

THE RUSSIAN REVOLUTION FOR DUMMIES!

1. Needing an ally and desiring to create a situation that would squeeze Germany between two great powers, France courts Russia as an ally by giving financial aid to its industrialization programs and inviting Russia to join in a non-binding defensive agreement, the Dual Entente. When England joins in 1904, it becomes the Triple Entente.
2. 1904-5. Russia takes on Japan in a war in Manchuria. Its army and navy are badly beaten. This reveals Russia's military and political weaknesses to sharp-eyed observers.
3. 1905 – Bloody Sunday. Russian students and workers in St. Petersburg chose New Year's Day to present the Tsar at the Winter Palace with a list of reforms they would like to see take place in Russia. The Tsar is at his country home and does not appear on the palace balcony. When the crowd seems to become restless, soldiers fire shots. A peaceful demonstration turns into a riot. Violent strikes and political protests break out throughout Russia.
4. The Tsar decides to summon the Duma, Russia's equivalent of a legislative council. He asks those who will attend to present their grievances and ideas for solutions to Russia's problems. When the Duma meets in 1906-7, the Tsar thanks them for coming, says he will consider their advice but states that they will be an advisory body rather than a legislative authority.
5. 1914. Russia holds to its policy as "protector of the Slavs" and mobilizes troops in the Balkans when Austria threatens Serbian autonomy.
6. World War I. A two-front war develops when Germany's Schlieffen Plan to get France first fails. The trench war on the Eastern front becomes stalemated.
7. By 1917, it is clear that Russia is incapable to provide support for its military and supplying the needs of its home front. Workers, having formed councils called SOVIETS, begin to strike. Soldiers on the front mutiny.
8. The situation becomes so bad that the Tsar, who has gone to the front to take command, is asked to abdicate in February 1917. He complies. When no other member of the royal family agrees to take his place, a PROVISIONAL GOVERNMENT under ALEXANDER KERENSKY is formed.
9. The P.G. lacks faith in its own authority and seems to be unable to deal with the problems at hand. Strikes continue in the city. The P.G. does nothing about taking Russia out of the war.
10. Lenin, head of the BOLSHEVIKS a revolutionary Marxist party, sees the situation in Russia as a chance to make the revolution he has long dreamed of.
11. In the fall of 1917 he secretly returns to Russia with German help. He has promised the Germans he would take Russia out of the war if he came to power.
12. Lenin promises the Russians (mostly his small band of followers) BREAD, LAND, PEACE.
13. November 1917, led by Leon Trotsky the Bolsheviks unseat the Provisional Government in a coup d'état.
14. Lenin comes to power. He lets the Soviets think they are the power but power is really concentrated in his hands with the help of his loyal Bolshevik followers.
15. Lenin gets Russia out of the War by signing the Treaty of Brest-Litovsk.
16. Lenin puts all industry and agriculture under government control.
17. Lenin empowers a new secret police called the CHEKA (late KGB) to get rid of enemies of state.
18. 1918-20. Russia involved in a brutal and bloody civil war. The Bolsheviks (Reds) win over the opposition made up of Tsarist supporters (Whites). The Bolsheviks become known as THE COMMUNIST PARTY. Russia becomes known as THE UNION OF SOVIET SOCIALIST REPUBLICS.

19. Lenin orders the execution of the Tsar's family that has been imprisoned beyond the Ural mountains.
20. When nationalization policies don't work (a case of too much, too fast), Lenin tries a NEW ECONOMIC PLAN which allows a limited amount of private enterprise.
21. 1929 – Lenin dies and Joseph Stalin comes to power. Stalin is even more ruthless than Lenin. Russia becomes a TOTALITARIAN STATE. The State and the Party are one. There is one state and one party. The people who run each are the same.
22. Stalin embarks on a program of forced industrialization with a series of FIVE YEAR PLANS. The goal is to develop heavy industry. Agriculture is nationalized into a system known as COLLECTIVE FARMING. The State sets goals for industrial and agricultural output.
23. 1932-33. A severe famine strikes Russia as a result of Stalin's mismanagement of agriculture. Grain is used for export and millions of Russians, deprived of a staple product, die as a result.
24. 1936 – Stalin inaugurates a series of brutal PURGES of those whom he believes to be his personal political enemies or the enemies of the state. The late 1930s witness a reign of terror in the Soviet Union.