

Vladimir Lenin

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(Redirected from Lenin)

Vladimir Ilyich Lenin (Russian: Владимир Ильич Ленин) (22 April 1870 – 21 January 1924), born **Vladimir Ilyich Ulyanov** (Russian: Владимир Ильич Ульянов), was the Bolshevik Leader of the 1917 October Revolution, and the first Head of State of the Soviet Union; in the course of his political career, he used the pseudonyms **Lenin**, **V. I. Lenin**, **Nikolai Lenin**, and **N. Lenin**. His contribution to political science, Leninism, is his development and interpretations of urban Marxist theory to fit the agrarian Russian Empire of that time, with Leninist theory turning Marx on his head by placing politics over economics.^[1]

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Early life and background

Vladimir Ilyich Lenin Владимир Ильич Ленин



Chairman of the Council of People's Commissars

In office

8 November 1917 – 21 January 1924

Preceded by Alexander Kerensky
(as President of the Provisional Government)

Succeeded by Alexei Rykov
(Joseph Stalin as the Party Leader)

Leader of the Bolshevik Party

In office

17 November 1903 – 21 January 1924

Preceded by None

Succeeded by Joseph Stalin
(as General Secretary)

Born	22 April 1870 Simbirsk, Russian Empire
Died	21 January 1924 (aged 53) Gorki, Russian SFSR, Soviet Union
Nationality	Russian
Political party	Bolshevik Party
Spouse(s)	Nadezhda Krupskaya (1898-1924)
Profession	Politician, Revolutionary, Lawyer
Religion	none (atheist)



Infancy: V.I. Ulyanov, aged three.



Youth: c. 1887

Lenin was born **Vladimir Ilyich Ulyanov**, on 22 April 1870, to Maria Alexandrovna Blank, a schoolmistress, and Ilya

Nikolayevich Ulyanov a physics instructor, at Simbirsk, in the Russian Empire (1721–1917) of the late nineteenth century; per family custom, he was baptized into the Russian Orthodox Church.^{[2][3]} Later, the USSR renamed Lenin's Volga River home city, Simbirsk, as Ulyanovsk.

Signature

In 1869, Ilya Nikolayevich Ulyanov became the Inspector of Public Schools, and later the Director of Elementary Schools, for the Simbirsk

Gubernia *Oblast* (province), a successful career in the Imperial Russian public education system. Tsarist cultural mores defined the Ulyanov family stock as “ethnically mixed” — “Mordovian, Kalmyk, Jewish (cf. Blank family), Volgan German, and Swedish, and possibly others”; being of the intelligentsia, the Ulyanovs educated their children against the ills of their time (violations of human rights, servile psychology), and instilled readiness to struggle for higher ideals, a free society, and equal rights. Subsequently, excepting Olga (dead at age 19), every Ulyanov child became a revolutionary;^[4] as such, **Vladimir Ilyich Ulyanov**, in 1902, adopted the *nom de guerre* **Lenin**, derived from the Siberian River Lena, the usage in this biographic article.^[3]

In January 1886, his father died of a cerebral hemorrhage; in May 1887 (when Lenin was 17 years old), his eldest brother Aleksandr Ulyanov was hanged for participating in a terrorist assassination attempt against the Tsar, Alexander III (1881–94).^[5] His sister, Anna Ulyanova, who was with Aleksandr when arrested, was banished to an Ulyanov family estate at Kokushkino, a village some 40 km (25 mi.) from Kazan — those events transformed Lenin into a political radical, which official Soviet biographies present as central to his assuming the revolutionary track as political life.

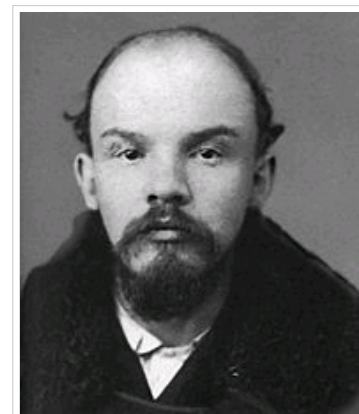
Complementing these personal, emotional, and political upheavals was his matriculation, in August 1887, to the Kazan University, where he studied law and read the works of Karl Marx. That Marxism-derived political development involved Lenin in a student riot and consequent arrest in December 1887; Kazan University expelled him, the authorities barred him from other universities, and thence was under continuous police surveillance — as the brother of a known terrorist.^[6] Nevertheless, he studied independently to earn his law degree; in that time, he first read *Das Kapital* (1867–94). Three years later, in 1890, he was permitted studies at the University of Saint Petersburg.^[7] In January 1892, he was awarded a first class diploma in law;^[8] moreover, he was an intellectually-distinguished student in the Classical languages of Latin and Greek, and the modern languages of German, French, and English, but had only limited command of the latter two; later, in the 1917 revolutionary period, he relied on Inessa Armand to translate an article to French and English, later writing to S. N. Ravich in Geneva, "I am unable to lecture in French".^[9]

