

# **Between the Revolutions** **March to October 1917**

The Provisional Government, the Petrograd Soviet, the return of Lenin and the Kornilov Affair.



Vladimir Lenin (1870-1924)

## Russian Communists

- Program of the Russian Social-Democratic Workers Party (Bolsheviks):
- Russian capitalism is underdeveloped – but it is already bankrupt, unviable
- The Russian state is unreformable
- The only solution to the Russian crisis is to **move directly to socialism**, bypassing the capitalist phase
- **Overthrow of the old ruling classes**
- Establish a **new state run by workers and peasants**

But Russia is backward: how can it go socialist when Europe is still capitalist?

The Bolsheviks were convinced that the disaster of the First World War was bound to produce **socialist revolutions in major European countries** – in Germany, above all

Faith in the inevitability of “world revolution” was a crucial element of their thinking

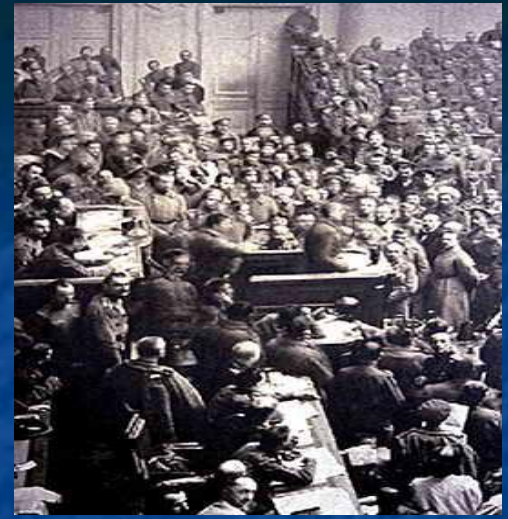
Success of the Russian revolution depended on the **spread of revolution beyond Russia**

- Lenin's plan:
  - Advance the most radical demands to gain popular support:
    - a **democratic peace**
    - radical **land reform**
    - worker control** of factories
    - self-determination** of nationalities
  - Push the Soviets to take power
  - Overthrow the Provisional Government by force, if necessary

# The Provisional Government

- **Shared Dual Authority** with the Petrograd Soviet.
- Led by Prince Lvov – many members of old duma formed part of the Government.
- **Not elected** – Milyukov, a member said that the Revolution had 'appointed them'!
- As they weren't elected by the people they lacked legitimate authority and failed to win the loyalty of the Russian people.
- Kerensky was a member of both the Provisional Government and the Petrograd Soviet.

# Petrograd Soviet



- A soviet is a workers council – previous soviets had been set up during the 1905 Revolution.
- The Soviet saw itself initially as a watchdog for the workers.
- Soviets spread throughout Russia.
- Enjoyed more credibility, popularity and power than the Provisional Government.
- Was able to restrain the government – for example had ultimate control over the Armed forces with ‘Soviet Order Number 1’.

# Working together ? The Dual Authority

- Initially the 2 bodies cooperated well and useful and effective changes were introduced including:
  - recognition of Trade Unions
  - 8 hour day for industrial workers
  - full civil and religious freedoms
  - commitment to a constituent assembly



# However.....

- As the year progressed the increasingly contrasting political makeup of the 2 bodies began to lead to disagreements. The Provisional Government moved further to the right politically and the Soviet moved to the left. This made cooperation much more difficult and tension between the 2 increased. The main issues of disagreement were Russia's involvement in the world war and the land question.

# Lenin returns!!

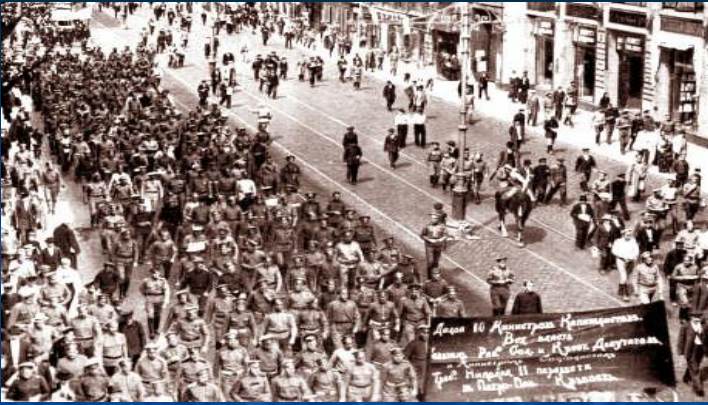
- Lenin's return was aided by the Germans socialists. He traveled across occupied Europe in a sealed train.
- Lenin arrived in Russia and immediately condemned the February Revolution and spoke of his desire to overthrow the Provisional Government – calling it a 'parliamentary-bourgeois republic'



# The April Theses

- On the 4<sup>th</sup> of April Lenin issued his 'April Theses'. The 'Theses' set out Bolshevik policy and expressed Bolshevik support for the Soviets (he certainly recognised their importance as an established powerbase). Lenin stated that the February Revolution was only the first stage of the Revolution. He refused to compromise on his belief in the power of the worker.
- Began to use slogans – 'Peace, Bread and Land' and 'All power to the Soviets'.

# Problems for the Provisional Government



- The Provisional Government wanted to continue with World War 1 – this was unpopular with many people and provided the Bolsheviks with increased support.
- Strikes occurred to protest against the war.
- Kerensky tried to persuade the Russian people to support the war by saying that it would help to save the Revolution, however public opinion was firmly opposed by that time.
- Sailors and workers at the Kronstadt naval base set up their own government in defiance of the Provisional Government – this gave other revolutionaries hope.

# **The July Day – almost a disaster for the Bolsheviks!!**

- Unrest was increasing throughout Russia – this discontent was focused on the Provisional Government.
- The July Days Rising (3-6 July):
  - widespread demonstrations
  - confused and disorderly
  - supported by the Bolsheviks (?)
  - easily crushed by Government troops

# July Days continued.....

- Even though the Bolsheviks didn't claim responsibility for the July Days fiasco, the Provisional Government saw it as a Bolshevik challenge to its authority and had many Bolsheviks arrested. Lenin fled Petrograd. The failure of the July Days severely hurt the reputation of the Bolshevik party as a serious revolutionary prospect.

# The Land Question

- Land shortages were a huge problem in 1917.
- Peasants had believed that the February Revolution would bring them land – it hadn't! Discontent grew and peasants began to seize land.
- The Provisional Government and the Soviet did not have a solution to the land question – but Lenin spotted the political advantage in the situation and adopted a land policy (stolen from the SRs) promising 'Land to the peasants'. This brought renewed support for the Bolsheviks.



# The Kornilov Affair– a right-wing coup?



- Kornilov was an army officer who hated Lenin and the Soviets and had not fully accepted the February Revolution.
- Kornilov made the decision to move troops to Petrograd to protect it against advancing German soldiers and growing unrest in the city itself.



# Continued....

- Kerensky publicly condemned Kornilov's action saying that he was bringing the troops to overthrow the government.
- Kerensky asked the people of Petrograd to fight against Kornilov – he gave weapons to 'loyal' people and released many Bolsheviks from prison so they could fight.
- No fighting occurred in the end because Kornilov's train was stopped on its way to Petrograd and he was arrested.
- Bolsheviks claimed that they had 'saved' the revolution and that the Provisional Government had been shown to be vulnerable.

**The Bolsheviks were now in a powerful and popular position. The Provisional Government had been weakened and the time was ripe for a change!!!!**