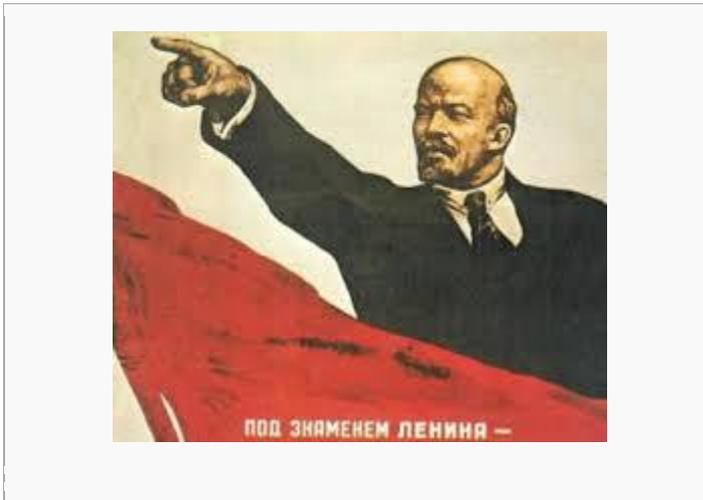


## Russia - Post Revolution



### Authoritarian Centralization:

In Post revolution Russia, **Vladimir Ilyich Ulyanov alias Lenin** welcomed free discussion during the decision-making process. However, once a decision was reached, it had to be unquestionably implemented. This was called Democratic Centralism. Command hierarchical system was adopted in the Communist Party.

He was a selfless-man, unwilling to claim special privileges for himself and wholly dedicated to the revolution. He lived in 2 rooms in the Kremlin and dressed little better than an ordinary worker.

His closest aide was Leon Trotsky (1879 - 1940). Original name of Trotsky was Lev Bronstein. He was born of middle class Jewish parents in Ukraine. He took part in the 1905 Revolution - exiled to Siberia and then escaped. He was in several European capitals. He was expelled from Paris in 1916 for pacifist activities against WW I and took refuge in USA. When he wanted to return to Russia upon learning the overthrow of the Tsar in March 1917, he was captured by British agents, but later released due to the intervention of Kerensky.

He too, arrived in Russia in April 1917 and began plotting overthrow of the Provisional government. In the Bolshevik government, he became Minister of Foreign Affairs and later Commissar for War.

### Civil War:

The Civil War erupted between the Bolsheviks (Red Army) Vs. Whites [i.e. Landlords, Capitalist, Tsarists and other Reactionaries, Social Revolutionaries, Mensheviks, and some big peasants]

The Whites were assisted for some time by the British, French, American and Japanese troops.

Bolsheviks unleashed a 'Reign of Terror' against the Whites. Secret Police (cheka) shot thousands as suspects. Tsar, Tsarina and their children were executed by Bolsheviks in July 1918.

To make up for shortage of goods, the Bolshevik government abolished payment of wages and distributed supplies among the workers in the cities in proportion to their need. **All private trade was prohibited.**

Everything produced by the peasants over and above what they required was taken by the state in order to provide food for the army fighting the Civil war. However, after the civil war, the New Economic Policy was unleashed.

Lenin described it as "one step backward in order to take 2 steps forward".

NEP: (1) authorized private manufacturing,

(ii) authorized private trade on a small scale

(iii) payment of wages

(iv) permitted peasants to sell their grains in the open market.

In 1924, a constitution was adopted - replacing imperial Russia with the USSR.

## **BOLSHEVISM**

**It was developed as a strict interpretation of Marx's writings. However, Lenin deviated in many aspects.**

- (A) Lenin denied that a capitalist stage was necessary for ushering in socialism.
- (B) Marx believed that in most cases revolution would be necessary, but he would not really welcome it. But Lenin emphasized the revolutionary character of socialism more than Marx.

Lenin theorised that both **objective and subjective** conditions of Revolution need to juxtapose to usher in a successful revolution.

**Objective Conditions:**

- (i) Conflict among capitalists for domination
- (ii) Suffering of the oppressed classes

**Subjective Conditions:**

- (i) Revolutionary consciousness of the masses
- (ii) The Vanguard Party
- (iii) Leadership of the party needs to be

experienced and trained.

- (C) Marx spoke of D.P [Dictatorship of the Proletariat] : he meant the dictatorship of the whole working class over remnants of the bourgeoisie.

**Lenin**, however, proclaimed the necessity of the dictatorship of an elite - the Communist Party (Politburo) - over both the bourgeoisie as well as the Proletariat.

In his famous work "What is to Be Done?" Lenin attacked economism. He said that the chief objective of the workers would be to capture political power and emancipation from economic bondage would follow.

To fulfil the goals of revolution, Lenin thought that the party should be small so that it can function swiftly and quite effectively. The Central Committee of the Party will dominate the ideological and other aspects of the organisation. He further stated that the party needs to consist of professional revolutionaries.

The leadership is to be in the hands of professional revolutionaries, who would be workers or intellectuals. However, as Christopher Hill says, Lenin had less faith on intellectuals - as they can be purchased by capitalists.

**Lenin** died on 21 January 1924, aged 53, at his estate at Gorki settlement (later renamed Gorki Leninskiye). After the death of Lenin (1924), two leaders emerged →

- (i) **STALIN** (1879 - 1953), son of a peasant shoemaker in Georgia expelled from school dedicated career to revolutionary activity.
- (ii) **TROTSKY** (1879 - 1940), Expelled from the Communist Party in 1927 and from Russia in 1929. Murdered in Mexico city by Stalin's agents.

