

## Revolutions of 1917-1921

WWI has sharpened long-standing problems and contradictions. People had to suffer from continuous hostilities, mass death and disabilities, famine and war economics and the interests and ambitions of different fighting blocks. This state of affairs became a breeding ground for social movements activation and revolutions. European countries found themselves not only in an external struggle against each other during the First World War but faced situation of state and nation building as well.

**The Russian Empire.** First was the Revolution in Russian Empire in 1917. As a result of this revolution, monarchy and later the interim Government were overthrown, power was seized through armed uprising and in October 25 the same year the power was "transferred" to the Petrograd Soviet. Then the Civil War of 1917-1922 was started. Nowadays this event is a place for discussion not only about history, but about politics, ideas and instruments too. There are different points of view connected with the murder of imperial family, with two parts of revolution (February and October events), with consequences of this events etc. Also there are still a lot of myths about events and image of revolution ("Aurora's volley", "Winter Palace storming"). In Soviet Russia such myths were the base of ideology and propaganda. Events of October 1917 actually look more like coup d'Etat, but Soviet society was sure, that it was a revolution of all people, because this view was fully supported in school education, mass events etc. You can read more about it in course of "[Arzamas](#)" project or in such books as: A. Rabinowitch "[The Bolsheviks Come to Power](#)", "[Symbols of power and power struggle](#)" (2012) or «Critical Companion to the Russian Revolution 1914–1921» (1997).

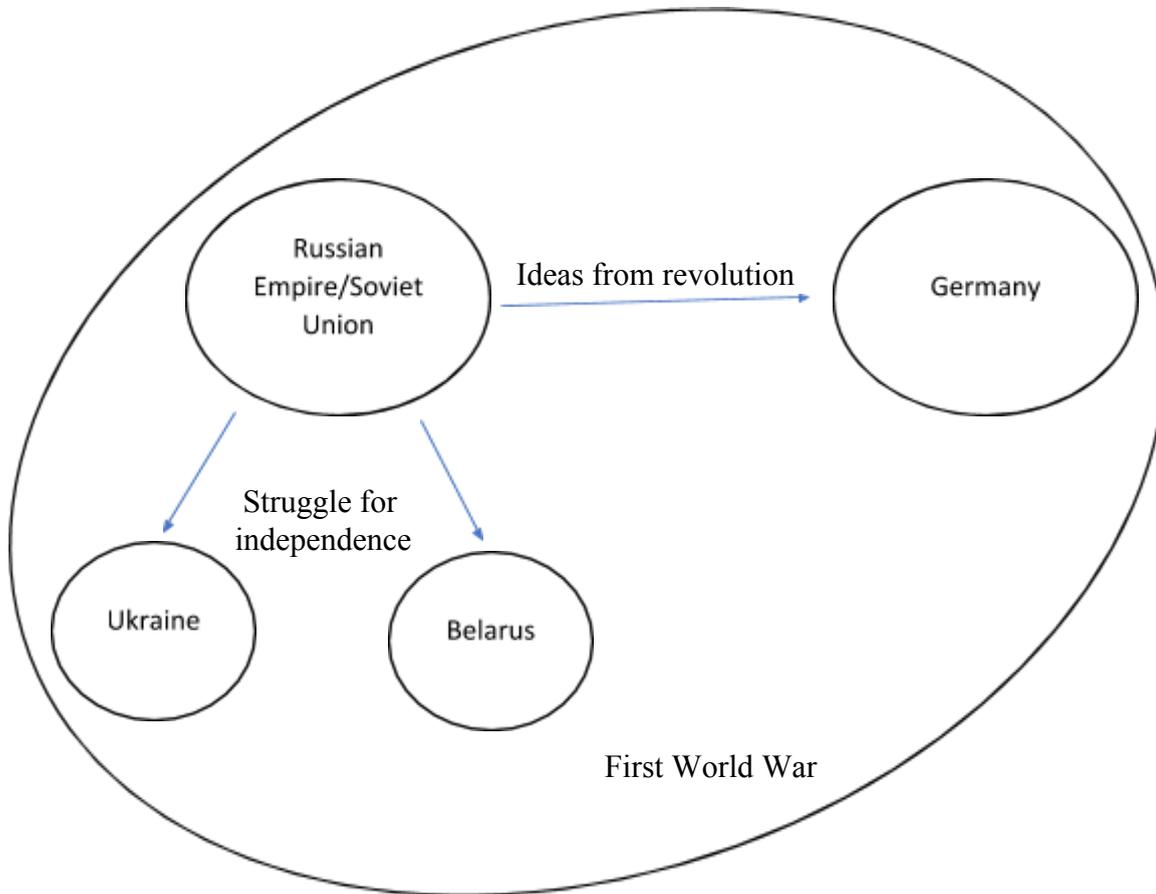
**Germany.** Under the impression of the events of the Russian Revolution, the soon to be reached defeat and yet the ongoing war efforts of Germany in the First World War, Germans revolted against their governance. The German Revolution started with the uprising of sailors in Kiel on the 29./30.10.1918 and spreaded through the country. These in most cases peaceful revolutions were accompanied with the creation of worker- and soldier councils and the demand of the abolishment of the monarchy. The question of the future political structure of Germany – parliamentary democracy v.s. council system – divided German society. Different political movements clashed in violent uprising until the summer of 1919. On the 14.08.1919 the constitution of the new parliamentary, democratically German state, the Weimar Republic, became operative. In German historiography these events are seen as an important step to the first German democratic state.

**Ukraine.** After fall of Russian Empire in 1917, Ukrainians expected not only get a land and freedom, but also to establish Ukrainian statehood in first time. Often, Ukrainian authorities use this historic event to underline the independence, which has long been desirable and fought, to settle interregional discord. Mainly, the Ukrainian historical narrative emphasizes on such aspects: Central Council ('Rada') in Kyiv, as a first government of sovereign country; [Fight under Kruty](#), as a heroic feat; struggles for Ukrainian territories among Soviet Russia, German, Poland and several Ukrainian movements. Whole Ukraine was involved into Revolution, but, because of a lack of information about it in other Ukrainian cities, citizens do not feel emotional connection to this event.

**Belarus.** Belarusians wanted to create their sovereign state. On March 25, 1918 under the conditions of German occupations, Belarus was declared as an independent and free state. The Belarusian People's Republic was proclaimed, but without a territory under its control. This idea was not supported by any state in the world. After unsuccessful attempts of recognition, in 1919 the government was forced to immigrate to Vilna due to the invasion of the Red Army. (The Council of the Belarusian People's Republic is the oldest still functioning government in exile). On January 1, 1919 the Socialist Soviet Republic of Belarussia was declared under Bolsheviks authority (then transformed to Belarusian Soviet Socialist Republic in 1920).

Although similar plots, the revolutions of 1917-1921 had different outcomes. In the following we want you to think about reasons of revolutions, differences in uprisings and ways how nowadays the revolutions of 1917-1921 are remembered.

1. Look at the following scheme. What would you add to it? (countries, connections, ...)



2. Imagine why in 1917-1921 there were no revolutions in Great Britain, France, USA?

3. Look at the caricature below. Who is this man with a broom? Who are others? Why here pictured a world, not just a specific country?



4. Is there in your country an official holiday remembering of the Revolution? If yes, remember how it is and think why it is so. If no, try to think why you do not have such holiday.