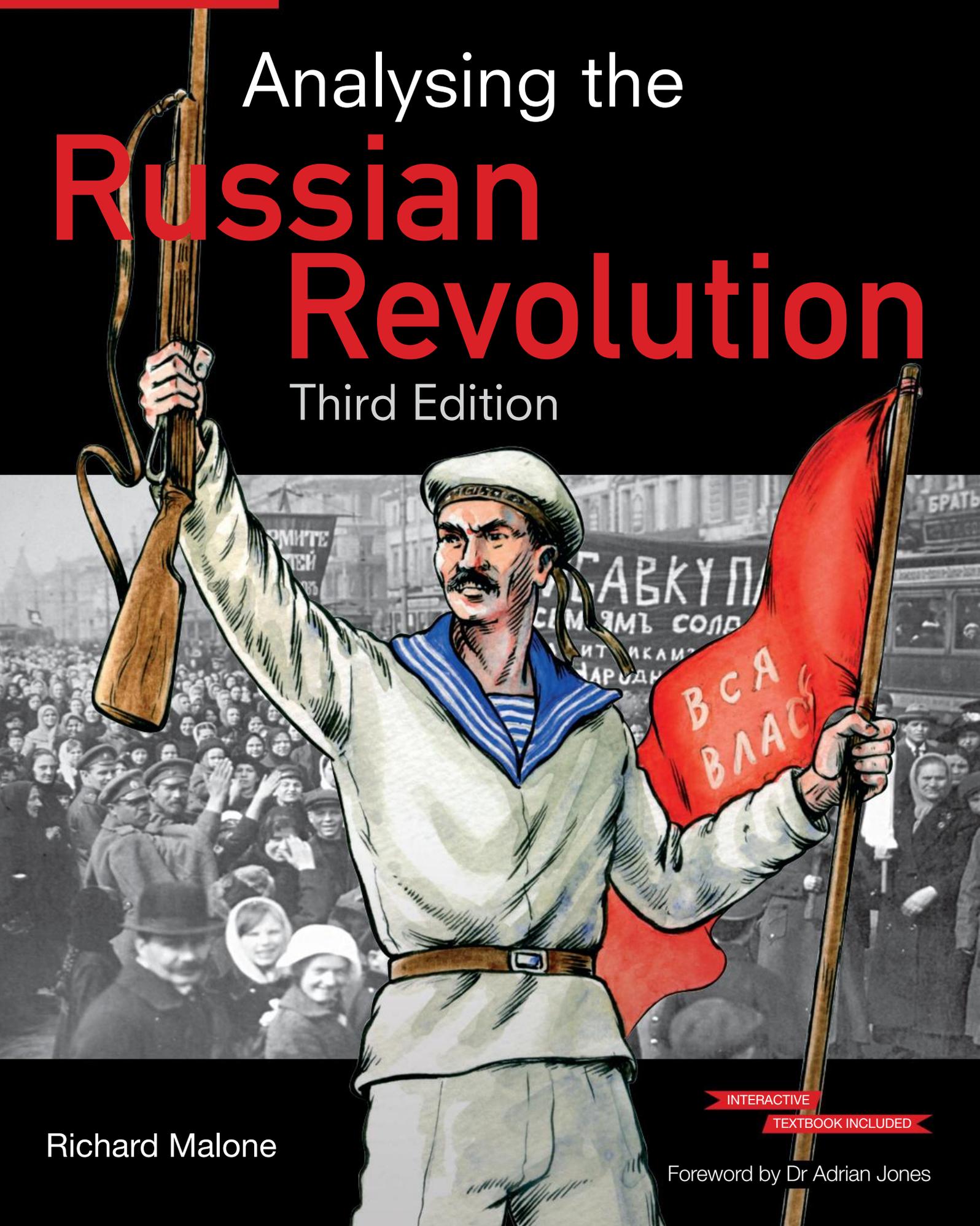


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Third Edition



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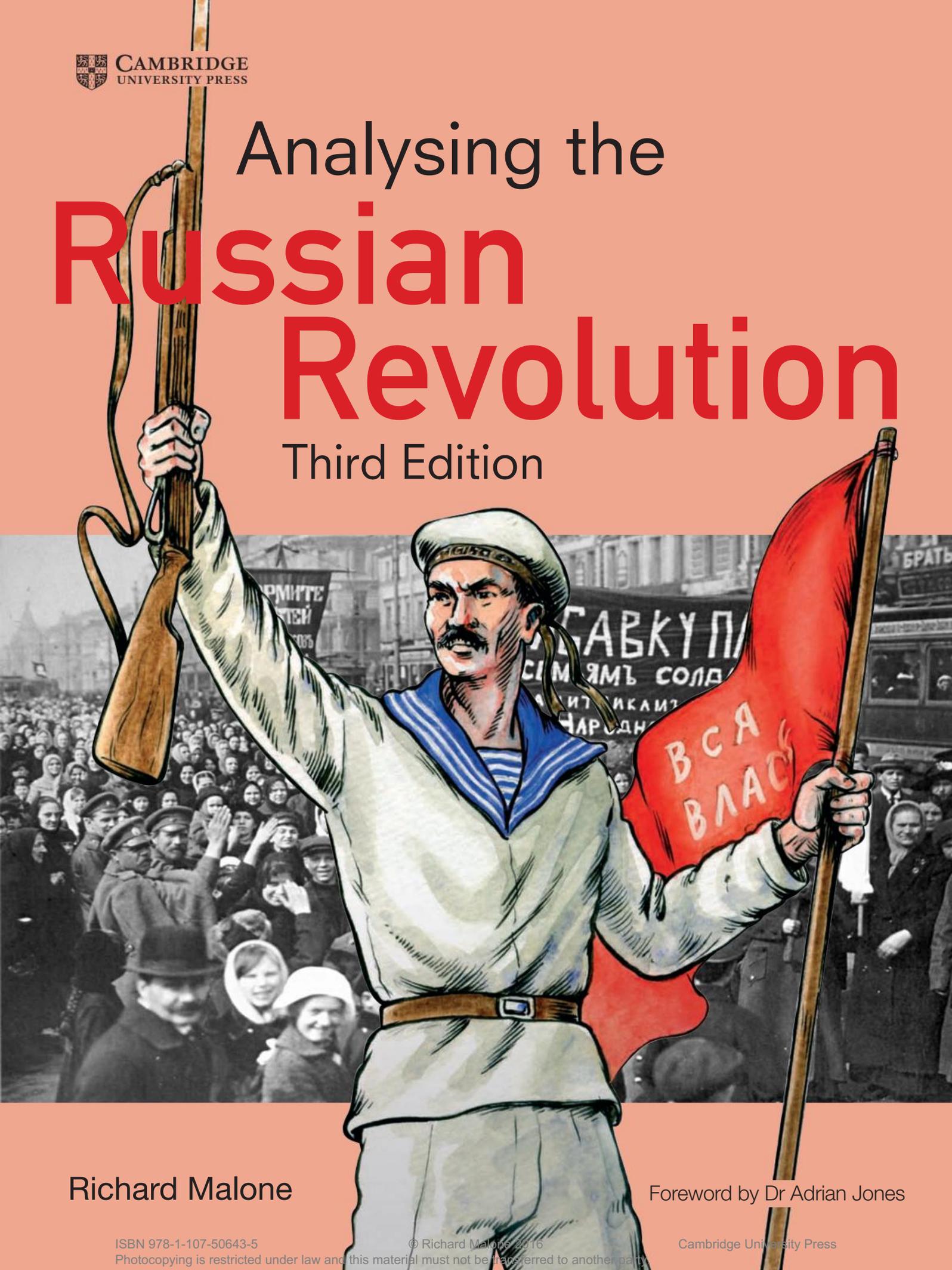
Richard Malone

Foreword by Dr Adrian Jones

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Analysing the Russian Revolution

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Richard Malone

Foreword by Dr Adrian Jones

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Practice examination questions – available on Cambridge GO



About the author

Richard Malone is a popular author and presenter in many topics of history. He is currently Head of Middle School at Caulfield Grammar School and was the 10–12 Learning Area Leader for Humanities for several years. He is a regular presenter at history conferences and lecture series and has been a VCAA examiner for Revolutions. Richard has published several secondary textbooks, including *Analysing the Russian Revolution*, *Monumental Humanities*, *Analysing Modern History* and *Analysing 20th Century History*. He has also contributed to the *History for the Australian Curriculum* texts for Years 7 and 10.





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Foreword

We live in the present, don't we? Television, the internet and Facebook keep telling us so ... if only to make us want to buy something. Yet here you are about to begin a major study of the Russian Revolution, guided by the incomparable Richard Malone. And here am I beginning Malone's great endeavour with an analysis of one grand socialist painting, adding layer upon layer about Russia back then and about after then. I want to explain why some strange things that happened around a century ago in the Russian empire might still be important. I conclude with a photograph that you can contrast with the painter, the painted and the painting.

I just mentioned, *layer upon layer*. That's what the study of history is all about. It locates us in time and space. And, as we learn, we shape our own values. Would you, could you, have done what those Russians did then? And what were the consequences for them? Histories arrest us – they inform about lives lost and overlooked. We know who we are only when we can recognise where we have been ... and where we might have been.

So let me use a Russian socialist painting (Source 0.1) to explain how you and the things you believe are affected by layers and layerings, past and present.



Source 0.1 Brodsky's painting of the Second Congress of the Communist International, July 1920

The painting illustrates the Russian Revolution in its international phase in 1920. The Bolsheviks still hoped to foment a worldwide revolution in 1920, even invading Poland. These hopes were dashed by the mid-1920s. Lenin had died in 1924. Stalin and Bukharin shifted political talk to ‘socialism in one country’ – that is, wanting to build socialism only in the Russian-dominated Union of Soviet and Socialist Republics.

The artwork took one man four years of work between 1920 and 1924. Try painting 300 portraits and setting them in the right sizes, in the right places, to evoke the right heroic revolutionary mood. Yet the painting ended up being locked away in a cupboard for decades, as its history of the Communists’ past was awkward, embarrassing and indeed dangerous. Too many people who were denounced and shot between 1927 and 1940 were depicted in the painting as leaders of the Russian revolution during its heyday period of 1917–20.

Layers upon layers: does this mean histories are only written by the victors? And, if that’s right (though I want to resist it), what might that mean for the histories you write, and for the histories you read? Histories are written by someone. They are never simply received, like the Ten Commandments were said to have been received. As we grow in intellectual maturity, we actually have to think for ourselves, and we have to base everything on evidence. We have to interpret, and connect, the things we come to know about the past.

I saw this painting for the first time in 2011. I have since found out it was first re-exhibited in 1989 in the old Lenin Museum on Red Square in Moscow; but that museum was closed in 1993, even as a waxy Lenin still reposes in an adjacent mausoleum. When I saw the painting it was on a poster issued by the Lenin Museum in ‘Red’ Tampere, a provincial industrial town in central Finland. For 62 of the 67 years of the history of the USSR (1924 to 1991), the painting languished in storage at the Museum of the Revolutions of the USSR. Only since the tumultuous fall of communism in the Balkans, Eastern Europe and the USSR during 1989–91 did the old socialist painting come out on display. It is now in the State Central Museum of Contemporary History of Russia (the new name for the same museum in the same building in Moscow).

Even here, there is yet another layering of layers. This museum about the history of revolutions in Russia is in the same grand building that once housed the reform-minded English Club of Russian nobles (from 1831). The club-turned-museum’s neo-classical building is the former town house of the Counts Razumovsky. The Moscow branch of the English Club in Russia was actually formed in the age of Catherine the Great in 1772. The club was based in that building there until the Bolsheviks nationalised it in 1917, reopening it in 1922 as a Museum of the Revolution, having used it as a police militia base in the intervening years.

Layers on layers: autocracy and reform, estates or classes, imperial and national politics versus international socialisms. Just as families have a disconcerting way of suddenly appearing just like you, pasts layer past pasts to make new presents. Puzzles like these lie at the heart of higher studies of history. You’ll find lots more in this book.

Here’s another layer. Remember that I first saw the painting first in Tampere in Finland, a place that had only been part of the Russian empire since 1814–15. Tampere offers glimpses of the importance of the Russian revolutions of February and October 1917. The February revolution set Finland on a path to national independence that would last until the First World War. It was tested again in wars against the USSR (with Nazi support) in 1939–40 and 1941–44, and then against Nazi Germany in Finnish Lapland in 1944–45. ‘Red’ Tampere was also a place of crisis in the civil war of 1918–20 that followed the revolution of October 1917. The ‘Reds’ in Tampere early in 1918 were convinced (as were Lenin and Stalin, before 1921) that working people everywhere must want to enter into the great new socialist state. Finnish Bolsheviks in Tampere tried to seize power in February and March 1918, wanting to flip Finland out of its newfound independence of 1917, but only provoking fierce resistance from Finnish nationalists. The same Marshal Mannerheim who repressed Bolshevism in

Tampere in 1918 defended Finnish independence in the Second World War, first warding off the USSR in 1939–40, then attacking in 1941–44, then making peace, then warding off in 1944–45 the ‘support’ of Nazi Germany that he had once sought. Layers upon layers: nationalism, communism and revolution, liberty and fraternity, war leading to peace, and peace leading to war. Do you begin to glimpse why the Russian Revolution is important?

Another layer: the artist and his world. The painting was by Isaak Israilevich Brodsky (1884–1939). If you have also studied the French Revolution, you may have already noticed how Brodsky harks back to Jacques-Louis David’s famous depiction of the Tennis Court Oath (*Le serment de jeu de paume*) on 17 June 1789. Brodsky offered an equivalent Russian tableau of the revolutionary hope and Communist fraternity. Some risking arrest abroad, 300 radical delegates had hastened to the Second Congress of the Communist International, some travelling incognito. Lenin is at the tribune. He presents himself as the first leader of a working-class movement ever to seize control of a state ... and hold on to that power! A world once lost to total war seems to wait for his word. The image is of the opening of the Congress on 19 July 1920 (the *торжественное открытие*). Imperialism is pronounced dead. A proletarian age dawns.

This Second Congress was held in St Petersburg in the grand hall of the former private school for noble girls, the Smolny Institute, which was the headquarters of the October Revolution of 1917. Behind Lenin, and beside Grigory Zinoviev, the leader of the Second Congress, prominent international supporters of the October revolution are seated, including Serrati from Italy, Rosmer from France and Zetkin from Germany. All look to Russia for leadership. They believe local socialisms in Germany, France, Italy and elsewhere have been discredited by four calamitous years of total war from 1914 to 1918. In Brodsky’s painting, Trotsky, Kalinin and Bukharin confer, off to the right, behind the podium. Less important leaders at the time, like Stalin (the new Communist Party General Secretary) and Tomsky (the head of the Communist trade unions), sit in the front row right. One person in the room, Paul Freeman, was an Australian of sorts: a German-American radical who had worked as a miner in Broken Hill and Cloncurry between 1911 and 1919, and who was deported for his vociferous denunciation of the First World War as an imperialist con. Many people in Australia at the time agreed to an extent: two conscription referenda had failed to garner majority votes in a majority of states in 1917, splitting the Labor Party in the process. Layer upon layer: war and anti-war, the quest for social justice, the pros and cons of revolutionary violence.

Another layer: revolutions bring on unprecedented transfers of property and power. It all boils down to ‘Who will beat whom’ (*Кто кого*), according to Lenin. So it was for our painter, too. Brodsky’s apartment is now a house-museum in St Petersburg. This well-located apartment near the Mikhailovsky Theatre and the State Russian Museum was allocated to him by the Communist Party when he was appointed professor and then director of the All-Russian Academy of Arts in 1932 and 1934. A new kind of privilege is seen: money, lands and birthright don’t count in this new form of politics and society.

A final layer: like Lev Davidovich Trotsky, Lenin’s great deputy and Stalin’s bitterest rival, Brodsky was a Russian Jew born in a free-settler village in the south-western plains in Ukraine. Like Trotsky, Brodsky preferred fraternal models of international socialism to Zionism. Religion was unimportant to them. They wanted justice in this place in this world: not in Palestine, not in heaven. Jews had limited rights in imperial Russia, a snobby society that excluded them from capital cities and from access to higher education. Like many other disaffected youths in the Russian Empire, our artist Brodsky had therefore gravitated to the left in politics, hoping for a revolution to repeat what happened in Paris in 1789, 1848 or 1871. Brodsky the radical young painter joined subversive ‘social realist’ art circles associated with the great Russian painter of the poor and down-trodden, Ilya Repin (with whom he studied in 1902–09), and with the radical proletarian novelist, Maxim Gorky (with whom he travelled in Europe in 1909–11). Delighted with both the February and October revolutions, Brodsky soon

painted portraits of Kerensky in 1917 (as a democrat and military everyman), of Lenin between 1920 and 1924 (as a crumpled and ordinary educated ‘man of the people’ in his plain Kremlin office or Smolny courtyard) and of Stalin at the onset of his ascendancy in 1928–29 (in the kind of humdrum military-style suit, whether in his office or at the tribune, favoured by Communists at the time).

To conclude: we’ve played ‘spot the similarities and differences’. It is time to begin your studies of Russia’s grand modern story as glimpsed through the pages of Richard Malone’s rich text. But first compare and cross-reference the rare photograph of the same scene on 19 July 1920 (Source 0.2) with the very composed painting by Brodsky of 1920–24. Both show the opening session of the Second Congress of the Communist International – as actually photographed on the day, and as retrospectively over the next four years.



Source 0.2 The photo of the opening session of the Second Congress of the Communist International, 19 July 1920

We are beginning now to discuss why the Russian Revolution is still so interesting ... and so important.

*Dr Adrian Jones OAM
Associate Professor of History
La Trobe University, Melbourne*

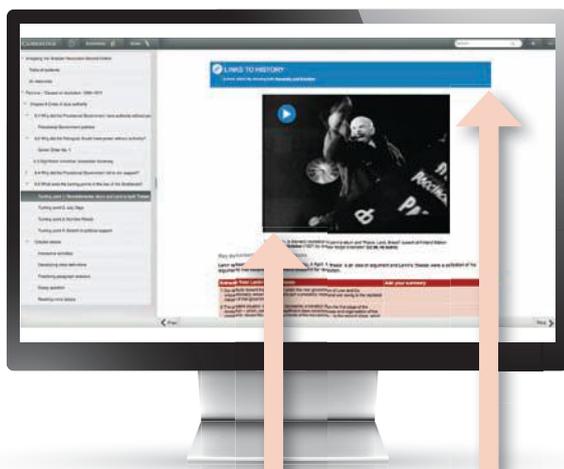


Talking portraits depict the diverse revolutionary experiences of people who are usually voiceless in the standard pages of history.



Chapter review activities include a combination of tasks designed to help consolidate your learning:

- **Developing clear definitions** encourages you to define key terms from the chapter in your own words
- **Practising paragraph answers** are exam-style writing tasks
- **Practice essay questions** help you prepare for internal and end-of-year assessments
- **Reading more deeply** offers suggested further reading for extra research and is broken into Easy, Moderate and Challenging categories. The latter is annotated to explain why it might be of use as extra research.



Video clips from Soviet-era films like *October* (1928) are designed to bring the revolution to life.

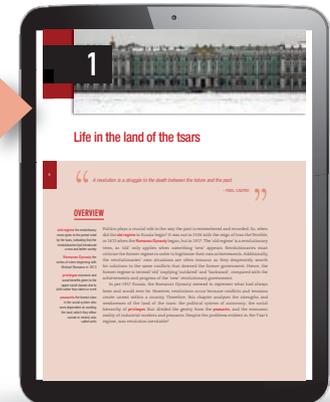
Links to history provide weblinks to further relevant historical content online.



Interactive activities (e.g. drag and drop questions) assist recall of facts and understanding of concepts.

Further digital resources are available in the **Interactive Textbook** and on **Cambridge GO**:

- **PDF Textbook** – downloadable, includes note-taking and search functions
- **Downloadable worksheets** – in Word format available for all activities
- **Weblinks** – to all URLs referenced in the text
- **Appendix: Practice examination questions** – a chapter of extra valuable revision activities relating specifically to sources used in the textbook
- **Pronunciation** – audio files appear at the start of a chapter, and cover any new difficult terms to be introduced
- **Reading more deeply** – additional annotations for all Easy and Moderate sources
- **Annotated map printable activity worksheet** – of key revolutionary sites in Petrograd







Causes of revolution: The development of significant ideas, events, individuals and popular movements in Russia, 1896 to October 1917

“

I shall adhere as unswervingly as my father to the principle of autocracy.

– TSAR NICHOLAS II, 1894

”

OVERVIEW

Tsar Russian word for ruler

government the official political body that runs a country

coronation a formal ceremony where a monarch is crowned

reforms the healthy process of making political, economic or social changes to make a country operate more effectively

economic relating to issues to do with money, such as taxation, inflation, unemployment, wages and prices of goods

Duma assembly, like a parliament, elected by voters

autocracy absolute rule by one person; in Russia also called 'tsarism', rule by the Tsar

leaders significant individuals (women and men) who influence ordinary people

Chapters 1–7 focus specifically on the reign of **Tsar** Nicholas II. The period until 1917 has been divided into seven chapters in order to assist an analysis of Nicholas's regime and his responses to the many significant crises that faced his **government**. The government experienced varying fortunes from Nicholas's **coronation** in 1896 to the end of his reign in 1917. Sergei Witte in the 1890s and Peter Stolypin from 1906 both introduced **reforms** that initially strengthened tsarism and produced significant **economic** gains. However, the tsarist regime was also weakened by the general strikes and violence of 1905, along with the failure of the **Dumas**, the Lena Goldfields Massacre and multiple crises of the First World War, which diminished the credibility of Nicholas. How did Nicholas attempt to continue imposing his absolute **autocracy** during times of crisis as previous Romanov rulers had done?

Knowing that the system of tsarism collapsed in 1917 allows us to re-read Nicholas II's reign to highlight the revolutionary undercurrents. How popular was their message? How were the revolutionaries organised and who were the key **leaders**?

While Chapters 2 and 3 are devoted to answering these questions, each chapter also deals with the responses of the opposition movement to the events and decisions of the mainstream government. Chapter 7 features a thematic analysis of the key tensions and conflicts within Russia. Was the creation of a revolutionary situation the result of poor leadership from Nicholas, years of agitation from opponents of his regime, or merely a historical inevitability, as Marxist theory would suggest?

As we will see, economic and political discontent could not be contained within the existing structure. As suggested by **Durnovo** in 1914, social revolution occurred, but with unpredictable political consequences. Tsar Nicholas II abdicated and the system of tsarism abruptly ended. Chapters 8–11 analyse how and why this occurred and the system of dual authority that emerged. The return of Lenin and fellow revolutionaries from exile undermined the rapport of the new Provisional Government with the people of Petrograd. Despite surging fortunes, the Bolshevik Party eventually gained a majority in the **Petrograd Soviet** by September, which provided the foundation for their takeover of power in October.

Dates provide an interesting problem. There were two calendars operating in the world in 1917: Russia used the old Julian calendar established by Roman ruler Julius Caesar, whereas Western countries used an updated calendar by Pope Gregory called the Gregorian calendar. Chapters 8–11 use the Julian calendar dates throughout (that is, when the events actually occurred for people in Russia). Russia adopted the Gregorian calendar on 1 February 1918, and this date became 14 February 1918.

Underlying all the events of the **revolution** that are described in this book are the interpretations provided by **historians** who also study the Russian Revolution. Chapter 19 summarises the key historical interpretations of the revolution as a whole. Despite being placed at the end of the book, it is worth reading now so that you develop the mindset of exploring Russian history with historians as you journey through this text with them.

Durnovo Pyotr Durnovo – member of the upper class, Minister of the Interior under Prime Minister Witte

Petrograd Soviet a powerful political body first formed by Trotsky during the 1905 Revolution and reformed on 28 February 1917

revolution a process of massive political upheaval that changes the way in which a country is governed; a vertical shift in power from an absolute monarch to a popular government ruling on behalf of the people

historians men and women who attempt to make sense of the past and usually specialise in one country or period of history

	First Revolution began	Second Revolution began
Russian Julian calendar	23 February	24 October
Western Gregorian calendar	8 March	6 November

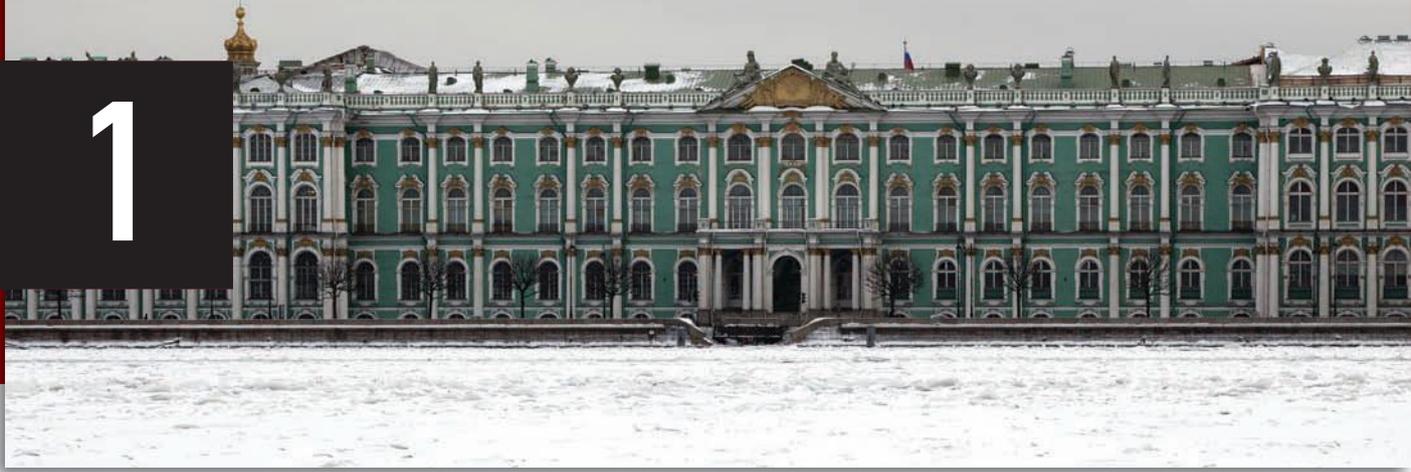


Source 1.1 The reign of Russia's Tsar Nicholas II is the focus of Chapters 1–7. This representation is by Boris Kustodiev, from 1915.

SUMMARY OF KEY EVENTS, 1896 TO OCTOBER 1917

Year	Date	Event	Significance
1896	26 November	Coronation of Tsar Nicholas II	Nicholas and Alexandra were officially crowned as absolute rulers of Russia. The problematic reign of the last Russian Tsar began.
1904–05		Russo-Japanese War	A tense war began between Russia and Japan after crises in Asia. Russia's military identity and pride were eventually destroyed with a humiliating defeat to Japan's navy in May 1905.
1905	9 January	Bloody Sunday Massacre	The peaceful march to present a respectful petition resulted in a massacre. It resulted directly in a loss of faith in the goodness of Tsar Nicholas. This divide between the Tsar and his people was never bridged.
	January to October	1905 Revolution	A series of rebellious events occurred from mutinies to strikes. The most significant was Trotsky's establishment of soviets.
	October	General strikes	These widespread strikes paralysed the economy, which forced the Tsar to respond.
	26 October	<i>October Manifesto</i>	Tsar Nicholas submitted to popular demands by granting a political body called the Duma. By giving the people representation, the Tsar was agreeing to share a portion of his absolute power.
1906–11		Prime Minister Stolypin	His reforms restored a degree of faith in tsarism by limiting the influence of the Dumas, strengthening the economy and eliminating revolutionary opposition.
1906	23 April	Fundamental State Laws	These were issued by the Tsar four days before the opening of the First Duma. His reassertion of his absolute authority rendered the Duma powerless.
		First Duma	Instead of serving the full five-year term, the Duma was dismissed after only months for its radical demands.
1907		Second Duma	It was similarly dismissed for its radical demands.
		Change in electoral laws	The electoral system was illegally changed to ensure that those elected to the next Duma were more conservative.
1907–12		Third Duma	It served its full five-year term but had no official influence over government decisions.
1912		Lena Goldfields Massacre	Revolutionary sentiment was reignited after goldminers were massacred for striking for better working conditions.
1914		Russia enters First World War	After initial victories, Russia's massive military machine suffered repeated defeats due to poor training and supplies. This lowered the morale of both the war and home fronts. Most significantly, the war devastated the home economy through increased unemployment, inflation, and food and fuel shortages.

Year	Date	Event	Significance
1915	August	Tsar takes personal command of the army	Tsar Nicholas's decision to replace Nikolaevich at the war front meant that he now personally shouldered the blame for the continued losses, but also left the inexperienced Tsarina Alexandra in control of the Russian government.
1915–16		Influence of Rasputin	Rasputin's repeated ability to heal Tsarevich Alexi's haemophilia earned him the favour of Alexandra. She promoted and dismissed several leading government ministers on his recommendation. Rasputin directly contributed to the loss of faith in the royal government and his own assassination.
1917	23 February–3 March	February Revolution	This spontaneous, leaderless revolution 'from below' resulted in the formation of the Provisional Government and Petrograd Soviet, and, most significantly, the abdication of the Tsar.
	1 March	Soviet Order No. 1 (issued by Petrograd Soviet)	This severely weakened the powers of the Provisional Government by decreeing that military orders were only to be obeyed if approved by the Soviet. It affirmed that the Soviet had the real authority and control of Petrograd.
	2 March	Abdication of the Tsar	This unintentionally ended the 300-year Romanov Dynasty and hence tsarism. With power given to the Provisional Government, hopes were raised of an immediate solution to the crises of the old regime.
	3 April	Lenin's return and speech at Finland Station	Lenin's return immediately transformed the political debate with his call for the overthrow of the Provisional Government and catch-cry of 'Peace, Land, Bread!'
	4 April	Lenin's <i>April Theses</i>	Lenin stamped his strong personal and ideological leadership over direction of Russia by delivering a crucial blueprint for revolution: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – that the February Revolution was merely a capitalist coup, not a genuine revolution – that a second revolution was needed to overthrow the corrupt Provisional Government – that the soviet, led by Bolsheviks, was the only possible form of government.
	18–20 June	June Offensive	War morale was dealt a final blow with Kerensky's failed attack on the Austrians and Germans. It fuelled Lenin's arguments for withdrawing from the imperialist war.
	3 July	July Days	This failed revolt seemingly signalled the end of the Bolshevik leadership and party, and the final victory of Kerensky and the Provisional Government.
	26 August	Kornilov Revolt	This revolt exposed Provisional Government weakness and a lack of military support. Allowed out of jail, Trotsky earned great respect by forming the Red Guard to defend Petrograd against fear of Kornilov's attempt to establish military rule.
	8 September	Trotsky becomes Chairman of Petrograd Soviet	This crucial event symbolised the Bolsheviks' majority support in the Soviet for the first time.
	7 October	Secret return of Lenin	The timing of, and support and strategies for, the October Revolution were implemented through Lenin's persuasion.
24–25 October	The October Revolution	The Bolsheviks' military capture of key organisations and vantage points in Petrograd led by Trotsky's Red Guard was the fulfilment of <i>April Theses</i> as the Provisional Government was overthrown in a Bolshevik takeover.	



Life in the land of the tsars



A revolution is a struggle to the death between the future and the past.

– FIDEL CASTRO



OVERVIEW

old regime the revolutionary name given to the period ruled by the tsars, indicating that the revolutionaries had introduced a new and better society

Romanov Dynasty the series of rulers beginning with Michael Romanov in 1613

privileges economic and social benefits given to the upper social classes due to birth rather than talent or merit

peasants the lowest class in the social system who were dependent on working the land, which they either owned or rented; also called serfs

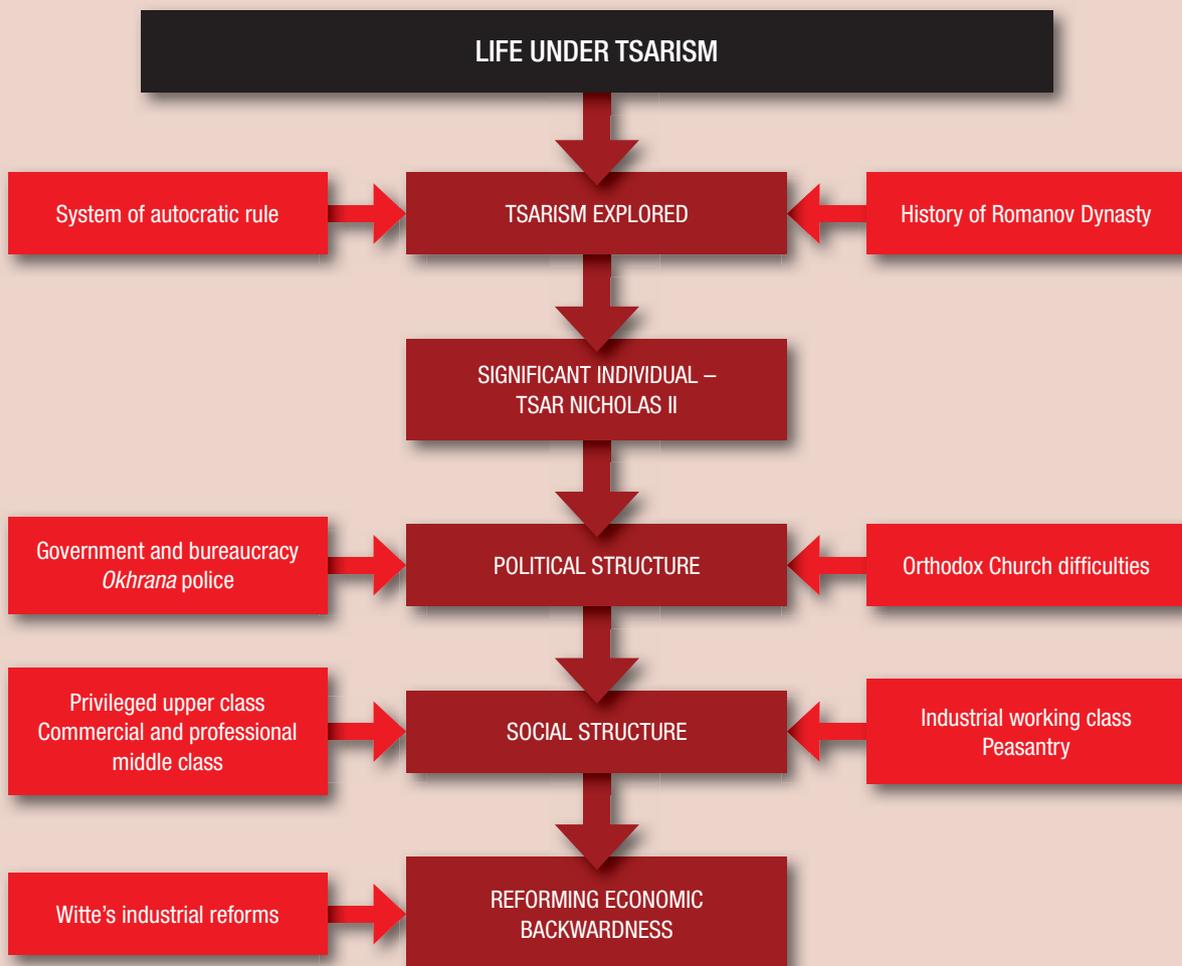
Politics plays a crucial role in the way the past is remembered and recorded. So, when did the **old regime** in Russia begin? It was not in 1534 with the reign of Ivan the Terrible, or 1613 when the **Romanov Dynasty** began, but in 1917. The ‘old regime’ is a revolutionary term, as ‘old’ only applies when something ‘new’ appears. Revolutionaries must criticise the former regime in order to legitimise their own achievements. Additionally, the revolutionaries’ own situations are often tenuous as they desperately search for solutions to the same conflicts that downed the former government. Hence, the former regime is termed ‘old’ implying ‘outdated’ and ‘backward’, compared with the achievements and progress of the ‘new’ revolutionary government.

In pre-1917 Russia, the Romanov Dynasty seemed to represent what had always been and would ever be. However, revolutions occur because conflicts and tensions create unrest within a country. Therefore, this chapter analyses the strengths and weaknesses of the land of the tsars: the political system of autocracy; the social hierarchy of **privileges** that divided the gentry from the **peasants**; and the economic reality of industrial workers and peasants. Despite the problems evident in the Tsar’s regime, was revolution inevitable?

KEY ISSUES

- What was tsarism?
- Coronation of Tsar Nicholas II in 1896
- Significant individual: Tsar Nicholas II
- Long-term political problems: how was tsarism implemented?
- Long-term social and economic problems: why did the social structure promote privilege?
- What attempts were made to reform Russia's economic backwardness?

FLOW OF CHAPTER





1.1 What was tsarism?

Defining tsarism

Understanding Russian psychology is essential to understanding the importance of the system of tsarism. Russian culture has traditionally relied on a strong central leader.

Russian society is very much like a colony of bees, in which royalty is a natural necessity. Just as the colony would cease to exist without its queen so, too, would Russian society cease to exist without the Tsar.

August Von Haxthausen, *Studies on the Interior of Russia* (1844)

autocratic a political system whereby the ruler has complete political power, unlimited by a formal constitution or parliament

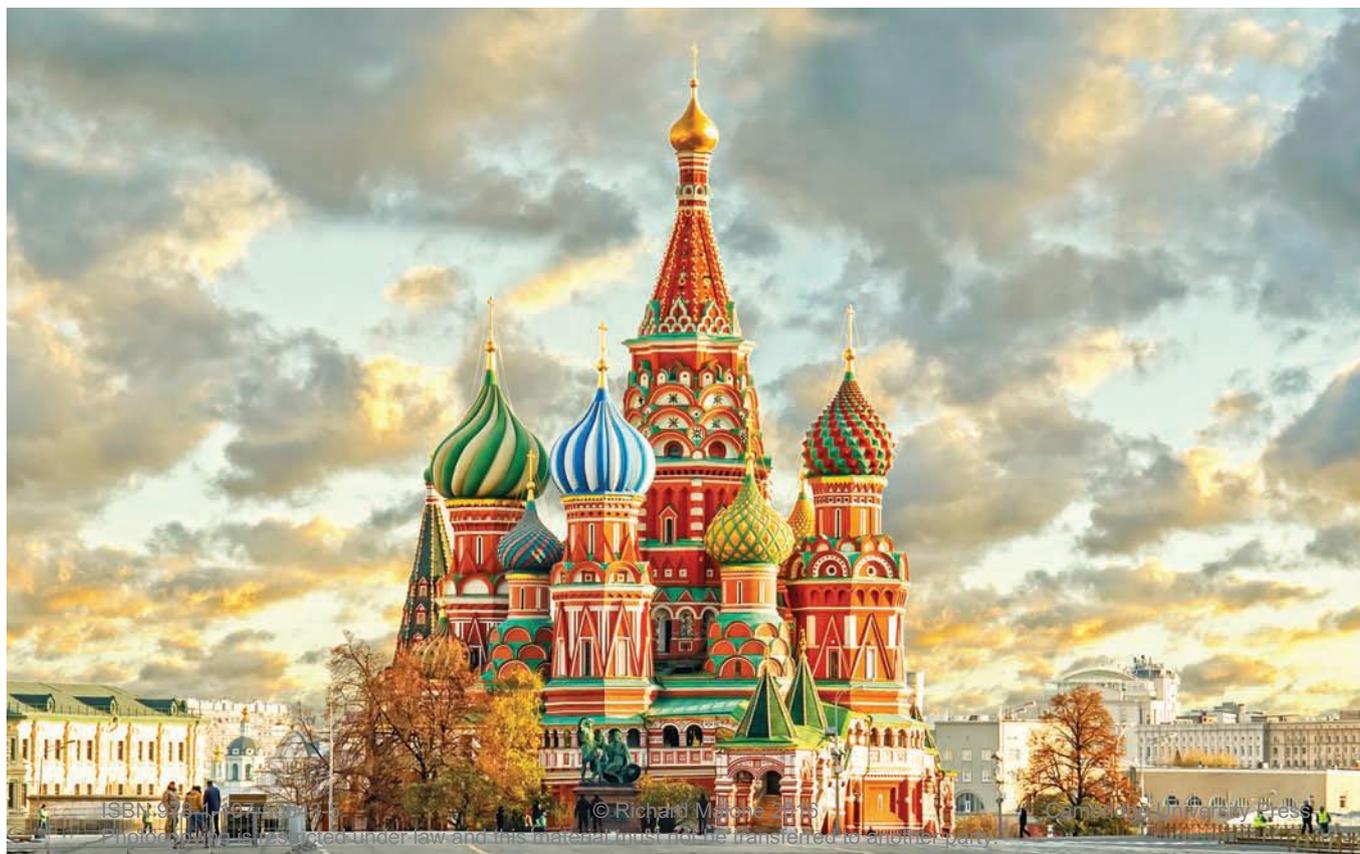
The Fundamental Laws of the Empire were statements issued in 1716 and again in 1832. They described the Tsar as being ‘an **autocratic** and unlimited monarch’ and stated that ‘God himself commands his supreme power be obeyed’. ‘Tsar’ is the Russian word for ruler and ‘tsarism’ is used to refer to this system of one-person rule. These autocratic powers of the Tsar are explained by Australian historian Marilyn Hoysted:

constitution the set of rules by which a country is governed

*Neither a **constitution** nor other institutions limited the Tsar’s authority. All law emanated from the Tsar. Russian officials swore an oath of loyalty to him personally, not to the state. Civil servants and ministers needed his permission to resign ... Nicholas II believed Autocracy to be a sacred trust and Russia the dynasty’s patrimony to be handed on to his own son intact.*

Hoysted, *The Russian Revolution: A Student Handbook* (2001), p. 8

Source 1.2 St Basil’s Cathedral in Moscow today



A MATTER OF FACT

When St Basil's Cathedral was built in Red Square in Moscow in 1560, Tsar Ivan the Terrible thought that it was so beautiful that he had the architect's eyes gouged out so that he could never make another building as impressive ever again. Despite being blind, he did build one final cathedral in the city of Vladimir!

Tracing tsarism



Source 1.3

Michael Romanov (1596–1645)

After years of political uncertainty, Michael Romanov became Tsar of Russia in 1613. This began a 304-year dynasty, during which Michael Romanov's direct descendants ruled Russia, and which only ended with the **abdication** of Nicholas II in 1917. The Romanovs adopted the double-headed eagle from the Byzantine period for their coat of arms, implying that they were as powerful as the Roman Empire.

abdication the resignation of a monarch from their political role



Source 1.4 The Romanov coat of arms



Peter the Great (1682–1725)

Peter I's rule was characterised by a forceful drive to Westernise Russia. In order to create a 'window to the West', a new capital city was built in 1712 on the Baltic Sea, which he called **St Petersburg**, after himself. This impressive legacy was also an appropriate symbol of the autocratic dominance of Peter I, who engaged in foreign wars, introduced conscription and raised taxes.

St Petersburg the major city in Russia along with Moscow

A MATTER OF FACT

Peter the Great built the city of St Petersburg because he hated Moscow. Strangely, a 98-metre monument of Peter the Great was erected in Moscow in 1997, but it is considered to be one of the 10 ugliest monuments of all time. In 2010, Moscow authorities offered to move the monument at no charge to St Petersburg, but their offer was refused!



Source 1.5

Catherine the Great (1762–1796)

Catherine was the most notable of the three women who occupied the Russian throne for the majority of the 1700s. She was greatly influenced by the progressive thinkers of the Enlightenment and this encouraged the development of the educated classes, called the **intelligentsia**. During the nineteenth century, the members of this intellectual elite gradually began to see themselves as members of a new class that would liberate the Russian people.

intelligentsia the educated thinkers, writers and artists



Source 1.6



Source 1.7

Nicholas I (1825–1855)

Despite his censorship and use of secret police, it was during conservative Nicholas I's reign that Western **ideas** took hold in Russia. A significant philosophical divide appeared within the intelligentsia between those 'Westerners' who welcomed the Western influence into Russia, and the 'slavophiles' who believed that Russia's unique and traditional culture needed to be protected and promoted. Opposition to autocratic rule emerged in the work of Russian writers such as Herzen and Kropotkin, and novelists such as Tolstoy and Turgenev.

ideas abstract concepts and beliefs that provide hope and solutions to problems



Source 1.8

Alexander II (1855–1881)

The Crimean War (1853–56) against the Turkish Empire for control of the Black Sea revealed major problems in Russian society and sparked significant reforms. Alexander II issued an **Edict of Emancipation** in 1861 that abolished **serfdom**, freeing 40 million peasants.

This significant reform accelerated economic development in Russia. A new system of administration was established called the **mir**, meaning village commune, which controlled land and property redistribution. In 1864, **zemstvos** were created; these were elected assemblies that represented the landowners, peasant communities and townspeople. Such assemblies, or local councils, had significant control over local finances, health care and education facilities, road and bridge maintenance, and improvements to agriculture. Just as significant as

Edict of Emancipation issued in 1861, this provided greater freedom for the Russian serfs (peasants)

serfdom the system that forced serfs to work for nobles

mir village governments that were formed under tsarism to provide cooperation and coordination in rural areas

zemstvos local councils that were made up of elected representatives of peasants and landowners

assassination murder of a public figure for political reasons

Alexander II's reforms were the circumstances of his death. Two assassins threw bombs at the Tsar's carriage, fatally wounding him. His bloody **assassination** by members of the radical revolutionary group called the People's Will began a strict period of political repression known as 'the Reaction'. To remember his death, a magnificent church was built called 'the Church of the Saviour on Spilled Blood'.



Alexander III (1881–1894)

Alexander III was Nicholas II's father and ruled during a reactionary period in Russia's history. He was considered the model autocrat – confident, forceful, tall and patriotic, with a dominant will. Given the assassination of his father, it is not surprising that his rule was characterised by a total belief in autocracy and the suppression of revolutionary movements. Russia was stable, prosperous and peaceful under Alexander's rule. While he came to the throne unexpectedly on the assassination of his father Alexander II, he also died unexpectedly in 1894 of kidney inflammation. Alexander III's eldest son Nicholas took on the responsibilities of running the nation as the new Tsar. As leaders, they could not have been more different. Alexander was confident and bold whereas Nicholas was shy and reluctant. But it was the model of rigid autocratic leadership that his father had reinforced – which therefore Nicholas was also determined to preserve – that set Nicholas up for failure in a rapidly modernising Europe. Understanding Alexander III is crucial to understanding Nicholas II.



Source 1.9

1.2 Coronation of Tsar Nicholas II in 1896

Nicholas II (1868–1918)

Nicholas became the new Tsar in November 1894, but had his official coronation two years later. Holding the coronation after the accession of the new Tsar was common practice for two reasons: first, to allow for a time of mourning for the previous Tsar; and second, to allow time to plan the elaborate coronation ceremony. On 14 May 1896, Nicholas was proclaimed Tsar of all Russia. Nicholas's wife, Alexandra, was also crowned during the same ceremony and pronounced as the Tsarina Alexandra Feodorovna. The coronation of a Russian monarch was a highly religious ceremony, where the Tsar was blessed by the church and presented with symbols of his rule – such as his robe, crown, sceptre and orb. Part of the ceremony was a significant sacred ritual where the Tsar and the priest received communion at the holy altar. Hence, the Tsar was anointed by God. The sacred and secular, the church and state, and God and government were deliberately and symbolically linked.



Source 1.10



Source 1.11
The coronation of Tsar Nicholas II in 1896, as represented by painter Laurits Tuxen

Khodynka tragedy – 18 May 1896

As part of the celebrations, Nicholas planned a present to the people of Russia. A free banquet was to be held four days after his coronation in a major park in Moscow, called the Khodynka Field, because it was the largest place that could hold the greatest number of Moscow citizens. Part of the celebration was a giveaway of gifts to each person – a bread roll, a piece of sausage, pretzels, gingerbread and a cup of beer, which was rumoured to have a gold coin at the bottom. Building for this exciting event included 20 new pubs, 150 tables and public theatres. Crowds began gathering the day before to try to get closer to the front, and therefore closer to the gifts. By 5am on the day of the celebration, estimates suggest that as many as 500 000 people were already gathered on the Khodynka Field, with 1800 police assembled to manage the crowds. But when rumours spread that there were not enough gifts for everyone, there was a catastrophic stampede. In the panic to reach the gift tables, or to flee the scene, 1389 people were trampled to death. Another 1300 were injured.

A MATTER OF FACT

Tsar Nicholas II is considered to be the fifth richest person to have ever lived in any country in any period. This is because all palaces and royal wealth were considered to be his personal possessions as Tsar. In today's terms, he would be worth US\$300 billion.



Source 1.12
A painting representing the great crowd gathered at Khodynka Field to celebrate the royal coronation



When the newly crowned Tsar Nicholas and Tsarina Alexandra were informed of the tragedy, they spent the rest of the day visiting the injured in hospital and set up a fund for the families of the dead. Nicholas dismissed the officials who failed to control the situation. However, from the very beginning of his rule, there were concerns over Tsar Nicholas's ability to control and manage the nation.

Royal palaces

Summer Palace

Alexander Palace is in Tsarskoe Selo, a 30-minute train trip from St Petersburg. Tsar Nicholas II was born there and it was his favourite residence.

Source 1.13 Tsarina Alexandra



Source 1.14 Alexander Palace around 1917

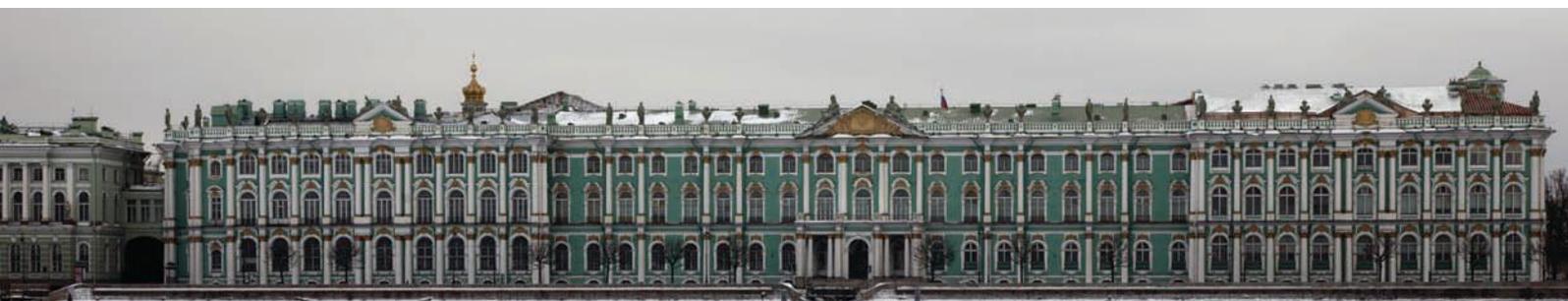
Winter Palace

The official residence of the tsars from 1732 to 1917 was the Winter Palace in St Petersburg. The palace was intentionally built on a massive scale to symbolise the might and power of the Russian monarchy. Tsar Nicholas used the Winter Palace on the most formal occasions. Today, the famous Hermitage Museum is in part of the restored Winter Palace.



Source 1.15 The main staircase in the Winter Palace

Source 1.16 The front of the Winter Palace





A MATTER OF FACT

The front face of the Winter Palace is over 250 metres long and it has 1786 doors, 1500 rooms and 117 staircases.

Difficulty of ruling Russia

Nicholas II's official title was 123 words long, reflecting the complexity and diversity of the empire he ruled. Russia is a vast country that crosses two continents, 11 time zones and five vegetation zones. St Petersburg is closer to New York than it is to Vladivostok in Russia's east. As a direct result of the vast size of the country, the ruling elite and upper classes established themselves on the European side of Russia where the major cities of **Moscow** and St Petersburg were located.

Moscow the major city in Russia, along with Petrograd (St Petersburg)



Source 1.17 Russia is a vast and geographically diverse country. This map shows the extent of the Russian empire by the time of Nicholas II's reign.

A MATTER OF FACT

Russian explorers were very active in the 1800s. But Russia ended its involvement in the North American region when it sold Alaska to the United States for US\$7.2 million. Many Americans were angered at this 'foolish' purchase for decades until major gold deposits were discovered in Alaska in 1896.

A MATTER OF FACT

The name 'Russia' probably came from a warrior tribe called the 'Russes'. They inhabited the region west of the Ural Mountains in the 1200s and were related to the Vikings and Normans.

1.3 SIGNIFICANT INDIVIDUAL

Tsar Nicholas II (1868–1918)



Source 1.18 Emperor Nicholas II

26 November 1894. Although the Tsarina was sometimes shy, she was also very determined that autocratic power would not be shared. Alexandra was pregnant within three months of their wedding.

Parents – His father was the dominant Tsar Alexander III and his mother was the influential Maria Feodorovna.

Height – 170 cm

Accession – He became Tsar at the age of 26 after his father died unexpectedly of kidney failure in 1894.

Sir George **Buchanan**, the British Ambassador to Russia from 1910, wrote: 'The Emperor Nicholas has not inherited his father's commanding personality nor the strong character and prompt decision making which are so essential to an autocratic ruler.'

Buchanan Sir George Buchanan was the British Ambassador in Russia from 1910 to 1917

Nicholas even wrote to his brother-in-law in 1894: 'I am not prepared to be a Tsar. I never wanted to become one. I know nothing of the business of ruling.'

Wife – He married the German Princess Alexandra, the granddaughter of Britain's Queen Victoria, on



Children – They had four daughters: Olga (born 1895), Tatiana (born 1897), Maria (born 1899) and Anastasia (born 1901). They also had a son, Alexis (born 1904), whose haemophilic condition influenced the leadership and decisions of the Tsar and Tsarina.



Source 1.19 (LEFT) Grand Duchesses Maria, Tatiana, Anastasia and Olga; (RIGHT) Tsarevich Alexis

democracy a liberal concept where citizens of a country have a say in how the country is to be governed and by whom

Style of leadership – He believed totally in the autocracy of the tsarist system and argued that a **democracy** and elections would result in political collapse. In his opening manifesto of 1894, Nicholas declared: ‘I shall adhere as unswervingly as my father to the principle of autocracy.’

Character strengths – He was a devoted family man who preferred his private world to public affairs. He loved Russia and had a strong sense of duty. He genuinely wanted to bring happiness to his country.



Source 1.20 The royal family in 1913

Love of tradition – ‘Nicholas surrounded himself with trappings of an earlier time. He insisted that official documents use archaic spelling, and he held costume balls where everyone wore replicas of two-hundred-year-old outfits. He preferred to spend time in Moscow, with its traditional wooden architecture and winding streets, rather than among the massive stone palaces in the newer, more European St Petersburg’ (Ackerman & DuVall, *A Force More Powerful*, 2000, p. 17).

Character weaknesses – Nicholas knew very little about the reality of life in Russia. He relied on advisers as he never went on tours to visit factories or villages. His sister, Duchess Olga, stated: ‘He was wholly ignorant about governmental matters. Nicky had been trained as a soldier. He should have been taught statesmanship and he was not.’

Attitude to violence – His belief in autocracy resulted in a willingness to use violence to suppress opposition to his regime. Alexander **Kerensky**, the leader of Russia in 1917, stated: ‘His mentality and circumstances kept him wholly out of touch with his people. From his youth he had been trained to believe that his welfare and the welfare of Russia were one and the same thing, so that “disloyal” workmen, peasants and students who were shot down, executed or exiled seemed to him mere monsters who must be destroyed for the sake of the country.’

Doomed from birth? – Nicholas was well aware that his birthday on 6 May fell on Saint Job’s day. Job was a man in the Bible who, although loved by God, was tested with a series of incredible personal disasters. Even at his coronation in 1896, more than 1000 spectators were disastrously killed in the surging crowd. Nicholas said to Prime Minister Peter **Stolypin** in 1906, ‘I have a deep certainty that I am doomed to terrible ordeals.’

Kerensky a member of the Provisional Government who later became its leader

Stolypin became Prime Minister in 1906 to control the new Dumas and restore the public faith in the Tsar

Focus questions

- 1 What was Nicholas II’s attitude to family?
- 2 What was Nicholas II’s attitude to leadership?
- 3 How do the photos influence your understanding of the role of the Tsar?
- 4 What is your initial attitude to Nicholas II? Are you sympathetic or critical?

1.4 Long-term political problems – the system of tsarism

How was tsarism implemented?

There were four main pillars that held up tsarist power. It was these pillars that authorised and implemented the power of the Tsar.

The government

The official government system was made up of three key bodies: the Imperial Council, who were the Tsar’s personal advisers and answerable only to him; the Cabinet of Ministers, each of whom was given responsibility over a specific department; and the Senate, who transformed the Tsar’s ideas



into state laws. Rather than sharing the Tsar's powers, these three bodies simply implemented his will. As they were directly appointed by the Tsar, the system promoted hostile infighting rather than collective responsibility or accountability.

The bureaucracy

Every government requires a civil service to put official policies into practice. By 1900, this **bureaucracy** had been allowed to regress into a complex web of inefficiency and undeserved privilege. There were

bureaucracy a system of officials and administrators that manages a country

14 levels of bureaucrats, each distinguished by unique uniforms, who relied on a varying scale of bribes in addition to their wages. Instead of fulfilling its desperately needed administrative function, the system merely created a noble upper class. The most crucial problem, however, stemmed from the arbitrary nature of autocracy, which was called *proizvol*. This caused significant issues because, in order to make decisions and address public grievances, the civil service, unable to develop policies officially, arbitrarily interpreted how the Tsar's laws were to be applied.

The police

The police system was divided into two groups. The first was the Tsar's secret police – the **Okhrana** – who protected the interests of the state. They were involved in surveillance of suspected enemies of

Okhrana the name given to the Tsar's secret police service to deal with opposition to the royal government

tsarism such as socialist agitators and anarchists. The second group maintained law and order among the people. On average there was only one police officer for every 3850 peasants. This meant that oppressive measures had to be introduced in order to keep the **masses** under control in times of significant unrest. To do this, the Tsar used the **Cossacks**. Their savage fighting on horseback prompted the government to offer them land in return for their loyalty to the Tsar and service in his army.

masses the general name given to the anonymous crowds of ordinary workers and peasants

The church

Orthodox Christianity had been the official religion of Russia since 989 CE and played a crucial role in legitimising the Tsar's autocratic powers. It was claimed that the authority of tsarism originated directly from God. The Church was used to further the power of the Tsar as the most important function of the Church was to preach obedience to the Tsar; spirituality came second. In fact, the Russian national anthem from 1833 to 1917 affirmed the link between God and the Tsar:

Cossacks a fiercely independent people from the region on the Don River near the Black Sea

*God, save the Tsar!
Mighty and strong reign for our glory,
Reign for the dread of our enemies,
O Tsar of the Orthodox faith!
God, save the Tsar!*

Orthodox Church the traditional Russian church that had both supported and benefited from the rule of the tsars

movements popular outbreaks of mass action by ordinary people

Rather than being an independent voice, the **Orthodox Church** had been under state control since 1721. This relationship became more evident from the 1880s. Then, the social influence of the church was used to reinforce conservative values in order to stifle receptiveness to revolutionary ideas and **movements**.

A MATTER OF FACT

By 1900, half of the nation's primary schools were run by the Church, where children were trained to be loyal to the Tsar. The official book of religious teaching included the phrase: 'God commends us to love and obey from the inner most recesses of our heart every authority and particularly the Tsar.'

The image in Source 1.21 was produced on the 300th anniversary of the Romanov Dynasty in 1913, and provides a rich resource of how tsarism saw itself. The central title says 'Tricentenary of the Romanovs' and the main symbol is the double-headed eagle of power. On the right there is a line of robed rulers and on the left the influence of the Orthodox Church. Angels on each side and at the top represent God's ordination of the tsarist system.



Focus questions

- 1 What is happening in this image?
- 2 What makes you think that?

Source 1.21 'Tricentenary of the Romanovs'

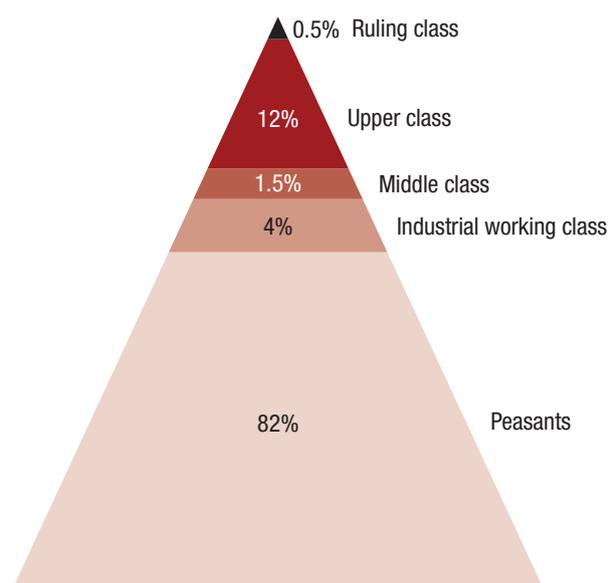


1.5 Long-term social and economic problems

The official census of 1897 quantified the Russian population as the largest in Europe, with 122.9 million people. Two key categories emerged: 60 different nationalities (from Great Russians to nomadic Asian tribesmen) and five general social classes (from the royal family to the landless peasants). This was compounded by the fact that the Russian population was growing at a phenomenal rate and, by 1910, had increased to 161 million.

The most significant problem, however, was not the size of the Russian population but its social structure of privilege. There are two important concepts here: 'utility' means value or usefulness to society; and 'merit' means personal skills and abilities. But Russian society was based on privilege by birth, not on utility or merit.

Breakdown of social structure



Source 1.22 Russia's social structure according to the 1897 official census

Focus questions

- 1 What percentage are the 'non-productive' educated classes (ruling, upper and middle class)?
- 2 What percentage are the 'productive working classes' (industrial and peasants)?
- 3 Is this division into 'productive' and 'non-productive' the best way to classify the classes? What might be some better alternatives?

Ruling class

The ruling class was the name given to the Tsar and the rest of the royal family, together with the members of government. The ruling class made up only a tiny fraction of the population, just 0.5 per cent.

Upper class

'Gentry' or 'nobility' are alternative terms for the privileged class, which made up 12 per cent of the population, and included hereditary landowning nobles, wealthy merchants, church leaders, leaders in the bureaucracy and the higher ranks within the army. This class was unified by its total protection from the harsh reality of Russian life, with members' incomes disproportionately high given their low workload.



Source 1.23 An upper-class lunch on the balcony of a country estate

Middle class

This middle class is a difficult one to categorise because of its lack of unity or common function. It began developing towards the end of the 1800s, along with the growth of heavy industries in the major cities and light industries in the towns. It was made up of professions like small-scale manufacturers, factory managers, technical specialists, clerks and white-collar workers. This class also included the educated thinkers, writers and artists sometimes referred to as the intelligentsia.

proletariat the name Karl Marx gave to industrial workers

Industrial working class

This growing industrial working class was called the **proletariat** by Marxist revolutionary theory. The lives of the families that made up this class are discussed later in this chapter, in reference to the impact of Sergei **Witte**'s industrial reforms.

Witte the influential finance minister and later Prime Minister who rapidly increased Russian industry and completed the Trans-Siberian Railway

Source 1.24 A photograph from 1912 showing the town of Hughesovka, Russia. Workers' housing can be seen in the foreground, and the local Orthodox Church is in the background on the left.





Peasants

Agriculture was the largest part and therefore the foundation of the Russian economy. But despite the estimated 90 million peasants who produced over half of the nation's income, the **agrarian** economy was underdeveloped. It was simply one of the worst in Europe. The system of agriculture lacked capital investment and technological advancement. Raising and utilising livestock for labour was limited. Any advancements, such as building new railways, were often at the expense of farming land. Agricultural problems limited the potential growth of the Russian economy.

agrarian relating to the production of foodstuffs in the countryside

The most suitable land for growing crops and grazing livestock was in European Russia. The majority of the remaining land was located too far north in freezing climates. Because there was not enough productive land to go round, rather than benefiting the system, the huge peasant population created overcrowding and poor conditions. What land peasant families did have was divided equally among all members. The cold climate also meant that in most areas the growing season was only between four and six months, as opposed to the eight to nine months in warmer Western Europe. The climate also influenced the system of farming narrow strips of land and this resulted in the ongoing use of outdated equipment and techniques. Such a **feudal** agrarian system meant that the amount of food produced rarely met the nation's demands and was especially scarce in times of **famine**. Added to this was the conservative nature of the rural peasantry, whose high **illiteracy** rate meant that many were resistant to change. The ruling classes were content with the backward nature of the 'dark masses', fearing that educating them might be socially or politically dangerous. The difficulty of rural life meant that there was often social discontent and a push for government reforms.

feudal relating to serfdom, the medieval social system whereby the privileged nobles controlled the hard-working peasants

famine a desperate situation where food is scarce, resulting in severe malnutrition and often death

illiteracy the inability to read or write

Source 1.25 Peasants planting potatoes near the Volga River in 1910. Peasants worked hard in difficult conditions. (Photo by Prokudin-Gorskii)



The aim of this section is to give a voice to the voiceless, those whose story history rarely recorded. Here is a fictional story of a peasant written from the imagination of the author.

I am Tatyana. Because I can't write, I will speak. I live in Omsk, in western Siberia. A few years ago, Sergei Witte, a government leader, spent much money to build the Trans-Siberian railway. This affected the numbers of people, goods and troops coming through Omsk. My parents were freed from serfdom by the 1861 emancipation reform.

My husband is Pyotr and we have many children. We live in a small, wooden hut with a thatched roof. It is very draughty and cramped for my family to live in. We work on our farm together, growing grain. Every day, I get up and sow the fields or plough them. The cold climate means that the growing season is only between four and six months. It is a tiring job, growing barely enough food to live on. We are not wealthy enough to own a horse, so we have to hand-plough the fields. Everyone in the family has to contribute. My children's 'education' is learning how to farm in harsh conditions. We are just coming out of the famine, but the land is still very dry and unworkable. The few vegetables I am able to grow lack the nutrients of fertile land. The Socialist Revolutionary Party keeps making promises to take all privately owned land and share it between the villages. Pyotr and I think that nothing will ever change. We are happy with our life, however difficult it may be. It is all I have ever known.

During the famine in 1891, Pyotr had to go to Moscow to find work in one of the new factories. Industry was growing due to Witte's reforms. Pyotr said the conditions were very harsh with poor wages and long hours. It was in the famine that we lost our two youngest children: one to disease, the other to starvation. We attend the Russian Orthodox Church. It is the local priest who has written my talking today.



Source 1.26

Pyotr and I have found a husband for our eldest daughter Kateryna. We will soon get the dowry, but we will lose her as a worker to her husband's family. Marriage is very important because it helps with farming. Working is the only way to feed the mouths of my children. Any money anyone in the family makes goes to supporting the family.

I pray that this year's harvest will be plentiful and that the famine will not return.

Peasant woman, 1902



The poor condition of the peasantry was worsened by another severe famine that began in 1891. Despite public appeals, relief agencies and sponsored soup kitchens, over 350 000 peasants died from starvation and disease during this famine. Semenov, a literate and radical peasant, suggested that grievances about social inequality intensified during the famine period:

The scenes of starvation were deeply distressing, and it was all the more disturbing to see that amidst all this suffering and death there were sprawling huge estates, beautiful and well-furnished manors, and that the grand old life of the squires, with its jolly hunts and balls, its banquets and its concerts, carried on as usual.

Cited in Oxley, *Russia: From Tsars to Commissars*, p. 46

ANALYSIS ACTIVITY 1.1: VISUAL ANALYSIS

These activities will encourage you to think about what you have just read and/or to explore a valuable issue. This activity presents a graphic for analysis. A helpful model for understanding images is to reflect upon three areas:

- 1 Content:** What do I see in this image and what is it symbolising? Which classes or groups are included and which excluded from the image?
- 2 Context:** What was happening at the time this image was produced that may have led to its creation?
- 3 Function:** What is the message of this image? Which side does it take? For example, is it for or against the Tsar? Is it for or against the revolution?

This sarcastic socialist cartoon from 1900 highlights the divisions between the classes and the inequality of the social structure, with the Tsar at the top and the workers at the bottom. There is also an alternative cartoon that is drawn in the shape of a wedding cake, mockingly symbolising the fragmentation of privilege within Russian society instead of the unity and harmony of marriage.

- 4** Identify the class or group represented in each layer of the cartoon. What are they doing?
- 5** What is this cartoon criticising about the social structure?



Source 1.27
They rule with our money,
They pray for us,
They eat for us,
They shoot at us,
We work for them all ...

A MATTER OF FACT

If a peasant had an insulting nickname (like 'smelly' or 'ugly') for enough years, it would be written down and formalised as their surname. It could not be changed without the Tsar's official consent.

1.6 Capturing images of tsarist Russia

Resource 1: The Wanderers



Source 1.28 The rebellious Wanderers or *Peredvizhniki* artists

The Wanderers, or *Peredvizhniki*, were a group of Russian Realist artists who originated from the Imperial Academy of Arts in 1863. During the rule of Alexander II, the Imperial Academy of Arts in St Petersburg promoted conservative neo-classical style, biblical and mythological subject matter. The topic of the Academy's annual Gold Medal painting competition in 1863 was 'The Entrance of Odin into Valhalla'. Many students found the competition's subject not only outdated and irrelevant, but also removed from the reality of daily life in Russia. In disgust, 14 students left the Academy to form an independent Artists' Cooperative Society.

In 1870, they started the 'Society for Travelling Art Exhibitions'. Between 1871 and 1923, the Society organised 48 travelling exhibitions in Moscow and St Petersburg. Their goal was to make art accessible and to depict the diversity and daily realities of the Russian population. Rather than

focusing their artistic attentions on the aristocracy and inaccessible images of Greek mythology, the Society depicted a profoundly humanistic view of the true Russian folk life. The resulting art was beautiful. It displayed Russian village life in all its injustices, poverty and hardship.



Source 1.29 *A Busy Time for the Mowers*, a painting by Grigorij Mjassojedow of peasants in the grain fields in 1887

Source 1.30 A painting of peasants dragging a barge on the river Volga by Ilya Repin, 1870–73



Resource 2: Prokudin-Gorskii (1863–1944), photographer to the Tsar

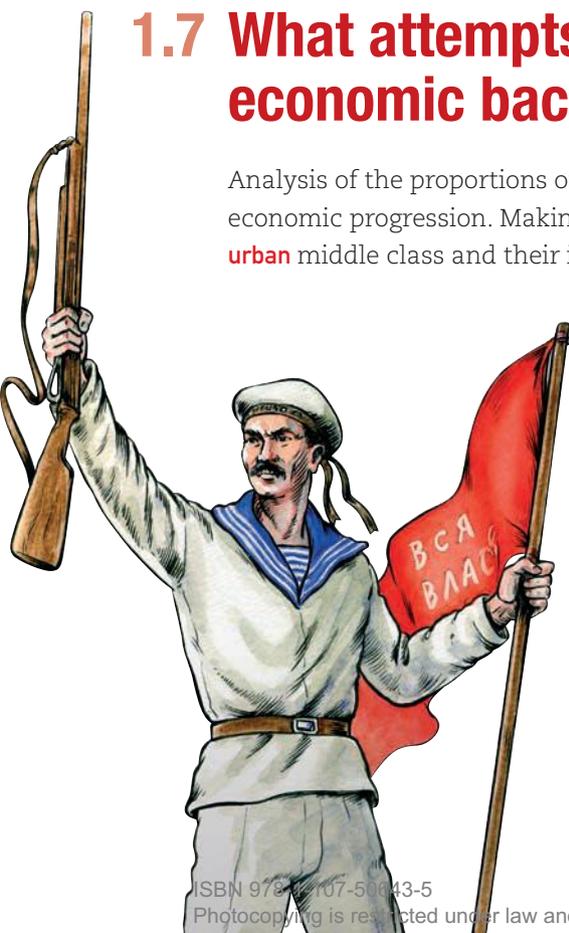
Another remarkable resource through which to understand the Russian society ruled over by the Tsar is the pioneering colour photographs of Sergey Prokudin-Gorskii. Educated as a chemist, he devoted his career to the advancement of photography. He developed a technique of using thin glass negatives that could be projected through red, green and blue filters to create one full-colour image for presentations. He was given permission and funding by Tsar Nicholas to embark on an adventurous photographic project throughout Russia using his innovative colour techniques. He wanted to capture the diverse people, cultures, history and modernisation of Russia. Using a specially designed train carriage as a dark room, Prokudin-Gorskii travelled around Russia from 1907 to 1915 and his extraordinary colour images inform our understanding of Russian life. He escaped Russia in 1918 after the revolution. For more information on his techniques and to view his images, see the link at <http://cambridge.edu.au/redirect/?id=5811>.



Source 1.31 One of Prokudin-Gorskii's stunning colour images of Russian peasant girls from around 1909

1.7 What attempts were made to reform Russia's economic backwardness?

Analysis of the proportions of the population in each social class provides an insight into the lack of economic progression. Making up only 1.5 and 4.0 per cent, respectively, of the total population, the **urban** middle class and their industrial worker employees operated on a remarkably small scale in comparison to the 82 per cent of **urban** of the city agricultural 'peasant' workers. The immense size of Russia was compounded by its poor transport networks and low available capital for attracting foreign investors. In every way, Russia was a backward and antiquated agricultural society in comparison to the aggressive growth experienced by enterprising industrial countries like Germany, Britain and the United States. Three crucial periods of reforms under Nicholas II attempted to address this: Witte in industry (see Flashpoint! in this chapter); Dumas in politics (see Chapter 5); and Stolypin in agriculture (see Chapter 5).





1.8 FLASHPOINT!

Sergei Witte's industrial reforms

Position	Minister of Finance, 1893–1903
Aims	Witte has been described as the architect of Russia's industrialisation. He aimed to modernise Russia's industry in order to improve Russia's military strength by: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • attracting foreign capital to invest in Russian industry • dramatically expanding the railway system to improve exports and trade, communication and movement of troops.
Methods	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • sought advice from experts in modernised countries
Opposition to reforms	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Russian industrial practices and equipment were backward • suspicion from royal court and elements of government who were resistant to change • military often disrupted building of railways
Key achievements	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • stabilised the Russian economy • dramatic increase in industrial production • the building of the Trans-Siberian Railway from Moscow in the west to Vladivostok in the far east
Negative social impact of industrialisation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • poor working conditions • severe overcrowding • imposition of heavy taxes with high interest rates
Historian perspectives	<p>Favourable perspective:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • dramatic improvement to Russian industry • attracted large investments from foreign countries, from 98 million roubles in 1880 to 911 million roubles in 1900. <p>Critical perspective:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • made Russia too dependent on foreign investment • only focused on industrialisation to the detriment of Russia's agricultural needs • improvements a result of worldwide industrial boom, not just Witte's reforms. <p>Many historians still doubt the 'success' of Witte's reforms.</p>
Career outcome	Tsar Nicholas replaced Witte with Peter Stolypin in 1906.

Trans-Siberian Railway completed by Witte and opened in 1905, this railway travelled across the length of Russia from Moscow to Vladivostok and therefore had major benefits for trade, the transport of goods and troop movements

rouble Russian currency

industrialisation the process of making a country more modern through the development of machines and factories



Source 1.32 Tsarist Minister of Finance Sergei Witte

Results of industrialisation

The growth in industry between 1890 and 1900 was remarkable:

- Production of iron and steel rose from nine to 76 million poods a year (1 pood = 36.11 pounds).
- Coal output tripled.
- Cotton cloth production increased by two-thirds.
- Towns increased in size: Moscow was the fastest growing city outside of New York and one of the 10 biggest cities in the world.

Railway growth in kilometres of new tracks

The length of railway tracks nearly doubled under Witte; 60 per cent of all iron and steel was used in constructing the tracks.

Year	Kilometres of track
1866	4 800
1881	21 232
1891	31 216
1900	53 232
1913	70 160



Source 1.33 The building of the railway bridge at Amur in the early 1900s

**Population growth in cities, 1881–1910**

	St Petersburg	Moscow
1890	1 033 600	1 038 600
1900	1 439 600	1 345 000
1910	1 905 600	1 617 700

ANALYSIS ACTIVITY 1.2

In your workbook, copy and complete the following table on the long-term causes of the Russian Revolution. Refer back to this table as you work through the chapters in Part One.

Long-term causes	Explanation
Political causes	
Economic causes	
Social causes	

The story so far

This section summarises key issues and events discussed in the chapter.

- Russia's political system was based on autocracy where the Tsar's powers were not shared or limited.
- The Tsar's autocratic powers were believed to have been granted by God. They were implemented through an intertwined system of government and bureaucracy, enforced by strict police oppression and legitimised by the Orthodox Church.
- Tsar Nicholas II was a reluctant leader who began his rule in 1896 after the unexpected death of his dominating father, Alexander III, continuing the Romanov Dynasty begun in 1613 by Michael Romanov.
- The social system featured the privilege of the upper classes and the exploitation of the urban industrial workers and rural peasants.
- Sergei Witte, Minister for Finance from 1893 to 1903, initiated progressive reforms that rapidly increased industrial growth.

CHAPTER REVIEW

DEVELOPING CLEAR DEFINITIONS

In this activity you will review your understanding of the key issues analysed in the chapter. By writing a brief explanation after reading each chapter, you will gradually build up a glossary of comprehensive notes for revision. Write explanations defining each of the following.

Key concepts	Key leaders
Autocracy	Tsar Nicholas II
Implementing tsarism	Sergei Witte
Social structure	
Economic backwardness	

PRACTISING PARAGRAPH ANSWERS

This activity encourages you to learn the material presented and begin developing your own opinions. Answer precisely using four to five key points.

- 1 What was tsarism?
- 2 How was tsarism implemented?
- 3 Why did the social structure promote privilege?
- 4 What attempts were made to reform Russia's economic backwardness?

PRACTICE ESSAY QUESTIONS

Historical events are often quite complex, and this is reflected in the essay questions used in this text and in the examinations. Provocative words and controversial ideas are used, giving you the opportunity to agree or disagree with different parts of the statement. This section enables you to practise the skills of relevantly answering the question, forming your own arguments supported by persuasive evidence, and constructing logical, flowing answers. Using evidence is the essential skill involved in writing strong history essays. Providing evidence is different from providing lots of facts. Facts become evidence when they are supporting an argument rather than just filling up a sentence. The challenge is that you cannot provide evidence without having an argument. Powerful introductions are crucial in history essays because they need to include your main arguments and how you plan to prove them. The formula is:

strong essay = argument + evidence



- 1 'Nicholas II was a weak leader but the main problem was that the entire system of autocracy and very nature of the social structure was fundamentally flawed.' Provide evidence for your own evaluation of the character of Tsar Nicholas II, the wider tsarist political system and social structure of privilege.
- 2 'The economy in Russia was too backward to reform. The total failure of Witte's reforms proves this.' Provide evidence for your own evaluation of the nature of Russian agriculture and industry.

READING MORE DEEPLY

This section provides an extra reading list for students and teachers who want to explore topics in greater depth.

Easy

Alexander Palace (see the link at <http://cambridge.edu.au/redirect/?id=5812>).

This is a thorough website on the Tsar's life of privilege. It contains a vast range of primary sources such as photographs, virtual tours of the rooms in his palaces and *Okhrana* documents, and is continually updated.

Moderate

Massie, R 1967, *Nicholas & Alexandra: The Tragic, Compelling Story of the Last Tsar and his Family*, Indigo. Chapter 6, 'The new Tsar', pp. 59–70.

Challenging

Christian, D 1986, *Power and Privilege*, Pitman, 'Introduction', pp. 1–7 (Also recommended is the section 'Economic growth from the 1890s', pp. 83–95).

Christian's purpose in writing his book was not to convey a chronological narrative of Russian history but to ask questions in order to encourage a rethinking of the revolution. His introduction addresses the nature of power and how this is maintained within society by the cohesion, unity and organisation of the ruling classes. It is a short but essential read due to the clarity with which Christian explores some powerful concepts. Reading the preface or introduction of history books is a brief way to see the historian's point of view, as it is there that he or she often explains why the book was written, how it was written and its main conclusion.

2



Opposition to tsarism: Revolutionary ideas and leaders

“ *Let the ruling classes tremble at a Communist Revolution. The proletarians have nothing to lose but their chains. They have a world to win. Working men of all countries unite.*

– FINAL SENTENCES OF MARX AND ENGELS' 1848 *COMMUNIST MANIFESTO*

”

35

OVERVIEW

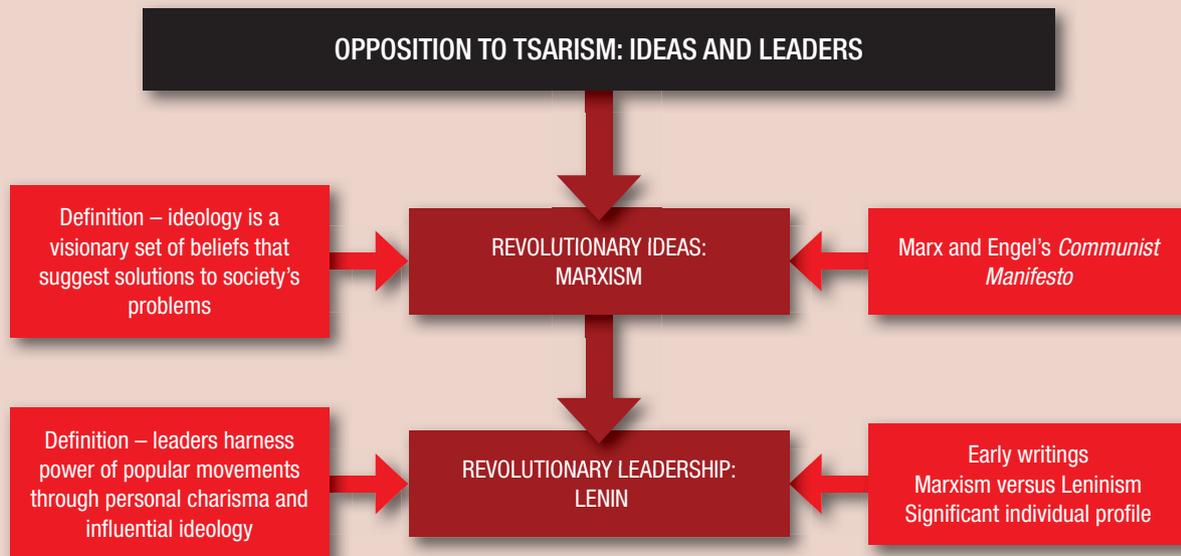
The plural name of the VCE History course, *Revolutions*, suggests that at its deepest level this study provides insights into the distinct patterns that many revolutions have followed. Historians argue about the role ideas, leaders and movements play in causing revolutions. Do revolutions begin because radical ideas become increasingly influential? Do they arise out of many years of protesting against the current regime by intelligent leaders? Do popular movements or political parties simply force rapid change? Or perhaps it is the relationship between each of these factors. Chapters 2 and 3 focus on the significant ideas, individuals and movements that opposed the system of tsarism, so that you can begin to determine for yourself how these factors interlinked. Chapter 8 onwards explores how the threads of revolutionary significant ideas, individuals and movements combined during the year of revolutions in 1917.

