

# Overthrow of the Kerensky Regime

The Bolsheviks Come to Power

# In This Lesson

- How the Military Revolutionary Committee's actions changed in response to Kerensky's crackdown and Lenin's arrival at Smolny
- Debates in the Pre-Parliament and Petrograd Soviet as events unfolded
- The opening of the Congress of Soviets and the Menshevik-SR Walkout
- Taking of the Winter Palace by the Bolsheviks
- Immediate aftermath of the October Revolution

10/24 (11/6):

# Planning for Armed Uprising Begins

- If Kerensky's crackdown succeeds, the **Oct. 25<sup>th</sup>** Congress of Soviets might not meet at all
- MRC begins planning for an armed uprising to defend the revolution from Kerensky
- Newspaper stations re-taken and re-opened; Stalin's writes lead editorial
- Trotsky at the Bolshevik Congress: 'The government is powerless...'
- Winter Palace defended by Women's Shock Battalion, 200 strong, and 68 cadets from the Artillery School.



**The Women's Shock Battalion of Death  
Led by Maria Bochkareva, here visited by  
British Suffragette Emmeline Pankhurst, 1917**

Source: fscclub.com



# Kerensky's Final Public Address

- **24 Oct:** At final meeting of Pre-Parliament Kerensky calls for:
  - Arrests of coup plotters
  - Reads from Trotsky's directive no. 1
  - Expresses confidence that he enjoys support
- Kerensky departs chamber; fierce debating ensues.

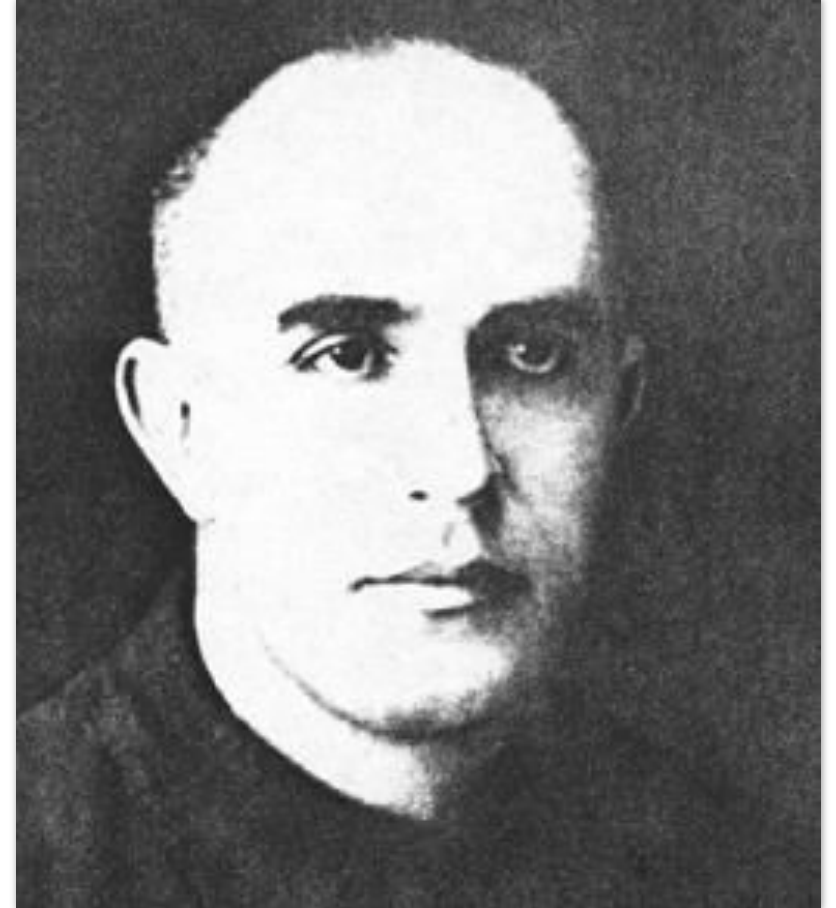


Kerensky Addressing the Pre-Parliament on  
October 24 (Nov 6), 1917

Source: [gettyimages.com](https://www.gettyimages.com)