Revolutionary

For a few years, Lenin practiced law in the Volga River port of Samara, mostly land ownership cases from which he derived much political insight to the condition of the Russian peasant,^[10] before moving to St Petersburg in 1893, where he pursued politics via revolutionary propaganda. In 1895, he founded the *League of Struggle for the Emancipation of the Working Class*, the consolidation of the city's Marxist groups; as an embryonic revolutionary party, they were active among the labour organisations of Russia. On 7 December 1895, Lenin was arrested and imprisoned for 14 months in solitary confinement, in Cell 193 of the St Petersburg Remand Prison. In February 1897, he was exiled to the village Shushenskoye, in the Minusinsk district, of the Yenisei Gubernia (Province) in Eastern Siberia. There, he met the notable Marxist Georgy Plekhanov, who had introduced socialism to Russia. In exile, he wrote more than 30 theoretical works; in July 1898, Lenin married socialist activist Nadezhda Krupskaya, and in April 1899, under the pseudonym **Vladimir Ilyin**, published the book *The Development of Capitalism in Russia* (<http://www.marxists.org/archive/lenin/works/1899/devel/index.htm>) (1899).^[11]

At exile's end in 1900, Lenin travelled Russia and Europe — Munich, Prague, Vienna, Manchester and London (where Percy Circus WC1, at King's Cross, London, bears a memorial wall plaque); but resided in Zurich, where he studied and worked as a lecturer at the Geneva University. In that time he and with Julius Martov (later a leading opponent) co-founded the newspaper *Iskra* ("Spark"), and published articles and books about revolutionary politics, whilst striving to recruit future Social Democrats. To effect such political work, he began assuming aliases, and, in 1902, settling upon "Lenin" — "N. Lenin" (*Eng.* "I. Lenin"), in full; **Nota bene:** The Western press misidentified him as "Nikolai Lenin", mis-translating the Cyrillic letter "И" (English letter "I") for the English "N"; thus *Ilyich Lenin* (Russian) metamorphosed to the (English) "Nikolai Lenin".

In 1903, the Russian Social Democratic Labour Party RSDLP (*Russ.* РСДРП) ideologically diverged; Lenin headed the Bolshevik faction, consequent to breaking with the Menshevik faction. The RSDLP party faction names *Bolshevik* ("majority") and *Menshevik* ("minority") derive from the narrow electoral defeat of the Mensheviks to the party's newspaper editorial board and to the central committee. The break partly originated from Lenin's book *What Is to Be Done?* (1901–02) — about concrete revolutionary strategy — and because of different opinions about the role of the Marxist *Iskra* faction within the RSDLP; reportedly, *What Is to Be Done?* was a most influential book in pre-revolutionary Tsarist Russia; Lenin claimed that three of five workers had either read it or had it read to them.^[12]



Revolutionary portrait: Police photograph of Lenin, December 1895.



Exile: Lenin's residence, Zurich, Switzerland, 1920.



Exile: Memorial plate, Lenin's residence, Zurich, Switzerland, 2008: "Here resided, from 21 February 1916 to 2 April 1917, Lenin, the leader of the Russian Revolution".



Exile: Lenin's residence, Zurich, Switzerland, 2008.

In

November 1905, Lenin returned to Russia to support the 1905 Russian Revolution.^[13] In 1906, he was elected to the Presidium of the RSDLP; and shuttled between Finland and Russia, but after the Tsarist defeat of the November Revolution, resumed his exile, in December 1907.^[13] Until the February and October revolutions of 1917, he lived in Western Europe, where, despite relative poverty, he developed Leninism — urban Marxism adapted to agrarian Russia.^[14] In 1909, to disambiguate philosophic doubts about the proper practical course of a socialist revolution, Lenin published *Materialism and Empirio-criticism* (1909); in the event, it became a philosophic foundation of Marxism-Leninism. Throughout exile, Lenin travelled Europe, participated in socialist activities, (e.g. the Prague Party Conference of 1912). When Inessa Armand left Russia for Paris, she met Lenin and other exiled Bolsheviks. Rumour has it she was Lenin's lover; yet Neil Harding notes that there is a "slender stock of evidence . . . we still have no evidence that they were sexually intimate".^[15]

In 1914, when the First World War (1914–18) began, the large Social Democratic parties of Europe (then self-described Marxists) and intellectual luminaries such as Karl Kautsky, each nationalistically supported their homelands' war effort. At first, Lenin disbelieved their political fickleness, and that the German Social Democrats had voted for war credits; the event decided his definitive break with the Second International (1889–1916). Lenin opposed the Great War, because the peasants

and workers would be fighting the bourgeoisie’s “imperialist war” — that ought to be transformed into a civil war between the classes. At war’s start, the Austrians briefly detained him in Poronin, already his town of residence. On 5 September 1914, Lenin moved to neutral Switzerland, residing first at Berne and then at Zurich.^[16] In 1915, he attended the anti-war Zimmerwald Conference, at the eponymous Swiss town. In the conference, Lenin led and headed the minority Zimmerwald Left, who unsuccessfully urged, against the majority pacifists, that the conference should adopt Lenin’s stance about transforming imperialist war to class war. Later, Lenin and the Zimmerwald Left presented a like resolution in the next conference, at Kienthal (24–30 April 1916), in Switzerland, that settled for a compromise manifesto.^[17]

