# October Revolution

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*This article is about the Soviet Revolution of 1917. For other uses, see* [*October Revolution (disambiguation)*](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/October_Revolution_(disambiguation))*.*

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| **Bolshevik Revolution** | |
| Part of the [Russian Revolution of 1917](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Russian_Revolution_of_1917), [Revolutions of 1917–23](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Revolutions_of_1917%E2%80%9323) and the [Russian Civil War](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Russian_Civil_War) | |
| [Red Guards](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Red_Guards_(Russia)) at Vulkan factory in 1917. | |
| |  |  | | --- | --- | | **Date** | 7–8 November 1917 | | **Location** | [Petrograd](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Saint_petersburg), [Russia](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Russian_Republic) | | **Result** | [Bolshevik](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Bolshevik) victory   * Creation of [Soviet Russia](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Russian_Soviet_Federative_Socialist_Republic) * End of [Russian Provisional Government](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Russian_Provisional_Government), [Russian Republic](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Russian_Republic) and [dual power](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Dual_power) * Start of the [Russian Civil War](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Russian_Civil_War) | | |
| **Belligerents** | |
| [Bolsheviks](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Bolshevik) [Left SRs](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Left_Socialist-Revolutionaries) [Red Guards](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Red_Guards_(Russia)) [2nd All-Russian Congress of Soviets](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/All-Russian_Congress_of_Soviets)   * [Petrograd Soviet](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Petrograd_Soviet)  * [Russian Soviet Republic](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Russian_Soviet_Federative_Socialist_Republic) (from November 7) | [Russian Republic](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Russian_Republic) (to November 7) [Russian Provisional Government](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Russian_Provisional_Government) (to November 8) |
| **Commanders and leaders** | |
| [Vladimir Lenin](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Vladimir_Lenin) [Leon Trotsky](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Leon_Trotsky) [Pavel Dybenko](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Pavel_Dybenko) | [Alexander Kerensky](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Alexander_Kerensky) |
| **Strength** | |
| 10,000 red sailors, 20,000-30,000 red guard soldiers | 500-1,000 volunteer soldiers, 1,000 soldiers of women's battalion |
| **Casualties and losses** | |
| Few wounded red guard soldiers | All deserted |



*Bolshevik* (1920), by [Boris Kustodiev](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Boris_Kustodiev)



[*New York Times*](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/New_York_Times) headline from November 9, 1917

The **October Revolution** ([Russian](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Russian_language): Октя́брьская револю́ция, [tr.](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Romanization_of_Russian) *Oktyabr'skaya revolyutsiya*, IPA: [[ɐkˈtʲæbrʲskəjə rʲɪvɐˈlʲʉtsɨjə]](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Help:IPA_for_Russian)), officially known as the **Great October Socialist Revolution** ([Russian](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Russian_language): Вели́кая Октя́брьская социалисти́ческая револю́ция, [tr.](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Romanization_of_Russian) *Velikaya Oktyabr'skaya sotsialisticheskaya revolyutsiya*), and commonly referred to as **Red October**, the **October Uprising** or the **Bolshevik Revolution**, was a seizure of state power instrumental in the larger [Russian Revolution of 1917](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Russian_Revolution_of_1917). It took place with an armed [insurrection](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Insurrection) in [Petrograd](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Saint_Petersburg) traditionally dated to 25 October 1917 (by the [Julian](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Julian_calendar) or [Old Style](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Old_Style_and_New_Style_dates) calendar, which corresponds to 7 November 1917 in the [Gregorian](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Gregorian_calendar) or New Style calendar).

It followed and capitalized on the [February Revolution](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/February_Revolution) of the same year. The October Revolution in Petrograd overthrew the [Russian Provisional Government](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Russian_Provisional_Government) and gave the power to the local [soviets](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Soviet_(council)) dominated by [Bolsheviks](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Bolsheviks). This immediately initiated the establishment of the [Russian Socialist Federative Soviet Republic](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Russian_Socialist_Federative_Soviet_Republic), the world's first self-proclaimed [socialist state](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Socialist_state). As the revolution was not universally recognized outside of Petrograd there followed the struggles of the [Russian Civil War](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Russian_Civil_War) (1917–1922) and the creation of the [Soviet Union](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Soviet_Union) in 1922.

