

The October Revolution

(Nb. By the Julian Calendar used in Russia at the time, the revolution took part in November 1917, and is therefore often referred to as the November Revolution)

With Russian politics still in a state of constant flux Lenin realised that now was the time to capitalise on his party's popularity. He planned a coup d'etat that would overthrow the increasingly ineffective Provisional Government and replace them with the Bolsheviks. On October 10th he held a famous meeting with twelve party leaders, and tried to persuade them that a revolution was required. Despite receiving the backing of only 10 of them plotting went ahead.

October 24th was the date decided upon, and on that day troops loyal to the Bolsheviks took up crucial positions in the city, such as the main telephone and telegraph offices, banks, railroad stations, post offices, and major bridges. Guards commissioned by the Provisional Government, who had got wind of the plot, fled or surrendered without a fight. By the 25th October every key building in St. Petersburg was under Bolshevik control, except the Winter Palace where Kerensky and the other Ministers were holed up with a small guard.

At 0900 of that day Kerensky fled the Palace by car, never to return to Russia. On the 26th the Palace was taken with barely a shot fired, and Lenin's October Revolution had been achieved with the bare minimum of drama or bloodshed.

Aftermath and Consequences

Despite being allowed to seize power so easily Lenin soon discovered that his support was far from absolute. His Peace Policy with the Germans was particularly unpopular as it ceded large amounts of Russian territory. Shortly after the October Revolution, the Russian Civil War broke out between the 'Reds' (Communists) and the 'Whites' (Nationalists, Conservatives, Imperialists and other anti-Bolshevik groups). After a bloody four year struggle Lenin and the Reds won, establishing the Soviet Union in 1922, at an estimated cost of 15 million lives and billions of roubles. In 1923 Lenin died and Stalin took over the Communist Party, which continued to rule Russia until 1991 when the USSR was dissolved.

