforts. Throughout Europe, workers came out in support of the war and their country. Even in Britain, where there was no draft, workers eagerly worked on war production, or flocked in huge numbers to join the military and get their chance to fight for king and country. In fact, so many Britains joined in the first weeks of the war that British industry couldn’t keep up. There was a shortage of uniforms, weapons, and provisions.

Another reason that everyone expected a short war was that most people agreed that a long war in the age of modern industry could only be sustained for a few months before the costs would wreck a nation’s economy. The Germans recognized this when they created the timetable for the Schlieffen Plan. They anticipated that it would take only 42 days to defeat the French, and then they could turn their attention to the Russians. It didn’t happen that way.

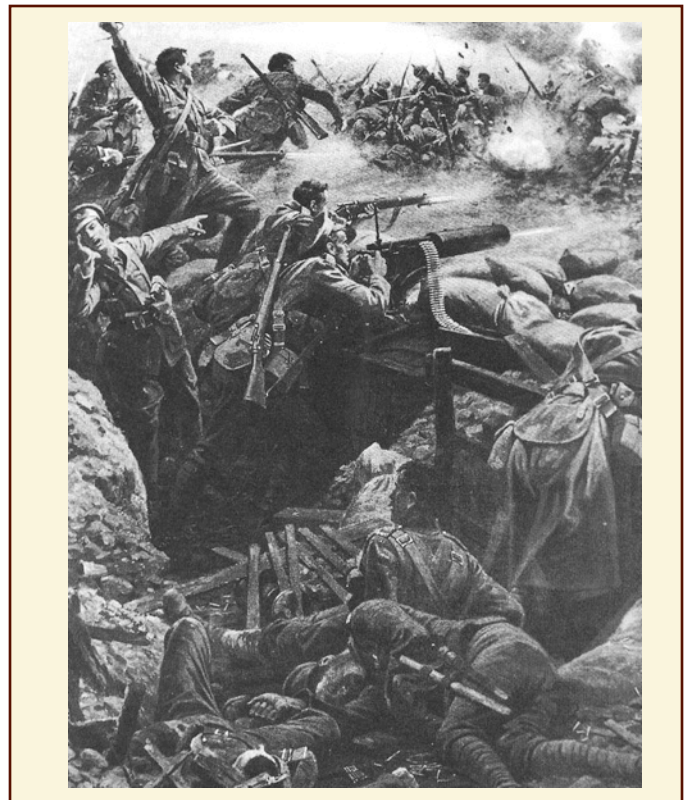
the Guns of August

In August, the Germans swept into France, proceeded by a wave of Belgian refugees. The French committed a huge blunder at this point. They also had contingency plans in case of war. They implemented what they called Plan XVII. This plan called for the French to send a large expedition to retake the Alsace-Lorraine region from the Germans. The French obsession nearly lost them the war. It drew needed troops and resources away from the German invasion. Pressed by a rapid German advance, the French line in the north nearly collapsed. By early September, the Germans were within 30 miles of Paris; but then, the German advance came to an abrupt halt. This was not because of French resistance. It was because the German

invasion had been so successful that they had outrun their own supply lines. In their enthusiasm, the Germans had spread themselves so thin that they would be unable to break through the Allies’ first counteroffensive — called the First Battle of the Marne. Battle lines stabilized along a line in northern France, and there the two sides stayed as days turned into weeks, weeks turned into months, and months to years. In fact, over the next 4 years the lines would not move more than 10 miles in any direction. Begun as a mobile war by the Germans in August and September of 1914, by winter the Western Front was at a standstill.

The War Goes On

Troops dug trenches across the battle lines that were heavily fortified and densely manned, and easily defended. They were impossible to take. From these trenches both sides hurled themselves across battlefields strewn with mines and barbed wire at the entrenched enemy. They advanced through exploding artillery shells, and small arms and machine gun fire. Tens of thousands of lives were lost in futile attempts to gain a few meters of ground. The conditions were horrific in the trenches. Soldiers lived, slept, ate in a hell of mud and blood all day, every day. The only thing that was worse than life in the trenches was the short run and sudden death that soldiers achieved when they went “over the top” to assault a dug in and well prepared enemy.



By Christmas of 1914, both sides realized that the war would be neither short nor glorious. But neither side was willing to talk peace. Both sides deluded themselves that they were in the right, and that the tide of war would soon turn, and that their side would eventually win a decisive and glorious victory. The war in the East was a different critter. It was more mobile, and the Central Powers felt that they were more successful there, but I'll let you look at the Eastern Front in your book because I don't have a lot of time, and because, ultimately, the West is where the war would be concluded.

Spring, 1915

In the West, by the spring of 1915 the war had come to a standstill. But the assaults continued and thousands died. Both sides began to use poison gas. This made the casualty count even higher. The gas was terrible, and also chancy. A random change in wind direction could send gas back into the trenches of the side that had released it. The war casualties mounted. In one battle the French lost 400,000 men to gain 3 miles. 1915 is frequently dismissed as a year of stalemate. This is true on the battlefield, but some things did happen that would effect the overall war.

In February of 1915 the Germans announced that they would blockade Britain with submarines. On May 7th, a German sub sank the Lusitania, a passenger liner (loaded with munitions that exploded), killing 1198 passengers, of which 139 were Americans. The U.S. was outraged, the Germans promised not to sink any more passenger ships without warning and that they would make some provisions for the safety of civilian passengers. They held to their promise for nearly 2 years. This kept the U.S. from taking an active part in the war, although she still gave secret aid to the Allies.

May-June: The Germans and Austrians launched a joint offensive in the East. By now the Russian army was in chaos, suffering from a lack of munitions, weapons, food. During the summer the Russians fell back nearly 300 miles. They lost Poland, Lithuania. Russian casualties amounted to some 1 million dead and another half-million captured. The Russian defeat strengthened opposition to the war in Russia, and provided the beginning stimulus to the Russian Revolution.