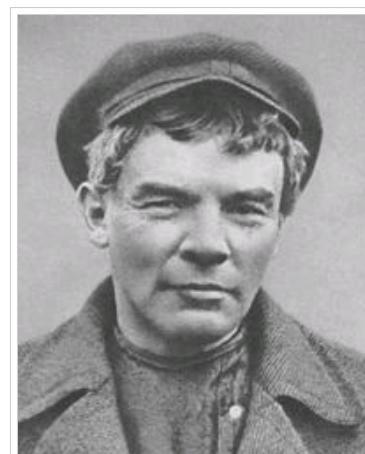
In Zurich, in spring of 1916, he wrote *Imperialism, the Highest Stage of Capitalism* (1916), which popularized (Lenin opponent) Karl Kautsky’s politico-economic perspective in the 1900s^[18] — wherein the merging of banks and industrial cartels gives rise to finance capital — the final, highest stage of capitalism; pursuing greater profits than the home market can offer, capital is exported. That leads to the division of the world, among international monopolist firms, and to European states colonizing large parts of the world, in support of their businesses. Imperialism, thus, is an advanced stage of capitalism relying upon the rise of monopolies and on the export of capital (rather than goods), a global financial system of which colonialism is one feature.^[19]

Russian return

After the 1917 February Revolution, provoking the abdication of Tsar Nicholas II (1894–17), Lenin decided to return to Russia, difficult, for he was isolated in neutral Switzerland, surrounded by countries fighting the Great War, nevertheless, the Swiss communist Fritz Platten obtained Imperial German government permission allowing Lenin (and cohort) to traverse Germany by rail, in a “sealed train (http://www.yamaguchy.netfirms.com/7897401/pearson/pearson_index.html)”.

Geopolitically, the Germans expected his return to politically disrupt Russia — in aid of ending the Eastern front war, so that Germany could concentrate upon defeating the Western allies. Having traversed Germany, Lenin continued through Sweden, aided by Swedish communists Otto Grimlund and Ture Nerman.

On 16 April 1917, Lenin arrived at the Finland Station, Petrograd, Russia — welcomed by many admirers,^[20] and assumed command of the Bolsheviks, and published the *April Theses* (1917),^[21] calling for uncompromising opposition to the Provisional Government. Initially, he isolated the Bolshevik party with such a leftist position, yet it rendered the Bolshevik party a refuge for people disillusioned with the Provisional Government — because their “luxury of opposition” exempted them from responsibility for that government’s policies.^[22] Meanwhile, Aleksandr Kerensky, Grigory Aleksinsky, and other opponents, accused the Bolsheviks — especially Lenin — of being Imperial German *agents provocateur*,^[23] and, on 17 July, in their defence, Leon Trotsky (a new Bolshevik leader), said:



Revolutionary alias: *Vilén*, Lenin bewigged and clean shaven, Finland, 11 August 1917.

An intolerable atmosphere has been created, in which you, as well as we, are choking. They are throwing dirty accusations at Lenin and Zinoviev. Lenin has fought thirty years for the revolution. I have fought [for] twenty years against the oppression of the people. And we cannot but cherish a hatred for German militarism . . . I have been sentenced by a German court to eight months’ imprisonment for my struggle against German militarism. This everybody knows. Let nobody in this hall say that we are hirelings of Germany.^[24]

In the event, after the tumultuous July Days in Petrograd — when the Kerensky Provisional Government violently suppressed spontaneous anti-government demonstrations by industrial workers and soldiers, it also took opportunity to suppress the Bolsheviks who had attempted to assume command of the demonstrations; Bolshevik party leaders were arrested, and Lenin fled to Finland. Although they did not arrange the July Days confrontations, Lenin said that, despite workers’ support in the city, the Bolsheviks needed the peasants’ support to realise the revolution. Meanwhile, Lenin finished *State and Revolution* (1917),^[25] which proposed a government based upon soviets (worker-elected councils revocable at all moments, by the workers). After General Kornilov’s abortive coup attempt against the Kerensky Provisional Government in late August, the people turned to the Bolsheviks and their “Peace, Land, Bread” programme.^[26] Imprisoned Bolshevik leaders were freed, and in October, Lenin returned to Petrograd from Finland — inspiring the October Revolution with the slogan “All Power to the Soviets!”. Lenin directed the deposition (6–8 November 1917) of the Provisional Government from the Smolny Institute, and

the storming (7–8 November) of the Winter Palace to realise the capitulation that marked the beginning of Soviet rule in Russia.



Historic artefact: The locomotive that delivered Lenin to the Finland Station, Petrograd, in April 1917.

