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An Exposition of the Forces in Play
in Russia
Between the Two Revolutions of
1917

by

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Abstract

By the beginning of 1917, the strain of war, together with the socialist agitation, had already ripened the Russian Empire for a social revolution. The March upheaval of the masses was one of the most amazing outbursts of elementary passions throughout History. Every party (and every politician) tried to channel this energy towards the fulfillment of party or class aims.

In this thesis we will try to show how the different organizations fought, from March to November, to get control of the masses, and how their fortunes changed until the Bolsheviki put the first iron thumb on the handle of power.

Russia Between Two Revolutions

CHAPTER I

Sic Transit Gloria Mundi

After the revolution of 1905, reaction set in, and the temporarily beaten workers returned to their factories. However, before long, the revolutionary spirit of the workers was re-inforced by the oppression of autocracy and the misery it generated, and by the propaganda of revolutionary organizations. In 1912 and 1913 political strikes grew in frequency, and in the first part of 1914 they reached a peak almost as high as that in 1905.¹ The war prevented strikes for a while only to increase their frequency and to mature the conditions in which the peasants and the army would join a proletarian upheaval.

The autocratic regime was plodding on miserably during the war. The 1915 Sukhomlinov² scandal caused a great stir throughout the country, and there gradually developed a general opposition to the Government because of its inefficient conduct of the war. In September 1915, the 'Progressive Bloc' was formed within the Duma. It contained about 2/3 of the members of that body and took its stand on a program of mild reform and the establishment of a ministry "enjoying public confidence."³ All groups in the Duma joined this more or less Cadet-guided Bloc, except the Social-Democrats and the Black Hundreds.⁴

On September 16, 1915, the Emperor prorogued the Duma. This

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1. For statistics on the frequency of strikes between the two revolutions, see Leon Trotsky, Histoire de la Revolution Russe, trans. Maurice Parijanine (Paris: Editions du Seuil, 1950), vol. I, p. 43-46.
 2. Sukhomlinov was War Minister during the early part of the war. Due to his negligence or treason, the Russian army was desperately short of ammunition during 1915.
 3. Quoted in William Henry Chamberlin, The Russian Revolution, (New York: Macmillan Co., 1954), vol. I, p. 66.
 4. Trotsky, op. cit., p. 36. The Black Hundreds were an ultra-Rightist organization which was formed after the 1905 revolution, and whose aim was to keep the autocracy intact, even at the price of using force against radicals and Leftists.

was followed by the successive 'retirement' of many moderate ministers and their replacement by reactionary, perverted members of the clique of Rasputin whose influence at Court was approaching its zenith. These changes in the Cabinet led to a profound atmosphere of discord between the Duma and the Court,⁵ a discord which was never to be conciliated.

As 1915 and 1916 proceeded, dismissals and appointments of ministers became more frequent, but the trend of policy remained the same. Protopopov, Octobrist and Vice-President of the Duma, was appointed Minister of the Interior, but he soon abandoned his friends and 'convictions' and became a notorious reactionary and ardent follower of Rasputin.⁶

At the Duma session that took place between November 13 and December 30, 1916, the Duma members attacked not only the Government, but also Rasputin and his courtier friends who were rumoured to be pro-German. Perhaps the most memorable speech of the whole session was the one in which Miliukov fiercely attacked the Government and ended thus: "Is it foolishness or treason?"⁷ And although Sturmer had replaced Trepov as President of the Council, yet the session ended with the rupture between the Duma and the Court even more acute than before.⁸

Trepov tried to reconcile the Progressive Bloc by attempting to dismiss Protopopov and other reactionary ministers of Rasputin's camarilla, but it was he who was dismissed (January 9, 1917) and replaced by the irreconcilable reactionary, Prince Golitzin, who was authorized by the Tzar to adjourn the meeting of the Duma of January 25, to February 27, 1917.⁹

5. Paul Milioukov, ^{et. al.} *Histoire de la Russie*, (Paris: Librairie Ernest L. Leroux, n.d.), vol. 3, pp. 1254-1255.

6. *Ibid.*, pp. 1155-1256.

7. *Ibid.*, p. 1256.

8. *Ibid.*, p. 1257.

9. *Ibid.*, p. 1258.

Rumours spread in Russia at the time that the 'German' Tzarina was working for a separate peace. Even such a story circulated among the rank and file of the army that she had informed the Germans about the voyage of Lord Kitchner to Russia.¹⁰ Whether she was involved in a pro-German 'conspiracy' or not is a matter of debate and no conclusive evidence is present. The Provisional Government later made an enquiry into the conduct of the Empress' immediate circle, but no evidence to throw any light on the subject was found.¹¹ However, General Denikin states that at a certain stage of the war, the Empress had one of two maps showing in detail the position of the Russian troops on the entire front.¹² This map might have been used by some member of the Empress' camarilla, without her knowledge, in outright treasonable activities.

In the last days of 1916 and the early days of 1917, there was much talk of a palace coup d'état. Some generals, including Krymov and Alexeiev, were said to be involved, the aim of the coup being to secure the abdication of the Emperor and to enthrone his son under the regency of the Tzar's brother, the Grand Duke Michael. The possibility of such an overturn was discussed at Court and in the 'responsible' circles of the Duma, and there was a good deal of activity in 'higher circles' concerning the subject.¹³ General Denikin even states that the would-be Premier after the coup was chosen, namely,

10. General A. I. Denikin, The Russian Turmoil (New York: E. P. Dutton & Co., n.d.), p. 19.

11. See Alexander Kerensky, The Catastrophe (New York and London: D. Appleton & Co., 1927), pp. 269-270 and p. 276;

12. Denikin, op. cit., p. 20.

13. Milioukov, op. cit., pp. 1257-1258. Concerning this proposed coup d'état also see Denikin, op. cit., p. 38, and Sir George Buchanan, My Mission to Russia and Other Diplomatic Memoirs (Boston: Little, Brown & Co., 1923), vol. II, p. 41 and p. 51.

Prince Lvov.¹⁴ But nothing concrete came out of that degenerate society's talk. The following episode¹⁵ clarifies the intensity of the revolutionary ardour and the discipline of the aristocrats: On January 8, 1917, a certain Prince Gabriel Constantinovitch gave, in honour of his mistress, a supper at which were present many Grand Dukes, princes, and important personages. The only topic of conversation was the conspiracy which the patricians were contemplating against the Emperor. The participants spoke openly in front of the servants, the harlots and the gypsies and discussed about which regiment could be counted upon to carry the coup. This thrilling topic was frequently discussed in society and to many patricians - and harlots - it became a heaven-sent subject of entertainment.¹⁶

Finally, the Imperial Family (the Grand Dukes and Duchesses) assembled early in January 1917, to discuss the situation. They addressed a letter to the Emperor, drawing his attention to the perils his home policy was exposing Russia and the dynasty.¹⁷ The Father of his Country's crisp reply thus began: "I allow no one to give me advice."¹⁸ Some days later, two Grand Dukes were advised by the Emperor to leave Petrograd.¹⁹ As for the Empress, she also refused to be advised by members of the Imperial Family, retorting that the corrupt patricians of Petrograd hated her, but that the masses wanted her, as evidenced by the great number of letters and telegrams she received daily from her beloved subjects.²⁰

On January 12, 1917, the British Ambassador, Sir George Buchanan, had an audience with the Emperor²¹ and tried to open his eyes. After informing the Tzar that King George V and the British Government were greatly concerned about the internal situation of

14. Denikin, *op. cit.*, p. 39.

15. Related in Paleologue/Maurice, *An Ambassador's Memoirs*, trans. F.A. Holt (New York: George H. Doren Co., n.d.), vol III, p. 157.

16. See Pitirim A. Sorokin, *Leaves from a Russian Diary - And Thirty Years After*, (Boston: The Beacon Press, 1950), pp. 1-2.

17. Paleologue, *op. cit.*, pp. 162-164.

18. *Ibid.*, p. 164.

19. *Ibid.*, p. 170.

20. *Ibid.*, pp. 158-159. The practice of sending letters and telegrams of 'backing' to the Empress was started by Sturmer and perfected by

21. For an account of the audience see Buchanan, *Protopopov*, *op. cit.*, pp. 43-46.

Russia, he proceeded to denounce the intrigues which were being fomented in the pro-German entourage of the Empress. Buchanan also referred to the evil influence of Protopopov and to his suspicious activities. The weak Emperor broke his silence twice only to give vent to his vanity as autocrat, but he ended the audience with a warm handshake.

At this point it is perhaps interesting to say something about the occult forces that governed the Empire. Rasputin was not the first charlatan to spell-bind the royal couple. His predecessor was a French magician, Papus, who is said to have arranged in 1905, a séance between the Tzar and his deceased father.²² When the Tzar asked his father's soul if he should or should not resist the tide of liberalism that was threatening to overwhelm Russia, the latter reportedly replied:

You must crush the revolution now beginning at any cost; but it will spring up again one day and its violence will be proportionate to the severity with which it is put down to-day. But what does it matter? Be brave, my son! Do not give up the struggle!"

Then Papus performed rites by which the doom of the Emperor would be averted as long as the charlatan remained on the 'physical plane'.

Later, Papus wrote to the Empress about Rasputin:

From the cabalistic point of view, Rasputin is a vessel like unto Pandora's box, and contains all the vices, crimes and lusts of the Russian people. Should this vessel break, we shall immediately see these horrible contents spilled all over Russia.²³

When the Empress read this letter to Rasputin, he merely retorted:

"Why, I've told you that many a time. When I die, Russia will perish."²⁴

The murder of Rasputin by patricians and Rightists, and the crocodile skin he exhibited, form a most interesting episode which is most vividly related (and romantically garbed) by Paléologue.²⁵

22. For this séance see Paleologue, op. cit., p. 98.

23. Ibid., p. 174.

24. Quoted in loc. cit.

25. Ibid., pp. 141-148.

After the Staretz' body was taken out of the river it was taken to the Empress to mourn on her "dear martyr"²⁶ and ask for his blessing. The important thing was that Papus disappeared from the 'physical plane' on October 27, 1916,²⁷ and Pandora's box was opened on December 30 of the same year. Could disaster be averted?

But if the Man of God had departed, his devoted disciples remained. The Empress still remained and she had already become the virtual ruler of the country.²⁸ As for the other disciples, they were still guided by their thorny path of life by the dead man's gentle soul. Old Prince Kurakin, master of necromancy, got into the habit of calling the soul of Rasputin and he was joined by the Ministers of the Interior and Justice. The three men sat in secret conclave and spent hours every evening listening to the dead man's solemn words²⁹ of which the Empress was kept informed.

During January and February 1917, prices rose fearfully in Petrograd and bread queues became longer and longer as bread became scarcer.³⁰ This was due not only to the lack of grain but also to the mismanagement of railways³¹ and, perhaps, Protopopov intentionally wanted to starve the capital and to cause an uprising, thus Russia would have an excuse to leave the war and Protopopov would decisively crush the uprising.³² This has no proof, but it is perhaps enlightening to mention that bread became less scarce right after the revolution in spite of the fact that "transportation lines have been crippled."³³

26. Quoted in Ibid., p. 136. It is interesting to note that after coming into the favour of the Court, Rasputin - literally meaning in Russian 'the debauched', a name given him by the peasants of his home town, - became known as the Staretz, or Man of God.

27. Ibid., p. 98.

28. Buchanan, op. cit., p. 32.

29. Paleologue, op. cit., p. 173.

30. See Sorokin, op. cit., pp. 2-3.

31. Denikin, op. cit., pp. 44-45; see also Alan Moorehead, The Russian Revolution, (New York: Bantam Books, 1959), pp. 4-5.

32. See Kerensky, op. cit., pp. 96-98.

33. David R. Francis, Russia from the American Embassy: April 1916 - November 1918 (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1921), p. 75.

The atmosphere became more and more dense, and a professor notes that his students were seized with the fever of the approaching revolution.³⁴

Then the featful month of March arrived. On the 6th there was a shortage of bread and wood in Petrograd. The transport crisis was becoming worse for the days were becoming exceptionally cold and snowy. The cold put about 1200 engines out of action, owing to boiler tubes bursting, and there was a shortage of spare tubes because of the strikes. There was also a shortage of labour in the villages to clear the snow from the railways. As a result, 57,000 railway wagons were put out of action.³⁵

On March 7 and 8 "the movement in the streets became clearly defined, going beyond the limits of the usual factory meetings."³⁶ Furthermore, the weakness of the authorities was exposed by their inability to stem the ~~disorders~~ in the embryo. By this time, Petrograd "was filled with rumours and a feeling of 'disorders'."³⁷

March 8 was observed by socialists as Woman's Day. After speeches in the factories, crowds of women went down into the streets, especially in the working-class Vyborg District, clamouring for bread and raising a few red flags with inscriptions of 'Down with the Autocracy.' The previous day there was a wage dispute in the large Putilov metal works and the management declared a general lockment. Thus over 20,000 workers were let loose to feed the demonstrations of the 8th. Another 90,000 workers struck and fifty factories closed. However, there were only occasional clashes with the police and the day passed without serious conflicts.³⁸

34. Sorokin, op. cit., p. 2.

35. Paleologue, op. cit., p. 213.

36. Nicholas Nicholaevitch Sukhanov, The Russian Revolution: A Personal Record, trans., ed., and abridged by Joel Carmichael from Zapiski O Revolutsii (Oxford, New York, Toronto: Oxford University Press, 1955), p. 5.

37. loc. cit.,

38. Chamberlin, op. cit., p. 75.

Protopopov relied on 12,000 well armed policemen to keep order in Petrograd. If these were not enough, he counted on the Cossaks and, in the last resort, on the 160,000 man garrison which, however, consisted of new recruits, scarcely trained, badly housed and often ill-fed.³⁹ It was with this force that Protopopov had to meet the rising tide of revolution.

On March 9, the streets and squares of Petrograd were flooded with people and the number of strikers was about 197,000 workers.⁴⁰ The workers succeeded in reaching the centre of the city in spite of the efforts of the police to block the bridges on the Neva.⁴¹ "Fugitive meetings were held in the main streets and were dispersed by Cossaks and mounted police-but without energy or zeal and after lengthy delays."⁴² The demonstrators made way for the Cossaks when these were ordered to clear some street and the Cossaks, in their turn, were rather friendly and careful not to hurt anybody. The few skirmishes that took place were between the demonstrators and the Pharaohs [the police] towards whom the crowd adopted a hostile attitude.⁴³ The same day General Khabalov, Military Governor of the District of Petrograd, proclaimed that he would take the sternest measures to quell the disorders - "in the future."⁴⁴

On March 10, the food crisis was investigated by an 'Extra-ordinary Council' which was attended by most of the top officials of the Tzarist Government.⁴⁵ There was a general strike and only one newspaper, the conservative *Novoye Vremya*, appeared.⁴⁶ University students abandoned their studies and demonstrations

39. *Ibid.*, p. 74.

