

## The October/November Revolution

The Russian calendar used at the time was 13 days behind the one used in Western Europe. Hence when the Bolsheviks seize power on 7<sup>th</sup>-8<sup>th</sup> November, according to the Russian Calendar the dates were actually 25-26 October. This is why the event is known as the October revolution. Lenin changed the calendar to be in line with Western Europe in 1918.

Throughout 1917 support for the Bolsheviks continued to grow. By the end of 1917 Lenin was convinced that the time was right for the Bolsheviks to seize power. Lenin convinced his comrades to act swiftly. It was a difficult task as many Bolshevik members, like Bukharin, felt that Russia was not ready for the revolution. However Lenin was extremely persuasive and other leading members of the party could not match his argument, hence they eventually agreed.

Leon Trotsky who had recently joined the Bolsheviks was responsible for the organisation of the **Red Guards** in Petrograd. During the night of 6<sup>th</sup> November, the Red Guards took control of post offices, bridges and the state bank. On 7<sup>th</sup> November they stormed the winter palace, without much opposition. The Provisional Government has its headquarters in the Winter Palace. It is guarded by an army of cadets and the Women's Battalion. The battleship Aurora (captured by the Bolsheviks) fired blank shells at the Winter Palace and the Red Guards move in. The cadets and Women's Battalion give in without a fight. The Provisional Government surrenders and the revolution is over. It has taken one day to overthrow the government; 18 people have been arrested and 2 people killed arrested ministers of the provisional government. Kerensky managed to escape and tried to rally loyal troops. When this failed he fled into exile. On 8<sup>th</sup> November an announcement was made to the Russian people:

### *Proclamation of the Petrograd Soviet, 8th November 1917*

The Provisional Government has been overthrown. The cause for which the people have fought has been made safe: the immediate proposal of a democratic peace, the end of land owner's rights, workers' control over production, the creation of a Soviet government. Long live the revolution of workers, soldiers and peasants.

### **An analysis of the Bolshevik revolution**

Despite their claims, the Bolsheviks did not have the support of the majority of Russian people. Despite this they were able to carry out their takeover in November 1917. There were a number of factors which contributed to this. The unpopularity of the Provisional Government was a crucial factor. A second factor was that the Bolsheviks were a disciplined party dedicated to revolution, even though not all Bolshevik leaders believed this was the right way to change Russia. The Bolsheviks had around 800,000 members and their supporters were also in the right places. Whilst this might sound like a lot remember the Russian population was 125 million. At least half of the army supported them, as did the sailors at the important naval base at Kronstadt near Petrograd. They were popular amongst armed forces as they were the only party demanding that Russia should pull out of the war. The major industrial centres and the Petrograd and Moscow soviets were also pro-Bolshevik. The Bolsheviks also had some outstanding leading members such as Trotsky and Lenin.

**Comrades:** a colleague or a fellow member of an organisation

**Red Guards:** An armed group set up to protect the Soviet's power. They had been set up during the Kornilov affair

## Tasks:

1. What happened on the 6<sup>th</sup>/7<sup>th</sup>/8<sup>th</sup> November?
2. Look through the timeline of events and using the information you have just read explain why the Bolsheviks were able to overthrow the Provisional Government.
3. Read the analysis of the Bolshevik revolution and bullet point 6 reasons for their success.
4. In what ways was this revolution different from the March revolution?
5. Create a fact file on Lenin and Trotsky. Include pictures and information about their lives. Include information like their place of birth, education, careers, what happened to them.
6. Look at the mind map, what do you think was the most important reasons for the revolution taking place, explain why you think this.
7. Using the PP slide about Trotsky and Lenin explain who you think contributed more to the November revolution.
8. What was the more important reason for the revolution happening:
  - The failures of the Provisional Government
  - The strengths of the Bolshevik party

To answer questions 6 you need to have one paragraph explaining how the failures of the provisional government contributed to the revolution. One paragraph explaining how it happened because of the Bolsheviks and then a final paragraph where you reach a judgement between the two. Explaining which one was more important and why you think that. If you need help there are sentence starters below

**One reason why there was a revolution was that the Provisional Government had lost support because it had failed to give people what they wanted.**

- Peasants in the countryside wanted.... but the Provisional government ...
- Workers in the towns wanted... but the Provisional Government
- Everyone in Russia wanted.... but the Provisional Government....
- By September 1917 people were....
- This meant that when the revolution began no one came to support the Provisional Government

**Another reason why there was a revolution was because of Lenin**

- Lenin returned to Russia in April and demanded .....
- These ideas were .....
- He won support from important groups like...
- Lenin also planned...
- In November he insisted
- He told Trotsky to
- This meant that the revolution was successful

Try to use the  
P,Ev,Ex,Ev,Ex  
structure