Head of state

On 8 November 1917, the Russian Congress of Soviets elected Lenin as Chairman of the Council of People's Commissars, as such, he declared that “Communism is Soviet power plus the electrification of the entire country” in modernising Russia into a twentieth-century country.^[27]

We must show the peasants that the organisation of industry on the basis of modern, advanced technology, on electrification which will provide a link between town and country, will put an end to the division between town and country, will make it possible to raise the level of culture in the countryside and to overcome, even in the most remote corners of land, backwardness, ignorance, poverty, disease, and barbarism.^[28]



Lenin and his wife, Nadezhda Krupskaya, 1919. (detail)

He initiated and supervised the realisation of the GOELRO plan (1920), the first Soviet national economic recovery and development project, establishing a free universal health care system, guaranteeing the rights of women, and educating the illiterate Russian people ^[29] — yet the Bolshevik government first had to withdraw Russia from the First World War (1914–18).

Facing continuing Imperial German eastward advance, Lenin proposed that Russia immediately sign a peace treaty withdrawing it from the Great War. Yet, other Bolshevik leaders (e.g. Nikolai Bukharin) advocated continuing in the war to foment revolution in Imperial Germany. Leon Trotsky, who led the peace negotiations, proposed the “No War, No Peace” intermediate position requiring a Russo–German peace treaty on condition that neither belligerents’ territorial gains be consolidated. When negotiations collapsed, the Germans renewed their advance into Russia, resulting in the loss of much west Russian territory. Resultantly, Lenin’s proposal — withdrawing from the war — gained the majority support of the Bolshevik leaders, and, on 3 March 1918, Russia withdrew from the First World War via the Treaty of Brest-Litovsk, costing much European Russian territory.



Joseph Stalin, Vladimir Lenin and Mikhail Kalinin, 1919

On 19 January, the Bolsheviks dissolved the Russian Constituent Assembly, in alliance with the left-wing Socialist Revolutionaries, relying upon support from the soviets. Moreover, the coalition collapsed consequent to the Social Revolutionaries opposing the Brest-Litovsk treaty — and then joined other political parties in deposing the Bolshevik government; Lenin responded with political persecution of, and jail for, the anti-Bolsheviks.

From early 1918, Lenin proposed a single leader (accountable to the Bolshevik government), in charge of each enterprise. Workers could request state measures resolving problems, but had to abide the leader’s decisions. Although contrary to workers' self-management, that administrative measure was essential for efficiency and expertise; proponents argued that said management

was meant to strengthen state control of labour, and that self-management failures were owed to lack of resources — a problem resolved by licensing (for a month) all workers of most factories; thus S.A. Smith’s observation: “By the end of the civil war, not much was left of the democratic forms of industrial administration promoted by the factory committees in 1917, but the government argued that this did not matter since industry had passed into the ownership of a workers’ state.”

Analogously, Lenin admired the Irish socialist revolutionary James Connolly, thus the USSR was the first country to diplomatically recognise the Irish Free State that fought Irish War of Independence from Britain. In the event, Lenin developed a friendship with Connolly’s revolutionary’s son, Roddy Connolly.

National security: the Cheka

Main article: Cheka

In December 1917, to protect the revolution and their soviet government, the Bolsheviks established the Cheka (*Chrezvychaynaya Komissiya*, the “Extraordinary Commission”) to defend it against counter-revolution and other political opposition;^[30] thus, it quickly imposed censorship, by confiscating dissident literature: “[On] 17 November, the Central Executive Committee passed a decree giving the Bolsheviks control over all newsprint and wide powers of closing down newspapers critical of the régime. . . .”^[31] Independent soviets, re-organized by non-Bolshevik workers, were disbanded; anti-soviet, independent newspapers were closed, until the Bolshevik *Pravda* (“Truth”) and *Izvestia* (“The News”) newspapers established a news-media monopoly, because of their “refusal to come to terms with the socialists and the dispersal of the Constituent assembly led to the logical result that revolutionary terror would now be directed, not only against traditional enemies, such as the bourgeoisie or right-wing opponents, but against anyone, be he socialist, worker, or peasant, who opposed Bolshevik rule”.



Lenin at his Kremlin desk, 1918.

Moreover, the Bolsheviks had planned to try the Tsar, Nicholas II, but, by July 1918, the counter-revolutionary White Army had advanced to Yekaterinburg, where the Bolsheviks had Romanov royal family under house arrest. Hence, Yakov Sverdlov agreed to the local soviet’s request to kill them forthwith, rather than risk their rescue by the Whites. Contemporarily the execution of the deposed Romanovs — if ordered by the Moscow central government ^[32]^[33] or by the local, Yekaterinburg, soviet remains debated.^[34]

Attempted assassinations

On 14 January 1918, in Petrograd, after a speech, assassins ambushed Lenin in his automobile; he and Fritz Platten were in the back seat when assassins began shooting into the automobile — “Platten grabbed Lenin by the head and pushed him down . . . Platten’s hand was covered in blood, having been grazed by a bullet as he was shielding Lenin”.^[35]

On 30 August 1918, Fanya Kaplan, of the Socialist Revolutionary Party, approached Lenin, again after a speech, as he walked to his automobile. Whilst Lenin rested a foot upon the running board, Kaplan called to him, and as he turned to answer her, she immediately shot him three times. The first bullet struck an arm, the second bullet struck his jaw and neck, and the third bullet missed him, wounding the woman with whom he had been speaking; the wounded Lenin fell to earth, unconscious.^[36] Fearing other assassins at hospital, he was taken to his Kremlin apartment. The attending physicians decided against removing the bullets, lest it endanger Lenin’s survival.



