Cambridge (CIE) IGCSE History

Your notes

How Did the Bolsheviks Gain & Consolidate Their Rule?

Contents

- How Effective was the Provisional Government in 1917?
- Reasons For the Bolsheviks' Seizure of Power
- Why Did the Bolsheviks Win the Civil War?
- How Far was the New Economic Policy a Success?

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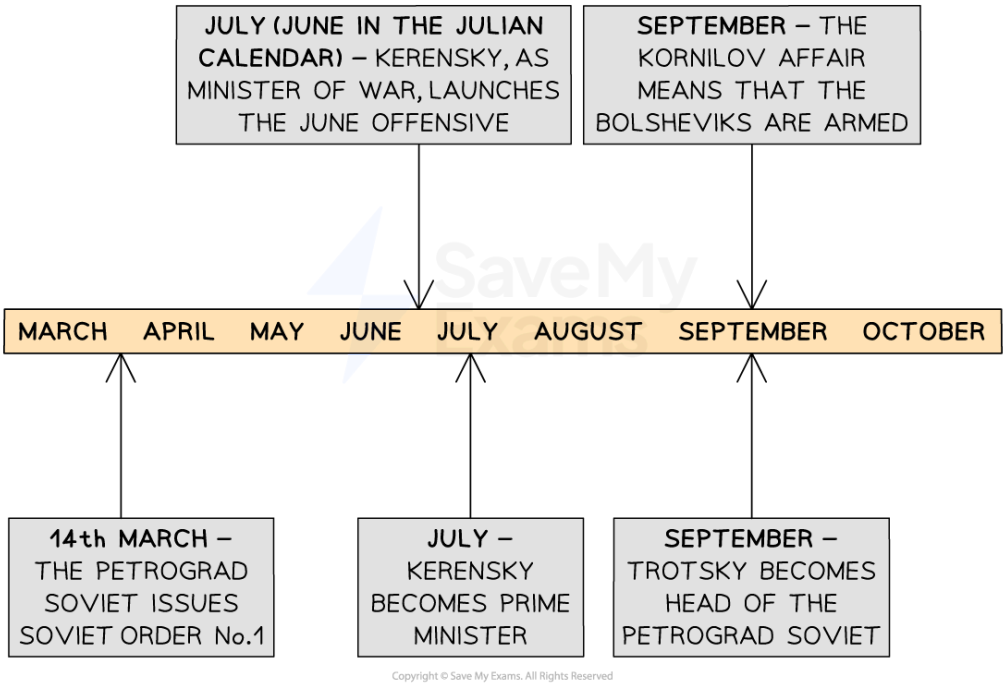
What was the Provisional Government? - Timeline & Summary



After Tsar Nicholas abdicated in March 1917, Russia was left in an unusual position. For 300 years, the Romanov dynasty ruled Russia using the Divine Rights of Kings. They had resisted democratic reform. By March 1917, Russia was on the **brink of establishing a democratic government**.

The ***duma* created the Provisional Government** with 12 representatives. As the name suggests, it was a **temporary solution** to the power vacuum in Russia. It aimed to establish **political stability and to discuss solutions** to Russia's issues. The Russian people had never experienced such freedom. However, the Provisional Government would become a failed experiment. The organisation was **too slow** and **faced too many issues** to be successful.

Issues with Dual Power

- In **March 1917**, the Provisional Government had to enter into Dual Power with the Petrograd Soviet
- The Petrograd Soviet caused issues with the Provisional Government because:
  - They released **Soviet Order No.1**
    - This directed the **Russian Army to obey the Petrograd Soviet** rather than the Provisional Government

- Extremist **parties** increased their **representation in the Petrograd Soviet**
  - The Bolsheviks in particular continued to undermine the Provisional Government
- The Petrograd Soviet **influenced the workers**
  - They continued to encourage the workers to strike

- The power and resistance of the Petrograd Soviet was damaging
  - **The Provisional Government could not govern successfully without their support**

Elections and Land

- The Provisional Government quickly passed **reforms**: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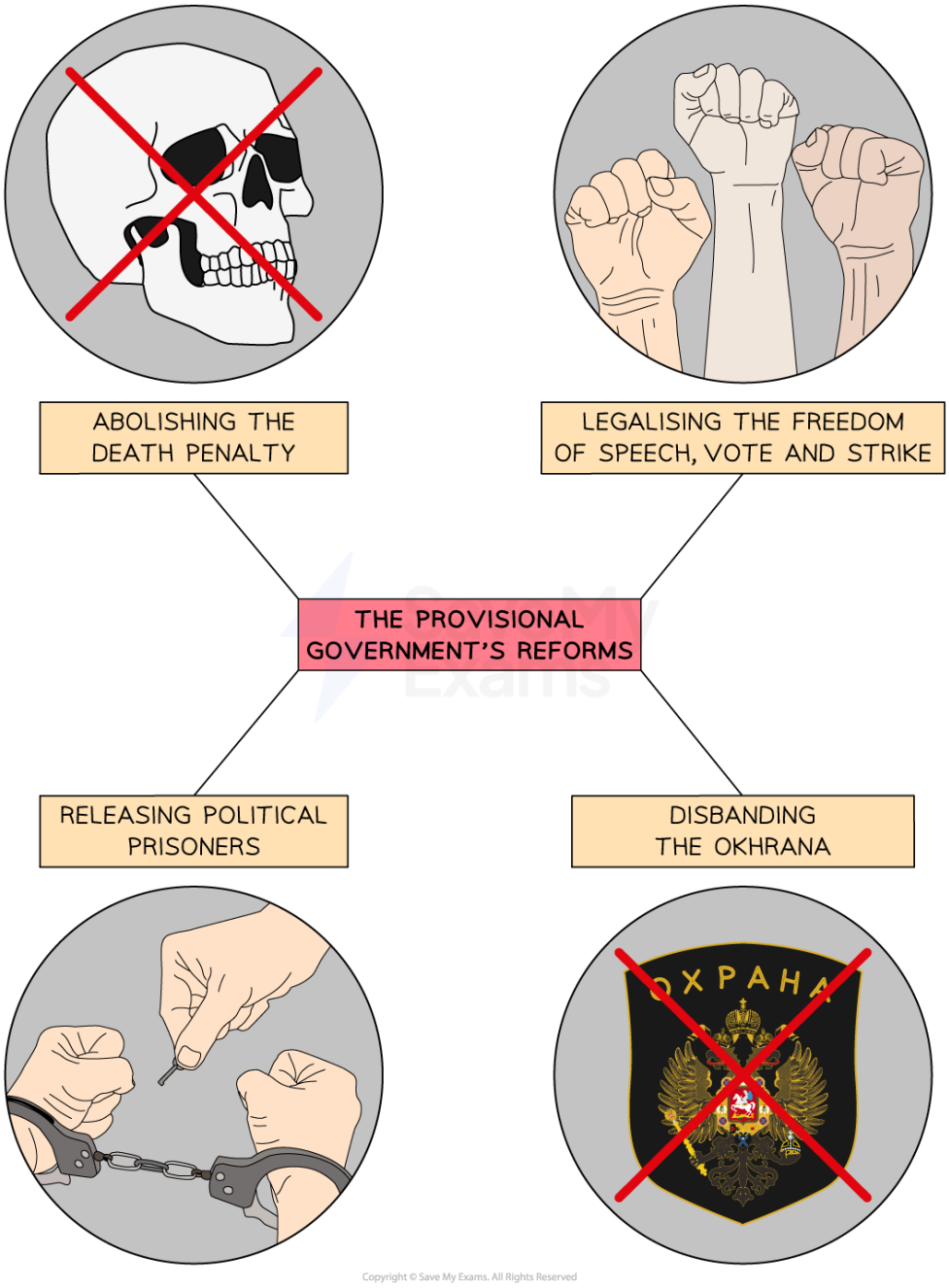

