

Do now: What's more important for a leader- staying true to his/her ideology or practical decision making? Explain your position.

V. I. Lenin's Letter To Central Committee Members, October 24 (November 6), 1917

Comrades,

I am writing these lines on the evening of the 24th. The situation is critical in the extreme. In fact it is now absolutely clear that to delay the uprising would be fatal.

With all my might I urge comrades to realize that everything now hangs by a thread; that we are confronted by problems which are not to be solved by conferences or congresses (even congresses of Soviets), but exclusively by peoples, by the masses, by the struggle of the armed people... We must not wait! We may lose everything!

...Who must take power? That is not important at present. Let the Revolutionary Military Committee do it, or "some other institution" which will declare that it will relinquish power only to the true representatives of the interests of the people, the interests of the army (the immediate proposal of peace), the interests of the peasants (the land to be taken immediately and private property abolished), the interests of the starving.

All districts, all regiments, all forces must be mobilized at once and must immediately send their delegations to the Revolutionary Military Committee and to the Central Committee of the Bolsheviks with the insistent demand that under no circumstances should power be left in the hands of Kerensky and Co. until the 25th; not under any circumstances; the matter must be decided without fail this very evening, or this very night.

History will not forgive revolutionaries for procrastinating when they could be victorious today (and they certainly will be victorious today), while they risk losing much tomorrow, in fact, they risk losing everything.

If we seize power today, we seize it not in opposition to the Soviets but on their behalf.

...It would be a disaster, or a sheer formality, to await the wavering vote of October 25. The people have the right and are in duty bound to decide such questions not by a vote, but by force; in critical moments of revolution, the people have the right and are in duty bound to give directions to their representatives, even their best representatives, and not to wait for them.

This is proved by the history of all revolutions; and it would be an infinite crime on the part of the revolutionaries were they to let the chance slip, knowing that the salvation of the revolution, the offer of peace, the salvation of Petrograd, salvation from famine, the transfer of the land to the peasants depend upon them.

The government is tottering. It must be given the death blow at all costs.

1. What is the tone of Lenin's letter? Underline 3 examples from the text that lead you to your response.

Brief Timeline

Source: Konecky & Konecky, trans., Chronicle of World History, Grange Books (adapted)

January 1905	The Czar's troops shoot dead more than 500 strikers on "Bloody Sunday"
May 1905	The Japanese annihilate the Russian fleet in the strait of Tsushima
April 1907	Twenty million people are threatened with starvation in the worst famine on record.
August 1914	Germany declares war on Russia
August 1915	The great Russian fortress of Brest-Litovsk falls to the Germans
February 1917	Women textile workers begin a city-wide strike in Saint Petersburg. Due to food and fuel shortages, riots break out. 200,000 workers organize and call out "down with the autocracy!" The Tsar orders the use of violence to quell civil unrest Soldiers mutiny against the government and the Petrograd Soviet is formed
March 1917	Tsar Nicholas II abdicates the throne. Alexander Kerensky and the Provisional Government take control of Russia. Russia remains in the war. Workers, peasants and soldiers form Soviets (local councils).
April 1917	Germans help arrange for Vladimir Lenin to return to Russia after years of exile. He arrives in St. Petersburg. Lenin rally support promising "Peace, Land and Bread"
November 1917	Armed factory workers calling themselves the Bolshevik Red Guards storm the winter palace in St. Petersburg. Bolsheviks arrest Kerensky and other members of the provisional government.
November 1917	War Communism announced and implemented
March 1918	Treaty of Brest-Litovsk signed
July 1918	Czar Nicholas II and his family are executed by the Bolsheviks
1918-1921	Russian Civil War fought- Red Army vs White Army
March 1921	Lenin's New Economic Policy announced and implemented
1922	"Russia" is named the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics (USSR)

C	O	W

Task: Using your knowledge of Global History and the sources below address the following question: Should Lenin be considered a Russian hero? Would you (in your Russian role) have supported him?

What does Lenin need to do to “fix” Russia?

Political Changes	Economic Changes	Social Changes

What does Lenin promise?

Peace	Land	Bread

Hero	Not a Hero

This image shows a single sheet of white paper with horizontal ruling lines. The lines are evenly spaced and run across the width of the page. There are no margins, text, or other markings on the paper.

