



Russia Topic 1: The revolutions of 1917

Key information

Tsarist Russia – The Romanovs had ruled Russia for over 300 years, tsar Nicholas II had the support of the Army, his secret police (Okhrana) and the **Duma** (Russian parliament) However, many Russians were living in poverty and wanted change. Political groups like the Socialist Revolutionaries and the **Bolsheviks** wanted to get rid of the tsarist regime. WWI had a terrible effect on Russia, economically Russia lost money through debt and lack of trade. This effected the society as food shortages were very common, unemployment increased, and 15 million peasants were forced to fight for the army. This led to unrest and even the Duma began to criticise the tsar and the war effort. In 1915 Tsar Nicholas II became the commander-in-chief of the army, this weakened his authority, not just within the army but in Petrograd, as his German wife, Alexandra, was left in charge of the Duma.

February Revolution – Long-term unrest, because of food shortages and the war, led to strikes and protests in Petrograd in late February. Women celebrating International Women’s Day joined workers who were striking in Petrograd. Between 23-25 Feb 250,000 peoples protested on the streets. 26th Feb soldiers were ordered to fire on the demonstrators, killing 40 people. Soldiers began to refuse orders and on the 28th Feb the tsar received a telegram reporting that Petrograd was out of control.



Key information

The Provisional Government – On the 2nd of March Tsar Nicholas was forced to **abdicate**, he had no support from the Duma nor from the Army High Command, Russia had become a republic. Nicholas was replaced by a **Provisional Government**, it was weak; it had no legitimate authority, it continued with the war and it was basically a Dual Government with the **Petrograd Soviet** who held a lot of the power, especially over the soldiers and sailors in Petrograd and other **soviets** in Russia. The decision to carry on with the war was a disaster, after the June Offensive, where there were 200,000 casualties, people protested in the streets of Petrograd between the 3rd -7th of July. Arguably the turning point in 1917 was during the Kornilov Revolt, General Kornilov wanted to take control of the Petrograd Soviet and sent troops to the capital to take control. **Kerensky** thought this was a military takeover, he freed Bolshevik prisoners and armed them. The **Red Guard** stopped Kornilov’s troops and it appeared that the Bolsheviks has saved Petrograd, their support began to increase rapidly, by October 1917 the Bolsheviks had 340,000 members, and 60,000 were in Petrograd.

Key Terms and People

Duma – Russian parliament who advised the tsar.
Bolsheviks – political group led by Lenin who was a communist and believed in socialism.
Abdicate – when a monarch steps down.
Provisional Government – government in charge of the Russian Republic from March 1917 till Oct 1917.
Petrograd Soviet – A committee of elected members, representing workers, soldiers and peasants.
Soviets – same as above.
Kerensky – Alexander Kerensky became leader of the P.G. in July 1917, made many mistakes including under estimating the Bolsheviks.
Red Guard – a military unit consisting of Bolsheviks or Bolshevik supporters to protect to soviets. After the Bolsheviks seized power it became the Red Army.

Key events

August 1st 1914 – Russia declares war on Germany.
August 1915 – Tsar Nicholas becomes commander-in-chief of the Russian Army.
February 1917 – Mass protests in Petrograd, unhappy about Tsar Nicholas and WWI.
March 1917 – Tsar Abdicates on the 2nd March, the Duma forms the Provisional Government.
April 1917 – Lenin returns from exile with his April Theses, calling for Peace, Land and bread and All Power to the Soviet.
June 1917 – Provisional Government decide to launch the “June Offensive” resulted in 200,000 Russian casualties and loss of territory (land).
July 1917 – Alexander Kerensky becomes leader of the Provisional Government and continues with the war.
July 3-7 1917 – Riots and protests led to an attempted uprising involving Lenin and the Bolsheviks, it failed as the Petrograd Soviet supported the Provisional Government. Bolsheviks were arrested and Lenin fled to Finland.
August 24th 1917 – Kornilov Revolt; General Kornilov (head of the Army) sent troops to Petrograd to shut down the Petrograd Soviet. Kerensky decided to release and arm the Bolsheviks. These Red Guard convinced Kornilov’s troops not to attack the capital.
October 10th 1917 – Lenin returns to Petrograd and convinces key Bolsheviks to support a takeover.
October 21st – The Petrograd Soviet swear loyalty to the MRC and Trotsky. They, along with the Red Guard seize important positions in Petrograd.
October 24th-25th 1917 – Red Guards seized control of the Winter Palace and arrested the remaining members of the P.G.
October 26th – Lenin forms the Bolshevik government called the Council of People’s Commissars.