Comrades: Lenin and Fritz Platten, 1919.

In the event, Lenin slowly recovered from his bullet wounds; *Pravda* ridiculed Fanya Kaplan as a latter-day Charlotte Corday (a murderess of Jean-Paul Marat), reassuring readers that immediately after surviving an assassination, “Lenin, shot through twice, with pierced lungs, spilling blood, refuses help and goes on his own. The next morning, still threatened with death, he reads papers, listens, learns, and observes to see that the engine of the locomotive that carries us towards global revolution has not stopped working. . . .”^[37] Although his lungs were unharmed, the neck wound had spilled blood into a lung.^[38] Other than like press exhortations, the Russian folk were not informed about either the attempted assassination, or the assassiness Fanya Kaplan, or of Lenin’s post-shooting health. Historian Richard Pipes reports that “the impression one gains . . . is that the Bolsheviks deliberately underplayed the event to convince the public that, whatever happened to Lenin, they were firmly in control”. Contemporary popular response to the attempted assassination is described by Leonid Krasin in a 7 September 1918 letter to his wife:

“As it happens, the attempt to kill Lenin has made him much more popular than he was. One hears a great many people who are far from having any sympathy with the Bolsheviks, saying that it would be an absolute disaster if Lenin had succumbed to his wounds, as it was first thought he would. And they are quite right, for, in the midst of all this chaos and confusion, he is the backbone of the new body politic, the main support on which everything rests.”^[39]

This second assassination attempt, Fanya Kaplan’s shooting of him, began the Lenin personality cult, which he discouraged;^[40]

nevertheless, Lenin's health declined, eventually leading to three strokes that eventually culminated in his death.

Combating anti-Semitism

Modern technologies intrigued Lenin as vehicles for mass communication; as Bolshevik leader, he recorded eight speeches to gramophone records in 1919; later, during the Khrushchev era, seven were put on sale. Significantly, the suppressed eighth speech delineated the Bolshevik leader's opposition to Christian anti-Semitism.^[41]

The Tsarist police, in alliance with the landowners and the capitalists, organized pogroms against the Jews. The landowners and capitalists tried to divert the hatred of the workers and peasants, who were tortured by want, against the Jews. . . . Only the most ignorant and down-trodden people can believe the lies and slander that are spread about the Jews. . . . It is not the Jews who are the enemies of the working people. The enemies of the workers are the capitalists of all countries. Among the Jews there are working people, and they form the majority. They are our brothers, who, like us, are oppressed by capital; they are our comrades in the struggle for socialism. Among the Jews there are *kulaks*, exploiters, and capitalists, just as there are among the Russians, and among people of all nations . . . Rich Jews, like rich Russians, and the rich in all countries, are in alliance to oppress, crush, rob, and disunite the workers . . . Shame on accursed Tsarism, which tortured and persecuted the Jews. Shame on those who foment hatred towards the Jews, who foment hatred towards other nations.^[42]

Social reforms

Alexandra Kollontai and fellow feminist revolutionary Inessa Armand in 1919 together established the *Zhenotdel* (Женотдел), the first government department for women in the world. Lenin's administration was also one of the first governments to decriminalize homosexuality in 1917. The Russian Communist Party effectively legalized no-fault divorce, abortion, and homosexuality, when they abolished said Tsarist laws. The initial Soviet criminal code retained these liberal sexual policies;^[43] but, a decade later, Stalin reversed that legal tolerance, and homosexuality remained illegal, under Article 121, until the Yeltsin era.

Red Terror

Main article: Red Terror

Once the Bolshevik Revolution was a *fait accompli*, the ideologically varied anti-Communist factions loosely associated as the counter-revolutionary White Movement to depose the Bolsheviks. In 1918, the Allies of World War I, sponsored the militarily-defeated Whites in launching the Russian Civil War (1917–23). Earlier in October, Kamenev and his supporters warned the Bolshevik party that rule by terror was inevitable with Lenin's seizure of power and rejection of democracy,^[44] despite his having predicted the White counter-revolution.

