

**The Russia Revolution, or  
How Not to Make a Revolution  
Part I: A Modified Billington Typology**

*Historical Problem:* How to industrialize while introducing democratic institutions?

*Historiographical Problem:* How successful was Russia in doing so by 1914?

I. Emphasize on Long-Term Causes (1825–1914)

A. Social

1. Demographic
2. Society of Privilege
3. Russification of Subject Nationalities
4. Persecution of Jews

B. Economic

1. Agricultural Country
2. Beginnings of Industrialization
3. Semi-Colonial Status
4. Deprivation

C. Political

1. Open Repression (“Bloody Sunday”; Father George Gapon)
2. Failure in War
  - a. Crimean War 1854–55
  - b. Russo-Japanese War 1904–05
3. Perception of Leadership as Vacillating (October Manifesto, 1905)
4. Mixed Success of Reform Measures
  - a. Sergei Witte (1849–1915)
  - b. Peter A. Stolypin (1862–1911)
5. Rationalization of Government (Konstantin Pobedonostsev)

D. Intellectual

1. Weak Liberal Parties (Constitutional Democrats [Kadets])
2. “Revolutionary” Groups: Socialist Revolutionaries [SRs]; Social Democrats
3. Appeal of Extremist Solutions (the “strong leader” [*vozhd'*])
4. Myth of Revolutionary Tradition and the *Okhrana* (Russian secret police)
  - a. Decembrists [1825];
  - b. assassinations of Alexander II [1881] and V. K. Plehve [1904]);
  - c. execution of A. I. Ulianov [1886])
  - d. Apis

## II. Conspiratorial Theories (1914–Feb. 1917)

### A. Rasputin, German Plots, Alexander Protopopov, and the Masons

### B. Immediate Causes of February Revolution

1. Political—belief tsar was incompetent
2. Economic—food shortages; prices soared
3. Social—peasants wanted nobles' fertile lands and woodlands

## III. Spontaneity and Accident (Feb. 1917–Oct. 1917)

### A. “Dual Power”

1. Provisional Government (A. F. Kerenskii [1881–1971]) — had the authority
2. Petrograd Soviet of Workers and Soldiers — had the power

### B. Return of V. I. Lenin (1870–1924)

1. April Theses
2. Bolshevik Slogans
  - a. “All Power to the Soviets”
  - b. “Peace, Bread, and Land”
3. Smolnyi Institute; Liteinyi Bridge

## IV. “Heroic” and Inevitable (October 1917–1924)

### A. Reasons for Bolshevik Success

1. Organization
  - a. Democratic Centralism
  - b. Red Army—Leon Trotsky (1879–1940)
2. Central Position
3. Unifying Ideology
4. Ruthless Use of Terror (Red Guards)
5. Pragmatic Leadership
  - a. Treaty of Brest-Litovsk
  - b. New Economic Policy

### Recommended Reading:

James Billington, “Six Views of the Russian Revolution,” *World Politics* (18 (June 1966): 456–473.

Colin Welch, “Broken Eggs, but No Omelette: Russia before the Revolution,” in *Lying Truths: A Critical Scrutiny of Current Beliefs and Conventions*, edited by Ronald Duncan and Miranda Weston-Smith (New York: Pergamon Press, 1979), 48–60.

Robert V. Daniels, *Red October: The Bolshevik Revolution of 1917* (New York: Scribner, 1967).