

Timeline of Russian History

1853 – 1855 Crimean War

Tsar Nicholas I attempted to increase Russia's influence in southeastern Europe and the Mediterranean, but the French and British intervened.

Tsar Nicholas I died during the Crimean War and was succeeded by Alexander II.

The Crimean War destroyed the Concert of Europe, the defensive alliance that guaranteed peace in post-Napoleonic Europe, by undermining the alliance between Russia and Austria.

Tsar Alexander II, having experienced the defeat of the Crimean War, decided to pursue reforms within Russia.

1861 Abolition of Serfdom

Alexander II emancipated the serfs and created a system of zemstvos (local assemblies) to provide a degree of self-government.

The small reforms initiated by Alexander II led to more radical reform movements promoting populism, socialism, and anarchism.

Russian anarchists such as Michael Bakunin advocated violence and assassination as a means to challenge the tsar.

1881 Alexander II assassinated

The radical demands for populism and socialism and the influence of anarchism led to the creation of violent groups such as The People's Will who assassinated the tsar.

Alexander III, in response to populism and violence, abandoned liberal reforms and embraced older methods of authoritarian repression.

1889 Second International is created, which unites the socialist parties of Europe.

1894 Alexander III died and succeeded by Nicholas II.

Nicholas II pursues the gradual industrialization of Russia through the construction of railroads and the development of coal and steel industries.

1898 the Marxist Social Democratic Party is founded in Russia.

1904 – 1905 Russo-Japanese War

Russia is defeated by Japan and the war effort causes food shortages in major cities.

January 9, 1905 Bloody Sunday

Workers and peasants hold a large peaceful demonstration in Saint Petersburg and soldiers kill hundreds of them, which sparks a revolution.

Russian Revolution of 1905

A general strike in October results in Nicholas II issuing the October Manifesto, which granted civil liberties and created the Duma (a national legislature).

Nicholas II, however, did not honor his agreements to reform and consistently curtailed the authority of the Duma.

1907 Russia joins Great Britain and France to form the Triple Entente.

1908 – 1909 Bosnian Crisis

Russia supported Serbia in preparing for war against Austria over the annexation of Bosnia, but William II of Germany intervened by threatening war against Russia.

Russia continued to support Serbia in the Balkans and went to war against Austria and Germany in WWI.

The Eastern Front of WWI proved disastrous for Russia and the war became very unpopular due to the high number of casualties.

The industrialization and mobilization of total war continued to heighten discontent within Russia. The nobility, middle class, peasants, soldiers, and proletariat are all opposed to the tsar.

1915 Tsar Nicholas II assumes personal command of the Russian army at the Eastern Front. Meanwhile, Alexandra, the tsar's wife, became influenced by a Siberian "holy man" named Rasputin who began to influence government policy.

1916 strikes begin to spread to all major cities within Russia in opposition to the war and economic problems.

Russian Revolution of 1917

1917 strikes continue to grow in size and strength. The soldiers in Saint Petersburg refused to suppress the strike and instead *joined* it.

On March 12, the workers formed a **soviet**, or council with the intention of becoming the ruling power in Saint Petersburg, but two days later the Duma declared itself the new provisional government after persuading Nicholas II to abdicate.