Following the August 30 assassination attempt against Lenin, and the successful assassination of the Petrograd Cheka chief Moisei Uritsky, Stalin, in a telegram to Lenin, proposed a policy of “open and systematic mass terror” against “those responsible”. Lenin and the Bolsheviks agreed, and instructed Cheka chief Felix Dzerzhinsky to commence a “Red Terror”, which was officially announced to the public on 1 September 1918, by the Bolshevik newspaper, *Krasnaya Gazeta* (“Krasnaya Gazette”);^[45] Lenin's Hanging Order requiring the public hangings of one hundred *kulaks* on 11 August 1918, before the second (30 August) assassination attempt against him, documents his authorization of the Red Terror.^[46] During the Russian Civil War, the enemies of the Bolsheviks faced torture and summary execution,^{[47][48][49][50][51]} and by May 1919 there were some 16,000 enemies of the people imprisoned in labor camps based upon the Tsarist *katorga* labor camps; by September 1921 there were more than 70,000 prisoners.^[52]

Although Lenin protected Bolshevik Russia with “mass terror against enemies of the revolution”, because the proletarian state was so organised against the capitalist establishment — intra-societal terrorism in post-Tsarist Russia was rooted in the popular anger of the working classes (peasant and worker) against the privileged classes of the deposed absolute monarchy.^[53] In September 1918, 25 former Tsarist ministers, high civil servants, and 765 so-called White Guards were shot in Moscow, per Lenin-signed execution lists.^[54] In late 1918, when Kamenev and Bukharin tried to curb the excesses of the Cheka, it was



Lenin who defended it.^[55] In 1921, via the Politburo, he expanded the Cheka's discretionary application of the death penalty.^[56]

After a clerical insurrection in the town of Shuia, in a 19 March 1918 letter to Vyacheslav Molotov and the Politburo, Lenin outlined a plan of action against the clergy and their followers, who were defying the Bolshevik government decree to remove church valuables: "We must . . . put down all resistance with such brutality that they will not forget it for several decades. . . . The greater the number of representatives of the reactionary clergy and reactionary bourgeoisie we succeed in executing . . . the better."^[57]^[58]

Nonetheless, during the Russian Civil War (1917–23), the Reds and the Whites committed atrocities in pursuing their revolution and counter-revolution;^[59] historians disagree about equating the Red and White terrors, because the Red Terror was official government policy directed against entire social classes (e.g. Decossackization),^[60] whilst the White Terror was racial and political, against Jews, anti-monarchists, and Communists, (cf. White Movement).

Civil War



Lenin addressing the folk

Further information: Allied invasions of Russia: (i) Allied intervention in the Russian Civil War, (ii) the Polar Bear Expedition, (iii) the North Russia Campaign, and (iv) the American Expeditionary Force Siberia

In Moscow, during March 1919, Lenin and the Bolsheviks met in conference with the revolutionary socialists of the world, and established the Communist International (1919–43) (**Comintern**, aka the **Third International**). At the meetings, Lenin and the Bolsheviks became the "Communist Party" and broke from the broader socialist movement — acting to ideologically distinguish their revolutionary party from the broad-movement socialist parties. In the event, in post-Revolutionary Russia, the Bolshevik Party was renamed as the "Russian Communist Party",

which later metamorphosed into the Communist Party of the Soviet Union.

Meanwhile, the civil war raged across Russia. A wide variety of political movements and their supporters took up arms to support or overthrow the Soviet Government. Although many different factions were involved in the civil war, the two main forces were the Red Army (communists) and the White Army (traditionalists). Foreign powers such as France, Britain, the United States and Japan also intervened in this war (on behalf of the White Army). Eventually, the more organisationally proficient Red Army, led by Leon Trotsky, won the civil war, defeating the White Russian forces and their allies in 1920. Smaller battles continued for several more years, however.



Trotsky, Lenin and Kamenev at the II Party Congress in 1919.

In late 1919, successes against the White Russian forces convinced Lenin that it was time to spread the revolution to the West, by force if necessary. When the newly independent Second Polish Republic began securing its eastern territories annexed by Russia in the partitions of Poland in the late 18th century, it clashed with Bolshevik forces for dominance in these areas, which led to the outbreak of the Polish-Soviet War in 1919. With the revolution in Germany and the Spartacist League on the rise, Lenin viewed this as the perfect time and place to "probe Europe with the bayonets of the Red Army." Lenin saw Poland as the bridge that the Red Army would have to cross in order to link up the Russian Revolution with the

communist supporters in the German Revolution, and to assist other communist movements in Western Europe. However the defeat of Soviet Russia in the Battle of Warsaw invalidated these plans.

Lenin was a harsh critic of imperialism.^[61] In 1917, he declared the unconditional right of separation for national minorities and oppressed nations. However, when the Russian Civil War was won, he used military force to assimilate the newly independent states of Armenia, Georgia, and Azerbaijan.^[62] He argued that the inclusion of those countries in the newly emerging Soviet government would shelter them from capitalist imperial ambitions.



White soldier: The Battalion of Death flag, later integral to the Volunteer Army.