A concept map showing the Provisional Government's reforms

- The Provisional Government **avoided tackling larger issues**. The Provisional Government:
  - Knew that the people **had not elected them**
  - Wanted elections to give them a mandate but **never confirmed a date** for these
- Land was a significant issue in Russia
  - **Peasants wanted landowners to give up their rights to the land**
  - The Provisional Government **promised land redistribution**

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- Peasants made up a large proportion of Russia's society
- The Provisional Government delayed making a decision about land
  - **They wanted to wait for the results of the election**
- The peasants refused to wait
  - **By mid-1917, the peasants began illegally seizing land**

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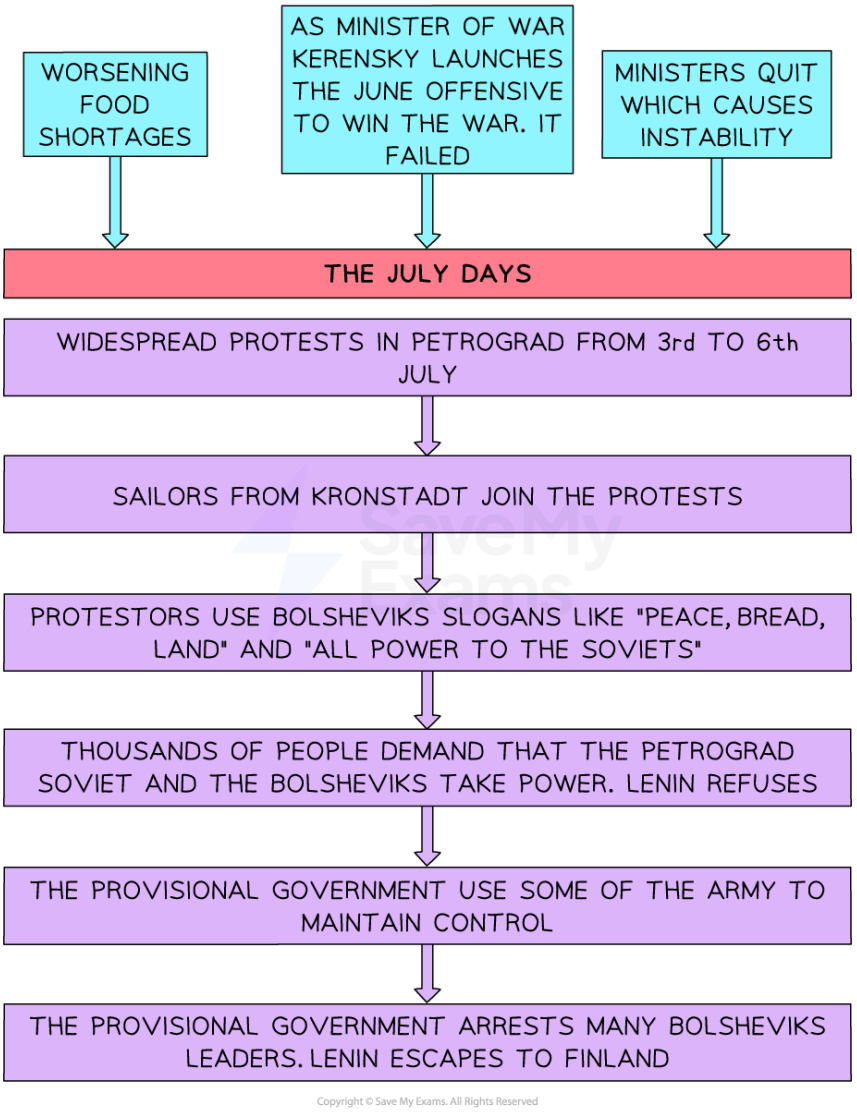
The July Days



A flow diagram showing the events of the July Days

Were the July Days a Missed Opportunity for Lenin?

- Many historians **criticise Lenin's decision** not to support the July Days because:
  - There was **popular support for the Bolsheviks**

- Lenin could have used this support to create a '**revolution from below**'
- Members of the Bolshevik Party believed that Lenin had missed his opportunity to govern Russia
  - The Provisional Government **arrested key Bolsheviks like Trotsky**
  - **Lenin had to flee Russia** for Finland, leaving the party leaderless



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Kornilov Affair

- **By September, the Provisional Government was failing**
  - Prince Lvov resigned and **Kerensky replaced him** as Prime Minister
    - Kerensky was the only member of the Provisional Government and the Petrograd Soviet
  - **Russia was performing poorly in the First World War**
  - **Strikes and food shortages** were widespread
- To help maintain control, Kerensky appointed **General Kornilov** as commander of the Russian Army
- Historians have different interpretations of what happened in September 1917:

Interpretation One	Interpretation Two
Kornilov marched into Petrograd intending to **overthrow** the Provisional Government	**Kerensky asked Kornilov to bring his soldiers into Petrograd** to bring the city back under control. Kerensky changed his mind when Kornilov arrived



Examiner Tips and Tricks

Even historians do not know the exact details of some events. In your exam answer, you could use either interpretation of the Kornilov Affair. Alternatively, you could state that there is debate about Kornilov's motivations to march to Petrograd.

- Kerensky panicked
  - He **freed many key Bolsheviks**
  - He **armed the** Red Guard so they could defend Petrograd from Kornilov
- The **Bolsheviks**:
  - Infiltrated Kornilov's troops and **encouraged them to** desert
  - **Disrupted Kornilov's supplies** by getting railway workers to strike
- By the end of September:

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- The Provisional Government had **arrested Kornilov**
- Kerensky's power over Russia had weakened
- The **Red Guard were armed** and did not return their weapons



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Worked Example

Who was Kerensky?

4 marks

Answer:

Kerensky was the Minister of War in the Provisional Government (1). He became Prime Minister in July 1917 (1). He was the only member of the Provisional Government that also sat on the Petrograd Soviet (1). During the Kornilov Affair, he distributed arms to the Bolsheviks to defend the city (1).



Examiner Tips and Tricks

For a 'Describe' question, you should aim to complete the question in **four minutes, one minute per point**. This will give you one minute to read through your answer.

Continuation of the First World War

- The First World War was very unpopular in Russia
  - The conflict caused millions of casualties **and desertions**
  - The war effort impacted **food and fuel supplies** in Russia
- The Provisional Government continued Russia's involvement
  - The Provisional Government **needed British and French investment**
- The issue caused **a divide in Dual Power**
  - In March, the Petrograd Soviet declared that it could not support the war
- **The June Offensive increased hatred of the war**
  - Kerensky had failed to push back Austrian troops
  - Desertions increased
  - **Soldiers listened more to Bolshevik propaganda**
    - This made them more loyal to the Petrograd Soviet than the Provisional Government

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Worked Example

Why did the Provisional Government lack popular support?

