

How did new ideas cause conflict?

In the 20th century, millions of people fought and died in some of the most horrific wars in history. Key causes of conflict were new political ideas such as communism and fascism. This section of the book will look at:

- what communists and fascists believed in
- how their ideas caused conflict.

History
Year 7
Tuesday 7th July

Workers of the world, unite!

Learning objectives

- Learn what communists believed in.
- Understand what caused the Russian Revolution, and the impact it had on the world.

What do you think?

Do you think it's right that most wealth is in the hands of a very few people?

Key term

Proletariat*: A collective noun used by Marxists to describe the class of workers.

Source A: Extracts from *The Communist Manifesto*, by Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels, published in 1848. This summed up many of Marx's key ideas.

The world will be for the common people, and the sounds of happiness will reach the deepest springs. Ah! Come! People of every land, how can you not be roused ... Let the ruling classes tremble at a Communist revolution. The proletarians have nothing to lose but their chains. They have a world to win.

Workers of all countries, unite!

In the late 19th century, a new political idea was created. It was called communism. The ideas of a German philosopher called Karl Marx (1818–83) formed the basis of communism, although his ideas were later built on and changed by others.

1. Communism is natural and inevitable, and will happen whether people like it or not.

3. All private property should be confiscated by the state, and shared out amongst everyone equally.

4. Workers will become the most important people, and will take charge of the 'means of production' (i.e. factories).

5. The workers need to have a revolution, and establish communism.

6. Eventually workers in every country will overthrow their governments and establish communism, so that national boundaries will no longer exist.

2. Private property causes poverty and war. A small number of individuals shouldn't have all the wealth.



7. A 'dictatorship of the proletariat' will need to be established. The workers will run everything and no other political parties will be allowed.

Figure 3.1: A diagram summarising some of the main ideas of communism. The red hammer and sickle shown is a communist symbol.

Russia in the early 20th century

For decades after Marx's death, only a tiny minority across the world believed communism was a good idea, or even possible. However, events in Russia changed everything.

Russia at the start of the 20th century was a country with deep problems. Russia was ruled by Tsar Nicholas II, and he believed he was God's representative on Earth. Because of this, he was extremely reluctant to share power with anyone else. However, Russia was undergoing major social and political changes that created a growing class of workers, particularly in the major cities of St Petersburg (Petrograd) and Moscow. These workers were unhappy with the social conditions of the country. In addition, a growing middle class began to call for involvement in the running of the country.

A small revolutionary political party known as the Bolsheviks went even further. Under their leader, a man known simply as 'Lenin', they began to call for a communist revolution. At this stage few people were willing to listen to such radical demands, and many Bolsheviks were either locked up by the Tsar's police or forced into exile.

In 1905, strikes and demonstrations forced the tsar to allow a kind of parliament called the Duma to be created, but as time went on he increasingly ignored it, and little changed.

In 1914, Russia was drawn into the First World War. Initially, the outbreak of the war was met by enthusiasm and patriotism. However, the war led to huge casualties and massive shortages, and the desire for change amongst many Russian people became greater than ever.

Did you know?

Tsar Nicholas, Kaiser Wilhelm of Germany, and King George V of Britain were cousins.



Source B: Cartoon published by the Union of Russian Socialists in 1900. The picture is meant to represent Russia.

Your turn!

- 1 Sum up what communists believe, in less than 50 words.
- 2 What do you think about these ideas? Summarise your view of communism in a paragraph.
- 3 Write a paragraph to explain why some Russian people were unhappy in the years before the First World War.
- 4 Look at Source B. Write down two inferences you can make from this cartoon about why groups like the socialists were unhappy with the political system in Russia.

The Russian Revolutions, February and October 1917

A series of events after 1914 shocked the world by bringing the Bolsheviks to power.



1. The war was a disaster for Russia. In February 1917, a combination of strikes and huge protesting crowds crippled Petrograd (St Petersburg).



2. Troops were brought in to restore order, but many were unwilling to open fire on the crowd. This was the first revolution in 1917.

3. In March, the authority of the tsar collapsed, and the monarchy was abolished. The Duma then formed a provisional government and tried to introduce reforms to end the unrest. However, they decided to continue the war, which made them very unpopular.

4. In October 1917, the Bolsheviks seized power in a final revolution. The Duma was closed and the Bolsheviks set about turning the largest country in the world, into the first communist state. This became known as the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics (USSR).



Figure 3.2: A summary of the events that led to the Bolshevik Revolution.

Did you know?

After falling from power, the tsar and his family were murdered by the Bolsheviks in 1918. Since then many people have claimed to be Anastasia, one of the Tsar's daughters. These claims were all untrue. The remains of the tsar and his entire family have now been found and identified.

How did the West react to the Russian Revolution?

The capitalist* West was horrified by the establishment of communism in Russia and their withdrawal from the war. In 1918, a civil war developed in Russia between the 'Reds' (the communists) and the 'Whites' (groups who sought to overturn Bolshevik rule). The West sent troops to Russia to aid the 'Whites', but were unable to stop the complete victory of the 'Reds'. After the First World War, communist uprisings occurred in other European countries such as Germany and Hungary (see Source C). However, these uprisings failed. The USSR instead concentrated on building communism within its own country.

Stalin and the emergence of the USSR as a world power

In 1924, Josef Stalin became the leader of the USSR (Soviet Union), and set about a ruthless programme of industrialisation in which millions of Soviet citizens died. In 1934, the USSR joined the League of Nations (see page 67) and became a major world power. Many countries regarded the USSR as more of a threat than the rising power of Nazi Germany.

Source C: Extract from a speech made in Germany by the German communist Karl Liebknecht in 1919. He was later murdered by anti-communists.

The proletariat of the world must not allow the flame of the Socialist Revolution to be extinguished. The failure of the [Russian Revolution] will be the defeat of the proletariat of the whole world. Friends, comrades, brothers arise against your rulers! Long live the Russian workers, soldiers and peasants! Long live the Revolution of the French, English, American proletariat! Long live the liberation of the workers of all countries from the infernal chasm of war, exploitation and slavery!

Your turn!

- 1 Draw a timeline showing the main events that led to the Russian Revolution. Start with Russia before 1905 and finish with the victory of the Bolsheviks.
- 2 Look at the events on your timeline. Colour code them into long- and short-term causes of the Russian Revolution.
- 3 Explain two reasons why the Russian Revolution happened.
- 4 Read Source C. What can you learn from this source about the following issues?
 - a How communists in other countries felt about the Russian Revolution, such as Germany.
 - b Why the West might have been so concerned about communism.
- 5 Design a Soviet propaganda poster to encourage other countries to adopt communism. What would you include to persuade them?

Key terms

Capitalist*: An economic and political system in which money and property are controlled by private individuals. The USA is a capitalist country.

Checkpoint

- 1 Who was Karl Marx?
- 2 What was the political party called that seized control of Russia in 1917?
- 3 What did Russia become known as after the Russian Revolution?
..... Stalin?