

CHAPTER  
**30**

## Section 1

**PRIMARY SOURCE** *from Bloody Sunday*  
by Father Gapon

*On January 22, 1905, a priest named Father Gapon led a peaceful march of about 200,000 workers and their families to the Winter Palace in St. Petersburg. The marchers wanted to ask Czar Nicholas II for better working conditions, more personal freedom, and an elected national legislature. As you read the following excerpt from Father Gapon's autobiography, think about what happened on Bloody Sunday.*

We were not more than thirty yards from the soldiers, being separated from them only by the bridge over the Tarakanovskii Canal, which here marks the border of the city, when suddenly, without any warning and without a moment's delay, was heard the dry crack of many rifle-shots. I was informed later on that a bugle was blown, but we could not hear it above the singing, and even if we had heard it we should not have known what it meant.

Vasiliev, with whom I was walking hand in hand, suddenly left hold of my arm and sank upon the snow. One of the workmen who carried the banners fell also. Immediately one of the two police officers to whom I had referred shouted out, 'What are you doing? How dare you fire upon the portrait of the Tsar?' This, of course, had no effect, and both he and the other officer were shot down—as I learned afterwards, one was killed and the other dangerously wounded.

I turned rapidly to the crowd and shouted to them to lie down, and I also stretched myself out upon the ground. As we lay thus another volley was fired, and another, and yet another, till it seemed as though the shooting was continuous. The crowd first kneeled and then lay flat down, hiding their heads from the rain of bullets, while the rear rows of the procession began to run away. The smoke of the fire lay before us like a thin cloud, and I felt it stiflingly in my throat. . . . A little boy of ten years, who was carrying a church lantern, fell pierced by a bullet, but still held the lantern tightly and tried to rise again, when another shot struck him down. Both the smiths who had guarded me were killed, as well as all those who were carrying the icons and banners; and all these emblems now lay scattered on the snow. The soldiers were actually shooting into the courtyards of the adjoining houses, where the crowd tried to find refuge and, as I learned

afterwards, bullets even struck persons inside, through the windows.

At last the firing ceased. I stood up with a few others who remained uninjured and looked down at the bodies that lay prostrate around me. I cried to them, 'Stand up!' But they lay still. I could not at first understand. Why did they lie there? I looked again, and saw that their arms were stretched out lifelessly, and I saw the scarlet stain of blood upon the snow. Then I understood. It was horrible. And my Vasiliev lay dead at my feet.

Horror crept into my heart. The thought flashed through my mind, 'And this is the work of our Little Father, the Tsar.' Perhaps this anger saved me, for now I knew in very truth that a new chapter was opened in the book of the history of our people. I stood up, and a little group of workmen gathered round me again. Looking backward, I saw that our line, though still stretching away into the distance, was broken and that many of the people were fleeing. It was in vain that I called to them, and in a moment I stood there, the centre of a few scores of men, trembling with indignation amid the broken ruins of our movement.

*from Father Gapon, The Story of My Life (1905). Reprinted in John Carey, ed., Eyewitness to History (New York: Avon, 1987), 417–418.*

## Discussion Questions

### Recognizing Facts and Details

1. When did the soldiers start firing on the marchers?
2. According to this excerpt, who were among the victims of the shooting?
3. **Perceiving Cause and Effect** Why do you think many Russians were outraged by this massacre? Use information from this excerpt as well as your textbook to support your opinion.

# Chapter 28

# Russia in Revolution

## THE PLIGHT OF THE RUSSIAN PEASANT

## ◆ Section I (pages 641–646)

The harsh conditions under which Russian peasants lived led to hundreds of small uprisings in the years preceding the revolution of 1917. Russian historian Pavel Nikolaevich Miliukov described those conditions during a tour of the United States in the early 1900's.

Prior to the emancipation of the peasants, forty years ago, economic life in Russia still preserved its medieval character. It was based on home production for home consumption—at least so far as peasant life was concerned. The outlay for food, lodging, clothing, fuel, and light—in short, for all the chief items of the family budget—was practically naught. A man paid nothing for his own hovel; he fed on the products of his own field and garden; he was amply supplied with homespun clothing. . . . Now, however, all this had changed. Wooden chips have given way to a kerosene smoker [lamp]; homespun linen has been superseded by calicoes, while woolen stuffs have disappeared without a substitute; fuel has become very scarce and expensive. Food—which consists of vegetable products alone—is insufficiently supplied; too often it has to be bought by the grain-producers themselves; . . .

Why have the conditions of life thus changed? In Russia you may sometimes hear the explanation, on the part of the former landlords, that it is because the Russian peasant has become lazy; that he is now a spendthrift, since nobody is there to take care of him. This is adduced as a reason why the peasant prefers factory products

to those of his own making. The fact is that the peasant now is too poor to utilize his and his family's work for himself; and, at the same time, he has no more raw material for his home industry. He can no longer have his clothes prepared by the women of his own family, because he has no more wool or linen to spare. His new expenses for the factory calico are certainly not inspired by any taste for fancy articles, but by mere necessity; and his purchases are generally cheap and of inferior quality. He can hardly be accused of lavishness on the ground that he has to buy some food in the market, since the fact is that on an average his yearly consumption is still below the necessary minimum. . . . To be sure, he will not be found buying meat, because on the average he eats meat only four times a year. . . .

If the Russian peasant has no time to work for himself; if he is fatally underfed and underclothed; if he needs money badly, it is, first and foremost, because he is compelled to perform his functions as a taxpayer. He does his best to pay his taxes; and if, in spite of all his exertions, he accumulated arrears upon arrears, it is not because he will not, but because he cannot, pay.

1. What were the economic conditions of Russian peasants before emancipation?

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2. How had conditions changed in the 40 years since emancipation?

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3. What, according to the author, is the foremost reason why peasants do not have the money they need to purchase goods?

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