Second All-Russian Congress of Soviet

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Summer Conference of Bright Dream Model United Nations Conference 2017
Historical Background

Introduction to Tsarist Regime in WWI to February Revolution

Russia embarked upon the war against Germany and Austria-Hungary at a critical point in its history. To a greater extent than any of the other major combatants, Russia had faced daunting domestic problems in the course of the past decade. Industrialization had given rise to urban poverty and unrest, and it remained unclear whether the agricultural reform had effectively pacified and stabilized the Russian peasantry, and broadened the basis of moderate conservative support for the Tsar's government. What is certain, however, is that Russia was yet ill equipped to sustain a long war against so powerful an industrial state as Germany. The Tsarist regime was put under severe pressure by the challenges imposed by the First World War. The stress and strain evident in Russia before 1914 were deepened by the enormous demands placed in the country by its involvement. The start of the war saw a rallying of support for the Tsar but as military defeats occurred and economic dislocation caused shortages in the cities, the survival of the regime was undermined. As disillusionment grew, and even the Tsar’s own supporters turned against him. By February 1917, faced with serious unrest across the Empire, the regime collapsed.

What was the impact of the WWI upon the Tsarist regime?

The initial popularity if the war

When Russia joined the WWI in 1914 there was, as in much of Europe, a wave of enthusiasm and patriotism which must have assured the regime of its prospects of survival. When Austria-Hungary invaded Serbia, public opinion in Russia supported entry into the war as part of Russia's traditional role as protector of the Slavs. There was support for the war across the political parties, including the Kadets and Octobrists as well as some socialists. The general acceptance of a ban on the sale of vodka showed just how willing people were to rally the cause of ‘Mother Russia’ (Phillips, 2000). Even the capital city was renamed, the Germanic sound of St Petersburg giving way to the Slav Petrograd. There were high expectations of the armed forces as the Russian ‘steamroller’ moved into action. But this initial enthusiasm did not last long. Defeats at the hands of the Germans as Tannenberg in August and the Masurian Lakes in September 1914 quickly dampened the morale of many in the army. The war then brought many of the weaknesses of the regime into sharp focus.

The military mobilisation

At the start of the war the inadequacies of the planning for military mobilisation were revealed. The Russian army totalled 5.3 million men after the initial mobilisation, and a
total of 15.3 million Russians had seen military service by the end of hostilities (Charques, 1958). Numbers, however, were the Russian soldiers’ only advantage. Compared to his opposite numbers in other armies he was worse armed, worse treated and worse led. It was still not unusual in 1915 for Russian artillery to be limited to two or three shells a day, and after mobilisation in 1914 the infantry had only two rifles for every three soldiers. Men were sent into battle with instructions to help themselves to the weapons of fallen comrades. By early 1917, Russia had had 1.6 million dead, 3.9 million wounded and 2.4 million taken prisoner (Charques, 1958). By the 1916 supplies to the army had been improved. The government recognised the importance of ensuring food supplies reached the army and good harvests helped in this respect. Unfortunately, food supplies to the cities were less secure.

The economy during the war

The mobilisation of the economy for the war production was slow to take effect and the government had to rely on imports. Plans were implemented to gear industrial output to the needs of the war effort and substantial increases in the production were achieved. Rifle production doubled and that of artillery quadrupled in the first two years of the war (Phillips, 2000). Yet as factories were converted to armament production, other goods became scarce. Fuel shortages also hit sectors of industry. The result was a rapid rise in prices. This inflation was accelerated by the government’s policy of printing more money than its reserve could support. For those industries where production was high, problems were caused by the inadequate transport system. Many areas of the country were still poorly served by the roads and the railways were clogged by the movement of troops and their equipment.

The impact on society

The strain caused by mobilisation for the war were to have an impact on all social groups. The deficiencies in army organisation and supplies had a considerable impact on the peasantry who made up the bulk of the rank and file soldiers. These peasants, suffering the hardships of the war, became much more radical and revolutionary groups began to find them susceptible to new political ideas. For those peasants who stayed at home, conditions also became difficult. With young males conscripted into the army, farming was left in the hands of women and the elderly. The army seized horses for transporting military equipment, making agricultural work even harder. Much of the food produced was sent to the army by the government and the prices the peasantry got for it were inadequate. Discontent mounted, fuelled by the stories of terrible conditions at the frontlines as soldiers sent news home.

