

Add a title for each paragraph

Highlight the KEY information in each paragraph. Be brief.

Summarise each paragraph in 2-3 bullet points

The February Revolution 1917

The February Revolution began with bread riots and ended with the downfall of the Russian monarchy. By 1917, the war was making life tough for the people of Petrograd; food shortages meant bakeries had stopped producing non-essentials such as buns, pies, and cakes. In workers' districts, women often had to queue for 8 hours for bread. Fuel shortages meant many were suffering in the coldest winter for several years. To make matters worse, on February 19th, the city authorities announced that bread would be rationed from March 1st. Rumours soon spread that bakeries would run out of grain and the poor would starve.

February 23rd was International Women's Day, an important date in the socialist calendar, which consisted of marches through Petrograd city centre. It was an unseasonably warm day, which may have encouraged 100,000 workers to go on strike and join the march. There were chants of 'Bread' and 'Down with the Tsar' from the crowd but overall, the day was fairly peaceful. That evening workers held factory meetings throughout the city and decided to continue the strikes. By February 25th, 200,000 were on strike and marching through the city. Now chants for 'Down with the Tsar' were more common than chants for 'Bread'. Trams were overturned, shop windows smashed and revolutionary speeches made at a statue of the autocratic Alexander III.

The authorities might have dealt with the workers by not confronting them and waiting for fresh supplies of bread to reach the city. Instead, Nicholas II, who was away from the capital at the General Headquarters of the Army, ordered the army to crush them. On February 26th troops opened fire on a crowd of strikers killing 50. Angry demonstrators attacked the barracks of the Pavlovsky Regiment, whose soldiers, shocked by the news of the killings, mutinied, and joined the workers. By February 27th, other barracks throughout the city had also mutinied; the strikes were fast becoming a revolution. The protestors, now a mixture of soldiers and workers, were armed. 100,000 rifles from munitions factories had fallen into their hands, and the streets were becoming lawless. Looting and robbery were common. In wealthy districts, houses were ransacked and the occupants murdered. In total, around 1500 were killed during the Revolution.

On February 27th, a crowd of 25,000 gathered at the Tauride Palace, home of the Duma, looking for authority figures to lead the increasingly chaotic revolution. Two organisations, from different wings of the political spectrum, sprung up looking to provide leadership. The Petrograd Soviet was a coalition of middle-class, socialist intellectuals who had little political experience, and aimed to speak on behalf of the demonstrators in the capital. The Temporary Committee of the Duma consisted of 12 liberal Duma Deputies who looked to form some sort of government to control the crisis. It was unclear which organisation would be in charge, who they spoke for, or who would listen to them, however, they both agreed on wanting to restore order to the capital whose streets were increasingly ruled by an armed, lawless, drunken mob.

On February 28th, the Temporary Committee attempted to end the demonstrations by ordering all soldiers to return to their barracks. The soldiers were distrustful of the Committee and believed they would be punished if they returned, so they looked to the Petrograd Soviet for support. The result was

Order Number One. The soldiers agreed to return to their barracks, but only because that was the wish of the Soviet; they would only recognise the authority of the Soviet and would only obey the Committee if the Committee's orders did not contradict the orders of the Soviet. Order Number One successfully ended the violent protests, however, it also demonstrated how weak the liberal Temporary Committee was.

Despite the liberal Temporary Committee of the Duma and the socialist Petrograd Soviet coming from opposite political wings, when they entered negotiations to form a government, they found they had a lot in common. Both agreed that Nicholas II would have to abdicate, that the Temporary Committee should form a Provisional Government until elections could be held, that political prisoners should be freed and that there should be freedom of speech and assembly. The Provisional Government would only be a temporary government that would exist until elections could be held. It was a coalition of Duma Deputies who had belonged to liberal parties. There was one socialist, Kerensky, who was also a member of the Petrograd Soviet.