# The Pre-Parliament Debates

- Kamkov (Left SR): Not a dozen soldiers at the garrison support Kerensky.
- Three Resolutions introduced
  1. **Kadets**: full support for Provisional Government
  2. **Cossacks**: entire left condemned for 'conniving with the Bolsheviks'
  3. Fedor Dan (**Menshevik**): call for urgent reforms, land and peace program, and Committee of Public Safety to restore order
- **8:30 pm**: Dan's resolution passes 132-102; equals a vote of 'no confidence'



**Boris Kamkov, Left SR**

Source: wikipedia.org



# Bolsheviks Condemned at the Petrograd Soviet

- At all-night meeting of the Petrograd Soviet, two motions pass:
  - **Menshevik motion** to condemn the Bolsheviks and reaffirm Dan's call for a Committee of Public Safety (passed).
  - **Left SR / Menshevik International motion** calling for an exclusively socialist government with an all new cabinet, and condemning both the Bolsheviks for inciting insurrection and the Provisional government for creating the conditions for one (passed).
- Meanwhile, the Provisional Government is losing control of Petrograd.



# Cold Night: Steady Takeover (Oct 24-25)



**The Aurora Cruiser**

Source: Pinterest.com

- **4 pm:** Central Telegraph Office
- **Evening:** Insurrection controls most bridges
- **8 pm:** Petrograd Telegraph Agency and Baltic Station
- **2 am:** Nikolaevsky Station
- **3:30 am:** Battleship Aurora at Nikolaevsky Bridge
- **6:00 am:** State Bank
- **8:00 am:** Warsaw Station (last station)



# Lenin Heads for Smolny



*Lenin Proclaims Soviet Power*  
By Vladimir Serov

Source: Pinterest.com

- **20 Oct:** Fresh warrant for Lenin's arrest issued
- **24 Oct:** Still in hiding, Lenin writes Krupskaya: 'everything now hangs by a thread'.
- Unable to wait, Lenin heads for the Smolny Institute
- While Lenin's influence over events was greatly exaggerate by later Soviet governments, he was alone in viewing overthrow prior to the opening of the Congress of Soviets as of key strategic importance.
- Between **9 pm (Oct 24)** and **2 am (Oct 25)** a shift in strategy is noticeable as arrested ministers no longer being released.



# 'To the Citizens of Russia'

'The Provisional Government has been deposed. State power has passed into the hands of the organ of the Petrograd Soviet of Workers' and Soldiers' Deputies-- the Revolutionary Military Committee, which heads the Petrograd proletariat and the garrison.

'The cause for which the people have fought, namely, the immediate offer of a democratic peace, the abolition of landed proprietorship, workers' control over production, and the establishment of Soviet power—this cause has been secured.

'Long live the revolution of workers, soldiers and peasants!

'Revolutionary Military Committee of the Petrograd Soviet of Workers' and Soldiers' Deputies

'10 a.m., October 25, 1917.'

## Къ Гражданамъ Россіи.

Временное Правительство низложено. Государственная власть перешла въ руки органа Петроградскаго Совѣта Рабочихъ и Солдатскихъ Депутатовъ Военно-Революціоннаго Комитета, стоящаго во главѣ Петроградскаго пролетаріата и гарнизона.

Дѣло, за которое боролся народъ: немедленное предложеніе демократическаго мира, отмѣна помѣщичьей собственности на землю, рабочій контроль надъ производствомъ, созданіе Совѣтскаго Правительства — это дѣло обезпечено.

ДА ЗДРАВСТВУЕТЪ РЕВОЛЮЦІЯ РАБОЧИХЪ, СОЛДАТЪ И КРЕСТЬЯНЪ!

