

Mexican Revolution

The Revolution began with a call to arms on 20th November 1910 to overthrow the current ruler and dictator Porfirio Díaz. Díaz was an ambitious president, keen to develop Mexico into an industrial and modernized country. While he worked on implementing a capitalist society building factories, dams, and roads the rural workers and peasants suffered greatly. Díaz reigned using a campaign of bullying, intimidating citizens into supporting him. While civil liberties such as the freedom of press suffered under his rule, the greatest injustice came in the form of new land laws. In an attempt to strengthen ties with the United States and other influential foreign interests, Díaz allocated land, once belonging to the people of Mexico, to wealthy non-nationals. In addition to this, no Mexican was able to own land unless they had a formal legal title. Small farmers were rendered utterly helpless, there was no other option but an uprising.

The path of the Revolution certainly didn't run smoothly, and the country saw a string of unreliable presidents. Francisco Madero, who was responsible for removing Díaz from power, was a weak leader and failed to implement the land reforms he had promised. He was quickly replaced by General Victoriano Huerta who had him executed within a week of coming to power. Huerta himself was a dictator and was overthrown by Venustiano Carranza in 1914. While many accused Carranza of being power hungry he also lusted after peace. In the pursuit of civil rest he formed the Constitutional Army and a new constitution into which he accepted many of the rebel demands.

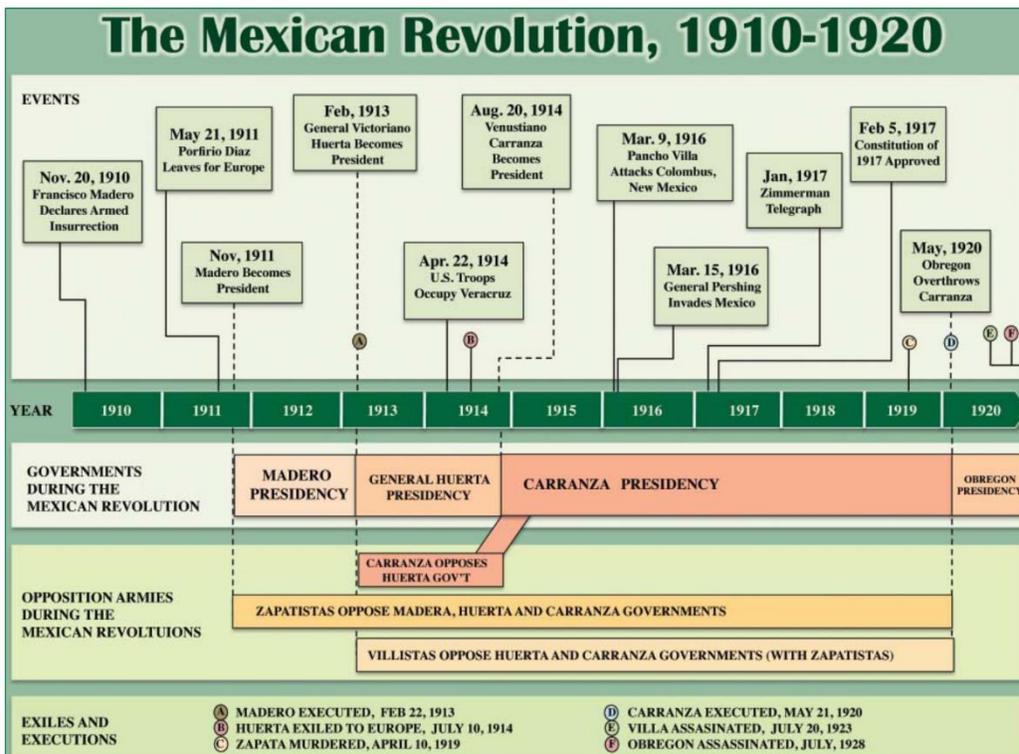
The official end of the Mexican Revolution is often taken to be the creation of the Constitution of Mexico in 1917, however the fighting continued long into the following decade. Ultimately while the Mexican Revolution was aimed at ensuring a fairer way of life for the farming classes, many argue it achieved little more than the frequent change of leadership in the country.

It was only in 1942 when the Mexican ex-presidents stood on the stage of the Mexico City Zocalo to show their support to Britain and America in the Second World War, that the citizens of Mexico saw their first glimmer of political solidarity and a country finally united.

CAUSES

1. General **Porfirio Díaz** ruled Mexico as a dictator in the late 1800s and early 1900s.
2. Díaz brought economic advances to Mexico.
3. Railroads were built and industry grew.
4. However, the wealth went to a small upper class as well as to foreign investors
5. The rule of Díaz, who brutally suppressed opposition, left most Mexicans uneducated, landless, and poor.
6. In 1910, the discontent boiled over into a revolution that forced Díaz from power.

<https://www.pbs.org/opb/historydetectives/feature/mexican-revolution/>



Russian Revolution

The Russian Revolution was like a firecracker with a very long fuse. The explosion came in 1917, yet the fuse had been burning for nearly a century. The cruel, oppressive rule of most 19th-century czars caused widespread social unrest for decades. When Nicholas II became czar in 1894, he continued the tradition of Russian autocracy.