The Petrograd Soviet could have taken power for itself, after all, the soldiers had declared that they only recognised the authority of the Soviet, so why didn't they? There were several possible reasons for this: fear of a counter-revolution, fear of the violence of the mob, a lack of political experience, and a feeling that Russia needed to modernise before it could be socialist. Prince Lvov, a well-meaning liberal aristocrat, was declared the first Prime Minister of the Provisional Government on March 2nd, the same day as Nicholas II abdicated. One member of the crowd who watched the announcement commented 'we have exchanged a Tsar for a Prince'. The Provisional Government had power, but no authority over the people. The Petrograd Soviet had authority but declined to have power.

Summarise the events of the 1917 February Revolution in your own paragraph (Challenge: 25 words or less)

Add a title for each paragraph

Highlight the KEY information in each paragraph. Be brief.

Summarise each paragraph in 2-3 bullet points

The Provisional Government February-June 1917

The Provisional Government saw itself as a temporary government that was neutral and above party politics. It was a transitional government that existed only to hold elections for the new parliament, the Constituent Assembly. It wished Russia to become a liberal democracy, like its Allies in Western Europe, and passed many liberal reforms. Universal suffrage was introduced, capital punishment was abolished, political prisoners were released, and there was freedom of speech and assembly. The February Revolution had created high expectations amongst peasants and workers that social reforms were imminent, however, the Provisional Government believed it lacked the democratic authority to pass any; they would be dealt with by the party which won the free and fair elections to the Constituent Assembly.

Considering the chaos that Russia had just experienced, it would have been wise to call elections to the new Constituent Assembly quickly. Instead, the Provisional Government spent months painstakingly deciding the fairest possible way to organise the elections. In mid-June it was announced they would be held on 17th September, however in August, the elections were pushed back to 12th November, by which time the Provisional Government had been overthrown by the Bolsheviks.

While the Provisional Government was willing to wait for the Constituent Assembly to solve Russia's problems, many peasants, workers, and soldiers were not. Bands of peasants began seizing the land of the gentry, with rival villages even fighting battles over who had the right to claim certain estates. The Provisional Government, in faraway Petrograd, lacked the authority to uphold property rights and stop this. In the cities, workers who had become armed during the February Revolution refused to surrender their weapons. Strikes continued: 500000 were on strike at some point between April and July. Professions which did not traditionally strike, such as barbers, waiters, and prostitutes, joined the protests. Soldiers demanded an 8-hour working day and some refused to fight. 1 million deserted between March and October.

On April 20th, thousands of armed workers and soldiers marched through Petrograd demanding peace and for the Provisional Government to be removed. Fearing civil war and a return to the anarchy of February, members of the Petrograd Soviet, decided to join the Provisional Government. The aim was to appease the workers, which in the short term they did, however, in the long term it led to workers becoming disillusioned with the socialists when they failed to use their position for change.

Lenin, the most influential Bolshevik, returned to Russia on April 3rd after nearly 17 years in exile. He was greeted at Finland Station by a large crowd that may have been his keen supporters, or they may have been attracted by the free beer which was handed out. Lenin quickly stamped his authority on the Bolsheviks in Russia by demanding, in his April Thesis, that they refuse to recognise the Provisional Government. This came as a surprise to the Bolsheviks on the Petrograd Soviet. Within Petrograd the Soviets had support, crucially, much of it was armed. The working-class Vyborg district was controlled by the Bolsheviks, and they had the support of the First Machine Gun Regiment which was based there. The Kronstadt naval base, which was on

an island outside the city, was also loyal to the Bolsheviks. On 18th June, the Bolsheviks demonstrated their growing influence by organising a huge protest in Petrograd which attracted 400000. It demanded an end to the Provisional Government and that power be handed to the 'Soviets'.

It was at this moment the Provisional Government decided to launch a poorly organised and overly optimistic offensive on the Eastern Front. There were many reasons why they did this: to show the western Allies that they were still committed to the War, therefore securing loans which they depended on; to unite the divided Russian people behind a quick victory; to strengthen Russia's negotiating position at a future peace conference (this was the anti-war socialist argument for the offensive); and to distract soldiers from revolutionary politics. It was predicted by military planners that Russia would suffer 6000 casualties; instead they suffered 400000 in a humiliating defeat. The offensive, which became known as the Kerensky Offensive after Alexander Kerensky, the Minister of War, swung the soldiers over to the Bolsheviks and started a succession of summer of crises which eventually led to the Bolsheviks seizing power in October.

