Steps to revolution 1914–17

When war broke out against Germany in 1914, the Tsar became more popular than he had been for years. The Russian people united in their support for him: problems could be set aside in the face of a common enemy. Crowds cheered the Tsar as troops paraded past him on the way to the war front. St Petersburg was renamed the more Russian-sounding Petrograd (grad means town in Russian, whereas burg means town in German).

Another positive result of the outbreak of war was that the Tsar started to work more closely with the Duma. Able people from the Duma began to be appointed to important posts.

1. Why was the outbreak of war a good thing for the Tsar?
2. What impressions do Sources 1 and 2 give you of the support for the Tsar?
3. What expectations do you think the Russian people had of him at the beginning of the war?

Source 1  Written by Muriel Buchanan (daughter of the British Ambassador to Russia) on the outbreak of war

“... The processions in the street carrying the Tsar’s portrait, framed in the flags of the allies, the bands everywhere playing the national anthem... the long unending line of khaki-clad figures who marched away singing and cheering, tall bronzed men with honest, open faces with childlike eyes, and a trusting faith in the little father [the Tsar], and a sure and certain hope that the saints would protect them and bring them back to their villages...

... Those first days of war! How full we were of enthusiasm, of the conviction that we were fighting in a just and holy cause...”

Source 2  Written by the Times correspondent in July 1914, on witnessing a huge crowd in front of the Winter Palace

“At last the Tsar, moved by the magnitude of the demonstration, appears on the balcony overlooking the square. Instantly the throng sinks upon its knees and with absolute spontaneity sings the deep-throated Russian anthem... For perhaps the first time since Napoleon’s invasion of Russia the people and their Tsar were one, and the strength that unity spreads in a nation stirred throughout the Empire.”

Source 5  A map of the Eastern Front, showing the first battles. Russia and its allies, Britain and France, were fighting against Germany and the Austro-Hungarian Empire

Step 1: The effects of the war on the soldiers

Enthusiasm for the war did not last for long. After some initial successes against the Austrians, the Russians were heavily defeated by the Germans at Tannenberg and the Masurian Lakes. Losses mounted rapidly – over one million soldiers were killed, wounded or taken prisoner by the end of 1914, and this number had risen to eight million by March 1917. Soldiers saw their comrades being slaughtered in a futile manner. Many died without weapons or ammunition, and some did not even have boots to wear in the bitterly cold weather. They blamed their officers, who appeared unfeeling and ineffective. And things got worse as the war went on.
SOURCE INVESTIGATION

What was the state of the Russian army?

SOURCE 4 From a report by Michael Rodzianko, President of the Duma, on a visit to the war front

"The army had neither wagons nor horses nor first aid supplies... We visited the Warsaw station, where there were about 17,000 men wounded in battles. At the station we found a terrible scene: on the platform in dirt, filth and cold, in the rain, on the ground, even without straw, wounded, who filled the air with heart rending cries, dolefully asked: 'For God's sake order them to dress our wounds, for five days we have not been attended to.'"

Rodzianko's son fought in the army

"Our son... began to narrate his experiences. Criminal incompetence, lack of cooperation in the higher command... had resulted in slackness of our crack regiments.

Rodzianko told the story of a frontal attack on the Rai-Mestro heights, ordered by a Grand Duke who had been told not to attack from the front because of a swamp

The troops found themselves in a swamp, where many men perished... My son sank up to his armpits, and was with difficulty extricated... The wounded could not be brought out, and perished in the swamp. Our artillery fire was weak... the shells fell short and dropped among our own men... Nevertheless, the gallant guards fulfilled their task, though bled white, and succeeded in capturing the heights, WHICH THEY WERE THEN ORDERED TO ABANDON."

SOURCE 5 A priest blessing the wounded

SOURCE 6 Written by General Belaiev

"In recent battles, a third of the men had no rifles. The poor devils had to wait patiently until their comrades fell before their eyes and they could pick up weapons. The army is drowning in its own blood."

SOURCE 7 By the Chairman of the Military Commission of the Duma

"As early as the beginning of the second year of the war desertions [of soldiers] at the front and on their way to the front became commonplace, and the average number of deserters reached 25 per cent. I happen to know of three cases when the train was stopped because there were no passengers on it; all, with the exception of the officer in command, had run away."

4. Why was the morale of the soldiers so low?
5. What do Sources 4–7 tell us about the problems of the army?
6. Which do you think was the most worrying problem? Why?
Step 2: The effects of the war on the Russians at home

1. Food was getting short. Millions of male peasants had been conscripted into the army, so there was a shortage of farm workers and less food was being produced. In addition, food was not getting to the cities; the Russian railway system was being used to carry supplies to the war front, and so trains carrying food to the cities had been reduced.

2. Coal and industrial materials were short. Many factories closed, making their workers unemployed. The lack of coal and fuel in general meant that people in the cities were cold as well as hungry.

3. Because of the shortages, the prices of goods were rising continually, but wages were hardly going up at all. To make matters worse, workers were being asked to work longer hours. And to add insult to injury, the sale of vodka was stopped during the war.

4. Factories closed, leading to unemployment and even greater poverty.

As defeat piled on defeat and the number of casualties increased, Russians in the cities began to lose confidence in the government. They were also suffering from the economic effects of the war.

1. Make a list of the reasons why people in the cities were getting more and more unhappy about the war.
Step 3: Turning point – a terrible mistake

In the midst of these difficulties, Nicholas II made a terrible mistake: in September 1915, he decided to take over the running of the war and to go to the war front himself. This had serious consequences. Firstly, Nicholas himself was now blamed for defeats in the war. Secondly, the Tsar handed over the day-to-day running of the country to the Tsarina. The people mistrusted her because of her German background, and thought she was a spy. Her close relationship with Rasputin contributed further to the collapse of her reputation. He seemed to be in charge of the government. There were stories that they were lovers.

The Tsarina made a mess of running the country. She would not work with the Duma at all. She dismissed able ministers and replaced them with ‘our men’, meaning men who would do what they were told or who were friends of Rasputin. Some were incompetent and others downright scoundrels. There were so many changes of ministers that nobody was organising food, fuel and other supplies for the cities properly. The railway system fell into chaos and trainloads of food were left rotting in the sidings.

SOURCE 8 A cartoon of Rasputin with the Tsar and Tsarina

SOURCE 9 Part of a letter from the Tsarina to Nicholas at the war front

"Deary, I heard that that horrid Rodzianko wants the Duma to be called together – oh please don’t, it’s not their business, they want to discuss things not concerning them and bring more discontent – they must be kept away...

Listen to our friend [Rasputin]... it is not for nothing God sent him to us... we must pay attention to what he says... Forgive me, but I don’t like the choice of the Minister of War, Polianov... is he not our friend’s [Rasputin’s] enemy?"

2. What is the message of the cartoon in Source 8?
5. How do Sources 8 and 9 show the damage being done by the Tsarina and Rasputin?
Step 4: Losing support

As the news from the war got worse and the situation in the cities got more desperate, support for the Tsar and his wife began to decrease among the middle and upper classes of society, and even among the aristocracy. They were appalled that a man like Rasputin should be allowed such influence, and they had little respect for the Tsarina. They blamed the Tsar for allowing this situation to develop.

The winter of 1916 was a bad one. The railway lines were so iced up that hardly any food or fuel got into Petrograd. Prices went sky high. Huge bread queues formed, but often there was no bread.

Source 10 Written by Sir Henry Wilson in Petrograd, February 1917

"... as certain as anything that the Emperor and Empress are riding for a fall. Everyone – officers, merchants, ladies – talks openly of the absolute necessity of doing away with them."

Source 11 A police report made at the end of 1916

"The industrial PROLETARIAT of the capital is on the verge of despair... the smallest outbreak will lead to uncontrollable riots... Even if we assume that wages have increased by 100 per cent, the cost of living has risen by 300 per cent. The impossibility of obtaining food, the time wasted in spending hours waiting in queues outside shops, the increasing death rate due to inadequate diet and anti-sanitary lodgings, cold and dampness as a result of lack of coal and firewood – all these conditions have created such a situation that the mass of industrial workers are quite ready to let themselves go to the wildest excesses of a hunger riot..."

