



One hundred years ago events in Russia took the world by storm. In February 1917, in the middle of World War I and following months of protest and political unrest, Tsar Nicholas II abdicated. Later that year a new political force, the socialist Bolshevik Party, seized power under the leadership of Vladimir Lenin. A bloody civil war and a period of extraordinary hardship for Russians finally led to the establishment of the Soviet Union.

This book accompanies a major exhibition that will re-examine the Russian Revolution in light of recent research, focusing on the experiences of ordinary Russians living through extraordinary times.

The Revolution was not a single event but a complex process of dramatic change. The story of the Revolution is told here through posters, maps, postcards, letters, newspapers, photographs, literature and personal accounts. Leading experts in Russian history reveal the Revolution as a utopian project that had traumatic consequences for people across Russia and beyond.

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Top cover image: *Ty zapisalsia dobrovol'tsem?* (Did You Volunteer?), Soviet poster (detail) by Dmitrii Moor, 1920.
 Bottom cover image: Orphan refugees of the First World War, c.1916. Photograph from *Voina i revoliutsiia*, c.1918.

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RUSSIAN REVOLUTION
 Hope, Tragedy, Myths

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Timeline

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Note: The date column uses New Style (Gregorian calendar) dates.
Old Style dates are included in the event text, in brackets, where relevant.

1861–1899	
DATE (Gregorian calendar)	EVENT
1861	Tsar Alexander II passes the Emancipation Edict, ending serfdom in Russia (but keeps peasants tied to the land through continuing labour obligations).
1861	Louis Pasteur publishes his germ theory.
1861–1865	American Civil War.
1863	The Metropolitan Railway opens the world’s first underground railway in London.
1865	Slavery is abolished in the United States.
1866	Publication of Fyodor Dostoevsky’s <i>Crime and Punishment</i> .
1867	Swedish chemist Alfred Nobel invents dynamite. Within a decade, Russian revolutionaries are using dynamite to try to assassinate the tsar.
1867	The first volume of Karl Marx’s <i>Das Kapital</i> is published.
1868	Nicholas II, the last tsar of Russia, is born.
1869	Dmitri Mendeleev publishes his periodic table.
1870	Vladimir Ilyich Lenin is born.
1877–1878	Russo–Turkish War.
1878	Vera Zasulich, a member of the secret revolutionary organisation Land and Freedom (<i>Zemlia i Volia</i>), is acquitted by the jury in her trial for the attempted murder of Dmitrii Trepov, Governor General of St Petersburg.

Events in (or relating to) Russia

World events

Statistics

Art, music and literature (including works by Lenin and Marx, and key fiction in Russian and English)

Science and technology

1880	Failed attempt (no. 5) to assassinate Tsar Alexander II by blowing up his palace dining room kills 11 and wounds 56. The tsar survives through being late to dinner.
1881	Tsar Alexander II is assassinated by a member of the radical group The People’s Will (<i>Narodnaia Volia</i>) after five previously unsuccessful attempts on his life. He is succeeded by his son, Alexander III, who enacts anti-terrorism measures that curb civil rights and freedom of the press.
1882	Pogroms against Jews spread across the Russian Empire, leading to mass emigration of the Jewish population.
1883	The Emancipation of Labour group (<i>Osvobozhdenie truda</i>), the first Russian Marxist group, is founded in Switzerland.
1883	Karl Marx dies in London.
1884	The Representation of the People Act 1884 is passed in Great Britain, significantly extending male suffrage.
1887	Lenin’s older brother, Alexander, is executed for his involvement in a plot to assassinate Tsar Alexander III.
1890	The Zemstvo Act restricts the authority of the <i>zemstvos</i> , rural government councils which were established in 1864.
1891–1892	Famine in Russia kills between 375,000 and 400,000 and affects millions more.
1891	Construction of the Trans-Siberian Railway begins.
1893	New Zealand becomes the first country to give women the vote in national elections.
1 November 1894	Tsar Alexander III dies after a sudden illness; his son Nicholas assumes the throne (20 October).
26 November 1894	Tsar Nicholas II marries Princess Alix (Russian Christian name – Alexandra Feodorovna), Queen Victoria’s granddaughter (14 November).
20 December 1895	Lenin is arrested to be kept in solitary confinement for 13 months and then exiled to Siberia for three years (8 December).
26 May 1896	Coronation of Tsar Nicholas II (14 May).
30 May 1896	The Khodynka Tragedy – a stampede in Moscow occurs during festivities following Nicholas II’s coronation, and results in the deaths of over 1,300 people. (18 May).
1897	Sergei Witte, Russian Minister of Finance, undertakes a major currency reform and puts the Russian rouble on the Gold Standard.
1897	According to census records, the overall literacy rate in the Russian Empire (excluding Finland) is 21.1 per cent (29.3 per cent for men and 13.1 per cent for women).
1898	The Russian Social Democratic Labour Party is founded in Minsk.
1898	Marie and Pierre Curie discover polonium and radium, and coin the term ‘radioactivity’.
1899–1902	Second Boer War.

