REINVENTING RUSSIA

THE REVOLUTIONARY EXPERIENCE

LAUREN PERFECT
TOM RYAN
SCOTT SWEENEY

HTAV SENIOR HISTORY

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First published 2016 by:

HTAV PUBLISHING

History Teachers' Association of Victoria
Suite 105
134–136 Cambridge Street
Collingwood VIC 3066
Australia

Phone 03 9417 3422
Fax 03 9419 4713
Web www.htav.asn.au

Reinventing Russia: The Revolutionary Experience
by Lauren Perfect, Tom Ryan and Scott Sweeney

ISBN – 9780980831559

Publisher and Series Editor: Ingrid Purnell
Project Editor: Shivaun Plozza
Typesetters: Michelle Allan and Shivaun Plozza

Series design by: Kim Ferguson
www.kimferguson.com.au

Printed by: Print Impressions
www.printimpressions.com.au

Cover image: Detail of 'Worker and Kolkhoz Woman' by Vera Mukhina. © Charles and Josette Lenars/CORBIS

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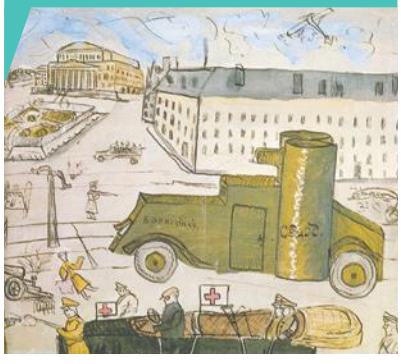

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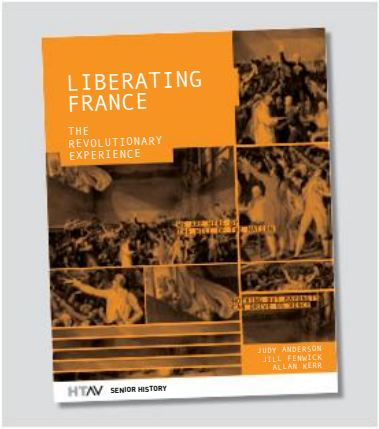
The Revolutionary Experience



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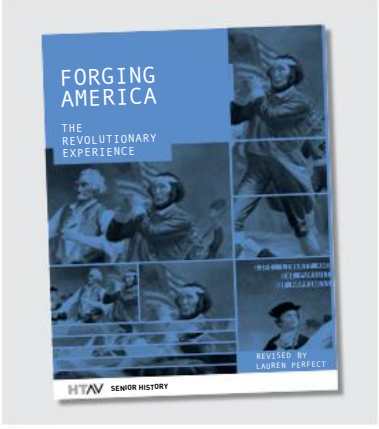
The Revolutionary Experience

3 Reinventing Russia:
The Revolutionary Experience



4 Forging America:
The Revolutionary Experience

FOREWORD

Russia in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries was one of the most creative contributors to European culture.

Russia was governed autocratically by a tsar who was backed by a serf-owning gentry and ranked noble-officials. Guided by the spiritual values of Orthodox monks and by the political values of 'enlightened despotism,' Russia's tsars maintained a mighty army and empire.

Then Russia faltered. Victory over Napoleon in 1812–13 endowed official Russia with too much self-esteem. (It happened again after 1945.) The Crimean War (1853–56) exposed Russia's weaknesses. Russia's ruling ideas, economy and society failed to evolve. Alexander I (reigning 1800–25) and Nicholas I (r. 1825–55) liked to pretend the French Revolution had never happened, disdaining the socialisms of 1798 and 1848 as much as the liberalism of 1789, let alone the republican terror of 1793–94.

Reaction was in vogue. Russia had no citizens, only subjects; official Russia celebrated this fact. For much of the time there was no national parliament in Russia, no free press, no way to form a trade union and no elections except those for local councils.[1] Alexander III (r. 1881–94) and Nicholas II (r. 1894–1917) charted this reactionary course; conservatives elsewhere, like Bismarck in Germany, had learned how to channel democracy by restricting people power.

Alexander III and Nicholas II thought theirs was the honourable policy, the truly Russian thing to do. They had followed the one tsar who had decided to emancipate the serfs and begin a path towards limited rights and elections: Alexander II, who reigned from 1855 until he was assassinated by socialist terrorists in 1881. Alexander III and Nicholas II resolved to modernise the army and the economy without following the democratic politics which had emerged in Britain and France; they became so confident in their firm hand they were even prepared to change Russia's traditional foreign policy, ditching alliances with Habsburg and Hohenzollern autocrats in favour of joining in with democratic France and Britain. One reason for this was Russia's hope for an empire in the Balkans.

But most people in Russia saw things differently. Traditional religious values no longer formed the basis of political aspirations. Almost everybody wanted a parliament. Most peasants wanted to own whatever village lands their landlords retained. Educated people blamed the autocracy for Russia's backwardness. Working and housing conditions in Russian cities were the worst in Europe.

1 These institutions did exist for limited periods: national parliament (1905–15, 1918); free press (1905–06, 1917); trade unions (1905–06, 1917–18); elections (1864–1905, 1917–18).

Educated people could only see a political system stuck in the patriotic and servile values of 1812: orthodoxy, autocracy and 'national feeling' (imperial patriotism).

Russia's revolutions were engendered by this mismatch of popular hopes for democracy with the rulers' faith in order and tradition. An impassioned literature for freedom and human fulfilment emerged, one of the glories of Europe's culture – Tolstoy, Turgenev, Dostoevsky and Chekhov passed a torch on to Gorky, Bulgakov, Mandelstam, Babel and Pasternak. Russia's educated people wanted to assert – following France's example – the sovereignty of the people. But the new order most of these educated people imagined far exceeded France's liberalism of 1789 – Russia's liberties now had to be free and equal in law and rights. Most radical Russians thought their new society should be Socialist – free and equal in property as well as rights. They also knew that the obstinacy of their tsars would mean freedom and equality would have to be won by revolutionary force.

A dazzling new revolutionary politics of hope and dedication emerged in the very Russia which once seemed Europe's most stable and conservative state. Russia's revolutions made everyone in Europe take notice.

It is now your turn to take notice. This book helps you clarify where you stand politically and ethically. It investigates how Russia was re-conceptualised by the Bolsheviks and other revolutionaries in the early part of the twentieth century. Be sure to debate the human, rhetorical, economic and political dilemmas raised by the revolutions with your fellow students, and to note the continuities and changes of this tumultuous period. Read on!

Dr Adrian Jones OAM

Associate Professor, Department of Archaeology and History, La Trobe University

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Lauren's acknowledgements: Thank you to my two beautiful children, Alexandra and William for their unconditional love and to my wonderful husband, Matt for his unending support. Thank you also to Scott and Tom; as always, they have been a pleasure to work with.

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Tom is Head of Humanities at Woodleigh School and writer of *China Rising*. He regularly presents lectures and online tutorials on senior Revolutions.

Tom's acknowledgements: Thank you to my wife Simmone, whose love, support and patience was much appreciated through the many weekends and 'holidays' I've spent writing this book. Thanks also to the dedicated young comrades of my Year 12 History Revolutions classes of 2008–15 who trialled activities, asked insightful questions and gave valued feedback to help make my telling of Russia's complicated revolutionary 'story' more accessible. Finally, thanks to Lauren and Scott with whom it was a pleasure to collaborate once again.

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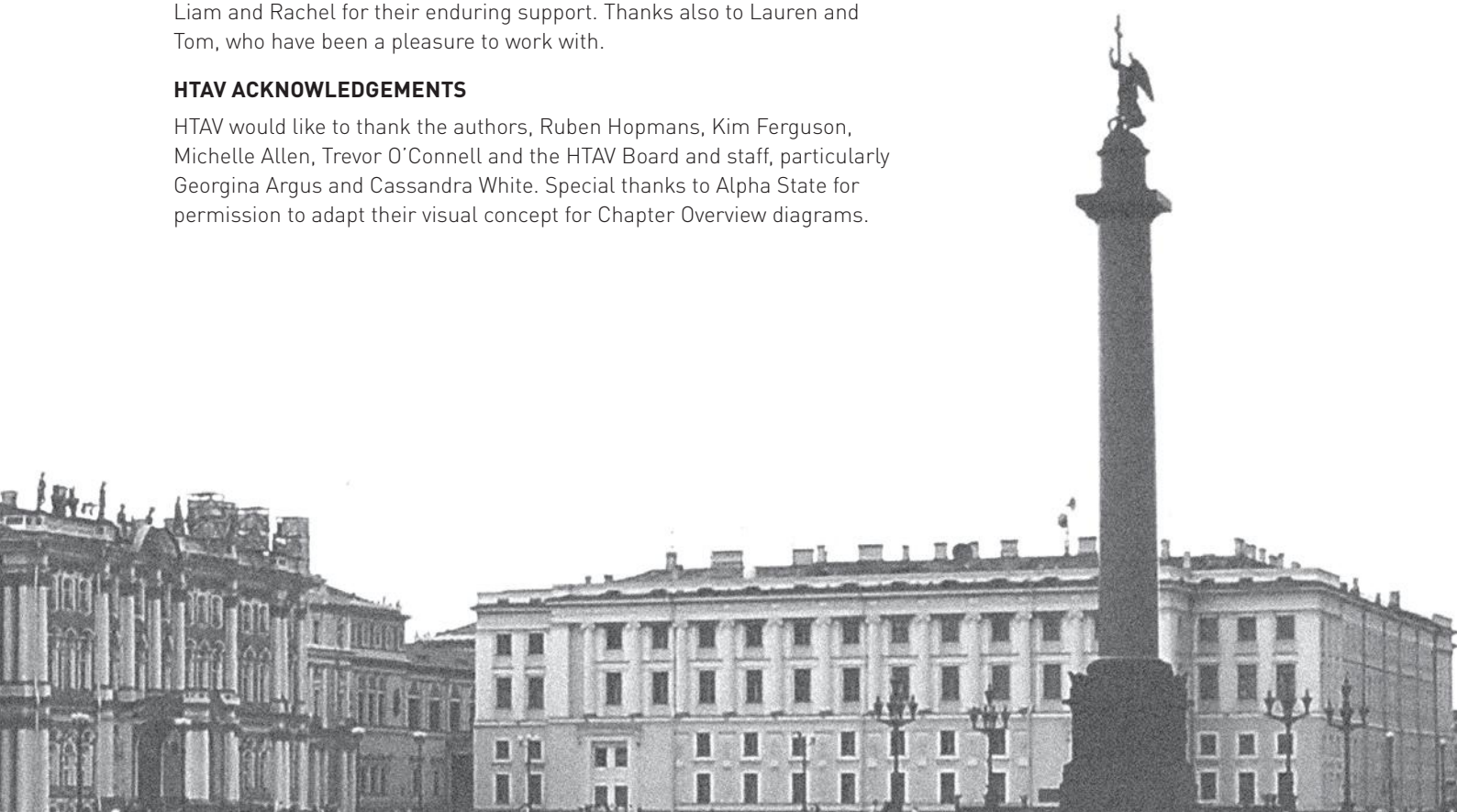
Scott's acknowledgments: Thanks to my wonderful family: Avery, Aidan, Liam and Rachel for their enduring support. Thanks also to Lauren and Tom, who have been a pleasure to work with.

HTAV ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

HTAV would like to thank the authors, Ruben Hopmans, Kim Ferguson, Michelle Allen, Trevor O'Connell and the HTAV Board and staff, particularly Georgina Argus and Cassandra White. Special thanks to Alpha State for permission to adapt their visual concept for Chapter Overview diagrams.



HISTORICAL THINKING

A WORD ABOUT DATES

Until 1918 Russia used the Julian calendar, which was thirteen days behind the Gregorian calendar. The latter was used elsewhere in the world and remains the international calendar today. The Bolshevik government adopted the Gregorian calendar in February 1918. In this book we have used the dates that applied in Russia at the time of the event. Thus, the 'October Revolution' is listed as such, even though it occurred in November according to the rest of the world. Dates after February 1918 are all according to the Gregorian calendar.

The study of Revolutions at the senior level is guided by historical thinking concepts developed by Seixas, van Drie and van Boxtel, Levesque and others.

Historical knowledge comprises both **substantive knowledge**, which refers to historical content or subject matter (i.e. what happened in the past?) and **procedural knowledge**, which refers to the process or skills involved in understanding that subject matter (i.e. what do the sources of evidence say and what should I conclude from them?). Together, substantive and procedural knowledge give students the depth of understanding required to excel in history.

Historical inquiry begins with **historical questions**. Students ask and are asked substantial questions about people and events from the past, including their **significance** and contribution to what came later. Students assess **continuity and change** and the different types of change that occurred. They examine the relationship between **cause and consequence** and consider the **ethical dimensions** of history. As they do this, students should be aware that they bring a twenty-first-century perspective to their studies and that their values and beliefs are not necessarily the same as those who lived in the past.

The key part of historical thinking and practice is **analysing sources** – primary and secondary – to reach conclusions and **construct arguments**. Generally speaking, primary sources indicate the **historical perspectives** or viewpoints of people at the time, while secondary sources indicate the **historical interpretations** of historians or commentators who are looking back at past events.

Historical perspectives are a reminder that people rarely share the same experience or opinions at a given point in history, while historical interpretations show how historians have different views on the importance or meaning of past events. Understanding these contrasting experiences and viewpoints is an important part of appreciating the complexity and contestability of history – one should approach the evidence with an open mind and 'listen' to what a source is communicating before forming a conclusion.

In this book we have included many activities designed to develop and enhance students' substantive and procedural knowledge in history. But above all, we hope students will get swept up by the story of the Russian Revolution, as it is story-telling that lies at the heart of history.

MORE ON HISTORICAL THINKING SKILLS

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

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CAUSES OF THE REVOLUTION

SECTION A

What were the significant causes of revolution?

How did the actions of key individuals and movements trigger the revolution?

How did social tensions and ideological conflicts contribute to the outbreak of revolution?

1896–October 1917

CHAPTER

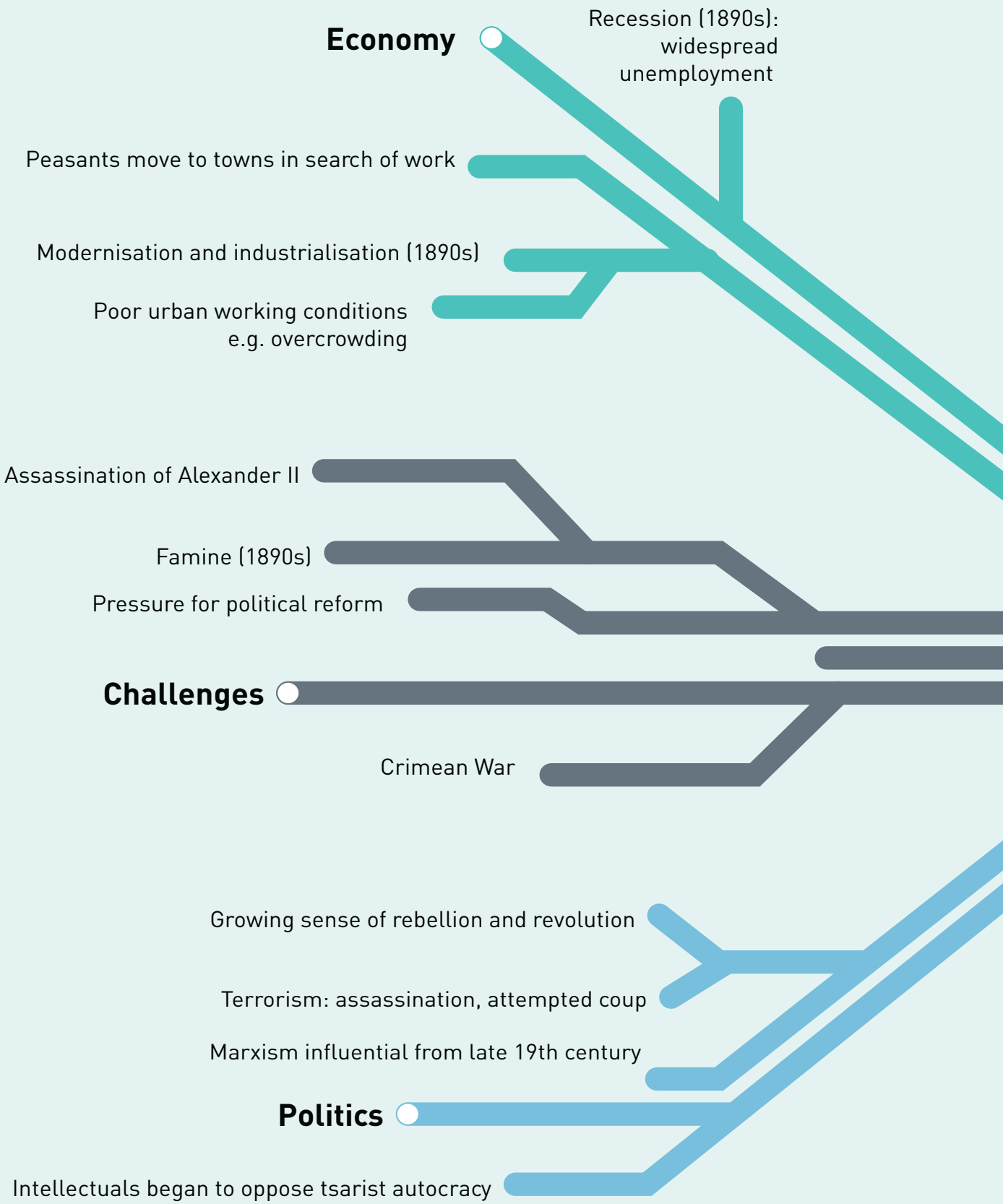
1

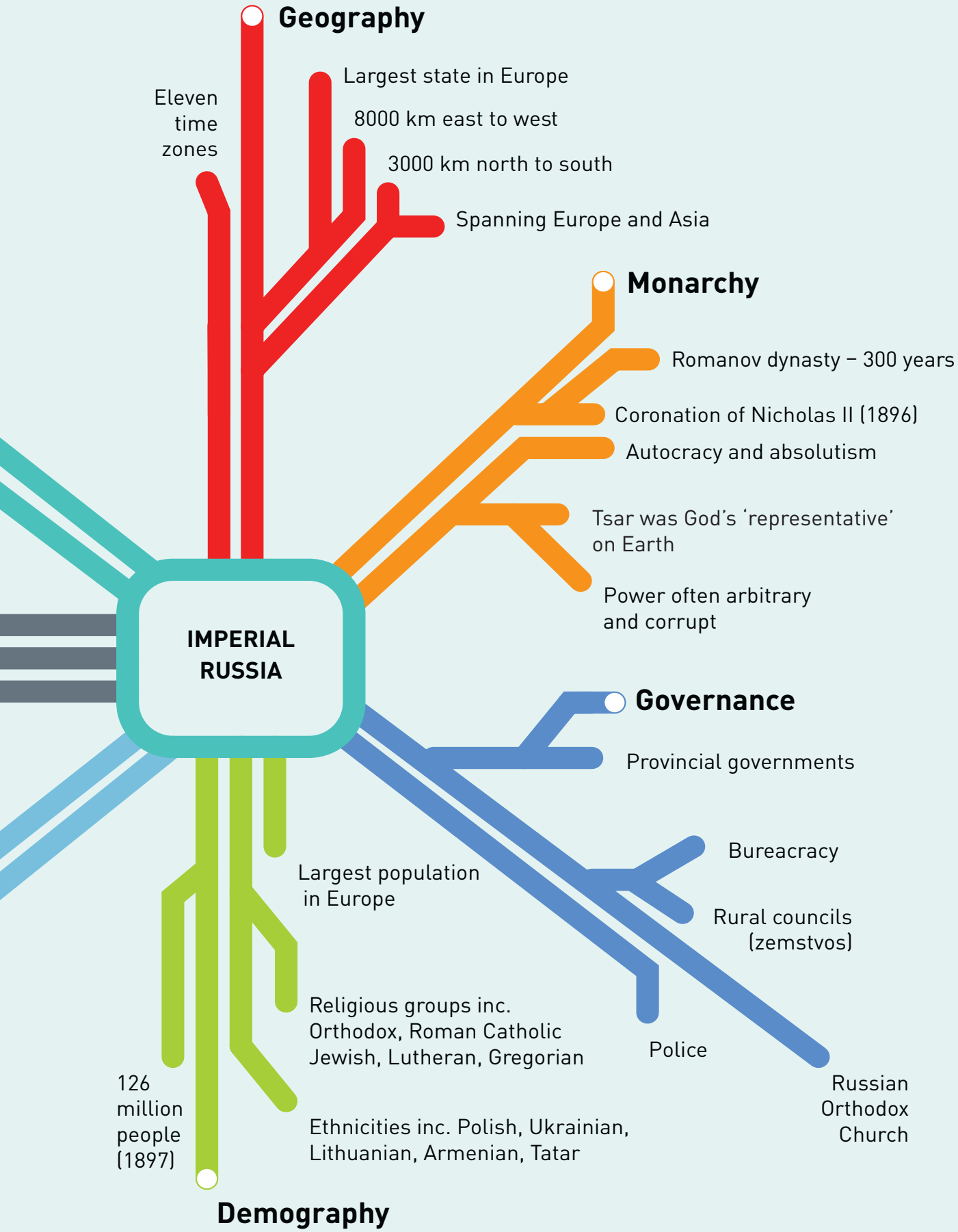
INTRODUCING RUSSIA

(PRE-1904)

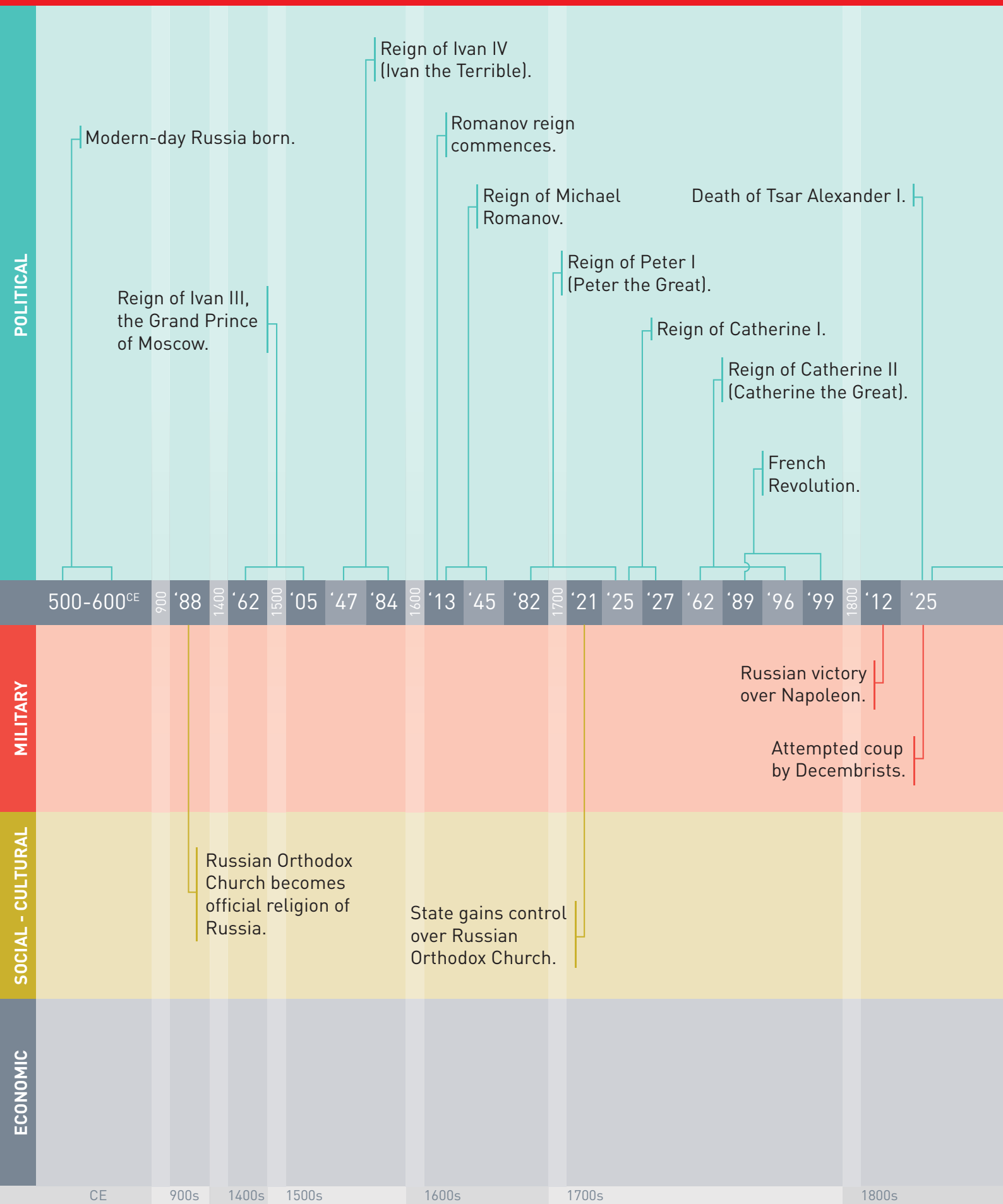
LAUREN PERFECT

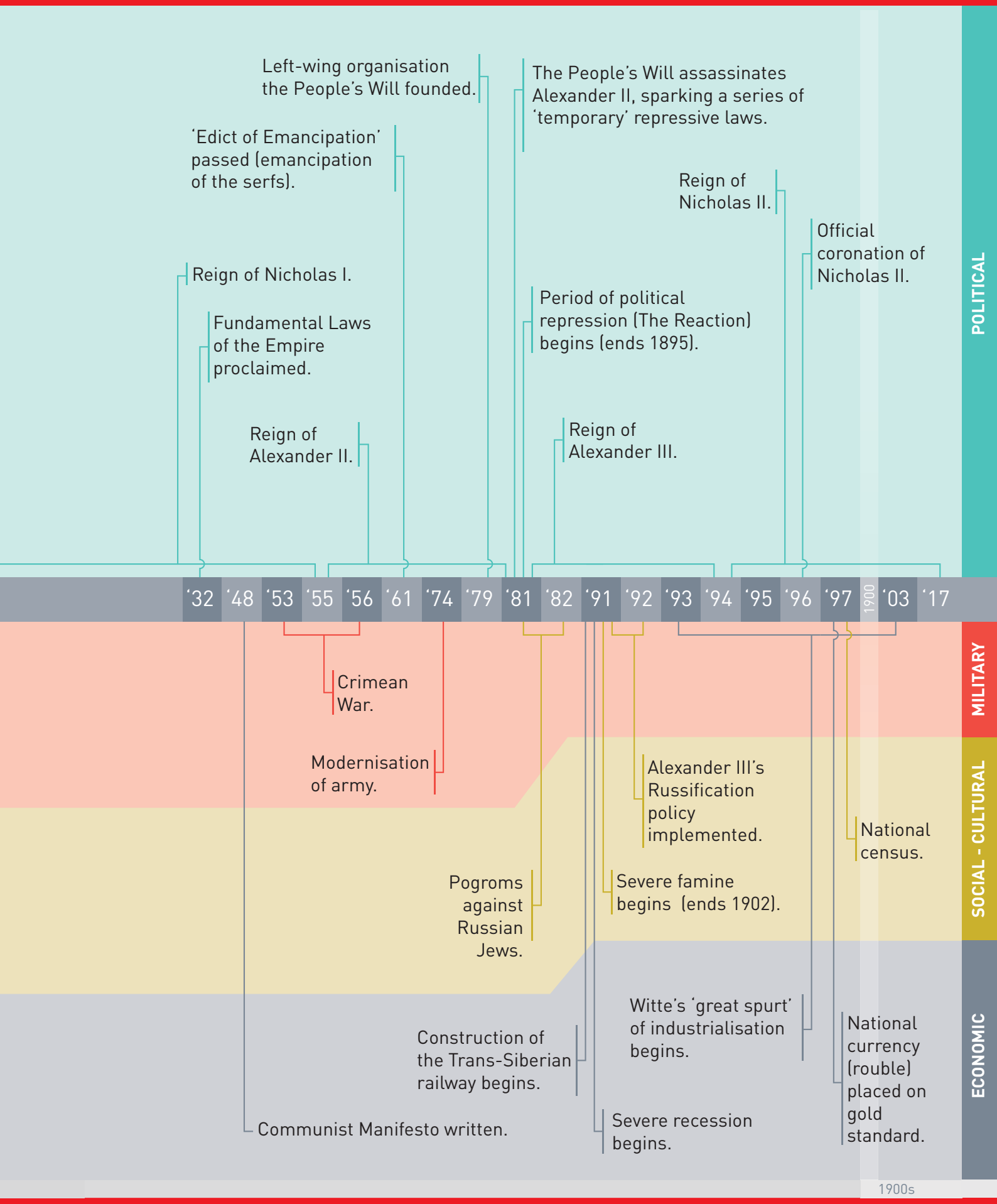
CHAPTER OVERVIEW




Geography
Largest state in Europe
8000 km east to west
3000 km north to south
Spanning Europe and Asia
Eleven time zones
Monarchy
Romanov dynasty – 300 years
Coronation of Nicholas II (1896)
Autocracy and absolutism
Tsar was God's 'representative' on Earth
Power often arbitrary and corrupt
IMPERIAL RUSSIA
Governance
Provincial governments
Bureacracy
Rural councils (zemstvos)
Police
Russian Orthodox Church
Largest population in Europe
Religious groups inc. Orthodox, Roman Catholic Jewish, Lutheran, Gregorian
Ethnicities inc. Polish, Ukrainian, Lithuanian, Armenian, Tatar
126 million people (1897)
Demography

TIMELINE


POLITICAL
Modern-day Russia born.
Reign of Ivan III, the Grand Prince of Moscow.
Reign of Ivan IV (Ivan the Terrible).
Romanov reign commences.
Reign of Michael Romanov.
Reign of Peter I (Peter the Great).
Reign of Catherine I.
Reign of Catherine II (Catherine the Great).
French Revolution.
Death of Tsar Alexander I.
500-600CE
900
'88
1400
'62
1500
'05
'47
'84
1600
'13
'45
'82
1700
'21
'25
'27
'62
'89
'96
'99
1800
'12
'25
MILITARY
Russian victory over Napoleon.
Attempted coup by Decembrists.
SOCIAL - CULTURAL
Russian Orthodox Church becomes official religion of Russia.
State gains control over Russian Orthodox Church.
ECONOMIC
CE
900s
1400s
1500s
1600s
1700s
1800s


POLITICAL
Left-wing organisation the People's Will founded.
The People's Will assassinates Alexander II, sparking a series of 'temporary' repressive laws.
'Edict of Emancipation' passed (emancipation of the serfs).
Reign of Nicholas II.
Official coronation of Nicholas II.
Reign of Nicholas I.
Fundamental Laws of the Empire proclaimed.
Period of political repression (The Reaction) begins (ends 1895).
Reign of Alexander II.
Reign of Alexander III.
'32 '48 '53 '55 '56 '61 '74 '79 '81 '82 '91 '92 '93 '94 '95 '96 '97 1900 '03 '17
MILITARY
Crimean War.
Modernisation of army.
SOCIAL - CULTURAL
Alexander III's Russification policy implemented.
National census.
Pogroms against Russian Jews.
Severe famine begins (ends 1902).
ECONOMIC
Witte's 'great spurt' of industrialisation begins.
Construction of the Trans-Siberian railway begins.
National currency (rouble) placed on gold standard.
Communist Manifesto written.
Severe recession begins.
1900s


IMPERIAL RUSSIA 1721-1917
11:00
12:00
1:00
2:00
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4:00
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6:00
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9:00
10:00
11:00
12.:00
England
North Sea
Norway
Barents Sea
Arctic Ocean
France
Germany
Sweden
Finland
Laptev Sea
Bering Sea
Berlin
Baltic Sea
Murmansk
Kara Sea
Kronstadt
Petrograd
Archangel
Vienna
Warsaw
Brest-Litovsk
Novgorod
Austria-Hungrary
Minsk
Smolensk
Arctic Circle
Poland
Mogilev
Volga River
Moscow
Kiev
Romania
Bulgaria
Ukraine
Nizhni Novgorod
Timezone 2:00
Timezone 3:00
Odessa
Tambov
Ural Mountains
Kazan
Crimea
Kharkov
Siberia
Sea of Okhotsk
Constantinople
Baltic Sea
Saratov
Samara
Tobolsk
Sevastopol
Yekaterinburg
Rostov -on-Don
Tsaritsyn
Black Sea
Timezone 4:00
Trans-Siberian Railway
Omsk
Timezone 8:00
Turkey
Caucasus Mtns
Lake Baikal
Khabarovsk
Batumi
Timezone 6:00
Mediterranean Sea
Caspian Sea
Irkutsk
Chita
Tiflis
Ottoman Empire
Ulan Ude
Harbin
Baku
Mongolia
Manchuria
Vladivostok
Krasnovodsk
China
Japan
Timezone 9:00
Timezone 8:00
Sea of Japan
KEY
Timezone
Trans-Siberian Railway
Cities
0
500
km
Afghanistan
Port Arthur

INTRODUCTION

Monument to Peter the Great, St Petersburg.

The seeds of the Russian Revolution were planted well before 1917. The bloody events of that year were an extreme response to several centuries of inequality in Russia. The desperate measures adopted by the Bolsheviks emerged in the context of an era of violence on the international scene during the early twentieth century. In this sense they were influenced by wider political movements. But such radical methods would not have been embraced if there had not been widespread anger and discontent within Russian society over 300 years and more of autocratic rule.

The Russian Empire was proclaimed in 1721 by Peter I, also known as Peter the Great. It was an extraordinarily varied state in every respect. Physically the largest state in Europe, Russia covered diverse geographical terrain and as a result experienced extreme climate variations. The population of Imperial Russia was the largest in Europe, spanning many different nationalities and language groups. Often tensions existed between rival nationalist groups, regularly leading to hostilities. Interestingly, however, a certain level of diversity and independence was tolerated among different ethnic groups as long as they conformed to the tsar's laws.

Imperial Russia was characterised by dynastic rule by the Romanov family, the prominence of the Russian Orthodox Church and a hierarchical social structure, most clearly seen in the system of serfdom. Royalty depended on the support of provincial governments, the bureaucracy, the Russian Orthodox Church and the police. A division existed between the privileged ruling and land-owning classes and the (mainly) impoverished rural and urban workers. The toil of the masses benefited only a select few and there was very little opportunity for social mobility.

The industrial boom of the 1890s, which saw many of Russia's factories established, drew many peasants to the cities in search of new opportunities and an escape from famine. This provided a pool of workers for the ever-growing industrial sector, but working conditions in factories were extremely poor. This, coupled with severe overcrowding, put the major cities under stress, further compounded by the worldwide recession in the late nineteenth century which led to widespread job losses. Not surprisingly, ideas of rebellion and revolution began to emerge.

Although many sources of information were censored, European ideologies such as Marxism began to seep into Russia in the late nineteenth century. Opposition groups began to resist the tsarist system in a more organised way. The emerging intelligentsia, comprising mainly upper- and middle-class Russians, began to set a revolutionary agenda.

Despite theories of an over-arching sense of 'oriental' or 'patrimonial' despotism[1] during the imperial period, there is some evidence to suggest that power was exercised in contradictory and complex ways. In other words, Russian tsars did not always have a strangle-hold over ordinary people; in some cases the power of the central government was weak and poorly organised, leading to abuse of power at the local level.[2] From the 1860s, for example, local governors were able to make their own laws; this was often done in an arbitrary and self-interested manner. Similarly, ethnic minorities, though at times persecuted, enjoyed some periods of freedom from state intrusion. Thus, the politics of the imperial period should

1 Richard Pipes, *Russian Conservatism and Its Critics: A Study in Political Culture* (London: Yale University Press, 2005), xi.

2 Julia Ulyannikova, 'Continuity and Change in the Russian Revolution,' HTAV Conference paper, Melbourne, February 2008.

be seen as dynamic rather than fixed, with state power being imposed in often haphazard and contradictory ways.

GEOGRAPHY

Russian proverb: 'Russia is not a State, but a World.'

DID YOU KNOW?

In 1881 Imperial Russia covered over twenty-million square kilometres.

The Russian Empire covered a vast expanse of territory, spanning two continents – Europe and Asia – and one-sixth of the world's surface. At its widest, the empire stretched for approximately 8000 kilometres east to west and at its longest, just over 3000 kilometres north to south. Imperial Russia extended from Poland to the Ural Mountains in Europe and from the Urals to the Pacific Ocean in Asia. Naturally, it encompassed a diverse range of physical features and vegetation. Forest covered much of the north and east, while desert and arid mountains featured in the south-east. Bitter winters plagued central and northern Russia, with temperatures as low as minus forty degrees for over six months of the year. Covering over 20 million square kilometres, eleven different time zones and five different vegetation zones, Imperial Russia was huge – while the sun was setting at the western end of the empire, it was rising in the east. Communication and defence were extremely difficult over such a large and varied terrain, posing considerable problems for the central government. The two major cities – St Petersburg (the capital) and Moscow – were positioned in European Russia, where the majority of the population lived.

MAPPING ACTIVITY

The very size of Imperial Russia meant that completing major projects could rarely be undertaken by anyone other than the central government – few other groups could raise the necessary funds or equipment to cover such large distances. This arguably led to a strengthening of the control of tsarist governments over the lives of ordinary people.

DEMOGRAPHY

The first census carried out in Imperial Russia in 1897 revealed a population of 126 million people, the largest population in all of Europe. Imperial Russia's population was increasing at a rapid rate during the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, with a population estimated at 40 million in 1815, growing to 161 million in 1910 and further expanding to 165 million in 1914. The census also indicated a diverse ethnic population, with sixty different nationalities officially recorded.

The population of the Russian Empire included Poles, Lithuanians, Ukrainians, Jews, Tatars, Kazaks, Cossacks, Germans and Armenians, among other ethnic minorities.

ACTIVITY

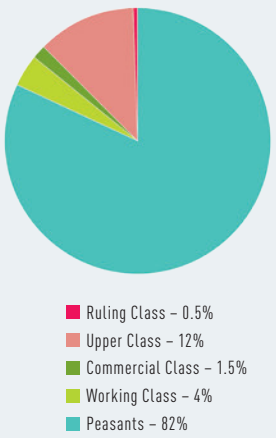
MAPPING

Complete the tasks below using the map and information provided on previous pages.

1. Identify four geographical features unique to Russia prior to 1904.
2. Identify four factors that would have made Imperial Russia a difficult place to govern. Explain why each factor would make governing difficult.
3. The majority of Russia's major cities and towns were located in the western part of the empire. Suggest possible reasons for this, using evidence from the map and other information.

SOCIAL CLASSES

The class structure in Imperial Russia, according to the 1897 census.



In 1902, Tsar Nicholas II said: 'I conceive Russia as a landed estate, of which the proprietor is the Tsar, the administrator is the nobility, and the workers are the peasantry.' Imperial Russians were born into a specific social class, with little opportunity for social mobility. The census of 1897 identified five general social classes, loosely defined as the ruling class, upper class, commercial class, working class and peasants. The distribution of these classes was uneven, as is the case in many societies.

Over four-fifths of the population were peasants, most of whom lacked formal education and had a low standard of living. The small proportion of working class or urban industrial workers (which grew to some extent in the early twentieth century) was similarly underprivileged. The commercial or professional middle class, which again grew a little in this period, represented a slim proportion of the overall population. This group enjoyed some wealth and opportunity. Finally, the ruling class represented the smallest class in Imperial Russia. The disparity between social classes and, more importantly, the unequal distribution of wealth and privilege, served as another potential problem for the tsarist government. There were many contradictions, in that great wealth existed alongside dire poverty, modern technology appeared in city areas but not rural areas and oppression was at different times accepted and resisted.

Peasants before a Ussuri River sternwheeler.

The conditions experienced by Russia's industrial working class were explored by government factory inspectors during the 1800s. The following excerpts give an insight into the appalling situation of many factories:

> Many of the workers in the steel mills are...literally 'working with fire.' For when steel is smelted, the metal is heated white-hot for stamping and rolling rails... The intensity of flaming light is undoubtedly harmful to the eyes...There are two twelve-hour shifts a day...In cloth factory no.48 which is typical of such establishments .'..there was no ventilation at all... Moving around these machines is extremely hazardous, and accidents could easily happen to the...[most careful of] workers.'[3]

Sergei Kravchinsky wrote in 1894 about the terrible working and living conditions of peasants:

3 Cited in Michael Bucklow and Glenn Russell, *Russia: Why Revolution?* (Melbourne: Longman, 1996), 54.

GRAPHING ACTIVITY

[I]t is difficult to conceive of more exhausting work…When moving the hay… the peasants do not allow themselves more than six hours rest out of the twenty-four… They hardly ever taste meat… The ordinary run of villagers, during eight months out of the twelve, eats bread mixed with husks, pounded straw or birch bark… A whole third of our peasantry has become landless [rural workers] in modern Russia.[4]

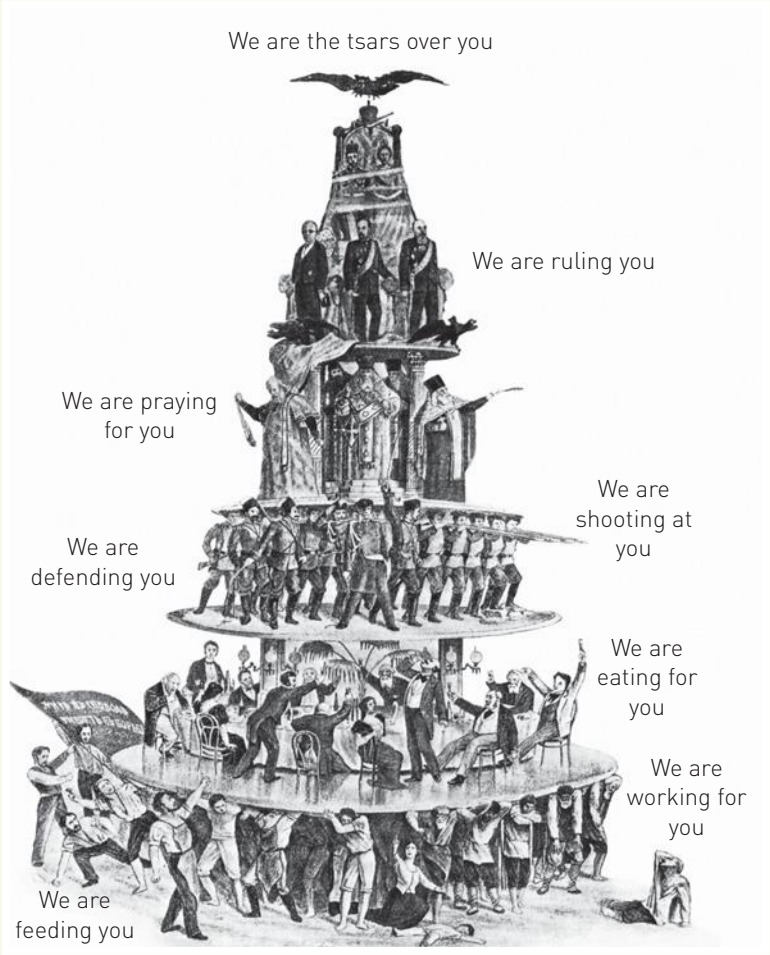
4 Cited in Bucklow and Russell, *Russia: Why Revolution?*, 37–8.

Such daily conditions among factory workers and peasants fed into anti-government feeling in these quarters and among members of the intelligentsia.

SOCIAL CLASSES IN IMPERIAL RUSSIA

Ruling class	0.5%	Tsar Tsar's family Members of government: State Council of Imperial Russia, Cabinet of Ministers, Senate	Privileged class Disproportionate wealth Autocrats and rulers of Imperial Russia
Upper class	12.0%	Nobility Gentry Hereditary landowners Nobles Wealthy merchants Church leaders Bureaucratic leaders High-ranked army officials	High incomes and privileges Low workload in general Exemption from more oppressive rules Each group tended to monitor the behaviour of its competitors, ensuring that other groups didn't get more than their share of resources / power A handful of trusted people were appointed by tsar to keep other groups under control
Commercial and professional middle class	1.5%	Small-scale manufacturers Factory managers Technical specialists Clerks White-collar workers Educated thinkers, writers and artists, known as 'intelligentsia'	Developed towards the end of the 1800s due to the growth of heavy industries in major cities and light industries in towns Characterised by a lack of unity between different professions Some feared protest from classes below them Merchants (business people), especially Jewish ones, were viewed with a degree of suspicion by government
Industrial working class	4.0%	Urban workers	Growing class due to increasing industrialisation in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries Population concentrated in a limited number of city centres Worked in factories that employed thousands of workers Extremely poor working conditions Often worked 14–15 hours a day Earned low, but fluctuating, wages
Peasants	82.0%	Agricultural workforce	Extremely poor living and working conditions Overcrowded and impoverished living High rates of illiteracy Often resistant to change Starvation and disease a common feature of life Financially dependent on landowners Many reliant on subsistence farming

ACTIVITIES



The Russian social structure is analysed and mocked in this 1900 cartoon published by the Union of Russian Socialists.

SOURCE ANALYSIS

Examine the representation and complete the tasks below.

1. Identify the social groups depicted in the representation.
2. Identify the message suggested by the representation.
3. Referring to parts of the representation and your own knowledge, explain the social structure of Imperial Russia in the late nineteenth century.
4. Evaluate to what extent the representation provides an accurate depiction of the social tensions in Imperial Russia prior to 1904. Refer to parts of the representation and to different interpretations of tsarist Russia.

CARTOON

Create a cartoon showing a day in the life of a typical industrial worker, peasant or factory manager in Imperial Russia in the late nineteenth century.

DID YOU KNOW?

Many Russian peasants believed that to be poor was to be virtuous.

DID YOU KNOW?

In Imperial Russia the well-to-do believed it was a sign of good breeding to be fluent in French.

THE TSARS

Tsar Nicholas II: 'Those who believe they can share in government dream senseless dreams.'

The origins of modern-day Russia lay in the sixth and seventh centuries, when groups of Slavic people moved from Eastern Europe to central Siberia. Trading centres emerged on the major rivers, until the ninth century when Scandinavian invaders established rule from Kiev. The Scandinavians were integrated into the Slavic community but were later defeated by a Mongol invasion in the thirteenth century. It was then that a city-state centred on Moscow was born. Despite having poor farming land, Moscow provided strong trading routes and was well protected by surrounding forest regions, making it an ideal centre from which to rule. Eventually Mongolian reign weakened and the first independent nation-state of Russia was established under the rule of Ivan III, the Grand Prince of Moscow (r. 1462–1505). Ivan III shared many of the beliefs of the Mongols, claiming rule over all the Russian people and demanding unconditional service to the nation-state. He established the notion of absolute autocracy, based around a central government, where the Grand Prince was landowner of all Russian territory and, above all, God's representative on earth.

Ivan III was followed by a succession of tsars from the Romanov dynasty. The dynasty, which lasted until 1917, was characterised by limited modernisation and reform. Serfs were emancipated (freed) in 1861 and there was a 'great spurt' of industrialisation in 1893–1903. Despite this there was little economic or political modernisation in Russia compared with the rest of Europe and the country retained an autocratic monarchy throughout. In response, anti-tsarist sentiment thrived in various radical and liberal groups, even despite censorship, and continued to do so as the twentieth century approached. When Marxist ideals filtered into Russia and radical groups began to form an underground movement, the regime was threatened in a way it had never been before. This, coupled with internal and international crises, weakened the capacity of the ruling class to meet challenges to its authority, eventually leading to revolution in 1905 and 1917.

Ivan the Terrible.

IVAN THE TERRIBLE

Ivan IV (r. 1543/47–1584), also called Ivan the Terrible, was the first Russian ruler to adopt the title of Tsar. He established many of the autocratic practices adopted by the Romanovs. Ruling from the religious capital, Moscow, Ivan IV established a clear partnership between the Orthodox Church and the state, a relationship that was to continue well into the Romanov era. The Church controlled the Russian education system to a large extent; consequently the system lacked scientific grounding. During Ivan's reign the economic and political power of the nobility and landowners was severely restricted, seeing the redistribution of land to those who served the state in military or administrative roles. A new gentry was formed, as peasants became increasingly indebted to landowners, serving under contracts and paying rent through produce and service. This system eventually grew into serfdom or slavery.

MICHAEL ROMANOV

The Time of Troubles (1598–1613), a period of turbulence and confusion marked by disputed leadership, national conflict and social crisis, ended with the Russian defeat of the Poles in Moscow in 1613. Without a leader, a national assembly (*zemskii sabor*) was called, comprising delegates from almost every level of society. It was the Assembly's task to select a new tsar. Michael Romanov was the chosen candidate, marking the beginning of a 300-year dynasty.

Michael Romanov was linked to the old regime of Ivan the Terrible through his marriage to his 'good wife' Anastacia Romanova. The Romanovs were a popular family with the masses. Michael's grandfather, Nikita, the brother of Anastacia, had defended victims of Ivan the Terrible, while his father remained a prisoner of the Poles at the time of the zemskii sabor. Michael, at the age of sixteen, remained untouched by the Poles during their occupation of Russia and was considered to have favourable relations with the Cossacks. Romanov was crowned Tsar on 21 July 1613.

Michael Romanov.

Michael Romanov continued the autocratic practices of Ivan IV, with the power of the tsar remaining virtually unlimited. In one way or another, all Russians were obliged to serve the state; the peasants through the payment of taxes and army or civil service, the landlords through similar service and merchants through financing new state industries.

PETER THE GREAT

During the early years of Romanov rule, Peter I (r. 1682–1725), Peter the Great, initiated a period of Westernisation and modernisation based on European principles. The new western capital, St Petersburg, was situated on the Baltic and was European in style. In addition to modernisation, the period of Peter's rule was characterised by foreign wars and, subsequently, a period of economic difficulty. Much of the economic burden fell on peasants, whose situation began to worsen during this time. Conscription was extended to twenty-five years' service – a peasant could be ordered to join the army by their landlord or the tsar. Peasant taxes also increased, as did services due to landlords. As the powers of landlords increased further, peasants were prohibited from leaving the land without permission. In short, peasants, or serfs, had become almost entirely obligated to their masters. Over time, as the situation for peasants gradually deteriorated, the standing of the landlord increased, further widening the gap between the two groups. Many peasants staged riots, but none of these led to significant reform in the short term.

Peter the Great.

The rule of the Romanov family continued until 1917.

CATHERINE THE GREAT

Following the reign of Peter the Great, Russia was to see the rule of two women, most notably Catherine II of Russia (r. 1762–1796) or Catherine the Great. Coming to the throne through a bloodless coup, Catherine succeeded her husband, Peter III, a precedent enabled by the succession of Catherine I from her husband Peter I. Catherine II's reign was punctuated by wars, extended diplomatic relations with Western Europe and the expansion of the empire. Catherine's achievements and progressive thinking allowed her to become one of Russia's

Catherine the Great.

best-known rulers. She is thought to have been comparatively enlightened, while retaining a firm hand over the empire. Catherine was significantly influenced by, and encouraging of, the intelligentsia, or educated class. This group was later to play an integral role in the development of reformist and revolutionary sentiment. Catherine's reign ended in 1796 when she died from a stroke. She was succeeded by Paul I (r. 1796–1801) and later Alexander I (r. 1801–1825).

NICHOLAS I

DID YOU KNOW?

Tsar Nicholas I once wrote on an official document, 'This word [*progress*] must be deleted from official terminology.'

The reign of Nicholas I, which followed the attempted coup by the Decembrists in 1825, was characterised by conservatism and rigid authority. Committed to shielding the Russian people from Western-style ideas, Nicholas enforced strict censorship, conformity and obedience to the tsar. His regime was one built on the idea of service; the landowning nobility was to serve the tsar and the peasants were to serve the landowners. Interestingly, though, Nicholas appointed a small number of trusted people to keep a check on the abuse of power by government officials.

Under Nicholas I, peasants and serfs had few opportunities for social or economic mobility. In general, peasants saw little opportunity for change and demonstrated little desire for it. Economically, Russia remained stagnant while the rest of Europe modernised. Agriculture, the most prominent form of Russian commerce, relied on outdated methods such as strip fields and common pastures, while almost all trade was instigated by foreigners.

Industry was gradually increased throughout the century, with 340 000 industrial workers in 1825 rising to 800 000 in 1856.

The influence of the Orthodox Church remained strong during this time, aided by Nicholas' suppression of reformist ideas from outside. Despite this, the intelligentsia spread Western ideas in defiance of the secret police – the works of Herzen, Bakunin, Kropotkin and Tolstoy were circulated. A division emerged between those who supported Western influences and the so-called 'Slavophiles' who wanted to protect Russia's traditional values and culture.

NICHOLAS II

Tsar Nicholas II when he inherited the throne.

PHOTOS AND VIDEO OF CORONATION

Upon the death of his father (Alexander III) in 1894, Nicholas is believed to have burst into tears, sobbing to his cousin, 'What is going to happen to me and to all of Russia? I am not prepared to be a tsar. I never wanted to become one. I know nothing of the business of ruling. I have no idea of even how to talk to the ministers.' Nicholas' rule was plagued by disaster from the very start, with over 1000 people killed in a surging crowd at his coronation in 1896. Nicholas believed himself to be ill-fated and, later in his rule, reflected on this early incident as being the beginning of his downfall. Despite his misgivings about becoming Tsar of All-Russia, Nicholas was a staunch advocate of autocracy. He was, as Richard Pipes suggests, 'committed to absolutism in part because he believed himself duty-bound by his coronation oath to uphold this system, and in part because he felt convinced that the intellectuals were incapable of administering the empire.'[5] It was this unswerving commitment to autocratic rule that characterised the reign of the last tsar, a reign plagued by crises, challenges to authority and, finally, revolution. For some historians, such as John Hite, it

was Nicholas' 'weakness of will' that led to his demise; he is described as 'poorly educated, narrow in intellectual horizons, a wretchedly bad judge of people, isolated from Russian society... [with a] lack of grasp of the realities of the country.'[6] Orlando Figes, however, contends that 'it was not a "weakness of will" that was the undoing of the last tsar but, on the contrary, a wilful determination to rule from the throne, despite the fact that he clearly lacked the necessary qualities to do so.'[7]

RARE PHOTOS OF ROMANOVS – VIDEO SLIDESHOW

ACTIVITY

ROMANOV FAMILY TREE

Construct a family tree for the Romanov dynasty, showing how the various rulers were related, what children they had and how long they reigned.

TSARIST POLITICAL STRUCTURES

Sergei Witte: 'The outside world should not be surprised that we have an imperfect government, but that we have a government at all. With many nationalities, many languages, and a nation largely illiterate, the marvel is that the country can be held together even by autocratic means.'

AMERICAN PERCEPTIONS OF NICHOLAS II

As Richard Pipes put it, 'It was as if the greatest empire in the world...were an artificial construction without organic unity, held together by wires, all of which converged in the person of the monarch.'[8] The tsarist system was one based on the theory of absolute authority, where the tsar (emperor), was believed to have been divinely appointed, with direct authority from God. Having unlimited executive, legislative and judicial power, the tsar's word was law, to be questioned by no one. The Fundamental Laws of the Empire in 1832 expressed this view, describing the 'unlimited' and 'autocratic' powers of the monarch, by whom 'God himself commands his supreme power to be obeyed.' Traditionally, the tsar was cherished and revered by the masses, who viewed their divine ruler as their 'little father.'

Imperial Russia remained unique in modern-day Europe, maintaining what was seen as an old-fashioned form of government in a continent shifting away from autocratic rule. In the late nineteenth century the majority of Western nations had incorporated some form of representative or democratic government. The autocratic institution in Imperial Russia remained at odds with mainstream political thought in Europe, despite the country's involvement in many continental affairs. At the core of the system were three key bodies: the State Council of Imperial Russia (also called the Imperial Council), the Cabinet of Ministers and the Senate. The State Council was comprised of the tsar's personal advisors. These advisors were appointed directly by the tsar and answered directly to him, reducing the legitimacy and accountability of this group. Similarly, the Cabinet of Ministers, again appointed by and responsible to the tsar alone, managed individual portfolios. In reality, members of this 'cabinet' worked separately in their independent departments and did not function as a group. Finally, the Senate worked to transform the will of the tsar into law.

5 Richard Pipes, *The Russian Revolution* (US: Pimlico, 1990), 9.
6 John Hite, *Tsarist Russia 1801–1917* (Oxford: Causeway Press, 1994), 109.
7 Orlando Figes, *A People's Tragedy: The Russian Revolution 1891–1924* (London: Pimlico, 1997), 21.
8 Pipes, *The Russian Revolution*, 336.

Significantly, none of these bodies or individuals could restrict or question the power of the tsar; it was simply their role to enact his commands. As Alan Wood puts it, 'a word from the Tsar was sufficient to alter, override or abolish any existing legislation or institution.'[9] Early Imperial Russia did not support or facilitate a parliament in any form, nor did it employ democratically-elected officials. Political parties were officially banned and protest was met with censorship, imprisonment or exile.

There is evidence to suggest that rights were granted by the tsars to groups of people, not to individuals. In other words, types of officials were allowed certain freedoms (or freedom from restrictions and punishments), and in turn these officials policed the behaviour of other groups.[10] This situation is described by Jane Burbank as an 'imperial rights regime.'[11] In general, however, the preservation of the tsarist system relied on the unique functioning of four key groups in society: the bureaucracy, provincial governments, the Russian Orthodox Church and the police.

BUREAUCRACY

Russian proverb: 'Any stick will do to beat a thief but only a rouble will help you with an official.'

Peter the Great had attempted to modernise Russia during his reign, by introducing a civil service to coordinate and administer government services. By the mid-nineteenth century, however, this had become a corrupt and inefficient organisation. Responsible for government administration, law, police and the militia at a local and national level, the bureaucracy or civil service held the power to control almost all facets of everyday life.

The organisation was separated into fourteen different levels, each distinguished by their unique uniform – a symbol of official rank and social status. Given the prestige and considerable income that came with a post in the civil service, the bureaucrats were understandably opposed to reform, preferring to maintain their positions in the noble upper class that had been created by this institution. As Pipes explains, 'on being admitted to the [civil] service, a Russian official swore loyalty, not to the state or the nation, but to the person of the ruler. He served entirely at the pleasure of the monarch and his own immediate superiors.'[12] The corrupt and inefficient nature of the bureaucracy made it virtually pointless to challenge or question the civil service, unless the claimant had connections within the organisation or had the means to pay a bribe. Arguably, during Nicholas II's reign the bureaucracy had become strongly associated with corruption.

Almost all requests took far too long to resolve, if at all. Finally, the concept of *proizvol*, loosely translated as 'arbitrariness' (at the whim of the individual), made for a service of inconsistencies and inequities; again, a burden to be shouldered by ordinary people.

PROVINCIAL GOVERNMENTS

According to Figes, 'to lovers of liberty the provincial governor was the very personification of Tsarist oppression and despotism.'[13] Imperial Russia was divided into ninety-six provinces (local areas), each presided over by a provincial

9 Alan Wood, *The Origins of the Russian Revolution 1861–1917*, 3rd edition (London: Routledge, 2003), 4.
10 Ulyannikova, 'Change and Continuity in the Russian Revolution.'
11 Jane Burbank, 'An Imperial Rights Regime: Law and Citizenship in the Russian Empire,' *Kritika: Explorations in Russian and Eurasian History 7*, no. 3 (Summer, 2006): 397–431.
12 Pipes, *The Russian Revolution*, 61–2.
13 Figes, *A People's Tragedy*, 44–5.

governor and governing body. In a similar fashion to government ministers, provincial governors were appointed by the tsar and reported directly to him. These men possessed considerable power in the day-to-day organisation of provincial areas, supported by *zemstvos*, the rural councils. Despite being elected bodies, often involving progressively-minded delegates, these councils were largely composed of the nobility and their actions often favoured this class.

Provincial governments were responsible for the administration of key local services, such as local police, public works, education and health. Despite being officially answerable to the Ministry of the Interior, provincial government and the governors themselves benefited from a close relationship with the imperial court. This relationship enabled them to ignore the demands of the ministers in St Petersburg, a benefit they often exercised, especially when issues were at odds with the interests of the nobility. The governors provided the central government with a connection to people living outside the main cities.

From the 1860s onwards, provincial governors were given licence to create their own laws at the local level. The idea of 'arbitrariness' was applied, leading to inconsistent and, often, self-interested decision-making.

RUSSIAN ORTHODOX CHURCH

Since 988 CE the Russian Orthodox Church had been the official religion of the Russian Empire. The Orthodox Church was a form of Christianity, independent from outside religious bodies since the fifteenth century. As such, it promoted a distinctly Russian character. The Church became an expression of Russian culture and was an integral organisation in the operation of autocracy throughout the empire.

Under state control from 1721, the Church was intrinsically linked with the tsar. The oath of the clergy was 'to defend, unsparingly all the powers, rights and prerogatives belonging to the High autocracy of his Majesty.'[14] While the tsar could not officially intervene in matters of faith, he did, however, exert influence over the Church's highest regulating body, the Holy Synod. The tsar appointed to the position of Procurator of the Holy Synod a secular (non-religious) person and through this avenue maintained close connections with the Church. The influence of the Church was immense, reinforcing the absolute rule of the tsar and preaching obligation, duty and service. In the late nineteenth century the Church reinforced conservative values, supporting the strict style of autocracy promoted by Tsar Nicholas II and fiercely opposing political change.

DID YOU KNOW?

Russian Orthodox priests were able to marry, unlike their Catholic counterparts.

St Basil's Cathedral.

POLICE

While the national military was used for defence and repression in Imperial Russia, the tsar and his administration relied on two separate police forces. The Okhrana, the tsar's secret police force, was designed to protect the political interests of state. The tsar relied on this group to monitor agitators, suspected enemies of the state and revolutionaries, and to deal with these groups through imprisonment, exile and, occasionally, execution. A standard police force existed for general law and order. The police were limited in numbers, therefore, in order to control the large population, severe oppressive actions were often employed. In addition to these two organisations, a group of men from the Don River region

14 Richard Pipes, *Russia Under the Old Regime* (London: Penguin, 1977), 241.

DID YOU KNOW?

Okhrana means 'protection.' Many modern-day Russian security guards have this word displayed on their uniforms.

near the Black Sea, the Cossacks, formed an elite military-style group, or militia. These men operated on horseback and were rewarded for their service through grants of land. They were renowned for their loyalty to the tsar.

ACTIVITY

CONCEPT MAP

Draw a concept map or flow chart representing the political structure of the tsarist system in Russia prior to 1904.

Include the following groups: Tsar, State Council of Imperial Russia, Cabinet of Ministers, Senate, army, Russian Orthodox Church, Okhrana, police force, civil service (central), provincial government and zemstvos.

A Tit Bit for a Russian Ambassador!!!

Cartoon showing a Russian holding up a small figure of Napoleon, preparing to eat him.

OUTSIDE INFLUENCES

Throughout the nineteenth century, the autocracy was reaffirmed by successful military campaigns, most notably the Russian victory over Napoleon in 1812, which buoyed national identity and patriotism. However, partly due to the influence of the French Revolution in the late eighteenth century, autocracy was beginning to be viewed very differently throughout Europe. In turn, Western ideas began filtering into Russia, mostly through well-travelled nobles. Many of these nobles, influenced by ideas of enlightenment and revolution, sought modernisation and change in Imperial Russia, with Western ideology growing more prevalent throughout the nineteenth century. Alan Wood describes the 'great division' that existed between two societies in Imperial Russia: on the one hand, an 'educated, Westernised [group]... a fully fledged, leisured, land-and-serf-owning nobility enjoying most, if not all, of the privileges of a European aristocracy' and, on the other hand, 'the Russian people...the enserfed peasants, who continued to be ruthlessly exploited, fleeced and conscripted...sunk in a vast swamp of ignorance, misery, superstition and periodic famine.'[15]

When Alexander I died in 1825 there was confusion over who was to be his successor. His eldest son, Grand Duke Constantine Pavlovich, had three years earlier renounced his claim to the throne. But since this was not widely known, allegiance was sworn to him. Following subsequent investigation, Constantine's younger brother Nicholas was pronounced the rightful successor and was affirmed as Tsar Nicholas I (r. 1825–1855). Groups such as the Decembrists, inspired by the Jacobins and French revolutionaries, emerged during this period to take advantage of the political uncertainty. Acting under the guise of defending the rightful heir to the throne – Constantine – the Decembrists attempted to overthrow the monarchy and promote political change and modernisation in Imperial Russia. The coup proved unsuccessful and was brutally suppressed by Nicholas I, who executed the leaders and exiled supporters.

15 Wood, *The Origins of the Russian Revolution*, 4.

NATIONAL CRISES

CRIMEAN WAR

MORE ON THE CRIMEAN WAR

Russian involvement in the Crimean War (1853–56) was a catalyst for the most extreme economic and political reform in Imperial Russia. The separation of the Turkish (Ottoman) Empire in the mid-nineteenth century saw Slavic nationalist groups mounting a case for independence. Russia had long considered itself protector of Slavs, who were Orthodox Christians in a largely Muslim empire. The separation of the Ottoman Empire provided Nicholas I with a legitimate reason to wage war on the Turks. In reality, Imperial Russia sought to extend its influence in south-east Europe and gain control of the valuable Balkan states and Black Sea area. This was, however, to prove disastrous, as the Russian Empire found itself at war with not only Turkey, but also England and France. Plagued by poor supplies, an inefficient transport system and an uneducated and corrupt military leadership, the Crimean War was a military disaster for Russia, revealing not only the country's military weaknesses and antiquated combat style, but also its lack of industrial and social sophistication. Added to this, the war placed enormous strain on the economy, leading the government to surrender. It became obvious to the regime that Russia needed to update its military and, in order to do this, significant industrialisation was required.

The capture of the Malakoff tower, fall of Sebastopol, 1855.

FAMINE

In 1891–92 there was a famine in Russia. While few people died directly from starvation, many died from associated disease.[16] According to David Lilly, the tsarist government managed to prevent mass starvation and total economic collapse, but its attempt to lessen the effects of the famine through better employment failed:

> One of the major impediments to efficient relief was the lack of cooperation between various ministries. The famine brought into view the corruption and inefficiency of

16 David Lilly, 'The Russian Famine of 1891–2,' *Student Historical Journal Vol XXVI* (US: Loyola University History Department, 1994).

> the government, and showed how St. Petersburg was out of touch with [most] of the country. It also exposed the dire poverty of the peasants, which could be traced back to emancipation…This famine, which pointed out the weakness of their social structure, should have been a huge warning to the government. [But] the tsarist regimes… failed to address…Russia's massive agricultural problems [which] helped lead to the government's downfall.[17]

This and other instances demonstrate that, at times of crisis, the central government's lack of proper infrastructure and organisation made it ineffective in tackling large social problems.

Famine-stricken villagers who have left their homes on the way to St Petersburg during the famine of 1891–92.

DID YOU KNOW?

In Leo Tolstoy's novel *Anna Karenina*, two characters of noble birth are discussing self-interest. One says to the other: 'It was not self-interest that induced us to work for the emancipation of the serfs, but we did work for it.' The other replies: 'The emancipation of the serfs was a different matter. There self-interest did come in. We longed to throw off that yoke [harness] that crushed all decent people alike.'

REFORM AND THE ABOLITION OF SERFDOM

Sergei Witte: 'Your Majesty has 130 million subjects. Of them, barely more than half live, the rest vegetate.'

The first step towards rapid industrialisation was for serfdom (enforced labour) to be abolished. This medieval institution was no longer valid in a nation looking to modernise and had long been an inefficient system, hindering large-scale production and preventing a potential labour force from moving to industrialised areas. The new tsar, Alexander II (r. 1855–1881), had not only inherited the economic problems of the Crimean War, but also the fallout from several peasant rebellions; this arguably left him with a responsibility, and an opportunity, to reform Russia.

In 1861 the Edict of Emancipation was presented by Alexander II. The Edict vowed to eliminate serfdom, modernise Russian agriculture and transform

17 Lilly, 'The Russian Famine.'

Russian society. More than one-half of the peasant population, or forty million crown and private peasants, were liberated. According to the Edict, peasants were granted their own homes and patches of land, purchased by the government and redeemed by the peasants in payments over forty-nine years or paid off in service to the landlord. Peasants were forced to accept the land granted to them and immediately became responsible for the redemption payments (taxes). Instead of the peasants being indebted to landlords, they were now obliged to the mir or village commune, which had the power to redistribute land and act in the collective interests of all peasants in the village. The mir took responsibility for the collection of taxes and dues, as well as land cultivation. Peasants were now free to marry and own land in a collective with the mir. Peasants were no longer able to be bought or sold.

DID YOU KNOW?

Mir means both 'village commune' and 'world.' The village was often the peasants' whole world.

Despite these significant reforms, peasant hopes remained largely unfulfilled. Most were still bound to a particular plot of land, requiring permission from the Land Assembly to leave their mir. Inefficient and outdated farming techniques also continued during this time, relying on a three field system, rather than processes of crop rotation and artificial fertilisation, making farming a burdensome, rather than profitable, activity. Harsh climate, poor harvests, population increases and disease had a devastating impact on the peasant population in 1881–82. Seventeen provinces were plunged into famine by the autumn of 1881, followed by a devastating outbreak of cholera and typhus, killing half-a-million people by the end of 1892. The ineffective political response to the crisis exacerbated the situation. Rumours surfaced that the bureaucracy was withholding food deliveries until 'statistical proof' was given to show that people could not feed themselves. A general ill-feeling towards the regime began to sweep across the affected provinces.

DECLARATION OF ALEXANDER II EMANCIPATING SERFS

Russian peasants in front of their home, c. 1890s.

DOCUMENT

EXTRACT FROM *THE ABOLITION OF SERFDOM IN RUSSIA MANIFESTO*, FEBRUARY 1861

By the Grace of God WE, Alexander II, Emperor and Autocrat of All Russia, King of Poland, Grand Duke of Finland, etc., make known to all OUR faithful subjects…

…On the basis of the above-mentioned new arrangements, the serfs will receive in time the full rights of free rural inhabitants.

The nobles, while retaining their property rights to all the lands belonging to them, grant the peasants perpetual use of their household plots in return for a specified obligation…While enjoying these land allotments, the peasants are obliged, in return, to fulfil obligations to the noblemen fixed by the same arrangements. In this status, which is temporary, the peasants are temporarily bound.

At the same time, they are granted the right to purchase their household plots, and, with the consent of the nobles, they may acquire in full ownership the arable lands and other properties which are allotted them for permanent use. Following such acquisition of full ownership of land, the peasants will be freed from their obligations to the nobles for the land thus purchased and will become free peasant landowners.

A special decree dealing with household serfs will establish a temporary status for them, adapted to their occupations and their needs. At the end of two years from the day of the promulgation of this decree, they shall receive full freedom and some temporary benefits…

…Given at St. Petersburg, March 3, the year of Grace 1861, and the seventh of OUR reign. Alexander.[18]

ACTIVITY

SOURCE ANALYSIS

Examine the extract and complete the tasks below.

1. Identify two liberties granted to serfs, according to the extract.
2. Identify two powers retained by nobles, according to the extract.
3. Referring to the extract and using your own knowledge, analyse the extent to which *The Abolition of Serfdom in Russia Manifesto* changed life for peasants in Imperial Russia.

FURTHER REFORM

Nikolai Tolstoy: 'Autocracy is a superannuated form of government that may suit the needs of a Central African tribe, but not those of the Russian people, who are increasingly assimilating the culture of the rest of the world.'

Other reforms followed in this period. Elected local bodies, zemstvos, were established, leading many to hope for a nationally-elected duma (parliament) to follow. Zemstvos were largely conservative organisations with limited power. These organisations were responsible for local reform, with the aim of joining local peasants and former landlords in productive working relationships. Under these groups primary schools were established, along with improvements in health, agricultural science and public works.

Reforms to the legal system occurred during the reign of Alexander II, including the introduction of equality for all under the law, public trial by jury and the right to a defence lawyer. However, some traces of corruption still existed within the judicial system, with government officials tried under different rules and courts than peasants. Alexander II relaxed censorship laws and reformed the education

18 'The Abolition of Serfdom in Russia: The Manifesto of February 19, 1861,' Documents in History, http://academic.shu.edu/russianhistory/index.php/Alexander_II,_Emancipation_Manifesto,_1861.

system, resulting in secondary education being available to a wider demographic, a luxury previously restricted to the nobility. Attempts were also made to restore the independence of universities. In 1874 the army was reorganised, reducing military service from twenty-five years to six, modernising training methods and doing away with brutal discipline practices. Alexander's reforms, while raising hope in the general populace, did little to quell discontent. The changes preserved the tradition of a privileged official class and thus strengthened the basis of revolutionary thought.

One revolutionary group that emerged during this period was the Populists, or Narodniks. Members of the group infiltrated the general society with the aim of educating the masses. Populists believed that peasants and (to a lesser extent) industrial workers were already socialist by nature due to their communal lifestyle and felt that revolution could be achieved through education. This approach failed in the 1870s, prompting many Populists to turn to terror and assassination. It was out of this group that the revolutionary movement called the People's Will (*Narodnaya Volya*) emerged.

TERRORISM

Founded in 1879, the People's Will adopted terror as a weapon against the tsarist state. The group advocated the death of the tsar and government officials. In 1881 the group succeeded in assassinating Tsar Alexander II. Rather than forcing the end of autocracy, the assassination resulted in the extension of autocratic repression in a period known as 'The Reaction.' Alexander III reacted with a firm hand, crushing virtually all political opposition through the use of his secret police, the Okhrana. Leaders of the People's Will were immediately executed, followers arrested and a strict regime of repression and censorship followed. Not only did Alexander III rely on the Okhrana for protection, but he also exiled his opponents to Siberia.

'RUSSIFICATION' AND THE TREATMENT OF MINORITIES

RUSSIFICATION AND NEIGHBOURING COUNTRIES

Russia was truly a multicultural and multilingual empire and to a certain extent different ethnic groups were left to their own devices on a day-to-day basis, provided they conformed to the laws of the state. Tsarist authorities, however, were concerned about the potential of different ethnic and nationalistic groups to destabilise Russia. Of particular concern was the fact that the Russian nationality accounted for less than half the total population and was the slowest growing ethnicity in the Empire.

To combat this problem Alexander III embarked upon a program of 'Russification' in the 1890s, a process conceived in the 1770s as a way of ensuring allegiance to the Russian state. Later the program tried to turn all peoples of the Russian Empire into 'Great Russians,' sharing language and culture, a process Alexander believed would enable Russia to modernise.

DID YOU KNOW?

Pobedonostsev said to Tsar Alexander III, 'The day may come when flatterers will try to persuade you that, if only Russia were to be granted a "constitution" on the Western model, all problems would vanish and the government could carry on in peace. This is a lie, and God forbid that a true Russian shall see the day when it becomes an accomplished fact.'

However, partly because of the influence of nationalist movements in Europe throughout the nineteenth century, most people identified as Poles, Jews, Lithuanians and so on, rather than as members of the Russian Empire. Despite the efforts of the central authorities, the idea of 'Russian-ness' was difficult to impose, as shown by the observations below:

> The peasants speak the Little Russian dialect; a small group...now professes a Ukrainian identity distinct from that of the Great Russians...Were one to ask an average peasant in the Ukraine his nationality, he would answer that he is Greek Orthodox; if pressed to say whether he is a Great Russian, a Pole, or a Ukrainian, he would probably reply that he is a peasant; and if one insisted on knowing what language he spoke he would say that he talked the 'local tongue.' One might perhaps get him to call himself by a proper national name and say that he is 'russkii' [Russian], but this declaration would hardly prejudge the question of a Ukrainian relationship; he simply does not think of nationality in terms familiar to the intelligentsia. Again, if one tried to find out to what state he desires to belong – whether he wanted to be ruled by an All-Russian or a separate Ukrainian Government – one would find that in his opinion all governments alike are a nuisance, and that it would be best if the 'Christian peasant-folk' were left to themselves.[19]

Stop your Cruel Oppression of the Jews by Emil Flohri, 1904.

This print shows an aged man labelled 'Russian Jew' carrying a large bundle labelled 'Oppression' on his back; hanging from the bundle are weights labelled 'Autocracy,' 'Robbery,' 'Cruelty,' 'Assassination,' 'Deception' and 'Murder.' In the background, on the right, a Jewish community burns, and in the upper left corner, Theodore Roosevelt speaks to the Emperor of Russia, Nicholas II, 'Now that you have peace without, why not remove his burden and have peace within your borders?'

The key player in the Russification policy was Konstantin Pobedonostsev, chief minister from 1881 to 1905 and also Ober-Procurator of the Holy Synod, the highest position of supervision in the Russian Orthodox Church. A thoroughly conservative man, Pobedonostsev was a staunch advocate for autocracy and opposed any form of democratic or liberal reform. In many ways Pobedonostsev, being chief advisor to three tsars, directly prevented Imperial Russia from pursuing modernisation and reform.

19 Cited in Marc Raeff, *Political Ideas and Institutions in Imperial Russia,* (Boulder: Westview Press, 1994).

Ultimately, the Russification program led to the persecution and alienation of many ethnic minorities, with many national groups, such as Poles, Lithuanians and Ukrainians, responding to the program by resorting to extreme and revolutionary actions. Russian nationalist groups also emerged during the imperial period, with the propaganda of the Union of Russian People, a monarchist organisation supporting the restoration of monarchy and the persecution of Jews, paving the way for more violent action through organisations such as the Union of Russian Men and the Black Hundred gangs. In 1905 and 1906 these groups, fuelled by rampant anti-Semitism, staged pogroms (violent killings) of non-Russians in major cities. While some theorists have argued that these vigilante-style groups acted with the tacit endorsement of the tsarist government, it is now widely believed that they acted independently.

ACTIVITY

DIAGRAM

Create your own diagram summarising the causes of instability in Imperial Russia between c. 1896 and 1904. Include a range of political, military, social-cultural and economic factors.

MARXISM IN IMPERIAL RUSSIA

Karl Marx: 'The proletarians have nothing to lose but their chains. They have a world to win. WORKING MEN OF ALL COUNTRIES, UNITE!'

In the late nineteenth century many revolutionary groups began to emerge. Led by liberal nobles and a small, but growing, middle class, these groups viewed revolution as the only way forward for Russia. Two German authors, Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels, came to prominence in 1848 with their work entitled *The Communist Manifesto*. Drawing on a study of the working people of Britain to explain the sequence of human history, the work outlined a new ideology (later called Marxism) exploring the notion of history as a series of class struggles that would inevitably lead to the demise of capitalism and the rise of communism.

Karl Marx.

The Communist Manifesto advocated a scientific study of human society. The authors asserted that history was made up of a series of struggles between those with political power and those without. Depending on the situation, the type of struggle might change, but the ongoing conflict, the dialectic, continued. Marx and Engels argued that the final stage of the class struggle would be the industrial era. This emboldened revolutionaries in the late nineteenth century, who believed the proletariat (industrial working class) would come to challenge, and eventually overcome, the bourgeoisie (those who owned the means of production, i.e. factory owners and capitalists).

AUDIO AND TEXT OF COMMUNIST MANIFESTO

Those who supported the Marxist view were joined by other political groups who had emerged in opposition to tsarism. Groups such as the liberals and the Populists rose in prominence during the 1890s, along with smaller, more extreme groups (see Chapter 2). Supporters of Nihilism, such as students, revolutionaries and writers, resorted to terrorism during this period in an attempt to destroy the imperial regime. Splinter groups also emerged, such as the People's Will and

the Union of Liberation, with the leaders living lives of secrecy to avoid exile to Siberia. Many of these groups and their ideas were to form the basis for the anti-tsarist political groups of the early twentieth century.

DOCUMENT

EXTRACT FROM MARX AND ENGELS, *THE COMMUNIST MANIFESTO*, 1848

> The bourgeoisie [middle and upper class] is unfit any longer to be the ruling class in society…The essential conditions for the existence…of the bourgeois class is the formation and augmentation [increase] of capital [profit]; the condition for capital is wage-labour. Wage-labour rests exclusively on competition between the labourers. The advance of industry…replaces the isolation of the labourers, due to competition…What the bourgeoisie therefore produces, above all, are its own grave-diggers. Its fall and the victory of the proletariat [working class] are equally inevitable [unavoidable].[20]

ACTIVITY

SOURCE ANALYSIS

Examine the extract from Marx and Engels and complete the tasks below.

1. Identify the message of the extract.
2. Analyse how the creators of the extract used language to convey a sense of crisis and to highlight structural inequalities in society.
3. Referring to the extract and using your own knowledge, explain why Marxism was significant in Russia in the late-nineteenth and early-twentieth century.
4. Evaluate the extent to which the extract gives a full picture of inequalities in Russia prior to 1904.

MODERNISATION AND INDUSTRIALISATION

Sergei Witte: 'The minister of finance recognises that the customs duties fall as a particularly heavy burden upon the impoverished landowners and peasants, particularly in a year of crop failure. These imposts are a heavy sacrifice made by the entire population, and not from surplus but out of current necessity.'

While Alexander III was generally opposed to social and political reform, believing it had the potential to undermine autocracy, he was committed to modernising Russia through industrialisation. Following his death from kidney disease in 1894 and the ascension to the throne of his son Nicholas II (r. 1894–1917), this commitment was continued, along with the preservation of absolute autocracy. Since the 1870s industrialisation had been pursued as a distinct government policy and this was further enhanced in the 1890s. For the tsarist government, industrialisation was the key to promoting military growth and strength; however, the impact of rapid industrialisation was to reach far more widely than the military. The period known as the 'great spurt' saw substantial industrialisation take place under the guidance of Sergei Witte, minister for finance, who was presented with the task of modernising Imperial Russia in line with Western European standards.

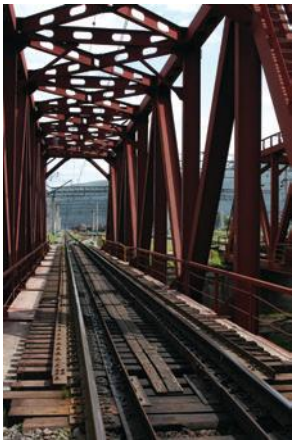
Witte employed foreign advisors and workers to counsel him in industrial planning and techniques. His task was not only to modernise Russia but also

20 'The Communist Manifesto,' Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels, https://www.marxists.org/archive/marx/works/1848/communist-manifesto/ch01.htm.

to protect local industries. Witte believed that the only way he could balance this incredible task was to foster a system of state-run capitalism, whereby entrepreneurial principles were employed while the state retained overall control.

The 'great spurt' brought about a great deal of economic reform. Foreign capital was encouraged, to facilitate the growth of the Empire's natural resources and the development of industry. Russia relied heavily on foreign loans to develop its economy in this way. The national currency, the rouble, was placed on the gold standard in 1897 in the hope of promoting a stable currency and, in turn, promoting foreign investment. Witte ensured foreign goods were limited on the Russian market and protected local industry through imposing hefty government tariffs. Despite enabling considerable industrial development, these reforms had many adverse impacts on ordinary Russians. With rapid modernisation came rising prices, taxes and interest rates – burdens difficult to bear for most people, particularly those in rural areas. Throughout the period of industrialisation the primary livelihood of the majority, agriculture, remained unprotected and undeveloped.

Investment in railways during the 'great spurt' was central to the idea of modernisation. The standout example of this progression is the Trans-Siberian railway (constructed from 1891 onwards), designed to connect the isolated regions of central and eastern Russia with the industrialised west. It was hoped this project would enable further east–west migration, bolstering the industrial workforce. The railway project remained unfinished at the outbreak of war in 1914, perhaps a stark reminder of a failed attempt to modernise a technologically unsophisticated nation.



A section of the Trans-Siberian railway.

While production and trade figures certainly indicate substantial industrial development comparable to European standards, conservative and radical opponents of Witte argued that his reforms were too dependent on foreign capital and too focussed on the development of heavy industry, ignoring the modernisation of light industry and agriculture. This was refuted by Witte, who argued that foreign capital directly enhanced Russia's production, and thus its wealth. Whatever the case, the task of rapidly industrialising an antiquated empire that was resistant to change, within the context of preserving the institution of absolute autocracy, proved to be of great difficulty for the tsarist government.

Industrialisation throughout the 1890s came at a time of world-wide industrial boom; however, this was swiftly followed by world-wide recession, taking a significant human toll on Imperial Russia. This, combined with the failure to meet rising class expectations, led to growing public discontent with the regime; discontent that would later contribute to revolutionary action in 1905. Throughout the late nineteenth century, harsh agricultural conditions coupled with the financial burden of land ownership, following the Emancipation Edict of 1861, saw many peasants flock to the industrial centres in search of work. Many peasants had realised they could no longer bear the financial burden of life on the land, resulting in a significant rise in the urban population of Imperial Russia. This migration to the urban centres provided a ready-made industrial labour force, facilitating the desired growth of industry.

Between 1860 and 1905 the industrial labour force trebled, with this new group being employed in large-scale units in primitive factories. Very little emphasis was placed on the improvement or updating of machinery, thereby maximising profit for a newly-emerging commercial class through a low-cost labour force, while

DID YOU KNOW?

The Putilov steel works, one of the largest industrial enterprises in St Petersburg, employed around 40 000 workers.

allowing appalling conditions for the industrial workers. With the absence of legal workplace protections and the prohibition of trade unions, rapid industrialisation through the exploitation of an oppressed industrial working class was enabled.

The unsupervised and unplanned growth of these industrial centres led to severe overcrowding. Living conditions were understandably poor, with on average sixteen people living in one apartment and six people in one room in 1904. It was in these overcrowded centres that political discontent began to stir, seeing the number of military-suppressed industrial strikes grow from nineteen in 1893 to 522 in 1902. When recession hit, widespread unemployment followed. Peasant hopes for a better life, this time in the urban centres, had again been squashed, leading to a growth in social unrest that over time would develop into a revolutionary response.

CAUSES OF THE REVOLUTION ACTIVITY

GROWTH OF POPULATION IN RUSSIA'S TWO MAIN CITIES		
YEAR	*ST PETERSBURG*	*MOSCOW*
1881	928 000	753 500
1890	1 033 600	1 038 600
1897	1 264 700	1 174 000
1900	1 439 600	1 345 000
1910	1 905 600	1 617 700
1914	2 217 500	1 762 700

INDUSTRIAL OUTPUT IN THE RUSSIAN EMPIRE (BASE UNIT OF 100 IN 1900)			
1900	100	**1909**	122.5
1904	109.5	**1911**	149.7
1905	98.2	**1912**	153.2
1906	111.7	**1913**	163.6

GROWTH IN NATIONAL PRODUCT 1898–1913		
Italy – 82.7%	Austria – 79%	Britain – 40%
Germany – 84.2%	France – 59.6%	Russia – 96.8%

Source: Michael Lynch, *Reaction and Revolutions: Russia 1881–1924* (Oxford: Hodder & Stoughton, 2000), 20–1.

ACTIVITY STATISTICS

1. Create a graph to represent each of the three sets of figures above. Choose the most appropriate graph type for each set of figures.
2. Describe the trend shown in each graph and offer possible explanations for the trends.

CONCLUSION

Russia prior to 1904 was a nation characterised by traditional values and structures. A unique nation on the European continent, Russia remained the cornerstone of rule by divine right, a belief not only held by the rulers themselves but also the majority of the population. The tsarist system, dominated by the Romanov dynasty for 300 years, was underpinned by bureaucracy, provincial government, the Russian Orthodox Church and the police (both overt and secret). Although there was a great deal of power exercised by tsars, there were contradictory and inconsistent aspects of their rule; in some instances central power was weak, allowing for provincial governors to wield disproportionate influence. In this sense the tsarist system can be seen as intrusive, yet poorly organised. Such a situation meant that when crises occurred, such as the famine of 1891–92, the state had little infrastructure to deal with large social problems. Not surprisingly this fuelled further public anger.

