



## TERRITORY OF THE RUSSIAN EMPIRE (1914)



### Events that led Russia into WWI,

The liberal Tsar Alexander II freed the serfs and passed government and military reforms. This set off industrialization in Russia. His successors, Alexander III and Nicholas II, ruled with an iron fist. Workers did not like the harsh conditions in the factories and many people joined protest and revolutionary groups calling for a constitution instead of the monarchy. Tsar Nicholas II promised more local authority and freedoms for the people but did not include them in the national government or follow through on his promises. The people's lack of trust for the tsar's government deepened due to the costs of preparing for war.

In 1905, many Russian peasants were suffering under very high taxes. They wanted land to farm, but the land all belonged to the nobility. Workers in industrial factories also had bad working conditions. When the huge empire of Russia lost a war with the islands of Japan, it was thought to be embarrassing to Russia. Desperate people demanded food and workers went on strike, but the peasants were dealt with harshly. These problems triggered the revolution of 1905. A food crisis began the next year when the wheat and oats crops fell by a third; the potato crop fell by 2.5 million metric tons that year. The revolution made some things better for the people, but cost a lot in terms of lost production.

Russia entered the First World War with the largest army in the world: 1.4 million soldiers. Once it was ready to enter the war, Russia's army had more than five million soldiers (even though they only had 4.6 million rifles). Russia spending increased steadily in the years leading up to the war. Russia felt that the only alternative to joining the war was letting the Germanic Empires (Germany and Austria-Hungary) take over Europe.

Effects of WWI on Russia

The physical location of the countries involved in the war meant that the Russian Empire was mostly alone defending the Eastern Front against both Germany and Austria-Hungary. Russia's troubles at home meant that other countries did not trust her stability and so they kept their soldiers to the Western Front. Russia's military leaders were not very skilled; the beginning of the war did not go well for the Russian Empire.

Country	Total Mobilized	Killed & Died	Wounded	Prisoners & Missing	Total Casualties	% of Soldiers Injured
Russia	12,000,000	1,700,000	4,950,000	2,500,000	9,150,000	76.3%

The social, economic, and political problems that Russia faced at home had become unmanageable by 1917. The food shortages in the cities led to protests which led to the tsar giving up his power and the February Revolution. On November 29, 1917, the Communist Bolsheviks led by Vladimir Lenin seized power. The new communist government tried to end the war and the Germans demanded enormous concessions. Finally, in March 1918, the Treaty of Brest-Litovsk was signed and Russia had officially lost the war. In all, the treaty took away a third of Russia's population, half of its industry, and 90% of its coal mines. See map below showing the lands (in green) that Russia lost as a result of signing the Treaty of Brest-Litovsk with the Central Powers ending Russia's involvement in WWI.



Part of what made WWI so horrible for the soldiers was the use of the WMD called mustard gas. This poison gas would kill anyone who did not get his gas mask on fast enough whenever a gas bomb exploded nearby. Also, mustard gas is heavier than air, so it sank down into the fox holes and other places the soldiers were hiding from the artillery shells and bombs. Many soldiers were injured or killed by mustard gas during WWI. In total, more than 1.2 million people were injured by poison gas attacks; nearly 100,000 of them died.

**Effects of Mustard Gas**

Country	Non-Fatal	Deaths	Total
Russia	419,340	56,000	475,340

In addition to being expensive in terms of lives lost, WWI was also expensive in terms of the money spent by the governments to run the war.

Allied Powers	Cost in Dollars in 1914-18
Russia	\$22,293,950,000
Total Allied Powers Costs	\$125,690,477,000

**Questions to prepare for simulation to represent the Russian Empire’s perspective**

1. Describe the social, political, and economic problems affecting Russia before the start of WWI.
2. What were the costs and benefits to the new Russian government for signing the Treaty of Brest-Litovsk?
3. What arguments can be made for and against allowing representatives of the new Russian government to join the peace conference with the other Allied Powers at the end of WWI?
4. As a representative of the new Russian government in 1918, what price would you ask of Russia and the other countries to pay for bringing an end to the war?