6 marks

Partial answer:

The Provisional Government lacked support because they continued Russia's involvement in the First World War (1). In June, Kerensky launched the June Offensive, which failed to push back Austrian troops. This offensive happened despite public demand for the government to end the war (1). This made the Provisional Government lack support because they were not listening to their people. They continued an unpopular conflict despite knowing the levels of desertions and increase in support for anti-war parties like the Bolsheviks (1).

Examiner Tips and Tricks

In Paper One, 'explain why' questions are worth either six or ten marks. For full marks in this question, an examiner is looking for **two fully explained reasons** as to why the Provisional Government lacked support. Use the PEE structure in your answer:

- **P –** Make a **p**oint about the question
- **E –** Use **e**vidence that supports the point that you have made
- **E –** **E**xplain why this evidence made the Provisional Government unpopular. Avoid repeating the point again. Explain how this factor made the Provisional Government go against the will of the people or seem slow at solving issues.

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How was the October Revolution Different to Other Revolutions in Russia? – Timeline & Summary

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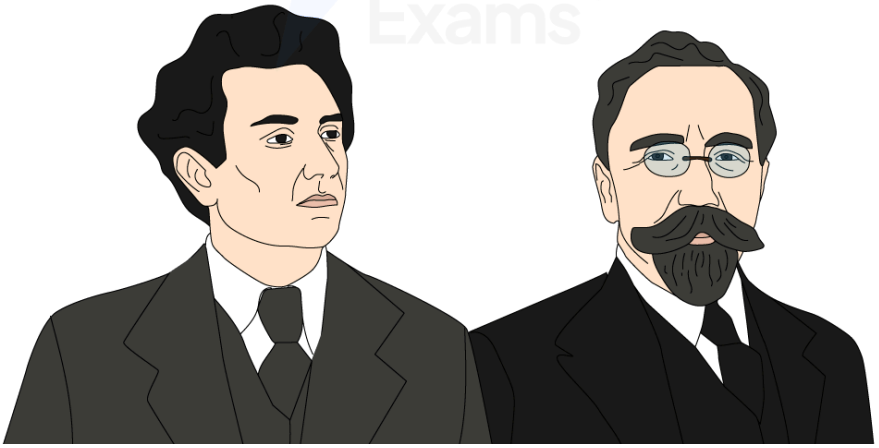
VLADIMIR LENIN

THE LEADER OF THE BOLSHEVIK PARTY.
LENIN PUSHED FOR THE REVOLUTION



LEON TROTSKY

INITIALLY A MENSHEVIK, TROTSKY BECAME A KEY BOLSHEVIK.
HE ORGANISED THE REVOLUTION AND WAS KNOWN FOR HIS ORATION SKILLS



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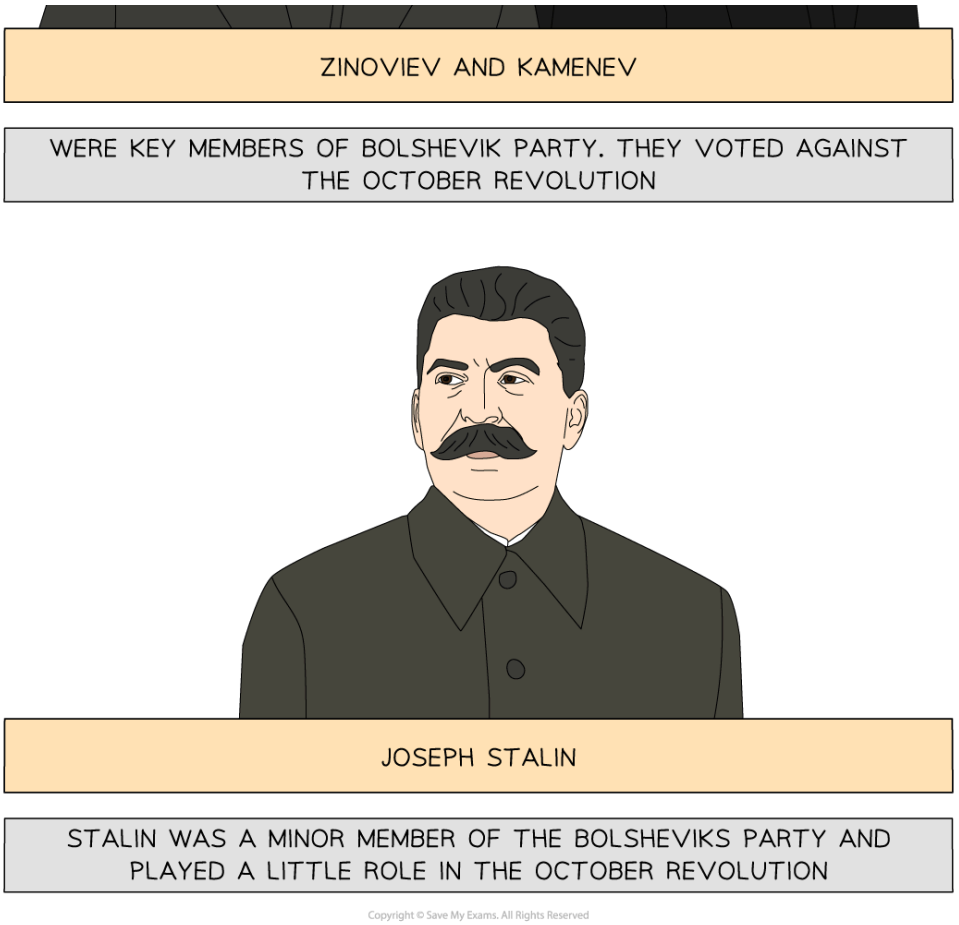

An illustration showing the key members of the Bolshevik Party

The October Revolution was **very different** to the revolutions in 1905 and March 1917. In **1928**, the Bolsheviks commissioned **Sergei Eisenstein to create a film about the October Revolution**. The film, *October,* shows masses of people storming the gates of the Winter Palace under heavy gunfire. **In reality, the gates of the Winter Palace were unguarded and open.** The Bolsheviks **faced little resistance** from the remaining members of the Provisional Government. Historians **consider the events of October 1917 a** coup. As a result, the only popular revolution in Russia was in March 1917. This is because the events of 1905 did not result in the overthrow of the tsar.

Many Russians considered the October Revolution as **a temporary change of government**. Tsereteli, the leader of the Mensheviks, stated that the **Bolsheviks' power would not last three weeks**. At this point, the Bolsheviks were a small, extremist party. The Bolsheviks would end up establishing a dictatorship that **remained in power for over 70 years**.