40. *Ibid.*, p. 75.

41. *Loc. cit.*; and Kerensky, *op. cit.*, p. 106.

42. Sukhanov, *op. cit.*, p. 6.

43. Buchanan, *op. cit.*, p. 59.

44. Sukhanov, *op. cit.*, p. 6

45. Paleologue, *op. cit.*, p. 215.

46. Isaac Don Levine, *The Russian Revolution* (New York and London: Harper and Brothers, n.d.), p. 215.

proceeded, but they presented a more organized appearance⁴⁷ perhaps due to the efforts of the socialists who on March 8 and 9 had made attempts to create inter-party centers and instructed workmen to elect from the factories deputies for the Soviet of workers. These elections were probably held on the evening of the 9th.⁴⁸

The demonstrations were peaceful until four o'clock, but by then the public began to get excited and shortly after five a few demonstrators and police officers were killed or wounded in clashes on the Nevsky Prospekt.⁴⁹ Meanwhile, General Khabalov had received orders from the Emperor to suppress disorders in the capital with a firm hand.⁵⁰ The troops went into action and there were bloody, though small clashes in the working-class districts where the troops occupied a few big factories and besieged others.⁵¹ By nightfall order was restored in most quarters, and during the night most streets were empty except for a handful of policemen here and there.⁵² About one hundred dangerous persons were arrested during the night, including the five members of the Petrograd Central Committee of the Bolshevik Party.⁵³

The atmosphere of Petrograd was one of extra-ordinary excitement on the 10th. Kerensky told a meeting of socialists that most of the bourgeois members of the Duma were in a state of panic and that their leaders were trying to avoid a revolution by making deals with Tzarism.⁵⁴ As Vernadsky says: "The leaders of the opposition in the Duma desired only a political revolution, and not a social one, whereas the extreme tension of the years of war added to the peculiar conditions prevailing in Russia made far-reaching social changes inevitable."⁵⁵ Miliukov himself told

47. Buchanan, op. cit., p. 59.

48. Sukhanov, op. cit., pp. 14-15.

49. Paleologue, op. cit., p. 215.

50. Chamberlin, op. cit., p. 77.

51. Sukhanov, op. cit., p. 23.

52. Paleologue, op. cit., pp. 215-216.

53. Chamberlin, op. cit., p. 77; and Trotsky, op. cit., p. 113.

54. Sukhanov, op. cit., p. 18.

55. George Vernadsky, A History of Russia (London: Oxford University Press, 1948), p. 231.

Sukhanov on the late evening of March the 12th, when the revolution was already a fact: "We, as responsible opposition, were certainly striving for power and moving towards it, but not along the path of revolution. That was not our way..."⁵⁶ The bourgeoisie was frightened by the movement and was not with it... but it could not afford to ignore it and make no use of it,"⁵⁷ thus it advanced the slogan: "Ministry responsible to the Duma."⁵⁸

On the early morning of the 11th, General Khabalov issued the following declaration:⁵⁹ "All meetings or gatherings are forbidden. I notify the civil population that I have given the troops fresh authority to use their arms and stop at nothing to maintain order." However, crowds filled the streets and acted in a more disorderly and aggressive manner than in the preceding days.

The siege of factories and working-class districts continued and was intensified. Great numbers of infantry units were moved out into the streets: they cordoned off bridges, isolated various districts,⁶⁰ and set about a thorough-going clearance of the streets.⁶⁰

At about one o'clock, the Volinsky Regiment made a little massacre in the Znamenskaya Square where about forty people were shot and almost as many wounded.⁶¹ There was also fighting at the Nevsky Prospekt and some other places.⁶² And as the news of these clashes spread throughout the city, the terrorized demonstrators began to leave the streets and by five o'clock in the evening it seemed that the movement was quelled.⁶³ Even at the meeting of the Vyborg Committee of the Bolshevik Party, which took place early in the night of the 11th, many put forth the proposal that the strike should be brought to an end.⁶⁴

56. Quoted in Sukhanov, op. cit., p. 56.

57. Ibid., p. 13.

58. loc. cit.

59. Quoted in Paleologue, op. cit., p. 216.

60. Sukhanov, op. cit., p. 25.

61. Chamberlin, op. cit., p. 77.

62. loc. cit.

63. Sukhanov, op. cit., p. 25; and Kerensky, op. cit., p. 107.

64. Trotsky, op. cit., p. 116.

Towards nightfall, a company of the Pavlovsky Regiment mutined and there was fighting between the police and the mutineers who were finally disarmed by the Preobrazhensky Regiment and their ring leaders sent to the Fortress of S.S. Peter and Paul.⁶⁵ Trotsky claims⁶⁶ that some Petrograd workers went to the barracks of the Pavlovsky Regiment at about two o'clock of the afternoon of the 11th, and incited the soldiers to mutiny. As to who led these soldiers, Trotsky says that he was a sub-lieutenant—
Who? his name has been lost without leaving any trace, among the hundreds and thousands of other heroic names."

As for the Tzar, he had spent January and February at the Imperial residence, Tzarskoe-Selo, but on March 8 he left to Moghilev, his headquarters at the front, more than twenty hours by train from Petrograd, after having left behind to Prince Golitzin a signed but undated decree for the dissolution of the Duma, to be used in case of necessity.⁶⁷

On the 11th, Rodzianko, President of the Duma, sent a telegram to the Tzar informing him of the anarchical situation that had developed in the capital and asking him to entrust someone who enjoyed the confidence of the nation with the power of forming a new government. Rodzianko ended his telegraph thus: "I pray God," he said, that at this hour the responsibility may not fall on the wearer of the crown."⁶⁸ The Emperor, true to the tradition of autocracy, did not even reply, perhaps assured by the picture which Protopopov had drawn him, telling him that the situation was serious but not alarming - that the troubles could be suppressed by a firm hand; and the firm hand was supposedly present in the person of General Khabalov under the disposal of whom several hundred machine-guns had been placed that he may deal with the situation as he saw fit.⁶⁹

65. Buchanan, op. cit., pp. 59-60; Chamberlin, op. cit., p. 77; and Sukhanov, op. cit., pp. 28-29.

66. Trotsky, op. cit., p. 118.

67. Kerensky, op. cit., p. 105.

68. Quoted in Buchanan, op. cit., p. 48.

69. Denikin, op. cit., p. 48.

The night of march 11 witnessed a long-awaited party given by Princess Leon Radziwill. A long line of cars and carriages were parked in front of the Princess' house which was blazing with lights. "Sénac de Meilhan tells us that there was plenty of gaiety in Paris on the night of the 5th October, 1789!"⁷⁰ The revolution seemed then at an end.

As the patricians drank and made merry, in the barracks, the soldiers of the training Volynsk Regiment discussed their impressions of the day's shooting and decided to shoot the crowd no more. In the morning their Captain Lashkevitch was greeted with shouts of "we will not shoot." He read to them the Tzar's order for the suppression of all disorders but this only aggravated the situation. The Captain was either shot or committed suicide and the troops poured into the streets under Sergeant Kirpichnikov; soon, they roused the Preobrazhensky and the Litovsky Regiments, quartered in nearby barracks.⁷¹ Thus began the last act of that great upheaval.

The crowds on the Nevsky were larger on the 12th than they had ever been in the preceding days, and there were clashes with the police in many quarters of the city.⁷² The mutinied army regiments literally melted with the crowds.⁷³ By noon, around 25,000 soldiers of the garrison had already defected to the people.⁷⁴ The soldier-worker mob burned the Law Courts, the Arsenal of the Liteiny, the Minister of the Court's offices, and a few other buildings, including the headquarters of the notorious Okhrana and a few police stations. The prisons were 'stormed' and all prisoners (political and criminal) were liberated, and finally,

70. Paleologue, op. cit., p. 217.

71. Chamberlin, op. cit., pp. 78-79.

72. Sorokin, op. cit., p. 5 and p. 7.

73. Paleologue, op. cit., p. 291.

74. Sukhanov, op. cit., p. 36; and Buchanan, op. cit., p. 61.

the Fortress itself surrendered after a siege.⁷⁵ By nightfall the de facto control of the capital by the almost unorganized proletariat and poorer peasantry was complete.

As for the Tzarist Cabinet, it had met during the night of March 11-12, and decided to send a telegram to the Emperor begging him to come at once. The ministers also agreed, with the exception of Protopopov, that a dictatorship should be set - General Ruzsky was mentioned as a very likely candidate.⁷⁶ But as the featful day (March 12) progressed, the Council of Ministers and the Tzar's brother, the simpleton, Grand Duke Michael, sent a telegram to the Emperor asking him to charge a man who possessed the confidence of the people with the task of creating a responsible ministry.⁷⁷ But the seriousness of the situation was greatly underestimated at Moghilev and, instead of concessions, the Tzar decided to send General Ivanov with a small number of picked troops (Cavaliers of St. George) to Petrograd.⁷⁸ But there was no haste. The General sent his adjutants to buy provisions from the markets of Moghilev, which he proposed to take as gifts for his friends in the capital. Furthermore, there was no haste in sending troops from the fronts nearest to the capital to re-inforce Ivanov.⁷⁹ All this inefficiency was largely due to the desire of officials to please under a despotism. As late as 1:45 P.M. on March 12, when the capital was totally out of the control of the Government, the War Minister Byalaev sent a telegram to Moghilev saying that the disturbances in some military units were being suppressed and that order would soon be restored.⁸⁰ After having completed his provisions, General Ivanov left for the capital with his handful of Cavaliers and with a secret warrant giving him full

75. For mob activity see Milioukov, op. cit., pp. 1260-1261; Paleologue, op. cit., p. 229; and Buchanan, op. cit., p. 62.
76. Paleologue, op. cit., p. 222.
77. Milioukov, op. cit., p. 1261.
78. Chamberlin, op. cit., p. 81.
79. Ibid., pp. 81-82.
80. Ibid., p. 81.

military and civic powers. This warrant was to be made public after the General's capture of Tzarskoe-Selo.⁸¹

The Military Governor of the Petrograd Military District, General Khabalov, was a weak, incompetent and inexperienced man who was thunderstruck at the news of the successive mutinies. He sent a supposedly loyal force under Colonel Kutepov, but it melted as soon as it came into contact with the revolutionary mob.⁸² Khabalov took refuge in the Winter Palace with 1500 to 2000 loyal troops with a very small reserve of bullets,⁸³ then he moved his headquarters to the Admiralty from where he issued two declarations,⁸⁴ the one concerning the resignation of Protopopov "because of illness," and the second proclaiming the capital in a state of siege. The troops of Khabalov quietly dispersed in the next morning (March 13) and the General himself was arrested.

At around midnight on March 11-12, Rodzianko received from the Government an Imperial Ukase for the prorogation of the Duma till April 25th.⁸⁵ On the morning of the 12th, after the mutiny of the soldiers had begun, Rodzianko sent urgent telegrams to the Emperor and to the generals in command of the various fronts telling them that some regiments had already mutinied and that others were restive, and he told the Emperor that this was the last hour at which he could make concessions, otherwise it would be too late.⁸⁶

On the morning of the 12th, the members of the Duma were met with the Ukase of Prorogation, but they decided not to disperse

81. Denikin, op. cit., p. 48.

82. Chamberlin, op. cit., p. 79.

83. Ibid., p. 86.

84. See Trotsky, op. cit., p. 128.

85. Kerensky, op. cit., p. 7; and Buchanan, op. cit., p. 63.

86. Concerning Rodzianko's two telegrams to the Emperor and his telegrams to generals, see Kerensky, op. cit., pp. 7-8; and p. 51; Buchanan, op. cit., p. 64; and Paleologue, op. cit., p. 224.

because of the extraordinary events that were taking place. A meeting of a Council of Duma party leaders was scheduled for twelve o'clock, but it began earlier, and the meeting⁸⁷ was opened by a very excited Rodzianko who informed the Council of the steps he had taken within the last forty-eight hours, and then asked: what was to be done? Kerensky and Chkheidze and other Leftists proposed a revolutionary course and demanded that the Duma immediately go into official session regardless of the order of prorogation. Some wavered, and Rodzianko and the majority to adopt this course of action so it was finally decided that the Duma would meet in an unofficial session. This reflected the loyalty of the majority of the Duma to the Romanovs.

At its unofficial session the Duma decided, at 2 or 3 P.M., to create a Temporary Committee.⁸⁸ Rodzianko was made President of the Committee which included Miliukov, Kerensky, Tchkeidze and others. The extreme Right was not represented in this Committee,⁸⁹ and the extreme Left, represented by Social-Democrats such as Chkheidze, refused to join the Temporary Committee and preferred to save their energies for the organization of the masses.⁹⁰ The function of this Committee during the first hours of its formation was very vaguely phrased. It was given authority "to restore order and to deal with institutions and individuals."⁹¹ This was because the Rightist Duma was by no means anxious to make a definite break with the regime, and, says Miliukov, it was only "when the revolutionary movement manifested itself in all its amplitude" that "the Provisional Committee decided to take a further step and to take in hand the power that has escaped the

87. For an account of this meeting see Kerensky, op. cit., p. 8 and pp. 11-12.

88. Ibid., p. 13; see also Bernard Pares, A History of Russia (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1953), p. 487.

89. Kerensky, op. cit., p. 13.

90. Vernadsky, op. cit., p. 234; and Pares, op. cit., pp. 487-488.

91. Quoted in Michael T. Florinsky, Russia: A History and an Interpretation (New York: The Macmillan Co., 1953), vol. II, p. 1381.

grip of the government."⁹² Thus the Committee took power only after it had been definitely snatched from the autocracy by the masses. After it decided to take power, the Duma sent deputies to take charge of ministries and of central government offices, and it was Bublikov, one of these commissars, who took over the central railway station and who, as appointed commissar in charge of communications, proceeded to telegraph the news of the revolution to all parts of Russia.⁹³ The next day reports arrived at Petrograd that Moscow had "easily and painlessly"⁹⁴ joined the revolution.

Among the Rightists, who composed a majority of the Duma, none was fit to be a leader at such a moment of crisis. It was the Leftists, especially Kerensky and Chkheidze, who harangued the mob of soldiers, workers and students who began flocking to the Duma around one o'clock in the afternoon of March 12.⁹⁵ Most of the troops went to the Duma without their officers and this was the source of considerable chaos.⁹⁶ But what discipline would one expect from a spontaneous mass uprising?