Document 1

Peace Treaty of Brest-Litovsk (March 3, 1918).

Article I. Germany, Austria-Hungary, Bulgaria, and Turkey, for the one part, and Russia, for the other part, declare that the state of war between them has ceased. They are resolved to live henceforth in peace and amity with one another.

Article II. The contracting parties will refrain from any agitation or propaganda against the Government or the public and military institutions of the other party. In so far as this obligation devolves upon Russia, it holds good also for the territories occupied by the Powers of the Quadruple Alliance

Document 2

Proclaiming the New Socialist Government, November 1917

Comrades, the workers' and peasants' revolution, about the necessity of which the Bolsheviks have always spoken, has been accomplished. What is the significance of this workers' and peasants' revolution? Its significance is, first of all, that we shall have a Soviet government, our own organ of power, in which the bourgeoisie will have no share whatsoever. The oppressed masses will themselves create a power. The old state apparatus will be shattered to its foundations and a new administrative apparatus set up in the form of the Soviet organizations. From now on, a new phase in the history of Russia begins, and this, the third Russian revolution, should in the end lead to the victory of socialism. . . . Within Russia a huge section of the peasantry have said that they have played long enough with the capitalists, and will now march with the workers. A single decree putting an end to landed proprietorship will win us the confidence of the peasants. The peasants will understand that the salvation of the peasantry lies only in an alliance with the workers. We shall institute genuine workers' control over production. . . . We must now set about building a proletarian socialist state in Russia. . . .

Source: V. I. Lenin, Collected Works, Volume 26, Progress Publishers

Document 3

War Communism

The new rulers of Russia had no plans to transform the economy, but in the course of the civil war they embarked on a hasty and unplanned course of nationalization, a policy known as war communism. After officially annulling private property, the Bolshevik government assumed control or ownership of banks, industry, and other privately held commercial properties. Landed estates and the holdings of monasteries and churches became national property, although the Bolsheviks explicitly exempted the holdings of poor peasants from confiscation. The abolition of private trade was unpopular, and when the party seized crops from peasants to feed people in the cities, the peasants drastically reduced their production. By 1920 industrial production had fallen to about one-tenth of its prewar level and agricultural output to about half its prewar level.

Source: Bentley, Jerry, and Herb Ziegler. *Traditions & Encounters: A Global Perspective on the Past*. 3. Boston, MA: Mc Graw Hill, 2006. 990-1001. Print.

Document 4

Lenin Demands Defeat of Counter-Revolutionary Kulaks [prosperous peasants] (November 8, 1918).

Comrades! The revolt by the five kulak [communities] must be suppressed without mercy. The interest of the entire revolution demands this, because we have now before us our final decisive battle “with the kulaks.” We need to set an example.

1. You need to hang (hang without fail, so that the public sees) at least 100 notorious kulaks, the rich, and the bloodsuckers.
2. Publish their names.
3. Take away all of their grain.
4. Execute the hostages - in accordance with yesterday’s telegram. This needs to be accomplished in such a way, that people for hundreds of miles around will see, tremble, know and scream out: let’s choke and strangle those blood-sucking kulaks.

Document 5

Russian Production Statistics 1913 and 1921

	1913 Czarist Russia Pre–World War I	1921 Communist Russia at the end of the Civil War
Grain	85 million metric tons	23.7 million metric tons
Coal	29 million metric tons	9.5 million metric tons
Pig Iron	4.2 million metric tons	1.2 million metric tons
Oil	9.2 million metric tons	3.8 million metric tons

Source: B. R. Mitchell, European Historical Statistics 1750–1975, Second Revised Edition, Facts on File (adapted)

Document 6

War Communism was an emergency programme established by Lenin during the civil war [1918–1921]. War Communism included forced seizure of grain, nationalization of all trade and industry and strict control of labour. As a result of this program and of the ravages of the war, industrial and agricultural production declined sharply, and the population suffered severe hardship. It caused a famine that led to the death of an estimated 5 million people. . . .

Source: Stephen Tonge, “Russia 1917–1924,” A Web of English History online

Document 7



Lenin-cleaning the filth from the world.