May 23rd, Italy entered the war. Remember that Italy was stuck in a treaty alliance with Germany and Austria, but Italy refused to enter the war at first. The British and French negotiated with the Italians, promising to supply them and give Italy some disputed areas of the Austrian Empire. So the Italians declared war on Austria. Italy had little success in her war with Austria, but she served as an

irritant and tied down a fair portion of the Austrian army that could have been put to use elsewhere.

During the summer of 1915, the Allies tried to expand the war into other areas of the globe. The war spread to the African colonies, and into the Middle East. Britain had already tried an offensive against the Turks in February with the invasion of Gallipoli. While the British stayed comfortably off shore, troops of Australia and New Zealand were landed and died. This was a disaster for the ANZACs (Australia New Zealand Army Corps). In a series of brutal and bloody assaults on Turkish positions, the ANZAC troops were killed by the thousands.

Both the Allies and the Central Powers decided that the only way to win the war was to punch through the German lines on the Western Front. So, their strategy for the next year would be very aggressive.



The War in 1916 & 1917

In February, 1916, the Germans launched an attack against the French at Verdun. The assault was supposed to be an offensive that would break the French lines and bring a glorious German victory. Instead, the German advance petered out and turned into yet another stalemate. The Germans lost 350,000 men at Verdun.

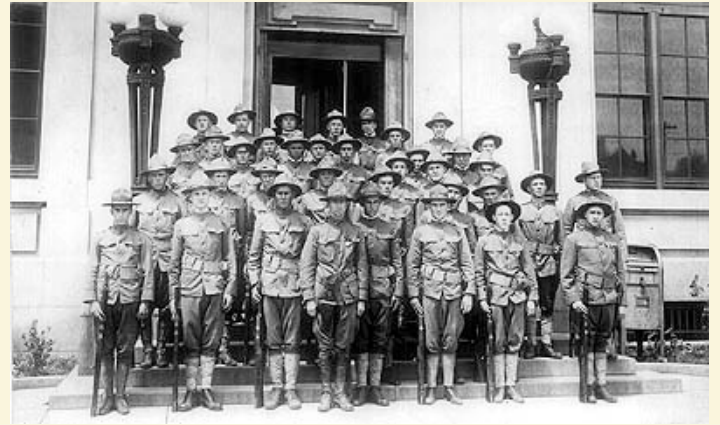
The British decided to launch an offensive of their own in June 1916. The British High command was convinced that if they threw an enormous force at the German line it would crumble. In June 1916, the Allies launched an offensive called the Battle of the Somme. They started with a terrific bombardment — some 2 million shells were fired at German defenses. Then they attacked the German lines. The Germans knew exactly when the troops were coming. On the First of July, Day 1 of the attack, the British lost 60,000 men, the Germans 8,000. For the next 5 months, the British launched attack after attack against the German trenches. The total body count was British - 600,000 to Germans - 650,000. The British gained 8 miles for a total body count of 1,250,000 dead or wounded — 21/2 men per inch. Then the Western Front returned to a standstill.

In 1917 several factors tipped the scales against the Central powers:

In 1917, Russia experienced two revolutions, the first deposed the Czar and created a republic. The second brought in the Communist Bolsheviks. Early in 1918, communist Russia signed a peace treaty with Germany withdrawing from the war — the Treaty of Brest-Litovsk. A year earlier this would have strengthened the Germans, but by early 1918, the Germans faced a far worse enemy in the West.

In Feb. 1917, the Germans had resumed unrestricted submarine warfare. Any ship heading for Britain was fair game. Germany also tried to take direct action against the U.S. by entering secret negotiations with Mexico. Germany urged Mexico to enter the war as a Central Power if the U.S. would not recognize New Mexico and Arizona as Mexican territory. A telegram from German Foreign Minister Zimmerman was intercepted by the British, who passed it to the U.S. State Dept. Americans were outraged and called for immediate war.

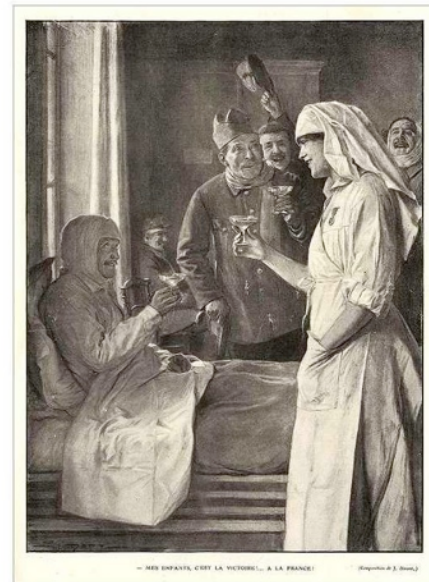
In April the U.S. declared war on Germany, and by the summer, 600,000 U.S. troops had begun to arrive on the Western Front. By August, the Americans had pushed the Germans back to the “Siegfried Line” — essentially the German border. In the fall Germany’s allies began to surrender.



U.S. troops began to arrive in Europe in April, 1917. They would turn the tide of the war.

Armistice

In the fall of 1918, the German Commander-in-Chief, Paul von Hindenburg had wrested control of the government from the Kaiser. In November the German royals fled Germany, and the new German Republic asked for peace negotiations. The allies would accept no terms, only unconditional surrender. An Armistice was arranged for 11:11 am, Nov. 11, 1918. This marks the end of the war. Many in Germany were angry and frustrated. Germany had not been invaded, and, despite bad times, some Germans felt that they could have won the war. Many felt that they had been betrayed by the politicians. And under these circumstances, the “War to end all wars” came to an end.



The Treaty of Versailles

In January, 1919, the Major powers (Britain, France, Italy and the U.S.) met at Versailles, the magnificent palace of Louis XIV, to prepare a peace settlement. Europe had been devastated, and the Allies wanted only one thing — REVENGE! France and Britain refused to take any responsibility for the war. Selfishness reigned supreme at Versailles. The results of the treaty played a major role in causing the next great war.

The U.S. didn't share in the general mood of their European allies. President Woodrow Wilson, the U.S. representative at Versailles, opposed the greed of the Europeans. Wilson, an idealist, believed that he could prevent further European wars by imposing American values and the American view of government on the Europeans. Wilson published a peace plan before the end of the war called the 14 Points, which he believed would end wars in Europe. The plan called for arms reductions, banned secret treaties, promoted "national determination," and provided for an international body to settle disputes — the League of Nations. The British and French had very different ideas.

