

# October's Shadows



A game of struggle  
and survival  
in Revolutionary Moscow

## Introduction

*"How can you make a revolution without executions?"  
-an outraged Lenin in October on hearing that the Soviet had abolished the death penalty.*

In October 1918, Russia was in a fervor of famine, war and revolution. Throughout the month the outcome of events was fragile and uncertain, a thousand turning points passing every day.

At the end of that month the Bolsheviks overthrew the Provisional Government, and began the chain of events that led to the Soviet Union. At first, their grip on power was tenuous, dependent on the consent of a hundred different organizations, but little by little power was concentrated, first in the soviets, then in the Party, and finally in the iron grip of a supreme leader.

But at the same time there was nothing inevitable about any of this. It was simply the result of those turning points and the ruthlessness of those Bolsheviks in perceiving and seizing them.

This game begins with those events, throwing the characters together in an aristocratic mansion in the heart of Moscow. Their struggles are the struggles of Russia's people; their ideologies are proxies for the ideologies of the people. The characters struggle for power, influence and ideology as events pressure them to take a stand on events as they unfold.

They may not affect its course, but the judgment of the revolution lies in their hands.

## OVERVIEW OF PLAY

The players of the game portray individual characters who have been assigned or who have chosen to live in an aristocratic mansion in the aftermath of the October Revolution. Each character is defined by their political affiliations and social class in addition to more traditional RPG attributes. These facts are generally expected to be the most crucial facets of their stories.

As the game progresses, the timeline of the revolution will progress as well, and new events and conditions will take place. These occur on a monthly basis, and take the form of special rules and suggested encounters. You can think of them as pre-charged weapons aimed at the hearts of specific types of characters. That said, there is no obligation to use any of these events at all.

Unlike most games, characters can only die from being shot. You can be stabbed, thrown off buildings and drowned, but somehow like Rasputin you will always manage to escape your fate. This is contrary to reality and good sense, but it needn't cramp your style too much as a gun has been helpfully provided to assist the characters in the resolution of their ideological struggles.

The key measure of effectiveness in this game is not the personal skill of their character, but their ability to tie into other characters and shape their attitudes. Players who value their effectiveness should plan accordingly.

## **EXAMPLE OF PLAY**

*Vitaly is an Aristocratic Menshevik Doctor. His old friend from medical school, Aleksandr (Aristocratic Royalist Doctor) has come to visit him, and is clearly in desperate straits. His ruffled coat is torn and mud stained, his hair is disheveled, and his riding boots have come apart at the soles and are exposing his filthy toes.*

*“Friend, what a sad succession of event I have endured. A weaker man would have perished under the burden I have carried these last months, but I have pushed on, pushed on in the hope that there is something I can do before my fate is sealed.*

*Vitaly, I trust you completely – absolutely, because there is absolutely no hope for me otherwise. But in truth, I hold no hope for myself, but only for my precious sister Tanya. There is no place in this Godless Russia for an old aristocratic fool like myself. But Tania – Tania is an angel, and you Vitaly, you have to help her.*

*There is man who desires her – a Bolshevik named Kronsky. You must protect her from him, Vitaly, I beg you... You have friends, influence – people respect you. I remember well your words in medical school – how mad I thought them then, how foolish I was. I should have listened, if only to understand the storm that has come and washed my family away.”*

*Aleksandr is a Comrade of Vitaly and can bring all their shared traits to bear. He uses their shared class as Aristocrats and Profession as a Doctor in addition to their Comraderie. Aleksandr has the Persuasive Great Talent, and finally draws upon his Relationship with Tania for a final die, for a total of 6 dice. Vitaly resists only with a single die, his Stolid talent. Vitaly rolls a three, and objects that his position is hardly safe, but Aleksandr declares that if even Vitaly cannot aid him he must end his life then and there. Vitaly relents, and Aleksandr uses the three books of his success to buy a Weakness of Obligation to Tania on Vitaly’s character sheet.*

# Characters

*“The depth and strength of a human character are defined by its moral reserves. People reveal themselves completely only when they are thrown out of the customary conditions of their life, for only then do they have to fall back on their reserves.”*  
- Trotsky

Characters in October’s Shadow are defined largely by their class and political sympathies. They also have skills, talents, and connections to other characters, but the attributes that most directly impact their life in revolutionary Moscow are class and politics.

