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The Bolshevik Revolution After 100 Years

The parallels between the French Revolution of 1789 and the Bolshevik Revolution are many. Both involved an indecisive king who had unwisely involved his country in a war that saddled his country with an enormous debt. Both kings had foreign wives who faced unfair charges of disloyalty. In both cases, the revolution occurred after years of agitation by secret societies, presuming to speak for the peasants and workers.



Once in power, the agitators used terror to stay in power. They were anti-Christian, and many Christians referred to the leaders of the revolutions as “anti-Christ.”

Vladimir Lenin, the leading Bolshevik, described Georges Danton of the French Revolution as the greatest revolutionary strategist ever, while Leon Trotsky, who created the Red Army that won the Russian Civil War, held up French revolutionary general Nicolas Carnot as his model. Trotsky’s creation of the “people’s commissars” was in emulation of the tactics of the French Jacobins.

Not surprisingly, Karl Marx, the author of the *Communist Manifesto*, was also an admirer of the French Revolution. His father strongly admired French radicals Voltaire and Rousseau, examples of the radicalism that permeated French society in the years leading up to the French Revolution. Marx himself copied the famous expression “The proletarians have nothing to lose but their chains” from French radical Jean-Paul Marat. From a French socialist in the 1840s, Louis Blanc, Marx borrowed the famous “From each according to his abilities, to each according to his needs.”

Radical subversive societies such as the Illuminati and the Jacobins have long been accused of having plotted and staged the French Revolution, before going underground and continuing to advance their radical and secular ideologies in the 1800s, eventually emerging as the internationalist communists in the mid-19th century. Marx wrote the *Communist Manifesto* at the behest of the shadowy League of the Just in 1848, along with his friend Friedrich Engels. But Marx did not start this group — which changed its name to the Communist League. It began several years earlier, when Marx was still drinking and getting into fistfights as a member of the Tavern Club in college.

Was this a continuation of the same radical societies that had conceived and driven the French Revolution? Suffice to say, they had basically the same beliefs. Later, these same ideas would be admired by and implemented by the Bolsheviks. If someone sees a white horse with a black spot on its side run into the woods, then observes a white horse with a black spot on its side emerge a few minutes later, one can safely presume it is the same horse.

Marx fell in with some strongly anti-Christian zealots at the university. One associate, Bruno Bauer, had written *Historical Criticism of the Synoptic Gospels*, in which he asserted that Jesus had never even existed. Bauer and Marx failed in launching a *Journal of Atheism*. Although Marx received a Ph.D. from the University of Jena in 1841, his revolutionary activities prevented him from obtaining a teaching position at any university in Germany. Fortunately for him, he met Friedrich Engels, the son of a textile



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manufacturer, in 1844, who helped Marx financially the rest of his life.

Basis of Bolshevik Success

In his *Communist Manifesto*, Marx called for the abolition of private property, the elimination of the family social unit, the overthrow of all existing governments, communal ownership of property, and the end of what he called “capitalism.” In 1862, Marx and others founded the First International, because they believed in revolution in all countries. In 1867, he wrote *Das Kapital*, in which he continued his attack upon religion, calling it the “opiate of the people.” By this he meant that it kept the working class dulled to the pain of their oppression by the ruling class, which he believed had created religion for that purpose.

In *Das Kapital*, Marx asserted that communist revolution would occur in the more industrialized nations first. According to this Marxist theory of history, there has always been a ruling class, lording it over the ruled class. Only when a nation has advanced to the most industrialized state would there be an uprising of the proletariat — the workers. After the revolution, there would then be an indefinite time period in which there would be a “dictatorship of the proletariat,” in which the people would be re-educated to share the wealth of society.

Eventually, according to Marx, the state would wither away, and true communism would emerge, in which those who had more would voluntarily share it with those who had less.

Mikhail Bakunin, a Russian anarchist who opposed Marx at the International Workingmen’s Association (often called the First International), asked what should be some obvious questions about these ideas: “If the proletariat is ruling, over whom will it rule?... If there exists a State, there is inevitable domination.... Can it really be that the entire proletariat will stand at the head of the administration?... There are about 40 million Germans. Will all 40 million really be members of the government?”

