

Aim #25: How & why does Russia become a Communist country in 1917?

Mini Lecture

- For centuries, the Czar ruled Russia as an **autocrat**, abusing his power, denying people's rights, & persecuting minorities. Peasants, especially lived a harsh life in an unequal hierarchy, which gave them no rights and all the burden of society.
- By the 1900s, Russia was a 'backward' country as it failed to modernize. This was costly in the Russo-Japanese War, where Japan humiliated Russia with a crushing defeat. The war put immense strain on the Russian economy; it raised food prices, but not wages. The loss was a huge embarrassment & opposition to **Czar Nicholas II** grew.
- Russians held peaceful protests towards the capital for reforms. On January 22, Nicholas ordered soldiers to shoot at the protestors in "**Bloody Sunday**" killing hundreds & hatred for the Czar increased even more.
- After Bloody Sunday, the first **soviets** (workers' councils) were created in order to voice their grievances. In October 1905, workers seized control of the major cities during a strike (**Revolution of 1905**).
- The czar made some reforms (limited freedom of speech & a legislature or elected gov't to make laws called the Duma) to appease the strikers.
- In theory, Russia became a constitutional monarchy- in practice, Nicholas kept his powers, but WWI is going to change everything
- At first, WWI seemed to unify Russia. Russians of all social classes drew together to defend their country- but this unity was short lived. Defeats in battle (loss of millions of soldiers) and food shortages at home made the Russian people desperate. They demanded to end Russia's participation in the war. When Czar Nicholas II ignored these demands, his people rebelled.
- In March 1917 (**March Revolution**), the **Russian Revolution** began. Czar Nicholas II was driven from his throne, and a provisional government of moderate leaders too charge.
- Soon, however, the provisional government's pledges of democracy and reform were not enough- they, like the czar, refused to take Russia out of the war. The hunger, misery, and massive military casualties continued.
- Finally, in November 1917 (**November Revolution**), a second revolution, led by **Vladimir I. Lenin**, occurred. He promised the Russian people what they wanted- **peace, land, bread**.
- Lenin's party, the **Bolsheviks** ("the Reds", later called the Communists), took over the government, executed the Czar & defeated the "Whites" in a civil war. One of the new government's first acts was to stop fighting in WWI. Russia agreed to the **Treaty of Brest-Litovsk** with the Central Powers, giving up a lot of territory.
- Under Lenin's regime, workers & peasants could elect representatives to a law-making body, but the congress was controlled by Lenin & the Communist Party. The elimination of class distinctions became official government policy (encouraged to address each other as "comrade").
- The Communist Party was the only political party allowed to exist. In order to prevent criticism of Communism, the government censored newspapers & other forms of communication. Also using the **Checka** secret police to silence opponents & carried out terror.
- The effort to rapidly change Russia's traditional economy into a Communist one was difficult. Lenin did not change his ideals, but he did agree to slow down the transition.
- In 1921, Lenin instituted the **New Economic Policy (NEP)**- made some compromises with Communist doctrine. For example, peasants were allowed to sell surplus grain for profit, and some small manufacturers were allowed to resume control over their businesses. Under the NEP, the Russian economy improved.
- In 1922, Russia changed its name to the **Union of Soviet Socialist Republics (USSR)**, or the **Soviet Union**- having the sickle & hammer as their symbol. Lenin made Russia into the first communist country in history- turning Karl Marx's ideas into a reality.

