# Historiography of the Russian Revolution

**Yevgeny Yevtushenko**: “Lord, let me be a poet,

Let me not deceive people”.

**Introduction**- When considering an in-depth analysis of any given historical period, all good historians will make some reference to historiography: the different views and debates that are held by a variety of historians; *the history of History*. An acknowledgement of the work that has come before them, an exploration of the issues that have given rise to dispute and a comparison of different arguments, gives balance and perspective to the writing of good History. Differing political backgrounds and bias, different emphasis of themes and new approaches sources has given rise to different ‘schools of thought’ within historians’ work; a trend that is indeed evident in the historiography of Russian Revolution. Labels of ‘Soviet’, ‘Marxist’, ‘liberal’, ‘libertarian’ and ‘revisionist’ have emerged that describe a number of mutual points of dispute and agreement amongst historians of the Russian Revolution. However, it is important to realise that it is not always possible to ‘pigeonhole’ every historian into neatly labelled ‘boxes’ and amongst historians of similar viewpoints, such as liberals; there are often considerable areas of disagreement. Nevertheless, many writers do stand for clearly defined schools of thought: Pipes is a definite liberal, Fitzpatrick a revisionist and the *History of the CPSU (Bolsheviks) short-course* articulates the Soviet view developed under Stalin. There are, though, innumerable grey areas. Many historians (especially more recent writers) have aspects in their work that overlap different traditional labels; e.g. Figes draws a lot of his arguments from the revisionist point of view, but he is fairly conservative in his political persuasion (in some respects not too far removed from Pipes) and he re-emphasises the importance of key individuals, such as Lenin, seeking to address the criticisms made of some early revisionist accounts by putting the ‘leaders back into history’.

The fall of Communism in the former USSR in 1991 has also drastically changed the historiographical landscape. The opening up of the Soviet archives has led to a renaissance in the study of the political nature of the Bolshevik Party, with sources now available to perhaps answer some key questions that have previously been largely based on conjecture or limited evidence. This has not resulted, though, in an easing of debate. The work of Robert Service has offered a revised understanding of the totalitarian view, whilst Russian historian Dmitri Volkogonov is scathing in his attacks upon Lenin and Stalin, a view that is largely identical to the classic liberal accounts in its conclusions. Indeed, the collapse of Communism and the supposed ‘triumph’ or ‘vindication’ of capitalist democracy has largely resulted in a return to the more conservative, liberal point of view in many popular accounts of the Revolution.

An equally important factor in developing an understanding of Russian historiography is the recognition of bias and the context in which different historians approaches have emerged. The basis of the Soviet view was to justify the Revolution and celebrate the triumphs of Communism; the Cold War influence over the liberal approach underscores its dismissal of any notions of ‘mass participation’ (a ‘Marxist’ ideal) and thus seeks to demonise the Bolsheviks; revisionists, on the other hand, are critical of both polarised views, and seek a deeper, more complex analysis. The debate amongst different historical approaches indeed continues to be an on going, developing discourse. Whilst the Stalinist Soviet view has been largely discredited, Marxist interpretations continue to be applied by some historians; the liberal view is still championed and eloquently espoused by a number of modern writers (most notably Richard Pipes); and revisionist (and even ‘post-revisionist’) approaches are continually throwing new understandings upon our understandings of the Russian Revolution.

Despite the increasingly complex nature of Russian historiography, a most worthwhile exercise is to consider which school of thought various historians belong to when you read their work. It is equally important to acknowledge areas of historical debate within your own writing, drawing attention to the insights different individual historians have made. It is perfectly acceptable for you to take on and base your own understandings on the interpretation of a historian whose analysis you feel is the most convincing, although you must acknowledge that you have gained your insights from their work. Unlike in some other subjects, students of History are not expected to ‘re-invent the wheel’. But that should not discount you seeking a complex answer to your questions that draws on the conclusion of different schools of thought. New work is being produced all the time and our understandings of the Revolution continue to grow as historians uncover new sources and approach the old in different ways. Students new to the study of History sometimes despair at trying to find out “what *really* happened” or what is “the *right* answer”. The fact that historians fundamentally disagree in their arguments can indeed be confusing. However, good students of History should see that maybe a “right” answer is very hard to come by. History was never nice and neat (just like real life), but the initial lack of a ‘clear cut’ answer should not lead to confusion – the analysis that is often most convincing is that which is best able to articulate and explain contrasting views and debates. Recognise bias – our own, that of historians, and that of the sources we analyse. Consider the notions that post-modernism sheds on History, and on the nature of memory and experience: how one person perceived and experienced the Revolution can be entirely different to the experiences of another. We must continue to ask questions of our sources: Why do they think that? How were they affected? What were they hoping to achieve? Did their expectations, experiences, values and desires change over time?

The popular perception of the Russian Revolution in the Western world (and therefore most school textbooks) has typically followed the liberal interpretation. We live in a free, democratic society (or we hope it is) and generally experience little discomfort, brutality or desperate danger. Russia at the turn of the century is in many ways a seemingly ‘alien’ world. It can be hard to not ascribe our own values onto this society. We should thus be wary of our own bias. The violence and callousness of much of the Revolution naturally repulses us. Punishing a thief by ramming a stake up his rectum or nailing him to a fence is horrible and inhuman in the least – but to the Russian villager, whose existence was often brutal and a life-long struggle for survival, it might have made sense. Even trying to understand the personality of Lenin is a difficult task. Many accounts of the Revolution portray him as wholly consumed by the task of the Revolution, a one-sided and dogmatic figure. Yet Lenin somehow found time to have a romantic fling with Inessa Armand. In the same way, Dzerzhinsky not only ran the Cheka, but also a large children’s charity. These were complex and very real human beings.

It is disappointing that the brilliant work of revisionist historians has been often overlooked, or is too complex in its analysis for popular media to make use of. It was interesting that for the anniversary of the Russian Revolution in 1997 the *New York Times Literally Supplement* chose all liberal historians to reflect on the importance and significance of the events. Richard Pipes has dismissed the revisionist account as simply a re-hash of the Soviet view; politics and the actions of leading protagonists continue to be the driving factors in understanding the Revolution. Pipes makes fine use of a wide variety of sources, but he ignores the important new evidence that revisionist historians have brought to light and he cannot reconcile any notions of popular support and mass agency with the Bolshevik Party. Orlando Figes, the author of one of the most brilliantly acclaimed new accounts of the Revolution, argues “we are all social historians now”; meaning that the broad notions raised by revisionist historians are now impossible to ignore. Although taking the liberal view can often be the easiest way of making a straightforward response to an exam or essay question (and the liberal view still has some compelling arguments), by taking on board some of the new insights revisionist work has given us, by seeking a more complex answer that is not consciously driven by political bias, the richness of one’s analyses can only be made greater.

Following my broad summary of the different schools in the History of the Russian Revolution, I have included a number of short quotes from leading historians. I have tried to structure the quotes so that they read like a conversation or debate – which I think is a good way of conceptualising historiography. Note how there is a certain amount of agreement on different matters, but also some subtle and some glaring differences. I have categorised these historians merely for the purpose of drawing attention to key, broad approaches in their views of the Revolution – not all uniformly agree on all issues of debate surrounding the Russian Revolution, nor do all necessarily ‘fit’ neatly into the categories given. The historians’ work I have drawn these quotes from are simply those I have read – it is not a definitive list. Nor should you avoid reading at least a few extended works yourself, to take in the narrative in its entirety is an important and valuable exercise in itself.

## Different Historians’ Views: A Summary

**Soviet View**-

* Soviet historians make up the school of historical thought established and fostered by the Communist Party of the USSR up until 1991. The role of Soviet historians was to eulogise the leadership of Lenin, celebrate the triumphs of the Revolution and legitimatise the rule of the Party.
* Soviet historians are Marxist in their analysis of the Revolution:
  + the Bolshevik victory was inevitable and followed the general laws of history established by Marx.
  + The Revolution was due to the leadership of Lenin and his evaluation of the Russian situation in Marxist terms: he was able to guide and lead Russia’s masses in a genuine popular uprising against a corrupt, bourgeois regime. Revolutionary ‘mass consciousness’ was raised by the Party and the ‘people’ were led to victory by the ‘vanguard’ of the Revolution. The success of the October Revolution was evidence of Lenin’s brilliance in leadership and his tight, disciplined organisation of the Party; and the radical mass support of the Russian workers, peasants and soldiers. The increasing authoritarian measures that had to be taken during the Civil War were necessary responses to crises and external military threat. The *History of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union (B.) short-course*, written under Stalin, is the best example of this view, although it does give very biased accounts of the contributions of key figures, such as Trotsky and Kamenev, who had fallen under the wrath of Stalin’s purges. The re-evaluation of Stalinism that occurred under Khrushchev after Stalin’s death led to a widening in Soviet views; however, the overriding correctness and legitimacy of the Communist Party’s authority to rule and the contributions of Lenin remained unquestioned.

In analysing the **February Revolution**, Soviet historians place less emphasis on WWI, believing that there was an essential continuity between developments before and after the outbreak of war. The Revolution was thus a conscious assault upon tsarism from the workers who had preserved the traditions of 1905. The Bolshevik Party played a central role in shaping the workers’ protests. Soviet historians maintain that there was also continuity of mass radicalism between the revolutions of 1905, February and October 1917. October was the ultimate fulfilment of the revolutionary aspirations of the masses and the laws of history.

* ***Prominent Soviet historians***: P.A. Golub, G.D. Obichkin, *History of the CPSU (Bolsheviks) short-course -* various authors*,* Trotsky’s early writings, E.N. Burdzhalov.

There also exists a considerable number of Western historians who have adopted a Marxist or leftist, and largely positive, view of the Bolshevik Revolution and the influence of Lenin.

* ***Western Marxist historians***: C. Hill, J. Reed.