1900–1916	
DATE (Gregorian calendar)	EVENT
1900	The average life expectancy at birth in Russia is 29.4 years for boys and 31.4 years for girls. By comparison, in 1901 life expectancy at birth in the UK is 45 years for boys and 49 years for girls.
1900	Boxer rebellion in China.
1901	Queen Victoria dies.
1901–1902	The Socialist Revolutionary Party (SR) is established.
1901–1905	Economic downturn in Russia creates discontent.
April 1902	Lenin enters the British Museum's round Reading Room for the first time under the pseudonym Jacob Richter.
1902	First publication of <i>Mrs Craddock</i> , one of the first novels by William Somerset Maugham, who in 1917 travelled to Russia as a British Secret Intelligence Service agent
1902	The Anglo–Japanese Alliance is signed.
1903	The Russian Social Democratic Labour Party meets for its Second Congress in London and splits into two factions: Mensheviks ('minority') and the more radical Bolsheviks ('majority').
1904	The first part of the Trans-Siberian Railway is completed between Moscow and Vladivostok. The entire railway was completed in 1916.
February 1904	The Russo–Japanese War starts. The Japanese fleet launches a surprise attack and siege on the Russian naval squadron at Port Arthur.
May–December 1904	The Russian army suffers defeats at the battles of Fu-hsien and Liao-yang.
12 August 1904	After having four daughters, Tsarina Alexandra gives birth to a son, Alexei (30 July).
January 1905	The Russian commander of Port Arthur surrenders the port to the Japanese without consulting his officers.
22 January 1905	Bloody Sunday. Troops and police open fire on a peaceful demonstration outside the Winter Palace and elsewhere in St Petersburg, killing between 200 and 1,000 people. The liberal press argued that Nicholas II was responsible for the bloodshed (9 January).
February–March 1905	The Russian army is defeated at the Battle of Mukden. Losses in the battle amount to approximately 89,000 Russian and 71,000 Japanese casualties.
April–May 1905	The Third Congress of the Russian Social Democratic Labour Party meets in London.
June 1905	Sailors mutiny on the battleship <i>Potemkin</i> , part of the Black Sea Fleet. The mutiny triggers riots in Odessa, which are quashed by troops on the tsar's orders.

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Summer 1905	Strikes, unrest and peasant uprisings continue, culminating in a general strike in October.
August–September 1905	Following Russia's defeat in the naval Battle of Tsushima in May 1905, Russia and Japan sign the Treaty of Portsmouth, ending the Russo–Japanese War.
October 1905	The St Petersburg Soviet of Workers' Deputies holds its first session.
October 1905	The Constitutional Democratic Party (Kadets) is formed.
30 October 1905	Tsar Nicholas II issues the October Manifesto, promising civil liberties and an elected parliament (Duma) (17 October).
December 1905	In response to the suppression of the St Petersburg Soviet, the Moscow Soviet launches a disastrous attempt to seize power. The government quashes the insurrection after five days.
1906	Finland, an autonomous part of the Russian Empire, becomes the first European country to give women the vote.
6 May 1906	Tsar Nicholas II issues the Fundamental Laws, a 124-point <i>de facto</i> constitution (23 April).
10 May 1906	The first Russian Duma meets (27 April).
November 1906	Prime Minister Petr Stolypin's Agrarian Reform Act, a series of measures aimed at ending the communal system of landholding, is implemented.
30 June 1908	The Tunguska event. A giant, mysterious explosion shakes Siberia, levelling an estimated 80 million trees over an area of 830 square miles (17 June).
1910	Leo Tolstoy dies.
1910	Artists and poets form a group that marks the start of the Russian futurist movement.
1911–1912	The Xinhai revolution overthrows China's last imperial dynasty and establishes the Republic of China.
6 March 1913	Nicholas II celebrates 300 years of Romanov rule in Russia (21 February).
1913	Andrei Bely's novel <i>Petersburg</i> , recognised as the most significant work of Russian symbolism and modernism, is published. The novel tells a story of a young revolutionary who is ordered to assassinate his father in autumn 1905, during the period of social and political unrest.
29 May 1913	Igor Stravinsky's ballet <i>The Rite of Spring</i> premieres in Paris, where it is met with outrage from the audience (17 May).
1913	Between 1908 and 1913 industrial production increases by almost 50 per cent in Russia, but working conditions remain almost the same.
1913	Natalia Goncharova, a prominent member of the Russian futurist movement, completes her futurist painting <i>The Cyclist</i> .
28 June 1914	Assassination of Archduke Franz Ferdinand, heir to the throne of Austria-Hungary (16 June).
28 July 1914	Austria-Hungary declares war on Serbia (16 July).