The war also radicalised opinion in the towns and cities, where food shortages inevitably led to inflation, with the price of meat rising by 300 per cent and that of flour by the 200 per cent (Phillips, 2000). The shortage of food was not helped by the Russian ‘scorched policy’ whereby large areas if farmland were set alight to prevent food
resources falling into the hands of Germans. Wages for industrial workers had risen at the start of the war but they had failed to match the increase in prices. It was not long before strikes and protests occurred and, as with the peasantry, the industrial workers found themselves more in tune with the demands of the revolutionary groups.

Even those groups who had supported the regime, and whose wealth might be expected to provide a cushion against the hardships of war, suffered. The landowners of large estates were hit by the collapse in the value of land and a severe shortage of farm labourers. Industrialists who failed to secure government orders for the production of war goods found the market for their products disappearing and many small businesses were forced into bankruptcy. Those companies that were given large government contracts during the war did well but they were seldom grateful to the Tsar. Many successful industrialists came to the conclusion that economic efficiency would be enhanced if the regulations associated with government intervention were removed.

As the war progressed there was growing resentment of the increased intervention of the government in daily life. The government found it particularly difficult to keep control over the remoter parts of the Empire and this provided an opportunity for the national minorities to assert some measure of independence. In Turkestan a major rebellion broke out in 1916 in response to the government’s attempt to maximise conscription into the army. Thousands of lives were lost as the government struggled to reassert its control (Service, 1997).

The impact on the government

The war not only revealed poor government planning but also the political ineptitude of the Tsar. In the September, Nicolas II, under pressure from his wife, Alexandra, took over command of the armed forces and went to the front to direct the fighting. He was now in a position where he could be seen as responsible for military defeats and be the target of officers’ criticisms of the war effort.

With Nicholas away at the front, Alexandra was left in control of government in the capital. Already unpopular because of her German background, Alexandra further added to the demoralisation of the government by the government by taking the advice of Rasputin, a holy man and confidant of the Tsarina. Rasputin used his influence to get both church and government positions for his friends and cronies and as a result upset many of the aristocrats at court who saw their own influence over the Tsar threatened. Ministers were regularly sacked. The government was in chaos and the aristocracy, who made up most of its personnel, was beginning to lose faith in the regime as an instrument for preserving its power (Phillips, 2000).

Even though the Rasputin was murdered by the Prince Yusupov in 1916, it came too late. The reputations of the Tsar and Tsarina continued to decline. Rumours that Alexandra was a German spy persisted and it was even suggested that the Tsar’s failure to
inflict military defeat on Germany was evidence of his own German sympathies. By 1916 the government, undermined by the rumours and speculation, was in chaos and seemed paralysed by hesitancy and inaction.

The February Revolution 1917

By the beginning of 1917 there were demonstrations in Petrograd over food shortages, which were increasingly aimed against the Tsar. The radicalisation of the industrial workers and peasants which had occurred during the war now became significant. Workers’ councils or Soviets started to reform in the hope of taking advantages of the situation. The member of demonstrators rose to a high if nearly a quarter of a million in February when a strike at Putilov works in Petrograd coincided with International Women’s Day, bringing thousands of women onto the streets in protest as food shortages. In this situation, the attitude of the army was crucial and key elements within it, including the Cossacks, refused to obey the orders of the Tsar and fire on demonstrators. The Tsar had lost the backing of his own supporters and under pressure from the army leaders, who were sick of the lack of progress in the war, Nicholas was persuaded to abdicate. The throne was offered to his brother who declined, leaving Russia a republic after 304 years of Romanov rule (Fitzpatrick, 1994).

The end of the Tsarist regime had not been brought about by actions of the revolutionary groups; it had collapsed rather than been overthrown. The long-term weaknesses evident in the regime had made it vulnerable to the additional strains imposed by the First World War. When, in February 1917, the regime was under severe pressure it found that its own supporters were no longer willing to save a government they had lost faith in.
Introduction to Socialism

Socialism

Socialism is a range of economic and social systems characterized by social ownership and democratic control of the means of production; as well as the political ideologies, theories, and movements that aim to establish them. In the 19th century, the socialist movements were in their heyday, making a dramatic change, from Utopian socialism to Scientific socialism, theory to practice, one nation to more.

Utopian socialism

Definition: A socialism based on a belief that social ownership of the means of production can be achieved by voluntary and peaceful surrender of their holdings by propertied groups (Webster).

