The Russian Revolution (1905-1907)

The first Russian Revolution happened between 1905 and 1907. It mostly involved peasants and workers, who were unsatisfied with the Tsar’s policies/laws. Although the middle classes partially agreed with this movement, the main events that caused the Revolution were in control of the low classes. This has lead to several consequences, that put Russia on a path of inevitable change.

Opposition Groups

Socialist Revolutionaries:
- formed in 1901, sometimes called the “peasants party”
- believed in general revolutionary movement that would bring together all the people opposing the Tsar
- thought the peasants would bring revolution to Russia
- Aims: eliminate the Tsar and his government, give all the land to peasants for free (then collectively in commune a forming thousands of small peasant communities)
- Supported by: mostly peasants, who wanted to get land and a share of the Tsar Nicholas II
- Tactics: propaganda to encourage revolution, violent acts/terrorism to destroy the government (therefore, they were the ones responsible for some important government officials’ deaths)
- Example of a famous supporter: Marie Spirodonova (1884–1941) was a 19-year-old student from a well-off family. She was upset at how peasants were being treated in Tambov in 1906 which inspired her to become a Socialist Revolutionist. She later killed the governor of Tambov who was torturing peasants who couldn’t pay taxes. For these actions, she was imprisoned and beaten, burnt with cigarettes, had her hair pulled and was passed around the Cossacks but still refused to give up names of accomplices. For not giving them names she was sentenced to death which was later changed a life sentence in Siberia.

Social Democrats:
- this party was found in 1895
- it followed the teachings of Karl Marx (who created the marxist movement)
- believed that revolution would be started by the workers in large cities
- Aims: overthrow the Tsar, create a Socialist state
- Supported by: mostly the workers in cities/large towns, and also students
- Tactics: in 1903, this party split into Mensheviks and Bolsheviks due to the different tactics they had to bring the revolution

Liberals:
- consisted mainly of middle class
- wanted to run the country through a parliament
- in 1905, formed the Constitutional Democratic party - the Cadets

- Aims: implement free elections and a parliament to run the country, the Tsar to be constitutional monarch, civil rights (freedom of speech, worship and conscience)
- Supported by: mainly the middle + educated classes, educators, doctors, lawyers, some industrialists
- Tactics: meetings, public speeches, discussions, publishing articles and books related/about their intentions as well as promoting change

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Mensheviks:
- believed the party should be a mass organisation that everyone could join; (by working with other groups and organisations to trade and grow)
- Key persona: Trotsky - Lev Bronstein born in 1879 and assassinated in 1940 was a Social Democrat

Bolsheviks:
- believed the party should be a small, disciplined party of revolutionaries; (by working alone)
- Key persona: Lenin - Vladimir Ilyich Ulanov born in 1870, died 1924 was a Social Democrat