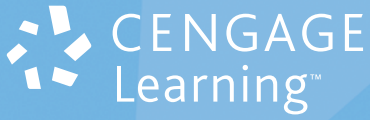
NELSON
MODERNHISTORY

RUSSIA AND THE SOVIET UNION

KEN WEBB

SERIES EDITOR: TONY TAYLOR



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Timeline
1905–1945

1900

1906

April
Fundamental Laws; the tsar reasserted his absolute power

January
Bloody Sunday; tsarist troops massacred peaceful protest marchers

February
Japanese attack on Port Arthur

Start of the Russo-Japanese War

May
Russian Navy destroyed at the Battle of Tsushima

Russia forced to make peace with Japan in September

October
The tsar granted constitutional concessions in the October Manifesto

1905

1914

August
Germany declared war on Russia

September
Assassination of Prime Minister Stolypin

1911

1915

1918

January
The Bolsheviks dissolved the Constituent Assembly

March
Russia and Germany signed the Treaty of Brest-Litovsk

1918–21

Bloody civil war in Russia; the Bolsheviks emerged triumphant

February
Abdication of Nicholas II

Establishment of the Provisional Government and the Soviet

April
Lenin returned to Russia and issued the April Theses

July
The July Days; massive protests against the Provisional Government, blamed on the Bolsheviks

August
Attempted military coup by General Kornilov

October
The Bolsheviks seized power in an almost bloodless coup

December
Creation of the Bolshevik secret police, the Cheka, headed by Felix Dzerzhinsky

1917

1920

1922

April
Stalin appointed General Secretary

March
The Kronstadt Revolt

Staging of the 10th Party Congress

1921

January
Death of Lenin

May
Reading of Lenin's last will and testament at the 13th Party Congress

1924

1925–29

Stalin consolidated position as party leader

Trotsky demoted, expelled from the party and exiled from the Soviet Union

First Five Year Plan

Beginning of industrialisation and collectivisation

1928–32

1940

1934

December
Murder of Kirov paved the way for the terror

1936–38

The purges; leading Bolsheviks condemned in public show trials

June
Nazi Germany invaded the Soviet Union

Hitler failed to take Moscow; Soviet survival ensured a lengthy eastern campaign

1941

1939

August
Signing of the Nazi–Soviet Pact

1942–1943

August–February
Soviet victory in the Battle of Stalingrad

July–August
The Battle of Kursk resulted in the end of German offensive power

1943

May
Defeat of Nazi Germany

Soviet troops occupied Berlin

1945

9780170244107

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“If things continue between 1912 and 1950 as they have between 1900 and 1912, Russia will dominate Europe by the middle of the current century, politically as much as economically and financially.”

Edmond Théry, 1913

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Russia and the Soviet Union
1st Edition
Ken Webb

Publishing editor: Michael Spurr
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Art direction: Danielle Maccarone
Cover designers: Olga Lavecchia, Danielle Maccarone
Front cover images: Getty Images/Hulton Archive/Stringer (main image); Getty Images/Claudia Dewald (inset)
Permissions researcher: Miriam Allen
Production controller: Julie McArthur
Typeset by: MPS Limited

Any URLs contained in this publication were checked for currency during the production process. Note, however, that the publisher cannot vouch for the ongoing currency of URLs.

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National Library of Australia Cataloguing-in-Publication Data
Webb, Ken, 1952- author.
Russia and the Soviet Union / Ken Webb ; Tony Taylor (series editor).

9780170244107 (paperback)
Nelson modern history.
Includes index.
For secondary school age.

History, Modern.
Russia--History.
Soviet Union--History.

Taylor, Tony, 1943- editor.

947

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South Melbourne, Victoria Australia 3205

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Unit 4B Rosedale Office Park
331 Rosedale Road, Albany, North Shore 0632, NZ

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Printed in China by China Translation & Printing Services.
1 2 3 4 5 6 7 19 18 17 16 15

9780170244107

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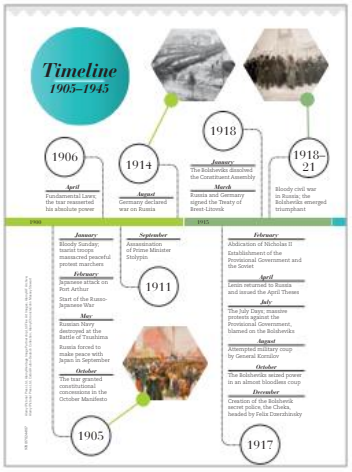
9780170244107

ABOUT THE SERIES

Using *Russia and the Soviet Union*

Russia and the Soviet Union has been developed especially for senior secondary students of History and is part of the Nelson Modern History series. Each book in the series is based on the understanding that History is an interpretive study of the past by which you also come to better appreciate the making of the modern world.

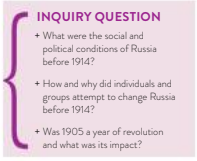
Developing understandings of the past and present in senior History extends the skills you learnt in earlier years. As senior students you will use historical skills, including research, evaluation, synthesis, analysis and communication, and historical concepts, such as evidence, continuity and change, cause and effect, significance, empathy, perspectives and contestability, to understand and interpret societies from the past. The activities and tasks in *Russia and the Soviet Union* have been written to ensure that you develop the skills and attributes you need in senior History subjects.



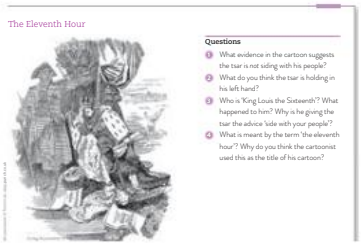
ILLUSTRATED TIMELINE
is a bird's-eye view of the topic and summarises the major developments of the period.

KEY FIGURES AND ORGANISATIONS, KEY TERMS AND CONCEPTS, KEY DOCUMENTS
feature brief biographies, profiles, definitions and summaries of key documents as a ready reference for learning and revision.

CHAPTER INTRODUCTIONS
provide a context to the issues that are addressed.



INQUIRY QUESTIONS
are listed at the start of the chapter. These questions provide a focus for you as you read each chapter.



SOURCE STUDIES
of visual and text primary sources and secondary literature appear frequently through the text and are combined with questions and activities to aid your evaluation and interpretation of evidence from the past.

SIGNIFICANT INDIVIDUALS
are biographical profiles and assessments of key historical figures and frequently include questions and activities.

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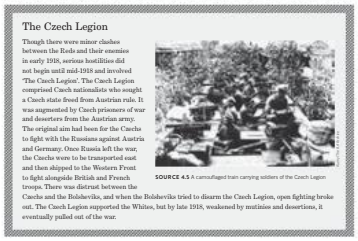
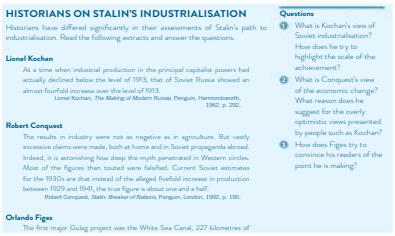

The Czech Legion

Though there were minor clashes between the Reds and their enemies in early 1918, serious hostilities did not begin until mid-1918 and involved 'The Czech Legion'. The Czech Legion comprised Czech nationalists who sought a Czech state freed from Austrian rule. It was augmented by Czech prisoners of war and deserters from the Austrian army. The original aim had been for the Czechs to fight with the Russians against Austria and Germany. Once Russia left the war, the Czechs were to be transported east and then shipped to the Western Front to fight alongside British and French troops. There was distrust between the Czechs and the Bolsheviks, and when the Bolsheviks tried to disarm the Czech Legion, open fighting broke out. The Czech Legion supported the Whites, but by late 1918, weakened by mutinies and desertions, it eventually pulled out of the war.

SOURCE 4.5 A camouflaged train carrying soldiers of the Czech Legion

INFORMATION BOXES

contain extended discussions of key events, concepts and historical developments. Many also include questions and activities.


HISTORIANS ON STALIN'S INDUSTRIALISATION

Historians have differed significantly in their assessments of Stalin's path to industrialisation. Read the following extracts and answer the questions.

Lionel Kochan

As a time when industrial production in the principal capitalist powers had actually declined below the level of 1913, that of Soviet Russia showed an almost fourfold increase over the level of 1913.

Lionel Kochan, *The Making of Modern Russia*, Penguin, Harmondsworth, 1962, p. 292.

Robert Conquest

The results in industry were not as negative as in agriculture. But vastly excessive claims were made, both at home and in Soviet propaganda abroad. Indeed, it is astonishing how deep the myth penetrated in Western circles. Most of the figures then touted were falsified. Current Soviet estimates for the 1930s are that instead of the alleged fivefold increase in production between 1929 and 1941, the true figure is about one and a half.

Robert Conquest, *Stalin: Breaker of Nations*, Penguin, London, 1992, p. 190.

Orlando Figes

The first major Gulag project was the White Sea Canal, 227 kilometres of

Questions

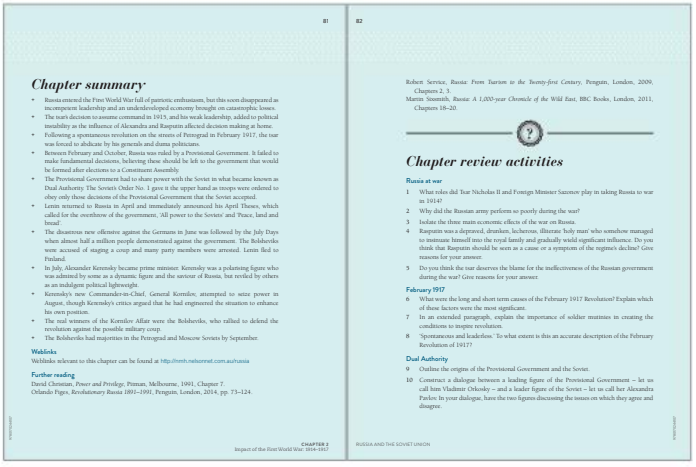
1. What is Kochan's view of Soviet industrialisation? How does he try to highlight the scale of the achievement?
2. What is Conquest's view of the economic change? What reason does he suggest for the overly optimistic views presented by people such as Kochan?
3. How does Figes try to convince his readers of the point he is making?

HISTORIAN BOXES

introduce key historians and schools of interpretation as a way of making historiography clearer.

DIAGRAMS AND TALKING SOURCES

are used to visually summarise complex ideas and events.


Chapter summary

- Russia entered the First World War full of patriotic enthusiasm, but this soon disappeared as incompetent leadership and an underdeveloped economy brought on catastrophic losses.
- The tsar's decision to assume command in 1915, and his weak leadership, added to political instability as the influence of Alexandra and Rasputin affected decision making at home.
- Following a spontaneous revolution on the streets of Petrograd in February 1917, the tsar was forced to abdicate by his generals and duma politicians.
- Between February and October, Russia was ruled by a Provisional Government. It failed to make fundamental decisions, believing these should be left to the government that would be formed after elections to a Constituent Assembly.
- The Provisional Government had to share power with the Soviet in what became known as Dual Authority. The Soviet's Order No. 1 gave it the upper hand as troops were ordered to obey only those decisions of the Provisional Government that the Soviet accepted.
- Lenin returned to Russia in April and immediately announced his April Theses, which called for the overthrow of the government, 'All power to the Soviets' and 'Peace, land and bread'.
- The disastrous new offensive against the Germans in June was followed by the July Days when almost half a million people demonstrated against the government. The Bolsheviks were accused of staging a coup and many party members were arrested. Lenin fled to Finland.
- In July, Alexander Kerensky became prime minister. Kerensky was a polarising figure who was admired by some as a dynamic figure and the saviour of Russia, but reviled by others as an indulgent political lightweight.
- Kerensky's new Commander-in-Chief, General Kornilov, attempted to seize power in August, though Kerensky's critics argued that he had engineered the situation to enhance his own position.
- The real winners of the Kornilov Affair were the Bolsheviks, who rallied to defend the revolution against the possible military coup.
- The Bolsheviks had majorities in the Petrograd and Moscow Soviets by September.

Weblinks

Weblinks relevant to this chapter can be found at http://lmnh.nelsonnet.com.au/russia

Further reading

David Christian, *Power and Privilege*, Pitman, Melbourne, 1991, Chapter 7.
Orlando Figes, *Revolutionary Russia 1891–1991*, Penguin, London, 2014, pp. 73–124.

Chapter review activities

Russia at war

1. What roles did Tsar Nicholas II and Foreign Minister Sazonov play in taking Russia to war in 1914?
2. Why did the Russian army perform so poorly during the war?
3. Isolate the three main economic effects of the war on Russia.
4. Rasputin was a depraved, drunken, lecherous, illiterate 'holy man' who somehow managed to insinuate himself into the royal family and gradually wield significant influence. Do you think that Rasputin should be seen as a cause or a symptom of the regime's decline? Give reasons for your answer.
5. Do you think the tsar deserves the blame for the ineffectiveness of the Russian government during the war? Give reasons for your answer.

February 1917

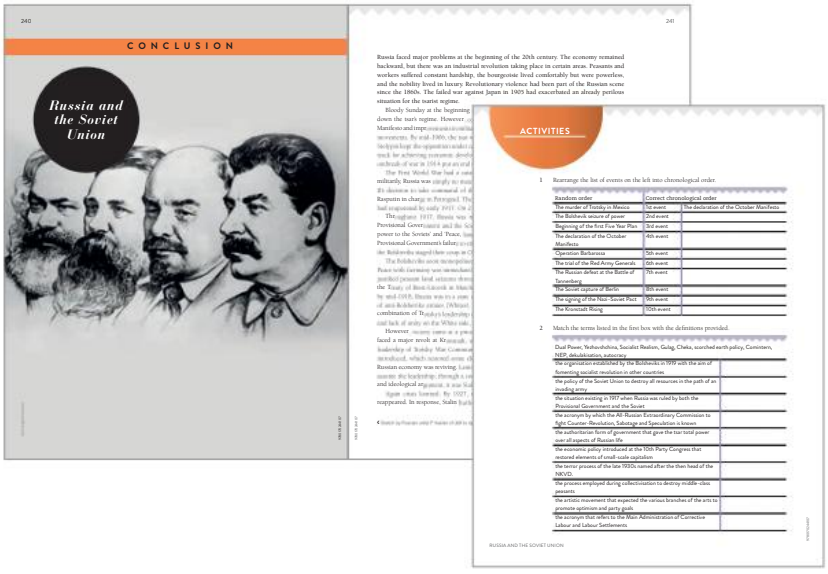
6. What were the long and short term causes of the February 1917 Revolution? Explain which of these factors were the most significant.
7. In an extended paragraph, explain the importance of soldier mutinies in creating the conditions to inspire revolution.
8. 'Spontaneous and leaderless.' To what extent is this an accurate description of the February Revolution of 1917?

Dual Authority

9. Outline the origins of the Provisional Government and the Soviet.
10. Construct a dialogue between a leading figure of the Provisional Government – let us call him Vladimir Orlovsky – and a leader figure of the Soviet – let us call her Alexandra Pavlov. In your dialogue, have the two figures discussing the issues on which they agree and disagree.

CHAPTER SUMMARY AND CHAPTER REVIEW ACTIVITIES

conclude each chapter. They include a brief precis of the topic, suggestions for further reading, and a range of learning activities that consolidate knowledge and understanding of the chapter's content. These tasks incorporate a range of historical understandings and skills.


CONCLUSION

Russia and the Soviet Union

ACTIVITIES

1. Rearrange the list of events on the left into chronological order.

Random order	Correct chronological order	
The murder of Trotsky in Mexico	1st event	The declaration of the October Manifesto
The Bolshevik seizure of power	2nd event	
Beginning of the first Five Year Plan	3rd event	
The declaration of the October Manifesto	4th event	
Operation Barbarossa	5th event	
The trial of the Red Army Generals	6th event	
The Russian defeat at the Battle of Tannenberg	7th event	
The Soviet capture of Berlin	8th event	
The signing of the Non-Soviet Pact	9th event	
The Kronstadt Rising	10th event	

2. Match the terms listed in the first box with the definitions provided.

Dual Power, Yezhovshchina, Socialist Realism, Gulag, Cheka, scorched earth policy, Comintern, NEP, dekulakisation, autocracy

the organisation established by the Bolsheviks in 1919 with the aim of fomenting socialist revolution in other countries	
the policy of the Soviet Union to destroy all resources in the path of an invading army	
the situation existing in 1917 when Russia was ruled by both the Provisional Government and the Soviet	
the acronym by which the All-Russian Extraordinary Commission to fight Counter-Revolution, Sabotage and Speculation is known	
the authoritarian form of government that gave the tsar total power over all aspects of Russian life	
the economic policy introduced at the 10th Party Congress that restored elements of small-scale capitalism	
the terror process of the late 1930s named after the then head of the NKVD.	
the process employed during collectivisation to destroy middle-class peasants	
the artistic movement that expected the various branches of the arts to promote optimism and party goals	
the acronym that refers to the Main Administration of Corrective Labour and Labour Settlements	

THE CONCLUSION

summarises the topic and includes a series of activities to consolidate your knowledge of it. More importantly, these final tasks will help you build an understanding and interpretation of this period in history.

Beyond this book

The Nelson Modern History series includes numerous titles on a range of topics covered in senior History courses around Australia. For further information about the series visit: **www.nelsonsecondary.com.au.**

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SERIES EDITOR ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Studying modern world history is a fascinating and exciting activity for several reasons. The first of these is our closeness to the modern past. All of us who live today are in direct contact with recent and contemporary history. For example, teachers who use this book might have had grandparents who experienced, in different ways, the events of the Second World War. Students who read this book will probably have grandparents who lived through the Swinging Sixties in Australia. Other students who come from more recently arrived migrant families will have stories to tell about significant historical events from their former homelands.

And when it comes to topicality, the study of modern history is also the study of events that directly affect the way we live today. For instance, the work of 18th-century Scottish philosopher Adam Smith is still being used by 21st-century politicians to underpin their economic policies. Further, the activities of feminist and civil rights activists in the 1960s have altered the way the international community and contemporary societies deal with their citizens. And the shadow of two world wars still impinges upon the collective memories of dozens of nations, often leading to confusion between commemoration of the past, celebration of long-ago endeavours and what this book is about, the pursuit of investigative history.

The study of the modern past is exciting too because when it comes to investigating the late 19th, the 20th and the 21st centuries, we can use graphic visual and auditory evidence that brings us close to a fuller realisation of how life was lived then and how the people we are researching looked and sounded. While these new sources of evidence can and do bring a freshness to our understanding of the past, they also demand new techniques of historical investigation.

Finally, the study of modern history, which is, to use historian Pieter Geyl's term, 'an argument without end', is often more intense than other forms of history because of our closeness to the events. This means that, even though conclusions may be passionately expressed, a carefully tempered and dispassionate approach to studying controversial events needs to be employed in the formulation of an historical explanation.

Having said all of that, enjoy your study of modern history.

Tony Taylor
Series editor

9780170244107

AUTHOR ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I am indebted to many people who, over 27 years, have had an influence on my writing. I was fortunate to have inspiring teachers as a school student.

I owe much to my many teaching colleagues at Pymble Ladies' College and Ravenswood, to my friends and colleagues at HSC Marking and in the History Teachers' Association. Their advice, expertise and feedback continue to be invaluable. Thanks to the team at Cengage Learning: Michael Spurr, senior publishing editor, Robyn Beaver, senior editor, and editor Helen Koehne for your confidence and continuing support. Above all, I thank all the students I have taught, who have sustained me in my love of History and teaching.

And a big thank you to my long-suffering wife and family, who over the years have put up with me spending many hours buried in my books.

Ken Webb

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RUSSIA AND THE SOVIET UNION
1905–1945

At the turn of the century, Russia was an autocratic regime, steeped in medieval political and religious thinking. The tsarist regime's refusal to consider constitutional reform led to the rise of various revolutionary groups, and political terrorism was common. Tsar Nicholas II clung to what he believed were his God-given autocratic rights. Economically, Russia was slowly changing from a backward agricultural economy into an industrial one, though it was decades behind the West. Political stubbornness, urban poverty and rural destitution combined to produce a revolutionary cocktail. The humiliation of defeat by Japan provided the spark that led to revolution in 1905.

The regime survived 1905, and during the next few years seemed to be progressing thanks to the reforms of Chief Minister Stolypin. However, the First World War intervened. Incompetent and corrupt military and political leadership, and economic collapse combined to create a situation that forced Tsar Nicholas II to abdicate in February 1917. Between March and November 1917, Russia experienced the Dual Power of the Provisional Government and the Soviet. The Provisional Government was weak, and its disastrous decision to remain in the war meant that it could not prevent the coup of October 1917, which allowed the Bolsheviks, led by Lenin, to seize power.

The Bolshevik hold on power was tenuous, and soon their opponents combined to try and bring down Lenin's government. Russia suffered three years of cruel civil war, with atrocities committed by both sides. By early 1921, the Bolsheviks had emerged victorious, but the country was in chaos, and starvation stalked the land. The introduction of the New Economic Policy (NEP) rescued the economy, and there was a brief economic revival during the 1920s. Lenin's death in 1924 led to a struggle for power, which resulted in Stalin's domination of the party by the late 1920s as he managed to outmanoeuvre the other leading Bolsheviks.

In 1928, Stalin launched the first Five Year Plan, which sought to transform the Soviet Union into a modern power to equal the West. Industrialisation proceeded at breakneck speed; farming was brutally collectivised, and millions died of famine in the Ukraine. The achievements were impressive, but the cost in human suffering was enormous. In order to achieve the nation's goals and to ensure Stalin's absolute unquestioned power, a totalitarian system developed inside the Soviet Union, which led to the spread of terror, public show trials, millions of deaths and tens of millions of people being sent to Gulags. However, on the eve of the Second World War, the Soviet Union had arrived as the world's number-two industrial power.

Though considered irreconcilable enemies, Nazi Germany and Soviet Russia signed their Non-Aggression Pact in August 1939. Having neutralised the threat of possible Soviet action against him, Adolf Hitler now felt confident enough to attack Poland. The two powers remained at peace until the Nazis' invasion of the Soviet Union in June 1941. The Nazis' failure to capture Moscow in late 1941 was crucial as it made possible the survival of the Soviet Union. However, for the next four years, the Soviet Union suffered invasion, occupation and destruction. The turning point in the war came with the Soviet Union's victory at Stalingrad in early 1943. Over the next two years, the Red Army gradually pushed the German forces back towards Berlin. The cost had been horrendous, but in May 1945, the Soviet flag was unfurled over the Reichstag building in Berlin. Victory had been achieved.

❮ Photograph by Sergei Mikhailovich Prokudin-Gorskii of three young women offering berries to visitors to their *izba*, a traditional wooden house, in a rural area near the town of Kirillov, 1909

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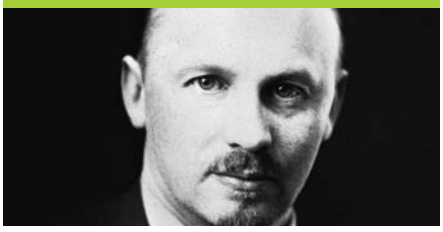
KEY FIGURES AND ORGANISATIONS

TSARINA ALEXANDRA (1872–1918)

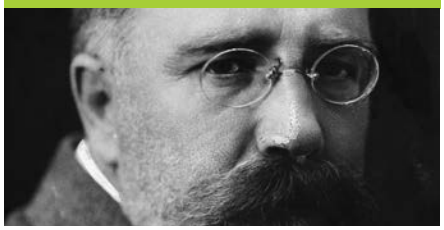
Following her conversion from Lutheranism to Russian Orthodoxy, Alexandra became obsessively religious and came increasingly under the influence of her mystic advisor, Rasputin. She was a devoted, intensely loyal wife, but was able to completely dominate her weak husband, Nicholas. Alexandra's religious fervour and her total commitment to autocracy often led Nicholas to make disastrous decisions.

NIKOLAI BUKHARIN (1888–1938)



Bukharin was a key Bolshevik ideologue and popular party member, closely associated with the party's left wing. A member of the Politburo from 1924, and head of the Comintern from 1926, Bukharin aligned with Stalin in the power struggles of the 1920s. Expelled from the Politburo in 1929, Bukharin was executed in 1938 for counter-revolutionary activities.

LEV KAMENEV (1883–1936)



Kamenev joined the Bolshevik Party in 1903 and was active in the attempted revolution of 1905. He returned from exile in Switzerland after the abdication of the tsar in 1917, becoming a Politburo member in 1918. With Stalin and Zinoviev, he ruled as part of a triumvirate from 1923, but split with Stalin over 'Socialism in One Country'. Kamenev was implicated, without foundation, in Kirov's murder in 1934, and subsequently was found guilty of plotting against Stalin. He was executed in 1936.

ALEXANDER KERENSKY (1881–1970)

Kerensky was a lawyer and member of the Socialist Revolutionary Party. Following the February 1917 Revolution, he became a key figure in the Provisional Government, becoming prime minister in July. Kerensky's government was eventually overthrown by the Bolsheviks in October 1917.

SERGEI KIROV (1886–1934)

Kirov was a Bolshevik who rose through the ranks to become the head of the Leningrad branch of the Communist Party. Some viewed Kirov as a possible alternative to Stalin. He was assassinated in December 1934. Stalin used Kirov's murder as a pretext for launching widespread terror across the country.

ALEXANDRA KOLLONTAI (1872–1952)

Alexandra Kollontai was the Commissar for Social Welfare in the Bolshevik government following the November Revolution. She was a firm advocate for women's equality, and established the *Zhenotdel*, or Women's Department. Her opposition to later party policies led to her being edged out of government and into diplomatic posts.

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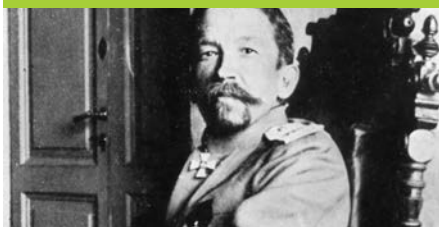
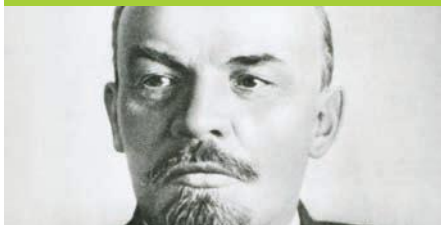
GENERAL LAVR KORNILOV (1870–1918)



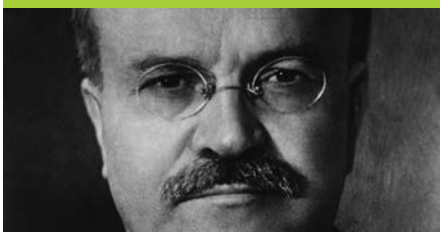
Kornilov was appointed commander-in-chief of Russian forces in August 1917 by Alexander Kerensky. Dissatisfied with Kerensky's conduct of the war, Kornilov attempted a military coup in August/September 1917. He was killed fighting Red forces during the civil war in April 1918.

LENIN (1870–1924)



Vladimir Ilyich Ulyanov, better known as Lenin, was the leader of the Bolshevik Party formed in 1903. Lenin's goal was revolution and the subsequent creation of a Marxist society and the spread of Marxism worldwide. The Bolsheviks seized power in a coup in October 1917. Lenin ruled Russia until his death in 1924.

VYACHESLAV MOLOTOV (1890–1986)

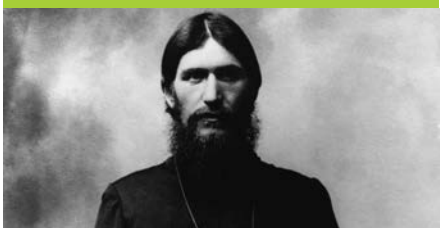


Molotov was Soviet foreign minister from 1939 to 1949, and again from 1953 to 1956. He worked closely with Stalin and was renowned for his diplomatic skills. Molotov signed the Nazi–Soviet Pact of August 1939.

TSAR NICHOLAS II (1868–1918)

Nicholas II ruled Russia from 1894 until his abdication in February 1917. Believing God had placed him on the throne, he sought to maintain autocracy. Though intelligent and eager to fulfil his duty, he proved to be a weak, indecisive leader, easily influenced by his wife Alexandra and Rasputin.

GREGORI RASPUTIN (1869–1916)



Rasputin was a Siberian 'holy man' who became a figure of fascination in St Petersburg high society during the 1900s. He managed to ingratiate himself with the royal family due to his alleged ability to treat the tsarevich's haemophilia. He wielded enormous influence in court and government circles.

STALIN (1878–1953)

Josef Vissarionovich Dzhugashvili, better known as Josef Stalin, was the leader of the Soviet Union from the late 1920s until his death in 1953. As General Secretary from 1922, he outmanoeuvred Trotsky in the struggle for power after Lenin's death. Under Stalin, the Soviet Union became the world's number two superpower. He led his country to victory against Germany during the Second World War.

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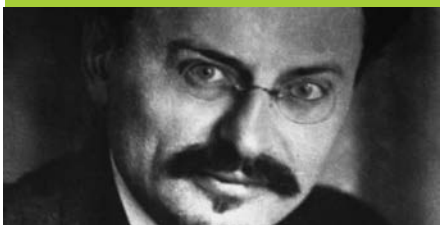
PYOTR STOLYPIN (1862–1911)

Pyotr Stolypin became the tsar's Chief Minister in 1906. He attempted to introduce much-needed reforms, particularly in the area of land ownership, and sought to modernise the economy. However, he also followed a policy of brutal suppression of opponents to the tsarist regime. He was assassinated in 1911.

LEON TROTSKY (1879–1940)

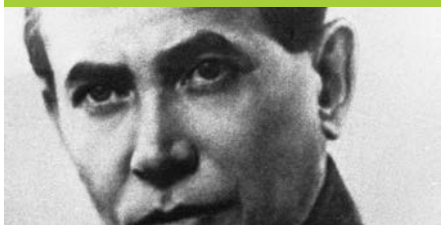


Lev Davidovich Bronstein, better known as Leon Trotsky, joined the Bolsheviks in mid 1917 and was the mastermind behind the October Revolution. He led the Red Army to victory in the civil war. However, he was outmanoeuvred by Stalin in the struggle for power after Lenin's death. Forced into exile in 1929, Trotsky was assassinated on Stalin's orders in Mexico in 1940.

SERGEI WITTE (1849–1915)

Witte's early career was in railway administration. In 1889, he was appointed Director of the Department of Railway Affairs, and became Minister of Finance in 1893. Witte promoted the building of the Trans-Siberian Railway and encouraged Russia's industrial development. He was forced to resign in 1903, but returned to become Chief Minister in 1905, only to be forced to resign again in 1906.

NIKOLAI YEZHOV (1895–1940)



Yezhov was the head of the Soviet secret police, the NKVD, from 1936 to 1938. He coordinated much of the terror inside the country during that time, so much so that the period became known as the Yezhovshchina. He was arrested for anti-Soviet activity, and executed in 1940.

GRIGORY ZINOVIEV (1883–1936)

Zinoviev joined the Bolshevik Party in 1903 and was elected to the central committee in 1907. In 1917, he returned to Russia and was a key opponent of the Provisional Government. After Lenin's death, Zinoviev formed a triumvirate with Stalin and Kamenev. Alongside Kamenev, he was falsely implicated in the murder of Kirov in 1934, tried for treason and executed in 1936.

BOLSHEVIKS

Formed following the split of the Russian Social Democratic Labour Party in 1903, the Bolsheviks, under the leadership of Lenin, believed in a tight-knit, disciplined party dedicated to violent revolution. Following the October Revolution in 1917, the Bolsheviks became the dominant force in Russian politics. In 1918 they changed their name to the All Russian Communist Party.

THE CHEKA

The Cheka was the Bolshevik secret police formed in December 1917 to protect the revolution from its enemies. Headed by Felix Dzerzhinsky, the Cheka was originally seen as a temporary body. However, it became a permanent institution, eventually evolving into the NKVD in 1934.

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DUMA

Duma is the Russian term for parliament. The duma, as a representative national assembly, was established following the announcement of the October Manifesto by the government of Tsar Nicholas II in 1905. Before the February 1917 Revolution, there were four dumas. However, the tsar and his ministers did their best to limit the power and influence of the duma. The Provisional Government created in February 1917 arose from the duma.

GREENS

This term was used for the non-Bolshevik and non-White combatants in the Russian Civil War, and usually referred to ethnic nationalist and peasant groups.

KADETS

The Constitutional Democratic Party, the largest of the liberal political parties, the Kadets were largely middle class, favouring more gradual social and political reforms and the establishment of a constitutional democracy limiting the authoritarian power of the tsar. The Kadets was the first major party to voice opposition to the tsar, and it played a key role in the establishment of the Provisional Government.

KULAKS

The kulaks were the more prosperous peasants who had made gains following the reforms of Stolypin before 1914. Stalin targeted the kulaks during the brutal process of collectivisation, claiming they were class enemies and opposed to the revolution. Under Stalin, many poor peasants also came to be targeted as kulaks.

LIBERALS

Supporters of the general principle of liberalism, such as the rule of law and the formalisation of political and social rights. In the Russian context, this included the Kadets and Octobrists.

MENSHEVIKS

Formed following the split in the Russian Democratic Labour Party in 1903, the Mensheviks advocated an Orthodox Marxist view that recognised the need for a bourgeois revolution before it was possible for a socialist revolution to occur. In 1917 there was considerable cooperation with the Bolsheviks, but ideological tensions continued. The Menshevik party was banned after the failed Kronstadt Uprising in 1921.

OCTOBRISTS

A liberal political group named for its support of the October Manifesto in 1905. Members served in the Provisional Government.

OKHRANA

The secret police service of the tsar.

PETROGRAD SOVIET

The Petrograd Soviet of Workers' and Soldiers' Deputies was established in Petrograd in February 1917 as the peak body of the various workers' and soldiers' committees (Soviets). Initially the Petrograd Soviet's role was the representation and protection of workers' rights, but the emergence of Dual Power structures greatly enhanced its significance during 1917. Although composed of a range of political groups through 1917, the Petrograd Soviet was eventually dominated by the Bolsheviks.

POLITBURO

A truncation of the term Political Bureau, the Politburo was the five-member executive committee of the Communist Party. It was established in 1919, and early members included Lenin, Trotsky, Stalin, Kamenev and Nikolai Krestinsky; later members included Zinoviev.

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PROVISIONAL GOVERNMENT

The interim government established following the abdication of Tsar Nicholas II in March 1917. It was considered provisional because it was envisaged as a temporary governing structure following the dissolution of the tsarist state. Initial leadership came from the Kadets but passed to Kerensky, a member of the Socialist Revolutionary Party. Members of the Menshevik and Bolshevik parties also participated in the Provisional Government. The division of power between the Provisional Government and the Petrograd Soviet greatly weakened its power and authority (see Dual Power).

RUSSIAN SOCIAL DEMOCRATIC LABOUR PARTY (RSDLP)

The Russian Social Democratic Labour Party was formed in 1898 with the aim of bringing about a Marxist revolution in Russia. In 1903 the party split into two rival groups: the Bolsheviks (majority) led by Lenin, and the Mensheviks (minority) led by Martov.

SOCIALIST REVOLUTIONARIES (SRs)

The Socialist Revolutionary Party was established in 1901. Shaped by the ideas of the Populist movement of the late 19th century and Marxism, the SRs were mainly supported by peasants and believed that socialism would be achieved through democratic reform rather than revolution. Kerensky was a Socialist Revolutionary; thus the party played a key role in the Provisional Government. It was the largest socialist group in Russia, but its significance declined following the October Revolution.

SOVIET

The term literally means 'council'.

WHITES

The main anti-Bolshevik forces in the Russian Civil War.

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KEY TERMS AND CONCEPTS

Autocracy
The form of government that existed under the tsars. All power, whether political, military or religious, ultimately lay in the hands of the tsar. Russians were told, and many accepted, that the tsar had been divinely appointed to rule; to oppose the tsar was, in effect, to oppose the will of God. Tsar Nicholas II steadfastly tried to retain his autocratic power in the years before 1917.

Bourgeoisie
Term used in Marxist theory to describe those who own the means of production in a capitalist society. These people might be factory and mine owners, traders, bankers or property owners. Their aim is to maintain their property and make a profit. The term is often loosely used to refer to the middle classes involved in commercial activities, or professional endeavours such as the law.

Collectivisation
As part of the drive towards modernisation, Stalin implemented a policy of collectivisation of agriculture. Private land ownership was to be brought to an end as peasants were driven into large collective or state farms, which it was hoped would lead to more modern farming and higher yields. Collectivisation had the political effect of bringing the countryside fully under the control of the party.

Dual Power
Term used to describe the government of Russia following the 1917 February Revolution. Power was uneasily shared between the Provisional Government that arose from the tsarist duma, and the Petrograd Soviet and local soviets across the country, a product of revolutionary workers and soldiers.

The Great Patriotic War
Term used for the period from the Nazi invasion of the Soviet Union in June 1941 to the capture of Berlin in May 1945. Stalin insisted on this term because he wanted to describe the conflict with Germany not as a war to defend socialism but as a war to defend 'mother Russia'. He believed that the people would be motivated to fight more by patriotism than by ideology.

Gulag
The network of labour camps dotted around the Soviet Union during the Stalinist era. The term refers to the government agency that administered the camps: the Main Administration of Corrective Labour and Labour Settlements. Most of these camps were situated in the most inhospitable regions, such as the Arctic. They originally housed suspected opponents of the regime, but came to also include a wider range of people. Prisoners were forced to work on projects as part of the Five Year Plans.

Industrialisation
With the introduction of the First Five Year Plan in 1928, Stalin pursued a policy of industrialisation, which aimed to modernise the Soviet economy. Industrialisation involved the rapid development of heavy industry such as iron and steel, chemicals, transport, mining and electricity production. The aim was to catch up with Western economies within a decade.

Marxism
The political and economic ideas of Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels. Marxism argues that history is the story of class struggle whereby a capitalist society eventually develops into a socialist, classless society.

New Economic Policy (NEP)
Policy introduced by the Bolshevik government at the Tenth Party Congress in 1921. It brought an end to the policy of War Communism. The NEP saw a return to small-scale capitalism, allowing for some private trade and small-scale private land ownership. The NEP led to a quick revival of the Russian economy.

Proletariat
Term used in Marxist theory to describe those who are wage earners in a capitalist society. The proletariat normally refers to industrial, urban workers who do not own the means of production, or general labourers who are at the mercy of employers. All the proletariat has to sell is its labour. The term is often loosely used to refer to the working class.

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Socialist Realism
The cultural and artistic movement that was promoted strongly during the Stalinist era. All aspects of artistic endeavour were to cease being personal, self-indulgent and 'bourgeois', and instead should aim to serve the state. Art was to be positive, optimistic, laud the achievements of the regime and motivate the people to work towards the achievement of communism.

SOVNARKOM (SNK)
The government of Russia following the October 1917 Revolution. The SNK was the Council of People's Commissars, comprising Bolshevik and some Left Socialist Revolutionary Party members. Lenin was the chairman of SOVNARKOM.

Totalitarianism
A system of political dictatorship with the features of a single ruling party led by a charismatic leader, in which the party seeks to control all aspects of public and private life through the use of and application of state-sanctioned terror.

War Communism
The policy implemented during the civil war by the Bolsheviks that gave the state total control over all aspects of the economy, including industry, transport, trade and agriculture. It was notable for its brutal policies towards the peasants as the government sought to ensure adequate food supplies for the Red Army and urban industrial workers. War Communism brought the country to the brink of total economic collapse, but arguably facilitated the Bolsheviks' victory in the civil war.

Yezhovshchina
Term for the period 1936–38 and derived from the name of Nikolai Yezhov, who was head of the NKVD. While Yezhov controlled the secret police, the party and larger society were subjected to widespread terror and repression, seen most openly in the public show trials during the purges. Yezhov himself became a victim of the terror – he was arrested in 1939 and executed the following year.

St Petersburg working-men's petition to Tsar Nicholas II
In January 1905, a peaceful march of St Petersburg workers and their families, led by an Orthodox priest, Father Gapon, attempted to present a petition to the tsar. Its purpose was to seek the tsar's intervention to improve the lives of his people. The petition called on the tsar to introduce measures to enfranchise the people, reduce poverty and improve people's working conditions. The petition stated that the people had two possible roads to follow: one towards liberty and happiness, the other towards the tomb. The tsar was not in residence at the Winter Palace and was unaware of the protest. The marchers were massacred by tsarist troops.

The October Manifesto
The October Manifesto was announced by the tsar in October 1905 as a response to the revolutionary events of that year. It offered the people a range of limited constitutional rights, and promised the creation of a duma for which there would be free and open elections. This was the first major concession made by the tsar in limiting his autocratic power. However, within a year, many of the promises of the October Manifesto had been significantly watered down.

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Fundamental Laws of April 1906

Once the tsar had regained control of Russia following the 1905 Revolution, he issued a series of Fundamental Laws in April 1906. The essence of these laws was a reassertion of the tsar's unlimited autocratic power. The powers of the duma, which had been created the previous year, were greatly limited.

Order No. 1

In February 1917, more than 600 soldiers and workers formed the Petrograd Soviet of Workers' and Soldiers' Deputies. The Soviet's 'Order No. 1' stated that no military orders given by the Provisional Government were to be accepted unless the Soviet approved them. In addition, Order No. 1 instructed military units to send representatives to attend the Soviet, and stated that all kinds of arms were not to be given to officers, who from now on were not be addressed as 'Your Excellency' or 'Your Honour'.

The April Theses

When Lenin returned to Russia in April 1917, he released his April Theses. These became the policies pursued by the Bolsheviks throughout 1917. The April Theses demanded an end of support for the Provisional Government, 'all power to the Soviets', confiscation of landed estates and the land to be put under the control of the local Soviets, and an immediate end to Russia's involvement in the war with Germany.

On Party Unity

At the time of the Tenth Party Congress, the Bolshevik leadership was facing major opposition from groups within Russian society and within the party. Lenin forced through a resolution called 'On Party Unity' which banned factions and demanded that party members accept decisions made by the party or face expulsion. This ban on 'factions' would later be used by Stalin as he gradually eliminated sources of opposition during his rise to power.

Lenin's last will and testament

Before he died, Lenin dictated his last will and testament. His wife, Krupskaya, released this shortly after his death and it was to cause the party some embarrassment. Lenin commented on each of the leading Bolsheviks, but his most damning criticism was of Stalin. Lenin called for Stalin's removal. Stalin's ability to survive Lenin's will was a significant factor in his eventual rise to undisputed party leader.

The Kirov Decrees

Following the murder of Leningrad Party leader Sergei Kirov in December 1934, Stalin issued a series of decrees in March 1935. The decrees, which became known as the Kirov Decrees, included measures such as reducing the minimum age for the death penalty to 12. Stalin called for collective responsibility and warned people to be on the lookout for enemies of the people. The Kirov Decrees laid the basis for the terror that enveloped the country and the party during the next few years.

The Constitution of 1936

The Soviet Union adopted its first constitution in December 1936. On paper it was an idealistic, democratic document that guaranteed basic human rights such as freedom of religion, voting rights and the right to work. However, Article 126 stated that the Communist Party was to play the leading role in developing the socialist system. The article was to be used to justify the banning of all other political parties.

The Nazi–Soviet Pact

In August 1939, Nazi Germany and the Soviet Union signed a non-aggression pact. This agreement, between two sworn enemies, has been described as one of the most remarkable diplomatic agreements in history. The pact contained a public section and secret protocols, which became known after the war. In essence it gave Hitler the green light to attack Poland without fear of Soviet action; it gave Stalin control of eastern Poland and the Baltic states. It also guaranteed that the Soviet Union would not be attacked by Nazi Germany, at least in the short term.

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CHAPTER ONE

On the eve of war: 1905–1914

At the turn of the 20th century, Russia was a nation of contrasts. Economically, it was stuck in the Middle Ages, yet there were pockets of rapid industrial development that promised a modern, industrial future. Socially, it exhibited many features of the feudal system, yet its middle and working classes were growing. Politically, it clung to autocracy, yet there were stirrings of demand for constitutional, and even revolutionary, change. Urban poverty, rural destitution, growing political violence and tsarist repression were combining to create a situation that would lead to revolution. Russia's disastrous performance in the war with Japan provided the spark for a revolutionary outbreak in 1905. The tsarist regime managed to retain the support of the military and survive the crisis due to a combination of well-timed concessions that split the opposition. Pyotr Stolypin became prime minister in 1906. He realised change was needed, and attempted to introduce reforms designed to drag tsarism into the modern age. At the same time, he was also willing to employ the most repressive of measures to maintain the autocracy. Stolypin was assassinated in 1911, but he had achieved much. The regime had survived the events of 1905, Russia was experiencing economic growth and, arguably, steps were even being made towards a tentative form of constitutionalism.

INQUIRY QUESTION

+ What were the social and political conditions of Russia before 1914?
+ How and why did individuals and groups attempt to change Russia before 1914?
+ Was 1905 a year of revolution and what was its impact?

‹ Tsar Nicholas II of Russia (1868–1918) and his wife Alexandra Feodorovna wearing state robes during a ball at the Winter Palace

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The geographical background

Geography always plays a key role in the history of any nation and this has been especially true in the case of Russia. The most obvious geographical point about Russia at the turn of the 20th century was its size. It covered about 22 400 000 square kilometres, one-sixth of the Earth's surface, and stretched from central Europe to the Pacific, from the Arctic to the edge of British India. Russia comprises a wide variety of environmental zones ranging from the treeless, permafrost areas of tundra in the north, to the semi-arid grassland steppes, to the vast coniferous forests of the taiga. Western Russia consists of vast flat plains. As Russia expanded over the centuries, it developed into a multinational empire. The following factors affected long-term Russian development.

+ Over the centuries, invasion had been easy for groups such as Napoleon's armies in 1812, Hitler's in 1941, and the Scandinavians and Mongols, who established dynasties and ruled various parts of Russia. This long history of invading enemies bred a feeling of insecurity verging on paranoia, which led to the belief that Russia needed strong, centralised rule to protect itself from outside enemies. This is a view that persists even into the 21st century.
+ Russia was a nation that contained about a hundred different ethnic groups that spoke dozens of languages and followed a variety of faiths. This vast land contained Russians, Georgians and Kazakhs, its people spoke Russian, Polish and Uzbek and dozens of other languages, and they worshipped in churches, mosques and synagogues. The only thing that could hold this disparate nation together, it was believed, was strong, centralised leadership.
+ Anarchy and foreign domination had threatened Russia since the 13th century, and the common notion developed that everyone was better off powerless under a strong paternalist government than empowered and fractious. This view is also shared by many in 21st-century Russia.
+ It seemed that a nation as vast as Russia could only be controlled by a strong, centralised power. Perhaps the petty bickering of parliamentary democracy could only be sustained in small, easy-to-govern countries such as Britain and Belgium.

Thus, it could be argued that geography was a key factor in determining the despotic nature of tsarist Russia and the later dictatorial nature of Soviet rule.

Russia's geographical extent had other implications. Russia has vast natural resources. At the turn of the 20th century, these resources were slowly being used to fuel industrial change. There was coal in the Donets Basin of the eastern Ukraine, and oil in the Baku region on the shores of the Caspian Sea. The plains of the Ukraine produced vast amounts of corn. The Russian Empire was rich in mineral deposits including copper, iron ore, gold and nickel. These minerals did much to assist Russia's industrial surge at the turn of the century.

However, size presented problems of transport. Russia was slow to develop modern railway systems. A crucial factor in Russia's defeat at the hands of Britain and France during the Crimean War had been its lack of north–south railway lines. The Trans-Siberian Railway took 25 years to build, between 1891 and 1916. It stretched from Moscow in the west, across southern Siberia to Vladivostok. A Chinese Eastern Railway was also built as part of the Russo-Chinese section of the Trans-Siberian Railway. The railway was only single track and this would cause great difficulties supplying Russian troops during the Russo-Japanese War of 1904–05.

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SOURCE 1.1 The Russian Empire, c.1900. This map illustrates the vastness of the Russian Empire, which extended from central Europe to the Pacific coast.

Society and economy at the turn of the century

According to the census of 1897, the population of Russia was 126 million; by the eve of the First World War, this figure had grown to over 160 million, making Russia the most populated country in Europe. Russian society at the end of the 19th century was still feudal in nature. Western European nations had thrown off the structure of **feudal society** and were evolving into modern capitalist, industrial societies. In this important sense, Russia was possibly a century and a half behind its Western counterparts.

feudal society
In a feudal society, relationships between people are based on ownership of land. A king grants land to a noble who in return offers loyalty and service to the king. A noble grants land to a peasant who in turn offers loyalty to the noble, and carries out labour and other duties for that noble.

SOCIAL STRUCTURE

Russian society displayed the classic characteristics of a pyramidal feudal society. This is illustrated in source 1.2. At the apex of the pyramid was the **tsar**, the royal family and those people who constituted the 'ruling class'. This was an extremely small number of people and made up only about 0.5 per cent of the entire population. This group held the nation's

tsar
Russian word for ruler. The ruling tsarist family between 1613 and 1917 was the Romanov family. Tsarism and tsarist are terms used to refer to the regime of the ruling tsar.

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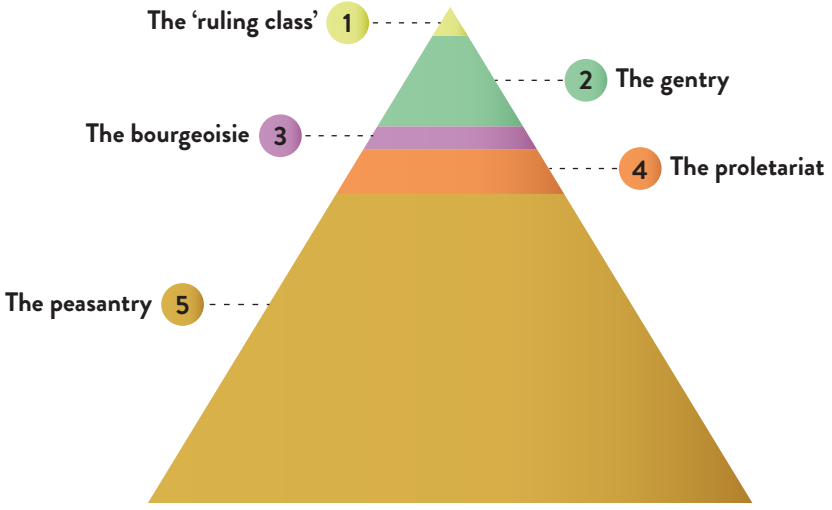
political power in its hands and was committed to maintaining the system and the tsar's position as the divinely appointed ruler of the country. They lived in luxury, isolated from the problems of the rest of the nation.

Below the ruling class was a group that can be loosely referred to as Russia's gentry class. These were noble landlords, the leading figures in the church, the military and the imperial bureaucracy. Like the ruling class, they lived lives of luxury and paid next to no taxation, but they wielded little political power. Figures vary, but this group constituted about 10 per cent of the population.



1 The 'ruling class'
Including the tsar and his family, about 0.5% of the population – rich and powerful

2 The gentry
Comprising the leading landlords, church, military and bureaucratic figures, about 10% of the population – rich but lacking real power

3 The bourgeoisie
Comprising business and educated intellectuals, about 2% of the population – a group of varied wealth but powerless

4 The proletariat
Urban working-class factory and mine workers, about 4% of the population – poor and powerless

5 The peasantry
Living in the countryside and working on the land, making up the vast majority of the population, about 80% to 85% of the population – poor and powerless

SOURCE 1.2 Russian society at the turn of the 20th century was pyramidal in structure. Those positioned higher up the pyramid had easier lives, paid fewer taxes, and had more wealth and influence.

bourgeoisie
French term used by Karl Marx to describe the middle class in a capitalist society. The bourgeoisie comprised those engaged in commerce such as bankers, factory owners and various levels of businessmen. The group also came to include the educated members of society such as lawyers and academics.

proletariat
The term used by Karl Marx to describe the urban, industrial workers of a capitalist society

Russia's middle class, or bourgeoisie, was a disparate group, far smaller than in Western countries. This was the result of the country's limited economic growth and Russia's isolation from the intellectual movements that had had such a profound effect on Western Europe, such as the Enlightenment of the 18th century. Peter the Great and Catherine the Great showed interest in Enlightenment thinking, but this did not filter down to the population at large. Russia's **bourgeoisie** was educated and comfortable, but small and powerless. Similarly, the lack of industrial, urban development meant that Russia's working class, or proletariat, was also few in number. Russia's **proletariat** experienced a squalid, miserable, unhealthy

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existence. They lived in slums far worse than those existing in Dickensian England, and worked in dangerous factories and mines. Together, these two groups constituted perhaps 6 per cent of the population.

By far the biggest social class in Russia was the peasants who made up between 80 and 85 per cent of the population. Traditionally, most of Russia's peasants had been serfs, owned by their feudal lords. 'State peasants' of northern Russia managed to experience a more independent existence. The Emancipation Proclamation delivered by Tsar Alexander II in 1861 gave the serfs their freedom, but the newly freed peasants found themselves in dire economic straits. The land they received was often far less than they needed. Some peasant families were still 'paying for their land' in the form of redemption payments into the 20th century. Most peasants lived lives of unremitting hardship. Life expectancy was limited, famine was frequent, illiteracy was standard, and they were always at the mercy of their 'betters'.

Maksim Petrovich Dmitriev and Sergei Mikhailovich Prokudin-Gorskii

Maksim Petrovich Dmitriev and Sergei Mikhailovich Prokudin-Gorskii were Russian photographers in the late 19th and early 20th centuries. Together their works provide great insight into many aspects of Russian society during the tsarist era.

Pictures from History

SOURCE 1.3 Photograph by Maksim Dmitriev of a village market on the Volga River, c.1897

continued

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Pictures from History

SOURCE 1.4 Photograph by Maksim Dmitriev of tramps in Nizhniy Novgorod, 1897

Pictures from History

SOURCE 1.5 Photograph by Maksim Dmitriev of priests with icons

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Pictures from History

SOURCE 1.6 Photograph by Maksim Dmitriev of Russia's first car

Library of Congress, Prints & Photographs Division, Prokudin-Gorskii Collection, reproduction number: LC-DIG-prokc-21578.

SOURCE 1.7 Photograph by Sergei Prokudin-Gorskii of Dagestani villagers from the area of Gunip, in the Caucasus Mountains, posing in traditional costumes

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Library of Congress, Prints & Photographs Division, Prokudin-Gorskii Collection, reproduction number: LC-DIG-prokc-21578.

SOURCE 1.8 Photograph by Sergei Prokudin-Gorskii of middle-class guests at Ekaterinin Spring spa resort, Georgia, 1907–15

Library of Congress, Prints & Photographs Division, Prokudin-Gorskii Collection, reproduction number: LC-DIG-prokc-20507

SOURCE 1.9 Photograph by Sergei Prokudin-Gorskii of metal workers at the Kasli Iron Works, 1910

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Questions

1. Who were Maksim Petrovich Dmitriev and Sergei Mikhailovich Prokudin-Gorskii and why did they take these photographs?
2. What are the strengths and weaknesses of photographs as forms of historical evidence?
3. Prepare a table that summarises the information conveyed about Russian society in Sources 1.3 to 1.9.

THE ECONOMY

There was a strong correlation between Russia's social structure and its economy. With only 6 per cent of the population comprising the bourgeoisie and the proletariat, it is not surprising that urban, industrial development was so limited in Russia. More than 80 per cent of the population were peasants involved in agriculture. However, despite the emancipation of the serfs in 1861 and later efforts to improve output, Russian agriculture remained backward, inefficient and often operated at a **subsistence** level. As a result, there was very little internal capital available for industrial development. This partly explained the very limited nature of Russian transport infrastructure.

The Russian Minister for Finance from 1893 to 1903, Sergei Witte, tried to stimulate growth and drag the Russian economy into the modern age. He sought foreign investment, especially French, which led to some developments in steel, coal, textiles and education. He also promoted transport development, including the construction of the Trans-Siberian Railway. Witte encouraged **protectionist** policies to shield Russian industry from cheap Western imports. About 95 per cent of Russian exports were primary products, such as corn, while 80 per cent of imports were industrial goods. To stabilise the Russian currency, he placed the rouble on the gold standard in 1897.

subsistence
When production operates at a subsistence level, it means that enough is being produced to just satisfy the needs of the population. There is no surplus, which means trade is limited and internal capital is not available as investment.

protectionism
The policy of imposing high tariffs (taxes) on imports. By making imports more expensive and therefore less attractive, domestic industries are protected from foreign competition, as consumers will prefer to purchase cheaper, domestically produced goods. However, despite Witte's efforts, Russian economic development still lagged well behind the West, as the figures for 1910 in Table 1.1 illustrate.

Sergei Witte (1849–1915)

Sergei Witte was a major figure in the political life of tsarist Russia from the late 1880s to the mid-1900s. Though not always popular with Russia's upper classes, he had a major influence on the development of Russian industry and transport. He negotiated peace with Japan in 1905 and was a major supporter of the October Manifesto.

Alamy/RIA Novosti

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KEY EVENTS IN THE LIFE OF SERGEI WITTE

1849 Born on 29 June in Tiflis (Tbilisi) in Georgia. His father was a nobleman. Witte was closely related to the prestigious Dolgorvki family, a point he often enjoyed making

1870 Finished university and began work in the Odessa Governor's Secretariat

1889 Became Director of the Department of Railway Affairs

1892 Appointed head of the Railway Ministry

1893 Became Minister of Finance. In this capacity, he promoted further railway construction, including the building of the Trans-Siberian Railway and the Chinese Eastern Railway. He supported capitalist methods and was a strong advocate for industrial development. He encouraged foreign investment and protectionist policies to foster Russian industry

1897 Helped stabilise the rouble and placed the Russian currency on the gold standard, which stimulated more foreign investment in the country

1903 Witte had a good relationship with Tsar Alexander III, but not with Nicholas II. Following the financial crisis of 1903, Witte's enemies, such as Interior Minister Vyacheslav von Plehve, conspired to force Witte's resignation

1905 Following Russia's defeat in the Russo-Japanese War, Witte was brought back to negotiate peace with Japan. His success in this won him favour, and the tsar brought him back into government as Chief Minister. Witte was largely instrumental in persuading the tsar to grant the October Manifesto

1906 As the tsar regained control after the failed 1905 Revolution, Witte's enemies gathered again and he was forced to resign in April 1906. He was never again able to exert the great influence he once had

1915 Died on 13 March

TABLE 1.1 Russian industrial output in 1910

Country	Cotton output (kg per head of population)	Pig-iron output (kg per head of population)	Coal output (kg per 1000 persons)	Power (hp per 1000 persons)
Germany	6.8	200	3190	130
Britain	19.8	210	4040	240
Belgium	9.4	250	3270	150
Russia	3.0	31	300	16

A Nove, *An Economic History of the USSR*, Penguin, Harmondsworth, 1972.

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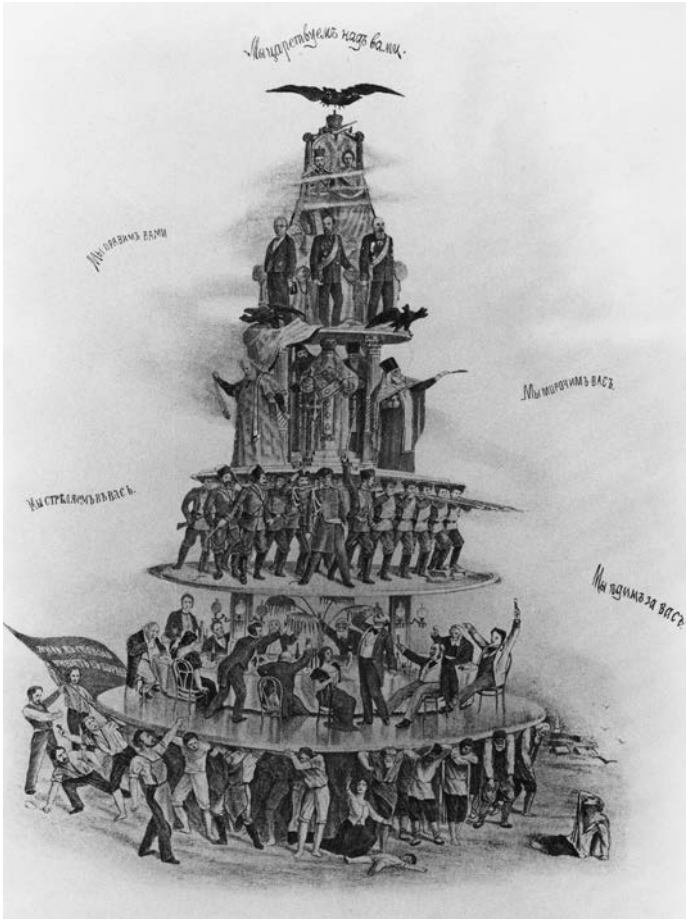
Russian society



akg-images/ullstein bild

SOURCE 1.10 This cartoon is from a flyer distributed by the Union of Russian Socialists in the early 1900s. The captions from top to bottom are: 'We reign over you', 'We rule you', 'We deceive you', 'We shoot you', 'We eat you', 'We work for you' and 'We feed you'.

Questions

1. Identify each of the groups in the cartoon and determine which quote applies best to each group. Explain what the cartoonist is suggesting about their role in Russian society.
2. Was this cartoon produced in support of the Russian social structure in 1900 or as a criticism of it? Give reasons for your answer.
3. Consider the context of this cartoon. What was happening in Russia at the time that might support the ideas presented in this cartoon?
4. Cartoons are often used by historians as primary sources from which they can draw conclusions about past events. Do you think cartoons such as this are reliable sources? In your answer think about the motive and perspective of the cartoonist, the intended audience, the ways in which the cartoonist tries to convey his message, and the context of the times.
5. Political cartoons are often 'satirical' in nature. Research this term and explain what it means.

The system of autocracy

At the turn of the 20th century, Russia had been an autocracy for several hundred years, since the time of the early tsars such as Ivan the Terrible (1547–84) and Peter the Great (1682–1725) to Alexander III (1881–94). In an autocracy, all political power rests in the hands of one person. The tsar of Russia was the head of state, the head of the government and the head of the military. The head of the Orthodox Church was the patriarch, but he was chosen by the tsar, and urged the people to obey the tsar. Ultimately, no decision could be made in Russia without the sanction of the tsar, who ruled by divine right. This was the belief that because he had been placed in his role by God, those who rebelled against him were rebelling against the will of God. The majority of the population were ignorant, illiterate and superstitious peasants, so for the tsars, this was a useful belief to promote.

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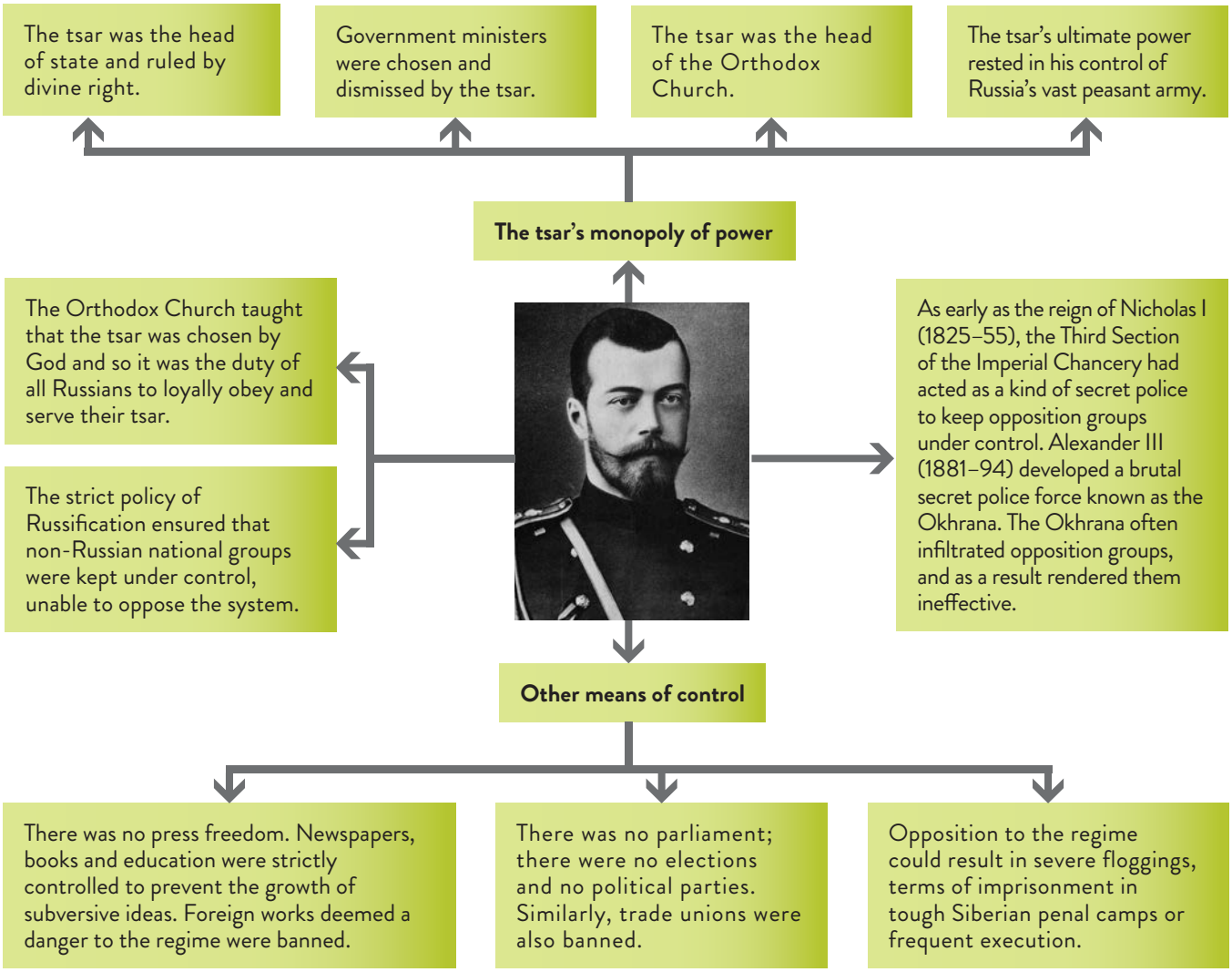
Autocracy did not allow any form of opposition. Source 1.11 summarises the ways in which the autocracy maintained its power.



SOURCE 1.11 The tsarist autocracy. This diagram summarises the extent of the power of the autocracy and how it managed to stifle dissent.

Autocracy was one of the three pillars of the tsarist system. The other two were 'orthodoxy' and 'nationalism'.

+ Orthodoxy refers to the close link between the tsarist state and the Russian Orthodox Church. As the tsar ruled by divine right, he was committed to defending the rights of the Orthodox Church. The church in turn was committed to defending the autocracy. From the Holy Synod, which ran the church, down to the lowly local priests, the word of God taught acceptance of and obedience to the tsarist system. Such was the way to salvation.
+ Nationalism refers to Russian nationalism. Tsarist Russia was a multinational state. To maintain its control, the regime enforced a policy of strict Russification by which all national groups had to learn Russian and operate in the Russian language. Such means were aimed at preventing the rise of any anti-Russian nationalist opposition to the regime.

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Tsar Alexander III, Tsar Nicholas II and the royal family

Alamy/Heritage Image Partnership Ltd

A country as vast, backward and diverse as Russia at the turn of the century needed a tsar who was strong, decisive, and swift to deal with opposition, and whose strength of personality demanded immediate respect and obedience. Alexander III, tsar from 1881 to 1894, was such a man. Alexander III oversaw a regime that hanged opponents and sent thousands to labour camps in Siberia, and whose secret police, the **Okhrana**, kept the lid on all forms of dissent. He was also a bearded giant of a man, blessed with a booming, deep voice. Under Alexander, Russia still had its problems, but the regime was stable and firmly in control of the country.

Okhrana
Tsarist secret police whose purpose was to seek and destroy opposition to the regime

Alexander's son and successor, Nicholas, could not have been more different. Gentle, soft-spoken, diffident and of slight build, Nicholas was a weak, vacillating character, easily influenced by others, most often the last person to whom he had spoken. Those who knew the young tsar shared the view that he was charming, highly educated, intelligent and devoted to his family. Unfortunately, Russia at the turn of the 20th century needed more than a good family man to keep it together.

Alamy/Heritage Image Partnership Ltd

Tsar Nicolas II and the royal family

Alexander died suddenly from **nephritis** at the age of 49. He had expected to rule for many years and had paid little attention to preparing his son for the responsibilities of ruling Russia. Nicholas came to the throne aged 26. On hearing of his father's death he burst into tears, not for his loss of his father, but because of what faced him. He said at the time:

nephritis
Inflammation of the kidneys

> What is going to happen to me … to all of Russia? I am not prepared to be a tsar. I never wanted to become one. I know nothing of the business of ruling, I have no idea of how even to talk to ministers.
>
> Cited in RK Massie, *Nicholas and Alexandra*, World Books, London, 1969, p. 57.

Nicholas II might have made a good constitutional monarch like England's Edward VII. In the English system, the king was a largely ceremonial figure; power was exercised by the prime minister and parliament. Things were made worse by Nicholas' determination to maintain the tsar's absolute autocratic powers. Nicholas had no personal secretariat; he lacked the staff who could have handled the less important aspects of administration. This limited his influence over civil service appointments, and meant there was no buffer to ensure he focused on the key issues, and he had no personal staff to ensure his decisions were followed. The British historian Sarah Badcock comments:

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> A final irony is that the Russian Empire's supreme autocrat took great pride in doing his own filing and letter writing, and personally sealed his own envelopes. Such eccentricities left Nicholas with less time to wield some level of control over the mighty administrative machine, and to direct and implement concerted policy.
>
> Sarah Badcock, 'Autocracy in crisis: Nicholas the last', in Alastair Kocho-Williams (ed), *The Twentieth-Century Russia Reader*, Routledge, Abingdon, 2011, p.13.

Soon after becoming tsar, Nicholas married Princess Alix of Hesse who became Tsarina Alexandra. The couple were genuinely in love, a rare thing for royal marriages at this time, but Alexandra proved to be a disastrous consort. Having converted from her Lutheran faith to Orthodoxy, she became obsessively religious. She convinced Nicholas that it was his duty to maintain the autocracy at all costs. Alexandra also became convinced that the monk Rasputin (see pages 63–65) was capable of stopping the bleeding of her **haemophiliac** son, the tsarevich Alexis. Her devotion to Rasputin would have fatal consequences in the later years of Nicholas' reign. Alexandra's German background made her extremely unpopular during the First World War, with many Russians believing she was little more than a German spy.

haemophilia
An incurable blood-clotting disorder. Sufferers lack certain blood-clotting factors that control a person's bleeding. This means that a slight cut can be potentially fatal.

The British ambassador to St Petersburg at this time was Sir George Buchanan. In 1923 Buchanan wrote:

> The emperor's marriage to Princess Alix of Hesse … was an unfortunate one … A good woman, bent on serving her husband's best interests, she is to prove the chosen instrument of his ruin. Diffident and irresolute, the emperor was bound to fall under the influence of a will stronger than his. It was her blind faith in unbridled aristocracy that was to be his undoing.
>
> George Buchanan, *My Mission to Russia and Other Diplomatic Memories*, Cassell and Co, London, 1923, pp. 73–4.

Questions

1. What was the role of the tsar in Russian society?
2. Write a paragraph describing Tsar Nicholas II.
3. Create a profile of Tsarina Alexandra in the form of a mind map. Include the following information: family background, religious and political beliefs, positive contribution to Nicholas' rule, negative contribution to Nicholas' rule, and some quotes attributed to her.

