Causes Of The Russian Revolution Essay, Research Paper

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The Russian revolution was caused by the continual breakdown of

the governments in Russia and the incompetency and authoritarian views

of it’s czars. Their failures as leaders included policies that

neither pleased nor benefitted the people. By the end of the

nineteenth century, Russia’s economy, government, military, and social

organization was at an extreme decline. Russia had become the least

advanced of the major European nations in terms of political and

social development. There was no parliament, and no middle class. The

Church, officers, and other important people and institutions were

firmly against social progress. The disastrous defeat of Russia in the

Crimean War in 1855 and 1856 exposed weaknesses of Russia’s various

organizations.

For the first few decades of the 1800’s, Russia’s outlook was

brighter under Alexander I, who was relatively liberal. He became more

reactionary however, and following his death, a group of young army

officers tried to overturn the Czardom. This was called the Decembrist

Revolt. The next czar, Nicholas, was a die hard authoritarian. The

Administrative system continued to decay regardless of his iron fisted

rule. The gap between the rich and the poorer continued to widen. Over

five hundred peasant revolts took place during his reign.

Alexander II, who took the throne in 1855 tried to avert revolt

by attempting reform. In 1861 he freed the serfs and gave them

expectations of free land allotments. But to their surprise, and

anger, they were only given the opportunity to share it as members of

a village commune(mir). In addition, the mir had to pay back the

government for the land over a period of 49 years with interest.

Alexander also formed a series of elected local councils that gave

districts restricted jurisdiction of certain aspects of life. He too

became more of a reactionary towards the end of his reign. The result

was his assassination by a group of conspirators called the People’s

Will movement. The next Czar, Alexander III, was yet another

reactionary. He was active in silencing criticism of the government,

exiling agitators, and stamping out revolutionary groups.

Industrialization began to appear and with it an increase of

dissatisfied workers. They were underpaid and forced to work in

unfavourable conditions. The peasants farmers were doing fine on their

farms but a famine in 1891 caused extensive suffering. Revolts again

became fairly frequent. Intellectual groups organized and continued

the fight against serfdom and autocracy.

At the beginning of the 20th century, Russian people were in the

mood for revolution. The loss of the Russo Japanese war to Japan, and

the resulting hardships, made concrete the opposition to the

autocracy. In December of 1904, unrest surfaced in Baku. Strikes

occurred in factories in the capital. Priest Father Gapon lead a

peaceful march to petition the czar for a redress of grievances but it

ended violently with the Czar’s troops firing on the crowd. In October

of 1905 a general strike was declared that crippled the country.

On October 30th, Nicholas dispatched the historical October

Manifesto which provided for a constitution under which civil

liberties were granted and an elected state institution called the

duma was formed. This broke the czar’s absolute power. However, the

czar chose reactionary ministers to lead the duma and the secret

police force was improved and strengthened. The first two were filled

with radicals but quickly dissolved. The members of the third were

conservative in outlook. Social conditions improved too slowly to

reverse public opposition to the absolute monarchy. Poor political and

military leadership in the First World War led to widespread desertion

of Russian soldiers. Their army suffered great casualties and a

battered economy.

It was the accumulation of discontent for governments, czar’s,

and living conditions along with Russian defeats in various wars,

including WWI, of the working class citizens in Russia that eventually

boiled over and resulted in revolution. The public dissatisfaction

continued to fill for over a decade like a powderkeg and eventually

was set off and caused an explosion of great impact to the future of

Russia. They displayed their anger in various ways, but the

authoritarian Czar’s which attained power did not react to the

incoming tide. In fact, they resisted change at every avenue possible

and proved to outrage certain people to such a point that Czar’s were

assassinated. By 1917, the Russian people had had enough, and a public

disturbance in Petrograd soon spread throughout the city and had

become a widespread revolt. The resulting revolution proved to

restructure the politics in Russia for years to come.

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