Daily conditions for rural and industrial workers came to be untenable in the late nineteenth century, particularly as the emerging educated middle class began to highlight the inequities involved. This group, which came to be seen as the 'intelligentsia,' drew on democratic developments elsewhere in Europe (such as the French Revolution) to advocate reform and, eventually, revolution. Some of the more extreme groups took political advantage of the poor social and economic conditions, turning to terrorism and rebellion to further their cause. In response, the government attempted to preserve autocratic power and to maintain a sense of service to the Crown by censoring and repressing individuals who called for reform.

As discussed in Chapter 2, the period following 1904 saw a dramatic shift in the social, economic and political climate of Imperial Russia, leading it into a revolutionary situation which changed Russia, and the world, forever.

TEST YOUR LEARNING

CHAPTER REVIEW

CONSTRUCTING AN ARGUMENT

Using evidence from Chapter 1 and further sources, write an essay on one of the topics below. Your essay should be approx. 800 words long and include a contention, topic sentences, evidence from sources (including historical interpretations), a conclusion and a bibliography.

TOPICS

- To what extent was the Romanov regime under threat from external and internal crises by the end of 1904?
- What were the key turning points in tsarist Russia between c. 1896 and 1904?

KEY IDEAS

Using evidence from Chapter 1 and further sources, give a five-minute presentation on one of the following key ideas that emerged in Imperial Russia prior to 1904:

- Russification
- Abolition of serfdom
- Political reform
- Modernisation and industrialisation
- Marxism.

HISTORICAL PERSPECTIVES

Create a gallery of approximately ten images of a diverse range of people in Imperial Russia prior to 1904. Images may be photographic or artistic. For each image, note down the caption/description, year of publication, book or website in which it was published and the creator of the image (if available).

FURTHER READING

Christian, David. Power and Privilege: The Russian Empire, the Soviet Union and the Challenge of Modernity. Melbourne: Longman Cheshire, 1994.

A detailed, thoughtful and well-written student textbook.

Morcombe, Margot and Fielding, Mark. The Spirit of Change: Russia in Revolution. Sydney: McGraw-Hill, 2003.

A textbook that gives a good overview of the revolution. Particularly useful for its wide range of primary source documents.

Pipes, Richard. Russia Under the Old Regime. Penguin, 1995.

This study analyses the evolution of the Russian state from the ninth century to the 1880s and its unique role in managing Russian society.

Pipes, Richard. The Three Whys of the Russian Revolution. USA: Vintage Books, 1997.

Pipes addresses the enigmas of Russia's seventy-year enthrallment with communism. A succinct and lively account. One of the the key questions addressed is 'Why did tsarism fail?'

Shukman, Harold. The Russian Revolution. Gloucestershire: Sutton, 1998.

A short account of the revolution that is accessible to students.

Wood, Alan. The Origins of the Russian Revolution: 1861–1917. London: Routledge, 1993.

A lucid and concise account. Accessible reading for students. The overview of historians' debates is useful.

CHAPTER

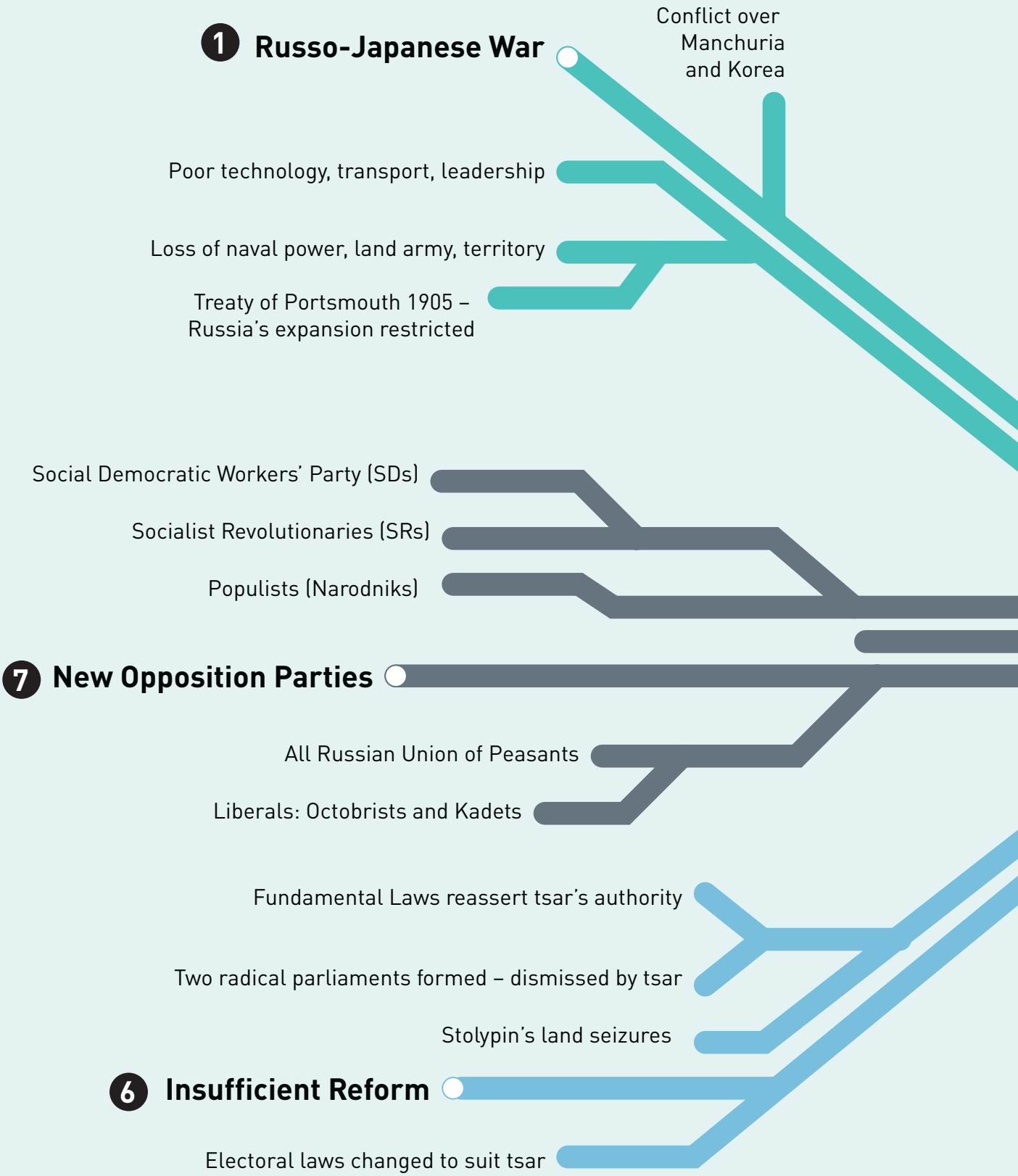
2

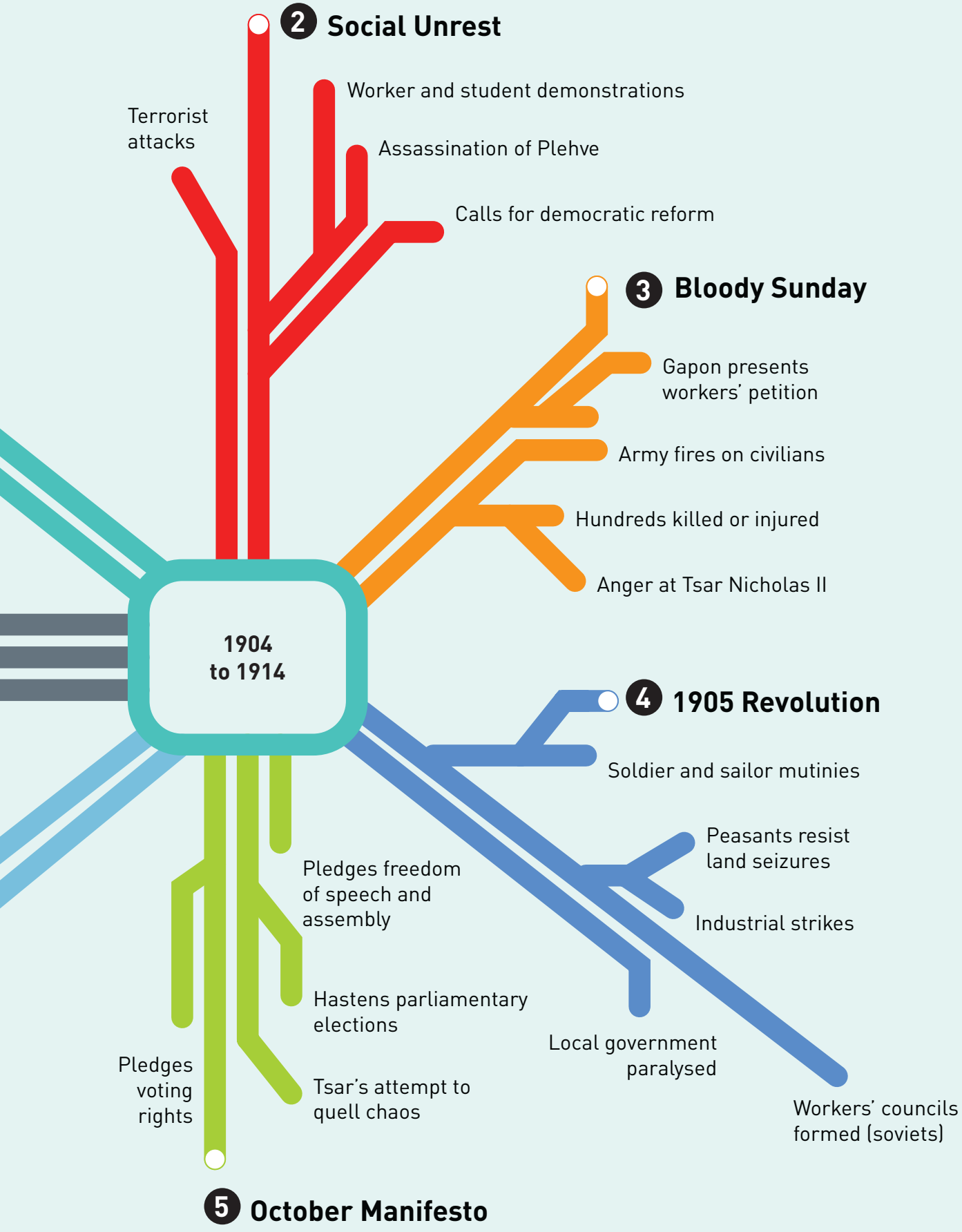
CRISIS AND RESPONSE

(1904–1914)

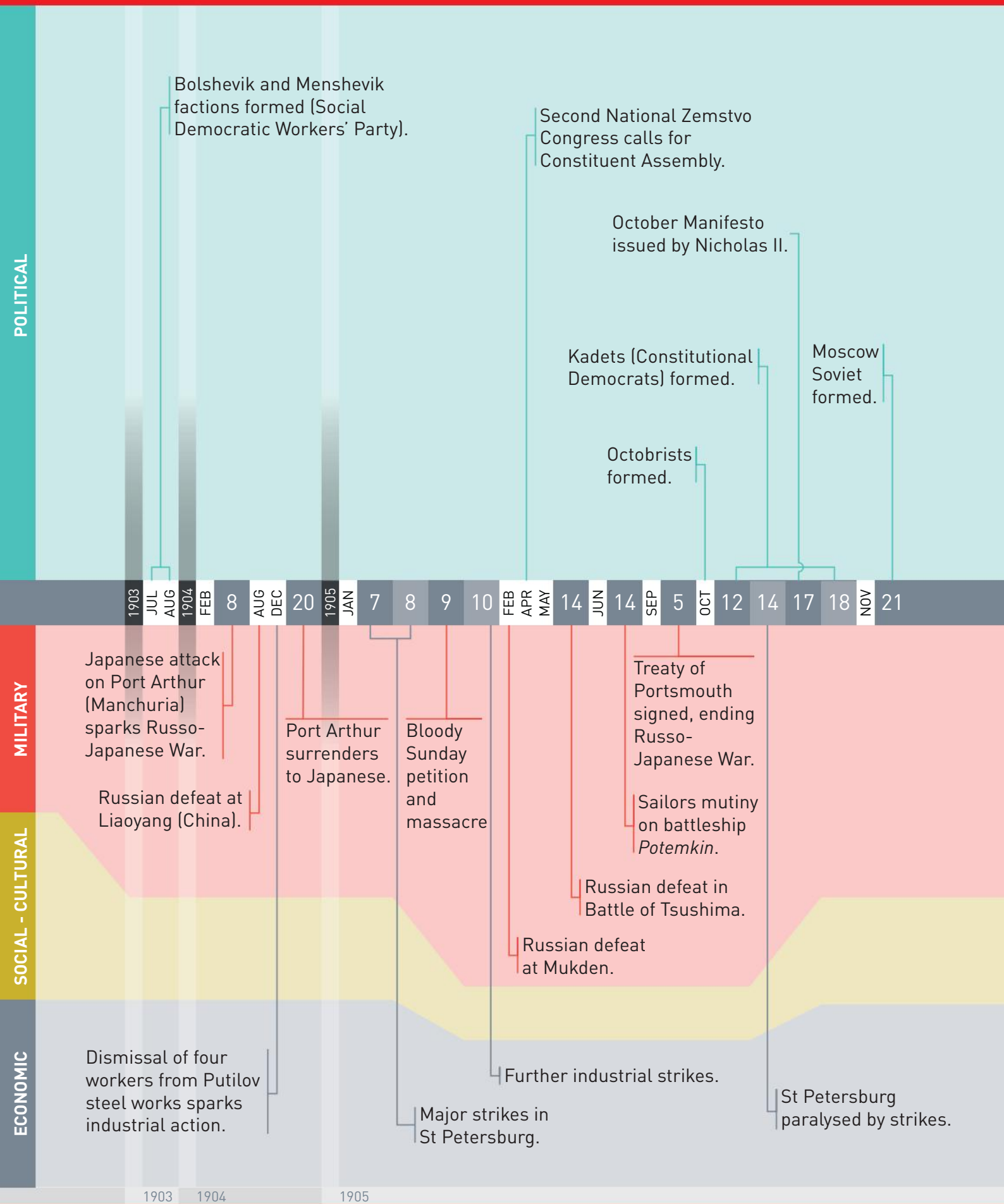
LAUREN PERFECT

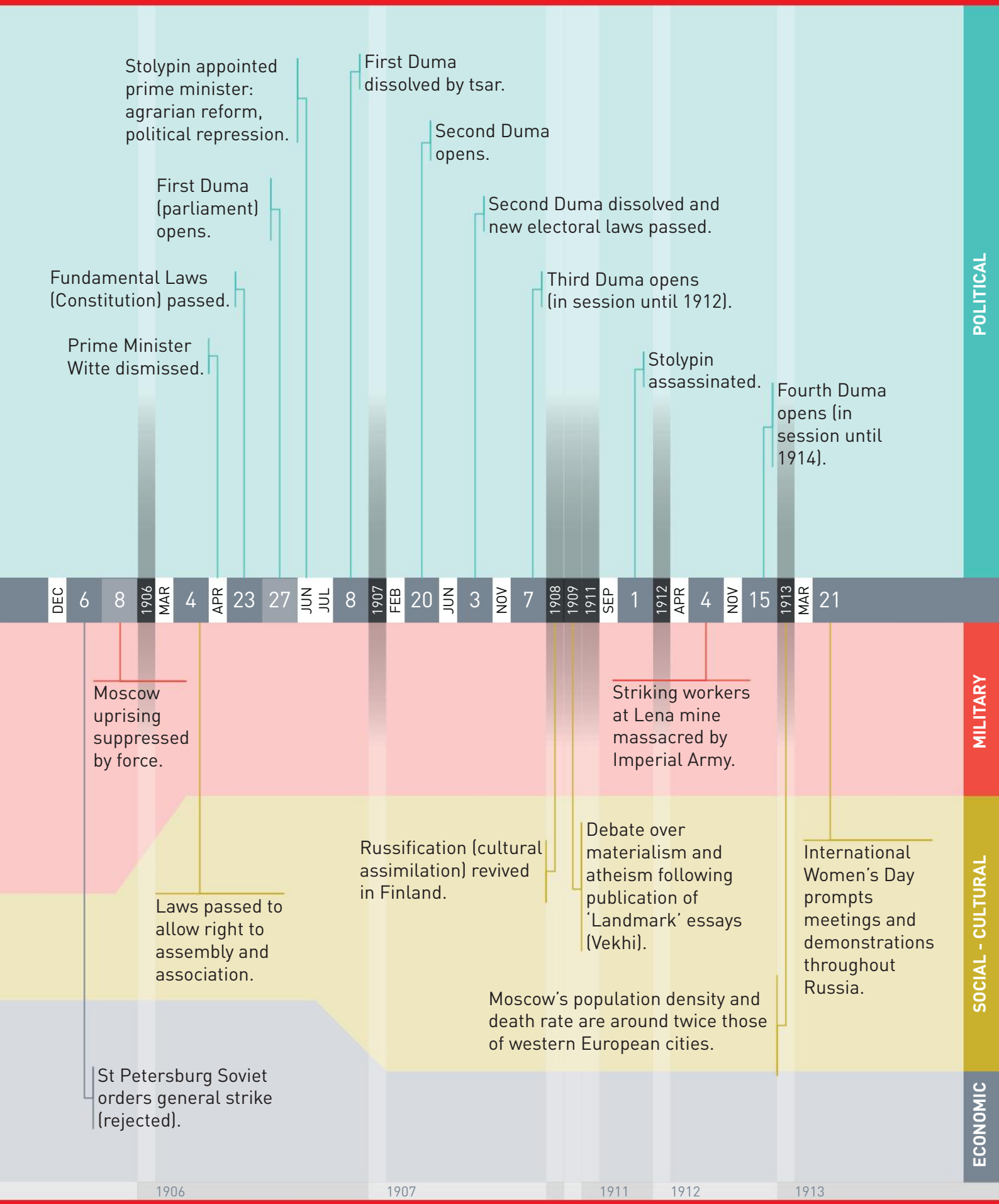
CHAPTER OVERVIEW




2 Social Unrest
Terrorist attacks
Worker and student demonstrations
Assassination of Plehve
Calls for democratic reform
3 Bloody Sunday
Gapon presents workers' petition
Army fires on civilians
Hundreds killed or injured
Anger at Tsar Nicholas II
1904 to 1914
4 1905 Revolution
Soldier and sailor mutinies
Peasants resist land seizures
Industrial strikes
Local government paralysed
Workers' councils formed (soviets)
Pledges freedom of speech and assembly
Hastens parliamentary elections
Tsar's attempt to quell chaos
Pledges voting rights
5 October Manifesto

TIMELINE


POLITICAL
MILITARY
SOCIAL - CULTURAL
ECONOMIC
Bolshevik and Menshevik factions formed (Social Democratic Workers' Party).
Second National Zemstvo Congress calls for Constituent Assembly.
October Manifesto issued by Nicholas II.
Kadets (Constitutional Democrats) formed.
Moscow Soviet formed.
Octobrists formed.
1903 JUL AUG 1904 FEB 8 AUG DEC 20 1905 JAN 7 8 9 10 FEB APR MAY 14 JUN 14 SEP 5 OCT 12 14 17 18 NOV 21
Japanese attack on Port Arthur (Manchuria) sparks Russo-Japanese War.
Russian defeat at Liaoyang (China).
Port Arthur surrenders to Japanese.
Bloody Sunday petition and massacre
Treaty of Portsmouth signed, ending Russo-Japanese War.
Sailors mutiny on battleship *Potemkin*.
Russian defeat in Battle of Tsushima.
Russian defeat at Mukden.
Dismissal of four workers from Putilov steel works sparks industrial action.
Major strikes in St Petersburg.
Further industrial strikes.
St Petersburg paralysed by strikes.
1903
1904
1905


POLITICAL
Stolypin appointed prime minister: agrarian reform, political repression.
First Duma dissolved by tsar.
Second Duma opens.
First Duma (parliament) opens.
Second Duma dissolved and new electoral laws passed.
Fundamental Laws (Constitution) passed.
Third Duma opens (in session until 1912).
Prime Minister Witte dismissed.
Stolypin assassinated.
Fourth Duma opens (in session until 1914).
DEC 6 8 1906 MAR 4 APR 23 27 JUN JUL 8 1907 FEB 20 JUN 3 NOV 7 1908 1909 1911 SEP 1 1912 APR 4 NOV 15 1913 MAR 21
MILITARY
Moscow uprising suppressed by force.
Striking workers at Lena mine massacred by Imperial Army.
SOCIAL - CULTURAL
Russification (cultural assimilation) revived in Finland.
Debate over materialism and atheism following publication of 'Landmark' essays (Vekhi).
International Women's Day prompts meetings and demonstrations throughout Russia.
Laws passed to allow right to assembly and association.
Moscow's population density and death rate are around twice those of western European cities.
ECONOMIC
St Petersburg Soviet orders general strike (rejected).
1906
1907
1911
1912
1913

Prime Minister Pyotr Stolypin.

INTRODUCTION

The new century brought with it new hopes in Russia. The tsarist government sought to expand its sphere of influence further east into Asia. Initially a plan for economic expansion, Russia's penetration into the Far East was also a product of 'the spirit of imperialism of the age,'[1] sparking conflict with other ambitious nations in the region. Japan, a rising power, resisted the eastern push, culminating in the Russo-Japanese War of 1904–05.

The war was a disaster for Russia. The country was soundly defeated by Japan and news of the dismal and embarrassing failure further provoked tensions throughout Russia. The defeat reflected poorly on Tsar Nicholas II and his regime, sparking political unrest and economic crisis. This unrest was initially felt in the industrial centres of St Petersburg and Moscow, where a growing working class, which was suffering the effects of rapid modernisation, latched onto the calls for democratic reform.

Tensions boiled over in January 1905, when masses of peaceful protesters, led by Father Georgiy Gapon, marched to the Winter Palace to present their grievances and proposals for reform to Nicholas II. The brutal reaction to this protest, 'Bloody Sunday,' was to spark a chain of unprecedented events. Widespread discontent in the urban centres soon spread to the countryside, with a variety of groups expressing dissatisfaction with the tsar. Sailors and returning soldiers from the Russo-Japanese War mutinied, much of the countryside was plunged into disarray and industrial action in the major cities continued, culminating in a general strike in Petrograd in October 1905.

'RUSSIA IN CRISIS' VIDEO

At this time the soviets (workers' councils) were beginning to exert considerable power. The soviets were dominated by the Socialist Revolutionaries, the Social Democratic Workers' Party and other radical groups. The combined strength of these groups forced the tsar to consider reform. Nicholas announced his 'October Manifesto' in 1905, which led to the introduction of a duma (parliament) the following year; some reformist groups were reassured by this while others remained defiant. Such divisions between gradualist and radical elements reduced the effectiveness of the anti-tsarist movement overall.

When the Fundamental State Laws were passed in April 1906, these served to reassert the tsar as the supreme power. Nevertheless, elections were held and, despite its restricted nature, a radical duma was formed, only to be swiftly dismissed by the tsar. This was to be repeated with the Second Duma and it was not until electoral laws were changed in 1907, to favour the more conservative parties, that tsar-approved dumas were able to serve their full five-year terms.

In 1906, Prime Minister Pyotr Stolypin (1862–1911) introduced a series of agrarian (agricultural) reforms. The measures were designed to give peasants smallholdings of land with which to make a living, and thus create a class of profit-minded and conservative peasants. The reforms, however, failed to disperse the growing sense of anger among peasants and others. Stolypin's assassination in 1911 sent a clear message of continued discontent and radical sentiment to Russian authorities.

The period 1904–14 saw the beginnings of an era marked by violence and terror on the international stage. This era, which Peter Holquist called an 'epoch of

1 Richard Pipes, *The Russian Revolution* (Vintage Books: New York, 1991), 12.

violence,'[2] was characterised by colonial expansionism and repression in several countries. It was in this context that revolutionary movements developed in Russia, arguably influencing the extreme nature of their methods.

RUSSO-JAPANESE WAR (1904–05)

Tsar Nicholas II: 'The Japanese are infidels. The might of Holy Russia will crush them.'

RUSSIAN POSTCARDS OF WAR WITH JAPAN

At the turn of the century Imperial Russia, like many European powers, sought to expand its empire. Of particular interest was land to the east, especially China and Korea. The Trans-Siberian railway was a direct move to expand towards this area, laying the infrastructure to connect western and eastern Russia.

Japan, a rising Asian power, was also looking to expand its empire and had recently succeeded in its territorial war with China. At the end of the Sino-Japanese War (1894–95), the European powers – Russia, Germany and France – intervened in the peace negotiations, hoping to gain benefits for themselves. This 'triple intervention,' as it became known, resulted in Russia convincing Japan to relinquish its hold in Manchuria (north-east China) in return for payment. Russia and Japan had long been engaged in disputes over this territory and tensions began to escalate in the region. Subsequently, Russia gained permission from China to build a railway across Manchuria. In 1898 Russia secured a twenty-five year lease on the Liaodong Peninsula and, with it, permission to extend the railway to Port Arthur. In 1903 Russia annexed Manchuria. The region was now on the brink of war.

In an attempt to prevent conflict, Japan proposed the creation of well-defined spheres of influence; it suggested that in return for recognition of the Russian presence in Manchuria, Russia should recognise Japan's influence in Korea. Upon Russia's rejection of the plan, Japan broke off diplomatic negotiations in February 1904. Japan had recently signed the Anglo-Japanese alliance (1902) with Britain, which ensured the European superpower would not come to Russia's aid in a conflict. Through rapid western modernisation initiated by Emperor Meiji (1852–1912), Japan had built a strong military and naval force. The country was well positioned for war.

On 8 February 1904, Japanese Admiral Togo sent a naval fleet to the Korean harbour of Chemulpo (Inchon) to disperse Russian ships stationed there, signalling the beginning of the Russo-Japanese War. A Japanese siege on Port Arthur soon followed, as nine Japanese destroyers sank much of the Russian fleet and forced the evacuation of the remainder of the Russian ships. Port Arthur eventually surrendered to the Japanese in January 1905 after months of seemingly futile fighting and a loss of approximately 31 000 Russian men. In a crushing blow to the Russians, the tsar's land army was defeated by the Japanese at the Battle of Mukden in February 1905. Approximately 90 000 men were lost. In May the Russian Baltic Fleet was defeated in less than twenty-four hours in the Battle of Tsushima, destroying Russia's naval power.

When the Russian public learned of the humiliating defeats in Asia, they reacted with anger, heightening an already tense situation in a nation in the midst of crisis. The situation in Russia, coupled with Japanese war-weariness, saw

DID YOU KNOW?

The Baltic Fleet took eight months to sail around the world and join the conflict in the Russo-Japanese War. The Fleet nearly sparked a war with England when it sank a group of fishing boats off Scotland. They mistook the fishing boats for Japanese torpedo boats!

2 Peter Holquist, 'Violent Russia, Deadly Marxism? Russia in the Epoch of Violence 1905–21' *Kritika: Explorations in Russian and Eurasian History 4*, no. 3 (Summer, 2003): 627–52.

A wounded Russian soldier is carried from the front down to the hospital in Port Arthur during the Russo-Japanese War.

diplomatic negotiations commence in mid-1905, resulting in US mediation and an agreement to sign an armistice. The Treaty of Portsmouth was signed in September 1905, officially ending the conflict. Japan retained control of Port Arthur and maintained Korea in its 'sphere of influence.' Russia was forced to evacuate Manchuria and cede the Liaodong Peninsula, as well as the southern half of Sakhalin, to Japan. On account of the diplomatic skills of Sergei Witte, Russia escaped having to pay compensation for its involvement in the war.

DOMESTIC IMPACTS OF THE WAR

Russian soldier: 'The Japanese are giving it to us with shells; we're giving it to them with icons.'

The effect on Russia of its war with Japan was far-reaching at a time of great social unrest. While some have reported that the minister of the interior, Vyacheslav Plehve, encouraged the tsar to actively provoke 'a little victorious war to stem the

revolution,'[3] it has been suggested by Richard Pipes that 'the origins of the Russo-Japanese conflict have long been distorted by the self-serving accounts of Sergei Witte.'[4] Pipes argues that Witte himself bore a great deal of the blame for the war through his vigorous economic policy in the Far East. He also suggests that while Nicholas II wished to avoid conflict with Japan, a sentiment supported by some of his ministers, he was encouraged by people such as General Kuropatkin, Minister of War, to engage in a short war in order to win an easy victory and boost national pride in a time of crisis. Whether the reasons for war stemmed from the government's desire to expand the empire and secure an ice-free port, or from the hope for a distraction from internal crisis, the results were disastrous. While the mainstream of Russian society was initially drawn together in patriotic enthusiasm, the population grew disenchanted as news of the humiliating land and sea defeats reached Russia. Instead of diverting public attention from the dire economic and social situation, the war highlighted Russia's poor technological infrastructure (basic equipment and services).

It became clear to ordinary Russians that their country was seriously under-equipped for military engagement, with its ineffective and ill-informed military leadership and inadequate supplies, largely due to the unsuccessful transport system. (The pride of the nation, the Trans-Siberian railway, lay incomplete in some sections and sabotaged in others, being of little assistance to a fledgling military force.) In the ensuing social, political and economic upheaval, which included terrorist attacks, student demonstrations and worker strikes, the liberal and radical movements gained ground. This resulted in domestic revolution before the war had even finished.

On 15 July 1904, Plehve was assassinated. As mentioned above, Plehve was regarded as the driving force behind Russia's involvement in a war with Japan and, as a consequence, was greatly disliked. Responsibility for the killing appears to have sat with members of the Socialist-Revolutionary Combat Organisation (the SR terrorist branch). The move was applauded by many.

Upon Plehve's death, his post was filled by Prince P.D. Sviatopolk-Mirskii, who was quick to adopt a more liberal approach to politics. It was his belief that in order to effectively govern Russia, both state and society must respect and trust each other. Mirskii's appointment was generally well accepted, since he relaxed censorship, abolished corporal punishment and restored some prominent members of local government boards (zemstvos) to their posts.

This liberal approach inspired the holding of a public congress addressing both zemstvo affairs and national issues, including proposals for a constitution. (Until that point zemstvos were limited in scope, being restricted to local, rather than national, issues.)[5] Plans were made for the congress to be held in early November. However, upon learning of the plans to discuss a constitution, Mirskii suggested the meetings be held in private. The congress was preceded on 17 September by a secret meeting in Paris between various oppositional groups, such as the Union of Liberation and the Socialist Revolutionaries. Known as the Paris Conference, the meeting proposed a united front against autocracy. The national Zemstvo Conference then met unofficially in St Petersburg on 6–9 November 1904, effectively serving as the first national assembly in Russian history. Under the guise of dinners and banquets, the group engaged in political meetings to discuss democratic possibilities. It was this group that called for a constitution, among other reforms.

3 Orlando Figes, *A People's Tragedy: The Russian Revolution 1891–1924*, (London: Pimlico, 1997), 168.

4 Pipes, *The Russian Revolution*, 12.

5 Julia Ulyannikova, 'Continuity and Change in the Russian Revolution,' HTAV Conference paper, Melbourne, February 2008.

CARTOON 1 (above): 'Japan — "I Seem to have some allies."' Caption (not pictured) reads: 'The war was marked by several accidents to Russian warships, which were blown up by their own mines. Another of Japan's allies was old Boreas [The North Wind], who froze thousands of Russians to death.'

CARTOON 2 (left): 'His Internal Troubles,' *Melbourne Punch*, 16 March 1905. Caption (not pictured) reads:

The Russians: 'How can a fellow fight, troubled internally as I am? For goodness' sake, give me some of your peace pills!'

The Mikado: 'Not so fast my friend, these pills are worth one hundred million guineas a box, and you must pay, pay, pay!'

ACTIVITY

SOURCE ANALYSIS

Look carefully at Cartoons 1 and 2, which both refer to the Russo-Japanese War. Then complete the tasks below.

1. What message is conveyed by each representation?
2. What symbols are used to express a point of view in each representation?
3. Which side of the conflict is portrayed as being in a superior position in both representations? Explain your answer.
4. To what extent do the two representations give an accurate depiction of the Russo-Japanese War?

Mirskii presented the proposed reforms to Nicholas II, who rejected most of them. He proclaimed to Witte, 'I shall never, under any circumstances, agree to the representative form of government because I consider it harmful to the people whom God has entrusted to my care.'[6] On 12 December the tsar's decree was passed, strengthening the rule of law, easing restrictions on the press and expanding the rights of the zemstvos. A parliamentary body, however, was not approved. It was an opportunity missed and tensions continued to mount.

ACTIVITY

SHORT RESPONSE

Using three or four points and citing evidence, explain how Russia's defeat in the Russo-Japanese War fuelled revolutionary sentiment in 1904–05.

BLOODY SUNDAY, 1905

Father Georgiy Gapon: 'There is no God any longer. There is no Tsar.'

Throughout the early stages of the new century three main groups emerged in opposition to the tsarist regime: the reformist middle class, the peasants and the industrial workers. It was the latter group that would play an integral role in the development of revolution in Russia.

Falling wages, coupled with the rising cost of living, increased discontent in the major cities. Between October 1903 and October 1904, real wages had decreased by up to one quarter,[7] while industrial recession, terrible working conditions and poor harvests led to growing worker restlessness. The situation escalated in December 1904 when four workers from the Putilov steel works, the largest industrial factory in St Petersburg, were dismissed, leading masses from that plant to strike in support of their fellow workers. By early January 1905 the number of industrial workers on strike had swelled to 120 000,[8] leading to the first chapter of the Russian Revolution, an event that was to become known as 'Bloody Sunday.'

Father Georgiy Gapon, 'a renegade priest with police connections,'[9] was the central figure in the 1905 revolution. Born to a peasant family in rural Russia, Gapon was prohibited from attending university due to minor involvement with revolutionary groups. He trained as a priest and worked with the underprivileged in St Petersburg (mainly with worker and convict groups). In 1904 Gapon established the Assembly of Russian Factory Workers, a group designed to support local workers and pursue industrial reform. This body was actively encouraged by the Ministry for the Interior, as it was a vehicle for channelling worker discontent away from other politically-motivated organisations emerging in the major cities. At the end of 1904 this group had 6000 to 8000 members[10] and its founder had established himself as a prominent member of the St Petersburg workers' community.

Gapon planned to approach Nicholas II on Sunday 9 January 1905 to present him with a petition outlining the grievances of the people of St Petersburg. The workers and their families would march peacefully to the tsar's home in St Petersburg, the Winter Palace, and present him with their petition begging for political, economic and social reform. In preparation, Gapon is reported to have sent letters to the tsar and the minister for the interior, Mirskii, informing them of the march. Even though the tsar had left St Petersburg for his country home, there is a suggestion that Gapon believed the tsar would return to meet his people.

6 Cited in Pipes, *The Russian Revolution,* 172.
7 Michael Bucklow and Glenn Russell, *Russia: Why Revolution?* (Melbourne: Longman, 1996), 67.
8 Richard Pipes, *A Concise History of the Russian Revolution* (New York: Vintage Books: 1996), 38.
9 Sheila Fitzpatrick, *The Russian Revolution* (Oxford: OUP, 1994), 32.
10 Bucklow and Russell, *Russia: Why Revolution?*, 67.

The tsar's soldiers shoot strikers during Bloody Sunday, St Petersburg, January 1905.

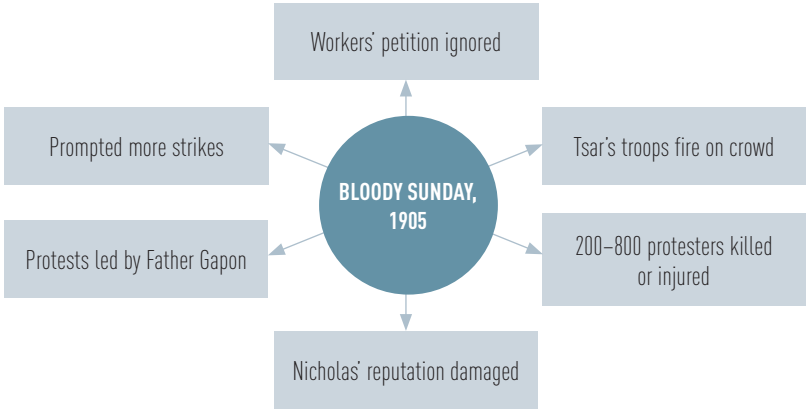
On Saturday 8 January, Gapon met with the justice minister, Muraviev, who in turn met with Mirskii, the police department and the chief of staff of the troops, to consider what action the government would take. The tsar is said to have learnt of the proposed march by nightfall. Troops were sent in to reinforce the garrison.

At approximately 10.00 the following morning workers and their families began to gather at four meeting points on the outskirts of St Petersburg. Up to 150 000 people marched peacefully in columns towards the Winter Palace, a procession which, according to Figes, 'formed something more like a religious procession than a workers' demonstration.'[11] Led by Father Gapon, the crowd carried religious icons and sang hymns. The gathering hoped to present the tsar with a petition for improved conditions for workers.

Leading one of the columns, Gapon carried a crucifix and behind him travelled a portrait of the tsar and a banner proclaiming, 'Soldiers do not shoot at the people!'[12] The crowd, however, never made it to the Winter Palace. There was panic in police ranks and the peaceful protestors were fired on and charged at as they approached their destination. It is reported that a few warning shots were fired, followed by direct shots at the crowd. Soon, forty people lay dead.[13]

Similar scenes were played out in other areas of the city, most violently at Nevsky Prospekt, where cavalry and cannons blocked the entrance to Palace Square, leading to further deaths and casualties. Journalists at the time wrote of up to 4600 people being either killed or wounded by tsarist troops and Cossack cavalry.[14] More recent estimates suggest up to 200 killed and 800 injured.[15]

Although Nicholas II was not present at the time, and did not directly order the troops to fire on civilians, he was held responsible for Bloody Sunday. The official history of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union (CPSU) says, 'On that day the workers received a bloody lesson. It was their faith in the tsar that was riddled by bullets on that day.'[16] Instead of 'Little Father,' the tsar came to be known as 'Nicholas the Bloody.'



11 Figes, *A People's Tragedy,* 173.
12 Figes, *A People's Tragedy*, 176.
13 Pipes, *The Russian Revolution,* 25.
14 Pipes, *The Russian Revolution,* 25.
15 Cited in Pipes, *The Russian Revolution,* 25.
16 Communist Party of the Soviet Union, *History of the CPSU* (Short Course) (International Publishers Co., 1939), 58.

DOCUMENT

PETITION PREPARED FOR PRESENTATION TO NICHOLAS II (JANUARY 9, 1905)

Sovereign!

We, workers and inhabitants of the city of St. Petersburg, members of various *sosloviia* (estates of the realm), our wives, children, and helpless old parents, have come to you, Sovereign, to seek justice and protection. We are impoverished and oppressed, we are burdened with work, and insulted. We are treated not like humans [but] like slaves who must suffer a bitter fate and keep silent. And we have suffered, but we only get pushed deeper and deeper into a gulf of misery, ignorance, and lack of rights. Despotism and arbitrariness are suffocating us, we are gasping for breath. Sovereign, we have no strength left. We have reached the limit of our patience. We have come to that terrible moment when it is better to die than to continue unbearable sufferings.

And so we left our work and declared to our employers that we will not return to work until they meet our demands. We do not ask much; we only want that without which life is hard labor and eternal suffering. Our first request was that our employers discuss our needs together with us. But they refused to do this; they denied us the right to speak about our needs, on the grounds that the law does not provide us with such a right. Also unlawful were our other requests: to reduce the working day to eight hours; for them to set wages together with us and by agreement with us; to examine our disputes with lower-level factory administrators; to increase the wages of unskilled workers and women to one ruble per day; to abolish overtime work; to provide medical care attentively and without insult; to build shops so that it is possible to work there and not face death from the awful drafts, rain and snow.[17]

17 'Petition Prepared for Presentation to Nicholas II January 9, 1905 (Bloody Sunday),' Documents in Russian History, http://academic.shu.edu/russianhistory/index.php/Workers%27_Petition%2C_January_9th%2C_1905_%28Bloody_Sunday%29.

ACTIVITY

SOURCE ANALYSIS

Read the extract 'Petition Prepared for Presentation to Nicholas II' and complete the tasks below.

1. Draw up a table with the following headings and fill it in.

GENERAL GRIEVANCES RAISED IN PETITION	SPECIFIC EXAMPLES OF INJUSTICE CITED	PERSUASIVE LANGUAGE USED BY PETITIONERS	SOCIAL GROUPS REPRESENTED BY PETITION

2. What picture emerges from the petition about daily life in Russia in 1905? How did people's working conditions and political rights differ from those experienced in Australia today?

Death as Czar [Tsar] of All the Russias, 1905.

ACTIVITY

SOURCE ANALYSIS

Look carefully at the cartoon *Death as Czar of All the Russias* and complete the tasks below.

1. Identify the message of the representation as conveyed by symbols and other visual elements.
2. Explain how the representation may have been influenced by the events of 1905 in Russia.
3. Referring to parts of the representation and using your own knowledge, explain why Bloody Sunday, 1905 was a revolutionary turning point in Russia.

DOCUMENTS: ACCOUNTS OF BLOODY SUNDAY

EXTRACT 1: FATHER GEORGIY GAPON, *THE STORY OF MY LIFE,* 1906

...I turned rapidly to the crowd and shouted to them to lie down, and I also stretched myself on the ground. As we lay thus another volley was fired, and another, and yet another, till it seemed as though the shooting was continuous...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 struck him down.

...At last the firing ceased...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...a new chapter was opened in the book of the history of our people... 'There is no longer any tsar for us!' I exclaimed.[18]

EXTRACT 2: ST PETERSBURG CORRESPONDENT OF *LE MATIN* (PARIS NEWSPAPER)

The soldiers of the Preobrazhensky regiment, without any summons to disperse, shoot down the unfortunate people as if they were playing at bloodshed. Several hundred fall; more than a hundred and fifty are killed. They are almost all children, women, and young people. It is terrible. Blood flows on all sides. At 5 o'clock the crowd is driven back, cut down and repelled on all sides. The people, terror-stricken, fly in every direction. Scared women and children slip, fall, rise to their feet, only to fall again farther on. At this moment a sharp word of command is heard and the victims fall en masse. There had been no disturbances to speak of. The whole crowd is unarmed and has not uttered a single threat.

As I proceeded, there were everywhere troops and Cossacks. Successive discharges of musketry shoot down on all sides the terrorized mob. The soldiers aim at the people's heads and the victims are frightfully disfigured. A woman falls almost at my side. A little farther on I slip on a piece of human brain. Before me is a child of eight years whose face is no longer human. Its mother is kneeling in tears over its corpse. The wounded, as they drag themselves along, leave streams of blood on the snow.[19]

EXTRACT 3: GOVERNMENT REPORT ON EVENTS OF 8–9 JANUARY 1905

...On the morning of January 8...the priest Gapon prepared and distributed a petition from the workers addressed to the sovereign, in which rude demands of a political nature were expressed along with wishes for changes in working conditions...the majority of workers were led astray concerning the purpose of the summons to Palace Square.

The fanatical preaching of the priest Gapon, forgetful of the sanctity of his calling, and the criminal agitation of persons of evil intent excited the workers to such an extent that on January 9 they began heading in great throngs toward the centre of the city. In some places bloody clashes took place between them and the troops, in consequence of the stubborn refusal of the crowd to obey the command to disperse, and sometimes even in consequence of attacks upon the troops.[20]

18 Georgei Gapon, *The Story of My Life* (London: Chapman & Hall, 1906).
19 James H. Robinson and Charles A. Beard, eds., *Readings in Modern European History,* vol. 2 (Boston: Ginn and Company, 1908), 375.
20 Cited in George Vernadsky, ed., *A Source Book for Russian History From Early Times to 1917,* vol. 1–3 (London: Yale University Press, 1972), 743.

ACTIVITY

HISTORICAL PERSPECTIVES

Read the accounts above of Bloody Sunday, 1905 and complete the tasks below.

1. To what extent do the three extracts agree on what happened on 9 January 1905? What might account for the different perspectives on the event?
2. How might the lives of members of the crowd been changed by Bloody Sunday?
3. As a class, debate the following statement: 'Despite the tragedy of 9 January 1905, there were some positive consequences of Bloody Sunday.'

DID YOU KNOW?

The 1925 film *Battleship Potemkin*, directed by Sergei Eisenstein, was named the greatest film of all time at the World's Fair in Brussels in 1958.

THE 1905 REVOLUTION

Tsar Nicholas II: 'Rioting and disturbances in the capitals and in many localities of Our Empire fill Our heart with great and heavy grief.'

Bloody Sunday had a crippling effect on the tsarist government, demonstrating for the first time widespread contempt for the regime. The autocracy was soon on the verge of collapse, as domestic and external events continued to punish an already fragile state. Bloody Sunday sparked further industrial action, seeing 400 000 workers strike in January alone.[21] News of the Russian defeat in the battle of Tsushima filtered home in May 1905, followed by a series of disturbances across the country.

Terrorism soon spread to rural areas, with peasants lashing out against government officials and landlords. Fearing the government would seize the property of peasants unable to repay mortgages, they seized the estates, crops and livestock of landowners, experiencing very little opposition as the lack of troops and isolated locations made it difficult for landlords to retaliate. By October, local government was paralysed. Minority groups throughout the empire took the opportunity to launch campaigns for independence or equality, such as Georgians, Poles and Jews.

Mutiny on the warship *Kniaz-Potemkin*, June 1905.

Julia Ulyannikova points out an interesting contradiction. The central government, while in some ways enjoying excessive power, was weak and poorly organised at the local level, meaning that crises such as those of 1905 were handled badly – emergency measures had to be found because there was no proper process to guide the authorities.[22] Having operated to a large extent on the arbitrary whims of governors, many local governments were corrupt and ineffectual, meaning that good information did not come their way in time to avert crises. Similarly, because the rights of minority groups had been suppressed for so long, such groups were able to take advantage of the chaos and demand autonomy when the system was at its most vulnerable.

The troops returning from Manchuria mutinied on their arrival home, taking control of the Trans-Siberian railway for some weeks. Despite the tsar's troops being able to eventually control the situation, the discontent had spread to yet another group. Mutinies continued in the tsar's military and navy, no more obvious than on the legendary battleship *Potemkin* in June. The crew of the *Prince Potemkin* battleship stationed in Odessa on the Black Sea mutinied on 14 June, murdering their officers and deserting their squadron, sailing out of Russian waters for Romania. Russian defeat and the end of the Russo-Japanese War had certainly exacerbated the situation.

Robert Service writes that at this stage 'the monarchy's fate hung by a thread.'[23] War defeat had in many ways united the anti-tsarist forces. Sergei Witte feared the

21 Bucklow and Russell, *Russia: Why Revolution?*, 76.
22 Ulyannikova, 'Continuity and Change in the Russian Revolution.'
23 Robert Service, *The Russian Revolution 1900–1927* (London: Macmillan, 1991), 14.

HISTORICAL INTERPRETATIONS ACTIVITY

sailors and soldiers would join the revolution, further threatening the government. Luckily for the tsar, at this point the revolutionaries were far too scattered and disunited in their cause to mount a serious challenge.

The outraged reaction to Bloody Sunday spread through universities around the country. Students went on strike in large numbers, turning campuses into 'centres of political agitation'; in Moscow University alone over 3000 students staged a rally,[24] burning a portrait of the tsar and hanging red flags from the buildings. The political fervour spread to some secondary schools and theological academies. On 18 March the authorities ordered all institutions of higher learning closed for the remainder of the academic year.

Throughout 1905 industrial strikes spread from the centre in St Petersburg to other major cities and towns. The prominence of opposition groups continued to grow and, spurred on by the Second National Congress of Zemstvos, professional unions organised themselves into a national alliance, the Union of Unions. This body provided the intelligentsia with connections to ordinary working people. Led by liberal politician Pavel Milyukov, the group demanded a Constituent Assembly (previously called for by the zemstvos) and voting rights for all. This paved the way for other organisations, such as the Constitutional Democratic Party, or Kadets (principally made up of middle-class liberals), to seek representation in government.

Also emerging during this period were the workers' councils, or soviets. These groups developed in the major cities, especially St Petersburg and Moscow, and by the end of 1905 approximately eighty soviets had been formed.[25] Despite being originally designed to represent the rights of workers, the soviets were soon recognised by parties such as the Socialist Revolutionaries as a potential power base. Leon Trotsky, a Menshevik (more moderate faction of the Russian Social Democratic Workers' Party), became the vice chairman of the St Petersburg Soviet, which called for a National General Strike.

THE TSAR'S OCTOBER MANIFESTO

Empress Marie Fedorovna Romanov (wife of Alexander III): 'I'm sure that the only man who can help you now and be useful is Witte.'

October 1905 saw widespread industrial action as printers and bakers downed tools, supported by factory, railway, post, telegraph and bank workers, civil servants, teachers and even the Imperial Ballet dancers. By 14 October the economies of both Moscow and St Petersburg were paralysed and the cities ground to a halt. A spontaneous action by the masses had forced Nicholas II into a position where he needed to act swiftly. The tsar, facing the potential collapse of his regime, needed to make concessions and he looked to his advisor, the former finance minister, Count Sergei Witte, for the solution. Witte, recently returned from negotiating peace with the Japanese, reported to the tsar that significant reform was required in order to bring peace to the nation. He suggested that the State Council must be considerably improved and, above all, the tsar must provide the right for the people to elect members of government. Severe repression must be ended in all matters, excluding those that significantly threatened the

24 Figes, *A People's Tragedy*, 181.
25 Bucklow and Russell, *Russia: Why Revolution?*, 76.

state and the tsar must adopt a policy of sincerity and 'freedom.'[26] Witte drafted the October Manifesto with Minister for Education Alexi Obolensky, which outlined these key reforms. He persuaded Nicholas to accept these terms and the document was issued on 17 October 1905.

26 Pipes, *A Concise History of the Russian Revolution*, 41.

DOCUMENT

OCTOBER MANIFESTO, 1905

We, Nicholas II, By the Grace of God Emperor and Autocrat of all Russia, King of Poland, Grand Duke of Finland, etc., proclaim to all Our loyal subjects:

Rioting and disturbances in the capitals [i.e. St. Petersburg and the old capital, Moscow] and in many localities of Our Empire fill Our heart with great and heavy grief. The well-being of the Russian Sovereign is inseparable from the well-being of the nation, and the nation's sorrow is his sorrow. The disturbances that have taken place may cause grave tension in the nation and may threaten the integrity and unity of Our state.

By the great vow of service as tsar We are obliged to use every resource of wisdom and of Our authority to bring a speedy end to unrest that is dangerous to Our state. We have ordered the responsible authorities to take measures to terminate direct manifestations of disorder, lawlessness, and violence and to protect peaceful people who quietly seek to fulfill their duties. To carry out successfully the general measures that we have conceived to restore peace to the life of the state, We believe that it is essential to coordinate activities at the highest level of government.

We require the government dutifully to execute our unshakeable will:

(1.) To grant to the population the essential foundations of civil freedom, based on the principles of genuine inviolability of the person, freedom of conscience, speech, assembly and association.

(2.) Without postponing the scheduled elections to the State Duma, to admit to participation in the duma (insofar as possible in the short time that remains before it is scheduled to convene) of all those classes of the population that now are completely deprived of voting rights; and to leave the further development of a general statute on elections to the future legislative order.

(3.) To establish as an unbreakable rule that no law shall take effect without confirmation by the State Duma and that the elected representatives of the people shall be guaranteed the opportunity to participate in the supervision of the legality of the actions of Our appointed officials.

We summon all loyal sons of Russia to remember their duties toward their country, to assist in terminating the unprecedented unrest now prevailing, and together with Us to make every effort to restore peace and tranquility to Our native land.

Given at Peterhof the 17th of October in the 1905th year of Our Lord and of Our reign the eleventh.

Nicholas[27]

27 'Manifesto of October 17th, 1905,' Documents in Russian History, http://academic.shu.edu/russianhistory/index.php/Manifesto_of_October_17th%2C_1905.

ACTIVITY

SOURCE ANALYSIS

Read the extract from Nicholas II's October Manifesto, 1905 and complete the tasks below.

1. Identify two signs of social upheaval referred to in the extract.
2. Identify two examples of emotive language used by Nicholas to persuade.
3. In your own words, explain the meaning of the three reforms listed in the manifesto.
4. Identify the obligations of the Russian people outlined in the document.
5. Discuss the significance of the October Manifesto. What did the manifesto suggest about the ways in which tsarist Russia was changing?

RESPONSES TO THE OCTOBER MANIFESTO

Leon Trotsky: 'We have been given a constitution, but absolutism remains... everything is given and nothing is given.'

REVOLUTIONARY GROUPS

The October Manifesto paved the way for a future where the power lay not with an autocratic ruler, but in a working relationship between a legislative duma and the tsar. This, coupled with the promise of a liberalisation of censorship and a gradual unlocking of land, gave the 1905 reforms the potential to appeal to many. Despite this, the manifesto received a mixed reception. While some groups saw it as an important step in the right direction, paving the way for further reform, others doubted it would ever come into practice. The manifesto divided the liberals, seeing the Octobrists accept the reform, while the Constitutional Democrats (Kadets) pursued further concessions. To the government it seemed that revolution had been avoided and the divide between the various liberal and revolutionary factions had been widened.

The Release. An optimistic view of the October Manifesto, published in *Punch*, 8 November 1905.

The greatest opposition to the October Manifesto came from the St Petersburg Soviet. The Soviet saw the manifesto as 'a fraud on the people, a trick of the Tsar to gain some sort of respite in which to lull the credulous and to win time to rally his forces and then to strike at the revolution.'[28] Having gained considerable influence during the General Strike, the Soviet felt able to encourage further revolutionary action and did this by calling for the General Strike to continue. Workers, however, returned to work, buoyed by the possibility of reform and unable to shoulder the economic burden of being on strike.

Following the arrest of its chairman, Nosar, the St Petersburg Soviet responded with an armed uprising. Two-hundred-and-sixty deputies, approximately half the membership, were arrested on 3 December.[29] The Moscow Soviet called a strike on 6 December that crippled the city. After troops were sent from St Petersburg the strike was ended on 18 December, limiting the influence of the Soviet. Over 1000 people lost their lives in the Moscow uprising.[30] Following this the St Petersburg Soviet headquarters were stormed and key figures were arrested, including Trotsky.

28 Communist Party of the Soviet Union, *History of the CPSU*, 79.
29 Pipes, *The Russian Revolution*, 49.
30 Pipes, *The Russian Revolution*, 450.

DID YOU KNOW?

Sergei Witte, chief architect of the October Manifesto, admitted that while he drafted the reform he did not care for it. First and foremost he was loyal to the tsar: 'I have a constitution in my head, but as to my heart, I spit on it.'

INDUSTRIAL WORKERS

Even though industrial workers were able to bring the central cities and towns to a standstill simply by stopping work, many were disengaged from the push for political reform and revolution, preoccupied with daily social and economic concerns. In general they wanted specific improvements such as an eight-hour working day, an elected workers' council and better medical services. Despite the work of the Social Democrats and, more directly, the soviets, workers largely remained focused on immediate economic reform. Wider political propaganda of the revolutionaries, such as calls for a 'constituent assembly' or a 'socialist proletarian revolution,' did little to interest them. Many could not afford to answer the call for another general strike. The St Petersburg and Moscow soviets had lost much of their influence over the industrial workers, a significant benefit for the tsar.

Russian labourers awaiting work.

PEASANTS

Like industrial workers, peasants remained largely disengaged from the push for political reform. They too wished for immediate change, however, their interest lay, largely, in gaining land and having lower taxes. Although there were a few radicalised peasants, they were often isolated and poorly coordinated. While it can be argued that the October Manifesto provided little for the peasants, it did offer hope for a limited recoup of land. Peasants pursued the idea of getting landlords to leave the country areas and sell their holdings, cheaply, to peasants. This led to some violent confrontations, which the tsar contained with the use of floggings and firing squads. Despite these repressive techniques the peasants were, to a certain extent, appeased by the October Manifesto, with land redemption payments for 1905 halved and later cancelled altogether. Fewer land seizures occurred, leading the peasants to pin their hopes on the duma.

ACTIVITY

HISTORICAL PERSPECTIVES

Create an infographic or cartoon showing what each of the following characters might have said about the October Manifesto:

- Aleksandr, an Octobrist
- Anna, an industrial worker from Moscow
- Pyotr, a Kadet
- Viktor, a member of the St Petersburg Soviet
- Irina, a peasant from Samara.

CONSEQUENCES OF THE 1905 REVOLUTION

CARTOONS OF 1905 REVOLUTION

Leon Trotsky: 'Although with a few broken ribs, tsarism came out of the experience of 1905 alive and strong enough.'

The tsarist regime emerged out of 1905 in many ways unscathed in the short term, despite a significant war loss, the rise of unions, crippling industrial action and the surfacing of key opposition groups. Sheila Fitzpatrick contends that the political outcome of the 1905 Revolution was 'ambiguous and in some ways unsatisfactory to all concerned,'[31] an argument furthered by Richard Pipes who highlights both the achievements and failures of key movements such as socialists, liberals, conservatives and even the government itself. While it conceded, the government did take a decisive stand, in many ways reasserting itself as a firm authority. In the process of concession, the regime managed to divide opposition groups and send a clear message to those who attempted to undermine the government that all challenges would be met with repression. The government realised that so long as they retained the loyalty of the military, which was ensured after initial mutinies subsided, protest could be withstood. The government also secured the allegiance of counter-revolutionary forces, such as wealthy landowners, high clergymen and many professionals.

Whether the events of 1905 actually constitute a revolution remains a topic of some debate. While it certainly resulted in reform, the extent to which this reform actually benefited the people of Russia in the long term is contentious, especially when subsequent reform passed in 1906 is explored. In light of these changes, the duma in actuality did not curb the tsar's powers. The revolution of 1905 also lacked the participation of key revolutionary leaders, most notably Lenin, Martov, Trotsky, Plekhanov and Chernov, all of whom were in exile at that time.

31 Fitzpatrick, *The Russian Revolution*, 34.

DOCUMENT

LEON TROTSKY, *THE HISTORY OF THE RUSSIAN REVOLUTION*, 1930

> The Russo-Japanese War had made tsarism totter...The workers had organised independently of the bourgeoisie in the soviets. Peasant uprisings to seize the land occurred throughout the country. Not only the peasants, but also the revolutionary parts of the army tended towards the soviets. However, all the revolutionary forces were then going into action for the first time, lacking experience and confidence. The liberals backed away from the revolution exactly at the moment when it became clear that to shake tsardom would not be enough, it must be overthrown. This sharp break of the bourgeoisie with the people, in which the bourgeoisie carried with it considerable circles of the democratic intelligentsia, made it easier for the monarch to differentiate within the army, separating out the loyal units and to make a bloody settlement with the workers and peasants. Although with a few broken ribs, tsarism came out of the experience of 1905 alive and strong enough.[32]

32 'The History of the Russian Revolution,' Leon Trotsky, trans. Max Eastman, www.marxists.org/archive/trotsky/1930/hrr/.

1905 REVOLUTION ACTIVITY

Prior to the October Manifesto in 1905 all political parties were illegal. As a result, opposition groups were forced into hiding and met either in secret or abroad. Many were radical in nature. Since the groups differed widely in ideology and practice, there tended to be suspicion, rivalry and even hostility between them. Key groups such as the Socialist Revolutionary Party and the Social Democratic Workers' Party were at loggerheads, rather than presenting a united front against the tsar. The upheaval in 1905 allowed existing political parties and emerging groups to surface. Institutions such as soviets and the Peasants Union gave a voice to previously-marginalised people. For the first time in Russian history, there was genuine pressure being exerted on the tsarist system.

EMERGING REFORMISTS AND REVOLUTIONARIES

***The Captain's Daughter,* Aleksandr Pushkin:** 'God defend you from the sight of a Russian rebellion in all its ruthless stupidity. Those who meditate in our country impossible revolutions, are either young and do not know our people, or are hard-hearted folk, who rate the lives of others cheap, and care nothing for their own necks.'

After 1905, many reformist and revolutionary groups began to gain influence in the community. Many of these had been around for some time. The main groups, their programs and support bases are outlined below.

I) POPULISTS (NARODNIKS)

POPULISTS	
Established	1870s
Members and support base	Peasants (*Narod* means 'the people')
Leadership	From middle and upper classes
Platform / methods	Called for a peasant-based revolution Believed the future of Russia lay in the hands of the peasant class and looked to them to take the lead in revolutionary action Felt it was the duty of the leadership to educate the masses and heighten their understanding of their potential as revolutionaries Attempted to educate the masses (this was largely unsuccessful) Main terrorist action: the 1881 assassination of Tsar Alexander II by the People's Will (see Chapter 1)
Legacy	Evolved into the Socialist Revolutionary Party

II) SOCIALIST REVOLUTIONARIES (SRs)

KEY PLAYERS ACTIVITY

SOCIALIST REVOLUTIONARIES	
Established	Emerged out of Populist movement in 1890s 1901 saw Viktor Chernov (editor of the party's newspaper) form and lead the national Socialist Revolutionary Party
Members and support base	Peasants the largest support base, but urban working class also represented
Leadership	Intelligentsia developed the theoretical base Led by Viktor Chernov and later Alexander Kerensky (who became prime minister in 1917)
Platform / methods	Primarily fought for land ownership for peasants Advocated violence to overthrow tsar Left faction called for a socialist state based on the peasants' commune Believed capitalism would not make progress in Russia Did not believe in the overthrow of the bourgeoisie by a proletariat class Believed Russia could evolve into a socialist society without a class war The promise of land proved the key ingredient for maintaining peasant support
Legacy	Remained the revolutionary group with the largest following until the Bolsheviks outlawed the party

A split emerged between the Maximalists (left-wing) and the Revolutionaries (right-wing) within the Socialist Revolutionaries group. The Maximalists engaged in terrorist-style activity and acts of 'economic terror,'[33] threatening and assassinating landlords and factory owners. The Revolutionaries were more moderate, prepared to cooperate with others to bring about immediate improvements.

The early years of the century saw the Left SRs dominate through terrorist activity, seeing over 2000 assassinations between the years 1901 to 1905.[34] Key assassinations included Minister of the Interior Plehve and Nicholas II's uncle, Grand Duke Sergei. These actions did little to appeal to the people and saw the moderate Socialist Revolutionaries gain more influence after the events of 1905. The following year saw major developments within the party, with professionals and trade unions lending their support to the party, including the All Russian Union of Peasants established in 1905 following the October Manifesto.

At the First Party Congress in 1906 the left faction of the SRs broke off, while the more moderate right claimed the party's platform was unworkable. This resulted in radical splinter groups emerging in 1906.

33 Pipes, *The Russian Revolution*, 148.

34 Michael Lynch, *Reaction and Revolutions: Russia 1881–1924* (Oxford: Hodder and Stoughton, 2000), 37.

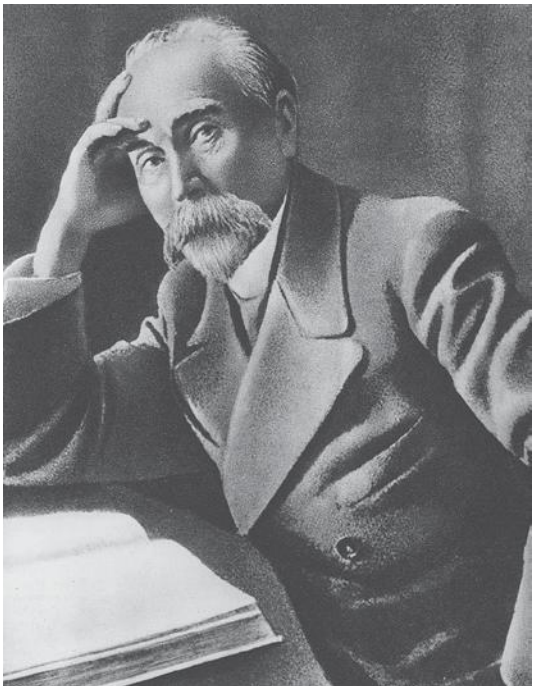
III) SOCIAL DEMOCRATIC WORKERS' PARTY (SDs)

SOCIAL DEMOCRATIC WORKERS' PARTY (OR 'ALL RUSSIAN DEMOCRATIC LABOUR PARTY')	
Established	1898
Members and support base	Marxist party Industrial working class
Leadership	Intelligentsia developed theoretical base Key leaders: Lenin, Plekhanov, Martov
Platform / methods	The group believed that the 'great spurt' of the 1890s led to the creation of an industrial working class, thus placing Russia in a perfect position for revolution All revolutionary hopes directed firmly at industrial working class, not peasants Initially committed to Marxist idea of class war, believing that industrialisation would create a proletariat class that would be capable of carrying out socialist revolution
Legacy	Division into two factions: Bolsheviks and Mensheviks October Revolution 1917

DID YOU KNOW?

The pseudonym 'Lenin' was most likely derived from the River Lena in Siberia. He first used it in 1901.

Plekhanov.



In 1893 the first Russian Marxist group was formed by George Plekhanov. Known as the 'father of Russian Marxism,' Plekhanov was the first to translate Marx's teachings into Russian. Proving to be too theoretical in his leadership, Plekhanov lost support. Thereupon, the editor of the party's newspaper, Vladimir Ilyich Ulyanov, or Lenin (his revolutionary pseudonym), took centre stage in voicing his opinions about the future of the party, most notably regarding the issue of leadership. Lenin had produced his watershed pamphlet *What is to be Done?* in 1902, which urged the group to adopt a methodical and professional approach to ideology and action. The text was to become, according to Figes, 'the founding text of international Leninism.'[35]

Lenin argued that membership of the party should be 'confined' to people who had been 'trained in the art of combating the political police' and were 'professionally engaged in revolutionary activity.' He argued that a limited group of dedicated professional revolutionaries was the key to success, drawing on a scientific analysis of socialism to highlight the natural path of a socialist revolution. He firmly believed that Marx and Engels had defined the true path of a socialist revolution and that Russia needed only to put this theory into action. Lenin also argued that only those truly informed individuals, the revolutionary intelligentsia, were capable of leading such a revolution and it was the role of the masses, the workers and Marxist supporters, to be guided by them.

35 Figes, *A People's Tragedy*, 150.

DOCUMENT

VLADIMIR ILYICH LENIN: *WHAT IS TO BE DONE?*, 1902.

I assert:

1) that no revolutionary movement can endure without a stable organization of leaders maintaining continuity;
2) that the broader the popular mass drawn spontaneously ... into the struggle, forming the basis of the movement and participating in it, the more urgent the need for such an organization, and the more solid this organization must be (for it is much easier for demagogues to side track the more backward sections of the masses);
3) that such an organization must consist chiefly of people professionally engaged in revolutionary activity;
4) that in an autocratic state, the more we confine the membership of such an organization to people who are professionally engaged in revolutionary activity and to have been professionally trained in the art of combating the political police, the more difficult will it be to wipe out such an organization, and
5) the greater will be the number of people of the working class and of the other classes of society who will be able to join the movement and perform active work in it…[36]

36 V.I. Lenin, *What is to be Done?*, first published by Dietz, Stuttgart, March 1902.

ACTIVITY

SOURCE ANALYSIS

Read the extract from Lenin's *What is to be Done?* and complete the tasks below.

1. List the actions Lenin suggests the Social Democratic Workers' Party (SDs) must take.
2. To what extent did Lenin's view differ from the path the SDs had previously taken? Use evidence to support your answer.
3. Discuss the significance of Lenin's pamphlet in changing the structure of the SDs.

Bolsheviks and Mensheviks (SDs)

LENIN'S 'WHAT IS TO BE DONE?'

The titles 'Menshevik' and 'Bolshevik' emerged from the Second Party Congress in 1903. Throughout the congress Lenin provoked confrontation, challenging the notion of who had a right to party membership, whilst also challenging the leader, Plekhanov. Tensions continued to mount, seeing Lenin and Martov divided in opinion. The congress had been forced into an impossible situation and a decision needed to be made. A vote was taken to resolve the issue and as a result the party split into two factions; Lenin and his supporters became the Bolsheviks (*Bolshinstvo* meaning majority), while the opposition group, Martov and his supporters became known as the Mensheviks (*Menshinstvo* meaning minority). Despite the titles, votes actually produced fairly even results; however, after a subsequent vote had returned a favourable result for Lenin, he proclaimed it was he and his supporters who were the majority. Ironically, as the revolution drew nearer it was the Mensheviks who outnumbered the Bolsheviks. The adoption of these names, forever branding the Mensheviks as a minority party, was a move Figes considers to be 'very foolish'[37] and was in years to come a distinct disadvantage for the Mensheviks.

By 1905 the two groups were moving in opposing directions and in 1912 they officially separated. Ideological and practical differences became increasingly apparent, seeing the two groups become bitter rivals as the years progressed.

37 Figes, *A People's Tragedy*, 152.

IV) LIBERALS: OCTOBRISTS AND KADETS

The liberals were mainly left-leaning intellectuals. Led by the progressive middle class, liberals believed in political and social reform rather than a violent overthrow of the tsarist system. In their philosophical outlook the liberals differed from the radicals, in that they did not share the belief that human beings and society could be perfected. In much of their strategy and tactics, however, they were similar to radicals. The liberals followed a radical social program, pursuing the redistribution of land and comprehensive social welfare. They also used the threat of revolution to their advantage, pressuring the monarchy for political concessions, suggesting it to be a far better alternative than suffering at the hands of the revolutionaries.

Emerging during the industrial growth of the 1890s, the liberals included those in the urban areas such as the ambitious class of industrialists, lawyers and financiers, while in the rural areas, those pursuing land reform supported the liberal cause. Often this group would incorporate a nationalistic element, with ethnic minorities using the group as a vehicle through which to seek independence. The two main sources of the liberal movement were the zemstvos (rural councils) and the intelligentsia. The zemstvos functioned as an elected franchise on a district and provincial level and represented mostly the landed gentry. Although considered by the monarchy to be supportive, the zemstvos were prohibited from forming a national organisation, as the monarchy believed they may begin to resemble a national parliament. While most deputies elected to zemstvos tended to be hostile to the autocracy and bureaucratic rule, they did remain opposed to revolution. From the 1890s onwards the role of zemstvos was restricted, forcing the bodies at times to resort to 'informal' national consultations rather than meeting openly.

Two main political parties emerged out of the liberal movement, the Octobrists and the Kadets.

OCTOBRISTS	
Established	1905, in response to Nicholas II's October Manifesto
Members and support base	Moderates loyal to the tsar Commercial and land-owning classes
Leadership	Key leaders: Alexander Guchkov and Mikhail Rodzianko (Guchkov served in the Provisional Government in 1917)
Platform / methods	Wanted preservation of tsarism Supported the October Manifesto and the creation of a duma Progress should be pursued through peace and law and order, not violence Argued for tsarism in conjunction with a legislative duma
Legacy	Influenced dumas to pursue genuine reform Members later served in the Provisional Government

KADETS (CONSTITUTIONAL DEMOCRATS)	
Established	October 1905
Members and support base	Progressive landlords, small industrial entrepreneurs, professionals and academics
Leadership	Liberal intelligentsia Key leader: Paul Milyukov, who served in the Provisional Government in 1917
Platform / methods	Pursued a constitutional monarchy where the powers of the tsar would be restricted by a constituent, or national, assembly Sought reforms such as equality, civil rights, free speech, land redemption payments, recognition of unions, the right to strike and universal education
Legacy	Largest of all liberal parties The first major opposition voice to tsarism in the duma Leader in forming the Provisional Government following the February Revolution of 1917

In the Russian context, the revolutionary parties sat in the following order on the political spectrum:

ACTIVITY

DIAGRAM

Complete a more detailed diagram or concept map which visually represents the similarities and differences between the Bolshevik SDs, Menshevik SDs, Socialist Revolutionaries, Kadets and Octobrists between 1904 and 1914.

THE DUMAS

Tsar Nicholas II: 'Curse the Duma. It's all Witte's fault.'

In accordance with the October Manifesto of 1905, Russia entered a new period of parliamentary government. Between 1906 and 1917 Russia was ruled by a combination of the tsar as God's representative on earth and the duma as the representative of the people. Alan Wood describes the new era in Russia as being 'a period of uneasy and ambiguous experimentation with quasi-constitutional politics.'[38] Following the abolition of censorship on 24 November, new electoral laws were passed on 11 December, whereby all men over the age of twenty-five were eligible to vote indirectly (i.e. to elect someone to vote on their behalf at a higher level), but only landowners with estates exceeding 200 hectares were

38 Alan Wood, *The Origins of the Russian Revolution 1861–1917*, 3rd edition (Routledge: London, 2003), 34.

eligible to vote directly.[39] Peasants were required to vote indirectly in three stages, where they would elect delegates to vote on their behalf at higher levels. Other prominent groups in Russian society, however, were excluded, such as factory workers from businesses employing fewer than fifty employees, building labourers and tradesmen. This meant that over sixty per cent of the urban working population was ineligible,[40] making universal suffrage a distant hope.

Despite being the instigator of the initial reforms, Prime Minister Sergei Witte grew ambivalent about the idea of a representative duma. The tsar began to lose faith in his formerly trusted advisor, signalling that Witte's time in government was drawing to a close. Witte's last successful action was to negotiate a loan from France, ensuring funding for local law and order. He resigned from his post on 22 April 1906 and was replaced by Ivan Goremykin. Meanwhile, Minister of the Interior Pyotr Durnovo embarked upon a series of strict policies, aggressively working to counter social revolutionary action and control the press. Durnovo was soon to be replaced by Pyotr Stolypin. It was during these early months of 1906 that the tsar issued laws upgrading the State Council of Imperial Russia, an advisory board to work in conjunction with the duma, creating a 198-member upper chamber of parliament comprising one-half of members appointed directly by the tsar and the other half elected representatives from wealthy noble, church and zemstvo assemblies. Not surprisingly, it was a conservative body, which agreed with the tsar on most significant issues. It was here that Nicholas first failed to honour promises made in the October Manifesto, which clearly outlined only one legislative body, the duma.

Despite making provisions for a legislative duma, the tsar's reforms in no way altered his commitment to autocratic rule. He considered the duma to be a consultative, rather than legislative body, saying to the minister of war, 'I created the Duma, not to be directed by it, but to be advised.'[41] His views were again reiterated in the Fundamental Laws of 23 April 1906. As it was designed as a constitutional charter, the drafters were careful to omit the word 'constitution' from the document, reflecting Nicholas' belief that Russia was still an autocracy.[42] The Fundamental Laws reiterated the tsar's supreme power, stating that all laws required his approval in order to be passed and allowing him to appoint his own ministers, to be accountable to him and not the duma. The tsar retained complete control over foreign affairs, military supervision, states of emergency and so on. These laws also cemented the shared authority of the duma and imperial council, stating that both houses of parliament, each sitting for a term of five years, needed to be in agreement for all laws to be passed.

FUNDAMENTAL STATE LAWS

With the tsar retaining such significant powers and each law requiring his direct approval, the duma exerted very little legislative influence. Article 87 stated that when the duma was not in session or under 'exceptional circumstances' the tsar held the power to legislate on his own, providing the decision received approval from the duma within two months. The latter part of the process, however, was often overlooked and, naturally, once passed, laws became very difficult to overturn.

The first elections for the duma began in late February 1906, with most of them being complete by mid-April. Unions and political parties were made legal on 4 March. Prior to the elections, all political parties left of the Kadets, including the Socialist Revolutionaries and Social Democrats, officially boycotted the elections,

39 Bucklow and Russell, *Russia: Why Revolution?,* 87.
40 Bucklow and Russell, *Russia: Why Revolution?,* 87.
41 Cited in Pipes, *The Russian Revolution,* 154.
42 Fitzpatrick, *The Russian Revolution,* 34.

DOCUMENT

FUNDAMENTAL LAWS, 1906

1. The Russian State is one and indivisible....

3. The Russian language is the general language of the state, and its use is compulsory in the army, the navy and state and public institutions....

4. The All-Russian Emperor possesses the supreme autocratic power. Not only fear and conscience, but God himself, commands obedience to his authority.

5. The person of the Sovereign Emperor is sacred and inviolable...

8. The sovereign emperor possesses the initiative in all legislative matters. The Fundamental Laws may be subject to revision in the State Council and State Duma only on His initiative. The sovereign emperor ratifies the laws. No law can come into force without his approval. . . .

9. The Sovereign Emperor approves laws; and without his approval no legislative measure can become law.

10. The Sovereign Emperor possesses the administrative power in its totality throughout the entire Russian state...

12. The sovereign emperor takes charge of all the external relations of the Russian State. He determines the direction of Russia's foreign policy. . . .

13. The Sovereign Emperor alone declares war, concludes peace, and negotiates treaties with foreign states.

14. The sovereign emperor is the Commander-in-Chief of the Russian army and navy.

15. The sovereign emperor appoints and dismisses the Chairman the Council of Ministers and individual Ministers....'[43]

43 'Russian Fundamental Laws, 1906,' Royal Russia and Gilbert's Royal Books, www.angelfire.com/pa/ImperialRussian/royalty/russia/rfl.html.

ACTIVITIES

SOURCE ANALYSIS

Read Nicholas II's Fundamental Laws, 1906 and complete the tasks below.

1. Identify two powers of the sovereign emperor (tsar) that are stated in the extract.
2. Identify two government positions the sovereign emperor has the power to appoint and dismiss, as stated in the extract.
3. Quoting from the extract and using your own knowledge, explain the social and political causes of the enactment of the Fundamental Laws.
4. Evaluate to what extent the extract provides a complete and accurate depiction of the causes of revolutionary sentiment in Russia in 1905–06. In your response refer to different historical interpretations of the period.

SHORT RESPONSE

In three or four points, respond to the following topic: 'Nicholas II's Fundamental Laws completely undermined his October Manifesto.' Do you agree?

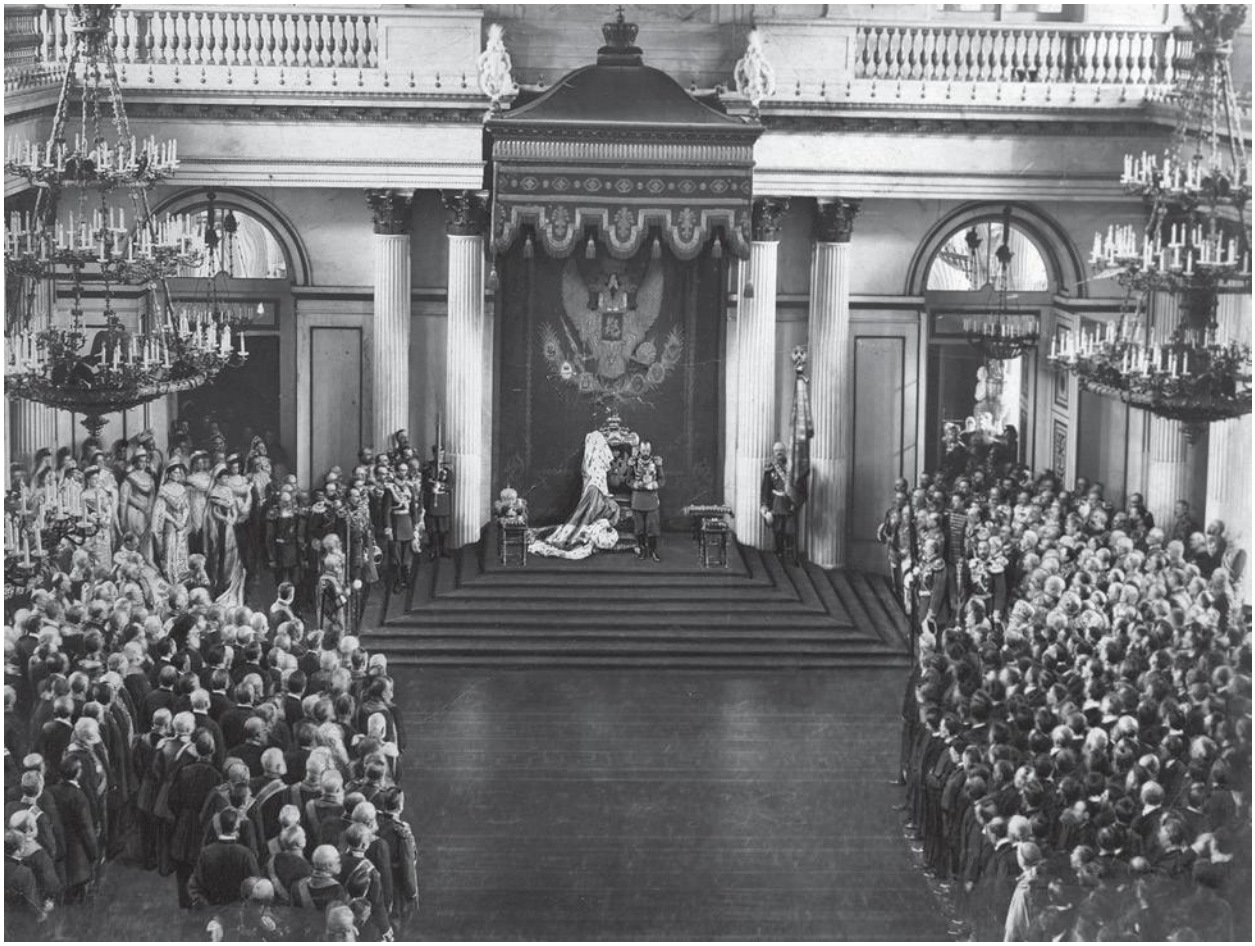
rejecting 'the very principles of constitutional monarchy and parliamentary government.'[44] Despite this, Russians were generally enthusiastic to vote and the elections produced a largely peasant-based body, with some radical representatives (despite the boycott). Having said this, the Fundamental Laws significantly undermined the role of the duma, seeing it become over time significantly more conservative than imagined, a far cry from the constitutional monarchy many reformists had in mind. Despite this, throughout its incarnation the duma was a

44 Pipes, *The Russian Revolution*, 156.

central forum for critique of the regime, with parliamentary privilege (immunity from legal proceedings) and the right to question ministers. The duma became a training ground for people who later took positions of responsibility in the Provisional Government of 1917.

FIRST DUMA: APRIL–JULY 1906

The First Duma opened on 27 April in an elaborate ceremony designed to impress the deputies who had been elected into the body. The ceremony did exactly the opposite, serving only to highlight the vast gap between rich and poor in Russian society; the opulence of the imperial monarch being compared to the destitution of the majority of the population.



Tsar Nicholas II's opening speech before the two chambers in the Winter Palace (1906).

Peasants held a large majority of the deputy positions, totalling thirty-eight per cent, while the Kadets were the largest political party, accounting for thirty-seven per cent of the seats.[45] These two groups formed a coalition, seeing the Kadets sponsor an 'Address to the Throne,' pursuing rights for the people. They demanded the following:

- freedom to strike
- freedom to publicly assemble
- the abolition of capital punishment

45 Bucklow and Russell, *Russia: Why Revolution?*, 87.

- political amnesty
- the abolition of the State Council of Imperial Russia
- significant reform to the civil service
- ministerial responsibility to be handed to the duma
- universal and direct voting
- universal and free education
- the seizure of large estates and redistribution to the peasants
- more equitable distribution of the tax burden.

Nicholas found these demands unacceptable, seeing them as openly anti-government. The First Duma was dissolved after only seventy-three days. Two-hundred deputies, mostly Kadets, staged an appeal, encouraging people to refrain from paying taxes and refusing orders to enlist. Violence broke out across the nation and the government acted decisively, appointing Pyotr Stolypin as prime minister. A second duma was promised for February the next year.

SECOND DUMA: FEBRUARY–JUNE 1907

PHOTOGRAPHS OF IMPERIAL DUMA

Having hoped for a more conservative body, the government was shocked to find that the Second Duma was more radical than its predecessor. This time the Socialist Revolutionaries and the Social Democrats participated in the elections, realising the potential for the duma to fuel anti-tsarist sentiment. The Second Duma was greatly divided ideologically, with deputies ranging from Socialist Revolutionaries to monarchists, with even a few poor peasants thrown in. It was near-impossible for the tsar and prime minister to work with such a disparate group, despite Stolypin's commitment to make it work.

Following disturbances throughout April and May, including the duma openly criticising the administration of the military, the tsar sought to dissolve the group and, more importantly, to gain a more docile duma for the future. After it became obvious that the body would not support Stolypin's proposed land reforms and that deputies wanted to nationalise land, the Second Duma's time was limited. The tsar and prime minister were given a perfect opportunity to dissolve it following the arrest of a Social Democrat who had allegedly planned to overthrow the regime. The duma was dissolved on 3 June. Nicholas stated that the decision was made on account of the irresponsible and obstructive behaviour of representatives. The public responded to the closure of the duma in a mostly quiet manner; there were few arrests.

DID YOU KNOW?

Stolypin said of his land reforms: 'The government has placed its wager, not on the needy and the drunken, but on the sturdy and the strong.'

THIRD DUMA: NOVEMBER 1907–JUNE 1912

The hope of real reform was further shattered when, on the same day, sweeping changes were made to the electoral system by Stolypin, who acted while the duma was not in session. Voting was suspended in districts where, according to the tsar, the population 'had not yet reached sufficient levels of civic development'[46] and further change to the system occurred, greatly restricting the franchise (right to vote). This move violated the constitution and was, thereby, illegal. In essence, the number of deputies from peasant, urban worker, small landowning and national minority backgrounds was drastically reduced, while the number from the landed gentry was greatly increased. The new laws were complex, but their objective was

46 Margot Morcombe and Mark Fielding, *The Spirit of Change: Russia in Revolution* (Sydney: McGraw-Hill, 2003), 55.

DID YOU KNOW?

Stolypin's favourite method of execution, hanging, was nicknamed 'the Stolypin necktie.'

clear. Now only one in six males was entitled to vote,[47] with one per cent of the population now responsible for electing 300 out of the 441 deputies.[48]

The result was exactly what the tsar and Stolypin had hoped for, a more conservative and compliant duma, dominated by right-wing parties willing to work with the prime minister. Stolypin considered this new group to be composed of 'responsible and statesmanlike people'[49] and was able to further pursue his land reform without the opposition of the duma. The body did, however, continue to be a forum for political discussion and proposal, most importantly raising the political consciousness and awareness of the wider community. For Nicholas, the existence of the duma continued to serve as a message to the European superpowers Britain and France, with whom Russia was now allied, that Russia was a modern nation committed to constitutional monarchy. It is for these reasons that the Third Duma was permitted to serve its full five-year term.

FOURTH DUMA: NOVEMBER 1912–AUGUST 1914

The term of the Fourth Duma was plagued by mounting tensions and crises, most notably the assassination of Prime Minister Stolypin in 1911. Arguably the most conservative of the dumas, the body was tested by radical protests, to which it responded repressively. The workers' movement began to resurface, prompted by the massacre of 500 miners from the Lena Goldfields in Siberia in 1912. The miners, demanding better pay and conditions, were brutally massacred by government forces, highlighting the growing reactionary methods of the tsar. Over the following two years, three-million workers staged 9000 strikes.[50] Many moderate deputies in the duma tired of the reactionary approach of the tsar and began to voice their concerns, in some cases even forecasting the breakdown of parliamentary government in Russia.

The duma in session, 1917.

Historians have long debated the successes and failures of the constitutional period in Russia. While the Stalin-sponsored *History of the CPSU* says the dumas were nothing more than 'an impotent appendage of tsardom,'[51] most Western historians contend that the dumas played an integral role in provoking debate, pursuing reform and, to some extent, awakening the political consciousnesses of the masses. Having said this, when considering the events of 1917, some historians lament the fact that, though they were not without their achievements, the four dumas of Nicholas II constituted a wasted opportunity that did not present itself again.[52]

47 Lynch, *Reaction and Revolutions,* 52.
48 Graham Darby, *The Russian Revolution: Tsarism to Bolshevism 1861–1924,* (Melbourne: Longman, 2004), 47.
49 Figes, *A People's Tragedy,* 225.
50 Figes, *A People's Tragedy,* 245.
51 Communist Party of the Soviet Union, *History of the CPSU,* 88.
52 Pipes, *The Russian Revolution,* 153.