Revolutionary groups

During the second half of the 19th century there was a significant increase in the number of revolutionary groups and the level of revolutionary violence in Russia. These groups had varied aims but they also had things in common. They shared anger at the injustices of the tsarist system and dissatisfaction over the limited nature of reforms that had been introduced in the 1860s, such as the emancipation of the serfs. The autocracy did not allow for free, peaceful, evolutionary change as was possible in a country such as Britain. In the 19th century, Britain experienced protests and calls for change. However, in Britain these protests could be directed into more peaceful avenues such as parliamentary reform, trades unions, Chartism and the suffragette movement. In Russia, there were no such peaceful avenues.

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Consequently, opposition to the tsarist regime went in a different direction. In Britain, the aim was to change the system; in Russia, the aim was to destroy it. Widespread oppression and the denial of opportunities for peaceful change led many groups to seek extreme, often unrealistic and 'romantic' solutions to Russia's problems. Russia had long experienced peasant revolts, but these events were responses to hardship, not attempts to overthrow the regime. Nineteenth-century revolutionary groups sought to destroy tsarism by means of terrorism. Prominent victims of revolutionary violence included Tsar Alexander II, assassinated in 1881, and the Interior Minister, Vyacheslav von Plehve, assassinated in 1904.

As early as 1820, revolutionary groups appeared, dominated by nobles who had returned to Russia after the Napoleonic Wars. They brought with them new radical ideas that had appeared since the 1789 French Revolution. Such groups included the Union of Salvation and the radical Southern Society. These challenges to tsarist rule culminated in the failed Decembrist Revolt of 1825. Peasant revolts continued to be a feature of Russian life. Dissatisfaction with Alexander II's Emancipation Edict of 1861 led to hundreds of peasant revolts in the 1860s. Peasant revolts were sometimes lengthy and bloody, but lack of leadership and an inability to coordinate revolts across Russia's vast territory meant that the authorities were always able to bring them under control.

However, the activities of various revolutionary groups in the second half of the 19th century troubled the regime most.

+ One of the main revolutionary groups of the 1870s was the Populists, or Narodniks. The Narodniks were an essentially pre-Marxist socialist group that idealised the peasants and believed that they must lead revolution and reform.
    + The Narodniks saw the peasants and the peasant communes as the basis of a socialist society. Future societies would be based on a series of loosely linked peasant communes and working-men's associations. The evils of capitalism would be avoided.
    + They believed that revolution could be achieved by educating the peasants in socialist thinking, so they promoted the idea of 'going to the people'. The peasants remained profoundly suspicious of urban intellectuals and their ideas.
    + The failure of 'going to the people' resulted in the Narodniks turning to violent 'revolutionary populism'. One of the groups that evolved from the Narodniks was the People's Will (the Narodnaya Volya). This group was responsible for the assassination of Tsar Alexander II. The influence of the Narodniks faded over the next few years.
+ By the turn of the century, the most influential revolutionary group was the Socialist Revolutionary Party. It too sought peasant-based socialism and the socialisation of the land, without the need to go through the capitalist stage, unlike Orthodox Marxists. Led by intellectuals, it had strong rural support but was poorly organised. Its key leaders were Victor Chernov, and later Alexander Kerensky, who headed the Provisional Government in Russia from July to October 1917.
+ The Nihilists were a group that argued man should bow to no authority and accept nothing on trust. Their ideas were popularised in the novel *Fathers and Sons* by Ivan Turgenev. This extreme group argued that all society must be destroyed before any improvements were possible.
+ Anarchists sought to overthrow the entire system and replace it with small communities across the country. Led by Bakunin, this group was responsible for assassinations in the late 19th century, though Russian anarchist violence never reached the intensity of its Spanish contemporaries.
+ The revolutionary group that ultimately played the biggest role in Russian history was the Bolshevik Party, which developed out of the Russian Social Democratic Labour Party.

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The Bolsheviks and the Mensheviks

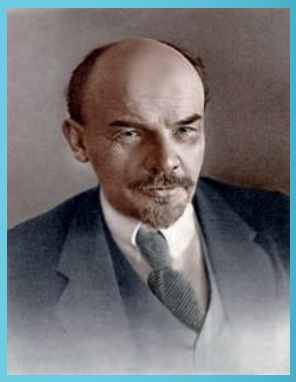
By the 1890s, Marxist ideas were spreading throughout intellectual circles within Russia. Russian Marxist ideas will be considered in more detail in chapter two. The essence of Marxist thinking was as follows:

+ History is the story of class struggle; the exploited in a struggle with the exploiters. For example, in the Feudal Stage, the struggle was between the nobility and the rising bourgeoisie. Having won their struggle, the exploited – the bourgeoisie – became the new exploiters in a struggle with the proletariat, and the next stage of the struggle occurred.
+ The class struggle would end when society had reached the socialist stage. There would be no more classes, there would be no need for a state, and society would be based on the principle of 'from each according to his ability, to each according to his needs'.

Marx had in mind modern capitalist societies such as Britain and Germany, not Russia. However, this did not stop Russian Marxists establishing themselves. In 1898, George Plekhanov established the Russian Social Democratic Labour Party. However, at its Second Congress in London in 1903, the party split into two factions: the Bolsheviks and the Mensheviks. The table below summarises the key differences between the two groups.

Russian Social Democratic Labour Party
Established in 1898
Opposed to revolutionary populism
Ideology was based on Marxism
The party split into two factions at its Second Congress in 1903

The Bolsheviks


Alamy/The Print Collector

Led by Vladimir Ilyich Ulyanov, better known to history as Lenin.

The party should comprise a small number of highly disciplined, dedicated revolutionaries.

The party should be centralised and hierarchical.

The aim was to educate the workers in socialist thinking. The workers would be the vanguard of the revolution, but under the tight leadership of the party.

Russia did not need to have developed a fully fledged capitalist system before socialism could be achieved.

The Mensheviks


Pictures from History

Led by Yuliy Osipovich Tsederbaum, better known to history as Martov.

The party should be broad-based and have a wide membership rather than an exclusive one.

The party should have a democratic structure and encourage debate and argument.

The Mensheviks believed that it would take a long time for the workers to develop a revolutionary consciousness.

It was necessary for capitalism to emerge before Russia could achieve socialism.

SOURCE 1.12 Bolshevik and Menshevik parties

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Questions

1. What is Marxism?
2. What do the words Bolshevik and Menshevik mean in Russian? Why were these terms used to describe the two factions?
3. Why might Lenin and Martov have differed in their beliefs about the path to socialism in Russia?

The Russo–Japanese War: 1904–05

The Russo-Japanese War of 1904–05 had a major impact on the regime of Nicholas II. Not only did defeat at the hands of an Asian nation undermine Russian prestige, but Russia's disastrous performance in the war caused outrage back home and provided the spark that was to fan the flames of revolution. More than 56 000 Russians died in battle or from disease.

Russian eastward expansion had started in the 1560s, but it gained real momentum from the 1860s. Vladivostok was Russia's key Pacific port and was steadily expanded once the eastern Maritime Province had been taken. In 1875, Russia took possession of the island of Sakhalin. Russian influence was increasing in Manchuria, demonstrated by the additions made to the Trans-Siberian Railway. In 1898 Russia annexed the Liaodong Peninsula, and following the Boxer Rebellion in China in 1900, a large number of Russian troops remained in Manchuria.

Japan also had expansionist ambitions. The country had been transformed into a major industrial and military power since the Meiji Restoration of 1868. Economic and demographic pressures dictated an expansionist foreign policy, and nationalist forces inside the country were demanding a showdown with Russia as Japan sought to increase its own influence in Manchuria and Korea. Its confidence was boosted by the alliance made with Britain in 1902, and Japan felt confident enough to attack its giant neighbour in February 1904.

SOURCE 1.13 The extent of Russian military defeat and eventual territorial losses as a result of the Russo-Japanese War

The war finally came to an end following the intervention of US President Theodore Roosevelt. Japan and Russia signed the Treaty of Portsmouth. Japan gained Port Arthur, the Liaodong Peninsula, the South Manchurian Railway and the southern half of the island of Sakhalin.

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Bridgeman Images/De Agostini Picture Library/M. Seemuller

SOURCE 1.14 Japanese artwork depicting Japan's victory at Tesiu during the Russo-Japanese war, 1904

The Russian calendar

From the time of Julius Caesar in the mid-1st century BC, the calendar used by the Roman Empire and the later Christian churches was known as the Julian Calendar. However, the Julian Calendar contained an error of one day every 128 years. This meant the solar year shifted backwards with respect to the calendar.

To correct the error, the Julian Calendar was replaced by the Gregorian Calendar in 1582, named after Pope Gregory XIII. Ten days were dropped in October 1582. New rules for determining the date of Easter and leap years were introduced. This change was adopted by most Catholic nations in the 16th century. Protestant nations followed later. In countries that followed the Orthodox Christian tradition, the Gregorian calendar was not adopted until the 20th century. This meant that by 1900, Russia's calendar was 13 days behind that of the West. Thus, when it was 2 March in St Petersburg, it was 15 March in London.

This is why there is confusion over the two revolutions of 1917.

+ To the people of Russia, the first revolution was the February Revolution, while to the people in the West it was the March Revolution.
+ The second revolution of 1917 was the October Revolution for the Russian people, and the November Revolution to people in the west.

The calendar issue was resolved in January 1918 when the Bolshevik government decided that 31 January that year would be followed by 14 February, thus bringing the country in line with Western Europe.

For the purposes of this book, all dates before 1918 are based on the Julian/Russian calendar.

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THE RUSSO–JAPANESE WAR

1904	**FEBRUARY**	Japanese naval forces attacked the Russian naval base of Port Arthur
	APRIL	Russian troops defeated at the Yalu River
	JUNE	Russian army defeated at the Battle of Telissu
	SEPTEMBER	Japanese achieved victory at the Battle of Laioyang
	OCTOBER	Both sides sustained heavy losses in the inconclusive Battle of Shahe
1905	**JANUARY**	Port Arthur fell to Japan after a 10-month siege
	MARCH	A 320 000-strong Russian army defeated at Mukden
	MAY	Russian Baltic fleet annihilated within an hour at the Battle of Tsushima

1905: A Revolution?

During the 1890s, Russia had suffered a major economic depression and several famines. Thousands were moving to the cities to seek work and shelter, which merely exacerbated shortages of food, jobs and housing in the cities. Russia's recent rapid industrialisation was causing far more exploitation and worse privation for the urban proletariat than British workers had experienced in the previous century. The future Soviet leader, Stalin, wrote in 1901:

> Wages are being reduced and bonuses taken away. Hours of work are being extended. Workers who make trouble are being blacklisted. The system of fines and beating up is in full swing.
>
> Cited in Tony Downey, *The USSR*, Oxford University Press, Oxford, 1989, p. 4.

In the countryside, the peasants remained destitute. Peasant revolts broke out in 1902 and a series of poor harvests provoked arson attacks and attempted land seizures.

The tsar's total refusal to compromise on his autocratic powers frustrated moderates and groups such as the Constitutional Democrats (Cadets), formed in 1905, who sought an English, parliamentary-style system of government. It also fuelled further revolutionary violence. The Socialist Revolutionaries (SRs) assassinated two Russian interior ministers, one in 1902 and again in 1904. Following the murder of Interior Minister von Plehve in 1904, the SRs issued a statement that included the following:

> Von Plehve has paid with his life for the hunger, the misery, the robbery, the torture, the groans and the deaths of millions of working people. Von Plehve was one of the pillars that held up the wall of autocracy, a wall that blocked the people's path to freedom and happiness. If you chop down the pillars, the wall will fall.
>
> Translated by Dr Francis King, www.korolevperevody.co.uk/korolev/srs-plehve.html.

By the end of 1904, Russia was in turmoil. With a foundering economy and harvest failures, food prices skyrocketed while the level of real wages fell 25 per cent. As the situation inside Russia steadily deteriorated, thousands of men were being sent to the Far East to fight in the war with Japan. Nicholas had been keen to avoid conflict with Japan, but his finance minister, Sergei

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Witte, had been equally keen to promote an aggressive economic policy in the east. Nicholas' Minister of War, General Kuropatkin, argued that a brief glorious war against Japan would boost national pride and ease the pressure on the government in a time of crisis.

At first there was general patriotic enthusiasm for the war as the first men marched off. However, the incompetence and total inadequacy of Russian military leadership, combined with the government's inability to properly supply its troops, led to a series of major defeats. Disillusionment, demoralisation and widespread anger quickly dominated the national mood as Russian forces suffered humiliation after humiliation. Russia's backwardness was fully revealed in the face of Japan's modern technological superiority. One Russian soldier lamented at the time: 'The Japanese are giving it to us with shells; we're giving it to them with **icons**'.

icon
A small representation or picture of a sacred person, such as a saint. Icons are venerated in the Orthodox Church. Troops going off to the war were given icons in the belief that the saints would protect them.

Events in St Petersburg began to boil over. Several men had been sacked from the city's giant Putilov Steel Works; soon thousands of workers went on strike in support of their dismissed colleagues. By early January, there were about 120 000 workers on strike. On 9 January, a protest march of more than 100 000 people – men, women and children – began walking to the tsar's Winter Palace. This was a peaceful march, led by an Orthodox priest, Father Georgi Gapon, who carried a petition outlining the people's grievances, which he hoped to present to the tsar. This was not a revolutionary event. The marchers sang hymns and the national anthem, and they carried pictures of the tsar and tsarina. Religious icons and crosses were very much in evidence.

As the marchers approached the Winter Palace, they were ordered to turn back by troops guarding the palace. There was panic among the ranks of the police and troops, and someone fired into the crowd. Mayhem followed as more shots were fired. Modern estimates suggest that about 200 people were killed and about 800 wounded. There were further deaths when other marchers approached the Nevsky Prospekt that led to the Palace Square. The events of 9 January 1905 became known as 'Bloody Sunday'.

The tsar was not in the Winter Palace to receive the marchers and certainly did not give the order to fire on them. However, as is often the case, in history it is not the truth that counts but what people think is the truth. Nicholas was blamed for this massacre of innocent, working Russian people; overnight he had changed from being Nicholas 'the little father' to Nicholas 'the bloody murderer'. Bloody Sunday and continuing disasters in the war with Japan fuelled revolutionary action, and within months the country was spiralling out of control. By mid-1905 the tsarist regime's existence was under serious threat.

TABLE 1.2 1905 Revolution

Month	Actions	Importance
January	Massive strikes in St Petersburg, which begin to spread to other centres. The events of Bloody Sunday	Bloody Sunday destroys Nicholas' reputation, from which he never recovers. The trust that had existed between tsar and his people is discredited.
February	Widespread peasant revolts begin to occur across the country. The strike movement spreads to the Caucasus in the south. Grand Duke Sergei Alexandrovich is murdered by an SR assassin.	The regime seems to be losing control.

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Month	Actions	Importance
March	The Battle of Mukden The strike movement spreads beyond the Ural Mountains and towards Siberia.	Russian forces are decisively beaten by the Japanese in arguably the greatest battle in history up to this point, in terms of the number of men involved.
April	The first ever National Congress of Zemstvos (local government councils formed in 1864) in November 1904 calls for a constitution, a legislative assembly and civil rights. These demands are increasingly taken up across the country.	Demands for a lessening of the tsar's autocratic powers increase. The reasonable demands of the National Congress of Zemstvos develop a revolutionary feel about them.
May	The Battle of Tsushima	Further humiliation is heaped upon Russia when the Baltic fleet is destroyed by the Japanese navy after taking eight months to reach the Far East.
June	On 27 June, sailors on the Battleship Potemkin mutiny, killing several of their officers. Flying a red flag, the sailors take the ship to Odessa, arriving on 29 June. Major clashes between troops and demonstrators in Odessa lead to the deaths of hundreds. The Potemkin eventually reaches Constanza in Romania. The Romanian authorities refuse to help the mutineers.	As popular support for the tsar evaporates, the only thing that keeps the regime alive is the loyalty of its armed forces. As the war worsens, the mutiny on the Potemkin suggests that the support of the armed forces for the regime may not be guaranteed.
July	Pro-tsarist forces in the Ukraine launch pogroms against Jews. Pogroms, officially sanctioned attacks on Jews and their property, were common occurrences in late-19th-century Russia.	The tsarist regime takes no action to stop this.
August	First Conference of the Peasants Union. First Congress of the Muslim Union.	Regional groups appear demanding autonomy. The territorial integrity of the empire is threatened.
September	Russia and Japan sign The Treaty of Portsmouth (New Hampshire). Russia's first general strike occurs in Moscow.	The war is brought to an end. Having been defeated by an Asian power, the humiliation of Russia is complete.
October	Mammoth strikes spread in Moscow, St Petersburg and other major centres. The tsar issues the October Manifesto. The St Petersburg Soviet of Workers' Deputies is formed. Mutinies occur in the Kronstadt Naval Base and in Vladivostok.	The October Manifesto offers the people a parliament (Duma) and a limitation of the tsar's autocratic rule. It is the first crack in the powers of the autocracy. However, it also divides the opposition forces, giving middle-class opponents of the regime what they had been demanding. Despite the appearance of the Moscow Soviet, the revolution is now losing momentum.

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Month	Actions	Importance
November	Strikes and peasant actions continue but the regime is beginning to regain control of the situation.	Revolutionary leaders begin to be rounded up and the government tightens laws on censorship.
December	Trotsky is elected chairman of the St Petersburg Soviet, but he is arrested within a week, along with many other Soviet members. A strike staged by the Moscow Soviet is totally crushed by troops loyal to the regime. The army sweeps across the country destroying remaining pockets of revolt.	By now the tsar's government has brought the troops home from the Far East. Pay and conditions are improved. In effect, the regime has bought the loyalty of its military forces. The police and army neutralise remaining pockets of revolutionary action. The revolution is over. The tsar has survived.

The January 1905 Workers' Petition prepared for presentation to Tsar Nicholas II

What became 'Bloody Sunday' began as a peaceful march led by Orthodox priest Father Georgi Gapon. Believing the tsar to be staying at the Winter Palace, Father Gapon's aim was to present a petition to the tsar as a desperate attempt to achieve peaceful change in Russia. This following document includes extracts from this petition to Tsar Nicholas II.

Sovereign!

We, workers and inhabitants of the city of St. Petersburg, members of various *sosloviia* (estates of the realm), our wives, children, and helpless old parents, have come to you, Sovereign, to seek justice and protection ...

... Sovereign, there are thousands of us here; outwardly we are human beings, but in reality neither we nor the Russian people as a whole are provided with any human rights, even the right to speak, to think, to assemble, to discuss our needs, or to take measure to improve our conditions. They have enslaved us and they did so under the protection of your officials, with their aid and with their cooperation. They imprison and send into exile any one of us who has the courage to speak on behalf of the interests of the working class and of the people. They punish us for a good heart and a responsive spirit as if for a crime. To pity a down-trodden and tormented person with no rights is to commit a grave crime ...

... Sovereign, examine our requests attentively and without any anger; they incline not to evil, but to the good, both for us and for you ... We need popular representation; it is necessary for the people to help itself and to administer itself. After all, only the people know its real needs ... Let the capitalist be there, and the worker, and the bureaucrat, and the priest, and the doctor and the teacher. Let everyone, whoever they are, elect their representatives. Let everyone be free and equal in his voting rights, and to that end order that elections to the Constituent Assembly be conducted under universal, secret and equal suffrage ...

The following are necessary:

A Measures against the ignorance of the Russian people and against its lack of rights

1 Immediate freedom and return home for all those who have suffered for their political and religious convictions, for strike activity, and for peasant disorders.

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2 Immediate proclamation of the freedom and inviolability of the person, of freedom of speech and of the press, of freedom of assembly, and of freedom of conscience in matters of religion.
3 Universal and compulsory public education at state expense.
4 Accountability of government ministers to the people and a guarantee of lawful administration.
5 Equality of all before the law without exception.
6 Separation of church and state.

B Measures against the poverty of the people

1 Abolition of indirect taxes and their replacement by a direct, progressive income tax.
2 Abolition of redemption payments, cheap credit, and the gradual transfer of land to the people.
3 Naval Ministry contracts should be filled in Russia, not abroad.
4 Termination of the war according to the will of the people.

C Measures against the oppression of labour by capital

1 Abolition of the office of factory inspector.
2 Establishment in factories and plants of permanent commissions elected by the workers, which jointly with the administration are to investigate all complaints coming from individual workers. A worker cannot be fired except by a resolution of this commission.
3 Freedom for producer–consumer cooperatives and workers' trade unions, at once.
4 An eight-hour working day and regulation of overtime work.
5 Freedom for labour to struggle with capital, at once.
6 Wage regulation, at once.
7 Guaranteed participation of representatives of the working classes in drafting a law on state insurance for workers, at once.

These, sovereign, are our main needs, about which we have come to you ... Give the order, swear to meet these needs, and you will make Russia both happy and glorious, and your name will be fixed in our hearts and the hearts of our posterity for all time. But if you do not give the order, if you do not respond to our prayer, then we shall die here, on this square, in front of your palace. We have nowhere else to go and no reason to. There are only two roads for us, one to freedom and happiness, the other to the grave. Let our lives be sacrificed for suffering Russia. We do not regret that sacrifice, we embrace it eagerly.

Georgi Gapon, priest

Ivan Vasimov, worker

Translation from Dansk Institut for Internationale Studier, www.folkedrab.dk/sw53689.asp?usepf=true.

Questions

1. Examine the demands presented in the petition. List the people's grievances.
2. Using single words or brief phrases, what do the petitioners seek?
3. What is the tone of the document? Do you think this is a revolutionary document? Give reasons.
4. What does the tone of the document suggest about the relationship between the tsar and the people?
5. What chance do you think the petitioners had of realising their aims? Give reasons.

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Alamy/Chronicle/John Massey Stewart

SOURCE 1.15 Painting depicting the Bloody Sunday Massacre, St Petersburg, January 1905, artist unknown

Bloody Sunday

Bloody Sunday was an event of major importance for the tsarist regime. It proved to be the spark that fuelled the flames of the revolution that almost toppled the regime. In the longer term, it destroyed the trust and affection that had previously existed between the tsar and his people. Many versions of the events of Bloody Sunday were produced over time. Examine the four accounts presented here and then answer the questions that follow.

Account 1: *New York Times* editorial, 23 January 1905, the day after Bloody Sunday

We need not enlarge upon the awful scenes which were enacted, and which, according to the latest telegrams, are still being enacted in the capital of Russia. It is enough to say that the victims were numbered by thousands – 2000 killed and 5000 wounded seems to be the most generally accepted total – and that these consisted of men, women, and children – even babes in arms.

The troops (doubtless carefully selected) did their butcher's work, for the most part, without reluctance at first: and, when once the blood gets into men's eyes, appetite grows with what it feeds on, so that obedience seems to have developed into alacrity ...

What will be the outcome of the day of blood which St Petersburg has just gone through there is no man may dare to say. But this at least is certain, that among the dying people there died a great idea – the

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people's idea of their Tsar. That sacred image has been broken by the fire of Vladimir's savage soldiery. The Tsar has shattered his own icon.

New York Times, 23 January 1905.

Account 2: Father Georgi Gapon's eyewitness account, written later in 1905

Vasiliev, with whom I was walking hand in hand, suddenly left hold of my arm and sank upon the snow ... A little boy of ten years, who was carrying a church lantern, fell pierced by a bullet, but still held the lantern tightly and tried to rise again, when another shot struck him down. Both the smiths who had guarded me were killed, as well as all those who were carrying the icons and banners; and all these emblems now lay scattered on the snow. The soldiers were actually shooting into the courtyards of the adjoining houses, where the crowd tried to find refuge and, as I learned afterwards, bullets even struck persons inside, through the windows ... Horror crept into my heart. The thought flashed through my mind, 'And this is the work of our Little Father, the Tsar'.

Cited at http://alphahistory.com/russianrevolution/eyewitness-account-of-bloody-sunday-1905/.

Account 3: US Ambassador Robert McCormick's account of Bloody Sunday, written on 31 January 1905 for US Secretary of State John Hay

It is now clear to every impartial observer that the [trust] ... of the working men had been worked upon by a group of socialists with Father Gapon, now raised by this press to the position of a demi-god – a sort of Second Saviour – at its head, although he has to his record the violation of a young girl of 12 years of age ... The correspondent of the 'Standard', who had an interview with this renegade priest, has told me that he was a thorough-paced revolutionist, and that he had utterly deceived the working men into the belief that his sole purpose was to aid them to better their condition ...

Moreover, my private secretary stood for some time on the Place behind the troops and saw the officers moving along the front of the crowd and begging the people to disperse ... The troopers, too, guarding the streets leading towards the Place, were invariably polite in their [warnings] ... to the crowd to move on and in refusing them passage through the streets ...

The events of Sunday January 9th weakened, if it did not shatter, that unswerving loyalty and deep seated reverence which has characterized the subjects of The Czar of All the Russias.

Cited in M Bucklow and G Russell, *Russia: Why Revolution?*, Longman, Hawthorn, 1976, pp. 86, 88.

Account 4: Official St Petersburg police report of Bloody Sunday, 1905

Incited by the priest Gapon (and members of the St Petersburg Society of Factory and Mill Workers), the workers of the Putilov factory stopped work on January 2 ...

The fanatical preaching of the priest Gapon, forgetful of the sanctity of his calling, and the criminal agitation of persons of evil intent, excited the workers to such an extent that on January 9 they began heading in great throngs toward the centre of the city. In some places bloody clashes took place between them and the troops, in consequence of the stubborn refusal of the crowd to obey the command to disperse, and sometimes even in consequence of attacks upon the troops ... The number of victims proved to be, by accurate count: 96 dead and 333 wounded.

Cited in M Morcombe and M Fielding, *Russia in Revolution*, McGraw-Hill, Sydney, 1998, p. 46.

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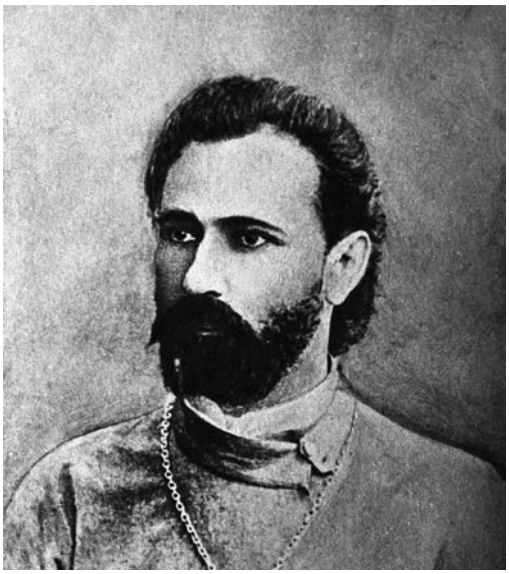
Questions

1. In what ways do the various accounts of Bloody Sunday agree with each other?
2. In what ways do they differ?
3. Using the evidence provided in the four accounts write a summary of the events of Bloody Sunday.
4. Each account contains a degree of bias. In each case, identify the bias, show how the writer is trying to manipulate the reader, and explain why you think this is being done.
5. What do the events of Bloody Sunday and the differing versions produced about it tell us about the study of history?

agent provocateur
A person employed by the government to encourage others to break the law so that they can be arrested



Alamy/RIA Novosti

SOURCE 1.16 Father Georgi Gapon led the demonstration by workers and their families on Bloody Sunday. After the massacre, Gapon fled Russia to return in late 1905. Gapon was murdered by Socialist Revolutionaries in March 1906 after it was discovered that he was spying for tsarist authorities

The fate of Father Gapon

It would appear that Father Georgi Gapon, who led the protest march on Bloody Sunday, was not everything that he seemed. Gapon was playing a double game. He had dealings with the tsarist secret police and regularly reported to them about the activities of the trade union movement that he had helped to found. The Socialist Revolutionaries believed that Gapon was an **agent provocateur** who deliberately stirred things up to ensnare opponents of the regime. In his memoirs, Count Witte states that Gapon had been used by the government to gain the people's confidence, but that he himself had 'become infected with the revolutionary spirit'. After Bloody Sunday, Gapon fled to Geneva and then London. He returned to Russia in 1906 and tried to persuade the leaders of the SRs to work with him and his police contacts, claiming that he was not a traitor. The SRs did not believe him. He was 'tried' by them, condemned and hanged.

The Potemkin

In June 1905, sailors on the Russian battleship *Prince Potemkin* mutinied while at sea. The mutiny began after a sailor named Valenchuk, elected by the crew to represent them in their complaints about poor food and drinking water, was shot by a senior officer. The crew then seized control of the ship, killing the captain and seven officers. Hoisting the red flag of the socialists, the crew sailed the ship to the Black Sea port of

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Odessa, which was in a state of political unrest – there had been strikes and clashes between demonstrators and tsarist authorities in the preceding two weeks. The mutineers were well received by Odessa locals, but the escalation in violence led to the declaration of martial law. When tsarist forces fired on the protesting crowd in the associated chaos, as many as 2000 people are believed to have been killed.

The crew of the *Prince Potemkin* did nothing to support the locals and left Odessa with the aim of encouraging other ships on the Black Sea to mutiny. They failed to achieve their goal and surrendered their ship to Romanian authorities, who returned the vessel to the Russians.

Questions

1. What is significant about the timing of the *Prince Potemkin* mutiny?
2. Why would the crew have elected a representative and flown the red flag?
3. Why would demonstrators in Odessa have welcomed the crew?

The Eleventh Hour

THE ELEVENTH HOUR.

Shade of King Louis the Sixteenth (*to the Czar*). "SIDE WITH YOUR PEOPLE, SIRE, WHILE THERE IS YET TIME. *I* WAS TOO LATE!"

Questions

1. What evidence in the cartoon suggests the tsar is *not* siding with his people?
2. What do you think the tsar is holding in his left hand?
3. Who is 'King Louis the Sixteenth'? What happened to him? Why is he giving the tsar the advice 'side with your people'?
4. What is meant by the term 'the eleventh hour'? Why do you think the cartoonist used this as the title of his cartoon?

SOURCE 1.17 Cartoon published in *Punch* magazine, London, 15 November 1905

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WHY DID THE 1905 REVOLUTION FAIL?

The Bolshevik leader Lenin later called 1905 'the great dress rehearsal'. However, though the regime was in serious difficulty mid-year, it regained the advantage and by the beginning of 1906 the tsarist authorities were once again in control, although peasant revolts continued for some time. Several factors help explain this turnaround.

+ 'Divide and rule' has long been the practice of a successful political leader. The granting of the October Manifesto split the opposition. Though the tsar would later renege on many of the Manifesto's promises, it was well received by the more moderate elements in the country. Middle-class people had been calling for a British-style constitutional monarchy, and the Manifesto seemed to give it to them. In effect, the October Manifesto divided the opposition to the tsar and took the wind out of the sails of the revolution.
+ Those who supported the October Manifesto, and insisted that the tsar should go no further, were called Octobrists. Those who wanted a British-style constitutional monarchy were called the Kadets.
+ Peasant violence was significant in 1905, but the vastness of Russia, poor communications and the illiteracy of many of Russia's peasants made coordinated revolutionary action next to impossible.
+ The revolution lacked clear leadership. The tsar's opponents ranged from moderate liberals, such as the Octobrists seeking a British-style constitutional system, to revolutionary SRs. The spontaneity and diffuseness of revolutionary action meant that a clear revolutionary program never really existed.
+ A major cause of discontent had been the disastrous war with Japan. Once peace had been achieved and the troops were returning home, revolutionary momentum began to lessen.
+ However, arguably the most important factor that kept the tsar in power was that he was able to maintain the loyalty of the armed forces (which he would not be able to do in February 1917). Ultimately, any regime's survival rests on the support of the army. The future Chinese Communist leader Mao Zedong later summed this up well when he stated: 'Political power grows out of the barrel of a gun'. Though there were mutinies, such as that of the *Potemkin*, they were not coordinated. The end of the war with Japan, measures to ensure back pay, improved wages and better conditions all combined to keep the military on the side of the tsarist regime. By the end of the year, the military was able to mop up the final pockets of revolutionary action. The tsar had survived.

The October Manifesto

On 17 October 1905, the tsar issued the manifesto titled 'On the improvement of Order in the State', which, because of its date, is generally called the October Manifesto. The manifesto was the tsar's response to the widespread unrest throughout Russia during that year.

> The disturbances and unrest in St Petersburg, Moscow and in many other parts of our Empire have filled Our heart with great and profound sorrow. The welfare of the Russian Sovereign and His people is inseparable and national sorrow is His too. The present disturbances could give rise to national instability

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and present a threat to the unity of Our State. The oath which We took as Tsar compels Us to use all Our strength, intelligence and power to put a speedy end to this unrest which is so dangerous for the State. The relevant authorities have been ordered to take measures to deal with direct outbreaks of disorder and violence and to protect people who only want to go about their daily business in peace. However, in view of the need to speedily implement earlier measures to pacify the country, we have decided that the work of the government must be unified. We have therefore ordered the government to take the following measures in fulfilment of our unbending will:

1 Fundamental civil freedoms will be granted to the population, including real personal inviolability, freedom of conscience, speech, assembly and association.

2 Participation in the Duma will be granted to those classes of the population which are at present deprived of voting powers, insofar as is possible in the short period before the convocation of the Duma, and this will lead to the development of a universal franchise. There will be no delay to the Duma elect already been organised.

3 It is established as an unshakeable rule that no law can come into force without its approval by the State Duma, and representatives of the people will be given the opportunity to take real part in the supervision of the legality of government bodies.

We call on all true sons of Russia to remember the homeland, to help put a stop to this unprecedented unrest and, together with this, to devote all their strength to the restoration of peace to their native land.

Questions

1. What does the tsar offer the Russian people in the October Manifesto?
2. To which groups in Russian society might the manifesto appeal?
3. Why might the Marxists have been critical of it?

The Octobrists and the Kadets

The Octobrists was a political group formed in late 1905. Its most prominent figures were the industrialist Alexander Guchkov and the landowner Michael Rodzianko. The key aim of the Octobrists was to achieve full implementation of the promises of the tsar's October Manifesto of 1905. The party believed in constitutional monarchy, and a strong parliament to which the executive was responsible. The Octobrists supported Sergei Witte and Pyotr Stolypin, backing Stolypin's promotion of private farming and land reform, but they became disillusioned with Stolypin's increasingly reactionary policies. The party had the largest number of seats in the Third Duma, but it split in 1913 and was of minor influence during the First World War. However, Guchkov and Rodzianko were instrumental in persuading the tsar to abdicate in February 1917. Guchkov became Minister of War in the Provisional Government.

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The Kadets, or Constitutional Democrats, were the largest of the liberal political parties formed in late 1905. Its main early figurehead was Pavel Milyukov. The Kadets represented members of the liberal intelligentsia, and its supporters included small businessmen, professionals, liberal landowners, and many who had gained experience working on local councils, or *zemstvos*. The Kadets wanted a full constitutional monarchy in the style of Britain, with the tsar's power greatly restricted and civil liberties fully guaranteed. They gained a third of the seats in the First Duma, but following the Duma's dissolution, they gathered at Vyborg in Finland and issued the Vyborg Manifesto, calling for civil disobedience and the non-payment of taxes. More than 100 Kadets were arrested and banned from the Second Duma. The Kadets would eventually form the core of the Provisional Government after the 1917 February Revolution, with Prince Lvov as prime minister and Milyukov as foreign minister.

After 1905

The tsar's regime survived the tumultuous events of 1905. There was continuing unrest into 1906, but the police and the military were gradually able to deal with this. However, the regime now faced three major issues:

1 The October Manifesto promised the people a representative duma or parliament. It remained to be seen how the Manifesto would be put into practice and whether the tsar would actually keep his word.
2 Though the revolutionary groups had been brought under control, it remained to be seen whether the lid could be kept on future revolutionary action.
3 The biggest problem was the state of Russian society and the economy. It remained to be seen whether Russia would be able to develop into a modern, industrial capitalist society like its counterparts in Western Europe and the United States.

Hindsight is a dangerous thing to exercise in history. It would be easy to state that the failure of the tsarist regime was inevitable and that its eventual demise was bound to happen because of a whole series of factors. Nothing in history is inevitable. However, there was a fundamental crisis at the heart of the tsarist regime that suggested that the reprieve after the defeat of the 1905 Revolution would only be temporary. The historian Sarah Badcock puts it this way:

> [Within Russia there was a] collision between Western-style civil society and economic development, which pointed towards the development of a more representative government, and an autocratic system which proved unable to respond effectively to the evolutionary challenges posed by modernisation. Modernisation required the state to take on a plethora of new roles in relation to society, and it needed to mobilise that society, and allow civil society to develop, if it was to fulfil its roles effectively. The state's rejection of society's attempts to become involved in Russia's governance doomed it to failure … Lack of co-ordination of policies,

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> corruption, inefficiency and arbitrariness were to become watchwords of Russian administration … The acceleration of industrialisation and urbanisation forced the state into an ever more interventionist role … [but] Nicholaevan government was unable to reconcile itself with civil society that developed alongside a larger, more interventionist state. The fundamental problem for Nicholas II was the collision between his political convictions, which revolved around a nostalgic desire for maintenance of traditional social structures and values, and the inexorably building pressure from Russian society and circumstances for extensive reform of the Russian state.
>
> Sarah Badcock, 'Autocracy in Crisis: Nicholas the Last', in Alastair Kocho-Williams (ed.), *The Twentieth-Century Russia Reader*, Routledge, Abingdon, 2011, pp. 29–31.

THE FAILURE OF THE DUMA

In 1905, the future key Bolshevik figure Trotsky told a student audience in Moscow that the tsar would take away the October Manifesto and tear it into pieces. He was not far from the truth. The system of representation established for the First Duma favoured rural areas: 31 per cent of voting power went to landowners, 42 per cent to the peasants and 27 per cent to the urban areas. The duma was to share power with a state council. For a bill to become law, it had to pass both the duma and the state council, and receive the sanction of the tsar. Even before the duma met, the Fundamental Laws of 23 April 1906 suggested that very little had changed. The Laws stated: 'To the Emperor of all the Russias belongs supreme autocratic power'.

Despite these measures, radical deputies in the duma pressed for change. They called for a constitution to limit the tsar's power, begin land reforms and establish greater equality in the areas of law, education and taxation. The tsar totally refused to consider these measures. The First Duma was closed down after only two months and fresh elections were called. The Second Duma opened in February 1907. It was even more radical than the First Duma, containing some radical left-wing deputies and members of national minority groups. Within four months, it too was closed down.

To deal with this troublesome body, the tsar's new Chief Minister, Pyotr Stolypin, introduced a new electoral law. Its aim was to distort the voting system in favour of those people and parties who supported the regime. Under the new electoral system, it took 230 landowner votes to elect one duma deputy, 60 000 peasant votes and 125 000 industrial worker votes. As a result, the Third Duma was pliant and conservative. There were 442 deputies in the Third Duma. Of these, well over 300 came from the **Octobrists** and several nationalist and ultra-conservative parties that fully supported the tsar. With no trouble emanating from the duma, it was allowed to run its five-year term.

Octobrists
Those inside Russia who accepted the 1905 October Manifesto as the final word in political reform

The Third Duma completed its term in 1912. Before elections were held for a Fourth Duma, election procedures were rigged in various ways to ensure another conservative majority. As with the Third Duma, the Fourth Duma was allowed to run its course until 1917 (by which time the events of the Great War had altered the entire situation in Russia).

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ORLANDO FIGES

Orlando Figes is an English historian specialising in Russian history. He graduated from Cambridge University in 1982 and gained his PhD from Trinity College, Cambridge. Between 1987 and 1999, Figes was a lecturer and fellow at Trinity College. Since 1999, he has been Professor of History at Birkbeck College, University of London.

Figes argues in his work *A People's Tragedy: The Russian Revolution, 1891–1924* that it was not abstract forces and ideologies that drove Russian events in this period, but rather human events. He focuses more on individuals and chance events than on the collective action of the masses. He can be seen as a revisionist historian on the history of Russia as he explains things in terms of social history rather than through great men or ideologies.

Figes describes the elaborate way in which the tsar and his ministers sought to overwhelm the new duma deputies at their first meeting with an elaborate display of pomp and ceremony, even to the point of having a greatly extended version of the national anthem played, which forced the deputies to remain standing. In this extract, Figes analyses the nature of the new duma system promised by the tsar in the October Manifesto.

> The whole period of Russian political history between the two revolutions of 1905 and February 1917 could be characterised as a battle between the royalist and the parliamentary forces. To begin with, when the country was still emerging from the revolutionary crisis, the court was forced to concede ground to the Duma. But as the memory of 1905 passed, it tried to roll back its power and restore the old autocracy.
>
> The constitutional reforms of 1905–6 were ambiguous enough to give both sides grounds for hope. Nicholas had never accepted the October Manifesto as a necessary limitation upon his own autocratic prerogatives. He had reluctantly granted the Manifesto under pressure from Witte in order to save his throne. But at no time had he sworn to act upon it as a 'constitution' (the crucial word had nowhere been mentioned) and therefore, at least in his own mind, his coronation oath to uphold the principles of autocracy remained in force. The Tsar's sovereignty was in his view still handed to him directly by God. The mystical basis of the Tsar's power – which put it beyond any challenge – remained intact. There was nothing new in The Fundamental Laws (passed in April 1906) to suggest that from now on the Tsar's authority should be deemed to derive from the people, as in Western constitutional theories …
>
> … As (Nicholas) saw it, the limitations imposed by the Fundamental Laws applied only to the tsarist administration, not to his own rights of unfettered rule … And the Tsar held the trump cards in the post-1905 system. He was the supreme commander of the armed services and retained the exclusive right

Questions

1. How did Nicholas view the October Manifesto?
2. According to Figes, what was the significance of the absence of the word 'constitution' in the October Manifesto?
3. 'And the Tsar held the trump cards in the post-1905 system.' What does Figes mean by this statement?
4. In what way did this Russian system emulate the German model of government rather than the English?
5. Summarise Figes' interpretation of the way in which the October Manifesto altered the power of the tsar.

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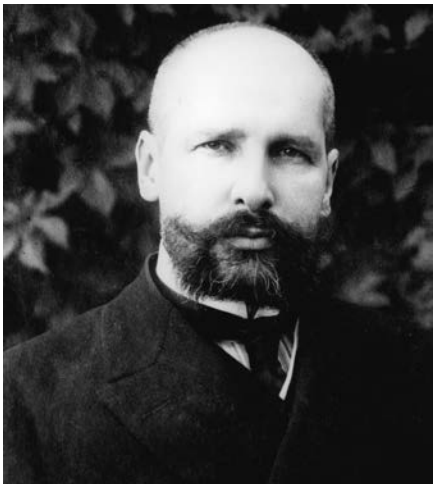
to declare war and make peace. He could dissolve the Duma, and did so twice when its conduct failed to please him. According to Article 87 of the Fundamental Laws he could also legislate by emergency decree when the Duma was not in session and his government used this loophole to bypass parliamentary opposition. The Duma electoral law established an indirect system of voting by estates heavily weighted in favour of the crown's traditional allies … The government (the Council of Ministers) was appointed exclusively by the tsar … (and) there was no effective parliamentary sanction against the abuses of the executive, which remained subordinate to the crown (as in the German system) rather than to parliament (as in the English).

Orlando Figes, *A People's Tragedy: The Russian Revolution, 1891–1924*, Pimlico, London, 1996, pp. 214–15.

Pyotr Stolypin (1862–1911)



Alamy/Pictorial Press Ltd

Pyotr Stolypin was born in Dresden, Germany. He came from a prominent aristocratic family: his father, Arkady, was a general in the Russian army and his mother, Natalia, was the daughter of a Russian foreign minister.

Stolypin was brought up and educated in Lithuania. In 1881, he entered St Petersburg University to study physics and mathematics. Following graduation, he entered the Russian Imperial Ministry of the Interior.

In May 1906 he was appointed interior minister and soon rose to become the tsar's chief minister. Stolypin pursued widely divergent polices as chief minister. After the upheavals of 1905, he proved to be a tough, no-nonsense enforcer of government control. He is also remembered for his efforts in the areas of agricultural reform, welfare reform, education and Jewish rights. However, he gradually fell out of favour with the tsar and the more conservative ministers. Stolypin may well have been dismissed if he had not been assassinated at the Kiev Opera on 1 September 1911.

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STOLYPIN'S 'NECKTIE'

The defeat of the revolution and the granting of the October Manifesto had not stopped revolutionary violence. In 1906, there were 1600 victims of terrorist violence throughout Russia; in 1907 the figure was 2500. Following the closure of the First Duma, there was major military unrest in the naval bases of Sveaborg and Kronstadt. There was an attempted general strike in Moscow. In August 1906, there was an assassination attempt on Chief Minister Stolypin. Throughout 1906, there was a series of assassinations of governors and military officials.

The government's response was to meet terror with terror. On 19 August 1906, a state of emergency was declared. Local judges now had the power to try a person immediately after arrest and carry out the sentence at once. Between September 1906 and April 1907, 683 executions took place, though the unofficial figure was probably much higher. Stolypin ordered the use of informers and agents provocateur. Thousands of regime opponents, or those suspected of opposition, faced arrest, deportation to Siberian labour camps or execution. Hanging became so widespread that the noose became known as 'Stolypin's necktie'. The Okhrana remained ever vigilant.

Stolypin himself became a victim of terrorist violence when he was assassinated in August 1911 while attending the opera. However, by the time of his death, the regime seemed to be back in control of the country. Industrial strikes were down and military unrest had faded. The revolutionary parties were in eclipse, riddled as they were with informers.

STOLYPIN'S REFORMS

reactionary
A person or political movement totally opposed to any change, who would prefer to turn the clock back to the way things were in an earlier time

Though Stolypin was extremely tough on political opponents, he was no **reactionary**. He understood the social and economic weaknesses of Russia and was determined to drag the regime into the 20th century. Stolypin introduced a series of land, social and industrial reforms. His motives were mixed. Improving the lives of the people, he hoped, would lessen the appeal of revolutionary groups. Reform would improve agricultural efficiency, increase grain exports and assist the movement of peasants to the cities where workers were needed. Stolypin was confident enough to state in 1909:

> "Give the state twenty years of quiet at home and abroad, and you will not recognise the Russia of that day!"

It will never be known whether Stolypin's efforts could have worked. He was murdered in 1911, and the outbreak of war in 1914 ended all chance of reform.

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Stolypin's principal aim was to create a prosperous, land-owning peasantry, enabling them to buy land and increase the size of their holdings. It was hoped this would increase the use of machinery and, therefore, production.

A Peasants Land Bank was established to make credit available to peasants keen on acquiring more land. Stolypin made it possible for peasants to buy land that the government controlled directly.

Most peasants lived in communes (*mir*) and worked their land that was divided into strips. They were now encouraged to leave the communes (*mir*), combine their strips and hopefully become more productive.

LAND REFORMS

Government regulations were introduced to stop the exploitation of women and children, and to improve working conditions, e.g. shorter working hours.

INDUSTRIAL REFORMS

SUCCESS?

+ Stolypin's land reforms had limited success. By the outbreak of war, more than two million peasants had left the *mir*. These more prosperous peasants became known as *kulaks*. Peasants in western Russia did increase their land holdings. Many peasants were forced to seek work in the cities. However, the vast majority of peasants preferred to remain in the *mir*.
+ Industrial reforms were implemented very slowly and little had changed by 1914.
+ Stolypin was sincere in his efforts to spread education and improve the taxation system. However, his success was very limited as he continued to face opposition from vested interests such as the aristocracy.

SOCIAL REFORMS

Following the examples of Germany and Britain, a series of measures were introduced to provide workers with protection from old age, sickness and work-related injuries. By 1914, primary school education had become compulsory. There were also attempts to make the taxation system fairer.

SOURCE 1.18 Stolypin's reforms

RUSSIAN NATIONALISM

Peter Struve was a member of the Kadets who was elected to the Second Duma, and was briefly the Provisional Government's foreign minister in 1917. In 1910, he wrote about the role of Russian nationalism: 'This whole official nationalism is indispensable under the present political circumstances because it can conceal in people's minds the powerlessness and the humiliation of the representative chamber. It dupes the assembly and "justifies" absolutism and its anti-liberal and anti-democratic policies'.

In other words, nationalism deflected discontent from the policies of the government. The threat of non-Russian nationals was played up so that the regime could justify absolutism. However, Struve also suggested that Russian nationalism was quite weak, and that this weakness lay at the root of official policies aimed against the non-Russian nationals.

During the upheavals of 1905, official policy towards the other nationalities softened. Concessions were made, such as allowing children to be taught in their mother tongue in the

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first two years of school, and Lithuanian books could be published in the Latin alphabet rather than the Cyrillic script. Polish lawyers were allowed to set up their own professional body. Non-Christians were able to become private tutors. The edict of Religious Toleration of 17 April 1905 allowed conversion from Orthodoxy to other religious denominations.

However, once the regime recovered from the events of 1905, restrictive policies towards people of other nationalities were reintroduced. Many in the bureaucracy believed that non-Russian groups had been behind the disturbances. State schools in Ukraine were forced to operate in Russian. The Polish language was banned, even in welfare organisations and the fire brigade.

During the period of Stolypin's reforms, non-Russians were prevented from buying land. The Peasant Land Bank discriminated on the basis of national origin. In the outer regions of the empire, land was taken from indigenous groups and given to Christian settlers. This policy caused so much trouble that it led to an uprising in 1916, which was bloodily suppressed.

However, not all government departments backed these policies. The ministries of Finance and Trade and Industry employed non-Russians and supported non-Russian enterprises, even Jewish ones.

It could be argued that by 1914, state nationalist policy was failing. Russification was failing among the nationalists as even nationalist intelligentsias, which appeared Russified on the surface, were developing an awareness of their roots. Peasants clung to their faith and their languages. Russification angered the minorities and failed to strengthen support for the empire. The regime increasingly relied upon the Orthodox Church to mobilise the population for its celebrations and during elections. Russian nationalism had not gained mass support. In its state-sponsored version at least, nationalism needed to lean on the crutches of the Orthodox Church and the growing prevalence of violent anti-Semitism, with the Jews, as always, providing a useful scapegoat.

Russia on the eve of the First World War

Counter-history is the study of 'what if?', the exploration of how things may have turned out if a certain event had not occurred, or if an individual had made a different decision, and so on. History is the study of what happened, not what might have happened.

However, let us indulge in a 'what if?' discussion. How might Russia have developed if it had been able to avoid becoming involved in war in 1914? In other words, in what direction was Russia heading at the beginning of the second decade of the 20th century? Russia's fate was war, defeat after defeat, revolution, civil war and eventually the rule of Stalin. Did it have to be like that?

In May 1913, the French economist Edmond Théry travelled to Russia to investigate its economic and political progress. He found a country that showed enormous potential and that had overcome its recent difficulties. Théry predicted that by 1948, Russia's population would be 343 million, dwarfing that of Germany, France and Britain. He concluded:

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Alamy/RIA Novosti

SOURCE 1.19 Crowds gather in Red Square, Moscow, to celebrate the 300th anniversary of Romanov rule, 6 March 1913

> If things continue between 1912 and 1950 as they have between 1900 and 1912, Russia will dominate Europe by the middle of the current century, politically as much as economically and financially.
>
> Cited in Charles Emmerson, 'The future's bright, the future's Russian', *History Today*, October 2013, p. 12.

So, on the eve of the First World War, was Russia headed for greatness, or was it the case that it was once again descending into crisis and revolution, regardless of international events? Table 1.3 attempts to provide both sides of the argument.

When Germany declared war on Russia in August 1914, all differences within the country were forgotten as the people rallied in devotion to faith, tsar and country. Distinctions were obscured and the nation was at one behind its tsar. The strike movement evaporated and all but a few members of the duma enthusiastically voted in favour of the war. The government did not have to manufacture enthusiasm for the war. Russia's peasants and workers were moved by patriotic fervour, and the outburst of nationalist feeling was spontaneous and real.

The burning question for Russia was, 'How long would this feeling last?'

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TABLE 1.3 Interpretations of Russia on the eve of the First World War

The positive view	The negative view
Russia had overcome the problems of defeat against Japan and internal unrest, and was developing into a modern, forward-looking, technological powerhouse. It even had the basis for a constitutional system of government. If war had not broken out in 1914, there is every chance that Russia would have evolved peacefully, if slowly, into a modern, industrial and perhaps eventually democratic state. Russia was on the brink of greatness.	The brief respite provided by Stolypin's time in power was over. Internal unrest was again on the rise, strikes were more frequent than ever, and the economy had stagnated. The war did not cause change in Russia; it merely determined the timing. The strains of economic development, the poverty in the countryside, the inability of the regime to adapt and the stubbornness of the tsar pointed to a violent upheaval. Russia was on the brink of revolution.
Russia was freeing itself from dependence on foreign investment. Between 1910 and 1913, 774 joint-stock companies had been started by Russian businessmen.	The fundamental weaknesses of the regime had not changed. It was still overly bureaucratic and divorced from the changes occurring throughout the country.
The aircraft designer Sikorsky was already showing potential Russian expertise in aircraft design.	The tsar remained evasive and vacillating, much to the consternation of his ministers. He spent hours on trivialities while major issues were left untouched.
The Russian stock market was booming, industrial workers were more interested in their conditions than ideology, and a series of good harvests had resulted in improved peasant incomes.	The tsar held firmly to his belief in autocracy, a situation exacerbated by the growing sinister influence of Rasputin on the royal family. His influence on policy during the war would be disastrous.
Thanks in part to French investment, Russian industry was expanding in several areas, including coal, iron and steel, and cotton.	After a quiet period from 1907 to 1910, thanks in large part to Stolypin, there was a sharp rise in popular discontent.
The vastness of Russia offered enormous opportunities for future mining and industrial development.	In early 1912, tsarist troops massacred 200 miners on the Lena goldfields in Siberia. This set off student demonstrations and a wave of sympathy strikes among workers.
The threat to the tsar's power that had seemed so real in 1905 was now long gone. The duma was functioning and rarely questioned the will of the tsar.	The size of the proletariat had grown considerably since 1905. Concentrated as it was in a few centres, organised strike action was now easier and more effective.
The tsar's power had been reaffirmed in the Fundamental Laws of April 1906.	Thanks in part to Bolshevik propaganda, the workers were now more radical and politicised than they had been before.
The revolutionary parties were now no more than irritants, thanks partly to improvements in the economy and Stolypin's system of repression.	Many peasants, who had been forced to sell up and move to the towns by Stolypin's reforms, had been radicalised as they now faced the reality of the urban slums.

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The positive view	The negative view
Stolypin's land reforms were slowly achieving the desired result. He himself had said that Russia would need a generation of peace for his policies to succeed.	In *The History of the Russian Revolution*, Trotsky estimated that in 1910 only 4000 people were on strike for political reasons. In 1913 the figure was 502 000. For the first six months of 1914, the figure was 1 059 000.
In 1913, the Romanovs celebrated their tercentenary (300 years of rule). The country basked in this anniversary. As the bells of Kazan Cathedral in St Petersburg rang out, thoughts of revolution seemed far from the minds of ordinary Russians.	In July 1914, a general strike began in St Petersburg and barricades were erected in working-class districts. Upper- and middle-class opponents of the regime were aligning themselves with the working-class movement as in 1905. This revolutionary situation collapsed only because of the outbreak of war.
Commenting on the public reaction to the tercentenary celebrations in Moscow, Bruce Lockhart, a diplomat in the British consulate, commented: 'The mass emotion this visit engendered was overwhelming'. The empire was clearly back on track.	

Conclusion

By the turn of the 20th century, Russia was still a backward, autocratic society steeped in tradition. Yet, it was also experiencing rapid economic modernisation and demands for change. The tsar's desire to cling to his power, combined with Russia's enormous internal problems and the prevalence of revolutionary violence, created a volatile cocktail. The war with Japan and the events of Bloody Sunday hurled the nation into revolution in 1905, which almost brought down the tsarist regime. By dividing the opposition and securing the support of the armed services, the regime survived. Stolypin's time in power cowed the opposition, limited the power of the duma and offered hope for economic modernisation. By the outbreak of the First World War, Russia seemed to be facing two possible futures. On the one hand there were signs that, given time, it might develop into a modern, Western-style society. On the other hand, there was evidence that by mid-1914 the country was on the brink of revolution, which was only avoided by the outbreak of war.

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Chapter summary

+ The geography of Russia offered both great potential and enormous difficulties for Russian development. Russia's size tended to support the idea that strong centralised government was best for the country.
+ In 1900, society was almost feudal in structure while the economy, though experiencing pockets of industrial growth, was dominated by backwards agriculture.
+ Nicholas II was determined to maintain his absolute power as tsar. However, he was also a weak and vacillating leader.
+ Russia's fundamental problem was the inability of the political system to adapt to the changes demanded by modernisation.
+ Since the 1860s, Russia had been experiencing frequent, revolutionary violence.
+ The disastrous war with Japan and Bloody Sunday set off a train of events that nearly brought down the tsarist regime during the Revolution of 1905.
+ Though the tsar was not directly responsible for Bloody Sunday, his reputation was forever tarnished as a result of the massacres of that day.
+ The regime survived 1905. The revolution lacked clear leadership and Russia's size prevented coordinated action. The tsar granted the people a parliament with the October Manifesto and he managed to maintain the loyalty of the armed forces.
+ Between 1906 and 1911, Chief Minister Stolypin did much to revitalise the regime. He kept the duma under control, suppressed the opposition and introduced reforms to modernise Russian society and economy.
+ Stolypin's assassination in 1911 and the outbreak of war in 1914 meant that Stolypin's reforms never had a chance to succeed.
+ Debate exists about where Russia was headed before 1914. Evidence can be presented to argue that, given time, the regime could have developed into a modern, Western-style state. However, evidence can also be presented to suggest that by mid-1914, Russia was on the verge of revolution.

Weblinks

Weblinks relevant to this chapter can be found at http://nmh.nelsonnet.com.au/russia

Further reading

Richard Charques, *The Twilight of Imperial Russia*, Oxford University Press, London, 1958, Chapters 1–10.

David Christian, *Power and Privilege*, Pitman, Melbourne, 1991, pp. 78–119.

Charles Emmerson, 'The future's bright, the future's Russian', *History Today*, October 2013, pp. 11–18.

Orlando Figes, *A People's Tragedy: The Russian Revolution, 1891–1924*, Chapters 1–6.

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Chapter review activities

Russia at the turn of the 20th century

1 In what ways had geography affected the development of tsarist Russia?
2 Explain the structure of Russian society by 1900.
3 Copy and complete the following table, using the information on pages 13–15.

Group	Size	Activities	Wealth	Political power
Ruling class				
Gentry				
Bourgeoisie				
Proletariat				
Peasantry				

4 Describe the main elements of the Russian economy in the early 20th century, using information from this chapter and evidence from Table 1.1.
5 Write a paragraph about the Russian economy that uses the terms 'subsistence', 'protectionism', 'capital' and 'gold standard'.
6 Explain how 'autocracy', 'orthodoxy' and 'nationalism' affected the functioning of tsarist Russia.
7 'Well intentioned but ultimately a liability.' To what extent do you think this statement accurately sums up Nicholas II?
8 Even in today's society, a loving, strong and loyal spouse is considered a crucial element for the success of a political leader. Do you think Alexandra was such a wife for Nicholas II?
9 Why were revolutionary groups so prevalent in Russia?
10 What happened to the Russian Social Democratic Labour Party in 1903?
11 Write a piece of dialogue between a Bolshevik and a Menshevik at the time of the split of the Russian Social Democratic Labour Party in 1903. Each character should justify their political position, and criticise the position of the other person.
12 Evaluate Russia's performance in the war with Japan.

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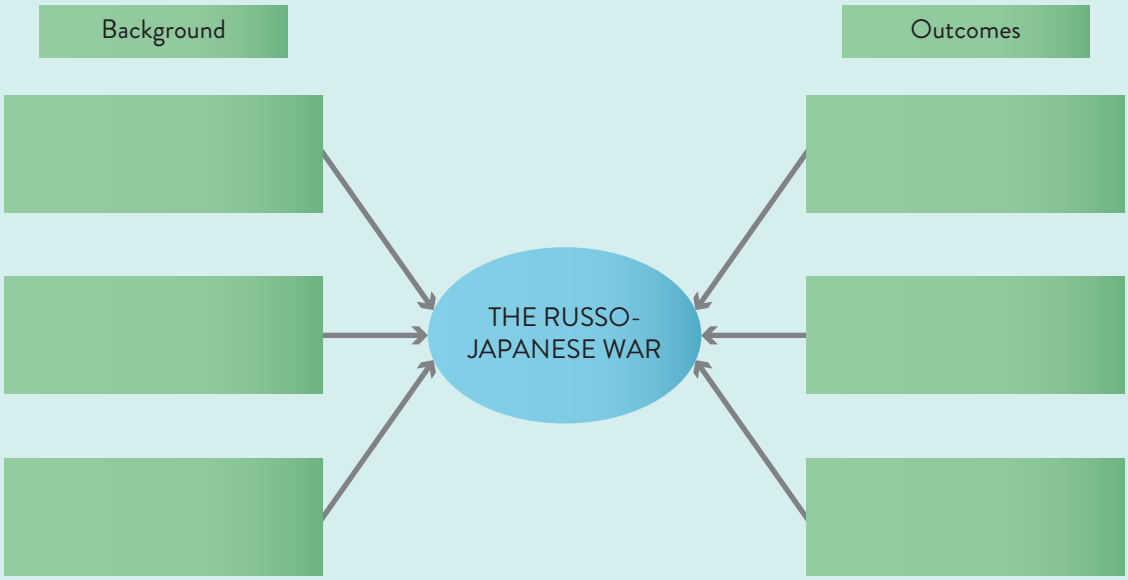
13 Complete the following diagram using the information on pages 27–28.



The 1905 'Revolution'

14 Construct a mind map to explain the long-term factors and short-term triggers that led to unrest in 1905. In an extended paragraph, identify and explain the three most significant factors.

15 Why have historians found it difficult to establish the truth about the events of Bloody Sunday?

16 Examine the painting in Source 1.15 on page 34. It is by an unknown artist. With whom do you think the artist has sympathy: the authorities or the marchers? Give reasons for your answer.

17 If Nicholas II had met Father Georgi Gapon in January 1905, how do you think he would have responded to the Workers' Petition?

18 Examine the cartoon in Source 1.17 on page 37. Write a short paragraph explaining the interpretation of the events of 1905 being presented by the cartoonist. Do you think it is significant that the cartoon is from an English magazine, *Punch*?

19 When was the most dangerous moment for the tsar's regime in 1905? Give reasons for your answer.

20 Why did the 1905 Revolution fail?

After 1905

21 Why was Stolypin so important for the tsarist regime?

22 Had the October Manifesto turned Russia into a constitutional regime?

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Thinking about it

23 Using the evidence provided throughout the chapter, and further information from library and internet research, present an argument to support one of the following propositions.

a Having weathered the storm of 1905, Russia was well on the way to developing into an economically powerful, socially stable and fully functioning constitutional regime before its progress was interrupted by war.

OR

b The tsarist regime had survived the events of 1905 and experienced a brief period of quiet in the years that followed. But by 1914, the strains and stresses that had produced the 1905 Revolution had reappeared in an even stronger form. The country was on the brink of revolution.

Research

24 Research the career of Sergei Witte (1849–1915).

a What was his contribution to the development of Russia?

b To what extent did his work affect the development of revolutionary feeling in Russia?

25 What was happening to the Bolsheviks between 1905 and 1914? What do you think this tells us about the success of the tsarist regime in consolidating its position?

26 What happened at the Lena goldfields in 1912? Why do you think these events did not erupt across a wider area, as did the events of Bloody Sunday?

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Getty Images/Fine Art Images/Heritage Images

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CHAPTER TWO

Impact of the First World War: 1914–1917

After the assassination of Archduke Franz Ferdinand, there followed six weeks of frantic, often secret, diplomatic and military manoeuvring that culminated in full-scale European war. Within weeks of the outbreak of war, Russia's military and economic inferiority to Germany became all too apparent. Russia proved no match for the brutally efficient German war machine, though the Russian army had more success against Austria-Hungary. However, it was the combination of the weak Russian military and the complete breakdown of the Home Front that brought about defeat. The backward Russian economy was incapable of supporting a 20th-century war. Lack of supplies, food and even boots bred anger, disillusionment and revolutionary thinking among the men at the front, which eventually turned to desertion and mutiny. Those on the Home Front faced massive shortages, rapid inflation and near starvation. The tsar's disastrous decision to take command of the army in 1915 effectively left Alexandra in charge and allowed Rasputin to exert influence. Government instability was the result. By early 1917, the tsar had lost all political support. Spontaneous, leaderless protests in February 1917 finally forced Nicholas II to abdicate. From February to October 1917, Russia experienced a system of Dual Authority, with power shared uneasily between the Provisional Government and the Soviets. Lenin's return in April raised the political temperature as the Bolsheviks demanded peace with Germany and land for the peasants. Kerensky headed the Provisional Government from July, but he found himself facing attacks from left and right, while continuing to wage war with Germany. By October, the Provisional Government was barely hanging on as its Bolshevik enemies were preparing to seize power.

‹ A demonstration of workers from the Putilov plant in Petrograd (modern day St Petersburg), Russia, during the February Revolution

INQUIRY QUESTION

+ How significant was the economic, military, political and social impact of the First World War on Russia up until October 1917?
+ What factors caused the February Revolution?
+ What were the achievements of the Provisional Government?

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Russia at war

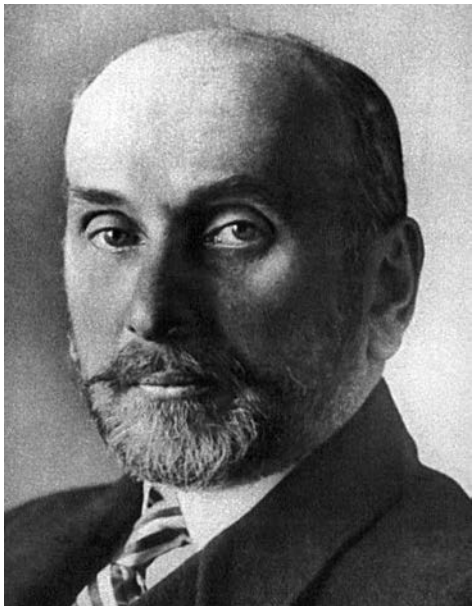
The events in the decades prior to 1914 highlighted that Russia and its empire were at a crossroads. From the late 19th century, political movements, ranging from moderate liberalisation to openly revolutionary groups, had been calling for transformation of the tsarist state. The events of 1905 highlighted many of these grievances and concerns, and reforms, such as those of Stoylpin, had haltingly attempted to address them. Socially and economically, the tsarist regime was, when compared to the developed economies and states of Western Europe, relatively backward. The First World War would ultimately act as a catalyst for change. The war would amplify the weaknesses of the Russian political, economic and social systems, and set in train a series of increasingly transformative radical political changes.

Slav
An ethnic and language group of Eastern Europe that includes Russians, Ukrainians, Serbians, Croats, Poles, Czechs and Slovaks

THE JULY CRISIS

The heir to the throne of Austria-Hungary, Archduke Franz Ferdinand was assassinated in Sarajevo on 28 June 1914. The Austrian government was convinced that the Serbian government was behind the murder and decided to use the assassination as an excuse to attack Serbia and put the lid on **Slav** nationalism that was threatening Austria's very existence. There followed a series of events that lead to the start of war.

+ On 6 July, Austria gained the unconditional support of Germany for any action it decided to take against Serbia.
+ An ultimatum was presented to Serbia on 23 July. Rejection of parts of it provided Austria with its *casus belli* and war was declared on Serbia.



Pictures from History

SOURCE 2.1 Russian Foreign Minister Sergei Sazonov. On 24 July, Sazonov told Serbia to accept only some of the ultimatum terms, warned Germany that Russia would not allow Austria to swallow up Serbia, and secretly informed Russia's ally, France, that it was mobilising. He did all this without informing Tsar Nicholas II.

+ Russia decided it could not leave its Slav brothers and co-religionists in Serbia at the mercy of Austria. The normally hesitant Russian Foreign Minister Sazonov began secret Russian mobilisation measures as early as 24 July, while in public declaring he was open to compromise and negotiation.
+ However, Russian mobilisation plans involved preparation against not only Austria, but also Germany.

As tensions rose in late July, Tsar Nicholas II attempted to work with his cousin, the German Kaiser Wilhelm II, to pull their nations back from the brink of war. Nicholas' vacillation was no more in evidence than at this crucial time, as he ordered, cancelled and then again ordered general mobilisation. Faced with a million armed Russian troops on its border, Germany declared war on Russia on 1 August. Within days, Russia's ally, France, and Britain were at war with Germany.

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THE EASTERN FRONT DURING THE FIRST WORLD WAR

In common with most European military commanders of the time, Russia's army leaders believed in the 'offensive'. This was in contrast to the traditional Russian strategy of withdrawing into their vast lands and then launching counter-attacks. In mid-August 1914, General Rennenkampf's First Army and General Samsonov's Second Army invaded (German) East Prussia. Under the leadership of General Hindenburg and his Chief-of-Staff, Erich Ludendorff, the Russians were decisively beaten at the Battles of Tannenberg and Masurian Lakes. However, further south, the Russians had success against Austria and captured much of Galicia. This was to be the pattern of the war on the Eastern Front for Russia: defeat at the hands of the Germans, some success against Austria. However, by late 1916, the enormous scale of Russian casualties and the inability of Russian industry to produce adequate supplies led to demoralisation within the army. Following the February Revolution in 1917, the Provisional Government decided to continue the war, charging General Brusilov with leading a final offensive. The consequences for the Russian army were disastrous, and by the end of the year, the army had virtually disintegrated. The first decision of the Bolshevik government, which took power in October 1917, was to seek peace with Germany.

Alamy/Chronicle/Robert Hunt Library

SOURCE 2.2 The German victory at the Battle of Tannenburg in August 1914 was a decisive defeat of Russian forces in the first month of the First World War. Approximately 30 000 Russian soldiers died in the battle, and 95 000 soldiers, some of whom are shown lined up in this photograph, and more than 350 cannons were captured.

SOURCE 2.3 The Eastern Front during the First World War. Russian forces rarely bettered their German opponents but they were more successful against the Austrians. Industry's inability to adequately supply the army prevented any chance of sustained Russian success.

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THE FIRST WORLD WAR: THE EASTERN FRONT

1914	**LATE AUGUST**	German forces under Hindenburg and Ludendorff inflicted a decisive defeat on Russian forces led by General Samsonov at the Battle of Tannenberg. Of Samsonov's original force of 150 000, 95 000 were captured, 30 000 were killed or wounded and only about 10 000 managed to escape. The Germans also captured 500 Russian artillery guns. Shortly after the battle, Samsonov committed suicide
	EARLY SEPTEMBER	General Rennenkampf was defeated by German forces led by General Mackensen at the Battle of Masurian Lakes. The Russians suffered a further 100 000 casualties
	LATE SEPTEMBER	Russians forced the Austrians to abandon their province of Galicia; Austrians suffered more than 130 000 casualties
1915	**EARLY 1915**	German forces drove deep into the Russian lines, and inflicted another 190 000 killed or wounded casualties on the Russians
		Russians defeated an Austrian force and gained control of the Dukla Pass, opening a path into Hungary. Due to poor supply systems, the Russians were unable to capitalise on this advantage
	MAY	The Germans had taken control of the entire Eastern Front. A series of spectacular victories followed. A 320-kilometre thrust into Russia completely destroyed the Russian Southern Front
	AUGUST	Germans captured Warsaw, Novogeorgieysk and Brest-Litovsk
		By the end of the year, more than two million Russians troops had been killed or captured
1916		By mid-1916, the Russian army had become better supplied, though the inefficiencies of the Russian supply system always prevented sustained success
	JUNE	Russian forces under the command of General Brusilov crossed into Galicia and captured 130 000 Austrian prisoners
		Romania joined Russia (and its allies) in 1916. However, an abortive Romanian thrust into Transylvania allowed German forces to launch a counter-offensive, which resulted in Romania's total collapse
	SEPTEMBER	General Brusilov continued his offensive, but Russian casualties again soon reached a million men. By now the Home Front was falling apart, the army could not be supplied, and Russia was edging towards revolution
1917	**2 MARCH**	Abdication of the tsar. Army discipline deteriorated. More and more troops were deserting to share in the land grabs that were occurring back home
		The Provisional Government continued the war
	MAY	Brusilov was appointed Commander-in-Chief
	JULY	Brusilov's July Offensive failed. He was replaced by General Kornilov
	OCTOBER /NOVEMBER	Bolsheviks seized power; Russia sued for peace with Germany
1918	**MARCH**	The Bolshevik government ended Russia's involvement in the war by signing the Treaty of Brest-Litovsk

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THE IMPACT OF THE WAR ON THE RUSSIAN ECONOMY AND SOCIETY

There are many reasons why the Russian army performed so poorly during the war and suffered such enormous casualties. The skill and brutal efficiency of the Germans were clear factors. Apart from figures such as Brusilov, Russian military leaders were of a poor quality and they often only gained their positions of authority because they had the right connections. Selfish rivalry often sabotaged the Russian war effort. This was seen no more clearly than in the conflict between Rennenkampf and Samsonov in August 1914, which led to the disasters at Tannenberg and Masurian Lakes. General Hindenburg was well aware of this rivalry from intercepted,

SOURCE 2.4 The socioeconomic impact of the war on Russia

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unciphered Russian communications! Russia's political weakness and Nicholas' disastrous decision to assume command will be discussed in the next section.

