Czar was still seen as the protective father figure of the Empire. This ended in tragedy, however, as royalist guards opened fire on the marchers, killing over 100 while the Czar was not even there.[1]

For the Russian people, this was unacceptable. They had been stuck in poverty and repression while much of the rest of Europe was rapidly becoming modernized and democratic. The backwardness of Russia was compounded by the Czar's unwillingness to embrace liberal reforms like other parts of Europe or the United States. After the massacre, however, the Czar didn't have a much of a choice. The Russian people rose up in a general strike, in what became known as the Revolution of 1905, forcing the Czar to sign the October Manifesto, a document that granted full civil liberties and promised the creation of a State Legislature known as the Duma.[2]

Unfortunately for the Russian people, this victory was short-lived and shallow. Although the legislature was created as a representative body for the Russians the Czar ultimately retained veto power over any legislation they approved, negating any power the Duma gave to the people. Finally, while the creation of the Duma gave voting rights to at least a segment of the population, voting requirements became steadily more restrictive following the first election, resulting in a legislature more representative of the landed aristocrats than the Russian people as a whole. For many Russians, these actions caused bitter resentment towards the Czar at a time when the memory of the Bloody Sunday massacre was still a fresh wound. In the minds of the Russian people, the Czar had quickly evolved from a protective figure to a bloody tyrant eager to use force to repress any dissent.[3]

It was in the midst of the furor over the voter restrictions and the wake of the 1905 Revolution that a small, localized incident in Sarajevo in 1914 escalated into the greatest conflict the world had yet seen. The assassination of Archduke Franz Ferdinand brought Russia into a system of alliances that was intended to prevent a general war,

1. Steinberg, John W., Bruce W. Menning, David S. Van Der Oye, David Wolff, and Shinji Yokote. *Russo-Japanese War in Global Perspective: World War Zero*. (Leiden, Netherlands: Brill Academic Publishers, 2005), 132.

2. Wood, Alan. *The Origins of the Russian Revolution, 1861-1917*. (Florence, KY: Rout ledge, 1993), 32.

3. Conroy, Mary S. *Emerging democracy in late Imperial Russia: case studies on local self-government (the Zemstvos), State Duma elections, the Tsarist government, and the State Council before and during World War I*. (N.p.: University Press of Colorado, 1998), 13-14

but did nothing more than force nearly all European nations to take up arms in defense of one another. Russia pledged to aid Serbia in the event of a war, while Germany had pledged to aid Austria-Hungary if they were attacked. This was further complicated by Britain and France, who had promised to step in against Germany if war were to commence, and the Ottoman Empire, who declared their support for Germany and Austria-Hungary. This complex series of alliances was a major factor in the escalation of the Balkan crisis into worldwide conflagration, instead of merely a small regional war.

This world-wide (and poorly-executed war) came at a steep price for the Russian people, a price that was not strictly confined to the ranks of the military. Millions of deaths in the First World War, rampant inflation, and leadership that was completely uninspiring, all combined to create dissatisfaction that turned into dissent, which quickly turned into turmoil.

Out of this turmoil arose a worker's council known as a soviet. A soviet was a unit of organization that would later form the basis of the Soviet Union's hierarchical structure, with local soviets electing regional soviets, regional soviets electing provincial soviets, and provincial soviets electing the All-Russian Congress of Soviets. These Soviets were made up of representatives from labor organizations and individual factories, which were intended to be non-political entities that gave Russian workers more control over their situation.[4]

The vision failed to match reality, as many of the soviets quickly became politicized in the growing turmoil and unrest against the Czar. The soviets were mostly split between two large factions that arose out of the turmoil of the Second Party Congress of the Russian Social Democratic Labor Party: the Bolsheviks and the Mensheviks. It was at this party congress in 1903 that Vladimir Lenin broke with Julius Martov, eventual leader of the Menshevik party, over a difference in ideology. Lenin and his Bolsheviks advocated an immediate violent uprising to overthrow the government and establish a purely communist state, whereas the Mensheviks recalled Marx's theory that "such a revolution could take place only in a highly developed capitalist society."[5]

4. Ross, E. A., and Selig Perlman. "Soviet Government in Russia." *The American Political Science Review* 14:2 (May 1920): 317-318

5. Brovkin, Vladimir N. *The Mensheviks After October: Socialist Opposition and the Rise of the Bolshevik Dictatorship*. (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1991), 1-2.