Russian Political Terms

**Bolshevik** : a member of the Bolshevik Party lead by [Lenin](http://www.historylearningsite.co.uk/lenin.htm). It later became the Communist Party. It believed that a small group of intellectuals should lead the fight for the working class as they had the education to know what to do and the poor did not.

**Cheka** : the name given to [Lenin's](http://www.historylearningsite.co.uk/lenin.htm) secret police. It later became the KGB.

[**Collectivisation**](http://www.historylearningsite.co.uk/collectivisation.htm) : the grouping together of farmland under [Stalin](http://www.historylearningsite.co.uk/Stalin.htm) so that farm production increased. Land given to the peasants' by Lenin, was taken back by Stalin.

**Communism** : a belief developed by Karl Marx. It basically stated that everybody is equal and no-one was better than anybody else. One person's luxury lifestyle, lead to another person's poverty and exploitation.

[**Five Year Plans**](http://www.historylearningsite.co.uk/Stalin.htm) : the name given to Stalin's industrial plans for the USSR so that she could catch up quickly with the west.

**Gulag** : the name given to Stalin's prison camps. Many were built in the harshest of conditions - frequently Siberia. The treatment given to these prisoners was harsh and extreme.

[**New Economic Policy (NEP**)](http://www.historylearningsite.co.uk/russia_1918_to_1921.htm) : introduced after the failure of [War Communism](http://www.historylearningsite.co.uk/russia_1918_to_1921.htm) whereby peasants could keep what they grew and sell it for a profit.

**Personality Cult** : when a country's leader gets the people of that country to all but worship hem/her. Cities, rivers, regions etc are named after him and towns and cities are littered with huge posters of the leader. [Stalin](http://www.historylearningsite.co.uk/Stalin.htm) tried to do this in Russia.

**Purges** : the name given to the time when Stalin shot or sent to the gulags those who he felt opposed his rule. Millions were dealt with in this manner after show trials.

**Reds** : the name given to anything associated with the Bolsheviks; such as the Red Army during the Civil War.

**Tsar** : Russia's equivalent of king such as in Tsar Nicholas II.

[**War Communism**](http://www.historylearningsite.co.uk/russia_1918_to_1921.htm) : the name given to the policy introduced by [Lenin](http://www.historylearningsite.co.uk/lenin.htm) at the start of the civil war whereby the Cheka confiscated whatever it needed with regards to food, equipment etc. Those who opposed the Cheka were shot as "enemies of the state".

**Whites** : the name given to the groups that opposed the Bolsheviks after the overthrow of the Provisional Government and during the Civil War.

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The Provisional Government  is the name given to the government that led [Russia](http://www.historylearningsite.co.uk/russia_1917_to_1939.htm) from [March](http://www.historylearningsite.co.uk/march_1917.htm) [1917](http://www.historylearningsite.co.uk/march_1917.htm) to [November 1917](http://www.historylearningsite.co.uk/november_1917.htm). Throughout its existence, the Provisional Government met at the Tauride Palace. By July it was led by [Alexander Kerensky](http://www.historylearningsite.co.uk/alexander_kerensky.htm) - the man who had informed the [Duma](http://www.historylearningsite.co.uk/first_duma.htm) on March 11th that 25,000 troops were on the way to support them.

The Provisional Government had one major disadvantage: its leaders - especially Kerensky - were associated with the middle class. They were not seen as having anything in common with the working class, therefore, how could they possibly represent them?

The Provisional Government also committed two huge blunders:

1. It refused to give land to the poor peasants in the rural areas. This seemed to confirm the point above - that the Provisional Government did not understand the desires of the poor. To survive the peasants needed land and this was refused by Kerensky.

2. By far, the biggest blunder was the decision taken by the Provisional Government to keep Russia in [World War One](http://www.historylearningsite.co.uk/index.htm). This was a curious decision as the war was hated by the Russian people who had suffered greatly as a result of it.

The Provisional Government had to overcome two challenges to its authority : one was called the July Days and the other was the [Kornilov](http://www.historylearningsite.co.uk/lavr_kornilov.htm) Affair.