KEY ISSUES

- What were the revolutionary ideas?
- How was revolutionary leadership expressed?
- Significant individual: Vladimir Lenin



FLOW OF CHAPTER



Source 2.1 Russia's most recognisable opponent of tsarism, revolutionary leader Vladimir Lenin, featured in the artwork *October in Smolny* by Isaak Brodsky, 1930

2.1 What were the revolutionary ideas?

Defining ideology

Ideology is the set of ideas or beliefs that characterise a particular revolutionary movement. Revolutionary leaders often adopt a specific ideology to explain to the masses their dreams for the country's future. Such ideas need to be attractive to the wider population by directly addressing and providing readily achievable solutions to society's problems.

Revolutionary ideologies have a number of important features: they harness mass philosophies, like nationalism, equality or peace; they sometimes deliberately exaggerate or distort the truth; they are often a source for slogans and revolutionary symbols; and they are a means of social control.

ideology the set of ideas or beliefs that characterise a particular revolutionary movement

Introducing Marxism

A solid understanding of Marxist theory is crucial for understanding the Russian Revolution. An appreciation of **Marxism** helps us to empathise with the revolutionaries who devoted their lives to implementing it in Europe. Writers who lack such historical empathy often describe **communism** as a mere 'experiment', the implications being that it was always a flawed idea, and therefore doomed.

Marxism the devotion to and practice of the communist ideology of Karl Marx

communism a system of economic and social organisation in which industry, capital, land and other means of production are owned and controlled by the community as a whole

Background of Marx and Engels

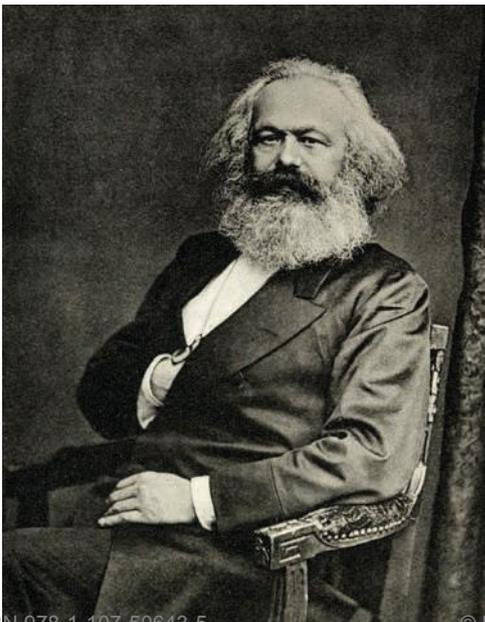
While Karl **Marx** was born in Germany, the birth of his revolutionary spirit can be traced to studying the **French Revolution** in Paris where he was working as a journalist. It was there in 1844 that he befriended Friedrich **Engels** who, earlier, had been sent by his wealthy father from Germany to establish a business in Manchester. Their work was often written together and they need to be considered a team as it is difficult to separate their individual contributions.

Marx Karl Marx was a German theorist who, along with Friedrich Engels, wrote the *Communist Manifesto* in 1848

French Revolution occurring in 1789, this famous revolution, which replaced the absolute monarchy with a republic, inspired many revolutionaries, including Lenin

Engels Friedrich Engels was a German theorist who, along with Karl Marx, wrote the *Communist Manifesto* in 1848

Source 2.2 Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels





Marx and Engels's observations

Marx and Engels visited factories in northern England to make scientific observations of the real world. Engels described the life of the industrial worker in 1846 at best to be one of 'utter monotony; it is his mission to be bored every day', but at worst 'children [are] deformed, men enfeebled, limbs crushed, whole generations wrecked, afflicted with disease and infirmity, purely to fill the purses of the bourgeoisie'. Since the Industrial Revolution, the aim of business has been to lower costs and raise profits. As the largest cost was often employee wages, labour was exploited by factory owners. Observation of similar exploitation in Germany convinced Marx and Engels that this was an unjust international problem requiring a radical solution.

bourgeoisie the upper middle class, including factory owners. To Marx and Engels (then Lenin) the bourgeoisie was the natural class enemy of the proletariat

A MATTER OF FACT

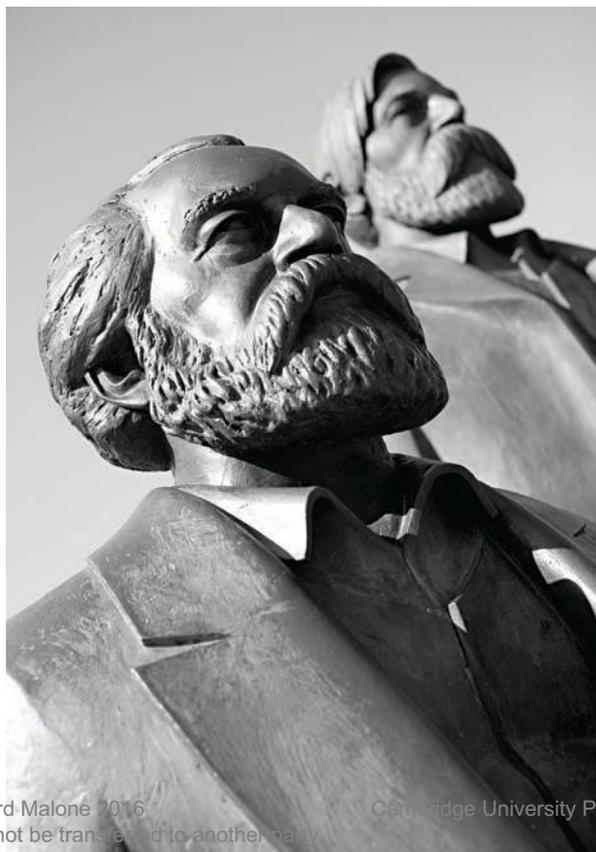
Though remembered today as an intellectual, as a 17-year-old student at the University of Bonn in Germany, Marx was known as a rebel who ran up heavy debts, was imprisoned for drunkenness, and even participated in a duel!

Communist Manifesto (1848)

In 1847 Marx (aged 28) and Engels (aged 26) became two of the founding members of the Communist League. At the League's request, the two drafted a pamphlet criticising the capitalist system and explaining the communist understanding of human history. The pamphlet was only 12000 words long, written in six weeks, was not edited and therefore contained lots of errors, and was written



Source 2.3 (LEFT) The Russian edition of Marx and Engels' *Communist Manifesto*, published in 1882; (RIGHT) a statue dedicated to the authors in Berlin, Germany



hurriedly after the turmoil of the 1848 revolutions. Despite this, Marx was always confident that he had ‘solved the riddle of man’s existence’. He believed that his writings were scientific because it implied that his ideas were moving closer to certainty. Published in 1848 and called the **Communist Manifesto**, this now universally recognised document revealed their philosophical answer to society’s problems – a new political system called communism. Marx wrote: ‘The theory of communism may be summed up in one sentence: abolish all private property.’

Part 1 of the *Communist Manifesto* was an analysis of how society had developed and how it would develop, while Part 2 described who communists were and what they should do.

Communist Manifesto published by Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels in 1848, it promoted the decline of capitalism and the inevitable rise of communism

A MATTER OF FACT

Marx never did manual work himself, despite writing about the lives of working families. In fact, he only worked for two years and then was financially supported by his friend Engels.

Communism inevitable

Marx and Engels’s underlying prediction in the *Communist Manifesto* was that the demise of **capitalism** and the subsequent rise of communism was inevitable. They believed that capitalists would continue to exploit workers, that neither government nor workers’ organisations would significantly improve their situation, and that workers would therefore be forced to revolt. Significant discussion throughout this book is directed at assessing this core belief of inevitability.

capitalism an economic system in which investment in and ownership of the means of production, distribution and exchange of wealth is in the hands of private individuals and corporations

Current system: definition of capitalism

An economic system in which investment in and ownership of the means of production, distribution and exchange of wealth is in the hands of private individuals and corporations.

Marx and Engels’s system: definition of communism

A system of economic and social organisation in which industry, capital, land and other means of production are owned and controlled by the community as a whole.

Stages of history

Marx and Engels considered society to be continually evolving as more efficient methods of production were invented and society’s demands changed. This led to their crucial definition of history as a series of class struggles between those who controlled production (employers) and those who did not (employees). Marx and Engels wrote: ‘The history of all hitherto existing society is the history of **class struggle**.’

class struggle the inevitable conflict between the working and ruling classes due to the exploitation of the former by the latter

Class consciousness

The industrial workers (proletariat) are described as prisoners of the state, enslaved by machines and business owners. In order for the proletariat to act as a class, they needed to see themselves as a class with common needs, aspirations and experiences. This development of such **class consciousness** would create a powerful unity and strength that would be essential to move from the capitalist stage of history to the

class consciousness the necessary process of the workers developing such a deep discontent with their exploitation that they are willing to unite to create a revolution



desired socialist stage. Marx and Engels wrote: 'The immediate aim of the communists is the same as that of all the other proletarian parties: formation of the proletariat into a class.'

Dictatorship of the proletariat

dictatorship a system where a single leader has dominant control over the government and country

This stage would involve the overthrow of capitalism and the abolition of private property. The result would be the '**dictatorship** of the proletariat', which meant that the means of production and distribution – like factories, railroads, mines, farms and transport – would be controlled by the people rather than by harsh bosses. Marx and Engels wrote: 'The class struggle necessarily leads to the dictatorship of the proletariat.'

PHILOSOPHER'S CORNER



Socialism

You have two cows and give one to your neighbour.

Communism

You have two cows; the government takes both and gives you the milk.

Fascism

You have two cows; the government takes both and sells you the milk.

Nazism

You have two cows; the government takes both and shoots you.

Bureaucratism

You have two cows; the government takes both, shoots one, milks the other and throws the milk away.

Capitalism

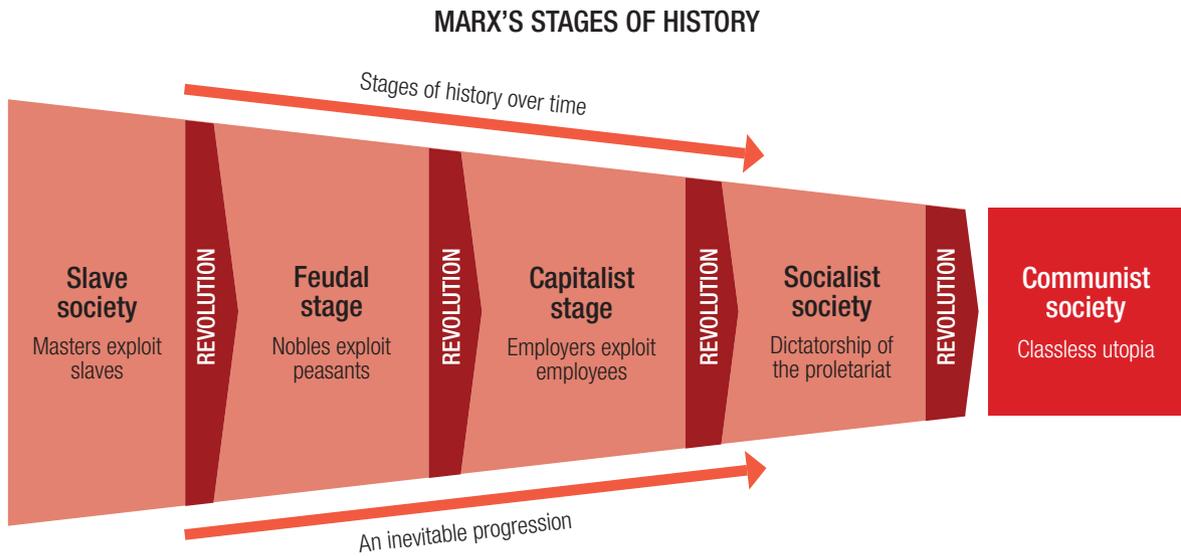
You have two cows; you sell one and buy a bull.

Classless utopia

The final stage of the communist model is to achieve **utopia**: a perfect society, without the problems experienced under capitalism. They argued that if revolution swept away the ruling classes then 'class' as both concept and reality would be abolished, resulting in the disappearance of class antagonism. Marx and Engels wrote: 'From each according to his abilities, to each according to his needs.'

utopia a perfect society without social problems





ANALYSIS ACTIVITY 2.1: ASSUMPTIONS OF COMMUNISM

Underlying Marx and Engels's writings about communism were five core assumptions. Research some examples and counter-examples of them. To what extent do you think each of these is true? Give reasons.

Assumption 1: Conflicts are only *between* classes and never *within* them.

Assumption 2: Human nature, and therefore human behaviour, are always consistent.

Assumption 3: Class loyalty is significantly more important than national loyalty.

Assumption 4: Capitalism is an unstable system that will get worse before collapsing.

Assumption 5: With the inevitable demise of capitalism, the rise of communism is therefore also inevitable.

What is the difference between socialism and communism?

Communism and socialism share many similarities, but communism can be considered as a 'higher' or more advanced form of socialism. Socialism generally refers to an economic system whereas communism generally refers to an economic and political system. Socialism is managed from a centralised government, such as each person being allocated resources based on their input, or amount of work. In communism, each person is allocated resources based on their needs. Hence, property is owned collectively under communism, where all people are considered equal and are provided for equally. Socialism is the necessary economic pre-step to reaching such a politically classless and stateless society.



2.2 How was revolutionary leadership expressed?

Defining leadership

Lenin the most recognised Marxist revolutionary who led the Bolshevik Party and eventually overthrew the Provisional Government in October 1917

exile many revolutionaries were imprisoned by the Tsar in the isolated region of central and eastern Russia called Siberia, or banished from Russia altogether

Revolutions become synonymous with their leaders: Robespierre symbolises the French Revolution; Mao, the Chinese; and **Lenin**, the Russian. In reality, the control of revolutionary leaders over events and policies was far more tenuous and fragile than the word itself suggests. Years of planning were not successful in inspiring the outbreak of revolution. Instead, the model for revolutions suggests that after missing the initial outbreak of revolution through **exile** or imprisonment, the leader's main role begins in harnessing the power of the crowds after their return. A common perspective among historians is that revolutions are begun by spontaneous popular movements that are then directed by powerful leaders through the use of influential ideas. Historian William Doyle argued: 'It would be truer to say that the revolutionaries had been created by the revolution.'

A MATTER OF FACT

Lenin and Trotsky were both of Jewish descent. Lenin's grandfather changed his surname from 'Blank' to 'Dmitrievich' and dropped Judaism for Christianity so he could further his medical career. Trotsky was born into a Jewish family but he changed his name from 'Lev Bronstein' to 'Leon Trotsky' after being badly bullied at school.



Source 2.4 Significant individuals: Bolsheviks Joseph Stalin, Vladimir Lenin and Leon Trotsky in 1918. Lenin and Trotsky are known for their leadership during 1917, while Stalin took charge of the party after Lenin's death in 1924.

While it is recognised that revolutions exist due to the combined influence of several significant individuals, Lenin and **Trotsky** were the two most prominent leaders from 1917 onwards, with Lenin being the ideological master and Trotsky the brilliant tactician. The key leaders who embraced Marxism profiled in this book are Vladimir Lenin (next page), Alexander Kerensky (see Chapter 9), Alexandra Kollontai (see Chapter 12) and Leon Trotsky (see Chapter 13).

Trotsky a radical Marxist revolutionary who joined with Lenin and the Bolsheviks in 1917 to form the new government after the October Revolution

A MATTER OF FACT

*Lenin's real surname was Ulyanov. He used over 160 code names to disguise his writing. He began using the name 'Lenin' consistently from 1901 because it was the most popular of his writing names. The name 'Lenin' may have come from the Lena River in **Siberia**.*

Siberia the remote but vast central and eastern area in Russia whose isolation and harsh conditions limited population numbers and made it ideal for exiling revolutionaries and other dangerous prisoners

Revolutionary theories: Marxism versus Leninism

The theory of communism was primarily proposed for industrialised countries like Germany, France and England, rather than the semi-feudal agrarian-based Russia. Whereas Marx and Engels simply believed that a classless utopia would inevitably occur, Lenin worked to accelerate the natural progress of economic and social evolution. The *Communist Manifesto* focused on detailing the flaws in the capitalist system, but did not explain how the socialist transition period would work or what the communist utopia might actually look like in practice.

These understandable omissions meant that Lenin needed to fill in the gaps himself. Lenin's suggestions of how Marx and Engels's theoretical ideas should be interpreted and implemented were called **Leninism**. Lenin himself once said that 'Sometimes history needs a push.' Lenin's writings about revolution and his *April Theses* (see Chapter 9) are crucial examples of Leninism.

Leninism Lenin's suggestions for how Marx and Engels's theoretical ideas should be interpreted and implemented

A MATTER OF FACT

Despite being a revolutionary heavyweight, Lenin was only 165 centimetres (5 feet, 5 inches) tall.

ANALYSIS ACTIVITY 2.2: RESEARCH REPORT

Understanding Lenin's approach to revolution is crucial. Lenin was a prolific writer. Research one of his pre-1917 writings, such as *What Is to Be Done?* (1902), *One Step Forward, Two Steps Back* (1904) or *Two Tactics* (1905), available at <http://cambridge.edu.au/redirect/?id=5815>, and write a short research report.



2.3 SIGNIFICANT INDIVIDUAL

Vladimir Lenin (1870–1924)

1870–89

- Born into a middle-class family in the province of Kazan in 1870 as Vladimir Ilyich Ulyanov.
- Excelled throughout high school, with one report card reading: ‘Quite talented, invariably diligent, prompt and reliable.’
- Revolutionary impulses developed after brother hanged in 1887 for assassination attempt on Tsar Alexander III.
- Was on the Tsar’s list of ‘dangerous persons’ from the age of 17 onwards.
- Managed the family farm in Samara from 1889, where he once successfully sued the neighbouring peasant family for letting their cattle walk over his crops.
- Was officially reported to the Ministry of Education while at Kazan University for ‘secretiveness, inattention and impoliteness’.
- Graduated as a lawyer.

1890–99

- Avid reading of Marx had turned him into a committed Marxist revolutionary.
- During the 1891–92 famine he was not in favour of providing aid, hoping it would ‘cause the peasant to reflect on the fundamental facts of capitalist society’ and ‘destroy his faith in the Tsar’.
- Did only two years’ paid work, in 1892–94, as an assistant to a barrister. Lived off his mother’s pension, a party salary and private supporters. Writings and newspapers brought only a meagre income.
- Arrested in St Petersburg for ‘subversive activity’ in 1895.
- Exiled to Siberia in 1895–99, which provided the opportunity to study and write.

Krupskaya Lenin’s wife; they met in Siberia after she had also been exiled there for her own revolutionary activity

- Adopted the pen name ‘Lenin’ (the most famous of his 160 revolutionary aliases).
- Met and married Nadezhda **Krupskaya** in Siberia in July 1898, but had no children with her.



Source 2.5 Lenin, 1887 (aged 17)



Source 2.6 Lenin, 1896 (aged 26)

1900–09

- Released from exile in 1900 and began revolutionary newspaper called **Iskra**, meaning 'Spark', taken from a phrase used by the troops who had rebelled against the Tsar, known as Decembrists of 1825, 'a spark will start a big blaze'.
- Published *What Is to Be Done?* in 1902.
- Led the Bolshevik faction of the Social Democratic Party in 1903.
- Played no role in the 1905 Revolution and only returned to St Petersburg in December.
- Exiled again from 1906 to 1917.

1910–17

- Began a relationship with the young and enthusiastic revolutionary Inessa **Armand** in Paris from 1910, forming an accepted trio with Lenin's wife.
- Began a daily newspaper called **Pravda**, meaning 'Truth', in 1912.
- Badly shaken by his mother's death in July 1916.
- Returned to Petrograd in April 1917 after the February Revolution and then initiated the Bolshevik takeover of October 1917.

Iskra Lenin began this revolutionary newspaper in 1900, meaning 'Spark'

Armand Inessa Armand was a passionate revolutionary who met Lenin in Paris in 1910 and became his mistress

Pravda Lenin's daily newspaper, meaning 'Truth', begun in 1912



Source 2.7 Lenin, 1910 (aged 40)



Source 2.8 Lenin, 1918 (aged 48)

Revolutionary fortunes: Marx and Lenin

By design or destiny, Lenin's life mirrored Marx's in several ways. Both studied law, which developed their reasoning and logic. Both were exiled from their country of birth for the majority of their adult lives. Both became popular through controversial writings that illuminated the fundamental problems underlying European society. Both considered the capitalist system unfair because it produced rich individuals while others remained poor. A critical difference, however, was that whereas Marx died in exile in 1883, Lenin finally witnessed his philosophies implemented in Russia after 1917.



Source 2.9 Lenin (centre) heads a Council of People's Commissars (*Sovnarkom*) session in December 1917

A MATTER OF FACT

Marx is buried in a prominent position in Highgate Cemetery in London. Ironically, his grave screams of capitalism with a massive granite tomb complete with his head modelled in bronze. Inscribed in gold letters are the words: 'Workers of all lands unite: philosophers have only interpreted the world in various ways – the point however is to change it.' Interestingly, visitors to his grave peaked during the global economic recession in 2008.

ANALYSIS ACTIVITY 2.3: HISTORICAL INTERPRETATIONS

The purpose of these sections is to provide extracts that reveal a specific point of view, or Historical Interpretations. Use of these in your writing can make it richer and more challenging.

Revolutions in short are made in the name of the proletariat, not by it, and usually in countries where the proletariat hardly exists. What is more, these revolutions do not bring the triumph or dictatorship of the proletariat. They bring the dictatorship of a new managerial class, or sometimes the old class under a new name. In any society, a few men will aspire to run things, and the great majority will allow them to do it . . . The Communists, from Marx onwards, were the chosen few who really knew what the proletariat wanted. They knew only because they said they knew. This was enough to convince them that they would always be right. Someone called Marxists 'god's prompters'. Lenin was the most persistent of those prophets.

AJP Taylor in his introduction to the *Communist Manifesto*, p. 46

- 1 According to Taylor, what is the problem with revolutions?
- 2 What does Taylor argue about revolutionary leaders?
- 3 In one sentence only, summarise Taylor's main point of view in this document.

The story so far

- Opposition to tsarism was not new in the 1900s. The fortunes of revolutionary ideas and leaders rose and fell throughout the 1800s.
- The key idea that inspired many revolutionaries was Marxism, an economic and political theory proposing that history was a series of class struggles inevitably resulting in the downfall of capitalism and the victory of the workers.
- Lenin, leader of the Bolshevik Party from 1903, had been politically active and agitating for revolution since his brother's death and spent nearly all of the period before 1917 in exile.

CHAPTER REVIEW

DEVELOPING CLEAR DEFINITIONS

Write explanations defining each of the following in pre-1917 Russia.

Key concepts	Key publications	Key leaders
Ideology	<i>Communist Manifesto</i> (1848)	Marx and Engels
Capitalism	<i>What Is to Be Done?</i> (1902)	Vladimir Lenin
Communism	<i>Pravda</i>	
Proletariat	<i>Iskra</i>	
Leninism		

PRACTISING PARAGRAPH ANSWERS

- 1 Describe Marx and Engels's reflections on the way society operated.
- 2 What is communism?
- 3 Explain why Lenin's background made him an ideal revolutionary.



PRACTICE ESSAY QUESTION

'The autocratic ideas and leaders of tsarism were totally opposite to the Marxist ideas of the revolutionary leaders. It was impossible for both to exist in the same society.' Discuss this view, providing evidence to support your answer.

READING MORE DEEPLY

Easy

Documentary, *Men of our time – Lenin* (Granada).

Written and narrated by James Cameron in 1970, 38 minutes long.

Moderate

Marxists Internet Archive – Selected Marxist Writers (see the link at <http://cambridge.edu.au/redirect/?id=5816>).

Challenging

Shlyapnikov, A 1984, *On the Eve of 1917: Reminiscences from the Revolutionary Underground*, Allison & Busby. Chapter 4, especially pp. 110–14.

Shlyapnikov was an important Bolshevik before 1917 due to his roving role as the link between the Bolshevik organisations in Russia and the Bolshevik leaders in exile. This unique first-hand perspective outlines his visits to the leaders in exile, the logistics of smuggling documents to their hiding places, and some of the divisions between exiles.

3



Opposition to tsarism: Revolutionary parties

“ *No army can stop an idea whose time has come.*

– VICTOR HUGO

”

OVERVIEW

‘Movements’ is a term that cannot be used generally because it has quite varied meanings. While significant ideas and individuals are important in shaping and directing revolutions, it is movements that typically begin revolutions and provide the force needed to threaten the existing regime. Revolutionary movements can be divided into three key groups in order to develop a specific understanding of this difficult term:

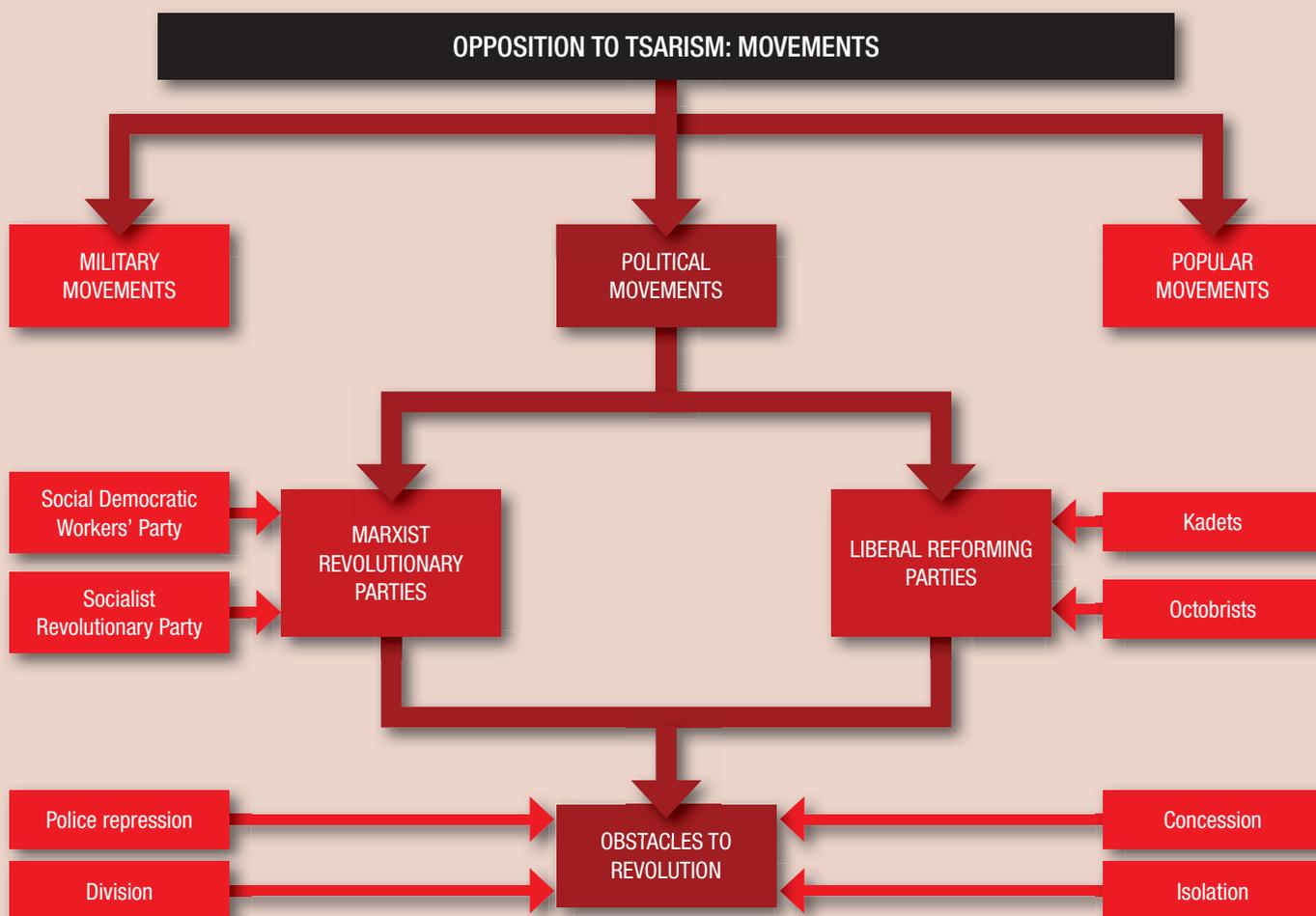
- Political movements – parties, clubs or associations that range from being single-minded in their determination to achieve their goal to being disorganised and split by different ideological viewpoints; for example, the Bolsheviks, Mensheviks and the Socialist Revolutionary Party (discussed later in this chapter).
- Military movements – movements need a military organisation to fight their battles in order to complete a successful overthrow of the government (whoever controls the troops controls power); for example, Red Army and CHEKA (see Chapters 12 and 13).
- Popular movements – often spontaneous and less well-defined groups of ordinary people that provide the important ground force that professional revolutionaries need to win over; for example, the St Petersburg Soviet and mass strikes (see Chapters 4, 9 and 10).



KEY ISSUES

- What were the main revolutionary political movements?
- What were the obstacles to revolution?

FLOW OF CHAPTER



3.1 What were the main revolutionary political movements?

Marxist revolutionary parties

Social Democratic Workers' Party

Background – Marxist principles were spreading throughout Russia in the 1890s, prompting George **Plekhanov**, now considered the father of Russian Marxism, to found the **Social Democratic Workers' Party** in 1898 on socialist principles. In 1903, delegates met safely in London where Lenin deliberately confronted Plekhanov and prominent *Iskra* co-editor, **Martov**, on the issue of party membership and organisation. The subsequent series of votes resulted in two factions being formed: Lenin and his supporters, who called themselves the **Bolsheviks** (meaning majority); and Martov and his supporters, who became the **Mensheviks** (minority). These became separate political parties in 1912.

Plekhanov George Plekhanov is considered to be the father of Russian Marxism

Social Democratic Workers' Party a revolutionary party founded by Plekhanov in 1898 on Marxist principles

Martov a serious disagreement with Lenin led to the establishment of the Mensheviks in 1903 and Martov was elected their first leader

Bolsheviks a revolutionary political party begun by Lenin after splitting with the Mensheviks in 1903

Mensheviks a Marxist revolutionary party that was formed, along with the Bolsheviks, when the Social Democratic Workers' Party split in 1903



Source 3.1 Members of the revolutionary St Petersburg League of Struggle in 1897. Lenin is seated in the centre; Martov is on his left.



	Bolsheviks	Mensheviks
Key leader	Vladimir Lenin	Julius Martov
Key influence	Marx's writings	Marx's writings
Stages of history	Believed they could bypass capitalist stage and move straight to socialist society.	Believed that capitalist stage was necessary before evolving into a socialist society.
Party organisation	Membership for dedicated workers only and decisions made by leaders alone.	Membership open to all workers and decisions made after open debate and majority vote.
Attitude to proletariat	Party needs to plan revolution and seize power as the 'vanguard of the proletariat'.	Party needs to educate workers to develop a class consciousness that unleashes a spontaneous struggle for equality.
Political influence	Due to their small numbers, perhaps only as high as 10 000 members before 1914, the Bolsheviks were not influential. Lenin was also in exile, leaving the party without direct leadership.	It was in fact the Mensheviks, not the Bolsheviks, who were more closely monitored by the <i>Okhrana</i> as the major revolutionary threat to tsarist authority.

Socialist Revolutionary Party

Socialist Revolutionary Party the most popular Marxist revolutionary party in Russia because it represented the interests of the peasants

socialism the stage of history identified by Karl Marx as coming after the end of capitalism that was necessary before moving into the classless utopia

Chernov Victor Chernov was a revolutionary who was involved with the Socialist Revolutionaries and later the Mensheviks

Constituent Assembly the name given to an elected political group

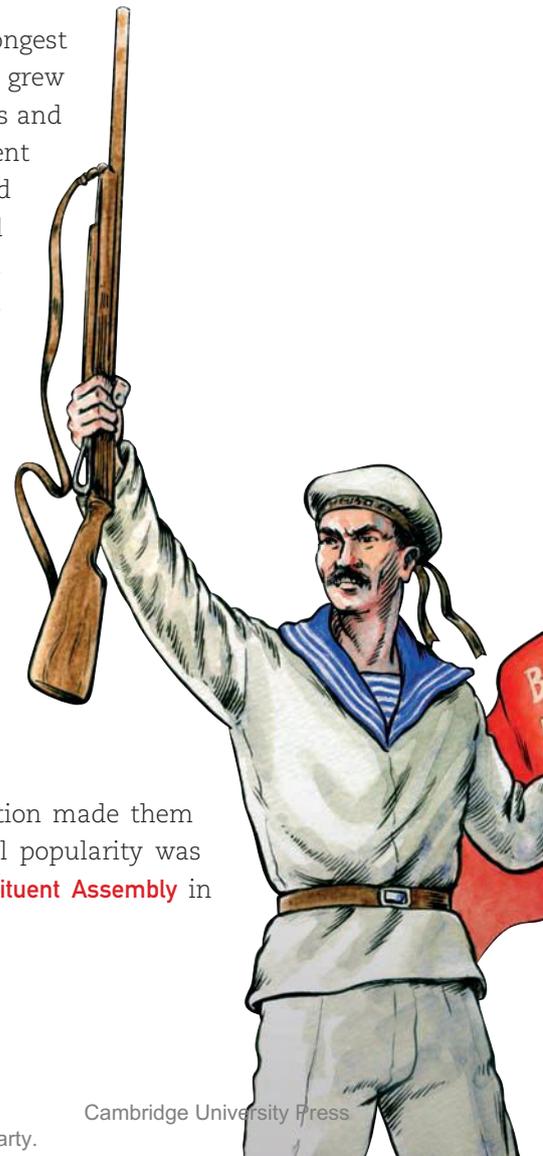
Background – The **Socialist Revolutionary Party** (SR) had the longest political tradition of any party. The Populist movement grew out of the economic reforms of Alexander II in the 1860s and was based upon a type of agrarian **socialism**. One violent section of the Populist movement formed a group called 'The People's Will' in 1879, which practised terrorism and assassination. During this radical period, the movement lost popularity before reforming in 1901 as the Socialist Revolutionary Party.

Key leaders – Victor **Chernov** and, later, Alexander Kerensky, who became the Prime Minister of Russia in 1917.

Key policies – Politically, the SR wanted to introduce representative federal and local governments elected by universal male suffrage that placed emphasis on rural communities and allowed for regional independence. Economically, the SR proposed the radical plan of socialising all privately owned land and redistributing it to democratically organised communes.

Support base – Peasants and industrial workers.

Political influence – The SR's belief that peasants were crucial to revolution made them a primary political party of rural Russia. Their overwhelming national popularity was demonstrated by their distinct majority in the elections to the **Constituent Assembly** in November 1917.



ANALYSIS ACTIVITY 3.1: APPARTS MODEL OF PRIMARY SOURCE ANALYSIS

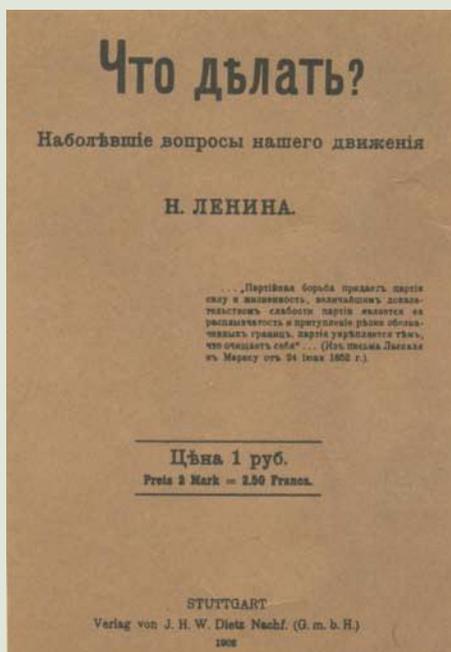
This is a helpful model to analyse primary sources. The heading is really suitable, because analysis is pulling apart a document or image, to look at the separate parts of a source so that we understand it better. Remember the APPARTS model as a way to analyse, or pull apart, a document or image.

A	AUTHOR	Who created the source?
P	PLACE AND TIME	Where and when was this source created? Does the date make this a primary or secondary source?
P	PRIOR KNOWLEDGE	What do you already know that would further your understanding of this source? For example, you may already know something about the author, or the place where it was produced, or what was happening in Russia at the same time, or about the event or topic on which the source is focusing.
A	AUDIENCE	Who was the intended audience of this source? Who was it made for?
R	REASON	Why was this source produced at the time it was produced?
T	THE MAIN IDEA	What is the key argument, perspective or point of view shown in this source?
S	SIGNIFICANCE	Why is this source important? How does this source help you to better understand the key issues or events occurring in Russia at the time?

Source: 'Improving Student Comprehension: Primary Sources', *The AP Vertical Teams Guide for Social Studies*, The College Board (2001), pp. 15–17

Lenin's *What Is to Be Done?* (1902)

Lenin was a prolific writer. Given that he was in nearly constant exile from 1895 to 1917, his writing became his main and most influential form of communication with other revolutionaries. This document was written in the context of a debate with the Mensheviks as to what type of group would be most likely to achieve the goal of revolution.



Source 3.2 The cover of Lenin's *What Is to Be Done?* (1902) with its author



A small, tight, solid nucleus of the most dependable, experienced and hardened workers having trustworthy representatives in the main regions and connected by all the rules of secrecy with the organization of revolutionaries can quite capably, with the widest support of the masses and without any formal organization, fulfill all functions of a professional organization, in a manner desirable to a Social-Democratic movement. Only in this way can we secure the consolidation and development of a Social-Democratic trade-union movement . . .

The moral from this is simple: if we begin with a solid foundation of strong organization of revolutionaries, we can guarantee the stability of the movement as a whole and realize the goals of Social-Democracy and of trade unions. If we, however, begin with a wide workers' organization, supposedly the most accessible to the masses (but in fact is the most accessible to the gendarmes, and makes revolutionaries most accessible to the police) we shall not achieve one goal nor the other . . .

From www.marxists.org, translated by Jane Scales

- 1 Use the headings and questions in the APPARTS model to help analyse, or pull apart, this primary source. Read Lenin's *What Is to Be Done?* then copy and complete this table in your workbook.

A	AUTHOR	
P	PLACE AND TIME	
P	PRIOR KNOWLEDGE	
A	AUDIENCE	
R	REASON	
T	THE MAIN IDEA	
S	SIGNIFICANCE	

A MATTER OF FACT

The Bolshevik Party quite openly stole in order to get money to survive. Young Joseph Stalin was responsible for bank robberies, the most well known being when he captured a wagon going to the bank and ran away with bags of money while firing over his shoulder.

ANALYSIS ACTIVITY 3.2: RESEARCH REPORT

Early revolutionary groups were made up of both men and women. Thirty per cent of the populist movement of the 1870s was women. The leader of The People's Will from 1881 was Vera Figner (1852–1943), described by a fellow activist as 'an ideal revolutionary, a woman with an iron will'. She was arrested in 1883 and imprisoned for 22 years. Another female activist was Vera Zasulich, an assassin who helped found the Social Democrats. Research a revolutionary woman from pre-1917 and write a short research report.

Liberal reforming parties

There was also a growing **liberal movement** in Russia which argued that the dire need for change did not require an overthrow of the tsarist system. It advocated reform rather than revolution; continuity with the past rather than a painful break from it. The movement was welcomed by the progressive middle class of industrialists, lawyers and financiers that had emerged from Witte's industrial reforms of the 1890s. There were two main political parties that emerged during 1905 that subscribed to this liberal approach: the Kadets and the Octobrists.

Kadets

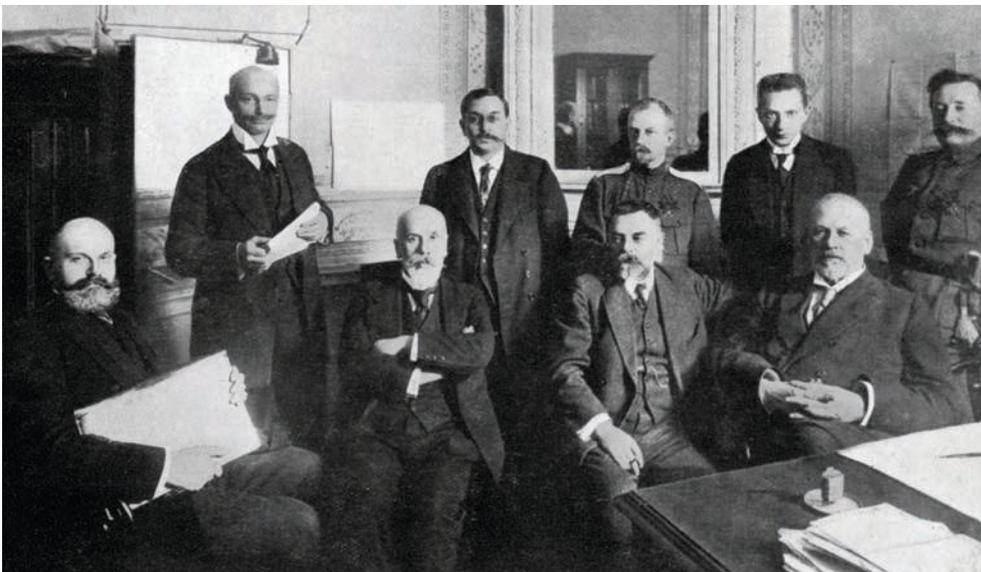
Background – The Constitutional Democratic Party, or **Kadets** for short, was the largest of the liberal parties. Its main policy was promoting a system of constitutional monarchy.

Key leaders – Paul **Miliukov**, a strong opponent of **Rasputin** and the war, who became the Foreign Minister in the **Provisional Government** in February 1917; and Prince Lvov, who became Prime Minister in March 1917.

Main policies – Kadets were strong advocates of a democratically elected constituent assembly that would limit the power of the Tsar. This representative body would then be able to address Russia's problems by introducing reforms like universal education, civil rights for all citizens, the legalisation of trade unions and striking, and the cessation of censorship.

Support base – Smaller industrial entrepreneurs and landlords.

Political influence – The Kadets were a powerful voice in the First Duma and were central in forming the Provisional Government.



Source 3.3 Octobrist leader Mikhail Rodzianko, chairman of the fourth Duma, pictured sitting on the right. Behind him is Alexander Kerensky.

liberal movement argued that the dire need for change did not require an overthrow of the tsarist system

Kadets a conservative revolutionary group that played an important role in the First Duma in 1906 and in the Provisional Government in 1917

Miliukov Paul Miliukov was a member of the conservative Kadet Party who opposed Rasputin and became a leader in the Provisional Government in 1917

Rasputin Grigorii Rasputin was a Siberian peasant who had great influence over Tsarina Alexandra and Tsar Nicholas II

Provisional Government a temporary committee formed during the February Revolution that became the new government after Tsar Nicholas II abdicated



Octobrists

October Manifesto the document produced by Tsar Nicholas II in 1905 promising to grant an elected Duma in return for an end to the general strikes that had paralysed the economy

Duma the Russian word for elected parliament

Rodzianko Mikhail Rodzianko was the head of the Fourth Duma (1912–17), which formed the Provisional Government after the abdication of Tsar Nicholas II

Background – Given their name because of their readiness to accept the **October Manifesto** in 1905, their loyalty to the Tsar meant that they embraced the **Dumas** as a significant constitutional reform. They were more conservative than the Kadets.

Key leaders – Mikhail **Rodzianko**, who was the chairman of the Fourth Duma from 1912 to 1917; and Alexander Guchkov, who became the first Minister for War in the new Provisional Government in 1917.

Key policies – Limited objectives primarily focusing on constitutional and legislative reform.

Support base – Industrialists and landowners.

Political influence – Primary influence was in the Dumas where they were commonly voicing serious concerns about the incompetence of the government.

Revolutionary parties					
	LEFT WING (radical revolutionaries)		RIGHT WING (moderate revolutionaries)		
	SOCIAL DEMOCRATS Split in 1903 into				
NAME	BOLSHEVIKS	MENSHEVIKS	SOCIALIST REVOLUTIONARIES	KADETS	OCTOBRISTS
SUPPORT	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Urban working class Soldiers in the army during First World War 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Urban working class Some lawyers and other professionals Cautious socialists 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Peasants Some moderate urban socialists 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Progressive landlords and industrialists Many lawyers and other professionals 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Wealthy land- and factory-owning monarchists
PERSONALITIES	Vladimir Lenin	Julius Martov	Alexander Kerensky	Paul Miliukov Prince Lvov	Mikhail Rodzianko
POLICIES	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Alliance between working class and peasants Rapid overthrow of the Tsar and the middle class to attain socialism 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Cooperation with the middle class to overthrow the Tsar, followed by steady progress to socialism 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Land reform to benefit the peasants 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> A constitutional monarchy, like the English model 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Supporters of the 1905 <i>October Manifesto</i> A Duma, but with the Tsar retaining most power

3.2 What were the obstacles to revolution?

It was very difficult for political movements under tsarism because political parties in the modern sense did not exist. Gaining support, influence and power was problematic because of the obstacles to change that existed in Russia, which had the effect of strengthening the status quo – in this case, tsarism.

Even the expression ‘The Russian Revolution’ presents a problem because we know that a revolution did actually occur. It is too easy to look for evidence to prove that it was obvious that Nicholas’s regime was going to collapse. The existence of professional revolutionaries like Lenin, socialist groups like the Bolsheviks and SR, and alluring ideologies like Marxism do not mean that revolution was necessary or inevitable. As history is based on the unpredictability of real people, it is never that simple. If political disillusionment, economic hardship and social inequality were the sole criteria for revolution, most societies would be in revolution most of the time. Instead, it is more valuable to reflect on the significant obstacles that limited the likelihood of revolution under tsarism.

Obstacle 1: Police repression – The *Okhrana* played a vital role in dispersing opponents of tsarism through stringent policies of social control. Censorship, imprisonment, exile and execution all limited the degree to which criticism of tsarism was spread. Chapter 5 describes Prime Minister Stolypin’s severe repression of Nicholas’s enemies between 1906 and 1911.

Obstacle 2: Division – It is inaccurate to assume that the underground socialist movements were unified. Leaders often had disagreements, exemplified by the divisions between the Bolsheviks and Mensheviks. Divisions weaken power.

Obstacle 3: Cohesion – The role of the revolutionaries was to convince the majority of the general population that they were a better alternative to tsarism. This did not occur within the sympathetic industrial or peasant workforces, let alone the unified ruling and upper classes that benefited so profitably from the current system.

Obstacle 4: Isolation – As discussed in Chapter 1, Russia’s sheer size and cultural diversity made the country extremely difficult to rule, let alone sabotage. The inefficiency of communication and transportation that was to severely impact on Russia during the First World War (see Chapter 6) also made revolutionary **propaganda** difficult to disseminate. Added to these constraints was the illiteracy and isolation of the majority of the peasant population.

propaganda the creation of powerful visual or verbal material that presents an issue from only one dominant point of view

Obstacle 5: Concession – Reforms, even of a limited or temporary nature, diffuse tension and conflict within a society; opposition softens and cooperation increases. Chapter 4 discusses the Tsar’s *October Manifesto* in response to the crises in 1905.

The story so far

- Marxist ideology was adopted by the Socialist Revolutionaries and the Social Democrats.
- Social Democrats split into the Bolshevik and Menshevik factions in 1903 due to opposing interpretations of how revolutionary parties should be organised and led.
- The liberalism movement that favoured reforms rather than revolutionary change produced two main parties, the Kadets and Octobrists, both formed during the 1905 Revolution.
- Despite the existence of revolutionary ideas, leaders and movements, there were several significant obstacles in the tsarist regime that made it more difficult for revolutionary political movements to gain mass support.



CHAPTER REVIEW

DEVELOPING CLEAR DEFINITIONS

Write explanations defining each of the following in pre-1917 Russia.

Key political movements	Key concepts
Bolsheviks	Movements
Mensheviks	Left wing
Socialist Revolutionary Party	Right wing

PRACTISING PARAGRAPH ANSWERS

- 1 Movements can be divided into three categories. Explain each.
- 2 Explain the differences between the Bolshevik and Menshevik factions.
- 3 What obstacles limited the growth of opposition to tsarism?

PRACTICE ESSAY QUESTIONS

- 1 'The structure of tsarism was so fragile and the revolutionaries so strong that Marx was right: revolution was indeed inevitable.' Use information from Chapters 1 to 3 to provide evidence to support your answer.
- 2 'It was the Socialist Revolutionaries, not the Bolsheviks, who were the primary revolutionary party in the tsarist regime.' Provide evidence to support your answer.

READING MORE DEEPLY

Easy

Fitzpatrick, S 1982, *The Russian Revolution 1917–1932*, Oxford, section subtitled 'The revolutionary tradition', pp. 18–26.

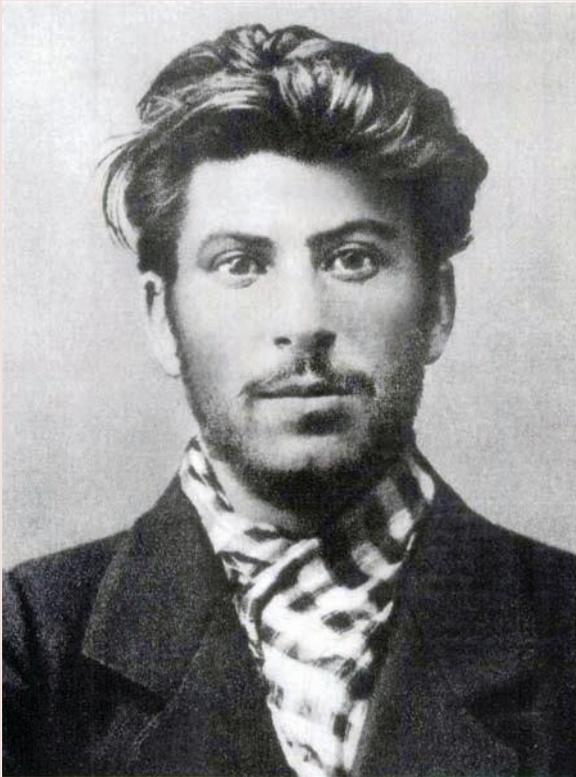
Moderate

Liebich, A, 'The Mensheviks', pp. 19–28 in Geifman, A (Ed.) 1999, *Russia Under the Last Tsar: Opposition and Subversion 1984–1917*, Blackwell.

Challenging

Carr, EH 1980, *From Napoleon to Stalin and Other Essays*, Macmillan. Chapter 7 'Liberalism in alien soil', pp. 60–7.

Carr is a prominent English writer about revolution and the nature of history. This chapter discusses the question of why radical Marxism, rather than the more moderate liberal school of thought, developed in Russia from the 1860s.



Source 3.4 Joseph Stalin, eventual leader of the Soviet Union, helped finance Bolshevik Party activities by robbing banks as a young man.

4

Opposition to tsarism: Popular movements of 1905

“

Russia – a country in which things that just don't happen, happen.

– PETER THE GREAT

”

OVERVIEW

Russo-Japanese War

a war that began in 1904 and ended disastrously for the Russian navy in 1905 with a comprehensive defeat in the Tsushima Strait

Growing tension within Asia due to the Tsar's imperialist mindset created an external crisis in 1904. The Russian Navy's eventual defeat in the **Russo-Japanese War** in 1904–05 resulted in a massive psychological and military dent in the nation's fragile mindset. Added to this was the growing internal crisis caused by the impact of reforms initiated over the previous decade by tsarist finance minister Sergei Witte. He indirectly and unknowingly played a role in creating a revolutionary situation.

Revolutionary discontent normally grows and becomes established in main towns and cities. The Russian Revolution was no different. The growth of industrialisation at the turn of the nineteenth century attracted thousands of peasants to the major industrial centres. After the worldwide recession of 1899, they formed a simmering pot of social grievance that boiled over in 1905 and again in February 1917. The rising expectations of a better life were unmet with the reality of poor living conditions and then, later, lack of jobs.

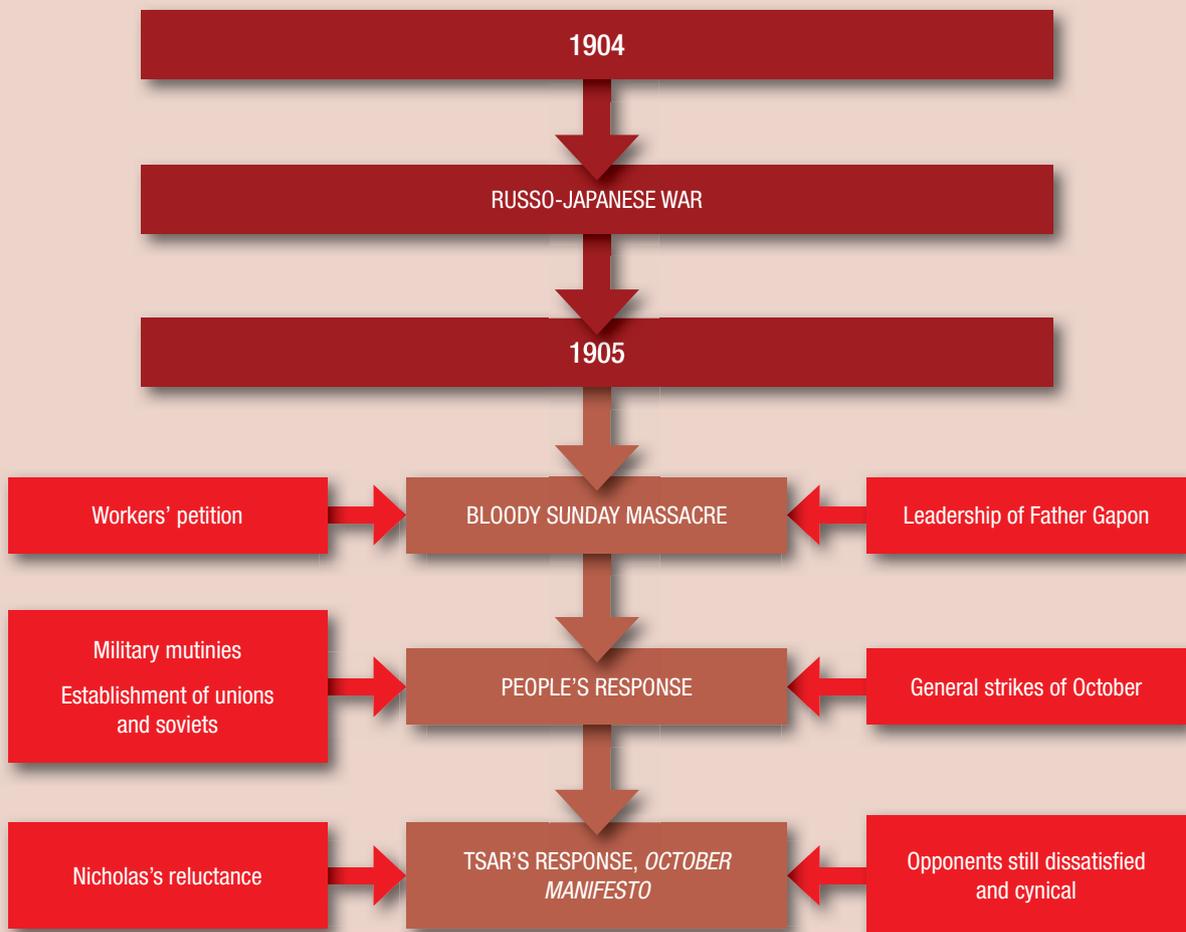
petition a written document signed by large numbers of people recommending a specific plan of action be undertaken by the government

Literacy was higher in the urban centres and reliance on the conservative teachings of the church lower. The new industrial working class presented revolutionary agitators with a fertile pool of discontent. This chapter examines a year when opposition to the tsarist regime was moved to mass action, beginning with the January march to present a **petition** demanding better working conditions, and ending with the general strikes of October.

KEY ISSUES

- External crisis: Russo-Japanese War, 1904–05
- Internal crisis: Bloody Sunday Massacre, 1905
- What were the key crises of 1905?
- What was the Tsar's response?
- What were the reactions to the *October Manifesto*?

FLOW OF CHAPTER





4.1 External crisis: the Russo-Japanese War, 1904–05

Background – The Tsar’s imperialist mindset led to a series of conflicts around the turn of the twentieth century in Asia, most notably his unsuccessful wars in Korea and the Russo-Japanese War. Russia’s authority in Asia was built upon its alliance with France and growing interest from Germany and Britain in negotiating with the Tsar. Japan’s victory over China in 1895 resulted in Japan, Russia, Germany, Britain and France occupying parts of China and negotiating deals with the defeated nation.

The famous French political cartoon depicted in Source 4.1 shows a cake called ‘Chine’, which is French for China. Hence the title of the image reads ‘China: the cake of kings and of emperors’. The cartoon, drawn by Henri Meyer, was printed in a supplement to *Le Petit Journal* on 16 January 1898. The cake of China is being cut up and divided by imperialist countries. British Queen Victoria is arguing with Germany’s Kaiser Wilhelm II over a border piece. Wilhelm’s use of the knife shows his willingness to use force. Russia’s Nicholas II is eying off the piece

he wants while the French Marianne stands close by – indicating the Franco-Russian Alliance. A Japanese Samurai is carefully pondering which piece would most benefit his country. Behind all of the caricatures a member of the Chinese Qing Government throws up his hands in frustration and anger at the division of his country. The core message of the image is of the imperialist attitudes of the world’s powerful nations over the weaker China during this period.

War is sparked – China’s patience soon wore thin and it attempted to remove the invaders in 1900 in the Boxer Rebellion. Forces from Russia, Europe, Japan and the United States combined to restore order in northern China. But upon victory, the 150 000 Russian troops did not withdraw in a bid to protect their new Trans-Siberian railway.

This was the immediate catalyst for the Russo-Japanese War. This constant military threat angered the Japanese and built tension between the two nations. Aggression erupted at Port Arthur in 1904 and began a conflict that lasted 12 months before the Japanese finally defeated the Russians at Port Arthur – though at a cost of 60 000 men. The Japanese forced the Russians north of Mukden



Source 4.1 Imperialists divide up ‘China: the cake of kings and of emperors’

but decided not to pursue them due to inadequate supplies of troops. Given the stalemate with the armies, the war would be decided with by two navies.

After a six-month voyage sailing from Russia to Japan – more than 33 000 kilometres – the Russian Baltic Fleet was decisively defeated. In the brief Battle of Tsushima on 27 May 1905, 35 of the 45 Russian warships were sunk or captured by the powerful Japanese warships. Over 10 000 Russian sailors were killed or captured, compared with Japan's 690. Not only was Russia's expansion into Southeast Asia abruptly halted, but more significantly, this humiliating military disaster became a crucial spark for the revolutionary uprisings of 1905.

Outcome – Facing international pressure for a diplomatic resolution combined with the internal pressure of the 1905 revolution, Tsar Nicholas II allowed US President Theodore Roosevelt to mediate between Russia and Japan. The result was Russia's withdrawal and acknowledgement of Japan's supremacy in the region. Humiliation spread across Russia.

ANALYSIS ACTIVITY 4.1: COMPARING IMAGES

Sources 4.2 and 4.3 show two perspectives on the Russo-Japanese War. The first is from a Russian perspective, confident of victory in 1904. The second is from a Japanese perspective in 1905, showing the Tsar caught by surprise.



Source 4.2 A Russian cartoon from 1904

- 1 Describe the main features of each cartoon.
- 2 What is the key message of each cartoon?
- 3 Which do you think more accurately represents the actual events of the 1904–05 Russo-Japanese War?
- 4 In your opinion, why are cartoon or visual images created with a bias, or a one-sided perspective?



Source 4.3 A Japanese cartoon from 1905



4.2 Internal crisis: Bloody Sunday, January 1905

Causes of Bloody Sunday: Problems caused by Witte's reforms

Sergei Witte's reforms while Minister for Finance and the Interior were outlined in Chapter 1. While there were significant economic gains, the social and political crises made significant inroads into the Tsar's power in 1905. It was the cumulative effect of Witte's reforms that erupted into the major revolutionary event of Bloody Sunday by January 1905.

Social problems – Many problems arose due to the readily available labour force in the main cities. Working conditions were poor, with low wages, irregular and insecure employment, 12-hour days and, by 1914, an average of 60 working hours per week. There were inadequate rest breaks and unsafe equipment, women and children working underground, and the threat of arbitrary fines from factory managers for random 'crimes' like singing or uncleanliness. Additionally, insufficient housing and low wages meant that families were forced to live in severely overcrowded conditions. A 1904 survey revealed an average of 16 people per apartment with six people per room. The development of a permanent and skilled industrial labour force was hampered by workers returning to their peasant villages every summer to help with **harvest** and haymaking.

harvest the collection of mature grain for eating, storage or market



Source 4.4 An overcrowded workers' flat in St Petersburg

Political problems – While modernisation was beneficial, it did introduce some direct problems for Tsar Nicholas II and challenges to his tsarist regime. First, with millions of workers moving from the countryside, there was an inevitable increase in discontent. This created a new volatile environment in which mass action became possible. Second, Witte favoured the spread of technical education. A more educated workforce meant that people were more willing and able to challenge the government. Third, industrialisation created a growing middle class such as factory and company owners. In many countries it was the emerging middle class that created pressure for political change, and a desire for accountable and representative government. This tension between the benefits and negatives of modernisation were addressed by historian Rogger in the following extract.

Witte hoped and believed that industrialization would transform Russian society, but to become industrialized Russia had first to be transformed. At the least both processes had to move at comparable speeds, but this demanded that the country, its people and indeed the world hold still, so to speak, for an unknown length of time while industry performed its work of transformation. Tranquility at home and peace abroad were essential, and the former especially would be difficult to maintain in the midst of the strains to which the country was being subjected. Even if there had been a greater supply of political intelligence or flexibility on the part of Russia's rulers, industrialization was bound to threaten political stability, and instability to endanger Witte's policies.

H Rogger, *Russia in the Age of Modernisation and Revolution 1881–1917* (1983), p. 108

Focus questions

- 1 What are the two tensions that Rogger has outlined in the first sentence?
- 2 What are the requirements that Rogger outlines as being essential for transformation to occur?
- 3 If transformation did not occur, what then were the threats, or dangers, of industrialisation?

FLASHPOINT!

Bloody Sunday march and massacre

Background – The famine and recession of the 1890s, and the subsequent rapid migration to the cities, resulted in significant shortages of food and housing. (These problems, as the result of Sergei Witte's reforms, are explained in more detail at the end of Chapter 1.) Both crises were compounded by the economic impact of the losses in the war against Japan in 1904. Economic distress drove workers to action. The sacking of five men from the **Putilov Steel Works** in St Petersburg resulted in virtually the entire workforce of the factory going on strike. Massive strikes in sympathy followed throughout the city, growing up to 150 000 workers in 382 factories by Friday 7 January 1905. By 8 January, the city had no electricity and no newspapers, and all public areas were declared closed.

Putilov Steel Works one of the largest factories in St Petersburg, employing over 8000 men

Petition and march – On a freezing Sunday morning on 9 January, the largest strike in Russia's history occurred. The historian Christian estimates the numbers of protesters at 111 000 men, women and children who started in different

Source 4.5 The peaceful march just before the Bloody Sunday Massacre



Winter Palace the Tsar's main palace in the heart of St Petersburg

Neva River the majestic river that flowed through St Petersburg directly behind the Tsar's Winter Palace

Gapon Father Gapon was an active revolutionary who led the peaceful march to petition the Tsar for political representation and better working conditions

sections of the city with the intention of marching to the Tsar's **Winter Palace** on the **Neva River**. The initial Putilov strikes and Sunday march were organised by Father **Gapon**, a priest from the Orthodox Church and head of the radical Assembly of Russian Factory and Mill Workers.

He described the demoralising condition of the industrial workers in 1905: 'The grey faces seemed dead, or relieved only by eyes blazing with the rage of desperate revolt ... Badly clad and underfed, waiting in the terrible frosty mornings of the St Petersburg winter, they present a sight that makes one shudder' (Hoysted 2001).

The marchers carried crosses and religious icons, sang the Tsar's hymn called 'God Save Thy People', and carried portraits of the Tsar and Tsarina. The ultimate aim of the march was to present a petition signed by 135 000 workers outlining their grievances and reverently requesting significant reforms. The idea of a petition was strongly supported by the workers as a respectful and traditional method of bringing problems to the attention of the Tsar.

Some groups joined together and reached the square outside the Winter Palace where reports vary dramatically as to what actually occurred.

In his autobiography, titled *The Story of My Life*, Father Gapon recorded that upon entering the square they were confronted with a line of the Tsar's troops and a company of mounted Cossacks: 'Suddenly the company of Cossacks galloped rapidly towards us with drawn swords ... I saw the swords lifted and falling, the men, women and children dropping to the earth like logs of wood, while moans, curses and shouts filled the air.'

Gorky Maxim Gorky was a famous revolutionary whose writings inspired and mentored many aspiring revolutionaries

Maxim **Gorky**, an influential socialist, witnessed the brutal death of a fellow worker: 'The Cossack circled round him and, shrieking like a woman, waved his

sabre in the air ... swooping down from his dancing horse ... he slashed him across the face, cutting him from the eyes to the chin.'

In comparison, the Tsar's *Okhrana* security police wrote defensively in their official report of the incident: 'Despite pleas by local police and cavalry charges, the crowd did not disperse but continued to advance ... as this had no effect a number of volleys were fired into the crowd.'



Source 4.6 An artist's representation of Father Gapon leading the crowd on Bloody Sunday

ANALYSIS ACTIVITY 4.2: DOCUMENT ANALYSIS

Workers' petition to Tsar Nicholas II

We working men of St Petersburg, our wives and children, and our parents, helpless, aged men and women, have come to you, O Tsar, in quest of justice and protection. We have been beggared, depressed, overburdened with excessive toil; we are humiliated. We are not recognised as normal human beings, but are dealt with as slaves who have to bear their bitter lot in silence. Patiently we endured this; but now ... O Tsar, we have no strength left.

We are ... [denied] a single human right, even that of speaking, thinking and meeting to talk over our needs, and of taking measures to better our condition. Any one of us who should dare lift his voice in defence of the working class is thrown into prison or banished ...

Sire, refuse not to help your people ... Give them a chance of accomplishing their destiny. Deliver them from the intolerable oppression of the bureaucracy. Demolish the wall between yourself and the people, and let them govern the country in conjunction with yourself ... Consider our demands attentively and without anger. They have been uttered not for evil, but for good; for our good, Sire, and yours ...

Give orders without delay to representatives of all classes in the land to meet together. Let capitalist and workmen be present; let officials, priests, physicians and teachers all come together and choose their own delegates. Let all be free to elect whom they will, and for this purpose let the elections to the Constituent Assembly be organised on the principle of universal suffrage voting. This is our principal request, on which everything else depends ...

Give orders and swear that they shall be fulfilled, and you will make Russia happy and glorious, and will impress your name on our hearts and on the hearts of our children, and our children's children for all time. But if you withhold the word, if you are not responsive to our petition, we will die here on this square before your palace ... For us there are but two roads, one leading to liberty and happiness, the other to the tomb. Point, Sire, to either of them; we will take it, even though it lead to death.

Signed by George Gapon and 135 000 workers.

Gapon, *The Story of My Life*, pp. 257–61

- 1 Describe the tone of this petition. What does this reveal to us about the workers' attitude towards the Tsar?
- 2 What was the workers' 'quest' or ultimate hope in presenting the petition to the Tsar?
- 3 How do the workers describe their situation?
- 4 What is the workers' 'principal request'?
- 5 The petition concludes with the powerful image of two roads. Explain the workers' two options.
- 6 Many primary sources included in history texts have been edited in some way by the author. The purpose of this is often to reduce the length and complexity of the document. If words have been left out, then ellipses or three dots (...) are added to indicate this. What problems might such alterations create?

Nine days later the government published an official account of the march in the journal *Pravo*, which means 'Justice', claiming that the petition contained 'rude demands of a political nature'. While the *Okhrana* report admitted that final deaths were unknown due to the crowd carrying off the victims, this later government report declared that 96 had died and 333 were wounded. Modern historians estimate that 200 were killed and 800 wounded. The devastating social impact of the massacre, however, was not contested and it immediately became known as 'Bloody Sunday'. The fundamental crisis was that the Tsar did not consider the requests in the workers' petition 'attentively and without anger', but instead responded with violence.

A MATTER OF FACT

After Bloody Sunday, Father Gapon escaped to nearby Finland. While in hiding, he wrote a bitter public letter criticising the Tsar's bloody response to the peaceful demonstration. One year later his body was found hanging in an abandoned cottage.

The cartoon reproduced in Source 4.7 vividly shows how Bloody Sunday changed the popular perception of Nicholas from a benevolent, trustworthy 'Little Father' to the hated 'Nicholas the Bloody'. It was originally produced in an English magazine, *Punch*. The Tsar is surrounded by symbols of privileged royalty – his jewelled crown, sceptre, mink robes, expensive heavy curtains, bear-skin floor rug and the image of the traditional Romanov double-headed eagle hanging behind him. Yet it is an image of destructive power rather than kind provision. The Tsar's attitude to his people is one of death, represented by his skeleton body. The face of the industrial worker reveals his unexpected and horrifying death just as he had got to the steps of the throne and was within reach of God's appointed representative. Instead of being armed and dangerous, he clutches a petition whose large size shows it to be of crucial importance. The mystical union tying the Tsar to his people was forever severed.

Described in modern terminology, the march to the Winter Palace was one of civil rights petitioners appealing to the supreme power for greater social and economic freedoms. Some historians

propose that the cause of the march was a rise in national consciousness due to the twin factors of urbanisation and the spread of literacy. Yet this proves a difficult argument to support given that Russian consciousness was an extremely diverse phenomenon. First, there was a chasm in material conditions; and second, the spread and acceptance of socialist theories were limited and disjointed, certainly not hypnotising the majority of the population and forging them into a united force.



Source 4.7 'The Czar of all the Russias' (*Punch*, 1 February 1905); Redmond Barry Collection, State Library of Victoria



Source 4.8 The Palace Square outside the Winter Palace

4.3 What were the key crises of 1905?

The march on the Winter Palace in January was only the first of many protests against the economic and political problems in Russia. The most significant protests were the general strikes in October 1905 because that was the final act that forced the Tsar to promise much-needed reforms.



Source 4.9 Protesting workers overturn a train in the city of Tiflis

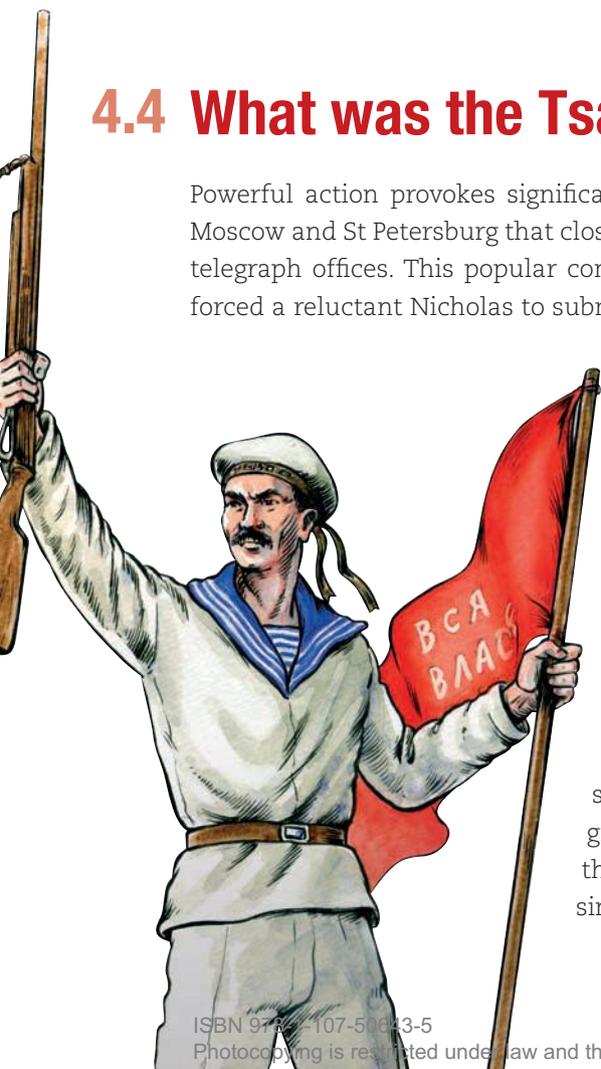


Month	Event	Significance
January	Bloody Sunday – a peaceful march to present a petition to Nicholas was crushed by mounted Cossacks.	Began the breakdown of trust between the Tsar and his people.
May	Battle of Tsushima – after six months of travel, the Russian navy was demolished in 24 hours.	Japan sealed the military defeat of Russia in the Russo-Japanese War of 1904–05.
July	Mutiny of the battleship <i>Potemkin</i> by navy crew in the Black Sea.	Nicholas was losing support of some armed forces. He was able to restore order given the random nature and location of armed opposition.
September	On return from fighting the Japanese in the east, army troops mutiny and control a section of the Trans-Siberian Railway.	Opposition to tsarism often too disorganised and violent.
May to October	Establishment of Union by Miliukov in May, All-Russian Union of Peasants in June and St Petersburg Soviet by Trotsky in October.	Factory workers and peasants were now formally represented so their grievances could be heard.
October	General strikes – the widespread nature of these strikes halted the economy.	Despite the spontaneous nature of the strikes, still without coordinated central leadership, Tsar Nicholas II was forced to act.

4.4 What was the Tsar's response?

Powerful action provokes significant reaction. The economy was paralysed by general strikes in Moscow and St Petersburg that closed banks, printing shops, bakeries, railway stations, and post and telegraph offices. This popular control over finance, transport, communication and food supplies forced a reluctant Nicholas to submit to popular demand for political reform. Underpinning all the

revolutionary action against the Tsar during 1905 was the desire to have an elected parliament to represent the Russian people, which was called a Duma. Sergei Witte was a key player in 1905. First, the Tsar called upon him to negotiate the peace settlement with Japan. Second, Witte held the position as chairman of the Council of Ministers, which was the equivalent of Prime Minister. Witte radically argued for the creation of an elected parliament, the formation of a constitutional monarchy and the establishment of a Bill of Rights. Hence, Tsar Nicholas II called on Witte, with Alexei Obolensky the Minister of Education, to implement his reforms and draft the actual wording of the *October Manifesto*. Tsar Nicholas II reluctantly signed the manifesto, published on 17 October 1905, which granted the establishment of a Duma. Nicholas was motivated by the urgent need to save his regime from collapse rather than by a sincere desire to reform the political practices of the nation.



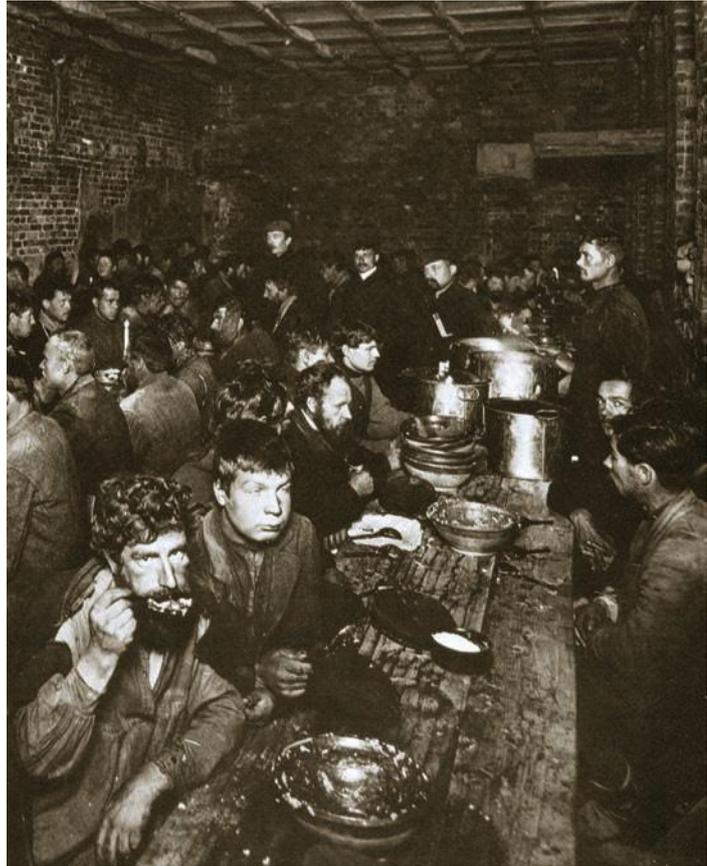
The aim of this section is to give a voice to the voiceless, those whose story history rarely recorded. Here is a fictional story of an urban worker written from the imagination of the author.

My name is Mikhail. I work in a textile factory in St Petersburg. The conditions are awful – up to 12 hours' work per day, low wages and general unfairness. I've had friends sacked for minor mistakes like singing and uncleanliness. The bosses sack people often, but it's no worry for them because there are so many desperate men looking for jobs.

My apartment is overcrowded. In fact, all of St Petersburg is overcrowded. I heard one man say that the population of St Petersburg had doubled since Witte's reforms. Sixteen people live in the same apartment as my family. There are six in my family and we all share the same room.

A confident-looking man came to our factory, asking us to sign a petition. It had been written by a radical priest called Father Gapon. The petition asked for representation. Better conditions for the workers; for us to be treated as valuable people. The man said that there was going to be massive march next Sunday to present the petition to the Tsar. Most of us decided to join. Last week men were sacked from the large Putilov Steel Works for no apparent reason. I could be the next one to lose my wages.

The morning of the march was freezing, ice and snow underfoot. I was amazed at the number of workers on the streets. Apparently they were the largest strikes in Russia's history, with 111 000 of us marching to the Tsar's Winter Palace in the centre of the city. Crowds of men walked slowly in rags with grey faces and eyes determined for improvements. I got there early and was in the front group of workers. I was handed a cross to carry – the traditional cross of the Orthodox Church with the three bars representing God the father, son and Holy Spirit. I joined in singing the Tsar's hymn 'God Save Thy People'.



Source 4.10

... I wasn't sure how it started. I was waiting in the motionless crowd of men, women and children in the square outside the Winter Palace. I heard the horses' hooves on the snow-covered cobblestones. Then I heard the shrieks and cries of pain as workers were cut down by a company of mounted Cossacks. I saw the unfeeling eyes of the Cossack as he slashed his sword. I fell to the ground with a vicious wound on my arm.

As I lay there with my hand clamped over the throbbing wound on my arm, I realised the truth about the Tsar. He simply did not care. I had been abandoned by Nicholas the Bloody. Any respect or trust for the Tsar was gone ...

Textile factory worker in 1905



ANALYSIS ACTIVITY 4.3: DOCUMENT ANALYSIS

The Tsar's *October Manifesto* document

By the grace of God, We Nicholas II, Emperor and Autocrat of all Russia, Tsar of Poland, Grand Duke of Finland etc.

*Make known to all Our loyal subjects: Rioting and disturbances in the capitals 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 national well-being; and the national sorrow is His sorrow. The disturbances which have appeared may cause a grave national tension in Our state.*

sovereign supreme ruler

By the great vow of the Tsarist service We are obligated to use every resource of wisdom and Our authority to bring a speedy end to an unrest dangerous to Our state ... We impose upon the government the duty to execute Our inflexible will:

- 1 *To grant the population the inviolable foundation of civic freedom based on the principles of genuine personal inviolability; freedom of conscience, speech, assemblies and associations.*
- 2 *Without postponing the scheduled election to the State Duma, to admit in the participation of the Duma insofar as possible in the short time that remains before its scheduled meeting, all those classes of the population which presently are completely deprived of voting rights, and to leave further development of general elective law to the future legislative order.*
- 3 *To establish as an unbreakable rule that no law shall become effective without the confirmation by the State Duma, and that the elected representatives of the people shall be guaranteed an opportunity of real participation in the supervision of the legality of the acts by authorities whom We shall appoint.*

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

Given in Peterhof, October 30, the year of Our Lord 1905, and eleventh of Our reign. [Nicholas]

Dmytryshyn (Ed.), *Imperial Russia: A Source Book 1700–1917*



Source 4.11 A painting of the surprised and delighted crowd reaction to the Tsar's *October Manifesto*, 17 October 1905, by Wanderers artist Ilya Repin

- 1 What was Nicholas trying to achieve by issuing the manifesto?
- 2 How did Nicholas describe his feelings about the disturbances of 1905?
- 3 What were the three key reforms issued? Select a phrase from each that best summarises that reform.
- 4 How would you expect the Russian people to have reacted to this manifesto?
- 5 The APPARTS model is a helpful model to analyse primary sources that was introduced in Chapter 3. Remember the APPARTS model as a way to analyse, or pull apart, a document or image. Copy and complete the table in your workbook for the *October Manifesto* primary source.

A	AUTHOR	Who created the source?
P	PLACE AND TIME	Where and when was this source created? Does the date make this a primary or secondary source?
P	PRIOR KNOWLEDGE	What do you already know that would further your understanding of this source? For example, you may already know something about the author, or the place it was produced, or what was happening in Russia at the same time, or about the event or topic on which the source is focusing.
A	AUDIENCE	Who was the intended audience of this source? Who was it made for?
R	REASON	Why was this source produced at the time it was produced?
T	THE MAIN IDEA	What is the key argument, perspective or point of view shown in this source?
S	SIGNIFICANCE	Why is this source important? How does this source help you to better understand the key issues or events occurring in Russia at the time?