Key Members of the Bolshevik Party

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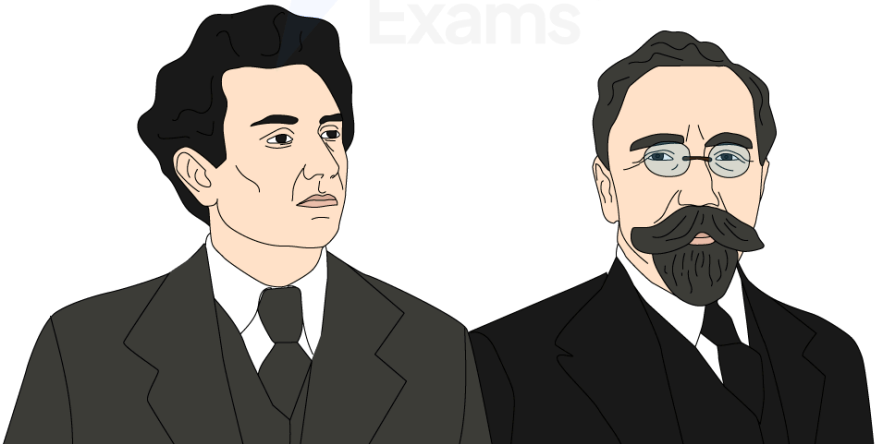

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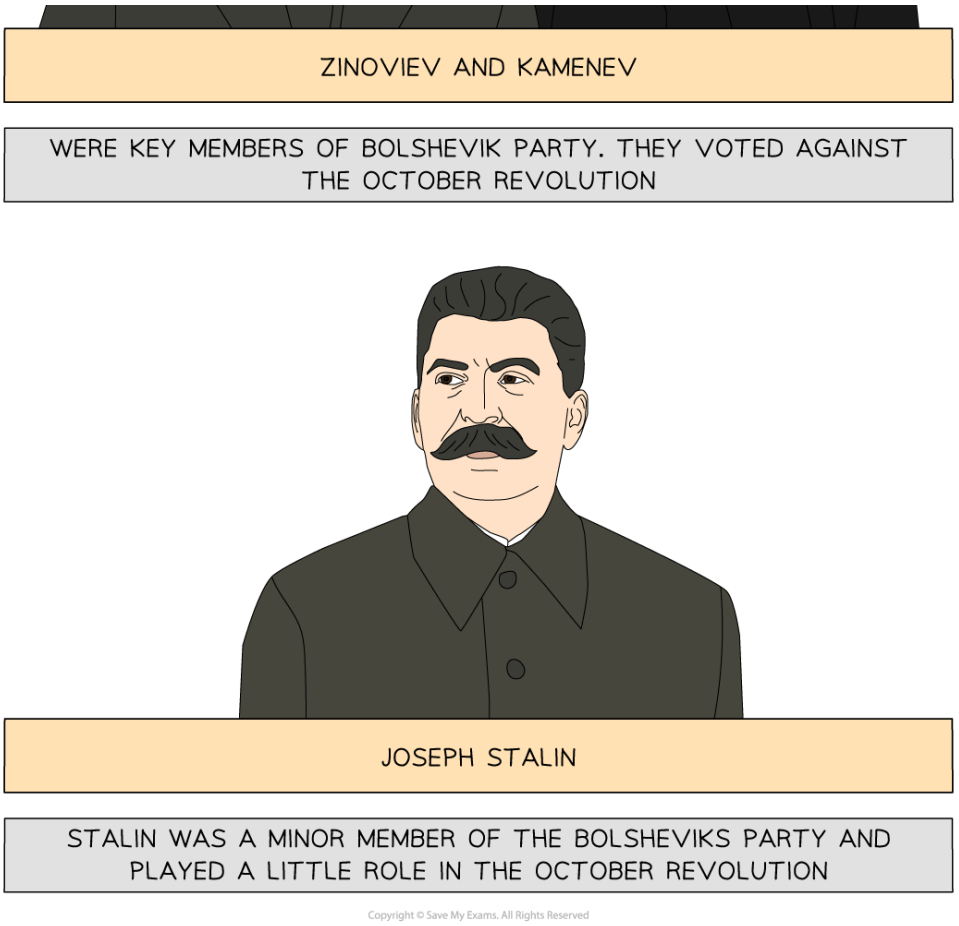

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An illustration showing the key members of the Bolshevik Party

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Examiner Tips and Tricks

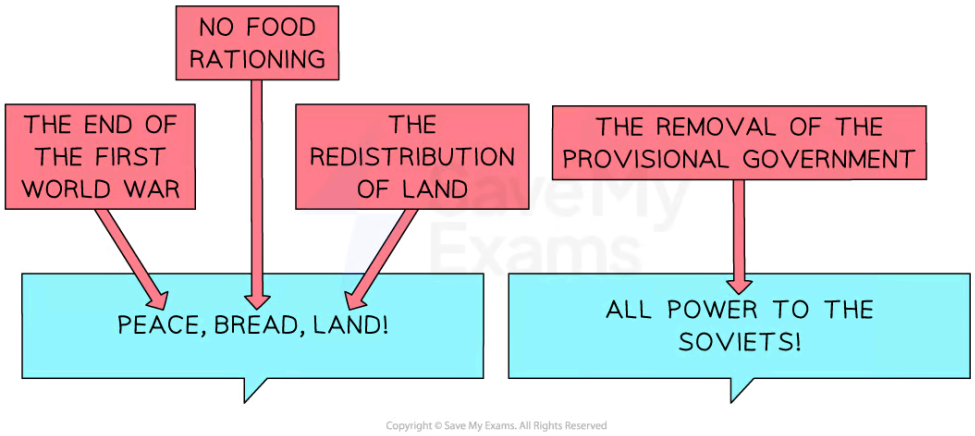
There were many more members of the Bolshevik Party. By early October, membership stood at 200,000. However, for your exam, try to remember these **five key figures**.

Return of Lenin and the April Thesis

- The Tsarist government had **exiled Lenin multiple times**
  - He was **not in the country during the March Revolution**
- In **April, Lenin returned to Russia**
  - **Germany funded his journey**
    - They believed that Lenin's presence in Russia would force Russia to surrender in the First World War
  - **Lenin travelled on the 'sealed train'**

- This means that Lenin travelled through countries without passport checks

- When Lenin returned to Petrograd, he made a speech called the **'April Theses'**
  - This outlined his key policies:



Lenin's key statements in his April Theses

- **The April Theses persuaded many workers to support the Bolsheviks**
  - The workers chanted these statements in the July Days
- Support for the Bolsheviks **declined after July**
  - Lenin did not support the July Days protest
  - He fled from Russia again

Events in the October Revolution

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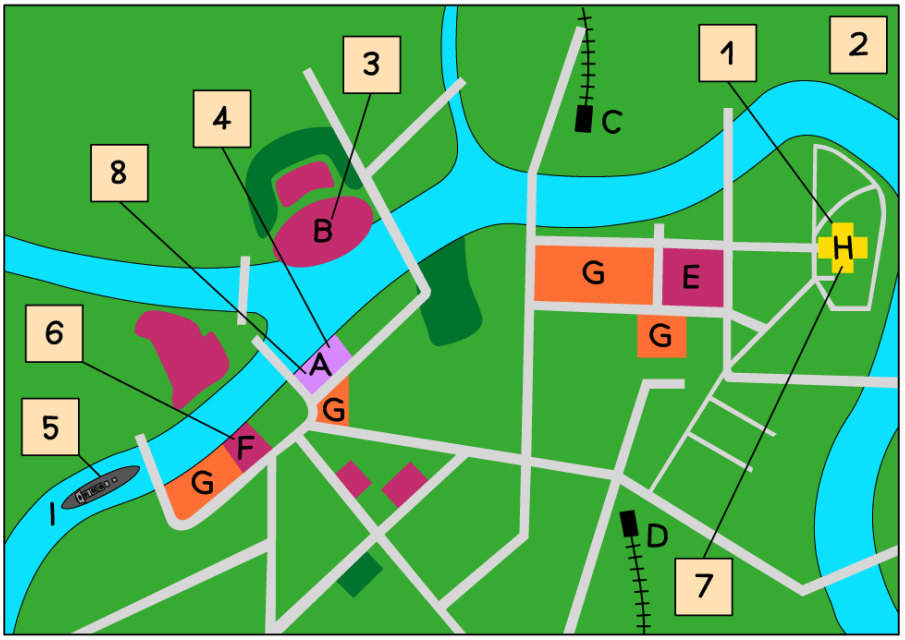