ACTIVITY

FACT FILE

Construct a table, list or graphic showing the following facts for each of the four dumas:

- Start and end date
- Party in majority
- Reforms introduced
- Problems or controversies
- Legacies.

STOLYPIN: REPRESSION AND REFORM

Pyotr Stolypin (1862–1911) became known for his far-reaching land reforms and ruthless tactics after the 1905 revolution. His first political job was as a provincial governor. He quickly climbed the ranks by improving peasant welfare and suppressing rural rebellions. Nicholas II appointed him minister of the interior in 1906 and, soon after, prime minister. As prime minister, Stolypin set about suppressing revolutionary groups and reducing the social discontent that fuelled them. His guiding principle was 'suppression first and then, and only then, reform.'[53] A committed monarchist, he set about protecting the tsar from revolution.

Stolypin focused on the 'rural crisis,' land shortages and rural overpopulation, which had been exacerbated by a series of poor harvests. His land reforms, issued while the duma was not in session, were set down by executive decree in November 1906. His aim was to transform peasants into a class of independent landowners that would serve as a loyal and conservative class – a barrier to revolution, rather than a catalyst. Stolypin planned to replace village communes with private land ownership and to give peasants more rights in selecting zemstvo members. Under his system, peasants were allowed to leave the mir (village commune) and sell land shares or claim single plots of land. Land taxes were halted from 1 January 1907, depriving the mir of financial power. The result was mixed. Some peasants, especially those in western regions, were able to get more land and adopt modern (Western European) farming methods. Others were left out of the process. This was largely due to the policy of redistributing, rather than expanding, land ownership, thus forcing many peasants to look for work in cities, further exacerbating stresses from Witte's industrial reforms.

Stolypin's program remained largely unfulfilled. The reluctance and inexperience of peasants made land distribution and new farming methods difficult to implement. Land shortages, high building costs, poor irrigation and inefficient transport made Stolypin's aims virtually unattainable. He did, however, succeed in pacifying rural Russians and raising their living standards overall. Historian Richard Pipes suggests that among Stolypin's achievements was his ability to offer 'a sense of national purpose and hope' after the traumas of 1905; most of Stolypin's social and political reforms, however, remained 'on paper.'[54]

Accompanying land reforms were severe acts of repression. Stolypin introduced a network of military tribunals in 1906 which processed cases without investigation or delay. Between August 1906 and April 1907, 1144 people were executed by these courts and a further 2000 by ordinary courts.[55]

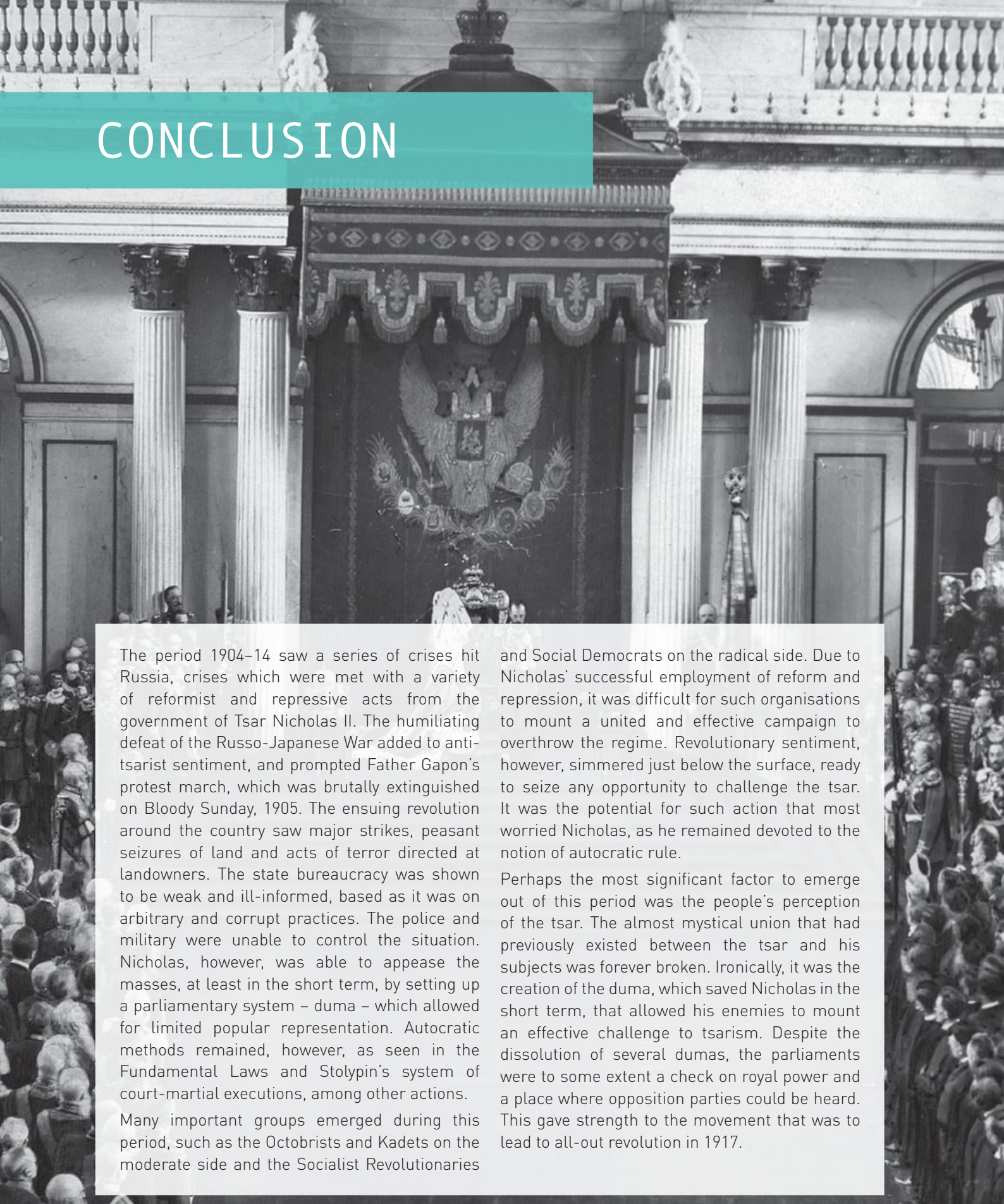
Pyotr Stolypin.

Stolypin also censored the press and conducted searches, arrests and surveillance of universities and liberal activists. He enraged reformists and radicals by dismissing the Second Duma and revising the electoral system single-handed.

Stolypin gained support from some moderate groups, such as the Octobrists and the Union of Russian People. Hence he was able to further his land reforms, reintroduce 'Russification' in Finland and extend the zemstvo system into Poland. He was seen by many as an abuser of the constitution, perhaps explaining his assassination in September 1911. Dmitry Bogrov, a revolutionary, fatally shot Stolypin on 1 September 1911. It is widely thought that, in any case, the tsar had lost faith in his prime minister and was looking for a chance to end Stolypin's post. As one duma member said, Stolypin 'died politically long before his physical death.'[56]

53 Lynch, *Reaction and Revolutions*, 23.
54 Pipes, *The Russian Revolution*, 190.
55 Darby, *Tsarism to Bolshevism*, 45.
56 Pipes, *The Russian Revolution*, 190.

CONCLUSION



The period 1904–14 saw a series of crises hit Russia, crises which were met with a variety of reformist and repressive acts from the government of Tsar Nicholas II. The humiliating defeat of the Russo-Japanese War added to anti-tsarist sentiment, and prompted Father Gapon's protest march, which was brutally extinguished on Bloody Sunday, 1905. The ensuing revolution around the country saw major strikes, peasant seizures of land and acts of terror directed at landowners. The state bureaucracy was shown to be weak and ill-informed, based as it was on arbitrary and corrupt practices. The police and military were unable to control the situation. Nicholas, however, was able to appease the masses, at least in the short term, by setting up a parliamentary system – duma – which allowed for limited popular representation. Autocratic methods remained, however, as seen in the Fundamental Laws and Stolypin's system of court-martial executions, among other actions.

Many important groups emerged during this period, such as the Octobrists and Kadets on the moderate side and the Socialist Revolutionaries and Social Democrats on the radical side. Due to Nicholas' successful employment of reform and repression, it was difficult for such organisations to mount a united and effective campaign to overthrow the regime. Revolutionary sentiment, however, simmered just below the surface, ready to seize any opportunity to challenge the tsar. It was the potential for such action that most worried Nicholas, as he remained devoted to the notion of autocratic rule.

Perhaps the most significant factor to emerge out of this period was the people's perception of the tsar. The almost mystical union that had previously existed between the tsar and his subjects was forever broken. Ironically, it was the creation of the duma, which saved Nicholas in the short term, that allowed his enemies to mount an effective challenge to tsarism. Despite the dissolution of several dumas, the parliaments were to some extent a check on royal power and a place where opposition parties could be heard. This gave strength to the movement that was to lead to all-out revolution in 1917.

TEST YOUR LEARNING

CHAPTER REVIEW

CAUSE AND CONSEQUENCE

Using three or four points, explain the causes and consequences of one of the following events between 1904 and 1914:

- The Russo-Japanese War
- Bloody Sunday
- Reform attempts (e.g. October Manifesto, the dumas)
- Limits to reform (e.g. Fundamental Laws, dissolution of the Second Duma).

HISTORICAL INTERPRETATIONS

Read the historians' views below about the events of 1905 and complete the tasks that follow:

- Richard Pipes: *'In the end [after the 1905 revolution], Russia had gained nothing more than a breathing spell.'*
- Orlando Figes: *'Although the regime succeeded in restoring order, it could not hope to put the clock back. 1905 had changed society for good. Many of the younger comrades of 1905 were the elders of 1917. They were inspired by its memory and instructed by its lessons.'*
- Communist Party of the Soviet Union: *'The streets of St Petersburg [on 9 January 1905] ran with workers' blood…On that day the workers received a bloody lesson. It was their faith in the Tsar that was riddled by bullets on that day. They came to realise that they could win their rights only by struggle.'*

1. Compare and contrast the three interpretations of Russia in 1905.
2. Explain which of the three quotes you find most informative/accurate and why. Do they all seem to be equally objective?

KEY PLAYERS

Give a presentation on the contribution of one of the following individuals or popular movements to the 1905 revolution:

- Tsar Nicholas II
- Count Sergei Witte
- Father Gapon and the Bloody Sunday petitioners
- Pyotr Stolypin
- Lenin and the Bolshevik SDs
- Alexander Kerensky, Viktor Chernov and the SRs.

TEST YOUR LEARNING

CONSTRUCTING AN ARGUMENT

Write an essay on the topic below. Your essay should be completed in approximately 60 minutes and include a brief introduction, 2–3 short paragraphs and a conclusion.

Topic: '1905 was not a true revolution.' Do you agree?

KEY IDEAS

Using three or four points, analyse Lenin's ideas and attitudes about Russia by 1914 and how he wished to change society.

FURTHER READING

Lynch, Michael. Reaction and Revolutions: Russia 1894–1924, Third Edition. London: Hodder Murray, 2005.

An accessible student textbook. Influenced by Richard Pipes, whom the author considers to be 'the leading contemporary authority on modern Russian history.'

Oxley, Peter. Russia 1855–1991: From Tsars to Commissars. Melbourne: Oxford University Press, 2001.

A very detailed textbook with an outstanding overview of modern Russia. An excellent place to start further research.

Ponomarev, B. N. et al. A Short History of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union. Moscow: Progress Publishers, 1970.

A standard Soviet analysis. Follows the official Party line.

Schapiro, Leonard. The Communist Party of the Soviet Union. London: Methuen and Co., 1974.

Written in meticulous detail. Schapiro is an interesting and influential historian.

Service, Robert. The Russian Revolution 1900–1927. New York: Palgrave, 1999.

Concise and accessible to students. Makes useful reference to debates over historical interpretations.

Shukman, Harold (ed.). The Blackwell Encyclopedia of the Russian Revolution. Oxford: Blackwell Publishers, 1988.

Highly recommended. Many leading historians have contributed to this monumental work. An excellent resource for research tasks.

Ulam, Adam. Lenin and the Bolsheviks. London: Fontana Library, 1969.

A detailed account of the Bolshevik Party and its founder.

White, James D. Lenin: The Practice and Theory of Revolution. New York; Palgrave, 2001.

White's biography gives a thorough analysis of Lenin's political ideas and actions.

CHAPTER

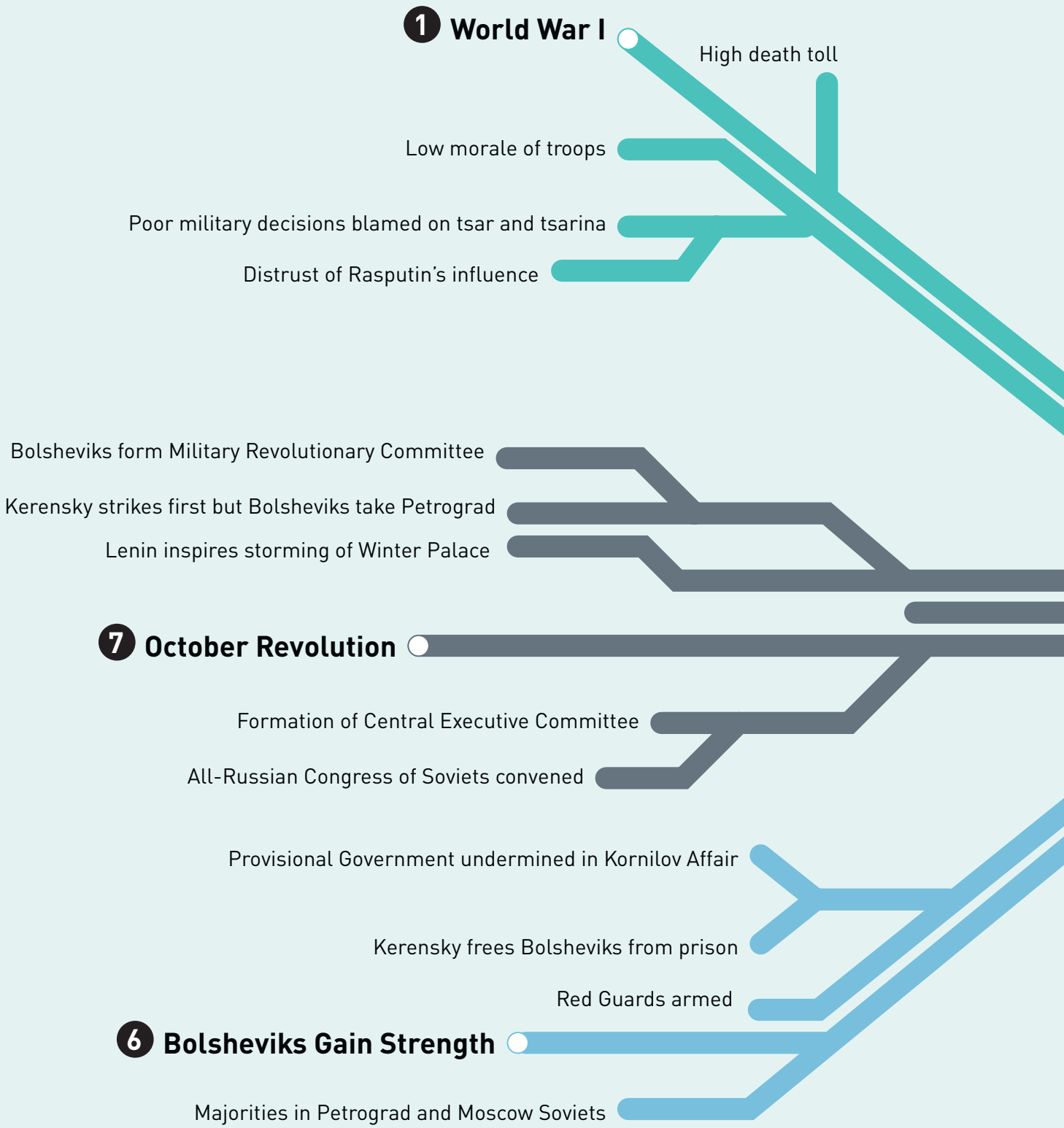
3

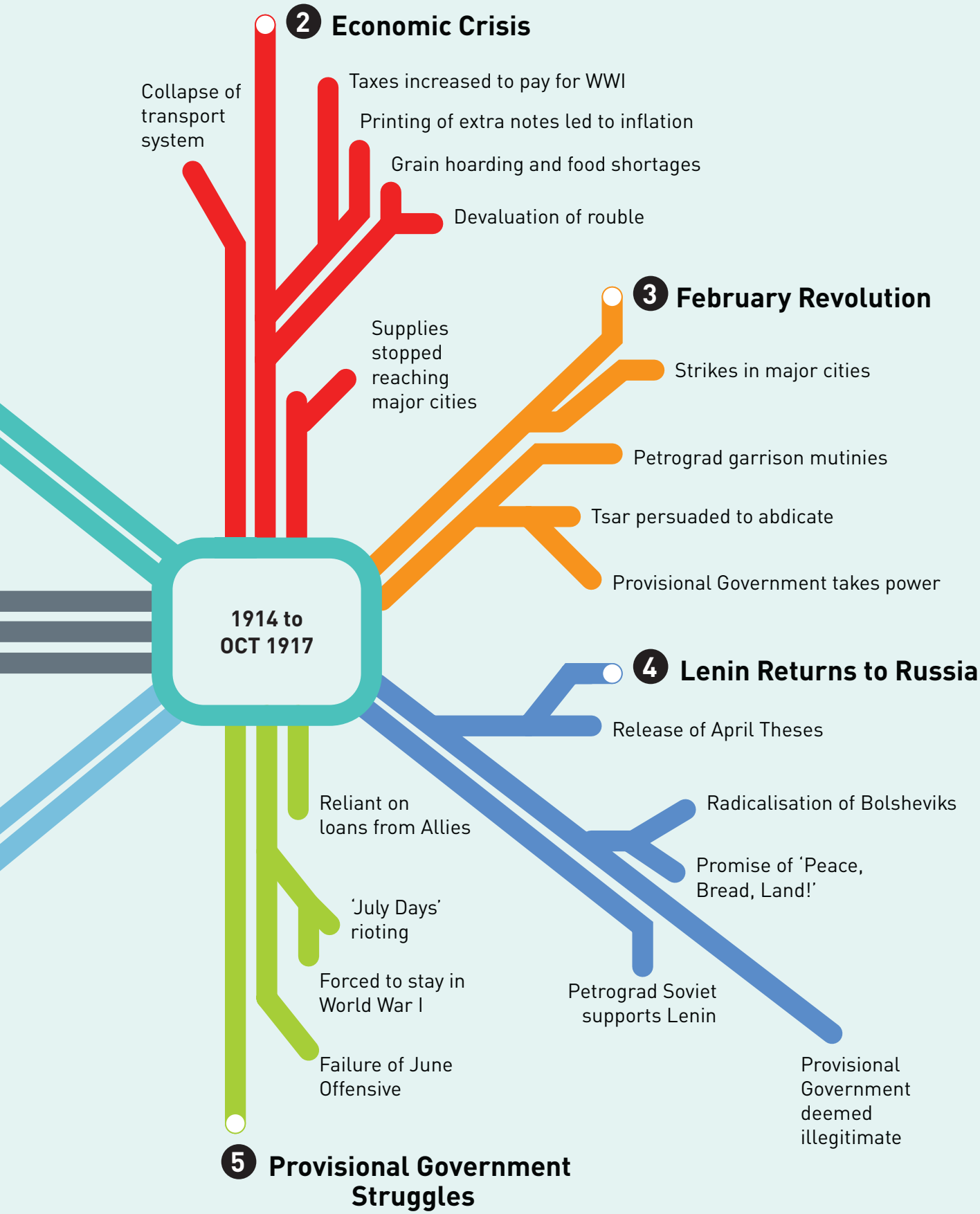
BREAKING WITH THE PAST

(1914–OCTOBER 1917)

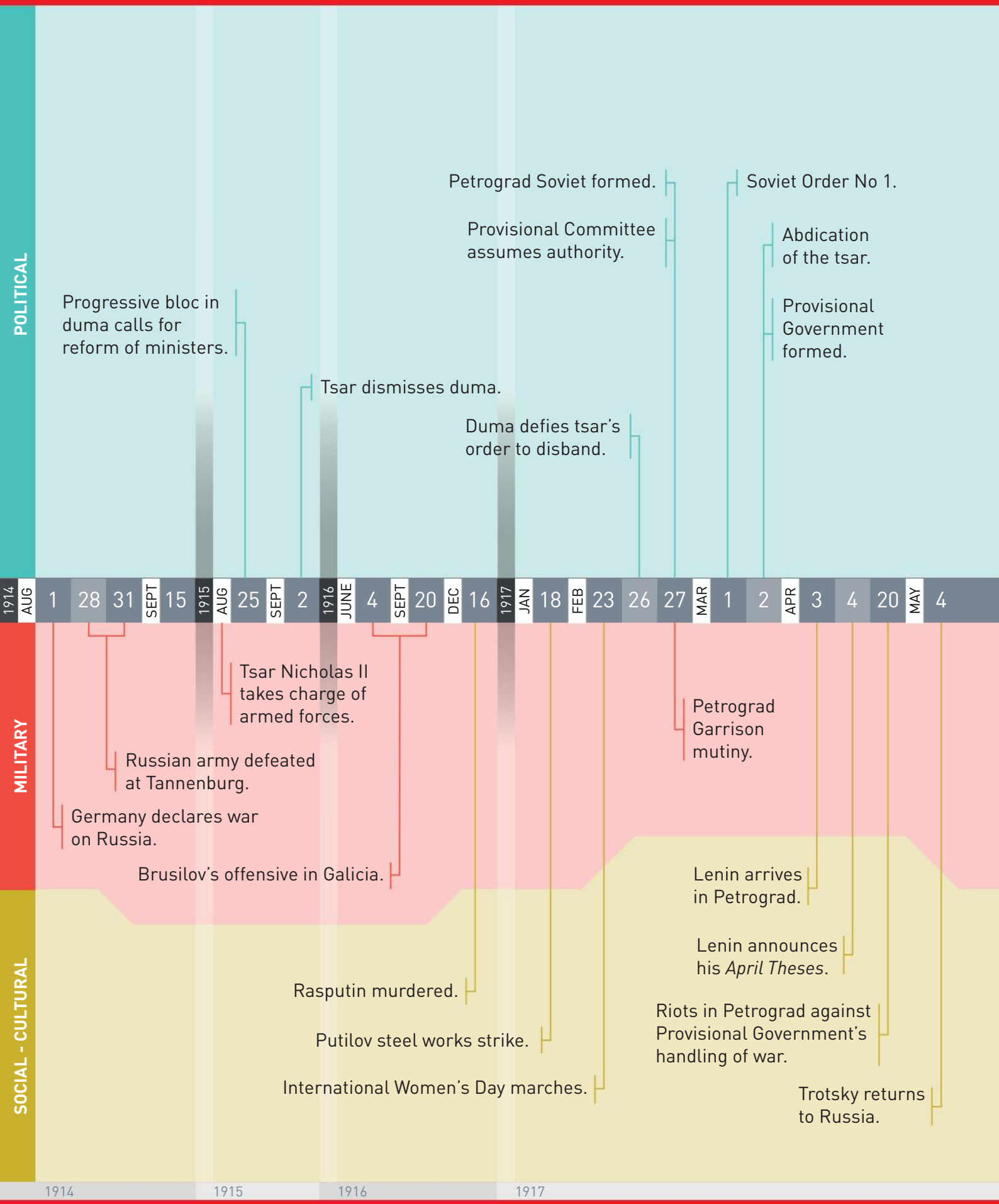
SCOTT SWEENEY
TOM RYAN

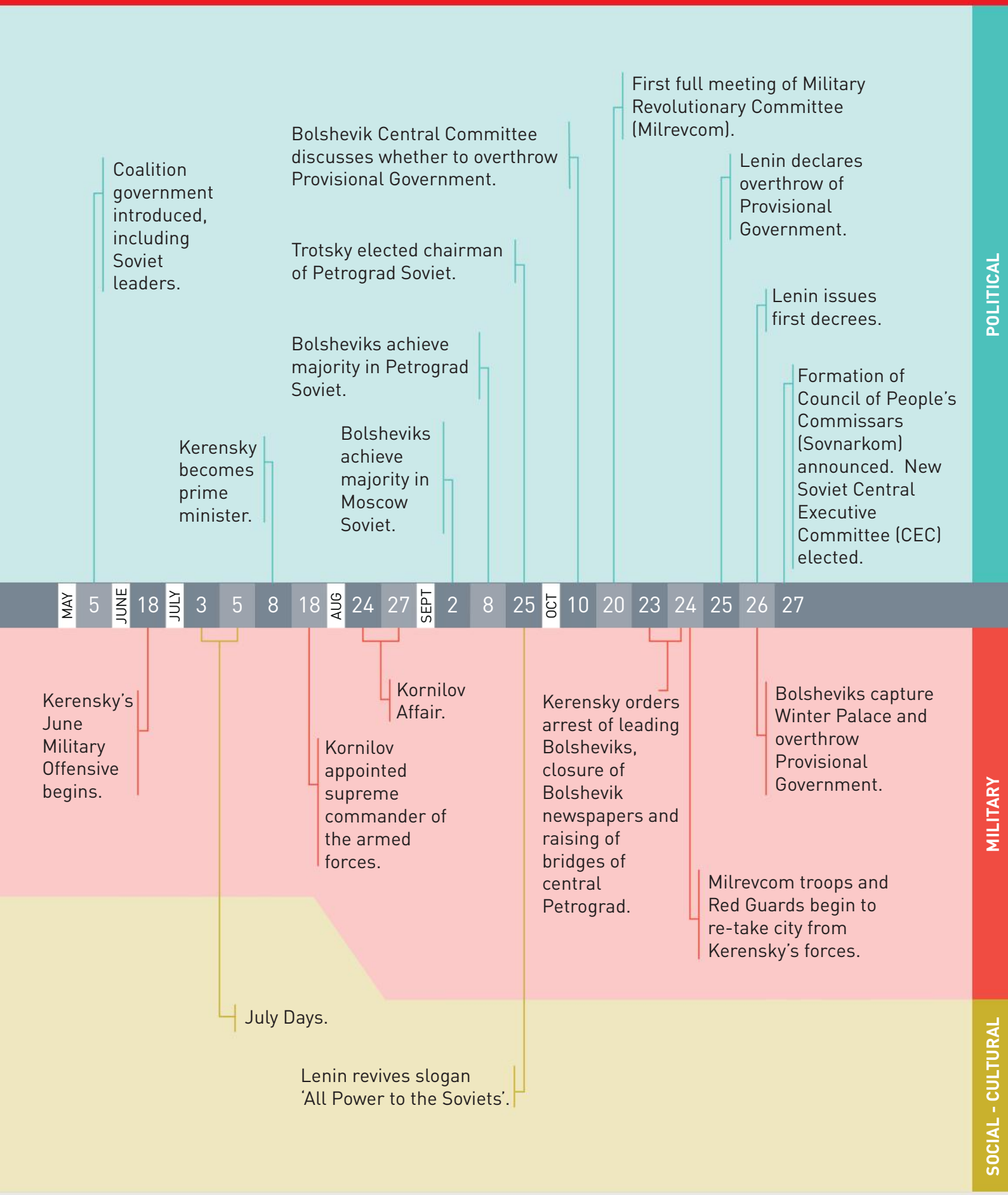
CHAPTER OVERVIEW




2 Economic Crisis
Collapse of transport system
Taxes increased to pay for WWI
Printing of extra notes led to inflation
Grain hoarding and food shortages
Devaluation of rouble
Supplies stopped reaching major cities
3 February Revolution
Strikes in major cities
Petrograd garrison mutinies
Tsar persuaded to abdicate
Provisional Government takes power
1914 to OCT 1917
4 Lenin Returns to Russia
Release of April Theses
Radicalisation of Bolsheviks
Promise of 'Peace, Bread, Land!'
Petrograd Soviet supports Lenin
Provisional Government deemed illegitimate
Reliant on loans from Allies
'July Days' rioting
Forced to stay in World War I
Failure of June Offensive
5 Provisional Government Struggles

TIMELINE


POLITICAL
MILITARY
SOCIAL - CULTURAL
1914 AUG 1 28 31 SEPT 15 1915 AUG 25 SEPT 2 1916 JUNE 4 SEPT 20 DEC 16 1917 JAN 18 FEB 23 26 27 MAR 1 2 APR 3 4 20 MAY 4
Progressive bloc in duma calls for reform of ministers.
Tsar dismisses duma.
Duma defies tsar's order to disband.
Petrograd Soviet formed.
Provisional Committee assumes authority.
Soviet Order No 1.
Abdication of the tsar.
Provisional Government formed.
Tsar Nicholas II takes charge of armed forces.
Russian army defeated at Tannenburg.
Germany declares war on Russia.
Brusilov's offensive in Galicia.
Petrograd Garrison mutiny.
Rasputin murdered.
Putilov steel works strike.
International Women's Day marches.
Lenin arrives in Petrograd.
Lenin announces his April Theses.
Riots in Petrograd against Provisional Government's handling of war.
Trotsky returns to Russia.
1914
1915
1916
1917


POLITICAL
MILITARY
SOCIAL - CULTURAL
MAY 5
JUNE 18
JULY 3 5 8 18
AUG 24 27
SEPT 2 8 25
OCT 10 20 23 24 25 26 27
Coalition government introduced, including Soviet leaders.
Kerensky becomes prime minister.
Bolshevik Central Committee discusses whether to overthrow Provisional Government.
Trotsky elected chairman of Petrograd Soviet.
Bolsheviks achieve majority in Petrograd Soviet.
Bolsheviks achieve majority in Moscow Soviet.
First full meeting of Military Revolutionary Committee (Milrevcom).
Lenin declares overthrow of Provisional Government.
Lenin issues first decrees.
Formation of Council of People's Commissars (Sovnarkom) announced. New Soviet Central Executive Committee (CEC) elected.
Kerensky's June Military Offensive begins.
July Days.
Kornilov appointed supreme commander of the armed forces.
Kornilov Affair.
Lenin revives slogan 'All Power to the Soviets'.
Kerensky orders arrest of leading Bolsheviks, closure of Bolshevik newspapers and raising of bridges of central Petrograd.
Milrevcom troops and Red Guards begin to re-take city from Kerensky's forces.
Bolsheviks capture Winter Palace and overthrow Provisional Government.

Tsar Nicholas II.

INTRODUCTION

In 1913, as the 300-year anniversary (tercentenary) of the Romanov dynasty receded, Russia entered a period of tremendous upheaval. The period between 1914 and 1917 brought challenges to the Russian autocracy from almost every element of society. Massive strikes paralysed Russian cities in 1914. The outbreak of war in August of that year initially brought celebration and increased nationalism but eventually provoked starvation and internal collapse. The Russian economy faltered, leading to shortages in food and fuel. By 1915 the transport system had fallen apart, intensifying these shortages and leading to widespread hunger. World War I, which started so promisingly in 1914, degenerated into a litany of Russian defeats, and, eventually, mutiny at the front.

By the beginning of 1917, Tsar Nicholas II was so unpopular he had lost the support of even the Petrograd garrison. Unable to forcibly put down the growing opposition and strikes within Petrograd, the tsar had no option but to abdicate, thus ending 304 years of Romanov rule. In his place the Provisional Government, drawn mostly from the old duma, took political control of Russia, while the newly re-established Soviet maintained popular support without formal authority. The Dual Authority shared an uneasy alliance for some months, but this proved unsustainable in the face of repeated challenges, particularly from the Bolshevik leader, Lenin. Besieged from the outset, the Provisional Government was ill-equipped to maintain power and failed to provide a strong transition to constitutional democracy.

Statue and mural celebrating Lenin's leadership in the October Revolution, Artillery Museum, St Petersburg.

The overthrow of the tsar in the February Revolution did not magically solve all of Russia's ills. Russia was still beset by economic deprivation and failure on the war front. Combined with this, the Provisional Government's failures led to political instability and a wider acceptance of radical agendas like those of the Bolsheviks. By September 1917, Russia had broken from its past, but there was no clear indication of what its future would hold.

The drumbeat of Bolshevik agitation for 'All Power to the Soviets' and 'Peace! Land! Bread!' continued to undermine the beleaguered Provisional Government as 1917 wore on. In October the Bolsheviks overthrew Kerensky's last cabinet of ministers, and at the Second All-Russian Congress of Soviets declared the founding of a new government – the Council of People's Commissars (Sovnarkom). It was a defining moment in modern history; the first ever socialist regime.

WORLD WAR I

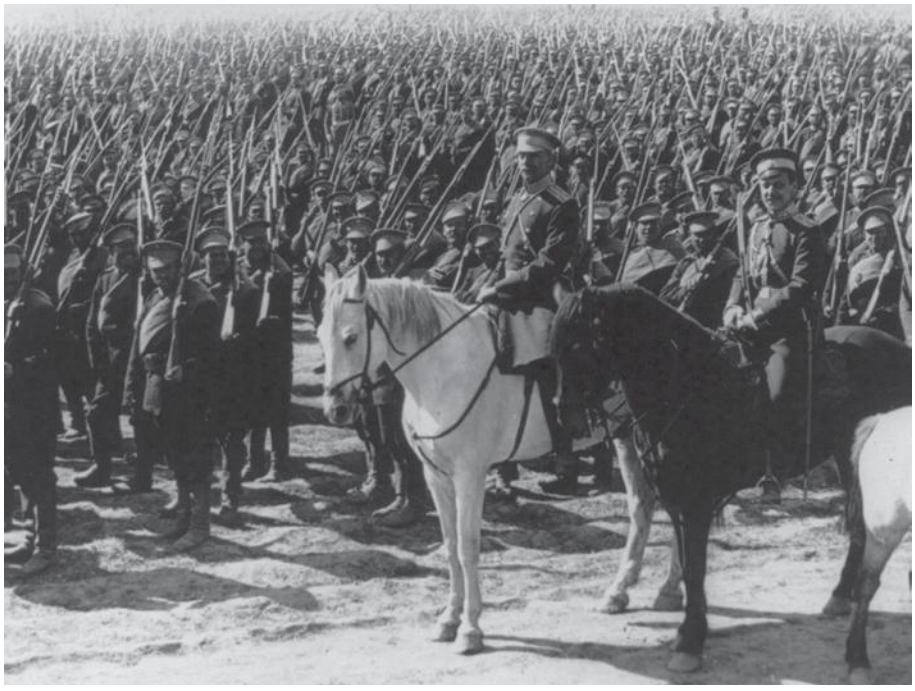
Friedrich Engels: 'War is the mid-wife of every old society pregnant with a new one.'

By 1914, few people in Europe would have thought the long period of peace would continue. Nicholas II said, 'The accelerating arms race is transforming the armed peace into a crushing burden that weighs on all nations and, if prolonged, will lead to the very cataclysm it seeks to avert.'[1] The build-up of arms and navies, the surge in nationalism throughout Europe, the series of small-scale conflicts and disagreements in the years preceding and the complex system of alliances had all set the preconditions for war by 1914.

Archduke Franz Ferdinand.

When Austria's Archduke Franz Ferdinand was assassinated in Sarajevo on 28 June 1914, by a Serb nationalist, the Austrian government sought German support for a declaration of war on Serbia. On 23 July, the Austrian government gave Serbia an ultimatum it knew would not be accepted because it would mean the surrender of Serbian sovereignty. As fellow Slavs, Serbia requested assistance from the might of the Russian Empire and the following day the tsar ordered the partial mobilisation of Russian troops. Full mobilisation was ordered on 30 July. The Russian Empire was so large that the mobilisation, once ordered, could not be easily rescinded.

This had significant ramifications. When the tsar's cousin, Kaiser Wilhelm, warned Nicholas to halt troop mobilisation, the tsar was unable to oblige. As A.J.P. Taylor wrote, 'Once started, the wagons and carriages must roll remorselessly and inevitably forward to their predestined goal.'[2] Despite the Russian defeat at the hands of Japan in 1905, the Russian army was still greatly feared in Europe and referred to colloquially as the 'Russian steamroller.' Russian mobilisation meant war, and Germany duly declared war on Russia on 1 August 1914. Following the plan set out by General von Schlieffen in 1905, Germany realised



Russian troops.

1 Cited in John Keegan, *The First World War* (New York: Vintage Books, 2000), 17.
2 A.J.P. Taylor, *The First World War: An Illustrated History* (London: Penguin Books, 1966), 17.

DID YOU KNOW?

Russia's minister of the interior, Peter Durnovo, sent a memo to Nicholas II in February 1914, warning of the dangers of impending war. He wrote that if the war fared poorly 'a social revolution in its most extreme form will be unavoidable in Russia.'

that Russian mobilisation would take time, so the country sent a small force to the East and the bulk of their forces to the Western Front in an effort to defeat the French and avoid fighting two fronts at the same time. On 3 August, Germany invaded Belgium in an unsuccessful attempt to knock France out of the war. The result of Germany's failure was a war across two fronts that would drag on until the end of 1918.

Nicholas II did not foresee the difficulties that World War I would present. In this, of course, he was not alone; virtually all the statesmen and generals in every participating country misunderstood the way modern wars would be conducted. The mechanisation of war, particularly through the machine gun and large artillery, made defending a position far easier than attacking one and this was exacerbated by the digging of trenches at the end of 1914. Nonetheless, a wave of patriotism spread through Russia in August 1914 when war was declared, as it did in most other European countries. The workers' strikes that had plagued St Petersburg in the first half of 1914 stopped while many socialists embraced the patriotism and supported Russia's efforts in the war.

Responding to the nationalist fervour, the government changed the name of the capital – from the German-sounding 'St Petersburg' to the more Russian 'Petrograd.' The duma also dissolved itself until the conclusion of the war so it would not interfere with the war effort. Lenin was, in fact, one of the few people to publicly criticise the war, calling for the redirection of the Russian working class' war efforts away from their working class brothers in other countries, towards the bourgeois governments throughout Europe. Despite this isolated opposition, it was a broadly unified Russia that embarked on war in August 1914, with little genuine understanding of the problems the war would bring – at first on the war front, and eventually on the home front.

3 Communist Party of the Soviet Union, *History of the CPSU (Short Course)* (International Publishers Co., 1939), 160–1.

DOCUMENT

EXTRACT FROM *HISTORY OF THE COMMUNIST PARTY OF THE SOVIET UNION*, 1939

By the end of the nineteenth century the whole territory of the globe had already been divided up among the capitalist states. Yet in the era of imperialism the development of capitalism proceeds extremely unevenly and by leaps: some countries, which previously held a foremost position, now develop their industry at a relatively slow rate, while others, which were formerly backward, overtake and outstrip them by rapid leaps. The relative economic and military strength of the imperialist states was undergoing a change. There arose a striving for a redivision of the world, and the struggle for this redivision made imperialist war inevitable. The war of 1914 was a war for the redivision of the world and of spheres of influence. All the imperialist states had long been preparing for it. The imperialists of all countries were responsible for the war.[3]

ACTIVITY

SOURCE ANALYSIS

Read the extract from the *History of the Communist Party* and complete the tasks below.

1. What does the extract suggest was the main cause of World War I?
2. What does the extract suggest about the development of capitalism in the era of imperialism?
3. By quoting from this extract and using your own knowledge, explain how imperialism caused World War I.
4. Evaluate to what extent this extract presents a complete depiction of the causes of World War I. In your response, quote parts of the extract and refer to different interpretations of World War I.

RUSSIAN INVOLVEMENT IN WORLD WAR I

Grand Duke Nikolai Nikolaevich (Russian general in World War I): 'I have no rifles, no shells, no boots.'

1914

One consequence of the Russian defeat in the Russo-Japanese War in 1905 was internal rebellion and a challenge to the tsar's authority. Conscious that tensions were mounting between empires in Europe, Russia had agreed to the Anglo-Russian Alliance and the Franco-Russian Alliance in 1907. France also agreed to partially fund improvements to key military infrastructure within Russia, such as bridges, roads and railway lines to the German and Austrian fronts. In 1912 the Great Military Program was announced. This program was to be completed by 1917 and it increased funding to the military to improve artillery, transport and the administration of mobilisation plans. This dedication to improvements within the Russian military was reflective of what was happening throughout Europe, but very little improvement had been made by 1914, when war broke out. The Russian army had many millions of men to draw on but inadequate military supplies to support them. By the end of 1914, 6.5 million men had been mobilised, with the issue of only 4.6 million rifles.[4]

DID YOU KNOW?

After the bloody campaigns of 1914 one Russian officer complained to his superior, 'This is not war, sir, it is slaughter. The Germans use up shells; we use up human lives.'

Despite the fact that Russian officers were the only ones in Europe who had experienced recent conflict, their positions of authority owed more to their imperial loyalty than to identifiable competence. The minister of war in 1914, General Sukhomlinov, distrusted the technology of modern warfare, preferring to attack with sheer force of troop numbers through the use of bayonets. The Russian military, like every other military in Europe in 1914, was unprepared for the style and longevity of the conflict that was to follow.

4 Richard Pipes, *A Concise History of the Russian Revolution* (New York: Vintage Books, 1996), 59.

Russian troops surrendering on the Eastern Front. Despite many losses, the Russian command maintained a confident stance until 1917.

TIMELINE ACTIVITY

Despite these difficulties, the Russian forces were sent into battle in mid-August in a hastily-conceived attack on East Prussia. General von Rennenkampf led the First Army into East Prussia, while General Samsonov led the Second Army further south. After their victories, both armies would meet up and drive towards Berlin. Von Rennenkampf's troops made a great deal of ground in the initial days of the war. So much ground, in fact, that their supplies were unable to keep up with the troops. This resulted in the Russians being forced to use wireless transmissions that were easily intercepted by the Germans. On 28 August, the Germans attacked the Russian Second Army in the Battle of Tannenberg and within four days had killed or wounded 70 000 men and captured 100 000. The German commander in charge, General von Hindenburg and his chief of staff, General von Ludendorff, defeated the Russians at Tannenburg with the loss of only 15 000 men. Samsonov shot himself as a result of the Russian humiliation.

In the face of the Russian onslaught, the German army had redirected units from the Western Front to the Eastern Front, and they arrived in East Prussia just after the Battle of Tannenburg. Hindenburg moved his own forces north via rail to meet with the new reinforcements and attack the Russian First Army at the Battle of Masurian Lakes. Rennenkampf ordered a retreat out of East Prussia, but not before the loss of 60 000 more Russian lives. The losses were catastrophic, but the

PHOTOS OF RUSSIAN ARMY DURING WWI

Russian elite seemed unfazed by the defeats, claiming their actions had required the withdrawal of German forces from the Western Front. This German withdrawal had allowed the French to regroup, repel the German advance and save France. The Russian elite were also comforted by the success they had had further south against the Austrians in August. It was easier for the Russian elite to tolerate such losses, however, because the death toll primarily affected the lower classes.

Enthusiasm for the war was maintained in the short term because of the Russian success in the southern thrust through Galicia. In mid-August 1914, Russian General Brusilov and the Eighth Army had forced the Austrian Army into retreat, capturing or killing one-third of the entire Austrian Army. This maintained the threat to Hindenburg's victorious German forces, but came at a terrible cost to the Russians. By the end of 1914, 1.2 million Russian men had been killed, wounded or taken prisoner. In 1915, another 2.5 million men were lost and twenty-five per cent of all Russian soldiers were sent to the front unarmed with explicit instructions to collect weapons from fallen comrades.[5] Russia could afford to sustain horrendous losses in the short term, but no country could maintain such an attrition rate if the war continued for years. When it became clear that there would be no easy conclusion to the war, and with continued German control of the Baltic Sea meaning Allied assistance was unlikely, the 'Russian steamroller' became far less of a threat.

1915

In 1915 the situation became far worse. The German forces focused more than two-thirds of its troops on the Eastern Front in an attempt to knock Russia out of the war; by the end of the year Russia had not only lost the land gained by Brusilov in Galicia, but also twenty-three million Russians to German occupation. Most critical of all, in terms of the status of the tsar, was his disastrous decision to relieve Grand Duke Nikolai Nikolaevich as commander-in-chief of the Russian armed forces in August 1915. The Council of Ministers warned, 'Sire, we make bold once more to tell you that, to the best of our understanding, your adoption of such a decision threatens Russia, yourself, and the dynasty with serious consequences.'[6] The president of the duma, Rodzianko, was even more forthright; he wrote to the tsar on 25 August 1915, asking him to revoke his decision.

Nicholas' decision to take command of the army was made alone and was widely criticised at the time, even if it may have been made with the best of intentions. Nicholas had little military experience, and, even though all major decisions were to be made by the new chief of staff, General Alekseev, the tsar was unable to inspire the troops as he had hoped. General Brusilov claimed, 'Everyone knew that Nicholas understood next to nothing about military matters and, although the word "Tsar" still had magical power over the troops, he utterly lacked the charisma to bring that magic to life. Faced with a group of soldiers, he was nervous and did not know what to say.'[7] The tsar was also blamed by the Russian people for subsequent military failures. His absence from Petrograd resulted in a powerful union between the German-born tsarina and the peasant Rasputin, with the two taking almost complete control of political matters in Russia while the tsar was absent at the front.

Nonetheless, Richard Pipes argues that the Russian military failures of 1915 may have contributed to the eventual German defeat in 1918.[8] The Germans were

DID YOU KNOW?

When Nicholas II left for the Front to assume control of the army, Alexandra wrote to her husband, 'Lovey, I am your wall in the rear. I am here, don't laugh at old wify ... She has "trousers" on unseen.'

5 Nicholas Riasanovsky, *A History of Russia,* 5th edition (New York: Oxford University Press, 1993), 418.
6 Peter Oxley, *Russia 1855–1991: From Tsars to Commissars* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2001), 79.
7 Orlando Figes, *A People's Tragedy: The Russian Revolution 1891–1924* (Sydney: Pimlico, 1996), 270.
8 Richard Pipes, *The Russian Revolution 1899–1919* (London: Harvill Press, 1990), 219.

DID YOU KNOW?

Brusilov said, 'In a year of war the regular army had vanished. It was replaced by an army of ignoramuses.'

DOCUMENT

LETTER FROM THE PRESIDENT OF THE DUMA TO TSAR NICHOLAS II, AUGUST 1915

The nation longs for and impatiently awaits that authority which will be capable of instilling confidence and leading our native land onto the path of victory. Yet at such a time, Your Majesty, you decide to remove the supreme commander in chief, whom the Russian people still trusts absolutely. The people must interpret your move as one inspired by the Germans around you, who are identified in the minds of the people with our enemies and with treason to the Russian cause.

Your Majesty's decision will appear to the people to be a confession of the hopelessness of the situation and of the chaos that has invaded the administration.

Sire! The situation will be even worse if the army, deprived of a leader enjoying its complete confidence, loses courage.

In this event defeat is inevitable, and within the country revolution and anarchy will then inevitably break out, sweeping everything from their path.

Your Majesty! Before it is too late, revoke your decision, no matter how hard it may be for you.

Retain Grand Duke Nickolai Nikolaevich at the head of the army.

Reassure troubled and already alarmed minds by forming a government from among those who enjoy your confidence and are known to the country by their public activities.

Sire, it is not yet too late!

On bended knees I beg you fervently not to delay the decision that will protect from approaching harm the sacred person of the Russian tsar and the reigning dynasty.

Sire, give heed to this truthful, heartfelt word from your loyal servant.

The President of the State Duma

Mikhail Rodzianko[9]

ACTIVITY

SOURCE ANALYSIS

Read the letter to Nicholas II and complete the following tasks.

1. How does Rodzianko suggest the Russian people will interpret the tsar's decision to take command of the armed forces?
2. Identify two pieces of advice Rodzianko gives to Nicholas II.
3. Referring to the document, identify the consequences of the tsar's decision to take command of the armed forces.

completely dominant on the battlefield but the Russians refused to back down; it seemed they were willing to lose unlimited territory and men in the war. From this the Germans concluded that the Russians could not be defeated. This may have been an unintended result of Russian inadequacy on the Eastern Front, but the negative consequences were becoming clear. The tsar's position as supreme ruler of Russia was being increasingly questioned, and would come under public criticism in the duma in late 1916.

9 Cited in George Vernadsky, ed., *A Source Book for Russian History From Early Times to 1917* (London: Yale University Press, 1972), 844–5.

BRUSILOV OFFENSIVE

General Brusilov: 'Our army is more like an ill-trained militia...such men could not be called soldiers.'

Once the German high command realised they were unlikely to defeat the Russians in the East, they concentrated their forces on the Western Front. This allowed the Russian forces to regroup and to equip every soldier with a rifle. By the summer of 1916, the re-established Russian army was able to launch another offensive against the Austrians. Led by General Brusilov, the Russian army almost brought the Austrian army to total collapse, capturing and killing almost one-million troops in a ten-week offensive. Germany transferred enough troops from the Western Front to save Austria, but the damage had been inflicted and the Austrians were unable to conduct any more campaigns without assistance from Germany. At this stage, it appeared the tsar had made the correct decision to take control of the armed forces, and Russia's military position appeared strong. Nonetheless, isolated success on the battlefront did little to stem discontent on the home front, which had grown steadily from the first weeks of the war in 1914.

DID YOU KNOW?

Tsarina Alexandra's German background earned her the derisive label of 'nemka' ('German woman') amongst the masses. This did not bode well in the midst of the Great War.

POLITICAL PROBLEMS ON THE HOME FRONT

Tsarina Alexandra: 'My poor Nicky's cross is heavy, all the more so as he has nobody on whom he can thoroughly rely.'

After war broke out in 1914, three key domestic organisations were set up to coordinate the war effort. The All-Russian Union of Towns and the All-Russian Union of Zemstva, led by Prince Lvov, were set up in 1914 on a wave of nationalism and aristocratic generosity. Their role was to care for the wounded and send supplies to the soldiers at the front. The Central War Industries Committee was set up in 1915 to organise war production after it became clear that there were massive munitions and arms shortages. These organisations also sought to profit by breaking the monopoly held by the big munitions producers; however, all three found the administration and bureaucracy obstructive, and there was very little organisation, leading many Russians to conclude by 1915 that the bureaucracy was unable to manage the war. The tsar had suggested that organising the country for war would pave the way for organised revolution. Miliukov later criticised this perception at the opening of the duma in November 1916: 'while the government persists in claiming that organizing the country means organizing a revolution and deliberately prefers chaos and disorganization, then what is this: stupidity or treason?'[10]

SHORT RESPONSE

Using three or four points, explain how World War I constituted a long-term cause of the October 1917 revolution.

In 1915 the Progressive Bloc was formed by the moderates in the duma. The bloc had the support of the Central War Industries Committee, the Union of Towns and the Union of Zemstva, as well as some members of the Council of Ministers. On 25 August the bloc released a program for reform that called for a change of ministers (to be chosen by the duma), who would work with the legislature, as well as a separation of military and civilian bureaucracies. In a subtle way, the Progressive Bloc was calling for parliamentary democracy. While bloc members

10 Cited in Frank Golder, ed., *Documents of Russian History 1914–1917* (Massachusetts: The Century Co., 1964), 154–66.

DID YOU KNOW?

Tsarina Alexandra told her husband she thought the Progressive Bloc were 'fiends' who deserved a 'smacking'!

Tsarina Alexandra.

did not directly threaten the tsar at this stage, they became the focus for political resistance within Russia. The tsar's response was to prorogue the duma in August, alienating virtually every political figure in Russia and isolating himself on the battle front. In the months that followed, the rebel ministers who had sided with the Progressive Bloc were systematically dismissed and replaced by allies of the Romanovs; this was arranged by Tsarina Alexandra and Rasputin, who held sway at the Winter Palace while Nicholas was at the front. The so-called 'ministerial leap-frogging' that occurred once the tsarina was in control saw a litany of poorly-considered ministerial changes. As Figes wrote of the period of the 'tsarina's rule,' between September 1915 and February 1917, 'Russia had four Prime Ministers, five Ministers of the Interior, three Foreign Ministers, three War Ministers, three Ministers of Transport and four Ministers of Agriculture.'[11] Not only did it make it impossible for these ministers to fully understand their roles before being changed, but few of them knew to whom they were ultimately responsible – the tsar at the front or the tsarina and Rasputin in Petrograd.

SOCIAL AND ECONOMIC DISCONTENT 1914–1917

Mikhail Rodzianko (leader of Third Duma): 'The country has everything it needs but cannot make adequate use of it.'

Once the war began in 1914 the government devoted its entire attention to the conflict, and this resulted in a vast reduction in the living standards of most Russians, particularly those in the major urban centres of Petrograd and Moscow. In 1914, the Russian currency (the rouble) was strong and stable, owing mainly to Russia having the largest supply of gold reserves in the world. However, between 1914 and 1917, Russia spent more than 1.5 billion roubles on the war and was forced to increase taxation and borrow from foreign powers to fund this increased expenditure. When this was not enough, the government resorted to printing more notes, which had the short term effect of meeting wage demands and war expenditure. Within several months, however, the extra notes in circulation resulted in rampant inflation that made the rouble's value decrease rapidly. Wages doubled, but at the same time the cost of basic foods quadrupled. The devaluation of the rouble encouraged the peasants to hoard their grain rather than sell it for valueless paper, and this contributed to the food shortage at the front and in the cities.

The peasants were challenged in the first few years of the war by constant demands. Millions of their young men were drafted to the war front and the armed forces requisitioned farm equipment and horses. Armed forces were also given priority in regard to transport. Despite these challenges, 1915 and 1916 produced bumper crops and there was easily enough grain to feed Russia. Inflation, hoarding of grain by the peasants and instances of forced requisitioning of grain by the armed forces made it impossible for the grain to be properly utilised, however, and food shortages soon spread through the cities. The calorie intake of unskilled workers fell by a quarter and infant mortality and crime increased at an alarming rate.[12] This was exacerbated by the collapse of the transport system.

11 Figes, *A People's Tragedy*, 278.
12 Figes, *A People's Tragedy*, 300.

The Russian railways were not able to cope with the massive strains of the mobilisation of armed forces and the subsequent maintenance that was required in a long and drawn-out conflict. While supply to the front suffered, supply to the cities was devastatingly cut back, so that by 1916 Petrograd and Moscow were receiving barely one-third of their fuel and food supplies. Many of the railway lines that crossed Russia were single tracks only, and when trains broke down the entire line stopped. Food rotted in carriages waiting for transport, and Michael Lynch describes how at Archangel in the north, the weight of undistributed goods was so great that the port sank into the ground; on occasion, trucks were tipped off the lines to make way for moving trains.[13]

Despite the success of Brusilov's offensive in 1916, it was not matched by successes in the north against the Germans. Moreover, Brusilov's campaigns were not indicative of the general success of the Russian armed forces, which by 1917 had lost 1.7 million troops, with eight-million wounded and 2.5 million taken prisoner.[14] Lack of rifles, ammunition, food, boots, logistics and tactical leadership compounded the problems faced by the conscripted Russian soldiers. On the home front the cities were facing shortages, having suffered through a bitterly cold winter in 1916–17 with a lack of fuel to keep them warm or the factories operational. Middle-class savings had been wiped out by inflation and organisations set up by the middle class had been undermined by the tsar. Political attempts at reform to support the war and save the tsar's position were ignored, while those government ministers not sufficiently enamoured by the tsarina and Rasputin were summarily dismissed. By December 1916 there was massive discontent within Russia and the blame was placed squarely at the feet of the Romanovs.

DID YOU KNOW?

During the Rasputin-tsarina scandals, the French Ambassador to Russia wrote a report to Paris which said, 'I am obliged to report that, at the present moment, the Russian Empire is run by lunatics.'

Women and children wait in line for milk in Russia, February 1918.

13 Michael Lynch, *Reaction and Revolutions: Russia 1881–1924* (Sydney: Hodder and Stoughton, 1992), 64–5.

14 Helen Proctor, *Ruling Russia: From Nicholas II to Stalin* (Sydney: Longman, 2006), 15.

FEATURE

GRIGORI RASPUTIN

Tsarina Alexandra had given birth to her first son, Alexei, after four girls, in 1904. According to Russian law the throne had to be passed on to a male heir, so the tsar was overjoyed by the new addition to the family. It was soon discovered, however, that Alexei suffered from haemophilia, a genetic condition that prevented the blood from clotting properly and leading to uncontrollable bleeding. Rasputin, a peasant faith healer, was first introduced to the royal family in St Petersburg in 1905 and began to treat Alexei with some success – something the royal doctors had been unable to do. As a result, the tsarina became totally devoted to Rasputin and he continued to consort with the royal family while treating their son. In 1912, he allegedly treated Alexei's symptoms via telegram.

Rasputin: 'The Mad Monk.'

Rasputin's influence in the palace spread to the broader elite within Russian society. He became a particularly frequent patron of the Russian salons. He was rumoured to have special powers over women and allegedly indulged in orgies with an array of upper-class Russians. He was even rumoured to be having an affair with the tsarina, although this was never proven. Popular pornography depicted him in various embraces with both the tsarina and the tsar; his presence in the lives of the Romanovs certainly discredited their characters. This affected their popularity with the conservatives and tarnished their public reputation.

Rasputin certainly had a strong influence over Tsarina Alexandra and they were both active in political affairs while Nicholas was away at the front in World War I. The frequent changes that led to the term 'ministerial leap-frogging' were often at Rasputin's behest.

In December 1916 a plot to kill Rasputin was hatched, although the motive for the murder is uncertain. Richard Pipes suggests that the conspirators sought to drive a wedge between the tsar and tsarina and thus make Nicholas more open to the demands of the duma. It was also suggested that the death would drive the tsarina into a mental institution.[15]

Orlando Figes, however, suggests that there may have been a homosexual vendetta involved, due to the fact that Rasputin had previously attempted to seduce the main conspirator, Prince Felix Yusupov. Yusupov, the Grand Duke Dmitry Pavlovich and the Grand Duke Nikolai Mikhailovich lured Rasputin to Yusupov's palace where he was fed cake and Madeira laced with cyanide. After failing to respond to the poison within two hours, Yusupov shot him in the side. Although this appeared to kill him, he was later found staggering to the front gate, where he was promptly shot again and kicked hard in the temple. His body was then weighed down and dumped in the River Neva; it wasn't discovered until several days later, encased in ice. Popular legend at the time had it that Rasputin's lungs were filled with water (indicating that he had died from drowning) and that he had partially escaped from his shackles. Contrary to the killers' expectations, perhaps, Rasputin's death brought the royal couple closer together in the final months of their reign.

Rasputin's body was finally buried outside the Tsarskoe Selo Palace (where the Imperial Family had been residing) in January 1917, before being exhumed after the February Revolution, doused with kerosene and burned to ash.

15 Pipes, *The Russian Revolution*, 262–7.

THE FEBRUARY REVOLUTION

Tsarina Alexandra: 'This is a hooligan movement, young people run and shout that there is no bread, simply to create excitement, along with workers who prevent others from working. If the weather were very cold they would probably all stay at home. But all this will pass and become calm if only the Duma will behave itself.'

DID YOU KNOW?

Rasputin said of Nicholas II, 'The tsar can change his mind from one minute to the next; he's a sad man; he lacks guts.'

At the start of 1917 very few people actually expected the overthrow of the tsar. In January 1917, six weeks before the February Revolution, Lenin said, 'We, the old, will probably not live to see the decisive battles of the coming revolution.'[16] On 9 January, 150 000 workers demonstrated in Petrograd in commemoration of Bloody Sunday and this led to a number of other strikes in January and early February. The Russian winter of 1916–17 was one of the coldest on record, with temperatures regularly hitting minus-thirty-five degrees Celsius, and averaging minus-fourteen in Petrograd in February. The cold also had a negative effect on what was left of the transport system, with blizzards dumping snow on the tracks and preventing trains from moving. This made the shortages of food and fuel in the cities worse, forcing the Putilov steel factory to shut down on 21 February. This in turn forced thousands of dismissed workers onto the streets of Petrograd. The tsar, who had been at home at Tsarskoe Selo with his family since Christmas, decided on 21 February that he should leave for the war front the following day. The next time he returned to Petrograd he would be a private citizen.

By the time the tsar had left for the war front, the weather had become milder as winter subsided. On 23 February, thousands of women marched on Petrograd to mark International Women's Day, demanding equality and access to more bread. They were joined by a group of around 100 000 workers who protested at the lack of available bread. The following day the number of protestors had doubled, and although there was an identifiable sense of anti-tsarist and anti-war sentiment, there was little violence. On 25 February, virtually all Petrograd factories were closed and almost 300 000 workers were on the streets. The information being sent to the tsar by the Petrograd police referred to the situation as minor and controllable and it was with this in mind that the tsar ordered the strikes to be quashed. He wrote to General Khabalov, who had been placed in charge of Petrograd's military garrison in January, 'I order you to stop tomorrow the disorders in the capital, which are unacceptable at the difficult time of war with Germany and Austria.'[17] Khabalov responded by banning public gatherings in the capital and warning that troops would fire on crowds who disobeyed. When crowds gathered in defiance of Khabolov's order on 26 February there were several instances of bloodshed which immediately galvanised and emboldened the protestors.

On 27 February the only body capable of enforcing the tsar's authority, the Petrograd garrison, mutinied. Housed in barracks designed to fit 20 000 men, by February 1917 there were 160 000 men living in cramped conditions and waiting to be sent to the front. Comprising mostly peasants and workers, they had witnessed the shootings the day before and identified with the victims, not the shooters. Fedor Linde, a sergeant in the barracks remembered shouting, 'To arms! To arms! They are killing innocent people, our brothers and sisters!'[18] All at once, the 160 000 men who had been gathered in Petrograd to be sent to the front became the critical group that led to the downfall of the Romanov dynasty,

16 J.P. Nettl, *The Soviet Achievement* (London: Thames and Hudson, 1977), 37.
17 Pipes, *The Russian Revolution*, 267.
18 Figes, *A People's Tragedy*, 315.

Soldiers of the garrison at Petrograd support the revolution.

because their defection deprived the tsar of any military authority in the capital. It also gave the crowds a military capacity and critical organisation.

The duma president, Rodzianko, had cabled the tsar on 26 February and told him of the chaos in the capital. He wrote,

> Your most faithful servant reports to your Majesty that popular risings, having begun in Petrograd, are taking on uncontrollable and threatening dimensions. Their cause is a shortage of baked bread...But the main reason is the absolute distrust of the authorities, who are not yet competent to lead the country out of its difficult situation...Your majesty, save Russia; she is threatened with humiliation and disgrace... Your Majesty, urgently summon a person in whom the whole country can have faith and entrust him with the formation of a government that all the people can trust.[19]

Nicholas responded by dismissing the duma.

In defiance of the tsar's order, the duma formed a group of twelve to be known as the Provisional Committee and whose task it would be to restore order in Petrograd. The Provisional Committee met in the Tauride Palace. Elsewhere in the palace on 27 February, the Petrograd Soviet of Soldiers,' Sailors' and Workers' Deputies formed, calling for immediate elections and temporary support of the Provisional Committee.

As the revolution neared its zenith, therefore, Petrograd was ruled by two clearly differing groups – the Provisional Committee, consisting mostly of middle-class members of the duma and strongly reflecting the ideology of the Progressive Bloc, and the Petrograd Soviet, representing the lower-class workers, soldiers and sailors. Only Alexander Kerensky was a member of both. By 28 February, Nicholas' Council of Ministers had stepped down, with many ministers fleeing the city. The Proclamation of Provisional Government was made the same day.

19 Peter Oxley, *Russia 1855–1991: From Tsars to Commissars* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001), 84.

DOCUMENT

PROCLAMATION OF PROVISIONAL GOVERNMENT

Citizens!

The Provisional Committee of the members of the State Duma, with the aid and sympathy of the troops and the population of the capital, has at present scored such a degree of success over the dark forces of the old regime that it can now proceed to a more durable organisation of executive power.

To this end, the Provisional Committee of the State Duma appoints as ministers of the first public cabinet the following persons, the country's confidence in whom is guaranteed by their past public and political activities.

The Cabinet will be guided in its present activity by the following principles:

Full and immediate amnesty in all political and religious cases, including terrorist attempts, military uprising and agrarian offences, and so forth.

Freedom of speech, the press, unions, assembly, and strikes, with the extension of political freedoms to servicemen within limits permitted by military and technical conditions.

Abolition of all class, religious, and national restrictions.

Immediate preparations for the convocation – on the basis of universal, equal, direct and secret suffrage – of a constituent assembly which will establish the form of government and the constitution of the country.

Replacement of the police by a people's militia with an elected command, subordinate to the organs of local self-government.

Elections to the organs of local self-government on the basis of universal, direct, equal, and secret ballot.

Non-disarmament and non-transfer from Petrograd of the military units that participated in the revolutionary movement.

Along with the preservation of strict military discipline in the ranks and during performance of military duty, the abolition of all restrictions upon the soldiers' enjoyment of those public rights that have been granted to all other citizens. The Provisional Government considers it its duty to add that it by no means intends to use the military situation to delay in any way the realisation of the above reforms and measures.

Provisional Executive Committee of the State Duma.

Chairman of the State Duma: M.V. Rodzianko

Chairman of the Council of Ministers: Prince G.E. Lvov

Ministers: P.N. Miliukov, N.V. Nekrosov, A.I. Konovalov, A.A. Manuilov, M.I. Tereshchenko, V.N. Lvov, A.I. Shingarev, A.F. Kerensky.[20]

20 Vernadsky, *A Source Book for Russian History*, 881–2.

ACTIVITY

SOURCE ANALYSIS

Read the Proclamation of Provisional Government and answer the questions below.

1. Identify five freedoms the Provisional Committee regarded as important.
2. Why were elections and suffrage so important to members of the committee?
3. To what extent is class conflict addressed in this proclamation?
4. Referring to the extract, discuss how successful the Provisional Government was in achieving these aims.

SHORT RESPONSE

Using three or four points, explain the significance of Tsar Nicholas II in the February Revolution of 1917. Provide evidence to support your answer.

ABDICATION OF NICHOLAS II

Tsar Nicholas II.

THE TSAR ABDICATES

Tsar Nicholas II: 'If it is necessary, for Russia's good, that I step aside, I am prepared to do so.'

Finally acknowledging that the situation in Petrograd was perilous, the tsar determined to return to Petrograd and settle the crowds. The train lines close to the capital were controlled by mutinous troops, however, and they refused him passage. Instead he travelled to Pskov where, on 2 March, he finally ceded to pressure from Rodzianko and the generals to abdicate in favour of his son, Alexei. That evening Nicholas summoned the court physician and quizzed him on the child's prognosis. The doctor replied that Alexei would not live much longer and, in any case, the tsar would see his son very little once he took the throne because Nicholas would be expected to go into exile. At this moment, the tsar decided not to pass the throne to his son but to his younger brother, the Grand Duke Mikhail, saying, 'I cannot be separated from him.'[21] Even in the final moments of his rule it seemed Nicholas prioritised his family above all else.

Legally, the tsar was unable to bestow the title on his brother as the throne had to be passed to the oldest son. Whatever the case, the Grand Duke Mikhail took little time to consider the throne when Rodzianko told him that the duma would not be able to protect him if he accepted the position. The Petrograd crowds had already condemned the Romanov lineage and wanted nothing to do with a continuation of the monarchy. When Mikhail declined the crown and signed the formal declaration of abdication, over 300 years of Romanov rule came to an end. Celebrations filled the streets of Petrograd, which soon spread to other Russian cities and towns. The non-Russian capitals saw the abdication as a release of their long-subjugated nations and flew their national flags. By the end of March, most people within Russia had heard the news. The peasants accepted the revolution gratefully, although some of the older, more traditional peasants found the news confronting as they had regarded the tsar as God's representative on earth. Old imperial symbols, signs and statues were destroyed across Russia and the Allied Powers, including the United States, recognised and accepted Russia's new interim government immediately.

THE PROVISIONAL GOVERNMENT

Alexander Kerensky: 'The Soviet had power without authority...the Provisional Government authority without power.'

On 2 March the Provisional Committee renamed itself the Provisional Government, with head of the All-Russian Union of Towns and the All-Russian Union of Zemstva, Prince Lvov, as prime minister. They declared that they would assume responsibility for governing Russia until Constituent Assembly elections could take place. Comprising an overwhelming majority of liberals and moderates, the ministers in the first cabinet were:

Minister-President and Minister of the Interior Prince G.E. Lvov (no party)
Minister of Foreign Affairs P.N. Miliukov (Kadet)
Minister of War and Navy A.I. Guchkov (Octobrist)

21 Figes, *A People's Tragedy*, 343.

Minister of Transport N.V. Nekrasov (Kadet)
Minister of Trade and Industry A.I. Konovalov (Kadet)
Minister of Finance M.I. Tereshchenko (no party)
Minister of Education A.A. Manuilov (Kadet)
Ober-Procurator of the Holy Synod V.N. Lvov (Centrist)
Minister of Agriculture A.I. Shingarev (Kadet)
Minister of Justice A.F. Kerensky (SR).

When the foreign minister and leader of the Kadets, Miliukov, announced the ministers of the new government, a heckler from the crowd shouted, 'Who appointed you?' Miliukov replied, 'We were appointed by the revolution itself,' confirming the fact that they had simply assumed control. The Petrograd Soviet, however, while not having legislative power, had significant influence. As Minister of War Guchkov said,

> The Provisional Government does not possess any real power; and its directives are carried out only to the extent that it is permitted by the Soviet of Workers' and Soldiers' Deputies, which enjoys all the essential elements of real power, since the troops, the railroads, the post and telegraph are all in its hands. One can say flatly that the Provisional Government exists only so long as it is permitted by the Soviet.[22]

Indeed, on 1 March the Petrograd Soviet had released Soviet Order Number 1, which placed it in control of the military, and agreed to follow the duma 'only in such cases as they do not conflict with the orders and resolutions of the Soviet.'[23]

In its first few weeks, the Provisional Government released several populist decrees. Trade unions were recognised and an eight-hour day was introduced for industrial workers. The tsar's secret police force, the Okhrana, was abolished and freedom of speech, assembly and the press were introduced. Universal suffrage was announced, political prisoners were freed and there was a commitment to convene a popularly-elected constituent assembly. Despite these reforms, however, the Provisional Government was not able to alleviate the concerns of the average citizen in Russia, namely peasant access to land, the conduct of the war and the supply of food and fuel. Unable to claim genuine legitimacy as leaders of Russia (after all, they had simply assumed power) they were also unwilling to convene elections too quickly. Intent on designing an ideal parliament with a fair voting process, the Provisional Government arguably missed an opportunity – had it quickly sought elections it might have been able to confer legitimacy on the elected parliament.[24] Instead, the Provisional Government lurched from one crisis to the next in its short eight months of existence, leaving the country open to more extreme elements.

DID YOU KNOW?

Trotsky famously said, 'the country has so radically vomited up the monarchy that it could not ever crawl down the people's throats again.'

LENIN'S APRIL THESES

Vladimir Lenin: 'Our tactics: absolute distrust, no support for the Provisional Government.'

Lenin was in Switzerland when the February Revolution occurred (Trotsky was in New York). Desperate to return quickly, Lenin negotiated with the German government, which gave him safe passage through that country. It was obviously in Germany's interests for Russian revolutionaries opposed to the war to be allowed to return, and they transported also a large contingent of Mensheviks one month later. Lenin arrived at Finland Station in Petrograd on 3 April and spoke briefly before leaving for a private conference with other members of the Bolshevik Party. When Lenin informed the public of his interpretation of the events of 1917 it

22 Cited in Sheila Fitzpatrick, *The Russian Revolution*, Second Edition (New York: Oxford University Press, 1994), 47.
23 Anthony Wood, *The Russian Revolution* (London: Longman, 1979), 85.
24 Figes, *A People's Tragedy*, 360–1.

DOCUMENT

LENIN'S *APRIL THESES*

1) In our attitude towards the war, which under the new [provisional] government of Lvov and Co. unquestionably remains on Russia's part a predatory imperialist war owing to the capitalist nature of that government, not the slightest concession to 'revolutionary defencism' [war waged in defence of new revolutionary government] is permissible.

The class-conscious proletariat can give its consent to a revolutionary war, which would really justify revolutionary defencism, only on condition: (a) that the power pass to the proletariat and the poorest sections of the peasants aligned with the proletariat; (b) that all annexations be renounced in deed and not in word; (c) that a complete break be effected in actual fact with all capitalist interests…

2) The specific feature of the present situation in Russia is that the country is passing from the first stage of the revolution—which, owing to the insufficient class-consciousness and organisation of the proletariat, placed power in the hands of the bourgeoisie—to its second stage, which must place power in the hands of the proletariat and the poorest sections of the peasants… This peculiar situation demands of us an ability to adapt ourselves to the special conditions of Party work among unprecedentedly large masses of proletarians who have just awakened to political life.

3) No support for the Provisional Government; the utter falsity of all its promises should be made clear, particularly of those relating to the renunciation of annexations…

4) …The masses must be made to see that the Soviets of Workers' Deputies are the only possible form of revolutionary government, and that therefore our task is, as long as this government yields to the influence of the bourgeoisie, to present a patient, systematic, and persistent explanation of the errors of their tactics, an explanation especially adapted to the practical needs of the masses…

As long as we are in the minority we carry on the work of criticising and exposing errors and at the same time we preach the necessity of transferring the entire state power to the Soviets of Workers' Deputies, so that the people may overcome their mistakes by experience.

5) Not a parliamentary republic—to return to a parliamentary republic from the Soviets of Workers' Deputies would be a retrograde step—but a republic of Soviets of Workers,' Agricultural Labourers' and Peasants' Deputies throughout the country, from top to bottom.

Abolition of the police, the army and the bureaucracy.

The salaries of all officials, all of whom are elective and displaceable at any time, not to exceed the average wage of a competent worker…

6)…Confiscation of all landed estates.

Nationalisation of all lands in the country, the land to be disposed of by the local Soviets of Agricultural Labourers' and Peasants' Deputies…

7) The immediate union of all banks in the country into a single national bank, and the institution of control over it by the Soviet of Workers' Deputies.

8) It is not our immediate task to 'introduce' socialism, but only to bring social production and the distribution of products at once under the control of the Soviets of Workers' Deputies.

9) Party tasks:

(a) Immediate convocation of a Party congress;

(b) Alteration of the Party Programme, mainly:

(1) On the question of imperialism and the imperialist war,

(2) On our attitude towards the state and our demand for a 'commune state';

(3) Amendment of our out-of-date minimum programme;

(c) Change of the Party's name.

10) A new International.'[25]

25 'The Tasks of the Proletariat in the Present Revolution' (the 'April Theses'), Lenin (via Marxists Internet Archive), www.marxists.org/archive/lenin/works/1917/apr/04.htm. Article originally published in *Pravda*, no. 26, 7 April 1917.

ACTIVITY

SOURCE ANALYSIS

Read Lenin's *April Theses* and complete the tasks below.

1. Explain Lenin's position on Russia's involvement in World War I.
2. To what extent is class conflict addressed in the *April Theses*?
3. How did Lenin adapt Marxism to address the needs of the peasants in the *April Theses*?
4. Referring to the extract, describe the effect of the *April Theses* on socialists within Russia.

came as a surprise and an affront to most Bolsheviks and proved to be an ominous warning to the Provisional Government. Lenin called the Provisional Government 'parliamentary-bourgeois' and rejected any cooperation with them, much to the astonishment of most Petrograd Bolsheviks, who had thus far accepted the February Revolution. Lenin demanded an end to the war he regarded as imperialist and he developed two slogans that summed up his position; 'Peace, Bread and Land' and 'All Power to the Soviets.' The first slogan addressed the main concerns of the Russian populace and the second emphasised his belief that only the Petrograd Soviet should form the basis of a new revolutionary government.

Lenin's *April Theses* declared there should be 'no support for the Provisional Government; the utter falsity of all its promises should be made clear.'[26] Over the ensuing days, Lenin was heavily criticised by other socialists, as well as by fellow Bolsheviks, but his program soon united the Bolshevik Party and identified them as the most radical opponents of the Provisional Government. Lenin's support of the soviets, particularly the Petrograd Soviet, would eventually provide him with a base of power from which to launch a challenge to the Provisional Government, and, therefore, to transfer power from the bourgeoisie to the proletariat.

DID YOU KNOW?

Lenin once said, 'I can't listen to music too often...It makes me want to say kind, stupid things, and pat the heads of people...But now you have to beat them on the head, beat them without mercy.'

CHALLENGES TO THE PROVISIONAL GOVERNMENT

Alexander Kerensky: 'The Old Regime has left everything in chaos.'

Even before Lenin's return, the Provisional Government was being challenged by conditions within Russia and by the war. The internal and external situations were closely linked. Russia was virtually bankrupt by 1917, and the only way the Provisional Government could survive was on loans and war credits from its wartime allies. If Russia withdrew from the war, this injection of capital would be lost and the government would collapse. Despite the unpopularity of the conflict, therefore, the Provisional Government had no choice but to continue fighting in World War I.

The war was a major point of difference between the Petrograd Soviet and the Provisional Government. The Petrograd Soviet wanted to achieve peace that recognised the self-determination of nations, without aggressive or victorious annexations (taking over other territories). When the Provisional Government released its formal declaration to the Allied governments concerning its war aims on 27 March, it reinforced Russia's desire for a 'lasting peace.'[27] Concerned that this may lead the Allies to conclude that Russia intended to withdraw from the war, Miliukov drafted a note to accompany the declaration. The note confirmed the Provisional Government's desire 'fully to carry out the obligations' required.[28]

DID YOU KNOW?

The return of revolutionary leaders in 1917 was commonly greeted with street parties involving lots of alcohol. Much of the crowd at Finland Station in April 1917 may have arrived with the expectation of free beer.

26 Oxley, *Russia 1855–1991*, 101.
27 Pipes, *The Russian Revolution*, 400.
28 Pipes, *The Russian Revolution*, 400.

When this statement appeared in the Russian press on 20 April it inflamed the socialists, who saw it as confirmation that the Provisional Government would pursue imperialist annexations. The 'Miliukov note' resulted in street disturbances that were quickly exploited by the Bolsheviks into riots that Pipes calls 'the first Bolshevik attempt at a putsch [that] ended in ignominious failure.'[29] In the end, there was no mass support for the uprising and the Bolsheviks denied responsibility. The disturbances did, however, cause the resignation of Guchkov as minister of war and Miliukov as foreign minister. In the cabinet reshuffle, Prince Lvov invited members of the Soviet to join the government and form a 'coalition,' including Irakli Tsereteli (a Menshevik) and Viktor Chernov (SR). Kerensky (SR) had been the only member of both the Soviet and the government since February. He took over as minister of war and immediately tried to characterise the war against Germany as a way to save the revolution, launching a massive offensive in June.

Meanwhile, the problem of land continued to plague Russia. The Provisional Government did not totally oppose the acquisition of former private land by the peasants – indeed many village communes had been seizing and redistributing land since February. Nonetheless, it would have been a Herculean task to administer this land reform, and in the context of the broader war effort and the struggle for power with the soviets, it was a task beyond the ability of the bureaucracy. The other concern was that there was not enough money to pay compensation to the former landowners, the liberals considering this to be an essential component of any land reform. Instead of addressing the issue that most concerned a vast majority of Russians, the Provisional Government determined that the only body capable of resolving the issue was a Constituent Assembly. Such a delay did little to stop the widespread seizure of land by Russian peasants.

29 Pipes, *The Russian Revolution*, 401.

The burning of coats of arms in the days of revolution.

THE JUNE OFFENSIVE

Alexander Kerensky: 'For the sake of the nation's life it was necessary to restore the army's will to die.'

To satisfy the socialists, the Provisional Government declared in May 1917 that it was committed to a defensive war to achieve peace without annexations, but in an attempt to drive the Austrians and Germans from Russian territory, Kerensky and General Brusilov embarked on a major offensive on the southwestern front in June. The war-weary soldiers were already deserting their posts in the lead-up to the offensive and the number increased as the offensive began, with more than 170 000 deserting. Despite some success in the first days after the artillery barrage began on 16 June, the Russian troops were soon faced with German counter-attack. Most Russian troops were without appropriate weapons and had been poorly trained, so when the Germans began to advance they were either killed, captured or they simply ran away. Kerensky, who was called in political circles the 'supreme persuader-in-chief,' spent the days rushing between regiments to improve morale with his speeches, but it was no use as whole regiments mutinied. The June Offensive cost Russia the lives of several-hundred-thousand men, as well as several-million square miles of territory. What had started as an opportunity to evoke patriotism in Russia degenerated into a chaotic defeat. Influenced also by a crisis over the question of Ukrainian autonomy, the coalition between the Kadets and the socialists in the Provisional Government fell apart and Prince Lvov resigned as prime minister. He was replaced by Kerensky on 8 July 1917.

The other major consequence of the June Offensive was on the Petrograd garrison, which had remained in the capital since February by agreement between the soviet and the government. When the 1st Machine Gun Regiment (the main base of Bolshevik support in the Petrograd garrison) was ordered to the front in June, however, local agitators claimed that the real motivation for the military offensive was to break the power of the garrison so the Provisional Government could consolidate its position. Widespread demonstrations occurred, which within a few weeks seriously challenged the Provisional Government's power.

SHORT RESPONSE

Using three or four points, analyse the role of Alexander Kerensky and the Provisional Government in triggering the October Revolution of 1917. Provide evidence to support your answer.

Kerensky addressing a regiment.

THE JULY DAYS

Prince Georgi Lvov: 'The only way to save the country now is to close down the Soviet and shoot the people. I cannot do that. But Kerensky can.'

On 2 July 1917, Trotsky addressed many of the 1st Machine Gun Regiment and criticised Kerensky for his pursuit of the June Offensive. He demanded power be immediately handed over to the Soviet. The following day, thousands took to the streets demanding the Provisional Government hand over power. Despite the enthusiasm of the rioters, only half of the 1st Machine Gun Regiment joined the demonstration and it did not receive full support from the Petrograd garrison. The protestors were supported by 20 000 sailors from the Kronstadt naval base on 4 July, who carried large banners with the Bolshevik slogans 'All Power to the Soviets' and 'Peace, Bread and Land.' They were joined by 20 000 workers from the Putilov steel works.

Petrograd, 4 July 1917. Demonstrators 'dispersed' after troops open fire.

The question of Bolshevik involvement in the July Days is one of the most debated aspects of 1917. Richard Pipes is in no doubt that the July Days was a failed Bolshevik *coup d'etat* (attempt to overthrow the government) that failed primarily because Lenin lost his nerve. After the failure of the July Days, Pipes asserts, the Bolsheviks attempted to distance themselves from the event. Sheila Fitzpatrick agrees that the July Days exposed the weaknesses of the Bolsheviks, but instead sees it as evidence of their lack of preparedness rather than a failure to seize power. Fitzpatrick claims the Bolsheviks were 'caught off balance. They had talked insurrection, in a general way, but not planned it.'[30] The Communist Party of the Soviet Union, however, maintains that,

> The Bolshevik Party was opposed to armed action at that time, for it considered that the revolutionary crisis had not yet matured, that the army and the provinces were not yet prepared to support an uprising in the capital, and that an isolated and premature rising might only make it easier for the counter-revolutionaries to crush the vanguard of the revolution. But when it became obviously impossible to keep the masses from demonstrating, the Party resolved to participate in the demonstration in order to lend it a peaceful and organised character. This the Bolshevik Party succeeded in doing.[31]

Despite the Bolshevik slogans and the presence of thousands of opponents on the street, the July Days were relatively quickly put down by Kerensky, who recalled troops from the front to suppress the uprising. Whether or not the Bolsheviks had organised and supported the July Days, their involvement was clear and they were heavily attacked in the ensuing days. On 6 July the Provisional Government ordered the arrest of eleven key Bolsheviks for high treason, including Lenin, who escaped to the countryside and then to Finland. In all, 800 Bolsheviks were arrested in the aftermath and the Bolshevik paper *Pravda* was banned. Bolshevik Party headquarters were raided and documents were seized that showed the Bolsheviks had been receiving funds from the Germans. Kerensky portrayed the Bolsheviks as traitors, although he did not put them on trial. The failure of the July Days weakened the Bolsheviks, but not fatally, and Kerensky's main fear seemed to be that the Right would exploit the socialist threat to embark on counter-revolution and restore the monarchy.

30 Fitzpatrick, *The Russian Revolution*, 58.
31 Communist Party of the Soviet Union, *History of the CPSU*.

ACTIVITY

HISTORICAL INTERPRETATIONS

Read about the July Days and complete the tasks below.

1. Identify differences between the views of Pipes, Fitzpatrick and the Communist Party of the Soviet Union regarding the failure of the July Days protest.
2. Explain why there might be three such different interpretations of the one event.
3. In pairs, discuss which version seems to be most accurate and why.
4. Referring to this book and at least two other sources, write a paragraph explaining which of the three approaches you favour. Give evidence to support your comments.

Petrograd shop window showing bullet hole after riots of July 1917.

THE KORNILOV AFFAIR

General Lavr Kornilov: 'It's time to hang the German supporters and spies, with Lenin at their head, and to disperse the Soviet!'

In July 1917, misunderstandings and conflict between Kerensky and General Kornilov further threatened the stability of the Provisional Government. Kornilov had become well known in Russia before the revolution due to his escape from an Austrian prisoner of war camp. After the February Revolution he had been appointed commander of the Petrograd garrison, although he later demanded to be sent back to the front over conflicts with the Petrograd Soviet. After the failed June offensive, Kornilov demanded a move to more right-wing policies to impose order, including the restoration of the death penalty for breaches of army discipline, a ban on strikes and a reduction in the power of the soviets. On 18 July, Kerensky appointed Kornilov the supreme commander of the Russian army, but their relationship proved uneasy.

By mid-August, Kornilov and Kerensky attempted to find a way to consolidate the power of the Provisional Government, but the two men differed in their preferred strategy. The conservative Kornilov distrusted all socialists and believed they should be purged from the government. Kerensky, however, was partially a product of the soviets and feared that their total removal from power would not only mean his removal from power, but also a return to monarchism. At worst, he felt it would trigger a civil war. The former Octobrist duma deputy, V.N. Lvov (not to be

confused with Prince Lvov), became involved on 24 August to mediate between the two men, yet he inflamed matters by misrepresenting each leader's demands. As Rex A. Wade wrote, Lvov 'heightened Kornilov's suspicions about Kerensky's reliability, while feeding Kerensky's anxiety that Kornilov's idea of restoration of order was a much more sweeping concept than his own, including even his own destruction.'[32] As a result of Lvov's mediation, Kornilov thought Kerensky was offering him the position of dictator, while Kerensky thought Kornilov was demanding a dictatorship and Kerensky's resignation. On 26 August, Kornilov requested Kerensky's urgent presence at military headquarters and, suspecting a plot against him, Kerensky immediately called a cabinet meeting where all ministers resigned in an effort to give Kerensky temporary dictatorial powers to meet Kornilov's impending right-wing coup.

HISTORICAL INTERPRETATIONS ACTIVITY

KORNILOV'S DISMISSAL

Kerensky sent Kornilov a telegram on 27 August 1917, dismissing him and requesting his immediate presence in Petrograd. Kornilov was enraged as this was totally out of context of the communications he had been having with Lvov. Suspecting Kerensky had succumbed to a Bolshevik coup, Kornilov ordered his troops to march on the capital and save Petrograd, declaring, 'the Provisional Government, under pressure from the Bolshevik majority in the Soviet, acts in full accord with the plans of the German General Staff and...convulses the country from within.'[33] In an attempt to meet the threat posed by Kornilov, Kerensky turned to the soviets for assistance and ordered all Bolshevik prisoners to be set free from prison and armed. It was the Bolsheviks who proved most effective in organising militias and expanding the Red Guards. In the end, Kornilov's troops were not even able to reach Petrograd, being stopped by railway workers who assured them there had been no coup and that they were being used to conduct a right-wing counter revolution. Kornilov was arrested and incarcerated, before escaping after the Bolshevik revolution in October. It appears clear that the Kornilov Affair was the result of miscommunication and, perhaps, of Kerensky's futile attempt to shore up his own power base.