To make a character, begin by choosing your **social class** and **political sympathy** from the list below. Particular in the case of sympathies, it is possible to suggest other groups, but the rarer the tendency, the harder it will be to influence -the thinking of others and make friends.

It’s suggested that Bolshevik Workers be avoided as primary play characters, since they would have a major leg up on their opponents in ideological struggles, but beyond that your only guidelines are your personal philosophies and beliefs. As a player, you should be comfortable articulating their ideological position.

You need to **create an NPC** reflecting each of these aspects of your life. They share this attribute with you and represent both a resource that can aid you and a millstone that can hold you back. You don’t need to spend a lot of time on them – in fact you should avoid making them in too much detail, as it will probably be more interesting for everyone if you let the specifics come out in play. Just write down their name, class, politics and job somewhere convenient, and write their name in your Comrades box at the end of your character sheet.

Finally, you need to write down your job, hobby, talent, and weakness.

**Jobs** are what they sound like, although the unemployed may need to exercise a little more imagination. You should define this in the broadest way possible, as shared attributes are very important in this game. Thus medical is perhaps

more valuable than doctor, as medical would grant you a bonus die in social interactions with nurses while doctor wouldn't.

To put it differently, the difference between doctors and nurses is viewed by this game as the difference between social classes, not their skills. A doctor and a nurse are equally good surgeons here. And social classes are already defined by the system.

Some good professions: Medical, Military, Industrial, Street, Farmer, Journalist

**Hobby** is again what it sounds like, and this should be more narrowly defined.

Some good hobbies: Hunting, Singing, Painting, Poetry, Arguing

Your **weakness** is a character trait that would typically be unhelpful in play. That said, you gain a social bonus on interactions with anyone who shares this trait. Thus, two drunkards would suffer a penalty die in many situations, but could use this Trait as a bonus when socializing with each other.

Some good weaknesses: Drunkard, Histrionic, Fatalist

**Talents** are different from the other traits here in that they are narrowly defined and must be chosen from this list. They represent natural talents and fill the place taken by attributes in many games.

Choose one talent from this list: Tough, Quick, Persuasive, Courageous

Finally, choose one of these traits as a **Great Trait**, and mark it with a star. This trait has double power in any conflict.

There are two other key character traits. **Authority** is a pool that can be used to influence a wide variety of events, but you don't start the game with any authority. **Comrades** is a listing of the relationships you have with other characters in the game, but at the start it should only have the NPCs you created to match your politics and class.

## ***Political Tendencies***

*"There are no morals in politics; there is only expedience.  
A scoundrel may be of use to us just because he is a scoundrel."  
-Lenin*

### **CHEKA**

The Cheka are the secret police of the new Soviet regime. Their authority is absolute – they are judge, jury and executioner, governed only by their revolutionary conscience. Conflict with them is frightening, as they generally have guns and are supported by the full weight of the Bolsheviks.

Characters probably shouldn't begin play as Cheka members. Cheka agents usually have two ideologies – typically Bolshevik and Cheka. Cheka members can draw on the powerful Cheka Influence pool in most situations and conflicts.

### **BOLSHEVIKS**

Bolsheviks are members of the ruling party, socialists who believe in absolute measures to institute the new workers' paradise. Bolsheviks believe in the abolition of credit, private property, and the elimination of the bourgeois and aristocratic classes.

### **MENSHEVIKS**

Mensheviks are moderate socialists who supported the provisional government and believe in the redistribution of private land to peasants and the reorganization of industry along socialist lines. Trade Unions are generally Menshevik controlled.

### **SOCIAL REVOLUTIONARIES (SRs)**

Social Revolutionaries believe in the redistribution of all land to peasants, the elimination of the Aristocratic classes, and the elimination of credit. They differ from Bolsheviks most clearly in emphasizing the role of peasants, not workers, and supporting more decentralized control and personal property.