German delegates came to Paris hoping to take part in peace negotiations. They were confined to their hotel which was surrounded by guards and barbed wire. When the treaty was finished by the Allies, the German diplomats were simply told to sign it, or face an allied invasion of Germany. The treaty blamed Germany completely for the war and made her financially obligated to foot the entire cost of it. Most of her colonies were taken over by France or Britain. Germany lost the Alsace-Lorraine to France. The German army was reduced to a maximum of 100,000 men, no armor, no artillery; her navy was cut back to 6 ships, and even her fishing fleet was reduced by 25%. The Allies would occupy the Rhineland for 15 years, and after that the Germans would be forbidden from placing any troops there.

Results of the Treaty

A couple of good things came out of the peace. The nation of Poland was created. The League of Nations was established, but Germany was not allowed to join, and the U.S. didn't join, so the League was never effective.

The primary effects of the Treaty of Versailles were not foreseen, although, had the victors been a little less greedy,

they might have stopped to think about their treatment of Germany.

The peace left the Germans bitter and resentful. Germany was strapped with all of the guilt for the war, although there was plenty to go around. After all, Britain and France might have at least have tried to make peace before they did, and certainly shared some of the guilt. But the treaty placed all of it on Germany.

The severity of the financial penalties imposed on Germany by the Allies were far out of proportion to the reality. Germany probably should have paid some reparations, but the treaty imposed no limit on the amount that Germany would have to pay. Theoretically, a Germany weakened by the military restrictions of the treaty could have been made to pay forever. This provided plenty of ammunition for the Nazi propaganda in the 1930s.

The destruction of Austria-Hungary left a power vacuum in Central Europe. So, in the 1930's and 40's, the area would fall swiftly to the Germans, and after World War II, to the Soviet Russians.

Ultimately the Treaty cast a pall over Europe in the 20's and 30's. The League of Nations provided no solutions. Germany's open ended debt made it necessary for Germany to print vast sums of Marks to pay it off. This led to runaway inflation. Consider the price of a loaf of bread in Germany: In 1918 it cost 63 pfennigs; in January, 1923, the same loaf cost 250 million Marks; by September, 1923, it cost 1.5 trillion Marks. By 1923, German money was worthless. Housewives used wheelbarrows to carry money to the shops to buy necessities. People on fixed pensions starved. The Germans could not pay reparations anymore, so they defaulted.



The French and British were furious. They had envisioned Germany as a giant cash cow that would float their economies for years to come. When Germany went belly up, it just about bankrupted France. In revenge, the French occupied the mineral rich Ruhr Valley in 1923. The French announced that if the Germans would not pay, France would simply take! Both France and Britain owed money to the U.S. which they announced they would not pay until the Germans paid their reparations. So hurting Germany had a profoundly negative effect on the world economy. Between 1924 and 1932 several attempts were made to alleviate economic problems, but they had little effect.

Finally, the humiliation that Germany underwent as a result of the treaty would provide a minor politician and thug named Adolf Hitler a pre-made set of stock talking points that would spring him into power in Germany in the late 1920s.



The Great Depression

Last time I finished by pointing out that by 1929 Germany was making pretty good strides in returning to normal after its post-war troubles. The same was true of the rest of the western world. After the war ended there was considerable economic upheaval as men returned to civilian life and factories had to re-tool for peacetime markets.

That took some time, but from 1925 to 1929 things looked like they were going to be okay. After all, a number of industries had made considerable progress during the war and were well-suited for the peacetime market as well — automobiles and all of the necessary side industries like oil production, gasoline stations, and auto repair places, radios, moving pictures, refrigerators, a new product developed during WWI.

But in 1929 it all began to unravel into what is called the Great Depression. While the most famous part of the Depression is the stock market crash of October, 1929, the underlying cause of the Depression rested in agriculture.

The agricultural problems grew out of the First World War. As you know so well, in all of the countries involved in the War, farmers were drafted like everyone else, but not only farmers — farm animals were drafted too, horses and even oxen for pulling weapons. In countries like Germany, France, and Britain, women, children, and old people had to do the farming with whatever animals were left to pull the plows.

But, as you also know, Britain and France had access to the huge agricultural production capacity of Canada and the United States. The demand for food was enormous during WWI and that meant that prices for agricultural products were high. So, American and Canadian farmers not only grew all that they could on their own land but they borrowed money to buy machinery and rent even more land so that they could grow even more food — and take advantage of those high prices.

But then the War came to an end. European farmers who survived returned home, the best farm animals were now used to plow fields rather than haul artillery, and by the early 1920s European agricultural production was reaching its pre-war numbers. But the American and Canadian farmers did not want to and really could not cut back on their production. They had borrowed a lot of money to invest in the expansion of their operations, and they had to keep production high so that they could pay off those loans. As prices fell because now there was too much food on the market, they tried to grow more and more to prevent themselves from going under.

Prices fell even more, production went up even more, and by the late 1920s, farmers were simply going bankrupt. But in these days there was no national support system for farmers or for banks — no FDIC, no farm relief, no nothing. So, when farmers could not pay their loans, banks could not get capital, and they went under too. And those banks got their capital from bigger banks, which of course now could not get payment on that capital either. So, the financial structure of the United States weakened.

The Industrial Economy

Whereas this weakness in the agricultural sector of the economy existed throughout the 1920s, it was masked by decent job growth elsewhere and an American stock market that was doing quite well. But then in 1929 the stock market began to weaken.

Stock market speculation was a new thing for American small investors in the 1920s. Before about 1920, small investors who has capital to invest had put their money into real estate. Before World War I the big thing had been land investment in Florida. But a series of devastating hurricanes in the early 1920s left Americans unwilling to sink (get it!) any more money into land in Florida. At that point folks began to invest in the stock market instead.

A main reason was speculation in stock pricing. What that means is to some degree what economists talk about today. The stock market rose in the 1920s because people were bidding against each other for stock without taking a good look at whether or not the companies whose stock they were buying were really worth it.