Richard Pipes believes Kerensky engineered the Kornilov threat 'to discredit the general as the ringleader of an imaginary but widely anticipated counterrevolution, the suppression of which would elevate the Prime Minister to a position of unrivaled popularity and power, enabling him to meet the growing threat from the Bolsheviks.'[34] The Kornilov affair did not, however, elevate Kerensky to Russian hero. Instead, he emerged as a compromised and ineffectual leader who had lost the respect and support of the armed forces. This loss of support would prove crucial in late October. The Bolsheviks, however, were revived. They were able to erase the memory of the July Days and portray themselves as defenders of the revolution. The Bolsheviks now had weapons for their Red Guards (given to them by Kerensky to halt the Kornilov advance) and it had been demonstrated that the Provisional Government was impotent and barely able to survive. Bolshevik popularity was beginning to grow, and, as other socialist parties showed uncertainty, it was the Bolsheviks who held firm to their uncompromising, radical party line. Lenin, having learned of these events in Finland, determined that the time to challenge the Provisional Government through armed insurrection was fast approaching.

32 Rex A. Wade, *The Russian Revolution, 1917,* 2nd edition (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2005), 205.
33 Pipes, *The Russian Revolution,* 460.
34 Pipes, *The Russian Revolution,* 463.

BOLSHEVIK MAJORITIES IN THE SOVIETS

Vladimir Lenin: 'All Power to the Soviets!'

The moderates who had maintained power in the soviets since the February Revolution slowly lost favour as the Bolshevik slogan 'All Power to the Soviets' successfully taunted their refusal to seize power. With the Provisional Government weakening, the Kornilov affair thrust the Bolsheviks to the forefront of Russian politics as the saviours of the revolution. With a newly-armed Red Guard, the sudden surge in Bolshevik popularity changed the main soviets in Moscow and Petrograd. Before the Kornilov affair, on 20 August, the Bolsheviks had made significant gains in the Petrograd municipal elections. After the Kornilov affair, however, the Bolsheviks gained even more seats in the municipal elections, seizing almost fifty per cent of the vote. These results were not only due to Bolshevik popularity, however, because the general Russian population appeared to lose interest in politics as every day passed. The Petrograd elections had a voter turnout down twenty per cent from the previous figure, with the Moscow elections seeing an even greater decline in voter participation – almost fifty per cent less. This political apathy was repeated in the major soviets.

MUNICIPAL ELECTIONS IN MOSCOW (PERCENTAGE OF SEATS)[35]

PARTY	JUNE	SEPTEMBER	CHANGE
SRs	58.9	14.7	-44.2%
Mensheviks	12.2	4.2	-8%
Bolsheviks	11.7	49.5	37.8%
Kadets	17.2	31.5	14.3%

The Petrograd Soviet filled the Tauride Palace in the weeks after the February Revolution, with some 3000 deputies attending regularly. By September, however, numbers were down to several hundred, mostly comprising the radical members. The political fervour of the Bolsheviks assured they maintained a key presence and on 19 September they achieved a majority in the Moscow Soviet, achieving the same in the Petrograd Soviet on 25 September. Trotsky, who had recently joined the Bolsheviks from the Mensheviks, became chairman of the Petrograd Soviet. As a result, Michael Lynch contends, 'the Bolshevik Party exerted an influence out of proportion to its numbers.'[36] Nonetheless, other historians have argued that the Bolsheviks earned genuine popularity in Petrograd due to their capacity to respond to the dominant mood. Rex Wade argues that the Bolsheviks 'became the political alternative for the disappointed and disenchanted,'[37] while Alan Wood wrote, 'Lenin's program manifestly reflected and articulated the increasingly radical temper of the party rank-and-file and the militant workers and troops.'[38] The growing popularity and influence of the Bolsheviks by September 1917, combined with the decline of Kerensky and the Provisional Government, led Lenin to send a letter to the Central Committee titled, 'The Bolsheviks Must Take Power.' It did not take long for the opportunity to be seized.

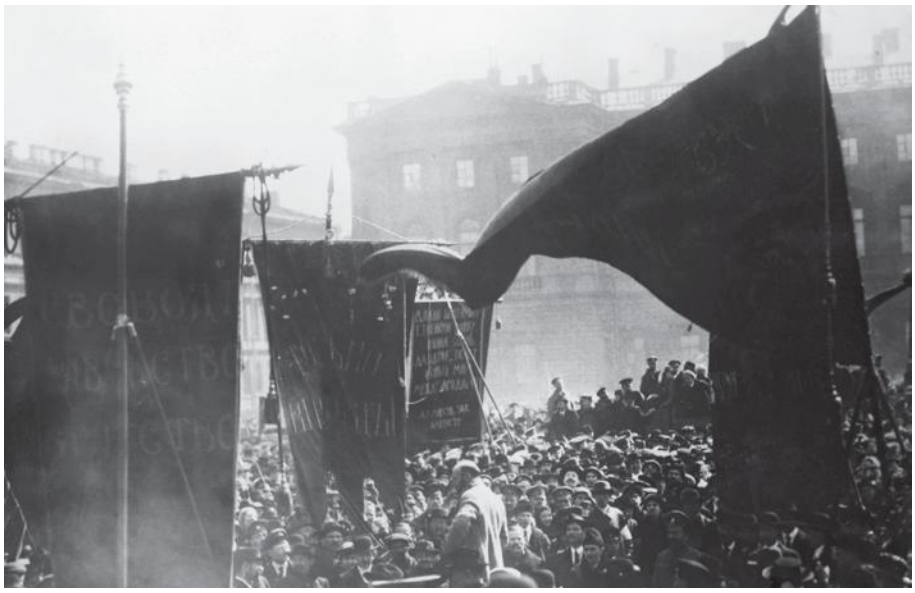
EXTENDED RESPONSE

Write an extended response (400–600 words) on the following topic:

'The Provisional Government would have succeeded if the Bolsheviks had given it a chance.' Do you agree?

PETROGRAD ELECTION RESULTS

35 Pipes, *The Russian Revolution*, 466.
36 Lynch, *Reaction and Revolutions*, 92.
37 Wade, *The Russian Revolution*, 208.
38 Alan Wood, *The Origins of the Russian Revolution: 1861–1917* (London: Routledge, 1993), 44.



Lenin addresses a crowd in Petrograd.

ACTIVITIES

HISTORICAL INTERPRETATIONS

1. Choose one of the topics below and research the ways in which different historians have interpreted it:
   - World War I
   - Popularity of the Bolsheviks
   - The July Days
   - The Kornilov revolt.
2. Collect three quotes (no more than 100 words each) from different historians on your chosen topic.
3. Assess the strengths and limitations of each interpretation. Which pieces of evidence do they emphasise, and are there any important points missing?
4. Present a five-minute talk to your class which summarises the main historical interpretations on your topic, finishing with a statement of your own regarding which one(s) you find most convincing. You must cite evidence throughout.

Refer to a range of historians, for example, Richard Pipes, Orlando Figes, Communist Party of the Soviet Union, Robert Service and/or Sheila Fitzpatrick.

CONSTRUCTING AN ARGUMENT

Write an essay on one of the topics below. Your essay should be approx. 800 words and include an introduction, paragraphs supported by evidence, a conclusion and a bibliography. Topics:

- To what extent was Tsar Nicholas II responsible for his own downfall?
- Did the Provisional Government and Petrograd Soviet uphold their original ideals in the period March–October 1917? To what extent did this influence the course of events?
- 'The Provisional Government was doomed to fail.' Do you agree?

DIAGRAM

Create a diagram or graphic organiser on one of the following:

- Different perspectives on how Russia should be governed after Nicholas' abdication in 1917.
- The revolutionary ideas that gained the Bolsheviks popular support amongst urban workers and soldiers during 1917.
- Setbacks faced by the Provisional Government by September 1917.

THE OCTOBER REVOLUTION

John Reed: 'Behind us great Smolny, bright with lights, hummed like a gigantic hive.'

DECLINE OF PROVISIONAL GOVERNMENT

RUSSIAN PHOTOGRAPHS, JUN–OCT 1917

By September 1917 the Bolsheviks' militant class rhetoric and uncompromising anti-war stance had found ready acceptance in the minds of Russia's soldiers and workers. More and more it seemed that only a government based on the authority of the soviets could act upon the demands for 'Peace, Bread and Land.' Though not the only radical socialist party, the Bolsheviks were the political group most readily identified with these ideals. The radical socialist left, headed by the Bolsheviks, 'became the political alternative for the disappointed and disenchanted, for those looking for new leadership.'[39] 'Soviet power' emerged as a genuinely popular aspiration broadly understood to mean the establishment of a governmental authority that would act in accordance with the wishes of the working classes and in their best interests. Class tensions, economic hardship and the breakdown of law and order set the city of Petrograd on edge by early October. The Provisional Government's authority was in rapid decline. With the peasantry again undertaking land seizures, the countryside more or less ruled itself. Russia was more than ever a fertile ground for revolutionary change. With majorities in the Petrograd and Moscow soviets, Lenin revived the slogan 'All Power to the Soviets' and bombarded his party colleagues with letters demanding that a plan for a seizure of power be set in motion.

MEETING OF BOLSHEVIKS ON 10 OCTOBER

It was apparent to Lenin that only a Bolshevik insurrection would bring about a true soviet-style government. He had long been an advocate of deposing the Provisional Government in favour of a government based on the soviets. At the same time, Lenin was adamant that only the Bolsheviks had the correct program – they were the only genuine revolutionary party – thus it was essential for Lenin that any Soviet government be dominated by a Bolshevik majority. At the First All-Russian Congress of Soviets in June 1917, the Menshevik Tsereteli had argued that there was not a single party willing or able to take power and offer a viable alternative to the Dual Authority of the Provisional Government and Petrograd Soviet. Lenin had leapt up at the back of the hall and shouted, 'Yes there is! There is such a party – the Bolsheviks!'[40] Most delegates reportedly laughed at his claims. Few opponents were laughing by October. The time for a Bolshevik-led revolution was nigh.

Not all Bolsheviks agreed with Lenin. Lev Kamenev and Grigory Zinoviev felt that the party should wait until the elections to the Constituent Assembly, scheduled for 12 November. Why should the Bolsheviks risk their ever-increasing popularity and the escalating revolutionary movement? Lenin was beside himself with rage over such wavering. On 7 October he returned to Petrograd from his countryside hideout and three days later called a meeting of the Bolshevik Central Committee to discuss the question of staging an insurrection. 'History will not forgive us if we do not take power now,' Lenin argued.[41] A seizure of power needed to be undertaken immediately. His sense of urgency came from a concern that if they

39 Wade, *The Russian Revolution*, 206.

40 Foreign Languages Publishing House, ed., 'June 17 entry,' in *Soviet Calendar: Thirty Years of the Soviet State 1917–1947* (Moscow: Foreign Languages Publishing House, 1947).

41 Cited in Wood, *The Origins of the Russian Revolution*, 47.

'There is such a party!' Lenin stands to speak at the First All-Russian Congress of Soviets, June 1917. Josef Stalin is seated next to him; Yakov Sverdlov behind.

waited any longer a coalition socialist government might be formed in which the Bolsheviks (and more importantly Lenin) would be marginalised. Lenin also judged that the international situation and the mood of the Russian working classes were inclined toward a revolutionary uprising.

Rather than an immediate seizure of power, Trotsky favoured waiting until the Second All-Russian Congress of Soviets in late October. The majority of the Committee, including Lenin, eventually adopted Trotsky's proposal. Often represented as a decisive plan to seize power,[42] the meeting on 10 October resolved to agree on the principle of an armed insurrection – 'the order of the day' – but did not set an exact date. Historians Rex Wade and Alexander Rabinowitch argue that it was a declaration of intent to overthrow the government at the most suitable opportunity.[43] The forthcoming Congress of Soviets was nevertheless seen as the most appropriate setting for the formation of a new socialist government. By contrast, Richard Pipes interprets the meeting on 10 October

42 Richard Pipes, 'Seventy-five Years On: The Great October Revolution as a Clandestine Coup d'Etat,' in *Times Literary Supplement 4675* (6 November 1992); Pipes, *A Concise History of the Russian Revolution*, 141.

43 Alexander Rabinowitch, *The Bolsheviks Come to Power: The Revolution of 1917 in Petrograd* (Chicago: Haymarket Books and Pluto Press, 2004), 206–7, 222; Wade, *The Russian Revolution*, 225.

LENIN DOCUMENTARY

as a definite resolution to seize power to coincide with the Soviet Congress. A new Soviet government would be then presented to the All-Russian Congress as a *fait accompli* (done deal), giving the insurrection the appearance of a transfer of power rather than a coup d'etat. As Lenin would later put it, 'If we seize power today, we seize it not in opposition to the Soviets but on their behalf.'[44] Zinoviev and Kamenev remained adamantly opposed, publicly airing their misgivings in the socialist newspaper *Novaia Zhizn* ('New Life'), edited by Maxim Gorky. Kamenev wrote,

> Before history, before the international proletariat, before the Russian Revolution and the Russian working class, we have no right to stake the whole future on the card of an armed uprising...Constituent Assembly and soviets [are]... the combined type of state institution toward which we are travelling.[45]

Lenin was furious. The plans for a Bolshevik coup were now an open secret.

ACTIVITY

HISTORICAL INTERPRETATIONS

Read about the meeting of the Bolshevik Central Committee on 10 October 1917 and complete the tasks below.

1. Explain the positions of the following Bolsheviks in regard to the debate over an armed uprising:
   - Lenin
   - Trotsky
   - Kamenev and Zinoviev.
2. Using dot-points or brief sentences, outline how different historians have explained the significance of the 10 October meeting. Views you might consider:
   - The History of the CPSU (B)
   - Richard Pipes
   - Alexander Rabinowitch.
3. Why has the meeting of 10 October been contested by historians? Consider the significance of this meeting in influencing different interpretations of the October Revolution.

Lenin addresses the Bolshevik Central Committee at Petrograd, 10 October 1917. In this official Communist representation, Stalin, Dzerzhinsky and Sverdlov are the only recognisable figures other than Lenin.

44 Vladimir Lenin, 'A Letter to the Members of the Central Committee,' in *Selected Works: Volume II* (Moscow: Foreign Languages Publishing House, 1947), 140.

45 Leon Trotsky, *History of the Russian Revolution* (London: Victor Gollancz Ltd, 1934), 1004.

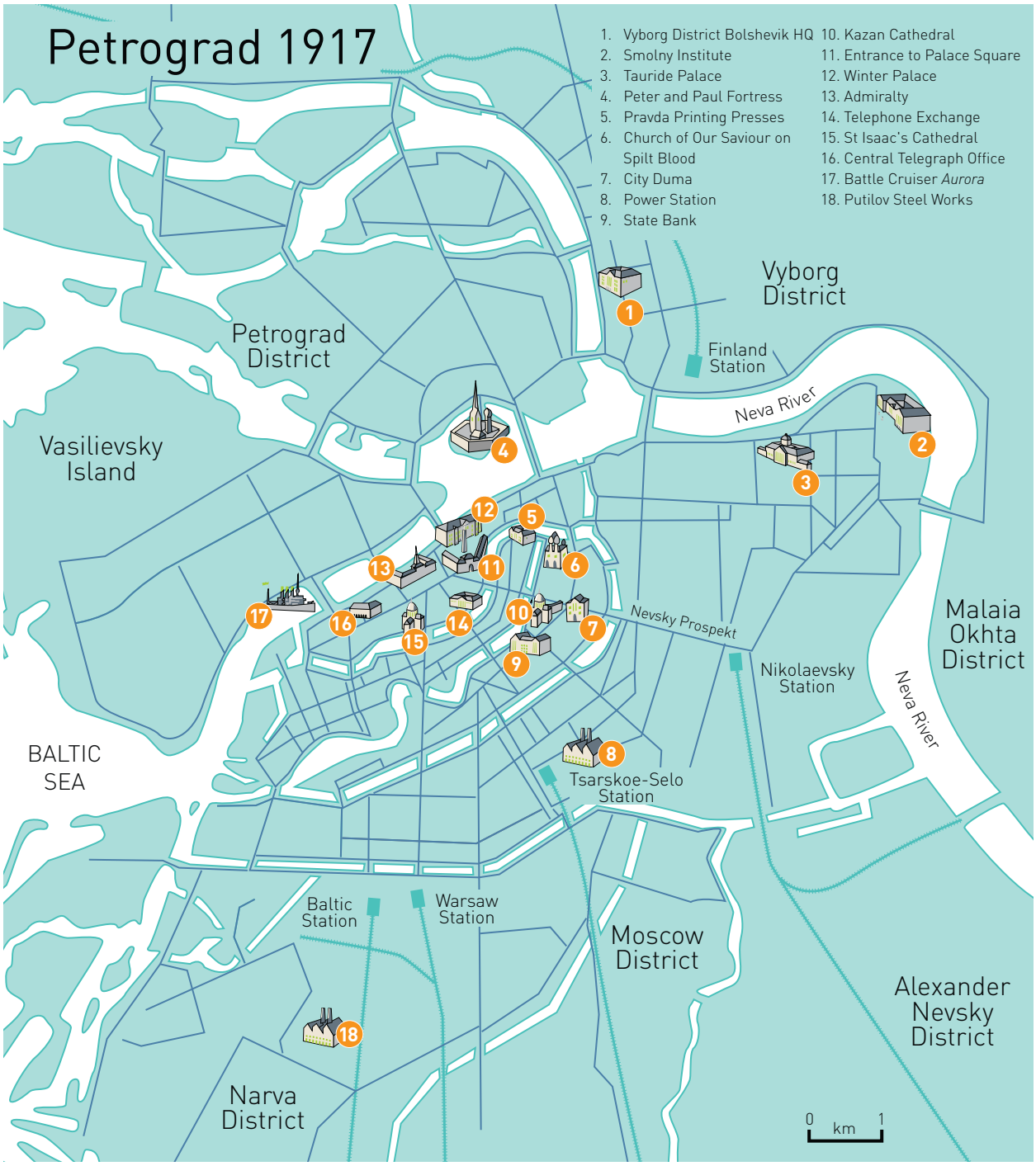
ACTIVITY

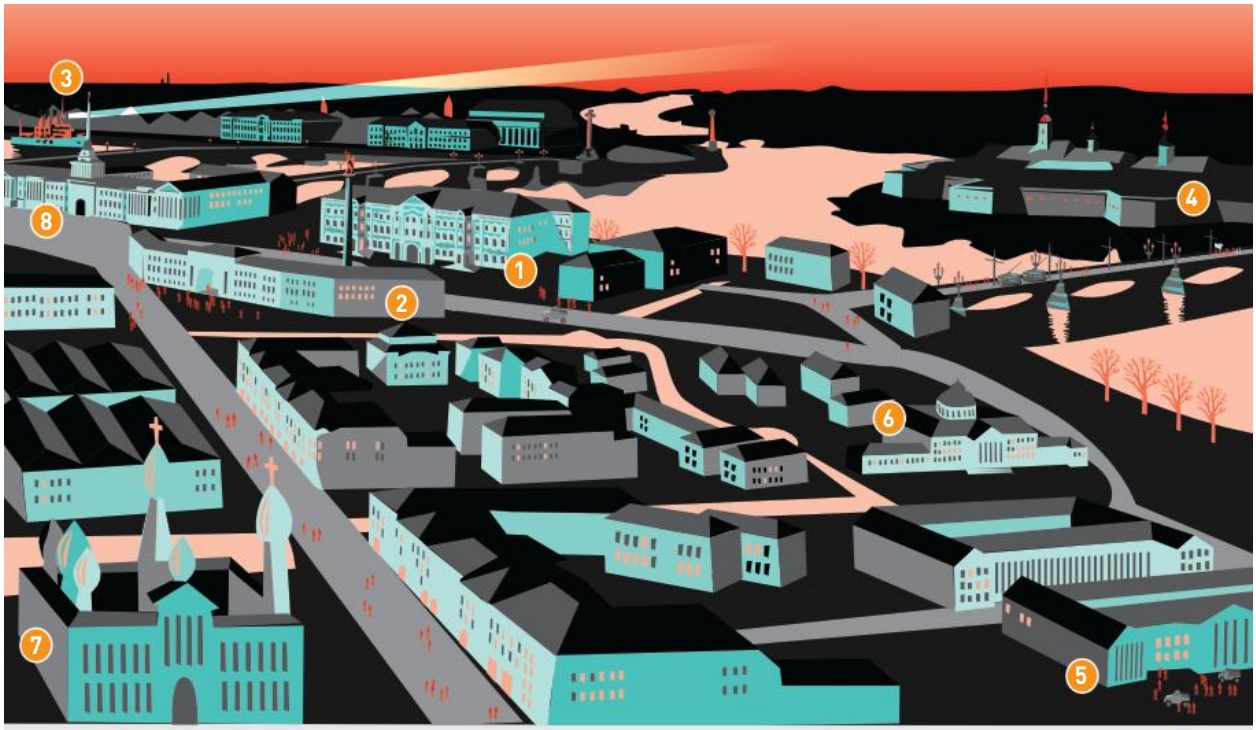
MAP EXERCISE

As you read about the October Revolution, carefully examine the maps and images of Petrograd on this page and opposite.

Select five places that were critical in the October Revolution, explore them on Google Maps and find images of them from c. 1917 to display in your classroom.

The Smolny Institute.





Petrograd, October Revolution

1. Winter Palace
2. War Ministry Building Archway
3. Battle Cruiser *Aurora*
4. Peter and Paul Fortress
5. Smolny Institute
6. Tauride Palace
7. Kazan Cathedral
8. Admiralty

MILITARY REVOLUTIONARY COMMITTEE

In mid-October 1917 Alexander Kerensky ordered the soldiers of the Petrograd garrison to be transferred to the Northern Front, supposedly to reinforce the capital against advancing German forces. In reality, Kerensky hoped to rid the capital of troublesome troops and lure the Bolsheviks into an ill-planned uprising. His plan backfired. The soldiers of the garrison were staunchly opposed to the move, whilst the Bolsheviks accused the Provisional Government of plotting to abandon the capital and close down the soviets. Rumours were further inflamed after the former duma chairman, Mikhail Rodzianko, declared in a much-publicised speech: 'To hell with Petrograd!'[46] The Petrograd Soviet now moved to defend the city against German invasion and to protect itself from the threat of counterrevolution. A Military Revolutionary Committee (Milrevcom or MRC), led by a five-man leadership executive, was formed on 16 October to take direct control of the city's garrison. The soviet thereby gained substantial authority over Petrograd's soldiers. Importantly, Trotsky and two other Bolsheviks – Vladimir Antonov-Ovseenko and Nikolai Krylenko – were the key members of the committee. The remaining two leadership positions were held by Left SRs.[47] Though created as a defence organ of the soviet, the Milrevcom was largely directed by Bolsheviks. The Milrevcom announced to Petrograd's workers and soldiers that it would defend the capital against German advance and, more significantly, the soviet against any Kornilov-style coup.

46 Figes, *A People's Tragedy*, 480.
47 Wade, *The Russian Revolution*, 228.

Alexander Kerensky.

KERENSKY FIGHTS BACK

Late on the night of 23 October, Kerensky finally made his move against the Bolsheviks. In doing so he unwittingly gave Lenin and Trotsky the excuse they needed to put their plans for a seizure of power into action. Kerensky ordered the bridges linking Petrograd's militant working-class districts with the rest of the city to be raised. Troops loyal to the Provisional Government shut down the printing presses of the Bolshevik newspapers *Rabochi Put* ('Workers' Road') and *Soldat* ('Soldier'). Unsuccessful attempts were made to arrest leading Bolsheviks and members of the Milrevcom.[48] Judging that Kerensky was attempting an anti-Soviet counterrevolution, Trotsky used the authority of the Milrevcom to re-take the city. One MRC member recalled Trotsky's thunderous call to gather at Committee headquarters: 'Kerensky is on the offensive...We need everyone at Smolny!'[49] Having ignored the Milrevcom declaration that decisive measures would be taken against any perceived threat to the Petrograd Soviet and its members, Kerensky inadvertently set in train the October Revolution.[50]

On the morning and afternoon of 24 October, Red Guards and Milrevcom soldiers took over the blockade checkpoints imposed on the city by Kerensky. By 2.00 pm the Bolshevik printing presses were recaptured and new editions of *Soldat* and *Rabochi Put* were shortly rolling off the press. Armed workers, soldiers and sailors spilled into Petrograd's centre from the suburbs. As night fell, Trotsky's forces seized control of strategic buildings and offices. In explaining the actions of the MRC, Trotsky said to members of the Petrograd Soviet, 'This is defence, comrades. This is defence.'[51] There was relatively little open fighting. Soldiers loyal to the Provisional Government often walked away or surrendered without a fight. By early morning, the Bolsheviks had control of the main telegraph and post offices, the State Bank, the electricity station and the train stations. Confined to the Winter Palace, the Provisional Government made hasty preparations for its defence. Barricades were erected. At 9.00 am on 25 October, Kerensky left the Winter Palace in a car borrowed from the American embassy. He hoped to rally loyal troops from the Front and bring them to the capital. He would never return.

ACTIVITY

HISTORICAL INTERPRETATIONS

Rex A. Wade suggests that Trotsky's response to Kerensky's moves of 23–24 October 1917 were of a defensive rather than an offensive nature.[52] Compare this interpretation with that of Richard Pipes, who argues that October was a coup driven by Lenin. What evidence supports these views?

Realising the vulnerability of the Provisional Government and anxious to see the seizure of power completed before the Second All-Russian Congress of Soviets (scheduled to open on the evening of 25 October), Lenin left his hiding place in Petrograd's outskirts and made his way into the city. He arrived at the Smolny Institute, the headquarters of the Bolsheviks and the Soviet, just before midnight on 24 October. Following a quick briefing on the latest developments from Trotsky, Lenin called a meeting of the Party's Central Committee. At around 2.00 am the Committee members gave their formal approval to the armed seizure of power. Plans were drawn up to pursue the attack against the remnants of Kerensky's government holding out in the Winter Palace. Vladimir Antonov-Ovseenko, who would lead the assault on the Winter Palace, declared: 'To work! Our leader is with us! Full speed ahead!'[53] Lenin's arrival at the Smolny had an

48 Wade, *The Russian Revolution*, 231.
49 Rabinowitch, *The Bolsheviks Come to Power*, 249.
50 Robert V. Daniels, 'The Bolshevik Gamble,' *Russian Review 26*, no. 4 (October, 1967): 339.
51 Cited in Rabinowitch, *The Bolsheviks Come to Power*, 254.
52 Wade, *The Russian Revolution.*
53 Cited in Robert V. Daniels, 'Lenin Gambled Wildly and Won,' in *The Russian Revolution and Bolshevik Victory: Visions and Revisions*, ed. Arthur Adams and Ronald Suny (Toronto: D.C. Heath and Company, 1990), 180.

electrifying effect on the Bolsheviks. He brow-beat his comrades into a change in attitude from defence to attack and galvanised the Party into action.[54] At 10.00 am on 25 October, Lenin released a statement to the press, announcing,

> The Provisional Government has been deposed. Government authority has passed into the hands of the organ of the Petrograd Soviet of Workers' and Soldiers' Deputies, the Military Revolutionary Committee, which stands at the head of the Petrograd proletariat and garrison.[55]

Although Petrograd was effectively in the hands of the Soviet forces, Lenin's declaration that the Provisional Government had been overthrown was premature. Whilst Milrevcom troops and Red Guards continued to strengthen their control of the city during the day, by nightfall the Winter Palace remained in the hands of Provisional Government ministers.

SHORT RESPONSE

Using three or four points, explain the role of Lenin's leadership in the October Revolution of 1917.

ASSAULT ON THE WINTER PALACE

In his cinematic epic, *October: Ten Days That Shook the World*, Soviet film director Sergei Eisenstein portrayed the overthrow of the Provisional Government as a triumphant 'storming' of the Winter Palace by heroic soldiers, sailors and workers. The Great October Socialist Revolution, and the legend of this mass-revolutionary onslaught, was thereafter celebrated by Soviet historians. In

The Winter Palace.

INTERPRETATIONS OF BOLSHEVIK SEIZURE OF POWER

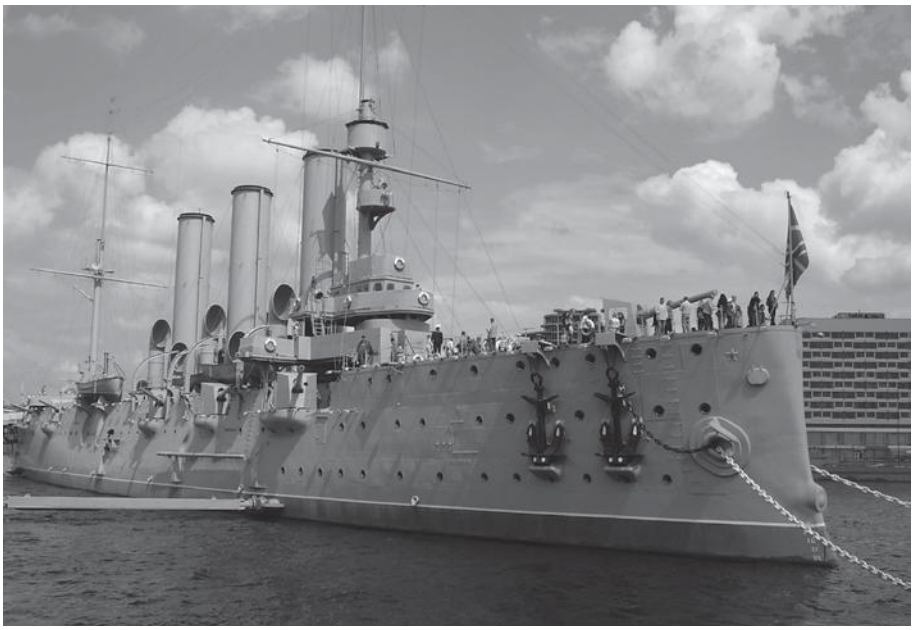
reality, the attack on the Winter Palace was characterised by confusion and an embarrassing lack of organisation. The Milrevcom was forced to delay its initial assault after re-enforcements of sailors from Kronstadt naval base were three hours late (they finally turned up at 6.00 pm). A key part of the plan was the use of cannons from the Peter and Paul Fortress, which faced the Winter Palace across the Neva River. At the last minute it was revealed that these were virtually rusty museum pieces. The frantic Bolsheviks managed to have soldiers drag up working replacements, although they then realised that no suitable shells were available. Furthermore, the signal to begin the assault on the Palace was to be a red lantern hoisted on a flagpole from the Peter and Paul Fortress, to be followed by the

54 Alexander Rabinowitch, *The Bolsheviks in Power: The First Year of Soviet Rule in Petrograd* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2007), 9.

55 Cited in Pipes, *A Concise History of the Russian Revolution*, 145.

DID YOU KNOW?

During the filming of Eisenstein's *October*, one caretaker of the Winter Palace reportedly told the director: 'Your people were more careful last time.' Many extras in the film were Civil War veterans who brought along their own rifles and live ammunition as props for the 'storming' scenes.



The cruiser ship *Aurora*.

cruiser *Aurora* firing its guns. More panic erupted when none of the Bolsheviks could find a red lantern. Blagonravov, the Bolshevik in charge of the Fortress, went out to find one but got lost and fell in a ditch. He finally returned with a lantern, but it wasn't red and couldn't be attached to the flagpole. In the end, a purple flare was the best they could do. To make matters worse, the *Aurora* was late to arrive in position.[56] The delays and mishaps were all infuriating to Lenin. A member of the MRC recalled that Lenin 'paced around the Smolny like a lion in a cage. He needed the Winter Palace at any cost: it remained the last gate on the road to workers' power. [He] scolded...he screamed...he was ready to shoot us.'[57]

Things were not going any better for the Provisional Government. Tired of waiting for the Bolshevik assault, many soldiers guarding the palace slipped away to find dinner at the city's restaurants. The defence of the building was left to the 140 volunteers of the Women's Death Battalion, forty disabled soldiers led by an officer with artificial legs, a bicycle unit, a handful of young trainee officers ('cadets') and a small detachment of Cossacks.[58]

At 9.40 pm the *Aurora* fired one blank round to signal the launch of the assault. The cannons of the Peter and Paul Fortress opened fire around 11.00 pm. Few shells hit the palace; the only damage visible the following day was a shattered window and a broken cornice. On hearing the artillery fire, government ministers hid under tables while many of the Women's Death Battalion became hysterical.[59] Over the coming hours more and more Red Guards, sailors and Milrevcom soldiers haphazardly infiltrated the Winter Palace.[60] The final bastion of the Provisional Government haemorrhaged from an ever-increasing flow of pro-Bolshevik forces. One entrance had been left totally unguarded, while a group of Bolshevik troops broke in through a basement window. American journalist John Reed was able to walk in 'unrebuked,' speak to palace servants and invading Red Guards, and then stroll out again.[61] The Winter Palace was indeed so big that Milrevcom troops could not locate the remaining Provisional Government

56 Figes, *A People's Tragedy*, 485; Trotsky, *History of the Russian Revolution*, 1108–9; Rabinowitch, *The Bolsheviks Come to Power*, 282.
57 Cited in Rabinowitch, *The Bolsheviks Come to Power*, 290–1.
58 Figes, *A People's Tragedy*, 486.
59 Rabinowitch, *The Bolsheviks Come to Power*, 288–9.
60 Wood, *Origins of the Russian Revolution*, 47.
61 John Reed, *Ten Days That Shook the World* (London: Penguin Books, 1966), 110.

ACTIVITY

SOURCE ANALYSIS

Examine 'The Storming of the Winter Palace' and complete the tasks below.

1. Identify the tone of the representation and the likely perspective of its creator.
2. Identify two details in the representation that symbolise revolutionary action.
3. With reference to the representation and your own knowledge, explain why the Provisional Government was under threat in October 1917.
4. Evaluate the extent to which this representation provides an accurate depiction of the assault on the Winter Palace. In your response, refer to the representation and to different interpretations of the causes of the Russian Revolution.

The storming of the Winter Palace, October 1917.

SHORT RESPONSE

In three or four points, discuss how conflict between political parties at the Second All-Russian Congress shaped the course of the October Revolution.

ministers for some time. At 2.10 am on 26 October, Bolshevik forces finally found them.

The Milrevcom official Antonov-Ovseenko declared the ministers under arrest and led them away to be imprisoned in the Peter and Paul Fortress.

At the Smolny, the Second All-Russian Congress of Soviets had formally opened at 10.40 pm despite disruptions by the Bolshevik delegates. The first to speak was Julius Martov, a leading Menshevik-Internationalist. Martov proposed that the gathered Soviet parties form a socialist coalition government. His proposal, seconded by the Bolshevik Lunacharsky, was met with wild cheers and applause. He was followed by a series of right-wing Menshevik and SR delegates. They denounced the actions of the Bolsheviks and at 1.00 am staged a walkout in protest against events unfolding at the Winter Palace. Bolshevik delegates stomped their feet and whistled as the SRs and Mensheviks began to leave. It was an act of astounding folly. Robert Service argues that the moderate socialists had offered a gesture of ineffective disapproval rather than a true challenge on the floor of the congress.[62] As the moderates left the hall, Martov beseeched the audience and tried to revive his call for a coalition government. He asked whether or not a compromise could be made. It was then that Trotsky rose and gave one of his most famous speeches. He dismissed any notion of the Bolsheviks having to compromise with other political parties. With typical rhetorical passion, Trotsky told Martov and the remaining Mensheviks,

> A rising of the masses requires no justification. What has happened is an insurrection, and not a conspiracy. We hardened the revolutionary energy of the Petersburg workers and soldiers...The masses followed our banner and our insurrection was victorious. And now we are told: Renounce your victory, make concessions, compromise. With whom I ask?...No, here no compromise is possible. To those who have left and those who tell us to do this we must say: You are miserable bankrupts, your role is played out; go back where you ought to go: into the dustbin of history![63]

DID YOU KNOW?

As Martov walked out of the congress, he muttered at those who remained, 'Someday you will understand the crime in which you are participating.'

An enraged Martov cried, 'Then we will go!' and led the remainder of the Menshevik and SR delegates out of the Congress.[64] Only members of the Left SR party stayed. The Bolsheviks now had control of the Soviet Congress. News of the fall of the Winter Palace arrived around 3.00 am and was received by much cheering. A manifesto written by Lenin, 'To All Workers, Soldiers and Peasants,' proclaiming the establishment of 'Soviet Power,' was read out by Lunacharsky. Promising to bring about 'Peace, Bread and Land,' the manifesto was enthusiastically received and passed unanimously. The proclamation declared,

> Supported by an overwhelming majority of the workers, soldiers, and peasants, and basing itself on the victorious insurrection of the workers and the garrison of Petrograd, the congress hereby resolves to take governmental power into its own hands.[65]

Soviet power was seemingly triumphant. Kamenev, the congress chairman, brought the night's events to a close just before 6.00 am on 26 October. It was declared that the congress would resume the next evening.

ACTIVITY

SOURCE ANALYSIS

View relevant excerpts from Sergei Eisenstein's film *October: Ten Days that Shook the World.* Write a review which highlights the historical strengths and limitations of this portrayal of the October Revolution.

62 Robert Service, *A History of Twentieth-Century Russia* (London: Penguin Books, 1997), 66.
63 Cited in Rabinowitch, *The Bolsheviks Come to Power*, 296.
64 Trotsky, *History of the Russian Revolution*, 1156.
65 Cited in Rabinowitch, *The Bolsheviks Come to Power*, 303.

FORMATION OF SOVIET GOVERNMENT

During the day of 26 October 1917, little appeared to have changed in Petrograd; most people went about their business as normal. At 8.40 pm, when the Congress of Soviets resumed, Lenin finally made an appearance at the rostrum. He proclaimed, 'We shall now proceed to build, on the space cleared of historical rubbish, the airy, towering edifice of socialist society.'[66] He read out decrees on 'Peace' and 'Land' and was greeted by thunderous applause. Early on the morning of 27 October, Lenin announced a further development. A new Soviet government was to be formed: the Council of People's Commissars (Sovnarkom). All the ministers, or 'commissars' as they were called, were Bolsheviks: Alexandra Kollontai was the commissar of social welfare, Josef Stalin the commissar of nationalities, Aleksandr Shlyapnikov the commissar of labour, Anatoli Lunacharsky the commissar of enlightenment (arts and education) and Trotsky the commissar of foreign affairs. Lenin was the new government's chairman.[67]

DID YOU KNOW?

On the evening of 26 October, as Lenin and Trotsky tried to get some sleep on the floor of a Smolny office, Lenin commented: 'You know, from persecution and a life underground, to come into power so suddenly...it makes your head spin!'

ACTIVITY

GROUP WORK

1. In a small group, construct a timeline of the key events of the 'October Days' of 1917 (23–27 October). Use a colour scheme or annotations to show which developments were the result of:
   - Lenin's actions and/or leadership
   - Trotsky's actions and/or leadership
   - Chance
   - Poor planning
   - Kerensky and/or the Provisional Government's actions.
2. With your group, consider Trotsky's assessment below:

   Had I not been present in 1917 in Petersburg, the October Revolution would still have taken place – on the condition that Lenin was present and in command. If neither Lenin nor I had been present in Petersburg, there would have been no October Revolution: the leadership of the Bolshevik party would have prevented it from occurring.[68]

   Then discuss why, according to Trotsky, Lenin was an essential element in the October Revolution.
3. It is often said that Trotsky 'organised' and Lenin 'inspired' the Bolshevik seizure of power. In your group, discuss the merits of this assessment.

On 27 October a new Soviet Central Executive Committee (CEC) was voted in. Chaired by Kamenev, it was made up of twenty-nine Left SRs, six Menshevik-Internationalists and sixty-two Bolsheviks.[69] Though the relationship between the Soviet CEC, the Bolshevik Party Central Committee and Sovnarkom was unclear and complex, Lenin and his comrades clearly dominated the new system of government. Many Bolsheviks held seats on all committees simultaneously.[70] 'Soviet' power had been proclaimed, but what this meant was uncertain. Though they had mass support in being associated with the ideal of 'All Power to the Soviets' and aggressive class rhetoric, 'All Power to the Bolsheviks' was not what workers and soldiers had favoured. To appease such concerns, Lenin claimed that the Sovnarkom would only rule until the Constituent Assembly convened in early 1918 and that the proposed November elections would go ahead as planned. Lenin and the more radically-minded Bolsheviks had nevertheless accomplished what they set out to achieve. The 'bourgeois' Provisional Government had been overthrown and the Bolsheviks had come to power.

66 Cited in Beryl Williams, *Lenin* (Essex: Pearson Education, 2000), 78.
67 Martin McCauley, 'Commissars and Commissariats of Sovnarkom,' in *The Blackwell Encyclopedia of the Russian Revolution*, ed. Harold Shukman (Oxford: Blackwell Publishers, 1988), 170.
68 Cited in Lynch, *Reaction and Revolutions*, 98.
69 Rabinowitch, *The Bolsheviks Come to Power*, 306.
70 Williams, *Lenin*, 78.

TIMELINE: TEN DAYS THAT SHOOK THE WORLD

DID YOU KNOW?

Lenin did not look much like Lenin during the October Days. To disguise his appearance and avoid arrest by the Provisional Government, Lenin was clean-shaven and without his trademark beard.

Drawing of Lenin by M. Shafran.

ACTIVITY

Lenin addresses the deputies of the Second All-Russian Congress of Soviets, Smolny Institute, October 1917.

SOURCE ANALYSIS

Examine the representation 'Lenin addresses the deputies' and complete the tasks below.

1. Identify two revolutionary leaders depicted in the representation.
2. Identify two uses of revolutionary symbolism to convey a particular point of view about the event depicted.
3. With reference to details in the representation and your own knowledge, explain how a Soviet government came to power in October 1917.
4. Evaluate the extent to which this representation provides an accurate depiction of events associated with the Second All-Russian Congress of Soviets. In your response, refer to the source and to different interpretations of the causes of the revolution.

COMPARATIVE TASK

Compare the leadership styles of Lenin, Kerensky and Kamenev in the second half of 1917.

CONCLUSION

When Russia celebrated the onset of World War I with a surge of nationalist fervour and support for Tsar Nicholas II, the collapse of the monarchy may have seemed an unlikely prospect. It did not take long, however, for the war experience to sour and for the problems that led to large-scale strikes in 1913 and 1914 to resurface. While Nicholas had been able to sedate the revolutionary sentiment in 1905 with small concessions, by 1917 his cause was all but hopeless. He had lost the support of the armed forces, the moderate politicians, the socialists and most of the Russian people. While the February Revolution may well have been a spontaneous expression of dissatisfaction among the urban workers, the vulnerability of the tsar was exposed when the Provisional Committee and the Petrograd Soviet seized power with little opposition. The problems that beset Russia did not vanish with the tsar, however, and the Provisional Government (in dual authority with the Petrograd Soviet) proved unable to address quickly the main concerns of war, hunger and land, instead opting to delay crucial decisions until the election of a Constituent Assembly in November.

While the revolution had been accepted by a majority of socialists in Petrograd, Lenin's return in April 1917 gave the Left a further boost by providing a revolutionary program and a clear agenda of non-cooperation with the Provisional Government, which thereafter suffered a series of debilitating crises. The decline of the Provisional Government was accompanied by an increase in the popularity of the Bolsheviks; when Kerensky lost the support of the army in August and September it seemed unlikely that the Provisional Government would be able to continue to fend off challenges until the Constituent Assembly elections, scheduled for November, took place.

In what became known as the October Revolution, the Bolsheviks seized control of the government on a wave of support for 'Soviet power.' They resisted pressure from other socialist parties to form a broad coalition government and instead embarked on a grand vision to create the 'towering edifice' of socialism. They sought to impose social order and to encourage mass participation in the revolutionary process. As E.H. Carr wrote, Lenin and the Bolsheviks' true triumph was 'not the overthrow of the provisional government … but the construction of something to take its place.'[71]

71 E.H. Carr, *Studies in Revolution* (London: Macmillan, 1950), 135.

TEST YOUR LEARNING

CHAPTER REVIEW

CAUSE AND CONSEQUENCE

Create a flow-chart on one of the topics below:

- Events and conditions contributing to the outbreak of the February Revolution 1917.
- The role of two or more popular movements in revolutionary action between February and October 1917.

CONSTRUCTING AN ARGUMENT

Write an essay on one of the following topics:

- 'More than any other individual, Lenin played a central role in the October revolution of 1917.' Discuss, using evidence to support your answer.
- 'The inadequacies of Kerensky were just as important as the leadership of Lenin in causing the October revolution of 1917.' Discuss, with evidence to support your answer.

KEY INDIVIDUALS

Present a five-minute talk on the contribution of one of the following individuals to the outbreak of the Russian Revolution:

- Tsar Nicholas II
- Tsarina Alexandra
- Count Witte
- Pyotr Stolypin
- Grigori Rasputin
- Alexander Kerensky
- Vladimir Lenin
- Leon Trotsky.

FURTHER READING

Chamberlin, W. H., The Russian Revolution 1917–18, Volume I; and The Russian Revolution 1918–1921, Volume II. New York: Universal Library, 1965.

The first detailed and scholarly analysis of the revolution by a Western writer, this two-volume history is outstanding.

Daly, Jonathan & Trofimov, Leonid (eds); Russia in War and Revolution, 1914-1922: A Documentary History. Hackett Publishing, Cambridge, 2009.

Drawing on newly available Russian sources, this volume covers a broad array of topics, including the Bolshevik rise to power and World War I. It considers the ways in which the revolution affected the lives of ordinary people, from the workers of Petrograd to Siberian peasants.

Swain, Geoffrey; Trotsky and the Russian Revolution. London: Routledge, 2014.

A concise and accessible introduction to Trotsky and his work.

Fitzpatrick, Sheila. The Russian Revolution. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1994.

An accessible and insightful commentary by a leading scholar.

Hill, Christopher. Lenin and the Russian Revolution. Harmondsworth: Penguin Books, 1971.

A sympathetic analysis of Lenin. A readable book which provides a good contrast to conservative accounts.

Pipes, Richard. The Russian Revolution. New York: Vintage Books, 1991.

Many consider this detailed account to be the pre-eminent work on the Russian Revolution.

Rabinowitch, Alexander. The Bolsheviks Come to Power: The Revolution of 1917 in Petrograd. Chicago: Haymarket Books and Pluto Press, 2004.

The best work for challenging the traditional analysis of the Bolsheviks and the October seizure of power.

Reed, John. Ten Days That Shook the World. London: Penguin Books, 1966.

Famous account by an American socialist journalist who witnessed much of the drama first-hand. The film *Reds*, which tells Reed's story, is well worth watching.

Steinberg, Mark D. Voices of Revolution, 1917. New Haven: Yale University Press, 2001.

A helpful analysis of the role of language in shaping social identities and revolutionary aspirations. The book shows how ordinary people experienced the revolution.

Wade, Rex. The Russian Revolution, 1917. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000.

This book draws on the best social and political histories. Arguably the best analysis of 1917 and its immediate aftermath.

CONSEQUENCES OF THE REVOLUTION

SECTION B

How did the consequences of revolution shape the new order?

How did the new regime consolidate its power?

How did the revolution affect those who experienced it?

To what extent was society changed and revolutionary ideas achieved?

October 1917–1927

CHAPTER

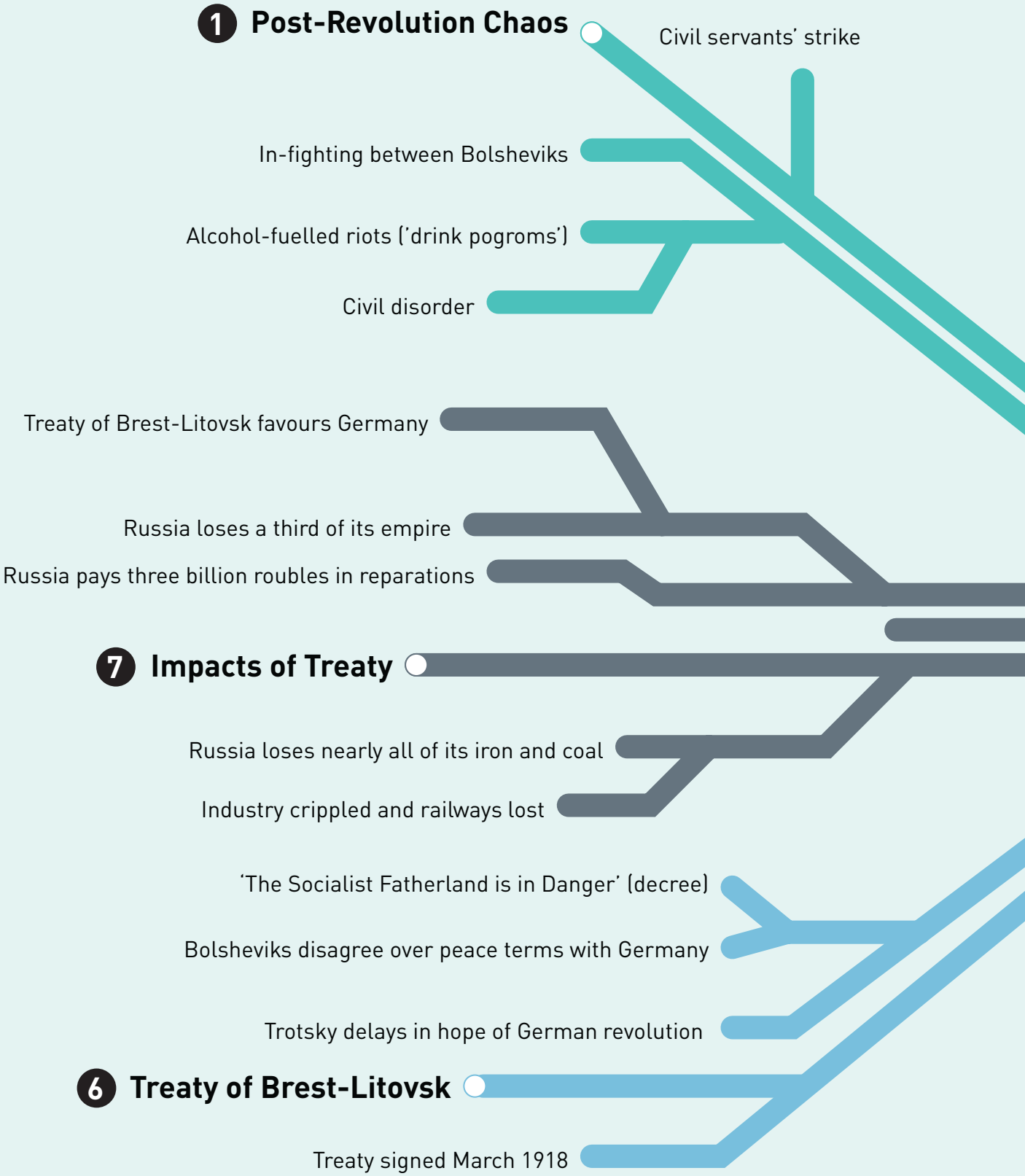
4

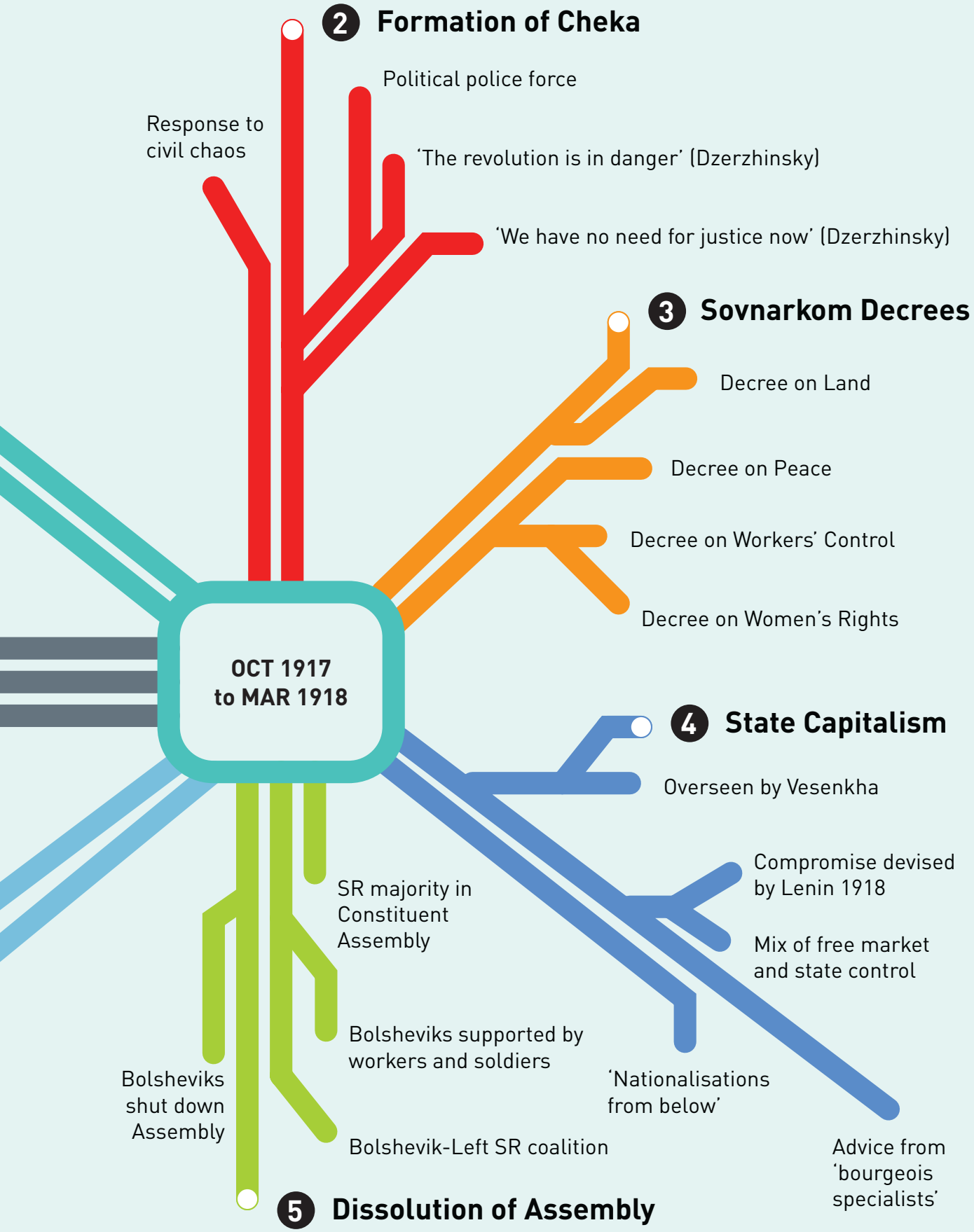
THE NEW REGIME

(OCTOBER 1917–MARCH 1918)

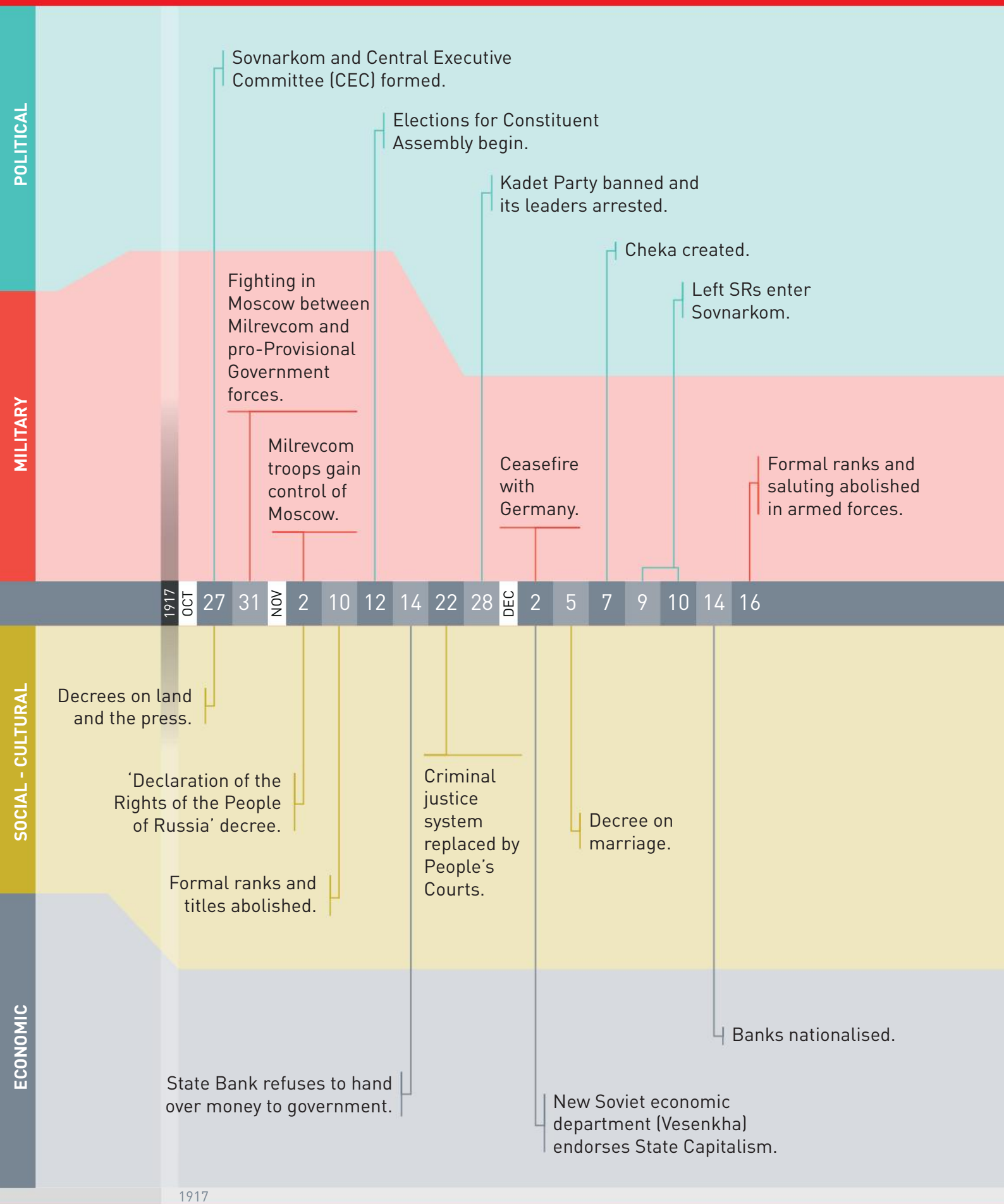
TOM RYAN

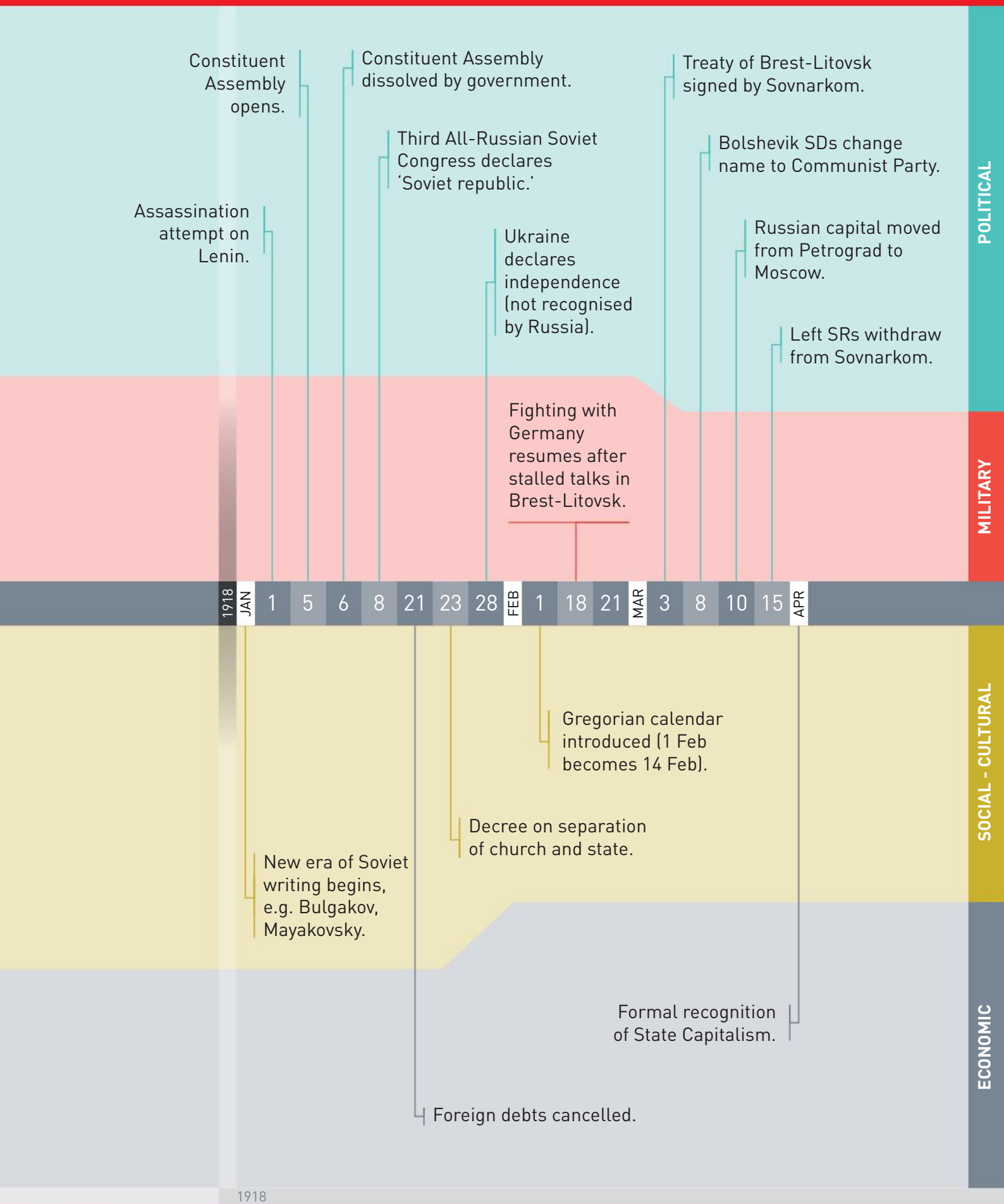
CHAPTER OVERVIEW




2 Formation of Cheka
Political police force
Response to civil chaos
'The revolution is in danger' (Dzerzhinsky)
'We have no need for justice now' (Dzerzhinsky)
3 Sovnarkom Decrees
Decree on Land
Decree on Peace
Decree on Workers' Control
Decree on Women's Rights
OCT 1917 to MAR 1918
4 State Capitalism
Overseen by Vesenkha
Compromise devised by Lenin 1918
Mix of free market and state control
'Nationalisations from below'
Advice from 'bourgeois specialists'
SR majority in Constituent Assembly
Bolsheviks supported by workers and soldiers
Bolsheviks shut down Assembly
Bolshevik-Left SR coalition
5 Dissolution of Assembly

TIMELINE


POLITICAL
MILITARY
SOCIAL - CULTURAL
ECONOMIC
Sovnarkom and Central Executive Committee (CEC) formed.
Elections for Constituent Assembly begin.
Kadet Party banned and its leaders arrested.
Cheka created.
Left SRs enter Sovnarkom.
Fighting in Moscow between Milrevcom and pro-Provisional Government forces.
Milrevcom troops gain control of Moscow.
Ceasefire with Germany.
Formal ranks and saluting abolished in armed forces.
1917 OCT 27 31 NOV 2 10 12 14 22 28 DEC 2 5 7 9 10 14 16
Decrees on land and the press.
'Declaration of the Rights of the People of Russia' decree.
Formal ranks and titles abolished.
Criminal justice system replaced by People's Courts.
Decree on marriage.
Banks nationalised.
State Bank refuses to hand over money to government.
New Soviet economic department (Vesenkha) endorses State Capitalism.
1917


POLITICAL
MILITARY
SOCIAL - CULTURAL
ECONOMIC
Constituent Assembly opens.
Constituent Assembly dissolved by government.
Treaty of Brest-Litovsk signed by Sovnarkom.
Third All-Russian Soviet Congress declares 'Soviet republic.'
Bolshevik SDs change name to Communist Party.
Assassination attempt on Lenin.
Ukraine declares independence (not recognised by Russia).
Russian capital moved from Petrograd to Moscow.
Left SRs withdraw from Sovnarkom.
Fighting with Germany resumes after stalled talks in Brest-Litovsk.
1918 JAN 1 5 6 8 21 23 28 FEB 1 18 21 MAR 3 8 10 15 APR
Gregorian calendar introduced (1 Feb becomes 14 Feb).
Decree on separation of church and state.
New era of Soviet writing begins, e.g. Bulgakov, Mayakovsky.
Formal recognition of State Capitalism.
Foreign debts cancelled.

A revolutionary poster from 1917: 'All Power to the Soviets!'

INTRODUCTION

Following the tumultuous events of October 1917, the new Bolshevik government quickly gained control of most major cities in Russia. Through its new Council of People's Commissars, Sovnarkom, the government implemented new decrees on 'Peace,' 'Land' and 'Workers' Control' throughout the country. Lenin described the early months of Sovnarkom rule as the 'triumphal march of Soviet power' and declared at the start of March 1918 that the 'civil war' was won.

However, the first few months of Soviet rule posed a considerable challenge for Lenin and his comrades. The new regime had to contend with social unrest, class polarisation, economic breakdown, military crises, internal party disagreements and an array of political opponents. At the time of the October seizure of power, many critics of the Bolsheviks had condemned what they saw as their irresponsible audacity;[1] many believed the Bolshevik government would only last a few months at best. They did far more than that. Although the Treaty of Brest-Litovsk and the subsequent loss of Bolshevik influence in the Ukraine marked the first dramatic halt of Lenin's 'triumphal march,' the October revolutionaries remained in power. William Henry Chamberlin, the first Western historian to undertake an in-depth analysis of the Russian Revolution, noted, 'The holding of power by the Bolsheviki was a far greater achievement than the taking of it.'[2]

MORE ON THE NEW BOLSHEVIK GOVERNMENT

SOVNARKOM: INITIAL CHALLENGES

Vladimir Lenin: 'Council of People's Commissars, Council of People's Commissars. That is splendid. That smells of revolution.'

The new Bolshevik Soviet government was immediately faced with a range of problems upon coming to power. Russia's civil servants went on strike in protest over the October 'coup.' The commissar of foreign affairs, Leon Trotsky, arrived for work at his ministry to be greeted with laughter and a mass walkout by staff. A similar scene confronted the commissar of social welfare, Alexandra Kollontai. The keys to offices and safes were hidden, records were destroyed,

1 David Shub, *Lenin* (New York: The New American Library, 1957), 140.
2 W. H. Chamberlin, *The Russian Revolution 1918–1921: From the Civil War to the Consolidation of Power* (New York: The Universal Library, 1965), 453.

desks and cupboards emptied. Secretarial staff chose to stay at home rather than attend to their duties. Employees of the State Bank refused to hand over any money to Sovnarkom officials.[3] Not until 20 November 1917, with the use of armed Red Guards, did the Bolsheviks gain unrestricted access to much-needed money in the State Bank. It was not just white-collar workers who objected to the new Bolshevik government. The Menshevik and SR-led Railwaymen's Union (Vikzhel) threatened to strike and cut off all deliveries of supplies to Petrograd unless negotiations to form a coalition socialist government were forthcoming. A number of moderate Bolsheviks, such as Kamenev and Zinoviev, took heed of these concerns and entered into talks with other political groups.[4] Lenin and Trotsky dismissed the value of these discussions, but nonetheless agreed that negotiations might stall their opponents. When it appeared that Lenin remained stubborn in his refusal to compromise on a Bolshevik-Menshevik-SR coalition, five leading Bolsheviks, including Zinoviev and Kamenev, resigned from the Central Committee in protest.[5]

Before the October seizure of power, Lenin had not fully considered how the Bolsheviks might govern or deal with practical problems that would invariably arise. Plans for the day-to-day running of the government and the roles different institutions might play had been ill-defined. Few Bolsheviks had any experience whatsoever in practical economics, law, military matters or business. They were revolutionaries; not politicians.[6] Lenin explained to the new commissar of finance why he had been chosen for the job: 'You are not much of a financier, but you are a man of action.'[7] Once they had seized power, Lenin told his Bolsheviks that they should wait and see what challenges arose, then respond accordingly. A belief in the imminent spread of international socialist revolution also coloured many Bolsheviks' expectations. The creation of a new socialist society in Russia – spurred on by revolution elsewhere – was expected to have been infinitely easier than it turned out to be. On becoming commissar for foreign affairs, Trotsky remarked, 'What sort of diplomatic work will we be doing anyway? I shall issue a few revolutionary decrees to the peoples, then shut up shop.'[8]

The fall of the Provisional Government precipitated a general breakdown of law and order; a situation that had been steadily worsening from the time of the February Revolution. This post-revolution anarchy was of considerable concern. The massive wine cellars of the Winter Palace were ransacked and there was much looting, despite efforts of Sovnarkom officials to maintain order around captured governmental buildings. 'Drink pogroms,' as they were known at the time, were rampant. Mobs raided the cellars of the well-to-do and vicious fighting inevitably broke out amongst the intoxicated participants. There were instances where inebriated looters drank themselves to death. Even when officials had collections of wine and liquor destroyed and the contents poured into the street, crowds gathered to drink the alcohol from the gutter.[9] Vladimir Antonov-Ovseenko, one of three Bolshevik Commissars in charge of military affairs, recalled the chaos:

> A wild and unexampled orgy spread over Petrograd... We tried to stop them by walling up the entrances. The crowd penetrated through the windows, forced out the bars and grabbed the stocks. An attempt was made to flood the cellars with water. The fire brigade sent to do this themselves got drunk... The whole city was infected by the drinking madness.[10]

Maxim Gorky, renowned author and editor of the socialist newspaper *Novaia Zhizn*, had on 18 October warned that if the Bolsheviks seized power, 'All the

SHORT RESPONSE

Write a paragraph, using evidence, on the following question: What role did class conflict play in shaping popular participation in the revolution in October–November 1917?

3 Victor Serge, *Year One of the Russian Revolution* (Chicago: Holt, Rinehart & Winston, 1972), 92–4.
4 Alexander Rabinowitch, *The Bolsheviks Come to Power: The Revolution of 1917 in Petrograd* (Chicago: Haymarket Books and Pluto Press, 2004), 308–9.
5 Rabinowitch, *The Bolsheviks Come to Power*, 310.
6 James D. White, *Lenin: The Practice and Theory of Revolution* (New York: Palgrave, 2001), 151.
7 Cited in Shub, *Lenin*, 143.
8 Leon Trotsky, *My Life. An Attempt at Autobiography* (London: Penguin, 1975), 355.
9 Orlando Figes, *A People's Tragedy: The Russian Revolution 1891–1924* (London: Pimlico, 1997), 494.
10 Cited in Tariq Ali and Phil Evans, *Trotsky For Beginners* (London: Writers and Readers Publishing, 1980), 81.

Maxim Gorky.

dark instincts of the crowd irritated by the disintegration of life and by the lies and filth of politics will flare up and fume, poisoning us with anger, hate and revenge.'[11] He later described the mood following the October Revolution as not one of celebratory release, but rather,

> ...a storm of dark passions; the past has laid bare before us its depths and shows how repulsively deformed man is; a blizzard of greed, hatred and vengeance rages about us; a wild beast, enraged by long captivity and worn out by centuries of torment, has opened wide its vengeful jaws and in triumph roars out its rancour and malice.[12]

Other writers saw something exciting and awe-inspiring in the brutality of revolutionary violence. In his poem 'The Twelve,' Aleksandr Blok mythologised the exploits of a group of Bolshevik soldiers roaming the streets of Petrograd and intimidating other citizens whom they meet: 'Put your shutters up, I say – there'll be broken locks today! Open your cellars: quick, run down...! The scum of the earth are hitting the town!'[13] Brutal and excessive street violence was a feature of life on the streets of Russia's cities after the October Revolution. Mobs handed out summary justice and lynched suspected criminals. Instances of brazen looting, physical assault and the murder of many members of the bourgeoisie were not uncommon. Although the Bolsheviks did not have the power to directly stop this violence, they certainly didn't discourage it. Popular violence served a purpose in terrorising those seen as class enemies. Proletarian attacks on symbols and persons of wealth and privilege were given explicit approval by the Bolsheviks and justified through the language of class conflict. Trotsky claimed, 'There is nothing immoral in the proletariat finishing off a class that is collapsing – that is its right.'[14]

An important aspect of understanding the nature of the new regime during the early days of its rule was that there was a 'dualism' in Bolshevik thought: it was both authoritarian and libertarian.[15] Lenin and his comrades believed that strong, centralised control would have to be instituted to bring order to Russia's shattered economy and to formalise the 'dictatorship of the Proletariat' that would end the rule of 'exploiters.' But the Bolsheviks also felt that the masses should be encouraged to participate in the revolutionary process; to be awakened to a sense of liberty and excitement in the smashing of the old world and the building of the new. In the words of Lenin, it was essential '...to imbue the oppressed and the working people with confidence in their own strength.'[16] In the chaotic weeks following the toppling of the Provisional Government, the idea that the proletariat should 'loot the looters' held much appeal amongst the hungry, war-ravaged lower classes. Bolshevik propaganda posters promoted and illustrated these ideas. It was easy for many to blame their hardships on capitalist 'burzhooi spiders' (bourgeois

11 Maxim Gorky, *Untimely Thoughts: Essays on Revolution, Culture and the Bolsheviks 1917–1918* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1995), 83.
12 Gorky, *Untimely Thoughts,* 116.
13 Aleksandr Blok, 'The Twelve,' in *Selected Poems* (Manchester: Carcanet, 2000), 104.
14 Cited in Figes, *A People's Tragedy*, 510.
15 Robert Service, *Lenin: A Biography* (London: Pan Books, 2002), 320–1; Beryl Williams, *Lenin* (Essex: Pearson Education, 2000), 87. I am indebted to Professor Michael C. Hickey of Bloomsburg University for this insight.
16 Vladimir Lenin, *Can The Bolsheviks Retain State Power?* (Moscow: Progress Publishers, 1984), 30.

ACTIVITY

HISTORICAL PERSPECTIVES

1. Read the accounts of Gorky and Blok above concerning post-revolution behaviour by the masses. Then discuss why the two accounts might differ so much. What can poets and novelists add to an understanding of history?
2. In a small group, act out a conversation between some of the following characters about the chaos following the fall of the Provisional Government:
   - A pro-Bolshevik worker
   - A Bolshevik leader
   - A drunk soldier
   - A middle-class businessman
   - A pro-Menshevik railway worker
   - A manager at the State Bank.

ACTIVITIES

SOURCE ANALYSIS

Look carefully at the two cartoons by Viktor Deni and complete the tasks below.

1. Identify two elements of Russian society caricatured in the representations.
2. Identify two symbols of the old order depicted in each representation.
3. Identify the tone and message of each representation.
4. Referring to the two representations and using your own knowledge, explain how the Bolsheviks sought to change popular attitudes to class.
5. Evaluate to what extent the two representations provide an accurate depiction of social tensions following the October Revolution of 1917. In your response refer to parts of each representation and to different historical interpretations of the revolution.

Fly Catcher and Booty by Viktor Deni.

Capital by Viktor Deni.

SUMMARY

Using dot-points, outline how each of the following were a challenge to the Bolsheviks during the first few weeks of Sovnarkom rule:

- The civil servants' strike
- Street violence and 'drink pogroms'
- Bolshevik inexperience
- Economic challenges
- Ideological differences within the party.

exploiters). A war on privilege was thus a key ideal of the revolution and the masses were encouraged to take matters into their own hands to realise this end.

The Bolsheviks were not, however, advocates of anarchism and did not call for a total end to law and order or the destruction of property deemed useful for the creation of a socialist economy. Lenin told one delegation of workers in late 1917, 'You are the power: do all you want to do, take all you want. We shall support you, but take care of production, see that production is useful.'[17]

17 Vladimir Lenin, 'Third All-Russia Congress of Soviets of Workers,' Soldiers' and Peasants' Deputies,' in *On Workers' Control and the Nationalisation of Industry* (Moscow: Progress Publishers, 1977), 147.

THE CHEKA

Felix Dzerzhinsky: 'Our Revolution is in danger. Do not concern yourselves with the forms of Revolutionary justice. We have no need for justice now.'

Although the Bolsheviks were pleased with popular expressions of class warfare, the impending social disorder illustrated by drink pogroms and mob violence could not be allowed to continue. Those who sought to undermine the effectiveness of the new government, such as Petrograd's civil servants and State Bank employees, were likewise not to be tolerated. Lenin argued that it was necessary for the Soviet government to form its own political police force to investigate and expose these 'counter-revolutionary' and 'criminal' activities. In early December Lenin outlined his concerns: 'The bourgeoisie...are bribing the outcast and degraded elements of society and plying them with drink to use them in riots... Urgent measures are necessary to fight the counter-revolutionaries and saboteurs.'[18]

Felix Dzerzhinsky.

On 7 December 1917, the formation of an All-Russian Extraordinary Commission for Combating Counter-Revolution, Speculation and Sabotage was proposed. Known as the Cheka, from the Russian abbreviation of its title ('Ch-K'), this 'extraordinary commission' was envisaged at the time as a temporary, emergency measure and seen more as an investigative rather than a punitive organisation. The Cheka was given quite modest powers; the publication of lists of 'enemies of the people' and confiscation of ration cards were suggested as its most severe sanctions. The first Chekists were authorised to conduct searches and make inquiries. The job of heading the Cheka was given to a Polish Bolshevik, Felix Dzerzhinsky. A member of the Military Revolutionary Committee and head of security for the Bolsheviks at their Smolny headquarters, Dzerzhinsky was a logical choice for this trusted position. He had a reputation for toughness and inscrutability that earned him the nickname 'Iron Felix.'

The Cheka was founded with a staff of just twenty-three. For some weeks Dzerzhinsky carried all his files in a single briefcase and, having no typist, wrote his orders out by hand. The secretary that was finally appointed had to double as an investigator. In the midst of rising opposition and perceived political danger the Cheka soon obtained the powers of arrest, imprisonment and, finally, execution. January 1918 witnessed the first assassination attempt on Lenin and a number of bomb scares at the Smolny. Calls amongst Bolshevik leaders for a strengthened and more efficient political police increased. The expansion of the Cheka's powers was further encouraged by the threat of German invasion following the disastrous breakdown of negotiations at Brest-Litovsk in February 1918. The German invasion prompted the release of an emergency decree on 21 February: 'The

18 Cited in Albert Nenarokov, *An Illustrated History of the Great Socialist October Revolution* (Moscow: Progress Publishers, 1987), 318.

Socialist Fatherland is in Danger!' Drafted by Lenin, the decree declared: 'Enemy agents, profiteers, marauders, hooligans, counter-revolutionary agitators and German spies, are to be summarily shot.'[19] The execution or imprisonment of these 'enemies' was arbitrary; they did not have to be brought to trial. Few leading Bolsheviks held any qualms about the use of violence in safeguarding the survival of the revolutionary regime.

A workers' militia rounds up tsarist police during the February Revolution.

Russian historian Alter Litvin argues that '...the Bolshevik leadership had created an extreme situation, and they saw a way out in the organization of a powerful punitive institution, capable of terrifying and terrorizing the population.'[20] However, historians have debated whether the evolution of the Cheka into a formidable weapon of state-sanctioned coercion was premeditated or whether it unfolded of its own accord. The fearsome Cheka of the Civil War period had yet to emerge, but its foundations were being laid in the weeks following the October Revolution.

ACTIVITY

COMPARATIVE TASK

Read about the formation of the Cheka (All-Russian Extraordinary Commission for Combating Counter-Revolution, Speculation and Sabotage) and complete the tasks below.

1. Why was the Cheka formed?
2. Outline the initial jurisdiction and size of the Cheka. What factors influenced its expansion in early 1918?
3. Compare the Cheka, as it was during the period December 1917–March 1918, to the tsarist Okhrana. To what extent was there continuity and change between the old and new regimes in this respect?

NEW DECREES

Leon Trotsky: 'We, the Soviets of Workers,' Soldiers' and Peasants' Deputies, are going to try an experiment unique in history; we are going to found a power which will have no other aim but to satisfy the needs of the soldiers, workers and peasants.'

The early initiatives of the Soviet government had two aims in mind: ensuring a continuation of power and instituting radical social and economic change. The Bolsheviks were determined to prove they were a government of revolutionary action – unlike the Provisional Government. In support of such a view, American journalist John Reed described the Bolsheviks as 'the only people in Russia who had a definite program of action while the others talked for eight long months.'[21]

19 Vladimir Lenin, 'The Socialist Fatherland is in Danger!,' in *Selected Works II* (Moscow: Progress Publishers, 1970), 276.

20 Alter L. Litvin, 'The Cheka,' in *Critical Companion to the Russian Revolution,* ed. Edward Acton et al. (Bloomington and Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 1997), 315–6.

21 John Reed, *Ten Days That Shook the World* (London: Penguin Books, 1966), 137.

FIGES ON THE BOLSHEVIK VICTORY

DOCUMENT

EXTRACT FROM ARTHUR RANSOME'S REPORT FOR THE *DAILY NEWS*, LATE DECEMBER 1917

> I arrived in Petrograd to find that the reports of disorder appearing in the English press are based mainly on wilful misrepresentation by the opposition newspapers here. The city is more orderly than it had been for some months before the Bolsheviks took control. For the first time since the Revolution the Government in Russia is based on real force. People may not like the Bolsheviks, but they obey them with startling alacrity. The... Government is extremely efficient, energetic and decisive, though faced by the noisy opposition of the privileged classes, who, though quite unable to replace this Government by one of their own, are doing all that they can to shake it by means of sabotage and libel.[22]

ACTIVITY

SOURCE ANALYSIS

Read the extract from Arthur Ransome's 1917 report and complete the tasks below.

1. Identify two changes in Petrograd since the Bolsheviks came to power, as noted by Ransome.
2. Identify two examples of effective government by the Bolsheviks, as noted by Ransome.
3. By quoting from the extract and using your own knowledge, explain how the Bolsheviks consolidated power in late 1917 and early 1918.
4. To what extent does the extract provide an accurate assessment of the early period of Soviet power? In your response, refer to the extract and to different historical interpretations.

In the same manner that the spontaneous revolutionary 'excesses' of the masses were praised by leading Bolsheviks, the early Sovnarkom decrees were, in part, aimed at encouraging popular participation in the revolution. Assessing the new decrees, British historian Robert Service argues, 'They were designed to inspire, to excite and to instigate.'[23] The Bolsheviks and their sympathisers, such as John Reed, believed that a new world was in the making and that each new decree was a step towards realising this goal. It was clearly an exhilarating experience. Upon coming to power, Lenin proclaimed, 'Yes, we shall destroy everything and on the ruins we shall build our temple!'[24] It would be inaccurate, though, to say that the Bolsheviks set out to destroy everything. Russia's royal palaces were carefully guarded, with certain national treasures to be preserved as museums for future generations. On hearing that St. Basil's Cathedral in Red Square had been damaged during the fighting to establish Soviet power in Moscow, the commissar for enlightenment, Anatoli Lunacharsky, burst into tears and offered his resignation. The Appeal of the People's Commissariat of Enlightenment, December 1917, stated,

> Preserve the pictures, statues and buildings – they are the embodiment of the spiritual power of yourselves and your predecessors... Do not touch a single stone, protect the monuments, buildings, old things and documents – they are your own history and pride. Remember that all this makes up the soil on which your new people's art is rising.

22 Cited in Harvey Pitcher, *Witnesses of the Russian Revolution* (London: Pimlico, 2001), 266.
23 Robert Service, 'The Soviet State,' in *Critical Companion to the Russian Revolution 1914–1921*, ed. Edward Acton et al. (Bloomington and Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 1997), 308.
24 Cited in Shub, *Lenin*, 142.

PEASANTS, PRESS AND INDUSTRIAL WORKERS

Lenin was serious when he said, 'we will turn Russia upside down.'[25] The Council of People's Commissars released no less than 116 decrees on various topics over the coming months. On 27 October 1917 a decree was passed giving the peasantry the right to seize the land of the gentry and distribute these estates how they wished. Whilst the peasants had been carrying out such actions for some months prior to October, the new Land Decree gave legal sanction to what had been occurring. Importantly, it allowed the Bolsheviks to project an image of supporting the peasantry and delivering on a key promise of the revolution. A Decree on the Press was issued on the same day, banning the publication of newspapers belonging to rival political groups who supposedly represented the 'bourgeoisie' (i.e. the Kadets). On 14 November the Workers' Control Decree gave industrial labourers the right to apply to the government to form self-management committees in their factories. These committees were to regulate rates of pay, hiring and dismissals, and take measures to ensure production continued.

DID YOU KNOW?

In a shrewd attempt to ensure that copies of new decrees weren't torn up for cigarette paper by illiterate peasants, Lenin arranged for stacks of old calendars to accompany the decrees sent out to the countryside.

ETHNIC MINORITIES

A decree promising the right to national self-determination (independence) to the various ethnic minorities was passed on 2 November. The first country to take up the offer was Finland, declaring its independence on 17 November. Lenin and his commissar of nationalities, Josef Stalin, hoped to see the establishment of revolutionary Soviet republics throughout the former Russian Empire. It was believed that these would be reabsorbed into a multinational socialist state that would eventually stretch across the whole European continent. Whether or not the Bolsheviks expected or wished other nations, such as Poland or the Ukraine, to seek permanent independence is another question entirely, as is the degree to which they were able to effectively halt such actions. The granting of independence to countries where regimes hostile to the Bolsheviks were established was not approved.

FURTHER DECREES

On 24 November the criminal justice system and old judiciary were scrapped and replaced by People's Courts in which 'revolutionary justice' was summarily handed out by elected judges. These judges did not have any formal legal training; they were instead guided by their 'revolutionary consciousness.' Reforms in women's rights were introduced. Women were guaranteed equal property rights and marriage was made a civil rather than Church affair. All banks, stock companies and financial institutions were nationalised and foreign debts were annulled. The Russian alphabet was reformed and letters deemed redundant were done away with. As a prelude to a formal peace treaty, an armistice with Germany was signed in early December 1917. The armed forces underwent 'democratisation,' whereby officers were elected by their troops. Formal ranks and saluting were abolished on 16 December. After 1 February 1918, the Gregorian calendar (thirteen days ahead of the Julian system) was adopted, bringing Russia in line with the rest of the world.

25 Vladimir Lenin, *What Is To Be Done?* (Moscow: Progress Publishers, 1978), 124.

ACTIVITY

SUMMARY TABLE

Choose three early decrees issued by the Bolsheviks. Create a table like the one below and fill in the following for each decree:

DECREE	NATURE OF DECREE	PEOPLE AFFECTED	SOCIAL CONSEQUENCES	POLITICAL OR ECONOMIC CONSEQUENCES
1.				
2.				
3.				

STATE CAPITALISM

Vladimir Lenin: 'The resistance of the capitalists and high-ranking employees will be smashed. Not a single person will be deprived of his property except under the special state law proclaiming the nationalisation of the banks and syndicates…Apart from the strictest accounting and control, apart from levying the set taxes in full the government has no intention of introducing any other measure.'

The Bolsheviks inherited an economy that was fast degenerating. Russia's state economic administration had virtually ceased to function by the time of the October seizure of power. Food and fuel shortages were critical and production was in danger of grinding to a halt. Bolshevik agitation had certainly inflamed this situation under the Provisional Government. Historian Alec Nove describes how the Bolsheviks '…tried to make things worse, since they were unconcerned with an orderly land settlement, industrial production or the military situation. They sought to reap the whirlwind. They contributed to the breakdown but did not cause it.'[26]

A key element of understanding the significance and outcomes of 1917 is recognising the profound social revolution that was occurring in response to extreme economic dislocation and social tensions. As the Provisional Government's authority broke down, workers, soldiers and peasants – by their own impetus – took measures to ensure some degree of control over their living conditions. The peasantry seized and redistributed land; soldiers formed their own revolutionary committees; workers joined together in their factories and attempted to regulate production. Having brought down the Provisional Government, the Bolsheviks sought to impose policies that would bring Russia's economic chaos under control.