Utopian socialism, it was first appeared in the 16th century during the period of capital original accumulation. The book *Utopia* which was written by a great statesman and political thinker, Thomas More, represented the Utopian socialism came into being. Utopia, literally ‘nowheresville’, was the name of an imaginary republic described by More in which all social conflict and distress has been overcome (Morris, 1886).

This socialism exposed and criticized capitalism system and expressed a vision for an ideal society in the future. ‘*In Utopia, where every man has a right to everything, they all know that if care is taken to keep the public stores full, no private man can want anything; for among them there is no unequal distribution, so that no man is poor, none in necessity, and though no man has anything, yet they are all rich; for what can make a man so rich as to lead a serene and cheerful life, free from anxieties* (More, 1515).’ Utopian socialism is the elementary form of the socialist view.

Scientific socialism

Definition: A socialism associated chiefly with Marxists and based principally upon a belief that historical forces (as economic determinism and the class struggle) determine usually by violent means the achievement of socialist goals (Webster).

Published in 1848, written by Marx and Engels, *The Communist Manifesto* gave the birth of Scientific socialism. The fundamental principles of which included class struggle, abolition of private ownership of production material to setting up a state-owned economy, proletarian internationalism and so forth.

Scientific socialism is one of crucial parts of Marxism, criticizing and inheriting the
rational sections of Utopian socialism. It is considered as a product of integration of Socialism with the labour movements, converting the socialism from Utopian to Scientific.

International Workingmen's Association

The International Workingmen's Association (IWA), sometimes called the First International, was an international communist organization which aimed at uniting a variety of different left-wing political groups and trade union organizations that were based on the working class and class struggle.

In the 1850s-60s, the worker forces were growing steadily along with the development of the capitalist economy. A worldwide economic crisis broke out means the capitalist world market had formed. The Bourgeois quelled the strike struggle using pressure tactics by insisting on cheap immigrant labour which produced a general consensus among workers recognizing the necessity of solidarity. The Great Exhibition in 1862 created an opportunity for workers to gather from British, French and Germany. In addition, the Second Battle of Nowa Wieś aroused the sympathy amid the European continent, facilitating the convention of the International Congress of workers (Raymond, 1992).

In 1864, the International Workingmen’s Association which was an international federation of proletarian organization was founded in London by Marx himself, often called as the First International, opposing the domination and oppression of bourgeois, against any thoughts and schools about anti-Marxism.

Paris Commune

The Paris Commune was a temporary government during the period from March 18th to May 28th in 1871. In that period, social unrest was the most difficult thing to tackle. Being defeated by Prussia, the new government French Third Republic which was established substituting for The Second French Empire not only bent down to compromise but also was hostile to their own people. Uppermost, the government troops attempted to process a sneak attack to Montmartre which was the main position of Garde Nationale.

Soldiers of the Commune's National Guard killed two French army generals, and the Commune refused to accept the authority of the French government. The regular French Army suppressed the Commune during "La semaine sanglante" ("The Bloody Week") beginning on 21st May 1871.

This national contradiction led to class contradiction in such particular conditions. Garde Nationale had being seized the chief organs of the government since 18th March before proclaiming the establishment of Paris Commune at 28th March. After the fall of
Paris in 28th May, this revolutionary was signalled to the end (Rougerie, 1988).

The Second International

Following the failure of The Paris Commune, the capitalist system had entered a period of relatively steady development when coming with the rise of the second industrial revolution, its productivity had been developed rapidly. Moreover, the labour movements around workers from Europe and America surged up anew led several political parties of the working class appear on these territories. Nevertheless, though the Marxism was spread proverbially, the Reformism and Anarchism begun to deluge.

International socialist Congress was conveyed in Paris on 14th July 1889 as marking the establishment of the second international. At the Paris meeting delegations from 20 countries participated. The international labour legislation, the class struggle and political struggle of Proletariat were discussed. The resolution of setting up the International Labour Day was passed. When the revisionism was gaining ascendancy, accompanied by the outbreak of WWI, turning out a bitter political division, the second International was beset with a crisis for being bankrupt (Luis, 1971).
Introduction to Marxism

Marxism is a method of analysis that analyses class relations and societal conflict using a materialist interpretation of historical development and a dialectical view of social transformation. It consists of both historical materialism and criticism of capitalism.