4.5 What were the reactions to the *October Manifesto*?

Reaction 1: Tsar – Nicholas was reluctant about the manifesto written by Witte due to his total belief in the value of autocracy. Nicholas's reflections on his options of how to deal with the general strikes and why he issued the manifesto were tenderly revealed in one of his long, regular letters to his 'dearest Mama' on 2 November 1905:

There were only two ways open: to find an energetic soldier and crush the rebellion by sheer force. There would be time to breathe but then, as likely as not, one would have to use force again in a few months and that would mean rivers of blood, and in the end we should be where we had started ... and no possibility of progress achieved. The other way out would be to give the people their civil rights, freedom of speech and press, also to have all laws confirmed by a State Duma – that, of course, would be a constitution.

Witte defends this very energetically. He says that while it is not without risk, it's the only way out at present ... He and Alexei drew up the Manifesto. We discussed it for two days, and in the end, invoking God's help, I signed. My dear Mama, you can't imagine what I went through before that moment; in my telegram I could not explain all the circumstances which brought me to this terrible decision, which I nevertheless took quite consciously. From all over Russia they cried for it, they begged for it, and around me many – very many – held the same views.

Bing (Ed.), *The Letters of Tsar Nicholas and Empress Maria*, pp. 185–9

Focus questions

- 1 What did Nicholas consider were his two main options?
- 2 Why did he claim that he chose the second?



Reaction 2: Marxist opponents of tsarism – The official history records of the Communist Party were called the *History of the CPSU (b.) short-course*. About 1905 it claimed boldly: ‘The revolution disclosed that tsardom was the sworn enemy of the people, that tsardom was like the proverbial hunchback whom only the grave could cure.’

Trotsky was instrumental in establishing the St Petersburg **Soviet**, which was an elected council of workers. The executive committee was composed of 22 workers and three representatives from each of the Bolsheviks, Mensheviks and Socialist Revolutionaries. But Trotsky was extremely critical of the Tsar’s manifesto and voiced the following objections as Vice Chairman of the St Petersburg Soviet:

soviet a local revolutionary group formed to listen to ordinary people’s debates



Source 4.12 Leon Trotsky

So a Constitution is granted. Freedom of assembly is granted; but the assemblies are surrounded by the military. Freedom of speech is granted, but censorship exists exactly as before. Freedom of knowledge is granted, but the universities are occupied by troops ... A constitution is given, but the autocracy remains. Everything is given and nothing is given.

Trotsky, 1905, p. 123



Source 4.13 The lion, the bear and the rabbit, 1905

Lenin quickly returned to Russia from exile and urged the workers to continue the struggle rather than break the strikes and peacefully return to work. Trotsky advocated that all workers withdraw their money from the banks in order to make the state bankrupt. Witte, now declared as Russia’s first Prime Minister, arrested the entire St Petersburg Soviet and jailed half, and put Trotsky on trial with the resulting sentence being life exile to Siberia. The armed uprising in Moscow and the peasant revolts were brutally crushed.

Reaction 3: Liberal opponents of tsarism – A significant split occurred within the revolutionary coalition, which was then formed by the Octobrists and Kadets. Representatives from the Octobrist liberal reforming party publicly welcomed the reforms, declaring that they signalled an end

to the political and social conflicts that had developed within the country. The Kadets complained that the reforms did not go far enough and continued to campaign against the government.

The satirical cartoon by Chemodanov, reproduced in Source 4.13, mocks the weak impact of the Russian liberals in 1905. Chemodanov drew the liberal 'bourgeoisie' parties as a tame rabbit pathetically trying to attack a fierce lion, which represented the Marxist-motivated industrial strikers. The lion's courage and strength was illustrated through the clawing of the bear's back and the showing of its teeth after killing the bear, which symbolised the tsarist regime. The royal crown has rolled off and is upside down in the grass. The cartoon contends that the traditional power structure in Russia has been overturned due solely to the power of the proletariat.

ANALYSIS ACTIVITY 4.4: COMPARING VISUAL REPRESENTATIONS

The images on this and the next page were produced separately and provide very different perspectives of the role and impact of the revolutionaries during the 1905 Revolution. Source 4.14 portrays the 1905 revolutionaries as a bloody skeleton crashing through streets, destroying both people and buildings.



Source 4.14 Death stalks the barricades



Source 4.15, a painting by Boris Kustodiev, portrays the 1905 revolutionaries as a heroic giant leading the proletariat through the streets.



Source 4.15
The Bolshevik

- 1 How are the actual revolutionaries drawn in each of these two images? What is the symbolic meaning of the body language of each caricature?
- 2 Describe what is included in the rest of the image. What is the impact of each on their immediate environment?
- 3 In your opinion, which image more accurately reflects the true events of 1905? Explain your reasoning.
- 4 Design and produce your own visual representation of the events of 1905.

The story so far

- Deep internal tensions and crises had developed by the end of 1904 due to economic and social problems. Social discontent was significantly heightened in the overcrowded cities as a result of the rapid industrialisation of Sergei Witte, Minister for Finance from 1893 to 1903.
- The situation was compounded by the external crisis of military defeats in the Russo-Japanese war.
- Opposition to tsarism erupted onto the streets of the major cities after the Bloody Sunday Massacre in St Petersburg in January 1905, signifying that a permanent loss of faith was developing between the Tsar and his people.
- Strikes, mutinies and violence were common throughout 1905, but due to their random and isolated nature they were able to be suppressed by troops loyal to the Tsar.
- The mass general strikes forced the Tsar to grant major reforms towards an elected political Duma and civic freedoms in his *October Manifesto*.

CHAPTER REVIEW

DEVELOPING CLEAR DEFINITIONS

Write explanations defining each of the following.

Key events	Key publications	Key concepts
Bloody Sunday	Bloody Sunday petition	Civil freedom
General strikes in October	<i>October Manifesto</i>	Dumas

PRACTISING PARAGRAPH ANSWERS

- 1 What were the key crises of 1905?
- 2 Outline how successfully the Tsar responded to the crises of 1905.
- 3 What were the reactions to the *October Manifesto*?
- 4 Why did the 1905 Revolution fail?

PRACTICE ESSAY QUESTIONS

- 1 'The *October Manifesto* revealed that Nicholas was both willing and able to respond to reform. The people's grievances were satisfied.' Provide evidence for your own evaluation of the reforms in October, Nicholas's leadership and how the reforms were received.
- 2 'The 1905 Revolution failed because of the weakness of the revolutionary movement rather than from the strength of the Tsar.' To what extent do you agree with this statement?
- 3 Marc Bloch stated: 'A document is a witness, and like most witnesses it rarely speaks until one begins to question it.' Discuss this in relation to primary documents included so far.



READING MORE DEEPLY

Easy

Ackerman, P & DuVall, J 2000, *A Force More Powerful: A Century of Nonviolent Conflict*, Palgrave. Chapter 1, 'Russia, 1905: The People Strike', pp. 16–30, 55–9.

Moderate

Salisbury, H 1977, *Black Night, White Snow*, Doubleday. Chapter XVII, 'The Dress Rehearsal', pp. 150–9.

Challenging

Deutscher, I 1954, *The Prophet Armed: Trotsky 1879–1921*, Oxford University Press. Chapter V, 'Trotsky in 1905', pp. 117–44.

This is a biographical piece that, by providing a lot of details, saves precious research time. Beware that its obvious viewpoint, even demonstrated in the title, is favourable to and admiring of the character and leadership of Trotsky.

5



Stabilising tsarism

“ Although with a few broken ribs, tsarism came out of the experience of 1905 alive and strong enough.

– TROTSKY

”

OVERVIEW

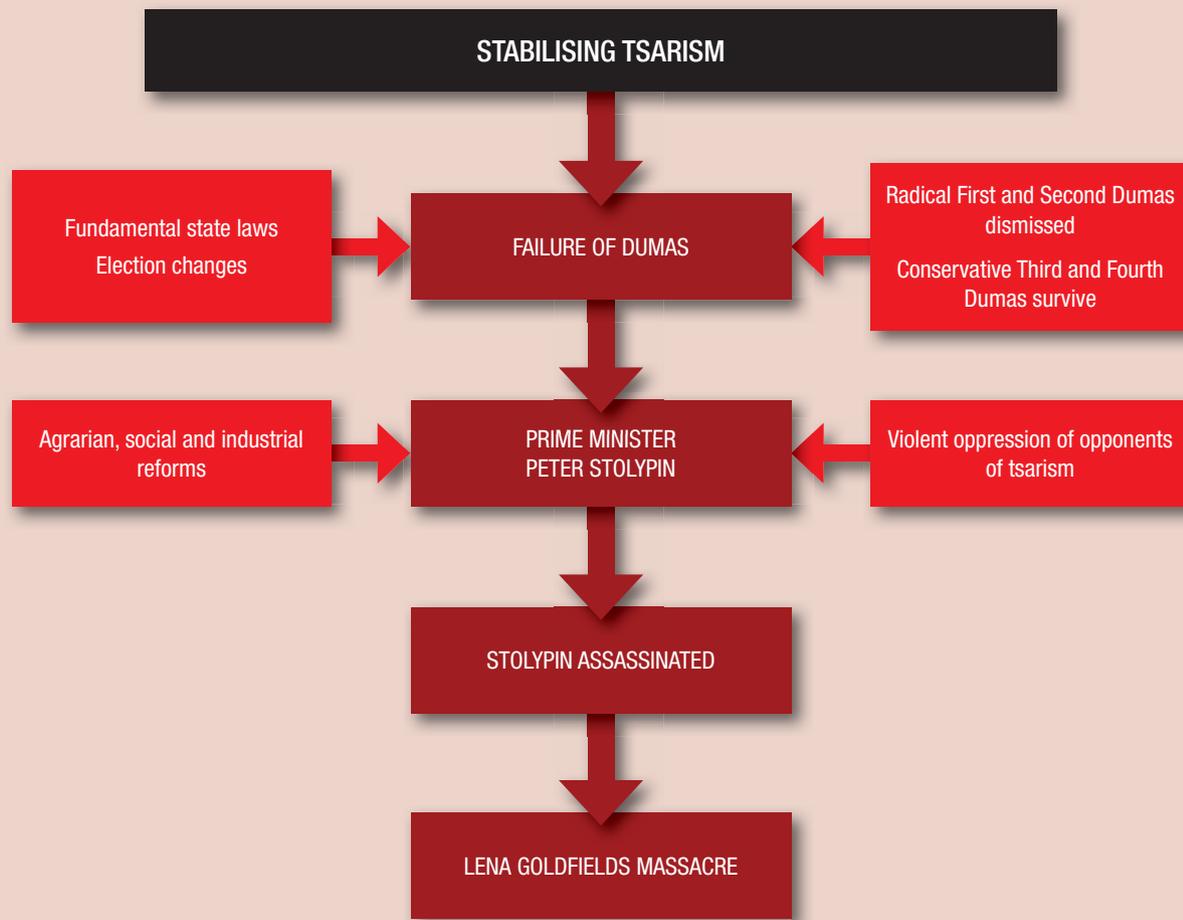
This chapter explores the key strategies employed by the Tsar and his new Prime Minister, Peter Stolypin, to stabilise tsarism. The formula that evolved was cunningly simple. First, Nicholas asserted his autocratic powers through his Fundamental State Laws. Second, he consolidated his personal power by dismissing the radical First and Second Dumas and changing the electoral laws so that a majority of his conservative supporters were elected. Third, Stolypin initiated significant agrarian reforms aimed at solving the land crisis. Fourth, any remaining discontent or opposition was dealt with severely and swiftly.

KEY ISSUES

- Why didn't the Dumas fulfil the nation's expectations?
- How did Stolypin attempt to restore tsarism?
- What was the impact on opponents of tsarism?
- Flashpoint! Stolypin's assassination
- What was the impact of the Lena Goldfields massacre?
- How stable was Russia by 1913?



FLOW OF CHAPTER



5.1 Why didn't the Dumas fulfil the nation's expectations?

As for the Tsar's manifesto, look, it's only a scrap of paper. Here it is before you – here it is crumpled in my fist. Today they have issued it, tomorrow they will take it away and tear it into pieces!

Trotsky's prediction to workers and students, Moscow, 1905

The Tsar acts 1: Issues his Fundamental State Laws

Four days before the opening of the First Duma on 27 April 1906, Nicholas published the Fundamental State Laws. This was an official statement that reasserted the Tsar's autocracy, as had been done in times of conflict by Peter the Great in 1716 and again by Nicholas I in 1832. Articles 4 and 9 stated, respectively, that 'Supreme Autocratic power belongs to the Emperor' and that 'no law can come into force without his consent'. Importantly, these laws removed the sharing of power offered in the *October Manifesto*. Nothing was going to impinge on Nicholas's authority, certainly not a Duma elected by the politically ignorant populace.

The Tsar acts 2: Dismisses the First and Second Dumas

Duma	Dates	Issues
First Duma	April to July 1906	Both were dominated by radical deputies whose demands were considered too extreme. Both were dismissed within months of opening.
Second Duma	February to June 1907	

Left-wing political parties dominated the elections for the first Duma. The radical demands of the elected deputies in the First and Second Dumas were:

- drafting of a constitution to limit the powers of the Tsar
- major land reform by transferring state, church and private land to the peasants
- universal and free education
- greater equality of all citizens before the law
- more equitable distribution of the tax burden.

First Duma – In response to these overwhelming reforms, on 13 May 1906 the conservative government ministers replied that these demands were 'completely unacceptable'. The Duma did not have the right to consider these proposals because they 'imply a huge change in the Fundamental Laws'. In reply, the radical deputies argued that 'by its refusal to fulfil the people's demands, the government is displaying obvious contempt for the true interests of the people'. The subsequent outbreak of violence and assassinations resulted in the Tsar dismissing the First Duma and calling for new elections.



Second Duma – With an increased number of Mensheviks and National Minority groups, the same radical demands were pressed upon the unreceptive government. The Tsar described the deputies as trying to undermine his government and creating an ‘obstacle to fruitful work’. In desperation, evidence was forged suggesting a plot to kill the Tsar by some of the radical deputies, which ‘forced’ Nicholas to again close the Duma.

The Tsar acts 3: Changes the electoral laws

In order to decrease the representation of radical deputies in the Dumas, the electoral laws were illegally changed by the Tsar in 1907. The new ‘college’ system was deliberately complex and aimed to reducing the number of deputies representing the workers, peasants and national minority groups while significantly increasing the numbers from the conservative upper classes and landed gentry. Voting power was unequal; to elect one deputy it now took 230



Source 5.1 Tsar Nicholas II

landowners’ votes, 60000 peasant votes or 125000 industrial worker votes. Within a mere 20 months after the crisis of October 1905, the Tsar had regained control over his nation.

The Tsar acts 4: Minimises the influence of Third and Fourth Dumas

The Third and Fourth Dumas were totally unrepresentative of the Russian people due to their conservative majority, which increased discontent within the radical parties. Historian George Fischer wrote in *Russian Liberalism* that the primary political problem of the radical deputies stemmed from the ‘dilemma of attaining complex, specifically Western objectives in an illiberal, under-developed society’.

Duma	Dates	Issues
Third Duma	1907–12	Both completed full five-year terms
Fourth Duma	1912–17	Dominated by conservative deputies

However, to regard these final two Dumas as purposeless is to miss the point. Radical deputies like Alexander Kerensky were able to gain invaluable experience being exposed to the inner workings of the government and political system. The Dumas also heightened the political consciousness of the population as they received greater exposure to national issues.

ANALYSIS ACTIVITY 5.1: HISTORICAL INTERPRETATIONS

The year of revolution had shown the astonishing resilience of the regime. It could yield ground on every front, face the bitter opposition of almost all the articulate strata of society, endure a crippling general strike, see outbursts of mutiny in the army and navy, lose a disastrous war in the Far East, be discredited internationally – and still survive. And not only survive; it could also go over to the offensive.

Kochan and Abraham, *The Making of Modern Russia* (1983), p. 265

- 1 What is Kochan and Abraham's opinion of tsarism?

5.2 How did Stolypin attempt to restore tsarism?

Sergei Witte was made Russia's first Chairman of the Council of Ministers in November 1905, which was the equivalent of the role of Prime Minister. Nicholas reasoned that this would enable Witte to oversee the implementation of his reforms as included in the *October Manifesto*. But the election of radical deputies to the First Duma, combined with the continual disturbances in St Petersburg and Moscow, forced him to resign in May 1906. He never again held a high position in the government and died at the outbreak of the First World War. Witte was temporarily replaced by Goremykin for a few months, then in July 1906 by Peter Stolypin, who was a traditional statesman for tsarism but also a political realist. Stolypin's primary motivation driving his reforms was to strengthen the position of



of the Tsar: 'As the revolution is so strong ... I must carry through effective measures of reform, and at the same time I must face revolution, resist it, and stop it.'

The most crucial issue facing the government was solving the problem of land. Stolypin initiated the reforms listed below with the overall aim of increasing the size of peasants' landholdings without alienating the landlords. It was a political attempt to create a wealthy class of land-owning peasants whose growing independence would stimulate the agrarian economy.

Source 5.2 Prime Minister Peter Stolypin



Stolypin's reforms	Results
<p>Land reforms</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> All royal and government land was made available to the Peasants Land Bank to be purchased by enterprising peasants. Land was to be sold at a price consistent with its value and the buying power of the farmer. A large-scale system of credit was initiated so that peasants had the money to buy more land and equipment, and improve their cultivation techniques. Peasants were permitted to leave the previously compulsory village commune, or <i>mir</i>, in order to combine their separate strips of land. 	<p>Stolypin's reforms were welcomed. By 1913, almost two million peasant families had left village communes to farm independently, while another three million accepted government offers of land and financial aid if they relocated to Siberia. Most, however, preferred the security of the <i>mir</i>.</p>
<p>Social reforms</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> Aid was offered to insure peasants from potential sickness, mutilation, disablement or old age. Proportional taxation was introduced that exempted the majority of landless peasants from facing the burden of new taxes. Religious tolerance and freedom of conscience were granted. Compulsory primary education was introduced. 	<p>The number of primary schools doubled between 1906 and 1912, as did the local council's expenditure on health, poor relief and agriculture advice.</p>
<p>Industrial reforms</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> Night and underground labour was banned for children, teenagers and women. The maximum working day was shortened for adult workers. 	<p>The reforms began to slowly meet the demands of the workers' petition from the Bloody Sunday march in 1905.</p>

kulaks the derogatory name given by Lenin's government to peasants who were deemed to be selfishly hoarding grain for their own benefit rather than that of the nation

A MATTER OF FACT

Stolypin's economic solution was to create a wealthy peasant class. But a decade later, Lenin's economic solution was to kill these wealthy peasants, who were given the name kulaks.

5.3 What was the impact on opponents of tsarism?

As tsarism regained in strength, opposition to tsarism weakened. After the *October Manifesto*, the opponents of Nicholas's regime were crushed and their leaders demoralised. Lenin had been forced to return to Finland, Trotsky was serving a life sentence in Siberia, and Stalin was desperately robbing bank wagons to gain funds for the struggling Bolsheviks.

To steady tsarism, Stolypin made it his business to increase *Okhrana* vigilance and to wipe out opponents of the regime in both the cities and the countryside. The hangman's noose was given the name 'Stolypin's Necktie' because so many revolutionaries were executed for terrorist activities.

Civilian executions for ‘terrorist activities’ after 1905

As a result of Stolypin’s reforms, many revolutionaries were tried in the field and summarily executed for terrorist activities.

Year	Number of executions
1905	19
1906	236
1907	627
1908	1330
1909	537
1910	129
1911	352
1912	123
1913	23

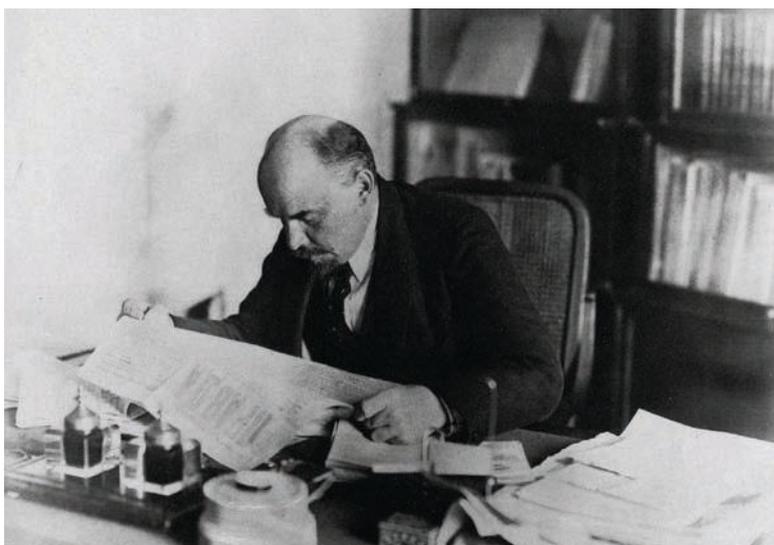
Source 5.3 Figures from a report by the Ministry of War Military Justice Department of Civilian Executions from 1905 to 1913. Note that this figure does not include the large number of deaths of military personnel for mutiny over these years, nor the thousands of political prisoners who were also captured at this time.



Source 5.4 Stolypin by Ilya Repin, 1910

5.4 Turning points

This period under Stolypin seemingly sounded the death knell for all revolutionary parties, ideologies and movements. Stolypin’s repression and the growing economy made revolutionary action less likely every year – until 1911. Two significant turning points occurred, neither thanks to Lenin. The first was the assassination of Stolypin in 1911. The second was the Lena Goldfields massacre in 1912. At the same time, two important aspects began in Lenin’s life. First, he began his influential newspaper *Pravda* in 1912, and second, he began an affair with a French revolutionary woman, Inessa Armand. These events reinvigorated Lenin’s revolutionary fortunes.



Source 5.5 Lenin reading a copy of *Pravda*, the newspaper he founded in 1912



Source 5.6 The two influential women in Lenin's life: (LEFT) Wife Nadezhda Krupskaya in her youth in the 1890s; (RIGHT) his mistress Inessa Armand in 1905

FLASHPOINT!

Stolypin's assassination

The royal family and imperial party attended a gala performance at the Kiev Opera House in the Ukraine in September 1911. During the interval, Stolypin was shot twice in the chest by a young man in a dinner suit who had calmly walked down the central aisle. The assassin was Mordka Bogrov, who cleverly combined being a revolutionary with acting as a police informer. The historian Massie explains that the most accepted theory was that Bogrov used his police connections to gain entry into the opera, claiming that he needed to protect Stolypin because there was a plot to assassinate him. Bogrov was therefore allowed to enter so that he himself could fulfil his revolutionary goal of removing the government oppressor. After being shot twice – in the arm and the chest – Stolypin said that he was proud to die for the Tsar and made the sign of the cross towards Nicholas. Stolypin died in hospital four days later. Bogrov was hanged within the week.

A MATTER OF FACT

Understandably, Stolypin's assassination was investigated. Mysteriously, Tsar Nicholas II himself ordered that the investigation stop immediately.

5.5 What was the impact of the Lena Goldfields massacre?

FLASHPOINT!

The Lena Goldfields massacre, 4 April 1912

The Lena region was named after the massive Lena River, which flows for 4800 kilometres through Siberia to the Arctic Ocean. In the early 1900s, wealthy Russian and British investors established a company called Lena River Mining to mine for gold in numerous villages along the river. Influential government minister Sergei Witte invested in the potentially lucrative project to promote Russian's modernisation. Several thousand workers were transported to Lena, including migrants, prospectors, land-hungry peasants and outlaws who were attracted by the prospect of work and wealth.

But the mines were not as profitable as promised. The owners therefore attempted to increase profits by cutting costs. Workers were forced to work 16-hour days, often in unsafe conditions. As a result, many workers suffered serious injuries and illness. It was reported that 70 per cent of the workers had suffered a serious injury. Salaries were also reduced by regular random fines, and prices for food supplies at the company's store were ridiculously high. All of these grievances over a long period of time erupted into a widespread spontaneous strike among the gold miners.

A strike committee was formed and a list of demands was presented to the company, including eight-hour working days, a 30 per cent increase in wages, a decrease in fines, and set prices on the food in the company shop. After the company openly rejected these demands, the strike intensified, further crippling production at the mines. To break the stalemate, the company owners asked the Russian government to send soldiers to stop the strike. When the troops arrived in early April, they immediately arrested 11 of the main leaders of the strike. This led to even more unrest and a crowd of around 2500 workers marched on company headquarters demanding their release. They were met by a thick line of waiting soldiers, under the command of Captain Treshchenkov, who were given orders to fire on the unarmed miners. The repression was brutal: 500 men lay dead or wounded, with at least 250 believed to have been killed.



Source 5.7 Lena River region in northeastern Siberia



A MATTER OF FACT

On 29 February 1912, the mining company's store sold rotting horse meat to the workers and told them that it was beef! But the scam was discovered. This was the final straw for the workers. Six thousand workers began striking in protest within days.

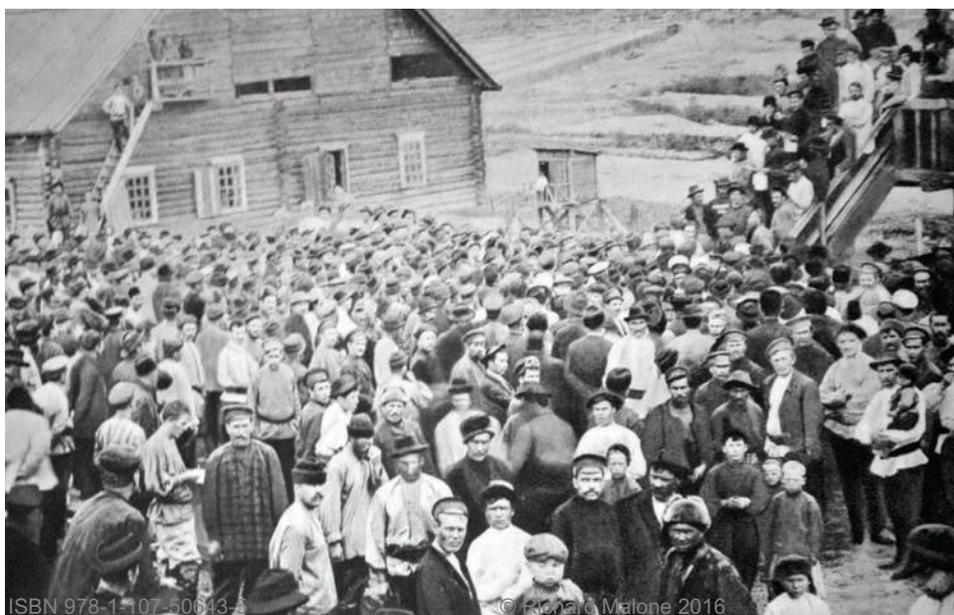
Reactions to the massacre

The government's Minister of the Interior defended the massacre in *The Russian Review*. He wrote: 'When an irrational crowd, under the influence of evil agitators, throws itself on the armed forces, the armed forces can do nothing else but shoot ... Thus it has always been, thus it will always be.' But the workers believed the exact opposite. There were many other options other than direct government violence. Many factories in industrial centres formed committees to write resolutions to formally condemn the massacre. One factory in St Petersburg ended its resolution with the words: 'We were so dazed and shocked that we could not at once find words to express our feelings. Whatever protest we made would be but a pale reflection of the anger that seethed in the hearts of all of us. Nothing can help us, neither tears nor protests, but an organized mass struggle.'

The Duma sent representatives to investigate the massacre, one of whom was Alexander Kerensky who was to become a crucial revolutionary leader during 1917. His official government report was that the working conditions at Lena were 'slums' that were 'incompatible with human dignity' and that the blame should fall of the company management. Captain Treshchenkov was demoted from an officer to a regular foot soldier.

A MATTER OF FACT

The famous luxury cruise ship 'Titanic' sank less than two weeks later on 15 April 1912. But the massacre at Lena commanded more public attention and debate in Russia than the 'Titanic'!



Source 5.8 Workers on strike at the Lena Goldfields

The massacre did not end the strike. In fact, the strike continued for another five months as the workers continued to reject the company's new offers. By August 1912, 80 per cent of the workers and their families had left the area for good, which meant that the gold mine was forced to close down. Today all that remains is a monument in the village of Aprisk commemorating the victims of the massacre.

Michael Melancon is one of the few Western historians to have extensively researched the massacre. His detailed 2006 book *The Lena Goldfields Massacre and the Crisis of the Late Tsarist State* focuses on the massacre from different perspectives, from the despair of the miners at the poor conditions they faced through to the rationale of the soldiers who fired on the miners.

Analysis of the Lena Goldfields massacre

- 1 The situation at Lena was a microcosm of the economic divide in Russia – the company's principal shareholders lived comfortable lifestyles, which compared sharply with the harsh living conditions of the mine workers.
- 2 The impact of the massacre was immediate and reignited revolutionary sentiment. Despite occurring in the remote and unpopulated regions of Siberia, it quickly gripped the Russian consciousness and was hotly debated in news reports, public discussions and in the Duma.
- 3 It was a critical turning point because it highlighted the government's willingness to resort to violence as it had done on Bloody Sunday in St Petersburg in 1905.
- 4 It signified the end of Stolypin's stage of peace and stability, and began a period that Soviet historians called 'the new revolutionary upsurge'. Joseph Stalin declared: 'The Lena shots broke the ice of silence, and the river of popular resentment is flowing again. The ice has broken. It has started!'
- 5 Opposition to the Tsarist regime was revived throughout the country. Economic and political strikes – which had dropped to a low of 47 000 participants in 1910 – again flourished. More than 1000 strikes took place in St Petersburg alone in May 1912, and 1 337 000 people went on strike in the first half of 1914.
- 6 The two factions of the Social Democratic Party were so encouraged by this regrowth in activity that they formally separated into the Bolshevik Party and Menshevik Party in 1912. Marxist revolutionaries' main hope was that Stolypin's land reforms would indeed create a bitter division between the poor and rich peasants.

Source 5.9 Bodies of the striking miners



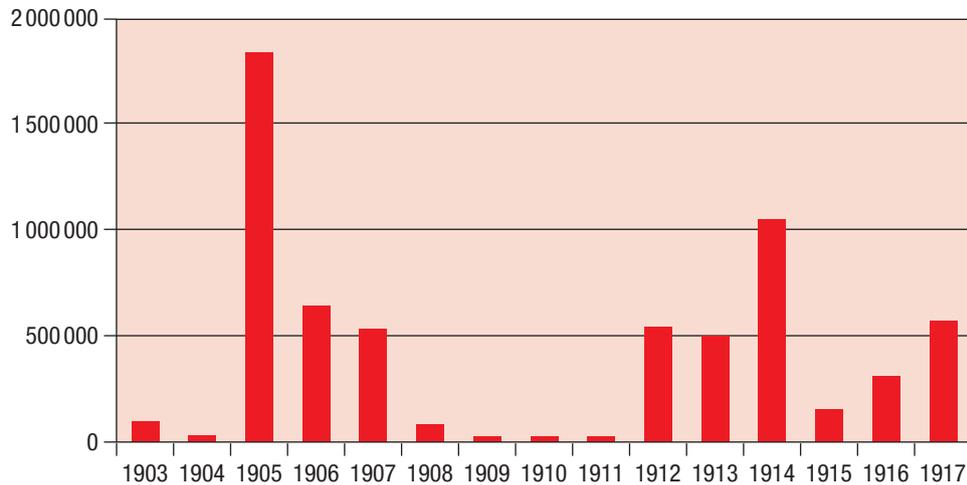


Political protests between 1903 and 1917

Trotsky was keen to prove the unhappiness of the Russian working class as proof that the people were demanding political change. He therefore published the numbers of people striking for political reasons between 1903 and 1917. These numbers came from official police records and were for political strikes only, not economic ones.

Focus questions

- 1 Which year had the greatest number of strikers? Why?
- 2 Why did 1909, 1910 and 1911 have the lowest number of political protests?
- 3 Why did the numbers of political strikes increase dramatically in 1912?



Source 5.10 Leon Trotsky, 1967, *The History of the Russian Revolution*, Sphere Books, London, p. 49

5.6 How stable was Russia by 1913?

Politically – Nicholas's position was certainly more stable in 1913 than in 1905. But it could not be regarded as secure. Despite the oppression of revolutionaries by Prime Minister Stolypin, political protests had significantly re-emerged due to the Lena Goldfields massacre. But, for the first time, the Russian Tsar officially ruled in conjunction with an elected Duma.

Economically – Russia made enormous and necessary economic progress between 1906 and 1913. The key achievements of this period include the following:

- National debt was reduced.
- Average annual growth rate was over 6 per cent, the highest in Europe.
- Amounts in savings accounts doubled.
- Exports doubled.
- Government expenditure and income both doubled.

Despite these increases, Russia was still behind powerful industrial nations such as France, Germany and Britain.

Socially – With the growing production figures there were embryonic groups of peasant landowners, a larger industrial workforce and wealthy commercial class.

The story so far

- The system of tsarism was at a crossroads after dangerous and damaging public opposition throughout 1905.
- Nicholas's reinforcement of his full autocratic powers through his Fundamental State Laws in 1906, and manipulation of the electoral laws in 1907, dashed the raised political expectations of the nation. The failure to create a constitutional monarchy or legitimately share the Tsar's absolute power with the people was criticised by the opponents of tsarism.
- The First and Second Dumas were dismissed for their determination to radically reform the power structure and land ownership. The Third and Fourth Dumas primarily comprised supporters of the Tsar, which resulted in greater conservatism and less influence.
- Stolypin initiated significant agrarian reforms aimed at solving the land crisis; any remaining opposition to tsarism was dealt with severely.
- While revolutionary leaders were struggling to exert any significant influence, popular opposition to tsarism re-emerged after Stolypin's assassination and the Lena Goldfields Massacre in the form of political strikes from 1912.

CHAPTER REVIEW

DEVELOPING CLEAR DEFINITIONS

Write explanations defining each of the following.

Key bodies	Key leaders	Key events
First and Second Dumas	Tsar Nicholas	Fundamental State Laws
Third and Fourth Dumas	Peter Stolypin	Change in electoral system
		Stolypin's assassination
		Lena Goldfields massacre



PRACTISING PARAGRAPH ANSWERS

- 1 Explain the Tsar's Fundamental State Laws and their impact.
- 2 Outline how Stolypin attempted to save tsarism through reforms.
- 3 Explain how Stolypin reinforced tsarism through his actions against opponents of the regime.

PRACTICE ESSAY QUESTIONS

- 1 'The failure of the Dumas revealed that Nicholas was totally unwilling to share his autocratic, God-given powers.' To what extent do you agree with this statement?
- 2 'In spite of Nicholas's reluctance, Witte and Stolypin were both tremendous reformers who initiated clever strategies that moved Russia forward.' To what extent do you agree with this statement?
- 3 'Neither the Tsar nor the Russian people were prepared for a popularly elected system of parliament. It was never going to work.' To what extent do you agree with this statement?

READING MORE DEEPLY

Easy

Darby, G 1998, *The Russian Revolution*, Longman. Chapter 3, 'Was the Tsarist regime stable or unstable in 1914?', pp. 53–65.

Moderate

Kochan, L & Abraham, R 1983, *The Making of Modern Russia*, Penguin. Chapter 13, 'From revolution to war', pp. 264–76.

Challenging

Lieven, D 1993, *Nicholas II: Emperor of all the Russias*, John Murray. Chapter 7, 'Constitutional monarch? 1907–1914', pp. 170–82.

This is a very readable biography of Nicholas. Lieven takes a political perspective, analysing Nicholas as an emperor and political head of government. He adopts a sympathetic perspective without denying that Nicholas was not suited to the role of autocrat. The small section in Chapter 7 describes Stolypin's reforms and relationship with Nicholas in great detail.

6



World at war

“ *In the event of defeat ... social revolution in its most extreme form is inevitable.*

– FORMER RUSSIAN MINISTER OF THE INTERIOR PYOTR DURNOVO IN 1914

”

93

OVERVIEW

The First World War lasted five years, from 1914 to 1918, and divided Europe for the first half of the twentieth century. Two background questions must be addressed briefly: Why did the First World War begin? And how did Russia become involved?

Germany, under the leadership of Nicholas's cousin Kaiser Wilhelm II, was seeking to expand its political role to match its industrial dominance. Germany, therefore, posed a direct challenge to Britain's world supremacy, as well as to other European powers. Austria wanted to restrict Serbia's expansion, which had been occurring since 1912. Russia had a vested interest in supporting Serbia in order to become the natural leader of the Slav people. This meant that Russia was threatened by Germany's and Austria's political and economic advances in the Balkans and Turkey. These tensions escalated through a growing arms race; increasing the sizes of armies into the millions and building dozens of battleships.

Igniting the existing tension was the assassination of Austrian Arch Duke Ferdinand by a Serbian student on 28 June 1914. Germany sent Russia an ultimatum demanding that it demobilise its troops within 12 hours. Upon Russia's refusal, Germany declared war on Russia on 1 August 1914. By mid-August, an international war for the control of Europe was being fought on western and eastern fronts on either side of an expanding German nation.

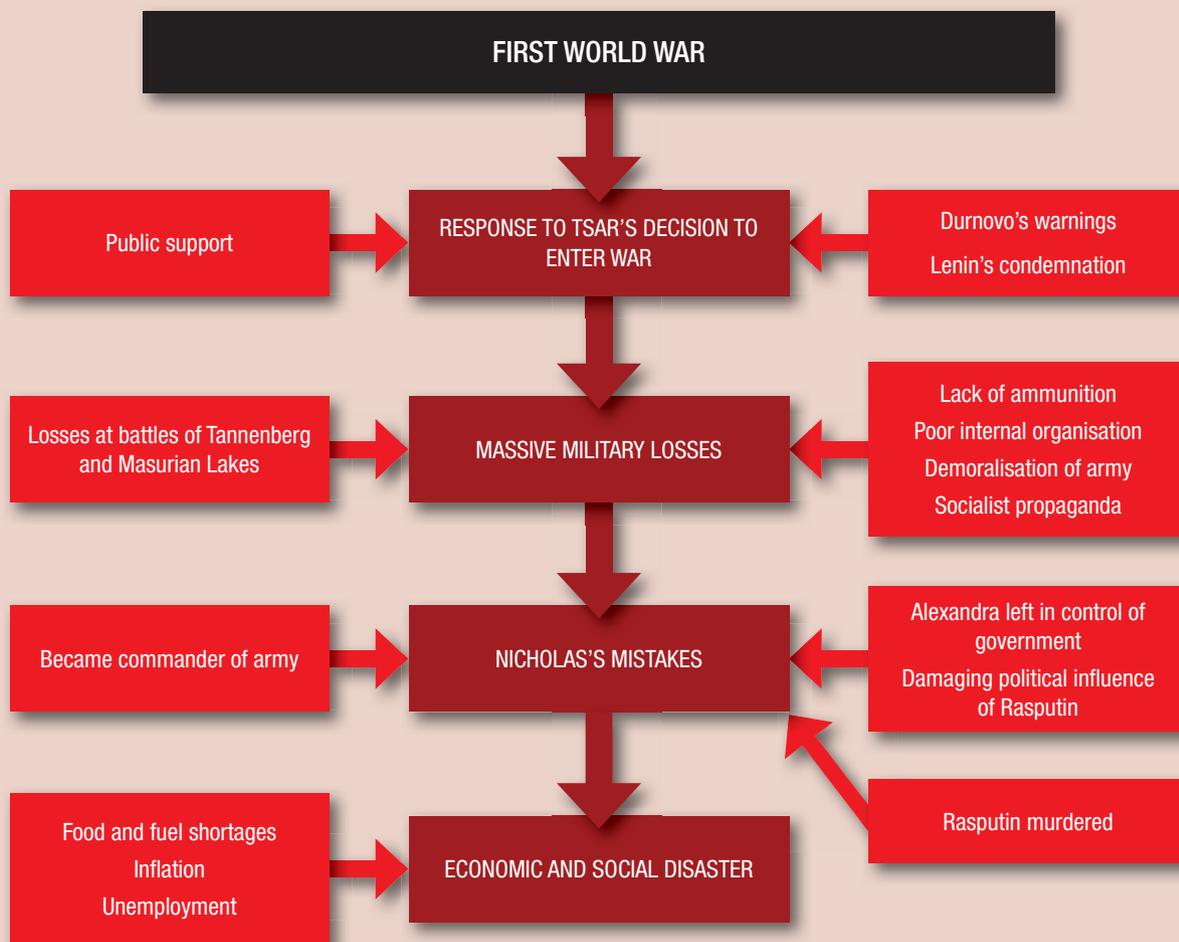
This chapter analyses the political, economic and social impact of the war on the Russian army at the front, but, more significantly, on the majority of the population remaining in the nation. A situation was created that was destructive enough to erupt into a revolution by February 1917.



KEY ISSUES

- What was the response in Russia to the outbreak of war?
- Why did the massive Russian army suffer so many defeats?
- Why was the war so damaging politically?
- What was the internal economic and social impact of war?
- Significant individual: the mysterious Rasputin

FLOW OF CHAPTER



6.1 What was the response in Russia to the outbreak of war?

Response 1: Public support – Popular discontent with the political and economic circumstances was forgotten amid the emotional fervour of embarking on such a serious campaign. People prayed, shouted joyously, carried flags and placards with ‘Long Live Russia’, and even bowed in reverence when the Tsar made public appearances. After the turmoil of 1905 and suppression under Stolypin, the war initially repaired the growing division between the Tsar and his people. Bruce Lockhart, the British Vice-Consul in Moscow in 1914, wrote that the patriotic and religious support for tsardom meant that ‘revolution was not even a distant possibility’.



Source 6.1 Tsar Nicholas II blesses his troops who kneel to pay him homage, circa 1910

A MATTER OF FACT

With the wave of anti-German hysteria at the beginning of the war in 1914, it was decided that St Petersburg sounded too Germanic so the city was renamed Petrograd. It was renamed Leningrad in 1924, before returning to its original name of St Petersburg in 1991.

Response 2: Durnovo's warnings – Pyotr **Durnovo** (1844–1915) was a member of the upper class through his role in the bureaucracy, then later as Minister of the Interior under Prime Minister Witte. Durnovo provided the clearest warning to Nicholas of the grave dangers involved in war. In February 1914, he argued that Russia would be irreparably damaged whether it won or lost. He declared that if Russia lost, ‘The financial and economic consequences of defeat can be neither calculated nor foreseen, and will undoubtedly spell the total disintegration of our entire national economy.’ But if Russia won the war the only benefit would be the easy defeat of the socialist movement.

Durnovo Pyotr Dumovo was a member of the upper class who became Minister of the Interior under Prime Minister Witte



Focus questions

- 1 List Durnovo's three predicted 'troubles' that Russia would face.
- 2 Write down two key phrases that provided the strongest warning to Nicholas.
- 3 Could Nicholas have not gone to war?

Durnovo's primary concern was the implications of the war on the rise of discontent within the popular movement; he argued quite prophetically that joining the war would inevitably boil over into social revolution:

Russia will be flung into hopeless anarchy, the issue of which will be hard to foresee ... There will be agrarian troubles, as a result of agitation for compensating the soldiers with additional land allotments; there will be labour troubles during the transition from the probably increased wages of war time to normal schedules; and this, it is to be hoped, will be all, so long as the wave of the German social revolution has not reached us. But in the event of defeat, the possibility of which in a struggle with a foe like Germany cannot be overlooked, social revolution in its most extreme form is inevitable.

Cited in Dmytryshyn (Ed.), *Imperial Russia: A Source Book 1700–1917*, 1990, pp. 464–5

A MATTER OF FACT

Durnovo never had the chance to see that his prediction of revolution came true. He died only one year into the war.

Response 3: Lenin's condemnation – Lenin declared the war to be merely another example

bourgeois relating to or belonging to the bourgeoisie

of the wealthy **bourgeois** upper classes manipulating the toiling masses for their gain. He

declared: 'We summon you to a social revolution. We appeal to you not to die for others but to destroy others, to destroy your enemies on the home front.' He called for the immediate formation of socialist groups that would go to the front not to fight but to win over their fellow German workers. His propaganda suggested the necessity of making both countries into republics, confiscating land and improving conditions for the industrial working classes. Yet Lenin's approach received little support. The wave of popular patriotism drowned Lenin's calls for a class war.



Source 6.2 Russian soldiers in a trench on the Eastern Front, 1914

6.2 Why did the massive Russian army suffer so many defeats?

Russia's lack of success in the First World War has puzzled many military historians. It had the largest army in the world, with more soldiers than Germany and Austria-Hungary combined. However, the overwhelming majority of Russia's soldiers were conscripted peasants, often with very little training. Further, their repeated defeats resulted from poor military leadership compounded by a critical lack of ammunition, supplies and organisation.



Source 6.3 The Eastern Front, 1914

Key military defeats in 1914

The Russian generals began immediate offensives in Eastern Prussia in the north and Galicia in the south. The four armies broke through the Austrians in Galicia and defeated one-third of the Austrian-Hungarian army by capturing 100 000 prisoners of war and 400 artillery guns, experiencing spectacular early success. But it was with the two armies in the north that the two most damaging defeats were inflicted on the Russians. The first was at the Battle of Tannenberg on 18 August where Russian casualties numbered 130 000 and prisoners of war over 100 000. The second was at the Battle of Masurian Lakes on 2 September where one whole army unit was surrounded and forced to surrender. In the first 12 months of war, the Russians lost over four million men, with 16 million people in the region captured by enemy offensives.

Lack of ammunition

Russia was in no position to fight a large-scale war, mainly due to the lack of rifles and ammunition. Added to this, the Minister of War, General Sukhomlinov, favoured using bayonets in traditional warfare. He encouraged the generals to storm the enemy trenches and engage in hand-to-hand combat, which became farcical against the modern machine guns and barbed wire of the Germans.

A MATTER OF FACT

Russian soldiers were sent into the trenches unarmed and instructed to wait for their comrades to die and then to use their rifles. Ammunition was also in such short supply that on average there were only three bullets per man per day.

Poor internal organisation

Although Witte had developed a railway system by the 1890s, during the war the organisation of the trains was so poor that the troops often went hungry. There were adequate meat and grain supplies in the Ukraine and Siberia, but they were not delivered on time. This was compounded by skilled men being sent to fight in the war, leaving locomotives without drivers or mechanics.

Demoralisation within the army

The historian Brian Moynahan highlights the demoralisation evident in the Russian army by comparing the ratio of soldiers captured as prisoners of war (POWs) to those killed in action. By 1916, Russia had witnessed four and a half times more men captured than killed, 1.2 million to 270 000. In comparison, the British army had contrasting figures, with five times more men killed than taken as POWs. By 1917, Russian POWs dramatically outnumbered the dead by a ratio of 16:1 – 900 000 POWs to 58 000 killed. Moynahan argues that the increasingly high POW ratio is significant because it reveals the Russian soldiers' desperate preference to be captured, rather than fight to the death for the sake of their fatherland.



Source 6.4 A First World War poster depicting Russian cavalry units in a heroic light



Source 6.5 Russian soldiers and officers surrendering

Impact of socialist propaganda

General Ruzski reported in December 1916 that ‘the influence of Bolshevik ideas is spreading very rapidly’. Desertion in war had previously been an ignoble act of selfish cowardice. Yet as Bolshevik propaganda became more widely accepted, surrendering to the enemy became more common. The more popular tactic was prompting whole companies to wound themselves in the finger or cheek and then race to board the hospital train to return home honourably as wounded in action.

6.3 Why was the war so damaging politically?

Mistake 1: Nicholas becomes Commander of the Russian army

The significance of these military losses was reflected in the Tsar’s next decision. Nicholas replaced the popular and experienced Grand Duke Nikolai Nikolaevich in August 1915, and became the Supreme Commander in Chief of the Russian army. His wife, Alexandra, wrote an extraordinary 400 letters to him at the front, which provide a fabulous insight into the priorities and mindset of the royal couple. Alexandra affirmed in writing that his decision demonstrated true ‘mastery, proving yourself the Autocrat without whom Russia cannot exist’.



Source 6.6 The 198 centimetre (6 feet, 6 inches) Nikolaevich with Tsar Nicholas



The Chairman of the Fourth State Duma, Mikhail Rodzianko, became a regular source of advice to the Tsar as the problems of the war brought difficulties to Petrograd. His opinion of Nicholas's decision, expressed in a letter to the Tsar on 12 August 1915, was in direct contrast to the admiration of the Tsarina:

Focus questions

- 1 What are Rodzianko's three key criticisms of Nicholas's decision to control the army?
- 2 Do you agree with these criticisms?

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 ... 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 your dynasty with serious consequences.

Cited in Vernadsky & Fisher, A Source Book for Russian History from Early Times to 1917, p. 844

While Nicholas believed he was doing the right thing, the magnitude of his decision cannot be understated. First, it meant that he literally abandoned the newly named capital Petrograd to command the troops at the army headquarters at Mogilev at the war front. Second, it meant that the Tsar symbolically abandoned the Russian people in their desperate time of need. The military defeats and high casualties resulted in a contagious lack of confidence in the Tsar, who now directly shouldered the blame for these losses in the eyes of the people.

Mistake 2: Nicholas leaves Alexandra in charge of the government

Nicholas's decision to leave for the war front left the Tsarina responsible for political affairs. Encouraged by the advice of Rasputin, she grew in confidence and began relishing the opportunity to be involved in maintaining autocratic rule. The problem was threefold: she was politically inexperienced, she was from Germany and she implemented Rasputin's decisions through the government. Due to her German descent, rampant conspiracy theories implicated her as favouring pro-German policy. Lockhart told of a popular story during the war:

The Tsarevich [Alexis, heir to the throne] is seen crying in the corridor of the Winter Palace. A general ... stops and pats the boy's head.

'What is wrong, my little man?'

The Tsarevich replies, half smiling, half crying: 'When the Russians are beaten, Papa cries. When the Germans are beaten, Mama cries. When am I to cry?'

Lockhart, Memoirs of a British Agent (1932)



Source 6.7 Tsarina Alexandra

6.4 What was the internal economic and social impact of war?

The political disillusionment about tsarism was exacerbated by the military defeats. By 1916, the war was costing nearly five times more than had been budgeted for in 1913. The same problems of a lack of supplies and internal organisation confronted by the troops were also experienced by working families in the cities and peasant families in the Russian provinces. Given that the 1917 Revolution began in Petrograd, it was these economic and social conflicts, rather than military defeats, that created a revolutionary situation. Both of these important issues are illuminated in more detail in Chapter 8 in relation to the February Revolution.

Economic impact

In Petrograd and Moscow the war had become of secondary importance to the people's suffering. According to Katkov in his book *Russia 1917* (1967), funding the war between 1914 and August 1917 cost 38648 million roubles. War costs alone were 4.7 times the total government expenditure in the last peacetime year of 1913. To raise such enormous amounts, the government settled on borrowing from Allied countries and printing more money. Both tactics were unsuccessful and resulted in the escalation of four main interrelated economic problems.

Food shortages	Fuel shortages
Tragically, Russia experienced strong harvests in 1914–16, but poor organisation meant that these rich supplies were not efficiently transported by rail or road to the towns and major cities. This increased the occurrence of riots to obtain food.	Russia relied on fuel like coal to operate both homes and businesses. The same transport crisis meant that bakeries and factories had to operate for limited periods or close down altogether. This fuel crisis was heightened by the freezing winter of 1916–17.
Inflation and price increases	Unemployment
Wage increases were surpassed by rising prices. The <i>Okhrana</i> reported to the Tsar in October 1916 that wages had risen 50 per cent, but goods between 100 per cent and 500 per cent. For example, rent rose from 3 to 12 roubles per month and boots from 6 to 30 roubles.	The practical reality of the fuel shortages was growing unemployment. This, along with the low supply but high price of food, meant that the daily lives of industrial workers became increasingly desperate.

Social impact

Military defeats, distant leadership and economic disaster resulted in significant social depression and tension. Women in Azerbaijan lay on train tracks to stop new recruits from being transported to the front and there was violent resistance to conscription. The government became increasingly concerned about socialist agitation among the industrial workers. Their message was not just anti-German, but anti-war. Sir George Buchanan advised the Tsar on 30 December 1916 about the importance of regaining the confidence of the people, 'for without such mutual confidence Russia will never win the war'. Lockhart later reflected that 'although his loyalty to his **Allies** remained unshaken to the last, it was his failure to harness the loyalty of his own people which eventually cost him his throne'.

Allies the group of countries who united to fight the Central Powers group of countries in the First World War



Source 6.8 Workers in a munitions factory

6.5 SIGNIFICANT INDIVIDUAL

The mysterious Rasputin (1869–1916)

It was not the bullets of revolutionary terrorists, nor the shells of Germans at the front, but the existence of a single person that was threatening to destroy one of the greatest empires in the world.

Edvard Radzinsky (2000)

Grigorii Effimovich Rasputin represented everything that the ruling elite were not, which contributed both to his fame and unpopularity. He was semi-literate rather than educated, a peasant rather than upper-class, from Siberia not Petrograd or Moscow, and a mystic not grounded in scientific logic. As a teenager he was a monk in an Orthodox monastery and at the age of 21 he married a peasant girl. Together they had four children, the youngest of whom died as a child. Witnesses frequently commented on Rasputin's blazing, hypnotically staring eyes.



Source 6.9 Rasputin

A MATTER OF FACT

Rasputin was part of a religious sect called the Khlysty, which believed that humans need to sin so that God can display His love through forgiveness. Nakedness and crude behaviour were part of their practices.

Rasputin and Alexandra

After four girls, Nicholas was openly delighted when Tsarevich Alexi was born in 1904, providing him with an heir to his throne. Yet the royal doctors predicted a short lifespan due to Alexi's haemophilia, a genetic condition that prevented his blood from forming the clotting cells needed to thicken blood if and when bleeding occurred. Throughout his boyhood, Alexi was therefore permanently accompanied by a minder who ensured that he was safe at all times.

Rasputin entered into the confidence of the royal family in St Petersburg in 1905 through his mysterious ability to heal Alexi's haemophilia. This began an incredible decade of influence over every member of the royal family. Alexandra especially appreciated Rasputin, as haemophilia is passed through the female line, so Rasputin's healing powers not only saved her son but also eased her guilt.

High society competed for his attendance at salons, restaurants and tea parties. Rasputin's popularity grew due to the clash between his image as a holy healer assisting the Tsarina and his late-night binge drinking and womanising. Despite most of the Tsarina's letters being full of respect for his healing powers and godly advice, rumours of a sexual relationship between the two consumed the popular imagination. The following controversial letter from the Tsarina to Rasputin, published in St Petersburg in 1912, fuelled such speculation:

I kiss your hands and lay my head upon your blessed shoulders. I feel so joyful then. Then all I want is to sleep, sleep forever on your shoulder, in your embrace.

Political influence

We are faced with the strangest of human triangles ... Rasputin, the empress and the emperor; set in ascending order of authority and a descending order of influence.

Sir B Pares (1939), who lived in Russia during the war

Rasputin's social impact was a mere diversion compared with his political impact. In 1915 and 1916 he exerted considerable influence through Alexandra, who was in control of the government in Nicholas's absence. Her desire to maintain the system of autocratic tsarism meant that she despised the Duma. This profoundly affected the social credibility of the royals as well as creating intense political disillusionment. The fundamental problem was that men were promoted to high positions if they respected Rasputin and his advice rather than because they displayed expertise in their new ministerial field. Political favouritism between 1915 and 1916 due to being a 'friend of Rasputin' influenced the selection of four Prime Ministers, three Foreign Secretaries, three Ministers of War and six Interior Ministers.



Many eyewitnesses and historians have criticised Rasputin as being the symbol of the decay evident in the tsarist regime. For example, Pares wrote critically against Rasputin's political influence: 'The Russian ministers were selected by an ignorant, blind and hysterical woman on the test of their subservience to an ignorant, fanatical and debauched adventurer.' Florinsky wrote: 'The fairly honourable and efficient group who formed the top of the bureaucratic pyramid degenerated into a rapidly changing succession of the appointees of Rasputin. It was an amazing, extravagant, and pitiful spectacle, and one without parallel in the history of civilised nations.'

Revolutions occur when there is a lack of trust with the ruling elite. This was Rasputin's most significant impact: he contributed directly to the perception that the royal family and the government were in a political shambles.

Rasputin's murder

Rasputin's death was even more mysterious and scandalous than his life.

Murder fact file

Date	16 December 1916
Central figure	Prince Felix Yusupov, a 29-year-old Oxford graduate who was the son of the richest woman in Russia. Although he was publicly homosexual, he had recently been married to Grand Duchess Irina Alexandrovna, daughter of the Tsar's favourite sister.
Co-conspirators	Grand Duke Dmitry Pavlovich, a favourite nephew of the Tsar, and Grand Duke Nikolai Mikailovich. Also involved was VM Purishkevich, a right-wing Duma leader and outspoken critic of Rasputin, and Dr Lazavert who prepared the poison.
Motives	Figes argues that it was a 'homosexual vendetta' after Rasputin had tried to seduce Yusupov after his wedding. It was also argued that Yusupov was outraged by Rasputin's influence over the Tsar.
Location	Cellar of Yusupov's palace by the River Neva.
Context	Rasputin was lured to the palace with the promise of sleeping with Yusupov's beautiful wife Irina. Although explicitly warned not to go, Rasputin could not resist the potential of this new conquest.
The murder	Rasputin was fed two glasses of poisoned wine and two cakes, each of which was laced with sufficient cyanide to kill several men instantly. He survived. Two-and-a-half hours later, in desperation, Yusupov shot him. He survived. After finding Rasputin running towards the palace gate they shot him in the head and back, then beat him repeatedly with a club. The conspirators then tied him in a rug and threw him in a hole in the ice. When his body was discovered three days later, incredibly one arm had wriggled free. Official cause of death – drowning.
Reaction	For several days after the murder, crowds of women gathered at the spot to collect 'holy water' from the river that had been purified by Rasputin's flesh.
Funeral	He was buried in the grounds of the royal palace at Tsarskoye Selo on a freezing day in January 1917. After the revolution in February 1917, a group of soldiers dug up Rasputin's embalmed corpse, hid it in a piano case, doused it in kerosene and burnt it in a nearby forest before scattering his ashes in the wind.



A MATTER OF FACT

The actual basement where Rasputin was murdered was blocked off and closed to the public until 1992 when it was painted and opened as a tourist site, complete with wax figures of Rasputin and Yusupov.

ANALYSIS ACTIVITY 6.1: VISUAL ANALYSIS

This postcard plays on the double meaning of the Russian word *derzhit*, which is both the verb 'to hold' and the root of the word 'autocracy' (*samoderzhavie*). Many postcards like this dominated popular culture after February 1917.

- 1 What are the two meanings of Rasputin's 'hold' on Alexandra?
- 2 Why might the postcard have been titled 'Autocracy'?



Source 6.10
A widely circulated pornographic postcard titled 'Autocracy'



ANALYSIS ACTIVITY 6.2: CREATIVE WRITING

Produce an article for the opinion section of the *St Petersburg Times* on the murder of Rasputin. Slant your opinion towards either favouring or condemning the murder of this notable socialite. Comment in your article whether Rasputin's death would significantly increase or decrease the chances of tsarism surviving.



The aim of this section is to give a voice to the voiceless, those whose story history rarely recorded. Here is a fictional story of a Russian soldier written from the imagination of the author.

I am a member of the Russian Army in the First World War. My name is Boris. My photo is deceptive. It was taken at the start of the war when the whole country thought that we would defeat the hated Germans before Christmas. My battalion was cheered by hearing that our armies had spectacular initial success in Galicia defeating the Austria-Hungarian army and capturing prisoners and much-needed guns. I fought in the north, expecting the same success. It couldn't have been more different. The Battle of Tannenberg saw hundreds of my fellow countrymen killed or captured. I survived with only minor wounds.

After two years my cheerful face is now replaced with gloom and misery. We had the largest army in the world but with continuous major problems. Many of the soldiers were peasants with little training, poor equipment and only three bullets per man per day. Added to this was our bad overall approach – poor organisation, failed military strategies and wrong decisions from our leaders. How could our commanders think that bayonets could beat machine guns? When I heard that Tsar Nicholas himself was coming to the war front as the new Commander in Chief, my spirits rose. The Tsar himself coming to our rescue! Surely this would turn our fortunes around.

But no. The demoralisation of our troops worsened after more losses. My fellow soldiers preferred to be taken prisoners of war rather than fight to the death. I heard stories of some soldiers shooting themselves in the leg so that they could be sent home. Heavy defeats sank our spirits.



Source 6.11

I remember when I first heard about the home front. The Tsar had left the inexperienced Tsarina Alexandra in control of the government. Why, when there are such experienced politicians and families to make good decisions? What was worse was hearing that the drunkard Rasputin was influencing her decisions – hiring and firing Prime Ministers and even Ministers of War while we were at war. My blood boiled at such dire distractions. None of us shed a tear when we heard of his murder. Good riddance to the rascal.

But the political damage was done. Disaster. Disillusionment. How could we respect the government or tsarism ever again? Letters from my sister at home in Petrograd told of a city crippled by unemployment, food shortages, fuel shortages, unemployment and massive price increases. The situation was desperate. My sister said that she was planning to join the march on International Women's Day. From the emotion in her last letter, it wouldn't surprise me if Petrograd erupted into angry protests.

Russian Soldier in the First World War

ANALYSIS ACTIVITY 6.3: VISUAL ANALYSIS



Source 6.12 The inscription means 'The Russian tsars at home'.

- 1 What is this cartoon's key message about the influence of Rasputin on the Tsar and Tsarina?
- 2 What is the meaning of the size of each of the three characters?
- 3 What truth was there in such a public impression that the royals were merely Rasputin's puppets?

The story so far

- The initial response to the outbreak of war was so widespread that warnings from ministers like Durnovo and opponents like Lenin received little attention.
- Despite being the largest army in the world, Russia suffered a prolonged series of defeats because the lack of ammunition and supplies, poor internal organisation and socialist propaganda all resulted in disastrous demoralisation among the troops.
- Military losses resulted in greater government spending on financing the war. This created severe economic and social hardships on the home front.
- Added to these conflicts was the political and social influence of the scandalous Rasputin through Tsarina Alexandra.



CHAPTER REVIEW

DEVELOPING CLEAR DEFINITIONS

Write explanations defining each of the following impacts of the war in your workbook.

Political impact of war	Economic impact of war	Social impact of war

PRACTISING PARAGRAPH ANSWERS

- 1 What was the response to the outbreak of war?
- 2 Why did the massive Russian army suffer so many defeats?
- 3 What was the significance of Nicholas becoming commander of the army?
- 4 How did Rasputin contribute to the mounting crisis against tsarism?

PRACTICE ESSAY QUESTIONS

- 1 'How did the crisis of the First World War help create a revolutionary situation in Russia?' Discuss this view, providing evidence to support your answer.
- 2 'It was Nicholas's decision to replace Nikolaevich that sealed his fate. From then onwards his downfall was inevitable.' Discuss this view, providing evidence to support your answer.
- 3 'Rasputin's real significance lies in the fact that he symbolised many of the regime's failings.' Discuss this view, providing evidence to support your answer.
- 4 'Weak leadership is most commonly revealed at times of great crisis.' Discuss this view, providing evidence to support your answer.

READING MORE DEEPLY

Easy

Massie, R 1967, *Nicholas & Alexandra: The Tragic, Compelling Story of the Last Tsar and his Family*, Indigo. Chapter 24, 'The government disintegrates', pp. 327–50.

Moderate

Radzinsky, E 2000, *Rasputin: The Last Word*, Allen & Unwin.

Challenging

Katkov, G 1967, *Russia 1917: The February Revolution*, Longman. Chapter 3, 'Army and revolution', pp. 34–47.

Katkov was born and lived in Russia until 1921 and wrote this book in an attempt to uncover the real causes of the 1917 February Revolution. This chapter examines the varied interpretations of the role of the war in determining the origins and course of the revolution.



Source 6.13 Russian machine-gunners in the trenches near Brest-Litousk, during the First World War in 1915



Thematic analysis, 1905–17

“

The Russian monarchy was an extreme case of authoritarianism in a world with many grades of unfreedom.

– ROBERT SERVICE, 1999

”

OVERVIEW

The entire political, social and economic system in Russia was designed to support the privileged powers of the ruling classes. But it is crucial to remember that this system in itself was not the cause of the revolution, as Russia had ‘survived’ under the Romanovs for over 300 years. It is too simple to blame autocracy for the failure of tsarism, but as Robert Service suggests in the above quote, Russian autocracy was certainly an extreme example of mismanagement within a European world that was characterised by lack of freedoms.

There were four main alternatives available to Nicholas in an attempt to solve the nation’s problems:

- Option 1: Nicholas’s solution – maintain autocratic tsarism.
- Option 2: The ‘Bismarck’ solution – the Tsar retains complete power, but satisfies the demands of the peasants by cancelling their debts, the workers through welfare measures, and the middle class through a Duma with limited powers.
- Option 3: The liberal solution – power is shared between the Tsar and an elected parliament based on property ownership.
- Option 4: The British solution – real power is given to a democratically elected parliament, with the Tsar as the constitutional Head of State.

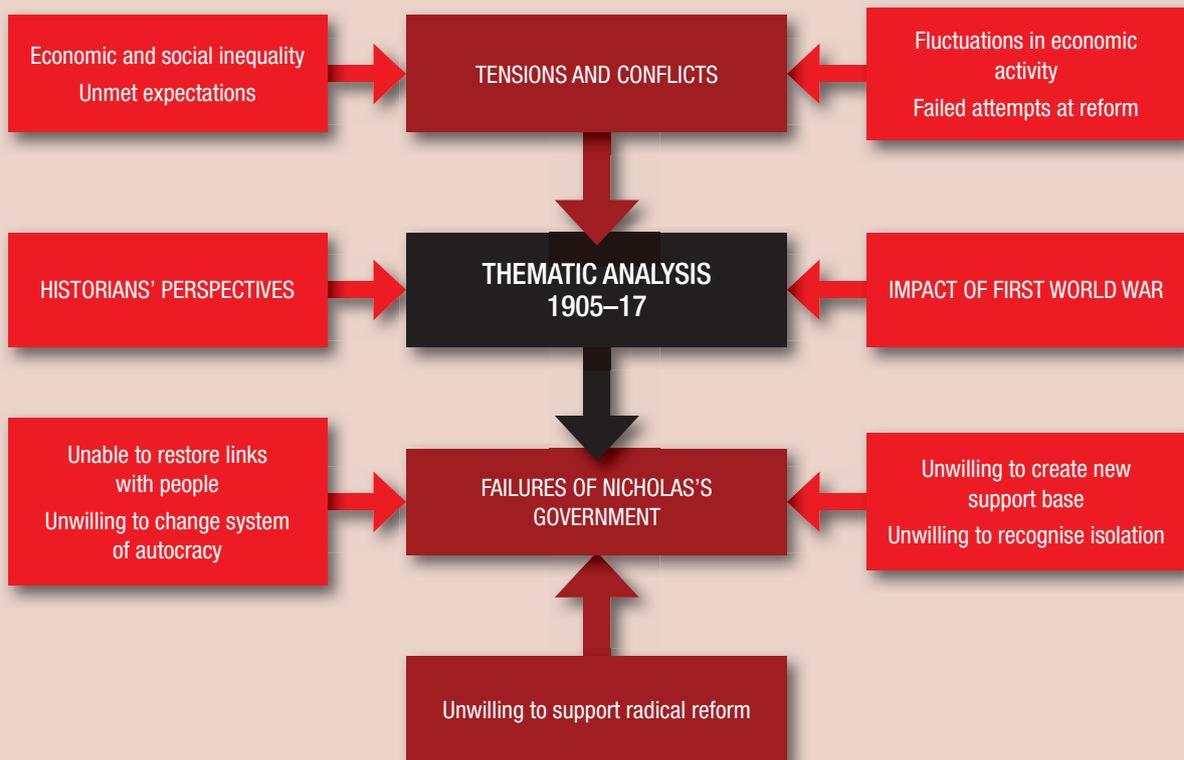
This chapter thematically analyses the complex intertwining of short- and long-term causes of the Russian Revolution of 1917. Put succinctly, a series of tensions was generated that Tsar Nicholas II and his government were unwilling and unable to respond to effectively. These conflicts were

compounded and heightened by the massive crises of the war. While the Russian Revolution was never inevitable, as Marxist theory suggests, by the beginning of 1917 the political system of autocracy was severely discredited, with the economic and social grievances of the workers and peasants at breaking point.

KEY ISSUES

- What were the causes of tensions and conflicts in the old regime?
- Why was Nicholas's government unwilling or unable to adjust to changing circumstances?
- What impact did the First World War have on the revolutionary situation?

FLOW OF CHAPTER



7.1 What were the causes of tensions and conflicts in the old regime?

Tension 1: Economic and social inequality

Explanation – ‘Power is what enables a privileged ruling group to maintain the steady transfer of wealth on which its privileges are based, in spite of resistance from below’ (Christian, 1986). While wealth is transferred to the ruling classes primarily through taxation, it also occurs through peasant serfdom and exploitation of urban wage labour. Life was full of economic and social inequalities.

Cause – The system of class hierarchy was based on privilege by birth rather than by merit or opportunity. There were formalised strict class boundaries that divided society into the privileged upper classes and working lower classes. Attempts to change this inequality through the petition that prompted the Bloody Sunday march and strikes throughout 1905 were suppressed by the Tsar. The only occasion when the people’s political voice was reluctantly listened to was after the crippling general strikes in October 1905 that forced Nicholas to issue the *October Manifesto*. Many radical agitators and alternative thinkers were exiled to Siberia or sentenced and executed during Stolypin’s increased *Okhrana* vigilance.

Tension 2: Rising and unmet class expectations

Explanation – Periodically, hopes were raised that this situation would change for the better. Expectation of an improved situation is a powerful psychological reaction, as people are given a glimpse of a better life. Therefore, having these hopes unmet or unfulfilled is worse than having no expectations of circumstances changing.

Cause – There were three moments under Tsar Nicholas II when the people’s expectations of the improvement of their class were dashed. First, Witte’s reforms promised work and stability for poor peasants, yet conditions in the urban centres were appalling. Second, Nicholas’s limitations on the political decision-making powers of the Dumas disillusioned the educated middle-class

intelligentsia, who for decades had been advocating the strength of this system. Third, the demoralising nature of the war disappointed the ruling classes and military who were hoping for increased unity and morale at the onset of the war.



Source 7.1 The Russian people became increasingly dissatisfied under tsarism.

Tension 3: Fluctuations in economic activity

Explanation – Economic fortunes change regularly in every society due to combinations of factors. When businesses and harvests boom, wealth results; when they fail dramatically, hardship results.

Cause – Stolypin's agricultural reforms increased the size of peasants' landholdings and made industrial workers' conditions more bearable. Despite resistance from Nicholas, both of these changes improved the annual production figures to an all-time high by 1913. The First World War reversed these relatively favourable circumstances. Food and fuel shortages meant higher inflation and price increases, which resulted in increased unemployment.

Tension 4: Failed attempts at economic, social and political reform

Explanation – Reforms are introduced as an attempt to change an existing problem. If these reforms fail, the problem still exists, but with added discontent and tension.

Cause – This was primarily the case with Witte's industrial reforms, which significantly improved the production output of the nation, but at incredible human cost. Nicholas's reinstatement of his autocratic authority after the promises of the *October Manifesto* meant that the political intentions for creating a Duma failed. Despite his intention of saving and strengthening tsarism, Stolypin's agricultural reforms were not fully supported by Nicholas. It was no coincidence that the primary growth of Marxist political movements within Russia occurred at the same time as social discontent exploded within this new urban working class.

7.2 Why was Nicholas's government unwilling or unable to adjust to changing circumstances?

Reason 1: Unwilling to change system of autocracy

Nicholas was never convinced that he should abandon autocracy. The reforms in the *October Manifesto* were reluctantly introduced to maintain control, but officially signified the end of autocratic government. The manifesto also raised political expectations that were dashed through the Fundamental State Laws of 1906 and electoral changes of 1907. Through this, Nicholas forfeited the confidence of his people; and the traditional supporters of tsarism – the ruling classes, the bureaucracy and the church – gradually abandoned him between 1906 and 1917.

Reason 2: Unwilling to support radical reform

Nicholas's rule was characterised by isolation from economic reality. Witte's industrial reforms were supported, as the historian Christian acknowledges: 'The main reason for the acceleration of economic growth after the 1880s was the government's decision to support industrial growth.' But Witte was replaced in 1906 when he pushed for constitutional reform. Similarly, the first two Dumas were dismissed for pressuring the government to implement wide-ranging reforms. Stolypin's reforms between 1906 and 1911 not only saved but also strengthened tsarism, but they still were not welcomed by the Tsar,



primarily because of suspicion from the royal court and a traditional government, which were both resistant to major change. This was most evident in the insignificance accorded to Stolypin's reforms after his assassination in 1911. The Tsar's inflexibility demonstrates that he perceived the world as one of extremes, void of compromise. Eyewitness Bernard Pares argues that the Tsar's downfall was primarily due to this inability to seek the middle ground between 'reform' and 'reaction'. This mindset led Nicholas to consider that any reforms by definition meant an attack on autocratic rule, which he was desperate to maintain.

Reason 3: Unable to restore the link with his people

There were several key events that created tension between the Tsar and his people: Bloody Sunday in January 1905; the broken promises of the *October Manifesto*; political sabotaging of the First and Second Dumas; severe social repression under Stolypin; the economic and social disaster of war; Nicholas making himself personally responsible for the disaster of the war; and the perceived corruption of Tsarina Alexandra and Rasputin. These events were compounded by the twin issues of the underlying revolutionary spirit of 1905 and the weakening of the authority of the Orthodox Church. Nicholas's unsuitability for the role of governing Russia was demonstrated by his inability to recognise the extent of his damaged reputation within the popular psyche.



Source 7.2 Tsar Nicholas II

Reason 4: Unwilling to recognise his government's isolation

Stolypin's reforms fell well short of his intentions. A conservative but prosperous rural society was not created, nor was the ruling elite unified by constitutional reform. Yet Nicholas's mistake was not recognising the extent to which he and his government were losing their traditional support base. Nicholas demonstrated his misguided beliefs by assuming that his personal control of the army would unite the nation and that Rasputin was harmless. Not only was there the expected division between the upper and working classes, but also now a fatal division between the upper classes and the Tsar. By 1917, the Tsar's support had dwindled to the bureaucracy and small elements of the army.

Reason 5: Unable to create a new support base

What was needed was a new long-term power base at the top of society. The traditional system of autocracy authorised by God no longer automatically gained the support of the privileged classes. According to the historian Christian, Nicholas's downfall was his inability to create a new ruling elite from cleverly manipulated coalitions of groups within the ruling and educated middle classes.

Nicholas tried to operate his country as he always had done – by using the traditional structures. Previous tsars had also isolated the intelligentsia through repression, censorship, lack of political parties and no form of parliament.

7.3 What impact did the First World War have on the revolutionary situation?

The policies of Nicholas's government were pressured and exposed during the war, given the gravity of the domestic situation and Nicholas's absence from Petrograd. The most significant result of the war was that the Tsar lost the loyalty of most sections of the population. While events in the Tsar's regime, such as Bloody Sunday in 1905, did indeed change the working class's perception of the Tsar, it was the war that lost him most support. Military failures resulted in many members of the army and the families of the conscripted losing faith in the Tsar. Allowing the Tsarina and Rasputin to control internal political affairs from 1915 disillusioned the ruling elite and middle-class intelligentsia. Economic hardships made life unbearable for industrial workers, peasants and their families.

ANALYSIS ACTIVITY 7.1: HISTORICAL INTERPRETATIONS

Author analysis: Massie's arguments about the impact of war

Robert Massie argues that the military weakness of the Russian army led to a series of events that culminated in the fall of the empire. A close reading of Massie's *Nicholas & Alexandra* (1967) reveals his formulae explaining why revolution occurred.

- 1 How does Massie link the lost military battle in 1914 with the political revolution of 1917?
- 2 Which links in his reasoning are the weakest?





All of these factors created a Russian society whose allegiances were more self-interested, with each sector looking after its own political or economic ends rather than those of tsarism. The current system did not offer any hope of improvement. This does not imply that all of Russia wanted a revolution to overthrow the Tsar and create a republic. However, it did mean that far-reaching change became a desperate need rather than a political luxury. How those changes eventuated and what they finally looked like are discussed in Part Two. The crucial impact of the war in the creation of a revolutionary situation was that the discontent evident in the old order was now targeted at autocratic tsarism itself.

The Emperor Nicholas II is one of the most pathetic figures in history. He loved his country. He had its welfare and greatness at heart. Yet it was he who was to cause the catastrophe which has brought it to utter ruin and misery.

Buchanan, My Mission to Russia and Other Diplomatic Memories (1923)

ANALYSIS ACTIVITY 7.2: CHECK YOUR SPELLING

These are key terms that have been used in the chapters so far. Spelling these words correctly is important. Write these drastically misspelt words correctly in your workbook.

- szar
- oughtocrasee
- privooleedge
- pheasant
- lenhen
- markshism
- innevietabl
- prolathairiate
- bolsevicks
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The story so far

- Life in the land of the Romanov Dynasty had progressed for 300 years based around a ruler who had complete autocratic authority over the nation. This system of tsarism was implemented with a complex web of competing government, administration, police and religious organisations. Even the social structure was designed to support tsarism.
- Opposition to tsarism had grown in the late 1880s and become prominent in the early 1900s through the adoption of Karl Marx's ideas by the Bolshevik, Menshevik and Socialist Revolutionary Parties. Vladimir Lenin and Leon Trotsky were simply two of the many leaders during this time who devoted their professional and personal lives to pursuing revolution.
- In 1905 this popular discontent finally moved to mass action. Bloody Sunday in January sparked a series of disconnected actions culminating in general strikes in October. Nicholas reluctantly granted civil liberties and the Dumas through his *October Manifesto*.
- Prime Minister Stolypin was able to temporarily save tsarism from collapse through limiting the effective power of the Dumas and implementing agrarian reforms. By 1913, Russia's economic recovery and severe police repression had thwarted the demands of the small revolutionary groups.
- The First World War played a crucial role in highlighting and compounding the existing military, political, economic and social problems under Nicholas. In historical hindsight, entering the war was the short-term factor that created a revolutionary situation in Russia that exploded into revolution in 1917.

CHAPTER REVIEW

DEVELOPING CLEAR DEFINITIONS

Write explanations of each of the following in your workbook.

Significant individuals	Key events	Key ideas	Key movements	Key documents
Tsar Nicholas	Growth of industrialisation	Autocracy	Marxist revolutionary parties	Bloody Sunday Petition
Tsarina Alexandra	1905 Revolution	Marxism	Liberal reforming parties	<i>October Manifesto</i>
Tsarevich Alexi	Agricultural reforms	Leninism	Industrial workers	Fundamental State Laws
Sergei Witte			Peasants	
Peter Stolypin				
Vladimir Lenin				
Grigorii Rasputin				

PRACTISING PARAGRAPH ANSWERS

- 1 What were the causes of tensions and conflicts generated in the old regime?
- 2 What were the reasons why Nicholas's government was unwilling or unable to adjust to changing circumstances?
- 3 Outline the conflicts between the Tsar and the people from 1905 to 1917.
- 4 What was the impact of the First World War on the creation of a revolutionary situation?
- 5 Explain why economic crisis helped create a revolutionary situation by February 1917.

PRACTICE ESSAY QUESTIONS

- 1 'The tragedy of the Russian Revolution was that Nicholas II could have prevented it.' To what extent do you agree with this statement?
- 2 'It was the system of tsarism that was totally weak and would have collapsed under any leader.' What is your assessment on the causes of the revolutionary situation?
- 3 'Economic crises were the lone factor that created a revolutionary situation.' To what extent do you agree with this statement?



READING MORE DEEPLY

Easy

Film study – *Nicholas & Alexandra* (director Franklin Schaffner), Columbia, 1982.

Moderate

Maylunas, A & Mironenko, S 1997, *A Lifelong Passion: Nicholas & Alexandra, Their Own Story*, Doubleday.

Challenging

Service, R 1999, *The Russian Revolution 1900–1927*, 3rd edition, Palgrave. Chapter 1, 'The unstable structure, 1900–1914', pp. 1–26.

In 26 pages, Service attempts to summarise the primary causes of the political, economic and social breakdown of Russian tsarism. He includes lots of details and analysis in a short space by examining issues such as the limits of the regime's adaptiveness and political instability.



Year of revolutions, 1917: The February revolution

“

Two different Russias settled side by side: the Russia of the ruling classes who had lost, although they did not realise it yet ... and the Russia of Labour, marching towards power, without suspecting it.

– KERENSKY, 1927

”

OVERVIEW

Russia's internal state was in a critical condition, but in February it became fatal. Yet all the key players of the revolution were missing from Petrograd: Lenin and his fellow revolutionaries were in exile and the Tsar was 650 kilometres away at military headquarters in Mogilev. Despite the revolutionary devotion of Lenin, Trotsky and others, these men in no way initiated the events of February 1917. Two crises ravaged Russia: food and fuel shortages. Food supplies were at a critical low. Moscow was receiving only 50 per cent of its necessary daily flour supply, and Petrograd a dire 20 per cent. Cities were also suffering from an acute shortage of fuel. Wood yards were empty and peat supplies were exhausted. Out of the 73 factories that had stopped operating by December 1916, 50 had stopped due to a lack of fuel to power the machinery. The real tragedy was that Russia, the largest country in the world, had incredible amounts of raw materials for food and fuel, but lacked the organisation to transport it to the cities. Skilled workers were also sent to the war front; consequently, Russia's labour force was severely depleted. This exacerbated the organisational problems.

Many sections of educated society already considered tsarism obsolete. Liberal elements of the Duma, *zemstva* representatives and industrialists discredited the system of autocracy and promoted the concept of constitutional monarchy, which would transfer some of the Tsar's absolute power into their hands. With the absence of the Tsar and the presence of Rasputin, their case for corruption and abuse of authority became even more convincing. The educated, property-owning classes wanted a share of power.

This chapter analyses the eight days of the February Revolution by focusing on the protests in Petrograd, so that patterns in the relationship between the hardships and revolution can be identified.

