The establishment of Bolshevik rule, 1917-1924

By the end of this spread you should be able to describe:
1 how Lenin established Bolshevik control in Russia
2 the nature of Bolshevik rule
3 social changes under the Bolsheviks

How the Bolsheviks took control

A new government
1 The Mensheviks and many Social Revolutionaries walked out of the Second Congress of Soviets.
2 The Bolsheviks and their allies now had a majority.
3 Lenin set up a Council of People’s Commissars as the new temporary government. He was its Chairman and chose its members.

Government by decree
Lenin’s new government ruled by decree aiming to
1 carry out popular reforms
2 show that it was in charge
3 control opposition.

Land
1 Land was taken from the Tsar, nobles, Church and other landlords and handed over to the peasants.
2 Because the peasants expected to have the land, Lenin decided not to follow Bolshevik policy and take it into State ownership.

Factories
All factories were put under the control of elected committees of workers.

The press
All non-Bolshevik newspapers were banned.

The first decrees

Peace
Negotiations to end the war with Germany were to begin at once.

The secret police
A new secret police force (the CHEKA) was set up to deal with the Bolsheviks’ opponents.

Religion
The Government
1 suppressed religious worship
2 persecuted priests and monks
3 banned religious education in schools.

Education
1 Literacy campaigns enabled more people to be able to read and write.
2 The sciences were encouraged and subjects thought to be ‘useless’, such as history and ancient languages, were banned.

Work
A Labour Law (1922) gave workers
1 an eight hour day
2 two weeks paid holiday a year
3 social insurance benefits such as sick and unemployment pay and old-age pensions.

Social changes

Marriage
1 Couples were allowed non-religious weddings.
2 Divorce was made easier.
3 Free love was encouraged.
4 Abortion became available on demand.

Victory in the Civil War (page 124)
1 The Bolsheviks survived the military threat from their enemies at home and abroad.
2 They gained firm control
   a over much wider territories
   b over nationalist groups that had declared independence.

The Red Terror
The CHEKA
1 tortured and killed Bolshevik opponents
2 killed the Tsar and his family during the Civil War to prevent them becoming the focus of opposition
3 used terror tactics to frighten the population into obedience to the Government.

The Communist state
1 In 1918
   a the Bolsheviks changed their name to the Communist Party
   b the Congress of Soviets approved a new constitution (Fig. 2).
2 By 1922
   a the Communist Party was the only legal political party
   b Lenin had banned opposition groups within the Party itself
   c Soviet Russia had become a one-party state ruled by a dictator.

Peace with Germany
1 Trotsky, Commissar (Minister) for Foreign Affairs, spun out negotiations hoping for a Socialist revolution in Germany.
2 By 1918 the Germans threatened Petrograd itself. Lenin decided peace had to be made at any price in order to
   a keep the army’s support
   b end the hardship at home
   c give the Bolshevik government a ‘breathing space’.
3 At the Treaty of Brest-Litovsk (Fig. 1 page 122) Russia had to accept very harsh terms.