From the Eagle to the Hammer and Sickle: How Russia's Great War Tragedy Changed the World

It can be said with certainty that the Russian Empire's involvement in the First World War resulted in the most dramatic immediate and long-term consequences for its own people and the rest of the world. The First World War's most dramatic, and arguably most significant, outcome was the collapse of the Russian Empire and the eventual rise of the Bolshevik-led Soviet Union in its place. While the Great War witnessed the collapse of many of Europe's great empires, nothing shaped the development of the twentieth century and the present day world as much as Russia's dramatic shift from tsardom to bolshevism. The calamity of Russia's disastrous military and economic experience in the Great War not only witnessed the collapse of the three-century old Romanov dynasty and an end to Russia's recently introduced constitutional and democratic processes, but put into motion events that shaped the remainder of the twentieth century and the present day. Namely, the Bolsheviks' eventual victory and political takeover, ultimately placed the Western world on a collision course that witnessed both democratic and new fascist regimes place themselves firmly against the socio-political ideologies of the communistic Soviet Union, eventually leading to the outbreak of the Second World War and the Cold War, as well as continued animosity toward Russia in the present day.

The historiography tracing Russia's path to the events of 1917 is often well known to the majority of both professional and amateur historians. This evolution usually portrays socially despotic and economically backward Russia suffering from the extreme strains of warfare and government ineptitude resulted in inevitable revolution. Eventually then, using a combination of populist propaganda and coercion in conjunction with the failures of counter-revolutionary forces, the Bolsheviks took power following a catastrophic civil war.

In much of the Western and Soviet Era historiography, Russia's participation in the First World War receives such simplification – the First World War served merely as the final nail in tsarist autocracy's coffin.[1] In fact, for much of the period from 1917 – 1991, the typical explanation for Russia's dramatic changes in 1917 focused much more on the pre-war conditions and painted the Russian Empire as ripe for revolution that continued simmering since the 1905 Revolutions ended in the creation of a quasi-democratic system and the formation of a constitutional monarchy in Russia. In these views, Russia's entry into the First World War, in fact, served more to *delay* an inevitable revolution rather than spawn the events of 1917. Building off of the ideologies of the likes of Lenin who even proclaimed in his famous "April Theses" that the war was a "deception of the bourgeoisie" to redirect revolutionary sentiments toward an "imperialistic war of conquest" Soviet historiography often portrayed the sole purpose for Russia's involvement in the war was to subvert the revolutionary mood of the country.[2]

For much of the twentieth century, then, in both the Soviet Union and the West, Russia's experience in the Great War often remained drastically overlooked or outright ignored in light of the results of the Revolutions of 1917. The Bolshevik takeover fascinated or horrified historians and observers outside of the Soviet Union who often portrayed the event as just another part of Russia's historical trend of despotism.[3] While inside the Soviet Union, 1917 continuously

[1] One stand out example of such a simplified explanation of Russia's path toward the Revolutions of 1917 is Michael T. Florinsky's *The End of the Russian Empire*,

[2] V. I. Lenin, "Zadachi proletariata v dannoi revolutsii," *Pravda,* April 7, 1917 No. 26.

[3] George Kennan's famous "Long Telegram," the basis for the United States' policy of Containment in the Cold War, makes reference to such interpretations of Russian history stating, "At bottom of Kremlin's neurotic view of world affairs is traditional and instinctive Russian sense of insecurity….It was no coincidence that Marxism, caught hold and blazed for the first time in Russia. Only in this land which had never known a friendly neighbor or indeed any tolerant equilibrium of powers, either internal or international, could a doctrine thrive which viewed economic conflicts of society as insoluble by peaceful means…Without [Marxism] [the Soviet Leadership] would stand before history at best, as only the last of the long succession of cruel and wasteful Russian rulers who have relentlessly forced country on to ever new heights of military power in order to guarantee external security of their internally weak regimes." George Kennan, *Telegram, George Kennan to George Marshall, February 22, 1946*.

required justification as the inevitable socio-political evolution of Russia through Leninism, Stalinism, and into the 1980s. Ultimately then, both in the West, where the memories and images of trench warfare dominated the narrative of the Great War, and the highly subjective approach of historians in the Soviet Union, the historiography of the Great War itself and Russia's participation remained largely unexplored or studied until recently.

