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EXODUS

Henry Lowell Cabot
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EXODUS

An Exploration of the Migratory Patterns of Average Russians throughout
Modern Russian History, and how this Coincides with the Three Great Ages
of Human Development.

Senior Project submitted to
The Division of Social Studies
Of Bard College

By

Henry Cabot
Annandale-on-Hudson, New York

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Professor Marina Kostalevsky

Professor Sean McMeekin

Dedicated to Ksenia, Maud and Andrew, and Carroll and John. And to Ethan Sukonik without whose spirited encouragement the fires of competition would have never been lit.

Introduction

An overview of how an autocratic undeveloped nation was able to industrialize and modernize in just over a century

Henry Cabot

Bard College

In a small town in Northern Nebraska, just south of the border with South Dakota, Elsie Eiler, mayor, bartender, and librarian, is now the only resident of a once growing town of more than a hundred. Eiler, who lived alone with her husband Rudy until his death in 2004, laments her lifelong friends' choice to leave, but does not blame them. The lack of opportunity in rural communities like Monowi makes residency nearly impossible. Eiler's stubborn ways kept her from leaving, but when she passes away, Monowi will go the way of so many other once bustling rural communities, and fall into disrepair, and that day is coming soon.

This is not an isolated incident: ghost towns and rapid depopulation has always played a role in human history and the development of civilization. However, as the industrial age draws a close, and the information age takes its place, this problem seems to have sped up considerably. No country has displayed the symptoms of rural flight quite as dramatically as Russia, however, where entire cities now lie derelict, revisited only by the government or by vagrants.

In order to get a handle on this problem, and why it's happening, we must begin with a rudimentary understanding of the three great ages of modern civilization, the first of which began several thousand years ago. When humans first began to tame the natural world around them, and cultivate crops, the first great age, the Agricultural Age, began. Now, enough food could be grown that nomadic practices of hunting and gathering could halt, bringing together people in areas of commerce across the world.

The transition to agricultural styles of life from a foraging life, also known as the Neolithic Revolution, is unique from the other two great ages in that it was the first,

laying the foundation for the other two. Despite being over ten millennia ago, the Neolithic Revolution led to all sorts of developments still with us today, including the first written languages for accounting purposes,¹ the earliest institutes of higher education, and the origins of the scientific method.²

With agriculture came the ability to develop larger communities, leading to the first towns, the first cities, and the first systems of government. However, the heavy reliance on food production meant these cities were limited in size by their ability to transport food effectively, and were thus relatively small. This age would persist for thousands of years, the methods of production and changing, but the focus of civilization remaining constant. The absolute necessity of food production meant that a massive portion of the population lived in rural areas, on farms.

Then, in the 19th century, the second great shift in civilization occurred, with the rise of the Industrial Age. The open, decentralized styles of government could now be better regulated. Just as the social change from forager to farmer allowed the most assertive and aggressive to take on the roles of emperor, king, or other sort of ruler, the social change from farmer to factory worker allowed the most assertive to seize power as Robber Barons, the people at the very top, who used every power at their disposal in the pursuit of more power and more wealth. This power allowed them to write laws protecting them and their monopolies only broadening their influence over the society. These were the caesars of the Industrial Age: anti-competition leaders who sought personal glory and

¹ Barker, Graeme. *The Agricultural Revolution in Prehistory: Why Did Foragers Become Farmers?* Oxford: Oxford U Press, 2009. Print.

² Neugebauer, O. *The Exact Sciences in Antiquity*. New York: Dover, 1969. Print.

managed to spread their authority not just over the means of production, but over industries, legislatures, and entire cities.

The Rockefeller family, headed by John D. Rockefeller, one such man of the time, would make by today's standards the fortunes of Bill Gates and Warren Buffett seem insignificant by comparison. Conservative estimates by Forbes place John D. Rockefeller's net worth today, adjusted for inflation, to be approximately \$336 billion.³ Similarly, the worth of Mansa Musa, 14th Century King of Mali, would make even Rockefeller's great fortune appear inconsequential. Estimating the value of Musa is nearly impossible, but his dazzling reign was filled with such extravagance that on his pilgrimage to Mecca, the gold he spread would destabilize European economies for nearly a century. His exorbitant wealth was so brilliant, it was said to put even the African sun to shame.

We are now making a transition into the third great age of civilization, the Information Age. As the Industrial age draws to a close, and the factory workers find themselves independent, destabilized, with an increasing need for entrepreneurship, the archaic factory towns of the Industrial Age are becoming a relic of the past. Steel workers, assembly line workers, company men of every stripe are being driven out, and forming startups, pursuing their fortunes independently in the cities. The new *cutting edge* is no longer slow constant production of goods, but fast, agile, cheap business practices, with heavier prioritization on minimizing space and costs, rather than maximizing production.

³ Forbes, *The All-Time Richest Americans, All the Money in the World*. September 14th 2007. Website. https://www.forbes.com/2007/09/14/richest-americans-alltime-biz_cx_pw_as_0914ialltime_slide.html

Russia has clearly and dramatically demonstrated each great change, and as Russia has evolved, so too have it's people. Though borders change, and contemporary political and social forces redraw the map frequently, the Russian sense of identity that feels itself descended Rurik has remained the same for centuries.

The Russian empire, long organized by a system of absolutism, where the absolute executive power was concentrated with the Tsar, was practically a feudal state, relatively unchanged since it's inception in 1721 all the way up until the end of the 19th century. Tsar Nicholas II showed himself to be a weak leader, allowing the aristocracy to brutally lord over the people, solely to protect his own autocracy. This led to a rural, poorly educated, agricultural society, far behind the rest of Europe and the United States in industrial development.

The Russian empire, like all regressive oligarchies, was woefully unsustainable, and provoked the fury of the peasant class. When it all came crashing down, the revolution that followed was one of the bloodiest revolts of all time, with the rich desperate to protect their power at all costs. Russians were slaughtered by the millions over the course of just a few decades. The transformation of Russia from an outdated agricultural power with the majority spread in rural villages across the country to an industrial power under the Soviet leadership. This massive shift necessitated the forced uprooting of millions of Russians, and considerably changed the course of Russian history. The village was to become a fragment of a bygone era, and the apartment would take it's place as the domicile of the modern age.

The revolution, led by the poorly educated, established the Soviet Union, one of

humanity's earliest experiments with Marxist-style communism. Part of this came a centralized command economy, instituted and maintained by the Soviet. This gave the government the power to move people to wherever it saw fit, "for the good of the state." Under the Soviet Union's watchful eye, people were moved from the small farms into the towns, where they could work in the industrial factories. The Second World War, forcing even greater amounts of people into areas around munitions and steel factories across the Soviet Union, exacerbated this shift.

The collapse of the Soviet Union was far less bloody than its commencement. With the disintegration of the Union came the fall of the command economy. No longer were people forced to live where the state told them to, and no longer were people guaranteed a job and food. The period immediately after the fall, what has come to be known in Russia as the 'crazy 90s' saw a mad dash to grab power before the government could stabilize. The most aggressive again rose to the top, and the criminal underworld thrived. Many felt their only chance for survival was in the most major cities.

Now, Russia is one of the least rural developed countries in the world, with the vast majority of all Russians living in the cities. The villages of Russia, former factory towns, and former farms, have fallen into disrepair, and despite the efforts of Putin and the ministers of Russia, the trend toward the cities looks irreversible. Incentivisation programs, such as President Putin's homesteading efforts, have been lackluster at best, and have been met with an equal level of disinterest from the Russian populace.

As Russia evolved culturally, from feudal to Marxist and finally, to rudimentarily capitalist, the dwellings of its people have changed tremendously. In 1870, about 50

years before the revolution, the majority lived in multigenerational households in the villages across Russia. Without any alternative and seriously lacking the means to pursue any alternative, the vast majority lived in simple cottages and houses in villages across the empire. Then, when the revolution came, these people were forced out of these houses and into kommunalki, which were the first major prefabricated housing in Russia. The kommunalki were squat, simple apartments with communal kitchens and bathrooms, and would be built across the Union as the government forced people out of their cottages and into housing near the new factories. These apartments would evolve with successive leaders, first into Khrushchevki, then Brezhnevki, and finally after the collapse of the Soviet Union, into the uniquely modern Russian prefabricated housing we see today.

With each shift in age came a great shift in where the people lived, and as Russians fled the rural areas, the style of housing evolved to accommodate them in their new homes.

Part I

The Feudal State

1870-1917

How the opulence of the aristocracy saw Russia lag behind the rest
of the world in development

During the late nineteenth century, the Russian government undertook several policies of rapid industrialization, which will be the focal point of my paper, as these few formative years would tangentially shape the lives of millions of Russians over the following century. The goal of industrialization, unlike in many of the other western powers, was not for the benefit of the society or the genuine improvement of the military, but to keep alive a façade of Russian strength.

Tsar Alexander II, a reformer, sought the counsel of Konstantin Pobedonostsev, advisor to the three tsars, internationally renowned statesman, and spokesman for reactionary and conservative positions.⁴ A reformer, Alexander II advocated for cautious military renewal and social restructuring, bringing Russia back into relevancy as a major power, with the counsel of Pobedonostsev to keep his self-admittedly often overly optimistic goals in check. Pobedonostsev was, in the mind of Alexander, the yin to Alexander's hasty yang. Alexander's social accomplishments were too many to list. For the sake of constraining this paper, I will focus on those policies that would directly set the stage for the revolution, and ultimately, the shift from rural to urban. During his reign, he completed a rebuilding of the judicial system, emancipation of the Russian serfs⁵, establishment of the zemstva⁶, and heavy promotion of education.⁷

In his attempts to reorganize the judiciary branch of Russian government, Alexander would move power from the aristocracy to the emerging middle class. To this

⁴ Mazour, Anatole G. *Russia: Tsarist and Communist*. Princeton: D. Van Nostrand Company, 1966. Print.

⁵ Lynch, Michael. *The Emancipation of the Russian Serfs, 1861: A Charter of Freedom or an Act of Betrayal?* N.p.: History Review, 2003. Print.

⁶ Radzinsky, Édvard. *Alexander II: the last great tsar*. New York: Free Press, 2006. Print. p.148

⁷ *ibid* p.152

end, he advocated democratic elections for local justice across his empire, compartmentalizing problems and removing the justice bottleneck from the realm. Where before, imprisonment might take several months or even years while local townships waited for the tsar to pass judgment, now could be sorted out quickly, and by elected leaders. This taste of freedom would eventually prove to be both a backlash against the autocratic rule of Alexander III and Nikolai II, and also set the stage for a Soviet empowering of the proletariat. The emancipated serfs could effectively elect judiciary representatives, facilitating Soviet mobilization of the workforce.

Alexander's implementation of the Zemstvo system, a rudimentary form of local government, was Russia's first unequivocal push toward personal accountability and self-government. Many prior tsars had governed with an unshakeable authoritarian rule, the torrid history of which is framed by death squads, gratuitous killings, and near-genocides. The zemstvo clearly demonstrated a push toward liberal democracies, as its representatives encompassed every class of Russian citizen: aristocrat, minor landowner, townsman, lower class citizen, and peasant.⁸ Author Edvard Radzinsky describes the Zemstvo optimistically: "The very word zemstvo, from the word for land, zemlya, was imbued with liberty. Back in Muscovite Russia, important decisions were made by meetings of all estates, the Zemskoe Assembly, which were assemblies of all Russian landowners. It was appropriate to use the word for land in the name of local organs of self-government, because for the first time the entire land, the whole population, was involved. There were representatives of the nobility, the peasantry, and the urbanites in

⁸ Radzinsky, Edvard. *Alexander II: the last great tsar*. New York: Free Press, 2006. Print. p.149

the assemblies.”⁹

The zemstvo would be, ultimately, a precursor to the Soviet, a localized political organization that the Soviet Union would use to govern its citizens, which would enable the leaders of the revolution to focus on more important matters, and leave minor governmental functions to officials from each region. In many cases, the villages across Russia were disconnected from the workings of the imperial state, as they were simple farmers, barely literate, and living in cottages without running water or even solid floors. Alexander II had sought to change this, and reform both the education and housing of Russia, but without his pressure-releasing reforms, fury would continue to build, as two more autocrats would attempt to hold back the inevitable decline of absolutism. Alexander II had penned a proclamation to establish a consultation system, limiting his own power, and granting additional power to democratically elected officials. This would have been potentially the first constitution of Russia, and would have likely commenced a more peaceful transition from agricultural to industrial, following the example of the west. But the day before he could establish this as law, he would be assassinated by a radical socialist revolutionary, Nikolai Rysakov, who would bomb the emperor’s carriage as it passed.

