

[These Bitesize notes are from 2015 and have been taken down.]

Provisional Government and its problems

The Provisional Government replaced the tsar's government that collapsed during the revolution in March 1917. Did the Provisional Government achieve any major reforms and pull Russia out of an unpopular war?

Problems

In March 1917, when the tsar's government collapsed, the members of the **Duma** set up the **Provisional Government**, led by Alexander Kerensky.

The Provisional Government never really ruled Russia. Right from the start, it had to share power with the **Petrograd Soviet**, which had a rule (Order No.1) that its members should only obey the Provisional Government if the Soviet agreed with it. For this reason, March to November 1917 is sometimes called the period of **Dual Government** in Russia.

Disastrously, the Provisional Government - because it was only a temporary government - **did not really carry out any major reforms**. All it did was abolish the Okhrana and press censorship, and allow political freedom. This gave the government's opponents - such as Lenin's **Bolsheviks** - the freedom to attack the government for the problems it was not solving.

The main problem of the Provisional Government was that it **tried to continue the war**. In June 1917, it organised an attack on Austria. When the attack failed, people began to turn against the government. Instead, they started to follow Lenin whose welcome message was: '**Peace, bread, land**'.



Alexander Kerensky

Failures

1. The Provisional Government had to **share power** with the Petrograd Soviet. Members of the Soviet **always** rejected the Provisional Government.
2. The Provisional Government did **nothing to stop the war**. In fact, as desertions increased, it set up death squads to hunt down and execute deserters. The soldiers came to hate the Provisional Government.
3. The Provisional Government was unable to end the **shortages of food and fuel** in Petrograd. This was because it continued the war, which was causing the shortages. The workers came to hate the Provisional Government.
4. The Provisional Government did **nothing to solve the land problem**. In the countryside, peasants started taking over the land of the nobles, many of whom had run away. The Provisional Government sent soldiers to take the land back by force. The peasants came to hate the Provisional Government.
5. The Provisional Government did **little to deal with its opponents**. Even after the Bolsheviks rebelled in July 1917, it allowed Lenin to preach his popular message of 'all power to the Soviets'. People came to despise the Provisional Government.