

## Cram Notes: The Russian Revolution

*These Cram Notes summarise key concepts and content for the Russian Revolution, following the requirements of each Area of Study in the VCAA Study Design. Use them to help revise your knowledge and understanding of what will be tested in the external exam.*

### Overview

In the early 1900s Russia was a country ripe for political revolution. Clinging to a semi-medieval autocracy, bolstered by the powerful Russian Orthodox Church and feudal social structure, Tsarism as a system of government was extremely outdated. Russian tsars had ruled over their empire through a mishmash of personality, idolatry, superstition, secrecy, oppression and violence. Economic reforms in Russia in the 1890s were not matched by political reforms; some Russians wanted political representation but found Nicholas II unwilling to share his sovereignty. The reforms of 1905 seemed to deliver these long-desired changes but they were a sham. World War One again highlighted the inadequacies of the regime and the need for revolution. But did it have to be a *socialist revolution*?

The year 1917 was to become the great crossroad in Russian history. At that point, the nation might have tentatively moved forward into parliamentary democracy, under a constitutional monarch or a republican head of state. Instead, amid the savagery and strain of World War One, a more radical form of government was to emerge, undermining more moderate attempts at reform and appealing to those classes long neglected under the old regime. The Bolsheviks were Russia's most extreme socialist revolutionary group but also the most organised and determined – in October 1917 they overthrew the baseless Provisional Government and embarked upon their plan to restructure Russia along socialist lines. Few elsewhere in the world expected the Bolshevik regime to succeed; many foreign governments, as well as groups inside Russia, actively worked to ensure that it would fail. The new regime faced considerable opposition that forced it to compromise and change its ideals, betray its origins and act in similar ways to the Tsarist regime that it replaced.

In your own writing about the Russian Revolution, refrain from absolute statements, such as 'the Russian Revolution failed' or preconceptions, such as 'communism does not work': analysis requires an open mind and a consideration that all revolutions and ideologies are unique to the settings in which they occur. It is undeniable that while Lenin and the Bolsheviks set out to create a better society, they created only limited improvements, and at great cost: war, famine, terror, violence and denial of freedoms. However, this was not wholly due to flawed ideology but also to other conditions, circumstances and opposition. Understanding the complexity of Bolshevik ideas, obstacles and responses will give you a stronger grasp of the revolution generally and allow you to more capably assess the outcomes of the new regime.

See page 62 for a Glossary of Terms specific to the Russian Revolution.

Before 1918 Russia used the Julian, or Old Style, calendar while the rest of Europe used the Gregorian, or New Style, calendar. All dates given in these Cram Notes on the Russian Revolution are Julian calendar dates, unless otherwise specified. These dates are thirteen days behind Gregorian calendar dates. Readers should also be aware that the Russian capital, Saint Petersburg, changed its name to Petrograd in 1914.

# 1. Revolutionary ideas, leaders, movements and events

The central question of this Area of Study is simple: Why did the Russian Revolution happen? The answer, however, is quite complicated. This half of the course asks you not only to understand the various reasons why the revolution occurred, but more interestingly, to decide which ones you consider to be the most significant. The Study Design outlines several important factors that you are expected to grasp, each of which will be analysed in the sections below: causes of tensions and conflicts, ideas utilised in revolutionary struggle, and the roles of revolutionary individuals and groups.