Source 12 A bread queue in Moscow, September 1917

Source 13 A demonstration on International Women’s Day, 8 March

1. Why would the statement in Source 10 be very worrying for the Tsar?
2. What do Sources 11 and 12 show us about the state of Russian cities at the end of 1916? Why were people getting angry?
Step 5: The revolution begins

By March 1917 the situation had become desperate and there was a serious mood of discontent. The workers wanted political changes as well as food and fuel.

On 7 March in Petrograd, 40,000 workers from the giant Putilov engineering works went on strike for higher wages. The next day was International Women’s Day and thousands of women joined strikers in demonstrations all over the city, shouting ‘Down with hunger! Bread for the workers!’ (see Source 15). In the two days that followed, thousands of workers, men and women, joined in demanding food, fuel and better conditions, and a new government.

The Tsar ordered that the demonstrations be put down by force. After all, there had been riots before. Rodzianko, leader of the Duma, sent a telegram saying that the situation was at crisis point. The Tsar commented to a minister, ‘That fat Rodzianko has again sent me some nonsense to which I will not even bother to reply.’ The Tsar was wrong not to take any notice.

Step 6: The army takes sides

12 March was a decisive day and changed the character of the riots. Soldiers in Petrograd refused to fire on crowds, and some regiments shot their officers and joined in the demonstrations. They had had enough of the war and the way they were treated. This made the demonstrations of 1917 different from anything that had gone before.

The soldiers joined the strikers and the women in the streets and marched to the Duma to demand that it take control of the government.

SOURCE 14 Report by an agent of the Okhrana (secret police), 11 March 1917

“Everything depends on the behaviour of the military units; if the latter do not join the proletariat, the movement will quickly subside: but if the troops turn against the government, then nothing can save the country from a revolutionary upheaval.”

SOURCE 15 A diary entry for 12 March 1917 by Shulgin, a Duma deputy

“During the last few days we have been living, as it were, on a volcano... It is not, of course, a question of bread. The trouble is that in that large city it is impossible to find a few hundred people who feel kindly towards the government.”

5. On what, according to Sources 14 and 15, did the revolution depend?
Step 7: The Tsar abdicates

Nicholas tried to get back to Petrograd, but it was too late. Railway workers refused to let his train into the city. It was from his train that, on 15 March, the Tsar finally decided to abdicate in favour of his brother Michael. (Alexis, his son, was too ill to be Tsar.) But the people had had enough of the royal family.

1. What does Source 16 tell us about the people's attitude to the Tsar at the end of his reign?

**SOURCE 16** A photograph showing the head of a statue of the Tsar on the ground

### ACTIVITY

You are going to write an essay with the title ‘What were the causes of the Russian Revolution in March 1917?’. Use the chart below to plan your essay. Make a copy on a large piece of paper. Make brief notes in each section about what you want to include.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Causes of the Revolution of March 1917</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Before the war</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Economic causes</strong> How well were industry and agriculture doing?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Social causes</strong> Had the conditions of a) the workers and b) the peasants improved in the years leading up to the war?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Political causes</strong> Were people's views being heard through the Duma? How well was the Tsar running the country?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>The war</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Effects of the war</strong> ... on people</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Effects of the war</strong> ... on the army</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>The Tsar's mistakes</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>The role of the Tsarina and Rasputin</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>The Revolution</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Conditions in March 1917</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Crucial role of the army</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Conclusions: Weigh up the importance of different causes</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

| Was the war the main cause? | Were the failures of the Tsar before and during the war the main cause? |

36
How did the Bolsheviks seize power?

Lenin returns

The arrival of Lenin, leader of the Bolsheviks, was to change the whole course of the revolution. Lenin had been in Switzerland when the March Revolution took place, and at first he could not get back to Russia as he had to cross Germany, where the Russians were fighting. However, the Germans were pleased to help him, hoping that he would cause trouble for the Russian government. They gave him money and put him in a special sealed train, which travelled through Germany to Finland. He then made his way to Petrograd, arriving at the beginning of April.

The Germans were right. Lenin did cause a stir and he did make trouble. Immediately on his arrival he made a speech demanding that:

- there should be no co-operation with the Provisional Government
- the war should be ended immediately
- the land should be given to the peasants
- the Soviets should take power.

The points in Lenin's speech were later written up as the April Theses, in which Lenin argued that there should be a second revolution – a Socialist revolution – in which the workers took power. Many Bolsheviks were surprised, and some did not take him seriously.

SOURCE 1 A 1930s painting of Lenin making a speech on his arrival at the Finland Station in Petrograd

The Bolshevik Party turned Lenin’s ideas into the slogans ‘Bread, Peace, Land’ and ‘All Power to the Soviets’. This was what the people wanted to hear. Support for the Bolsheviks began to grow, although as you can see from Source 2 they were outnumbered in the Soviets by other Socialists.

SOURCE 2 In June 1917 all the Soviets in Russia selected representatives to go to the First All-Russian Congress of Soviets. These were the results

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Party</th>
<th>Number</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Socialist Revolutionaries</td>
<td>285</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mensheviks</td>
<td>248</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bolsheviks</td>
<td>105</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other Socialists</td>
<td>105</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
July Days
The war was the big issue that distinguished the Bolsheviks from other groups. Only they opposed the war.
Over the summer of 1917, the ordinary people became more and more opposed to the war as shortages continued. Matters came to a head in July, when Kerensky launched a major attack on the Germans. This turned out to be a huge mistake, leading to a terrible defeat. It sparked an enormous demonstration in Petrograd, which became known as the ‘July Days’. Soldiers, sailors and workers poured onto the streets on 16 and 17 July to protest about the war. Naturally, they turned to the Bolsheviks, the anti-war party, to lead them. But the Bolsheviks were not ready to seize power.
The demonstrations turned to rioting, and eventually troops were sent in to break up the mobs. Kerensky used this opportunity to produce evidence - letters - that seemed to show that Lenin was in the pay of the Germans. Lenin fled to Finland, and other leading Bolsheviks were arrested. It seemed that the Bolsheviks had missed their opportunity. Kerensky became Prime Minister.

Autumn 1917 – a second chance
Fortunately for the Bolsheviks, events now started to work in their favour: Kerensky had appointed a general called Kornilov to be head of the army. But Kornilov decided that it was time to deal with the revolutionaries once and for all and to establish strong government in Russia - his own government. He ordered his Cossack troops to march on Petrograd.
The people in Petrograd panicked; there was bound to be violence and bloodshed. Kerensky also panicked and asked the Bolsheviks for help. He gave rifles to the Bolshevik Red Guard, groups of workers who had been training secretly, and who now appeared on the streets to help defend the city. But Kornilov’s troops never arrived. The railway workers stopped the trains carrying the troops, and workers and other soldiers persuaded them not to fight their fellow Russians. However, the Red Guard kept their rifles.

SOURCE 4 Lenin had to shave off his beard to escape. Any films or photographs of Lenin during this time which show Lenin with a beard are fakes, usually produced well after the Revolution.

SOURCE 5 Troops fire on demonstrators during the July Days.
The time is right
The Bolsheviks were now the 'saviours' of Petrograd, and their support was at an all-time high. They won an overall majority in elections to the Petrograd Soviet and Leon Trotsky, a recent recruit to the Bolsheviks, was elected chairman.

Meanwhile, the situation in the rest of Russia was deteriorating fast. In the countryside, the peasants were seizing land at an increased rate. Kerensky sent out punishment brigades to try to stop the land seizures, but this only made the peasants hate the Provisional Government more. Soldiers were deserting from the army in their thousands, trying to get back to their villages to get a share of the land. Food was rationed in the cities and prices were rising fast. It began to get cold as winter approached.