The historical materialist theory of history analyses the underlying causes of societal development and change from the perspective of the collective ways that humans make their living. All constituent features of a society are assumed to stem from economic activity, an idea often portrayed with the metaphor of the base and superstructure.

The base and superstructure metaphor portrays the totality of social relations by which humans produce and re-produce their social existence. According to Marx, "The sum total of the forces of production accessible to men determines the condition of society," and forms a society's economic base. The base includes the material forces of production, that is, the labour and material means of production, and relations of production, i.e. the social and political arrangements that regulate production and distribution. From this base rises a superstructure of legal and political "forms of social consciousness" of political and legal institutions that derive from the economic base which conditions the superstructure and a society's dominant ideology (Callinicos, 1980).

'The principal content of Marxism was Marx's economic doctrine.'-Vladimir Lenin

Principal ideas of Marxism

1. Modern work are 'alienated'
   Work can be one of the sources of our greatest joy, but only if workers 'see themselves in the objects they created.' The modern work is more specialized, which made them more efficient, but also meant the modern workers cannot derive a sense of genuine contribution they might be making to the real needs of humanity.

2. Modern work is insecure
   Capitalism made the human being expendable, just one factors of production. Which meant workers can be let go as soon as costs rise or be replaced by machines. Marx argued that people don't want to feel being expendable, and that we always had a place in the world's heart.

3. Workers get paid little while the capitalists get rich
   Marx believes the capitalists shrunk wages of the labour as much as possible in order to maximize profits, and that profits is theft. Capitalists stole the talent and hard work of the work force in the process called primitive accumulation, and sold it to others for a higher price.
4. Capitalism is very unstable
Marx proposed that capitalists system are characterized by series of crisis. Which always made the economy in either bloom or blast.

5. Capitalism is bad for capitalists
Marx argued that marriage was actually an extension of business, and that families stay together not for love but for financial reasons. Capitalism forces everyone to put economic interest at the top of their minds, so they can not enjoy a deep honest relationship.
Introduction to Parties

Bolshevik

Economic policies
After the abdication of Tsarist government, the primal mission for Bolsheviks in power was to create a new economic structure and restore Russian economic strength for the devastating war, but it was not as easy as overthrowing the old government. In order to ensure the stability of this new-born regime, the leader of Bolsheviks, Vladimir Lenin introduced the idea of ‘STATE CAPITALISM’.

State Capitalism, which means ‘a form of a capitalism in which the central government controls most of the capital, industries, natural resources, etc.’ this policy aided Bolsheviks to adjust the economic structure before a complete structural reform, and enable them to secure their political position by fulfilling part of their promises to their followers. It was mainly be executed by two ways. The first one is ‘Land Decree’, abolish the private ownership of land, and redistribute it to peasant via land committee. Another one is ‘Factories for Workers’, in ‘Draft Regulations on workers’ Control’, 1917, Lenin wrote in the first clause, ‘Workers’ control over the production, storage, purchase and sale of all products and raw materials shall be introduced’ (Service, 2010).

But this policy was somehow been opposed by radical workers and Bolsheviks, they claimed that Lenin abandoned Marxist theory and they requested a truly socialist economic restructure, despite Lenin had argued that ‘state monopoly capitalism inevitably and unavoidably implies a step, and more than one step, towards socialism’.

Political views
Since the Second Congress of Social Democratic Party, Lenin and his supporters insisted that party membership be restricted to professional revolutionaries, the first individual Russian Bolshevik Organization was established by 1912, and they refused the co-operation with Tsarist government and Duma due to their belief in the proletarian dictatorship.

After the February Revolution, the Petrograd Soviet supported by massive industrial workers and soldiers shared power with the Provisional Government consisted of socialists and liberalists which attempted to build a democratically elected executive and constitutional assembly. However, the Soviet had stronger influence because it firmly controlled most of the infrastructures like railway and telephone stations, and the Military Revolutionary Committee (MRC) further enhanced the popularity of Bolsheviks in the army (Izvestia, 1917).

After the returning in April 1917, Lenin announced the April Theses (The Task of the
Proletariats in the Present Revolution. It included 10 guidance orders:

1. Cease the predatory imperialist war and raise the class-conscious of proletarians;
2. The current feature of Russia is passing from the first stage of the revolution;
3. No support for the Provisional Government;
4. Recognize the fact the in the most of the Soviets of Workers' Deputies Bolsheviks are in a minority;
5. Not a parliamentary republic, but a republic of Soviets of workers', Agricultural Labourers' and Peasants' Deputies throughout the country;
6. Confiscate all landed estates and nationalize all lands in the country;
7. Unit all banks in the country into a single national bank, and the institution of control over it by the Soviet of Workers' Deputies;
8. Bring social production and the distribution of products at once under the control of the Soviets of Worker' Deputies
9. Parties tasks are immediate convocation of a Party congress, alternation of the Party Programs and change of the Party's name;
10. A new International.