KEY:
A – The Winter Palace
B – Peter and Paul Fortress
C – Finland Station
D – Nicholas Station
E – Tauride Palace
F – General Post Office
G – Barracks
H – Smolny Institute
I – Cruiser 'Aurora'

1	**Smolny Institute, Headquarters of Petrograd Soviet September.** Bolsheviks become majority party in Petrograd soviet. Trotsky is elected Chairman of the soviet
2	On 7 October, Lenin returns to Petrograd. On 10 October, in a secret meeting, Lenin convinces a majority of the Bolshevik leadership to support a seizure of power
3	**Peter and Paul Fortress.** Soldiers agree to give Bolsheviks weapons. 23 October Trotsky reports that 15 of the 18 armed units in the capital support a seizure of power by the Bolsheviks
4	**The Winter Palace, Provisional Government Headquarters. Night of 23–24 October.** Kerensky sends troops to close down Bolshevik newspapers, 'Pravda' and 'Izvesta'. However, Kerensky's soldiers are pushed back
5	**24 October.**

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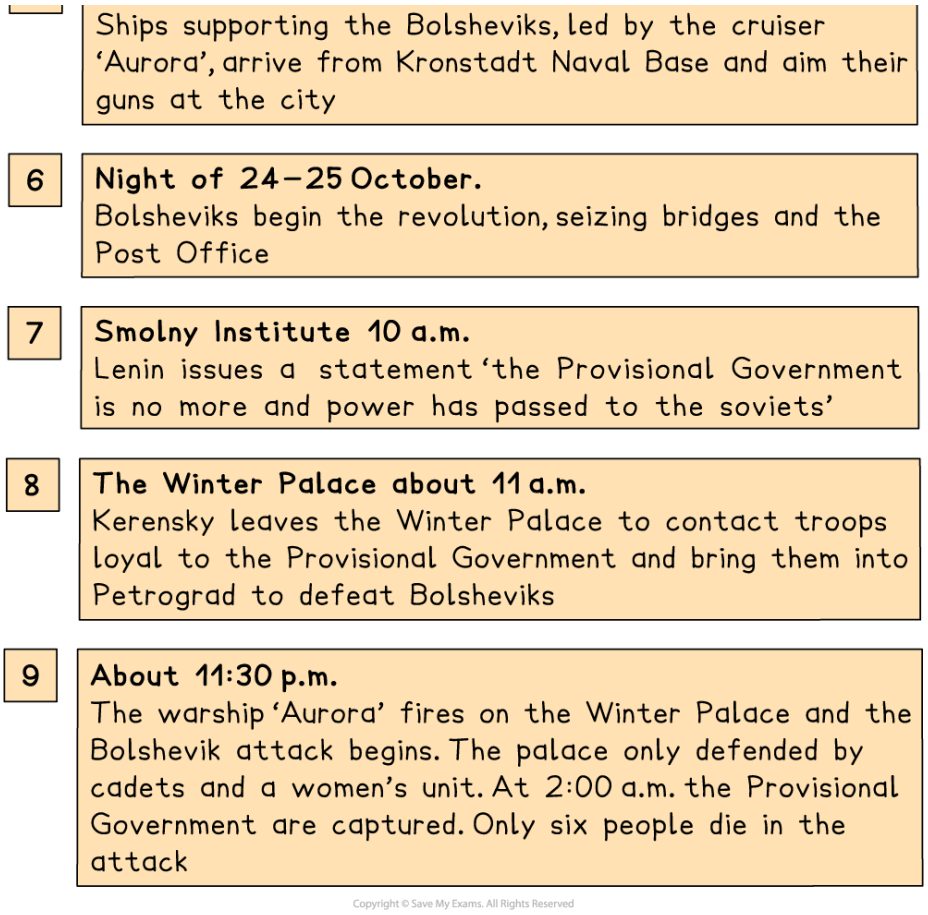

A map showing the events of the October Revolution

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Worked Example

Describe how the Bolsheviks took power on 6th–8th November 1917

4 marks

Answer:

The Bolsheviks seized control of Petrograd (1). The Red Guards stormed the Winter Palace (1). Once inside the Winter Palace, the Bolsheviks arrested members of the government (1). Kerensky fled Petrograd (1).

Examiner Tips and Tricks

This style of question does not require you to explain your answer. The Cambridge IGCSE gives you a point for each relevant piece of information that you write in your answer. Therefore, do not spend any additional time trying to describe or explain each

reason. You should aim to complete the question in four minutes, one minute per point. This will give you one minute to read through your answer.



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Outcomes of the October Revolution

- The Provisional Government was **no longer in charge of Petrograd**
- The Bolsheviks had control of Petrograd
  - This was a **key city in the Russian Empire**
- **The Bolsheviks did not have control over the whole of Russia**
  - The empire was large
  - The Bolsheviks had many enemies that did not want them to seize power

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What Caused a Civil War in Russia? – Summary

When the Bolsheviks overthrew the Provisional Government in October 1917, they did not have control of Russia. In the **ten months of 1917, there had been three changes in government**. Many opponents of the Bolsheviks believed that this would be the first of many political groups that attempted to rule Russia.

The Bolsheviks created many enemies. In March 1918, Trotsky met with German delegates to negotiate Russia's withdrawal from the First World War. Many Russians wanted this but the Treaty of Brest-Litovsk was incredibly harsh. The treaty **forced Russia to give up around 1 million square miles of land and over a third of its population**.

Aspects of the Bolshevik rule were also unpopular. Lenin openly stated that his government was a "**dictatorship of the proletariat**". Non-Bolshevik newspapers were banned and the secret police, the Cheka, was created. Opposition groups could **no longer express criticism** of the government without facing arrest.

Opponents of different political backgrounds came together to fight the Bolsheviks. **Their differences would contribute significantly to their defeat.**

How did Lenin Establish Power?

