

# Bolsheviks

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## Lenin

- *Real Name:* Vladimir Illych Vlanov
- Father of the **USSR** (Union of Soviet Socialist Republics 1918-1991)
- The undisputed leader of the **Bolsheviks**
  - he was a dictator
  - *Bolshcik-Menshevik split*
  - **Important names** when considering the Bolsheviks
    - Trotsky
      - from Menshevik switched to Bolshevik
      - father of the **Red Guards**
    - Stalin
    - Kamenev
    - Zinoviev
    - Bukharin
- **Marxist-Leninism**
  - **Marxism**
    1. No private property (means of production)
    2. Class struggle (rulers - rule of)
    3. Thesis (Feudalism) - Antithesis (capitalism) - Sythesis (socialism)
      - **proletariat** -> working-class people
  - **Marxist-Leninism**
    - *since Russia doesn't have proletariats*
      - Russia needs **revolutionary vanguards**
        - a small group to lead the masses
        - Lenin is going to be this revolutionary vanguard
    - **DEMOCRATIC CENTRALISM**
      - Lenin's ruling style
- **Early life**
  - born in Simbirsk
    - schoolmate with Kerensky
    - brother named Alexander
      - tried to kill the Tsar -> executed
  - university -> kicked out
  - tried to become a lawyer

- internal exile -> exile abroad
- Newspaper -> Iskra (Spark)
- He was **anti-war** the whole time from 1914 to 1917
  - he said it's an "imperialist war"
- **April Thesis**
  - "peace, bread, and land!"
    - bread -> food
      - people were starving (considering the famine)
    - peace -> treaty of **Brest-Litovsk**
      - 90% of the railroads
      - Poland, Ukraine, Lithuania, Latvia, and Estonia were given to the Germans
      - Lenin begged on Russia's eventual defeat to get the land back
    - land
      - *Kerensky* -> don't touch the land policy
      - *Lenin* -> get any you want (:
  - "all power to the Soviets"
- **Night before the Oct Revolution**
  - highly significant to Bolshevik victory
- **Lenin in control**
  1. Nationalize the banks
  2. **Ruthless**
    - willing to do whatever for anything he wants
    - uncompromising
  3. "Things must get worst until they can get better"
    - the people have to be so disappointed that they would uprising

## Bolsheviks Maintaining power

### Constituent Assesmbly [4]

The constituent assembly was a democratic assembly proposed by the "Union of Unions", which was a full gathering of elected representatives of the Russian people. It was meant to elect a legitimate group to be the leader of Russia. It held a congress in November 1917, in which the SRs won more votes (370) than the Bolsheviks (175). This was unacceptable to the Bolsheviks and hence Lenin dissolved the Constituent Assembly later. 召开立宪会议 -> 制定宪法 -> 规定新的政府有什么权利/民众有什么公民权利 -> Constituent决定执法机构

- **All Russian Congress of Soviets**

- established when people struck in St. Petersburg during the 1905 revolution
- 1907 -> Soviet distributed everywhere in Russia, into villages and cities

## **Drawbacks of Brest-Litovsk [6]**

To begin with, the Treaty of Brest-Litovsk was bad for Russia due to its industrial impacts. Statistically, Russia lost 26 per cent of its railways and an astonishing 74 per cent of iron ore and coal. This was a fatal blow to Russia, which had just experienced high industrial growth before WWI. In particular, the loss of railways meant that Russia's fertile resources in the Ural mountains and Ukraine couldn't be transferred and used. At the same time, the dramatic loss in iron ore and coal deprived Russia's yet most thriving industry of mining, creating an economic yet industrial burden to it. (railway investment is lost)

Moreover, the Treaty of Brest-Litovsk was bad for Russia thanks to its agricultural impacts. Ukraine, the biggest producer of grain, was forced to be ceded to Germany and its Allies, together with 27 per cent of Russia's farmland. This was bad for Russia as food supply had always been a severe issue haunting Russia's public throughout the years before and within WWI, and hence such a decrease in the productive capacity of agriculture meant a further decrease in the availability of food, contributing to a lower living standard and also public dissatisfaction.