Russia Industrializes

Rapid industrialization changed the face of the Russian economy. The number of factories more than doubled between 1863 and 1900. Rapid industrialization stirred discontent among the people of Russia. The growth of factories brought grueling working conditions, miserably low wages, and child labor. The government outlawed trade unions. Workers unhappy with their low standard of living and lack of political power organized strikes.

As a result of these factors, several revolutionary movements began to grow and compete for power. A group that followed the views of Karl Marx successfully established a following in Russia. The Marxist revolutionaries believed that the industrial class of workers would overthrow the czar. These workers would then form “a dictatorship of the proletariat.” This meant that the proletariat—the workers—would rule the country. The more radical Bolsheviks (BOHL•shuh•vihks), Russian Marxists supported those revolutionaries willing to sacrifice everything for change. The major leader of the Bolsheviks was Vladimir Ilyich Lenin. In the early 1900s, Lenin fled to western Europe to avoid arrest by the czarist regime. Lenin then waited until he could safely return to Russia.

Between 1904 and 1917, Russia faced a series of crises. These events showed the czar’s weakness and paved the way for revolution. In 1905, Russia lost the Russo-Japanese War. News of repeated Russian losses sparked unrest at home and led to a revolt, the Revolution of 1905. There were a wave of strikes and violence that spread across the country. In October 1905, Nicholas reluctantly promised more freedom. He approved the creation of the Duma—Russia’s first parliament. But because he was hesitant to share his power, the czar dissolved the Duma after ten weeks.

World War I: The Final Blow

In 1914, Nicholas II made the fateful decision to drag Russia into World War I. Russia was unprepared to handle the military and economic costs. Its weak generals and poorly equipped troops were no match for the German army. German machine guns mowed down advancing Russians by the thousands. Before a year had passed, more than 4 million Russian soldiers had been killed, wounded, or taken prisoner. In 1915, Nicholas moved his headquarters to the war front. From there, he hoped to rally his discouraged troops to victory. On the war front Russian soldiers mutinied, deserted, or ignored orders. On the home front, food and fuel supplies were dwindling. Prices were wildly inflated. People from all classes were clamoring for change and an end to the war.

The March Revolution

In March 1917, women textile workers in Petrograd led a citywide strike. In the next five days, riots flared up over shortages of bread and fuel. Nearly 200,000 workers swarmed the streets shouting, “Down with the autocracy!” and “Down with the war!” At first the soldiers obeyed orders to shoot the rioters but later sided with them. The local protest exploded into a general uprising—the March Revolution. It forced Czar Nicholas II to abdicate his throne. A year later revolutionaries executed Nicholas and his family. The March Revolution succeeded in bringing down the czar. Yet it failed to set up a strong government to replace his regime.

Leaders of the Duma established a provisional government, or temporary government, but it’s governing was weak. The Germans believed that Lenin and his Bolshevik supporters would stir unrest in Russia and hurt the Russian war effort against Germany. They arranged Lenin’s return to Russia after many years of exile. Traveling in a sealed railway boxcar, Lenin reached Petrograd in April 1917.

The Bolshevik Revolution

Lenin and the Bolsheviks soon gained control of the Petrograd soviet, as well as the soviets in other major Russian cities. By the fall of 1917, people in the cities were rallying to the call, “All power to the soviets.” Lenin’s slogan—“Peace, Land, and Bread”—gained widespread appeal. Lenin decided to take action. The Provisional Government Topples In November 1917, without warning, armed factory workers stormed the Winter Palace in Petrograd. Calling themselves the Bolshevik Red Guards, they took over government offices and arrested the leaders of the provisional government. Kerensky and his colleagues disappeared almost as quickly as the czarist regime they had replaced.

Within days after the Bolshevik takeover, Lenin ordered that all farmland be distributed among the peasants. Lenin and the Bolsheviks gave control of factories to the workers. The Bolshevik government also signed a truce with Germany to stop all fighting and began peace talks. In March 1918, Russia and Germany signed the Treaty of Brest-Litovsk. Russia surrendered a large part of its territory to Germany and its allies. The humiliating terms of this

treaty triggered widespread anger among many Russians. They objected to the Bolsheviks and their policies and to the murder of the royal family.

Civil War Rages in Russia

The Bolsheviks now faced a new challenge—stamping out their enemies at home. Their opponents formed the White Army. The White Army was made up of very different groups. There were those groups who supported the return to rule by the czar, others who wanted democratic government, and even socialists who opposed Lenin’s style of socialism. Only the desire to defeat the Bolsheviks united the White Army. The groups barely cooperated with each other. At one point there were three White Armies fighting against the Bolsheviks’ Red Army. The revolutionary leader, Leon Trotsky, expertly commanded the Bolshevik Red Army. From 1918 to 1920, civil war raged in Russia. Several Western nations, including the United States, sent military aid and forces to Russia to help the White Army. However, they were of little help. Russia’s civil war proved far more deadly than the earlier revolutions. Around 14 million Russians died in the three-year struggle and in the famine that followed. The destruction and loss of life from fighting, hunger, and a worldwide flu epidemic left Russia in chaos. In the end, the Red Army crushed all opposition. The victory showed that the Bolsheviks were able both to seize power and to maintain it.