The liberal ideals of Alexander II were dashed by his son, a deeply conservative ideologue who readily embraced the guidance of Pobedonostsev, leading to Pobedonostsev’s unofficial position as “*éminence grise*.” He would go on to become one of the most powerful men in the Russian empire, and unshackled from liberal opposition, would pen Alexander’s Manifesto of April 29th 1881, establishing an unshakeable

⁹ *ibid.* p. 149

autocracy in which the tsar held absolute power. Alexander III, acting on the advice of Pobedonostsev cancelled his father's tentative constitution¹⁰, signaling his absolute power to the world. Whatever liberal beliefs dwelled in Alexander III died after the assassination of his father. This signaled to him that the socialist viewpoint, and liberal philosophies at large were dangerous and needed to be stamped out. His reaction to his father's death at the hands of an assassin was volcanic, as he felt it was an insult to his father's legacy, and he had martyred himself for an ungrateful Russian citizenry. This event would solidify the reactionary tone of the following thirteen years. Revolutionaries were exiled, educational reforms were walked back, and the press had two choices: capitulate or be censored. Liberal proposals were quickly dismissed by either Pobedonostsev or Alexander himself, and to many in Western Europe, his authoritarian rule signaled an unstable Russia, led by a woefully unqualified commander with absolute power. Queen Victoria commented on him "a sovereign whom I do not look upon as a gentleman."¹¹

Dissent was crushed and forced underground, and capitalism began to take root in Russia. This triggered a natural migration in many cases across Russia towards towns, which were experiencing a significant uptick in travel and opportunity. Alexander was called the *Peasant's Tsar* and his simple bombastic speaking style¹², larger than life size, and fierce patriotism made him very popular with the former peasant class, and he did not see fit to appease the aristocracy, wholeheartedly supporting the peasants in their

¹⁰ King, Greg. *The Court of the Last Tsar: Pomp, Power, and Pageantry in the Reign of Nicholas II*. Hoboken: Wiley Publishing, 2006. Print. p. 157

¹¹ Malsom, Scott Web. "The Home of the Last Tsar - Romanov and Russian History." *Alexander III Time Machine*. N.p., 2009. Web. 18 Jan. 2017.

¹² Mazour, Anatole G. *Russia: Tsarist and Communist*. Princeton: D. Van Nostrand Company, 1966. Print. p. 303.

migrations to the towns and cities.

Historian Anatole Mazour describes Alexander's brashness as follows¹³:

“The new tsar came in with a single goal –eradication of sedition and consolidation of autocracy recently jolted by the bombs of terrorists. In sedition he saw the cause of his father's tragic death; in autocracy he had implicit faith as the one and only form of government there could be in a civilized society...Neither by temperament nor by training was Alexander III qualified to assume power, yet fate willed that he should reach the throne at a decisive turn in Russian history. Barely educated, his tutor, Constantine Pobedonostsev, nevertheless imbued his royal pupil with a profound sense of autocratic responsibility and pride to fulfill a divinely ordained mission as Sovereign of Russia.”

As a monarch, Alexander III was absolute. Mazour goes on to explain how Pobedonostsev's guidance would shape Alexander's unwavering faith in autocracy, and this would prove to be the downfall of his much weaker son.

As a result of aforementioned early migration, a precursor of what was to come, the first Russian imperial apartments began to be built, particularly in Saint Petersburg and Moscow. Because of the nature of Russia as an agricultural nation, these buildings were typically only available to the most wealthy, and stand out today because of their grand facades and unique, intricate architecture.

¹³ Ibid p. 305-306





These magnificent apartments once housed Muscovite aristocrats, and when the revolution came, rather than being destroyed like many buildings, they were converted into apartments for the first Bolsheviks. The architecture was modeled after European styles, particularly French. The magnificent thick walls often combined neoclassical architecture with early eclecticism, culminating in fabulously intricate facades. Peter the Great's Europhile ways led to a culture that praised renaissance architecture, and the intense patriotism that pervaded Russian society at the time led to a combined style unique to Russia. The Palladian style of architecture would remain the dominant form of the Russian Empire, right up until the revolution. While the opulent apartments convey vast wealth, this contrasted with the neglected villages across Russia, where the majority of Russians lived barely better than those a hundred or two hundred years before.

Alexander III, like his father, died prematurely, but he had no heir whose rule would be appropriate, as Nikolai II was sickly and young¹⁴, utterly incapable of filling his father's shoes. Though history view Alexander as a tyrannical despot, we cannot know the events that could have been. His premature death would ultimately bring Russia to the brink of annihilation just a few short years later. His cancellation of the constitution and heavy emphasis on autocracy led, in the short term, to both a boost in the Russian economy, and, paradoxically, made him very popular with the peasant class. But, in the long term, his refusal to adopt a Russian constitution left his weak son with much more responsibility than he was capable of handling, and his denial of the emerging realities of the world in terms of industrial development would cripple Russia. His views belonged in the past, and as the rest of the world adopted more liberal, industrial, urban lifestyles, Russia's largely illiterate, uneducated populace was subjected to autocratic rule. When Alexander should have followed his father's lead in advancing education, infrastructural development, and personal freedom, he chose to grant himself even more power, and surrounded himself not with a team of rivals, but an army of like-minded aristocrats.

From Alexander, we come to the last Russian tsar, Nicholas II. History typically views Nicholas II unfavorably, as an emperor who totally lost the respect of his subjects through his systematic suppression of his adversaries, and blood-spattered campaigns against Jews, Marxists, and other workers strikes. The scholar Arkadiy Sack describes him in 1918 cordially, but focuses more harshly on Pobedonostsev: "Nicholas II, the son of Alexander III, the last of the Romanoffs, overthrown by the Revolution of March, 1917, had been brought up in an atmosphere vitiated by the soullessness and

¹⁴ Oldenburg, S. S., and Patrick J. Rollins. *Last Tsar: Nicholas II, his Reign and his Russia*. Gulf Breeze: Academic International Press, 1977. Print. p. 19

obscurantism of Pobiedonostzev.”¹⁵ Although Nicholas’ weakness did eventually lead to the collapse of the Russian empire, he cannot be entirely blamed. His father had consolidated so much power to the autocrat, and though he was able to carry the mantle, Nicholas simply was not able to, and Sack’s criticism of Pobedonostsev is more judgmental than analytical, it is not without precedent: Pobedonostsev’s counsel of Alexander III was the reason the autocrat held so much power. His scathing description of Pobodonostsev continues, as he illustrates what would naturally follow: “It was very evident that Pobiedonostzev was to be permitted to continue his reign of darkness. The revolutionists, who had been completely disheartened, saw now the opportunity to revive their movement.”¹⁶ Had it not been for the assassination of Alexander II before his constitution was ratified, it is likely that the Russian change from agricultural to industrial would have been considerably less bloody.

One of the first actions Nicholas II took, as tsar was the complete rejection of a cabal of zemstva visited the winter palace to propose court reforms and a constitution, as a means of granting more power to the regional governments, a decision severely condemned by Sack and Mazour. Part of these reforms included mandatory education for all subjects of the Russian Empire, something that was direly lacking across the land. But Nicholas II rejected these, following his father’s example of absolute autocrat. “It has come to my knowledge that during the last months there have been heard in some assemblies of the zemstva the voices of those who have indulged in a senseless dream that the zemstva be called upon to participate in the government of the country. I want

¹⁵Sack, Arkady J. *The Birth of the Russian Democracy*. New York: Russian Information Bureau, 1918. Print. p. 75

¹⁶ *ibid.* p. 75

everyone to know that I will devote all my strength to maintain, for the good of the whole nation, the principle of absolute autocracy, as firmly and as strongly as did my late lamented father.”¹⁷

Though this rejection made him unpopular, it was just the first of many refusals to adapt to a changing liberal world, one in which autocracy had no place. After issuing a reformation proclamation, in which he promised little concrete reforms, protestors attempted to march on the Winter Palace, but this rebellion was brutally crushed by the tsar. This was to be a critical turning point in the favorability of Nicholas II, as his perceived callousness in handling the grievances of the working class severely damaged him in their eyes, many of whom felt a paternal link to the royal family. A prominent leader of the March, George Gapon, wrote a public letter to the Tsar,

«Разобьём Вдребезги правительственный насос самодержавия – насос, что кровь нашу из жил тянет, выкачивает, поит, вскармливает лиходеев наших досыта... И да падёт вся кровь, имеющая пролиться – на голову палача-царя да на голову его присных!»¹⁸

«...Break into pieces the pump of autocracy, pumping our blood drawn from the veins, pumping it and feeding our enemies... Let all the blood be poured on the head of our tsar the executioner, and on the heads of his compatriots.»

Gapon went on to call on the socialists and workers to unite against the autocratic

¹⁷ Radziwill, Catherine (1931) *Nicholas II, The Last of the Tsars*, London: Cassell and Company Ltd., p. 100. Text.

¹⁸ Gapon, George *“Воззвание ко всему крестьянскому люду»* Издание Партии . Социалистов-Революционеров. St. Petersburg. 1905. Print.

rule of the tsar, further kindling the embers of disloyalty, and calling into question for the first time since Alexander II whether autocracy and tsarism were viable styles of government. German historian Werner Mosse chronicles letters between imperial figures and family members showing a lack of faith in the tsar's capabilities.¹⁹ After the rebellion, Russia's finance minister Sergei Witte began urgently stressing the need for constitutional reform, and democratic interventionism in revolutionary hotbeds across the country. Though loyalty to the tsar still was the dominant undercurrent among laborers, Witte sensed a growing resentment that could only be appeased by a relinquishment of autocratic power. Nicholas, however, was hurt by the suggestion and took the autumn off ruling to go hunting, leaving the country in the hands of his advisors. During this time, Russia would lose Russo-Japanese war, severely damaging the already rapidly dwindling respect for the royal family. As strikes and mutinies gripped the country, Nicholas was forced to yield to Witte's judgment, agreeing to make steps away from autocracy, establishing the Imperial Duma.²⁰

Though this new democratically elected advisory function was granted legislative power, Nicholas remained a steadfast proponent of autocracy. The first Duma, on their very first day, demanded universal suffrage, land reform, the pardoning of political prisoners, and more democratically elected representatives.²¹ Professor John Westwood describes the tenor of these unilateral demands as “world-weary and unwavering,” as though these reforms had been long overdue. Unsurprisingly, Nicholas reacted furiously,

¹⁹ Mosse, Werner E. *Alexander II and the Modernization of Russia*. London: English Universities Press Ltd., 1958. Print.

²⁰ Ferro, Marc, and Brian Pearce. *Nicholas II: Last of the Tsars*. New York: Oxford U Press, 1994. Print. p. 83

²¹ Westwood, John N. *Endurance and Endeavour: Russian history 1812-1992*. Oxford: Oxford U Press, 1995. Print. p. 68

dissolving the Duma, and only further radicalizing the members of the second Duma, who would convene a year later. While the Social Democrats and revolutionaries did not participate in the first duma, they had won considerable support since then, and took nearly a third of the seats in the second Duma. Sack emphasizes this point, as it highlights the uphill battle the government found itself in by dissolving the first Duma: “Of the 520 members the government had to face now a far stronger opposition than in the First Duma. One of the reasons for the impressive consolidation of the opposing forces was that this time the socialists entered the elections, whereas formerly they had boycotted the Duma altogether. Consequently, 180 Socialists entered the lower chamber, ready to exchange blows with the government. This was something the government had not expected, and instant deadlock between the opposition and the government resulted.”²²

Nicholas and his advisors, most notably the new Prime Minister Pyotr Stolypin tried frantically to cultivate the same bond between tsar and peasant, to take power back from the socialists, but it was to no avail.²³ Stolypin’s reformist tendencies granted the peasantry the loans they needed to buy land- and make something more of themselves, and his tenure as prime minister was marked by his increasingly desperate attempts to hold back revolutionary groups by appeasement and passing legitimate agrarian reforms. By creating a class of landowners, he hoped to both introduce a dependency on the market and improve the daily lives of the peasant class. Stolypin’s reforms would yield productive results, greatly increasing Russian crop production, and injecting much foreign capital into the Russian economy from grain exports.