**Liberal View**- The liberal view has been, until recently, the dominant one espoused by historians writing in the West and it continues to be a prominent interpretation championed by a number of writers. However, it must be noted that the liberal interpretation of the Revolution was shaped by the prejudices of the Cold War and is therefore fundamentally hostile to the notions of socialism, Marxist theory (considered a ‘false’ doctrine) and Communist Party rule. In general, liberal historians have traditionally interpreted history ‘from above’, focussing on the ‘actors’ in ‘high politics’. The role of key individuals or ‘principal characters’ (Tsar Nicholas II, Kerensky, Lenin, Trotsky) is central in explaining the outcomes and nature of the Revolution. The masses on the other hand, were largely irrational, ignorant, passive or simply anarchic in their demands and actions. The manipulation and exploitation of this “chaos” and naivety were central in the Bolsheviks’ victory; whilst the failing and unpopular war effort, the rampages of the peasants and the unrealistic demands of the workers created a situation in which the democratic Provisional Government could not hold power. For liberal historians, the October Revolution was “a classic coup d’etat” in which the Bolsheviks disguised their real aim - to build “a one party dictatorship“ (**Pipes**). October was neither popular nor democratic. It was due to the superior organisation and subterfuge of the masses by a professional, dedicated elite who were intent on just one goal: the seizure and retainment of power. Events following the revolution would like-wise prove the undemocratic, authoritarian and intolerant nature of the October revolutionaries. It was in the nature of the Bolshevik Revolution to develop ***totalitarian*** tendencies from the out-set: the Bolsheviks aimed for a one-party, one-ideology state that tolerated no opposition and sought to control and manipulate every aspect of its citizen’s lives.

The early exponents of the liberal interpretation based much of their work on the writings of Russian émigrés, whose views of the October Revolution were understandably negative. It was these sources that led many liberal historians to take an **‘optimist’ view** of the **February Revolution**: Imperial Russia was steadily transforming into a modern, democratic, industrial society. However, WWI politically, socially and economically weakened the tsarist state and thwarted reformist tendencies. It was these enormous pressures that ultimately led to the collapse of the Tsar’s government. The February Revolution, however, again provided an opportunity for Russia to develop a western-style democracy and civil liberties. On-going pressure of the War continued to cause problems, but the situation was ultimately subverted by the Bolsheviks, who exploited the fears and desires of the masses. Russia’s chance at democracy and a stable, civil and capitalist future was stolen by the Bolshevik’s power-hungry grab for rulership.

Some liberal historians have seen the collapse of the Soviet Union in 1991 as the vindication of their views: In his 2001 *Communism - A Brief History*, Pipes claimed that his work “is an introduction to Communism and, at the same time, its obituary”. Russian historian Dmitri Volkogonov, much like Pipes, is brutal in his condemnation of the outcomes of the October Revolution. Volkogonov, who has had extensive access to the Soviet archives, makes some compelling arguments that draw strong links between the actions of Lenin and the development of Stalin’s ‘totalitarian’ regime. However, it must be remembered that Volkogonov is a product of his environment: the freedom and need to expose the failings of the Communist Party and the sufferings it caused is a process of catharsis for many contemporary Russian writers.

* ***Prominent liberal historians***: B. Pares, R. Pipes, J. H. Keep,

L. Shapiro, M. Lynch, D. Volkogonov, A. Ulam, R. Conquest.

**Libertarian View**- The growth of ‘New Left’ writers during the Vietnam War led to the development of a different view of the Revolution that rejected the arguments of both liberal and Soviet historians. These ‘libertarian’ historians see the role of the masses as the central element of causation: it was the ordinary workers and peasants, men and women, who made the Revolution. They were neither brainwashed nor led by the Bolsheviks. As summarised by Edward Acton, libertarian historians argue that the “goals for which they (the masses) strove were their own”. Although the February and October Revolutions were genuine movements of the masses, they were later betrayed by the Bolsheviks. The libertarian view is thus sometimes referred to as ‘the theory of unfinished revolution’ and was influenced by the writings of Russian anarchists and the later ideas of Trotsky, who wrote *The Revolution Betrayed* in response to the direction of the USSR under Stalin. Much of the work of libertarian scholars was based on circumstantial evidence and was therefore dismissed by liberal and Soviet historians alike. However, many of the assumptions of the libertarian view would be proven to be not entirely wrong by the work of later revisionist historians.

* ***Prominent Libertarian historians***: A. Berkman, M. Brinton.

**Revisionist View**- In the 1970s, a number of scholars began to again question the assumptions of both the Soviet and liberal scholars, but unlike libertarians, **revisionist** or **social** historians employed advanced historical scholarly research alongside modes of analysis borrowed from the fields of sociology, economics and politics. In some ways like the libertarian view, revisionist historians are wary of a historical narrative that discounts or marginalizes the role played by ordinary people, arguing that an understanding of the Revolution based purely on its chief ‘actors’ is a limited one. Although revisionist work encompasses a number of various views, an overall recognition of the importance played by the ordinary people in creating the revolutionary nature of Russian society in 1917 is emphasised. Revisionists seek to understand and read history ‘from below’. Alongside trying to integrate the agency of ordinary Russians into their explanation of the Revolution, revisionist historians also seek to outline the sheer complexity, changing nature and regional differences that were active in the Revolution. As expressed by Acton, “Russia’s workers were not one uniform, grey mass but flesh-and-blood individuals, highly differentiated in terms of level of skill, cultural development, nationality and outlook. Rather then responding *en masse* to events, their reactions depended closely upon their own particular experience”; likewise Russia’s peasants had their own legitimate, articulate and very real demands.

Contrary to the liberal view, the work of revisionists has revealed that there was a degree of genuine mass support for the Bolsheviks in October 1917. Lenin was indeed a key figure in shaping the course of the Revolution and it was the Bolshevik Party who were able to best articulate the revolutionary demands of the masses. The Russian masses were becoming more radicalised; society was becoming increasing polarised along notions of class; and Lenin’s slogan of “All Power to the Soviets” was a truly popular one. Revisionist historians have also stressed the complexity of the relationship between the masses, Lenin and the Bolsheviks. The programme of the Bolsheviks was successful because it reflected the independent radical demands of the masses; and in clearly articulating such demands, the Bolshevik Party swelled in size by October 1917, becoming a mass popular party identified with the ideals Soviet power and class struggle.

Again, contrary to both Soviet and liberal arguments, revisionist research has revealed that the Bolsheviks in 1917 were far from the disciplined, centralised and tightly organised Party that traditional accounts make them out to be. Party members held a diverse range of views and democratic debate was common; orders given by the Party leadership were often ignored or disobeyed by the rank-and-file; administrative procedures were rudimentary; and problems with communication often left decisions and actions in the hands of local cadres.

Some revisionist historians have argued that there was a degree of discontinuity between the popular nature of the October Revolution and the increasing authoritarian measures taken up by the Party post-1917. These historians argue that the Bolsheviks held a considerably utopian view of how the Revolution would develop after their seizure of power. As expressed by Lenin in his *State and Revolution*, the rest of the world was meant to follow Russia into socialist revolution and the ‘state’, after the temporary imposition of the ‘dictatorship of the proletariat’, would simply fade away. However, international revolution did not follow October and the Party had to jettison much of its popular appeal and resort to centralised, authoritarian measures in order to respond to the myriad of economic, political, military and social crises that were faced during the Civil War period; problems that Lenin and the Bolsheviks had barely considered before seizing power. The question of whether the new regime could survive or not without terror is debatable; however, the notion that the Bolsheviks had a ‘hidden agenda’ behind their October seizure of power is questioned by these historians who see the Bolsheviks acting more out of utopian idealism, than conspiratorial deceitfulness.

This complexity of relationship between the masses and the Party, that of rulers and ruled, continues to be a key area of investigation amongst revisionist historians. The extent to which the Party was responding to popular pressure in instigating class terror during the Civil War and the popularity of Stalin’s policies of mass industrialisation and collectivisation amongst the Party’s rank-and-file throw into question notions of the Party elite being the sole ‘directors’ of the Revolution. Historians such as Sheila Fitzpatrick have explored the phenomenon of ‘Cultural Revolution’, which had significant elements of utopian idealism and popular agency that were, in some respects, independent of Stalin’s control. Stalin certainly played a key role in instigating mass terror, but popular participation drove the process on into wider Soviet society. Furthermore, the recent work of Robert Service has thrown into question both liberal and revisionist views of the **‘totalitarian’** nature of the Soviet regime. Service argues that while the Soviet state was certainly totalitarian in its aims, the results left much room for popular resistance and opposition via falsification of information, slack work habits and the continued strength of family and kinship ties. Some recent investigations, such as those by Orlando Figes and Service, have re-orientated their approach somewhat and have again analysed the central role of key leaders, such as Lenin, in the Revolution. Nonetheless, the overriding concern to include everyday people’s experiences within the historical narrative, and not cast aside the masses as passive victims, continues throughout contemporary revisionist (or even ‘post-revisionist’ in some ways) accounts of the Revolution. As Figes so eloquently states, the Revolution was “a human event of complicated individual tragedies’’.

In regards to the **February Revolution**, the debate over the origins of the Revolution is wide amongst revisionist historians, and the review of the **factors** leading the downfall of tsarism are given differing emphasis by different historians. However, a number of revisionists have taken a **‘pessimist view’** of the February Revolution: Russia was suffering a long-term institutional crisis and revolution was an unavoidable outcome; Imperial Russia was headed toward turmoil and the impact of WWI made little difference in the long run.

A number of contemporary liberal historians, most notably Richard Pipes, have been strident in their recent criticisms of the conclusions reached by revisionist historians, claiming that the revisionist analyses are simply re-worked interpretations of the Soviet view. However, such criticisms don’t reflect the rich and complex tapestry of interpretation offered by revisionist work and must simply be rejected on the grounds of political bias. Acton is more correct in arguing that, “by reading history backwards, by attributing to the Party of 1917 characteristics it acquired during the Civil War, the Soviet, liberal and libertarian traditions have all distorted the process whereby the Bolsheviks came to power. Each tradition mythologized the revolution”. Whilst in light of the events of 1991 Pipes might call his work the “obituary” of Communism, a celebration and vindication of the traditional Western view, Service offers a more balanced insight: “Communism is the young god that failed; capitalism, an older deity, has yet to succeed for most of the world’s people most of the time”.