Only since the collapse of the Soviet Union, and the opening of many Russian archives, historians began piecing together how the First World War actually fits into the greater study of Russian History. Particularly, the biggest question a number of current historians such as Peter Gatrell, Joshua Sanborn, and Mikhail Loukianov explore is how "inevitable" was anti-autocratic revolution due to Russia's participation and defeat in World War I. More specifically, recent historiography now reemphasizes the significance Russia's Great War experience had in ultimately creating a situation that allowed the Bolsheviks to take power in the chaos following the February Revolution that ended the tsarist regime. Like much of recent historiography on Russia's experience in the First World War, this paper too will assess the significance of World War I in understanding Russia's transition between tsarist and Bolshevik Russia. More specifically, I look to give a brief look at how the Great War influenced transitions in identity amongst the Russian populace during the period from 1914 – 1917. This period in particular witnessed major shifts in how Russians across all social classes identified their relationship to the state, from willing, jubilant participants in Russia's war efforts, to disillusioned, mutinous politicians, peasants, and revolutionaries.

Ultimately, while Russia's calamitous First World War brought to light many of the critical issues facing Imperial Russia at the turn of the century, the issue of how the war influenced Russia's subjects, particularly ethnic Russians' identity and understanding of their

relationship to the tsarist state played a critical role in both the collapse of tsarist autocracy and the Revolutionary Period. In particular, as I will describe, the war increasingly strained the glaring disconnect between the life and experience of everyday Russians with their government. It would be the Great War, and Russia's effort to continue fighting that eventually forced many Russian subjects and ethnic Russians to realize that the tsarist regime, and later the Provisional Government, proved willing to sacrifice the wants and interests of the people for seemingly unknown or unjustified means. Ultimately then, I hope to present my argument that, particularly amongst ethnic Russians, once the cultural and ideological myths surrounding the tsarist autocracy faltered under the devastation of the First World War, the Russian masses, still overwhelmingly made up of the peasantry, became more perceptible to messages that appealed to their two base desires: land and peace.

The Great War, then, ultimately directly challenged the very notion of what it meant to be "Russian" not only individually, but culturally as well. Particularly, 1914 – 1917 became a major transition in Russian identity as the period witnessed the greatest dramatic shift in Russian cultural, political, and social identity since the early sixteenth century's formation of the Third Rome Doctrine. First proposed in 1510 by Felofei of Pskov in a letter to Grand Prince Vasily III of Moscow, the Third Rome Doctrine championed a notion of Russian Exceptionalism that proclaimed Moscow as the third and final embodiment of a pure Christian state that would last until the End Times.[4] Over the next four centuries, various elements in the Russian state and society utilized the Third Rome Doctrine, or its similar incarnation of Moscow as the "New Jerusalem," to champion their vision of a Holy Russia on a mission to serve as a model society

[4] Filofei, "Filofei's Concept of the 'Third Rome,'" *Medieval Russia: A Source Book, 850 – 1700*, Basil Dmytryshyn trans. ed., (Gulf Breeze, FL: Academic International Press, 2000) 259 – 61.

for all of Christendom.[5] Under such models, Russia, and much of its populace, envisioned its Empire as on a mission to protect itself, and humanity as a whole, from the social, political, and moral degradation that corrupted their Christian brethren to the West.