Bakunin presciently said, “They say that such a State yoke, a dictatorship, is a necessary transitional means for attaining the most complete popular liberation. So, to liberate the masses of the people they first have to be enslaved.”

Ironically, Bakunin’s own Russia would soon experience this “liberation” into slavery known as communism, with the coming of the Bolshevik Revolution.

Marx’s prediction that the workers’ uprising would happen first in one of the more industrialized countries, such as Germany or England, proved wrong. Instead, it happened in Europe’s least industrialized major nation — Russia.

To be sure, the same sort of radicals who populated universities in England and Germany were in Russia. After Czar Nicholas II unwisely involved Russia in a losing war against Japan in 1904-1905, his prestige was greatly diminished. On January 22, 1905, about 200,000 citizens approached the Winter Palace in St. Petersburg, demanding better working conditions, more personal freedom, and an elected legislature.

Nicholas was not there when soldiers fired on the crowd, killing or wounding hundreds, in what became known as “Bloody Sunday.” While Nicholas privately expressed sorrow at what had happened, he rejected suggestions from his advisors to shift the blame and publicly announce the soldiers had acted without orders. He believed that would be disloyal to his own troops. After strikes swept the country,



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Nicholas decided to create a legislative body known as the Duma. At this point, it appeared that Russia would evolve into a constitutional monarchy, much like England. Only a minority of radicals actually favored the termination of the Romanov Dynasty.

It is unlikely that Nicholas would have been ousted, then later murdered by the Bolsheviks, had he only kept his country out of the First World War. It was against his better judgment, but his key advisors pressed him to sign an order of mobilization — which would almost certainly put Russia into a war with Germany. He told his advisors, “Think of the responsibility you are advising me to take. Remember, it would mean sending hundreds of thousands of Russian people to their deaths.”

Yet, he gave the order, and Russia went into the Great War, which caused the deaths of millions of English, French, Germans, and Russians, and led to the demise of the Romanov Dynasty, his own death, and the death of his wife and children.

It would also impose atheistic communism on his country.

By the end of 1914, the first year of the war, Russia had experienced four million casualties. Eventually the casualty list would reach over eight million. Nicholas’ country was simply not capable of fighting a modern, industrialized war, as his factories could not even equip all of his soldiers with weapons. Replacement troops often used rifles picked up from dead soldiers. Even ammunition was rationed.

Soldiers and civilians alike were short on food. By 1917, the primitive Russian transportation system, barely adequate in peacetime, simply could not fight a war against the Germans to the west and the Turks to the south, and get food from rural areas into cities such as St. Petersburg.

Facing desertions and mutiny at the front, Nicholas decided to travel to the front, so as to inspire the troops. But it was too late. (Russian soldiers were not alone in abandoning the war — many other soldiers in other countries thought it was past time to quit). In his absence from the capital, revolts against the czar began. Fearing a total collapse of the front, Nicholas’ generals pleaded with him to abdicate.

A provisional government was formed, with a reformist aristocrat, Prince Georgy Lvov, named to head it. His intention was to construct a republican government, with a constitution. As W. Cleon Skousen wrote in his classic work *The Naked Communist*, “The Provisional Government then launched into the double task of initiating widespread domestic reforms and, at the same time, reassembling Russia’s military strength. At the front, the troops began responding by exhibiting a new fighting spirit, and within a month remarkable progress was made in providing domestic reforms on the home front.”

Prince Lvov declared, “We should consider ourselves the happiest of men, for our generation finds itself in the happiest period of Russian history.” Sadly, this “happy period” would not last.

It should be noted that the Bolsheviks had nothing to do with the abolition of the monarchy and the establishment of a republic. In fact, Trotsky and Lenin were not even in the country.

Perhaps the fatal error of the Provisional Government, an error that would provide an opening for the Bolsheviks, was the decision to continue the war rather than seeking to end it. The government’s popularity declined rapidly, and the army’s success was soon reversed, causing Lvov to step down in early July. A “social revolutionary,” Alexander Kerensky, won the top position in the new regime. Kerensky’s actions over the next few months contributed greatly to the eventual success of the Bolsheviks.



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Kerensky's father and Lenin's father had been friends. In fact, the younger Lenin had been a student of the elder Kerensky. But within four months, Kerensky would be driven from office by his father's student, and the Bolshevik Revolution would impose a totalitarian dictatorship on Russia.