From his hiding place in Finland, Lenin sent messages to the Bolsheviks telling them to seize power now that they controlled the Soviets. But leading Bolsheviks refused to carry out his instructions. So Lenin returned to Petrograd in disguise. He spent the night of 25 October arguing with them until they gave in. He wanted them to seize power straight away, but Trotsky persuaded him to wait.

SOURCE 5 The situation at the end of the summer, reported by an eye-witness, N. Sukanov

"Lynch law, the destruction of homes and shops, jeering at and attacks on officers, unauthorised arrests, seizures and beatings up were recorded every day by tens and hundreds. In the country, burnings and destruction of country houses became more frequent.

Military discipline collapsed... There were masses of deserters. The soldiers, without leave, went off home in great floods. They filled all the trains, kicked out the passengers and threatened the entire transport system."

SOURCE 6 Bread rations per person per day in Petrograd in 1917

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>March</th>
<th>April</th>
<th>September</th>
<th>October</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Manual workers</td>
<td>675g</td>
<td>335g</td>
<td>225g</td>
<td>110g</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Others</td>
<td>450g</td>
<td>335g</td>
<td>225g</td>
<td>110g</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

SOURCE 7 John Reed, an American journalist, describes Petrograd in Ten Days that Shook the World

"September and October are the worst months of the Russian year - especially the Petrograd year. Under dull grey skies, in the shortening days, the rain fell drenching, incessant...

It was dark from three in the afternoon till ten in the morning. Robberies and housebreaking increased. In the apartment houses the men took turns at night guard duty, armed with loaded rifles.

Week by week, food became scarcer. The daily allowance of bread fell... Towards the end there was a week without bread at all. Sugar one was entitled to at the rate of two pounds per month - if one could get it at all, which was seldom. A bar of chocolate cost anywhere from seven to ten roubles - at least a dollar. There was milk for half the babies in the city; most hotels and private houses never saw it for months. For milk and tobacco one had to stand in a queue long hours in the chill rain."

SOURCE 8 Bolsheviks distributing leaflets
The Bolsheviks seize power

The Bolsheviks had their headquarters in the Smolny Institute, a former girls’ school. It was from here that Trotsky organised the takeover of the city, planned for 7 November. It was no secret – the newspapers carried articles about it and the Bolsheviks distributed leaflets saying it was going to happen. Kerensky, dosing himself on brandy and morphine, desperately rushed round the city trying to find troops to help him.

Trotsky made his first moves in the early hours of 7 November. As the city slept, small groups of Bolshevik Red Guards moved out. Lenin and Trotsky were gloomy, realising that they were finished if Kerensky could get enough troops together. The Red Guards took control of the bridges, the main telegraph office, the railway stations and the power stations. In most cases, other troops just melted away as the Red Guards arrived.

During the morning of the next day, the Bolsheviks carried on seizing key places, such as the State Bank. But otherwise all seemed normal. The shops and factories were open and the trams were running. Nobody seemed to be taking much notice, and many people thought the Bolsheviks would be defeated as soon as Kerensky arrived with troops. But Kerensky had left the city in a car lent by the American Embassy and did not return.

SOURCE 9 Bolsheviks outside the Smolny Institute

SOURCE 10 A map of Petrograd, showing the key points taken over by the Bolsheviks
Storming the Winter Palace

The Bolsheviks now moved in on the Winter Palace, where the Provisional Government was meeting. But morale among the defenders of the Winter Palace was very low. During the afternoon, most of the Cossacks had slipped out of the palace, leaving some military cadets and the Women's Death Battalion.

At 5.00 p.m. the Aurora (a ship whose sailors supported the Bolsheviks) fired a blank shot to start the attack. There was a little machine-gun fire, but very little damage was done to the Palace. The Women's Death Battalion offered no resistance, came out and went back to camp. The Red Guards entered and made their way along the miles of corridors. When they did meet military cadets, they gave up, as did the Provisional Government when the Red Guards found them. The Bolsheviks had control of Petrograd.

1. Looking at the map, Source 10, explain why the bridges were particularly important.
2. Why did the Bolsheviks seize the railway stations and telephone exchange on the first night?
3. How was the storming of the Winter Palace represented by the Bolsheviks in paintings like Source 11 and street theatre events like that shown in Source 12?
4. How does this compare with what happened?
5. How useful are these sources as evidence?

SOURCE 11 (above) A painting made in Russia in the 1930s by Sokolov-Skalya, showing the storming of the Winter Palace

SOURCE 12 One of the street theatre events staged in the years after the Revolution, celebrating the storming of the Winter Palace. This photograph is often used to portray the actual storming
Did Lenin make a difference?

SOURCE INVESTIGATION

Would there have been a revolution in November 1917 if Lenin had not returned to Russia? Look back over pages 38-47 and study the evidence below. What conclusions can you reach?

Now is the time for a Socialist revolution.

April 1917

SOURCE 1 A painting of Lenin returning to Petrograd in April 1917, made in the USSR in the 1930s. Trotsky called Lenin the 'engine driver of the Revolution'.

SOURCE 2 From V. Serge's book From Lenin to Stalin, 1937. Serge was a Bolshevik supporter in Petrograd in 1917.

"Hardly off the train, Lenin asked the Party comrades, 'Why didn't you seize power?' And at once he comes out with his April Theses... He is called mad and delirious... But suddenly it becomes apparent that he has the ear of the man in the street, and of the man in the factory and barracks! His whole genius consists in his ability to say what these people want to say, but do not know how to say."

SOURCE 5 Sukhanov, a non-Bolshevik Socialist journalist describes reactions to Lenin's speech on his return to Russia in April 1917.

"Dear Comrades, soldiers, sailors and workers! [said Lenin]. I am happy to greet you in person the victorious Russian Revolution, and greet you as vanguard leaders of the worldwide proletarian army... Long live the worldwide Socialist revolution!... Suddenly, before the eyes of all of us, completely swallowed up by the routine drudgery of the Revolution, there was presented a bright, blinding, exotic beacon... Lenin's voice heard straight from the train, was a 'voice from outside'."

Look back at page 42 before answering these two questions.

1. What, according to Sources 2 and 5, was Lenin saying that was so different?
2. Why did Lenin's arrival have such an impact on the Bolshevik Party and the workers and soldiers?
There was an argument between Lenin and other Bolshevik leaders about whether they should seize power at the end of October. Lenin sent a letter to the Bolshevik Central Committee, written on 6 October from his hiding place in Finland.

**SOURCE 4**

"Having obtained the majority in the Soviet of Workers' and Soldiers' Deputies in both capitals, the Bolsheviks can and must take state power into their hands."

But when the Committee met, Lenin's proposal was defeated by 4 votes to 6 with 6 abstaining. On 23 October, Lenin returned secretly to Petrograd and persuaded the Bolshevik Central Committee to agree to his plans. He talked to them through the entire night until they gave in. However, Trotsky persuaded Lenin to wait until 7 November. The next day, Zinoviev and Kamenev, leading Bolsheviks, sent a letter to the Bolshevik Party opposing the uprising.

"To call at present for an armed uprising means to stake on one card not only the fate of our party, but also the fate of the Russian and international revolution... A majority of workers and a significant part of the army in Russia is for us. But all the rest are in question. We are convinced [that]... the majority of peasants will vote for the Socialist Revolutionaries... If we take power now and are forced to wage a revolutionary war, the mass of the soldiers will not support us."

Lenin had to continue to urge leading Bolsheviks to be active in supporting the seizure of power. He sent this letter to the other Bolshevik leaders on the evening before the Revolution.

"The situation is extremely critical. Delaying the uprising now really means death... We must at any price, tonight, arrest the Ministers, having disarmed the military cadets, etc. We must not wait! We may lose everything... The government is tottering. We must deal it the death blow at any cost."

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**What do historians say?**

**SOURCE 5** From 1917, the Russian Revolutions by Leonard Schapiro

"In the actual organisation of the final stages of the Bolshevik Revolution, Lenin's role fell far short of Trotsky's... Yet there is no doubt that without Lenin the Bolshevik coup would have been postponed and might have failed..."