### **ROYALISTS**

Royalists believe in the restoration of the Russian Monarchy, serfdom for peasants, and the glory of the army. This is a very dangerous ideology to support in Revolutionary Russia, but it could be a very interesting one.

## **Anarchists**

Anarchists in Revolutionary Russia usually take the form of Factory Committees, groups of workers that took control of factories abandoned by their owners. They believe in absolute freedom from the dictates of central governments. They immediately were in confrontation with both Capitalists who wanted to regain control of their factories under whatever system and Menshevik trade unionists who wanted to absorb the factory committees into their control.

## **Orthodox**

Followers of the Orthodox Church hold themselves separate from the political quarrels except as they threaten tradition and the place of the church itself. Although Bolshevik ideology was hostile to the church, they saved that fight for later, and their quarrels were incidental in the period immediately following the revolution.

## **Capitalists**

Capitalists believe in the right of owners to enjoy profits and control its production so as to benefit themselves – indeed they think this is the only effective means to organize production. Capitalists were an immediate target in the revolution, but soon their skills and knowledge became too valuable to liquidate, and many capitalists became freshly minted party members on factory management committees.

## **Classes**

### **Aristocracy**

Being an aristocrat in revolutionary Russia is a big problem in most circumstances, but you have hidden resources, with access to supplies and knowledge of the places and means of power.

### **Haute Bourgeois**

This is the capitalist class, the wealthy factory owners, prosperous shopkeepers, and similar people. They are the most immediate target of Bolshevik ideology, but at the same time they are very useful people, with knowledge of the specifics of a great many industries and people.

## **Petty Bourgeois**

The petty bourgeois are the shopkeepers and tradesmen who employ other workers but work alongside them, straddling the boundary between owners and workers. They are a target of suspicion, but their skills and practical knowledge of production are valuable to any government.

## **Proletariat**

The proletariat is the common worker, the seat of class consciousness. They are the backbone and the privileged class of the revolution.

## **Lumpenproletariat**

Whores, criminals, urchins – these are the Lumpenproletariat, the workers who are removed from the actual means of production and thus the opportunity to develop class consciousness. You have friends on the streets and access to information.

## **Peasants**

The peasants are the masters of the land – and of farming, not inconsequential in a time of famine. They are also a theoretically privileged class, although Lenin's contempt for the peasantry soon becomes clear.

## **THE HOUSE**

*"In inner-party politics, these methods lead, as we shall yet see, to this: the party organization substitutes itself for the party, the central committee substitutes itself for the organization, and, finally, a "dictator" substitutes himself for the central committee."*  
- Trotsky

The house that the characters live in is a central character in its own right, which must be collectively designed by all participants in the game.

The easiest way to do this is to start with a nice big piece of paper, perhaps the back of an old poster or four or six sheets of letter paper taped together. In the central area, covering the majority of the space, you can draw an outline of the house in pencil. Depending on your artistic skills and inclinations, it could be a floor plan, a realistic depiction, or a childlike drawing.

In turn, each of the participants should suggest an element of the house or its environment. This could be a person who lives in the house, an external



element which influences life in the house, such as a workplace, a soviet, or a community gathering place, or perhaps a significant object in the house.

People should be set out in outline form, with their class, politics, job, and a comrade or two specified. You can draw lines to signify connections, or simply write them down.

External elements should represent one type of politics, job or even class. Elements come with Influence, which is the number of dice that can be drawn from those elements to act in conflicts. Influence should range from 1 to 5, with 5 representing a very powerful influence indeed, perhaps the Cheka.

### ***THE SUBCOMMITTEE MEETING***

The Subcommittee meeting should be held at the beginning of each play session. It serves to highlight the web of relationships between characters and apportion authority.

During this meeting, NPCs are generally controlled by the player characters they are most closely associated with. In order of preference, that goes by comradeship, class, politics, authority, friend preferences, profession, talent, and hobby. So, if Levensky is comrades with three of the potential leaders, his choice will go to the social class of the potential leaders. If that is inconclusive, then their politics will be the determining factor, and so on.