And some people were greatly attracted by the possibility of large profits, and so they began to borrow money to buy stocks. Now, once again do not forget that in those days there was no regulation of the stock market — no Securities and Exchange Commission to make sure that speculation was kept firmly under control.

On Thursday, October 24, 1929, the bottom began to fall out. With the opening of the New York Stock Exchange that morning, the market began to show weakness. Prices dropped precipitously as more and more investors tried to sell their holdings. By the end of the day, the New York Stock Exchange had lost four billion dollars, and it took exchange clerks until five o'clock AM the next day to clear all the transactions. By the following Monday, the realization of what had

happened began to sink in, and a full-blown panic ensued. Thousands of investors — many of them ordinary working people, not serious "players" — were financially ruined. By the end of the year, stock values had dropped by fifteen billion dollars.

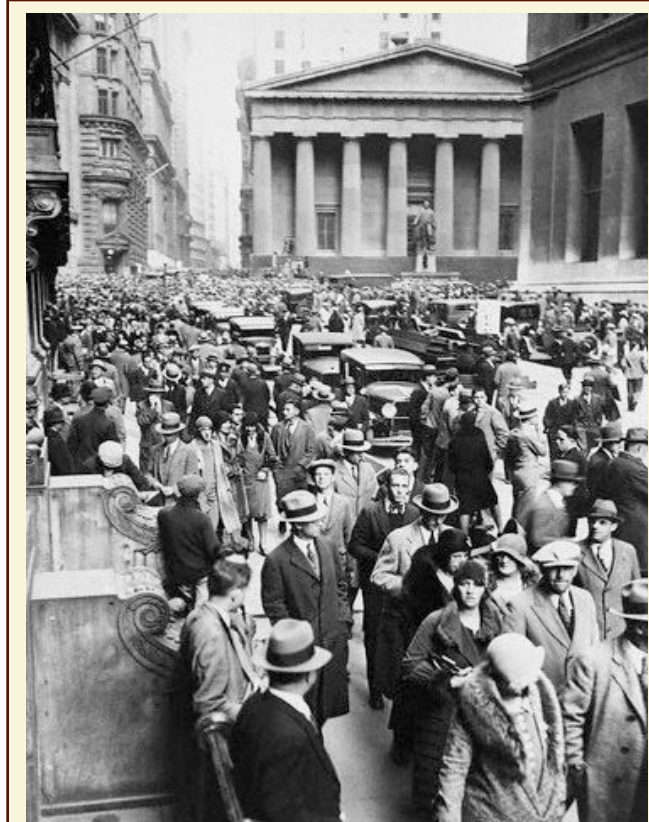
People who had borrowed money to invest were really happy with the stock market until early 1929, when the market began to weaken seriously. Then in October the market plummeted; in fact, the market fell 40% just in the month of October. So, people who borrowed money to invest were now in deep trouble, but so were the banks which had loaned the money.

Add all of this together. Farmers could not pay back their loans to their banks, which could not pay their loans to

bigger banks; investors could not pay their loans to banks, which could not pay their loans to holding companies. Between 1929 and 1932 five thousand American banks closed up shop.

Feedback Loop

There is no Federal Deposit Insurance Corporation at this time, so people who had their money in banks simply lost it. They would go down to the bank in the morning to take out some money for living expenses, and the doors were locked.



Folks milling about Wall Street on the afternoon of October 24, 1929, after the greatest stock market crash in the history of the New York Stock Exchange.

Their money was simply gone. Imagine yourselves going to your ATM machine, putting in your card, and receiving a piece of paper which says, “Sorry, the bank is closed until further notice.” And that means your money is simply gone. How are you going to pay for food? clothes? school? And imagine that being the case of about 1/4 of the banks that serve the campus. Well, you would probably just go home. Imagine that, when you got home, you learned your parents’ bank, which may be the same one as yours, has closed as well. Then think of what would happen here. Let’s say 25% of the students went home because there was no money. We would have to lay off 25% of the staff and faculty, 25% of the businesses around campus would close, laying off workers, and all of that would take additional money out of the economy. That sort of thing happened all over the country from 1929 on.

In Europe

And it rapidly spread to Europe. As I mentioned earlier, Europe was enjoying a decent recovery by 1929, but most of it was financed by American capital, because only America in 1929 had a lot of money to invest. But imagine what happened now. Stocks collapsed, and companies and banks had to scramble to create liquid capital to pay their own creditors. One quick way to do it was to sell any holdings they had in Europe and bring that money home. Well, that pulled the rug completely out from under the European economy.

And the effect was the same in Europe as it was in the United States. Companies could no longer afford to pay all of their workers, so they laid workers off. That took those workers out of the economy — they had no money to spend — so that means that demand for products went down. And, as demand for products went down, there were fewer orders for goods, which meant companies laid off more people because orders were falling. Since most companies were shedding workers, those people could not find jobs, so they stopped buying.

And that meant fewer taxes were collected, which meant that governments had to lay off people too. They laid off civil servants, maintenance people, school teachers, and, horror or horrors, university professors. But those people could not find jobs either, so they dropped out of the economy and stopped buying.

All of this had what we in the North call a snowball effect. As the economy went downhill, the collapse picked up speed and became increasingly widespread. Now is the time for statistics. These are unemployment rates by country by year:

	USA	Britain	Germany	Netherlands
1930	7.80%	14.60%	15.30%	9.70%
1931	16.3	21.5	23.3	18.1
1932	24.9	22.5	30.1	29.5
1933	25.1	21.3	26.3	31
1934	20.2	17.7	14.9	32.1
1935	18.4	16.4	11.6	36.3
1936	14.5	14.3	8.3	36.3
1937	12	11.3	4.6	29.2
1938	18.8	13.3	2.1	27.2
1939	16.7	11.7	0	21.8

National Policies

Each country tried to become as self-sufficient as possible. The goal was to provide economic assistance to its people, and, the way to do it, many thought, was to make certain that people bought goods only grown or manufactured in their own countries. So, countries put up trade barriers, high tariffs, and tried to control trade. In other words, just as in World War I, governments abandoned ideas of free trade and tried to control the economy as much as they could to try to make certain it served the public interest. This is the time of banking laws, insurance laws, stock market laws, the creation of things like FDIC and SEC and other regulatory agencies that we still have.