Although all Bolsheviks agreed that moves toward a socialist economy should be undertaken, just how soon and to what extent these ideals should be implemented was a matter for debate. Party theorists, such as Bukharin and Preobrazhensky,

26 Alec Nove, 'State Capitalism,' in *The Blackwell Encyclopedia of the Russian Revolution*, ed. Harold Shukman (Oxford: Blackwell Publishers, 1988), 25.

argued for an immediate and comprehensive socialist economic program. After April 1918 Lenin proposed a more pragmatic approach that came to be known as State Capitalism: the government would exercise tight control over key industries, forming a 'monopoly' on trade, and fiscal policy would be directed through a single, centralised banking sector. Most existing economic enterprises were to remain under the direction of their previous owners and managers, supervised by Workers' Control. Lenin insisted that the expertise of 'bourgeois specialists' was necessary in this transitional phase of socialism. Lenin envisaged a quasi-capitalist economy, regulated and held accountable by a socialist government for the benefit of all Soviet citizens.

STATE CAPITALISM

'STATE' (SOCIALIST)	'CAPITALISM'
• Government control and ownership of some industries. • Centralised banking. • Economy overseen by economic department (Vesenkha). • Workers' Control supervises management.	• Most businesses and industries retain old managers and bosses as 'bourgeois experts.' • 'Structures' and 'technique' of free market remains. No significant change in economic foundations. • Government has a 'monopoly' in some sectors but free market remains.
Lenin saw this approach as a 'transitional' phase of development from capitalism to socialism.	

On 2 December 1917, a central body to coordinate economic activity was set up: the Supreme Council of the National Economy (VSNKh or Vesenkha). This body was initially seen as playing a supervisory role; managing and coordinating workers' committees and company management boards. Against Bukharin's criticisms, Lenin argued that by using the achievements, structures and 'technique' set in place by capitalism in the interests of socialism, steps towards a full socialist society were inevitably being taken. According to Lenin,

> ... state monopoly capitalism inevitably and unavoidably implies a step, or several steps towards Socialism! For if a large capitalist enterprise becomes a monopoly, it means it serves the whole nation. If it has become a state monopoly, it means the state... directs the whole enterprise. In whose interests?...in the interest of the revolutionary democracy – and that will be a step towards Socialism... Socialism is nothing but state-capitalist monopoly which has been turned in the interest of the whole people and has therefore ceased to be capitalist monopoly.[27]

Lenin's compromise in response to calls for a total socialist economy and full proletariat control of industry was to encourage workers' supervision of production. When they had learnt to manage economic affairs as well as capitalist factory owners, then workers could fully take over and run their factories.

Deepening social and economic turmoil undermined Lenin's ideal of State Capitalism. Fearing the total collapse of production, workers' committees urged the government to take ownership and regulation of more and more factories. Workers increasingly forced the matter by taking full control of their workplaces and dispossessing the former owners without having first sought official approval. The extent of this groundswell of 'nationalisations from below' was reflected in the cities of Moscow and Petrograd, where for every factory formally nationalised under the Workers' Control Decree, four more were seized without government

DID YOU KNOW?

During the State Capitalism period, shortages of raw materials led to workers stealing tools and materials to make items that could be readily bartered for food, such as cigarette lighters, kerosene lamps and candle sticks.

27 Vladimir Lenin, 'The Impending Catastrophe and How to Combat It,' in *Selected Works II* (Moscow: Progress Publishers, 1970), 112–3.

permission. Whilst Lenin had called for a mixed economy, the proletariat was pushing the government away from this ideal. A keen believer in discipline and centralised authority, Lenin would soon institute a far more militarised and state-directed economy.

ACTIVITY

SUMMARY

After reading about State Capitalism, write two paragraphs outlining the main features of the policy, Lenin's justifications for it and the extent to which it was successful.

DISSOLUTION OF THE CONSTITUENT ASSEMBLY

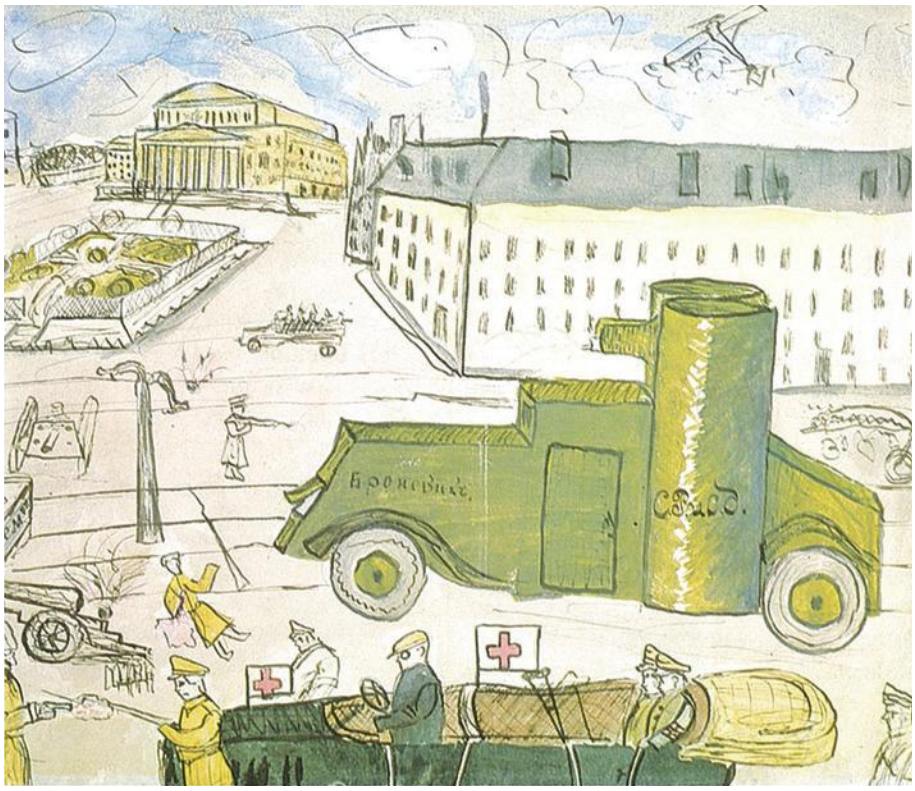
Vladimir Lenin: 'Naturally, the interests of this Revolution stand higher than the formal rights of the Constituent Assembly.'

Elections for the Constituent Assembly were initially proposed for 17 September 1917 but were put back until 12 November. This delay had proved fatal for the Provisional Government. Bolshevik agitators had been able to argue that only a Soviet government would guarantee the successful convocation of the Assembly. Having seized power, the Bolsheviks were now faced with a potentially serious problem – how should they react to the election results? What if they lost? Would they relinquish the reins of government? Realising the lack of support for the Bolsheviks amongst the peasantry, which as a group typically favoured the SRs, Lenin argued in favour of delaying the elections. Others in the party disagreed. Sverdlov, chairman of the Soviet Executive Committee, overruled Lenin's proposal. The voting began on 12 November and was completed three days later. Votes were tallied throughout December, and 5 January 1918 was set aside for the opening of the Assembly.

After counting, it was revealed that the Bolsheviks had won only twenty-four per cent of the vote (175 seats). The SRs had won 370 out of 707 seats, mainly from the peasant vote, and therefore had a majority (fifty-two per cent).[28] Although disappointed that the elections had not delivered a resounding endorsement of their October insurrection, the Bolsheviks were not entirely discouraged by the result. They had gained a majority of votes in the towns and cities and amongst the troops at the Front – they had won the proletarian vote. This was important for the party that styled itself as the 'vanguard of the proletariat.' According to Lenin, 'Only scoundrels and imbeciles can think that the proletariat must win a majority of votes in elections.'[29] Winning the vote of the workers and soldiers was considered of greater significance than an electoral majority based on votes from the countryside. Lenin argued, 'the town cannot be equal to the country...the town inevitably leads the country.'[30]

Lenin also claimed that the elections – held only two weeks after the October Revolution – had gone ahead before the Bolsheviks were well-known throughout Russia. He placed further importance on the fact that voters were unaware that the Socialist Revolutionaries had split as a party and that voting lists often made

28 Oliver Radkey, *Russia Goes to the Polls: The Election to the All-Russian Constituent Assembly, 1917* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1989), 23.
29 Cited in John Laver, *Lenin: Liberator or Oppressor?* (London: Hodder and Stoughton, 1994), 58.
30 Cited in Laver, *Lenin*, 57.



ABOVE: A child's drawing showing street fighting in Moscow, 1918. BELOW: A child's drawing showing Red Guards in a truck, 1918.

no distinction between Left and Right SR candidates. (After some hesitation, the Left SRs had agreed to support the Bolsheviks and, on 12 December, had joined the Sovnarkom government. Thus, the Bolsheviks argued that some SR votes effectively belonged to them.) Even before it had convened, Lenin made known his thoughts on the Constituent Assembly. Its importance had been surpassed by events since October. Lenin declared, 'The toiling masses have become convinced by their experience that bourgeois parliamentarianism is outdated; that it is completely incompatible with the construction of Socialism.'[31] Revolutionary Soviet democracy was a 'higher' form of democracy than 'bourgeois parliamentarianism.' Anything less than Soviet power would be 'a retrograde step and would cause a collapse of the entire October Workers' and Peasants' Revolution.'[32] The Constituent Assembly was therefore expected to recognise and endorse the changes that had been made since the October Revolution; it was not to make decisions on questions of political power.

31 Serge, *Year One of the Russian Revolution*, 135.

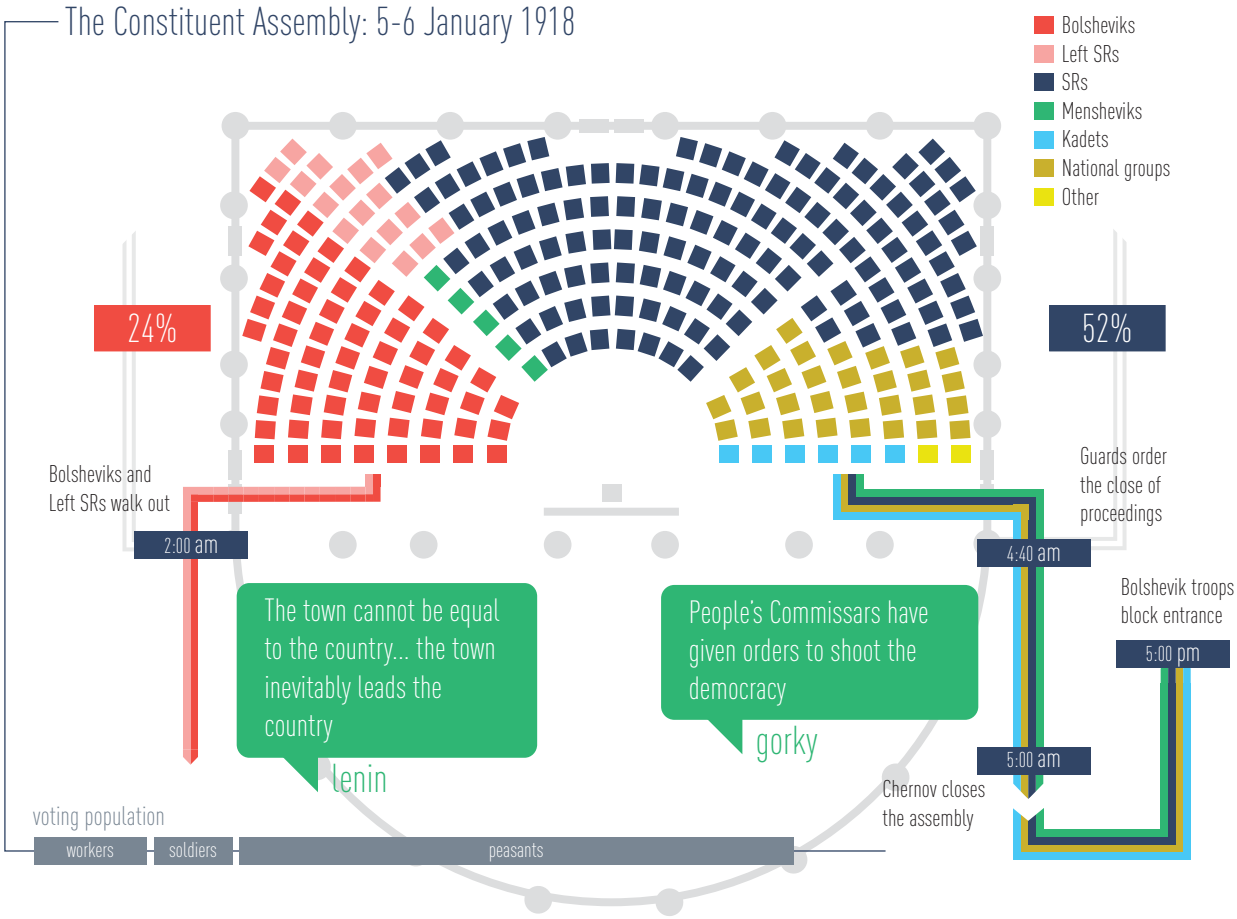
32 Vladimir Lenin, 'Draft Decree on the Dissolution of the Constituent Assembly,' in Robert Daniels, *A Documentary History of Communism, Volume 1: Communism in Russia* (London: I.B. Tauris & Co., 1985), 91.

On 5 January, martial law was declared in Petrograd and Sovnarkom authorities issued a ban on large public gatherings. Pro-Bolshevik troops were brought into the city in great numbers. The headline for *Pravda* (Bolshevik newspaper) ominously read: 'Today the Hyenas of the Capital and their hirelings want to seize power from Soviet hands.'[33] A showdown was clearly on the cards. That morning a protest march in favour of the Constituent Assembly, attended by some workers but made up largely of white-collar employees, was dispersed by machine-gun fire.

At around 4.00 p.m., delegates to the Constituent Assembly gathered at the Tauride Palace for the first opening session. On the left sat the Bolsheviks and Left SRs; the seats at the centre and right of the room were filled by Mensheviks, Right SRs and other groups. After Sverdlov opened the meeting, SR leader, Victor Chernov, was elected chairman. There was heckling, cheering, whistling, foot stomping and applause, as well as a notable air of tension and hostility throughout the proceedings. One of the first speakers was Sverdlov. He read out the Bolsheviks' Declaration of the Rights of Toilers and Exploited People, which had been previously approved by the Soviet Executive Committee and published on 4 January in Bolshevik newspapers. Drafted by Lenin, the declaration called for the Constituent Assembly to approve the new decrees given by Sovnarkom since the October insurrection. According to the Declaration, 'the Constituent Assembly considers that its own task is confined to establishing the fundamental principles of the socialist reconstruction of society.'[34]

33 Cited in Richard Pipes, *A Concise History of the Russian Revolution* (New York: Vintage Books, 1996), 162.

34 Vladimir Lenin, 'Draft Declaration of the Rights of the Toilers and Exploited People,' in *Selected Works II* (Moscow: Progress Publishers, 1970), 266.



The Menshevik and Right SR delegates, who together held a majority in the Assembly, made clear their disapproval of Sverdlov's speech. Tsereteli, a prominent Menshevik and former minister of labour in the Provisional Government, gave a rousing condemnation of the October seizure of power and voiced the opinion that most of the delegates would not recognise Lenin's Council of People's Commissars. Debate raged back and forth into the night.

Leon Trotsky.

Following a pre-arranged signal from Lenin, at around 2.00 am the Bolshevik delegates denounced the meeting and staged a walkout. They were followed soon after by the Left SRs. Red Guards and Kronstadt sailors remained behind and intimidated the delegates who stayed on. Some sailors had been drinking and found it immensely amusing to aim their guns at the Menshevik speakers. The Assembly meanwhile passed decrees calling for the fair and equitable distribution of land amongst the peasantry, a democratic peace with Germany and for the declaration of a republic. At 4.40 am the head of the guard at the Tauride Palace ordered Chernov to close proceedings for the night as the guards were 'too tired.' Chernov managed to keep the Assembly open for another twenty minutes before sailors and Red Guards started hurrying the delegates from the Palace, shoving them with their rifle butts. This went against Lenin's instructions somewhat, as he had told the guards that the Assembly should not be dispersed forcibly, but rather delegates should be permitted to talk as long as they liked and then go home; after this, they should not be allowed back in.[35] Before bringing the meeting to a close, Chernov announced that that the Assembly would reconvene later that day at 5.00 pm.

When the delegates arrived in the afternoon just before 5.00 they found the Tauride Palace locked and guarded by Bolshevik troops who presented them with a decree declaring the Constituent Assembly dissolved. There was little they could do but disperse and consider how they might respond to the end of Russia's first and last democratic Constituent Assembly. The convocation of an Assembly had been an ideal long held dear by moderate opposition groups. In despair, Maxim Gorky wrote, 'Rivers of blood have been spilled on the sacrificial altar of this sacred idea, and now the "People's Commissars" have given orders to shoot the democracy.'[36]

Leon Trotsky freely admitted to the use of violence in ending the Constituent Assembly: 'Lenin's theoretical considerations went hand in hand with sharpshooters.'[37] Lenin had also made it clear that force was to be employed, advising his followers to, 'Trust in the mood, but don't forget your rifles.'[38] Some historians have argued that the ease with which the 'problem' of the Constituent Assembly was solved proved a valuable lesson for the Bolsheviks. Violent intimidation worked well when dealing with political opponents. Richard Pipes argues,

> The machine gun became for them the principal instrument of political persuasion. The unrestrained brutality with which they henceforth ruled Russia stemmed in large measure from the knowledge, gained on January 5, that they could use it with impunity.[39]

Yet the Bolsheviks' actions in regard to the Constituent Assembly were largely consistent with their political outlook and revolutionary mentality. Having successfully seized power by force, it would have seemed nonsensical to Lenin that he relent to the pressure of a democratic election, especially one he deemed not truly representative. Ron Suny argues, 'Revolution was not like an election

35 Alexander Rabinowitch, *The Bolsheviks in Power: The First Year of Soviet Rule in Petrograd* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2007), 122.
36 Gorky, *Untimely Thoughts*, 124–5.
37 Cited in Michael Lynch, *Reaction and Revolutions: Russia 1881–1924* (Sydney: Hodder and Stoughton, 1992), 105.
38 Cited in Christopher Hill, *Lenin and the Russian Revolution* (London: Penguin, 1947), 162.
39 Pipes, *A Concise History of the Russian Revolution*, 165.

DID YOU KNOW?

Working-class Russians often wrote letters to government officials including rude and colourful insults. A mild example was when one soldier wrote to Lenin in early January 1918: 'Bastard! What the hell are you doing? How long are you going to keep on degrading the Russian people?!'

campaign in which the party that gains a majority gains the upper hand; rather it was like a military campaign in which the side that can mobilise the greatest physical strength in the most sensitive places wins the day.'[40] Lenin proclaimed, 'We will not exchange our rifles for a ballot!'[41] Compromise was not something the more radical-minded Bolsheviks aspired to. And though a group of mainly middle-class white-collar workers had protested in support of the Assembly on the morning of 5 January, there was little public protest over the closure of the body. Victor Serge recalled, 'The dissolution of the Constituent Assembly made a great sensation abroad. In Russia, it passed almost unnoticed.'[42] Similarly, the SR Nikolai Sviatitsky explained the fate of the Constituent Assembly as 'a consequence of the indifference with which the people responded to our dissolution, which permitted Lenin to dismiss us with a wave of his hand: "Let them just go home!"'[43]

Other historians have questioned why the dissolution of the Constituent Assembly went largely unchallenged by ordinary people. Richard Pipes sees the 'surprising indifference' toward the closing of the Constituent Assembly as evidence that Russia 'lacked a sense of national cohesion capable of inspiring the population to give up immediate and personal interests for the sake of the common good.'[44] Arguably, workers were preoccupied with securing enough food and fuel for their families, whilst the peasantry saw the Assembly as a 'distant thing in the city,' according to Figes.[45] Conflicts between political parties were of little interest to peasants, who were largely unwilling to risk their newly-gained social autonomy by supporting the Right SRs.[46] But Mark Steinberg asserts that many ordinary people, rather than being apathetic, were more concerned with bringing revolutionary changes into the spheres of everyday life – factory floor, military barracks, trench and village – than they were with creating political institutions.[47] By this logic the Constituent Assembly was irrelevant as long as the Soviet government endorsed these practical and immediate actions.

The meaning of the SR electoral victory has also been given some reconsideration. The 'cohesiveness' of the SR's majority is seen by Oliver Radkey as 'much softer' than often thought.[48] The extent of the peasantry's true loyalty to the Socialist Revolutionary party was not hard and fast, whilst the elections also revealed that the Bolsheviks certainly had strong popular support. Peasant voting patterns are also worthy of consideration. The elections were not a closed, secret ballot in many communities. Though voter turn-out was high, peasants tended to vote together as a 'bloc' for the same party following the tradition of a mir-style communal debate. That many workers, peasants and soldiers saw the soviets as a more accurate representation of their personal understanding of 'democracy,' regardless of Leninist rhetoric, was also true. 'Democracy,' in the working class sense of the term, was a socialist political authority that excluded the 'bourgeoisie' from power in a way that the Constituent Assembly did not. Many did not see the Constituent Assembly as a viable alternative to soviet power.

Some working class Russians were nevertheless indignant at the actions of the Bolsheviks. For example, an anonymous letter to Trotsky (see opposite) criticised the armed response to the demonstration held in support of the Constituent Assembly on 5 January 1918.

Constitutional questions had already been under discussion amongst Soviet authorities around the time of the Constituent Assembly and continued soon after its closure. At the Third All-Russian Congress of Soviets on 8 January 1918, calls

40 Ronald Grigor Suny, *The Soviet Experiment: Russia, The USSR and the Successor States* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1998), 60.
41 Cited in W. Bruce Lincoln, *Red Victory: A History of the Russian Civil War* (New York: Simon & Shuster, 1989), 122.
42 Serge, *Year One of the Russian Revolution*, 135.
43 Cited in Rabinowitch, *The Bolsheviks in Power*, 124.
44 Pipes, *A Concise History of the Russian Revolution*, 163–4.
45 Figes, *A People's Tragedy*, 518.
46 Orlando Figes, *Peasant Russia, Civil War: The Volga Countryside in Revolution, 1917–1921* (London: Phoenix Press, 2001), 67–8, 162.
47 Mark Steinberg, *Voices of Revolution*, 1917 (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2001), 272.
48 Radkey, *Russia Goes to the Polls*, 102–3.

DOCUMENT

ANONYMOUS LETTER TO TROTSKY, JANUARY 1918

To Citizen Trotsky

I am sending you a New Year's greeting from the whole Russian people. God damn you to hell! What did the worker-demonstrators who were marching peacefully today down Petrograd's streets ever do to you? Why did you fire on them?... Who do you think you are? Where did you come from? Bandits! Know this: Before three months are out you will break your neck! ...You have disarmed all the citizens and left them without any way of defending themselves against the bandits, who you send to rob and kill innocent "persons"! Vengeance is at hand, though! Soon, very soon, you will see that God is still alive and will not forget his own! Murderers and thieves, you broke your promise to the people. You are stealing the people's money, you want to get a sacksful [sackful]. So know this! The very first one the Germans will hang will be Ulyanov-Lenin and the second will be his secretary that yid [Jew] Bronstein-Trotsky. The Russian people have no wish to be under the yoke of the yids. This shall never be!... Prison and death on a pillar of shame – that will be your fate in 1918. These are not empty words.... You are not the people's chosen. You are impostors. You deserve to be hanged, state criminals.[49]

ACTIVITY

SOURCE ANALYSIS

Examine the anonymous letter to Trotsky and read about the dissolution of the Constituent Assembly. Then complete the tasks below.

1. What are the main complaints of the author?
2. What is the author's apparent attitude to Lenin and Trotsky? Explain your answer.
3. Does the letter tend to support the views presented by Pipes, Figes, Steinberg or Radkey? (See opposite.) Explain your answer.
4. To what extent does the extract give a complete account of the attitudes of ordinary Russians to the dissolution of the Constituent Assembly? What other evidence would be needed?

had been made for the drafting of a new constitution to outline the aspirations of the revolutionary government, the structure of the Soviet state and the rights afforded to its citizens. A commission chaired by Sverdlov had various draft constitutions drawn up before a final version was accepted on 19 July 1918. With the ratification of this constitution, the Russian Soviet Federal Socialist Republic (RSFSR) formally came into being.

THE TREATY OF BREST-LITOVSK

PODCAST ON IMPACTS OF TREATY

Vladimir Lenin: 'Intolerably severe are the terms of peace. Nevertheless, history will claim its own... Let us set to work to organise, organise and organise. Despite all trials, the future is ours.'

In September 1917, Lenin had written to his party comrades, telling them 'to secure a truce at present means to conquer the *whole world*.'[50] He had long been an advocate of pulling Russia out of World War I, a conflict he described as a 'bourgeois imperialist' war that should be turned into a 'civil war.' Lenin argued that Russia's soldiers, either peasants or workers in uniform, had been hoodwinked into fighting their German and Austrian fellows when really they should be acting together to overthrow the various capitalist governments

49 Cited in Steinberg, *Voices of Revolution*, 281.
50 Vladimir Lenin, *On the Eve of October* (London: Martin Lawrence, 1949), 8.

Trotsky at Brest-Litovsk.

DID YOU KNOW?

The Soviet delegation to Brest-Litovsk included a worker, a sailor, a soldier, a peasant and a woman – all symbolic of the new egalitarian social order. Having almost forgotten to include a peasant delegate, an old bearded farmer found walking along the streets of Petrograd was invited along by Bolshevik officials on their way to catch the train to Brest-Litovsk.

that used them as cannon fodder in furthering imperialist expansion. As the Provisional Government lurched from crisis to crisis and radical socialist parties grew in influence, Lenin's ideas had gathered popular momentum. The Bolsheviks' Decree on Peace was met with widespread acclamation amongst workers, soldiers and peasants. Realising the ideal of 'peace' was therefore a key factor underpinning the legitimacy of the Bolshevik government. As consolidating the gains of the October Revolution was of primary importance to Lenin, obtaining a peace treaty would allow Russia's socialist revolution time to develop and strengthen, thereby inspiring and sparking off socialist revolutions elsewhere. Yet Russia's ability to continue the war, regardless of Bolshevik policy, was decidedly shaky. The armed forces had simply lost the will to fight. Strong anti-war sentiment brought the army to the brink of collapse as thousands of soldiers voted with their feet and deserted the trenches. The Bolsheviks were well aware that the Decree on Peace was merely a call for peace, not an actual treaty or ceasefire as such. Lenin felt that a formal peace treaty with Germany needed to be made immediately and at any cost. As a revolutionary Marxist, his loyalty towards Russia as a nation was also limited. 'I spit on Russia,' he reportedly told one Social Democrat, 'This is merely one phase through which we must pass on the way to a world revolution.'[51]

Although an initial ceasefire was negotiated on 2 December 1917, the party did not adopt Lenin's call for an immediate peace on any terms. The Bolsheviks were, in fact, divided on the signing of a peace treaty. One faction, led by Bukharin, became known as the Left Communists and was supported in its stance by the Left SRs. The Left Communists believed that the revolution would be best served by fighting a 'revolutionary war' with Germany by refusing to give in to any demands – a treaty would be an immoral and obscene endorsement of German imperialism. The Soviet Republic had no effective army, but Bukharin argued that the 'revolutionary consciousness' of the proletariat would be roused by a German invasion, which would allow for a successful guerrilla campaign to be waged. Such a war, he believed, would bring about the eventual defeat of Germany and ultimately launch socialist revolution elsewhere.

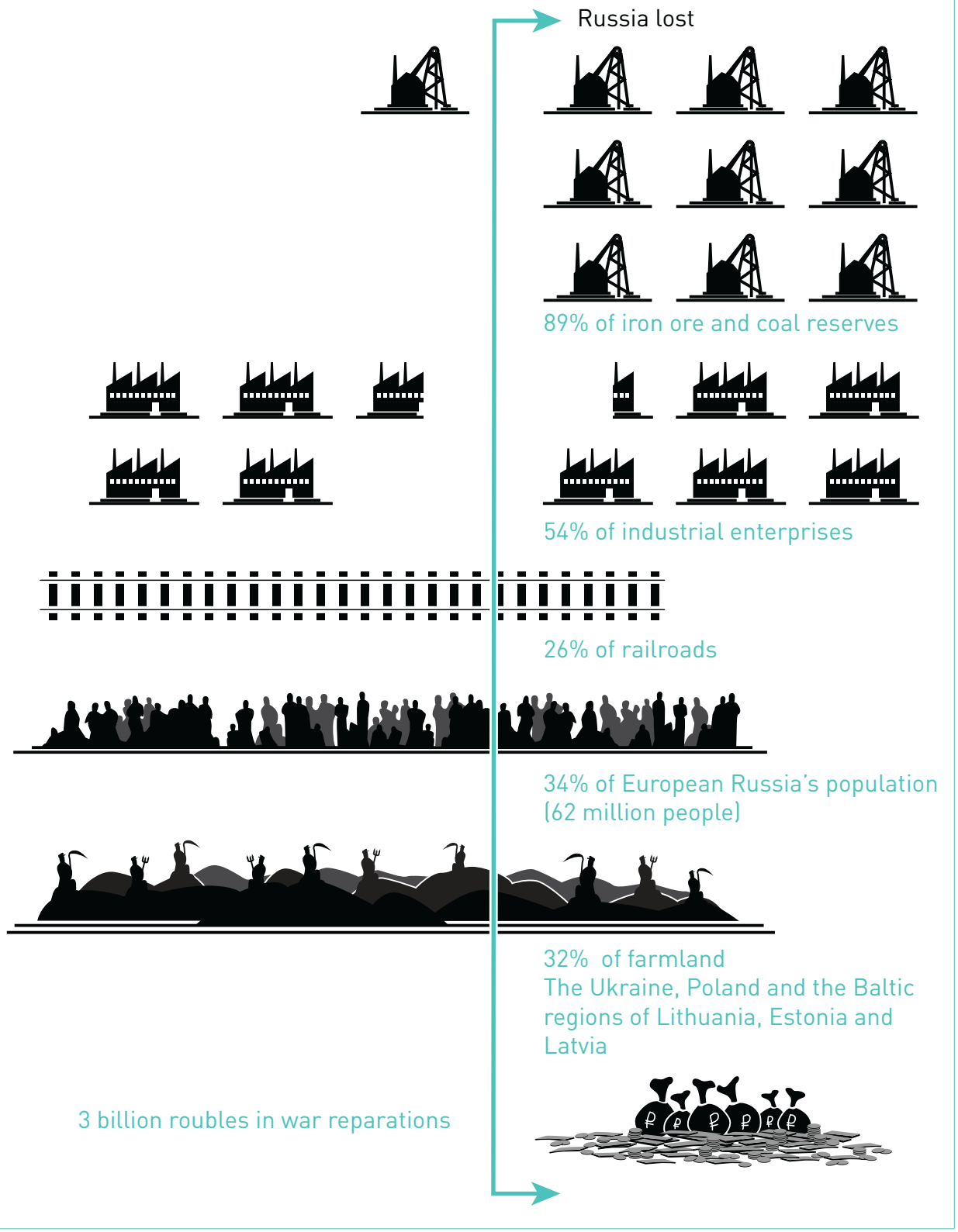
Lenin was not impressed and accused the Left Communists of childish irresponsibility; they were suffering from 'an infantile disorder.' The first task before the party was the consolidation of the October Revolution, not grand revolutionary gestures that posed a serious threat to the stability of the new regime. It was foolhardy to risk the survival of Russia's socialist revolution on the chance that one might break out in Germany. Lenin argued, 'Germany is still only pregnant with revolution; and a quite healthy child has been born to us – a socialist republic which we may kill if we begin a war.'[52] Russia's peasants and workers were in no mood to fight a war, be it revolutionary or otherwise. The correct policy, in Lenin's mind, was 'immediate peace.' Lenin was given unwavering support from Sverdlov and Stalin; the latter noted, 'There is no revolutionary movement in the West. There are no facts; there is only a possibility, and with possibilities we cannot reckon.'[53]

Leon Trotsky offered a third view that bridged the rival positions of Lenin and Bukharin. As the commissar of foreign affairs, Trotsky led the delegation that negotiated with the German High Command at the town of Brest-Litovsk in Poland throughout late December, January and February. Trotsky pursued a policy that he described as 'neither peace, nor war.'[54] He went to great lengths to

51 Cited in Shub, *Lenin*, 142.
52 Cited in W. H. Chamberlin, *The Russian Revolution 1917–18: From the Overthrow of the Czar to the Assumption of Power by the Bolsheviks, Volume 1* (New York: The Universal Library, 1965), 398.
53 Cited in W. H. Chamberlin, *The Russian Revolution 1917–18*, 398.
54 Cited in Hill, *Lenin and the Russian Revolution*, 111.


TREATY OF BREST-LITOVSK 1918
KEY
Russian Territory
Other Territories
Lost Territories
Russian Border
Treaty Border
Other Borders
Inland Lakes & Seas
Cities
N
England
North Sea
Barents Sea
Norway
Sweden
France
Germany
Berlin
Baltic Sea
Murmansk
Kronstadt
Riga
Petrograd
Kara Sea
Archangel
Vienna
Warsaw
Brest-Litovsk
Novgorod
Austria-Hungary
Minsk
Smolensk
Belgrade
Poland
Dnepr
Mogilev
Volga
Moscow
Romania
Kiev
Nizhni Novgorod
Sofia
Bucharist
Bulgaria
Odessa
Irtish
Ural Mountains
Kazan
Kharkov
Constantinople
Saratov
Samara
Tobolsk
Don
Rostov -on-Don
Yekaterinburg
Tsaritsyn
Black Sea
Ural
Turkey
Omsk
Trans-Siberian Railway
Mediterranean Sea
Kars
Caspian Sea
Tiflis
Baku
0
500
km

Russian losses in the Treaty of Brest-Litovsk



Source: Orlando Figes, *A People's Tragedy*, 1997.

protract discussions; giving the impression that he was about to accept the peace terms on offer, then promptly rejecting them and calling for further negotiation. He gave theatrical, long-winded and often contradictory speeches, generally doing his best to confuse the proceedings. At the same time, Bolshevik agitators went to considerable effort in spreading propaganda amongst German troops stationed along the Eastern Front. Russian soldiers fraternised with their German counterparts, urging them to resist orders given by their officers and turn their 'imperialist war into a civil war.' Trotsky also employed the highly unconventional ploy of addressing his calls for a fair, equitable peace not only to the German government, but also the German public. In late January 1918, German workers went on strike to protest for an immediate peace with Russia without annexations or indemnities. Trotsky believed his tactics were paying off and viewed developments at Brest-Litovsk as a spectacular vindication of revolutionary diplomacy.[55] He was convinced that if he could delay the negotiations just a little longer, socialist revolution would be sure to break out in Germany. Negotiations would then be of an entirely different nature.

The German negotiators were at first perplexed and then increasingly frustrated with Trotsky's antics. Field Marshall Hindenberg was clearly annoyed: 'Trotsky degraded the conference-table to the level of a tub-thumper's street corner.'[56] The German army was undoubtedly the superior military force, yet the Bolsheviks were acting like they had won the war. It didn't make any sense to the Germans; losers don't dictate their own peace terms! German frustrations finally came to a head in early February when the Bolsheviks were presented with an ultimatum: accept the terms on offer or hostilities will resume. Trotsky then baffled the Germans by announcing that Russia was pulling out of the war, but would not sign the German peace treaty. It was an action that went against all customary international diplomacy. 'Unheard of!' exclaimed General Hoffman.[57] Initially surprised, the German High Command soon called Trotsky's bluff and on 18 February 1918, launched an offensive involving 700 000 troops. The German army met no resistance as it ploughed into Russian territory. The Soviet government was thrown into disarray. Fearing the Germans might capture the government, on 12 March the capital was moved from Petrograd to Moscow, where Soviet officials set up residence in the Kremlin.

The debate over whether to relent to the Germans or prepare for a revolutionary partisan war continued to rage. This debate, according to Rabinowitch, was the most profound crisis within the party during Lenin's years as head of state.[58] Bukharin wanted to fight, whilst Lenin urged for peace as the survival of the revolutionary government was clearly at stake. Lenin threatened to resign unless his proposals were met and the incessant debate amongst the Bolsheviks, what he called 'revolutionary phrasemongering,'[59] ceased immediately.

EXTENDED RESPONSE

Write an extended response (400-600 words) on the following topic:

'A lack of consensus among the Bolsheviks made it impossible for them to create an effective new society.' Do you agree?

ACTIVITY

SCRIPT

Read about the views of Lenin, Bukharin and Trotsky on whether to sign a peace treaty with Germany.

Write a two-page script detailing a conversation between the three men. How does each put forward his position and respond to criticisms? What rhetorical techniques are used?

Perform the script for your class. (Extra points for characterisation.)

55 Rabinowitch, *The Bolsheviks in Power*, 134.
56 Cited in Lynch, *Reaction and Revolutions*, 107.
57 Cited in Dmitri Volkogonov, *Trotsky: The Eternal Revolutionary* (Hammersmith: HarperCollins, 1996), 110–1.
58 Rabinowitch, *The Bolsheviks in Power*, 141.
59 Lenin, *Selected Works II*, 288.

DID YOU KNOW?

Bolsheviks or Communists? Though the name of the Party was formally changed at the Seventh Party Congress, the terms Bolshevik and Communist are interchangeable and the older title remained in common use.

Faced with an imminent invasion and with an army that was in no position to stage an effective defence, Lenin's view held sway. On 19 February a message was sent to Berlin expressing the Soviet government's willingness to sign a peace treaty. German troops continued to advance while no reply was received for three days. A new treaty, demanding even harsher terms than before, was set forth on 22 February. On 3 March the Sovnarkom accepted Germany's demands and signed the Treaty of Brest-Litovsk. The terms of the Treaty were severe:

- Thirty-four per cent of Russia's European population was taken out of Russian control, amounting to approximately sixty-two million people;
- Russia was to give up thirty-two per cent of its farmland, including the Ukraine, which was one of the country's major sources of grain – the so-called 'bread basket.' German forces gained control of Poland and the Baltic regions of Lithuania, Estonia and Latvia;
- Germany was to be paid three billion roubles in war reparations; and
- Russia lost eighty-nine per cent of its iron ore and coal reserves, as well as fifty-four per cent of its industrial enterprises and twenty-six per cent of its railways.[60]

The Treaty of Brest-Litovsk was a bitter pill to swallow. For Russian nationalists it was an unmitigated disaster: two centuries of expansion by the Russian Empire – all the achievements from Peter the Great onwards – were lost at the stroke of a pen. National humiliation fostered resentment amongst groups who had been organising opposition to the Bolsheviks, namely former tsarist generals and members of the now-banned Kadet party. The Bolsheviks and Left SRs also endured heart-wrenching setbacks in their revolutionary agenda following the treaty. Direct revolutionary propaganda against the German and Austrian governments had to cease, whilst the withdrawal of Russian troops from the Ukraine, Latvia and Estonia sounded the death knell for newly-formed Soviet authorities in Kiev and other major cities in the Baltic States. German forces overthrew the workers' soviets and installed conservative puppet regimes in their place.

PERSPECTIVES ON PEACE WITH GERMANY

Trotsky flatly refused to put his signature to the treaty. He resigned as commissar of foreign affairs and took up the position of commissar of war. The Left Communists continued to agitate for the rejection of the peace terms through their newspaper *Kommunist*. Lenin railed against his opponents and at the Seventh Party Congress (6–8 March) campaigned hard for the formal ratification of the treaty. At the Congress, Lenin delivered a scathing attack on his recalcitrant comrades:

> Facts are stubborn things. And the facts show that Bukharin denied the possibility of a German attack and sowed illusions which actually, against his wishes, helped the German imperialists...That is the essence of revolutionary phrasemongering...if the new terms are worse, more distressful and humiliating than the bad, distressing and humiliating Brest terms, it is our pseudo-'Lefts,' Bukharin...and Co., who are guilty... It is a fact you cannot escape, wriggle as you will. You were offered the Brest terms, and you replied by blustering and swaggering, which led to worse terms. That is a fact. And you cannot escape the responsibility for it... Down with blustering![61]

Lenin was telling critics of the treaty to toughen up and pull their heads in. The severe terms imposed at Brest-Litovsk were the direct result of posturing by the Left Communists and the failure to agree to the earlier terms that were offered. It was now time to stop bickering and get on with the job of building socialism.

60 Figes, *A People's Tragedy*, 548.
61 Vladimir Lenin, 'A Serious Lesson and a Serious Responsibility,' in *Collected Works*, Vol. 27, first published in *Pravda* No. 42, 6 March 1918 (Moscow: Progress Publishers, 1972), 79–84.

The Party Congress agreed and gave its approval to the Treaty, which was given final ratification on 15 March by the Fourth Congress of Soviets. Debate at the Congress was kept under tight rein by Soviet Chairman Sverdlov.

The Left SRs remained unrepentant and voiced their protest by resigning from the Sovnarkom government on 19 March 1918. The Bolsheviks, who at the Seventh Party Congress had changed their name to the All-Russian Communist Party, were thereafter no longer partners in a coalition socialist government, but rather the leaders of a one-party dictatorship. The signing of the Treaty of Brest-Litovsk clearly had greater ramifications beyond being an economic blow and political humiliation to the Soviet regime. However, following the entrance of the USA into World War I and the renewal of the Allied campaign, Germany was unable to maintain its war efforts and surrendered on 11 November 1918. Two days later the Communists renounced the Treaty of Brest-Litovsk, thereby re-gaining much of the territory that had been lost. Lenin's insistence that Sovnarkom accept the humiliating treaty had paid off and his reputation as the Party's wise and eminent leader grew.

ACTIVITY

NOTE-TAKING

Read about the Treaty of Brest-Litovsk and answer the following questions in note form.

1. What were the consequences of the Treaty of Brest-Litovsk for Russia?
2. How did the severity of the treaty deepen economic hardship in Russia?
3. Who did Lenin blame for the 'distressing and humiliating' terms of the treaty? What were his chief criticisms of the Left factions in this regard?

THE QUESTION OF 'PEACE' OR 'WAR'

The issue of when, how and if a peace treaty should be signed with the Germans was fiercely debated by the Soviet government. Lenin, Bukharin and Trotsky championed the three main positions.*

LENIN: Immediate peace! Russia has had a socialist revolution – the first in the world – and this must be safeguarded at all costs. The Russian soldiers will no longer fight and if the Germans invade Soviet power will be overthrown!

BUKHARIN: To sign a treaty with Germany would mean giving in to a capitalist and imperialist power! If the Germans invade, a 'revolutionary war' will unfold that will soon spark a new socialist uprising in Germany. To compromise now means to betray the international revolution!

TROTSKY: By protracted negotiation and appeals directly to the German workers and soldiers two things are gained: time for Soviet Russia to improve its position and, hopefully, time for a revolution in Germany to develop. We should cease fighting but not agree to any formal treaty. Neither peace, nor war!

DISCUSSION ACTIVITY

1. What were the justifications or logic behind Lenin, Bukharin and Trotsky's position on the question of peace?
2. Taking the persona of a Bolshevik or Left SR, whose argument do you find most convincing? Keep in mind that opinions varied.
3. In regard to the two views you don't find convincing, what arguments would you offer to refute them?

* The views of Lenin, Bukharin and Trotsky presented above are NOT direct quotes and are instead creatively paraphrased; however, the ideas are historically accurate.

CONCLUSION

After the October Revolution of 1917, Russia was inundated with new decrees endorsing many popular sentiments, including 'Workers Control,' the decree on 'Peace,' women's rights and the agrarian revolution in the villages. Many Russians were captivated by a sense that a new society, even a new world, was being created. Others, particularly the middle and upper classes, fell victim to the more violent expressions of the revolutionary movement. Popular expressions of class anger were endorsed and openly sanctioned by the new Soviet government. Aghast at the cruelty and suffering unleashed by the Bolshevik revolution, many critics voiced concerns about the nature of this new regime.

It was apparent by early 1918 that the social revolution envisaged by ordinary people and the political vision held dear by the Bolsheviks were rapidly drifting apart. The economy continued to break down and the ideals of State Capitalism and workers' supervision in industry proved increasingly unworkable. A more centralised economic policy was emerging. Crime and political opposition likewise prompted authoritarian measures. Opposition newspapers were shut down and a number of rival political groups banned. The soon-to-be-notorious Cheka, led by 'Iron Felix' Dzerzhinsky, was born. Russia's first 'democratic' Constituent Assembly, having met for one day, was dispersed by the Bolsheviks, who questioned its legitimacy on revolutionary grounds given the 'achievements' of the new Soviet government.

Though a ceasefire was negotiated soon after October, the might of the German armed forces would prove to be a grave challenge. Worldwide socialist revolution, the perceived solution to so many diplomatic and economic woes, failed to emerge in support of the October Revolution and the 'triumphant march' of Soviet power came to a grinding halt after the Treaty of Brest-Litovsk was signed in March 1918. Economic difficulties were exacerbated by the ensuing loss of fertile grain-producing areas and much-valued mining regions.

This terrible blow to the Soviet republic also set in train opposition that would develop into full civil war. The Left SRs withdrew from Sovnarkom in protest. Groups hostile to the Bolshevik regime had fled south to the Ukraine or Siberia after the Constituent Assembly and were soon rallying their forces. Former tsarist generals were already drafting together armies to oppose the Bolsheviks. In the midst of this terrible and bloody conflict, many of the cherished ideals of October 1917 would be lost or evolve into something quite different. Ruthless and authoritarian practices had already been implemented during the early months of Bolshevik rule; historians continue to debate, however, whether the so-called 'original sin' of October and the actions taken soon after inevitably led to this tragic nightmare or whether the Civil War, more than any other experience, profoundly shaped the nature of the new regime.

TEST YOUR LEARNING

CHAPTER REVIEW

QUOTATION BANK

Collate a list of short quotes by leading Bolsheviks during the period October 1917–March 1918. Write a short comment about what each reveals about Bolshevik ideology, attitudes toward the new society and/or the nature of the challenges they faced. Continue to add to the 'bank' as you read the chapters ahead.

CAUSE AND CONSEQUENCE

Create a table like the one below and fill in the missing information.

CHALLENGES TO THE NEW REGIME (OCT 1917–MAR 1918): SOVNARKOM RESPONSES

CHALLENGE	RESPONSE
Declining industrial production.	State _____ and Workers' Control Decree aim to stabilise and maintain economic output.
Inflation and _____ shortages.	Decree on Land gains peasant support.
Street violence.	The Ch_____ founded to investigate and halt counter-revolutionary activity.
Civil servants' _____.	Soviet propaganda promotes class conflict against the bourgeoisie.
Russia invaded by _____.	Trotsky delays peace negotiations; Lenin convinces government to sign Treaty of _____-_____.
SR electoral victory in the _____ Assembly.	Assembly dissolved by force.

SOURCE ANALYSIS

Examine the representation 'Comrade Lenin Sweeps the World Clean of Filth' (right) and complete the tasks below.

1. Identify two groups portrayed as 'filth' in the representation.
2. Identify two features of the representation that symbolise class conflict in the new society.
3. By referring to the representation and using your own knowledge, explain how Lenin orchestrated revolutionary change between October 1917 and March 1918.
4. Evaluate the extent to which the representation provides an accurate depiction of the policies and actions of the Bolsheviks from October 1917 to March 1918.

CREATIVE RESPONSE

Imagine you are a Bolshevik worker-activist, a soldier, a Menshevik, a Left SR, a middle-class lawyer OR a peasant farmer living in Russia in early 1918. Write a letter to *Pravda* (newspaper), or give a speech to your class, which outlines your views on the closure of the Constituent Assembly or another key event from the time.

Comrade Lenin Sweeps the World Clean of Filth by Viktor Deni.

TEST YOUR LEARNING

CONSTRUCTING AN ARGUMENT

Write an essay on one of the topics below. Your essay should be completed in approximately 60 minutes and include an introduction, paragraphs supported by evidence, a conclusion and a bibliography.

Topics:

- To what extent did the reality of governing compromise the Bolsheviks' revolutionary vision?
- Many observers expected the Soviet regime to last no longer than a few weeks. How did the Bolsheviks remain in power after October 1917?
- To what extent did Lenin drive the change that occurred in Russia in the months after October 1917?
- How did the founding of a Soviet government change the lives of different social groups in Russia?

FURTHER READING

Chamberlin, W. H., The Russian Revolution 1918–1921: From the Civil War to the Consolidation of Power, Volume II. New York: Universal Library, 1965.

This second volume of Chamberlin's influential work draws on interviews and rare documents to provide a unique view of early Soviet Russia. The book covers the period from March 1917 to the introduction of the New Economic Policy in 1921.

Communist Party of the Soviet Union (Commission of the Central Committee). History of the CPSU (Short Course). International Publishers Co., 1939.

The definitive Stalinist account of the revolution. Dry in tone and extremely biased.

Kowalski, Ronald. The Russian Revolution 1917–1921. London: Routledge, 1997.

Offers a good range of significant primary sources and well-written commentary.

Malia, Martin. The Soviet Tragedy: A History of Socialism in Russia, 1917–1991. New York: The Free Press, 1996.

Emphasises the role of ideology in shaping the new society. Malia has some similarities with Pipes.

Nettl, J. P. The Soviet Achievement. London: Thames and Hudson, 1967.

An accessible analysis from the late 1960s.

Pipes, Richard. A Concise History of the Russian Revolution. New York: Vintage Books, 1996.

A manageable collection of Pipes' larger works. Pipes, an erudite and passionate historian, is highly critical of Lenin, the Bolsheviks and all revolutionaries. The best of the conservative accounts.

Rabinowitch, Alexander. The Bolsheviks in Power: The First Year of Soviet Rule in Petrograd. Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2007.

Drawing largely on previously inaccessible Soviet archives, this book demolishes standard interpretations of the origins of Soviet authoritarianism by showing that the Soviet system evolved in an ad hoc manner as the Bolsheviks struggled to retain political power in the midst of political, social, economic and military crises.

Radkey, Oliver. Russia Goes to the Polls: The Election to the All-Russian Constituent Assembly, 1917. Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1989.

Considered the leading analysis of the electoral framework, results and significance of the Constituent Assembly.

Serge, Victor. Year One of the Russian Revolution. Chicago: Holt, Rinehart and Winston, 1972.

A sympathetic account by a writer who had close ties to the Bolsheviks.

Service, Robert. Lenin: A Biography. London: Pan Books, 2002.

The best of the more recent biographies of Lenin. Service draws on extensive archival research and offers a complex, human portrayal of Lenin.

Wade, Rex (ed.). Revolutionary Russia: New Approaches. New York: Routledge, 2004.

Compilation of important articles by Hasegawa, Figes, Wade and others. Excellent discussion of recent trends in historical interpretations.

CHAPTER

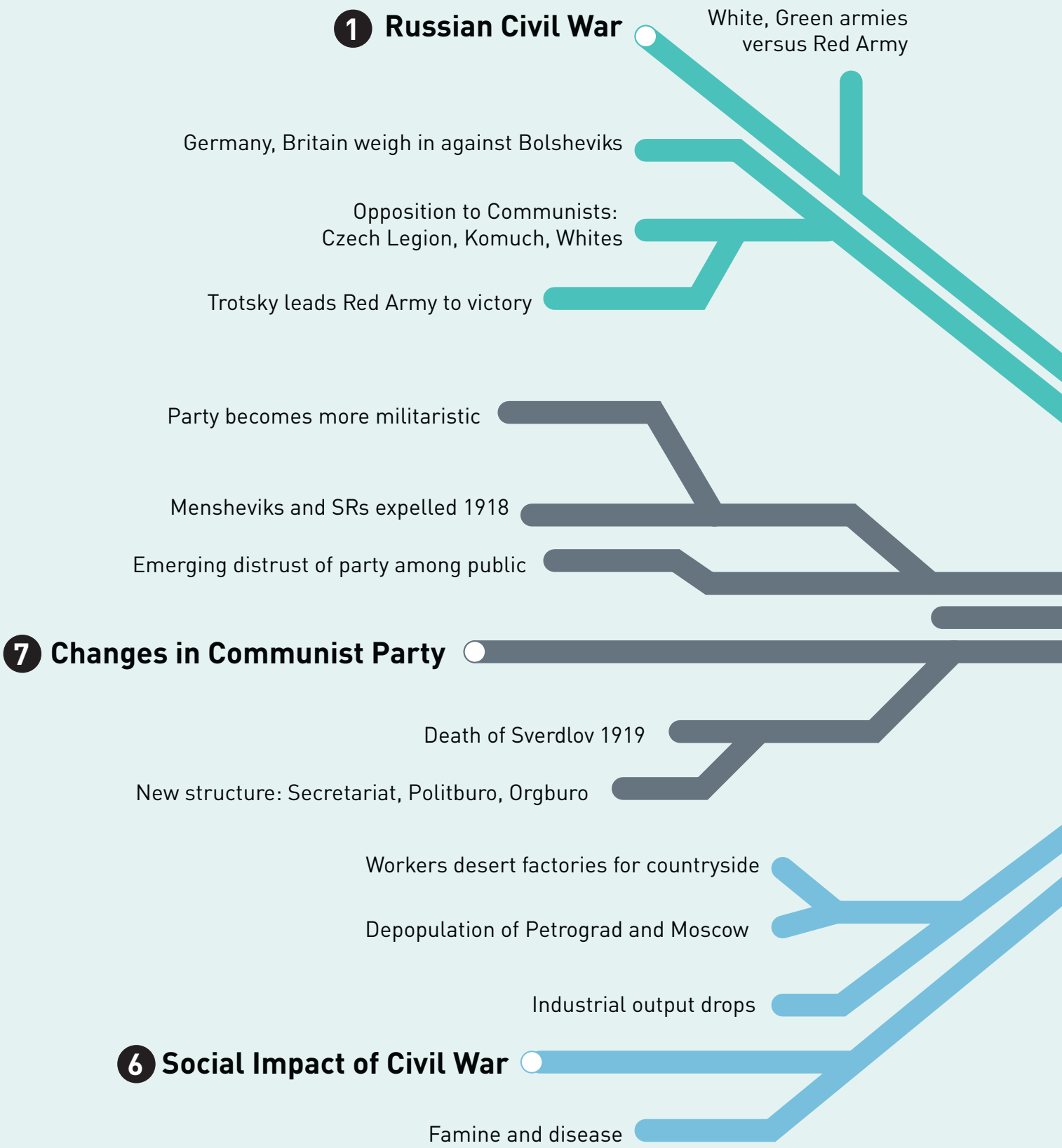
5

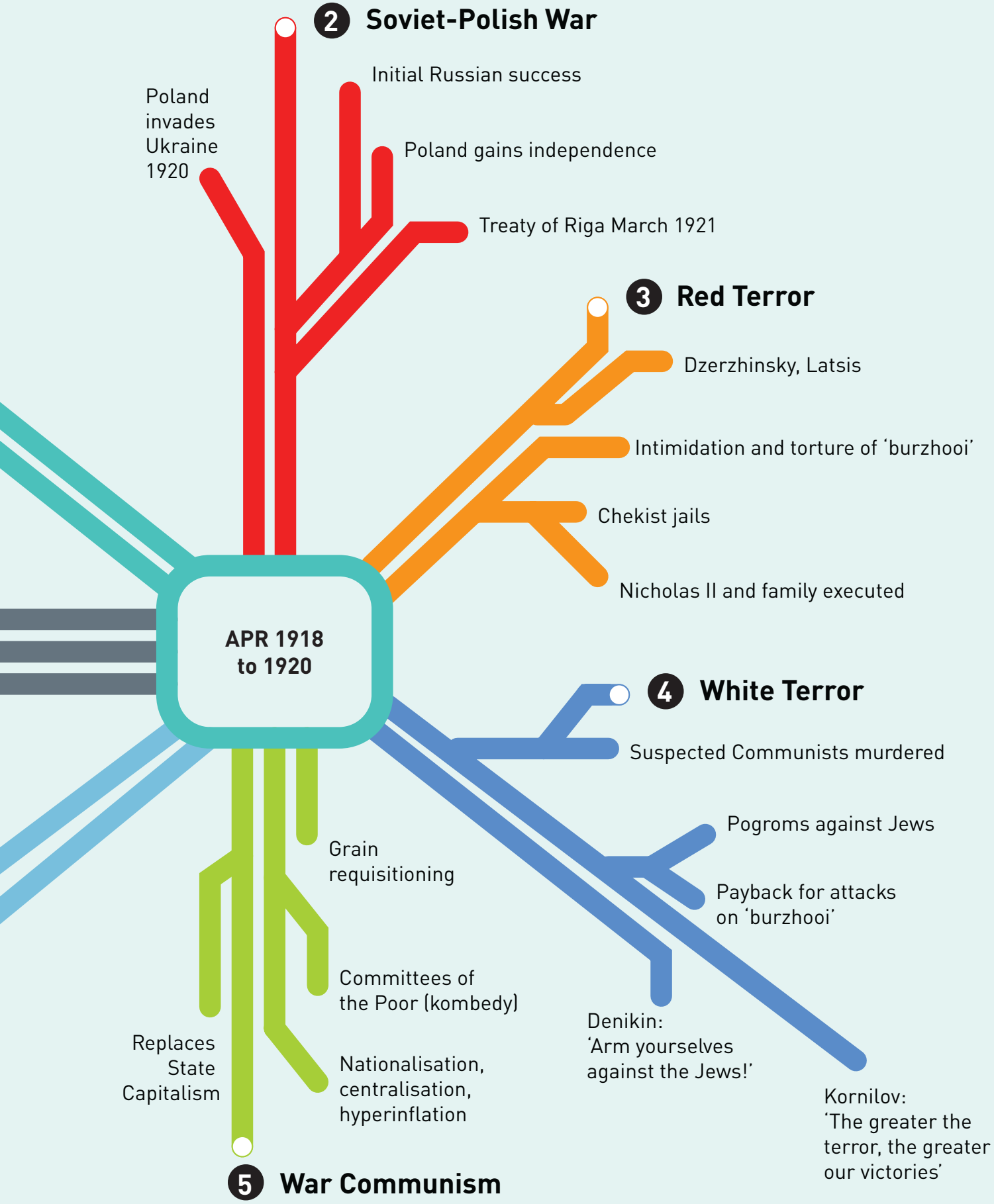
CIVIL WAR, CLASS WAR

(APRIL 1918-1920)

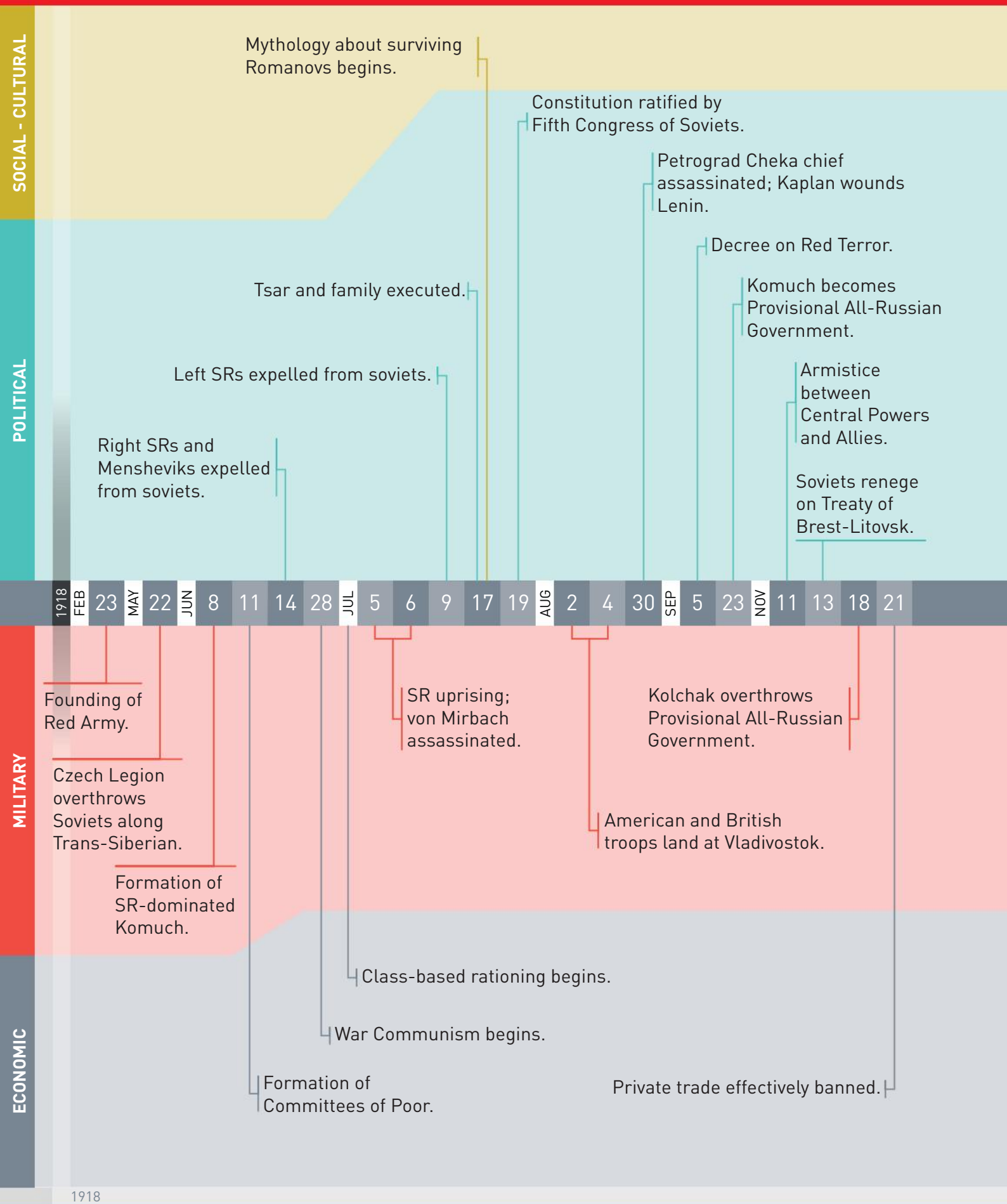
TOM RYAN

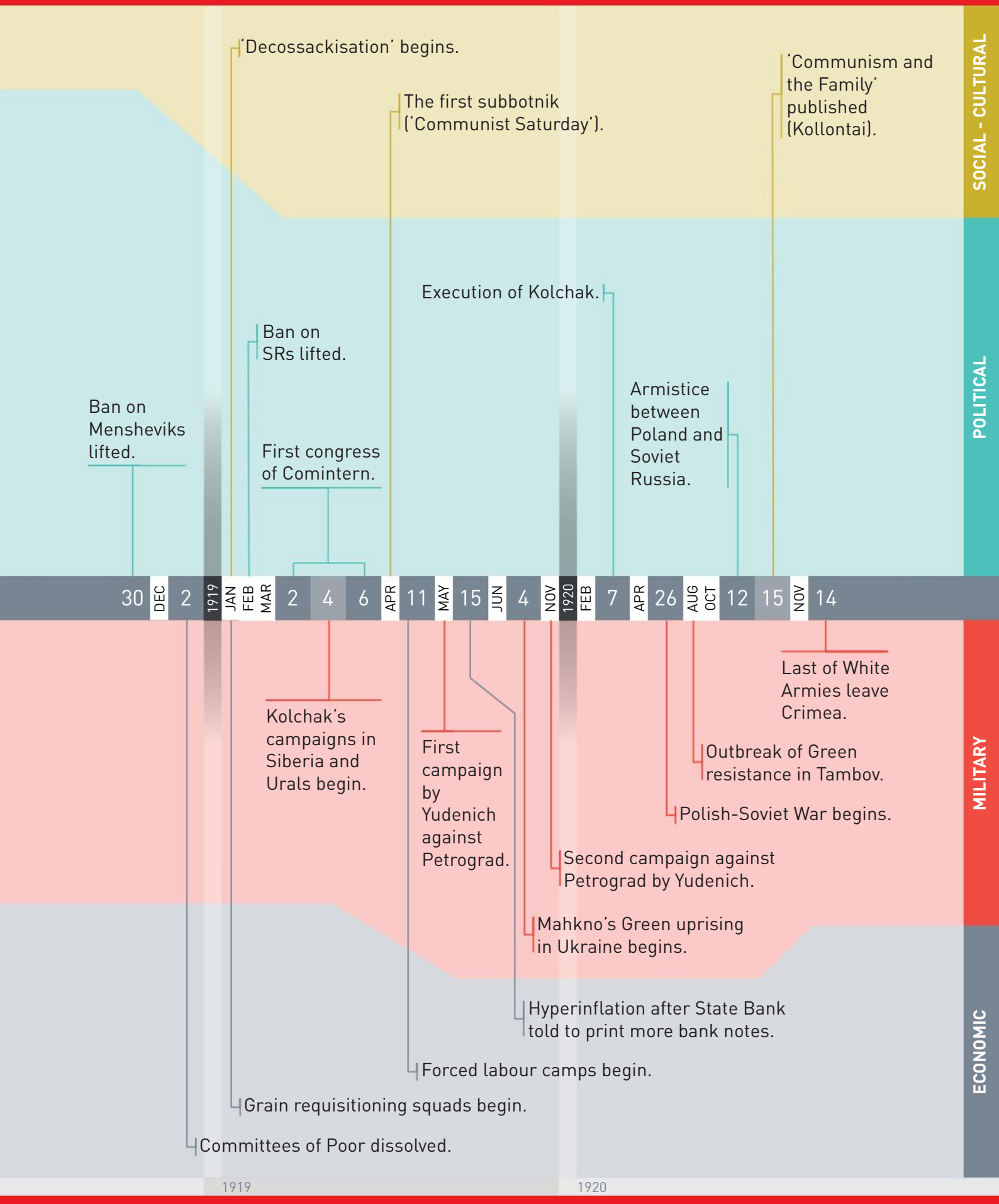
CHAPTER OVERVIEW




2 Soviet-Polish War
Initial Russian success
Poland invades Ukraine 1920
Poland gains independence
Treaty of Riga March 1921
3 Red Terror
Dzerzhinsky, Latsis
Intimidation and torture of 'burzhooi'
Chekist jails
Nicholas II and family executed
APR 1918 to 1920
4 White Terror
Suspected Communists murdered
Pogroms against Jews
Payback for attacks on 'burzhooi'
Denikin: 'Arm yourselves against the Jews!'
Kornilov: 'The greater the terror, the greater our victories'
Grain requisitioning
Committees of the Poor (kombedy)
Nationalisation, centralisation, hyperinflation
Replaces State Capitalism
5 War Communism

TIMELINE


SOCIAL - CULTURAL
POLITICAL
MILITARY
ECONOMIC
Mythology about surviving Romanovs begins.
Constitution ratified by Fifth Congress of Soviets.
Petrograd Cheka chief assassinated; Kaplan wounds Lenin.
Decree on Red Terror.
Tsar and family executed.
Komuch becomes Provisional All-Russian Government.
Left SRs expelled from soviets.
Armistice between Central Powers and Allies.
Right SRs and Mensheviks expelled from soviets.
Soviets renege on Treaty of Brest-Litovsk.
1918 FEB 23 MAY 22 JUN 8 11 14 28 JUL 5 6 9 17 19 AUG 2 4 30 SEP 5 23 NOV 11 13 18 21
Founding of Red Army.
SR uprising; von Mirbach assassinated.
Kolchak overthrows Provisional All-Russian Government.
Czech Legion overthrows Soviets along Trans-Siberian.
American and British troops land at Vladivostok.
Formation of SR-dominated Komuch.
Class-based rationing begins.
War Communism begins.
Formation of Committees of Poor.
Private trade effectively banned.


SOCIAL - CULTURAL
POLITICAL
MILITARY
ECONOMIC
'Decossackisation' begins.
The first subbotnik ('Communist Saturday').
'Communism and the Family' published (Kollontai).
Execution of Kolchak.
Ban on SRs lifted.
Armistice between Poland and Soviet Russia.
Ban on Mensheviks lifted.
First congress of Comintern.
30 DEC 2 1919 JAN FEB MAR 2 4 6 APR 11 MAY 15 JUN 4 NOV 1920 FEB 7 APR 26 AUG OCT 12 15 NOV 14
Last of White Armies leave Crimea.
Kolchak's campaigns in Siberia and Urals begin.
First campaign by Yudenich against Petrograd.
Outbreak of Green resistance in Tambov.
Polish-Soviet War begins.
Second campaign against Petrograd by Yudenich.
Mahkno's Green uprising in Ukraine begins.
Hyperinflation after State Bank told to print more bank notes.
Forced labour camps begin.
Grain requisitioning squads begin.
Committees of Poor dissolved.
1919
1920

INTRODUCTION

Lenin and his comrades were keen to turn the 'imperialist war' (World War I) into a 'civil war.' Yet what kind of civil war did they envisage? For the Bolsheviks, 'civil war' and 'class war' were interchangeable terms. A civil war was nothing more than the extension of class warfare by the revolutionary state. When Trotsky proclaimed that 'Soviet authority is organised civil war,' he was voicing a belief that a 'war' against the privileged and corrupt of society – the capitalist bourgeoisie – was to be a key element of the new Soviet government. By March 1918 Lenin had announced that this civil war was nearing an end. His triumph was short-lived. A full civil war, in the sense of a large-scale military conflict, was what the Bolsheviks soon got.

The magnitude of the Russian Civil War (1917–22) was far beyond what Lenin expected. During this bitter and bloody conflict, revolutionary zeal and emergency measures combined to produce new policies and practices that fundamentally influenced the nature of Soviet institutions. It was a formative experience of great significance. Faced with extreme economic dislocation and seemingly surrounded by threats, the leaders of the Soviet regime grew accustomed to exercising their authority and developed a brotherhood mentality with a militaristic character. A

Death of a Commissar by Kuzma Petrov-Vodkin, 1923.

highly centralised economic system was introduced, the Red Army was founded and state coercion and terror were extended through the expansion of the Cheka. The Bolsheviks eventually vanquished their White enemies and rival socialists. Yet Soviet Russia was brought to the brink of collapse, emerging from the Civil War, as Lenin put it, 'like a man beaten within an inch of his life.'[1]

Red Army soldiers.

BEGINNINGS OF CIVIL WAR

Vladimir Lenin: 'Peace – this is a slogan of philistines and priests. The proletarian slogan must be: Civil War!'

Military opposition to the new regime emerged soon after the October 1917 insurrection. Control over Petrograd was accomplished with surprising ease; elsewhere it was a different story. Street fighting carried on for more than a week in Moscow before Bolshevik forces finally prevailed on 2 November. Having fled the Winter Palace, Kerensky managed to rouse the support of Cossack troops under General Krasnov, who captured the towns of Gatchina and Tsarskoe Selo before preparing to march on the capital. Military Commissars Nikolai Krylenko, Vladimir Antonov-Ovseenko and Pavel Dybenko led Red Guards and Kronstadt sailors in a fierce fight for the defence of 'Red' Petrograd, at the battle of Pulkovo Heights on 30 October. Surprised by the determination of the Bolshevik forces, Krasnov's Cossacks were resoundingly defeated. An uprising by cadets (trainee officers), which was meant to coincide with Krasnov's assault, was launched a day before the battle and was also overcome by Red Guards. Having narrowly avoided being handed over to the Bolsheviks by a disaffected Cossack officer, Kerensky disguised himself in driving goggles and sailor's uniform and went into hiding. He eventually fled overseas, settling in the United States.

DID YOU KNOW?

Kerensky later married an Australian journalist, Lydia 'Nell' Triton, and gave guest lectures at Melbourne University.

The success of Soviet forces at Pulkovo Heights and Moscow greatly buoyed the October revolutionaries. The likelihood of the Provisional Government reclaiming power came to an end. Many Bolsheviks felt there was no longer any need to maintain negotiations over a coalition socialist government, as groups such as Vikzhel (the Railway Workers' Union) had been pressuring them to do. The new regime survived the initial onslaught of counter-revolution. Soviet Power was triumphant. However, the Cossack regions of the Don, the Kuban and the Ukraine remained hostile to the Bolshevik government. As early as December 1917, General Alekseev had been recruiting a 'Volunteer Army' of former tsarist officers and set about planning a campaign to liberate the northern cities. Based at Rostov-on-Don in the Ukraine, the Volunteer Army attracted Cossack forces, such as those under Ataman Kaledin, and a number of generals from the former tsarist and Provisional Government armies. Generals Kornilov, Denikin and Wrangel were prominent. Members of Russia's upper classes, Kadet politicians and patriots appalled by the Treaty of Brest-Litovsk rallied to this emerging banner of 'White' resistance to the Bolshevik 'Reds.'

CZECH LEGION

The spark that set off more extensive resistance was of external origin and unexpected. Following the cessation of hostilities on the Eastern Front, a large

1 Cited in Stephen A. Smith, *The Russian Revolution: A Very Short Introduction* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002), 100.

group of Czech soldiers, numbering some 40 000 well-armed men, were granted permission to cross Russia by rail to Vladivostok in the Far East. The troops of this Czech Legion, as they were known, had hoped to board ships to France and serve on the Western Front against Germany before returning to their homeland. As they travelled the Trans-Siberian railway during the summer of 1918, hostilities broke out between the Czech Legion and provincial Soviets. The presence of a mass body of armed men antagonised local authorities, who attacked the trains carrying the Czech soldiers. The Czechs were also incensed by orders issued by central Bolshevik authorities demanding that they disarm. From 22 May 1918 onwards, the Legion responded by defeating local military forces and overthrowing regional Soviet authorities. The Czech Legion helped to establish a new SR-led government, the Komuch (the Committee of Members of the Constituent Assembly), on 8 June 1918 at the town of Samara on the Volga River. A 'People's Army' was formed by the Komuch and its forces and, with support from the Czech Legion, rapidly advanced against Soviet authorities in central Siberia, culminating in the capture of Kazan in August 1918. The Czech Legion continued to travel back and forth along the Trans-Siberian railway, overthrowing Soviet forces as they went. Their actions provided the impetus for other groups to organise mass armed opposition to the Bolshevik regime.

Czech troops at machine guns atop an armoured train on the Trans-Siberian railway. Defying Trosky's orders to disarm, Czech forces captured the railway during the Russian Civil War.

WHITE ARMIES

General Anton Denikin: 'I shall not fight for any particular form of government. I am fighting only for Russia.'

DID YOU KNOW?

A popular Siberian song from 1919 said of Kolchak's army: 'Uniform, British; boot, French; bayonet, Japanese; ruler, Omsk.'

On 23 February 1918, the commissar of war, Leon Trotsky, founded the Workers' and Peasants' Red Army. The forces opposed to the Soviet regime came to be known as the White armies. The Whites were a diverse array of groups who gathered in opposition to the Bolsheviks for different reasons. There were monarchists who hoped to reinstate the Romanov dynasty; patriots who resented the losses of the Treaty of Brest-Litovsk; those who favoured a republic based on a restored Constituent Assembly; refugees who by their social class were forced to flee the onslaught of the revolutionary regime; minorities, such as the Cossacks, who sought a greater degree of autonomy in their home regions; and a number of political leaders dispossessed by Bolshevik repression. The one factor that united the Whites was their hatred of the Bolsheviks.

The Russian Civil War was a vastly complex conflict. It was a war of movement with rapidly changing fronts, not at all like the static trench warfare of World War I. The forces in armed opposition to the Bolsheviks also changed over time. Foreign interventionist forces and armies from neighboring countries also played a role. Peasant partisan armies – the Greens – who supported neither the Reds nor the Whites further complicated the conflict.

By late 1918 four distinct groups had emerged, comprising the most dangerous threats to the Communist regime.

I) THE ARMED FORCES OF SOUTH RUSSIA

The largest of the White armies was stationed in southern Russia around the Ukraine, Caucasus, Kuban and Don Regions. Supreme command of the Armed Forces of South Russia (AFSR) was held by General Denikin. It was Denikin who led the Whites during most of the major Civil War campaigns waged by the AFSR. From 1918–20 Denikin's forces threatened Soviet Russia from the south, culminating in a campaign that came within 300 kilometres of Moscow in November 1919. Overstretched and outnumbered, the AFSR was forced to retreat in early 1920 at Irkutsk.

Admiral Kolchak.

II) KOLCHAK'S SIBERIAN FORCES

The Komuch was reorganised into the Provisional All-Russian Government in late September 1918 and based itself in the Siberian city of Omsk. The only attempt at a civilian-led anti-Bolshevik government, it lasted just eight weeks. The SR-dominated Provisional All-Russian Government was overthrown in a coup in November by its war minister, Admiral Kolchak. Based in Siberia, Kolchak's White Army menaced the Communist regime from the east from March 1919 onwards. There were some considerable victories during his early campaigns. Kolchak was recognised as the nominal head of the White movement and declared himself 'Supreme Ruler of the Russian State.' He was nevertheless a


THE RUSSIAN CIVIL WAR 1918-21
KEY
Bolshevik-controlled territory
Fronts of forces opposing the Bolsheviks
Troop movements
Antonov's peasant rebellion
Makhno's insurgency
England
North Sea
Norway
Barents Sea
Sweden
France
Germany
Berlin
British
Finland
Murmansk
British and Commonwealth Forces under Admiral Miller
Arctic Ocean
Laptev Sea
Kara Sea
Kronstadt
Petrograd
General Yudenich
Archangel
Admiral Miller
Vienna
Warsaw
Novgorod
Austria-Hungrary
Poland
British
Brest-Litovsk
Minsk
Smolensk
Mogilev
Moscow
Volga River
Nizhni Novgorod
Arctic Circle
Ural Mountains
Yana River
Indigirka River
Bering Sea
Lena River
Yenisei River
Soviet Russia
Romania
Bulgaria
Kiev
Dnepr
Odessa
Tambov
Kazan
Irtish River
Ob River
Sea of Okhotsk
French
Crimea
Kharkov
General Denikin
Constantinople
Sevastopol
Saratov
Samara
Tobolsk
Yekaterinburg
Rostov -on-Don
Tsaritsyn
British
Admiral Kolchak
Czech Legion
Omsk
Trans-Siberian Railway
Ural River
Turkey
Batumi
Caucasus Mtns
Caspian Sea
Lake Baikal
Khabarovsk
Mediterranean Sea
Tiflis
Baku
Irkutsk
Chita
Ulan Ude
Japanese
Sea of Japan
Harbin
Krasnovodsk
Ottoman Empire
British
Mongolia
Manchuria
Vladivostok
China
Japan
Japanese & American Forces
Port Arthur
Afghanistan
0
500
km
Finland
Narva
May, 1919
Kronstadt
Petrograd
Riga
General Yudenich
Tsarkoe Selo
Gatchina
Admiral Miller
November, 1919
Pskov
Novgorod
Vologda
Tver
Volga River
Dnepr River
Mogilev
Smolensk
Moscow

poor military commander. Counter-offensives by the Red Army forced Kolchak to retreat back along the Trans-Siberian railway in 1919. He was executed on 7 February 1920.

III) THE NORTH-WESTERN ARMY

A small White army based in the Baltic region of Estonia was formed in October 1918. Led by General Yudenich, the North-Western White Army launched two campaigns against Petrograd in May and November of 1919. The last of these offences reached the suburbs of Petrograd before being turned back following the arrival and intervention of Trotsky. Yudenich and his army, which numbered only 14 400 men at its peak, were disarmed and interned in Estonia in late November 1918. Yudenich was briefly arrested by Estonian authorities before emigrating in 1920.

IV) FOREIGN INTERVENTIONISTS

Josef Pilsudski.

The Germans were only the first of many foreign powers to send troops to Russia after 1918. British and Commonwealth troops under the command of General Miller took control of the northern port cities of Murmansk and Archangel in March 1918. Japanese forces had landed at Vladivostok in the Far East in April and were joined by contingents of American and British troops in August 1918. Britain occupied the oilfields of Baku in Azerbaijan. The British and French navies offered support to Denikin's forces around the port cities of the Black Sea. Besides sending troops to occupy various outlying regions, Britain, France and the United States also gave extensive financial support and war supplies in the form of rifles, ammunition and uniforms to the Whites. Foreign interventionist forces were involved, directly and indirectly, for a range of reasons. The Allies were keen to support any group that promised to re-enter the war with Germany after the Bolsheviks signed the Treaty of Brest-Litovsk. Japan, which by November 1918 had sent 70 000 soldiers into eastern Siberia, had definite territorial ambitions. The American troops in the east were sent to keep the Japanese in check and to protect the Trans-Siberian railway. Ideology also played a part. Bolshevism was a creed that preached international socialist revolution and the inevitable downfall of capitalist governments everywhere. Britain's war minister, Winston Churchill, spoke of the need to 'strangle Bolshevism at birth.'[2] Sovnarkom had also nationalised numerous foreign-owned industries and annulled foreign loans (granted to the tsar and Provisional Government) worth millions of roubles. The involvement of foreign interventionist forces reinforced for the Communists the belief that they were fighting not only 'bourgeois' White Guardists but also 'capitalist imperialist invaders.' Although the support of foreign powers bolstered the White armies and undoubtedly discouraged the advance of Communist forces toward the West, fighting in World War I had wearied Allied troops. As Communist forces prevailed, the various foreign powers slowly withdrew their troops.

2 Cited in Neil Redfern, *Class Or Nation: Communists, Imperialism and Two World Wars* (London: Tauris Academic Studies, 2005), 59.

DOCUMENT

EXTRACT FROM LENIN'S *SELECTED WORKS II* REFERRING TO FOREIGN INTERVENTIONIST FORCES IN 1918

The Soviet Republic is surrounded by enemies. But it will defeat its enemies, both external and internal. A rising spirit is already perceptible among the working-class masses which will ensure victory. We already see how frequent the sparks and flashes of the revolutionary conflagration in Western Europe have become, inspiring us with the assurance that the triumph of the international working-class revolution is not far off.

The external foe of the Russian Soviet Socialist Republic at the present moment is British, French, American and Japanese imperialism. This foe is attacking Russia; it is filching our territory... This enemy is attacking peaceable Russia with the ferocity and voracity of the Germans in February, the only difference being that the British and Japanese are out not only to seize and plunder Russian territory but also overthrow the Soviet government so as to 'restore the front', i.e., once more to draw Russia into the imperialist (or, more simply, the robber) war between England and Germany.

The British and Japanese capitalists want to restore the power of the landlords and capitalists in Russia in order to share with them the booty plundered in the war; they want to enslave the Russian workers and peasantry to British and French capital, to squeeze out of them interest on the billions advanced in loans and to quench the fire of Socialist revolution which has broken out in our country and which is threatening to spread all over the world.[3]

ACTIVITY

SOURCE ANALYSIS

Read the extract on foreign interventionist forces and complete the tasks below.

1. Give two reasons, stated by Lenin, why the Soviet Republic will be victorious in the Civil War.
2. List the nations which, according to Lenin, constitute Russia's 'external foe.'
3. With reference to the source and your own knowledge, explain what military threats the Bolsheviks faced during the Russian Civil War.
4. Explain the usefulness of the extract in understanding how the Bolsheviks viewed the Civil War. In your response refer to further sources of evidence and to historical interpretations.

ACTIVITY

CONCEPT MAP

Create a concept map illustrating the forces opposed to the Bolsheviks during the Civil War period. Include a short paragraph or bullet points which explain the location of the opposition forces, the leader or key individuals involved, and when this opposition threatened the Bolsheviks. Topics to include are:

- Alexander Kerensky and General Krasnov
- Czech Legion
- Komuch and the Provisional All-Russian Government
- Volunteer Army (AFSR)
- Kolchak's Siberian Army
- North-Western Army
- Foreign interventionists
- Poland
- Green armies.

3 Vladimir Lenin, 'Comrade Workers, Onward to Fight the Last Decisive Fight!' in *Selected Works: Volume II* (Moscow: Foreign Languages Publishing House, 1947), 354–5.

THE SOVIET-POLISH WAR

Marshall Jozef Pilsudski: 'My impression of Bolshevik behaviour is that peace is out of the question...Our army is ready.'

Having first asserted its claim to independence during the chaos that marked the beginnings of the Civil War, Poland sought to expand its territory by invading the Ukraine in April 1920. Many former generals, including Brusilov, offered their services to the Red Army now that Russia was truly under attack by a foreign power. Polish forces captured Kiev but were pushed back by the Red Army, which in turn launched a counter-invasion that came within striking distance of Warsaw. The initial success of the Polish campaign raised hopes amongst leading Communists that the invasion might be the first step in an advance that could spark off revolution in Germany and perhaps even England. It was time to switch from defence to offence! Karl Radek proclaimed, 'We were always for revolutionary war. The bayonet is an essential necessity for introducing communism.'[4] Lenin expected Polish workers to welcome the Red Army as their fellow 'proletarian liberators.' It was not to be. The Poles saw the Red Army as invading Russian chauvinists and threw themselves into a heroic and ultimately successful counter-offensive under the 'iron will' of Marshall Pilsudski.[5] On the brink of defeat, Polish forces rallied and surrounded the overstretched and overconfident Red Army. Following the Battle of Warsaw (12–25 August), the Red Army was routed and forced to retreat. Gaining the independence of Poland until the Nazi invasion of World War II, the success of the Polish Army forced the Communists to negotiate an armistice in October 1920 and agree to the ratification of a formal peace agreement, the Treaty of Riga, in March 1921.

TREATY OF RIGA

The success of the Polish army under Pilsudki's command compelled the Communists to negotiate an armistice in October 1920 and agree to the ratification of formal peace with the Treaty of Riga on 18 March 1921. The Treaty granted Poland thirty-million gold roubles, large tracts of Ukrainian and Belorussian territory, and sizable material for the construction of railways. Furthermore, Poland's eastern frontiers were secured until the outbreak of World War II. The Treaty of Riga also allowed the Soviets to deal with pressing short-term concerns: the March 1921 Kronstadt uprising, peasant uprisings in Ukraine and defeating General Wrangel, the last of the White forces. 'I thought it wiser to come to terms with the enemy,' Lenin explained, 'the temporary sacrifice of a hard peace appeared to me preferable to a continuation of the war ... We had to make peace.'[6] In the long term, the Soviet-Polish War changed the outlook of Communist foreign policy from direct revolutionary assault to a more cautious approach. A.J.P. Taylor argues, 'After the treaty of Riga, Soviet Russia retreated ... Unavowedly and almost unconsciously, the Soviet leaders abandoned the cause of international revolution.'[7]

GREEN FORCES

Peasant partisan armies, known as Green armies, rose up in armed resistance against both the White and Red armies in a number of regions during the Civil

4 Cited in Smith, *The Russian Revolution,* 55.
5 Norman Davies, *White Eagle, Red Star: The Polish-Soviet War 1919–20* (London: Orbis Books, 1983), 220.
6 Cited in Davies, *White Eagle, Red Star*, 266.
7 Cited in Davies, *White Eagle, Red Star*, xi.

DID YOU KNOW?

The Red Guards and Red Army should not be confused. Red Guards were workers' militias formed in the midst of the Kornilov revolt of 1917. They played an important role in securing Soviet power during the October Days of 1917. The Red Army was the professional armed force of the Soviet regime, founded in February 1918.

War. Led by the Anarchist Nestor Mahkno, a large group of guerrilla fighters held control over the south-east of the Ukraine throughout much of 1919–20. Mahkno's group was notorious for its daring cavalry attacks. The central province of Tambov was made a virtual 'no go' area for Bolshevik authorities until mid-1921 by an army of 40 000 partisans. By 1920 the revolts in the countryside had become so bad that Lenin remarked that peasant insurgents were 'far more dangerous than all the Denikins, Yundeniches and Kolchaks put together.'[8] British historian Geoffrey Swain made an important distinction in suggesting that the SR Siberian governments set up in opposition to the Bolshevik regime – the Komuch and latter Provisional All-Russian Government – may also be considered part of the Green movement.[9] The emergence of Green forces, in addition to the (albeit brief) reign of the Komuch and SR Provisional Government in Siberia, indicates that the Civil War was also a battle between different visions and claims as to what constituted the *true* revolution. It was not a straightforward Red versus White conflict.