However, the fundamental cause of the poor Russian military effort on the Eastern Front came from the economy's inability to supply, finance and transport an army fighting a 20th-century war. This was in contrast to the modern and technologically efficient industrial base from which Germany operated. Russia's inability to supply its troops in an effective manner led to defeat after defeat and huge losses, which in turn led to a demoralised and disillusioned army that gradually turned to desertion and mutiny. The situation on the Home Front was equally bad and by early 1917, starvation and famine were evident.

Source 2.4 details some of the weaknesses of the Russian economy. The war was crippling not only Russia's industrial production and its ability to supply an army of millions, but also agriculture, transport, trade and government financial policy.

THE POLITICAL IMPACT OF THE WAR ON RUSSIA

When Germany declared war on Russia on 1 August 1914, there was a wave of patriotic enthusiasm across Russia. Millions willingly marched off to fight for tsar, church and Mother Russia. All deputies in the duma, except the few Bolsheviks present, voted for war credits. It appeared that memories of 1905 had been forgotten and the nation stood at one behind its tsar. However, within only a few months, the situation was transformed.

The tsar's indecision, which had been all too apparent during the July Crisis, continued as the war progressed. In September 1915, he assumed the position of Commander-in-Chief and moved to the front. Nicholas II never actually commanded the armies, even when he went to the Russian army headquarters in Mogilev. However, his decision was to be a disastrous one. Nicholas had no military expertise, and he left Alexandra (and Rasputin) in control in Petrograd (St Petersburg had been renamed to lose its German connotation). Nicholas' indecision and ineffectiveness were illustrated extremely well in the 1971 movie, *Nicholas and Alexandra*. A short extract from the screenplay is on page 60–62.

Nicholas and Alexandra

Released in 1971, the film *Nicholas and Alexandra*, directed by Franklin J Schaffner, recreates the life of the tsar and his family between 1905 and 1918. The film was nominated for six Academy Awards. This dialogue takes place during the First World War when the tsar's mother, the Dowager Empress Maria Feodorovna, visits Nicholas sometime after he has assumed military command.

M: I came to congratulate you, Nicky.

N: What for?

M: For finding from all Russia's countless cretins, idiots and incompetents, the men least qualified to run your government.

continued

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continued

N: Would you like some tea?
M: I've taken tea. I've tried to understand you but I can't.
N: I sometimes fail to judge men well.
M: Sometimes? How can one man make so many mistakes? Why did you stop our Austrian campaign?
N: Our casualties were terrible.
M: But surely you knew they would be before you started? Theirs were larger.
N: Mother, what do you know about strategy?
M: What do you? What are you doing here anyway? There isn't a battlefield within five hundred miles.
N: It's important that I'm here.
M: Your place is in Petersburg. Don't you know about the riots and scandals and starvation? They hate your wife. They think she is a German spy. How can you let that foolish woman ruin your country?
N: Leave Sunny out of this.
M: Someone has to make you see sense about her. Can't you think of anyone else? Can't you think of the rest of your family? Can't you think of Russia? I wish your father was alive.
N: Don't throw him at me.
M: He knew how to be a tsar. He'd have burnt Vienna down, stamped on the Germans, shot the strikers. Anything to give Russia peace. And he'd certainly have known how to deal with Rasputin.
N: He is a man of God.
M: Do you believe that?
N: He works miracles. He keeps my son alive.
M: Do you believe that Nicky?
N: Sunny does. She needs him.
M: Hang him. I don't wish any man harmed but so many Russians will die if you don't.
N: I can't.
M: At least send him to Siberia.
N: I can't.
M: He's going to destroy us. Millions will suffer and all because you can't say no to your wife.
N: It's in God's hands.
M: That's no answer.
N: Don't you think I see what's happening?
M: Then act! Come back home. Hang this man, send Alexandra to Livadia and deal with the real problem.

continued

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continued

N: I can't.
M: In heaven's name Nicholas, what can you do?
N: Just what I'm doing, Mama. There's nothing else that can be done.

Questions

1. Act out this dialogue in class.
2. How reliable a source do you consider this to be?
3. Does the fact that it is a movie screenplay detract from its historical value?
4. What research do you think James Goldman, the writer of the screenplay, carried out to produce dialogue such as this?
5. Do you agree with the Empress Dowager's comment that Nicholas could have avoided revolution if he had acted more like his father?

1914	**The duma** + Though the duma supported the war in August 1914, Nicholas II quickly suspended its sittings. It met rarely during the war. In August 1915, a Progressive Bloc calling for a 'government of confidence' was formed, but this was rejected by the tsar, and he again suspended the duma. The Provisional Government that came to power in March 1917 came from the duma.
1915	+ In September, Nicholas II took over from Nikolay Nikolayavich as army Commander-in-Chief. + Nicholas had no military expertise and in fact the key military decisions were made by his leading officers such as his Chief of Staff Alexeiev. However, by taking on this role, the tsar now had to shoulder personal responsibility for military failures. Before, Nicholas had been able to stand above day-to-day military matters and it was his generals who received the blame for military setbacks. + Nicholas' presence at the front left Alexandra in charge in Petrograd. The historian Richard Charques states that 'Alexandra's will was law'. Her obsession with Rasputin allowed him to interfere with the business of government. This resulted in great governmental instability as ministers were randomly sacked and appointed in a game of ministerial leapfrog. From autumn 1915 to autumn 1916, there were five ministers of the interior, four ministers of agriculture, and three ministers of war. + Rasputin's influence was probably not as great as legend would have it although many believed he exerted considerable influence and that he was sleeping with the tsarina. Rasputin was murdered by the noble Count Yusupov and accomplices in December 1916. However, by then the regime was doomed and whether Rasputin was alive or dead made little difference.
1917	+ By the beginning of 1917, the tsar had lost the support of all groups in the country. Above all, he had lost the support of his demoralised and disillusioned armed forces. The year opened with food riots, widespread mutinies and an increasing number of calls for the tsar to abdicate.

SOURCE 2.5 The political impact of the war on Russia up to 1917

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The role of Grigori Rasputin

Grigori Yefimovich Rasputin, 'the mad monk' in the popular imagination, became a key figure in the final years of the Romanov Dynasty. He was born in Pokrovskoye in central Russia in 1869. In 1891, he took himself on a 2000 mile walk to a convent in Mt Athos in Greece, and later wandered around the Holy Land. He became a wandering *staretz*, a kind of spiritual teacher with alleged powers of healing. He came to St Petersburg in 1903 and soon became a regular feature of upper class society; aristocratic women were particularly attracted to his mystical ways.

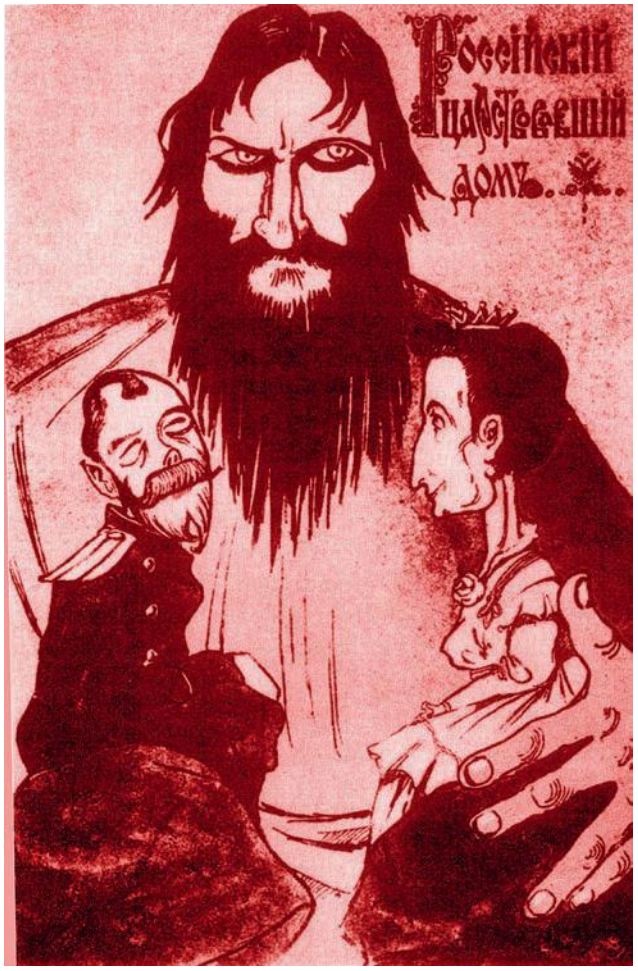
Corbis/Hulton-Deutsch Collection

SOURCE 2.6 Grigori Rasputin surrounded by admirers, c. 1911

By mid-1906, he had come to the attention of the royal family. Tsarina Alexandra came to believe that Rasputin was able to use his 'healing powers' to relieve the bleeding of the haemophiliac tsarevich, Alexis. Rasputin's womanising and drunken behaviour became the stuff of legend. Alexandra would not have a word said against him, believing unquestioningly in his ability to help her son. Alexandra once advised Nicholas to comb his hair with Rasputin's comb to reinforce his will.

Rumours abounded about Rasputin's behaviour. Alexandra was accused of having a sexual relationship with him, of engaging in lesbian orgies, and of working for the Germans with Rasputin. As Orlando Figes points out, none of these rumours had any basis in fact.

> "But the point of the rumours was not their truth or untruth: it was their power to mobilise an angry public against the monarchy. In a revolutionary crisis it is perceptions and beliefs that really count … Once a rumour, however false, became the subject of common belief, it assumed the status of a political fact, informing the attitudes and actions of the public. All revolutions are based in part on myth."
>
> Orlando Figes, *Revolutionary Russia 1891–1991*, Penguin, London, 2014, p. 82–3.



Alamy/World History Archive

SOURCE 2.7 Political leaflet showing a demonic Rasputin manipulating the tsar and tsarina, c. 1910

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When the tsar left to join his troops in September 1915, Alexandra ran the government. Rasputin's influence on her, and subsequently the government, resulted in the appointment and sacking of various ministers. However, Rasputin's direct impact on government has probably been exaggerated. In December 1916, Rasputin was murdered by a group of aristocrats led by Count Yusupov.

Count Yusupov invited Rasputin to his home on 29 December 1916. They ate and drank into the early hours of the morning. Rasputin had been given cakes and Madeira wine that had been generously laced with the poison cyanide. However, the poison seemed to have no effect on him. Eventually Yusupov decided to shoot Rasputin. Here, Count Yusupov describes the murder of Rasputin:

> … Rasputin stood before me motionless, his head bent and his eyes on the crucifix. I slowly raised my revolver. Where should I aim, at the temple or at the heart? A shudder swept over me; my arm grew rigid, I aimed at his heart and pulled the trigger. Rasputin gave a wild scream and crumpled up on the bearskin … His features twitched in nervous spasms; his hands were clenched, his eyes closed. A bloodstain was spreading on his silk blouse. A few moments later all movements ceased. We bent over his body to examine it. The doctor declared that the bullet had struck him in the region of the heart. There was no possibility of doubt: Rasputin was dead … Our hearts were full of hope, for we were convinced that what had just taken place would save Russia and the dynasty from ruin and dishonour.
>
> … Rasputin lay exactly where we had left him (in the basement) … I felt his pulse; not a beat, he was dead. Scarcely knowing what I was doing I seized the corpse by the arms and shook it violently. It leaned to one side and fell back. I was just about to go, when I suddenly noticed an almost imperceptible quivering of his left eyelid. All of a sudden, I saw the left eye open … A few seconds later his right eyelid began to quiver, then opened. I then saw both eyes – the green eyes of a viper – staring at me with an expression of diabolical hatred. The blood ran cold in my veins. My muscles turned to stone. I wanted to run away, to call for help, but my legs refused to obey me and not a sound came from my throat. I stood rooted to the flagstones as if caught in the toils of a nightmare.
>
> Then a terrible thing happened: with a sudden violent effort Rasputin leapt to his feet, foaming at the mouth. A wild roar echoed through the vaulted rooms, and his hands convulsively thrashed the air. He rushed at me, trying to get at my throat, and sank his fingers into my shoulder like steel claws. His eyes were bursting from their sockets, blood oozed from his lips. And all the time he called me by name, in a low raucous voice. No words can express the horror I felt. I tried to free myself but was powerless in his vice-like grip. A ferocious struggle began.
>
> … This devil who was dying of poison, who had a bullet in his heart, must have been raised from the dead by the powers of evil. There was something appalling and monstrous in his diabolical refusal to die. I realised now who Rasputin really was. It was the reincarnation of Satan himself who held me in his clutches and would never let me go till my dying day.
>
> By a superhuman effort I succeeded in freeing myself from his grasp. He fell on his back, gasping horribly … I rushed upstairs and called Pourichkevitch, who was in my study.

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'Quick, quick, come down!' I cried. 'He is still alive!'

He was crawling on his hands and knees, gasping and roaring like a wounded animal. He gave a desperate leap and managed to reach the secret door which led into the courtyard … The courtyard had three entrances, but only the middle one was unlocked. Through the iron railings, I could see Rasputin making straight for it. I heard a third shot, then a fourth … I saw Rasputin totter and fall beside a heap of snow. Pourichkevitch ran up to him, and stood for a few seconds looking at the body, then having made sure that this time all was over, went swiftly into the house.

Dimitri, Soukhotin and Doctor Lazovert … wrapped the corpse in a piece of heavy linen, shoved it into the car, and drove to Petrovski Island. There, from the top of the bridge, they hurled it into the river. It was almost five in the morning when I left Moika … full of courage and confidence at the thought that the first steps to save Russia had been taken.

Felix Youssoupoff, *Lost Splendour*, trans. A Green and N Katkoff, Cape, London, 1953, pp. 224–33. Quoted in Michael Bucklow and Glenn Russell, *Russia: Why Revolution?*, Longman, Melbourne, 1976, pp. 116–18.

February 1917

In February 1917, the tsar's regime collapsed. The revolution did not involve a carefully worked out plan carried out by a group of dedicated professional revolutionaries. Like a house standing on stilts, the regime simply collapsed as each of the stilts holding the house up was gradually worn away, until there was nothing left to hold it up. The February Revolution was a leaderless, spontaneous revolution.

Writing in 1958, the American historian Richard Charques argued that the February Revolution was the result of the mass action of mutinous soldiers, workers and peasants. Driven by hatred of the war but without any planned leadership, the mass moved by itself. Charques calls the February event a mass revolution but concludes:

> …the crude paradox of the Russian Revolution remains: for all its spontaneity it sprang not so much from the will of the people as from the mere decomposition and collapse of the tsar's government.
>
> Richard Charques, *The Twilight of Imperial Russia*, Oxford University Press, Oxford, 1958, p. 241.

However, Richard Pipes presents the events of February 1917 in a different light. Pipes argues that the attack on the monarchy came not from hatred of the war but from a desire to fight it more effectively. He further argues that the tsar was not forced from power by rebellious workers and peasants, calling that a myth. The tsar was forced from power, argues Pipes, by generals and politicians, and he accepted his fate for the good of Russia.

abdication
The formal act of a monarch surrendering royal power

> In February 1917, when the Petrograd garrison refused to fire on civilian crowds, the generals in agreement with parliamentary politicians, hoping to prevent the mutiny from spreading to the front, convinced Tsar Nicholas II to abdicate. The **abdication**, made for the sake of military victory, brought down the edifice of Russian statehood … The social revolution followed rather than preceded the act of abdication.
>
> Richard Pipes, *Russia under the Bolshevik Regime*, Arnold A Knopf, New York, 1994, pp. 490, 497.

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THE FEBRUARY 1917 REVOLUTION

THURSDAY	International Women's Day
23 FEBRUARY	More than 90 000 people went on strike in Petrograd
	Street marches and demonstrations protested against the shortages of food and fuel
FRIDAY	The strike movement spread
24 FEBRUARY	Now 200 000 workers were on strike
	Protesting crowds filled the Nevsky Prospect
	Cossack troops and police kept control of the crowds
SATURDAY	Most of the city's factories closed
25 FEBRUARY	The crowds increased in size
	Cossack troops fired into the Nevsky Prospect crowds
SUNDAY	Trains and trams were no longer operating in Petrograd
26 FEBRUARY	The demonstrations turned political with crowds carrying banners: 'Down with the German woman, down with the war'
	The cabinet asked Nicholas to form a government acceptable to the duma. He refused
	Troops refused to fire into the crowd
	An officer of the Volinskii regiment was murdered. The regiment mutinied and its officers fled
	Other regiments joined the mutiny. This was the crucial moment for the tsar; he has lost the backing of his troops, the only thing that was keeping him in power
	The mutinous troops and sailors were the key group and were largely responsible for radicalising the February Revolution. They were actually quite unpopular with troops at the front who had to cope with battle. Having mutinied, they had a vested interest in the revolution succeeding
MONDAY	Troops and police joined the crowds
27 FEBRUARY	The government lost control of Petrograd; the mob was in control of the city
	There were calls for the duma to replace the tsar
TUESDAY	The duma established a committee to assume the powers of the government. From this emerged
28 FEBRUARY	the Provisional Government
	The Petrograd Soviet of Workers and Soldiers was created on the same day, in the same building. It issued Order No. 1 – troops were only to accept instructions with which the Soviet agreed
WEDNESDAY	The tsar was unable to get his train into Petrograd
1 MARCH	No troops in Petrograd remained loyal to the regime, and defected to either the duma or the Soviet
	Soviets appeared in other cities, including Moscow
THURSDAY	The tsar signed the abdication document. He abdicated not only for himself but also for his son, Alexis
2 MARCH	Part of the Abdication Document stated: 'In agreement with the Imperial Duma we have thought it well to renounce the throne of the Russian Empire and to lay down the supreme power. As We do not wish to part from our beloved son, We transmit the succession to our brother, the Grand Duke Michael Alexandrovich, and give him our blessing to mount the throne of the Russian Empire.'
	Grand Duke Michael refused the throne
	Three hundred and four years of Romanov rule were at an end
	The duma established the Provisional Government

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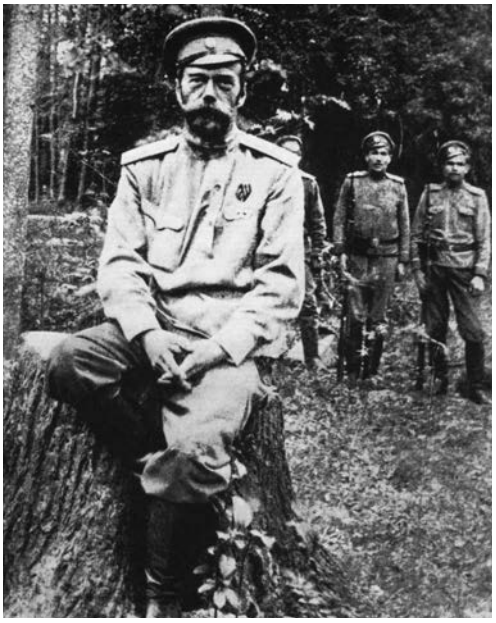

Alamy/Pictorial Press Ltd

SOURCE 2.8 The former Tsar of Russia, shortly after his abdication in March 1917

Alamy/Pictorial Press Ltd

SOURCE 2.9 Russian soldiers marching in protest through Petrograd (St Petersburg) in 1917

DAVID CHRISTIAN ON THE FEBRUARY REVOLUTION

Born in the United States in 1946, David Christian later studied at the University of Oxford, taught at San Diego University and currently works at Macquarie University in Sydney. Christian's current research has taken him into the interdisciplinary approach of study that he calls 'Big History'. However, Christian is also a noted expert on Russian history. He has published a series of books on aspects of Russian social history such as *A History of Russia, Central Asia and Mongolia; Bread and Salt: A social and economic history of food and drink in Russia;* and *Living Water: Vodka and Russian Society on the Eve of Emancipation.*

One of his best known books, used widely in schools and universities throughout Australia, is his 1986 book (revised in 1994), *Power and Privilege*, on Russia and the Soviet Union in the 19th and 20th centuries.

In his analysis of the February 1917 Revolution, Christian poses the counter-factual question, 'Could the tsarist government have survived?' He discusses the fundamental political divisions that existed in Russia at the time, and argues that the collapse of the tsarist regime in 1917 was certainly not inevitable, and with a more flexible approach from Nicholas II, it could well have been avoided.

> By 1914, it had become clear that there were two basic types of division in Russia. One was the division between Russia's upper classes and the working-class majority, between a privileged, educated minority, and the working classes who sustained its privileged position. The other division

Questions

1. Identify the two types of political divisions that Christian says existed in Russia at this time.
2. What action of the tsar in 1905 proved the 'superficiality of the revolutionary coalition' in that year?
3. What does Christian suggest would have been the three key results of the tsar's acceptance of the demands of the Progressive Bloc?
4. Where does Christian ultimately place the blame for the revolution of 1917?

continued

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continued

was between the majority of the ruling group and its traditional leader, the tsar. A Russian-American historian, Leopold Haimson, describes the two divisions as follows: 'by July 1914, along with polarisation between workers and educated privileged society ... a second process of polarisation – this one between the vast bulk of privileged society and the tsarist regime – appear almost equally advanced'.

At times, such as during the October 1905 general strike, divisions within the ruling group had seemed even deeper than those between the ruling group and the working classes, for it seemed that the whole of society was united by opposition to the tsar. The collapse of this temporary class unity after October 1905 revealed the superficiality of the revolutionary coalition. Rifts within the elite were, nevertheless, profound enough to drive many of its members to seek at least temporary alliances outside the upper classes.

This suggests that there might have been an alternative to the February Revolution. If the tsar had been willing to accept the demands of the Progressive Bloc, this act alone would have greatly narrowed the gulf within the ruling group. It would also have improved the conduct of the war, for members of the Progressive Bloc played a crucial role in their own business operations and through organisations such as the War Industries Committees in supplying the armies. When discontent did break out in the towns, as it almost certainly would have sooner or later, the demonstrators would have faced a far more united ruling class, and the history of 1917 might have been very different. But Nicholas was incapable of seeing this alternative. It seems that Nicholas' failures as a politician go a long way to explaining why, when the revolution finally came in 1917, it swept away not only the autocratic government, but the whole traditional ruling group of Russia.

David Christian, *Power and Privilege*, Pitman, Melbourne, 1991, pp. 134–5.

Questions

5 Is Christian's explanation for the events of February 1917 similar to the accounts of Richard Chaques and Richard Pipes on page 65?

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March to October 1917

MARCH–OCTOBER 1917

MARCH	Following a complete breakdown of order in Petrograd, and having been advised that he no longer had the support of his generals, Tsar Nicholas II abdicated, bringing an end to the rule of the Romanovs
	After the tsar's abdication, political power in Russia fell to the Provisional Government and the Soviet. These two bodies shared power uneasily for the next eight months
	The Provisional Government was headed by Prince Lvov and it made the fateful decision to continue the war with Germany
	The Soviet issued Order No. 1, which stated that soldiers and sailors should obey no order unless it has been agreed to by the Soviet. Other Soviets began to appear across the country
APRIL	The Bolshevik leader, Lenin, was in Switzerland when the February Revolution occurred. In late 1915, he was of the view that a revolution would not occur in his lifetime. With the agreement of the German government, he was able to travel in a sealed train across Europe, via neutral Sweden and Russian-controlled Finland, to Petrograd
	When Lenin arrived at the Finland Station, he announced his April Theses. He ordered his party to oppose the Provisional Government, called for 'All power to the Soviets' and demanded an immediate end to the war with Germany
	The publication of the Provisional Government's war aims caused rioting in Petrograd, disturbances that the Bolsheviks sought to exploit. War Minister Guchkov and Foreign Minister Miliukov were forced to resign. Alexander Kerensky entered the government as War Minister. Kerensky was the only man who had been a member of both the Provisional Government and the Soviet since the revolution
APRIL/MAY	The Provisional Government claimed to be the legitimate government of Russia, but its authority was shaky and it did not have a firm grip on power
	The government was unable to stop the virtual anarchy in the countryside as peasants seized land and attacked landowners
	Faced with the massive problem of how to deal with the land issue, the government announced that it would leave resolution of the problem to a Constituent Assembly that would be elected at the end of the year
	Meanwhile, as news of land seizures began to spread, more and more soldiers deserted to come home and grab their share of land
JUNE	Kerensky ordered General Brusilov to launch an offensive on the South Western Front. An artillery barrage opened on the campaign and there was some brief success against Austrian forces
	Arrival of German forces led to a complete Russian breakdown. Men threw away their weapons and more than 170 000 deserted
	The offensive was a disaster as Russia lost hundreds of thousands of men and several million square kilometres of territory
JULY	Kerensky ordered Petrograd's 2nd and 3rd Machine Gun Companies to the front, but they refused, believing that the move was designed to break their power in the city
	Soon the city was in chaos, with 500 000 people demonstrating against the government and the war
	Kerensky, who believed the Bolsheviks were behind the trouble, recalled loyal troops back from the front and gave them orders to restore peace, destroy the Bolsheviks and arrest any revolutionary leaders

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	The Bolsheviks were split on what to do. Trotsky and others wanted to use the situation to seize power, but Lenin argued that the party was not ready. Whether or not the Bolsheviks were involved in a coup attempt at this time is debated by historians, but Kerensky's forces prevailed
	Leading Bolsheviks like Trotsky were captured while Lenin fled to Finland disguised as a worker
	Kerensky took over from Prince Lvov as prime minister
AUGUST	Kerensky soon faced a threat from his new Commander-in-Chief, General Lavr Kornilov. Kornilov sought a restoration of the death penalty, the removal of socialists from the government and a reduction in Soviet power. Kerensky opposed this, fearing it could lead to civil war
	Relations between Kerensky and Kornilov deteriorated. Kerensky believed Kornilov was incompetent and had dictatorial pretensions. Kerensky suspended Kornilov from his command and ordered him back to Petrograd. Kornilov responded by ordering General Krymov to lead troops against the Provisional Government in what was essentially an attempted military coup against Kerensky
SEPTEMBER	Kerensky rallied forces in Petrograd to face Krymov. The Petrograd Soviet and various political groups, including the Bolsheviks, were armed to face the oncoming troops and defend the government
	The 'Kornilov Affair' ended peacefully as the rival forces refused to fight each other. Krymov committed suicide, Kornilov was arrested and Kerensky's government survived
	However, the real winners were the Bolsheviks. They were seen as defenders of the revolution and the memories of their involvement in 'The July Days' faded. Once order had been restored, Bolshevik popularity increased, as seen in their electoral success in the Moscow and Petrograd Soviets, where they were now in a majority. Trotsky became Chairman of the Petrograd Soviet. In 1905, Trotsky had briefly been Chairman of the St Petersburg Soviet
	The Bolsheviks still had their arms provided to them by Kerensky to deal with Kornilov
OCTOBER	Lenin returned from Finland and called a meeting of the leading Bolsheviks, including Trotsky, Stalin, Kamenev and Zinoviev. The decision was taken to seize power
	The Military Revolutionary Committee was set up by the Petrograd Soviet, at Trotsky's suggestion, to plan a takeover. It was dominated by Bolsheviks and chaired by Trotsky

Dual Authority

The collapse of the tsar's regime created a political vacuum in Russia. It was filled by two bodies: the Provisional Government and the Petrograd Soviet of Workers' and Soldiers' Deputies. The bodies met in adjacent rooms of the Tauride Palace in Petrograd.

THE PROVISIONAL GOVERNMENT

The Provisional Government was so called because it did not see itself as Russia's final government. Its members had merely 'assumed power'. It was believed that following elections to a Constituent Assembly later in the year, Russia's proper legitimate government would be created. This was a serious error because it prevented the government from tackling major issues, such as land reform and implementing reforming policies.

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Members of the Provisional Government came from the Fourth Duma, which had been elected in 1912. The government was mainly composed of landowners, liberals and moderates. Key members included Prince Lvov (prime minister), Miliukov (foreign minister), Guchkov (minister of war) and Alexander Kerensky (minister of justice). Kerensky was a member of the Socialist Revolutionary Party.

War Minister Guchkov complained that the Provisional Government had no real power because its decisions were only carried out as far as the Soviet would allow. In essence, the Provisional Government, as Prince Lvov observed, had 'authority without power'.

Corbis

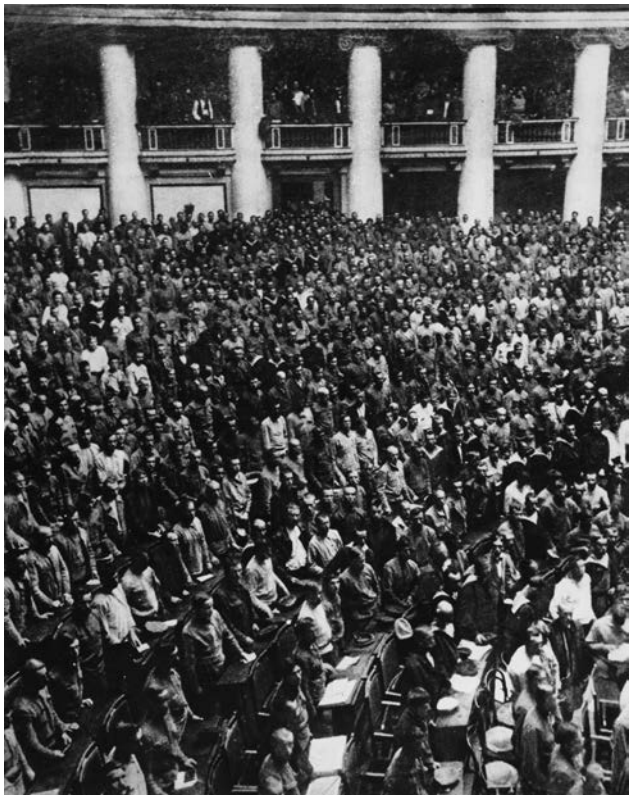
SOURCE 2.10 Discussions within the Provisional Government were generally calm and respectful, reflecting the fact that these men emanated from the tsar's conservative Fourth Duma. The leader, Kerensky, is standing second from right; others include Lvov (seated second from left) and Michael Rodzianko (seated first from right).

THE SOVIET OF WORKERS' AND SOLDIERS' DEPUTIES

On 27 February, 600 workers and soldiers met in the Tauride Palace and created the Petrograd Soviet of Workers' and Soldiers' Deputies. This was loosely modelled on the St Petersburg Soviet of 1905. At times, almost 3000 deputies would pack into the Soviet's meeting room to discuss issues. The first chairman was Nikolay Chkheidze, a Menshevik.

The Soviet wielded great influence. It controlled the railways, posts and telegraphs. Of even greater significance was the declaration of Order No. 1, issued to all military and naval forces:

+ Each military unit was to send deputies to represent it at the Soviet.
+ Any political activity was to be second to that of the Soviet.
+ Any instructions emanating from the Provisional Government should only be obeyed if they did not contradict decisions or resolutions of the Soviet.
+ All weapons fell under the control of soldier committees and not officers.
+ While on duty, soldiers were required to adhere to military discipline; while off duty, soldiers were entitled to 'enjoy the rights granted to citizens'.
+ No weapons were to be turned over to officers.
+ Officers were no longer to be referred to as 'Your honour' or 'Your excellency'.



Bridgeman/Bibliotheque Nationale, Paris, France / Archives Charmet

SOURCE 2.11 The Soviet in session in Petrograd, from the *Illustrated London News*, May 1927

The Provisional Government and the Soviet had emerged from the March Revolution, and there were many issues on which they agreed. However, as time went on, increasingly there were also points of difference. The following table summarises the key points of similarity and difference between the Provisional Government and the Soviet.

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TABLE 2.1 Provisional Government and the Petrograd Soviet – similarities and differences

Points of agreement

+ There was to be an end of tsarist-style censorship. There was to be absolute freedom of speech and of the press.
+ All political and religious prisoners were to be granted a full amnesty and released from the tsarist prisons.
+ Workers were to be allowed to form trade unions and have the right to strike.
+ All previous discrimination that had been based on religion, race or social class was to be abolished.
+ Preparations were to begin immediately for the election of a Constituent Assembly, which would have the job of drawing up a democratic constitution for Russia.
+ Elections would be held: they would be free, equal, and universal, and people would be allowed a secret ballot.
+ The tsar's hated secret police, the Okhrana, was to be disbanded.

It was fairly easy for the two bodies to agree on these issues. However, when it came to more specific policy matters, differences arose.

Points of disagreement

The Provisional Government	The Petrograd Soviet
+ Russia should honour its treaties, support its allies and continue to oppose Germany.	+ Peace should be pursued with Germany, and there should be a return to pre-war boundaries.
+ Land should remain in the current owners' hands until proper reforms with compensation had been implemented.	+ Land should be taken from the landowners and split up among the peasants without compensation.
+ The government should work cooperatively with those who owned and sold grain to ensure supplies for the towns and the army.	+ The government should immediately take control of grain supplies to ensure the army and the towns were supplied.
+ A new police force should be formed under government control.	+ Instead of a police force, there should be a people's militia whose officers were elected. This militia should be under the control of the elected bodies.
+ While the army was in the field, normal military discipline and procedures should be practised.	+ The army should elect its own officers, and end the previous brutal tsarist discipline.

As time went on, the differences between the Provisional Government and the Soviet increased, a process that intensified once Lenin returned from exile, though the Provisional Government was becoming more radical as socialist parties began to dominate.

The return of Lenin and the April Theses

The Bolsheviks had played virtually no role in the February Revolution, though Trotsky would try to argue later that the radicalism of Petrograd workers had been the result of steady Bolshevik education and propaganda. When the revolution broke out, Trotsky was in fact in New York. It would take him almost two months to reach Russia, suffering imprisonment by Canadian authorities along the way. Stalin, who was a minor party figure at this stage, was in Petrograd soon after Nicholas' abdication. Lenin was in Switzerland; he had spent less than three months in Russia during the past decade. The vast majority of Russians would have had difficulty explaining who Lenin was.

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Lenin managed to persuade German authorities to give him safe passage across Europe, via neutral Sweden, in a sealed train so that he could reach Russia. Lenin argued that his only concern was gaining power in Russia, and that once he had taken it, his first decision would be to withdraw Russia from the war. The Germans were dismissive, indeed suspicious, but the possibility of ending a two-front war had major strategic advantages. The German Chancellor, Bethmann Hollweg, instructed his Foreign Minister, Richard von Kuhlmann, to arrange transport for 32 Russian revolutionaries across Europe.

Lenin arrived at Petrograd's Finland Station on 3 April. He immediately changed the whole revolutionary dynamic in Russia. Since the tsar's abdication, the Bolsheviks inside Russia, including Stalin, had been supporting the Provisional Government. It was taken for granted by party members that Russia was not ready for socialism. Lenin had different ideas. As soon as he arrived, he demanded that Bolshevik support for the Provisional Government cease immediately. 'All power to the Soviets' became the catchcry of Lenin and the party. Many in the party thought Lenin was mad to pursue such a strategy, but Lenin believed that he could use the Soviet as a power base from which the Bolsheviks could eventually seize power.

Lenin's arrival at the Finland Station

This style of art is known as, 'Socialist Realism' (see chapter seven). The artist has used artis present an idealised version of Lenin's return to Russia. Study the painting carefully, and the questions that follow.

SOURCE 2.12 Vladimir Aleksandrovich Serov (1910–68), *Lenin Rallying the Workers at Finland Station*

continued

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continued

Questions

1. What impression is the artist trying to create of Lenin's return to Russia?
2. Describe how he has presented Lenin, the people around him and the general background.
3. What is significant about the people who are greeting Lenin?
4. The colour red is dominant in the painting. Why do you think that is so?
5. Do you think this is an accurate depiction of Lenin's return or do you think it is a piece of propaganda? Give reasons for your answer. Consider not only the context of Lenin's return, but also the context of the artist.

Lenin's other catchcry was: 'Peace, land and bread'. In this short phrase, he encapsulated the hopes and dreams of the Russian people. The majority of the population wanted an end to the futile war with Germany, the workers in the towns wanted food, and the peasants in the countryside wanted land reform. In fact, throughout most of 1917, the peasants were seizing land for themselves. Soon after his return, Lenin published his 'April Theses', which explained what Bolshevik policy was to be.

The April Theses

Lenin's return to Russia in April 1917 proved to be a turning point in the course of the Russian Revolution. His April Theses, which were published a few days after his speech at the Finland Station, completely altered Bolshevik strategy, though party members were not all in agreement with Lenin at first. Lenin was a man in a hurry who realised that history had given him an opportunity. The April Theses can be seen both in terms of outlining the party's political strategy and refining its ideological direction.

The April Theses were published in the party newspaper, *Pravda*, on 7 April under the title 'The tasks of the proletariat in the present revolution'. He had read them twice on 4 April at two meetings of the All-Russia Conference of Soviets of Workers' and Soldiers' Deputies.

Here is an edited account of the April Theses.

1 ... the war ... unquestionably remains on Russia's part a predatory imperialist war owing to the capitalist nature of that government ... in view of the fact that they (the proletariat) are being deceived by the bourgeoisie, it is necessary with particular thoroughness, persistence and patience ... to explain the inseparable connection existing between capital and the imperialist war, and to prove that without overthrowing capital it is impossible to end the war by a truly democratic peace, a peace not imposed by violence. The most widespread campaign for this view must be organised in the army at the front.

2 ... the country is passing from the first stage of the revolution ... to its second stage which must place power in the hands of the proletariat and the poorest sections of the peasants. This transition is characterised, on the one hand, by a maximum of legally recognised rights ... on the other, by the absence of violence towards the masses, and finally by their unreasoning trust in the government of capitalists, those worst enemies of peace and socialism. This peculiar situation demands of us an ability to adapt ourselves to the special conditions of Party work among unprecedentedly large masses of proletarians who have just awakened to political life.

3 No support for the Provisional Government ...

continued

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4 … The masses must be made to see that the Soviets of Workers' Deputies are the only possible form of revolutionary government, and that therefore our task is, as long as this government yields to the influence of the bourgeoisie, to present a patient, systematic, and persistent explanation of the errors of their tactics, an explanation especially adapted to the practical needs of the masses. As long as we are in the minority we carry on the work of criticising and exposing errors and at the same time we preach the necessity of transferring the entire state power to the Soviets of Workers' Deputies, so that the people may overcome their mistakes by experience.

5 Not a parliamentary republic … but a republic of Soviets of Workers', Agricultural Labourers' and Peasants' Deputies throughout the country, from top to bottom. Abolition of the police, the army and the bureaucracy. The salaries of all officials, all of whom are elective and displaceable at any time, not to exceed the average wage of a competent worker.

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

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

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

9 Party tasks:

- a Immediate convocation of a Party Congress;
- b Alteration of the Party Program, mainly:
  - i On the question of imperialism and the imperialist war;
  - ii On our attitude towards the state and our demand for a 'commune state';
  - iii Amendment of our out-of-date minimum program
- c Change of the Party's name

10 A new International. We must take the initiative in creating a revolutionary International, an International against the social-chauvinists and against the Centre.

Marxist Internet Archive, www.marxists.org/archive/lenin/works/1917/apr/04.htm, accessed 31 October 2014.

Questions

1. Construct a mind map that reduces each of the April Theses to either a word or a specific phrase, for example, point 4 could be, 'All power to the Soviets'.
2. Why does Lenin call for peace in point 1? Consider both the issues of context and ideology.
3. In point 2, what does the party need to spread throughout the general population?
4. How do you think point 5 would have been received by members of the Party? By the people in Russia?
5. Why was point 6 of such crucial importance to the Party?
6. Examine point 8. Lenin is not promising immediate socialism. How do think Russia might need to be governed in the short term? Give reasons for your answer.
7. Point 10 calls for a new International. There already existed what was known as the 'Second International', a loose grouping of European socialist parties. Lenin is calling for something new and more radical. What do you think he is expecting, or hoping to happen across Europe?
8. What do you think are the three most important points in Lenin's April Theses? In an extended paragraph explain your choices.

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THE JULY DAYS

By late June there was growing dissatisfaction with the Provisional Government. The new offensive against the Germans in June 1917 had resulted in enormous casualties in what proved to be another futile military adventure. Since February, hundreds of factories had closed down, resulting in unemployment and misery for Petrograd's people. Following a rousing speech from Trotsky on 2 July attacking the government, thousands of people took to the streets to protest. The protestors were joined by members of the 1st Machine Gun Regiment, 20 000 sailors from the Kronstadt naval base and thousands of workers from the Putilov steel complex. The massive protests that followed between 3 and 6 July are referred to as 'The July Days'. It has been estimated that up to half a million people were involved.

However, the protests were not organised or coordinated in any systematic manner, and Provisional Government forces were able to suppress them in a fairly short time. The July Days proved to be problematic for the Bolsheviks. Historians are divided on whether the protests were a Bolshevik attempt to seize power. If they were, it was an amateurish and near fatal attempt. Hundreds of Bolsheviks were rounded up and arrested, while several of the leaders were charged with treason. The party newspaper, *Pravda*, was closed down and the party's headquarters were taken over. Documents proving German financing for the party's activities were allegedly discovered, which allowed Kerensky to accuse the Bolsheviks of treason. Unlike Trotsky and Kamenev, who waited for arrest and imprisonment, Lenin fled across the border to Finland, disguised as a worker, having shaved off his beard.

Corbis/Bettmann

SOURCE 2.13 Petrograd on 4 July 1917. People flee as government troops open fire in their attempt to regain control. If the Bolsheviks were attempting to take power, it was a poorly organised affair

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Though the July Days proved to be a disaster for the party, Lenin had learnt important lessons. Lenin realised that he needed a tight party to seize power, a position he had held since he wrote *What is to be done?* in 1902. But he also realised that he needed a mass movement led by that tight party. In July he had only the latter; it would not be until October that he felt he also had the former. The Soviet now became increasingly important for the party. With no wide base of popular support, Lenin sought to achieve a majority in the Soviet. Lenin's earlier catchcry, 'All power to the Soviets' had not changed. However, he learnt that working in coalition with other groups in the Soviet would not work. Thus, what his slogan really meant now was, 'All power to the Bolsheviks'.

Corbis/Underwood & Underwood

SOURCE 2.14 Alexander Kerensky (centre, foreground) at a funeral for victims of the July Days Bolshevik rising, 1917

Alexander Kerensky (1881–1970)

Kerensky was a complex character who drew both enormous praise and enormous criticism. He had a fine legal mind and was a charismatic orator. For several months during 1917, he seemed to be the hope of a new democratic Russia. He was able to rouse an audience, and for a while he was even able to maintain Russia's effort in the war with Germany. However, this was the root of his ultimate failure. When the Bolsheviks turned on the Provisional Government in November 1917, Kerensky could not raise even 500 men to defend it. His decision to continue the war, while the Russian people were desperate for peace, was to be his most grievous error.

Alamy/ITAR-TASS Photo Agency

Kerensky's critics pointed to his arrogance and his penchant for comfort. On becoming prime minister, he lived in the tsarist Winter Palace, travelled in Nicholas' royal train and indulged in luxury. The Kadet Minister, Vladimir Nabokov, described Kerensky in the following terms:

> The man was gifted, but not of the highest calibre. He had the appearance of a dandy, the face of an actor and an unpleasant smile that bared his upper teeth … He combined abnormal vanity with a love of posing, ostentation and pomp … In his soul he must have realised that all the admiration and idolisation [he received] were mere mass hysteria, for he had neither the merits nor the intellectual and moral qualities to deserve them. He was a fortuitous little man, to whom history assigned a role in which he was destined to fail so ingloriously, without a trace.
>
> Vladimir Nabokov, quoted in Martin Sixsmith, *Russia: A 1,000-year Chronicle of the Wild East*, BBC Books, London, 2011, p. 197.

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MAJOR POINTS IN KERENSKY'S LIFE

1881		Born Alexander Fyodorovitch Kerensky in Simbirsk, 900 kilometres east of Moscow. Lenin was born in the same city (1870). Kerensky's father was a headmaster. (When Lenin was a student at Kazan University, he was taught by Kerensky's father.)
1904		Kerensky graduated in law from St Petersburg University and gained a reputation for defending people charged by the government with political offences
1905		He joined the Socialist Revolutionary Party
1912		Kerensky was elected to the Fourth Duma
1917	**MARCH**	Kerensky had long been an outspoken critic of the tsar's government. Following Nicholas II's abdication on 2 March 1917, Kerensky became minister of justice in the Provisional Government. He was also a leading member of the Petrograd Soviet
	JUNE	Kerensky was appointed minister of war
	JULY	Following the violence of the July Days, Kerensky became prime minister while continuing as minister of war
	AUGUST	Faced with an attempted military coup by his Commander-in Chief, General Kornilov, Kerensky was forced to call upon the Bolsheviks and other groups to protect his government
	SEPTEMBER	Kerensky survived Kornilov but he now faced the growing threat of increasing Bolshevik popularity in the Soviet
	OCTOBER	Lenin returned from Finland and gave the order to seize power
		The Bolsheviks overthrew the Provisional Government. Kerensky fled to Finland while most of his ministers were arrested. Kerensky did not return to Russia and spent the rest of his life living in France, Australia and the United States
1970		Kerensky died in New York

Questions

1. What were the strengths and weaknesses of Kerensky as a leader?
2. Evaluate Kerensky's contribution to the revolutionary crisis in Russia in 1917.

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The Kornilov Affair and after

Kerensky had faced a threat from the left during the July Days. In August he faced a threat from the right in the form of army commander General Lavr Kornilov. The clash between these two men highlights the scarcity of talent in Russia at this time. Kadet Minister Vladimir Nabokov argued that Kerensky was not of the highest calibre, while Kornilov was known as a man 'with the heart of a lion and the brain of a sheep'.

The course of the Kornilov Affair resulted, at worst, from the combination of Kornilov's overblown belief in his mission to save Russia from socialists conspiring with the German army, and Kerensky's desire to discredit Kornilov and gain credit for preventing a full-blown counter-revolution. At best, it was the result of miscommunication between the two men and the failure of each to understand the motivations of the other.

Kornilov briefly ended up in prison. Kerensky assumed the role of Commander-in-Chief on 13 September, but he did not gain the popularity and unquestioned authority that he expected his role in the affair would bring him. Instead, Kerensky's position had weakened. He had lost the respect and support of the army, while his Bolshevik enemies had gained enormous prestige for the way in which they had rallied to defend the revolution. The memories of the July Days seemed long gone.

The drama of the Kornilov Affair hid other political developments inside Russia. The mass enthusiasm and involvement of the people that had exploded in February had declined significantly. As life became harder, the war dragged on and food became ever scarcer, a degree of apathy in the political process was creeping in. The turnout for local elections in the major cities dropped considerably. In March there were sometimes more than 3000 people attending meetings of the Petrograd Soviet, but by September the number was down to a few hundred. However, the Bolsheviks remained active. Their courage

Following the debacle of the Brusilov Offensive in June, Kerensky appointed Lavr Kornilov as Supreme Commander of the Russian army in late July. Kornilov demanded that the government introduce stricter discipline in the army, including the restoration of the death penalty, to deal with the decline of order within the army.

Alamy/Chronicle/Robert Hunt Library

↓

Kornilov also had ideas of what to do at home. He called for strikes to be outlawed, was opposed to involvement of socialists in the government, and sought to end the influence of the Soviet, in particular the operation of Order No. 1.

↓

Relations between Kerensky and Kornilov worsened. Kerensky feared that Kornilov's anti-socialist campaign might lead to his removal from power, perhaps a return to the monarchy or even civil war. Misunderstanding and distrust enveloped the communications between the men. Kornilov came to believe that he was being offered a dictatorship to deal with a possible Bolshevik coup, while Kerensky believed that Kornilov was demanding a dictatorship and that Kerensky resign.

↓

In late August, Kerensky sacked Kornilov and demanded he return to Petrograd. Kornilov believed that the Bolsheviks had carried out a coup and were in league with the German General Staff. He ordered his troops to march on Petrograd.

↓

Kerensky turned to the Soviet to thwart Kornilov, and released Bolshevik prisoners who in turn organised Red Guard units to face Kornilov. The revolt collapsed. Railway workers refused to transport the troops and convinced them that they were being duped into supporting a coup. Kornilov had placed General Krymov in charge of the Petrograd expeditionary force. After being summoned to Kerensky, Krymov committed suicide. On 13 September, Kornilov and other leading officers were arrested. Kornilov escaped from prison shortly after the Bolshevik Revolution in November.

SOURCE 2.15 The Kornilov Affair

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Alamy/The Print Collector

SOURCE 2.16 General Lavr Kornilov inspecting troops, July 1917

in the face of the Kornilov Revolt was well received, and this was evident in the increased support they were receiving in elections to the Soviets. By late September, the Bolsheviks had gained majorities in both the Petrograd and Moscow Soviets; Trotsky became Chairman of the Petrograd Soviet on 25 September, the position he had held briefly in 1905. However, this was against a background of growing disenchantment with the political process. Consequently, it could be argued that the surge in Bolshevik popularity at this time was more apparent than real.

However, with Kerensky's appeal on the decline, and Bolshevik confidence increasing, it would not be long before the Bolsheviks would decide that the time was right to make their move.

Conclusion

The catastrophic impact of the war on the socioeconomic fabric and political structure of Russia led to the disintegration of the tsarist regime in February 1917. Following the abdication of Nicholas II, his government was replaced with a Provisional Government, which emerged from the Fourth Duma. However, it had to share power uneasily with the Soviet of Workers' and Soldiers' Deputies. These two elements of Dual Authority coexisted uneasily for the next eight months, but they were not able to deal with the fundamental problems that continued to beset the country: primarily the war and the land issue. The key figure in the Provisional Government, Alexander Kerensky, made the fateful mistake of continuing the war with Germany. Lenin's return to Russia in April added a new radical element to the political equation, as he ordered his party to oppose the Provisional Government and called for 'All power to the Soviets'.

In July, massive demonstrations were held against the government and the Bolsheviks were accused of staging a coup. Kerensky survived this episode but soon faced a threat from the military during the Kornilov Affair. Kornilov's attempted coup failed largely due to the efforts of Bolshevik units who fought to save the revolution. By October, Kerensky had become increasingly isolated, having lost support from the left as Bolshevik popularity continued to rise, and from the right as disillusionment within the army continued to grow.

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Chapter summary

+ Russia entered the First World War full of patriotic enthusiasm, but this soon disappeared as incompetent leadership and an underdeveloped economy brought on catastrophic losses.
+ The tsar's decision to assume command in 1915, and his weak leadership, added to political instability as the influence of Alexandra and Rasputin affected decision making at home.
+ Following a spontaneous revolution on the streets of Petrograd in February 1917, the tsar was forced to abdicate by his generals and duma politicians.
+ Between February and October, Russia was ruled by a Provisional Government. It failed to make fundamental decisions, believing these should be left to the government that would be formed after elections to a Constituent Assembly.
+ The Provisional Government had to share power with the Soviet in what became known as Dual Authority. The Soviet's Order No. 1 gave it the upper hand as troops were ordered to obey only those decisions of the Provisional Government that the Soviet accepted.
+ Lenin returned to Russia in April and immediately announced his April Theses, which called for the overthrow of the government, 'All power to the Soviets' and 'Peace, land and bread'.
+ The disastrous new offensive against the Germans in June was followed by the July Days when almost half a million people demonstrated against the government. The Bolsheviks were accused of staging a coup and many party members were arrested. Lenin fled to Finland.
+ In July, Alexander Kerensky became prime minister. Kerensky was a polarising figure who was admired by some as a dynamic figure and the saviour of Russia, but reviled by others as an indulgent political lightweight.
+ Kerensky's new Commander-in-Chief, General Kornilov, attempted to seize power in August, though Kerensky's critics argued that he had engineered the situation to enhance his own position.
+ The real winners of the Kornilov Affair were the Bolsheviks, who rallied to defend the revolution against the possible military coup.
+ The Bolsheviks had majorities in the Petrograd and Moscow Soviets by September.

Weblinks

Weblinks relevant to this chapter can be found at http://nmh.nelsonnet.com.au/russia

Further reading

David Christian, *Power and Privilege*, Pitman, Melbourne, 1991, Chapter 7.
Orlando Figes, *Revolutionary Russia 1891–1991*, Penguin, London, 2014, pp. 73–124.

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Robert Service, *Russia: From Tsarism to the Twenty-first Century*, Penguin, London, 2009, Chapters 2, 3.
Martin Sixsmith, *Russia: A 1,000-year Chronicle of the Wild East*, BBC Books, London, 2011, Chapters 18–20.

Chapter review activities

Russia at war

1 What roles did Tsar Nicholas II and Foreign Minister Sazonov play in taking Russia to war in 1914?

2 Why did the Russian army perform so poorly during the war?

3 Isolate the three main economic effects of the war on Russia.

4 Rasputin was a depraved, drunken, lecherous, illiterate 'holy man' who somehow managed to insinuate himself into the royal family and gradually wield significant influence. Do you think that Rasputin should be seen as a cause or a symptom of the regime's decline? Give reasons for your answer.

5 Do you think the tsar deserves the blame for the ineffectiveness of the Russian government during the war? Give reasons for your answer.

February 1917

6 What were the long and short term causes of the February 1917 Revolution? Explain which of these factors were the most significant.

7 In an extended paragraph, explain the importance of soldier mutinies in creating the conditions to inspire revolution.

8 'Spontaneous and leaderless.' To what extent is this an accurate description of the February Revolution of 1917?

Dual Authority

9 Outline the origins of the Provisional Government and the Soviet.

10 Construct a dialogue between a leading figure of the Provisional Government – let us call him Vladimir Orkosky – and a leader figure of the Soviet – let us call her Alexandra Pavlov. In your dialogue, have the two figures discussing the issues on which they agree and disagree.

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11 Evaluate the significance of Dual Authority as a factor compounding the revolutionary situation in Russia during 1917.

The return of Lenin and the April Theses

12 Research the experiences of both Lenin and Trotsky from December 1905 to May 1917, and summarise your findings on a timeline.

13 What impact did Lenin's return to Russia have on the policies of the Bolshevik Party?

The July Days

14 What happened during the July Days?

15 What had Lenin learnt from the events of this time?

The Kornilov Affair

16 How did both Kornilov and Kerensky seek to present the events of the Kornilov Affair?

17 Who were the real winners of the Kornilov Affair? Give reasons for your answer.

Overview

18 Create an annotated and illustrated timeline of the long - and short-term factors contributing to the March 1917 Revolution.

Research

19 Research the background and post-1917 fate of the following people:
   a Nicholas' mother, the Dowager Empress Maria Feodorovna
   b Count Yusupov, the man who murdered Rasputin in December 1916.

Historical interpretations

20 Several historians have been mentioned throughout this chapter. Re-read each of their extracts and in a table summarise their arguments and your evaluation of their arguments.

Essay questions

21 The causes of the March 1917 Revolution were the same as those in 1905, only they were compounded by the events of the First World War. Discuss.

22 Consider the following quote from David Christian: 'It seems that Nicholas' failures as a politician go a long way to explaining why, when the revolution finally came in 1917, it swept away not only the autocratic government, but the whole traditional ruling group of Russia'. Is the role of Tsar Nicholas the most significant factor in explaining the collapse of autocratic government in 1917?

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CHAPTER THREE

The new Bolshevik regime: 1917–1918

Lenin's secret return to Russia in October 1917 completely changed Russia's political future. By force of argument, he convinced the party that the time was right to seize power and remove the Provisional Government. The planned coup would be carried out in the name of the Soviets. The Bolshevik Revolution of October 1917 was a capital affair. Under the leadership of Trotsky, it was well organised and almost bloodless. Kerensky's support had melted away and he soon fled Russia. However, the Bolshevik hold on power was tenuous at best, and it faced a mountain of problems. The Bolsheviks' opponents in the Congress of Soviets were shouted down and told to enter 'the dustbin of history'. The new government, referred to as SOVNARKOM, introduced a program that was populist in nature and was primarily designed to shore up its precarious position by immediately calling for peace and issuing a Land Decree. However, the new regime also showed it had teeth. In December 1917, it established its own secret police, the Cheka, which dealt with opponents mercilessly. When election results for the Constituent Assembly did not go the Bolsheviks' way, that body was summarily closed down. By the middle of 1918, the Bolsheviks were still in power, but its enemies were lining up against them, ready to strike them down.

INQUIRY QUESTION

+ How were the Bolsheviks able to take power in October 1917?
+ How did the Bolsheviks consolidate their hold on power?

❮ Images of Lenin as the inspirational leader featured prominently in propaganda material produced by the Bolshevik Party. His distinctive beard and either worker's cap or bald head made him an easily identifiable figure in a largely illiterate society, as this 1917 poster demonstrates.

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The Bolsheviks seize power

By October 1917, the Provisional Government was in clear decline. Parts of the countryside were facing near anarchy as peasant land seizures continued; in the cities, law and order were breaking down in the face of ever-worsening social and economic distress. And Russia still faced the threat of German attacks.

It is against this background that the rise in Bolshevik popularity and Kerensky's growing isolation were occurring. There were increasing calls for the Soviet to take power. The Bolsheviks were not the only revolutionary socialist party, but it was Lenin who had been calling for 'All power to the Soviets' since April.

THE DECISION TO ACT

Lenin believed that only a Bolshevik revolt could end the Provisional Government and bring about Soviet power. He also believed that any Soviet government had to be Bolshevik dominated, as only the Bolsheviks, he argued, had a real revolutionary program. However, the party was split. There were some who argued that the Bolsheviks should not risk their current popularity with violent action. Lenin's main opponents were Zinoviev and Kamenev, who went so far as to publish their objections to Lenin's ideas. (This open defiance of Lenin would come back to haunt them in the 1920s – see chapter five). Lenin returned to Petrograd on 8 October and two days later he was addressing the party Central Committee, arguing, 'History will not forgive us if we do not take power now'. Lenin was afraid that a future Soviet government would contain several parties and that the Bolsheviks would be in a minority.

Alamy/Glasshouse Images | Alamy/David Cole | Corbis/Underwood & Underwood | Corbis/Hulton-Deutsch Collection

SOURCE 3.1 Left to right: Lenin, Trotsky, Zinoviev and Kamenev. Lenin faced opposition from Zinoviev and Kamenev, but he was persuaded by Trotsky to delay any attempted coup.

Trotsky backed Lenin but persuaded him to delay any takeover until the Second All-Russian Congress of Soviets in late October, arguing that after a successful coup, a new government could be presented to the Congress. Lenin agreed and argued that a seizure of power could thus be done in the name of the Soviets. Lenin was also keen to ensure power had been taken before the Constituent Assembly elections, as a poor Bolshevik performance in these could affect their freedom of action.

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Lenin (1870–1924)


Corbis/Leemage

Lenin was born Vladimir Ilyich Ulyanov in Simbirsk on the River Volga in April 1870. He came from a comfortable, well-educated professional family. A bright student at school, Lenin entered university to study law. Exposed to revolutionary ideas and people he met there, and greatly affected by the execution of his brother, Alexander, in 1887, he became increasingly radical in his thinking, eventually turning to Marxism. His activism led to his expulsion from university and he was forced to complete his legal studies externally, which he managed to do in 1891.

By the early 1890s, Lenin had become fully involved in revolutionary activities, using his considerable intellect to pen revolutionary tracts and agitate for the overthrow of tsarism. He spent much of 1896 in custody, and in 1897 he was exiled to Siberia for his revolutionary activities.

In 1900, having completed his sentence in Siberia, Lenin left Russia and went to Munich. In December 1900, he produced the first edition of the revolutionary newspaper *Iskra*. By now Lenin was giving much time and thought to how a revolution might be achieved. In 1902, he wrote, *What is to be done?* in which he argued for the need for a centralised, highly disciplined revolutionary party that would contain just a few dedicated full-time revolutionaries. Lenin argued that this party would develop a revolutionary consciousness among the working class and lead it towards revolution.

In 1903, Lenin was based in London. At the Second Congress of the Marxist Russian Social Democratic Labour Party, he triggered a split in the party, which resulted in the creation of the Mensheviks and his Bolsheviks.

Lenin returned to Russia briefly in late 1905 during the revolution of that year. However, from 1905 to the February Revolution of 1917, he spent very little time in Russia. During this period, he lived in Finland, Geneva and Paris. During the First World War, Lenin was in Switzerland. He attended the Zimmerwald Conference of antiwar socialists in 1915. At this time, he openly admitted that he did not expect a revolution to occur in Russia in his lifetime.

In 1916, Lenin wrote *Imperialism: The highest stage of capitalism*. In this major work he argued that wars between imperialist powers could spark a revolution, even in a backward country like Russia. Such revolutions could then spread to more developed nations.

When the February revolution broke out in 1917, Lenin was still in Switzerland. He was able to travel across Europe to Petrograd in a sealed train provided by the German government. He returned to Russia in April 1917.

Questions

1. Using the internet and other sources, gather a collection of 10 Lenin quotes about revolution made prior to the events of October 1917. For each quote you should note the year, the source and your summary of its meaning. Based on your knowledge, which of these quotes are the most significant?
2. Why do historians frequently regard Lenin as the key figure of the October Revolution? Explain why Lenin is regarded as more important than Trotsky, Zinoviev or Kamenev.

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THE BOLSHEVIK TAKEOVER

Lenin's impatience to act seems quite logical with the benefit of hindsight, but at the time it took all his skills of persuasion to bring the party with him and attempt a coup. Historians over time have differed in the assessment of the factors that shaped Lenin's thinking at this time. Christopher Hill, in *Lenin and the Russian Revolution* (1947), argued that Lenin had two major fears by late 1917. Firstly, Hill argues, Lenin believed that the army command might give up Petrograd and the fleet to the Germans in preference to Soviet control. Secondly, with anarchy growing in the countryside, power had to be taken now before a military strongman came along to establish a military dictatorship and 'restore order'.

More recently Robert Service, in *Russia: From Tsarism to the Twenty-first Century* (2009), has argued that Lenin realised that the Bolsheviks would not have a clear majority in the forthcoming Congress of Soviets. He would not be able to get his policies through the Congress without having to compromise with other groups such as the Mensheviks and the Socialist Revolutionaries. Lenin could think of nothing worse than having to share power with such groups. In particular, Service notes:

> "His counter-measure was to get the Military-Revolutionary Committee to grab power hours in advance of the Congress on the assumption that this would probably annoy the Mensheviks and Socialist Revolutionaries enough to dissuade them from joining a coalition with the Bolsheviks."
>
> Robert Service, *Russia: From Tsarism to the Twenty-first Century*, Penguin, London, 2009, pp. 65–6.

The Bolshevik attempt to take power in October 1917 was not without great risk. Lenin's decision was the ultimate gamble. The Bolsheviks were in a far weaker position than the Provisional Government, and some in the party wanted to wait for a multiparty revolution by the Congress of Soviets. It was Kerensky's error on 23 October of moving against the Bolsheviks and sparking fears of a right-wing coup that galvanised the Bolsheviks into action.

Lenin's will ensured that the October Revolution would take place, but Trotsky's skills of organisation ensured it would be a success. It was Trotsky who had persuaded Lenin to delay the takeover until the Second Congress of All-Russian Soviets, so that the new government could be presented to the Congress and the claim could be made that the takeover had been done in the name of the Soviet. It was Trotsky who was the brains behind the Military Revolutionary Committee,

Getty Images/Roger Viollet

SOURCE 3.2 Lenin (left) and Trotsky (saluting). Though Lenin was the undisputed leader of the Bolsheviks and made the decision to seize power, it was Trotsky who was responsible for carrying out the coup.

Nikolai Mikhaylovich Kochergin/Museum Stock

SOURCE 3.3 Nikolai Korchergin's painting *Storming the Winter Palace,* vividly and heroically reconstructs the Bolshevik seizure of power in October 1917.

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which controlled Petrograd's arms and manpower. It was Trotsky who, from the Smolny Institute, coordinated Red Guard units to seize the key installations in Petrograd such as bridges and the railway station. It was Trotsky who sent Red Guard units into the Winter Palace to arrest members of the Provisional Government. The storming of the Winter Palace was not quite the heroic episode of later Soviet propaganda, seen most notably in Sergei Eisenstein's 1928 film, *October*.

THE NOVEMBER BOLSHEVIK REVOLUTION OF 1917

10 OCTOBER	Lenin addressed the Party Central Committee and won the argument about attempting a coup
16 OCTOBER	Formation of the Military Revolutionary Committee
24 OCTOBER	The Petrograd garrison rose up against the Provisional Government
	Red Guard units captured strategic city locations including bridges, the railway station, post office, telegraph and banks. There was very little violence
	The Provisional Government seemed paralysed in the face of the Bolshevik action
25 OCTOBER	Red Guard troops attacked the Winter Palace
	The cruiser *Aurora*, moored in the River Neva, fired blank shells on the Winter Palace
	Artillery from the Peter and Paul fortress, to the north of the Winter Palace, fired a series of shells at the palace. Most missed and damage was minimal
	Provisional Government ministers were arrested, but Kerensky managed to escape
	The Second All-Russian Congress of Soviets opened. Lenin announced that power had passed into the hands of the Petrograd Soviet
	Menshevik and Socialist Revolutionaries members walked out in protest at the Bolshevik action
26 OCTOBER	The new government – Council of People's Commissars – was announced, with Lenin as chairman
27 OCTOBER	The Bolsheviks faced attacks from opposition groups outside of Petrograd, including in Georgia and the Don Region
28 OCTOBER	There were signs of increasing opposition to the Bolsheviks
29 OCTOBER	Kerensky led Cossack troops to Tsarskoye Selo on the outskirts of Petrograd
	When troops inside Petrograd refused to lay down their arms, Kerensky's men fired on them. This proved to be disastrous for Kerensky and his reputation never recovered
30 OCTOBER	Red Guard troops defeated opposition Cossacks in the Don Region and Kerensky's troops at Tsarskoye Selo
31 OCTOBER	The Bolsheviks gained control of Moscow. There were hundreds of casualties. However, the Bolsheviks still remained weak in parts of the country
1 NOVEMBER	Bolshevik support was firming
2 NOVEMBER	Lenin announced that the Bolsheviks were in control of the country. The truth was that the Bolshevik hold on power was tenuous at best

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Eisenstein's *October: Ten days that shook the world*

One of the great filmmakers of the 1920s was the Soviet director Sergei Eisenstein. Eisenstein was born in 1898 in Riga (modern-day Latvia). He studied engineering and architecture, and in 1918 joined the Bolshevik Red Army. During the civil war, he fought against his own father, Mikhail. Eisenstein's first film was *Glumov's Diary* in 1923. His greatest films were *Battleship Potemkin* about the 1905 Revolution, and *October* about the Bolshevik takeover.

Eisenstein saw film as a means of educating the masses about history and the revolutionary movement. In this sense, Eisenstein was a propagandist filmmaker, a description that he accepted as a badge of honour. His films were **didactic**. To achieve his aims, Eisenstein employed the method of 'montage', the juxtapositioning of contrasting shots, degrees of light and levels of film speed. Montage enabled him to produce films that had a **dialectical** quality.

didactic
Art that is didactic, as in film, has the purpose of educating its audience and teaching a lesson

dialectic
Term that originated with the German philosopher Hegel, and was developed in a different form by Karl Marx. The idea of the dialectic is that any idea (thesis) has its opposite (antithesis), and that the clash of these two produces a new idea (synthesis). The synthesis becomes the new thesis and the process begins again.

Picture-desk.com

SOURCE 3.4 Lenin figures prominently as the heroic leader in Eisenstein's *October*

Alamy/Pictorial Press Ltd

SOURCE 3.5 A still from Sergei Eisenstein's 1928 film *October* showing Red Guards seizing the Winter Palace. In fact, the action was certainly not as dramatic as this.

Eisenstein's idea for *October* was to create a five-act drama. Each act began with a thesis, which he would develop, sometimes using the method of montage, and this would be followed by its antithesis, By the end of each act, the clash between his thesis and antithesis would be resolved by the creation of a synthesis, which in Act 2 would become the new thesis, and the process would be begin again.

October begins with Eisenstein's thesis, the image and power of tsarist Russia, complete with palaces, gold, jewels and the symbols of the monarchy. The next part of the film presents his antithesis, shots of starving masses, toiling workers and destitute peasants. The synthesis comes with the scene of the tsar's statue being attacked, roped and pulled down so that it shatters into pieces. Eisenstein's synthesis becomes his new thesis and we see banners that proclaim 'Long live the Provisional Government'.

Act 2 shows the struggle between the Petrograd workers and their enemies, seen as the supporters of General Kornilov.

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continued

Act 3 presents the struggle between the Bolsheviks and the Provisional Government, who are grouped with various enemies of the Bolsheviks, such as the Mensheviks and the SRs. It concludes with plans being made for the seizure of power. The planning for the seizure of power is the synthesis for Act 3 and becomes the thesis for Act 4.

However, Eisenstein seems to get carried away with the Bolshevik takeover in the later parts of the film. Instead of continuing with the conflict between thesis and antithesis, Eisenstein has the Bolsheviks overwhelming the opposition with an air of inevitability. This is seen in the long sequence towards the end of the film involving the storming of the Winter Palace and the fighting that ensued, which of course did not happen.

Pioneer though Eisenstein was, modern audiences might not be as absorbed as audiences of earlier times. This is because Eisenstein's method lacks the subtlety of modern propaganda films.

Questions

Eisenstein's *October* is an important and influential artistic representation of the Bolshevik Revolution. Watch clips from the film and make note of the symbols Eisenstein uses to convey his message.

The film was made to coincide with the 10th anniversary of the October Revolution by the Communist Party, as the Bolsheviks later renamed themselves.

1. Why would they have commissioned such a film?
2. What uses might such a film have to historians of the Russian Revolution?

The new government: SOVNARKOM

Following Lenin's announcement that power had been seized in the name of the Soviets, many non-Bolshevik deputies walked out in protest. Trotsky famously yelled after them: 'You are pitiful isolated individuals; you are bankrupts; your role is played out. Go where you belong from now on — into the dustbin of history!' With only Bolsheviks and their left-SR allies present in the Congress, Lenin had his majority and when he spoke to those present he was received rapturously. John Reed, an American journalist who witnessed the revolution, provides a telling description of Lenin at this time. Far from appearing as the dynamic, all-conquering revolutionary hero, Lenin appeared as:

> A short stocky figure, with a big head set down in his shoulders, bald and bulging. Little eyes, a snobbish nose, wide generous mouth and heavy chin … Dressed in shabby clothes, his trousers much too long for him. Unimpressive, to be the idol of the mob, loved and revered as perhaps few leaders in history have been.
>
> John Reed, *Ten Days that Shook the World*, Modern Library, New York, 1960, p. 170.

The new government was called 'The Council of People's Commissars', or SOVNARKOM, and had 16 members. It was one thing to seize power; it was quite another to hold on to it and to actually do anything with it. Lenin's new government was in a precarious position at the end of 1917, and it faced a multitude of problems. Source 3.6 summarises the enormous difficulties that SOVNARKOM faced in its early days.

