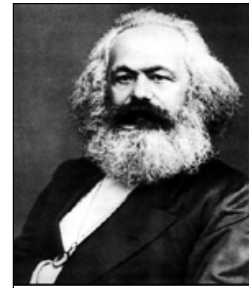


THE RUSSIAN REVOLUTION

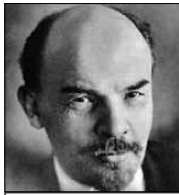
The revolution in Animal Farm has a lot in common with the real-life Russian Revolution. Here is a quick introduction to that revolution. It will help you understand a little of what Orwell refers to in the book.

In the mid 1800s, the capitalist system was strong in Europe and America, but the profits of businesses came at the expense of workers who laboured 14 to 18 hours a day in unsafe conditions. There were no child labour laws, and wages were barely livable for the common worker. In 1847, an international workers' group asked **Karl Marx**, a German philosopher, to draw up a plan for their organisation. The group was called the **Communist League**. Marx wrote a plan called *The Manifesto of the Communist Party*.



Karl Marx

Marx envisioned a workers' revolt followed by a kind of paradise where each person would work according to his or her ability and receive money according to his or her need. Marx saw the final stage of his Communist system being total worldwide economic equality. About this time, labour laws were passed in Western Europe and America that made the workplace safer and more tolerable for workers. The worldwide revolution that Marx foresaw never came to pass.



Lenin

The people that followed Marx's thinking were called **Socialists**. The Socialists split into two groups. The milder group wanted to bring about **Communism** slowly by passing new laws. The other group (we'll call them Communists) stuck to Marx's original idea of a major worker revolt. The Communists were a small extremist group compared to the total number of Socialists. They formed a political party called the **Bolshevik Party**, which was led by a man named **Vladimir Lenin**.

Russia at this time was being poorly managed by a Czarist government, ruled by Czar Nicholas II. Most of the Russian people were still underpaid workers on land owned by a small number of wealthy landlords.

Beginnings of the Russian Revolution

By 1917, the suffering was too great and groups of people began a revolution. The Bolshevik Party, led by Vladimir Lenin, took a role in leading this revolution. Czar Nicholas II was forced to leave power, and later he and his family were executed. The Bolshevik Party under Lenin took control of the government. From 1918 to 1921 other countries that did not want Communism to spread invaded Russia. However, the Communists were successful, and they changed the name of the country from Russia to the Soviet Union. They often called each other "comrade" which means someone who is a friend and equal.



An early Soviet propaganda poster