Name: _____

Source Set A: Eastern Europe

Synopsis

Although World War I ended officially in 1918, fierce border conflicts, terrible antisemitic violence, massacres of communists, and revolutions persisted throughout the 1920s in Eastern Europe. World War I and the Russian Civil War produced millions of refugees and prisoners of war. Additional millions of war-weary soldiers returned home. The postwar treaties split the formerly powerful Austro-Hungarian Empire (also known as the Habsburg Empire) into several new countries: Austria, Hungary, Poland, Czechoslovakia, Romania, and Yugoslavia. U.S. President Woodrow Wilson's Fourteen Points peace plan called for the borders of these new European countries to be decided based on the ethnicity of their populations. This forced massive numbers of people in Eastern Europe to move from one state to another to create more ethnically homogenous countries. These enormous population shifts, as well as dissatisfaction with new state borders, created unrest and often violence between groups. Hundreds of years of migration and intermarriage in Eastern Europe had made defining ethnic identity extremely complex. Each new country included sizable ethnic minorities.

In addition to the massive population movements, the devastation of war also caused social unrest. Buildings and infrastructure were in ruins. Agricultural production declined significantly from pre-war levels, and people did not have enough coal to heat their homes. Major cities such as Vienna, Prague, and Warsaw became filled with starving people and diseases were rampant. Socialists, communists, and Far-Right antisemitic nationalists competed for power across the new countries, each promising answers to these complex problems. None of the countries had been democratic previously. Yet their people each believed, at least initially, that democracy was the best way forward. However, internal divisions led to frequent changes in who controlled governments, contributing to disruption and instability. As a result, more and more people turned to extreme ideologies such as fascism. Leaders across Eastern Europe, with the exception of Czechoslovakia, adopted authoritarian measures in the 1920s.

Primary Sources

1. Nelli Cornea, a feminist Romanian writing in her diary in 1918. Cornea volunteered as a hospital nurse during the war.

"Women have no rights, widows even fewer. After widows are squashed like a lemon, they are thrown out on the street by the law…Democracy, democracy, when will your time come, to rule here like in France and America, so that a person could win based on merit, work, and talent, not inheritance."

2. From the declaration created by the Congress of Oppressed Nationalities of the Habsburg Empire*, which met in Rome in April 1918. The Congress included representatives of different nationalities who were living under the Austro-Hungarian Empire, including Czechoslovaks, Poles, Italians, Yugoslavs, and Romanians.*

"Every people proclaims it to be its right to determine its own nationality and national unity and complete independence. Every people knows that the Austro-Hungarian monarchy is an instrument of [Austrian] domination and a fundamental obstacle to the realization of its rights to free development and self-government. The Congress recognizes the necessity of fighting against the common oppressors."

3. Michał Römer, a Lithuanian-Polish politician and lawyer, writing in his diary, April 1, 1919.

"The war, finished in autumn, has not died away. Peace and a return to stability appear to be as remote, if not more distant, as in autumn when the war was formally approaching its end. Evicted from the trenches, front lines and from the official and regular struggle of militarized powers, it reached into human societies and transformed itself into a state of permanent chaos…. Formally, the regular war has stopped, but the catastrophe, of which the war was only the first act, goes on and is far from over. Who knows if it is only in its initial stage?"

Name: _____

4. Miklós Kozma, a World War I veteran and Hungarian nationalist, writing in August 1919 about punishments he believed should be given to perpetrators of communist violence in Hungary.

"We shall see to it…that the flame of nationalism leaps high…. We shall also punish. Those who for months have committed heinous crimes must receive their punishment. It is predictable…that the compromisers and those with weak stomachs will moan and groan when we line up a few red rogues and terrorists against the wall [and execute them]. The false slogans of humanism and other "isms" have helped to drive the country into ruin before. This second time they will wail in vain."

National Archives and Records Administration, Public domain, via Wikimedia Commons

Hungarian communists driving through the streets of Budapest in March 1919.

