

[These Bitesize notes are from 2008 and have been taken down.]

Life in Lenin's Russia

Life improved for many ordinary people in Lenin's Russia. But Russia was now a *dictatorship* and anyone who openly criticised Communism risked losing their life.

Five aspects of the communist state

The *Bolsheviks* wanted to set up a Communist state. This comprised **five** aspects:

1. **Peace** - as promised, Lenin made the Treaty of Brest-Litovsk with Germany although it meant that Russia lost vast amounts of its best industrial and agricultural land in Poland and the Ukraine.
2. **Communist economy** - the Bolsheviks gave the land previously owned by the nobles to the peasants, and factories were handed over to workers' committees.
3. **Communist laws** - the Bolsheviks banned religion; brought in an eight-hour day for workers, as well as unemployment pay and pensions; abolished the teaching of history and Latin, while encouraging science; and allowed divorce.
4. **Communist propaganda** - there was a huge campaign to teach everyone to read. 'Agit trains' went around the country showing communist newsreels and giving lectures to teach peasants about Communism.
5. **Dictatorship** - Lenin dismissed the Constituent Assembly, which was the parliament that the Provisional Government had arranged, and declared the 'dictatorship of the proletariat' (which was really, the dictatorship of Lenin). A secret police force called the **Cheka** arrested, tortured and killed anybody who tried to destroy the Communist state.

What is Communism?

Here are eight things Communists believed:

1. The ideas of *Karl Marx*.
2. People should contribute to the public wealth according to their ability, but receive according to their needs.
3. The means of production should be owned equally by the whole community (hence communism), not as in capitalism where individuals (who might be very rich) own the means of production and leave the rest of society to be poor and oppressed wage slaves.
4. A deterministic interpretation of history, which said that society must inevitably develop through successive stages of slavery, feudalism, then capitalism, ending up with the violent overthrow of capitalism and the establishment of a communist society.
5. They should work to overthrow capitalism throughout the world by means of a revolution by the proletariat (workers).
6. Class was a feature of capitalist society, and should be destroyed and replaced by a society of equals.
7. The economy should be planned - controlled by the government.
8. Lenin changed Marx's ideas to add that a Communist government first had to be a dictatorship which was essential in order to bring in the communist state safely.