Countries instituted public works projects, which meant state-supported ways to put people back to work. One country that did a lot of it was the United States. Under the leadership of President Franklin Roosevelt, congress created the Works Projects Administration or WPA, which built public buildings all over the country, including a number on this campus. The WPA also supported artists of various kinds, collecting folk stories, doing interviews, decorating the new public buildings; in fact, a good example of WPA art are the murals in Allen Hall. They were actually painted by LSU students, but they reflect the kind of art that was common in the 1930s. A second example of public jobs was the Civilian Conservation Corps, or CCC, which undertook a number of projects that would improve or preserve the natural environment. A good example nearby of CCC projects was in the Felicianas where there were broad expanses of land abandoned since the boll weevil did damage to the cotton fields. The CCC did extensive planting of trees and created a truly wonderful natural environment there. A third example was the Tennessee Valley Authority or TVA, which still exists. It controlled through the construction of a number of dams the flood-prone Tennessee River and created a huge generation of electric power. But the main purpose of the TVA was to provide people with jobs.

And governments believed that even people who could not work needed some help, not only so that they would not starve but also because giving them a little money would pump more money into circulation. The best example that we know about is Social Security, which is a Depression-era innovation and which is the topic of much discussion today.

Hitler's "New Deal"

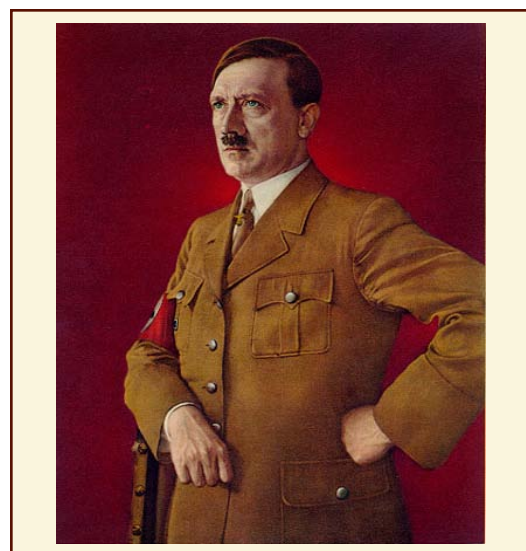
The United States might offer a good example of public works to put people back to work, but no country invested more in public works than Germany under Adolf Hitler. Just look at those unemployment figures. Much of Hitler's popularity was due to his providing jobs. Many of those jobs



were in his rearmament efforts, but a lot were not as well. Tell the Austrian story.

In fact, probably more than anything else, the Depression helped Hitler come to power. And he was not alone. Throughout the new democracies there was a feeling that perhaps democracy was not the kind of government that could deal with a crisis like the Great Depression. What was needed instead was strong leadership, and, if that new leadership decided to junk the democratic constitution in order to save the country, that seemed okay.

Every country east of the Rhine River had become a democracy by 1920. By 1938, the only country east of the Rhine that still had a democracy was Czechoslovakia; every other country had fallen to some kind of dictatorship. And it was the Depression that brought that about.



Long-Term Affects

One last thing about the depression, and that was the psychological impact it had on a lot of people. Many people were out of work for years. People lost much of what they owned. And the reactions were many and varied. Some became fearful for the rest of their lives. And others sought someone to blame. As you can probably guess, there was a real upsurge everywhere, not just in Germany, of anti-Semitism. Many people associated Jews with the financial world, and consequently many blamed the Depression on the Jews. It reached its most extreme form, as you know, in Germany, but it was widespread in a lot of places, and the United States was certainly not immune.

A poster for the July 1932 German parliamentary election. Here the Nazis are making the argument that their party will put Germany back to work. The caption says: "The workers have awakened!" Various other parties are trying to persuade the worker to side with them, without success. The small chap in the center with the red hat represents the Marxists (note the Jew whispering in his ear). His piece of paper says: "Nazi barons! Emergency decrees. Lies and slanders. The big-wigs are living high on the hog, the



Work and Food," this poster (left) says. It was used for the November 1932 Reichstag election. The Nazis viewed this as one of their most effective posters.

The Russian Revolution



One of the most earth shattering events of the 20th century is the triumph of Communism in Russia. The Revolution of 1917 instituted a dictatorial regime that endured 70 years and more. It set the stage for the great ideological conflict that dominated the second half of the 20th century, and the decades of “Cold War” between the East and West.

I have not actually spoken about Russia during this course. One reason that we don't deal much with Russia is because Russia doesn't really share in the great movements of the 19th century. For the most part Russia does little in the way of industrialization. It has no classical liberal reforms. Its involvement with the West is primarily defensive, that is it enters the story of the Western world only on those occasions when it must. When it was invaded by Napoleon, for instance, or when it was drawn into World War I. The story of most of Russia's history is the story of its tsars. Even into the early 20th century Russia was the most absolutist monarchy in Europe.

For most of Europe's history during the period we have studied in this course, Russia was pretty much a throwback to the Middle Ages. Feudalism was a way of life; the tsar was seen as the unifier of all Russia. The Russian people retained their love and loyalty for the czar – their “Little Father.” Most Russian homes– even the poorest – sported a picture of the tsar hanging near an icon of the Blessed Mother or Glorified Christ. But, this attitude began to change in the first years of the 20th century.

In 1894 Nicholas II (1894-1917) became the Tsar of Russia. Nicholas was a committed absolutist. He believed that absolutism was the will of God and was for the good of his people. Nicholas was a very pious Orthodox Christian, and he believed that his life and rule was in God's hands. He was also somewhat like Louis XVI of France — he was not intelligent or imaginative, and he tended to be weak willed. This was not a good combination. He was committed to absolutism but too weak-willed to practice it.



An icon of the Romanov royal family. Nicholas II, Empress Alexandra, his daughters and son and heir Alexis.