## Chronology of key events

Date	Event	Significance
January 1905	• 'Bloody Sunday' – massacre of protestors by troops	• This showed Tsarist indifference to social and economic problems, a refusal to reform and a willingness to commit acts of unmitigated violence against the people.
May 1905	• Defeat at the Battle of Tsushima in south-east Asia	• An embarrassing defeat at the hands of an Asian power, with almost complete destruction of the fleet; the Tsarist regime lost credibility.
January–November 1905	• 1905 revolution	• There was widespread unrest, strikes, rioting and mutinies. • An overthrow of the Tsarist order appeared imminent.
October 1905	• St Petersburg Soviet formed by Trotsky	• Trotsky created a body representing workers and soldiers. • This highlighted Trotsky's role as a key revolutionary figure.
October 1905	• October Manifesto issued by the Tsar	• On advice from Witte, the Tsar agreed to legal, civil and political reforms; the most significant of these was a representative parliament (Duma).
April 1906	• Tsar issued the Fundamental Laws	• Intended to function as a constitution, the Laws failed to implement the full reforms promised in the Manifesto; the Tsar's sovereignty over the Duma is maintained.
May–July 1906	• First Duma sat and was then prorogued (closed) by the Tsar	• This demonstrated that the Tsar would exercise his authority to dissolve the Duma if it dissented or contravened his rule. • The second Duma (1907) also only lasted three months.
October 1906	• Stolypin's land reforms/response to opposition	• Stolypin cancelled peasant redemption payments and allowed private land ownership, to enhance peasant loyalty to the regime. • This was coupled with brutal oppression of political dissidents.
August 1914	• World War One started • Russia entered on the side of the Allies	• A surge of patriotism and 'war fever' put a temporary end to opposition and revolutionary activity; however, early defeats at Tannenberg showed Russian troops were ill-prepared and poorly led.
September 1915	• Tsar took personal command of military operations	• The Tsar was now personally associated with continued defeats, while domestic matters were controlled by the German-born Tsarina, who was in league with Rasputin.
1916–17	• Long involvement in the war caused social and economic chaos	• Inflation skyrocketed, food was scarce, and the transportation system collapsed. • Revolutionary discussion and activity rose, mutinies in the military increased.
February 1917	• Mutinies and bread riots sparked the February revolution	• The Tsar was overthrown and arrested, while elements of the Duma assumed control as the Provisional Government. • 300 years of Romanov rule came to an end.
March/April 1917	• Petrograd Soviet issued 'Order Number 1' • Lenin returned from exile	• The Soviet order suggested non-compliance with Provisional Government policy, weakening the position of the government. • Lenin called for immediate socialist revolution on his return, signalling a new phase of Bolshevik agitation.
July/August 1917	• July Days and the Kornilov revolt	• Bolsheviks attempted revolution in July but failed due to lack of support. • An Attempted counter-revolution by General Kornilov weakened the Provisional Government's position.
October 1917	• Bolshevik revolution in Petrograd	• After gaining a majority in the Soviets, the Bolsheviks felt confident enough to attempt another takeover. They did so with comparative ease, thanks to Trotsky's organisation.

# The causes of tensions and conflicts within the old regime

## Political tensions and conflicts

- In 1905, Tsarist Russia was the only true autocracy remaining among the major nations of Europe; most had long since developed some form of democratic parliament, ministerial autonomy or constitutional limits on royal power.
- Following the assassination of Alexander II in 1881, Russia had undergone a period of reaction and counter-reform under Alexander III, Nicholas II's father. Like his father, Nicholas was a firm believer in autocracy, although he was not a strong character and often showed a lack of interest in governing, preferring to spend time with his family.
- The repressive nature of Tsarist Russia was a constant source of motivation for revolutionaries: it was essentially a police state, with the Okhrana (secret police) engaged in surveillance, extra-legal punishments, kidnapping and arbitrary executions. Russia had been a 'closed society', closely controlled and monitored with censorship of education and the press firmly in place.
- The Provisional Government came to power in February 1917 but was not able to attain or consolidate a strong position. The February revolution was a popular uprising that was *against* Tsarism but it was not necessarily *for* an alternative government; the Provisional Government therefore assumed power by default rather than by popular support.
- The role of the Soviets was critical in undermining the Provisional Government; the period between February and October 1917 is often known as the 'dual power' because of this. The Petrograd Soviet issued *Soviet Order Number 1* in March 1917 stating that the Soviet must approve all military orders; this undermined the capacity of the Provisional Government to conduct the war and govern Russia.

