WORLD WAR 1 - RUSSIA

CAUSE

- To protect Serbia (Slavic)
  - Warlike demands from Austria-Hungary
    - Austria-Hungary allied to Germany - leader Kaiser Wilhelm II is tsarina's cousin
      - Germany declared war on Russia
- Initial reaction
  - National unity, patriotic feeling
    - Germany was disliked
    - Tsar seen as honorable, protecting fellow Slav country
    - **In the Duma, all members except 5 Bolsheviks declared their support for the war**

ECONOMIC WEAKNESSES

- Cost
  - **High human cost and cost of resources**
    - Peasant majority of soldiers had little clothes, food, weapons and ammunition
    - Waste of resources - guns and shells piled up, unable to reach front lines due to **inefficient transport system**
  - The conflict cost 15 times more than the Russo-Japanese war
- Runaway inflation
  - The government resorted to printing money to finance the war
  - Average income doubled 1914-16 but price of fuel and foodstuffs quadrupled (real wage halved)
    - Rising prices affected lower classes
- Food shortage
  - Peasants hoarded food, which worsened food shortages in urban areas
- **Lack of organisation** + inefficient transport system
  - Network failed to properly transport food and supplies and to cope with pressures
    - Food rotted in depots instead of being moved to towns and cities where needed
    - Movement of raw materials to manufacturing centres disrupted too
  - Needs of military given priority on railways at the expense of civilian population
- **Labour supply**
  - Workers and peasants drafted to war so there was extra burden on labourers in factories and farms
- Strikes spread in Moscow and Petrograd

MILITARY WEAKNESSES

- **Deficient military planning**
  - Large numbers of soldiers and weapons kept in strongpoints behind front lines
  - The army had to result to defensive tactics
    - Not well trained for
  - Army generals tactic was to throw masses of badly equipped soldiers against gunfire
- **Not modern**
  - Relied on **cavalry**
    - **Ineffective against modern weapons** such as machine guns - brave charges -> slaughter
    - Horses required large quantities of food and transport (urgently needed elsewhere!)
  - Relied on **bayonets**

    - Soldiers lost to gunfire before they could reach the enemy
- Germany had better **intelligence**
  - They intercepted radio messages to figure out where Russian forces were
- **Defeats**
  - **Tannenberg August 1914**
    - 70,000 Russian soldiers killed or injured
    - 92,000 Russian soldiers captured
  - June 1916
    - General Brusilov attempt against Austria-Hungary pushed back by German forces
    - Almost a million Russian casualties

SOCIAL WEAKNESSES

- Population impacted by military losses
- Enourmous displacement
  - Half a million households forced to abandon their farms in 1914-16
  - Movement eastwards
- Propaganda had reverse effect
  - Failed to match public mood
- Zemgor had no support from the government
  - Zemgor (from spring 1915 - initially Union of Towns and Union of Zemstvos) was an organisation that heped offer relief to refugees and orphans, as well as help with medical aid and provisions
    - Could barely cope with social and economic crisis
    - People appreciated local governments and helpers rather than the gov and tsar

POLITICAL WEAKNESSES

- Courtiers and generals were also dissatisfied with the conduct of the war
- The tsar constantly reshuffled his government
  - Appointed few (if any) competent ministers
- The Duma was recalled in July 1915 due to rising pressure (had been suspended upon war outbreak)
  - **"Progressive bloc" formed**
    - Formed by liberals and moderate conservatives in Duma
    - Supported by Social Revolutionaries outside Duma
  - Growing criticism from Duma + increasing willingness to oppose (following nov 1916)
    - Pavek Milyukov said *"is this stupidity or treason?"* regarding gov actions (liberal leader)
  - BUT the tsar rejected their calls for a new government
    - Duma suspended after less than 2 months and not recalled until February 1916

THE TSAR AT THE FRONT

- In **August 1915**, Nicholas II decided to go to the front
- *Big mistake!*
  - Tsar had no military skills or training
  - His presence did not motivate army generals nor common soldiers
  - His abscense from court left a power vacuum in Russia!
  - He was regarded as personally responsible for defeats because of his new position as leader of military!
    - Even though he did not take many decisions and his role was mostly ceremonial - attending parades, visiting hospitals
  - He was remote from developments in Petrograd
    - HQ ar Mogilev, 600km south of Petrograd

TSARINA AND RASPUTIN

- Tsarina left in charge of government
  - **German princess**
    - Viewed with suspicion
    - Accused of being a German spy
    - Little power because she was a woman
  - **Influnced by Grigori Rasputin**
    - She was very mystic and religious
      - He said he had recieved a vision from God that he could save her son (Alexei had haemophilia - fatal blood disease)
        - He calmed her son, probably because he stopped him from taking aspirin
      - Rasputin believed he was the second coming of Christ
    - Rasputin was disliked by courtiers
      - Lowly origins, dirty appearance, crude manners, lack of education, history of theft, nasty rumours
      - Tsarina defended him fiercely and dismissed ministers critical of him
    - Rasputin was also disliked by the public
    - **Rasputin murdered by a group of conservative courtiers in December 1916**
      - Wanted to save tsar's reputation

RESULT

- Many deserters
- Diminishing loyalty of army
  - Soldiers opened fire on officers
  - Even the Cossacks turned against the tsar (the most loyal to tsar)
- February revolution
  - Collapse of tsarist regime, abdication

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