Name: _____

Source Set B: France

Synopsis

World War I devastated France. It experienced 1.6 million military and civilian deaths, a significant portion of its population. Many French towns were occupied by German soldiers during the war, with soldiers forcibly living in French homes and seizing French harvests. France's economy, heavily reliant on its agricultural production, suffered because of the physical destruction to large areas of the countryside. In urban areas during the war, conditions for many working men and women in factories worsened as inflation grew. French workers launched repeated strikes in 1917 and 1918. The French government violently repressed many of these strikes.

The war also increased political divisions within the population of France and its colonies. Communists opposed French participation in the war. They sought a greater alliance with the Russian communists, and split off from more moderate French socialists to form their own party in 1920. At the same time, some people in France, including some of the country's military leadership, were sympathetic to fascism and suspicious of the republican French government. Ten percent of France's military during World War I were Africans and Asians from France's extensive colonial empire. After the war, some of those troops became active in their nation's ongoing movements for independence from France.

Despite the difficulties of the immediate postwar period, the French economy recovered fairly quickly. The 1920s came to be known as the *années folles*, or "crazy years," for its economic prosperity and rich culture. Paris, like New York City and Berlin, became a city known across the world for jazz, art styles like Art Deco, and nightlife. Opportunities for women expanded, with many women entering the workforce to fill jobs previously performed by men. Many urban women challenged social expectations that had limited their rights and opportunities. Unlike in Germany, Great Britain, and the United States, however, women did not acquire the right to vote in France.

Primary Sources

1. Artist Victor Prouvé in an inscription on a 1918 poster describing the destruction the war had caused in France.

"The voice of the ruins rises from the ravaged earth, the destroyed orchards, the burned factories, the annihilated villages, the collapsed or gasping walls, the moving solitude of ghost cities. It is neither heartbreaking, nor poetic, nor frightening, it is a kind of silent and unrelenting thing that no one had ever suspected."

2. The Paris Civic Union*, an organization on the Right that opposed socialist movements in France, in the newspaper* Le Temps*, May 22, 1920.*

"France is not Russia. [France] has taken a century and a half to win one after another all the freedoms that are the condition of social and political progress: freedom of assembly, freedom of the press… Against the [communist] forces that seek the violent overthrow [of the regime]… France will maintain the sacred gains of our glorious revolutions."

3. Poet Paul Valery in a 1922 speech.

"The storm has died away, and still we are restless, uneasy, as if the storm were about to break. Almost all the affairs of men remain in a terrible uncertainty. We think of what has disappeared, we are almost destroyed by what has been destroyed; we do not know what will be born, and we fear the future, not without reason….

"We are a very unfortunate generation, whose lot has been to see the moment of our passage through life coincide with the arrival of great and terrifying events, the echo of which will resound through all our lives. One can say that all the fundamentals of the world have been affected by the war."

Name: _____

4. Elisabeth Fonsèque, a women's voting rights activist, at the 1929 congress of the National Council of French Women. *Many women in France were frustrated by the disconnect between their increasingly significant role in society and their lack of political rights.*

"[W]e feminists believe that an exhausted France needs the help of all her children, and that you cannot, without great danger, exclude half of them."

American National Red Cross photograph collection at the Library of Congress

This is a June 1918 photo of a child forced to leave her home in eastern France for Paris, where the American Red Cross was helping refugees from other areas of France. Many French families experienced dislocation and uncertainty during and after the war.

Name: _____

Source Set C: Germany's Former Colonies

Synopsis

At the outset of World War I, Germany controlled a significant colonial empire. Its African holdings included the colonies of Togoland and Kamerun (present-day Togo and Cameroon) in West Africa, German South West Africa (present-day Namibia), and German East Africa (present-day Tanzania, Burundi, Rwanda, and Mozambique). Its Pacific holdings included Samoa, part of New Guinea, many islands in the Western Pacific, and several small sections of Chinese port cities. During the war, millions of people from the German colonies and other empires' colonies fought for their respective colonial empires. Many joined voluntarily, hoping to gain citizenship in return for their service. Many others were forced to join the war effort. During World War I, many of Germany's colonies were seized by other powers. The conflict over the German colonies in Africa, especially, led to violence and death, and caused significant economic harm and social upheaval.