Nicholas fell under the domination of his Tsarina, a German princess whom he had married for love. Alexandra dominated their marriage, and despite her lack of talent, insisted on involving herself in governmental affairs. Nicholas was foolish enough to follow her advice, which was sometimes downright wacky.

Russia under Tsar Nicholas II went well up to the first decade of the 20th century, and then things started to fall apart. The catalyst for this was a war. In 1904, Russian activity in the Pacific Ocean off of Asia brought about a war with Japan. At the time both nations were competing for territory in the Pacific. Japan launched a surprise attack on the Russian Pacific fleet in Port Arthur, beginning the Russian-Japanese War — a war Russia was completely unprepared to fight. Russia suffered defeat after defeat, including the sinking of practically the entire Russian fleet in May, 1904.

However, Russia continued to pour resources into the war, and this caused hardships at home. It also increased revolutionary agitation. Increased liberal activism in Russia in the late 19th century had already been eroding support for the Tsars, and the military defeat in the East further eroded Nicholas's position. This unrest culminated on 9 January 1905 – Bloody Sunday.

A massive march in St. Petersburg was organized by workers but included many peasants who still revered the Tsar

as the “Little Father.” They did not blame the Tsar for their hardships. Instead, they blamed his advisors. The marchers thought that they were taking their grievances directly to Nicholas, and they thought that he'd make it all better. The crowd was largely unarmed. Ironically, the Tsar was not at their destination – the Winter Palace. When the crowd converged on the Winter Palace, troops stationed there panicked and fired on the crowd, killing many, including women and children. The event radicalized the crowd, including the peasants. Bloody Sunday was an event that went a long way toward breaking the traditional loyalty of the Russian common people to the Tsar.

Nicholas was horrified to learn what happened. He set up a commission to investigate the event, but it accomplished nothing. Russia's common people saw inaction as indifference. Through 1905, there were increased workers' strikes and violence, including the assassination of Nicholas' uncle.

Finally, on 30 October, Nicholas was forced to make concessions under the threat of further violence – October Manifesto. The October Manifesto provided for the establishment of a legislative body called the Duma. The Duma could pass laws and not just recommend them to the Tsar.

Bloody Sunday

On January 9, 1905, Russian troops attacked demonstrators near the Winter Palace in St. Petersburg. Some 1,000 demonstrators were killed.



In essence, the Tsarist regime became a constitutional monarchy. This calmed the immediate crisis but split the opposition. More moderate liberals were satisfied, but the radicals were not. The leader of the Russian radicals, Vladimir Ilyich Ulyanov, who called himself Nikolai Lenin, and his Marxists followers, instigated a flare-up in Moscow that left 1,000 dead. Lenin ended up having to flee Russia. He took refuge in Switzerland. In the safety of Switzerland, and on the payroll of the German government, Lenin sipped tea and talked radical politics with other Russian refugees, waiting for an opportunity to return to Russia.

Aside from the radicals, the majority of Russians were willing to accept Nicholas's concessions. The Duma was considered a step in the right direction. Nicholas seems to have acted in good faith. He appointed a new prime minister for Russia — Peter Stolypin. Stolypin instituted a land reform program to help alleviate the huge debt of the serfs who had been freed almost a half century earlier. This created a new class of farmers known as kulaks. The more productive farmers were rewarded with land purchased by the state from incompetent and unproductive farmers. The peasants who lost their land were compensated with cash, but they had to spend the money to live. Many of the unproductive farmers who lost their land moved to the cities where they became part of the urban poor, which was always a potential source for revolution. The peasants who received the land became rather wealthy.

Stolypin, with Nicholas's blessing, worked hard for the good of Russia, but reforms needed time and peace. He received neither. Radicals continued their agitation. From 1906-1907, there were nearly 4,000 terrorist murders. In 1911, Stolypin himself was assassinated by radicals.

Gregory Rasputin

During the same period, ca.1910, one of the strangest characters in history, Gregory Rasputin, emerged. He claimed to be a Russian Orthodox monk, but the Russian

Orthodox Church does not claim him. Rasputin was a thoroughly unsavory character. He was tall and heavy, a bull of a man. He had a bushy beard and rarely washed. He had a magnetic personality. For some reason, despite his lack of personal hygiene, he was irresistible to women. He also had a growing reputation as a healer. The last is most significant to our story.

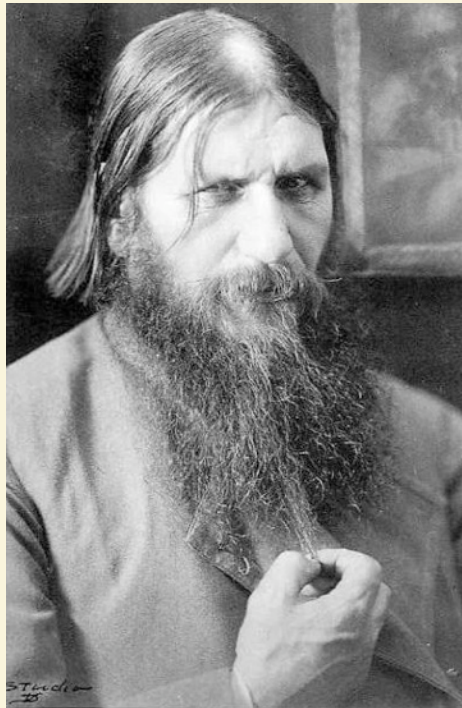
Nicholas and Alexandra had four daughters before July 1904, when a son, Alexis, the heir to the throne, was born. Joy at the birth turned to sorrow when it became apparent that Alexis had hemophilia — a disorder that prevents blood from clotting normally. The main danger from hemophilia comes not so much from cuts because pressure on the wound can usually stop the bleeding, but rather from a bruise, which produces internal bleeding. In 1912, Alexis fell and bruised himself. He suffered from severe internal hemorrhaging and unbearable pain. Alexandra nursed him night and day; doctors tried everything but could not help

Alexis. Alexandra had heard of a healing monk. She telegraphed Rasputin who replied, "Tell the doctors not to bother the little one too much. He will be all right." Alexandra sent the doctors away. Within hours, Alexis' internal bleeding stopped, and he began to recover. Alexandra believed that Rasputin had worked a miracle. She summoned him to the palace, where he became a regular fixture. Even when clear evidence of Rasputin's immoral life was brought to Alexandra's attention (he progressively seduced the ladies of the royal court), she refused to believe. Against his better judgement, Nicholas allowed her to have her way, and people's respect for the royal family declined further.