1 August 1914	Germany declares war on Russia and Russia enters the First World War (19 July). Three days later, on 4 August, Britain declares war on Germany (22 July).
1914	At the beginning of the First World War, the number of urban workers in Russia is estimated at between 12 and 22 million (approximately 10 per cent of the total population). Only 0.5 to 0.8 per cent of this industrial workforce were members of either the Bolshevik or Menshevik factions of the Social Democrats. The population of the Russian Empire in 1914 is approximately 170 million.
1914	Women comprise one-third of the industrial labour force in Russia, but receive significantly lower wages than their male counterparts.
1914	St Petersburg is renamed Petrograd to make it sound less German.
26–30 August 1914	Russia's 2nd Army suffers defeat at the Battle of Tannenberg, the first major battle on the eastern front. Over 30,000 Russian soldiers are killed or wounded, and more than 90,000 are taken prisoner by the Germans (14–18 August).
January 1915	The first use of gas warfare by the German forces.
April 1915 – January 1916	The Gallipoli campaign.
September 1915	Tsar Nicholas II becomes supreme commander of the Russian army.
1915	By the middle of 1915, the German army controls all of Russian Poland and Lithuania, and most of Latvia.
1915	Kazimir Malevich completes the first version of his Black Square painting.
July 1916	The Battle of the Somme begins.
30 December 1916	Grigorii Rasputin, the controversial 'holy man' and close friend of Tsar Nicholas II's family, is murdered (17 December) after several failed attempts.
1916	By 1916 Russia's war casualties total 1.7 million military dead and 5 million wounded.

1917	
DATE (Gregorian calendar)	EVENT
1917	The overall literacy rate in Russia is approximately 43 per cent.
January 1917	A Russian pound (or funt) of sugar in Moscow costs 28 kopecks, compared to 15 kopecks before the war. (The Russian pound is an obsolete unit of measurement equal to 409.5 grams.)
8 March 1917	On International Women's Day, demonstrators and striking workers – many of whom are women – take to the streets to protest against food shortages and the war (23 February).
10 March 1917	Strikes spread across Petrograd (25 February).

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12 March 1917	The Duma meets against the Tsar's wishes. The Petrograd Soviet of Workers' and Soldiers' Deputies forms and holds its first meeting. The death penalty is abolished (27 February).
14 March 1917	Order Number 1, the first official decree of the Petrograd Soviet of Workers' and Soldiers' Deputies, is issued (1 March). Tsar Nicholas II abdicates and also removes his son from the succession. The following day Nicholas's brother Mikhail announces his refusal to accept the throne.
15 March 1917	The Provisional Committee (Government) of the State Duma is formed and replaces the tsarist government (2 March). Prince Lvov becomes leader of the Provisional Government.
6 April 1917	The US declares war on Germany and enters the First World War.
April 1917	Lenin returns from exile, travelling to Petrograd in a sealed train from Switzerland via Germany and Finland.
1 May 1917	The 'Miliukov note'. A telegram sent to the Allied Powers by Foreign Minister (and member of the Kadet Party) Pavel Miliukov states the Provisional Government's intention to continue the war. The note is leaked, resulting in protests and increased support for the Bolsheviks (18 April).
May 1917	Miliukov resigns and members of the Socialist Revolutionaries and Mensheviks join the government.
June 1917	The first All-Russia Congress of Workers' and Soldiers' Deputies opens.
July 1917	Russia launches an offensive against Austria-Hungary.
July 1917	The death penalty is re-introduced at the front.
16–20 July 1917	The July Days begin in Petrograd (3–7 July). A new Provisional Government is set up with Alexander Kerensky at its head. Lenin goes into hiding.
July 1917	The Provisional Government grants women the right to vote and hold office.
24 July 1917	Alexander Kerensky becomes Prime Minister of the Provisional Government (11 July).
August 1917	A Russian pound (funt) of sugar costs 2.25 roubles in Moscow and is being sold on the black market.
August 1917	Trotsky joins the Bolshevik Party. He had previously been a member of the Menshevik faction and later was head of the Mezhrainitsy – a small independent faction of the Russian Social Democratic Labour Party.
4–9 September 1917	The Kornilov affair, a failed coup by General Kornilov, commander of the Russian army, takes place (22–27 August).
September 1917	Russia is officially declared a republic, several months after the de facto end of the monarchy.
7 November 1917	The October revolution; the Bolsheviks seize control of Petrograd (25 October).
8 November 1917	The Bolsheviks take control of the Winter Palace, the last remaining holdout of the Provisional Government (26 October).
8 November 1917	The decrees on land and peace are issued by the new government. Subsequent workers' decrees outline measures for an eight-hour working day, minimum wage and the running of factories. The death penalty is abolished once again (26 October).