After the end of the war, the terms of the Treaty of Versailles required that Germany forfeit (give up) all of its colonies. The former colonies were then designated as League of Nations mandates, meaning that countries from the victorious Allied Powers would govern the territories under guidelines generated by the newly created League of Nations. The League of Nations claimed that people living in the former German colonies were not ready for self-governance and needed supervision from more "advanced" powers before gaining independence. The League's dominant European powers relied on the false belief that they were racially and culturally superior and that they had the right to seize territories inhabited by people of color and govern them as colonies.

Germany's African colonies were divided among Britain, France, Belgium, and South Africa. Its Pacific colonies were split among Japan, Australia, New Zealand, and Britain. The inhabitants of the former German colonies were not consulted during the process, and many people were opposed to being governed by their new colonizers. These new colonial administrations, like Germans before them, often oppressed and exploited local people. Additionally, some adjustments to the borders of the former German colonies disrupted established trade, transportation, and social activities. In both Africa and the Pacific, some inhabitants of the former German colonies tried to petition the League of Nations or their new colonial rulers for independence. Many referenced the concept of self-determination put forth in U.S President Wilson's Fourteen Points peace plan in their petitions.

Primary Sources

1. Joseph Bell, from the former German colony of Kamerun (Cameroon) in central Africa, in an October 1919 letter to the Anti-Slavery Society.

"The first principle laid down by President Wilson was, applied to the German Colonies, that no people must be forced under a sovereignty under which it does not wish to live…. The French Government is forcing us to live under his Government Administration but our country [does not] want French Government."

2. From a 1927 petition by leaders of the former German colony of Samoa in the Pacific to the New Zealand Government.

"Starting from ourselves and our wives, even to our children, we all complain together at the weight of the load we have to carry nowadays, brought about by some laws made expressly for the Samoans, oppressing us to the point of slavery, whereas we cannot believe this to be our status…. We find it hard to understand the reason for the hard things imposed on us in these days, as we have not been thus treated by previous Governments. We therefore humbly pray for our being given the liberty due to our proper status."

3. Selections from the 1929 statute of the German Section of the League for the Defense of the Negro Race. *("Negro" is a historical term for Black people considered outdated and potentially offensive today.) The organization*