Why concentrate on Rasputin?

He was probably a charlatan, but he had the Tsarina in his thrall. She listened to him, and Nicholas listened to her. The unwashed, monk, in effect, became an advisor to the Russian government. So long as Nicholas and his other advisors were in St. Petersburg, this was not too bad, because Nicholas had other voices to listen too as well. But then World War I began.

Gregory Rasputin



I have already traced Russia's role in the beginning of the war and discussed how Russia took a hammering in 1914-1915. Nicholas sensed that certain defeat was looming. He decided that the only way to save Russia was to take over supreme command at the front. He had little real military talent, but that's not the only reason that this was a bad move. Nicholas left the government in the hands of Alexandra, who listened only to Rasputin. In Nicholas's absence, Rasputin wreaked havoc. He knew that all the able men in high government positions detested him, so he convinced Alexandra to dismiss them and replace them with weak, immoral men whom he could control. As a result, the situation in Russia rapidly deteriorated.

In 1916, word filtered to Nicholas at the front. He was determined to fire Rasputin's appointments, but Alexandra intervened. She managed to talk Nicholas out of dismissing the ministers.

This was the last straw for Rasputin's enemies. A group of Russian aristocrats plotted his murder. They hoped that by removing him they could save Russia. There were probably some personal motivations here too. I think both of their wives had "flings" with Rasputin. The aristocrats planned to lure Rasputin to one of their houses and poison him. They prepared by putting cyanide into each of three pastries and a pitcher of wine. On December 31st, they lured him there with a faked letter from one of the wives. Rasputin proceeded to down two of the pastries and two glasses of wine. This was enough poison to kill four men . . . but apparently not Rasputin.

Desperate, one of the aristocrats whipped out a revolver and shot him in the chest at point-blank range. Rasputin crashed face-first into the floor, on a snow-white polar bear rug. This sounds like something out of a horror movie, but it's well documented. The men rolled Rasputin over, and there was no blood on the rug and only a small spot on Rasputin's chest, despite the fact that the bullet probably passed through his heart. And he still breathed.

Then his eyes popped open, his arm shot up, and he grabbed one of the aristocrats by the arm and whispered, "Felix, Felix, Felix, Felix . . ." Felix Yusupov screamed, tore his arm away, and ran out. Rasputin followed him outside into the snow. The other aristocrat pumped more bullets into Rasputin. Two missed, one hit him in the shoulder, and one went through his neck. He collapsed, and they dragged him back inside.

And again, his eyes opened. Yusupov grabbed a heavy walking stick and beat Rasputin until his body was still again. They bound it with ropes, drove to the river, and

dumped it off the bridge. On the way down, Rasputin's body struck either a bridge piling or ice, cracking his head open. Finally, his body disappeared into the black water. Yusupov and his companion drove away.

Rasputin had ingested enough poison to kill four men; had been shot at least three times, twice fatally; beaten to a pulp; thrown into freezing water. Nevertheless, when his body was retrieved from the river the next day, water was found in his lungs and the ropes binding him had almost been worked free. Rasputin had struggled and tried to breathe in the River before finally dying.

But dead Rasputin was, on New Year's Eve 1917. Alexandra was heart-broken. She believed that he was the last hope for her son. Unfortunately, Rasputin's death did not solve anything. His malignant work was done. The royal family's prestige was ruined by the long scandal, and a power vacuum existed in the Russian imperial government. Continued military catastrophe had wrecked Russia's economy. In March 1917, bread riots broke out in St. Petersburg. Unlike 1905, this riot was not suppressed by soldiers – they joined in.



Having lost the support of his own troops, on March 16th, Nicholas II signed a document of abdication. He turned over governmental power to the Duma, the representative assembly. A leader in the Duma, Alexander Kerensky, formed a provisional government, but ultimately, he fared no better in meeting the challenges facing Russia. His biggest mistake was staying in the war. He really wanted to withdraw, but the Allies (Britain and France) pressured him into staying in. The slaughter of Russian soldiers continued, although many could take no more. Between March and August 1917, seven million Russian soldiers deserted. Kerensky's government faced other problems as well — the wrecked economy and food shortages.

The abdication of Nicholas had come so quickly that it caught the Russian Marxists off guard. However events in Russia were being watched from Switzerland. Lenin saw the chaos at home as an opportunity to gain control of Russia. He contacted the German government and asked for more money and help in returning to Russia so he could take control over the government. He promised to withdraw from the war immediately. The Germans agreed. There was little cost in trying, and if Lenin was able to cause problems for the Russian government, so much the better. Germans transported Lenin from Switzerland to the Russian border in a sealed railroad car.

In April 1917, Lenin arrived in St. Petersburg and was welcomed by his fellow radicals. Lenin immediately took charge of the most radical Marxist group the Bolsheviks. (The word "bolshevik" means majority, which these radicals never were!)

The Bolsheviks appealed to the Russian people. Their slogan was "Peace, Bread, & Land." Peace meant a withdrawal from the war, which just about everybody wanted by now. The promise of Bread appealed to workers and farmers. The Bolsheviks advocated taking property away from those who owned it and distributing it among the common people. The promise of land was specifically aimed at those peasants who had lost out when Stolypin's reforms created kulaks.

Over the next few months, Lenin stirred up the people to a fever pitch. The Bolsheviks became so influential that by May, the government had to allow them into the Duma. Yet, Lenin was not satisfied. The Bolshevik Revolution finally came on 7 November. It is called the "October Revolution" because Russia still used an older calendar, which had been done away with in the West during the 18th century. November 7th by the Western calendar was still October in Russia. The Bolsheviks seized the railroad

Vladimir Lenin



stations, banks, power stations, bridges, and telephone exchanges. Most soldiers stationed in St. Petersburg supported the Bolsheviks. By nightfall, only the Winter Palace, the Tsar's former residence, remained under Kerensky's control. At 9 p.m., the Bolsheviks started shelling the Palace, and by 1 a.m., Red Guards were in the building. They captured several government leaders, but Kerensky escaped.