9 November 1917	The Decree on the Press, the first Bolshevik censorship decree, abolishes the 'bourgeois' press (27 October).
15 November 1917	The Bolsheviks gain control of Moscow after a week of bitter street fighting (2 November).
November 1917	The Central Rada (parliament) takes power in Kyiv.
25 November 1917	Elections to the Constituent Assembly take place (12 November). The Socialist Revolutionaries win the largest number of seats, while the Bolsheviks win less than one-quarter of the vote.
6 December 1917	Finland declares its independence from Russia (23 November).
December 1917	A Russian pound (fun) of sugar costs 6 roubles in Moscow. Each person receives ¼ pound of bread per day. Bread and flour are still being sold openly, but for extortionate prices.
December 1917	Lenin appoints Felix Dzerzhinsky as Commissar for Internal Affairs and head of the All-Russian Extraordinary Commission for Combating Counter-Revolution and Sabotage (Cheka).
15 December 1917	An armistice between Russia and the Central Powers is signed, and fighting stops (2 December).
22 December 1917	Russian–German peace negotiations begin at Brest-Litovsk (9 December).
23 December 1917	Orthographic reform is introduced by the People's Commissariat for Education (10 December). However, the reform does not take effect until 10 October 1918.

1918–1924	
DATE (Gregorian calendar)	EVENT
18–19 January 1918	The Constituent Assembly meets but is dissolved by the Bolsheviks (5–6 January).
January 1918	Alexander Blok completes his poem <i>The Twelve</i> .
January 1918	The Russian delegation, led by Leon Trotsky, denounces the German Peace Terms as unacceptable and walks out of the peace negotiations at Brest-Litovsk.
28 January 1918	The Council of People's Commissars (<i>Sovnarkom</i>) issues a decree forming the Workers' and Peasants' Red Army (15 January).
February 1918	A Russian pound (fun) of sugar in Moscow costs 10 roubles.
14 February 1918	Russia adopts the Western (Gregorian) calendar.
3 March 1918	The Brest-Litovsk Treaty ends Russia's participation in the First World War. Russia accepts territorial losses.

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6–8 March 1918	At the 7th Congress of the Russian Social Democratic Labour Party, the Bolsheviks change the name of their party to the Russian Communist Party.
1918	Spanish flu pandemic kills 50 to 100 million people worldwide.
March 1918	British troops land in Murmansk.
March 1918	The Russian capital is moved from Petrograd to Moscow.
April 1918	For an eight-hour day, skilled male workers receive 18 roubles and women workers of the same category receive 15 roubles 30 kopecks. Unskilled workers receive 10.65 roubles and 9.35 roubles, respectively.
May 1918	Czechoslovak legionnaires storm Chelyabinsk railway station and occupy the city.
6 July 1918	Wilhelm von Mirbach, the German ambassador to Soviet Russia, is assassinated in Moscow by members of the Left Socialist Revolutionary Party.
10 July 1918	The first constitution of the Russian Socialist Federated Soviet Republic grants equal rights to men and women.
16 July 1918	Gorky's <i>Novaia zhizn'</i> (<i>New Life</i>), the last opposition newspaper, is banned.
16–17 July 1918	Tsar Nicholas II and his family are executed by the Bolsheviks in Yekaterinburg.
July 1918	US President Woodrow Wilson approves a 5,000-strong American force to support the White Army in northern Russia.
11 August 1918	Lenin sends a telegram to communists in Penza, Central Russia, complaining about uprisings in the area and calling for the public execution of 100 kulaks.
30 August 1918	Moisei Uritskii, head of the Bolshevik secret police (Cheka) in Petrograd, is assassinated.
30 August 1918	An assassination attempt on Lenin by the Socialist Revolutionary Fanny Kaplan leaves him seriously wounded. The attempt, together with the murder of Uritskii, sparks a period of mass arrests and executions known as the 'Red Terror'.
October 1918	A Russian pound (fun) of sugar in Moscow costs 35 roubles.
October 1918	The Bolshevik Family Law clarifies and expands earlier reforms on the legal status of marriage, divorce and parenthood.
7–8 November 1918	Revolution breaks out in a number of German cities, including the capital, Berlin. Uprisings continue over the following months until the final suppression of the Munich Soviet in May 1919.
11 November 1918	First World War ends.
11 November 1918	Poland declares its independence.
19 November 1918	The first All-Russian Congress of Women meets. The congress results in the foundation of the <i>Zhenotdel</i> , the world's first government department exclusively concerned with the affairs of women, in 1919.
December 1918	Perm (in central Siberia) falls to the White Army, led by Admiral Kolchak.
15 January 1919	German communist leaders Rosa Luxemburg and Karl Liebknecht are murdered in Berlin.

