Russian Revolution

Autocracy
- During the 21st century, Russia was the only true autocracy left in Europe.
- Russia’s tsar (king) was the absolute ruler believed to be anointed by God.
- The Romanov family ruled Russia from 1613 until the Russian Revolution in 1917.
- In 1884, Tsar Nicholas II became the last aristocratic ruler of Russia.

Divided Russia
- For many years before WWII, Russia’s citizens suffered under the Romanov monarchy.
- Russia was divided into two groups: the ruling class who held the country’s wealth, and the serfs (peasants) who barely had enough food to eat.
- Peasants worked for little pay and had few rights.

Serf Life
- In exchange for working long hours for a landlord, a serf received a small log hut, a tiny piece of land, and a few animals.
- Most of the serfs’ crops went to pay the landlord’s taxes.
- Anyone who resisted the rules was beaten with a leather and wire whip.
- Many tried to escape, but few succeeded.

Bloody Sunday
- In 1905, Russia lost a war with Japan, which angered many serfs and workers because their family members were forced to fight in the war.
- On January 22nd, thousands of people marched on the Winter Palace to ask Tsar Nicholas for reforms.
- Palace troops shot people in the crowd; this became known as “Bloody Sunday”.
- More and more riots began to occur after this.

WWI
- When Russia entered WWI in 1914, many of its peasants were forced to join the army.
- They were not trained or equipped to fight, and many were sent into battle without enough clothes, shoes, or weapons to survive.
- Over 2 million soldiers were killed and nearly 5 million were wounded.
- Russia’s people were also struggling with food shortages and not having enough coal to keep warm.

Tsar Nicholas
- The Russian people blamed their tsar for entering the war and getting so many killed or wounded.
- Tsar Nicholas II ignored the fact that his people were suffering and unhappy.
- He was seen as a weak man and became increasingly remote as a ruler.
- He did not see that changes were needed in the way that his country was run.

Change
- In early 1917, thousands of workers filled the streets and began to riot.
- Men and women protested against the tsar’s failing government.
• Tsar Nicholas ordered his army to end the riots, but the people outnumbered them and the military could not keep the peace.

Revolution
• Workers united against the Russian ruler and on March 15, 1917, Tsar Nicholas II abdicated his throne.
• The tsar and his family were captured.
• A new government took over Russia.

The Duma
• The Duma was the Russian congress.
• There were 3 attempts to make the Duma work, but each was too radical and still favored only the wealthiest Russians.
• In the end, there were just too many problems.
• It was time for a new revolution...

Lenin
• In October 1917, a revolutionary group called the Bolshevik (Communist) party seized power.
• The Bolsheviks, lead by Vladimir Lenin, took control of the Russian government.
• Lenin ordered Tsar Nicholas and his family to be executed.

Soviet Union
• Lenin declared himself dictator of Russia.
• In 1922, Lenin established the Soviet Union, the first communist country in the world.
• This joined Russia, Belarus, Armenia, Georgia, and Ukraine.
• Lenin promised that communism would bring fairness and equality to ALL Soviets.

Communism
• Communism is a theory that says the government should own the farms and factories for the benefit of all the citizens.
• Everyone should share the work equally and receive an equal share of the rewards.
• This appealed greatly to many Russians because there was such a huge split between rich and poor.
• Unfortunately, the system did not work and Russia’s people continued to suffer for years to come...