In 1917, he assumed the Secretary-Generalship of the Communist Party. Using that portfolio, he was able to control nominations to the Council of Commissars and pooled in his loyalists.

**Stalinism:** To abandon the programme of World Revolution in order to build Socialism In Russia. Essentially it was Nationalism

**Trotskyism:** Socialism in Russia could never be entirely successful until capitalism was overthrown in surrounding countries. Advocated a continuous crusade for world revolution. Fundamentally internationalism.

Interestingly, Lenin had criticized Trotsky as: "having far reaching self-confidence"

On Stalin, his view was : " too rough" And "needs to be removed as Secy. General"

### Features of STALINISM:

- (1) Party as a State within the "State"
- (2) Bureaucrats - the *apparatchiki*, started assuming increasing influence.
- (3) 5 - year plan: started in 1928.

1<sup>st</sup> Plan → agricultural collectivization to bring rural farms together into larger units of several thousand acres under the communal proprietorship of the peasants. The idea was to bring in mechanization and enhance yield.

**KULAKS:** the more prosperous farmers, resisted. State Terror liquidated them - either killed or transported to distant labour camps in Siberia or Urals - 20 million people were moved off the land since in mechanized farmlands, fewer labourers (agricultural) were required. Those people were sent to cities to work in factories.

Although agricultural output did not increase during the early years of collectivization, by controlling production, the govt. was able to regulate the distribution of agricultural products - allocating them for export where necessary.

(4) Russian army was more than doubled in size and reorganized in accordance with the Western European model.

(5) **Patriotism** - which Marxists hated as a form of capitalist propaganda - was exalted.

(6) Alliance with European powers - In 1934, USSR entered League of Nations and ratified a military alliance with France

(7) In 1936, the new constitution provided citizens with a Bill of Rights, guaranteeing freedom of speech, of assembly and of religion -- Also Right to Employment, Right to Leisure and Right to Maintenance in case of old age or disability.

In spite of these rights, Stalin conducted systematic purges - almost 9 million imprisoned, banished or killed.

In 1930, 1 million was the membership of the Party. Total population of Russia in 1930 was 150 millions.

- **By 1939** - Private manufacturing and trade were entirely abolished.
- Factories, mines, rail-roads and public utilities were exclusively owned by the State.
- Agriculture was completely socialized.
- Almost 75 -80% of National Product was Industrial in origin.
- Illiteracy improved from 50% to 20%.
- National standard of health was enhanced.

### **KHRUSHCHEV (1953 - 64)**

Politburo decided to share power after Stalin's death. Khrushchev became Party Secretary. He criticized Stalin's policies, especially his purges, personality cult. He also advocated peaceful co-existence with the West.

Khrushchev focused on light industries producing consumer goods, though still following the model of the 5 years plans.

He started the virgin lands scheme (1954) - cultivating huge areas of lands in Siberia and Kazakhstan.

Bit of relaxation of press control, but strict overall party control was encouraged.

His loss of prestige over Cuban Missile Crisis and controversy courted by honouring Egypt's Nasser led to his ouster by the Central committee.

After 1964, Kosygin (advocated economic decentralization), Brezhnev and Podgorny assumed control in the 1970s.

Agriculture in USSR was still inefficient compared to USA.

- ✓ 1 farmer in USA in 1980 was feeding 75 people
- ✓ 1 farmer in USSR in 1980 was feeding 10 people

Moscow attacked Czechoslovakia in 1968.

**Brezhnev Doctrine:** Intervention in any Communist country was justified if Socialism was threatened there, e.g. invasion of Afghanistan (1979).

After Brezhnev's death in 1982, USSR went under the regimes of Yuri Andropov and Konstantin Chernenko. They were pro-stalinist leaders or pro-Status-quoists.

## GORBACHEV

He hailed from a peasant family in Northern Caucasus who joined a collective farm. He was the youngest General Secretary after Stalin.

Gorbachev attempted a series of reforms to re-structure the economy and loosening up the restrictions on the media. He unveiled policies of Glasnost and Perestroika.

*"Without Glasnost (openness), there would have been No Perestroika (restructuring the economy)" - said Gorbachav.*

Greater freedom in press, better flow of ideas in and out of the Iron curtain; allowed dissenting voices to be heard legally.

Historian Robert Grogin defined Perestroika:

*"it was designed to cure economic inertia, overhaul the bureaucracy, the Communist party, and even the military. It included a partial reduction of Central Planning system, introduction of market mechanisms, emphasis on quality, infusion of new investment and technologies into industry".*

Gorbachev compared Perestroika with Lenin's NEP and differentiated it from Stalin's policies which he termed as corrupt and ineffective.

**Fundamental Reasons for collapse of USSR:**

- i) Overall oppression caused discontentment within Russia
- ii) Nationalities like Lithuania, Latvia, Estonia, Belarussia, Ukraine had never voluntarily accepted Moscow's suzerainty
- iii) Gorbachev allowed elections in the party and hence criticism and dissent.
- iv) Collapse of Iron Curtain due to openness of Gorbachev.
- v) Economic reforms of Gorbachev did not produce the desired results quickly.
- vi) Failed coup by hardliners in August 1991.

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