THE CZAR — a complete autocrat; his will was law

THE OFFICIALS — carried out Czar's commands; included army, navy, secret service, and bureaucracy

THE NOBLES — served Czar but had power over peasants

THE MIDDLE CLASSES — included merchants and craftsmen

THE PEASANTS — majority of Russian people; very poor with few rights

THE INDUSTRIAL WORKERS — becoming more numerous but poor and underpaid



ЦАРЬ, ПОИ И БОГАЧ
на престоле у престолопреемника

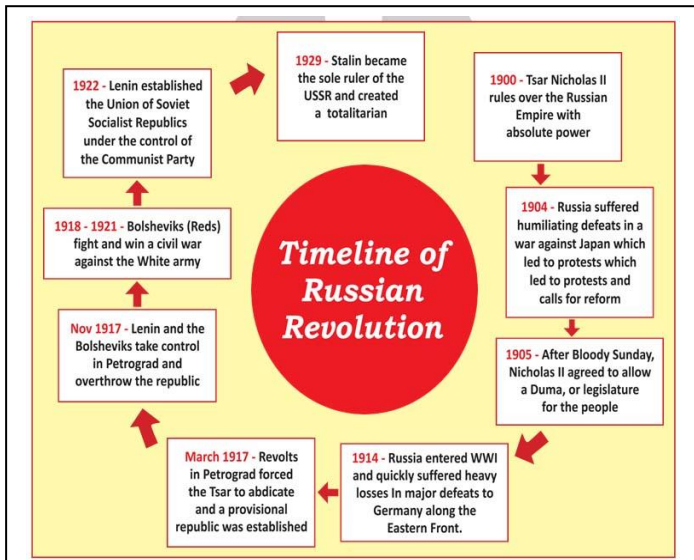










Review Questions:

- How did WWI contribute to the collapse of the Russian monarchy?
- How did the Bolsheviks take power in Russia?
- How did Communist Russia's government and economy develop under Lenin (how did it differ from "pure communism"?)

Enduring Issue: Revolution

What were the causes of the Russian Revolution?

Introduction

Directions: Read the letter below and answer the questions that follow.

Letter to Russian War Minister Alexander Kerensky from soldiers fighting in WWI, August 18th, 1917. (* Kerensky was the leader of the provisional government in Russia between the March and November Revolutions until he was overthrown by Vladimir Lenin and the Bolsheviks.)

Mr. War Minister!

We, soldiers from various regiments[...]ask you to end the war and its bloodshed at any cost. If this is not done, then believe us when we say that we will take our weapons and head out for our own hearths [homes] to save our fathers, mothers, wives, and children from death by starvation (which is nigh [near]). And if we cannot save them, then we'd rather die with them in our native lands than be killed, poisoned, or frozen to death somewhere and cast into the earth like a dog.

Remember that all your threats about the death penalty and discipline and the eloquent words of orators will cease to have any effect on us then-- it will be too late. You know we are all tired, both at the front and in the rear, and we cannot endure another autumn and winter, nor do we have any wish to.

For a second time we ask you, Mr. War Minister, put an end to the slaughter. Only by doing this can you keep the enemy from penetrating deep inside Russia and save us both from this invasion and from starvation.

- Soldiers

1. Who wrote this?
2. Who was the audience?
3. When was this letter written? What was happening at that time?
4. Why was this letter written?
5. Based on the letter above, what problems existed in Russia in 1917?

What was the Russian Revolution?

The Russian Revolution of 1917, was actually two revolutions, one in February, and one in October of 1917. At the time, Russia used a different calendar than we use today, so they call these revolutions the March Revolution and November Revolution because their calendar was thirteen days ahead of what is commonly used today. The November Revolution is also referred to as the Bolshevik Revolution.

Before the Russian Revolution, the country was ruled by a king, called a **czar** (sometimes spelled tsar), named Nicholas II. There was discontent [dissatisfaction] in Russia because the government was corrupt and ineffective, there was widespread poverty in the country, there was a scarcity of food, and the Russians suffered massive losses in World War I.

As a result, in February of 1917 (The March Revolution), Czar Nicholas II was forced to abdicate [give up the throne] and power was given to a group of elected officials called the Duma. The Duma ruled until October, when it was replaced by the events of the November Revolution.

Led by a man named Vladimir Lenin, a group of Communists named the Bolsheviks took control of the Russian government in a bloodless coup [a forced overthrow of the government in which no one was killed] called the November (or Bolshevik) Revolution. The Bolsheviks gained support from the peasants, urban workers, and soldiers by promising "peace, land, and bread."