Russia's Radicals

The three men most associated with that dictatorship were Lenin, Trotsky, and Joseph Stalin.

Lenin was born Vladimir Ilich Ulyanov, but he eventually took the alias Lenin and was variously called Nicolai or Vladimir Lenin. His brother Alexander was a radical at the University of St. Petersburg who plotted to construct a bomb of dynamite and strychnine-treated bullets to kill Czar Alexander III, but the plot was discovered by the police. This led to the hanging of all the conspirators, including Lenin's brother, in May of 1887.

Photo of Leon Trotsky: AP Images

This apparently radicalized the younger Lenin, who drifted into atheism. Although he did well in law school, he was largely unsuccessful in that profession. He opposed efforts of Leo Tolstoy to set up soup kitchens during an 1891-92 famine, apparently fearing that such charity would just delay the revolution as predicted by Marx. While in Switzerland for a stomach ailment, he met George Plekhavnov, an exiled Russian Marxist, who encouraged him to form a communist party in Russia. He eventually did organize the Social Democratic Party of Russia, and wrote *Capitalism in Russia*.

After returning to Russia, Lenin's radical writings got him sent to Siberia. His Marxist girlfriend, Nadezhda Krupskaya, was allowed to join him there on the condition that they married (they both had accepted Marxist teaching that the family should be abolished). When released in 1900, he went to Munich and started a communist paper, *The Spark*, which was then smuggled back into Russia.

At the July 1903 Russian Social Democratic Party congress held in London, Lenin argued against those delegates who favored a peaceful transition to socialism through the political process, asserting that party membership should be limited to hard-core revolutionaries. Lenin prevailed by one vote, and this is why his group took the name of the Bolsheviks, which means "majority" in Russian. They dismissed the opposition as Mensheviks ("minority").

Born Lev Bronstein, Trotsky was the son of a wealthy Kulak Jewish family that left city life to farm near the Black Sea. His father was an atheist, but not a political radical.

After printing an illegal radical paper, Trotsky was arrested and spent four years in Siberia, but he escaped by hiding himself in a load of hay. Managing to make it to a train station, he used the name Leon Trotsky (who had been his jailer) and made it to London to join the Social Democratic congress. While some have implied that Trotsky was less violent than Lenin and Stalin (not a high hurdle), it was Trotsky who would personally supervise the liquidation of hundreds of comrades suspected of deviating from hard-core Bolshevik doctrine.

After the Revolution of 1905 failed to produce a Marxist revolution, Lenin fled the country, and Trotsky was arrested and spent more time in Siberia. In a daring escape in wintertime, he traveled 430 miles on a deer-sleigh, crossing the Ural Mountains into Finland, where he and Lenin linked up again.

Born Joseph Djugashvili, Joseph Stalin was from Gori, near the Turkish border. His father, an alcoholic shoemaker, died when Stalin was only 11. Stalin enrolled at a theological seminary at Tiflis, but instead



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of emerging as a priest as his mother hoped, Stalin fell in with the atheistic and Marxist secret societies that were prominent at the school. He was eventually expelled and became a full-time Marxist revolutionary, organizing strikes and rising to leadership in the Social Democratic Party. His radicalism eventually got him arrested and sent to Siberia.

Later, he met Lenin in Finland, and became his aide. No quiet Marxist theoretician, Stalin raised money for the party by conducting a bank robbery in which many innocent bystanders were killed or wounded. Never an effective public speaker, Stalin was better at organization and writing in various Marxist newspapers, such as the *Social Democrat Zvezda* ("star") and *Pravda* ("truth"), using the pen name Stalin ("man of steel").

Coming Home With Help

None of these three revolutionaries were within hundreds of miles of St. Petersburg when the czar abdicated and the provisional government was established. Lenin was in Switzerland, Trotsky was in New York City, and Stalin was in Siberia. This contradicts a myth that the Bolsheviks ended the monarchy in March 1917. As John Stormer wrote in his book *None Dare Call It Treason*, this myth has been perpetuated in many history textbooks, such as in an edition of Harlow's *Story of America*, which falsely stated, "In 1917 revolutionists in Russia overthrew the government of the czar and established a communist nation."

