



2. CONSOLIDATION AND MAINTENANCE OF POWER BY LENIN

TOPICS:

Decrees and measures

The Civil War

Single party rule

The nature of the party and the state

The Bolsheviks were in control of Petrograd as a result of their insurrection on 24th October but elsewhere the Bolshevik take-over was not so smooth. Fighting lasted a week in Moscow between officers and Red Guards, with 500 killed. It was the end of November before other cities were won over. Rural areas were much more difficult to deal with and very few peasants were Bolshevik supporters. Civil war did not break out at this stage, partly because the Bolsheviks' opponents were waiting to see what would happen when elections to the Constituent Assembly were held on 12th November. Most people did not expect the new government to last long because of the scale of the problems it would face:

1. Economic crisis; by November 1917 prices were 1,000% higher than they had been in 1914.
2. Opposition from other political groups.
3. The War; by late 1917, the Germans had advanced closer to Petrograd.

Lenin was more realistic than many of the Bolsheviks: he realised that the Bolsheviks would have to fight a civil war to gain control of the rest of Russia, and that this would involve ignoring many of the principles of communism and creating a ruthless, dictatorial government. In December 1917, Lenin set up the Cheka, the Bolshevik secret police. Lenin also believed that the Communist revolution could not survive in Russia alone, but must be spread to other, more industrialised countries.

2.1 Bolshevik Decrees and Measures

At the end of October, Sovnarkom published a series of decrees and measures (which did not strictly reflect Bolshevik ideology but were an attempt to satisfy the Russian masses):

1. The Decree on Land

This decree handed over the estates of the crown, church and aristocracy to the peasants. This effectively legalised what the peasants had already done. Some Bolsheviks were very angry about this because they believed that, since land was part of the means of production, it should now belong to the state, not to individual peasants. However, Lenin's pragmatic view was accepted because 300,000 Bolsheviks could not deprive 125