## Economic tensions and conflicts

- Tsarist Russia was distinctly unequal in its distribution of wealth: royalty, the aristocracy, the land-owners, professional middle-classes and the Russian Orthodox Church possessed great wealth and income, while the peasants and industrial workers had little and often worked and lived in appalling conditions.
- Rapid industrialisation and modernisation in the 1890s caused dramatic economic and social changes. Initiated by chief minister Sergei Witte, important industries, engineering projects and new transportation infrastructure were created, funded mainly with loans and investment from abroad. This led to the formation of an industrial workforce as peasants flocked to the cities seeking employment in the new factories.
- Short-term economic factors, brought about by three years of involvement in World War One, finally led to the disintegration of Tsarism as a political force (see 'Fluctuations in economic activity' below).

## Social tensions and conflicts

- Working conditions were a critical issue for those employed in industry and factories, mainly in the cities. These conditions sparked the strikes and unrest of 1905. With no legislative limits on employers, workers could be ordered to complete days of eleven hours or more, working from dawn to night.
- Workers lived in ramshackle tenements provided by factory owners, often with several families living in one or two rooms. Working conditions were usually unsafe: many workers were killed by machines or injury, while others caught diseases in workplaces that were often freezing and unhygienic. There were no holidays and no sick pay; if workers could not work they were simply replaced.
- Employers often implemented a series of costly fines or salary deductions, to be imposed on workers arbitrarily. These might be for low productivity, time-wasting or for trivial behaviour, such as whistling while working.

## Rising and unfulfilled class expectations

The creation and growth of new classes is often an integral cause of revolution. These emerging classes develop social and political ambitions or demand economic improvements that cannot or will not be accommodated by the old regime.

### The industrial working-class

- Russia's underdeveloped economy in the nineteenth century had little industrial production; consequently there were few industrial workers, and urban population density was low in comparison to the rest of Europe.
- Economic reforms led by chief minister Witte in the 1890s invited foreign investment into Russia as part of a state-controlled program of modernisation. These changes saw thousands of former peasants move to the cities to take up work in the new factories and industries. Both urban population density and the number of industrial workers rose significantly in the next two decades. These workers had to endure atrocious conditions both in the workplace and in factory-provided tenement housing.
- This close living enabled dissent and discussion of reform and revolution to form and circulate more easily than it could among the scattered peasantry. Whereas revolutionary ideas didn't 'travel' well in rural areas and among superstitious peasants, the cities, factories and tenements were a more receptive breeding ground for dissent and radicalism.
- The petition carried by Father Gapon, on behalf of industrial workers, at the 'Bloody Sunday' procession expressed a need for social and economic reforms.

### The professional middle classes

- The modernisation of Russia that started in the late 1800s gave birth to new affluent middle classes, including: factory owners and managers, merchants and business owners, lawyers, white-collar workers, mid-ranking bureaucrats and, generally speaking, those who were educated.
- Although not a unified group, the middle classes generally favoured liberal reforms rather than radical changes; many wanted political representation to match their wealth and status in the workforce, so strongly supported the idea of a constitutional monarchy with an elected parliament.
- These middle classes, along with several liberal aristocrats, became the supporter base of liberal-conservative groups, such as the Kadets and Octobrists.

## Fluctuations in economic activity

The economic state of Russia during the pre-revolutionary period (1890–1917) was one of rapid modernisation and growth, yet the nation remained well behind the rest of Europe in many aspects. Some historians suggest that the rate of change in Russia may have been too fast, creating subsequent pressures on the social and political orders that they could not accommodate or cope with.

- The economic impact of World War One was critical in creating a revolutionary situation, as it placed great strain on the political regime and caused widespread fissures in the social structure. The movement of men to the war front caused labour shortages, which reduced food production. In 1916 Russia's transport infrastructure collapsed, mainly because of low morale and a shortage of workers, and food was not able to reach the cities in sufficient quantity.
- The most significant outcome of these events was a sharp reduction in the availability of food, especially in the cities. The value of the rouble slumped with inflation climbing to almost 400 per cent. Shortages of food, particularly bread, led to protests and riots in Petrograd and Moscow. When the February revolution occurred, it was sparked by a series of bread riots. Petrograd's soldiers were ordered to use force to suppress these riots, but instead took part in them, signalling the military's declining loyalty to the Tsar.

