

Bolsheviks Seize Power in Russia

Vladimir Ilyich Lenin



OVERVIEW

During World War I, Czar Nicolas II of Russia abdicated and a provisional government took over. Promised social reforms did not occur, though, as the Russian economy slumped under the weight of the war effort. On November 7, 1917, the Bolsheviks, led by Vladimir Ilyich Lenin, overthrew Alexander Kerensky's provisional government at Petrograd (St. Petersburg). The Bolsheviks then laid the foundation of a socialist state. The following proclamation written by Bolshevik leader Lenin formalized the seizure of power by the Bolsheviks in Russia.

GUIDED READING As you read, consider the following questions:

- How did Lenin use the dissatisfaction of the Russian population to his advantage?
 - In what ways are Lenin's tactics and rhetoric similar to those used in modern political campaigns?
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THE YEAR 1917

TO WORKERS, SOLDIERS AND PEASANTS!

The Second All-Russia Congress of Soviets of Workers' and Soldiers' Deputies has opened. The vast majority of the Soviets are represented at the Congress. A number of delegates from the Peasants' Soviets are also present. The mandate of the compromising Central Executive Committee has terminated. Backed by the will of the vast majority of the workers, soldiers and peasants, backed by the victorious uprising of the workers and the garrison which has taken place in Petrograd, the Congress takes power into its own hands.

The Provisional Government has been overthrown. The majority of the members of the Provisional Government have already been arrested.

The Soviet Government will propose an immediate democratic peace to all the nations and an immediate armistice on all fronts. It will secure the transfer of the land of the landed proprietors, the crown and the monasteries to the peasant committees without compensation; it will protect the rights of the soldiers by introducing complete democracy in the army; it will establish workers' control over production; it will ensure the convocation of the Constituent Assembly at the time appointed; it will see to it that bread is supplied to the cities and prime necessities to the villages; it will guarantee all the nations inhabiting Russia the genuine right to self-determination.

The Congress decrees: all power in the localities shall pass to the Soviets of Workers', Soldiers' and Peasants' Deputies, which must guarantee genuine revolutionary order.

The Congress calls upon the soldiers in the trenches to be vigilant and firm. The Congress of Soviets is convinced that the revolutionary army will be able to defend the revolution against all attacks of imperialism until such time as the new government succeeds in concluding a democratic peace, which it will propose directly to all peoples. The new government will do everything to fully supply the revolutionary army, by means of a determined policy of requisitions and taxation of the propertied classes, and also will improve the condition of soldiers' families.

The Kornilov men—Kerensky, Kaledin and others—are attempting to bring troops against Petrograd. Several detachments, whom Kerensky had moved by deceiving them, have come over to the side of the insurgent people.

SOLDIERS, ACTIVELY RESIST KERENSKY THE KORNILOVITE! BE ON YOUR GUARD!

RAILWAYMEN, HOLD UP ALL TROOP TRAINS DISPATCHED BY KERENSKY AGAINST PETROGRAD!

SOLDIERS, WORKERS IN FACTORY AND OFFICE, THE FATE OF THE REVOLUTION AND THE FATE OF THE DEMOCRATIC PEACE IS IN YOUR HANDS!
LONG LIVE THE REVOLUTION!

The All-Russian Congress of Soviets of Workers' and Soldiers' Deputies.
The Delegates from the Peasants' Soviets.