**SOURCE 6** From The Russian Revolution, by Robert Service, 1986

"He had limitless capacity to persuade, cajole and goad. On 23 October, the Central Committee debated the question of state power. Lenin returned clandestinely [secretly] from Finland to participate, and the consequent decision came from his pen. Still he had to be restrained. He wanted power seized immediately. Trotsky's view was preferred, that the uprising would... on the opening day of the Second All-Russian Congress of Soviets."

**SOURCE 7** A view of Lenin by a Soviet writer, Y. Kukushkin, in History of the USSR, published in the USSR in 1981

"The Bolshevik party was waging a determined struggle to win over the masses. The struggle was headed by Lenin, who led and guided the Party's Central Committee... He frequently addressed mass rallies and meetings. Lenin's speeches, noted for their profound content and brilliant delivery, inspired workers and soldiers... The Bolshevik Party's membership began to grow rapidly."

5. Does Source 4 show that it was mainly Lenin who was pushing the Bolsheviks to seize power? Explain your answer by referring to different parts of Source 4.
4. Why did Zinoviev and Kamenev not want to seize power in October?
5. Write a paragraph summing up what Sources 2-4 tell us about Lenin's role in 1917.
6. a) Do the historians in Sources 5, 6 and 7 support this view?
b) What else do they tell us?
7. Do you think that one man – Lenin – really made a difference in 1917?
How did the Bolsheviks stay in power?

LENIN HAD SEIZED power in Petrograd, but for how long could he hold on to it? A few days after the takeover, Kerensky sent troops to put the Provisional Government back in control, but they were easily stopped in the suburbs by a force of pro-Bolshevik workers, soldiers and sailors. In Moscow, the fighting was fiercer. Other cities also came out in favour of the Bolsheviks, but they controlled only a small area of Russia.

Meanwhile, Lenin set up his government, called the Sovnarkom – the ‘Council of People’s Commissars’. Lenin was chairman, Trotsky was Commissar for War and Stalin was Commissar for Nationalities. There was only one woman in the Sovnarkom – Alexandra Kollontai.

Lenin pushed ahead with his first measures. It was important that he carry out his promises: to end the war, to give land to the peasants and to get food to the cities. Otherwise, his support would disappear.

**The first months**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Decrees made by the Sovnarkom in the first few months of power</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>November</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>■ A maximum eight-hour day and 48-hour week declared for industrial workers</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>■ Employment insurance introduced for workers for injuries, illness and unemployment</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>■ All titles and class distinctions abolished – no dukes or lords, the title ‘comrade’ for everybody</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>■ Women declared equal to men</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>■ All non-Bolshevik newspapers banned</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>December</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>■ Liberal party, the Cadets, banned</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>■ All factories to be put under the control of workers’ committees</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>■ All banks taken over by the government</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>■ The army to be more democratic – officers to be elected, no ranks or saluting</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>■ Church land to be confiscated by the state</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>■ Divorce made easier and marriages do not have to be in churches</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**SOURCE 1** A collage of photographs showing members of Lenin’s new government

**Land**

In November, a decree was passed taking all the land away from the Tsar and the old landlords. Land was to be given to the peasants, who would form committees to divide it up fairly.

**Food**

Lenin put an absolute priority on getting food to the cities. Where peasants would not sell their produce, he sent out the police and the Cheka to take it.

**The Cheka**

In December 1917, Lenin set up the Cheka. The head of this secret police force was the cold and incorruptible Felix Dzerzhinski. He set up headquarters in the ‘Lubyanka’ in Moscow, a name that was to become feared because of the torture and executions that were carried out there.

The Cheka arrested people who were considered dangerous. After an assassination attempt on Lenin, the Cheka launched the Red Terror. Anybody who spoke out against the government was arrested, and many were shot without trial. Sometimes it was enough to be someone who might oppose the Bolsheviks. The use of terror to control people was to become a feature of the new regime.
Constituent Assembly

Lenin had been forced, in November 1917, into holding the elections promised by the Provisional Government. The railway workers said that they would shut down the railways if Lenin did not go ahead with Russia's first free elections. These were to choose a Constituent Assembly, which would work out how Russia would be governed in the future.

This was a real threat to Lenin, as the party with most votes would probably form a new government. The results of the elections can be seen in Source 2. Shortly after the Constituent Assembly met in January 1918, Lenin sent in soldiers to shut it down for good.

SOURCE 2 The results of the November 1917 election

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Party</th>
<th>Seats in Constituent Assembly</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Socialist Revolutionaries</td>
<td>370</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bolsheviks</td>
<td>175</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Left Socialist Revolutionaries (supporters of Bolsheviks)</td>
<td>40</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cadets</td>
<td>17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mensheviks</td>
<td>16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Others</td>
<td>89</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

A new name

In 1918, Lenin changed the name of the Bolshevik Party. They were now called COMMUNISTS.

Peace

Lenin sent Trotsky to meet the Germans to negotiate a peace treaty. Trotsky walked out of the talks because the Germans demanded so much territory. He said there would be 'no peace, no war'. However, Lenin sent him back, because he was sure that the Bolsheviks would stay in power only if the war could be ended quickly. The result was the harsh Treaty of Brest-Litovsk in March 1918.

SOURCE 3 A map showing land lost in the Treaty of Brest-Litovsk

Key
- Land lost in Treaty of Brest-Litovsk
- Russia lost:
  - 62 million people (one-sixth of the population)
  - 27 per cent of farmland (some of the best in Russia)
  - 26 per cent of railways
  - 74 per cent of iron ore and coal

TASK

1. Consider the following people. Decide which of Lenin's actions described on pages 50–51 would have been popular with each person and which would not. You could do this in the form of a chart, with the names of the people along the top and the different actions down the side. (Your teacher will give you a sheet to fill in.)
   - woman worker
   - Tsarist army officer
   - industrialist
   - Socialist Revolutionary
   - peasant

2. a) Which of the actions mentioned would have increased support for Lenin?
   b) Which do you think would have been most unpopular amongst different groups of people?
3. Had Lenin honoured his promises?
4. Which political party had been elected to form the new government of Russia?
5. How did Lenin deal with opposition and threats to his power?
How did the Communists win the Civil War?

By the summer of 1918, the Communists (the new name for the Bolsheviks) found themselves under attack. They only controlled a small part of Russia and their enemies were determined that they should not remain in power for long. This was the beginning of a vicious civil war which was to tear Russia apart.

There were three main sides:

**The Reds:** the Bolsheviks or Communists (red was the colour of Communism).

**The Whites:** all the opponents of the Bolsheviks – tsarists and nobles, middle-class constitutional democrats, Mensheviks and Socialist Revolutionaries. The Whites got their name from the white uniforms worn by tsarist officers. This meant that the Whites were always associated with the Tsar and the old system of government.

**The Greens:** independent groups of nationalists, peasants or bandits who roamed Russia at this time. They fought anyone and raided villages and towns. The most famous was the Ukrainian nationalist, Nestor Makno, who shared his booty with local peasants.

But the real struggle was between the Reds and the Whites. The Greens were fighting for themselves, not for control of Russia. A number of factors played a crucial role in the war. These included the aims of both sides, geographical factors, leadership and unity, and foreign intervention.

**Geographical factors**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Reds</th>
<th>Whites</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>- They held the central area of western Russia, which contained most of the large industrial centres able to produce munitions and war supplies.</td>
<td>- They were scattered around this central area, often with hundreds of miles separating the different armies.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- They had control of the railway lines which connected Petrograd and Moscow to the rest of the country. This meant that they could send soldiers and munitions quickly to any place in the battle area.</td>
<td>- Communications were difficult – that is, if the generals wanted to communicate.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Aims

Reds
- They had only one aim: to stay in power so that they could build the new Socialist society.

Whites
- The groups which made up the Whites had different aims: some wanted the Tsar back, some a military dictator; others wanted constitutional government or revolutionary change. The only aim they had in common was to defeat the Bolsheviks; they agreed on little else.

