

# A Call to Revolution

*The letter below was written by a Russian peasant and discusses some reasons that people in Russia want to start a revolution. As you read the letter, underline anything that reminds you of the situation leading up to the French Revolution.*

Dear Fellow Comrade,

Mother Russia needs your help more than ever in order to throw off the absolute power that is keeping her loyal children down!

Four out of five people are peasants – just like you and I. We have been made to live in terrible conditions for far too long. Brother, doesn't it infuriate you that we have to pay so much for the little bit of land we have to farm? I am tired of my family going many days without food – aren't you?

As a hardworking peasant, I am tired of the fact that most of the money and much of the land in Russia is in the hands of the nobles, the royal family and the growing class of capitalists, who earn huge profits off the factories in which our comrades work day after day!

You know who our enemy is – it is **Tsar** (King) **Nicholas**, the absolute monarch. So far he has resisted all attempts to change the government of Russia and continues to live his very extravagant lifestyle – he refuses to give the people a voice! Brother, all of us peasants must unite and put an end to his reign!

We also can't forget the trouble that WWI caused us. Even though Mother Russia entered WWI in 1914 with a massive army and as a member of the Allied Forces, we had bad leadership, not enough supplies and poor equipment. It is no wonder that our army suffered defeat after defeat to the Germans and Austro-Hungarians. By 1916, more than 1 million of our fellow Russian soldiers had been killed and huge amounts of very productive land in western Russia were destroyed in the war.

Because of the war, our economy has collapsed. Food and basic materials like coal are unavailable and very expensive. We peasants have suffered long enough! Now is the time for change, now is the time for revolution!

Our friend, **Vladimir Lenin**, the leader of the **Bolshevik** movement (a communist organization) has promised us “**peace, land and bread!**” This is exactly what we need. **PEACE, LAND and BREAD!!**

Join us and fight!

Gratefully Yours,  
-Vladimir Tiplakov

## Questions:

1. In your own words, write down 5 causes of the revolution.
1. Who would want change in Russia the most? Why?
2. How did World War I affect Russia? Do you think it caused the revolution?

## Effects of the Russian Revolution

*After the revolution, different groups in Russia fought for power. In the end, a group of socialists called the Bolsheviks, whose leader was **Vladimir Lenin**, won out. Their slogan of “land, peace and bread” had won them great popular support. The Bolsheviks took control of Petrograd, Russia’s capitol, on November 7, 1917. The next day Lenin declared he was setting up a new government and immediately started ordering reforms in Russia. Read the reforms below and think about how they changed Russia. Then answer the questions at the bottom.*

### LENIN’S REFORMS

**REFORM 1:** Nov. 8, 1917 – Lenin issued a decree on land taking 540 million acres of land away from the Tsar, the nobles, the church and other major landlords. This land was given to the peasants to divide among themselves.

**REFORM 2:** On the same day (November 8), Lenin promised to get Russia out of World War I. Lenin made good on his promise a month later, when he signed a peace treaty with Germany and Austria. Russia had to accept very harsh terms – it gave up all of its western lands, which were the richest parts of the country. This meant that Russia gave up nearly 1/3 of her agricultural land, more than 3/5 of her iron-ore and coal production and 1/2 of her industrial plants. But the new government had peace.

**REFORM 3:** Nov. 12 – Lenin issued a decree on work establishing an eight-hour day and a forty-hour week for all industrial workers.

**REFORM 4:** Nov. 14 – Lenin issued a decree on unemployment insurance promising to give all workers insurance against injury, illness and unemployment.

**REFORM 5:** Dec. 1 – Lenin issued a decree on the press banning all non-Bolshevik newspapers.

**REFORM 6:** Dec. 11 – The government banned a rival political party and ordered the arrest of its leaders.

**REFORM 7:** Dec. 20 – Lenin set up a political police force to deal with the Bolsheviks’ opponents and enemies.

**REFORM 8:** Dec. 27 – Lenin issued a decree on industry that put all factories under the control of elected committees of workers.

**REFORM 9:** Dec. 27 – Lenin issued a decree on banking put all banks under the government’s control.

### **Questions:**

1. Which of Lenin’s reforms do you think changed Russia for the better? How? Which reforms changed Russia for the worse? Why?
2. How do you think these reforms changed Russian society?
3. Who stood to benefit from Lenin’s reforms? How and why?