**The July Days** : the Russians continued to do badly in the war, food remained scarce and what food there was proved to be too expensive for many. Soldiers and sailors took to the streets of Petrograd in July 1917 and they were soon joined by workers in the factories. Riots occurred on July 16th and 17th against the Provisional Government. The government brought in troops loyal to it and they ended the riots. [Lenin](http://www.historylearningsite.co.uk/lenin.htm) had returned to Russia in April 1917, and he was blamed by the government for starting these riots. In fact, he had little to do with it, but it proved a useful lever for the Provisional Government as they despised Lenin. False evidence was produced that proved that Lenin was working for the German government and the people in Petrograd turned on the communists. Lenin had to flee to Finland while others were not so lucky. In July 1917, it seemed that the Communists were still a long way from taking over the government.

**The Kornilov Affair :** this was lead by a right wing army officer called [Lavr Kornilov](http://www.historylearningsite.co.uk/lavr_kornilov.htm). He wanted the government to deal much more harshly with the communists. He basically felt that the Provisional Government was too soft and that it should go. He was supported by many other army officers. Kornilov demanded that all socialists and communists should be arrested - Kerensky refused to do this as he did not want to be seen to be weak. If anybody was going to order arrests it was Kerensky and not anybody else.

Kornilov gathered troops together and marched on Petrograd. They were faced with those soldiers who had deserted the army and 20,000 Red Guards. This was a new force created by the workers of Petrograd to defend the city. With this type of force opposing him, Kornilov did not stand a chance and the attempted take over failed.

While it may appear that Kerensky came out of this well, the real winners were the communists. The Red Guards were credited with saving the city and the workers who formed the Red Guards were sympathetic to the communists. In fact, many were communists. Ironically, the man who gained most from this was not even in Russia as [Lenin](http://www.historylearningsite.co.uk/lenin.htm) was still in Finland. But it was only a matter of time. Kerensky had lost a lot of support and his power base was rapidly disappearing. But Lenin's preparations had to be perfect. He had to strongly rely on the Petrograd Soviet. This was a group of workers and soldiers who had formed in 1917. Soviets were rather like councils.They had been made illegal by Nicholas in 1906 but he no longer had any power and they had re-formed after he abdicated in [March 1917](http://www.historylearningsite.co.uk/march_1917.htm). The Petrograd Soviet had supporters in the railway service (so they could stop trains if they wished) and the banks (so they could stop the flow of money if they wished). The Soviet was made up of workers and it hated the Provisional Government as it was made up of middle class men. The workers in Petrograd were in the majority and it was these people who supported The Petrograd Soviet.

**Alexander Kerensky** led, for part of its short life, the [Provisional Government](http://www.historylearningsite.co.uk/provisional_government1.htm). Kerensky belonged to the [Socialist Revolutionaries](http://www.historylearningsite.co.uk/socialist_revolutionaries.htm), the Petrograd Soviet and was a member of the Duma. He was therefore seen as a solid representative of the working class and in July 1917 became the Prime Minister of the Provisional Government.

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| http://www.historylearningsite.co.uk/fileadmin/historyLearningSite/kerensky.jpg |

Kerensky was born in 1881 in Simbirsk. Like so many of the people associated with the Russian Revolution, he had a comfortable upbringing. His father was a head teacher and one of the star young pupils at his school was Vladimir Ulyanov - later to be better known as Lenin. Kerensky studied law at St Petersburg University. At this moment in history, university students were considered to be a radical body, probably because they could see the ills in Russia's society - and they certainly could not defend them. From 1912 to 1917, Kerensky was a member of the Duma where he stood as a democratic socialist.

He was also voted in as the deputy chairman of the Petrograd Soviet, therefore, despite his middle class background, Kerensky did develop a positive relationship with the working class of St Petersburg.

After the abdication of Nicholas II in March 1917, Kerensky was made Minister of Justice in the [Provisional Government](http://www.historylearningsite.co.uk/provisional_government1.htm). In May, he was promoted to Minister of War and in July he became Prime Minister. His rise to power was swift but Kerensky had developed a reputation for effective leadership in whatever area of government he worked in.

