Review of the RUSSIAN REVOLUTION(S) for APUSH Purposes

Russia, 1880s-1924
Causes of the Russian Revolution

Social & Political Structure

- Political Structure
  - Strong tradition of autocracy, where Tsars ruled with unlimited power
  - Censorship; secret police

- Society
  - Peasants made up 80% of the population
  - Plagued by high taxes, crop failures, famines and poverty
  - Lacked industrialization
  - Hugely diverse; Tsars attempt *Russification* in an attempt to establish a uniform Russian culture
Causes of the Russian Revolution

Industrialization

- The technological gap was widening between Russia and the Western powers in the second half of the 19th century

- Nicholas II (the last tsar) sought to industrialize Russia (1880s and onward):
  - High taxes, grueling working conditions, miserably low wages, child labor, unions outlawed, etc. → stirred discontent and formation of revolutionary movements
Causes of the Russian Revolution

Russian Marxists

- The group that would succeed in establishing a new government in Russia followed the views of Karl Marx
  - Believed that the industrial class of workers would overthrow the tsar, ruling in a “dictatorship of the proletariat”

- In 1903, the Bolsheviks formed
  - Devoted to radical, quick change in Russia; to be led by elites
  - Leader: Vladimir Lenin
1904-1918: A series of crises

- 3 Crises Propel Revolutionary Fervor
- Russo-Japanese War (1904)
- Bloody Sunday: The Revolution of 1905
- World War I: The Final Blow (1914-1918)
Causes of the Russian Revolution
The Russo-Japanese War, 1904

- By the late 1880s, Russia and Japan were competing for Korea and Manchuria
  - Russia broke a series of agreements over these territories, prompting Japanese aggression

- Though Russians went confidently to war, the Japanese defeated them
  - "Humiliating" to be defeated by an Asiatic nation
  - Sparked protests and demonstrations
Causes of the Russian Revolution

Bloody Sunday, 1905

- 200,000 peaceful workers approached the Winter Palace in St. Petersburg, carrying a petition requesting better working conditions
  - Tsar ordered military units to fire at protestors; destroyed the bond between the people and their tsar, provoking a wave of strikes and violence

- Nicholas II reluctantly approved the creation of the Duma – Russia’s first parliament but then dissolved it after 10 weeks
Causes of the Russian Revolution

World War I, 1914-1918

- Initially united Russian people in a crusade against the Central Powers
- Strength lay in their numbers
  - But industry couldn’t supply enough
  - Generals were weak and soldiers were poorly equipped
- Defeat on the front fueled disorder at home
  - 1 million casualties within the first year!
  - People turned against the government and soldiers mutinied
  - Severe rationing resulted in starvation and shortages
In an effort to increase troop morale, Nicholas took personal command of the army.

Left Tsarina Alexandra (a German) in charge and under the guidance of Rasputin.
- A self-proclaimed holy man and former peasant who had “cured” their son of disease.

Rasputin gained significant power over the government and helped to spread corruption.
- Indulgences and rumors of love affair damaged tsarist rule.
- Murdered by Russian nobles in 1916.
The First of Two Revolutions
The March Revolution, 1917

- By 1917 Russia was on the verge of collapse
  - A massive worker’s uprising spread throughout Russia
  - Soldiers sent to put down the rebellion joined it instead

- Tsar Nicolas II abdicated his throne
  - Weak provisional government replaced the regime
  - Soviets (local councils consisting of workers, peasants and soldiers) had more influence than the provisional government

- Imperial family placed under house arrest
The Second of Two Revolutions
The Bolshevik Revolution, Nov. 1917

- Lenin and the Bolsheviks recognized their opportunity to seize power
  - Gained support with their slogan *Peace, Land and Bread*
  - Gained control of key soviets

- In November 1917, without warning, Bolshevik Red Guards made up of armed factory workers stormed the Winter Palace
  - Provisional government toppled
Peace, Land, and Bread
Bolsheviks in Power

- Lenin was named the head of the new Communist government within hours
  - Distributed farmland to peasants
  - Gave control of factories to the workers
  - Declared all classes equal
  - Prohibited teaching/practicing religion
  - Used secret police in the “Red Terror” - thousands of Russian executed as so-called “enemies of the state/revolution”

- Signed a truce with Germany
  - Treaty of Brest-Litovsk (1918) surrendered a quarter of Russia’s land
Civil War, 1918-1920
The Red Army Battles the White Army

- While the Communists had overthrown the government they still had many opponents and didn’t control the whole of Russia

- Civil war broke out between the “White Army” – those that opposed communism – and the “Red Army” of Bolsheviks who wanted to implement communism

- Reds eventually win under the military leadership of Leon Trotsky
  - 15 million Russians died during the Civil War
Civil War, 1918-1920

The Fate of the Imperial Family

- Reds learn that the whites were planning on rescuing the tsar and his family

- Reds executed all members of the family in July, 1918
Russia was organized into several self-governing republics which were controlled from Moscow.

In 1922, the country was named the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics (USSR) in honor of the soviets that helped launch the Bolshevik Revolution.

Communist Party held all real power.

Lenin had established a dictatorship of the Communist Party, not the dictatorship of the proletariat envisioned by Marx.
From the 1 September 1918 edition of the Bolshevik newspaper, Krasnaya Gazeta:

“We will turn our hearts into steel, which we will temper in the fire of suffering and the blood of fighters for freedom. We will make our hearts cruel, hard, and immovable, so that no mercy will enter them, and so that they will not quiver at the sight of a sea of enemy blood. We will let loose the floodgates of that sea. Without mercy, without sparing, we will kill our enemies in scores of hundreds. Let them be thousands; let them drown themselves in their own blood...let there be floods of the blood of the bourgeois - more blood, as much as possible.”