²² Sack, Arkady J. *The Birth of the Russian Democracy*. New York: Russian Information Bureau, 1918. Print. p. 385

²³ Massie, Robert K. *Nicholas and Alexandra*. Michigan: Ballantine, 2013. Print. p. 65

Stolypin would, however, be assassinated by a student and reactionary sympathizer, an act that cemented in the minds of the populace the tsar's unwillingness to relinquish power, despite his avowed respect and support for Stolypin.

Without Stolypin's sage advice, Nicholas fell back on his old hesitant ways, deaf to the growing storm, and refusing once again to grant the Duma legislative authority. Arguably, the final straw for many was his perceived dragging of Russia into the First World War. Though Russia had always relied on superior numbers, rather than superior technology, the war highlighted for the world the total decay of the Russian military. Russia had nearly 2 million troops ready for combat with another 3 million waiting in reserves. However despite these superior numbers, the government's contempt for heavy industry was now fully on display, with pitiful munitions, almost no heavy artillery, and even lacking in wartime essentials such as boots and coats. Bolsheviks remembering these times would eventually make industrialization a primary priority.

Throughout the war, the Russian government failed to produce any supplies, creating national rebellions. A famine gripped the nation, as many farmers were conscripted into Russia's vast armies, and food prices understandably soared. Simultaneously, severe weather conditions irreparably damaged the Russian railway systems, delivering direly needed emergency shipments of coal and food. The first outright riot began in Petrograd on February 23rd 1917, as the people began to break shop windows, loot aristocrat houses, bring out red banners, and began chanting "down

with the tsar!”²⁴

The tsar, and his minister of the interior Alexander Protopopov, ordered that the rioters be detained, and the demonstrations be halted. However, as most of the police and regular army had gone to fight, the Petrograd garrison was woefully ill equipped to handle the riots.²⁵



Historian J.C. Trewin and Charles Gibbes, a tutor of Nicholas II who shared imprisonment with the Imperial family, have painstakingly chronicled through journal

²⁴ Tames, Richard. *Last of the Tsars: the Life and Death of Nicholas and Alexandra*. London: Pan, 1972. Print. p. 184

²⁵ Trewin, J. C., and Charles Sydney Gibbes. *The House of Special Purpose: an Intimate Portrait of the Last Days of the Russian Imperial Family*. New York: Stein and Day, 1982. Print.

entries and photographs the overrunning of the Petrograd police garrison, and the panicked letters that ensued. Many of these makeshift policemen did not even have rifles or uniforms. Above is a photograph of the entire Tobolsk guard, redirected to attempt to stem the tide of revolution at Petrograd.²⁶ General Khabalov, on the eleventh of March, ordered the police to fire into the crowds of people, killing over 200. Nicholas ordered reinforcements to Petrograd and suspended the Duma, but as if characteristic of almost all his actions up to this point, it was too little too late.

One by one, the regiments mutinied, and by the end of the next day, nearly 100,000 soldiers had joined the revolution.²⁷ The provisional government demanded Nicholas abdicate the throne, and with no options left to him, and his family taken hostage, Nicholas stepped down, ending three centuries of Romanov rule, and violently forcing the change that Nicholas had put off for so long. When the revolution inevitably came to Tobolsk (as seen below²⁸) there were simply no police to restrain them as they marched on the governors house.

Nicholas and his family were caught while trying to flee, imprisoned, quickly tried, and summarily executed in the house where they were caught, bringing to an end the rule of the Romanovs in Russia after centuries. Nicholas was unavailable as a leader, and refused to make concessions, something that simply was an unfeasible position in the

²⁶ Trewin, J. C., and Charles Sydney Gibbes. *The House of Special Purpose: an Intimate Portrait of the Last Days of the Russian Imperial Family*. New York: Stein and Day, 1982. Print. p. 77

²⁷ Tames, Richard. *Last of the Tsars: the Life and Death of Nicholas and Alexandra*. London: Pan , 1972. Print. p. 53

²⁸ Trewin, J. C., and Charles Sydney Gibbes. *The House of Special Purpose: an Intimate Portrait of the Last Days of the Russian Imperial Family*. New York: Stein and Day, 1982. Print. p. 96

cold light of the 20th century. By disregarding his advisors wishes that he relinquish power, work with the Dumas, or even turn rule over to the advisors themselves, Nicholas damned not only himself, but also his country to the unimaginable horrors that would follow.



Although what happened to Nicholas and his family is tragic, and he was canonized in Russian Orthodox Church for facing death with bravery, we must also examine the potential he had for reform. During the war, his efforts were completely directed on victory over Germany and Austro-Hungary, but even when his supply lines dwindled, he still did not consider industrialization, nor did he make any wholehearted attempts before

the war to shift the majority of his subjects away from agricultural lifestyles. If a modern historian could speak directly with Nicholas, it is likely Nicholas' hesitance to act in a truly reformist manner would have been due to Russia's immeasurable vastness. This theory was furthered by reporter Thomas Maugh, whose research into the tsar's family led him to conclude Despite the zemstva, and local governments, enacting change from the top down simply was not feasible because of the disconnectedness and fragility of the Russian Empire. Though the aristocrats lived in architecturally complex palaces in Russia's cities, the vast majority of Russians had to consign themselves to regressive existences, living in squalid abodes in the villages across the empire.



This pre-revolution photo²⁹ demonstrates the simple realities of life for a Russian peasant living just outside Tobolsk. The houses were made out of the timber that

²⁹ Trewin, J. C., and Charles Sydney Gibbes. *The House of Special Purpose: an Intimate Portrait of the Last Days of the Russian Imperial Family*. New York: Stein and Day, 1982. Print. p. 149

surrounded them, and thatched with the straw that grew in their farms nearby. The agricultural lifestyle by which they lived was apparent in every way of their being.

After the downfall of the Tsar, the revolutionaries would bring change across the country, and to do this, they needed to change the very ways that news of this change was delivered.³⁰ Lenin, often credited as the father of the revolution, would become one of the first advocates for the Bolsheviks secret weapon in industrializing Russia: radio.

³⁰ Radziwill, Catherine. *Nicholas II: the Last of the Tsars*. London: Cassell and Company Ltd., 1931. Print. p. 97

Part II

The Revolution

1917-1919

How radical change to the status quo would set the stage for an irrevocable shift in the general populace away from rural farms to factory towns

Nearing the end of World War I, the Russian population overthrew the autocratic rule that had governed them for many centuries and established the world's first Marxist-communist state. The Russian revolution spread across Imperial Russia like a plague, aided by the instability of the Russian government and the deep displeasure of the population. It took very little effort for the revolutionaries to remove the tsar from power, and as the Imperial government fell into shadow, the Bolshevik party emerged above the maelstrom, seizing power in the now-famous October Revolution. The Bolsheviks were able to manipulate affairs during the revolution, and as the revolution fizzled out, wrest complete control from rival factions, and as the formerly brittle Russian Empire gave way to the harsh industrial Soviet Union, great changes to the existing style of life accompanied it.

Despite being a massive world power, late Imperial Russia was notoriously unstable, marked by squabbling aristocrats and increasingly hostile peasantry, industrial workers, and progressives, whose anger was exacerbated by the government's unwillingness to consider any form of social change. Russia was an exceptionally rural country, even into the twentieth century, in stark contrast to other European powers, which had been swept up by the Industrial revolution nearly a half century earlier. The peasantry was widespread across the country, and although serfdom was abolished in 1860, they felt cheated out of the land they had worked for generations. This political powder-keg just needed someone to light the fuse of resentment, and Vladimir Lenin, one of the leaders of the Bolshevik party, had just the idea for unification and direction of the peasants' ire. As one of the earliest proponents of radio and mass-produced printed news as means to connect

the citizenry of Russia to the mouthpieces of the revolution, Lenin was able to manipulate the general populace through demagoguery and appealing to increasingly populist sentiments. In a letter to the Star, Pyotr Durnovo had this to say: "An especially favorable soil for social upheavals is found in Russia, where the masses undoubtedly profess, unconsciously, the principles of Socialism. In spite of the spirit of antagonism to the Government in Russian society, as unconscious as the Socialism of the broad masses of the people, a political revolution is not possible in Russia, and any revolutionary movement inevitably must degenerate into a Socialist movement."³¹ By broadcasting himself as the figurehead of the revolution, Lenin positioned himself to be the face of the Bolshevik party, and directed his increasingly loyal followers as chess pieces. The critical technological development of radio would also later spur the industrial revolution in first great migration in Russian history: the shift from rural, agricultural farms across the expanses of Russia, to the new industrialized towns of the Soviet Union. In fact, in the days before the Soviet government had the means to forcibly move people around the country, the singular development of radio and early Soviet media would prove the most critical of all new devices of incentivization.³²

Richard Pipes chronicles the accusations of the descent into propaganda of the Soviet organization Comintern, a group that advocated world communism through media outreach: "According to Zinoviev, during its first year his organization was no

³¹ Durnovo, Peter, Memorandum to the Star. Star, 1914. Accessed December 2nd 2016. Website. <http://www2.stetson.edu/~psteeves/classes/durnovo.html>

³² Pipes, Richard, Russia Under the Bolshevik Regime, p 86

more than a propaganda association” But this statement cannot be taken at face value because a great deal of Comintern activity was clandestine. It happens to be known, for instance, that the head of the Soviet Red Cross Mission in Vienna gave local Communists 200,000 crowns with which to found their organ, *Weckruf*.”³³

Although the radio served its purpose as an effective communication tool of the Russian Imperial government, it did not spread to the mostly feudal citizenry of Russia. Lenin, however, was an early advocate of radio for citizens, believing it to be an integral tool of control over the masses. While the American government poured funding into research for the purpose of military superiority, the Soviet plan called for funding for radio for the purpose of domestic use. However, because it was not based in audio in Russia yet, the radio still had to be transcribed and then read to the mostly illiterate class of peasantry, particularly in the more rural areas. The difference in the reasoning behind funding radio would speak to the difference between the ideologies of Russia and America. Lenin openly criticized the entire idea of war, saying that if world communism could be achieved, war would cease to be a concern. “We say: our aim is to achieve a socialist system of society, which, by eliminating the division of mankind into classes, by eliminating all exploitation of man by man and nation by nation, will inevitably eliminate the very possibility of war.”³⁴

Though Lenin did not live to see the first radio broadcast in his new state, his

³³ Pipes, Richard, *Russia Under the Bolshevik Regime*, p. 175

³⁴ Lenin, Vladimir. *War And Revolution*. Lecture given May 14, 1917, transcribed April 23rd 1929 in Pravda. Lecture.

advocacy for it would prove one of the first steps in industrializing an agricultural nation. The first radio station opened by the revolutionaries in the Soviet Union was given very strong support from the new Soviet government.. It's first broadcast was on November 23rd 1924 by Comintern. The Comintern radio station began to broadcast daily news reports in a new format, called "Oral Newspaper." Because audible radio had not yet been brought to Russia, a typical audience would be a large crowd of Moscow citizens gathered around a podium in squares. "Появление Термина «громкоговоритель» было связано с таким именно характером вещания, с особы, стилем чтения материалов по радио, обращенного к множеству людей, собравшихся в одной месте («Рупор усиливающий телефон и говорящий толпе»)).³⁵ It would not be for around ten more years that Russian citizens began to have vocal radios in their own homes.

In Britain and the U.S, the literacy rate among working class people rose sharply in the late 1800s, allowing newspapers to become one of the most profitable forms of media. This sudden change in the size and general class of the audience also changed the format of the newspaper. Because it was originally made for just the upper crust, news tended to focus more on gossip and foreign affairs, but as the target audience shifted, the writing style and nature of the stories shifted as well.

Unfortunately, this trend did not arrive to the common Russian citizens in time for the revolution. Newspapers by and large never truly took root in Russia in the

³⁵ Zakharine, Dmitri, and Nils Meise. *Electrified Voices: Medial, Socio-historical and Cultural Aspects of Voice Transfer*. Göttingen: Niedersachs, 2013. Print.

