

## History 344 Final Review Discussion/ May 13

### Final Examination Information

Thursday May 15, 8-10 am, same classroom

Format: exam will be weighted toward the period after 1914, but knowledge of the roots of revolution and nature of late imperial Russia will be important. The three sections will be weighted equally in grading.

40 minutes: identifications from required course readings [major figures, events, concepts]

40 minutes: mini-essays (focused questions)

40 minutes: major essay (a large interpretive question)]

### I. Revolution – General

1. Michael D. Richards' book, *Revolutions in World History*, argues that revolutions must be understood just as much by the period after the transfer of power as in terms of the overthrow of the old regime. In what sense is the period from 1918 to Stalinism “revolutionary”? In what sense does the “aftermath” of 1917 flow from the revolution that overthrew the old regime, and in what sense does it take the revolution in different directions?

2. Richards makes a distinction between “successful” and “unsuccessful” revolutions. To what extent is the Russian Revolution a failure or a success? Defend the criteria you use to answer the question.

3. Jack Goldstone's encyclopedia definition of revolutions invokes Tocqueville's observations on the “continuity of the old regime and the post-revolutionary state” to question the “extent of the historical transformation associated with revolutions.” How can we measure the extent of the transformation brought about by the Russian Revolution? What were the chief continuities with tsarism?

4. How was the Russian Revolution a “people's tragedy”? Do you agree with Figes (p. 808) that the Russian Revolution was a “people's tragedy but it was a tragedy which they helped to make”? Discuss Figes's title and his overall perspective on the revolution.

5. Goldstone also writes that “the role of ideological changes in causing revolutions and shaping their outcomes is hotly debated.” As examples of how ideology can play a secondary role, he cites “pragmatic” modifications by revolutionaries of their programs, including the “New Economic Plan [sic] of the 1920s.” Can ideology in the Russian Revolution be seen to have shaped historical events more than just providing a rhetorical cover for the actions of revolutionaries? How and why does it matter, for example, that the Bolsheviks were Marxists bent on building socialism, rather than proponents of other ideologies Goldstone mentions as useful in other revolutionary movements, such as Islamic fundamentalism?

6. When did the Russian Revolution begin and when did it end? Justify your argument with reference to the nature of the revolutionary process.

### II. Roots of the Russian Revolution

1. Arguably, the tsarist government contributed to revolution not by what it failed to do, but by its pursuit of a selective and partial, yet very substantial modernization -- itself due to its race to keep up with other Great Powers in the West. Agree or disagree.

2. Do some of the causes that brought down tsarism remain to plague the Provisional and the Soviet governments? Describe how the persistent Russian problems which tsarism could not cope with were

dealt with by the two subsequent regimes.

### **III. Peasantry and Rural Russia**

1. What are the motivations and goals behind rural revolution? How are those goals manifested in peasant behavior and rural uprisings in 1917 and after? Explain in terms of peasant worldview, economic conditions and change in the countryside since the emancipation.
2. What are the effects of the revolution on the countryside between 1917 and 1921? In the 1920s under NEP?
3. In its conflicts with the peasantry, is the new regime merely facing many of the same dilemmas the tsarist government faced after 1861 and the age of Stolypin?

### **IV. 1905**

1. Explain the failure of the “first Russian revolution.”
2. How does the legacy of 1905 affect 1917 in terms of the revolutionary movement, politics, and the nature of the tsarist system?

### **V. 1917 and the “Popular Revolution”**

1. To what extent does the pre-October Bolshevik program coincide with the aspirations of the “people’s revolution?” How does it diverge?
2. Explain the challenges facing the Provisional Government in 1917. Did it fail because it was insufficiently liberal, too liberal, or for other reasons?
3. Explain the role of Lenin in changing the course of 1917 and early Soviet history.
4. How do the political crises that punctuate the period between February and October 1917 affect the position of the Bolsheviks and set the stage for the October Revolution?

### **VI. Political Movements and Ideologies**

1. Was there a liberal alternative in the Russian Revolution? How about a moderate socialist (Menshevik or SR) one? Explain why or why not.
2. How do the goals of Bolshevism differ before and after October 1917? What are the landmarks in Bolshevism’s shift from tearing down the old system to constructing a new one?
3. How did the Bolsheviks attempt to replace religion after 1917? How successful were they?
4. Explain the forms of utopianism that were expressed and implemented after 1917 (Stites, e-reserve), and the extent to which they came out of the Bolshevik world-view. What is utopian about the new Soviet state? How does the new political order shape experimentation and change in the realm of cultural and social policy?

### **VII. Civil War, War Communism, NEP**

1. Explain why the Reds won the civil war and why the Whites lost.

2. How does the civil war era change Bolshevism? Be specific. Were these changes necessary to ensure communist victory?
3. What are the demographic and social effects of civil war?
4. How much is “war communism” shaped by the emergencies of the day, and how much by the legacy and ethos of Bolshevism?
5. Analyze the new regime’s changing positions in regard to the “bourgeois specialists.” Why is this group so important after the revolution?

### **VIII. Non-Russians, Borderlands, National Movements**

1. How do the roots and dynamics of revolution differ from that of the “center” in the non-Russian or ethnically mixed areas of the three major borderlands: Transcaucasia, the Western borderlands and Central Asia?
2. How do the Reds and the Whites deal with national movements, and what are the results of the revolution for nationalities policy in the new regime?
3. What kind of position do the non-Russians have in the Soviet order?

### **IX. Violence**

1. One feature of the entire revolutionary period in Russia that emerges from Figs’s book is that it was very violent. Discuss the various types of violence that emerge in revolutionary Russia: state or political violence, ethnic violence, popular violence, and violence in everyday life. Did these types of violence overlap, and were they connected if you look at concrete examples? If so, explain how and why they could overlap.
2. “Experiencing revolution in the midst of war, Russian political movements deployed state practices that were emerging out of Russia’s total war experience to achieve their revolutionary goals” (Holquist, e-reserve, 640). How, specifically, did total war affect the violent methods employed by reds and the whites?
3. Compare the White and the Red Terror during the Civil War. To what extent was the Red Terror something different, and in what ways did it set precedents for the violence of the Soviet regime?

### **X. The New Soviet Regime**

1. What is most radically new about the new party-state?
2. How is the new regime consolidated between 1920 and 1922?
3. How can we explain the emergence out of the Russian Revolution of a strong, centralized, militarized Bolshevik dictatorship, what Moshe Lewin terms a “superstate”? How much is due to the ethos and ideology of the Bolsheviks, how much to the civil war, and how much to the nature of Russian history and society?
4. “The Russian Revolution launched a vast experiment in social engineering—perhaps the grandest in the history of mankind” (Figs, 823). In what areas did this social engineering manifest itself? What were

its greatest effects and greatest failures? What was its appeal internationally? (Marks, e-reserve).