Document 8

In 1917, Lenin and his fellow Bolsheviks had taken power in the name of the Russian working class, but socialist victory did not bring peace and stability to the lands of the former Russian empire. After seizing power, Lenin and his supporters had to defend the world's first "dictatorship of the proletariat" against numerous enemies, including dissident socialists, anti-Bolshevik officers and troops, peasants, and foreign military forces.

Opposition to the Bolshevik Party- by now calling itself the Russian Communist party-erupted into a civil war that lasted from 1918 to 1920. Operating out of its new capital in Moscow, Lenin's government began a policy of crushing all opposition. The communists began the Red Terror campaign in which suspected anticommunists known as Whites were arrested, tried and executed. The secret police killed some 200,000 opponents of the regime. In July 1918 the Bolsheviks executed Tsar Nicholas II, Empress Alexandra, their five children, and the remaining servants because they feared that the Romanov family would fall into the hands of the Whites, thereby strengthening counterrevolutionary forces. White terror was often equally as brutal as Red terror. The peasantry, although hostile to the communists, largely supported the Bolsheviks, fearing that a victory by the Whites would result in the return of the monarchy. However, foreign military intervention supported White resistance to the communist takeover. Russia's withdrawal from the Great War and anticommunist sentiment inflamed Russia's former allies (Britain, France, Japan and the United States) who sent troops and supplies to aid White forces. Although their numbers were negligible, the foreigners' presence sometimes had the effect of bonding otherwise hostile groups to the Reds. Poorly organized and without widespread support, the Whites were defeated by the Red Army in 1920. Estimates place the number of lives lost in the civil war at ten million, with many more persons dying from disease and starvation than from the fighting. The political system that emerged from the civil war bore the imprint of political oppression, which played a significant role in the later development of the Soviet state.

Citation:

Bentley, Jerry, and Herb Ziegler. *Traditions & Encounters: A Global Perspective on the Past*. 3. Boston, MA: Mc Graw Hill, 2006. 990-1001. Print.

Document 9

. . .Drought had drastically reduced crop output. Under communism, all land was owned by the state. The crops belonged to the state, which seized them. The peasants could not sell them. As a result, they had no incentive to grow more food than they could eat. A famine developed in the land. People starved to death. In 1921, Lenin had instituted the New Economic Policy (NEP) to deal with this situation. When Stalin took over in 1924, the NEP was firmly in place. It was a retreat from communism, "a partial return to private enterprise." The peasants no longer had to turn over their crops to the government. Instead, they paid a tax on what they produced, and were allowed to sell it at a profit. Although private property had technically been abolished, they could now own and run small farms. They could hire labor. Citizens could start new businesses. Badly managed industrial plants were returned to their former owners. The entire Communist financial system was reorganized along semi-capitalist lines. Foreign capitalists were invited to invest in state-owned businesses. The response was limited. . . .

Source: Ted Gottfried, *The Stalinist Empire: The Rise and Fall of the Soviet Union*, Twenty-First Century Books, 2002 (adapted)

Document 10

The Romanovs had given Lenin a major problem. To many, Nicholas was still the legitimate ruler of Russia. While he was alive, people would rally to his cause. The simple fact was that many in the White (non-communist) corner were fighting to restore Nicholas to the throne. The tsar, appointed by God, had many loyal followers. If Nicholas escaped, then his followers would have had someone at their head to lead them—against Lenin.

In the summer of 1918, Ekaterinburg was threatened by the advancing Whites. The decision was taken by the Bolsheviks to kill Nicholas and his family. On the night of July 17th, 1918, the family was awoken and told that there was trouble in Ekaterinburg. They were told that they would be safer in the basement of the house they were staying in. The whole family, the family doctor and three servants went to the basement. A group of twelve Red Army soldiers appeared in the basement and shot them. The legend has it that the princesses had to be finished off with bayonets as they had sewn jewels in their blouses which had deflected the bullets.

Source: History Learning Site

Document 11

In 1921, as the Reds consolidated their military victories, Lenin faced the daunting prospect of rebuilding a society that had been at war since 1914. The workers, in whose name he had taken power, were on strike. Other problems included depopulated cities, destroyed factories, and an army that demobilized soldiers faster than the workforce could absorb them. Lenin and the party tried to take strict control of the country by crushing workers' strikes, peasant rebellions and a sailors' revolt. Yet Lenin recognized the need to make peace with those whose skills would rekindle industrial production. Faced with economic paralysis in the spring of 1921 he decided on a radical reversal of war communism.