On 8 November, representatives of the Communist Party, called Soviets – which means assemblies – met. They were dominated by Lenin because he led the Bolsheviks. They voted to end Russia's participation in the war, approved government seizure of all private property, and elected Lenin head of the new government. A week later, they were in total control of St. Petersburg.

Lenin ordered the seizure of all private property and took over all industries. He declared that Russia would not honor debts accrued by former governments. He set up new courts and confiscated the lands of the Russian Orthodox Church. Lenin also instituted a reign of terror against his rivals through his secret police organization, which was known by a variety of names, the most well-known being KGB.

None of this helped the ordinary people. Food was still scarce. Crime was out of control. In the elections for a new constitutional assembly in December 1917, Lenin's Bolsheviks received only 25 percent of the vote. This could have ended Lenin's power. So, Lenin destroyed the Constitutional Assembly and established himself in power as firmly and absolutely as the most autocratic tsar ever had.

In March 1918, Lenin signed the Treaty of Brest-Litovsk, which pulled Russia out of the war. This freed Lenin to consolidate his gains at home and gave him the needed resources to fight a civil war. Kerensky had managed to raise forces in the country and in other centers of resistance. A variety of groups opposed Lenin for different reasons. This unlikely coalition included monarchists, aristocrats, traditionalists, kulaks and orthodox Marxists. Together they are referred to as the “Whites” as opposed to Lenin’s “Reds.” The civil war lasted four years, 1918-1922.

The civil war spelled doom for the Russian royal family. Lenin feared they would become a rallying point and had them captured, held prisoner, and ultimately murdered on 12 January, 1918. Their remains were dissolved in lime and acid. Contrary to popular myth, there were no survivors. Ultimately, the Whites lost, as much as anything because they were a diverse lot united only by their opposition to Lenin. By 1922, when the civil war ended, Lenin was firmly in power. The end of the war marked the creation of the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics (USSR).

Was the Bolshevik Revolution really Marxist? Marx had advocated violence to bring about the inevitable “workers’ revolution.” But Marx believed that his revolutions would take place in industrialized nations, and Russia was hardly that! Marx also thought that workers’ revolutions would inevitably help create states with democratic governments that would be run by workers. Lenin gave lip service to Marx, but what he created was not a workers’ paradise, but a totalitarian state controlled by radical intellectuals who didn’t have a clue about the plight of workers, and couldn’t have cared less. He succeeded in this because the Russian people had no strong tradition of participation in government at any level. Lenin essentially completed a transformation from one kind of autocracy to another. So the Bolshevik Revolution was really not “Marxist.” In fact, Lenin’s beliefs are usually not called “Marxism.” Rather they are called “Leninist” or at best “Marxist-Leninist.” In many ways Lenin’s philosophy of government was a combination of Progressivism (that is the fervent belief that progress and technology can solve all problems), nationalism, and socialism.

The new USSR faced hard times in the mid-1920s as a result of the stresses of World War I and the Russian Civil War. As the leader of Russia during the Civil War, Lenin sought to implement War Communism. He nationalized or “socialized” Russian industry, introduced compulsory labor, treated the Russian economy as if it were the military. Moreover, he seized land in the countryside and forced the peasants to give the state everything that they produced to

feed the Red Army. The peasants got back a bare minimum, more often less, with which to sustain themselves. They had no incentive to produce more. This proved to be a dismal failure. The conjunction of these forces caused a collapse of Russian industry. War Communism’s main accomplishment was to alienate the Russian population and



Lenin in a propaganda picture exerting leadership over the Russian people.

destroy the Russian economy.

Lenin realized that this program was a failure and changed direction as soon as he could. With the end of the Civil War, he implemented a new program to revive the Russian economy – the NEP (New Economic Policy). Many pure communists hated this plan. Lenin constructed a compromise with capitalist forces within Russia. As much as anything this shows that Lenin was not really a Marxist. The NEP was really “state capitalism” – capitalism dominated by a central “governmental planning commission” that oversaw the economy. This allowed some freedom of ownership in basic industry and encouraged foreign capitalists to invest money in Russia. Many capitalists from Europe and America did so.

The state gave up its control over agriculture. A set amount of produce was established to be taken from each peasant farmer. It was a tax levied in kind. However, anything they produced above that set amount was theirs to keep. Russians began to improve their lives. But, before improvement could be fully felt, five million Russians had died of starvation.

NEP rescued Lenin's regime, but the Communist Party was never comfortable with it and saw it as a betrayal of communist principles. Through the force of his personality, Lenin prevailed, but he did not live long afterward. In 1924, he died – officially of a stroke. Rumor since that time, however, has been that Lenin was murdered by one of his lieutenants Joseph Stalin (1879-1953). "Stalin" was an assumed name that meant "Man of Steel." Knowing Stalin's character and later murderous actions, I think it is quite likely that he "helped" Lenin along to his "reward."

The death of Lenin brought to fore an ideological split within Russian communism. Two groups competed to succeed Lenin in control of the Soviet government – the Bolsheviks and the Moderates. The Bolsheviks supported the Marxist ideal of a worldwide workers' revolution and believed that Russian Communists had a duty to export the revolution to the rest of the world. The chief proponent of this was Leon Trotsky, who led the Red Army during the Civil War. Lenin actually expressed his desire that Trotsky be his successor as chairman, but Trotsky was at a disadvantage in 1924. He was a Jew in an anti-Semitic society. The Bolshevik's opponents were called the Moderates. They urged consolidation of communism in Russia before even thinking about exporting it to the rest of the world. Neither side was keen on Lenin's NEP. In a sense, rejection of a world-wide communist revolution constituted a rejection of Marx. This was championed by Stalin, who was the general secretary of the Communist Party in Russia. Stalin, a Moderate? Stalin would rise to become one of the most ruthless dictators in an age of dictators.