However, as Prime Minister he made two major errors. He ensured that Russia stayed in a [war](http://www.historylearningsite.co.uk/russian_and_war.htm) that was detested in the country itself. The overwhelming bulk of the population wanted Russia to withdraw from the war. There must have been few families, especially among the poor, who had not experienced personal tragedy between 1914 and 1917. His second mistake was not to offer the peasants land. Lenin did just this and immediately got the support he and the [Bolsheviks](http://www.historylearningsite.co.uk/bolsheviks.htm) needed at the expense of Kerensky.

To undermine the support of the Bolsheviks, Kerensky ordered that elections should take place for a constituent assembly. The elections were to be held in January 1918. Lenin had called for such elections earlier in 1917, so he could not object to this. As Kerensky argued, it was simply an extension of the democratic process denied to the people by the [Romanovs](http://www.historylearningsite.co.uk/nicholas_and_alexandra.htm). However, all the evidence indicated that the Bolsheviks would have done less well than other groups - including the [Mensheviks](http://www.historylearningsite.co.uk/mensheviks.htm).

Spurred into action by the near certainty of defeat in the January elections, Lenin ordered a coup d'état on November 7th, 1917. Brilliantly successful, the November Revolution ended the Provisional Government and the power of Kerensky. He fled to France, moved to Australia and then spent 24 years living in America.

Alexander Kerensky died in 1970.

**REVOLUTION November 1917**

In November 1917 [Russia](http://www.historylearningsite.co.uk/russia_1917_to_1939.htm) got the world's first communist government. Lead by [Lenin](http://www.historylearningsite.co.uk/lenin.htm), communists took over the vital city of St Petrograd and removed the [Provisional Government](http://www.historylearningsite.co.uk/provisional_government.htm) from power.

[Lenin](http://www.historylearningsite.co.uk/lenin.htm) had already proved himself to the workers of the city with his slogans "Peace, bread and land" and "All power to the soviets". His middle class background was not held against him as he had been in prison for his beliefs and he was seen by the workers as the man to lead them.

Lenin had already decided that the workers were incapable of leading themselves as they did not have the necessary skills. He and other trained revolutionaries would do it.

Lenin promised the people of Russia a number of things. The first was that he would pull Russia out of the war. This proved extremely popular especially among soldiers. Secondly he promised land to the peasants. This was also popular as the [Provisional](http://www.historylearningsite.co.uk/provisional_government.htm) [Government](http://www.historylearningsite.co.uk/provisional_government.htm) had refused to do this. Third, he promised that the workers and soviets would control the factories. With these three promises, it is not surprising that support for Lenin grew at a great speed.

By October 1917, [Lenin](http://www.historylearningsite.co.uk/lenin.htm) felt the time was right for a revolution. He returned in disguise from Finland and set the date for 6th/7th November. The actual details for the revolution were left to Leon Trotsky but the actual date for it to begin was left to Lenin.

November 6th/7th : Most of what we know about these two nights comes from an American journalist who was in Petrograd at the time. The man was called John Reed and he wrote about what happened in "Ten days that shook the world".

The Petrograd Soviet was meeting in the Smolny Institute - a former girls school. Speeches were made by Trotsky as to why people should support the communists. While he was giving these speeches, he knew that the Red Guards and armed workers were actually taking over key points in the city. By the time that the speeches had finished most of the city was in the hands of the Bolsheviks (communists led by [Lenin](http://www.historylearningsite.co.uk/lenin.htm)) - as Trotsky had planned.

The telephone and telegraph buildings were taken over, as were the power stations. Bridges were captured. So were the railway stations.

There was very little bloodshed and it is probable that many people in Petrograd were unaware of what had happened when they woke up in the morning. In fact, while the communists were taking power, theatres and cinemas were still open !!

November 7th/8th :

Now [Lenin](http://www.historylearningsite.co.uk/lenin.htm) had to find the leaders of the [Provisional Government](http://www.historylearningsite.co.uk/provisional_government.htm) and arrest them. He also had to get the support of the other political parties that existed in Petrograd then.