The revolution was led by the [Bolsheviks](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Bolshevik), who used their influence in the [Petrograd Soviet](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Petrograd_Soviet) to organize the armed forces. Bolshevik [Red Guards](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Red_Guards_(Russia)) forces under the [Military Revolutionary Committee](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Military_Revolutionary_Committee) began the takeover of government buildings on 24 October 1917 (O.S.). The following day, the [Winter Palace](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Winter_Palace) (the seat of the Provisional government located in [Petrograd](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Saint_Petersburg), then capital of [Russia](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Russia)), was captured.

## Etymology

Initially, the event was referred as the *October coup* (Октябрьский переворот) or the *Uprising of 25th*, as seen in contemporary documents (for example, in the first editions of [Lenin](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Vladimir_Lenin)'s complete works). In Russian, however, "переворот" has a similar meaning to "revolution" and also means "upheaval" or "overturn", so "coup" is not necessarily the right translation. With time, the term *October Revolution* (Октябрьская революция) came into use. It is also known as the "November Revolution" having occurred in November according to the Gregorian Calendar.

The Great October Socialist Revolution ([Russian](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Russian_language): Вели́кая Октя́брьская Социалисти́ческая Революция, *Velikaya Oktyabr'skaya sotsialisticheskaya revolyutsiya*) was the official name for the October Revolution in the Soviet Union after the 10th anniversary of the Revolution in 1927.

## Background

The [February Revolution](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/February_Revolution) had toppled Tsar [Nicholas II](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Nicholas_II) of Russia, and replaced his government with the [Russian Provisional Government](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Russian_Provisional_Government). However, the provisional government was weak and riven by internal dissension. It continued to wage [World War I](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/World_War_I), which became increasingly unpopular. A nationwide crisis developed in Russia, affecting social, economic, and political relations. Disorder in industry and transport had intensified, and difficulties in obtaining provisions had increased. Gross industrial production in 1917 had decreased by over 36 percent from what it had been in 1916. In the autumn, as much as 50 percent of all enterprises were closed down in the [Urals](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Urals), the [Donbas](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Donbas), and other industrial centers, leading to mass unemployment. At the same time, the cost of living increased sharply. The real wages of the workers fell about 50 percent from what they had been in 1913. Russia's national debt in October 1917 had risen to 50 billion rubles. Of this, debts to foreign governments constituted more than 11 billion rubles. The country faced the threat of financial [bankruptcy](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Bankruptcy).

In September and October 1917, there were strikes by the [Moscow](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Moscow) and Petrograd workers, the miners of the Donbas, the metalworkers of the Urals, the oil workers of [Baku](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Baku), the textile workers of the Central Industrial Region, and the railroad workers on 44 different railway lines. In these months alone more than a million workers took part in mass [strike action](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Strike_action). Workers established control over production and distribution in many factories and plants in a [social revolution](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Social_revolution).

By October 1917 there had been over four thousand peasant uprisings against landowners. When the Provisional Government sent out punitive detachments it only enraged the peasants. The garrisons in Petrograd, Moscow, and other cities, the Northern and Western fronts, and the sailors of the [Baltic](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Baltic_Sea) Fleet in September openly declared through their elected representative body [Tsentrobalt](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Tsentrobalt) that they did not recognize the authority of the Provisional Government and would not carry out any of its commands.

In a diplomatic note of the 1st May, the minister of foreign affairs, [Pavel Milyukov](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Pavel_Milyukov), expressed the Provisional Government's desire to carry the war against the [Central Powers](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Central_Powers) through "to a victorious conclusion", arousing broad indignation. On 1–4 May about 100,000 workers and soldiers of Petrograd, and after them the workers and soldiers of other cities, led by the Bolsheviks, demonstrated under banners reading "Down with the war!" and "all power to the soviets!" The mass demonstrations resulted in a crisis for the Provisional Government.

1 July saw more demonstrations, as about 500,000 workers and soldiers in Petrograd demonstrated, again demanding "all power to the soviets", "down with the war", and "down with the ten capitalist ministers". The Provisional Government opened an [offensive](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Kerensky_Offensive) against the Central Powers on 1 July but it soon collapsed. The news of the offensive and its collapse intensified the struggle of the workers and the soldiers. A new crisis in the Provisional Government began on 15 July.



A scene from the July Days. The army has just opened fire on street protesters.