But before there is a vote, there is a debate over the policies of the day, and the players can engage in a multi-sided conflict to try and change the opinions of other characters. As a rule of thumb, it should cost as many books to change a NPC's loyalty as they have connections with their leader.

During this debate, the players can draw on events that have happened in the story to support their position, and the Vanguard can grant influence to these events, which the player can then call on as needed throughout the entire month, as can other players according to the rules of the game. These influences should be written down on the house sheet.

At the end of the meeting, there should be a vote on the housing subcommittee's position with regard to the conditions of the month. The leader of the winning position in that vote gains one Authority – which is usually the largest faction leader. Noone gains authority if the vote is unanimous. If the position is interesting and/or potentially dangerous, it can be enshrined as an influence.

## **THE GUN**

Finally, the house should have a gun of some sort with a strictly limited supply of ammunition. For that reason it's suggested that it be a shotgun or bolt action rifle – so that a single character cannot expend all the ammunition available in a single fit of pique. The gun automatically has an influence of 5, which is very strong indeed. Beyond that, it should be outlined with one strength and one weakness. For example, a double barreled shotgun might be Good at shooting people ten to twenty feet away, but Weak at shooting people within five feet.

## **RESOLVING EVENTS**

*“Where force is necessary, there it must be applied boldly, decisively and completely. But one must know the limitations of force; one must know when to blend force with a maneuver, a blow with an agreement.”*

- Trotsky

Most actions by characters should be assumed to be automatically successful in achieving their aims, unless another character directly opposes them. This is a conflict, and is the chief business of rules for a game such as this.

## **Agreed Outcomes**

Before you begin rolling dice in a conflict, you need to decide on some of the possible outcomes of the conflict, and how relatively difficult they will be to achieve.

For example, in a fistfight, you might agree that taking the other guy out of the fight costs three books (more detail below). As each book is marked in conflict, you can set aside the dice until the third book is won. Once that third

book is one, you can take those books and describe the effects of your last successful action, and how they lead to the desired result.

Personal trait changes rarely require any pre-arranged agreement – it's changing other people's characters that involves negotiation about legitimate goals for a conflict.

### **CORE RULES**

Resolution in this game relies on six sided dice. As a general rule, you agree on what relevant traits each participant has and roll that many dice without letting your opponent see the results. The acting player chooses a die from their pool and narrates their character's action, sliding the die forward while covering it with their hand. The other player then narrates how they neutralize the action, doing the same action. Both players then reveal their dice, and the player with the highest die has won a book. That player then has the lead and can choose a new die, describe their action and wait for the response die.

### **TIES**

If the dice revealed are tied, then another pair of dice are brought out in the same manner as any round, and so on. Each round of dice counts as a separate book.

### **RULE OF SIX**

Any time you win a round with a six against an opponent die of three or less, you can choose to reroll the captured die and put aside the six as a book. You must use that rerolled die as your next lead.

### **RULE OF ONE**

If you capture an opponent die of one with a four or better, you can change your winning die to a six, put it aside as a book, and reroll the one as your next lead.

### **MULTI-CHARACTER CONFLICTS**

Conflicts with multiple characters pursuing separate and contradictory goals can enter the same conflict together, with the highest die taking the book of three dice. One alteration to the normal rules is that books won from ties cannot be spent to affect a character who didn't tie in the first place– the

struggle for domination pushes aside that character and insulates them from the consequences.

### ***Upping the Ante***

At the end of any round a player may choose to up the ante, by acting in such a way that the potential outcomes are more dangerous. You should agree on what those new potential outcomes might be and how many books they should cost. Each player may in turn then roll new dice for new traits and influences suggested by the scope of the altered combat. You keep all the old dice you rolled, whether they would ordinarily apply to this new conflict or not.

### ***Weaknesses***

Relevant weaknesses can be named and rolled as bonus dice by the opposing side of a conflict. They never function as penalty dice. As a result of this, all character sheets must be publicly visible for inspection in conflict.