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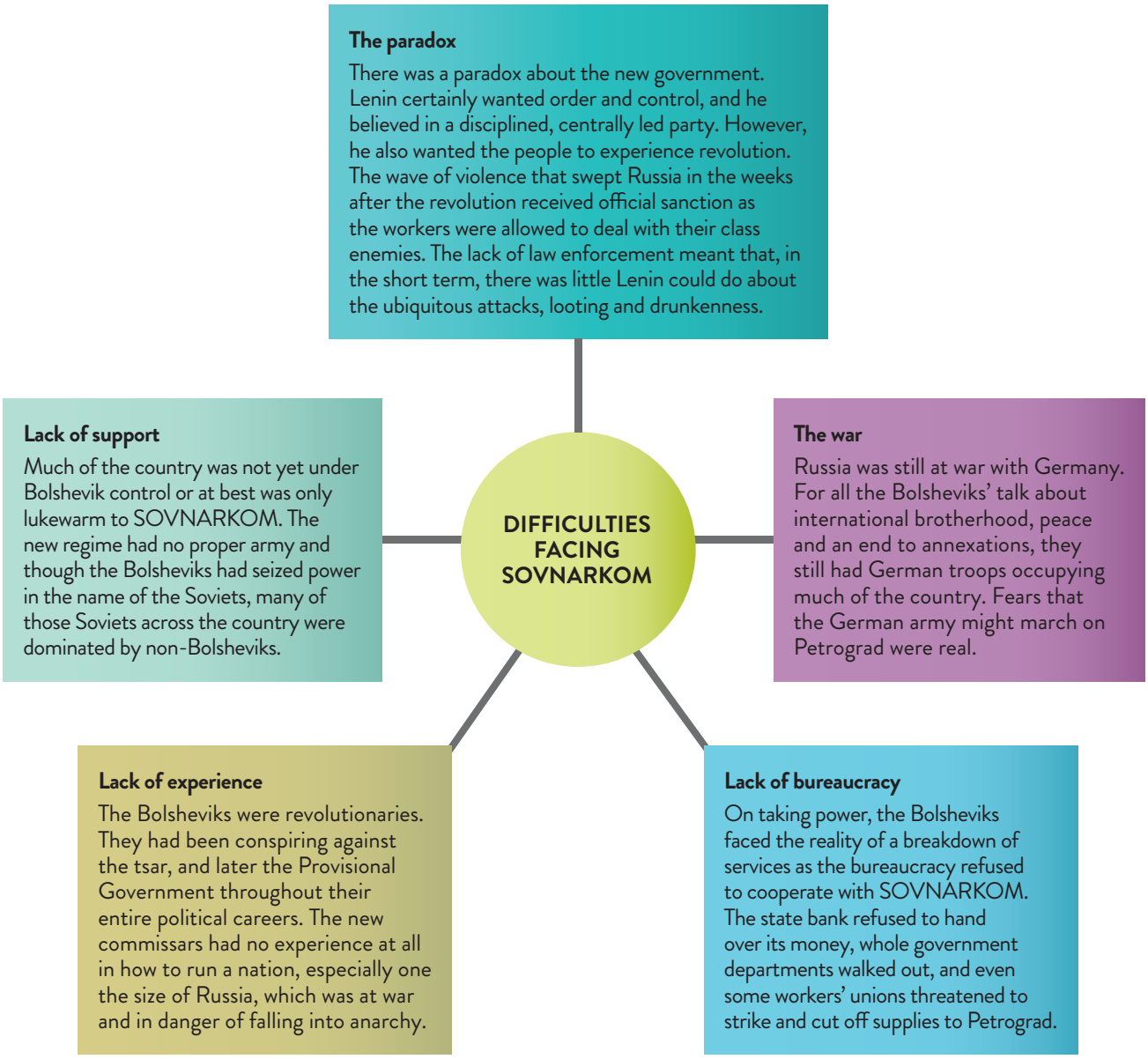
TABLE 3.1 Key figures of the Council of People's Commissars

Commissariat held	Holder of the position in the first council
Chairman	Vladimir Lenin
Agriculture	Vladimir Milyutin
Education and Enlightenment	Anatoly Lunacharsky
Foreign Affairs	Leon Trotsky
Internal Affairs	Alexei Rykov
Nationalities	Josef Stalin
Social Welfare	Alexandra Kollontai



SOURCE 3.6 Difficulties facing SOVNARKOM

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HOW DID IT ALL HAPPEN?

When the tsar abdicated in March 1917, few people would have predicted that within eight months Russia would be under a Bolshevik government. Lenin was in Switzerland, Trotsky was in New York, and other leading Bolsheviks were in Siberia. Those who were in Petrograd, such as Stalin, were happy to support the Provisional Government that emerged from the Fourth Duma. Yet it happened. The Provisional Government proved to be inept both in the formulation and practice of policy, and once Lenin had returned to Russia, the Bolsheviks remained determined and focused on the ultimate goal of taking power. Source 3.7 summarises the reasons for the failure of the Provisional Government.

Failure of the Provisional Government

The fundamental reason for the failure of the Provisional Government was the decision to continue the war. After two and half years of bloody, futile fighting, the Russian people were yearning for peace. Casualties in their millions, lack of supplies and incompetent leadership had broken the Russian army. Widespread mutiny and desertion were the evidence for this. However, the Provisional Government was in a difficult position. Faced with economic collapse, it relied upon money from Russia's allies. Those allies made it clear that money would disappear if Russia pulled out of the war. Many in the government also agreed with the army's stubborn generals that it was a matter of honour for Russia to fight on. But the catastrophe of the June Offensive merely exacerbated the longing of the people for peace, which Lenin offered.

To many in the country, the Provisional Government lacked legitimacy. A small group of Russia's privileged elite who happened to be in the tsar's Fourth Duma had formed it. It had no mandate and had not been popularly elected. The Soviet, on the other hand, seemed to be a representation of the popular will.

The Provisional Government also faced internal divisions from the start. Its members ranged from aristocrats, such as its first leader Prince Lvov, to members of the Socialist Revolutionary Party, such as Kerensky. This lack of common interests made policy formulation next to impossible.

It should also be noted that from the start, the Provisional Government coexisted in an uneasy relationship with the Soviet. The Provisional Government increasingly became a government viewed as having authority without power. The Soviet's Order No. 1, which instructed troops to obey no order of the Provisional Government unless the Soviet agreed with it, for example, seriously undermined the authority of the government.

The Provisional Government also lacked any real coercive power. Army discipline was breaking down and the Soviet had greater sway over the troops. In addition, Okhrana and tsarist police had been broken up, but the government was unable to replace them with any authoritative force that could deal with the increasing lawlessness that was spreading across Russia's cities and the countryside.

The Provisional Government also gradually alienated each of the social groups throughout the country. This was partly due to its own perception of itself. It failed to tackle Russia's key problems, such as land reform, believing that its position was only 'provisional'. These major decisions, they believed, should be left to the government that would be elected to the Constituent Assembly. Failure to act on land reform angered all. Landowners and property owners wanted action against those seizing property and demanded compensation. Peasants wanted their rights

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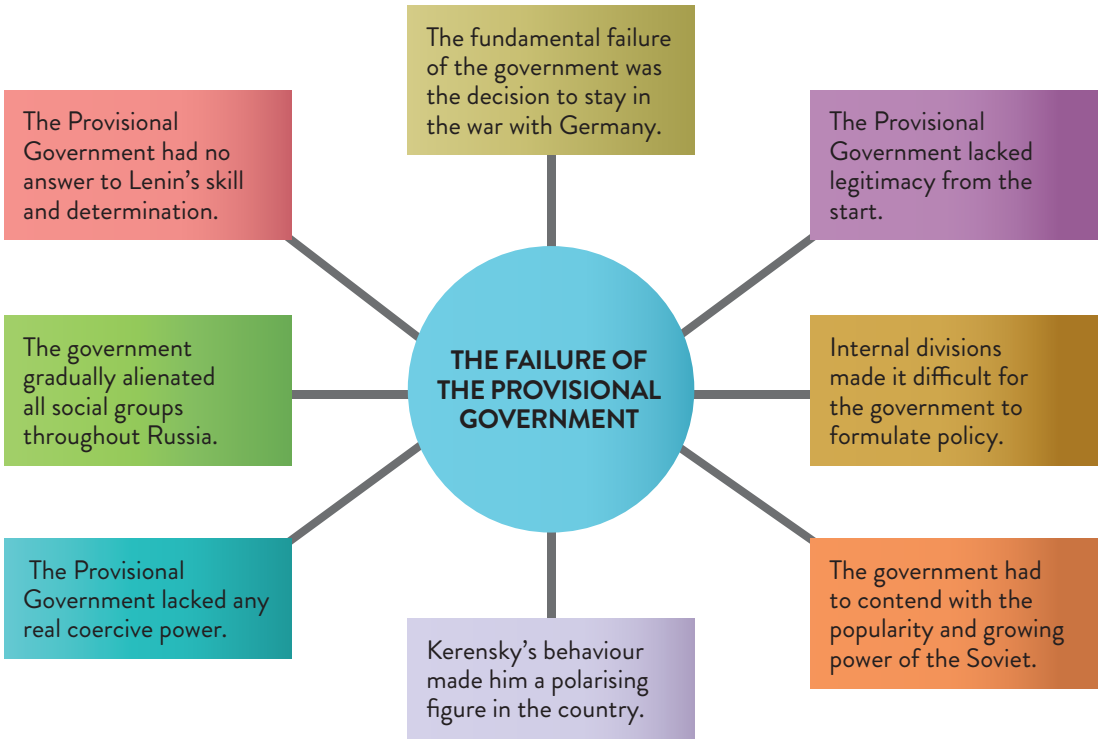
to take land to be properly recognised. The Provisional Government was unable to satisfy either and thus alienated both.

The role of individuals was also significant. Kerensky, initially as the war minister and then prime minister, became an increasingly polarising figure. While, clearly the most able figure in the Provisional Government, Kerensky's standing magnified the responses to mistakes he made, such as the decision to launch the June Offensive. His personal behaviour alienated many. Kerensky soon took a liking to the pomp and luxury that the tsar had enjoyed, such as travelling the country in the former imperial train. Kerensky's reputation was also harmed by the rumours of his use of cocaine and having a mistress.

Lenin's return to Russia in April was another contributing factor in the ultimate failure of the Provisional Government. As he was not part of the government, Lenin was able to present Bolshevik policy as fundamentally different – an alternative to the flailing Provisional Government. The party succeeded, most obviously in the area of propaganda, where the Provisional Government failed. Lenin's simple slogans such as 'Peace, land and bread' and 'All power to the Soviets' galvanised his supporters and gradually those outside the party. The Bolshevik response to the Kornilov revolt also did much to increase the party's popularity, as is apparent in the Petrograd and Moscow Soviet elections that followed. Lenin's strategy of using small, tightly disciplined groups to achieve his ends suited the times.



SOURCE 3.7 The failure of the Provisional Government

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THE FACTORS CONTRIBUTING TO REVOLUTION

The success of revolutionary forces in Russia in 1917 has led some people to argue that revolution in Russia was inevitable. Marxists were certainly attracted to this determinist way of looking at things. However, nothing in history is inevitable. Events, such as revolutions, occur for many reasons. The state of the economy, social conditions, cultural trends, ideas, long- and short-term factors, as well as the choices made by individuals, are among the many preconditions, or causes, of a revolution.

The factors that determine the success or failure of revolution vary from country to country, and time to time. In some instances, socioeconomic distress combined with the failure of government to act can be crucial. Arguably this was the case in France in 1789. Protest against exploitation, foreign and domestic, led by a charismatic leader can be crucial, as was the case in Cuba in 1959. Nationalist opposition to foreign rule can ignite revolution, as happened in Vietnam. In all revolutions, several specific factors can be identified that played a major or a minor role, depending on the situation. These factors include socioeconomic breakdown, leadership, ideas, the involvement of the masses, the role of specific groups, the behaviour of the military and of course 'luck'. The two revolutions of February and October 1917 involved all of these factors but not in the same way.

The February Revolution

The February Revolution was essentially leaderless. There was no planning, no conspiracy, but the regime collapsed. In fact the only element of leadership was the tsar's lack of it. The revolution was the response to the socioeconomic disintegration of the country brought on by the war. In Petrograd in February 1917, the masses played a key role, including the women who participated in the demonstrations of International Women's Day on 23 March, which sparked wider demonstrations. Specific groups, such as political parties, played almost no role in the events. The role of the military concerned only the general demoralisation that had permeated the army from top to bottom, leaving the tsar with no forces to defend him. It was in this context that, Orlando Figes argues, military and political figures persuaded the tsar to step down. Ideas were not prominent, beyond a general disillusionment with the current regime and the desire for change, any change. The masses in February were lucky that the military refused to shoot into the Petrograd crowds and support the tsar.

The October Revolution

October 1917 was quite different. Leadership was the essence of the revolution. Without Lenin's determination, his ability to carry his colleagues with him and his single-minded pursuit of power, there would have been no Bolshevik takeover. This understanding, that the October Revolution was all about planning and conspiracy, is a common explanation among historians, including Christopher Hill, who emphasise the role of Lenin and the Bolsheviks as key factors in their explanations. Other historians, sometimes described as Revisionists, in contrast, place greater emphasis on the socioeconomic situation in Russia that was as dire as in February. However, even with the people's longing for peace, this was not leading to the spontaneous action that had occurred eight months earlier. The masses played little role in October. Certainly,

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Corbis/Bettmann

SOURCE 3.8 Revolutionary Bolsheviks and soldiers in Petrograd, October 1917

the Bolsheviks' popularity had increased, but action was carried out by small, tightly disciplined groups, which Lenin had always argued were necessary for success. Ideas played a much bigger role in October than in February. Bolshevik propaganda regarding the war and land had been a key factor in building up its support base. The role of the military was important in that Kerensky could not raise even 500 men to deal with the Bolshevik coup. Luck played its part as the Bolsheviks had been able to maintain secrecy about their specific intentions.

Historians interpret the revolution

In an ideal world, historians would work in the following way. They would approach the past with empty minds, free of any political, cultural, religious or national perspective, without any regard to race, sexuality or gender. They would produce history free of the influence of personal experiences. They would research their topics, and from this empirical research would emerge 'the truth'. Alas, we do not live in an ideal world. History is constantly being rewritten. The actual events of the past do not change (though new research may introduce things that were not previously known), but historians' views of those events do change. When historians write about the past, they cannot escape their national, cultural and political contexts. They do not leave their own history and their own beliefs at the door, try though they might. Hence, history is constantly reinterpreted.

The events of 1917 in Russia have been pored over by historians for decades. The style of analysis has often depended on the political and national standpoint of the historian. In the West, the success of the Bolsheviks was something to be mourned or celebrated, depending on one's own political or philosophical stance. In the Soviet Union, interpretations varied depending on the prevailing political climate. Since the end of the Cold War in 1991 and the opening of the old Soviet archives, treatment of the Russian Revolution has been less overtly political.

Historians have written millions of words about 1917, producing countless interpretations depending on the standpoint of the historian. However, for the purpose of this discussion, historians writing about the events of 1917 have been divided into three broad groups: Soviet historians, liberal historians and revisionists historians. Source 3.9 summarises these three main strands.

SOVIET AND MARXIST INTERPRETATIONS

Soviet historians generally writing in the Soviet Union between 1917 and 1990, tended to view the events in heroic terms and saw the victory of the Bolsheviks as the greatest event in history. Lenin was seen as a courageous, inspired leader and raised to almost divine status. Every Soviet citizen was expected to walk past his embalmed body in the Lenin Mausoleum in Moscow's Red

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The Soviet interpretation

Soviet historians view 1917 through the prism of Marxism. They see the revolution as inevitable, necessary and an episode in human progress: the climax of the class struggle. Lenin's theoretical views are added to this interpretation. Capitalism had reached its final stage: imperialism. Revolution would break out first where imperialism was weakest: Russia. The party of Lenin was required to lead the revolution. The revolution was thus the result of the Marxist laws of history and the work of the Bolsheviks.

Liberal Western interpretation

Western liberal historians view the revolution of November 1917 as a disaster. They argue that to view history through the prism of Marxism is simplistic, as history is far more complicated than that allows. They argue that the masses played little role in events, the Bolsheviks had only minority support and that success was the result of ruthless opportunism. In essence, western liberal historians view the October Revolution not as fortunate but as a tragedy for Russia, which was to be denied democracy for the next 70 years.

Revisionist interpretation

Since the 1960s, revisionist historians have tried to examine 1917 by avoiding the rigidity of Marxist analysis and the antagonistic stance of the liberal historians. They have tended to focus on examining the role of ordinary people, that is 'history from below', and assessing their impact on events, rather than the usual focus on leading individuals. They also examine the change from the heady idealistic days of 1917 to the brutal reality that the Soviet regime became.

SOURCE 3.9 Historians and the Russian Revolution

Square at least once in their life. The revolution was the climax of the class struggle, but it needed 'subjective' conditions, that is, Lenin's party to lead the proletariat, guided by Marxist principles. The party, this view argues, led the proletariat in February, and then welded the proletariat into an unbeatable revolutionary force by October. Some Western historians influenced by Marxism, such as Christopher Hill and Isaac Deutscher, later wrote favourably about Lenin and the success of the revolution.

WESTERN INTERPRETATIONS

However, once Stalin had gained ascendancy, the role of Trotsky was written out of history, except to damn him, while the fairly inconsequential role of Stalin in the events of 1917 was built up. The treachery of Stalin's rivals was traced back to 1917 and before, and Stalin's role in the revolution grew beyond all recognition of the known facts. In his eyewitness account of the October Revolution, *Ten Days that Shook the World,* John Reed does not give Stalin a single sentence. Once expression was freed up under President Gorbachev in the 1980s, Trotsky's role was 'rediscovered' although he is still not regarded as a heroic figure. Russian writers since the Cold War have been freed of having to toe the strict party line on their country's history.

Western liberal historians obviously do not approach their study of the past from the standpoint of Marxist thinking. Far from seeing events in 1917 as the result of class struggle, they argue that those events were the result of various factors including nationalism, culture, war and a wide range of ideas. One point of agreement with the Soviet view is the belief in the important role played by leading individuals in 1917. The October Revolution was not evidence of the will of the masses but the manipulation of the masses, led by a fanatical, revolutionary elite. While not ignoring the prevailing conditions, the Western liberal view argues that it was the decisions, judgements and ambitions of individuals that were decisive.

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It is the individuals who use the masses. In a backward country such as Russia, whose population was largely illiterate, the role of the masses was subordinate. The terrible conditions of Russia might have made the masses predisposed to revolt, but their role was determined by clever, ruthless leaders. The Western liberal view was reinforced as the true nature of post-revolution Russia became apparent. The Stalinist terror with its purges and Gulags, (see chapter six) and the ruthless takeover of Eastern Europe after 1945 and the onset of the Cold War, merely led to or reinforced the view of Western liberal historians that 1917 had been a tragedy. Some of the key proponents of the liberal view include historians such as Richard Pipes, Leonard Schapiro and Robert Conquest.

REVISIONIST INTERPRETATIONS

From the 1960s, a new revisionist group of historians began to look at 1917 in a different way. These historians still rejected the Marxist straitjacket of Soviet historians, but also opposed the equally ideological stand of the liberal historians. To question the liberal view was no longer seen as tantamount to supporting communism, and the easing of the Cold War produced an atmosphere where a more objective study could occur. Prominent among the revisionist historians are Stephen Smith and Sheila Fitzpatrick.

Revisionists focus on studying 1917 'from below'. Instead of concentrating on the main political leaders, such as Lenin, these historians examine developments in factories, villages, the trenches and the barracks. They examine the correspondence, letters and activities of people in organisations at the local level, such as peasant committees and Red Guard units, and the impact ordinary people had on political developments. What the revisionists show is the difficulty the elites of the time had of convincing ordinary Russians of their ideas for a new order. Herein lay the long-term antagonism between the Russian peasant and the Soviet regime. Revisionists also examine the link between the economic and social unrest, and the various socialist parties. The final area of study for revisionist historians is the major discontinuity between the idealistic egalitarian movement in 1917, and what developed in Russia after 1917.

HISTORIANS ON THE EVENTS OF 1917

Below are three extracts from historians with differing interpretations of the events of 1917.

Extract from *Outline History of the USSR*

> Victory had been achieved because the revolution had been effected by a militant alliance of workers and peasants, and because the leader of the revolution, the working-class under the guidance of the Bolshevik Party, stood at the head of the general democratic movement of millions of peasants and soldiers for peace, bread and liberty ... The fundamental contradictions in the life of society remained unsolved. It was inevitable that the bourgeois-democratic revolution should develop into a socialist revolution. Only the socialist revolution could solve the already mature problems of social progress, abolish the bourgeois-landowner structure of Russia, abolish all forms of

Questions

Read each extract carefully, and then:

1. Isolate the key ideas each historian presents.
2. Identify differences and similarities between the extracts.
3. In an extended paragraph, evaluate the strengths and weaknesses of each historian's account of the events of 1917.

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social and national oppression and establish the dictatorship of the proletariat for the purpose of building socialist society … The inspirer and organiser of the October Socialist revolution was the Communist Party, headed by Lenin, the party whose actions were based on a knowledge of the laws of social development.

Outline History of the USSR, trans. GH Hanna, Foreign Languages Publishing House, Moscow, 1960.

Extract from *Russia under the Bolshevik Regime*

Russia's industrial workers were potentially destabilizing not because they assimilated revolutionary ideologies – very few of them did and even they were excluded from leadership positions in the revolutionary parties. Rather, since most of them were one or at most two generations removed from the village and only superficially urbanized, they carried with them to the factory rural attitudes only slightly adjusted to industrial conditions. They were not socialists but syndicalists, believing that as their village relatives were entitled to all the land, so they had a right to the factories. Politics interested them no more than it did the peasants: in this sense, too, they were under the influence of primitive, non-ideological anarchism. Furthermore, industrial labour in Russia was numerically too insignificant to play a major role in revolution: with at most 3 million workers (a high proportion of them peasants seasonally employed), they represented a mere 2 percent of the population.

… while the collapse of tsarism was not inevitable, it was made likely by deep-seated 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 pressures generated by World War I … Economic and social difficulties did not contribute significantly to the revolutionary threat that hung over Russia before 1917. Whatever grievances they may have harboured – real and fancied – the 'masses' neither needed nor desired a revolution: the only group interested in it was the intelligentsia. Stress on alleged popular discontent and class conflict derives more from ideological preconceptions than from facts at hand, namely from the discredited idea that political developments are always and everywhere driven by socioeconomic conflicts, that they are mere 'foam' on the surfaces of the currents that really guide human destiny.

Richard Pipes, *Russia under the Bolshevik Regime*, First Vintage Books Edition, New York, April 1995, pp. 497–8.

Extract from *Revolutionary Russia 1891–1991*

The Bolsheviks [Lenin] argued, 'can and *must* take state power into their own hands'. Can – because the Party had already won a majority in the Moscow and Petrograd Soviets and this was 'enough to carry the people with it' in a civil war. Must – because if it waited for the convocation of the Constituent Assembly to win power through the ballot box, 'Kerensky and Co.' would take pre-emptive action against the Soviets, either by giving up Petrograd to the Germans or by establishing a military dictatorship. Reminding his comrades of Marx's dictum that 'insurrection is an art', Lenin concluded that 'it would be naïve to wait for a 'formal' majority for the Bolsheviks. No revolution ever waits for *that*'.

The Central Committee ignored Lenin's instructions. It was still committed to Kamenev's parliamentary tactics and resolved to wait until the Second All-Russian Soviet Congress, due to convene on 20 October, for the transfer of power to the Soviets.

… Lenin's impatience was political. If the transfer of power took place by a vote of the Congress, the result would almost certainly be a Soviet coalition made up of all the socialist parties. The Bolsheviks would have to share power with at least the left wing (and possibly all) of the SRs and Mensheviks. This would be a victory for Kamenev, Lenin's arch-rival in the Party, who would probably emerge as the central figure in any Soviet coalition government. By seizing power before the Congress Lenin would retain the political initiative, forcing the rest of the socialist parties to endorse the Bolshevik action and join his government, or go into opposition, leaving the Bolsheviks in power on their own. Lenin's revolution was as much against the other Soviet-based parties as it was against the Provisional Government.

Orlando Figes, *Revolutionary Russia 1891–1991*, Pelican, London, 2014, p. 126.

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The first six months of Bolshevik rule

Lenin had no illusions about the weakness of his position at the end of 1917. The party may have carried the day in late October, but holding on to that power was another matter. Building socialism was something else completely. As a result, Lenin introduced a series of popular measures during the early months of Bolshevik rule. These early measures reflected both his understanding of the need to win over the Russian people and the ideas that had been promoted in Bolshevik propaganda throughout 1917. SOVNARKOM did not waste any time and within a few months it had introduced 116 decrees. Source 3.10 summarises the early Bolshevik program.

SOURCE 3.10 Summary of early SOVNARKOM measures

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Punch on the Bolshevik Revolution

THE LIBERATORS.

FIRST BOLSHEVIK. "LET ME SEE; WE'VE MADE AN END OF LAW, CREDIT, TREATIES, THE ARMY AND THE NAVY. IS THERE ANYTHING ELSE TO ABOLISH?"
SECOND BOLSHEVIK. "WHAT ABOUT WAR?"
FIRST BOLSHEVIK. "GOOD! AND PEACE, TOO. AWAY WITH BOTH OF 'EM!"

SOURCE 3.11 A cartoon from the British satirical magazine *Punch* reflects on the early period of Bolshevik rule in Russia

Questions

1. Is this a negative or positive assessment of the 'liberators'?
2. Why might such a cartoon have featured in a British magazine in early 1918?

PEACE

The very first measure was the Peace Decree. Lenin knew that the ultimate reason for Kerensky's failure was the Provisional Government's decision to continue the war. Lenin sought an immediate end to the war with Germany for two main reasons: firstly, the war was imperialist and so his regime should have nothing to do with it; secondly, consolidation of Bolshevik power had no chance if Russia kept fighting. The Peace Decree called on 'all the belligerent peoples and their governments to open immediate negotiations for an honest democratic peace'.[1] Some of the generals baulked at Lenin's decree, so on 9 November he told Russia's soldiers and sailors that they would decide the issue of peace, and warned them not to let the generals destroy this chance.

LAND

Lenin's other great immediate concern was land. He was certainly no supporter of private land ownership but he knew that to hold on to power he had to satisfy the peasants' yearning for land. Throughout 1917, there had been near anarchy in the countryside as peasants seized land

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and attacked landowners. The Land Decree gave the peasants the right to seize the land with no compensation required. In the short term, Lenin had no choice but to grant the peasants their wish of land ownership.

STATE CAPITALISM

By late 1917, Lenin had developed his policy called 'state capitalism'. For Lenin, the purpose of state capitalism was to ease the transition to full socialism. Russia was not in a position to move to socialism immediately, and so Lenin decided to allow the economy to maintain some of the elements of a capitalist system, such as the use of money and small-scale trade. Markets and small businesses would be allowed to function. Accountants, technicians and other bourgeois workers would be allowed to continue their current occupations. The state would control the major sectors of the economy, such as the banks, finance, the mines and heavy industry. These sectors would be planned and organised by a government department called *Vesenkha*, set up by the SOVNARKOM in late 1917. Lenin faced opposition from some party members who believed state capitalism was a betrayal of the revolution. The debate became academic once the civil war started and War Communism was introduced (see page 129).

OTHER REFORMS

Other early Bolshevik measures were more in keeping with the ideological beliefs of the party. Several measures were introduced that benefited the proletariat. An eight-hour working day was established as were welfare benefits such as old-age pensions. Workers' control of factories was introduced, which was soon extended to the railways. The government also nationalised the banks and other financial institutions, and cancelled Russia's foreign debts.

One of the most privileged sectors of tsarist Russia had been the Church, and the Church's power, hypocrisy and wealth were easy targets for the new regime. Church lands were confiscated, civil marriage was introduced and the traditional link between the Church and state was severed. One of the leading figures of the early Bolshevik period was Alexandra Kollontai. Kollontai championed women's rights and soon women had gained legal equality with their husbands in the 1918 Marriage Code. Divorce was made easier, as was access to abortion. In 1921, thanks to Kollontai, a special Women's Department was established called the *Zhenotdel*.

Reform was also introduced to the armed forces. Traditional aspects of army life, such as uniforms, saluting and ranks, disappeared. Officers were to be elected and they would come under the control of army Soviets and soldiers' committees. Brutal discipline, which had long been a feature of the army during tsarist times, was temporarily ended.

On 2 November, a decree was passed that promised Russia's various national groups the right of self-determination, the right to rule themselves. Lenin probably expected that these newly independent entities would embrace socialism and might even seek a return to the new socialist Russian empire. Finland took advantage of this decree and declared itself independent on 17 November and other areas of the Empire, such as Ukraine, followed its example.

On 31 January 1918, according to the Old Russian calendar, the Bolshevik government decided to discard the Julian system of dating and adopt the Western-style Gregorian system, making the following day 14 February. This brought Russia into line with the rest of Europe. Even the Russian alphabet was purged, with the removal of unnecessary letters and symbols.

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Alexandra Kollontai (1872–1952)

Alexandra Kollontai was a significant figure in the early years of the Bolshevik regime. She was close to Lenin, who appointed her Commissar of Social Welfare in the SOVNARKOM. She lobbied hard for women's rights. However, her leadership in the Workers' Opposition in 1921 led to her being squeezed out of party leadership. Her facility with languages led to a successful ambassadorial career and she also became a writer of fiction.

Alamy/DIZ Muenchen GmbH, Sueddeutsche Zeitung Photo

KEY EVENTS

1872	Born Alexandra Mikhailovna Domontovich in St Petersburg into a comfortable, liberal-thinking family. Was well-educated and acquired fluency in several languages
1893	Married Vladimir Kollontai. They had one son
1898	Left Russia, without her husband; went to Zurich to study Marxism. She was soon working for the Russian Social Democratic Labour Party and became its expert on Finnish affairs. She had spent several years living in Finland
1904	Joined the Bolsheviks
1905–17	Supported Trotsky and the St Petersburg Soviet in 1905. For the next few years she worked tirelessly promoting women's rights and trying to organise working women
1908	To avoid arrest she fled Russia, and for the next few years travelled widely promoting her ideas. By 1914, she had become closely associated with Lenin
1917	Following the February Revolution, she returned to Russia with her lover Alexander Shlyapnikov. She backed Lenin in his opposition to the Provisional Government and his call for 'All power to the Soviets'. Following the October Revolution, Kollontai became Commissar of Social Welfare
1918	Kollontai resigned due to her opposition to the Treaty of Brest-Litovsk. In the next few years she worked hard pushing the rights of women, and became head of the Zhenotdel, the Women's Department within the party
1921	Opposing the bureaucratisation of the party, Kollontai became part of the Workers' Opposition to this process. The ban on factions decided at the 10th Party Congress effectively ended her career
1922–52	Held several ambassadorial posts and became Advisor to the Soviet Foreign Affairs Ministry in 1946
1952	Died, aged 80

Question

1. Using information from this book and other sources, evaluate the role of Alexandra Kollontai in the period between 1917 and 1921.

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THE CHEKA

Lenin knew that though the early measures of his regime would be well received by many, there were groups throughout Russia who sought the immediate destruction of the Bolshevik government, ranging from supporters of the tsar to army officers to members of the various political parties. Lenin had understood this when, in his 1917 work *State and Revolution* (written before the October Revolution), he had stated that the new revolutionary government would need a strong coercive apparatus if it were to survive.

As well as pushing a popular reform program, SOVNARKOM also introduced a series of coercive measures. The Constituent Assembly was to be dissolved after only one day. Opposition newspapers were closed down, including those of other socialist parties. By the end of 1917, various political parties were banned, including the Kadets, the Mensheviks and right-wing Socialist Revolutionaries. Those in the civil service who did not support the new regime were purged. The traditional legal system was replaced by one advocating revolutionary justice. Untrained judges meted out quick, stern, arbitrary revolutionary justice. Anyone who was perceived as an 'enemy of the people' or a 'parasite' was referred to as a *burzhui*. The only acceptable form of address became 'comrade'.

However, the most significant aspect of the Bolsheviks' coercive power came in the form of the Cheka. In December 1917, Lenin established The Extraordinary Commission Against Counter-Revolution, Sabotage and Speculation, which became known by its Russian acronym as the Cheka. The Cheka was originally intended to be a 'temporary' organisation, created to deal with the immediate issue of opposition to the regime. In fact, at first the Cheka had only 23 members. Its leader, Felix Dzerzhinsky, was reputed to carry around the Cheka's files and paperwork in a single briefcase. However, it soon grew. By June 1918 it had 10 000 members; by the end of the civil war in early 1921, it had over grown to a force of more than 100 000. What had been intended as a short-term organisation, evolved into a massive state secret police force. By the end of the 1930s, the Soviet secret police had grown from its original force of 23 to one employing millions who would infiltrate every aspect of Soviet life.

Reds
Bolsheviks, and later communists, have commonly been described as Reds, a reference to the use of the colour red in their banners, flags and party symbolism

Whites
During the Russian Civil War, the Bolsheviks' enemies were referred to as the Whites

The brutality of the Cheka far exceeded that of the tsarist Okhrana. It sought to enforce conformity and acceptance of the regime. Its key weapons were fear and intimidation. During the civil war, the Cheka committed unbelievable atrocities, inflicting 'a red terror' on those perceived as enemies of the revolution (see chapter four). The terror that the Cheka practised ranged from scalping and skinning prisoners to boiling **White** officers to crucifying priests to severing bodies with a saw. **Red** atrocities during the civil war would be matched in kind by White atrocities.

Felix Dzerzhinsky (1877–1926)

In December 1917, Lenin appointed Felix Dzerzhinsky as the head of Cheka. Dzerzhinsky became known as 'Iron' Felix. He was utterly lacking in compassion and believed that if innocent people suffered at the hands of the Cheka, 'so be it'. The revolution must be protected 'no matter what the cost'. Dzerzhinsky's reputation for brutality was matched by his reputation for incorruptibility and inscrutability.

continued

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continued

Alamy/Mary Evans Picture Library

Dzerzhinsky was born in Poland. His father was a teacher and the young Felix was given a good education. He became fluent in three foreign languages. However, he was expelled from school due to revolutionary activities and he joined the Union of Workers.

In 1897 Dzerzhinsky was arrested by the tsarist Okhrana 10 times and frequently experienced torture when he was in prison. In 1897 he was sent to Siberia but escaped and fled to Warsaw, then part of the Russian Empire.

In 1917 Dzerzhinsky joined the Bolshevik Party and was a member of the Military Revolutionary Committee and head of security for the Bolshevik Party headquarters in the Smolny Institute. In December he became head of the Cheka. There was nothing secret about the Cheka's work. Its leather-coated officers flaunted their reputation and succeeded in inspiring fear. Events conspired to justify, in Dzerzhinsky's mind, the use of extreme terror. In January 1918, there was an attempt on Lenin's life. As peace talks with Germany at Brest-Litovsk seemed to be breaking down, there were fears of a German advance on Petrograd. In August, the Socialist Revolutionary Fanya Kaplan shot and seriously wounded Lenin. The Petrograd Cheka boss, Moisei Uritsky, was assassinated.

Dzerzhinsky now sought to honour Lenin's earlier Emergency Decree that called for all counter-revolutionaries to be shot. Party newspapers called for 'floods of bourgeois blood'. The result was the 'red terror' of the civil war (see chapter four).

By 1922 the Cheka was transformed from a temporary expedient into a permanent organ of the state to be known as the GPU – the Government Political Administration. A secret security apparatus was to become a fundamental feature of the Soviet state for the next 70 years.

Dzerzhinsky's death, given the brutality of his life and actions, was rather prosaic, dying of a heart attack at 49.

British diplomat Robert Bruce Lockhart met Dzerzhinsky during this period and described him in the following manner:

> A man of correct manners and quiet speech, but without a ray of humour in his character. The most remarkable thing about him was his eyes. Deeply sunk, they blazed with a steady fire of fanaticism. They never twitched. His eyelids seemed paralysed.
>
> Cited at http://spartacus-educational.com/RUSDzerzhinsky.htm.

Questions

1. Create a biographical table of key Bolsheviks with the following headings: date of birth, education, profession, first political activities, periods of 'exile', activities in 1905, when they joined the Bolsheviks, location in February 1917, role in the October Revolution, positions and role in the party.
2. Is the experience of Dzerzhinsky similar to or different from other leading Bolsheviks?

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THE CONSTITUENT ASSEMBLY

One of the reasons the Provisional Government did not take decisive action on major issues such as land was because it believed such things should wait until after the election of a Constituent Assembly. However, believing that its members would perform poorly in such an election, the government was in no hurry to hold it. A Constituent Assembly had long been a dream of Russian liberals, as they hoped to create a parliamentary system. Elections for the Constituent Assembly were due in September 1917, but were then delayed until late November. This enabled the Bolsheviks to claim that only they could guarantee the calling of the Constituent Assembly.

Lenin was not overly keen on staging the Constituent Assembly elections as he believed, rightly, that the peasant majority would probably favour the Socialist Revolutionary Party and leave the Bolsheviks in a minority. Where would this leave the October Revolution? The election results bore out Lenin's concerns.

TABLE 3.2 Constituent Assembly election results, 25 November 1917

Party	% of the vote	Seats in the Assembly
Bolsheviks	25	175
Socialist Revolutionaries	52	370
Left SRs	6	40
Mensheviks	2	16
Popular Socialists	0.2	2
Kadets	2	17
National Groups	12	86
Unknown	0.8	1

Though the Bolsheviks had lost nationally, they had won in the cities and the major towns, and had won a majority of the votes of the troops at the front. Of course, Lenin had no intention of honouring the results of the election (unless the Bolsheviks won) as he argued that revolutionary democracy had superseded bourgeois parliamentary democracy of the Assembly.

The first session of the Constituent Assembly opened on 5 January 1918 in the Tauride Palace. Great tension preceded the opening, as the Bolsheviks had placed many troops on the streets and some had fired at pro-Assembly demonstrators. The SR leader, Chernov, was elected chairman, and during the long debates there were several attacks on the Bolshevik seizure of power. During the early hours of the 6 January, the Bolsheviks and their allies, the Left SRs, walked out. Debate continued until about 5 a.m. when Chernov closed proceedings and called for another session later that day at 5 p.m. However, before the second session could resume, Bolshevik troops locked down the Tauride Palace and a SOVNARKOM decree dissolved the Constituent Assembly.

To some this was an utter betrayal of Russia's chance at democracy. Russians, concerned at the fate of the Constituent Assembly, had no way of resisting until a White Army committed to democracy could emerge. As the Whites in the civil war followed army officers who opposed the egalitarian changes of 1917, there was no hope for the Constituent Assembly. To Lenin, dissolving the Assembly was a logical and unavoidable action. He did not care about majority

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support, and was it ever likely that a party would surrender power after having carried out a revolution? News of the dissolution of the Constituent Assembly left most Russians unconcerned; finding food was probably a greater concern at that time. Russia would not have the opportunity to participate in a democratic exercise again until more than 70 years later.

THE TREATY OF BREST-LITOVSK

Russia's preoccupation with internal developments – the Bolshevik coup, SOVNARKOM, creation of the Cheka, dissolution of the Constituent Assembly – could not hide the fact the German troops were still on Russian territory and were threatening to move on Petrograd. Such action on the part of the German army would almost certainly have spelled the end of Lenin's regime. Lenin knew this, and he also knew that continuation of the war had been the key reason for Kerensky's fall. As a result, he demanded peace with Germany 'whatever the cost'. He overruled Bukharin's romantic notion of launching a revolutionary war. During the negotiations at Brest-Litovsk, Trotsky, as Commissar of Foreign Affairs, attempted his tactic of 'no war, no peace'. He argued that a Russian disengagement on the Eastern Front would be welcomed by the Germans due to their desperate position on the Western Front. Initially the Germans did not quite know how to react to Trotsky's tactic, but within a day or two they were once again heading to Petrograd. It was then that Lenin stepped in and demanded that Russia sign the peace treaty.

Alamy/Pictorial Press Ltd

SOURCE 3.12 The signing of the Treaty of Brest-Litovsk was attended by Trotsky and Kamenev. German delegates are on the left; Russians on the right.

In his book *Lenin and the Bolsheviks*, Adam Ulam suggests that Lenin had another reason for being so keen on achieving a quick peace. Ulam argues that Lenin feared that the Western powers might do a deal with Germany to destroy the Bolshevik regime and partition Russia. Lenin's regime even went as far as making contacts with the West, suggesting it might re-enter the war and even welcome Allied troops in northern Russia. Events moved quickly to prevent such a fanciful development, and on 3 March 1918, Germany and Russia signed the Treaty of Brest-Litovsk, which brought an end to Russia's involvement in the First World War.

The conclusion of the Treaty of Brest-Litovsk not only ended Russian involvement in the war but had a major impact on internal developments. The Russian people may have wanted to end the war, but handing over vast territories and 62 million people was something else. Lenin had to fight hard to win over his party, and the coalition with the Left Socialist Revolutionaries broke down because of the treaty. An attempted SR revolt in July, following the murder of the German ambassador Count von Mirbach by a Left SR, finally destroyed the Bolshevik–Left SR link.

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SOURCE 3.13 Main terms of the Treaty of Brest-Litovsk

The Treaty of Brest-Litovsk was a further stimulus for the outbreak of civil war. One of the reasons the Bolsheviks' enemies now began to get organised was for the sake of the nation, for the sake of Russia's territorial integrity. In March 1918, the Bolsheviks changed their name to the All-Russian Communist Party.

The treaty may have ended German actions against the Bolshevik regime, but it created a new, potentially greater threat to the government. The Western allies were stretched to the limit during the first half of 1918 as Germany launched a massive offensive along the Western Front, made possible by its disengagement on the Eastern Front. By late 1918, several Allied nations had landed troops in Russia to force it back into the war. These included forces from Britain, France, the US and Japan. However, the fact that many of these troops remained after the conclusion of the First World War suggests their main purpose was to help bring down the Bolshevik regime. Japanese troops did not leave Russian territory until 1922.

In a real sense, the Treaty of Brest-Litovsk had no long-term significance. The defeat of Germany in November 1918 meant that Lenin was able to ignore it, though by then Russia had become embroiled in civil war. By the time the Bolsheviks had emerged victorious, the map of Europe had been redrawn, and several new countries had been carved out of the former Russian empire, including Finland, Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania and Poland. In 1922, Germany and Russia

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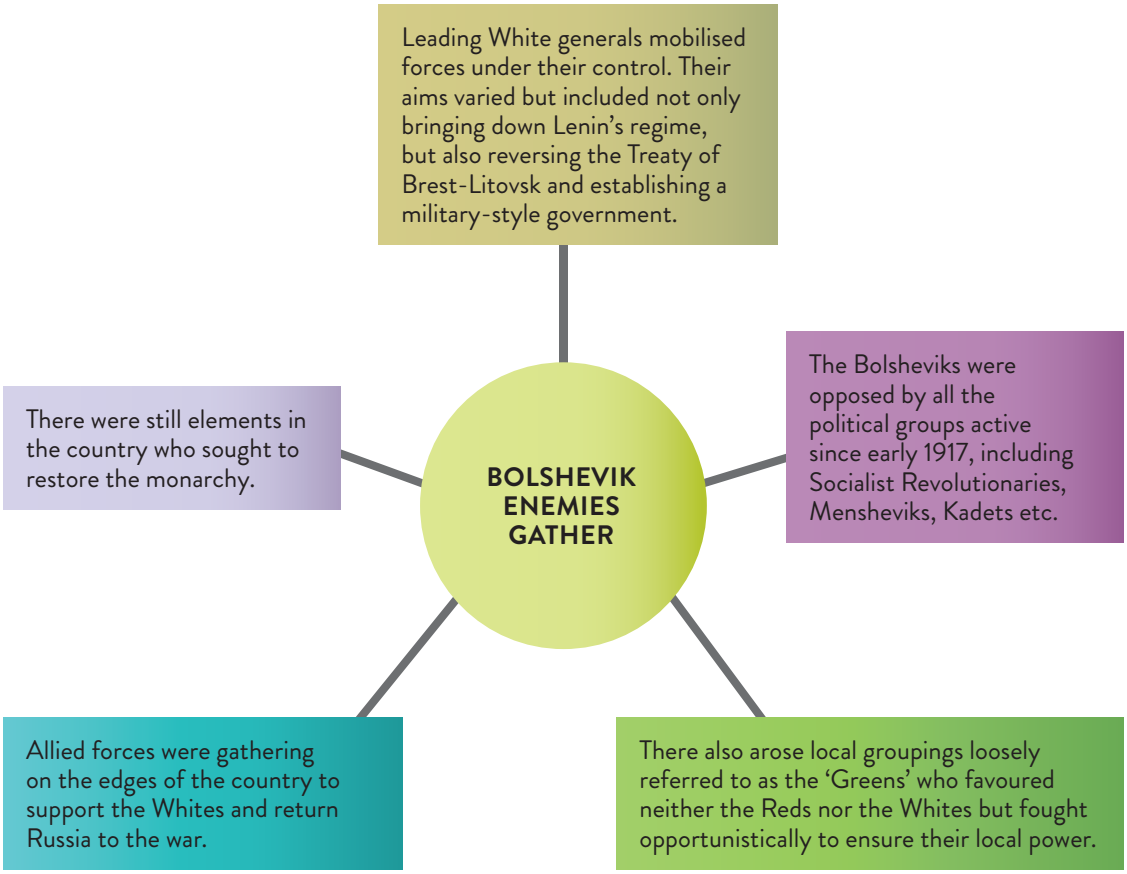
signed the Treaty of Rapallo, which cancelled any claims each nation might have raised against the other because of the war.

The Bolsheviks' enemies gather

Lenin's hold on power remained tenuous throughout 1918. Despite the peace treaty with Germany, the activities of the Cheka, and a series of popular measures aimed at pleasing the peasantry and the proletariat, the regime's chances of survival did not look good. By the summer of 1918, the Bolsheviks' enemies began to gather. The result was to be a brutal and bloody three-year civil war. Source 3.14 summarises the nature of the opposition that was forming against the Bolshevik regime. Lenin's enemies became collectively referred to as 'the Whites'.



SOURCE 3.14 The Bolsheviks' enemies gather

The Bolsheviks and national minorities

Non-Russian national minorities had comprised up to 57 per cent of the former tsarist empire. These peoples had been forced into the Russian empire and, on occasions, had tried to break away, only to be brutally suppressed. The Polish Revolt of 1863 is one example of this. Lenin believed that the discontent of these groups could be used to assist the destruction of the tsarist regime.

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Lenin believed that these groups should be allowed to secede from Russia. He thought that these newly independent nationalities would recognise that they had more in common with a socialist Russia than a capitalist West, and would develop close, friendly relations with a post-revolution Russia. Lenin eventually came to think that these groups would, in fact, return to Russia, where they would be allowed to develop their own cultures. In the long term, Lenin believed that nationalist cultures would be subsumed by a new internationalist proletarian culture that would develop under socialism.

Following Lenin's seizure of power, events did not quite proceed as he had hoped. In some smaller areas, such as Latvia and Estonia, the Bolsheviks were quite successful in elections. However, in larger regions, such as Poland and Ukraine, this was not the case. In Poland, a Menshevik government was elected.

This presented Lenin with a dilemma. He was expecting the national groups to want to return to a socialist Russia. If they did not, should they be forced back into Russia? He concluded that a loose federalist union should be established, which allowed the national minorities considerable autonomy. However, he faced opposition from the more hardline members of the party, who argued that the future Russian union should be more centralised and allow less autonomy.

By the mid-1920s, most of the non-Russian regions had been forced back into the Russian Soviet Federative Socialist Republic. These included Georgia, Ukraine, Armenia, Azerbaijan and Kazakhstan. Poland had gained its independence at the Paris Peace Conference, and gained territory from Russia in the Treaty of Riga following the Russo-Polish War. Finland had gained its independence, as had the three Baltic States of Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania.

The independence of the Baltic states would disappear in 1940 when Stalin invaded, following the signing of the Nazi–Soviet Pact in August 1939. From late 1939 and into 1940, the Soviet Union was at war with Finland. Poland was carved up between Germany and the Soviet Union in October 1939. These developments are examined in chapter eight.

Under Stalin during the 1930s, a policy of Russification, not dissimilar to that of the tsars in the 19th century, was pursued. Russian culture was promoted over national minority cultures, and Russian was made the official language. Local decision-making over services such as health and education was replaced by centralised control from Moscow. During the Great Patriotic War, Stalin uprooted and exiled entire ethnic groups to Siberia. Today, we would call this 'ethnic cleansing'.

Conclusion

Even the Bolsheviks' bitterest enemies had to accept the enormity of what had happened in 1917. At the beginning of that year, the Bolsheviks looked like ending up as a mere footnote in history, and Lenin a pathetic, romantic exile living out his days in a Swiss boarding house. However, within eight months, the Bolsheviks had emerged from virtual eclipse to seize power in Russia. Tightly disciplined by Lenin and superbly organised by Trotsky, the party had managed to become the governing party by the beginning of 1918. Yet Lenin understood all too well how tenuous his hold on power was. His mantra was to become: 'The end justifies the means'. In other words, anything is justified if it makes possible the retention of power, even if it means compromising socialist ideology or using terror. Through a clever combination of populist measures, stern repression and an unpopular peace treaty with Germany, he managed to consolidate Bolshevik power, at least in the short term. However, by mid-1918, both the

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Bolsheviks' internal and external enemies were gathering and ready to strike. Historians have pondered these amazing developments for decades, with interpretations of these events being as varied as those seeking to present them.

Chapter summary

+ Following the Bolsheviks' 'heroic' role in helping to put down the Kornilov revolt, Lenin realised that the party had to seize the opportunity, offered by its popularity, to take power.
+ Lenin's persuasive powers convinced the Central Committee to act, though he was opposed by Zinoviev and Kamenev.
+ Trotsky convinced Lenin to delay the coup until the meeting of the Second All-Russian Congress of Soviets so that the takeover could be presented as being in the name of the Soviet.
+ Trotsky was the key organiser of the coup, which was carried out almost bloodlessly. The later dramatic Eisenstein film version of the capture of the Winter Palace did not reflect the reality of the event.
+ By late November, the Bolsheviks controlled many Soviets across the country but their hold on power was tenuous at best.
+ The new government formed by Lenin was called The Council of People's Commissars or SOVNARKOM.
+ The first two acts of the new government were the Peace Decree and the Land Decree. Lenin wanted to end the war with Germany at any price, knowing how the decision to continue the war had destroyed Kerensky. He also needed to ensure peasant support in the anarchic countryside.
+ Many measures were implemented that both satisfied the people and were generally consistent with party ideology, including workers' control of factories, female equality, breaking the power of the Church and democratisation of the army.
+ The Provisional Government made serious errors, such as continuing the war and failing to deal with the land issue.
+ The February Revolution had been essentially leaderless and spontaneous with little, if any, input from the revolutionary parties. The October Revolution was all about leadership, the role of the party and careful planning. The masses played little part.
+ Historians' views have ranged from the Soviet angle, which praised Lenin and the party and saw developments through a Marxist prism, to Western liberal historians, who saw the revolution as a tragedy, to revisionists historians who have focused more on 'history from below'.
+ In December 1917, Lenin created the Cheka to deal with counter-revolutionary opposition. It was headed by Felix Dzerzhinsky.

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+ The Cheka (and its White opponents) would be responsible for acts of the most brutal kind of terror.
+ Elections were held for the Constituent Assembly shortly after the Bolshevik takeover.
+ Results did not go the Bolsheviks' way and in January 1918, after only one sitting day, the Assembly was dissolved.
+ Lenin forced his colleagues to accept peace with Germany at any price.
+ The Treaty of Brest-Litovsk denuded Russia of vast areas, resources and peoples. It was very unpopular across the country and stimulated growing opposition to the Bolsheviks.
+ By mid-1918, anti-Bolshevik forces were organising to destroy the regime. Civil war would blight Russia for the next three years, with White forces supported by Allied interventionist powers who were seeking to drag Russia back into the war.

Endnotes

1 Cited at www.marxists.org/archive/lenin/works/1917/oct/25-26/26b.htm>.

Weblinks

Weblinks relevant to this chapter can be found at http://nmh.nelsonnet.com.au/russia

Further reading

Sheila Fitzpatrick, *The Russian Revolution*, Oxford University Press, Oxford, 2008.
Richard Pipes, *Russia under the Bolshevik Regime*, Harvill, London, 1994.
John Reed, *Ten Days that Shook the World*, World Library, New York, 1960.
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Chapter review activities

The Bolsheviks seize power

1 Identify the factors that added to the weakness of the Provisional Government.
2 Assess the significance of Lenin and Trotsky in the Bolshevik takeover of power in October 1917.
3 Identify the key moments in the Bolshevik takeover.

The new government: SOVNARKOM

4 What was the SOVNARKOM?
5 Explain Lenin's first two key decrees.
6 How were the urban workers treated by the SOVNARKOM?
7 Outline the measures passed by SOVNARKOM during its first six months in office.

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8 Imagine you are each of the following. Explain your feelings about the early policies of the new government.
   a a Petrograd worker
   b a Ukrainian peasant
   c an educated member of the bourgeoisie.

How had all this been possible?

9 Draw up a simple table outlining the ideas of the three main historical interpretations of 1917.
10 Which interpretation do you find the most convincing? Give reasons for your answer.
   a Prepare a mind map that illustrates the long-term factors and short-term triggers contributing to the October Revolution. This mindmap should draw on material covered in chapters one, two and three.
   b Rank in order of significance the long-term factors and short-term triggers of the October Revolution.
   c Using evidence, explain your choices in two paragraphs.

The Cheka

11 What was the purpose of the Cheka?
12 What sort of person was Felix Dzerzhinsky?
13 Do you think the creation of the Cheka was a betrayal of the ideals of the revolution or an inevitable consequence of the Bolshevik seizure of power? Give reasons for your answer.

The Constituent Assembly

14 What were the results of the Constituent Assembly elections?
15 What was the fate of the Constituent Assembly?
16 How did Lenin justify his actions in regard to the Constituent Assembly?

The Treaty of Brest-Litovsk

17 What were the main measures of the Treaty of Brest-Litovsk?
18 Why was Lenin so insistent on acceptance of the treaty?
19 What was the historical significance of the signing of the treaty?

The Bolsheviks' enemies gather

20 Imagine you are a neutral observer in Russia in mid-1918. You believe that the chances of the Bolsheviks holding onto power are slight. Produce a mind map to support this interpretation of the situation.

Essay questions

21 Rather than a Bolshevik victory, the October Revolution is best understood as a failure of the Provisional Government. Discuss.
22 Evaluate the importance of Lenin and Trotsky in the Bolshevik seizure of power in October 1917.
23 What were the long-term factors and short-term triggers of the October 1917 Revolution?
24 The Bolsheviks' seizure of power in October 1917 was followed by a series of initiatives aimed at consolidating their position. Discuss.

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CHAPTER FOUR

The Bolsheviks triumphant: 1918–1924

By the summer of 1918, Russia was ablaze with civil war. The Bolshevik regime (the Reds) was surrounded by its numerically superior enemies (the Whites), who were backed by the Western Allied powers, including Britain, France and the United States. In 1920–21, the Bolsheviks also found themselves involved in a brief war with the new state of Poland. The civil war dragged on into early 1921 and saw the Reds emerge victorious against all the odds, due in large part to Red discipline and White disunity. Both sides used terror, the threat or use of actual violence, as a tactic. The war eventually claimed more than 600 000 lives and left as many as half a million people displaced or deported, leaving Russia in a state of utter devastation. To feed the Red Army and the workers supplying that army, Lenin introduced the policy of War Communism. This extreme form of state control was resented deeply by the peasants, but it did keep Red forces supplied. In March 1921, the extremes of War Communism even led to the traditionally loyal Kronstadt sailors rising in revolt against the regime, a revolt brutally suppressed by Red Army troops led by Trotsky. By the time of the 10th Party Congress in 1921, Lenin and his party had achieved victory, but their hold on power was now threatened by the weakness of Russia. To counter this, Lenin ended War Communism and introduced the New Economic Policy (NEP). The NEP allowed a return to small-scale capitalism. This policy was resented by many in the party, but it had the effect of reviving the economy. Lenin also tightened party discipline, banning factionalism within the party. Formal diplomatic ties with neighbouring nations were now gradually being established.

‹ A 1920 propaganda poster posing the question, 'Have you volunteered for the red army?'

INQUIRY QUESTIONS

+ How had the Bolsheviks been able to consolidate their hold on power?
+ What were the major challenges to their authority?
+ What were the consequences of Bolshevik rule?

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The Russian Civil War

The Russian Civil War lasted from about the middle of 1918 to early 1921, though isolated pockets of opposition to Bolshevik rule persisted for several years to come. It was a savage affair with both sides guilty of terrible atrocities, and it eventually cost Russia nearly a million lives – including around 300 000 war dead, and roughly the same number of executions. There were also approximately half a million civilians displaced. The war was fought from the Arctic to the Black Sea, from European Russia to Siberia. On occasions it involved full-scale battles with thousands of men on each side. Often it involved small-scale, **guerrilla-warfare** actions. Commanders on both sides were not always in control of the men who were allegedly fighting for their cause. Red and White '**partisans**' organised themselves and fought for themselves, usually on horseback. There were also 'Green' partisan groups, aligned to neither Reds nor Whites, who fought to secure their own local interests.

guerrilla warfare
A style of warfare involving small groups, using surprise, ambush, and hit and run tactics that often occur at night. Guerrilla fighters avoid large-scale battles with conventional armies

partisans
Irregular soldiers, often civilians, who fight in smallish groups, often in areas already occupied by the enemy

The Russian Civil War is usually characterised as a conflict between 'Reds' and 'Whites', which is largely correct, though it does conceal the fact that there were many smaller forces across the country who did not owe allegiance to either. Supporting the Bolshevik regime were the Reds.

Shutterstock.com/photoplotnikov

The aim of the Reds was simple: survive and retain power at any cost; satisfying the people and building socialism were put on hold. Strategically, the aim involved holding on to the Russian heartland.

Getty Images/Hulton Archive

Lenin was the undisputed leader of the Reds, and even when the Bolshevik Party was united against a policy he might try to implement, he nearly always had his way.

Alamy/David Cole

Trotsky was the leader of the Red Army. The Bolshevik victory was very much the result of his organisational skill, charisma and ruthlessness.

Alamy/Heritage Image Partnership Ltd/ Fine Art Images

Under Trotsky's leadership, the Red Army became a disciplined, effective and obedient military force. Ranks, saluting, uniforms and strict discipline, including flogging and capital punishment, were reintroduced. Former tsarist army officers were reinstated and to ensure their loyalty 'political commissars', party officials, accompanied them.

SOURCE 4.1 The Reds and the civil war

The leadership and organisation of the 'White' forces was quite different. The Whites had many advantages over the Reds at the beginning of the civil war. They controlled far more territory, including most of Russia's coastline. They had more men, greater resources and they had the support of several Western Allied powers, including Britain and the United States. However, in terms of leadership and organisation they were inferior to the Reds.

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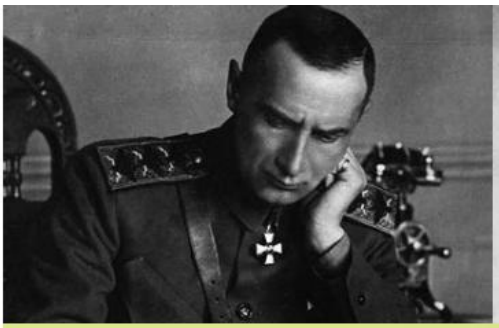
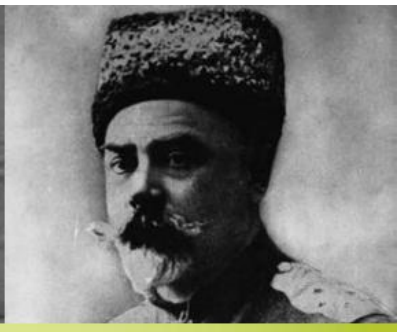
iStockphoto/PromesaArtStudio

The aims of the Whites were as straightforward as the Reds: to destroy the Bolshevik regime, its leaders and all they stood for.



Alamy/Heritage Image Partnership Ltd/Fine Art Images



Getty Images/Popperfoto

There was no unified leadership among the Whites. Politically their long-term aims differed. Members of the White forces supported a range of political outcomes including Socialist Revolutionaries, who held the idealistic goal of peasant socialism, and liberals, who demanded a Western-style parliamentary system after the war. In addition there were also major military divisions that made effective strategy impossible. Each of the leading generals – Kolchak (above, left), Denikin (above, right), Kornilov, Yudenich and Wrangel – believed that 'he' was the saviour of Russia. Coordinated White military action was further hampered by the fact that their forces were scattered across the vastness of Russia.

SOURCE 4.2 Whites in the civil war

There were three main White armies. The smallest army was the 15 000-strong force of General Yudenich in the north-west, operating out of Estonia. It reached the outskirts of Petrograd in October 1919 but was eventually repelled by superior Red forces.

In the south was the Southern Volunteer Army under Generals Kornilov and Alekseev. Both men died in 1918 and their forces were taken over by General Denikin. Denikin had more than 300 000 men under his control and hoped to drive north-east and link up with Kolchak's army. In the summer of 1918 he was besieging Tsaritsyn on the River Volga. The successful Bolshevik resistance in Tsaritsyn, led by Stalin, became a major part of Red civil war

Getty Images/Sovfoto/UIG

SOURCE 4.3 Admiral Kolchak, leader of counter-revolutionary forces against the Bolsheviks, inspects White army soldiers at the front, 1919

SOURCE 4.4 Extent of White advances against Red forces

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mythology. Despite the later mythologising of Tsaritsyn as an example of heroic Bolshevik resistance, Stalin did not perform well there. This was a catalyst for Trotsky and Stalin's ongoing criticisms of each other. In October 1919, Denikin's forces were 320 km from Moscow and were only stopped by a determined Red counter-attack. Trotsky's inspirational presence and organisational skills did much to motivate the Red forces. Denikin was gradually forced towards the Crimean peninsula. He was later replaced by General Wrangel, and the White troops were evacuated by British and French ships.

General Kolchak led 140 000 men in the north-east of Moscow. His forces linked up with those of the Czech Legion, and by late 1918 had advanced westwards, capturing the cities of Samara and Kazan about 600 km from Moscow. However, Kolchak's forces were weakened by internal divisions and stiff Red counter-attacks. By late 1919, this army was in full retreat, and in 1920 Kolchak was captured and shot.

The Czech Legion

Though there were minor clashes between the Reds and their enemies in early 1918, serious hostilities did not begin until mid-1918 and involved 'The Czech Legion'. The Czech Legion comprised Czech nationalists who sought a Czech state freed from Austrian rule. It was augmented by Czech prisoners of war and deserters from the Austrian army. The original aim had been for the Czechs to fight with the Russians against Austria and Germany. Once Russia left the war, the Czechs were to be transported east and then shipped to the Western Front to fight alongside British and French troops. There was distrust between the Czechs and the Bolsheviks, and when the Bolsheviks tried to disarm the Czech Legion, open fighting broke out. The Czech Legion supported the Whites, but by late 1918, weakened by mutinies and desertions, it eventually pulled out of the war.

Alamy/The Art Archive

SOURCE 4.5 A camouflaged train carrying soldiers of the Czech Legion

A third and not insignificant participant in the civil war was the 'Greens'. Green forces did not fight in a coordinated manner as the Reds and Whites attempted. They comprised localised peasant armies who were only concerned with protecting their own region. They varied in size from bandit groups of a couple of dozen to significant forces involving hundreds of men. Many of their members were deserters from the Reds and the Whites. By the end of the civil war many Greens were operating as irregular Red forces, though once the Reds had achieved victory, they hunted down and destroyed Green groups. The most famous of the Green leaders was the Ukrainian Nestor Makhno. He eventually fled to Romania.

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MAIN EVENTS OF THE RUSSIAN CIVIL WAR

1918	**MARCH**	Russia signed the Treaty of Brest-Litovsk
		British troops landed at Murmansk in northern Russia
	MAY	Czech troops in action along the Trans-Siberian railway
		Trotsky introduced conscription, tightening control of the Red Army and reintroducing strict discipline
	JUNE	Socialist Revolutionaries set up a rival government at Samara, east of Moscow
	JULY	Tsar Nicholas II and his family murdered at Ekaterinburg
	AUGUST	US troops entered eastern Russia
		British and Australian forces attempted to establish an anti-Bolshevik government at Archangel in the north
		Stalin successfully led the defence of Tsaritsyn against White forces
	NOVEMBER	Kolchak's forces captured Omsk, 2000 km from Moscow
	DECEMBER	French forces landed at Odessa in the south
1919	**FEBRUARY**	General Denikin took control of White forces in the south-east
		Red forces captured Kiev in the Ukraine
	MARCH	Kolchak's army crossed the Ural Mountains but was prevented from moving on Moscow by stiff Red resistance
	APRIL	Lack of enthusiasm for the war evident within the Allied forces. French troops left Odessa
	JUNE	Denikin's forces captured Kharkov
	JULY	Denikin's forces captured Tsaritsyn
	SEPTEMBER	Allied intervention forces left Archangel
	OCTOBER	Denikin captured Orel but was soon forced out by the Reds
		Yudenich's forces reached the outskirts of Petrograd
	DECEMBER	The Reds in major trouble on three fronts. However, by the end of the year Yudenich has been pushed westwards, Denikin southwards and Kolchak eastwards
1920	**JANUARY**	Red forces captured Kolchak
	FEBRUARY	Kolchak executed
		Red forces invaded Georgia in the Caucasus
	APRIL	Denikin's forces driven towards the Crimea
		Denikin replaced by General Wrangel
	MAY	War between Red forces and Poland began
	NOVEMBER	The only remaining White general in the field, Wrangel, was defeated in the Crimea
		Wrangel's forces evacuated. The general escaped to Turkey
1921	**MARCH**	Peace with Poland: Treaty of Riga signed
		Remaining pockets of White resistance were defeated by Red forces
		The Red forces were victorious

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Red and White terror

One of the notable features of the Russian Civil War was its ferocity and sheer brutality. Each side was guilty of atrocities and seemed determined to outdo the other in the inventiveness of their barbarity. The question that immediately arises is: Why did such things occur during the civil war?

The historian Richard Pipes argues that the Bloshevik's aim was to destroy any possible resistance to the revolution as soon as it appeared. In other words, Pipes believes that the Red Terror was not the result of circumstances, ideology or the nature of the counter-revolutionary threat. The Bolsheviks employed terror as a matter of deliberate choice. Felix Dzerzhinsky, the head of the Cheka, stated quite openly that he believed in the use of terror. The purpose of the Cheka was quite simple – to defend the revolution and destroy its enemies no matter what the cost, no matter how cruel the methods, and if innocent people are caught up in the maelstrom, so be it.

As threats to Bolshevik power increased, so too did the justification for the terror. At first it was aimed at 'the bourgeois class enemy'. However, as the civil war continued, terror became more indiscriminate and members of all classes, including peasants and workers, could be targeted. As Red Terror was employed, the Whites responded in kind.

There seemed to be no limits to the inventiveness of Red and White terror:

+ in Kharkov, prisoners were scalped and their skin removed like gloves
+ in Odessa, White officers were boiled
+ in Kiev, prisoners were buried alive with decomposing bodies
+ in Voronezh, it was the practice to roll prisoners in spiked barrels
+ another method involved placing rats in metal piping with one end sealed. The non-sealed end was placed against a prisoner's stomach and heated. As the rats inside became frantic, they gnawed at the prisoner's stomach in an effort to escape.
+ White forces were known to have buried their opponents up to their necks and then rode their horses over them
+ White forces were also guilty of anti-Jewish **pogroms** in the middle of the civil war. Up to 100 000 Jews were killed in the Ukraine.

pogrom
An officially sanctioned and organised violent attack on Jews. They had become common practice during the later years of tsarist rule.

Dzerzhinsky was clearly a fanatic, but he seems to have truly believed that what he was doing would preserve the revolution and help take Russia to the future paradise of communism. He lived an austere life and was merciless towards Cheka members who abused their positions for personal gain. However, it is also clear that many Chekists were mentally unstable or, at best, corrupt.

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Getty Images/Albert Harlingue/Roger Viollet/Archive Photos

SOURCE 4.6 A starving family during a famine in Russia, 1922

Alamy/INTERFOTO / History

SOURCE 4.7 Corpses of farmers and labourers shot by White troops of Admiral Kolchak during the Russian Civil War

Did the terror work? It cannot be denied that the use of terror was clearly a factor in the Bolshevik victory. Perhaps what is of even greater significance is the effect the use of terror had on the regime in the long term. Once the terror genie had been allowed out of the bottle, it was very difficult to put it back. In 1922, the Cheka became a permanent state organisation called the GPU. During the 1930s and the Second World War, Stalin was to inflict terror on his country on a massive scale without a qualm.

The murder of the tsar

At the end of 1917, Tsar Nicholas II and his family were being held under guard near Petrograd. As the civil war began to intensify, Bolshevik authorities moved the family, along with four others who elected to stay with the royal family, to Ekaterinburg in the southern Ural Mountains. They were placed under guard in the house of a merchant, NN Ipatiev, which had been taken for the purpose. By mid-July, 1918, combined Czech Legion and White forces were closing in on the town.

The Bolsheviks now had to decide what to do with the royal family. Lenin had hoped to place Nicholas on trial but the civil war intervened. The White forces were a diverse grouping of anti-Bolshevik groups, but the person of the tsar could have acted as a unifying influence. Lenin decided that it was too dangerous to allow Nicholas to live, so the order was given to execute Nicholas, the family and their four companions.

Commandant Yakov Yurovsky was given the job of organising the execution. Late on 16 July, the royal party was awoken and ordered to get dressed, allegedly on the pretext that they were being moved to a safer location. They were taken to the cellar of the house. There were eleven in the party: Nicholas, Tsarina Alexandra, their daughters Maria, Olga, Tatiana and Anastasia, Tsarevich Alexei who had to be carried in his

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father's arms, the family doctor, Botkin, and three servants. In the early hours of 17 July 1918, Yurovsky led a party of his men, armed with revolvers, into the cellar room. Precise details about what happened next are still unclear, but it appears that Yurovsky read out the family's 'sentence' and then the men opened fire. The family members were grouped together as if ready to have their photograph taken, with the parents sitting in the front. Yurovsky later claimed to have found about 8 kg of jewellery sewn into the garments of the daughters.

An eyewitness to the events, Pavel Medvedev, later gave this account of the execution.

> Yurovsky ordered me to leave, saying, 'Go on to the street, see if there is anybody there, and wait to see whether the shots have been heard'. I went out to the court, which was enclosed by a fence, but before I got to the street I heard the firing. I returned to the house immediately (only two or three minutes having elapsed) and upon entering the room where the execution had taken place, I saw that all the members of the tsar's family were lying on the floor with many wounds in their bodies. The blood was running in streams. The doctor, the maid and two waiters had also been shot. When I entered, the heir was still alive and moaned a little. Yurovsky went up and fired two or three more times at him. Then the heir was still.
>
> 'The Execution of Tsar Nicholas II, 1918', *EyeWitness to History*, www.eyewitnesstohistory.com, 2005.

At the time, the Bolsheviks merely stated that the tsar had been executed and no details were provided. Rumours abounded for decades that some of the family may have escaped. In 1991, the remains of the family were discovered near Ekaterinburg, and two years later DNA analysis positively identified all but two of the children. In 2008, further more advanced DNA tests identified them all. As a surviving relative of the family, the Duke of Edinburgh provided a DNA sample to complete the identification process.

Since the end of the Soviet Union, the reign of Nicholas II is being reassessed. The family was given a proper Orthodox funeral and received a proper burial in St Petersburg.

