

THE RUSSIAN REVOLUTION OF 1917-1920

Essential Questions

- What are the primary causes of the Russian Revolution?
- How does the political revolution change the course of Russian history?
- How does Russia emerge from this political crisis?

The Fall of Imperial Russia



Causes

1. Russian armies suffered from a lack of supplies and equipment.
2. Russia's political system, with its weak Duma and powerful Tsar, was not conducive to total war mobilization.
3. The tsar, Nicholas II, distrusted the Duma and resisted calls to share power with his subjects.

The Fall of Imperial Russia

Causes (cont.)

4. In September 1915 the tsar took direct command of armies at the front, leaving his wife, Alexandra, and her adviser Rasputin in real control of the government.
5. In March 1917 troops in St. Petersburg mutinied as women rioted, demanding bread. The Duma formed a provisional government and the Tsar abdicated.



The Provisional Government

1. **The Provisional Government** made Russia the freest country in the world on paper, with equality before the law, freedom of religion, the right to strike, and so on.
2. The Provisional Government shared power with the Petrograd Soviet of Workers' and Soldiers' Deputies.
3. Following the failure of Russia's summer 1917 offensive, the army began to dissolve.

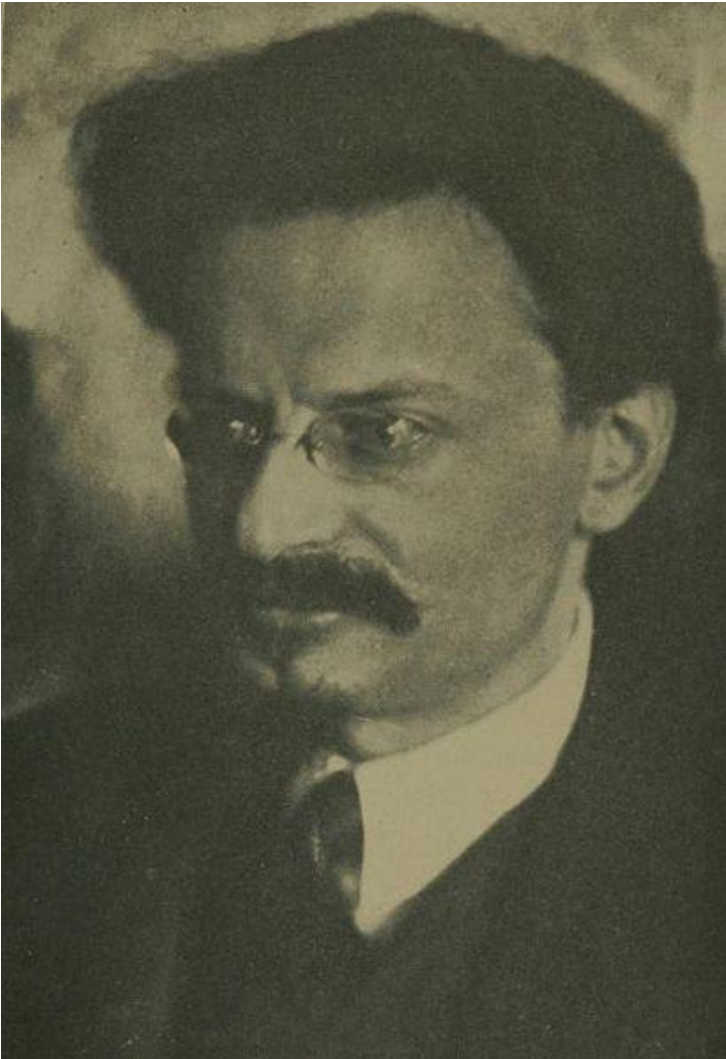


Lenin and the Bolshevik Revolution

- A. Lenin's political ideas:
 - 1. Only violent revolution could destroy capitalism.
 - 2. Socialist revolution was possible even in a backward country such as Russia.
 - 3. Human leadership rather than historical laws made real revolutions. **(this is a difference from Marxist theory)**
 - 4. Unlike many other socialists Lenin did not rally round the flag in 1914.
- B. In April 1917 Germans smuggled Lenin out of exile in Switzerland and into Russia.
- C. In the summer of 1917 Bolsheviks won support in Petrograd and by October gained a small majority in the Soviet.