As we have already mentioned, the mutinied soldiers and the crowds freed prisoners from the jails, and among those freed were many socialists, including the Workers' Group of the Central War Industries Committee, headed by K. A. Gvozdev. The leaders of this group went to the Tauride Palace. At about 2 P.M., prominent representatives of the trade-unions and co-operatives movements arrived, and together with these and with Left deputies and other socialists, the leaders of the Workers' Group formed 'The Provisional Executive Committee of the Soviet of Workers' Deputies' whose essential function was to convoke the Petrograd Soviet of Workers' Deputies, a task

92. Milioukov, op. cit., p. 1261.

93. Kerensky, op. cit., p. 29 and p. 27.

94. Sukhanov, op. cit., p. 95.

95. Kerensky, op. cit., pp. 14-15.

96. Ibid., p. 25.

it performed with lightning speed.⁹⁷

The Provisional Executive Committee distributed pamphlets to the workers of Petrograd fixing the first session of the Soviet for seven o'clock in the evening of March 12, at the Tauride Palace.⁹⁸ Every factory was to send a deputy for each 1000 workers, and soldiers were invited to send a deputy for each company to watch the first session of the Soviet.⁹⁹

But the Provisional Executive Committee did not limit itself to the function of convoking the Soviet. It also took emergency measures to organize supplies for the mutinying, scattered and homeless military units which had abandoned their barracks. It immediately elected a "provisional supply commission"... which first of all set up a soldiers' supply base in the Tauride Palace, and secondly appealed directly to the townspeople for assistance in feeding the soldiers."¹⁰⁰

The first Soviet session began around 9 P.M.¹⁰¹ It was opened with a resolution by Sokolov to elect a Praesidium. The Duma deputies Keresky, Chkheidze and Skobelev were elected without opposition and Chairman and Vice-Chairmen of the Soviet, respectively. In addition to these, four secretaries were elected.¹⁰² As for the Executive Committee of the Soviet (henceforward referred to as Ex. Com.), it was to include the above-mentioned seven together with other eight elected members, including Sukhanov, Steklov and Shlyapnikov. The central and local organizations of the socialist parties were also to send delegates to the Ex. Com.¹⁰³

At this session, a resolution for turning the Petrograd Soviet into the Soviet of Workers' and Soldiers' Deputies was passed.¹⁰⁴ The Ex. Com. tried to organized a military staff for the defence of the revolution. All what they did was to telephone a group of officers known to be democrats and to call

97. Sukhanov, op. cit., pp. 38-39.

98. Ibid., p. 39.

99. See Vernadsky, op. cit., p. 235; Pares, op. cit., p. 488; and Buchanan, op. cit., p. 65.

100. Sukhanov, op. cit., p. 59. 101. Ibid., p. 59.

102. Ibid., p. 60. 103. Ibid., pp. 70-71. 104. Ibid., pp. 61-62.

them to a conference. This staff had no power and it was later incorporated by Kerensky into the Military Commission¹⁰⁵ which was organized by the Temporary Committee in order to defend the capital from possible attacks by troops loyal to the Tzarist Government. This Military Commission was soon to be put under the command of Colonel Engelhardt, member of the Duma and former officer of the General Staff.

Thus by the night of March 12, the revolution was already secure (although some had their doubts at the time) and it had already established the new organs of government, namely, the Temporary Committee of the Duma which was soon to create the First Provisional Government, and the Soviet.

The swift and complete defection of the troops was quite a surprise not only to the leaders of the liberal parties, but also to the socialist leaders. During the revolution, almost all the first-rate socialist leaders were either in prison or in Siberia or abroad and those present were second-rate people and junior party leaders.¹⁰⁶ Trotsky himself says that the Bolshevik Committee of the Vyborg District spoke, on March 7 (five days before the defection of the troops), against any strike the following day, the 'Day of Woman', lest such a strike develop into an open collision with the authorities for which the workers were not yet prepared. (But when the next morning the workers struck and went into the streets, the Bolsheviks joined them, although "à contre-cœur").¹⁰⁷

We have already mentioned¹⁰⁸ that at a meeting of the Vyborg Committee of the Bolshevik Party, twelve hours before victory, many put forth the proposal that the strike should be

105. Ibid., p. 40.

106. Ibid., p. 21.

107. Trotsky, op. cit., p. 110.

108. See p. 11 above.

brought to an end. The leading Bolsheviks trio at Petrograd, Molotov, Zalutsky and Shlyapnikov, made a bad mess of things and were extremely late in addressing and directing the troops. The first near-Bolshevik Social-Democratic pamphlet was issued only on the 11th and distributed on the morning of the 12th. As for the Bolsheviks themselves, Shlyapnikov issued, on the morning of the 12th, an appeal to the soldiers, but this had no effect on the events of the day.¹⁰⁹

Kerensky, a moderate socialist, was taken by surprise by the revolution. So was the Socialist Revolutionary Zenzinov who wrote in the party's newspaper 'Dyelo Naroda' on March 15, 1917, that "the revolution was a great and joyous surprise for us, revolutionaries, who had worked for it for years and had always expected it."¹¹⁰ Likewise, the International Menshevik Sukhanov says that "not one party was preparing for the great upheaval."¹¹¹ As for Lenin, he addressed a meeting of Swiss socialists that his generation was not likely "to live to see the decisive battles of the approaching revolution."¹¹²

Lenin's lieutenant^s future, Trotsky, was lingering in New York.

On the evening of the 11th, the so-called Information Bureau of the parties of the Left (composed of Socialist Revolutionaries (SRs), Social-Democrats, Populist -Socialists and the Labour Party) held its regular meeting between six and seven o'clock, at Kerensky's apartment. At the meeting¹¹³ it was generally agreed that the soldiers were quite passive in their attitude towards demonstrations of the workers, and that these unorganized demonstrations were without purpose or direction. (Sukhanov later wrote that there was no positive purpose for the March mass upheaval. 'Down with the Autocracy' was a

109. Trotsky, op. cit., p. 120.

110. Quoted in Chamberlin, op. cit., p. 73.

111. Sukhanov, op. cit., p. 5.

112. Florinsky, op. cit., p. 1401. Quoted in

113. For this meeting see Kerensky, op. cit., pp. 6-7.

watchword of the revolution, but no political program was as yet advanced to the masses. At length, the street agitators developed a new slogan which dominated all meetings during the March upheaval; it was 'Down with the War').¹¹⁴ The revolutionary movement, it was generally accepted at the meeting, was losing strength and there was no hope of revolution at the moment, so the Bureau decided to concentrate its efforts of propaganda for the purpose of preparing a serious revolution later on.

It is true that the soldiers and the workers were led and 'excited' by some form among their numbers, but those 'leaders' can hardly be considered as something 'different' from the crowd. These 'leaders' only marched with the 'revolutionaries' along the way which the fermenting circumstances, created by historic development and social conditions and fed by the propaganda of different revolutionary parties, led the workers and soldiers to follow. ~~Some~~ the importance of these leaders is negligible.

Thus occurred the Russian March Revolution, one of the most amazing upheavals of elementary passions throughout history. Two organs of power, the Soviet and the Temporary Committee, created to organize and direct the elementary forces, came into existence during the upheaval; the history of the next eight months was one of struggle between those two organs and between the social classes and interests that constituted each.

114. Sukhanov, op. cit., p. 11.

CHAPTER II

Political Parties In Russia Prior To The Revolution, And Composition Of The First Executive Committee

It would be an exhausting task to go into the details of the Bolshevik-Menshevik struggle and split within the Russian Social-Democratic Party, suffice it to say that two of the main tactics of Lenin were not accepted by the Mensheviks, namely, the formation of a small compact party made of cells of professional revolutionaries instead of a loose monstrosity of a structure containing not only professional revolutionaries but also sympathizers and malingerers who achieve nothing but dilute the vigour of the party and shatter the strict discipline pre-requisite for the success of any revolutionary movement. As early as 1902 Lenin published a pamphlet: "What is to be Done?" in which he stressed the importance of the development of a class of professional revolutionaries who would have control of the party. "An organization of revolutionaries," wrote Lenin, "must above all and mainly include people whose profession consists of revolutionary activity. This organization must not be very broad and as conspirative as possible.... Give us an organization of revolutionaries and we shall turn Russia upside down." ¹

The second important point of difference in technique centered on the scientific use of force preached and adopted by Lenin. The Mensheviks revolted against Lenin's methods, and at the Third Social Democratic Conference held at Stockholm in 1906, the Mensheviks, who had a majority in the Conference, outlawed 'expropriations', ² and Plekhanov went as far as

1. Quoted in Chamberlin, op. cit., p. 37.

2. Expropriations was the word used to denote the stealing of money from capitalists and feudalists in order to supply the Party with funds. Stalin was the leader of one of the biggest gangs which effected expropriations.

criticizing the Moscow workers for the street fights at the end of 1905. But Lenin disagreed with all this and insisted on the necessity of the use of force in revolutions.³ In this he echoed the beliefs of his elder brother, Alexander Ulianov, who boldly stated his conviction before the Tzarist judges who were judging him for participation in a plot to kill Alexander III on March 1st, 1887. "Terror," said Alexander, "is the sole form of defence that is left to a minority, strong only in spiritual force and of the consciousness of its rightness against the consciousness of the physical force of the majority."⁴ But Lenin developed this crude formula, this expression of despair, into a belief in the necessity of the scientific and discriminate use of force, and this differentiates him from the anarchists and the terrorists of the 1880s whose activities were probably harmful to the revolution.

Talking strictly of theory, both the Bolsheviks and the Mensheviks accepted Marxism as their basic theory, but they differed in its interpretation as far as application to Russia was concerned. The Mensheviks held that the workers, being a small fraction of Russia, could not make a revolution. They believed that the time was ripe for a bourgeois revolution which would sweep autocracy, and by establishing freedom of speech, thought, assembly, trade-unions, etc., create conditions that would lead, when Russia had made the necessary industrial and cultural advance, to the ultimate realization of a socialist organization of society. The Mensheviks, particularly Plekhanov, distrusted the peasants and looked at them as a potentially reactionary force, and they favoured some measure

3. See Moorehead, op. cit., pp. 78-79.

4. Quoted in Chamberlin, op. cit., p. 34.

of collaboration with the non-socialist, liberal parties.⁵

But Lenin took a more orthodox Marxist point of view; he distinguished between the agricultural labourers, wage workers and poor peasants (all potential allies of the proletariat), and the middle and well-to-do peasants, most of who were petit bourgeois and sympathized with the bourgeoisie.⁶ The poorer peasants would ally themselves to their proletarian brothers who, after all, were nothing but peasants working in factories. As Lenin wrote towards the end of 1910: "The peasants do not and can not have any other way out of the desperate want, poverty, and death by starvation in which the government has plunged them than mass struggle together with the proletariat to overthrow the Tzarist rule."⁷ Lenin also rejected any compromise with the middle-class liberals.

A third tendency within the Russian Marxist movement was exhibited by Trotsky and a small group of followers. These favoured the direct seizure of power in Russia by the working class, without the co-operation of the bourgeois liberals. But they also believed that the Russian socialist revolution would succeed only if it acted as a spark for the ignition of revolution in more advanced countries. (This view was also shared by Lenin). Otherwise, the revolution would fail due to industrial backwardness and the reaction of the peasants.⁸

When the World War broke out, the socialists of most belligerent countries voted for war credits, claiming that their respective countries were fighting a defensive war. Right Mensheviks, like Deutsch and Zassoulitch, held a patriotic a

5. Ibid., p. 39.

6. Vladimir Ilyitch Lenin, Alliance of the Working Class and the Peasantry (Moscow: Foreign Languages Publishing House, 1959), p. 181.

7. Ibid., pp. 176-177.

8. Chamberlin, op. cit., p. 40

attitude to the war and supported it in so far as it was waged for national defence, but they stressed the necessity of peace without indemnities or annexations. Plekhanov, who with age was drifting into chauvinism, wrote an article in an American journal on the very day before the March Revolution, branding the strikes and other anti-government activities in Russia as criminal actions.⁹

Only the Bolsheviks and some related groups (Left Mensheviks, Left SRs and Trotskiites) condemned the war, and the Bolsheviks adopted Lenin's view that "the imperialist war must be turned into a civil war."¹⁰ The five anti-war Bolshevik Duma members tried to protest against the war and were arrested on the night of Nov. 5, 1914. After a short trial they were sent to Eastern Siberia.¹¹

During the war, the socialists convened a conference which met from 5 to 12 September, 1915, at Zimmerwald, in Switzerland. Eleven countries were represented by thirty-eight delegates.¹² The Conference issued a manifesto calling on the workers of the world to make concerted efforts for peace on the basis of no indemnities and no territorial annexations.¹³ The Left Zimmerwaldites (eight persons),¹⁴ led by Lenin and Zinoviev, "voted for the manifesto since it represented the first step in the fight against the war,"¹⁵ but after the Conference, this Left group issued a separate declaration (without breaking with the Zimmerwald majority) calling on the workers of all nations to militate against their capitalistic

9. Trotsky, op. cit., p. 212.

10. Quoted in Chamberlin, op. cit., p. 64.

11. History of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union, ed., Andrew Rothstein (Moscow: 1960), p. 194.

12. Ibid., p. 198.

13. Leonard Schapiro, The Origin of the Communist Autocracy: Political Opposition in the Soviet State (London: G. Bells and Sons Ltd., 1955), p. 19.

14. History of the Communist Party (1960), p. 198.

15. loc cit.,

governments with the aim of seizing "that political power which is necessary for a socialist organization of society,"¹⁶

Another socialist conference convened at Kienthal, in Switzerland from February 5 to 9, 1916. The mood of the delegates was more to the Left than at Zimmerwald. This Conference called on the workers to put pressure on their Governments to open immediate peace negotiations. It also asserted that a lasting peace could only be achieved by the seizure of political power by the workers and by the abolition of capitalistic power. As for the Left Zimmerwald group at Kienthal, It issued, under Lenin, a very radical proclamation to the workers, which ended thus: "Lay down your weapons! You should turn them only against the common foe—the capitalistic governments."¹⁷

Thus the March Revolution found the Social-Democrats engaged in a number of fights, the most important of which was due to their divergent attitudes towards the war, which ranged from the patriotism of Plekhanov to the extreme Leftist though more coherent and logical attitude of Lenin and Trotsky. However, the Social-Democrats agreed on one thing, that if the autocracy collapsed, it would be followed by a bourgeois regime. The task of the Marxists was to mature, in the womb of the bourgeois regime, the conditions that were required for the achievement of socialism.

The other political parties in Russia deserve some mention, and it would be relevant here to mention that the failure of these parties during 1917 was either due to the lack of discipline in these parties or to the lack of any fixed ideology, or both. The above-mentioned discrepancies rendered inevitable the doom of these parties.

16. Quoted in Schapiro, op. cit., p. 19.

17. Quoted in Ibid., p. 20.

The Black Hundreds were extreme Rightists, devoted to the autocracy. They were quite active in the post-1905 reaction but almost disappeared overnight after the March Revolution. Between the two revolutions in 1917, they were said to be working as agents provocateurs, trying to turn the demonstrations of the masses into bloody riots, in the hope that the revolution might be choked by the blood of the masses who effected it.

