

Chapter 26 reviewed World War One, the Russian Revolution, and the Bolsheviks' rise to power. The war atmosphere strained an already tense Russia and allowed for the return of Vladimir Lenin.

During WWI Russia experienced food shortages and loss of soldier's lives. "The Home Front," depicted German citizens waiting many hours in line for small portions of food. The same occurred in Russia. "The Path of Glory" of two dead British soldiers, was a reminder of the many lives that were lost during the war. As more of their countrymen continued to starve and die the nation became increasingly disenchanted with the government's involvement in WWI. These were the makings of the Russian Revolution.

With already high tensions in Russia before the war Tsar Nicholas II put himself into a double bind economically and politically, according to Robert Service. Service indicated that the Russians lacked technology to make their economy competitive with industrialized societies. This caused growing poverty that triggered civil unrest, especially among the peasants. There were also limited political rights under the Tsar. The revolutionary revisions made in the "Program of the Provisional Government in Russia" expanded individual freedoms, which meant that the previous leader did not grant his citizens basic rights. Without proper representation the voice of the Russians was not heard. The few supporters at the start of WWI turned against him once they experienced great losses and difficulties in the war. By the Tsar not promoting nationhood he made it easy for the citizens to overthrow him according to Service. The revolution that followed set the stage for the Bolsheviks.

The return of Vladimir Lenin explained the rise of the Bolsheviks. According to Sherman's introduction he was brought out of exile with the aid of Germany. The Germans wanted Lenin to weaken the Russian government; thereby distracting them from fighting. Bring him back during such instability allowed Lenin to easily cause the unrest the Germans desired. For instance, his "April Theses" called for the power to switch for the bourgeoisie to the peasants by supporting him instead of the provisional government. He promised to rework the economy to favor the "workers, agricultural laborers, and peasants". Abolishing privatization of land was also addressed. Without landholders all would be equal, which was impossible under the current land laws in Russia. After the Tsar's reign the poor were ready for the more radical change addressed in the theses. Lenin's "Speech to the Petrograd Soviet" appealed to a wider range of Russian citizens, causing further turmoil. Those oppressed by the former regime were promised that "the old state machinery" would "be smashed." The many Russian war critics were assured an immediate end to the fight; an action the provisional government had not done. Lastly, the citizens were guaranteed labor unions. By taking a stance in direct opposition to the old unpopular ruler Lenin overwhelmingly gained support for the Bolsheviks. When the Bolsheviks took control Lenin made peace with Germany according to Arthur Walworth. This peace took them out of the war, just as the German strategy had hoped.

Overall, the tensions in Russia were exhausted by WWI. When opposition became too much the tsar was overthrown, which gave others an opportunity to take over the government. Lenin did that with the help of Germany, who wanted Russia out of the war. Once back Lenin's appeal made the Bolsheviks become a strong force.