

# 1. Historical context

## 1.a Politics in pre-revolutionary Russia

### The Tsarist autocratic system

- Over the 200 years after Ivan III (1462-1505) first to claimed rule over Russian people Russia's system of autocracy was strengthened.
- Tsar = absolute power, head of state, government, church and armed forces. No opposition allowed. Ruled by "divine right" – him ruling was the will of god.
- "Russification" – making Russia's multi-national empire all reflect Russian language and culture.
- Peasants lived lives of destitution and despair.
- Russia's economy and society was that of the middle ages.

### The nature of political life in pre-revolutionary Russia

- Up until the 20<sup>th</sup> century there had been no opposition to the Tsar, although there were assassinations and frequent peasant revolts against living standards; not the tsar.
- In 1825 there was an attempt to overthrow tsardom (Decembrist Revolt) in which a Republic was proposed but revolt crushed by Tsar Nicholas I who established a nationwide security system known as the Third Section of the Imperial Chancery.
- Tsar Alexander II attempted to introduce modern reforms but after he was assassinated, reforms came to an end.

### The nature of political opposition in pre-revolutionary Russia

- **SOCIALIST REVOLUTIONARY PARTY** = peasant socialism without capitalist stage
- **POPULISTS** = replace tsarism with loosely-linked peasant communes + working men's associations.
- **ANIHILISTS** = no respect to authority and accept nothing on trust.
- **ANARCHISTS** = overthrow of gov't + replaced with small communities.
- **SOCIAL DEMOCRATIC PARTY** = Marxist group. Split into **MENSHEVIKS** + **BOLSHEVIKS**.
- Opposition groups had to operate in secret to avoid being arrested, exiled, imprisoned or executed.
- Protests + demands for change expressed in violence.
- Groups sought unrealistic solutions to Russia's problems.

### Politics in the years before 1917

- Nicholas II was ill-suited to the role of tsar.
- Revolution in 1905 ended due to the October Manifesto which briefly settled the country down.
- Revolutionary leaders imprisoned and thousands were hanged.
- First and second Dumas (a parliament promised to the people) shut down and 3<sup>rd</sup> and 4<sup>th</sup> only carried through due to changes made to the electoral roles.
- Strike activity increased dramatically in the years prior to WWI and revolution was only avoided by the huge increase of patriotic fervour which wiped almost all political opposition.
- Poor conditions on the war and home front led to increase of political opposition.
- In March 1917 revolution was a spontaneous outburst and the main revolutionary figures were either out of the country or exiled in Siberia.

## 1.b The 1917 revolution

Tsarist Russia is in turmoil:

- Poor living + working conditions
- Lacking support in the war



LEADS TO EVENTS IN MARCH



**MARCH**

For the next 8 months, Russia will be ruled by the Provisional Government, a “Dual Power System”. The government prevails during this time under Alexander Kerensky.

**MARCH** saw Tsar Nicholas II abdicate under pressure for himself and his son, on the 15<sup>th</sup> March 1917.

The events (strikes and protests) which led to this were spontaneous and unorganised. It had no party basis, and was leaderless in its outbreak.

In **April**, at the news of the March Revolution, Lenin returns to Russia.

**APRIL**

By **July**, Lenin has called for the overthrow of the Provisional Gov't, and “all power to the Soviets”.

**JULY**

The Bolsheviks' attempts at power fails, and most party leaders flee or are arrested (including Trotsky).

**SEPTEMBER**

General Kornilov attempts to overthrow the Provisional Government under Kerensky. This fails when he doesn't mention his thanks or the workers' support of the gov't.

The Bols use this episode to increase their popularity.

Lenin arrives back in Russia. He orders the Bolsheviks to take power and calls for “all power to the Soviets” – succeeding in this attempt. (However, the ‘coup’ was largely executed by Trotsky!)

**OCTOBER**

On the **7<sup>th</sup> November**, the Bolsheviks are officially running Petrograd and most other parts of Russia.

**NOVEMBER**

By the end of **1917**, the Bolsheviks had gained power to Russia, and moved forward to eliminate their enemies.

Petrograd is now ruled by the ‘ultimate’ revolutionist party – the BOLSHEVIKS, under Lenin!