Even by the start of the twentieth century, such notions remained a part of Russian identity. Groups such as the religiously oppressed, but extremely economically influential Russian Orthodox Old Rite[6] communities in Rogozhskoe and Preobrazhenskoe Cemeteries in Moscow openly proclaimed their firm belief in Russia's spiritual and moral destiny to overcome the extreme societal degradation and corruption of Western socio-economic models.[7] Outspoken Old Rite industrialists such as Vladimir Riabushinskii, one of the eight Riabushinskii brothers—Pre-Revolutionary Russia's wealthiest entrepreneurial family—championed their firm belief in the moral superiority of pure Russian culture. Writing in 1912, Riabushinskii discussed the difference between Russian entrepreneurs, the *muzhik* (a Russian slang for "everyday man"), against the Westernized, political ideologues the *barins*:

[5] For the various uses of the Third Rome Doctrine, or "New Jerusalem" ideology, and their uses by the state or Russian society, see Robert. O. Crummey, *The Old Believers and the World of Antichrist* (Madison, WI: University of Wisconsin Press, 1970), Peter T. De Simone, "An Old Believer 'Holy Moscow' in Imperial Russia: Community and Identity in the History of the Rogozhskoe Cemetery Old Believers, 1771 – 1917," (PhD diss., The Ohio State University, 2012), E. M. Iukhimenko, *Staroobriadcheskii tsentr za Rogozhskoi zastavou* (Moscow, 2005), Fr. John Meyendorff, *Rome, Constantinople, Moscow: Historical and Theological Studies* (Crestwood, NY: St. Vladimir's Seminary Press, 1996), Vladimir P. Riabushinskii, *Staroobriadchestvo i russkoe religioznoe chuvstvo* (Moskva-Ierusalim: "Mosti," 1994), Roy R. Robson, *Old Believers in Modern Russia* (DeKalb, IL: Northern Illinois University Press, 1995), Daniel B. Rowland, "Moscow – The Third Rome or the New Israel?" *Russian Review,* Vol. 55, No. 4 (Oct. 1996) 591 – 614, Dmitri Stremooukhoff, "Moscow the Third Rome: Sources of the Doctrine," *Speculum,* Vol. 28, No. 1 (January 1953) 84 – 101, and Serge A. Zenkovsky, *Russkoe staroobriadchestvo: Dukhovnye dvizheniia semnadtsatogo veka* (Munich, 1970).

[6] It is important to note that while more commonly referred to in English as "Old Believers," the Russian term *staroobriadtsy* is more properly translated as "Old Ritualists." This is an important distinction in understanding the origins and history of the movement as those who recognize themselves as *staroobriadtsy* maintain dogmatic orthodoxy with the Russian Orthodox Church but object to changes in rituals and spellings in liturgical books introduced in the mid-seventeenth century under Patriarch Nikon who sought ritual and liturgical conformity with the then contemporary Greek Orthodox Church. Therefore, I will use terms such as "Old Believers" and "Old Ritualists" interchangeably and similarly refer to the movement as either the "Old Belief" or "Old Rite."

[7] See, De Simone, "An Old Believer 'Holy Moscow'" 223 – 94, and Valdimir P. Riabushinskii, *Kupchestvo moskovskoe* (Moscow: Rodina, 1992), and *Staroobriadchestvo i russkoe religioznoe chuvstvo*.

> The well-read, rich merchant-Old Believer, with a beard and long Russian garments, is a talented industrialist, the manager of hundreds, sometimes thousands, of working people, and at the same time, he is an expert on ancient Russian art, archeology, a collector of icons, books, manuscripts, he is greatly versed in historical and economic issues, he loves his job, but he also strives to meet his spiritual needs – he is a *muzhik*….the petty clerk, clean-shaven, in his western dress, seized some elite education but is entirely uncultured, he regularly takes bribes, criticizes and condemns those above and below him, he despises everything about the *muzhiki*, he and his ancestors created the intelligentsia who proclaim Russia and its people as inferior, he is a *barin*.[8]

As described by Riabushinskii, the Russian *muzhik,* embodied the essence of Russia. They needed to protect Russia ideologically, culturally, and politically from the over-intellectualized *barin* who used their Western culture to corrupt and discredit Russian history and order.