The Kobal Collection/Columbia

SOURCE 4.8 Still from the film *Nicholas and Alexandra* depicting the moments just before the royal family's execution. In the film, the director chose to include only Nicholas, Alexandra, their five children and Dr Botkin being shot.

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ALLIED INTERVENTION

From late 1918 into 1920, Western Allied powers intervened in the Russian Civil War on the side of the Whites, offering supplies and money. British troops were active in the north around Murmansk and Archangel; there was a French presence in the south from Odessa to the Crimea; and US and Japanese troops were active in the Far East. Military action against the Reds was limited, and their efforts had little impact on the outcome. If anything, it enabled the Reds to play the 'nationalist card', arguing that they were defending Mother Russia against foreign interference. The original excuse for intervention was to force Russia back into the war; it soon became to destroy Bolshevism. By the autumn of 1919, all foreign troops had left Russia, though there was a Japanese presence in the Far East as late as 1922.

Britain: A case study in allied intervention

It is Winston Churchill whose name is most associated with the British desire to intervene against the Bolsheviks. However, British policy was already being formulated long before Churchill played a role. In November 1917, British Prime Minister Lloyd George was concerned only with the possibility of Russia leaving the war, and Germany being able to divert up to a million troops to the Western Front. At this time, the war was still very evenly poised. Lloyd George tried hard to come to an agreement with Lenin for Russia's continued participation in the war. However, Lenin made it clear he was going to withdraw from the war.

In early 1918, Britain sent troops to Murmansk, Archangel and Vladivostok to prevent supplies sent to Russia from falling into German hands. The announcement of the Treaty of Brest-Litovsk changed the mood in Britain, and the Bolshevik regime was now viewed as a traitor. In late August the British Embassy in Petrograd was attacked and the naval attaché, Captain Cromie, was murdered and his body mutilated, probably by members of the Cheka. Lloyd George was being advised by everyone from South African Prime Minister Smuts to the British emissary in Russia, Bruce Lockhart, that Bolshevism threatened future world peace, and that for the sake of Russia and Europe, the Bolsheviks should be destroyed.

Churchill entered the War Cabinet in November 1918 and became a champion of Allied intervention in Russia. However, Lloyd George argued that intervention with anything less than a million men would be pointless. He argued that if Russia were really anti-Bolshevik, British supplies would be enough; if Russia was not really anti-Bolshevik, it was none of Britain's business, and military intervention would merely bolster the Bolsheviks and probably cause trouble at home.

Churchill lost the argument, and though he spoke widely about the Bolshevik menace, it was he who organised the steady withdrawal of British troops. By the end of 1919, Lloyd George had become exasperated with Churchill's insistence on focusing on Russia. He told him on 22 September to end his 'vain fretting which paralyses you for other work'.

As news of White atrocities and White anti-Semitic attacks reached Britain, any possibility of further British involvement in Russia ended. By the end of the Russian Civil War, Britain had spent almost £150 million on the intervention. Despite Britain's efforts to bring down Lenin's regime, in November 1920, the Lloyd George government was prepared to sign a trade treaty with the Bolshevik government!

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Propaganda and the Russian Civil War

The poster in source 4.9 was produced by the Bolsheviks as part of their propaganda against the Whites. Source 4.10 is a White propaganda image from the civil war. It is from 1919 and is called *Peace and Freedom*. Study both images carefully and answer the questions that follow. Class discussion would be beneficial before writing any responses.

Getty Images/DEA/G. DAGLI ORTI/DeAgostini

SOURCE 4.9 Bolshevik propaganda poster from the Russian Civil War depicts the capitalists unleashing their dogs

Questions

1. When analysing posters or cartoons, consider the image in a literal sense. Taking no account of history and context, what is happening in this poster?
2. There are three men on the right. Which countries do they represent? How can you tell this?
3. How is each of the dogs represented?
4. Who do you think the three dogs represent? Give reasons for your answer.
5. What is the message the artist is trying to convey?
6. What emotion is the Bolshevik artist playing on to manipulate the audience?

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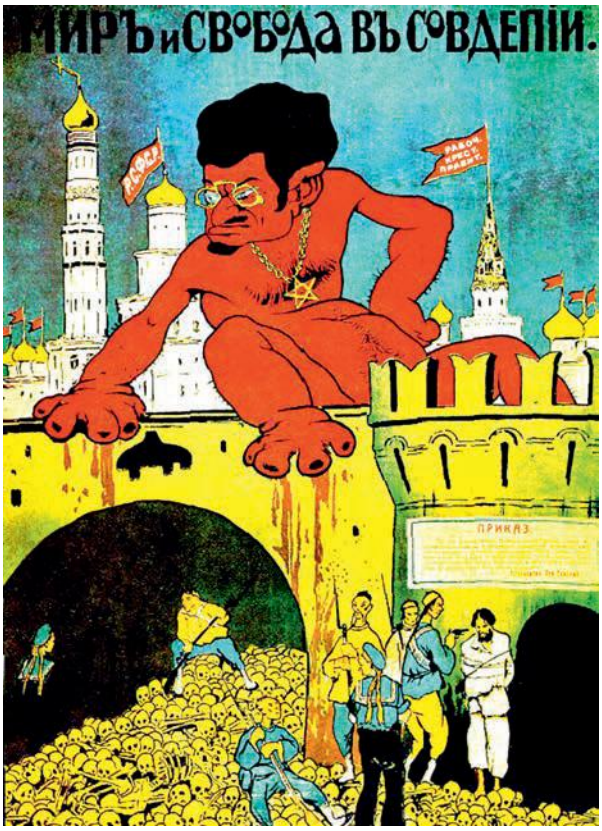

Alamy/Pictorial Press Ltd

SOURCE 4.10 White Army propaganda poster from the Russian Civil War

Questions

1. Who is the man sitting on the bridge?
2. Consider the way he has been presented. Why is he red? What seems to be dripping from his hand and foot? Why?
3. What is hanging around the man's neck? What does this symbolise? Why has it been included in this poster?
4. Why is there a pile of skulls underneath the bridge?
5. The men in the foreground shovelling the skulls and threatening the man in 'white' have an Asian appearance. Do you think there is any significance in this?
6. What is the artist's motive in producing this poster?

THE RUSSO-POLISH WAR

A Polish state, supported by the victorious powers of the First World War, reappeared in 1919 for the first time since the 1790s. The eastern frontier of Poland was settled as the rough boundary between the Catholic Polish communities and the Orthodox communities to the east. This frontier became known as the Curzon Line (after the British Foreign Secretary). Poland's new leaders were eager to expand, and in April 1920 they invaded the Ukraine, capturing the capital, Kiev, on 6 May. However, the Red Army fought back and ejected the Poles on 11 June.

Some in the Soviet government now began talking 'revolutionary war', believing that an advance against Poland might spark revolution in Germany. Red Army General Tukhachevsky stated at the time: 'Our way towards worldwide conflagration passes over the corpse of Poland'. Lenin expected Polish workers to welcome the Red Army. Instead the Poles showed that they were imbued more with nationalism than international proletarian solidarity.

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Vistula
The river that runs through Warsaw

With the help of French General Weygand, the Poles managed to save their capital, Warsaw, in a life and death struggle that became known as the Miracle of the **Vistula**. On 16 August, led by Josef Pilsudski, the Poles counter-attacked and pushed the Red Army well to the east of the Curzon Line. An armistice was signed in October, and in March 1921 Poland and the Soviet state ended their brief war with the signing of the Treaty of Riga. There were now six million Ukrainians and White Russians under Polish domination. Lenin was unperturbed. He believed that when the world revolution came, the treaty would be ripped up, and he believed that Poland would soon encounter problems with having to deal with such a large national minority.

However, despite Lenin's optimism, the Soviet Union's defeat by Poland put an end to the imminent hope of revolution spreading across Europe. Lenin's government now started pursuing normal diplomatic relations with its neighbours and adopted the NEP at home.

The Treaty of Riga

The Treaty of Riga, which ended the Russo-Polish War, was signed in the Latvian capital of Riga on 18 March 1921. It was eventually acknowledged by the Western powers in 1923. The treaty was concerned with three main issues: borders, national minorities and economics.

SOURCE 4.11 Poland after the First World War

The border between Poland and Russia was established 250 kilometres east of the Curzon Line. The Curzon Line was the border agreed on at the Paris Peace Conference in 1919. Poland's border with Lithuania was settled the following year.

Poland was now much larger than had been planned at the Paris Conference in 1919. As a result, it now contained significant numbers of non-Poles: up to four million Ukrainians and one million Belorussians. These groups never

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became assimilated, and agitated for greater autonomy in the 1930s. People living in the border areas between Poland and Russia were allowed to choose their nationality, and each state promised to respect the rights of national minorities within their borders.

Russia was to pay Poland in gold for a year, and had to provide materials for railway construction. Poland was excused from any obligation to pay debts incurred by the Polish region of the Russian empire when it was under tsarist control. Poland was also given 'most-favoured nation status'. Thus, any trading concessions Russia granted to another nation automatically flowed on to Poland.

From Russia to the Soviet Union

When the Bolsheviks took power, Russia became the Russian Socialist Soviet Republic. In December 1922, the formal proclamation of the USSR – the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics – was announced. This new state comprised the Russian Socialist Soviet Republic, Ukraine, Belorussia, and the three members of the Trans Caucasian Federation – Georgia, Armenia and Azerbaijan. (Henceforth we will refer to the country as the Soviet Union or the Soviets.)

WHY DID THE REDS WIN THE RUSSIAN CIVIL WAR?

With the benefit of hindsight, events in history often seem inevitable. Such is the case of the Reds' victory in the Russian Civil War. However, observers of events in Russia in the middle of 1918 would not have been predicting a Red victory. The Reds seemed to be outnumbered as they controlled only a small area of the country, and they had control of virtually none of Russia's coastline. Russia's experienced generals led the White armies. The Reds were facing possible significant intervention by the Western Allied powers on the side of the Whites, and there was always the possibility that Germany might make increasing demands on the Bolshevik regime, as it did in August with its demand for reparations. Despite all the handicaps the Reds faced, they emerged triumphant. How did this happen? Source 4.11 summarises the key reasons for the Red victory in the civil war.

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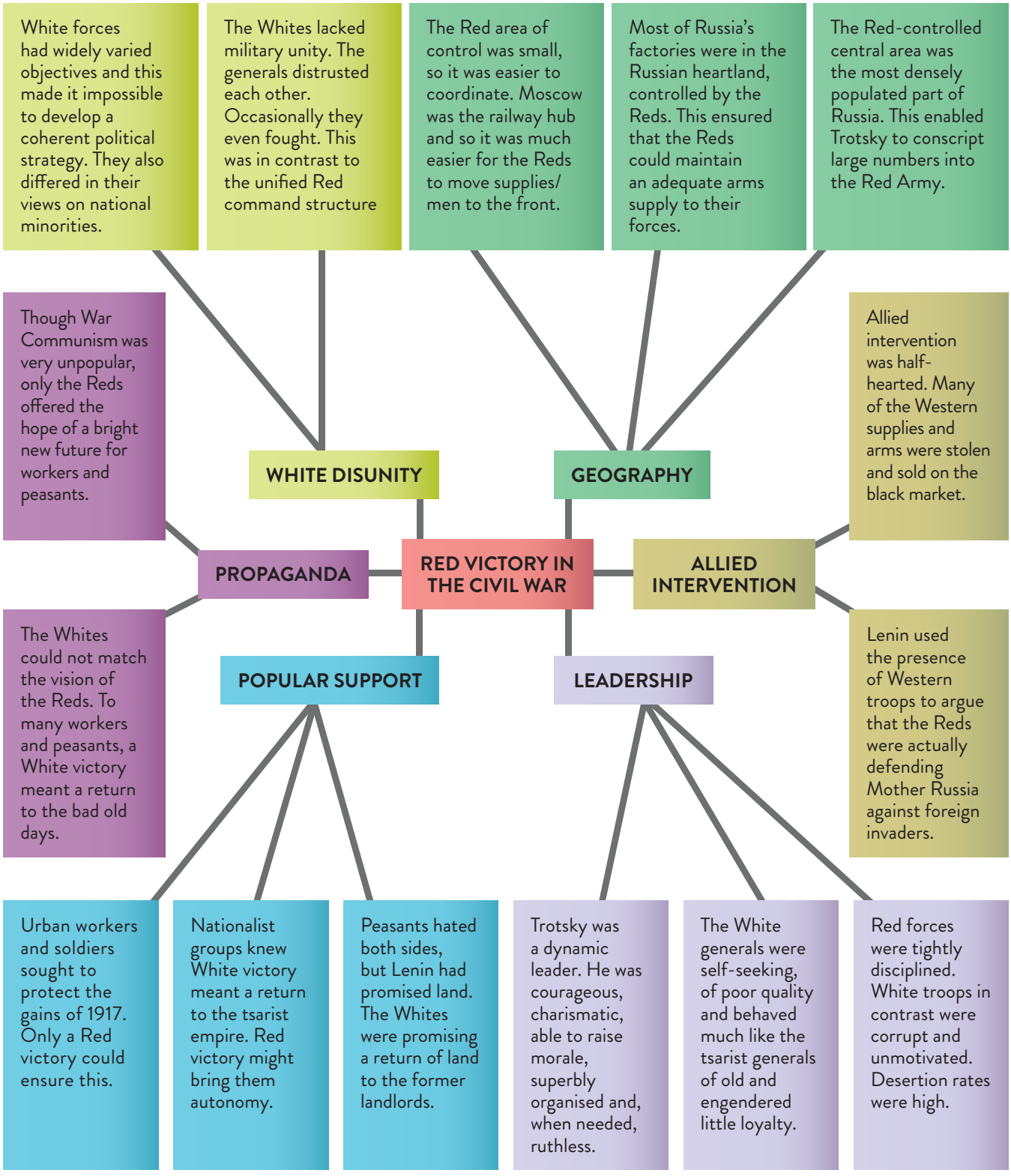

SOURCE 4.12 How did the Reds win the Civil War?

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War Communism

THE BASICS OF WAR COMMUNISM

The term War Communism refers to the extreme economic policies that Lenin introduced in 1918 and that were maintained throughout the civil war. The increase in the use of terror was often closely associated with War Communism.

The Bolsheviks faced a disastrous situation by the summer of 1918. Uppermost was the onset of civil war with White armies ranged against them across the country and the prospect of Western Allied intervention. However, the country's economic problems were equally as dire as the military situation. The Bolsheviks had pursued a popular agenda on taking power. Workers were able to form committees to run the factories, and the peasants were allowed to seize land from the landlords. Such policies were necessary for political survival. However, the workers proved incapable of running the factories. Production plummeted, and many workers began to leave the towns. In the countryside, the food-supply situation had become disastrous. The grain-growing areas of the Ukraine had been lost due to the Treaty of Brest-Litovsk. Peasant holdings were getting smaller as land was being subdivided among family members, and output plummeted as a result. With the rouble becoming worthless, and the factories producing nothing the peasants wanted, peasant farmers would not send food to the cities, and Russian agriculture was in danger of reverting to a near subsistence level.

Lenin took drastic action. The only thing that mattered was the survival of the regime. Workers' control of factories ended and the state took over. Peasants were to be forced to send their grain to the towns. In Lenin's view, two things were uppermost:

+ the soldiers of the Red army had to be fed
+ the workers in the factories producing supplies for the army had to be fed.

Anything else was of minor importance. Hence, the introduction of War Communism.

War Communism was a complex system but it came down to five key essential elements.

1 All industrial enterprises were nationalised and placed under the control of the Supreme Council of National Economy (*Vesenkha*). The workers' committees were ended and the running of factories was returned to the former bourgeois managers. They were called specialists. By the end of 1919, Vesenkha controlled 3300 enterprises, employing 1.3 million workers.

2 Accompanying nationalisation was the imposition of strict labour discipline. An internal passport system was introduced to stop workers moving to the countryside. There were fines for lateness and absenteeism, and a piece work/bonus system was implemented to encourage greater productivity. All workers were on rations and a ration book could only be accessed by those who had a job.

3 A strict system of rationing was brought in. It was 'class-based'. Workers and soldiers received the most rations, along with other essential workers, such as doctors. The lowest rations went to former bourgeois people, called *burzhui*, and former aristocrats.

4 An end was brought to the market economy. The country was flooded with useless banknotes with the resultant hyperinflation. Normal trade ended and was replaced with barter and a massive black market.

5 However, the key element of War Communism was grain requisitioning. The land was 'socialised' and peasants became, in effect, state employees. They were forced to hand over grain to grain-requisitioning squads who roamed the country, seeking out secret stores of grain hidden by peasants reluctant to hand over their produce. The Cheka became increasingly

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involved in grain requisitioning, and as the civil war intensified, Lenin demanded that no mercy should be shown to recalcitrant peasants. Violence intensified in country areas as Cheka-led squads enforced the movement of grain to the towns. The system of requisitioning was called *prodrazverstka*. Grain detachments were rewarded with a share of what they collected.

THE IMPACT OF WAR COMMUNISM

In a real sense, War Communism was a clear success. The system of *prodrazverstka* had succeeded in keeping the workers fed and had made it possible for the Red Army to operate effectively. As a result, victory in the civil war was possible. There were some in the party who positively enthused about War Communism, as to them it looked like the birth of socialism itself.

Though War Communism might have had its military and ideological merits, there was no denying that it had also produced a social, economic and humanitarian catastrophe. The peasants resisted in any way they could. They burned or hoarded crops, killed their livestock, gorged on any food they had and refused to sow new crops. Actions such as these merely intensified the violent reprisals of the Cheka-led grain-requisition detachments. The violence in the countryside became part of a wider class war. It became acceptable to attack anyone who was a declared class enemy. A class enemy was a person who behaved like a bourgeois or perhaps looked like a bourgeois. The first Soviet labour camps appeared during the civil war.

By 1921, agricultural output had plummeted and there was large-scale starvation in many areas. No totally accurate figures can ever be ascertained but estimates suggested that between five and eight million people died because of famine. The famine was the result of the dislocation caused by seven years of war, government indifference and mismanagement, and a serious drought.

The 1921 famine

The chaos and disruption of the Civil War, the demands of War Communism, and a severe drought combined to create a catastrophic famine in the Volga and Ural rivers regions of the Soviet Union in 1921.

Thousands of villages were abandoned as people desperately sought food. People ate grass and chunks of earth. Police reports told of peasants digging up bodies so that they could eat any flesh remaining on the corpses.

The Soviet writer Gorki and the Soviet Red Cross appealed to the International Red Cross in Geneva for help. The League of Red Cross Societies set up a relief body under the direction of the Norwegian Fridtjof Nansen. The American Relief Administration was one of the first to send aid. By the end of the year, a food program for one million children had been put in place, and half a million railway trucks of food had been brought into the affected areas.

According to most estimates, between five and six million people died during the famine.

Alamy/Mary Evans Picture Library

SOURCE 4.13 Children, in particular, suffered during the famine causes by War Communism.

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David Christian argues in *Power and Privilege* that one of the main results of War Communism was the changes brought about in the Bolshevik (soon to be called Communist) Party. At the start of the civil war and War Communism, the party still had an open, democratic feel about it. There were debates, arguments and controversies, and even Lenin had to argue his case. Links between Moscow, the capital since 1918, and the regions were sporadic, and central decisions were often rejected. However, by the end of the civil war, the situation was totally different. After years of fighting, terror and frequently facing death, party officials became used to giving orders and being obeyed without question. To disobey Moscow was now seen as treacherous. However, the enforcement of centralism and discipline did not always come from the top down. Party members at the lower levels often asked for guidance from the centre and even sought Moscow-appointed officials to sort out local crises.

A resolution of the 8th Party Congress of March 1919 gives the flavour of the new way of thinking within the party.

> The Party finds itself in a situation in which the strictest centralism and most severe discipline are an absolute necessity. All decisions of a higher body are absolutely obligatory for lower ones.
>
> Cited in Graeme Gill, *The Origins of the Stalinist Political System*, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 1990, p. 42.

THE KRONSTADT REVOLT

The Kronstadt Naval Base was located on Kotlin Island in the Gulf of Finland about 25 km west of Petrograd. In March 1921, the Kronstadt sailors rose up in revolt against Lenin's government. The Kronstadt sailors were considered among the most loyal and dependable supporters the Bolsheviks had, 'the pride and glory of the Russian Revolution', as Trotsky described them. If they had become disillusioned to the point of revolt, then the regime was in trouble.

Though the Bolsheviks had achieved victory in the civil war, it was clear that they still faced major problems. In early 1921, there were widespread workers' strikes in Moscow and Petrograd, and peasant revolts in Tambov province and the Ukraine lasted for months. Cheka reports listed 118 separate revolts in February alone.

However, the Kronstadt Revolt was much more serious. There were 15 000 sailors in the base. Once the ice thawed, the base would be impossible to take and its ships could threaten Petrograd. Of even greater significance was the moral dilemma faced by the regime, as its most loyal followers had turned on the regime. Lenin realised the danger and stated: 'This was the flash which lit up reality more than anything else'.

The rebels had a series of demands. Some of the demands were of an economic nature and revealed the anger many felt about the impact of War Communism. They called for an immediate end of grain detachments, the right of peasants to dispose of their grain as they saw fit, and an end to roadblock detachments, and they demanded the peasants' right to bring food into the city. However, there were also political demands. The sailors claimed that the Bolshevik regime had moved away from the ideals of the revolution. They were not counter-revolutionary; rather their demands were even more revolutionary. They called for free elections to the Soviets; in fact they wanted 'Soviets without Bolsheviks'. They saw the Communists becoming a new elite and behaving like the previous regime. They stated that Soviet Russia had become one large penal colony.

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The Communist government of Lenin could not let this revolt pass. To give in to the demands of the sailors would have undermined its power for good. As a result, Trotsky ordered 50 000 Red Army troops to attack Kronstadt across the ice. The Bolsheviks' leading general, Tukhachevsky, was also involved in the attack. It took 10 days for the base to fall. More than 10 000 Red Army troops and 5000 rebels were killed. Once Cheka troops gained entry to the base, a further 2329 sailors were executed and 6459 were sent to labour camps.

Alamy/RIA Novosti

SOURCE 4.14 Red Army attack on the Kronstadt Naval Base, March 1921. More than 15 000 troops died in the assault on Kronstadt.

Kronstadt showed that the party would take any action to cling on to power. More importantly, it marked a turning point in the party's relationship with the people as the early idealism and genuine links to the proletariat were destroyed. In the short term, Lenin realised that there had to be a change in policy direction. In effect, it could be said that Kronstadt gave birth to the New Economic Policy (NEP).

Leon Trotsky (1879–1940)

Alamy/Chronicle

Next to Lenin, Trotsky was the most influential of the Bolshevik leaders. It was Trotsky who masterminded the October 1917 seizure of power, who transformed the ragtag red militias into the five-million-strong Red Army, and who organised the attack on the Kronstadt rebels. However, during the 1920s, he was to be outmanoeuvred by Stalin in the post-Lenin struggle for power. By 1929, Trotsky had been driven out of the Soviet Union. Once Stalin had established his supremacy, Trotsky was effectively written out of Soviet history, only to be mentioned as a counter-revolutionary /antiparty/rightist/deviationist/pro-German traitor, or whatever other insult could be hurled at him. Trotsky was eventually murdered in 1940 in Mexico, on the orders of Stalin.

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KEY EVENTS IN THE LIFE OF TROTSKY

1879	Trotsky was born Lev Davidovich Bronstein to Jewish parents as one of eight children. The family was not particularly devout
1888–97	He was educated in a Jewish school in Gromokley and then St Paul's High School in Odessa. He finished his schooling in Nikolayev
1897	He organised the South Russian Workers' Union. For his efforts he was arrested, spent a few months in solitary confinement and then 18 months in an Odessa prison
1902	After prison, he ended up in a Siberian camp, but in 1902 managed to escape and later that year arrived in London. The young Bronstein chose the name of one of his gaolers for his passport: Trotsky. Once in London, Trotsky met Lenin and started working for the (Marxist) Russian Social Democratic Labour Party
1903	When the party split, Trotsky opposed Lenin but he never became an outright Menshevik
1905	Towards the end of the 1905 Revolution, Trotsky became chairman of the St Petersburg Soviet. He was arrested after a week
1906–17	Trotsky was tried and sentenced to exile in Siberia for life. He managed to escape even before he got there. During the next decade, Trotsky travelled widely, developed his ideas and tried to reunite the party. He often worked as a journalist
1917	At the time of the March Revolution, Trotsky was in New York. It took him two months to return to Russia, and along the way he was briefly imprisoned in Canada. Back in Petrograd, he soon found common cause with Lenin. Following the July Days, Trotsky was briefly imprisoned but was freed following the Bolsheviks' efforts during the Kornilov coup. In September he became chairman of the Petrograd Soviet. Trotsky persuaded Lenin to delay the Bolshevik takeover so that the party's actions could be presented as being carried out in the name of the Soviets. Trotsky organised the takeover of Petrograd, which heralded the Bolshevik Revolution
1918–20	As Commissar of Foreign Affairs, Trotsky led negotiations for peace with Germany. However, his 'no war, no peace' strategy was rejected by Lenin. By the time of the Treaty of Brest-Litovsk, Trotsky had become Commissar of War. Trotsky was to prove an able and charismatic leader, simultaneously inspiring and utterly ruthless. His five-million-strong Red Army emerged victorious in the civil war
1921	Faced with the Kronstadt Revolt, Trotsky agreed with Lenin that the rebellion had to be crushed in order to consolidate the revolution. More than 15 000 men died during the crushing of the Kronstadt Revolt

Trotsky's later career will be examined in chapters five and six.

Questions

1. Compare Trotsky's experiences before 1917 with those of other key individuals? Was he typical of other Bolsheviks?
2. Using the Internet and other sources, prepare a collection of 10 Trotsky quotes from before 1923 that reflect on the nature of revolution. Explain why these ideas might have changed during this period.

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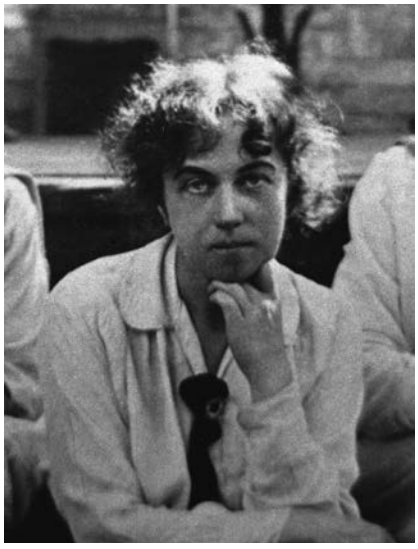
The 10th Party Congress

The 10th Party Congress was held from 8 to 16 March 1921. The Kronstadt Revolt occurred at the same time. In fact, the Congress was interrupted for a while as 300 Congress attendees left to join Red Army forces to put down the revolt. For Lenin, the lesson of Kronstadt was that the days of War Communism had to come to an end. He stated at the time: 'What is needed now is an economic breathing space'. The result was the NEP (which will be discussed in the following section).

However, though Lenin was willing to ease the pressure and liberalise in the economic sphere, he had no intention of doing this in the political sphere. The essential theme of the 10th Party Congress was the 'unity and cohesion of the ranks of the party'. Lenin argued forcefully that factionalism was both harmful and impermissible, as it could be used by counter-revolutionary forces to undermine the party.

The faction that Lenin clearly had in his sights was the Workers' Opposition, led by Alexandra Kollontai and Alexander Shlyapnikov. The Workers' Opposition faction within the party demanded relaxation in the party's political life, as was now occurring in the nation's economic life. Autocratic rule was acceptable, indeed even necessary, during times of crisis such as the recent civil war. However, once the crisis was past, there should be a return to democracy within the working class. This would be achieved by decentralising power to working-class groups, such as trade unions and various working men's organisations.



Alamy/RIA Novosti

Pictures from History

SOURCE 4.15 Alexandra Kollontai (left) and Alexander Shlyapnikov (right) were the key leading figures of the Workers' Opposition

These views were denounced at the Congress. Decrees were passed at the 10th Party Congress that showed the civil war trend for party discipline would be enhanced, not weakened, during the period of NEP. Martin Sixsmith makes this point about what came out of the 10th Party Congress.

> The 'On Party Unity' motion was carried, and it would have fateful consequences. The remaining elements of pluralism within the party were swept away. From now on debate would be stifled and any challenge to the leadership would be denounced as treacherous 'factionalism', a tactic Josef Stalin would later exploit to establish his dictatorial hold on power. The motion paved the way for the intolerant, monolithic Communist Party that would rule the country for the next 70 years.
>
> Lenin was acutely aware that even limited reform runs the risk of unleashing demands for more. So he accompanied the concessions of the NEP with a crackdown on dissent that included show trials of political opponents and deportations of the Russian intelligentsia, beginning in 1922.
>
> Martin Sixsmith, *Russia*, BBC Books, London, 2011, p. 245.

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Resolution of the 10th Party Congress on Party Unity, March 1921

The text below is part of the Party Resolution on Party Unity, which was passed at the 10th Party Congress in March 1921. Read it carefully, and using both the information in the Resolution, and the contextual information of this chapter, answer the questions that follow.

1 The Congress directs the attention of all members of the Party to the fact that the unity and solidarity of its ranks ... is especially necessary at the present moment, when a number of circumstances increase the waverings among the petty-bourgeois population of the country ...

2 ... All class-conscious workers must clearly recognise the harm and impermissibility of any kind of factionalism, which inevitably leads in fact to a weakening of amicable work and a strengthening of the repeated attempts of enemies who have crept into the governing Party to deepen any differences and to exploit it for counter-revolutionary purposes. The ability of the enemies of the proletariat to exploit any departures from a strictly maintained Communist line was most clearly revealed at the time of the Kronstadt mutiny, when bourgeois counter-revolution and the White Guards in all countries of the world showed their readiness even to accept the slogans of the Soviet regime in order to overthrow the dictatorship of the proletariat in Russia...

6 The Congress gives instruction that all groups which have been organised on the basis of any platform whatever should be immediately dissolved and commissions of all organisations to watch out very closely, so that no factional demonstrations may be permitted. Nonfulfillment of this decision of the Congress must incur unconditional and immediate expulsion from the party.

7 In order to bring about strict discipline in the Party ... the Congress empowers the CC (Central Committee) to apply, in the case (or cases) of violation of party discipline or reappearance of, or connivance at, factionalism, all measures of Party punishment right up to expulsion.

Cited at www.marxists.org/archive/lenin/works/1921/10thcong/ch04.htm.

Questions:

1. When point 1 refers to 'the present moment', what was happening in Russia at 'this moment' to make such a resolution necessary?
2. Whom do you think point 1 is referring to as 'the petty-bourgeois population of the country'?
3. What is the significance of calling the Kronstadt revolt a 'mutiny' in point 2?
4. How is point 2 trying to present the Kronstadt rebels with its reference to enemy forces using Soviet slogans in support of the revolt?
5. At whom do you think point 6 is specifically aimed?
6. Why do you think expulsion from the party would be considered such a major punishment for party members?
7. The ultimate punishment for lack of discipline seems to be expulsion from the party. After the events of the past three years inside Russia, why might this seem surprising?

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The New Economic Policy

The principal policy decision at the 10th Party Congress was the introduction of the New Economic Policy (NEP). If the wave of peasant revolts and the Kronstadt Revolt did not convince Lenin of the country's plight, cold statistics could. In 1921, Russia's industrial output was 16 per cent of the 1912 level, mining output was 29 per cent, oil was 36 per cent and grain was 48 per cent. In Petrograd the birth rate had fallen 50 per cent while the death rate had increased fourfold. It was against this background that the NEP was introduced.

Lenin agonised about this partial return to capitalism. He compared the NEP to Brest-Litovsk – something that was unpalatable, necessary in the short term, but would not last forever. Zinoviev said at the Congress: 'I ask you comrades, to be clear that the New Economic Policy is only a temporary deviation, a tactical retreat'.[1] In many ways, the NEP was very similar to the state capitalism that had existed during the first six months of 1918.

SOURCE 4.16 The main elements of the New Economic Policy

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THE IMPACT OF THE NEP

The short-term economic and social effects of the NEP were dramatic. Within a very short time, food began to flow into the cities, and shops and restaurants reopened. The spectre of starvation and famine began to recede from the land, though not until after Lenin had been forced to accept relief aid from the United States. Now that the system of *prodrazverstka* had been abolished, peasant opposition to the regime ended. Peasants wanted only two things – to own their land and to be left alone to work that land. For a brief period in the 1920s, under the NEP, they had their wish.

However, there was a dark side to the success of the NEP. Though there was clearly an economic revival, as the figures in Table 4.1 illustrate, this improvement was accompanied by rampant corruption, speculation and conspicuous consumption – not exactly the goals of a socialist society. Much of the private trade fell into the hands of 'NEP men', traders who roamed from village to village, workshop to workshop, buying surplus produce – anything from eggs, meat and vegetables to nails, garments and tools – and selling it in the market place. These men quickly started making big profits. Property speculation reappeared and government officials could be bribed if the price was right. There was a major increase in crime, and prostitution once again became a significant business. The Moscow local government authority received most of its revenue from taxes levied on gambling clubs.

Getty Images/Fine Art Images/Heritage Images

SOURCE 4.17 The poster 'From the NEP Russia will come the Socialist Russia!', by the artist Gustav Klutsis (1895-1938), was created in 1930. While it was created long after the death of Lenin and the end of NEP the image celebrates Lenin's role as the leader of this economic initiative.

However, the NEP also raised even more significant economic issues. The figures given in Table 4.1 can be read in two ways. Clearly, there was some spectacular growth in certain areas. Industrial production rose sevenfold between 1920 and 1926 while coal production tripled. Cotton-fabric production soared and the grain harvest almost doubled. However, most areas of economic endeavour still had not yet reached their 1913 levels. Only electricity output showed any real improvement.

Getty Images/Universal History Archive/UIG

SOURCE 4.18 Emergence of free market economy under the New Economic Policy, including signage of shops and increased numbers of people in shops

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TABLE 4.1 The Soviet economy under the NEP

Product	Index numbers (1913 = 100)						
	1920	1921	1922	1923	1924	1925	1926
Industrial production	14	20	26	39	45	75	108
Coal	30	31	33	47	56	62	95
Electricity	__	27	40	59	80	150	180
Pig iron	__	3	4	7	18	36	58
Steel	__	4	9	17	27	50	74
Rail freight	__	30	30	44	51	63	__
Cotton fabrics	__	4	14	27	37	65	89
Sown area	__	86	74	87	93	99	105
Grain harvest	58	47	63	71	64	91	96

A Nove, *An Economic History of the USSR*, Penguin, Harmondsworth, 1982, p. 94.

THE END OF THE NEP

> NEP posed a major problem for the young Communist state. It did not answer to Russia's long-term development. In ideological terms, Russia was in the socialist stage of development which was to precede the ultimate stage of communism. Lenin knew that this stage would last a long time. Marx had a vision of a communist society based on abundance. However, Russia was very backward and so, to achieve the condition of abundance, it was necessary for Russia to modernise and industrialise. The problem with NEP was that it was not creating the necessary capital that was essential for industrial development.
>
> Ken Webb, *Russia and the Soviet Union 1917–41*, Get Smart Education, Sydney, 2010, p. 50.

Lenin and Trotsky had expected that revolutions would break out across Europe and that fellow Western socialist regimes would assist the Soviet Union. This did not happen. The Soviet Union was alone, isolated among a sea of hostile capitalist nations. The country needed rapid industrial development, not only to build socialism, but also to build up its defence capability.

Trotsky had highlighted the problem the country was facing when he spoke of the 'scissors crisis' at the 1923 12th Party Congress. Though the NEP revitalised the Soviet economy and improved living standards across the country, there were in-built restraints that meant long-term economic growth was impossible. It was the realisation of this situation, combined with the accompanying food shortages, that persuaded Stalin to launch the first of the Five Year Plans in 1928, and bring the NEP to an end. The demise of the NEP is examined in more detail in chapter six, pages 178–179.

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ORLANDO FIGES AND ADAM ULAM ON LENIN

The role of Lenin at this time has been debated at length by historians. In recent years, there has been a tendency in the historiography of the Russian Revolution to play down the role of specific leaders such as Lenin, and later Stalin, and emphasise the pressures that came from ordinary people. Historians promoting this view are generally called 'revisionists'. They argue that even at the 10th Party Congress, Lenin was not totally in charge and was in fact responding to events and pressures from below, rather than having the freedom to simply enforce his will.

One of the best known revisionist historians is Orlando Figes. Figes does not rely on the writings of Marx or the speeches of Lenin to tell his story. He does not focus on political ideology, but rather is more concerned with ordinary Russians and their motivations and conditions. Figes sees the cultural aspects of revolution as being of major importance. These include such things as the use of language, mood, symbols and the importance of psychology. Figes concedes that a revolution may start with specific events and ideas, but that it is how these events and ideas impact on ordinary people that matters. Thus, Figes' view of the 10th Party Congress focuses on the impact that the Russian Civil War and War Communism had on the people, and how this forced Lenin to consider the NEP.

A generation earlier, historians such as the American Adam Ulam took a different line. Ulam highlights the incredible hold that Lenin had over his colleagues, and their almost religious reverence of him. Lenin eschewed such adulation, and he would have been none too pleased if he knew that his body was to be embalmed and placed in a quasi-religious shrine after his death. Ulam presents an almost heroic image of Lenin at the 10th Party Congress, standing firm against the wishes of many party members, sticking to the stance that he believed was best for the party and the revolution.

Read the following extracts and answer the questions.

Adam Ulam on Lenin

> But it was an unequal contest, the discontent of the majority against the iron determination of one man, Vladimir Ilyich. It was now not so much affection as a superstitious fear of what could happen without him that kept the majority of Communists behind Lenin and made it unthinkable that a vote at a Party Congress could go against him. *He*, as against practically everybody else, was right at the time of Brest-Litovsk. *He* never lost his confidence during the most harrowing moments of the civil war. *He* protected the party against the ambitious designs of Zinoviev, Trotsky and others.

Adam Ulam, *Lenin and the Bolsheviks,* Fontana, London, 1969, pp. 616–7.

Orlando Figes on Lenin

> By 1921, Bolshevik power had ceased to exist in much of the countryside. The consignment of grain to the cities had been brought to a halt within the rebel strongholds. As the urban food crisis deepened, workers went on strike. The strikes that swept across Russia during February 1921 were no less revolutionary than the

Questions

1. What does Ulam suggest had become the relationship between the leader of the party, Lenin, and the members of the party?
2. How does Ulam suggest Lenin had made himself indispensable to the party?
3. What decisions does Figes say Lenin managed to push through?
4. How does Figes suggest Lenin was not as fully in command of things as Ulam suggests?
5. Which historian's interpretation of Lenin is more convincing?
6. Based on these historians' interpretations, evaluate the role of Lenin as a revolutionary leader.

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peasant rebellions ... Moscow was the first industrial city to rebel ... [On 27 February] the revolt spread to the Kronstadt naval base ... This was the crisis situation in which the Tenth Party Congress assembled in Moscow on 8 March. Determined to defeat the Workers' Opposition, Lenin got a vote condemning it, and then forced a secret resolution banning factions ... Lenin [also] insisted that [the NEP] was needed to quell the peasant uprisings (which he said were 'far more dangerous than all the Denikins and Kolchaks put together') and build a new alliance with the peasantry.

Orlando Figes, *Revolutionary Russia 1891–1991,* Penguin, London, pp. 164–6.

Early Soviet foreign policy

Comintern
The Comintern, or Communist International, was created in 1919, and sought to bring together all communist parties and to assist each in bringing about revolution in their countries. It was assumed that it would be led and guided by the Soviet Union.

There was to be a major ambiguity in the nature and practice of Soviet foreign policy during the regime's early years. The Soviet Union was supposed to be a revolutionary regime whose long-term goal was the creation of communism in the Soviet Union on the basis of Marxism-Leninism. The party believed that revolution would not stop at the frontier of the Soviet Union and saw Bolshevik inspired risings in Germany and Hungary as evidence of the spread of revolution. It was convinced that the flames of socialist revolution, once fanned, would spread across all of Europe, and eventually to the United States. It was the duty of the Soviet Union to assist the bringing about of revolutions in other countries. This was fundamentally the purpose of the **Comintern**.

However, by the early 1920s, it was apparent that world revolution was not going to happen. The Soviet Union was alone. Faced with this situation, the party had to compromise its principles and develop normal state-to-state relationships. This became even more imperative once the NEP was introduced and the economy needed to be able to trade. A decade later, the dilemma would still be there. Stalin needed Western markets to sell his grain, and Western suppliers from whom to buy machine tools and factory equipment for the Five Year Plan. Yet it was also assumed that the onset of the Great Depression was merely the first stage in the collapse of Western capitalism.

The following table outlines the main steps taken in the practice of Soviet foreign policy to the mid-1920s.

TABLE 4.2 Soviet foreign policy, 1917 to late 1920s

Date	Action	Significance
December 1917	SOVNARKOM issues the Decree For Peace	The Bolsheviks' main concerns are peace and survival.
March 1918	Treaty of Brest-Litovsk	War with Germany ends. Russia pays a high price for peace but Lenin does not expect the treaty to last. The Bolsheviks repudiate all debts owed to Western powers.
1918–20	Allied intervention in the civil war	The Western Allies claimed to be seeking Russia's return to the First Word War, but it is soon clear they seek the destruction of the regime.
1920–21	War with Poland Treaty of Riga in March 1921	Some Bolshevik enthusiasts briefly believe in using the Russo-Polish War to launch revolutions across Europe. Russia's defeat puts an end to such ideas.

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Date	Action	Significance
1919	Creation of the Comintern	Its purpose is to foment revolution across Europe.
June 1919	Germany is forced to sign The Treaty of Versailles. League of Nations is established.	Russia does not attend the Paris Peace Conference Russia is not invited to join the League of Nations, which it sees as a capitalist club. Attempted revolutions in Hungary and Germany fail, leaving Russia as an isolated socialist state.
1920	Friendship treaties are signed with Russia's neighbours Finland, Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania.	The Bolsheviks had already given up claims to former tsarist lands. However, Georgia, Azerbaijan and Armenia are soon reincorporated into the Soviet Union.
1921	Friendship treaties are signed with Afghanistan, Persia and Turkey.	Soviets establish diplomatic relations with neighbours
1921	Commercial treaties are signed with Italy and Britain.	These arrangements coincide with the introduction of the NEP.
1922	Germany and Russia sign the Treaty of Rapallo.	Treaty of Rapallo resolves territorial and economic disputes between German and the Soviets and lays the foundation for later secret military cooperation.
1924	Diplomatic relations are established with Britain.	Anglo-Soviet relations become something of a 'political football'. Relations are established, broken, and established again, depending on events in the British political scene, such as the **General Strike**, and the activities of the Comintern, such as the **Zinoviev Letter** of 1924.
late 1920s	Diplomatic relations are established with all the great powers except the United States.	Despite occasional rhetoric coming from the Comintern and party members, the Soviet Union dedicates itself to building socialism at home and has effectively given up the dream of world revolution. By now, the country is embroiled in its internal economic transformation.

General Strike
In 1926, a British miners' strike became a national general strike, which briefly brought the country to a standstill. Britain accused Soviet authorities of assisting the strikers.

Zinoviev Letter
A letter allegedly written by Comintern chief Zinoviev in 1924, which encouraged revolution in Britain. It did much to discredit the left-wing British Labour Party and was arguably a factor in their 1924 electoral defeat.

The Treaty of Rapallo: 1922

Though Germany and Russia had been enemies during the First World War, after the war they soon found common ground. They were both 'pariah' nations. Germany was rejected by the other powers because of its responsibility for beginning the war. Clause 231 of the Treaty of Versailles put the blame squarely on Germany. Germany was also forced to hand over territories and pay huge reparations to the victorious powers. It was allowed no part in the treaty negotiations.

Russia had become a pariah for ideological reasons. It had lost territories, and the Western powers were demanding the repayment of loans that had been made to the former tsarist regime, which the Bolsheviks had repudiated. Russia was also not invited to the peace talks in Paris in 1919.

Thus, both nations had common interests despite the obvious ideological divide. They sought cancellation of international debts and needed trade. The Treaty of Versailles had greatly restricted Germany's military power. So even before the two nations had signed a formal treaty, the German army chief, Hans von Seeckt, and Trotsky had set up factories inside the Soviet Union making arms for the German army, while the *Reichswehr* trained Soviet forces.

Reichswehr
Name given to the German armed forces during the Weimar Republic period of 1919–33

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In 1922, Germany and the Soviet Union were present at an economic conference in Genoa. They used this occasion to sign a Treaty at Rapallo. According to the treaty:

+ All claims for reparations and compensation were cancelled.
+ Each granted the other 'most favoured nation status'; any trade concession either power gave to another power, automatically flowed to each partner.
+ Each promised to cooperate in a spirit of goodwill to meet each nation's economic needs.

The Soviet regime had secured its first official recognition by a great power.

A social revolution?

The events following the Bolshevik seizure of power in the October Revolution clearly had a major political and economic impact on Russia and its former Empire. Politically, the autocratic system of the tsar, which had collapsed in February 1917, had been replaced with new political structures of government – SOVNARKOM – by the Bolsheviks. The economic system on which the tsarist autocracy had been based had also been radically changed, but aspects of these changes had been shaped by the needs of the Bolsheviks during the civil war. State socialism and the NEP had maintained aspects of the capitalist system as part of a transition to socialism, while War Communism, between 1918 and 1921, had been a highly centralised system in which the state had dominated the economy.

The early measures of SOVNARKOM, particularly those relating to land reform, also broke down the old system of property ownership, one of the underpinning structures of the economy of the tsarist period. These developments, when combined with the social aims of the Bolshevik party, had broader social implications. At its core, Bolshevism's vision of a new society was based on the idea of socialism in which social equality was an important element. In practice, however, as Sheila Fitzpatrick notes in *The Russian Revolution*, for the Bolsheviks 'it was impossible to regard all citizens as equal when some of them were class enemies of the regime'. Therefore the ways in which these ideals were enacted in the context of the Civil War meant that the experience of Russian social groups was still shaped by their pre-revolutionary social status.

SOURCE 4.19 Inessa Armand had been an active Bolshevik since 1903. Returning from exile with Lenin in 1917, she led the *Zhendotdel* until her death in 1920.

WOMEN'S RIGHTS

The direct impact on women clearly illustrates the way in which social equality underpinned the early SOVNARKOM reforms. These Bolshevik reforms were spearheaded by Inessa Armand (1919–20) and Alexandra Kollontai (1920–21), as the heads of the *Zhendotdel*, the women's department of the Bolshevik Party. For Lenin, as he argued in a speech to non-Party women in Moscow in September 1919, the changes were required to make the 'cause of socialist development' sound. Against this background the party adopted a three-pronged strategy to liberate women from the conservative social restrictions of the tsarist era the state. The three prongs included legal and bureaucratic reform, education and training and, thirdly, policies to support women as mothers and carers.

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Between 1918 and 1920, Russian women gained legal and political equality with Russian men. This enabled Russian women to own property and businesses in their own right, have equal suffrage rights and individual legal status within the court system. The Bolshevik's *Code on Marriage, the Family and Guardianship* (1918) was equally wide ranging. It redefined the legal structures of the family, making marriage a civil, rather than religious, arrangement and made the processes of divorce simpler for abandoned, abused or neglected women. The laws that applied to the workplace included eight weeks of paid maternity leave, maternity clinics and child care facilities, regular breastfeeding breaks for nursing mothers in the workplace and a ban on pregnant women working overtime or overnight shifts. In 1920, abortion was removed from the criminal code. While many of these initiatives may appear rather unremarkable today, in their historical context these laws and provisions were among the most progressive in the world, addressing many of the legal and workplace rights women in Australia, Britain and the United States would not achieve until the 1970s.

EDUCATION

The education policy of the Bolsheviks was also an important, socially transformative initiative, built upon notions of equality and applied to women as well as men and children. Among the earliest decrees of the Bolsheviks, in November 1917, was to attain universal literacy. While the implementation was somewhat haphazard, the party initiated numerous literacy campaigns such as the 1919 'liquidation of illiteracy' program, with millions of peasants believed to have been trained in the rudiments of reading and writing. The impact was remarkable: literacy rose from the 1897 measures of 40 per cent literacy for men and 16 per cent for women to 68 per cent for men and 56 per cent for women by the end of the 1920s.

www.bridgemanimages.com

SOURCE 4.20 Russian literacy propaganda poster from 1920 by Russian artist Elizaveta Kruglikova, advocating female literacy. The top section reads: 'Woman! Learn to read and write!' At the bottom: 'Oh, Mommy! If you were literate, you could help me!'

IMPACT ON SOCIAL GROUPS

While the impact of the revolution on women and on education can be seen as positive, the outcome for other groups in Russian society was generally less clear cut. In considering the impact on Russian social groups, other initiatives of the early Bolshevik government in relation to land and private property are of key importance. These reforms, most notably the Land Decree of 26 October 1917 and the Fundamental Law of Land Socialization of 19 February 1918, transformed the nature of the Russian economic system by abolishing private property. By February 1918, 75 per cent of property had been confiscated from its former owners. Post-revolution, the Bolshevik understanding of the significance of class and class war would shape the implications for all social groups.

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The aristocracy

The experience of the Russian aristocracy can be best understood against the background of land and property reform and the Bolsheviks' ideals of social equality. As the social elite of tsarist society, the aristocracy were an obvious target of the Bolsheviks. Prior to 1917, their social status had largely been determined by inheritance; this was seen as counter to the Bolshevik ideals of class. The economic power of the aristocracy was also based on ownership of property, in particular, land. The SOVNARKOM decrees abolished ownership of land, along with all the titles and privileges of the aristocracy. The aristocracy became the 'former people'.

What this meant for individual experiences was diverse because the aristocracy was itself divided. Many of Russia's aristocrats were living outside of the country at the time of the revolution. Many others left if they were able, taking what money and jewels they could. Some aristocrats had family in Europe upon whom they could rely; others emigrated to the United States. For some time, there were hopes of a tsarist restoration and various Restoration Committees were set up within the émigré communities.

However, many aristocrats were not rich and could not afford to emigrate. These members of the aristocracy were often conscripted to do work by the new regime. Some who remained adapted to life in Soviet society, often using their education to become scholars and cultural figures. One such person was Aleksei Tolstoi, who became a well-known writer. However, surviving in a 'workers' state' was not easy for former aristocrats and they faced discrimination. Many aristocrats hid their origin or bought false identity papers to suggest a more modest social background. During the 1930s, former aristocrats were targeted by the NKVD and 'settled' in remote regions of the country.

Library of Congress, Prints & Photographs Division, drawing by Al Frueh, [reproduction number, LC-USZ62-34298]

SOURCE 4.21 Cartoon comment on the impact of the Russian Revolution on the aristocracy, from *Good Morning*, 15 May 1919.

Count Parasitsky

Alfred Frueh was an American cartoonist most famous for his regular contributions to the magazine *The New Yorker*. This cartoon comes from the short-lived American political magazine *Good Morning*, published between 1919 and 1921, and was originally published on 15 May 1919. The cartoon is a reflection of the impact of the Russian Revolution on the aristocracy. The original cartoon was accompanied by the caption: 'Society note from Moscow. Count Parasitsky will not occupy his palatial residence in the mountains this summer. He expects to remain in the city and do uplift work'.

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Questions

1. What is the significance of the name Count Parasitsky? What does this title suggest about the artist's attitude towards the Russian aristocracy?
2. How does the artist convey that Count Parasitsky is an aristocrat?

The bourgeoisie

At the time of the revolution, the Russian bourgeoisie was a relatively small group, predominantly located in the large cities. Similar to the impact on the aristocracy, the Bolsheviks' land and property reforms destroyed the structures on which the status of the middle class in Russian society was based. Methods including seizure of property such as factories and shops, restrictions on bank withdrawals and taxation were used to reduce the economic power of the middle class. In early 1918, Lenin had sanctioned the use of violence against the middle classes, and many became victims of looting and violence, sometimes from the crowd, sometimes initiated by the Party itself. During the Civil War, Trotsky initiated programs of forced labour for members of the middle classes. Along with aristocrats and former priests, other members of the bourgeoisie were forced to undertake manual labour, such as clearing streets of snow or rubbish. While wealthier members of the middle classes fled, the majority were not able to do so. Like the poorer members of the aristocracy, those who remained in Russia also became victims of the Cheka's anti-bourgeoisie terror.

The workers

Marxists believed that the urban working class – the 'proletariat' – would be the most revolutionary class because they experienced the worst of the capitalist system's exploitation. Marxists also believed that the proletariat would become the largest class as the economy modernised and industrialised.

This presented a problem for the Bolsheviks because there were only about two and half million workers in Russia by 1917 from a population of about 180 million. The overwhelming mass of the population were peasants. How could an economically backward society such as Russia possibly have a Marxist revolution? Lenin's argument was that the peasants were experiencing similar exploitation to the proletariat and that they would enthusiastically unite with the workers to create a new society. Lenin called this union between the proletariat and peasants the 'smychka'. Before 1917, Lenin did not believe that coercion would be needed to achieve this union.

The proletariat, guided by the Party, would lead the revolution. Revolutions would spread across Europe, and new socialist states would assist the young socialist Russia. However, by mid-1918, Russia was embroiled in civil war. Revolutions did not occur in the rest of Europe and Western nations were antagonistic to the Bolshevik regime. Clearly, socialism would not be arriving quickly in Russia. As many workers returned to the countryside or joined the Red Army, by 1920, the size of the proletariat had fallen to just over one million.

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Peasants and kulaks

The Land Decree of November 1917 had been popular with the peasants, but *smychka*, the union of the proletariat and the peasants in the socialist society, proved difficult to achieve because the peasants were only interested in having land. As the Civil War continued, the Bolsheviks faced catastrophic grain shortages. This resulted in brutal grain requisitioning by Cheka-led units sent into the countryside. The gap between the proletariat and the peasants was now a gulf.

Victory was achieved in the war but at a terrible price. In 1920–21, a severe famine struck, leaving millions of Russians without food. At the 10th Party Congress, Lenin introduced the New Economic Policy, which enabled peasants to sell surpluses on the open market once they had contributed a set amount of their produce to the state. The economy prospered and the immediate food situation improved.

Some peasants prospered greatly. These 'middle-class' peasants were known as kulaks. The kulaks first appeared following the reforms of Stolypin before 1914, when some peasants were able to purchase land from neighbours and even begin to employ farm labourers. The kulaks reappeared during the period of the NEP and were able to sell their produce on the open market. A small number of these kulaks became quite wealthy.

Pictures from History

SOURCE 4.22 This 1921 lithograph, by artist Viktor Deni, encapsulates the Bolsheviks' representation of the kulaks. Seated among sacks, the well-fed and well-dressed, yet pig-like, kulak expresses his indifference to the starving. The text translates as 'Bread power, Kulak-bloodsucker: What do I care about the hungry?!'

However, if socialism were to develop inside Russia, the NEP could only ever be a short-term solution. Private land ownership was in contradiction to socialist ideology. Worse still, as the 'scissors crisis' of 1927–28 proved (see chapter six), the NEP was not producing the capital needed for future industrialisation. This was a fundamental reason for Stalin's introduction of collectivisation from 1928. The brutality of collectivisation and dekulakisation in the early 1930s (see chapter six) destroyed any possibility of Lenin's earlier idealistic notion of smychka. The kulaks became prime targets during the early years of Stalin's collectivisation policies.

Nationalities

The experience of non-Russian ethnicities of the former Russian Empire, including Finns, Armenians, Poles and Ukrainians, like that of other social groups, was largely framed by the Bolsheviks' understanding of Marxism. Many of the former subject people of the Russian Empire had, as the old order collapsed, declared their independence. Lenin, and other key Bolsheviks, sanctioned this self-determination. In November 1917, for example, the

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Bolshevik government recognised the independence of Poland and Finland. Early in 1918, the Commissar for Nationalities, Joseph Stalin, authorised other ethnic groups within the Russian Soviet Republic to use their own language, and establish schools, courts and administrative structures. In some Muslim regions of the former Russian empire, Muslim communities even established legal codes based on Sharia law.

As the Civil War progressed, the Bolshevik became less accepting of the independence of minority nationalities. The realities of the war shaped this, but so too did the Bolshevik belief that nationalism as an ideology was inherently counter-revolutionary. This trend is sometimes viewed as an initiative of Stalin who, despite being a Georgian, became increasingly hostile to the rights of minority nationalities. After Lenin's death in 1924, the Stalinist position became increasingly dominant, with restrictions placed on the use of minority languages and the impositions of Russification policies.

Conclusion

By mid-1918, Russia was in the midst of civil war and the odds were heavily stacked against a Bolshevik victory. White armies, aided by Western interventionist powers, surrounded the small area controlled by Red forces. However, political division and geographical separation worked against the various White forces, and most Allied powers soon lost interest in the conflict. The Bolsheviks' control of the Russian heartland brought it economic and strategic advantages. This factor, combined with Trotsky's dynamic leadership and reorganisation of the Red Army, turned the conflict in the Reds' favour. The policy of War Communism, though extremely unpopular, succeeded in keeping Red troops fed and supplied. Victory for the Reds had been achieved by 1921, but as the Kronstadt Revolt indicated, the country desperately needed a change in economic direction. This came when Lenin introduced the NEP at the 10th Party Congress. The economy soon revived, but this revival was also accompanied by capitalist evils the party had vowed to remove. The 10th Party Congress also outlawed factionalism, and party affairs became much more rigid and disciplined. Externally, the Soviet Union began establishing normal state-to-state relations as the dream of world revolution ebbed away. Relations with Germany became particularly close.

Chapter summary

+ Civil war lasted from mid-1918 to early 1921 and was primarily a contest between the Reds and the Whites. Green forces were also involved, not for ideological reasons, but to keep control of local areas.
+ The Russian Civil War ranged from full-scale battles involving thousands to small-scale guerrilla and partisan warfare.

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+ The Reds' aim was survival at any cost.
+ Trotsky was crucial to the Reds' military effort. Charismatic, energetic and superbly organised, he transformed Red Guard units into a five-million-strong Red Army, which he ran on traditional disciplined military lines.
+ The Whites lacked political and geographical unity. With no clear political platform beyond removing the Bolsheviks, White generals were so disunited they even fought each other on occasions.
+ Western Allied powers, such as Britain, France, the US and Japan, intervened to try and force Russia back into the war. Their real aim was to destroy the Reds, but their half-hearted intervention had ended by 1920. The champion of intervention in Britain was Winston Churchill, but his desire for greater involvement was overruled by Lloyd George.
+ The brief Russo-Polish War of 1920–21 resulted in a Soviet defeat and ended any romantic dreams of revolutionary warfare.
+ Both Reds and Whites were guilty of the most horrific atrocities.
+ The use of terror by the Cheka was a factor in the Reds' victory. The Cheka became a permanent state body in 1922, renamed the GPU.
+ The Reds won the civil war as a result of geography, White disunity, more effective propaganda, popular support, and the superior leadership of Lenin and Trotsky.
+ Lenin introduced War Communism in 1918. Though extremely unpopular and often accompanied by terror and violence, it did keep Red forces fed and supplied throughout the civil war.
+ The civil war and War Communism left the country in a disastrous state by 1921. There were rebellions against the Bolsheviks from the Ukraine to the Kronstadt Naval Base, and millions died of famine.
+ Lenin took a backward ideological step by reintroducing elements of capitalism in the New Economic Policy. Grain requisitioning ended, markets and a cash economy returned, and the economy quickly revived.
+ However, there were drawbacks to the NEP. Graft and corruption accompanied its implementation. More importantly, it did not provide the answer to Russia's long-term modernisation.
+ The 10th Party Congress placed the Party on a stricter, more disciplined path where dissent and the creation of factions were banned. At this stage, deviation from party rules and decisions meant, at worst, expulsion from the party.
+ Early Soviet foreign policy was ambiguous in nature. The party stood for world revolution, and through the Comintern sought to foment uprisings in Western capitalist countries. However, faced with isolation and a desperate economic situation, the Soviet Union also developed normal state-to-state relations throughout the 1920s.
+ In the 1920s, the Soviet Union's closest diplomatic friend was Germany.

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Endnotes

1 Cited at http://alphahistory.com/russianrevolution/russian-revolution-quotations/.

Weblinks

Weblinks relevant to this chapter can be found at http://nmh.nelsonnet.com.au/russia

Further reading

Evan Mawdsley, *The Russian Civil War*, Pegasus, New York, 2007.
Martin McCauley, *The Soviet Union Since 1917*, Longman, Harlow, 1981, pp. 28–40.
Richard Pipes, *Russia under the Bolshevik regime*, Harvill, 1994.
Adam Ulam, *Lenin and the Bolsheviks*, Fontana, London, 1969, Chapter IX, Part 1, pp. 588–646

Chapter review activities

The Russian Civil War

1 Imagine you are a journalist covering the outbreak of the civil war. Explain to your readers why you expect a White victory.
2 Present an argument that shows Trotsky being the key factor in the Red victory in the civil war.
3 Identify the main weaknesses of the Whites during the civil war.
4 What do you think was Lenin's logic in insisting on the implementation of a terror campaign against his enemies?
5 Why did Allied intervention eventually work in favour of the Reds?
6 Why was Lenin not particularly concerned at losing to Poland in the brief war of 1920–21?
7 There were many reasons why the Reds won the civil War. Identify what you see as the most important four factors. Justify your choice.

War Communism

8 Identify the key elements of War Communism.
9 Why were some in the party pleased to see the introduction of War Communism?
10 Why did Lenin believe War Communism was necessary?
11 What impact did War Communism have on the workings of the Bolshevik Party?
12 Was War Communism a success? Give reasons for your answer.

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The Kronstadt Revolt

13 Why did the Kronstadt sailors revolt?

14 Why were such harsh measures taken against the revolt?

15 What were the results of the revolt?

The 10th Party Congress

16 What was the context of the 10th Party Congress?

17 Put yourself in Lenin's place. Justify the ban on factions.

The NEP

18 Outline the key reasons for the introduction of the NEP.

19 Identify the key elements of the NEP.

20 Why would Lenin have had mixed feelings about the introduction of the NEP?

21 Was the NEP an economic success? Present arguments both for and against the idea of it being a success.

Early Soviet foreign policy

22 Explain the ambiguity of early Soviet foreign policy.

23 What was the Comintern?

24 What had become the main objectives of Soviet foreign policy by the early 1920s? Explain why this was the case.

25 Outline the beginnings of the postwar Russo-German relationship.

Bringing it all together

26 Create an annotated timeline of the 10 most significant developments between 1918 and 1924.

27 a Based on your reading of this chapter and wider research, prepare a detailed table describing the experiences of social groups in Russian society following the Bolshevik Revolution. Your summary table should include the aristocracy, peasants, kulaks, bourgeoisie, workers, women and nationalities of the former Russian Empire. It should note the challenges faced by each group and the changes in their lives that resulted from the revolution. Which group(s) benefited or were disadvantaged by the change?

b In an extended paragraph, describe the changes to Russian society that occurred as a result of the Bolshevik Revolution.

Research

28 Propaganda posters were frequently used by the Bolsheviks and the Whites during the civil war. These posters were often in colour and generally relied on simple visual messages

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conveyed with common symbols. This research task is to familiarise you with some of the common symbols and their meanings.

a Using the internet and other sources, collect five examples of propaganda from each group and prepare a table, based on the example below, or annotated images. An example in table form, based on source 4.10, is provided below as an example.

Title/Date	Description of the poster	Words or symbols used in the poster and their meaning	Audience	Key messages
Peace and Freedom 1919	A White Army Propaganda poster. The central figure is a giant red devil-like Trotsky wearing a Star of David. Blood runs from the hands and feet of the giant 'Trotsky' figure. In the background, buildings fly read flags. One building, which appears to be a church, has a broken cross. In the foreground are piles of skulls and a group of soldiers preparing to kill a man.	Star of David: association of Bolsheviks with Judaism Red flags: Bolsheviks Skulls: death Broken cross: Bolshevik opposition to Christianity	Anti-Bolshevik groups and individuals, particularly those to which anti-Semitism and Russian nationalism would appeal.	Bolsheviks as demonic, associated with Jews and responsible for death and destruction. Bolsheviks are anti-Christian Bolshevik forces are not 'true Russians'

b Identify and explain the meaning of the five frequently used symbols.

c Are there similarities and differences in the symbols used by the Bolsheviks and the Whites?

d In an extended paragraph, describe the types of messages conveyed in propaganda posters by the Bolsheviks and the Whites.

Essay questions

29 Trotsky's leadership of the Red Army was the key factor in the Bolshevik victory in the Russian civil war. Critically evaluate this statement.

30 What were the consequences of Bolshevik rule for Russian society in the early 1920s?

31 To what extent was Russian society and politics changed, and the aims of the Bolsheviks achieved, by 1924?

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CHAPTER FIVE

The struggle for power: 1924–1929

Lenin's party had changed enormously by the early 1920s. The boisterous debating and vigorous exchange of ideas that had been a feature of the party for so long was replaced by rigidity and discipline. As the party grew, it also became more centralised and bureaucratic. The party not only decided national policy, but was also the dispenser of offices and favours across the land. The man who controlled the party bureaucracy wielded enormous power. By the early 1920s, the most influential figure in the party bureaucracy was Josef Stalin. However, Lenin disliked and distrusted Stalin and the relationship between the two men had deteriorated to such an extent that in his last will and testament, Lenin called for Stalin's removal from the office of general secretary. With Zinoviev's help, Stalin survived the reading of Lenin's will. He did not grieve over Lenin's death as others did, and with Lenin gone, Stalin was able to manipulate the party debate over ideology and the future direction of the country, outmanoeuvring his rivals to become Lenin's successor. Of all the leading Bolsheviks, Stalin seemed the least likely to assume leadership of the party and the country. Most people assumed that the position would fall to Trotsky. However, by 1929, Stalin was being hailed as the 'Lenin of today', Trotsky was in foreign exile never to see his country again, and the party looked to Stalin to take it into an uncertain future.

INQUIRY QUESTION

+ What impact did Lenin's death have on Russia?
+ How did Stalin come to power?

‹ The body of Vladimir Lenin has been on display in a purpose-built mausoleum since shortly after his death in 1924

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The nature of Soviet rule

The Bolshevik Party was much smaller during its early years than it was by the early 1920s. Though Lenin's position was unchallenged, he had to use his intellectual skills to get his way and not merely rely on the loyalty of party members. Party debates were often rowdy, robust affairs with insults thrown about, occasional walkouts and keen discussion. This was the essence of democratic centralism.

THE END OF DEMOCRATIC CENTRALISM

However, by the early 1920s, two key developments brought about the end of democratic centralism. The first of these was the ban on factionalism, which was discussed in chapter four. The wishes of those party members who sought greater debate at party congresses, and who wanted more grassroots decision making, were thwarted. The civil war had introduced an inevitable centralisation of power. With victory won, groups such as the Workers' Opposition wanted a return to the old ways. Lenin crushed this group at the 10th Party Congress, reinforced the power of party leaders and reduced the influence of ordinary members.

The second development related to the enormous growth in party membership, and the fact that the party now controlled an empire. This necessitated a revamped party apparatus and the creation of three new party bodies:

1 The Politburo – this made the key decisions.
2 The Orgburo – the Organisation Bureau overseeing party efficiency.
3 The Secretariat – responsible for record-keeping, allocating jobs and membership.

The Secretariat was to become the most important body. The Secretariat appointed local party officials who in turn held authority over local rank-and-file members. Thus, the Secretariat was able to dispense enormous patronage. The Central Committee of the Party and local provincial committees drew up lists of key positions in government administration that had to be filled called Nomenklatura. These committees soon had the right to determine who was appointed to these positions. David Christian summarises the position this way:

> Thus, the Secretariat's control of the apparat (the party machine) of professional Party workers effectively gave it control of all key positions in Soviet society.
>
> David Christian, *Power and Privilege*, Pitman, Melbourne, 1991, p. 196.

At the time, Trotsky railed against this development. In October 1923, he wrote to the Central Committee:

> The bureaucratization of the Party apparatus has developed to unheard-of proportions by means of the method of secretarial selection. There has been created a very broad stratum of Party workers, entering into the apparatus of the government of the Party, who completely renounce their own Party opinion, at least the open expression of it, as though assuming that the secretarial hierarchy is the apparatus which creates Party opinion and Party decisions. Beneath this stratum, abstaining from their own opinions, there lies the broad mass of the Party, before whom every decision stands in the form of a summons or a command.
>
> Trotsky, first letter to the Central Committee, 8 October 1923. Cited in *Challenge of the Left Opposition: 1923–1925*, Pathfinder Press, New York, 1975, pp. 55–6.

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Between 1921 and 1923, purges of the party membership, carried out by the bureaucracy, resulted in the expulsion of about 25 per cent of the members. By 1923, only one in seven of the administrative posts allocated by the party machine was held by manual workers.

'Democratic centralism' had been replaced by 'bureaucratic centralism'. The main beneficiary of this development was to be Stalin.

STALIN'S SECRET RISE TO POWER BY 1923

At the time of Lenin's death, the five main Bolshevik leaders were Trotsky, Zinoviev, Kamenev, Bukharin and Stalin. The background of these men, and the struggle for power after Lenin's death, will be covered in detail later. However, at this stage it is worth noting that of these five men, most people in the party assumed that Trotsky would assume the leadership. Zinoviev, Kamenev and Bukharin were notable figures who arguably also had a claim. However, if members agreed that Trotsky was the 'man most likely', Stalin was clearly the 'man least likely'. In his classic biography of Stalin, the historian Isaac Deutscher refers to Stalin at this time as 'a grey blur'.

Corbis/Hulton-Deutsch Collection

SOURCE 5.1 Stalin's 'mug shot' from tsarist Okhrana records. Stalin was arrested many times and served several periods in Siberian exile, the last up until the February 1917 Revolution.

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STALIN'S BACKGROUND: 1878–1919

1878	**18 DECEMBER**	Stalin was born Josef Vissarionovich Dzhugashvili in the Georgian town of Gori. For some reason, official accounts of Stalin's life give his birth date as 21 December 1879
1878–88		Stalin's parents, Vissarion and Ekaterina, were of peasant background but had moved to the Georgian capital, Tiflis, where Vissarion worked as a cobbler. It would have been a tough and poor childhood. Vissarion was a violent alcoholic who beat his son, while Ekaterina did her best to protect the young Josef. Stalin had smallpox as a child and his scarred face forever bore the evidence of the disease. A childhood accident left him with a slightly withered left arm
1888–94		Stalin attended school in Gori where he was forced to speak Russian. Stalin's Russian would always have a Georgian accent, a fact mocked by his better-educated Bolshevik colleagues later on
1894–99		Stalin attended the Tiflis Seminary and seemed to be heading towards a religious life. He was expelled from the seminary in 1899 because of his involvement with the Georgian Social Democratic Group, the Mesame Dasi. For the next couple of years, Stalin worked with various left-wing Georgian groups, adopting the party alias 'Koba' – a fictional hero of Russian literature
1902		Following his organisation of a strike at Batumi, Stalin was arrested and exiled to Siberia
1903		Stalin married his first wife, Ekaterina Svanidze
		In December, he joined the Bolsheviks
1904		He managed to escape from exile
1905		In December, Stalin had his first meeting with Lenin at the party conference in Tammerfors in Finland
1907		A son is born to Stalin and Ekaterina, Yakov. Ekaterina died later in the year. Stalin said of her death: 'With her died my last warm feelings for humanity'
1909–12		Stalin is involved in 'expropriations', robberies that raised funds for the party. In January 1912, he was appointed to the Central Committee by Lenin. It was at this time that 'Koba' adopted the name 'Stalin', meaning 'man of steel'
1913–17		With Lenin, Stalin co-wrote a party piece called 'Marxism and the national question'. Stalin was arrested again and exiled to Siberia where he saw out the war years
1917		Following the February Revolution, Stalin was released and made his way back to Petrograd. At first he supported the Provisional Government but switched to opposition following Lenin's return in April and the leader's call for 'All power to the Soviets'. Stalin played a 'behind the scenes' role throughout 1917. He supported Lenin's call for the removal of the Provisional Government, but he played a minor part in the actual October Revolution
1918–19		During the civil war, Stalin gained prestige for his leadership in the defence of Tsaritsyn, though he was also heavily criticised for his dictatorial and violent behaviour
1919		Stalin was married for a second time, to Nadezhda Alliluyeva. They had two children, Svetlana and Vassily. Nadezhda allegedly committed suicide in 1932

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Though Stalin was a member of the Bolshevik leadership, he was not seen as one of its leading lights. Lenin's position was unassailable, Trotsky was the charismatic and dynamic leader of the Red Army, Zinoviev ran the Comintern, and Kamenev was head of the government. Stalin was more concerned with the party bureaucracy. However, it was this factor that would be so crucial to Stalin's success in the post-Lenin struggle for power. By 1923, Stalin already wielded enormous power within the party. Source 5.2 summarises the nature of this power.