- Lenin knew the importance of **establishing power quickly** in Petrograd
  - Lenin had some **support from the workers and the army**
  - From Petrograd, Lenin could **extend his power eastwards** across the Russian Empire

Tactics that Lenin Used to Gain Power

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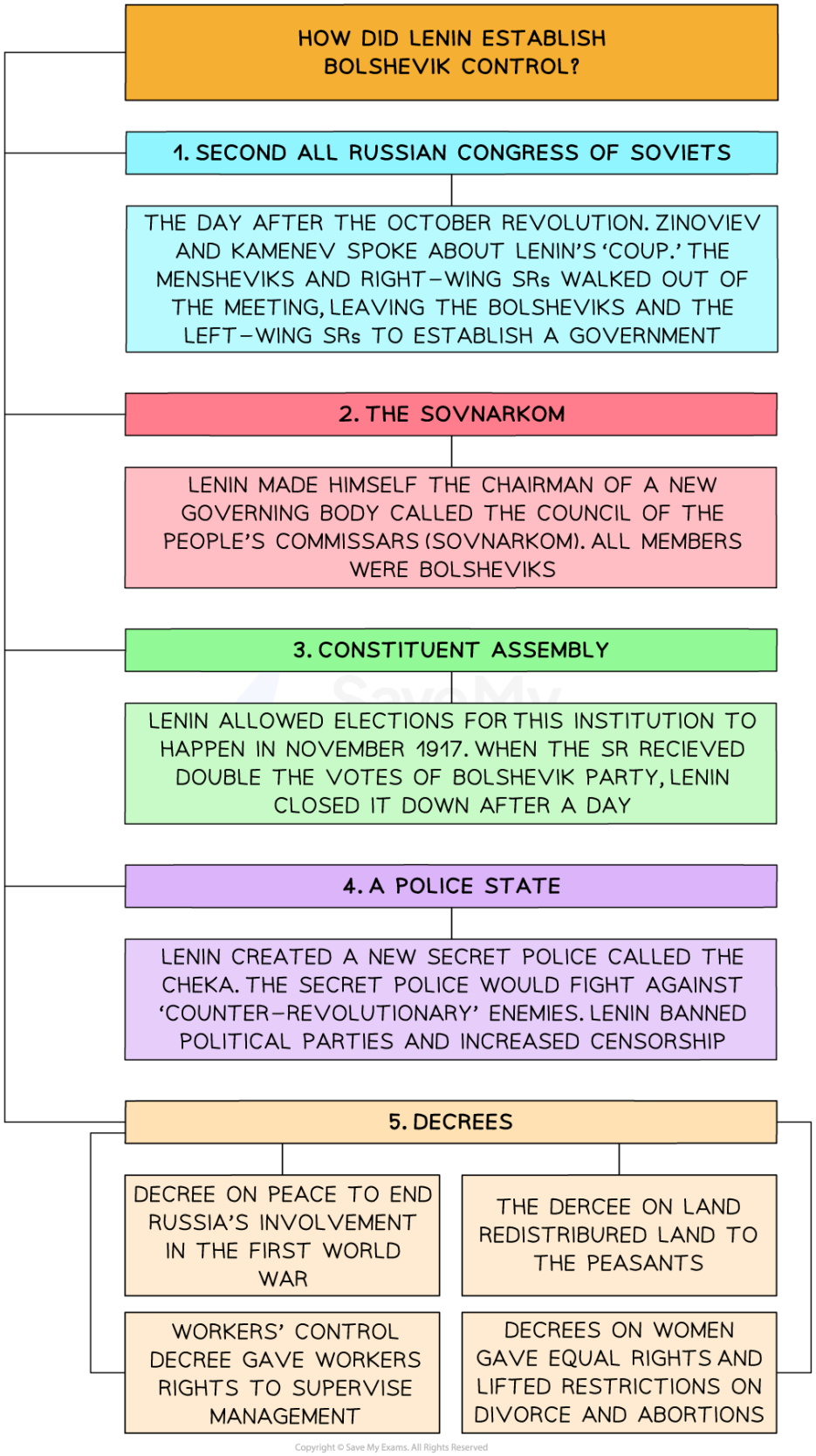

A concept map showing the ways in which Lenin established Bolshevik control

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Worked Example

Describe the decrees issued by the Bolshevik government in late 1917

4 marks

Answers:

The Decree on Land took land away from landowners and gave it to peasants (1). Decrees on Women made divorce and abortion was made easier (1). The Worker's Control Decree placed factories under the control of the workers (1). The Decree on Peace meant Russia would end its involvement in the First World War (1).

Examiner Tips and Tricks

This question in Paper One requires you to state information you know about the Bolshevik decrees. The Cambridge IGCSE gives you **a point for each relevant piece of information** that you write. Therefore, do not spend any additional time trying to describe or explain each reason.

- The methods above show that to gain control, Lenin used:
  - The element of **surprise**
    - The speed of the Bolshevik takeover forced Soviet representatives to either **support the uprising or play no part in their government**
  - **Exclusion**
    - The Mensheviks and right-wing SRs felt they had to **walk out of the Congress of Soviets**. Trotsky declared they would go into 'the dustbin of history'
    - The Sovnarkom **only had Bolshevik members**
    - The Constituent Assembly was **immediately closed down** due to their lack of Bolshevik representation
  - **Fear**
    - Similar to Tsarist Russia, Lenin used **censorship and secret police** to repress his enemies
  - **Reform**
    - The decrees **tackled the key issues** that the Provisional Government had avoided
    - The Bolsheviks **progressed women's rights**. Alexandra Kollontai became the Commissar for Social Welfare

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- Despite these actions, by the **summer of 1918**, enemies of the Bolsheviks had declared **war**



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Examiner Tips and Tricks

Students often get confused between the Sovnarkom and the Constituent Assembly. The Sovnarkom was a government body chosen by the Bolsheviks, similar to a cabinet. The Constituent Assembly was an elected government body.

Leadership of the Reds

- Lenin placed **Trotsky in total control of the** Red Army
  - This showed Lenin's trust in Trotsky's abilities
  - Trotsky quickly raised an army of **300,000 men**
- By 1921, Trotsky had created a strong military force of over three million men
  - Trotsky enlisted **ex-tsarist officers to train the army**
    - Political commissars monitored these officers closely and authorised all military orders
  - Red Army soldiers of all ranks were called 'Comrades'
    - This created a sense of **unity between troops**
  - Trotsky **reinstated the death penalty** for desertion or disloyalty to the Red Army
  - Trotsky was a charismatic leader of the Red Army
    - He travelled in an armoured train to inspire his troops
- The Bolsheviks used a mixture of terror and propaganda to gain support

Terror tactics	Propaganda tactics
Forcibly conscripting **peasants** from occupied territory	Trotsky used the slogan '**Everything for the Front**' to recruit soldiers
Red Army soldiers **seized grain from the peasants**. This is called grain requisition	The Bolsheviks stated that **foreign troops** wanted to **invade Russia**
The Cheka intimidated people to support the Bolsheviks	Many soldiers **believed in the Bolsheviks' aims**. This gave the Red Army a sense of purpose

Leadership of the Whites

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- The White Army was made up of **different groups** such as:
  - The SRs
  - The Mensheviks
  - Monarchists who wanted to reinstate the tsar
  - Nationalist groups
- General Yudenich and General Denikin commanded these combined forces
- **By 1921, the White Army was weak**
  - The various groups under the White Army **fought separately** from each other
    - In major attacks, the White Army did not have enough troops in reserve
    - This allowed **Trotsky to defeat each army one by one**
  - The members of the White Army **did not have the same aim**
    - The monarchists disagreed with the SRs and Mensheviks who did not want the return of the tsar
    - **A hatred of Bolsheviks was not enough to unify these groups**
  - Some generals **treated their soldiers badly**
    - This encouraged troops to defect to the Bolsheviks
  - The White Army's **propaganda was not as effective**
    - They could not persuade enough Russians to support their cause



Your notes

Geography



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A map of the Russian Civil War, 1918–1921

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Examiner Tips and Tricks

There is some confusion over exactly when the Russian Civil War ended. By 1921, the Bolsheviks held all key areas of Russia and the Allies withdrew from the conflict. Some sub-groups of the White Army continued to fight the Red Army until 1923. As long as you justify this in your exam, any of these end dates is acceptable.