The Bolsheviks signed a peace agreement with Germany, taking Russia out of WWI. After winning a civil war that lasted from 1917 to 1922, the Bolsheviks set about transforming Russia into the world's first **Communist** nation. They renamed Russia the **Union of Soviet Socialist Republics (USSR)**, also known as the Soviet Union. A soviet was a local ruling council elected by workers.



Emperor Nicholas II



Vladimir Lenin, leader of the Bolshevik Revolution in 1917 speaking to troops in 1920.

1. Where and when did the Russian Revolution take place?
2. What caused the Russian Revolution?
3. What were the effects of the Russian Revolution?

Causes of the Russian Revolution

Directions: Examine the following documents on Russia in 1917 that demonstrate the causes of the Russian Revolution and answer the questions that accompany them.

Cause #1: The Peasants' Lives

In 1861, Czar Alexander II issued the **Emancipation Manifesto**, which was a document that freed all of the 23 million serfs in Russia. The newly freed serfs had no money to buy land and most of them were forced to work in poor conditions with little pay without their most basic needs being met. By 1900, around 85 percent of the Russian people lived in the countryside and earned their living from agriculture. These peasants lived in extreme poverty and became disgruntled with the government and the upper class who had money and owned the land.

In the summer of 1876, Praskovia Ivanovskaia and her friend Galina Cheriavskaia went to work as agricultural laborers. The following are sections of Praskovia Ivaovskaia's recollection of her time:

"At four in the morning, as the sun's rays were just beginning to spill over the steppe, the overseer would wake us, kicking the legs of those who wouldn't get up immediately.... In the morning, we froze from the bitterly cold dew, which drenched our clothing up to the waist. Staggering along, still half asleep, we worked as automatically as robots, gradually warming up a bit."

"At ten, we returned to camp for breakfast, which lasted around half an hour. Despite the camp hubbub, some people preferred to nap instead of eating. Our food was of rather poor quality - very plain and unappetizing. In the morning, they cooked us a watery gruel made from wheat and water with a dose of salt, or buckwheat dumplings as big as cobblestones - one or two of these would satisfy the hunger of even the greatest glutton. The meal was poured into a wooden trough, from which you'd pull the dumplings with long, pointed splinters. We got the same modest fare for lunch and dinner."

"After our brief breakfast, we returned to work. As the day wore on, the heat became so intense that you wanted to take shelter in any available patch of shade. The sun was so strong that the backs of most of the newly arrived vagabonds were practically covered with swollen blisters; later, as their skin toughened up, the burns went away."

"During the busy season, there were no set limits to the work day: if the steward wished, it could last for sixteen hours or more, with only an hour off for lunch..."

"In the evening, after the sun had set, we returned to camp..." "Frequently our evening talks ended with the peasants saying: "That's our fate - so it's been written", or, "We're born - we'll die."

"In fact, we were rarely able to talk at all: after the day's work, our limbs shrieked with weariness, our exhausted bodies demanded rest and peace. "

1. How long was the peasants' work day?
2. How did the working conditions add to peasant unrest before the Russian Revolution?

Cause #2: Working Conditions and Bloody Sunday (January 22, 1905)

At the beginning of the 20th century the Russian industrial employee worked on average an 11 hour day (10 hours on Saturday). Conditions in the factories were extremely harsh and little concern was shown for the workers' health and safety. Attempts by workers to form trade unions were resisted by the factory owners, and in 1903, a priest named Father George Gapon, formed the Assembly of Russian Workers. Within a year it had over 9,000 members.

1904 was a bad year for Russian workers. Prices of essential goods rose so quickly that real wages declined by 20 per cent. When four members of the Assembly of Russian Workers were dismissed at the Putilov Iron Works, Gapon called for industrial action. Over the next few days, over 110,000 workers in St. Petersburg went out on strike.

