Question B: To what extent (how much) were Lenin's policies a success or a failure for the people of Russia/USSR?
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On the
Revolution
February
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The following day, these hundreds of women were joined by about one hundred thousand workers who gathered in the streets. As they marched, people chanted, “Give us bread.” A number of bakeries were looted that day and the next, as more strikers and women joined the demonstration. Some used sticks, cobblestones, or chunks of ice as weapons, but police did not fire into the crowds. The government refrained from sending out soldiers or Cossacks to disperse them.

As the demonstration went on, there was some shooting in the streets, and traffic halted for hours at a time. Nonetheless, most people went about their business. Alan Moorehead writes,

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But the people refused to disperse. On March 11, they marched defiantly with red banners, crying, “Down with Protopopov!” and “Down with the German woman” (Czarina Alexandra). Mobs attacked and looted police stations, jails, and court buildings. Fires were set throughout Petrograd, and the mayor was shot.

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Several important factors worked in their favor. The police in Petrograd, who numbered more than 160,000 armed men, were no longer the career policemen who worked there prior to the war. These replacements were younger and less loyal and included men from Estonia and other countries that bordered Russia, places that had suffered greatly during the war years. Other replacements were elderly men who had been reservists. The Cossacks were not geared to fight in city streets. Besides, many of these men sympathized with the workers and others who were demonstrating.

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The professor, Pitirim Sorokin, described a population that looked more and more rebellious. Women and children demonstrated in the streets calling for bread and herring. Large, noisy riots stopped the flow of tramcars, as people plundered shops and even attacked policemen. As February drew near, he wrote,

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Rising up against the monarchy, the Russian people left their jobs in factories and protested in the streets of Petrograd in 1917.

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other regiments came out against their czar. The government no longer had the use of the army. As the Cossacks observed these mutinies, they relinquished their neutrality in support of the revolution. At Tsarskoe Selo, the empress’s garrison mutinied, and she could not be moved to a safer location. She would not have left anyway, because all her children had measles, and the czarina insisted on caring for them where they were.

Only about two thousand loyal troops remained—too few to control the huge crowds in Petrograd, which were looting and seizing arms from arsenals. Revolutionary groups forced army officers out of the Astoria Hotel. They set fire to the District Court. The mobs proceeded to the Tauride Palace, singing "La Marseillaise," the anthem of the French Revolution. Fearing for their lives, some members of the Duma went into hiding.

The czar ordered his military commander in Petrograd, General Sergey Khabalov, to end the disorder, and the czar issued an edict disbanding the Duma. On March 12, Nicholas finally agreed to return to Petrograd and discuss forming a new government with his advisers and the leaders of the Duma. It was too late. Railway workers identified the czar’s train and blocked the line. Nicholas had to head in another direction.

Duma leaders inside the Tauride Palace realized the regime could not regain control.
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As the Duma members formed a provisional government, it seemed that the revolution was over. The city had suffered little damage, and there were few casualties considering the number of people involved. The 1,84 who died were placed in red coffins, and a million people marched quietly past their graves in Petrograd. At first, the provisional government declared that no religious services would be held, but the victims’ families expressed misgivings, so priests went to bless the graves.

People in other towns and cities had followed the lead of the workers in Petrograd. Telegrams brought news of their successful fight. Authorities in Moscow and outlying villages decided to accept the authority of the new provisional government and its committees. The chief of police in Moscow told a crowd of people, “Long live the Revolution!” Red flags were hung on buildings throughout the city, as in Petrograd. People tied red ribbons on their hats and coats to show they supported the revolution.

At the end of March, Lenin was still in Switzerland, seeking to obtain the papers and transportation he and his wife needed to return to Russia. He expressed his impatience: “You can imagine what a torture it is for us to be stuck here at a time like this.”

The forty-seven-year-old revolutionary finally reached Russia by train in the spring and was greeted by thousands of supporters. At once, he began to denounce the provisional government.

Unmet Needs

The new government, led by Socialist Aleksandr Kerensky, faced many problems, and the three main demands of the people-peace, land, and bread—had not been satisfied.

With so many different political parties, it was difficult to reach a consensus about how to govern Russia. Liberals, moderates, and conservatives wanted to restore order and...
continue the war alongside the Allies. The Ex Com, made up of Mensheviks, Bolsheviks, and Social Revolutionaries, hoped to end Russia’s involvement in World War I and move toward socialism, a system in which the means of production, whether it be a factory, farm, or mine, are commonly owned by a social group, instead of by private owners. Most people wanted to end the war. Moscow and other cities formed soviets—elected committees—that attempted to keep order and meet social needs. These committees passed decrees and organized police units. They also rationed food and opened distribution centers.