Throughout the 7th the Red Guards kept on occupying important buildings. By mid-afternoon, the only building not held by the Bolsheviks was the Winter Palace, the old home of the tsar. It was here that the Provisional Government met. In fact, the troops who were meant to be defending the building had gone home and only the Women’s Battalion remained.

The sign for the Red Guards to attack the Winter Palace was a shell fired by the naval ship the "Aurora". The attack was short lived and any opposition was easily overcome. The Provisional Government surrendered to the Red Guards. The attack took longer than it might have done because there were 1000 rooms in the Palace that they had to search.

In the Smolny Institute, those politicians who did not agree with what had happened and did not want the Bolsheviks in power walked out of the building. Trotsky said that they were going to where they belonged - the waste-paper basket of history.

At 1 a.m. on November 8th, a shabbily dressed man got to his feet and rose to speak. He took away a handkerchief from his face and was instantly recognised as [Lenin](http://www.historylearningsite.co.uk/lenin.htm). He told those in the Smolny Institute that he was forming a government of Bolsheviks and that it would contain no middle class people. The government would work to help the workers and peasants.

By the end of the day the members of the [Provisional Government](http://www.historylearningsite.co.uk/provisional_government.htm) were under arrest, the tsar and his family were also under house arrest. [Lenin's](http://www.historylearningsite.co.uk/lenin.htm) statement that he would overturn the government of Russia - made after his brother had been executed - was fulfilled.

But Lenin may have controlled Petrograd. Russia was a vast country and he did not control vast areas. These areas were openly hostile to the Bolsheviks.

The Bolsheviks in power

When the [Bolsheviks](http://www.historylearningsite.co.uk/bolsheviks.htm) seized power in Petrograd in November 1917, they faced many problems. Not least was the fact that the Bolsheviks only controlled a very small part of Russia – basically the land between Petrograd and Moscow, a rectangular band of territory 30 miles by 400 miles. Outside of this territory, there were many groups that were opposed to the Bolsheviks. Some areas broke away from Russia to become semi-autonomous regions. Even in the land between Moscow and Petrograd, the Bolsheviks were far from being free of enemies.

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However, the Bolsheviks did have a number of major advantages over their opponents. They had a leader who was driven by energy and desire – Lenin. His military commander was equally as gifted – Leon Trotsky. The party was actually reasonably small in numbers. This made party discipline much easier to control and maintain. The party had a central body of authority called the National Council. This elected the party’s commissars (ministers) and Lenin was the president. Such tight organization was vital for success. No other political party in Russia had such organization and, as a result, the Bolsheviks had a major advantage over them.

The first task for Lenin was to withdraw Russia from a highly unpopular war. Both sides benefited from this. The Germans could shift all their forces on the Eastern Front to the Western Front. Lenin could concentrate all his resources on what was happening in Russia. On December 14th, 1917, an armistice was concluded between Russia and the Central Powers.

The start of the negotiations with the Germans did not go smoothly. Trotsky did not share Lenin’s belief that it should be peace at any price. As Foreign Commissary, Trotsky started the first talks. Trotsky believed that the [Russian Revolution](http://www.historylearningsite.co.uk/russian_revolution.htm) would be the catalyst for a world revolution with the workers across the world showing their support for the Bolsheviks. He therefore felt that the Germans were not in the strong position they believed themselves to be as, in Trotsky’s mind, the workers in Germany would rise up in support of the Bolsheviks. He even appealed to the German workers directly. When it became clear that he was wrong and he failed to soften the German demands, he walked out of the negotiations.

The Germans went back on the armistice on February 12th, 1918 and advanced a further 100 miles into Russia in just 4 days. Lenin then took charge and ordered that there should be peace at any price. The result was the [Treaty of Brest-Litovsk](http://www.historylearningsite.co.uk/treaty_of_brest-litovsk.htm). This treaty took away from Russia all the land gained since [Peter the Great](http://www.historylearningsite.co.uk/peter_the_great.htm) and it separated the Ukraine. Germany was to take from her new territory what she felt was needed to fight the war. When Germans complained about the terms of the [Treaty of Versailles](http://www.historylearningsite.co.uk/treaty_of_versailles.htm), many reminded them of the terms the Germans were willing to impose on the Russians with Brest-Litovsk.