## Failed attempts at economic, social or political reform

- The most significant political reform was the creation of the Duma by the October Manifesto, 1905, easing demands for representation by liberal groups such as the Kadets and moderate socialists. It seemed that Russia might head down the path to constitutional monarchy. But the Fundamental Laws of 1906 (effectively Russia's first constitution) signalled the Tsar's intention to retain all political sovereignty and authority.
- The Duma failed initially because it made radical demands, including: land reform and reallocation, constitutional limits on the Tsar, free education for all, and a progressive and more equitable tax system. The first two dumas were prorogued by the Tsar, whose ministers then manipulated electoral laws so that subsequent dumas would be less radical in their demands.
- A series of social and economic reforms, formulated by chief minister Petr Stolypin, were agreed to by the Tsar in response to the disorder and the threat of revolution in 1905. As part of these reforms the maximum working-day was shortened, laws restricting child labour were introduced, a progressive taxation system was introduced, compulsory primary education was implemented and there was increased spending on health and welfare.
- Coupled with the more positive reforms was a crackdown on revolutionary groups: Okhrana surveillance was stepped up, executions increased and many figures like Lenin and Trotsky were forced into exile.
- These changes did decrease revolutionary activity and render revolutionary groups less popular, creating a period of relative calm between 1906 and 1912. Strikes decreased over this period; however, dissent was revived in 1912 after Tsarist police shot over 200 striking gold miners on the Lena River in Siberia.
- Almost 1.5 million Russian workers went on strike over conditions in the first months of 1914, despite Russia's improving economy, with its high level of growth, exports and government spending. The outbreak of World War One prompted a new rush of patriotism, bringing about a sudden decrease in anti-Tsarist feeling and revolutionary activity, albeit temporarily.

## The impact of war or economic crisis that contributed to revolution

War was integral to the formation, progress and outcomes of revolution in Russia. Two wars served to embarrass, undermine and weaken both the political authority of the Tsarist regime and the fast-growing but fragile Russian economy.

### The Russo-Japanese War, 1904–05

- Pre-revolutionary Russia, like some of its European counterparts, was an empire rather than a nation: it was made up of many regions which contained people not of Russian ethnicity. Nicholas II, despite his reluctance to rule, still had imperial ambitions to expand Russia.
- Russian troops had marched into Manchuria in the 1890s, competing with the fast-modernising Japanese Empire for influence and trade in China and Korea. Nicholas effectively provoked the Japanese into war, believing their military to be ill-equipped and unable to cope with Russian forces.
- Despite Russia's numerical advantage, it faced two significant problems: the war was in the distant eastern sphere, so reinforcements took weeks to arrive on the Trans-Siberian railway; and most of Russia's naval strength was anchored in the Baltic. The decision was made to send the Baltic Fleet on the long voyage to Asia, half a world away.
- Sending the Baltic Fleet to Asia was a catastrophic failure. The fleet almost provoked a war with England shortly after setting out, by firing on fishing boats in the English Channel in October 1904. Rounding Africa and crossing the Indian Ocean, the fleet arrived in the Tsushima Straits near Korea in May 1905 and was ambushed by a smaller but faster flotilla of Japanese ships. Most of the Russian fleet was sunk, including all eight battleships.

- Following on from several land defeats, the Battle of Tsushima proved disastrous for both Russian military credibility and the leadership of the Tsar and his generals. With the 1905 'revolution' by now in full swing, the Russians elected to sue for peace rather than continue the war, which marked the rise of Japan as a military power in Asia.

