

Paper No. 1 – The Revolutionary Year, 1917

The Russian Revolutions of February and October 1917 have been widely researched by a wide range of scholars so we now have elaborate chronologies of what happened on a day-by-day basis. Through concerted efforts scholars have collected primary documents in the form of letters, petitions, diary entries, and the like.

In this first paper of the semester we will create a collective website highlighting the voices of those caught up in the revolution with particular attention to four groups: workers, soldiers, peasants and activists. Our goal will be to create a timeline that shows some of the enormous variation among the complaints and demands of each of these four groups and also the ways in which their demands changed over time. By creating a sophisticated timeline with access to documents by the participants themselves, we will be able to help scholars and students globally to understand the complexity of different views and their interactions at different moments in time in this revolutionary year as many of the players became increasingly radical and intransigent.

In class on February 9 you will each be given a card showing the name of one of these four groups (or a “wild card,” which I will explain below). Your card will also give you a particular time period: February-March, April-May, June-July, August-September, and October-November. Since there are 25 students in the class, that means there will be five of you working in each of the five time periods.

Each individual will be responsible for finding four to five primary documents for their type of person in their time period. Workers, soldiers and peasants will recognize their documents particularly in the volumes by Daly and Trofimov (*Russia in War and Revolution*) and by Steinberg (*Voices of Revolution*), where documents are grouped by exactly such sociological principles. The person who receives the card “activist” must look for documents by revolutionaries with particular priority to lesser known figures (i.e., moving beyond Lenin and Tsar Nicholas II). The person who receives the designation “wild card” can choose to look at documents by any one of the other four groups or may consider more prominent activist figures.

Meeting for discussion

The five students who receive cards naming the same time period will meet a week before the class is due (preferably during the weekend of February 13 which is a long weekend) to discuss the themes that are emerging in their time period and compare notes on the documents they have found so far. When you meet, you may decide to cover your period by issue rather than by type of person. In other words, you might decide that one of you will principally tackle the war issue; another, the land issue; a third, the issue of the form of government. For example, the June-July group might decide that one person will take up the issue of the June 18 offensive against Austria-Hungary, looking for letters from soldiers, workers, peasants and/or activists relating to that offensive.

When you meet, you may give each other documents if you find ones that look particularly promising for that person given their historical character or topic. For

example, if you are researching workers but you find a soldier's letter you think is excellent, you may give it to your comrade, the soldier. (One note: If you give away a document, I would prefer that you not use it yourself. We want the final result to include as many diverse documents as possible.)

Analyzing your documents

Your individual mission will then be to study closely the documents you have chosen, using as well all the documents we will be reading for the course. You will choose one of these documents to be your lead document. This is the one that will be posted on the timeline we will collectively create. The other documents should relate to the first document either by group (e.g., they are all documents written by soldiers) or by topic (e.g., the June 18 offensive). The documents may take opposing viewpoints, e.g., you may find you have some soldiers who are pro-war while others are vehemently anti-war. You will want to talk about these variations and disagreements in your paper.

In your paper you will provide analysis of the documents. Here are some questions to help you:

- What do you know about the authors of these documents and who they are addressing? How have they chosen their audience(s)? How does their choice of audience affect what they have to say? If the audience is an authority figure, what does the document tell you about their understanding of the nature of authority at this time?
- What is the author's point of view on the topics he or she is addressing? Is that person for or against the war or land reform, for example? Does he or she think munitions workers, to take another example, should go on strike or continue to produce for the war effort? Is he or she pro-monarchist or anti-monarchist, pro- or anti-Bolshevik? This is by no means an exhaustive list of possible points of view. Pay close attention. Some may be subtle.
- What kind of language are your subjects using? Think about both phrasing and tone. Are they deferential or defiant? How do they refer to third parties? If they speak of the Bolsheviks, for example, do they view them as "blood-suckers" or "saviors"? Is their language formal or informal? Do they seem to show a high level of education or one that is probably not so high?
- What is the significance of these documents? Do they seem to be addressing each other? In other words, are they aware of others who are making similar arguments? How do they address counter-arguments, i.e., the views of those who would disagree with them?

Looking for more information

In addition to analyzing the primary documents you have found, you may want to search GoogleScholar for your date or issue to see what scholars have written about your

time period. Pay particular attention to any controversies at that time and controversies among later scholars (e.g., was Lenin a German spy? Was it a good idea to initiate a new offensive in June as part of World War I?).

Once you have assembled the information for your project, you will write up a **7-page** (double-spaced) paper discussing why your lead document is important, what other contemporaries were saying (from your other documents), what controversies were most prominent at the time, and what controversies have emerged among scholars and popular students of Russian and Soviet history since that time.

Creating the website

After you have completed your essay, you must also write a title and an executive summary. An example of a title might be “Soldiers Threaten Mutiny over Galician Offensive” if that is your topic. Your executive summary would be one-paragraph long so that a viewer clicking on, say, June 25, would pull up your description of what was going on for soldiers in that time frame.