### ***Shared Traits***

In social conflicts, you can get a bonus die by naming a trait you share in common with your opponent. The acting player gets the first chance to do this, then the other player and so on. This doesn't usually apply to physical conflicts. A trait once named cannot be used again in the same conflict by any party to the conflict.

### ***Comrades***

Any character who is connected to you can give you a die from their pool if their character is in the same scene. If your opponent is connected to you, you can treat that as a shared trait like any other.

### ***Influences***

Characters who share a trait with an influence can draw a single die from that source at the beginning of the conflict, and again for each escalation during the conflict. The Cheka and the Gun are exceptions to this rule – they can draw as many dice from their Influence as they like. Influences are a limited pool of dice. Characters that have a great trait matching the influence have first claim on the dice in the pool, and can draw as many dice as they like from the pool in any circumstance.

In some circumstance it may make sense to let unconnected characters draw a die from an influence. For example, it could make sense to have a Menshevik use a die from the Cheka to resist an attempt at Royalist indoctrination. Alternately, you can purchase a connection to an influence allowing you to access it in a scene that is either designed to allow this or just makes logical sense. You can always suggest this when you up the ante and renegotiate agreed outcomes. In general, this should cost as many boxes as dice are currently in the influence pool – minimum one.

### ***Authority***

Any character with authority can expend those dice in any conflict their character is present at; as long as the character they're intervening against is part of the society they have authority in – which means the house in this case. He does not need to have any other connection to the conflict; all he needs to do is say something. There is no limit on the number of dice he can offer this way.

Authority usually manifests as being a delegate to the local Soviet, but there are other possibilities. Keep in mind that not all Soviet delegates are Bolsheviks at this stage of the revolution.

### ***Out of Dice***

When your opponent is out of dice, you can choose either to pair up your remaining dice as books or save them for a follow up conflict. If you do the latter, you get to reroll those dice in the next conflict.

### ***Books***

A book is a pair of dice (or a single six) from a successful round in a conflict. At the end of a round of conflict, you can spend books to either purchase goals or hinder your opponent.

You can only purchase results after winning a round. If the conflict ends and you have unspent books, the other player may spend them himself to purchase weaknesses and destroy connections for their own character.

Generally speaking, minor or temporary goals should cost one book, significant goals that do not directly change another character should cost two books, and

major changes or immediate victories to another character should cost three or more books.

There is nothing that says that a single effect should always cost the same number of books. A Cheka officer should be harder to indoctrinate than a street sweeper, and perhaps he should cost more books to indoctrinate as well.

### **SAMPLE COSTS**

Cost	Result
1	Temporary weakness: Bruised
1	Hesitation – Buys time for another character to join the conflict or get past the opponent.
1	I've got the hang of it: get a temporary profession
1	Buy off a book your opponent has saved.
2	Pull out of the conflict
2	Comrades – Become a comrade with another character
2	Friends no More – A Connection is erased from the target character's sheet.
3	Knock Out – The other guy is out of the fight
3	I don't know what to believe anymore – The target character's Politics Trait is removed.
3	I see it! – A target character with no politics trait gains one.
3	The target character gains a permanent weakness pertinent to the conflict.
4	Make a Great trait into a normal one, or vice versa.
4	The character is permanently injured. They lose a talent, or perhaps even a profession.
5	The character has been shot – they will die soon if not treated.

### **PERSUASION AND INDOCTRINATION**

As you may have noticed, the above scores suggest that you can change the beliefs and traits on a character's sheet by winning verbal conflicts. Of course, many players don't like the feeling that the thoughts and opinions of their character are not under their control. There are two potential ways to deal with this problem.

The first is to point out that if a proposed change is unacceptable, the player can always up the ante so that the proposed stakes are no longer on the table, perhaps by resorting to a fistfight if their beliefs are questioned.

The second is to assume that these rules don't fully apply to player characters through some sort of halo effect – their will is their own, unchallenged by the statements of others.

## ***DEATH AND INJURY***

A character that has been wounded or is dying can be saved if they are attended to immediately by comrades. The acting player rolls against the total number of books used to make the wound plus any relevant weaknesses of either the patient or the doctor. To succeed, they need as many books as were used to purchase the wound in the first place.