### World War One, 1914–18

- Russia's entry into World War One was less due to Tsarist error than the Russo-Japanese War, but proved much more costly to the nation. The Russians had pledged military support to Serbia should the Serbs be attacked, the two nations sharing Slavic ethnicity. When Serbia was menaced by Austria-Hungary in July 1914 after the assassination of the Austrian heir to the throne, Franz Ferdinand, Russia again affirmed its support for Serbia.
- Russia's support for Serbia against Austria-Hungary brought Germany, an ally of Austria-Hungary, into the fray. The Tsar hoped to avert war with Germany by private communications between himself and the German Kaiser (his cousin); however, this soon broke down. By early August 1914, Russia found itself at war with Germany and Austria-Hungary, prompting an initial rush of patriotism and affection for the Tsar.
- This was not to last, however, as Russian forces were humiliated at Tannenberg (30 000 Russian casualties, 95 000 Russians taken prisoner) and the Masurian Lakes. Russian forces lacked equipment and weaponry, while their generals were inconsistent and often incompetent. In September 1915 the Tsar took command of military operations, despite having minimal training and no combat experience.
- Domestic control was left in the hands of the Tsarina Alexandra, herself of German origin. Alexandra was devoutly religious and superstitious, and relied on advice from the debauched monk Rasputin, who infiltrated the Romanov family after he was able to ease the pain of the haemophiliac Tsarevitch, Alexei. Rasputin was a noted drinker and had sexual encounters with both wealthy women and prostitutes. His association with the Romanovs gave rise to political pornography and revolutionary propaganda, diminishing the credibility and respectability of the Romanovs.
- By 1916 the war had sapped the Russian economy: inflation was running at almost 400 per cent, food was scarce due to labour shortages and peasant hoarding, most transport infrastructure had collapsed, and desertions and mutinies were increasing. With the social fabric unravelling, bread riots in February 1917 became a revolutionary protest. The Tsar was forced to abdicate after the Duma refused to obey his directives. The throne passed to Nicholas' brother who also surrendered it. Russia was without a monarch.
- Replacing the Tsar in 1917, the Provisional Government promised a constituent assembly, free elections, and economic improvements; however, it was also committed to maintaining Russia's involvement in the war. This was partly due to its composition, being made up of liberal and conservative elements of the old Duma, but also because foreign recognition of the new government hinged on its continuing support for the Allies.
- Despite the great hopes Russians initially had for the Provisional Government, its war policy alienated most of the nation as 1917 progressed. The Bolsheviks began to undermine its efforts, promoting mutiny on the front and socialist revolution in the cities using Lenin's catchcry 'Peace! Bread! Land!'

### The ideas and ideologies used in revolutionary struggle

Revolutions need ideas to justify and to 'explain' events taking place, and all revolutions have, at certain stages, a range of different ideas about what should occur.

#### Marxism, socialism and communism

- Karl Marx, 1818–83, was a German Jew famous for his theories about history, society, economic status and political power. Marx suggested that all history is the history of 'class struggle': that classes are always in a state of tension as they try to improve their

- economic position. For the upper and middle classes this means seeking profit, wealth and capital; for the lower classes it means the struggle for better wages and conditions.
- Examining the rampant industrial capitalism of the 1800s, Marx focused on the exploitation of labour (workers) by those who own capital, or the 'means of production' (e.g. factories, machinery). In capitalism, the workers are 'wage slaves' while the bourgeoisie, or capital-owning middle-class, use profits to further increase their capital, and therefore continue the inequitable distribution of wealth.
- Marx envisaged a point where capitalism would develop and become so corrupt, exploitative and inequitable that it would collapse, leading to a revolution of the proletariat, or working class. The revolutionaries would then establish a 'dictatorship of the proletariat', a regime ruling in the interests of the working class to dismantle the old order. This phase of history would be called *socialism*.
- Eventually the institutions of society would be dismantled under socialism: classes would disappear, the state (institutions of government) would 'wither away', leading to a phase called *communism*. Marx's ideology was Utopian, that is it envisaged a perfect society in the future that many consider could not be achieved.

#### Marxist-Leninism or Bolshevism

- Lenin held true to most Marxist ideas; however, he adapted Marxism to suit the situation in Russia. This new synthesis of ideologies was called 'Marxist-Leninism'. The key difference between Lenin's theories and orthodox Marxism was that Lenin argued that the capitalist phase could be 'bypassed': socialist revolution could take place immediately in Russia rather than waiting for a capitalist-democratic period to develop, consolidate and collapse.
- While holding true to the fundamental ideas of Marxism, Lenin defended the need for ideological flexibility and stated on several occasions that he would adapt Marx's ideas to suit the unique political, social and economic circumstances in Russia.

