

Vladimir Ilyich Ulyanov^[a] (22 April [O.S. 10 April] 1870 – 21 January 1924), better known as **Vladimir Lenin**,^[a] was a Russian revolutionary, politician, and political theorist. He served as the first and founding [head of government](#) of [Soviet Russia](#) from 1917 to 1924 and of the [Soviet Union](#) from 1922 to 1924. Under his administration, Russia, and later the Soviet Union, became a [one-party socialist state](#) governed by the [Communist Party](#). Ideologically a [Marxist](#), his developments to the ideology are called [Leninism](#).

Born to an [upper-middle-class](#) family in [Simbirsk](#), Lenin embraced [revolutionary socialist](#) politics following [his brother's](#) 1887 execution. Expelled from [Kazan Imperial University](#) for participating in protests against the [Russian Empire's Tsarist government](#), he devoted the following years to a law degree. He moved to [Saint Petersburg](#) in 1893 and became a senior Marxist activist. In 1897, he was arrested for [sedition](#) and exiled to [Shushenskoye](#) in Siberia for three years, where he married [Nadezhda Krupskaya](#). After his exile, he moved to Western Europe, where he became a prominent theorist in the Marxist [Russian Social Democratic Labour Party](#) (RSDLP). In 1903, he took a key role in the RSDLP ideological split, leading the [Bolshevik faction](#) against [Julius Martov's Mensheviks](#). Following Russia's failed [Revolution of 1905](#), he campaigned for the [First World War](#) to be transformed into a Europe-wide [proletarian revolution](#), which, as a Marxist, he believed would cause the overthrow of [capitalism](#) and its replacement with [socialism](#). After the 1917 [February Revolution](#) ousted the [Tsar](#) and established a [Provisional Government](#), he returned to Russia to play a leading role in the [October Revolution](#) in which the Bolsheviks overthrew the new regime.

[Lenin's Bolshevik government](#) initially shared power with the [Left Socialist Revolutionaries](#), elected [soviets](#), and a multi-party [Constituent Assembly](#), although by 1918 it had centralised power in the new Communist Party. Lenin's administration redistributed land among the peasantry and nationalised banks and large-scale industry. It withdrew from the First World War by signing a [treaty](#) conceding territory to the [Central Powers](#), and promoted [world revolution](#) through the [Communist International](#). Opponents were suppressed in the [Red Terror](#), a violent campaign administered by the [state security services](#); tens of thousands were killed or interned in concentration camps. His administration defeated [right](#) and [left-wing](#) anti-Bolshevik armies in the [Russian Civil War](#) from 1917 to 1922 and oversaw the [Polish–Soviet War](#) of 1919–1921. Responding to wartime devastation, [famine](#), and popular uprisings, in 1921 Lenin encouraged economic growth through the [New Economic Policy](#). Several non-Russian nations had secured independence from the Russian Empire after 1917, but three were [re-united](#) into the new [Soviet Union](#) in 1922. His health failing, Lenin died in [Gorki](#), with [Joseph Stalin](#) succeeding him as the pre-eminent figure in the Soviet government.