However, the treaty gave Lenin what he needed – time to concentrate solely on Russia. Many groups had formed that wanted the Bolsheviks destroyed. In the [Russian Civil War](http://www.historylearningsite.co.uk/russian_civil_war1.htm), these were to be known as the Whites. They had little in common, other than a desire to rid Russia of the Bolsheviks.

Lenin also faced an immediate problem in the rectangle of land controlled by the Bolsheviks. Kerensky had promised elections for a constituent assembly while head of the [Provisional Government](http://www.historylearningsite.co.uk/provisional_government1.htm). In July 1917, Lenin had called for a constituent assembly, so he could hardly campaign against one now. Therefore, in December 1917, elections were held for a constituent assembly. The [Social Revolutionaries](http://www.historylearningsite.co.uk/socialist_revolutionaries.htm) gained most seats (370 out of 703) while the [Bolsheviks](http://www.historylearningsite.co.uk/bolsheviks.htm) only got 168 seats. It was obvious that the constituent assembly would be highly critical of Lenin and the Bolsheviks – especially the 100 [Mensheviks](http://www.historylearningsite.co.uk/mensheviks.htm) elected to it. Those voted to the constituent assembly were allowed to meet in the Tauride Palace. The Palace was then surrounded by Red Guards and those in it were told to disperse. It was the first and last time it met.

Lenin could now concentrate on the impending civil war. He also needed to introduce an economic system that was commensurate with his beliefs and one that would benefit those under Bolsheviks rule. This economic policy was to be called ‘[War Communism](http://www.historylearningsite.co.uk/war_communism.htm)’.

War Communism

War Communism was the name given to the economic system that existed in [Russia](http://www.historylearningsite.co.uk/russian_revolution.htm) from 1918 to 1921. War Communism was introduced by Lenin to combat the economic problems brought on by the [civil war](http://www.historylearningsite.co.uk/russian_civil_war1.htm) in Russia. It was a combination of emergency measures and socialist dogma.

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One of the first measures of War Communism was the nationalisation of [land](http://www.historylearningsite.co.uk/russia_and_agriculture.htm). Banks and shipping were also nationalised and foreign trade was declared a state monopoly. This was the response when Lenin realised that the [Bolsheviks](http://www.historylearningsite.co.uk/bolsheviks.htm) were simply unprepared to take over the whole economic system of Russia. Lenin stressed the importance of the workers showing discipline and a will to work hard if the revolution was to survive. There were those in the Bolshevik hierarchy who wanted factory managers removed and the workers to take over the factories for themselves but on behalf of the people. It was felt that the workers would work better if they believed they were working for a cause as opposed to a system that made some rich but many poor. The civil war had made many in the Bolsheviks even more class antagonistic, as there were many of the old guard who were fighting to destroy the Bolsheviks.

On June 28th, 1918, a decree was passed that ended all forms of private capitalism. Many large factories were taken over by the state and on November 29th, 1920, any factory/industry that employed over 10 workers was nationalised.

War Communism also took control of the distribution of food. The Food Commissariat was set up to carry out this task. All co-operatives were fused together under this Commissariat.

War Communism had six principles:

1)   Production should be run by the state. Private ownership should be kept to the minimum. Private houses were to be confiscated by the state.

2)   State control was to be granted over the labour of every citizen. Once a military army had served its purpose, it would become a labour army.

3)   The state should produce everything in its own undertakings. The state tried to control the activities of millions of peasants.

4)   Extreme centralisation was introduced. The economic life of the area controlled by the [Bolsheviks](http://www.historylearningsite.co.uk/bolsheviks.htm) was put into the hands of just a few organisations. The most important one was the Supreme Economic Council. This had the right to confiscate and requisition. The speciality of the SEC was the management of industry. Over 40 head departments (known as glavki) were set up to accomplish this. One glavki could be responsible for thousands of factories. This frequently resulted in chronic inefficiency. The Commissariat of Transport controlled the railways. The Commissariat of Agriculture controlled what the peasants did.