*Example: Vitaly runs to Aleksandr's prone body and attempts to staunch the bleeding from his wounds. Blood stains his undershirt and Vitaly determines that it's a gut wound.*

*Vitaly's pool comes from his talent (Steady), profession (Medical), and their shared traits and comradeship (Aristocrat, Doctor, Comrades), for 5 dice (6,6,4,1,1). The wound rolls six dice – Five for the cost of a deadly wound, and one for Aleksandr's Alcoholism). The Vanguard rolls the dice as they are needed, not in advance.*

*Vitaly's player leads with a description of him pulling Aleksandr's scissors out of his coat pocket and digging in the wound for the bullet (4). The Vanguard rolls a 3 and responds with a description of how Vitaly has a partial grip on the bullet. Vitaly then leads (6) by declaring that he will slowly and carefully extract the bullet with the scissors. The Vanguard rolls (5) and describes how Vitaly nearly loses his grip several times, but manages to pull it up to the surface. Finally Vitaly tries to describe stitching the wound closed (6). The Vanguard rolls a 3, and Vitaly can invoke the rule of Six, putting aside the six as a book and rolling the other die as his lead. He gets a 3 explaining how he is bandaging the wound with Aleksandr's undershirt and belt, and the Vanguard*

*counters with another 3. This is a tie and Vitaly must lead another die. Unfortunately Vitaly has nothing but ones remaining. The Vanguard rolls a four, avoiding the rule of one but still winning two books. For his final die the Vanguard leads a 2, but Vitaly is forced to counter with his last 1.*

*Both participants have three books – not enough to save Aleksandr, who dies. The Vanguard uses his 3 books to give Vitaly the weakness of Drinking. If Aleksandr had won the last round, he could have used his three books to buy off the Vanguard's successes, but instead he decides to eliminate his Menshevik politics, deciding that if this is what the revolution has in store for the aristocracy, different measures are called for.*

## **BETRAYAL**

If a character you are connected to betrays you, they can add two bonus dice to their own attack or anyone else's simply by erasing the comradeship from their sheet. This can apply to any conflict where you intervene against a comrade.

## **THE VANGUARD**

*There are no absolute rules of conduct, either in peace or war.  
Everything depends on circumstances.  
-Trotsky*

That position known in most role-playing games as the gamemaster is here called the Vanguard. It is his job to guide and nudge play into an appropriate form while respecting the desires of the participants. In that mode he mainly seeks to put pressure on the inherent fault lines the characters face, putting pressure on their connections, politics, and desire for survival to create interesting choices for the players.

## **Starting Up**

The Vanguard's aim at the start of play should be to create tensions between various aspects of the character's identity as expressed through their traits and comrades. Their comrades should pull them in opposite directions, the political preferences one way, their class another, and their sense of self-preservation yet another.



At the beginning of the game, the Vanguard should aim to race through the months, introducing new player characters month by month. This serves several purposes – to establish a pecking order and some authority in the house and to draw the characters into the web of relationships slowly. The characters can be returning from the front, relocating from the Petrograd (St. Petersburg) Soviet, or simply fleeing from war. At this stage each month can focus on introducing the problems and issues of the lead character.

At the option of the Vanguard, the player of the character may choose to create their own opening scene in play, suggesting the opening of a dangerous conflict of some sort, some sort of event that will drive their story in the future. This is the Kicker technique used by games like *Sorcerer* and *Burning Wheel*, and it's certainly appropriate here.

It's suggested that replacement characters should come from the characters that already exist in the house, to fully connect them to the ongoing activities and place them in a relationship map.

### ***Non-Traditional Play***

It is perfectly feasible to switch characters quite freely, especially as you create clusters of like minded characters. GMing duties can also be switched around on perhaps a monthly basis as the values of various influences changes. That said, that sort of play is beyond the scope of what's covered here.

### ***Month By Month***

The end of the month (and the session, hopefully) is a time to take stock of events and rewards.