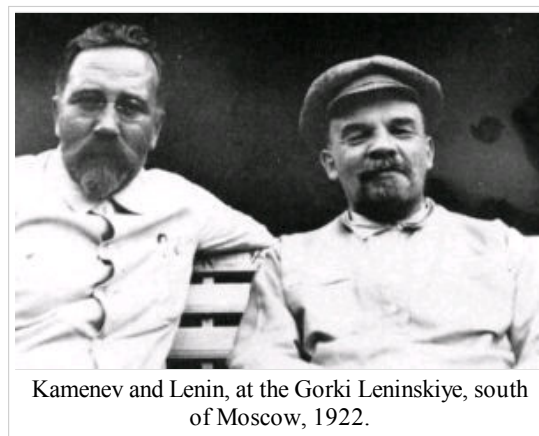
During the civil war, as an attempt to maintain food supply to the cities and the army in the conditions of economic collapse, the Bolsheviks adopted the policy of war communism. That involved “requisitioning” supplies from the peasantry for little or nothing in exchange. This led the peasants to drastically reduce their crop production. Additionally, according to the official Bolshevik view which is still shared by some Marxists,^[63] rich peasants (kulaks) withheld grain in order to increase their profits – statistics indicate that most of the grain and the other food supplies passed through the black market.^[64] Then, the Bolshevik requisitions came to affect the food that peasants had grown for their own subsistence and their seed grain. The resulting conflicts began with the Cheka and the army shooting hostages, and, according to *The Black Book of Communism*, ended with a second full-scale civil war against the peasantry, including the use of poison gas, death camps, and deportations. The same source emphasizes that in 1920, Lenin ordered increased emphasis on the food requisitioning from the peasantry, at the same time as the Cheka gave detailed reports about the large scale famine.^[65] The long war and a drought in 1921 also contributed to the famine. Estimates on the deaths from this famine are between 3 and 10 million.^{[66][67]}

The long years of war, the Bolshevik policy of War Communism, famine and the encirclement of hostile governments took their toll on Russia, and much of the country lay in ruins. There were many peasant uprisings, the largest being the Tambov rebellion. After an uprising by the sailors at Kronstadt in March 1921, Lenin replaced the policy of War Communism with the New Economic Policy (NEP), in a successful attempt to rebuild industry and especially agriculture. The new policy was based on recognition of political and economic realities, though it was intended merely as a tactical retreat from the socialist ideal. The whole policy was later reversed by Stalin.

Later life and death

The physical strains of leading a revolution, running a government, and fighting a civil war aggravated the debilitation caused by his wounds from the attempted assassinations; Lenin still had a bullet in the neck, until a German surgeon removed it on 24 April 1922.^[68] In May 1922, Lenin suffered the first of three strokes, which diminished his governing. In December 1922, he suffered a second stroke that partly paralyzed his right side; he withdrew from active politics. In March 1923, he suffered a third stroke that left him dumb and bed-ridden until he died.

After the first stroke, Lenin dictated government papers to Nadezhda; among them was *Lenin's Testament* (changing the structure of the soviets), partly inspired by the 1922 Georgian Affair (Russian cultural assimilation of constituent USSR republics), and it criticized high-rank Communists, including Josef Stalin, Grigory Zinoviev, Lev Kamenev, Nikolai Bukharin, and Leon Trotsky. About the Communist Party's General Secretary (since 1922), Josef Stalin, Lenin reported that the “unlimited authority” concentrated in him was unacceptable, suggesting that “comrades think about a way of removing Stalin from that post”, because his personal rudeness would be “intolerable in a Secretary-General”.



Kamenev and Lenin, at the Gorki Leninskiye, south of Moscow, 1922.



V.I. Lenin in 1923.

Upon Lenin's death, Nadezhda mailed his testament to the central committee, to be read aloud to the 13th Party Congress in May 1924, however, the ruling *troika* — Stalin, Kamenev, Zinoviev — suppressed *Lenin's Testament* to remain in power; it was not published until 1925, in the United States, by the American intellectual Max Eastman. In that year, Trotsky published an article minimizing the importance of *Lenin's Testament*, saying that Lenin's notes should not be perceived as a "will", that it had been neither concealed, nor violated,^[69] yet did invoke it in later polemics against Stalin.^{[70][71]}

The Bolshevik leader Vladimir Ilyich Lenin died at 18:50 hrs, Moscow time, on 21 January 1924, aged 53, at his estate in Gorki Leninskiye. In the four days that he lay in state, more than 900,000 mourners viewed his body in the Hall of Columns; among the statesmen who expressed condolences to Russia (the USSR) was Chinese premier Sun Yat-sen, who said:



V.I. Lenin in 1923.