## 2. Background

### 2.a Family background and education

- Trotsky's father = David Leontievich Bronstein. He was from a Jewish family who migrated to the Ukraine. He became a substantial landowner.
- Trotsky was closer to his father than his mother and respected his solid work ethic.
- Trotsky's upbringing was not particularly Jewish.
- **1889** went to Odessa with Spentzer where he developed a taste for the arts (especially books).
- **1896** went to Nikolayev to finish his education and converted to Marxism.

### 2.b Development of political ideals

#### THE SOUTH RUSSIAN WORKERS' UNION

- While finishing his education in Nikolayev he was involved with young socialists and eventually converted to Marxism due to debates with his future wife, Alexandra Sokolovskaya.
- Prior to this, Trotsky could best be described as a POPULIST.
- **March 1897** -> organised an illegal workers' organisation, the **South Russian Workers' Union**.
  - ↳ easily tracked down + arrested
  - ↳ Trotsky faced months in solitary confinement + 1.5 years in Odessa prison.

#### EXILE IN SIBERIA

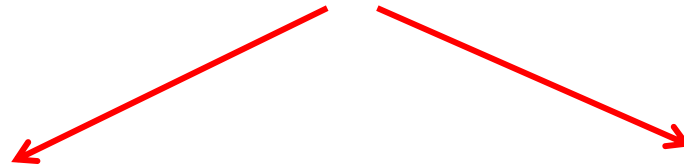
- Sentenced to 4 years exile
- While in exile he studied Marxism and read the **Iskra**
- Main preoccupation = politics + Russian Revolution
- Wanted to join up + impress the leading Marxist (Lenin) so he escaped Siberia.

#### ESCAPE TO LONDON

- **1902** arrived in London + met Lenin
- Began writing for the Iskra – Lenin called him 'the Pen'
- Older members of the **Russian Social Democratic Party** didn't like Trotsky (such as Georgi Plekhanov)

## Second Congress of the Russian Social Democratic Party

**1903 ----->** The Second Congress of the **RUSSIAN SOCIAL DEMOCRATIC PARTY** saw the party split in two.



### **BOLSHEVIKS (under Lenin)**

- Strict discipline
- Must be highly centralised
- Tight, hierarchal structure
- A group of PROFESSIONAL revolutionaries to lead.

### **MENSHEVIKS (under Martov)**

- MASS participation of the working class
- Wanted to work in the cooperation with the middle class liberalist parties.

### **What did TROTSKY think?**

- Trotsky did not pick a side and didn't want the split in the party to be permanent!
- He opposed Lenin's ideas AND the Mensheviks view that they should cooperate with middle class liberalist parties.
- He urged Menshevik colleagues to unite with Bolsheviks ready to desert Lenin!

**However...** in 1904, Trotsky announced his split with the Mensheviks in an 'Open Letter to Comrades'!

## 3. Rise to prominence

### 3.a Emerging political role 1905-1917

- **February 1905** Trotsky secretly made his way back to Russia
- Not with either the Mensheviks or the Bolsheviks but wrote for both
- **May** - police agents infiltrated party and forced Trotsky to flee to Finland where he developed revolutionary ideas.
- **OCTOBER** – widespread strikes + Trotsky returned to capital and starting writing for 'Russian Gazette'.

- Trotsky became an active member of the St Petersburg Soviet -> became Chairman for a week before arrested!

### Years in exile: 1907-1917

- **1907** Trotsky in London + attended 5<sup>th</sup> Congress of Russian Social Democratic Party.
- Lived in Vienna for a while (Sergei – second child – born in Vienna in **1908**).
- Still in Vienna in **1908**. Started paper called ‘Pravda’ (Truth) which shut down in **1912**. Later that year Bolsheviks started their own newspaper called Pravda -> angered Trotsky greatly -> wrote letter to Lenin which was used against him by Stalin in the power struggle.
- Disagreement between Trotsky + Lenin over expropriations. Bolsheviks involved in bank robberies + other criminal activity to raise funds + Stalin was involved in expropriation activity.
- Trotsky worked intermittently as a journalist during these years. **1912 + 1913** -> war correspondent in Balkan Wars.
- Trotsky opposes war when it broke out in **August 1914** → fled to Switzerland. Writings directed against war supporting members in European Social Democratic Parties.
- **Nov 1914** he moved to Paris and worked as a war correspondent for a Kioiv paper.
- **1915** he began editing ‘Our World’ a socialist paper. He was worried that the paper was too pro-Menshevik so he published some pro-Bolshevik papers.
- Trotsky attended the Zimmerwald conferences. His resolution opposing the war was adopted. He also managed to prevent a split in the international socialist camp – which was Lenin’s wish.
- **1916** Trotsky was deported from France to Spain because of his anti-war activities. From here he was deported to the US where he worked for the Russian language socialist paper ‘Navy Mir’.
- Once he heard about the 1917 revolution in Russia he headed back. He was detained by the British and strip searched before being allowed to come back when the provisional gov’t protested.