Each character should have a chance to add one comrade, one connection, and change one trait other than class which is forever.

### ***Events***

Without powerful conflicts within their own society to engage with, the characters will more or less inevitably decide to play another game and assassinate Lenin. This would be a fine game to be sure, but it's not what the system is set up to support.

To put pressure on the characters and to play out the drama of life during the revolution, play is organized on a monthly basis. Simply put, each session should encompass the events of a month or perhaps two, beginning with the monthly housing subcommittee meeting which will introduce the prevailing conditions of the month.

The Conditions are strongly suggested, but the Events are purely optional. They merely hint at the sorts of things that might be happening at that time, and are designed to place pressure on certain types of characters, but If you aren't interested by them, feel no shame at casting them aside and replacing them with something more specifically focused at your players' focal points.

And indeed, the players may succeed in changing the course of events, and if that's the case, more power to them.

Month	Condition	Event
October 1917	Street Fighting	The Recruiter
November 1917	Elections	The Ballot Stuffer
December 1917	New Alliances	Factories
January 1918	Constituent Assembly	Agitators
February 1918	Red Army	The Call-Up
March 1918	Peace	The Left Bolsheviks
April 1918	New Capital	The Job
May 1918	Famine	Confiscations
June 1918	Rations	The Execution
July 1918	No Turning Back	The Prince
August 1918	Expulsions	The Denouncement
September 1918	Red Terror	The Liquidation

The timeline ends here, but is suggested to lead to an ever escalating series of repressive measures. The success of the Communist Party is not yet assured, but the death of the revolution most assuredly is.

## **October 1917**

Street Fighting

Influence: Bolsheviks 2

At the end of October 1917, the Bolsheviks took over the Petrograd government in the space of an afternoon, but in Moscow the fighting

continued over ten days. Any character who goes out on the streets should see mobs in brutal combat, with Mensheviks fighting against Bolsheviks using guns, knives, rocks and nearly everything else.

The Recruiter

Menshevik Agitator

One of the characters should be visited by a friend who should urge them to fight on behalf of either the Provisional Government or the Bolsheviks. They will appeal to their patriotism, denounce the war, the excesses of the Bolsheviks, and claim that the Bolsheviks plan to reintroduce their own monarchy.

## **NOVEMBER 1917**

Elections

Influence: SR 2

The elections for delegates to the constituent assembly happens on Nov. 7. The results come in a week or so later – the Socialist Revolutionaries have won, with the Bolsheviks doing well and the Mensheviks beaten soundly. Much shouting and political debate should occur.

Campaigners

A variety of characters contest for the votes of the group, offering bribes, influence, and making veiled threats.

## **DECEMBER 1917**

New Alliances

Influence: SR, Bolsheviks 3

The SRs formally split into the Left and Right SRs – the Bolsheviks immediately invite some Left SR members into their cabinet.

Factories

Worker Menshevik Unionist

The struggles between the Factory Committees and the Trade Unions comes to a head with the Bolsheviks coming in on the side of the trade unions, declaring that the trade unions should become agents of the unions themselves.

Anarchist organizers should have a confrontation with Trade Union representatives who demand in various ways that the committees subsume themselves into their organizations.

## **JANUARY 1917**

Constituent Assembly

Democracy 3

The Constituent Assembly elected in November meets and elects a cabinet dominated by SR members. Although the Bolsheviks declare that the Left-Right SR split puts them in the majority, their guards close the Assembly and prevent the reentrance of its members. Cheka police fire on protestors.

Agitators

A pair of old friends come to the committee meeting and make impassioned speeches asking the committee to declare their support of the Assembly and demand it's re-opening.

## **FEBRUARY 1918**

Red Army

Influence: Military 3

Trotsky is assigned to form the Red Army of Peasant and Workers. The Army is originally meant to be completely democratic, but it also enthusiastically recruits aristocratic tsarist army officers.

The Call - Up

An old friend approaches a military character and tries to persuade them to join the army, promising that class will be no barrier in the new army and that "everything will be done in the old way again, you'll see."