Name: _____

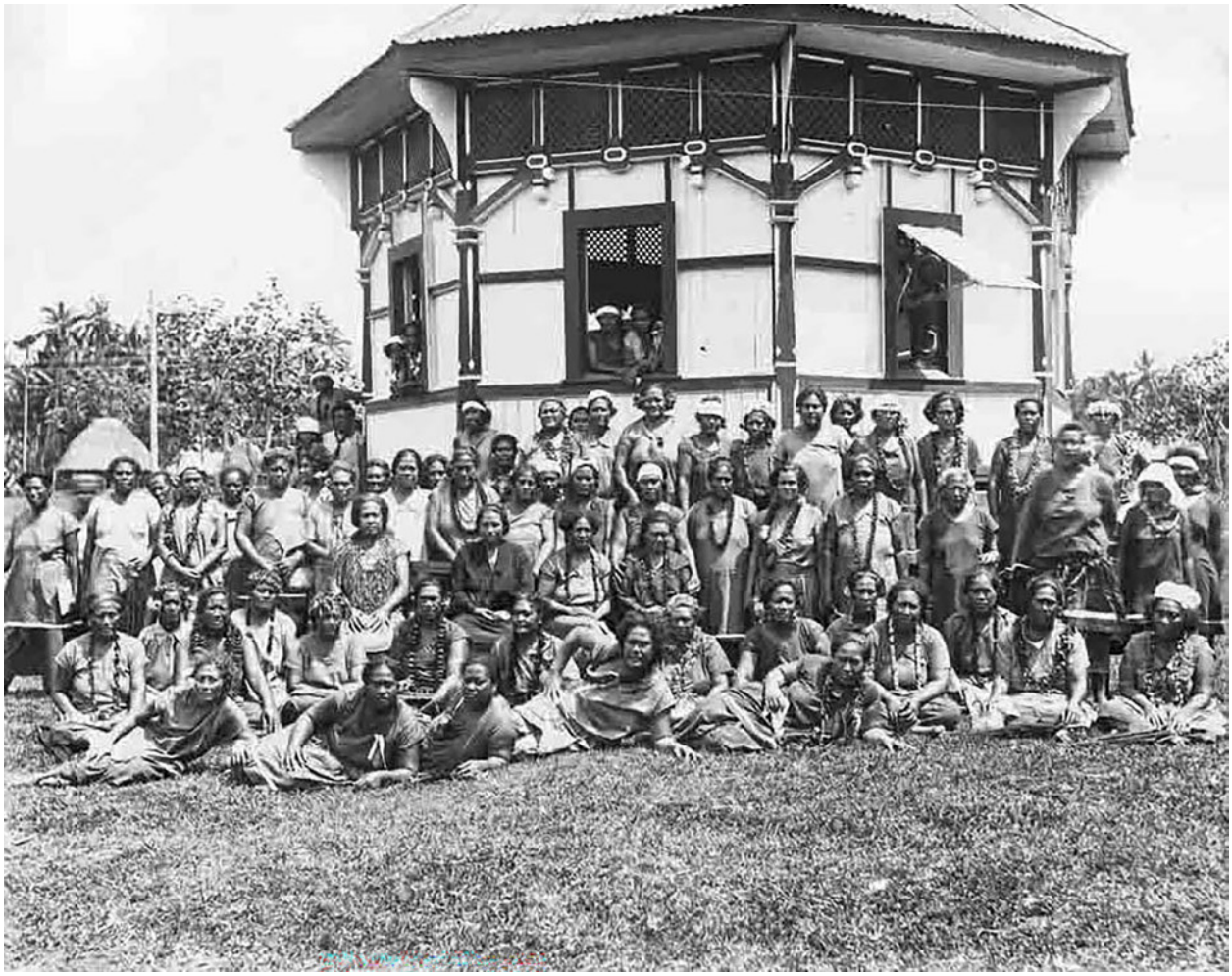
was based in Berlin and was part of the Communist International *(a Soviet-led organization that sought to spread communism worldwide).*

"The aim of the association is:

…The emancipation of the Negro race in every respect and by all means in active solidarity with the intellectual and manual workers of the whole world….

a) To seize the national independence of the Negro people of Africa and to establish a large modern state. To this aim the peasants, workers, officials, merchants, soldiers and sailors, students and black schoolchildren are called upon to organize themselves on the basis of their particular demands….

e) Active resistance against all political doctrines which demand the annexation of Negro countries and the assimilation of Negroes as part of colonialism…."



Public domain via Alexander Turnbull Library, National Library of New Zealand, Te Puna Mātauranga o Aotearoa.

Women of the Mau protest movement in Western Samoa, pictured in about 1930. Western Samoa was a German colony captured and occupied by New Zealand during World War I. Following the war, Western Samoa became a New Zealand mandate, which was marked by disregard for the health and welfare of the Samoans. The Mau movement used petitions to world leaders and the League of Nations as well as passive resistance to protest New Zealand rule.

Name: _____

Source Set D: Great Britain

Synopsis

The effects of World War I on Great Britain were significant, even though no fighting occurred in Great Britain itself. Three-quarters of a million British men died fighting in Europe or in the British Empire's colonies, and more than twice that number returned home wounded. The extensive loss of life during the war was traumatic for many British people. While Britain had been an economic powerhouse before the war, trade dropped significantly in the years during and after the war, hurting businesses and workers. Unemployment in some areas, particularly in factories, rose sharply in the early 1920s. The country also experienced inflation because it had borrowed money to pay for the war effort.