I would particularly like you to write your paper with hyperlinks to both the scholarly articles and any primary documents that are on line. If it is possible for you to scan any documents that are not on line, that would be great. One hope I have is that visitors to our timeline will be able to read “across” the documents and follow a particular line of development (e.g., the mutiny of the soldiers, the uprisings of the peasants, and so on).

You must provide accurate and detailed bibliographical information for all sources that you use. *Any attempts at plagiarism will be ruthlessly tracked down. This is going to be a public website and we will all be publicly humiliated if there is any plagiarism. Someone attempting to plagiarize will receive a failing grade on this assignment and a warning in their file at MIT.*

I strongly recommend that you consider visiting the Writing Center (12-132) for help at any stage with your writing. They offer free, one-on-one, professional advice from lecturers who are published writers about all types of academic, creative, and professional writing and about all aspects of oral presentations. If you begin by going to <http://writing.mit.edu/wcc>, you can click on "Appointments" to find a time and a person to work with.

Chronologies of the Russian Revolution

<http://www.barnsdle.demon.co.uk/russ/datesr.html>

<http://europeanhistory.about.com/od/russiaandukraine/a/rrevstimeline1.htm>

[http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Russian_Revolution_\(1917\)](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Russian_Revolution_(1917))

http://www.indopedia.org/Russian_Revolution_of_1917.html#Brief_Chronology_leading_to_Revolution_of_1917

<http://www.marxists.org/history/ussr/events/timeline/1917.htm>

<http://web.archive.org/web/19991103122911/www.departments.bucknell.edu/russian/chrono3.html>

Websites with primary documents from this period

“The Russian Revolution” - <http://www.barnsdle.demon.co.uk/russ/rusrev.html>

http://www.historyguide.org/europe/rusrev_links.html

<http://www.fordham.edu/halsall/mod/modsbook39.html>

Lenin’s works: <http://marxists.org/archive/lenin/works/index.htm>
specifically those for 1917: <http://marxists.org/archive/lenin/works/date/1917.htm>

also Lenin in the Lenin Museum:
http://www.stel.ru/museum/february_russian_revolution.htm

Trotsky’s works: <http://marxists.org/archive/trotsky/works/index.htm>

Stalin’s works: <http://marxists.org/reference/archive/stalin/works/decades-index.htm>

Kerensky, “The Prelude to Bolshevism: The Kornilov Rising” (1919) -
<http://www.archive.org/details/preludetobolshev008537mbp>

Nicholas II’s 1917 diaries and letters, as well as those of other members of the royal family; Nicholas II’s abdication; the order for his arrest; interrogation of some members of the royal court in 1917: <http://www.alexanderpalace.org/palace/>

The All-Russian Congress of Soviets: <http://www.marxists.org/glossary/events/a/arcs.htm>

World War I documents relating to Russia:
<http://wwi.lib.byu.edu/index.php?title=Special%3ASearch&search=russia&go=Go>
including the Abdication of Nicholas II:
http://wwi.lib.byu.edu/index.php/The_Abdication_of_Nicholas_II

“Face of Russia” (PBS timeline) <http://www.pbs.org/weta/faceofrussia/timeline-index.html>

“Seventeen Moments in Soviet History” <http://www.soviethistory.org/> [You have to register to use this site, but it is free and has many useful primary documents, including some film clips and art as well as political manifestoes and the like.]

Primary sources in print form (on reserve in Hayden)

Edward Acton and Tom Stableford, eds., *The Soviet Union: A Documentary History* (2005) [Hayden Library - Stacks | DK246.S685 2005](#)

Robert P. Browder and Alexander F. Kerensky, *The Russian Provisional Government, 1917: Documents* (Stanford University Press, 1961) [partially available on line]
http://books.google.com/books?id=LzWsAAAAIAAJ&dq=browder+kerensky+russian+provisional+government&printsec=frontcover&source=bl&ots=DSY1VAMI6G&sig=90rIU-DyQLauLs-vwtRXDCYMB0k&hl=en&ei=IZdDS_7UEdPN8QaD0_CDBQ&sa=X&oi=book_result&ct=result&resnum=5&ved=0CBoQ6AEwBA#v=onepage&q=&f=false
[Hayden Library - Stacks | DK265.19.B877](#)

V. P. Butt, ed., *The Russian Civil War: Documents from the Soviet Archives* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1996) [Hayden Library - Stacks | DK265.A5372 1996](#)

Jonathan Daly and Leonid Trofimov, *Russia in War and Revolution, 1914-1922* (Indianapolis/Cambridge: Hackett Publishing, 2009), esp. pp. 35-130, 210-222

Sheila Fitzpatrick and Yuri Slezkine, eds., *In the Shadow of Revolution: Life Stories of Russian Women from 1917 to the Second World War* (Princeton University Press, 2000) [at Boston Public Library, but not in MIT]

Eric Homberger with John Biggart, eds., *John Reed and the Russian Revolution: uncollected articles, letters, and speeches on Russia, 1917-1920* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1992) [Library Storage Annex - Off Campus Collection | HX84.R4.A25 1992](#)