Then how did these Bolsheviks undermine the Provisional Government and come to power by the end of the year? Lenin, along with three other Russian revolutionaries, was sent back into Russia with the help of the German government (evidently hoping the Bolsheviks would weaken the government of the Germans' war opponent), carrying with him as much as \$6 million in gold on a "sealed train." The Kaiser was not told about this plan, but it was approved by his chancellor, Theobald von Bethmann-Hollweg, a descendant of the Bethmann banking family of Frankfurt.

Trotsky had been living quite well in New York City, owning a refrigerator and a telephone, and even enjoying a chauffeur. But after hearing of the fall of the czar, he left for Russia, on board the *Kristianiafjord*, on March 26, 1917. Also aboard was American communist Lincoln Steffens.

Steffens said that all were in agreement that "the revolution is in its first phase only, that it must grow. Crane and Russian radicals on the ship think we shall be in Petrograd (the new name for St. Petersburg) for the re-revolution."

The trip was arranged by Charles Crane, former chairman of the U.S. Democratic Party's Finance Committee, who had organized the Westinghouse Company in Russia. Between 1890 and 1930, Crane made 23 visits to Russia. His son, Richard, was a personal assistant to Secretary of State Robert Lansing.

He was also a friend of President Woodrow Wilson.

Canadian authorities, however, arrested Trotsky and his entourage when they reached Amherst, Nova Scotia, on April 3. They also seized \$10,000, which was in Trotsky's possession. Understandably, they did not want to send back to Russia a person who wished to overthrow the Russian Provisional Government, Canada's ally in the war against Germany. But he was soon released "at the request of the British Embassy at Washington," which was acting upon the request of the U.S. State Department.

Trotsky then made his way to Petrograd on a passport supplied at the intervention of President



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Woodrow Wilson and his trusted aide Colonel Edward Mandell House.

When Lenin made it to Petrograd, he jumped on top of a car, and demanded the immediate implementation of Marx's "dictatorship of the proletariat," adding that the war should end. He also called for turning all power over to the local workers' councils known as "soviets." Although the term soviet was not the same as Bolshevik, the Bolsheviks largely controlled them by this time.

With the war again turning against the Russians, Lvov lost out to Kerensky. Kerensky appointed General Lavr Kornilov as commander-in-chief of the army. On August 24, Kornilov heard of an attempted Bolshevik uprising and sent a Cossack force to occupy the capital. At this point, Kerensky betrayed Kornilov, apparently thinking he could win over the leftist plotters by condemning his own general as a "counter-revolutionary," a traitor to the government, and dismissing him as commander-in-chief.

He invited the socialist revolutionaries to join him in defense of the Provisional Government against the alleged Kornilov-attempted coup d'état. This brought radical sailors from Kronstadt to the city to defend Kerensky from the supposed Kornilov threat. Kornilov was jailed along with 30 other officers as part of a "counter-revolutionary conspiracy."

Orlando Figes strongly condemns Kerensky's duplicity in his *Revolutionary Russia, 1891-1991*, arguing that "in the end, the Kornilov Affair undermined ... Kerensky's position. Condemned by the Right for betraying Kornilov, the Prime Minister was also widely suspected on the Left of having been involved in his 'counter-revolutionary' action."

It left Kerensky with almost no supporters. Desertions in the army increased, and by November, the Bolsheviks were ready to execute their own coup. (Often called the October Revolution, because it took place in late October 1917 under the old Russian calendar, the date of the Bolshevik Revolution is dated as November 7, 1917 under the "new" calendar, which had been in use in western Europe for well over a hundred years.)

With almost every available soldier at the front, the Winter Palace, seat of the Kerensky-led provisional government, was largely undefended. As Robert Massie writes in *Nicholas and Alexandra*, "On November 6, the Bolsheviks struck.... Armed Bolshevik squads occupied the railway stations, bridges, banks, telephone exchanges, post office, and other public buildings.... The next morning, November 7, Kerensky left the Winter Palace in an open Pierce-Arrow touring car.... Passing unmolested through streets filled with Bolshevik soldiers, he drove south to try to raise help from the army. The remaining ministers of the Provisional Government remained in the Malachite Hall of the Winter Palace, protected by a women's battalion and a troop of cadets."