SOURCE 5.2 Summary of Stalin's positions and power by 1923. Though not seen as a leading, dynamic figure like Trotsky, Stalin was already holding enormous power even before Lenin died.

As was explained above, by the early 1920s the Communist Party had become more centralised, more hierarchical, more bureaucratic and more disciplined. This suited Stalin because he alone of the major party leaders understood the significance of these developments, and had gradually manoeuvred himself into powerful bureaucratic positions. Lenin was a sick man by 1923 and Stalin knew that once Lenin was dead, political power in the party and the nation would be determined by 'who had the numbers'. This is why control of the bureaucracy was so important.

In 1919, Lenin appointed Stalin as Commissar of Nationalities. Russia was a multinational empire that contained dozens of different ethnic groups around its periphery, including Georgians, Ukrainians, Armenians and many from central Asia. Most of the party's leading figures were Western-educated and felt much more at home in Paris or Zurich than in Azerbaijan. Only Stalin was willing to take on what seemed the thankless task of Commissar of Nationalities, which involved spending time in the regions and talking to the minorities. However, by doing this, Stalin was able to build up contacts and support, and place 'his' people in positions in the far-flung regional party organisations. Stalin was left alone when it came to issues regarding the nationalities.

In its early days, the party maintained its idealism and Lenin established the Commissariat of the Workers' and Peasants' Inspectorate to weed out corruption and increase efficiency. The inspectorate came to oversee all branches of government and the civil service across the country.

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In 1919, Stalin was appointed to head the Inspectorate and so found himself supervising the workings of the entire government.

The chief body in the country from the time of the civil war was the Politburo, which decided high policy. At this time it contained five members – Lenin, Trotsky, Zinoviev, Kamenev and Stalin. Each Politburo member had specific functions. Trotsky's was the running of the civil war. Stalin's job was the unexciting one of running day-to-day party business. Stalin provided the only permanent link between the Politburo and the Orgburo, which was in charge of party personnel.

However, by far the most significant of Stalin's bureaucratic positions was the post of general secretary, to which he was appointed in 1922. The purpose of the general secretary was to coordinate the overlapping bodies of the party. It was responsible for promotions and demotions, and the myriad of party appointments. As Trotsky's biographer, Isaac Deutscher, put it: 'Like none of his colleagues, he (Stalin) was immersed in the party's daily drudgery and in all its kitchen cabals'.[1] Again, it was not exciting work, but Stalin's willingness to take on such a job would serve him well. Soon there were many thousands of party officials across the Soviet Union who owed their job and their future to one man – Stalin.

Getty Images/Sovfoto/UIG

SOURCE 5.3 This image of Lenin, with his sister and his doctor, was one of the last before his death. As the photograph clearly shows, Lenin's health was greatly weakened by the strokes he had suffered.

The death of Lenin

Lenin had been in poor health for some time. He had long been a workaholic and thought nothing of putting in a 15- or 16-hour day. He had a long record of suffering from migraines and insomnia. While in exile from Russia, he had been diagnosed with erysipelas, a potentially fatal bacterial infection of the skin and tissue. The failed assassination attempt by Fanya Kaplan in August 1918 left him with a punctured lung, and two bullets permanently lodged in his neck and collarbone. In November 1921, he noticeably faltered during a major speech, unable to remember his words. Over the next few months, he suffered bouts of aphasia, the inability to speak, and agraphia, the inability to write, both common symptoms of strokes.

In May 1922, he suffered a stroke but managed to recover. A second stroke resulted in him withdrawing almost completely from public life, and a third stroke in May 1923 left him paralysed down his right side. Lenin was suffering from advanced cerebral arteriosclerosis. With the help of his wife, Nadezhda Krupskaya, he slowly started to re-learn how to speak and was even able to walk with a cane. Lenin suffered his final stroke on the morning of 21 January 1924, and died that evening.

THE IMPACT OF LENIN'S DEATH

Though Lenin's death was not unexpected, it still came as shock to the party and the nation. Russia had suffered much in recent years, yet Lenin was mourned by the Russian people as few leaders in history have been mourned. For many, Lenin still epitomised the hope of an equal and

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free society. Lenin's funeral was an enormous and elaborate ceremony. His body was eventually embalmed and laid to rest in a mausoleum in Red Square, Moscow, which millions would visit to silently and reverentially file past. The Soviet Union was an atheist state, but even an atheist state needed its religion. Soon, Lenin's status would be raised to a near divine level. His words would become sacred text, his image the new icon and his successors his priests. Stalin inaugurated what would become the Leninist cult with his 'oath to Lenin' read at the Second Congress of the Soviets. The oath was a strange mixture of a 'revolutionary call to arms' and a 'religious catechism'.

> In leaving us, Comrade Lenin ordained us to hold high and keep pure the great title of member of the party. We vow to thee, Comrade Lenin, that we shall honourably fulfil thy commandment too … In leaving us, Comrade Lenin ordained us to guard the unity of our party like the apple of our eye. We vow to thee, Comrade Lenin, that we shall honourably fulfil this, thy commandment.
>
> Isaac Deutscher, *Stalin*, Penguin, Harmondsworth, 1968, p. 235.

It is difficult not to see the depth of Stalin's hypocrisy in his speech. In the past couple of years, the relationship between Lenin and Stalin had completely broken down. Though they had been colleagues for many years, Lenin had indicated that personal relations between him and Stalin were at an end. Reasons for the breakdown are not clear, but alleged rudeness on Stalin's part towards Lenin's wife, Krupskaya, may have had something to do with it. Losing Lenin's favour was not a good career move.

However, in a different way, the loss of Lenin did not hurt Stalin. Stalin was no fool but he was not an intellectual. While his colleagues were discussing Marxist dialectics with Lenin in Swiss coffee houses, Stalin was robbing banks or enduring Siberian exile. Lenin's colleagues sought to emulate the leader. Zinoviev even tried to copy Lenin's handwriting style. Stalin did not share their intellectual need of Lenin.

A more immediate impact of Lenin's death was the harm it did to Trotsky's reputation. When Lenin died, Stalin and the other party leaders quickly made their way to Lenin's home in Gorki to pay their respects and 'to be seen to pay their respects'. That is, all of them except Trotsky, who was in the Caucasus recovering from an illness. At Lenin's funeral the leading party figures enthusiastically carried Lenin's coffin; all except Trotsky. Stalin had misinformed Trotsky, possibly deliberately, of the date of the funeral, and advised him to continue his convalescence so that Trotsky would be embarrassed by his absence. Only Trotsky, his critics could then argue, would arrogantly not bother attending Lenin's funeral. Trotsky's apparent snub of the late leader was never forgotten.

However, Lenin's death had the potential to have an even greater impact on the party and the nation as it brought to notice his last will and testament.

Corbis/Hulton-Deutsch Collection

SOURCE 5.4 After his death, Lenin's body was transferred to Moscow. His body lay in state for three days and as many as a million 'pilgrims' are believed to have viewed his body prior to the funeral.

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Alamy/GL Archive

SOURCE 5.5 *At the coffin of the leader*, 1924, a painting by the Socialist Realist artist Isaak Brodsky (1884–1939), highlights the formality of Lenin's funeral. Stalin and other key Bolshevik figures, but not Trotsky, are shown closest to the coffin.

Corbis/Hulton-Deutsch Collection

SOURCE 5.6 Nadezhda Krupskaya with Lenin. Krupskaya was Lenin's widow and angrily disagreed with the decision not to publish Lenin's last will and testament.

LENIN'S LAST WILL AND TESTAMENT

Stalin's position within the party had clearly been strengthened by the death of Lenin. From the middle of 1923, he had been working closely with two other Politburo members: Zinoviev and Kamenev. With Lenin incapacitated, leading party figures were already looking to the future. Both Zinoviev and Kamenev played leading roles in the party and each saw himself as a future party leader. Neither of them considered Stalin a serious contender. However, all three men had a deep distrust, and probably, deep dislike, of Trotsky. To many, Trotsky seemed the natural successor. However, Stalin, Zinoviev and Kamenev were working together as a 'triumvirate' to sabotage Trotsky's position within the party.

In May 1924, only four months after Lenin's death, Stalin had to face arguably his greatest crisis. Unknown to Stalin and the party at large, Lenin had composed a last will and testament. This was now to be read to a plenary session of the Central Committee, with a view to making the document public at the soon-to-be-held party congress.

In this document, Lenin presented his views on each of the leading party figures. He was not particularly complimentary to any of them, though there was praise for Trotsky's talents. However, the man who received Lenin's greatest condemnation was Stalin. In essence, Lenin stated that Stalin could not be trusted with the power he had been given, and that he should be removed from power. That said, Lenin did value Stalin as a 'yes' man, and detailed discussion of both Stalin and Trotsky in the will and testament suggests that Lenin saw both as having important roles in the future. In the atmosphere of the Leninist cult that was quickly developing since the leader's death, it would be deemed sacrilegious not to honour Lenin's wishes.

Stalin was in deep trouble; his whole future was at stake at this moment. How could the party not follow the word of their deceased leader? It was Zinoviev who came to Stalin's rescue. Zinoviev told the meeting that they had all sworn to obey Comrade Lenin's instructions. However, on this occasion, Comrade Lenin's fears had proven baseless in regards to General Secretary Stalin. Zinoviev then went on to argue that relations between Stalin and other branches of the party

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had been very harmonious and that he should be left in office. Lenin's wife, Krupskaya, angrily disagreed but she was overruled. Trotsky just sat there. Isaac Deutscher interpreted Trotsky's response as disgust at the piece of theatre that was taking place. Other commentators, however, have challenged this assessment, arguing that Trotsky unduly dismissed Stalin as a lightweight. The meeting voted 44 votes to 10 against publishing the last will and testament, and to give it only to selected delegates.

This was a moment of crucial importance for Stalin, for the Soviet Union, indeed for the future of the world. Stalin's future could have ended there; instead he would go on to become one of the giant figures of the 20th century. Isaac Deutscher described the impact of Zinoviev's speech and the plenary vote this way:

> Stalin could now wipe the cold sweat from his brow. He was back in the saddle, firmly and for good.
>
> Isaac Deutscher, *Stalin*, Penguin, Harmondsworth, 1966, p. 275.

Lenin's last will and testament

Lenin dictated his last will and testament at the end of 1922. In the months that followed, he suffered a series of strokes that left him incapacitated. Lenin died in January 1924. In May of that year, his widow, Nadezhda Krupskaya, presented his testament to a plenary meeting of the Central Committee. The document seems to have been composed over two days, the second section damning Stalin written on the second day.

Lenin, 24 December 1922

Our Party relies on two classes and therefore its instability would be possible and its downfall inevitable if there were no agreement between those two classes. In that event, this or that measure, and generally all talk about the stability of our C.C., would be futile. No measures of any kind could prevent a split in such a case. But I hope that this is too remote a future and too improbable an event to talk about.

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 number of 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 authority with sufficient caution. Comrade Trotsky, on the other hand, as his struggles against the C.C. on the question of the People's Commissariat for Communications has already proved, is distinguished not only by 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.

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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. I shall just recall that the October episode with Zinoviev and Kamenev was, of course, 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 fully Marxist only with the great reserve, for there is something scholastic about him (he has never made a study of dialectics, and, I think, never fully appreciated it).

As for Pyatakov, he is unquestionably a man of outstanding will and outstanding ability, but shows far too much zeal for administrating and the administrative side of the work to be relied upon in a serious political matter.

Both of these remarks, of course, are made only for the present, on the assumption that both these outstanding and devoted Party workers fail to find an occasion to enhance their knowledge and amend their one-sidedness.

Lenin, 25 December 1922

Stalin is too rude and this defect, although quite tolerable in our midst and in dealing among us Communists, becomes intolerable in a Secretary-General. That is why I suggest the comrades think about a way of removing Stalin from that post and appointing another man in his stead who in all other respects differs 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 the standpoint of safeguards against a split, and from the standpoint of what I wrote above about the relationship between Stalin and Trotsky, it is not a detail, or it is a detail which can assume decisive importance.

Lenin's last will and testament, cited at http://historyguide.org/europe/testament.html.

Questions

1. Lenin states that agreement is essential between two classes. To which classes is he referring?
2. What does Lenin fear might be the consequences of the rivalry between Trotsky and Stalin?
3. What is Lenin's overall view of Trotsky? What slight reservation does he have?
4. When discussing Zinoviev and Kamenev, to which 'October episode' is Lenin referring?
5. What is Lenin's opinion of Bukharin?
6. Lenin is scathing about Stalin. Identify the points in his testament that Lenin makes about Stalin? Why were such criticisms so serious for Stalin?
7. Imagine you are attending the plenary session of the Central Committee. In a paragraph, describe your reaction to Lenin's last will and testament.

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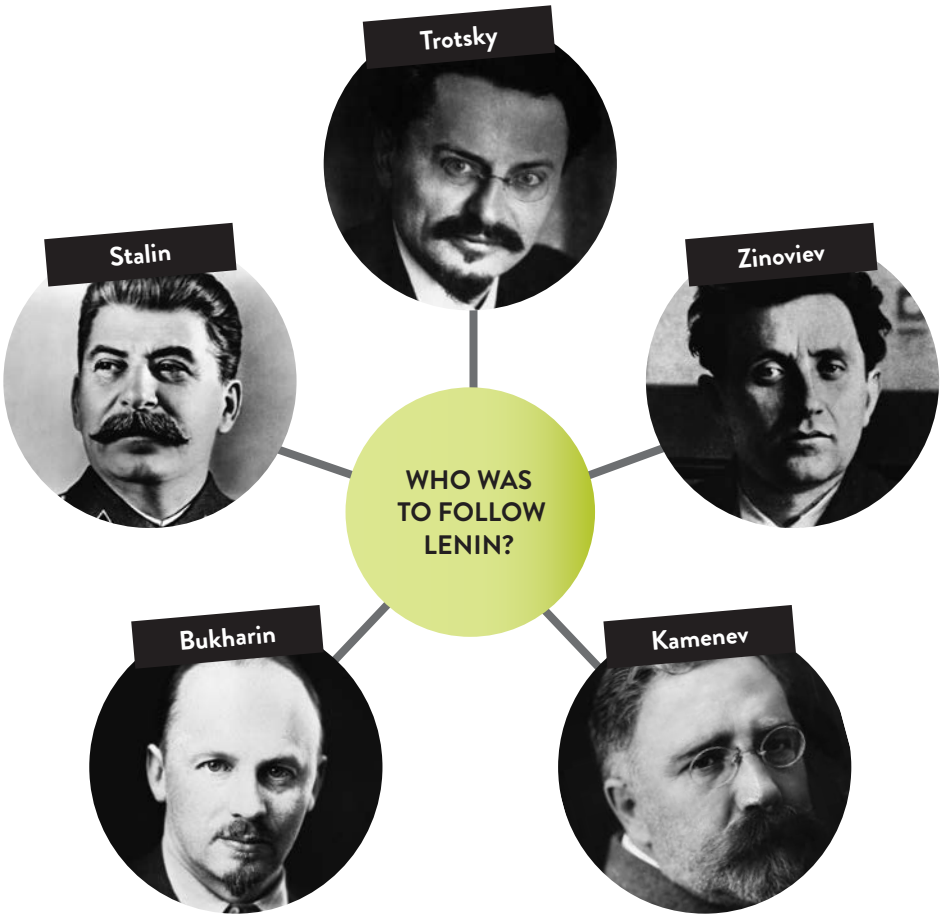
The post-Lenin struggle for power

With the benefit of hindsight, it is easy to how Stalin emerged victorious in the post-Lenin struggle for power. From the start, he had gained a firm grip on the party bureaucracy. He proved to be a shrewd political player, forming alliances with leading party figures and then turning on those allies. Stalin correctly assessed the mood of the country and used ideological arguments to his advantage, only to completely change his position once his position was secure. His opponents totally underestimated his guile and his political skill, while the general suspicion and dislike of Trotsky worked in his favour.



Clockwise from top: Alamy/David Cole; Corbis; Corbis; Alamy/RIA Novosti; Alamy/AF archive

SOURCE 5.7 The rivals for power. Of the leading figures in the party who might succeed Lenin, Stalin was considered the least likely to take control.

In 1924, Stalin seemed the most unlikely of the leading Bolsheviks to succeed Lenin. He was seen as dour, grey, lacking charisma and not of the same calibre as his rivals. This was the general view of Stalin even before Lenin's testament became known. Trotsky was the most likely successor. He had the charisma and intellect; he had the Red Army behind him, and his record in the civil war was second to none. Apart from Trotsky and Stalin, the other potential claimants for power after Lenin's death were Grigory Zinoviev, Lev Kamenev and Nikolai Bukharin. Zinoviev was the leading party figure in Leningrad (Petrograd having been renamed in Lenin's honour) and was head of the Comintern. Kamenev was the leading party

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figure in Moscow and head of the government. Bukharin was younger than the others but, as Lenin had conceded in his testament, the most popular figure in the party. Yet of all these, Stalin was triumphant. His control of the party bureaucracy was crucial to his victory. The other three factors that accounted for Stalin's success were:

+ the nature of the ideological debate
+ Stalin's skill at political manoeuvring
+ the party's suspicion and dislike of Trotsky.

Grigory Zinoviev (1883–1936)

Corbis/Underwood & Underwood

Zinoviev was born to Jewish peasant farmers in the Ukraine in 1883. He joined the party in 1901, sided with Lenin in 1903 and became a Bolshevik. He spent much time in exile and became one of Lenin's closest associates. During the war he was in Switzerland with Lenin. He returned to Russia in April 1917 with Lenin in his sealed train. Zinoviev and Lenin fell out over Zinoviev's opposition to the decision to seize power in October 1917, an issue Lenin mentions in his testament. However, Zinoviev played a key role in the next few years. He was responsible for defending Petrograd in the civil war, became a non-voting member of the Politburo in 1919, gaining full voting rights in 1921, and was President of the Comintern from 1919. In 1923 he joined the anti-Trotsky 'triumvirate' with Stalin and Kamenev, and Zinoviev persuaded the party to suppress publication of Lenin's last will and testament. At the time of Lenin's death, Zinoviev's power was at its peak, but his influence was limited to Leningrad, while Stalin's control of the bureaucracy gave him much wider influence.

Lev Kamenev (1883–1936)

Corbis/Hulton-Deutsch Collection

Lev Kamenev was born in Moscow in 1883. His parents were comfortably well off and he received a good education. In 1902, he met Lenin in London and sided with the Bolsheviks in the party split the following year. He was in St Petersburg during the 1905 Revolution but played a minor role; by now, he had married Trotsky's sister, Olga. Over the next few years he was involved in party work, both in Russia and abroad, becoming a close associate of Lenin. Returning to St Petersburg at the outbreak of war, Kamenev was arrested and exiled to Siberia where he would spend the war years. He was released in March 1917 and returned to Petrograd.

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Like Zinoviev, he opposed Lenin's decision to seize power in October, a fact Lenin mentions in his testament. During the civil war, Kamenev was head of the Moscow Soviet and became a full Politburo member in 1919. During Lenin's illness, it was Kamenev who chaired the Politburo and acted as head of the government. In 1923, he joined Stalin and Zinoviev in the 'triumvirate' against Trotsky.

Nikolai Bukharin (1888–1938)

Alamy/RIA Novosti

Nikolai Bukharin was born in Moscow in 1888. His parents were teachers, and he received a good education and entered Moscow University in 1905. He became caught up in the fervour of that year and played a minor role in the 1905 Revolution. In 1906, he joined the Bolsheviks. In 1907, he helped organised a nationwide youth conference, an early version of what was to become the Komsomol (the Communist Youth League). Over the next few years he was arrested on several occasions and in 1911 was exiled to the Arctic. He soon managed to escape and during the next few years lived overseas, meeting Lenin and Zinoviev in Switzerland, and Trotsky and Kollontai in New York. Following the February Revolution, he returned to Russia via the Far East, and was briefly detained by Japanese authorities. He reached Moscow in mid-1917 and joined the Moscow Soviet. During the civil war, he believed in the idea of a Soviet-led revolutionary war, and proposed the romantic notion of a Socialist United States of Europe, but he was opposed strongly on this by Lenin. He and Lenin had various ideological differences at this time, but when Lenin introduced the NEP in at the 10th Party Congress in 1921, Bukharin became a firm adherent. He became a full Politburo member in 1924.

THE ROLE OF IDEOLOGY AND THE FUTURE

Politics is always essentially about gaining power, wielding it and holding on to it. The Bolsheviks were no different from any other political group in this regard. The number one aim of political parties in democratic countries is to gain power; the number two aim is holding on to it. However, for the Bolsheviks having power was never enough. Years of arrest, police torture, imprisonment, exile and bloody civil war had not been endured merely to gain and hold on to power. The Bolsheviks had a noble, idealistic aim. Their goal was to create a communist paradise. Lenin had warned them that this goal would not be easy to reach, would involve many sacrifices, and would probably not be achieved in their lifetimes, but that cherished long-term aim was never in doubt. All that was in doubt was how that goal was to be reached.

Consequently, ideological considerations were to become a major aspect of the post-Lenin struggle for power. Party manoeuvring and personal attacks, even Stalin's domination of the party machine, would never really be enough. The players in the intra-party struggle had to base their claim for leadership on a sound, ideological basis.

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The crux of the ideological debate concerned the vexing question: 'How was the Soviet Union going to modernise and industrialise?' Marx had always argued that communism would be based on abundance; it would not be a society of equality based on poverty. He had envisaged the road to communism starting out from fully developed capitalism, as existed in Britain and Germany. He had not considered that a backward society like Russia would be attempting such a journey, at least not until it had gone through its capitalist stage. For the party, this issue had added urgency. Revolutions had not occurred across Europe and so the Soviet Union was an isolated socialist country surrounded by capitalist enemies. Thus, the country had to develop quickly in order to defend itself from a possible future attack. Ideologues within the party debated strongly on which strategy to follow, but it narrowed down the options to two alternatives, which for sake of ease of understanding will be referred to as 'the left model' and 'the right model'.

The main differences between the two models are summarised in Table 5.1.

TABLE 5.1 The left and right models

The 'left' and the 'right' agreed on certain things. Traditional sources of capital for development were not open to the Soviet Union. Profits from colonies could not be used as the country had none; profits from capitalist enterprises were not available as the government controlled the 'commanding heights'; the socialist state could hardly expect funds to flow in from the capitalist West (especially after the earlier Bolshevik repudiation of tsarist debts). For industrialisation, a means had to be worked out to squeeze the maximum revenue possible from a population that was still predominantly peasant.

The 'left' model	The 'right' model
Trotsky was the main promoter of the 'left' model.	Bukharin was the main promoter of the 'right' model.
This model argued that industrialisation had to be rapid and massive. This meant an end of the NEP, or 'socialism at a snail's pace', as Bukharin had put it.	This model was based on the continuation of the NEP, which seemed intuitively correct as the NEP had brought rapid economic growth by the mid-1920s.
The peasants had to be squeezed, taxed hard, and a return to War Communism–style policies was necessary.	The peasants should be allowed to prosper, be taxed mildly and allowed to sell their surpluses. This would increase their productivity.
Small private farms had to go and be replaced by large collective farms. This would increase output for export, which would earn foreign exchange and provide capital for industrial investment.	Increased grain production would mean more grain exports, and so more foreign exchange to purchase those goods was needed for industrialisation.
Heavy industry and armaments should be promoted to build up defence capability. This could end Russia's isolation as an aggressive foreign policy could be promoted to encourage revolution in the West.	Prosperous peasants would buy more industrially produced goods and so a 'multiplier effect' would feed into economic growth.
This model could certainly not be condemned as being capitalist.	This method would guarantee peace at home and good external relations. It might even lead to a return of foreign loans.
But: (i) it would inevitably bring massive peasant opposition; (ii) it could well lead to lower output as peasants refused to cooperate; (iii) it could lead to conflict with the West.	But: (i) this was capitalism; (ii) it favoured the peasantry over the proletariat; (iii) it would be very slow; (iv) the 'scissors crisis' would show it to be unworkable (see chapter six).

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Trotsky's 'left' model gained the label 'permanent revolution'. Stalin came up with a variation on the 'right' model called 'socialism in one country', arguing that the Soviet Union did not need the West's help to modernise, and could go it alone. His playing of the 'patriotic card' was well received in the party and the country at large. The last thing people wanted was a return to the upheavals of the civil war/War Communism times. Little did the people know that Stalin's eventual strategy would turn the country upside down.

PARTY MANOEUVRING

Stalin was close to establishing his mastery of the party bureaucracy. He had established his position in the ideological debate. Most importantly, he had survived the reading of Lenin's last will and testament. It was now time to gradually squeeze out his party rivals. It is unlikely that Stalin had a carefully worked out plan of action for his rise to power. His original intention was probably to protect his position and ensure that he remained a key player in the party. However, Stalin was an opportunist, and often his rivals would do his work for him by attacking each other.

> Although Stalin seemed to win every trick, it is unlikely that he followed a long-term plan. He did not need to; he could stand back and watch his rivals dig their own graves, occasionally offering his spade to one or other of them.
>
> JN Westwood, *Endurance and Endeavour*, Oxford University Press, Oxford, 1973, p. 287.

He would achieve success by various methods:

+ by using the numbers he had been able to muster as general secretary and his other positions
+ by forming and breaking brief party alliances
+ by playing on the party's suspicion and dislike of Trotsky
+ by taking advantage of the fact that other leading party figures underestimated his political skills, even his intelligence; a thick Georgian accent perhaps had its advantages
+ by manipulating the course of the ideological debate.

Stalin had become distant from Lenin. Indeed in his testament, Lenin had called for Stalin's removal on the grounds that he could not be trusted to use the power that he had accrued. However, it was to be Stalin who most strongly promoted what became 'the cult of Lenin'. Lenin may have been driven and ruthless, but he remained always a modest man who never demanded the luxuries of power and who would have hated the near divine status that was thrust upon him after his death. However, Stalin realised that the party's and the nation's feelings for Lenin could be used to his advantage. He promoted the Lenin cult. From the mid-1920s, Lenin's image was everywhere in schools, railway stations and homes, whether it be in the form of a photograph, a painting or a sculpture. The word of Lenin became holy writ. Stalin's own speeches and writings were peppered with quotations from Lenin. Everything Stalin did, it was agued, was done in the name of Lenin.

Opponents were often attacked for their lack of loyalty and respect to the memory of Lenin. Trotsky's earlier disagreements with Lenin before 1917 were frequently aired. The decision of Zinoviev and Kamenev to oppose Lenin's decision to seize power in November was dragged up. Stalin's own apparent modesty worked in his favour in regard to Lenin's memory. He always presented himself as a disciple of Lenin; Trotsky regarded himself as Lenin's equal. This provided another weapon to use against Trotsky: his arrogance.

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The Bolsheviks frequently looked back to history for guidance on their revolution. The only real example they had to look to was the French Revolution of 1789. The French Revolution had begun with idealistic notions of liberty, equality and fraternity, and hopes of creating a new society. It ended up in the military dictatorship of Napoleon Bonaparte. The Bolsheviks feared that this might be the fate of their revolution, but who would be the Russian Bonaparte? It could only be one man: Trotsky. There was only one man it could never be: Stalin. The manoeuvrings of Stalin in the intra-party struggle are summarised in source 5.8.

The Struggle for Power	Luck, circumstance and a propensity for hard work had placed Stalin in a strong position by the early 1920s. Lenin's death was a godsend as, had Lenin survived, he would almost certainly have removed Stalin. Trotsky's absence from Lenin's funeral, the result of Stalin's misinformation, hurt Trotsky's reputation. Stalin had gradually built up his power within the bureaucracy. Zinoviev's underestimation of Stalin certainly played a role in his decision to persuade the party not to publish Lenin's Testament.
Stage 1: Stalin/Zinoviev/ Kamenev versus Trotsky	The triumvirate of Stalin, Zinoviev and Kamenev isolated and defeated Trotsky at the 1924 13th Party Congress following Trotsky's criticism of party centralisation and bureaucratisation. Trotsky wrote *Lessons of October* attacking Zinoviev and Kamenev for opposing Lenin in October 1917. They brought up Trotsky's disagreements with Lenin before 1917. Stalin merely had to sit back and watch his enemies tear each other apart. At this stage, Stalin was promoting the 'right' ideological model while Trotsky was pressing the 'left' model. In 1925, Trotsky was sacked as Commissar of War.
Stage 2: Stalin/ Bukharin versus Zinoviev/ Kamenev	Stalin now turned on his former allies. He joined Bukharin, Rykov and Tomsky who were promoting the 'right' model and a continuation of the NEP. Stalin introduced his idea: 'Socialism in one country'. Zinoviev and Kamenev adopted the 'left' model, which promoted the idea of rapid industrialisation. They even tried to ally with Trotsky against the 'right' but he refused to work with them. Stalin 'had the numbers' and at the 14th Party Congress in 1925, Zinoviev and Kamenev were consistently outvoted. Stalin had by now effectively sidelined not only Trotsky, but also Zinoviev and Kamenev, who were temporarily expelled from the party.
Stage 3: Stalin versus Bukharin and the 'right'	As Trotsky had earlier predicted, the economy was in trouble as the 'scissors crisis' developed (see chapter six). As food shortages appeared and economic growth stagnated, Stalin realised that the NEP was not working and that major changes were required. Stalin turned on his 'right' allies and now promoted the 'left' model of rapid industrialisation. At the 1929 Party Congress, Bukharin, Rykov and Tomsky were removed from the Politburo. They were replaced with Stalin's allies: Kaganovich, Molotov and Voroshilov. By now, Trotsky had been expelled from the Soviet Union. Stalin had control of the party.
The End	In 1929, Stalin's 50th birthday was celebrated across the nation. He was being glorified as the 'Lenin of Today'. Lenin's cult did not disappear, but it was to be gradually smothered by the more all-pervasive 'cult of Stalin'.

SOURCE 5.8 The struggle for power. Stalin cleverly, and opportunistically, formed party alliances and broke party alliances until, by 1929, the leading party figures were all 'Stalin men'.

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The eclipse of Trotsky

Trotsky's fall from power was dramatic in terms of both the distance and speed at which he fell. In 1921, Trotsky was the number-two man in the country and Lenin's trusted confidant. He was Commissar of War, the man who had led the Bolsheviks to victory against the Whites, and the man who commanded the loyalty of the five-million-plus Red Army. By 1929, he had not only lost office but had been expelled from the country, never to return. Stalin's success in destroying Trotsky has already been described. The following timeline shows the key moments in Trotsky's fall from grace.

TROTSKY'S FALL

1921	At the 10th Party Congress, a ban on factionalism was enforced. Stalin successfully used this against Trotsky during the next few years
1923	Trotsky's opposition to the centralisation and bureaucratisation of the party failed at the 13th Party Congress
1924	Missed Lenin's funeral. Lenin's testament, which castigated Stalin, failed to gain widespread exposure
1925	Lost his job as Commissar of War
1926	Removed from the Politburo
1927	Expelled from the Communist Party
1928	Exiled to Alma-Ata in Turkistan
1929	Expelled from the Soviet Union, and began foreign exile in Turkey

ISAAC DEUTSCHER

Isaac Deutscher was one of the leading historians of the history of the Soviet Union. He was born in 1907 near Kraków in modern-day Poland. Up until 1939, he worked as a journalist in Poland (recreated as an independent state at the 1919 Paris Peace Conference). He joined the Polish Communist Party in 1926 but was expelled in 1932 for attacking the policies of Stalin. In 1939 he arrived in London. During the next 28 years, Deutscher worked on leading British publications, such as the *Economist* and the *Observer*, while increasingly focusing on his historical writings. Towards the end of his life, he was the GM Trevelyan Lecturer at the University of Cambridge.

Isaac Deutscher became a leading authority on the history of the Soviet Union. His trilogy on Trotsky – *The Prophet Armed, The Prophet Unarmed* and *The Prophet Outcast* – remains one of the leading works on the Bolshevik leader. His

Questions

1. How did Zinoviev, Kamenev and others in the party view Stalin?
2. Why do you think party figures kept looking back to the French Revolution?
3. Why did the 'mask of Bonaparte' best fit Trotsky?

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biography of Stalin first appeared in 1949, was updated after Stalin's death in 1953, and has been in print ever since.

Deutscher was an ardent Trotskyist and never denied his admiration for the man. However, this did not prevent him writing a classic work on Stalin, and he did credit Stalin with transforming the Soviet Union. In the extract that follows, Deutscher explains the party's fear and suspicion of Trotsky.

> Both [Zinoviev and Kamenev] looked upon Stalin as their auxiliary; and though they were sometimes uneasy about a streak of perversity in him, neither suspected him of the ambition to become Lenin's sole successor. Nor, for that matter, did any such suspicion enter the mind of the party as a whole. It was not, on the other hand, very difficult to arouse in the party distrust of Trotsky. The agents of the triumvirate whispered that Trotsky was the potential Danton or, alternatively, the Bonaparte of the Russian Revolution. The whispering campaign was effective, because the party had, from its beginnings, been accustomed to consult the great French precedent. It had always been admitted that history might repeat itself; and that a Directory or a single usurper might once again climb to power on the back of the revolution. It was taken for granted that the Russian usurper would, like his French prototype, be a personality possessed of brilliance and legendary fame won in battles. The mask of Bonaparte seemed to fit Trotsky only too well. Indeed, it might have fitted any personality with the exception of Stalin. In this lay part of his strength.
>
> The very thing which under different circumstances would have been a liability in a man aspiring to power, his obscurity, was his important asset. The party had been brought up to distrust 'bourgeois individualism' and to strive for collectivism. None of its leaders looked as immune from the former and as expressive of the latter as Stalin. What was striking about the General Secretary was that there was nothing striking about him.
>
> Isaac Deutscher, *Stalin*, Penguin, Harmondsworth, 1966, p. 275.

Questions

4. Why did that mask least fit Stalin?
5. From this extract, what is Deutscher's key argument about the reasons why Stalin succeeded in the post-Lenin struggle for power?

Stalin: The Lenin of today

From the time of Lenin's death, Stalin had deliberately and skilfully used the cult of Lenin for his own purposes. He quoted Lenin in his own writing and his speeches. He attacked opponents by using the words of Lenin. However, the emphasis gradually began to change and what was to become a 'cult of Stalin' began to emerge. This will be dealt with more fully in chapter six, but there were already signs of its presence as early as 1929. Stalin's image was frequently reproduced alongside Lenin's (and the founders of socialism, Marx and Engels). It was also beginning to appear alone. Oaths of loyalty were being sworn to Stalin; rarely did a newspaper not have Stalin on its front page. It was becoming the habit of party figures to quote Stalin as well as Lenin. This promotion of Stalin would reach extraordinary heights by the mid-1930s.

When Stalin's 50th birthday was celebrated in 1929 (it was actually his 51st birthday), he was declared within the party and throughout the nation as the 'Lenin of today'. This was merely a foretaste of the propaganda barrage to come.

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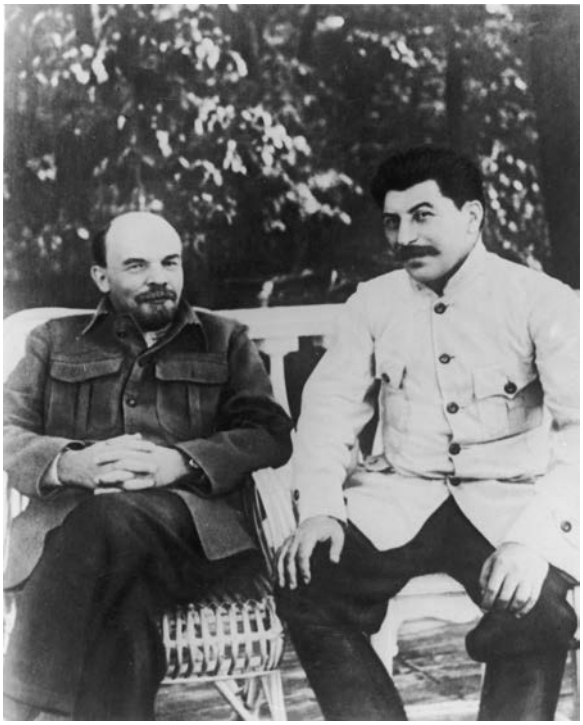
1929: Stalin the 'Lenin of today'

Stalinist propaganda began promoting Stalin's near divine status in the late 1920s. Below are two examples of the kind of images that were being popularised. Examine them closely and respond to the questions that follow.



Alamy/Mary Evans Picture Library

SOURCE 5.9 Stalin and Lenin talking together, about 1922

Bridgeman Images/Klutchis (fl.1932)/Private Collection/Archives Charmet

SOURCE 5.10 Soviet propaganda poster from 1931. The slogan reads, 'The USSR is the Shock Brigade of the World's Proletariat'. The front row shows Joseph Stalin (centre), Mikhail Kalinin, Vyacheslav Molotov and Kliment Vorochilov.

Alamy/Pictorial Press Ltd

Getty Images/Fine Art Images/Heritage Images

SOURCE 5.11 These two photographs highlight the manner in which the propaganda cult of Stalin sought to rewrite key events in the history of the Russian Revolution. The photograph is of Lenin delivering a speech to members of the Red Army on 5 May 1920 in Sverdlov Square, Moscow. The original photograph is on the left and includes Trotsky and Kamenev. The photograph on the right was altered to remove both Trotsky and Kamenev.

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Questions

1. Why do you think Stalin was so keen to have pictures of him with Lenin published, even long after the death of Lenin?
2. Why might such a publication be seen as slightly ironic?
3. What do you see as the purpose of the propaganda poster?
4. Why might images of Stalin's 'competitors' have been removed from the historical record?
5. Conduct further research to find additional examples of the removal of competitors from the historical record. Bring the results of your research to class and explain them.

Conclusion

Lenin's death in 1924 at the age of 54 created an enormous vacuum. The obvious candidate to succeed Lenin seemed to be civil war hero Trotsky, who had undoubted talents but who was not popular in the party. Lenin's illness had effectively sidelined him as early as mid-1923. At this time, a triumvirate of Zinoviev, Kamenev and Stalin had formed whose primary aim was to isolate Trotsky. When Lenin died, his wife, Krupskaya, presented the Central Committee with his last will and testament. In it, Lenin commented on the party's leading figures, saving his harshest words for Stalin. Stalin managed to survive Lenin's testament. Having been able to consolidate his control of the party bureaucracy in the previous two years, Stalin was able to use his backroom power to defeat his rivals in the post-Lenin struggle for power. Adopting the ideas of the 'right', Stalin worked with Zinoviev and Kamenev to defeat Trotsky. He then linked up with Bukharin and others on the 'right' to attack Zinoviev and Kamenev, who were now promoting Trotsky's 'left' agenda. Once he had defeated them, he turned on Bukharin and other members of the 'right', adopted the ideas of the 'left', and removed his right-wing rivals. By 1929, Stalin's opponents had been subdued and Trotsky was in exile. Stalin had control of the party and he was being hailed as the 'Lenin of today'.

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Chapter summary

+ In its earlier days, the Bolshevik Party was notable for its robust debates. However, this 'democratic centralism' had disappeared by the early 1920s.
+ As the party grew and its affairs became more complex, greater centralisation and discipline became the key aspects of party life. In part, the demands of the civil war made such developments necessary.
+ At the 10th Party Congress in 1921, the ban on factionalism did much to stifle intra-party debate.
+ The main beneficiary of the increasing bureaucratisation of the party was Stalin. As Commissar of Nationalities, Commissar of the Workers' and Peasants' Inspectorate, Politburo member and general secretary, Stalin gradually became the controlling influence over the party bureaucratic machine.
+ Trotsky railed against this development with no success.
+ After Lenin's death, there was no clear successor, though most assumed it would be Trotsky; few thought of Stalin, who was perceived as a grey, background figure.
+ In his last will and testament, Lenin praised Trotsky's talents, but stated that Stalin was not fit for the job of general secretary, and that he should be removed.
+ Stalin survived Lenin's testament thanks to Zinoviev's intervention.
+ Stalin's success in the post-Lenin struggle for power was the result of his control of the party bureaucracy, his use of the ideological debate and his skill at party manoeuvring.
+ Those on the 'left' in the party sought rapid and radical change that would turn the Soviet Union into a modern industrial state. The main proponent of this line of thinking was Trotsky, who promoted his idea of 'permanent revolution'.
+ Those on the 'right' argued that the country's development should be more gradual, that the NEP should be continued, and that the peasants should not be squeezed as they were during the period of War Communism.
+ At first, Stalin sided with the 'right', and developed his idea of 'socialism in one country'.
+ Stalin joined Zinoviev and Kamenev in a triumvirate to defeat Trotsky. He then joined Bukharin and others on the right to defeat Zinoviev and Kamenev, who took up the ideas of the 'left' and who tried, unsuccessfully, to link up with Trotsky.
+ Following the 'scissors crisis' (see chapter six), Stalin turned on the 'right' and adopted the ideas of the 'left'.
+ By 1929, Stalin had defeated all his main rivals, and on his 50th birthday he was being declared the 'Lenin of today'. Stalin had cleverly used the growing 'cult of Lenin' to his advantage. However, there were already signs by this time that a 'cult of Stalin' was developing.
+ Trotsky had been completely outmanoeuvred by Stalin. He lost his party posts, was exiled to central Asia and finally forced to permanently leave the Soviet Union.

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Endnote

1 Isaac Deutscher, Stalin, Penguin, Harmondsworth, 1968, p. 235.

Weblinks

Weblinks relevant to this chapter can be found at http://nmh.nelsonnet.com.au/russia

Further reading

Isaac Deutscher, *Stalin*, Penguin, Harmondsworth, 1966, Chapter 8, pp. 298–318.
Irving Howe, *Trotsky*, Fontana/Collins, Glasgow, 1978, pp. 92–115.
Martin McCauley, *The Soviet Union Since 1917*, Longman, Harlow, 1981, Chapter 2, pp. 48–71.
Robert Service, *Trotsky: A Biography*, Harvard University Press, Cambridge, Massachusetts, 2009.
Ian D Thatcher, *Trotsky*, Routledge, London, 2003.
D Volkogonov, *Trotsky: The Eternal Revolutionary*, Free Press, New York, 1996.

Chapter review activities

The nature of Soviet rule

1 Explain the difference between 'democratic centralism' and 'bureaucratic centralism'.

2 How do you account for the development of bureaucratic centralism?

3 In what ways had Stalin's party career before 1917 been different from most other members of the party leadership?

4 Explain why Stalin was able to gain such a stranglehold over the party machine by the early 1920s.

5 Stalin must have had mixed feelings about Lenin's death. Provide responses to the following:
   a You are Stalin; write an entry about Lenin's death in your personal diary that you are convinced no one will ever see.
   b You are Stalin; outline the key points you will make about Lenin's death at the next Central Committee meeting.

6 Outline Lenin's views on each of the main party leaders.

7 How did Stalin survive Lenin's last will and testament?

8 Why did Trotsky not attend Lenin's funeral? How was his absence viewed by many party members?

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The post-Lenin struggle for power

9 Why were ideological positions so important for the Bolshevik Party?

10 Outline briefly where Trotsky, Zinoviev, Kamenev, Bukharin and Stalin stood in the 'left' versus 'right' debates of the 1920s.

11 Form pairs. Together, produce a script between a member of the 'left' and a member of the 'right' in which each side tries to argue its case and break down the arguments of the other.

12 Produce a mind map to explain why Trotsky failed in the post-Lenin leadership struggle. In your diagram, refer to such things as the bureaucracy, character, popularity, ideology, Bonapartism, etc.

13 What was the 'cult of Lenin'? How did Stalin make use of it? What would Lenin have most likely thought of his 'cult'?

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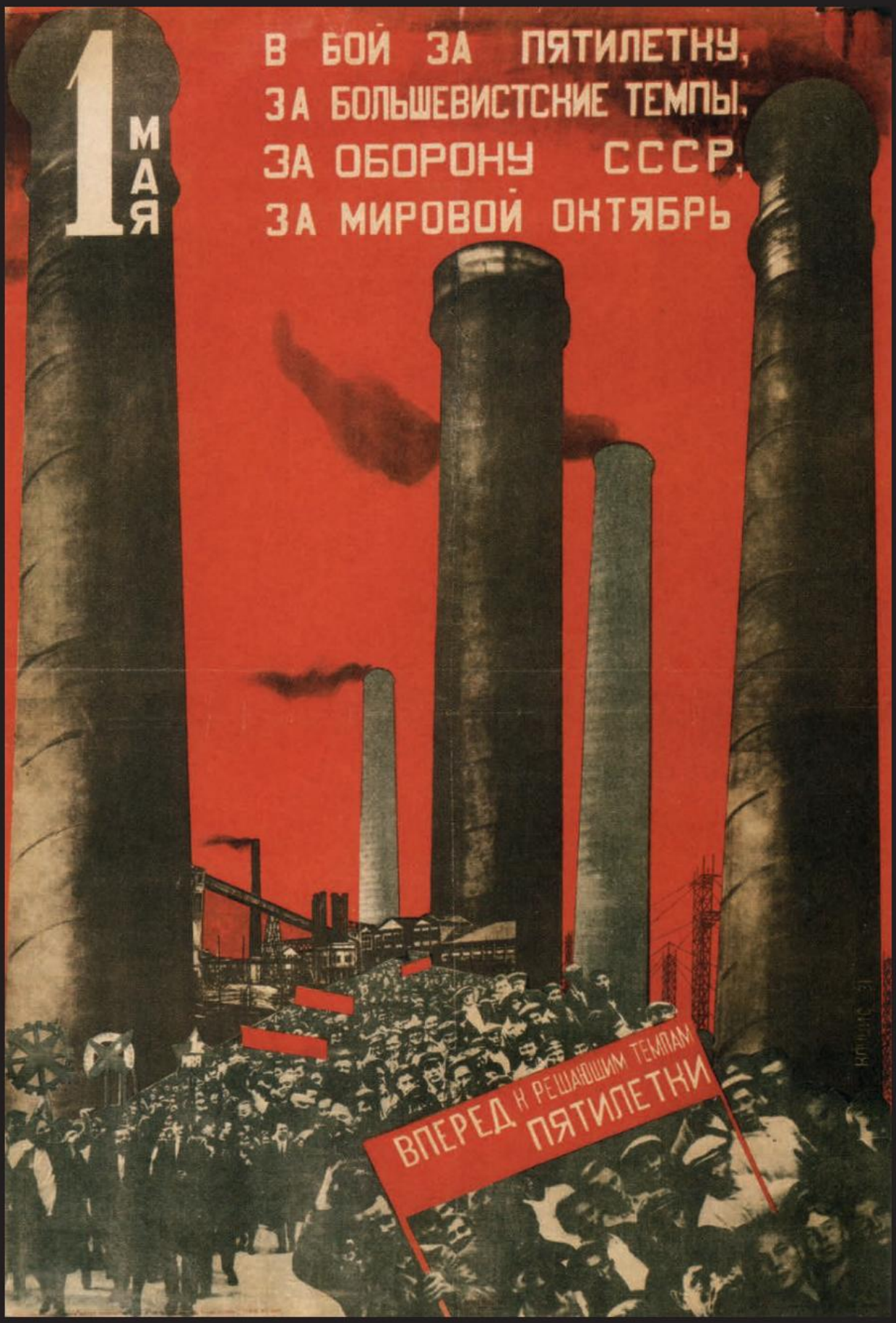

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CHAPTER SIX

Soviet Union transformed: 1928–1941

As Trotsky and others on the left had predicted, the Soviet economy was in trouble by about 1927–28; the limits of the NEP had been reached. This economic crisis was referred to as the 'scissors crisis'. For Stalin, the scissors crisis provided him with a dual opportunity: he was able to destroy his rivals on the right, and it gave him both the opportunity and the excuse to launch the Soviet Union into a massive program of economic modernisation. With the implementation of a series of Five Year Plans, Stalin exhorted, and his system terrorised, the Soviet people to achieve his goal of economic equality with the West within a decade. The process of industrialisation experienced many successes and failures, but there was no denying that, though the cost had been high, by 1941, the Soviet Union's economy had been transformed. A key feature of the transformation was the forced collectivisation of agriculture and the 'war on the kulaks'. Capital was needed for modernisation; grain exports would be the source. The country's peasants would be forced to participate; the result was virtual civil war in the countryside. The worst affected region during the collectivisation process was the Ukraine, where a man-made famine killed possibly up to five million people.

INQUIRY QUESTION

+ How successful was Stalin's attempt to transform the Soviet Union into a modern, industrial power?

❮ Propaganda poster by Gustav Klutsis, 1931, titled 'First of May. Join the battle for the five year plan'

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Industrialisation

The New Economic Policy (NEP) had restored much health to the Soviet economy. In many areas, prewar production had been matched and in some areas even exceeded. However, the 'scissors crisis' of 1927–28 indicated that economic growth had not only slowed, but that in-built restraints within the NEP-based economy meant that further growth was impossible. Stalin realised that drastic measures were needed if the Soviet Union were to achieve its goal of modernisation; he was also concerned about the defence connotations of the country's lack of industrial power. The first Five Year Plan was launched in 1928. The focus of the plan was to rapidly expand areas of heavy industry such as coal, oil, iron and steel, and chemical production. Little attention was paid to the development of consumer industries. The second Five Year Plan (1933–37) had similar concerns, but there was some allowance for the development of light industry. The third Five Year Plan (1938–41, cut short due to the Second World War) had a major focus on the defence area. By 1941, the Soviet Union had become the number-two industrial power in the world and could boast major economic achievements, such as the building of the Dnieper Dam. It also had one of the lowest illiteracy rates in the world. However, the cost had been incredibly high in terms of lives lost, waste and inefficiencies, a plummeting standard of living and the denial of freedom, as a police state took form.

THE 'SCISSORS CRISIS' AND THE END OF THE NEP

As early as 1921, those on the left of the party, such as Trotsky and Yevgeni Preobrazhensky, urged the promotion of a policy of rapid industrialisation. This could only be achieved, argued Preobrazhensky, a Bolshevik economist and member of the Central Committee, if resources were transferred from the agricultural sector. He called this 'primitive socialist accumulation'. Such ideas went against the prevailing thinking of the party in the 1920s, which favoured a continuation of the NEP.

The state's monopoly of trade had to be reinstituted, and prices needed to be artificially fixed so that resources could be drained from agriculture and concentrated in industry. Preobrazhensky and Trotsky predicted that the NEP would result in increasing prices of goods from the industrial/manufacturing sector, and falling prices of goods from the agricultural sector. This was largely the result of inefficiencies in the manufacturing sector, where industry could not take advantage of **economies of scale** or developments such as mass-production and assembly-line techniques, which were occurring in countries such as the United States. Agricultural prices were falling because domestic demand had been satisfied by 1926, and there was little for peasants to buy even if they could sell their surpluses. Falling prices meant peasants were cutting production and putting less produce on the market, with all the dangers of food shortages this implied.

economies of scale
The ability of industry to produce greater output at a lower price as the industry increases in size

The Soviet economy presented a dilemma. With the majority of the population working in agriculture, the main source of capital for industrialisation had to come from the rural sector. However, failures in the manufacturing sector meant that peasants had ceased trying to increase output by 1926. Their output was not going to increase without improvements in the manufacturing sector. However, those improvements could not be achieved without capital from the agricultural sector. It was a classic **'catch 22' situation**.

'catch 22' situation
From the 1961 US satirical novel *Catch 22*. The term refers to two outcomes, neither of which can be achieved, as each requires the other to be achieved first.

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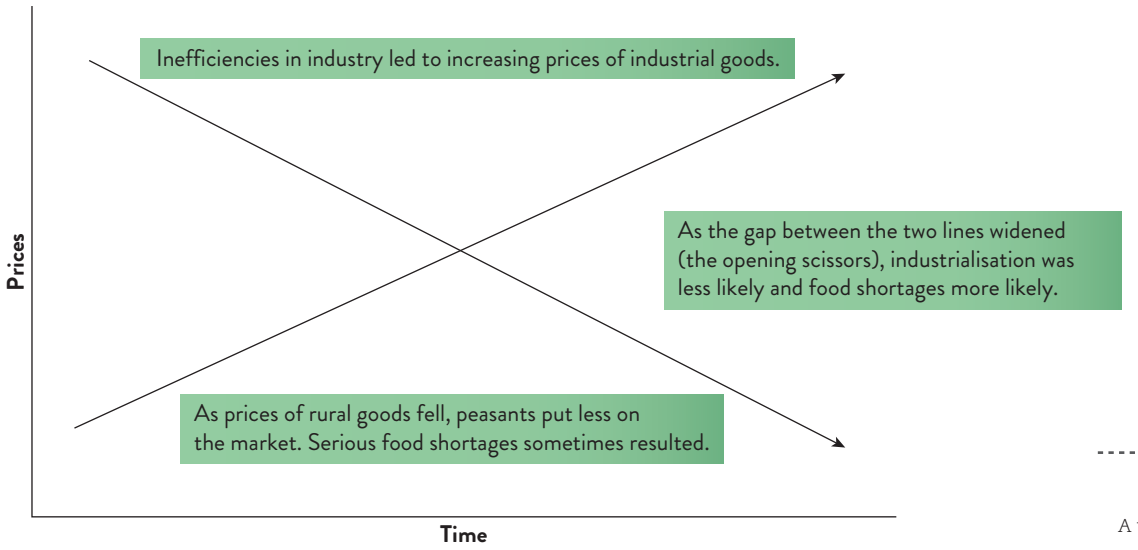
Trotsky and Preobrazhensky predicted that a point would be reached when urban prices began to exceed rural prices, and once this occurred, rural production would steadily fall. This increasing gap between urban and rural prices was likened to a pair of scissors opening: hence the term 'scissors crisis'. It had made a brief appearance in 1923 as Trotsky had predicted, but the economy was able to overcome it. However, by 1927–28 the scissors crisis had taken a firm hold over the Soviet economy. The situation is illustrated in source 6.1. If the NEP continued, argued Preobrazhensky, it would be impossible for the Soviet Union to industrialise. This had not only economic but also defence implications.



SOURCE 6.1 Diagram of the 'scissors crisis'

THE INDUSTRIALISATION DRIVE

The process of industrialisation required three basic economic essentials: **capital**, **labour** and **resources**. Clearly, the Soviet Union was likely to have problems with all three elements. The fundamental method of **capital accumulation** was to squeeze the countryside. This will be dealt with in more detail later, but essentially, it involved forcing peasants onto collective farms, maximising grain output and exporting as much as was humanly (and often inhumanely) possible. Grain exports earned foreign exchange, which could be used to purchase Western technology and even Western technicians. The squeeze in the countryside allowed for the movement of peasant labour into the factories. Thousands of people sent to the **Gulags** provided another source of labour – the secret police having 'trialled' the use of political prisoners in the Solvetskii camps from the mid-1920s. By the mid-1930s, superhuman efforts had succeeded in creating a canal and railway network across the country, which made possible the movement of Russia's vast resources to where they were required.

capital
Money or other assets

labour
A work force; in this case, urban workers to work in factories

resources
Raw materials such as coal and iron ore

capital accumulation
The acquisition of money and other assets to invest further in the economy

Gulag
Acronym for the 'Main Administration of Corrective Labour Camps'. It was an institution inside the secret police, responsible for the forced labour/prison camps that were established from the 1930s. The word 'gulag' came to simply mean a forced labour/prison camp.

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The Five Year Plans

The planning of the economy was a 'top down' process. Through the state planning body, GosPlan, the party established overall targets but left the commissariats of the various industries to work out the details. The commissariats worked through their regional administrators who then established specific plans and targets for individual enterprises.

The first Five Year Plan covered the period from October 1928 to the end of 1932. The whole nation was effectively thrown into an enormous struggle to transform the Soviet Union from a backward agricultural economy into a modern, industrial one. Stalin did not hold back on the importance of industrialisation. In 1931, he stated: 'We are 50 or a 100 years behind the advanced countries. We must make good this distance in 10 years. Either we do it, or we shall be crushed.'[1] Hitler coming to power in Germany only served to increase the urgency of the need for change (see chapter eight).

The second Five Year Plan was to run from 1933 to the end of 1937. This plan placed a greater emphasis on class B industries, though there was still great emphasis placed on electrification and transport development. The third Five Year Plan was interrupted by the outbreak of the First World War. Its main emphasis was on the build-up of the Soviet Union's military power.

The emphasis in the plans was primarily on heavy industry. In the first plan, ambitious targets were set, with some sectors of the economy expected to increase their output by several hundredfold.

- Class A industries such as coal, iron and steel, oil and machine building were expected to triple their output.
- Class B industries such as those producing consumer goods were to double their output.
- By 1933, Soviet **Gross National Product (GNP)** was planned to be 236 per cent above the 1927–28 level. Electrical power was expected to rise 600 per cent.
- Few sectors of the economy reached their ambitious targets despite the announcements coming from Soviet propaganda. Historians still debate the successes of the Five Year Plans.

Gross National Product (GNP)
The total money value of all the goods and services produced inside a country over a particular period.

However, enormous achievements could not be denied. The massive iron and steel centre of Magnitogorsk, beyond the Ural Mountains, arose from almost nothing. Under the guidance of American Hugh Cooper, the giant Dnieper Dam and its hydroelectric works were built. Coal fields near Moscow and in the Donets Basin, at Karaganda in Kazakhstan, and in Siberia were developed. The Soviet Union's transport network was transformed. Canals were constructed, often with forced labour, which linked the major waterways of the country from the Black Sea to the White Sea in the far north of the country. It has been estimated that the tractor plant that was built in the town of Chelyabinsk covered an area that was larger than the original town. Accompanying industrial development was significant urban growth, not only of old established cities such as Moscow and Leningrad, but of smaller centres that grew with industrialisation, such as Minsk and Sverdlovsk.

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Alamy/RIA Novosti

SOURCE 6.2 A blast furnace under construction at the Magnitogorsk Iron Steel Works, November 1933

Getty Images/Margaret Bourke-White/The LIFE Picture Collection

SOURCE 6.3 The world's largest dam, the Dnieper River Dam, begins construction, c. 1930

The Five Year Plans had achieved much, but Stalin's ridiculously ambitious targets were often simply out of reach. Tables 6.1 and 6.2 give an indication of how well targets were reached. The massive increases in expenditure that were directed towards defence, especially in the third Five Year Plan, were a reflection of the deteriorating European situation and the threats to Soviet security (see chapter eight).

TABLE 6.1 Targets and achievements of the Five Year Plans

		First Five Year Plan		Second Five Year Plan	
Production in millions of tonnes	1927–28 level	Target for 1933	Actual result for 1933	Target for 1937	Actual result for 1937
Coal	35.4	75.0	64.0	152.5	128.0
Oil	11.7	21.7	21.4	46.8	28.5
Pig iron	3.2	10.0	6.2	16.0	14.5

TABLE 6.2 Armaments expenditure of the Soviet Union

Expenditure on armaments	1933	1937	1940
Total spending in millions of roubles	42 080	106 238	174 350
Defence spending	1421	17 481	56 800
% of total spending going to defence	3.4%	16.5%	32.6%

Tables adapted from M Morcombe and M Fielding, *The Spirit of Change: Russia in Revolution*, McGraw-Hill, Sydney, 1998, p. 205.

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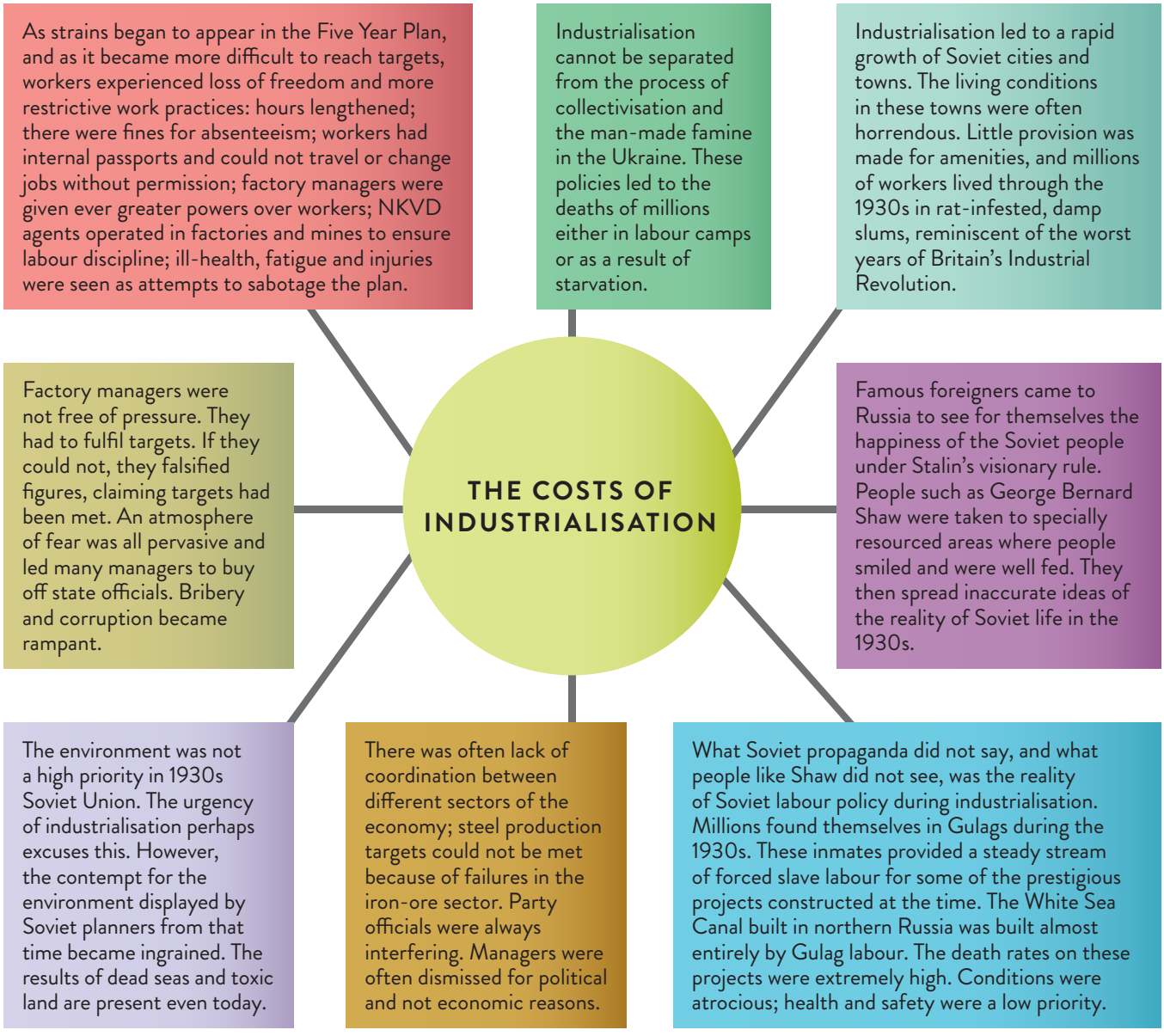
The costs of industrialisation

There is no doubt that Stalin successfully mobilised popular support for the great change he introduced after 1928. The Soviet propaganda machine promoted feelings of nationalism and patriotic sacrifice within the Soviet Union. Indeed, for many people there was a feeling that they were engaged in the great adventure of building socialism. Many, young people in particular, willingly volunteered to work in some of the country's most inhospitable regions. There were thousands of foreign workers who also felt that they were playing a part in creating socialism. When propaganda failed to motivate the Soviet people, incentives were introduced such as higher wages for skilled workers and additional social benefits.

However, though national pride might be felt by many, the costs of Stalin's great change were enormous. Source 6.4 summarises the negative side of the industrialisation process.



SOURCE 6.4 The costs of industrialisation

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HISTORIANS ON STALIN'S INDUSTRIALISATION

Historians have differed significantly in their assessments of Stalin's path to industrialisation. Read the following extracts and answer the questions.

Lionel Kochan

> At a time when industrial production in the principal capitalist powers had actually declined below the level of 1913, that of Soviet Russia showed an almost fourfold increase over the level of 1913.

Lionel Kochan, *The Making of Modern Russia*, Penguin, Harmondsworth, 1962, p. 292.

Robert Conquest

> The results in industry were not as negative as in agriculture. But vastly excessive claims were made, both at home and in Soviet propaganda abroad. Indeed, it is astonishing how deep the myth penetrated in Western circles. Most of the figures then touted were falsified. Current Soviet estimates for the 1930s are that instead of the alleged fivefold increase in production between 1929 and 1941, the true figure is about one and a half.

Robert Conquest, *Stalin: Breaker of Nations*, Penguin, London, 1992, p. 190.

Orlando Figes

> The first major Gulag project was the White Sea Canal, 227 kilometres of waterway between the Baltic and the White Sea, which employed 100 000 prisoners by 1932 … Prisoners were given primitive hand tools – crudely fashioned axes, saws and hammers – instead of dynamite and machinery. Worked to exhaustion in the freezing cold, an estimated 25 000 prisoners died during the first winter of 1931–32 alone. Their frozen corpses were thrown into the ditch … Built on top of bones, the canal was a fitting symbol of the Stalinist regime, whose greatest propaganda successes were achieved with total disregard for the millions of lives they cost.

Orlando Figes, *Revolutionary Russia 1891–1991*, Penguin, London, pp. 222–3.

Questions

1. What is Kochan's view of Soviet industrialisation? How does he try to highlight the scale of the achievement?
2. What is Conquest's view of the economic change? What reason does he suggest for the overly optimistic views presented by people such as Kochan?
3. How does Figes try to convince his readers of the point he is making?

Stakhanovisms

In September 1935, a coal miner by the name of Aleksei Grigorievich Stakhanov, working in the Donets Basin, allegedly managed to dig out 102 tons of coal in his shift – 14 times his quota. Stakhanov's name quickly became used to 'inspire' or perhaps 'shame' other workers into similar selfless feats. Technicians, who raised practical objections to what became known as 'Stakhanovism', were labelled as defeatists or, even worse, saboteurs. In November 1935, the First All-Union Stakhanovite Conference was held. A month later, the party's Central Committee passed resolutions calling for Stakhanovite thinking to be incorporated into industrial training and special courses for 'foremen of socialist labour'. There were Stakhanovite

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competitions, and Stakhanovite brigades were created. Authorities claimed that as a result of Stakhanovism, labour productivity almost doubled during the second Five Year Plan.

However, the whole Stakhanov episode was concocted and promoted merely to serve Soviet propaganda at the time. Even in the 1930s, there were stories that Stakhanov's output figures had been boosted by including the efforts of fellow workers. The lie was fully revealed by President Gorbachev in the late 1980s.

Alamy/World History Archive

SOURCE 6.5 Alexsei Stakhanov, whose allegedly superhuman coal-mining exploits turned him briefly into a national hero

Stakhanov was a tragic figure. Used by the regime, no doubt hated by many of his fellow workers who were now forced to work even harder, he ended up in Moscow and became an alcoholic. In 1957, when Soviet leader Khrushchev was asked by visiting foreign press about Stakhanov, he replied that he was still working in the Donets. On learning that he was in Moscow, Khrushchev had Stakhanov sent back to the Donets with only 24 hours' notice. He died a lonely and depressed man in 1977.

ROBERT SERVICE

Robert Service is one of the leading experts today on the history of the Soviet Union. Born in 1947, Service graduated from the University of Cambridge, and since 1998 has been Professor of History at the University of Oxford. Service's work includes a three-volume biography of Lenin, a biography of Stalin, and a controversial work on Trotsky, which was attacked for being error-ridden and Service criticised as willing to swallow Stalinist anti-Trotsky propaganda. Though consistently condemning Marxism, Service deals with Stalin fairly evenhandedly. He never hides the fact that Stalin was cunning and ruthless, but he also sees him as more complex than the two-dimensional villain who is often portrayed.

In the following extract, Service discusses the quality and necessity of Stalin's drive to industrialisation.

> The picture of over-filled economic plans painted by the newspapers involved much distortion. And where there was indeed over-fulfilment, as in steel production, its quality was often too poor for use in manufacturing. Wastage occurred on a huge scale and the problem of uncoordinated production was ubiquitous. The statistics themselves were fiddled not only by a central party machine wishing to fool the world but also by local functionaries wanting to trick the central party machine. Deceit was deeply embedded in the mode of industrial and agricultural management.

Questions

1. What is Service's main comment regarding the quality of Soviet industrial output?
2. How does Service back up his statement that 'deceit was deeply embedded in the mode of industrial and agricultural management'?
3. How does Service justify his view that the Soviet Union could have performed just as well under Bukharin as under Stalin?

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It has been asserted that shoddy, unusable goods were so high a proportion of output that official claims for increases in output were typically double the reality. If the increase in output has been exaggerated, then perhaps Stalin's forced-rate industrialisation and forcible mass collectivisation were not indispensable to the transformation of Russia into a military power capable of defeating Hitler in the Second World War. An extrapolation of the NEP's economic growth rate into the 1930s even suggests that a Bukharinist leadership would have attained an equal industrial capacity. This is not the end of the debate; for as the first Five Year Plan continued, Stalin diverted investment increasingly towards the defence sub-sector. Nearly six per cent of such capital was dedicated to the Red Army's requirements: this was higher than the combined total for agricultural machines, tractors, cars, buses and lorries. It was easier for Stalin to bring this about that it would have been for Bukharin who wanted peasant aspirations to be taken into account.

Robert Service, *Russia: From Tsarism to the Twenty-first Century*, Penguin, London, 2009, p. 186.

Questions

4 Why was Stalin able to focus on the needs of the Red Army more effectively than Bukharin would have?

Collectivisation

The fundamental aims of collectivisation for Stalin were economic, ideological and political. The economic purpose related to the Soviet Union's lack of capital. Stalin needed to squeeze the countryside and increase grain production for export, which in turn would earn foreign exchange that could be used to buy Western mechanical goods and employ technicians. Ideologically, collectivisation was seen as a means of ending the capitalist interlude of the NEP. Peasant private land ownership, after all, was not exactly socialist. Politically, Stalin's 'liquidation of the kulaks' would ensure his long-term control of the country as well as the towns. Collectivisation began at breakneck speed, and resistance from the peasants was strong. Stalin had declared war on the kulaks but increasingly, more and more peasants were being given that label. There was virtually civil war in the countryside.

Corbis/Austrian Archives

SOURCE 6.6 Russian peasant women demonstrate in support of the removal of distinctions between workers and peasants, and the strengthening of the collective farm system, 1930s

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Getty Images/Sovfoto/UIG

SOURCE 6.7 Children collecting frozen potatoes in a field of a collective farm, 1933

Corbis/Bettmann

SOURCE 6.8 Women on a collective farm using machinery to clean grain, 1930

GPU
State Political Directorate, the Soviet secret police established in 1922. It was the successor of the Cheka.

A local village committee would be formed, which included the head of the local **GPU**. The committee would take everything away from the kulaks, not just their land and livestock, but even their glasses. In response, those peasants targeted as kulaks did anything to avoid having to surrender their property. They killed livestock, burned crops, gorged food and burned houses. In the Ukraine, the collectivisation reached tragic proportions with Stalin's man-made famine. Historians still disagree about the success or failure of collectivisation. Essentially, the verdict on collectivisation depends very much on one's perspective. This is illustrated in source 6.9.