In an attempt to settle the dispute, George Gapon decided to make a personal appeal to Czar Nicholas II. He drew up a petition outlining the workers' suffering and demands. This included calling for a reduction in the working day to eight hours, an increase in wages and an improvement in working conditions.

Over 150,000 people signed the petition and on January 22, 1905, Gapon led a large procession of workers to the Winter Palace in order to present the petition to Nicholas II. When the procession of workers reached the Winter Palace, it was attacked by the police and the Cossacks [Russian Soldiers]. Over 100 workers were killed and some 300 wounded. The incident became known as Bloody Sunday.

Bloody Sunday sparked waves of strikes and violence across Russia in support of worker's rights and against the Czar. The violence following Bloody Sunday became known as the Revolution of 1905. In response, Czar Nicholas II reluctantly promised more freedom and approved of the creation of the Duma, the first parliament in Russia. Nicholas II dissolved the Duma in ten weeks and many of the problems plaguing Russian workers continued.

3. What types of poor working conditions inspired the industry workers to approach the Winter Palace on January 22, 1905?
4. What were the worker's demands?
5. What would have been some of your thoughts if you were with the workers who were being killed by the Czar's soldiers at the Winter Palace?

Cause #3: Corruption in the Czar's Family: Rasputin (1872- 1916)

Born a peasant in Siberia, Grigori Rasputin became a religious teacher, although he was never ordained as a priest. He became close with czar's family because they believed he had mysterious powers that relieved their son's hemophilia, a disease that prevents blood from clotting and causes massive bleeding from even slight injuries.

It was rumored that Czarina Alexandra, who was put in charge of the Czar's responsibilities when he went to command troops during WWI, was heavily under Rasputin's control.

In December 1916, a small group of young aristocrats who feared that Rasputin was taking control of the government plotted his assassination. They lured him to a mansion and fed him poisoned cakes. The poison apparently had no effect on Rasputin's extraordinary strength. The conspirators then shot him several times. Assuming he was finally dead, they threw him into the Neva River. When his body was discovered three days later, doctors confirmed the cause of his death- drowning.

Rasputin's death threw the Czarina into shock. His prediction haunted her: "If I die or you desert me, in six months you will lose your son and your throne."

The specifics behind Rasputin's death are now more a legend than fact. Many of the facts have been discredited through historical investigation. Rasputin's supposed influence over the Czar's family showed that the government was corrupt and added to the lower class's distrust for the family.



Russian political cartoon showing Rasputin, Czar Nicholas II and his wife Alexandra.

6. Rasputin had influence over government decisions when he was close to the Czar's family. How does this support the claim that the government was corrupt?

Cause #4: Czar Nicholas II's Military Woes

Popular support for a country's leader has always depended largely on their success as a military leader. Czar Nicholas II experienced several disappointments which turned the peasants and workers against him. The Russo-Japanese War and World War I showed the Czar's weakness and paved the way for revolution.

In the late 1800s, Russia and Japan were imperialist powers. Both competed for control of Korea and Manchuria. The two nations signed a series of agreements over the territories, but Russia broke them. In retaliation, Japan attacked the Russians at Port Arthur, Manchuria, in February 1904. Though Russian soldiers and sailors went confidently to war, the Japanese defeated them. News of repeated losses sparked unrest at home and led to revolt in the midst of the war.

In 1914, Nicholas II made the fateful decision to drag Russia into World War I. Russia was unprepared to handle the military and economic costs. Russia's weak generals and poorly equipped troops were no match for the German army. Before a year had passed, more than 4 million Russian soldiers had been killed, wounded or taken prisoner. German machine guns mowed down advancing Russians by the thousands. Defeat followed defeat. As in the Russo-Japanese War, Russia's involvement in World War I revealed the weakness of czarist rule and military leadership.