### The role of revolutionary individuals and groups in bringing about change

#### The Bolsheviks and Mensheviks

- The first significant Marxist party in Russia was the Social Democratic Workers' Party, or SDs, formed by Lenin, Martov, Plekhanov and other key socialist figures.
- In 1903 the SDs split on issues of membership, method and tactic. The party divided into Mensheviks ('minority') and Bolsheviks ('majority'). The Mensheviks, led by Martov, favoured a gradual approach, working to achieve socialist improvements over time, as well as a broad party membership. The Bolsheviks, led by Lenin, preferred a 'revolutionary vanguard': a small group of professional revolutionaries, working in secret to achieve revolution as quickly as possible.
- These groups had many similar points of ideology and their beliefs often overlapped; however, the gap between them widened and they formally separated in 1912.

#### The Soviets

- The Soviets, democratically formed councils of workers and low-ranking military personnel, were important groups both in the events of 1905 and 1917. Formed and led by Trotsky in 1905, the St Petersburg Soviet was a key organiser of strikes and unrest before being repressed by force late that year.
- The Soviets re-formed shortly before the February 1917 revolution and played a critical role in undermining the Provisional Government and limiting its control of military, infrastructure and labour. Initially containing a majority of Social Revolutionaries (SRs), Bolshevik representation in the Soviets gradually increased throughout 1917, to the point where a Bolshevik majority allowed them to seize power (nominally on behalf of the Soviets) in October 1917.

**Vladimir Lenin, 1870–1924**

- The dominant figure in the Bolshevik party, Lenin was born Vladimir Illich Ulyanov in Simbirsk, Russia, the son of a schools' inspector. A successful student, quiet and diligent, Lenin acquired his political views from his brother Alexander (a member of the violent revolutionary group 'People's Will') as well as utopian writers like Chernyshevsky and Marx. In 1887 Alexander Ulyanov was executed for plotting to assassinate the Tsar; this was an influential event in Lenin's political development.
- Lenin studied law, completing his degree despite being expelled at one point for his radical political views. He aligned himself with fellow Marxists such as Martov, Plekhanov and his future wife, Krupskaya, whom he married in 1898. In that year the group formed the Social Democratic Labour Party (SDs), which was explicitly Marxist and aimed to overthrow Tsarism in Russia. In 1903 Lenin, who held different opinions about the best way to achieve change, prompted a split in the SDs and undertook leadership of the new Bolshevik faction.
- Lenin was active between 1905 and 1914 but had limited influence on the situation in Russia. He mostly lived abroad, writing revolutionary propaganda and texts. Unlike Trotsky he played virtually no part in the 1905 revolution, and although Bolshevik propaganda helped undermine Tsarism, Lenin had little input in the February 1917 revolution. He returned to Russia in April of that year, calling for an immediate transition from the Provisional Government to a socialist regime.
- With the Provisional Government in power and continuing Russia's involvement in World War One, Lenin led the Bolsheviks on a propaganda campaign aimed at undermining the war effort, promoting mutiny and desertion, and encouraging dissent in the powerful city-based Soviets. These Soviets would become his route to revolution, Lenin naming them as the 'only possible form of government' and calling for 'all power to the Soviets!'

**Leon Trotsky, 1879–1940**

- Trotsky came from the middle class, the son of Russian-Jewish parents. Like Lenin he was a member of the SDs; however, he sided with the Mensheviks after the split in 1903. He did not join the Bolsheviks until 1917, although he had sometimes supported Lenin and Bolshevik ideas in his writings prior to that time.
- Unlike most Bolsheviks, Trotsky was a pivotal figure in the failed 1905 revolution, helping to form and then lead the St Petersburg Soviet; he was also chairman of the Petrograd Soviet during 1917.
- A superb military organiser and tactician, the success of the October 1917 revolution can largely be attributed to Trotsky. As chairman of the MRC (Military Revolutionary Committee), he was responsible for tactical and logistic organisation of the coup that swept the Bolsheviks to power.
- Trotsky became Commissar for Foreign Affairs after the October revolution and was the main negotiator at the Brest-Litovsk negotiations; like Lenin he was an internationalist who considered that world revolution was imminent, so his approach to negotiations was bold and aggressive, believing that 'losses' would eventually be retained.
- In 1918 Trotsky was appointed Commissar for War. He abandoned the idea of militia-style Bolshevik units and instead pushed for a more professional Red Army, controversially using ex-Tsarist officers to implement rigid discipline into the army. Using conscription, political commissars and propaganda, Trotsky moulded the Red Army into a cohesive force that was able to withstand the threat of White counter-revolution during the Civil War (1918–21).
- The logical successor to Lenin as party leader, Trotsky was politically isolated and therefore failed to garner support within the party after Lenin's death. Outmanoeuvred by Stalin, he was exiled from Russia in 1926.

