

SIGNIFICANCE OF BOLSHEVIK REVOLUTION

contd...

The treaty was a demanding loss to the Russian people, resulting in the loss of a quarter of Russia's territory, one third of its people and half of its industry including the iron and coal rich mines. Kochan also argues that, 'the eventual peace treaty was one of the most ruthless in the world. Although inevitably, this allowed the Bolsheviks necessary time to focus on consolidating power.

By November 1917, opposition parties had declared war against Lenin's Bolsheviks. — World War I and the Civil War had left Russia's agriculture devastated and its industry, stagnant. Lenin had introduced War Communism to centralise all areas of production and distribution as a response, but at the harsh treatment of the peasants. This had resulted in wide spread famine in 1921 where soviet records estimate five million peasants had died as a result. As Lenin began to consolidate more power, he introduced a new policy, '**Red Terror**'. This sought to capture all counter-revolutionaries and imprison them in concentration camps in Siberia.

This policy had resulted in the execution of the Romanov family to destroy all links to the old regime.

J.N. Westwood argues that, 'probably in 1923 the unpopularity of the government was great as two years earlier, the workers were still underpaid, underfed and underproductive, while the peasants had never forgotten their treatment under War Communism. In both town and country there was a feeling that every Communist was a little tsar.'

The Bolsheviks efforts to win the Civil War were an attempt to consolidate power rather address the needs and treatment of the Russian people through War Communism. Although, Mawdsley seemingly disagrees, saying the exploiting of the Russian people worked in the long run, 'the Bolsheviks readiness to use extreme methods against their enemies was an important element in their keeping control of central Russia – at a time when their political base was small and they had little to give to the people.'

Although, the Red Terror had been used to consolidate the gains from the Bolshevik Revolution, it had created an opportunity that the opposition could use to criticize the ways of the Lenin.

The crippling effects of War Communism on Russia resulted in the unsuccessful Kronstadt Mutiny in 1921. In response, Lenin had created the **New Economic Policy** in an attempt to save Russia from famine and poverty and to encourage economic growth. The New Economic Policy 'represented a retreat from the Bolshevik policy of state control of the economy to a mixed economy where some private ownership was allowed to exist alongside state control.' The introduction of the New Economic Policy showed how the Bolshevik party was willing to change to counter each problem faced.

In retrospect the Bolshevik party wasn't the same Party as it was during October 1917, encouraging mass criticism towards the Lenin as some peasants got richer than others creating an imbalance in industry and agriculture, creating 'Scissor Prices', which presented opposition from traditional socialists within Lenin's own Party. The Bolshevik's had used War Communism to centralize industrialisation and agriculture to consolidate power during the Civil War. 'War Communism thus led to a rejection of communism, strengthening the argument that Lenin's economic policies sacrificed the Party's original ideologies.'

Although, not all historians agree with the view that the New Economic Policy was as destructive to the Communist regime as it had globally helped to encourage investment in Russia from Western countries for the first time, 'the great European powers gave recognition only to the Soviet government trade relations. This subsequently followed by the recognition by almost every country except the United States.'

The significance of the Bolshevik Revolution has been summarised by Robert V. Daniels, who states, 'A host of other circumstances and political events helped shape the Bolshevik regime from this time on – the Civil War, the death of Lenin, the challenge of industrialisation, the threat of foreign enemies and above all the rise to power of Joseph Stalin, who accomplished a new 'revolution from above' more far-reaching than the Bolshevik Revolution of 1917.'

To conclude, the Bolshevik Revolution ensured there was a Lenin led Bolshevik government ruling Russia. The policies made by Lenin were becoming more extreme, as consolidating power was progressively becoming harder, due to the Civil War and growing unrest caused by Lenin's own short term policies, causing tensions within the Ruling Party. It is clear to see, that Lenin's actions were taken to consolidate power, in response to each opposition force that tried to challenge Bolshevik rule. This is predominately, the biggest short term significance of the Bolshevik Revolution.