

Peace, Bread, and Land

Directions: Read the story, and answer the questions that follow.

As our story opens, the new Russian government is facing grave problems. The riots are worse than ever. Small, well organized groups are trying to take over the government. The world war continues, and Russians suffer even greater losses at the hands of the Germans. The situation is desperate. Russia's very survival seems to be at stake.

Two men, both revolutionaries, are discussing their plans for Russia's future. Both agree that the czar and the nobility must be prevented from returning to power. They disagree on practically everything else. Both men will taste power. One will go on to change the course of Russian history. The other will live out his years in exile, lonely and forgotten.

See if you understand the reasons for one man's success and the other man's failure.

Petrograd 1917

Lenin: (talking to the government leader, Alexander Kerensky) "And you call yourself a revolutionary."

Kerensky: "of course, I'm a revolutionary. I am transferring the government from the czar to the people. I am saying goodbye to 300 years of misery and corruption. What else am I if not a revolutionary?"

Lenin: "A fool. You are a fool who has come to believe in his own daydreams."

Kerensky: "Stop talking down to me as if I were one of your schoolboy followers. While you make speeches on street corners, I'm putting together a government that will give hope to Russians who love freedom. It will take time. Democracy moves slowly. But one day the people will understand what I have done for them. Then they will return the love I feel for them."

Lenin: “Love you? They hate you! Fool that you are, you don’t even understand why.”

Kerensky: “Tell me why.”

Lenin: “They hate you because you are a good man, and they understand only cruelty.”

Kerensky: “I don’t understand.”

Lenin: “Of course you don’t, Kerensky. You don’t understand that the people want to see this war over now. They want land and bread now. They don’t care how they get these things. Our people are filled with hatred. They hate the rich, the educated and the privileged. They hate all those who make them feel stupid, clumsy, and inferior. They will follow a man shrewd enough to punish those they hate and strong enough to make them fear him.”

Kerensky: “No, no! The Russian people aren’t like that at all! They are brave people who will fight on until this war is over. They will get their land and their bread. But they know that these things take time. They understand that these things take time. They understand that these things must be done properly. They must be done democratically. They people understand, and they will wait.”

Lenin: “Bah! You lead the Russian people but you don’t understand them at all. Your picture of them is a lie!”

Kerensky: “But what of your picture of the Russian people?” What an ugly picture you paint of them. I am begging to think that you hate the Russian people!”

Lenin: “I am above love and hate. Russia is about to give birth to a great revolution. I am the doctor who will deliver this child. I will do anything – use any trick, sacrifice any person-to see the revolution live and grow strong!”

Kerensky: “You’re mad!

Lenin: “Perhaps. Perhaps great visions come only to those who are a little mad. Maybe that’s why we succeed where others fail!”

Kerensky: “Take care, Lenin.” Kerensky warned. “You may become the thing you claim to hate the most!”

Lenin: “And what is that?”

Kerensky: “The next Russian czar!”

Questions:

1. What problems did Russia face in 1917?

2. a) What type of government did Kerensky favor?

b) Why did Lenin criticize this type of government?

3. According to Lenin, what do the Russian people want?

4. According to Lenin, “I will do anything-use any trick, sacrifice any person-to see the revolution live and grow strong.” Who do you suppose inspired Lenin? Explain your answer.

5. What does Kerensky mean when he says to Lenin, “You may become the thing you claim to hate the most....The next Russian czar!”