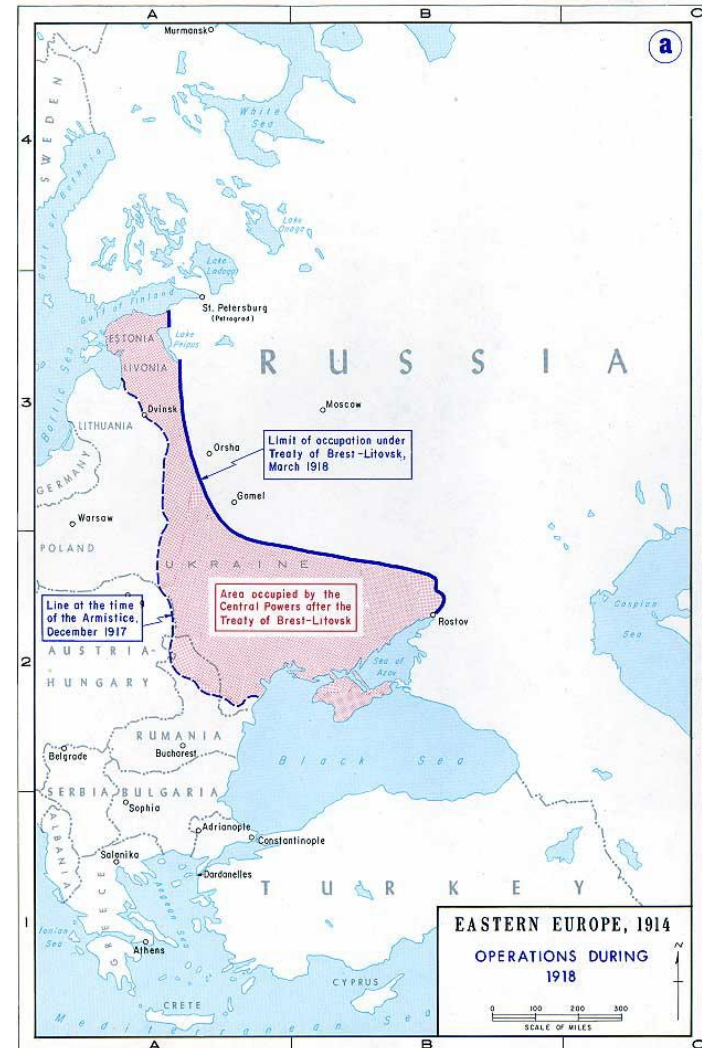
Trotsky and the Seizure of Power



- A. In early November militant Bolsheviks under the leadership of Leon Trotsky seized power from the Provisional Government in the name of the Petrograd Soviet.
- B. Reasons for Bolshevik success:
 - 1. By late 1917 Russia was in anarchy. Power was available to anyone who would seize it.
 - 2. Bolshevik leadership was superior to that of the Imperial or Provisional Governments.
 - 3. In 1917 the Bolsheviks succeeded in appealing to many soldiers and urban workers.

Dictatorship and Civil War

- A. The Bolsheviks immediately legalized peasant seizures of land.
- B. The Bolsheviks made peace with Germany in March 1918. (Treaty of Brest-Litovsk)
- C. In January 1918 the Bolsheviks dispersed by force the democratically elected Constituent Assembly, which was to write a constitution for Russia.
- D. The Bolshevik destruction of democracy led to civil war in Russia from 1918–1921.



Reasons for Bolshevik Success



Bolsheviks speaking at a meeting of workers and soldiers in Petrograd in 1917

- A. The Bolsheviks won the civil war for several reasons.
1. They controlled the strategic center of the country.
 2. The Bolsheviks' "White" opponents were divided and lacked a single clear political program.
 3. Trotsky created a superior army to the Whites.
 4. The Bolsheviks mobilized the home front, introducing forced labor, grain requisitioning, and rationing.
 5. The Bolsheviks used terror to maintain discipline and subdue opposition.
 6. Allied military intervention against the Bolsheviks allowed the latter to appeal to Russian patriotic sentiment against foreign invasion.

Questions for your review

1. What was the single most “fatal decision” made by Tsar Nicholas before the Russian Revolution?
2. Who was Rasputin? What was his influence w/i the Russian govt? What was his final fate?
3. What was Lenin’s contribution to Marxist theory?
4. What was the Petrograd Soviet’s Army Order #1?
5. Who was Trotsky and what was his role?
6. What was the Treaty of Brest-Litovsk?
7. What was the Cheka? How was it used?
8. Who were the “White Russians”?
9. What effect did Allied intervention have upon the Russian Civil War?