Life in Russia was chaotic as a new form of government took shape. Politicians wrote fiery articles in newspapers, and made speeches on the streets or in meeting halls. Because most people were still illiterate, they were more easily influenced by powerful speakers. Loud protesters, sometimes as many as five hundred thousand a day in Petrograd, lined the streets until after dark. Most of them were workers and soldiers, but there were many women and peasants, too. One day in May, soldiers who had been disabled or wounded in the war marched in support of the provisional government. Another day, some soldiers demanded to be allowed to return to the country for the harvest, carrying signs that read, “Our families are dying of hunger.”

Wealthy Russians often found their homes taken over by revolutionaries. Among the finest homes in Petrograd was that of Mathilde Kschessinskaya, premier dancer for

In Petrograd crowds celebrate a free Russia on May 1, 1917. Yet with the end of the monarchy, the Russian people were undecided on a new government.
the royal ballet and once a close companion of
the czar’s. Bolshevik leaders made her house
their headquarters, with a red flag flying from
the roof. It was spacious and stood near an as-
sembly hall where the Bolsheviks held politi-
cal rallies. When they held their April meeting
there, Lenin appeared at the conference to
cheering cries of “All Power to the Soviets!”

Kschessinskaya worked to regain her
house, even taking the matter to court. A
judge ordered the Bolsheviks to vacate, but
they remained there throughout the summer.
In July, Mensheviks raided the house as they
fought against the Bolsheviks. The house later
became state property.

All over the city, people debated politics.
Lenin’s wife, Nadezhda Konstantinovna
Krupskaya, later wrote,

At night I amused myself by opening the
window and listening to the heated debates
in a courtyard across the road from our
house. A soldier was sitting there sur-
rounded by cooks, chambermaids and I
know not what other young people. At one
o’clock in the morning, snatches of their talk
reached me: “Bolsheviks, Mensheviks.”

People celebrated the first May Day as a
free Russia on May 1, demonstrating in Petro-
grad carrying signs that read “Down with
the war! Land to the Peasants! All power to
the Soviets!” June brought a demonstration
that attracted nearly five hundred thousand
people to the streets to complain about the
provisional government. The rally was called
by Mensheviks and Social Democrats, but
most people marched with Bolshevik signs that read “All Power to the Soviets!” “The Right to Life is Higher Than the Right to Private Property!” Others read “No Separate Peace with Germany!”

The provisional government was not able to get the large number of weapons out of civilian hands. Lenin declared that the Bolsheviks should use force to take power from the provisional government under Kerensky: “All hopes for a peaceful development of the Russian Revolution have definitely vanished.” Lenin and other Bolshevik leaders intended to seize control of the government through violent means, if necessary.

In August, as elections were being held, the Bolsheviks distributed propaganda aimed at winning the support of more Russians. An article in the August 15, 18, and 19 issues of Proletariat said, “Every worker, peasant, and soldier must vote for our list because only our party is struggling staunchly and bravely against the raging counterrevolutionary dictators of the bourgeoisie and large landowners.” The article declared that the Bolsheviks were the only ones struggling to maintain “the freedoms won with the blood and sweat of the people.” Such articles aimed to arouse anger toward those who had any property or wealth. The election gave more seats to the Bolsheviks throughout the cities.

On August 13, Kerensky spoke to the Duma, trying to keep some sort of middle ground between right and left. He said to those on the left, “Let everyone who has already tried to use force of arms against the power of the people know that such attempts will be crushed with blood and iron.” And to those on the right: “At the same time let those who think the time is ripe to overthrow the revolutionary government with bayonets, be even more careful.”

The clash between these irreconcilable viewpoints would bring more bloodshed to Russia, along with other hardships, before the revolution was complete.
The post-czarist government grappled with many problems, as peasants, soldiers, and workers debated whose needs should come first. The economy had to be restructured, as did the military. Food and other goods had to be rationed and distributed.

The government faced many obstacles. For instance, workers had been demanding a shorter workday. As the government made plans to pass laws mandating an eight-hour day, soldiers protested. They themselves were risking their lives day and night at the front, they said, and needed the supplies workers could provide. Soldiers vehemently opposed shorter days for workers.