Despite the April These was challenged or opposed by most Bolsheviks, they criticize Lenin too utopian and had divorced from the real situation of Russia, but Lenin's determination pushed him to defend his creative ideas, and finally passed the April Theses in the party. Therefore, the political and economic goals were clearly shown before Bolsheviks.

Menshevik

Political views
In the split of Social Democratic Party, Mensheviks stood on the reversed side of Bolsheviks'. They argued Lenin's centralized party and only professional activists could be the member, and they favoured legal protests like trade union methods should be used in the revolution instead of Bolsheviks' use of violence to overthrow the original regime. Moreover, Mensheviks believed that a bourgeois revolution is an essential stage for Russia before she completely transforms into a socialism state. Thus, while Bolsheviks were boycotting the national Duma, Mensheviks joined the constitution and showed their inclination to co-operate with liberalists such as Constitutional Democratic Party, although most Mensheviks contradict the standpoint of other bourgeois democratic parties and disagreed with the involvement of Russia in the First World War.

After the collapse of Tsarist government, Mensheviks once planned a reunification between Bolsheviks and Mensheviks, but Lenin radicalized the crowds and intensified the revolution, so the reunification failed.

Meanwhile, Mensheviks conditionally supported the coalition Provisional Government for the purpose of imitating Western socialism and a mild social reform through peaceful
and legal methods. However, the Menshevik Party was separated by "What should be done next?" At this turning point, revolutionaries, such as Leon Trotsky and Alexandra Kollontai joined Bolsheviks, when the other Mensheviks who supported the war by the name of "defence of the revolution" like Irakli Tsereteli joined the Provisional Government and later he was nominated as the Minister of the Interior (Simkin, 1997).

Social Revolutionary Party
Social Revolutionary Party was founded in 1902 by a small group of socialism and liberalism intellectuals, and the unique peasantry society and Tsarist government which were the foundation of Russian empire inspired them to carry out two party program, the land redistribution based on the need of peasants and democratically elected constitutional assembly. As the result of concern peasant affairs, through the comparison between Social Revolutionary Party and other political groups, SR was far more popular in the rural area.

But at the very beginning, the party was divided into two groups, Left SR and Right SR. On the one hand, Left SR was more radical direct in the methods to achieve its goals, it had a combat organization called 'People's Will' which was used to assassinate opponents. On the other hand, Right SR was more moderate, its members tended to co-operate with other parties and peaceful campaign to fulfil their political ambitions (Simkin, 1997).

The left-wing power dominate the party between 1902 and 1905, and the uprising in 1905 was strongly supported by SR members all cross Russia. In return, the violence in 1905 astonished Tsarist government, and it was forced to start political reform. It gave chance to Right SR, so the right-wing power grew up since 1906, and before the First World War, SR had already become the main strain in the national Duma who stood with other democratic party and supported the involvement of the war.

After the February Revolution, SR members could still maintain their position as an influential party within the Provisional Government, key figures like Kerensky who was appointed as the Prime Minister and Victor Chernov who was in charge of the agriculture affairs were able to remain in the cabinet. Furthermore, in the First Congress of Soviets, SR had 285 representatives which had a higher proportion than Mensheviks with 248 members and 105 Bolsheviks, and in the Constitutional Assembly election in November 1917, SR beat Bolsheviks again with 58% to 25% (Wilde, 2017).

Due to the fear of communism, SR was the strongest resistance to the Bolshevik Party. Although it had better prestige in the rural area and more seats in the constitution, the Provisional Government could not control the infrastructure and the army as efficient as Bolsheviks, and some Left SR members who were seeking for a complete revolution joined Bolshevik Party. These evidences hint the weakness of SR as a loose organization and ignored the interests of industrial workers.
Further Update

In the next updates, we will introduce the historical background of Russia from the February Revolution to October Revolution, Leninism, current situation as well as problems await to be solved.

Last but not least, the Committee QQ group chat is 643465973. Please join the group chat as soon as possible.
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