Why was Geography Important for the Bolsheviks?

- The Red Army held significant areas of Western Russia
  - **Moscow and Petrograd** were key industrial centres
    - The Bolsheviks used this to **gain troops and resources**
  - The Bolsheviks controlled access to the **Trans-Siberian railway**
    - This allowed easy movement of troops and equipment across Russia

- **The White Army did not have a base**
  - Their armies were spread across Russia
    - This made **coordination between divisions difficult**
  - They had limited access to trains and industry
    - Moving troops to where they were needed quickly was impossible
    - **Generals had limited and slow communication** with each other



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Influence of Foreign Powers

- The Allies **supported the White Army**
  - The Bolsheviks' **Decree on Peace** would pull Russia out of the First World War
  - The Allies hoped Russia would form a moderate government that would continue the war effort
- The White Army suffered from their connection to Britain and France
  - **Many Russians did not trust Europeans or Western powers**
  - Bolshevik propaganda stated that Europe was invading Russia



Worked Example

'The Whites were to blame for their defeat in the Civil War.' How far do you agree with this statement? Explain your answer

10 marks

Partial answer:

Some people may disagree with this statement (1). This is because of the brilliance of Trotsky as leader of the Red Army (1). Very quickly, Trotsky organised an army of 300,000 men. Trotsky used ex-tsarist officers to train soldiers and he introduced strict discipline like the death penalty for disloyalty (1). As a result, the Red Army won due to Trotsky's organisation. He had created a strong, disciplined and united force motivated by Bolshevik ideology or fear (1).



Examiner Tips and Tricks

A strong response for this Paper One question needs to **examine both sides of the argument**. The next paragraph would explain why the White Army could be blamed for losing the Russian Civil War. You could argue that the White Army was divided and suffered communication issues. Continue to use a clear **PEE structure** as shown above.

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You would then need to write a **conclusion explaining if the White Army was responsible for losing the Russian Civil War**. Remember to use phrases like '**fully**' or '**partially**' to state if the White Army lost or if the Red Army won.



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Why did the Bolsheviks Introduce the NEP? – Summary

The NEP was a radical change from War Communism. The Bolsheviks introduced War Communism in June 1918 as a result of the Russian Civil War. War Communism was a **communist approach to the economy**. In Marx's vision of communism, there would be no private businesses. As a result, the Bolshevik government took control of all areas of production.

War Communism ended up having **damaging impacts on the Russian economy**. It was clear to Lenin that the government could not continue its policy of War Communism. This is despite the desire of many Bolsheviks (like Bukharin) to do so. **Lenin had to introduce capitalist elements to the Bolshevik economy.** This caused many benefits and costs to Lenin and the Russian economy.

Effect of War Communism in Towns

- The Bolsheviks needed the support of Russian towns in the civil war
  - There was **still a shortage of industrial goods** caused by the First World War and strikes
  - The Bolsheviks wanted to **control the armament industry** to ensure that the Red Army got the best supplies
  - The **Decree on Workers** allowed many workers to pay themselves **high wages for doing little to no work**

Industrial Terms of War Communism

Term	Impact on workers
The nationalisation **of industry** under the Vesenkha	Workers had **production targets and lost control** over factories
An increase in **factory discipline**	Workers **lost the right to strike** and could work longer than eight hours
The re-introduction of **food rationing**	Workers received the **second largest ration**
The **banning of all private trade**	Many workers still traded in **illegal black markets**

Effect of War Communism in the Countryside

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- The Bolsheviks needed the support of the Russian peasants
  - The Bolsheviks would **conscript many peasants** into the Red Army
  - The Red Army needed a **guaranteed food supply** to keep their soldiers strong
  - Some peasants fought against the Bolsheviks. The harsh terms of War Communism would **increase Bolshevik control across Russia**


Your notes

Agricultural Terms of War Communism

Term	Impact on peasants
Grain requisitioning	This policy, combined with poor weather, caused the **Great Famine of 1921–1922**. Historians estimate that between five to eight million Russians died. **The Bolshevik government did nothing to stop this famine**
The re-introduction of **food rationing**	Peasants had very little food for themselves before the civil war. This **contributed to the Great Famine**
The **banning of all private trade**	Under the Tsarist governments, *kulaks* were encouraged to trade. The Bolshevik government **politically attacked *kulaks*,** beginning a process called **dekulakization**

Kronstadt Uprising 1921

- By 1921, all areas of Russian society felt the impacts of War Communism
  - **Industrial output had dropped** below 1913 levels
  - **Millions had died due to famine**
  - Russia had suffered **seven years of continuous fighting**
- The Kronstadt Uprising forced Lenin to abandon War Communism