## **Russian Civil War**

### **War communism**

1. Nationalization (production of war material a priority)
2. Grain requisitioning -> distribution to the front and the cities
  - Tambov Rebellion
3. Strikes, unions, worker rights banned
  - hunt for counterrevolutionaries
4. Centralization
5. Profit illegal (No private enterprise)
6. Human rights banned (Martial Law)

### **Kronstadt Uprising**

- sailors
- March 1921 -> Tuchachevsky led the army to kill them all
- leading from War communism to New economic policy

## **New Economic Policy**

- "Commanding heights of the economy" -> still nationalized
- mixed economy to allow small private businesses (to increase food production + end grain requisitioning)
- As the rouble was worthless, the barter system tax-in-kind were used
- Depopulation of the cities needed to be supported
- Capitalism? A **retreat**

- Meant to keep power
- 1st USSR Gov Sovuakom

## **Worries of Kronstadt Uprising [6]**

One of the worries haunting Lenin regarding the Kronstadt Uprising was the people who actually uprose. Early in March 1921, thousand of workers met at Kronstadt naval base, together with the sailors, putting forward the Kronstadt Manifesto. Considering the fact that the workers and the sailors used to be great supporters of the Bolsheviks in 1917, who were even referred to as the "heroes of revolution". This uprising pointed out that the Bolsheviks were losing public support, which was an important factor that could easily threaten the Bolshevik's regime, especially at the time just after the Civil War, and hence worried Lenin.

In addition, the Kronstadt uprising also revealed weaknesses of the previous economic policies of Lenin, which worried him. Terms of the Kronstadt Manifesto urged for the ending of special food rations for Communist Party members and the freedom for individuals to transport food without confiscation. Since even these loyal workers and sailors were demanding food, a vivid picture of the severe food issue was drawn, for which the War Communism policy was to be blamed. Hence, the Kronstadt Uprising worried Lenin as he saw the issue regarding his previous policies, leading to him promoting the NEP later.

## **Reasons of Russian Civil War [6]**

- Factory from capitalist to workers "Decree on Land"
- Land from nobles to peasants "Decree on Workers' Control"
- Constituent assembly
- Treaty of Brest-Litovsk

To begin with, the Treaty of Brest-Litovsk was a factor in the outbreak of the Russian civil war. Despite the demanding terms put forward by the treaty - one-third of European Russia covered 27% of farmland, 26% of railways, and 74% of iron ores and coal, with exceeding reparations - Lenin and Trotsky disregarded the public's disagreements and accepted these humiliating terms. These would create great opposition towards the Bolshevik regime, as Lenin and Trotsky were the ones who symbolized it. People would argue that the first thing the Bolsheviks did in power was to give all these Russian territories and money to Germany, and therefore would argue its competence and uprising.

In addition, the dissolution of the Constituent Assembly also contributed to the Russian civil war. Lenin and the Bolsheviks dissolved the Constituent Assembly after the latter's congress held in November 1917, in which the SRs won 350 votes over the Bolsheviks, who won 175. The Constituent Assembly was meant to democratically choose the leader for Russia, which was agreed upon by all political parties, and such a violent act of dissolution from Lenin would be considered as an opposition to general expectations and an act of might. Hence, the other political parties would grow angry to Bolshevik's control, contributing to their uprising in the Russian civil war.

Moreover, the "Decree on Land" policy also led to the Russian civil war. Lenin promoted the total abolishment of private ownership of land in its "Decree on Land" policy, calling that all land should pass into the use of all those who cultivate it. This irritated the landlords and the nobilities, who relied on huge profits from a large share of lands and low-paid peasants working for them. Hence, these lords and aristocracies would uprising to earn back their previous lucrative and released life.

Lastly, the "Worker's Decrees" also contributed to the Russian civil war. Under the decree's terms, minimum wages and controlling working hours are put forward. But most importantly, the decree promoted the running of factories by elected workers' committees. This was just snatching away the rights and properties of the previous factory owners, whose lives might become hard after the decrees, leading to resentments from these aristocracies to the Bolsheviks, which partly triggered the Russian Civil War.