Then there were the Octobrists, a clique of capitalists and rich landowners under the industrialist Gutchkov. They were satisfied with the 1905 October Manifesto and all they wanted from the Government was to keep favourable conditions that would make them grow richer. They supported the war and grew fat on it, and when they saw that it was carried on inefficiently and sensed that a separate peace might be concluded, they began plotting against the Tzar who stood in the way of the 'proper' carrying on of the war. But the revolution of the masses ruined the irresolute plots of these half-hearted 'revolutionaries'.

However, the strongest and largest bourgeois party was that of the Constitutional Democrats (Cadet), under the leadership of the brilliant historian, Paul Miliukov, who was a full-fledged liberal and an admirer of the Western democracies. This party was monarchical, but it turned republican almost overnight after the March Revolution. Furthermore, all the Rightists, except a few extremists, turned to the Cadet Party and rallied around it after the revolution.

On the Left, there was the Socialist Revolutionary Party which was the largest political party in Russia and which got its main support from the masses of the peasantry which it vaguely considered as the soul of Russia. The SRs believed that the fall of the monarchy would lead to a socialist state (without passing through, or leaping over, capitalism). But they had nothing planned and were not very well organized. Furthermore, they believed in the indiscri-

minate use of force and their terroristic organization was very active in the 1880s. Strictly speaking, this party had no fixed ideology, represented no definite class, and comprised people of many shades of opinion, ranging from Rightist, almost liberal professors like Sorokin, to Leftists who were voting with the Bolsheviki. The above-mentioned qualities of the SR party were very important in giving it popularity before and right after the March Revolution, but they were also the decisive factors in its inevitable defeat at the hands of the Bolsheviki. This party lacked theoreticians and leaders of any stature (except, perhaps, Tchernov), and it was led in the Soviet by Rightist Mensheviks like Dan and Tseretelli.

In addition to the above-mentioned groups and parties, there was Kerensky's Trudovik group, or Labour group, which might be considered as part of the Right wing of the SR party, and the anarchists, whose influence was negligible.

There were three attitudes towards the bourgeoisie and the Revolution in the first Ex. Com. of the Petrograd Soviet. The Right wing socialists were convinced that the "revolution was a bourgeois revolution."¹⁸ Somehow, they drew from the above premise the conclusions "that the establishment in Russia of a dictatorship of capital (as in 'the great democracies of the West') was the basic task of our epoch and the sole object of the revolution; that the imperialism of the new revolutionary Russia and also, consequently, unity in the war with our gallant allies were inevitable and lawful phenomena, demanding the support of the democracy in the avoidance of a 'national catastrophe'; that in connection

18. Sukhanov, op. cit., p. 102.

with this the working class and the peasantry should cut down their demands and their programme, which otherwise would be 'unrealizable', .etc..."¹⁹

On the other extreme of the Ex. Com. stood the ~~Bolsheviks~~ Bolsheviki and the Left SRs. They held that the war would inevitably cause a worldwide socialist revolution. The revolt of the Russian masses was laying the foundation for such a revolution that would lead to "the annihilation of the power of capital."²⁰ The insurgent masses should take power into their own hands, liquidate the war, and put into effect a maximum program. But this was only theory, at least for the time being. When the debate came in the Ex. Com. about the transfer of power to the Provisional Government, the Bolshevik leaders did not protest against this transfer of power to the bourgeoisie, but took the step for granted.²¹

The third group in the Ex. Com. was the most numerous and effective right after the March Revolution. This group was mainly composed of Zimmerwaldites and Left wing Mensheviks. They believed that "the historical development of Europe was entering the phase of the liquidation of capitalism."²² However, they held that the Russian proletariat lacked "both the material power and the indispensable pre-requisites for an immediate socialist transformation of Russia,"²³ and that the revolution, being unable to lead Russia straight to socialism, should create a state of affairs in which the future socialist state would be laid and the proletariat trained to run such a state. "I decided," said Sukhanov, a prototype of this group, that "the government that was to take the place of Tzarism must be exclusively bourgeois.

19. Ibid., p. 103.

20. loc. cit.

21. Ibid., pp. 107-108.

22. Ibid., p. 104.

23. loc. cit.

Trepov and Rasputin should be replaced only by the bosses of the Progressive Bloc. This was the solution to be aimed at, otherwise the overturn would fail and the revolution perish."²⁴ Thus, a bourgeois government should be established, but it should by no means left to establish its dictatorship; this government should insure "complete political freedom in the country" and "an absolute freedom of organization and agitation."²⁵

In addition to the proclamation of complete political freedom, Sukhanov saw in an amnesty, and the taking of immediate measures for the convocation of a Constituent Assembly, as measures against the establishment of a bourgeois dictatorship during the period of transition to socialism.²⁶

Such ground would indeed be fertile for the organization of the proletariat under a bourgeois government. However, such a transformation was too optimistic and unrealistic since no class would sit and watch itself undergoing a controlled experiment, the end result of which would be to train a new class which, as soon as it was mature, would suffocate the one which trained it. This took place under the New Economic Policy, but that was when the socialists were completely in power and the few remnants of the once colourful bourgeoisie had no choice but to walk to the slaughter-house on the path prescribed by the victors.

As for the war, the Soviet majority knew that the bourgeoisie wanted war to a complete victory, and they believed that the bourgeoisie would support the revolutionary masses only towards the fulfilment of that end. Thus Sukhanov says

24. Ibid., pp. 6-7.

25. Ibid., p. 105.

26. Ibid., pp. 105-107.

about the first days of the revolution: "It was clear then a priori that if a bourgeois government and the adherence of the bourgeoisie to the revolution were to be counted on, it was temporarily necessary to shelve the slogans against the war, and furl for a time the banner of Zimmerwald...."²⁷ Sukhanov (that incorrigible economist) also believed at the beginning of the March Revolution that the liquidation of the war was an impractical step since it would result in the demobilization of a huge army and "the transfer of industry to a peace-time basis, with the consequent large-scale shutting down of factories and mass unemployment at a moment when the national economy was completely disorganized. Thus, "the creation of the conditions for the liquidation of the war, and not the liquidation itself, that was the fundamental problem of the overturn. And for this a bourgeois, not a democratic, government was essential."²⁸ Sukhanov had his brains over-stuffed with economics and he failed to realize that in spite of any 'possible' or 'logical' economic theory, the political aspect of things was more important and appealed infinitely more readily to the masses than the strict economic theory.

We clearly see from the above that the majority of the Soviet gave grudging and very conditional support to the Provisional Government which had great responsibilities but little authority to cope with events. This characterized the Soviet-Government relations until the Bolshevik seizure of the Soviet, in spite of the fact that due to more party representation in the Ex. Com., and due to the flooding of that organ by soldiers' delegates, the Ex. Com. was taken over by defensist Mensheviks and SRs.

27. Ibid., p. 12.

28. Ibid., p. 9.

Before going into the defensist 'take-over' of the Soviet and the Bolshevik policy in the early months of the revolution, let us return to the Temporary Committee of the Duma and to the Soviet after its first session, and see how the Tzar failed to recover his throne and how the two above-mentioned institutions tried to consolidate themselves, and what measures and policy did each adopt.

CHAPTER III

March 12-16, 1917

In the first chapter we left the aide-de-camp of General Ivanov buying provisions from the markets of Moghilev. Next, the hero of the first campaign in Galicia moved towards Petrograd with a detachment of picked troops of the Order of St. George. The troops reached Tzarskeo-Selo, a few miles from Petrograd, but as soon as they came into contact with the revolted garrison of the Imperial residence their 'reliability' began to melt and the General withdrew to Viritsa where he remained until he received instructions to return to the Stavka.¹ General Ruzsky sent troops from the Northern front, but when they reached Luga they were already fraternizing with the local troops and refused to proceed any further. By March 15, the Stavka, realizing the uselessness of such efforts, ordered that no more troops be dispatched from the front to Petrograd.²

Back in Petrograd, the authority was divided on the 13th between the Temporary Committee and the Soviet. There was a good deal of shooting in the suburbs but the resistance of the police in the streets was diminishing.³ In the morning, many cadets of the military schools and many Guard regiments went with their officers to the Duma to express allegiance to the revolution. Reports also reached that the people in neighbouring towns were joining the revolution. The very same day Nicholas II left General Headquarters for the Imperial residence, and the Tzarskoe-Selo garrison joined the revolution.⁴

By the 13th, Scheglovitov, former Minister of Justice and President of the Imperial Council; Goremykin, twice before Prime Minister and Privy Councillor of the

1. Chamberlin, *op. cit.*, p. 81 and pp. 85-86. The Stavka was the name given to General Headquarters, at Moghilev.
2. *Ibid.*, p. 86.
3. Kerensky, *op. cit.*, pp. 44-45.
4. *Ibid.*, p. 33.

first class; Sukhomlinov, hero of the 1915 munition scandal; Prince, Golitzin, President of the Council; the Metropolitan Pitirim; Sturmer; Dobrovolsky and Protopopov and others were either arrested or delivered themselves⁵ lest they be 'executed' by the mob. They were imprisoned in the government pavilion, a place consisting of spacious and luxurious rooms which were connected by a glass-roofed passage to the Duma Hall, and which were used in bygone days as resting rooms for the Tzarist ministers when they went to address the Duma.⁶

A very noteworthy episode occurred on the 13th. The town house of the ballerina Kshesinskaya (later the headquarters of Lenin) was occupied by insurgents and sacked from top to bottom. This ballerina, one-time beloved of the Tzarevitch and subsequently courted by two Grand dukes at once, enjoyed privileges which even the British Ambassador could not obtain (such as coal for central-heating during war-time).⁷ She had become a symbol of the hated Imperial order and by sacking her house the mob was releasing its hate upon that order. "A revolution is always more or less a summary and a sanction."⁸

The same day, the Duma appointed commissars to administer the vacant ministries. It also appointed, as we have already mentioned, a Military Commission under Colonel Engelhardt to safe-guard the new regime against any possible counter-revolution and to try to restore some

5. Ibid., pp. 17-18, and pp. 36-39; also Paleologue, op. cit., p. 229.

6. Kerensky, op. cit., p. 18.

7. For the 'coal' incident see Paleologue, op. cit., pp. 229-230.

8. Ibid., p. 230.

measure of order in the city and discipline among the garrison.

Meanwhile, all kinds of delegations went to the Ex. Com. asking admittance to the Soviet. Thus went delegates from the posts and telegraphs, teachers, engineers, Zemstvo and municipal employees, representatives of doctors^sthe, the lawyers, and the artists, all asking to be admitted and they had to be admitted; by the 14th, the number of delegates in the Soviet reached 2000.⁹

On the morning of the 14th, there was still much fighting and burning in the streets of Petrograd, and the rebellious soldiers together with the masses savagely hunted down 'Pharaohs', a considerable number of whom were still loyal to the ancien regime.¹⁰ But the most bloody riots occurred at the Cronstadt naval base where many people, including thirty-nine officers, were killed.¹¹ Admiral Viren, the Commande-in-chief, was literally torn to pieces. The soldiers and the sailors of Cronstadt also arrested about five hundred persons, including more than two hundred officers, and put them in prison where they were subjected to the most humiliating treatment.¹¹

Trouble was also expected any moment at the naval base of Helsingfors, and riots were averted only through the direct pleas of Kerensky (on the phone) to representatives of the naval crews. Furthermore, a delegation of all Duma parties left for Helsingfors and for some time there was no trouble. However, on March 17, Admiral Nepenin, an excellent officer, was killed by an unidentified civilian.¹²

9. For the swelling of the Soviet see Sukhanov, op. cit., pp. 85-86.

10. Paleologue, op. cit., p. 230.

11. Kerensky, op. cit., p. 65.

12. Ibid., p. 64.

On the 14th, there was a big meeting of officers at Petrograd at which a resolution was passed "to stand by the people and unanimously to recognize the power of the Executive Committee of the Duma, pending the convocation of the Constituent Assembly; because a speedy organization of order and of united work in the rear were necessary for the victorious end of the war."¹³ At about 11 A.M., the Emperor's cousin, ~~the~~ Grand Duke Cyril Vladimirovitch himself, came out in favour of the revolution.¹⁴ Dressed in a naval captain's uniform, he led the Marines of the Guard, whose commander he was, to the Tauride Palace and placed their services at the disposal of the Duma.

Now let us return to the Tzar and see how he abdicated in favour of his brother and how the latter renounced the throne pending the meeting of the Constituent Assembly.

The Revolution overtook the Tzar at Moghilev. Denikin says that on the 12th, the Empress wired her husband: "Concessions inevitable,"¹⁵ but the aids and attendants of the Tzar distorted to him the situation in Petrograd, presenting it as something serious but not catastrophe.

Nicholas left Moghilev for Tzarskoe-Selo on the early morning of the 13th.¹⁶ Kerensky claims that the Temporary Committee of the Duma ordered the Imperial train to be stopped at Dno¹⁷ but according to Buchanan, the Emperor was still expected at Tzarskoe-Selo on the late evening of the 14th, and Rodziianko was preparing a manifesto to be signed by

13. Quoted in Denikin, op. cit., pp. 43-44.

14. Kerensky, op. cit., p. 54; Paleologue, in op. cit., p. 232, puts the time at one o'clock.

15. Quoted in Denikin, op. cit., p. 49.

16. Kerensky, op. cit., p. 45; and Paleologue, op. cit., p. 235.

17. Kerensky, op. cit., p. 45.

Nicholas, granting a constitution and empowering Rodzianko to select the members of the new government,¹⁸ so it is more probable that the road was closed by Soviet instructions or workers acting independently. Finding the road barred at Dno the Imperial train tried another road to Petrograd but it was closed. Thereupon the Tzar decided to go to Moscow but the city had already joined the revolution. So the trapped Emperor proceeded to Pskov, the headquarters of General Ruzsky, Commander of the Northern Front, where he hoped to get refuge among his troops.

When Ruzsky informed Nicholas of the true state of affairs in Petrograd, the latter said that he was ready to make any concessions desired by the Duma, if these would restore order in the country; he furthermore decided to commission Rodzianko with the formation of a new ministry, reserving for himself the appointment of the War and the Naval Ministers.¹⁹ This was around 2 A.M. on March 15,²⁰ but it was too late. The Soviet was definitely against the re-assumption of power by Nicholas, and the Rightists, seeing the revolutionary climate of opinion, decided in a meeting held in the evening of March 14, in the absence of socialists and without their knowledge, to sacrifice Nicholas and to overthrow him by force, if necessary, in order to save Russia and the dynasty.²¹

Negotiations ensued between Rodzianko and the commanders of the different fronts and it was almost unanimously decided that the Tzar should abdicate in favour of his son, with the Grand Duke Michael as Regent.²²

18. Buchanan, op. cit., p. 68.

19. Ibid., p. 68; also Chamberlin, op. cit., p. 82.

20. Denikin, op. cit., p. 49.

21. This is related in Paleologue, op. cit., pp. 233-234.

22. For details see Ibid., p. 235; Kerensky, op. cit., p. 46; and Chamberlin, op. cit., p. 91.

So on the 15th, General Ruzsky, together with Generals Danilov and Savitch, got an audience with the Emperor²³ and told him that it had been unanimously agreed that he should abdicate. The Emperor was thunderstruck. Then, returning to his usual calm and apathy, he addressed a telegram to Alexeiev and another to Rodzianko stating that he was ready to abdicate in favour of his son. Accordingly, the Stavka wrote a manifesto to that effect and quickly despatched it to Ruzsky.²⁴

Meanwhile, the Temporary Committee of the Duma had sent Gutchkov and Shulgin, two Rightists of the Progressive Bloc, to get the Tzar's abdication in favour of his son.²⁵ The two delegates left on the afternoon of March 15, in a semi-conspirative manner²⁶ (anxious to avoid and forestall any action by the Soviet), in a special train bound to Pskov. They were detained at Luga where they had difficulty in convincing the insurgent soldiers and workers that they were pursuing no counter-revolutionary ends, and reached Pskov at about ten in the evening when they were immediately conducted into the salon-car of the Imperial train.