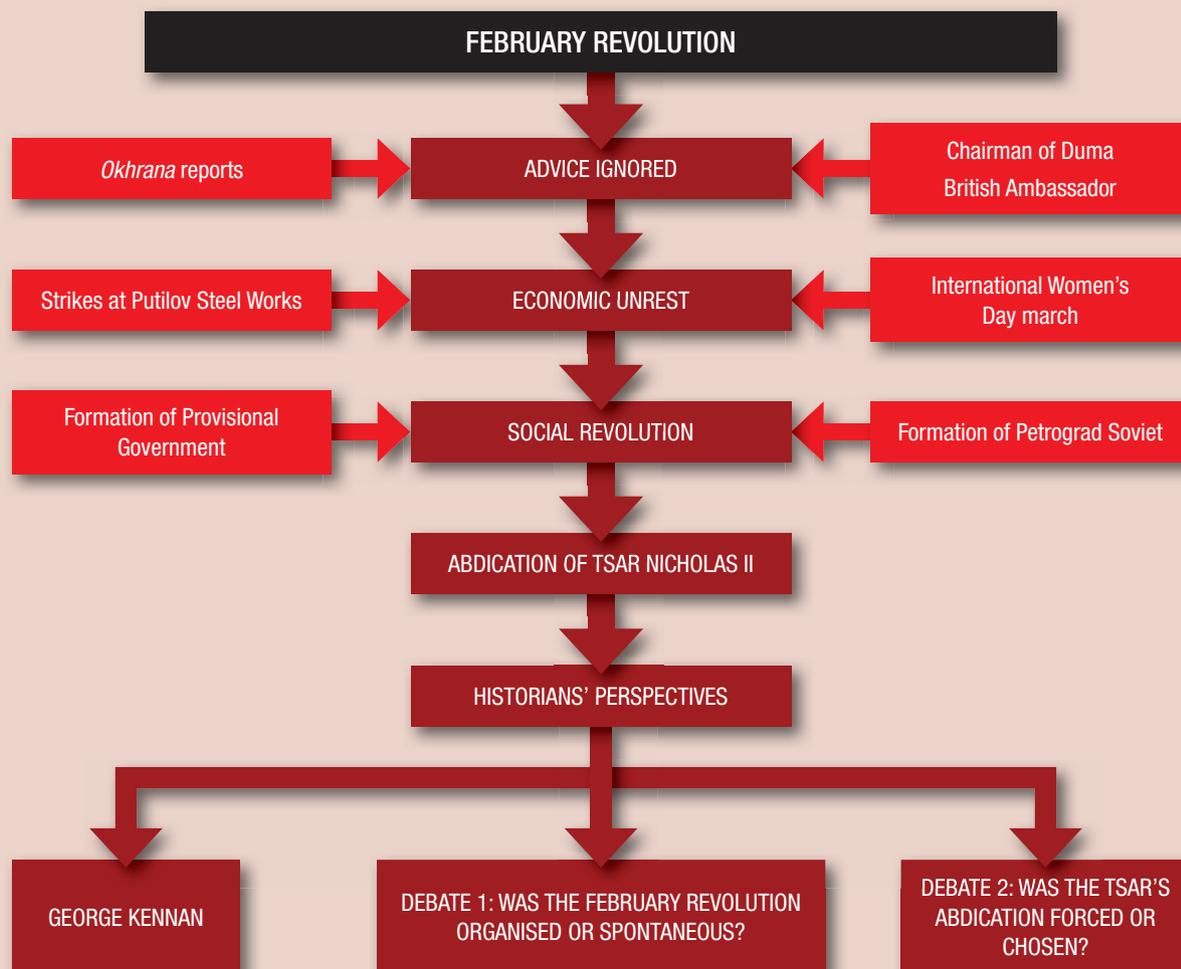


It is important to focus on the key responses of the main players: the Tsar, the Duma and soldiers. It is also important that, when making a point or presenting an argument, specific examples are used – avoid generalisations like ‘the people’ or ‘leaders’. Ask yourself whether the political reforms achieved during the February Revolution could indeed be considered as an inevitable idea ‘whose time had come’.

KEY ISSUES

- What impact did the key features of Petrograd have on the revolution?
- What advice did the Tsar receive about the revolutionary situation?
- How did economic unrest result in social revolution?
- Flashpoint! Abdication of Tsar Nicholas II
- Why did the February Revolution occur?

FLOW OF CHAPTER





Source 8.1 Petrograd – a city of revolution. Use this map to help develop your spatial awareness of the key locations covered by this book.

8.1 What impact did the key features of Petrograd have on the revolution?

Petrograd is considered one of the most beautiful cities in the world. To understand the city in which the twin revolutions of 1917 occurred, it is crucial to acknowledge two key features that have dictated its historical development. First, Petrograd is built along a 30-kilometre stretch of the wide Neva River, which runs for 74 kilometres from Lake Ladoga to the Gulf of Finland. Numerous canals branch off the Neva, creating a city of islands and inlets. Not only do the waterways provide the main form of water transport, but they also enable the city to be protected by raising its bridges. Second, Petrograd's geographical location, on the same line of latitude as Alaska and Greenland, means that the city experiences sub-zero winters when the canals and rivers freeze. This limited any outdoor marches or protests for months of the year.

8.2 What advice did the Tsar receive about the revolutionary situation?

Warning 1: *Okhrana*

The Tsar's secret police regularly sent detailed reports to the Tsar informing him of the atmosphere in Petrograd. In January 1917 the following report was made:

The mass of the population is at present in a very troubled mood ... an exceptional heightening of opposition and bitterness of feeling became very obvious amongst wide sections of the population of Petrograd. There were more and more frequent complaints about the administration and fierce and relentless criticism of government policies ... Complaints were openly voiced about the venality of the government, the unbelievable burdens of the war, the unbearable conditions of everyday life ... the conviction has been expressed, without exception, that 'we are on the eve of great events' in comparison with which '1905 was but a toy'.

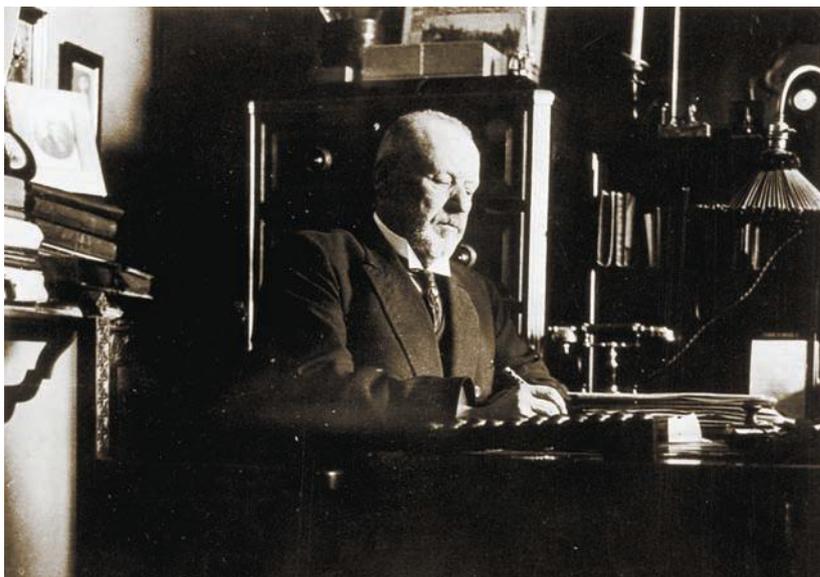
Cited in Laver, *Russia 1914–1941* (1991), pp. 7–8

Warning 2: Chairman of Duma

Rodzianko was the Chairman of the Duma and visited the Tsar at army headquarters on 20 January 1917 to share his grave concerns:

Your majesty, I consider the state of the country to have become more critical and menacing than ever. The spirit of all the people is such that the gravest upheavals may be expected ... All Russia is unanimous in claiming a change of government and the appointment of a responsible premier invested with the confidence of the nation ... Sire, there is not a single honest or reliable man left in your entourage; all the best have either been eliminated or have resigned ... Indignation against and hatred of the Empress are growing throughout the country. She is looked on as Germany's champion ... Your Majesty, do not compel the people to choose between you and the good of the country.

Mikhail Rodzianko, cited in Massie, *Nicholas and Alexandra* (1967), p. 374



Source 8.2 Mikhail Rodzianko

Warning 3: British Ambassador

Sir George Buchanan was the British Ambassador in Russia from 1910 to 1918. He sent a respectful but prophetic warning to the Tsar in February 1917:

Your Majesty, I concluded, we must remember that the people and the army are but one, and that in the event of revolution only a small portion of the army can be counted on to defend the dynasty ...

If I see a friend walking through a wood on a dark night along a path which I knew ended in a precipice, would it not be my duty, sir, to warn him of the danger? And is it not equally my duty to warn Your Majesty of the abyss that lies ahead of you? You have, sir, come to the parting of the ways, and you have now to choose between the two paths. The one will lead you to victory and a glorious peace – the other to revolution and disaster. Let me implore you to choose the former.



Buchanan, *My Mission to Russia and Other Diplomatic Memories* (1923)

Source 8.3 Sir George Buchanan, British diplomat to Russia, 1910–17

Focus questions

- 1 What was Buchanan's prediction about the army?
- 2 Was the Tsar's regime in serious enough danger to be described as heading towards an 'abyss'?
- 3 What are the 'two paths'?



8.3 How did economic unrest result in social revolution?

Julian date	Crisis in Petrograd	Response
Saturday, 18 February 1917	<p>Twenty thousand workers at the Putilov Steel Works, the largest factory in Petrograd, were locked out by their managers after a disagreement over pay. Political activism resulted in the remaining workers at the factory also striking to support their workmates.</p>  <p>Source 8.4 Workers from the Putilov factory in Petrograd protesting</p>	No significant response recorded by Tsar, Duma or the soldiers.
Thursday, 23 February 1917	<p>International Women's Day saw thousands of women marching through the streets of Petrograd in protest against the lack of food and the futility of war. The crowd swelled to 90 000.</p>  <p>Source 8.5 International Women's Day march</p>	No significant response recorded by Tsar, Duma or the soldiers.
Friday, 24 February 1917	<p>According to General Khabalov, Chief of the Petrograd Military District, around 200 000 workers were on strike. Only minor violence occurred.</p>  <p>Source 8.6 Revolutionary newspapers are handed out to eager crowds</p>	Soldiers – Cossacks patrolled the city, but refused to fire on the striking workers in Nevsky Prospekt as long as bread was their only demand.

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Khabalov General Khabalov was the Chief of the Petrograd Military District during the February Revolution

Julian date	Crisis in Petrograd	Response
Saturday, 25 February 1917	Khabalov estimated that the number of striking workers had grown to around 240 000. The city came to a standstill. Public transport ceased. All newspapers closed down.	<p>Tsar – Nicholas telegraphed Khabalov: 'I command you to suppress from tomorrow all disorders on the streets of the capital, which are impermissible at a time when the fatherland is carrying on a difficult war with Germany.'</p> <p>Tsarina – Alexandra sent a message to Nicholas: 'This is a hooligan movement. Young people run about and shout that there is no bread, simply to create excitement, along with workers who prevent others from working ... But all this will pass and become calm, if only the Duma will behave itself.'</p>
Sunday, 26 February 1917	This was the day Trotsky later defined as most decisive because the soldiers began to join the protesters, turning the strikes into dangerous revolts. While many soldiers still patrolled the streets clearing protesters at bayonet point, several were seen among the crowds firing on police.	<p>Duma – Rodzianko telegraphed the Tsar urging immediate action: 'The situation is serious. The capital is in a state of anarchy ... It is necessary that some person enjoying the confidence of the whole country be entrusted immediately with the formation of a new government. There can be no delay. Any procrastination is fatal.'</p> <p>Tsar – Nicholas dismissed Rodzianko's telegram exclaiming, 'More rubbish from that fat pig!' Nicholas directed his agitation towards the Duma rather than the popular disturbances. He ordered the Duma to cease meeting immediately.</p>
Monday, 27 February 1917	The workers controlled the entire city with the exception of the Winter Palace, Admiralty and telegraph installations. Protesters released an estimated 15 000 political prisoners and ordinary criminals. Prisons, police stations, government records and furniture were then burnt in huge bonfires.	<p>Tsar – Nicholas telegraphed Alexandra suggesting that mutiny among the troops was minor and that the Duma ministers must simply work harder to solve the food and fuel problems.</p> <p>Duma – Rodzianko sent an urgent telegram: 'Measures must be taken, immediately, for tomorrow will already be too late. The final hour has struck, when the fate of the country and the dynasty is being decided.'</p> <p>Significantly, the first political initiative was taken by 12 members of the Duma who refused the Tsar's demand to dissolve, and formed a Provisional Committee.</p> <p>Soldiers – No soldiers could now be relied upon by the government. John Pollock, an English journalist, estimated that up to 40 000 soldiers had mutinied; other estimates were as high as 75 000.</p>
Tuesday, 28 February 1917	The fighting escalated to extreme violence. Police with machine guns and rifles positioned themselves at the top of high buildings. Armoured trucks full of rebelling soldiers were taken where the fighting was heaviest. Shulgin, a conservative Duma leader, commented: 'These days passed as a nightmare – no beginning, no ending, no middle, all jumbled together.'	<p>Tsar – The Tsar received an urgent telegram from Alexandra: 'Concessions inevitable. Street fighting continues. Many units gone over to the enemy.'</p> <p>Yet Nicholas did not act. His mistake was one of omission. This failure to act decisively or to promise reform allowed the protests to gather deadly momentum.</p>



Julian date	Crisis in Petrograd	Response
Tuesday, 28 February 1917 (continued)		Duma – The one-day old Provisional Committee publicly declared itself the Provisional Government (see Chapter 9). Soldiers – Apart from 1500 loyal troops led by Khabalov in the Winter Palace, the city now overwhelmingly belonged to the protesters. In a crucial act, soldiers and workers formed the Petrograd Soviet (see Chapter 9).
Wednesday, 1 March 1917	Soldiers, including the Imperial Guard and Cossacks on horseback, openly marched in official formation wearing red ribbons and carrying red flags, demonstrating their allegiance to the revolution.	Tsar – The Tsar finally responded proactively by approving the formation of the Provisional Government. He began the return journey to Petrograd to personally solve the problems. Soldiers – The military revolution was complete. The Petrograd Soviet asserted control by issuing Soviet Order No. 1 (see Chapter 9).
Thursday, 2 March 1917	Due to the capture of the train tracks by armed revolutionary soldiers, the Tsar's train journey was halted 250 kilometres short of Petrograd and detoured to Pskov.	Tsar – Nicholas abdicated! He wrote in his diary: 'All around me there is treachery, cowardice and deceit.' He requested that his brother Mikhail become the new Tsar. Duma – The Provisional Government took official control of Russia.
Friday, 3 March 1917	Key political action took place behind the scenes because peace on the streets had been restored. An estimated 1330 people had been killed fighting.	Tsar – Grand Duke Mikhail abdicated! The Romanov Dynasty ended in a dismal blaze of helplessness and resignation.

ANALYSIS ACTIVITY 8.1: COMPREHENSION TABLE

In your workbook, write a short heading summarising the key crisis for each day in order to create an overview of the February Revolution. Also work out the Gregorian dates to eliminate confusion when you read Western sources.

Russian Julian calendar	Western Gregorian calendar	Your summary of key crisis or event
18 February	3 March	Massive strike at Putilov Steel Works, Petrograd
23 February		
24 February		
25 February		
26 February		
27 February		
28 February		
1 March		
2 March		
3 March		

A MATTER OF FACT

One wealthy upper-class lady cunningly saved the destruction of her elegant Petrograd mansion by putting a sign on her door: 'No trespassing. This house is the property of the Petrograd Soviet.' Countess Kleinmichel has been taken to the Fortress of St Peter and Paul.' She then leisurely packed her bags and escaped.

ANALYSIS ACTIVITY 8.2: SYNTHESIS

- 1 Which day do you consider most significant? Provide evidence.
- 2 Which single event do you consider most significant? Provide evidence.
- 3 Was it the role of ideas, leaders or popular movements that was most important in causing the February Revolution in Petrograd? Provide evidence.

ANALYSIS ACTIVITY 8.3: CREATIVE RESPONSE

Imagine you were one of the following key players in the February Revolution. Write your account of the revolution.

- Rodzianko – Chairman of the Duma
- Khabalov – Chief of Police in Petrograd
- Nicholas – last Tsar of Russia
- Alexandra – last Tsarina of Russia
- Mikhail – Nicholas's brother
- Serge – a fictional industrial worker from the Putilov Steel Works
- Olga – a fictional woman who marched in protest on International Women's Day



**ANALYSIS ACTIVITY 8.4: HISTORICAL INTERPRETATIONS****Key debate 1: Was the February Revolution spontaneous or organised?**

Argument 1: The February Revolution was spontaneous and leaderless.

William Chamberlin, an American historian, wrote:

The collapse of the Romanov autocracy in March 1917 was one of the most leaderless, spontaneous, anonymous revolutions of all time. While almost every thoughtful observer in Russia in the winter of 1916–1917 foresaw the likelihood of the crash of the existing regime, no one, even among the revolutionary leaders, realised that the strikes and bread riots which broke out in Petrograd on March 8 [Gregorian calendar] would culminate in the mutiny of the garrison and the overthrow of the government four days later . . .

There are two features of the March revolution that strike the observer again and again. There is the lack of planned leadership, and there is the action of the soldiers independently of their officers. The latter, with very few exceptions, simply disappeared during the decisive hours of the uprising.

The anonymous host of workers in collarless blouses and soldiers in grey uniforms overthrew the Romanov Dynasty, with its three centuries of absolute rule behind it. But the rebellious masses had nothing concrete to put in the place of the old order.

Chamberlin, *The Russian Revolution 1917–1921*, pp. 73–80

- 1 Write down the sentence that best summarises Chamberlin's key argument.
- 2 What are the two features of the revolution that 'strike the observer'?
- 3 What key role did the troops play?
- 4 What was his criticism of the 'rebellious masses'?

Argument 2: The February Revolution was planned and organised by the Bolsheviks.

Despite not being in Petrograd in February or March 1917, or being a member of the Bolshevik Party, Leon Trotsky argued that revolution was achieved by the workers and peasants who were educated and organised by the Bolsheviks. Trotsky wrote:

The February Revolution was accomplished by the workers and peasants – the latter in the person of soldiers. But there still remains the great question. Who raised the workers to their feet? Who brought the soldiers into the streets? . . . The mystic doctrine of spontaneousness explains nothing. In every factory, in each guild, in each company, in each tavern, in the military hospital, at the transfer stations, even in the depopulated villages, the molecular work of revolutionary thought was in progress . . . To the question 'Who led the February Revolution?' we can answer definitely enough: Conscious and tempered workers educated for the most part by the party of Lenin.

Trotsky, *History of the Russian Revolution* (1977), pp. 136–48

- 1 The revolution occurred in the city of Petrograd. How does Trotsky argue that the peasants contributed to the success of the revolution?
- 2 What evidence is there to support Trotsky's argument that the revolution was led by the Bolsheviks?
- 3 Why would it be hypocritical for Trotsky to argue any differently than he does?

8.4 FLASHPOINT!

Abdication of Tsar Nicholas II

The Tsar had lost all political and popular authority even before his abdication. Due to the immediacy of the crisis, the Petrograd Soviet and the Provisional Government had been asserting power since 28 February. Nicholas's generals and advisers recommended that his voluntary abdication would be the only way to ensure a peaceful transition to a new order. General Brussilov stated: 'If it is necessary to choose between the Tsar and Russia, I side with Russia.' Historian Robert Massie writes of the personal turmoil experienced by the Tsar in accepting his generals' advice:

If the anguish felt by Nicholas at this last climatic moment of his reign is impossible to know, the logic of his reasoning is fairly clear. If he rejected the advice of his political leaders in Petrograd and of his generals, what could he do next? ... Years of rule, years of war, years of personal strain and anguish had left him with few inner resources with which to face the prospect of plunging his country into civil war. Ultimately, the factor which swung the Tsar's decision was the advice of his generals. For Nicholas, each one of these telegrams was more significant than a dozen messages from Rodzianko ... If it was the advice of his generals that the highest act of patriotism he could perform would be to abdicate, then it became impossible for Nicholas to refuse.

Massie, *Nicholas and Alexandra* (1967),
pp. 393–4



Source 8.7 A young Nicholas II and his son and heir, Tsarevich Alexi, around 1910. By March 1917, Nicholas planned to abdicate in favour of his 13-year-old-son.

**ANALYSIS ACTIVITY 8.5: DOCUMENT ANALYSIS****Key document: The Tsar's abdication**

At 3 pm on 2 March 1917, Tsar Nicholas II signed his abdication in favour of his son, Alexi. While waiting for the Duma delegates to arrive at Pskov, Nicholas had a conversation with the family doctor about the grave nature of Alexi's haemophilia. The fact that he and Alexandra were likely to be exiled from Russia and hence separated from their son prompted the Tsar to write a second abdication document that included Alexi:

In these days of great struggle with a foreign enemy, who for nearly three years has striven to enslave our homeland, the Lord God has been pleased to send down on Russia a new, terrible ordeal. The internal popular disturbances that have begun, threaten to have a disastrous effect on the further conduct of this persistent war. The destiny of Russia, the honour of our heroic army, the welfare of the people, the entire future of our dear fatherland demand that, whatever it may cost, the war be brought to a victorious end.

The cruel enemy is gathering his last forces, and already the hour is near when our gallant army, together with our glorious allies, will be able to finally crush the enemy. In these decisive days in the life of Russia, we have deemed it a duty of conscience to facilitate for our people a close union and consolidation of all national forces for the speediest attainment of victory; and, in agreement with the State Duma, we have thought it best to abdicate the throne of the Russian state and to lay down the supreme power.

Not wishing to part with our beloved son, we hand down our inheritance to our brother, Grand Duke Mikhail Aleksandrovich, and give him our blessing on his accession to the throne of the Russian state. We enjoin our brother to direct state affairs in full and inviolable union with the representatives of the people in the legislative institutions, on those principles which they will establish.

In the name of our dearly beloved homeland we call on all faithful sons of the fatherland to fulfil their sacred duty to the Tsar by obeying him at this grave moment of national tribulation, to help him, together with the representatives of the people, to bring the Russian state onto the road of victory, prosperity and glory.

May the Lord God help Russia! Nikolai

From Vernadsky & Fisher, *A Source Book for Russian History*, p. 883



Source 8.8 The front page of Sydney newspaper *The Sun* the morning after the Tsar abdicated

- 1 What was Tsar Nicholas's attitude to the war?
- 2 What was his attitude towards the 'internal popular disturbances' in Petrograd?
- 3 What reason does he provide for laying down the supreme power and abdicating?
- 4 What reason does he provide for also abdicating on behalf of his son Alexi? Was this the correct decision?
- 5 What is unexpected or ironic about the leadership advice ('enjoin') he gave to his brother Grand Duke Mikhail?
- 6 What is your overall impression of the Tsar's character in this process?
- 7 The APPARTS model is a helpful model to analyse primary sources. Remember the APPARTS model as a way to analyse, or pull apart, a document or image. Copy and complete the table below in your workbook for the Tsar's abdication.

A	AUTHOR	Who created the source?
P	PLACE AND TIME	Where and when was this source created? Does the date make this a primary or secondary source?
P	PRIOR KNOWLEDGE	What do you already know that would further your understanding of this source? For example, you may already know something about the author, or the place where it was produced, or what was happening in Russia at the same time, or about the event or topic on which the source is focusing.
A	AUDIENCE	Who was the intended audience of this source? Who was it made for?
R	REASON	Why was this source produced at the time it was produced?
T	THE MAIN IDEA	What is the key argument, perspective or point of view shown in this source?
S	SIGNIFICANCE	Why is this source important? How does this source help you to better understand the key issues or events occurring in Russia at the time?

A MATTER OF FACT

In the last letter to his wife before he abdicated, Nicholas wrote, 'I shall take up dominoes again in my spare time.'

The day after Nicholas abdicated, his brother refused to become the new Tsar. This second abdication ended the 304-year Romanov Dynasty. Despite not being Nicholas's intention, the system of government in Russia headed by an autocratic tsar was formally over. Official power was transferred to the Provisional Committee, which became the Provisional Government. The great influence of popular movements was realised – what had begun as protests to alert the government of the terrible food and fuel crisis in Petrograd resulted in the political defeat of one of the most powerful leaders in Europe. Ironically, the Tsar's abdication resulted in what he had never been willing or able to give his country: a broad-based coalition government. As historian Orlando Figes powerfully argued:

For 22 years he ignored the lessons of history, as well as the pleadings of countless advisors, which all pointed to the fact that the only way to save his throne was to grant a government accountable to the people ... he probably found it easier to abdicate than to turn himself into a constitutional king. That was Nicholas' tragedy.

**ANALYSIS ACTIVITY 8.6: HISTORICAL INTERPRETATIONS****Key debate 2: Was the Tsar pushed off the throne against his will or did he choose to give up his throne?**

The answer to this question is important in our understanding of the Tsar as the leader of Russia. If he was forced off the throne, we can reserve some sympathy for him. If he simply gave up, it provides a perfect example of weak leadership.

Argument 1: The Tsar abdicated against his will.

- 1 In this cartoon, what does the dark cloud symbolise about revolution?
- 2 Whose hand is pushing the Tsar off the cliff? What is the symbolism of the hand coming through the back of the throne?
- 3 What is interesting about what the Tsar is wearing?
- 4 Is it historically correct to argue, as the cartoon does, that the throne was very close to the edge of the cliff?



Source 8.9 A cartoon produced in March 1917, titled 'At Last' (*Brisbane Worker*, 22 March 1917)

Argument 2: The Tsar chose to give up his throne.

Pipes argued that the Tsar both replaced Nikolaevich in 1915 and then abdicated in 1917 because of his selfless love for Russia. He had the power to crush the February disturbance, which would have made it merely a futile revolt rather than the revolution it became. Pipes wrote:

When the generals and Duma politicians persuaded him that he had to go and save the army and avert a humiliating capitulation, he acquiesced. Had staying in power been his supreme objective, he could easily have concluded peace with Germany and turned the army loose against the mutineers. The record leaves no doubt that the myth of the Tsar being forced from the throne by the rebellious workers and peasants is just that. The Tsar yielded not to a rebellious populace, but to generals and politicians, and he did so from a sense of patriotic duty. The social revolution followed rather than preceded the act of abdication.

Pipes, *Russia under the Bolshevik Regime 1919–1924* (1994), p. 497

- 1 Why does Pipes believe that the Tsar's abdication reflected strong leadership?
- 2 From this extract, why does Pipes argue that there was a social revolution in Russia?

8.5 Why did the February Revolution occur?

George Kennan, an American who worked with the American Foreign Service from 1926 to 1953, wrote three books on the revolution and Russian foreign policy. Kennan's arguments about why the February Revolution occurred were presented to a conference of experts in Russian history commemorating the fiftieth anniversary of the revolution in 1967. The following extracts are taken from his full paper in Bucklow and Russell's *Russia: Why Revolution?* (1992).

Argument 1 – It is an oversimplification to argue that the old regime collapsed because it failed to modernise industry.

Evidence 1 – ‘The rates of industrial growth achieved in Russia in the final decades of tsardom would appear to compare not at all unfavourably with those achieved in Western countries at comparable stages of development. The 8 per cent figure for the period from 1906 to 1914 [is] respectable ... to say the least. One must doubt that the pace of industrialisation could have been pushed much further without producing adverse social consequence.’

Argument 2 – It is an oversimplification to argue that the old regime collapsed because it failed to overcome the backward agrarian system.

Evidence 2 – ‘One can truthfully say that the Tsar's government deserved [criticism] ... for its failures in relation to the peasant throughout most of the nineteenth century ... [but] the fact is that the revolution came precisely at the moment when the prospects for the development of Russian agriculture, the war aside, had never looked more hopeful.’



Source 8.10 A demonstration in Petrograd in 1917



Argument 3 – The most decisive and fundamental reason for which the old regime collapsed was the failure of the autocracy to introduce a representative ‘parliament’.

Evidence 3 – ‘There was of course, eventually, the Duma ... [but] it was obvious that the granting of it by Nicholas II came far too late and precisely in the wrong way – under pressure, that is, and with obvious reluctance and suspicion on his part.’

Argument 4 – The second fundamental reason why the old regime collapsed was the personality and weak leadership of the Tsar.

Evidence 4 – ‘Poorly educated, narrow in intellectual horizon, a wretchedly bad judge of people, isolated from Russian society at large, in contact with only the most narrow military and bureaucratic circles, intimidated by the ghost of his imposing father and the glowering proximity of his numerous gigantic uncles, helpless under the destructive influence of his endlessly unfortunate wife: Nicholas was obviously inadequate to the demands of his exalted position.’

The story so far

- Russia was experiencing severe economic crisis due to a shortage of food and fuel as a result of the First World War.
- Despite receiving honest and desperate warnings from three key sources – the *Okhrana*, Chairman of the Duma and the British Ambassador – the Tsar remained inactive. No reforms were initiated.
- The economic unrest erupted into social action on the streets of Petrograd from 23 February, when striking workers from the Putilov factory joined the march for International Women’s Day.
- The key factor in the success of the revolution was the mutiny of the troops from the large Petrograd and Tsarskoe Selo Garrisons, who openly sided with the protesters. This gave military power to the protesters’ numerical might.
- While the spontaneous popular disturbances were predicted by many sources, the political consequences were unimaginable. The result of the February Revolution was the abdication of the Tsar and the end of the 300-year-old Romanov Dynasty.
- A new coalition Provisional Government was established by members of the Fourth Duma, led by Prince Lvov.

CHAPTER REVIEW

DEVELOPING CLEAR DEFINITIONS

Write explanations for the role in the February Revolution of each of the following.

Key leadership roles	Key locations	Key events
Mikhail Rodzianko	Putilov Steel Works	Putilov Strikes
General Khabalov	Nevsky Prospekt	International Women's Day
Grand Duke Mikhail	Pskov	Abdication of the Tsar

PRACTISING PARAGRAPH ANSWERS

- 1 What were the main outcomes of the February Revolution?
- 2 Was the February Revolution spontaneous or organised?
- 3 Did the Tsar abdicate against his will or did he choose to give up the throne?
- 4 Why did the February Revolution succeed?

PRACTICE ESSAY QUESTIONS

- 1 'A revolution breaks out when all the antagonisms of a society have reached their highest tension' (Trotsky). Discuss this view, providing evidence to support your answer.
- 2 'February was a fortunate revolution. It had no leaders, no ideology and no program for the future.' Discuss this view, providing evidence to support your answer.
- 3 'Was there a "revolution" in Russia in February 1917?' Discuss this question, providing evidence to support your answer.



READING MORE DEEPLY

Easy

Massie, R 1967, *Nicholas & Alexandra: The Tragic, Compelling Story of the Last Tsar and his Family*, Indigo. Chapter 27, 'Revolution: March 1917', pp. 377–88; Chapter 28, 'Abdication', pp. 389–405.

Moderate

Lang, S, 'What is bias?' in *AGORA* (History Teachers' Association of Victoria Journal, 1994), Vol. 29, No. 3.

Challenging

Hill, C 1947, *Lenin and the Russian Revolution*, London. Chapter 1, 'The causes of the revolution', pp. 3–30.

The strength of Hill's chapter is his focus on economic, social and political aspects of the tsarist regime. As Hill's sympathies lie with the revolution, his assumption is that the cracks in the old regime became so large that revolution was inevitable. Specifically, he contrasts the political undercurrent of liberalism and socialism, and the growing demand within Russia for modernisation, with the human weakness of Nicholas.



Crisis of dual authority

“

The Provisional Government had authority without power whilst the Soviet had power without authority.

– KERENSKY

”

OVERVIEW

The abdication of Tsar Nicholas II was the most significant event of the February Revolution. The political consequences, however, went far deeper. Two new political bodies were formed on 28 February: the Provisional Government that, as Kerensky admitted, were the official authority with formal power; and the Petrograd Soviet that had the genuine power in the eyes of the people. Russia entered a period best described as **dual government**, with both organisations playing crucial roles for eight months until the Bolshevik takeover in October.

dual government the term given to the eight-month period between February and October 1917

Dual government can further be considered as having operated in two different phases. The first phase, February to April, was when the Provisional Government and the Petrograd Soviet generally worked together and were supported by the main revolutionary parties, including the Bolsheviks. The second phase was from Lenin's return on 3 April, when he launched a rivalry campaign that separated the Soviet and the Bolshevik Party from the Provisional Government and their supporters.

This chapter analyses the formation, key documents and impact of each of these two new powers, with a focus on the key turning points within this formative revolutionary year. Lenin's return in April infused a radical Marxist mindset into the Bolshevik Party. The failed revolt of July seemingly signalled the victory of Kerensky and the Provisional Government, as the Bolshevik leadership, organisation and offices were utterly destroyed. Yet a turn of affairs, with General **Kornilov's** threatening march on Petrograd, reinvented the Bolsheviks – within two months they were able to overthrow the Provisional Government.

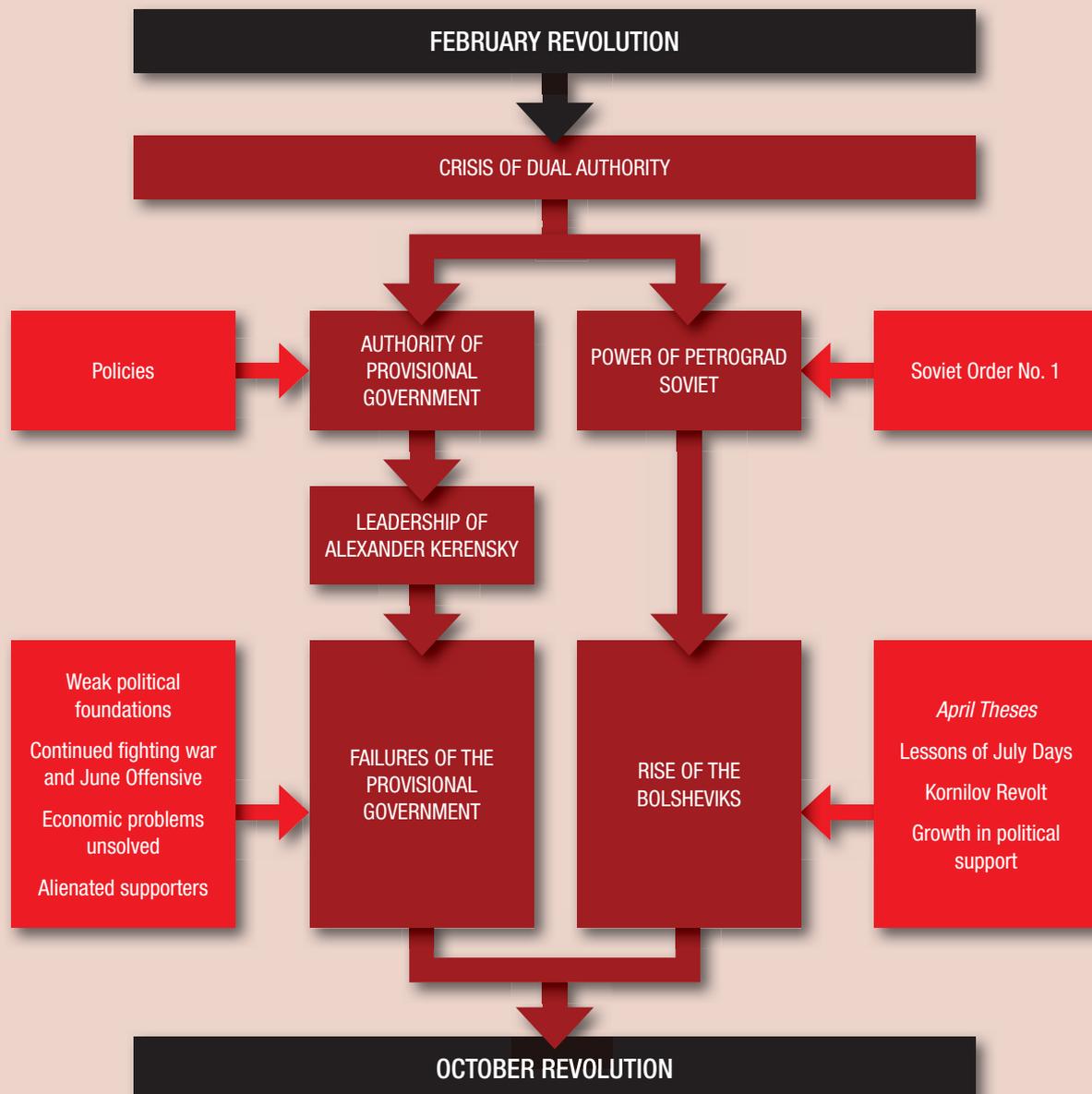
Kornilov a tsarist military general who marched his troops on Petrograd in August 1917



KEY ISSUES

- Why did the Provisional Government have authority without power?
- Why did the Petrograd Soviet have power without authority?
- Significant individual: Alexander Kerensky
- Why did the Provisional Government fail to win support?
- What were the turning points in the rise of the Bolsheviks?

FLOW OF CHAPTER



9.1 Why did the Provisional Government have authority without power?

As Chairman of the State Duma, Mikhail Rodzianko formed the Provisional Government and Prince Lvov was appointed Prime Minister. The members of the new government had all been elected in 1912 to the Fourth Duma. All were wealthy members of noble or landowning families and most were members of the Freemasons religious society. Some were openly liberal and opposed to the Tsar, like Miliukov, the Foreign Minister, and Kerensky, a former leader of the Socialist Revolutionaries and a current member of the Petrograd Soviet.

Provisional Government policies

The Provisional Government's key policies were published on the same day and immediately implemented over the next few days. Historian Robert Service described Russia as becoming 'freer than any other country', despite still being involved in the First World War. Policies included:

- full amnesty of all political and religious prisoners
- freedom of speech
- freedom of the press
- freedom to strike and assemble in unions
- abolition of all class, religious and national restrictions
- immediate preparations for a vote to elect a Constituent Assembly consisting of representatives from the whole nation; when formed, the Provisional Government would cease to exist
- replacement of the tsarist police with an elected people's militia
- election of local councils
- military troops who fought on the side of the revolution to be given roles as permanent defenders of Petrograd.



Source 9.1 Prince Lvov, appointed as Prime Minister of Russia

Focus questions

- 1 Why did the Provisional Government describe itself as 'provisional' or 'temporary'?
- 2 How might these policies have been received by the troops? By the workers?
- 3 Which policies would have assisted the war effort? Which would have disadvantaged the war effort?
- 4 Suggest some extra policies that may have gained greater support for the Provisional Government.
- 5 Lenin later attacked the Provisional Government as being made up of conservative politicians who did not represent the 'revolutionary' aspirations of the people. To what extent do you agree with Lenin's criticism?



9.2 Why did the Petrograd Soviet have power without authority?

On 28 February, 600 soldiers and workers turned up to the Tauride Palace and officially formed the Petrograd Soviet of Workers' and Soldiers' Deputies, as Trotsky had during the 1905 Revolution. Chkeidze, a Menshevik, was elected as its first chairman. The soviet's considerable influence derived from its control of the army, railways, communications, employers and employees. Over 3000 deputies regularly packed into the meeting room to hotly debate the progress of the revolution. Lenin argued that because the soviet represented ordinary Russians, it must assume total control.

A MATTER OF FACT

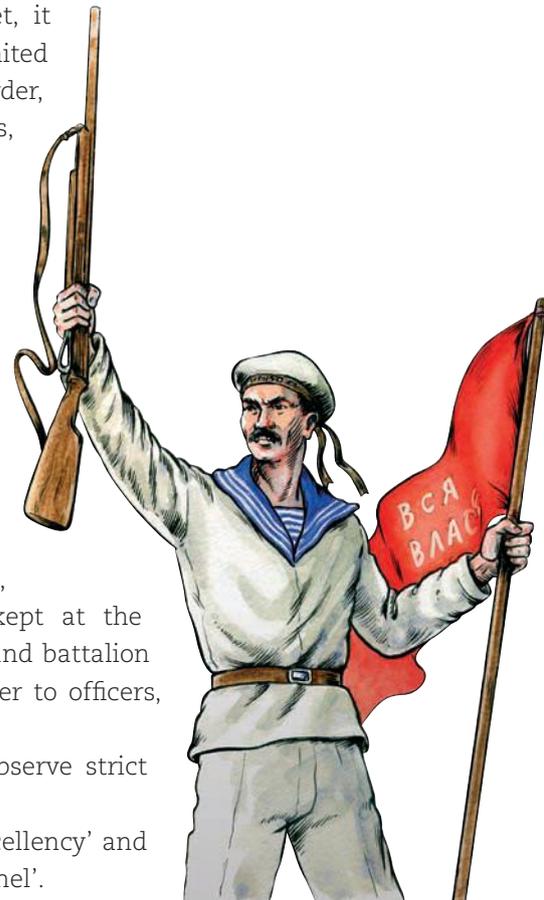
Surprisingly, the rival Provisional Government and Petrograd Soviet met in adjacent rooms of the royal Tauride Palace.

Soviet Order No. 1

Soviet Order No. 1 The Order given by the Petrograd Soviet one day after its formation that no military orders from the Provisional Government were to be obeyed unless also approved by the Soviet

A day after the formation of the Petrograd Soviet, it published the following demands that severely limited the power of the Provisional Government. The Order, called **Soviet Order No. 1**, was to be read to all companies, battalions, regiments and sailors. Key demands included:

- Every military unit, from army battalions to navy vessels, must elect representatives immediately to attend the Soviet.
- All political activity of the military units 'is subordinated to the Soviet'.
- Any military orders given by the Provisional Government 'shall be executed only in such cases as they do not conflict with the orders and resolutions of the Soviet'.
- 'All kinds of arms, such as rifles, machine guns, armoured automobiles and others, must be kept at the disposal and under the control of the company and battalion commanders and must in no case be turned over to officers, even at their demand.'
- When performing their duties, soldiers 'must observe strict military discipline'.
- Titles of officers must be changed from 'Your Excellency' and 'Your Honour' to 'Mister General' and 'Mister Colonel'.



Focus questions

- 1 Which of these items were reactions against the old tsarist system?
- 2 Which of these would have been most threatening to the Provisional Government?
- 3 Rank the demands in order of significance, with 1 being most important and 6 being least important.
- 4 How likely was it that these orders would be obeyed?

ANALYSIS ACTIVITY 9.1: VISUAL ANALYSIS

As Napoleon famously stated, 'A picture tells a thousand words'. Your task is to compare photographs of the representative political bodies formed in 1917 (see Sources 9.2 and 9.3).



Source 9.2 The new Provisional Government



Source 9.3 First session of the Petrograd Soviet in the Tauride Palace

- 1 Write three words that best describe each of the photographs.
- 2 In what ways do these two photographs support Lenin's argument that the Provisional Government merely represented the wealthy, while the Soviet represented the proletariat?
- 3 Lenin criticised the Provisional Government as being merely the Duma under a new name. Research images of these institutions using the links at <http://cambridge.edu.au/redirect/?id=5818>, <http://cambridge.edu.au/redirect/?id=5820>, and <http://cambridge.edu.au/redirect/?id=5822>.
 - *The State Duma*, 1906. Type 'State Duma' in the advanced search panel to look up pictures.
 - *Ceremonial Meeting of the State Council*, 1903, by Ilia Repin.
 - Search the Russian Museum, which has some useful resources.
 - a What are the similarities between the Provisional Government and the Tsar's government?
 - b Is Lenin's criticism justified?

9.3 SIGNIFICANT INDIVIDUAL**Alexander Kerensky (1881–1970)**

Kerensky was a fascinating and unique character in that he was the only member of both the Provisional Government and the Executive Committee of the Petrograd Soviet. As an eloquent and passionate leader of the dominant Socialist Revolutionary Party and Vice Chairman of the Petrograd Soviet, he was seemingly an ideal figurehead to unify the new Russia.

Career background

Lawyer

Leadership roles

1905 Joined the Socialist Revolutionaries

1917 February – led a strong movement demanding the Tsar's abdication
 March – Minister of Justice
 June – Minister of War
 July – Prime Minister of Provisional Government

Leadership strengths

Brilliant orator

Enthusiasm – described by Moynahan as 'compulsively energetic'

Leadership highlights

Absolute defeat of radical Bolshevik Party in the July Days

Defeat of Commander in Chief Kornilov's advance on Petrograd

Image in media headlines

'Knight of the Revolution'

'First love of the Revolution'

'The hero-minister'

'The Leader of Freedom'

'Leader of the Russian Revolution'



Source 9.4 Alexander Kerensky, born 1881

A MATTER OF FACT

Kerensky's father was the principal of Lenin's high school when Lenin was a student there.

9.4 Why did the Provisional Government fail to win support?

Failure 1: Weak political and popular foundation

The fundamental weakness undermining the Provisional Government's power was its dubious political beginnings. The new government had formed from a rebellious committee of 12 men who had refused to stop meeting as the Tsar had ordered. They had then gained power by default after the triple abdication (Nicholas, Alexi and Michael). This had vast political implications. They were not chosen representatives elected by mass vote and therefore did not have widespread support. The core issue was that they were privileged members of society from the Fourth Duma who were given political control in the confusion of a desperate internal crisis. They did not have a popular mandate for their new-found authority and were never able to overcome this legacy.

Failure 2: Continued fighting the First World War

The dominant problem inherited by the Provisional Government was Russia's continued involvement in the First World War. Militarily, Russian forces had been disorganised since their early losses. Economically, the war had virtually bankrupted the nation, as Interior Minister Durnovo had warned the Tsar. Socially, the Russian population desired peace and relief from constant turmoil. Yet the new government remained committed to the war because pulling out would have forfeited the considerable loans from Russia's Western allies. Politicians and generals also stubbornly refused to give up the struggle.

Failure 3: June Offensive

By June, Russia's problems were crushing the country. Kerensky had been promoted to Minister of War in early May. He decided that remaining in the war was like waiting to die. Despite having little military rationale, a proactive attack was planned to boost the morale of the soldiers. Kerensky visited the front, powerfully urging them to view the battle as a revolutionary crusade leading to freedom and a bright future. The Petrograd Soviet supported the move, declaring that it might, 'stop the disintegration in our army'. Similarly, Maxim Gorky, a socialist leader, claimed that, 'although I am a pacifist, I welcome the coming offensive in the hope that it may at least bring some organisation to the country'.

Source 9.5 Kerensky at his writing desk



**A MATTER OF FACT**

Before the June Offensive, a medal was produced in Kerensky's honour. One side of the medal showed him surrounded by flowers and the other was inscribed: 'The glorious, wise, true and beloved leader of the people – 1917'. After the June Offensive, however, his public image was undermined by rumours that he dressed in women's clothes and undoubtedly used drugs!

After two days of artillery bombing, the Russians attacked the Austrian line on 18 June. The Russian army achieved immediate success, capturing 18 000 prisoners in only two days. German reinforcements nullified this euphoria, however, inflicting massive casualties, estimated by Sheila Fitzpatrick at 200 000. Instead of dropping shells, the German planes flew low over the fleeing troops and 'bombed' them with propaganda leaflets.

Failure 4: Lack of focus on economic problems

The direct consequence of focusing on the war was that the internal problems of food and fuel shortages, inflation, peasant seizures of land and ministerial instability were not adequately addressed. The historian Michael Lynch describes the central problem facing the Provisional Government: 'It was a paradoxical situation: in order to survive the Provisional Government had to keep Russia in the war, but in doing so it destroyed its own chances of survival' (Lynch 2000).

Failure 5: Alienation of both upper-class and working-class supporters

Australian historian David Christian, in his book *Power and Privilege* (1989), argues that the Provisional Government lost support primarily because it attempted to please all sections of the population.

ANALYSIS ACTIVITY 9.2: GRIEVANCES

In the first few weeks after the abdication, over 4000 letters and telegrams were sent to the Soviet, Duma and Provisional Government, providing an invaluable analysis of the aspirations of the Russian people. The overwhelming demand was to form a democratic republic by establishing a Constituent Assembly.

Workers' main grievances	Peasants' main grievances
Introduce an eight-hour working day	Seize state land and that of large landowners
Raise salaries	Give land to those who work it
Improve sanitary conditions	Decrease land rents
Abolish overtime hours	

Bucklow & Russell, *Russia: Why Revolution?*, pp. 132–3

- 1 Which of these grievances did the Provisional Government try to address and how?
- 2 How does this list of grievances help explain the failure of the Provisional Government?

Kerensky admitted in his memoirs that he had attempted an impossible middle road. This meant that some of the Provisional Government's policies were aimed at pleasing its upper-class supporters while others sought to appeal to working-class supporters of the Soviet. Consequently, both sections of society were alienated.

9.5 What were the turning points in the rise of the Bolsheviks?

Turning points are events in history that have a significant positive or negative impact. Rather than suggesting that the following turning points created a formula for Bolshevik success, they merely highlight the experiences of the Bolshevik Party in 1917.

Turning point 1: Revolutionaries return and Lenin's *April Theses*

Bolshevik involvement in the February Revolution was limited, with most Bolshevik leaders at the time exiled to Europe or Siberia. However, the Provisional Government's policy of releasing all political prisoners meant leaders could publicly return to Russia. Revolutionaries in Europe faced the difficult prospect of returning through enemy war zones, but accepting Germany's assistance raised the ideological danger of political compromise. The Germans naturally hoped that returning the revolutionaries would defeat the Russian Government and result in the withdrawal of Russian troops from the war. Lenin, Stalin, Zinoviev and other Bolshevik exiles in Switzerland accepted the option of being transported in a sealed express German train, and were returned to Finland Station in Petrograd on 3 April. Trotsky returned independently from the United States in May 1917 (see Source 9.6).

Lenin's return was the most significant turning point in this period of dual government. He radically altered the course of the Bolshevik Party from supporting the Provisional Government to seeking exclusive power. He presented a clear political program for change. The Provisional Government's policy of freedom of speech and the press now operated against it. Lenin was able to openly speak against the new government in the same hostile and abrupt manner that had resulted in his frequent exile under the Tsar.



Source 9.6 Trotsky (pictured here with bodyguards) had returned from the United States to Petrograd by May 1917



Lenin's attack on the Provisional Government began in an impromptu speech to crowds gathered by the Soviet at the Finland Station to celebrate his return. Sukhanov described the powerful speech in his memoirs as being unforgettably 'thunder-like'. Two phrases from his speech became common slogans that represented the philosophies of the Bolsheviks: 'Peace, Land, Bread!' and 'All Power to the Soviets'. These slogans became the political platform upon which Lenin attempted to gain popularity – a promise to end the hated war, to redistribute land in the countryside and to solve the chronic food shortage. What was so revolutionary about his speech and subsequent *April Theses* was the immediacy with which he demanded the transition from the Provisional Government's upper-class democracy to a revolutionary dictatorship of workers and peasants.

Key document: Lenin's *April Theses*

Lenin released his *April Theses* the next day, 4 April. A 'thesis' is an idea or argument and Lenin's 'theses' were a collection of his arguments that became the Bolshevik blueprint for revolution.

Extracts from Lenin's <i>April Theses</i>	Add your summary
1 Our attitude toward the war, which under the new government of Lvov and Co. unquestionably remains on Russia's part a predatory imperialist war owing to the capitalist nature of that government ...	
2 The present situation in Russia ... represents a transition from the first stage of the revolution – which, owing to the insufficient class consciousness and organisation of the proletariat, placed the power in the hands of the bourgeoisie – to the second stage, which must place the power in the hands of the proletariat and the poorest strata of the peasantry ...	
3 No support for the Provisional Government; the utter falsity of all its promises should be made clear ...	
4 It must be explained to the masses that the Soviet of Workers' Deputies are the only possible form of the revolutionary government ...	
5 Not a parliamentary republic – a return to it ... would be a step backward – but a republic of Soviets of Workers', Agricultural Labourers' and Peasants' Deputies throughout the land, from top to bottom.	
6 Confiscation of all landed estates ... the disposal of the land to be put in charge of the local soviets ...	

Adapted from Lenin, *Collected Works*, Vol. 24

Focus questions

- 1 Copy and complete the second column in your workbook.
- 2 Which of the six extracts would have been most favoured by the Petrograd Soviet? Industrial workers? Peasants?
- 3 Which was most damaging to the Provisional Government?
- 4 Describe the tone of Lenin's words.



Source 9.7 A painting by Aksenov depicting both Lenin's speech of 3 April 1917 and the popularity of his return

Menshevik Bogdanov immediately declared the *April Theses* as 'the raving of a madman!', arguing that Lenin was 'planting the banner of civil war in the midst of revolutionary democracy'. This grievance arose because Lenin's approach was uncompromising: the February Revolution had not been a genuine class revolution, and the Bolsheviks would achieve power alone through the soviets without cooperation from any other revolutionary party. Even Kamenev, a prominent Bolshevik leader, published an article in *Pravda* the next day called 'Our Differences'. In it he declared that Lenin's arguments were 'unacceptable' and 'greatly in variance' with those of other revolutionary leaders. Most historians conclude that Lenin's call for 'All power to the Soviets' was really a call for 'All power to the Bolsheviks'. They argue that Lenin perceived the soviets, with the most important being the Petrograd Soviet, as a strong power base from which the Bolshevik Party could assume sole political power. Taking control of the soviets could then allow a takeover of the country in the name of the proletariat.

Lenin's return and the *April Theses* are crucial to understanding the subsequent events of 1917. The relative cooperation between the Provisional Government, Petrograd Soviet and revolutionary parties ended abruptly. The fires of hostile ideological and political rivalry were inflamed.

Turning point 2: The July Days

By late June, the country was collapsing both socially and economically. Between March and July, 568 factories closed down, resulting in the dismissal of a further 104 000 workers. Internal crises were multiplying and the inadequacy of the Provisional Government was magnified. Street demonstrations had been a daily occurrence since February, but from 3 to 6 July the protests



Source 9.8 Sailors demonstrate in Petrograd

directly challenged the authority and future of the new government. Historian Sheila Fitzpatrick estimates the number of these protesters at half a million. Their joint actions were disorganised and undisciplined, many of them roaming the streets, drinking and looting. As a result, they were easily defeated by the Provisional Government's armed troops.

The July Days were disastrous for the progress of the Bolshevik Party, as they were blamed for the disturbances. To avoid accepting blame for a failed uprising, Trotsky argued that the protests were initiated by the Socialist Revolutionaries and the Mensheviks. Lenin's credibility as a revolutionary leader was significantly damaged after he created a false passport and escaped to Finland, while other leaders like Trotsky and Kamenev stayed to face arrest and imprisonment. Pipes is brutal in his assessment of Lenin's escape:

The flight of the shepherd could not but deliver a heavy blow to the sheep. After all, the masses, mobilised by Lenin, bore the whole burden of responsibility for the July Days ... and the real culprit abandons his army, his comrades and seeks personal safety in flight.

Pipes, *The Russian Revolution*, p. 436



Source 9.9 Troops loyal to the Provisional Government return from the front and defeat the protestors with force

The July Days seemed to signal the destruction of the Bolsheviks and a significant victory for the government. While it should have been titled a 'death point', it became a 'turning point' for three reasons. First, the Bolsheviks survived. Second, Lenin resolved his long differences with Trotsky and recruited him as a new member of the Bolshevik Party. Third, Trotsky was able to use the failure of these July protests to develop more effective strategies, which were successfully implemented in the October Revolution.

Lesson 1: The Bolsheviks had been caught unaware by this rising of Bolshevik sailors from within the **Kronstadt** Garrison. Successful uprisings must be coordinated and directed from above with strong leadership.

Lesson 2: Revolutionary parties within the Soviet were disunited. The Bolsheviks must assume power alone as a coalition of revolutionary parties was unworkable.

Lesson 3: The Bolsheviks still lacked mass popular support and first had to achieve a majority in the Petrograd Soviet.

Lesson 4: Large-scale public protests breed failure; it is necessary to use surprise tactics in multiple locations at night.

Lesson 5: The Provisional Government maintained enough military support to defeat armed insurrections, so small, disciplined groups of trained workers and sailors must be used.



Source 9.10 Kerensky at the funeral of those who died in the July Days

Kronstadt a major naval base situated on an island near Petrograd

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Focus questions

- 1 Which of these lessons do you consider to be most important and why?
- 2 How can we know whether the Bolsheviks really did 'learn' these lessons?



Source 9.11 A clean-shaven and disguised Lenin escaped quite easily to Finland after the July Days.



Turning point 3: Kornilov Revolt

While the question of who initiated the July Days is still hotly debated by historians, the results are not. Kerensky, appointed Prime Minister of the Provisional Government two days after the July Days, went on the offensive by arresting Bolshevik leaders, ransacking their offices, confiscating printing equipment and banning the Bolshevik newspaper *Pravda*. Yet, ironically, the Provisional Government's weak handling of the subsequent Kornilov Affair enabled the broken Bolshevik Party to recover and grow in popular support.

In August, General Kornilov was appointed Commander in Chief of the Russian army. He was described as having the 'heart of a lion but the brain of a sheep'.

Red Guard a group of workers that was hastily formed into a fighting group to defend Petrograd against the advancing Kornilov

German army, Kornilov warned Kerensky of the urgent need to defend Petrograd. His method of restoring order, however, was to march his troops towards the capital. Fearing that Kornilov was going to replace the Provisional Government with a military dictatorship, Kerensky declared Kornilov a traitor and ordered the release of the Bolsheviks from prison. Ironically, the Bolsheviks were given weapons by the

very government Lenin had threatened to overthrow. Trotsky immediately formed, armed and trained the **Red Guard** from 40000 radical workers, who were then credited with saving Petrograd from certain military defeat by a tsarist general. Trotsky later criticised Kerensky for having 'neither sufficient logical consistency nor determination' to keep the Bolsheviks suppressed.



Source 9.12 General Lavr Kornilov addresses his troops

A MATTER OF FACT

The battle between Kornilov and Kerensky never eventuated. Workers on the railroads refused to transport Kornilov's troops the final two hours into Petrograd. Kornilov allowed himself to be arrested.

The aim of this section is to give a voice to the voiceless, those whose story history rarely recorded. Here is a fictional story of a worker in Petrograd written from the imagination of the author.

Меня зовут Наталья, и я работаю, живу и всегда жила в Петрограде.

Sorry. I'll talk in English if your Russian is poor. My name is Natalya and I have lived and worked in Petrograd all my life. I am married to Vasily, who works at the Putilov Steel Works.

The excitement of February was great. I always joined in the march on International Women's Day each year. But it was different in '17. The cost was too high both at the war front and at the home front, so this march meant much to us all ...

It was simple to get Vasily to join me, as he had been part of the strikes at Putilov the previous week. Newspapers said that there were 200 000 people on the streets. Never once did the Tsar promise improvements. In fact, his horrible German wife called us a 'hooligan movement'! We were surprised but delighted when our protests resulted in the Tsar abdicating. He had his chance to win us over but he again misread the voice of the people, same as he had with our protests in 1905.

I welcomed the Provisional Government at first because of the joy of having a government who told us they wanted to make reforms for us. Record numbers of women joined the Russian Army. But for my working friends and me, our main focus was bread and peace.

Soon we realised that the Provisional Government was not everything we hoped for. They did not share our burdens. Prime Minister Lvov decided to continue fighting in the war, which meant more unnecessary death, and more hardship. My sister who lived south of Moscow said that the redistribution of land was too slow for the desperate peasant villages. As the Bolshevik leader Lenin said, 'No amount of political freedom will satisfy the hungry masses.'



Source 9.13

Many of my husband's friends joined Lenin's party after he promised peace, bread and land. By June, we were convinced for two reasons. The failed June Offensive at the war front demoralised us all. How could we keep losing when the Tsar was there himself? Petrograd was falling. Newspapers reported that 568 factories had closed down since March, with 104 000 workers now newly unemployed. Even though Vasily was lucky at Putilov, we were convinced that enough was enough. I joined the new Women's Bureau formed by the Bolshevik Party. Vasily joined the Bolshevik Party. There was a central committee of the Bolshevik Party. The central committee sent orders to the local Soviets who gave orders to the factories. We were told over two million people were now in the Bolshevik Party. It was time for change; and the Provisional Government was in our sights. As Lenin once said, 'sometimes, history needs a push.'

Petrograd worker in 1917



Turning point 4: Growth in political support

From the defeat of Kornilov, Bolshevik support grew rapidly. Two crucial indicators of this were the influential Petrograd and Moscow Soviets and the mass meeting of the All Russian Congress of Soviets.

Moscow Soviet

July = 11 per cent

September = 51 per cent

June 1917: First All Russian Congress of Soviets

822 representatives from soviets throughout Russia.
Bolsheviks 12 per cent.
Socialist Revolutionaries 34 per cent and Mensheviks 30 per cent.

Lenin was outvoted 543 to 126 in his motion to declare the First World War a class war. His ideology was not shared or supported by the revolutionaries in the soviet.

25 October 1917: Second All Russian Congress of Soviets

670 representatives from soviets throughout Russia.
Bolsheviks 59 per cent.

Socialist Revolutionaries and Menshevik delegates walked out of the Congress to Trotsky's jeers.

A key debate facing historians involves the rapid growth in support within a mere four-month period, particularly considering the low experienced by the party after the July Days. Possible reasons to explain why the Bolsheviks became more popular include:

Reason 1 – Demoralisation of the army after the June Offensive multiplied the number of Bolshevik groups within the army. Forty-four groups in July increased to 108 by September.

Reason 2 – Bolshevik popularity increased by reputation as defenders of Petrograd after the Kornilov Revolt.

ANALYSIS ACTIVITY 9.3: HISTORICAL INTERPRETATIONS

Figes describes a typical Bolshevik in 1917 when the party received its biggest boost in membership:

The typical male Bolshevik of these years was both an ex-peasant and an ex-worker. He had probably left the village as a young boy during the industrial boom of the 1890s, roamed from factory to factory in search of work, become involved in the workers' movement, gone through various prisons, fought in the war, and returned to the northern cities, only to disperse across the countryside, during and after 1917. He was a rootless and declassed figure – like the revolution, a product of his times ...

In many ways the new Bolsheviks were far more submissive than the old ones had ever been. It resulted from their lack of education. While they were able to mouth mechanically a few Marxist phrases, they were not sufficiently educated to think for themselves or indeed to question the party leaders on abstract policy issues ...

Figes, *A People's Tragedy* (1996), p. 692

- 1 List five features of a 'typical' Bolshevik.
- 2 How were new Bolsheviks different from earlier ones?
- 3 Figes provides little evidence to support his statements. What types of evidence would be required to substantiate his claims?

Reason 3 – Bolsheviks promoted themselves as true revolutionaries because they were the only party who had not cooperated with the Provisional Government.

Reason 4 – Bolsheviks gained a majority in the Petrograd and Moscow Soviets by September.

Reason 5 – Trotsky was elected Chairman of the Petrograd Soviet.

ANALYSIS ACTIVITY 9.4: CREATIVE THINKING

How might the following events have altered the course of 1917 if they had actually occurred?

- 1 What if the Provisional Government had signed a peace treaty with the Germans and ended Russia's involvement in the First World War?
- 2 What if the Germans had actively stopped the return of the revolutionaries to Russia?
- 3 What if elections to the Constituent Assembly planned for October had actually taken place in June or July?
- 4 What if the Petrograd Soviet had ignored Lenin's *April Theses* and continued cooperating with the Provisional Government?
- 5 What if Lenin had been caught trying to escape after the July Days and was put in prison?
- 6 What if General Kornilov had not marched on Petrograd?

The story so far

- The Tsar's abdication left two political bodies in control of all Russia: the Provisional Government that had political authority; and the Petrograd Soviet that had genuine influence with the popular movements.
- Lenin's return in April aggressively challenged the favourable perceptions of the success of the February Revolution and the revolutionary nature of the Provisional Government.
- The Provisional Government experienced two dramatic summer months with the demoralising failure of the June Offensive followed by the overwhelming internal success of defeating the Bolsheviks in the July Days. Trotsky became a member of the Bolshevik Party in July after being associated with the Mensheviks from 1903.
- The Kornilov Revolt in August was full of fortune for the scattered Bolsheviks as Trotsky was released from prison and was given the credit for protecting Petrograd with his newly formed Red Guard.
- The political support for the Bolshevik Party grew rapidly in the key political bodies – the Petrograd and Moscow Soviets and the All Russian Congress of Soviets.



CHAPTER REVIEW

DEVELOPING CLEAR DEFINITIONS

Write explanations for each of the following.

Key political bodies	Key documents	Key events
Provisional Government	Provisional Government Policies	Return of revolutionaries
Petrograd Soviet	Soviet Order No. 1	June Offensive
All Russian Congress of Soviets	Lenin's <i>April Theses</i>	July Days
		Kornilov Revolt

PRACTISING PARAGRAPH ANSWERS

- 1 Why did the Provisional Government fail to win support?
- 2 How did Lenin's return from exile in April 1917 affect the political progress of 1917?
- 3 How did the Bolshevik Party recover politically from their absolute demoralisation of the July Days?

PRACTICE ESSAY QUESTION

'The Provisional Government's policies and performance were so flawed that they deserved to be overthrown.' Discuss this view, providing evidence to support your answer.

READING MORE DEEPLY

Easy

Chamberlin, WH 1935, *The Russian Revolution 1917–1921*, Vol. 1, New York. Chapter VII, 'The deepening of the revolution', pp. 142–65.

Moderate

Moynahan, B 1992, *Comrades, 1917 – Russia in Revolution*, Hutchinson. Chapter XV, 'Take the power, you son of a bitch', pp. 188–204.

Challenging

Abraham, R 1987, *Alexander Kerensky: The First Love of the Revolution*, Columbia University Press. Chapter 14, 'Reproaches and slander', pp. 276–301.

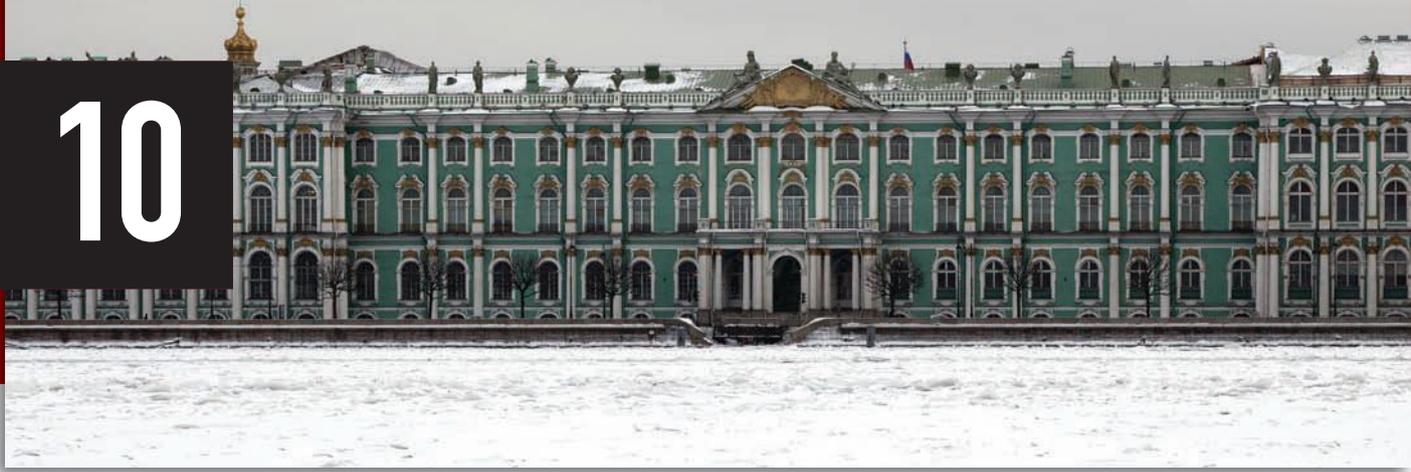
Abraham describes the period in August and September 1917 during which Kerensky is abandoning his idealistic revolutionary past and preparing to defend his government from Bolshevik opposition. This long chapter includes lots of detail in examining the dynamics between the failing authority of the Provisional Government and the growing power of the Bolsheviks and Petrograd Soviet.



Source 9.14 A meeting in the Putilov Steel Works in Petrograd in early 1917. Worker unrest contributed greatly to the February Revolution.

Source 9.15 In a symbolic image of the downfall of the old regime, Russian children pose with the bronze head of a ruined statue of Tsar Alexander III (father of Nicholas II)





Year of revolutions, 1917: The October revolution

“

In times of revolution it is not enough to ascertain the ‘will’ of the majority – no, one must be stronger at the decisive moment in the decisive place and win.

– LENIN

”

OVERVIEW

History remembers the October Revolution as being the most dramatic event of 1917. The takeover becomes a fascinating topic given the amount of historical debate that has been rekindled since the fall of the **Soviet Union** in 1991. The perception of the Bolsheviks and their communist regime undoubtedly influences the perception of its beginnings in October 1917.

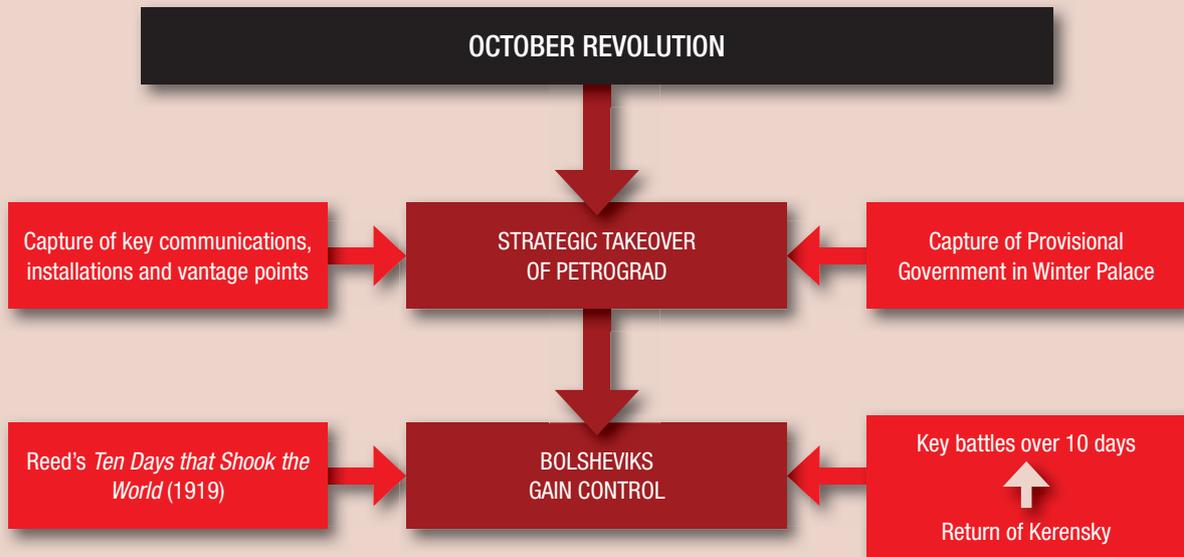
Soviet Union Union of
Soviet Socialist Republics
(USSR)

This chapter analyses the seizure of political power in Petrograd by the Bolsheviks in October 1917. Lenin initiated the ‘revolution’ while Trotsky coordinated it so efficiently that it can best be described as a takeover: a simple transfer of power from the Provisional Government to the Bolshevik Party. The 10 days of protest that followed, and the counter-revolutionary battles until 1921, reveal that the takeover in October was indeed the easy launch of a difficult journey for the Bolsheviks.

KEY ISSUES

- Flashpoint: the strategic takeover of Petrograd
- Literature study: John Reed’s *Ten Days that Shook the World* (1919)
- How did the Bolsheviks gain control?

FLOW OF CHAPTER



Source 10.1 *October 1917 in Petrograd* (oil on canvas) by Boris Kustodiev, circa 1918

10.1 FLASHPOINT!

The strategic takeover of Petrograd

Rebellions happen; revolutions are made.

Pipes

Lenin's self-imposed exile in Finland was not wasted. While living in a tent on a remote island, using a tree stump as a table, he wrote letters attempting to continue directing the revolution. His suggestions of immediate preparations for the overthrow of the government were ignored.

Central Committee the main decision-making group of the Bolshevik Party

A desperate two weeks of negotiation began with the Bolshevik **Central Committee** after Lenin's secret return to Petrograd on 7 October. Lenin urged that the takeover must occur before the November elections for the Constituent Assembly. The Assembly had been the democratic dream of the reformers and progressives since the turn of the century, and would have seriously limited Bolshevik ambition once established. Lenin was also determined to have secured

leadership by the Second All Russian Congress of Soviets, scheduled to begin meeting on 25 October, so that they could legitimise the action that had already occurred.

By 10 October, Lenin had persuaded the Congress that an armed insurrection was necessary. Many members of the Central Committee, however, were not convinced that the time was right, so no date was agreed upon.

Rumours of Bolshevik action were confirmed when two prominent members of the Central Committee, Grigory Zinoviev and Lev Kamenev, published an article in a revolutionary journal arguing it was the wrong circumstances upon which to base a Bolshevik overthrow of the government. On 23 October, Kerensky took the offensive and initiated action against the Bolsheviks. He declared to a hastily called pre-parliament meeting: 'Those who dare lift their hand against the state are liable to immediate, decisive and permanent liquidation.' Bolshevik newspapers were closed down and telephone wires to their headquarters cut. Members of the Kadets, Women's Battalion and Cossacks were sent to guard the Winter Palace, but without heavy artillery or machine guns.



Source 10.2 Kerensky established the Women's Death Battalion called the 'Amazons'.

A MATTER OF FACT

Trotsky signalled that the revolution had begun by dripping some official red sealing wax on the door of the Bolshevik editorial office.

Kerensky's aggression demanded a swift response and Lenin acted immediately. The Bolshevik takeover was ordered to begin the following night, 24 October. Despite Trotsky's claim that the revolution would not have occurred without Lenin, it was he who strategically organised the takeover. Trotsky had several advantages. He was administratively minded, had influence over the workers as Chairman of the Petrograd Soviet, dominated the **Military Revolutionary Committee** established by the Soviet, and led the Red Guard that he formed in August to defend Petrograd from General Kornilov. He armed the Red Guard with guns stored in the Peter and Paul Fortress, and then implemented his takeover. It may be helpful to refer to the map of Petrograd in Chapter 8. The stages of the takeover were broadly organised as follows:

Stage 1: Capture key communication centres like the telegraph station and post office.

Stage 2: Capture key installations like the electric companies.

Stage 3: Capture key vantage points like the bridges and railway stations.

Stage 4: Capture the Provisional Government in the Winter Palace.

The first three stages were completed so efficiently that the takeover resembled the changing of the guard. Capturing the Winter Palace proved more dramatic, although the opposition was still of a very limited nature. The Cossacks deserted when the Red Guard approached, and the Cadets and the 140 volunteers of the Women's Battalion surrendered

rather than resist the 40 000 strong army. The battleship *Aurora*, in the Neva River for repairs, was also commandeered to fire blank shells upon the Winter Palace in a symbolic act of rejection of the government. It is curious that the Winter Palace did not



Source 10.3 Soviet artist Pavel Petrovich's dramatic interpretation of the storming of the Winter Palace

Military Revolutionary Committee an influential body established by the Bolsheviks in 1917 and coordinated by Trotsky to effect the October Revolution



Source 10.4 A deserted Winter Palace after the arrest of the Provisional Government

fall because of acts of courage or a military barrage, but because the back door was left open, allowing the Red Guard to enter. A Red Guard named Adamovich remembered gasping as he burst into the Winter Palace, as he had never before seen such splendour and luxury.

A MATTER OF FACT

More damage was done to the Winter Palace during the filming of Sergei Eisenstein's epic called 'October' in 1927 than in its actual overthrow in 1917.

A MATTER OF FACT

Many of the men guarding the Provisional Government in the Winter Palace got tired of waiting for the Bolshevik attack and left their posts to have dinner in local restaurants. One of the groups that remained behind consisted of 40 disabled soldiers led by an officer with artificial legs.

ANALYSIS ACTIVITY 10.1: USING LANGUAGE

coup d'état the forced replacement of a government

There are many possible terms to describe major political events: uprising, revolt, **coup d'état**, mutiny, takeover, insurrection or revolution. Language and terminology are powerful weapons. Pipes and MacDonald use the term 'coup d'état' and Figs 'insurrection' when referring to the October Revolution, while Malone uses 'takeover'.

- 1 Why are these authors reluctant to use the word 'revolution'?
- 2 Which term do you think most accurately reflects the events of October 1917?

ANALYSIS ACTIVITY 10.2: DOCUMENT ANALYSIS

On 25 October, Lenin issued a declaration of victory that was sent by telegram throughout Russia:

To the citizens of Russia.

The Provisional Government has been overthrown. State power 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 Soviet and garrison.

The cause for which the people have struggled – the immediate proposal of a democratic peace, the elimination of landlord estates, workers' control over production, the creation of a soviet government – the triumph of this cause has been assured.

Long live the workers', soldiers', and peasants' revolution!

The Military Revolutionary Committee of the Petrograd Soviet of Workers' and Soldiers' Deputies

- 1 The APPARTS model is a helpful tool to analyse primary sources. Remember the APPARTS model as a way to analyse, or pull apart, a document or image. Copy and complete this table in your workbook to analyse Lenin's declaration of Bolshevik victory.

A	AUTHOR	Who created the source?
P	PLACE AND TIME	Where and when was this source created? Does the date make this a primary or secondary source?
P	PRIOR KNOWLEDGE	What do you already know that would further your understanding of this source? For example, you may already know something about the author, or the place where it was produced, or what was happening in Russia at the same time, or about the event or topic on which the source is focusing.
A	AUDIENCE	Who was the intended audience of this source? Who was it made for?
R	REASON	Why was this source produced at the time it was produced?
T	THE MAIN IDEA	What is the key argument, perspective or point of view shown in this source?
S	SIGNIFICANCE	Why is this source important? How does this source help you to better understand the key issues or events occurring in Russia at the time?

10.2 Literature study: Reed's *Ten Days that Shook the World* (1919)

This is one of the classic eyewitness accounts of the October Revolution. In the introduction **Reed** states that his book is 'a slice of intensified history – history as I saw it'. The book describes the 10 days during which the Bolsheviks established control over Petrograd and Moscow, and began to implement a socialist society – which, in the words of Australian historian Hoysted, 'shook both the foundations of Russia and

Reed John Reed was an American journalist who was in Petrograd during the revolution

**Focus questions**

- 1 Is Reed's book an unreliable source given that it was so unreservedly praised by the Bolsheviks?
- 2 Is Reed's book 'literature' or simply a primary source?

the complacency of the capitalist western systems'. Reed's book was initially released in America in 1919 and was also accepted by the communist regime and published in the USSR in 1923. Reed was an American journalist, described by Lenin's wife Krupskaya in the introduction to the Russian edition as a 'passionate revolutionary, a communist who understood the meaning of the great struggle'. Reed returned to Russia to work for the communists, but died of typhus in 1920 and was considered such a hero of the revolution that he was buried under the Kremlin. Another fascinating source is Orson Welles's narration of a documentary also called *Ten Days that Shook the World*. Interestingly, this program has a strong pro-communist perspective, but was made by British television.

Lenin lavished praise on the book, stating 'unreservedly do I recommend it to the workers of the world. Here is a book which I should like to see published in millions of copies and translated into all languages'. It is interesting to note that since Reed's account identifies Trotsky and Lenin as the genuine heroes of the revolution, it was banned by Stalin because he was barely mentioned.

A MATTER OF FACT

A modern source that covers the October Revolution well is the 1981 Hollywood film 'Reds', starring Warren Beatty and Diane Keaton.



Source 10.5 Trotsky saluting in the street, October 1917

10.3 How did the Bolsheviks gain control?

Reed's book can be used to chart the Bolsheviks' battle to gain control of Petrograd and ultimately Russia.

1917 Julian date (Gregorian date)	Events	Summary of significance
Day 1 Tuesday, 24 October (6 November)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Trotsky distributes arms to Red Guard. Petrograd Garrison rebels against the Provisional Government, claiming that it is a 'tool of the enemies of the people'. Systematic capture of key communication, installations and vantage points. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Kerensky powerless to stop armed uprising by the Bolsheviks.
Day 2 Wednesday, 25 October (7 November)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Red Guard storms Winter Palace at 2.10 am. Battleship <i>Aurora</i> fires blanks at palace. Kerensky escapes and is protected by the American Embassy. Provisional Government arrested and imprisoned in Peter and Paul Fortress. Opening session of the Second All Russian Congress of Soviets. Trotsky dismisses Menshevik and Socialist Revolutionary Party opposition from Congress. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Government ministers resigned to fate and surrender without a fight. Provisional Government officially overthrown. Petrograd Soviet now in control of government, garrison and proletariat.
Day 3 Thursday, 26 October (8 November)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Bolsheviks announce their official government title as 'Government of People's Commissars' with Lenin as leader. Posters pinned on walls and fences by the SRs describing takeover as a 'crime against the motherland and revolution'. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Strong anti-Bolshevik opposition <i>within</i> Petrograd.
Day 4 Friday, 27 October (9 November)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Mensheviks seize power of Georgia and declare it an independent republic. Cossacks from the Don region claim control of own government. Reports that Provisional Government has not conceded defeat and are meeting with the army at the front. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Strong anti-Bolshevik opposition <i>outside</i> of Petrograd. Bolshevik control of country still very weak.
Day 5 Saturday, 28 October (10 November)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Day of threats with posters and newspapers refuting Bolshevik authority and criticising their actions. For example, the Executive Committee of Peasants Soviets 'refutes with indignation all participation of the organised peasantry in this criminal violation of the will of the working class'. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Strong opposition to Bolsheviks continues from several important proletarian sources.
Day 6 Sunday, 29 October (11 November)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Opposition develops into major counter-revolutionary action. Cossacks enter Tsarskoye Selo on outskirts of Petrograd with Kerensky riding on a white horse welcomed by church bells. Kerensky gave an ultimatum to rifle garrison to lay down weapons. Refused. Fired upon by Kerensky's Cossacks. Eight killed. This turned soldiers in Petrograd against Kerensky because he was just like the old regime. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Kerensky's failure to assume authority over troops described by Reed as a 'fatal blunder' that signalled the final death of the government. Enables Bolsheviks to unleash their most powerful weapon – propaganda.