### **3.b Role in 1917 revolution**

#### May-June: 1917

- **Trotsky** arrived in Russia in **May 1917** and was still not a Bolshevik
- In **May Trotsky** persuaded the Kronstadt sailors to handover the officers they had rose up against and arrested to the Provisional Government.

- There were only 105 Bolsheviks out of 822 delegates in the First Congress of the Soviets opened. NEITHER Trotsky nor Lenin downhearted.
- **Trotsky** spoke directly to the masses (factories, town squares and schools)

### The July Days

- Involved **uncontrolled rioting**
- **20,000 Kronstadt sailors** demanded that the Soviet assume power
- Riots lacked leadership → demonstrations died down
- **Trotsky arrested.** Lenin + other Bols fled

### The Kornilov Affair

- **July** → Kerensky appointed Prime Minister
- Kerensky appointed General Kornilov as Supreme Commander of Russian forces to restore law and order, and army discipline. Kornilov = BAD! In September he marched with a coup to seize power in Petrograd.
- Kerensky asked Bolsheviks for help so Red Guard militias were successful in stopping the attempted coup.

### The November Revolution

- **Trotsky** joined Bolsheviks in **August**
- Managed to persuade Lenin to delay takeover until early November. This decision was crucial to the Bolsheviks control as during this time the majority of the population was supportive of a Soviet government rather than a purely Bolshevik one. By delaying the revolution to coincide with the Second Congress of All-Russian Soviets, it was viewed by the population that the takeover was supported by the Soviet rather than the Bolsheviks acting alone.
- Set up the **Military Revolutionary Committee**. This gave the Bolsheviks direct control over men and arms in the city and prevented any repeat of the Kornilov affair.
- Planned the actual details of the takeover

## 4. Significance and evaluation

### 4.a Role as Commissar for Foreign Affairs

One of the first problems faced by the Bols was how to end their involvement in WWI.

Lenin = Peace at any price

Trotsky = No peace, No war

Bukharin = Revolutionary war

- Bukharin's ideas were unrealistic and would lead to a loss in popularity
- Trotsky's idea failed → he began to see Lenin's ideas as correct.
- Trotsky did not vote on whether or not to accept Germany's harsh peace conditions: they were accepted by a narrow margin.
- **The Treaty of Brest Litovsk 16<sup>th</sup> March 1918**
  - Huge economic losses
  - Large territory loss
  - 62 million people lost
- Trotsky saw the signing to the Treaty of Brest Litovsk as making Civil War inevitable

#### 4.b Role as Commissar for War

Measures which Trotsky implemented:

1. Totally transformed the disorganised Red Militias into an effective, military organisation.
  - Restored strict hierarchal military structure (like tsarist) in early **1918** (ranks, uniforms, insignia).
  - Recruited former tsarist officers who were experienced in training, organisation + leadership.
  - Stalin + Zinoviev disagreed with these changes.
2. Trotsky took measures so tsarist officers remained loyal
  - Families held hostage
  - Appointed political commissars to oversee officers
  - Brutal punishment
3. Trotsky ended soldiers' committees (committees would elect their own officers)
  - No time for debate + voting
4. Became unpopular due to:
  - Ending of committees
  - Return to tsarist style army
5. Restoration of strict military discipline
  - Capital punishment brought back
  - Flogging reintroduced
  - Labour battalions created for men who could not fight or were 'unreliable'

6. Travelled between fronts in his train
  - Trotsky = INSPIRATIONAL
  - Train carried troops, uniform, supplies, weapons + ammunition