19th century, because with only a literate upper class, the profitability was very low. However, the revolutionaries realized that printed media was a very efficient means of control over ideas, and control over ideas gave them control over the daily life of Russians. Lenin himself said “A newspaper is not only a collective propagandist and a collective agitator, it is also a collective organiser.”³⁶

The first newspaper that was designed for and paid for by revolutionaries was *Pravda*, founded on May 5th, 1912, which advocated communism and far left before the revolution actually broke out in earnest. The newspaper began before the October Revolution, but it is still operating today, from the same office on Pravda Street in Moscow. After the revolution, *Pravda* was acquired by the Central Committee of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union³⁷, as a political mouthpiece. Pipes shares an ominous description of the consolidation of *Pravda* by the government, and subsequent defamation of Trotsky, a father of the revolution. “Kamenev and Zinoviev wanted Trotsky expelled from the Party, but Stalin thought this not prudent: on his urging, the motion was rejected. The Politburo published in *Pravda* a resolution stating that notwithstanding Trotsky’s improper behavior, it was inconceivable to carry on work without him: his continued collaboration in the highest party organs was absolutely indispensable. Realizing that the regime of the ‘troika’ was coming under increasing criticism, Stalin thought it advisable to pretend

³⁶ Lenin, Vladimir. *What is to be Done? The Plan for an All-Russia Political Newspaper*. New York: International Publishers, 1901. Print.

³⁷ Pipes, Richard. *Russia under the Bolshevik Regime: 1919-1924*. London: Harvill, 1997. Print. p. 485-487

that he wished to retain Trotsky as a valued if errant associate.”³⁸ The acquisition of Pravda led to a dramatic change in the writing style as what was once a freely critical newspaper became much more about government support and advocacy. Each story was carefully crafted by a team of clandestine officials to deliver most efficiently the message of the state. By controlling the hearts and minds of a people, Stalin understood it would be much easier to manipulate poorly educated, largely illiterate people to give up their farms and cottages by promising them a worthy ideological goal. With this came the seeds of the first great migration.

The architects of the former Russian Empire who chose to remain in the country were pressured to denounce their old Classical styles, and began to endeavor in formalism, a futuristic and simple style, free of the older complexities of the palaces. The residents of the city apartments were evicted, and replaced by new tenants. As the Soviets had little time to achieve their great dreams of industrialization, everything was done as quickly as possible. In each communal apartment, a family was granted one room, while bathroom and kitchen were shared amongst the families. The interiors were quite simple, as the focus was on function rather than anything else.

These new media developments both facilitated and initiated the transition from agricultural to industrial and as the Soviet mass-media propaganda machine began in earnest, it would lay the groundwork for a mass migration to factories. Although the industrial working class had technically already come to Russia,

³⁸ Pipes, Richard. *Russia under the Bolshevik Regime: 1919-1924*. London: Harvill, 1997. Print. p. 485

factory workers were clustered nearly exclusively in Moscow and Petrograd. Being such an agricultural society, urban overcrowding was not a problem ever before encountered by the Russian government, and frequent rotations of power coupled with a rapidly changing political paradigm meant that the Russians were wholly unprepared to make such a dramatic shift. With so few Russians receiving any form of higher education prior to the revolution, enabling mass media was one of the earliest motivational tools employed by the Bolsheviks in the pursuit of an industrialized Russia. The shift away from media of old and ready embracing of the new enabled the great changes the later Soviet government would seek to enact.

Part III

The Monolith Rises

1920-1945

How the Soviet Union forced a quick, but unsustainable growth of industrial power and sanctioned the dragging of it's citizens into factories

After the Soviet Union had established itself as the new stable power in Russia, Joseph Stalin, a former protégé of Lenin, was able to secure power after Lenin's death in 1924, and confirm himself General Secretary of the Central Committee of the Communist Party. Stalin was born in modern day Georgia, then the Tiflis Governorate of the Russian Empire. His bloody reign would be marked with a pyrrhic victory over the Nazi Empire, pogroms against the Jews, and the purges in which he would exile millions of his countrymen to work camps in Siberia. Stalin feared that the economies of the great western powers would soon advance too far ahead of Russia, and they would forfeit their delicate advantage. In a speech on to the Fourth Plenum of Industrial Managers in 1931, Stalin stated, "We are 100 years behind the advanced countries. WE must make good this lag in ten years. Either we do it, or they crush us!"³⁹ boldly setting the precedent that would guide economic planning for the Soviet Union.

Stalin began, as early as 1928, setting up his first five year plan, using the State Planning Commission set up by Lenin in 1921.⁴⁰ His plan involved seemingly impossibly optimistic targets for production across all industries, and a revamping of housing, power, and transport. Workers were encouraged by radio and other propaganda techniques to meet their individual targets, and those who could not would face punishments. By changing the behavior of the workers, the Soviets

³⁹ Stalin, Joseph. *On Soviet Industrialization*. February 1931. Lecture. http://academic.shu.edu/russianhistory/index.php/Stalin_on_Rapid_Industrialization

⁴⁰ Sebag-Montefiore, Simon. *Young Stalin*. New York: Vintage , 2008. Print. p. 273

aimed to wipe away the working practices of the formerly agricultural peasants, used to working at their own speed, and without a clock, and converted them, through propaganda, punishment, and rewards, into factory-workers. Absenteeism and even tardiness were strictly forbidden, and workers who took time off would likely face termination or worse. Though other countries had had the time to slowly phase out the agricultural practices and lifestyles and phase in the newer, fast-paced lifestyle, the Soviet Union would attempt to make this shift in a few short months.

Early in the Soviet Union, the rewards for meeting the goals set in the five year plan would be vast, including higher salaries, more lenience, and even coveted extra days off from work. However, it became apparent early (around 1932)⁴¹ that this would not be enough to convince people to work beyond their capabilities. As workers began leaving the new factory towns to attempt to find some other work more in keeping with their old lives, the Soviet government introduced something that would render the shift from farm to town permanent: internal passports.

Although Imperial Russia had a similar system of internal passport, this was done with the explicit goal of preventing laborers from around the empire leaving their rural areas and coming to the cities to cause trouble for the regime. However, in 1932, the new Soviet government found itself facing the opposite problem: people leaving the towns to try to return to a rural lifestyle. It's declared purpose was the improve the registration of population and flush out hiding kulaks and enemies of

⁴¹ Schaich, David. *The Bolsheviks, the Masses, and October*. New York: n.p., 2006. Print. p. 8

the state. Although it would not be finalized until the mid 1970s, the system began by documenting workers living near the newly built factories. Now, in order to move about the country, one needed to apply with the Ministry of Internal Affairs.⁴²

The internal passport was not a new idea, nor was it a uniquely Russian concept, but it was indispensable to the regime more so than in any other place. Because of the shock of transitioning from agricultural to industrial so quickly, it was understandable that the new laborers would attempt to leave. Those who, just fifteen years prior were farmers operating at their own pace, found themselves confined to the clock and assembly line of the factory.

Another policy implemented by the early Soviet Union in pursuit of a completely industrialized landscape was the labor camp replacing the detainment facility.⁴³ Stalin's former allies Zinoviev and Kamenev were subjected to a show-trial and summarily executed. This would be the start of the great purge. Opponents of the Stalinist regime, which included millions of peasants who opposed collectivization, poets, authors, doctors, any of the higher educated, Kulaks, and anyone who simply opposed a governmental policy. The propaganda stated that these people stood in the way of the proletariat through their hysterical naysaying, and they would be reeducated through useful employment but the truth was far more sinister. These people, by the millions, were conscripted into slavery, building

⁴² Clarkson, Jesse Dunsmore. *A History of Russia*. N.p.: Random House, 1969. Print. p. 83

⁴³ Cunningham, Kevin. *Joseph Stalin and the Soviet Union*. Greensboro, NC: M. Reynolds Pub., 2006. Print. p. 123

Russian roads, railways, bridges, canals, factories, and apartments. Anything that was ordered by the Soviet was to be constructed at the expense of the labor forces. Forced by the point of bayonet to tear down any semblance of old Russia and replace it with a modern Soviet-approved version. His paranoia meant that no one was safe: even closest advisors and lifelong friends often faced execution or exile. Later in life, on reflection, Stalin “...admitted to ‘grave mistakes... more mistakes than might have been expected.... Nevertheless the Purge of 1933-36 was unavoidable and its results, on the whole, were beneficial.’”⁴⁴

These camps were supervised by Soviet secret police, and to this day, documents about the gulag are shrouded in secrecy, and it is likely that many of the horrors committed will never be brought to light. Personal accounts have been recorded, most notably by the Soviet dissident Alexandr Solzhenitsyn. In his book **The Gulag Archipelago**, Solzhenitsyn demonstrates that he is critically aware of the problems with the obsession of robust ideological purity:

“Thanks to ideology, the twentieth century was fated to experience evil-doing on a scale calculated in the millions. This cannot be denied, nor passed over, nor suppressed. How, then, do we dare insist that evil-doers do not exist? And who was it that destroyed these millions? Without evil-doers there would have been no archipelago.

There was a rumor going the rounds between 1918 and 1920 that the Petrograd Cheka, headed by Uritsky, and the Odessa Cheka, headed by Deich, did not

⁴⁴ *ibid.* p. 136

shoot all those condemned to death but fed some of them live to the animals in the city zoos. I do not know whether this is truth, or, if there were such cases, how many were there. But I wouldn't set out to look for proof either. Following the practice of the blue caps, I would propose that they prove to us that this was impossible. How else could they get food for the zoos in those famine years? Take it away from the working class? Those enemies were going to die anyway, so why couldn't their deaths support the zoo economy of the Republic, and thereby assist our march into the future? Wasn't it expedient?

That is the precise line the Shakespearean evildoer could not cross. But the evildoer with ideology does cross it, and his eyes remain dry and clear."⁴⁵

Solzhenitsyn sees the clear danger presented by the propagandizing of the government, as it enables the most reprehensible behaviors of humanity to be not only sanctioned, but encouraged if politically beneficial. However, it seems that he does not hate his Soviet captors, as he simultaneously understands the necessity. Without the gulags, and the enslavement of millions, the country simply could not have feasibly materialized as quickly as it did, and their ideological pursuit of the "Worker's Paradise" blinded those in power to the atrocities they were committing. The constant postponing of the industrial economy by Tsar Alexander III and his son were now forcing the Soviet government to make up for lost time. Stalin's rule, though incredibly brutal, would see many great changes enacted.

⁴⁵ Solzhenitsyn, Aleksandr I. *The Gulag Archipelago*. New York: Harper Collins, 1979. Print. p. 367

Gulags were necessary to force a modernization but at a cost that the citizens of the Soviet Union would pay for dearly. Working millions for long hours, little food, and no pay, with minimal protection from the elements was certainly a cheap way to rebuild the country quickly, and gather resources to fuel the new economy, and when one is so ideologically blinded by visions of paradise, one has no qualms about working people by the millions to their early deaths. In 1928, approximately 7,000,000 workers went to the camps, and before the end of the year, more than a third of them would die. During the Stalinist purges, this number would climb to around 12 million⁴⁶, many innocent⁴⁷ by our standards, buried in unmarked graves, out in the permafrost of Siberia.

Despite the cost, the effects on the Soviet Union were dramatic. It became, in just ten years, the second largest industrial power in the world, a herculean effort. New steel plants, hydroelectric dams, railways, and massive grey apartment buildings appeared across the landscape. Factories were established, and around them grew towns full of laborers. A concrete example of this theory exists in the town of Magnitogorsk. Stalin modeled the town after the one-industry steel towns of the United States, Pittsburgh Pennsylvania and Gary Indiana. Magnitogorsk was a focal point in tours of the prosperity of the Soviet Union. In just four years (1928-1932), it had gone from a rural, disconnected village to a massive titan of industry, with workers numbering more than half a million.

