

## Chapter 27 Terms to Know:

### Bolsheviks:

A group of radical socialists under Lenin that evolved during the Social Democratic Labor party meetings in 1903 (London), the Bolsheviks embraced the three major principles of Lenin. However, the Russian “majority group” ironically found themselves in the minority against the other group of Marxian socialists, the Mensheviks. After slipping behind the scenes throughout the majority of the First World War, Lenin’s Bolsheviks, aided with German funding, preached against the provisional government in Russia and launched a bold coup in July, 1917. The ultimate failure of the overthrow would not last long as General Kornilov, the commander in chief of the Russian forces, attempted to seize power for himself, prompting the socialists to respond. Ultimately, the event would serve to discredit Kerensky, who had risen to the place of prime minister following the failed July Revolution. Now the army, weakened by the Petrograd Soviets’ Army Order No. 1 and the Bolsheviks were turned against him, culminating in a revolt led by Trotsky and Lenin in November, 1917. They ended Russian involvement in World War One through the Treaty of Brest-Litovsk and promised elections in a Constituent Assembly that, when they turned sour for the Bolsheviks, were thrown out. But, this led to Russia lining up into two armed camps by 1918: the White opposition against Lenin’s Red Bolsheviks. With Trotsky leading the war effort, the formation of the Cheka, the implementation of war communism (total war), and the intervention of outside forces that boosted nationalism for the Reds, the Whites finally lost the October Revolution in 1920. This proved monumental to modern history as the Bolshevik takeover was the first successful socialist revolution, removed Russia from WWI, ended the Tsar bloodline, and won the Russian Civil War, leaving Lenin in an undisputed position of power.

### Duma:

The Duma was the lower house of the Russian Legislature that helped organize the war effort in 1914. Yet, this political structure was controlled largely by aristocratic, conservative influence and any legislative action was left largely in the hands of Tsar Nicholas II, who had the power of veto. As the Duma became more moderate, the masses began to question their distant tsar, who was dependent upon his status as supreme ruler rather than popular support, and the progressive bloc demanded that the government be responsible to the Duma— not the tsar. In response, Nicholas II disbanded the Duma in 1915 while he left for the Russian front to lead the war effort. His deluded wife Alexandra and the crazed Rasputin were left in power. Alexandra desired to rule absolutely, but the well-intended attempts of three aristocrats to right the rumors of an affair between her and the manic preacher led to his murder in 1916. As strained order quickly turned to chaos, the Duma formed a provisional government built upon classic liberalist policies in March of 1917. In May, those who opposed outright revolution reorganized the government, and Alexander Kerensky became prime minister two months later. Hence, the Duma was important in that it forced Tsar Nicholas II to abdicate and brought Kerensky to power.

### Petrograd Soviets:

The competitor of the Russian provisional government, the Petrograd Soviet of Workers’ and Soldiers’ Deputies was based on the revolutionary soviets of 1905. Its members included soldiers, workers, as well as socialist thinkers, and it essentially inhibited the power of the temporary government set up by the Duma in 1917 by passing its own radical laws and acting as a “counter-government”. Army Order No. 1 was passed under them; it empowered the common soldier by allowing them to elect their superior officers. Its design was to keep conservative monarchist like Napoleon from rising up and using the military to squash the revolution, but it only led to the dissolution of army regulation. The Petrograd

Soviets' importance lies in this fact and how it weakened the provisional government, paving the way for Lenin's Bolshevik takeover and the overthrowing of Alexander Kerensky.

### **Alexander Kerensky:**

Following the abdication of Tsar Nicholas II, the Duma's liberal structure began to give way once again to more conservative policies as Kerensky, a moderate, patriotic socialist, gained the title of prime minister in July of 1917. He poured much of his resources into promoting the war effort against the Germans but refused to confiscate lands and surrender them to the discontented peasantry. Even more of an exacting body was the Petrograd Soviets, who passed their own laws and crumbled the army through their Army Order No. 1. His commander in chief Kornilov also turned against him as the general unsuccessfully attempted to seize power for himself. With a collapsing army and rampant civil turmoil, the Bolsheviks spied an opportunity. Trotsky and Lenin deposed of Kerensky and took over the government in October of 1917. Kerensky's short-lived reign was over. He did, however, stand as proof that not all socialists were necessarily Marxian and was a decisive factor in keeping Russia involved in World War I.

### **Treaty of Brest-Litovsk:**

Formed between the Russians and the Germans in 1918, Lenin agreed to Germany's harsh terms of surrendering all of its western territories in order to bring an end to the war. The socialist government, still in its infancy and facing civil war, would not be able to continue participation in World War I. Lenin convinced his wary Bolshevik colleagues of the treaty's imperativeness and a vote by the Central Committee barely agreed. However, the Bolshevik Communists were then able to consolidate their power while the rest of Europe tangled with the Germans, who now had the ability to send their soldiers to the French front.

### **Vladimir Ilyich Lenin:**

Heavily influenced by the execution of his revolutionary brother Alexander, Lenin became a firm believer in the principles of the *Communist Manifesto* and developed three main points: Capitalism could only be crushed through violent revolution (denunciation of revisionists); certain conditions could open the door for a socialist revolution, even in Russia, where there was a small working class but extremely poor peasants; and, a determined workers' party was necessary to ensure a thorough revolution. The Petrograd Soviets helped to drag down the provisional government along with the rebelling lower classes, and here is where Lenin saw his chance. He snuck through Germany into Russia in 1917 and led the Bolsheviks in a complete takeover, overthrowing Kerensky with the aid of his supporter Leon Trotsky in November of that year. Lenin's first law was merely to appease the roiling peasantry, giving them the land they had already started taking from landlords and churches. Next, having promised free elections for a Constituent Assembly, Lenin was shocked to find that the Bolsheviks were voted as a minority in the government and quickly disbanded the party after the first meeting. This action stirred up another revolution as people realized that they were finding themselves under a dictatorship once again. Lenin recognized the trouble and hurriedly organized the Treaty of Brest-Litovsk with the Germans in order to focus entirely on the forming civil war. Thus, the October Revolution in 1918 divided Russia between the White armies and the Bolshevik Reds. Nevertheless, with Trotsky's support and the formation of the Cheka, the Reds triumphed in 1920, and Lenin's power was secured. He was crucial to European history as he led the first successful communist takeover, was a symbol of strong revolutionaries, and left Russia under a one party rule.