	Key information	Key information	Key Questions
<p>Russia Topic 1: The revolutions of 1917</p>	<p>The Bolshevik Revolution – Following Lenin’s return in April, where he promised “All Power to the Soviet” and “Peace, Land and Bread”, support for the Bolsheviks slowly increased. By July the Bolsheviks had 10,000 Red Guard in Petrograd, and after the failed revolt by Kornilov the Bolsheviks were in a powerful position with their support still growing.</p> <p>By the beginning of October, Lenin and the Bolsheviks were beginning to prepare for the revolution:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 31 August Bolsheviks had won majority in the Petrograd Soviet • They had newspapers set up in Petrograd • A Bolshevik Headquarters was set up in Petrograd, in the Smolny Institute • 10th October Lenin returned from Finland and convinced 12 leading Bolsheviks to agree to a revolution. <p>Lenin’s leadership was key for the Bolsheviks to be successful, without Lenin the revolution would not have happened.</p>	<p>On the evening of 25 October, Red Guards and sailors from Kronstadt advanced on the old tsarist Winter Palace – where the Provisional Government had its headquarters.</p> <p>The palace was defended by officer cadets and a women’s battalion – Kerensky could not persuade more experienced troops to support him anymore. There was almost no opposition and the Bolsheviks entered the Winter Palace, found the remaining members of the P.G. and had them arrested.</p> <p>By the early hours of 26 October, it was all over. It was declared at the Congress of Soviets that the Bolsheviks had taken power across Russia.</p> <p><u>Reasons why the Bolsheviks were successful:</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The P.G. was weak, it continued with the war. • Lenin was a strong leader with a clear message. • “Peace, Land and Bread” was a powerful slogan. • Trotsky was an amazing planner who organised the Red Guards into an effective fighting force. • Kerensky underestimated the Bolsheviks and didn’t break up the Red Guard after the Kornilov Revolt. 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. What was the name of the ruler of Russia in 1914? 2. Who was the leader of the Bolsheviks? 3. What is the Russian word for a parliament? 4. What special day of marches led to the outbreak of the February Revolution? 5. Why was it a mistake for the tsar to become commander-in-chief of the army? 6. What was the name of the tsar’s wife and where did she come from? 7. What is the Russian word for a revolutionary council of workers, soldiers and peasants? 8. What was the title of Lenin’s publication produced when he first returned to Russia? 9. Who led the Provisional Government from July 1917?
		<p>Key terms and People</p>	
	<p>Another important individual for the success of the Bolsheviks in October was Leon Trotsky, he became chairman of the Petrograd Soviet and used its Military Revolutionary Committee along with the Bolshevik’s Red guard to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Take control of road and canal bridges in Petrograd • Take control of the Army headquarters • Took over telegraph offices to control communication in Petrograd <p>By the 24th October the Bolsheviks were ready to seize power.</p>	<p>Lenin – Leader of the Bolsheviks in 1917, exiled for much of this time, but led the revolution in October. He was a great public speaker, with a very persuasive and passionate personality. He was a true Marxist and believed in the idea of socialism.</p> <p>Leon Trotsky – once a Menshevik (opposed the Bolsheviks) Trotsky planned the October Revolution and would go on to led the Red Army. Very intelligent individual, but could be arrogant.</p> <p>Military Revolutionary Committee (MRC) – made up of soldiers and sailors apart of the Petrograd Soviet.</p> <p>Kronstadt – a naval base 20 miles west of Petrograd, Kronstadt sailors were supporters of the Bolsheviks.</p> <p>Congress of Soviets – A meeting of soviets in Petrograd the night of the revolution.</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 10. Who led a military revolt against the Provisional Government in August 1917? 11. What was given to the Red Guard after the military revolt in August? 12. What date did Lenin return from Finland to lead the October Revolution? 13. Who organised the Bolshevik October Revolution? 14. Name one area of the capital that the Red Guard controlled? 15. What date was the October Revolution?