* **Prominent Revisionist historians**: A. Rabinowitch, R. Service,

M. Ferro, S. Smith, J. Arch-Getty, A. Wood, O. Figes, T. Hasegawa,

S. Fitzpatrick, B. Williams, R.G. Sunny, E. Acton, C. Read,

V. Cherniaev, M. Melancon, S. Wheatcroft, W.G. Rosenberg,

B. Kolonitskii, J. P. Nettl.

**GENERAL ISSUES OF DEBATE OVER THE FEBRUARY REVOLUTION:**

Even though the February Revolution of 1917 is, to a degree, less controversial in nature than that of October, historians have nevertheless differed in their explanation as to why tsarism collapsed. A number of explanations have been put forward but the relative importance of different factors is an area of dispute amongst historians of all schools of thought:

* The inherent weaknesses in the institutions and ideologies that the Old Regime used to maintain its authority were fundamentally to blame: tsarism was facing a ‘crisis of modernisation’. The tsars wanted all the success and power of a modern economic society, but unlike the West, were unwilling to grant the social freedoms that generally went along with such developments.
* Unmet class expectations and perceived social inequality created the revolutionary situation.
* The government failed to adjust to changing circumstances, as exemplified by the failure of liberal reform in Russia after the 1905 revolution.
* The individual character of Nicholas II; he was simply ill-suited to being an autocrat.
* The economic, social, political and military impact of the First World War simply created unbearable strains upon the Tsarist regime.

**Discussing Historiography in Essays**: When reviewing historians’ opinions in your essays, you should aim to make the reader aware that you have a good grasp of the different, broad trends in historiographical debate. You should be able to identify a few key elements of these different views and also be able to point out the views of some prominent individual writers. Although it’s not formally required that you quote verbatim in exams, it would set you in good stead to have a few ‘one-liners’ memorised. However, the views of historians should not take precedence over your own argument, nor the use of primary evidence. They are to be discussed merely to highlight different views and interpretations.

Some examples of how you might incorporate a review of historiography and referrals to different individuals and schools of thought into your sentences:

* *Whilst Soviet historians view the 1917 October Revolution as a 'mass movement' led by Lenin; liberal historians, such as Richard Pipes, argue that October was simply "a classic coup d’etat": the seizure of power by a small, well organised minority, without the support or consent of wider society.*
* *For revisionist historians, the Russian Revolution was an infinitely more complicated movement than what Soviet and liberal historians make it out to be. There was, to a degree, popular support for the Bolshevik seizure of power in October 1917 (whilst this support was conditional on the idea of 'Soviet power') and the use of violence and terror may have had an element of responding to popular demands. This is in direct conflict with the liberal ‘totalitarian’ view that sees Lenin and Stalin as the sole ‘directors’ of the terror and control inflicted upon Soviet society.*
* *Lynch sees a clear link between the repressive and autocratic nature of both the Old Regime and the New Society, as “1917 did not mark a complete break with the past. Rather it was the replacement of one form of state authoritarianism with another".*

### Russian Revolution: Historians’ Quotes

### **Area of Study One**

**Service**: “…the Russian Empire was deeply fissured between the government and the tsar’s subjects; between the capital and the provinces; between the educated and the uneducated; between Western and Russian ideas; between rich and poor; between privilege and oppression; between contemporary fashion and centuries-old custom”.

**Smith**: “The collapse of the autocracy was rooted in a crisis of modernisation. The government hoped that it could carry out modernisation whilst maintaining tight control over society. Yet the effect of industrialization, urbanization, internal migration, and the emergence of new social classes was to set in train forces that served to erode the foundations of the autocratic state”.

**Hasegawa**: “…the tsarist regime was pregnant with irreconcilable internal contradictions that it had no capacity to resolve”.

***History of the CPSU (b.) short-course***: “In tsarist Russia the capitalist yoke was aggravated by the yoke of tsardom. The workers not only suffered from capitalist exploitation, from inhuman toil, but, in common with the whole people, suffered from a lack of all rights. The politically advanced workers therefore strove to lead the revolutionary movement of all the democratic elements in town and country against tsardom. The peasants were in dire need owing to lack of land and the numerous survivals of serfdom, and lived in a state of bondage to the landlords and kulaks. The nations inhabiting tsarist Russia groaned beneath a double yoke – that of their own landlords and capitalists and that of the Russian landlords and capitalists. The economic crisis of 1900-03 had aggravated the hardships of the toiling masses; the war intensified them still further. The war defeats added fuel to the hatred of the masses for tsardom. The patience of the people was coming to an end”.

**Figes**: “Time and time again, the obstinate refusal of the tsarist regime to concede reforms turned what should have been a political problem into a revolutionary crisis: decent minded liberals like Prince Lvov were forced into the revolutionary camp by the regime’s idiotic policy of blocking the initiatives of patriotic bodies such as the zemstvos…The tsarist regime’s downfall was not inevitable; but its own stupidity made it so”.

**Pipes**: “…the collapse of tsarism, while not improbable, was certainly not inevitable”.

**Figes**: “It was ironic but somehow fitting that the 1905 Revolution should have been started by an organisation dreamed up by the tsarist regime itself. No-one believed more than Father Gapon in the bond between Tsar and people”.

***History of the CPSU (b.) short-course***: “The streets of St. Petersburg ran with workers' blood. January 9 (22) came to be known as "Bloody Sunday": On that day the workers received a bloody lesson. It was their faith in the tsar that was riddled by bullets on that day. They came to realize that they could win their rights only by struggle”.

**Trotsky**: “Although with a few broken ribs, Tsarism came out of the experience of 1905 alive and strong enough”.

**Figes**: “…although the regime succeeded in restoring order, it could not hope to put the clock back. 1905 had changed society for good. Many of the younger comrades of 1905 were the elders of 1917. They were inspired by its memory and instructed by its lessons”.

**Trotsky**: “The events of 1905 were a prologue to the two revolutions of 1917, that of February and that of October”.

***History of the CPSU (b.) short-course***: “The revolution disclosed that tsardom was the sworn enemy of the people, that tsardom was like the proverbial hunchback whom only the grave could cure”.

**Pipes**: “In the end, Russia gained nothing more than a breathing spell”.

***History of the CPSU (b.) short-course***: “The triumph of the Stolypin reaction was short-lived. A government which would offer the people nothing but the knout and the gallows could not endure. Repressive measures became so habitual that they ceased to inspire fear in the people. The fatigue felt by the workers in the years immediately following the defeat of the revolution began to wear off. The workers resumed the struggle. The Bolsheviks' forecast that a new rise in the tide of revolution was inevitable proved correct”.

**Wood**: “…the scandal which had surrounded Rasputin’s name was merely a symptom, not a cause, of the acute malaise which inflicted an incompetent and unpopular regime now deep in the throes of a devastating war”.

**Lynch**: “The Rasputin scandal had been a bizarre symptom of the disease affecting Russian politics rather than a cause”.

**Figes**: “Alexandra’s ‘sexual corruption’ became a kind of metaphor for the diseased condition of the tsarist state”.

**Pares**: “In the midst of a world wide struggle, in a time of the closest collaboration with the best brains of Western statesmanship, the Russian ministers were selected by an ignorant, blind and hysterical woman on the test of their subservience to an ignorant, fanatical and debouched adventurer”.

**Service**: “There were those at court who made criticisms, but they castigated the symptoms of decadence, not the disease: they reviled Rasputin while refusing to recognize more basic political problems”.

**Figes**: “Nicholas was the source of all the problems. If there was a vacuum of power at the centre of the ruling system, then he was the empty space. In a sense, Russia gained in him the worst of both worlds: a Tsar determined to rule from the throne yet quite incapable of exercising power”.

**Service**: “…although Nicholas II may not have been an outstanding emperor, it was the general situation and not his personality that enfeebled the regime’s reaction to the assaults made upon it”.

**Pipes**: “…while the collapse of tsarism was not inevitable, it was made likely by deep-seated cultural and political flaws that prevented the tsarist regime from adjusting to the economic and cultural growth of the country, flaws that proved fatal under the pressure generated by World War I”.

**Figes**: “…whereas the other European powers managed to adapt and improvise, the tsarist system proved much too rigid and unwieldy, too inflexible and set in its ways, too authoritarian and inefficient, to adapt itself to the situation as it changed. The First World War was a titanic test for the states of Europe – and one that Tsarism failed in a singular and catastrophic way”.

**Hill**: “The fundamental cause of the Russian Revolution, then, was the incompatibility of the tsarist state with the demands of modern civilization. War accelerated the development of revolutionary crises, but their deep-lying causes could not be wished away in times of peace”.

**Fitzpatrick**: “The pressures of the First World War – and, no doubt, the personalities of Nicholas and his wife, and the tragedy of their young son’s haemophilia – threw the anachronistic traits of the Russian autocracy into sharp relief, and made Nicholas seem less like the upholder of the autocratic tradition than an unwitting satirist of it”.

**Wood**: “The tsar foolishly added to his own isolation by assuming personal command of the Russian army in 1915. His unhelpful presence at military headquarters in Mogilev left the conduct of affairs in the capital…in the hands of his neurotic wife – contemptuously known by the public as *nemka* (‘the German Woman’) – and the abominable Rasputin”.

**Hill**: “Not only were the ministers shockingly incompetent, they were also changed with bewildering rapidity as the situation went from bad to worse”.

**Service**: “Truly this was already a creaky structure of power. Matters were not helped by the fact that the Emperor was not respected. He was a monarch whose capacity for hard work was not matched by outstanding intelligence. He had no clear vision for Russia’s future and wore himself out with day-to-day political administration. He found contentment only in the company of his family and was thought to be hen-pecked by his spouse Alexandra. In fact he was more independent from her than rumour suggested, but the rumours were believed. Furthermore he surrounded himself with advisors who included a variety of mystics and quacks…Nicholas was out of joint with his times”.

**Figes**: “…when misfortune had put him (Nicholas II) on the throne he swore to uphold and pass on to his son the autocratic powers which he had inherited from his beloved and much-feared father. He adhered to this coronation oath with dogged narrow-mindedness, as if he were terrified that God (or his wife) would punish him if he failed to rule like Ivan the Terrible. As long as he remained Tsar nothing could divert him from this path. For twenty-two years he had ignored the lessons of history, as well as the pleadings of countless advisors, which all pointed to the fact that the only way to save his throne was to grant a government accountable to the people. His motive was always the same: his ‘conscience’ forbade him to do it…he probably found it easier to abdicate than to turn himself into a constitutional king. That was Nicholas’s tragedy”.

**Pipes**: “Nicholas II fell not because he was hated but because he was held in contempt”.

**Figes**: “Throughout his reign Nicholas gave the impression of being unable to cope with the task of ruling a vast Empire in the grips of a deepening revolutionary crisis. True, only a genius could have coped with it. And Nicholas was certainly no genius”.

**Smith**: “When the February Revolution came, it was not as the result of military defeat, or even war weariness, but as the result of the collapse of public support in the government”.