Even coming after the Revolutions of 1905 that shook Russia to its very political core, the tsarist regime found allies such as the Riabushinskiis, and much of the Russian peasantry, seeking more ways to work within the new political structure to restore Russia economically and socially. While Russia still experienced bouts of labor and political discord over the next 9 years, much of the period witnessed an extreme upswing in Russia's industrial and economic output and a return toward greater stability with the Tsar still firmly in charge of the Empire.[9] The shift from revolution back to the status quo amongst the general populace after the October Manifesto placed Russia on the path toward constitutionalism infuriated more liberal-minded politicians such as Alexander Kerensky, who eventually served as Prime Minister of the Provisional Government in 1917. Writing in 1945, Kerensky proclaimed that the attitudes of 1905 failed not because of pro-tsarist or conservative sentiments of much of the Russian

[8] Riabushinskii, *Staroobriadchestvo i russkoe religioznoe chustvo*, 41.
[9] See for example, Peter Gatrell *Russia's First World War: A Social and Economic History* (Harlow, England: Pearson, 2005).

populace but, due entirely to the tinkering of government officials and ministers such as Pyotr Stolypin, namely their ability to pander to Russia's peasantry through agrarian reform encouraging peasant land ownership.[10] In Kerensky's mind then, the tsarist regime duped the Russian peasantry into supporting their minuscule offerings that distracted from the "greater benefits" that further liberalization offered to all of Russia.[11]

However, even at the end of the Tsarist Era, much of the Russian peasantry remained completely devoted to their mythologies surrounding the Tsar himself. Particularly, historians such as Daniel Field have well noted the phenomenon in Russia known as "Tsar Batiushka" – the Tsar as the "benevolent father" of the Russian people. Often described as "naïve" or "popular monarchism," this concept amongst the Russian populace maintained that the Tsar always remained sympathetic to the suffering of his people; it was the nobility and other state authorities who intentionally corrupted any of the Tsar's orders and designs to save his people from their suffering. As Field argues in his work, in the mind of the oppressed people of the Russian Empire, "The myth [of the tsar] held the promise that the tsar would deliver the *narod* from oppression, but it also laid the blame for this oppression on the tsar's officials."[12] With such sentiments then, Field highlights that, in fact, such a sentiment often led to civil disobedience amongst the Russian peasantry not *against* the tsar or his policies, but to enact what they believed to be *the tsar's true will* against the corruption of the nobility and other elements in society.[13]

[10] Alexander Kerensky, "Russia on the Eve of World War I," *Russian Review* (Autumn 1945) 11 – 13.
[11] Ibid., 14 – 15.
[12] Daniel Field, *Rebels in the Name of the Tsar* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1976) 22.
[13] Ibid., 24.

Such sentiments amongst the Russian populace play a major role in understanding why the First World War is a critical moment in Russian history, and not just part of the transition from 1905 to 1917. In fact, as the world's largest multiethnic state at the time, the outbreak of war served as a momentous period that witnessed an outpouring of support for the tsarist regime across ethnic and religious barriers throughout the Empire. While this certainly can be attributed to the general "Myth of 1914" sweeping across Europe at the time, throughout much of Russian history, the Empire's multi-ethnicity was often viewed as one of its greatest weaknesses. The fact that all of Russia's periphery contained foreign elements—Baltic Germans, Poles, Jews, Tatars, Turks, Khazaks, and Bashkirs to just name a few of these periphery peoples—led to a constant view of Russia's borderlands as insecure and dangerous for the stability of the Russian state.[14] Yet, in the immediate aftermath of Germany's declaration of war on Russia, the empire did witness a major outpouring of support from throughout the various peoples of the Empire.