The war was destroying the morale of Russian troops. Soldiers mutinied, deserted, or ignored orders. On the home front, food and fuel supplies were dwindling. Prices were wildly inflated. People from all classes were clamoring for change and an end to the war. Neither Czar Nicholas nor Czarina Alexandra proved capable of tackling these enormous problems.



Political cartoon that depicts Japan beating Russia in the Russo-Japanese War published in the Brooklyn Eagle in 1904.

Source: <https://www.oxford.edu/~jst1215/war.htm>

7. What effect did the outcome of the Russo-Japanese War have on the Russian people?
8. Why were the Russian people unhappy with their country's involvement in World War I?

Cause #5: The March Revolution (1917)

In March 1917, women textile workers in Petrograd led a citywide strike. Soon afterward, riots flared up over shortages of bread and fuel. Nearly 200,000 workers swarmed the streets. At first the soldiers obeyed orders to shoot the rioters but later sided with them. The soldiers fired at their commanding officers and joined the rebellion. Large crowds gathered, shouting "Down with the autocracy!" and "Down with the war!"

The local protest exploded into a general uprising- the March Revolution. It forced Czar Nicholas II to abdicate (give up) his throne. The czarist rule of the Romanovs, which spanned over three centuries, had finally collapsed. The March Revolution succeeded in bringing down the czar, yet it failed to set up a strong government to replace his regime.

Leaders of the Duma established a **provisional government**, or temporary government. The provisional government kept the country in World War I and was too weak to make the changes that peasants and workers demanded. Instead, power in the cities grew in local councils of workers called **Soviets**. In many cities, including Petrograd, the soviets had more influence than the provisional government.

The March Revolution of 1917 dethroned Nicholas II but failed to put a strong government in his place.



Protesters during the March Revolution, 1917.

Source: <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/File:1917.jpg>

9. What spurred the March Revolution of 1917?
10. How successful was the provisional government set up by the Duma?

Cause #6: Industrial Workers Support a Growing Revolution

Rapid industrialization stirred discontent among the people of Russia. The growth of factories brought new problems. Among these problems were grueling working conditions, miserably low wages, and child labor. Unions were outlawed. Still, exploited laborers who worked in factories and built the railway lines organized strikes. Workers were unhappy with their low standard of living and lack of political power. The gap between rich and poor was enormous.

Amid the widespread unrest of workers and other members of Russian society, various revolutionary movements began to grow. They also competed for power. The group that would eventually succeed in establishing a new government in Russia followed the views of Karl Marx. These revolutionaries believed that the industrial class of workers would overthrow the czar. The industrial class would then form "a dictatorship of the proletariat." In such a state, the workers would rule.

In 1903, Russian Marxists split into two groups over revolutionary tactics. The Mensheviks wanted a broad base of popular support for the revolution. The **Bolsheviks** supported a small number of committed revolutionaries willing to sacrifice everything for radical change. The major leader of the Bolsheviks was Vladimir Ilyich Ulyanov. He adopted the name of **Lenin**. He had an engaging personality and was an excellent organizer. He was also ruthless. These traits would ultimately help him gain command of the Bolsheviks. In the early 1900s, Lenin fled to Western Europe to avoid arrest by the czarist regime. He maintained contact with other Bolsheviks. Lenin then waited until he could safely return to Russia.



Workers protesting in Chiatura, Russia in 1917.

Source: https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Chiatura_workers_demonstration_1917.jpg

11. List four reasons why life was difficult for workers in Russia in the early 1900s.
12. Why would the workers follow the Bolsheviks? What about the Bolsheviks beliefs appealed to Russian workers?



Who was Vladimir Lenin? What did he believe?

Directions: Watch the [Vladimir Lenin Biography from CloudBiography](#) and answer the questions below.

1. What happened early in Lenin's life that turned him against the Czar?
2. What actions did Lenin take as the leader of the Bolsheviks and the Communist government of Russia?
3. How did Lenin's ideas differ from Karl Marx's?