## Reasons for Bolshevik's success [10]

- **Trotsky**

- established the **Red Army**

- **Red guards**
    - **Tsarist officers**
      - threatened of rebellion
      - locked the officers' family...
    - **Political commissars**
      - supervise the officers and the red guards
        - at every state
      - much controlled by Stalin
        - foreshadowed the worsening relations between Trotsky and Stalin
    - **Conscriptions**
      - mainly peasants and some workers
    - **Expose strict discipline**
      - centralizing the army -> create army's efficiency

- **Strategies**

- ensure the internal line of communication of Red Army
      - supply
    - prevent the Whites maintaining regular supply
    - prevent the Whites concentrating in one location

- **Weaknesses of the whites**

- too dependent on foreign support
  - geographical reasons - less supply
  - no uniform aim
  - white terror

- **War communism**

- **Red Terrorism**

- the establishment of Cheka
  - labour camp and show trial

**Trotsky**

To begin with, Trotsky was a key for Bolshevik's success in the Russian civil war due to his establishment of the Red Army. Under Trotsky's organization, the previous Red guards, together with some Tsarist officers who commanded the army and political commissars who violently supervised army's rebellions, formed the new Red Army fighting the White on the Battlefield. Most importantly, Trotsky imposed strict discipline in this new Red Army and centralized them, which greatly enhanced the latter's strength. With such a disciplined army with demanding supervision and experienced commanders established by Trotsky, it was undoubted that the winning phase for the Bolsheviks were high in the battlefield, contributing to its success.

In addition, Trotsky's strategy was also to be complimented for leading to the Bolshevik's success. Trotsky tried his best to prevent the Whites maintaining their regular supply, while providing the Reds adequate supply through the railways. Such an inequity in supply would influence the combating strength of each side, shifting the key of success to the Red. In addition, Trotsky also strived to prevent the Whites concentrating in one location. Although there were numerous White armies formed in Estonia, Ukraine and so on, they could be easily tackle one by one by the well-supplied and disciplined Red army, but had they united, their massive force would have overthrown the Reds. Hence, Trotsky's strategies were also a key factor to the success of the Bolsheviks.

### ***Weaknesses of the Whites***

However, the White's weaknesses, i.e., their disunity were also contributing to the Bolshevik's success. Despite the emergence of White armies throughout Russia, such as the White "volunteer army" led by General Denikin in Caucasus and the Whites led by General Yudenich in Estonia, the interests and aims were not uniform apart from overthrowing the Bolsheviks. The white themselves consisted of different political parties, i.e., socialists and liberals and Tsarists, who frequently disputed with each other, and some of them just urged constitutional regime while the others hopes the return of a tsarist government. Hence, they would not help each other when one's being attacked, leaving room for the Bolsheviks to pick off them one by one with little resistance.

Additionally, the White's reliance on foreign support was also pivotal for the Bolshevik's success. Despite the useful supplies given by the West, the latter's army was reluctant in fighting another war with the Bolsheviks. Hence, there was mutiny of the French Navy in the Black Sea, and protests from the British Labour Party at the use of British troops in crushing Russian workers. Therefore, the foreign support from the West didn't really help the Whites much, but instead offering the Bolsheviks room to denounce them as "agents of imperialists" and shape themselves to be the defender of the Russian people, which legitimated them, contributing to their success.

### ***War communism***

First of all, war communism led to the Bolshevik's victory due to its effect on Russia's industries. Under its terms, all of the major industries were nationalized and commanded to produce war materials, such as arms, as a priority. This gave the Bolsheviks enough equipment, allowing them to fight more vigorously on the battlefield. Furthermore, war communism also imposed the "strictest order and discipline" on the workers, which ensured the latter's productivity so that the factories' outputs were sufficient to supply the Bolsheviks, contributing to the latter's success.

Additionally, the agricultural aspect of war communism was also vital for the Bolshevik's success. During wartime, Cheka was commanded to carry out grain requisitioning across the countryside, meaning that they literally grabbed food from the peasants and distributed it to the front and the cities. Despite the hunger caused by this policy, it ensured that at least the Bolsheviks and the Red army would have food, which was

a scarce thing during that period, maintaining the Red's strength on the battlefield. Moreover, some people would be forced or be willing to join the Red Army as it was the only way for them to gain food to sustain their living, which enlarged the Red Army and increased the latter's strength, and considerably led to its success.

### **Red Terror**

Nevertheless, red terror, namely the Cheka, was also a stimulus for the Bolshevik's victory. Cheka, found to fight against "the enemy of revolution", was established in December 1917, which was answerable only to Lenin and granted unlimited powers of arrest, detention and torture. Under the ruthlessness of Cheka, Bolsheviks gained scares from the peasants and workers, putting the latter on conformity. Also, it was the Cheka who carried out grain requisitioning throughout the country, ensuring an adequate food supply to the Bolsheviks, leading to its success.