However, it is this same "Myth of 1914" where one can begin tracing the shifts in identity within the Russian populace's relationship with their autocratic state. Namely in less than a year after the start of war, many Russians' opinion of war changed from extreme patriotism to questioning the need for Russia to continue fighting or even the autocracy's motives behind fighting. As Colleen Moore's article "Demonstrations and Lamentations" reveals, throughout July 1914 and it seemingly more and more likely Russia would enter a war against Austria in defense of Serbia, Russian newspapers attempted to create sympathy for Serbia within the Russian populace.[15] While met with some success in cities like St. Petersburg

[14] See for example, Mikhail Khodarkovsky, *Russia's Steppe Frontier: The Making of a Colonial Empire, 1500 – 1800* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2004) and Theodore R. Weeks, *Nation and State in Late Imperial Russia: Nationalism and Russification on the Western Frontier, 1863 – 1914* (DeKalb: Northern Illinois University Press, 2008).
[15] Colleen M. Moore, "Demonstrations and Lamentations: Urban and Rural Responses to War in Russia in 1914," *The Historian,* Vol. 71, No. 3 (Fall 2009) 558 – 59.

and Moscow where demonstrations with slogans proclaiming "God Save Serbia" and "Down with Austria," much of Russia remained quiet.[16] Yet Germany's declaration of war proved to be a game changer. Few Russians could understand why Germany declared war on Russia. It then became the duty of the Russian state, and Russian press to explain the situation to turn the war not into a defense of Serbia but a war in defense of *Russia*.

Officially recognized Russian periodicals such as *Novoe vremia* published accounts of the growing Russian support for the oncoming war. On July 16, the paper published an article describing a mass demonstration in Saint Petersburg in which participants shouted slogans such as "God Protect the Russian Army! For Serbia and Holy Rus!" while singing "God Save the Tsar" as they marched on the Austrian and German consulates before being turned away by the police.[17] Such articles and demonstrations not only took place in the capital, but in Moscow, Vladimir, Kazan, and other major urban centers.[18] Germany's declaration of war only added more fuel to the fire for Russian periodicals, some going so far as to briefly describe the Tsar's last-minute diplomatic efforts with the Kaiser and the "sudden German betrayal" of Russia's good intentions toward Germany.[19] In the days that followed, these same periodicals shared tales of the "jubilance" and "patriotism" of demonstrators and the general populace throughout Russia.

More importantly, however, in understanding the significance 1914 played in shaping Russian identity is Russians' very understanding of their nation. As argued by Joshua Sanborn, Mikhail Loukianov, and Scott Seregny, it was Russia's call to arms against Germany that

[16] Ibid. and see also, Joshua A. Sanborn, *Drafting the Russian Nation: Military Conscription, Total War, and Mass Politics, 1905 – 1925* (DeKalb: Northern Illinois University Press, 2002).
[17] *Novoe vremia,* 16 July 1914, 1.
[18] Moore, "Demonstrations…," 557.
[19] *Kazanskie gubernskie vedmosti,* 22 July 1914, 1.

witnessed some of the first efforts by the government, and more importantly the Russian peasantry to form a real concept of the "Russian nation."[20] Historically speaking, in light of Russia's multiethnic makeup, tsarist authorities and the Russian populace struggled with the concept of both nationalism and nation.[21] To many in Russia the term most associated with nation, *narod*, emphasized the ties between people of a particular ethnic group. For example, beginning in the nineteenth century, tsarist authorities encouraged the growing domination of influences by the *velikii russkii narod*, or Great Russians. However, even defining the *russkii narod,* proved problematic as there was no one definitive *russkii narod*: most clearly the cultural and social divide between the elite and peasantry created a significant gap between a distinctly "Westernized" Russian society found amongst the nobility and urban centers, and a more "traditional" society amongst the vast majority of Russia's population. Throughout the nineteenth century then, tsarist authorities' attempts to define the Russian Empire's *narodnost',* or nationality, proved futile under the glaring inability to define a *russkii narodnost'* in light of the diversity of ethnic Russians themselves, let alone the multitudes of ethnicities in the Russian Empire.