Военно-Революціонный Комитетъ  
или Петроградскій Совѣтъ

Source: [kronstadter.deviantart.com](http://kronstadter.deviantart.com)

# 'The Provisional Government no longer Exists!'

- **11:00 am:** Kerensky departs Petrograd
- **1:00 pm:** Admiralty occupied; High Command arrested
- **2:00 pm:** Kronstadt Armada arrives
- **2:35 pm:** Trotsky tells emergency session of the Petrograd Soviet: 'The Provisional Government no longer Exists!' Lenin appears amidst speech and gives brief speech.
- Mensheviks absolve themselves from 'the tragic consequences of the conspiracy underway'
- Resolution from Lenin calls on workers and peasants to support the revolution *and* expresses confidence that a full and stable victory would be assured with proletarian revolution across Western Europe.



# Delays in Seizing the Winter Palace

- **3 pm:** Taking of Winter Palace delayed 3 hours when MRC leader Blaganravov finds that:
  - 6" guns at Peter and Paul Fortress had not been cleaned in months.
  - No red lantern can be found to give the agreed upon signal.
- Lenin growing increasingly anxious



**Peter and Paul Fortress today**

Source: [guide-saint-petersburg.com](http://guide-saint-petersburg.com)



# Doctor Kishkin appointed 'Dictator'

- American journalist John Reed describes dismal scene at Winter Palace
- Ministers gather in Malachite hall on 2<sup>nd</sup> Floor
- Nikolai Kishkin, a physician and Minister of Welfare, appointed 'dictator'
- Kishkin heads to military HQ, sacks Gen. Polkovnikov, whose followers resign, adding to chaos
- Blagonravov sends ultimatum to Palace; ministers discuss surrender as 'unthinkable' and refuse to answer
- Revolutionists flood first floor of Palace



**Николай Михайлович Кишкин**

Source: [kishkin.name/blog](http://kishkin.name/blog)

# Firing Commences

- **9:40 pm:** Cruiser *Aurora* fires blank; louder than actual shell (no damage)
- Last warning to soldiers in Winter Palace
- **11:00 pm:** Blaganravov orders firing to commence. Most shells fall in river. One hits cornice, another explodes on third floor.
- Mayor Shreider leads City Duma delegates to defend Palace; they are fired on, perhaps by cadets within Palace.







# The Congress of Soviets opens

- ⦿ 10:40 pm: Chairman Fedor Dan rings opening bell for Second All-Russian Congress of Soviets:
- ⦿ Of 670:
  - ⦿ 300 Bolsheviks
  - ⦿ 193 SRs
  - ⦿ 68 Mensheviks
- ⦿ Bolsheviks need Left SRs for majority
- ⦿ 505 support 'all power to the soviets'
- ⦿ 86 support 'all power to democracy'
- ⦿ Martov's plea for peaceful resolution not opposed by Bolsheviks and passes.



# The Menshevik-SR Walkout



You are pitiful isolated individuals; you are bankrupts; your role is played out. Go where you belong from now on - into the dustbin of history!

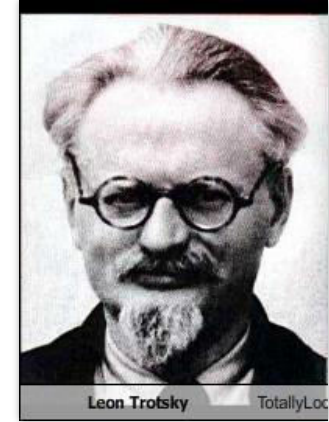
(Leon Trotsky)

izquotes.com

- After Martov's motion passes, moderate socialists rose to denounce the Bolsheviks:
- **Kharash**: 'A criminal political venture'
- **Kuchin**: 'We must save the revolution from this mad adventure'
- **Khinchuk** and **Gendelman**: 'We leave the present congress...'
- **Sukhanov** later reflects: 'We completely untied the Bolsheviks' hands'

# Martov versus Trotsky

- After the walkout:
- Martov's resolution states that the Bolshevik coup threatened to bring about bloodshed, civil war and the triumph of counterrevolution, and again calls for a peaceful settlement.
- Trotsky's resolution condemns the walkout as 'weak and treacherous'
- Neither resolution passes.
- **2:40 am:** Unaware of what had recently transpired at the Winter Palace, the Congress of Soviets takes a recess.