(continued)

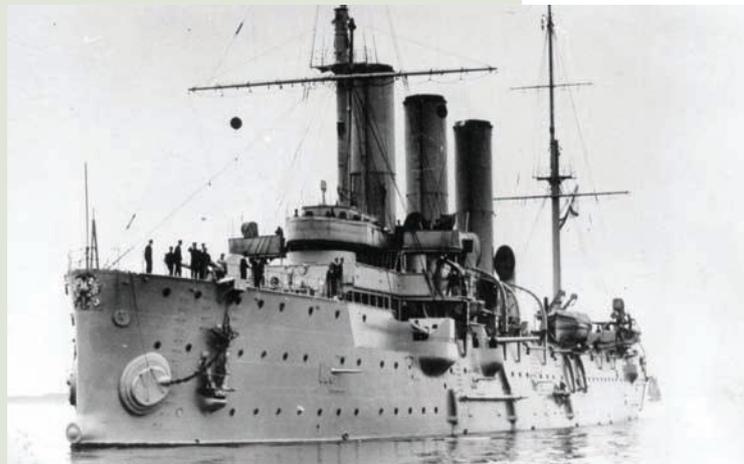


1917 Julian date (Gregorian date)	Events	Summary of significance
Day 7 Monday, 30 October (12 November)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Battle against anti-Bolsheviks continues; Red Guard fights against Cossacks at Tsarskoye Selo. Cossacks break rank and flee, leaving artillery behind. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Power of proletarian army: sailors, workers and anonymous masses united in common cause.
Day 8 Tuesday, 31 October (13 November)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Bolshevik victory in Moscow after a week of bitter street-fighting. Artillery had been freely used with an estimated 700 casualties. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Bolshevik control now includes Moscow but continued support for Kerensky remains in the provinces.
Day 9 Wednesday, 1 November (14 November)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Appeal to anti-Bolsheviks throughout Russia to join new government of the people. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Bolsheviks gradually winning support of Russian people.
Day 10 Thursday, 2 November (15 November)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Only minor public anti-Bolshevik sentiment; for example, newspaper <i>Novaya Zhizn</i> criticises the lack of manpower and organisation of the Bolsheviks to run a party, let alone a government. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Lenin confidently claims that there is 'not a shadow of hesitation in the masses of Petrograd, Moscow and the rest of Russia' towards Bolshevik rule.

ANALYSIS ACTIVITY 10.3: SYNTHESIS

- Which individual event was most significant? Provide reasons for your answer.
- Which day was most significant as a whole? Provide reasons for your answer.
- Summarise the role of ideas, leaders and popular movements in the October Revolution.
- Was it the role of ideas, leaders and/or popular movements that was most important in the success of the October Revolution in Petrograd? Provide reasons for your answer.

Source 10.6 The battleship *Aurora*, which fired blanks upon the Winter Palace

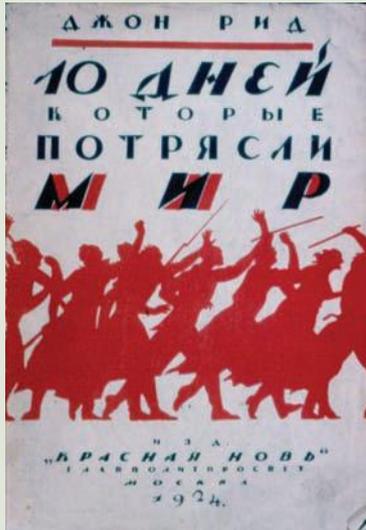


A MATTER OF FACT

Kerensky was never captured by the Bolsheviks. He returned secretly to Petrograd in January 1918 posing as a Swedish doctor. British Ambassador Lockhart supplied a British visa for Kerensky's false passport, allowing him to escape Russia with some Serbian troops. He then organised anti-Bolshevik resistance movements in Paris, Berlin and London before moving to America after the Second World War, where he died in 1970 aged 90.

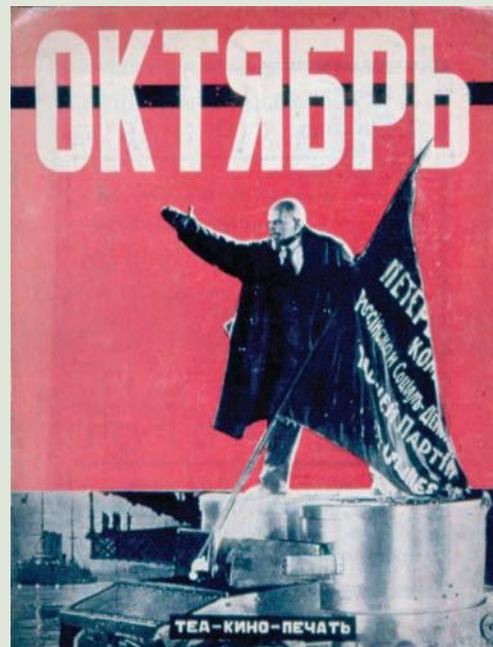
ANALYSIS ACTIVITY 10.4: VISUAL ANALYSIS

Two of the most popular works applauded by the communist regime as worthy representations of the glory of the October Revolution were Reed's book *Ten Days that Shook the World* (1919) and Sergei Eisenstein's film *October* (1927).



Source 10.7 Cover of Reed's book *Ten Days that Shook the World*

- 1 What message is conveyed in Source 10.7 about the role of the proletariat?
- 2 What is this image suggesting about the role of Lenin and the Bolsheviks?



Source 10.8 Advertising poster for Eisenstein's film *October*

- 3 What is Source 10.8 suggesting by having Lenin as the main subject in the centre of the poster?
- 4 What are the images underneath Lenin's feet?
- 5 In your opinion, which image more accurately represents the October Revolution?

The story so far

- Lenin returned secretly from his hiding place in Finland on 7 October and argued each night with the Bolshevik Central Committee for a systematic and strategic overthrow of the Provisional Government.
- Seizing power was made urgent by two scheduled events: the opening session of the Second All Russian Congress of Soviets in late October and the November elections for the Constituent Assembly. Lenin and Trotsky hastily organised the takeover for 24 October after Kerensky attacked the Bolsheviks.
- Trotsky's strategic takeover was efficiently completed by capturing the key communications, installations, vantage points and, most importantly, the government in the Winter Palace.
- The Bolsheviks won a 10-day battle to retrospectively legitimise the takeover and develop a broad base of support for their new government.



CHAPTER REVIEW

DEVELOPING CLEAR DEFINITIONS

Write explanations for the role of each of the following in the October takeover.

Key leadership roles	Key events
Vladimir Lenin	Takeover of installations and communications
Leon Trotsky	Defeat of Winter Palace
Red Guard	Battleship <i>Aurora</i>
Alexander Kerensky	

PRACTISING PARAGRAPH ANSWERS

- 1 Explain the lead-up to the October takeover.
- 2 Outline the strategic takeover of Petrograd.
- 3 How did the Bolsheviks respond to immediate challenges to their authority in the 10 days after the fall of the Winter Palace?

PRACTICE ESSAY QUESTIONS

- 1 'The Bolshevik takeover would never have occurred if the Provisional Government had reacted strongly in October as it had in July.' Discuss this view, providing evidence to support your answer.
- 2 'While Lenin traditionally receives all the praise, Trotsky was actually the primary leader of the takeover and thus deserves the most credit.' Discuss this view, providing evidence to support your answer.
- 3 'Lenin was absolutely correct. The popular masses were crucial in achieving the October Revolution.' Discuss this view, providing evidence to support your answer.

READING MORE DEEPLY

Easy

Moynahan, B 1992, *Comrades, 1917 – Russia in Revolution*, Hutchinson. Chapter XXI, 'We had the revolution last night', pp. 282–302.

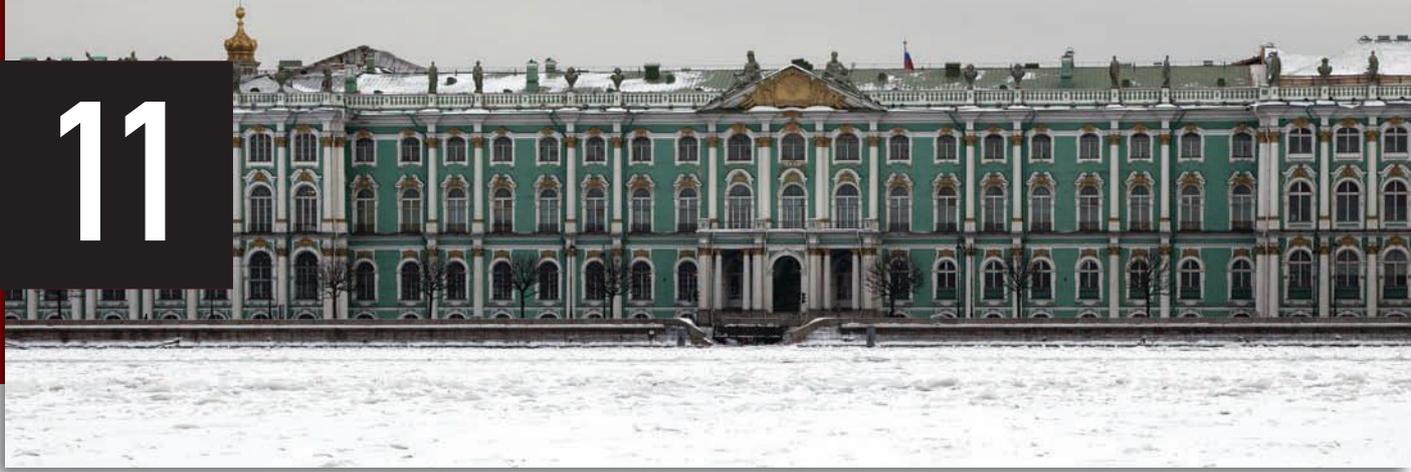
Moderate

Kerensky, A 1927, *The Catastrophe: Kerensky's Own Story of the Russian Revolution*, Appleton. Chapter XVIII, 'Gatchina', pp. 324–39.

Challenging

Medvedev, R 1979, *The October Revolution*, Constable. Chapter 4, 'Was the October Revolution inevitable? Spontaneity and organisation in the actions of the masses in 1917', pp. 36–54.

Medvedev examines whether the organised nature of the October Revolution means that it cannot be defined as a true revolution. Brief quotes and perspectives are provided on pp. 3–6, supporting both sides of the debate about whether the October Revolution was inevitable or not.



Thematic analysis, 1917

“

We older ones will not live to see the revolution in our lifetime.

– LECTURE GIVEN BY LENIN IN SWITZERLAND, JANUARY 1917
(BEFORE THE FEBRUARY REVOLUTION)

History will not forgive us if we do not assume power.

– LENIN IN A LETTER TO THE BOLSHEVIKS FROM FINLAND, SEPTEMBER 1917
(BEFORE THE OCTOBER REVOLUTION)

”

OVERVIEW

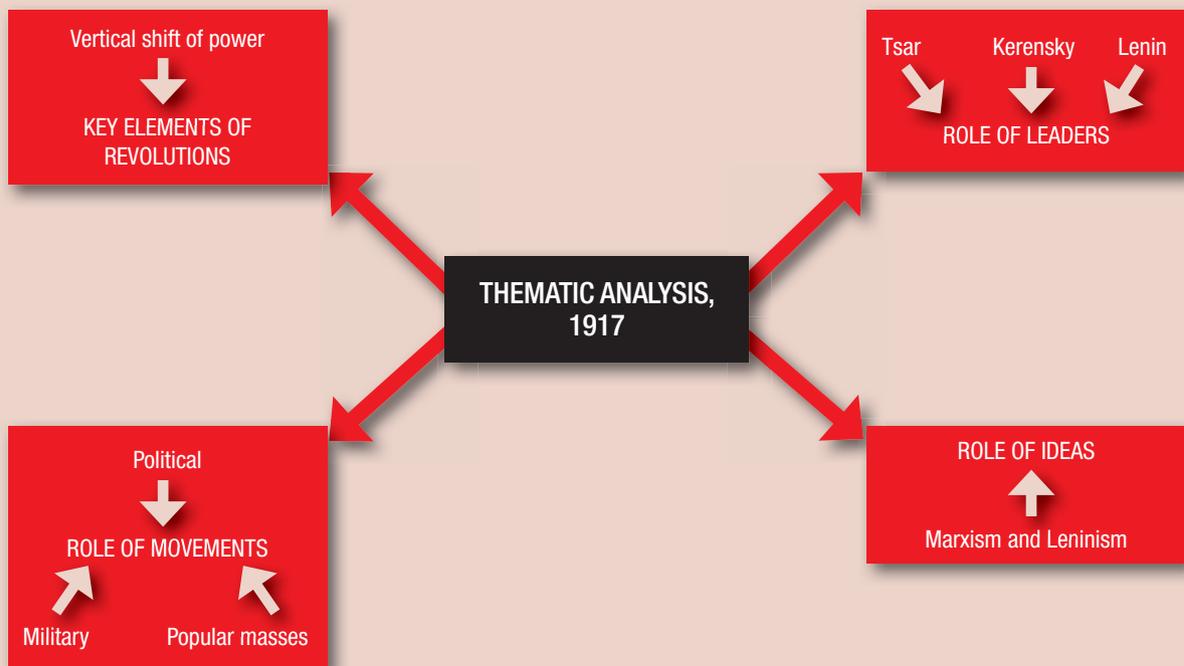
This chapter analyses 1917 from two critical angles. First, in order to develop a strong definition and understanding of what a revolution really is, several theoretical elements of revolution are proposed. There is an interesting contradiction, though. On the one hand, Lenin once said: ‘It is impossible to predict the time and progress of revolution. It is governed by its own more or less mysterious laws.’ While on the other hand, his prominent writings such as *What Is to Be Done?* (1902) and his *April Theses* (1917) strongly promoted the idea that there was method to creating a revolution and that it could be controlled.

Second, the important interconnecting roles played by significant ideas, individuals and popular movements in the two 1917 revolutions are examined. A revolution would not occur with only one of these three key factors. This analysis is further complicated by the vast differences between the February and October revolutions.

KEY ISSUES

- What are the key elements of revolutions?
- What role did leaders play in 1917?
- What role did ideas play in 1917?
- What role did movements play in 1917?

FLOW OF CHAPTER





11.1 What are the key elements of revolutions?

A revolution is not a dinner party or writing an essay or doing embroidery. A revolution is an act of violence.

Mao Zedong

Understanding the nature of revolutions is crucial to understanding 1917. Some historians have dedicated their academic careers to identifying patterns that all revolutions follow. EH Carr argued that revolutions must involve a vertical shift of power – from the privileged to the less privileged, and from the upper class to the middle and lower classes. Therefore a coup d'état cannot be defined as a revolution, as it is merely a horizontal transfer of power from military to military or one privileged power base to another. The fundamental distinguishing feature of revolutions is not the extent to which they are initiated by the popular masses, but rather the degree of change they actually achieve. Therefore, revolutions must be examined on their influence over years rather than just months.

Each revolution takes its own unique shape. While not all of the following elements have to be present for a revolution to be considered a true revolution, they tend to be evident in most revolutions. A revolution must:

- 1 involve some form of change
- 2 accelerate previously existing rates of change
- 3 have significant and far-reaching effects
- 4 deliver political change brought about by gross inequalities in society
- 5 be aimed at the government and ruling classes, and transfer political power from this group to the new revolutionary government
- 6 be unauthorised and illegal
- 7 be based on a mass movement that, to some degree, involves all elements of society
- 8 effect gradual long-term social change where all economic, cultural and psychological facets of society are altered
- 9 involve the use or threat of violence
- 10 involve a process, or series of interconnected events, rather than a single defined event.



Focus questions

- 1 Make a list of those elements evident in the February Revolution.
- 2 Make a list of those elements evident in the October Revolution.
- 3 Why might Lenin argue that the October Revolution was a pure revolution while the February Revolution was in fact not a revolution at all?
- 4 After reading this list of key elements of revolution, would you agree or disagree with Lenin's perspective? Why?

Further, once a revolution commences, it often faces a threat that needs to be overcome in order to consolidate the existence of the revolution. Finally, starting points are more easily recognised, but end-points of revolutions are less defined and less obvious.

11.2 What role did leaders play in 1917?

February	October	Change
Leaders involved:	Leaders involved:	Leaders rose by default in February, whereas the leaders in October were self-appointed.
Tsar	Kerensky	
Rodzianko	Lenin	
Prince Lvov	Trotsky	

How significant were leaders in achieving the February and October revolutions?

All the main revolutionary leaders were absent during February and had been in exile for most of the previous two decades. They had dedicated their lives to planning and initiating revolution, yet it caught them by surprise. In reference to the French Revolution, William Doyle admits that 'it would be truer to say that the revolutionaries had been created by the revolution' rather than vice versa. Upon the Bolsheviks' return to Russia in April, they did indeed play a dramatic role in redirecting the energies of the party; yet it must be noted that they were scattered again only months later in July.

The fact that, as William Chamberlin later described it, February was one of the most leaderless revolutions of all time must have grated against the raw revolutionary nerves of Lenin and Trotsky. In this light, their determination to succeed first and talk later when the opportunity arose in October is understandable. A deeper leadership analysis is provided below. It demonstrates the crucial role leaders play in manipulating ideology and harnessing the power of popular movements.

COMPARING LEADERS

Tsar Nicholas II

Absolute belief in autocracy

- Influence of his father's autocratic dominance.
- Introduced the Fundamental State Laws in 1906.
- Took command of the armed forces in 1915. He never returned to Petrograd.
- Encouraged his wife to take control of internal affairs and disbelieved *Okhrana's* reports about the destructive influence of Rasputin.

Source 11.1 The Tsar made several catastrophic mistakes during the last years of his reign.





- Ignored the desperate warnings of the *Okhrana*, Rodzianko and Buchanan only weeks before the revolution when there was still time to be proactive.
- Abdicated in favour of his brother, Grand Duke Mikhail, who did not want the position and responsibility. Surely he should have checked first.

Failure to reform

- Showed a lack of real support for Witte's and Stolypin's reforms.
- Dismissed the First and Second Dumas in 1906–07 due to their radical demands.

Misunderstood the needs of his people

- Disregarded requests of workers' petition in Bloody Sunday protest in January 1905.
- Blamed the Duma for protests in February 1917 rather than addressing the real needs of the people or promising reforms as he had done in October 1905.
- Ordered that the February protests be 'suppressed' by the military.

Alexander Kerensky

Revolutionary background

- Joined Socialist Revolutionaries in 1905.
- Worked as a defence lawyer for the victims of 1905.
- Elected to the Tsar's Fourth Duma in 1912.
- Wrote the government report on Lena Goldfields massacre.

Role in 1917

- Founding member of Provisional Committee and Provisional Government.
- Founding vice chairman of the Petrograd Soviet.
- Decided to continue fighting the First World War.
- Military failure of June Offensive as Minister of War, which dented his public image.
- Made Prime Minister of Provisional Government in July 1917.
- Inability to solve economic problem of rising prices and land redistribution.
- Suppressed Bolsheviks in July Day protests but released them to defend Petrograd from General Kornilov in August 1917.
- Inadequate defences resulted in his overthrow by the Bolsheviks in October 1917.

A MATTER OF FACT

In August, Kerensky opened himself up to criticism by moving into the Imperial bedroom of the Winter Palace, using the Tsar's desk and study, and travelling in the Tsar's train.

Vladimir Lenin

Political initiator

- Created and led Bolshevik Party from 1903.

International revolutionary

- Avid reader of Marxist writings.
- In exile in various European countries (1896–1905 and 1907–17).

Influential writer

- *What Is to Be Done?*, 1902.
- *April Theses*, 1917.

Political negotiator

- Recruited Trotsky to Bolsheviks in July 1917.
- Convinced reluctant Bolshevik Central Committee of the need of immediate revolution in October 1917.

Notable absences

- Played no role in 1905.
- Played no role in the February Revolution of 1917.
- Was only briefly in Russia in 1900 and 1906, then in 1917 for four months (April to July).

Incredibly influential

- Impact of speech at Finland Station, April 1917.
- Initiated Bolshevik defeat of the Provisional Government.

Unlimited perseverance

- Remained loyal to the cause during Stolypin's oppression of revolutionaries in 1906–11.
- Escaped to Finland to continue fighting after July Days.

Politically dominant

- Head of new Bolshevik Government in October 1917.

Leon Trotsky

Revolutionary Background

- Joined Marxists in 1897.
- Imprisoned or in exile in 1898–1902 and 1905–17, becoming an international revolutionary like Lenin.
- Supported the Mensheviks but from 1904 described himself as neither a Bolshevik nor Menshevik.



Role in 1905

- Returned to Russia and was active in 1905 Revolution.
- Formed the St Petersburg Soviet in 1905, was a leader in October Strikes and warned people against believing Tsar's October Manifesto.
- Arrested in December 1905 along with other members of Soviet. Convicted and exiled in 1906.

Role in 1917

- Returned to Russia in May 1917.
- Joined Bolshevik Party in July 1917.
- Imprisoned after failed July Days in 1917.
- Released to defend Petrograd against General Kornilov and formed the Red Guard in September 1917.
- Elected Chairman of the Petrograd Soviet in October 1917.
- Organised and directed the Bolsheviks' October Revolution in 1917.

Focus questions

- 1 To what extent can the Tsar's weak leadership be blamed for the downfall of the Romanov Dynasty?
- 2 Was Kerensky a weak man whose preoccupation with war meant that internal problems were deemed minor, or was he a strong leader who deserved more time to deal with the massive problems he inherited from the Tsar's regime?
- 3 To what extent was the success of the October Revolution due to Lenin's strong leadership?

11.3 What role did ideas play in 1917?

February	October	Change
Ideas involved:	Ideas involved:	February was motivated more by the economic demands of the people, whereas October was motivated by philosophical ideas of leadership.
Autocracy	'Peace, Bread, Land'	
Representative government	'All Power to the Soviets'	
	Marxism and Leninism	

How significant were ideas in achieving the revolutions?

Ideology is the set of ideas or beliefs that motivate or drive a revolutionary movement. Both the Mensheviks and Bolsheviks drew upon Marxism: a complex economic philosophy encapsulated by Marx and Engels in 1848. Interestingly, the two 1917 revolutions were remarkably different in their utilisation of ideology. Given the spontaneous nature of the February Revolution, ideas were not a key aspect of the motivation for the revolution. This is one of the reasons why Lenin so vehemently opposed the February Revolution and called for a second stage of revolution in his *April Theses*.

The October takeover, however, was the opposite. Lenin's propaganda from April onwards was full of Marxist terminology. His preparation for a second revolution was based on the belief that power

had not transferred into the blistered hands of the proletariat, but rather into the white palms of bourgeoisie landowners. The contradiction inherent in October, however, was Lenin's claim that he was taking power on behalf of the workers and peasants through the soviets. Was this a genuine belief or merely propaganda for ultimately assuming power himself? So, rather than motivating action, Marxist ideals were used to justify action to the Bolshevik Central Committee, and later to legitimise the October takeover once it had been achieved.



Source 11.2 Lenin addressing the crowd in Red Square, Moscow

11.4 What role did movements play in 1917?

Role of revolutionary parties

February	October	Change
Parties involved:	Parties involved:	October reduced the number of parties actively involved in shaping society from many to one.
Socialist Revolutionaries	Bolsheviks	
Mensheviks		
Kadets		

Why were the Bolsheviks able to defeat the other revolutionary parties?

A crucial issue in understanding 1917 is to understand why the popular Socialist Revolutionaries or Mensheviks did not seriously challenge the Bolsheviks for political power. Miliukov, the leader of the Kadet Party, argued that the Bolsheviks 'went in the direction which they had chosen once and for all towards a goal which came nearer with every new, unsuccessful, experiment of compromise'. Factors contributing to the defeat of other revolutionary parties include the following:

- 1 All other revolutionary parties considered the events of February to be a genuine revolution and therefore had cooperated with the Provisional Government rather than trying to overthrow them. Lenin aggressively promoted the need for the second revolution to occur to transfer power from the bourgeoisie to the proletariat.
- 2 Both the Provisional Government and the revolutionary parties were prepared to wait for the anticipated national elections to the Constituent Assembly in November. Lenin supported the sole rule of the Bolsheviks rather than a popularly elected coalition of revolutionary parties.



- 3 All other revolutionary parties, especially the Mensheviks, supported the continuation of the war, believing that defeating the bourgeois Germany was the most revolutionary cause. Lenin directed his ideology into opposing the war.
- 4 There was not a tradition of established political parties fighting each other for the publicity and the vote. Lenin proved to be the most politically cunning and ruthless.
- 5 Liberal parties like the Kadets and Octobrists failed to develop a comparable symbolic tradition through the publication of pamphlets, collections of political songs and the parading of flags.

Role of military

February	October	Continuity
Military involved:	Military involved:	Both revolutions were successful because troops supported the challengers – the protesters in February and the Bolsheviks in October.
Volynski Regiment	Soldiers and Kronstadt sailors in Red Guard	
Tsarskoye Selo		
Kronstadt		
Pavlovsk		

Why did the troops support the revolutionaries rather than the existing government?

Revolutions are forced overthrows of existing governments and so, by definition, require the support of armed military organisations. Troop involvement enabled both revolutions to be successful. In fact, Trotsky ascribed Bolshevik success in October purely to the military involvement of the Petrograd Garrison and Military Revolutionary Committee, and the effectiveness of Bolshevik agitation at the war front.



Source 11.3 Down with the icons of the old regime: *Soldiers burning paintings*, 1917 by Ivan Vladimirov

At the very heart of the military is the professional culture of discipline and following orders. The Tsar's troops supported the Tsar in 1905 and went to war for him in 1914, but by February 1917 even they recognised the futility in continuing this support. They then broke away to instead back the workers' protests for change in Petrograd. Under the Provisional Government, troops were involved in the June Offensive and in defeating the July Days protests, but by October many of them identified with the promises of the Bolsheviks and joined the Red Guard to attack their former bosses.

Role of popular masses

February	October	Change
Popular protesters involved:	Red Guards involved:	The February Revolution was achieved from below, whereas the October Revolution was implemented from above.
Striking workers from Putilov Steel Works	Sailors from Kronstadt	
Women from march on 23 February	Workers	
Unemployed from closed factories	Soldiers	

How significant were the masses in achieving the February and October revolutions?

While Lenin had been planning for revolution since 1895, it happened without him in February 1917. This illuminates some significant elements of genuine revolution. First, they originate from below – from discontent of the masses – rather than being imposed from above. Second, they are spontaneous, rather than calculated and planned. Third, they involve the majority rather than a select few. Fourth, they must touch every aspect of society – social, economic and political. The February Revolution began because of social and economic discontent from the war, but had unfathomable political consequences.

Between March and October, the popular movements were indeed significant, with daily street demonstrations and strikes, such as the July Days. Yet the spontaneous role of the crowd in October was limited. The division of the Social Democrats into the Bolshevik and Menshevik factions was over the nature of the revolutionary organisation of the party. Lenin's belief that a revolutionary should be guided by his head, and the party disciplined with centralised authority, was perfectly executed in October. A small group of well-trained Red Guards with specific roles achieved his goal: political control of the largest country in the world. Western liberal historian Richard Pipes argued: 'Communism did not come to Russia as a result of a popular uprising: it was imposed on her from above by a small minority hiding behind democratic slogans.'

What role did women play in the revolutions?

Since the 1860s, women had played an active role throughout the development of Russia's revolutionary tradition. While they were prominent in February, their role became more passive. The revolutionary parties believed that focusing on women's issues detracted from their political agenda. Women's contributions, indirectly or directly, to the revolutionary cause included:



February – organised a march on International Women’s Day advocating a solution to the food shortages and an end to the war. Their involvement on the streets continued throughout the revolution.

March to September – established the League of Equal Rights and League of Women’s Equality who organised a demonstration of 40000 women to convince Provisional Government of the need to give all women the vote. An All Russian Congress of Women was held in April. While some spoke at mass meetings, many more organised the printing and distribution of revolutionary leaflets and newspapers. The Bolsheviks established a women’s group called *Rabotnitsa*, meaning ‘The Working Woman’, which produced a newspaper of the same name.



Source 11.4 International Women’s Day march

October – initiated the establishment of the Women’s Death Battalion, which was used by Kerensky to protect the Winter Palace. Otherwise, women played a relatively minor role in the Bolshevik takeover.

ANALYSIS ACTIVITY 11.1: RESEARCH REPORT

Research a leading female activist from the following list and write a short research report:

Kollontai Alexandra Kollontai was a prominent Bolshevik revolutionary who became the first woman selected to join Lenin’s powerful Central Committee

- Alexandra **Kollontai** – prominent Bolshevik leader (profiled in Chapter 12)
- Nadezhda Krupskaya – revolutionary activist from 1891
- Inessa Armand – first director of Zhenotdel, the Communist Party’s Women’s Department
- Maria L. Bochkareva – established Women’s Death Battalion and commanded the unit at the Winter Palace
- Maria Spiridonova – main leader of the left Socialist Revolutionary Party
- Tatiana Ludvinskaya – wounded in barricade fighting in 1905
- Ekaterina Kaskova – involved in League of Women’s Equality.

ANALYSIS ACTIVITY 11.2: HISTORICAL INTERPRETATIONS

Key debate: ‘Was the Bolshevik Revolution inevitable?’

The ease with which the Bolsheviks toppled the Provisional Government – in Lenin’s words, it was like ‘lifting a feather’ – has persuaded many historians that the October coup was ‘inevitable’. But it can appear as such only in retrospect. Lenin himself thought it an extremely chancy undertaking. In urgent letters to the Central Committee in September and October 1917 from his hideaway, he insisted that success depended entirely on the speed and resoluteness with which the armed insurrection was carried

out: 'To delay the uprising is death,' he wrote on October 24, 'everything hangs on a hair.' These were not the sentiments of a person prepared to trust the forces of history. Trotsky later asserted – and who was in a better position to know? – that if 'neither Lenin nor myself had been in Petersburg, there would have been no October Revolution.' Can one conceive of an 'inevitable' historical event dependent on two individuals?

Pipes, *Russia under the Bolshevik Regime 1919–1924* (1994), p. 498

- 1 What evidence does Pipes provide to suggest that both Lenin and Trotsky themselves prove that the revolution was not inevitable?
- 2 How convincing do you find his logic?

ANALYSIS ACTIVITY 11.3: INADEQUATE EVIDENCE?

One of the problems of history is that there are many topics for which we may never have 'adequate' evidence to reach firm conclusions. For example, research:

- What really motivated Nicholas to abdicate?
- Did Trotsky really learn lessons from the July Days or were his strategies for the takeover of Petrograd motivated by other factors?
- Why did the Bolshevik Party attract so many new members in 1917?
- Was there much support from rural areas?
- Why were Kerensky's defensive preparations for the Bolsheviks' takeover so inadequate?



Source 11.5 A truck crammed with eager soldiers during the October Revolution in Petrograd, 1917



CHAPTER REVIEW

DEVELOPING CLEAR DEFINITIONS

Write explanations for the impact in 1917 of each of the following.

Key leadership roles	Key events	Key publications
Tsar Nicholas	February Revolution	Soviet Order No. 1
Kerensky	Return of Lenin	Provisional Government Policies
Lenin	July Days	<i>April Theses</i>
Trotsky	Kornilov Revolt	
	October Revolution	

PRACTISING PARAGRAPH ANSWERS

- 1 'Popular movements are the engine of revolution and leaders merely the drivers.' To what extent do you agree with this statement?
- 2 'Revolutions come in many shapes, but the ones that are planned are more successful.' To what extent do you agree with this statement?
- 3 How important was Lenin in 1917?

PRACTICE ESSAY QUESTIONS

- 1 'Marx stated that "insurrection is an art".' Discuss this view, providing evidence to support your answer.
- 2 'Both the tsarist regime and Provisional Government were overthrown solely because of their inability to deal with the crises of the First World War.' Discuss this view, providing evidence to support your answer.
- 3 'Lenin emerged as the leader of the revolution at the end of 1917 simply because he made the least mistakes.' Discuss this view, providing evidence to support your answer.

READING MORE DEEPLY

Easy

Pipes, R 1998, *Three Whys of the Russian Revolution*, Pimlico.

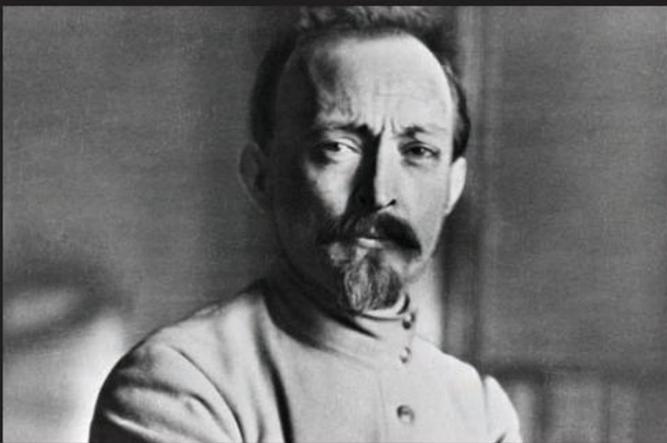
Moderate

Cowley, R (Ed.) 2001, *More What If?*, Pan Books. Chapter by George Feifer, 'No Finland Station', pp. 210–35.

Challenging

Todd, A 1998, *Revolutions 1789–1917*, Cambridge. Chapter 1, 'What is revolution?', pp. 1–6.

This chapter draws together many themes underlying the discussions in this text. Todd answers some key questions: What exactly are revolutions? What stages do revolutions follow? What is the difference between a coup d'état and a popular revolution?





Consequences of revolution: Challenges and responses, changes and continuity, significant individuals and experiences of groups in Russia, October 1917 to 1927

“

The Bolsheviks did not inherit a ship of state, they took over a derelict hulk.

– LYNCH (2000)

”

OVERVIEW

After 20 years of writing and agitating for revolution, Lenin finally had the opportunity to implement his perfect communist society. But this new society was not created easily. Why? First, there was conflict over the direction and shape of a communist society. Second, Lenin's government had inherited the key problems of whether to withdraw from the First World War and how to restore economic stability. Third, there was still strong opposition to Lenin and his minority Bolshevik Party.

As a result, the future of the revolution became endangered. The Bolsheviks were fighting for their political survival. Despite gaining the support of the Second Congress of Soviets, the Bolsheviks received less than one-quarter of the vote in the newly elected Constituent Assembly and promptly dismissed it at gunpoint. There was also continued opposition from various political parties and the traditional conservative groups, which resulted in the destructive Civil War from 1918 to 1920. These key conflicts frustrated Lenin's initial dreams of transforming the old regime into a classless utopia.

Lenin's government needed to become more authoritarian and radical in order to stay in control of a rapidly dividing country. He introduced terror through the **CHEKA** and **Red Army** during the Civil War, initiated an economic breathing space with the New Economic Policy, and crushed the internal opposition of the Kronstadt Mutiny. His responses to these crises were decisive.

The period up to 1927 has been divided into five chapters (see Chapters 12 to 16) analysing how Lenin's regime attempted to transform the 'derelict hulk' he had inherited. These chapters examine events from the Bolshevik takeover of power in

CHEKA a Russian acronym meaning the 'All Russian Extraordinary Commission to Fight Counter-Revolution, Sabotage and Speculation'

Red Army the army of the Soviet Union

October 1917 to mid-1921, when all internal and external enemies were defeated and the revolution was finally stabilised. Chapter 16 looks at how the Bolshevik government promoted its new ideology to Russian society through a range of visual means. The chapter features a wide range of propaganda images for visual analysis – a crucial skill to practise. This part concludes with two analysis chapters. Chapter 17 analyses Lenin’s legacy and Chapter 18 examines the key crises and responses. The underlying essential question is to what extent were Lenin and his new government able to implement the communist utopia that they had dreamed of, written about and spoken of for decades?

SUMMARY OF KEY EVENTS, OCTOBER 1917 TO 1927

Year	Date	Event	Significance
1917	November	Land Decree	Lenin fulfilled his promise of land by authorising the redistribution of large landholdings among the peasants, albeit authorising an illegal process that had already begun.
	November	Voting for the Constituent Assembly	Lenin allowed the elections to continue. Not surprisingly, the Socialist Revolutionaries received the highest percentage of the votes, given their mass support from the peasantry.
	December	Formation of the CHEKA	Despite its small beginnings, this group of secret police became a prominent force behind the new government. It was given extensive powers of execution of enemies of the government.
1918	18 January	Dismissal of the Constituent Assembly	This demonstrated Lenin’s unwillingness to form a broad-based coalition government of many revolutionary parties. It also revealed his justification of force as an acceptable political weapon. The ends always justified the means for the new government.
	March	Treaty of Brest-Litovsk	Lenin’s 1917 promise of peace was fulfilled. The new government’s determination to withdraw Russia from the First World War was demonstrated by the high conditions demanded by the Germans in the treaty.
	July	Murder of the royal family	Eliminating Nicholas and his family was perceived as preventing a royal return to the throne. But it further illustrated merciless Bolshevik violence.
	28 August	Attempted assassination of Lenin	Fanny Kaplan’s close but failed assassination of Lenin directly led to the new government’s implementation of Red Terror against its opponents.
1918–20		Civil War – White and Green armies	Many separate groups and leaders fought against the Bolshevik government. Their reasons and desired outcomes were different, but their disillusionment with the government was shared. All armies were defeated due to the Bolsheviks’ greater military and psychological strength.
		Foreign intervention	Frustrated at Russia’s withdrawal from the First World War, former Allied nations entered Russia to provide support for the White armies. Defeating the new communist government may have returned Russia to the world war.
		Policy of War Communism	Implemented in order to help win the Civil War, these policies devastated rural Russia. Grain requisitioning discouraged peasants from producing a surplus, resulting in severe famine, killing nearly 10 million people.

Year	Date	Event	Significance
1921	March	Tenth Party Congress	After three years of military, economic and social turmoil, Lenin called for unity.
	March	Defeat of the Kronstadt Uprising	The sailors' execution for their criticism of the establishment of a one-party state demonstrated Lenin's unwillingness to tolerate any internal opposition.
	March	Introduction of the New Economic Policy	Lenin's pragmatism was demonstrated by his willingness to adopt some aspects of capitalism in order to stimulate the devastated economy. It was an ideological departure from pure communism.
	March	Treaty of Riga	This peace treaty ended the Polish Soviet War and established new national borders.
1922		Formation of the USSR	This was an initiative taken in a time of peace that established massive government control of land, people and resources.
1922–23		Lenin suffers strokes	Lenin's illness left him paralysed and forced his withdrawal from public life in Moscow.
1923	October	Scissors crisis	Trotsky identified significant problems between the increasing prices for industrial goods and lowering prices for agricultural goods.
1924	January	Death of Lenin	The outpouring of grief at Lenin's death signalled the grief of the nation and the ending of his vision of the creation of a communist utopia.
1927		End of New Economic Policy	The NEP was ideologically unpopular and economically unsuccessful. It was always believed to be a temporary policy and was abandoned when Stalin came to power in 1928.



Source 12.1 A representation of Lenin addressing a crowd by Isaak Brodsky, 1920



Consolidating power: The first six months

“

*Our rising has been victorious.
Now they tell us: Renounce your victory, yield, make a compromise.
With whom? ... You are bankrupt. You have played out your role.
Go where you belong: to the dustbin of history!*

– TROTSKY TO THE SOCIALIST REVOLUTIONARIES AND MENSHEVIKS, 27 OCTOBER 1917

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OVERVIEW

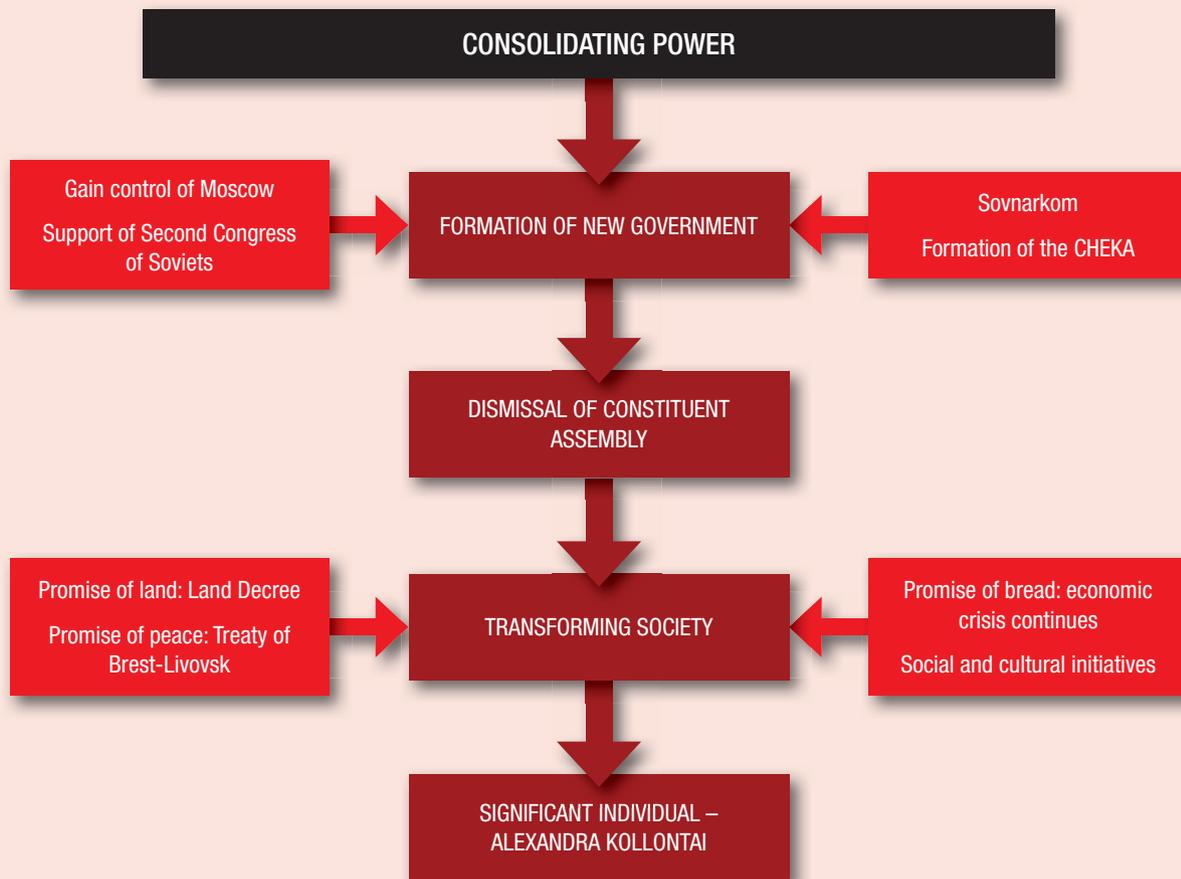
Lenin's and Trotsky's major efforts had been devoted to actually establishing power rather than to formulating a clear direction once in power. There was no honeymoon period, as the crises facing the new government within the first six months were urgent. The October takeover needed the support of the Second Congress of Soviets and Constituent Assembly in order to gain legitimacy. It also needed to address the immediate crises of the war: unequal land distribution and chronic food shortages. These tasks were complicated by ideological battles within the Bolshevik Party. This chapter analyses the ways in which Lenin and the Bolsheviks confronted the immense task of transforming Russia into a socialist society worthy of their original ideals.

KEY ISSUES

- How did the Bolsheviks establish their dictatorship?
- Flashpoint! Dismissal of the Constituent Assembly
- How successfully did Lenin fulfil his promise of 'Peace, Bread, Land!'?
- How was society transformed?
- Significant individual: Alexandra Kollontai



FLOW OF CHAPTER



Source 12.2 After the Bolshevik takeover of Petrograd in October 1917, Lenin next set his sights on the city of Moscow. This painting is *The Taking of the Moscow Kremlin in 1917*, by Konstantin Ivanovich Maximov, 1938.

ANALYSIS ACTIVITY 12.1

Debating Lenin's approach to leadership through quotes

This is a list of interesting quotes by Lenin during his leadership. It is valuable to think of the big picture at the very start of Lenin's leadership. What mattered to him? What was his approach to leadership?

Discuss and debate the meaning of each. Which is your favourite? Which paints Lenin in the best light? Which in the worst? Explain your reasons for each of these choices.

'Without revolutionary theory there can be no revolutionary movement.'

'It is true that liberty is precious; so precious that it must be rationed carefully.'

'Communism is Soviet power plus the electrification of the whole country.'

'It is impossible to predict the time and progress of revolution. It is governed by its own more or less mysterious laws.'

'No amount of political freedom will satisfy the hungry masses.'

'When one makes a revolution, one cannot mark time; one must always go forward – or go back.'

'Give us the child for eight years and it will be a Bolshevik forever.'

'There are no morals in politics.'

'One man with a gun can control 100 without one.'

'A lie told often enough becomes the truth.'

Compare the above quotes by Lenin to those from other powerful leaders of the twentieth century:

'Political power grows out of the barrel of a gun.' (Mao Zedong)

'The greater the lie, the more it will be believed.' (Adolf Hitler)

'Fascism believes that permanent peace is neither possible nor useful.' (Benito Mussolini)

'There are no longer any free realms in which the individual belongs to himself ... The time of personal happiness is over.' (Adolf Hitler)





12.1 How did the Bolsheviks establish their dictatorship?

Lenin and Trotsky's takeover left them in control of Petrograd. There was no opportunity for a slow and peaceful political transition. The membership of the Bolshevik Party was only 300 000 and it seemed unlikely that they would be able to expand their power.

Victory in Moscow

Lenin's first move was to extend his control of Russia, beginning in Moscow. Conflict erupted immediately after news of the events in Petrograd reached the Moscow Soviet. It proved a much harder struggle: artillery was used liberally and casualties reached an estimated 7000. After a week-long battle, the capital was tenuously controlled by the Bolsheviks.

Support of the Second Congress of Soviets

Smolny Institute the headquarters of the new Bolshevik government as well as the Petrograd Soviet in 1917

The opening session of the Congress of Soviets began on 25 October 1917 in the **Smolny Institute**, which later became the headquarters of the Bolshevik Party. Because members were elected, this was a crucial decision-making body that received widespread support and carried genuine authority. The Provisional Government had been seriously weakened by its failure to convince the population of its right to rule. Consequently, Lenin could not let the October events be seen as a mere Bolshevik coup, and therefore marketed the revolution as a rising by the Petrograd Soviet in which many parties were represented. His tactic worked. Despite growing pockets of anti-Bolshevik sentiment, the Congress of Soviets officially approved the new regime, providing legitimacy to Lenin's new government.



Source 12.3 Soldiers guarding the Smolny Institute, Bolshevik headquarters and meeting of the Second Congress of Soviets

Sovnarkom: The Bolsheviks assert one-party rule

The Bolsheviks described themselves as leaders of a nationwide movement of workers, soldiers and peasants. Now they could begin dismantling the old regime. They announced to the Congress of Soviets that their official title would be 'Government of People's **Commissars**'. They replaced the bourgeois title of 'Ministers' with the more proletarian 'People's Commissars', and the 'Cabinet' was renamed '**Sovnarkom**'. The Sovnarkom was an incredibly powerful group consisting of 15 Bolshevik leaders, each of whom was in control of specific governmental departments, with Lenin as Chairman. Trotsky, for instance, became Commissar for Foreign Affairs. Theoretically, they were expected to gain authorisation from the Congress of Soviets, but in practice they acted quite independently.

Commissars while the new Bolshevik government was officially called the Government of People's Commissars, the individual ministerial roles were renamed Commissar

Sovnarkom the powerful 15-member cabinet of ministers in the new Bolshevik government in 1917

A MATTER OF FACT

Provisional Government officials were so hostile to the Bolsheviks that they went on strike and refused to hand over keys to government offices and safes, so the new Sovnarkom members had to temporarily work from home! The employees of the State Bank also refused to pay out money to the new Bolshevik government.

More importantly, although the Sovnarkom was intended to represent the soviets, it quite openly became purely Bolshevik, as Lenin believed only Bolsheviks were capable of leading Russia towards a better future. Immediately after the October takeover, he unequivocally argued that 'there must be no government in Russia other than the Soviet Government'. This push for exclusive leadership angered the other revolutionary parties, which had anticipated the establishment of a socialist coalition.

Lenin established three executive bodies within the new government:

- Politburo – policy-making arm of the Communist Party
- Orgburo – organising arm of the Communist Party
- Secretariat – appointed people to implement decisions of the Communist Party.

The CHEKA

It was necessary to make the foe feel that there was everywhere about him a seeing eye and a heavy hand ready to come down on him the moment he undertook anything against the Soviet Government.

Dzerzhinsky, Head of the CHEKA, December 1917

Perhaps the greatest weapon introduced by the Bolsheviks to establish political control was the formation of a security police. Established in December 1917, the 15-man team was initially a temporary administrative body designed to carry out investigations. It had no powers of arrest. Yet this changed rapidly. By the end of December, it was granted the power of arrest. In January 1918 it was assigned armed units. In February it was given the powers of conducting trials and executions. At the end of 1917 the CHEKA had 23 men, but this had grown to 10 000 within a mere six months. By



1921 it had grown to 100 000 men. Its primary function was revealed by its name, CHEKA, a Russian acronym meaning the 'All Russian Extraordinary Commission to Fight Counter-Revolution, Sabotage and Speculation'. An order was issued to all soviets in February 1918 demanding the immediate arrest and execution of those who were agents of enemy spies, counter-revolutionary agitators or organisers of revolts against the government, or those profiting from selling weapons to counter-revolutionaries.

A MATTER OF FACT

Dzerzhinsky Felix Dzerzhinsky was the chairman of the powerful secret police organisation called the CHEKA

The first head of the CHEKA was Felix Dzerzhinsky, who was Polish, not Russian. As a child he believed that he would one day become a Catholic priest, but instead was jailed for 22 years at age 18 for aggressive anti-government actions.

12.2 FLASHPOINT!

Dismissal of the Constituent Assembly

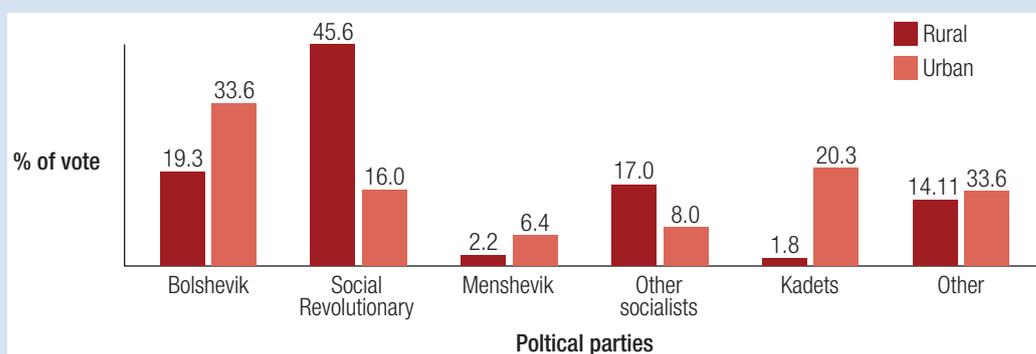
The Provisional Government had initiated elections for Russia's first democratically elected parliament, called the Constituent Assembly. The intelligentsia had been arguing for nearly 100 years that this could be the only authentic answer to Russia's problems. Before the October Revolution, even Lenin repeatedly declared the importance of this body to the future of Russia.

The Bolsheviks allowed the elections to proceed in November 1917 for fear of otherwise appearing undemocratic. The election was a crucial indicator of whether Bolshevik claims of popular support were justified. Were the people really convinced that the Bolsheviks represented the nation? Over 47 million of the 80 million people who were eligible chose to vote and thus created the most representative political body in Russian history.

Election results

Political parties	% of vote	No. of deputies
Socialist Revolutionaries	42.0	370
Bolsheviks	23.6	175
National minority groups	19.8	99
Left SRs (pro-Bolshevik)	6.7	40
Kadets	4.9	17
Mensheviks	3.0	16





Source 12.4 Constituent Assembly election results, November 1917

Source: Kowalski, *The Russian Revolution*, p. 103

The results were not surprising. The majority of voters were peasants from rural provinces where the Socialist Revolutionary policy to end private ownership was popular. Conversely, the Bolsheviks were primarily an industrial workers' party, and their popularity was therefore limited to urban areas. Instead of providing a mandate to rule, this vote became a thorny reminder that the Bolsheviks were not sweeping their way through Russia with the same effectiveness they had achieved in Petrograd only a month earlier.

The Constituent Assembly met at the Tauride Palace in Petrograd on 18 January 1918. The Assembly approved some of the Bolshevik government's early decrees on peace, land and the formation of independent national entities. Tseretelli, a leading Menshevik and a moderate socialist, then condemned the way in which the Bolsheviks had assumed power. In reply, the Bolsheviks, through a man called Sverdloff, read a declaration which was defeated by 273 votes to 140. The Bolshevik troops then forced the Assembly to conclude. One bitter supporter of the Assembly summarised the events of the day with the words: 'On our side were legality, great ideals and faith in the triumph of democracy. On their side were activity, machine-guns, weapons'. Anti-Bolshevik Western historian Richard Pipes stated even more bluntly: 'The machine gun became for them the principal instrument of political persuasion.'

ANALYSIS ACTIVITY 12.2: LENIN'S PERSPECTIVE

Lenin justified the Bolshevik action this way:

As long as behind the slogan 'All power to the Constituent Assembly' is concealed the slogan 'Down with the Soviets', civil war is inevitable. For nothing in the world will induce us to surrender the Soviet power. And when the Constituent Assembly revealed its readiness to postpone all the painfully urgent problems and tasks that were placed before it by the soviets, we told the Constituent Assembly that they must not postpone for a single moment.

And by the will of the Soviet power, the Constituent Assembly, which has refused to recognise the power of the people, is dissolved. The Soviet Revolutionary Republic will triumph no matter what the cost.

Cited in Lynch, *Reaction and Revolutions*, p. 105

- 1 Select two brief quotes from this speech that demonstrate Lenin's attitude towards the Constituent Assembly.
- 2 What was Lenin's key argument about the Constituent Assembly in the final paragraph? Was this a fair complaint?



Analysing historical interpretations of the dismissal of the Constituent Assembly

- 1 Historian William Chamberlin identified two reasons for the failure of the Assembly. First, as the Bolshevik government had already determined its land and peace legislation, the Assembly had no genuine topics to debate. It was left to simply authorise the policies of the Bolsheviks. Second, the Assembly collapsed due to the absence of a Russian parliamentary tradition. Chamberlin (*The Russian Revolution 1917–1921*, p. 371) argues that, had the Bolsheviks failed to win the Civil War, Russia would not have reinstated a Constituent Assembly under Chernov, but rather would have welcomed a military dictator like General **Kolchak** or Denikin because this was more familiar.
- 2 Lenin's dismissal of the Constituent Assembly was a prime example of the fragility of the Bolsheviks' hold on power. From Lenin's perspective, Russia was still at war with Germany, there was growing opposition to the new government from allied countries and the majority of the nation supported non-Bolshevik parties. He was also struggling to unify the various factions within the Bolshevik Party. Hence, Lenin's dissolution of the Assembly left his political opponents without any legitimate power base from which to undermine the new government.
- 3 The dismissal of the Assembly demonstrated how deeply Lenin believed that the Bolsheviks represented the workers and peasants. In this mindset, the Constituent Assembly was simply an unnecessary sideshow.
- 4 Figes (*A People's Tragedy*, p. 505) writes: 'It was as if the Bolsheviks were psychologically unable to make the transition from an underground fighting organisation to a responsible party of national government. They couldn't bring themselves to exchange their leather jackets for ministerial suits.'

Kolchak Alexander Kolchak was an admiral who led a White Army against the Bolshevik government

Kolchak or Denikin because this was more familiar.

ANALYSIS ACTIVITY 12.3: CREATIVE TASK

Lenin's dismissal of the Constituent Assembly made enemies of the other revolutionary parties instead of harnessing a coalition of socialist forces. Write a speech by Lenin to the Bolshevik Central Committee arguing why it was necessary for him to dismiss the Assembly.

12.3 How successfully did Lenin fulfil his promise of 'Peace, Bread, Land!'?

Lenin's memorable speech at Finland Station made popular the catch cry of 'Peace, Bread, Land!' These three key grievances became the platform for his popularity and a blueprint for action. How quickly and effectively did he fulfil his promises once in power?

The promise of land

The land question was one of the easiest to solve on an administrative level. Throughout 1917, the peasants had been claiming that the land they worked on should be theirs and many villages had

already formed revolutionary detachments to seize land from landlords. Sophia Kossak and husband Stefan were landowners whose land in the Ukraine was seized by peasants in January 1918. In her memoirs, called *The Blaze* (1927), she described village meetings where the peasant women organised and motivated crowds to forcefully take over land. The Bolsheviks simply legitimised events like this by issuing a decree from the Second All Russian Congress of Soviets. Rather than being an original statement, this was adapted from the agrarian policy of the Socialist Revolutionaries, who were traditionally considered the voice of the peasants:

The Decree on Land, 8 November 1917

- 1 *Private ownership of land shall be abolished for ever ... All land ... shall become the property of the whole people, and pass into the use of those who cultivate it.*
- 2 *The right to use the land shall be accorded to all citizens of the Russian State (without distinction of sex) desiring to cultivate it by their own labour, with the help of their families, or in partnership, but only as long as they are able to cultivate it ... Peasants who, owing to old age or ill health, are permanently disabled and unable to cultivate the land personally, shall lose their rights to the use of it, but, in return, shall receive a pension from the State.*
- 3 *Land tenure shall be on an equality basis ... there shall be absolutely no restriction on the forms of land tenure – household, farm, communal or co-operative, as shall be decided in each individual village and settlement.*

Akhapkin (Ed.), *First Decrees of Soviet Power*

The promise of bread

Solving the food crisis proved far more difficult. Given that the Provisional Government had continued fighting in the war, combined with a poor harvest in 1917, the economic crisis was terrible by the time Lenin took power. This was the main crisis that Lenin failed to solve. Chapter 14 examines the worsening economic situation between 1918 and 1920 due to the impact of the Civil War and policies of **War Communism**.

War Communism a series of economic policies instituted between 1918 and 1920 to attempt to win the Civil War

The promise of peace: The Treaty of Brest-Litovsk, March 1918

The question of peace is the burning question, the most pressing question of the present time.

Lenin (1917)

The First World War was a crucial factor in the downfall of both the Tsar and the Provisional Government. Hence, it became the most urgent barrier standing in the way of the Bolsheviks and a secure future. Lenin 'declared war on war', calling for immediate peace negotiations. No winners. No losers. Just peace.

Trotsky was Commissar for Foreign Affairs and the logical candidate for chief negotiator for the Russian delegation. After early talks resulted in a ceasefire agreement on 15 December 1917, Trotsky voiced a different policy to Lenin. He was able to persuade the Central Committee to adopt his strategy of stalling the peace process so that communist agitators could attempt to lead tired German soldiers towards mutiny and a revolution in Berlin.



The Germans had proposed a peace treaty that placed severe penalties on Russia. Their demands included:

- one-third of European Russia from the Black Sea to the Baltic Sea (this area totalled 1 million square kilometres and contained 45 million people)
- control over the fertile Ukraine region, Russia's major grain source
- three billion roubles in gold as compensation for damage to German property and industry
- the Russian army to be demolished and Russian warships to be disarmed
- prisoners of war to be exchanged without negotiation.

Heated arguments took place within the Central Committee as many leaders disagreed with the humiliating and costly demands of the treaty. Eventually, Lenin issued an ultimatum: agree to the treaty or accept his resignation. Despite this show of force, the decision to accept the treaty only succeeded by one vote, with Lenin receiving support from men such as Trotsky, Stalin and Zinoviev.



Source 12.5
Territorial losses in the Treaty of Brest-Litovsk

However, both the German army and the peace delegation grew tired of Trotsky's stalling and ended the armistice in February 1918 by launching an offensive against Petrograd. Lenin had to move the Bolshevik government to Moscow as bombs fell on the city. Despite the humiliating conditions, the peace treaty was quickly signed in a small Polish town between Russia and Germany called Brest-Litovsk on 3 March 1918. Over the next six months, Germans transported 35 000 wagon loads of corn and other foodstuffs and raw materials out of the Ukraine to support their troops still fighting the war. The Bolsheviks were saved from further payments as the Allied victory in the First World War forced Germany to sign the equally humiliating Treaty of Versailles in 1919, which voided the Treaty of Brest-Litovsk.



Source 12.6 Trotsky and members of the Russian peace delegation are welcomed by German officers to peace negotiations at Brest-Litovsk

Analysing the treaty

The signing of the peace treaty reveals four intriguing elements about the leadership of Lenin and Trotsky:

- 1 Lenin and Trotsky considered themselves to be victors. Trotsky deliberately embarrassed and annoyed Germany's chief negotiator, Field-Marshal Hindenburg, even at Brest-Litovsk before officially surrendering.
- 2 Lenin and Trotsky believed themselves to be international revolutionaries. Russia was simply the model for the eventual proletarian conquest of the world, which helps explain their willingness to agree to a treaty that had such devastating implications.
- 3 Lenin and Trotsky were masters of persuasion. The brilliant minds and arguments of these men are revealed through their ability to overcome significant opposition to the treaty from within their own party. Lenin had fought and won similar verbal battles over the October Revolution and the dismissal of the Constituent Assembly.
- 4 Lenin's motivations are difficult to assess. After German foreign policy documents were seized, it was revealed that Germany had been providing substantial financial support to Lenin since 1914 and this continued after October 1917. The aim was for Lenin to withdraw Russia from the war, allowing Germany to focus all its manpower and physical resources on the Western Front. Did Lenin push for peace to fulfil his promise to the Russian people or to his German employers?



12.4 How was society transformed?

Give me four years to teach the children and the seed I have sown will never be uprooted.

Lenin

The Bolsheviks also actively introduced sweeping innovations that had a dramatic impact on social and cultural life in Russia. New laws were introduced, traditional roles of women redefined and development of the arts, film, literature and music encouraged, which made Russia one of the world's leading centres of creative expression. Lenin even declared in 1918: 'No state, no democratically enacted legislation, has done half as much for women as the soviet government in the first few months of its existence.' A fascinating book produced by Bolshevik leaders Bukharin and Preobrazhensky, called *The ABC of Communism*, was published in early 1918. It explains the communist perspective on all aspects of life.

Private ownership, 6 December 1917

- The right to own large houses was abolished. Such houses now became the property of the local soviet so that several families, rather than one, could occupy the space.

Marriage and divorce laws, 18 December 1917

- Only civil marriage, not church marriage, was recognised by the state.
- Divorce could be obtained easily by either partner.
- Full judicial equality was granted to men and women.

Education

- Education became the right of the state, not of parents.
 - Creches and kindergartens were established so that children could be educated from an early age and mothers could join the workforce.

Focus questions

- 1 Which of these policies do you consider to be the most radical?
- 2 Which policies specifically attacked the wealthy classes?
- 3 Which reforms had an impact on women?
- 4 Suggest why the Bolsheviks disliked religion.
- 5 See 'Practice examination questions' available on *Cambridge GO* for exam-style questions.

Banks, 27 December 1917

- All banks were nationalised and brought under the control of the State Bank.
- All gold held in private banks now belonged to the state.

Calendar and alphabet, 31 January 1918

- Russia's Julian calendar, which was 13 days behind the Western Gregorian calendar, was abolished on 31 January 1918. The new day became 14 February.
- The Russian alphabet was pruned of 'unnecessary' letters and symbols.

Religion, 9 February 1918

- Complete separation of church from state and school from church was established.
- Every citizen was free to profess any or no religion.
- Teaching of religion was banned in both public and private schools.
- Churches were denied the right to own property.

A MATTER OF FACT

In order to completely replace the old regime, Lenin urged people to adopt new first names and surnames. His suggestions for new names included Marlen (short for Marxism–Leninism), Engelsine (after Engels) and Octobrine (to commemorate the 1917 October Revolution).

The role of women

The Women's Bureau, or Zhenotdel, was formed a few months before the October Revolution. Led by Alexandra Kollontai and backed by Lenin and Trotsky, it aimed to rally women to the support of the new regime. Activating women was crucial to unite and ignite the new society. Kollontai held the first All Russian Congress of Women on 19 November 1918. Three hundred women were expected but over 1000 attended. Lenin spoke and called for an end to women's domestic slavery and drudgery, for high standards of sexual morality and for avoidance of prostitution. Lenin said in 1918:

Comrades, in a certain respect this congress of the feminine section of the proletarian army is of particularly great significance ... It has been observed in the experience of all liberation movements that the success of a revolution depends on the extent to which women take part in it. The Soviet Government is doing everything to enable women to carry on their proletarian socialist activity independently.

Karen M Offen (Ed.), *Women, the Family, and Freedom: 1880–1950*, pp. 287–9

Lenin's wife, Nadezdha Krupskaya, wrote her own revolutionary book called *The Woman Worker* in 1900, which focused on Marxist solutions to the use of female labour. During the war years, Lenin was exiled to Switzerland while Krupskaya continued her own revolutionary work from Sweden.

12.5 SIGNIFICANT INDIVIDUAL

Alexandra Kollontai (1872–1952)

Philosophy

- Kollontai, like Trotsky and Lenin, was an international revolutionary for whom the Russian Revolution was simply one part of the worldwide struggle against capitalism.

Involvement in old regime

- Daughter of a liberal-minded Russian general.
- Contributor to *Iskra*.
- Member of the Social Democratic Workers' Party from age 17.
- Initially supported the Mensheviks in the split, but joined the Bolsheviks in 1914.
- Marched with the workers during the Bloody Sunday protest in 1905.
- Taught Marxism classes to groups of workers.



- Wrote leaflets inciting workers to overthrow the Tsar.
- Toured America in 1916 to gain support to end the war.

Involvement in 1917

- In exile in the United States with Trotsky and Bukharin on eve of 1917 February Revolution.
- The only Bolshevik leader to support Lenin's radical *April Theses* from the outset.

Involvement in new society

- A brilliant politician.
- First and only woman elected to the Central Committee.
- As Commissar for Social Welfare she became a leader in debates on women, sexuality and family – often misrepresented as promoting sexual promiscuity.
- Became director of Zhenotdel, the Communist Party's Women's Department, in 1920.
- Opposed War Communism (see Chapter 14).
- Broke from Lenin in 1921 to lead the Workers' Opposition.
- Was the Russian Ambassador to Norway, Mexico then Sweden between 1923 and 1945.

Key quotes

'An ebullient and emotional woman, prone to fall in love with young men and utopian ideas, she had thrown herself into the Bolshevik cause with all the fanaticism of the newly converted.'
(Figes, *A People's Tragedy* (1996), p. 292)

Nothing was revolutionary enough for her.' (Trotsky)



Source 12.7 Alexandra Kollontai



ANALYSIS ACTIVITY 12.4: VISUAL ANALYSIS

The poster depicted in Source 12.8 was commissioned by the new government to celebrate the first anniversary of the Bolshevik regime in October 1918.

- 1 Who do the two main figures represent?
- 2 What do the symbols in the foreground and the position of the two men in a doorway represent?
- 3 What is the meaning of the sun and factories in the background?
- 4 What is the meaning of some of the other symbols in this poster?
- 5 To what extent do you agree with the message of this poster?

Source 12.8 Apsit's 'The Year of Proletarian Dictatorship' (1918). The caption at the top can be translated as 'The proletariat of all the countries'.



The story so far

- The Bolsheviks acted quickly after assuming power through the October Revolution. They established a power structure that was dominated by leaders of the Bolshevik Party. A one-party dictatorship was established.
- Lenin dismissed the much anticipated Constituent Assembly as the Bolsheviks only received 23.6 per cent of the vote. Lenin justified his action by arguing that the Assembly was merely an 'expression of the old regime when the authority belonged to the bourgeoisie' and did not represent the soviets or the working class. Democracy in Russia was dead.
- Lenin acted immediately to address his promise of 'Peace, Bread, Land!' He issued a Land Decree, but the bread question remained unresolved due to the depth of the crisis.
- Despite the devastating and humiliating price, Trotsky signed the Treaty of Brest-Litovsk as he wanted to expand the revolution throughout the world, not just get the best deal for Russia.
- The new Bolshevik government introduced several innovative policies that significantly transformed social and cultural life in Russia.



CHAPTER REVIEW

DEVELOPING CLEAR DEFINITIONS

Write explanations for each of the following.

Key political groups	Key events
Congress of Soviets	Dismissal of Constituent Assembly
Sovnarkom	Treaty of Brest-Litovsk
Politburo	

PRACTISING PARAGRAPH ANSWERS

- 1 How did the Bolsheviks establish their dictatorship?
- 2 Why was the Constituent Assembly dismissed?
- 3 How successfully did Lenin fulfil his promise of 'Peace, Bread, Land!'?
- 4 What changes did the Bolsheviks make to social and cultural life?

PRACTICE ESSAY QUESTIONS

- 1 'By receiving the highest representation for the Constituent Assembly and having their land policy implemented, the Socialist Revolutionaries proved that they were more worthy of assuming power than the Bolsheviks.' Discuss this view, providing evidence to support your answer.
- 2 'Creating a new society was not easy. Given that they experienced greater opposition than support during the first six months of power, the Bolsheviks were not able to achieve anything they had promised.' Discuss this view, providing evidence to support your answer.

READING MORE DEEPLY

Easy

Kowalski, R 1997, *The Russian Revolution 1917–1921*, Routledge. Chapter 7, 'The origins of the Bolshevik dictatorship', pp. 99–113.

Moderate

Anweiler, O 1974, *The Soviets*, Pantheon Books. Chapter, 'The Soviets during the October Revolution', pp. 192–207.

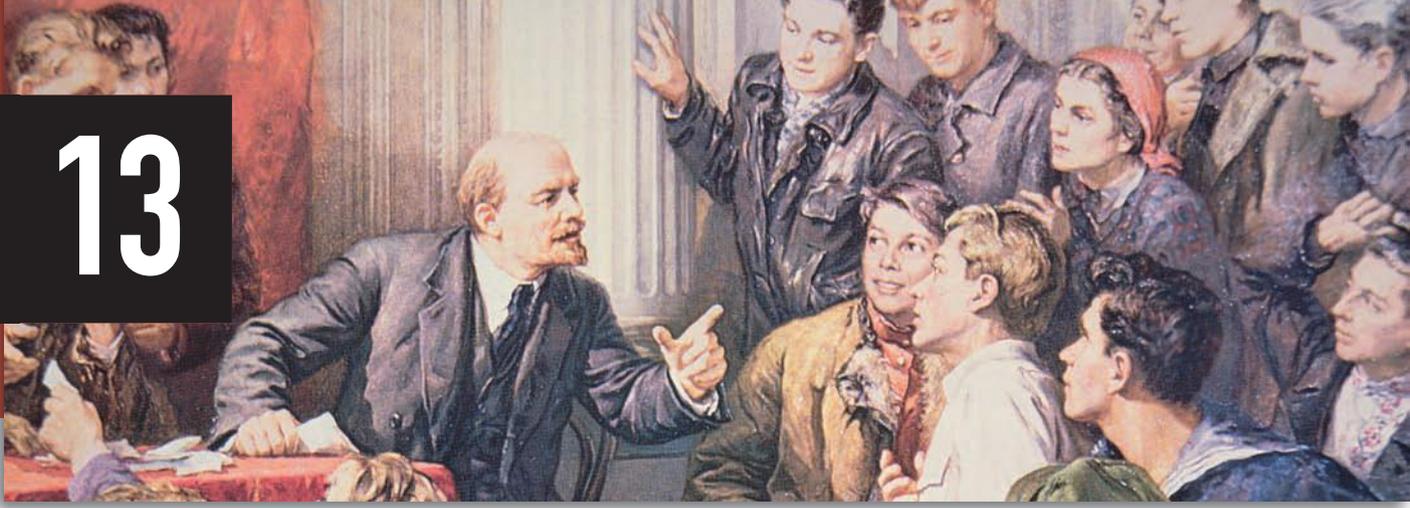
Challenging

Thébaud, F (Ed.) 1994, *A History of Women in the West: Toward a Cultural Identity in the Twentieth Century*, vol. 5, Harvard University Press. 'The Soviet model' by Françoise Navailh, pp. 226–44.

Navailh rereads the Soviet Union in the 1920s and 1930s from a feminist perspective. The most intriguing and valuable aspect of the chapter is the analysis of the sexual revolution in the 1920s where the laws on divorce, abortion, de facto relationships and children were liberalised in a sweeping move to oppose the social regulations of the old regime.



Source 12.9 German (at left) and Russian delegates at the preliminary talks of the Treaty of Brest-Litovsk, December 1917



Civil War

“

Civil war never has and never can create a government that has the backing of the whole country.

VIKZHEL, THE ALL-RUSSIAN EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE OF THE UNION OF RAILWAY WORKERS, 1917

”

OVERVIEW

Despite Lenin and Trotsky's deep beliefs in the inevitability of a worldwide revolution, one never occurred. This turned their immediate focus to saving the revolution in Russia from defeat. Lenin faced two challenges to his authority, which made the process of consolidating the revolution both easier and more difficult. These battles are often combined under the title of 'The Civil War' because the Bolsheviks fought both concurrently with the same army, strategies and general location.

It is more helpful, however, to consider this period as made up of two distinct threats. First, there was the internal threat of a Russian civil war where the Bolshevik forces (called the Reds) were confronted by many separate anti-Bolshevik forces (called the Whites and the Greens). Second, there was the external threat in 1918 and 1919 where several nations sent in troops in a bid to force Russia to rejoin the war and re-engage the Germans in battle on the Eastern Front.

The communists were convinced of their ultimate victory both in Russia and throughout Europe. Zinoviev, a Bolshevik, exclaimed in May 1919: 'Old Europe is rushing towards revolution at breakneck speed. In a twelve-month, we shall have forgotten that there was ever a struggle for communism in Europe, for all of Europe will be Communist.'

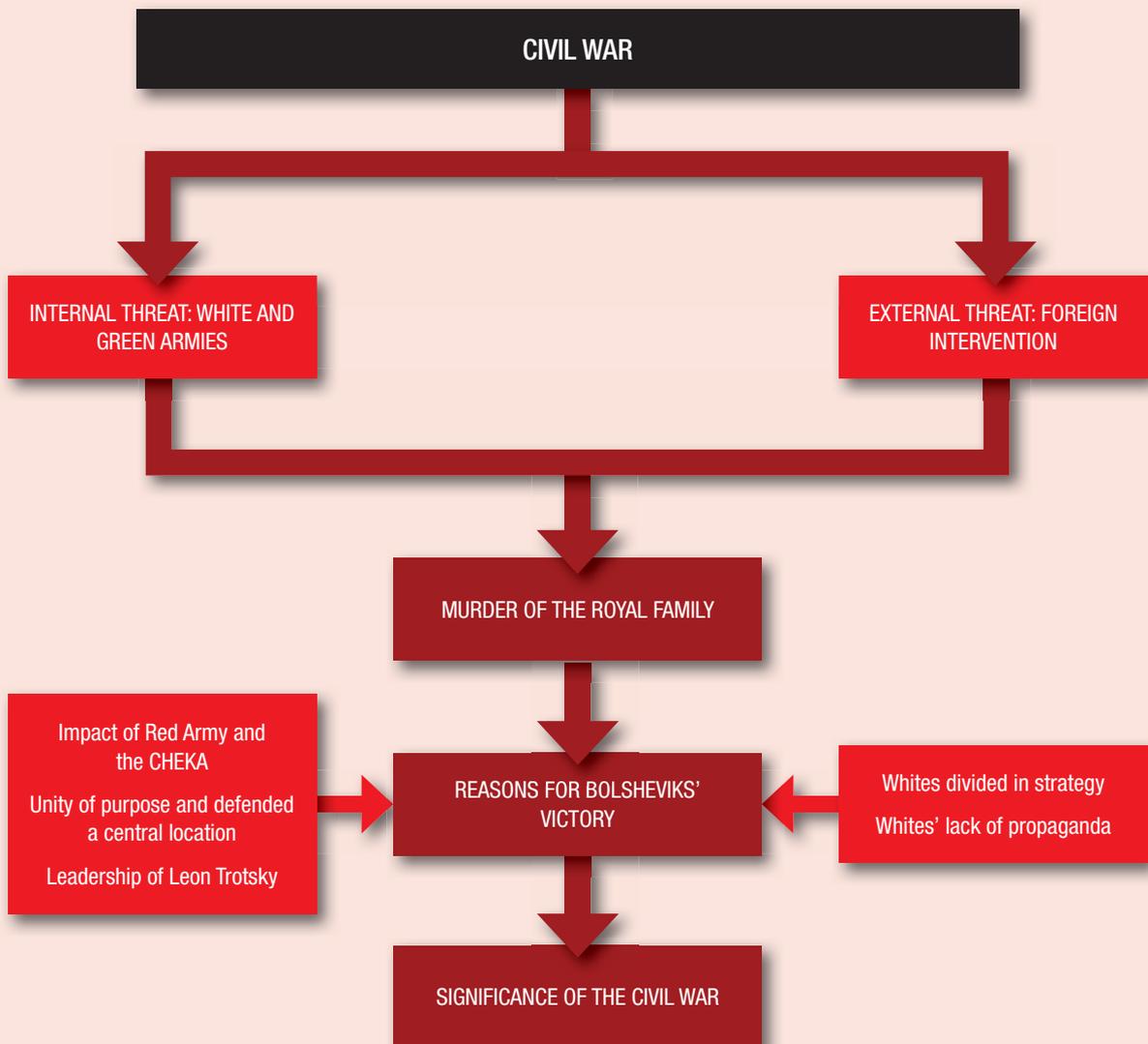
The result of both threats was also the same. Led effectively by Lenin and Trotsky, the Bolsheviks, who now called themselves communists, were forced to adopt dictatorial methods of discipline and control that became an integral part of the nature of the Communist Party, even after the Civil War had been won.

An entire book could be devoted to the Civil War itself. For example, Kiev, the capital of the Ukraine, changed control 16 times during the war. This chapter will attempt to provide a clear outline of the events and significance of this crucial period.

KEY ISSUES

- Flashpoint! Attempted assassination of Lenin
- Why were the Whites and Greens such an internal threat?
- Why was foreign intervention such an external threat?
- Why did the Bolsheviks win the Civil War?
- Significant individual: Leon Trotsky
- Flashpoint! Murder of the royal family
- What was the significance of the Civil War?

FLOW OF CHAPTER



13.1 FLASHPOINT!

Attempted assassination of Lenin

On 30 August 1918, a crucial event took place that directly changed the policies and approach of the Bolshevik government. Lenin had only been in power for 10 months. Despite the assassination of Michael Uritsky, the Head of the CHEKA in Petrograd, that morning by a Socialist Revolutionary student, Lenin continued his afternoon program in Moscow. He was to make two open-air speeches to the ordinary Russians, accompanied only by his chauffeur. After the second, he was approached by a group of women, one of whom held out her arm to push the crowd of workers away, while another, Fanny Kaplan, pulled out a revolver and shot at Lenin three times.

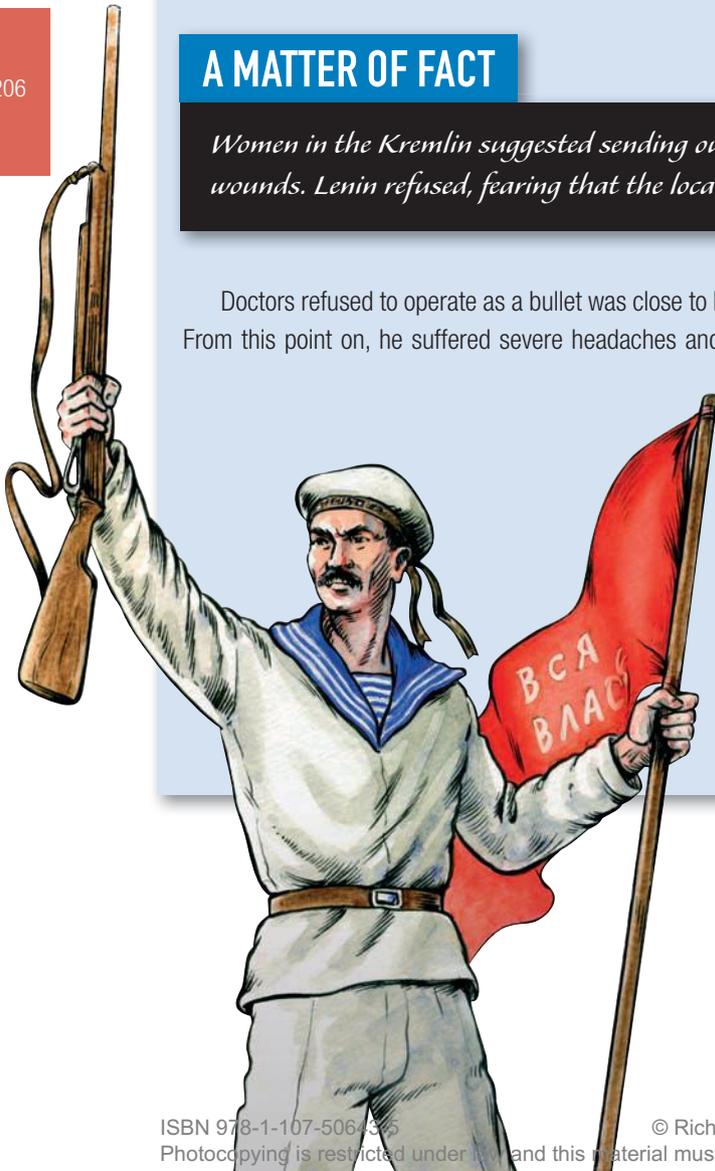
Kaplan Fanny Kaplan was a radical anarchist who shot Lenin twice in a failed assassination attempt in August 1918

Two shots hit Lenin: one in the left shoulder blade near to the collar bone, and the other more dangerously in the base of his neck. Bleeding profusely, Lenin demanded to be taken directly to the Kremlin as he feared being ambushed on the way to the hospital. He stubbornly walked up the stairs, refusing to be carried. The major problem was that there were only Bolshevik leaders and their families in the Kremlin and two surgeons only arrived in the early hours of the following morning. Lenin immediately asked, 'Is the end near? If it's near tell me straight so that I don't leave matters pending.'

A MATTER OF FACT

Women in the Kremlin suggested sending out to get some lemons to help disinfect the wounds. Lenin refused, fearing that the local grocer might not be politically reliable.

Doctors refused to operate as a bullet was close to his spine and surgery may have resulted in paralysis or death. From this point on, he suffered severe headaches and migraines. All the events of the next two chapters need to be read in this light. The most significant outcome of the failed assassination was the direct introduction of a policy of Red Terror by the Bolshevik government. The shooting was direct proof to the government that counter-revolution was real, active and dangerous. Socialist Revolutionaries and Mensheviks became the tools of the class enemy. The policy of Red Terror was implemented to defeat enemies of the government and dominated the Bolshevik mentality during the Civil War that followed.