⁴⁶ Applebaum, Anne. *Gulag: An Anthology*. New Haven, CT: Yale U Press, 2011. Print. p. 134

⁴⁷ Clarkson, Jesse Dunsmore. *A History of Russia*. N.p.: Random House, 1969. Print. p. 301

Stalin's ascent also heralded the beginning of another shift in Russian architectural styles, particularly during the war. Monumentalism took root as a boastful way to demonstrate to the world that Russia was not the backwards country of the past, but a shining example of modernism.



The Ministry of Foreign Affairs, one of Stalin's seven great skyscrapers,

embodies this principle. The imposing façade moves away from the simplicity of the Bolshevik formalism, in favor of extravagant conservative design, and vivid decorative features. Stalinist architecture would change the landscape of Moscow, and much of his work still remains today.⁴⁸

In 1938, the Soviet Union launched another Five Year Plan, to focus on production of modern household goods, something that Stalin considered a hallmark of a modern industrial country.⁴⁹ This plan came to an abrupt halt when the Nazis invaded the Soviet Union. This would put to test Stalin's modernization of Russia. Would it meet the same humiliating defeat as it had in Crimea under the tsars? As we know now, Russia was able to repel the Nazi invaders, despite being armed with less modern weapons.

Even Russian agriculture required industrialization. In the early 1900s, many peasants still used horse-drawn plows instead of tractors, and Stalin decided that in order to achieve the food production quotas set in the five year plan, the Soviets would have to alter the ways in which their agriculture was organized. In this, he needed collectivization, something which many peasants, and kulaks, (the slightly richer farming class) were reluctant to do, a problem that led to pre-war famines. However, by the time the war began in earnest, Stalin had used his purges and secret police to thoroughly eliminate the Kulaks, and force the peasants into his new collectivized farms, the Kolkhozes. Here, Stalin would undertake another ambitious

⁴⁸ McNeal, Robert H. *Stalin: Man and Ruler*. N.p.: Macmillan in association with St. Anthony's College, Basingstoke, Hampshire, 1988. Print.

⁴⁹ *ibid* p. 67

project: full literacy of the former peasant class. In the same way as production had been, the agricultural sector was upgraded by Stalin's rapid industrialization, with heavy costs to the populace at large.

In conclusion, without Stalin's feverish support of extreme-left positions of revitalization and establishment of Russian industry, the Soviet Union would never have been able to accelerate its military and industrial capabilities to meet the demands of World War II. Had such rapid advancement not taken place, it's likely that Russia would still be a backwards country. While industry would have eventually taken root, as it does everywhere, those who simply refused to adapt to a new market environment would have heavily retarded its peaceful advancement. Even one of the founding fathers of the revolution, Leon Trotsky, recognized this, and the necessary evil that Russia was forced to undertake at the risk of being destroyed by foreign powers if they did not.⁵⁰ Stalin's harshness against any and all opposition forced this industrialization in just under two decades, at the cost of millions of lives. However, this cost is not something that should be accepted, and Russia still pays the price for the purges. The apartments dotted across Russia did allow it to establish itself as a modern country, but these were built by slave labor. The factory towns had replaced the farms as Russia's primary source of economic growth, but the workers in these factories were both forbidden to leave and compelled to work. Solzhenitsyn, in his book, prophetically warns of the future destined for Russia because of the cutting of corners and forcing opposition

⁵⁰ Trotsky, Leon. *Trotsky's Diary in Exile*. Trans. Elena Zarudnaya.. Comp. Harvard University, 1935. Print. Entry 37.

underground.

“In keeping silent about evil, in burying it so deep within us that no sign of it appears on the surface, we are implanting it, and it will rise up a thousand fold in the future. When we neither punish nor reproach evildoers, we are not simply protecting their trivial old age, we are thereby ripping the foundations of justice from beneath new generations.”⁵¹

⁵¹ Solzhenitsyn, Aleksandr I. *The Gulag Archipelago*. New York: Harper Collins, 1979. Print. p. 485

Part IV

Gloom

1945-1991

How the unstable economy set up by Stalin could not be saved,
and how the Soviet Union would focus instead on damage
control for an inevitable collapse

The Soviet Union has today become a symbol of totalitarianism; even the hammer and sickle, designed to be associated with the common worker, has become synonymous with a vastly overreaching government, marked by extrajudicial disappearances, mass killing, forced starvations, and other such monstrous behavior. In a totalitarian state, the government is forced, in order to predict and control the economy, to control every action undertaken by its citizens, which leads to the eradication of basic human rights, and eventually, a disregard for the value of human life in general. The early Soviet Union set the stage with its extreme violence and intimidation, but the apathy, despondency, and gloom of the later Soviet Union led to its collapse.

After the aggressive policies of Stalinism had given way to the coldly bureaucratic policies of the middle Soviet Union, Russian industries faced not a collapse, but a decay brought on by the overwhelming feelings of hopelessness surrounding the governmental bureaus tasked with managing said industries. These feelings would prevail for several decades after the war, during which Russia remained an opposite of the US as the only other superpower left in what came to be known as the Cold War. General Secretary Mikhail Gorbachev, the final secretary of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union, would eventually bring about a revolution in Russia. But this would not be one as before. Gorbachev had learned the lessons of Stalinism, and change would be brought about through increased freedom and peaceable transition of economic structuring.

In examining what led up to the Soviet Union's collapse, we must begin in post-

war Soviet Union. After Soviet Spies successfully stole details of the United States' secret weapon, the atomic bomb, they detonated their first prototype in 1949, signaling to the world their unequivocal dominance in the East, and beginning the nuclear arms race. The Soviet government, having suffered heavy losses in World War II, began reaching out to Communist groups around the world, formalizing alliances with China and Korea. As the west began operations in the Korean War, and the Berlin Blockade took effect, the relations between East and West deteriorated almost completely in just two years. In 1953, the United States and Soviet Union tested their first thermonuclear bombs.

The Soviets also established the Warsaw Pact, the Soviet counter to NATO, coming as close to a war scenario with the West as they ever would. However, a new force was brewing in Russia: the anti-Stalinist sentiments had come to a head by dissidents in the political class who worried Stalin's impetuosity would bring them destruction. Nikita Khrushchev, one such person, gave a speech to the 20th Communist party conference in secret, harshly rebuking Stalinism and Stalin himself as having a dictatorial rule and only maintaining power through a cult of personality. This speech (О культе личности и его последствиях) would herald yet another period of optimistic transformation. Khrushchev opposed the purges, the consolidation of power, and above all else, the reestablishment by Stalin of a caste system.

Khrushchev's support grew quickly, and a new era dawned, marked by the Post-Stalin thaw. Khrushchev had a simple peasant background and worked to

stabilize relations with the West, and it was his cool head that helped him navigate the U-2 crisis more soberly than Stalin likely would have. In 1960, a United States spy plane was shot down over the Soviet Union, something that could not go unpunished, and required the Soviet government's attention. Because the United States was now conclusively shown to be spying on the Soviet Union, Khrushchev's hand was forced by the international community: inaction would be weakness, and the U-2 crisis hurt the relationship by forcing the Soviet government to increase military spending and decrease domestic spending. This inadvertently led to the second blow to his domestic agenda: because the Soviet Union had redoubled their war efforts, the United States was forced to increase theirs as well, and this increase in arms led to the Cuban missile crisis just two years later, due to the accelerating tide of war.

Domestically, Khrushchev dealt with demand for residences by developing the Khrushchyovka, a low-cost, concrete-paneled apartment, and typically about five stories tall. These were built under Khrushchev across the entire Soviet Union, and as they were prefabricated, their production continued right up until the collapse of the Soviet Union. As the Soviet Union tried to embrace the industrial age, nothing can be so distinctly architecturally representative of this mood as the Khrushchyovka; grey, concrete, cheap, prone to insulation failures and plumbing failures, and all the same.



This simple Khrushchyovka still stands today on the edge of Moscow's business district. The brick-and-mortar style seen here was rare, and was typically replaced with simple concrete. The five-story style was necessary because the water could not effectively be brought to higher story buildings.

Under Khrushchev, the Stalinist political violence and rigid centralization of economics would come to an end. His criticisms and calls for reform were not

hollow, and his destalinization efforts would be sweeping, economically. The shift away from farms was so harshly implemented that it was irreversible, and anyway, Khrushchev was of the opinion that the sacrifices made by millions in pursuit of rapid industrialization should not be in vain. However he also held agricultural production in higher esteem than industrial production.

Khrushchev's establishment of the Sovnarkhoz system, localized central economies, made the economy more efficient, and less centralized, and under him, grain output would rise from 83 million tons to 136 million tons between the years of 1953 and 1958. However, virgin land cultivation and overly optimistic harvest schedules meant that these harvests would taper and fail after successive years. As the Soviet Union moved into the mid 1960s, party officials would replace Khrushchev with Leonid Brezhnev.

Deemed a 'safe pick' by most in government, Brezhnev was notoriously cautious. This was touted by the Central Committee as one of his greatest assets over the at-times brash Khrushchev. In a real-life example of the idiom "be careful what you wish for," this supposed asset would lead the Soviet Union into a period of decline. He reversed Khrushchev's destalinization efforts, and he opposed the Sovnarkhozy from the beginning, limiting their authority and attempting to recentralize the government around Moscow planning committees.

Very little good or bad would happen under Brezhnev, and his plans simply led

the Soviet Union into stagnancy.⁵² Historian John Keep cites growth rate estimates between 1965 and 1985 as follows⁵³:

Growth Rate Estimates between 1965-1985

	1965-1970	1970-1975	1975-1980	1980-1985
Western	4.9	3.0	1.9	1.8
Khanin	4.1	3.2	1.0	0.6

This slow descent into economic stagnation manifested itself as shrinking consumption of goods, increased cost of groceries 231, and decreased consumption of 'exotic' or imported foods. Below is the percentage growth⁵⁴ in the consumption of selected consumer goods, as it appeared in the years immediately following Khrushchev, and then after a decade of Brezhnevism.

Sector	1966-1970	1976-1980
Food	4.3	1.3
Soft Goods	7.1	3.1
Durables	9.1	5.4
Personal	5.8	3.4

Lastly, the quality of food in the later Soviet Union would fall as well, most particularly in the more remote regions and towns, possibly setting the stage for a

⁵² Bacon, Edwin, and Mark Sandle. *Brezhnev Reconsidered*. New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2014. Print. p. 16.

⁵³ Keep, John. *Last of the Empires: A History of the Soviet Union 1945-1991*, Oxford Press. Print. p. 223

⁵⁴ *ibid.* p. 228

migration away to only the largest regional cities after the collapse. Food consumption between the years of 1965 and 1985 is as follows, according to John Keep, would decline as prices sharply increased, particularly on bread. In 1979, a loaf of bread in Moscow was nearly five times more valuable than a loaf of bread in London, and seven times more than in Washington.⁵⁵

He made some minor social reforms, such as the establishment of a minimum wage and five-day workweek, and the subsidization of food production costs. However, the farms were still unproductive, so this pay was pointless, as there was no food to actually spend their money on. Despite this, living standards did improve. Nearly three quarters of Russians owned a television in 1975, compared with one quarter when Brezhnev took power.

Brezhnev's changes to housing were, as many of his other changes, minor. The old five-story Khrushchovky were revitalized into ten-story Brezhnevky. These were slightly less prone to insulation and plumbing failures, but again represented the cold industrialization of the dreary state of the Russian economy. The Brezhnevky did, however, allow for increased urban growth. Below are two examples of a typical Brezhnevka: mundane and easily constructed, but necessary for housing the influx of workers.

⁵⁵ *ibid.* p. 231





These buildings, are, unlike the Stalinist apartments and the Khrushchovky, still widely used in Russia today. As so many were built, they are a plentiful resource which the modern Russian government utilizes to the fullest extent.

As the wonderment of the industrial age wore off and was replaced with a more apathetic efficiency, Brezhnevky were exactly the appropriate accommodation: cheap, quick to make, and larger than Khrushchovky. In 1960, Russian urban population was at about 53.731%, and when Brezhnev stepped down after two decades of constructing Brezhnevky around the country, urban population had risen steadily to 71.597%.⁵⁶ Though it was not exactly a comfortable time, it was

⁵⁶ WorldBank. "Urban population (% of total)" *Urban population*. World Bank Organization, 2015. Web. 26 Nov. 2017. Website <http://data.worldbank.org/indicator/SP.URB.TOTL.IN.ZS?locations=RU>

neither particularly uncomfortable, and Brezhnev's rule would pave the way for Gorbachev, modernization, and, ultimately, the collapse of the Soviet System altogether.

