Along the Eastern Front, Russia was in a constant state of retreat against Germany throughout most of the War. Additionally, Russia also began suffering losses against Austria-Hungary as German troops began to support their ally to the south. With Russia experiencing economic and political troubles, its government sought to end its involvement in World War I.

The Treaty of Brest-Litovsk was a peace treaty that ended Russia's participation in the War. It was signed on March 3, 1918 between Russia's new government, now referred to as Soviet Russia, and the Central Powers of Germany, Austria-Hungary, Bulgaria, and the Ottoman Empire. The treaty was agreed upon by the new Bolshevik government to stop further advances by German and Austro-Hungarian troops. During negotiations, each time the Russia delegates attempted to gain some advantage against the German representatives, German troops were ordered to once again advance into Russian territory. This forced the hand of Russian negotiators to accept the treaty.

In the treaty, Soviet Russia ceded (gave up) the Baltic States to Germany; they were meant to become German territory under the authority of German princes. Russia also ceded its province of Kars Oblast in the South Caucasus region to the Ottoman Empire and recognized the independence of Ukraine north of the Black Sea. As the German government continued to formulate extraordinarily harsh terms of the treaty, the German negotiator was shocked by the demands of his own country. In addition to the territorial losses, Russia was also ordered to pay Germany six billion marks as compensation for the losses by Germany during the War. All total, Russia lost territory that included 34% of its population, 54% of its industrialized land, 89% of its coal mines, and 26% of its railways.