Summarise why the Provisional Government failed – go through the article and underline any evidence that links to your reasons

Add a title for each paragraph

Highlight the KEY information in each paragraph. Be brief.

Summarise each paragraph in 2-3 bullet points

The Provisional Government July-October 1917

The Kerensky Offensive in the summer of 1917 was meant to unite the Russian people, behind the Provisional Government, with a quick military victory. Instead, its failure started a summer of crises which eventually led to the downfall of the Provisional Government with the Bolshevik Revolution of October 1917.

The first crisis of the summer became known as the July Days. This was a disorganised, Bolshevik inspired armed demonstration, which aspired to overthrow the Provisional Government, however, lacked the support of the Bolshevik leadership. The July Days began on July 3rd when armed workers and soldiers, who supported the Bolsheviks, took to the streets calling for a revolution and an end to the Provisional Government. Many of the workers were from the Bolshevik Vyborg district and many of the soldiers were from the Bolshevik supporting First Machine Gun Regiment. They were joined by the Kronstadt sailors, who marched past the Bolshevik headquarters hoping to receive orders to begin the revolution. Instead, Lenin, who probably believed any attempt to overthrow the Provisional Government would fail at this time, hesitated. He spoke a few words to the sailors from a balcony before returning inside. Not knowing what to do, they marched to the Tauride Palace, where tens of thousands of armed men were waiting aimlessly outside.

At 5pm there was a thunderstorm, which soaked the workers and soldiers outside the Tauride Palace; many of them gave up and went home. In the evening, a group of workers did break into the Palace and burst in on a meeting of the Petrograd Soviet. When they were told to leave by members of the Soviet, not knowing what to do, they obeyed and left without a fight. Despite an unsuccessful first day, armed workers and soldiers took to the streets again on July 4th, however, because of the failure of the previous day, less people came out. This time the Provisional Government was ready for them. Gun battles erupted between troops loyal to the government and demonstrators.

By the evening it was clear that the attempted revolution, known as the July Days, had failed. The Provisional Government used the failed uprising as an opportunity to suppress the Bolsheviks. 500 were arrested on July 6th and Lenin fled to Finland on July 9th. A consequence of the July Days was the resignation of Prince Lvov as prime minister on July 3rd. He was replaced on July 6th by Alexander Kerensky, the former minister of war. Kerensky cut the Provisional Government's ties with the Petrograd Soviet and expelled it from the Tauride Palace. The Petrograd Soviet moved to the Smolny Institute, a former private girls school, which would later become the command centre of the October Revolution. In the immediate aftermath of the February Revolution, Kerensky had been genuinely popular, however, the fame had gone to his head, and he may have had delusions of grandeur. He moved into the Winter Palace and increasingly behaved like a Tsar, even sleeping in Alexander III's huge four poster bed. His behaviour also became erratic, which may have been caused by drug use. He took cocaine and morphine daily to deal with the pressures of the job. After the failings of the Kerensky Offensive, the Russian Army continued to collapse and there were fears Petrograd would

be taken. There was a growing atmosphere of counter revolution with many calling for a return of Nicholas II.

On July 18th, Kerensky appointed a new Commander in Chief of the Army, General Kornilov. Kornilov was a tough soldier, although he was not thought of as being particularly intelligent. Kerensky probably felt he would be easy to control. However, he was not. On August 3rd, Kornilov made a list of political reforms, which were supported by some right-wing politicians. They were to reverse many of the liberal laws that were introduced in February, such as the abolition of capital punishment. This began the second summer crisis: the Kornilov Affair. Throughout August it was widely thought that Kornilov was about to launch a counter-revolution. He eventually did, but only after Kerensky fired him on August 27th. Kornilov's revolt failed, as his troops, who were marching on Petrograd, had no desire to overthrow the Provisional Government and surrendered without a fight on August 30th. The main outcome of the Kornilov Affair was the rehabilitation of the Bolsheviks. The Petrograd Soviet, who disliked Kerensky, but supported him over Kornilov, wished to defend the February Revolution. The only members of the Petrograd Soviet who had ever been able to muster large scale armed support were the Bolsheviks, so they were invited back to help defend the Provisional Government. Within two months they would be in power.