In addition, the labour camps and show trials, being as parts of the Red terror, were also important for the Bolshevik's victory. All the Bolshevik-considered opponents, i.e. the Whites, political prisoners, and uncooperative peasants, were put into the labour camps being tortured extremely. Moreover, those political opponents were also put into humiliating public trials before being sentenced to imprisonment. This, again, created terror to the Bolshevik's opponents, threatening them not to uprising and oppose the Bolshevik's rule. It also prevented others from joining the outlawed political parties and the Whites, contributing to the Bolshevik's success.

## **Surprisingness of the NEP [10]**

- **Not surprising**

- Kronstadt Uprising
- Low industrial output
- Low food supply

- **Surprising**

- Capitalism!
- Abolishments of War communism

To begin with, the introduction of the NEP was surprising as it clearly showed signs of capitalism. This economic policy introduced in 1921 by Lenin allowed the peasants to sell their food surpluses for profit, probably causing the emergence of Nepmens, namely the rich retailers and peasants, which was much a concession to capitalism. This was surprising as the Bolsheviks used to view those capitalists as their enemies and used this as propaganda to justify their revolution and attacks.

In addition, introducing the NEP was also surprising to the Bolshevik members. Lenin's realism demanded that political theory should take place after economic necessities. This surprised and troubled the Bolsheviks, including Trotsky, who thought that the war communism was meant to be used long-termly and the peasants were exactly the ones the Bolsheviks should repress. Hence, it would be unacceptable for them to give peasants such freedom to sell the food and etc.

On the other hand, it seemed that the NEP was not surprising considering the weak food supply of Russia during and after the civil war. Due to grain requisition under war communism, peasants provided just the food for their family to survive, with not enough food even for the general public to consume. It is calculated that the grain harvests in 1920 and 1921 produced half the amount of 1913. Hence, it would not be surprising for Lenin to introduce the NEP, which would encourage the production of grain by using profit

as an incentive.

Lastly, the NEP was not surprising due to the low industrial output of Russia during the period as well. Factories were forced to be totally controlled by the government, which gave absolute priority and denied the production of other goods and services. Hence, despite the high production in the military, the total industrial output was dismal. The effect of hyperinflation further deepened such a phenomenon and destroyed the value of the rouble, giving people no ability to meet their basic needs. Hence, it was not surprising that Lenin brought in the NEP, which allowed some private businesses and reintroduced money as a means of trading.

## Power Struggle: Stalin vs. Trotsky

### Trotsky's Advantages

- leads the Red Army
  - feared and respected, not liked by people
  - arrogant, meritocracy
  - self conscious of his Jewish background
- 1905 Petrograd Soviet, October Revolution, Winning Civil War
- He was a **menshivik**
- great writer and speaker
  - the 'Pen'
  - critical of others
- **"Permanent Revolution"**
  - a revolutionary class pursuing its own interests independently and without compromise or alliance with opposing sections of society

### Trotsky's Disadvantages

- controversial opinion (a bad politician)
  1. Kamenev
  2. Zinoviev
  - they allied with Stalin forming a Troika
- some unpopular actions from the past
  - signing the **brest-litovsk**
  - arguing with Lenin
  - banned strikes
- Lenin - cult of personality
- He **underestimated** Stalin
  - he assumed that he would be the next leader of Russia
- Didn't go to Lenin's funeral
- Health was falling
- He was an **idealist**



## Stalin's Advantages

- **General Secretary**
  1. admit people to the party
  2. kick people out of the party
    - allowed him to control the composition of the party
- **Class Background**
  - Stalin - peasants
  - Trotsky - middle class
- shifting ideology
  - ally with the right and left
  - 'Socialism in one country'
    - take a break and let's just establish the Soviet Union at first
- Insane in attention in detail
- Personality appeared to be unassuming
- He was a **practicalist**

## Stalin's Disadvantages

- Lenin wrote: "**Don't let Stalin be leader**"
- Krupskaya was insulted by Stalin and she kept the will
- He was a **bankruptor** in the early days
  - he came from the lowest level

## Key events

- **Lenin's funeral**
  - 27th January, 1924
  - Stalin's speech
  - Trotsky's absence
- **Suppression of Lenin's will**
  - saved Stalin from being openly denounced by Lenin
    - Lenin named no successor
- **Troika of Stalin**
  - Kamenev and Zinoviev allied with Stalin
    - they underestimated Stalin
- **Lenin enrollment**
- **ban on factionalism**