Nikita Gorbachev, the next major Soviet leader, facing pressure from the international community for Russia's involvements in Afghanistan, began a period of westernization. In May 1985, Gorbachev gave a speech in Leningrad, decrying the slow economic growth under Brezhnev, and most notably calling for sweeping reforms to the substandard industrial age housing. As the industrial age drew to a close, and Brezhnev's stagnant economy had not propelled Russia nearly as far as Stalin's or Khrushchev's, Gorbachev now would force another great change to the Russian system. The rank-and-file industrialized world governed by a monolithic entity and checked by labor unions, which had dominated the political landscape across all modern countries, was about to see a paradigm shift as the information age dawned. Old rigidity would face necessary deregulation as the age demanded economically nimble markets, or be destroyed, and Gorbachev had learned the lessons of Stalinism and Brezhnev's soft apathetic government.

Gorbachev would later introduce glasnost, a series of freedoms for the Soviet people that allowed for the first time in three generations to see parts of their government that had been unturned in decades. The press was given freedom, political prisoners returned from exile, freedom of speech was granted, and most importantly, two years later, Gorbachev would step down as chairman and retake command as president, signaling to the world the end of Stalinist communism in the

Soviet Union.

Gorbachev's architectural contributions were again, a simple increase in size, both of the buildings, and the individual apartment units.



With modern plumbing came the ability to make taller buildings, and these would prove critical in the shifts to the major cities after the collapse of the Soviet Union.

These Gorbachev-era apartments would be the final evolution of the simple style of

Soviet apartment.

Although this can be a touchy subject with many Russians, the fact of the matter is that it was precisely the apathy brought on by Brezhnev and the later Soviet politics that discounted the mighty Soviet military. Professor John Lewis Gaddis of Yale University writes in his book *"We Now Know: Rethinking Cold War History"*.⁵⁷

"The end of the Cold War made it blindingly clear that military strength does not always determine the course of great events: the Soviet Union collapsed, after all, with its arms and armed forces fully intact. Deficiencies in other kinds of power-economic, ideological, cultural, moral-caused the USSR to lose its superpower status, and we can now see that a slow but steady erosion in those non-military capabilities had been going on for some time."

Even with such a massive powerful military, the Soviet Union's mistreatment of its own people brought on a feeling of pointlessness. Alcoholism ran rampant as people tried to cope with the grinding gloom. Although the government still had the people under its thumb, it had lost the hearts and minds of its citizens. They had, from an ideological and cultural standpoint, completely lost faith in their leadership. The KGB and secret police forces increased dramatically following 1963, and this added to the despondency. Many East Germans and other citizens of Soviet satellites were shot trying to escape the despair, which only served to increase and validate

⁵⁷ Gaddis, John Lewis. *We Now Know: Rethinking Cold War History*. Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1998. Print.

people's distrust of the actions perpetrated by the regime. Historian Vladislav Zubok also discussed at one point the importance of leadership in the Soviet Union, and the fact that near the end of the cold war, the Soviet Union did not have a nationally heroic figure in Gorbachev to rally around, as the United States did in Ronald Reagan, was a distinct disadvantage. In fact, as Zubok frames it:⁵⁸

The United States was also lucky to have an enemy that represented the ideological, economic, and political mirror image of Western capitalism. This enemy was the product of the European search for modernity. In other words, the Cold War was a competition between very distant cousins, who fought over the best way to modernize and globalize the world, not between the friends and foes of modernization and globalization.

Gorbachev was effective in modernizing the economic and political system in Russian through democratization and liberalization, but perhaps most importantly, Gorbachev did not allow himself to fall into the trap of becoming corrupted by the mass of power he had. In my opinion, had he not had the moral understanding that absolute power corrupts absolutely, he would not have sought to limit his own powers nor the powers of his government. This anti-autocratic attitude could not cohabit with the paradigm of government already in place. Gorbachev deserves credit for standing by his beliefs, which are much more moral than the system in place before his, and he deserves credit for his attempts to modernize without

⁵⁸ Zubok, V. M. *A Failed Empire: The Soviet Union in the Cold War from Stalin to Gorbachev*. Chapel Hill: U of North Carolina Press, 2009. Print.

completely tearing down the society he was governing, as the Bolsheviks did the tsar. Many Russians today feel that Gorbachev betrayed them by collapsing the system, and was therefore responsible for the ensuing chaos, but this is no more his fault than the fault of those former citizens of the Soviet Union who would take advantage of the chaos, harming others in the process.

When a government has to enforce a system of controlled economics, it requires a great degree of intimidation of its citizens, a factor that contributes greatly to the results of the Cold War. When this archaic and unfair system could no longer persist in the modern world, Glastnost and Perestroika came, allowing people to see how their government worked (or didn't.) The dispirited populace struggled with rampant alcoholism, which led to less work output, which in turn led to mass starvation across the poorer areas of the Soviet Union.

Freedom of speech is an integral part of a free society. In the words of Ronald Reagan, the sitting American president who famously asked Chairman Gorbachev to "tear down the wall" separating East and West Berlin: "Freedom is never more than one generation away from extinction. We didn't pass it to our children in the bloodstream. It must be fought for, protected, and handed on for them to do the same, or one day we will spend our sunset years telling our children, and our children's children what it once was like in the United States, when men were free."

Gorbachev's resolve in bringing more freedom to the Soviet People, even at the expense of the stability of government should be the position of all world leaders. Though the later Soviet Union was not marked by the same tyrannical fear that the

early Soviet Union had under Stalin, it was a bureaucratic and unfair system nonetheless, and one that was doomed to fail from the moment it was implemented. Gorbachev had learned the lessons of the past, and if the Soviet Union's trajectory was unavoidable, his sweeping reforms would come by legislation rather than force.

Part V

Collapse and Rebirth

1991-1999

How Gorbachev's deliberate wrecking of the Soviet system prevented another revolution, but led to pandemonium across a new nation.

The struggles a new nation undergoes when a great political change occurs are likely the cause of millions of deaths since the dawn of civilization. Even today, developing countries which face coup d'états can see shockingly high amounts of casualties. The Soviet Union had already undergone three great periods of transformation before Gorbachev: the extremity of Stalinism, the tolerance of Krushchevism, and the apathy of Brezhnevism. During this time, the Russian economy evolved from agricultural to industrial in just a few short decades, an absolutely herculean effort. However, because Russia joined the industrial revolution in earnest so late, it hadn't the time to build a strong foundation for an industrial culture before another great age beckoned: the information age.

The fall of communism was precipitated by Gorbachev's injection of personal freedom into the country⁵⁹, but was more than just a mere political event. Economics and politics were fused seemingly inescapably, and this left the Russian people with very few ideas of democracy. But Gorbachev's recognition of both the inhumanity of a monolithic non-democratic government and the impracticality of a centrally planned economy tasked him with the difficult task of liberalization. As we know today, Russia's transition to a democracy has been fraught with difficulty, but how can this be if the principles on which it was founded were fundamentally sound? The dilemma that Russia has demonstrated to the world is that trying to reconstruct a socialist government in the traditions of capitalism and democracy

⁵⁹ Sanghera, B., S. Amsler, and T. Yarkova. "Theorising Social Change in Post-Soviet Countries : Critical Approaches." *WorldCat*. N.p., 30 Mar. 2016. Web. 31 Mar. 2017. <<http://www.worldcat.org/title/theorising-social-change-in-post-soviet-countries-critical-approaches/oclc/173721341>>.

leads the two coming into conflict with each other.

The establishment of democracy in a non-capitalist country often hinders capitalist growth because of reactionary apprehension of change⁶⁰, and programs that further capitalist goals often shake the unstable foundations of a new democracy. These problems are at the heart of Russia's difficulties to this day. The creation of a democratic nation-state from the skeletal remains of a socialist government has led typically younger Russians to clash with typically older Russians on whether Gorbachev's revisions were for the best. But just because Gorbachev was a moral man who was not oppressive does not mean the system prevented oppressive chairmen. Another Brezhnev or Stalin, who either largely ignored or openly oppressed his people would be able to take the reigns, and if so, the Russian rebirth would not have been so peaceable, and likely would have ended in open revolt, in the same way that the Romanians revolted against the Ceausescus in the later 1980s. But this was to a much smaller degree, and the problems facing Romania after the revolution were much more concentrated than those of 90s Russia.

Historian Philippe Schmitter writes in his book "*Dangers and Dilemmas of Democracy*" that there is "no simply democratic way of deciding what a nation and its corresponding political unit should be."⁶¹ This is precisely what the Russian

⁶⁰ Jeffries, I. "Guide to the Economies in Transition, A - CRCnetBASE." *WorldCat*. N.p., 1996. Web. 18 Oct. 2016.

<<http://www.crcnetbase.com/doi/pdfplus/10.4324/9780203028490.fmatt>>.

⁶¹ Schmitter, Philippe C. *Dangers, Dilemmas and Prospects for the Consolidation of Democracy*. New York: n.p., 1993. Print.p. 66

Federation attempted to do, and to add to the confusion, nationalist elements in multiethnic areas across Russia required force beyond a typical democracy in order to preserve the integrity of the nation-state. In regions like Sakhalin and Tatarstan, rich national resources and different ethnicities to Moscow have led to chaotic negotiations about whether Russia should even continue in its current form.

Boris Yeltsin, the first Russian president after Gorbachev, was faced with these challenges, and his presidential term encapsulates the rough time period in which Russia was in flux, and is called in Russia today the crazy 90s. Yeltsin showed in February 1994 that he was willing to compromise in the name of defusing potential revolutions. Staving these off required his signing of a treaty with Tatarstan, granting it rights to its own international relations and providing it with considerable autonomy. This treaty showed the absolute limit to the concessions that Yeltsin was willing to make in pursuit of preservation.

At the same time however, Yeltsin was beginning the First Chechen War. When Chechen separatists attempted to break away from Russia, Yeltsin crushed the dissenters brutally, killing over 80,000 Chechen civilians. Though he was willing in cases like Tatarstan to make concessions, he also demonstrated a total unwillingness to allow his country to fall apart, and was willing to assume an authoritarian role to suppress the rebellion.

However we cannot blame Yeltsin entirely for the problems. Though he may have exacerbated them, he was not the cause. The collapse of the Soviet system was a crucial turning point for both the Russian culture and the world in general. All the

political developments that had hinged on the assumption that the Soviet Union would be a continuing success were now questioned, shaking the foundations of several nations. Karl Marx, the philosopher behind the ideals of Soviet communism, had assured people in his book the Communist Manifesto that “The history of all hitherto existing society is the history of class struggle.”⁶² These struggles were, according to Marx, to lead a great revolution in which national identities would be foregone as classes united against one another. The proletariat across the world would rise against the bourgeoisie and that this was the ultimate fate of humanity.

The fall would certainly demonstrate some flaw with the theory. The Soviet Union had moved along the correct trajectory following Marxist theory closely but still failed. To understand what happened, we must therefore examine the very roots of communist theory, as it was implemented by the Soviets.

Stalinism is arguably where they first deviated, but pursuit of the ideals of Marxism continued until sometime between Brezhnev’s rule and Gorbachev’s. In the later Soviet model, under Brezhnev, transactional decisions were not to be made but by the educated members of the Soviet. These highly educated professionals had much more authority than the leaders in the west. If we were to assume that this system was governed by the ten smartest people in the world, as a hyperbolic example, two things about this system must be realized: first of all, the members of the Soviet government didn’t always agree. This should tell you something right away about the nature of philosophy. Second, there are always several areas in

⁶² Marx, Karl. Engels, Friedrich. *The Communist Manifesto and Other Writings*. N.p., 1848. p. 79

which the average able-minded adult knows more than all ten of the smartest people on planet earth. It could be something as innocuous as the details of the life of Alexander the Great, or it could be the correct temperature at which to store fresh eggs, or how to properly string a tennis racket. There will always be many things where common citizens know more than those in charge of them. The American and Russian economies, around 1900, were radically different in terms of size and organization, but the basic idea is the same in any society: every day, many individual transactions all across the land take place, in a nation of 250 million people (the population of 1970 Soviet Union.) This amounts to likely billions of transactions every singly day, far too many to be calculated by a smart group of elite, particularly when the issue could be outsourced to a specialist. For example, who better to run a farm in Krasnoyarsk than a farmer from Krasnoyarsk?