Ultimately, however, what World War I provided was the opportunity for both state officials and the Russian populace to define their understanding of the Russian nation that marched off to war. More particularly, the question became was the Russian Empire to be dominated by the ethnic Russian *russkii narod,* or did a "Russian nation" need to focus more on creating a nationality around Russian subjects – the *rossiiskii narod*? As Loukianov looks at in

[20] See, Mikhail Loukianov, "'Russia for Russians' or 'Russia for Russian Subjects'? Conservatives and the Nationality Question on the Eve of World War I," *Russian Studies in History,* Vol. 46, No. 4, (Spring 2008) 77 – 92, Joshua Sanborn, *Drafting the Russian Nation*, and Scott J. Seregny, "Peasants, Nation, and Local Government in Wartime Russia," *Slavic Review,* Vol. 59, No. 2 (Summer 2000), 336 – 42.
[21] For a more detailed look at the early efforts to define a "Russian nationality" see, Nicholas V. Riasanovsky, *Nicholas I and Official Nationality in Russia, 1825 – 1855* (Berkley: University of California Press, 1959).

his work "'Russia for Russians' or 'Russia for Russian Subjects?'" the period between 1905 and 1914 saw conservative political groups hoping to buttress their power in the new Duma by encouraging a "flourishing" of Russian nationalism amongst the *russkii narod*, meeting with limited success. However, as war drew nearer, the appeal to the *russkii narod* became more effective. Namely, conservative appeals to the reality that many *inorodtsi*, or Non-Russians, particularly Baltic Germans, held a significant number of bureaucratic jobs throughout the Empire played into the need for a stronger sense of Russian nationalism. As the journalist-turned-politician Mikhail Men'shikov lamented, "Russia has undergone a fateful misfortune – it lost its national ruling class. What happened to Russia was similar to what happened to China. There a gigantic empire was taken over by the numerically negligible Manchurians, whereas here Germans, Swedes, Poles, Jews, and Armenians have come to rule—without a war of any description, through unfettered immigration."[22] Similarly, Men'shikov also proclaimed, "Germans, who constitute 1 percent of the empire, have already somehow appropriated 75 percent of government posts, rendering our diplomacy and our military colorless."[23] Ultimately then, with the German declaration of war, conservative politicians found new justification in their aappeals to the *velikii russkii narod* hoping to spur on public support for the coming war, and hopefully the formation of a *russkii* led Empire.

However, while tsarist politicians certainly called for a strengthening of the *russkii narod*, Joshua Sanborn in particular argues that World War I allowed the Russian peasantry, for the first time in their history, found means to demand and achieve recognition as equal members in Russian society.[24] Namely, the peasantry's interaction with government agencies allowed the

[22] Mikhail O. Men'shikov, quoted in, Mikhail Loukianov, "Russia for Russians," 79.
[23] Ibid., 84.
[24] Sanborn, *Drafting the Russian Nation*, 1 – 6.

Russian peasantry to place themselves within and envision their role in the larger Russian Empire.[25] World War I, then, ended the days of the isolated Russian peasant commune. Various Russian peasant organizations, particularly the peasantry's self-governing *zemstvos* created in 1864 as local governing bodies, demanded an equal role with government agencies in making decisions on issues that directly affected the lives of the Russian peasantry—namely conscription of troops and procuring food and material supplies for the war effort. As Scott Seregny also argues, when looking at *zemstvo* adult education programs meant to educate the peasantry on the Great War, "the Great War accelerated change, opening up the village to the outside world, and multiplying peasant contacts with the broader polity and society….[the *zemstvo's* efforts] facilitated a dialogue that allowed peasants to imagine themselves connected to a larger community."[26] That peasants organizations began acting in what they felt was in their best interest, then, became an expression of Russian peasant identity that would continue to develop in the immediate aftermath of the outbreak of the War.

