

Explain why these policies aroused opposition within the Bolshevik Party and within the USSR

Throughout the years 1918 to 1924 Lenin introduced three new economic policies; State Capitalism, War Communism and the N.E.P, which were an attempt to solve the long-term problems facing the Russian economy. Each economic policy was different in many ways, some did not even agree with Bolshevik ideology and due to this many people within the Bolshevik party and the USSR disagreed with some of Lenin's policies.

When looking at State Capitalism we can see that not only did members of the Bolshevik party oppose but so did the peasants. The Party members opposed because many Bolsheviks wanted the immediate introduction of a more sweeping revolutionary policy i.e. total socialism. The party did not want to work with the old economic system however Lenin persuaded the party that they needed to work with what they had and not what they did not have: "Without the guidance of specialists, no transition to socialism is possible, because, as compared with capitalism, socialism requires a deliberate and forward mass movement towards higher productivity of labour. But the majority of specialists are bourgeois...Clearly it is a compromise measure." Bukharin, Radek, Obolensky and others resented Lenin's emphasis not only on discipline but also on the need for material incentives, piecework and specially favourable conditions for the employment of bourgeois specialists. The Middle classes were happy because not much had changed in terms of economic policy since the Tsar had abdicated. It also annoyed the peasants because land reform was being put back. The peasants lived a hard and cold uncomfortable life and had disliked the Tsar because none of his policies had helped them. They did not want Lenin to be the same and because State Capitalism was similar to what had happened when the Tsar had been in power they believed that change would not be coming.

However things changed slightly when War Communism was introduced. The Middle classes came to hate War Communism as it was a policy based around socialism and they did not like this. They were the class enemy and were not allowed to work, although some were drafted back as managers in the nationalised industries or to work in the civil service. However most survived by selling clothes and jewellery or anything that they owned. Members of nobility hated War Communism too, for the "former people" life was arduous queuing up with the poor for food.

The Kronstadt Rising in 1921 was partly due to the repressive measures and opposition to War Communism. Two prominent Bolsheviks, Alexander Shylapnikov, the labour commissar, and Alexandra Kollanti, the outstanding woman in the party, led a "Worker's Opposition" movement against the excesses of War Communism. Picking up the cue given by the "Worker's Opposition", groups of workers in Petrograd went on strike early in 1921. By February 1921,

thousands of Petrograd workers had crossed the naval base at Kronstadt, there they linked up with sailors and demanded greater freedom. Unfortunately Trotsky crushed their demonstration.

The leading economic theorists in the party, Bukharin and Preobrazhensky, who were referred to as "Left Bolsheviks" urged that War Communism should be retained as the permanent economic strategy of the Bolshevik government, Trotsky also supported War Communism.

Trotsky and Preobrazhensky regarded the repressive measures of War Communism as the proper revolutionary strategy for the Bolshevik party to follow. However when the New Economic Policy was introduced they were disturbed by the concessions to the peasantry and the re-emergence of Capitalism as N.E.P did not agree with their Bolshevik ideology. They did not like the fact that incentive had been brought back into the economy to make sure that people worked and also made sure that food distribution was better, they preferred the more repressive measures which had been introduced with War Communism. Trotsky described N.E.P as "the first sign of the degeneration of Bolshevism". He objected to the reintroduction of money and private trading which created Nepmen. Trotsky became the spokesman of "the Platform of 46", a group of 46 party members who issued an open letter condemning the governments "flagrant radical errors of economic policy" which had subordinated Soviet Russia's needs to the interest of the Nepmen. Trotsky's arguments were strengthened by the undeniable failure of Vesenkha to formulate a national economic strategy because after three years its chairman had to admit that Soviet Russia still lacked "a single economic plan".

Originally Bukharin was also opposed to N.E.P but soon became its most enthusiastic supporter. His new approach was expressed in his appeal to the peasants: "Enrich yourselves under the N.E.P" Bukharin believed that the increased purchasing power of the peasants, which would result from the sale of their surplus grain, would also stimulate industry.

In conclusion it can be seen that all three economic policies aroused opposition within the Bolshevik party as well as within the USSR for a number of reasons. It was mainly State Capitalism and N.E.P that aroused opposition within the Bolshevik party as not many Bolsheviks, especially Trotsky, liked the idea of using the means of capitalism in any economic policy as it opposed their own Bolshevik ideology. The peasants disliked State Capitalism and War communism, as did the working class due to War Communism's repressive measures and the extraction of using incentives within the work force. The "former people" and aristocracy disliked War Communism as it was based on socialism, which meant that their wealth now meant nothing to them. It can be argued that Bolshevik policy in these years, far from being a matter of structured economic planning, was never anything more than a set of fragmented responses to a series of desperate situations and opposition.