As winter approached, people lacked fuel, and mothers had no milk for their children. In Petrograd and Moscow, the bread ration was cut from one pound a day per person to one-half pound, then to one-quarter pound. Food prices doubled, and the train system broke down, which meant that grain did not arrive from Ukraine. Tens of thousands of people lost jobs as factories shut down. Inflation soared, and the amount of money circulating in the country more than doubled between January and October 1917.

Once again, wealthy Russians seemed untouched, their lives a stark contrast to those of the masses. According to American journalist John Reed, who was in Petrograd at the time, the wives of government bureaucrats had tea each afternoon with sugar and half a loaf of bread. Affluent people continued to eat in fine restaurants where they were serenaded by orchestras. Nightclubs and gambling houses remained open twenty-four hours a day. “The theatres were going every night, including Sundays. Karsavina appeared in a new ballet at the Mariinsky, all dance-loving Russia coming to see her. Chaliapin was singing . . . there were weekly exhibitions of painting,” Reed wrote. Even so, he said, “the city was nervous, starting at every sharp sound.”

Where was Russia headed? Nobody was sure. Czarism was dead, but nothing clearly replaced it. People talked endlessly in towns and cities about politics, and rumors spread. A Siberian peasant summed up the confusion many felt: “We feel that we have escaped from a dark cave into the bright daylight. And here we stand not knowing where to go or what to do.”

**Russian Revolution**

**Bolshevik Takeover**

During late October, delegates to the All-Russian Congress of Soviets began arriving in Petrograd. The assembly was scheduled to meet on November 2.

November 7 dawned gray and cloudy, with a hint of sunshine. The streets of Petrograd were unusually busy. People noticed large numbers of cars, trucks, armored vehicles in the streets, and soldiers, sailors, political officials, and members of the Duma and their assistants.
In support of the Bolshevik uprising, Red Guards patrol Leningrad in an armored car.

Throughout the rest of Petrograd, children were attending school as usual, and stores, factories, and government offices were open. En route to a newspaper stand that day, a writer whose pen name was Knizhnik describes the atmosphere in Petrograd:

As I passed the Troitsky Bridge, I saw a patrol of sailors. In the Neva, a cruiser was visible at the Nikolaevsky Bridge. In the streetcar some elderly citizen, evidently a merchant, was loudly and heatedly telling his neighbor that he was sick of the state of things, that the power of the Provisional Government was not a firm power, and therefore let even the Bolsheviks take power, if only there will be order.44

Knizhnik continued to wander the streets, asking people what was going on. Back home, he heard the sound of machine-gun fire. The next morning, Bolshevik trucks sped around Petrograd delivering notices that were nailed to walls throughout the city. The proclamation, written by Lenin, read:

To the Citizens of Russia!

The Provisional Government has been deposed. State power has passed into the hands of the organ of the Petrograd Soviet of Workers and Soldiers' Deputies—the Revolutionary Military Committee, which heads the Petrograd proletariat and the garrison.

The cause for which the people have fought, namely, the immediate offer of a democratic peace, the abolition of landed proprietorship, workers' control over production and the establishment of Soviet power—this cause has been secured.

Long live the revolution of workers, soldiers, and peasants!45

That day, the Bolshevik paper Rabochiy Put featured a long article by Lenin that urged that power be taken from the bourgeois class and given to workers and peasants. Mensheviks and Social Revolutionaries presented their views in Izvestiya, saying, 'The Bolshevik up-
rising, which we have warned against as a terrible trial for the country, is being organized and started. . . . The dictatorship of one party, no matter how radical, will be as hateful to the great majority of the people as the autocracy." 66

The Bolsheviks had failed to overthrow the government that summer. This time they were determined to prevail. They had support from disgruntled citizens who believed the Bolshevik promises of a better future. To delegates who opposed the Bolsheviks, Leon Trotsky said, "You are miserable bankrupts, your role is played out; go where you ought to go: into the dustbin of history." 67

The Bolsheviks also had military support in the form of the Red Guard. Workers and soldiers had joined, or been recruited for, this group. During September, thousands of factory workers received rifles and military training. By October, the guard comprised twenty thousand men. Late that month, units of guards were assigned to take over, on command, the telephone exchange, railroad stations, state bank, printing plants, and bridges that spanned the Neva River.