Leadership and unity

Reds
- They had a superb leader in Trotsky. He built up the Red Army from nothing, introducing conscription for men over eighteen years of age. He brought in nearly 50,000 experienced former Tsarist officers and appointed political Commissars – fanatical Bolsheviks – to each unit of men to make sure the officers and soldiers carried out their orders.
- Trotsky was personally very courageous. He had a special train which took him and his army of hand-picked soldiers to the places where the fighting was hardest.

Whites
- They lacked good leaders. Often the commanders were cruel, treated their men with disrespect and set a bad example, drinking and taking drugs.
- The White generals did not trust each other and would not co-ordinate their attacks. This allowed the Reds to pick off the White armies one by one.
- The Whites had problems inside their armies, too. There was often fighting and squabbling, because groups had different aims and beliefs. It was particularly hard for revolutionaries to co-operate with supporters of the Tsar.

Foreign intervention

The Whites had the advantage of support from foreign powers. Britain, France, Japan and the USA, along with several other countries, sent forces to help them. Their governments did not want to see Bolshevism spread into Europe. However, although the supplies and armaments they gave to the Whites were very valuable, their troops did not fight. They were tired of war, and some of the soldiers were sympathetic to the Bolshevik cause. There was a mutiny of the French navy in the Black Sea, and the British Labour Party protested at the use of British troops to crush Russian workers. The Americans were there only to make sure that the Japanese did not seize territory in the east. So the Allied intervention was half-hearted and ineffective.

The intervention of foreign countries helped the Communists. They portrayed the Whites as being used by foreign capitalist powers, while they themselves were the defenders of ordinary Russian people from foreign invaders.

SOURCE 2 A Bolshevik poster. The names of the dogs are Denikin, Kolchak and Yudenich

1. Who is holding the leashes of the dogs in Source 2?
2. What is the message of the cartoon?
3. How does Source 1 help us understand why the Reds won the Civil War?
4. What do you think was the main problem facing the Whites?
The War

By the end of 1918, the Civil War was not going well for the Reds. White forces were pressing in from all sides, and the Reds suffered a series of defeats. Trotsky worked hard to organise the Red Army.

Fortunately for him, the White armies did not attack together. This allowed him to move his forces to deal with one attack at a time.

It was in the middle of 1919 that the real test came. In the west, General Yudenich came within 30 miles of Petrograd, only to be turned back by determined resistance led by Trotsky's special forces. General Denikin was also very successful, advancing from the south to within 200 miles of Moscow. Much depended on Admiral Kolchak's attack from the east linking up with Denikin's forces. But Kolchak's army fell apart because different groups would not cooperate and started arguing and fighting with each other. The Socialist Revolutionaries in particular refused to fight with Kolchak.

The Red Army now attacked ferociously, and Denikin was pushed further and further back. In the east, Kolchak's forces disintegrated and he was shot. By 1920, the main White threat was over. The war lingered on, particularly in a desperate battle with the Poles, but this was settled by the Treaty of Riga in 1921.

Fighting in the Civil War was bitter and cruel. Both sides were guilty of atrocities. At Rostov miners supporting the Bolsheviks were buried alive in their mines. At Kharkov, Bolsheviks nailed epaulets to White soldiers while the victims were still alive.

The war was also confusing. Units of soldiers often changed sides, sometimes several times. Some units shot their officers and went home. The fighting moved back and forth across the country: Kiev changed hands sixteen times. And the people suffered whichever side was in control of their area. Both Red and White units looted and raided villages, requisitioning (taking) grain and animals.

The role of the peasants in the Civil War was crucial. They made up most of the armies on both sides, and the side they supported was likely to win. In the end, the peasants were more willing to support the Reds, because the Reds said they could keep the land. The Whites, on the other hand, made it clear that they would restore the land to the old landlords.

SOURCE 3 A photograph of Trotsky and his special train. The arrival of Trotsky's special train would raise morale, but the soldiers also knew they would have to fight hard
SOURCE 4  A White colonel describes the punishment of a village accused of supporting the Reds, in March 1918.

"The mounted platoon entered the village, met the Bolshevik committee and put the members to death... After the execution, the houses of the culprits were burned and the whole male population under 45 whipped soundly... Then the population was ordered to deliver without pay the best cattle, pigs, fowl, forage and bread for the whole detachment, as well as the best horses. All this they kept bringing over until nightfall... The whole village set up a howl..."

SOURCE 5  Isaac Babel was a volunteer in a revolutionary Cossack regiment. In his book Red Cavalry he wrote stories which reflected the savagery of the Civil War. This extract comes from a story he called 'A Letter', in which a family is split, with the father fighting on one side and his sons on the other.

"Dear Mother,

...I am alive and well... I hasten to describe to you about Dad, that he killed our brother Theodore a year ago. Our Red brigade was advancing on the town of Rostov. Dad was then with General Denikin (Whites), commanding a company... and they took us all prisoners... Dad noticed my brother Theodore. And Dad began cutting him about, saying, 'Brute, Red cur, son of a bitch,' and all sorts of other things, and went on cutting him about until dark and Theodore passed away...

I soon ran away from Dad and managed to get back to my unit... Then brother Simon and I began to pursue General Denikin, and killed thousands of them, and drove them into the Black Sea. Only Dad was nowhere to be seen. So Dear Mother, what do you think Dad did? He had dyed his beard shamelessly from red to black and was staying in the town of Maykop in civvies...

But Simon got Dad all right and he began to whip Dad... and asked him:

'You all right, Dad, in my hands?'

'No,' says Dad, 'not all right.'

Then Simon said: 'And Theo, was he all right in your hands when you killed him?'

'No,' says Dad. 'Things went badly for Theo...'

Then Simon turned to us all and said: 'And what I think is that if I got caught by his boys, there wouldn't be no quarter for me - and now, Dad, we're going to finish you off.'"

SOURCE 6  A White poster, showing Bolsheviks seizing grain.

1. How does Source 4 help explain why the peasants would not support the Whites?
2. Why would the Whites produce a poster like the one in Source 6?
3. What do Sources 4–6 reveal about the nature of the Civil War?
4. Which do you think is more reliable – Source 4 or Source 5?

ACTIVITY

1. Draw up a chart to compare the advantages and disadvantages of the Reds and the Whites, using the headings below.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Aims</th>
<th>Reds</th>
<th>Whites</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Geographical factors</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Leadership</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Unity</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Foreign intervention</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Peasant support</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

2. Write a short essay explaining why the Reds won the Civil War. Use the headings in the chart as the key ideas for your paragraphs. You will find more useful information in the two investigations on pages 56–57 on a) the use of propaganda by the Reds; and b) the role of Trotsky.
How did the Communists use propaganda?

SOURCE INVESTIGATION

During the period of the Civil War, the Communists produced over 5,000 political posters. Some of these used exciting new avant-garde designs, which became popular in Russia after the Revolution.

SOURCE 1 (right) 'Shoulder to shoulder in the defence of Petrograd'. This poster was used when Petrograd was under threat in 1919

1. Who are the people standing 'shoulder to shoulder'?
2. Why is this effective?

ЦАРСКИЕ ПОЛКИ И КРАСНАЯ АРМИЯ

SOURCE 2 (left) A Civil War poster showing Russia before and after the Revolution

3. What were the soldiers fighting for before the Revolution?
4. What were the forces fighting for after the Revolution?

SOURCE 5 (below) 'Drive Red wedges into White troops!' A poster by El Lissitzky, 1920

5. What is the 'Red wedge'?

TASK

1. Imagine that you work in a museum and have to give a talk to a group of students using the posters on this page and the one on page 37. Explain:
   - the meaning of the posters, one by one
   - the different design styles
   - how effectively they put their messages across
   - which one you think is most effective and why.