RED ARMY SUCCESS IN CIVIL WAR

Leon Trotsky: 'We are fighting to settle the question of whether the homes, palaces, cities, sun, and heavens will belong to the people who live by their labour, to the workers, peasants, and the poor, or whether they belong to the bourgeoisie.'

DID YOU KNOW?

The design of the Red Army's uniform, with its distinctive peaked woolen cap, came about through a competition sponsored by Trotsky.

The combined forces opposed to the Communist regime were formidable. 'Soviet Russia found herself in a ring of fire,' according to a panel of Communist historians headed by Boris Ponomarev.[10] However, by the end of 1920 the Red Army had won a decisive victory. This was not an inevitable outcome and the threats faced by the Communists were very real. Thousands of men lost their lives and vast areas of territory were outside Soviet control for a number of years.

Although the reasons for the Communist victory are complex, the success of the Red Army can be attributed to a number of key factors.

I) GEOGRAPHY

The Bolsheviks controlled central European Russia. This meant that Red forces had a substantially larger population from which to draw recruits. There were roughly seventy-million people in Soviet Russia compared to an average of eight to ten million in White-held areas. The Communists also had a much more ethnically consistent population to govern. Soviet territory held the major cities of Moscow and Petrograd, thereby retaining key factories as well as access to the tsarist and Provisional Governments' ammunition supplies. Furthermore, control of European Russia meant control of a much more extensive railway system. The Civil War was a war of movement in which effective use of trains and cavalry played a key role. The Red Army had easier access to supplies, as well as more rapid deployment of troops. They could transfer troops from front to front as the need arose and deal with one enemy force at a time, or at least not all at once. The White armies, by contrast, had supply problems and were geographically scattered. This tyranny of distance resulted in few coordinated attacks and irregular communication between White commanders.

8 Cited in Bruce Lincoln, *Red Victory: A History of the Russian Civil War* (New York: Simon & Shuster, 1989), 390.
9 Cited in Stephen Lee, *Lenin and Revolutionary Russia* (London: Routledge, 2003), 93–4.
10 B. N. Ponomarev et al, *A Short History of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union*, trans. David Skvirsky (Moscow: Progress Publishers, 1970), 151.

II) IDEOLOGY

The Bolsheviks and their Red Army shared a more united sense of purpose and political vision than their opponents.[11] As revolutionary Marxists, Lenin and his comrades felt that history was on their side and the eventual triumph of communism inevitable. The Bolsheviks made effective use of propaganda in portraying the conflict as both a class war against the capitalist bourgeoisie and exploitative kulaks, and as a patriotic defence of the Socialist Fatherland against imperialist foreign invaders. Purpose-built propaganda trains toured the countryside and talented artists were employed to design eye-catching posters explaining the ideals of the Communist regime. The Reds drew heavily upon the rhetoric of class struggle and the promise of an equitable socialist society that was to be born following the Communist victory. Desertion, however, was a problem for both forces: tens of thousands of soldiers escaped from the Red Army during the course of the Civil War, even more from the Whites.

DID YOU KNOW?

Trotsky warned that when failures occurred in the Red Army, punishment would be handed out 'first to the commissar, then the officer.' If a regiment retreated without permission, Trotsky would order the execution of its commander, the political commissar and up to one out of ten regular troops randomly selected from the ranks.

III) TROTSKY'S LEADERSHIP

As commissar of war, Leon Trotsky played a fundamental role in shaping the Red Army into a formidable military force. By the end of 1918 the Red Army had 500 000 men. Over the course of two further years Trotsky organised the Bolsheviks' rag-tag Red Guards into a professional army of five-million men. Ruthless in his determination to achieve a Communist victory, Trotsky imposed harsh disciplinary policies on the Red Army. The death penalty for a range of offences was introduced and, on occasions, detachments of Chekists with machine guns were stationed behind advancing troops. Any who retreated would be shot. Red Army soldiers swore a 'socialist oath' of loyalty in which they promised 'strictly and undeviatingly to observe revolutionary discipline and unquestionably to fulfill all the orders of the commanders...If...I break this, my solemn pledge, may general contempt be my lot and may the strong hand of revolutionary law punish me.'[12] Trotsky employed a controversial policy of recruiting former tsarist officers as 'military experts.' Their compliance was sometimes gained by holding their families hostage, whilst those who refused to serve were imprisoned in concentration camps. Loyalty was further ensured by

11 Lincoln, *Red Victory,* 199.
12 Cited in William H. Chamberlin, *The Russian Revolution 1918–1921: From the Civil War to the Consolidation of Power,* Volume II (New York: The Universal Library, 1965), 36.

Trotsky addresses Red Army soldiers.

Young Red Army men were steeled in the battles of the Civil War.

political commissars who were attached to every commanding officer. In addition to carrying out propaganda work amongst rank-and-file soldiers, the political commissars supervised commanding officers and ensured that orders from above were effectively carried out. Stern discipline and brutal measures fashioned the Red Army into a hard, dedicated fighting organisation.

It was not by threat alone that the Red Army grew to a professional force. Trotsky was quick to praise and reward those who performed their duties admirably. He was tactful and polite towards the military experts who served the Reds; hoping to put former tsarist officers at ease and foster a sense of loyalty and accomplishment in the new revolutionary army. A military expert 'has the right to be respected, and shall be respected in the ranks of the Red Army,' Trotsky argued.[13] Recognising the importance of decisive leadership, Trotsky raced from front to front in a special armoured train. Trotsky's train was manned by ruthless military commissars in striking black leather uniforms and a crack team of specialists including engineers, medical personnel, machine gunners and snipers. The train had its own library, electricity generator, radio station and a printing press. Stores of tobacco, boots and food were kept on board for soldiers in need of a morale boost. On a number of occasions Trotsky's commanding presence at a battlefield galvanised hesitating troops into action and victory.

CIVIL WAR PROPAGANDA ACTIVITY

Trotsky was a brilliant orator and an inspiring leader who commanded respect from those around him. He was ruthless, determined and extremely hard working. He expected the same level of dedication from his officers and commissars. But he had little time for those he considered intellectually inferior and was notoriously arrogant. Many Communists found him impossible to work with. The head of the French military mission to Russia during the Civil War described Trotsky as a 'son of a bitch, but the greatest Jew since Jesus.'[14]

13 Cited in Ronald Kowalski, *The Russian Revolution 1917–1921* (London: Routledge, 1997), 184.

14 Cited in Lincoln, *Red Victory,* 166.

IV) WHITE ARMY WEAKNESSES

As the Civil War dragged on the White generals increasingly had trouble motivating their troops and maintaining discipline. Corruption was rife amongst the lower officer ranks, whilst Cossack cavalrymen were reluctant to fight extended campaigns outside their homelands. Some White generals were drunk for days on end. Denikin complained, 'I can do nothing with my army. I am glad when it carries out my combat orders.'[15] Disagreements within and between White armies developed. The broad range of aims held by the Whites created obvious problems: the restoration of the monarchy, support for the Constituent Assembly, faith in the virtues of military dictatorship – the only ideal uniting the Whites was their opposition to the Bolsheviks and their fervent nationalism.[16] Denikin observed, 'If I raise the republican flag, I lose half my volunteers, and if I raise the monarchist flag, I lose the other half. But we have to save Russia.'[17]

The most explicit ideal that they were able to articulate was the slogan 'Russia shall be great, united, undivided!'[18] This hardly inspired enthusiasm amongst the peasantry or urban workers. Lacking a supportive population base from the outset, the Whites were unable to gain the backing of the Russian populace as whole. Refusing to recognise the importance of propaganda until late in the War, they did not effectively counter the messages spread by the Reds. Concentrating solely on military matters, both Kolchak and Denikin also neglected the formation of an effective governmental administration in the areas under their control. As they often restored the rights of the landlords and brutally punished the peasants or workers suspected of assisting the Reds, in the end it was apparent that the Whites could offer no good alternative to the Bolsheviks. 'Soviet power' retained its allure despite the massive gulf between reality and the ideals of the Bolshevik regime.

DID YOU KNOW?

General Slaschev, who served under Denikin's command, travelled with an extensive collection of exotic birds.

General Denikin and staff.

ACTIVITY

SUMMARY

Write a one-page summary of the reasons for the Red Army's success in the Civil War. Include short quotes from people at the time and from historians.

15 Cited in Chris Corin and Terry Fiehn, *Communist Russia Under Lenin and Stalin* (London: John Murray Publishers, 2002), 91.
16 Lincoln, *Red Victory,* 213.
17 Cited in V. I. Cherniaev, 'The White Generals,' in ed. Edward Acton et al. *Critical Companion to the Russian Revolution 1914–1921* (Bloomington and Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 1997), 209.
18 Chamberlin, *The Russian Revolution 1918– 1921* , 251.

Felix Edmundovich Dzerzhinsky (1877–1926): 'Be sharp-eyed and diligent!'

TERROR

Felix Dzerzhinsky: 'The public and the press misunderstand the character and tasks of our commission. They imagine the struggle waged against Counter Revolution to be on the plane of normal state life, and consequently they wail about courts of law, about guarantees, about inquiries, investigators etc...We stand for organised terror – this should be frankly stated.'

Richard Pipes sees the wilful repression of all potential and apparent opponents as the principal Bolshevik intention in forming the Cheka: 'the "Red Terror" was not a reluctant response to the actions of others but a...measure designed to nip in the bud any thoughts of resistance to the dictatorship.'[19] The Bolsheviks certainly did much to provoke resistance to their regime. Yet the Cheka's purpose extended beyond its role as an agency of state coercion. Furthermore, historians have debated the extent to which circumstances, counter-revolutionary threat and ideological considerations drove the terror. The violence of the Civil War, both Red and White, was of complex origin and development.

By March 1918 the Cheka had moved to its Lubyanka headquarters in Moscow and under the leadership of 'Iron Felix' Dzerzhinsky had grown to a staff of over 1000 with its own military Combat Detachment. It was not, however, well organised or centrally controlled. Local Cheka authorities, like other Soviet bodies, had considerable autonomy in the early months of Bolshevik rule. In this regard, Orlando Figes has stressed the manner in which Red Terror developed in response to popular pressure. Russia's privileged classes were the target of much hatred and violence during the Civil War period. Denunciations by ordinary members of the community, both in urban centers and countryside, influenced who was targeted by the provincial Cheka. The Bolshevik authorities endorsed these sentiments; a 'class war' was seen as an intrinsic part of the revolution. One of Dzerzhinsky's deputies, Martyn Latsis, issued the following instructions to his officials regarding the interrogation of prisoners: 'First you must ask him to what class he belongs, what his social origin is, his education and profession. These are

19 Richard Pipes, *Three Whys of the Russian Revolution* (London: Pimlico, 1998), 41.

the questions that must determine the fate of the accused. That is the meaning of the Red Terror.'[20] Another Chekist expressed an even simpler method: 'What purpose is served by all these questions of origins and education? One needs only to go into the kitchen and look into his soup pot. If there is meat in it, then he is an enemy of the people. Stand him up against the wall!'[21]

For all the Communist rhetoric of revolutionary violence and anti-bourgeois sentiment, it was not until after mid-1918 that the Red Terror took on the more organised and fearsome character with which it is most commonly associated. In June 1918, Dzerzhinsky warned, 'We stand for organised terror... The Cheka is obliged to defend the revolution and conquer the enemy even if its sword does by chance sometimes fall on the heads of the innocent.'[22]

The sense that the Bolsheviks were under attack from not only White armies but also dangerous political terrorists was made clear after Lenin was shot and seriously wounded by an SR, Fanya Kaplan, on 30 August 1918. On the same day, Petrograd Cheka boss Moisei Uritsky was assassinated by a young military cadet. The death of Uritsky and the attempt on Lenin's life were greeted with outrage by the Bolsheviks, providing them with justification for escalating the Red Terror. One Party newspaper, *Krasnaia Gazeta*, proclaimed: 'Without mercy, we will kill our enemies in scores of hundreds. Let them be thousands, let them drown themselves in their own blood. For the blood of Lenin and Uritsky...let there be floods of bourgeois blood – more blood, as much as possible.'[23]

DID YOU KNOW?

Felix Dzerzhinsky's body was reportedly covered in scars from torture received in prison under the tsar. Is this where he learned his methods?

20 Cited in Orlando Figes, *A People's Tragedy: The Russian Revolution 1891–1924* (London: Pimlico, 1996), 534.
21 Cited in Lincoln, *Red Victory*, 140.
22 Cited in Ronald Hingley, *The Russian Secret Police: Muscovite, Imperial and Soviet Political Security Operations 1565–1970* (London: Hutchinson, 1970), 122.
23 Cited in Figes, *A People's Tragedy*, 630.

Lenin addresses a crowd of workers in Moscow, 30 August 1918, where an assassination attempt was made. Painting by M. Sokolov.

DID YOU KNOW?

On 30 August, the chair of the Soviet CEC, Yakov Sverdlov, published an 'Appeal in Connection with the Attempt on the Life of Lenin' that summed up the mood amongst Communist leaders: 'The working class will answer assassination attempts on its leaders by still greater consolidation of its forces and by ruthless mass terror against all enemies of the Revolution... Maintain order and organisation! Everybody must remain at their posts! Close ranks!'

The Bolsheviks subsequently launched a war on terror that was to be won by even greater, more violent terror. In Lenin's absence, Yakov Sverdlov and Dzerzhinsky directed Sovnarkom to pass a decree, 'On Red Terror,' on 5 September. The decree allowed for the creation of concentration camps to imprison 'class enemies' and authorised the Cheka to execute 'anyone involved in White Guard organisations, conspiracies and rebellions.'[24]

The assassination attempt on Lenin was blamed not just on SR terrorists but also the bourgeoisie. Another of Dzerzhinsky's deputies, Yakov Peters, declared: 'The bullet was directed not only against Comrade Lenin but also the working-class as a whole.'[25] Thousands of suspected 'counter-revolutionaries,' many from the middle and upper classes, were now arrested and incarcerated in concentration camps and Cheka jails. Thousands were likewise summarily executed. Latsis explained, 'We are not waging war against individual persons. We are exterminating the bourgeoisie as a class.'[26]

METHODS OF TERROR

Tales of the tortures inflicted by Chekists abound and raise serious doubts as to whether the perpetrators were mentally stable. One Cheka executioner liked to shoot his victims bit by bit, starting at the wrist and ending at the head...taking a sniff of cocaine between each shot. The Kharkov Cheka preferred the 'glove trick' where the hand of a prisoner was held in boiling water until the skin came off 'like a glove.' In Voronezh prisoners were rolled about in spiked barrels. In Tsaritsyn and Kamyshin they used blunt saws to sever the bones of prisoners. In Kiev, pipes filled with rats and sealed at one end were placed against a victim's stomach and heated up. Desperate to escape, the rats would gnaw into the prisoner's body. White officers had their epaulettes nailed into their shoulders or were 'roasted' against the side of ships' furnaces. Sometimes psychological torture could be just as damaging. The Kiev Chekists were known to have put prisoners into coffins with a rotting corpse, bury them alive, then dig them up half an hour later. A subtle but equally distressing practice was to bring a prisoner into the execution room and fire an empty pistol at their head. They were then returned to their cell and left to wonder when their 'real' execution would occur – if at all. For all the sickening and extravagant ways of inflicting pain and death, the most common method of execution was a pistol shot fired at point blank range to the back of the head.

These executions and tortures had a brutalising and mentally damaging effect on the Chekists themselves. A considerable number of Chekists went insane. Cocaine and alcohol abuse was high amongst members of the political police. A delivery of liquor to a Cheka headquarters was seen as a sign of upcoming executions. Most executions were carried out in the privacy of Cheka jails, although that did nothing to diminish the fear they instilled. Lists of those killed were regularly published in newspapers. The commissar of justice, Nikolai Krylenko, argued, 'We must execute not only the guilty. Execution of the innocent will impress the masses even more.'[27]

MORE RED TERROR ACTIVITIES

24 Cited in Dmitri Volkogonov, *Lenin: A New Biography* (New York: The Free Press, 1994), 234.
25 Cited in Lincoln, *Red Victory,* 158.
26 Cited in George Leggett, 'The Vecheka,' in ed. Harold Shukman, *The Blackwell Encyclopedia of the Russian Revolution* (Oxford: Blackwell Publishers, 1988), 182.
27 Cited in Richard Pipes, *A Concise History of the Russian Revolution* (New York: Vintage Books, 1996), 224.

FEATURE

EXECUTION OF THE TSAR AND HIS FAMILY

On 17 July 1918, Tsar Nicholas II and his family were killed by Cheka authorities in the basement of the house in which they were imprisoned at Yekaterinberg in Siberia. It was at first believed that local officials had acted on their own in disposing of the Romanovs, to ensure the family was not liberated by advancing anti-Bolshevik forces. However, evidence suggests that Sverdlov, with the blessing of Lenin, had telegraphed an order to the Chekists to go ahead with the executions. The official who directed the Yekaterinberg Cheka was a personal friend of Sverdlov and had been in frequent contact with him before the murders.[28] When Trotsky asked who ordered the executions, Sverdlov replied, 'We decided it here. Ilyich [Lenin] believed that we should not leave the Whites a live banner to rally around.'[29] Trotsky later recognised that the execution of the Romanovs had a deeper message; there was to be no turning back and no mercy for the enemies of the new regime: 'The execution of the Tsar and his family was needed not only to frighten, horrify and instill a sense of hopelessness in the enemy, but also to shake up our own ranks, to show that there was no retreating, that ahead lay total victory or total doom.'[30] In December 2000, Nicholas II and his immediate family were canonised by the Russian Orthodox Church.

The Russian royal family.

JUSTIFICATIONS FOR TERROR

Was mass terror, as the commissar of justice implied, simply an end in itself? Or should we take seriously Dzerzhinsky's claim that executions would somehow lead to socialism? A number of Chekists were mentally unstable and got perverse pleasure from torture and killing. One expressed enthusiasm for his work through poetry:

> There is no greater joy, not better music
> Than the crunch of broken lives and bones
> This is why when our eyes are languid
> And passion begins to seethe stormily in the breast,
> I want to write on your sentence
> One unquavering thing: 'Up against the wall! Shoot!'[31]

Men like Martyn Latsis and Felix Dzerzhinsky were at once fanatics and idealists.

28 Volkogonov, *Lenin*, 210–13.
29 Cited in Adam Ulam, *Lenin and the Bolsheviks* (London: Fontana Library, 1969), 559.
30 Cited in Martin Amis, *Koba the Dread* (London: Vintage, 2003), 54.
31 Cited in Donald Rayfield, *Stalin and His Hangmen: An Authoritative Portrait of a Tyrant and Those Who Served Him* (London: Viking, 2004), 76.

DID YOU KNOW?

The character Pasha Antipov in Boris Pasternak's novel *Doctor Zhivago* had similarities with Iron Felix. Driven by a hatred of those who exploit the poor and brutalised by his experiences in World War I, Pasha became the dreaded Bolshevik Commissar, Strelnikov ('the Shooter'). 'These are apocalyptic times, my dear sir, this is the Last Judgement,' he says to Dr Zhivago. 'This is a time for angels with flaming swords and winged beasts from the abyss, not for sympathisers and loyal doctors.' This echoed Dzerzhinsky's purist, almost religious, commitment to the revolution.

They considered the task entrusted to them to be of the utmost importance. In explaining the role of the Cheka, Dzerzhinsky said,

> We need to send to the front – the most dangerous and cruel of fronts – determined, hard, dedicated comrades ready to do anything in defence of the Revolution. Do not think that I seek forms of revolutionary justice; we are not now in need of justice. It is war now – face to face, a fight to the finish. Life or death![32]

Dzerzhinsky saw membership of the Cheka as a kind of higher calling: 'To be a Chekist a man must have a clear mind, a passionate heart, and clean hands. A Chekist must be more honest and trustworthy than the average. He must be as pure as crystal.'[33] Dzerzhinsky saw his role as the unshakable guardian of the revolution. His Chekists were likewise seen as chivalrous crusaders; the so-called 'sword and flame of the revolution.' Working eighteen hours a day, seven days a week, Dzerzhinsky possessed an austere dedication to 'the cause.' He was known to have remained at his unheated Lubyanka office for days on end. Overwhelmed by exhaustion, he commonly slept with just his greatcoat as a blanket. His workload brought on ill-health and was the cause of much worry amongst other Bolsheviks. In the worst period of shortage during the Civil War, Dzerzhinsky chastised colleagues who brought him a meal of bacon and potatoes rather than horsemeat (a common source of food at the time). He often lived off mint tea and bread. Chamberlin described Dzerzhinsky as, 'an old revolutionary of the most unimpeachable idealism.'[34] Similarly, Neil Harding argues, 'There was about him no hint of personal corruption or self-interested abuse of his massive powers.'[35] A good many rank-and-file Chekists, however, did not adopt Dzerzhinsky's Spartan virtuousness. Corruption was rampant. In response, Iron Felix was known to have ordered the execution of Chekists who took bribes and deducted alimony from the pay of his employees who were unfaithful to their wives.

ACTIVITY

CONSTRUCTING AN ARGUMENT

After researching the Red Terror, run a class debate on one of the topics below. Appoint an adjudicator and affirmative and negative teams and follow debating conventions.

Topics:

- 'Iron Felix and the Cheka were sadistic lunatics.'
- 'The Red Terror proved Bukharin's saying: "You can't make an omelette without breaking a few eggs."'
- 'The Bolsheviks had to use terror: it was a weapon of war.'

WHITE TERROR

White Terror, often overlooked in accounts of the revolution, was similarly brutal and unrelenting. The Whites nailed suspected Communists by their left hand and left foot to trees with railway spikes. 'Socialist' workers (sometimes merely trade unionists) were buried in the ground up to their necks and ridden over by cavalry. Captured Red soldiers had stars carved into their backs, their limbs hacked off, or were buried head-down with the bottom half of their legs exposed. On hearing that Bolsheviks killed those with clean fingernails and smooth hands, one White commander captured a factory and ordered the execution of any employee with calloused hands.

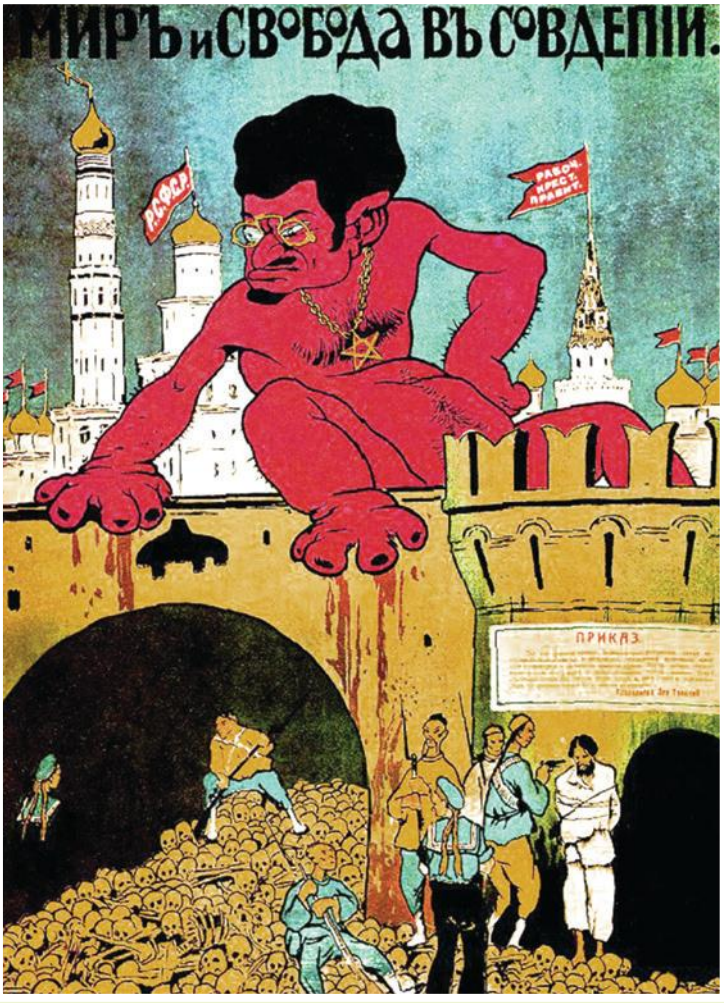
32 Cited by Figes, *A People's Tragedy*, 510.
33 Cited by Norman Friedman, *The Cold War Experience* (London: Carlton Books, 2005), 27.
34 W. H. Chamberlin, *The Russian Revolution:1918–1921*, 76.
35 Neil Harding, 'Review: The Cheka: Lenin's Political Police by George Leggett,' *International Affairs 58*, no. 2 (Spring 1982): 351–2.

ACTIVITY

SOURCE ANALYSIS

Examine the representation 'Peace and Liberty in Sovdepiya' and complete the tasks below.

1. Identify two symbols or features of the representation that convey a negative message about Trotsky.
2. Identify two features or symbols of the representation that suggest the Soviet government made ordinary people suffer.
3. Referring to the representation and using your own knowledge, explain how Soviet leaders endorsed Red Terror during the Civil War.
4. Evaluate the extent to which the representation provides an accurate depiction of Communist rule during the Civil War (1918–20). In your response, refer to parts of the representation and to historical interpretations of the revolution.



Peace and Liberty in Sovdepiya. A White propaganda poster of 1919. 'Sovdepiya' was a derogatory slang term roughly translating as 'land of Soviet deputies.'

DID YOU KNOW?

A telling example of the sheer callousness of the Red Terror is revealed through a misunderstanding between Lenin and Dzerzhinsky in 1919. During a Sovnarkom meeting Lenin passed Dzerzhinsky a note asking, 'How many dangerous counter-revolutionaries do we have in prison?' Dzerzhinsky wrote back: 'About 1,500'. Lenin drew a quick cross next to the figure, passed back the note, and returned his attention to the meeting. That night, Dzerzhinsky ordered 1500 prisoners from Moscow's Cheka jails to be executed. What Felix had forgotten was that Lenin drew a small cross next to everything he read to mark that he had understood and considered it!

DID YOU KNOW?

White Army generals instructed their men to 'Take no prisoners! The more terrible the terror, the more the victories!'

Pogroms against Jewish communities were a further insidious expression of White Terror. As a means to 'let off steam,' White generals were known to grant their soldiers two or three days leave to loot Jewish homes and businesses at will. In the Ukraine over 100 000 Jews were murdered. Thousands more were beaten and raped. Whereas the Communists persecuted the bourgeoisie as the defenders of old regime, the Whites targeted Jews as scapegoats for all the perceived wrongs of the revolutionary regime. As former duma deputy and White supporter Vasili Shulgin said, 'They shouted, "Death to the Burzhooi!" and we replied, "Death to the Yids!"'[36]

Revolutionary fanaticism alone does not explain the dramatic growth of the Cheka. Dzerzhinsky was in demand as an administrator. He had a reputation as a man who could get the job done. In 1921 he was made Commissar of Transport and given the task of restoring Russia's crippled rail system. He was later appointed chair of the Supreme Economic Council (VSNKh or Vesenkha). Like its founder, the Cheka was seen as versatile, efficient and useful to the new

36 Cited in Figes, *A People's Tragedy*, 677.

FEATURE

WAR AND TERROR

In his comparative history of the French and Russian revolutions, Arno J. Mayer emphasises the interrelationship between terror and the threat of military defeat. The fortunes of the Civil War strongly influenced the application of revolutionary violence. According to Mayer, throughout the Civil War, 'the bulk of the terror, and the worst of it, was closely correlated with the fighting between the Reds and Whites. It was much more a part of military operations than of political battles against real or perceived enemies and conspiracies.'[37] Revolution often provokes its opposite – counter-revolution – and both forces throw all they have against the other. 'The Furies of revolution are fueled above all by the resistance of the forces and ideas opposed to it,' Mayer argues. Despite the Communists' predisposition toward revolutionary violence, without the threat of domestic resistance, profound social unrest, foreign intervention and assassinations by SR terrorists, the Red Terror would have been, arguably, less forceful and uncompromising.

The extent to which terror came about in response to crises and threat or was a product of ideological intolerance remains an area of continued debate for historians. Rather than arguing the merits of circumstances versus intent, Peter Holquist calls for a consideration of Bolshevik policies within their 'historical conditions.'[38] The authoritarian state institutions of the Civil War years can be seen as an extension of previous trends that predated the Bolsheviks. The period of 1905 to 1921 was an 'epoch of violence.' Communist mentality and practices, as well as the brutality of Terror, were a product of 'specific time and place,' according to Holquist. In the midst of this time of troubles, the extreme means of wartime were seen as applicable to revolutionary ends.

37 Arno J. Mayer, *The Furies: Violence and Terror in the French and Russian Revolutions* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2000), 253.

38 Peter Holquist, 'Violent Russia, Deadly Marxism? Russia in the Epoch of Violence, 1905–21,' *Kritika: Exploration in Russian and Eurasian History* 4, no. 3 (2003): 628.

regime. As problems mounted and internal threats increased, many within the Party came to regard the political police as indispensable. Lenin gave his full support to Dzerzhinsky's work and overruled any attempts within the Party to curtail the Cheka. Russian historian Dmitri Volkogonov argues, 'Lenin himself was the patron saint of the Cheka.'[39] As a valued tool of the Soviet state the Cheka took on diverse tasks such as border control; overseeing labour conscription; fuel procurement; countering desertions; uncovering espionage and political dissent; exposing bribery and corruption; policing crime; and coordinating epidemic and famine relief.[40] In what some might see as a mismatch of interests, the founder of Soviet Russia's largest child welfare agency was Iron Felix Dzerzhinsky. Numerous homes for orphans were built from the proceeds of voluntary deductions from Chekists' salaries. Dzerzhinsky once told a fellow Chekist, 'Concern for our children's welfare is one of the best ways to wipe out counter-revolution.'[41]

DID YOU KNOW?

The Cheka Weekly celebrated the work of the political police and educated Chekists on methods and ideology. Such was its fanaticism that even Lenin found it unacceptable – only six issues were published.

WAR COMMUNISM

Vladimir Lenin: 'Long live civil war in the name of bread, for children and old people, for the workers and the Red Army, in the name of direct and merciless struggle with counter-revolution.'

Stabilising the economy proved an increasingly difficult task for the Bolsheviks. State Capitalism strained under shortages of raw materials, lack of consumer goods, pressure 'from below' for increased nationalisation of industry and declining grain stocks. This was exacerbated by the outbreak of the Civil War. Trade with other countries ceased as a blockade was enforced from mid-1918 until 1921. With fuel and food already scarce, the loss of Ukraine (first to the Treaty of Brest-Litovsk, then White occupation and later to peasant uprisings) also denied European Russia its 'breadbasket.' Supplying the cities became a haphazard exercise, since the Red Army took precedence in rail deliveries.

The military emergency and failing economy convinced Lenin and other leading Communists that decisive intervention was needed. In the summer of 1918 a range of harsh, centralised economic measures were introduced. Later known as War Communism, these policies originated in part from the need to secure food for the cities, halt economic breakdown and focus industrial production on supplying the Red Army. Trotsky's catch-cry was: 'Everything for the front!'[42]

ELEMENTS OF WAR COMMUNISM

A dramatic increase in the degree of state control over industry marked the first element of War Communism. As 1918 wore on, more and more factory committees begged Sovnarkom officials to take control of their industries and bring order to the economy. A gradual process of nationalisation had begun. Faced with economic ruin, many enterprises had already nationalised without prior approval from the central authorities. Warnings were issued in January and again in April 1918 against the expropriation of industries without the approval of Vesenkha. Few workers' committees paid any attention. With the added pressure of mobilising the economy to assist in the support of the Red Army, on 28 June 1918 the Decree on Nationalisation was released. This point marks

39 Volkogonov, *Lenin*, 238.
40 Leggett, 'The Vecheka,' 184.
41 Cited in Lincoln, *Red Victory*, 137.
42 Dmitri Volkogonov, *Trotsky: The Eternal Revolutionary* (Hammersmith: HarperCollins, 1996), 133.

the leap into War Communism. The decree announced that the state would take full ownership of all metallurgical, textile, electrical, mining, cement and tanning industries. More enterprises soon followed, culminating in a decree promulgated on 29 November 1920, which announced the nationalisation of all factories that employed more than ten workers, and more than five if powered machinery was used.

First envisaged as a supervisory body, Vesenkha now found itself the coordinator of a highly centralised economic system. Having taken over the means of production and drastically cut back private ownership of industry, the Communist regime had hoped to bring stability to the economy. Yet these measures did little to effectively improve economic output. Imposed during a time of severe economic and social disruption, difficulties in supply and distribution were a recurring problem. The attempt to nationalise virtually everything led to the emergence of an unwieldy state bureaucracy. Resources and initiative were caught up in a mountain of red tape. Departments and officials haggled and held up the distribution of materials, the supply of additional workers to understaffed industries, and reports on the progress of production. Lack of adequate manpower, due to military conscription and the flight of workers from urban areas to the countryside, also proved to be an on-going impediment to economic recovery.

A Communist subbotnik: people worked 'voluntarily' without remuneration to help rehabilitate the war-ravaged economy.

REPRESSION OF WORKERS

War Communism witnessed the effective militarisation of the workplace, as the state attempted to control the labour of all its citizens. The ideal of workers' control was rolled back, not just in regards to the running of industry, but also in the regulation of working hours, day-to-day conditions and the types of work undertaken. Workers were sent to factories where they were most needed; those who disobeyed were threatened with the loss of food rations and imprisonment. Towards the end of the Civil War Trotsky called for battalions of the Red Army to be mobilised into 'labour armies' and used to build roads, unload freight and cut trees. Those in charge of labour armies submitted military-style reports and workers marched to their workplaces. Longer working hours were introduced in all industries. Absenteeism could be punished through workers being assigned to more difficult duties and a deduction in their already scant rations. Strikers were threatened with execution. 'A deserter from labour,' according to Trotsky, 'is as contemptible and despicable as a deserter from the battlefield.'[43] Voluntary work on weekends, called 'Communist Saturdays' (subbotniki), was encouraged.[44] Workers were obliged to clean up roads or unload trains on their days off. Party activists soon placed great pressure on all workers to participate in such 'voluntary' work.

Before the Civil War period the supposed 'privileged' members of society had already been mobilised for compulsory labour service. Bankers, priests, military officers, factory owners, lawyers, stock brokers, former tsarist officials and members of aristocratic families were forced into work gangs and made to shovel snow or clear city streets of rubbish. Trotsky told one such group, 'Our grandfathers, great-grandfathers, and fathers all had to clean up the shit and filth of your grandfathers and fathers. Now you are going to do the same thing for us.'[45]

Compulsory labour by the bourgeoisie was welcomed by workers whose hatred of their social betters remained an important element of support for the revolutionary regime. However, whilst ordinary people often went hungry and lived in substandard housing, the Red elite had access to French trained chefs and comfortable Kremlin apartments; this also fostered popular disillusionment.

DID YOU KNOW?

Zinoviev and Radek enjoyed the food and fine clothes afforded to the Communist elite. In contrast, Lenin, Bukharin and Lunacharsky lived quite modestly and Dzerzhinsky was notoriously frugal.

DID YOU KNOW?

During the period of hyperinflation, Preobrazhensky dedicated a book to 'The printing presses of the Commissariat of Finance – that machine-gun which shot the bourgeois regime in the arse.' Communist economist Larin said about hyperinflation: 'Money will lose its significance as treasure and remain what it really is: coloured paper.'

ATTEMPTS TO ABOLISH MONEY

In his 1919 draft programme of the Russian Communist Party, Lenin declared, 'The RCP will strive as speedily as possible to introduce the most radical measures to pave the way for the abolition of money.'[46] State-induced hyperinflation was the method by which this was achieved. The government continued to print money until it became well and truly worthless. Exchanges between state-run industries were simply exercises in bookkeeping. No cash changed hands. One wry observer noted that Soviet Russia was a 'country of millionaire paupers.'

Having eliminated reliance on a monetary economy, the Communist regime aimed to become the sole producer and provider of food and goods in Russia. Following a decree issued on 21 November 1918, all private trade was declared illegal, including small business, peasant markets and the selling of any personal goods for profit. A government body called the Food Commissariat was the only organisation legally allowed to supply consumer items. It was allowed to confiscate stocks held by private traders.

43 Vladimir Lenin, 'The Tax in Kind,' in *Selected Works: Volume II* (Moscow: Foreign Languages Publishing House, 1947), 712.
44 Cited in Lincoln, *Red Victory*, 377.
45 Cited in Lincoln, *Red Victory*, 53–4.
46 Cited in Alec Nove, 'War Communism,' in *Blackwell Encyclopedia of the Russian Revolution*, ed. Harold Shukman (Oxford: Blackwell Publishers, 1988), 59.

DID YOU KNOW?

Under War Communism, mansions were sub-divided and filled with the homeless (as portrayed in a scene from *Doctor Zhivago*). The popular slogan was: 'Peace to the Hovels, War to the Palaces!'

PROBLEMS OF WAR COMMUNISM

The complete collapse in the value of the rouble and the ban on private trade resulted in a booming black market economy. Bartering became a way of life for almost all Soviet citizens. It was the only way city dwellers could get enough food. Paradoxically, more people were now in private trade than ever before. Trains were crowded with speculators, known as 'bagmen,' who travelled from the countryside to the towns with goods and food which they re-sold at substantial profits. People flocked to markets, such as the Sukarevka in Moscow, to trade for bread and other staple foods. The authorities periodically launched crackdowns on the markets and arrested those caught trading, but consumer demand was so great that the markets generally reopened the next day. Checkpoints were set up on the railways to confiscate any goods or food illegally transported. Despite the misgivings of Soviet authorities and a stream of propaganda denouncing the bagmen as 'evil exploiters,' the bartering system had to be tolerated. It is estimated that during 1918–19 illegal traders supplied city dwellers with up to sixty per cent of their bread. The figure is even higher for smaller provincial towns.

A range of free services were introduced by the state to replace wages that would normally be paid in cash. The postal service, public transport, medical treatment and food rations of dubious quality and quantity were supplied by the government free of charge. In July 1918, a class-based food rationing system was introduced whereby workers, soldiers and members of the Communist party received considerably more food than the upper classes. Lenin famously declared, 'He who does not work, neither shall he eat.'[47] In the hierarchy that determined the amount of food one received, those who lived off 'capital,' namely the bourgeoisie, clergy and former employees of the tsarist regime, received very little. Zinoviev spoke of the bourgeoisie receiving just enough bread to remember the smell of it.[48]

Obtaining enough food to ensure that the cities and towns did not starve was soon the foremost concern of Soviet authorities. Thousands of people perished from starvation and riots broke out in numerous towns over the lack of available food. It was a desperate crisis that came to dominate the attention of many within the party and government. Policies aimed at forcing the peasantry to provide

A line outside a butcher's shop (above) and a black marketeer (right); children's drawings from 1918.

47 Vladimir Lenin, 'The Famine: A Letter to the Workers of Petrograd,' in *Selected Works: Volume II* (Moscow: Foreign Languages Publishing House, 1947), 345.

48 Smith, *The Russian Revolution*, 80.

more food were soon implemented. The Communists embarked on what Lenin called a 'crusade for bread.'[49] Though the Bolsheviks had won the tentative support of people in country areas through their Decree on Land, the peasantry remained reluctant to hand over their grain. Most preferred to feed up their livestock or sell their produce on the black market, usually to bagmen. Lenin was convinced that the food shortages were due to kulaks (rich peasants) hoarding surplus grain. His proposed solution was to turn the poorer peasantry against their well-off neighbors. Sverdlov explained, 'Only if we are able to split the village into two camps, to arouse there the same class war as in the cities, only then will we achieve in the villages what we have achieved in the cities.'[50]

COMMITTEES OF THE POOR

On 11 June 1918 the government announced that Committees of the Poor (kombedy) were to be formed throughout the countryside. The theory was that the poorest of the peasantry would do the Communists' dirty work. The surplus grain and livestock of the kulaks was to be uncovered and confiscated by the kombedy, who would then hand it over to Soviet officials. The enticement was that the poorer peasants were allowed to keep a percentage of what they confiscated. The Committees of the Poor, however, were largely unsuccessful. Extra grain was received from some areas but splitting the village into two 'hostile camps' proved a problematic exercise. In some villages the middle peasants, who Lenin wanted to win over, were targeted. Self-interest also undermined the ideal, as confiscated grain was shared out amongst the poor peasants and not handed over to authorities. The biggest problem was the peasants' sense of communal solidarity. Many were reluctant to turn on each other. Lars Lih argues that 'instead of splitting the village, [the kombedy] united it – in rage and fury against the Bolsheviks.'[51] By December the Committees were abandoned.

DID YOU KNOW?

Even Lenin admitted by March 1918 that the government had made 'terrible errors' in its policies regarding peasants.

REQUISITION SQUADS

Lenin remained convinced that food shortages were due to 'hoarding' by rich peasants. If the countryside would not hand over its grain willingly, then force would be used. Lenin wrote to officials in charge of grain procurement to do all they could to find more grain. It was a matter of life and death; the very survival of the proletariat and Red Army were at stake.

Starting in January 1919 detachments of armed workers and Cheka agents were formed into grain-requisitioning squads and sent to the countryside to seize 'hoarded surplus' from whole villages, a practice known as prodrazverstka. In most cases, squads took all the grain they could find and left no seeds for peasants to re-plant. Deeply resentful of the government's new tactics, the peasantry responded by closing ranks. Requisition squads were faced with armed resistance. While some short-term increases in procurements were made, requisitioning quickly led to even less food being available. There was no incentive for farmers to produce any more grain than their immediate family needed to survive. The countryside simply stopped producing surplus grain. Between 1917 and 1921, the amount of land under cultivation dropped by forty per cent. Harvests were around thirty-seven per cent of the usual yield.

Resistance to grain requisitioning was also due to the inexperience and ruthlessness of some officials. One Communist, Zhenia Egorovna, complained

49 Nove, 'War Communism,' 52–3.
50 Cited in W. H. Chamberlin, *The Russian Revolution 1917–1918: From the Overthrow of the Tsar to the Assumption of Power by the Bolsheviks* (New York: The Universal Library, 1965), 426.
51 Lars T. Lih, *Bread and Authority in Russia*, 1914–1921 (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1990), 176.

DOCUMENT

LENIN'S INSTRUCTIONS REGARDING KULAKS, AUGUST 1918

Comrades! The uprising of the five kulak districts should be mercilessly suppressed... We need to set an example.

1. Hang (hang without fail, so the people see) no fewer than one hundred known kulaks, rich men, bloodsuckers.

2. Publish their names.

3. Take from them all the grain.

4. Designate hostages...

Do it in such a way that for hundreds of [kilometres] around, the people will see, tremble, know, shout: they are strangling and will strangle to death the bloodsucker kulaks.

Telegraph receipt and implementation.

Yours, Lenin.

P.S. Find some truly hard people.[52]

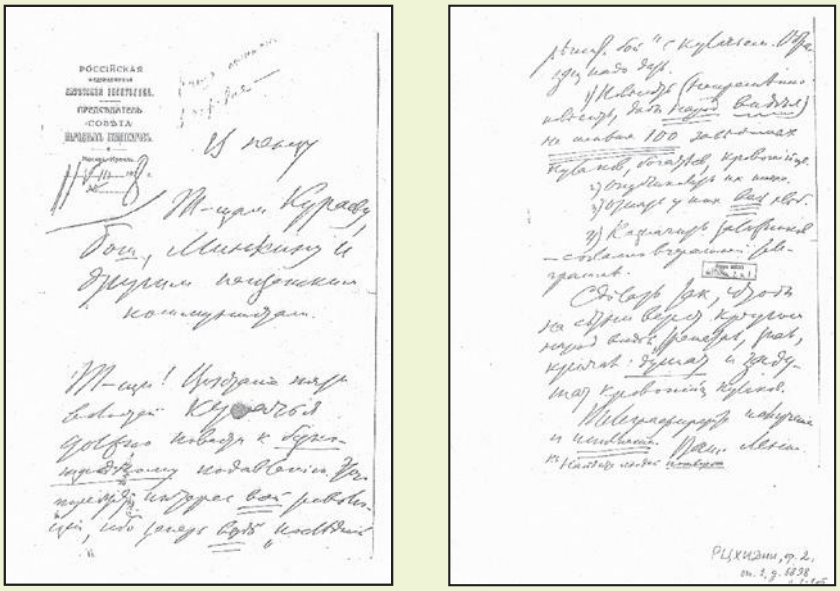
ACTIVITY

SOURCE ANALYSIS

Read Lenin's instructions regarding kulaks (above) and complete the tasks below.

1. Why does Lenin propose harsh measures against the kulaks?
2. How should kulaks be treated, according to Lenin?
3. What was the desired impact of such actions?
4. What does this document reveal about Lenin's attitude to revolutionary violence?
5. The above source appeared in Richard Pipes' *The Unknown Lenin* in 1996. Pipes pays close attention to it, as he believes it shows Lenin's disregard for human life. However, Lars T. Lih argues that the source should not be viewed in isolation.[53] To find out more, complete the activity 'Pipes vs. Lih' below (see icon).

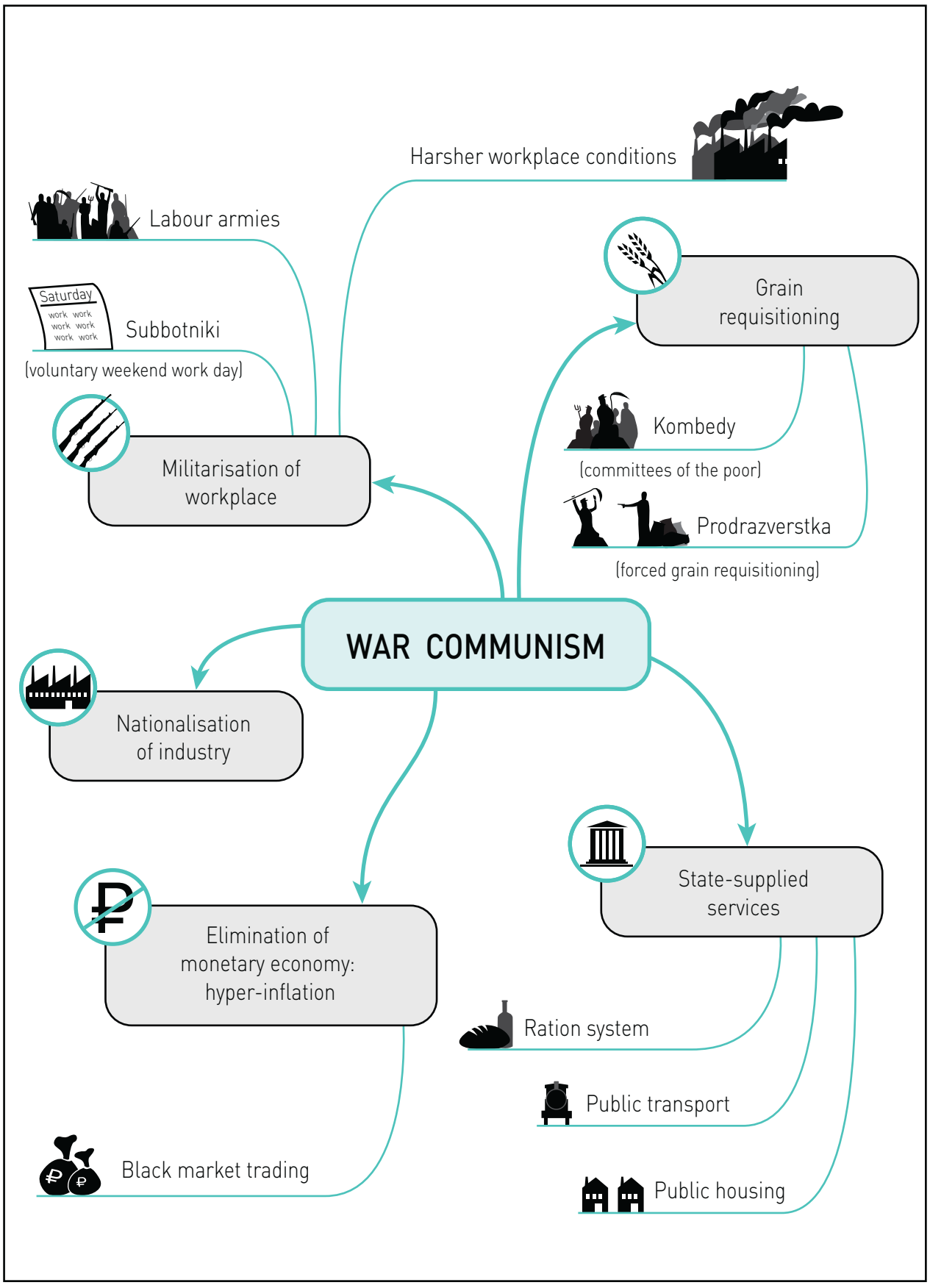
PIPES VS. LIH ON LENIN AND THE KULAKS



Two-page handwritten letter from Lenin ordering communists in Penza to publicly hang at least 100 kulaks and confiscate their grain.

52 Cited in Richard Pipes, *The Unknown Lenin: From the Secret Archive* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1998), 50.

53 Lars T. Lih, *Lenin* (London: Reaktion Books, 2011).


WAR COMMUNISM
Militarisation of workplace
Labour armies
Saturday
work work work work work work
Subbotniki
(voluntary weekend work day)
Harsher workplace conditions
Grain requisitioning
Kombedy
(committees of the poor)
Prodrazverstka
(forced grain requisitioning)
Nationalisation of industry
Elimination of monetary economy: hyper-inflation
Black market trading
State-supplied services
Ration system
Public transport
Public housing

DID YOU KNOW?

Mikhail Bulgakov was an acclaimed Russian novelist and playwright. His creative brilliance is best captured in the works *The Heart of a Dog* and *The Master and Margarita*. His first major novel, *The White Guard*, was adapted for theatre and was one of Stalin's favourite plays – despite the main protagonist being a White officer.

that, 'the detachments were being badly organized,' and were, 'composed of undesirable elements that deserved to be arrested.' However, the desperate need for grain for the cities and army, as well as a resolute stand against 'class enemies' in the midst of the Civil War, resulted in continued harsh measures in the countryside.

ASSESSING WAR COMMUNISM

Some historians argue that the policies of War Communism, though severe, were necessary due to economic collapse and war. They follow Lenin's retrospective assessment: 'We were forced to resort to "War Communism" by war and ruin.'[54] Lars T. Lih emphasises the central concern of the food-supply crisis as one of 'the terrible dilemmas of the time of troubles.'[55]

War Communism had obvious pragmatic justifications, but there were also ideological assumptions at play. Many within the Party saw War Communism as the first step towards a truly communist society. It represented a more extreme expression of socialist principles and was wholeheartedly welcomed at the time by theorists such as Bukharin and Preobrazhensky. Though the term 'War Communism' was applied after the event, observers at the time did describe the period as one of 'militant' Communism. For some historians, the policies demonstrated Bolshevik ideological fanaticism rather than a credible response to circumstance.[56] It was a flawed experiment in which socialist ideology fundamentally determined economic policy. Bernard Pares argues that it was 'not merely war Communism, such as is appropriate to a besieged city, but militant Communism or rather pure Communism, and its failure was self-evident.'[57] According to Richard Pipes, the architects of War Communism were not well-versed in either economics or business management: 'That such rank amateurs would ... turn upside down the economy of tens of millions, subjecting it to innovations never attempted anywhere ... says something of [their] judgment.'[58]

With its mix of ideological, economic and militaristic origins, War Communism was described by Alec Nove as 'a siege economy with a communist ideology. A partly organised chaos. Sleepless, leather-jacketed commissars working around the clock in a vain effort to replace the free market.'[59] War Communism was literally *communism* in response to *war*. The period was not governed by unified, structured or carefully considered policies. Many decrees were improvised in the face of crisis, adjusted according to changing circumstances or not fully implemented. Local officials acted independently and instructions issued by Sovnarkom were at times contradictory or unclear. According to Figes, War Communism can also be analysed as a product of the growing divide in economic relations between the countryside and towns.[60] The unreliability of provincial soviet authorities in coordinating grain distribution set in train greater centralisation.

54 Chamberlin, *The Russian Revolution 1918–1921*, 295.
55 Lih, *Bread and Authority in Russia*, 199–200, 260.
56 Pipes, *A Concise History of the Russian Revolution*, 193; Martin Malia, *The Soviet Tragedy: A History of Socialism in Russia, 1917–1991* (New York: The Free Press, 1996), 112; Robert Conquest, *The Harvest of Sorrow* (London: Hutchinson, 1986), 47–8.
57 Cited in Niall Rothnie, *Stalin and Russia, 1924–1953* (London: Macmillan Education, 1991), 123.
58 Pipes, *A Concise History of the Russian Revolution*, 194.
59 Nove, 'War Communism,' 68.
60 Orlando Figes, *Peasant Russia, Civil War: The Volga Countryside in Revolution 1917–1921* (Weidenfeld & Nicolson, 2001), 247.

ACTIVITY

FACT FILE

Create a fact file about War Communism that includes the following headings:

- Date of introduction
- Purpose
- Connection with Civil War
- Subbotniki
- Abolition of money
- Committees of the Poor
- Requisition squads
- Consequences for a range of people.

EVERYDAY IMPACTS OF THE CIVIL WAR

Mikhail Bulgakov: 'Great and terrible was the year of Our Lord 1918, of the Revolution the second...but the year 1919 was even more terrible.'

Life for ordinary people was dreadfully hard during the Civil War. Chronic shortages of food and fuel prevailed. Houses and fences were stripped of their timber to burn in stoves for heating. By 1920, most wages bought less than a fiftieth of what they bought in 1914.[61] As food became critically low, workers deserted factories and fled to rural areas in a desperate search for something to eat. Many still had relatives with whom they could seek shelter. The flood of cold and hungry city dwellers to the countryside reached such proportions that by 1920 Petrograd's population had fallen by seventy per cent and Moscow's by fifty per cent.[62] An editorial in the 1919 New Year edition of *Pravda* proudly asked, 'Where are the wealthy, the fashionable ladies, the rich restaurants and private mansions, the beautiful entrances, the lying newspapers, all the corrupted "golden life"? All swept away.'[63]

Whereas the Soviet press saw some merit in the end of obvious signs of wealth, critics of the new regime noted, without undue cynicism, that if such a massive demographic upheaval continued the Bolsheviks would soon be the 'vanguard' of a nonexistent class. There were 2.6 million workers in 1917; this had dropped to 1.2 million by 1920.[64] This decrease in the workforce and in the availability of materials caused a dramatic decline in production. Large-scale industrial output fell to thirteen per cent of its pre-war level. Steel output was four per cent of 1913 levels and iron ore was at one-and-a-half per cent. Copper production ceased entirely.

Two small coffins being carried on stretchers to the cemetery in the Volga famine district of Soviet Russia, 1921.

Help! Dmitry Moor, 1921.

FAMINE AND DISEASE

Famine and disease caused millions of deaths during the Civil War. Cartloads of rubbish in Moscow remained uncollected. Sewage systems backed up and burst pipes were left in a state of disrepair. Typhus, cholera and lice were rampant. It is estimated that starvation caused at least half of the fatalities of the Civil War period. Family life was severely disrupted, with millions of children orphaned or abandoned. Many fell into a life of crime or prostitution.

The villagers of some regions ate 'famine bread' made of clay and grass. Thousands of cases of cannibalism were also reported. One man arrested and brought to trial for eating human flesh confessed: 'In our village everyone eats human flesh but they hide it. There are several cafeterias in the village – and all of them serve up young children.'[65]

Much to the chagrin of the Bolshevik government, Russia was forced to accept aid from the international community, in particular the American Relief Administration (ARA). In addition to supplies of medicine, grain seed and clothing, by 1922 ARA soup kitchens were feeding ten-million Russians per day.

The Communists were victorious in the Civil War but the Soviet regime was on the brink of economic ruin and torn by social unrest. W. H. Chamberlin wrote, 'The realm which the Bolsheviki had conquered bore strong resemblance to a

61 Lincoln, *Red Victory,* 374.
62 Smith, *The Russian Revolution,* 85.
63 Cited in Chamberlin, *The Russian Revolution 1918–1921*, 348.
64 Nove, 'War Communism,' 60.
65 Cited in Figes, *A People's Tragedy,* 777.

DID YOU KNOW?

During the Russian Civil War, food was so scarce that horses, cats and dogs left outside overnight often disappeared. Horsemeat was colloquially known as 'civil war sausage.' Graffiti appeared on the streets of Petrograd that read: 'Down with Lenin and horsemeat! Give us the Tsar and pork!'

desert.'[66] The situation in the countryside was particularly volatile. Increasing levels of peasant unrest, especially in the Tambov region and the Ukraine, were a major worry for the Communists. Many areas were ungovernable. The confused nature of peasant political alliances was expressed through slogans such as 'Long Live the Bolsheviks! Death to the Communists!' and 'Long Live Lenin! Down with Trotsky!'[67] Trotsky and Communists were associated with the Civil War; Lenin and the Bolsheviks with 'Peace' and 'Land.' What the peasantry really wanted was *volia* (freedom or liberty). They wished for the central authorities to leave them alone or to at least trade fairly and not seize their grain without proper payment.[68] One peasant wrote to the government: 'We welcome Soviet power, but give us ploughs, harrows and machines and stop seizing our grain, milk, eggs, and meat.'[69] Another lamented the fact that whilst the revolution had given the peasantry the land that they had desired for so long, the revolutionary government was taking away the fruits of their labour: 'The land belongs to us but the bread belongs to you; the water belongs to us, but the fish to you; the forests are ours but the timber is yours.'

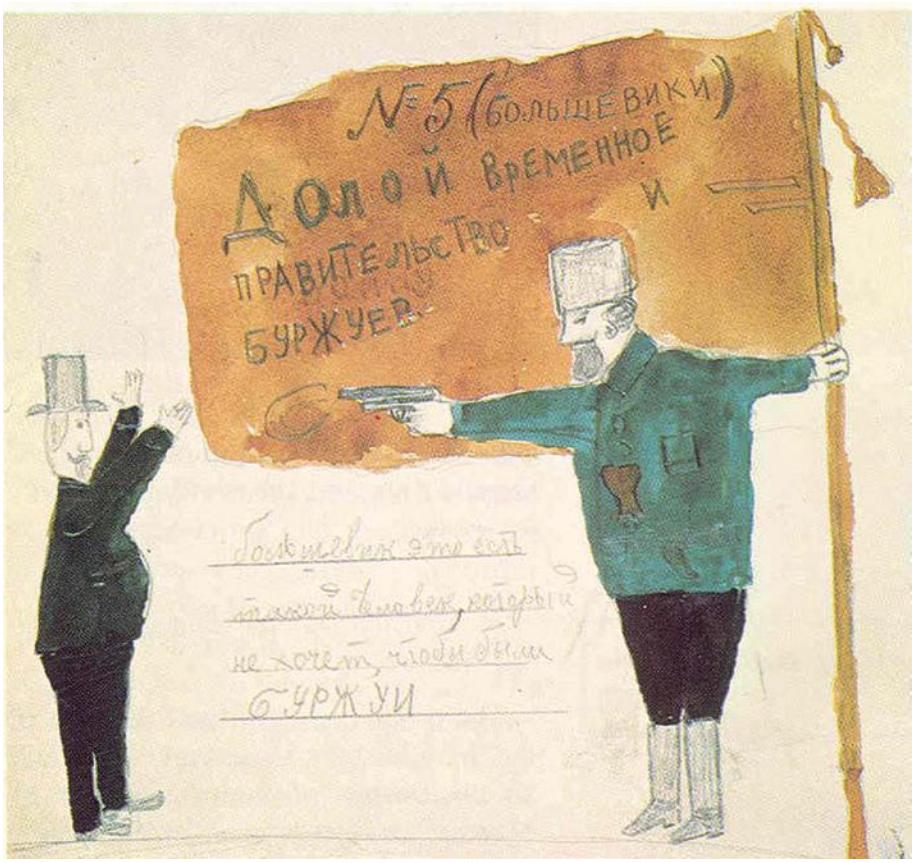
INCREASING AUTHORITARIANISM

The Civil War had a profound influence on the political culture of the Communist party. In the face of crisis the new regime had become more and more reliant on rule by decree and force. The centralised party-state was now seen as the instrument through which socialism would be built. The success of the Red Army and effectiveness of the Cheka reinforced such values. The Civil War had seen an influx of military personnel into the party. These men brought with them different values and were generally more willing to accept decisions from above without question. Orders were orders. On being appointed Commissar of War, Trotsky had telegraphed Lenin from the Front: 'Send me communists who know how to obey.' There was a sense that the party was now a militarised, fighting fellowship of leather-jacketed commissars. They were accustomed to the effectiveness of dictatorial practices. The Civil War bred a generation of men who were quick to reach for their pistols when their authority was questioned or when a crisis needed to be resolved. A belief in the infallibility of the party hierarchy, common values and common threats bound the Communists together. The party provided a pillar of self-assured strength for the rank-and-file amidst the social upheaval of the Civil War. Communist leaders likewise grew accustomed to flexing their political muscle and issuing commands which they expected to be obeyed.

Yakov Serdlov.

Though the Bolsheviks claimed to have inaugurated a dictatorship of the proletariat based on 'Soviet' authority, as the Civil War progressed it became increasingly clear that the regime was more a dictatorship of the party than a dictatorship of workers. The Bolshevik government – Sovnarkom – was theoretically subordinate to the Central Executive Committee (CEC) of the Soviets, which was elected at the annual All-Russian Congress of Soviets. Decrees of 'general political significance' were meant to be submitted to the CEC for ratification and approval. Government commissars could be called before the CEC to explain their policies and could theoretically be replaced at its insistence. The Soviet Congress was never, though, an impingement upon Bolshevik authority. The individual who ensured this never happened was Yakov Sverdlov. Both chairman of the CEC and secretary of the Bolshevik Central Committee, Sverdlov was an organiser extraordinaire. His imposing personality

66 Chamberlin, *The Russian Revolution 1918– 1921*, 291.
67 Figes, *A People's Tragedy*, 756.
68 Figes, *Peasant Russia, Civil War*, 143.
69 Cited in Lincoln, *Red Victory*, 467.



'The Bolshevik and the Bourgeois. A Bolshevik is a person who doesn't want there to be any more burzhooi.' A child's drawing from 1918.

kept critical debate within the Soviet Executive Committee to a minimum and he was adept at manipulating the votes during the annual Soviet Congress. Not surprisingly, non-Bolshevik Soviet delegates were soon removed from their posts. Accused of counter-revolutionary activity, the Mensheviks and SRs were expelled on 14 June 1918; the Left SRs barred on 9 July. As time went on legislation was increasingly passed without the approval of the CEC. British historian Martin McCauley estimates that of the 480 decrees sanctioned during the first year of the Soviet regime, only sixty-eight were passed on to the CEC. And whilst Sovnarkom met daily, sometimes even twice a day, the Soviet Executive Committee was called to meet less and less frequently. In March 1918 Sverdlov argued that the Party should take up 'a significant part of the work which has up to now been performed by the soviets.'[70] Since almost all members of the Bolshevik Central Committee held posts in Sovnarkom, which was headed by Lenin, this was arguably an inevitable development. The Central Committee formulated resolutions on economic and political strategy which were then given to Sovnarkom to implement.

Sverdlov died unexpectedly in March 1919; a devastating blow to the Bolsheviks. The Party apparatus was subsequently restructured into the Secretariat, Politburo and Orgburo. The Secretariat was the administrative wing of the party and government – it coordinated paperwork and communication. The Orgburo made decisions on personnel and delegated tasks to officials – it was the

DID YOU KNOW?

Lice were abundant during the Civil War. They were a source of discomfort and spread contagious disease. When the clothes of one Red unit were disinfected, a layer of what appeared to be grey sand two inches high covered the floor of the wash rooms. The grey sand was dead lice!

DID YOU KNOW?

The Bolsheviks renounced religion. When asked by a delegation of Jews to help his 'fellows,' Trotsky (whose real surname was Bronstein) is reported to have snapped, 'I am not a Jew but an internationalist!' As Moscow's Chief Rabbi once observed, it was the Trotskys of the world who made revolutions but the Bronsteins who had to live with them.

70 Cited in Leonard Schapiro, *The Communist Party of the Soviet Union* (New York: Random House, 1970), 247.

'organising' body. The Politburo was a committee of five leading Communists (initially Lenin, Stalin, Trotsky, Kamenev and Kristinsky) who were given the authority to make decisions when urgency overruled a full meeting of the Central Committee. As Lenin explained, 'the Orgburo allocates forces, while the Politburo decides policy.'[71] The Soviet constitution made no reference to the Communist party; however, the Politburo was the highest decision-making body in Russia. Hierarchical and centralised authority, with the Communist Politburo at its apex, had become the basis of governmental rule in the new society.

71 Cited in Martin McCauley, 'Commissars and Commissariats of Sovnarkom,' in ed. Harold Shukman, *The Blackwell Encyclopedia of the Russian Revolution* (Oxford: Blackwell Publishers, 1988), 37.

ACTIVITY

RUSSIAN CIVIL WAR

NOTE-TAKING

Choose one of the decrees introduced during the Civil War (e.g. Decree on Red Terror, Nationalisation or Land). Note down the following about the decree: date/context of introduction; purposes; key quotes from the decree; and two historical interpretations on the consequences or significance of the decree.

DISCUSSION

Read about the Russian Civil War and discuss the following questions.

1. What was the purpose of terror in the Russian Civil War? Was it generally reactive in nature?
2. What role did ideology play in the Red and White Terror? Why might the White Terror often be overlooked in accounts of the revolution?
3. What were some of the interesting or disturbing moments in the Civil War?
4. What would family life have been like during the Civil War?
5. A Communist Party resolution from September 1918 stated:

> *'The civil war in Russia is peaking. The necessity of adopting Red Terror in response to White Terror is a reflection of this fact … The working class must finally implement a dictatorship of steel and settle scores with all its enemies coarsely. Security in the rear must be assured and all forces devoted to the front … It is essential to teach male and female workers that they are all employees of the Cheka, that all of us are participants in the great struggle with the counterrevolution.'*

To what extent did the Civil War give the Communist regime an excuse to become more authoritarian?

Sovnarkom and the Communist Party

The Communist Party

Politburo

Highest decision making body of the Communist Party – its inner cabinet. The five to nine members of the Politburo were chosen from the Central Committee. They discussed policy when a meeting of the Central Committee was deemed unnecessary. The Politburo met daily.

Orgburo

Coordinated personnel within the Party and allocated tasks.

Central Commitee

The thirty to forty members of the Central Committee were elected by the annual Party congress. The CC voted on and discussed key policies. Resolutions of the CC were handed on to Sovnarkom to implement.

Party Congress

Delegates to the Party Congress were elected from regional Party committees and in turn elected the Central Committee. They debated important policies and discussed the general direction of the Communist Party.

District and Local Soviets

Workers and peasants elected their representatives to the local soviet – the lowest level of people's councils. Ordinary people would take their concerns and views to their local soviet. Select members were elected to the higher level provincial and city soviets.

Government

Sovnarkom (Council of People's Commissars)

The Council of People's Commissars – the government of Soviet Russia. Each commissariat was headed by a commissar selected by the Chairman (Lenin). Commissars met as a cabinet to discuss government policy; at first this was daily, but by 1920 weekly.

Secretariat (Civil Service)

Managed paperwork and communication between Central Committee, Politburo, Sovnarkom and Soviet CEC.

Soviet CEC

The Central Executive Committee of the Soviet reviewed policies between meetings of All-Russian Congress of Soviets. The first chairman of the CEC was Sverdlov.

All-Russian Congress of Soviets

Representatives were elected from regional soviets that were formed at village, town and district level. Chaired by Sverdlov and later Kalinin. Generally met once a year to elect the CEC and vote on important policies.

Provincial and City Soviets

Each region, city and town had its own soviet. These implemented policies given by Sovnarkom, provided higher soviet and governmental bodies with information concerning economics and social concerns, and assisted in the administration of areas under their jurisdiction.

CONCLUSION

By conquering the counter-revolutionary 'ring of fire,' the Soviet regime survived the Civil War. With its numerous protagonists and complex fronts, this conflict significantly shaped the nature of the new regime. Under the leadership of Trotsky the Bolsheviks went to war, raising a professional military force of five-million men. The party itself became more militarised and a highly-centralised political structure evolved.

War Communism, a range of economic policies informed by ideology and military emergency, harnessed 'everything for the front' to effectively feed and equip the Bolsheviks' armed forces. A more socialist economy was 'achieved.' With more unified purpose, better leadership and geographical advantages, the Red Army emerged victorious.

Civil war was also class war. In response to pressures 'from below,' ideological fanaticism and external threat, the Cheka grew exponentially and instituted a fearsome 'Red Terror.' So, too, the Whites unleashed their own brutal measures. Life was cheap during the Civil War. He who did not work did not eat. Those who did work got very little. 'The cities were hives of the starving,' wrote Victor Serge.[72] Seeing the shortages of grain as the product of kulak hoarding and failing to properly understand the nature of social relations in the countryside, the Communists brutally coerced the peasants into handing over grain far beyond the 'hoarded' surplus. Terrible famine, disease and societal breakdown resulted.

Just how far the Bolsheviks had drifted from the revolutionary idealism of October 1917 was clear to many by 1920. Though still supportive of 'Soviet Power,' the vast majority of peasants and workers had become disillusioned with the revolutionary regime.

By 1921 critical choices in policy had to be made.

72 Cited in Corin and Fiehn, *Communist Russia Under Lenin and Stalin*, 364.

TEST YOUR LEARNING

CHAPTER REVIEW

CONSTRUCTING AN ARGUMENT

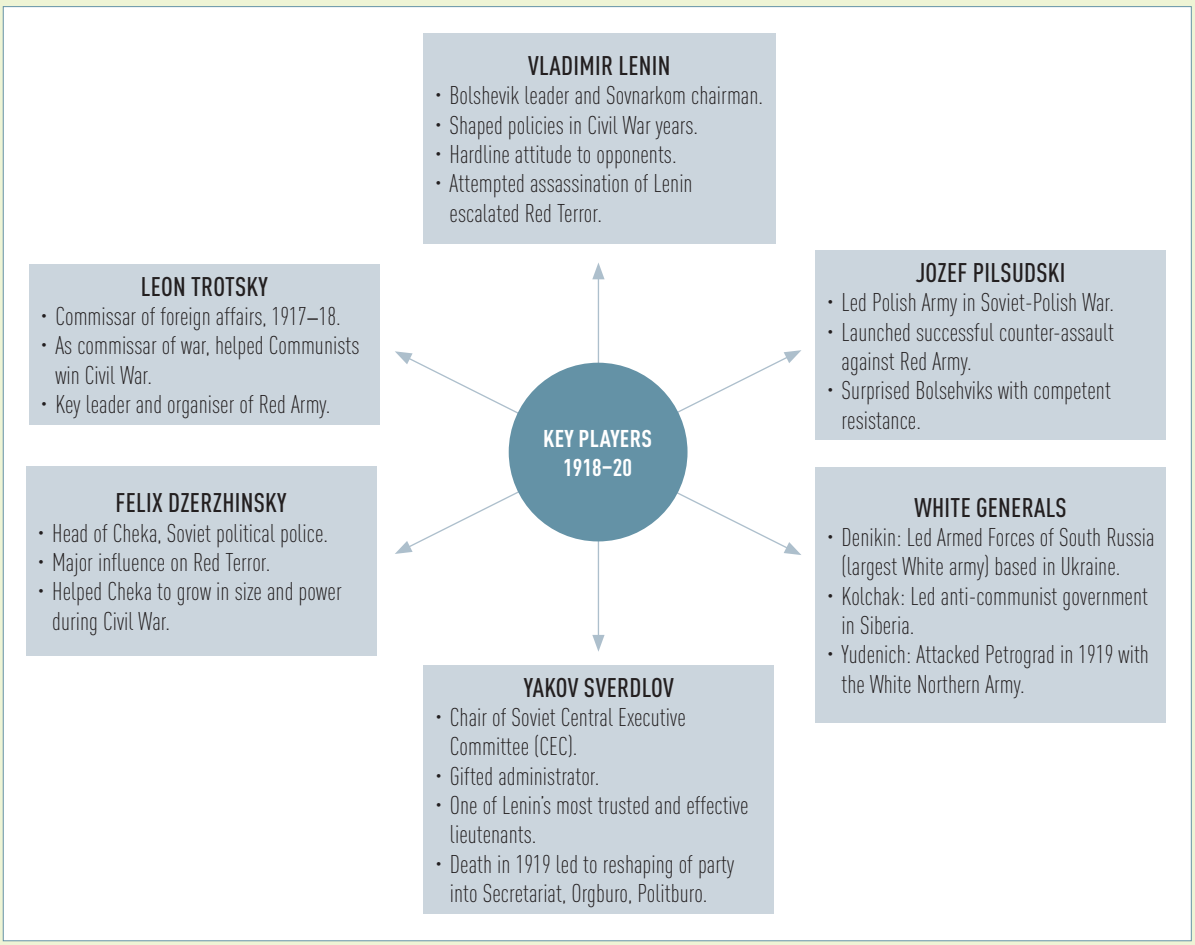
Write an essay on one of the topics below. Your essay should be approx. 800 words long and include an introduction, paragraphs based on evidence, a conclusion and a bibliography.

Topics:

- 'The Communists' desperate measures in the Civil War era were a legitimate response to crises.' Do you agree?
- How did the Communists change Russian society in the period April 1918–20? To what extent did they live up to their revolutionary ideals?
- What were the consequences of the Civil War period for ordinary Russians? Refer to two or three groups.

KEY PLAYERS

The diagram below outlines some of the key players in Russia in the period April 1918–1920. Give a presentation to your class on one of these OR on another important person in this period such as Nikolai Bukharin, Alexandra Kollontai or Anatoli Lunacharsky. (See Who's Who at the end of the book.)



TEST YOUR LEARNING

CAUSE AND CONSEQUENCE

Create a table like the one below and fill in the missing information.

CHALLENGES TO THE NEW REGIME (1918–20): SOVNARKOM RESPONSES

CHALLENGE	RESPONSE
Organised opposition, e.g. C _____ Legion, W _____ armies and SR terrorism.	Founding of a professional and disciplined army (Red Army).
	Expansion of the Ch _____ and Red T _____.
Failure of _____ Capitalism to stabilise economy and improve production.	Launch of _____ Communism: a harsh, centralised economic model ('everything for the front!').
Severe food shortages in cities and need to feed R _____ Army.	Committees of the _____ and grain r _____.
Achieving victory in Civil _____.	Ideological vision and use of propaganda.
	Effective leadership from T _____,
	L _____, Sv _____ and Dz _____.
	Increased authoritarianism.

FURTHER READING

Acton, E., Cherniaev, V. I. and Rosenberg, W. G. (eds.). Critical Companion to the Russian Revolution. Bloomington and Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 1997.

Contains excellent articles on a vast array of topics. Contributions by Service, Rosenberg, Figes, Mawdsley and Acton are particularly important. An insight into the work of leading historians.

Davies, Norman. White Eagle, Red Star: The Polish-Soviet War 1919–20. London: Orbis Books, 1983.

The Polish-Soviet War was a significant turning point in the revolution but it is often overlooked. Davies' military history competently reviews each element of the conflict.

Figes, Orlando. A People's Tragedy: The Russian Revolution 1891–1924. London: Pimlico, 1996.

A book which offers incredible scope but which is very readable. Figes captures the vivid panorama of revolutionary Russia, discussing broad issues and then focussing on particular individuals from a range of backgrounds. A social and cultural historian, Figes reconsiders Russian politics and comes to some conservative conclusions.

Figes, Orlando. Peasant Russia, Civil War: The Volga Countryside in Revolution (1917–1921). London: Phoenix Press, 1989.

Figes' first major work. His study of the Volga peasantry offers an excellent analysis of this 'forgotten' class, which actively participated in and shaped the revolution.

Lincoln, W. Bruce. Red Victory: A History of the Russian Civil War 1918–1921. New York: Da Capo Press, 1999.

One of the best histories of the Civil War – thorough and informative.

Mayer, Arno J. The Furies: Violence and Terror in the French and Russian Revolutions. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2000.

Fascinating analysis of revolutionary violence in France and Russia. Good for its deconstruction of the context in which Terror was applied.

Smith, Stephen A. The Russian Revolution: A Very Short Introduction. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002.

Concise but insightful, this book provides an excellent contrast to other perspectives. Smith is a leading social historian.

Volkogonov, Dmitri. Trotsky: The Eternal Revolutionary. Hammersmith: HarperCollins, 1996.

The third in Volkogonov's trilogy on the 'big three' of the revolution. Draws on Soviet archives that have recently been made available. See also *Lenin: A New Biography* (Moscow: Free Press, 1994) and *Stalin: Triumph and Tragedy* (Grove Weidenfeld, 1991).

CHAPTER

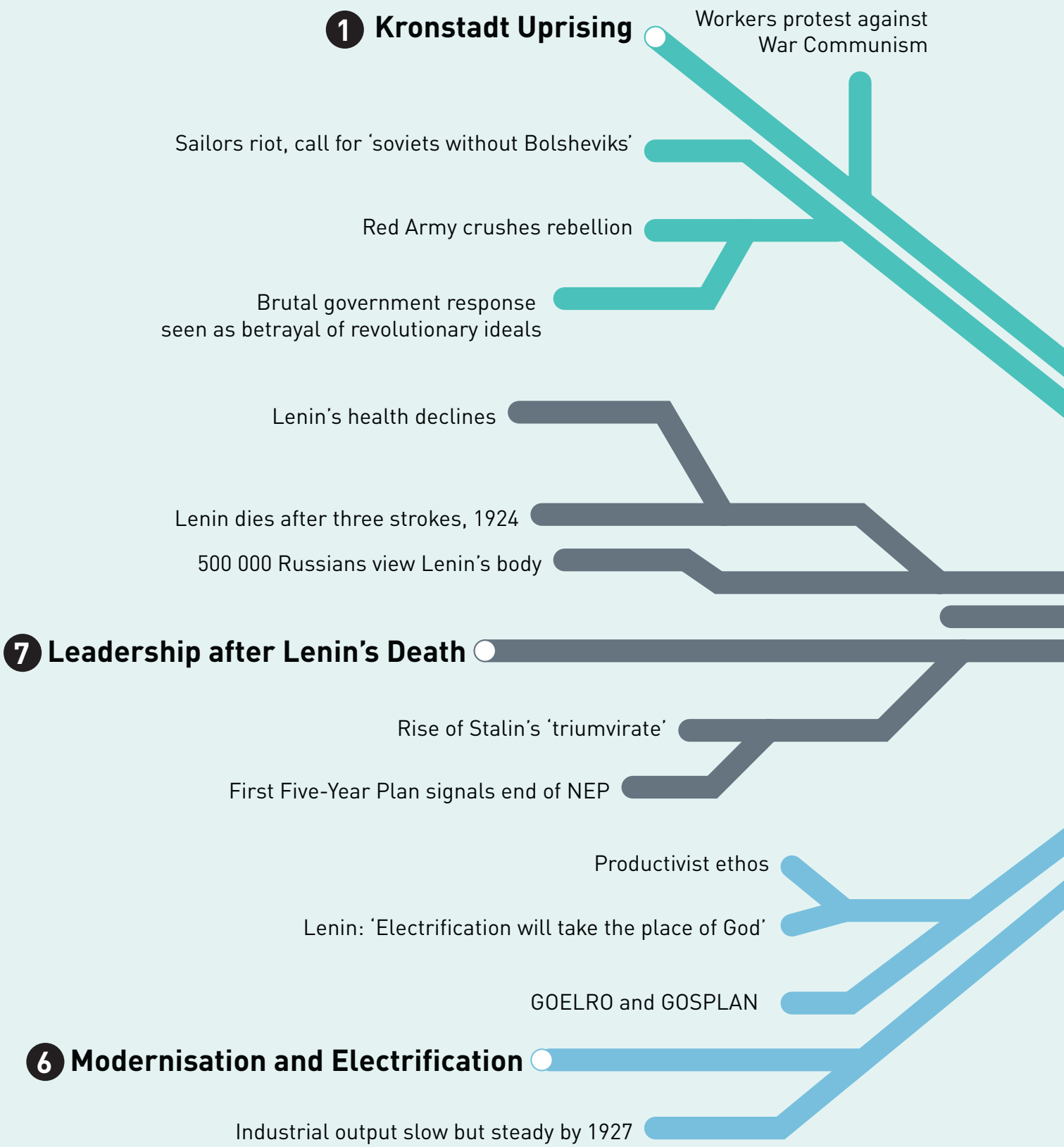
6

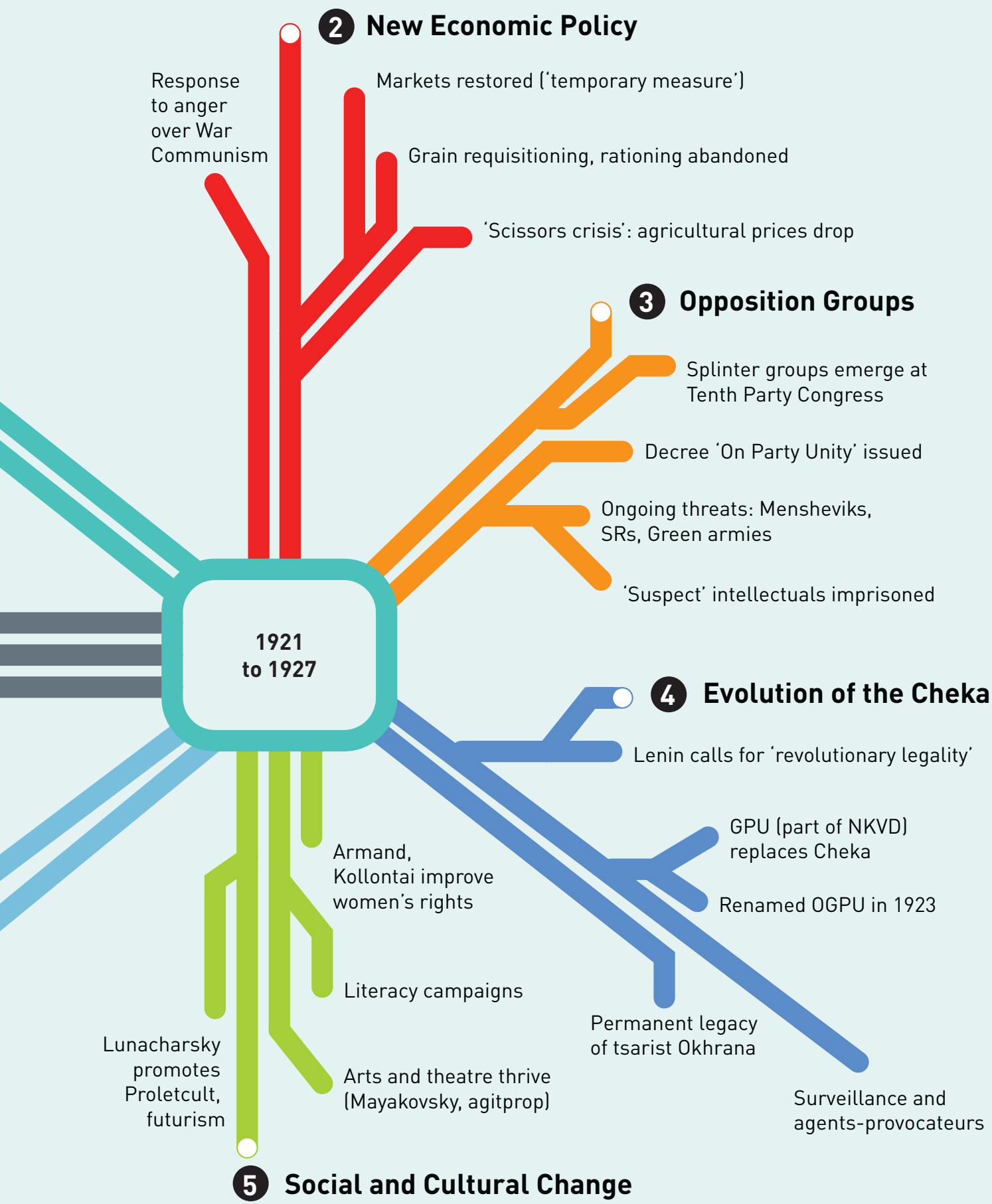
A NEW SOCIETY?

