





[These Bitesize notes are from 2015 and have been taken down.]

## The First World War and the February Revolution

The First World War had two main effects on Russia: firstly a huge number of men lost their lives, and secondly it caused economic chaos. On 8 March 1917 women in St Petersburg went on a strike for 'bread and peace', starting the February Revolution.

### Summary

	<p>The <b>First World War</b> proved the last straw for the tsar's government. The Russian troops were <b>slaughtered</b> in their millions.</p> <p>Nicholas made things worse by going to the front to lead the army. This made him responsible for the defeats in most people's eyes. It also left the government in the hands of the tsar's wife, the tsarina, and the monk, Rasputin.</p>
	<p>The war effort caused <b>economic chaos</b>. By February 1917, people in the towns were <b>starving and freezing</b>.</p> <p>The revolution was started by the women - on 8 March 1917 they went on a march <b>demanding bread</b>, which turned into rioting.</p>
	<p>The tsarina called in the <b>troops</b>. However, on 12 March they <b>mutinied</b> and started to help the rioters.</p> <p>Workers and soldiers set up the <b>Petrograd Soviet</b> to coordinate the revolution.</p>
	<p>The tsar went to pieces and was unable to make any decisions.</p> <p>When the Duma realised the government was collapsing, it set up a <b>provisional government</b>, and on 15 March forced the tsar to <b>abdicate</b>.</p>

### Ten Extra Details

1. In February 1914 the Deputy Minister of the Interior and former head of police sent a memo to the tsar warning him that a war against Germany - even if Russia won - would destroy the monarchy.
2. The tsarina was German. Most Russians believed she was helping the Germans to win by ruining Russia.
3. The huge casualties in the war - 9 million dead or wounded by 1917 - lost the tsar the support of the soldiers, so they turned against him when they were asked to put down the riots.
4. Taking 15 million men to fight in the army ruined Russia's agriculture. There were not enough workers to take in the harvest.
5. The war effort clogged up the railways with military transport, so food couldn't get into the towns.
6. On 13 March at the Kronstadt naval base, the sailors mutinied and murdered hundreds of their officers.
7. On 4 March, workers at the huge Putilov armaments factory in St Petersburg went on strike. Many historians say that this was the real start of the February Revolution.
8. The February Revolution was a genuine popular revolution, with spontaneous uprisings all over the country against the government - it was not planned by a particular rebel group or fuelled by a particular ideology.
9. On 10 March, with bread riots out of control, the tsarina wrote to the tsar blaming hooligans for the trouble. Her letter shows how out of touch the government was with reality.
10. The tsar tried to get back from the front on 13 March, but it was too late. None of the soldiers were loyal and his train could not get through to St Petersburg.