

HTAV Student Lectures - Richard Malone

Russia 1905-1917

Different Perspectives on Revolution

Deutscher

- “The February Revolution of 1917 holds its place in history only as the prelude to October.”

Trotsky

- “What has taken place is an uprising not a conspiracy. An uprising of the masses of the people needs no justification. We have been strengthening the revolutionary energy of the workers and the soldiers. We have been forging, openly, the will of the masses for an uprising. Our uprising has won.”
25 October 1917

Richard Pipes

- Just because the Oct Rev was ‘easy’ doesn’t make it inevitable, as Lenin persuaded people to believe
- In fact, not even Lenin was sure whether the takeover would be successful or not
- If the Oct Rev was not inevitable, then the very basis of Marxist ideology is flawed

Edward Acton

“The central drama of the revolution was precisely the attempt of the Russian masses to assert direct control over their own lives... October marked the moment at which power began to move from the hands of the mass movement, then at full tide, into the hands of an organisation determined to exercise control from above. The popular vision paled, dimmed and faded away.”

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Christopher Hill

- Lenin represented the oppressed
- Lenin represented the pure qualities of communism
- Lenin was a true Russian patriot

Orlando Figes

- *Revolution was tragedy for the Russian people*

“If there was one lesson to be drawn from the Russian Revolution it was that the people had failed to emancipate themselves. They had failed to become their own political masters, to free themselves from emperors and become citizens.”

Dominic Lieven

“In no circumstances would 20th century Russian History have been pleasant or bloodless. But Lenin made it far worse than it needed to be. In 1917 he combine fanaticism, ruthlessness and absolute self-confidence with a terrifying naivety about government, economics and Russian society...To impose such immense sacrifices in the name of so naïve and flawed a vision makes Lenin one of the greatest criminals of the 20th Century.” (2000)

Christopher Hill

“The revolutionary process abolished a regime of despair and created a new world of hope.”

Pipes

“Lenin’s and Trotsky’s main concern was holding on to power, whereas Nicholas cared for Russia.”

Thomas & McAndrew

“The Communists might have controlled the railways, the large industrial enterprises and the armed forces, but not the hearts and minds of the people.”