5)   The state attempted to become the soul distributor as well as the sole producer. The Commissariats took what they needed to meet demands. The people were divided into four categories – manual workers in harmful trades, workers who performed hard physical labour, workers in light tasks/housewives and professional people. Food was distributed on a 4:3:2:1 ratio. Though the manual class was the favoured class, it still received little food. Many in the professional class simply starved. It is believed that about 0% of all food consumed came from an illegal source. On July 20th 1918, the Bolsheviks decided that all surplus food had to be surrendered to the state. This led to an increase in the supply of grain to the state. From 1917 to 1928, about ¾ million ton was collected by the state. In 1920 to 1921, this had risen to about 6 million tons. However, the policy of having to hand over surplus food caused huge resentment in the countryside, especially as Lenin had promised “all land to the people” pre-November 1917. While the peasants had the land, they had not been made aware that they would have to hand over any extra food they produced from their land. Even the extra could not meet demand. In 1933, 25 million tons of grain was collected and this only just met demand.

6)   War Communism attempted to abolish money as a means of exchange. The Bolsheviks wanted to go over to a system of a natural economy in which all transactions were carried out in kind. Effectively, bartering would be introduced. By 1921, the value of the rouble had dropped massively and inflation had markedly increased. The government’s revenue raising ability was chronically poor, as it had abolished most taxes. The only tax allowed was the ‘Extraordinary Revolutionary Tax’, which was targeted at the rich and not the workers.

War Communism was a disaster. In all areas, the economic strength of Russia fell below the 1914 level. Peasant farmers only grew for themselves, as they knew that any extra would be taken by the state. Therefore, the industrial cities were starved of food despite the introduction of the 4:3:2:1 ratio. A bad harvest could be disastrous for the countryside – and even worse for cities. Malnutrition was common, as was disease. Those in the cities believed that their only hope was to move out to the countryside and grow food for themselves. Between 1916 and 1920, the cities of northern and central Russia lost 33% of their population to the countryside. Under War Communism, the number of those working in the factories and mines dropped by 50%.

In the cities, private trade was illegal, but more people were engaged in this than at any other time in Russia’s history. Large factories became paralysed through lack of fuel and skilled labour.

Small factories were in 1920 producing just 43% of their 1913 total. Large factories were producing 18% of their 1913 figure. Coal production was at 27% of its 1913 figure in 1920. With little food to nourish them, it could not be expected that the workers could work effectively. By 1920, the average worker had a productivity rate that was 44% less than the 1913 figure.

Even if anything of value could be produced, the ability to move it around Russia was limited. By the end of 1918, Russia’s rail system was in chaos.

In the countryside, most land was used for the growth of food. Crops such as flax and cotton simply were not grown. Between 1913 and 1920, there was an 87% drop in the number of acres given over to cotton production. Therefore, those factories producing cotton related products were starved of the most basic commodity they needed.

How did the people react to War Communism? Within the cities, many were convinced that their leaders were right and the failings being experienced were the fault of the [Whites](http://www.historylearningsite.co.uk/russian_civil_war1.htm) and international capitalists. There were few strikes during War Communism – though Lenin was quick to have anyone arrested who seemed to be a potential cause of trouble. Those in Bolshevik held territory were also keen to see a Bolshevik victory in the civil war, so they were prepared to do what was necessary. The alternate – a White victory – was unthinkable.

Also the Bolshevik hierarchy could blame a lot of Russia’s troubles on the Whites as they controlled the areas, which would have supplied the factories with produce. The Urals provided Petrograd and Tula with coal and iron for their factories. The Urals was completely separated from Bolshevik Russia from the spring of 1918 to November 1919. Oil fields were in the hands of the Whites. Also the Bolshevik’s Red Army took up the majority of whatever supplies there were in their fight against the Whites.

No foreign country was prepared to trade with the Russia controlled by the Bolsheviks, so foreign trade ceased to exist. Between 1918 and November 1920, the Allies formally blockaded Russia.