**Pipes**: “Whatever grievances they may have harboured – real and fancified – the ‘masses’ neither needed nor desired a revolution; the only group interested in it was the intelligentsia. Stress on alleged popular discontent and class conflict derives more from ideological preconceptions than from the facts at hand – namely from the discredited Marxist theory that political developments are always and everywhere driven by class conflict”.

**Wood**. “Despite the disaffection of the military, however, it was neither the high command nor the Duma politicians, still less the revolutionary parties, which finally brought about the downfall of ‘Bloody Nicholas’. It was caused by the spontaneous upsurge of the politically radicalized masses”.

**Pares**: “…the cause of ruin came not at all from below, but from above…The Tsar had many opportunities of putting things right, and several times he was on the point of taking them…far from a dictation of events from below, this passive people went on enduring long after it ought to have ceased to do so; and when the crash came, it had done so little to shape it in any way, that it was left to the last minute of a single regiment to determine the issue”.

**Pipes**: “The record leaves no doubt that the myth of the Tsar being forced from the throne by rebellious workers and peasants is just that. The Tsar yielded not to a rebellious populace but to generals and politicians, and he did so from a sense of patriotic duty”.

***History of the CPSU (b.) short-course***: “The revolution was victorious because its vanguard was the working class which headed the movement of millions of peasants clad in soldiers' uniform demanding "peace, bread and liberty." It was the hegemony of the proletariat that determined the success of the revolution…The First Revolution, that of 1905, had prepared the way for the swift success of the Second Revolution, that of 1917…The Revolution of 1905 had shown that the Soviets were organs of armed uprising and at the same time the embryo of a new, revolutionary power. The idea of Soviets lived in the minds of the working-class masses, and they put it into effect as soon as tsardom was overthrown, with this difference, however, that in 1905 it was Soviets only of *Workers'* Deputies that were formed, whereas in February 1917, on the initiative of the Bolsheviks, there arose Soviets of *Workers'* and *Soldiers'* Deputies”.

**J. P. Nettl**: “…for the first time a Tsar had simply become irrelevant…one factor emerged with chilling certainty: the growing consensus among the Duma leaders, the society of the capital, and a good many of the ministers that nothing could be done with the obstinate and totally unperceptive autocrat”.

**Trotsky**: “There were not to be found anywhere in the country any groups of the population, any parties, institutions, or military units which were ready to put up a fight for the old regime”.

**Pipes**: “The most striking aspect of the February Revolution was the extraordinary rapidity with which the Russian state fell apart. It was if the greatest empire in the world had been an artificial construction, without organic unity. The instant the monarch withdrew, the entire structure collapsed in a heap”.

**Figes**: “Collapse is certainly the right word to use. For the Romanov regime fell under the weight of its own internal contradictions. It was not overthrown”.

**Crankshaw**: “Imperial Russia simply rotted away from the centre outward until its shell fell in”.

**Trotsky**: “…the country had so radically vomited up the monarchy that it could not ever crawl down the people’s throat again”.

**E. N. Burdzhalov**: “The second revolutionary wave had not achieved its main goal. The bourgeoisie remained in power, a provisional government had been formed, and the basic demands of the minimum programs of the RSDRP did not recede without a trace. It overthrew the tsarist monarchy and strengthened the organ of genuine popular authority – the Soviet of Workers’ and Soldiers’ Deputies, and this was of paramount importance for the revolution’s further development”.

**Fitzpatrick**: “In February 1917, the autocracy collapsed in the face of popular demonstrations and the withdrawal of elite support for the regime. In the euphoria of revolution, political solutions seemed easy. Russia’s future form of government would, of course, be democratic…Yet within eight months the hopes and expectations of February lay in ruins. ‘Dual power’ proved an illusion, masking something like a power vacuum. The popular revolution became progressively more radical, while the elite revolution moved towards an anxious conservative stance in defense of property and law and order”.

**Kolonitskii**: “For the liberals it *(the Revolution)* was excessively radical, cutting across their ideals and developing in a direction which was ‘left of common sense’. The socialists considered it to be a ‘bourgeois’ revolution and looked for a way out of the crisis and its problems by deepening the revolution”.

**Smith**: “The February Revolution gave rise to a short-lived mood of national unity and optimism. Liberty and democracy were the order of the day. Overnight everyone was transformed from a subject to a citizen…Yet from the first, the scope of the revolution was in dispute. For the reluctant revolutionaries of the Provisional Government the overthrow of the tsar was an act of national self-preservation driven by the need to bring victory in war. For the lower classes, liberty and democracy meant nothing short of a social revolution that would bring about the complete destruction on the old structure of authority and the construction of a new life in accordance with the ideas of justice and freedom”.

**A.J.P. Taylor**: “Though called democratic, this government had no popular mandate and little popular support. It simply carried on the old system, just as a hen continues to run around the yard when its head has been cut off. No one knew how to change direction”.

**Pipes**: “Russia was governed – or rather misgoverned – by a regime of dual power, under which the soviets subverted the authority of the administration without assuming responsibility for the consequences”.

**Lynch**: “The Provisional Government was thus from the beginning in an impossible and paradoxical situation: in order to survive it had to keep Russia in the war, but in keeping Russia in the war, it destroyed its chances of survival”.

**Wood**: “In the fields and factories and at the front, therefore, the population was mobilizing itself for continued revolutionary action as the twin organs of dual power hedged and havered on the two crucial issues of the day – peace and land”.

**Lynch**: “He defined the events of February not as a genuine class revolution but as a palace coup which had simply given authority to ex-tsarist aristocrats and the bourgeoisie” *(on Lenin’s ‘April Theses’)*.

***History of the CPSU (b.) short-course***: “Lenin's April Theses laid down for the Party a brilliant plan of struggle for the transition from the bourgeois-democratic to the Socialist revolution, from the first stage of the revolution to the second stage – the stage of the Socialist revolution. The whole history of the Party had prepared it for this great task”.

**Pipes**: “Totally out of touch with reality, if not positively mad” *(on Lenin’s April Theses*).

**Lynch**: “He never allowed the opponents or doubters to sway him. It was this clarity of purpose and determination that enabled Lenin to seize power in the vacuum which developed as the Provincial Government lost control”.

**Wood**: “Lenin’s programme manifestly reflected and articulated the increasingly radical temper of the party rank-and-file and the militant workers and troops”.

***History of the CPSU (b.) short-course***: “The Bolshevik Party was confronted with the task of explaining to the masses of workers and soldiers, who had been intoxicated by the first successes, that the complete victory of the revolution was still a long way off, that as long as the power was in the hands of the bourgeois Provisional Government, and as long as the Soviets were dominated by the compromisers – the Mensheviks and Socialist-Revolutionaries – the people would secure neither peace, nor land, nor bread, and that in order to achieve complete victory, one more step had to be taken and the power transferred to the Soviets”.

**Golub**: “He *(Lenin)* was able swiftly and precisely to evaluate the new situation, to give scientifically-based prognosis of the further development of the class struggle…and to plan the most appropriate methods and means of struggle against the counter-revolution. And again, as at every sudden historical turning-point, the creative power of Lenin’s genius was displayed”.

**Figes**: “The social polarization of the summer gave the Bolsheviks their first real mass following as a party which based its main appeal on the plebeian rejection of all subordinate authority”.

**Fitzpatrick**: “The Bolsheviks’ strength was that they were the only party uncompromised by association with the bourgeoisie and the February regime, and the party most firmly identified with the ideas of workers’ power and armed uprising”.

**Wood**: “The ‘collaboration’ of Menshevik and SR ministers with the bourgeois, pro-war government meant that the Bolsheviks were now the only political faction which pursued an unswervingly anti-war policy”.

**J.P. Nettl**: “All through the hot summer Petrograd alternatively simmered and boiled.

**Smith**: “By summer *(1917)* the discourse of democracy put into circulation by the February Revolution was being overtaken by a discourse of class, a shift symbolized by the increasing use of the word ‘comrade’ instead of ‘citizen’ as the favoured form of address”.

**Rosenberg**: “Indeed, as imperial Russia’s state-capitalist structure did begin to crumble, at once cause and consequence of the deprivations of war and revolution, the analytic logic of class difference and conflict became the insidious, ideologized passions of class warfare”.

**Berkman**: “The revolutionary masses by their own initiative began, long before the October days, to put into practice their social ideals. They took possession of the land, the factories, mines, mills and tools of production. They got rid of the more hated and dangerous representatives of government and authority. In their grand revolutionary outburst they destroyed every form of political and economic oppression”.

**J.P. Nettl**: “While revolution see-sawed in Petrograd, the country on a whole lapsed into anarchy. Over the next few months effective and centrally controlled government of any sort ceased to exist”.

**Service**: “…it was also a crucial advantage for Lenin that the political and administrative system was in an advanced condition of disintegration. Peasants in most villages across the former Russian Empire governed themselves. The military conscripts intimidated their officers. The workers, even if they were loath to take to the streets, wished to impose their control over the factories and mines. Kerensky had lost authority over all these great social groups. While central power was breaking down in Petrograd, moreover, it had virtually collapsed in the rest of Russia”.

**Nove**: “Both in the towns and in the villages the situation was approaching chaos even without the help of Lenin and the Bolsheviks. Of course, they tried to make things worse, since they were unconcerned with an orderly land settlement, industrial production or the military situation. They sought to reap the whirlwind. They contributed to the breakdown but did not cause it”.

**John Reed**: “Daily the Government seemed to become more and more helpless. Even the Municipal administration broke down. The columns of morning papers were filled with accounts of the most audacious robberies and murders, the criminals went unmolested”.

**Lynch**: “In October 1917 the Bolsheviks were pushing against an already open door”.

**Service**: “If Lenin had never existed, a socialist government would probably have rule Russia by the end of [1917].”

**Wood**: “The Bolsheviks made no secret of their preparations for insurrection, but Kerensky seemed impotent to stop it”.

**Pipes**: “The events that led to the overthrow of the Provisional Government were not spontaneous but carefully plotted and staged by a tightly organised conspiracy…October was a classic coup d’etat, the capture of governmental authority by a small band, carried out, in deference to the democratic professions of the age, with a show of mass participation, but with hardly any mass involvement”.

**Ulam**: “The Bolsheviks did not seize power, they picked it up”.

**G.D. Obichkin:** “In his guidance of the uprising, Lenin’s genius as a leader of the masses, a wise and fearless strategist, who clearly saw what direction the revolution would take, was strikingly revealed”.