In the afternoon, the Tzar had talked with the Court physician, Professor Feodorov, and had been told that the Tzarevitch's haemophilia was incurable. So when Gutchkov told the Tzar of the object of his mission, the latter, after calmly retorting that he had decided to abdicate the preceeding day, went on to say that since his son's health was delicate, he would not be separated from him but, instead, would abdicate in favour of his brother, the Grand Duke Michael.

23. For the audience see Denikin, op. cit., p. 50; Paleologue, op. cit., p. 235; and Chamberlin, op. cit., pp. 91-92.

24. Chamberlin, op. cit., pp. 91-92.

25. Milioukov, op. cit., p. 1263.

26. Kerensky, op. cit., p. 63.

The Duma deputies agreed to this amendment and soon were on their way back to Petrograd with the the Tzar's abdication.²⁷

Miliukov states that the abdication of the Tzar in favour of his brother rather than his son seems to the casual observer as a great and touching episode of parental love amidst that turmoil of power and bloodthirsty passions. But, in reality, as appears in later letters of the Tzarina, this act was not only prompted by the ill-health of the Tzarevitch but also by the fact that, as Nicholas' abdication for his son was illegitimate, then it would be nullified at the first favourable opportunity and the Tzarevitch would be restored to his autocratic heritage without being bound by any commitments to rule with a Duma and a responsible ministry as he would have been had he directly succeeded his father.²⁸ However, this was most probably an afterthought of the Tzarina rather than a guiding motive of the Tzar during these fateful moments.

To avoid the impression that it had been extorted, the act of abdication, though signed around midnight on March 15, was dated March 15, 3P.M. Moreover, to preserve the appearance of continuity in the government, Nicholas signed two documents, dated March 15, 2 P.M., the one charging Prince Lvov with the task of forming a new government, and the other appointing the Grand Duke Nicholas Nicholaevitch to the Supreme Command of the army,²⁹ an appointment which never materialized since the Grand Duke resigned shortly after his arrival to the Stavka, upon being informed by the Provisional Government that public opinion was against the

27. For a dramatic version of this scene see Paleologue, op. cit., pp. 236-238.

28. Milioukov, op. cit., p. 1263.

29. Chamberlin, op. cit., p. 94.

30.

assumption of high public office by a Romanov.³⁰

Thus vanished the Romanovs from the path of history. The fallen Emperor was permitted to return to Moghilev, but soon, under pressure from the Soviet, the Provisional Government arrested him after rumours had circulated that Citizen Romanov and Alexandra the German were conspiring with the generals and the moderate ministers against the revolution, and the Citizen was confined with his family to Tzarskoe-Selo. There was an attempt to send the Imperial family to England³¹ but the Soviet refused to allow them to go lest they organize a counter-revolution from abroad. On March 23, Sokolov (member of the Praesidium of the Soviet) told an audience that the Soviet had taken all measures for preventing the Imperial family from leaving Russia, and that the Tzar had become as much under the protection of the Soviet as under that of the Provisional Government.³²

The abdication of the Tzar in favour of his brother was a blow to many Rightists who saw that the only way out of the crisis was the accession of the Tzarevitch.³³ Miliukov himself had risked the hostility of an audience by telling them, on the 15th, that the Tzarevitch would assume the throne,³⁴ and the Rightists were of the same opinion as Miliukov. But in view of the changing situation, most of the members of the Temporary Committee and of the would-be Provisional Government, including Rodzianko, held that it was inadvisable to proclaim Michael Emperor. Only Miliukov insisted and he held his ground till dawn in a discussion with the majority.³⁵

30. Denikin, op. cit., p. 66.

31. See Buchanan, op. cit., pp. 102-105; and Paleologue, op. cit., p. 253, pp. 257-258, p. 263, and p. 268.

32. Denikin, op. cit., pp. 55-56.

33. See for instance Paleologue, op. cit., pp. 249-250 and 265-6.

34. For Miliukov's speech and the reaction of the audience to it see Sukhanov, op. cit., pp. 144-148.

35. Kerensky, op. cit., pp. 67-68.

Finally, the two sides decided to visit the Grand Duke Michael and explain to him their points of view. The interview³⁶ began at around 10 A. M. on March 16. Only Milukov and Gutchkov urged the Grand Duke to take the throne, while Kerensky, supported by the other Provisional Government representatives, entreated Michael to resign and threatened that the Grand Duke's safety could not be guaranteed if he accepted the throne. The non-too-courageous Grand Duke decided to abdicate, refusing power unless it was granted him by a Constituent Assembly elected by universal suffrage.

Meanwhile, there was great activity in the Soviet. On the night of March 14, came into existence one of the most controversial ordinances issued during the March Revolution, namely, Order No I. This order came into existence thus: Late in the evening of March 14, a delegation of the newly formed soldiers' section of the Petrograd Soviet appeared before Colonel Engelhardt and asked him to collaborate with them in formulating an order to the thousands of Petrograd soldiers who had suddenly found themselves without commanders. Following consultation with some members of the Military Commission, Engelhardt refused to take a hand in drafting the Order because he believed that the first order to the troops of the Petrograd Military District ought to be issued by the new Minister of War who was to assume his functions in a day or two. Vexed by the refusal, the delegates left in anger after having told Engelhardt that they Order themselves.³⁷ Following this, the soldiers went to the left side of the Duma and, finding Sokolov, asked him

36. For the interview see Ibid.; pp. 69-70; Paleologue, op. cit., pp. 239-241; and Chamberlin, op. cit., p. 95.

37. Kerensky, op. cit., p. 162.

to write the Order for them. Sukhanov tells us that he entered a room in the left wing of the Tauride Palace, at about 10 P. M. on March 14, and that is what he saw: "Sokolov was sitting at a table writing. He was surrounded on all sides by soldiers, standing, sitting, and leaning on the table, half-dictating and half-suggesting to Sokolov what he should write."³⁸

Thus came into existence the famous Order No I which was addressed: "To the garrison of the Petrograd District, to all Guardsmen, soldiers of the line, of the artillery, and of the Fleet, for immediate observance, and to the workmen of Petrograd for information."³⁹ The contents of the Order can be summarized thus: Committees were to be elected by all naval and military units and all arms to be put at the disposal of the Company and Battalion Committees, and not to be handed over to officers even if they asked for it. Those units that were not yet represented in the Soviet were to elect one representative for each company, this representative to report to the Soviet before 10 A.M. on March 15. In political activity, the units were subordinated to the Soviet and its committees, and they were to obey the commands of the Military Commission of the Duma only when they did not contradict with the orders and decrees of the Soviet. Furthermore, the soldiers were to comply with strict military discipline on duty and on parade, but otherwise, they had the same political rights as other citizens. Saluting when off duty was abolished and officers were no more to be addresses as "Your Excellency," and "Your Honour," etc., but as "Mr. General," "Mr. Colonel," and so on. As for the officers,

38. Sukhanov, op. cit., p. 113.

39. For the full text of Order No I, see Denikin, op. cit., pp. 61-62.

they were prohibited to address soldiers as "thou." The order ended thus: " Any infringement of this regulation and misunderstandings between officers and men are to be reported by the latter to Company Committees."

According to the Rightists, this Order created chaos in the army.⁴⁰ Yet in reality, this Order "was one of the effects of the peculiar state of disintegration and lack of authority in the Petrograd garrison, and by no means the cause of it, as has been charged."⁴¹ This Order corresponded to revolutionary reality and did not create it. This is witnessed by the fact that army committees appeared at some places, such as among the sailors of the Baltic Fleet, before the receipt of Order No I.⁴² In any case, the contents of this order "were completely covered by the decisions of the Soviet and had nothing terrible in them."⁴³

As we have said, the Rightists were violently against Order No I and, under pressure from the Provisional Government, the Ex. Com. issued, on March 18 and 20, orders in which it emphasized, among other things, that Order No I did not give army committees the right to elect officers, and that the Order only applied to the Petrograd garrison.⁴⁴ The Rightists wanted to restore the full power of the officers, but the socialists saw in such an army a weapon that could be wielded by the Right to end the revolution of the masses and establish its own dictatorship.⁴⁵ That is why the Soviet never gave real support to the attempts of the generals and the Provisional Government to restore the usual discipline in

40. Ibid., p. 61; see also Sorokin, op. cit., p. 23.

41. Kerensky, op. cit., p. 47.

42. Ibid., p. 165.

43. Sukhanov, op. cit., p. 113.

44. Florinsky, op. cit., p. 1394.

45. Sukhanov, op. cit., pp. 75-76.

the army. Finally, as army committees spread throughout the whole army and navy, Alexeiev and Gutchkov issued, on April 12 and 29 respectively, orders about the election and the functioning of these committees, in the hope of limiting their activities. Alexeiev decreed that 1/3 of the members of the army committees should be officers. Gutchkov ordered that regimental committees be chosen separately by soldiers and officers, and 1/5 of the members of these committees were to be officers. Gutchkov thus outlined the functions of the regimental committees: "To control the supply department of the unit; to take legal measures in the event of abuse and exceeding of authority by responsible persons in the unit; to settle misunderstandings between officers and soldiers; to look after the maintenance of order and discipline in the regiment; to prepare for the elections to the Constituent Assembly."⁴⁶

The commanders tried to restrict the committees of the smaller units to domestic matters (like canteens) but these discussed and voted on all matters and soon even insisted that their sanction was necessary every time the troops were ordered into action.⁴⁷

As for the Stavka, it lost much of its power after the revolution. The War Minister made many important appointments and dismissals of officers without referring to it and the High Command itself was reshuffled. According to the monarchist General Denikin, later Commander of the White armies, "the entire military hierarchy was shaken to its very foundations, though it retained all the attributes of power and the customary routine-instructions which could not move the Armies, orders that were never carried out, verdicts of the Courts which were derided. The full weight

46. Chamberlin, op. cit., p. 229.

47. Pares, op. cit., pp. 491-492.

of oppression, following the line of the least resistance, fell solely upon the loyal commanding officers, who submitted without a murmur to persecution from above as well as from below."⁴⁸ Malheur aux vaincus! '

On March 14, the Temporary Committee proceeded to make a Provisional Government under Prince Lvov. Most of the members were representatives of parties and groups which adhered to the Progressive Bloc. Then members of the Temporary Committee and the members designed to participate in the Provisional Government met twice (first ^{the time} at nightfall on the 14th,⁴⁹ and then during the night of the 15th⁵⁰) with representatives of the Ex. Com. (Chkheidze, Sokolov, Steklov and Sukhanov), in order to get the support of the Soviet for the proposed Provisional Government. After heated discussion, the delegates of the bourgeoisie reluctantly consented to grant certain rights to the army and especially to the Petrograd garrison, and to adopt a radical social and political program; in return, the Soviet was to issue in its declaration an appeal for confidence in the officers' corps and for the recognition of the commanding staff by the soldiers. Furthermore, the bourgeoisie succeeded in getting for the Constituent Assembly the right to determine the type of government and the fate of the dynasty. However, the Soviet retained for itself the prerogative to "engage without delay in a broad struggle for a democratic republic."

The Temporary Committee also invited the Soviet to send two representatives (Kerensky and Chkheidze) as members of the projected Provisional Government. This was discussed

48. Denikin, op. cit., p. 77.

49. For a description of what happened at this meeting see Sukhanov, op. cit., pp. 116-126.

50. For this meeting see Ibid., pp. 152-157.

in the Ex. Com. in the course of the 14th, and a resolution was reached that representatives of the revolutionary democracy "could not take office in the Provisional Government because the government and the whole Revolution were bourgeois."⁵¹ But Kerensky, lured by the glow of power, joined the Provisional Government, and on the 16th, after a typical dramatic speech to the Soviet, became the 'hostage of democracy' in the bourgeois government.⁵²

The Proclamation of the Provisional Government appeared in the papers on the morning of the 16th. It contained not a single reference to the social and economic grievances of the working classes or to the question of war and peace. The following is a summary of the Declaration: An immediate and complete amnesty for political and religious offenders. Political freedom and freedom of organization for civilians, to be extended to soldiers "in so far as the war conditions permit." The abolition of all disabilities due to social, religious or national discrimination. The police to be replaced by a national militia with elective officers, subject to the local self-governing body. Immediate preparations for calling the Constituent Assembly was to determine the form of government and draw a constitution for the country. All elections to be based on universal, direct, equal and secret suffrage. Finally, the troops that made the revolution were to be neither disarmed nor sent to the front, and the soldiers were to have, when off duty, the same public rights as other citizens. This decree was signed, in addition to Rodzianko and Lvov, by Kerensky, Miliukov, and other ministers.⁵³

51. Kerensky, op. cit., p. 53.

52. For Kerensky's speech to the Soviet and its effects see Sukhanov, op. cit., pp. 140-143; see also Kerensky, op. cit., pp. 59-61.

53. For the full text of the March 16, Declaration of the Provisional Government, see Chamberlin, op. cit., pp. 431-2.

On the same day appeared the declaration of the Ex. Com.⁵⁴
It called on the soldiers to co-operate with the officers
"and we suppose that in the measure in which the government
which is coming into being will act in the direction of
realizing these obligations [expressed in the Declaration of
the Provisional Government] and of decisive struggle with the
old power, -the democracy must show it its support."
An almost legal duality of power from the first day.

54. For the full text see Ibid., p. 433.

CHAPTER IV

The First Provisional Government

The members of the Provisional Government took over their respective ministries on March 16, and a few days later settled in the Mariinsky Palace where the Tzar's Government and Council of State used formerly to meet. After the July days, Kerensky moved the seat of the Government to the Winter Palace. As for the Soviet, it moved from the Tauride Palace to the Michaelovsky Theater and then to the Naval Academy. In August, it moved again, this time to the Smolny Institute.