However, these two growing expressions of the Russian nation would ultimately diverge from one another and ultimately lead to conflict. The War itself brought out two dramatically different experiences that only further divided the world of the Russian politicians and the Russian peasantry—particularly the very experience of conscription. While politicians saw the war as an opportunity for waking the *russkii narod*, also seeing conscription as a means to "Russify" non-Russians, all the while receiving positive response from urban centers, the call to arms witnessed a complete opposite effect in the rural countryside. As Moore and Sanborn reveal in their respective works, while peasants called to serve throughout July and August 1914

[26] Seregny, "Peasants," 337

view their service as a duty to Russia, waves of lamentation and sorrow flooded the peasant world as the war tore sons, fathers, and husbands away from their families to go and fight a war many did not understand. As Moore reveals in her study, a selection of student essays from December 1914 describe what a handful of students remembered about the outbreak of war. The most common response amongst the students of what they witnessed was the sorrow of the men leaving that far outweighed the "jubilation" or justification for war in their compositions. One student Moore identifies as A. Zadvornov wrote an essay describing how one August night he was woken by "the sobbing and wailing of women who just learned that the reservists were being assembled."[27] Other essays noted similar scenes of sobbing women, children, and parents in villages and train stations as their most memorable moment of the outbreak of the war.[28]

Such imagery, then, reveals the two very distinct way peasants recognized and identified themselves with the experience of war. In particular, the essays show a very distinctive weak recognition of a connection between the *russki narod* and the Russian state. For example, while the essays acknowledge that Germany declared war on Russia (*Rossia*), only two of the selected essays use phrases such as "Germany declared war on *us* (*nam*)."[29] As Moore notes, "[The students] occasionally referred to Russia as a 'motherland' (*rodina*) or 'fatherland' (*otchestvo*), but rarely as *their* country or nation. If Russian belonged to anyone, in the minds of the children it was to the tsar or to God."[30] It would be this recognition that the state was tied to the government, not the people, which ultimately led to the dramatic shift in Russian identity under the strains of the Great War

[27] Moore, "Demonstrations," 565.
[28] Ibid., 565 – 57.
[29] Ibid., 565.
[30] Ibid.

Russia's Great War experience turned calamitous almost immediately. While the Russian Armies made steady advances into Austria, they met devastating defeat against the Germans. More dramatically, the conflict quickly revealed Russia's complete inability to supply its own forces as munitions quickly dried up. Support for the war only declined further following Nicholas II's decision to take command of the armed forces resulted in further military calamity.[31] The desire for scapegoating for Russia's defeats became a necessity by both the tsarist authorities and the populace, leading to a "spy mania" throughout the Empire that did in fact lead to an outpouring of nationalist sentiment amongst the *Russki narod* in violent attacks against German, Polish, and Jewish populations throughout the Empire.[32] Caught within this spy search was Russia's own War Minister Vladimir Sukhomlinov who was accused of purposely undersupplying the military shortly after one of his closest lieutenants was accused and executed for treason.[33] This search for internal foes ultimately became one of the first steps for the Russian populace to call into question the ability of the tsarist state to function in their best interests. Was it not the same tsarist ministries and bureaucracies full of foreign appointees that dictated war policy?

The Imperial Family too was not immune to such animosity from the Russian people. The Empress Alexandria, whom Nicholas left to run the country in his absence, quickly became a target and scapegoat for all of Russia's economic and domestic issues because of her German background.[34] Her well-known association with the notorious Grigroii Rasputin likewise created enemies amongst the Duma as well. On November 1, 1916, in one of the most defining

[31] Peter Gatrell, *Russia's First World War: A Social and Economic History* (Harlow, England: Pearson, 2005), 86 – 87.
[32] For greater detail on Russia's concern with espionage during the war, see William C. Fuller, Jr., *The Foe Within: Fantasies of Treason and the End of Imperial Russia* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2006).
[33] Ibid., and Gatrell, *Russia's First World War,* 86 – 87.
[34] Gatrell, *Russia's First World War,* 100 – 03.