Martin McCauley, ed., *The Russian Revolution & the Soviet State, 1917-1921: Documents* (New York: Barnes & Noble, 1975) [Hayden Library - Stacks | DK265.A538 1975](#)

Morgan Philips Price (1885-1973), *Dispatches from the Revolution: Russia, 1916-18* (London: Pluto Press, 1997) [Hayden Library - Stacks | DK265.A5276 1997](#)

Mark D. Steinberg, *Voices of Revolution, 1917* (New Haven, CT : Yale University Press, 2001) [Hayden Library - Stacks | DK265.A544 2001](#)

Mark D. Steinberg and Vladimir M. Khrustal'ev, eds., *The Fall of the Romanovs: Political dreams and personal struggles in a time of Revolution* (New Haven, CT : Yale University Press, 1995) [Hayden Library - Stacks | DK258.S74 1995](#)

Ronald Grigor Suny, ed., *The Structure of Soviet History. Essays and Documents* (Oxford University Press, 2003), esp. pp. 32-47; [Hayden Library - Stacks | DK266.A3.S78 2003](#)

Bibliography of Secondary Sources

Edward Acton et al., eds., *Critical Companion to the Russian Revolution 1914-1921* (Indiana University Press, 1997)

James H. Bater, *Studies in Russian Historical Geography*

Edward Hallett Carr, *The Bolshevik Revolution* (3 vols.) (1950-1978)

William Chamberlin, *The Russian Revolution* (2 vols.) (1935)

Orlando Figes, *A People's Tragedy, The Russian Revolution 1891 – 1924* (Pimlico, 1996)

Orlando Figes, *Peasant Russia, Civil War: The Volga Countryside in Revolution, 1917-1921* (Oxford University Press, 1989) [Hayden Library - Stacks | DK265.8.V56.F53 1989](#)

----- and Boris Kolonitskii, *Interpreting the Russian Revolution: The Language and Symbols of 1917* (Yale University Press, 1999) [Hayden Library - Stacks | DK265.F468 1999](#)

Sheila Fitzpatrick, *The Russian Revolution* (Oxford University Press, 1982, 2008) [Hayden Library - Stacks | DK265.F48 2008](#)

Anna Geifman, *Russia Under the Last Tsar: Opposition and Subversion, 1894-1917*

Anna Geifman, *Thou Shalt Kill: Revolutionary Terrorism in Russia, 1894-1917* (1993)

Daniel H. Kaiser, ed., *The Workers' Revolution in Russia, 1917: The View from Below* (Cambridge University Press, 1987)

J.L.H. Keep, *The Russian Revolution*

David Mandel, *The Petrograd Workers and the Soviet Seizure of Power: From the July Days, 1917 to July 1918* (Studies in Soviet History and Society)

Martin A. Miller, *The Russian Revolution: The Essential Readings* (Blackwell Essential Readings in History)

Vladimir Nabokov (father of the famous novelist, 1869-1922), *V. D. Nabokov and the Russian Provisional Government, 1917*, ed. Virgil D. Medlin and Steven L. Parsons (Yale University Press, 1976) [Library Storage Annex - Off Campus Collection | DK265.7.N26 1976](#)

Bernard Pares, *The Fall of the Russian Monarchy* (1939)

Richard Pipes, *The Russian Revolution* (Vintage, 1991)

-----, *Three Whys of the Russian Revolution* (Pimlico, 1995)

Alexander Rabinowitch, *The Bolsheviks Come to Power: The Revolution of 1917 in Petrograd* (NY: Norton, 1976) [Dewey Library - Stacks | DK265.8.L4.R27 1976](#)

-----, *Prelude to Revolution. The Petrograd Bolsheviks and the July Revolution* (Bloomington: Indiana Univ. Press, 1968) [Dewey Library - Stacks | DK265.8.L4.R116](#)

M. Rendle, *Defenders of the Motherland: The Tsarist Elite in Revolutionary Russia* (2009)

Harold Shukman, ed., *The Blackwell Encyclopedia of the Russian Revolution* (1988)

Robert C. Tucker, *Stalin as Revolutionary, 1879-1929* (1973)

Adam B. Ulam, *The Bolsheviks* (1965)

Dmitri Volkogonov, *Lenin: a New Biography* (1994)

Rex A. Wade, *The Russian Revolution, 1917* (Cambridge, 2000)

Alan Wildman, *The End of the Russian Imperial Army* (Princeton University Press, 1980)

Bertram D. Wolfe, *Three Who Made a Revolution: A Biographical History* (1948,1964)

Alan Wood, *The Origins of the Russian Revolution* (Routledge, 2003)

Other Reference Works

The Longman Companion to Imperial Russia 1689 - 1917 by David Longley
The Longman Companion to Russia since 1914 by Martin McCauley

Other websites

<http://cominganarchy.com/2009/06/02/political-geography-of-the-russian-revolution/>