



VICTIMS OF COMMUNISM MEMORIAL FOUNDATION

Communism: A History of Repression, Violence, and Victims

Chapter 5 Assessments and Assignments

Create the Context

Homework or pre-class preparation activity:

- Assign the chapter essay and story, noting the continuing themes and ideas from previous chapters.
- Students should watch the videos:
 - *Vladimir Lenin Biography* (2 minutes) <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=VxHUeHhdYz0>
 - *The Russian Revolution 1917* (3 minutes) <https://youtu.be/KOK1TMSyKcM>
 - *20 December 1917: Establishment of the Cheka, the Russian Bolshevik Secret Police* (2 minutes) <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Os38ospqAfs>

Wrap-up Questions

- How did Lenin adapt and advance Marx's theory of communism in Russia?
- What rights did Lenin, and the Bolsheviks take away from the people? What were the methods used to take away these rights?
- What were Lenin's goals when he and the Bolsheviks seized power?
- What "categories" of people did Lenin order the Cheka to eliminate? Why did he perceive these people as threats?
- Who were the parties involved in the Russian Civil War, and what were the results?

Assessments

- **In-Class Assessment 1: Categorize**

Give students story cards with people from different classes, jobs, family backgrounds, religious beliefs, education levels, etc. Ask students to determine which people would be the most likely targets of the communist government, and to explain why.

- **Take-Home Assessment**

Have students create a timeline of the key events and important figures of the Russian Revolution from 1917 to 1922. For each item on the timeline, they should write a sentence or two summarizing the significance of each person or event.

Primary Source Activity

- **Primary Source Activity: Analyze**

Students should read through the excerpt from Vladimir Lenin's *The State and Revolution* and explain Lenin's main ideas. What are Lenin's views on revolution and the proletariat? How far should revolution go? What does Lenin's ideal society look like, given his views in this excerpt? What did Russia look like at the time of Lenin's death in 1924? Discuss Lenin's question at the end of the excerpt: what would be destroyed by Lenin and his Bolsheviks?

Primary Sources

The State and Revolution (1917)

“The overthrow of bourgeois rule can be accomplished only by the proletariat, as the particular class whose economic conditions of existence train it for this task and provide it with the opportunity and the power to perform it. While the bourgeoisie breaks up and disintegrates the peasantry and all the petty-bourgeois strata, it welds together, unites and organizes the proletariat. Only the proletariat – by virtue of the economic role it plays in large-scale production – is capable of acting as the leader of *all* the toiling and exploited masses, whom the bourgeoisie exploits, oppresses and crushes not less, and often more, than it does the proletarians, but who are incapable of waging an *independent* struggle for their emancipation.

The doctrine of the class struggle, as applied by Marx to the question of the state and of the socialist revolution, leads inevitably to the recognition of the *political rule* of the proletariat, of its dictatorship, *i.e.*, of power shared with none and relying directly upon the armed force of the masses. The overthrow of the bourgeoisie can be achieved only by the proletariat becoming transformed into the *ruling class*, capable of crushing the inevitable and desperate resistance of the bourgeoisie, and of organizing *all* the toiling and exploited masses for the new economic order.

The proletariat needs state power, the centralized organization of force, the organization of violence, for the purpose of crushing the resistance of the exploiters and for the purpose of *leading* the great mass of the population – the peasantry, the petty bourgeoisie, the semi-proletarians – in the work of organizing socialist economy.

By educating the workers' party, Marxism educates the vanguard of the proletariat which is capable of assuming power and of *leading the whole people* to socialism, of directing and organizing the new order, of being the teacher, guide and leader of all the toiling and exploited in the task of building up their social life without the bourgeoisie and against the bourgeoisie. As against this, the now prevailing opportunism breeds in the ranks of the workers' party representatives of the better paid workers, who lose touch with the rank and file, "get along" fairly well under capitalism, and sell their birthright for a mess of pottage, *i.e.*, renounce their role of revolutionary leaders of the people against the bourgeoisie.

Marx's theory: "The state, *i.e.*, the proletariat organized as the ruling class," is inseparably bound up with all he taught on the revolutionary role of the proletariat in history. The culmination of this role is the proletarian dictatorship, the political rule of the proletariat.

But if the proletariat needs a state as a *special* form of organization of violence *against* the bourgeoisie, the following deduction automatically arises: is it conceivable that such an organization can be created without first abolishing, destroying the state machine created by the bourgeoisie for *itself*? *The Communist Manifesto* leads straight to this deduction, and it is of this deduction that Marx speaks with summing up the experience of the Revolution of 1848-51."ⁱ

ⁱ Vladimir Lenin, *The State and Revolution*, Marxists Internet Archive, accessed June 29, 2023, <https://www.marxists.org/archive/lenin/works/1917/staterev/ch02.htm>.