2. Are these posters good evidence to show us what ordinary Russians were thinking during this period? If not, are they at all useful to historians?
**War Communism**

Leonid's job during the Civil War was to run the government and to organise food and industrial production in the Red-held area. This was no easy task; food riots rocked several cities in spring 1918 and industry began to collapse as starving workers left the cities. However, it was crucial to keep the Red Army supplied. To do this, Lenin adopted a tough policy called 'War Communism'.

... In the towns

The state took control of industry, and told factories what to produce. The factories had been handed over to the control of workers' committees in 1917, but the committees did not run them very well. So Lenin now put in his own managers, and strict discipline was imposed on the workers. One report said: 'One might have thought that these were not factories but the forced labour prisons of Tsarist times.' Trade unions were not allowed, and workers were prevented from leaving the cities.

Food was rationed, but people could only get a ration card if they were working. The bread ration was sometimes as low as 200 grams a day. Larger rations were given to factory workers and soldiers. The only other way of getting food was through the illegal Black Market.

Money became virtually worthless (the rouble of 1920 was worth one per cent of its 1917 value). By 1920, wages were often paid in food or other goods, and many people bartered goods instead of using money.

... In the countryside

Lenin desperately needed food to feed the workers. Since the peasants were unwilling to sell their grain for money which had no value, he sent out units of the Cheka to seize surplus food. Those found hoarding supplies were punished harshly. The peasants resisted, and this became a bitter struggle. Many peasants decided to produce less grain, because they thought it would simply be taken away. So the situation got worse.

Terror

Over all this was the shadow of the Red Terror. The Cheka became increasingly brutal. People opposing the government were arrested and shot without trial or sent to labour camps. Many workers and peasants began to think that the workers' state was worse than the government of the Tsar which they had been so pleased to get rid of.
SOURCE 4  From V. Serge's Memoirs of a Revolutionary

"Inside Petrograd's grand apartments people were crowded in one room, living around a little stove of brick or cast iron... Fuel for it would come from the floor boards nearby, from the last stick of furniture available, or else from books. Entire libraries disappeared in this way."

SOURCE 5  From Arthur Ransome, Six Weeks in Russia in 1919. The wealthy were forced to share their houses with ordinary people, as Ransome describes

"Rooms are distributed on much the same plan as clothes. In every district there are housing committees to whom people wanting rooms apply. They work on the rough and ready theory that until every man has one room no-one has a right to two... This plan has, of course, proved very hard on house-owners, and in some cases the new tenants have made a horrible mess of the houses."

SOURCE 6  Grain requisitioning

SOURCE 7  From V. Serge's Memoirs of a Revolutionary

"Parties which were sent into the countryside to obtain grain by requisition might be driven away by the peasants with pitchforks. Savage peasants would slit open a Commissar's belly, pack it with grain, and leave him by the roadside as a lesson to all."

1. What were the key features of War Communism
   a) in the towns
   b) in the countryside?
2. What happened to many middle-class Russians (Sources 2, 3 and 5)?
3. Why do you think they found it so hard to get food?
4. Why did the struggle between the peasants and the requisition parties become so bitter?

SOURCE 8  P.D. Ouspensky, a writer, fled to southern Russia, where the situation was not much better, in 1919

"The price of all products and necessities has risen by 20, 50, 100 or 600 times. Workmen's wages have risen 20, 50 or even 100 times. But the salary of an ordinary 'brain-worker' — teacher, journalist or doctor — has risen in the best cases no more than three times...

I personally am still alive because my boots and trousers and other articles of clothing are still holding together. When they end their existence, I shall evidently end mine...

The prices are different in every place. To carry something from one town to another is to make money... 'the masses' rush to take part in the general looting... For a bag of flour or of bread, a basket of eggs or a jar of butter may bring them a fortune as reckoned in old values. So the trains and stations are crowded with people with bags and baskets; they carry typhus and cholera..."

ACTIVITY

Use Sources 1–8 to either

a) write a description of what life was like under War Communism; or
b) write a letter to middle-class relatives in America who fled Russia after the Bolsheviks seized power in 1917. Tell them:

■ how War Communism operates
■ how people in the cities are faring, particularly the middle classes
■ what is happening in the countryside
■ about the power of the Cheka and how control is kept.
1921 - a year of crisis

The results of War Communism

By 1921, the economy of Russia was in ruins. Industrial production had fallen disastrously under War Communism. The cities were in chaos: gangs of orphaned children roamed the streets, robbery and burglary were common, stolen goods appeared on the thieves’ markets. ‘Bagmen’ rode the trains, bringing supplies to the cities for a quick, if illegal, profit.

Agriculture had also collapsed. The disruption of the war and grain requisitioning had led to low grain harvests. Peasants saw little point in growing food. In 1921, even less grain was grown, because of a drought: this led to a horrendous famine, which killed up to five million people. A massive international aid operation was mounted, in which the USA played a major role.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>SOURCE 1</th>
<th>Production of grain</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>1913</strong>: 80 million tons</td>
<td><strong>1921</strong>: 37.6 million tons</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>SOURCE 2</th>
<th>Industrial output (in millions of tons)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>1913</strong></td>
<td><strong>1921</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Coal</td>
<td>29</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Oil</td>
<td>9.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Iron</td>
<td>4.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Steel</td>
<td>4.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sugar</td>
<td>1.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Electricity (in million kWh)</td>
<td>2039</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>SOURCE 5 (left)</th>
<th>A peasant family during the famine</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>SOURCE 4</th>
<th>The famine affected both the countryside and the cities. There were reports of cannibalism in some districts. This was written in 1922</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>“Sometimes mothers and fathers feed their children human meat as a last resort. Sometimes a starving family eats the body of one of its junior members... Sometimes parents at night seize part of a body from a cemetery and feed it to their children.”</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>SOURCE 5</th>
<th>Ludmilla Shapiro, an eye-witness, describes Moscow during the famine of 1921</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>“You could often see people who had walked from the famine-stricken areas of the Soviet Union... in the hope of finding food there. By that time they were usually so weak that they mostly died on the street, so as a child I saw many deaths... whole families dying on the sidewalks.”</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>SOURCE 6</th>
<th>By a writer, Nina Berberova, who was living in Petrograd in 1921</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>“A city completely dead... No electricity, no heat. It was a terrible city, because there was nothing... people just dying.”</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Opposition to Lenin’s policies

Opposition to Communism grew as a result of the grim economic situation and the brutal way in which the Communists were running the country.

* A group called the **Workers’ Opposition** was formed, demanding higher wages, better conditions, more food and workers’ control of industry. One of their leaders was Alexandra Kollontai, the Bolshevik. She, like many other Bolsheviks and left-wingers, objected to the use of mass arrests by the Cheka to scare the people into submission. There were calls for ‘Soviets without Communists’.

* In March 1921, sailors at the **Kronstadt naval base** (on an island just outside Petrograd) staged an uprising because ‘life under the yoke of the Communist dictatorship has become more terrible than death’. The Red Kronstadters, as they were known, had been strong supporters of the Bolsheviks during the 1917 Revolution. By 1921 these were not the same men – most had gone off to fight in the Civil War – but the uprising was still a shock to the government. Trotsky had to use troops to crush them, and 20,000 men were killed and wounded in the attack. The sailors were executed in batches or sent off to labour camps.

1. What happened to industrial production between 1915 and 1921 (Source 2)?
2. Was this all the result of War Communism?
3. Where have you come across similar demands to those put forward by the Kronstadt sailors in Source 7?
4. Why do you think the Kronstadters fought so hard (Source 9)?

**ACTIVITY**

You are a policy adviser to Lenin. Persuade him that it is time to introduce a new economic policy. Give him your reasons, mentioning:

* economic consequences of the Civil War and War Communism
* the growth of opposition and the reasons for it.

**SOURCE 7**  Demands of the Kronstadt sailors

> Because the present Soviets do not express the will of the workers and peasants, new elections should be held.
> Freedom of speech and press to be granted to workers and peasants.
> Also, freedom of assembly and of trade unions and peasants’ associations.
> All political prisoners belonging to Socialist parties . . . to be set free.