**Pipes**: “It was a surreptitious seizure of the nerve centres of the modern state, carried out under false slogans in order to neutralize the population at large, the true purpose of which was revealed only after the new claimants to power were firmly in the saddle”.

**Smith**: “The seizure of power is often presented as a conspiratorial coup against a democratic government. It had all the elements of a coup – albeit one much advertised in the press – except for the fact that a coup implies the seizure of a functioning state machine. Arguably, Russia had not had this since February”.

**Service**: “Popular uprisings have never been organised by a people as a whole. Only a minority directly participates. And, by mid-October, Lenin could also argue that soviets in city after city throughout Russia were following the example of Petrograd and Moscow in acquiring Bolshevik majorities”.

**Wood**: “It would, however, be incorrect to consider that the Bolsheviks’ planning for revolution was efficient, co-coordinated or thoroughly considered. It succeeded by default rather than design…the events of 24-26 October were marked by confusion, apprehension, uncertainty and opportunism…After hours of indecision and ignored ultimatums punctuated by sporadic and innocuous shell-fire, the Palace was infiltrated (not stormed)”.

***History of the CPSU (b.) short-course***: “The Petrograd workers in those days showed what a splendid schooling they had received under the guidance of the Bolshevik Party. The revolutionary units of the army, prepared for the uprising by the work of the Bolsheviks, carried out fighting orders with precision and fought side by side with the Red Guard. The navy did not lag behind the army. Kronstadt was a stronghold of the Bolshevik Party, and had long since refused to recognize the authority of the Provisional Government. The cruiser *Aurora* trained its guns on the Winter Palace, and on October 25 their thunder ushered in a new era, the era of the Great Socialist Revolution”.

**Shapiro**: “In the last resort, Bolshevism proved less a doctrine, than a technique of action for the seizing and holding of power by the Bolshevik party”.

**Hill**: “That in these years the Bolsheviks had evolved a political philosophy and analysis of events more realistic than those of any of their rivals was shown by the ease with which they swept aside all other parties in the revolutionary months of 1917…In Russia in 1917 it was the Bolshevik mastery of *fact* that was decisive. The party knew exactly what it wanted, what *concrete* concessions to make to different social groups at any given stage, how to convince the masses of the population by *actions*, its own and their own. The party’s organisation allowed great flexibility in maneuver, combined with firmness and strength in pursuit of the clearly envisaged ultimate objectives. It was this which won the confidence of a following sufficient to enable the Bolsheviks to seize and retain power whilst the Mensheviks and Socialist Revolutionaries discredited themselves by the helplessness of their most eloquent phrases in the face of the rude and stubborn fact”.

**Wood**: “There was clearly much more behind the Bolsheviks’ victory than ideological or organizational superiority over other political forces. The Bolsheviks were simply much more in tune with popular feeling than either the constitutionally-minded liberal politicians or the moderate socialists”.

**Acton**: “…the October revolution emerges as very much more than a conspiratorial coup d’etat. By then the central political issue was that of soviet power. It was popular support for this cause which doomed Kerensky and the Provisional Government and explains the ease with which armed resistance to the new order was overcome, even where (as in Moscow) it was more formidable than in the capital”.

**Volkogonov**: “What had taken place had not been a classic conspiracy. The Bolsheviks were prepared to seize power by any means – peaceful, conspiratorial, or by mass uprising. Reading the situation correctly, they saw that a conspiracy was not required…What had been a small clutch of illegals in February 1917 had swollen to a mighty force by October”.

**Figes**: “The October insurrection was a coup d’etat, actively supported by a small minority of the population…but it took place amidst a social revolution, which was centered on the popular realization of Soviet power”.

**Rosenberg**: “If ‘coup’ is used conceptually to emphasize the sudden, swift and forceful manner in which Bolshevik leaders seized state institutions on 25 October, clearly October was a *coup d’etat* whether or not it had popular support. But in so far as ‘coup’ connotes the ‘usurpation’ of power by a narrow band of dedicated revolutionaries socially rooted in the radical intelligentsia, who artificially cloaked their own political ambitions with a self-styled defence of popular interests, as the notion is now frequently deployed, the essential linkages between Russia’s revolution and October are lost, along with its world historical meaning…the notion of the party as a disciplined conspiratorial block determined from the start to seize power is and has always been a distorting caricature”.

**Lynch**: “His *(Lenin’s)* objective had not been to win mass support but to create a party capable of seizing power when the political circumstances permitted”.

**Pipes**: “Communism thus did not come to Russia as a result of a popular uprising: it was imposed on her from above by a small minority hiding behind democratic slogans”.

**John Reed**: “Instead of being a destructive force, it seems to me that the Bolsheviki were the only party in Russia with a constructive programme and the power to impose it on the country. If they had not succeeded the Government when they did, there is little doubt in my mind that the armies of imperial Germany would have been in Petrograd and Moscow in December, and Russia would again be ridden by a Tsar”.

**Suny**: “The Bolsheviks came to power, not because they were superior manipulators or cynical opportunists, but because their policies, as formulated by Lenin in April and shaped by the events of the following months, placed them at the head of a genuinely popular movement”.

**Ulam**: “Except for the workers at some factories there was no pro-Bolshevik enthusiasm in the population, only apathy”.

**Pipes**: “ The Russian Revolution was made neither by the forces of nature nor the anonymous masses but by identifiable men pursuing their own advantages”.

**Acton**: “To stress the Party’s responsiveness to pressures from below is not to deny the significance of the lead given by Lenin. His prestige within the Party was enormous; his pre-eminence among the leaders was manifest; his ability to combine theory and practice, to bring a Marxist analysis of the class struggle to bear upon choices confronting the Party, was unique. Clearly his personal radicalism played an important part in ensuring that the Party he had done so much to create responded so readily to mass radicalism…whereby in April conditional support for the Provisional Government was withdrawn in favour of outright opposition, reflected rank-and-file radicalism as much as Lenin’s personal authority”.

**Rosenberg**: “Bolshevik strength grew not only because of the party’s relative organizational strength, but also because of the explanatory content of party views and programs…The complementary tasks of proletarian social and Bolshevik political revolution thus coalesced; so too did workers and party “professionals” in a period of increasingly economic privation and social polarization, when the Bolsheviks (and others) could provide most workers with seemingly clear ideas of an alternative, socialist, mode of production”.

**Service**: “…the revolutionary transformation was not monopolized by the political elites but also involved the masses acting in their own interests and through their own organisations…The masses had not taken leave of their senses. War, economic dislocation and administrative breakdown meant that their everyday needs were not being met. The sole alternative was for the people to preside over their own affairs; and as the situation worsened, so the workers, soldiers, and peasants took to direct political action. The Bolshevik party had the slogans that most nearly corresponded to their wishes. And so the Leninist seizure of power was an easy task: the masses had already completed most of the job for the Bolsheviks”.

**Rabinowitch**: “One can certainly understand why the Mensheviks and SRs reacted the way they did. At the same time, it is difficult to escape the conclusion that by totally repudiating the actions of the Bolsheviks and of the workers and soldiers who willingly followed them, and, even more, by pulling out of the congress, the moderate socialists undercut efforts at compromise by the Menshevik-Internationalists, the Left SRs, and the Bolshevik moderates”.

**J.P. Nettl**: “A similar coup d’etat could have been undertaken by the other revolutionary parties, particularly the Socialist Revolutionaries – if their leadership had been more determined…the determination of Lenin and Trotsky was something of an historical accident. The Bolshevik survival has deeper social significance”.

**Smith**: “The October seizure of power generated an exhilarating sense that a new world was in the offing where justice and equality would triumph over arbitrariness and exploitation, where the power of nature would be harnessed to ensure plenty for all”.

**Service**: “Yet what also needs to be understood is that the congruence between Bolshevik policies and mass aspirations was never tight and always doomed”.

**A.J.P. Taylor**: “The Bolshevik revolution was not a fully orchestrated piece with the music already composed. It was compounded, like most other events, of confusions and misunderstandings, of human endeavors and human failures, where the outcome surprised the victors as much as it stunned the defeated”.

Pipes: “As late as January 1917, when he was in exile in Switzerland, Lenin predicted that he and his generation would not live to see a revolution in Russia. This he said seven weeks before tsarism collapsed. If there was anyone in Europe who understood the weaknesses of tsarist Russia it was Lenin, and yet even he did not foresee its imminent demise” *Three Whys of the Russian Revolution*

Pipes: “Some historians who argue the inevitability of the collapse of tsarism point for proof to the extraordinary number of industrial strikes that occurred in Russia on the eve of the First World War. This argument, however, cannot withstand scrutiny. While, indeed, there was an unprecedented number of strikes in Russia at that time, exactly the same phenomenon occurred in England and the United States. Both of these countries experienced a surge of industrial stoppages on the eve of August 1914, and yet neither had a revolution. Industrial action is rarely political in motivation and, therefore, hardly reliable system of a regime’s imminent collapse” *Three Whys of the Russian Revolution*

Pipes: “all power was concentrated in the Crown. The lines of authority ran from the top down; there were hardly any lateral lines. The fact that the wires were concentrated in the hands of the Crown and its staff meant that in q time of crisis the state would instantly disintegrate; for once the monarchy went, these wires snapped and there was nothing left to hold the country together” *Three Whys of the Russian Revolution*

Pipes: “while, in Germany society, the force ‘below’ stepped in to fill the temporary vacuum; in Russia, when there was nothing at the top, there was nothing below either. Only another authoritarian regime, imposed from above, could restore a semblance of order” *Three Whys of the Russian Revolution*

Pipes: “People who come into power with plans of grand reforms as a rule quickly realise, if able to test those plan, that ingrained habits and vested interests set limits to what they can accomplish...ideas which looked good on paper can be next to impossible to implement, no matter how noble the intention. But if ambitious would-be reformers lack the opportunity to learn from experience, they not only adhere to their utopian ideals but become ever more fanatically committed to them, certain that, with sufficient determination and force, they should be able to make them work” *Three Whys of the Russian Revolution*

Pipes: “unrelenting hostility between the government and the political opposition was the prime immediate cause of the regime’s collapse. The government, driven against the wall, made concession after concession, and yet nothing was enough because the liberals and radicals were sharpening weapons for the coup de grace” *Three Whys of the Russian Revolution*