#### 4.c Power struggle following the death of Lenin

##### Lenin dies:

- Most leading Bolsheviks had become reliant on Lenin
- Trotsky saw himself more as Lenin's equal thus was less reliant
- Stalin + Lenin had no personal relationship by the time of Lenin's death, so Stalin was not overly upset but rather pleased.
- Lenin didn't want a cult to develop around him, but Stalin created one and praised Lenin so that his words were treated as **holy**.
- PAST DISAGREEMENTS with Lenin = grounds for expulsion in later years
- As Trotsky saw himself as Lenin's equal he was opposed to this and was thus deemed very arrogant
- **Trotsky does not attend Lenin's funeral (1924)**

##### Lenin's will + testament

- **May 1924** will was handed to Central Committee
- Said things about **STALIN** that would have ended his career
- Said things about Trotsky that weren't as bad, but his arrogance prevented him from opposing the non-publishing of Lenin's will
- **Zinoviev + Kamenev** urged not to publish the will at the oncoming 13<sup>th</sup> Party Congress → Central Committee agreed not to publish.

##### How Stalin won:

- Held **major bureaucratic power**
- Had **embarrassed TROTSKY during Lenin's funeral**
- Survived **the publication of Lenin's will**

##### 13<sup>th</sup> Party Congress

- **Trotsky** spoke out against growing anti-democratic tendencies + bureaucratisation in the party
  - OUTVOTED ☹️

##### Position weakened

- **ATTACKED** by **Zinoviev + Kamenev** who brought up differences between Trotsky + Lenin in years preceding the revolution
- **STALIN** presented himself as a peacemaker

##### NEP

- **Right side** = YES NEP! Slow process to socialism (Stalin, Bukharin + Rykov)
- **Left side** = NO NEP! Wanted industrialisation + collectivisation (Trotsky, Zinoviev + Kamenev)



## END OF STRUGGLE

- Trotsky, Kamenev + Zinoviev ACCUSED OF “**FACTIONALISM**”
  - Expelled from Party in **1927**
- **1928 Stalin** changed side + launched campaign AGAINST continuation of NEP
- By this stage all the party congresses were full with pro-Staliners
  - Stalin wins over Bukharin, Rykov + Tomsy and they are all removed.

### 4.d Expulsion from the Communist Party

- |                    |  |
|--------------------|--|
| Fun                | - <b>Funeral</b> (missed Lenin's) ( <b>1924</b> )                  |
| Weather            | - Lenin's <b>will</b> ( <b>1924</b> )                              |
| 13 degrees Outside | - <b>13<sup>th</sup> Party Congress + outvoted</b> ( <b>1924</b> ) |
| Can We             | - Lost post as <b>Commissar of War</b> ( <b>1925</b> )             |
| Please             | - Removed from <b>Politburo</b> ( <b>1926</b> )                    |
| Eat?               | - <b>EXPELLED</b> ( <b>1927</b> )                                  |

### 4.e Life and activities in exile

1. Exiled to Alma-Ata (desolate location)
  - Started working on his autobiography
  - Translated Marx-Engels works to earn an income
2. Deported from the Soviet Union and arrived in **Constantinople** in **1929**
3. Moves to **Prinkipo Island**
  - Wrote for western newspapers to earn income
  - Began working on his History of the Russian Revolution
  - Trotsky attempted to counter Stalin's attempt to downplay Trotsky's role in the history of the revolution by writing his own works, eg The Stalin School of Falsification
4. Allowed to live in France in **1932**
5. In **1935** Trotsky + Natalia were given sanctuary in Norway
  - Began writing his critique of Soviet society, The Revolution Betrayed.
  - Learns that Kirov was murdered in **1934**

- Trials in Russia always included conspiring with Trotsky, so in **1936** he was demanded to refrain from any political activity that would threaten friendly powers to Norway. Trotsky = aggravated + stated he had never interfered with Norwegian affairs or those of any other country → his secretaries deported + Trotsky placed under house arrest.
- 6. President in Mexico granted Trotsky asylum
  - Trotsky + wife departed Europe **December 1936**
  - Arrived in Mexico **9<sup>th</sup> January 1937**
  - News about the charges from the purges reached Mexico and Stalin ensured that Communist parties around the world believed the allegations.
  - Commission in **1937** considered the charges that the Soviet authorities had laid against Trotsky. Declared that Trotsky was innocent
  - Trotsky was continually suffering from headaches and high blood pressure.
  - Attempted to continue his writing.
  - **1938** agreed to create a Fourth International (aim: to provide a revolutionary, international alternative to Stalin's Comintern)
  - Murdered on **21<sup>st</sup> August 1940**