

Russian History the Years after the October Coup/Revolution.

After the October incidents:

- October coup
 - Lenin in the name of the Soviets had taken power from the Provisional Government.
- After seizing power, Lenin issued two key decrees:
 - Decree on Peace
 - Decree on Land
- In order to control the Soviets Lenin formed the Central Committee of the Bolshevik Party. A Council of People's Commissars was formed as the new government. All the commissars belonged to the Bolshevik Party.
 - Lenin became Chairman
 - Trotsky took over Foreign Affairs.
 - Stalin had an unimportant post, Chairman of Nationality Affairs.
- Promised free elections to the Assembly in November 1917, lost the election, took away its legislative power and promptly disbanding it.
- Banning the liberals as enemies of the people.

Creating the Single Party State:

- Russia became a new Dual Power. The Party ruled by ordering the Soviets.
- Lenin and the Bolsheviks faced big problems:
 - **Democracy and Influence:**
 - Lenin had no intentions of making Russia a democracy, he thought that democracy means Bourgeoisie rule.
 - The Soviets wanted influence.
 - **The farmers wanted land, but not Bolshevik rule.**
 - **No popular support.**
 - The people answered with **strikes**.
 - And with **refusal to obey**.
 - Trotsky and the Foreign ministry.
- The strikes spread throughout the entire country
 - Lenin answers with war and terror.
- Starts with a “cleaning up” of Russia. Leads to RED TERROR and CIVIL WAR.
- The murder of the czar and his family in 1918. Trying to gain control over Czarist elements.
 - Starts in June when Michail is shot in the woods outside Perm.
 - July 16, The Ural Soviet decides to shoot them. Take them down in the cellar of their Ekaterinburgian House and shot, burned and buried.
 - Results in intervention in the civil war by a small international force.

Creating the embryo of the “Stalinist” Totalitarian State:

- The Bolsheviks (Changed name to Communist in march 1918)
needed personnel:
 - 1917 23 600 members
 - 1919 250 000 members
 - 1921 730 000 members.
- **How do you control so many members?**
 - *Terror and fear.*
 - *Career opportunity.*
- **For this you need:**
 - a secret police.
 - Important posts only to “Old Guard”.
- **Governing Russia / Political Control:**
 - The Communist Party was making ALL decisions.
 - The Decree of Nationalization of all property meant that the Party needed control over all production in the country.
 - The Politburo was formed, taking care of all the important decisions. Lenin led the Politburo; in this we find Stalin, Trotsky, Kamenev etc.
 - Lenin rules the country with decrees. The men around him follow his orders. If there is a problem, Lenin decides what to do and it is done.

THE RED TERROR

- If you disapproved of the decisions made by the Party you were an *enemy of the people* and got arrested.
- Felix Dzerzhinski becomes head of the Cheka.

The Consolidation of Power:

- The First Step:
 - No laws, replace them with “Revolutionary Conscience”
 - In nov 1917 the Courts of Law are dissolved.
 - In March 1918 they are replaced with People’s Courts.
 - Now new laws.
 - Socialist sense of justice..
- The Second Step:
 - Introduce the idea of Political Crimes. Everything that is not in line with the Party Idea = contra-revolutionary activity.
- The third step:
 - Introduce laws and rules that actually promote and support terror.
- The fourth step:
 - Create a powerful secret police, one that answers to no rules and laws.
 - Spread terror by letting the people know that there is a very strong and violent secret police.
 - Make the people fear everybody, have informants everywhere.
- The Fifth step:
 - Create an enemy. Blame everything that is wrong in society on that group.
 - Make people know that there is an enemy and the only way to survive is to inform on suspicious elements. If not they will be next.

- Stalin will be the master of this. Lenin dies before we can see what he had planned for the Russian people...
- Strikes and demonstrations were dealt with very violently.
 - Jan 5 1918 the Bolsheviks open fire on demonstrators asking the Bolsheviks to respect the election held in November.
- The Leaders of the Communist Party becomes the “true voice of the people”. The Leninist propaganda has this approach all through their 74 years history. Stalin makes this into an art....

Signing the Brest-Litovsk ending the war:

- Disagreement at first, not all Bolsheviks think this is a good idea.
- Lenin persuades them..
- March 3 the paper is signed.
- Some international troops remain in Russia.

Civil War:

- Whites against the Red Army.
- Trotsky Commissar of the Red Army.
- Bolsheviks have huge problems at first.

and War Communism:

- The peasants revolt against the Bolsheviks, climax in 1920
- Lenin and the Party **engage in war against the peasants.**
 - Lenin declares war against Kulaks ("rich" farmers).
 - Tens of thousand rebels are executed and starved to death.
 - Lenin's own words: "These spiders have grown fat at the expense of peasants ... These leeches have drunk the blood of toilers, growing richer the more the workers starved in the cities ... These vampires have gathered ... in their hands the lands of landlords, enslaving ... the poor peasants. Merciless war against these kulaks! Death to them."
 - People in the countryside are shot by quotas.
- The result of the war against the peasantry is a complete and utter disaster, production falls, starving spreads to the cities. Permanent hunger spread through Russia during 1919-1920.
- Ends in complete disaster, nothing is working any more.

The NEP 21-28.

- The collapse of the economy meant that the communist had to back down.
- People were revolting all over Russia.
 - The **Kronstadt mutiny of 1921** was the final blow for Lenin.
 - Cut rations of bread with a third in Moscow and Petrograd, the workers striked, the soldiers did mutiny.
 - In March 1921 the Red Army Stormed Kronstadt,
 - 1000 soldiers refused to obey orders and went to the rebellion side
 - Trotsky ordered the execution of every fifth soldier refusing orders.
 - Kronstadt response with a statement, *the Bolsheviks are betraying the revolution and should allow free elections.*
 - The Red Army storms with 50 000 soldiers, against 17 000 rebellion soldiers.
 - Big peasant rebellion all over.
- Lenin answers with more terror, calling the rebelling farmers bandits and promising to kill anybody who help them.
- But he is slowly loosing the grip, he realizes that he can't win against the peasantries demand to get to keep some of their surplus and sell it on the market.
- Day before the storming of Kronstadt Lenin allows the farmers to keep part of the grain, starting in rebellious areas but soon forced to give the same right to all farmers.
- After doing this he has to allow other sectors of consumer goods set free at the market.
- Lenin and the communists keep a grip on the heavy industry, foreign trade, banking and other vital sectors of the economy.
- This is of course a major setback for the communists. These necessary changes of the political way meant that they were fearing that the lost of economic power would lead to the loosing of political power.
- In order to keep the political power they increased the political control, harder censorship, giving more power to the secret police, using of force labour, accusing people of being contrarevolutionary etc.
- 1920 – 1922 about 5 million people died from starving.

Lenin Dies.

- May 1922 suffers a stroke. Stalin, Kamenev and Zinoviev gets more power at the expense of Trotsky. More about this when we look on Stalin
- Dies on January 21 1924.