1917

Note: Julian calendar for all dates

FEBRUARY REVOLUTION! (Feb 23 - Mar 3)

Feb 18

- Wokers at **Putilov steel works** went on **strike**
  - Most important and politically active factory in Petrograd
  - Followed by other workers

Feb 23

- Thousands of women demonstrating on the street on **International Women's Day**
  - Police could not be counted on to suppress

Mar 1

- **Soviet Order No.1**
  - The Petrograd Soviet stated it would obey the orders of the **Military Commission of the State Duma**
    - Only if these did not clash with its own decrees
    - Provisional gov had qualified control over army

Mar 2

- **Nicholas abdicates**
  - On the way to Petrograd, he was diverted to Pskov
    - 160km from Petrograd
      - Including Mikhail Rodzianko (president of Duma, loyalist)
    - Army leaders and members of Duma persuaded him to give up the throne
  - Nominated his brother, Grand Duke Michael — Not willing to accept throne

Tsar Nicholas was over 600km from Petrograd, at military HQ

Sergey Khabalov (governor of Petrograd) declared martial law

- He asked the soldiers to restore order
  - They refused and opened fire on officers instead
  - Even the Cossacks turned against Nicholas

April

- **Provisional gov established**
  - Immediately after Tsar's abdication, Mar 2
  - **Lenin back (April 3)**
  - Foreign minister, Pavel Milyukov, provoked street demonstrations, declaring gov intended to fight war to victory
    - Mainly **liberals**, some socialists — No members of Bolshevik party
  - First PM — Prince Georgy Lvov
    - Moderate reformer
    - Spokesman for rural interests
    - Was head of Union of Zemstvos
    - Naively believed that there could be democracy and self-governing in wartime
  - overshadowed by
  - Second PM — **Alexander Kerensky**
    - Leading member of Social Revolutionary Party
    - Was minister of justice and minister of war
    - PM in July 1917
    - Postponed land reform and decided to continue war
    - damaged Kerensky's reputation

May

- Trotsky back
- Kerensky replaces Alexander Guchov as minister of war
- Pavel Milyukov forced out

June

- June/ **Kerensky Offensive**
  - **60K troops lost**
    - Disastrous — Demands for peace increased

July 3

- Start of demonstrations by workers and soldiers in Petrograd

Sailors at Kronstadt (naval base near Petrograd) establish their own government in July

July 6

- Last day of demonstrations by workers and soldiers in Petrograd

"July Days"

- Caused by Kerensky Offensive
- Problems
  - Poorly organised
  - Divided participants
- Gov reaction
  - Gathered soldiers to put down disorder — Gov still had some authority!
  - Branded Lenin as a German agent — Lenin had to flee to Finland
  - Closed down the **Pravda** Bolshevik newspaper
  - Bolshevik party members dispersed
- Who started "July Days" disturbances?
  - Bolsheviks said that SRs and Menshevik
  - Menshevik said started by Bolsheviks who wanted to distance themselves from failed attempt

Following July Days, Trotsky joins the Bolshevik party (he was Menshevik)

Provisional gov problems

- **Decided to continue unpopular war**
  - Why?
    - Honour, national survival
    - Pressure from allies — Provided financial aid
    - Hoped war would appeal to nationalism
  - Issues
    - Soldier loyalty declining — Troops encouraged by Bolsheviks to disobey their officers
      - Troops open to Bolshevik agitation
    - Growing casualties
- Internal instability
  - Provisional gov not strong enough to restore order
  - Army unrest, popular uprisings
- **Soviets** widespread
  - Cities, countryside, army
  - Co-ordinated
  - More support, and increasingly critical of gov
    - "All power to the Soviets"
      - slogan
    - **Possible alternate form of government**
- **Bad food distribution** — Difficult during wartime
- **Lack of land distribution**
  - Lost support on the countryside
  - Gov did not redistribute land
    - Peasants seized the land of nobles and the Church anyway when gov didn't!
    - Leading members of gov were property owners
  - **Recognised the land seizures** on the basis of "revolutionary legality"
    - Bolsheviks adopted the ideas of Social Revolutionaries on land redistribution — Improved support in countryside
    - opportunist | tactical
- **Lenin returned to Russia in April 1917**
- Failed to bring about major democratic reform

Co-operation between Soviet and Provisional gov

- Amnesty for political prisoners
- Introduction of universal voting rights
- Abolishment of capital punishment
- Recognition of trade unions
- "Dual authority"
  - Criticised by Lenin
    - Called the provisional gov a "parliamentary bourgeois republic"
    - Incited socialists to overthrow gov