Although this government team is composed of geniuses, how could they know how much he pays for his tools, what percentage of his savings go toward expansion of his little farm, how much he has put away in case of disaster, and all of these factors that make up that man's individual decision to sell his crops at a certain price. Then, the economics become even more complex as one realizes that all these transactions are interconnected. That the commissar in town who set the price of his crop determined, by extension, the amount that another could spend that year on a new harvesting tool, and that determined whether the blacksmith could hire a new apprentice.

No ten people are smart enough to track this data, let alone interpret it or even

plan for the future. The level of intelligence of those ten people is likely more than a million times less than what is needed to run an economy. The only way that an elite bureau of intelligent economists in Moscow could plan such a monumental undertaking as a national economy is to control it, and every aspect of it, which leads to such despondency and gloom that we saw near the end of the Soviet Union, when the pervasive feeling of hopelessness was inescapable.

Development slows to a halt to fit through this intelligence bottleneck, drop by drop, until eventually the pressure grows to such a point, that the whole system collapses. The interactions of life were interpreted by the Soviet system as a series of billiard balls on a frictionless table, where all the crashes and collisions can be predicted into infinity. Human nature is unpredictable and unreasonable. Any economic equation with human interaction in it is chaos. The variables involved in any equation concerning the 250 million people in the Russian economy of 1900 can be represented by chaos to the power of 250 million. The only way to have even the mildest degree of control over this amount of people is to have these 250 million individuals, each make personal decisions on their own issues, and the ones closest to them. Ten individuals, several thousand miles away are woefully ill prepared, even if they are twice or three times as smart as the average civilian. These truths are self-evident, and have been repeated under the guise of various ideologies throughout history, but all are doomed to failure, and the propensity to form golden ages under this system are bleak at best.

Communism had spread like a cult to Albania, Czechoslovakia, Romania,

Poland, Hungary, Yugoslavia, North Vietnam, North Korea, Somalia, Cambodia, and Yemen. By promising a state of the people by the people and for the people, it appeared to be a godsend to many oppressed working-class people across the world. And all followed the Soviet's example of rapid industrialization to escape the agricultural lifestyles they perceive were holding them back. The ultimate goal was to create an international utopia. Communist countries turned to the USSR in the same way that newly capitalist countries turned to the US, and without the massive trading partner they had in the USSR, the communist parties of these countries dwindled and died.

When you give people a taste of freedom, it is very difficult to encumber them with chains again. Through Glasnost and Perestroika, Gorbachev doomed any potential for communism to continue in Russia, at least in the Soviet style. When Neo-Stalinists staged a coup and attempted to remove Gorbachev from power and replace him with someone more in line with Stalinist thinking: someone to rule with an iron fist and drag Russia into the future, they were met with heavy resistance. It was not, as they would come to learn, purely Gorbachev pulling Russia away from Marxism: the elites in Moscow saw the prosperity of the west and envied it, losing faith in their system.

Yeltsin's attempts to shock the Russian economy back to life were obviously detrimental in hindsight, as they had several unintended consequences and didn't even succeed in reinvigorating the economy, but he cannot be blamed for this. He was tasked with liberalization, democratization, and stabilization all at once, which

is not surmountable in two mere presidential terms.

His liberalization efforts only increased the inflation. The quick establishment of capitalism meant that the most enterprising (and with no checks and regulations, often the most ruthless) rose to the top in crypto-syndicates across Russia. His stabilization efforts could be described as austerity measures, punishing waste and inefficiency. But this did not reduce inefficiency; it merely hid it from sight, driving Russia into a depression.

Remaking both its political and economic structures at once was, as before, a massive obstacle, but now, in the 21st century, the crimes Stalin committed against his own people in his rapid rebuilding of Russia were not tolerated, particularly in a modern country like Russia. The new Russia also needed to contend with holdover massive military spending from the Soviet Union, and their difficulties transitioning into democracy were manifest from the beginning of the 1990s, and Russia would remain in a depression until 1999.

During this depression, while the new Russian government was contending with these problems, the public support systems dropped, and people were essentially left to fend for themselves. Migration to the cities stopped completely⁶³ as movement was no longer an affordable option, and poverty rates skyrocketed to

⁶³ WorldBank. "Urban population (% of total)" *Urban population*. World Bank Organization, 2015. Web. 26 Nov. 2017. Website. <http://data.worldbank.org/indicator/SP.URB.TOTL.IN.ZS?locations=RU>

50%.⁶⁴

One positive effect was the architectural revolution that Yeltsin's liberalizing policies led to. Under him, the architecturally drab apartments of the past were cast out as a new culture of western individualism took root. During the early and mid-nineties, a few major companies managed to eke out an oligopoly on construction firms.

These apartments look much more familiar to us, as they are again influenced by western architectural styles, and private architecture firms such as Glavstroy, LSR, Mitz, and Perviy Stroitel'niy Trest have filled the void left by the collapse of Soviet central planning. Balconies, more intricate facades, and even columns are featured, and the size is limited only by modern plumbing and heating standards.

⁶⁴ Alexeev, Mikhail. *Income Distribution in the U.S.S.R in the 1980s*. New York. 1993. Print. <http://www.roiw.org/1993/23.pdf>



Yeltsin's efforts to privatize the economy by trading vouchers for cash were abused, and dangerous elements began heading gangs to collect these vouchers, often through criminal enterprises. These individuals became fabulously wealthy much faster than they possibly could have overseas. These elites began taking positions of power, controlling the Russian financial and industrial sectors, known today as the Russian Oligarchs.

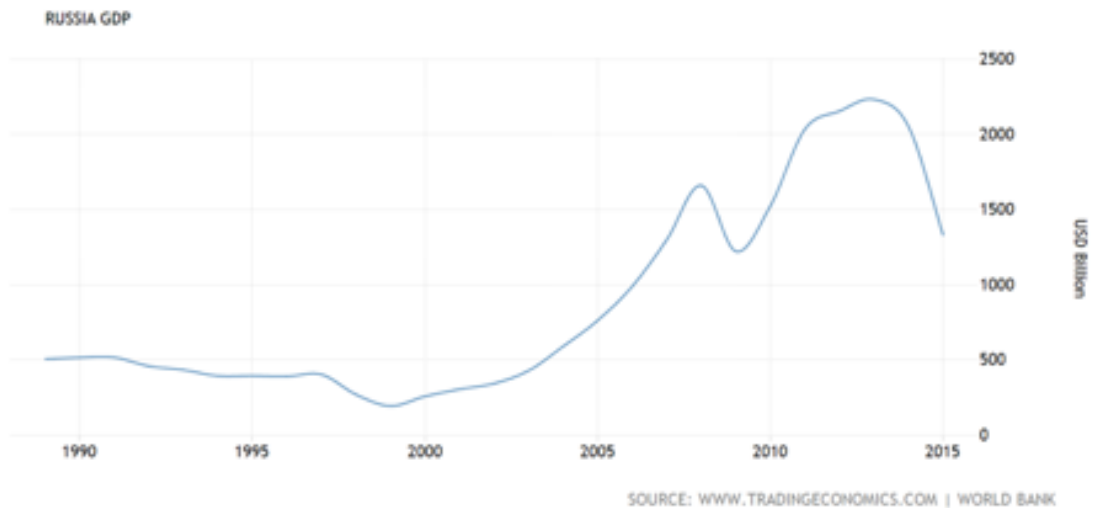
It was a tragic irony that Russia, in pursuit of justice found unimaginable injustice, as the oligarchs ran rampant, and in pursuit of prosperity found unimaginable poverty, as people across the country starved.

Part VI

1999-2017

How Russia has coped with the many problems it faced in the collapse and adapted to the information age.

Russia's economy today has faced considerable difficulties transitioning to the demands of the information age. An economically nimble economy is predicated on the adaptability and entrepreneurial spirit of the people, and Russia had been unable to foster an atmosphere of eagerness. Russia's GDP growth has been sporadic at best. To understand where the citizens of Russia find themselves today, we must analyze first the national crises the country has found itself in since its inception.



This economic instability that came just after the recession in the 1990s has led to a very cautious populace. Growth is, unlike most other western countries, not guaranteed each year. Falling oil prices, economic sanctions imposed by the west, and a weak national market have all contributed to the ongoing downturn. Russia faces a multitude of both external and internal challenges. As an energy producer, particularly natural gas, Russia has had to contend with falling gas prices and a shrinking trade market. Russia has also, as a method of saber rattling against the

United States' sanctions, begun bulking up its military. Defense spending has reached a ten-year high, soaking up money that could otherwise be used for social programs.

The reasons for Russia undertaking military modernization can be understood as typical of current president Vladimir Putin. A cynic may look at Putin's rise to power as having taken full advantage of the chaos of the 90s. While these criticisms may contain a grain of truth, the full story is more nuanced. Putin's story begins in Brezhnev's Soviet Union. As young KGB officer, Putin was trained from an early age in the ways of espionage and foreign relations. From 1985 to 1990, he worked as a KGB agent in East Germany, and after this he was transferred to become assistant rector of Leningrad State University for international affairs. After the collapse, Putin became chairman of the St. Petersburg City Hall's committee for foreign relations, from where he would rise through the ranks to become Prime Minister under Yeltsin. When Yeltsin stepped down in 1999, Putin was named as his replacement, and the rest is history.

In all this time, Putin's focus has been on Russia's standing in the international community, and his specialty, as a statesman, has been negotiation and the manipulation of world affairs. He has done very little for the Russian people directly, and this has created a shaky economy, and one in which the success of the Russian people is directly correlated with the success of Russia internationally. Though Russia does not have more than peacekeeping troops in Syria, nor does it have any significant garrisons in Crimea, (nor any in Ukraine, despite the popular

misconceptions,) it's full withdrawal has not been accepted by mainstream European politicians, and likely never will be as ongoing political gambits drive east and west to clash.

Russia is also facing stiff competition from the US in supplying natural gas to Europe. Russia, still operating in an industrialist mindset, has not adapted to the information age economy as the US has, which is why it's natural resource extraction facilities and energy services find themselves in increasingly dire straits. What this has meant for average Russians is a heavily discouraged economic libido, and much ambiguity about the future and the stability of their jobs. Furthering vulnerability, an income collapse since the imposition of sanctions has forced many Russians to take matters into their own hands⁶⁵, fleeing former Soviet resource extracting towns to central cities across Russia.

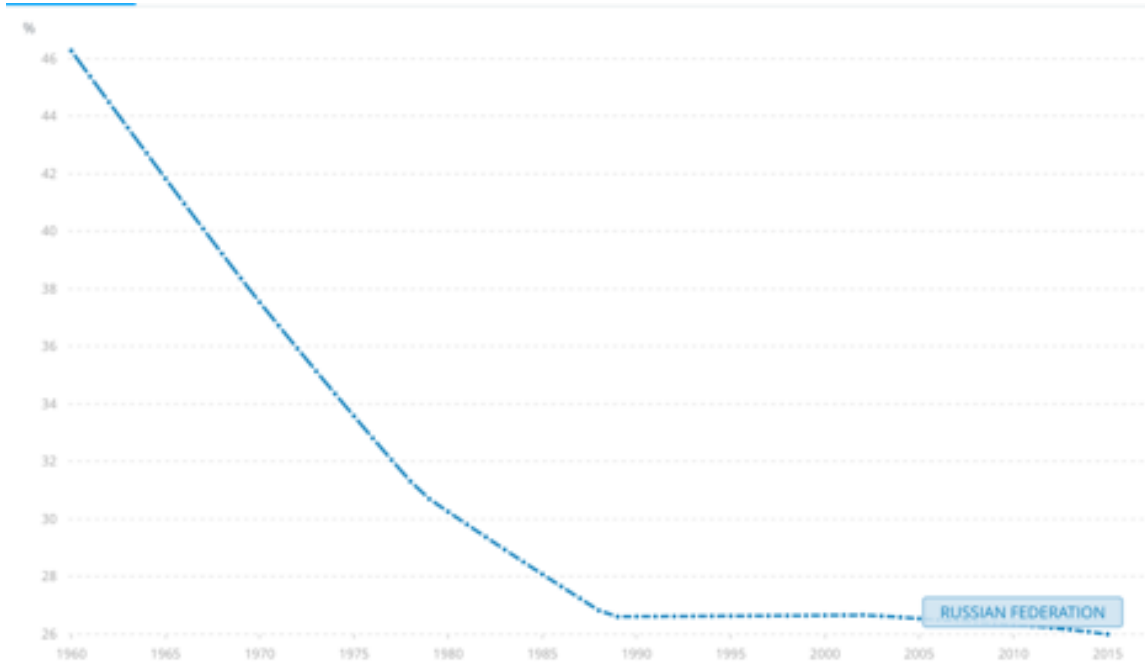
We can observe this phenomenon through two population graphs. First, the population of Russia that lives in rural versus urban environments. Second, the population of Moscow over the course of the Soviet collapse, birth of the Russian federation, imposition of sanctions, and into the future.