The First Provisional Government got the recognition of the U.S. on March 22nd, and of France, Great-Britain and Italy on the 24th. This was after Miliukov, the Minister of Foreign Affairs, called the three Allied ambassadors on the 17th and assured them that "our business now is to save Russia by ruthlessly prosecuting the war to victory,"¹ and after the Provisional Government issued a manifesto on March 19, declaring that "the Provisional Government will loyally maintain all its alliances and do everything in its power to provide the army with all it needs with a view to carrying on the war to a victorious conclusion,"²

No sooner had the new order been established than the Western Imperialists began to bombard it with letters, telegrams and visits from patriotic socialists. As early as March 18, Thomas Albert, Jules Guesde and Marcel Sembat (all patriotic French socialists) sent a telegram³ to Kerensky saying that they were looking forward for a fresh

1. Milioukov, op. cit., p. 234.

2. Quoted in Paleologue, op. cit., p. 254.

3. For the complete text of the telegram see Ibid., pp. 244-45.

war effort on the part of the Russian nation. They told him that as citizen-soldiers, the Allies "must together work in destroying the last and most formidable citadel of absolutism, Prussian militarism." The telegram ended with a utopian statement that the victory of the Allies would bring peace to the world and secure its welfare and its liberty for ever. On March 25, Kerensky sent his reply, a typical document of oscillation between the bourgeois and the democratic ideals.⁴

Following this overture, many Allied socialists went to Russia to "preach wisdom and patriotism to the Soviet."⁵ They included three French deputies, Montet, Cachin and Lafont who arrived on April 14, and Albert Thomas who arrived on the 22nd, and Thorne and O'Grady from the British Labour Party. However, these socialists were invariably given the cold shoulder by internationalists who regarded them as chauvinists and "agents of Anglo-French imperialism."⁶ One French socialist, Cachin, did not dare even assert, at his first visit to the Soviet, the right of restoration to France of Alsace-Lorraine, but presented this restoration as a contingency, subject to conditions such as a plebiscite.⁷

Meanwhile, the Provisional Government proceeded to fulfil its program. On March 19, it issued a decree which sanctioned the order given on the 15th by the Minister of Justice, Kerensky, for the release of all political prisoners throughout Russia. On March 20, the Provisional Government

4. For the text of Kerensky's reply see Ibid., p. 272.

5. Ibid., p. 297.

6. Sukhanov, op. cit., p. 260.

7. Paleologue, op. cit., p. 299.

restored the Finnish Constitution, amnestied all Finnish political prisoners, promised extension of the Finnish autonomy and ordered the creation of a diet (but this did not satisfy the Finns who asked for complete independence and got it on Dec. 17, 1917). On March 25th, the death penalty was abolished, except at the front, a step which gave impetus to the disintegration of the army. On the 29th, the independence of Poland was recognized (a Polish state had already been proclaimed by Germany which occupied most of Poland), and all April 2, all disabilities resulting from race, religion and social status were removed.

In the provinces, the old administration broke down and its members fled. New self-appointed organizations appeared, like Soviets, committees of public safety, conferences of public leaders, 'democratized' Dumas and the like, but this did not prevent the setting in of a great degree of chaos. Consequently, Prince Lvov telegraphed to the Chairmen of Zemstvo Administrations, suggesting that they temporarily assume the duties of governors, in the capacity of commissars of the Provisional Government. But most of the Zemstvo Chairmen were wealthy, conservative, and often reactionary men who did not have the confidence of the local Soviets. So this plan for the administration of the provinces failed and Lvov decided (neither out of weakness nor out of a profound understanding of the situation but out of the understanding of the Provisional Government's weakness) not to elect governors but to let the populations elect them and inform the Provisional Government of their decision.⁸ Following this, commissars followed in swift succession and in the first six weeks, sixteen Provincial Commissars were

8. Kerensky, op. cit., p. 110 and p. 112.

removed by the local Soviets and by the 'democratized' Dumas.⁹ As for the police, the Government issued an order on April 30, abolishing the police and replacing it by a militia.¹⁰ However, by this step, as by the one concerning the election of governors, the Government was only acknowledging faits accomplis.

During the first days of the revolution, factories were out of work. On March 18, Chkheidze made a report to the Soviet concerning the resumption of work. Work, he said, was possible, since "to-day the enemy has been sufficiently disarmed for there to be no danger in going back to work...." But Chkheidze added: "It would be absurd if we went on working under the former conditions. Let the bourgeoisie realize that. Once we have returned to work we shall immediately start elaborating the conditions under which we shall work...."¹¹ At the same meeting, the Soviet decided, by a vote of 1170 to 30, to resume work on the following day.¹²

On March 23-24, an agreement was reached between the Ex. Com. and the Petersburg Manufacturers' Association. Factory committees (to be elected by workers and to possess considerable powers in matters of internal regulation) were created and factory central conciliation boards were established to settle disputes between owners and workers. Furthermore, the eight-hour day was introduced and any extra work done was to be paid overtime.¹³ In Moscow, the Soviet, faced with obstinate employers, decreed on March 30 the eight-hour day.¹⁴ But this was only for the two capitals and

9. Denikin, op. cit., pp. 108-109.

10. Ibid., p. 114.

11. Both quotations quoted in Sukhanov, op. cit., p. 195.

12. loc. cit.

13. For this agreement see Ibid., pp. 211-213.

14. Chamberlin, op. cit., p. 267

even there was not uniformly enforced, but remained a popular battle-cry of organized labour till the November Revolution.¹⁵

The factory committees were formed spontaneously after the revolution. The Soviet decreed their formation on March 18,¹⁶ and a few days later the Manufacturers' Association agreed to grant them considerable, though limited powers. But these committees soon took matters into their own hands, and before long they began to interfere with the tasks of owners, technicians and managers and even to crowd them out of the enterprises.¹⁷ This led to chaos in industry and to the consequent fall in output. By the end of April, the output of the Moscow metallurgical industries fell by 32%, and coal mining in the Donets Basin fell 30% by July.¹⁸ Furthermore, the workers usually asked for an increase in pay, without regard to the income of the enterprise. This demand for higher wages was partly due to depreciation of the paper money, but it led, in turn, to greater depreciation.¹⁹

On March 24, in a reception given in honour of the Allied ambassadors at Petrograd, Miliukov expanded the theory which was the cornerstone of his policy. The revolution, he said, was primarily a protest against the organization of the war effort by the Tzarist Government. Now that Russia was free, she "was determined to use her best endeavour and to make all sacrifices... to create conditions for a lasting peace through victory [sic]."²⁰

15. Florinsky, op. cit., p. 1419.

16. loc. cit.

17. Ibid., p. 1420; and Denikin, op. cit., p. 119.

18. Vernadsky, op. cit., pp. 246-247.

19. Ibid., p. 247.

20. Quoted in Florinsky, op. cit., p. 1345.

The ideas of Miliukov sharply contrasted with the March 27 Appeal issued by the Soviet which was still dominated by the internationalists. This 'Manifesto to the Peoples of the World' was written by Sukhanov, and commented upon, revised and added to by Chkheidze.²¹ According to Sukhanov, the basic propositions of the Manifesto were:

"First thesis: 'Aware of its revolutionary strength the Russian democracy declares that it will counteract by all its means the imperialist policies of its ruling classes, and that it summons the nations of Europe to joint decisive action on behalf of peace.'

Second thesis: 'We will steadfastly defend our freedom against any reactionary encroachments, domestic or foreign; the Russian revolution will not retreat before the bayonets of the war-mongers and will not allow itself to be crushed by military power.'

In addition the manifesto contained a special appeal to the German proletariat, a factor of exceptional importance for war and peace, which was called upon to deal a blow to the semi-absolutist German Government, at this time victorious on the field of battle.²²

In short, the manifesto bound the Russians to fight a defensive war as long as the revolution did not occur in Germany.

On March 30, the German Reichstag, voting by a majority against the Social-Democrats, declined the offer of peace without annexations.²³ Likewise did the Western democracies. And a few days after the Manifesto, on April 2, when half-peaceful relations were developing between the antagonists on the Russian front, the Germans attacked a Russian Army Corps at Stokhod and smashed it to pieces. About 10,000 Russian soldiers were captured, together with great masses of artillery.²⁴ But the German Chancellor soon

21. Sukhanov, *op. cit.*, pp. 205-206.

22. *Ibid.*, p. 217. For the complete text of the Proclamation see John S. Curtiss, *The Russian Revolution* (D. Van Nostrand Co., Princeton, N.J.), pp. 119-120.

23. Denikin, *op. cit.*, p. 92.

24. *Ibid.*, p. 132. Kerensky in *op. cit.*, p. 173, puts the number of prisoners at 25,000.

perceived the blunder and asked the High Command to make as little as possible out of the success, prohibiting further demonstrations of force on the Eastern Front lest they "injure a real prospect of peace."²⁵ However, this incident strengthened the defensist attitude in Russia at the time.

The duality of power manifested itself from the first days of the revolution. Delegations from the Baltic and the Black Sea Fleets affirmed, on March 29, that they were ready to obey orders from the Provisional Government as long as these were in accord with the policy of the Ex. Com. The 172nd Reserve Regiment said, in its resolution, that "the army and the people should solely obey the decisions of the Soviet"; it also added that "the orders of the Provisional Government which conflict with the decisions of the Soviet are not to be executed."²⁶

Early in April, the bourgeois press began a violent attack on the workers who were insisting on applying the eight-hour day, saying that the workers were idling in the factories while the soldiers were dying in the trenches. Even the Allied press had its remarks about the heroism of the Russian soldiers and the laziness of the workers.²⁷ This almost caused a split between the workers and the soldiers. There were heated discussions and the soldiers were even threatening the use of force. To counteract this result of bourgeois propaganda, the socialists sent agitators to argue with the soldiers, and Soviet members accompanied

25. General— von Ludendorff, My War Memoirs (London: Hutchinson's, n.d.), vol. 2, p. 432.

26. Quote in Trotsky, op. cit., p. 206.

27. La Crise du Pouvoir, Illustration, No MMMCCMLXXXII (July, 1917), p. 95.

troop delegates to factories, in order to bring the soldiers and the workers closer together. The soldier-worker crisis remained acute for about ~~ten~~or fifteen days, but finally the troop delegates "officially refuted the slanders on the workers,"²⁸ and by the end of April the soldier-worker relations were becoming again friendly. The bourgeoisie had failed either to inflame the patriotism of the soldiers and workers, or to drive a wedge between them.

Meanwhile, the Ex. Com. had appointed a 'Liaison Commission' whose task was to exert 'pressure' and 'control' over the Provisional Government.²⁹ This Liaison Commission first met on March 24, and was composed of Chkheidze, Steklov, Sukhanov, Skobelev and Philippovsky, and was later joined by Tseretelli after his arrival on March 31st.

On April 4, the Liaison Commission "was charged with obtaining the Provisional Government's official repudiation of all aggressive policies."³⁰ For that purpose the Committee met the Council of Ministers on April 6.³¹ Tseretelli stressed to the Government the necessity of renouncing all war aims but defence. Miliukov flatly refused to publish and to sign a statement to that effect, but many ministers agreed to the publication of such a document. The meeting ended without a decision, and after a great deal of further discussion on both sides³² the Government agreed to include in its declaration that there was to be "no violent seizure of foreign territory."³³ This inclusion in the proposed declaration to the people of Russia concerning the war and its aims, was considered as not enough by the Zimmerwaldites,

28. Sukhanov, op. cit., p. 235.

29. Ibid., p. 190.

30. Ibid., p. 246.

31. For an account of this meeting see Ibid., pp. 247-248.

32. For these discussions see Ibid., pp. 248-253,

33. Quoted in Ibid., p. 253.

but by that time they were already out of control of the Ex. Com. which had been taken over by the defensist Tseretelli. The Declaration of the Provisional Government was issued on April 9,³⁴ and was a typical defensist document, characteristic of the new Soviet majority.

April 5, was the occasion of the state burial of the victims of the revolutionary uprising. More than 900,000 people marched through the streets, carrying 210 coffins which were buried in the Champs de Mars.³⁵ To many, the great and bloodless Russian Revolution seemed already completed.

As we have mentioned above, Tseretelli arrived to Petrograd on March 31st. He not only spoke in the Ex. Com. (April 3) for armed defence, but also spoke against "any domestic political activities in favour of peace."³⁶ The Zimmerwaldites insisted that the Soviet open a campaign for peace throughout Russia, but on April 4, Tseretelli came with a compromise which was accepted by the Ex. Com. "The campaign [for peace]," he said, "could be opened at any desired moment, but just then there was no need for it."³⁷ Compromise, that object most loathed by orthodox Marxists, became the official policy of the Soviet.

A preliminary All-Russian Conference of Soviets took place in Petrograd between April 11 and 16. The majority of the delegates were defensists like the new majority in the Petrograd Ex. Com. This Conference was supposed to create an All-Russian Soviet Ex. Com. It did so by merely electing sixteen members to supplement the

34. For the complete text of this declaration see Chamberlin, op. cit., pp. 440-441.

35. Paleologue, op. cit., p. 285.

36. Sukhanov, op. cit., p. 231.

37. Ibid., p. 244.

Petrograd Ex. Com. These new members were elected in a way which henceforth became common in Soviet elections: the candidates were nominated by party factions in proportion to the Soviet strength of the respective parties, and the Soviet Assembly merely formally confirmed the party nominees. The soldiers also sent delegates to the Ex. Com. - which swelled to comprise as many as eighty or ninety members.³⁸

At the Conference, Tseretelli expressed his hope that the other peoples would follow the example of Russia by overthrowing their governments or compelling them to renounce annexationist designs. But until that happened, Tseretelli held that it was a matter of honour for Russia to fight the enemy without as bravely as it fought the enemy within. Opposed to Tseretelli at the Conference was the Bolshevnik leader, Leo Kamenev, who called for an immediate peace, but Tseretelli won by 325 to 57 votes, with 20 abstentions.³⁹ However, this cannot be taken to mean that the majority of the workers and soldiers were taken by patriotic ardour and ready to sacrifice their lives for the defense of the fatherland. The following episode should make the situation clearer: Plekhanov, the founder of Russian Social Democracy, arrived to Russia on April 14, after forty years of exile, and was given a triumphal reception. The next day he was received by cheers as he entered the Soviet, but when he spoke of his determination to continue the war and not to yield to the Hohenzollerns, there was a gloomy stillness around him and even mutterings could be heard.⁴⁰ This once great revolutionary turned ardent patriot, was out of touch with the masses of Russia and he drifted through 1917 without leaving any mark on events.