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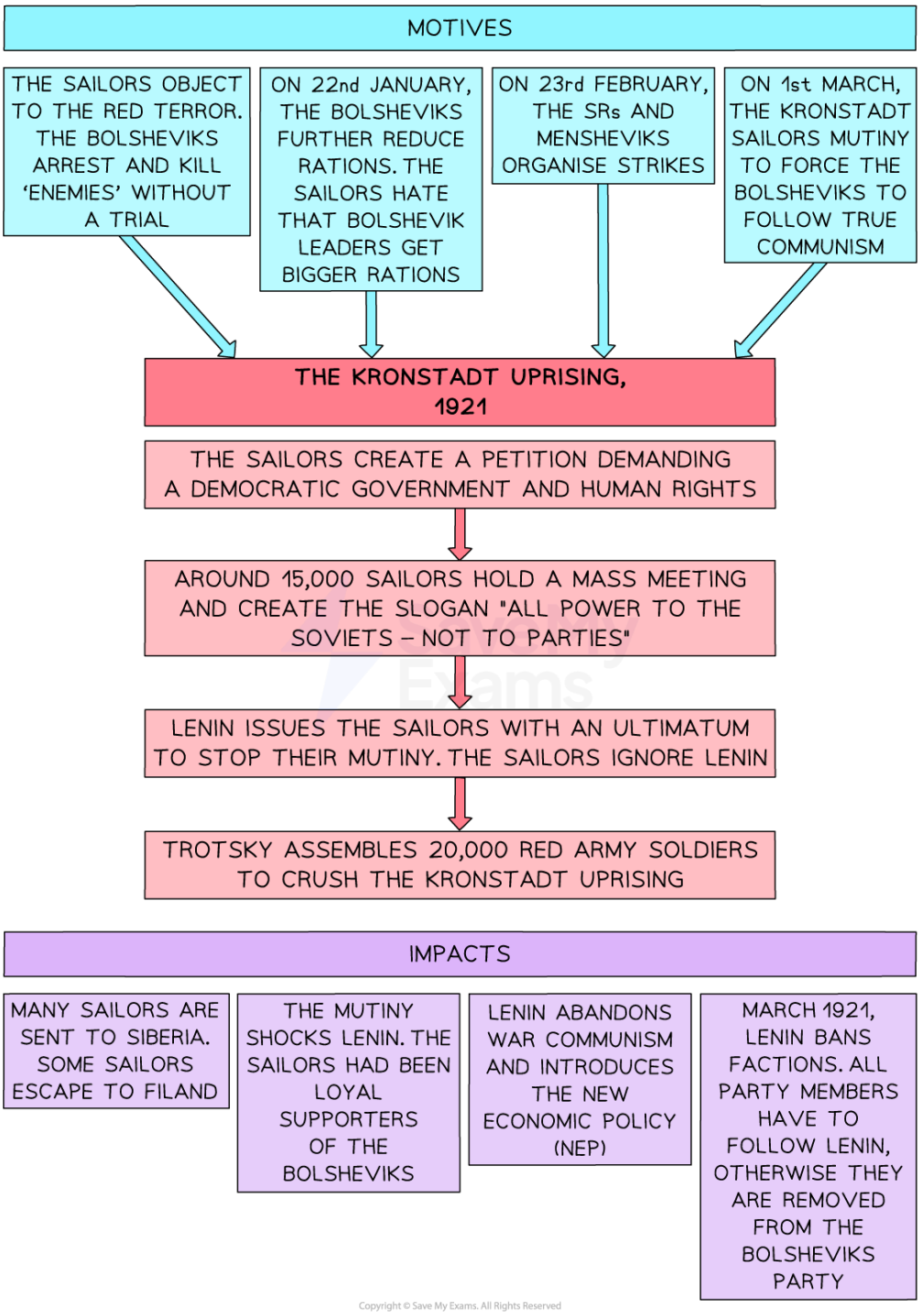

A flow diagram showing the causes and consequences of the Kronstadt Uprising in March 1921

Your notes

Examiner Tips and Tricks

Students often confuse this mutiny and the Kronstadt Rebellion in July 1917. It was the same group of sailors but the reasons for the mutiny were very different. An easy way to remember the two is that the mutiny in **July 1917 was pro-Bolshevik**. The mutiny in **1921 was anti-Bolshevik**.


Your notes

Features of the New Economic Policy (NEP)

- After the Red Army had defeated most enemies of the Bolsheviks, Lenin introduced the **New Economic Policy (NEP)**
  - This was **radically different to War Communism**

Feature of the NEP	Explanation
The **end of grain requisitioning**	Grain requisitioning was replaced by a '**tax in kind**'. Peasants gave **50% of their grain to the state**. This amount was much less than the amounts taken by requisitioning. They could **sell any surplus on the open market**. This created NEPmen
Changes to **state control of industry**	**The state kept control of large-scale heavy industry**. It also retained control of transport and the banking system. Lenin **organised industries into trusts**. Each trust had to buy materials and pay their workers from their own budgets. If they overspent, the state would not step in
Small businesses reopened	Lenin realised that peasants would not sell their products unless there were goods they wanted on sale. **Small, privately owned businesses could reopen and make a profit** if they made goods such as shoes, nails and clothes
End of rationing	Due to the end of the civil war, there was no need for rationing. People had to **buy food and goods from their own income**. This allowed food and goods to **flow more easily** between the countryside and the towns



Examiner Tips and Tricks

Students can sometimes mix up Lenin's two economic policies. Remember that:

- **War** Communism occurred during the Russian Civil **War**. It was an attempt to introduce a communist economy

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- The **N**EP was implemented after the civil war. It was a **new** approach to economics. It tried to create a capitalist economy in a communist society

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Worked Example

What were the main features of the New Economic Policy (NEP)?

4 marks

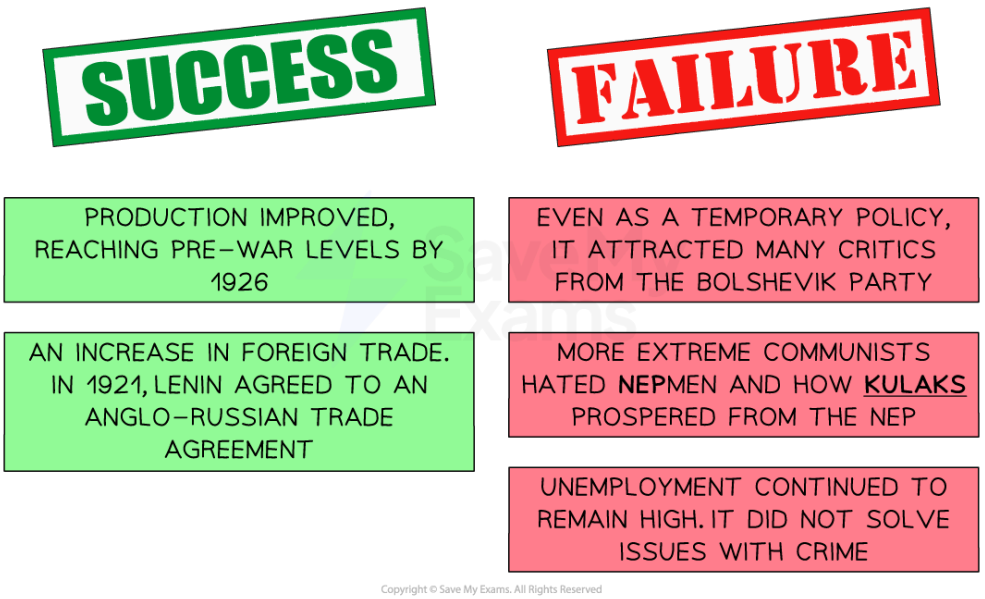
Answer:

It reintroduced aspects of capitalism into Russia's economy (1). It allowed private ownership of small factories and businesses (1). Peasants were allowed to sell their surplus grain for profit (1). The state still controlled heavy industries (1).

Examiner Tips and Tricks

This style of question does not require you to explain your answer. The Cambridge IGCSE gives you **a point for each relevant piece of information** that you write. Therefore, do not spend any additional time trying to describe or explain each reason.

Was the NEP a Success?



An illustration showing the successes and failures of the NEP

Worked Example

Why was the New Economic Policy (NEP) important?

6 marks

Partial answer:

The NEP was important because it helped the Bolsheviks solve the problems caused by War Communism (1). This had helped the communists win the war but it had harmful effects on the people. The Great Famine of 1921–1922 was partially a result of War Communism (1). This made the NEP important because it allowed the countryside to recover. Peasants sold some of their grain for profit leading them to have more money and a better quality of life (1).

Examiner Tips and Tricks

In Paper One, 'explain why' questions are worth either six or ten marks. For full marks in this question, an examiner is looking for **two fully explained reasons** as to why the NEP was important. Use the PEE structure in your answer:

- **P –** Make a **p**oint about the question
- **E –** Use **e**vidence that supports the point that you have made
- **E – E**xplain why this evidence made the NEP important. Avoid repeating the point again. Explain how this factor had a significant impact on the Russian people

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