Because Russia has attempted to maintain an agrarian industry into the modern era⁶⁶, the amount of rural emigrants has dramatically decreased, and

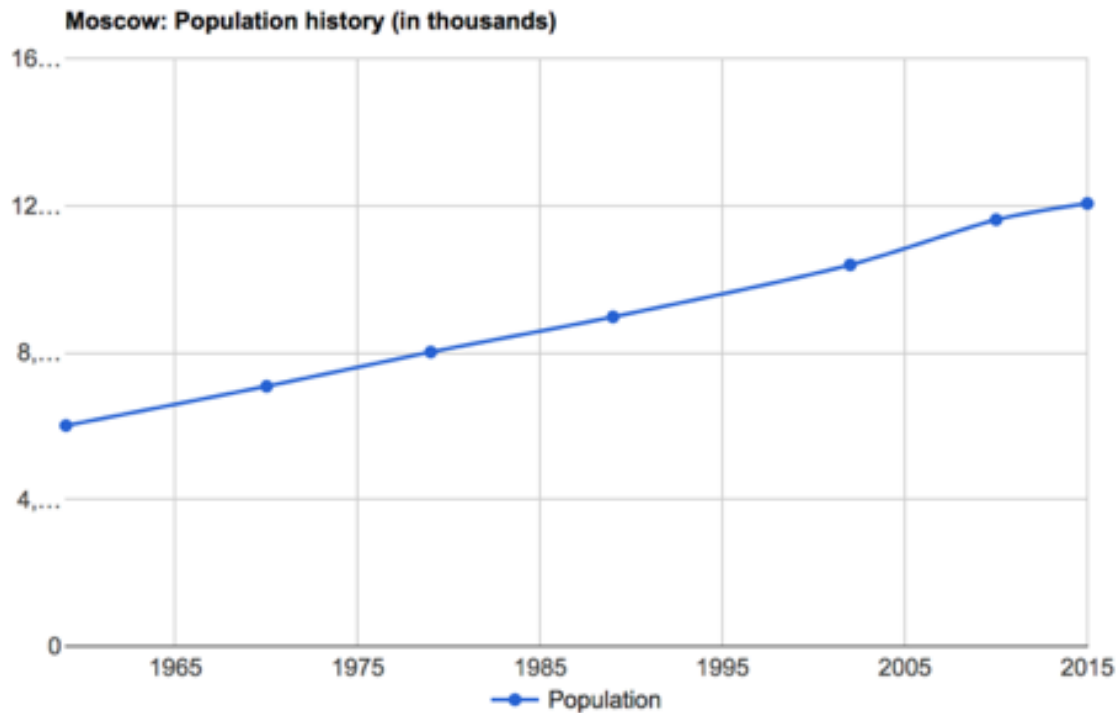
⁶⁵ Robinson, Neil. "August 1998 and the Development of Russia's Post-Communist Political Economy." *Review of International Political Economy* 16.3 (2009): 433-55. Print. <http://www.tandfonline.com/doi/abs/10.1080/09692290802418161> p. 488

⁶⁶ Stephen K., Wegren. "From Communism to Capitalism? Russia's Agrarian Relations in the Twentieth Century and Beyond." *Journal of Peasant Studies* 31.3 (2004): 363-99. Print.

tapered off to become constant.



This chart (from WorldBank) illustrates the percentage of Russians who live in rural communities. In 1990, it's about 26.6% and today, it's 25.9%. After the disintegration of public works facilities and public services, most people who lived in villages and on farms were trapped by their own jobs, unable to flee to the cities. This illustrates half of the theory; that those who lived in distinctly rural areas were no longer moving to towns or cities. But the other half of the theory comes directly from the Russian Ministry of Statistics:



This shows that the population of Moscow has not only grown since 1990, but actually grown at increasing rate. Those with the ability to make the move from nearby resource towns such as Chekhov, did. It is not the farms that are being abandoned across the nation, but the villages and towns. RT estimates that in 2010, 3,000 villages across Russia became completely deserted, and with these young Russians go the workforce. Schools, hospitals, and entire industries are shutting down, as they neither have anyone to work for, nor do they have anyone seeking a job.

The graphs charting the populations of smaller industry towns in Russia nearly without exception look like the inverse of this Moscow chart, while the major cities (St. Petersburg, Ekaterinburg, Nizhny Novgorod, Novosibirsk, Rostov, and Samara) all have similarly grown since the collapse of the Soviet Union.

The shift is inescapable, and the Russian government is critically aware of the problems facing their rural regions. Putin has made several attempts to combat this rural flight, most notably his homesteading efforts. RT reports in January, 2015: “The Russian president has approved the idea to offer large land plots for free to anyone who resettles to the Russian Far East to start a farm or other business.”

This effort was allegedly to strengthen the tendency of people’s migration to the Far East, and included regions rich in game, tinder, gold, coal, farmland, and many other natural resources, but this has been met with little success, as Russia has been forced to contend with an unfortunate reality of the information age: an abandonment of small, individual farms because of profitability. Major corporations can, using heavy farm equipment, complete the jobs of an individual farming family for cheaper, faster, and with less manpower.⁶⁷ Thus ended Putin’s short-lived homesteading efforts, to be replaced with something more lucrative. Today, the Russian government has made attempts to spread to the far East by subsidizing the businesses of the primary regional cities, signaling to the world that they have abandoned attempts to revitalize the rural population and are now focusing instead on simply moving people to the Far East at all.

Those left in the rural communities, particularly those in the Far East and Extreme North sectors of Russia are quite literally left out in the cold. Historian Martin McCauley views the agricultural crisis as being compounded by the declining

⁶⁷ Brady, Rose. *After Yeltsin. Rev. of Without A Map: Political Tactics and Economic Reform in Russia*. Bloomberg Businessweek. 15 Mar. 2000. Article

population of Russia, and the disinterest of young Russians in farming. "The New Russians have no interest in agriculture, but they are extremely keen to acquire a dacha. A New Russian without a dacha is like a dog without a bone. Practically every Muscovite aspires to a private plot and dacha."⁶⁸ As the Soviet infrastructure crumbles little by little each year, and more and more people flee the old resource-extracting towns, this is a pressing issue that Russia must contend with. The lives of its citizens are on the line.

⁶⁸ McCauley, Martin. *Bandits, Gangsters and the Mafia: Russia, the Baltic state and the CSI since 1992*. Harlow: Longman, 2001. Print. p. 311

Part VII

What's Next?

2017-Future

A summary and speculation about the future of Russia, as she
reluctantly moves into the information age.

Russian history has all too often been dismal, and even researching it can prove to be a depressing endeavor. From the beginning, it has been tale after tale of tragedy, and even in the snippet of modernity that I have chosen to research, cruelty beyond human comprehension was committed, and to such a magnitude that it no longer even feels like anything more than a statistic. The wellbeing of the Russian people has often taken a backseat to other, seemingly larger problems, and often, they have been relegated to living conditions that a middle-class western family might find appalling.

Russia, from its roots as one of the last major agricultural powers, was dotted with villages. Around 80% of the people lived in farming cottages, in the same way as generations of Russians had before them. There was little education, little improvement, and modern amenities such as running water and refrigeration were scant.

The opulence and unwillingness to adapt of Nicholas II was the gasket that eventually blew, forcing Russia into the industrial age. Though the troubles the Russian people would face ahead were enormous, it was through the harshness of Stalinism that an entire national mindset could be transformed in just a generation from that of agricultural to that of industrial. The cost, however, is something that can never be forgotten.

During and after the revolution, the Soviet shift to the industrial age triggered an awareness of the backwardness of the Russian living style. The capacious apartments of the aristocrats were immediately converted into communal apartments to accommodate those first workers whom the Soviet government moved for the purposes of laboring in the factory towns across the country. But once the former palaces were filled, and the factories were still not running to full capacity, the government was forced to conceive of

the first prefabricated Russian housing. The Kommunalki, little more than dormitories, began appearing across Russia.

Through the purges, Stalin was able to instill such a fear or, at least, a numbness in his citizens, that they, fearing that they would end up buried in the permafrost like the rest, simply lost the will to fight, and complied with Stalin's plan for economic growth. Some peasants, still loyal to their newfound freedom, were unwilling to transfer ownership of what little material possessions they had to Soviet government, instead choosing to destroy them. Similarly, the Soviet government *demand*ed that people give up their religious beliefs, in accordance with Marx's theory that it was the opiate of the masses. However, this only drove religion underground, which had the opposite effect the Soviets had wanted: instead of controlling the minds of its populace, it only further distanced them from their citizens. Marxist theory dictated that these people would simply adapt to having communal kitchens and communal bathrooms, but it seemed to many that this was not the case.

After Stalin's death, the Kommunalki program was halted and replaced with the Khrushchevki, more modern, more personal apartments allowing for more living space, and came equipped with personal bathrooms and kitchens, rather than communal. Then came Brezhnevki, larger versions allowing still greater personal freedom.

In the United States, freedom of choice has brought the government closer to its people, something that Khrushchev and Brezhnev may have benefitted from, whether they are aware of it or not, through their allowances of personal freedom. The philosophy is plainly displayed in our constitution to this day: it's not a matter of how many laws must be put on people, but how few can be that the society will continue. This idea is

why the United States has never, as the quote so colorfully described, resorted to rapacious tactics. The purges are a demonstration of how the Soviet system believed it could force human nature into changing, and reshaping its people into the “new Soviet person” who would share everything, once all the obstructionists, and wreckers were eliminated. Looking back, it can be easy to say that of course this idea is so troublesome, because it is based not on how humans really behave, but how we might wish them to behave. That one with absolute power might be “good enough” not to be corrupted by it.

Anyone who is willing to accept the mantle of absolute power, is by the very nature of this act, unworthy of it. As the American Revolutionary War drew to a close, many of Washington’s soldiers selected him to be their king, and if he had decided to accept this role, I have no doubt that American history would have been much shorter, and much bloodier, but his moral fiber prevented him from accepting it, instead insisting that he was no more and no less important than every member of the society, and no one should force their will upon another. This is why force has never had to be used, or at least, very sparingly used, in the United States to such an extent as the purges under Stalin.

As the Soviet government collapsed under its own ideological weight, the Russian government replaced it. Fresh wounds from the hasty transition to industrial age were about to be reopened as the information age took over, and with this would come another shift in the population. Today, nearly all Russians own an apartment rather than a house, because the Soviets had built so much prefabricated housing and planning around this style of housing that it was simply not feasible to attempt anything else. In the US, many Americans live in urban sprawl, and the American Dream can be represented for many coming to our country as a picket fence around a yard and a house in the suburbia of one

of our cities, while in Russia, this dream does not exist. Formerly government prefabricated housing has been replaced by free market prefabricated housing, and though they be equipped with the amenities of modern life, the skeletal structure of the houses is exactly the same as it has been since the beginning of the Soviet system.

If Russia is to truly take hold of its destiny it must come to realize that the agricultural and industrial ways of the past are not areas in which profit is to be found. Becoming an economy of services rather than mineral extraction is the only way that Russia can hope to both stem the tide of people overcrowding its cities, and allow the people who have been forgotten and abandoned in the villages the same dignity and modern lifestyles as those in its cities.

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PART VII

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