The government ministers gave up after a brief skirmish, as Massie wrote, "later magnified in Communist mythology into an epic of struggle and heroism. In fact, life in the capital was largely undisturbed." Kerensky never returned to Petrograd, and fled the country, eventually winding up teaching at Stanford in the United States.

The czar blamed Kerensky for the collapse of the army, and for his betrayal of Kornilov. Figes wrote, "One of the most basic misconceptions about the October Revolution is that the Bolsheviks were swept into power on a tide of mass support for the Party.... They were not. The October insurrection was a coup d'état, actively supported by a small minority of the population."



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He added, "The Bolsheviks had a tenuous hold on the capital ... but no grip whatsoever on the provinces."

On November 25, the Bolsheviks suffered what should have been a decisive defeat. The Provisional Government had already scheduled a national election to create a Constituent, or National Assembly. The Bolsheviks polled less than 25 percent of the vote, but when the Assembly convened on January 1, 1918, the Bolsheviks simply used armed thugs to enter the meeting hall and force out the non-Bolsheviks. This was justified by Lenin under the doctrine of what has been dubbed the "Marxist-Leninist" position. Lenin argued that the workers would never rise up on their own and establish communism, contradicting Marx, but that the revolution and the resulting dictatorship would have to be led by a hard-core group of revolutionaries. "To hand over power to the Constituent Assembly would again be compromising with malignant bourgeoisie," Lenin explained.

This naturally led to a long civil war between Trotsky's Red Army and the opposition White Army before the Bolsheviks finally emerged triumphant.

Unfortunately, the opposition to the Bolsheviks was deeply divided among republicans, monarchists, and socialists. This no doubt contributed greatly to the ultimate Bolshevik victory in the war. But the Bolsheviks had powerful allies supplying the funds that made that victory possible.

Money for Marxism

White Russian General Arsene de Goulevitch, in his book *Czarism and the Revolution*, wrote, "The main purveyors of funds for the revolution, however, were neither the crackpot Russian millionaires nor the armed bandits of Lenin. The 'real' money primarily came from certain British and American circles which for a long time past had lent their support to the Russian revolutionary cause."

The *New York Journal* reported on February 3, 1949, "Today it is estimated by Jacob's grandson, John Schiff, that the old man sank about 20,000,000 dollars for the final triumph of Bolshevism in Russia." Jacob Schiff was the senior partner in the Wall Street firm Kuhn, Loeb & Company. His son-in-law, Felix Warburg, was another partner in the firm and the brother of the German banker Max Warburg, who had arranged Lenin's return to Russia from Switzerland. Their other brother was the American Paul Warburg, member of the board of directors for the Federal Reserve System.

Writing in *None Dare Call It Conspiracy*, Gary Allen wrote, "Later evidence indicates that the bankrolling of the Bolsheviks was handled by a syndicate of international bankers, which in addition to the Schiff-Warburg clique, included Morgan and Rockefeller interests."

Antony Sutton, who was a scholar at Stanford's Hoover Institution, carefully documented in his book *Wall Street and the Bolshevik Revolution* the supporting role of Wall Street financiers in securing the victory of the Bolsheviks over all of their rivals. He quoted William Franklin Sands, executive secretary of the J.P. Morgan-run American International Corporation (AIC), as saying Lenin and Trotsky appealed to the masses and the United States should recognize Russia. The AIC financially supported the Bolsheviks in early 1918, even though at that point they only controlled a part of Russia and their success was very much in doubt.

This means that these powerful "capitalists" wanted to see the victory of the Russian Communists, for whatever reason, over their non-communist opposition. It can be safely said that many finance capitalists have values that are to them more important than, and even in opposition to, free enterprise,



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limited government, and individual liberty.

Otto Kahn, director of AIC and a partner in Kuhn, Loeb & Company, spoke to the socialist organization the League for Industrial Democracy in New York in 1924 and told them that the bankers and the radical socialists were all on the same side. "What you radicals and we who hold opposing views differ about," he explained, "is not so much what should be brought about as how it should, and can, be brought about."

What these Wall Street bankers "brought about" in putting the Bolsheviks in power in Russia, and creating the Soviet Union, was a totalitarian state that caused the deaths of millions of people in the 20th century.

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