ANALYSIS ACTIVITY 13.1: DOCUMENT ANALYSIS

On 1 September 1918, a Bolshevik newspaper, *Krasnaya Gazeta*, summarised this new and radical approach.

We will turn our hearts into steel, which we will temper in the fire of suffering and the blood of fighters for freedom. We will make our hearts cruel, hard and immovable, so that no mercy will enter them, and so that they will not quiver at the sight of a sea of enemy blood. We will let loose the floodgates of that sea. Without mercy, without sparing, 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 ... let there be floods of the blood of the bourgeois – more blood, as much as possible.

- 1 Why did the newspaper demand that hearts be cruel and hard?
- 2 What is the tone, or emotion, of this article?
- 3 Write down the phrase that you think best summarises the main point of this article.

13.2 SIGNIFICANT INDIVIDUAL

Fanny Kaplan (1890–1918)

Fanny Kaplan was from the Ukraine, which had been sacrificed to the Germans in the Treaty of Brest-Litovsk. She was an anarchist and had been imprisoned for terrorism under the tsarist regime. Sources differ as to whether she was linked to the Socialist Revolutionaries. After her attempted assassination of Lenin, Kaplan's Jewish background led to an increase of anti-Jewish sentiment and violence. She was executed three days later without either a trial or even a comment as to whether she had worked alone or as part of a conspiracy.



Source 13.1 Fanny Kaplan

13.3 Why were the Whites and Greens such an internal threat?

It is indeed difficult to state exactly when the Civil War commenced. Internal dissent began as soon as the Bolsheviks had seized power in October. As discussed in Chapter 10, the Bolsheviks received open opposition from the Socialist Revolutionaries and Kerensky. As early as December 1917, General Kornilov was gathering a volunteer army from the Don Cossack region to fight against the government.

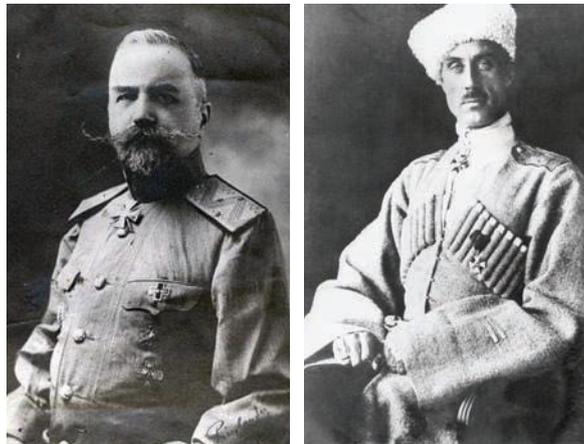


Who were the White armies?

The White armies comprised the traditional conservative forces in Russia. They were led by officers from the former Russian army and were supported by peasants, landowners, businessmen and ousted political groups like the Socialist Revolutionaries who wanted to defeat the new Soviet government. These powerful generals threatened from every direction. Although the following threats are listed separately for clarity, each attack overlapped and for more than three years provided a serious and constant opposition to the Soviet government.

September 1918: General Miller's northern threat

The Socialist Revolutionaries established a government in the north, but it was overthrown by a military coup in September 1918 led by General Wrangel who opposed any form of revolutionary, socialist government.



Source 13.2 (LEFT) General Miller; (RIGHT) General Wrangel

October 1919: General Yudenich's north-western threat

General Yudenich led an army of 14 400 Russian soldiers who had been captured and then released by the Germans. Their biggest challenge to the Reds was an attack on Petrograd in October 1919, but they were defeated by the Reds on the outskirts of the city. At the same time, General Denikin's forces reached their closest point to Moscow before being defeated at Orel.



Source 13.3
General Yudenich



Source 13.4 Internal and external threats to the Bolsheviks

Source 13.5 An eagle sits upon an Orthodox Russian Cross: icons of the Romanov dynasty



August 1918: Murder of the royal family

The royal family was murdered by local Bolsheviks to prevent them from being captured by the White Armies.

Murder of the royal family

1918–20: Admiral Kolchak’s eastern threat

Kolchak had been Admiral of the Black Sea Fleet during the First World War and his hatred of socialism led him to focus on establishing an anti-Bolshevik government in Siberia. He commanded a powerful army of 100 000 soldiers and was supplied with one million rifles and 700 field guns by the Allies. In March 1919 he advanced into Red territory along the Trans-Siberian Railway. An English periodical called the *Annual Register*, which sought to record the most significant events in each year, described Kolchak as being the most important of the anti-Bolshevik forces, who had ‘the support of the entire outside world’. However, Kolchak resigned in January 1920 after 80 per cent of his anti-Bolshevik peasant conscripts deserted. He was shot by the Red Army.

Admiral Kolchak



Source 13.6 Admiral Kolchak

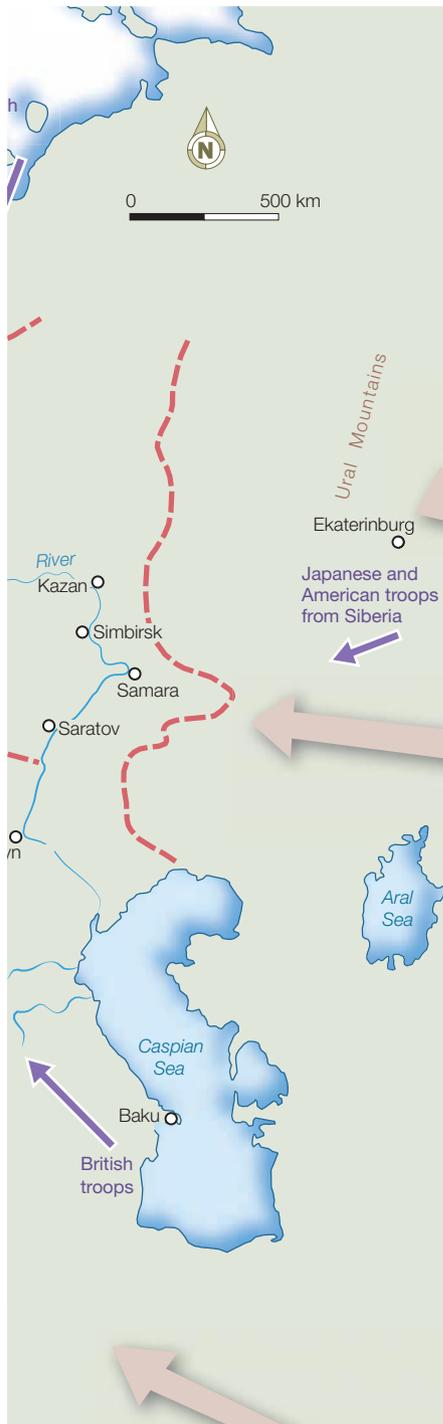
December 1917–20: General Denikin’s southern threat

Denikin was an old-fashioned nationalist who wanted to restore the old regime. He commanded a maximum of 150 000 soldiers and advanced through the Ukraine and Kiev close to Moscow. In March 1920 he handed over command of his White forces to General Wrangel.

General Denikin



Source 13.7 General Denikin





A MATTER OF FACT

The Russian Revolution used many symbols from the French Revolution. The Marseillaise was sung as the anthem of the February 1917 Revolution and the White armies took their name from the white royal colour of the French monarchy.

ANALYSIS ACTIVITY 13.2: IMAGE ANALYSIS



Source 13.8 (ABOVE) Soviet propaganda depicting the mighty sword of the Red Army forcefully cutting off the advancing hand of the White armies; (RIGHT) White propaganda – ‘Two worlds, two systems’

- 1 What are the key features and symbols of each image?
- 2 Which image is more effective in communicating its message?

Who were the Green armies?

The impact of the peasant wars must be considered seriously given that Lenin told the opening session of the Tenth Party Congress in March 1921 that the peasants were ‘far more dangerous than all of the Denikins, Yudeniches and Kolchaks put together’. These Green armies were an intriguing but separate collection of peasant and Cossack forces that gave allegiance neither to the Whites nor the Reds. The Green armies were not a unified group and did not fight together. The Civil War becomes far more complex if it is considered as being not just a Red versus White conflict but also as a Red versus Green and Green versus White conflict.

What is remarkable about these peasant wars is that they shared so many common features, despite the huge distances between them and the different contexts in which they took place. Most of the larger rebellions had started out in 1920 as small-scale peasant revolts against the requisitioning of food which, as a result of their incompetent and often brutal handling by the local Communists, soon became inflamed and spread into full-scale peasant wars.

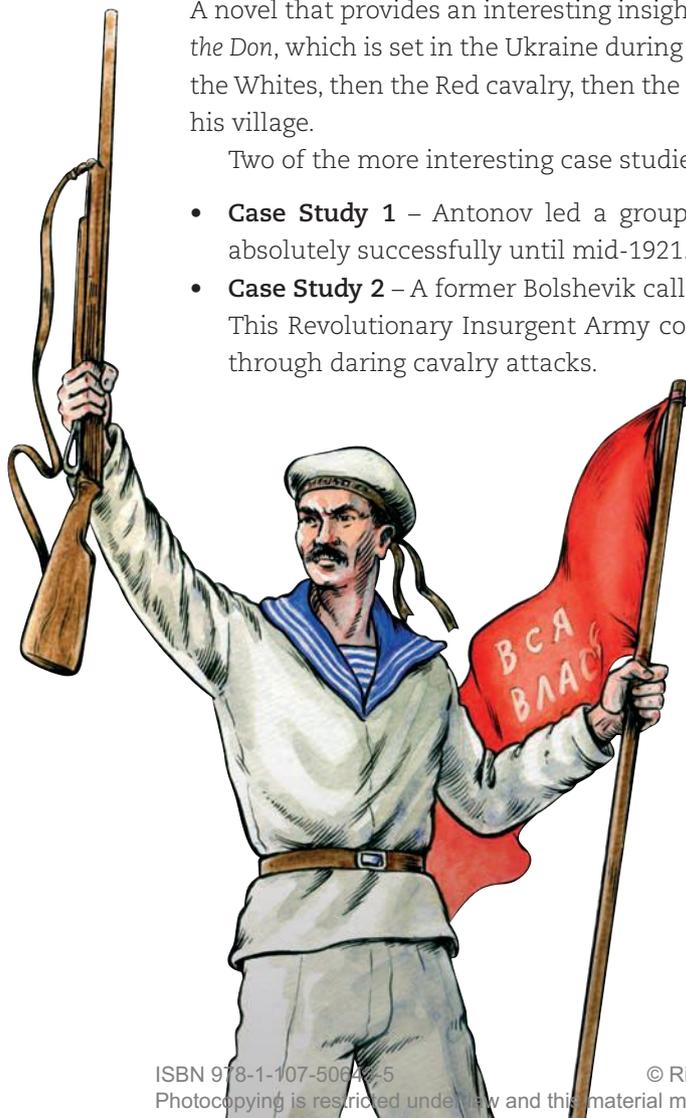
requisitioning the confiscation of goods (often foodstuffs such as grain), frequently with a high degree of force

Figes, A People's Tragedy (1996), p. 753

The Green armies' demands were for greater autonomy from Moscow. They operated primarily in the outer provinces in White-occupied territories and supported movements for national independence. A novel that provides an interesting insight into these conflicts is Mikhail Sholokov's *And Quiet Flows the Don*, which is set in the Ukraine during the Civil War. The main character, Grigory Melekhov, joins the Whites, then the Red cavalry, then the Greens. But primarily, he wants to be left in peace to enjoy his village.

Two of the more interesting case studies of the impact of the Green armies:

- **Case Study 1** – Antonov led a group of 40000 partisans that controlled the Tambov region absolutely successfully until mid-1921.
- **Case Study 2** – A former Bolshevik called Mohkno coordinated a large group of guerrilla fighters. This Revolutionary Insurgent Army controlled a small area of the Ukraine throughout 1919–20 through daring cavalry attacks.



British historian Geoff Swain argued that the Civil War was not just about the Bolshevik revolution fighting against tsarist counter-revolution. It was primarily a clash between different versions of revolution. The peasants became a dominant problem for the government in 1920 and 1921, not because they wanted to become the leaders of Russia but rather because of fundamentally different beliefs about the benefits of the 1917 Revolution. Lenin's government wanted national unity while the Greens wanted local independence.



13.4 Why was foreign intervention such an external threat?

While the initial revolution created a lot of anxiety, Lenin's subsequent political stance stirred up intense anger in Europe's conservative corridors of power. The Allied countries refused to recognise the Treaty of Brest-Litovsk and preferred to gather support for a White government that would continue the war. The catalyst for foreign intervention was Lenin's dramatic declaration on 18 January 1918 that all foreign debts were cancelled 'unconditionally and without any exception'. By cancelling repayments of the country's national debt, Russia saved a massive 80 billion roubles in gold, which equated to two-thirds of its total national wealth. In addition, Lenin confiscated all foreign-owned property located in Russia, which further antagonised international companies.

These demands resulted in foreign powers supporting the White armies, although they were rarely involved in actual fighting. The Treaty of Brest-Litovsk had only given Russia a brief break from international war and military action. After the military, financial and psychological exhaustion of four years of the First World War, several nations mounted another major campaign, this time against the Soviets.

April 1918: British threat – British marines landed in several locations, including Russia's two most northern ports, Archangel and Murmansk. Perhaps their most significant role was to provide invaluable physical and financial resources to the White armies. Winston Churchill announced to the House of Commons in August 1919 that Great Britain alone had spent £70 million over the last nine months in support of anti-Bolshevik forces.



Source 13.9 The brutality of battle

April 1918: French threat – French troops were involved in the landing at Archangel with the British, yet were the first foreign nation to withdraw one year later in April 1919.

April 1918: Japanese threat and August 1918: American threat – Both these countries sent troops to Siberia, but for different reasons. The Japanese sent 70 000 troops, hoping to gain more territory, while the Americans went to restrain the Japanese, protect the Trans-Siberian Railway and, some believe, to support Admiral Kolchak's new government.

May 1918: Czech Legion threat – The involvement of the Czech Legion is a fascinating story of poor circumstance. The legion of 30 000 men planned to travel east on the Trans-Siberian Railway and then travel by ship from Vladivostok back to the battlefields in Western Europe. Although Lenin had agreed to the Czechs undertaking this trip through Russia, local Bolshevik groups reacted in a hostile way. The armed Czechs became even more of a target when they aligned themselves with anti-Bolshevik Socialist Revolutionary units to form an independent republic in the Volga. The resulting battles against the Reds meant that the Czech Legion had to fight its way across the vast countryside until they could escape Russia.

February 1919 to March 1921: Polish Soviet War – This war was fought primarily over the Ukraine, but a Soviet victory would have threatened Poland's very existence as an independent state. Poland was strategically important to Lenin because control would allow easier exportation of revolutionary agitation to other European nations. Trotsky's Red Army drove quickly through Poland until an unexpected defeat in the Battle of Warsaw. The result was a ceasefire, and a formal peace treaty, called the Treaty of Riga, was signed in Latvia on 18 March 1921. The treaty not only established the Polish–Soviet border but also allowed the Bolsheviks to defeat the last White Russian general, Wrangel.

Civil War poetry

The Russian poet Mayakovsky wrote a poem summarising the foreign threat in the Civil War. While the complete poem is cited in *The History of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union* (1960), some lines follow:

*They came and fought like mad,
They marched on Petrograd ...
They came supplied with tanks,
With dollars, pound and francs,
They came and thought they'd win,
But got their heads bashed in.*

13.5 Why did the Bolsheviks win the Civil War?

At the lowest point of the war, the Bolsheviks only retained control of one-fifth of the old Russian Empire. So how was the new government able to conquer both an internal and foreign opposition?



Why the Reds won

1 The Red Army

The Red Army was crucial to the survival of the Bolsheviks. It was formed in January 1918 by the Council of People's Commissars and should not be confused with the Red Guard that was established in preparation to defend Petrograd against General Kornilov in August 1917. Workers and peasants were conscripted to the army, which meant that the new government could claim not only to be the saviours of the nation, but also saviours actively supported by the proletariat.

Trotsky became their leader because of his appointment as Commissar of War in March 1918. He enforced strict military discipline that was best encapsulated by the compulsory Oath of the Red Warrior. This oath of loyalty committed each individual to 'observe the strictest revolutionary discipline', to protect all public property from damage and robbery, and to defend the Soviet republic against all foreign invaders. To these causes the Red Army pledged to 'give my whole strength and life itself'. By 1920 the Red Army had grown to five million men. Trotsky also cleverly recruited 50 000 former tsarist military officers to lead the Red Army, but in doing so had to appoint loyal Bolsheviks to watch their every move to ensure their allegiance to the Reds.

2 The CHEKA

Like the sound of a bolt being shot, the two syllables, Che-ka, would stop any conversation.

Volkogonov



Source 13.10 Founder and head of the CHEKA, Felix Dzerzhinsky

The CHEKA, along with the Red Army, became significant instruments of terror. They stringently enforced compliance to the communist government by committing atrocities against both the White armies and dissident workers and peasants. Stories included waiting outside upper-class schools and killing the children as they came out, imprisoning the wives of political opponents, seriously wounding prisoners before burying them alive, and tying hot tin cans full of rats to victims' stomachs.

According to Fitzpatrick, the official CHEKA figures revealed that in just 20 provinces in 1918 alone, they exposed 142 counter-revolutionary organisations and were confronted with 245 separate revolts that required suppression. At least 8389 people were shot and 87 000 arrested. According to historian Steven Smith, the overall number of executions carried out by the CHEKA during the three years of the Civil War was 140 000, with another 140 000 killed in the process of eliminating peasant and other uprisings. By comparison, the Tsar's *Okhrana* had executed 'only' 14 000 people in a period of 50 years.

Nikolai Bukharin made a famous quote in a speech in 1921 that is often attributed to Lenin: 'One cannot make omelettes without breaking eggs.' He perceived the Civil War as a period where the Bolsheviks acted as the sledgehammer that smashed the eggs open.

A MATTER OF FACT

Dzerzhinsky committed incredible atrocities but also had a surprising humane side. He not only ran the violent CHEKA but also headed a large children's charity.

3 Unity of purpose

Patriotism was a key psychological factor as it bred high morale and dedication. The Reds had a greater commitment to the cause as they were defending their nation on their own soil. It became an urgent battle for survival: victory would consolidate the revolution, but defeat would see their recent gains evaporated. Bolshevik propaganda represented the Whites as the combined evil forces of tsarism, the bourgeoisie, superstition and foreign capitalists.

4 Defending a central location

Although the White armies controlled the majority of Russian soil, the area retained by the Reds included the cities of Petrograd and Moscow. The surrounding areas were industrial strongholds, which meant that equipment, ammunition, war supplies and, most significantly, the hub of the railway system were able to be controlled and utilised by the Reds.

Why the Whites lost

1 Divided in purpose and strategy

The Whites had no common unity of purpose because they were drawn from a vast background of foreign motivation and political ideology. Some Whites were socialists, whereas others were conservatives who promoted a return to tsarism. Geographical distance meant a lack of cooperation or unification of leadership. Equipment was not shared. Military tactics were not forged in common. White offensives were often months apart rather than launched simultaneously. Ultimately, instead of fighting a combined White force, the Red Army simply fought several separate battles, one after the other, until each White army was defeated, surrendered or simply withdrew.

2 Lack of propaganda

The Whites were unable to capitalise on the despair of the peasant communities with effective propaganda. Despite the starvation and desperation of the rural communities exacerbated by the war, the Whites did not present themselves as a better alternative to the Reds. As the White armies were drawn primarily from the old middle and upper classes, they did not approve of seizing land from the traditional landowners. The White armies therefore experienced less commitment from the peasant recruits and also greater desertion as the Reds were considered to be the lesser of two evils. The Whites also relied on the practical support from the Allies, triggering Lenin's declaration that the opposition were merely puppets of foreign enemies.



ANALYSIS ACTIVITY 13.3: SYNTHESIS ACTIVITY

- 1 Consider the six reasons in the previous pages why the Red Army won and White armies lost. List them in order of importance, with 1 being the most important, in explaining why the Bolsheviks won the Civil War.
- 2 Justify why you believe that the reason you have chosen is the most significant.



Source 13.11 A poster of the Russian Civil War, 1918–22, which says: ‘Long Live World October [revolution]! Workers conquered power in Russia. Workers will conquer power in the entire world.’

ANALYSIS ACTIVITY 13.4: HISTORICAL INTERPRETATIONS

Greenwood (*The Modern World*, 1973) argues that the Whites lost rather than the Reds winning:

Much was due to the driving initiative, the disciplined order and the ruthlessness of the Bolsheviks themselves. They possessed in Lenin a leader of great strength and astuteness, and in Trotsky an organiser of extraordinary capacity. The policy of terror subdued opposition and aided their cause, but the victory was not due to terrorism. The Bolsheviks were faced by a motley array of oppositionists, who had little in common. It was difficult to maintain effective co-operation between socialist revolutionary leaders and army generals of the old regime. There was little co-operation of policy or strategy between the White leaders, and this lack of unity was to prove fatal to the counter-revolutionary cause.

- 1 How does Greenwood support his view?
- 2 See ‘Practice examination questions’ available on *Cambridge GO* for exam-style questions using this document.

13.6 SIGNIFICANT INDIVIDUAL

Leon Trotsky (1879–1940)

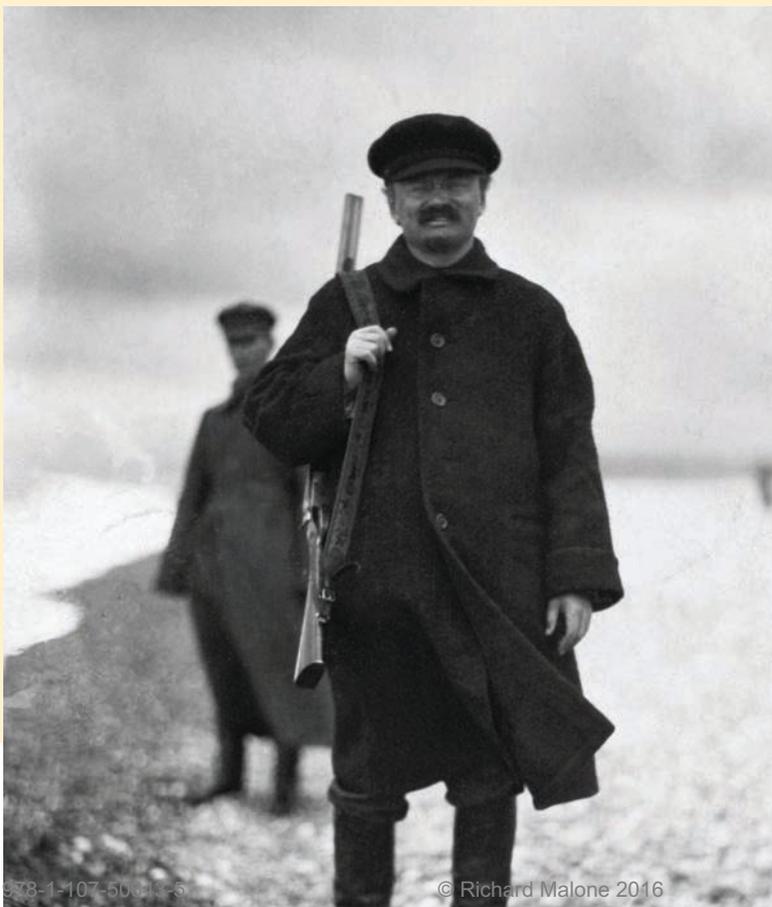
He strikes me as a man who would willingly die fighting for Russia provided there was a big enough audience to see him do it.

Lockhart, the British Vice-Consul in Moscow, after meeting Trotsky in February 1918

Trotsky's brilliance as a tactician and motivating orator was a prime factor in the October takeover and victory in the Civil War. For the three years of the war he lived in an armoured train and travelled around the Reds' defences inspiring the troops and promoting their 'inevitable' victory. His train carried his support staff, which included engineering specialists, as well as printing presses, a court of justice, map room, several motor cars, and munitions and troops. It travelled an estimated 105 000 kilometres during the course of the war.

The myths about Trotsky's train were numerous. Red Army men came to expect that it would bring them long-awaited reinforcements, artillery and ammunition, as well as the legendary leader of the army himself, whose personal example would create a breakthrough on the front. Commanders and commissars, on the other hand, awaited Trotsky's peremptory [authoritative and dictatorial] orders with trepidation. Everyone, however, believed that Trotsky's arrival meant that things would get going. More was said than was written about the train, but the archives hold much information about this unique symbol of Trotsky's operational revolutionary leadership of the fronts in the civil war.

Dmitri Volkogonov, *Trotsky: the Eternal Revolutionary* (1996), p. 163



Source 13.12 Commissar Trotsky with a guard



Fast train facts



Source 13.13 Armoured train built at Putilov Steel Works in 1918 (similar to Trotsky's)

- The train was hastily prepared for Trotsky on 7 August 1918. Originally it had 12 carriages and 250 people and was continually extended thereafter.
- It served as a mobile administration unit.
- It is estimated to have travelled over 200 000 kilometres during the Civil War.
- The train was highly protected – all carriages were armoured and were protected by machine guns. All crew members were highly armed.
- All personnel wore black leather uniforms.
- Writings completed by Trotsky on the train amount to five volumes, published between 1922 and 1924.

Equipment	Personnel
Needed two engines to pull it	Twelve bodyguards of Latvian Riflemen
Carriages included a secretariat	Several dozen young Communists vied for roles of commanders
Printing press	General security guards
Telegraph station	Machine gun unit
Radio station	Group of agitators
Electric power station	Communications crew
Library	Team of drivers
Aviation unit of two aeroplanes	Unit of track repairmen
Several automobiles	Team of cooks
Garage – mechanics	Musical band

Reasons for Trotsky's widespread popularity

Dmitri Volkogonov was a Soviet military officer specialising in psychological warfare. However, his total belief in the superiority of communism changed over time. His greatest life achievement was writing a massive biographical trilogy on Stalin, Lenin and Trotsky. When interviewed just before his death, he stated: 'I feel very happy that by the end of my life I've freed myself from this horrible nightmare, this primitivism.' In this extract he explains why Trotsky was so popular with the Red Army soldiers in the Civil War.

It seems that the main explanation for Trotsky's immense popularity was the impression he gave that he was capable of sacrificing himself in the name of an idea. The people, above all, saw his dynamism, his decisiveness, his constant movement, they heard his passionate speeches and sensed his implacability [being relentless and merciless], and many were taken with his originality ...

Trotsky was everywhere an object of discussion and argument. In its regular 'Leaders of the Revolution' column of the newspaper of 7th Army, the Krasnyi Shtyk (Red Bayonet), wrote:

In a short space of time he has performed a near miracle: he has created a wonderful army and led it to victories. Trotsky himself is always at the front, the real front where the fighting is eye to eye, where stray bullets do not distinguish between ordinary Red Army men, commanders or commissars. The train and the boat he lives on have frequently come under artillery and machine-gun fire. But Trotsky somehow doesn't notice these inconveniences.

Under enemy fire, as during the revolution itself, he goes on working and working and working ... No one knows where Trotsky takes a rest.

It is true that Trotsky worked prodigiously, but it is also true that he did not make an effort to curtail such panegyrics [self-aggrandising] in the press, which was under his control. Dedication to the revolutionary idea did not prevent him from being vain, from posturing before the mirror of history ...

It was not so much that Trotsky was naïve. He was not, but he was an adventurer who depicted reality as he wished it to be, rather than as it was. This often led him to promise an early victory, future happiness, universal brotherhood and a worldwide Soviet republic. Perhaps it was this aspect of Trotsky – the prophet of a happy future – that drew the crowds. Perhaps it was that he realised that one must promise something to people who were up to their knees in blood, that one must inspire them with something and point to great goals that were close at hand and attainable.'

Dmitri Volkogonov, *Trotsky: the Eternal Revolutionary* (1996), Harper Collins, London, pp. 158, 159, 161

Trotsky defends the use of terror

Trotsky and Lenin were prolific writers and a lot of our understanding of the Bolshevik psyche comes from their publications. This extract is from one of Trotsky's books, *The Defence of Terrorism* (1920).

The revolution 'logically' does not demand terrorism just as 'logically' it does not demand an armed insurrection ... But the revolution does require of the revolutionary class that it should attain its end by all methods at its disposal – if necessary, by an armed rising; if required by terrorism. A revolutionary class which has conquered power with arms in its hands is bound to, and will, suppress, rifle in hand, all attempts to tear the power out of its hands. Where



it had against it a hostile army, it will oppose to it its own army. Where it is confronted with armed conspiracy ... it will hurl at the heads of its enemies an unsparing penalty.

Trotsky, *The Defence of Terrorism* (1920)

In comparison, historian Richard Pipes wrote:

To stay in power against the wishes of the overwhelming majority of their subjects, the Bolsheviks had to distort that power beyond all recognition. Terror may have saved Communism but it totally corroded its soul.

Pipes, *A Concise History of the Russian Revolution* (1994), p. 229

A MATTER OF FACT

Chinese communist leader Mao Zedong once famously said, 'Communism has nothing to do with love. It is an excellent hammer which we use to destroy our enemy.'

Trotsky became legendary for his ruthless attitude against those who lost their focus and motivation to the communist cause. For example, at the commencement of the war in the summer of 1918, Trotsky was called to deal with 200 deserters from the Red Army at Svyazhsk who had stolen a boat to escape from the advancing White forces. In one of his most famous acts he called for the immediate execution of the regiment, which was carried out on the river bank.

Deutscher is an historian who is sympathetic to the Bolsheviks and defended Trotsky's reluctant use of force, claiming: 'Trotsky has not shrunk from using terror in the Civil War; but he can be said to have been as little fond of it as a surgeon is fond of bloodshed.'



Source 13.14 Trotsky motivating Red Army soldiers during the Civil War

ANALYSIS ACTIVITY 13.5: VISUAL ANALYSIS

The images in Sources 13.15 and 13.16 were published in consecutive official Soviet history texts. The significant difference was the replacement of Lenin (who admired Trotsky) by Stalin (who hated Trotsky). It is fascinating to see how historical sources can be produced to serve the interests of their political masters.

Positive perspective



Source 13.15 Hero Trotsky portrayed as St George slaying the White 'dragon' of the Civil War

Negative perspective



Source 13.16 Trotsky portrayed as the 'Red Devil' sabotaging Soviet society by disposing of good communists

- 1 What are the key features and symbols of each image?
- 2 Which image is more effective in communicating its message?
- 3 Is such manipulation of history wrong? Or is it simply human nature to do so?

13.7 FLASHPOINT!

Murder of the royal family

One of the clearest examples of the terror of the Civil War was the brutal murder of Tsar Nicholas II and his entire family at Ekaterinburg on 17 July 1918. On the way back to Moscow for trial, the Romanovs were intercepted by a local Bolshevik group and imprisoned.



A MATTER OF FACT

Shay McNeal published a controversial book called 'The Plots to Rescue the Tsar: The Truth behind the Disappearance of the Romanovs' (Arrow, 2002). She provides a range of previously hidden evidence to suggest that King George V rescued the royal family via Tibet and China to an awaiting Royal Navy gunboat. For an intriguing summary of her evidence, read Chapter 16 of her book, 'Coming Full Circle'. It is an excellent example of an historian questioning the accepted facts and using evidence to support her argument.

The Tsar and his family were woken at 10.30 pm, instructed to dress and taken to the narrow cellar of the villa under the guise of having their photo taken, but instead were greeted by a detachment of Red Guards. After announcing, 'We must now shoot you', Yurovsky, the chairman of the local CHEKA, executed the Tsar with a revolver at close range, followed by the shooting and bayoneting of the Tsarina, Alexis and his four sisters plus their cook, maid, doctor, valet and spaniel Jimmy. Before dawn, their bodies were taken by truck to a deserted mine shaft where they were carefully cut into pieces, soaked in petrol and burnt, with the larger bones dissolved in sulphuric acid. It was declared that 'the world will never know what we did with them'. The killings sent a shock wave of horror throughout the ruling classes of Europe. Communism was a matter for interesting debate, but the murder of the Romanovs was a definitive statement of the permanent rejection of the old regime.

A MATTER OF FACT

The Romanov royal family continues to fascinate Russians. In 1998, remains of the royal family were buried in the traditional Cathedral of Saints Peter and Paul in a highly controversial ceremony commemorating the 80th anniversary of their deaths. In December 2000 the Tsar and his family were granted the official title of 'martyrs' by the Russian Orthodox Church, because of the honourable way in which they went to their deaths. Given the location of the 17 bullet holes in the lower wall and floor, it is likely that the family members were shot while kneeling and praying. In 2006, Russian President Vladimir Putin allowed Nicholas's mother to be re-buried with the rest of the family.

Although there is debate over whether or not Lenin gave the order, it appears that the CHEKA group in Ekaterinburg decided to execute the family. Felix Dzerzhinsky (*Annual Register*, 1918) stated that his organisation was 'not a court ... and cannot stop to ask whether it may harm particular individuals ... the CHEKA must defend the revolution and conquer the enemy even if its sword falls occasionally on the heads of the innocent'. It was a perfect snapshot of how the CHEKA operated: there was no trial, no accusations and no proof of guilt. The 304-year Romanov Dynasty was ended by an indiscriminate initiative.

A MATTER OF FACT

Nicholas had four other siblings. What was their fate? George died of tuberculosis in 1899 and his sisters Xenia and Olga escaped Russia during the revolution. But Michael, the 'Tsar for a day', was executed by the Bolsheviks six days before Nicholas.

Possible motives for the royal murders

Motive 1 – White soldiers were relatively close to where the family was being held and members could have been rescued.

Motive 2 – Saving the royal family could have motivated anti-Bolshevik forces.

Motive 3 – It was a demonstration that there was no going back to tsarism.

Motive 4 – Difficulties in communication led to local initiative rather than waiting for orders from central leadership.

A MATTER OF FACT

Forty-four bone fragments, seven teeth, three bullets and one piece of cloth were found in a second burial grave in 2008 in Ekaterinburg. Only hours before the ceremony to mark the 90th anniversary of their deaths, Russian police confirmed that DNA testing had proven that these were the remains of Alexi and either Anastasia or Maria. The exciting mystery over the 'disappearance' of the royal family may now finally be closed.

13.8 What was the significance of the Civil War?

Impact on the Bolshevik Party

Rather than crushing the power of the Bolsheviks, the Civil War resulted in the strengthening of their authority to justify more stringent measures of social control. Similar to the Tsar after the failed 1905 Revolution, the Bolsheviks emerged stronger from a crisis that was intended to make them weaker.

Of all members of the Bolshevik Party in 1927, Kochan and Abraham estimated that 33 per cent had joined between 1917 and 1920, while only 1 per cent had joined before 1917. Therefore, many crucial characteristics of the party and attitudes of its members were forged in the environment of war after 1917, rather than through the party's pre-revolutionary political heritage.

- **Psychologically** – the war created a survival mentality, incredible self-belief and a ruthless determination to fight against seemingly overwhelming odds.
- **Politically** – the war shaped the militaristic character of communism, which meant that party members readily accepted the tradition of loyalty and discipline.



The aim of this section is to give a voice to the voiceless, those whose story history rarely recorded. Here is a fictional story of a Red Army soldier written from the imagination of the author.

I am a member of the Red Army in the Civil War. My name is Aleksis. I was recruited as a soldier to the Red Army; supporting the Council of People's Commissars instead of supporting the Green Armies like many other peasants. I hated being conscripted and leaving my family, but I loved the food, lodgings and total support. Lenin meant it when he said that he represented the soldiers and proletariat. Hearing that Lenin had been shot in an attempted assassination made us all the more determined against our enemies.

Trotsky was the leader when I was recruited. He was very strict in military discipline, and made us all swear an oath. It was an oath of loyalty where every man promised that he would observe the strictest revolutionary discipline and protect public property from getting stolen or damaged. Most importantly, we were sworn to defend the Soviet republic against any enemies. These were Trotsky's motivations.

Trotsky was very willing to use violence to remind us where we stood. We always had to be focused and giving everything we had. I'd heard rumours that Trotsky had killed men for less. Despite this, we all felt the shivers of power and pride when his armoured train pulled in. Everything would work out right if Trotsky was there.

We fought successfully against the Whites. Kolchak. Denikin. Yudenich. They attacked at different times over a few years which gave us the chance to use the railways to send men to the next battle. We would have been in big trouble if they had coordinated strategies and equipment. I'm glad that the CHEKA were on our side because they were fierce and brutal with open permission to use violence and torture. It didn't surprise me at all when I heard that they'd murdered the royal family so that they couldn't be captured by the Whites.



Source 13.17

Our biggest fights, however, were against the Green Armies. The difficulty was in the fact that they were defending their homeland, not invading someone else's. They wanted independence from both us and the Whites. I didn't blame them. Everything was very complicated and hard to understand as the circumstances in the war changed week by week. I did whatever Trotsky wanted me to do, because I had sworn to him. That was easier than keeping up with all of the politics.

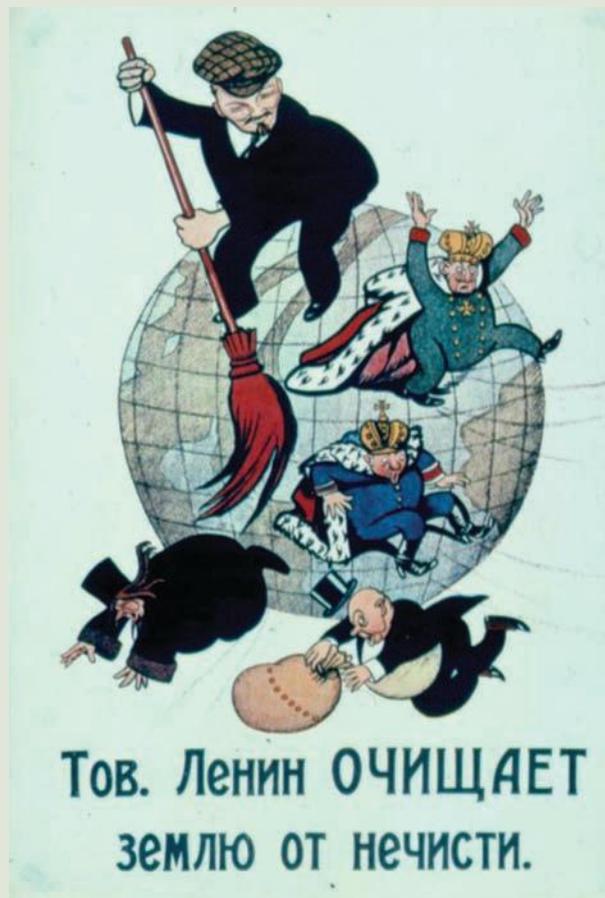
Soldier in the Red Army

- **Organisationally** – the war developed a strong centralised administration characterised by an authoritative leadership with smaller governing bodies.
- **Socially** – the war justified strict sanctions and summary justice on perceived counter-revolutionary threats both inside and outside of the party.

ANALYSIS ACTIVITY 13.6: VISUAL ANALYSIS

The Bolshevik poster depicted in Source 13.18 was published in the early 1920s. The image symbolises Lenin sweeping away the old regime, imperial nations and the wealthy bourgeoisie.

- 1 Why is Lenin standing on a globe of the world?
- 2 Who are the characters that Lenin is sweeping away?
- 3 Lenin is portrayed as the largest character in this cartoon. Symbolically, what does this suggest about the role of Lenin?
- 4 What is the implication of this portrayal for leaders like Trotsky?
- 5 How would you explain any differences between the message of the poster and the reality?
- 6 The cartoon suggests that the defeat of the old regime was as easy as using a broom. Drawing on evidence from 1918 to 1920, why wasn't it as easy as this image suggests?



Source 13.18 'Lenin cleanses the world of evil spirits'

The story so far

- The signing of the humiliating peace treaty to withdraw from the First World War only provided a break for a few months as a civil war began in mid-1918. Yet this was a different war – the new revolutionary Bolshevik government was fighting for survival against its anti-Bolshevik opponents.
- The White armies were made up of traditional conservative forces within Russia. The leaders were generals from the Tsar's army – the most important of whom was Admiral Kolchak – and the fighters were peasants, landowners and ousted political groups like the Socialist Revolutionary Party.



- Lenin's regime also faced the external threat of invasion by foreign powers. The British, French, Japanese, Americans, Czech Legions and Poles all were involved in attempting to overthrow the Bolsheviks.
- The Bolsheviks won due to the impact of the Red Army, terror of the CHEKA, unity of purpose, the fact that they were defending a central location, and the impact of Trotsky. The White armies lost as they were divided in purpose and strategy and lacked powerful propaganda.

CHAPTER REVIEW

DEVELOPING CLEAR DEFINITIONS

Write explanations for each of the following.

Key concepts	Key opponents	Key leadership
Civil War	Internal threats	Trotsky
	External threats	Dzerzhinsky
	Peasants	

PRACTISING PARAGRAPH ANSWERS

- 1 What caused the Civil War in Russia?
- 2 How did the revolutionary government respond to the threats during the Civil War?
- 3 Why did the Bolsheviks win the Civil War?
- 4 Describe Trotsky's role in the Civil War.

PRACTICE ESSAY QUESTIONS

- 1 'The tragedy of the Civil War was not the deaths, but rather the hatred of the common Russians towards their new Bolshevik government.' Discuss this view, providing evidence to support your answer.

- 2 'The Bolsheviks only won the Civil War because of violence and terror.' To what extent does this statement accurately account for the reasons for the Red victory?
- 3 'Lenin achieved the October Revolution, but it was Trotsky who emerged as the key leader from then onwards.' To what extent do you agree with this assessment of the roles of these two leaders?

READING MORE DEEPLY

Easy

Volkogonov, D 1996, *Trotsky: The Eternal Revolutionary*, HarperCollins. Section called 'Within the noose', pp. 151–62.

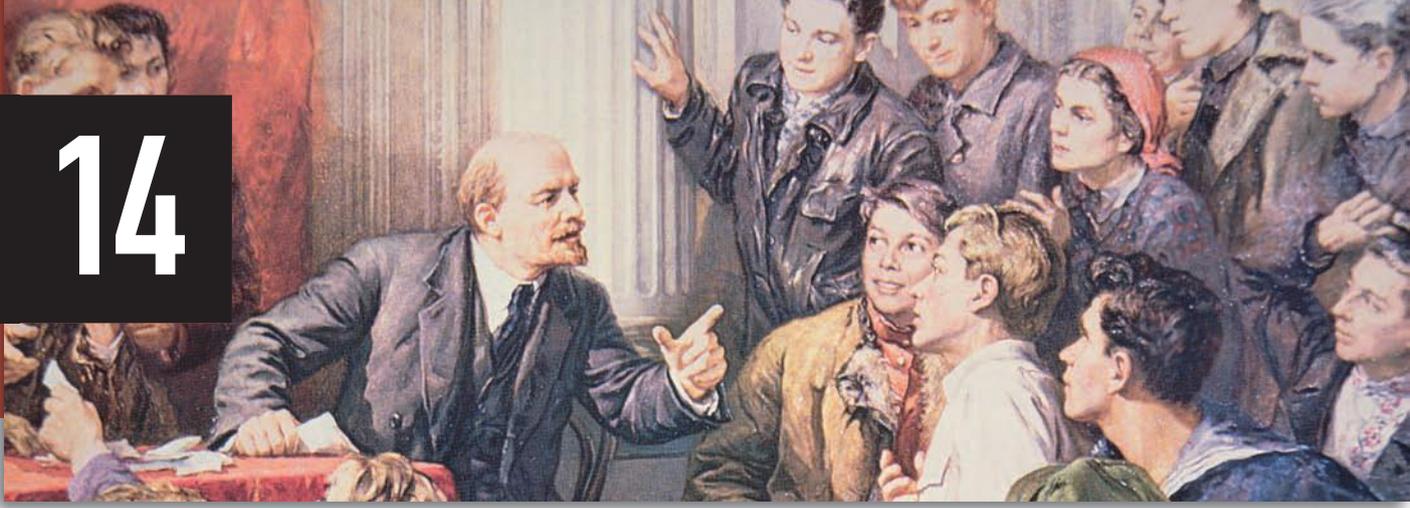
Moderate

Lincoln, WB 1989, *Red Victory: A History of the Russian Civil War*, Cardinal. Chapter 14, 'Victory's bitter fruit', pp. 462–88.

Challenging

Deutscher, I 1954, *The Prophet Armed: Trotsky 1879–1921*, Oxford University Press. Chapter XII, 'Arming the republic', pp. 432–47.

Deutscher admires the leadership of Trotsky. These pages are the final portion of a chapter discussing the inner workings of Trotsky's role in the Civil War.



Government crises: War Communism and the Kronstadt Uprising

“

The Communists may have controlled the railways, the large industrial enterprises and the armed forces, but not the hearts and minds of the people.

– THOMAS AND MCANDREW (1999)

”

OVERVIEW

Although the young Soviet Republic won the Civil War and restored peace, it paid a high price. The country was left in ruins. Some of its best workers died in the battles, the people were exhausted, and the communist vision of a proletarian utopia was fading. As well, there was only one communist group for every 1200 square kilometres of Russian countryside, leaving the communists without the total support of the population. Hence, the greatest dangers during this critical year were no longer military opponents but economic devastation, social chaos and ideological disillusionment:

Not only had the revolution occurred in a nation lacking the developed capitalistic society which Marx had envisaged, but the small proletariat had disappeared during the Civil War. True, there were urban workers, but few of them were the experienced and politically conscious men of 1917 ... The factory workers of the early twentieth century were largely ex-peasants, ill-educated, ill-disciplined, and not particularly interested in the party. Thus, the Bolsheviks, who had regarded themselves as the vanguard of the proletariat, found themselves in the van with nothing to guard.

Westwood, *Endurance and Endeavour*, pp. 281–2

The common theme that runs through all wars is their far-reaching impact on every aspect of society. This chapter explores two major crises that came to a revolutionary head in 1921: the economic crisis resulting from the collapse of the economy under War Communism; and the social and political crisis of the open opposition to the regime through the sailors' petition and rebellion at the Kronstadt naval base. The next chapter explores the government's response to these crises – the introduction of the New Economic Policy.

KEY ISSUES

- What was the impact of War Communism?
- Why was the Kronstadt Uprising so threatening to the Bolsheviks?

FLOW OF CHAPTER



Source 14.1 On this postage stamp from 1987 to commemorate the 70th anniversary of the Bolshevik takeover, Lenin is depicted strategising with his generals. By 1921 and after winning the Civil War, Russia's new rulers were again faced with many and varied problems, including those in the economic and social spheres.



14.1 What was the impact of War Communism?

War Communism a series of economic policies instituted between 1918 and 1920 to attempt to win the Civil War

The policies imposed by the Bolsheviks in order to mobilise the nation to fight the Civil War were labelled as '**War Communism**'. These economic policies had initially been introduced from June 1918 in an attempt to maintain firm government control over the economy and trade. Several problems emerged during the Civil War, including the Treaty of Brest-Litovsk in March 1918 (with the loss of the productive territory of the Ukraine), food shortages in large cities – especially Moscow and Petrograd – and transport problems such as maintaining the operation of railways.

The forced confiscation of manpower to either the Red Army or to industry (called conscription) and the forced confiscation of grain and food (called requisitioning) were at the heart of War Communism. Other decisions under of War Communism during the Civil War included the:

black market the illegal trade of products

- banning of private trade (which resulted in the growth of the **black market**)
- abolition of money as a means of exchange; trade of goods was encouraged
- militarisation of labour – as wages were the same and there was no money in circulation, people were forced to work but without financial compensation
- establishment of Soviet Farms on large estates
- nationalisation of large-scale industry and railways
- rationing of food
- imposition of a grain tax
- introduction of Communist Sundays, whereby loyal communists were expected to 'volunteer' to aid the war effort.

Although the Bolsheviks had won the Civil War, eliminated their enemies and established political control over the vast Russian territories, it all came at a high price. The result was disaster – political, economic and human disaster.

- British historian Peter Oxley estimated that out of the 10 million deaths during the period of the war, 9.5 million were from famine and disease, whereas only 350 000 died in actual combat. In other words, 95 per cent of deaths during the Civil War were from famine and disease.
- Industrial output had fallen to as low as 15 per cent of pre-war levels, and agricultural output to 60 per cent.
- The number of industrial workers had fallen by half, from 3 024 000 in 1917 to 1 480 000 in 1921.
- Since 1913, coal production had fallen to 30 per cent of its output.
- Since 1913, electrical energy had fallen to 25 per cent of its output.
- Bribes were an accepted aspect of life. For example, a train ticket of 100 roubles sometimes involved a bribe of 500 roubles.
- Savage stories emerged of cannibalism and salted human flesh being sold at markets.

The shortages caused by War Communism, exacerbated by a year of drought and heavy frosts, can best be illustrated by the example of the province of Samara. Grain requisitioning between 1919 and 1920 exceeded the harvest surplus by a massive 30 per cent, which resulted in the average peasant household being forced to give up 118 kilograms of food, fodder and seed. Ouspensky, a journalist for a Russian newspaper, wrote in 1919: 'You must understand, too, the psychological side ... In some people they create panic, in others complete prostration, in others again a kind of mystic fatalism.' By 1920, 8000 members of the requisitioning parties had been murdered by peasants who literally had no more grain or patience to give.



Source 14.2 Young victims of the 1920–21 famine in Samara

An horrific account of starvation

In one house beyond the Volga I saw a family waiting for death, and they had not long to wait. They had no bread, no leaves, no cabbage stalks ... The father raised himself from a wooden settle. He was bleeding from the mouth and was a living skeleton with yellow skin drawn tightly over visible bones ... At the end of the room in the window seat, a handsome lad sat in his rags. He was nearly dead, with strange staring eyes that looked into the next world. It was very quiet in the room. The father whispered a few words, but they could hardly be heard. Once the mother moaned. The boy and girl made no sound at all. Death stood at the threshold.

Review of Reviews (1921), pp. 405–7

International support

The Russian famine was acknowledged worldwide as a humanitarian disaster. Despite fighting against the Soviets in the Civil War, Britain actively supported the famine victims by establishing an appeal called ‘Save the Children Fund in Russia’, and even re-entered Russia to oversee the allocation of funds. Further, it is estimated that the food and seed distributed by the American Relief Administration saved another 14 million peasants from starvation in the worst famine-hit areas. Both the British and American aid was accepted reluctantly by a humiliated communist regime.

Kill the kulaks

The richer peasants, labelled ‘**kulaks**’ by the Communist Party, were blamed for the rising high prices from the critical food shortage. It was believed that they were secretly hoarding grain rather than handing it over. Historians debate whether the food shortage was caused by widespread hoarding, or whether there was simply no extra grain because War Communism removed any incentive for peasants to

kulaks the derogatory name given by Lenin’s government to peasants who were deemed to be selfishly hoarding grain for their own benefit rather than that of the nation



produce a surplus. Lenin described the kulaks as ‘obstinately deaf and indifferent to the cries of the starving workers and peasant poor’. All of Lenin’s attempts to stop this perceived hoarding failed, so he resorted to sending detachments of the CHEKA to coerce kulaks to give up their grain. Mass terror and suspicion resulted. Food supplies fell as peasants only produced enough grain to feed their families.

A MATTER OF FACT

Kulak was a Russian word that meant ‘tight-fisted’.

Focus questions

- 1 What parts of this image suggest that the CHEKA were taking grain by force?
- 2 Why do you think that this image was helpful for Lenin’s Government?



Source 14.3 CHEKA members collecting grain from a peasant family in a watercolour called *Requisition* by Vladimirov

Since the fall of the Soviet Union, historians have had greater access to a wider range of primary sources. The following document is a telegram from Lenin to communist leaders in the Penza region ordering the public murder of suspected kulaks.

11 August 1918

Comrades! The uprising of the five kulak districts should be mercilessly suppressed. The interests of the entire revolution require this, because now ‘the last decisive battle’ with the kulaks is under way everywhere. One must create an example.

- 1 *Hang (hang without fail so the people will 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 – as per yesterday's telegram.*

Do it in such a way that for hundreds of versts [approximately 1 kilometre] 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

Pipes (Ed.), *The Unknown Lenin: From the Secret Archive* (1996), Document 24

14.2 Why was the Kronstadt Uprising so threatening to the Bolsheviks?

Why did the Kronstadt Uprising occur?

By 1920, Russia was economically devastated:

- Income per head had been reduced to one-third of its levels in 1913.
- Industrial production was reduced to one-fifth.
- Coal mining was one-tenth.
- Iron production was one-fortieth.
- The railway system was nearly destroyed.
- In February 1921, over 118 separate peasant uprisings were reported.
- In January 1921, the government announced that already poor bread ration for Moscow and Petrograd was to be reduced by one-third. (Not a single train load of grain had arrived in Moscow warehouses in the first two weeks of February.)

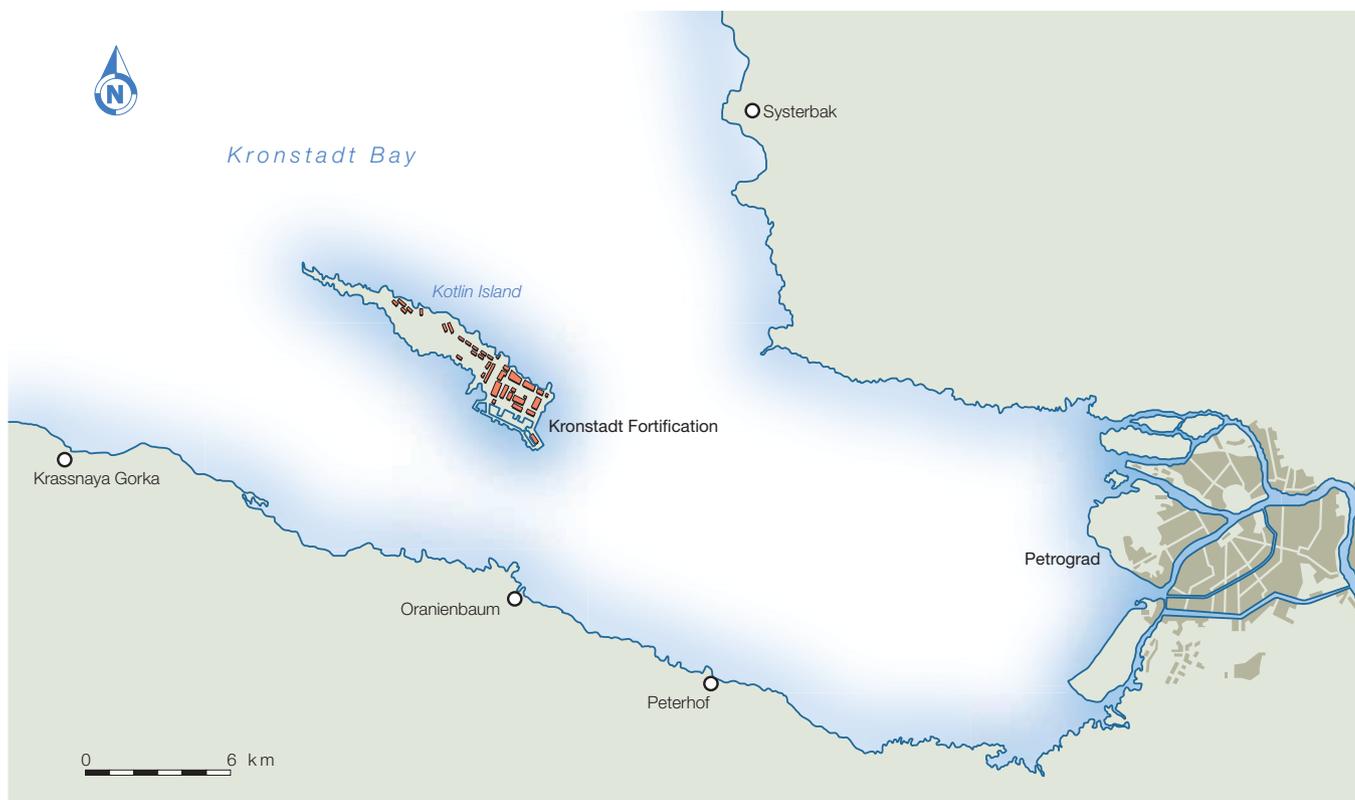
These were the main grievances of the Kronstadt sailors, but at the same time explained the aggressive determination of the government. The soldiers cried that the economic and social situation was desperate, but the government saw this as political weakness, and knew that it was too weak to withstand any criticism or disunity. The fledgling society was too close to being toppled. So the sailors criticised and the government fought desperately. Lose against Kronstadt and the government would have lost its country.

What was the Kronstadt threat?

The most formidable opposition to the Soviet government came from the internal 'enemy'. The economic crisis that sparked the peasant wars against the government, and the general industrial strikes in Petrograd and Moscow, was compounded when the sailors from Kronstadt challenged the very legitimacy of the new regime. Their 'uprising' in March 1921 came in two forms: first, a political attack on the regime through a civil rights petition that was drafted at a general meeting on 1 March



1921; and second, a military attack on the regime. Kronstadt was a serious threat to the government because the sailors were a highly trained military force and had been the vanguard of support for the Bolsheviks since 1905. Figes describes Russia being on the brink of a third revolution as the key elements of national discontent and a willingness to use force against the ruling elite were activated. All classes of citizens united in opposition to the Soviet regime.



Source 14.4 Map of Kronstadt Bay: Kotlin Island and its fortifications can be seen on the left, approximately 30 kilometres west of Petrograd.

The background

At the core of the Kronstadt Uprising was a declaration of war on the Soviet regime. The sailors hoisted the flag of revolt and added their considerable weight to the thousands of strikers and deserters from the Red Army. They declared they would fight until Soviet rule was overthrown. After defeating the revolters at the Krassnaya Gorka garrison, the Soviet forces had secured a nearby base from which to launch repeated attacks against the island-based Kronstadt garrison. The regime was determined to defeat the sailors before the ice melted.

The action

Lenin's severe response indicates the depth of the threat. He unleashed his two harshest weapons from the Civil War: the Red Army and the CHEKA, commanded by Trotsky himself. After days of cannon fire and bombardment, Trotsky ordered the invasion of the Kronstadt garrison on 17 March. The Soviet victory is described in a newspaper article in *The Times* on 19 March 1921.

THE BATTLE OF KRONSTADT

- ALL DAY STRUGGLE
- 15 000 MEN SURRENDER

(From our own correspondent.)
Stockholm, March 18.

Kronstadt fell at 11 o'clock last night. The fortress succumbed to a combined attack of the Soviet troops, numbering 60,000 men led by Trotsky himself.

The Red soldiers converged upon Kronstadt from Oranenbaum, Peterhof, Systerbak and Krassnaya Gorka, while those forts poured a murderous fire over the heads of the advancing troops on the battlements of the fortress.

The progress of the attack and the desperate defence of the garrison were watched by spectators on the Finnish coast, where the tremendous cannonading seemed to make the very beach tremble. Red troops clad in white overcoats could be clearly seen early in the morning sunshine marching towards the fort, which sent back an answering fire. Until 3:30 in the afternoon the fire from the batteries of Todtleben, Obtutcherov, Riss and Schnatz continued uninterruptedly, sometimes mingled with the rattle of machine-guns.

After that, however, the fire of those forts seemed to be gradually falling off till it ceased altogether about 9 pm.

Deserters were seen leaving the fortress and hurrying across the ice to the Finnish frontier. On reaching the coast these fugitives stated that the fortress could not hold out much longer. The garrison was exhausted. The gunners had been at their posts since last Tuesday without being relieved, and were unable to go on. From Oranienbaum, where Trotsky had collected the whole Soviet Seventh Army Corps, the Reds had stormed the Petrogradskaya gate and penetrated into the fortress, where they were joined by the Communists in Kronstadt.

The storm troops, the fugitives added, had been at first repulsed by machine-gun fire, but the forts had been taken when they left. Todtleben and Obrutcherov being the last to surrender.

Some time after 11 in the evening about 800 men, among them all the leaders of the Kronstadt revolution, reached the Finnish coast. Kronstadt had capitulated. They had been allowed or had managed to escape and find refuge in Finland, while the garrison of the fortress about 15 000 men submitted to the Soviet.

From *The Times*, 19 March 1921

Source 14.5 The Red Army attacks the Kronstadt naval base across the frozen bay. Men lie dead and wounded from earlier battles.





ANALYSIS ACTIVITY 14.1: DOCUMENT ANALYSIS

The grievances – Kronstadt Petition

Having heard the report of the representatives of the crews sent by the general meeting of ships' crews to Petrograd to investigate the state of affairs there, we demand:

- 1 that in view of the fact that the present soviets do not express the will of the workers and peasants, new elections by secret ballot be held immediately ...
- 2 freedom of speech and press for workers and peasant, for anarchists and left socialist parties
- 3 freedom of assembly for trade unions and peasant associations
- 4 the liberation of all political prisoners of socialist parties, as well as all workers and peasants, Red Army soldiers and sailors imprisoned in connection with the working-class and peasant movements
- 5 the abolition of all political departments because no single party should have special privileges in the propaganda of its ideas and receive funds from the state for this purpose ...
- 6 the equalisation of the rations of all workers ...
- 7 the abolition of the Communist fighting detachments in all military units, as well as various Communist guards kept on duty in factories ...
- 8 that the peasants be given the right and freedom of actions to do as they please with all the land and also the right to have cattle which they themselves must maintain and manage ...
- 9 we request all military units, as well as the comrades ... endorse our resolution
- 10 we demand that all resolutions be widely published in the press.

Cited in Daborn, *Russia: Revolution and Counter-Revolution 1917–1924*, pp. 122–3

- 1 Analyse the following topics in the petition. What were the sailors' main grievances on these issues? List the resolutions that helped you develop this point of view.
 - a Soviets
 - b Bolshevik Party
 - c Social restrictions and political terror
 - d War Communism and economic control
- 2 Which resolution do you consider to be the biggest threat to the Bolsheviks?
- 3 How would you expect the Bolsheviks to respond to these demands?
- 4 See 'Practice examination questions' available on *Cambridge GO* for exam-style questions using this document.
- 5 Use the headings and questions in the APPARTS model to help analyse, or pull apart, this primary source. Copy and complete this table in your workbook.

A	AUTHOR	Who created the source?
P	PLACE AND TIME	Where and when was this source created? Does the date make this a primary or secondary source?
P	PRIOR KNOWLEDGE	What do you already know that would further your understanding of this source? For example, you may already know something about the author, or the place where it was produced, or what was happening in Russia at the same time, or about the event or topic on which the source is focusing.
A	AUDIENCE	Who was the intended audience of this source? Who was it made for?
R	REASON	Why was this source produced at the time it was produced?
T	THE MAIN IDEA	What is the key argument, perspective or point of view shown in this source?
S	SIGNIFICANCE	Why is this source important? How does this source help you to better understand the key issues or events occurring in Russia at the time?

Kronstadt fact file

The dates

The uprising began on 26 February and continued through to the defeat of Kronstadt on 17 March. This was the same time as the Tenth Party Congress in Moscow.

The players

Sixteen thousand sailors at Kronstadt Naval Base; 60 000 Red Army soldiers under Trotsky.

The action

Days of bombardment and hard fighting ended with Trotsky's forces actually invading the Kronstadt garrison across the ice.

The result

More than 12 000 sailors fled across the ice to Finland; more than 2 000 others were executed by the Red Army.



Source 14.6 Kronstadt victims

ANALYSIS ACTIVITY 14.2: IMPORTANCE OF LANGUAGE

Writers can use language to influence readers' perceptions. Words have positive or negative connotations that convey the deeper opinion of the author.

- 1 What is implied in each of the following ways of describing the crisis at the Kronstadt garrison: mutiny, revolt, revolution, uprising, protest or counter-revolutionary movement?
- 2 Which term is adopted in this chapter? What impression does this term give?
- 3 Which term would you have chosen? Explain why.

14.3 Analysis of the Kronstadt Uprising: Different perspectives

Trotsky defends his action by criticising the sailors

Rather than promoting the valiant perspective that the Kronstadt sailors represented all that was good about communism, Trotsky accused the sailors of being unreliable ever since the October Revolution, and therefore key tools for the counter-revolutionary movement:



Beginning as early as 1918, the fronts began to complain that the new contingents of 'Kronstadters' were unsatisfactory, exacting, undisciplined, unreliable in battle, and doing more harm than good ... It would seem that the Bolsheviks marched with bared chests across the ice against the fortress only because of their evil characters and their hatred of the Kronstadt sailors ... Is this not childish prattle? ... The critics try to suggest that everything would have ended in general satisfaction if only the revolution had left the insurgent sailors alone. Unfortunately, the world counterrevolution would in no case have left them alone.

Trotsky, 'Hue and cry over Kronstadt', *New International*, April 1938

Trotsky argues that defeating the sailors was necessary to defend the revolution

The following extract was taken from an article by Abbie Bakan called 'A Tragic Necessity', first printed in the *Socialist Workers Review* in November 1990:

The repression of the Kronstadt revolt was a necessity because there is no question that if the Kronstadt rebellion had been successful, it would have been, as Lenin said, 'a step, a ladder, a bridge' to the victory of counter revolution. Its success would have opened the way for the restoration of the Whites, the reactionary forces uniting monarchists, social democratic Mensheviks and foreign armies in a massive assault on the fledgling and isolated workers state.



Source 14.7 A sailor from Kronstadt being interrogated

Historian Pipes criticises the government's swift force and Trotsky's role

On March 2, the sailors formed a Provisional Revolutionary Committee to take charge of the island and organise its defence against the anticipated assault from the mainland. The rebels had no illusions about their ability to withstand for long the might of the Red Army, but they counted on rallying the nation and the armed forces to their cause. In this

expectation they were disappointed, for the Bolsheviks took prompt and effective countermeasures to prevent the mutiny's spread: in this respect, the new totalitarian regime proved far more competent than tsarism. The sailors found themselves isolated, and locked in a military struggle they could not possibly win. It is interesting to observe how quickly the Bolsheviks assimilated the habit of the old regime of attributing any challenge to their authority to dark, foreign forces. Then they had been the Jews; now they were 'White Guardists'. On March 2, Lenin and Trotsky declared the mutiny to be a plot of 'White Guard' general, behind whom stood the SRs [Socialist Revolutionaries] and 'French counterintelligence'...

The crushing of the Kronstadt uprising was not well received by the population. It did not enhance the reputation of Trotsky: although he loved to dwell on his military and political triumphs, in his memoirs he omitted any mention of his role in this tragic event.

Pipes, *Russia Under the Bolshevik Regime 1919-1924* (1997), pp. 380–2, 386

Eyewitness Serge defends the government's force

Victor Serge was an ex-anarchist who, despite initially being repulsed by the massacre, later believed the crushing of the sailors to be a political necessity:

After many hesitations, and with unutterable anguish, my Communist friends and I finally declared ourselves on the side of the Party. This is why ... the country was absolutely exhausted and production was practically at a standstill; there were no reserves of any kind, not even reserves of stamina in the hearts of the masses ... If the Bolshevik dictatorship fell, it was only a short step to chaos, and through chaos to a peasant rising, the massacre of the Communists, the return of the émigrés, and, in the end, through sheer force of events, another dictatorship, this time anti-proletarian.

Serge, *Memoirs of a Revolutionary 1901–41*



Source 14.8 Victor Serge, a disillusioned revolutionary

Historian Deutscher supports Trotsky's desire to create a peaceful society

Historian Isaac Deutscher writes about Trotsky's desire to play a crucial role in the establishment of a new society:

He was now at the summit of his political and military achievement. He had led a revolution, he had founded a great army and had guided it to victory. He had won the adoration of the broad mass of the revolution's well-wishers and the grudging adoration as well as the unforgiving hatred of its enemies. Like other Bolshevik leaders, he hoped that the horrors and terrors of the civil war were over and that the era of peaceful Socialist reconstruction was about to begin. In this he expected to play a part as pre-eminent as the one he had played in military affairs.

Deutscher, *The Prophet Armed*, p. 446



The enemy within: The proletariat

The core crisis of Kronstadt was ideological rather than military. While the Bolsheviks were able to unite under the flag of patriotism in order to defeat the external threats during the Civil War, they were now confronted by the enemy within. The very people who Lenin claimed to be representing were actively and openly attacking the new government. Ironically, the sailors used Marx's directive that 'you have nothing to lose but your chains!' as inspiration to fight *against* communist rule. The peasants, workers, soldiers and sailors were willing to die in their opposition to Bolshevism. Kronstadt was a significant threat because the sailors had been at the vanguard of support for the Bolsheviks since the 1905 Revolution. It is no surprise that the essential theme at the Tenth Party Congress was 'unity and cohesion of the ranks of the Party'. **Factionalism** was deemed 'harmful and impermissible' as it could be used by enemies of the party 'to widen the cleavage and use it for counter-revolutionary purposes' (Lenin, *Collected Works*, vol. 32).

factionalism disputes between two or more groups acting in self-interest within a larger group

The enemy within: The leadership

Lenin was most concerned about opposition from within the leadership of the party itself. Notable leaders like Alexandra Kollontai led a 'Workers Opposition' movement, highlighting the economic and political failures of the party. Kollontai published a pamphlet criticising the gulf between the party leadership and the proletariat:

The workers ask – who are we? Are we really the prop of the class dictatorship, or just an obedient flock that serves as a support for those, who having severed all ties with the masses, carry out their own policy and build up industry without any regard to our opinions and creative abilities ... ?

Cited in Lynch, *Reactions and Revolutions*, p. 122

ANALYSIS ACTIVITY 14.3: CONTINUITY AND CHANGE

Any society has some elements that are similar (continuity) to the former regime and others that are different (changes). While you cannot directly compare the old regime and new society in your writing, the 1905 Bloody Sunday Massacre (described in Chapter 4) under Tsar Nicholas and the 1921 crushing of the Kronstadt Uprising under Lenin make a fascinating comparison. Create a table like the one below, leaving ample space to write notes. Re-read both petitions and events. Use the last column to reflect upon and compare the two petitions, protests and government responses.

	Bloody Sunday, 1905	Kronstadt Uprising, 1921	Continuity or change?
Petitions	1 Actual demands	1 Actual demands	
	2 Tone of demands	2 Tone of demands	
The action	How did the people protest?	How did the people protest?	
Response of the government	How did the Tsar respond to the protest?	How did Lenin respond to the protest?	

Revisionist historian Orlando Figes argued that the defeat of the sailors was direct proof of the tragic reality of socialism: ‘The suppression of the Kronstadt rebellion had a shattering effect on the socialists of the world. There could be no more conclusive proof that the Bolsheviks had turned into tyrants.’

ANALYSIS ACTIVITY 14.4: WAS LENIN’S FORCE NECESSARY AND JUSTIFIED?

Lenin and his government’s use of force is an issue that divided Russians at the time and has led to debate among historians ever since. Never fall into the intellectual trap of criticising Lenin because he used force at all. Revolutions cannot be peaceful. There will always be force and violence during revolutions. Hence, the more problematic and thought-provoking questions are: When was Lenin’s use of force acceptable and unacceptable? When was it justified and unjustified? Necessary and unnecessary? Do not fall into the second trap of thinking that there is a correct answer to these questions. The aim of this difficult activity is to promote debate with your peers and teacher. Consider the following events where force was used:

- 1 dismissal of Constituent Assembly, January 1918
- 2 losses due to Treaty of Brest-Litovsk, March 1918
- 3 formation and use of the CHEKA, from December 1917
- 4 formation and use of the Red Army, 1918–21
- 5 killing of rich peasant kulaks
- 6 defeat of White and Green Armies
- 7 banning of other revolutionary parties (for example, the Mensheviks and the Socialist Revolutionaries)
- 8 defeat of Kronstadt Uprising, March 1921.

Start by deciding whether you think that the defeat of the Kronstadt Uprising was necessary or unnecessary. Copy the graphic organiser below into your workbook and complete using the other events. Be prepared to explain your reasoning. Let the debates begin!

Lenin’s use of force was necessary	Lenin’s use of force was unnecessary
↓	↓
List examples of events where force was acceptable	List examples of events where force was unacceptable



The aim of this section is to give a voice to the voiceless, those whose story history rarely recorded. Here is a fictional story of a sailor involved in the Kronstadt Uprising written from the imagination of the author.

My name is Anatoly. I was a Kronstadt sailor in 1921, and lucky to escape with my life. This is my experience, my story.

My friends know me as an activist, always with opinions about politics. About how society should be. Others in the garrison had been involved in the 1905 Revolution whereas I joined in the First World War fighting against the Germans. I was one of the first on the streets in the failed July Day protest in 1917 and helped secure the city in October – the picture you see of me is from that time. Commissar of War, Trotsky, called us the ‘Pride and glory of the Russian Revolution’. So why fight against the Bolsheviks now, you may ask? Promises the government made were never kept.

By 1920, my country was in economic devastation. I couldn’t support the propaganda that we were living in a glorious new world ...

After the Civil War had ended we celebrated. But spontaneous strikes erupted across Russia. The government became oppressive. Arrests daily. Our Kronstadt garrison was based on an island in the Gulf of Finland, roughly 30 kilometres from Petrograd. I was a crew member of the battleship *Petropavlovsk* and we held an emergency mass meeting in the main square on the island to raise 15 demands against the Bolshevik Government. The one-party state that the Bolsheviks had created was not fair. It was politically exclusive. We wanted the freedoms that we’d been promised in 1917. Political activity. Social recognition. Public debate. Soviet power.



Source 14.9

We were painted as enemies against the state. Traitors. But we didn’t want to fight the Bolsheviks. The government refused all attempts at negotiation – it was surrender or fight ... We saw Trotsky’s army coming over the ice. Thousands of them. We tried to fight back, but there was too many of them. I shot back at them. Slipping on the ice as I dodged their bullets. I watched as the men around me got shot down, and I realised we didn’t stand a chance. I read later that there were 60 000 of them, but only 16 000 of us ...

Day after day of fighting became a bloody blur. Many sailors decided to fight to the end. But I fled with 8000 others to Finland. Months later, some of my friends were sick of life in exile and returned to Petrograd. I haven’t heard from them since and can only expect the worst. I myself can’t return to a dictatorship. Is forced unity really unity at all?

Kronstadt Sailor in 1921



Source 14.10 (LEFT) Part of the remaining buildings at Kronstadt garrison today, during winter; (RIGHT) inside one of the fortifications

The story so far

- Economic policies that were introduced during the Civil War were collectively called War Communism. The most hated policies were conscription and grain requisitioning.
- Despite winning the Civil War and consolidating the revolution, Lenin was left presiding over a war-torn and starving nation. The famine of 1920–21 resulted in millions of deaths and a failing economy.
- The sailors at the Kronstadt Garrison, close to Petrograd, published a petition attacking the dominant rule of the Bolsheviks and requesting political and social freedoms.
- Lenin – through Trotsky, the Red Army and the CHEKA – brutally attacked and defeated the Kronstadt sailors, and in doing so sent a strong message that opposition to the new government would not be accepted.



CHAPTER REVIEW

DEVELOPING CLEAR DEFINITIONS

Write explanations for the following.

Key policies	Key political groups	Key leadership roles
War Communism	Kronstadt sailors	Lenin
		Trotsky
		Kollontai

PRACTISING PARAGRAPH ANSWERS

- 1 What was the impact of the policies of War Communism?
- 2 Outline the key threat and action of the Kronstadt Uprising.

PRACTICE ESSAY QUESTIONS

- 1 'Lenin was simply a Tsar by another name. He reacted the same way to opposition to his government as the Tsar did.' Discuss this view, providing evidence to support your answer.
- 2 'Lenin's use of force against the Kronstadt sailors was both justified and necessary.' What is your view? Provide evidence to support your answer.
- 3 'Although he remained in power, Lenin experienced significantly more setbacks than victories between 1918 and 1921.' Discuss this view, providing evidence to support your answer.

READING MORE DEEPLY

Easy

Thatcher, I 2003, *Trotsky*, Routledge. Chapter 4, 'Defending the revolution, 1917–1921', pp. 93–116.

Moderate

Avrich, P 1970, *Kronstadt 1921*, New York. Chapter 4, 'The first assault', pp. 131–56.

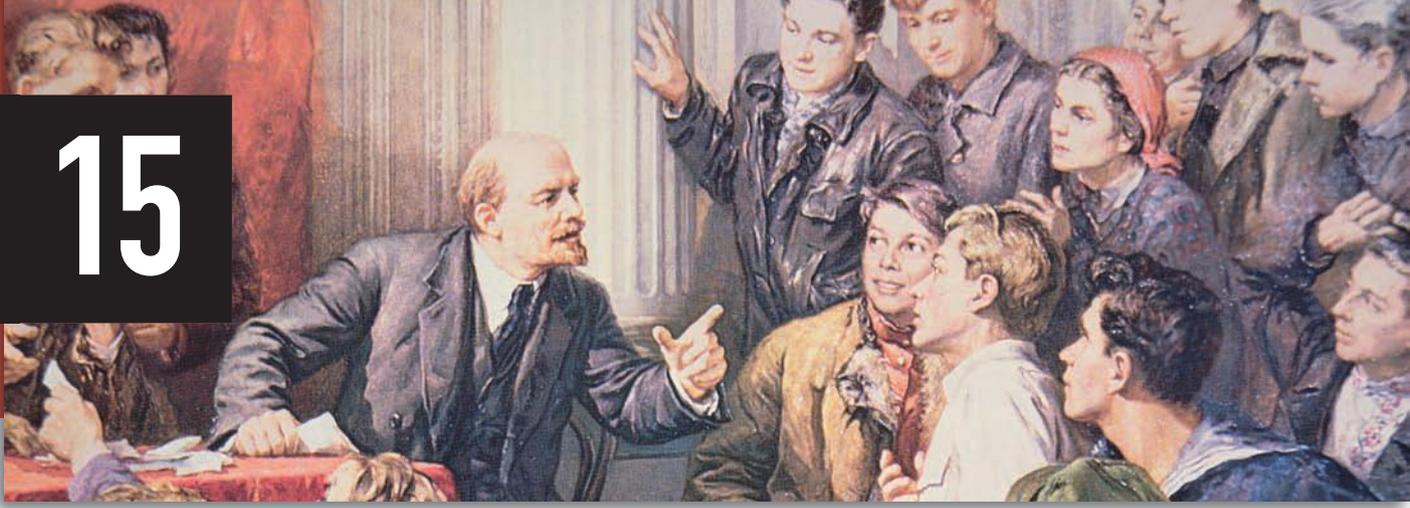
Challenging

Serge, V 1963, *Memoirs of a Revolutionary 1901–1941*, Oxford University Press. Chapter 4, 'Danger from within, 1920–1921', pp. 115–56.

Serge was an ex-anarchist who joined the Bolsheviks. Despite being a supporter of the Bolsheviks, his writing is certainly interesting as he was an eyewitness and an insider to the challenges and responses of the new communist government.



Source 14.11 A Red Army recruitment poster from 1917–18 proudly displaying a heroic sailor. By 1921, the Red Army would turn on its own with the crushing of the rebellious sailors from Kronstradt.



Government response: New Economic Policy, 1921–27

“

Let us retreat and construct everything in a new and solid manner; otherwise we shall be beaten.

– LENIN

”

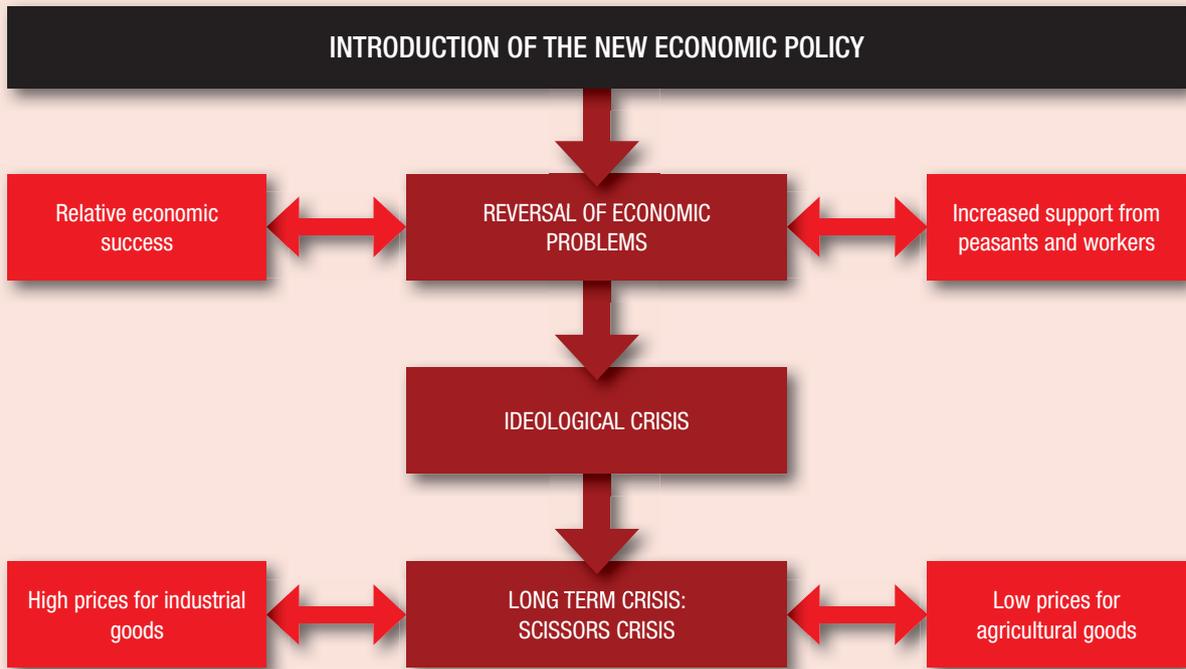
OVERVIEW

The more significant a crisis, the greater the need for a radical response. The crisis of the Civil War had significant impact on the new nation. Famine. Uprisings. Discontent. Worker and peasant grievances needed to be listened to and addressed. ‘Green’ peasant rebellions needed to stop. The famine needed to be solved. Peasants needed to produce more grain. Lenin said: ‘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.’ This chapter explores the economic differences between War Communism and the New Economic Policy, as well as the ideological crisis resulting from the apparent introduction of capitalist economic theory.

KEY ISSUES

- What was the economic impact of the New Economic Policy?
- Why did the New Economic Policy create a deep ideological crisis?
- How did the Bolsheviks attempt to fix the ‘scissors crisis’?

FLOW OF CHAPTER



Source 15.1 A monument to Karl Marx in Moscow today. Would Lenin's New Economic Policy represent a reversal of socialist ideals?