Marx Believed	Lenin Believed
The working class would be the ones to start the Communist revolution and overthrow the capitalist class	Intellectuals could start the revolution of the working class against the capitalists
In order to get to a Communist state a civilization must first be industrialized and live under the rule of the bourgeoisie [the rich capitalists]	An agrarian country, like Russia, could skip the industrial stage that Marx described and create a Communist state

How did Lenin and the Bolsheviks gain, consolidate, and maintain power in Russia?

Document Analysis Activity

Directions: As you read the information below, annotate it by placing a "G" next to examples of methods that Lenin and the Bolsheviks used to gain power in Russia, a "C" next to examples of methods they used to consolidate their power, and an "M" next to examples of methods used to maintain power. Then, complete the questions accompanying the documents. At the end of the activity, fill in the graphic organizer below.

GAIN Gaining power is the process of getting it and expanding it.	CONSOLIDATE Consolidating power is the process of taking control from other people who also have power.	MAINTAIN Maintaining power is the process of keeping one's power.
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Method of Control	Gain, Consolidate, and/or Maintain Power? Circle all that apply.	Explanation Explain why the method of control described made it possible for Lenin and the Bolsheviks to gain, consolidate, and/or maintain power in Russia.
Ideological Promises: Communism	GAIN	
	CONSOLIDATE	
	MAINTAIN	
Military Force	GAIN	
	CONSOLIDATE	
	MAINTAIN	
Secret Police	GAIN	
	CONSOLIDATE	
	MAINTAIN	
Control of the Economy	GAIN	
	CONSOLIDATE	
	MAINTAIN	
New Economic Policy	GAIN	
	CONSOLIDATE	
	MAINTAIN	

Timeline of Lenin's Rise and Rule in Russia

April- Nov. 1917: Lenin and Bolsheviks Gain Support Amongst Peasants, Workers, and Soldiers

Lenin returned to Russia in 1917 after being in exile for his political beliefs. When he returned to lead the Bolsheviks, they were not a powerful political party, but they gained popular support from peasants, workers, and soldiers through meetings and speeches when they expounded upon their slogan, "Peace, Land, and Bread." If in power, they promised peace by taking Russia out of WWI. They would take control of all of the land in Russia and re-distribute it evenly to peasants and workers, and end starvation by taking control of farms to produce more food and give it out equally to the population.

1. What was the Bolshevik party slogan?
2. Why would soldiers, workers, and peasants support the Bolsheviks?

Nov. 1917: November Revolution: Bolsheviks Seize Power

In November, 1917, the Bolshevik party leaders and a group of factory workers who supported them called the Red Guards, joined by some soldiers that left the Russian army, attacked the provisional government in Petrograd. Lenin the Bolsheviks took control of the government in a couple of days and several other similar actions were taken by Bolsheviks in other important Russian cities.

The Bolsheviks set about transforming Russia into the world's first Communist nation. They renamed Russia the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics (USSR), also known as the Soviet Union.

On the eve of the take-over Lenin wrote a Call To Power, a piece outlining the reasons for the Bolshevik's actions and their plans for when they are in power.

Lenin: Call to Power,

Oct 24, 1917

The situation is critical in the extreme. In fact it is now absolutely clear that to delay the uprising would be fatal.

With all my might I urge comrades to realize that everything now hangs by a thread; that we are confronted by problems which are not to be solved by conferences or congresses (even congresses of Soviets), but exclusively by peoples, by the masses, by the struggle of the armed people.

...We must at all costs, this very evening, this very night, arrest the government, having first disarmed the officer cadets, and so on.

We must not wait! We may lose everything!

Who must take power?

That is not important at present. Let the Revolutionary Military Committee do it, or "some other institution" which will declare that it will relinquish power only to the true representatives of the interests of the people, the interests of the army, the interests of the peasants, the interests of the starving.

...If we seize power today, we seize it not in opposition to the Soviets but on their behalf.

The seizure of power is the business of the uprising...