18 January 1919	Paris Peace Conference convenes, resulting in the Treaty of Versailles.
January 1919	The Sovnarkom formally announces the beginning of Prodravzverstka (compulsory grain requisitioning), which leads to peasant revolts.
1919–1921	Polish–Soviet War.
March 1919	American journalist and socialist John Reed's <i>Ten Days that Shook the World</i> is published in New York.
March 1919	The Hungarian Soviet Republic, led by Béla Kun is established; it lasts until August before being dispersed.
March 1919	The Comintern (or Third International) is formed in Moscow, with the aim of spreading revolution all over the world.
July 1919	Finland becomes a republic.
1920	Communist parties form across the world.
10 January 1920	The League of Nations is established.
August 1920	Peasant insurrection in Tambov (300 miles south-east of Moscow) begins.
November 1920	The Red Army invades and occupies Crimea and the White Army is forced to withdraw.
November 1920	Abortion is legalised.
1920	Evgenii Zamyatin completes his dystopian novel <i>We</i> . It is the first work to be banned by the Goskomizdat (State Committee for Publishing) and is first published in English in New York in 1924.
1921	The population of Petrograd has fallen from 2.5 million in 1917 to 600,000 in 1920.
1921	By the beginning of 1921 the rouble has lost 96 per cent of its pre-war value; industrial production has fallen to 10 per cent of its 1913 level.
March 1921	The Kronstadt mutiny, an unsuccessful uprising against the Bolsheviks, takes place.
March 1921	End of 'War Communism' and the introduction of the 'New Economic Policy' (NEP).
18 March 1921	The Peace of Riga ends the Polish–Soviet War.
1921	Extreme inflation in Germany.
1921–1922	Between 6 and 7 million children are living on the streets, with a further 540,000 living in orphanages.
3 April 1922	Stalin is appointed General Secretary of the Communist Party.
16 April 1922	Soviet Russia and Germany sign the Treaty of Rapallo, renouncing all territorial and financial claims against each other following the Brest-Litovsk Treaty and the First World War.

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October 1922	Mussolini marches on Rome.
December 1922	Creation of the Soviet Union.
1922	Five million people have died as a result of two years of famine.
1923	The Soviet nationalities policy <i>Korenizatsiia</i> (indigenisation) is introduced.
23–25 October 1923	The Hamburg uprising, an attempted communist coup, is crushed within 24 hours.
21 January 1924	Lenin dies, leading to a power struggle within the party. Stalin emerges as party leader. His rival Leon Trotsky is dismissed, then exiled and finally murdered in 1940.
31 January 1924	Constitution of the USSR that legitimises its creation is ratified.
1 February 1924	Britain, led by its first Labour government, recognises the Soviet Union. Several other countries, including Italy and China, quickly follow.
1924	The majority of Western countries close their borders to immigrants from Eastern Europe following almost 40 years of mass migration.

1925–1991

DATE (Gregorian calendar)	EVENT
1928–32	The first five-year plan.
1 December 1934	Sergei Kirov, a member of the ruling Politburo, is murdered. Over the next four and a half years, millions of party members and others are arrested, many of whom are executed.
1937–1938	More than 1 million people are estimated to have been killed during Stalin's Great Purge.
1 September 1939–2 September 1945	The Second World War.
1 October 1949	Chinese Communist leader Mao Zedong declares the creation of the People's Republic of China (PRC).
5 March 1953	Death of Joseph Stalin.
25 February 1956	Stalin's successor Nikita Khrushchev denounces him in his 'Secret Speech'.
14–28 October 1962	Cuban missile crisis.
1985	Soviet leader Mikhail Gorbachev introduces a programme known as <i>Perestroika</i> , designed to restructure Soviet political and economic policy.
26 April 1986	Chernobyl nuclear disaster.
December 1991	The Belavezha Accords – the agreement that declares the Soviet Union effectively dissolved – is signed.