On 16 July spontaneous demonstrations of workers and soldiers began in Petrograd, demanding that power be turned over to the soviets. The Central Committee of the [Russian Social Democratic Labor Party](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Russian_Social_Democratic_Labour_Party) provided leadership to the spontaneous movements. On 17 July, over 500,000 people participated in a peaceful demonstration in Petrograd, the so-called [July Days](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/July_Days). The Provisional Government, with the support of the [Socialist-Revolutionary Party](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Socialist-Revolutionary_Party)-[Menshevik](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Menshevik) leaders of the All-Russian Executive Committee of the Soviets, ordered an armed attack against the demonstrators. Fifty-six people were killed and 650 were wounded.

A period of repression followed. On 5–6 July attacks were made on the editorial offices and printing presses of [*Pravda*](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Pravda) and on the [Palace of Kshesinskaya](http://en.wikipedia.org/w/index.php?title=Palace_of_Kshesinskaya&action=edit&redlink=1), where the Central Committee and the Petrograd Committee of the Bolsheviks were located. On 7 July a government decree ordering the arrest and trial of [Vladimir Lenin](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Vladimir_Lenin) was published. He was forced to go underground, just as he had been under the [Tsarist](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Tsarist) regime. Bolsheviks began to be arrested, workers were disarmed, and revolutionary military units in Petrograd were disbanded or sent off to the front. On 12 July the Provisional Government published a law introducing the death penalty at the front. The formation of the second coalition government, with [Alexander Kerensky](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Alexander_Kerensky) as chairman, was completed on 24 July.

Another problem for the government centered on General [Lavr Kornilov](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Lavr_Kornilov), who had been Commander-in-Chief since 18 July. In response to a Bolshevik appeal, Moscow’s working class began a protest strike of 400,000 workers. The Moscow workers were supported by strikes and protest rallies by workers in [Kiev](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Kiev), [Kharkov](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Kharkov), [Nizhny Novgorod](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Nizhny_Novgorod), [Ekaterinburg](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Ekaterinburg), and other cities.

In what became known as the [Kornilov Affair](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Kornilov_Affair), Kornilov directed an army under [Aleksandr Krymov](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Aleksandr_Krymov) to march toward Petrograd with Kerensky's agreement. Although the details remain sketchy, Kerensky appeared to become frightened by the possibility of a coup and the order was countermanded (by comparison, historian Richard Pipes has argued that the whole episode was engineered by Kerensky himself). On 27 August, feeling betrayed by the Kerensky government who had previously agreed with his views on how to restore order to Russia, Kornilov pushed on towards Petrograd. With few troops to spare on the front, Kerensky was forced to turn to the Petrograd Soviet for help. Bolsheviks, Mensheviks and Socialist Revolutionaries confronted the army and convinced them to stand down. The damage was already done, however. Right-wingers felt betrayed, and the left wing was resurgent.

With Kornilov defeated, the Bolsheviks' popularity with the soviets significantly increased. During and after the defeat of Kornilov, a mass turn of the soviets toward the Bolsheviks began, both in the central and local areas. On 31 August, the Petrograd Soviet of Workers and Soldiers Deputies, and on 5 September, the Moscow Soviet Workers Deputies adopted the Bolshevik resolutions on the question of power. The Bolsheviks won a majority in the Soviets of [Briansk](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Briansk), [Samara](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Samara,_Russia), [Saratov](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Saratov), [Tsaritsyn](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Tsaritsyn), [Minsk](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Minsk), Kiev, [Tashkent](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Tashkent), and other cities. In one day alone, 1 September, the All-Russian Central Executive Committee of Soviets received demands from 126 local soviets urging it to take power into its own hands.

## Events



Cruiser [*Aurora*](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Russian_cruiser_Aurora).



Forward gun of *Aurora* that fired the signal shot.

On 23 October [[O.S.](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Old_Style_and_New_Style_dates) 10 October] 1917, the Bolsheviks' Central Committee voted 10-2 for a resolution saying that "an armed uprising is inevitable, and that the time for it is fully ripe".



Map of October uprising conflicts in Petrograd, 6–7 November 1917

On 5 November [[O.S.](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Old_Style_and_New_Style_dates) 23 October] 1917, [Bolshevik](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Bolshevik) leader [Jaan Anvelt](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Jaan_Anvelt) led his leftist revolutionaries in an uprising in [Tallinn](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Tallinn), the capital of the [Autonomous Governorate of Estonia](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Autonomous_Governorate_of_Estonia). Two days later, Bolsheviks led their forces in the uprising in Petrograd (modern day Saint Petersburg), the capital of Russia, against the Kerensky [Provisional Government](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Russian_Provisional_Government). For the most part, the revolt in Petrograd was bloodless, with the Red Guards led by Bolsheviks taking over major government facilities with little opposition before finally launching an assault on the poorly defended [Winter Palace](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Winter_Palace).