Demonstrating his willingness to compromise, Lenin implemented the New Economic Policy (NEP), which temporarily restored the market economy and some private enterprise in Russia. Large industries, banks, and transportation and communications facilities remained under state control, but the government returned small-scale industries to private ownership. The government also allowed peasants to sell their surpluses at free market prices. Other features of the NEP included a vigorous program of electrification and the establishment of technical schools to train technicians and engineers. Lenin did not live to see the success of the NEP. After suffering three paralytic strokes, he died in 1924. His death was followed by a bitter struggle for power among the Bolshevik leaders.

Source: Bentley, Jerry, and Herb Ziegler. *Traditions & Encounters: A Global Perspective on the Past*. 3. Boston, MA: Mc Graw Hill, 2006. 990-1001. Print.

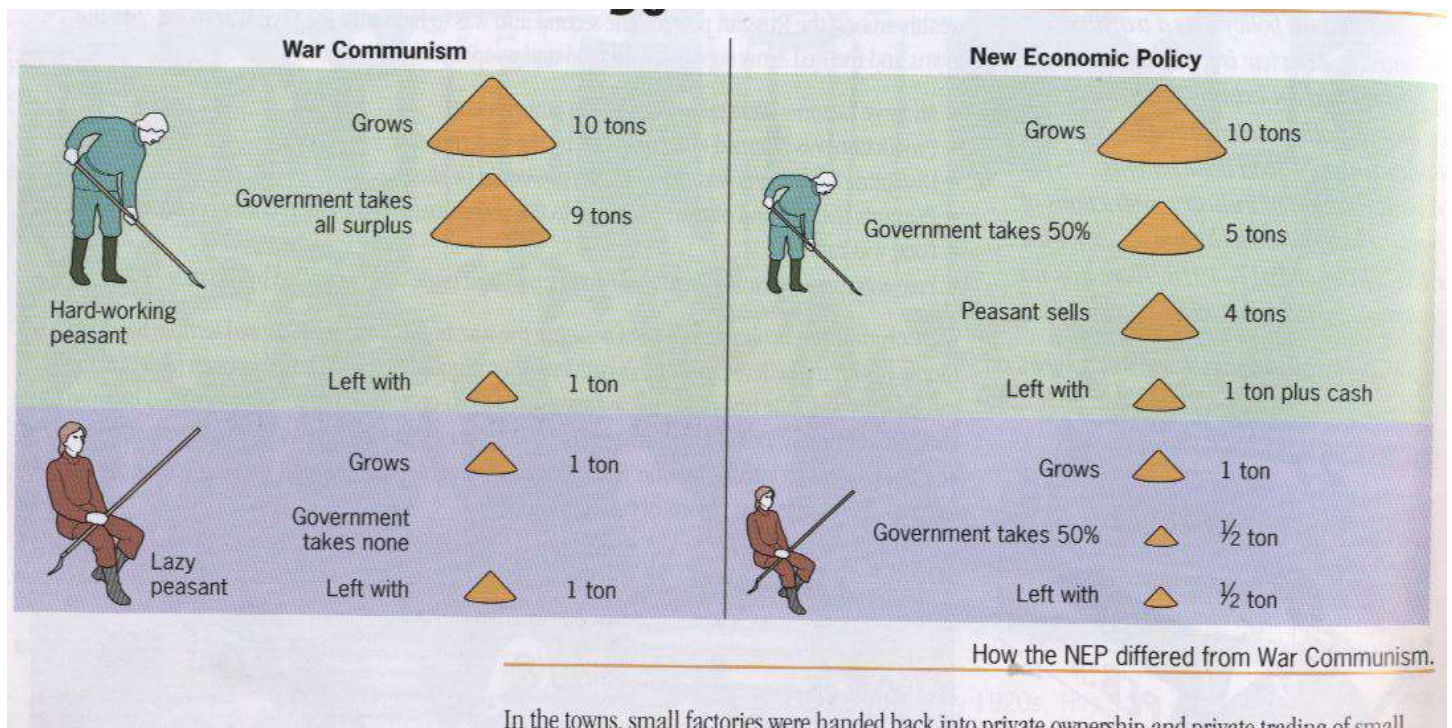
Document 12

We must not count on going straight to communism. We must build on the basis of peasants' personal incentive. We are told that the personal incentive of the peasants means restoring private property. But we have never interfered with personally owned articles of consumption and implements of production as far as the peasants are concerned. We have abolished private ownership of land. Peasants farmed land that they did not own—rented land, for instance. That system exists in very many countries. There is nothing impossible about it from the standpoint of economics. The difficulty lies in creating personal incentive...