THE LIQUIDATION OF THE KULAKS

The process of collectivisation was seen by many in the party as the necessary adjunct to the policy of industrialisation, for the simple reason that grain exports seemed to be the only way to raise capital for industrial change. The only way to increase grain exports was to squeeze the peasantry by increasing grain procurements. However, as the extract from historian Robert Service (page 184) shows, such a view is debatable.

However, as explained before, Stalin also had political motives for collectivisation. Though Stalin talked about the need for farm amalgamations and the increased use of technology, his speeches of the time revealed an almost obsessive class-warfare zeal. His target was the kulaks. These middle-class peasants had larger farms, had been successful during the years of the NEP and often hired others to work for them. This was the classic Bolshevik definition of a class enemy. Stalin told the party in 1929:

> We must break down the resistance of the kulaks and deprive this class of its existence. We must eliminate the kulaks as a class. We must smash the kulaks … we must strike at the kulaks so hard as to prevent them rising to their feet again. We must annihilate them as a social class.
>
> Cited in Tony Downey, *The USSR*, Oxford University Press, Oxford, 1989, p. 33.

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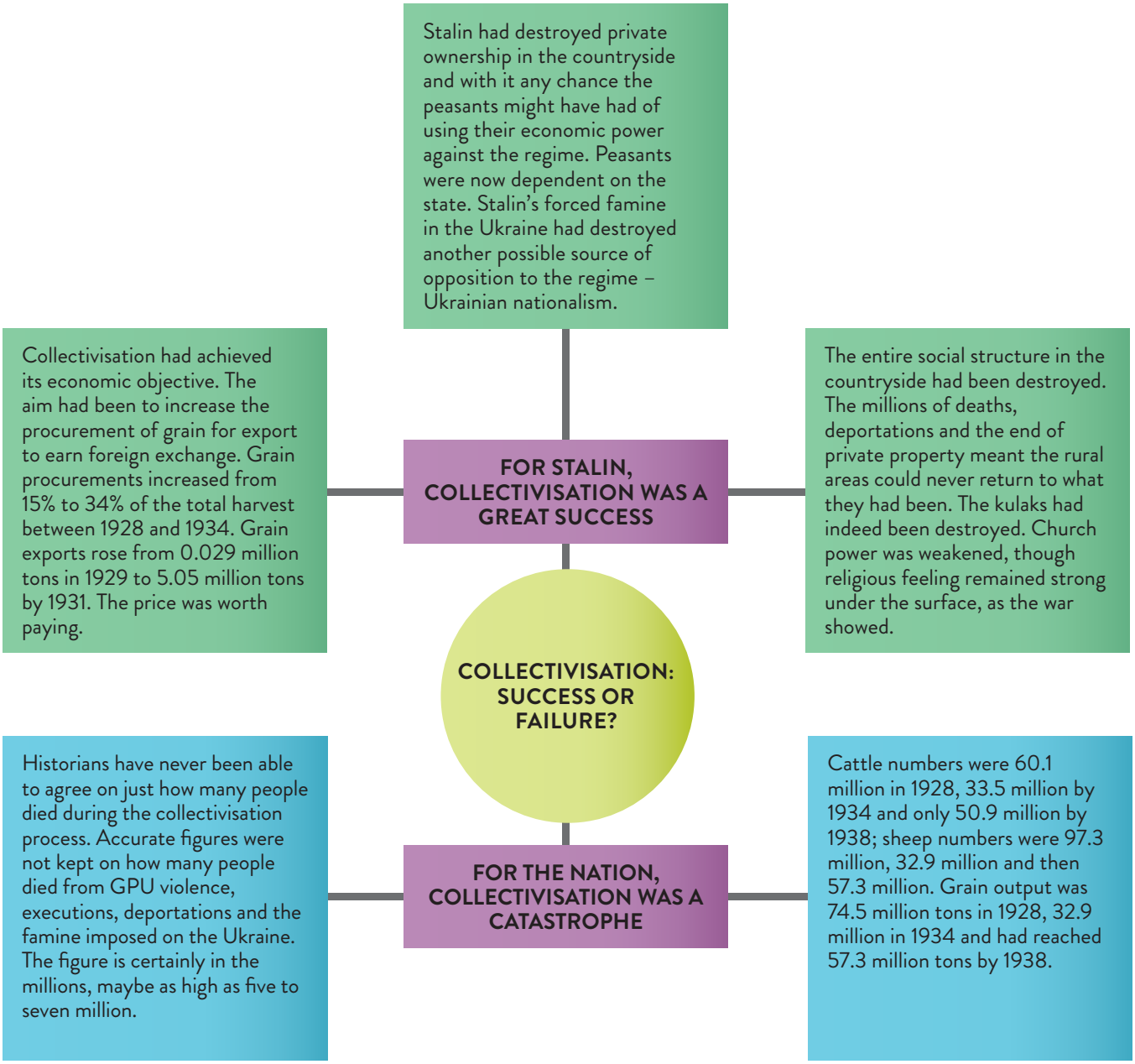

SOURCE 6.9 Collectivisation: success or failure?

This type of language showed that Stalin's interest in collectivisation went well beyond simple economics. At first there were three categories of kulak (though soon it became apparent that anyone could be classified as a kulak):

+ counter-revolutionaries – people in this group were either shot or sent to prison camps immediately, without compunction
+ wealthy kulaks – this group was banished to work in labour camps in Siberia and the Arctic
+ other kulaks – this group was allowed to stay in the district but often settled outside of the collective.

Stalin urged terror and repression, and the conflict between the party and the kulaks became akin to civil war in the countryside. Millions were exiled, often in the middle of winter, and transported in open cattle trucks. Party officials took everything they could. However, the results

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of this campaign began to have serious consequences in the countryside as the the extract from *Virgin Soil Upturned* (below) suggest. This led Stalin to slow down the process, claiming that party members had become too carried away, and had become 'dizzy with success'.

The official party view, expressed in newspapers, cinemas and on the radio, was that collectivisation was extremely popular throughout the nation. When celebrities such as the Irish playwright George Bernard Shaw visited the Soviet Union, they were taken to 'model' collective farms where food was plentiful, bellies full, housing of a high standard and technology in full evidence. On their return to the West, these privileged visitors spoke enthusiastically about the achievements of Soviet agriculture, especially at a time when the West was in the middle of the Great Depression. Soviet propaganda propagated this view with examples of Socialist Realist art (see the source study on pages 189–190). The extract from Mikhail Sholokov below suggests a version of events closer to the truth.

The results of Stalin's dekulakisation polices were the deaths of millions and the destruction of traditional rural society. Historians will never know the true extent of the human tragedy. Robert Conquest has suggested up to 10 million people lost their lives, and most estimates suggest around one million of these deaths were by execution. The slaughter of livestock associated with collectivisation also had catastrophic consequences that are frequently overlooked. In Kazakhstan, farmers were completely reliant upon their herds. The Kazakhs arguably suffered more than any other nationality during this period; approximately 1.5 million people, about 38 per cent of the population, died. The Russian novelist and dissident Alexander Solzhenitsyn, himself later an inmate of a Stalinist Gulag, estimated that more than five million people were forced into Siberian and Arctic labour camps in the 1930s.

Collectivisation

Mikhail Sholokov – *Virgin Soil Upturned*

Mikhail Sholokov was one of the Soviet Union's leading novelists; he won the Nobel Prize for Literature in 1965. Born in 1905, he joined the Bolsheviks and fought for them during the Russian Civil War from the age of 13. His first work was *Tales from the Don* in 1926. He started writing *And Quiet Flows The Don* the same year but it was not published until 1940. His book *Virgin Soil Upturned* earned him the Lenin Prize. It took him 28 years to write. It comprises two parts: *Seeds of Tomorrow* (1932) and *Harvest on The Don* (1960). Mikhail Sholokov died in 1984.

The following extract is from *Virgin Soil Upturned* and it provides a more realistic account of what went on during collectivisation than the Socialist Realist art that the regime promoted at the time.

> Stock was slaughtered every night in Gremyachy Log. Hardly had dusk fallen when the muffled short bleats of sheep, the death squeals of pigs, or the lowing of calves, could be heard. Both those who had joined the kolkhoz (collective farm) and individual farmers killed their stock. Bulls, sheep, pigs, even cows were slaughtered, as well as cattle for breeding. The horned stock of Gremyachy was halved in two nights. The dogs began to drag entrails about the village. Cellars and barns were filled with meat. The cooperative sold about two hundred poods (about 36 pounds) of salt in two days, that had been lying in stock for eighteen months. 'Kill, it's not ours anymore ... Kill, they'll take it for meat anyway ... Kill, you won't get any meant in the kolkhoz.' And they killed. They ate until they could eat no more. Young and old suffered from

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continued

stomach ache. At dinner time tables groaned under boiled and roasted meat. At dinner time everyone had a greasy mouth, everyone hiccoughed as if at a wake. Everyone blinked like an owl, as if drunk from eating.

Mikhail Shokolov, *Virgin Soil Upturned*, 1932

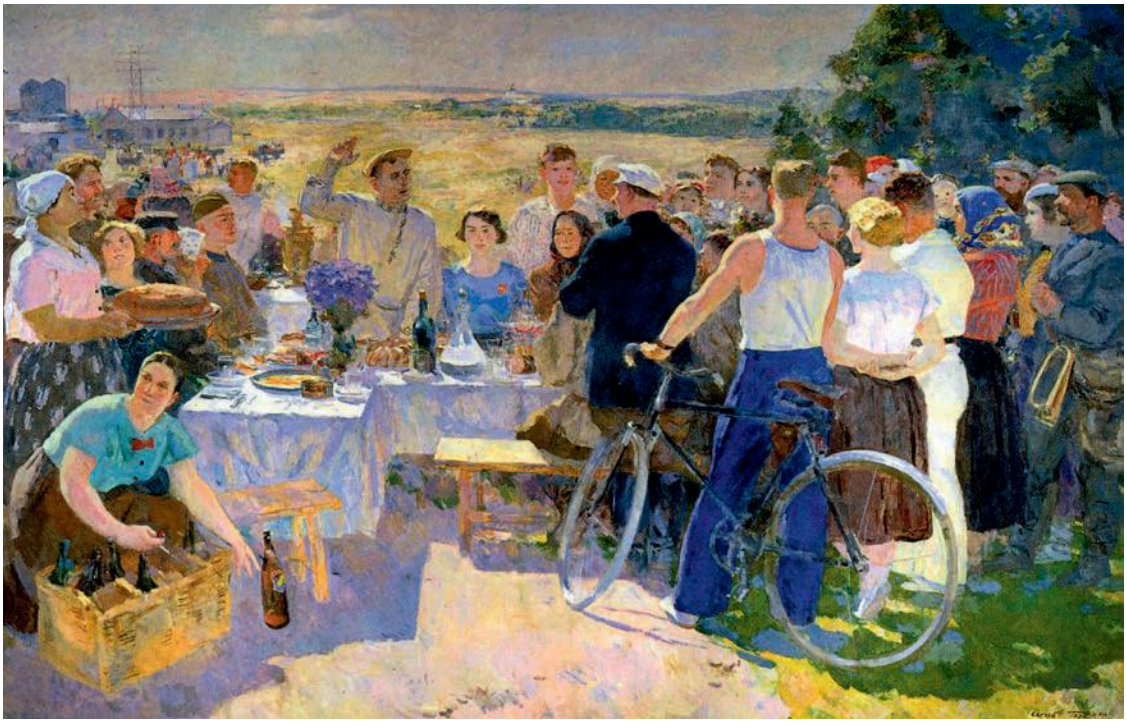
Questions

1. The behaviour of the peasants seems extremely odd. How do you account for it?
2. Why was there such a demand for salt?
3. What do you think the reaction of the authorities to this behaviour would have been?

The Socialist Realist depiction of collectivisation

During the 1930s, Stalin demanded that all artistic endeavour – be it music, art, literature, cinema – should be used to support and promote the enormous efforts that the nation was making to modernise. Creators of the various art forms had been used to expressing their own feelings and emotions, such as in love poetry. However, under Stalin, personal art was replaced by Socialist Realism. Art now had to be in line with party views, be optimistic and didactic; it had to teach the people correct attitudes.

This was seen no more clearly than in Soviet artistic depictions of the collectivisation program in the 1930s. Examine the two paintings below and consider the questions that follow.



AlamyWorld History Archive

SOURCE 6.10 *The Collective Farm Harvest* by the Soviet artist Sergei Vasilyevich Gerasimov was painted in 1937

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Illya Maximovich Shulga/Museum Stock

SOURCE 6.11 *The First Tractor* by the Soviet artist Vladimir Gavrilovich Krikhatsky. This is just one of many paintings depicting tractors on the collective farms.

Questions

1. Examine *The Collective Farm Harvest* and *The First Tractor*. Identify the ways in which the artists have presented a happy, optimistic view of life on the collective farm.
2. How do these images compare with what you have read in this chapter?
3. Why do you think so many paintings were commissioned to illustrate the use of tractors?
4. What is your view: should art be personal or should it be used to promote social goals?

MAN-MADE FAMINE?

The events in the Ukraine during the process of collectivisation deserve special attention. Stalin's motives were clear: maximise grain procurement. However, historians differ markedly in the wider assessment of the events, with interpretations ranging from a deliberate policy of genocide to attributing the famine to natural disaster. Historians, most notably Robert Conquest in *Harvest of Sorrow* (1987), have argued that Stalin's policies in the Ukraine amounted to a deliberate policy of mass murder, or even genocide. Conquest argues that Stalin deliberately engineered the Ukrainian famine, not only for economic gain, but also to destroy the remnants of Ukrainian nationalism. He argues that around seven million Ukrainians died as a result of these policies. Conquest is not alone in this assessment. Norman Naimark, in *Stalin's Genocides* (2011), makes similar arguments. However, historians, as they so often do, debate the issue of genocide in the Ukrainian context. For example, Mark B Tauger, from the University of West Virginia, suggests that there was not a deliberate genocidal policy, but the famine was caused by poor harvests.

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Australian historian Stephen Wheatcroft, using archival material released after the collapse of the Soviet Union in 1991, suggests the answer lies between the two extremes. The famines were the result of multiple factors, including failed crops caused by fluctuating levels of rainfall and wheat rust, and the inept policies of grain procurement. Wheatcroft suggests that the number of deaths as a result of the famine in the Ukraine is around 4.5 million.

Questions

1. Why might these historians differ in their interpretations of the impact of famine in Ukraine?

Holodomor

The term 'Holodomor', meaning 'extermination by hunger' in Ukrainian, has come to be used to describe the famine in the Ukraine in 1932–33. The Holodomor is seen as the result of a deliberate genocidal program initiated by the Soviet Union. In 2006, the Ukrainian government recognised the famine as a form of genocide. Since then Australia, the United States, Canada and a number of other nations have acknowledged that the Holodomor was genocide.

Questions

1. What is genocide and why does it differ from other forms of mass killing?
2. Why might the Holodomor be considered genocide?

Pictures from History

SOURCE 6.12 Ukrainian peasants forced from their home during the famine of 1932–33

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Pictures from History

SOURCE 6.13 An emaciated horse pulls a cart during the famine of 1932–33

Alamy/ITAR-TASS Photo Agency

SOURCE 6.14 This photo is titled '*Death of Starvation in Kharkov, 1933*'

Against all the evidence, Stalin continued to deny the situation in the region. Staged visits for foreign figures tried to present a calm, prosperous scene. Red Cross trains loaded with grain were turned back at the border on the grounds that there was no famine in the country. However, the truth did begin to emerge. British journalist Malcolm Muggeridge managed to have firsthand accounts smuggled out, and he wrote strongly on the issue. The author and journalist Arthur Koestler did the same. The Soviet composer Dmitri Shostakovich wrote about the Ukraine in his memoir, *Testimony*. He tells the story of the roaming blind folk singers of the Ukraine known as *lirniki* or *banduristy*. These men were a living embodiment of Ukrainian culture and passed on their cultural knowledge in the time-honoured oral tradition. Stalin had hundreds of them brought to Moscow to 'honour' their work. They were all shot.

Dmitri Simes gives this summary of the events in the Ukraine.

> Starvation was particularly brutal in the Ukraine where, in addition to the campaign against kulaks, a war was declared against all vestiges of local nationalism. Ukrainian peasants were viewed as a major constituency for 'petty-bourgeois' nationalist sentiment. To them the sword of the revolution knew no mercy. The authorities had gone so far as to prevent starving Ukrainian peasants from escaping to the better supplied Russian provinces and bringing food back to their dying villages. Conquest calculates that of a Ukrainian farm population of between twenty and twenty-five million, about five million died – a quarter to a fifth. Travellers to the Ukraine reported unattended corpses of peasants who failed to escape filling railroad stations.
>
> Dmitri Simes, 'Stalin's genocide of the Soviet peasantry', *The Guardian*, 9 November, 1986, p. 18.

Conclusion

By 1927–28, the Soviet economy was in trouble as economic growth had stalled and food shortages were appearing. This was the so-called 'scissors crisis'. Stalin seized the opportunity of the crisis both to remove his opponents on the right and to hurl the country into a frenzy

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of economic transformation. Agriculture was forcibly collectivised, often with great brutality as Stalin sought to destroy the kulaks and the remnants of Ukrainian nationalism. What the countryside experienced was like a civil war. The cost in human lives and destruction of property was enormous. However, Stalin had succeeded in increasing grain procurements for export, which earned foreign exchange that could be used to finance industrialisation. Based on a series of Five Year Plans, the Soviet economy was transformed in a few years. There was an emphasis on heavy industry, and armaments later in the decade. Conditions for workers were torrid, discipline strict and as the 1930s moved along, millions of forced labourers were used to promote industrial change. However, despite the enormous hardships, there was also some support for the industrialisation program, particularly among young people, who were motivated by the idea that they were building a new Russia. Propaganda was mobilised to gain popular support for the changes, as seen in Socialist Realist art and the Stakhanovite movement. Great strides were made in the 1930s, but never as great as Soviet propaganda tried to make out. The human cost in terms of death, famine, deportations and imprisonment counted in the millions.

Chapter summary

+ By about 1927–28, it had become clear that the NEP had run out of steam. Urban products were increasing in price, rural goods were falling and so peasant grain output began to drop. This was the 'scissors crisis'.
+ Stalin's solution was to begin a massive industrialisation drive.
+ Five Year Plans became the basis of the industrialisation program. Targets were established centrally, while regional authorities had to organise their local situations to reach them.
+ The emphasis at the beginning was on heavy industry. In the second Five Year Plan some allowance was made for lighter industry, but by the end of the decade, as the foreign situation became more dangerous, armaments production was given priority.
+ The Soviet economy made enormous strides and could boast many prestige projects, such as the Dnieper Dam and the Moscow Underground Railway system. However, the increases claimed by the authorities were never as great as the propaganda suggested, and there was much inefficiency, bribery and corruption that accompanied the drive for change.
+ Though there was genuine enthusiasm among many sections of the population, it proved necessary to use forced labour in many areas to get the work done. Working conditions were poor and labour discipline became ever stricter.

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+ The Stakhanovite movement, named after the Donets miner of the same name, was promoted to encourage greater effort from workers. Socialist Realist art sought to do the same thing by promoting a positive and optimistic view of developments.
+ Agriculture was collectivised. Private land ownership became a thing of the past as peasants were forced onto collectives or into the towns. There was widespread opposition to the process and this led to violence in the country, destruction of crops and livestock, and, in places, virtual civil war.
+ However, despite the enormous cost in lives and property, Stalin managed to achieve major increases in grain exports, which earned the foreign exchange that was needed to provide the capital for industrial change.
+ The party's control in the countryside was complete after collectivisation; the kulaks had been destroyed.
+ The Ukraine came in for especially brutal treatment as Stalin sought not only to maximise the output of this grain-rich region, but also to stamp out the remaining elements of Ukrainian nationalism. A man-made famine was imposed on the Ukraine, which historians estimate led to the deaths of more than five million people.

Endnote

1 Stalin, cited in Martin McCauley, *The Soviet Union since 1917*, Longman, London, 1981, p. 73.

Weblinks

Weblinks relevant to this chapter can be found at http://nmh.nelsonnet.com.au/russia

Further reading

David Christian, *Power and Privilege*, Pitman, Melbourne, 1991, Chapter 10, pp. 202–11.

Robert Conquest, *Harvest of Sorrow: Soviet collectivisation and the terror famine*, Oxford University Press, New York, 1986.

Alec Nove, *An Economic History of the USSR 1917–1991*, Penguin, Harmondsworth, 1992.

Dmitri Shostakovich, *Testimony: The Memoirs of Dmitri Shostakovich*, ed. Solomon Volkov, trans. Antonia Bouis, Hamish Hamilton, London, 1979.

Chapter review activities

The 'scissors crisis'

1 Define the terms 'NEP' and 'scissors crisis'.

2 Explain how Trotsky and Preobrazhensky had been proven right on the issue of economic development.

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3 The Soviet economy faced a 'catch 22' situation. Explain what this means.

4 What were the defence implications of the 'scissors crisis'?

5 Why might the end of the NEP be regarded as the end of Lenin's revolutionary reforms to the economy?

The Five Year Plans

6 How were the Five Year Plans worked out?

7 Identify the main elements of the first three Five Year Plans.

8 List some of the major achievements of the industrialisation program.

9 Why is there so much disagreement about the achievements and success of Stalin's industrialisation drive?

10 Summarise Robert Service's argument about the quality of Soviet industrial output. Does his argument reduce the scale of the Soviet achievement?

11 What are the key points made by Kochan, Figes and Conquest regarding the industrialisation process?

12 Imagine you are a young Soviet citizen imbued with industrialisation fervour. Write a short speech in which you exhort your peers to volunteer for industrial work in an inhospitable part of the country.

Collectivisation

13 What were the three main motives behind Stalin's collectivisation policy?

14 Who were the kulaks?

15 In what ways did the Soviet police and judicial system contribute to the programs of industrialisation and collectivisation?

16 'Human catastrophe, economic success and politically astute.' Support this statement in terms of the results of collectivisation.

17 Imagine you are a Soviet peasant. Outline your views on the process of collectivisation.

18 Why was Stalin so keen to target the kulaks?

19 Put yourself in Stalin's place. You are having a one-on-one meeting with the head of the secret police. Explain your intentions regarding the Ukraine.

Essay question

20 Evaluate the successes and failings of industrialisation and collectivisation.

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CHAPTER SEVEN

Stalinist totalitarianism: 1929–1941

By end of the 1930s, the Soviet system had evolved into a fully fledged totalitarian regime as the state sought to intervene in every aspect of the lives of its people. The Constitution of 1936 had all the appearances of democratic procedure, but in practice the power of the party was unlimited and unchallenged. The terror that operated in the 1930s reached down to all levels of the party and beyond. Leading figures were caught up in the great show trials of the purges, while millions of ordinary party members and other Soviet citizens found themselves subject to deportation or sentenced to time in a Gulag. The secret police had appeared as a temporary measure in December 1917, but by the late 1930s they had evolved into a massive organisation that enveloped every aspect of Soviet life. Above all this stood Stalin, who, particularly after the murder of Kirov, was untouchable; indeed, Soviet propaganda raised Stalin to near-divine status. The party left no part of Soviet society untouched. The lives of workers, peasants, women and youth could not escape party interference. Education, the media, the arts, the military and the economy all bore the imprint of the presence of the party. And at the top was the figure of Stalin, 'the great helmsman'.

‹ The Trial of the Twenty-One, Moscow, 1938

INQUIRY QUESTION

+ How had the Soviet system evolved into Stalinist totalitarianism by the end of the 1930s?

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fascism
A political movement based on extreme nationalism, anti-Communism and opposition to democracy and conservatism. Fascist ideology tends to emphasise the cult of the leader, prefers a militarised style of organisation, uses terror as a political tactic and frequently advocates racist policies. Fascism first emerged as a political force in Italy after the First World War, but by 1939, most European nations had their own varieties of fascist movements. Nazism is generally considered to be a variety of fascism.

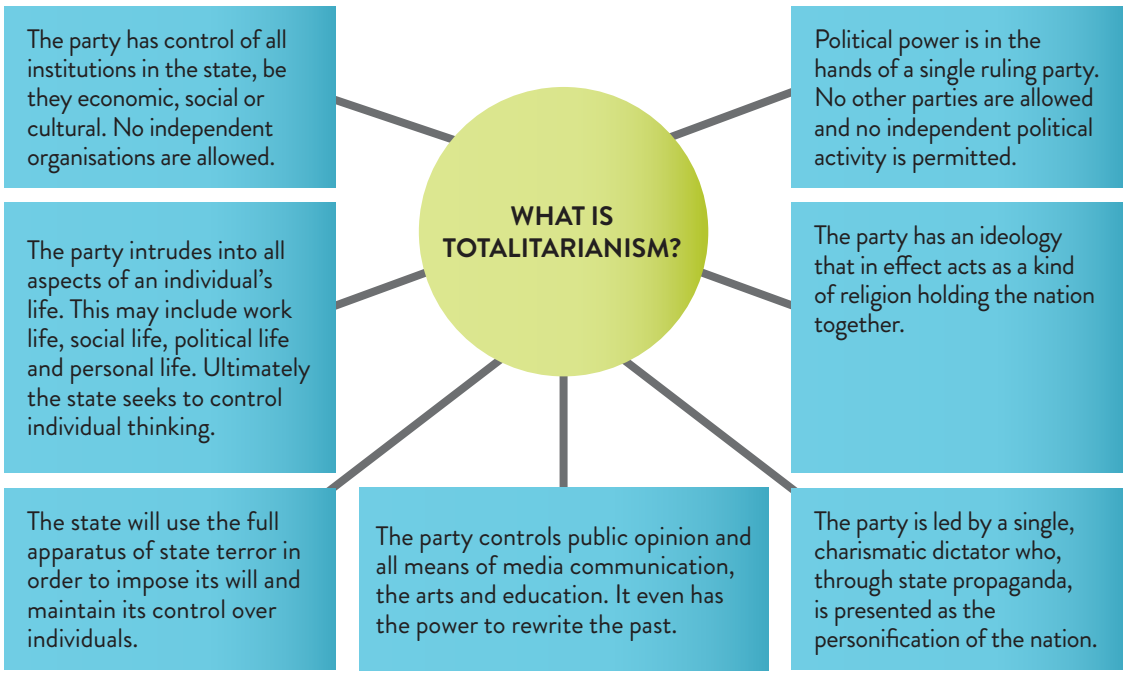
Cold War
The term used to describe the tense state of relations between the United States (the West) and the Soviet Union (the East) between 1945 and 1990. It was both an ideological and a great power conflict. The term 'cold war' is applicable as each side on occasions took the conflict to the brink of war but managed to step back from outright war.

Totalitarianism

The term 'totalitarian' was first used by Italian **fascists** in the 1920s to describe the aims of their system of rule, in which the ruling party sought to dominate all aspects of life in Italy. After 1945, as the **Cold War** was intensifying, the term came to be used to identify and discuss similarities between Hitler's Nazi regime in Germany and Stalin's Soviet regime. There was a Western propaganda element in this: highlighting similarities between Stalin and Hitler could only serve to blacken the nature of the Soviet Russia in the eyes of the world. In fact, the differences between the two regimes were sharp. However, thinking about totalitarianism has led historians to identify the similarities between the systems of rule established in particular forms of dictatorship. To consider the Stalinist regime of the 1930s in this light, a definition of totalitarianism is required.

DEFINITION OF TOTALITARIANISM

The novel *1984*, by the English writer George Orwell, was published in 1948. In it, Orwell described a government system dominated by the all-powerful figure, 'Big Brother'. In Orwell's *1984* world, every aspect of people's lives, including thought, was dominated and controlled by the state. Many at the time saw *1984* as a parody of life inside the Soviet Union. During the 1950s, several academic writers attempted to develop theories of totalitarianism. One of the most influential works on the topic was the 1956 book *Totalitarian dictatorship and autocracy* by Carl Friedrich and Zbigniew Brzezinski. In this work, Friedrich and Brzezinski created a model for totalitarian regimes that had five criteria: a charismatic leader heading a single party, a party ideology, state economic control, state use of terror and party control of the armed forces. This comparative approach waned during the 1970s and 1980s, but has been revisited since the end of the Cold War. Figure 7.1 presents a more detailed diagrammatic representation of the main elements of totalitarianism.



SOURCE 7.1 The main elements of a totalitarian regime

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STALINISM AS TOTALITARIANISM

Notwithstanding the propaganda motive of much political analysis in the 1950s, which clearly sought to paint the Stalinist system in the worst possible light, very strong arguments can be presented to show Stalinism as totalitarianism. These arguments are summarised in source 7.2.

By the 1930s, the party had come to dominate institutions in all areas of life ranging from the arts to sport to the Young Communist League (Komsomol) and the armed forces. Participation in activities throughout the country was vetted by party officials and all organisations had party officials present.

There was only one legal political party allowed in the Soviet Union. Following victory in the civil war, all effective opposition had come to an end. The party went further and banned any opposition 'within' the party with the ban on factions. Stalin had destroyed remaining party opposition by 1929.

Cynics might disparage references made to ideology and argue Stalin was only about power. However, ideology provided justification for Stalin's actions and often served to motivate individuals. The party also wanted ideology to supplant traditional religion.

The party came to have enormous influence over people's personal lives. Where one worked, lived and studied was determined by the state. The demands of collectivisation and industrialisation increased this control with the introduction of labour books and internal passports. The fate of the kulaks speaks for itself.

Alamy/AF archive

Some might doubt how much charisma Stalin had. However, through the development of the personality cult, Stalin was successfully presented as the nation's strong, reliable leader in troubled times. He became the personification of the Soviet state.

Collectivisation had been achieved largely through the use of state terror. Industrial workers and managers had to be wary of breaking the rules. The purges and the terror of the later 1930s showed the willingness of Stalin to hurl the full weight of the state terror apparatus against enemies of the state, real or imagined.

The party controlled all media – the press, cinema and the arts. Education was controlled to present the party line and inculcate the correct thinking. Socialist Realism was the only acceptable style for the arts. The media promoted the cult of personality around Stalin, who even had his people rewriting the past.

SOURCE 7.2 Stalinism as totalitarianism

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In his book *Sacred Causes*, the British historian Michael Burleigh explains how Bolshevism evolved into a political religion, which he sees as a key element of a totalitarian regime. At first it was Lenin, but by the mid-1930s it was Stalin who had become the Soviet Union's saviour. The following extract from Burleigh's book gives a flavour of the religious nature of Stalinist totalitarianism.

> He (Stalin) slipped easily into the tsars' role of genial father-figure, to whose justice desperate people turned when they sought to outflank unresponsive officialdom … This belief in Stalin's good-natured blindness sat oddly with the repeated claim to omniscience – the essence of the 'fantasy state' based on the interaction of the inner workings of a dictatorial mind and the wider society (including its institutions) as a whole. The following Stalin-era poem reflected the Orwellian spirit:
>
> And so – everywhere, In the workshops, in the mines
> In the Red Army, the kindergarten
> He is watching …
> You look at his portrait and it's as if he knows
> Your work – and weighs it
> You've worked badly – his brow lowers
> But when you've worked well, he smiles in his moustache
>
> Michael Burleigh, *Sacred Causes: Religion and Politics from the European dictators to Al Qaeda,* Harper Collins, London, 2006, pp. 74–5.

However, it should also be remembered that the Soviet Union in the 1930s still remained a very inefficient system. The problems of land size, and poor transport and communications, which had plagued the tsarist regime in earlier years, had not yet been fully overcome. The party in Moscow might hand down directives; it was another thing to ensure that those directives were obeyed to the letter in distant places such as Vladivostok. Indeed, some local party functionaries sought to be more independent. Stalin hinted at this when he blamed the excesses of collectivisation and the terror on overzealous local officials. (This view had been countered by recent research, which will be considered in the section on terror and the purges.)

THE CONSTITUTION OF 1936

It seems bizarre that such a system should even bother having a constitution, but in December 1936 the Constitution of the USSR, known as the Fundamental Law, was proclaimed with great fanfare. On paper, it was a truly democratic document, guaranteeing the basic freedoms of speech, religion, press and assembly, and provided for free elections based on universal suffrage with no discrimination against any religious, ethnic or national group.

Soviet citizens could vote in elections at various levels ranging from village to town to province to republic. The constitution made the 'Supreme Soviet' the highest organ of state power in the USSR. It had two houses: the Soviet of the Union (which had one representative for every 300 000 citizens) and the Soviet of the Nationalities (which aimed to provide separate representation for each national group). The Supreme Soviet appointed the Council of Ministers, which was the official government of the USSR. The Supreme Soviet also chose the 'presidium', whose chairman was the official head of state.

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Despite the democratic guarantees and the complicated nature of the governmental set-up, the Soviet Constitution was of course a facade. The Communist Party, according to its self-definition, theoretically represented the interests of the Soviet people; other parties were not needed and were hence illegal. Elections took place but there was only one candidate to vote for: the party's nominee. The constitution provided window-dressing legitimacy for the power of the party, which of course meant the power of Stalin.

The purges and the terror

In his biography of Stalin, Isaac Deutscher has a chapter entitled, 'The gods are athirst'. It is a most apt label for what happened in the Soviet Union in the 1930s. The costs of collectivisation, enforced famine in the Ukraine and industrialisation have already been discussed. Yet there were even more deaths, imprisonment and deportations that were the result of direct government policy. From the beginning of the industrialisation period, scapegoats were found if targets were not achieved. Following the murder of Sergei Kirov in 1934 (see page 203), the Soviet security and judicial system began full-scale purging of the party, from the highest to the lowest levels. Many of the inmates in the Gulags had been former, loyal, dedicated party members. The secret police grew into a massive, powerful organisation. These developments raise many questions: Why did all this happen? Was it a natural evolution of the Soviet system? Was it Stalin's paranoia? Was much of the purging and terror due to the fact that the party had lost control of affairs? Was the threat of Nazi Germany a factor? These issues will be discussed in sections to come.

THE EARLY PURGES

The purges of the 1930s are epitomised by the great show trials in the later years of the decade, when thousands of party members were sentenced to death, imprisoned or deported. However, purging was nothing new in the party. As early as the civil war years, Lenin had ordered purging of the party ranks. His argument then was that there was growing corruption and inefficiency within the party and it needed to be a tighter organisation. Many people had joined the party once it was clear that the Bolsheviks were going to win. Lenin called these people 'careerists', people who did not really believe in socialism. Such people were contemptuously referred to as 'radishes': red on the outside, white on the inside. They too were purged. Those purged from the party could appeal to the Central Control Commission in Moscow, which eventually sat in joint session with the Central Committee. The link between these two bodies was the office of the general secretary, held by Stalin. Thus, it could be argued that Stalin was actually carrying out the first party purges.

Official purges were carried out in 1919, 1924, 1925, 1928 and 1929 as party membership expanded. Party membership never rose above five per cent of the population, and membership was prized because it was the main pathway to a career and a good job. During this time, as party discipline became stricter, and as Stalin was gradually tightening his hold on power, expulsion from the party was a common punishment. At this stage, expulsion from the party was not seen as permanent but rather an inconvenient interruption to one's career, and many members who were expelled did re-join the party. Neither was expulsion seen as a threat to a person's life.

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However, once problems and setbacks began to appear in the modernisation drive, the process of purging was stepped up and scapegoats had to be found. Those purged were now being accused of much more serious crimes, and the punishments being handed down were far more severe. Source 7.3 summarises some of the purging activity that occurred between 1928 and 1933.

March 1928	**Shakty Trial** Fifty-three engineers from the Shakty area of the Donbass region of southern Russia were accused of conspiring with former mine owners to sabotage the Soviet economy. This occurred while the Five Year Plan was having serious problems. Scapegoats were needed. Five of the 53 were shot and 44 were sent to labour camps.
November and December 1930	**'The Industrial Party' Trial** The group of prominent economists and engineers was accused of industrial sabotage, conspiring with France and planning a new government. The charges were false. The accused were alleged to have met with a former tsarist minister, Ivan Vyshnegradsky, and industrialist Pavel Ryabushinsky. Both were long since dead! All were sentenced to death though the sentences were commuted to lengthy spells of imprisonment.
1933	A major purge of the party ranks was carried out and more than 20% of party members were expelled. The expelled included some of the party's former leading lights, such as Zinoviev and Kamenev. The economic dimension of this purge, as with the Shakty Trial and the Industrial Party Trial, was clear as a reason for expulsion, and now included labelling as fantasy the objectives designated by the party for the development of the USSR.

SOURCE 7.3 Purges of 1928–33

Purging: 1928–33

In 1934, the pressure on the party eased. The targets for the second Five Year Plan were more realistic, the harvest for that year improved and there were even some minor 'NEP-style' concessions given to some of the peasants in certain regions. Some of those who had been imprisoned were released, and many party members who had recently been expelled were allowed to rejoin the party.

However, this temporary reprieve ended dramatically in December 1934 with the murder of the popular Leningrad party head Sergei Kirov. Stalin used the murder of Kirov as an excuse to launch a massive wave of terror on the country. The Soviet criminal code was expanded to include a whole new range of offences. The death penalty could now be carried out on people as young as 12. It became a crime to be a 'parasite', to be associated with a 'parasite' or to even know a 'parasite'. A parasite could be almost anyone the secret police decided was a parasite. In 1935, a

Corbis/Bettmann

SOURCE 7.4 Leonid Ramzin, left, giving evidence during the 1930 trial of the Industrial Party, an organisation he was accused of leading. This was the first of the Stalinist 'show trials', designed to blame shortcomings of the Soviet state on 'outside agitators' and to keep the people in a state of fear.

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wave of terror spread across the country as thousands of people, party members and ordinary citizens were denounced to the secret police as saboteurs, traitors or parasites. The vast majority of the people caught up in this denunciation and terror frenzy were totally innocent of any crime; in many cases old scores were being settled. Though the terror was to affect thousands, it was the purging of the leading party figures that caught the imagination of the nation, and indeed the world.

Sergei Kirov (1886–1934)

Corbis/Pictorial Press Ltd

Sergei Kirov came as close as anyone in the Soviet Union to being considered as a realistic alternative to Stalin as party leader. In 1934, as the strains of collectivisation and industrialisation were being felt, Kirov's popularity, and his doubts about the country's economic policies, led many in the party to seriously consider Kirov as a realistic challenger to Stalin.

Kirov was born in Urzhum, a small town west of Moscow. His parents died when he was young, and from the age of seven he was raised in an orphanage. After attending a technical school in the regional centre of Kazan, he gravitated towards politics. He took part in the 1905 Revolution, was arrested and served three months in prison, and then joined the Bolsheviks. In 1906, on returning to Moscow, he became involved in party activities and was again arrested.

In March 1917, following a general amnesty for political prisoners, Kirov found himself in Petrograd. Following the November Revolution, he fought in the Red Army during the civil war against the White forces of General Denikin. In 1921 Kirov became the party boss in the southern republic of Azerbaijan.

During the 1920s, Kirov supported Stalin in the struggle for power within the party and, in 1926, was rewarded with Zinoviev's previous job as party head in Leningrad. In 1930 he was appointed to the Politburo.

At the 17th Party Congress in 1934, Kirov received as big an ovation as Stalin. He called for reconciliation with those party members who had been purged. Stalin could not have been ignorant of the fact that his position was threatened by Kirov's growing popularity. On 1 December 1934, Kirov was murdered.

The alleged assassin was a young communist named Nikolayev, who was apparently motivated by personal issues. Kirov was supposed to have been having an affair with Nikolayev's wife, and had reneged on the offer of a job for Nikolayev. Stalin used the murder of Kirov to launch more purges and set the terror in motion. At the 20th Party Congress, in 1956, Soviet leader Nikita Khrushchev stated that Kirov had been murdered on the orders of Stalin with the connivance of the NKVD (the Soviet secret police service established in 1923, formerly the GPU). The last possible rival of Stalin was gone. An extract of Khrushchev's speech is included in the source study on page 204.

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Nikita Khrushchev's secret speech to the 20th Party Congress in February 1956

Stalin died in March 1953. For the next few years, a collective leadership took control of the Soviet Union since no arrangements had been made for a successor. The main leadership contenders were Georgy Malenkov, Nikolay Bulganin and Nikita Khrushchev. At the 20th Party Congress, in February 1956, Khrushchev took a gamble and delivered his famous 'secret speech' in which he denounced Stalin and placed the blame for the terror of the 1930s on the late Soviet leader. Khrushchev's gamble paid off as the party was ready to move into a new, post-Stalinist way of governing. Khrushchev was soon able to consolidate his position and he remained Soviet leader until 1964.

In his speech to the congress, Khrushchev made specific reference to the circumstances surrounding the death of Sergei Kirov on 1 December 1934.

> After the criminal murder of S M Kirov, mass repressions and brutal acts of violation of socialist legality began. On the evening of December 1, 1934, on Stalin's initiative (without the approval of the Political Bureau – which was passed two days later, casually) the secretary of the Presidium of the Central Executive Committee, Enukidze, signed the directive ... [that] became the basis for mass acts of abuse against socialist legality ...
>
> It must be asserted that to this day the circumstances surrounding Kirov's murder hide many things which are inexplicable and mysterious and demand most careful examination. There are reasons for the suspicion that the killer of Kirov, Nikolayev, was assisted by someone from among the people whose duty it was to protect the person of Kirov. A month and a half before the killing, Nikolayev was arrested on the grounds of suspicious behaviour, but he was released and not even searched. It is an unusually suspicious circumstance that when the Chekist assigned to protect Kirov was being brought for an interrogation, on December 2, 1934, he was killed in a car 'accident' in which no other occupants of the car were harmed. After the murder of Kirov, top functionaries of the Leningrad NKVD were given very light sentences, but in 1937 they were shot. We can assume that they were shot in order to cover the traces of the organisers of Kirov's killing.
>
> Nikita Khrushchev, 'Report delivered to the 20th Congress of the CPSU', 25 February 1956.

Questions

1. Why could it be argued that Khrushchev was taking a big gamble by delivering a speech denouncing Stalin?
2. What use did Stalin make of Kirov's murder, according to Khrushchev?
3. What is Khrushchev suggesting about Nikolayev?
4. Why were the NKVD officers shot in 1937, according to Khrushchev?
5. How do you think the assembled delegates at the 20th Congress of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union in February 1956 would have reacted to Khrushchev's speech? Give reasons.

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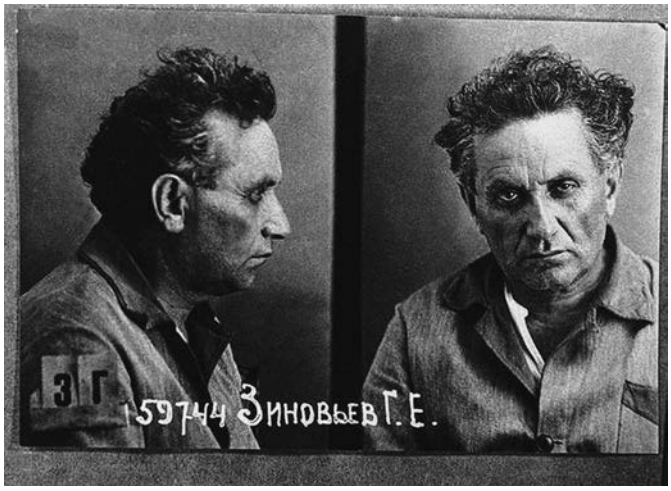
THE SHOW TRIALS

The drama of the great show trials of 1930s is almost beyond belief. The charges, the conduct of the trials, the confessions, the accused being the leading figures of the party and the army, and the fact that in many quarters the trials were accepted at face value as justice, today seem beyond comprehension. Several questions need to be considered:

+ Who were the accused, what were they accused of and what was their fate?
+ Why did so many obviously innocent men confess to the fabricated charges?
+ How and why did it happen, and who or what was responsible?



Getty Images/Fine Art Images/Heritage Images

SOURCE 7.5 Zinoviev's mug shot, taken shortly after his arrest by the NKVD in 1936

Alamy/DIZ Muenchen GmbH, Sueddeutsche Zeitung Photo

SOURCE 7.6 Attendees at a show trial in Moscow in the late 1930s

All the leading 'old' Bolsheviks were dragged into the show trials. The following table summarises the key details of the trials.

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TABLE 7.1 The show trials

Date and trial	Charges and conduct of the trial	Results
January 1935 The (first) trial of Zinoviev, Kamenev and other leading party figures.	They were charged with setting up an opposition group in Moscow and of having links to a terrorist centre in Leningrad.	Zinoviev was sentenced to 10 years; Kamenev to five years; and various other sentences for the other accused.
August 1936 The trial of the Trotskyist-Zinovievist bloc. The accused included Zinoviev, Kamenev, Bakayev, Smirnov and Mrachkovsky.	They were charged with Kirov's murder, planning the murder of Stalin and creating a terrorist centre. Trotsky was always accused of masterminding these events from afar.	All those accused confessed and all were shot.
January 1937 Known as the Trial of 17, the accused included Radek, Piatakov and Sokolnikov.	The charges were similar to those of August 1936 but also included economic sabotage and conspiring with Germany and Japan.	All confessed and 13 of them were shot.
Mid-1937 The trial of the Red Army leaders. The accused included the civil war hero Marshal Tukhachevsky, Yakir and Uborevic.	The charges included plotting with Nazi Germany to remove Stalin from power. The generals were tried 'in camera' (in private). The Czech leader, Benes, had warned Stalin of an impending military coup. Historians remain divided on whether a coup was really being planned.	The leading figures were shot. There followed a full purge of the leading ranks of the army and navy.
March 1938 The accused in this final great show trial of the bloc of 'anti-Soviet rightists and Trotskyists included Bukharin and Rykov. The former NKVD chief, Yagoda, was also on trial.	The accused were charged with economic sabotage, plotting with Germany, Japan, Britain and Poland, working with Trotsky and planning to assassinate Stalin. In addition, they were accused of planning to assassinate Lenin.	All the accused confessed and all were shot.

This was all fantasy. People were accused of meeting co-conspirators who had died years before, in buildings that had been demolished, having taking flights to various locations (which never occurred). So why did these men confess? Many of them were hardened revolutionaries who had experienced tsarist gaols and had fought in the civil war. Some had obviously given in to physical torture. Others gave in to psychological pressure such as threats being made against loved ones. For some it may have been the futility of opposition. Isaac Deutscher suggests that many confessed out of loyalty to the Soviet system and the revolution. For good or ill, the revolution had become Stalin. To oppose Stalin meant opposing the revolution to which these men had dedicated their lives. To oppose Stalin also meant weakening the Soviet Union while threats from aggressive countries Germany and Japan loomed.

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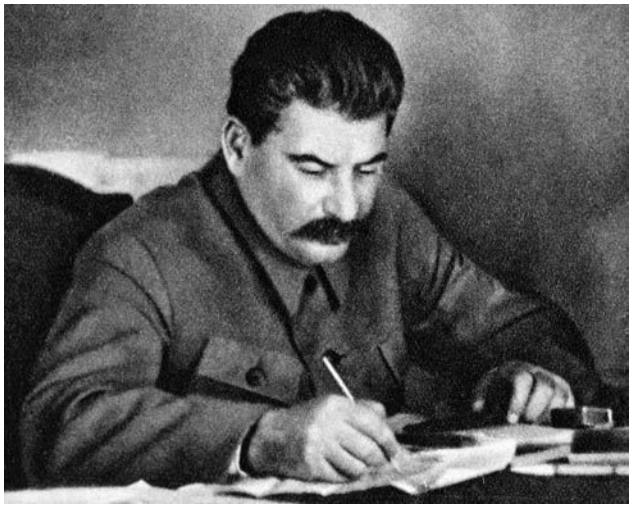
WHO OR WHAT WAS RESPONSIBLE FOR THE TERROR?


Alamy/RIA Novosti

SOURCE 7.7 Stalin signing a death warrant at the time of the show trials

Details of the widespread nature of the terror will be given in the next section, but this is a good place to pose the question: How was all this possible? Who was to blame?

+ Following the death of Stalin in 1953, the Soviet Union went through what was a called a 'de-Stalinisation' period, as the most repressive elements of the Stalinist regime were dismantled. In 1956, at the 20th Party Congress, the new Soviet leader, Nikita Khrushchev, gave a 'secret speech' that openly condemned Stalin for the murder of Kirov, and the subsequent terror and purges. This explanation suited the Soviet Communist Party. There was nothing wrong with communism; any wrongdoing was the fault of one man, Stalin, driven by his inner demons and paranoia.
+ Western historians saw things differently. The terror was not the result of the actions of one man; Stalin was merely a symptom of an evil system. The terror was the natural outgrowth of Bolshevism, and the signs of totalitarian excess could be seen from the early years of Bolshevik rule. The system was the cause of the terror.
+ Deutscher suggests that Stalin, faced with the real looming threats of Germany and Japan, needed a totally united front. In the war that Stalin believed was coming, the party needed to be totally united and so could not allow even the possibility of internal dissent. Hence, the purges.
+ Was Stalin really in control? The Soviet Union is a vast country, difficult to control, and once the process had started, perhaps Stalin lost control of the situation as zealous party members sought to outdo each other in the purging process to prove their loyalty and dedication.

However, more recent research, made possible since the opening of the Soviet archives following the end of the Cold War, has strongly suggested that the terror *was* centrally planned and directed by Stalin.

THE WIDER TERROR

Though the purge of the leading party figures gained the headlines, men such as Zinoviev and Bukharin represent only a small minority of the number of victims caught up in the terror. The principal orchestrator of the terror was the NKVD chief of the time, Nikolai Yezhov. This short, sadistic man, known as the 'bloodthirsty dwarf', gave his name to the terror that spread across the country: the Yezhovshchina. Yezhov drew up lists of victims. Local NKVD offices were given arrest quotas to fill, and fixed percentages of these quotas were to be executed or imprisoned. Innocence or guilt was utterly irrelevant.

The early key targets of the terror were party members. However, the terror affected all groups of society. Intellectuals and artists were particular targets; free thinking was not encouraged in Stalinist Russia. Foreign communists living in the Soviet Union were also targets. Even Trotsky

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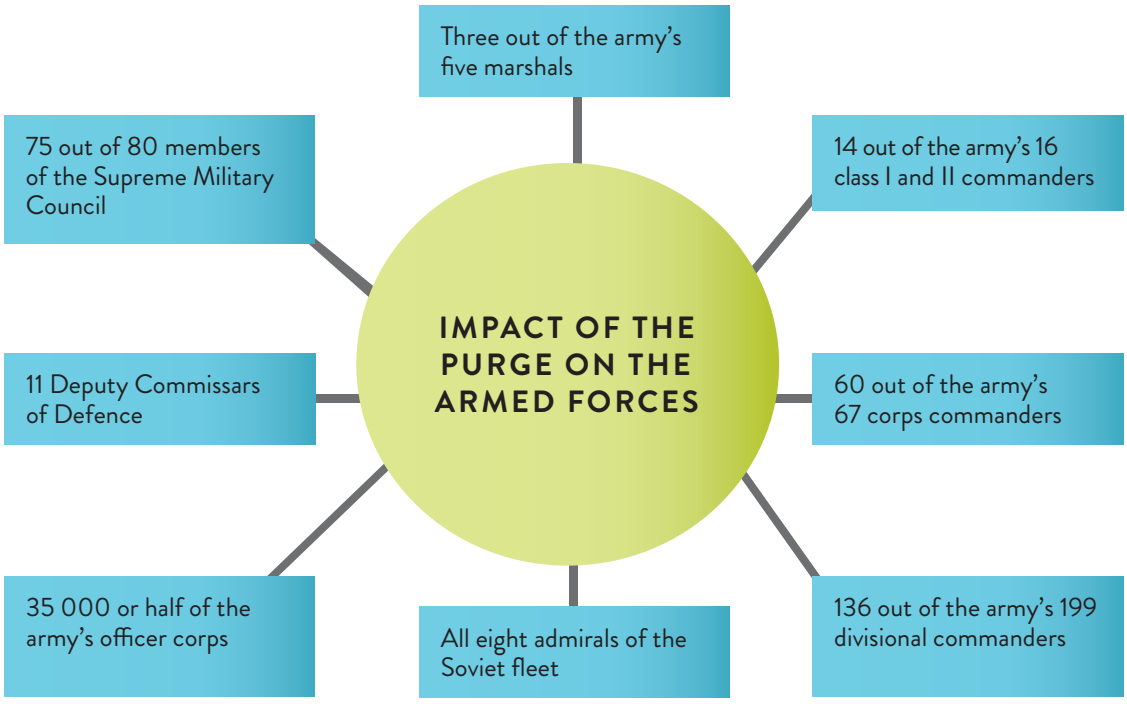
did not escape the terror; he was murdered in Mexico in 1940 by an NKVD agent. Those arrested were always able to give the NKVD the names of others who should be arrested. People volunteered names for a variety of reasons: to remove suspicion from themselves, to settle old scores or to hopefully gain the jobs of those arrested.

The terror created a sense of helplessness for ordinary Soviet citizens. It fragmented Soviet society, because no one could rely on anyone else and certainly not on the institutions of the state. Hélène Carrère d'Encausse, a historian of Stalin's terror, sums up this situation:

> "... the mutual distrust, the fear of being compromised had isolated every individual. This social atomisation was a decisive help to Stalin's power which was able from then on to grow unhindered."
>
> Hélène Carrère D'Encausse, *Stalin: Order Through Terror*, Longman, Harlow, 1981, p. 53.

The exact figure for the loss of life in the Soviet Union during the 1930s as a result of economic changes, forced famine and the terror will never be known. However, the census held in January 1937 as part of the second Five Year Plan expected the Soviet population to be about 180 million; it was 164 million. Non-Russian groups were especially targeted. Stalin may have been a Georgian, but his Russification policies exceeded anything the tsars had tried to do. In his home region of Georgia, 260 out of 300 party secretaries were purged. Following the 1937 trial of Marshal Tukhachevsky, the armed forces were also purged. Robert Conquest, in the book *The Great Terror* (1968), one of the first detailed academic studies of Stalinist terror, argued that during 1937–38 there were around seven million arrests, about one million executions and approximately two million deaths in camps. While Conquest has revised this book several times, he has remained convinced that his estimates may in fact be understated.



SOURCE 7.8 The purging of the armed forces was extensive and weakened Russia considerably

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THE EVOLUTION OF THE SECRET POLICE

A key aspect of the Stalinist terror was the secret police. When the Cheka was formed in December 1917 under the leadership of Felix Dzerzhinsky, it was seen as a temporary means to deal with the likely threat to the young Bolshevik regime of counter-revolutionaries. It grew in strength during the civil war and became renowned for its willingness to implement the most barbaric atrocities. Dzerzhinsky was seen as incorruptible and totally loyal to Lenin.

After the victory in the civil war, the Cheka was placed under the control of the Commissariat of Internal Affairs. In 1922, the Cheka became the GPU – the Political Administration of the State; the secret police had become a permanent organ of state. In 1923 the GPU became the OGPU – the Unified Political Administration of the State. Though Dzerzhinsky worked with Stalin at this time, he remained very much his 'own man' and as incorruptible as ever.

Dzerzhinsky died in 1926 and was succeeded by Menzhinsky, who was not as strong as his predecessor. Stalin was able to direct him to do things Dzerzhinsky would not have done. The OGPU now spied on party members and began to use violence against them. Menzhinsky's ill health meant that the organisation came increasingly under the control of his deputy, Yagoda. Menzhinsky had tried to maintain party control of the police but this changed under Yagoda, though he did succeed in preventing death sentences being carried out against 'old Bolsheviks'.

In 1934, the OGPU and the Commissariat of Internal Affairs were merged and became the NKVD. Stalin brought in more new people and he became exasperated at Yagoda's unwillingness to do his bidding. In 1936, Yagoda was replaced by Yezhov. Yezhov was different from his predecessors. He owed his whole career to Stalin and was quite prepared to do his master's bidding. It was under Yezhov that the terror reached its height. The influence of the NKVD was everywhere, from factories to schools to libraries to parks to the army. Millions of files were kept on people. By now the secret police was not controlled by the party; it controlled the party, under Stalin's direction, of course. Stalin enforced a massive system of surveillance in true 'big brother' fashion. Nobody was free of this surveillance, not even the police themselves.

Being head of the secret police was no guarantee of safety. Yagoda was arrested and shot in 1938. Yezhov was arrested and executed in early 1939. Yezhov's deputy, Beria, took control of the NKVD in December 1938. (He, too, would be executed, in December 1953).

Soviet society under Stalin

With so much upheaval caused by collectivisation and industrialisation, and the terror inflicted on so many people during the 1930s, it is perhaps difficult to appreciate that in many areas of the Soviet Union, 'normal life' did continue. To balance the 'terror' view of Stalinism, four aspects of Soviet life under Stalin will be considered: education, the role and status of women, culture and the arts, and the rise of new elites. Education, women's mobilisation and the establishment of a technical intelligentsia, with hindsight, can readily be viewed as the constructive accomplishments of Stalin's dictatorship.

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EDUCATION

During the 1920s, Soviet education fell into disarray (similar to the experience in China during the Cultural Revolution of the 1960s and 1970s). The party wanted young people to question bourgeois values and exercise their revolutionary fervour. As the revolution and the civil war had already been won, a new target had to be found. Teachers became that target. Many teachers lost their jobs and thousands of students did not attend school, preferring to participate in the great transformation by working in factories or heading to the countryside to teach peasants to read and write.

However, as in many areas of Soviet life, the values that the party began to promote became increasingly conservative. Students with a proletarian consciousness were of little use if they lacked basic skills of literacy and numeracy. More importantly, as the economic transformation took hold, there was a need for engineers, scientists and specialists. As a result, education reverted to a stricter, more conservative model. The curriculum was tightened, teachers were given greater authority, discipline was restored and non-political subjects, such as physics, chemistry and mathematics were given emphasis.

Alamy/ITAR-TASS Photo Agency

SOURCE 7.9 Meeting of members of the Komsomol, the Communist Youth Leagues, in Moscow, 1930

History became part of the party propaganda. Students were now taught about Russia's past strong rulers, such as Peter the Great. An official view of Soviet history was enforced, which played up Stalin's role and his 'close' relationship with Lenin, while removing Trotsky from the story. John Reed's 1919 book, *Ten Days that Shook the World,* fell out of favour because it did not mention Stalin. In 1938, the compulsory text for all students became the *Short History of the USSR* by AV Shestakov.

While not at school learning 'useful' things and the 'correct' view of the past, students were forced into the Komsomol, the Communist Youth Leagues, where they were taught about Marxist thinking, maintained healthy bodies and learnt to love Stalin.

WOMEN

The fate of women in the Soviet Union echoed that of education. During the early days of the revolution, there was a great emphasis on women's rights, equality and feminist thinking. This was in no small part due to the efforts of Alexandra Kollontai and her work with Lenin's wife, Krupskaya, in the Women's Department, the Zhenotdel. Women achieved legal equality, divorce was made easier and abortion was legalised. There was even a brief period where 'free love' was promoted by some women. Kollontai wrote novels at the time that encouraged such thinking. Women even fought in combat units during the civil war. This kind of thinking regarding women was not surprising in a revolutionary time, as the new regime sought to transform the old society. Under Stalin, women were given greater educational opportunities and women working in factories during the economic transformation became a common sight.

However, modern revolutionary Soviet society could not shake off the traditional Russian view of women. Russia's deep male chauvinism and sexist thinking remained strong. In addition, in the 1930s, the Soviet Union was beset with a variety of social ills. Easier divorce had created

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broken homes, Soviet cities were inundated with homeless children (similar to scenes described by Charles Dickens about the British Industrial Revolution) and juvenile crime was rampant. The Soviet birth rate was declining, which was not good for future economic growth. As a result, Stalin enforced a range of conservative measures regarding the lives of women.

A new approach to women's affairs was now implemented, which became known as 'the great retreat'. Most of the liberal reforms of the early Soviet period were reversed as the regime took a 'more serious' attitude towards marriage, family and child rearing. In 1936 a new Family Code was introduced.

+ Abortion was outlawed unless it was essential for the mother's health. A doctor who performed an abortion (and some women who received them) could be imprisoned.
+ Laws were passed against prostitution and homosexuality, and illegitimacy was frowned upon.
+ Child-support benefits were increased. The more children a woman had, the higher the rate of benefits. If a woman had six children, she would receive 2000 roubles a year for five years.
+ Divorce became more difficult to obtain and was made much more expensive.
+ The NKVD became involved in dealing with juvenile crime. Homeless children were forced into orphanages, and parents could be fined if their children had been consistently unruly.

The conservative nature of these regulations echoed those that were being introduced in Nazi Germany.

Getty Images/Art Media/Print Collector

SOURCE 7.10 Propaganda poster from 1920s extolling the new woman working in a factory with men. Female labour was always valued, but women were subjected to more conservative social thinking in the 1930s. The words read, 'By force of arms we have smashed the enemy, with our labour we will get bread. Down to work, Comrades!'

CULTURE AND THE ARTS

One of Russia's great 20th-century writers was the poet and novelist Boris Pasternak. In 1958, Boris Pasternak won the Nobel Prize for Literature for his novel *Doctor Zhivago*. In 1965, the novel was made into a major Hollywood movie starring Omar Sharif and Julie Christie and it won five Academy Awards. However, Pasternak's book was banned inside the Soviet Union because it did not paint a flattering picture of early Soviet history. It had to be smuggled out to the West to be published.

The novel tells the story of the romance between a young doctor, Zhivago, and a woman he falls in love with, Lara. All this is set against the drama of Russia during the war, the 1917 Revolutions, the Russian Civil War and afterwards. In the film, there is an interesting exchange between Zhivago and a Red Partisan leader, Strelnikov. Zhivago also writes love poetry. Strelnikov

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mocks Zhivago's 'bourgeois indulgences', arguing that such 'personal' things are out of place in the new post-revolution world. There is only one thing that is important, and that is the revolution!

Strelnikov's views are reflected in the Soviet attitude to the arts during the 1930s. Stalin demanded that the arts should be mobilised to support the efforts of the nation as it tried to build socialism. This was not the time for personal emotions and individuality. Instead, art, literature, cinema and music should be directed to the goals of the party. This framework of artistic endeavour became known as Socialist Realism. Artistic work was to be optimistic, positive and heroic. It was to be didactic; that is, it should teach people the correct way to think and go about their lives, not simply reflect the artist's individual feelings. Art was not meant to create doubt, but to present socialist heroes, be they Stakhanovite workers, industrious peasants or brave soldiers. Above all was the figure of Stalin. By the end of the 1930s, Socialist Realism was presenting Stalin as a genius, the world's greatest statesman, the people's guide, a man imbued with limitless wisdom who sacrificed all for the nation. The 'personality cult' that developed around the figure of Stalin exceeded anything that had grown up around Lenin in the 1920s.

The First Congress of Soviet Writers met in 1934, and Socialist Realism was formally announced as the Soviet Union's 'official' cultural style. Writers were not allowed to stray from this model; they would be condemned for writing in a 'stream of consciousness' style like James Joyce. Artists were attacked if their work reflected Impressionism or Cubism or other modern styles. In 1935, the Leningrad Union of Artists presented an exhibition that set the tone of Soviet art with its positive and optimistic depictions of Soviet life. One of Russia's great 20th-century composers, Dmitri Shostakovich, often earned Stalin's ire with his work. Shostakovich's opera, *Lady Macbeth of the Mtsensk District*, was banned because Stalin believed it was too dark and realistic. Shostakovich was again in trouble in 1945 when his *Symphony No. 9* failed to reflect the heroics of the Soviet people and the glory of the nation's defeat of Nazi Germany.

Socialist Realism and the Stalin personality cult

During the 1920s, Stalin sought to identify himself closely with Lenin, and promoted the 'cult of Lenin'. The aim was to present Stalin as a true disciple of Lenin and his natural heir. During the 1930s, the link to Lenin was expanded, but gradually the 'success' of the nation was being attributed to Stalin's great leadership alone. He was presented as the nation's 'father', not dissimilar to the tsarist idea. Links to the common people were emphasised; Stalin knew how they felt and understood their problems. He was omnipotent and omniscient – all-powerful and all-knowing. His picture was everywhere. No home failed to have his picture hanging; countless places were named after him, as were prizes and awards. Statues of Stalin were everywhere, often presenting him as tall and strong like Alexander III, though he was much shorter. In this way, Stalin propagandists were emulating the Roman Emperor Augustus, whose statues always depicted him as strong and youthful.

Examine the Socialist Realism posters below and answer the questions that follow.

continued

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continued

Alamy/Heritage Image Partnership Ltd

SOURCE 7.11 The slogan reads: 'Thank you, Comrade Stalin, for our happy childhood'.

Getty Images/Fine Art Images/Heritage Images

SOURCE 7.12 Stalin presented as 'the great helmsman'. The slogan reads, 'The captain of the Soviet nation pilots us from victory to victory!'

Questions

1. How are the children presented in source 7.11? How is Stalin presented?
2. Consider the idea that Stalin is both 'close and distant'.
3. How is Stalin depicted in source 7.12?
4. Explain the analogy of Stalin as the helmsman and the Soviet Union as a ship.

THE NEW ELITES

Another key aspect of Soviet society in the 1930s was the social revolution. This revolution did not have barricades in the street, and though bloodless, it was largely the result of the terror.

With the economic transformation that was taking place, there was a desperate need for educated, trained people who could organise the economy. The trials of the Shakhty engineers and the Industrial Party led many in the Communist Party to question the reliability of bourgeois specialists trained under the old regime. Technical education expanded, and party members and young workers soon took advantage of the opportunities being opened up. As the economy grew, there came into being a new class of managers, many of whom had come from peasant and worker ranks.

An even more significant change occurred within the party. Many experienced party members were lost during the 1930s as a result of purging, membership screening and the terror. Their places had to be filled so that the jobs of party functionaries could be carried out. This provided a clear opportunity for young men with initiative and ability to step forward and rise through the ranks. Future leaders such as Nikita Khrushchev, Leonid Brezhnev and Andrei Gromyko began their careers in this way. The vast majority of this 'new elite' came from peasant or proletarian backgrounds and had been educated in technical fields. An appreciation of bourgeois tastes in literature, art and music was a low priority. As this group became more influential, it is perhaps not surprising that Soviet society and culture became more and more conformist, less willing to experiment and more closely tied to socialist construction.

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One of the paradoxes of the rise of the new elites, though probably not a surprising one, is that out of a revolution that sought equality came the entrenchment of privilege and inequality.

Conclusion

Not only had Stalin transformed the economy of the Soviet Union in the 1930s, but he had also turned the country into the closest thing to totalitarianism the world has ever seen (apart from present-day North Korea, perhaps). The party, ably assisted by the growing power of the secret police, permeated every element of Soviet life. It even became dangerous to think anything that went against the wishes of the party. Stalinist rule was typified by the extensive use of terror. Terror was imposed across society, not only against kulaks, but against the various national groups and social classes within the country. Party members were especially subjected to the terror as Stalin removed thousands of party members from the highest to the lowest levels. By the end of the 1930s, the party had been transformed. Public show trials against former leading Bolsheviks were the most obvious sign of the terror. The secret police grew in size and power, and came to dominate the party, but always remained under the control of Stalin. Soviet society was changing, while the economic transformation and the terror continued apace. More conservative values came to be enforced, especially in the areas of education, women's affairs and the arts. The demands of economic change and the opportunities provided by the purges opened the way for the appearance of a new elite in Soviet society.

Chapter summary

+ A totalitarian regime is one that intrudes on every aspect of a citizen's life. Theories of totalitarianism were developed in the 1950s as attempts were made to equate the Stalinist regime with that of Nazi Germany.
+ Stalinist Russia matched most of the criteria that analysts had developed to explain the nature of a totalitarian regime.
+ Against this totalitarian background, Stalin introduced a constitution in 1936 that suggested that the Soviet system was based on democratic principles.
+ Purging had been a feature of the Soviet system since the early days of Bolshevik rule, but in the 1930s it reached massive proportions and had the effect of transforming the party.
+ There had been some show trials in Lenin's era. However, after the Shakhty engineers' trial in 1928, they became a key feature of the Soviet system in the 1930s. The great public show

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trials of 1936–38 saw nearly all the leading 'old' Bolsheviks condemned and sentenced to death.

+ In 1937, even the leading figures of the Soviet military were purged.
+ The terror affected all areas of the Soviet Union, both geographically and socially, and gained momentum after the assassination of Sergei Kirov in 1934.
+ Most historians now believe that Kirov was murdered on the orders of Stalin. This is certainly the view Khrushchev argued before the 20th Party Congress in 1956.
+ Various theories have been presented to explain the exercise of the terror, ranging from Stalin's personal responsibility to systemic faults within the regime to the idea that the process was beyond Stalin's control.
+ The principal instrument of the terror was the secret police, which evolved into a mammoth, all-powerful organisation under Stalin's control. However, leadership of the NKVD did not guarantee safety from the terror, as Yagoda and Yezhov discovered.
+ Education during the 1920s had suffered as students were encouraged to discover their revolutionary consciousness. However, economic need and social issues combined to restore more conservative values in the education system.
+ Practical and scientific subjects were promoted in schools and universities at the expense of the humanities. History became a vehicle for party propaganda.
+ The wide-ranging rights and freedoms that women had gained in the 1920s were gradually whittled away as a conservative agenda was imposed on them.
+ The arts and culture were placed in a party straitjacket. Individual feelings and emotions, and experimentation in all artistic fields were frowned upon. The purpose of the arts was to promote the goals of the party.
+ Socialist Realism became the official style of the arts, which the Soviet Union's artists, writers and composers were expected to emulate. Socialist Realism was intended to be optimistic and positive, and to extol the virtues of the regime.
+ A new elite arose in the Soviet Union by the end of the 1930s. This group benefited from the economic transformation that created a need for technical expertise and assisted in the expansion of education, which provided the means for that expertise to be developed.
+ The massive purging of the 1930s created opportunities for younger party members with ability and unquestioning loyalty to Stalin.

Weblinks

Weblinks relevant to this chapter can be found at http://nmh.nelsonnet.com.au/russia

Further reading

Hélène Carrère D'Encausse, *Stalin: Order through Terror*, Longman, Harlow, 1981.

Robert Conquest, *The Great Terror: A Reassessment*, Oxford University Press, Oxford, 2007.

Walter Duranty, *The Kremlin and the People*, Hamish Hamilton, London, 1942 (a controversial book that argues the case for Stalin and the 'justice' of the purges).

Simon S Montefiore, *Stalin: The Court of the Red Tsar*, Phoenix, London, 2004.

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Chapter review activities

Totalitarianism

1 List the characteristics that would indicate a system of government was totalitarian in nature.
2 Why were historians researching the nature of totalitarianism in the 1950s?
3 Imagine you are a Soviet citizen from the 1930s speaking confidentially to a visitor. List the ways in which the Soviet system was intruding directly into your life.
4 How democratic was the Soviet constitution of 1936? Give reasons for your answer.

The purges

5 Was purging something that appeared only in the 1930s under Stalin?
6 What were the causes and consequences of the early purges?
7 What was behind the Shakhty trial and the Industrial Party trial?
8 Why was Stalin so concerned about Sergei Kirov?
9 What happened to Kirov? What theories have been presented to explain the assassination of Kirov?
10 Why did the murder become so significant?

The show trials

11 Who were the main victims of the show trials?
12 Of what crime were the main subjects of the show trials accused? What was the likelihood the accusations against them were true?
13 Imagine you are one of the accused who has been tried, condemned and sentenced to execution. You know that you are innocent. Explain to an outsider why you and many of your innocent co-accused willingly confessed to what you had not done.
14 To what extent do you think Stalin was personally responsible for the terror?
15 'The terror lacked rationality and logic.' Provide arguments to support this statement.

