The Russian Revolution
A Brief Outline

RUSSIA AT THE TIME OF THE REVOLUTION
A vast empire stretching from Europe to the Pacific
A brutal form of feudalism, which involved landed serfdom
Years of isolation left Russia behind the west economically
The royal family had a reputation for opulence and brutality through the 1700s
New radical ideas of anarchism, socialism and communism becoming popular

RUSSIA IN THE 1800’s
Autocracy – a society led by a supreme dictatorship
Czar – the title of the king/emperor of Russia
Dynasty – a line of rulers from the same family
Romanovs – the ruling family of Russia since 1613
Alexander III – a brutal czar who targeted anyone who questioned his authority, the
Orthodox religion, or using the Russian language
- used spies and a secret police
- censored all new ideas and the media
- political prisoners were shipped off to Siberia
- encourage attacks on Jews, called Pogroms
Nicholas II – The last Czar
Not as harsh as his father, but chose not to change the old way of things
Did try to advance industry, and there was some growth
Trans-Siberian Railway completed in 1904
Some people resented this new industrial way

BEFORE THE REVOLUTION
The Industrial Revolution
A 19th and 20th century process by which machine power automated the
production of goods – i.e. textiles no longer manufactured at home, but mass-produced in
factories
Upside – goods get cheaper, transportation improved, communication advances
Downside – long hours, dangerous conditions, child labor, low pay, poverty,
slums in cities, people displaced from old jobs and farms

Radicals Unite
In clubs called Soviets, educated people gather to talk about the ideas of Karl Marx
They discussed ways to bring about a revolution in Russia – often in secret
They split on ways to do this
Bolsheviks – wanted a dictatorship of the workers run by full-time revolutionaries
Mensheviks – wanted a popularly elected and mandated revolution
Vladimir Lenin – a ruthless young leader of the Moscow Soviet
Early1900s – fled to Western Europe to avoid arrest
His movement went on without him

1904-1917 – A series of Crises
1. 1905 – Russo-Japanese War – Japan wins some key islands once owned by Russia
2. Bloody Sunday (January 22, 1905) – Peasants approach the Czar’s winter palace in St. Petersburg
   (he wasn’t there) with a petition asking for better work conditions and food. Troops opened fire on the
crowd of women and children and as many as 1000 die.
3. The Duma – 1906 – a legislative body made by the Czar in response to national unrest –
dissolved it weeks later. Others met, yet did nothing.

4. WWI – 1914-1917 – An unmitigated disaster for Russia.
   Weak generals, poorly equipped troops (some sent with no gun!)
   4 million Russian soldiers die in the first year
   drained the government money reserves
   food shortages begin again

5. Rasputin – Nicholas goes to the front, his wife turns to a holy man/psychic for help in running the government. Russians are furious about this.

THE FEBRUARY REVOLUTION, 1917
Saint Petersburg, a city-wide strike and food riot erupts
The army turns on their commanders and joins the crowds
“down with autocracy” “down with the war”
The Czar steps down – cities were in chaos
A provisional government is established
Headed by Alexander Kerensky
He votes to stay in the war – something very few wanted

THE OCTOBER (BOLSHEVIK) REVOLUTION, 1917
Soviet councils around the country armed themselves
An army stormed the Winter Palace and took over the government
“Peace, Land, Bread” was the slogan heard. More city governments fell in months after
The Germans had secretly shipped Lenin back into Russia
1. Orders the redistribution of noble land to all peasants
2. Bows out of war with peace treaty with Germany (controversially gave up land)
3. Factories given to workers

CIVIL WAR(1918-1920)
Lenin’s troops (Reds) versus the White Army (pro-Czar)
-15 million Russians die in fight and resulting flu epidemic
-all land secured, but many problems existed

1920 – Now What?
Economy in total shambles
   little industry, many skilled workers fled fighting, food shortages
   The New Economic Policy – let some capitalism exist, but kept control of media
   and banks in hands of the government
Government is totally disorganized
   The huge country is divided into smaller provinces which all looked to Moscow
   Put the Communist Party in charge of the government
Lenin died in 1924 – a vacuum of power and a struggle for his place ensued
   Leon Trotsky and Josef Stalin both vied for the leadership role
   Stalin puts his supporters in key positions, by 1928, he’s got total control of the party
   Trotsky is forced into exile in 1929

Totalitarianism – Stalin was given complete control over every aspect of every Russian’s life
   Basic Tenets of this philosophy
      -absolute loyalty to one person and government
      -cult of personality (provides comfort and direction to people)
      -glorify the aims of the state
      -demand for total devotion to leaders and government
      -total control of information and media
      -use of secret police and spies to ferret out opposition
This will also emerge in
- China (Mao Tse Tung)
- Korea (Kim Il Sung)
- Germany (Adolf Hitler)
- Italy (Benito Mussulini)

**STALIN**
Stalin and the Economy— the opposite of free enterprise, a *command economy*— no private property and nothing is produced or consumed without permission of the government.

1953 Industry – The Five-Year Plan
“We are 100 years behind other countries. We must make this up in 10 years or be crushed trying”
- impossibly high quotas for factories
- government determined that consumer goods were unimportant – huge shortages
- workers watched constantly – all aspects of production dictated by bosses
- industrial production did increase 25% in 10 years

1953 Agriculture – Collectivization
- 25 million farms taken from owners
- peasants who resisted were killed or sent to Siberia (5 million killed)
- by 1938, 90% of peasants worked on farms
- food production did not increase until the late 30s

Stalin and Russian Life – EVERY aspect of life is controlled
1953 All communication monitored – opponents of Stalin arrested and executed
1953 1934 – the Great Purge – thousands of Bolsheviks and Communist party members executed for “crimes against the revolution” (they did nothing usually)
- In the end Stalin killed as many as 13 million people!
- he encouraged children to report their parents for questioning the government

1953 Propaganda
- at school, “thank you Comrade Stalin for this wonderful life”
- youth-groups
- newspapers never said anything negative (Pravda – truth)
- Posters, plays, music
- artists were unsure of what was appropriate, many arrested and killed

1953 No Religion – “religion is the opium of the masses”
- religious leaders put in prison or executed
- schools of atheist thought encouraged

**WWII**
Would prove equally disastrous for Russia
Stalin was supreme commander – Russians still poorly equipped
20 million Russians die in WWII!
Hitler tries to invade, many more starve to death
1953 – Stalin dies
- thousands of Russians die while mourning, hundreds commit suicide