Pipes: “Russians found it difficult to accept that they had been bested in a fair fight by a superior force; the loss had to be due to a treason. And, as misfortune would want it, the wife of the tsar was a German- a very patriotic lady, devoted to Russia, but nevertheless widely believed to be a spy who betrayed…[these] were a tissue of lies concocted by politicians willing to use any tool to embarrass the government. The animosity towards the Crown brought into being an unprecedented alliance of radicals and liberals, who hated it on principle, with conservative nationalises, who acted out of dismay over the alleged betrayal of Russia to the Germany enemy. This coalition left the government friendless and defenceless. ” *Three Whys of the Russian Revolution*

Pipes: “It is a mistake to attribute the February Revolution to fatigue with the war. The contrary is true. Russians wanted to pursue the war more effectively, and they felt that the existing government was not capable of doing it, that existing political structures were in need of a major overhaul...Fatigue with the war set in only after the unsuccessful June 1917 offensive launched by the Provisional Government to bolster its prestige and lift national morale. Until then, even Bolsheviks did not dare to openly call for peace because it was a highly unpopular slogan” *Three Whys of the Russian Revolution*

Pipes: “being a devoted Russian patriot and loyal ally...he abdicated...put of pure patriotism...[there is] not a slightest doubt that he faced no popular pressures to abdicate; the pressure stemmed exclusively from the ranks of politicians and generals who thought the Crown’s removal essential to victory. The fact that the tsar’s abdication had opposite effect of that intended tells nothing of his motives in so doing” *Three Whys of the Russian Revolution*

Pipes: “For humankind at large Lenin had nothing but scorn” *The Unknown Lenin*

Pipes: “There was nothing preordained about either the fall of tsarism or the Bolshevik power seizure. In fact…the latter was something of a fluke, but that, once it occurred and the totalitarian machine was in place, then the rise of Stalin became virtually a foregone conclusion.” *Three Whys of the Russian Revolution*

Pipes: “a classic coup d’etat, rather than a popular revolution, and the Bolshevik’s victory was attributed not to their popular support but to their superior organisation and greater ruthlessness.” *Three Whys of the Russian Revolution*

Pipes: “he did not care about Russia. He cared about Germany and England in the sense that, for him, as a revolutionary, they were the key countries. Russia he viewed as nothing more than a stepping-stone to global upheaval; a backward country, populated mainly by an uncouth rural ‘petty bourgeoisie’ in the shape of self sufficient ‘middle’ peasants and ‘kulaks’. Such a country could not make a world revolution: at best, it could serve as a spark that would set off the power-keg abroad. In his view, Russia was the weak link in the chain of world imperialism, the snapping of which would unleash upheavals in the heart of Europe.” *Three Whys of the Russian Revolution*

Pipes: “a classical modern coup d’etat accomplished without mass support. It was a surreptitious seizure of the nerve centres of the modern state, carried out under false slogans in order to neutralize the population at large, the true purpose of which was revealed only after the new claimants to power were firmly in saddle.” *Three Whys of the Russian Revolution*

Reed: “Unimpressive, to be the idol of a mob, loved and revered as perhaps few leaders in history have been. A strange popular leader- a leader purely by virtue of intellect; colourless, humourless, uncompromising and detached, without picturesque idiosyncrasies- but with the power of explaining profound ideas in simple terms, of analysing a concrete situation. And combined with shrewdness, the greatest intellectual audacity.” *Ten Days That Shook the World*

Reed: “Bolsheviki ahead, irresistible, overriding hesitation and opposition- the only people in Russia who had a definite programme of action while the others talked for eight long months” *Ten Days That Shook the World*

Reed: “If the masses all over Russia had not been ready for insurrection it must have failed. The only reason for Bolshevik success lay in their accomplishing the cast and simple desires of the most profound strata of the people, calling them to the work of tearing down and destroying the old, and afterwards, in the smoke of falling ruins, cooperating with them to erect the framework of the new…” *Ten Days That Shook the World*

Service: “The [November] Revolution has often and widely been held to have been mainly Lenin’s revolution. But was it? Certainly Lenin had a heavier impact on the course than anyone else. The point is, however, that great historical changed are brought about not only by individuals. There were other mighty factors at work as well in Russian in 1917…Lenin could not have done of even co-ordinated everything”

Figes: “There was no ‘private Lenin’ behind the public mask. He gave all of himself to politics. He rarely showed emotion, he had few intimates, and everything he ever said or wrote was intended only for the revolutionary cause. This was not a man but a political machine. Lenin’s personal life was extraordinarily dull…He did not smoke, he did not really drink, and apart from his affair with the beautiful Inessa Armand, he was not even interested in women. Krupskaya called him ‘Ilich’, his nickname in the party, and he called her ‘comrade’. She was more like his secretary than his wife…Lenin lived for the revolution.” *The Sunday Times, March 2000*

# Harrison Salisbury: Legend has invested the events of October with heroic stature. They are presented as an epic tapestry across which move figures possessing dimensions greater than life. Above them towers the commanding presence of Lenin, the leader, the master strategist, all wise, armed with the guiding truth of Marx, organising and directing the strategy and tactics of the supreme revolution. Lenin triumphs against the colossal strength of Russia's capitalist-feudal society, he thwarts false prophets, he confounds enemies within the ranks of his own party and emerges as the tribune of his people, the saviour of humanity. The picture has been painted many times, and not only by the eulogists of the Lenin cult. The Bolshevik Revolution, as many insist on calling it, proved to be a watershed in contemporary history... It is natural to expect so germinal an event to be presented on an Olympian stage. Natural - but in the case of Russia's October, totally mistaken. [They were] encumbered by trivia, petty rivalry, miscalculation, hesitation, ineptitude, posturing and mistakes. Almost nothing was planned and what did happen was often accidental. The Bolsheviks did not seize power in one bold clandestine move. They blundered into power, divided, fighting against each other, and until the final moments Lenin had only an occasional role in what happened. Kerensky and his government were not crushed by the steel power of valiant revolutionaries. He and his supporters skedaddled off the political stage.

### Russian Revolution: Historians’ Quotes

#### Area of Study Two

**John Reed**: “So plunged the Bolsheviki ahead, irresistible, overriding hesitation and opposition – the only people in Russia who had a definite programme of action while the others talked for eight long months”.

**Pipes**: “The system of legislation the Bolsheviks set in place within two weeks of the October coup, for all its revolutionary rhetoric, marked a reversion to the autocratic practices of tsarist Russia before the October Manifesto of October 17, 1905. They simply wiped out the eleven intervening years of constitutionalism”.

**John Reed**: “Not by compromise with the propertied classes, or with other political leaders; not by conciliating the old Government mechanism, did the Bolsheviki conquer the power. Nor by the organized violence of a small clique. If the masses all over Russia had not been ready for insurrection it must have failed. The only reason for the Bolshevik success lay in their accomplishing the vast and simple desires of the most profound strata of the people, calling them to the work of tearing down and destroying the old, and afterwards, in the smoke of falling ruins, cooperating with them to erect the framework of the new”.

**Rosenberg**: “One of the most salient features of revolutionary Russia in the eight months or so after October 1917 is that nothing seemed to have changed for the better. This realization, and the even more precarious, uncertain conditions that soon emerged, disturbed and angered broad groups of workers”.

**Volkogonov**: “Of course a regime subjected at its inception to the pressures of a civil war such as that faced by the Bolsheviks will seek and find rationalisations for its harsh policies. The question is, how clearly did Lenin and his followers distinguish, in their own minds, between the force and coercion required to combat their armed enemies, and that which they used against their purely political foes, real and potential? The promise to create a new society without oppression, police rule and terror…was swallowed up by the imperatives of Bolshevik survival and never retrieved”.

**Pipes**: “The machine gun became for them the principle instrument of political persuasion…and they could use it with impunity” *(on the closing of the Constituent Assembly).*

**Rosenberg**: “At the risk of emphasizing the obvious, let me stress, first the importance of remembering that whereas the Bolsheviks came to power reflecting politically the perceived interests and will of a great number of Russia’s fifteen to eighteen million workers, they did so only as part of a vast social upheaval over which they had, in fact, very little control…the overthrow of the old order involved, simultaneously, a massive, and ultimately for the Bolsheviks, problematic assault on a wide array of social relationships and values that reflected Russia’s social institutions”.

**Volkogonov**: “…Lenin wanted earthly happiness for the people, at least those he called ‘the proletariat’. But he regarded it as normal to build this ‘happiness’ on blood, coercion and the denial of freedom”.

**Lynch**: “It is doubtful whether, even without that threat *(to the Bolsheviks survival)* Bolshevism could have developed other than as an oppressive system. Its dogmatic Marxist creed made it as intolerant of other political creeds as tsardom had been”.

**Hill**: “The attempt to overthrow the Bolsheviks after the revolution produced cruelties indeed; but the revolutionary process abolished a regime of despair and created a new world of hope”.

**Trotsky**: “The execution of the Tsar and his family was needed not only to frighten, horrify and instill a sense of hopelessness in the enemy, but also to shake up our own ranks, to show that there was no retreating, that ahead lay total victory or total doom”.

**Figes**: “It *(the murder of the Romanov family)* was a declaration of the Terror. It was a statement that from now on individuals would count for nothing in the civil war”.

**Pipes**: “…the ‘Red Terror’ was not a reluctant response the actions of others but a prophylactic measure designed to nip in the bud any thoughts of resistance to the dictatorship”.

**Volkogonov**: “Threatened by danger, the Bolsheviks resorted to the most repugnant means of saving their state, mass terror against their own people. They kept Lenin’s promise to turn the imperialist war into a civil war”.

**Smith**: “The belief that the end justified the means served them well, blinding them to the way in which means corrupt ends”.

**Figes**:

* “The Bolshevik Terror came up from the depths. It started as a social revolution, a means for the lower classes to exact their own bloody revenge on their former masters and class enemies”.
* “The Red Terror did not come out of the blue. It was implicit in the regime from the start…The Bolsheviks were forced to turn increasingly to terror to silence their political critics and subjugate a society they could not control by other means”.
* “Under Lenin’s regime – not Stalin’s – the Cheka was to become a vast police state. It had its own leviathan infrastructure, from house committees to the concentration camps, employing more than a quarter of a million people”.

**J.P. Nettl**: “The machinery of counter-terror and repression grew piecemeal but rapidly from each challenge to Bolshevik authority”.