**Alexandra Kollontai, 1872–1952**

- Kollontai's role in the Bolshevik party is testament to its initial commitment to the idea of sexual equality, but her own abilities and effort enabled her to rise to a prominent position in the party's administration.
- Kollontai had only a basic education and married young. She left her husband and undertook charity work among Russia's poor and industrial working class during the 1890s. At that time she read several Marxist works, her experiences giving her a personal insight into Marx's theories of exploitation. Kollontai eventually became a member of the SDs.
- The party split in 1903 but Kollontai was unsure which faction to join, so she offered her services to both the Bolsheviks and Mensheviks. Unhappy with Lenin's approach, she joined the Mensheviks in 1906 but left and aligned herself with the Bolsheviks in 1915, taking part in the October 1917 revolution.
- One of several women in the Bolshevik administration, Kollontai was appointed Commissar for Social Welfare and helped establish the Commission for Agitation and Propaganda Among Working Women. Despite her position in the party she did not enjoy a good relationship with Lenin: she was critical of party policy and bureaucracy, and formed an opposing faction within the party structure.
- Kollontai is often referred to as the 'conscience of the Bolsheviks' because she was openly critical of their disregard and treatment of the workers whom they claimed to represent. She was a staunch feminist and advocated more sexual freedom for women, and marriage based on love rather than property or status.

**Other important figures in the revolution**

- **Alexander Kerensky, 1881–1970**, came from the same home town as Lenin and was to eventually vie with him for power in 1917. A member of the SRs, ambitious and a gifted orator, Kerensky was the only socialist in the new Provisional Government. He rose to become war minister and eventually prime minister (July 1917) as the Provisional Government struggled to cope with the war, revolutionary activity and the popularity and strength of the Soviets. Kerensky's mishandling of the Kornilov affair in August 1917 was a costly factor in the fall of the Provisional Government.
- **Nikolai Bukharin, 1888–1938**, was a key Bolshevik and a close ally of Lenin prior to the revolution. He was editor of *Pravda* ('Truth') in 1918 but resigned in protest at the Treaty of Brest-Litovsk, believing that the new regime should expand the war to create an international communist revolution around Europe. He was a member of Comintern (Communist International) and the Politburo, supporting the New Economic Policy (NEP) and gradual economic change. He was arrested and executed on Stalin's orders on false charges of counter-revolutionary activity.
- **Feliks Dzerzhinsky, 1877–1926**, was a Polish nobleman who became one of the revolution's most fanatical Bolsheviks. After playing a key role in the October 1917 revolution, Dzerzhinsky was appointed leader of the Cheka in December and became known as an incorruptible and ruthless commander. He formed concentration camps to house potential counter-revolutionaries and kulaks and did not hesitate to order torture, executions and massacres as tools of revolutionary policy. He later became commissar for internal affairs and transport in the new regime.
- **Nadezhda Krupskaya, 1869–1939**, was Lenin's wife but also a key figure in the Bolshevik party. She met Lenin while teaching and remained with him, both in Russia and in exile, for the rest of his life, assisting in his revolutionary writings and with the editing of *Iskra* ('Spark'). Although she opposed Lenin's calls for an early socialist revolution in 1917, she eventually supported it, later becoming Deputy Commissar for Enlightenment and Education.
- **Josef Stalin, 1879–1953**, was a minor figure during the revolutionary period, often in exile in Siberia for his political activity; however, with the decline of Lenin's health, he amassed considerable power in the Bolshevik party. Originally engaged in armed robbery to fund the party, Stalin later went on to be one of the first editors of *Pravda*. He