In 1913, the British controlled a vast overseas empire that ruled over 400 million people and nearly a quarter of the earth's land. At the end of World War I, the Allies, including Great Britain, stated their commitment to ensuring the independence of small nations from imperial control. The British government, however, did not uphold this commitment. Despite calls from many people in British colonies for independence, Great Britain actually increased its colonial holdings after the war.

World War I accelerated social changes in Great Britain. Men from across social classes served in the war, and women worked extensively in weapons factories and agriculture during the war. These two circumstances influenced the passage of new laws. Strong, sometimes militant, labor organizations and suffrage movements demanded the British government address social inequalities. All men over twenty-one and most women over thirty earned the right to vote shortly after the war ended. The government put additional measures in place—such as old age pensions, unemployment benefits, and public health benefits—to win the support of the working classes.

When the end of World War I was announced, many British people on the home front expressed surprise, while soldiers often felt relief at having defeated the enemy and ended the war. The experience of World War I convinced many British people that war should be avoided in the future at all costs.

Primary Sources

1. Lieutenant R.G. Dickson, a British soldier describing his thoughts upon his return to England following World War I, in his 1970s memoir.

"While we were going through the formalities of disembarking [from a ship returning to Great Britain] a strange and unreal thought was running through my mind. I had a future. It took some getting used to this knowledge. There was a future ahead of me, something I had not imagined for some years. I said so much to Captain Brown. He smiled at me; he was a man about forty. 'Yes', he agreed. 'You've got a future now, Dickie. And so have I. I wonder what we'll do with it, and what it will be like. Because, you know, things are not going to be the same as they were before.'"

2. William Kirk, recounting his experience of his return to Great Britain in 1918, in a recording made in 1986.

"I was very dissatisfied when I came home, conditions I found. We were promised lands for heroes to live in and all that sort of thing, but when we came home, we found nothing. Everybody, everybody, wanted us—king and country wanted us—in 1914 and when we come back nobody wanted us. Because there was neither work nor money. There was poverty everywhere, everywhere."

3. Winston Churchill, a British politician, in a speech on November 4, 1920, claiming communism posed a threat to Great Britain.

"No doubt the war struck Russia a heavy blow, but none from which she could not have survived. [The communists] destroyed Russia and plunged it deep into unspeakable misery. We must never cease proclaim-

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ing this fact as a warning to other nations in the world, and for the preservation of our own country. For Russia we can do little…. But if we can do little for Russia, we can do much for Britain. We do not want any of these experiments here. Any such experiments in this country would be followed by the destruction of the great majority of the persons dwelling in these islands. We can at any rate make sure that in our life and time the deadly disease which has struck down Russia should not be allowed to spring up here and poison us as it is poisoning them."

4. Margaret Bondfield, trade union leader and member of parliament, speaking in a debate in the House of Commons on January 21, 1924.

"The points on which I wish to address this House…have a great deal to do with the suffering that is going on in this country at the present time amongst unemployed women…. The War made an enormous difference to the position of women…. I do not think…Members [of Parliament] realize quite what it means today, for example, to be in the clothing trades, compared with what it was 15 years ago. In the clothing trades mass production has developed enormously [decreasing the need for workers], and the War accentuated that development…. There are the women in clerical work, many of whom were brought into Government Departments during the War. Of necessity—I do not complain—vast numbers of women were put to do work of a certain elementary kind that did not give them the necessary training or experience to enable them to continue clerical work at the end of the War. These women, above all others, require opportunities for developing technical and general knowledge.

Spaarnestad Photo. Public domain via Wikimedia Commons.

Sylvia Pankhurst was a Far-Left British communist. During World War I she fought for workers' rights, socialist values, and women's right to vote in Great Britain. Later, she went on to support independence for British colonies. She was arrested several times for protesting. In this 1932 photograph she is speaking at a protest against British colonial policy in India.