15.1 What was the economic impact of the New Economic Policy?

Lenin's decisive response to the economic crisis was to introduce a New Economic Policy (NEP), announced at the Tenth Congress of the Communist Party in Moscow on 8–16 March 1921. This new policy reversed the policies of War Communism – practically and ideologically. Ironically, some of the demands of the Kronstadt petition were satisfied by this new policy, which was being formulated and introduced in Moscow at the same time as the sailors' requests were being actively suppressed in Petrograd.

A MATTER OF FACT

When challenged about the introduction of the NEP at the 10th Party Congress, Lenin reportedly replied in an angry voice, '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!'

Comparing War Communism and the New Economic Policy

	War Communism, 1918–21	New Economic Policy, 1921–27
Why introduced?	Every aspect of economic and social life had to be directed to winning the Civil War.	To primarily provide food for a starving population that in turn would regain public confidence in the Bolshevik government.
Key characteristics	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A planned and deliberate policy • Discriminated against the peasants through heavy food requisitioning • No choice for peasants as surplus confiscated • State control over the economy • Industry and production limited • Consistent with communist ideals • Attempted socialism 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Unplanned and a simple reaction to the economic crisis of 1920–21 • Favoured the peasants through less tax and greater rewards and incentives for producing a surplus • Extra choice for peasants with their surplus • Individual private control over the economy • Industry and production encouraged • A departure from communist ideals • Allowing aspects of capitalism
Key quote	'War Communism ... involved the drastic mobilization of the whole national economy to serve the needs of war ... it meant attacking the interests of the mass of the peasants and workers.' (Thomson, <i>Europe Since Napoleon</i> , p. 584)	'The NEP was, in the space of a few months, already giving marvellous results. From one week to the next, the famine and the speculation were diminishing perceptibly ... the public were beginning to recover its breath.' (Serge, <i>Memoirs of a Revolutionary 1901–41</i> , p. 147)

	War Communism, 1918–21	New Economic Policy, 1921–27
Results	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Widespread famine Industrial and agricultural production fell alarmingly Widespread anti-Bolshevik uprisings 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Grain harvest doubled between 1921 and 1925 Railways transported twice as much and average monthly wage of factory worker increased by 150 per cent Greater support from peasants and workers yet confusion from party members and Civil War veterans
Overall analysis	ECONOMIC FAILURE	INITIAL ECONOMIC SUCCESS; LONG-TERM PROBLEMS

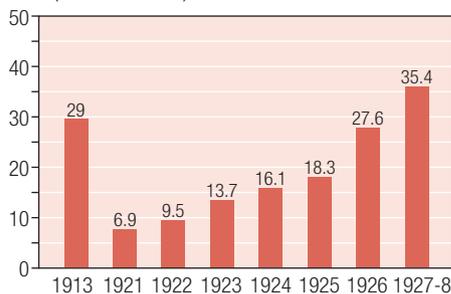


Source 15.2 A typical street scene under War Communism

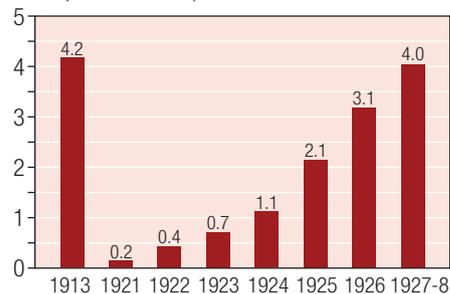
Results of the New Economic Policy

Russian industry, 1913–28

Coal (million tonnes)



Steel (million tonnes)



Russian agriculture, 1913–28

	Sown area (millions of hectares)	Grain harvest (millions of tonnes)
1913	105.6	80.0
1922	77.7	50.3
1925	104.3	72.5
1928		74.4

Source 15.3 Comparison of Russian industry and agriculture, 1913–28

Source: Christopher Condon, *The Making of the Modern World* (1987), Macmillan



15.2 Why did the New Economic Policy create a deep ideological crisis?

Lenin's justification of the NEP – 'bridled capitalism'

Lenin 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.

Marxist historian Christopher Hill

According to Lenin, the NEP was the economic equivalent to the Treaty of Brest-Litovsk – an unfortunate but necessary step. He defined the NEP as 'State Capitalism' whereby there was a temporary coexistence of private property with communist property. He publicly defended the shift to the NEP by arguing at the party conference: 'You must first attempt to build small bridges which shall lead a land of small peasant holdings through State Capitalism to Socialism. Otherwise you will never lead tens of millions of people to Communism.' Perhaps the best summary of Lenin's perspective was that the NEP was 'bridled capitalism' – capitalism that was restrained, controlled and exploited.

Behind closed doors, however, Lenin admitted that the NEP was a final desperate attempt to respond to an economic crisis that limited the future development of the revolution. In probably one of Lenin's frankest and rarest admissions of failure, he admitted to a meeting of party delegates that 'the real meaning of the New Economic Policy is that we have met a great defeat in our plans and that we are now making a strategic retreat'.

A MATTER OF FACT

Lenin once said that gold 'should be used to make toilets after the victory of socialism to remind people of capitalist waste'. Hong Kong jeweller Lam Sai Wing was so inspired by Lenin's words that he built a 24-carat solid gold toilet. The toilet is valued at A\$5.88 million and has been recognised by the Guinness Book of World Records as the planet's most expensive toilet. It sits in a garish bathroom in his showroom, complete with gold fittings and a gold toilet brush holder.

Analysis of the New Economic Policy

Lenin's economic leadership

The enforcement of War Communism and the subsequent introduction of the NEP also suggest that the Bolshevik economic planning can be considered merely a fragmented response to a series of desperate situations. Lenin did not reveal an economic blueprint or master plan to address the economic crisis; he simply adjusted his policies in response to changing circumstances. Lenin's arguments in support of the introduction of the NEP – that 'War Communism ... was forced on us by extreme want, ruin and war' and that 'we must not be afraid of Communists "learning" from bourgeois experts' – must have been uttered through clenched ideological teeth.

Pragmatism versus idealism

Debates about the change from War Communism to the NEP hinged on ideological versus pragmatic interpretations of the shift. Those favouring pragmatic considerations welcomed the policy alteration as the previous policy had failed. Those favouring ideological considerations, however, perceived the change to be undermining the foundations of the party. For traditional communists, the NEP was nothing short of treason.



Source 15.4 The new types of visibly affluent people that emerged after the implementation of the New Economic Policy. *NEPmen* by Dmitri Kardovsky, 1920s

15.3 What were the long-term outcomes of the New Economic Policy?

Creation of a divided society

The impact of the New Economic Policy was varied. Trotsky wrote an article in the Bolshevik newspaper *Pravda* on 16 May 1923 called 'The Struggle of Cultured Speech'. In the article, Trotsky discussed the contrasting images in Russian society. One of the portraits he paints is of the 'domineering buchaner' – a greedy selfish man making profits from the New Economic Policy.

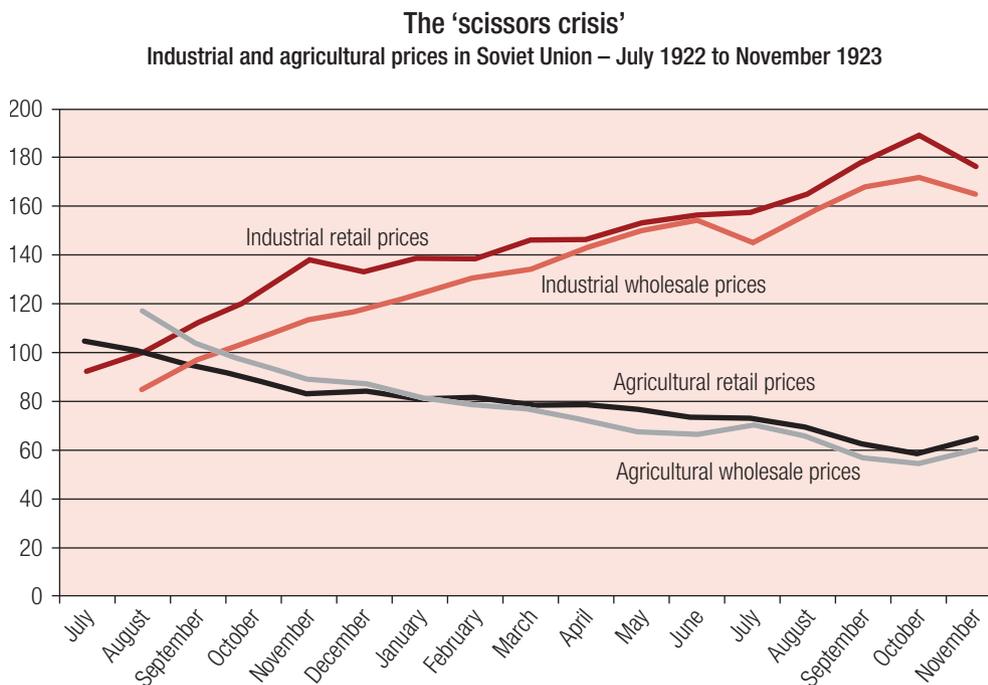
Our life in Russia is made up of the most striking contrasts – in economics as well as in everything else. In the very center of the country, close to Moscow, there are miles of swamps, of impassable roads – and close by you might suddenly see a factory which would impress a European or American engineer by its technical equipment. Similar contrasts abound in our national life. Side by side with some old-fashioned type of domineering rapacious buchaner, who has come to life again in the present generation, who has passed through revolution and expropriation, engaged in swindling and in masked and legalised profiteering, preserving intact all the while



his suburban vulgarity and greediness – we see the best type of communists of the working class who devote their lives day by day to the interests of the world's proletariat, and are ready to fight at any given moment for the cause of the revolution in any country.

Creation of a 'scissors crisis'

While the early economic gains of the NEP were promising, the economic 'success' did not last. By 1923 there was a concerning trend. The problem was that as prices for industrial goods increased, the price for agricultural goods decreased. This trend peaked in October 1923 when industrial prices soared to 290 per cent compared with their levels in 1913, while agricultural goods dropped to only 89 per cent of their 1913 levels. Trotsky named this problem the 'scissors crisis' because the graph showing the differences in the prices looked like an open pair of scissors (see Source 15.5).



Source 15.5 A graph illustrating the 'scissors crisis'

Source: data based on *Biulleten Gosplana 1923* (Gosplan Bulletin 1923), taken from Mark Harrison (2008), 'Prices in the Politburo, 1927: Market Equilibrium Versus the Use of Force'.

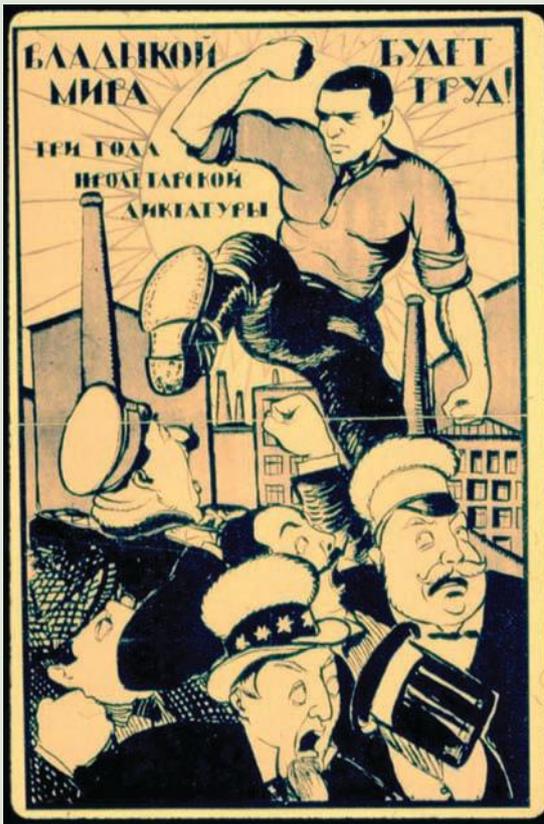
The problem was caused because industry was slow to recover after the damaging years of the Civil War. Low production kept prices high. In comparison, the peasants quickly recovered with the removal of War Communism and introduction of the 'capitalist' freedoms on the NEP. Successful harvests of 1922 and 1923 lowered prices due to the massive surplus of grain. The main problems of the scissors crisis were:

- sharpened opposition to the NEP
- peasant incomes falling dramatically
- fear of grain strikes by peasants
- peasants reverting to subsistence farming – that is, producing only enough to eat.

The Bolsheviks were divided about how to address the problem of the scissors crisis. Lenin could not afford another devastating famine. The left-wing members of the Bolshevik Party wanted tough actions, whereas those on the right wanted to pay higher prices to the peasants to maintain a relationship with the peasantry. The left won and the government responded by returning to the hated grain requisitioning from the Civil War years, closing down the free trade markets and shops, and reducing industrial costs. While this helped lessen the problem, it didn't solve it. The New Economic Policy had served its short-term purpose of stopping the famine, but had created new longer-term economic and social problems, which were never solved. The scissors opened and never closed.

ANALYSIS ACTIVITY 15.1: VISUAL ANALYSIS

Despite the economic troubles of the early years of the communist regime, propaganda continually told a different story. The 1922 poster depicted in Source 15.6 boasts about the abilities and achievements of the Russian industrial worker; that the NEP was successful when compared with War Communism.



Source 15.6 Three years of proletarian dictatorship

- 1 What visual clues are given to suggest the dominance of the proletariat?
- 2 Who do the people in the foreground represent? What is the symbolism of being stepped on?
- 3 Although from 1913 to 1921 industrial production dropped, is the sentiment in this poster now accurate given the introduction of the NEP?
- 4 Did the defeat of the Kronstadt Uprising crush the political power of the proletariat?
- 5 Design your own propaganda poster praising the achievements and resilience of the peasants.



The aim of this section is to give a voice to the voiceless, those whose story history rarely recorded. Here is a fictional story of a peasant written from the imagination of the author.

I am Tatyana. My story got recorded by a Russian priest 25 years ago. Much has happened since that day. My face is older. My heart is harder. It is now 1927, three years after Lenin's passing.

The biggest change is that I am writing this with my own hand. Lenin believed in 'universal literacy' so that all Russians could understand politics. In late 1919, the new government decided to send literate party members into the countryside to teach all of us aged between 8 and 50 to learn to read and write. It was an order, not a choice. To refuse was a criminal offence. Thirty thousand *ikpunkty* (literacy schools) were set up, as well as 33 000 libraries or reading rooms, and more than six million textbooks were printed to help us practise.

Within a year of the Bolsheviks stealing power, our country was still at war. The First World War had been replaced by Civil War. The Tsar and his beautiful family were murdered so that they were not captured by the White generals. While Lenin's public war was against the White generals, his silent war was against us peasants. His most terrible attacks on us were conscription and grain requisitioning. The brutal CHEKA and Red Army squads would come to force us to hand over our sacks of grain while looking down the muzzle of a gun. There was no incentive for my husband Pyotr and my adult family to grow more. We decided to be subsistence farmers – only growing enough for our family to live off. Most peasants thought the same and we suffered the pain of another deadly famine in 1920–21.



Source 15.7

In the government newspapers, Lenin's headlines read 'Merciless war against the kulaks! Death to them!' Nobody really had spare grain to hoard even if they wanted to, but Lenin needed someone to blame for the famine. There were no class enemies, just desperate fathers. Pyotr had fought with the local Green Army against the desperate Reds who wanted to control our land and our minds. We just wanted independence and peace. Pyotr's fighting meant that he was hated by the authorities, who gave him up to the CHEKA squads to be hung as a kulak. Many loved ones and good men from our village died on that terrible day.

But in March 1921, I felt the seed of hope being watered in my heart. Maybe my family did have a future. Lenin announced the radical New Economic Policy. We welcomed the freedom of being able to sell our grain at new local markets. My three sons, their wives and their children worked hard to plant, grow and harvest more than we ever had before. Things blossomed in those early years. But so much was produced that prices for our grain dropped and dropped.

I finish my story with mixed feelings. My life has had highs and lows. I thought that the New Economic Policy was the answer, but it hasn't been now. I thought that I'd grow old happily with Pyotr, but I won't now. I believed that Lenin would end our hardships, but we've still suffered war and famine. Maybe we all just have our lot in life and a communist society is just the utopian dream of fanciful men. I pray generations to pass will live a better life than I've endured.

Peasant woman, 1927

ANALYSIS ACTIVITY 15.2: HISTORICAL INTERPRETATIONS

Figes attempts to summarise the depth of threats in 1921 by explaining the connection between the economic crisis, the Kronstadt Uprising and the introduction of the NEP:

As the urban food crisis deepened and more and more workers went on strike, it became clear that the Bolsheviks were facing a revolutionary situation. Lenin was thrown into panic: every day he bombarded the local Red commanders with violent demands for the swiftest possible suppression of the revolts by whatever means. 'We are barely holding on,' he acknowledged in March. The peasant wars, he told the opening session of the Tenth Party Congress on 8 March, were 'far more dangerous than all of the Denikins, Yudeniches and Kolchaks put together.' Together with the strikes and the Kronstadt mutiny of March, they would force the Congress to abandon finally the widely hated policies of War Communism and restore free trade under the NEP. It was a desperate bid to stem the tide of this popular revolution. Having defeated the Whites, who were backed by no fewer than eight Western powers, the Bolsheviks surrendered to the peasantry.

Figes, *A People's Tragedy* (1996), p. 758

- 1 What was Lenin's attitude to the internal threat of the peasants, workers and sailors?
- 2 Figes describes the opposition to Soviet rule as a 'popular revolution'. To what extent do you agree with this analysis? Use examples from the crises of 1921 to support your answer.
- 3 See 'Practice examination questions' available on *Cambridge GO* for exam-style questions using this document.

The story so far

- Despite winning the Civil War and consolidating the revolution, Lenin was left presiding over a war-torn and starved nation. The famine of 1920–21 resulted in millions of deaths and a failing economy. A radical response was needed.
- Lenin replaced the failed War Communism with the New Economic Policy (NEP), which finally began to bring hope to the troubled nation. Both industrial and agricultural production increased dramatically, making the NEP an economic success.
- Ideologically, however, the NEP was a reversal of socialist ideals, which created intense disharmony among many in the party.
- By October 1923, significant economic problems were obvious, with prices of industrial goods high but prices of agricultural goods low. Trotsky called this graph the 'scissors crisis'.



CHAPTER REVIEW

DEVELOPING CLEAR DEFINITIONS

Write explanations for the following.

Key policies

War Communism

New Economic Policy

PRACTISING PARAGRAPH ANSWERS

- 1 Outline the main differences between War Communism and the New Economic Policy.
- 2 Explain why the New Economic Policy provoked such an ideological debate within the Bolshevik Party.
- 3 Explain the outcomes of the New Economic Policy, including the 'scissors crisis'.

PRACTICE ESSAY QUESTIONS

- 1 'Lenin was an excellent political leader but a poor economic one.' To what extent do you agree with this statement? Provide evidence to support your response.
- 2 Evaluate the ideological message of the New Economic Policy. Did it symbolise that Lenin was a visionary and practical leader, or was it a sign that the communist revolution had failed? What is your key argument about this issue?
- 3 'The Bolsheviks were successful revolutionaries but failures at economic management.' To what extent do you agree with this statement in light of the information in this chapter and Chapter 14?

READING MORE DEEPLY

Easy

The New Economic Policy (see the link at <http://cambridge.edu.au/redirect/?id=5824>)

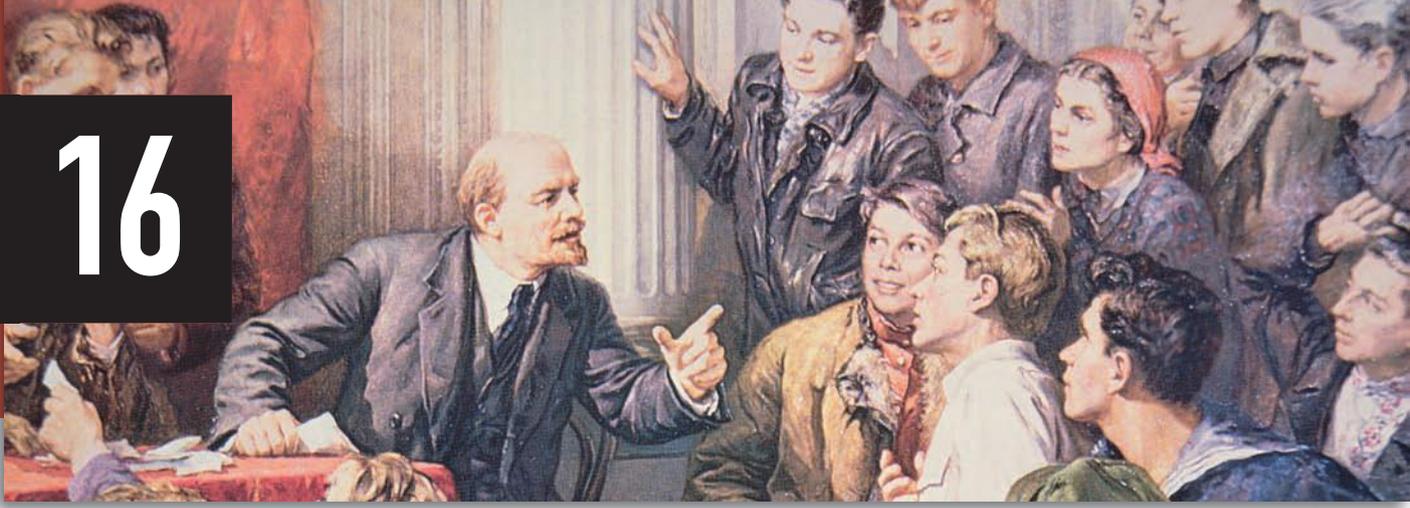
Moderate

Alpha History – The Great Famine of 1921 (see the link at <http://cambridge.edu.au/redirect/?id=5826>)

Challenging

The New Economic Policy and the Tasks of the Political Education Departments (see the link at <http://cambridge.edu.au/redirect/?id=5828>)

This is a complex reading. It is Lenin's report to the Second All-Russia Congress of Political Education Departments on 17 October 1921.



Communist propaganda

“

The illiterate person stands outside of politics. First it is necessary to teach him the alphabet. Without it, there are only rumors, fairy tales, and prejudices, but not politics.

– LENIN

”

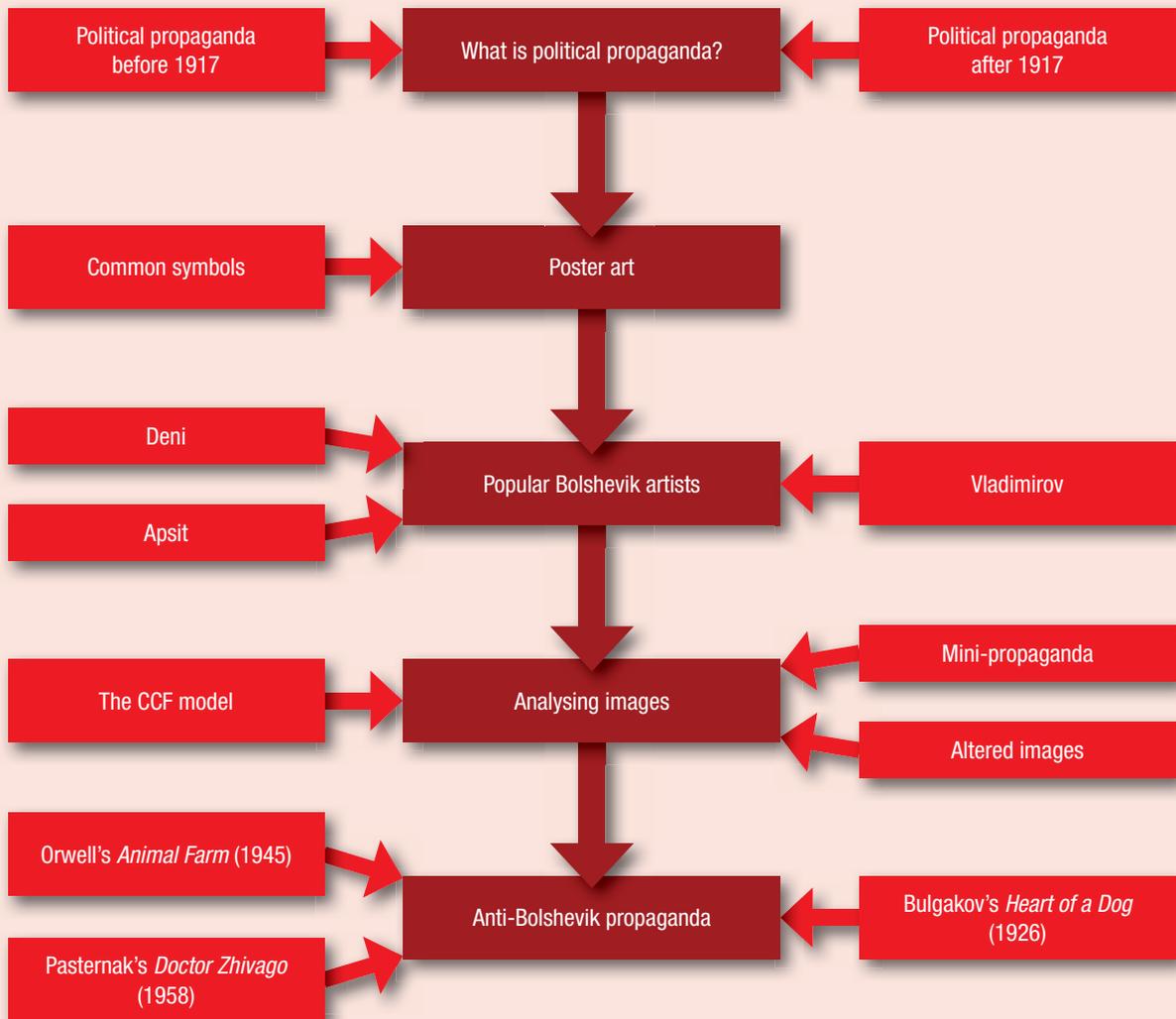
OVERVIEW

A revolution attempts to transform every aspect of society. It is not minor reforms but a significant overhaul of society. It begins with a change of government. But the new ideology needs to be conveyed throughout society. The new Bolshevik government did this very effectively through visual material. This chapter summarises the use of propaganda under the Tsar and looks at the reasons for its rapid increase under Lenin's government. Main artists are studied along with multiple images to be analysed.

KEY ISSUES

- Political propaganda
- What was the history of propaganda in Russia pre-1917?
- Why did Lenin rapidly increase the use of propaganda?
- Who were some popular artists?
- What was anti-communist propaganda like?

FLOW OF CHAPTER





16.1 What is political propaganda?

propaganda the creation of powerful visual or verbal material that presents an issue from only one dominant point of view

Propaganda is a modern Latin word, the gerund form of *propagare*, meaning 'to spread'. Propaganda is a form of communication aimed at spreading a specific message, or influencing the attitude of a population towards some cause or position. It often pushes a particular ideology or spreads the government's point of view. The aim is to present only one point of view or perspective, creating an emotional response. It can be described as manipulative, biased, selective and emotive. Effective propaganda results in the viewer believing that the message is true and that they should act on it.

Propaganda can take many forms, including visual art, radio and television programs, and films. Propaganda can also be used for more neutral purposes such as encouraging Russians to join the Red Army or to invest in war bonds. Communist countries, especially during the Cold War, and fascist Nazi Germany in the 1930s and 1940s created some of the most detailed and powerful propaganda campaigns witnessed in recent history.

Political propaganda before 1917

There were existing traditions within Russian society out of which the new Soviet propaganda emerged. First, woodcuts were produced, called *lubok*, which combined pictures and text to convey accepted folklore on social or political issues. *Lubok* were easily understood by peasants in the countryside. Second, icons were common and were found in most houses and churches. Icons were painted illustrations to enhance spiritual devotion or a commentary on religious issues. Third, satirical cartoons were created that directly criticised government decisions and actions. These were published in 'fat journals', which were collections of images and articles. About 89 of these journals appeared from the 1860s, whereas 249 journals appeared between 1905 and 1907 after the Tsar briefly lifted censorship following the 1905 revolution. Combined, these satirical journals are estimated to have produced over 40 million copies. Suppressing these journals was one of the ways in which Prime Minister Stolypin restricted the revolutionary movement. Fourth, posters were a common form of political communication during the First World War. Posters served a few purposes, such as promoting patriotism to assist war victims and to contribute to war loans. Posters were again used by the Provisional Government in 1917 to promote a continued effort to fight the First World War. The significance is that Lenin and his new government were building on pre-existing traditions within Russia, and many Bolshevik artists had already been practising and publishing their art.

A MATTER OF FACT

In 1897 Russia staged its first poster show: the International Bills Exhibition in St Petersburg. Over 700 posters were displayed from 13 different countries, including 200 from France and 28 from Russia.

Political propaganda after 1917

Lenin's difficulties were obvious. First, in October 1917 the Bolshevik Party membership was only 350 000 but the party had to sell its new ideology to the country's massive population of 140 million. Second, there were significant shortages of paper, printing plants and transport due to the wars. Third, Lenin had to educate the population about what the concepts of 'communism', 'socialism', 'proletariat' and 'bourgeoisie' actually meant, and then convince them of their value.

His solution was immediate. One of Lenin's first appointments, on the very day of taking control of Petrograd on 26 October 1917, was to appoint Anatoly Lunacharsky as Head of the People's Commissariat for Enlightenment. Lunacharsky was responsible for removing any images or monuments of the Tsar. He was also required to promote Bolshevism to the Russian people through erecting new monuments, street decorations, leaflets, films, **agitprop** trains and public celebrations. Hence, the selling of the political vision of the new government was completely intentional.

agitprop art forms with a strong political message (short for 'agitational propaganda')

In the 1919 program of the Petrograd Collective of Communist-Futurists, it was declared that

a Communist structure demands a Communist consciousness. All forms of everyday life, morality, philosophy and art must be restructured according to Communist principles. Without this any future development of the Communist Revolution is impossible

Golomstock, Totalitarian Art in the Soviet Union, the Third Reich, Fascist Italy and the People's Republic of China, 1990, p. 22)

Propaganda would serve as a constant education for the pupils of Lenin's gigantic new revolutionary school.



Source 16.1 Lenin and Lunacharsky, the first Bolshevik Propaganda Minister, among the people they aimed to influence



A MATTER OF FACT

An incredible re-enactment of the October Revolution was staged in 1920. It included 8000 extras to make the performance more realistic.

A census in 1897 found that only 28.4 per cent of the Russian population aged 9–49 were able to read and write. By 1920, this had increased to 44.1 per cent, but this was concentrated mainly in the urban centres, leaving rural areas with lower levels of literacy. So given this semi-literate population of Russia, visual messages were very effective. While the use of visual aids was not a new concept in Russia, the intensity of publication and prioritisation of this medium was.

16.2 Poster art

It was in this context that the powerful medium of soviet propaganda posters was launched. Poster art became the centrepiece of spreading Lenin's propaganda message as they were able to convey deeper political and economic issues effectively, quickly and cheaply. Posters appeared everywhere and became a distinctively unique feature of Russian towns and villages. One visitor in 1920 stated: 'The unusual efforts of Communist propaganda, posters in colour, posters in print, imprinted on white washed walls, formed your mind for you.'

The first overt wave of communist posters was produced in August 1918. During the Civil War years, over 3000 different poster designs were produced by more than 450 different organisations and institutions. For example, Litizdat – a poster production house operating under the Russian Union of

Federated Socialist Republics – distributed 7.5 million posters, postcards and pictures between 1919 and 1922. Gosizdat, the state publishing house established in 1919, published 75 separate posters in 1920, printing 3.2 million copies. When American journalist Albert Rhys Williams travelled to Russia in 1923, he reported: 'The visitor is struck by the multitudes of posters – in factories and barracks, on walls and railway-cars, on telegraph poles – everywhere!' The fact that Williams makes such an observation indicates that this type of visual communication in Russia was distinctly different from that in the United States or other European cities at the time.

In 1923, Lenin's wife Nadezhda Krupskaya observed:

For the present and near future, a peasant can learn to improve his production only if he is taught by visual example. And in general the peasant, just like the workers in their mass, think much more in terms of images than abstract formulas; and visual illustration, even when a high level of literacy is reached, will always play a major role for the peasant.



Common symbols

Despite there being no central control over propaganda posters, there were some commonly used symbols. These became the new language of the victorious Bolsheviks that everyone was required to learn.



Red – used from the earliest days of Bolshevik rule. Red had been used as the colour of revolution since 1872. It symbolised the blood of martyrs and the fire of faith.



Lenin – his image was often used and drawn oversized to symbolise his power and dominance.



Hero – a soldier/peasant/worker was often used as the central image to convey their centrality to communism. Who defeated the Tsar? The ordinary person. Who will benefit from communism? You will. Images often conveyed a sense of struggle to show that the proletariat had achieved well-earned victories.



Chains – represented the struggle of the hero and the victory over oppression.



Hammer and sickle – represented the worker (a blacksmith's hammer) and the peasant (a sickle used to harvest crops).



Crowds – crowds of people were often included to show that the people were unified behind Lenin, or adored him, or were better off now that the Bolshevik government was in power.

(continued)



Sun – the contrast between the dark past and the bright future. The light of the sun represented the hope of a dawning classless utopia.



Capitalists – drawn to look excessively wealthy and greedy, wearing formal evening suits, with evil or animalistic faces and having a fat stomach.



Church – the theme of destroying the old often included images of the church with evil priests.



Red Star, with five points – this had been the symbol of the Red Army from 1918 but became common in posters from 1924.



St George defeating the dragon – the revolutionary hero now defeats the bourgeois monster.



Blacksmith – used to represent the proletariat as there was a blacksmith in every town, whether urban or rural.

A MATTER OF FACT

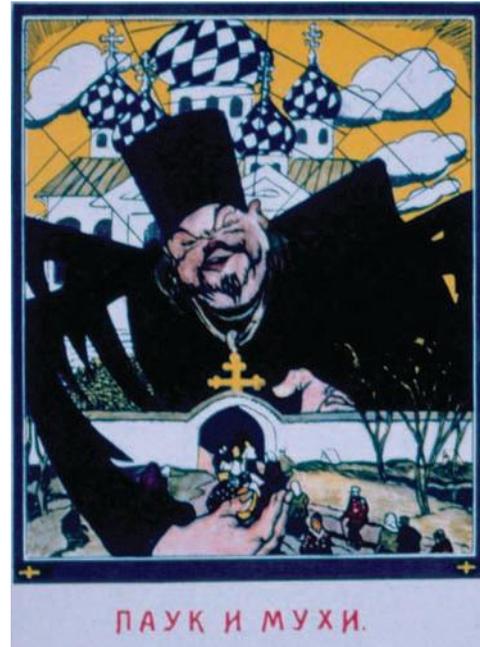
A public competition was held in mid-1918 to decide the symbols of coins, flags, stamps and the coat of arms for the new society. The image of a hammer and sickle with a red background was approved as the new state coat of arms.

16.3 Popular Bolshevik artists

Viktor Deni (1893–1946)

Before the revolution, Deni had developed his artistic reputation in satirical journals. After the revolution he was employed by the state publishing house, Litizdat. His caricatures during the Civil War made him one of the most popular poster artists. Many of his 50 posters during this time became instant successes. One of his most recognised works was the poster he produced called 'Lenin cleanses the world of evil spirits' (see Source 13.18). Source 16.2 shows another of his famous works.

The Orthodox Church was widely criticised. The alluring spider image used in Deni's cartoon was used before 1914 as a depiction of the Jews feeding off the Russian people. After the 1917 Revolution, this same image was used to portray the evil nature of the privileged upper classes and **bourgeois** factory owners. This 1919 image depicts the spider as the manipulative Orthodox Church, symbolised by the cross and clerical robes and the recognisable onion domes of the Church of the Saviour on Spilled Blood in St Petersburg. The church is also represented by an oversized priest with many barbed arms feeding off the harmless workers and peasants by greedily forcing them through the entrance to his web. The destructive nature of the church is further symbolised by windswept barren trees and rising clouds. This cartoon perhaps also includes an **anti-Semitic** element as the robes and hat of the priest are very similar to those worn by Russian Jews.



Source 16.2 Deni's image of 'the Fly Catcher', 1919

bourgeois relating to or belonging to the bourgeoisie

anti-Semitic hostile to Jewish people

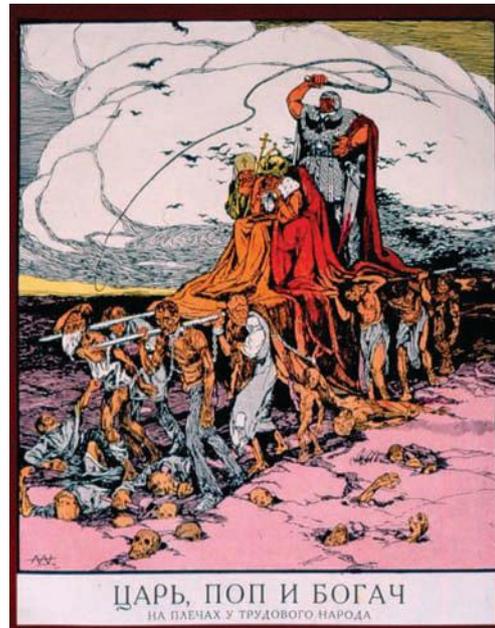
Alexander Apsit (1880–1943)

Apsit was born into a working-class family that moved to St Petersburg in 1894, the year Tsar Nicholas II became ruler of Russia. Before the revolution, Apsit worked on *lubok* wood carving and

then later worked on First World War propaganda. After the revolution, like Deni, he was employed by the State Publishing House. He is considered by many to be the founder of Soviet poster art due to the decorative style of his posters, with the inclusion of many details and communist symbols (see Sources 16.3 and 16.4). His most recognised work was the poster he produced for the first anniversary of the October Revolution, called 'The Year of Proletarian Dictatorship' (see Source 12.8).



Source 16.3 'Stand up for Petrograd', by Apsit, 1919



Source 16.4 'The Tsar, the Priest and the Rich Man on the Shoulders of the Labouring People', by Apsit, 1918

Ivan Vladimirov (1869–1947)

Vladimirov's style was very different from the poster art of Deni and Apsit. He was best known as a Civil War-era military artist who painted in a realist style. He studied at the St Petersburg Academy of Arts, and before the revolution was a combat artist and reporter in the Russo-Japanese War (1904–05), Balkan War (1912–13) and First World War (1914–18). Vladimirov's work was so popular that he was awarded the Order of the Red Banner of Labour, along with various other medals.



Source 16.5 'In search of the escaped Kulak', by Vladimirov, 1920



Source 16.6 'Removing valuables from a church', by Vladimirov, 1922

16.4 Analysing images

Mini-propaganda – the use of postage stamps

Postage stamps were considered an ideal form of propaganda because they could operate on a vast scale of circulation. Letter writing was encouraged as literacy improved. The government also cleverly promoted the use of stamps in fundraising and stamp collecting. Postage stamps could also reach international audiences to promote worldwide revolution.

Prior to the February revolution, all postage stamps featured either a double-headed eagle of the Romanovs or a portrait of the Tsar. The Provisional Government created a stamp, which featured a hand holding a sword slicing through a chain, to symbolise freedom from the tsarist regime. In an ironic twist, the new Bolshevik government was too poor to establish a whole new stamp industry in the Civil War period. Hence, the government was forced to use the stores of already printed tsarist and provisional government stamps, but stamped revolutionary slogans on the top of them. It wasn't until the end of the Civil War that the government produced its first new postage stamp images: a peasant, a blacksmith and a soldier. These three new stamps were used for the remainder of the 1920s.



Source 16.7 'Breaking the chains of oppression', a Russian postage stamp from 1918

The CCF model

There are many models and ways to analyse images. The CCF (Content, Context, Function) model is one possible process.

Content – Ask yourself questions about the actual things that you see in the image:

- What is the caption of the image?
- When was the image produced?
- Who is/are the key figure or figures in the image?
- What is in the background and what does it symbolise?
- What is in the foreground and what does it symbolise?
- Who or what is NOT in the image?

Context – Ask yourself questions about what was happening around the time of the topic in the image:

- What event or topic is shown in the image?
- Why did this event happen? What caused it?
- What was the significance of this event? What happened after this event?

Function – Ask yourself questions about the purpose, or function, of the image:

- What is the main message of the image?
- Is this image for or against the revolution? For or against Lenin?
- Which other examples can you think of that would support this message?
- Which examples would be opposite to this message?
- Which historians would support this view of the revolution?
- Which historians would oppose this view of the revolution?



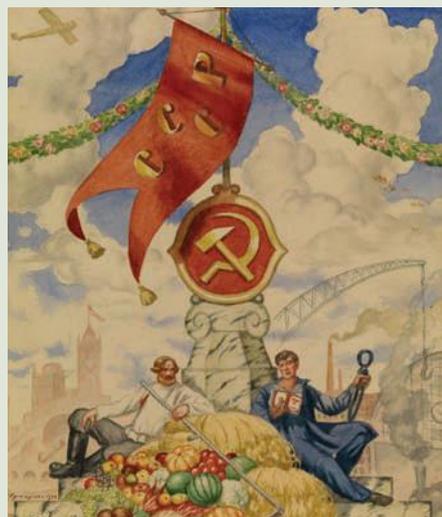
ANALYSIS ACTIVITY 16.1

Sources 16.8 to 16.16 depict a series of propaganda images promoting the Bolshevik government.

- 1 Use the CCF model to analyse each of the images.
- 2 What are the similarities between these images?
- 3 Which one do you think is the most effective?



Source 16.8 'The Enemy is at the Gate'



Source 16.12 'Worker and Farmer'



Source 16.9 'Have You Become a Volunteer?'



Source 16.10 'Workers of the World Unite'



Source 16.11 Poster dedicated to the fifth anniversary of the October Revolution and Fourth Congress of the Communist International



Source 16.13 'Fight the White Army with a Red Wedge'



Source 16.14 'The immortal October Leader Lenin has Shown us the Way to Victory; Long Live Leninism'



Source 16.15 'Death to World Imperialism'



Source 16.16 'Who is Against the Soviet?'

Altered images

Not all photographs are what they seem. After Lenin's death, Stalin was determined to paint himself as the true disciple of Lenin. Hence he rewrote history by altering photographs from the revolution. The most famous are the images of Lenin speaking in 1920 during the Civil War (see Sources 16.17 and 16.18).



Source 16.17 Lenin speaking at a meeting in Sverdlov Square in Moscow on 5 May 1920. This is the original photo with Trotsky and Kamenev standing on the right-hand steps of the platform.



Source 16.18 This is the censored photograph. Trotsky and Kamenev have been removed by Stalin from the stairs on the right of the platform. They have literally been erased from the record of history.

16.5 Anti-Bolshevik propaganda

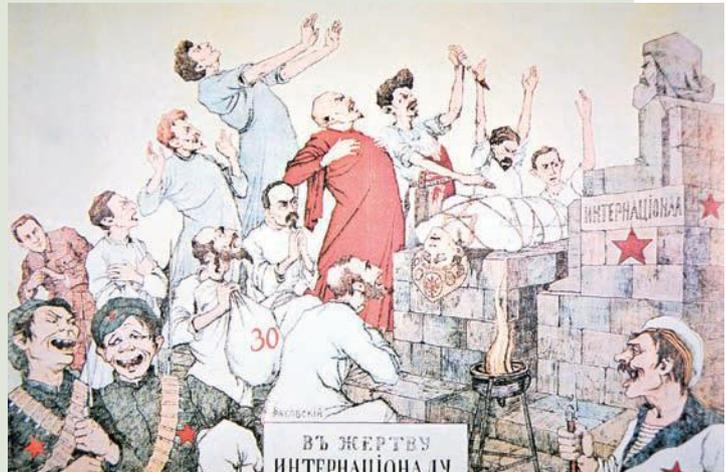
There was also significant propaganda produced by the enemies of the Russian Bolsheviks. Anti-Bolshevik propaganda came in many forms. This section looks at poster art and literature as forms of attack.

ANALYSIS ACTIVITY 16.2

First, look closely at Sources 16.19 and 16.20. Next, discuss with a partner how the artists convey their political messages through their work. Are they effective?



Source 16.19 'What Bolshevism brings to the people', 1918



Source 16.20 'Mother Russia is being sacrificed on the altar of Bolshevism,' 1917. Lenin is the high priest and Trotsky the executioner.

Literature study 1: Orwell's *Animal Farm* (1945)

In 2003 the academic world celebrated the hundredth anniversary of the birth of George Orwell, who is regarded as one of the greatest political writers of the twentieth century. Orwell admitted towards the end of his life that most of his works were written 'directly or indirectly, against totalitarianism and for democratic socialism'. Liberty and equality, the two great ideals from the French Revolution,



Source 16.21 The animals turn on the farmer in the 1954 animated film version of *Animal Farm*.

shone through Orwell's works. *Nineteen Eighty-Four* (1949) warned about the loss of liberty through the abuse of state power. Another Orwell work, *Animal Farm* (1945), was a fable about the failure and betrayal of the Russian Revolution. *Animal Farm* was based on the struggles a group of animals faced in organising their farm after driving away the human owners. While Orwell's text was written as a critique of Stalin, it provides valuable insights into the overall revolutionary progress of ideas, leaders and movements.

A MATTER OF FACT

Orwell's manuscript for 'Animal Farm' was rejected by 14 publishers because they were scared that it was far too anti-Soviet.

Theme	Examples	Link
Ideas	The fable begins with an elderly pig called Major who shares his life-long dream of 'animalism', a farm animal society where equality and consideration form the basis of his Seven Commandments. The pigs become the leaders of the farm, renamed Animal Farm, and progressively alter the purity of Major's original ideals. Orwell cleverly emphasises how ideology is dispensable to pragmatism and a lust for privilege.	Major represents Marx. Animalism represents the ideas of Marxism.
Leadership	The fable focuses on how leaders betray ideals through corruption, self-interest and inequality. Snowball is a hard-working pig with the visionary idea of building a windmill to increase production and ease labour. He is replaced by a domineering pig, aptly named Napoleon. Orwell reflects on the success of an inspirational selfless style of leadership in comparison with the social harm caused by an authoritarian and coercive leader.	Snowball represents Trotsky, but could also suit Lenin. Napoleon represents Stalin.
Movements	The role of the crowd is represented cleverly through the diversity of reactions to these revolutionary changes. There is an enthusiastic horse called Boxer who works himself to death to build the windmill, rebellious chickens that smash their eggs rather than support Napoleon's leadership, and subservient ducks. But most animals on the farm are nameless and faceless, doing what they are told, often not unified in purpose or action.	Boxer represents the proletarian workers. The chickens represent the peasants under conditions of war, communism and Stalin's collectivisation.
Propaganda	Orwell's masterstroke was his demonstration of the detrimental influence of the manipulation of propaganda. Squealer's propaganda films promote the achievements of the farm. Squealer is Napoleon's sly mouthpiece who successfully explains and justifies changes to all the original commandments, each of which creates a more comfortable and privileged life for the new ruling pig elite. The animals on the farm are only unified by the central leader, who attempts to motivate them through manipulating the original ideas.	Propaganda films highlight the Lenin and Stalin personality cults.



Literature study 2: Pasternak's *Doctor Zhivago* (1958)

After Stalin's death in 1953, Nikita Khrushchev became the new President of the USSR and introduced a de-Stalinisation program. In this new era of relative political freedom, writers became more adventurous in their criticism of the communist era. Boris Pasternak wrote a novel called *Doctor Zhivago* that was set in the years of the Russian Revolution and Civil War. Due to its heavy criticism of the actions of the Bolsheviks, it was first published in Italy, after being rejected in Russia. In 1958 Pasternak was awarded the Nobel Prize for Literature, but declined it after being denounced and evicted from the Union of Soviet Writers. Pasternak died soon afterwards.

This classic novel traces the life and loves of Yury Andreyevich Zhivago, who is a doctor and a traditional Russian poet. The key Bolshevik figure is a hated man called Strelnikov. In contrast to Strelnikov in the novel, who stated that 'history has no room for personal feelings', Pasternak argues for the individual over the state – the exact opposite to communist ideology. While Zhivago marries the loyal Tonya, he is forever intrigued by chance meetings with a young girl, Lara. During the First World War he serves as a medic where he works with Lara, now a nurse. In his opposition to the revolution, he escapes to the Ural Mountains only to be captured by the Reds in the Civil War and forced to serve as their doctor. Zhivago and Lara eventually live together and he returns to his poetry, expressing his fears and loves. *Doctor Zhivago* is a worthy source as it comments on the devastation of the wars and Marxist revolution, and on the magnificent countryside and culture of Russia.

Extract 1

Take your red banner. You think it is a flag, isn't that what you think? Well, it isn't a flag. It's the purple kerchief of the death woman ... She waves it and she nods and winks and entices young men to come and be killed to death, then she sends famine and plague. That's what it is. And you believed her ... You thought it was saying: 'Come to me, all ye poor and proletarians of the world'.

Extract 2

Marxism a science? Well it's taking a risk, to say the least ... Marxism is not sufficiently master of itself to be a science. Science is more balanced. You talk about Marxism and objectivity. I don't know of any teaching more self-centred and further from the facts than Marxism. Ordinarily, people are anxious to test their theories in practice, to learn from experience, but those who wield power are so anxious to establish the myth of their own infallibility that they turn their back on truth as squarely as they can. Politics means nothing to me. I don't like people who are indifferent to the truth.

Focus questions

- 1 What is Pasternak saying about the red banner?
- 2 Which words convey Pasternak's negative attitude towards the red banner?
- 3 What are Pasternak's criticisms about Marxism?
- 4 What are his criticisms about the Bolshevik leadership?

Literature study 3: Bulgakov's *Heart of a Dog* (1926)

This is a satirical tale criticising the nature of Bolsheviks. It was written in early 1925 by Mikhail Bulgakov, who remained in Russia after the revolution even though his writing was often criticised. His works were banned from 1930. This short story tells of an upper-class gentleman, Philip Philippovich, who is a scientist in Moscow. He takes an injured, undernourished, mongrel dog off the street and operates to transplant a human pituitary gland and testicles from a petty criminal. The story focuses on the subsequent transformation of the dog into a vulgar Bolshevik who reads Engels, gets drunk on vodka, gropes women, swears, smokes, considers theatre to be counter-revolutionary and claims

to have been injured fighting General Kolchak in the Civil War. He is so attracted to Bolshevik ideas that he becomes a member of the government bureaucracy as the director in charge of choking all of Moscow's cats to death. This 'man with a heart of a dog' finally reports the scientist for many 'crimes' against the regime and orders his arrest. The underlying critique of the communist regime is that the experiment was aimed at improving the human species, but instead results in producing obscenities and violence.

Extract

'You are on the lowest rung of development,' Philippovich shouted still more loudly. 'You are a creature just in the process of formation, with a feeble intellect. All of your actions are the actions of an animal. Yet you permit yourself to . . . offer advice on a cosmic scale and of equally cosmic stupidity on how to divide everything.'

Bulgakov, *Heart of a Dog*, pp. 90–1

ANALYSIS ACTIVITY 16.3: CREATE YOUR OWN PROPAGANDA

Design your own poster summarising Lenin's political regime from 1917 to 1924. Decide whether you are promoting or criticising Lenin.

If you believe that Lenin's impact was positive, include symbols that promote Lenin, like the proletariat, NEP or Civil War victories. If you believe that Lenin's impact was negative, include symbols that criticise Lenin, like starving peasants, crowded industry, dictatorship, the Kronstadt Uprising, images of terror or the hanging of kulaks.

Focus questions

- 1 What are the key criticisms of the nature of the new society?
- 2 In Bulgakov's opinion, how successfully did the Bolsheviks transform society?
- 3 Many successful historical books have been made into films, such as Pasternak's *Doctor Zhivago*, Massie's *Nicholas and Alexandra* and Orwell's *Animal Farm*. Given that films contain significantly less detail and are interpretations of the original text, how beneficial do you believe films are as a source of historical knowledge?

The story so far

- The Bolshevik Revolution of October 1917 was not simply a change of government but a change of ideology that transformed the political, economic and social life of the nation. Lenin used propaganda to assist this transformation.
- Lenin appointed Anatoly Lunacharsky as Head of the People's Commissariat for Enlightenment and he coordinated the process for promoting the new ideology through propaganda.
- Deni, Apsit and Vladimirov were all successful propaganda artists employed by the Bolshevik government.
- There was significant anti-Bolshevik propaganda, including famous pieces of literature such as Orwell's *Animal Farm*, Pasternak's *Dr Zhivago* and Bulgakov's *Heart of a Dog*.



CHAPTER REVIEW

DEVELOPING CLEAR DEFINITIONS

Write explanations for the following.

Key terms	Key artists	Key authors
propaganda	Apsit	Pasternak
<i>lubok</i>	Deni	Orwell
	Vladimirov	Bulgakov

PRACTISING PARAGRAPH ANSWERS

- 1 Why did Lenin rapidly increase the use of propaganda?
- 2 What was anti-communist propaganda like?

PRACTICE ESSAY QUESTIONS

- 1 Communist propaganda was a new language that the Russian people were required to learn. What would they have learnt? Use common symbols and examples of artists' work to provide evidence for your response.
- 2 Compare the pro- and anti-Bolshevik propaganda. What were the similarities and differences?
- 3 'It is often said that the Bolsheviks were a party formed in Lenin's own image.' To what extent is this statement true with regard to propaganda?

READING MORE DEEPLY

Easy

Russian Revolution graphics (see the link at <http://cambridge.edu.au/redirect/?id=5830>).

Moderate

Bonnell, V 1999, *Iconography of Power: Soviet Political Posters under Lenin and Stalin*. Introduction.

Challenging

Cull, N, Culbert, D & Welch, D (eds) 2003, *Propaganda and Mass Persuasion: A Historical Encyclopedia, 1500 to the Present*. A tertiary-level source worth a skim read for the dedicated scholar.



Lenin's final years and legacy

“ *There was no private Lenin behind the public mask. He gave all of himself to politics. He rarely showed emotions, he had few intimates, and everything he ever said or wrote was intended only for the revolutionary cause. He was not a man but a political machine.*

– ORLANDO FIGES, 2000

”

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OVERVIEW

Lenin is the key to understanding the Russian Revolution. Even Trotsky argued that the revolution would not have happened without Lenin. He was a visionary revolutionary who adapted Marxist theory to suit the practical realities of a backward Russia. It is crucial to examine the final years of Lenin's life from 1922 to 1924. True priorities are revealed in the final throes of a person's life. What really matters comes to the top. So what mattered to Lenin? His *Political Will* reveals that the crucial issue in Lenin's mind was the future leadership and direction of communism through the party – a cause to which he had devoted his whole life.

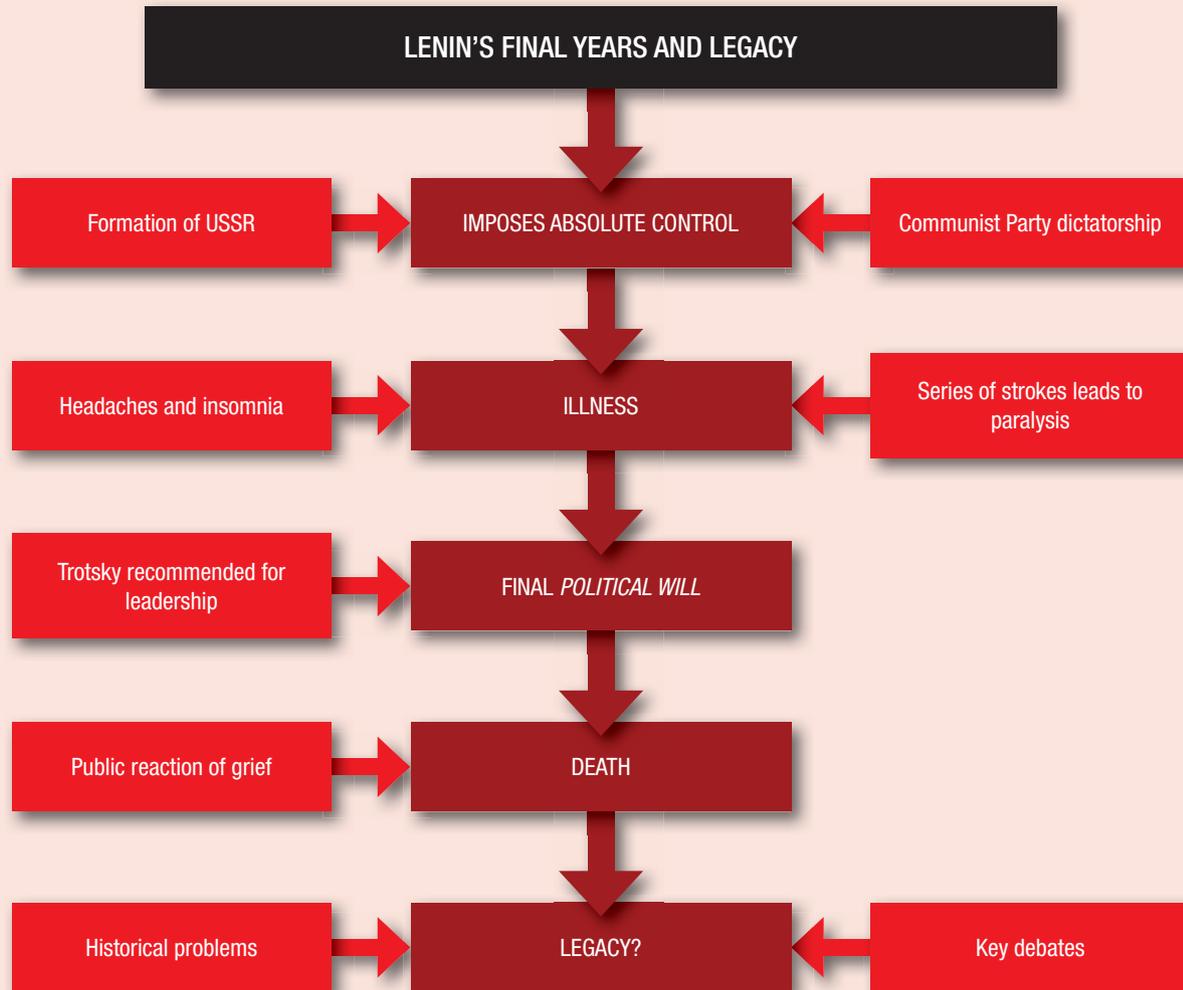
Lenin's terror has become a problematic issue for historians, not in terms of whether Lenin employed terror or not, as this is unanimously accepted, but rather in the interpretation of it. The second half of this chapter focuses on the historical problems of analysing Lenin's legacy and then examines key debates about his reign.

KEY ISSUES

- How did Lenin impose absolute control?
- What was the nature of Lenin's illness and what were the reactions to his death?
- What were Lenin's final political concerns?
- What were the key debates about Lenin?



FLOW OF CHAPTER



17.1 How did Lenin impose absolute control?

Lenin began a purge of members of opposing political parties who were critical of the Bolshevik leadership. While the Tenth Party Congress in March 1921 requested unity, Lenin now enforced compliance. This process was known as eliminating 'radishes' – those who were red on the outside but really white on the inside! The CHEKA was given unquestioned authority and, by the end of 1922, about one-quarter of the party membership had been expelled. Bureaucrats now controlled the party. This was the type of revolutionary party that Lenin had been advocating ever since the split with the Mensheviks in 1903: stern, disciplined, devoted and organised. Hence, a new system of bureaucratic centralism developed as the main form of government. This political shift allowed party members like Joseph Stalin to become entrenched in the functioning of the party after he became General Secretary in April 1922.

Political aftermath of 1921

1922: Formation of the USSR

After February 1917, six provinces in the former Russian Empire chose to become independent Soviet republics. All signed the Treaty of Union in 1922, which joined them together as the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics. Russia now became known as the USSR or Soviet Union. The government of the USSR was in Moscow. The USSR remained joined in this union until 1991.

1923: Bureaucratic nature of the party

By 1923 the die was cast ... the once competent, combative, and cultivated elite were supplanted by squadrons of colorless yes-men. Strong personalities such as Alexandra Kollontai were removed or liquidated.

Navailh (1994)

1924: Secret police

The CHEKA was abolished in February 1922 and replaced by the GPU (State Political Organisation) and in 1924 by the OGPU (Unified State Political Organisation). Felix Dzerzhinsky was the head of each of these secret police organisations.

GOVERNMENT 'VICTORIES'

- 1 Introduced a socialist society
- 2 First World War peace treaty, March 1918
- 3 Decree on Land, November 1917
- 4 Social transformation (education, judicial equality and relative freedoms for women)
- 5 Defeated counter-revolution in Civil War
- 6 Defeated foreign intervention in Civil War
- 7 Created 'unity'
 - a Dismissed Constituent Assembly, 1918
 - b Crushed Kronstadt sailors, 1921
 - c Abolished all political parties, 1922
- 8 Stabilised the economy by replacing failed War Communism with New Economic Policy, 1921



17.2 What was the nature of Lenin's illness and what were the reactions to his death?

Illness

Lenin suffered two major strokes in 1922, the first in May and the second in December. His third stroke, in March 1923, rendered him paralysed and unable to speak. The great leader of the Communist Revolution was rarely seen in person as he was confined to a wheelchair and in a frail condition. Yet, while his body was immobilised, his brain was active and he became an avid letter writer. Politburo members like Stalin and Kamenev visited him regularly, but Trotsky rarely visited.

Reason for illness

While Lenin's illness remains undiagnosed by doctors or historians, the following have been offered as possible causes.

Possibility 1: Lead poisoning theory

In August 1918 an assassination attempt was made on Lenin's life. One bullet pierced his collar bone while another remained lodged in the base of his neck. He disregarded the constant headaches after his recovery. Bolshevik Dr Forster saw lead poisoning as the primary reason for his strokes and death.

Possibility 2: Removal of bullet theory

Despite being in good health for the two years after the assassination attempt, he began getting headaches and insomnia in 1921. In April 1922, doctors removed the bullet from his neck in an attempt to cure these illnesses and perhaps caused damage in the process. One month later, he suffered his first stroke.

Possibility 3: Broken heart theory

A leading female Bolshevik, Alexandra Kollontai, claimed that Lenin never recovered from the death of Inessa Armand in 1920. Apparently, he was so distraught after her death that he worked himself harder to the point of nervous exhaustion.

Death

Vladimir Ilyich Lenin died on 21 January 1924.



Source 17.1 Lenin in 1923, after a stroke

A MATTER OF FACT

Lenin's father also died of a cerebral haemorrhage. Lenin's brain was removed before his body was embalmed so that neuroscientists could study it.



Source 17.2 Lenin's body in the mausoleum in Red Square

Reactions to Lenin's death

Trotsky's initial grief

Lenin is no more. We have lost Lenin ... Medicine has proved itself powerless to accomplish what was passionately hoped for, what millions of hearts demanded ... And now Lenin is no more. These words descend upon our consciousness like gigantic rocks falling to the sea.

Trotsky speaking at Tiflis Station, 22 January 1924

Postage stamps

The Postal Department issued a special series of stamps with Lenin's portrait.

Renaming Petrograd

Petrograd was renamed Leningrad as a permanent reminder of the Russian leader.

Public grief

The announcement was made to the delegates of the Eleventh Soviet Congress. There were screams and sobbing noises from the hall. The public showed signs of genuine grief: theatres and shops closed down for a week; portraits of Lenin, draped in red and black ribbons, were displayed in many windows ...

Figes, *A People's Tragedy* (1996)

English newspaper article

RUSSIA HONORS DEAD DICTATOR

The Congress of the Union of the Soviet Republics ... adopted a resolution that the body should be preserved in a glass lidded coffin and be accessible to visitors as long as possible. Lenin's heart and brain will be placed in a special urn for preservation by the Lenin Institute.

Extract from *The Times*, London, 28 January 1924



Trotsky's response

Death for him was merely a deliverance from physical and moral suffering ... Comrades came to demand that I write on Lenin's death at once. But I knew only one urgent desire – and that was to be alone. I could not stretch my hand to lift my pen. The text of the Moscow telegram [informing him of Lenin's death] was still resounding in my head ... I lay in bed with a temperature, and remained silent.

Trotsky, *My Life*, p. 509

My son Vladimir

Many ordinary Russian parents named their newborn boys Vladimir after Lenin.



Source 17.3 Over the next three days, half a million people queued for many hours waiting to enter Lenin's mausoleum in Red Square, Moscow, merely to glimpse his embalmed corpse.

A MATTER OF FACT

There was such an overwhelming response from soldiers wanting to stand guard over Lenin's body that the number of guards had to be increased from eight to 24 and changed every three minutes.

17.3 What were Lenin's final political concerns?

After his first series of strokes, Lenin dictated his Political Will in December 1922 against his doctors' wishes. Despite being one of the last documents he produced, it was not openly published. Its contents were a summary of Lenin's reflections on the key leaders of the party and recommendations with regard to their appropriateness to succeed him.

ANALYSIS ACTIVITY 17.1: LENIN'S *POLITICAL WILL* DOCUMENT

[25 December 1922]

By stability of the Central Committee ... I mean measures against a split. I have in mind stability as a guarantee against a split in the immediate future, and I intend to deal here with a few ideas concerning personal qualities. I think that from this standpoint the prime factors in the question of stability are such members of the C.C. as Stalin and Trotsky. I think relations between them make up the greater part of the danger of a split, which could be avoided, and this purpose, in my opinion, would be served, among other things, by increasing the numbers of the C.C. members to 50 or 100.

Comrade Stalin, having become Secretary General, has unlimited authority concentrated in his hands, and I am not sure whether he will always be capable of using that power with sufficient caution. Comrade Trotsky, on the other hand ... is distinguished not only by his outstanding ability. He is personally perhaps the most capable man in the present C.C., but he has displayed excessive self-assurance and shown excessive preoccupation with the purely administrative side of the work. These two qualities of the two outstanding leaders of the present C.C. can inadvertently lead to a split, and if our Party does not take steps to avert this, the split may come unexpectedly.

I shall not give any further appraisals of the personal qualities of other members of the C.C. [but] recall that the October episode with Zinoviev and Kamenev was no accident, but neither can the blame for it be laid upon them personally, any more than non-Bolshevism can upon Trotsky. Speaking of the young C.C. members, I wish to say a few words about Bukharin and Pyatakov. They are, in my opinion, the most outstanding figures (among the younger ones) and the following must be borne in mind about them: Bukharin is not only a most valuable and major theorist of the Party; he is also rightly considered the favourite of the whole Party, but his theoretical views can be classified as Marxist only with great reserve ... As for Pyatakov, he is unquestionably a man of outstanding will and outstanding ability, but shows too much zeal for administrating and the administrative side of the work to be relied upon in a serious political matter.

Postscript:

Stalin is too rude and this defect, although quite tolerable in our midst and in dealings among us communists, becomes intolerable in a Secretary General. That is why I suggest that the comrades think about a way of removing Stalin from the post and appointing another man in his stead who in all other respects differ from Comrade Stalin in having only one advantage, namely that of being more tolerant, more loyal, more polite and more considerate to the comrades, less capricious, etc. This circumstance may appear to be a negligible detail. But I think that from a standpoint of safeguarding against a split and from the standpoint of what I wrote about the relationship between Stalin and Trotsky it is ... a detail which can assume decisive importance.

[4 January 1923]

Lenin, *Collected Works*, Vol. 36, pp. 594–6



- 1 What did Lenin consider to be the biggest danger facing the future of the Communist Party?
- 2 In your workbook summarise Lenin's key comments about each Central Committee member listed below. In the final column, choose one word that best summarises what Lenin may have thought about each person. For example, Lenin's one-word summary of Stalin may have been 'beware'.

Member	Praise	Criticisms	One word summary
Stalin			Beware
Trotsky			
Bukharin			
Pyatakov			

- 3 What would the significance of this document have been to the party?
- 4 Why would it be considered a valuable source for historians?

A MATTER OF FACT

Lenin added the postscript to his 'Political Will' after Stalin had been rude to his wife, Krupskaya, on the telephone.

17.4 What were the key debates about Lenin?

Problematic nature of studying history

Analysing Lenin's regime is historically problematic for several reasons. When reading the following problems, the least helpful response would be to conclude that no one can ever understand what really happened in the past. Interpreting the past is like understanding tricks of persuasion used by advertising and marketing, such as appeals to vanity or conformity. By understanding them, you defuse their power. By acknowledging the problematic nature of historical evidence, you

become aware of the need to critically evaluate historians' arguments so that you can reach your own conclusions.

1 Problem of personal values and beliefs

If an historian likes, or at least is sympathetic to, the aims of Marxism and socialism, then it is easier to excuse Lenin's harsh methods as being a necessary response to crisis in order to achieve the worthwhile goal of socialism. Hill is an historian who fits into this category. If, however, an historian perceives the goal of socialism to be misguided in the first place, then it is likely that they will damn both the methods and outcomes as simply being a futile experiment. Pipes is one such historian.

2 Problem of assessing motivation

It is sometimes difficult to assess Lenin's intentions behind his actions. Did he enjoy employing harsh social control, as did Stalin? Consider this story. A little girl wanted to show her mother how much she loved her, so she cut some of her mum's prize-winning roses from the garden and proudly presented them to her in the kitchen. While the actual action was destroying a precious possession, the motivation was genuinely sincere. Should the girl's actions be forgiven? This is the dilemma facing historians. Debates will rage eternally over whether Lenin's motivations behind his actions were pure or heartless.

3 Problem of hindsight

Lenin never lived under Stalin's regime. In fact, he warned of Stalin's potential abuse of power in *Political Will*. However, it is difficult not to assess Lenin in the murky shadow of Stalin. Many Western historians saw Lenin as responsible for creating a structure of totalitarianism that Stalin simply exploited. Even the current Soviet historian Volkogonov agrees with this argument.

4 Problem of time

Lenin only ruled Russia for six years and three months. This was a very short period of time to transform an autocratic political system with a backward economy into a socialist utopia. But there are more time complications. For the first four years Lenin and Russia were involved the First World War and then the Civil War, while during the last two years Lenin was under the physical restrictions of serious illness. This leaves Lenin only the period of mid-1921 to May 1922, 10 months or so, to implement proactive reforms in peace time. Hence, Lenin's decisions must be analysed in the context that, of his 75 months in power, 59 per cent was spent in the emergency of war, 28 per cent was spent seriously ill, with only 13 per cent spent in peace and good health.



Source 17.4 A statue of Lenin in Italy today



Key debates

archive a central location where written material, often secret, is stored by an organisation

Many aspects of Lenin's life and impact have provoked differing interpretations by historians. The fall of the Soviet Union meant that documents that had been zealously guarded by successive communist governments in Moscow's Central Archives were now opened to historians. The following debates must be considered in the light of the previously mentioned problems of studying history:

- 1 Is it possible to change human nature?
- 2 Did Lenin really represent the welfare and interests of the proletariat?
- 3 Was Lenin a dictator?
- 4 Was Lenin's use of violence necessary and acceptable?

1 Is it possible to change human nature?

Communist philosophy was based on ideals of the Enlightenment thinkers who believed that human nature was a product of historical development and could therefore be transformed, renewed and refashioned to espouse a collective humanity. Core questions are whether this is indeed correct: can human nature be changed? And second, if it can, how successful was the new communist government in changing human nature in Russia?

YES

Lenin apparently said these words to great physiologist IP Pavlov in October 1919:

I want the masses of Russia to follow a Communistic pattern of thinking and reacting. There was too much individualism in the Russia of the past. Communism does not tolerate individualistic tendencies. They are harmful. They interfere with our plans. We must abolish individualism ... Man can be corrected. Man can be made what we want him to be.

Cited in Figes, *A People's Tragedy* (1996), p. 732

YES

What is man? He is by no means a finished or harmonious being. No, he is still a highly awkward creature. Man, as an animal, has not yet evolved, by plan but spontaneously, and has accumulated many contradictions. The question of how to educate and regulate, of how to improve and complete the physical and spiritual construction of man, is a colossal problem which can only be conceived on the basis of Socialism. We can construct a railway across the Sahara, we can build the Eiffel Tower and talk directly with New York, but we surely cannot improve man. No, we can! To produce a new, 'improved version' of man – that is the future task of Communism. And for that we first have to find out everything about man, his anatomy, his physiology and that part of his physiology which is called his psychology. Man must look at himself and see himself as a raw material, or at best as a semi-manufactured product, and say: 'At last, my dear homo sapiens, I will work on you.'

Trotsky as cited in Figes, *A People's Tragedy* (1996), p. 734

YES

Trotsky wrote an article in *Pravda* on 16 May 1923 called 'The Struggle of Cultured Speech'. In it, he discussed the difficulty of the Bolshevik agenda, which was to change or shape human nature into a selfless classless utopia:

The revolution is in the first place an awakening of human personality in the masses – who were supposed to possess no personality. In spite of occasional cruelty, the revolution is, before and above all, the awakening of humanity, its onward march, and is marked with a growing respect for the personal dignity of every individual, with an ever-increasing concern for those who are weak ... Human psychology is very conservative by nature ... the correct formula for education and self-education in general, and above all for our party, beginning at the top, should be to straighten out the ideological front, that is, to rework all the areas of consciousness, using the Marxist method. But there again the problem is extremely complicated and could not be solved by school teaching and books alone; the roots of contradiction and muddle of psychological contradictions in which people live. Psychology after all, is determined by life.

NO

Figes views the revolution and communist era as a 'human event of complicated individual tragedies'. He summarised the collapse of communism as being a failure to understand human nature – it cannot be changed simply by altering the political system:

The attempt by the Bolsheviks to 'make the world and man anew' foundered on the rocks of reality. It was in many ways a utopian dream – one of the most ambitious in history – to believe that human nature could be changed by simply altering the social environment in which people lived. Man cannot be transformed quite so easily: human nature moves more slowly than ruling ideologies or society. This is perhaps the one enduring moral lesson of the Russian Revolution.

Figes, *A People's Tragedy* (1996), p. 751

2 Did Lenin really represent the welfare and interests of the proletariat?

NO

Russian writer Volkogonov recognises the synonymous nature of Lenin and the Bolshevik Party. They are inseparable. He argues that Lenin's party was characterised by power and privilege, not by representing the proletariat:

It is impossible to think of Lenin without contemplating his brain-child, his party. Perhaps the idea of the mighty revolutionary organization is central to Leninism, but his accomplishment was not merely that he created a party with a disciplined organization, but that he was rapidly able to erect it into a state system. The Party soon acquired a monopoly of power, of thought and of life itself. It became a Leninist order, in whose name its 'leaders' and their 'comrades-in-arms' were to rule the country for decades to come.

Volkogonov, *Lenin: Life and Legacy* (1994), p. xxxii

NO

Pipes argues that Lenin's pragmatism meant that he acknowledged that his regime was not popular with the proletariat. Pipes argues that instead of a dictatorship of the proletariat, Lenin developed a dictatorship of privilege that even he couldn't control:

The main base of Bolshevik support came not from the people at large, the 'masses', but from the Communist Party apparatus, which grew by leaps and bounds during the Civil War: at its conclusion, the party numbered between 600 000 and 700 000 members ... They joined because membership offered privileges and security in a society in which extreme poverty and insecurity were the rule. Towards outsiders, people not belonging to his order of the elect, Lenin showed no human feeling whatsoever ...

Pipes, *Russia under the Bolshevik Regime 1919–24* (1994)



A MATTER OF FACT

Lenin started the revolution with a Renault and, like Trotsky, had a Rolls Royce by the end of the Civil War. Luxury and privilege were not denied.

3 Was Lenin a dictator?

YES

The Times newspaper argues that Lenin was a dictator:

Lenin was a real dictator. They obeyed him not for fear, but with pleasure. He was their leader. He gave instructions, they merely carried them out. Lenin decided there must be a Red Army. Trotsky carried out the idea. Lenin outlined the functions of the CHEKA; Dzerzhinsky put these instructions into practice.

Lenin put forward the watch-words of the economic policy, and the Commissars eagerly applied them.

The Times (1923)

NO

Russian historian Volkogonov argues that Lenin was not a dictator:

If the chief feature of a dictator is unlimited personal power – and Lenin had such power – we ought to see him as a dictator. Yet he was not. Certainly he regarded dictatorship as a positive virtue contributing to the success of the revolution ... Power for Lenin was dictatorship, but he exercised it remotely, through a flexible mechanism of ideological and organisational structures.

Volkogonov, Lenin: Life and Legacy (1994), p. xxxii



Source 17.5 Lenin delivers a speech in Red Square, Moscow, 1919

4 Was Lenin's use of violence necessary and acceptable?

NO

Russian historian Volkogonov argues that Lenin's terror was not just unnecessary, but that he also made terror the norm rather than the exception. Volkogonov argues that Lenin founded a totalitarian ideology of intolerance, which he demonstrated through terror. The tragedy of Lenin was that he normalised terror and disguised it with revolutionary terminology. In essence, he twisted the amoral to become moral. Volkogonov argues: 'I do not doubt that Lenin wanted earthly happiness for the people, at least for those he called "the proletariat". But he regarded it as normal to build this "happiness" on blood, coercion and the denial of freedom' (Volkogonov, 1994).

He was willing to commit appallingly cruel acts in the name of the revolution. Although he was not personally vindictive, like Stalin, he did believe that the revolution would fail if the millstones of the dictatorship ceased to grind for a moment. While this Jacobin outlook was little better than Stalin's brutality, it seemed to give a noble purpose, a certain revolutionary aura, to force and cruelty.

Volkogonov, *Lenin: Life and Legacy* (1994), p. 472

YES

Historian Hill argues that Lenin's cruelty was necessary to abolish the Tsar's regime of despair:

Lenin possessed a second quality, which symbolised the achievements of the Revolution as a whole. It is the quality, which on Maurice Baring's first visit most impressed him as typical of the ordinary Russian – humaneness. The attempt to overthrow the Bolsheviks after the Revolution produced cruelties indeed; but the revolutionary process abolished a regime of despair and created a new world of hope ... [Gorky] says of him: 'I never met anyone in Russia ... nor do I know anyone who hated, loathed and despised all unhappiness, grief and suffering as Lenin did.'

Hill, *Lenin and the Russian Revolution* (1947)

See 'Practice examination questions' available on Cambridge GO for exam-style questions using this extract from Hill.

ANALYSIS ACTIVITY 17.2: EVIDENCE TO SUPPORT AN ARGUMENT

Many perspectives are provided comparing historical opinion and documents reflecting on the impact and style of Lenin's leadership. What is your perspective? Copy and complete the table below in your workbook, summarising your argument about each debate and providing a key piece of evidence from the extracts to support that view.

Key debates	Your argument	Your evidence
Is it possible to change human nature?		
Did Lenin really represent the welfare and interests of the proletariat?		
Was Lenin a dictator?		
Was Lenin's use of violence necessary and acceptable?		



ANALYSIS ACTIVITY 17.3: VISUAL ANALYSIS

After his death, Russia became a visual memorial to its revolutionary leader through an outpouring of paintings, statues and posters. The poster in Source 17.6 was produced on the first anniversary of Lenin's death.

- 1 Lenin's body language is quite striking. What does this portray about his leadership and character?
- 2 Identify the images behind Lenin. What do these symbolise about Lenin's ideology?



Source 17.6 The poster produced on the anniversary of Lenin's death

The story so far

- After the crushing of the Kronstadt Uprising, Lenin imposed absolute authority over the nation. He abolished all other political parties, established concentration camps for political opponents, formed Russia into the USSR and revamped the CHEKA. All of these measures ensured the unquestioned domination of the Communist Party.
- Lenin's rule was cut short by a series of strokes in 1922 and 1923 that left him paralysed and unable to speak. Although he maintained his presence within the party and continued to write policies and liaise with the Politburo, the jostling for political favouritism among other leaders had begun.
- Lenin dictated his influential *Political Will* that strongly outlined his perspectives on key leaders within the party and their suitability to succeed him. Trotsky was considered to be an outstanding and brilliant leader, while it was recommended that Stalin be sacked.
- Analysing the impact of Lenin is difficult due to the problems of personal values and beliefs, determining his motivation (not just his actions), factoring out hindsight and the limited time in which Lenin ruled in peace and good health.
- Hence, key debates rage about the impact of Lenin's leadership: whether history should remember him favourably or not, given his willingness to employ violence to consolidate his regime.

CHAPTER REVIEW

DEVELOPING CLEAR DEFINITIONS

Write explanations for each of the following.

Key issues	Key documents	Key historians
Lenin's legacy	Lenin's <i>Political Will</i>	Dmitri Volkogonov
Lenin's use of violence		Richard Pipes
		Christopher Hill

PRACTISING PARAGRAPH ANSWERS

- 1 How did Lenin impose absolute control from 1922?
- 2 What were the reactions to Lenin's death?
- 3 What were the main features of Lenin's *Political Will*?
- 4 What are some of the historical problems in studying Lenin?

PRACTICE ESSAY QUESTIONS

- 1 'Lenin's achievements must be discounted due to his imposition of stringent policies of social control. One cannot rationally support a total terrorist.' Discuss this view, providing evidence to support your answer.
- 2 'Lenin's authoritarian nature was necessary to save a struggling regime from collapse. Returning to the Tsar's regime would have been even more unforgivable.' Discuss this view, providing evidence to support your answer.



READING MORE DEEPLY

Easy

Volkogonov, D 1994, *Lenin: Life and Legacy*, HarperCollins. Introduction, pp. xxix–xxxix.

Moderate

Hill, C 1947, *Lenin and the Russian Revolution*. Chapter viii, 'Lenin and the Russian Revolution', pp. 217–34.

Challenging

Service, R 2000, *Lenin: A Biography*, Harvard University Press. Chapter 28, 'Death in the Big House', pp. 464–72, 477–80.

The first part of this chapter explains the writing and motivation behind Lenin's *Political Will*, while the final pages describe his death and funeral.



Source 17.7 A representation of Lenin's funeral by Isaak Brodsky, 1925



Thematic analysis, 1917–27

“ *It is impossible to predict the time and progress of revolution. It is governed by its own more or less mysterious laws.*

– LENIN

”

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OVERVIEW

The Bolshevik Revolution of October 1917 was the new beginning for a Russia with the same old problems. Just because Lenin – a fresh, adaptable, reforming leader – had replaced the Tsar did not mean that the new society was as utopian as Marx’s theory of communism predicted. In fact, Lenin inherited a nation under severe torment that also faced new problems restricting the success of the introduction of socialism. Certainly, the initial promise of social and political change by the Bolshevik Party was endangered by the democracy of socialism, civil war, economic breakdown and internal dissent. In these times of crisis, the new communist government’s responses were unsurprisingly authoritarian, involving the introduction of stringent policies of social control.