Source: [wikiwand.com](http://wikiwand.com)

# Martov versus Trotsky

- After the walkout:
- Martov's resolution states that the Bolshevik coup threatened to bring about bloodshed, civil war and the triumph of counterrevolution, and again calls for a peaceful settlement.
- Trotsky's resolution condemns the walkout as 'weak and treacherous'
- Neither resolution passes.
- **2:40 am:** Unaware of what had recently transpired at the Winter Palace, the Congress of Soviets takes a recess.

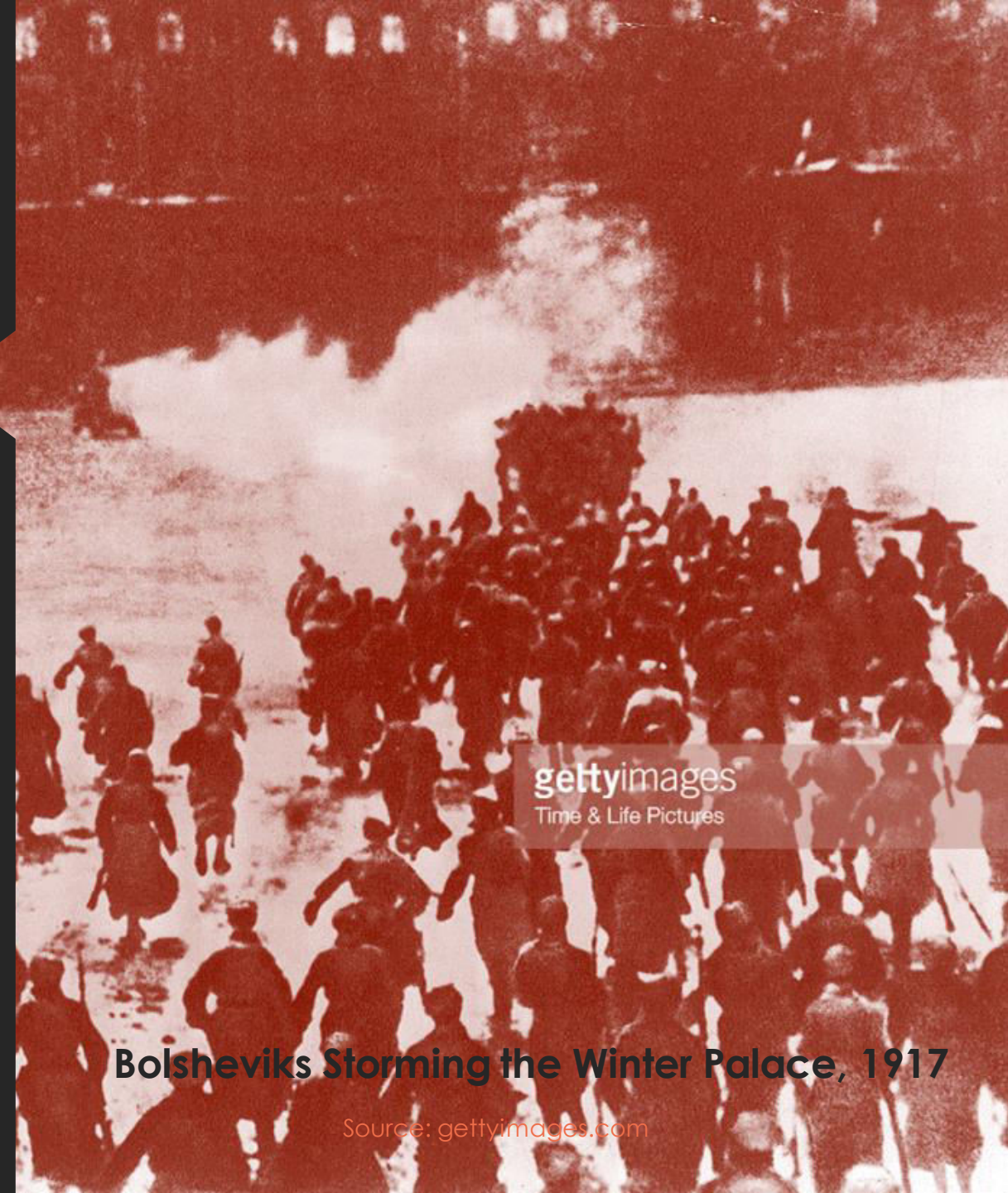


Source: wikiwand.com



# Ministers Arrested

- City Duma delegates turned away from Winter Palace.
- Artillery shell strikes, two cadets injured, Kishkin treats them.
- ~ **2:00 am**: Commander Antonov leads forces to second floor; ministers arrested.
- Antonov maintains discipline.
- News arrives at Smolny. Congress of Soviets reconvenes. Kamenev announces the arrests, to cheers.



**Bolsheviks Storming the Winter Palace, 1917**

Source: [gettyimages.com](https://www.gettyimages.com)





# Lenin's Declaration

- After Kamenev, soldiers explain their confusion regarding who they were sent to protect and pledge support for the Soviet.
- Lenin takes the floor and declares 'The Provisional Government is deposed and most of its members are under arrest. The Soviet authority will at once propose a democratic peace to all nations and an immediate armistice on all fronts...'
- **5:00 am:** Lenin's statement overwhelmingly passes. The Bolsheviks now in power. Congress adjourns for sleep.
- Lenin's decree on peace and land passes two days later. Lenin to chair new Council of Peoples' Commissars.

# The Pulkovo Heights Battle

- From Pskov, Kerensky organizes supporters led by Gen. Krasnov.
- Recalcitrant Mensheviks, SRs and City Duma delegates organize All-Russian Committee for the Salvation of the Country.
- **28 Oct:** Only cadets revolt and are crushed by MRC.
- Union of Railway workers tries and fails to moderate. Kamenev and Zinoviev open to moderation; Lenin seeks their expulsion.
- **30 Oct:** Krasnov's 1,000 soldiers defeated by 10,000 MRC soldiers at Pulkovo Heights.
- Bolsheviks and Left SRs form government; Kamenev resigns. Left-SRs would exit in **March of 1918**.
- Civil War to Follow.