Duma — Radical members formed **provisional committee**

Soviets — Soviet of soldiers, sailors and workers established

Lenin

- Aim — Bolshevik party to take control of the soviets
- **"April Thesis"** (April 4)
  - Called for second revolution
  - Called for withdrawal from war
  - **Seemed unrealistic at the time**
    - But Lenin was strong, cunning, persuasive, ruthless, visionary and had good control of workers, knew when was the right time to act, knew how to use propaganda
- **"Peace, Land and bread"** — Appealed to masses
  - slogan
  - End of unpopular war
  - Land to peasants
  - Food for the hungry

Trotsky

- Role
  - Brilliant public speaker — More charisma than Lenin
  - **Petrograd Soviet chairman**
  - Organised **Red Guards** — Armed workers' group
  - Initiative in formation of **Military Revolutionary Committee** (MRC)
    - Objective
      - Defend Bolsheviks
      - Armed attack against gov
  - Joined Bolshevik Party's **Central Committee** — Became Lenin's most trusted
- Erased from history during USSR (enemy of Stalin)

August

- **Kornilov affair**
  - Lavr Kornilov
    - Conservative commander-in-chief of army
    - Concerned by war situation
      - Germans approaching Petrograd
      - Restore internal stability — Strong action against Bolsheviks
  - **28-31 Aug** — Attempted to march on Petrograd with **"Savage Division"**
  - Collapse of takeover — Rail workers refused to transport Kornilov and his men to Petrograd — Kornilov then arrested
  - Kerensky reaction
    - Accused Kornilov of coup to establish military dictatorship — Dismissed Kornilov
    - Asked the Bolsheviks to help put it down
      - Armed them
      - Released prisoners
  - Effect
    - Bolsheviks gained credit — Led resistance
    - Demonstrated weakness of the Provisional gov
    - Kerensky lost support from the right — Right supported Kornilov
    - Kerensky lost support from the left — Left suspected him of being involved
      - counter-revolutionary plotting
- Bolsheviks majority on Petrograd Soviet
- Bolsheviks gain control of Moscow Soviet

September

- **Trotsky becomes chairman of Petrograd Soviet**

October 7

Bolsheviks and the Revolution

- Many Bolsheviks wanted to wait until the meeting of the All-Russian Congress of Soviets (20 Oct, then postponed 25 Oct)
  - Lenin did not want to wait
    - This would transfer power to coalition with Social Revolutionaries and Mensheviks
    - Elections to a constituent assembly in November
      - This would be the first fully democratic Russian parliament
      - Would give legitimacy to Provisional gov (which it did not have - self-appointed)
      - Lenin wasn't sure how Bolsheviks would perform in election
    - Struggled to convince the Central Committee

October 10

- Bolsheviks voted 10-2 that it was Bolshevik's time to take amed action

October 24

Lenin gave the decision and direction of the revolution, Trotsky carried it out as leader of the Red Guards

October Revolution causes

- Trigger — Kerensky action against Bolsheviks
- Short term
  - Provisional gov had to control
    - Disobedience of soviets
    - Kornilov Affair
  - Russian army losses in war — Rumours that he was planning to abandon Petrograd to the Germans
  - Kerensky's lack of land or constitutional reform
- Lenin back
  - Convinced it is time for revolution
  - Transported by Germany
    - **"Sealed train"**
      - Was isolated in Switzerland
      - Germans did not inspect the passengers + made as little stops as possible
    - Germany was also financing the Bolsheviks
      - Why?
        - Str disorder in Russia
        - Stop Russian war effort

October 25

- Start of October revolution
- Bolsheviks gained control of Petrograd and seized the Winter Palace — Easily taken
  - Few armed men took part
  - Only 5 men killed
  - Very little resistance; few troops loyal to Kerensky left in Petrograd

OCTOBER REVOLUTION! (Oct 25 - 27)

- Soldiers loyal to Kerensky seized and destroyed **printing equipment from Bolshevik press (Rabochiy Put)** — Bolsheviks fought back
- Kerensky announced closure of all bridges but one
  - Red Guard and MRC vs Gov soldiers fight over control of bridges
  - Tactic used during July days
- MRC seized the **Central Telegraph of Petrograd** - control of communications

Kerensky escaped in a Renault car during the revolution

October 27

- **Congress of Soviets**
  - Bolsheviks announced the **seizure of the Winter Palace**
  - Right-wing SRs and Mensheviks walked out angrily
  - They saw this as takeover by one party rather than soviets
  - Bolsheviks organised a vote of the remaining delegates

Loss of power of Mensheviks and SRs

- By condemn the Bolsheviks after October, they deprived themselves of any power following
- Trotsky said they passed to "dustbin of history"

Was October revolution a coup or a popular revolution?

- USSR will show October Rev as a heroic struggle but was actually easy (weak gov)

Propaganda film from 1927

Sergei Eisenstei - October: 10 Days that Shook the World

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