The evolution of the secret police

16 Place these organisations in the correct chronological order: NKVD, Cheka, OGPU, GPU.
17 Place these secret police chiefs in the correct chronological order: Beria, Dzerzhinsky, Yagoda, Yezhov, Menzhinsky.
18 What was the essential difference between the Cheka and the NKVD?

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Soviet society under Stalin

19 In what ways did education in the Soviet Union change from the 1920s to the 1930s?
20 Why were the humanities frowned upon in the Soviet system?
21 What became the purpose of the study of history under Stalin?
22 Create a dialogue between two Soviet women from the late 1930s. They are discussing women's affairs: one of the women is a great supporter of Stalin, one is not.
23 Explain the term Socialist Realism.

Rewriting history

24 Stalin was accused of using history for propaganda (see page 210). Read the following extract and answer the question that follows.

> Ivan the Terrible, the Russian tsar, should really be considered Ivan the Not so Bad, according to a wildly popular historical exhibition held near the Kremlin.
>
> The exhibition accused the Western news media of miscasting Tsar Ivan IV as 'the Terrible'. A display of German etchings that showed the 16th-century tsar's troops committing atrocities was offered as proof that labelling him a murderous tyrant was a foreign slur. He was also the first Russian leader hit by Western sanctions, the display asserted, with a supposed ban on metal sales to Russia prompting the domestic production of canons.
>
> The exhibition was one of several recent blockbusters that historians and others say distort Russia's past to create false parallels that justify current Kremlin policy.
>
> 'History is being used as an ideological tool', said historian Nikita Sokolov. The message of some of the exhibitions, he said, was that 'Russia is a besieged fortress that needs a strong commander'. But museum officials denied they were following Kremlin orders. Rather, they said, the 1991 collapse of the Soviet Union had unleashed negative historical research, which needed rebalancing.
>
> 'Not once has any government representative told me how history should be written', said Yuri Nikiforov, an historian on the Second World War. 'It's just not true that Russian historians dance to the president's [Vladimir Putin] tune.'
>
> Neil MacFarquar, 'Tsar's history makeover: "Ivan the Not So Bad"', *Sydney Morning Herald*, Thursday, 2 April 2015. MacFarquar was reporting from Moscow.

Do you see any similarity in the way that Russia's current leader, President Putin, might be using history in the same way that Stalin did in the 1930s? Give reasons for your answer.

Research

25 Recent historians have challenged the totalitarian view of Stalin's Russia. Research the ideas of Sheila Fitzpatrick (*Everyday Stalinism: Ordinary Life in Extraordinary Times, Soviet Russia in the 1930s,* OUP, Oxford, 2000) and Jochen Hellbeck (*Revolution on my Mind*, Harvard University Press, Cambridge, 2006).

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CHAPTER EIGHT

The Great Patriotic War: 1941–1945

As the threat of Nazi aggression grew ever greater throughout the 1930s, the Soviet Union sought to work with the Western powers and its immediate neighbours to establish a united front against Germany.

Germany invaded Poland in September 1939; Soviet troops invaded soon after. However, Hitler's long-term desire to achieve *lebensraum* (a German empire in the east) remained, and in June 1941, Germany invaded the Soviet Union in Operation Barbarossa. At first the Germans achieved a series of massive victories, but they failed in their bid to capture Moscow. In 1942, the Germans pushed deeper into the Soviet Union but were finally stopped at the Battle of Stalingrad. Soviet forces gradually pushed the Germans back. The inconclusive Battle of Kursk in 1943 saw the end of German initiative in the east, and in January 1944, the lengthy Nazi siege of Leningrad came to an end. The Red Army advanced westwards, gaining control of Eastern Europe and finally capturing Berlin in May 1945. The superhuman efforts of Soviet troops in the field were matched by the unstinting efforts of the Home Front to keep Soviet forces supplied, always under the watchful eye of the NKVD. Soviet propaganda played up the patriotic nature of the conflict and even the churches were allowed to reopen. When victory was achieved in 1945, Stalin had achieved genuine popularity and adulation in his country.

INQUIRY QUESTION

+ How was the Soviet Union able to emerge victorious from the 'Great Patriotic War' despite the catastrophic setbacks in the beginning of the conflict?

‹ 1939 Soviet propaganda poster by Viktor Borisovich Koretsky (1909–1998) reads, 'Long live the mighty worker-peasant war-navy fleet of the USSR!'

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Origins of the Great Patriotic War

Comintern
International communist organisation established by the Bolsheviks in 1919 to assist with spreading revolution beyond Russia and the Soviet Union

Popular Front governments
Coalition governments, which included communist parties, established to provide a united front against the threat of fascism

appeasement
Anglo-French policy of making concessions to Nazi Germany in the belief that its demands were reasonable, and that by doing so war could be avoided

In the 1920s, Soviet foreign policy had been ambiguous. As a revolutionary state that believed in the eventual triumph of socialism, it used the **Comintern** to assist communist parties across the world to destroy capitalism. However, when it became clear that the Soviet Union was to be the only socialist state, it sought to develop conventional state-to-state relations. The Depression seemed to herald the end, or at the least a crisis, of Western capitalism, and Stalin ordered European communist parties not to work with other parties in resisting fascist groups, which were gaining strength. This had disastrous results in Germany where Hitler was brought into power in January 1933. Once Nazi intentions to expand became clear, Stalin sought cooperation with the West against Germany. He ordered communist parties to join **Popular Front governments**, signed alliances with France and Czechoslovakia, and joined the League of Nations. However, Western distrust of communism, and Britain's preference for the policy of **appeasement**, left the Soviet Union isolated. As a result, the Soviet Union and Germany saw it was in their interests to drop their mutual antagonism, if only temporarily, and sign a Non-Aggression Pact in August 1939. Within a week, Germany attacked Poland and the Second World War had begun. Soviet troops occupied eastern Poland. Under the secret terms of the Nazi–Soviet Pact, the Soviet Union then occupied the Baltic States and Bessarabia. Hitler's intention to attack the Soviet Union and create a new German empire in the east never wavered. Believing he had little to fear from the Western Allies, he launched Operation Barbarossa in June 1941. Three million Axis troops marched into the Soviet Union along a 1500-mile front. What came to be called the Great Patriotic War had begun.

SOVIET FOREIGN POLICY TO 1939

Stalin and his Foreign Minister, Litvinov, were well aware of the dangers presented by the growth of German Nazism in the west and Japanese militarism in the east. Hitler had made no secret of his intention to create a new German empire in Russia, and Japan's army leaders were eyeing eastern Siberia, having already taken control of Manchuria in 1931. Hitler's Non-Aggression Pact with Poland in 1934 led Stalin to fear the possibility of joint German-Polish action. The young Bolshevik regime had already fought a war with Poland in 1920–21.

TABLE 8.1 Major developments in Soviet foreign policy, 1932–41

Date	Action	Significance
1932	Non-Aggression Pacts were signed with Poland, Finland and Estonia. A Friendship Treaty was signed with Italy.	Stalin was indicating he had no aggressive intentions towards his neighbours.
1933	Diplomatic relations were established with the United States.	The US was the last major Western power to recognise the Soviet Union.
1934	The Soviet Union joined the League of Nations.	Stalin was making clear his desire to be part of the League's Collective Security machinery.
May 1935	The Soviet Union signed an alliance with France. Czechoslovakia joined the Franco-Soviet arrangement.	The diplomatic make-up of Europe from before the First World War seemed to be re-emerging.

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Date	Action	Significance
July 1935	The 7th Comintern Congress announced that communists were to cooperate with all anti-fascist groups in Popular Front governments. One such government was formed in France in 1936.	Traditional Russian foreign policy had won out against revolutionary policy. It was the security of Russia that now mattered, not the spread of socialism.
1936	Spanish Civil War	Stalin sent 'volunteers', arms and money to help the anti-fascist Republican forces.
1936–38	The fascist powers made several significant gains. Hitler marched into the Rhineland (1936), annexed Austria (1938) and was given the Czech Sudetenland region at the Munich Conference by Britain and France. Mussolini had been allowed to invade and take over Abyssinia (1935). Britain and France pursued non-intervention in the Spanish Civil War.	To Stalin, Britain and France's appeasement of Hitler seemed to be a policy of pushing Germany eastwards to confront the Soviet Union. The failure of collective security also made Stalin feel very nervous about his country's security.
1939	In March, Hitler invaded the rest of Czechoslovakia. Britain gave Poland a guarantee to defend it if it was attacked by Germany. Throughout the year, Stalin sought to establish defence links with the West to no avail. Therefore, the non-aggression pact with Nazi Germany was signed.	Britain's reluctance to enter firm arrangements with the Soviet Union convinced Stalin that the West was still bent on pushing the Nazis to confront the communists. Stalin responded to the West's reluctance by entering into a non-aggression pact with Nazi Germany to reduce the likelihood of conflict with Germany in the short term.
1932–41	The Soviet Union established links with the Nationalist regime in China. Following Japan's attack on China in 1937, Soviet advisers were sent to help the Nationalist Chinese forces that were now fighting alongside Chinese communist forces. Soviet–Japanese clashes along their common border between 1937 and 1939 resulted in major Japanese setbacks. As a result, Japanese expansion was now directed southwards. The Soviet–Japanese Neutrality Pact was signed in April 1941.	Stalin was willing to help the Chinese Nationalists even though they had massacred Chinese communists in 1927. Russian security again prevailed over international communism. The Soviet–Japanese Neutrality Pact ended clashes with Japan.

THE NAZI–SOVIET PACT

The Nazi–Soviet Pact of August 1939 is one of the most amazing acts of diplomacy in modern European history. From the time he wrote his political memoir *Mein Kampf* while in prison during 1924, Hitler made it clear that he intended to achieve ***lebensraum*** in the east at the expense of the Soviet Union. He despised Bolshevism, arguing that it was a product of an international Jewish conspiracy. In addition, Hitler looked down on the Slavic peoples of the Soviet Union, as ***untermenschen*** – subhumans. Their fate in the new German empire was to be the slave labour force of Hitler's master race. Stalin despised all that Nazism stood for; it was the ideological antithesis of

lebensraum
German, living space: the term used by the Nazis to describe the areas in eastern Europe and the Soviet Union where the new German Empire was to be created

untermenschen
German term for subhumans, used by the Nazis to describe what they saw as inferior races, such as Slavs

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socialism. More importantly, with the Soviet Union weakened by economic upheaval and the purges, he feared the German military machine to the west. Stalin had tried, unsuccessfully, to establish a united front with the West against the Nazi menace, but his overtures to Britain and France had largely been rejected. Stalin had good reasons to be cautious of the Western powers – the British and French prime ministers, for example, had excluded the Soviet Union from discussions about the fate of the Sudetenland at the Munich Conference in 1938. It is also worth noting that British and French envoys to the Soviet Union in 1939 to discuss cooperation appeared half-hearted and unable to commit to a program of containing German expansion. The cartoon shown in the source study illustrates the feelings of Hitler and Stalin about each other.

So if the antipathy between the Soviet Union and Germany was so deep-rooted, why did they agree to sign a 10-year Non-Aggression Pact on 23 August 1939?

For Hitler there was one overriding aim: he wanted to ensure that he would not have to face a two-front war, which had been so disastrous for Germany in the First World War. In March, Britain had given a guarantee that it would defend Poland in the event of a German attack. Thus, Hitler had to consider the possibility of Polish resistance, combined with war with the West, and the possibility of Soviet action if he moved east. By signing the pact, Hitler achieved several things. There would be no two-front war; indeed the Soviet Union would soon join Germany in its dismemberment of Poland. Poland could be overcome in just a few weeks using blitzkrieg tactics. Once this had been achieved, Hitler could deal with the West. He had not changed his aim of attacking the Soviet Union; it just suited him to postpone such an attack until later.

Alamy/Heritage Image Partnership Ltd

SOURCE 8.1 The Soviet Foreign Minister, Vyacheslav Molotov, signs the Non-Aggression Pact, 23 August 1939. German Foreign Minister Joachim von Ribbentrop (third from left) and Soviet leader Josef Stalin (second from right) look on, while standing under a portrait of Lenin.

Stalin's motives for the pact were equally opportunistic. Stalin believed he could not trust the West. A deal with Hitler over Poland, he believed, would ensure that Germany moved west and that a long conflict would ensue, which would weaken both Germany and the Western powers. A deal with Hitler would give him control of eastern Poland (and other territories) and more importantly, the agreement gave the Soviet Union time to consolidate and strengthen its military for the struggle with Germany that would surely come eventually. The pact's secret articles also included an agreement between the parties to an increased Soviet role in the Baltic States and eastern Europe.

Hitler's Foreign Minister, Joachim von Ribbentrop flew into Moscow on 23 August and, with the Soviet Foreign Minister, Vyacheslav Molotov, signed the Non-Aggression Pact. The world was stunned!

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The Nazi–Soviet Pact

SOURCE 8.2 David Low's cartoon in the *London Evening Standard*, 20 September 1939

Questions

1. How does the cartoonist present Hitler and Stalin? What indicates that they have become friendly? What indicates that this friendship is not deep-seated?
2. What does the body between them represent? Explain why the cartoonist has added this to the cartoon.
3. There are storm clouds in the background. What might they indicate?
4. This is a British cartoon. What is this British perspective trying to say about the Nazi–Soviet Pact?

The Nazi–Soviet Pact, 23 August 1939

The Nazi–Soviet Pact was a brief document comprising two sections: a public section and 'secret protocol'.

> The Government of the German Reich and the Government of the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics desirous of strengthening the cause of peace between Germany and the U.S.S.R., and proceeding from the fundamental provisions of the Neutrality Agreement concluded in April, 1926 between Germany and the U.S.S.R., have reached the following Agreement:
>
> **Article I.** Both High Contracting Parties obligate themselves to desist from any act of violence, any aggressive action, and any attack on each other, either individually or jointly with other Powers.
>
> **Article II.** Should one of the High Contracting Parties become the object of belligerent action by a third Power, the other High Contracting Party shall in no manner lend its support to this third Power.
>
> **Article III.** The Governments of the two High Contracting Parties shall in the future maintain continual contact with one another for the purpose of consultation in order to exchange information on problems affecting their common interests.
>
> **Article IV.** Should disputes or conflicts arise between the High Contracting Parties, neither of the two High Contracting Parties shall participate in any grouping of Powers whatsoever that is directly or indirectly aimed at the other party.
>
> **Article V.** Should disputes or conflicts arise between the High Contracting Parties over problems of one kind or another, both parties shall settle these disputes or conflicts exclusively through friendly exchange of opinion or, if necessary, through the establishment of arbitration commissions.
>
> **Article VI.** The present Treaty is concluded for a period of ten years, with the proviso that, in so far as one of the High Contracting Parties does not advance it one year prior to the expiration of this period, the validity of this Treaty shall automatically be extended for another five years.

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continued

Article VII. The present treaty shall be ratified within the shortest possible time. The ratifications shall be exchanged in Berlin. The Agreement shall enter into force as soon as it is signed.

Secret Additional Protocol

Article I. In the event of a territorial and political rearrangement in the areas belonging to the Baltic States (Finland, Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania), the northern boundary of Lithuania shall represent the boundary of the spheres of influence of Germany and U.S.S.R. In this connection the interest of Lithuania in the Vilna area is recognized by each party.

Article II. In the event of a territorial and political rearrangement of the areas belonging to the Polish state, the spheres of influence of Germany and the U.S.S.R. shall be bounded approximately by the line of the rivers Narev, Vistula and San.

The question of whether the interests of both parties make desirable the maintenance of an independent Polish States and how such a state should be bounded can only be definitely determined in the course of further political developments.

In any event both Governments will resolve this question by means of a friendly agreement.

Article III. With regard to Southeastern Europe attention is called by the Soviet side to its interest in Bessarabia. The German side declares its complete political disinterestedness in these areas.

Article IV. This protocol shall be treated by both parties as strictly secret.

Moscow, August 23, 1939.

For the Government of the German Reich v. Ribbentrop

Plenipotentiary of the Government of the U.S.S.R. V. Molotov

Cited at www.historyplace.com/worldwar2/timeline/pact.htm.

Questions

1. In Article II, what is each power offering the other in the event either power becomes involved in a war?
2. What is the significance of Article VII? What does it suggest about Hitler's intentions towards Poland?
3. In Article I of the Secret Protocol, what is Stalin being offered by Hitler in regards to the Baltic States?
4. What does Article II of the Secret Protocol suggest is going to happen to Poland?
5. What does Article III indicate is likely to happen to Bessarabia?
6. Why do you think Hitler and Stalin wanted the Secret Protocol kept secret?

BARBAROSSA

By the summer of 1941, Hitler was ready to attack the Soviet Union. Since the Nazi–Soviet Pact of August 1939, relations between Germany and the Soviet Union had proceeded well, considering the fundamental distrust and suspicion that existed. Stalin continued to send war supplies westwards to Germany, while Hitler acceded to Stalin's takeover of the Baltic States and Bessarabia, provision for which was made in the Non-Aggression Pact.

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Alamy/DIZ Muenchen GmbH, Sueddeutsche Zeitung Photo

SOURCE 8.3 German forces invading Poland in September 1939. Hitler's prime motivation in signing the Non-Aggression Pact was to facilitate the rapid defeat of Poland.

Alamy/INTERFOTO

SOURCE 8.4 Captured Soviet soldiers on the Eastern Front, 1941

Germany defeated Poland in about five weeks; Soviet troops had invaded the country on 17 September and taken possession of the eastern half. Between April and June 1940, Germany took over Denmark, Norway, the Netherlands, Belgium and Luxemburg; France surrendered in June. Britain survived the Battle of Britain, but Hitler believed he had little to fear in the west, so turned his attention to the Soviet Union. By March 1941, Hungary and Bulgaria had joined the **Axis**, and Romania was also pressured to join. By late May, Germany had taken over Yugoslavia and Greece, and driven Allied troops out of Crete. Nazi actions in the Balkans arguably delayed the invasion of Russia, which would have great significance later in the year.

Alamy/INTERFOTO

SOURCE 8.5 German troops move into the Soviet Union during operation Barbarossa, 1941

The German invasion of the Soviet Union – Operation Barbarossa – began on 22 June 1941. It was the biggest invasion in history involving more than three million men, 600 000 trucks, 3350 tanks, 2000 aircraft and, perhaps surprisingly, hundreds of thousands of horses. Three German army groups invaded, heading for Leningrad, Moscow and Kiev. Soviet forces were totally unprepared for the attack. Winston Churchill, the British prime minister, had warned Stalin what was coming, but Stalin had believed the Western powers were merely trying to trick him into fighting. When the German troops attacked, many Soviet troops were on leave, playing in sporting events; as the German army marched into some towns, trams were still running and people waved at the troops believing them to be Red Army contingents. The first two months of the campaign led to Soviet losses on an incredible scale.

Axis
The alliance of Nazi Germany, Fascist Italy and Imperial Japan and their other allies

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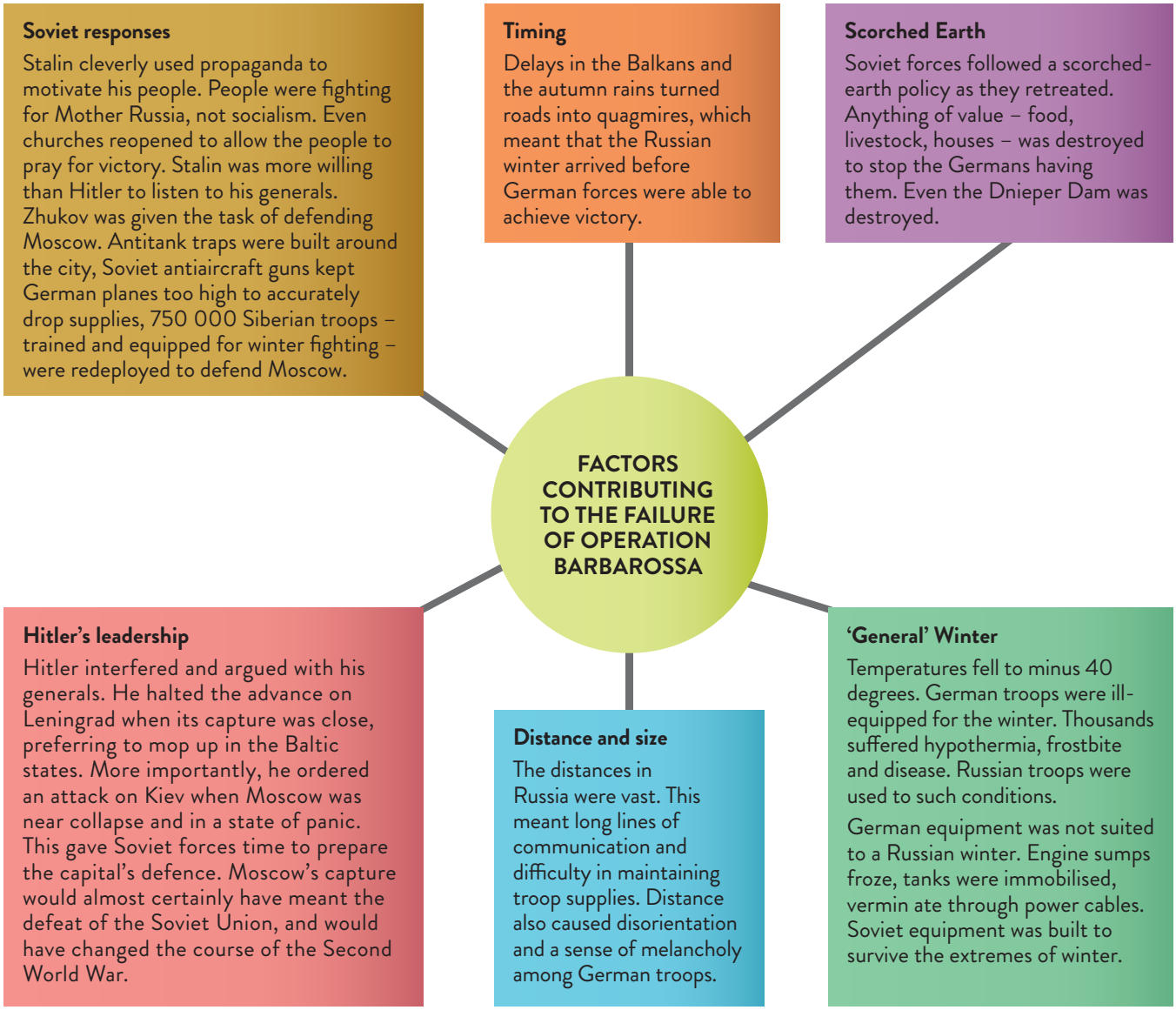
+ On the first day, the Soviets lost 1200 aircraft.
+ By late July, German forces had captured an area twice the size of Germany.
+ By September, Soviet forces had lost three million men, most of its aircraft and thousands of tanks.
+ By November, German forces had captured Minsk, Smolensk, Kiev, Kharkov, Odessa and Rostov. Leningrad was besieged and Moscow was within striking distance. For a brief time in October, Moscow was a city in a state of panic; even Stalin left briefly.

However, the German advance stalled and in December, Soviet forces were able to launch a massive counter-attack that pushed the Axis forces back, up to 300 kilometres in some places. For now, the Soviet Union had survived. Source 8.6 summarises the reasons for Germany's failure to achieve victory in 1941.



SOURCE 8.6 Reasons for the failure of Operation Barbarossa in 1941

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The Great Patriotic War

General Zhukov's counter-offensive in December 1941 saved the Soviet Union from defeat. However, the war was far from over and the Soviet Union had only been given a reprieve. Reinvigorated, German forces launched major offensives in 1942 and continued to capture more prisoners, more Soviet equipment and town after town. By the summer of 1942, Hitler had become fixated on Stalingrad, which was situated on the River Volga and provided a gateway to the oil fields of the Caucasus. The massive, bloody, four-month Battle of Stalingrad saw the Germans suffer their biggest defeat of the war up to that point. In July 1943, Hitler committed his forces to a major battle at Kursk. This massive tank battle was inconclusive and led to great losses on both sides. However, it was the Red Army that was now able to make good its losses and take the initiative. By the end of 1943, Kharkov, Smolensk and Kiev had been retaken. The war now became a matter of the Russian 'sledgehammer', gradually pushing German forces back. In June 1944, General Zhukov launched Operation Bagration, which destroyed the main German army group. By the end of the year there were no German troops inside Russia, and Hitler's occupation of Eastern Europe was greatly diminished. As 1945 progressed, the Russian advance became irresistible, and by April the Russians were in Berlin. The German surrender came on 8 May 1945.

SOURCE 8.7 Red Army advances after the Battle of Stalingrad

THE COURSE OF THE WAR: 1942–45

1942

The siege of Leningrad continued but the Germans were unable to capture the city. German hopes of taking Moscow were fading

29 MAY

A German victory near Kharkov resulted in the taking of 214 000 Soviet prisoners, 1200 tanks and 2000 guns

Further victories followed at Sevastopol and Rostov-on-Don

Hitler decided on a major thrust south towards the oil fields: Operation Blue. The aim came to be the capture of Stalingrad. The city had little strategic value and it would appear that Hitler had become mesmerised by the city's name

AUGUST

The Battle of Stalingrad commenced. The fighting in Stalingrad became a matter of street by street, house by house. As the winter deepened, the German forces found themselves in trouble. The *Luftwaffe* could not get supplies in, expected reinforcements had become bogged down in the Caucasus, and Paulus' north-eastern flank – comprising Italian, Hungarian and Romanian troops – was weak and exposed

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	19 NOVEMBER	Zhukov launched Operation Uranus, which successfully encircled Axis forces besieging Stalingrad
1943	**JANUARY**	The 6th Army was starving, frozen, disease-ridden and had almost run out of ammunition
	31 JANUARY	At Stalingrad, Germany and its allies surrendered after the loss of almost 300 000 men: 200 000 dead, 91 000 captured. This was the turning-point of the war on the Eastern Front
		During the early months of 1943, neither side made any progress. Towns including Belgorod and Kharkov were captured and then lost
	JULY	Hitler launched Operation Citadel, an attempt to encircle Soviet forces that had become exposed near the Soviet front line at Kursk. The battle lasted seven days and was the greatest tank battle in history to that date. While the outcome of the battle was indecisive, the attempted German advance was blocked
	5 AUGUST	Belgorod was retaken by Soviet forces
	23 AUGUST	Kharkov was retaken by Soviet forces
	SEPTEMBER	Smolensk was retaken by Soviet forces
	6 NOVEMBER	Kiev was captured by Soviet forces
1944		The siege of Leningrad was broken in late January and by the end of February, German forces in the north had been routed
	JUNE	The Crimean peninsula had been captured and Red Army forces were poised to move into Romania. Finland made peace on 2 September
		With more than a million men, 6000 tanks and 2000 aircraft, Zhukov launched Operation Bagration against Germany's Army Group Centre. German losses were as great as they were in the Battle of Stalingrad
	AUGUST–OCTOBER	Stalin allowed German forces to destroy the Polish nationalists rising against German forces in Warsaw. Stalin's intention was to allow the Polish resistance to be destroyed so that he could then impose a pro-Soviet Polish regime on the country
	OCTOBER	Soviet forces were in control of Warsaw
	DECEMBER	Soviet forces had liberated the Baltic States, were inside Poland, had taken over Romania and Bulgaria, and had entered Slovakia
1945	**12 JANUARY**	A massive Russian offensive was launched along a 1200-kilometre front from the Baltic Sea in the north to the Carpathian Mountains in the south
	APRIL	Hungary had fallen and the Austrian capital, Vienna, fell to Red Army forces
		The climax to the war came with the Soviet attack on Berlin. About 2.5 million men, 6000 tanks, 7500 aircraft and 42 000 artillery guns were hurled against the German capital
	25 APRIL	Berlin was encircled. Young boys and old men provided much of the German resistance
	8 MAY	The Germans surrendered

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The siege of Leningrad

The 'Seventh Symphony' of the Russian composer Dmitri Shostakovich is known as the 'Leningrad Symphony'. Shostakovich wrote the first three movements when he was in Leningrad in 1941 and completed it after he and his family were evacuated to Moscow. The symphony received its premiere in March 1942. Shostakovich stated at the time:
'I dedicate my "Seventh Symphony" to our struggle against fascism, to our coming victory over the enemy, to my native city, Leningrad'. The symphony became a symbol of the heroism and endurance of the people of Leningrad.

Alamy/RIA Novosti

SOURCE 8.8 Leningrad during the siege. More than a million people died during the siege, but the people refused to surrender.

The siege of Leningrad is one of the epic stories of the Second World War. German forces surrounded Leningrad from 8 September 1941 to 27 January 1944 – almost 900 days. Soviet losses in Leningrad during the siege exceeded one million; total British civilian losses for the whole of the Second World War were 60 000! Food soon ran out, there was next to no power, no heating, and the winter of 1941–42 was particularly severe. By January 1942, people were restricted to 125 grams of bread a day, and that was often mixed with sawdust and various other 'ingredients'. Many resorted to eating birds, rats and pets. There were even reports of cannibalism.

However, the people did not give up. Factories still operated; the Germans were resisted. Many civilians, especially children, were slowly evacuated across frozen Lake Lagoda, 'the road of life', while soldiers moved in to boost the city's defences. The city's art treasures were hidden in basements. The siege was finally lifted on 27 January 1944.

The war on the Home Front

No country suffered as much as the Soviet Union during the Second World War. War is never gentle, and death and destruction were absolutes experienced by all nations between 1939 and 1945. However, the fighting on the Eastern Front was carried out on a scale and with a savagery that is hard to comprehend. For the Nazis, the invasion of the Soviet Union was quite different from their campaigns in the west. In the west, the Germans were often fighting those they considered fellow Aryans. This was not the case in Russia. The Soviet Union was populated by various Slavic groups and the Slavs were believed by the Nazis to be racially inferior – *untermenschen* or subhumans. In Nazi eyes, what happened to them was immaterial except as it affected the fortunes of the Reich. The best that the Soviet Union's Slav peoples could hope for was a life of slavery at the hands of their German masters. As for the Jews of the Soviet Union, there was no future at all.

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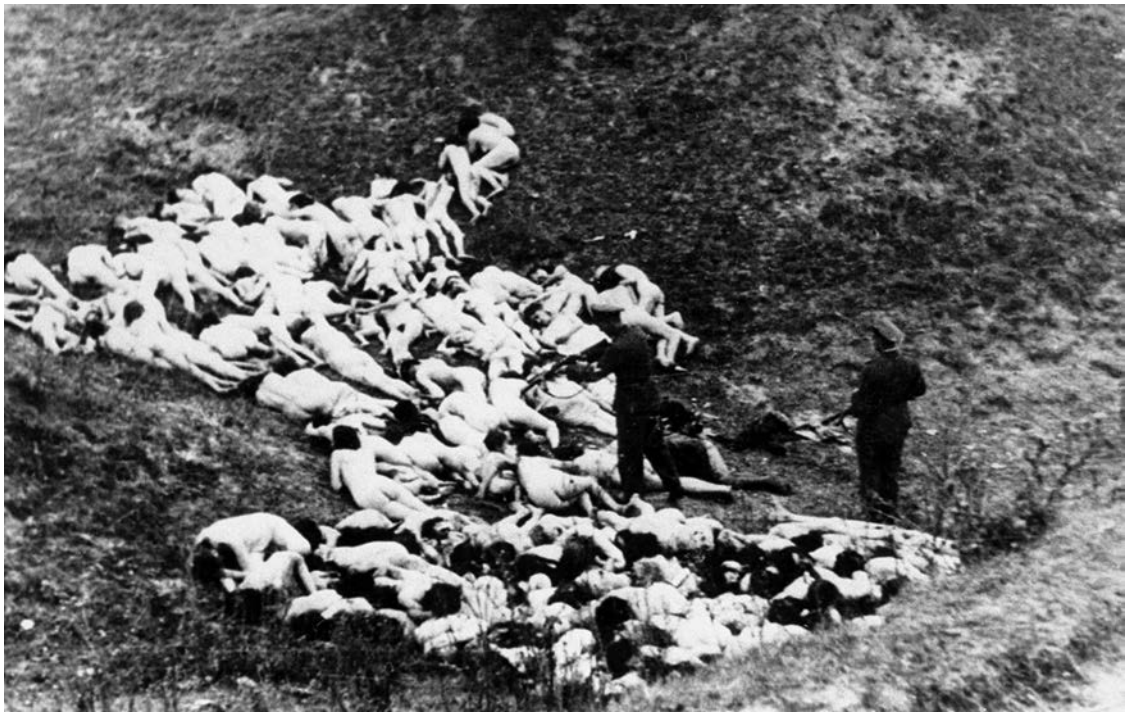
In some areas, such as the Ukraine, the invading German troops were welcomed. This was no doubt a response shaped by Stalinist repression and the famines of the early 1930s. However, the Germans failed to capitalise on this enthusiasm. From the beginning, the Nazis showed no mercy to the civilian populations. The slightest opposition or hesitancy on the part of civilians was met with merciless retribution. Partisan actions against German troops were met with brutal responses as whole villages were wiped out. The Soviet population became an immediate source of slave labour. Organised by Fritz Sauckel, slave labour contingents were recruited. It was not an unusual sight to see elite Nazi SS troops descend on an area, round up the people and transport them to labour camps. Captured Soviet prisoners of war were treated as the subhumans the Nazis believed they were.

For the Jewish population of the Soviet Union, the experience of the Second World War was even more brutal. From the commencement of Operation Barbarossa in 1941, German forces, initially the SS Einsatzgruppen, carried out mass killings of Jews. Later many more would die in the Nazi death camps or be used as slave labour. Historians generally agree that more than one million Soviet Jews were killed during the Holocaust.

Added to the suffering inflicted on the Soviet people by the Nazis was the suffering that they inflicted upon themselves. One hundred and thirty years earlier, the invading armies of Napoleon had been thwarted by the Russians' scorched-earth policy. As the enemy advanced, the Russians destroyed everything as they retreated. This was the same strategy that they followed in the Great Patriotic War. Stalin ordered that nothing be available to the Germans as they moved deeper into the Russian heartland. The destruction, particularly in the western regions of Ukraine and Belarus, that the Soviet Union experienced during the war exceeded anything experienced in most European nations, except perhaps Poland.



Pictures from History

SOURCE 8.9 On 29–30 September 1941, at Baba Yar in the Ukrainian city of Kiev, German forces and local collaborators killed approximately 33 000 Jews in a single mass killing. This was one of the largest mass killings undertaken in this public phase of the Holocaust.

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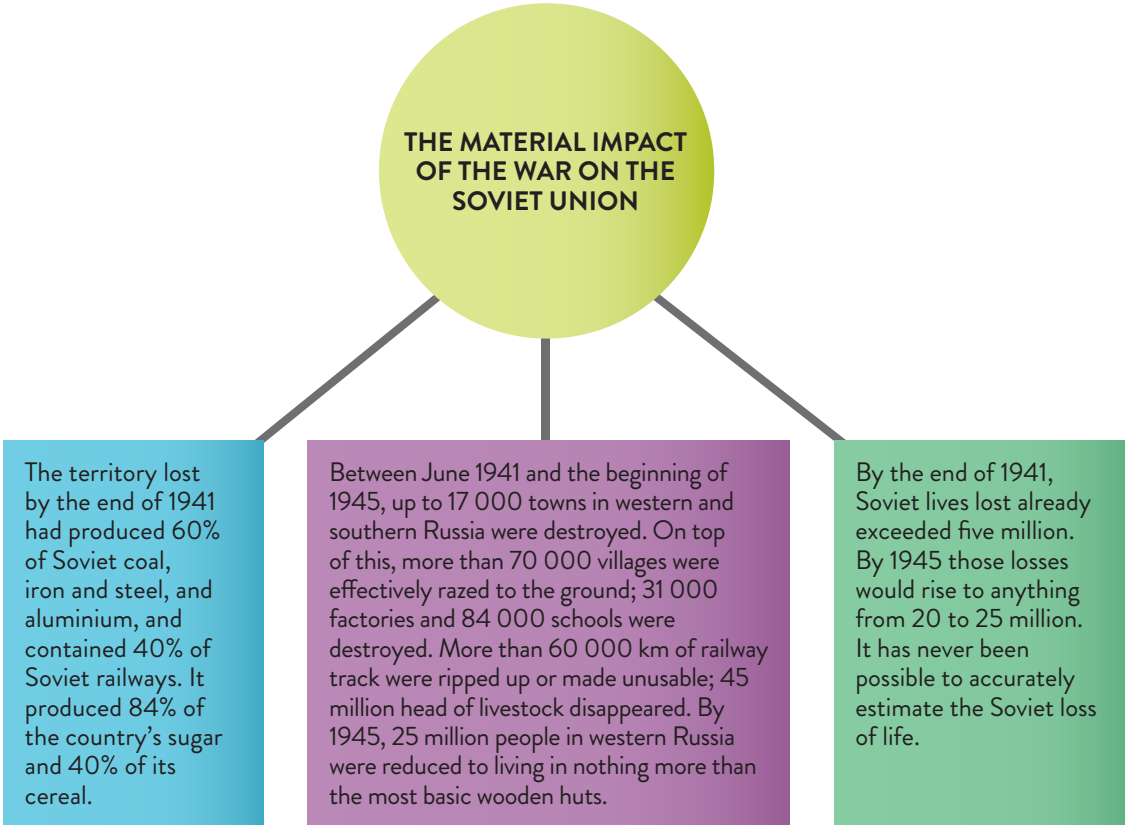

SOURCE 8.10 Summary of the material impact of the war on the Soviet Union

ORGANISING THE DEFENCE

On 30 June, the State Defence Committee (GKO) was set up to organise the running of the war. The GKO comprised five men: Stalin, Molotov (foreign policy), Beria (secret police), Voroshilov (army) and Malenkov (party). From the start, it was clear that civilian control overruled military control. Military command was concentrated in the Stavka or Supreme Command. Stalin was head of both the GKO and the Stavka. It is alleged that Stalin suffered a complete collapse on hearing of the German invasion and could not be reached for almost a fortnight. At this time, it would have been Foreign Minister Molotov who was effectively running the country. However, Stalin rallied, and eventually spoke to the people on 3 July.

The Soviet economy was hit badly following the Nazi invasion. As source 8.10 illustrates, economic and human losses were enormous. Soviet factories and mines were in range of *Luftwaffe* bombers. Stalin's solution was to order a massive migration of people, machines and even factories eastwards, beyond the Ural Mountains and out of range of German aircraft. More than 1500 industrial enterprises were moved to the east of the Urals along with millions of

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Alamy/Heritage Image Partnership Ltd/Fine Art Images

SOURCE 8.11 Women soldiers of the Red Army, photographed in 1941. More than 800 000 women served in the Red Army during the Great Patriotic War. Unlike women in other combatant nations, Soviet women served in combat roles, such as snipers and fighter pilots.

Lend-Lease
Aid given by the US to its allies, which was not to be paid for until after the conclusion of the war

Alamy/Pictorial Press Ltd

SOURCE 8.12 Soviet T34 tanks entering the outskirts of Vienna in April 1945

workers. In some cases, entire factories were stripped down, moved and rebuilt. It was an astonishing human effort. Conditions for workers were often horrendous. Yet, the output that the Soviet Union managed to achieve against all the odds was nothing short of an economic miracle. During the war, the Soviet economy managed to produce more than 135 000 aircraft, 500 000 guns and 100 000 tanks. There were 3500 new industrial enterprises built. Production was carefully rationalised to simplify and maximise output. Tank models became limited to the T34 and the KV. There were only five types of aircraft produced: three fighters, one bomber and one fighter-bomber. Soviet industry was greatly assisted by aid from the United States under the **Lend-Lease** scheme.

The Soviet people's morale remained amazingly high despite all the hardships, but Stalin did not take any chances. The NKVD kept tight control of the population and maintained the system of Gulags. The state security system, which had been perfected during the terror and the purges of the 1930s, proved to be ideal for dealing with the conditions faced on the Home Front during the Great Patriotic War. Always fearful of the nationalities in the Soviet Union, Stalin transported entire national groups to the east, fearing they might collaborate with the invading Germans. Deported groups included the Chechens and Ingushis in February 1944 and the Crimean Tatars in June 1944.

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Propaganda

On 3 July 1941, Stalin addressed the Soviet people.

> Comrades, citizens, brothers and sisters, men of our Army and Navy! It is to you I am speaking dear friends.
>
> The perfidious military attack by Hitlerite Germany on our Motherland, begun on 22 June is continuing.
>
> ... The enemy is cruel and implacable. He is out to seize our grain and oil secured by the labour of our hands. He is out to restore the rule of the landlords, to restore tsarism, to destroy the national culture and the national existence as states of the Russians, Ukrainians, Belorussians, Lithuanians, Latvians, Estonians, Uzbeks, Tatars, Moldavians, Georgians, Armenians, Azerbaijians and the other free peoples of the Soviet Union, to Germanise them, to turn them into the slaves of German princes and barons. Thus, the issue is one of life and death for the Soviet state, of life and death for the people of the USSR; the issue is whether the peoples of the Soviet Union shall be free or fall into slavery.
>
> Cited at www.ibiblio.org/pha/policy/1941/410703a.html.

What is notable about Stalin's speech on 3 July, and other pronouncements he made during the war, is the lack of reference to socialism, the party of Lenin, and securing the Marxist-Leninist future. Stalin realised that in order to mobilise the people, it was necessary for him to appeal to more traditional emotions, such as nationalism and love of the Russian motherland. For these things, the people would work, fight and die. Several propaganda themes were developed.

+ Past Russian heroes were lauded, such as the 13th-century leader Alexander Nevsky, Peter the Great, and General Kutuzov who saved Russia from Napoleon.
+ The arts developed patriotic themes ranging from Fadeev's novel *Leningrad in the Days of the Blockade* to Shostakovich's 'Seventh Symphony'. The official party newspaper, *Pravda*, published anti-German stories and poems. One *Pravda* editorial stated: 'May holy hatred become our chief, our only feeling'.
+ Russian cinema poured out patriotic films with wartime themes. Many films dealt with partisan resistance, particularly from women.
+ The anti-religious policies of the 1930s and the state's official atheism were played down or abandoned. The churches were reopened, priests were allowed to train in seminaries, and the people were urged to pray for a Soviet victory. Stalin allowed the election of new patriarch of the Russian Orthodox Church. The League of Militant Atheists was closed down. Stalin wanted God on the side of the Soviet Union.
+ In October 1943, an organisation called the Spiritual Administration of the Muslims of Central Asia and Kazakhstan was set up in Tashkent as Stalin sought to keep Muslims on side and not be susceptible to German efforts to gain their support.

Getty Images/Fine Art Images/Heritage Images

SOURCE 8.13 Soviet propaganda poster from 1944. The slogan reads, 'Victory is close at hand! More help to the front!'

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Getty Images/Fine Art Images/Heritage Images

SOURCE 8.14 Soviet propaganda poster from 1944–45 celebrating the heroic struggle of the Great Patriotic war. The slogan reads, 'We will raise the flag of victory over Berlin!'

THE PARTY DURING THE WAR

The war had a significant impact on the party. The obvious effect was the massive increase in party membership. Between 1941 and 1945, eight and a half million people joined the party as full members or candidate members. As the stresses of the war mounted, the party found itself more and more involved in a whole range of economic and military activities.

Party membership changed in other ways. Before the war, one's 'proletarian consciousness' was of great importance in gaining party membership and in rising up through the ranks. The stress of war changed this, as what mattered now was one's ability to 'get the job done'. More than 40 per cent of new party members came from the intelligentsia during the war. Strong bonds were created between party members during the war, which was not surprising given the life and death struggle in which the party was engaged.

Partisan bands also fought the invading Germans. The partisans comprised, at most, 10 per cent party members, and consequently often operated independently of the Soviet authorities. At one stage, partisan forces fighting behind the lines occupied up to 10 per cent of the German forces. Some of the partisan groups remained beyond Soviet government control for years after the war.

RICHARD OVERY

Richard Overy is one of the leading historians on the lead-up to the Second World War and aspects of the war itself. He has written several highly regarded books in this area including *The Origins of the Second World War*, *War and Economy in the Third Reich*, *The Inter-War Crisis* and *Russia's War*. The following extract is from Overy's excellent work *Why the Allies Won*. Overy's central thesis is that there was nothing inevitable or preordained about the victory of the Allies. Indeed, observers on the Allied side in mid-1942 certainly did not think that victory was likely to occur soon, if at all. Overy argues that it was the failure of the Axis powers to properly conduct the war and the Allies' ability to maximise their assets that made the difference. It was not simply a matter of the Allies' superiority in numbers and resources. In this extract, Overy discusses the situation on the Russian Home Front during the war.

Questions

1. Summarise Overy's overall impression of the Soviet people during the war.
2. Do you think he is justified in having that impression?
3. List the ways that Overy shows how tough it was for Soviet workers at the time.

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continued

The gruelling regime of work imposed on the Soviet people was not deliberately inflicted but was the product of the sudden crisis following the invasion. All holidays and leave for workers were cancelled indefinitely for the duration. Hours worked were fixed at twelve to sixteen per day; three hours compulsory overtime was introduced … large sections of the workforce were placed under military law … the factory became a battlefield. Absenteeism and lateness were treated like desertion. Repeated offences meant the labour camp, though the conditions of everyday life were so dreary for most workers that life in the camps and outside them became increasingly difficult to distinguish.

The greatest source of hardship was the food supply. Though the authorities managed to organise a nationwide rationing system, it did little more than impose malnutrition equitably across the working population. [Rations for most workers were] a quarter of German rations, one-fifth of British, for a work day that was longer and harder to endure.

How Soviet workers kept going, month after month, exhausted, hungry, terrified that any slip or dereliction might be classified as sabotage, defies belief. No other population was asked to make this level of sacrifice … The story of the Soviet people is one of epic endurance, that needs no embellishment of Soviet propaganda to make it convincing …

… In the end the motives that kept workers at their ploughs and lathes through years of profound suffering and physical exhaustion can only be guessed at. Few families were unaffected by losses on the battlefield. The refugees had the bitterness of enforced exile and the wild stories of German atrocity to fire their efforts … When the American visitors to Magnitogorsk were introduced to a sour-faced young woman, an exceptional over-achiever, they asked her why she did it. Instead of a stock Marxist-Leninist answer, she explained that she worked from hatred, born of the death of her parents under German rule.

Richard Overy, *Why the Allies Won*, Jonathan Cape, London, 1995, pp. 187–9.

Questions

4. Do you think fear of official retribution played a big part in the attitude of Soviet workers?
5. From what you have read, what would appear to be the prime motivation behind the efforts of Soviet workers?

Conclusion

The Great Patriotic War left the Soviet Union in a paradoxical position. It had defeated the might of Nazi Germany, and even former critics of Stalin's regime stood in admiration at the courage and self-sacrifice of the Soviet people. As the British prime minister and wartime leader Winston Churchill put it, it was on the Eastern Front that the guts of the German army had been torn out. By mid-1945, the Red Army occupied all of Eastern Europe. However, in other ways, the Soviet Union was on its knees. Estimates of losses during the war range from 20 to 25 million; including one million Jews. More than a million people died during the siege of Leningrad alone. Nazi destruction combined with the Soviet scorched-earth policy left vast tracts of the

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country in a state of utter ruin. Much of the progress made during the 1930s had to be repeated. The Soviet Union had been saved by Zhukov's well-organised defence of Moscow in late 1941, but it was the Battle of Stalingrad that turned the tide on the Eastern Front, and arguably for the whole of the European war. At Kursk, the Germans finally lost the initiative in the east, and from then on the war became the story of the steady advance of the Red Army towards Germany and Berlin. Stalin may have hesitated on hearing of the German invasion in June 1941, but by 1945 he was hailed across the country as the nation's saviour and a military genius, and his status was near divine. At the moment of victory, official propaganda did not have to artificially create popular admiration for the Soviet leader.

Chapter summary

+ Soviet foreign policy had veered from trying to promote revolution in capitalist countries to establishing normal state-to-state relations. However, in the face of the Nazi threat in the 1930s, Stalin tried hard to create a common anti-fascist front with the Western nations.
+ The West's unwillingness to work with the Soviet Union led Stalin to take the opportunistic step of signing a Non-Aggression Pact with Hitler in August 1939.
+ For almost two years, the Soviet Union was able to avoid involvement in the European war, and during this time it took possession of the Baltic States, Eastern Poland and Bessarabia.
+ In June 1941, Hitler launched Operation Barbarossa. The Red Army experienced defeat after defeat and the collapse of the Soviet Union seemed a real possibility.
+ However, strategic errors on Hitler's part, the onset of winter, the transfer of troops from Siberia to the west and Zhukov's organisational skill combined to prevent the Germans from capturing Moscow.
+ The German advance continued in 1942 and by August, German forces found themselves at the gates of Stalingrad. For the next four months, the German army and the Red Army were engaged in one of the great battles of history. Germany's defeat at Stalingrad proved to be the turning point of the war.
+ The Battle of Kursk in July 1943, though inconclusive, marked the end of German advances in the east. From this point on, the Red Army steadily pushed westwards. In June 1944, Zhukov launched the massive Operation Bagration, which eventually led to Soviet armies taking control of much of Eastern Europe.

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- The final offensive of the Red Army from January 1945 led to the capitulation of the German army, and Berlin was finally captured in May 1945.
- Despite achieving an astonishing victory, the cost to the Soviet Union had been horrendous. The siege of Leningrad lasted for 900 days and led to more than a million deaths.
- To the Nazis, the peoples of the Soviet Union were *untermenschen* – sub-humans – and were treated accordingly. The savagery on the Eastern Front exceeded all else in the European war.
- Human losses and physical destruction in the west of Russia left the country devastated. To maintain economic output, millions of people, machines and even factories were evacuated to the east of the Ural Mountains.
- A combination of courageous self-sacrifice, hatred of the enemy and fear of the NKVD worked to produce almost superhuman efforts from the Soviet people. Soviet production levels during the war soon reached enormous heights and exceeded anything Germany could produce.
- Despite early hesitation, Stalin soon reasserted his control and headed both the State Defence Committee and Stavka, the military command.
- Soviet propaganda promoted patriotism. The people were not fighting to save socialism; they were fighting to save Mother Russia. Stalin was also willing to seek God's assistance; churches were opened and official campaigns against religion were ended.
- Party membership rose dramatically during the war as it took on many extra duties it previously had not undertaken. The bonds of comradeship that were forged during the extremities of the war remained very strong into the future.
- The Soviet Union emerged victorious and admired at the end of the Great Patriotic War; it was in control of Eastern Europe. However, the country was in a state of devastation. More than 20 million were dead and vast areas had been wiped out, a result of Nazi destruction and the traditional Russian scorched-earth policy practised in the face of invasion.

Weblinks

Weblinks relevant to this chapter can be found at http://nmh.nelsonnet.com.au/russia

Further reading

Antony Beevor, *The Second World War*, Little Brown and Company, New York, 2012, Chapter 24.

Isaac Deutscher, *Stalin*, Penguin, Harmondsworth, 1968.

Richard Overy, *Why the Allies Won*, Jonathan Cape, London, 1995, Chapter 3, Chapter 7, pp. 180–90.

Paullina Simons, *The Bronze Horseman*, Harper Collins, New York, 1997.

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Chapter review activities

Soviet foreign policy

1 What was the function of the Comintern?

2 Explain the ambiguity of Soviet foreign policy in the 1920s?

3 How did Soviet foreign policy change from the mid-1930s? How do you account for this change?

4 Imagine you are a leading member of the Soviet government. From your perspective, explain the motives of the Western powers in their dealings with Hitler.

The Nazi–Soviet Pact

5 You are an official of the British government in August 1939. Explain your reaction to the news of the signing of the Nazi–Soviet Pact.

6 Hitler and Stalin did not trust each other. So why did they agree to sign the Non-Aggression Pact?

7 What was the key significance of the Nazi–Soviet Non-Aggression Pact?

8 What strategic gains did Stalin make from the Secret Protocols of the Pact?

Barbarossa

9 Describe the early success of Operation Barbarossa.

10 What was arguably Hitler's major error during Barbarossa? Justify your answer.

11 Select three key factors that you believe explain the failure of Operation Barbarossa to achieve its goals.

The course of the war

12 You are a resident of Leningrad, 500 days into the siege. Write an entry in your diary describing what the past week has been like.

13 A popular novel of recent times is Paullina Simons' *The Bronze Horseman*, a romance set at the time of the siege of Leningrad. Do you think historical novels can be used as historical sources? Give reasons for your answer.

14 What do you think the reaction of both the German and Russian peoples would have been on hearing the news of the end of the Battle of Stalingrad?

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The Home Front

15 Explain why the war on the Russian front was so much more savage than it was in the west.

16 Explain the logic of the Russian 'scorched earth policy'.

17 How was Soviet civilian and military command organised during the war?

18 How did the Soviet Union manage to maintain such high output levels during the war?

19 Summarise Richard Overy's feelings about the role of the Soviet workers in the eventual Soviet victory.

20 Imagine you are Stalin talking to Molotov. Present the arguments you think Stalin might have used to justify the nature of Soviet propaganda during the war.

21 How had the party changed as a result of the war?

Essay question

22 Stalin's leadership was decisive in the Soviet Union's defeat of Nazi Germany during the Great Patriotic War. Discuss.

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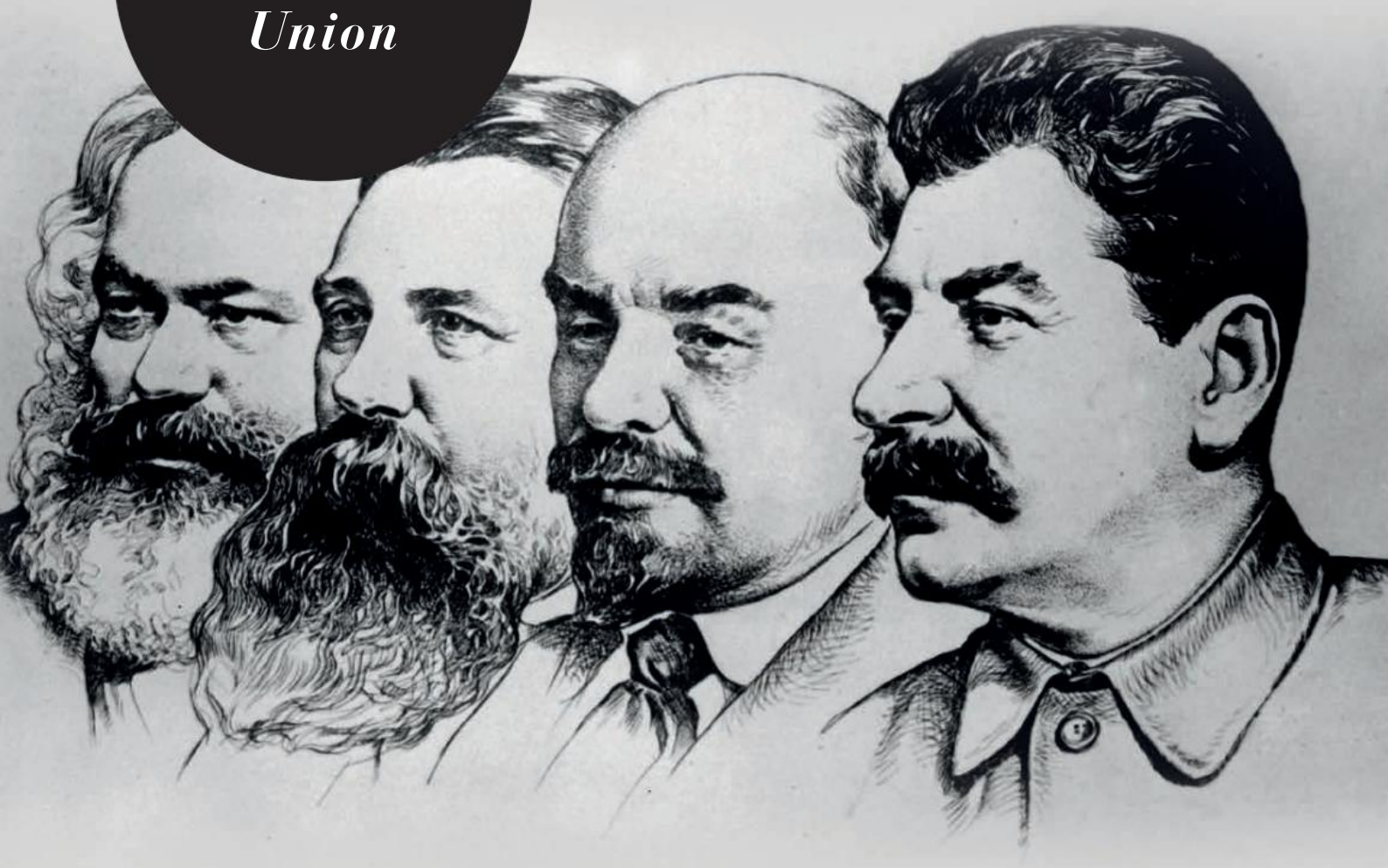
CONCLUSION

Russia and the Soviet Union



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Russia faced major problems at the beginning of the 20th century. The economy remained backward, but there was an industrial revolution taking place in certain areas. Peasants and workers suffered constant hardship, the bourgeoisie lived comfortably but were powerless, and the nobility lived in luxury. Revolutionary violence had been part of the Russian scene since the 1860s. The failed war against Japan in 1905 had exacerbated an already perilous situation for the tsarist regime.

Bloody Sunday at the beginning of 1905 sparked revolutionary events that almost brought down the tsar's regime. However, concessions to the middle class in the form of the October Manifesto and improvements in military pay and conditions were enough to stifle the revolutionary movements. By mid-1906, the tsar was again in firm control. Repression under Prime Minister Stolypin kept the opposition under control, and his reforms were setting the country on the right track for achieving economic development. However, the murder of Stolypin in 1911 and the outbreak of war in 1914 put an end to any chance of peaceful development in Russia.

The First World War had a catastrophic effect on the Russian Empire. Economically and militarily, Russia was simply no match for the efficiency and strength of Germany. Tsar Nicholas II's decision to take command of the army in 1915 was ill-advised, as it left Alexandra and Rasputin in charge in Petrograd. The regime gradually disintegrated, and all support for the tsar had evaporated by early 1917. On 2 March 1917, Nicholas II abdicated.

Throughout 1917, Russia was ruled by an uneasy system of Dual Power shared by the Provisional Government and the Soviet. Lenin's return in April and his immediate call for 'All power to the Soviets' and 'Peace, land and bread' proved appealing to many in the country. The Provisional Government's failure to end the war and institute land reform lost it support, and when the Bolsheviks staged their coup in October 1917, the government collapsed, deserted by all.

The Bolsheviks soon monopolised the key posts in Lenin's new government, SOVNARKOM. Peace with Germany was immediately sought and a Land Decree was passed that retrospectively justified peasant land seizures throughout 1917. The war with Germany formally ended with the Treaty of Brest-Litovsk in March 1918. However, anti-Bolshevik forces soon gathered and by mid-1918, Russia was in a state of civil war. The Bolsheviks (Reds) faced a stronger enemy of anti-Bolsheviks armies (Whites), who were assisted by Western Allied powers. Through a combination of Trotsky's leadership of the Red Army, Lenin's introduction of War Communism and lack of unity on the White side, the Bolsheviks prevailed.

However, victory came at a price. The country was in ruins, and in March the Bolsheviks faced a major revolt at Kronstadt, which the Red Army brutally suppressed, again under the leadership of Trotsky. War Communism was ended and the New Economic Policy (NEP) was introduced, which restored some elements of small-scale capitalism. Within a short time, the Russian economy was reviving. Lenin died in January 1924 and though Trotsky was expected to assume the leadership, through a combination of bureaucratic power, intra-party manoeuvring and ideological argument, it was Stalin who triumphed as Lenin's successor.

Again crisis loomed. By 1927, economic growth had stagnated and food shortages had reappeared. In response, Stalin hurled the nation into collectivisation and industrialisation with

‹ Sketch by Russian artist P Vasilev of (left to right) Karl Marx, Friedrich Engels, Vladimir Ilyich Lenin and Josef Stalin, 1942

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a series of Five Year Plans. The suffering of the Soviet people during this process was enormous and included a man-made famine in the Ukraine. However, the economic progress made was equally enormous; by the late 1930s, the Soviet Union was the world's second largest economy.

It was not only the economy that was transformed in the 1930s. Through purging, show trials and a wave of terror, Stalin completely reconstructed the party. Massive propaganda and the implementation of Socialist Realism raised up a cult of Stalin, propelling him to almost divine status. The Soviet Union had evolved into a fully totalitarian state by the end of the 1930s.

Soviet foreign policy followed a contradictory path in the 1920s; the government was aiming to foment revolution overseas, while at the same time developing normal state-to-state relations. The rise of Nazism in Germany in the 1930s posed a direct threat to the Soviet Union, and Stalin sought united action with the Western powers. Their reluctance to work seriously with the Soviet Union convinced Stalin to sign a Non-Aggression Pact with Hitler in August 1939. This gave Hitler the green light to attack Poland, but it kept the Soviet Union out of the war for two years.

Germany attacked Russia in June 1941 and for a while a German victory seemed highly likely. However, German strategic error, the winter and General Zhukov's skill saved the Soviet Union. The Battle of Stalingrad proved to be the turning point, as from then on the German forces were steadily pushed westwards. By 1944, the Red Army was advancing across Eastern Europe; Berlin was finally captured in May 1945. The Soviet Union had won the war, but the cost in loss of life and destruction of its country was on a scale never before seen.

Russia, the Soviet Union and the 20th century

This summary of the major developments in Russian and Soviet history between 1900 and 1945 highlights the complexity of events, but it does little to place the significance of these developments in the wider context of the 20th century. While it is possible to view all of these developments in terms of the experience of the peoples of Russia and the Soviet Union, it is clear that the events, such as revolution, the emergence of Bolshevism as a political force, Stalin's dictatorship and the Soviet's role in the Second World War have far wider impact.

The Russian revolutions of 1917 and the ascendency of the Bolshevik Party, as much as the First World War itself, played a considerable role in shaping the political landscape of the 20th century. The Bolsheviks' victory provided a new and challenging model that would continue to influence political developments throughout the century. From 1918 the radical socialists sought to apply Lenin's model of a revolutionary vanguard leading a proletarian revolutionary movement. In 1918–19, communist groups, such as the Sparticists in Germany and Bela Kun in Hungary, attempted to stage revolutions based on Lenin's model. These groups failed, but throughout the world the revolutionary creed of Bolshevism was adopted, spread, and grew under the guidance of the Comintern. Nowhere perhaps is this influence more apparent than in China during the 1920s and 1930s. Importantly, after the Second World War, the influence

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of the Bolshevik model also permeated the politics of decolonisation, with strong communist movements emerging in areas such as India and shaping the political destinies of newly independent nations such as Vietnam.

The emergence of Bolshevism as a political creed also influenced the dynamic of domestic politics and, later, of international relations. The threat, real or not, of a communist revolution was one of the many factors that prompted the emergence of fascism in Europe during the interwar years. First in Italy, and later in Germany, fascist states were established, while a myriad similar groups formed throughout the developed world. Fascists saw themselves as a bulwark against communism, which they viewed, for a variety of reasons, as a challenge to the idea of civilisation itself. With the emergence of radically anti-communist states in an area of political instability, the dynamic of international relations took on an increasingly ideological tone in the interwar years. The resulting Second World War was as much a war of conventional aspirations, territory and economic resources, as it was an ideological conflict.

The defeat of fascism, through the alliance between the Soviet Union and the democratic powers of Britain and the United States, did little to solve the ideological tensions created by the emergence of communism in Russia and the Soviet Union. The Cold War standoff that would dominate the period from 1945 to 1991 had at its heart the competing models of how society should be organised. It was a clash between socialism inspired by Marx, Lenin and Stalin, and liberal democracy.

Nor should the nature of Bolshevik rule be ignored. The totalitarian dictatorship, first established under the leadership of Lenin and 'perfected' under Stalin, highlighted the potential power of the modern state and, as much as the nature of Hitler's dictatorship in Germany, raises fundamental moral questions about the nature of the state's relationship with its people. To be sure, the Soviet state was able to speed up the process of industrialisation, increase literacy and build a technical intelligentsia. But these developments came at an enormous human price – famine and political purges were the most obvious examples, which resulted in the deaths of many of millions of Russians, Ukrainians, Kazachs, Cossacks, Tatars, Georgians, Moldovans and others.

The application of these Stalinist techniques of modernisation, collectivisation and rapid industrialisation combined with the characteristics of totalitarianism, party rule, the cult of the leader, the establishment of mass party movements and the emergence of a terror state, were not confined to the Soviet Union. After the Second World War, this kind of state emerged in the territories of Eastern Europe that the Soviets had liberated from the Axis powers. In Eastern Europe these regimes would stay in power until 1989–90. Similar systems of rule, based on or inspired by the Marxist-Leninist-Stalinist tradition, also emerged elsewhere – in China, Vietnam, Laos, Cambodia and Cuba for example. In each case, economic transformation has occurred, but the human cost has been significant.

The Bolshevik revolution of 1917 has been one of the major shaping forces of the modern world. The revolutionary leaders each shared a desire to create a new society built on new values and ideals. While they achieved some of their goals, they ultimately failed to establish the workers' society as they had imagined it. For Russia and the Soviet Union, this experiment came to an end in 1991, but its legacies, even today, shape the world in which we live.

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ACTIVITIES

1 Rearrange the list of events on the left into chronological order.

Random order	Correct chronological order	
The murder of Trotsky in Mexico	1st event	The declaration of the October Manifesto
The Bolshevik seizure of power	2nd event	
Beginning of the first Five Year Plan	3rd event	
The declaration of the October Manifesto	4th event	
Operation Barbarossa	5th event	
The trial of the Red Army Generals	6th event	
The Russian defeat at the Battle of Tannenberg	7th event	
The Soviet capture of Berlin	8th event	
The signing of the Nazi–Soviet Pact	9th event	
The Kronstadt Rising	10th event	

2 Match the terms listed in the first box with the definitions provided.

Dual Power, Yezhovshchina, Socialist Realism, Gulag, Cheka, scorched earth policy, Comintern, NEP, dekulakisation, autocracy

the organisation established by the Bolsheviks in 1919 with the aim of fomenting socialist revolution in other countries	
the policy of the Soviet Union to destroy all resources in the path of an invading army	
the situation existing in 1917 when Russia was ruled by both the Provisional Government and the Soviet	
the acronym by which the All-Russian Extraordinary Commission to fight Counter-Revolution, Sabotage and Speculation is known	
the authoritarian form of government that gave the tsar total power over all aspects of Russian life	
the economic policy introduced at the 10th Party Congress that restored elements of small-scale capitalism	
the terror process of the late 1930s named after the then head of the NKVD.	
the process employed during collectivisation to destroy middle-class peasants	
the artistic movement that expected the various branches of the arts to promote optimism and party goals	
the acronym that refers to the Main Administration of Corrective Labour and Labour Settlements	

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3 Using the information in the book, plus additional research, answer the following questions.
   a What was the nature of the problems facing the tsarist regime at the beginning of 1905?
   b What long- and short-term factors led to the February 1917 Revolution and the establishment of the Provisional Government?
   c Do you think that Bolshevik success between October 1917 and March 1921 was due to the role of individuals or greater historical forces?
   d Why were issues of ideology so important during the 1920s?
   e Stalin's regime in the 1930s is often described as being totalitarian. Select three factors which you think best support that description and explain their significance.
   f Despite all the terrible things that happened when Stalin was in control of the Soviet Union, today many people in Russia praise his rule, even to the point of raising monuments to him. How do you account for this?

4 The following is an extract from the officially sanctioned *History of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union* published in 1939. Like all totalitarian regimes, Stalin realised that an important way of controlling the present is to control the past. Or as the writer George Orwell put it in his book *1984*, 'He who controls the past controls the future. He who controls the present controls the past'.[1] Examine the following source and answer the questions that follow.

> The years of transition to the peaceful work of economic restoration constituted one of the most crucial periods in the history of the Bolshevik Party. In a tense situation, the Party was able to effect the difficult turn from the policy of War Communism to the New Economic Policy. The Party reinforced the alliance of the workers and peasants on a new economic foundation. The Union of Soviet Socialist Republics was formed.
>
> By means of the New Economic Policy, decisive results were obtained in the restoration of the economic life of the country. The Soviet Union emerged from the period of economic restoration with success and entered a new period, the period of industrialization of the country.
>
> The transition from civil war to peaceful Socialist construction was accompanied by great difficulties, especially in the early stages. The enemies of Bolshevism, the anti-Party elements in the ranks of the C.P.S.U. (the party), waged a desperate struggle against the Leninist Party all through this period. These anti-Party elements were headed by Trotsky. His henchmen in this struggle were Kamenev, Zinoviev and Bukharin. After the death of Lenin, the oppositionists calculated on demoralizing the ranks of the Bolshevik Party, on splitting the Party, and infecting it with disbelief in the possibility of the victory of Socialism in the U.S.S.R. In point of fact, the Trotskyites were trying to form another party in the U.S.S.R., a political organization of the new bourgeoisie, a party of capitalist restoration.
>
> ... The Party rallied under the banner of Lenin around its Leninist Central Committee, around Comrade Stalin, and inflicted defeat both on the Trotskyites and on their new friends in Leningrad, the Zinoviev Kamenev New Opposition.

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... Having accumulated strength and resources, the Bolshevik Party brought the country to a new stage in its history – the stage of Socialist industrialisation.

During the period 1926–29, the Party grappled with and overcame immense difficulties on the home and foreign fronts in the fight for the Socialist industrialization of the country. The efforts of the Party and the working class ended in the victory of the policy of Socialist industrialization.

... In the main, one of the most difficult problems of industrialization had been solved, namely, the problem of accumulating funds for the building of a heavy industry. The foundations were laid of a heavy industry capable of re-equipping the entire national economy.

... The First Five-Year Plan of Socialist construction was adopted. The building of new factories, state farms and collective farms was developed on a vast scale.

... This advance towards Socialism was attended by a sharpening of the class struggle in the country and a sharpening of the struggle within the Party. The chief results of this struggle were that the resistance of the kulaks was crushed, the bloc of Trotskyite and Zinovievite capitulators was exposed as an anti-Soviet bloc, the Right capitulators were exposed as agents of the kulaks, the Trotskyites were expelled from the Party, and the views of the Trotskyites and the Right opportunists were declared incompatible with membership of the C.P.S.U.

... Defeated ideologically by the Bolshevik Party, and having lost all support among the working class, the Trotskyites ceased to be a political trend and became an unprincipled, careerist clique of political swindlers, a gang of political double-dealers.

... Having laid the foundations of a heavy industry, the Party mustered the working class and the peasantry for the fulfilment of the First Five-Year Plan for the Socialist reconstruction of the U.S.S.R. Socialist emulation developed all over the country among millions of working people, giving rise to a mighty wave of labour enthusiasm and originating a new labour discipline.

... This period ended with a year of great change, signalized by sweeping victories of Socialism in industry, the first important successes in agriculture, the swing of the middle peasant towards the collective farms, and the beginning of a mass collective-farm movement.

The History of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union (Bolsheviks),
International Publishers, New York, 1939, Chapter 10.

a Identify some of the achievements claimed for the Communist Party in this extract.

b Identify any failures that this extract claims the Communist Party has been responsible for.

c List the offences for which Trotsky is accused.

d The language in this extract clearly betrays its propaganda intent. Select some examples of obviously propaganda writing and comment on them.

e From what you have studied, which statements made in this extract can be supported by the historical evidence?

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f From what you have studied, which statements cannot be supported by the historical evidence?

g Writing history is selective: it is not only about what a historian includes but what he or she chooses to omit. Which major events or issues you do think this 'historian' has chosen to omit from the period of the early 1920s to the early 1930s?

5 Provide an extended response to answer the following question: 'Explain the development of the Soviet Union from the early 1920s to the late 1930s.' In your answer you should consider the context, the reasons for the policies implemented and their results.

Endnote

1 George Orwell, *1984*, Secker & Warburg, London, 1949.

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