Russian Revolution Of 1917 And The Role Of Kerensky

The early 1900s was a time of change for many nations around the world. The devastation of WW1 was apparent and people had started to take action because of it. Fascism was founded and was adopted by many other nations as a method of recovery from the devastation from WW1. Originating from Italy, fascism is a dictatorial form of government that forcibly suppresses any opposition against the regime. Many of the major nations of europe adopted this form of rule as it proved to be an effect and efficient method of recovery from the war. So at the time, fascism was everywhere and other nations could not just sit around and watch as neighboring nations were rebuilding their army and economy. Russia adopted similar practices called serfdom which had the same idea as fascism but had landlords hold power over serfs(essentially slaves). However, before the rise Vladamir Lenin and the Bolsheviks, there was Kernesky's Revolution of 1917. Kernesky's Revolution of 1917 was important in the formation of what Russia would later become. This research paper will provide a clear background of the Revolution of 1917 and show what led to the revolution as well as what happened during it and what historical importance it held in the 20th century.

Before we get into who Kernesky was or what he did, we first need to understand what was going on in Russia at the time. In an article called "Post-war Economy (Russian Empire), Anthony Heywood explains how Russia was at an all time low coming out of World War 1. Post-war Russia's economy was a product of the long and straining war effort. Eventually, of course, the huge strain would prove to be unbearable, with chronic fuel and food shortages in urban areas. The people of Russia have been living in harsh conditions since Russia's defeats in the Crimean War (1854-56), the Russo-Turkish War (1877-78), the Russo-Japanese War (1904-1905), and of course World War I (1914-18). On top of this, Russia industrialized rather late compared to Western Europe and the United States. When Russia had finally caught up around the end of the 19th century and the beginning of the 20th, it brought with it political and social changes. For example, the population in major cities like Moscow and St. Petersburg nearly doubled in just about 30 years. This would lead to overpopulation and harsh living conditions for the Russian people. This sudden increase in population combined with the already cold and harsh living conditions Russia had also eventually contributed to a buildup of social unrest in Russia. As a result, large protests by angry Russian workers against the monarchy led to a massacre by the czar's troops in 1905 which would later be known as Bloody Sunday. On that day, hundreds of unarmed Russian workers were either killed or wounded. Angry workers responded to the massacre with crippling strikes across Russia further escalation tensions and distress which would ultimately lead to the fall of the Roman empire. This cycle of protest and failure of the czar to respond accordingly led to the fall of the Romanov family. Czar Nicholas II and his family were executed by the Bolsheviks, bringing and end to the three-century-old Romanov dynasty.

This brings us to the rise of the Provisional Government and Alexander Fyodorovich Kerensky. The fall of the Czar let the Provisional Government become the dominant form of government for about 8 months starting in February until Vladamir Lenin and the Bolsheviks' in the following October. Kerensky was appointed Minister-President, Minister of Justice and Minister of War and Navy of the Socialist-Revolutionary Party in March of 1917. Of all the appointed members of the Provisional Government, Kerensky was the only socialist to join the first cabinet and come

straight from the Provisional Committee of the State Duma. He was also elected vice-chairman of the Petrograd Soviet, which represented the city's workers and soldiers and by July, eventually became the Prime Minister. Kerensky's intuitive knowledge of the appropriate action to take in the early days of the Revolution was unmatched by the other leading political figures of the time. For example, in March of 1917, when the former Tsarist ministers were seized and escorted to the Winter Palace, Kerensky stepped forward and declared them "Prisoners of the revolution". He also issued the arrest of Vladimir Sukhomlinov, the Minister of War who, for a long time, was a symbol of power and corruption during the Czar's reign. This was something other revolutionaries lacked the courage to do. The Provisional government, led by Kerensky, started to introduce reforms such as instituting universal suffrage and freedom of speech, assembly, press and religion, and addressing the demands of the many national minorities who were the majority of the Russian population. These all seemed to be the answer to all the problems but all of this did nothing to solve what the people wanted most: land for peasants, peace and food. Kerensky had good intentions and strived for peace and did good work in that regard. He was charismatic and influential and was able to continue Russia's war effort. However, this action meant that more money will be spent on the manufacturing of weapons rather than bread to eat. Thus, protests continued and Kerensky's final desperate attempt at war ended in failure. The majority of the Russian population who suffered under the rule of the provisional government started would eventually rally up under one of Russia's greatest and well-known revolutionaries, Vlagamir Lenin, who would lead the Bolsheviks through the October Revolution and the Russian Civil War. They would go on to win the russian Civil War and establish the Solviet Union in 1922. Kerensky was pushed out of power and later exiled after an attempt to regain his power.

Now that we know who Kerensky was and what he did in the Russian Revolution of 1917, the question arises: What importance does it have in history? First, Kerensky was the only link between the Provisional Government and the Soviets. Before coming into power, he was a lawyer and worked for a small TrudovikLabor) party, which was affiliated with the Socialist Revolutionary Party. He was well known to the public to be an enemy of Tsarism and even defended other revolutionaries in many trials. He was clearly a man of the people and wanted to change Russia for the better. Second, if Kerensky succeeded in his attempt at the war effort, he would have been able to answer the needs of the people which would rid of any reason for the Revolution in October. This would have meant less bloodshed and more chances for unity in Russia. New-York-times writer, John Quiggin, in his article called "The February Revolution and Kerensky's Missed Opportunity" says

"We cannot tell whether a positive response from Kerensky to the Reichstag peace initiative would have achieved anything. But it is hard to imagine an outcome worse than the one that actually took place. The years of pointless bloodshed that brought Russia two revolutions turned out to be merely a foretaste of the decades of totalitarianism and total war to come. Kerensky's failure was one of the great missed opportunities of history."

Here, John points out that if Kernesk stayed in power and succeeded in his plan, Russia would not have suffered as much as it actually did. Thirdly and lastly, although Kerensky failed to bring Russia to victory as Vladamir Lenin did, he still played a major supporting role in Russia's overall success. At his time of power, when Kerensky was doing everything he could to build up an army strong enough for the war effort, he resorted to giving guns to jobless workers and farmers and make them soldiers. At the same time, Lenin was gathering people for his Revolution in October. When they realized that Kerensky was leading them to defeat, those

jobless workers and farmers decided to support Lenin’s cause. In a way, Kerensky indirectly set up a revolution for Lenin to lead. All in all, Kerensky’s revolution played a major supporting role in the success of the following Revolution which would become the one that succeeds in satisfying the needs of the Russian people.

In conclusion, Kerensky’s Revolution of 1917 was essential for the outcome of what Russia is today. He was a key figure in the Russian Provisional Government and one of the first Russian revolutionaries to bring Russia away from tyranny. His revolution served as a stepping stone for Vladamir Lenin’s Revolution which pushed Russia into becoming what it is today. Kerensky might have failed in the war effort and was only in power for a couple of months, but his Revolution in 1917 was important nonetheless.