...It would be an infinite crime on the part of the revolutionaries were they to let the chance slip, knowing that the salvation of the revolution, the offer of peace, the salvation of Petrograd, salvation from famine, the transfer of the land to the peasants depend upon them.

The government is tottering. It must be given the death-blow at all costs.

Source: Fordham Modern History Sourcebook. <http://legacy.fordham.edu/Halsall/mod/1917lenin1.asp>

3. What action did the Bolsheviks and the Red Guard take in November, 1917?
4. According to Lenin's Call to Power, how can Russia's problems be solved (li. 4-7)?
5. In whose interest does Lenin claim to take power for (li. 15-18)?
6. How would you have reacted to this Call to Power if you were a Bolshevik? How would you have reacted if you were a member of the provisional government?

Dec. 1917: Cheka: The Soviet Secret Police Created

[Watch this video on the early Soviet government and the Cheka](#) and read the text below.

To protect the newly-established Bolshevik government from counter-revolutionaries and other political opponents, the Bolsheviks created a secret police, the Cheka (from the Russian for extraordinary committee). One of the first important actions taken by the Cheka was to execute the Czar and his whole family.

Source: Adapted from "Vladimir Lenin." New World Encyclopedia. http://www.newworldencyclopedia.org/entry/Vladimir_Lenin

7. What was the Cheka? What was its role in the Soviet government?

March 3, 1918: Russia Leaves WWI: Treaty of Brest-Litovsk

On March 3, 1918, Lenin fulfilled one Bolshevik promise by removing Russia from World War I. They negotiated with the Germans and agreed to the Treaty of Brest-Litovsk, under which Russia lost significant territories in Europe.

8. What were the effects of the Treaty of Brest-Litovsk?

1917-1922: Russian Civil War Demonstrates Bolshevik Military Superiority

[Watch this video on the Russian Civil War](#) and read the text below.

Soon after the Bolsheviks took power, a civil war erupted in Russia. Supporters of a wide variety of political movements took up arms to support or overthrow the Soviet government. Although many different factions were involved in the civil war, the two main forces were the Red Army (communists) and the pro-Imperialist White Army. Foreign powers such as France, Britain, the United States, and Japan also intervened in this war (on behalf of the White Army), though they had little impact. Eventually, the more organizationally proficient Red Army, led by Leon Trotsky, won the civil war, defeating the White Army and their allies in 1920. Smaller fights, however, continued for several more years.

Both White and Red Army forces, during this tumultuous time of war and revolution, "behaved with great brutality and cruelty in areas they controlled. Towns were burned, property destroyed or stolen, peasant farmers' crops and livestock taken by force—if people objected, they faced torture and execution."

9. What were the two sides of the Civil War named? Who fought on each side?
10. Who won the war? Why were they successful?

Sept. 1918: Assassination Attempts and The Red Terror

In 1918, there were two assassination attempts on Lenin's life. In the second attempt, Lenin was shot twice. The doctors who treated him decided that it was too dangerous to remove the bullets. He partially recovered, but his health never returned to full strength.

The Communist government responded to the assassination attempts with what they termed the Red Terror. The Red Terror was a campaign of mass killings, torture, and oppression on all who opposed the Bolsheviks that took place from 1918 to 1922. Estimates for the total number of people killed during the Red Terror range from 50,000 to 140,000 to over one and half million.

Source: Adapted from "Vladimir Lenin." New World Encyclopedia. http://www.newworldencyclopedia.org/entry/Vladimir_Lenin

11. What was the Red Terror? What was its purpose?

June, 1918: Lenin Declares War Communism

The Red Terror coincided with the escalation of the Civil War and the implementation of a policy known as "War Communism" which lasted from June 1918 to March 1921. War Communism's chief feature was the nationalization of private businesses. Nationalization is the process a government taking ownership of a private business. Nationalism is sometimes called centralization. For example, if a coal mine that was run by a business owner was nationalized, the government would then own that mine, decide who worked in the mine, and decide how to run it.

