

1917 Russian Revolution

Ms Barnett

History



Who was Karl Marx?

The man who developed Communism was **Karl Marx**. He studied what was happening in industrial Europe and thought the system was unfair.

He said the world was run by **capitalists** who were the people who owned the factories, banks and transport network. As a result they made lots of profit and became rich. Despite this they paid their workers badly, treated their workers badly and were not interested in making conditions better for their employees.



What is Communism?

Marx said that in time the workers would stop accepting the situation and begin a **revolution** against their rulers. Marx believed that the workers would take power for themselves and put the interest of the workers first. This would lead to a **Communist** society.

A communist society included:

- people cooperating with each other and sharing things fairly.
- people working at what they are good at, rather than working just to make money.
- everybody taking what they **need** from a central set of resources.
- machines doing the majority of the work so people would have more free time to enjoy life.



How did Russia become Communist?

Marx died in 1883 but wrote lots of books. People who believed in his ideas were called **Marxists**. One of the people who believed in these ideas was a Russian called **Vladimir Lenin**. He thought the workers in Russia were ready for a revolution.

When the Tsar abdicated in 1917 following protests from the unhappy Russian population, there was much confusion that followed it. Lenin and his supporters took the opportunity and seized control in the name of the workers and declared the world's first Communist state.



What did Communism look like in Russia?

- Titles and ranks were dropped. Everyone was called 'comrade.'
- Women became equal to men.
- The workers took control of the factories and ran them using **worker committees**.
- The peasants took the land from the landowners and shared it out amongst themselves.
- Political parties were banned, except the Communist Party.
- The state took control of the banks.
- Houses were taken from their rich owners and were shared among the workers.
- People who were powerful before the Russian Revolution became known as 'former people.'
- The wealth of 'former people' was confiscated by the state.
- A call to end the war.



Reaction to the Revolution

Countries around the world were concerned by the Russian Revolution. Many countries had become **industrial societies** with lots of workers in factories working long hours in poor conditions. Power in countries like Germany, France, Britain and the United States, was still held by traditional rulers. In all these countries there was a big divide between the richest and poorest in the country. Many of the poorest people couldn't vote in elections to show their opinions on how their country was being run.

These countries began to think - if the people in Russia became fed up enough to remove their leader and replace it with a communist society, why couldn't it happen in other countries?



Glossary

Capitalist - a person who believes in an economic and political system in which a country's trade and industry are controlled by private owners for profit, rather than by the state.

Revolution - a deliberate overthrow of a government or social order, in favour of a new system.

Worker committees - a committee created and elected by workers to represent themselves.



Questions

1. What was the name of the person who developed the idea of communism?
2. Why do you think communism appealed to Russian society during WWI?
3. Why do you think the following people, living outside Russia, would be afraid of Communism spreading to their country? Explain why.
 - A rich landowner
 - An industrialist who owns several factories
 - A traditional conservative political figure/leader of a country
 - A middle class doctor
 - A military man
4. Why do you think neighbouring countries would be afraid of the Russian Revolution?