Name: _____

Source Set E: Italy

Synopsis

Despite public opposition to joining World War I, nationalists in Italy succeeded in pushing Italy to join the war against the Austro-Hungarian Empire in May 1915. Many Italians resisted—or at least did not support—Italy's war efforts. Supporters of war hoped to regain what they believed was Italian territory from Austria. Indeed, a secret treaty Italy had signed in 1915 with England, France, and Russia promised just that. The Austro-Hungarians, however, invaded Italy in 1917, forcing hundreds of thousands of Italians to flee their homes. The Italian military, made up largely of poor farmers forced to fight, suffered great losses. Meanwhile, Italian workers in weapons factories suffered under harsh conditions. As in other countries, many Italian women joined the paid workforce for the first time during the war, and some nationalists claimed that it was Italian women's duty to support the war effort. While many wealthy women volunteered for the war effort in a number of ways, by no means did all women support the war. Protests against the war—from both women and men—sometimes turned violent. Many Italians saw their government as oppressive and were appalled by the costs—both in terms of lives lost and in money spent—of the war. At the end of the war, the country was deeply divided.

During the Versailles Treaty negotiations, Italy did not acquire all of the territory promised in the secret 1915 treaty with England, France, and Russia. Nationalists were outraged and used what they called this "mutilated victory" to discredit the Italian government. Meanwhile, inflation rose, unemployment surged, and industrial factories went bankrupt. Average people lost their savings or their jobs, or both. For two years after the war ended, violent protests, riots, and extensive strikes plagued the country. The government failed to assist those in need.

At the same time, the government failed to reassure landowners and the wealthy, who feared a socialist revolution. This political and economic unrest helped to usher in a new leader, Benito Mussolini, and his Far-Right fascist supporters. The Italian fascists, often brutal and ruthless in their intimidation tactics, gained support mostly from people on Far Right of the political spectrum and from other supporters of Italian nationalism. Mussolini emphasized average people's grievances. He gave them scapegoats to blame—mostly socialists and communists. He promised that Italy would gain power and prestige with his leadership. In 1925, Mussolini became the dictator of Italy.

Primary Sources

1. Carlo Ciseri, a middle-class man from Northern Italy who had fought in the war, describing in his diary in October 1919 his reaction to the divisions in Italian society after the end of World War I.

"What disillusionment! The great Italian family that intervened entirely as one…in the great war, has become horribly divided…. I feel completely at sea…I cannot begin to understand how these squalid [repulsive] political ideas can make people who should be brothers hate each other to the point of killing…. I no longer believe in anything.… I swear I will never have anything to do with politics ever again.… Long live a new Italy of peace and greatness! And in this great hope I direct to God a prayer that in his grace he will send us a man who will overcome everything, conquer all, and rule with true justice."

2. Benito Mussolini in a speech from October 6, 1922.

"[B]y uniting the Italian people to face the world-task…we shall inaugurate [begin]…a really great period in Italian history. Thus will our dead be made immortal…. We shall point them out to the rising generation…. We shall say: 'Great was the effort and hard the sacrifice, and pure was the blood that was shed…it was shed in the name of an ideal, of all that is most noble, beautiful and generous in the human soul.'"

Name: _____

3. Vincenzo Rabito, a Sicilian farm worker drafted into the Italian army to fight in World War I at age eighteen, recalling Mussolini's appeal to former soldiers in his memoir, written between 1968 and 1975.

"And so because all those who fought in this damned war [World War I] and were then discharged were all without work—we would have been better off losing the war, because there was no food and no work—so we were all becoming…communists and [so to] put an end to all these strikes, we badly needed this fascist movement led by Benito Mussolini."

4. Editors of a feminist newspaper in Genoa, Italy, La Chiosa, *writing in 1925.*

"We wish to ask our good Fascist *camerati* [comrades] what you have done recently for women's rights, to educate and elevate women? In fascism there seems to be a spirit of inexplicable, yet ferocious antifeminism."

"Torino - Comizio festivo in una officina metallurgica occupata." *L'Illustrazione Italiana*, 26 September 1920, p. 393. Public domain.