The official Soviet version of events follows: An assault led by [Vladimir Lenin](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Vladimir_Lenin) was launched at 9:45 p.m. signaled by a blank shot from the cruiser [*Aurora*](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Russian_cruiser_Aurora). (The *Aurora* was placed in Petrograd and still stands there now.) The Winter Palace was guarded by [Cossacks](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Cossack), [cadets](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Cadet) (military students), and a [Women's Battalion](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Women%27s_Battalion). It was taken at about 2 a.m. The earlier date was made the official date of the Revolution, when all offices except the Winter Palace had been taken. More contemporary research with access to government archives significantly corrects accepted Soviet edited and embellished history. The archival version shows that parties of Bolshevik operatives sent out from the Smolny by Lenin took over all critical centers of power in Petrograd in the early hours of the night without a shot being fired. In fact the effectively unoccupied Winter Palace also was taken bloodlessly by a small group which broke in, got lost in the cavernous interior, and accidentally happened upon the remnants of Kerensky's provisional government in the imperial family's breakfast room. The illiterate revolutionaries then compelled those arrested to write up their own arrest papers. The stories of the "defense of the Winter Palace" and the heroic "Storming of the Winter Palace" came later as the creative propaganda product of Bolshevik publicists. Grandiose paintings depicting the "Women's Battalion" and photo stills taken from Sergei Eisenstein's staged film depicting the "politically correct" version of the October events in Petrograd came to be taken as truth.

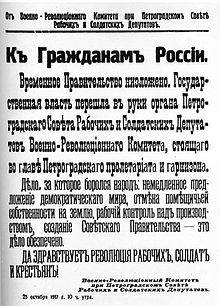
Later official accounts of the revolution from the [Soviet Union](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Soviet_Union) would depict the events in October as being far more dramatic than they actually had been. (See firsthand account by British General [Knox](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Alfred_Knox).) This was helped by the [historical reenactment](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Historical_reenactment), entitled [*The Storming of the Winter Palace*](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/The_Storming_of_the_Winter_Palace), which was staged in 1920. This reenactment, watched by 100,000 spectators, provided the model for official films made much later, which showed a huge storming of the Winter Palace and fierce fighting (See [Sergei Eisenstein](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Sergei_Eisenstein)'s [*October: Ten Days That Shook the World*](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/October:_Ten_Days_That_Shook_the_World)). In reality the Bolshevik insurgents faced little or no opposition. The insurrection was timed and organized to hand state power to the Second [All-Russian Congress of Soviets](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/All-Russian_Congress_of_Soviets) of Workers' and Soldiers' Deputies, which began on 25 October. After a single day of revolution eighteen people had been arrested and two had been killed.

## Timeline of the spread of Soviet power ([Gregorian calendar](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Gregorian_calendar) dates)

* 5 November 1917: Tallinn.
* 7 November 1917: [Petrograd](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Petrograd), [Minsk](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Minsk), [Novgorod](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Novgorod), [Ivanovo-Voznesensk](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Ivanovo-Voznesensk) and [Tartu](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Tartu)
* 8 November 1917: Ufa, Kazan, Yekaterinburg and Narva;([failed](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Kiev_Bolshevik_Uprising) in [Kiev](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Kiev))
* 9 November 1917: Vitebsk, Yaroslavl, Saratov, Samara and Izhevsk
* 10 November 1917: Rostov, Tver and Nizhny Novgorod
* 12 November 1917: Voronezh, Smolensk and Gomel
* 13 November 1917: Tambov
* 14 November 1917: Orel and Perm
* 15 November 1917: Pskov, Moscow and Baku
* 27 November 1917: [Tsaritsyn](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Tsaritsyn)
* 1 December 1917: Mogilev
* 8 December 1917: Vyatka
* 10 December 1917: Kishinev
* 11 December 1917: Kaluga
* 14 December 1917: Novorossisk
* 15 December 1917: Kostroma
* 20 December 1917: Tula
* 24 December 1917: Kharkov (invasion of Ukraine by the Muravyov Red Guard forces, establishment of the Soviet Ukraine and [hostilities in the region](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Ukrainian-Soviet_war))
* 29 December 1917: Sevastopol (invasion of Crimea by the Red Guard forces, establishment of the Taurida Soviet republic)
* 4 January 1918: Penza
* 11 January 1918: Yekaterinoslav
* 17 January 1918: Petrozavodsk
* 19 January 1918: Poltava
* 22 January 1918: Zhitomir
* 26 January 1918: Simferopol
* 27 January 1918: Nikolayev
* 28 January 1918: Helsinki (the [Reds](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Red_Guards_(Finland)) overthrow the [White Senate](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Senate_of_Finland), the [Finnish Civil War](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Finnish_Civil_War) begins)
* 29 January 1918: ([failed](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Kiev_Arsenal_January_Uprising) again in Kiev)
* 31 January 1918: Odessa and Orenburg (establishment of the [Odessa Soviet Republic](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Odessa_Soviet_Republic))
* 7 February 1918: Astrakhan
* 8 February 1918: Kiev and Vologda (defeat of the Ukrainian government)
* 17 February 1918: Arkhangelsk
* 25 February 1918: Novocherkassk