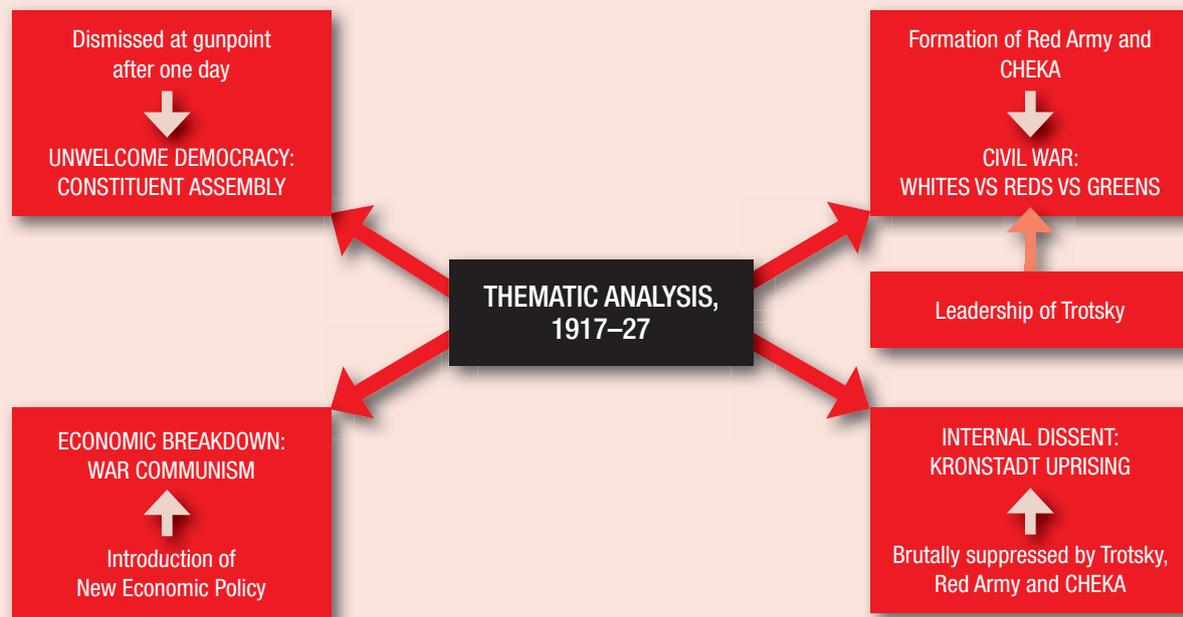
These crises and responses are summarised in this chapter with the explicit purpose of reflecting on the continuities and changes of the old regime. Each of these events has been described in detail in the preceding chapters, leading to an understanding of each. This chapter aims to model how your writing can be converted from simply retelling the story of the revolution to a more thoughtful thematic style.

KEY ISSUES

- Crisis and response 1: Unwelcome democracy
- Crisis and response 2: Civil War
- Crisis and response 3: Economic breakdown
- Crisis and response 4: Internal dissent



FLOW OF CHAPTER



Source 18.1 Were the Russian people better off under tsardom or communism?

18.1 Crisis and response 1: Unwelcome democracy

Crisis	Response	Continuity
Constituent Assembly: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> voting November 1917 opening day 18 January 1918 	Constituent Assembly dismissed at gunpoint after only one day. In 1922, Lenin abolished all other political parties.	Lenin's actions the same as the Tsar's in dismissing the first two Dumas for promoting radical ideas that differed from his own.

Cause of crisis

The understandable expectation of the revolutionary parties and groups was that the October Revolution had secured control of the government on behalf of them all. In fact, Lenin openly affirmed this was the case through his slogan: 'All power to the soviets'. In this mindset, the wide distribution of deputies from the Socialist Revolutionary Party with 370 seats, down to the Mensheviks with 16 seats, should have signalled a victory to the people as every political persuasion now had representation. A multi-party government based on a coalition of socialist parties was now a possibility. Rather than being considered positively, however, in Lenin's mind this simply exposed the political ignorance of the proletariat and their need for strong leadership. The dismissal of the Constituent Assembly the next morning marked the last day of democratic government in Russia for the next 74 years. Democracy was dead.

Analysis of response

It is interesting to analyse Lenin's definition of democracy. In our current Western culture, the principle of fair and free nationwide elections to a representative political body equates with democracy. Lenin's deep objections to the Assembly reveal that his understanding of true democracy was the rule of the Bolshevik Party, which he considered to be the purest representation of the proletariat. This concept is described as '**democratic centralism**', which meant that the Bolsheviks believed that they were the only vehicle to lead the voiceless masses in fulfilling their revolutionary potential. Such an interpretation of democracy allowed for Lenin to disregard the election results as being secondary to the urgent needs of the revolution.

democratic centralism
the Leninist principle in which policy is decided at high levels and binding on all members of society

Continuity or change?

To what extent were such forceful actions new and radical? Only by referring to Chapter 5 on the failure of the First and Second Dumas are we able to place Lenin's actions into a wider context. Despite promising fundamental reform in his *October Manifesto* of 1905, the Tsar, four days before the opening of the First Duma on 27 April 1906, published the Fundamental State Laws. These reasserted his autocratic power as Emperor of All Russia and resulted in both the First and Second Dumas being dismissed within months of their opening. The key continuities between the Tsar's and Lenin's actions were their core beliefs that they held the answers to the future of Russia, and their determination to block any erosion of their absolute power. The dismissal of both the Dumas and the Constituent Assembly demonstrated the desire to maintain an authoritarian centralised political system.



Source 18.2 The Romanovs visit a regiment during the First World War

Yet it is incorrect to consider that Lenin was simply another Tsar by a different title. While Tsar Nicholas II was attempting to maintain Russia the way it had always been, Lenin's vision was of an improved Russia that released the potential of its people rather than stifled it.

18.2 Crisis and response 2: Civil War

Crisis	Response	Continuities and changes
Civil War: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • internal counter-revolutionary threat • external foreign threat 	Political/military response: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • formation of Red Army under Trotsky • Lenin's ideological propaganda Economic response: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • introduction of War Communism Social response: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • formation of the CHEKA 	Both the Tsar and Lenin wanted war to rally support behind their leadership and to eliminate opposition. Yet Lenin's reforms and visions were brutally supported by the Red Army and the CHEKA, unlike the Tsar who was unable to maintain military support.

Cause of crisis

The Treaty of Brest-Litovsk merely exchanged one war for another. While the First World War was extremely damaging, the ensuing Russian Civil War was devastating. The new Bolshevik government encountered two significant threats. The first was from the former tsarist generals supported by angry political party members, such as the Socialist Revolutionaries, and disenchanted peasant groups in the European provinces. The second was from Russia's First World War allies – Britain, France and the United States – which were frustrated that Russia's withdrawal had left them more vulnerable on the Western Front. The Civil War raged for three years.

Analysis of response

1 Political/military response

Lenin's key role was as ideological master. His propaganda expertise represented the Civil War as a class war between capitalists and the revolutionary proletariat. However, this was too simplistic a perspective. While anti-Bolshevik opposition did indeed come from supporters of tsarism and middle-class landowners and gentry, significant counter-revolution came from the peasants and national minority Greens movement (see Chapter 13). Trotsky's role, however, was more crucial as his military strategies and presence in the battle zones provided dominant leadership and cohesion that the White forces lacked. The reasons for Red victory were obvious and more a result of White weakness than Red strength.

2 Economic response

The series of policies implemented to service the economic requirements demanded by the Civil War were later called War Communism. Aimed at ensuring military success through industrial production and army strength, War Communism came at the expense of families and communities in the provinces. Many local battles in the Civil War were fought over food rather than for ideology, as Lenin claimed.

3 Social response

The early creation of the CHEKA in December 1917, before Lenin encountered substantial opposition, clearly signalled Lenin's core belief that strict social control was a vital aspect of dominant political control. He had experienced this first hand for the past two decades through the Tsar's *Okhrana*, as had most of the leading Bolshevik revolutionaries. The Tsar taught Lenin that force was not only necessary but also justifiable.

Continuity or change?

A key question beckons. Did Lenin cause the Civil War? The weight of historical opinion suggests that he was indeed responsible. Lenin not only wanted war, but his dismissal of the Constituent Assembly also made it unavoidable. Revolutionary allegiance was split between the two main socialist parties, the Bolsheviks and Socialist Revolutionaries, and civil war was Lenin's brutal game that allowed only one winner. All wars provide a cover for old scores to be settled. Humankind is capable of as much atrocity as it has imagination. Lenin's attitude provides a continuity with the Tsar, who entered the First World War in an attempt to reunify the nation behind his personal authority and eliminate anti-tsarist opposition. Both wars exacerbated the pre-existing economic breakdown. Both wars deepened social discontent. Both wars highlighted the political vulnerability of the governing body.

However, despite both the tsarist and communist governments being involved in devastating wars, there were more changes than continuities. The Tsar was fighting an external enemy on mainly foreign soil for the protection of his nation. Lenin was fighting on home soil for the very existence of his new regime. The desperation of the fledging regime was demonstrated by the establishment of the Red Army and CHEKA, and a willingness to use extreme methods in order to heighten their odds of survival. In fact, the only point of continuity between the *Okhrana* and the CHEKA is their function as secret police. In every other way the CHEKA was more organised, brutal and effective. For example, the Tsar could not



contain the influence of Rasputin and eventually succumbed to mass opposition in February 1917. Lenin's ability to overcome threats to his government was not just a reflection of his superior leadership abilities but also the strength of his military and police base.

Source 18.3 *Lenin and a Demonstration*, by Isaak Brodsky, 1919. Was Lenin essentially Russia's new Tsar?



18.3 Crisis and response 3: Economic breakdown

Crisis	Response	Change
Economic devastation: severe famine in 1920 and 1921	Introduction of New Economic Policy (NEP)	Economic devastation and famine was worse under Lenin than the Tsar, yet things improved drastically under the NEP. Lenin's willingness to reform was very different from the Tsar's apathy to the plight of his people.

Cause of crisis

Although the communist government was successful in defending its new regime, the resulting wounds cut deeply. Famine was widespread. Starvation was commonplace. The nation was drained of both its economic and psychological resources. This crisis was far worse than the 1891 famine under Tsar Nicholas II, given the cumulative effect of constant war since 1914. It is interesting that the 1891 famine was caused by a short winter followed by a hot, dry summer, whereas the 1920–21 famine was caused by a civil war and economic policies of Lenin's own making.

Analysis of response

The failure of War Communism was a lot more serious than simply ill-chosen economic decisions. This policy was embedded in the ideological mindset of the party and was considered to be the beginning of pure socialism. The long-term aims of the party were the abolition of private property and the free market, so that products could be distributed more fairly according to need. The failure of War Communism, therefore, injected the party with self-doubt over the legitimacy of its socialist ideals, and set back the introduction of socialism in Russia. Socialism was far easier to discuss and write about than to implement.

What is the link between ideas, leaders and movements? The introduction of the NEP revealed the wide gap between revolutionary theory and economic reality. The introduction of the NEP is a prime example of how ideology is simply a useful tool that can be modified or dispensed with in order to follow

changing circumstances. The example of the change to the NEP suggests that ideas are manipulated by leaders to justify their decisions to gain the support of popular movements and retain control.

Continuity or change?

Did conditions of everyday life improve under the new society? Who benefited economically?

1 Industrial workers

It is often difficult to gain authoritative evidence about the day-to-day life of men and women workers. Workers' lives were worse off under War Communism than during the old regime, but relatively better off under the NEP, although production levels did not reach those of 1913 until after Lenin's death. Under War Communism, unemployment had risen by 100 000, bread rations had declined, the black market was thriving, and fuel shortages left people with no heating or lighting. Under the NEP, rationing was gradually phased out and wages stabilised through government control of banking. Shops and restaurants reopened and goods became more readily available. The emergence of the NEPman entrepreneurs (people who exploited the NEP to make money for themselves), with their money-making schemes and extravagant living, was an indication of better times.

2 Peasants

The lives of peasant families were worse off under War Communism than during the old regime, yet relatively better off after the NEP was introduced in 1921. Under War Communism, while the peasants did receive land through the Land Decree, the government requisitioned grain with minimal compensation, resulting in severe famine and starvation. Under the NEP, rebellion ceased as open markets were established and peasants could begin small-scale enterprises that attracted profit. Surpluses could be kept and traded. Agriculture expanded. The psychological benefit of owning land made life significantly better, even if economic circumstances did not change for some families.

18.4 Crisis and response 4: Internal dissent

Crisis	Response	Change
Kronstadt Uprising in March 1921	Brutal suppression of uprising by Trotsky and Red Army	The suppression of Bloody Sunday protesters by Nicholas was very similar, yet Lenin allowed greater debate between party members.

Cause of crisis

Lenin's leadership was filled with internal dissent from both party leaders and devout party supporters even before the October Revolution. Some of these key debates were:

- 1917 – Zinoviev and Kamenev published their criticisms of the proposed Bolshevik takeover.
- 1918 – Leftist party members and Bukharin opposed the Treaty of Brest-Litovsk.
- 1920 – Democratic Centralists opposed the lack of openness and democracy within the party.
- 1920 – 'The Workers Opposition' led by Kollontai opposed political elitism of the party who claimed to represent the proletariat yet lived like old-regime gentry.



The final straw came in 1921 with the Kronstadt sailors' petition and uprising against the strict restrictions on personal and political freedoms. Lenin's response was the brutal deployment of the same forces used to win the Civil War – the Red Army and the CHEKA – all under the control of Trotsky. Outnumbered and overpowered, the once 'reddest of the red' sailors, who had helped defeat the Winter Palace in 1917, were decimated. Lenin's concern about this depth of division was aptly demonstrated by his imposition of a Decree on Party Unity at the Tenth Party Congress, which coincided with the uprising in March.

Analysis of response

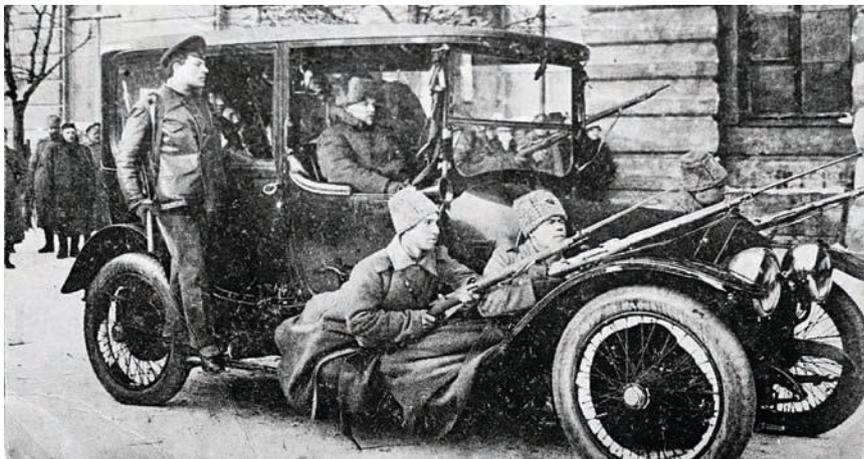
Lenin's attempts to end the divisions within the party were not successful. The introduction of the NEP met with fierce debate between leftist party idealists like Trotsky and rightist party pragmatists like Rykov and Tomsy. Despite its success, in 1923 Trotsky criticised the NEP for creating a scissors crisis, whereby the gap between the prices of agricultural and processed goods widened. So what impact does this constant internal dissent have on our understanding of Lenin's leadership? Gerrantana provided this reflection:

When he was still alive, Lenin was not regarded as a source of authority ... nor was his authority even considered indisputable. On the contrary, he always encountered disagreement, resistance or opposition even within the ruling group of the Bolshevik Party. He was the recognized 'head' of the Party, but it was permissible to disagree with him and, when it was thought necessary, other comrades were allowed and even expected to oppose his will. He was 'head' because he managed to convince and draw into struggle even wavering and reluctant people, not because he had the right to reject or silence opponents. Convinced of the need for firm Party discipline, he never tried to place his opponents under a discipline to which he was not himself subject.

Cited in Appignanesi & Zarate, *Introducing Lenin* (1994), p. 169

One of the causes of this internal dissent was that communism was imposed from above rather than through class consciousness welling up from below, as the *Communist Manifesto* predicted:

From the days of the October Revolution the Communist control at the grass roots level was never fully secure. By 1924 the Party had consolidated its rule, but to the majority of the people it was far away in Moscow. Certain elements of the population came to grudgingly accept the Communist government during the difficult days of the Civil War, but it could



Source 18.4 A Bolshevik patrol

be said that the great majority remained neutral towards their new masters. The Communists might have controlled the railways, the large industrial enterprises and the armed forces, but not the hearts and minds of the people.

Thomas & McAndrew, *Russia, Soviet Union 1917–1945* (1995), p. 137

Continuity or change?

Lenin was never able to wipe out internal dissent. His Political Will was devoted to this issue. Four years of conflict between Stalin, Trotsky and the Politburo leaders over the direction of the USSR followed Lenin's death in January 1924. If Lenin failed in this regard, so did the Tsar. Revolutionary writers and parties bubbled underneath the seeming tranquillity of the old regime, and the prison camps in Siberia were full.

Yet there was a significant change in political climate between the old and new regimes. While there was a desire to have a more effective representative advisory body, the only system anybody knew was the autocracy of tsardom. Although the intelligentsia dreamed of democracy, it was out of reach. Under Lenin and the new communist government, people were determined to have their say in making the reality as close to their dreams as possible.

The closest continuity with the Tsar, however, was the brutal suppression of alternative ideas. On the surface, the crushing of Bloody Sunday in the old regime and Kronstadt in the new provide a simple continuity. Both sets of protesters were trying to fine-tune a system they supported. Both recognised the ultimate authority of their government. Both wanted reform not revolution. Yet both received death not democracy. Bullets not ballots. Slaughter not sympathy.

However, the core of the Bloody Sunday petition was a demand for better working conditions, while the Kronstadt petition was demanding more representative democracy and greater civil liberties. The new society had bred a greater political awareness and desire within the proletariat to be part of the political system.

ANALYSIS ACTIVITY 18.1: HISTORICAL INTERPRETATIONS

In a review of Service's biography of Lenin, Lieven argued that Lenin escalated terror past the realms of necessity, was politically naive and should be considered a criminal:

In no circumstances would 20th Century Russian history have been pleasant or bloodless. But Lenin made it far worse than it needed to be. In 1917 he combined fanaticism, ruthlessness and absolute self-confidence with a terrifying naivety about government, economics and Russian society ... To impose such immense sacrifices in the name of so naive and flawed a vision makes Lenin one of the greatest criminals of the 20th Century.

Lieven, *The Sunday Telegraph*, 12 March 2000

- 1 Lieven describes the 1917 Revolution as a combination of 'fanaticism, ruthlessness and absolute self-confidence'. To what extent do you agree that Lenin's takeover of Petrograd could best be described as (a) fanatical, (b) ruthless, or (c) self-confident?
- 2 Lieven describes the theory of communism itself as 'naive and flawed'. To what extent do you agree?
- 3 To what extent do Lenin's actions deserve Lieven's criticism of Lenin as 'one of the greatest criminals of the 20th Century'?



ANALYSIS ACTIVITY 18.2: VISUAL ANALYSIS

Which of the images depicted Sources 18.5 and 18.6 better represents your perception of the communist regime from 1917 to 1924?

Positive perspective



Source 18.5 Karpov's painting

The painting is by Karpov, 1924. It depicts peasants, industrial workers and soldiers working together to celebrate unity of life under the Communist Party (CCCP).

- 1 Identify and explain each of the many symbols of the USSR in this painting.
- 2 What is the artist arguing about life under communism?

Negative perspective



Source 18.6 'Help!' by Moor

This poster was produced by Dmitri Moor in 1921 and the very title of 'Help!' demonstrates people's desperation under the communist regime.

- 1 Which class does the main figure represent? Explain why.
- 2 What is the artist arguing about life under communism?

ANALYSIS ACTIVITY 18.3: CREATIVE THINKING

A distinct disadvantage of studying history is that the outcome is already known. But imagine if it were happening right now! SCAMPER is a creative activity that allows the significance of each event in this period to be freshly analysed. Complete the table below in your workbook.

S	Substitute	Consider the impact of Lenin's leadership during this period. How would the shape of the revolution have been altered if Trotsky, not Lenin, had been the leader of the new government?
C	Combine	Reflect on the impact of the Bolsheviks' introduction of a one-party state. How would the shape of the new society have changed if the Constituent Assembly, made up of a coalition of socialist parties, had been allowed to continue?
A	Adapt	Think about the role of economic policies. What would have been the impact on society and the government if the New Economic Policy had not been introduced and War Communism had continued?
M	Modify or magnify	Imagine the impact of the Kronstadt sailors. What if Lenin had implemented their complaints in their petition rather than destroying them?
P	Put to use	Think about the role of armed forces. What would have happened if the Bolsheviks did not have the loyal support of the Red Army and the CHEKA?
E	Eliminate	Reflect on the murder of the royal family. What difference would it have made if they had been rescued rather than murdered?
R	Rearrange or reverse	Consider the impact of the First World War. What would have happened to Russia's new government if Germany had won the First World War?

The story so far

- The easiest aspect of the new society was taking power in October 1917. The first six months in power witnessed significant opposition: the much anticipated Constituent Assembly was dismissed, a costly peace treaty was signed to withdraw from the war, and the inherited problems of land and bread proved difficult to solve. However, many social and cultural reforms were introduced.
- Foreign invasion from former international allies exacerbated the already raging counter-revolutions from several groups, including former tsarist generals who were advancing on Moscow and Petrograd from every point of the compass. The Red Army's discipline combined with the CHEKA's brutality eventually defeated the White forces and consolidated the revolution for the new government.
- The Civil War victory came at a deep cost. By 1921 the country was characterised by economic ruin and internal disunity. To remain in power, Lenin and Trotsky crushed the Kronstadt Uprising and replaced the failed War Communism (based on socialism) with the New Economic Policy (based on capitalism).
- Lenin now assumed full autocratic control. The Communist Party led a one-party government. Given that the country was no longer at war for the first time since 1914, Lenin could govern in peace. This was interrupted by a series of paralysing strokes that resulted in his death in 1924 at the age of 54.



CHAPTER REVIEW

DEVELOPING CLEAR DEFINITIONS

Write explanations for the role of each of the following in the 1917–27 period.

Key leaders	Key events	Key policies
Lenin	Dismissal of Constituent Assembly	War Communism
Trotsky	Treaty of Brest-Litovsk	NEP
Dzerzhinsky	Civil War	
Kollontai	Kronstadt Uprising	
	Death of Lenin	

PRACTISING PARAGRAPH ANSWERS

- 1 Explain how the Bolsheviks assumed full control over Russia by the end of 1922.
- 2 Explain how the Bolshevik government responded to the crisis of the Civil War.
- 3 Outline the effectiveness of the government's responses to economic challenges.
- 4 Outline the effectiveness of the government's responses to internal dissent.

READING MORE DEEPLY

Easy

Sinclair, K (Ed.) 1997, *Readings: Russian Revolution*, History Teachers Association of Victoria. McDonald, D, 'Crises in the Russian Revolution', pp. 55–81.

Moderate

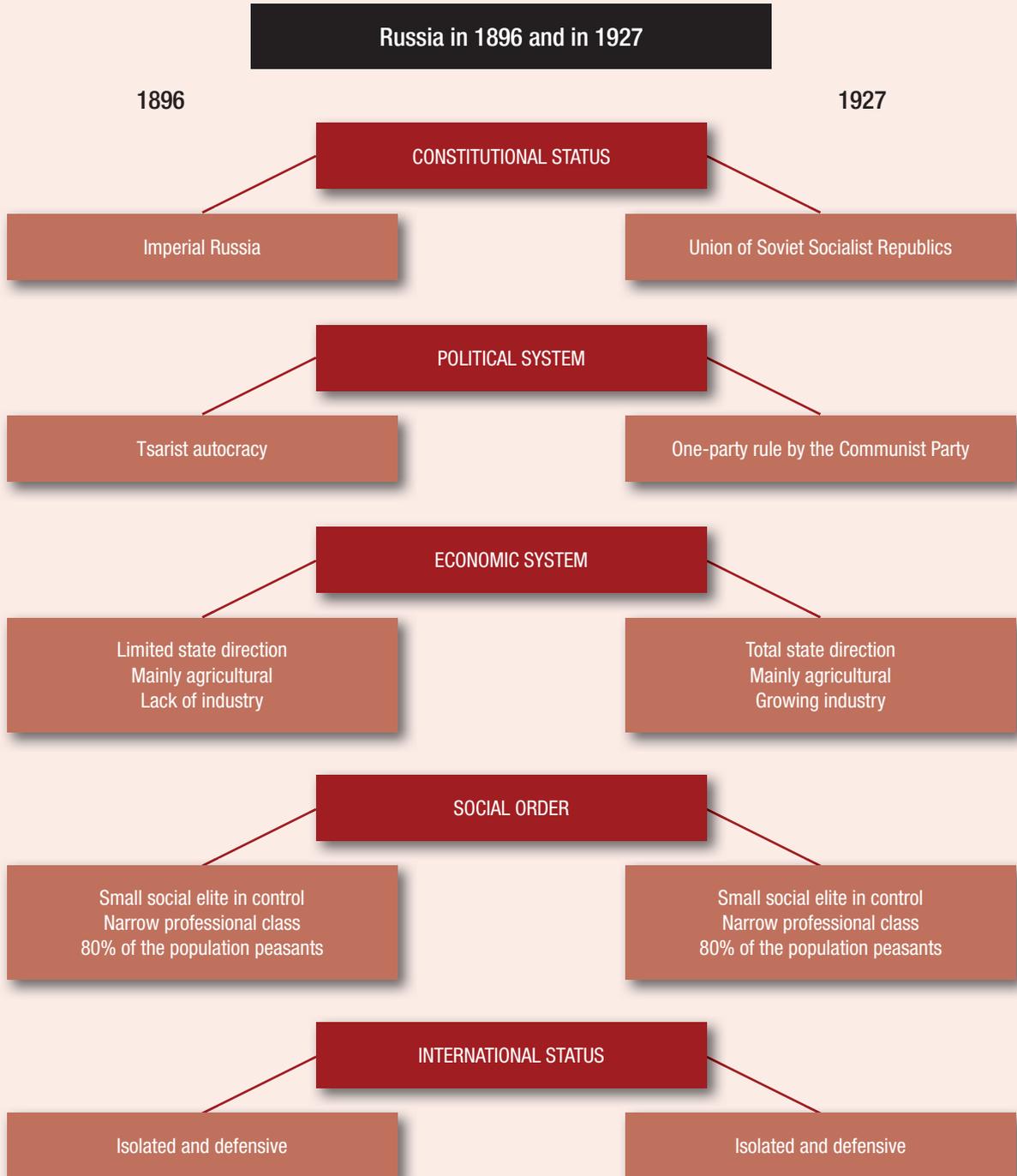
Todd, A 1998, *Revolutions 1789–1917*, Cambridge. Chapter 6, 'Barricades and blood: Violence in revolutions', pp. 58, 64–8.

Challenging

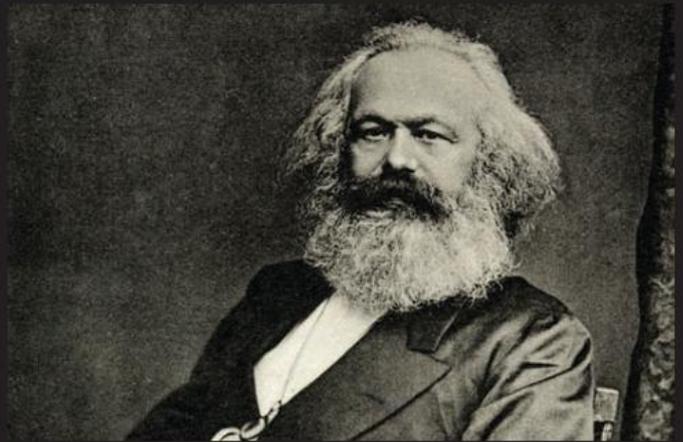
Figes 1996, *A People's Tragedy: The Russian Revolution 1891–1924*, Pimlico. 'Conclusion', pp. 808–15.

Figes argues that by 1921 the revolution had returned to an old system of aristocracy. He discusses the plight of the peasants, impact of the First World War, misplaced ideas in 1917 and the nature of Bolshevism. He explains the reason for the failure of socialism as a people's tragedy, as his title indicates: 'If there was one lesson to be drawn from the Russian Revolution it was that the people had failed to emancipate themselves. They had failed to become their own political masters, to free themselves from emperors and become citizens.'

SUMMARY DIAGRAM



Source: Based on Michael Lynch, *Reaction & Revolutions: Russia 1881–1924*, Hodder & Stoughton, 2000, pp. 150





part three

The revolution in retrospect

“ *Political power grows out of the barrel of a gun.*

– MAO ZEDONG

”

OVERVIEW

Noted Chinese leader Zhou En-Lai was asked his opinion about the implications of the French Revolution. His response was simple: ‘It’s too soon to tell.’ If this is the case with the French Revolution, which occurred over 200 years ago, how much more evident is it for the Soviet Union? It began with Lenin’s Bolshevik Revolution almost 100 years ago; the USSR fell almost 25 years ago. The long-term consequences of communism in Russia will still be hotly debated for decades to come as its impact slowly unravels. The historical topic we now call the ‘Russian Revolution’ may be reduced to merely the ‘Bolshevik Experiment’.



Source 19.1 The battleship *Aurora* anchored next to the Winter Palace in St Petersburg today



Historical interpretations

“ *There is no such thing as impartial history: the story we receive is always to some degree contaminated by the interpretation put on it by the historian.*

– RAYNER, 1998

”

OVERVIEW

Historians are meant to be objective. They are supposed to tell stories based on truth; stories that reflect the facts from the past. Yet every historian's work reflects their country of birth, personality, political views, personal beliefs and values, life experiences and the political period in which they write. So, as Rayner stated, these influences mean that historians' writing cannot be completely without prejudice, even if they attempt to be objective. The formal term used to describe the study of historians' different interpretations about historical events is called '**historiography**'. You may come across this word in your further studies, but a more appropriate term for VCE is 'historical interpretations' – which you need to write about in SACs and the examination.

historiography the study of the writing and interpretation of the past

No historians share exactly the same perspective on every event and document in the Russian Revolution. Hence, debates emerge between historians. These debates focus on key controversial issues such as leadership, violence, ideology, government power and the impact on workers and peasants. Historians also do not operate in isolation; they read and adopt the ideas of other historians. Hence, it is difficult to categorise historians neatly. After the collapse of the USSR, the historical understanding of the nature of communism was dramatically affected. Historians' perspectives of revolution can also change over time, especially those modern historians who wrote both before and after the fall of the USSR.

As Zhou En-Lai suggested with regard to the French Revolution, a fuller understanding of the implications of communism may emerge during our lifetimes. Given that the USSR collapsed in 1991, it is difficult to uncritically praise Lenin's regime because many historians believe that Stalin's terror was its logical or inevitable outcome. The collapse also changed a key question asked by



historians. It was no longer ‘Why did the Soviet regime survive?’ but ‘Why did it fail?’ All historians now ask three fundamental questions. Why did the Russian Revolution occur? What changes did it produce? Why did it ultimately fail?

Despite their differences, historians can be loosely categorised into three main interpretations of the Russian Revolution: Soviet, Western and Revisionist. For example, these general categories can clearly be highlighted when discussing the October Revolution. Historians who believe in the traditional Soviet perspective argue that the October Revolution was achieved by clever actions from Lenin, Trotsky and the Bolsheviks with the support of the majority of the proletariat. Western liberal historians would contest these views by suggesting that the masses were not involved at all. Instead, the Bolsheviks were a minority party that took advantage of the anarchy of 1917 to seize power and never let go. Revisionist historians view neither of these perspectives as quite accurate. Their interpretation of 1917 was that the Bolsheviks assumed power because their views coincided with those of the masses through their focus on the Soviets. It was only when War Communism was introduced, a one-party monopoly was established and stringent policies of social control were enforced, that this partnership broke down.

It is crucial to note, however, that the labels are far less important than recognising and exploring the different views held by each group of historians. Debates occur not through historical labels or interpretations but by contrasting different views of the same event. This chapter explores different views of historians by using these three general categories simply as an accepted means of grouping historians.

Lenin thought of revolutions as trains. He wrote: ‘Revolutions are the locomotives of history. Drive them at full speed and keep them on the rails.’ Expanding on this analogy, the driver becomes the leader, the locomotive the Communist Party, the rails the ideals of Marxism, and the speed of the train fuelled by the mass power of the proletariat. The role of each of these variables is debated by historians. This chapter adopts and develops this train imagery to examine the major historical interpretations of the revolution.

It is for all these reasons that history must be considered as being alive and living. The study of historical interpretations is like looking at a precious gemstone. Each time you turn the gem, the light refracts differently, giving you a colour or reflection that you might not have seen before. So as we keep turning the gem of history, we see the events of history in a different light. It is exactly this phenomenon that creates different views and interpretations of the same events and people. History is alive because the study of historical interpretations is a continuous process.

At their very core, historical interpretations provide a constant dialogue about how historians have interpreted the past. This chapter merely adds its voice to the many books written on this topic in order to continue this valuable conversation and to keep turning the gem of history and enjoying the new reflections.

KEY ISSUES

- Soviet interpretations
- Western interpretations
- Revisionist interpretations
- Comparing different views of the revolution
- Your interpretation

19.1 Soviet interpretations

Focus is on Marxism and Lenin

Traditional Soviet, or Marxist, perspectives are defined by that name: a strong belief that Lenin was infallible and had translated Marxism to suit twentieth-century Russian conditions in 1917. Historians subscribing to this perspective consider that the October Revolution was both necessary and inevitable, and indeed the greatest event in world history because it successfully transferred power from the privileged bourgeoisie to the oppressed proletariat. The revolution was achieved by the masses as directed and represented by the Bolshevik Party. This new workers' state excited the admiration of workers, peasants and radical intellectuals everywhere and for generations to come. This mindset viewed revolutions as inherently good. The view extended to believing that the Mensheviks and the Socialist Revolutionary Party were vicious counter-revolutionaries. The defeat of any internal and external opposition to the revolution, even if it required violence, was therefore acceptable. Thus the Red Army and the CHEKA terror during the Civil War was justified by the need to save the gains coming out of the revolution.

Within the Soviet Union, strict censorship and a lack of access to party archives meant that this Marxist position was the only view taught and permitted. The key text that highlighted Soviet achievements was the official *History of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union* that was published and updated several times between 1938 and 1959. There are also a number of historians from Western countries – such as Hill, Deutscher and Hobsbawm – who have adopted this Soviet interpretation of the Russian Revolution. They have supported the positive perspective of the Russian Revolution and the inevitability of social revolution, and are sympathetic towards the Bolshevik leadership of Lenin and Trotsky. As Edward Acton, an expert on Russian historical interpretations, states, 'an understanding of the Soviet view is therefore a pre-requisite for studying the revolution'.

HISTORIAN PROFILE

Christopher Hill (1912–2003)

At the age of 19, Hill spent a long holiday in Germany that directly radicalised his political outlook as he witnessed the rise of the Nazi Party. Upon his return to England, he became a committed Marxist and joined the Communist Party of Great Britain.

As a 23-year-old, he travelled to Stalin's Russia to immerse himself in its culture, language and politics. In 1946 he helped form the Communist Party Historians Group. His interpretation, like Deutscher, was therefore favourable towards communism and the revolution. His major writing was completed during the height of communism when a Marxist perspective was the mainstream and traditional perspective of the Russian Revolution.



Source 19.2 Christopher Hill



Train analogy

The Marxist tracks meant that the train of revolution was always headed towards worthy ideals, powered by the proletariat. Sometimes the train was attacked, such as during the Civil War or the Kronstadt Uprising. This necessitated the leader to slow the train and order violence so that the train was not returned to the old society. Once counter-revolution was defeated and the train safe, it continued rapidly towards a classless utopia. After 1991, Soviet historians questioned both Lenin's motivations as the driver of the train and the nature of the Communist Party locomotive.

Key historians

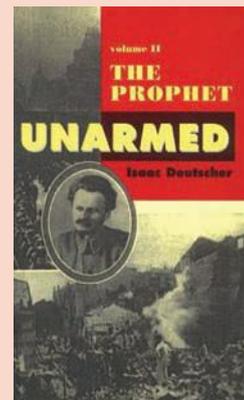
- Vladimir Lenin, *Collected Works*
- Leon Trotsky (see Chapter 13)
- *History of the CPSU (Bolsheviks) Short-course* (1938) various authors
- *Short History of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union* (1970) various authors
- GD Obichkin
- John Reed – an eyewitness (see Chapter 10)
- Christopher Hill – British historian (see Chapter 17)
- Isaac Deutscher
- AJP Taylor
- Eric Hobsbawm

HISTORIAN PROFILE

Isaac Deutscher (1907–67)

Isaac Deutscher was a British journalist, historian and political activist of Polish-Jewish birth. His family were observant Jews but he lost his faith around his bar mitzvah and converted to Marxism when he left home at the age of 18. At the age of 19 he joined the illegal Polish Communist Party and became the editor of the group's underground publications. He rose to professional prominence with a biography of Stalin in 1949 and later wrote a massive trilogy on Trotsky. This research made him a leading expert on communism. As opposed to Pipes, whose Polish origins turned him against communism, Deutscher was sympathetic to communism and was one of the Western historians who wrote favourably about Lenin and the revolution.

Source 19.3 Deutscher's 1954 work *The Prophet Unarmed: Trotsky 1921–1929*, part of a trilogy of books on the historical figure



19.2 Western interpretations

Focus is on the actions of political leaders, and the idea that Marxism was a flawed philosophy

Western liberals and conservatives openly rejected many aspects of the Soviet interpretation. As liberals, they rejected Marxism not only because of fundamental ideological differences, but also because of their view that revolution occurred because of a combination of crises. It was too simplistic to reduce the complex network of history merely to class struggle. Instead, liberal historians looked to other reasons to explain the revolution. While acknowledging the key role of leaders in directing revolution, they pointed to other factors like nationalism, culture, ideas and religion. They saw the whole Russian Revolution as a tragedy, but preferred the February to the October Revolution.

Revolution was not inevitable but ‘fortunate’, and the October Revolution was a victory for a small but ruthless Bolshevik Party. They contended that beginnings of a Western-style democracy were permanently destroyed by Bolshevik fundamentalism and the Civil War. In essence, Western liberal historians argued that instead of establishing a ‘dictatorship of the proletariat’, Lenin created a ‘dictatorship over the proletariat’.

Train analogy	Key historians
<p>Every aspect of the revolutionary train is wrong. Lenin, the driver, merely lusted for power; the Communist Party locomotive simply replaced the privileged ruling classes under tsarism; and the tracks of Marxism were a flawed philosophy from the start. Therefore, the train of revolution was always headed towards violence and destruction.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Richard Pipes (see Chapters 14 and 15) • Dmitri Volkogonov – a conservative Russian historian who wrote a massive leadership trilogy on Lenin, Trotsky and Stalin before his death in 1995 (see Chapter 17) • Bernard Pares – an eyewitness (see Chapters 6 and 7) • Sir George Buchanan – an eyewitness (see Chapter 8) • WH Chamberlin – an eyewitness (see Chapter 12) • Leonard Schapiro – an eyewitness • Dominic Lieven • Robert Conquest • David Thomas and Mark McAndrew • Michael Lynch • Robert Massie • George Kennan • Alexander Solzhenitsyn

HISTORIAN PROFILE

Richard Pipes (1923–)

Richard Pipes’s antagonism towards extreme regimes was developed during his childhood in Poland. His family fled to the United States in 1939, one month before Poland was invaded by Nazi Germany. Pipes served in the US Army Air Corps as a 20-year-old. Educated at Harvard University, he then lectured there from 1950 until his retirement in 1996. Pipes’s political and historical expertise saw him promoted to several significant roles within the US government. For example, he headed a team of analysts during the Cold War called ‘Team B’ that analysed the strategic capacities and political intentions of the Soviet Union and reported directly to the US President.

Pipes’s extremely conservative political approach meant that he was antagonistic towards the Soviet Union, Bolshevism and the Communist Party, which has been demonstrated in his 21 books. This has resulted in a damning and narrow interpretation of the theory of communism and Lenin. He argues that the disastrous October Revolution of 1917 was a coup d’état driven by a small group of influential Bolsheviks to create a one-party privileged society. At the core of his views is his liberal conservatism, which is suspicious of any ideology



Source 19.4 Richard Pipes



that rejects previous traditions and values. His most fundamental argument was that the whole ideology of communism was flawed, not just its implementation by Lenin and Stalin. The concept of communism ‘rested on a faulty philosophy of history as well as an unrealistic psychological doctrine’ (Pipes, *Communism*, p. 148).

How does he support this argument? Pipes argues that, first, Marxism was based on the notion that interest in private property (land, livestock, possessions and money) would pass, whereas it is a permanent feature of every society. Second, Marxism was based on the notion that human nature is flexible and able to be moulded.

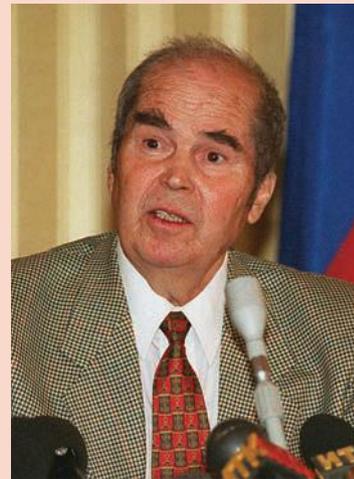
Pipes’s damning perspectives from *Communism: A Brief History* (2001)

- ‘Communism is ultimately defeated by its inability to refashion human nature.’ (p. 149)
- ‘Failure was inevitable and imbedded in the very premises of the Communist regime.’ (p. 511)
- ‘[T]he excesses of the Bolsheviks, their readiness to sacrifice countless lives for their own purposes, were a monstrous violation of both ethics and common sense.’ (p. 512)
- ‘The tragic and sordid history of the Russian Revolution ... teaches us that political authority must never be employed for ideological ends. It is best to let people be.’ (p. 512)

HISTORIAN PROFILE

Dmitri Volkogonov (1928–95)

Dmitri Volkogonov was a Russian author whose political perspectives remain fascinating. Being brought up in Soviet Russia, he was taught the benefits of communism. Yet, due to the murder of both of his parents in Stalin’s purges, Volkogonov was always ready to highlight the terror of Stalin, which he did in 20 years of research resulting in an epic biography simply called *Stalin*. His respect for Lenin remained intact until he began writing a biography on him. This research revealed many of the atrocities ordered by Lenin during the formation of the new communist society. Somewhat reluctantly, therefore, Volkogonov had to admit that the historical documentation pointed towards Lenin’s excessive use of terror to keep pursuing a communist utopia. Interestingly, while British authors like Deutscher and Hill were sympathetic towards communism, Volkogonov was a Russian author who was critical of communism. It is for this reason that Volkogonov’s perspective differs from Pipes’s traditional attack of communism and hence is difficult to categorise.



Source 19.5 Dmitri Volkogonov

19.3 Revisionist interpretations

Focus is on the social circumstances of the masses and the political implications of their discontent

Revisionist historians revise or ‘review’ the Soviet and Western interpretations of the Russian Revolution. From the 1960s, a new generation of historians attempted to review all the available

material on the revolution from a fresh perspective. There were four general areas that this research investigated. First, the revolution ‘from below’, which focused on revealing the lives of the ordinary workers, peasants, soldiers and sailors. Second, the link between these grassroots players and their impact on political developments through the formation of the Red Guard, Soviets, trade unions, and factory, soldier and peasant committees. Third, a closer analysis of the economic and political tension under the tsarist regime caused by the socialist parties and popular unrest. Fourth, the change from a democratic revolution to a Bolshevik dictatorship after October 1917.

This interpretation has been criticised by Western liberal historians as merely attempting to promote the pro-Bolshevik emphasis on the role of the proletariat. The majority of Soviet historians also reject the revisionist perspective as being simply a sophisticated and disguised variation of the anti-Bolshevik theme of Western historians. Acton argues that because the revisionist perspective of revolution draws the best from each of the three established interpretations, it ‘supersedes them all’.

Train analogy	Key historians
<p>All acknowledge that the train of revolution did not run smoothly. Some suggest that the train slowed down when it enforced violence on the proletariat and just focused on serving the interests of the party locomotive. Some believe the main problem was that the tracks of Marxism were not well constructed, making the ride bumpy. Others suggest that the train was destabilised by the change of driver from Lenin to Stalin.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Orlando Figes (see Chapters 9, 15 and 16) • Sheila Fitzpatrick (see Chapter 3) • Robert Service (see Chapters 7 and 15) • Edward Acton • Alexander Rabinowitch • Beryl Williams • Tsuyoshi Hasegawa • Steve Smith • Harold Shukman (Ed.), <i>The Blackwell Encyclopedia of the Russian Revolution</i> (Oxford, 1988)

HISTORIAN PROFILE

Sheila Fitzpatrick (1941–)

Born and raised in Australia, Sheila Fitzpatrick is the daughter of an author and an avid musician. Having taught Russian history at the University of Chicago, she is now an Honorary Professor at the University of Sydney. Her interpretation is similar to Orlando Figes in that they are both interested in analysing the revolution ‘from below’. This means battling to remove the traditional viewpoint of reading history through political lens in order to see the revolution as a social history of people. Fitzpatrick therefore became the leading historian of the revisionist interpretation of the revolution.



Source 19.6 Sheila Fitzpatrick

HISTORIAN PROFILE

Orlando Figes (1959–)

Figes is an award-winning British historian who was a lecturer at Cambridge University but is now Professor of History at the University of London. His mother and sister were both authors so he grew up in an environment of robust political discussion. His latest book is *Revolutionary Russia, 1891–1991* (Pelican, 2014), which uses information from several of his previous books. Interestingly, Figes argues that the Russian Revolution should be understood as a single cycle of 100 years, from the famine crisis of 1891 until the collapse of the Soviet regime in 1991. His interest is how the revolution affected the lives of ordinary people, such as peasants and workers, under the new communist regime.

Some historians neatly fit these historical interpretations. Orlando Figes does not. He draws most of his argument and approach from the revisionist interpretation but has a very conservative viewpoint, as do Western liberal historians such as Richard Pipes. In many respects, Figes forms a category of his own as a post-revisionist.

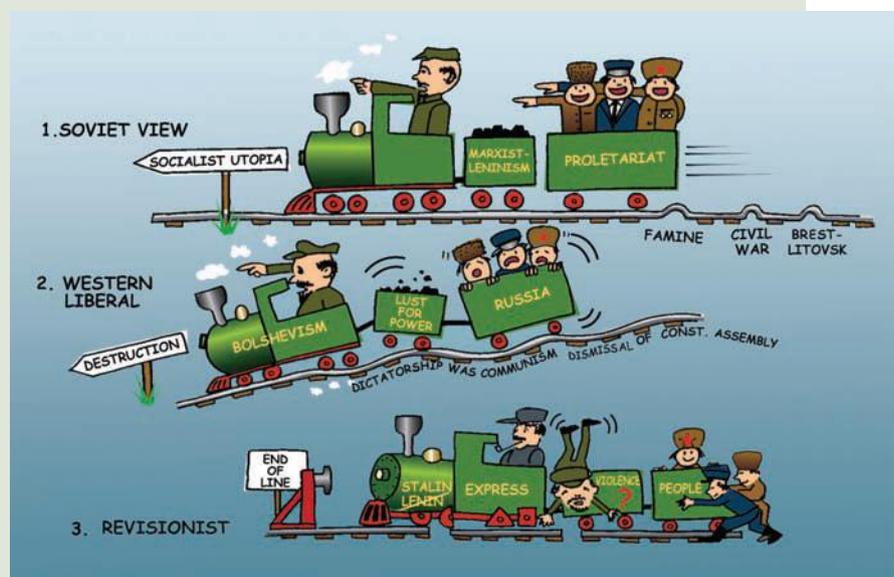


Source 19.7 Orlando Figes

ANALYSIS ACTIVITY 19.1: VISUAL ANALYSIS

Comparing these different interpretations may be easier using a visual stimulus. Source 19.8 depicts a series of cartoons designed by Trevor Sowdon to illustrate the author's train analogy.

- 1 What is the destination of each train?
- 2 What is powering each train?
- 3 What is the role of the ordinary people on each train?
- 4 Which train do you think best summarises the history of Lenin's Russia from 1917 to 1924?



Source 19.8 Richard Malone's train analogy as illustrated by historian Trevor Sowdon

19.4 Comparing different views of the revolution

The *easiest* way of using historians in your writing is by simply quoting a single historian. The problem of this approach is that the quote is too often an intellectual island – a piece of information that is not incorporated or linked into the rest of your paragraph. So the *best* way of incorporating historical interpretations is by discussing historians' views that are similar and, even more effectively, historians' views that are opposite. The advantage of exploring different or opposing views is that it allows you to enter important big-picture debates about the revolution. A significant number of quotes and extracts have been used throughout this book so remember to re-read and use them.

The following quotes have been selected to clearly present the different views of historians on specific events in the revolution. Historians such as Pipes and Figs are used regularly because these are popular authors whose books are readily available. Remembering quotes is one way of discussing different views; paraphrasing is another. Paraphrasing is the skill of summarising the ideas, arguments and examples used by an historian into your own words. This sometimes makes remembering historians' opinions easier. You are encouraged to practise comparing the different views of historians by paraphrasing each quote, then writing your own overall summary for each issue.

1 Tsarist Russia

Interpretation	Historian	Quote
Soviet	<i>History of the CPSU Short-course</i>	'In tsarist Russia the capitalist yoke was aggravated by the yoke of tsardom. The workers not only suffered from capitalist exploitation, from inhuman toil, but, in common with the whole people, suffered from a lack of all rights.'
Western	Buchanan	'The Emperor Nicholas II is one of the most pathetic figures in history ... it was he who was to cause the catastrophe which has brought it to utter ruin and misery.'
Revisionist	Hasegawa	'The tsarist regime was pregnant with irreconcilable internal contradiction that it had no capacity to resolve.'

Paraphrase each quote and then summarise these different views of this event.

2 1905 Revolution

Interpretation	Historian	Quote
Soviet	<i>History of the CPSU Short-course</i>	'It was their [the workers] 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.'
Western	Pares	'The monarchy had been saved; the economy was prosperous; and Russia had – shall we say – half a constitution.'
Revisionist	Figs	'[A]lthough 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.'

Paraphrase each quote and then summarise these different views of this event.

3 First World War

Interpretation	Historian	Quote
Soviet	Hill	'The fundamental cause of the Russian Revolution, then, was the incompatibility of the tsarist state with the demands of modern civilisation. War accelerated the development of revolutionary crisis, but their deep-lying causes could not be wished away in times of peace.'
Western	Pipes	'While the collapse of tsarism was not inevitable, it was made more likely by deepening cultural and political flaws that prevented the tsarist regime from adjusting to the economic and cultural growth of the country, flaws that proved fatal under the pressure generated by World War I.'
Revisionist	Fitzpatrick	'The autocracy's situation was precarious on the eve of the First World War. The society was deeply divided, and the political and bureaucratic structure was fragile and overstrained. The regime was so vulnerable to any kind of jolt or setback that it is hard to imagine that it could have survived long, even without the War.'

Paraphrase each quote and then summarise these different views of this event.

4 1917 February Revolution

Interpretation	Historian	Quote
Soviet	Trotsky	'Who led the February Revolution? We can ... answer definitely enough: conscious and tempered workers educated for the most part by the party of Lenin.'
Western	Chamberlin	'The collapse of the Romanov autocracy in March 1917 was one of the most leaderless, spontaneous, anonymous revolutions of all time.'
Revisionist	Smith	'When the February Revolution came, it was not as the result of military defeat, or even war weariness, but as the result of the collapse of public support in the government.'

Paraphrase each quote and then summarise these different views of this event.

5 Collapse of tsarism

Interpretation	Historian	Quote
Soviet	<i>History of the CPSU Short-course</i>	'The revolution of 1905 had shown that the Soviets were organs of armed uprising and at the same time the embryo of a new, revolutionary power. The idea of Soviets lived in the minds of the working-class masses, and they put it into effect as soon as tsardom was overthrown.'
Western	Pares	'No one made the Russian Revolution, unless it was the autocracy itself ... It was the direct result of the utter bankruptcy of the autocracy.'
Revisionist	Figes	'Time and time again, the obstinate refusal of the tsarist regime to concede reforms turned what should have been a political problem, into a revolutionary crisis ... The tsarist regime's downfall was not inevitable, but its own stupidity made it so.'

Paraphrase each quote and then summarise these different views of this event.

6 1917 October Revolution

Interpretation	Historian	Quote
Soviet	Obichkin	'In his guidance of the uprising, Lenin's genius as a leader of the masses, a wise and fearless strategist, who clearly saw what direction the revolution would take, was strikingly revealed.'
Western	Pipes	'October was a classic coup d'état, the capture of governmental authority by a small band ... with a show of mass participation, but with hardly any mass involvement.'
Revisionist	Acton	'The October Revolution emerges as very much more than a conspiratorial coup d'état. By then the central political issue was that of soviet power.'

Paraphrase each quote and then summarise these different views of this event.

7 Civil War

Interpretation	Historian	Quote
Soviet	Deutscher	'The single-party system became for the Bolsheviks an inescapable necessity. Their own survival, and no doubt the survival of the revolution, depended on it.'
Western	Thomas and McAndrew	'The Communists might have controlled the railways, the large industrial enterprises and the armed forces, but not the hearts and minds of the people.'
Revisionist	Figes	'Nothing did more to shape the ruling attitudes of the Bolsheviks than the experience of the Civil War ... The Bolshevism that emerged from the Civil War viewed itself as a crusading brotherhood of comrades in arms, conquering Russia and the world with a red pencil in one hand and a gun in the other.'

Paraphrase each quote and then summarise these different views of this event.

8 War Communism and the NEP

Interpretation	Historian	Quote
Soviet	<i>History of the CPSU Short-course</i>	'War Communism had been an attempt to take the fortress of the capitalist elements in town and countryside by assault ... now Lenin proposed to retire a little ... to change from an assault of the fortress to the slower method of siege, so as to gain greater strength and resume the offensive.'
Western	Volkogonov	'Lenin apparently never asked himself why, before 1921, the Bolsheviks were incapable of giving the people anything but chaos, civil war, hunger and terror. The fact is, the Bolsheviks had achieved their goal: the Party had power.'
Revisionist	Figes	'War Communism was not just a response to the Civil War; it was also a means of making civil war ... the policies of War Communism were seen by the Bolsheviks as an instrument of struggle against their social or "internal" enemies.'

Paraphrase each quote and then summarise these different views of this event.

9 Bolshevik use of terror

Interpretation	Historian	Quote
Soviet	Hill	'The attempt to overthrow the Bolsheviks after the revolution produced cruelties indeed; but the revolutionary process abolished a regime of despair and created a new world of hope.'
Western	Volkogonov	'Lenin wanted earthly happiness for the people, at least those he called "the proletariat". But he regarded it as normal to build this "happiness" on blood, coercion and the denial of freedom.'
Revisionist	Figes	'The Red Terror did not come out of the blue. It was implicit in the regime from the start ... The Bolsheviks were forced to turn increasingly to terror to silence their political critics and subjugate a society they could not control by any other means.'

Paraphrase each quote and then summarise these different views of this event.

10 Lenin's leadership

Interpretation	Historian	Quote
Soviet	Obichkin	'The leadership given by Lenin and the Bolshevik Party, the valiant struggle and heroism of the workers of the Red Guard, the soldiers and sailors, ensured the success of one of the greatest events in world history – the overthrow of the power of the landowners and capitalists.'
Western	Lieven	'To impose such immense sacrifices in the name of so naive and flawed a vision makes Lenin one of the greatest criminals of the 20th Century.'
Revisionist	Service	'While Lenin was cunning and untrustworthy, he was also dedicated to the ultimate goal of communism. He enjoyed power, he lusted after it. He yearned to keep his party in power. But he wanted power for a purpose. He was determined that the Bolsheviks should initiate the achievement of a world without exploitation and oppression.'

Paraphrase each quote and then summarise these different views of this event.

11 Summary of Lenin's communist regime

Interpretation	Historian	Quote
Soviet	Deutscher	'Besieged fortresses are hardly ever ruled in a democratic manner.'
Western	Pipes	'Judged in terms of its own aspirations: the Communist regime was a monumental failure.'
Revisionist	Figes	'Russia in the 1920s remained a society at war with itself – full of unresolved social tensions and resentments just beneath the surface. In this sense, the deepest legacy of the revolution was its failure to eliminate the social inequalities that had brought it about in the first place.'

Paraphrase each quote and then summarise these different views of this event.

19.5 Your interpretation

Like the writing of all historians, this book is not an objective source. The author has selected the topics, edited documents, chosen the language, added captions to photographs, selected statistics, directed thinking through the focus questions and analysis activities, and been influenced by particular historians. This all means that your thinking about the revolution has been influenced by the author's point of view and the way in which he has constructed this book. The aim of this book has been to provide you with the skills to critically analyse sources and strong opinions to enable you to reach your own interpretation of the Russian Revolution.

ANALYSIS ACTIVITY 19.2: VISUAL ANALYSIS

The powerful painting, *A Fantasy* (Source 19.9), by a non-communist artist living in the USSR in the 1920s, depicts a red horse symbolising communism leaping boldly forward into Russia's future. The rider is dressed like an industrial worker and his horse is leaping over the traditional Russian agrarian village with its conservative church, suggesting that Russia's future is both industrial and secular. However, the rider is looking back nervously, as if hesitant to leave the past behind, and the horse is rearing, perhaps symbolising a reluctance to trample on the peasant community.



Source 19.9 *A Fantasy*, 1925

- 1 After exploring the analysis of the causes, conflicts and consequences of the Russian Revolution contained in this book, do you think the attempt to introduce communism in Russia was a worthwhile project or an impossible fantasy? Discuss.

Focus questions

Provide a summary of Malone's answers to these key questions about the Russian Revolution, then provide your own responses.

- 1 Why did the Russian Revolution occur?
- 2 Were leaders, ideas or movements the main influence in the revolution?
- 3 What political, economic and social changes did the revolution produce?
- 4 Which historical perspective does he favour? Which do you favour?

CHAPTER REVIEW

DEVELOPING CLEAR DEFINITIONS

Write explanations for the following.

Key points of view	Key historians
Soviet	Richard Pipes
Western	Isaac Deutscher
Revisionist	Orlando Figes Sheila Fitzpatrick

PRACTISING PARAGRAPH ANSWERS

- 1 What are the main similarities and differences between each the three main views of the Russian Revolution?
- 2 Explain which view of the Russian Revolution you agree with most. Explain why.
- 3 Why do you think there are different historical views in the first place?

PRACTICE ESSAY QUESTIONS

- 1 Historian Pipes states that 'failure was inevitable'. To what extent do agree that this was true for the Russian Revolution between 1917 and 1927? Use evidence from November 1917 to support your argument.
- 2 Historian Reed argues that Lenin created a 'new society of hope'. To what extent do agree that this was true for the Russian Revolution between 1917 and 1927? Use evidence from November 1917 to support your argument.
- 3 Dominic Lieven argued that Lenin was the 'greatest criminal of the twentieth century'. To what extent do agree that this was true for the Russian Revolution between 1917 and 1927? Think about Lenin's successes and failures and use evidence from November 1917 to support your argument.

READING MORE DEEPLY

Essential reading

Acton, E 1990, *Rethinking the Russian Revolution*, Edward Arnold.

Acton provides perhaps the best discussion available on the concepts of representing the past. Chapter 2 focuses on the three major interpretations of the revolution and the impact of revisionism. The strength of the book is that Acton then applies these perspectives to different debates about the revolution. For example, Chapter 8 (14 pages) provides perspectives on the controversy of whether the Bolsheviks or the masses were responsible for the October 1917 Revolution.

Soviet interpretations

Trotsky, L 1945, *The Revolution Betrayed: What is the Soviet Union and Where is it Going?* Pioneer (written in 1936). Chapter III, 'Socialism and the state', pp. 45–56.

In this reflection on the achievements of the Soviet regime, Trotsky explores the key question as to whether true socialism had been achieved in the Soviet Union between 1917 and 1936. His answer includes a valuable discussion on the fundamental contradiction between Bolshevik theory and Soviet reality. In order for a proletarian dictatorship to be truly achieved, the state and bureaucracy must 'die away'. Instead of this, Trotsky criticises Stalin's regime as 'turning into an uncontrolled force dominating the masses' and 'strangling the workers' movement'. A familiarity with Marxist theory and terminology is an important basis for gaining the most from this chapter.

Western liberal interpretations

Pipes, R 1994, *Russia under the Bolshevik Regime 1919–1924*, Harvill. 'Reflections on the Russian Revolution', pp. 490–512.

This final chapter provides an analysis of the entire revolution from its causes, through the two 1917 revolutions, to discussing why communism failed. Pipes denounces Lenin's revolution, and Lenin's and Stalin's communist regime. He argues that neither European nor Russian socialism worked and that the failure of communism as an ideology was inevitable.

Revisionist interpretations

Fitzpatrick, S 1994 revised edition, *The Russian Revolution*. Chapter 6, 'Ending the revolution', pp. 148–72.

Fitzpatrick was a 'pioneering revisionist' who argued that the Russian Revolution was a process that did not end with Lenin, but continued into the 1930s under Stalin. This is a very logical text that is organised exceptionally well into clear subheadings and has a good discussion of historical interpretations.



The end of the story?

“

When one man dies it is a tragedy, when thousands die it's statistics.

– JOSEPH STALIN, 1943

”

20.1 The 1920s and 1930s: The USSR and Stalin

Political themes

Although Stalin's political fate had been in the balance due to Lenin's Political Will, his survival allowed him to remain as General Secretary of the Communist Party. It would certainly not have been guaranteed in 1924 that Stalin would eventually become the new leader of communist Russia. The widely preferred candidate to succeed Lenin was Leon Trotsky, who had been named in Lenin's Political Will as 'the most capable man in the present Communist Party' and was a popular Civil War hero with the proletariat.

A MATTER OF FACT

Trotsky remained a threat to Stalin even after his exile in 1929 through his written criticisms of the Soviet regime. In Mexico, in 1940, Stalin hired a Spanish communist called Ramon Mercador to befriend and seduce Trotsky's secretary in order to gain access to his heavily guarded house. As Trotsky was writing a chapter called 'Terrorism and Communism', Mercador pulled an ice-pick from his black leather jacket and slammed it into the back of Trotsky's head. Trotsky's immediate reaction was to turn and spit on his attacker. He then survived for 26 hours before dying. Twenty years later, an unrepentant Mercador was released from prison, announcing: 'Terrorism is necessary in the struggle for Communism.'



Source 20.1 Trotsky posing with American admirers in Mexico in April 1940. This photo was taken only four months before his assassination.

In a climate of intense political and personal manoeuvring between members of the Politburo, Stalin emerged as the sole leader of the Communist Party because, as Pipes described, he was the most competent and popular communist politician. Stalin's tactics included suppressing Lenin's *Political Will*, promoting his attractive policy of 'socialism in one country', manipulating power through his role as General Secretary, and coordinating a systematic alienation of Politburo members. The late 1930s

saw an incredible series of nationwide purges that resulted in the assassination of Trotsky, publicised show trials and the execution of former revolutionary leaders such as Bukharin, Kamenev, Zinoviev and Rykov.

Economic themes

Despite a bumper harvest in 1926, grain supplies were scarce in 1927, which prompted a series of new governmental policies. Similar to the actions of the Red Army enforcing War Communism, such policies relied on force rather than incentives. The new measures included soldiers being sent into the countryside to requisition goods and confiscate hoarded grain, which was made a crime. Although there was



Source 20.2 Trotsky on his deathbed



moderate success, no longer-term benefits were gained. The subsequent agricultural crisis created an industrial crisis, resulting in the end of the New Economic Policy.

Stalin was desperate to transform the backward agricultural nation into a world industrial power, fearing that otherwise the Soviet Union would be dominated by foreign powers. He famously said: 'We are fifty or a hundred years behind the advanced countries. We must make good this distance in 10 years. Either we do it or be crushed.' Rapid industrialisation and large-scale collectivisation of agriculture became the primary aims in the formulation of a new economic policy. The Five Year Plan between 1928 and 1932 was called the *First Five Year Plan* as Stalin implemented two more in 1933–37 and in 1938–41. The last had to be abandoned when the USSR was invaded by Germany.

The core belief underpinning the plan was that the country would advance only when all sections of society worked together in harmony. How successful was Stalin's regime in building such a socialist paradise on earth? Despite not reaching the massively inflated **Gosplan** targets, heavy industry production doubled, causing Western countries to applaud Soviet achievements. There was, however, massive starvation and monumental suffering for the peasants under collectivisation.

Gosplan the state planning committee responsible for central economic planning in the USSR; formed in 1921

Social themes

Stalin stated famously: 'Our greatest goal was the universal triumph of Communism, and for the sake of that goal, everything was permissible – to lie, to steal, to destroy hundreds of thousands and even millions of people.' While it is important to avoid the glowing image of Stalin (which he forced others to present during his reign), it is also important not to wear anti-Stalin glasses so thick that any recognition of the achievements of his rule are blocked out. Stalinism created 'radically new and durable political, economic, social and cultural structures that were to last for half a century' (Kotkin in Fitzpatrick 2000, p. 7). Under Stalin's regime, education, illiteracy, the role of women, medical services and employment all improved.



Memoirs provide a powerful source of original reflections about life under Stalin. Victor Serge criticised Stalin's totalitarian regime as stunting the growth of socialism through his strict censorship. 'This regime is in contradiction with everything that was stated, proclaimed, intended and thought during the revolution' (Serge, *Memoirs of a Revolutionary 1901–1941*, p. 283). Trotsky even described Stalin as a 'ruler with a great big club in his hand'. Three key strategies were introduced to restrict independent thought: attacks on religion, establishment of a Stalin cult, and the enforcement of terror. Although Stalin's USSR was considered a major industrial power by the 1930s, were his political and economic achievements worth the social restrictions required?

Source 20.3 Joseph Stalin

A MATTER OF FACT

During the Second World War, Stalin wanted to reinforce a tight family unit. He created the title of Heroic Mother, for those women with more than 10 children, and the Order of Maternal Glory, for those with seven to nine children, and imposed heavy taxes on unmarried adults and married couples without children.

20.2 The 1940s: The USSR and the Second World War

The Nazis invaded Russian territory in June 1941 in an attempt to gain more land. Despite rapid early victories, Hitler suffered two main defeats that characterised his ultimately unsuccessful campaign. In September 1941, the Germans ruthlessly bombed St Petersburg (then called Leningrad) and besieged the city for two years, but were unable to gain victory. In November 1941, they had reached the outskirts of the new capital, Moscow. By February 1943, however, General Von Paulus's army was forced to surrender at Stalingrad in southern Russia. This Soviet success inspired the nation to drive the Germans back through Poland to Germany. The Russians were the first Allied country to enter Berlin in May 1945, which marked the end of the war in Europe.



Source 20.4 A Russian soldier waves the red flag over the Reichstag building in Berlin, May 1945

20.3 The 1950s to the 1970s: The USSR and the Cold War

Stalin's death in 1953 allowed previously strict censorship to be relaxed by the new president, Nikita Khrushchev, who publicly criticised the excesses of the Stalinist regime. Khrushchev dramatically intensified the ideological battle against the United States and capitalism, which became known as the Cold War. The superpowers never openly engaged in direct warfare, but fought each other through programs such as the space and nuclear arms races, crises like the Cuban Missile Crisis and the confrontation of the Berlin Wall, and in competing alliances such as North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) versus the Warsaw Pact. The most significant conflicts were the Korean (1950–53) and the Vietnam (1954–75) Wars, where the Soviets supplied arms and equipment to the North while the United States actively fought alongside the South. The threat of countries throughout the world falling to communism like dominoes also instilled fear. US Senator Joseph McCarthy's anti-communism investigations in the 1950s influenced popular culture. In one episode of the situation comedy *Happy Days*, ultra-cool hero the Fonze and Richie Cunningham build an underground shelter in preparation for what they believed was the inevitable communist invasion of America.

A MATTER OF FACT

The feeling against Stalin after his death was so harsh that his body was removed from Lenin's mausoleum in the middle of the night and buried in a deep pit filled with concrete.

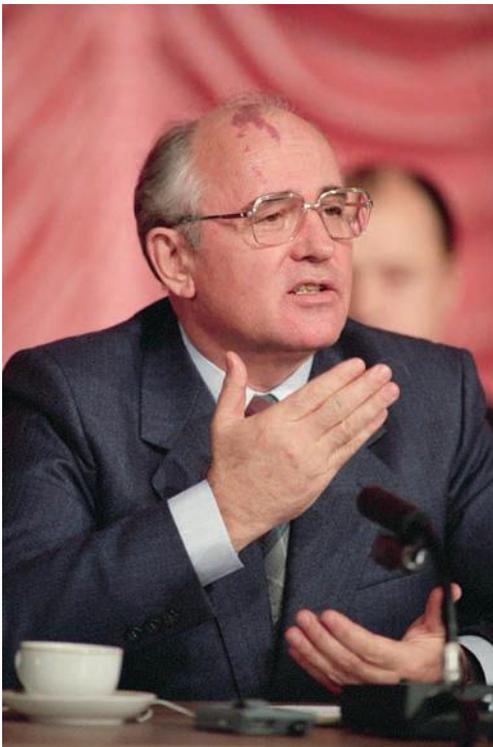


Source 20.5
Lenin's Mausoleum
in Red Square,
Moscow

20.4 The 1980s: The USSR and Gorbachev

Mikhail Gorbachev's election as leader of the USSR after Leonid Brezhnev's death in 1982 began an extraordinary era that rapidly improved a nation in decline. He introduced *perestroika*, a series of reforms that restructured the whole Soviet economy by liberating private enterprises. He also imposed the controversial policy of *glasnost*, meaning an opening up of Soviet oppression through relaxing the strict censorship that had previously prevented any criticism of the government. In March 1990, Gorbachev overturned Lenin's 1922 prohibition of political parties other than the Communist Party. These radical moves by Gorbachev inflamed pre-existing movements for self-government by the national minorities within the USSR. Throughout 1990 several states, including Lithuania, Kazakhstan, Chechnya and the Ukraine, declared independence. A fall in industrial and agricultural output, combined with the new republics' refusal to continue contributing to Gorbachev's government, pushed the USSR into an economic crisis.

20.5 The 1990s: The USSR and collapse



Source 20.6 Mikhail Gorbachev in 1987

The establishment of the Soviet regime in 1917 was momentous as it created a new state that, for the remainder of the century, challenged the West and capitalism for ideological supremacy. Despite surviving an attempted coup d'état in August 1991, Gorbachev had lost his political authority within his own party, which hastened the breakdown of the USSR. On 1 January 1992, after 75 years of communist rule, the USSR ceased to exist. Ultimately, however, the death of the USSR influenced the world as significantly as its birth.



Glossary

abdication the resignation of a monarch from their political role

agitprop art forms with a strong political message (short for 'agitational propaganda')

agrarian relating to the production of foodstuffs in the countryside

Allies the group of countries who united to fight the Central Powers group of countries in the First World War

anti-Semitic hostile to Jewish people

archive a central location where written material, often secret, is stored by an organisation

Armand Inessa Armand was a passionate revolutionary who met Lenin in Paris in 1910 and became his mistress

assassination murder of a public figure for political reasons

autocracy absolute rule by one person; in Russia also called 'tsarism', rule by the Tsar

autocratic a political system whereby the ruler has complete political power, unlimited by a formal constitution or parliament

black market the illegal trade of products

Bolsheviks a revolutionary political party begun by Lenin after splitting with the Mensheviks in 1903

bourgeois relating to or belonging to the bourgeoisie

bourgeoisie the upper middle class, including factory owners. To Marx and Engels (then Lenin) the bourgeoisie was the natural class enemy of the proletariat

Buchanan Sir George Buchanan was the British Ambassador in Russia from 1910 to 1917

bureaucracy a system of officials and administrators that manages a country

capitalism an economic system in which investment in and ownership of the means of production, distribution and exchange of wealth is in the hands of private individuals and corporations

Central Committee the main decision-making group of the

Bolshevik Party

CHEKA a Russian acronym meaning the 'All Russian Extraordinary Commission to Fight Counter-Revolution, Sabotage and Speculation'

Chernov Victor Chernov was a revolutionary who was involved with the Socialist Revolutionaries and later the Mensheviks

class consciousness the necessary process of the workers developing such a deep discontent with their exploitation that they are willing to unite to create a revolution

class struggle the inevitable conflict between the working and ruling classes due to the exploitation of the former by the latter

Commissars while the new Bolshevik government was officially called the Government of People's Commissars, the individual ministerial roles were renamed Commissar

communism a system of economic and social organisation in which industry, capital, land and other means of production are owned and controlled by the community as a whole

Communist Manifesto published by Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels in 1848, it promoted the decline of capitalism and the inevitable rise of communism

Constituent Assembly the name given to an elected political group

constitution the set of rules by which a country is governed

coronation a formal ceremony where a monarch is crowned

Cossacks a fiercely independent people from the region on the Don River near the Black Sea

coup d'état the forced replacement of a government

democracy a liberal concept where citizens of a country have a say in how the country is to be governed and by whom

democratic centralism the Leninist principle in which policy is decided at high levels and binding on all members of society

- dictatorship** a system where a single leader has dominant control over the government and country
- dual government** the term given to the eight-month period between February and October 1917
- Duma** the Russian word for elected parliament
- Durnovo** Pyotr Durnovo was a member of the upper class who became Minister of the Interior under Prime Minister Witte
- Dzerzhinsky** Felix Dzerzhinsky was the chairman of the powerful secret police organisation called the CHEKA
- economic** relating to any issues to do with money, such as taxation, inflation, unemployment, wages and prices of goods
- Edict of Emancipation** issued in 1861, this provided greater freedom for the Russian serfs (peasants)
- Engels** Friedrich Engels was a German theorist who, along with Karl Marx, wrote the *Communist Manifesto* in 1848
- exile** many revolutionaries were imprisoned by the Tsar in the isolated region of central Russia called Siberia, or banished from Russia altogether
- factionalism** disputes between two or more groups acting in self-interest within a larger group
- famine** a desperate situation where food is scarce, resulting in severe malnutrition and often death
- feudal** relating to serfdom; the medieval social system whereby the privileged nobles controlled the hard-working peasants
- French Revolution** occurring in 1789, this famous revolution, which replaced the absolute monarchy with a republic, inspired many revolutionaries, including Lenin
- Gapon** Father Gapon was an active revolutionary who led the peaceful march to petition the Tsar for political representation and better working conditions
- Gorky** Maxim Gorky was a famous revolutionary whose writings inspired and mentored many aspiring revolutionaries
- Gosplan** the state planning committee responsible for central economic planning in the USSR; formed in 1921
- government** the official political body that runs a country
- harvest** the collection of mature grain for eating, storage or market
- historians** men and women who attempt to make sense of the past and usually specialise in one country or period of history
- historiography** the study of the writing and interpretation of the past
- ideas** abstract concepts and beliefs that provide hope and solutions to problems
- ideology** the set of ideas or beliefs that characterise a particular revolutionary movement
- illiteracy** the inability to read or write
- industrialisation** the process of making a country more modern through the development of machines and factories
- intelligentsia** the educated thinkers, writers and artists
- Iskra** Lenin began this revolutionary newspaper in 1900, meaning 'Spark'
- Kadets** a conservative revolutionary group that played an important role in the First Duma in 1906 and in the Provisional Government in 1917
- Kaplan** Fanny Kaplan was a radical anarchist who shot Lenin twice in a failed assassination attempt in August 1918
- Kerensky** a member of the Provisional Government who later became its leader
- Khabalov** General Khabalov was the Chief of the Petrograd Military District during the February Revolution
- Kolchak** Alexander Kolchak was an admiral who led a White Army against the Bolshevik government
- Kollontai** Alexandra Kollontai was a prominent Bolshevik revolutionary who became the first woman selected to join Lenin's powerful Central Committee
- Kornilov** a tsarist military general who marched his troops on Petrograd in August 1917
- Kronstadt** a major naval base situated on an island near Petrograd
- Krupskaya** Lenin's wife; they met in Siberia after she had also been exiled there for her own revolutionary activity
- kulaks** the derogatory name given by Lenin's government to peasants who were deemed to be selfishly hoarding grain for their own benefit rather than that of the nation
- leaders** significant individuals (women and men) who influence ordinary people
- Lenin** the most recognised Marxist revolutionary who led the Bolshevik Party and eventually overthrew the Provisional Government in October 1917
- Leninism** Lenin's suggestions for how Marx and Engels's theoretical ideas should be interpreted and implemented
- liberal movement** argued that the dire need for change did not require an overthrow of the tsarist system
- Martov** a serious disagreement with Lenin led to the establishment of the Mensheviks in 1903 and Martov was elected their first leader
- Marx** Karl Marx was a German theorist who, along with Friedrich Engels, wrote the *Communist Manifesto* in 1848
- Marxism** the devotion and practice of the communist ideology of Karl Marx
- masses** the general name given to the anonymous crowds of ordinary workers and peasants

- Mensheviks** a Marxist revolutionary party that was formed, along with the Bolsheviks, when the Social Democratic Workers' Party split in 1903
- Military Revolutionary Committee** an influential body established by the Bolsheviks in 1917 and coordinated by Trotsky to effect the October Revolution
- Miliukov** Paul Miliukov was a member of the conservative Kadet Party who opposed Rasputin and became a leader in the Provisional Government in 1917
- mir** village governments that were formed under tsarism to provide cooperation and coordination in rural areas
- Moscow** the major city in Russia, along with Petrograd (St Petersburg)
- movements** popular outbreaks of mass action by ordinary people
- Neva River** the majestic river that flowed through St Petersburg directly behind the Tsar's Winter Palace
- October Manifesto** the document produced by Tsar Nicholas II in 1905 promising to grant an elected Duma in return for an end to the general strikes that had paralysed the economy
- Okhrana** the name given to the Tsar's secret police service to deal with opposition to the royal government
- old regime** the revolutionary name given to the period ruled by the tsars, indicating that the revolutionaries had introduced a new and better society
- Orthodox Church** the traditional Russian church that had both supported and benefited from the rule of the tsars
- peasants** the lowest class in the social system who were dependent on working the land, which they either owned or rented; also called serfs
- petition** a written document signed by large numbers of people recommending a specific plan of action be undertaken by the government
- Petrograd Soviet** a powerful political body first formed by Trotsky during the 1905 Revolution and reformed on 28 February 1917
- Plekhanov** George Plekhanov is considered to be the father of Russian Marxism
- Pravda** Lenin's daily newspaper, meaning 'Truth', begun in 1912
- privileges** economic and social benefits given to the upper social classes due to birth rather than talent or merit
- proletariat** the name Karl Marx gave to industrial workers
- propaganda** the creation of powerful visual or verbal material that presents an issue from only one dominant point of view
- Provisional Government** a temporary committee formed during the February Revolution that became the new government after Tsar Nicholas II abdicated
- Putilov Steel Works** one of the largest factories in St Petersburg, employing over 8000 men
- Rasputin** Grigorii Rasputin was a Siberian peasant who had great influence over Tsarina Alexandra and Tsar Nicholas II
- Red Army** the army of the Soviet Union
- Red Guard** a group of workers that was hastily formed into a fighting group to defend Petrograd against the advancing Kornilov
- Reed** John Reed was an American journalist who was in Petrograd during the revolution
- reforms** the healthy process of making political, economic or social changes in order to make a country operate more effectively
- requisitioning** the confiscation of goods (often foodstuffs such as grain), frequently with a high degree of force
- revolution** a process of massive political upheaval that changes the way in which a country is governed; a vertical shift in power from an absolute monarch to a popular government ruling on behalf of the people
- Rodzianko** Mikhail Rodzianko was the head of the Fourth Duma (1912–17), who formed the Provisional Government after the abdication of Tsar Nicholas II
- Romanov Dynasty** the series of rulers beginning with Michael Romanov in 1613
- rouble** Russian currency
- Russo-Japanese War** A war that began in 1904 and ended disastrously for the Russian navy in 1905 with a comprehensive defeat in the Tsushima Strait
- serfdom** the system that forced serfs to work for nobles
- Siberia** the remote but vast central area in Russia whose isolation and harsh conditions limited population numbers and made it ideal for exiling revolutionaries and other dangerous prisoners
- Smolny Institute** the headquarters of the new Bolshevik government as well as the Petrograd Soviet in 1917
- Social Democratic Workers' Party** a revolutionary party founded by Plekhanov in 1898 on Marxist principles
- socialism** the stage of history identified by Karl Marx as coming after the end of capitalism that was necessary before moving into the classless utopia
- Socialist Revolutionary Party** the most popular Marxist revolutionary party in Russia because it represented the interests of the peasants
- sovereign** supreme ruler
- soviet** a local revolutionary group formed to listen to ordinary people's debates

Soviet Order No. 1 The Order given by the Petrograd Soviet one day after its formation that no military orders from the Provisional Government were to be obeyed unless also approved by the Soviet

Soviet Union Union of Soviet Socialist Republics (USSR)

Sovnarkom the powerful 15-member cabinet of ministers in the new Bolshevik government in 1917

St Petersburg the major city in Russia along with Moscow

Stolypin became Prime Minister in 1906 to control the new Dumas and restore the public faith in the Tsar

Trans-Siberian Railway completed by Witte and opened in 1905, this railway travelled across the length of Russia from Moscow to Vladivostok and therefore had major benefits for trade, the transport of goods and troop movements

Trotsky a radical Marxist revolutionary who joined with Lenin and the Bolsheviks in 1917 to form the new government

after the October Revolution

Tsar Russian word for ruler

urban of the city

utopia a perfect society without social problems

War Communism a series of economic policies instituted between 1918 and 1920 to attempt to win the Civil War

Winter Palace the Tsar's main palace in the heart of St Petersburg

Witte the influential finance minister and later Prime Minister who rapidly increased Russian industry and completed the Trans-Siberian Railway

zemstvos local councils that were made up of elected representatives of peasants and landowners



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