**Service**: “Lenin, Trotsky and Dzerzhinsky believed that over-killing was better than running the risk of being overthrown”.

**Volkogonov**:

* “The leaders of the revolution had become priests of terror”.
* “Lenin himself was the patron saint of the Cheka”.
* “As during the French Revolution the knife of the guillotine ceaselessly reaped its doleful harvest, so now the Cheka gunned its way through the population.”
* “Like the sound of a bolt being shot, the two syllables, *Che-ka*, would stop any conversation”.
* “The guillotine of the Russian Revolution was the gun”.

**Smith**: “…it is the Bolsheviks’ incapacity to realise their ends, their blindness rather than their vision, that is striking. After they came to power, they faced a huge range of problems for which Marxism-Leninism left them ill-equipped…Policy, therefore, was frequently the outcome of improvisation and pragmatism as much as of the hallowed tenets of ideology. In other words, the relationship between belief and action was complex, influenced by a far larger range of factors”.

**Volkogonov**: “Having seized power, he *(Lenin)* shrugged off the cape of Social Democrat and donned the cloak of the Jacobin. All his attitudes were now conditioned by one consideration: to cling to power at any cost”.

**Pipes**: “Their irresponsibility was nowhere more evident than in their obstinate attempts to introduce a money-less economy” *(on induced hyper-inflation during War Communism).*

**Figes**: “…War Communism was not just a *response* to the civil war; it was also a *means of making civil war*…the policies of War Communism were seen by the Bolsheviks as an instrument of struggle against their social or ‘internal’ enemies”.

**Volkogonov**: “Lenin apparently never asked himself why, before 1921, the Bolsheviks were incapable of giving the people anything but chaos, civil war, hunger and terror. The fact is, the Bolsheviks had achieved their goal: the Party had power”.

**Nove**: “In interpreting the events of 1917-21, it is important to bear in mind the following. Firstly, there was a good deal of anarchy, of sheer elemental chaos, in the situation of Russia in those years. Orders by the centre might be obeyed, but quite probably the local authorities, even if communist-controlled, pleased themselves. Orders were in any case all too often confused and contradictory, though sheer inexperience or because the civil service machine was all too effectively smashed…Therefore much that happened was not due to central orders at all, and many of these orders were due to desperate efforts to cope with confusion and anarchy”.

***History of the CPSU (b.) short-course***: “War Communism had been an attempt to take the fortress of the capitalist elements in town and countryside by assault, by a frontal attack. In this offensive the Party had gone too far ahead, and ran the risk of being cut off from its base. Now Lenin proposed to retire a little, to retreat for a while nearer to the base, to change from an assault of the fortress to the slower method of siege, so as to gather strength and resume the offensive”.

**Volkogonov**: “It seem unlikely that the Bolsheviks gave any thought to the fact that giving promise while in opposition is a different thing from fulfilling it in government. On every point - peace, land, liberty, Constituent Assembly, freedom of the press and all the rest – their promises rapidly changed into coercion, limitation, alteration, a different ‘reading’ or an outright denial. Even the land, which they did give, they made undesirable by confiscating everything it produced”.

**Figes**: “Half a million Red Army soldiers joined the Bolshevik Party during the civil war. These were the missionaries of the revolution. They carried Bolshevism, its ideas and its methods, back to their own towns and villages, where they flooded into the Soviet institutions during the early 1920s. The whole Soviet apparatus was thus militarized…The success of the Red Army increasingly led to the application of military methods throughout the Soviet system. Nothing did more to shape the ruling attitudes of the Bolsheviks than the experience of the civil war…The Bolshevism that emerged from the civil war viewed itself as a crusading brotherhood of comrades in arms, conquering Russia and the world with a red pencil in one hand and a gun in the other”.

**Service**: “In particular, he [Lenin] had little foresight about what he was doing when he set up the centralised one-party state. One of the great malignancies of the 20th century was created more by off-the –cuff measures than by grandiose planning.”

**Service**: “…how new was the world being built by Lenin and Sovnarkom? The RSFSR had facets reminiscent of the tsarist order at its worst. Central power was being asserted in an authoritarian fashion. Ideological intolerance was being asserted and organised dissent repressed. Elective principles were being trampled under foot”.

**Lynch**: “1917 did not mark a complete break with the past. Rather it was the replacement of one form of state-authoritarianism with another”.

**Figes**: “There was no master plan. When the Bolsheviks came to power they had no set idea – other than the general urge to control and centralize – of how to structure the institutional relationships between the party and the Soviets…Only during the civil war, when they stressed the need for strict centralized control to mobilize the resources of the country, did the Bolsheviks plan the general structure of the party-state”.

**Pipes**: “So unnatural were the new conditions, they so outraged common sense and decency, that the vast majority of the population viewed the regime responsible for them as a terrible and inexplicable cataclysm which could not be resisted but had to be endured until it would vanish as suddenly and as inextricably as it had come”.

**Smith**: “The Bolshevik revolution wrought calamity on a scale commensurate with the transformation in the human condition it sought to achieve. Measured by the benchmarks of contemporary politics, Bolshevik ambition leaves us reeling. But it is easier for us today to appreciate the illusions under which they laboured than the ideals they sought to achieve. Yet we shall never understand the Russian Revolution unless we appreciate that the Bolsheviks were fundamentally driven by outrage against the exploitation at the heart of capitalism and the aggressive nationalism that had led Europe into the carnage of the First World War. The hideous inhumanities that resulted from the revolution, culminating in Stalinism, should not obscure that fact that millions welcomed the revolution as the harbinger of social justice and freedom”.

**Service**: “The soviet order was extremely disorderly for a great deal of the time. Yet the movement towards a centralised, ideocratic dictatorship of a single party had been started. Neither Lenin nor his leading comrades had expressly intended this; they had few clearly elaborated policies and were forever fumbling and improvising. Constantly they found international, political, economic, social and cultural difficulties less tractable than they assumed. And constantly they dipped into their rag-bag of authoritarian concepts to help them survive in power…and they felt that the ruthless measures were being applied in the service of a supreme good”.

**Volkogonov**: “The Russian revolutionaries, including Lenin, rightly exposed the age-old evils of human existence, the exploitation, inequality, lack of freedom. But having acquired the opportunity to abolish these evils, the Leninists established a new, barley disguised form of exploitation to be carried out by the state…In the last analysis, the Leninist promise of great progress turned into great backwardness”.

**Service**: “The basic compound of the Soviet order had been invented by Lenin and his fellow communist leaders within a couple of years of the October Revolution. There had been created a centralized, one-ideology dictatorship of a single party which permitted no challenge to its monopoly of power…Civil war had added to the pressures which had resulted in the creation of the compound. On taking power in 1917, the communist leaders had not possessed a preparatory blueprint. Nevertheless they had come with assumptions and inclinations which had predisposed them towards a high degree of state economic dominance, administrative arbitrariness, ideological intolerance and political violence”.

**Volkogonov**: “Dogma deprived the Bolsheviks of common sense”.

**Pipes**: “The Bolsheviks ceased to be utopians when, once and for all it had become obvious the ideal was unattainable, they persisted in the attempt by resorting to unrestrained violence”.

**Service**: “Despite all the problems, the Soviet regime retained a vision of political, economic and cultural betterment. Many former army conscripts and would-be university students responded enthusiastically. Many parents, too, could remember the social oppressiveness of the pre-revolutionary tsarist regime and gave a welcome to the Bolshevik party’s projects for literacy, numeracy, cultural awareness and administrative facility”.

**Figes**: “The Russian Revolution launched a vast experiment in social engineering – perhaps the grandest in the history of mankind…The experiment went horribly wrong, not so much because of the malice of its leaders, most of whom had started out with the highest of ideals, but because their ideals were themselves impossible”.

**Volkogonov**: “…despite the fact that millions of honest people, led by the ‘vanguard of the revolution’, laboured for it, the utopia remained a fairy-tale”.

**Fitzpatrick**: “Communists of the 1920s were afraid of class enemies, intolerant of cultural pluralism and uneasy about the lack of unity in the party leadership and the loss of a sense of direction and purpose. They wanted their revolution to transform the world, but it was very clear during the NEP how much of the old world had survived…Many rank-and-file Communists and sympathizers, especially among the young, were becoming disillusioned, inclined to believe that the revolution had reached an impasse…It was a mood of restlessness, dissatisfaction, and barely subdued belligerence and, especially among the party youth, nostalgia for the old heroic days of the Civil War”.

**Figes**: “…the fact remained that within the village the Bolsheviks were without real authority. This was the root failure of the NEP. Unable to govern the countryside by peaceable means, the Bolsheviks resorted to terrorizing it, ending up in collectivization. The events of 1918-21 had left a deep scar on peasant-state relations. Although the civil war between them had come to an end, the two sides faced each other with deep suspicion and mistrust during the uneasy truce of the 1920s…Militant Bolsheviks were increasingly afraid that the revolution would degenerate, that it would sink in the ‘kulak’ mud, unless a new civil war was launched to subjugate the village to the town. Here were the roots of Stalin’s civil war against the village, the civil war of collectivization. Without the means to govern the village, let alone transform it on socialist lines, the Bolsheviks sought to abolish it instead”.

**Service**: “Most Bolshevik leaders had never liked the NEP, regarding it as an excrescent boil on the body politic and at worst a malignant cancer”.

**Figes**: “Having defeated the Whites, who were backed up by no fewer than eight western powers, the Bolsheviks surrendered to the peasantry” *(on the NEP).*

**Fitzpatrick**: “…the Right was promising much less in the way of achievement than Stalin; and the party in the late 1920s was hungry for achievement, and it did not have our retrospective knowledge of what it was going to cost. The Right, after all, was promising a moderate, small-gains, low conflict programme to a party that was belligerently revolutionary, felt itself threatened by an array of foreign and domestic enemies, and continued to believe that society could and should be transformed”.

**Service**: “Bolshevik leaders, unlike tsars, strove to identify themselves with ordinary people…central party leaders tried to present themselves as ordinary blokes with un-flamboyant tastes…interest in fine clothes, furniture or interior décor was treated as downright reactionary. A roughness of comportment, speech and dress was fostered”.

**Lynch**: “Trotsky never had control of the political system as it operated in Soviet Russia. Politics is the art of the possible. After 1924 all the possibilities belonged to Stalin.”