## Outcomes

See also: [Russian Revolution (1917)](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Russian_Revolution_(1917)) and [Kiev Bolshevik Uprising](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Kiev_Bolshevik_Uprising)



Petrograd [Milrevcom](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Milrevcom) proclamation about the deposing of the [Russian Provisional Government](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Russian_Provisional_Government)

The Second Congress of Soviets consisted of 670 elected delegates; 300 were Bolshevik and nearly a hundred were Left [Socialist-Revolutionaries](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Socialist-Revolutionaries), who also supported the overthrow of the [Alexander Kerensky](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Alexander_Kerensky) Government. When the fall of the Winter Palace was announced, the Congress adopted a decree transferring power to the Soviets of Workers', Soldiers' and Peasants' Deputies, thus ratifying the Revolution.

The transfer of power was not without disagreement. The center and Right wings of the Socialist Revolutionaries as well as the Mensheviks believed that Lenin and the Bolsheviks had [illegally seized power](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Coup_d%27%C3%A9tat) and they walked out before the resolution was passed. As they exited, they were taunted by [Leon Trotsky](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Leon_Trotsky) who told them "You are pitiful isolated individuals; you are bankrupts; your role is played out. Go where you belong from now on — into the dustbin of history!"

The following day, the Congress elected a Council of People's Commissars ([Sovnarkom](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Sovnarkom)) as the basis of a new Soviet Government, pending the convocation of a [Constituent Assembly](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Russian_Constituent_Assembly), and passed the [Decree on Peace](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Decree_on_Peace) and the [Decree on Land](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Decree_on_Land). This new government was also officially called "provisional" until the Assembly was dissolved.

The Council of People's Commissars now began to arrest the leaders of opposition parties. Dozens of [Constitutional Democratic Party](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Constitutional_Democratic_Party) (Kadet) leaders and members of the Constituent Assembly were imprisoned in The [Peter and Paul Fortress](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Peter_and_Paul_Fortress). These were to be followed by the arrests of Socialist-Revolutionary Party and Menshevik leaders. On 20 December 1917 the [Cheka](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Cheka) was created by the decree of [Vladimir Lenin](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Vladimir_Lenin). These were the beginnings of the Bolshevik's consolidation of power over their political opponents.

The Decree on Land ratified the actions of the [peasants](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Peasant) who throughout Russia seized private land and redistributed it among themselves. The Bolsheviks viewed themselves as representing an alliance of workers and peasants and memorialized that understanding with the [Hammer and Sickle](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Hammer_and_Sickle) on the flag and coat of arms of the Soviet Union.

Other decrees:

* All Russian banks were [nationalized](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Nationalization).
* Private [bank accounts](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Bank_account) were confiscated.
* The Church's properties (including bank accounts) were seized.
* All foreign debts were repudiated.
* Control of the factories was given to the soviets.
* Wages were fixed at higher rates than during the war, and a shorter, eight-hour working day was introduced.

