

Communist Government of the USSR, 1917-24



Understanding Questions:

1. How was Russia governed before the October revolution that introduced Communism?
2. Why were people unhappy with the previous governing system of Russia? And how did Tsar Nicholas II attempt to resolve the issues?
3. What was the main intention of the October Revolution in 1917? And who organised the coup?

4. What were the results of the October Revolution?

5. Explain what the Treaty of Brest-Litovsk was and why it was so unpopular amongst the people.

6. Who were the radical opponents of Lenin's new democratic government?

7. Briefly explain the importance of each group within Lenin's new government structure:

Russian workers, peasants and soldiers	Local soviets	All-Russian Congress of Soviets	Sovnarkom

Extension:

8. Research the communist manifesto
 - a. Identify its key features
 - b. How it influenced Lenin's new democratic state
 - c. Find a quote supporting Karl Marx's predicted imminent revolution in Europe

Source Question:

Source A

Adapted from Lenin's 'Theses for Peace', published in the official Communist newspaper 'Pravda' in February 1918.

1. The condition of the Russian Revolution at the present moment is such that practically all the workers and a large majority of the peasants are on the side of the Soviet Government and the social revolution. In that respect the success of the Socialist Revolution in Russia seems assured.
2. At the same time the civil war which was caused by the furious resistance of the propertied classes has not reached its highest point. In the end the Soviet Government will win the fight, but it will take much time and a good deal of energy, and a certain period of disorganisation and chaos incidental to every war and especially civil war is inevitable before the bourgeoisie is finally crushed.
3. Furthermore, the resistance of the bourgeoisie in its less active and non-military forms such as sabotage, bribing tramps and other hirelings of the bourgeoisie to join the Socialist ranks with the purpose of undermining their cause, has proved to be so obstinate and capable of assuming such varying forms that it will take time, several months perhaps, to put it down.

Source B

Adapted from Bessie Beatty's book, *The Red Heart of Russia*, written in 1918. Beatty was an American journalist who lived in Russia at the time of the Bolshevik Revolution. She later defended the Bolsheviks in front of a US Senate Committee in 1921.

...Yakov Peters [One of the founders of the Cheka] told me that one day he was riding on a street car, when the man sitting beside him engaged him in conversation. He offered to sell him twelve hundred bags of flour at two hundred and fifty roubles each, six thousand pounds of sugar, and some butter. Peters got him to write down his name and address and within the hour, he had been arrested and his supplies had been seized.

Despite all efforts to unearth the offenders, a few men waxed hideously rich upon the hunger of the many. All provocation notwithstanding, the guillotine remained simply a name. Wherever the death penalty was inflicted, it was done by mobs having no official sanction, by mobs aroused to an uncontrolled fury, and momentarily conscious of no other passion than that of reprisal. Considering the unsettled condition of government, such instances of violence were not so frequent as to change the character of the Revolution into that of a Reign of Terror.

1. With reference to these sources and your own understanding of the historical context, assess the value of these sources to a historian studying the Bolshevik Revolution between 1917 to 1921.

[30 marks]

END OF SOURCE QUESTION

2. How successful was the Bolshevik Party in introducing communism to Russia in 1917-1924?

[25 marks]

3. 'Trotsky was Lenin's main contender to succeed his leadership due to his major role in the October Revolution and the Civil War'

Assess the validity of this view.

[25 marks]

END OF QUESTIONS

Mark Scheme (understanding questions):

How was Russia governed before the October revolution that introduced Communism?

Russia was governed by a tsarist romanov dynasty, ruled predominantly by russian emperors, including the Tsar Nicholas II.

Why were people unhappy with the previous governing system of Russia? And how did Tsar Nicholas II attempt to resolve the issues?

People were unhappy with the Tsar Nicholas for four main reasons; political, social, military and economic-

Political: the people of Russia resented the autocracy and corruption of Tsar Nicholas II.

Social: Tsarist Russia was less modernised and developed than the rest of Europe in its industry and farming, meaning there were fewer opportunities for fair advancement on the part of peasants and industrial workers.

Economic: Under his rule there was inflation and long lasting food shortages that contributed to the revolution.

Military: He provided inadequate supplies, logistics, and weaponry, that ultimately led to heavy human losses that the Russians suffered during World War I.

Tsar Nicholas II established constitutional reform that essentially promised basic civil rights of freedom of expression, assembly and religion along with: The establishment of the State Duma, the multi-party system and the Russian Constitution of 1906

What was the main intention of the October Revolution in 1917? And who organised the coup?

The October revolution was intended to overthrow the provisional government and demand for the redistribution of land to the peasants. It was organised by the Russian Social-Democratic Labour Party (RSDLP) led by Lenin.

What were the results of the October Revolution?

The October revolution led to the undisputed success of the Bolsheviks. Urban workers then began to organize into councils named: 'soviets' wherein revolutionaries criticized the provisional government.

After the newly governing body, 'Congress of Soviets' had its second session it elected members of the Bolsheviks and other left-wing groups such as the Left Socialist Revolutionaries to important positions within the new state of affairs. This immediately initiated the establishment of the Russian Soviet Republic. And ultimately on 17 July 1918, the Tsar and his family were executed.

Explain what the Treaty of Brest-Litovsk was and why it was so unpopular amongst the people.

The Treaty was so unpopular amongst the people as Russia had lost control over the Baltic states of Lithuania, Estonia and Latvia, Finland, Ukraine and parts of the caucasus region. It was a national humiliation for the conservatives, especially for military officers that had served in the Tsar's army

Who were the radical opponents of Lenin's new democratic government?

- Social Revolutionaries
- Mensheviks
- Anarchists
- Britain, France, the US and Japan
- Nationalist Groups within the Russian Empire, such as Ukrainians, Poles and Finns

Briefly explain the importance of each group within Lenin's new government structure:

Russian workers, peasants and soldiers	Local soviets	All-Russian Congress of Soviets	Sovnarkom
<p>They would democratically elect members to form councils from towns and villages- and represented the democratic nature of the party</p>	<p>They were important as they would govern and were responsible for all decision making in local areas</p>	<p>They would elect Sovnarkom delegates, and would pass major laws</p>	<p>Important as they would control the state, govern Russia and would be accountable for the congress.</p> <p>However, they had no function during the Civil War as the main center of the government.</p>