Have we been able to do that? No, we have not! We thought that production and distribution would go on at communist bidding in a country with a declassed proletariat. We must change that now, or we shall be unable to make the proletariat understand this process of transition...

Source: Vladimir Lenin, Report to the All-Russia Congress October 1921- New Economic Policy (NEP)

Document 13



Document 14

We stand for organized terror - this should be frankly admitted. Terror is an absolute necessity during times of revolution. Our aim is to fight against the enemies of the Soviet Government and of the new order of life. We judge quickly. In most cases only a day passes between the apprehension of the criminal and his sentence. When confronted with evidence criminals in almost every case confess; and what argument can have greater weight than a criminal's own confession.

Leader of the Secret Police [Cheka], Dzerzhinsky, 1918

Document 15

The Russian Civil War raged from 1918 until the start of 1921. During this time, the Bolsheviks faced massive opposition to their rule in the form of the White Armies, led by former officers of the Tsarist state, and also from intervention by the forces of foreign countries. Yet, by the start of 1921, the Bolsheviks had defeated their enemies and gained a complete victory.

The Bolsheviks were extremely fortunate in the quality of their leadership, particularly in Lenin and Trotsky. Throughout the Civil War, Lenin provided the energy and drive needed to inspire success, while Trotsky provided the organisation and charisma.

The White Armies appeared to have a number of advantages in the Civil War:

- Their leaders were experienced military commanders
- They controlled huge areas of Russia
- They had the Bolsheviks surrounded
- They had the active support of foreign countries, which intervened in the Civil War on their behalf.

However, as the Civil War developed, the White Armies began to face major problems and difficulties in organising their campaigns. Against the drive and ruthless energy of the Bolsheviks, their campaigns faltered. By the end of 1920, the Bolsheviks were close to achieving total victory.

Victory for the Reds

By the end of the Civil War in 1921 the Bolsheviks had succeeded in securing their grip on power in Russia.

The White Armies and the foreign powers fighting on Russian soil had been defeated. Just as importantly, rival political parties had been outlawed. Thanks to the Cheka secret police, dissenting voices had been silenced.

Lenin had achieved his ultimate goal of steering his small Bolshevik party to total control of Russia.

<https://www.bbc.com/bitesize/guides/zgdtthyc/revision/3>

Document 16

> Analyzing Key Concepts

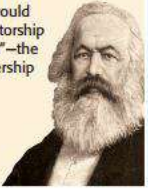
Communism

Communism is a political and economic system of organization. In theory, property is owned by the community and all citizens share in the common wealth according to their need. In practice, this was difficult to achieve.

German philosopher Karl Marx saw communism as the end result of an essential historical process. Russian revolutionary Vladimir Lenin built on Marx's theories and sought ways of applying those theories. Ultimately, however, Lenin's communist state—the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics (USSR)—became a one-party, totalitarian system. This chart compares how Marx and Lenin viewed communism.

SKILLBUILDER: Interpreting Charts
Comparing and Contrasting How did Lenin's ideas about communism differ from those of Marx?

Evolution of Communist Thought

Marx	Lenin
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• History was the story of class struggle.• The struggle Marx saw was between capitalists and the proletariat, or the workers.• The proletariat's numbers would become so great and their condition so poor that a spontaneous revolution would occur.• The revolution would end with a "dictatorship of the proletariat"—the communal ownership of wealth. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• History was the story of class struggle.• The struggle Lenin saw was capitalists against the proletariat and the peasants.• The proletariat and the peasants were not capable of leading a revolution and needed the guidance of professional revolutionaries.• After the revolution, the state needed to be run by a single party with disciplined, centrally directed administrators in order to ensure its goals. 