(1921–1927)

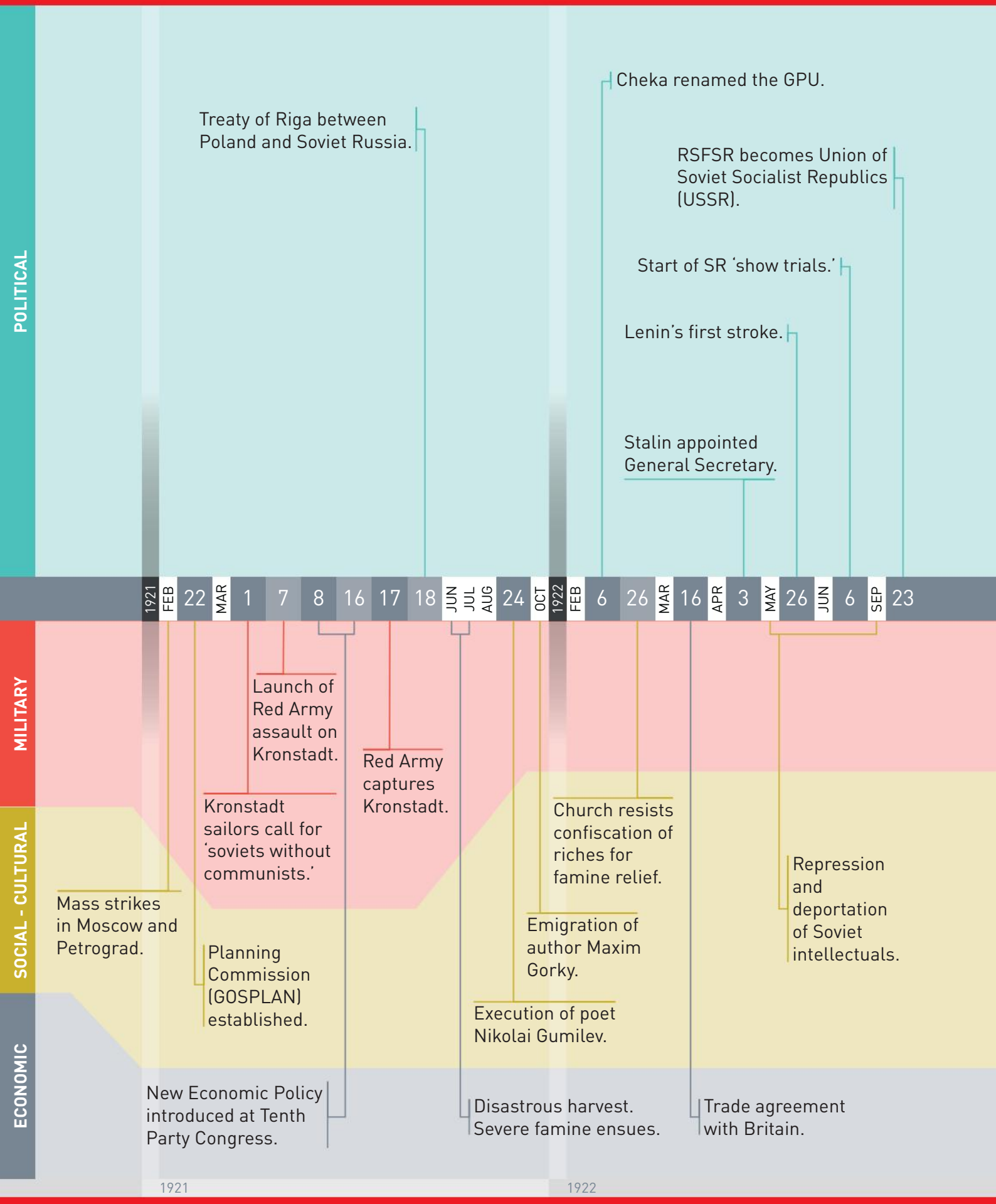
TOM RYAN
SCOTT SWEENEY

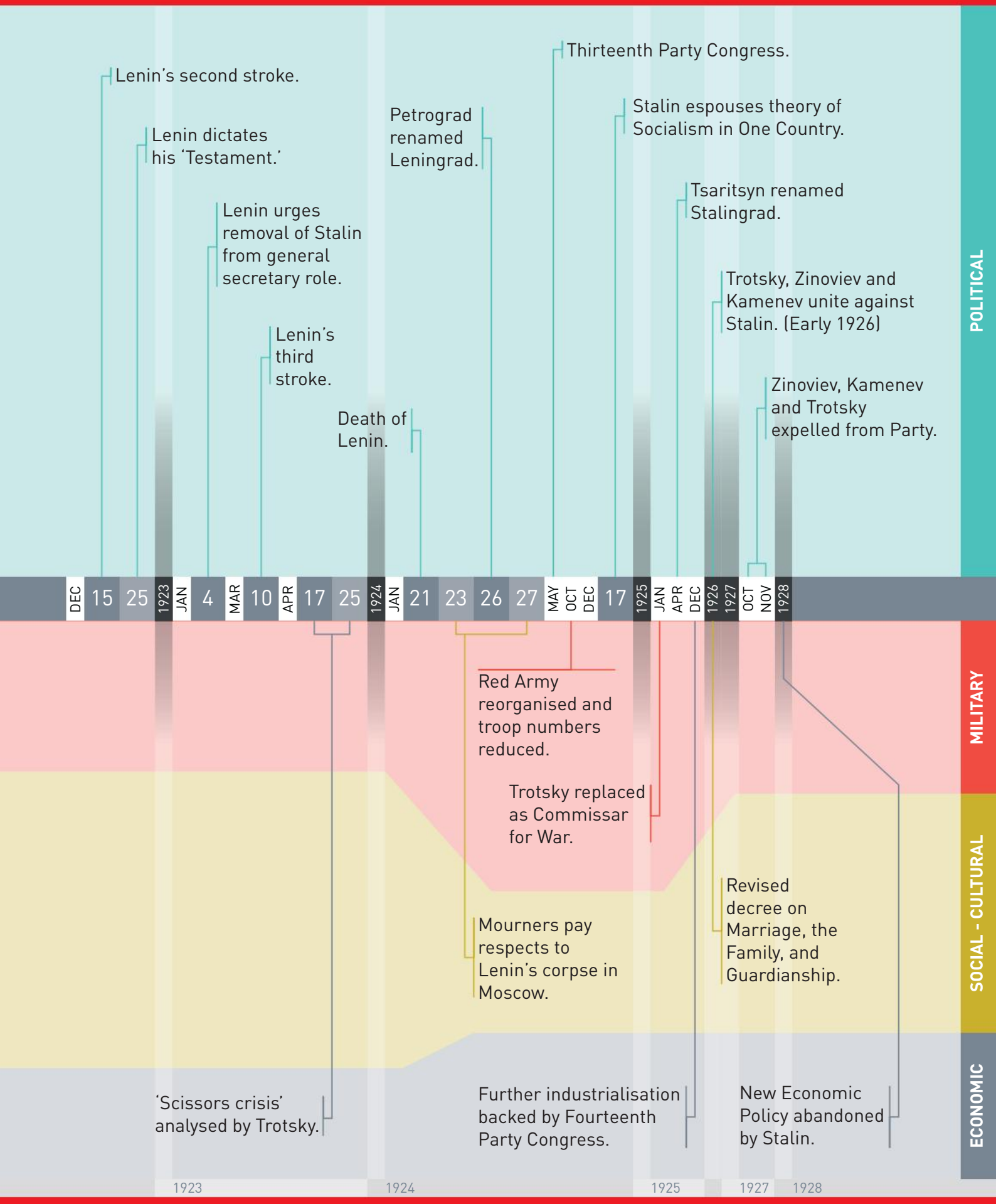
CHAPTER OVERVIEW

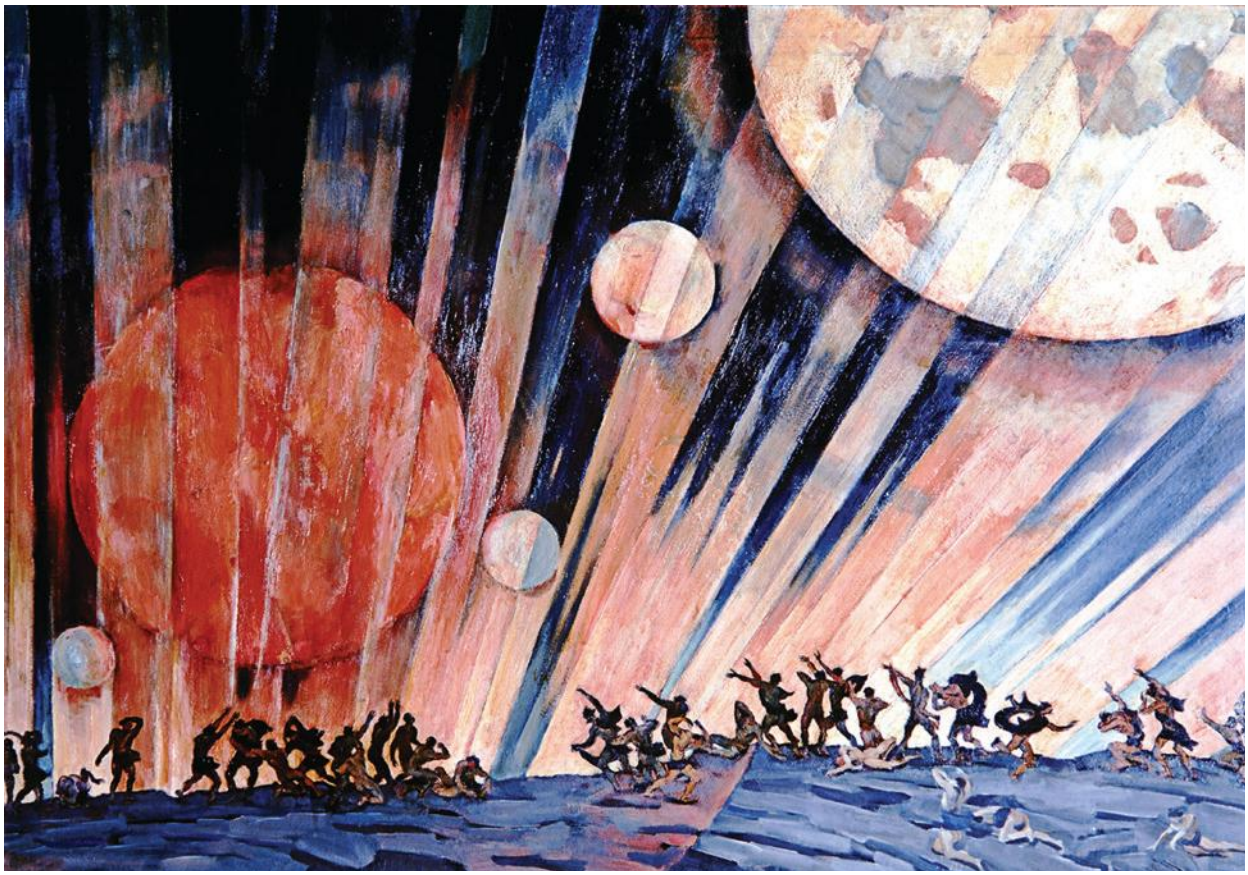



2 New Economic Policy
Response to anger over War Communism
Markets restored ('temporary measure')
Grain requisitioning, rationing abandoned
'Scissors crisis': agricultural prices drop
3 Opposition Groups
Splinter groups emerge at Tenth Party Congress
Decree 'On Party Unity' issued
Ongoing threats: Mensheviks, SRs, Green armies
'Suspect' intellectuals imprisoned
1921 to 1927
4 Evolution of the Cheka
Lenin calls for 'revolutionary legality'
GPU (part of NKVD) replaces Cheka
Renamed OGPU in 1923
Permanent legacy of tsarist Okhrana
Surveillance and agents-provocateurs
Armand, Kollontai improve women's rights
Literacy campaigns
Arts and theatre thrive (Mayakovsky, agitprop)
Lunacharsky promotes Proletcult, futurism
5 Social and Cultural Change

TIMELINE


POLITICAL
MILITARY
SOCIAL - CULTURAL
ECONOMIC
Treaty of Riga between Poland and Soviet Russia.
Cheka renamed the GPU.
RSFSR becomes Union of Soviet Socialist Republics (USSR).
Start of SR 'show trials.'
Lenin's first stroke.
Stalin appointed General Secretary.
1921 FEB 22 MAR 1 7 8 16 17 18 JUN JUL AUG 24 OCT 1922 FEB 6 26 MAR 16 APR 3 MAY 26 JUN 6 SEP 23
Launch of Red Army assault on Kronstadt.
Kronstadt sailors call for 'soviets without communists.'
Red Army captures Kronstadt.
Church resists confiscation of riches for famine relief.
Repression and deportation of Soviet intellectuals.
Mass strikes in Moscow and Petrograd.
Planning Commission (GOSPLAN) established.
Emigration of author Maxim Gorky.
Execution of poet Nikolai Gumilev.
New Economic Policy introduced at Tenth Party Congress.
Disastrous harvest. Severe famine ensues.
Trade agreement with Britain.
1921
1922


Lenin's second stroke.
Lenin dictates his 'Testament.'
Lenin urges removal of Stalin from general secretary role.
Lenin's third stroke.
Death of Lenin.
Petrograd renamed Leningrad.
Thirteenth Party Congress.
Stalin espouses theory of Socialism in One Country.
Tsaritsyn renamed Stalingrad.
Trotsky, Zinoviev and Kamenev unite against Stalin. (Early 1926)
Zinoviev, Kamenev and Trotsky expelled from Party.
POLITICAL
DEC 15 25 1923 JAN 4 MAR 10 APR 17 25 1924 JAN 21 23 26 27 MAY OCT DEC 17 1925 JAN APR DEC 1926 1927 OCT NOV 1928
Red Army reorganised and troop numbers reduced.
Trotsky replaced as Commissar for War.
MILITARY
Mourners pay respects to Lenin's corpse in Moscow.
Revised decree on Marriage, the Family, and Guardianship.
SOCIAL - CULTURAL
'Scissors crisis' analysed by Trotsky.
Further industrialisation backed by Fourteenth Party Congress.
New Economic Policy abandoned by Stalin.
ECONOMIC
1923
1924
1925
1927
1928



The New World by Konstantin Fedorovic Juon, 1921.

INTRODUCTION

By 1921, Soviet Russia was in economic and social turmoil. Lenin recognised the desperation of the situation and set about easing the discontent of the peasantry and reviving the economy. This was no easy feat. Many Bolsheviks staunchly opposed the abandonment of War Communism; there were others who voiced concerns over the party's bureaucratic and dictatorial nature. In the midst of this critical turning point Lenin's iron will triumphed. A more moderate approach to economics was reflected in the New Economic Policy (NEP). Rebellions in the countryside decreased and living standards generally improved. There were, however, worries over inconsistent outputs in different sectors of the economy, and radicals in the party remained uneasy. Whilst centralised control over economics relaxed in the 1920s, civil liberties were not forthcoming. As Robert Service argues, 'Lenin's Russia in the years of the NEP still outmatched Nicholas II's in political unfreedom.'[1] Felix Dzerzhinsky continued to imprison opponents of the Communist regime. His Cheka was renamed and granted permanent status by the Soviet constitution. A more telling example of Bolshevik intolerance was seen in the merciless repression of the Kronstadt uprising and the remaining peasant rebellions. Yet for all its brutality and hardship, the Russian Revolution created an opportunity for people to make exciting plans for a future world. Under the revolutionary regime new social values emerged, with improved

PODCAST ON AFTERMATH OF RUSSIAN CIVIL WAR

1 Robert Service, *The Russian Revolution 1900–1927* (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 1986), 76.

conditions for women, and artistic and scientific experimentation flourished in some quarters. Indeed, the 1920s were seen as a period of 'cultural revolution' in Russia. Intellectual debate was diverse and original. Despite signs of increasing censorship, society was fairly pluralistic. Brutal dictatorship was therefore not the sum total of the revolutionary experience. In order to understand the allure of the new society, it is important to consider its more progressive and idealistic elements, which helped to capture the hearts and minds of revolutionaries.

When Lenin died in 1924, it was widely assumed that Trotsky would replace him as Soviet leader. Stalin, however, used his position as general secretary of the Communist Party to launch his own leadership ambitions; four years later he was the almost-undisputed leader of the Soviet Union. Stalin went on to become the so-called 'Red tsar,' one of history's most brutal dictators.

Under the Bolshevik regime, cities were renamed to commemorate Communist leaders, e.g. Leningrad and Stalingrad.

THE KRONSTADT REVOLT

Kronstadt sailors: 'The autocracy has fallen. The Constituent Assembly has departed to the realm of the damned. The commissarocracy is collapsing. The moment has come for a true government of toilers, a government of soviets.'

By the end of 1920 there were clear indications that whilst the Civil War was won, the Communist regime was in dire trouble. The economy was in tatters; the urban population was ravaged by cold, hunger and disease; the peasants in many regions were in open revolt. Although the peasant rebellions constituted a great threat to the new regime, it was the Kronstadt sailors who forced a re-evaluation of Communist Party policies. Lenin would later remark, 'This was the flash which lit up reality better than anything else.'[2]

DID YOU KNOW?

A resolution passed by a meeting of factory workers in 1919 called for the leather jackets of commissars to be made into shoes for workers.

Following the Civil War, the Communists attempted to deal with the problems of economic reconstruction by supporting the continuation of War Communism. Grain requisitioning was increased, a military-style approach to the workplace was adopted and battalions of soldiers were reorganised into 'labour armies.' It was an ill-conceived strategy. Strengthening War Communism only made people more resentful of the government. The masses might rally around the Soviet banner when threatened by White armies or foreign invaders, but the methods of war were not applicable during peacetime. The peasants had long resented the prodrazverstka; they hated it even more once they realised their grain was no longer feeding soldiers. The Ukraine and Tambov were already in open revolt. Guerrilla fighters, such as Mahkno and Antonov, had raised formidable peasant armies and had largely driven out Soviet authorities in these regions. Soldiers drafted into labour armies wanted to go home. Workers wanted a return to economic and social stability, not more dictatorial controls. Anger and disillusionment festered amongst the workers of Russia's major cities throughout the winter days of 1921. Shortages of coal and fuel led to the closure of many industries, including Petrograd's massive Putilov steel works. Workers were cold, hungry and many were now temporarily unemployed. Tensions flared in late February when thousands of Moscow and Petrograd workers went on strike over cutbacks in their bread rations and the military methods imposed on factories. Martial law was declared. Detachments of trainee Red Army officers patrolled the streets and stood guard outside factories. The stand-off escalated into a volatile

2 Cited in Isaac Deutscher, *Stalin: A Political Biography* (London: Penguin Books, 1966), 224.

threat to the Communist regime after sailors from Kronstadt became aware of the workers' and peasants' plight.

The Kronstadt sailors had been one of the Bolsheviks' most loyal fighting forces. They were described by Trotsky as 'the pride and glory of the Revolution...the reddest of the red.' Sailors from Kronstadt had stormed the Winter Palace and served valiantly in the Civil War; they were belligerently revolutionary. The island of Kronstadt was the first area to be fully controlled by the Soviets under the Provisional Government. Although the sailors were militant supporters of the Bolsheviks, many also maintained sympathies towards the Left SRs and anarchist groups. They supported the Bolsheviks in October 1917 and the Civil War because they accepted the superior organisation and determination of the party.

Hearing news of the crackdown on workers' protests in 1921, the Kronstadt sailors sent a delegation to Petrograd to investigate. The sailors were dismayed at what they found. On seeing armed guards outside factories one sailor wrote, 'One might have thought that these were not factories but the forced labour prisons of tsarist times.'[3] The sailors were also deeply disturbed by (untrue) rumours of the suppression of worker protests by Cheka firing squads. The sailors were already unhappy as quite a few were young men of peasant background who had been recruited in the months preceding the February strikes. They were enraged after receiving letters from families telling them of increased grain requisitioning.

On 1 March 1921, thousands of sailors rallied in Kronstadt's Anchor Square. The meeting was addressed and chastised by Soviet CEC chairman Kalinin (Sverdlov's replacement) and the commissar of the Baltic Fleet. Their speeches were to no avail. The rally endorsed a resolution drafted by the sailor Stepan Petrichenko, which called for significant changes within Soviet society.

3 Cited in Bruce Lincoln, *Red Victory: A History of the Russian Civil War* (New York: Simon & Shuster, 1989), 494.

4 Cited in Robert Daniels, *A Documentary History of Communism and the World: From Revolution to Collapse* (New England: New England University Press, 1994), 137–8.

DOCUMENT

EXTRACT FROM *WHAT WE ARE FIGHTING FOR*, LETTER WRITTEN BY KRONSTADT SAILORS, 1 MARCH 1921

> After…the October Revolution, the working class had hoped to achieve its emancipation. The result has been to create an even greater enslavement of the individual man. The power of the police-gendarme monarchy has gone into the hands of the Communist-usurpers, who instead of freedom offer the toilers the constant fear of falling into the torture-chambers of the Cheka…[T]he sickle and the hammer – have actually been replaced…with the bayonet and the barred window, for the sake of preserving the calm, carefree life of the new bureaucracy of Communist commissars…Here at Kronstadt the first stone of the third revolution has been laid…[4]

ACTIVITY

SOURCE ANALYSIS

Read the extract from 'What We are Fighting For' and complete the tasks below.

1. What did the October Revolution hope to achieve and what was the result, according to the source?
2. Identify two or more criticisms of the Communist regime made by the Kronstadt sailors.
3. Referring to the extract and using your own knowledge, explain the causes of the Kronstadt uprising of March 1921.
4. To what extent does the extract add to an understanding of the problems faced by the Communist regime? In your response refer to the extract and to historical interpretations of the revolution.

The sailors condemned what they described as the replacement of the tsarist autocracy with a Communist 'commissarocracy.' They called for new soviet elections – 'Soviets without Bolsheviks.' They also demanded greater freedom of speech and press, the release of socialist political prisoners from Cheka jails, an end to grain requisitioning, the disbanding of labour armies and an end to military-style working conditions. Importantly, the Kronstadt sailors did not call for an end to the revolution. On the contrary, their demands were left-wing and revolutionary. They had not advocated greater freedom for all; only for workers, socialists and peasants. Nor had they called for a Constituent Assembly; the sailors were advocates of 'Soviet power.' What they did insist on was a return to the revolutionary values of October 1917. They accused the Communists of betraying the original goals of the Revolution. An article in a Kronstadt newspaper declared, 'All of Soviet Russia has been turned into an all-Russian penal colony.'[5]

The Kronstadt rebellion was a moral and military crisis for the Communists. A revolt by well-armed sailors on an island just twenty-five kilometres off the coast of Petrograd posed a serious military threat to the second most important city in Soviet Russia. If the rebellion was not pacified before the ice of the Gulf thawed, Kronstadt would be almost impossible to retake and its ships could menace the city. Of even greater importance was the moral dilemma posed by the rebellion. The 'reddest of the red' had turned on the party. The Communists flatly refused to negotiate with the sailors. Trotsky warned, 'Only those who surrender unconditionally may count on the mercy of the Soviet Republic.'[6] Those who chose to ignore this advice were faced with a bleak threat: 'You will be shot like partridges.' Lenin believed a hard-line response was required to what he deemed an act of counter-revolution. He argued that the 1917 revolutionaries on the island had been replaced by sailors sympathetic to SRs, Mensheviks and 'White Guardists.'

The Kronstadt sailors (as they had been in 1917) were a mix of radicals – Bolsheviks, SRs, Anarchists – who were fluid in their political allegiances. As Israel Getzler has convincingly shown, they had remained a more or less united group since the October days.[7] Whether the Communists knew and chose to ignore this fact is debatable. What is certain is that Lenin and his comrades were not willing to accept any opposition to their regime or show any signs of weakness. If they had given in to the demands of the rebels, further outbreaks and opposition might have eventuated. The countryside was already seething with discontent. They needed to project an image of strength and unshakeable intolerance toward critics of the Soviet government. On 7 March Trotsky ordered 50 000 Red Army soldiers under General Tukhachevsky to launch an offensive. One of the leaders of the rebellion, Stepan Petrichenko, later wrote, 'Standing waist deep in the blood of toilers, the bloody Field-Marshall Trotsky opened fire on revolutionary Kronstadt.'[8]

The 16 000 Kronstadt sailors waged a fierce and heroic battle against Soviet troops. The assault was led by trainee Red Army officers and backed up by Cheka machine gunners. Chekists were told to shoot down any Communist soldiers who retreated without orders. Heavy artillery was brought in. Three-hundred delegates from the Tenth Communist Party Congress joined the offensive to boost the morale of rank-and-file soldiers. Though they held off the invaders for more than a week, the Kronstadt sailors were eventually

DID YOU KNOW?

Many Red Army officers had served in the imperial armed forces and had assisted the tsar in quelling rebellions. The Cheka also drew on tsarist torture manuals to extract confessions.

5 Cited in Lincoln, *Red Victory*, 511.
6 Cited in Lincoln, *Red Victory*, 500.
7 Israel Getzler, *Kronstadt 1917–1921: The Fate of a Soviet Democracy* (London: Cambridge University Press, 1983), 207–8.
8 Cited in Lincoln, *Red Victory*, 503.

DID YOU KNOW?

Finnish authorities requested that the Communist government retrieve bodies from the Gulf following the Kronstadt uprising. There were concerns that masses of bodies would wash up on the Finnish coast once the ice thawed.

overwhelmed. At least 10 000 Red Army soldiers were killed during the siege; the Kronstadt sailors lost 5000 men. Victor Serge described the events as 'the beginning of a ghastly fratricide...a senseless and criminal agony.'[9] Having captured the naval base on 17 March, Communist authorities sent in more Chekists, who executed some 2329 sailors and sent 6459 to prison or labour camps.[10] Thousands of sailors evaded capture by fleeing across the ice to Finland.

Many contemporary observers, including some previous supporters of the party, viewed the suppression of Kronstadt as the point at which the Bolsheviks broke their last true links with the working class and with the ideals of October. Anarchist Emma Goldman wrote of hearing the Communist anthem, 'The Internationale,' following Kronstadt: 'Its strains once jubilant to my ears now sounded like a funeral dirge for humanity's hope.'[11] Historians likewise see Kronstadt as a turning point in the Communist revolution. Sheila Fitzpatrick argues it was 'a symbolic parting of the ways between the working class and the Bolshevik Party.'[12] The revolutionaries had turned on their own. Peter Kenez argues that by defeating the sailors the party 'in effect repudiated some of the utopian, but nonetheless emotionally powerful, goals of the revolution.'[13] However, the party could hardly ignore an armed revolt in the midst of a supposed Communist stronghold.

Kronstadt was both a lesson learnt and a lesson taught by the regime. The Communists made it clear that they would respond to any challenge to their authority with brutal oppression, even if the critics were former supporters. Lenin was also aware of the origins of the rebellion, particularly peasant discontent over grain requisitioning and workers' strikes, and accepted that the current economic system was no longer feasible. A fundamental change in policy was in order. Leading members of the party had already been discussing alternative economic models; Kronstadt made change all the more urgent.

ACTIVITY

KRONSTADT DIAGRAM

Create a diagram or flow-chart on the Kronstadt uprising of 1921. Include the following headings:

Causes:

- Grain requisitioning
- Labour armies
- Food and fuel shortages
- Other (state one or more).

Consequences:

- A military threat by 'the reddest of the red'
- Counter-revolution by SRs and Mensheviks
- Red Army assualt on Kronstadt
- Other (state one or more).

9 Cited in Margot Morcombe and Mark Fielding, *The Spirit of Change: Russia in Revolution* (Sydney: McGraw-Hill, 1998), 167.
10 Harold Shukman, *The Russian Revolution* (Gloucestershire: Sutton, 1998), 89.
11 Cited in Lincoln, *Red Victory,* 511.
12 Sheila Fitzpatrick, *The Russian Revolution,* 2nd edition (New York: Oxford University Press, 1994), 95.
13 Peter Kenez, *A History of the Soviet Union from the Beginning to the End* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999), 46.

THE NEW ECONOMIC POLICY

Vladimir Lenin: 'Let us retreat and construct everything in a new and solid manner; otherwise we shall be beaten.'

ELEMENTS OF THE NEP

Convened on 8 March 1921, the day after the opening offensive on Kronstadt, the Tenth Party Congress was the setting for Lenin's dramatic repudiation and reversal of the policies of War Communism. In its place he announced the New Economic Policy. The peasant rebellions and Kronstadt revolt had made it clear that the authoritarian economic policies of the Civil War were creating more problems than they were solving. Lenin told the Congress, 'What is needed now is an economic breathing spell.' Although productivity needed to be restored across all enterprises, the most pressing concerns were pacifying worker grievances and finding an incentive for the peasantry to produce more grain. According to Lenin, 'The national economy must be put back on its feet at all costs. The first thing to do is to restore, consolidate, and improve peasant farming.'[14] The essence of the NEP was the re-establishment of private trade and a relaxing of centralised state control over the economy.

The central planks of the NEP were as follows:

- Grain requisitioning was abandoned and replaced by 'a tax in kind,' which amounted to a certain percentage of a farmer's harvest. Once the tax was paid, peasants were allowed to keep their surplus and sell their produce to whomever they wished. In famine-devastated areas, central authorities waived the tax for the first year. The 'tax in kind' remained until 1924 when it was replaced by a tax in money, a result of the stabilisation of currency;
- Markets and private trading were legalised. Small businessmen were allowed to re-open stores and workshops. Some smaller factories were leased or sold by the government to private owners. Economic ties with foreign nations slowly resumed and a trade agreement with Britain was signed in 1922;
- Rationing and distribution of food by the government was phased out, as were various state-supplied services such as free public transport. Cash wages were reintroduced. A new currency backed by a gold standard was launched and inflation was brought under control;
- The more militarised aspects of workplace conditions, such as labour armies, were abandoned.

Historian Martin McCauley argues, 'If War Communism was a leap into socialism then the NEP was a leap out of socialism.'[15] The NEP was not, though, a wholesale return to private ownership of industry and capitalist trade. Lenin reassured the party that the Soviet state was to retain the 'commanding heights of the economy.'[16] Banking, the transport sector and heavy industries such as mining and metallurgy remained government enterprises. The NEP was nevertheless a noticeable step back from the principle of total, centralised control over trade and a move towards a mixed economy where capitalism existed alongside socialism. It was very much a return to the kind of economy that existed under State Capitalism in 1918. Christopher Hill gives a good summary

DID YOU KNOW?

Harry Young, a British Communist who attended the Tenth Party Congress as a guest, recalled Lenin's handling of debate over the NEP: 'Lenin spoke to the Congress like a ... grandad speaking to wayward children... he was administering a bitter pill. And they had to take it. And he just very quietly said, "We can't go on like this any longer, comrades"... and there was a sort of a subdued hush.' When challenged further by party colleagues, Lenin reportedly shouted, 'Please don't try teaching me what to include and what to leave out of Marxism: eggs don't teach their hens how to lay!'

14 Cited in Lincoln, *Red Victory,* 472.

15 Martin McCauley, 'Commissars and Commissariats of Sovnarkom,' in *The Blackwell Encyclopedia of the Russian Revolution,* ed. Harold Shukman (Oxford: Blackwell Publishers, 1988), 48.

16 Cited in Christopher Hill, *Lenin and the Russian Revolution* (London: Penguin, 1947), 141.

of how Lenin initially understood the development: '[he] always insisted that the New Economic Policy introduced in 1921 was really the old economic policy of 1918, but he never attempted to disguise the fact that it was a large-scale retreat, another breathing-space, a Brest-Litovsk on the economic front.'[17]

Under War Communism, securing surplus grain by force had been a complete disaster; the Communists were now obliged to resort to persuasion. Lenin had a hard time convincing many of his comrades to allow the peasantry to market their own grain. Like the Treaty of Brest-Litovsk, the NEP was a crisis of ideology for some and led to considerable friction within the party. A number of Communists were unhappy with what they saw as a break with true revolutionary strategy and a betrayal of the proletariat. Many had seen the Civil War years as a period of heroic struggle and believed centralised control of industry had been a great achievement. Had all the sacrifices been in vain? Lenin weathered the storm and admonished those who longed for a continuation of more militant practices; he insisted the NEP was nothing more than a disciplined retreat following the unsuccessful charge of War Communism. The NEP was a tactical withdrawal, an opportunity for the Communists to regroup; it was presented as a 'transitional' phase from capitalism to socialism.

Russian peasants winnowing grain.

COMMUNIST PARTY DEBATES OVER THE NEP

Gauging Lenin's real opinion on the NEP is problematic, as his views on the policy were sometimes unclear and changed over time. The NEP was initially seen as a retreat, a breathing space before the next onslaught of militant Communism. Campaigning on Lenin's behalf, Grigory Zinoviev was blunt in his explanation to the party rank-and-file: 'be clear that the New Economic Policy is only a temporary deviation, a tactical retreat, a clearing of the land for a new and decisive attack of labour against the front of international capitalism.'[18] Yet, elsewhere Lenin said War Communism was a mistake: 'It was not, nor could it be a policy that corresponded to the economic tasks of the proletariat. It was a temporary measure.' If the NEP was a return to the appropriate path of socialist development, was it really a retreat at all? Bukharin didn't think so. He argued that it was a stepping-stone toward socialism. In 1925, Bukharin created quite a stir after he instructed peasants to 'enrich' themselves under the NEP. It was not a popular slogan amongst Communist leaders. Josef Stalin made it clear to his supporters: 'The slogan "get rich" is not our slogan.'[19] Bukharin withdrew the comment, although he remained a staunch advocate of the NEP and its non-

17 Hill, *Lenin and the Revolution,* 140.

18 Cited in Richard Pipes, *A Concise History of the Russian Revolution* (New York: Vintage Books, 1996), 343–4.

19 Cited in Alec Nove, 'The NEP,' in *The Blackwell Encyclopedia of the Russian Revolution,* ed. Harold Shukman (Oxford: Blackwell Publishers, 1988), 120.

confrontational approach to the peasantry. Bukharin believed that Russia was 'riding into socialism on a peasant nag.'[20]

Others disagreed. Critics saw concessions given to the peasantry and abandonment of free services for the urban working class as the 'New Exploitation of the Proletariat.'[21] Discontent continued to simmer with the emergence of profiteering entrepreneurs colloquially known as 'nepmen.' Making considerable profits in a variety of speculations, the nepmen flourished under the NEP and were an unwelcome capitalist blemish on what was supposed to be an emerging socialist economy. There was a sense of restlessness amongst many Communists; veterans of the Civil War had a hard time accepting that the path to socialism might be a slow and steady one. It remained an unresolved itch that the more militant Communists longed to scratch. It would not be until the launch of Stalin's first Five Year Plan in 1928 that they were given the opportunity to do so.

RESULTS OF THE NEP

Nikolai Bukharin: 'We must say to the whole peasantry, to all its strata: enrich yourselves, accumulate, develop your economy.'

Notwithstanding the famine of 1921–22, during which five-million people died from malnutrition, the NEP was successful in turning the economy around – eventually. By 1926–27, production output in most industries had steadily increased (though only to pre-war tsarist levels). Production levels were also uneven between different industries. Manufacturing and light industry experienced considerable success. Exports of oil greatly surpassed those of tsarist times. Heavy industry stagnated and lagged behind the output achieved in 1913.[22] The iron-ore industry brought in only half of what it mined before World War I. Unemployment amongst workers involved in heavy industry rose to half a million by the end of 1922. Aware of the strategic importance heavy industry played in supporting the armed forces, party leaders grappled with how to modernise the industrial sector. It was not clear whether the NEP could produce sufficient capital for the construction of new metallurgy plants, mines and oil refineries. There was also a lack of foreign capital available to further enhance industrial production. Foreign governments were unwilling to risk investment in Russia after the widespread nationalisation of foreign businesses after the revolution, leading to stagnation in heavy industry in the 1920s.

VIDEO ON THE NEP

Despite this, the NEP reduced the discontent of workers and peasants. Strikes steadily decreased from 1922 onwards. Having recovered from famine, the countryside made considerable advances. Grain production rose to levels similar to the harvests of 1909–13, whilst livestock surpassed pre-war levels. Diversity in crops also improved, with greater production of potatoes, cotton and sugar beets. The rural sector even began to produce more than the manufacturing sector; by 1927, cultivated acreage in Russia matched that of pre-war levels. By the mid-1920s most peasants were better off than they were before World War I. There were improvements in farming and taxes were lower than under the tsars; however, peasants chose to consume (rather than sell) more of their produce than in the past, leading to lower quantities of grain entering the market.[23]

20 Cited in Nove, 'The NEP,' 121.
21 Cited in Orlando Figes, *A People's Tragedy: The Russian Revolution 1891–1924* (London: Pimlico, 1996), 771.
22 Leonard Schapiro, *The Communist Party of the Soviet Union* (New York: Random House, 1970), 221.
23 Kenez, *A History of the Soviet Union from the Beginning to the End*, 63.

SCISSORS CRISIS

One potential drawback emerged in 1923 when a growing gap between industrial and agricultural prices was noted. Whilst many factories were still struggling to produce sufficient quantities of goods that might be sold to the peasants, the countryside had recovered and had been steadily increasing its output. Prices remained high for manufactured goods, while the price of grain was becoming cheaper. It was feared that the higher price and scarcity of goods, combined with a lower grain price, would again lead to reluctance to trade amongst the peasantry. The inevitable result would be a halt in agricultural output as farmers reduced their crops in order to drive up prices. Another shortage of grain was definitely not what the Communists hoped to provoke. In a figurative way, Trotsky likened the problem created by the widening gap between industrial and agricultural prices to the open blades of a pair of scissors, which needed to be 'squeezed' and brought closer together. The squeeze to 'close the blades' was quickly implemented through the introduction of price controls in the industrial and manufacturing sectors.

ACTIVITIES

DATA ANALYSIS

Look carefully at the figures below and complete the tasks that follow.

YEAR	1913	1920	1921	1922	1923	1924	1925	1926
Coal (million tons)	29	8.7	8.9	9.5	13.7	16.1	18.1	27.6
Steel (thousand tons)	4231	–	183	392	709	1140	2135	3141
Electricity (million kWhs)	1945	–	520	775	1146	1562	2925	3508
Cotton fabrics (million metres)	2582	–	105	349	691	963	1688	2286
Sown land (million hectares)	105	–	90.3	77.7	91.7	98.1	104.3	110.3
Grain harvest (million tons)	80.1 (NB: weather excellent)	46.1	37.6	50.3	56.6	51.4	72.5	76.8

Source: Alec Nove, *An Economic History of the USSR 1917–1991* (London: Penguin, 1992), 89.

1. Which industries in Russia suffered most during the revolution?
2. Which industries were at or below pre-World War I levels by 1926?
3. Which areas of the economy had improved beyond pre-war levels by 1926?
4. Based on the figures, write two or three paragraphs on the effectiveness and viability of the NEP by 1926.

GROUP WORK

In a small group, discuss the questions below, noting down your responses on a large sheet of paper. Pin your sheet of paper to the wall and view the responses of other groups.

1. Why was the NEP introduced?
2. What did it involve?
3. How was the policy justified and criticised at the time?
4. How did the NEP change Russia between 1921 and 1927?

OPPOSITION GROUPS

Vladimir Lenin: 'Comrades, this is no time to have an opposition. Either you're on this side, or on the other, but then your weapon must be a gun, and not an opposition.'

WITHIN THE PARTY

As the Communist regime loosened its control over trade and small industries under the NEP, it simultaneously strengthened party discipline and political repression. Though willing to compromise in the economic sphere, Lenin was not about to extend similar freedoms to politics. Kronstadt was merely the first instance in which the Communists demonstrated that critics of the regime would not be tolerated. Having taken a step back from the ideal of a fully socialist economy, Lenin argued that the strictest discipline needed to be maintained within the party. His concerns stemmed from the emergence of opposition platforms at the Tenth Party Congress of 8–16 March 1921. Not only was the New Economic Policy contentious but also discontent simmered over increasing bureaucratisation, the role of workers' unions and the Politburo's dominance over lower levels of the party. The atmosphere at the Tenth Party Congress was tense as two main opposition platforms expressed their concerns to their comrades.

Headed by Alexandra Kollontai and Aleksandr Shlyapnikov, the Workers' Opposition was critical of the practice of placing non-Communist experts in charge of factories. The faction called for greater involvement by the proletariat in the day-to-day running of industry. Control of the economy should be handed over to an authority elected and directed by the trade unions. Concerns that the party was becoming too bureaucratic and dominated by self-serving officials were raised. The Bolsheviks were losing touch with their rank-and-file supporters – the workers. Trotsky's efforts at militarising the workplace and his proposal to put the unions under central government control were particularly controversial. Some argued the NEP was a surrender to the peasantry.

Lenin sought the swift approval of the NEP so that the rebellious peasantry could be appeased. The Worker's Opposition and the Democratic Centralists, another faction, struggled to gather support and were bitterly denounced by Lenin. Those who called for the unions to direct the economy were 'anarcho-syndicalists' whose proposals conflicted with the basic ideals of the party. According to Lenin, the demands of both rebel factions were far too idealistic to be taken seriously and merely provided ammunition for critics of the government. He called on the party to close ranks and for his comrades to put a lid on internal disagreements. The long-term survival of the regime depended on the party presenting a united front.

Taking firm steps to prevent further splits, Lenin introduced two decrees: 'On the Anarcho-Syndicalist Deviation' and 'On Party Unity.' The first declared that the demands of opposition factions were 'inconsistent with membership' of the Communist Party. Continued advocacy of these ideals would be illegal. Lenin introduced the decree 'On Party Unity' with almost an air of nonchalance: 'I do not think it will be necessary for me to say much on this subject.'[24] The decree banned 'factions' within the party. Individual Communists were still allowed to voice their ideas on the direction of the party and government; however, all

DID YOU KNOW?

Socialist newspapers avoided Bolshevik censorship with tactics employed under the tsar. If shut down they would open again the next day with a new name and editor. The Menshevik paper *Den* ('Day') had eight names in one month: 'Midday,' 'New Day,' 'Night,' 'Midnight,' 'The Coming Day,' 'New Day' (again) and 'Dark Night'. Its final edition was 'In the Dead of the Night'!

DID YOU KNOW?

Anarcho-syndicalism was a combination of distrust of the state and trade unionism. Proponents argued that workers should manage their own industries and share profits among themselves.

24 Cited in Schapiro, *The Communist Party*, 214.

opposition platforms were to be immediately disbanded. Those who refused to disband or formed factions in the future were threatened with expulsion. Facing threats from Kronstadt sailors and peasant insurgents, the Congress passed both decrees decisively. Members of the Workers' Opposition were amongst the delegates who joined the assault on Kronstadt. Although the decree 'On Party Unity' effectively stamped out the threat of internal division, it would later prove to have momentous significance. Karl Radek offered a prophetic reflection:

> In voting for this resolution I feel that it can be turned against us, and nevertheless I support it...Let the Central Committee in a moment of danger take the severest measures against the best party comrades, if it finds this necessary...Let the Central Committee be mistaken! This is less dangerous than the wavering which is now observable.[25]

Later, the ban on factions would allow Stalin to silence and remove his political opponents. In the end, Radek turned out to be one of the many 'best party comrades' purged from his position and executed by Stalin. In the meantime, Lenin's decree preserved party 'unity.'

MENSHEVIKS AND SRs

The formal bans on Mensheviks and Socialist Revolutionaries were removed in November 1918 and February 1919 respectively. Some members of these parties had already taken up posts in the administration, while others even joined the Communist Party. Communist tolerance of other left-wing groups did not last long. Menshevik and SR support for the 1921 strikes in Petrograd and Moscow led to a crackdown; the parties were again declared illegal 'counter-revolutionary' organisations and two-thousand Mensheviks were arrested following the Tenth Communist Party Congress. Most leading Mensheviks fled overseas. In June-August of 1922 the first of Soviet Russia's infamous political 'show trials' was conducted. Thirty-four Socialist Revolutionaries, including twelve members of the SR Central Committee, were brought to trial. They stood accused of plotting terrorist acts, counter-revolution, collusion with White generals and organising strikes. The defendants, who had already been imprisoned by the Cheka for months, were meant to stick to a pre-rehearsed script and plead guilty to trumped-up charges. The SR Central Committee refused to cooperate. Those who acted in accordance with the prosecution were acquitted; those who didn't were found guilty and executed. After spending a year-and-a-half in Lubyanka jail cells believing they were on death row, these prisoners had their sentences commuted to five years imprisonment.[26]

DID YOU KNOW?

Makhno's Green forces fought under the black flag of anarchism and were fond of the slogan: 'Beat the Whites until they are Red! Beat the Reds until they are Black!'

GREEN ARMIES

Outside the main cities, stringent measures were taken to strengthen Communist authority. Although the end of grain requisitioning dramatically reduced the number of peasant uprisings, 'rebel' provinces were nonetheless flooded with Red Army troops and Cheka commissars. Nestor Makhno's Green insurgents were suppressed by late 1920. Fifty-thousand Red soldiers poured into Tambov, whereupon Aleksandr Antonov's rebels were mercilessly crushed. General Tukhachevsky, who had quelled the Kronstadt uprising, headed military operations, and Vladimir Antonov-Ovseenko took charge of subduing the civilian population. Poisonous gas was used to flush partisans out of the forests

25 Cited in Schapiro, *The Communist Party,* 215–6.
26 Richard Pipes, *Russia Under the Bolshevik Regime* (New York: Vintage Books, 1994), 404–9.

and aeroplanes kept track of roving horsemen. Whole villages were threatened with execution if rebels didn't give themselves up. Any peasant found carrying a concealed weapon was killed on the spot. By August 1921 the last of the Green movements had been stamped out.

ARTISTS AND INTELLECTUALS

In May 1922 Lenin directed Dzerzhinsky's secret police to examine academic and literary journals and identify contributors suspected of being 'overt counter-revolutionaries' and 'corruptors of student youth.'[27] By September, 120 intellectuals had been imprisoned. Most were later deported to Germany or France. Many of Russia's outstanding thinkers, writers, musicians and artists fled or were forced from their homeland during the Bolshevik revolution. It was a massive cultural emigration that included the author Vladimir Nabokov and composers such as Sergei Rachmaninov. Unwell and disillusioned by the new regime, Maxim Gorky had left Russia in October 1921. Those who escaped to the émigré communities of Paris and Berlin were often the lucky ones. In August 1921 the talented poet Nikolai Gumilev was accused of involvement in a monarchist conspiracy (the charges were most likely unfounded) and arrested by the Cheka. Despite the efforts of Gorky, who petitioned Lenin on the poet's behalf, Gumilev was executed.

DID YOU KNOW?

The Communists launched an offensive against the Russian Orthodox Church in 1922–23. Saying that funds were needed for famine relief, authorities confiscated all valuable religious items – including Eucharist vessels. Bloody conflicts raged as the faithful rallied to defend their places of worship. Thousands were arrested and around 7000 priests, monks and nuns were killed.

ACTIVITY

CHECK YOUR UNDERSTANDING

Read about the NEP period and complete the tasks below.

1. In what ways did political repression continue during the NEP period?
2. Explain the significance of the Tenth Party Congress. List the criticisms made by the opposition platforms and explain how Lenin responded to their views.
3. Give two examples of censorship imposed by the Bolsheviks. Then explain how they created an atmosphere of self-censorship.

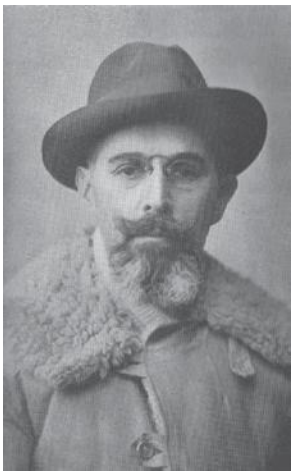
EVOLUTION OF THE CHEKA

Martyn Latsis: '[T]here is no sphere of life exempt from Vecheka coverage.'

In February 1922 the Cheka was replaced by the State Political Administration (GPU), a new branch of the People's Commissariat of the Interior (NKVD). The change reflected a transition from arbitrary violence and 'revolutionary expediency' towards what Lenin called 'revolutionary legality.' Ordinary crimes were now dealt by the Commissariat of Justice, whilst crimes against the state, espionage and counter-revolution remained the jurisdiction of the political police. The name 'Cheka' had become so associated with terror, that to give the impression of a more benign regime a name change was necessary. In real terms, not a great deal changed. Dzerzhinsky headed both the NKVD and the GPU. Many of the old Cheka staff were retained and the headquarters remained in Moscow's notorious Lubyanka building. The subordination of the GPU to the

CHEKA FLOW-CHART 

27 Cited in Pipes, *Russia Under the Bolshevik Regime,* 335.



Boris Cederholm.

DOCUMENT

EXTRACT FROM BORIS CEDERHOLM, *IN THE CLUTCHES OF THE TCHEKA*, 1929

> Attracted by the bait of 'Nep', business men, traders, and the intellectuals who had been spared by the terror during the period of militant Communism, crept out of their holes. The apparent possibilities of 'Nep' aroused some hopes of enrichment, in others of suitable work…Foreign merchants, contractors, and even financiers made their appearance…but disillusionment quickly set in, and the faces of those optimists who had seen in the 'Nep' a sign of evolution and retreat from the Communist positions began to grow longer and longer. The so-called dictatorship of the proletariat remained unshaken, and the Tcheka, reformed under the title of State Political Administration (GPU), and extended and perfected to an incredible degree, remained the old Tcheka with wider powers than ever…Thus the activities of the Tcheka became every moment more multifarious and elaborate, till they embraced the tiniest manifestations of life in the remotest corners of the Soviet State. The Tcheka is everywhere. It is in the schools, the factories, the party organisations, in all works and businesses, in the police, in the army, on the railways…The Tcheka is even in the home; for owing to the great number of ruined and collapsing houses, almost every flat is inhabited by several families, and there are always several secret agents of the Tcheka to every house.[28]

ACTIVITY

SOURCE ANALYSIS

Read the extract from Cederholm's *In the Clutches of the Tcheka* and complete the tasks below.

1. Identify two groups whose hopes were raised with the introduction of the NEP, according to Cederholm. Why did 'disillusionment set in' among these groups?
2. Give an example of Cederholm's use of language to convey an atmosphere of menace on the part of the Cheka.
3. Referring to the extract and using your own knowledge, explain how political repression continued into the NEP period.
4. How useful is this source in evaluating life in Russia during the NEP? Refer to historical interpretations in your response.

DID YOU KNOW?

Lenin said, 'A good Communist is a good Chekist at the same time.'

NKVD lasted until July 1923. Renamed the United State Political Administration (OGPU) and granted the status of an independent People's Commissariat, its existence was enshrined in the constitution of the USSR (Union of Soviet Socialist Republics, or 'Soviet Union'). No longer 'extraordinary,' the former Cheka was now a permanent Soviet institution.

While the OGPU retained much of the work of the Cheka, there was a decline in executions and the more extreme elements of police terror became the exception rather than the rule.[29] Other operations were refined and improved, however, such as surveillance of citizens and foreigners. Agent provocateurs (spies) were used to infiltrate businesses and organisations to expose potential counter-revolutionary activity. Suspect individuals were promptly arrested. Infiltrating all areas of society was the ultimate aim of the OGPU.

28 Boris Cederholm, *In the Clutches of the Tcheka* (London: George Allen & Unwin, 1929), 38–40.

29 Ronald Hingley, *The Russian Secret Police: Muscovite, Imperial, Russian and Soviet Political Security Operations, 1565–1970* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1970), 135.

Boris Cederholm, a Finnish businessman, was sent by his employers to Petrograd in 1923 to investigate possible contracts. Set up by an agent provocateur on false charges of laundering foreign goods (a small box of typewriter ribbons!), Cederholm was arrested and imprisoned by the OGPU from 1924 to 1926. In his memoirs Cederholm recalls the nature of political repression in Soviet Russia.

COMPARISONS WITH OKHRANA

The degree of continuity and change between the tsarist secret police, the Okhrana, and the Bolsheviks' Cheka/OGPU is often debated. George Leggett, a leading historian of Russia's secret police, said, 'The Vecheka continued a long tsarist political police tradition, but differed both quantitatively and qualitatively from its immediate predecessor.'[30]

The Cheka was easily the bigger and more ruthless of the two. The Okhrana had 15 000 staff while the Cheka had 100 000 (with a further 160 000 Frontier Troops). The Okhrana never instituted anything like the Red Terror: 14 000 people were executed during the last fifty years of imperial rule, while it is estimated that the Cheka executed up to 140 000 people, with another 140 000 killed in the suppression of peasant and other rebellions.[31] Whilst the visible and terrifying Cheka of the Civil War period was 'quantitatively and qualitatively' different from the Okhrana, the OGPU more closely resembled its tsarist predecessor. Formal procedures were imposed (at least in theory) and surveillance and agent provocateurs were preferred over terror. Despite changes in name and procedure, support for the secret police rarely wavered among the party elite.

ARTISTIC DEVELOPMENTS

Vladimir Mayakovsky: 'What we need is not a dead cathedral of art, where dead masterpieces can languish, but a living factory of the human spirit. We need raw art, raw words, raw deeds. Art...should be everywhere – on the streets, in streetcars, in factories and in workers' homes.'

Economics and class structures were not the only things challenged by the revolution. Education and the arts were also profoundly reconsidered. A passion for modernity and cultural revolution were driving forces for the Bolsheviks in the new society. Lenin and Anatoli Lunacharsky, commissar for Enlightenment, took particular interest: a new 'proletarian' culture and expressions of a 'socialist lifestyle' were imagined and trialled. These initiatives reflected a sense of excitement about creating a new society and a new culture: revolution was far more than politics and economics.

Even before the October Revolution, Russia had been in the midst of a so-called 'silver age' of literary and artistic experimentation. The exhilaration of 1917 and the heady days of the Civil War inspired further innovation amongst writers and artists. Many saw the revolutionary regime as the dawning of a new age. Futurism, which rejected past traditions and glorified technology, and the Proletarian Culture Movement (Proletcult) became the dominant influences. Artists of the non-Party Proletcult collective hoped that expressions of a new proletarian-style culture would bring about socialist revolution.

DID YOU KNOW?

One artistic movement, the 'nothingists,' expressed their revolutionary zeal by vowing to write, read, speak and print nothing!

30 George Leggett, 'The Vecheka,' in *The Blackwell Encyclopedia of the Russian Revolution*, ed. Harold Shukman (Oxford: Blackwell Publishers, 1988), 185.

31 Stephen A. Smith, *The Russian Revolution: A Very Short Introduction* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002), 63.

DID YOU KNOW?

Under the Bolshevik regime, workers held parades where they marched behind floats that represented their labour. Workers from a tool factory walked behind an oversized chisel, brewery workers walked behind barrels and so on. At one march the Association of Chemists marched behind a huge tablet with the following prescription: 'For the sick proletariat of Western Europe: one part general strike, one part united front, and one part soviet republic. Ordered by Doctor Lenin. Dose: as much as is required.'

ACTIVITY ON RUSSIAN FUTURIST ART

DOCUMENT

REVOLUTIONARY POETRY

The Left March by Vladimir Mayakovsky

Rally the ranks into a march!
Now's no time to quibble or browse there,
Silence, you orators!
You
have the floor
Comrade Mauser.[32]
Enough of living by laws
that Adam and Eve have left.
Hustle old history's horse.
Left!
Left!
Left!
Ahoy, blue jackets!
Cleave skywards!
Beyond the oceans!
Unless
your battleships on the roads
blunted their keels' fighting keenness!
Baring the teeth of his crown,
let the lion of Britain whine, gale-heft.
The Commune can never go down.
Left!
Left!
Left!
There –
beyond sorrow's seas
sunlit lands uncharted.
Beyond hunger,
beyond plague's dark peaks
tramping the marching of millions!
Let armies of hirelings ambush us,
streaming cold steel through every rift.
L'Entente can't conquer the Russians.
Left!
Left!
Left!
Does the eye of the eagles fade?
Shall we stare back at the old?
Proletarian fingers
grip tighter
The throat of the world:
Chests out! Shoulders straight!
Stick the red flags adrift!
Who is marching there with the right?
Left!
Left!
Left![33]

32 The most common type of pistol used by the Cheka and Red Army.

33 Cited in Guerman, ed., *Art of the October Revolution* (Leningrad: Aurora Art Publishers, 1979), 52.

Traditional modes of artistic representation were thus abandoned or given socialist emphasis. Constructivist styles of sculpture and architecture emerged. Public sculptures in honour of tsarist leaders were replaced by busts of Marx, Engels and other revolutionaries. Grand plans were drawn up for remarkable new buildings that incorporated radical design. One of the most famous was Vladimir Tatlin's Monument to the Third Internationale. This building was to be twice the height of the Empire State Building with spiral fret work like the Eiffel Tower and massive rotating glass cylinders. It was to house a projector that illuminated images on clouds against the night sky and a huge screen on which news and proclamations could be displayed. Painters experimented with geometric form and 'proletarian' themes and writers embraced the sense that a new world was in the making. The poet Mayakovsky recalled his response to the October Revolution: 'To accept or not to accept? There was no such problem for me (and other Moscow futurists). It was my revolution...I did everything that was necessary.'[34]

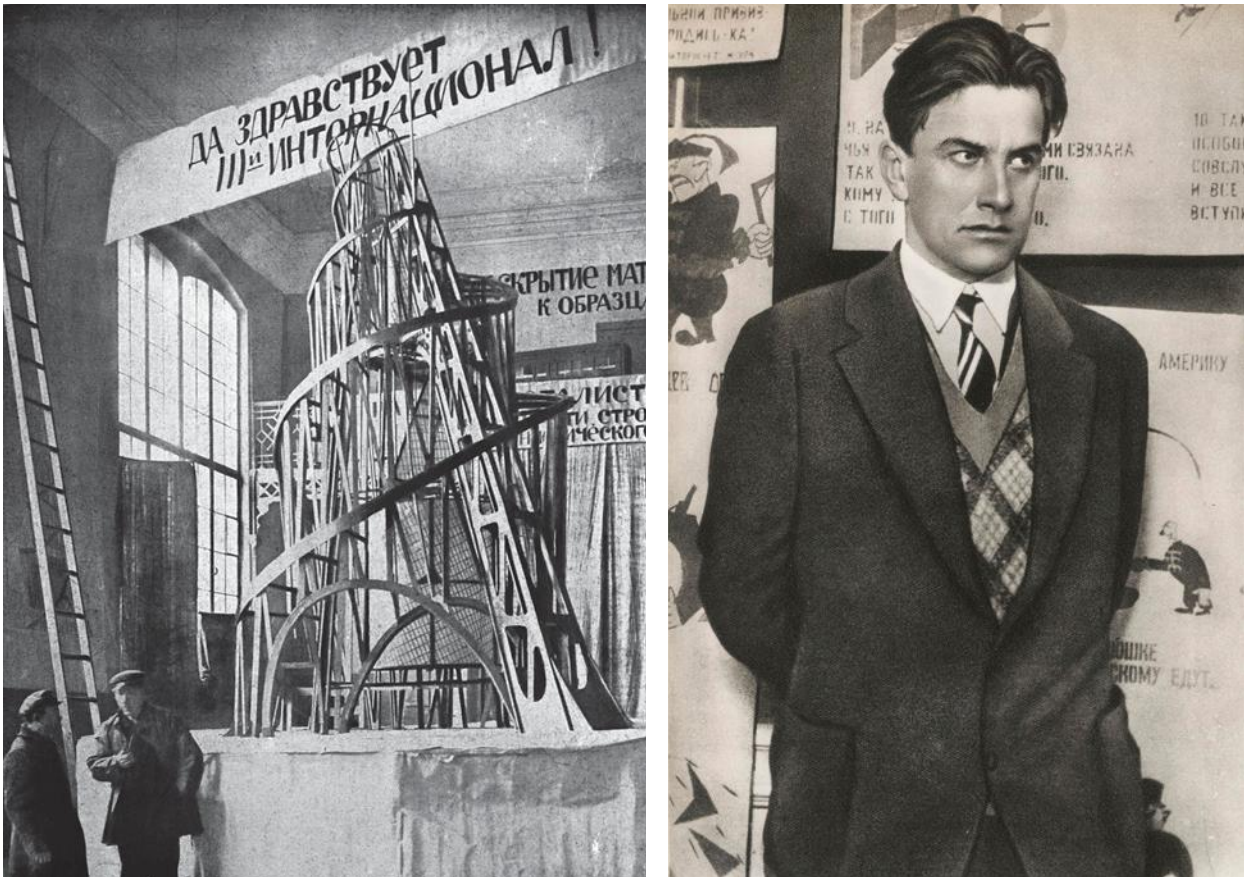
Inspiration for the revolutionary 'muse' came from a range of sources. These ranged from the mundane – factories, coal, steel and tools – to the romantic – Civil War battles and visions of the future. One group of classical musicians demonstrated their socialist convictions by performing as a conductorless orchestra. The musicians sat in a semi-circle facing each other so that changes in the piece could be communicated through eye contact. Repertoire was decided

DID YOU KNOW?

A friend of Mayakovsky's wrote of the Civil War years: 'In this terrifying world made of frost, stale herrings, rags, typhoid fever, arrests, bread lines, and armed soldiers, ... the theatres were jammed every evening.'

MORE ON THEATRE DURING CIVIL WAR

34 Cited in Harrison Salisbury, *Black Night, White Snow: Russia's Revolutions 1905–1917* (New York: Doubleday, 1978), 188.



Left: Model of the Monument to the Third Internationale, installed at an exhibition in Moscow in 1920, with Tatlin in the foreground holding a pipe. Illustration from Ivan Puni's book *Tatlin* (Protiv kubizma), 1921. Right: Vladimir Vladimirovitch Mayakovsky (1894-1930).

DID YOU KNOW?

One mass performance about the storming of the Winter Palace involved a 500-piece orchestra, 8000 performers and 100 000 spectators.

collectively and the interpretation of the music discussed by all; each musician learnt the whole score. They set themselves a 'production plan' of concerts and rehearsals and modelled efficiency to the public by starting exactly on time.[35]

Visual imagery became the main tool of propaganda in a population where literacy levels were low. The Bolsheviks made ready use of the artists who were willing to work for them. Mayakovsky designed vibrant propaganda posters with captivating figures and witty captions that were easily understood by the general public. His Rosta window posters, made for display outside the Russian Telegraph Agency, were particularly striking.

'Beat the Whites with the Red Wedge', 1920.

Brightly painted agitational propaganda ('agitprop') trains spread the Bolshevik message across the countryside. Agitprop staff gave rousing speeches and handed out posters and pamphlets wherever they went. The agitprop trains were accompanied by theatre troupes and brass bands and often contained a movie theatre. Many Russians saw their first film in an agitprop train. There was even an agitprop ship, the *Red Star*, which travelled the Volga and Kama rivers. Buildings were given elaborate decoration and public spaces, such as Moscow's Red Square, witnessed mass street theatre displays. The 'storming' of the Winter Palace was, naturally, a favourite topic.

35 Richard Stites, *Revolutionary Dreams: Utopian Vision and Experimental Life in the Russian Revolution* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1989), 135–8.

ACTIVITY

ART REVIEW

Imagine you are a Russian journalist writing in the period 1921–27. Your magazine specialises in new artistic trends. Write a review of an artwork, poem or performance that was produced in this period. The review should be 700 words long and assess the artistic and persuasive techniques used to convey a Communist message.

Alternatively, create your own painting, propaganda poster, poem or sculpture that reflects the values of the Communist regime. Present it to the class and explain what values of the new society you have tried to reflect.

Left: 'Recall the Day of the Red Army', Rosta poster by Mayakovsky, 1920. It reads:

1) We killed the Russian Whites, but that wasn't enough
2) The monster of international capitalism still exists
3) Therefore we still need the Red Army
4) Therefore we obviously must help the Red Army.

DAILY LIFE

Under the Bolshevik regime everyday practices were remodelled to incorporate new Soviet rituals. Christenings were replaced by Octoberings, where parents vowed to raise their children as loyal Communists. Couples formalised their relationships with 'red marriages.' Cities were renamed to commemorate Communist leaders, such as Leningrad, Trotsk, Sverdlovsk, Stalingrad and Zinovievsk. Children were given names such as Oktyabrina, Revolyutsiya, Ninel (Lenin backwards), Marx, Engelina, Rosa (after Rosa Luxemburg), Terrora, Illich and Illina.[36] Traditional Christian holidays were replaced by celebrations of May Day and the anniversary of the October Revolution. To reflect the new egalitarianism, 'Mister,' 'Sir,' 'Madam' and so on were replaced by 'Comrade.' Concerned that swearing was a product of poverty and class privation, Trotsky even called for the Russian language to be refined and freed from coarseness.[37] Poet and theorist Aleksei Gastev extolled the use of acronyms and short expressions as a means to 'mechanise' speech for efficiency. It was also hoped that everyday dress would change to reflect the new society; designs for 'socialist' clothing based on Constructivist ideals were drawn up. There was even talk of disposable clothing made of paper!

36 Figes, *A People's Tragedy*, 747.
37 Dmitri Volkogonov, *Trotsky: The Eternal Revolutionary* (Hammersmith: HarperCollins, 1996), 224.

A civil marriage conducted beneath the red flag, officiated by a provincial commissar.

DID YOU KNOW?

A sample reader for the Red Army included the following:

B

The Bolsheviks hunt the burzhoois (bourgeois)

The burzhoois run a mile

K

It's hard for cows to run fast

Kerensky was Prime Minister

M

The Mensheviks are people

Who run off to their mothers

Ts

Flowers smell sweet in the evening

Tsar Nicholas loved them very much

38 B. Lincoln, *Red Victory*, 345.

EDUCATION AND LITERACY

Lenin: 'The illiterate person stands outside of politics. First it is necessary to teach him his ABCs. Without it, there are only rumours, fairytales, and prejudices, but not politics.'

For the Bolsheviks, conquering illiteracy was crucial. Considerable efforts were made by leading Bolsheviks and volunteer activists to improve the education of ordinary Russians. It was believed that science, education and socialism would lead to the creation of a new type of 'Soviet man.' The newly-acquired skill of reading also offered many people a glimmer of hope in the midst of economic hardship. Due to the hardships and scarcities of the Civil War, early campaigns to 'liquidate' illiteracy focused almost entirely on soldiers in the Red Army. Compulsory reading lessons were introduced in April 1918. As they marched, soldiers sang: 'Two days of study, then a week in battle. Two days with pencils, a week with bayonets.'[38] During the Polish-Soviet War cavalrymen rode with cards on their backs bearing letters of the Russian alphabet for the troops behind them to recite as they marched. Nikolai Podvoisky, head of the Red Army training administration, declared, 'Our word is our best weapon.'

Reading opened up new worlds of knowledge and the sense of liberation it instilled was a moving experience for many. Dora Elkina, a Bolshevik activist, was sent to teach soldiers stationed along the Southern Front. At the start of one lesson Elkina wrote on a blackboard a sentence for the class to learn: 'Masha ate the kasha' (the equivalent of 'Mary ate the porridge'). The soldiers thought this was quite funny. They heckled and laughed, asking silly questions: 'Who is Masha? What kind of kasha?' On the verge of losing her temper, Elkina began a political discussion, explaining why the country was so short of staple foods, like kasha, and why loyal Red Army men could not yet go home to their Mashas. The soldiers began to settle and Elkina wrote on the board: 'We are not slaves, slaves we are not.' This struck a chord with the soldiers. To be respected and not treated as 'slaves' were key ideals that inspired much revolutionary enthusiasm. They begged Elkina to teach them this powerful set of words. 'We are not slaves, slaves we are not' became a common sentence in reading texts of the 1920s and 1930s and was the first sentence that millions of Russians learnt to read.[39]

Jochen Hellbeck points out that some Soviet citizens, having learnt to write, expressed revealing thoughts about post-revolution Russia in their diaries: 'They held in common a striving to inscribe their life into a larger narrative of the revolutionary cause. ... The power of the Communist appeal, which promised that those who had been slaves in the past could remold themselves into exemplary members of humanity, cannot be overestimated. It is poignantly expressed in the groping autobiographical narratives of semi-literate Soviet citizens who detailed their journeys from darkness to light.'[40]

The strangeness of new words and the power they represented had some amusing outcomes. During a visit to the Tambov Province in mid-1920, a young Red Army recruit revealed his new knowledge to an audience of peasants at a propaganda meeting:

> Comrades! Can you tell in diameters what you know of the internal size of our victorious Red Army? I am sure that diametrically-perpendicularly you can not say anything about its internal size. Our victorious Red Army on a scale always beats our enemies in parallel. To understand the axiom, you ought to think not in straight lines, like women, but perpendicularly like men. Then the two radiuses will be equal to a diameter.[41]

The audience exclaimed: 'See how clever he has become! All those words! Where did he learn them? He is completely educated!' Although these words were used nonsensically, their meaningfulness to the speaker was important and the impression they made on his audience cannot be denied. Learning to read also allowed people to seek new knowledge; one peasant wrote asking officials to send him 'a list of books published on comets, stars, water, the earth, and sky.'[42]

Throughout the 1920s volunteers travelled the countryside to teach people to read. In cities, free workers' reading rooms were established and intensive courses for talented (though formally uneducated) adults were offered. Experiments in school curriculum were undertaken. In May 1918 schools were standardised; Consolidated Labour Schools were administered by the Commissariat of Enlightenment. Classes were co-educational and attendance was compulsory (though the latter was hard to enforce). As commissar of enlightenment, Lunacharsky was passionate about modern educational theories such as the Montessori method. He felt that students should 'learn by doing.'[43] Many of Lunacharsky ideas were progressive and would fit comfortably in a modern

DID YOU KNOW?

George Orwell's *1984*, about a dystopic totalitarian society, was partly based on the Russian Revolution. One fascinating aspect of the novel is the remodelling of the English language to reduce the opportunity for free thought. The language imposed by the 'Big Brother' state – Newspeak – attempts to make all words functional and devoid of emotion. For example, the word 'free' can only be used to describe an absence (e.g. 'this dog is free of lice') rather than a state of being. The concept of political freedom is replaced by 'thoughtcrime.'

39 Lincoln, *Red Victory,* 601.
40 Jochen Hellbeck, *Revolution on My Mind: Writing a Diary Under Stalin* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2006), 22.
41 Cited in Figes, 'The Revolution and its Language in the Village,' in *The Russian Revolution: Blackwell Essential Readings in History*, ed. Martin Miller (Oxford: Blackwell, 2001), 98.
42 Cited in Smith, *The Russian Revolution,* 145.
43 Cited in Pipes, *Russia Under the Bolshevik Regime,* 316.

PODCAST ON WOMEN AND FAMILIES AFTER 1917

classroom. Group work was encouraged, as was a more collaborative relationship between teacher and students. Instructions issued by education authorities stated: 'the teacher must be an organiser, an assistant, an instructor and above all an older comrade, but not a superior officer.'[44] Moves were made towards an inter-disciplinary curriculum. Excursions to factories, museums and theatres were encouraged. Students were expected to manage their own behavior and 'excessive' discipline by teachers was discouraged. Some argue that this approach only led to classroom chaos and low standards: Richard Pipes, for example, said that '...the only innovations that struck root were those directed against academic standards and teachers' authority.'[45] Some party members likewise complained that '...nothing of any use was being taught in the experimental schools, that the whole system of education had become a hotbed of anarchists.'[46] The mid-1920s saw the adoption of a more traditional education system. By then, fifty-one per cent of Russians could read and write compared with twenty-three per cent at the turn of the century (although females still had lower literacy rates than men).[47] By the mid-1930s, there were very few illiterate Russians.[48]

Alexandra Kollontai.

WOMEN'S RIGHTS

Alexandra Kollontai: 'In the name of equality, of liberty, and of love, we call upon the working women and working men, peasant women and peasants, courageously and with faith to [reconstruct] human society... rendering it more perfect, more just, and more capable of assuring to the individual the happiness which he deserves.'

Legislative improvements for women were a significant part of the new society and an achievement of which Lenin was proud.[49] Female members of the Bolshevik Party – Bolshevichki – had a long tradition of active involvement as revolutionary agitators. As Barbara Evens Clements argues, 'The Bolshevichki were engaged in all the activities that prepared the way for their party's seizure of power in October.'[50] Inessa Armand, Alexandra Kollontai and Nadezhda Krupskaya were well respected by their party colleagues and, after October, put women's rights on the political agenda. Kollontai and Armand were particularly prominent. A key ideal of the Bolshevichki was the emancipation of women – regardless of social class – from their shared experience of patriarchy and prejudice. In Russia, misogynist (anti-female) attitudes were exemplified by the folk saying, 'A chicken is not a bird, and a baba [peasant wife] is not a human being.' Bolshevichki saw gender equity as fundamental to a new Communist society.

Much like their endeavor to bring the peasant economy under central control, the Bolsheviks' influence on gender relations in the villages was limited. Women in the countryside were given the right to act as heads of households and were granted equal rights in ownership of land. Peasant women were, however, suspicious of perceived threats to the village community from external authorities. False rumours that women were to be 'nationalised' and communally 'shared' fuelled these suspicions. Bolshevichki activists sent to the countryside were often abused rather than welcomed by village women.

44 Cited in J. P. Nettl, *The Soviet Achievement* (London: Thames and Hudson, 1967), 111.
45 Pipes, *Russia Under the Bolshevik Regime,* 318.
46 Nettl, *The Soviet Achievement,* 112.
47 Smith, *The Russian Revolution,* 145.
48 Michael Glenny, 'Anatoli Lunacharsky,' in *The Blackwell Encyclopedia of the Russian Revolution,* ed. Harold Shukman (Oxford: Blackwell Publishers, 1988), 347.
49 Beryl Williams, *Lenin* (Essex: Pearson Education, 2000), 154.
50 Barbara Evans Clements, 'Bolshevik Women,' in *The Russian Revolution: Blackwell Essential Readings,* ed. Martin Miller (Oxford: Blackwell Publishers),187.

A women's street parade in revolutionary Russia.

Despite setbacks in rural areas, improvements were apparent in urban centres where new laws aimed at freeing women from the bonds of patriarchy (male domination) had considerable impact. The December 1917 Decree on Marriage stipulated that marriage was an act of mutual consent and divorce was made more accessible through a straightforward civil process. Women were guaranteed the right to equal pay in the workplace; campaigns against prostitution were launched; laws discriminating against children born outside marriage were abolished. Abortion was legalised in November 1920 and made available free of charge.

In 1919 the Women's Department of the Central Committee Secretariat (Zhenotdel) was formed to promote women's rights. Headed by Inessa Armand until her death in 1920 and thereafter by Alexandra Kollontai, Zhenotdel set up crèches, communal kitchens and laundries to liberate women from housework and thus enable greater involvement in the party and the workplace. Efforts were made to improve women's literacy and industrial skills. Ella Shistyer, a student and electrical engineer during the 1920s and 1930s, recalled the ideals and opportunities that the revolution inspired:

> What I liked was the promise of a happy, classless society in the future, in which everyone would enjoy all the good created by society...The Revolution gave me the right to feel equal to any man. It gave me the right to work, to study what I wanted to study.[51]

Gains in the area of women's rights – at least on paper – do seem substantial. However, many of these policies rested on the notion that women were to gain freedom by their own collective effort, such as through Zhenotdel-sponsored laundries and kindergartens. For the most part the more difficult question of patriarchal attitudes was left unaddressed. As Linda Edmondson argues, 'The socially more radical possibility that men might take on traditionally feminine roles at home (as women were expected to take on men's at work) was never explored.'[52]

DID YOU KNOW?

Some Bolsheviks were known to have derisively referred to Zhenotdel as 'baba central' or 'babatdel.'

51 *Red Flag: Communism in Russia 1917–36*, PBS documentary, 1998: www.pbs.org/wgbh/peoplescentury/episodes/redflag/description.html.

52 Linda Edmondson, 'Women in 1917 and After,' in *The Blackwell Encyclopedia of the Russian Revolution*, ed. Harold Shukman (Oxford: Blackwell Publishers), 36.

DOCUMENT

EXTRACT FROM ALEXANDRA KOLLONTAI, *COMMUNISM AND THE FAMILY*, 1920

> [T]he old type of family has seen its day…since it needlessly holds back the female workers from more productive and far more serious work…The woman in the communist city no longer depends on her husband but her work. It is not her husband but her robust arms which will support her… Marriage is henceforth to be transformed into a sublime union of two souls in love with each other…In place of the individual and egotistic family, there will arise a great universal family of workers, in which all the workers, men and women, will be, above all, comrades.'[53]

ACTIVITY

SOURCE ANALYSIS

Read the extract from Kollontai's *Communism and the Family* and complete the tasks below.

1. Identify two reasons why, according to Kollontai, the 'old type of family' is outdated.
2. Identify two changes in family relations that will change under communism, according to Kollontai.
3. How does Kollontai's language convey a message of idealism? What does this say about the beliefs and attitudes of Communists at the time?
4. Referring to the extract and to your own knowledge, explain how the new regime changed the lives of Russian women.

Kollontai's theories on women's liberation were also misunderstood. Her advocacy of a woman's right to a fulfilled relationship, to a choice of partner and freedom from the onerous 'bonds' of marriage, was interpreted as an endorsement of sexual promiscuity. She was reported to have said that under communism the satisfaction of one's sexual desires would be 'as simple and unimportant as drinking a glass of water.'[54] Lenin did not approve. He retorted, 'To be sure, thirst has to be quenched. But would a normal person lie down in the gutter and drink from a puddle?'[55] Sheila Fitzpatrick argues that Kollontai '…was a believer in love rather than the "glass of water" theory of sex that was often attributed to her.'[56] Kollontai's involvement in the Workers' Opposition movement was the beginning of her political decline and her influence diminished after this point.

Whilst important gains were made, women's liberation did prove problematic. Amidst economic deprivation the Communist Party struggled to live up to the rhetoric of its decrees. Funds and experienced staff for communal kitchens and crèches were lacking. They might have had greater opportunities but most women were still expected to do the housework. The continuation of patriarchal attitudes, in the party and elsewhere, undermined the emancipatory effort. In the new society a baba was a human being, but, to borrow from George Orwell, some comrades were still more equal than others.

53 Cited in Daniels, *Documentary History of Communism,* 131–2.
54 Cited in Pipes, *Russia Under the Bolshevik Regime,* 333.
55 Cited in Figes, *A People's Tragedy,* 741.
56 Fitzpatrick, *The Russian Revolution,* 86.

MODERNISATION AND ELECTRIFICATION

Vladimir Lenin: 'Communism equals Soviet power plus the electrification of the whole country.'

The revolution was largely a struggle to achieve modernisation. Many Bolshevik policies were based on a utopian vision for the future; they considered revolution as a forward march towards economic, political, social and cultural improvement. The Communist victory in the Civil War and the NEP era brought these ideals to the fore in Sovnarkom policy. The revolution was no longer a bitter struggle for survival but a quest for a better life. Careful economic management combined with advances in science and technology were seen as critical to constructing socialism. Steve Smith describes this 'new strain in Bolshevik ideology' as 'productivist.'[57]

The productivist ethos was best demonstrated by the goal of electrification. In explaining how Russia would move towards socialism in the era of the NEP, Lenin asked,

> Is a direct transition from this condition predominating in Russia to Socialism conceivable? Yes, it is conceivable to a certain degree, but on one condition, the precise nature of which we now know thanks to an enormous piece of scientific work that has been completed. That condition is electrification. If we construct scores of district electric power stations...if we transmit electric power from these to every village, if we obtain a sufficient number of electric motors and other machinery, we shall not need, or shall hardly need, transition stages, intermediary links between patriarchalism and Socialism.[58]

Even before the introduction of the NEP, Lenin had expressed his conviction that electrification was the key to overcoming the 'backwardness' of the countryside. During a discussion in 1918 with the commissar of trade and industry, Leonid Krasin, Lenin had said, 'Electricity will take the place of God. Let the peasant pray to electricity; he's going to feel the power of the central authorities more than that of heaven.'[59] There was something special, almost magical about electricity for Lenin. He urged his colleagues to conserve their personal use. Late at night he would roam the corridors of the Kremlin turning off lights left on by his less-conscientious comrades. Meeting Lenin in October 1920, British science-fiction writer H. G. Wells observed, 'Lenin, who like a good Marxist, denounces all "utopians", has succumbed at last to utopia, the utopia of electricians.'[60] Wells called Lenin 'the Kremlin dreamer.'

Others shared Lenin's passion for electric power. The poet Mayakovsky wrote: 'We must snatch away God's thunderbolts, Take 'em, We can use those volts, For electrification.'[61] Electricity was the ultimate symbol and expression of modernity. Mayakovsky bluntly admitted, 'After electricity, I lost interest in nature. Too backward.'[62] The Bolsheviks did not just dream about electrification; they made real plans for its introduction across the breadth of Soviet Russia. In 1920 Lenin had overseen the creation of a State Commission for the Electrification of Russia (GOELRO), which set out a long-term strategy for the country's electric infrastructure. The task of building up power resources was taken up with enthusiasm in February 1921 with the creation of the State General-

57 Smith, *The Russian Revolution,* 104.
58 V. I. Lenin, 'The Tax in Kind,' in *Selected Works: Volume II* (Moscow: Foreign Languages Publishing House, 1947), 718.
59 Cited in Dmitri Volkogonov, *Lenin: Life and Legacy* (New York: The Free Press, 1994), 372.
60 Cited in Stites, *Revolutionary Dreams,* 49.
61 Stites, *Revolutionary Dreams,* 50.
62 Stites, *Revolutionary Dreams,* 52.

The first electric lightbulb in a village in Bryansk province.

Planning Commission (GOSPLAN), an organisation that was to supersede VSNKh and oversee the nationwide management of industry. Lenin's program of electrification was a focal point of these plans. In June 1921 Lenin outlined the 'tactics' that would bring about socialism: the electrification of Russia, with the expansion of large-scale industry in order to modernise farming. According to Lenin:

> The only material basis that is possible for Socialism is large-scale machine industry that is capable of re-organising agriculture. But we cannot confine ourselves to this general thesis...Modern large-scale industry...means the electrification of the whole country...The execution of the first part of the electrification scheme is estimated to take ten years.'[63]

The challenges involved in nation-wide electrification were considerable. As N. S. Simonovin argued, '...the program of electrification in reality resembled electro-fiction.'[64] Even the head of GOELRO, Krzhizhanovsky, posed the following question:

> How, in view of the enormity of the destruction and ruin we have lived through, can we possibly establish a plan for the widespread electrification of such an economically backward land as Russia has been and still is...? Doesn't the scheme of electrification in a period of gigantic economic dislocation seem a fantasy, a utopia, a paper project?[65]

But Krzhizhanovsky answered his own question with an emphatic 'no.' Electrification was a dream for the Communists, but it was one that given time and resources would become a reality.

ELECTRICITY OUTPUT IN RUSSIA 1913–26 [66]

YEAR	MILLION KILOWATTS
1913	1945
1920	unknown
1921	520
1922	775
1923	1146
1924	1562
1925	2925
1926	3508

Electrification was seen as the foundation stone of the socialist economy. It was to bring light, heat, sanitation, knowledge and efficiency. Electricity was the means to bring substantive benefits, particularly to peasants, and to demonstrate the potential of socialism. According to Lars Lih, when considering the possibilities of electricity, 'Lenin himself was electrified.'[67] Lenin once expressed a hope that electric power grids might extend to neighbouring countries, thereby fostering fraternal internationalism. Around one-billion gold roubles were invested in the electrification program. Considering the modest gains made by the mid-1920s this might indeed warrant claims of 'electro-fiction.'

By 1924 output was still below pre-war tsarist levels. It was, however, increasing – a fair achievement given the poor state of the industry following the Civil War.

63 Vladimir Lenin, 'Theses of Report on the Tactics of the Russian Communist Party to the Third Congress of the Communist International: The Material Basis of Socialism and the Plan for the Electrification of Russia,' in *Selected Works II* (Moscow: Foreign Languages Publishing House, 1947), 735.
64 Cited in Pipes, *Russia Under the Bolshevik Regime,* 397.
65 Cited in Stites, *Revolutionary Dreams,* 49.
66 Nove, 'The NEP,' 89.
67 Lars Lih, *Lenin,* 177.

By 1926 the investment was paying off. It must also be remembered that rapid increases in the short-term were not expected. Although Lenin did not live to see this scheme fulfilled, under Stalin light globes would be called 'little Illich lamps' in his honour.

ACTIVITIES

DATA ANALYSIS

Using this book and at least one other source, research electricity output in Russia between 1913 and 1926. Then complete the tasks below.

1. Calculate the percentage increase (or decrease) each year in the period.
2. Identify three logistical problems with electrifying the whole of Russia.
3. Evaluate the success of Lenin's electrification campaign. Were claims of 'electro-fiction' warranted?
4. What insights does the 'productivist' outlook of the Communists during the 1920s give to an understanding of the revolutionary vision and the nature of the new society?

HISTORICAL INTERPRETATIONS

Read Ron Suny's summation of life during the NEP below. Then complete the tasks that follow:

> *'By the end of the 1920s the Soviet people enjoyed greater security, better health care, higher literacy, better nutrition, greater social mobility, and more social equality than most of them had ever experienced. Not surprisingly, looking forward from the civil war years and back from the Stalinist decades, NEP retains a brighter glow than many other periods of Soviet history. For the Bolsheviks it was a retreat, a detour, but for millions of Soviet citizens it was a time of relative peace and steady improvement in their lives.'* (Ron Suny, *The Soviet Experiment*, 193.)

1. Identify two or more aspects of life that had improved by the NEP era, according to Suny.
2. Explain in detail the impact of one change or improvement to daily life under the new regime (1917–27).
3. Contrast Suny's view on the NEP with that of one or more other historians. Who do you find more persuasive and why?

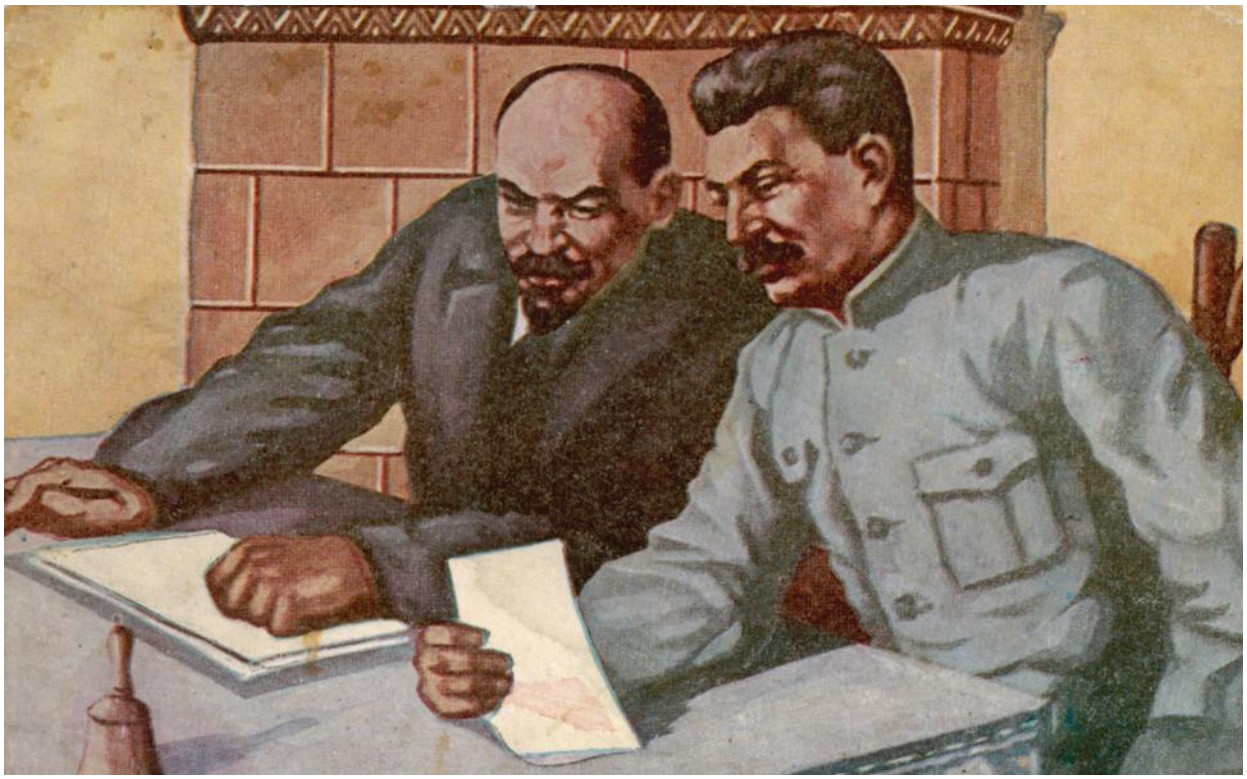
PARTY LEADERSHIP AND THE DEATH OF LENIN

Josef Stalin: 'Departing from us, Comrade Lenin adjured us to hold high and guard the purity of the great title of member of the Party. We vow to you, Comrade Lenin, that we will fulfill your behest with credit! Departing from us, Comrade Lenin adjured us to guard the unity of our Party as the apple of our eye. We vow to you, Comrade Lenin, that this behest, too, we will fulfill with credit! Departing from us, Comrade Lenin adjured us to guard and strengthen the dictatorship of the proletariat. We vow to you, Comrade Lenin, that we will spare no effort to fulfill this behest, too, with credit!'

Vladimir Lenin.

Lenin's health had been poor since the attempt on his life by Fanya Kaplan in 1918. This was not helped by the stress of an enormous workload and a number of medical conditions. He had been plagued by a weak stomach and periodic bouts of severe headache throughout his life. Lenin was also deeply upset by the death in 1920 of Inessa Armand, with whom he may have been romantically involved. 'Lenin never survived Inessa's death and it precipitated the illnesses which were eventually to undermine him too,' Kollontai recalled.[68] On 26 May

68 Cited in Cathy Porter, *Alexandra Kollontai: A Biography* (London: Virago, 1980), 345.



Lenin and Stalin discuss their plans.

1922 Lenin suffered his first stroke. He remained mentally alert and was still able to speak, but was paralysed down his right side. Having rested for two months at his country house just outside Moscow, Lenin recovered and returned to work with a reduced load. He was living on borrowed time. In December he fell victim to two more strokes and was left wheelchair-bound. In Lenin's absence, leadership of the party was shared by a 'triumvirate' of three leading Communists: Kamenev, Zinoviev and Stalin.

Since April 1922 Stalin had been general secretary of the Communist Party, which meant that he headed the party bureaucracy. Envisaged as a purely administrative position, Stalin's appointment had allowed him to place his supporters into positions of influence and gather increasing support amongst the party rank-and-file. This did not mean, though, that he was Lenin's chosen successor. Lenin felt that no individual party member was capable of filling his position.[69] He assumed that a collective leadership would come about after his death. Lenin was particularly suspicious of Stalin, who had come to wield enormous influence in his capacity as general secretary. If anything, Lenin had become closer to Trotsky, who he hoped might curtail some of Stalin's proposals, most notably his intolerance to the growing independence movement in Georgia. In late December 1922 Lenin had dictated his 'Testament' to one of his secretaries, in which he offered a critical assessment of all the leading Communists. His most damning appraisal was of Stalin:

> Comrade Stalin, having become General Secretary, has concentrated an enormous power in his hand; and I am not sure that he always knows how to use that power with sufficient caution...Stalin is too rude, and this fault entirely supportable in relations among us Communists, becomes insupportable in the office of General Secretary. Therefore, I propose to the comrades to find a way to remove Stalin from that position and appoint to it another man who in all respects differs from

DID YOU KNOW?

Lenin's body was preserved after his death and displayed in a sombre mausoleum in Red Square. Although there has been talk of laying him to rest in a proper grave, as he requested, Lenin can be seen there today. Shortly after his death, his wife Krupskaya wrote in *Pravda*: 'Do not build memorials to him, name palaces after him, do not hold magnificent celebrations in his memory. All of this meant so little to him.'