On the night of November 7, Bolsheviks marched to Palace Square to take over the Winter Palace and arrest the ministers and overcome military cadet guards. Thousands of bullets showered the palace. The cadets could not resist this onslaught. The crowd then moved through the city to seize control of other government buildings and railway stations and arrest people.

While the Winter Palace was under siege, the Bolsheviks met in the assembly hall with the few ministers from other parties who had not fled. One of their leaders, Julius Martov, said, "The civil war is beginning, comrades! The first question must be a peaceful settlement of the crisis." 68

As conflicts continued, the Bolsheviks sought help from more citizens. Men, women, and children were asked to help the Red Guard. They dug trenches and put up barricades and barbed wire in case Cossacks or others threatened their revolt. According to John Reed,

By tens of thousands the working people poured out, men and women; by tens of thousands the humming sums belched out their dumb and miserable hordes. Red Petrograd was in danger! Cossacks!
South and southwest they poured through the shabby streets towards the Moscovsky Gate, men, women, and children, with rifles, picks, spades, barbed wire, cartridge belts over their working clothes. ... Such an immense outpouring of a city was never seen.  

There was a frenzy of activity in the palace with some soldiers looting valuables and other soldiers trying to stop them. Some soldiers and sailors began opening bottles in the imperial wine cellars and drinking the contents. Things finally became quiet inside and out in the square.

Lenin addressed Bolshevik leaders on November 8, saying, “We shall now proceed to construct the Socialist order!” The Bolsheviks announced their plans: sign a peace proposal, give estate lands to peasants, de-

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**Women’s Battalion of Death Fighters**

A group of women volunteers joined the Women’s Battalion of Death Regiment during World War I. The women wore plain uniforms and their hair was cut quite short, not to look masculine, but to preventlice, parasites that infect the skin around hair and may carry dangerous diseases such as typhus. The battalion formed to carry out domestic military duties while men were at the front. They swore they would also fight against Germany until death, if necessary.

When the Bolshevik revolution began, they were sent to the Winter Palace to guard members of the provisional government, who no longer trusted other soldiers. When the fighting began, they were still inside the Winter Palace. Men in the Red Guard were ready to fire and attack, but their leader restrained them, warning them that other Russians would revile them for shooting at Russian women. After the Bolsheviks gained control of the building, the women were allowed to leave.

*Members of the Women’s Death Battalion volunteered to perform military duties at home while Russian soldiers fought on the front lines during World War I.*

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democratize the army, allow workers to control industry, provide bread to cities and factory goods to rural areas, and create a representative assembly. Czarist institutions would be replaced by proletarian groups.

The October Decree on Land declared that all the lands once owned by the imperial family, the Russian church, and monasteries and nobles’ large estates would now be under the control of district land committees and the county Soviets of Peasants’ Deputies.

The Bolshevik newspaper Pravda had been shut down by the provisional government. Now it was published again, with headlines that read “All Power to the Soviets of Workers’, Soldiers’ and Peasants’ Deputies! Peace! Bread! Land!” Millions of people were pleased by and enthusiastic about these decrees.

**Hunger and Violence**

Bolsheviks also took over Moscow, with much violence. The Kremlin was bombarded and damaged by Red Gunners on November 1. Some Bolsheviks expressed dismay. The chief of the Department of Education, Anatoli Lunacharsky, resigned and said,

> I cannot bear this monstrous destruction of beauty and tradition... Comrades, you are the new masters of this country, and although you now have many other things to reflect upon, you must also defend your artistic and scientific heritage... Soon even the most uncultured among us, those whom oppression has kept in ignorance for so long, will be educated and will understand what source of joy, of strength and wisdom, are the great works of art.

At the home of her aunt and uncle in Moscow, where she was attending school, Margarita Zarudny had listened to many discussions about the revolution: “In that house every word printed in the papers and press was discussed, every aspect, every pro and con. In October, when the revolution erupted and the fighting started, none of us were allowed to set foot outside the house.”

*All Power to the Bolsheviks!*
After the fighting between the Bolsheviks and their opponents ended, robberies and other crimes became frequent. Although her uncle was a respected professor with four children, there was little food in Zarudny's house. Some meals consisted of bits of bread with water. People exchanged belongings for food. Zarudny remembers, "One time my aunt and uncle brought home a little round sack of sunflower seeds. They'd swapped a dress for them. And so every day I'd spend a couple of hours husking sunflowers and eating seeds until I felt full." In exchange for a clock, they received a bag of oats used to feed horses. Food prices were incredibly high. Visitors from the country brought welcome gifts of food.

