

DOCUMENT PRACTICE: RUSSIAN REVOLUTION**Document 1: Excerpt from 'What Is to Be Done' by Lenin (1902)**

I assert that it is far more difficult [for government police] to unearth a dozen wise men than a hundred fools. This position I will defend, no matter how much you instigate the masses against me for my "anti-democratic" views. As I have stated repeatedly, by "wise men," in connection with organization, I mean *professional revolutionaries*, irrespective of whether they have developed from among students or working men. I assert: (1) that no revolutionary movement can endure without a stable organization of leaders maintaining continuity; (2) that the broader the popular mass drawn spontaneously into the struggle, which forms the basis of the movement and participates in it, the more urgent the need for such an organization, and the more solid this organization must be...; (3) that such an organization must consist chiefly of people professionally engaged in revolutionary activity; (4) that in an autocratic state [such as Russia], the more we *confine* the membership of such an organization to people who are professionally engaged in revolutionary activity and who have been professionally trained in the art of combating the political police, the more difficult will it be to unearth people from the working class and from other social classes who will be able to join the movement and perform active work in it... The only serious organization principle for the active workers of our movement should be the strictest secrecy, the strictest selection of members, and the training of professional revolutionaries.

Q1: *What does Lenin mean by "professional revolutionaries"?*

Q2: *Why does Lenin believe that professional revolutionaries are especially needed in Russia?*

Q3: *What criticism of his views does he anticipate?*

Q4: *How does he defend himself against this criticism?*

Document 2: Excerpt from 'Decree on the Dissolution of the Constituent Assembly' (Jan. 1918)

After the Bolshevik coup in November 1917, elections for the Constituent Assembly were held. The results gave a majority to the Social Revolutionary Party and embarrassed the Bolsheviks. Using his control of the Red Army, Lenin closed the Constituent Assembly in January 1918, after it had met for only one day, and established his own dictatorship.

At its very inception, the Russian Revolution produced the Soviets of Workers', Soldiers' and Peasants' Deputies as the only mass organization of all the working and exploited classes capable of leading the struggle of these classes for their complete political and economic emancipation. The October Revolution... transferred the entire power to the Soviets.

The Constituent Assembly, elected on the basis of electoral lists drawn up prior to the October Revolution, was an expression of the old relation of political forces which existed when power was held by the compromisers.... When the people at that time voted for the candidates of the Socialist-Revolutionary Party, they were not in a position to choose between the Right Socialist-Revolutionaries, the supporters of the bourgeoisie, and the Left Socialist-Revolutionaries, the supporters of socialism...

The October Revolution, by giving power to the Soviets, and through the Soviets to the working and exploited classes, aroused the desperate resistance of the exploiters... the Party of Right Socialist-Revolutionaries, the party of Kerensky, Avksentyev and Chernov, obtained the majority in the Constituent Assembly which met on January 5... this party refused to discuss the absolutely clear, precise and unambiguous proposal of the supreme organ of Soviet power, the Central Executive Committee of the Soviets, to recognize the program of Soviet power, to recognize the Declaration of Rights of the Working and Exploited People, to recognize the October Revolution and Soviet power. By this action the Constituent Assembly severed all ties with the Soviet Republic of Russia...

The Right Socialist-Revolutionary and Menshevik parties are in fact carrying on outside the Constituent Assembly a most desperate struggle against Soviet power... Accordingly, the Central Executive Committee resolves that the Constituent Assembly is hereby dissolved.

Q5: *According to Lenin, what is the only body that has a legitimate claim on political power in Russia?*

Q6: *How does Lenin defend his claim that the election didn't represent the true wishes of the people?*

Q7: *What reason does Lenin give for closing the legitimately elected Constituent Assembly?*

Q8: *In your opinion, is there any justification for Lenin dissolving the Assembly? Explain your position.*