**SOURCE 8**  Attack on Kronstadt across the ice, 17 March 1921

**SOURCE 9**  Tukhachevsky, leader of the attack on Kronstadt, made this report to Trotsky

> The sailors fought like wild beasts. I cannot understand where they found the might for such rage . . . An entire company fought for an hour to capture one house and when the house was captured it was found to contain two or three soldiers at a machine gun. They seemed half dead, but they snatched their revolvers and gasped, ‘We didn’t shoot enough of you bastards.’
LENIN SAID that the Kronstadt rising was 'the flash that lit up reality'. He knew that he had to do something to improve the economic situation in Russia. If he did not, the Communists would not survive. In 1921, he introduced a New Economic Policy (NEP).

The main features of the NEP

- Grain requisitioning was stopped. No longer would grain be taken from the peasants by force. The peasants would have to give a fixed amount of grain to the government each year as a tax, but any surplus they produced could be sold on the open market.

- Traders could buy and sell goods (this had been illegal during War Communism).

- Smaller factories, particularly those producing consumer goods like shoes and clothes, were returned to their former owners. They were allowed to sell the goods they made and make a profit.

- Larger industries, e.g. coal, steel and transport, remained under state control. Some larger factories were allowed to sell their products.

Lenin said that the NEP would give the Soviet Union a 'breathing space' to get back on its feet. But many Communists were angry about what they saw as a return to capitalism. They did not like the idea that 'making a profit' was the main driving force for smaller industries. They disliked the fact that the bosses of factories or kulaks (rich peasants) could hire men to work for them. It was all too much like the old days.

Communists particularly disliked the new traders, who appeared in the cities. These 'Nepmen', as they were called, made high profits by buying food and goods cheaply and selling them more dearly. They were middlemen who, as the Communists saw it, made money out of the labour of others. But they made the goods appear in the shops in quantities that had not been seen for years. Nepmen also set up restaurants and made enormous amounts of money from dealing in property and gambling.

Lenin persuaded the Party to accept the NEP for the time being. The majority realised that these measures were needed to revive industry and get more food produced.

Electrification

One great step forward was the electrification of Russia. Lenin was enthusiastic about technological innovation and saw electric power as the key to modernising the Soviet Union. He envisaged a great network of power stations which would provide the power for modern large-scale industry. He wanted to put an electric light in every home to replace oil lamps and candles. Lenin believed electric power would change things so much that he said: 'Soviet power plus electrification equals Communism.'

1. Look at Source 1.
   a) What do the horse and sledge represent?
   b) Who is on the sledge?
   c) Why should Kamenev want to stop the sledge?

2. Why do you think Lenin placed such importance on electricity as a means of changing life in Soviet Russia? Think about its uses today.

Source 1 A 1924 cartoon entitled 'Honorary militiaman, L.B. Kamenev'. Kamenev was a leading Communist. The horse has NEP written on its collar.
Foreign trade
NEP encouraged foreign countries, which had refused to trade with Soviet Russia before 1921, to resume trade links. Western countries hoped that the move back to private trade and profit — capitalism — meant the failure of Communist ideas. An Anglo-Soviet trade agreement in 1921 marked the beginning of increased trade with the West which gave a great boost to the Soviet economy. There were large-scale exchanges of Western industrial goods for Russian oil and similar products.

Success and failure
The NEP lasted until 1928 and Russia generally became more prosperous. Some of this can be put down to the period of stability which followed seven years of war and civil war from 1914 to 1921. But the NEP undoubtedly played a big role in improving the general economic situation.

However, NEP was far from a total success story. The peasants found prices for manufactured goods high and were unwilling, after 1925, to sell their grain for money because they could not buy much with it. While some peasants became quite rich buying up land and animals, many remained poor and continued to use backward methods of farming. Industrial workers were better off but levels of unemployment remained a serious problem for the whole time of the NEP, particularly among young people, and there was a high crime rate associated with this. Many people were angry about the profiteering of the Nepmen and the growth of a class of rich businessmen. After 1925 steps were taken to curb their profits and luxurious lifestyle.

Up to 1925, much of the progress under NEP had been from very low levels of production and involved repairing and restoring old machinery, factories and transport. But by 1926 the economy had reached pre-1914 levels and massive new investment was needed to turn the Soviet Union into a modern industrialised country. Where was this going to come from? Also, by the end of the 1920s, food supplies were a problem again, and many Communists wanted to see the introduction of more Socialist methods of running the economy.
SOURCE 4
From I Write As I Please, 1935, by Walter Duranty. Duranty was an American journalist who was in Russia during the NEP.

"Moscow had changed during my three weeks' absence. Everywhere run-down and half-ruined buildings were being refurbished and restored. Shops, cafes and restaurants were being opened in all directions... The city was full of peasants selling fruit, vegetables and other produce... To the Communists NEP was doubtless repugnant, but to the mass of the workers it brought jobs that would be paid in money instead of valueless paper or mouldy rations, and the certainty that with money they could buy the food and necessaries of life...

To the traders, NEP meant opportunity and the dawn of better days. Until August 9th (1921) it was technically a crime to possess goods of value... and a crime to buy and sell anything. The NEP decree changed all that...

At the top of my street, I saw a man selling flour, sugar and rice on a little table... At the end of a week he was selling fresh eggs and vegetables... By mid November he had rented a tiny store... By the following May he had four salesmen in a fair-sized store, to which peasants brought fresh produce each morning.

After a year's trading... he made $20,000 to $30,000 clear profit, but the point is that his enterprise stimulated scores of peasants to fatten chickens or little pigs or plant vegetables. The same thing was being done all over Russia and the effects were amazing. In a single year the supply of food and goods jumped from starvation point to something nearly adequate, and prices fell accordingly."

SOURCE 5
From a 1923 report by Walter Duranty.

"Living conditions in Russia have enormously improved in the past two years. The condition of Moscow may be reckoned as 25 per cent ahead of the rest of Russia, but similar, if slower, improvement is visible everywhere. The essential fact is that everyone is so infinitely better off than during the 'black years' of 1920 and 1921 that present conditions seem paradise by comparison.

The industrial workers are relatively better off, although hit by high prices and short time in many industries... at least they get paid regularly now.

The industrial workers of Moscow grumble about the overcrowding and the luxury displayed by the 'Nepmen', the newly rich traders and speculators... It is estimated that upward of 250,000 private traders have migrated to Moscow since the NEP began, two years ago. They crowd the restaurants where it costs $2.5 a head for dinner with French wine... and lose a thousand or so an evening at baccarat [cards] without turning a hair."

1. What do the figures in Source 6 show about:
   a) changes in the production of grain under NEP?
   b) changes in industrial output?

2. a) Do these figures show that NEP was a complete success?
   b) Why do you have to be careful about accepting these figures?

SOURCE 6
Agricultural and industrial production, 1921–28.
SOURCE 7  General Grigorevko of the Soviet army recalling the time

"Never did I live as well as I did in the NEP years, not even when I became a general."

SOURCE 8  Anna Strong, a Communist

"In my few short trips into Moscow during the winter of 1921–22, I had been disturbed by the growing private trade. To me each seems a step of defeat... There's a horrible new rich set growing."

3. a) How do Sources 2, 4, 5 and 7 support the view that the NEP was successful?
b) How does the writer of Source 4 account for this?
4. How do Sources 1 and 8 explain why many Communists did not like NEP?

ACTIVITY

1. Use all the information to make a balance sheet for the NEP. On one side put the positive aspects of NEP, on the other put the negative aspects.
2. How do you think that each of the following would respond to the question 'Do you think that the NEP was good for Russia?'?
   - a peasant
   - a member of the Communist Party
   - a private trader
   - an industrial worker.
How did the Communists try to change Russia?

SOURCE 1: Ella Shister talking about the 1920s in an interview for The People's Century, a BBC programme shown in the 1990s.

