

1905 – 1924

Russian Revolution Timeline

The Russian Revolution ended three centuries of Romanov rule, brought the Bolsheviks to power, and created the world's first communist state — the Soviet Union.

1905

The 1905 Revolution

On Bloody Sunday, soldiers fire on peaceful marchers heading to the Tsar's palace in St. Petersburg; strikes and uprisings spread across Russia.

> **Why it mattered:** *The 1905 revolution forced Nicholas II to create a parliament — but his half-hearted reforms left the underlying problems of poverty, inequality, and autocracy completely unresolved.*

1914–17

World War I Devastates Russia

Russia suffers catastrophic military defeats and millions of casualties; food shortages grow severe as the war economy breaks down.

> **Why it mattered:** *By early 1917, Russia had lost millions of soldiers, cities were starving, and ordinary people had completely lost faith in the Tsar's government.*

February 1917

February Revolution

Mass strikes and soldier mutinies in Petrograd force Tsar Nicholas II to abdicate; a provisional government of liberal politicians takes power.

> **Why it mattered:** *Three centuries of Romanov rule ended in days — but the provisional government made a fatal error by refusing to end the deeply unpopular war.*

April 1917

Lenin Returns to Russia

Vladimir Lenin, leader of the Bolshevik Party, returns from exile with a radical program: immediate peace, land for the peasants, and power to workers' councils called soviets.

> **Why it mattered:** *Lenin's simple slogans — peace, land, bread — gave the Bolsheviks a clear message that resonated with desperate workers and soldiers.*

Russian Revolution Timeline *continued*

October 1917

October Revolution

On the night of October 25-26, the Bolsheviks seize key government buildings in Petrograd and overthrow the provisional government in a nearly bloodless coup.

> **Why it mattered:** *The Bolsheviks had taken power — but turning a coup in one city into control of a country as vast as Russia would require years of brutal civil war.*

1918

Treaty of Brest-Litovsk

The Bolsheviks sign a humiliating peace treaty with Germany, surrendering vast territories including Ukraine, Poland, and the Baltic states.

> **Why it mattered:** *Lenin accepted enormous losses to exit the war — his priority was securing the revolution at home, not defending territory that would have to be retaken later.*

1918

Execution of the Romanovs

Tsar Nicholas II, his wife, and their five children are executed by Bolshevik forces in Yekaterinburg.

> **Why it mattered:** *The executions ended any possibility of a Romanov restoration and signaled the Bolsheviks' willingness to use extreme measures to hold power.*

1918–22

Russian Civil War

The Bolshevik Red Army fights the anti-Bolshevik White Army — backed by Britain, France, the US, and Japan — in a brutal civil war.

> **Why it mattered:** *The civil war killed more people through war, disease, and famine than World War I had — but the Bolsheviks won, and the Soviet state survived.*

1921

New Economic Policy

Lenin introduces the New Economic Policy, allowing limited private enterprise to revive the economy after the devastation of war and civil war.

> **Why it mattered:** *The NEP showed Lenin's pragmatism — he temporarily retreated from pure communism to prevent economic collapse, proving he valued power over ideology.*

1924

Lenin Dies — Stalin Rises

Vladimir Lenin dies in January after years of declining health; Joseph Stalin outmaneuvers rivals including Leon Trotsky to take control of the Soviet Union.

> **Why it mattered:** *Lenin's death opened a power struggle that Stalin won — establishing a personal dictatorship far more brutal than anything Lenin had built.*