

Russia regained the Ukraine and Georgia in 1921 and, after Germany's defeat in 1918, the Baltic states (Latvia, Lithuania, and Estonia) and Poland were given their independence.

Lenin favoured accepting the German demands because Russia was too weak to continue the war, and only by making peace could the Bolsheviks concentrate on consolidating and extending their control within Russia and sorting out the economic problems that had brought about the downfall of both the Tsar and the Provisional Government. In any case, Lenin believed that ultimately workers revolutions would break out in Germany and other European countries and that any losses of territory would be temporary. His perspective, therefore, was not that of a Russian nationalist but of an international socialist.

The Left Social Revolutionaries, who had supported the Bolsheviks since the October Revolution, now resigned in protest from *Sovnarkom*, meaning that the Bolsheviks held every position in it. On 8th March, the Seventh Congress of the Bolshevik Party changed the name of the party to the **Communist Party** and, on 10th March, Lenin moved the capital from Petrograd to Moscow.

7. Elections to the Constituent Assembly (November 1917)

The Bolsheviks had criticised the Provisional Government for delaying elections to the Constituent Assembly and some Bolsheviks favoured a broad coalition of socialist parties, so Lenin felt that he had to allow elections to go ahead on 12th November. He correctly anticipated that the Bolsheviks would not do well:

| Party | Number of seats in the Constituent Assembly |
|------------------|---|
| Bolsheviks | 175 (24%) |
| Left SRs | 40 |
| Right SRs | 370 (52%) |
| Mensheviks | 16 |
| Kadets | 17 |
| National Parties | 86 |

8. Lenin's closure of the Constituent Assembly (January 1918)

On 5th January, the Constituent Assembly met and elected the leader of the Right SRs, Victor Chernov, as its President. The Bolsheviks, who were in the minority, withdrew and Lenin sent in the Red Guards to close down the Assembly. On 6th January, Lenin declared that the Assembly was permanently dissolved. Lenin was opposed to Western ideas of democracy, believing in the need for a dictatorship of the Bolshevik Party to rule on behalf of the working classes.

Trotsky remarked that:

“We have trampled underfoot the principles of democracy for the sake of the loftier principles of a social revolution.”

Lenin's actions were criticised by foreign communists such as the German leaders Rosa Luxemburg and Karl Liebknecht. It led to a civil war within Russia that would last until late 1920, ending in Bolshevik victory and transforming the Bolshevik Party itself.

9. The establishment of a secret police

The Bolsheviks set up the *Cheka*, a secret police force, in December 1917. The *Cheka* was led by Felix Dzerzhinsky.



Key Term

Communist Party: the Bolshevik Party officially changed its name to 'Communist Party' in March 1918.