Bolshevik-led attempts to seize power in other parts of the [Russian Empire](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Russian_Empire) were largely successful in Russia proper — although the fighting in [Moscow](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Moscow) lasted for two weeks — but they were less successful in ethnically non-Russian parts of the Empire, which had been clamoring for independence since the February Revolution. For example, the Ukrainian [Rada](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Rada), which had declared autonomy on 23 June 1917, created the [Ukrainian People's Republic](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Ukrainian_People%27s_Republic) on 20 November, which was supported by the Ukrainian Congress of Soviets. This led to an armed conflict with the Bolshevik government in Petrograd and, eventually, a Ukrainian declaration of independence from Russia on 25 January 1918. In [Estonia](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Estonia), two rival governments emerged: the [Estonian Provincial Assembly](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Estonian_Provincial_Assembly) proclaimed itself the supreme legal authority of Estonia on 28 November 1917 and issued the [Declaration of Independence](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Estonian_Declaration_of_Independence) on 24 February 1918, while an Estonian Bolshevik sympathizer, [Jaan Anvelt](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Jaan_Anvelt), was recognized by Lenin's government as Estonia's leader on 8 December, although forces loyal to Anvelt controlled only the capital.

The success of the October Revolution transformed the Russian state from parliamentarian to socialist in character. A coalition of anti-Bolshevik groups attempted to unseat the new government in the [Russian Civil War](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Russian_Civil_War) from 1918 to 1922.

In an attempt to intervene in the civil war after the Bolshevik's separate peace with the Central Powers, the Allied powers (United Kingdom, France, United States and Japan) occupied parts of the Soviet Union for over two years before finally withdrawing. The [United States](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/United_States) did not recognize the new Russian government until 1933. The European powers recognized the Soviet Union in the early 1920s and began to engage in business with it after the [New Economic Policy](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/New_Economic_Policy) (NEP) was implemented.

## Historiography

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| [**Soviet Union**](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Soviet_Union) |
|  |
| This article is part of a series on the [**politics and government of the Soviet Union**](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Politics_of_the_Soviet_Union) |
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| Leadership   * [Leaders](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/List_of_leaders_of_the_Soviet_Union) * [President](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/President_of_the_Soviet_Union)   + ([list](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/List_of_heads_of_state_of_the_Soviet_Union)   + [Vice President](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Vice_President_of_the_Soviet_Union)) * [Collective leadership](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Collective_leadership_in_the_Soviet_Union) * [State Council](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/State_Council_of_the_Soviet_Union) * [Presidential Council](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Presidential_Council_of_the_Soviet_Union) |
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Few events in historical research have been as conditioned by political influences as the October Revolution. The [historiography](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Historiography) of the Revolution generally divides into three camps: the Soviet-Marxist view, the Western-Totalitarian view, and the Revisionist view.

### Soviet historiography

Soviet historiography of the October Revolution is intertwined with Soviet historical development. Many of the initial Soviet interpreters of the Revolution were themselves Bolshevik revolutionaries. (For example, the revolutionary Leon Trotsky wrote a major narrative of the October Revolution.) After the initial wave of revolutionary narratives, Soviet historians worked within “narrow guidelines” defined by the Soviet government. The rigidity of interpretive possibilities reached its height under [Joseph Stalin](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Joseph_Stalin).

Soviet historians of the October Revolution interpreted the Revolution so as to establish the legitimacy of Marxist ideology, and also the Bolshevik regime. To establish the accuracy of Marxist ideology, Soviet historians generally described the Revolution as the product of class struggle. They maintained that the Revolution was the supreme event in a world history governed by historical laws. The Bolshevik Party is placed at the center of the Revolution, exposing the errors of both the moderate Provisional Government and the spurious “socialist” Mensheviks in the Petrograd Soviet. Guided by [Vladimir Lenin](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Vladimir_Lenin)'s leadership and his firm grasp of scientific Marxist theory; the Party led the “logically predetermined” events of the October Revolution from beginning to end. The events were, according to these historians, logically predetermined because of the socio-economic development of Russia, where the monopoly industrial capitalism alienated the masses. In this view, the Bolshevik party took the leading role in organizing these alienated industrial workers, and thereby established the construction of the first socialist state.

Although Soviet historiography of the October Revolution stayed relatively constant until 1991, it did undergo some changes. Following Stalin’s death, historians such as E. N. Burdzhalov and P. V. Volobuev published historical research that deviated significantly from the party line in refining the doctrine that the Bolshevik victory “was predetermined by the state of Russia’s socio-economic development”. These historians, who comprised the “New Directions Group”, posited that the complex nature of the October Revolution “could only be explained by a multi-causal analysis, not by recourse to the mono-causality of monopoly capitalism”. For them, the central actor is still the Bolshevik party, but this party triumphed “because it alone could solve the preponderance of ‘general democratic’ tasks the country faced” (such as the struggle for peace, the exploitation of landlords, and so on.)