"What I liked was the promise of a happy classless society in the future in which everybody would enjoy the good created by society... When Lenin said that Communism is Soviet power plus electrification, I decided that I should become an electrical engineer... I wanted to build an electrical power station - that was my mission and I achieved it. The Revolution gave me the right to feel equal to any man, the right to study what I wanted to study."

AS WE HAVE seen, life was very hard under War Communism. It took a long time for the country to recover from the depths of 1921. But how was life different in the 1920s from life before the Revolution? How had the Revolution changed things?

Equality, the family and the role of women

Some of the Bolsheviks' first actions (see page 50) were to abolish ranks and titles and to declare equality for women. They hoped to create a new era of freedom in personal and sexual relations. Alexandra Kollontai said that sex should be as natural as drinking a glass of water, and argued for free love. She headed a campaign to free women from the drudgery of family life by setting up creches and kindergartens. Marriage and divorce were made easy - simply a matter of both parties agreeing and filling in a register. Abortion was to be available on demand.

Despite this, the idea of the family proved very resistant to change, with fewer workers and peasants wanting to see it break down. Many did not agree with the new ideas on sex and marriage. Women did, however, gain more equality in the workplace.

Religion

Religion, which Communists saw as a trick to make people accept terrible conditions on earth in the hope of a better afterlife, came under attack. It was forbidden to teach religion to people under fifteen, and some churches were taken over and priests exiled.

Education

The Communists put a lot of effort into education, building schools and making sure that children got adequate food. In an attempt to capture the minds of the young, the Communist Party set up the Komsomol, or Young Communist League, to encourage the growth of Communist ideas. A massive literacy programme was begun, with thousands of young activists sent out to teach workers and peasants to read.
The Communists realised early on that they were a small group controlling a country which was still inhabited by peasants. They felt that they needed to explain the ideas of Communism to the people. They sent out 'agitprop' (agitation and propaganda) trains, boats and even trams to put across the messages of the Revolution and encourage Russians to see what they were working for in the future. They used posters, pamphlets and theatre groups, who acted out scenes about the aims of the new Socialist state. Many Russians saw their first films on the agitprop train. This propaganda machine was fed by the avant-garde art of the period.
The arts

Experimentation in the arts was encouraged in film, painting, posters, sculpture, the theatre and radio. It was a time of great creativity. Young artists, poets and playwrights were excited by the ideas of the Revolution – a new society based on equal rights for the people. They abandoned the old forms of Tsarist art and looked to the future. They called themselves Futurists.

They believed in art for the people – art with a practical purpose. This was to be seen in the design of buildings, streets, fabrics, clothes, furniture and all areas of life. Architects constructed new types of housing and theatres.

The arts were affected by the new spirit of equality. Artists worked in teams. Orchestras did away with conductors, taking votes on how they wanted the music arranged.

Communist films, such as those made by Sergei Eisenstein – *October* and *Battleship Potemkin* – were amongst the most innovative made in the world at the time. Novelists such as Boris Pasternak and poets such as Osip Mandelstam flourished.
1. List three ways in which life for women changed in this period.
2. Why do you think the people resisted some of these changes?
3. What attitudes to women are shown in Sources 1, 2 and 6?
4. What methods did the Communists use to explain the ideas of the Revolution to the people?
5. What are the messages of Sources 6 and 7?
6. What part did Soviet art play in this idea of a new society?
7. Look at Sources 8–13.
   a) How do they suggest a ‘modern’ view of art?
   b) Choose three and explain why you would not have seen them in Tsarist Russia.
   c) How do you think this ‘art for the people’ was different from art before the Revolution?

**ACTIVITY**

You are a foreign journalist visiting Russia, who has heard about exciting new changes since the Revolution. Write an article for your newspaper back home. Include in it:

- changes in attitudes to the role of women in society
- the role of the family and the Church
- education and ways of explaining the new
  Communist ideas
- changes in the arts.

Comment on how far these changes are going and whether everybody agrees with them.

Select two illustrations from pages 70–75 which best sum up these changes to go with your article.

**SOURCE 12** Designs by Rodchenko for Dobroljet

**SOURCE 15** A poster for the film Enthusiasm
A Russian village in the 1920s

In 1926, Maurice Hindus, who had lived most of his life in America, went back to the village where he was born. He never names the village. The following extracts show what he found.

Source 1: A description of the old village

"There was the same long, narrow winding street, as in the old days, still unpaved, and now after the heavy rain of the previous day and night, turned into a river of black slush... No sidewalks; not a patch of lawn, not a flower bush; the little heaps of manure lying as of old at every house right by the open wall.

The same muddy street, the same dwarfed houses with the puny windows and thatch roofs, the same foul smells, the same scene of poverty and helplessness.

Fields were as in former times cut into narrow strips, narrower than in my boyhood days... too small to grow enough bread even for a mere man and wife. Yet there were families in the village that had to live off such puny holdings."

Source 2: At the village mill, Hindus talked to some villagers

"That these peasants mistrusted the Soviet government was clear enough. After all it was a government, something that exacted obligations which they were loath to fulfill, just as the old government did...

"What I'd like to know is what these Soviets do with all their money. Just think of the amounts they gather as fines alone, and then taxes..."

'Aye,' said Fyodor, 'if I had half of what they took in today, I could buy boots for everyone in my family.'

Demyan: 'They are spending it on themselves. That's why they all sport around in new boots, all of them, from the chairman of the Soviet to the lowest clerk.'

'And why shouldn't they?' queried another man (Zakhair). 'They are our rulers, aren't they? Well, rulers always do have everything. Think of the Tsar and the landlords and the generals in the old days. They did not lack anything, did they? Indeed not, for they were our rulers.'"
SOURCE 5  He talked to young people in the village

"And what, I asked, of the morality of the young people? Had there been any changes since the Revolution? None, they replied. Girls were as strict as ever their mothers and grandmothers had been.

Of course a fellow could flirt with a girl, put his arm around her, hold her hand, kiss her — but only on the cheek or neck, never on the lips, unless she was his fiancée. Otherwise — well — our girls were quite strong, a blow of their fists might even draw blood . . .

Lapses in conduct were as rare as in the old times . . . it was the worst thing for a girl to submit to a man. Her betrayer is likely to abandon her; and no other man, excepting perhaps one old enough to be her grandfather, would have her as a wife. The girls knew that and took care of themselves.

And what, I further inquired, of the Young Communists? . . . They laughed uproariously. Eh, the Young Communists! There were only two in our village, and there were not many more in any of the villages around, and some should retire to a monastery . . . Some of them were against kissing and dancing, said it was all the invention of the capitalists to corrupt the peasant and proletarian . . . and besides it was too much responsibility to be a Young Communist, too many meetings to attend, too stern a discipline to submit to; and they were fearfully strict.

And then I shifted the conversation to religion . . . The girls, they informed me, were quite loyal to the Church, just like their mothers. Of course, they no longer attended services as regularly as they had in former times . . . Still, when they married they insisted on a church wedding, but the problem of church weddings was beginning to cause no little trouble in the villages. No real revolutionary, especially if he was a member of the Communist Party, would have a priest marry him."

SOURCE 4  What supporters of the Revolution said

"And there is no more standing to attention until your feet sink under you and your bones crack, and there is no more "your highness" or "your excellency". It is all tovarish [comrade] now . . .

"When the muzhik [peasant] boy goes to the army, nobody weeps. He goes away for only a short time, and during his service his family gets a reduction in the amount of their taxes, and when he comes back he can read and write. He knows who Marx was and what he taught. He understands the class struggle. He believes in the Revolution."

"Yes," chimed in another youth, "and a muzhik is now given preference in the university, and he pays nothing for his studies there, and if he is poor he is given board and room free."

". . . and a muzhik, tovarishsh, can climb as high in rank as his ability will permit. That's something isn't it?"

TASK

1. Draw a chart like the one below to show how the Revolution had changed lives in the village.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>What had changed</th>
<th>What had stayed the same</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

2. Do you think the changes were for the better or the worse?

3. Can the example of one village help us understand how the Revolution was affecting villages throughout the USSR?