Striking workers occupy a factory in Turin, a northern Italian city, in 1920. 1919 and 1920 were known in Italy as the "Biennio Rosso," or the "Two Red Years," for the intense conflict involving socialists and anarchists that overtook Italy in the aftermath of the First World War.

Name: _____

Source Set F: Russia

Synopsis

During World War I, Russia underwent a revolution that ended the three-hundred-year-old monarchy there and resulted in the loss of much of its empire. Brutal government repression and the suffering of millions led people to seek revolutionary change. By 1917, fifteen million Russian soldiers had been sent to fight in World War I. With Russia's resources directed to the war effort, the population endured shortages of food, firewood, kerosene, soap, and clothing. It was hunger that sparked the first large demonstrations of February 1917. The protesters became increasingly violent and were joined by mutinying soldiers. The crowds invaded prisons, destroyed police stations and court buildings. Having lost the support of its own people and the loyalty of its armed forces, the monarchy collapsed. On March 2, the tsar, or emperor, gave up his throne.

By the summer of 1917, the question of how the new government of Russia would be organized was still undecided. The Bolsheviks, a communist organization led by Vladimir Lenin, began to grow more popular and eventually seized control of the government. But it was not the end of the struggle for power. In fact, it was the beginning of a bloody civil war in which as many as thirteen million people died.

Lenin realized that to win the civil war he would have to arrange a peace deal with Germany and its allies, even though many of his fellow Bolsheviks opposed such a deal. The peace deal gave Germany large amounts of territory of the former Russian Empire, including Poland, Ukraine, Finland, and the Baltic States. (The Allied Powers forced Germany to give up these territories after the war.) The Russian Empire lost 34 percent of its population, 32 percent of its agricultural land, 54 percent of its industry, and 89 percent of its coal mines.

As a result of the Russian Civil War, two million Russians migrated to other countries. Widespread famine resulted in the deaths of as many as five million people from starvation and disease. In the end, the Bolsheviks defeated their opponents, consolidated power, and began building a new society that became the Soviet Union in 1922. The Bolsheviks wanted their communist revolution to spread throughout Europe and the world in order to replace the capitalist system.

Primary Sources

1. Chant of women textile workers, as reported by I. Gordienko, worker for the Ludwig Nobel Machinery Works, February 23, 1917.

"Down with the war! Down with the high cost of living! Down with hunger! Bread for the workers!"

2. Anna Litveiko, recalling her time as an eighteen-year-old political activist from working-class Moscow in 1917, in her 1957 memoir.

"What would it be like to live under communism? [One activist] imagined enormous public buildings that would include huge cafeterias, laundromats, day care centers, and kindergartens, that would free families from all household chores. The only kind of property we would allow would be books and clothes.… Finally we agreed that under communism everything was going to be beautiful—both spiritually (there would be no more greed or envy) and externally (all clothing would be light—in weight and color)."

3. Bolshevik leader Vladimir Lenin writing a "Letter To The Workers Of Europe And America" in the newspaper Pravda *[Truth], January 24, 1919.*

"Now, on January 12, 1919, we already see quite a number of communist…parties, not only within the boundaries of the former tsarist [Russian] empire—in Latvia, Finland and Poland, for example—but also in Western Europe—Austria, Hungary, Holland and, lastly, Germany.… [World War I] fully exposed itself as an imperialist, reactionary, predatory war both on the part of Germany and on the part of the capitalists of Britain, France, Italy and America. The latter are now beginning to quarrel over the spoils, over the division of Tur-

Name: _____

key, Russia, the African and Polynesian colonies, the Balkans, and so on. The hypocritical phrases uttered by [U.S. President] Wilson and his followers about 'democracy' and 'union of nations' are exposed with amazing rapidity…. There is a growing number of people in the Allied countries who have taken the communist path…. These are men who have realized that if imperialism is to be crushed and the victory of socialism and lasting peace ensured, the [ruling class] must be overthrown[,]…parliaments abolished, and Soviet power and the dictatorship of the proletariat established."

Public domain.

A march demanding the right for women to vote in elections in Petrograd, Russia, in the spring of 1917.