Causes and Effects of Two Russian Revolutions		
Causes	Russian Revolutions of 1917	Effects
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Widespread discontent among all classes of Russian society • Agitation from revolutionaries • Weak leadership of Czar Nicholas II • Defeat in Russo-Japanese War (1905) • Bloody Sunday (1905) • Losses in World War I • Strikes and riots 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Abdication of Czar Nicholas • Failure of provisional government • Growing power of soviets • Lenin’s return to Russia • Bolshevik takeover under Lenin 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Civil war (1918–1920) • Czar and his family killed—end of czarist rule • Peace with Germany under Treaty of Brest-Litovsk (1918) • Bolshevik control of government • Russian economy in ruins



Chinese Revolution of 1911

In the Nineteenth Century, the Qing Empire faced a number of challenges to its rule, including a number of foreign incursions into Chinese territory. The two Opium Wars against Western powers led by Great Britain resulted in the loss of Hong Kong, forced opening of “treaty ports” for international trade, and large foreign “concessions” in major cities privileged with extraterritorial rule. After its loss in the Sino-Japanese War (1894–95), Imperial China was forced to relinquish control over still more of its territory, losing Taiwan and parts of Manchuria and ending its suzerainty over Korea. The Russo-Japanese War (1904–05) firmly established Japanese claims to the Northeast and further weakened Qing rule. The combination of increasing imperialist demands (from both Japan and the West), frustration with the foreign Manchu Government embodied by the Qing court, and the desire to see a unified China less parochial in outlook fed a growing nationalism that spurred on revolutionary ideas.

As Qing rule fell into decline, it made a few last-ditch efforts at constitutional reform. In 1905, the court abolished the examination system, which had limited political power to elites who passed elaborate exams on Chinese classics. Faced with increasing foreign challenges, it worked to modernize its military. With its central power weakening, the court also attempted a limited decentralization of power, creating elected assemblies and increasing provincial self-government. Although the Qing court maintained a degree of control within China in these years, millions of Chinese living overseas, especially in Southeast Asia and the Americas, began pressing for either widespread reform or outright revolution. Kang Youwei and Liang Qichao emerged as leaders of those proposing the creation of a constitutional monarchy. Sun Yat-sen led the amalgam of groups that together formed the Revolutionary Alliance. The Revolutionary Alliance advocated replacing Qing rule with a republican government; Sun himself was a nationalist with some socialist tendencies. Both the revolutionary leaders and the overseas Chinese bankrolling their efforts had their roots in southern China. The Revolutionary Alliance attempted seven or more different revolts against the Qing in the years leading up to the revolution, most of which originated in south China and all of which were ultimately stopped by the Qing army.

Finally, in the autumn of 1911, the right set of conditions turned an uprising in Wuchang into a nationalist revolt. As its losses mounted, the Qing court responded positively to a set of demands intended to transform authoritarian imperial rule into a Constitutional monarchy. They named Yuan Shikai the new premier of China, but before he was able to retake the captured areas from the revolutionaries, the provinces started to declare their allegiance to the Revolutionary Alliance. Dr. Sun was in the United States on a fundraising tour at the time of the initial revolt; he hastened first to London and Paris to ensure that neither country would give financial or military support to the Qing government in its struggle. By the time he returned to China, the revolutionaries had taken Nanjing, a former capital under the Ming Dynasty, and representatives from the provinces began to arrive for the first national assembly. Together, they elected Dr. Sun the provisional president of the newly declared Republic of China.

Sun Yat-sen telegraphed Yuan Shikai to promise that, should Yuan agree to the formation of a republic, the position of president would be his. With the military position of the Qing weakening and provisions made for the maintenance of the royal family at court, the emperor and the royal family abdicated the throne in February of 1912.

The 1911 revolution was only the first steps in a process that would require the 1949 revolution to complete. Though the new government created the Republic of China and established the seat of government in Nanjing, it failed to unify the country under its control. The Qing withdrawal led to a power vacuum in certain regions, resulting in the rise of warlords. These warlords often controlled their territories without acknowledging the nationalist government. Additionally, the reforms set in place by the new government were not nearly as sweeping as the revolutionary rhetoric had intended; unifying the country took precedent over fundamental changes.

International reaction to the revolution was guarded. Foreign nations with investments in China remained neutral throughout the upheaval, though they were anxious to protect the treaty rights they gained from the Qing through the first and second opium wars. Still, the United States was largely supportive of the republican project, and in 1913, the United States was among the first countries to establish full diplomatic relations with the new Republic. Britain, Japan, and Russia soon followed.

The Fall of China's Last Dynasty

