

The Russian Revolution of 1917

1. The revolutionary forces.

--Kadet Party (Constitutional Democrats). Western-style liberal democrats. Founded during the 1905 revolution in which it played a central role, as also in the Duma constitutional experiment. An important component of the Provisional Government from February 1917. Leader Miliukov. Little popular support.

--Menshevik Party. Orthodox, Second International marxists. Formed by split in the Russian Social Democratic Party in 1903. Believed in a socialist revolution as the outcome of the contradictions of a fully developed capitalist, industrialised society. Leading figures - Martov, Tsereteli.

--Bolshevik Party. Unorthodox marxists. Formed by split in the Russian Social Democratic Party in 1903. Nature of party defined by Lenin's What is to be Done (1902). Despite faith in 'scientific' laws of Marxism, highly voluntaristic. Considerable urban popular support in 1917, in opposition to the war. Gambled that the crisis that brought down Tsardom could also produce a socialist regime, albeit in a 'backward' country. Key figures: Lenin, Trotsky (from July 1917), Kamenev, Zinoviev, etc.).

--Socialist Revolutionaries. Founded 1902. Revolutionary socialist party, drawing on Russian traditions of collectivism as well as western ideas. Spectrum of views on political tactics, from operating through liberal democratic politics, to collective action, to terror. Major support in the countryside.

2. Elections, 1917.

1) Soviets (number and % delegates)

June 1917 Congress of Soviets :

Bolsheviks - 105 - 15%
Mensheviks - 248 - 36%
Socialist Revolutionaries 285 - 41%
Other - 51 - 8%

October 1917: Congress of Soviets:

Bolsheviks - 300 - 45%
Mensheviks - 82 - 12%
Socialist Revolutionaries - 193 - 29%
Other - 95 - 14%

2) Constituent Assembly (elections of November 1917).

Kadets - 4.7%
Bolsheviks - 23.9%
Mensheviks - 2.3%
Socialist Revolutionaries - 40%
Other (including nationalities) - 29%

3. Key individuals.

Kerensky, Aleksandr (1881-1970). Law graduate, defending revolutionaries in trials. Chairman of Trudoviks in Fourth Duma (1912). Vice-chairman of Petrograd Soviet, March 1917, and minister in Provisional Government; Prime Minister July 1917, and supreme Commander-in-Chief and Head of Directorate following Kornilov rebellion. Escaped Bolsheviks in November. Emigrated to France, 1918.

Kamenev, Lev (1883-1936). Son of railway engineer. Joined Russian Social Democrats 1901, and sided with Bolsheviks in 1903. Member of Central Committee, April 1917. Opposed Bolshevik uprising in November. Chairman of Moscow Soviet, 1918-26; member

of Politburo, 1919-25. Sided with Stalin against Trotsky, 1923-4, and then with Trotsky against Stalin, 1926-7. Executed following show trial, 1936.

Kornilov, Lavr Georevich (1870-1918). General, from a Cossack family. Appointed Commander-in-Chief, 18 July 1917. Dismissed and arrested by Kerensky 27 August for counter-revolutionary coup. Escaped and formed a volunteer White army. Killed in action 1918.

Lenin, Vladimir Ilich (1870-1924). Born Simbirsk, son of school inspector. Active in revolutionary student politics and exiled to Siberia. Member of Marxist Russian Social Democratic Party. In *What is to be Done?* (1902), advocated centralized revolutionary party composed of professional revolutionaries. Provoked schism of RSDP in 1903, leading Bolshevik ('majority') faction. Returned from exile to Russia April 1917, with German help. April Theses set out Bolshevik revolutionary tactics - opposition to Provisional Government and war, support for soviets and peasant land take-overs. Hid in Finland after July Days. Took lead in successful Bolshevik uprising of October/November 1917. Chairman of Council of People's Commissars (ie. revolutionary government), October 1917. Insisted on immediate peace with Germany at Brest-Litovsk, February 1918. Established Third (Communist) International, or Comintern, March 1919. Dominant figure in Communist government down to his death in 1924.

Trotsky, Lev Davydovich (1879-1940). Born into Jewish peasant family in southern Ukraine. Brilliant intellectual and independent revolutionary. Sided with Martov and orthodox Marxists against Lenin in 1903 (see above). Returned from exile to Russia in 1905; chaired St Petersburg Soviet, 27 November-3 Dec. 1905. Escaped from exile in Siberia, to Europe and North America. Returned to Petrograd May 1917. Joined Bolsheviks and became Lenin's key supporter for October rising. Commissar of Foreign Affairs; reluctantly negotiated peace with Germans, 1918. Chairman of Revolutionary Military Council and architect of Red Army victory in Civil War, 1918-20. Theorist of 'permanent revolution' to explain how a socialist revolution could succeed in a backward country. Ousted by Stalin in struggle for succession following Lenin's death. Expelled from Russia 1929. Assassinated 1940 in Mexico on Stalin's instructions.

Zinoviev, Grigory Evseevich (1883-1936). Joined Social Democrats 1901. Worked with Lenin in exile before FWW. Returned with Lenin but opposed armed uprising. Chairman of Petrograd Soviet, Dec. 1917-26; chairman of Comintern, 1919-26. Executed after show trial.

4. Loss of territory in Europe, 1917-21.



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