

## The Russian Revolution

### Central Historical Question:

Did the social conditions in Russia justify the steps taken during the Bolshevik Revolution?

#### **Document #1 Manifesto of the Communist Party, 1848**

The immediate aim of the Communists is the formation of the proletariat into a class and the overthrow of the bourgeois supremacy. Communism will abolish bourgeois property. Communism will end the system of producing and appropriating products that is based on class antagonisms, on the exploitation of the many by the few.

#### **Document #2 Vladimir Illyich Lenin: What is to be Done, 1902**

An organization of revolutionaries is an essential factor in "making" the political revolution. The organizations of revolutionaries must consist first and foremost of people whose profession is that of a revolutionary. Next, *all distinctions between workers and intellectuals*, and certainly distinctions of trade and profession, must be obliterated.

"Give us an organization of revolutionaries, and we shall overturn the whole of Russia!"

#### **Document #3 Abdication of Nikolai II, March 15, 1917**

It is for the good of the country that we abdicate the Crown of Russia and lay down the Supreme Power. We call upon all faithful sons of our native land to fulfill their sacred and patriotic duty of obeying the Tsar at the painful moment of national trial and to help them lead Russia in the way of prosperity and glory. May God help Russia.

## **Document #4 Lenin: Call to Power, October 24, 1917**

The situation is extremely critical. Delaying the uprising would be fatal.

Comrades, everything now hangs by a thread; we are confronted by problems which cannot be solved by conferences or congresses, but only by peoples, by the masses, by the struggle of the armed people.

We must not wait! We may lose everything!

*Who must take power?*

That is not important at present. Let the Revolutionary Military Committee do it, or "*some other institution*" which will declare that it will relinquish power only to the true representatives of the interests of the people, the interests of the army, the interests of the peasants, the interests of the starving.

History will not forgive revolutionaries for procrastinating when they could be victorious today, if they risk losing everything tomorrow.

If we seize power today, we seize it not in opposition to the Soviets but on their behalf. The seizure of power is the business of the uprising; its political purpose will become clear after the seizure.

It would be a crime for the revolutionaries to let this chance slip, knowing that the salvation of the revolution, the offer of peace, the salvation of Petrograd, salvation from famine, the transfer of the land to the peasants depend upon them.

The government is tottering. It must be given the death-blow at all costs.

## **Doc #5 The Russian Soviet Federated Socialist Republic Constitution The Declaration of the Rights of the Laboring and Exploited People 1918**

### Chapter One

1. Russia is declared to be a republic of the Soviets of Workers', Soldiers', and Peasants. All central and local power belongs to these soviets.

### Chapter Two

(a) Private property land is abolished; land is now national property and will be shared between farmers without payment to the former owners.

(b) All forests, treasures of the earth, waters, all equipment, farms and agricultural enterprises, are declared to be national property.

(c) All factories, mills, mines, railways, and other means of production and transportation belong to the workers to insure the power of the workers.

(e) To liberate the toiling masses from the yoke of capital ownership of all banks are transferred to the Worker's and Peasants' Government.

(f) Universal obligation to work is introduced to help eliminate the parasitic strata of society and organize the economic life of the country

(g) For the purpose of securing the working class' complete power, and to eliminate all possibility being exploited again, all workers can be armed and the Red Army be organized and the propertied class disarmed.

### Chapter 3

4. In its resolve to liberate mankind from the grip of capital and imperialism, the Soviet Government will work to organize all the workers and peasants of the world into a democratic peace based on the free determination of peoples.

## **Document #6 Chronology of Russian Revolution**

1917 Feb The Tsar abdicates after Moscow joins the Revolution.

1917 September The Bolsheviks win control of the Petrograd Soviet.

1917 Oct The Bolsheviks overthrow the Provisional government.

1918 Jan 5th The Bolsheviks meet for one day before being suppressed.  
Bolshevik army units fire on and kill several demonstrators.

1918 April 12th Moscow anarchists' headquarters attacked by Bolsheviks

1918 May 9th Bolshevik troops fire on food shortage protesters in Kolpino

1918 July 16 Gorky's *Novaia Zhizn*, the last opposition paper, banned.

1918 Aug 23, Three Siberian Government members are arrested. They are told to resign. Two agree. The third refuses and is hacked to death.

1919 White Armies attack the Bolsheviks, but the Red Army is victorious.

1920 Aug 19, Start of peasant insurrection in Tambov

1921 Peasant uprisings are suppressed but the New Economic Policy is proclaimed that gives the peasants the right to sell their grain surpluses

1921 Mar Bolshevik Kronstadt demands free elections but is suppressed.

1921 May Tambov insurrection suppressed

1924 Lenin dies. Trotsky is defeated by a triumvirate of Stalin, Kamenev and Zinoviev. Though Stalin stays in the background it is he who is the real power as the other two will shortly discover.