

THE CIVIL WAR & NEP

Lenin's government faced challenges during the end of the war and concerning the Constituent Assembly.

Ending the War and the Treaty of Brest-Litovsk:

Lenin signed the Decree on Peace in October 1917, advocating for a just peace without annexations or indemnities. However, the Russian army at the front disintegrated rapidly, and negotiations with Germany at Brest-Litovsk resulted in excessive demands. Trotsky withdrew from the negotiations, refusing to sign punitive terms. Under Lenin's pressure, Bolshevik representatives reluctantly signed the Treaty of Brest-Litovsk in March 1918 to secure peace at any cost for the Bolshevik regime.

Consequences of the Treaty:

The Treaty of Brest-Litovsk shocked patriotic Russians and fueled opposition, causing splits within the Bolshevik party. Some, like Bukharin and left-wing factions, wanted to continue a revolutionary war to inspire a European socialist revolution. This led to further isolation for the Bolsheviks and increased the likelihood of civil war.

Fate of the Constituent Assembly:

Despite winning only 175 seats in comparison to the Socialist Revolutionary Party's 370 seats, the Bolsheviks deemed the Constituent Assembly redundant. They allowed it to meet for one day on January 5, 1918, before closing its doors and dispersing deputies. This action led to criticism and unease, both within and outside the Bolshevik ranks, with accusations of betraying the revolution and concerns about eroding democracy. Lenin justified these actions, citing the country's challenges and the necessity of strong measures, emphasizing the concept of democratic centralism.

In summary, Lenin's government grappled with challenges in ending the war and making significant concessions in the Treaty of Brest-Litovsk, which had far-reaching consequences, including opposition, internal splits within the Bolshevik party, and an increased likelihood of civil war. The closure of the Constituent Assembly sparked criticism and unease, with accusations of betraying the revolution and concerns about the erosion of democracy. Lenin defended these actions by emphasizing the challenges faced and the need for strong measures.

The Russian Civil War involved key players and events. Here are some additional details about the sides involved and the causes of the war:

Sides in the Civil War:

- Red Army: Comprised of Bolsheviks, workers, sailors, and soldiers supporting the Bolshevik government and the success of the revolution.
- White Armies: A diverse group, including liberals, former tsarists, nationalists, and anti-Bolshevik forces, aimed to oppose the Bolshevik regime and restore order in Russia.
- Green Armies: Peasant armies, some aligned with the Bolsheviks, others against. Many were primarily concerned with protecting their areas.

Key Events of the Civil War:

- The establishment of the Red Army in January 1918.
- The signing of the Treaty of Brest-Litovsk in March 1918.
- The rebellion of the Czech Legion captured a section of the Trans-Siberian Railway.
- The emergence of anti-Bolshevik governments in various regions.
- The involvement of foreign powers, including troops from Britain, France, Japan, and the United States, supported anti-Bolshevik forces.
- Leadership of key figures like Trotsky, Admiral Kolchak, and Nestor Makhno.

Causes of the Russian Civil War:

- The collapse of the Russian Empire and the emergence of regional governments.
- Breakdown of law and order, causing alarm among citizens.
- Political opposition, triggered by Bolshevik policies and opposition groups.
- Allied opposition from foreign powers with varying motives.
- Internal dissent, including actions by groups like Mensheviks, Cossacks, and Kadets.

In summary, the Russian Civil War involved the Red Army, White Armies, and Green Armies, with various domestic and international factors influencing the conflict. The war included military campaigns, political developments, and divisions among different factions.

The Russian Civil War, lasting from 1918 to 1922, witnessed the Communists' victory over the Whites due to various factors. Additional details are as follows:

White Divisions: Internal divisions weakened the Whites' efforts against the Bolsheviks, including disputes among the Omsk government, the execution of SRs by Kolchak, and the Don Cossacks' lack of support.

Lack of Support and Brutality: The Whites failed to gain widespread support due to their association with the old tsarist order and

their brutal actions, driving peasants to the Red Army.

Geographical Challenges: The Whites faced difficulties in coordinating efforts due to the vast distances between their leaders, hindering a unified front against the Red Army.

Strengths of the Communists: The Communists held the Russian heartland, industrial resources, and a larger population. They mobilized support for the Red Army through propaganda and the leadership of figures like Trotsky.

War Communism: The policy centralized economic control, requisitioned grain from peasants, and supported the war effort, despite causing suffering among the population.

In summary, the Whites' internal divisions, lack of support, brutality, and geographical challenges, along with the Communists' strengths and War Communism, contributed to the Communists' victory in the Russian Civil War.

War Communism, implemented during the Russian Civil War, aimed to centralize the economy for Red Army support. Key aspects included:

- Nationalization of Industry: All industries came under state control, replacing workers' committees.
- Labor Discipline: Strict measures enforced discipline with fines for lateness and absenteeism.
- Banning of Private Trade: Private trade was banned, leading to a significant black market.
- Grain Requisitioning: Forcible grain requisitioning led to peasant resistance and production breakdown.
- Rationing: Rationing was introduced, prioritizing the labour force and Red Army soldiers.
- Collapse of Currency: Hyperinflation and economic instability devalued money.

War Communism intensified opposition, dissent, and the perception of Bolsheviks as ruthless. The policy's consequences contributed to the shift to the New Economic Policy (NEP) in the 1920s.

The Cheka, the Bolshevik secret police, played a role in collecting grain from peasants alongside requisitioning brigades. Peasants resisted, leading to violence. Bolsheviks encouraged attacks on kulaks, but it failed, and many peasants hid grain. The Civil War and War Communism devastated the country, causing famine, diseases, and widespread suffering. Peasant revolts erupted, and the Kronstadt Rebellion challenged the Bolshevik government.

The Petrograd Strike Committee issued demands for more freedoms in 1921, signalling growing discontent among urban workers. The Workers' Opposition criticized militarized factories and centralization, while the Kronstadt naval base revolted against the government. The events in Petrograd and Kronstadt prompted the introduction of the New Economic Policy (NEP), signifying the need for a change in policies.

The New Economic Policy (NEP) was introduced to address economic and social challenges in Soviet Russia. It featured the end of grain requisitioning, the legalization of small businesses, and the removal of bans on private trade. The state retained control over heavy industry, while small-scale industries operated for profit. Lenin viewed the NEP as a strategic retreat but faced party debates. Economically, the NEP led to recovery, but it also marked a period of centralization and bureaucratic control.

Overall, the NEP stabilized the Soviet economy and maintained Bolshevik power, providing a temporary retreat from strict socialist policies. It allowed for economic recovery but also set the stage for increased government control and centralization.