Violence erupted in the countryside as people attacked and killed landlords or seized land or timber plots. They took firewood and burned stores of grain and hay. Near the end of 1917, seizures of land were common. Peasants also resisted turning over grain to government officials and paying rent or taxes. In rural regions, people were impatient. Before the government completed its surveys and
made recommendations, small landowners put together their own peasant soviets, or councils. Defying the laws, they stole farm tools and other items from large estates and cleared wooded areas and plowed lands that were not legally theirs.

Half of the men drafted for military service in the Russian army during the war were peasants. So since they were often peasants themselves, soldiers sent to the country to keep order seldom arrested people for these acts. The new government did not yet have an effective police force. When the peasants’ actions went unchecked, they became even bolder, burning castles and manor houses.

Military Deserters

Desertions continued in the army. Letters from home told soldiers that lands were being divided and given out. Many soldiers feared that they might not receive their share if they stayed with the army. By 1917, more than a million soldiers had deserted and returned to the countryside.

As the revolution spread into the military, soldiers vented their long-suppressed anger toward officers by insulting them and tearing off their medals and insignia. They refused to salute their superiors when they were off duty.

The government decreed new military procedures. Officers were ordered to stop treating soldiers rudely; although discipline was still expected. Soldiers were granted rights like other citizens.

In the months that followed, military officers said they no longer could control the troops, who disobeyed and deserted at will. Conditions in the army worsened as food deliveries ran short. Boots, more essential than ever as winter approached, were not arriving as needed. Observers said the army would collapse. A report published in 1917 called the Russian army “an exhausted mass of undernourished men in rags, full of bitterness and united only in their resentment and thirst for peace.” Bolshevik leaders promised them peace.

The Bolsheviks now prepared to consolidate their power and govern Russia. Sure of their convictions, they were prepared to take whatever steps were necessary to achieve their goals. It would take several more years of fighting their political enemies throughout Russia before the Bolsheviks’ seizure of power was complete.
Blood and Iron

After the Bolshevik revolution, instability and confusion marked daily life in Russia. People in different parts of the country found themselves controlled by different forces. Bolsheviks (Reds) held Petrograd, Moscow, and most of central Russia. They were moving east. They renamed streets and cities to honor bolshevism, its leaders and ideals. Buildings were also converted for different uses, so that former mansions were now workers unions, for example.

Other areas were under anti-Bolshevik (White) control. The White army was made up of czarist officers, nobles, conservative Cossacks, peasants, bourgeois, intellectuals, and leftists who opposed bolshevism. In the south, Don Cossacks, a group of Cossacks who supported the provisional government, set up their own anti-Red government. In Ukraine, the Whites controlled the capital city of Kiev.

Shortages of food, oil, cooking equipment, nails, farm tools, textiles, matches, and many other things plagued the nation. Early in 1918, Kyra Karadja, a ten-year-old girl, lined up at a store to receive her bread ration. A man behind the counter weighed each person's piece carefully. To make her slice last longer, Karadja "took small bites and tried to count till thirty between every nibble."

At noon, they might have lentils or potatoes to eat. The schools fed students tea with brown sugar and a piece of cornbread. Milk, cheese, butter, and white sugar were delicacies. Kyra and her sisters wore old dresses that they washed and pressed over and over.

Socks were carefully darned. They wore rope-soled sandals for everyday use; their shoes, worn on special occasions, were too small.

Tight Control

After the revolution, many people had hoped for a government made up of elected representatives of workers, peasants, merchants, and minorities. Early in November, people throughout Russia elected representatives for the Constituent Assembly. Out of 707 seats, 175 Bolsheviks were chosen. Another 40 seats went to Bolshevik allies. A total of 370 anti-Bolshevik Socialist Revolutionaries won seats, giving this party a majority. Voters thought these men would help to govern the nation.

This marked the first time that Russians were free to vote for their leaders. It would also be the last really free election held there for nearly seventy years. Lenin and his followers rejected a coalition government. When the elected representatives arrived in January 1918, Bolshevik guards stood outside the Tauride Palace. The Bolsheviks insisted that the group declare them the rightful leaders of Russia. When the majority of delegates refused to approve this measure, Bolsheviks and their supporters left.

The remaining delegates elected a chairman and began conducting business. They were still at work when a commander of the guards outside told the chairman they must stop for the day. When the delegates de-