38. Ibid., p. 304.

39. Chamberlin, op. cit., p. 112.

40. Paleologue, op. cit., p. 300.

Meanwhile, the Provisional Government was spending its time and energy on **internal**, immediately meaningless, fights. Miliukov insisted on the annexation of Constantinople while Kerensky, as a socialist, stood for a defensive war and for the free self-determination of nations. As for the Soviet, it insisted that Miliukov communicate the April 9 Declaration, to the Allied governments.⁴¹ This Miliukov refused to do and a storm ensued against him in the Soviet.⁴² Kerensky and other ministers put pressure on Miliukov who finally accepted to communicate the Declaration to the Allies, on condition that an explanatory note be attached. This explanatory note⁴³ was approved of by the whole Cabinet, including Kerensky.⁴⁴ In the vaguely worded note, Miliukov asserted that " the popular aspiration to carry on the World War to a decisive victory has only become intensified" after the revolution, "as a result of everyone's consciousness of the general responsibility." He also asserted "that the Provisional Government ... will fully observe the obligations which were undertaken in regard to our Allies."

This note was contacted to the Ex. Com. on May 2, the day following its despatch to the Allied governments. It made a big stir in the Ex. Com. According to the Zimmerwaldite Sukhanov, "the new Note completely annuled everything the revolution had accomplished on behalf of peace up to then. It assured the Allies that Russia's aims in the war remained as before, under the Tzar...."⁴⁵ This opinion was also shared by many moderate socialists in the Soviet.

41. Ibid., p. 328.

42. Kerensky, op. cit., pp. 134-135.

43. For the text of the note see Chamberlin, op. cit., p. 444.

44. Kerensky, op. cit., p. 135.

45. Sukhanov, op. cit., p. 314.

But perhaps it was Miliukov's 'imperialist' language rather than the contents of his note, that sent the Soviet into a frenzy. Soviet indignation was also intensified due to the fact that many Soviet members lacked confidence in Miliukov and were even hostile to him because in their eyes he had become a symbol for imperialism.⁴⁶ The Soviet sat late into the night of May 2, and decided to issue a sharp protest against Miliukov's imperialist note.⁴⁷

The note appeared in the newspapers on May 3. The same day, the Finnish Guard Regiment appeared, fully armed, in the streets of Petrograd. The Regiment was probably led by Linde, an ardent Finn revolutionary.⁴⁸ The troops held red banners and placards denouncing the Provisional Government, especially Gutchkov and Miliukov, as they marched to the Mariinsky Palace. The Finnish Regiment surrounded the Palace and occupied all its entrances. Other regiments joined the Finns and there was talk of arresting the whole Provisional Government (which, by the way, was not at the Mariinsky Palace then, but was on the Moika, at the office of Gutchkov⁴⁹): The troops around the Palace were estimated at about 25,000 to 30,000 soldiers.⁵⁰ However, the Soviet sent Skobelev who succeeded in dispersing the soldiers from around the Mariinsky Palace, but they continued to demonstrate against Miliukov in the streets.⁵¹

On the same day, huge crowds advanced from the Vyborg side to the Nevsky. There was a possibility of great bloodshed, so Chkheidze and some socialists went to the demonstrators and after "some rather stormy wrangling... apparently managed to calm and disperse the demonstrators.

46. See Kerensky, op. cit., p. 130 and 135; and Chamberlin, op. cit., p. 143.

47. Paleologue, op. cit., p. 328.

48. See Trotsky, op. cit., p. 309.

49. Kerensky, op. cit., p. 13.

50. Chamberlin, op. cit., p. 143.

51. Sukhanov, op. cit., pp. 315-316.

He [Chkheidze] pointed out that the Ex. Com. was going to discuss the situation at once, and in case of need would then call for organized action, whereas fragmentary actions would show us [the democracy] to be weak and merely hurt the cause."⁵²

On the night of May 3, the Provisional Government met with representatives of the Soviet. Prince Lvov declared that the Government should either possess the full confidence of the Soviet or else resign. After a great deal of discussion, Tseretelli withdrew his original demand for the despatch of a new note to the Allies, and was satisfied with the issue of an 'explanation' of a few ambiguous phrases in the note. In return, Tseretelli promised the support of the Soviet.⁵³

In spite of the Soviet-Government agreement, disturbances continued on the 4th. Great numbers of workers (some of them armed) flocked to the center of the city where they were met by Cadet-organized crowds, raising placards and banners "in favour of Gouchkov-Miliukov, the war and the Allies, and against anarchy, Lenin, and German militarism."⁵⁴ A clash was inevitable and there were dead and wounded on the Nevsky. The fighting did not stop even after the Ex. Com. appealed to the workers to demonstrate unarmed, and after it issued an order to the soldiers that they were not to leave their barracks without written authorization from the Ex. Com.⁵⁵ This last order was issued not only with the aim of preventing further disorder, but also lest General Kornilov who, according to Trotsky, advanced the canons in front of the Mariinsky Palace and

52. Sukhanov, op. cit., Ibid., p. 316.

53. Chamberlin, op. cit., p. 144.

54. Sukhanov, op. cit., p. 318.

55. Ibid., pp. 318-319; and Chamberlin, op. cit., p. 145.

assembled military cadets there⁵⁶ attack the workers and even threaten the Soviet itself. This order to the troops put the Soviet, in theory, above the Commander of the Petrograd Garrison, and was more than the already disgusted Kornilov could bare, so he resigned shortly afterwards.

On the evening of the 4th, the Ex. Com. accepted the explanation issued by the Government, by a vote of 34 to 19.⁵⁷ This explanation was conveyed by Miliukov to the ambassadors of the Allied powers.

In face of increasing disorder, the Soviet took a drastic measure. It forbade ~~street~~ demonstrations and ~~street~~ meetings for three days (May 4-6).⁵⁸ As touched by a magic stick, the tormented city resumed its normal apareil. A remarkable lesson for seekers of power in Russia at the time.

In the May 3-4 demonstrations, there was a great deal of Bolshevik manoeuvring and ideas. However, the masses were more to the Left than Lenin deemed desirable at the moment:

"The slogan 'Down with the Provisional Government' was adventurous," Lenin declared; "to overthrow that government now was impermissible, therefore we gave the slogan of peaceful demonstrations. We desired to carry out only a peaceful reconnaissance of the forces of the enemy, but not to give battle, and the Petrograd Party Committee took a position a little more to the Left,⁵⁹ which, under the circumstances, is a grave offense."

On s'engage - et puit en voit!

Throughout March and April, as the organization and solidification of the democratic organizations proceeded around the Soviet, the rift widened between it and the

56. Trotsky, op. cit., p. 315.

57. Chamberlin, op. cit., p. 145; see also Kerensky, op. cit., op. cit., p. 137

58. Sukhanov, op. cit., pp. 319-320.

59. Quoted in Chamberlin, op. cit., p. 146.

Provisional Government. The speeches and articles of the Soviet leaders were not much more than the criticism of a healthy opposition in time of peace, but the situation was a very critical one with a great deal of tension in the air, and this criticism sowed the seeds of hate and revolt in the restless masses. Furthermore, the 'opposition' represented the overwhelming majority of the population and this was the main source of the impracticality of the situation.

It was clear to the members of the Provisional Government that the real power in the country was wielded by the Soviet. Early in May, the idea of forming a coalition government was advanced by the Right wing of the democracy and the Left wing of the bourgeoisie. On May 9, the Government issued an address to the Russians in which it raised the question of coalition, and on the 10th, Prince Lvov sent an official letter to the Ex. Com. concerning the subject.⁶⁰

On May 11 and 12, a majority of the Praesidium and the Ex. Com. voted against a coalition.⁶¹ The moderate socialists were afraid to participate in such a government lest they become susceptible to Bolshevik criticism and loose their hold on the masses. But on May 14, after the resignation of the disliked Gutchkov (because he opposed the democratization of the army), and after Kerensky had drawn a very gloomy picture of the situation, the Ex. Com. agreed, by a vote of 44 to 19, to authorize its representatives to join a coalition ministry.⁶² It also laid the following conditions for this participation:

60. Sukhanov, op. cit., pp. 329-330.

61. Ibid., p. 334; and Chamberkin, op. cit., p. 147.

62. Chamberlin, op. cit., p. 147; Kerensky, op. cit., p. 141, puts the vote as 41 to 19. For an account of the negotiations for the formation of a coalition government, see Sukhanov, op. cit., pp. 334-338.

Active foreign policy, aiming to the achievement of peace on the basis of the self-determination of peoples without annexations or indemnities; preparation for negotiations with the Allies for revision of the War agreements; democratization of the army and strengthening its fighting power; control over industry and transport, and over the exchange and distribution of products as a means of combatting economic breakdown; protection of labor; an agrarian policy which would "prepare the passing of the land into the hands of the toilers"; imposition of financial burdens on the propertied classes; establishment of democratic local administration and the speedy convocation in Petrograd of the Constituent Assembly.⁶³

Kerensky insisted, using the threat of resignation, that Miliukov be transferred to the Ministry of Education,⁶⁴ a step which the latter refused, preferring to resign. Miliukov was replaced by Tereschenko who adopted the same foreign policy as his predecessor.⁶⁵

The Cadets agreed to join the coalition if they were given four ministries, if the Government would be given undivided authority and full power "to take the most energetic measures against anarchistic, illegal and violent actions,"⁶⁶ and if the army would be prepared for defensive as well as offensive operations. These they were granted and they joined the coalition which came to be composed of five socialist ministers (in charge of the War Ministry and the Admiralty, Justice, Supply, Labour, and Posts and Telegraphs) together with nine bourgeois ministers of the preceding government.⁶⁷ This First Coalition Government came into existence on May 18,⁶⁸

63. Chamberlin, op. cit., p. 147.

64. Kerensky, op. cit., p. 13 .

65. Miliukov, op. cit., p. 1270.

66. Quoted in Miliukov Chamberlin, op. cit., p. 148.

67. Miliukov, op. cit., p. 1270; and Sukhanov, op. cit., p. 338.

68. For accomplishments of First Provisional Government see Kerensky, op. cit., pp. 124-125.

The two most important parties in the Soviet then were the SRs and the Mensheviks. The SR party was the largest in Russia but it was split at the top into two main groups, the one Rightist under Kerensky, and the other moderate under Tchernov. There was also a small Leftists group which usually voted with the Bolsheviki. This split was evident at the May 5, SR Party Conference,⁶⁹ and soon weakened the Party to the point of paralysis, Sukhanov writes in scorn of the Rightist and moderate majority of the SRs: "The SR party gave itself up entirely to the Coalition, it gave it everything it had. The loveliest girl in France could have given no more."⁷⁰ As for the Mensheviks, Sukhanov says that they regarded the Coalition as an evil, but felt they had to join it in order to save the country. On May 22, an All-Russian Conference of the Menshevik Party approved the Party's entrance into the Coalition.⁷¹

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Now let us turn to the army and examine its condition during the first months of the revolution and study the course of its disintegration.

A very important factor in the disintegration of the army was war-weariness. This had resulted in a great number of desertions even before the revolution, and special military police detachments had been formed to round up deserters.⁷² The view that the army had been disintegrating before the revolution was held by most Russian socialists at the time.⁷³ As for the Rightists, they held that the army began disintegrating with

69. For this Conference, see Sorokin, op. cit., pp. 29-30.

70. Sukhanov, op. cit., p. 348.

71. Ibid., p. 350.

72. Kerensky, op. cit., p. 99.

73. See for example Ibid., pp. 142-146, and Trotsky, op. cit., pp. 29-30.

Order No I decreeing the formation of army committees.⁷⁴
In reality, the troops were weary of the carnage and of the ill-executed war, and many of them had stayed in their trenches only because of the iron grip of autocracy. But once that grip had melted, and once the first flush of revolutionary enthusiasm and patriotism had faded away, there was nothing to control the war-weary soldiers and to keep them in their trenches. Kerensky succeeded in filling them with fire for a while, but this was soon put off by enemy fire. Then talk about an imminent land division and the prospect of a fourth winter in the trenches were too much for the Russian army; and with the failure of Kornilov, the forces of disintegrations- which had been only thinly disguised by the tough C-in-C - came to the fore in all their glory and gave a coup de grace to the remnants of the Tzarist war machine.

This was the general trend of disintegration in the Russian army during 1917. Any details given fit into this pattern.

When the Petrograd garrison mutinied on March 12, it did so without its officers, or, more accurately, against them. This was because most of the officers were loyal tools of the autocracy and its immediate representatives to the soldiers. Right after the revolution, the Soviet easily took control of the soldiers of the garrison who joined the Soviet in its first session. Thus, the Soviet became representative of the soldiers and the Ex. Com. kept in close contact with the troops through the 'military section' which it established on the night of March 13. On the other hand, the officers of the Petrograd garrison adopted, as we have already mentioned, a resolution on March 14, expressing their allegiance to the Duma.

74. See for example Denikin, op. cit., p. 159.

But the soldiers fully backed the Soviet while the majority of the officers gave a very grudging backing to the Duma and even considered its leaders as usurpers. As for the The Ex. Com., it was regarded by the officers as a clique of bandits. Early in April, a well-known general, Krymov, offered the Provisional Government to "cleanse Petrograd in two days with one division; but, of course, not without bloodshed."⁷⁵ Had the 'cleansing' been attempted in April, it would have had no better chance than Ivanov's attempt, or Kerensky's November attempt, or the ill-starred attempt of Krymov himself in September.

On March 15, Rodzianko, on behalf of the Temporary Committee of the Duma, asked General Kornilov to accept the Command of the Petrograd Military District. Kornilov accepted and hoped to gain authority over a majority of the garrison,⁷⁶ but the socialist agitators and the army committees were too much for him. During the May demonstrations, the General requested the Government for permission to call out the troops for its protection, but the Government unanimously declined this proposal.⁷⁷ Then on May 4, was issued the order of the Ex. Com. prohibiting the troops of the garrison from leaving their barracks without its written permission. Kornilov saw the uselessness of trying to discipline the garrison, and he resigned right after the resignation of Gutchkov and was transferred to the Southwestern front.

As for the Stavka, it was viewed suspiciously by both the Duma and the Ex. Com. Within a few weeks after his assumption of the War Ministry, Gutchkov placed

75. Quoted in Ibid., p. 68.

76. Ibid., p. 71.

77. Kerensky, op. cit., p. 136.

one-fifty senior officers on the retired list.⁷⁸ This measure was adopted not only because the Government wanted new talent to replace old officers, as Gutchkov said,⁷⁹ but because the Government distrusted the Stavka and because many officers were inefficient. The Provisional Government fell into the tragedy that often overtakes moderates: by trying to steer a middle course between both extremes (the Soviet and the Stavka), it lost the confidence of both.

The democratization of the army, inevitable after the revolution, quickened the process of disintegration. Military chiefs were deprived of disciplinary powers, these being transferred to Regimental and Company Disciplinary Courts which also settled misunderstandings between officers and men. Army committees were given wide powers by the Government in the hope that a sense of responsibility might restore discipline in the army. The Company Committees were prohibited from discussing matters of military preparedness and other purely military matters affecting the unit, but no such reservation was made in regard to Regimental Committees. The Regimental C.O. was entitled to appeal against but could not suspend the decisions of the Regimental Committees. These Regimental Committees were also given the power to negotiate with the political parties on the matter of sending delegates to the front in order to explain their political programs before the elections of the Constituent Assembly.⁸⁰ This turned the army into something nearer to a city political platform than to an army engaged

78. Denikin, op. cit., p. 146.

79. Ibid., p. 147.

80. Ibid., loc. cit.

in deadly struggle. And the committees got, in practice, the right of moving C.O.s wince the position of a C.O. who received a vote of censure was intolerable.⁸¹ Thus discipline broke down and a kind of 'legal' semi-anarchy prevailed.