69 Service, *A History of 20th Century Russia* (London: Penguin Books, 1997), 152.

> Stalin only in superiority – namely, more patient, more loyal, more polite and more attentive to comrades.[70]

FOOTAGE OF LENIN'S FUNERAL

On 4 March 1923, after a row with Stalin who had upset his wife (Krupskaya), Lenin suffered a severe stroke that left him almost totally paralysed and unable to speak. He never fully recovered. On 21 January 1924 Vladimir Ilyich Ulyanov died. He was fifty-three. The daughter of a senior Communist official, Nadezhda Yoffe, was with her father when news of Lenin's death was announced at the Congress of Soviets:

> I have never seen so many people, especially men, who were in tears. I was sitting somewhere in a corner and sitting next to me was an elderly man – he looked like a worker. He turned around and said to me: 'Little one, what are we going to do? What's going to happen now?'[71]

Dzherzhinsky leads the pallbearers carrying Lenin's coffin. Kamenev is to the left.

For the next few days Lenin's body lay in state while over half-a-million people queued in freezing conditions to pass by the coffin and pay their respects. A special funeral edition of *Pravda* was released. In an article entitled *Comrade*, Bukharin wrote, 'We shall never again see that great forehead, the wonderful head which radiated revolutionary energy in all directions.' Zinoviev described Lenin as, 'a rebel among rebels, a thinker among thinkers.' Stalin called on Soviet citizens to remember Lenin as 'a genius of geniuses among the leaders of the proletariat.'[72] The whole of the USSR (as it was known after 1922) came to a standstill for Lenin's funeral on 27 January 1924.

Stalin delivered the main eulogy. His vows to dearly departed Comrade Lenin were steeped in religious overtones, not surprising given that he had attended seminary school in his youth. Trotsky was noticeably absent. (He later claimed

70 Cited in Daniels, *A Documentary History of Russia Volume 1, 149–151.*
71 Cited in Jonathan Lewis and Phillip Whitehead, *Stalin: A Time for Judgement* (London: Thames & Hudson, 1990), 39–40.
72 Cited in Volkogonov, *Lenin,* 439.

FEATURE

STALIN'S FALSIFICATION OF PHOTOGRAPHS

By falsifying and distorting photographs between 1929 and 1953, Stalin sought to rewrite history.

The retouching of photographs had begun in 1917, when Bolshevik leaders tried to illustrate the support of the masses for the party and the Civil War. During the purges of the 1930s, however, the process reached its frightening zenith.

Similar to Orwell's Ministry of Truth in *1984* (though more *ad hoc*), falsifiers worked to remove images, words and ideas that might be critical of the government. Photographs were cropped, retouched or sliced, with new backgrounds inserted in some cases.

This method did not include books that had already been published, however, so citizens were told to remove certain facts and individuals from books within their possession. They often achieved this crudely with a felt-tip pen or a pair of scissors. Failure to do so could result in arrest.

ORIGINAL IMAGE

Lenin addressing troops outside the Bolshoi Theatre in Moscow, 5 May 1920. Kamenev and Trotsky are on the platform with him.

Similarly, official Soviet artists were charged with the task of inserting Stalin's image into pictures of significant events. Painters and sculptors were asked to demonstrate his closeness to Lenin by creating works that showed the two men together.

In this way Stalin was able to portray himself as a key player in the Communist Party and as a lynchpin in the early years of the revolution. In reality, Stalin exerted little influence before 1922.

David King has spent several decades researching the falsification of Soviet photos. In 1997 he published his renowned book *The Commissar Vanishes: The Falsification of Photographs and Art in Stalin's Russia*.

King has compiled a collection of over 250 000 images.

ALTERED IMAGE

After Trotsky's expulsion from the Soviet Union in 1927, Stalin had the photograph reproduced with Trotsky and Kamenev removed. Steps were painted in their place.

'HISTORY V. LENIN' VIDEO

he was told the wrong date by Stalin, but it is also possible he was too ill to travel.)[73] At exactly four pm cannons, factory whistles, train horns and sirens sounded simultaneously across the nation as Lenin's body was placed into its vault. Public radio called for silence and announced, 'Stand up, comrades, Illich is being lowered into his grave.' The silence was ended a few minutes later with the announcement: 'Lenin has died – but Leninism lives!'

Lenin's role in shaping the Communist party and the direction of the USSR is undoubtedly significant and historians have much debated his legacy. His immediate loss to the Communists was profound and many issues remained uncertain. Lenin had bequeathed to his comrades a party in which leadership was based largely on his own personal authority and an economic policy that was contentious and soon to be hotly debated. Dispute would rage in the coming years over these issues.

STALIN'S RISE

In May 1924, a few months after Lenin's death and just before the Thirteenth Party Congress, the Communist Central Committee met to hear Lenin's Testament. Lenin had said: '...I propose to the comrades to find a way to remove Stalin [from the post of general secretary] and appoint to it another man...'[74] Zinoviev, however, saved Stalin from demotion. Promising to follow every word of Lenin's Testament, Zinoviev added,

73 Adam Ulam, *Stalin: The Man and His Era* (London: Tauris Parke Paperbacks, 2007), 235.

74 Cited in Daniels, *A Documentary History of Russia, Volume 1* (London: I.B. Tauris and Co., 1985), 149.

Lenin's mausoleum in Red Square.

> [W]e are happy to say, Lenin's fears have proved groundless. I am speaking of the question of our General Secretary. All of you have witnessed our harmonious cooperation during the last months, and all of you, like me, have had the satisfaction of seeing that what Lenin feared has not taken place.[75]

Josef Stalin.

Kamenev concurred. Stalin questioned Lenin's state of mind when writing his Testament, while Trotsky sat quietly, failing to seize the opportunity. Richard Pipes believes the most likely explanation for this was Trotsky's belief that a fight against Stalin would have been hopeless, particularly considering Stalin's powerful support base and Trotsky's Jewish background.[76] Stalin even offered his resignation but it was not accepted. The Central Committee decided not to read Lenin's Testament to the whole Congress or to make it publicly available. This early threat to Stalin's leadership was overcome quickly and there was an immediate consolidation of power between Stalin, Zinoviev and Kamenev, otherwise known as the Triumvirate or the Troika.

Trotsky's political trump card had been Lenin's Testament, but he failed to pursue this political advantage. When Lenin's criticisms of Stalin were so roundly ignored it became clear that Trotsky had little chance of assuming the leadership. Trotsky had not been politically astute since Lenin became ill; he had heavily criticised the NEP and had been linked to the Platform of Forty-Six, a group of Left members of the Committee who criticised the party in October 1923. Trotsky had missed Lenin's funeral and the omission reflected poorly on him. After the Thirteenth Party Congress, attacks on Trotsky became widespread within the party and he responded with a volume of writings called *Lessons of October*. The *Lessons* criticised Zinoviev and Kamenev for opposing Lenin's plans for insurrection in October 1917. Unfortunately for Trotsky, this backfired: firstly, Stalin's position in the triumvirate was strengthened by public criticisms of Kamenev and Zinoviev; and secondly, party leaders responded with a litany of attacks on Trotsky's errors and ambitions. In the introduction to *On Leninism*, Rykov wrote, 'The historical source of the disagreement of a huge majority of the party members with Comrade Trotsky lies in the fact that [he] grew up and formed his political viewpoint as an active leader of the party hostile to us, the opportunist Menshevik Party.'[77] In January 1925 Trotsky was replaced as commissar for war. He retained his position in the Politburo but never again enjoyed influence in the party.

Leon Trotsky.

On 17 December 1924, Stalin outlined his major theoretical interpretation of Marxism – Socialism in One Country. While Marx and Lenin had argued that a revolution in the Western world was essential for the success of socialism, Stalin argued that the consolidation of Russian socialism would eventually lead to revolution in the West. Left members of the party, including Zinoviev and Kamenev, were appalled at this reinterpretation of Marxism and launched an attack on Stalin. They failed, however, to gain widespread support from a party that was becoming increasingly pragmatic and non-ideological.

75 Robert Conquest, *Stalin: Breaker of Nations* (London: Penguin, 1992), 111.
76 Richard Pipes, *A Concise History of the Russian Revolution* (New York: Vintage Books, 1995), 379.
77 Adam Ulam, *Stalin*, 245.

DID YOU KNOW?

Asked why Trotsky had taken so long to abandon the Mensheviks and join the Bolsheviks, Lenin replied, 'Now don't you know? Ambition, ambition, ambition.'

At the Fourteenth Party Congress in December, Kamenev said, 'I have reached the conviction that Comrade Stalin cannot perform the function of uniting the Bolshevik general staff.'[78] Kamenev was condemned by the Congress and had his Politburo voting rights removed. A few months later Trotsky made peace with Kamenev and Zinoviev, joining them in the United Opposition group against Stalin. In July 1926 Zinoviev was removed from the Politburo, closely followed by Trotsky and Kamenev. In 1927 all three were expelled from the party. Stalin had adroitly neutralised the Left of the party; the icing on the cake was Trotsky's exile from the Soviet Union in January 1929.

DEFEAT OF RIGHT OPPONENTS

During 1928 a difference emerged between Stalin and right-wing members of the party over how to end the grain crisis. Stalin wanted to embark on a massive modernisation program that would ban private trade, impose peasant collectives and increase industrial output. In contrast, Bukharin, Tomsky and Rykov argued for the continuation of the NEP and for peasants to be allowed to accumulate a degree of private wealth. Stalin accused the three of supporting kulaks, wealthy farmers portrayed by Marx and Lenin as enemies of the peasants. In a Politburo meeting in February 1929 Stalin said, 'Sad though it may be, we must face facts: a factional group has been established within our party composed of Bukharin, Tomsky, and Rykov.'[79] The three men retained their positions in the short term but were isolated. In 1929 Bukharin was removed from the Politburo and Pravda, while Tomsky and Rykov were ejected from the Politburo the following year. Stalin, having defeated his political rivals, was now the undisputed leader of the party and the Soviet Union.

78 Conquest, *Stalin: Breaker of Nations,* 135.
79 Ulam, *Stalin,* 315.

ACTIVITY

SOURCE ANALYSIS

Examine the poster by Gustav Klutsis and complete the tasks below. You may need to do further research.

1. Identify the individuals depicted in the representation.
2. What was the likely perspective of the creator of the poster on the figures depicted?
3. Using your broader knowledge, discuss how Marxist-Leninism differed from Marxism.

LEFT: Poster by Gustav Klutsis, 1936. 'Raise high the banner of Marx, Engels, Lenin and Stalin!'

ACTIVITY

HISTORICAL INTERPRETATIONS

Read the different interpretations of the new society below and complete the tasks that follow.

W.H. CHAMBERLIN, *THE RUSSIAN REVOLUTION 1918–1921* (NEW YORK: UNIVERSAL LIBRARY, 1965), 462–63.

'Every revolution has its ... combination of tragedy and triumph as it ... uproots individuals and whole classes and ... pushes up others which were previously submerged. Whether measured by the misery which it caused some, or by the opportunity which it created for others, or by the ... social reorganization which it brought about, the Russian Revolution is the greatest event of its kind in history ... [T]here has perhaps never been so ... spectacular an inflow of fresh people, mainly recruited from classes which were formally largely excluded from the governing group, into posts of authority. Out of the endless turmoil and bloodshed of the terrible years from 1917 until 1921 there emerged a new state order, a new economic system, a new world outlook, a new conception of life and ethics, in short, all the elements of the distinctive new epoch of Russian national development.'

RICHARD PIPES, *RUSSIA UNDER THE BOLSHEVIK REGIME* (NEW YORK: VINTAGE BOOKS, 1994), 510, 512.

'Judged in terms of its own aspirations, the Communist regime was a monumental failure: it succeeded in one thing only – staying in power. But since for the Bolsheviks power was not an end in itself but the means to an end, its mere retention does not qualify the experiment as a success ... the excesses of the Bolsheviks, their readiness to sacrifice countless lives for their own purposes, were a monstrous violation of both ethics and common sense. They ignored that the means – the well-being and even the lives of people – are very real, whereas the ends are always nebulous and often unattainable ... The tragic and sordid history of the Russian Revolution ... teaches that political authority must never be employed for ideological ends.'

STEPHEN A. SMITH, *THE RUSSIAN REVOLUTION: A VERY SHORT INTRODUCTION* (OXFORD: OXFORD UNIVERSITY PRESS, 2002), 167.

'The Bolshevik revolution wrought calamity on a scale commensurate with the transformation in the human condition it sought to achieve. Measured by the benchmarks of contemporary politics, Bolshevik ambition leaves us reeling. But it is easier for us today to appreciate the illusions under which they laboured than the ideals they sought to achieve. Yet we shall never understand the Russian Revolution unless we appreciate that the Bolsheviks were fundamentally driven by outrage against the exploitation at the heart of capitalism and the aggressive nationalism that had led Europe into the carnage of the First World War. The hideous inhumanities that resulted from the revolution ... should not obscure that fact that millions welcomed the revolution as the harbinger of social justice and freedom.'

1. How does each historian describe the outcomes of the Russian Revolution?
2. According to each historian, what were the critical factors that influenced the new society?
3. Choose one of the historical interpretations above and evaluate the extent to which it offers an accurate account of the nature of the new society from October 1917 to 1927. In your response, refer to further interpretations and evidence.

FEATURE

FIRST FIVE YEAR PLAN

Stalin's first Five Year Plan set targets for Russian industry in the period 1928–32. Based on Western models, the plan involved funding large-scale government projects. As Stalin said in 1931, 'We are fifty or a hundred years behind the advanced countries. We must make good this distance in ten years. Either we do it, or we shall be crushed.'[80] He also wished to reduce the threat of Western invasion by building up Soviet armaments. The Five Year Plan set ambitious production targets – in some cases up to 400 per cent higher than 1928 levels.

DOCUMENT

INDUSTRIAL OUTPUT 1927–1933[81]

ITEM	1927 OUTPUT	1932–33 TARGET	1932–33 OUTPUT
Gross industrial production (100 million roubles)	18.3	43.2	43.3
Gross agricultural production (100 million roubles)	13.1	25.8	16.6
Electricity (100 million kW)	5.05	22	13.4
Coal (million tons)	35.4	75	64.3
Oil (million tons)	11.7	22	21.4
Iron ore (million tons)	5.7	19	12.1
Pig iron (crude iron) (million tons)	3.3	10	6.2
Steel (million tons)	4	10.4	5.9
Total employed labour force (millions)	11.3	15.8	22.8

ROBERT CONQUEST, *STALIN: BREAKER OF NATIONS*, 1992

The results in industry were not as negative as in agriculture. But vastly excessive claims were made, both at home and in Soviet propaganda abroad. Indeed, it is astonishing how deep the myth penetrated in Western circles. Most of the figures then touted were in fact falsified. Current Soviet estimates for the 1930s are that instead of the alleged fivefold increase in production over 1929 to 1941, the true figure is about one and a half. This was about the same rate as Germany. Moreover…the industrial advance was distorted in the direction of the prestigious and away from the profitable.[82]

ACTIVITY

EXTENSION

Examine the table of industrial output and Conquest's extract above. Then complete the tasks below.

1. According to the table, which item had the greatest increase over the period, in percentage terms?
2. Which items met, or nearly met, their targets?
3. What 'myth' does Conquest identify in the extract?
4. Explain why you think Stalin embarked on a program of industrialisation in 1928. To what extent did Russia need to undergo significant economic change in the late 1920s?

DOCUMENT

EXTRACT FROM JOSEF STALIN, *THE RESULTS OF THE FIRST FIVE YEAR PLAN*, REPORT DELIVERED TO CENTRAL COMMITTEE OF COMMUNIST PARTY, 7 JANUARY 1933

[We] have not only created…new great industries but have created them on a scale and in dimensions that eclipse the scale and dimensions of European industry.

And as a result of all this, the capitalist elements have been completely and irrevocably ousted from industry, and socialist industry has become the sole form of industry in the USSR.

And, as a result of all this, our country has become converted from an agrarian into an industrial country; for the proportion of industrial output as compared with agricultural output has risen from 48 per cent of the total, in the beginning of the five year plan period (1928), to 70 per cent at the end of the fourth year of the five year plan period (1932).

And, as a result of all this, we have succeeded by the end of the fourth year of the five year plan period in fulfilling the total programme of industrial output, which was drawn up for five years to the extent of 93.7 per cent, thereby raising the volume of industrial output to more than three times the pre-war output, and to more than double the level of 1928. As for the programme of output for heavy industry, we have fulfilled the five year plan by 108 per cent.

It is true that we are six per cent short of fulfilling the total programme of the five year plan. But that is due to the fact that in the view of the refusal of neighbouring countries to sign pacts of non-aggression with us, and of the obligations that arose in the Far East, we were obliged for the purpose of strengthening our defence, hastily to switch a number of factories to the production of modern defensive means. And, owing to the necessity of going through a certain period of preparation, this switch resulted in these factories suspending production for four months, which could not but affect the fulfillment of the total programme of output for 1932, as fixed in the five year plan. As a result of this operation, we have completely filled the gaps with regard to the defensive capabilities of this country… It is beyond any doubt that, but for this incidental circumstance, we would almost certainly not only have fulfilled, but even over-fulfilled the total production figures of the five year plan.

Finally, as a result of all this, the Soviet Union has been converted from a weak country, unprepared for defence into a country mighty in defence, a country prepared for every contingency, a country capable of producing on a mass scale all modern means of defence, and of equipping its army with them in the event of an attack from abroad.[83]

A worker in a USSR textile plant.

80 Peter Oxley, *Russia 1855–1991: From Tsars to Commissars* (Melbourne: Oxford University Press, 2001), 161.
81 Bernard Barker, *Stalin's Russia 1924–41* (Great Britain: Jacaranda Press, 1979), 8; Steven Waugh, *Essential Modern World History* (UK: Nelson Thornes Ltd, 2001), 445.
82 Conquest, *Stalin: Breaker of Nations,* 190.
83 Report Delivered at the Joint Plenum of the Central Committee of the CPSU(B.), 7 January 1933, cited by J.V. Stalin, *Problems of Leninism* (Peking: Foreign Languages Press, 1976), 578–630.

ACTIVITY

EXTENSION

Read the extract from Stalin's report on the results of the first Five Year Plan. Then discuss Stalin's claim that as a result of the plan, the Soviet Union was converted from a 'weak country' into a 'country prepared for every contingency'.

FEATURE

COLLECTIVISATION AND THE GREAT FAMINE

In the 1920s the dominant form of farming was the strip system, an inefficient form of farming inherited from tsarist Russia. Peasant farms, which had limited machinery, struggled to produce enough food to feed the population. This made it hard for factory workers in the cities to work effectively since they were low on physical energy. To rectify this Stalin decided to pursue collectivisation – the merging of small, inefficient farms into large, state-run farms. The larger farms would, in theory, be able to use the machinery more effectively – economies of scale – and thus increase production. Machinery and Tractor Stations (MTS) would be set up to school the peasants in modern farming methods.

Just as the peasants had been reluctant to leave their village communes under the reforms of Witte and Stolypin, they rejected Stalin's collectivisation programme. Despite this, Stalin declared in January 1929 that all grain-producing areas should be collectivised by 1930. The declaration meant forced collectivisation, which led to massive opposition in the countryside, particularly from the so-called kulaks. Kulaks, suppposedly the more prosperous farmers, were portrayed by the Party as class enemies and capitalists, while in reality their wealth was often modest, i.e. they owned two pigs rather than one or they had a newly-painted house. The kulaks opposed collectivisation because it meant sharing their profits with the collective, with a resulting decline in their living standards. Under Stalin's direction the Party decided to liquidate the entire kulak class by dispossession, deportation or death. The Party set the numbers of kulaks at an arbitrary figure of three per cent (approximately 1 million families) and initiated a series of quotas to eliminate them all. Each area needed to identify a certain number of kulaks, with peasants encouraged to denounce the kulaks in their village. In some areas people used this as an opportunity to settle old scores, while in other areas whole villages banded together to shield the kulaks in their midst.

There was great resistance to collectivisation, particularly in the Ukraine. Spontaneous acts of murder spread through the countryside as the hated collectivisers were targeted. Stalin called his policy 'revolution carried out from above.'[84] Collective farms (kolkhozes) were officially voluntary, but the Party ordered each area to have a certain number of kolkhozes operated by a quota of families. If local Communists were not able to recruit enough volunteers, peasants were coerced. Many refused to go quietly, sacrificing their livestock rather than handing them over to the kolkhoz.

On 2 March 1930, Stalin published an article in *Pravda* called 'Dizzy with Success.' He claimed that while much of the collectivisation had been successful, some local officials had got carried away and used excessive force. He wrote,

> [T]he successes have their seamy side, especially when they are attained with comparative ease — unexpectedly so to speak. Such successes sometimes induce a spirit of vanity and conceit: We can achieve anything! There is nothing we can't do! People not infrequently become intoxicated by such successes; they become dizzy with success, lose all sense of proportion and the capacity to understand realities; they show a tendency to overrate their own strength and to underrate the strength of the enemy.[85]

Harvest time on a collective farm.

The main consequence of this massive disruption to farming was a drop in production, partly because the kulaks had been the more successful and productive farmers. Meat was scarce because many peasants had slaughtered livestock rather than hand it to the government; on top of this, the

'All working people to cooperatives!' 1929.

harvests of 1930, 1931 and 1932 were poor. Stalin refused to accept this, however, and demanded that peasants meet their grain quotas so that industrial workers could be fed and profitable exports could continue. In 1932 Stalin increased quotas because the urban population had grown by forty per cent over two years. He dispatched armed units to seize grain from starving peasants.

The famine of 1932–33 killed millions of peasants (some argue as many as 10 million),[86] most of them Ukrainian. Almost all grain was seized by Party officials and peasants who resisted were accused of being hoarders or saboteurs; many were shot. Peasants died of starvation outside massive silos of grain being guarded by officials. Truckloads of grain were extracted from peasant communities while people died in the streets. Victor Belov lived through collectivisation in the Ukraine. He wrote,

> The famine...was the most terrible and destructive that the Ukrainian people have ever experienced. The peasants ate dogs, horses, rotten potatoes, the bark of trees, grass... Incidents of cannibalism were not uncommon. The people were like wild beasts, ready to devour one another. And no matter what they did, they went on dying, dying, dying. They died singly and in families. They died everywhere – in the yards, on streetcars, and on trains. There was no one to bury these victims of the Stalinist famine. People travelled for thousands of kilometers in search of food – to Siberia, the Caucasus...To protect what little grain they had from the raids of the militia, the peasants often banded together...and defended their gleanings with sticks and knives.[87]

The Great Famine was not widely reported in the West at the time; even urban Soviets knew little or nothing about it. Because peasants were forbidden from travelling to cities, news of the horror did not reach the world for several years.

84 Richard Conquest, *Harvest of Sorrow: Soviet Collectivization and the Terror-Famine* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1986), 144.
85 *Pravda*, 2 March 2 1930, See http://www.marxists.org/reference/archive/stalin/works/1930/03/02.htm.
86 See for example the website of the Ukrainian Genocide Famine Foundation: http://www.ukrainiangenocide.com/.
87 Fedor Belov, *The History of the Soviet Collective Farm* (New York: Praeger Publishers), 530.

CONCLUSION

The New Economic Policy (NEP) was adopted in 1921 at the Tenth Party Congress against the backdrop of the Kronstadt revolt and several peasant uprisings. Although Lenin's more militant comrades disliked the measures, he got his way. A degree of free trade was allowed and the hated workplace militarism and grain requisitioning of War Communism were abandoned. The NEP provided relief and allowed for the repair of relations between the countryside and towns. The early 1920s were a time of recovery and renewal. The success of the Bolsheviks would extend beyond merely remaining in power. The revolutionary regime had brought not only turmoil, suffering and nightmares, but also hope, opportunity, and utopian dreams for some Russians. Literacy levels improved and significant advances were made in women's rights. The exhilaration of revolution was expressed through artistic experimentation. Whilst economic concessions were granted after 1921, political freedoms were not; the peasant rebels and Kronstadt sailors were brutally suppressed. The reliance on secret political police was made permanent with the reorganisation of the Cheka into the OGPU. Mensheviks and SRs, largely tolerated during the Civil War, were repressed. The first 'show trials' were held and 'factions' were banned following the emergence of opposition platforms at the Tenth Party Congress. The Communist Party was now the sole representative of 'Soviet' power. This was not a dilemma for Lenin and his comrades; they considered the dictatorship of the proletariat as synonymous with the dictatorship of its vanguard – the Party. Many ordinary people did not. Yet faith in the positive outcome of a Soviet regime and its socialist values remained – there had been many compromises with the promised ideals of October in the period since the Bolsheviks came to power. Referring to the long, straight road that runs through St. Petersburg, Lenin once said, 'Political activity is not like the Nevskii Prospekt'.[88] A determination to hold power at all costs and an unshakeable belief in the infallibility of the Party's right to rule shielded the Bolsheviks from the insight that by relying on the means to justify the ends, the ends themselves were tarnished. This led to the evolution of a repressive party-state that would abide no political opposition. For all the revolutionary rhetoric, much of the old world remained in the new society. William Rosenberg argues that Soviet policies were 'essentially a radical extension, rather than radical break with the past.'[89]

Life for ordinary Russians in the 1920s, though better than during Civil War, was not much of an improvement on life under the tsars. A vast governmental bureaucracy continued to hinder relations between the people and their rulers. The coercive power and prying eyes of the OGPU resembled those of the tsarist Okhrana. The NEP gave some respite from War Communism but it did not lead to better productivity across the board; agricultural output improved whilst heavy industry lagged. Many Communists were uneasy with the concessions to private traders and entrepreneurs in the NEP. Upon his death in 1924, Lenin left the Soviet state and its leaders unsure of the future.

Having gained great influence as General Secretary, 'Comrade Stalin' embarked on a series of Five Year Plans and a punishing policy of 'collectivisation' that led to widespread famine. Stalin went on to become one of the twentieth century's most brutal dictators.

88 Cited in John Keep, *Power to the People* (New York: Colombia University Press), 347.

89 William Rosenberg, 'Social Mediation and State Construction(s) in Revolutionary Russia,' in *Social History 19*, no. 2 (1994): 188.

TEST YOUR LEARNING

CHAPTER REVIEW

CONSTRUCTING AN ARGUMENT

Write an essay of approx. 800 words on one of the topics below. Your essay should include an introduction, paragraphs citing evidence, a conclusion and a bibliography.

Topics:

- Were the Kronstadt sailors correct in arguing that the revolution brought 'greater enslavement' rather than 'emancipation'?
- 'The NEP is ... a temporary deviation, ... a clearing of land for a new ... attack [on] international capitalism.' (Zinoviev). To what extent did the NEP consolidate the revolution?
- How did three different social groups experience everyday life in Soviet Russia during the NEP period?

A Vladivostok crowd commemorates the Russian Revolution.

- 'The consequences of the Russian Revolution were both triumphant and tragic.' Do you agree?
- 'We are not slaves, slaves we are not.' To what extent did the Russian Revolution empower different people to change the world around them?
- Create a historical question of your own about the period 1921–27 in Russia.

CAUSE AND CONSEQUENCE

Create a table like the one below and fill in the missing information.

CHALLENGES TO THE NEW REGIME (1921–27): SOVNARKOM RESPONSES

CHALLENGE	RESPONSE
K_____ uprising.	Red Army assault on K_____; Cheka arrests and imprisons rebels; Party declares the revolt is the work of '_____-revolutionaries.'
Social unrest and economic decline under War Communism.	Introduction of New _____ Policy.
Green _____.	Suppression of rebellious areas by Red Army, the C_____ and political commissars. Decree 'On _____ Unity.'
Opposition platforms and debate at _____ Party Congress.	Revolutionary arts and pr_____; Changes in everyday life; Education and l_____ drives; Women's rights pioneered by A_____ and K_____.
Ensuring popular support and engagement with revolutionary project.	Lenin's Te_____.
Death of _____ in 1924; ongoing legacy.	Stalin's rising influence as General S_____.

TEST YOUR LEARNING

KEY INDIVIDUALS

In a pair or small group, give a five-minute presentation on or more of the individuals below. Explain how they might have experienced the new society and any significant contributions they made. You might like to give your presentation in character with costumes and props or in the form of a dialogue.

- Vladimir Lenin
- Alexandra Kollontai
- Nikolai Bukharin
- Vladimir Mayakovsky (poet)
- Stepan Petrichenko (Kronstadt sailor)
- Felix Dzerzhinsky
- Leon Trotsky
- Anatoli Lunacharsky (commissar of enlightenment)
- Yakov Sverdlov
- Dora Elkina (teacher)
- Nestor Mahkno (Green commander).

FURTHER READING

Cohen, Stephen. Bukharin and the Bolshevik Revolution. New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1973.

Cohen is an influential historian. His biography of Bukharin gives insight into this significant figure and offers an interesting commentary on the range of competing ideas within Bolshevism. Particularly useful in regard to debates over the NEP.

Conquest, Robert. Stalin: Breaker of Nations. London: Penguin Books, 1992.

A detailed analysis of Stalin, his motivations and impact on world history. Conquest is one of the world's leading historians on Stalin.

Elliott, David. New Worlds: Russian Art and Society 1900–1937. London: Thames and Hudson, 1986.

Useful for understanding the artistic trends in the revolutionary period. Accompanied by excellent images.

Getzler, Israel. Kronstadt, 1917–1921: The Fate of a Soviet Democracy. London: Cambridge University Press, 1983.

The best account available of the Kronstadt sailors and their revolutionary outlook.

King, David. The Commissar Vanishes: The Falsification of Photographs and Art in Stalin's Russia. UK: Canongate Books, 1997.

A fascinating look at the way Stalin falsified photographs and art in order to remove his enemies from the record or to insert himself into significant events.

Miller, Martin (ed.). The Russian Revolution: Blackwell Essential Readings in History. Oxford: Blackwell, 2001.

A good compilation of influential articles. Highlights are Figes' work on language and the articles on the contribution of women to the revolutionary movement.

Nove, Alec. An Economic History of the USSR 1917–1991. London: Penguin, 1992.

Nove is the leading economic historian of the period. His analysis gives insight to the complexity and changing nature of Bolshevik economic policy.

Stites, Richard. Revolutionary Dreams: Utopian Vision and Experimental Life in the Russian Revolution. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1989.

A study of the more unusual and experimental expressions of revolutionary life. Stites offers what he calls a history 'from the side'.

Volkogonov, Dmitri. Lenin: Life and Legacy. Hammersmith: HarperCollins, 1994.

A writer who has come to despise his former Bolshevik heroes, Volkogonov provides a passionate and detailed biography that draws on his extensive work in the Russian archives.

Ward, Chris. Stalin's Russia. Melbourne: Edward Arnold Publishing, 1993.

A scholarly look at the structure of Stalinist Russia. An outstanding analysis of modern historical perspectives since the opening of the Soviet archives.

REVIEW

CHAIN OF EVENTS

INEQUALITY UNDER TSAR

- Approx. 85 per cent of population disadvantaged, the rest extremely privileged
- Poor working conditions
- Alexander III anti-reform, highly autocratic

EMERGING DISSENT

- Increasing anti-government terrorism
- Defeat in Russo-Japanese War
- Bloody Sunday protests
- Mutiny on battleship *Potemkin*
- 1905 revolution
- New political groups (middle-class Populists, peasant-based SDs, industrial SDs)

FRUSTRATION WITH REFORM

- October Manifesto
- Limited power of dumas
- Fundamental Laws (1906) undermine October Manifesto
- Lena goldfields massacre
- Increased strike activity prior to war

BRIEF RESPITE

- Tercentenary of Romanov rule (1913): pride and nationalism
- Widespread excitement at declaration of war

WORLD WAR I LOSSES

- Heavy military defeats
- Tsar blamed for war failures after taking command at front
- German-born tsarina and Rasputin distrusted
- Inflation
- Collapse of transport system

DISSENT LEADS TO REVOLUTION

- Massive protests in Petrograd (Jan–Feb 1917)
- Petrograd garrison mutinies
- Provisional Government prepared to rule until November elections
- Tsar abdicates

PROVISIONAL GOVERNMENT STRUGGLES

- Lenin returns to Russia (Apr 1917)
- Continuation of military defeats
- July Days
- Kornilov revolt

BOLSHEVIKS SEIZE POWER

- Majority in Petrograd and Moscow Soviets by September 1917
- Provisional Government unable to maintain power
- Bolsheviks exploit Provisional Government weakness
- October Revolution

KEY PLAYERS IN THE REVOLUTION

VLADIMIR LENIN

- In Switzerland during February Revolution
- Returned to Russia and released *April Theses*
- Forced Bolsheviks to seize power in October

PYOTR STOLYPIN

- As prime minister, led agricultural reform
- Dealt harshly with dissenters, executing thousands
- Dissolved first two dumas because they were too radical

COUNT WITTE

- Oversaw construction of Trans-Siberian railway
- Introduced rapid industrialisation
- As prime minister, advised tsar to reform in 1905

LEON TROTSKY

- Early chair of St Petersburg Soviet
- Originally a Menshevik, joined Bolsheviks July 1917
- Conducted most planning for October Revolution

WORKER AND PEASANT MOVEMENTS

- 1905 revolution – workers' strikes and peasant unrest
- Thousands protest living and economic conditions in Petrograd (Feb 1917)
- Peasants seize land and distribute among themselves (spring 1917)

ALEXANDER KERENSKY

- SR member of Fourth Duma, contributed to February Revolution
- As war minister, led disastrous June Offensive 1917
- As prime minister, unable to hold Provisional Government together in October 1917

SOLDIER AND SAILOR MUTINIES

- Mutiny on battleship *Potemkin* (1905) leads to reform
- Mutiny of Petrograd garrison (Feb 1917) leads to tsar's abdication
- Failure of attempted coup by Kornilov and troops (Aug 1917)

NICHOLAS II AND TSARINA ALEXANDRA

- Nicholas incompetent (defeat in Russo-Japanese War, poor WWI command)
- Massacres ordered (Bloody Sunday, Lena goldfields)
- Tsarina distrusted (German heritage)

POLITICAL GROUPS

- SRs played key role in Soviets after February Revolution
- Mensheviks led many Soviets
- Bolsheviks suppressed most parties after October Revolution
- Octobrists call for constitutional democracy; largest faction in Third Duma
- Kadets held leadership positions in Provisional Government

GRIGORI RASPUTIN

- Peasant faith healer who purportedly healed the tsar's son, Alexei
- Strong influence over Alexandra while Nicholas was away at front
- Murdered in December 1916

CHANGES IN SOCIETY

POLITICAL	MILITARY	SOCIAL-CULTURAL	ECONOMIC
Centralisation The October Revolution brought a 'Soviet' government to power but over time the Communist Party became highly centralised.	**World War I** The war exposed flaws in imperial Russia and military losses undermined the tsar and the Provisional Government. The Bolsheviks' promise of 'peace' helped them to gain power in October 1917.	**Class conflict** Hatred of the bourgeoisie was a revolutionary ideal that gained support for the Bolsheviks amongst the working classes.	**Early challenges** The Soviet government inherited a dire economy brought about by the tsarist and Provisional Governments during World War I; this called for drastic measures.
Sacking of Assembly The dissolution of the Constituent Assembly made many liberals and moderate socialists despair.	**Civil War** The key shaper of Soviet institutions and policies, this four-year conflict between Whites, Greens and Reds resulted in a Communist victory by 1920.	**Artistic innovation** Soviet art and culture reflected and celebrated the idealism of the revolution. Blok, Deni, Mayakovsky et al. explored bold styles and socialist themes.	**State Capitalism (1918)** This policy of mixed socialist and free market practices brought economic breakdown and lasted less than six months.
Diplomatic isolation Western governments supported the Whites in the Civil War and afterwards Soviet Russia was a pariah state, cut off from trade opportunities.	**Polish-Soviet War** Following Poland's 1920 invasion, the Red Army marched into Polish territory, sparking hopes of an international revolution. Poland's counter-offensive dashed these hopes.	**Education** There were innovations in schooling, the alphabet and mass literacy campaigns. Literacy brought opportunities for social advancement.	**War Communism (1918–21)** While celebrated by radicals and addressing immediate needs, War Communism led to famine, goods shortages and widespread suffering.
Cheka and the Terror Partly responding to the Civil War, the Communists imprisoned and executed thousands. The Cheka was larger and more brutal than the tsarist Okhrana.	**Popular revolts** The previously loyal Kronstadt sailors supported workers by rebelling in 1921. Around the same time, peasant Green armies rebelled, e.g. in the Ukraine.	**Women's rights** In a notoriously patriarchal society, the gains made for women were considerable, thanks to Armand, Kollontai, Zhenotdel and others.	**New Economic Policy (1921–27)** A mix of free market and state ownership, the NEP showed Lenin's ability to compromise. Industry recovered but stayed around pre-war levels.
Opposition groups Kadets, Mensheviks and others were harassed or banned. Many fled Russia and others were arrested or executed. Communist Party factions were banned.		**Social customs** The new regime brought changes to names, greetings, rituals, language and fashion. Revolutionary motifs were ever-present in daily life.	
Summary The Communists set up hierarchical and centralised structures. They repressed dissent and used terror to control their one-party state. While not yet entirely autocratic, by 1927 Russia was a dictatorship.	**Summary** Marx said war was the 'midwife of revolution.' War undermined the tsarist and Provisional Governments and the Civil War and international conflicts shaped the new society. The Communists became increasingly militaristic.	**Summary** The Soviet government encouraged experimentation and sought to engage people through education, the arts and propaganda. There were many improvements to social life.	**Summary** Soviet economics reflect the challenges of the period and Bolshevik ideology. The suffering wrought by War Communism and the return to a mixed economy under the NEP left a mixed legacy.

EXPERIENCES OF REVOLUTION

Once I had a successful career, a fine apartment ... all gone! I've been attacked in the street by hooligans and my home is filled with stinking workers. Today I was forced at gunpoint to sweep the streets. Where is the law? I would leave my precious Russia but I fear being jailed or worse...

Fedor, former lawyer, c. 1918

Usurpers! Thieves! The Bolsheviks have stolen power! They betray Russia and have sold out to the Germans. They shoot down the people. They are not even true Russians! We must rouse the Cossacks and rally behind true patriots like Kornilov and Denikin. Stern leadership is required. We must save the empire from the Lenin-Trotsky gang of criminals!

Vanya, Kadet politician, c. 1918

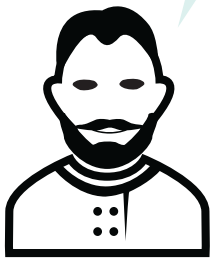
Red, red, red! A new world! Workers march! The burzhooi tremble! Lenin, Trotsky, Kollontai, Lunacharsky ... heroes all! See the calloused hands of the worker? His hammer? With these a new world is built. How can I capture this excitement on a canvas?

Masha, socialist artist, c. 1920

Hear that? Artillery and rifles! The so-called 'red' troops commanded by the murderous Trotsky are coming to get revolutionary Kronstadt! What was the Civil War for? Russia is a prison – they starve peasants, shoot workers and throw opponents in jail. Down with Commissarocracy!

Ivan, Kronstadt sailor, c. March 1921

In 1917 my fellow villagers and I took what was rightly ours: the land. We loved the revolution! When the Civil War came, it was said the Whites would bring back the landlords. But the Communists took our grain – many starved. With the NEP we can trade our grain again. Still, I am suspicious of the government.



Sergei, peasant, c. 1922

I cried when I heard that Comrade Lenin was dead. The revolution changed my life. My mother was one of those who called for bread in February 1917. The tsar cared nothing for the people. But life is still a struggle – I work long hours in the factory. But at night I go to reading classes. My mother would not believe the rights we women have now.

Elena, Petrograd factory worker, c. 1924

NB. These fictional characters are based on historical research.

ADDITIONAL MATERIALS

GLOSSARY

A

AGENT PROVOCATEUR

Secret government agent who infiltrates a 'suspect' organisation and encourages members to break the law; this information is fed back to the government.

ANARCHISM

Political movement based on the goal of removing formal government. Personal independence and collectivism valued.

ANGLO-JAPANESE ALLIANCE

Agreement signed in 1902 between Britain and Japan, in part designed to control Russian expansionism.

ANNEXATION

Taking over land and attaching it to land already held.

ANTI-SEMITISM

Dislike of, or discrimination against, Jews.

ARBITRARINESS

In the Russian context, a system whereby decisions were made at the whim of officials, particularly at the lower levels of government.

AUTOCRACY

State ruled by a single person. Few if any constitutional restrictions on leader.

AUTONOMY

Independence; the ability of people within a state to decide their own future.

B

BAGMEN

Speculators who traded goods and food on the black market during War Communism.

BOLSHEVICHKI

Female Bolshevik party members.

BOLSHEVIKS

Lenin's radical faction of the Social Democratic Workers' Party (SDs). They emerged after the Second Party Congress of 1903. Lenin's insistence on an exclusive, professional revolutionary organisation led to the split. Those who preferred Lenin's views called themselves the Bolsheviks (the 'majority-ites'). The name is misleading as it came from a vote over a minor issue that Lenin's faction won and does not represent the numerical breakdown of SD membership. The Bolsheviks were distinguished by their adherence to 'democratic centralism'; all party members had a say in general policy direction, but once a policy was voted on the minority had to obey the majority decision. The Bolsheviks emerged as a distinct political entity after 1912. They seized power in October 1917. Having changed their name to the Communists in March 1918, the party of Lenin remained in power until the collapse of the Soviet Union in 1991.

BOURGEOISIE

According to Marx and Engels, the privileged class that owns the means of production.

BURZHOOI

Russian slang for 'bourgeois' (privileged class that owns means of production). Derogatory term.

C

CAPITALISM

Economic system based on free market principles, in which individuals are encouraged to seek prosperity and private capital (wealth); based on theories developed by Adam Smith, David Ricardo and Jean-Baptiste Say. Theoretically, in a capitalist system the government plays a limited role in the economy, allowing the marketplace to decide general prices, salaries and conditions. Individuals and corporations are encouraged to trade goods, services, labour and land. (Compare communism.)

CEC

All-Russian Central Executive Committee of the Soviets. Chaired by Sverdlov and, later, Kalinin.

CENSORSHIP

The restriction or removal of information from the public domain, through direct order or other means.

CHEKA

The Soviet political police, named from the abbreviation for the All-Russian Extraordinary Commission for Combating Counter-Revolution, Speculation and Sabotage. Founded in December 1917 and headed by Felix Dzerzhinsky. Also called 'Vecheka' or 'Tcheka.'

CHEKIST

Member of the Cheka.

COALITION

Two or more groups that join together without necessarily agreeing on all issues. A political coalition will often result in disputes because the players have disparate values or ideologies, despite having broadly similar goals.

COMINTERN

The Communist Third Internationale. Set up by the Bolsheviks in 1919 to promote Communist party organisations worldwide.

COMMISSAR

Minister or official of the Soviet government.

COMMUNISM

A political and economic doctrine that aims to replace private property and a profit-based economy with public ownership and collective control of most of the major means of production (such as agriculture, natural resources and manufacturing). Based on theories developed during the Industrial Revolution and French Revolution and the work of Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels. Theoretically, in a communist system the state (government) controls the means of production and works towards the empowerment of the 'proletariat' (working class), eventually depriving the 'bourgeoisie' (middle and upper class) of its power.

CONSERVATISM

Belief in slow, gradual improvement rather than sudden change.

CONSTITUENT ASSEMBLY

Democratically-elected body that was to discuss and formulate constitutional matters. The Bolsheviks dispersed the first and only Constituent Assembly in January 1918.

COSSACKS

Tsarist military unit comprising horsemen from the Don River region near the Black Sea.

COUP D'ETAT

Sudden overthrow of a government, often by military personnel or officials.

D

DIVINE RULE

Authority derived directly from God.

DUMA

From the Russian *dumat*, 'to consider,' the duma is the Russian parliament. The original duma was an advisory council to the tsars until Peter the Great changed it into a Senate in 1721. Tsar Nicholas II reinstated the State Duma (national lower house or legislative assembly) in 1905. There were four dumas constituted during his reign. The body was dissolved after the October Revolution of 1917 but was later reinstated – it continues today.

E

EMANCIPATION

Freedom or release from control by another party.

EXILE

Expulsion by government from native country.

F

FACTION

Small group within large group that demonstrates opposition to the majority position.

FASCISM

Extreme right-wing ideology based on dictatorship. From the Roman *fasces*, a bundle of sticks tied together. Mussolini first used the term to describe the unity and strength of his government in Italy in 1922, while Hitler later used the term in Germany.

FOREIGN INTERVENTIONISTS

Foreign armed forces involved in the Russian Civil War, namely Britain, France, the United States and Japan.

FRANCHISE

The right to vote.

FUNDAMENTAL LAWS

Passed by Tsar Nicholas II on 23 April 1906, the Fundamental Laws reiterated the supreme power of the tsar and limit the powers of the newly-formed duma.

G

GARRISON

Group of soldiers stationed within city or town; the building in which the group resides.

GOELRO

State Commission for the Electrification of Russia, established in 1920.

GOSPLAN

State General-Planning Commission. Took over from VSNKh in supervising the economy and industrial expansion in 1921.

GREEN ARMIES

Peasant insurgent armies that fought against both Red and White armies in the Russian Civil War.

GULAG

Chief Administration of Corrective Labour Camps and Labour Settlements (GULAG). It became the name commonly used to describe the forced labour camps.

I

INDUSTRIALISATION

Creating large-scale factories that will be more efficient due to economies of scale.

INTELLIGENTSIA

The intellectual elite, usually professionals such as writers, artists, lawyers, doctors, educators and academics.

ISKRA

Social Democrat newspaper, translated as 'spark.'

K

KOLKHOZ

Collectivised farm. A kolkhoz member was paid a share of the farm's profit according to the number of days worked. The kolkhoz had to sell its crops to the government at a fixed price.

KOMBEDY

Committees of the Poor. Groups of poor peasants who were to help the government extract grain from kulaks under War Communism.

KOMUCH

Committee of Members of the Constituent Assembly. Called for honouring of the Constituent Assembly elections in 1917, in which the SRs gained a majority. Overthrown by Kolchak in November 1918.

KRONSTADT

Island naval base off the coast of Petrograd. The sailors of Kronstadt were revolutionary in outlook and helped topple the Provisional Government. They rose up against the Communists in March 1921 and were brutally suppressed.

KULAK

Rich peasant or farm owner. Russian for 'fist.'

L

LEFT COMMUNISTS

Radical wing of Bolshevik party, headed by Bukharin. Called for non-cooperation with Germany during negotiations over peace treaty; allied with Left SRs.

LEFT SRS

Radical wing of the Socialist Revolutionary Party. Heirs to the political terrorism of their People's Will forebears. Left SRs formally split from the more moderate SRs in the midst of elections to the Constituent Assembly and joined Sovnarkom in December 1917. They left the Bolshevik-dominated government in protest at the Treaty of Brest-Litovsk.

M

MENSHEVIKS

Non-Leninist faction of the Social Democratic Workers' Party, which split from the Bolsheviks in 1903. From *menshinstvo*, meaning 'minority.' More moderate than Bolsheviks. The 'Menshevik-Internationalists' were a left-wing faction of the Menshevik party, headed by Martov, which supported the anti-war stance of the Bolsheviks. By October 1917 they were advocates of Soviet power, but on the basis of a coalition of socialist groups.

MILREVCOM (MRC)

The Military Revolutionary Committee of the Petrograd Soviet. A council headed by a five-man executive committee (dominated by Bolsheviks) which assumed authority over the Petrograd garrison in October 1917. Under the command of Trotsky, the Milrevcom played a key role in the Bolshevik seizure of power.

MIR

Village commune, encompassing village government and co-operative.

N

NARKOMPROSS

Commissariat of Enlightenment. Headed by Lunacharsky, Narkompross oversaw Bolshevik initiatives in arts and education.

NEP

New Economic Policy, introduced at the Tenth Party Congress in March 1921. Objective was to promote economic recovery after Civil War by abandoning grain requisitioning (in favour of a 'tax in kind'), reintroducing private trade and relaxing state control of industry. Nationalised control of heavy industry and the banking sector was maintained. Many elements of the NEP were contentious.

NEPMEN

Merchants and private traders who emerged during the NEP to exploit commercial opportunities.

NKVD

Secret police force established in 1934 to take over the work of the OGPU and control the labour camp system.

O

OCTOBER MANIFESTO

Issued by Tsar Nicholas II on 17 October 1905 in response to the revolution of that year. Granted limited civil liberties and allowed for creation of State Duma (national parliament).

OGPU

United State Political Administration. The OGPU was the re-organised Soviet political police which emerged in the 1920s. It evolved from the Cheka and the GPU. OGPU favoured surveillance and infiltration rather than mass terror. Like the Cheka, it was headed by Felix Dzerzhinsky.

OKHRANA

Tsarist secret police, charged with protecting the tsar and imperial family, investigating left-wing revolutionaries and combating terrorism. Known for undercover surveillance and infiltration of political groups. Translates as 'protection.'

OPPOSITION PLATFORMS

Groups within the Communist Party that voiced concerns and criticism at the 1921 Tenth Party Congress. They included the Workers' Opposition and the Democratic Centralists. Lenin clamped down on these platforms with his 'On Party Unity' decree.

ORGBURO

The organisational bureau of the Bolshevik Central Committee.

P

PEASANT

Farm worker who rented land or worked for farm owner.

PETROGRAD SOVIET

The workers' council established in Petrograd in March 1917 after the abdication of Tsar Nicholas II. Comprised rival power base to Provisional Government.

POGROM

An organised, violent attack on a minority group (particularly Jews).

POLITBURO

Political bureau of the Bolshevik Central Committee.

PRAVDA

Translated as 'truth,' *Pravda* was the main Bolshevik newspaper.

PRODRAZVERSTKA

Forced grain requisitioning by government. Instituted under War Communism after January 1919.

PROLETARIAT

According to Marx and Engels, the industrial working class, which sells its labour to the bourgeoisie for income.

PROLETCULT

Proletarian Culture Movement. A non-Communist organisation that placed great emphasis on artistic endeavour as a means to achieve socialism.

PROPAGANDA

Material designed to influence people's political opinions often taking visual form in the Soviet Union such as posters and films. Usually involves presenting facts selectively or appealing to emotion rather than intellect.

PURGE

To remove or cleanse impure elements. In the political context, an attempt to find and neutralise rivals or opponents, usually within one's own party.

R

RED ARMY

The Workers' and Peasants' Red Army was founded during the Civil War by Leon Trotsky in February 1918. In 1922 it became the army of the Soviet Union. The Red Army continued until the collapse of the Soviet Union in 1991. 'Red' denotes the blood of the workers in their struggle against capitalism.

REDEMPTION PAYMENTS

Annual payments made by peasants to landowners in return for an allocation of land. A result of the Emancipation Manifesto of 1861.

RED GUARDS

Group of armed workers formed by Bolsheviks in 1917. Abolished after creation of Red Army in 1918.

REGIMENT

Military unit containing two or more battalions.

RSFSR

The Russian Soviet Federal Socialist Republic was declared on 7 November 1917. After 1922 Soviet Russia was known as the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics (USSR).

RUSSIFICATION

The imposition of Russian language, culture and religion on non-Russians, especially ethnic minorities in Imperial Russia.

S

SCHLIEFFEN PLAN

Failed plan, devised in 1905 and enacted in 1914, to prevent Germany having to fight a war on two fronts. Involved a sudden invasion of France (through Belgium, Luxembourg and the Netherlands) and subsequent invasion of Russia.

SERFDOM

State of subjugation to owner or master. Serfs worked the land for landowners, who could transfer the serf to another landowner while keeping the serf's property and family. Landowners were obliged to protect serfs.

SMOLNY INSTITUTE

Bolshevik headquarters and meeting place of Petrograd Soviet.

SOVEREIGNTY

Exclusive right to control an area or state.

SOVIET

Originally referred to a workers,' soldiers' and peasants' council. Soviets became formal organs of the government under the Bolsheviks and acted as 'houses of review' to the Sovnarkom. Lower-level soviets came to be dominated by bodies such as the Soviet Central Executive Committee. Later the term 'Soviets' became associated with the Communist government.

SOVNARKOM

Acronym for the Council of People's Commissars, the Soviet government that came to power in the October Revolution. Each ministry or Commissariat was headed by a commissar. Lenin was the chairman of Sovnarkom.

SPETSY

Russian for 'specialist.' This could include former tsarist officers who served in the Red Army or members of the middle or upper classes who were employed by the Bolshevik regime for their technical knowledge (engineers, managers and so on).

STATE CAPITALISM

Economic policy initially adopted by the Bolsheviks, emphasising a mixed economy, the employment of bourgeois specialists and industries managed by workers.

STATE COUNCIL OF IMPERIAL RUSSIA

Established by Alexander I in 1810. Upper house of Russian parliament, made up of appointed and elected members. Disbanded after the February Revolution of 1917.

SUBBOTNIK

Voluntary work day on a weekend.

T

TREATY OF BREST-LITOVSK

Peace treaty signed on 3 March 1918 at Brest-Litovsk (Poland) between Russia and Germany, marking the former's exit from World War I. Though almost obsolete before the end of the year, the treaty took pressure off the Bolsheviks as they waged civil war. It also acknowledged

the independent status of Poland, Finland and countries in the Baltic region.

TREATY OF PORTSMOUTH

Signed in England on 5 September 1905, the Treaty formally ended the Russo-Japanese War of 1904–1905.

TRIUMVIRATE

Group of three that wields power and influence (also called 'troika'). In the Russian context it usually refers to Stalin, Zinoviev and Kamenev.

V

VIKZHEL

All-Russian Railways Union. Attempted to pressure the Bolsheviks into a coalition government after the October Revolution.

VSNKH

Supreme Council of the National Economy (pronounced 'veh-sen-ka'), which under the Bolsheviks regulated and managed the economy.

W

WAR COMMUNISM

A series of harsh, centralised economic measures adopted by the Communists during the Civil War. The policy featured the seizing of private businesses, the nationalisation of industry and the forcible removal of surplus grain from peasants. Abandoned after March 1921.

WHITE ARMIES

Counter-revolutionary armed forces opposed to the Bolsheviks in the Civil War. Comprised a disparate group of Kadets, dispossessed landowners and factory owners, monarchists and devout members of the Orthodox Church.

Z

ZEMSTVO

Elected local assembly, largely comprised of landed gentry. Established by Tsar Alexander II in the mid-nineteenth century. Abolished after the October Revolution.

ZHENOTDEL

Women's Department of the Communist Party, led by Inessa Armand and Alexandra Kollontai. Promoted women's rights and advancement.

WHO'S WHO IN THE REVOLUTION

ARMAND, INESSA (1874–1920)

Born in Paris, Inessa Armand was raised in Russia by a wealthy industrialist (her step-father). In her early years she taught in a school for peasant children and joined a Moscow charity that supported poor working-class women; gradually she embraced a more radical career. Armand left her husband and in 1903 joined the Social Democratic Workers' Party. She rose to become an influential Bolshevik propagandist in Moscow. After a number of arrests and a term of northern exile, Armand emigrated to Western Europe. She met Lenin in Paris in 1910 and was enthralled by his revolutionary charisma. He was enchanted by her stunning beauty and sharp intellect. There is strong circumstantial evidence that for two years they had an extra-marital affair. Lenin's wife, Nadezhda Krupskaya, tolerated the arrangement. Lenin relied on Armand to present his views at a number of important Party conferences in Europe that he was unable to attend. Armand remained a staunch feminist throughout her career. She founded and edited the SD paper *Rabotnitsa* (Woman Worker). Armand was among the nineteen revolutionaries who returned with Lenin to Russia in April 1917. After the Bolsheviks came to power she was appointed the first director of Zhenotdel, the Women's Department of the Central Committee. Armand's fluency in French and other languages earned her a role in the Comintern. In 1920 she contracted cholera and died at the age of forty-six. Lenin was shattered by the death of his 'dearest friend.' Her remains were interred under the Kremlin wall alongside other leading Soviet dignitaries.

BRONSTEIN, LEV (LEON TROTSKY) (1879–1940)

Lev Bronstein was born on 7 November 1879 to a Ukrainian Jewish family. In 1902 he changed his name to Leon Trotsky. He was educated in Odessa and Nikolayev; at the latter he was exposed to Marxist ideology. At first a Populist, Trotsky was heavily involved in organising the South Russian Workers' Union in 1897 and was subsequently arrested in 1898 and exiled to Siberia. In 1902 he escaped to London, where he worked with fellow Marxists such as Lenin and Martov, producing the journal *Iskra*. By then a Social Democrat, Trotsky supported Martov and the Mensheviks at the Second Party Congress in 1903; he later split with them and became a non-factional Social Democrat. Trotsky returned to Russia following Bloody Sunday in January 1905 and helped to create the St Petersburg Soviet, eventually becoming its chairman. The soviet was stormed in December 1905 and its deputies arrested, including Trotsky, who in 1906 was sentenced to internal exile. During his time in prison Trotsky developed the theory of permanent revolution, eventually escaping and making his way to London and Vienna, where he joined with Adolf Joffe to publish the journal *Pravda*. Having denounced World War I, Trotsky lived in Vienna, Zurich and Paris during the conflict, where he published several Social Democratic newspapers until he was arrested by French authorities and deported to Spain in September 1916; he was deported to the United

States in December that year. In New York he published the revolutionary newspaper *Novy Mir*, remaining there throughout the February Revolution of 1917. On his way back to Russia Trotsky was arrested in Canada and eventually released following protests from the Provisional Government. Arriving in Russia in May 1917, Trotsky joined the Bolsheviks in July. He was called on by Kerensky to lead the Red Guard to protect Petrograd and was elected Chairman of the Petrograd Soviet in October. He played an integral role in the October Revolution. In November Trotsky became the People's Commissar for Foreign Affairs and led the Russian delegation to negotiate peace with Germany and Austria-Hungary in Brest-Litovsk. Trotsky hoped to delay negotiations and allow revolution to spread to Europe; Russia was forced to sign the humiliating treaty when this did not eventuate. On his return, Trotsky was appointed leader of the Red Army of Workers and Peasants. He successfully led the Red Army throughout the Civil War, controversially employing ex-tsarist officers and conscripted soldiers from June 1918, enabling the survival of the Bolsheviks. Despite being involved in various controversial debates and conflicts over trade union policy, Trotsky returned to favour after he successfully quelled the Kronstadt Rebellion in 1921. As a member of the Communist Party Central Committee, he was a forerunner in the bid to replace the ailing Lenin. After Lenin's death, Stalin dismissed Trotsky as commissar of war. In 1926, Stalin's former supporters – Zinoviev and Kamenev – joined forces with Trotsky to rein in Stalin's power. Trotsky was expelled from the Politburo in 1926, from the party in 1927 and from the country in 1929. Trotsky sought asylum in Turkey, France and Norway; in December 1936 he was deported to Mexico. During this time all of his children died in various mysterious circumstances and Stalin accused him of treason. Trotsky was tried in New York and found not guilty. Trotsky died in Mexico City in August 1940, when he was struck with an ice pick by Ramon Mercader.

BRUSILOV, ALEXEI (1853–1926)

Alexei Brusilov became a general in the Russian army in 1906, commanding the Eighth Army at the onset of World War I. He became renowned as Russia's most successful general (particularly on account of the 'Brusilov Offensive' in 1916, which gained Russia valuable territory) and was appointed Commander-in-Chief after the tsar's abdication. Dismissed in August 1917, Brusilov did not actively participate in the Civil War but joined the Red Army in 1920. He did not fully support the Bolsheviks and was first and foremost a Russian nationalist. He died in Moscow in 1926.

BUKHARIN, NIKOLAI (1888–1938)

The youngest of the leading Bolsheviks, Nikolai Bukharin was the Communist Party's top Marxist theoretician. Lenin said he was the most valuable theorist and most popular member of the Party. Like Trotsky, Bukharin was in New York during the February Revolution but on his return rose to prominence in the Bolsheviks' Moscow organisation. After the October Revolution Bukharin served as editor of *Pravda* and came to be associated with the more radical Left Communist wing of the Party. He advocated a revolutionary war against German imperialism and, alongside his Left Communist and Left

SR comrades, campaigned for the rejection of all peace terms with Germany during and after Brest-Litovsk. He was an influential member of the Central Committee and made important analyses of social policy and economics. One of his most important works was *The ABC of Communism*, a widely-circulated guide. One of Bukharin's insights was his belief that a severe downturn in production was bound to emerge from a proletarian revolution, since such a revolution would destroy the apparatus of the bourgeois state. Although lamentable, this was, according to Bukharin, a necessary phase of the revolutionary process that would finally result in a prosperous socialist state: he described it as 'breaking an egg to obtain an omelette.' Initially a staunch supporter of War Communism, Bukharin emerged as the most prominent defender of the moderate NEP. After Lenin's death Bukharin continued to advocate gradualist economics. Appointed to the Politburo in 1924 and head of the Comintern in 1926, Bukharin remained outside the initial power struggle between Trotsky and the triumvirate of Stalin, Kamenev and Zinoviev. After late 1925 he was aligned with Stalin and the Right against the United Opposition of Kamenev, Zinoviev and Trotsky. Bukharin spent the mid-to-late 1920s at the pinnacle of political power until he too fell from Stalin's grace after expressing concern over enforced collectivisation. He said Stalin was an 'unprincipled intriguer' who at a moment's notice would 'change his theories in order to get rid of someone.' These were prophetic words. Expelled from the Politburo for factionalism in 1929, Bukharin was executed in the Great Purge of 1938. Stephen Cohen argues that the intelligent and comparatively moderate Bukharin represented a missed opportunity for the Communist Party.

DZERZHINSKY, FELIX (1877–1926)

A Pole of aristocratic background, Felix Dzerzhinsky founded and led the Communist political police agencies. Dzerzhinsky had contemplated joining the Catholic priesthood before becoming a Marxist revolutionary. He spent eleven years in tsarist prisons, serving sentences under hard labour and terms of Siberian exile for his role in agitating for revolution, particularly as a leading member of the Lithuanian Social Democratic Party and SD groups in Poland. Freed from prison during the February Revolution, Dzerzhinsky supervised security at the Smolny and played an important role in the October insurrection, mainly by securing the control of Petrograd's telegraph and postal agencies. He was appointed head of the All-Russian Extraordinary Commission for Combating Counter-Revolution, Speculation and Sabotage (Cheka) in December 1917. Dzerzhinsky's obsessive energy and attention to detail took the Cheka into areas far beyond counter-revolutionary intelligence and terror; the body grew into a multi-dimensional organisation that was greatly valued by Communist leaders. He was merciless in dealing with 'counter-revolutionaries' and the Cheka was considered of equal importance to the Red Army in the Civil War victory. The victims of Red Terror, the casualties of the 'war on the internal front' as the Chekists understood it, amounted to hundreds of thousands of people. After the Civil War, Dzerzhinsky served as chairmen of VSNKh, People's Commissar of the Interior (NKVD) and Commissar of Railways. He remained head of the political police and oversaw the reorganisation of the Cheka into the

GPU, then OGPU. He died of a heart attack following a rousing speech to the Politburo in 1926. At his funeral, Stalin said Dzerzhinsky's impassioned, seething life could be summed up by a single word, 'burning.' Free from personal corruption and holding purist ideals for the Cheka, Dzerzhinsky was revered by successive generations of Soviet secret police agents, who vowed to be 'sharp-eyed and diligent' like their founding leader. Despite this he is remembered by many as a murderous fanatic.

DZHUGASHVILI, IOSIF (JOSEF STALIN) (1879–1953)

Iosif Dzhugashvili was born in Georgia in 1879. His parents were peasants and he had a sparse upbringing. Dzhugashvili suffered many ailments, including smallpox (which left him with a pock-marked face). He received a scholarship to attend a theological seminary; while he studied he became involved with the burgeoning Georgian independence movement and came into contact with Marxism. In 1899 he was expelled from the seminary, either because of reading banned books or, according to him, because he tried to convert fellow students to Marxism. In 1901 Dzhugashvili joined the Social Democratic Workers' Party (SDs). He was imprisoned the following year for organising an industrial strike and later was deported to Siberia. He changed his name to Stalin in 1913: it roughly translates as 'man of steel.' Another nickname he picked up was 'Koba,' derived from the Robin Hood-like protagonist of a novel by Alexander Kazbegi.

In the early period of the Sovnarkom (following the October Revolution of 1917), Stalin became Commissar of Nationalities and was a member of the Politburo. He became General Secretary of the Soviet Communist Party in 1922. Following the death of Lenin two years later, he prevailed over Trotsky in a leadership struggle. Stalin replaced the New Economic Policy of the 1920s with Five-Year Plans in 1928 and collective farming at about the same time. Under his direction the Soviet Union changed from a mainly peasant-based society to a major industrial power by the end of the 1930s. His policies, which included the forced collectivisation of farms and coercive grain requisitioning, had a devastating effect on social and family life. Up to ten-million people died of starvation, mostly in Ukraine but also in the North Caucasus, Kazakhstan and Russia. So-called wealthy famers and members of the middle and upper classes were targeted and persecuted as enemies of the people. Stalin sought to eliminate all potential threats to his authority: between 1934 and 1939 Stalin purged almost all the 'Old Bolsheviks' as well as most of those elected to the Central Committee in 1934. He also got rid of many military personnel, including heroes of the Civil War. He also ordered the trial, torture, imprisonment and execution of millions of ordinary citizens. Stalin was later denounced by Communist leaders for his tyrannical rule and 'cult of personality.'

GAPON, GEORGIY (1870–1906)

Georgiy Gapon was born in rural Russia in 1870. Following minor involvement with revolutionary groups throughout his early years, Gapon was prohibited from attending university; it was then he decided to train as a priest. Gapon came to prominence in 1904 when he established the Assembly of Russian Factory Workers. This group, actively supported by the Ministry for the Interior, was designed to support local workers and pursue

industrial reform. The Assembly's links with the Ministry led Gapon to being described as a 'double agent.' He established himself as a prominent member of the St Petersburg workers' community, with his organisation boasting tens of thousands of members. In 1905 there was major industrial action after four workers were dismissed from the Putilov Steel Works. Gapon planned to present a petition to Tsar Nicholas II at a peaceful demonstration at the Winter Palace on Sunday 9 January 1905; the petition outlined the Putilov workers' grievances and called for political, economic and social reform. When the procession of up to 150 000 people reached the Winter Palace they were fired upon by police and Cossacks. Up to 200 people were killed and 800 injured; the day became known as Bloody Sunday. Afterwards, Gapon fled Russia for Geneva, where he mixed with SRs and other exiled revolutionaries. While in Geneva he was 'discovered' by SR Pinchas Rutenberg to be a spy for the Ministry for the Interior. He was murdered outside St Petersburg in March 1906, allegedly on the orders of the SR leadership.

KAMENEV, LEV (1883–1936)

Lev Kamenev joined the Bolsheviks after the Second Party Congress in 1903, having spent time with Lenin in Switzerland. During the 1905 Revolution he organised railway strikes in St Petersburg before moving to Switzerland. After the tsar's abdication Kamenev returned to Russia and undermined the Provisional Government, becoming joint editor of *Pravda* with Zinoviev. Kamenev opposed Lenin's call for revolution in October 1917 but participated in the uprising once it began. Elected Chairman of the Moscow Soviet in 1918, Kamenev became a member of the Politburo and joined with Zinoviev and Stalin in the Triumvirate in 1923. Kamenev disagreed with Stalin over the latter's insistence on Socialism in One Country; Stalin used this deviation from the Party line to reduce Kamenev's power. In 1935 he was charged with involvement in Kirov's assassination and sentenced to ten years' imprisonment. The following year he was accused of plotting against Stalin in Stalin's first Show Trial. Kamenev was found guilty and executed in Moscow in August 1936. Two of Kamenev's sons and his first wife were also executed over the next two years.

KERENSKY, ALEXANDER (1881–1970)

Alexander Kerensky was born in 1881 in Simbirsk, Lenin's home town. (His father taught Lenin at one point.) Kerensky, who was known for his persuasive and rhetorical skills, joined the Socialist Revolutionaries in 1905. Elected to the duma in 1912, he played a key role in the February Revolution in 1917, calling for the removal of the tsar. When the tsar abdicated, Kerensky was appointed Justice Minister in the new Provisional Government, rising to become Minister of War in May. He toured the front line with General Brusilov and made a series of stirring speeches to the troops to implore them to continue fighting. In one speech he said, 'Forward to the battle for freedom. I summon you not to a feast but death.' Kerensky announced a military campaign in Galacia (known as the June Offensive) which aimed to improve the credibility of the Provisional Government through a Russian victory. The offensive was highly unpopular and, despite some gains in the first few days, was unsuccessful. Due to the low standing of Prime Minister

Lvov, however, Kerensky became Prime Minister in July and replaced Brusilov with Kornilov, with whom he soon came into conflict. Enlisting the support of the Bolsheviks to protect Petrograd from Kornilov and his troops, Kerensky was never again able to exert real power, despite taking control of the Russian Army in September. Kerensky fled Petrograd before the Bolsheviks seized power, rallying troops to challenge Bolshevik forces in the north. Upon defeat, Kerensky fled to Finland before escaping to London in 1918. Kerensky spent much of the next twenty years in France trying to persuade the Western world to intervene in the Soviet Union. When his wife became ill in 1945 they moved to Brisbane to be with her family; she died the following year. He later moved to the United States where he taught graduate courses at Stanford University in California. Kerensky died of cancer in 1970.

KIROV, SERGEI (1886-1934)

Sergei Mironovich Kostrikov (later Kirov) was born to a poor family in Urzhum, Russia, in 1886. He took part in the 1905 Revolution and was imprisoned for a period; shortly afterwards he joined the Bolsheviks. In 1906 Kostrikov was imprisoned again, this time for producing illegal literature. He moved to the Caucasus until Tsar Nicholas II abdicated; by then he had become known as Kirov. He fought in the Russian Civil War until 1920 and in 1921 he was put in charge of the Azerbaijan party organisation. Kirov was appointed head of the Leningrad party organisation by Stalin; he joined the Politburo in 1930. In 1934 Kirov was killed by Leonid Nikolaev at the Smolny Institute in Leningrad. NKVD investigators claimed Nikolaev was part of a conspiracy against Stalin led by Trotsky, Zinoviev and Kamenev. Kirov's death sparked the Great Purge, during which perceived opponents of Stalin were arrested or executed.

KOLLONTAI, ALEXANDRA (1872–1952)

Alexandra Kollontai was a tireless champion of women's rights and a leading figure in the Bolshevik party. She believed that the granting of equal political, social and economic opportunities to women was an essential element of a communist revolution. Like Lenin, Kollontai spent a good deal of her revolutionary career in European exile. She was a prolific writer and considered an excellent orator. A radical by inclination, Kollontai backed Lenin's *April Theses* and campaigned on his behalf after his return to Russia. She was appointed Commissar of Social Welfare after the October Revolution and headed Zhenotdel (the Women's Section of the Central Committee) after the death of Inessa Armand. Reputedly a compassionate woman who took her work very seriously, Kollontai did her best to assist the petitioners who presented themselves at her Commissariat. Kollontai articulated arguments for women's rights within relationships, but her views were misrepresented and ridiculed by some Bolsheviks. At the Tenth Party Congress of 1921, she criticised (as chief spokesperson for the Worker's Opposition group) the growing bureaucratisation of the Party and its diminishing links with the working classes. Kollontai's political influence waned after 1921. She served out the remainder of her career as Soviet diplomat to Norway, Sweden and Mexico. She died peacefully in retirement in 1952, one of the few old Bolsheviks to survive Stalin's wrathful purges.

KORNILOV, LAVR (1870–1919)

Lavr Kornilov was an Imperial Russian general who was decorated for his role in the Russo-Japanese War and sent to the Eastern Front during World War I. He was captured by the Austro-Hungarian Army in 1915 but escaped the following year. After the tsar's abdication Kornilov was appointed Commander-in-Chief of the Petrograd garrison before being appointed Supreme Commander of the Russian Army by Kerensky. Kornilov and Kerensky came into conflict during the Kornilov Affair, which occurred after Kerensky dismissed him. Suspecting Kerensky had succumbed to a Bolshevik coup, Kornilov ordered his troops to march on Petrograd. In an attempt to meet the threat, Kerensky turned to the soviets for assistance and ordered all Bolshevik prisoners to be set free from prison and charged with defending the city. Kornilov was arrested but he escaped and became commander of one of the White armies during the Civil War. He was killed by a Red Army shell in April 1918. Kornilov was buried in a nearby cemetery but the Red Army later found the grave, dug up his corpse and paraded it through a nearby town before burning it in the main square.

LENIN

(See Ulyanov)

LUNACHARSKY, ANATOLI (1875–1933)

Anatoli Lunacharsky was the first Commissar of Enlightenment (Arts and Education). A man of independent views, he had a number of fierce disagreements with Lenin on literary, philosophical and political matters in the years before 1917. A member of Trotsky's small Inter-district Group of SDs, Lunacharsky joined the Bolsheviks in the merger immediately preceding the July Days. In the lead-up to the October insurrection, Lunacharsky was a prominent orator for the Bolshevik cause, considered second only to Trotsky. As Commissar of Enlightenment, he was renowned for his tolerance of temperamental artists and writers and for his own artistic endeavours. He had a deep love of Russia's cultural heritage. He was adamant that the artistic achievements of the past be preserved against wanton revolutionary destruction. Innovations in education (particularly in relation to literacy) were Lunacharsky's main contribution: by 1926 eighty per cent of children aged eight to eleven regularly attended school compared to forty-nine per cent in 1915. He played no role in the inter-Party leadership struggles after Lenin's death, preferring to focus on literary and philosophical interests. Lunacharsky wrote over 1500 articles on artistic matters and jointly represented the USSR at the League of Nations from 1930 to 1932. He died peacefully in 1933.

MARTOV, JULIUS (1873–1920)

Julius Martov was born in 1873. In his early years he became friends with Vladimir Ulyanov (Lenin) and together they formed the Struggle for the Emancipation of the Working Classes in 1895. Following his exile from Russia, Martov joined the Social Democratic Workers' Party (SDs) and worked with fellow revolutionaries on the party journal *Iskra*. In 1903 the SDs held their Second Congress in London. Following a division between Martov and Lenin, the party divided into the Martov-led Mensheviks and the Lenin-led Bolsheviks. Martov was staunchly opposed to Russia's involvement in World War I and maintained a left-wing internationalist position within

the Mensheviks. Like many other revolutionaries he returned to Russia after the February Revolution; he criticised former Mensheviks who joined the Provisional Government. Following the Bolshevik-led October Revolution Martov led a small Menshevik delegation in the Constituent Assembly until the body was forcibly dissolved in 1918. During the Civil War Martov supported the Red Army despite his opposition to many Bolshevik practices (such as the persecution of opposition groups and newspaper editors). Martov was exiled in 1920 and died in Germany the same year.

POBEDONOSTSEV, KONSTANTIN (1827–1907)

Konstantin Petrovich Pobedonostsev was born in 1827. He began lecturing in civil law at Moscow University in 1859 and later served as Professor of Civil Law at Moscow State University between 1860 and 1865. It is through this that Pobedonostsev became personal tutor to Alexander II's sons, moving into the royal residence in 1866. By 1880 he was the Chief Procurator of the Holy Synod; the highest position in the Russian Orthodox Church. Pobedonostsev, who had ministerial posts in the government from 1881 to 1905, was a key figure in asserting the autocracy of the tsar. He penned Alexander III's Manifesto of 1881, which proclaimed the divine right and absolute power of the tsar. He opposed 'Western' ideas such as independence and political freedom, calling democracy a dangerous delusion. As a result he was disliked by liberals and seen as an obstacle to reform. Pobedonostsev instigated the policy of 'Russification' under Alexander III's reign, which ultimately encouraged religious persecution and violent pogroms, mostly directed at Jews. He resigned from political life in 1905.

ROMANOV, NIKOLAY (TSAR NICHOLAS II) (1868–1918)

Nikolay Romanov was born in May 1868 to Tsar Alexander III and Marie Feodorovna. Nikolay (Nicholas) ascended the throne on 20 October 1894 following his father's death and in that same month married Alexandra of Hesse-Darmstadt, the granddaughter of Queen Victoria of England. Nicholas II was a devoutly religious man who, despite his reluctance to ascend the throne and his personal distaste for politics, remained wholly committed to the tradition of autocratic rule. His rule was plagued with international conflict and domestic unrest, highlighted by the revolution of 1905. Nicholas' inflexibility on the question of autocracy was the catalyst for internal discontent, which was only briefly diverted by democratic reforms (suggested by Witte) in the October Manifesto of 1905. Nicholas reasserted his authority, however, through the Fundamental Laws of 1906 and other electoral changes. In 1907 he signed the Triple Entente with Britain and France and in 1914 committed Russia to World War I. Nicholas II assumed control of the Russian Army in September 1915, a fatal mistake which prompted the Russian High Command to recommend that he abdicate. In March 1917 Tsar Nicholas II abdicated and his family was exiled to Siberia, where they lived until they were executed by the Bolsheviks in July 1918.

RYKOV, ALEXEI (1881–1938)

Alexei Rykov joined the Social Democratic Workers' Party in 1901 and joined the Bolshevik Party after the Second Party Congress in 1903. Less radical than Lenin, Rykov was exiled to Siberia in 1912 before rejoining the Bolsheviks in

1917. He was appointed Chairman of the Supreme Council of the National Economy in 1918 and elected a member of the Central Committee in 1920. Along with Bukharin and Tomsky, Rykov led the moderate wing of the Communist Party in the 1920s; because of this he came into frequent conflict with an increasingly radical Stalin. Rykov was executed in 1938, having been accused at the third Show Trial of plotting against Stalin.

STALIN

(see Dzhugashvili)

STOLYPIN, PYOTR (1862–1911)

Pyotr Stolypin was born in Dresden on 14 April 1862 to a Russian aristocratic landowning family. In 1884 he married Olga Borisovna Neidhardt, daughter of a prominent family and in 1885 graduated from St Petersburg University. Stolypin immediately pursued political life, entering the Ministry of State Domains in 1885. In 1889 he was appointed marshal of Kovno province, a post he held for three years before he served governorships at Grodno and Saratov. Stolypin quickly earned a reputation for suppressing revolutionaries, most notably in Saratov in 1905. As a result he was appointed Minister for the Interior in April 1906 and, in August, Prime Minister. As Prime Minister, Stolypin introduced sweeping agrarian reforms, legislating in 1906 to open up land to peasants in the hope of making them self-sufficient and prosperous – and possibly more obedient. He allowed greater freedom in rural zemstvo elections. Despite his progressive reforms, Stolypin ruled in an uncompromising manner, introducing measures to allow for the efficient arrest and conviction of political dissidents. Between 1906 and 1909 an estimated 3000 people were convicted and executed by Stolypin's courts. He also dissolved the two progressive dumas (the first and second), and formulated laws to ensure that future dumas would be more conservative in composition. By 1911 Stolypin was falling out of favour with the tsar; he was assassinated in September of that year by Dmitri Bogrov (an SR).

SVERDLOV, YAKOV (1885–1919)

Yakov Sverdlov was a leading organiser of the Bolshevik Party, the Central Committee Secretary and Chairman of the All-Russian Central Executive Committee (CEC) of the Soviets. He was an active Marxist revolutionary from a young age and in 1903 sided with the Bolshevik faction of the SDs. He was arrested and sent to Siberian exile on a number of occasions. Though small in stature, Sverdlov had a booming voice and sharp wit. He was considered one of the Bolsheviks' best speakers. He was said to have had a 'filing-cabinet sort of a mind.'[1] His prodigious memory for the names and talents of fellow Bolsheviks led Preobrazhensky to remark: 'He knew our party better than anyone else.'[2] As the leading Bolshevik administrator Sverdlov worked in close collaboration with Lenin after his return in April 1917 through to the October Revolution. He was instrumental in maintaining a functional Central Committee in the difficult period of the post-July Days repression. Once in power, Sverdlov's knack for efficient administration ensured the Soviet Congress passed resolutions with minimal fuss. He drafted the first Soviet constitution. Besides Dzerzhinsky, Sverdlov was the only Bolshevik allowed instant access to Lenin. He controlled the day-to-day running of the

1 Richard Pipes, *The Russian Revolution 1899–1919* (London: Harvill Press, 1990), 512.
2 Cited in Martin McCauley, 'Sverdlov,' (entry) in *The Blackwell Encyclopedia of the Russian Revolution*, ed. Harold Shukman (Oxford: Blackwell Publishers, 1988), 389.

Party, allowing Lenin and others to deal with the Civil War. Following the assassination attempt on Lenin in August 1918, Sverdlov chaired Sovnarkom meetings and managed state affairs until Lenin recovered. It was Sverdlov who ordered the execution of Lenin's attacker, Fanya Kaplan. He was a supporter of Kollontai's initiatives in women's rights, often conveying her proposals to the Central Committee. Lenin once said that Sverdlov was irreplaceable. Having relied heavily on his organisational skills, the Party was restructured into the Secretariat, Politburo and Orgburo after his death from Spanish influenza in 1919. Desperate for able administrators, it was understandable that Lenin turned to Stalin as his new chief of paperwork. It is highly likely that Sverdlov would have been first in line for General Secretary had he not died before his time; this would have deprived Stalin of his ladder to power.

TROTSKY

(see Bronstein)

TSAR NICHOLAS II

(see Romanov)

ULYANOV, VLADIMIR ILYICH (LENIN) (1870–1924)

Vladimir Ilyich Ulyanov, popularly known as Lenin, was born into an upper-middle class family. His father was a provincial schools inspector in the Simbirsk region of the Volga. An important public office, this position granted him the title of a hereditary nobleman. The young Lenin grew up in a household that encouraged hard work, intellectual endeavour and frugal living. He was an extremely gifted student who made a great impression on his school's headmaster (who happened to be Kerensky's father). Lenin's father died unexpectedly in 1886 and his brother Aleksandr was executed for plotting to kill Tsar Alexander III with the terrorist group The People's Will. After this the family became virtual outcasts from society and were monitored closely by authorities. Lenin went on to study law at Kazan University, but was expelled after he joined in student protests. Through the assistance of Kerensky's father, Lenin was able to complete his law degree by correspondence and then worked as a lawyer. But he was soon devoting most of his time to Russia's burgeoning Marxist revolutionary movement. He was arrested in 1895 and sent into Siberian exile (his pseudonym, derived from the Lena River, appeared at this time). Lenin emigrated in 1900, spending time in Switzerland, Austria, France and Britain. He married a fellow revolutionary, Nadezhda Krupskaya, in 1898. Lenin collaborated with a number of Marxist intellectuals in the 1890s before joining Plekhanov's Social Democratic Workers' Party soon after its inception. Lenin quickly became a leading figure within the Party. He co-founded the SD newspaper Iskra with Martov. Lenin quickly made a name for himself: he was intense, brilliant and intolerant of those who disagreed with him. Some found him obsessive. He would apparently explode with fury if so much as a pencil was in the wrong place in his office. He was a master of factional politics and liked to 'row' with his comrades. Prematurely bald, Lenin's nickname was 'Old Man.' During the February Revolution, while Lenin was in Switzerland, the abrupt end of tsarism took him completely by surprise. Only weeks before he had told a group of younger revolutionaries that he did not expect to see

the successful overthrow of the tsar in his lifetime. Desperate to get back to Russia and regain influence over the direction of the Bolshevik Party, Lenin travelled through German territory in a special sealed train carriage. The radical proposals of Lenin's April Theses had an immediate impact: the SDs were forced to choose whether they supported the moderate, orthodox Marxist position of the Mensheviks or Lenin's radical ideas. Lenin insisted that no co-operation should be given to the Provisional Government; it should instead be overthrown. The February Revolution was a bourgeois coup and the revolution needed to continue. Russia needn't go through a stage of capitalist democracy and there was no need to establish a democratic parliament. The last two Marxist stages of historical development – the bourgeois and socialist phases – could be 'telescoped' into one. Power should be transferred to the soviets; the true representative organisations of the workers, soldiers and peasantry. Lenin's role in bringing about the October Revolution was significant. It can certainly be argued that without Lenin the October Revolution would not have occurred or at least turned out the way it did. Although it was Trotsky who organised most aspects of the seizure of power, it was Lenin who inspired the Party to act, constantly heckling and urging his colleagues on. It was by Lenin's forceful personality that the Bolshevik Sovnarkom government emerged at this time. He made no qualms about the violence that would be needed to subjugate the former bourgeois elements of society. Private property was to be abolished and a workers' state would oversee the socialist re-distribution of the means of production. After this period of 'dictatorship' by the proletariat, the 'state' would cease to be of use and eventually 'wither away.' Lenin's view of the nature of post-revolutionary society was underpinned by idealism; it was rather vague about how the transition from capitalism to socialism and then to communism was to be achieved. Lenin and the other leading Bolsheviks believed that worldwide socialist revolution was inevitable and imminent. Once Russia staged its revolution, other countries would follow. When this did not occur the Bolsheviks were left with a situation for which they had no back-up plan. Yet Lenin's ideals also left room for compromise and adaptation, and there was to be much of this in the Civil War period of 1918 to 1921. Severely wounded in an assassination attempt in August 1918, Lenin recovered but declined in health after 1921. After a series of strokes Lenin passed away in 1924 at the age of fifty-three. He cast a long shadow over the twentieth century. He was at once the murderous founder of Russian totalitarianism; the great comrade of the working class and its vanguard; a brilliant revolutionary; a complex and flawed human being; a statesmen with the political acumen allowing for compromise at critical moments; and a dogmatic individual who did not face his own errors – Vladimir Ilyich Ulyanov was an enigma whose legacy continues to be debated.

WITTE, SERGEI (1849–1915)

Sergei Witte was born in Tiflis, Georgia on 29 June 1849. His father had a Lutheran German background and his mother came from Russian nobility. Witte went to university in Odessa, graduating in 1870 with a degree in mathematics. He pursued a variety of private enterprises, most notably in the railways, where he experienced great success. He entered the Russian

government in 1889 and was appointed Director of the Department of Railway Affairs and, later, Transportation Minister. In these roles he supervised the construction of the Trans-Siberian railway. He was soon promoted to Minister of Finance in 1893 and oversaw a program of rapid industrialisation in Russia. In this role Witte placed Russia on the gold standard and attracted foreign investors. Witte was appointed Chairman of the Committee of Ministers in 1903. At the tsar's request, Witte negotiated a peace treaty with Japan following Russia's defeat in the Russo-Japanese War in 1905. As Prime Minister, Witte advised the tsar to make democratic reforms as a concession to the revolution of 1905; he then drafted the October Manifesto. Witte's liberal approach outraged conservatives and, under mounting pressure, he resigned in April 1906. He opposed Russia's entry into World War I. Witte died in Petrograd on 13 March 1915.

ZINOVIEV, GRIGORY (1883–1936)

Grigory Zinoviev was born in the Ukraine in 1883 – his parents were Jewish dairy farmers. He joined the Social Democratic Workers' Party in 1901, before meeting Lenin in Switzerland and joining the Bolsheviks after the Second Party Congress in 1903. Involved in organising the general strike of 1905, Zinoviev was elected to the Central Committee in 1907. Along with Lenin, Trotsky and Kamenev, Zinoviev was one of the key plotters against the Provisional Government in 1917. Joint editors of *Pravda*, Zinoviev and Kamenev were the only two Party members to oppose Lenin's call for a Bolshevik seizure of power in October 1917; both eventually took part, however. He was part of the 'triumvirate' that ensured that Trotsky did not succeed Lenin as leader. Stalin and Zinoviev disagreed over the concept of worldwide revolution and this allowed Stalin to alienate Zinoviev politically. In 1935 Zinoviev was arrested and accused of involvement in Kirov's assassination; he was later sentenced to ten years' imprisonment. The following year, accused of plotting against Stalin, he was executed. When his time came, Zinoviev allegedly broke down, pleading with the guard to spare him. Panicking, the guard shot him straight away. Stalin enjoyed having this moment re-enacted for him at social gatherings.

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