

The February Revolution 1917.

Background.

- Russia entered World War 1 in 1914.
 - The Russian army was badly equipped.
- The weather: it had been an extremely cold winter, hardship for population, sudden change and warm in the end of February.
 - This meant that major factories had to close down because they got no deliveries.
 - Cold weather means that people stay at home, when the heat comes people go out.
- The Constitutional situation. October Manifesto.
- There were a lot of strikes and disorder around Russia at this time.

List of events: (with a map)

The revolution starts

- Nicholas left for the front on February 22.
- Next day women demonstrate for bread
- February 24 200 000 workers walk up the Nevsky Prospekt.
- February 25, Nicholas sends order to commander of Petrograd (name change) to restore order by force. He had no idea how bad the situation was. His wife also called for firm action.
- On the morning of February 26 soldiers in uniform gather up in central Petrograd.
- In Znamenskii Square troops from a Guard Regiment fired at a crowd, 40 civilian casualties.
- A group of workers went to one of the regiments and told the soldier what happened.
- Mutiny on three of the regiments, soldiers held rallies declaring that they wouldn't obey any orders to fire at civilians.
 - The soldiers placed in the cities were older and had lower morale than the ones on the front.
- Soldiers took armed vehicles and went around in the city, storming the secret police, okhrana, stole weapons, hung some policemen and looted shops. By evening half of the 160 000 soldiers in Petrograd were active in the mutiny. The rest were neutral, only 2000 troops remained loyal to the Czar.
- Nicholas orders eight regiments and one battalion of veteran soldiers to Petrograd with machineguns, but they never arrive, the order is aborted.

The Duma and Soviet sees the opportunity to seize power

- Center of attention moves to Taurida Palace where the Duma sat. The Duma decides that they will have an executive bureau of 12 Duma members, called Provisional Committee.
 - Head of this is Rodzianko
 - Important member is Kerensky, socialist.
 - Internal fights.
- Petrograd Soviet is formed February 28, they quickly became a rival for power.
 - Ca 3000 members, had very chaotic meetings, 2000 soldiers.
 - Everybody tried to make his or her voice heard.
 - To make it smoother, an executive committee was formed, the ISPOLKOM. This committee wasn't elected but appointed by socialists. This will become the acting ground for the Bolshevik Party.
- ISPOLKOM becomes the "guardians of the Revolution", they don't participate in the Duma Executive Committee and sees them as enemies of the revolution.
- This means that two rivaling bodies run from now on Russia.
- The leaders from the Duma wanted to contain the revolution, the Soviet wanted to deepen it.

The ISPOLKOM and the Soviets take power:

- The executive committee of the Duma renames itself to The Provisional Government. Minister of Justice becomes Kerensky.
- Kerensky: resemblance to Napoleon. As a Socialist he should have said no to the place in Prov Gov, since he was also a member of the ISPOLKOM. His defense speech in the ISPOLKOM, "I cannot live without the people, and the moment you come to doubt me, kill me!". After this speech he sat down and kept the two seats.
- The ISPOLKOM takes the right to legislate with order no 1, defying the Prov Gov. Order no 1 calls for the soldiers to form Soviets and send members to the Petrograd Soviet. What they are doing is confirming their power over the military in Petrograd.
 - In Article 3 and 4 they say that the soldiers should take orders from the Soviet not the Czar or the Prov Gov.
 - Article 5 that they should take control over all arms.
- This had the effect that the military got politicized
 - The prov Gov lost power over the country and the Soviet gained it.

The Czar abdicates:

- Nicholas took no part in this, his last order was the one from February 25, ordering the military to the city.
- The Commander in Chief (ÖB) Alekseev sent a message to the Czar recommending him to give Duma real constitutional power, saying that the soldiers won't obey orders to oppress the rebellion.
- Nicholas decides to tell Rodzianko that the Duma can form a cabinet and to tell the soldiers outside Petrograd to back off.
- Rodziansko answered that the Czar seems unaware of the gravity of the situation, no control of the soldiers, firing at each other.
- Alekseev recommends that the Czar abdicate in favor of his minor son, with the Czars brother Grand Duke Michael to assume regency.
- Nicholas signs a paper doing this, but on the news that two members from the Duma are on their way, ha asks for it back. He hopes that they will bring the news that he will be able to stay in the throne. While waiting for the arrival of the members from the Duma, he consults a doctor regarding his sons illness.
 - Rasputin had said that he would be able to cure him by his 13th birthday, which would be now.
 - The doctor says that there are no medical ways of curing him, medicine knows of no such miracles.
 - On hearing this Nicholas changes his mind.
 - Out of love for his son, he decides to give the crown to his brother Michael.
 - Michael doesn't want the crown since Rodzianko can't guarantee his personal safety.
- The Czars abdication left Russia in a political vacuum, he had been the state, now there is nothing.
- The Struggle for power between the Soviet and the Prov Gov continued.

Next time we will work with the October revolution.