"Through the ages of world history, thousands of leaders and scholars appeared who spoke eloquent words, but these remained words. You, Lenin, were an exception. You not only spoke and taught us, but translated your words into deeds. You created a new country. You showed us the road of joint struggle . . . You, great man that you are, will live on in the memories of the oppressed people through the centuries."^[72]

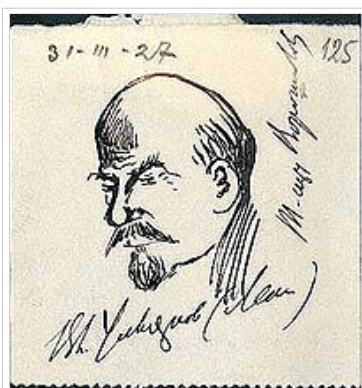
Winston Churchill, who encouraged British intervention against the Russian Revolution, in league with the White Movement, to destroy the Bolsheviks and Bolshevism, said:

"He alone could have found the way back to the causeway . . . The Russian people were left floundering in the bog. Their worst misfortune was his birth . . . their next worst his

death."^[73]

Three days after his death, Petrograd was renamed Leningrad in his honour, so remaining until 1991, when the USSR dissolved, yet the administrative area remains "Leningrad Oblast". In the early 1920s, the Russian cosmism movement proved so popular that Leonid Krasin and Alexander Bogdanov proposed to cryonically preserve Lenin for future resurrection, yet, despite buying the requisite equipment, that was not done.^[74] Instead, the body of V. I. Lenin was embalmed and permanently exhibited in the Lenin Mausoleum, in Moscow, on 27 January 1924.

Post-mortem



Vladimir Ulyanov (Lenin),
drawing by Nikolai Bukharin,
1927

Since the dissolution of the USSR in late 1991, reverence for Lenin declined among the post-Soviet generations, yet remains an important historical figure for the Soviet-era generations.^[75] In Eastern Europe, most statues of Lenin were removed, yet some remain in Russia; however, given his importance as an historical figure, one such statue, from Poprad, Slovakia, was installed in Seattle, Washington, USA, as a kitsch reminder of the Cold War (1945–91). Another statue was placed in 1991 on the rooftop of "Red Square" apartment building, standing on the corner of Essex and Houston Street in Lower East Side, New York. In 1991, subsequent to a contested vote, between Communists and liberals, the Leningrad government reverted the city's eponymous name to St. Petersburg, whilst the surrounding Leningrad Oblast remained so named;^[76] like-wise the city of Ulyanovsk (V. I. Lenin's birthplace) remains so named. Gyumri in Armenia was named *Leninakan* from 1924 to 1990, Khujand in Tajikistan *Leninabad* from 1936 to 1991.

Soviet censorship of Lenin

After his death, the USSR selectively censored Lenin's writings, to establish the dogma of the infallibility of Lenin, Stalin (his successor), and the Central Committee;^[77] thus, the Soviet fifth edition (55 vols., 1958–65) of Lenin's *oeuvre* deleted the ideological contradictions (between Lenin and Stalin) and all that is unfavourable to the founder of the USSR.^[78] The historians Pipes and Brandenberger published a documentary collection (mostly letters and telegrams), excluded from the Soviet fifth edition, which are not notably different from the *Collected Works*, which does not suggest censorship.^[79] Those documents have been proposed as proof that the Soviet fifth edition is incomplete, but that much depends upon the notion of "Lenin's works", because the Khrushchev-era edition contains documents not considered works for publication; there is no evidence that any work published by V. I. Lenin has been excluded from this collection.



The Lenin Mausoleum, Red Square, Moscow.

Writings

Lenin's significant writings are:

- *What is to be Done?* (1903) (arguing that a revolution requires a professional vanguard party);
- *Imperialism, the Highest Stage of Capitalism* (1916) (explaining why capitalism had not earlier collapsed, as Marx had posited and arguing that the First World War broke out among capitalist countries competing for land, resources, and cheap labor).
- *The State and the Revolution* (1917) (providing interpretation of Marx and Engels' ideas, the theoretical base of the Russian October Revolution, and giving a strong opposition to social-democratic tendency);
- *April Theses* (1917) (proposing a need for a socialist revolution);

See also

- Anti-Leninism
- Decossackization
- Enemy of the people
- Lenin's stance on anti-Semitism
- Human rights in the Soviet Union
- Lenin's Hanging Order
- Lenin's national policy
- Leninade
- Leninism
- List of statues of Lenin
- Russian Civil War
- Russian Revolution of 1917
- Leningrad
- Ulyanovsk

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- *What is to be Done?* [1] (http://www.marxists.org/archive/lenin/works/1901/witbd/index.htm)
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- The Proletarian Revolution and the Renegade Kautsky (http://www.marxists.org/archive/lenin/works/1918/oct/10.htm)
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- Lenin's *Testament* (http://www.marxists.org/archive/lenin/works/1922/dec/testamnt/index.htm)
- Lenin's last letter to Stalin (http://www.marxists.org/archive/lenin/works/1923/mar/05.htm)
- Reply by N. Lenin (http://www.marxists.org/archive/lenin/works/1904/sep/15a.htm) to Rosa Luxemburg
- How to Organise Competition? (http://www.marxists.org/archive/lenin/works/1917/dec/25.htm)

Political offices		
Preceded by None	Chairman of the RSFSR Council of People's Commissars 1917 – 1924	Succeeded by Alexey Rykov
Preceded by None	Chairman of the Council of People's Commissars of the USSR 1922 – 1924	
Military offices		
Preceded by None	Chairman of the Council of Labour and Defence 1918 – 1920	Succeeded by Himself as Chair of the Sovnarkom

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