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SOCIALISM IN EUROPE AND THE RUSSIAN REVOLUTION

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1. THE FEBRUARY REVOLUTION

The Russian Revolution of 1917 centers around two primary events: the February Revolution and the October Revolution. The February Revolution, which removed Tsar Nicholas II from power, developed spontaneously out of a series of increasingly violent demonstrations and riots on the streets of Petrograd (present-day St. Petersburg), during a time when the tsar was away from the capital visiting troops on the World War I front.

Though the February Revolution was a popular uprising, it did not necessarily express the wishes of the majority of the Russian population, as the event was primarily limited to the city of Petrograd. However, most of those who took power after the February Revolution, in the Provisional Government (the temporary government that replaced the tsar) and in the Petrograd Soviet (an influential local council representing workers and soldiers in Petrograd), generally favored rule that was at least partially democratic.

2. THE OCTOBER REVOLUTION

The October Revolution (also called the Bolshevik Revolution) overturned the interim provisional government and established the Soviet Union. The October Revolution was a much more deliberate event, orchestrated by a small group of people. The Bolsheviks, who led this coup, prepared their coup in only six

months. They were generally viewed as an extremist group and had very little popular support when they began serious efforts in April 1917. By October, the Bolsheviks' popular base was much larger; though still a minority within the country as a whole, they had built up a majority of support within Petrograd and other urban centers.

After October, the Bolsheviks realized that they could not maintain power in an election-based system without sharing power with other parties and compromising their principles. As a result, they formally abandoned the democratic process in January 1918 and declared themselves the representatives of a Dictatorship Of The Proletariat. In response, the Russian Civil War broke out in the summer of that year and would last well into 1920.

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