After the Kornilov Affair, discipline disintegrated in the army. Soldiers murdered their officers, suspecting them of having supported Kornilov. Huge numbers of troops deserted and returned to their villages, often attacking the local manor when they arrived home. The Bolsheviks became more popular: they gained 150000 members between July and October. They also did well in local elections: between June and September, their share of the vote in Moscow City Duma elections rose from 11% to 50%. Their influence in the Petrograd Soviet also grew to the point where they began to dominate it. Lenin was becoming more and more keen on an armed uprising.

Summarise the reasons for the failure of the Provisional Government and highlight the evidence to support in the text. Challenge: how are these reasons similar or different than your previous ones?

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The October Revolution 1917

On October 10th, the Bolshevik Central Committee took the decision to overthrow the Provisional Government. This was not a unanimous decision; many Bolshevik leaders felt the time was not right. Lenin fought for it, pushed for it, and won. Without Lenin's determination, the Bolshevik Revolution would not have happened and the history of the twentieth century would have been drastically different. The Bolsheviks, along with the other parties which made up the Petrograd Soviet, were based in the Smolny Institute. The former girls school was teeming with armed men; the rooms were filled with cigarette smoke and the corridors were littered with rubbish and smelt of urine. The Bolshevik plan was to use loyal workers and soldiers to capture key government buildings in Petrograd and demand the surrender of the Provisional Government. If they refused to surrender, on a signal from the Peter and Paul Fortress (a huge prison and garrison in the city), the Winter Palace was to be seized.

The plan started well. There was a mutiny in the Petrograd garrison over the threat of a transfer to the Front. By October 23rd most troops in the city, including those in the Peter and Paul Fortress, were loyal to the Bolsheviks. Kerensky, realising he had no loyal troops to protect him or his government, fled the city on October 24th in a car that had been stolen from the American Embassy and was flying the Stars and Stripes. By October 25th, the Bolsheviks were in control over most government buildings in Petrograd. Despite this, the Provisional Government refused to surrender. For hours, workers and soldiers waited for the signal to storm the Winter Palace from the Peter and Paul Fortress. The signal never came. This was because the cannons at the Fortress, which were to be fired as the signal to attack, were antiques and did not work. The Bolsheviks in the Fortress spent hours trying to find either a working cannon or a flag to signal the attack. They eventually found a red lantern, but only after the commander of the Fortress got stuck in a bog on his way to retrieve it.

When the signal came, the Winter Palace fell easily; by 2am the Provisional Government had been arrested. The Bolshevik Revolution was more of a military coup than a popular revolution. They were between 10000 to 15000 people outside the Winter Palace on the night of the Revolution, but most of them did not take part. The majority of Petrograd knew nothing about what was happening. Shops and restaurants remained open, and the streetcars ran through the night. Police reported no disturbances in working class districts that evening.

The Revolution was relatively peaceful in Petrograd, however, in other cities, such as Moscow, there were several days of vicious street fighting. The downfall of the Provisional Government triggered a wave of spontaneous violence, which was encouraged by the Bolsheviks. There were widespread peasant disturbances with land seized, manors burned, and gentry murdered. Soldiers murdered their officers; 800 were killed by naval cadets in Crimea alone. The Bolsheviks encouraged workers, peasants, and soldiers to seek retribution from their employers, landlords and officers. They described this as 'looting the looters' and was the forerunner to the Red Terror.

The October Revolution put the Bolsheviks in power, and not many people expected them to last long. They were unique; no party like them had been in power anywhere in the world before. It was expected their government would collapse after a few chaotic weeks. The Bolsheviks allowed the Constituent Assembly elections to go ahead, hoping to gain legitimacy for their revolution at the ballot box. Embarrassingly, the Right SR's won, with the Bolsheviks coming second, with 24% of the vote. The Bolsheviks had no desire to honour the outcome of the election; the Constituent Assembly was allowed to meet on January 5th, however, it was shut down permanently the following day. Although people expected the Bolshevik Revolution to last only a few weeks, they were to be in power for the next 70 years.

'The Provisional Government was doomed from the start' How far do you agree?