**Gen. Pyotr Krasnov**

Source: kishkin.name/blog

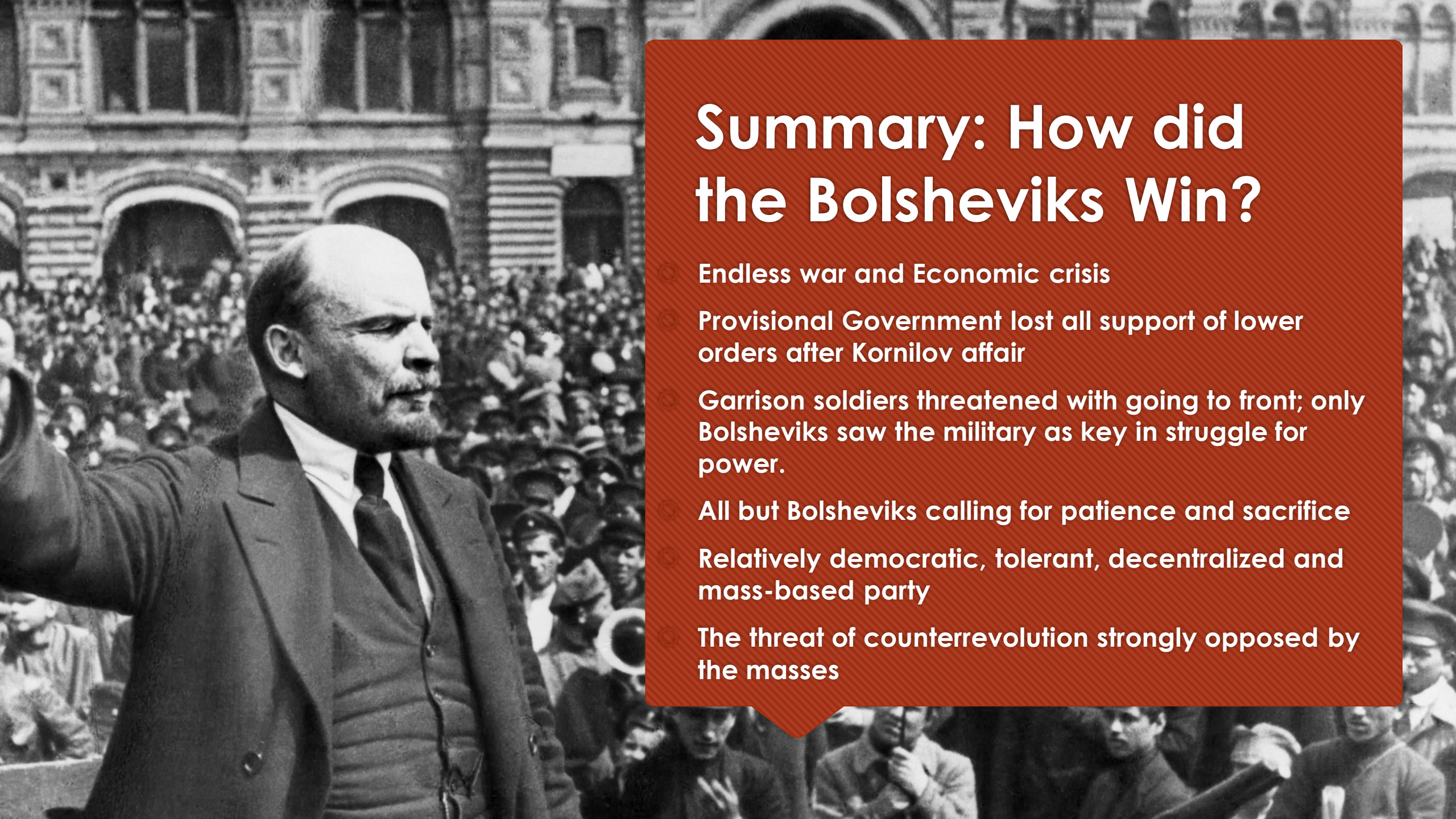


# Moscow and Kiev

- **Moscow:** Bitter street fighting lasts for weeks. Battle at Krymsky Square bloody. Over 700 dead. Tunnels under Kremlin walls give Bolsheviks access and victory by **31 Oct**.
- **Kiev: 26 Oct:** Central Committee for the Protection of Revolution in Ukraine formed. The Bolsheviks were a minority in the *Rada* and supported advancing Bolshevik forces in the **Jan 1918** uprising. On **28 Oct** Bolsheviks were arrested. Chaos ensued in street fighting, but Bolsheviks victorious by **3 (16) Nov**. Ukraine declared an autonomous province of the Russian state.







# Summary: How did the Bolsheviks Win?

- ⑥ Endless war and Economic crisis
- ⑥ Provisional Government lost all support of lower orders after Kornilov affair
- ⑥ Garrison soldiers threatened with going to front; only Bolsheviks saw the military as key in struggle for power.
- ⑥ All but Bolsheviks calling for patience and sacrifice
- ⑥ Relatively democratic, tolerant, decentralized and mass-based party
- ⑥ The threat of counterrevolution strongly opposed by the masses



# The 'impassable abyss'

*'what has taken place was not a political but a social revolution, in which, according to them, we are the losers and they are the winners ... Previously we ruled, now they themselves want to rule. Within them speak the unavenged insults of centuries past. A common language between us cannot be found.'*

—liberal Russian army officer, March 1917, as quoted in Steinberg

Обстрѣлъ революціонными

войсками засады полицейскихъ.