

## History Department

### Russia: The impact of World War 1:

#### Initial reaction

- War was popular with most Russians. Most Mensheviks support war
- Church makes the war a holy war
- Anti-German fever (St Petersburg = Petrograd)

Only a small number resist this mood: including Lenin & Bolsheviks who believed the war was the Tsar's imperialist war and should be used to topple the autocracy.

#### WW1 & the countryside

- 15.5 million conscripted, mainly from the land = less labour on the land
- Most military casualties = peasant soldiers.
- Occupied lands in west were the most heavily populated and productive agriculturally
- Russian civilian losses by 1917 = 2,000,000 (famine, disease, war)
- Increasingly this turns the peasants against war (and Tsar)

#### WW1 & industry

- Blockade by Germany starves industry of raw materials
- Raw materials from the western allies could not reach factories due to transport collapse = factory closures

#### WW1 & towns

- German occupation of west:
  - = (1) refugees in towns with no work/ Shelter (1916: 3.3 million refugees)
  - = (2) Shortages of food (1916 cereal production = 20% less than pre war)
    - = cost of food rises
    - = ruble inflation (400% 1914-1916)
- Factory closures
  - = unemployed seeking work
  - = real wages fall as prices rise
- Agitation grows in the towns:
  - 1916: 67,000 march to commemorate Bloody Sunday. 1917: 145,000

- Sept 1916, 200,000 strike in Petrograd
- Strikes spread outside capital and become political in their demands
- Bolshevik agitation increases (1914-1917, 2,000,000 leaflets believed to be distributed in secrecy)

#### Increasing military collapse

- Losses so high, 33% of all men conscripted
- 1914 = lost 500,000
- Reinforcements badly armed & equipped = desertion grows = self mutilation grows
- By 1915 = lost 3,400,000 (dead, captured, wounded) men in war
- Troops increasingly disillusioned by military leadership of Tsar and generals. Growing agitation by small number of Bolsheviks within the army.

#### Incompetence of Tsar

(See classwork)

*Figures from Alexander Grunt, "Russia at war", a Soviet historian*