

million peasants of their land. In February 1918, the Bolshevik government passed a decree declaring that all land belonged to the state, but did not attempt to implement it.

### 2. The Decree on Workers' Control of the Factories

Again, the Bolsheviks pragmatically recognised what had already happened, that the industrial workers had seized control of the factories, even though many of the factory committees were controlled by the Mensheviks.

### 3. State Capitalism

This is the term used to describe the economic policy of the Bolsheviks from October 1917 to June 1918, when War Communism replaced it. Bolshevik economic policy during this period, and throughout the Civil War, was improvised. Lenin's economic writings before 1917 had been very theoretical, he had given little thought to economic planning. Therefore, from 1917 to summer 1918 the Bolsheviks had to use existing economic structures; in December, they did establish *Vesenkha* (the Supreme Council of the National Economy) to regulate the national economy, but its control was limited at first. However, it did nationalise banks and railways and cancelled debts owed to foreign governments.

### 4. The Decree on Nationalities

The Bolsheviks declared that the non-Russian peoples had the right to break away from the former Russian Empire. Independence movements had already sprung up in a number of areas, notably the Ukraine, Georgia, and the Baltic region. The Bolsheviks would later use the Red Army to force the Ukraine and Georgia into the USSR (the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics, formally set up in 1922).

### 5. The Decree on Peace

On 25<sup>th</sup> October (8<sup>th</sup> November 'New Style'), the Bolsheviks published a decree calling for a 'just, democratic peace' between all countries involved in the war. Lenin seems to have regarded his call for a peace settlement without land transfers and reparations as a public relations' exercise, because he knew that the priority was to achieve a quick peace settlement if the Bolsheviks were to consolidate their power and that would mean accepting harsh terms from Germany.

Trotsky, the **Commissar** for Foreign Affairs, favoured trying to spin the peace talks out in the hope that, when the German workers saw how greedy their government was for land given the growing burdens imposed by the war on the German population, they would revolt and Germany would have its own communist revolution. Peace talks opened at Brest-Litovsk in December 1917.

An armistice (ceasefire) was agreed for 22<sup>nd</sup> November and peace talks began at Brest-Litovsk in December 1917. Trotsky's delaying tactics—'neither peace, nor war'—only irritated the Germans who launched a new offensive against the Russians in February 1918. Lenin insisted that a treaty must be signed and, in spite of opposition from several leading Bolsheviks including Trotsky and Bukharin, the Bolshevik government agreed. Trotsky resigned as Commissar for Foreign Affairs, but remained Commissar for War.

### 6. The Treaty of Brest-Litovsk (March 1918)

As a result of the terms of the treaty that Germany imposed on Russia, Russia lost one third of its population and one third of its arable land. Some of the key terms were:

- Russia lost Poland, Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania, Finland, the Ukraine and Georgia.
- Russia had to pay an indemnity of 6,000 million marks.



#### Key Term

**Commissar:** the name given by the Bolsheviks to Government Ministers.



#### Key Point

**Change of capital to Moscow:** the Communist Party decided in March 1918 to make Moscow the capital of Russia instead of Petrograd.