## **MARCH 1918**

Peace

Influence: Anti Bolsheviks 4

The Bolsheviks sign the Treaty of Brest-Litvosk, which essentially dictates Soviet surrender to German demands, including the payment of tribute, the ceding of vast swaths of land to Germany, and the return of all prisoners. The Left SRs and substantial portions of the Bolsheviks denounce the treaty.

The Left Bolsheviks

As a result, many Bolsheviks opposing the treaty form the Left Bolsheviks, known as Kommunistas after their newspaper. Any Bolsheviks should be enthusiastically approached to join the organization.

## **APRIL 1918**

New Capital

Influence: Bureaucracy 3

In April the capital moves from Petrograd to Moscow in earnest. Hundreds of committees, bureaus and secretariats spring up in the matter of a few months.

### The Job

An old friend approaches someone with useful skills, preferentially a bourgeois or similar person with trade skills and offers employment and access to food if they offer their skills to the government.

## **MAY 1918**

### Famine

Influence: Hunger 4

The entire spring has seen famine as food source after food source is cut off by the civil war, but May is the worst of it. Hunger acts as an influence that grows and grows. In any conflict, one side can declare that they have eaten more recently than the other side or they can offer food to gain bonus dice.

### Confiscations

The war is intensifying, and soldiers come to the house to requisition war materials, including food, vehicles and especially weapons. The key aim of this encounter is to make Bolshevik leaders do something treasonous that all the other characters know about – hiding weapons.

## **JUNE 1918**

### Rations

Influence: Hunger 6

As inflation spirals relentlessly, the only way to get food is to obtain ration cards, available only for workers and peasants – ration cards are unofficially available to government workers as well.

### Executions

The Soviet resolution outlawing executions is repealed. The characters should have an opportunity to see the execution of someone they know for counter-revolutionary activities.

## **JULY 1918**

### No Turning Back

Influence: Royalists: 2

There is a shock as the news of the execution of the Royal family is spread, and even a faint wave of sympathy for them.

### The Prince

This one is very optional, but you can run with it if you like. A friend of almost any character could come to the characters with a baby in hand, asking for help. One way or another, it can be revealed that this is some sort of royal child, perhaps princess Anastasia herself.

## **AUGUST 1918**

### Expulsions

Influence: Bolsheviks 4

In July the Left SRs turned against the Bolsheviks and were in turned expelled from all decision making bodies like the Soviets – in fact such a measure had been distributed in June directed against the Mensheviks but many of the Bolshevik leaders in the Soviets were reluctant to implement it for fear of losing control of the Soviets. But in August the expulsions really got going. These were not purges in the later soviet sense, but represented the concentration of power in the hands of the party, rather than the soviets.

### The Denouncement

To signify this, if any of the people in the house with Authority are non-Bolsheviks, the GM should take control of an appropriate Bolshevik character and begin denouncing them and demanding that they be stripped of their status. During the ensuing conflict, you should keep pulling in dice off the Cheka Influence pile and adding it to their score – do the other characters dare to back their leaders against the will of the Cheka?

## **SEPTEMBER 1918**

### Red Terror

Influence: Cheka 8

After the attempt to assassinate Lenin, the Cheka spreads out to strike fear in the heart of the ‘counter-revolutionary’, which in practice means anyone they feel like shooting.

### The Liquidation

Bourgeois Cheka Police

A group of policemen come into the house, accuse a leading PC of counter-revolutionary activities, and execute him.

## Notes and Credits

This game was more or less imagined as the 'Dr. Zhivago in Moscow' game, but grew beyond that to encompass a lot of the things I read about the revolution today. I'm pretty pleased with the results – and curious to try it out and see how it works in actual play.

Credit where it's Due: A lot of the material in this game owes a large debt to Vincent Baker, particularly the Ars Magica Knockoff discussion on [anyways](#) with notable contributions from Paul Czege. Paranoia is also another significant influence.

This game was written as a 24 hour RPG on November 13, 2005 by Tony Pace. It's an entrant for the November 2005 Ronnies, using the keywords Soviet and Gun.