During the late Soviet period, the opening of select Soviet archives during glasnost sparked innovative research that broke away from some aspects of Marxism-Leninism, though the key features of the orthodox Soviet view remained intact.

### Western historiography

During the Cold War, Western historiography of the October Revolution developed in direct response to the assertions of the Soviet view. The Soviet Marxist-Leninist version of the October Revolution conditioned historical interpretations in the United States and the West. As a result, these Western historians exposed what they considered flaws in the Soviet view, thereby undermining the Bolshevik’s original legitimacy, as well as the precepts of Marxism.

Far from being inevitable according the historical laws of Marxism, these Western historians presented the revolution as the result of a chain of contingent accidents. Examples of these accidental and contingent factors that precipitated the Revolution include [World War I](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/World_War_I)'s timing, chance, and the poor leadership of Tsar Nicholas II as well as liberal and moderate socialists. According to this historical interpretation, it was not popular support, but rather Bolshevik manipulation of the masses and the organization’s ruthlessness and superior structure which enabled it to survive. For these historians, the Bolsheviks’ defeat in the Constituent Assembly elections of November–December 1917 demonstrated popular opposition to the Bolsheviks’ coup, as did the scale and breadth of the Civil War.

These historians saw the organization of the Bolshevik party as proto-totalitarian. Their interpretation of the October Revolution as a violent coup organized by a proto-totalitarian party reinforced the idea that totalitarianism is an inherent part of Soviet history. For them, Stalinist totalitarianism developed as a natural progression from Leninism and the Bolshevik party’s tactics and organization.

### Impact of the dissolution of the USSR on historical research

The dissolution of the USSR had an impact on historical interpretations of the October Revolution. Since 1991, increasing access to large amounts of Soviet archival materials made it possible to re‑examine the October Revolution. Though both Western and Russian historians now have access to many of these archives, the impact of the dissolution of the USSR can be seen most clearly in the work of historians in the former USSR. While the disintegration essentially helped solidify the Western and Revisionist views, post-USSR Russian historians largely repudiated the former Soviet historical interpretation of the Revolution. In other words, the established Soviet view of the October Revolution has been challenged, and consequently “Russian historians’ outlook has come closer to that of their Western conferees.” As Stephen Kotkin argues, 1991 prompted “a return to political history and the apparent resurrection of totalitarianism, the interpretive view that, in different ways…revisionists sought to bury”. In other words, after 1991, there has been the revival among some historians of the “continuity thesis”, the idea that there was an uncomplicated, natural evolution from the October Revolution’s organizational structure to Stalin’s Gulags.

## Legacy

The term "Red October" (Красный Октябрь, Krasnyy Oktyabr) has also been used to describe the events of the month. This name has in turn been lent to a steel factory made notable by the [Battle of Stalingrad](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Battle_of_Stalingrad), a [Moscow sweets factory](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Krasny_Oktyabr_Open_Joint-Stock_Company) that is well known in Russia, and a [fictional Soviet submarine](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Red_October_(submarine)).

[Sergei Eisenstein](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Sergei_Eisenstein)'s film [*October: Ten Days That Shook the World*](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/October:_Ten_Days_That_Shook_the_World) describes and glorifies the revolution and was commissioned to commemorate the event.

7 November, the anniversary of the October Revolution, was the official [national day](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/National_day) of the [Soviet Union](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Soviet_Union) from 1918 onward and still is a [public holiday](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Public_holiday) in [Belarus](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Belarus), [Kyrgyzstan](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Kyrgyzstan), and the breakaway territory of [Transnistria](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Transnistria).

The October revolution of 1917 also marks the inception of the first communist government in Russia, and thus the first large-scale [socialist state](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Socialist_state) in world history. After this Russia became the Russian SFSR and later part of the USSR, which dissolved in late 1991.

## See also

* [February Revolution](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/February_Revolution)
* [Arthur Ransome](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Arthur_Ransome)
* [John Reed](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/John_Reed_(journalist))
  + [Ten Days that Shook the World](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Ten_Days_that_Shook_the_World)
* [Revolutions of 1917-23](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Revolutions_of_1917-23)
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* [Russian Revolution (1917)](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Russian_Revolution_(1917))
* [Kiev Bolshevik Uprising](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Kiev_Bolshevik_Uprising)
* [Anna Geifman](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Anna_Geifman)

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