The harshness of War Communism could be justified whilst the civil war was going on. When it had finished, there could be no such justification. There were violent rebellions in Tambov and in Siberia. The sailors in Kronstadt mutinied. Lenin faced the very real risk of an uprising of workers and peasants and he needed to show the type of approach to the problem that the tsarist regime was incapable of doing. In February 1921, Lenin had decided to do away with War Communism and replace it with a completely different system – the [New Economic Policy](http://www.historylearningsite.co.uk/new_economic_policy.htm). This was put to the 10th Party Conference in March and accepted. War Communism was swept away. During War Communism, the people had no incentive to produce as money had been abolished. They did what needed to be done because of the civil war, but once this had ended Lenin could not use it as an excuse any longer.

New Economic Policy

The New Economic Policy (NEP) was based around a tax called prodnalog, which was a tax on food. By introducing a tax, Lenin was essentially admitting that he was taxing something people owned. Requisition had forcibly taken food under [War Communism](http://www.historylearningsite.co.uk/war_communism.htm). Prodnalog taxed people at a lower level than the level set for requisition and allowed them to keep the rest of what they produced. Food that was left could be sold – hence, the peasants had an incentive to grow as much as they could knowing that they could keep what was not taxed. The amount of grain taxed in 1922 was half of the grain taken by force in 1920-21. The same was true for the tax on potatoes. The tax on food allowed the cities to be fed and gave the farmers an incentive to produce as much as was humanly possibly.

In 1924, the food tax prodnalog was replaced by a tax on money. This was a natural move. The peasants still had a very good incentive to grow as much as was possible. They were allowed to travel to the towns/cities to sell their produce. The process needed a middle man and as a result private enterprise developed. In theory there were restrictions on private trade but they were not enforced. Those in power knew that the cities needed feeding and the system that had developed after War Communism allowed for this.

In October 1921, Lenin admitted that there could be no going back to the limitations imposed by the dogmas of War Communism.

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| **“We are in desperate straights. We must buy from whom we can and we must sell to whom we can. The party would have to learn to trade.”** |

The economic freedom that the NEP introduced restored Lenin and the [Bolsheviks](http://www.historylearningsite.co.uk/bolsheviks.htm) to political power – but it also expanded Russia’s economic base. Lenin admitted that War Communism had been “a grievous error”.

The NEP was discussed at the 10th Party Congress. The Congress recognised that drastic measures were needed in the face of rebellions by both peasants and workers. The Congress supported the abolition of requisition and the introduction of a food tax. Lenin forced through change by threatening to resign if his ideas were not adopted.

The NEP represented a radical break with the party’s doctrine. There were those who were fundamentally opposed to it. The main opponent initially was Bukharin but even he ended up supporting it after Lenin’s threat of resignation.

There were two reasons why some objected to the NEP:

1)   The planned economy that the Bolsheviks had so desired was being sacrificed. Those who most benefited from the NEP would be the peasant smallholder – the natural enemy of socialism.

2)   [Marx](http://www.historylearningsite.co.uk/karl_marx.htm) believed that the political superstructure of every society was based on its economic base. If the economic base was to become a free market, it seemed inevitable that sooner or later the political superstructure would have to conform with the economic base. Alongside of revived capitalism, the political features of the bourgeois state would replace the socialism believed to have been won in the November 1917 revolution.

Lenin argued that the only way the revolution could be saved was with the support and agreement of the peasants. Lenin argued that the direct transition to communism had been a mistake and that the first stage to communism had to be the acceptance of small-scale production with state capitalism. Lenin then believed that Russia would then proceed to socialism and then to communism. Lenin claimed that the peasants could not be converted overnight. It would take “generations but not centuries”. (Lenin)

By 1922, with a tax limited to just 10%, the success of the NEP was obvious. In 1921, Russia had faced famine. By May 1922, this fear had subsided and by 1923, agricultural production was at a healthy 75% of the 1913 level. Light industry also benefited from the healthy situation found in agriculture. They had to produce goods for the peasants. The success of the peasants stimulated production in light industry. However, heavy industry did not benefit from the success in agriculture. In 1922, 500,000 were unemployed in the heavy industry sector.