moments of the war and in response to the manipulations of both the Empress and Rasputin in the appointment of Boris Sturmer to Prime Minister and his failed policies throughout 1916, Pavel Milyukov, leader of the Kadet Party, issued a speech that would open the floodgates against the tsarist regime. First outlining the downward spiral of the war, Milyukov ultimately raises the issue, "We have lost faith in the ability of this Government to achieve victory." His speech then rails on the inability of the government to properly support the war effort, and appointing Strumer to such a high post given his German roots. Milyukov finally poses the question, "What is this, stupidity or treason?" before finally concluding "We must realize that we have no other task left us today, than the task I point out to you: to obtain the retirement of the Government…. They are a menace to the war, and it is precisely for this reason, in time of war and in the name of war, for the sake of that very thing which induced us to unite, that we are now fighting them."[35] The vote of no confidence in the tsarist regime combined with a rapidly deteriorating warfront and economy put into motion the series of events over the next months that ultimately culminated in the February Revolution and the end of the Russian Tsardom.

The collapse of the three-hundred year old monarchy, for the Russian populace at home and in the military seemingly heralded the end of the war. However, the newly formed Provisional Government, just as its tsarist predecessor, refused to meet such desires of the Russian populace. As historian Sarah Badcock argues in her article "Talking to the People and Shaping Revolution,", the Provisional Government soon found itself in direct competition with the Petrograd Soviet, which held sway over the workforce and much of the military, for the minds of the Russian people. As Badcock reveals, the major problem with the Provisional

[35] Pavel Milyukov, "Speech to the Duma, 1 November 1916," In, Frank Alfred Golder, ed., *Documents of Russian History, 1914 – 1917,* (Gloucester, MA: Golder Press, 1964), 154 – 66.

Government's efforts to sway public support in their favor reflected the remaining divide between Russian elite and Russian peasant. Specifically, the Provisional Government approached the Russian peasantry as backward villagers who simply needed an education in modern politics to appreciate the new political system and wish to continue the war efforts.[36] As Badcock continues, such efforts undermined themselves as it was a refusal to acknowledge the Russian peasantry's own desires for peace.[37]

Ultimately then, the Provisional Government's failure became the Bolsheviks' gain. Whereas the Provisional Government continually sought to manipulate the populace to continue the war efforts, the Bolsheviks appealed to the Russian populace's main desire – peace. In the end, the Bolsheviks best appealed to the general Russian populace because of their ability to give the *russkii narod* the peace that they desired. As Badcock herself suggests, the fact that the Bolsheviks did not see the need to politicize the peasantry, but rather could "talk" to the peasants and offered peace and land doomed and the Provisional Government's insistence in carrying on the fight doomed Russia to further revolution.[38]

1914 therefore became a critical moment for Russia and not merely a segue into socialist revolution. But rather, it played a major role in forming a greater sense of identity amongst the greater population of ethnic Russians to begin identifying themselves as part of a larger entity, but not necessarily the tsarist state. As described, this break away from devotion to tsarist autocracy did not necessarily come from a desire for greater access to politics but rather for a greater expression of the *Russkii narod* as an equal member in the whole of the Russian Empire

[36] Sarah Badcock, "Talking to the People and Shaping Revolution: The Drive for Enlightenment in Revolutionary Russia," *Russian Review,* Vol. 65, No. 4 (Oct., 2006) 617 – 18.
[37] Ibid.
[38] Ibid., 635 – 36.

and recognized as both capable and useful. The outpouring of support then witnessed the rise of a sense of Russian nationalism based on the concept of a need for the *russkii narod* to play a more influential role rather than the various Non-Russians who made up significant portions of the Empire's bureaucracy. Ultimately then, this vocalization of *russkii* identity would not only be tsarist Russia's own undoing as the *narod* no long viewed the autocracy as holding their best interests, but ultimately would allow populist and socialist groups to gain more appeal in a desire buttress their own causes by appealing to the *russkii narod's* base desires of land and peace after three years of devastating warfare.