**John Reed**: “He’s not an intellectual like the other people you will meet…but he know what he wants. He’s got willpower, and he’s going to be top of the pile some day” *(on Stalin, 1919).*

**Lynch**: “The grey blur was about to become the Red tsar” *(on Stalin’s defeat of the Left and then the Right during the 1920s).*

**Ward**: “Trotsky and Bukharin might win the argument, but Stalin invariably won the vote”.

**E.H. Carr**: “A triumph not of reason, but of organisation” *(on Stalin’s rise to power).*

**Deutscher**: “It seemed to Trotsky almost a bad joke that Stalin, the willful and sly but shabby and inarticulate man in the background should be his rival”.

**Figes**: “On the one hand it seems clear that the basic elements of the Stalinist regime – the one-party state, the system of terror and the cult of personality – were all in place by 1924. The party apparatus was, for the most part, an obedient tool in Stalin’s hands. The majority of its provincial bosses had been appointed by Stalin himself, as the head of the Orgburo, in the civil war. They shared his plebian hatred for the specialist and the intelligentsia, were moved by his rhetoric of proletarian solidarity and Russian nationalism, and on most questions of ideology were willing to defer to their Great Leader. After all, they were the former subjects of the tsars…On the other hand, there were fundamental differences between Lenin’s regime and that of Stalin. Fewer people were murdered for a start. And, despite the ban on factions, the party still made room for comradely debate”.

Pipes: “once...the totalitarian machine was in place, then the rise of Stalin became virtually a foregone conclusion” *Three Whys of the Revolution*

Pipes: “unilinear explanation of historical phenomena like the Marxist one s bound to be false, and can be sustained only by ignoring events that do not fit the class interpretation” *Three Whys of the Revolution*

Pipes: “Continuity was facilitated by the fact that a high percentage of Soviet administrative posts were stagged by ex-tsarist functionaries, who brought with them and communicated to Communist newcomers habits acquired in the tsarist services” *Three Whys of the Revolution*

Fitzpatrick: “forthright about their own use of terror...and they took pride in being tough-minded about violence” *The Russian Revolution*

Fitzpatrick: “did not see any parallel to the Tsarist secret police, though Western historians have often drawn one. The Cheka, in fact, operated much more openly and violently than the old police” *The Russian Revolution*

### Russian Revolution: Historians’ Quotes

***The USSR under Stalin: 1928-32***

**Lynch**: “Essentially the Plan was a huge propaganda project which aimed at convincing the Soviet people that they were engaged in vast industrial enterprise of their own making” *(on the First Five-Year Plan).*

**Fitzpatrick**: “…Moscow’s central politicians and planners were clearly in the grip of ‘gigantomania’, the obsession with hugeness. The Soviet Union must build more and produce more than any other country. Its plants must not only catch up with the West in economic development, but surpass it”.

**J.P. Nettl**: “The real significance of the second revolution of 1928-30 was not so much in what it achieved, as in the radical change in the manner of achieving it”.

**Fitzpatrick**: “The winter of 1929-30 was a time of frenzy, when the party’s apocalyptic mood and wildly revolutionary rhetoric did indeed recall that of an earlier ‘heroic period’ – the desperate climax of the Civil War and War Communism in 1920”.

***History of the CPSU (b.) short-course***: “History had never known industrial construction on such a gigantic scale, such enthusiasm for new development, such labour heroism on the part of the working-class millions…It was a veritable upsurge of labour enthusiasm, produced and stimulated by Socialist emulation”.

**Fitzpatrick**: “Less like an obedient functionary than a wheeling dealing entrepreneur, ready to cut corners and seize an opportunity to out do his competitors” *(on factory managers during the 5 Year Plans).*

**Lynch**: “He *(Stalin)* stood Marxist theory in its head. Instead of the economy determining the character of the political system, the political system would determine the character of the economy”.

**Fitzpatrick**: “…Cultural Revolution was an iconoclastic and belligerent youth movement, whose activists, like the Red Guards of the Chinese Cultural Revolution in the 1960s, were by no means a docile tool of the party leadership…many of the initiatives taken in the name of Cultural Revolution were spontaneous, they produced some unexpected results”.

**Service**: “Many of Stalin’s inclinations were shared by many Bolsheviks”.

**Fitzpatrick**: “The policy of ‘promoting’ workers into administrative jobs and sending workers to higher education was not new, but it had never been implemented with such urgency or on such a massive scale as during the Cultural Revolution…For members of this favoured group – ‘sons of the working class’, as they liked to call themselves in later years – the Revolution had indeed fulfilled its promises to give power to the proletariat and turn workers into masters of the state”.

**Volkogonov**:

* “Lenin had created a system which could only tolerate one leader at its summit”.
* “Leninist was eating Leninist, the system was remorselessly consuming its creators”
* “Lenin had transformed the dictatorship of the proletariat into the dictatorship of the Party, and Stalin went further by making the dictatorship of the Party into that of one man”.
* “Stalin finished building Lenin’s totalitarian pyramid”.
* “Stalin was indeed, as the slogan had it, ‘the Lenin of today’.”
* “None of us – the present author included – could begin to imagine that the father of domestic Russian terrorism, merciless and totalitarian, was Lenin”.

**Service**: “Lenin’s ideas on violence, dictatorship, terror, centralism, hierarchy and leadership were integral to Stalin’s thinking…It is hard to imagine Lenin, however, carrying out a terror upon his own party”.

**Shapiro**: “The purpose of the new cult was clear to all: if Lenin was Allah, then Stalin was his prophet”.

**Service**: “…if Lenin had not given him the map, Stalin would have never had the chance to select the destination”.

**Volkogonov**: “The system created by Lenin would have found its Stalin in any event. The country might have been spared the monstrous experiments of Stalinism, but the one-party ‘dictatorship of the proletariat’ would inevitably have led to an authoritarian regime”.

**Service**: “The First Five-Year Plan had intensified state authority beyond precedent. The Politburo under Stalin decided every great aspect of policy in foreign affairs, security, politics, administration, economy, science and the arts…yet somehow the peoples of the USSR had resisted being pummeled into the shape prescribed by the Kremlin”.

***History of the CPSU (b.) short-course***: “The sum and substance of the achievements of the First Five-Year Plan was that they had completely emancipated the workers and peasants from exploitation and had opened the way to a prosperous and cultured life for *ALL* working people in the U.S.S.R”.

**Volkogonov**: “Collectivisation is essentially a form of serfdom in the 20th century”.

**Shapiro**: “It *(the famine)* was a salutary lesson to the peasants that resistance did not pay”.

**Deutscher**: “The first purely man-made famine in history” *(on the impact of collectivization).*

***History of the CPSU (b.) short-course***: “The Bolshevik Party had helped millions of poor peasants to join the collective farms and to escape from servitude to the kulaks. By joining the collective farms, and having the best lands and the finest instruments of production at their disposal, millions of poor peasants who had formerly lived in penury had now as collective farmers risen to the level of middle peasants, and had attained material security”.

**Ward**: “What happened between November 1929 and December 1931 cannot be grasped by merely reciting statistics…a socio-economic system in existence for five hundred years vanished forever”.

***History of the CPSU (b.) short-course***: “Purging and consolidating its ranks, destroying the enemies of the Party and relentlessly combating distortions of the Party line, the Bolshevik Party rallied closer than ever around its Central Committee under whose leadership the Party and the Soviet land now passed to a new stage – the completion of the construction of a classless, Socialist society”.

**Service**: “The thought, practices and institutions of the Civil War had set precedents for the horrors of the late 1930’s…Nonetheless the Great Terror would not have taken place but for Stalin’s personality and ideas”.

**Fitzpatrick**: “The Great Purges could not have snowballed as they did without popular participation. Self-interested denunciations played a part, as did complaints against bosses that were based on real grievances”.

**Service**: “The Jews and Gypsies exterminated by Hitler knew that they were dying because they were Jews and Gypsies. Stalin’s terror was more chaotic and confusing: thousands went to their deaths shouting out their fervent loyalty to Stalin”.

**Volkogonov**: “To Stalin the aim was supreme; the people meant nothing”.

**Conquest**: “He *(Stalin)* carried out a revolution which completely transformed the Party and the whole of society. Far more than the Bolshevik Revolution itself, this period marks the major gulf between modern Russia and the past”.

***History of the CPSU (b.) short-course***: “The rise in the standard of welfare and culture of the masses was a reflection of the strength, might and invincibility of our Soviet revolution. Revolutions in the past perished because, while giving the people freedom, they were unable to bring about any serious improvement in their material and cultural conditions. Therein lay their chief weakness. Our revolution differs from all other revolutions in that it not only freed the people from tsardom and capitalism, but also brought about a radical improvement in the welfare and cultural condition of the people. Therein lies its strength and invincibility”.

**Service**: “The central authorities aimed at the total penetration of society…however, the Soviet state found it difficult to achieve its goals…groups based on family, wider kinship, friendship, leisure and a common culture were molecules resistant to disintegration into separate atoms…control over people came nearest to perfection in relation to two groups: those at the very bottom and those at the very top. Camp inmates had no rights: their daily routine ensured compliance with the instruction of their guards on pain of death. Politburo members, too, lacked rights, and their physical proximity to Stalin necessitated an unswerving obedience to the whim of the Leader…But in between there were gradations of non-compliance which were possible and common…the entire structure of public information, surveillance and enforcement was patchy. Such a state and society were clearly not totalitarian if the epithet involves totality in practice as well as intent…Totalitarianism as a term fails to encapsulate the contradictions with this extremely nasty and orderly but also extremely chaotic reality…But the goal was so ambitious that even its half-completion was a dreadful achievement”.

**Figes**: “They were not the victims of the revolution but protagonists in its tragedy…It was the weakness of Russia’s democratic culture which enabled Bolshevism to take root. This was the legacy of Russian history, of centuries of serfdom and autocratic rule, that had kept the common people powerless and passive…To be sure, this was a people’s tragedy but it was a tragedy they helped to make. The Russian people were trapped by the tyranny of their own history…For while the people could destroy the old system, they could not build a new one of their own…By 1921, if not earlier, the revolution had come full circle, and a new autocracy had been imposed on Russia which in many ways resembled the old”.

**Trotsky**: “Nero too, was a product of his epoch, yet after he perished his statues were smashed and his name was scraped off everything. The vengeance of history is more terrible than the most powerful General Secretary. I venture to think that this is consoling” *(on Stalin, 1947).*

Russian Revolution Historiography

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