Through war communism, Lenin hoped to accelerate the process of creating a Communist state where the government owns everything and divides it equally among the country's inhabitants. To do this, the Soviet government took over people's private businesses, especially industry, and forced peasant farmers to grow grain for the government and hand it over after it was harvested.

These measures negatively affected both agricultural and industrial production. With no incentives [motivations like money] to grow surplus grain (since it would just be confiscated), the peasants' production of it and other crops plummeted, with the result that starvation came to threaten many city dwellers. In the cities, a large and untrained bureaucracy was hastily created to supervise the newly centralized, state-owned economy, with the result that labor productivity and industrial output plummeted. By 1921 industrial production had dropped to one-fifth of its prewar levels (i.e., in 1913), and the real wages of urban workers had declined by an estimated two-thirds in just three years.

12. What was War Communism? What was the purpose of War Communism?

13. What were the effects of War Communism on Russia?

14. Was the policy of War Communism successful? Explain.

1921: New Economic Plan (NEP): A Temporary Retreat from Communism

Watch this video on the transition from War Communism to the New Economic Plan [Watch this video on the transition from War Communism to the New Economic Plan](#) and read the text below. and read the text below.

The long years of war, the Bolshevik policy of War Communism, the Russian Famine of 1921, and the Civil War took their toll on Russia and much of the country lay in ruins. There were many peasant uprisings, the largest being the Tambov Rebellion. After an uprising by the sailors at Kronstadt in March 1921, Lenin replaced the policy of War Communism with the New Economic Policy (NEP), in a successful attempt to rebuild industry and, especially, agriculture.

Though the goal of Lenin and the Soviet government was to create a truly communist state in Russia, he realized that their economic policies were damaging the country and threatening the Bolshevik hold on Russia. The New Economic Policy included the return of most agriculture, retail trade, and small-scale light industry to private ownership and management while the state retained control of heavy industry, transport, banking, and foreign trade. The peasantry were allowed to own and cultivate their own land, while paying taxes to the state. The New Economic Policy reintroduced a measure of stability to the economy and allowed the Soviet people to recover from years of war, civil war, and governmental mismanagement. The small businessmen and managers who flourished in this period became known as NEP men.

Though successful, the NEP was viewed by the Soviet government as merely a temporary measure to allow the economy to recover while the Communists solidified their hold on power and move the country towards a centralized communist government.

15. Why did Lenin start the New Economic Policy (NEP)?

16. How was the NEP different than War Communism?

17. Was the NEP successful? Explain.

Jan. 21, 1924: Lenin's Death

Lenin's health had already been severely damaged by the strains of revolution and war. The assassination attempt earlier in his life also added to his health problems. The bullet was still lodged in his neck, too close to his spine for medical techniques of the time to remove. In May 1922, Lenin had his first stroke. He was left partially paralyzed on his right side, and his role in government declined. After the second stroke in December of the same year, he resigned from active politics. In March 1923, he suffered his third stroke and was left bedridden for the remainder of his life, no longer able to speak.

After his first stroke, Lenin dictated several papers regarding the government to his wife. Most famous of these is Lenin's testament, which, among other things, criticized top-ranking communists, especially Joseph Stalin. Lenin said that Stalin, who had been the Communist Party's general secretary since April 1922, had "unlimited authority concentrated in his hands" and suggested that "comrades think about a way of removing Stalin from that post."

Lenin died on January 21, 1924, at the age of 53. Most historians agree that the most likely cause of his death was a stroke induced by the bullet still lodged in his neck from the assassination attempt.

The city of Petrograd was renamed Leningrad in Lenin's honor three days after his death. This remained the name of the city until the collapse of the Soviet Union in 1991, when it reverted to its original name, Saint Petersburg. To memorialize him further, Lenin's body was embalmed and placed on permanent exhibition in the Lenin Mausoleum in Moscow on January 27, 1924. His body is still on display today.

18. What did Lenin die from?

19. Who did Lenin warn other Communists about?