

Opposition parties:

Kadets: Constitutional Democrats who wanted a constitutional state with democratic freedoms and a Parliament, along the model of England or France. Focused political not economic reforms. Supported by the merchant classes and some liberal aristocrats. When the Tsar was overthrown, they were initially in charge of the Provisional Government.

Socialists in general believed in the abolition of private ownership of factories, lands, mines, utilities, and transportation system. The community as a whole, they argued, should own these instead. In Russia, the socialist movement was divided into several, mutually hostile, factions.

Social Revolutionaries: The Party was founded in 1901. They were advocates of peasant socialism, in which the peasants would be the revolutionary class and establish a Russian type of socialism, with the mir or village council as the basis of the organization of the new society. They were hostile to industrial society, which they saw as European, not Russian, in its values. They were Slavophiles, lovers of Russian culture, which they identified as rooted in the peasantry. Many argued for immediate confiscation of aristocratic land without compensation. Some SR's used terrorism to assassinate government officials such as the reforming Prime Minister Stolypin in 1911

Social Democrats: This is the name for the Russian Marxist party. They believed that socialism would inevitably triumph because the scientific laws of society discovered by Karl Marx, who outlined the critical role of class struggle in history. In this view, the owners of the means of production [aristocrats in an agricultural society or bourgeoisie in an industrial society] exploit the people who work for them and must be overthrown to create a just society. The Bolsheviks worked for a revolution led by the industrial proletariat, which would then establish the dictatorship by the proletariat as the new government, and completely abolish the ruling elite's economic and political power by expropriating their properties and ending their privileges, to end the exploitation of capitalism. They wanted to industrialize Russia as completely and as soon as possible under the aegis of the state acting for the working class.

The Social Democratic Party split into two groups in 1903.

The Bolsheviks were led by Lenin. They argued that because the proletariat in Russia was small, the Social Democratic Party had to be a small, elite party of dedicated revolutionaries which would lead the workers to victory. The model for the party structure was a pyramid with top-down control, which they called **democratic centralism**, giving a great deal of power to the central committee of the party. They argued that the bourgeois stage of Marxist theory could be skipped in Russia and that Russia could go quickly from an agricultural (feudal) to a proletarian state.

The Mensheviks felt that revolution could only be achieved with a broad-based, umbrella party that would incorporate even non-Marxists opposed the Tsarist government. This party would have to be open and democratic in structure. They argued that Marx was right and that therefore the bourgeois stage of the revolution had to be achieved before a proletarian revolution was possible. This meant that they would work with bourgeois groups for reform until the time for radical revolution had arrived.

Supporters of the Tsar were called the monarchists or the **whites**. They opposed reform in any basic way, arguing that any such reformist idea came from the West and would destroy the very essence of Russia. Typically, they came from the aristocracy, the church, or the government service.

RUSSIA BEFORE REVOLUTION: *primary sources*

The industrial workers

They [the cotton workers] receive miserable wages, and generally live in an overcrowded state...the normal working day is eleven and a half hours of work, exclusive of meal times. But...manufacturers have received permission to work overtime, so that the average day is longer than nominally allowed by law - fourteen or fifteen hours. I often watched the crowds of poorly clad and emaciated figures of men and girls returning from the mills. It was a heartrending sight. The grey faces seemed dead, or relieved only by eyes blazing with the rage of desperate revolt...[After] fifteen and twenty years, and often less, of such a life, even they have not succumbed to accident or illness, men and women lose altogether their vitality and capacity for strenuous labor. Then they lose their places in the mill. Crowds of such unemployed are to be seen at the factory gates in the early morning....Badly clad and underfed, waiting in the terrible frosty mornings of the St. Petersburg winter, they represent a sight that makes one shudder.

Father G. Gapon, *The Story of my Life* [1905]

The village priests

Perhaps you heard that the parish priest extorts money from the peasants - refusing to perform the rites of baptism or burial until a considerable sum has been paid. It is only too true, but who is to blame? The priest must live and bring up his family...The peasantry are poor and heavily taxed. They set great importance on the sacraments and observe rigorously the fasts, which comprise nearly a half of the year; but they show very little respect for the priests...

D. M. Wallace, *Russia* [1912]

The civil servants [government employees]

All the government officials...stand in a definite rank. Once a man is drawn into the subtle mechanism of the Table of Ranks, he may go from grade to grade with hardly an effort on his part, by the mere fact of existing and growing wrinkled and grey-haired...From the big dreary-looking yellow or brown buildings in St. Petersburg, in which the ministries are housed, currents of authority...go forth to all the ends of the great Empire in the form of telegrams or occasional oral messages by special couriers but above all in the form of endless papers.

H. William, *Russia of the Russians*, [1915]

The landlords

[He] gets up about seven o'clock...having nothing in particular to do, he sits at the open window and looks into the yard....towards nine o'clock tea is announced, and he goes into the dining room. The head of the house begins the labors of the day by resuming his seat at the open window. Here he sits tranquilly...until dinner-time. Dinner is the great event of the day...[then] it is the time of the afternoon siesta... A regular part of the evening's occupation is the interview with the steward. The work that has been done, and the program for the morrow, are always discussed at great length...till supper is announced, and immediately after that meal...all retire for the night.

D. M. Wallace, *Russia* [1912]

The peasants

A small hut is about twelve feet square - with a door through which a medium-sized man can only go by stooping - the floor made of earth, the ceiling so low that a tall man cannot stand upright, thin windows letting in but little light with much draughts and cold - the whole building made of thin wood...That is the usual peasant's home in Russia! And these poor peasants constitute nine-tenths of the population....The stove takes up a quarter of the room...It heats the room and cooks the food, it bakes the bread and boils the dirty clothes, and all the members of the family bathe in it in turns and the old people sleep on it....it is torture to go into a peasant's hut when the stove is being lit...it is suffocating [since] the real Russian stove has no chimney...The entire family lives in this room day and night. They sleep on the benches and on the floor all together, men, women, old men, children, and cattle.

D. S. Rappaport, *Home Life in Russia* [1913]

All selections from J. Robottom, *Russia in Change 1870-1945* [Longman 1984]