

# 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	2 the nature of Bolshevik rule
3 social changes under the Bolsheviks	3 social changes under the Bolsheviks

## How the Bolsheviks took control

### A new government

- The Mensheviks and many Social Revolutionaries walked out of the Second Congress of Soviets.
- The Bolsheviks and their allies now had a majority.
- 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
- carry out popular reforms
  - show that it was in charge
  - control opposition.

### Factories

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

### The press

All non-Bolshevik newspapers were banned.

### Land

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

### 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.

### The Constituent Assembly

- The Provisional Government had arranged for elections to be held for a Constituent Assembly to set up a new democratic government.
- In November 1917 these returned 370 Socialist Revolutionary (SR) deputies, 175 Bolsheviks and 162 others.
- In January 1918, when the Assembly met, Lenin refused to hand over power to the SR majority and ordered it to close.
- Red Guards enforced his order, killing or wounding over 100 pro-Assembly demonstrators.

### Peace with Germany

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

Russia lost its richest areas. They contained over 25% of its population, farmland and railways, and about 75% of its coal and iron ore.

Fig. 1 The Treaty of Brest-Litovsk, March 1918



### Victory in the Civil War (page 124)

- The Bolsheviks survived the military threat from their enemies at home and abroad.
- They gained firm control
  - over much wider territories
  - over nationalist groups that had declared independence.

### The Red Terror

#### The CHEKA

- tortured and killed Bolshevik opponents
- killed the Tsar and his family during the Civil War to prevent them becoming the focus of opposition
- used terror tactics to frighten the population into obedience to the Government.

### The Communist state

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

### Religion

#### The Government

- suppressed religious worship
- persecuted priests and monks
- banned religious education in schools.

### Work

#### A Labour Law (1922) gave workers

- an eight hour day
- two weeks paid holiday a year
- social insurance benefits such as sick and unemployment pay and old-age pensions.

### Education

- Literacy campaigns enabled more people to be able to read and write.
- The sciences were encouraged and subjects thought to be 'useless', such as history and ancient languages, were banned.

### Social changes

### Marriage

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