The disintegration of the army was rendered easier by the abolishment of capital punishment on March 25. At the front, field court-martials which provided summary punishment were abolished and juries were introduced in military courts thus weakening the authority of military judges.⁸² As for the intelligence service of the army, it "was completely destroyed by the suspicions of the Revolutionary Democracy, which had foolishly believed that this service was identical with the old secret police organization, and had therefore abolished it."⁸³

After the revolution, a kind of semi-peace reigned at the Russian front. Germany perceived the inclination of the revolutionary democracy and of the peasant-soldiers for peace and it started a campaign to bring the war with Russia to an end. The front was flooded with proclamations urging the Russian soldiers to revolt against the Russian, English and French capitalists and to conclude peace with Germany. The ~~Russai~~ Germans also said in their leaflets that they would not attack unless obliged by a Russian offensive. Furthermore, many German 'peace delegations,' bearing white flags, moved towards the Russian trenches but they were usually driven by the Russian artillery and this often enraged the Russian infantry in the trenches. But soon, a virtual armistice was established,⁸⁴ and the Stokhod incident was quickly outweighed by defeatist propaganda.

81. Ibid., p. 164.

82. Ibid., p. 154.

83. Ibid., p. 140.

84. For German propaganda at the front and peace delegations see Ibid., pp. 171-173.

The Military Organization of the Bolsheviks sent a great number of agitators to the front. It also especially edited a newspaper, Soldatskaya Pravda (Soldiers' Truth), for the front. This newspaper was later supplemented by the Okopnaya Pravda (Trench Truth). These two papers carried on agitation for peasant seizure of the landlords' estates, for organized fraternization at the front, and for "making the soldier the master of all regimental, company, division and other committees."⁸⁵ In addition, the Bolshevik Military Organization maintained a soldiers' club at Petrograd where delegates from the front were entertained and where efforts were made to implement Bolshevik ideas in the soldiers. By July, this Military Organization counted 26,000 members, distributed among forty-three front and seven rear organizations,⁸⁶ and in the following months, especially after the fall of Kornilov, this Military Organization spread its control over a great number of troops.

As we have already mentioned, war-weariness returned to the trenches after the first flush of revolutionary ardour had died away. Maskunikov and Shmakov, two Duma members, who had visited the front immediately after the revolution, made a second trip towards the end of April and noticed a great deal of deterioration in the will to fight of the troops. Summing up their impressions, they wrote:

The soldiers are no longer eager for battle; they talk of defence, and even so with fear of protecting mythical French and British capital. The rear is already considerably infected with this propaganda. Our gallant artillery and the Cossaks are not affected by this propaganda....

85. Chamberlin, op. cit., p. 236.

86. loc. cit.

The officers, the majority of whom urge war until victory, do not meet sympathy, and agitation against them fails on prepared soil.

It is significant that the most suspected officers are, in most cases, the best in the military sense. This is explained by the involuntary fear⁸⁷ that good officers may compel the troops to attack.

Due to this condition of the army, the High Command had to postpone the spring offensive which was to take place in mid-April to co-incide with the Allied offensive in the West, to mid-May and then to July.

The rhythm of disintegration of the army was not uniform. The troops furthest from Petrograd, in the Caucasus, in Galicia and Rumania and in the Black Sea Fleet, long preserved their organization and their fighting capacity. Also the more specialized branches of the army were slow to disintegrate, while the great mass of the infantry which was never really organized after the terrible defeats of 1914-1915, and which contained new recruits from the villages, disintegrated in a rather quick manner. Especially responding were the 'third' divisions which were formed by General Gurko in January, 1917. These divisions were created by reducing regiments from four battalions to three, thus creating a new division in each army corps where all undesirable elements (ranging from Leftists to criminals) were heaped. This rendered the army corps more pliable, but it was a dangerous thing to do during wartime. These 'third' divisions became an extremely fertile ground for German and socialist agitation, and "carriers of cowardice, anarchy and disintegration."⁸⁸ In May, the Stavka sanctioned the disbanding of these divisions, but this idea never materialized.⁸⁹

87. Quoted in Ibid., ppp. 227-228.

88. Kerensky, op. cit., p. 169.

89. Deniken, op. cit., p. 128.

The revolutionary mentality was stronger among the men in the fleet than in the army for in the latter the officers from the old cadet corps were diluted by the mass of reserve and militia officers and by the bloody battles that raged early in the war, while very few officers of the fleet were killed in action and the same rigid officer mentality remained. Furthermore, the lazy sailors were more apt to listen to socialist propoganda than the soldiers sitting under enemy fire in the trenches.

In the Baltic Fleet, the officers' quarters and the soldiers' barracks were like two enemy camps, suspicious, and hostile to one another. As in the army, there many officers who had worked as off spies and agents provocateurs, and some have even witnessed against their own men in court.⁹⁰ This Baltic Fleet became a stronghold of Bolshevism from early in the revolution and strongly opposed the Provisional Government.

As for the Black Sea Fleet, it was kept in shape for some time by its tough Admiral Kolchak, the future White dictator of Siberia. But soon agitators from Petrograd arrived and as the men drifted to the Left, Kolchak began loosing control of the Fleet and resigned. But it was only after the November Revolution that the Bolsheviks obtained a majority in the sailors' committees.

Towards the end of April, a Conference of the Delegates of the Front convened. It addressed an emphatic demand to the Soviet to introduce commissars in the army in order to bring nearer the views of the officers and the army committees. The C.O.s, however, viewed the commissars with hostility, and Denikin says that the appointment of commissars "was prompted chiefly by distrust of the Commanding Staffs."⁹¹ It was at first agreed to send

90. Kerensky, op. cit., pp. 142-146.

91. Denikin, op. cit., p. 168.

commissars by two, one from the Provisional Government and one from the Soviet, but after the formation of the Coalition Government it was decided that one commissar would represent both institutions. One of the tasks of these commissars was to see that all political questions arising within the units at the front would be given a uniform solution, and the work of the commissars was to be co-ordinated. In July, a Commissar of the Fronts, of High Commissar, was attached to the Stavka. In addition to their jobs, Denikin, says, the commissars had secret instructions to watch the C.O.s in respect to their political reliability.⁹² Evidently, the appointment of commissars did not make for better officer-soldier relations in the army.

Meanwhile, Gutchkov had established a Commission under Polivanov, which included representatives of the Soviet, of the Military Commission of the Duma, and of army committees. The task of this Commission was to carry out reforms in the army, in the hope that discipline might be restored by gaining the confidence of the troops and by making them feel responsible. It was this Commission which that passed the afore-mentioned resolutions about the organization and functions of the army committees, the disciplinary action of military courts, and the composition of these courts. These concessions alienated the Stavka. Finally, the Commission presented Gutchkov with the Declaration of the Rights of Soldiers. Gutchkov, seeing the failure of the policy of concessions and appalled by the chaos in the army, refused to sign. According to Kerensky,

92. Ibid., p. 169.

Gutchkov, without informing the Government, called a conference of all the army commanders to meet on or about May 15, to express confidence in the War Minister, who was about to resign, in a form closely resembling an ultimatum.⁹³ Gutchkov resigned, and the army commanders met at Petrograd on May 16-17, but they had already lost confidence in the War Minister because of his previous ratification of concessions made by the Polivanov Commission, and they refused to back him. As for the Polivanov Commission, it was dissolved shortly after the assumption of the War Ministry by Kerensky.

Before proceeding on with the study of the Declaration of the Rights of Soldiers and with the offensive, let us discuss the Bolshevik Party and its activities from the first days of the revolution.

93. Kerensky, op. cit., p. 182.

CHAPTER VII

The Bolsheviks - from March to July

We have already seen that the Bolsheviks played a totally negligible role in organizing and directing the March popular upheaval. As their principle leaders were either in exile or abroad, the Bolsheviks were led in the first two weeks after the revolution by three young men, Molotov, Shlyapnikov and Zalutsky, who constituted the Petrograd Bureau of the Bolshevik Party, but who did not have the political experience or the theoretical preparation necessary for the proper guidance of the Party.

These three men were Leftist Bolsheviks, and Pravda, edited by Molotov, called for the immediate overthrow of the Provisional Government and the transfer of all power to the Soviet.¹ Thus, the first seven issues of Pravda (whose publication was resumed on March 18) denounced the Provisional Government as a "a government of capitalists and landowners" and declared that the Soviet should call on a Constituent Assembly to establish a "democratic government."² As for the war, a resolution of the Petrograd Bureau was published in Pravda on March 23, demanding fraternization at the front and the opening of peace negotiations between the proletariat of belligerent countries. The resolution also advocated the transformation of the imperialist war into a civil war for the liberation of peoples from the yoke of the oppressors.³ But the Right wing of the Party, under Voytinsky, disagreed with the

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1. Isaac Deutscher, Stalin: A Political Biography (London, New York, Toronto: Oxford University Press, 1949), p. 131-2.
 2. Quoted in Edward Hallett Carr, The Bolshevik Revolution: 1917-1923 (New York: The Macmillan Co., 1951), vol. I, p. 73.
 3. Schapiro, op. cit., p. 26.

Petrograd Bureau and preached support for the Provisional Government. This Rightist group was re-inforced by the arrival of Kamenev.

Kamenev, Stalin and Muranov returned from Siberia on March 25, and took over the leadership of the Party from the Petrograd trio on the grounds of seniority. Stalin replaced Shlyapnikov as senior Party organizer and Muranov became the director of Pravda with Stalin and Kamenev on the editorial board. Soon, Pravda passed from its irreconcilable attitude to a more moderate one. On March 28, Kamenev wrote an article advocating national defense:

Our slogan is not disorganization of the revolutionary and revolutionizing army, not the empty 'Down with the War,' but pressure on the Provisional Government with the purpose of compelling it to come out immediately before the whole democratic world with an attempt to induce all the warring countries immediately to open up negotiations about means of stopping the World War. And until that time everyone remains at his fighting post.... When army stands against army it would be the most stupid policy to propose that one of them should lay down its arms and disperse to its homes. This would be a policy not of peace, but of slavery, which a free people would reject with indignation. No, it will remain staunchly at its posts, answering bullet with bullet and shell with shell.⁴

The same issue of Pravda carried on its front page the Soviet 'Appeal to the Peoples of the Whole World,' saying that "we shall stoutly defend our own liberty," and that "the Russian people will not flinch before the bayonets of conquerors."⁵ This attitude was at least temporarily shared by Stalin.

The effect of the arrival of Stalin and Kamenev is clearly seen by contrasting the manifesto published by the young trio on March 11, and the resolution of the Petrograd Bureau on April 8. The March 11 manifesto called on the

4. Quoted in Chamberlin, *op. cit.*, p. 115.

5. Quoted in Carr, *op. cit.*, p. 75. This manifesto has been discussed earlier.

workers and the revolutionary soldiers

to create a "provisional revolutionary government", which would establish a republic, introduce democratic reforms such as the eight-hour day, the confiscation of estates and the creation of a constituent assembly on a basis of universal suffrage and secret ballot, confiscate and distribute stocks of food, and "enter into negotiations with the proletariat of belligerent countries for a revolutionary struggle of the peoples of all countries against their oppressors and enslavers... and for the termination of the bloody human slaughter which has been imposed on the enslaved peoples."⁶

In contrast, the Petrograd Bureau, in its resolution on April 8, merely demanded the exertion of pressure on the Provisional Government in order "to offer immediate and just peace terms."⁷ Until then, the soldiers should remain in their trenches.

Kamenev, the 'conciliationist', continued to lead the Rightists of the Party. Towards the end of March, he said to Sukhanov: "Bolshevism has always maintained that the World War can only be ended by a world proletarian revolution. And as long as that has not taken place... we shall be against any disorganization and for maintaining the front."⁸

Meanwhile, Stalin advocated that the question of policy should be left for a Party Conference to decide, and, under pressure from him, Pravda published no more articles in favour of national defense, but it also refrained from any serious attack on the Provisional Government.⁹

From April 11 to 14, the Bolsheviks held a conference of the Petrograd Party organization, and immediately afterwards began an All-Russian Party Conference. Both these

6. Carr, op. cit., pp. 72-73.

7. Quoted in Schapiro, op. cit., p. 26.

8. Quoted in Sukhanov, op. cit., p. 227.

9. Deutscher, op. cit., p. 132; and Carr, op. cit., pp. 25-26.

conferences were controlled by Stalin and Kamenev. After initial opposition, Stalin's attitude towards the Provisional Government was almost unanimously adopted at both conferences, and this was built on the then universally accepted dogma among Marxists that a long period of bourgeois democratic government was necessary before the arrival of the socialist phase. The resolution adopted at both conferences called for "vigilant control over the activities of the Provisional Government at the centre and in the provinces";¹⁰ Stalin also proposed to the All-Russian Party Conference to "support the Provisional Government in its activity only in so far as it moves along the path of satisfying the working-class and the revolutionary peasantry,"¹¹ a proposition which was accepted. As for the war, the Left wing demanded that it should be turned into a civil war, but the attitude of Stalin and Kamenev, formerly expressed in Pravda, was adopted.

At the All-Russia Party Conference it was also decided, in spite of the opposition of Molotov and the Leftists, to start negotiations for unity between the Bolsheviks and the Mensheviks and other Social Democratic groups on the basis of Zimmerwald and Kienthal. These negotiations were broken after the arrival of Lenin.¹²

After the revolution, and before his arrival to Russia, Lenin wrote five 'Letters from Afar'. The first of these letters began as follows: "the first revolution, nourished by the imperialist war, has broken out. This first revolution will certainly not be the last."¹³ Lenin called

10. Quoted in Scapiro, op. cit., p. 27.

11. Quoted in Carr, op. cit., p. 67.

12. Deutscher, op. cit., p. 137.

13. Vladimir Ilyitch Lenin, Lettres de Loin (Moscow, Institut Marx-Engels-Lenine, 1951), p. 5.

14. Ibid., p. 16.

in these letters for the arming of the proletariat and for non-support of the workers to the bourgeois Provisional Government which could give the people "neither peace, nor bread, nor liberty."¹⁴ The Russian proletariat, he added, was not alone in its struggle against the bourgeoisie; it had on its side the millions of poor Russian peasants and the proletariat of the belligerent countries.

In his other letters, Lenin also stressed the importance of withholding confidence ~~in~~^{from} the Government and he attacked the socialists who backed that Government. As for the second revolution, Lenin held that it had already begun but that the proletariat could not gain any lasting victory unless it organized itself. He also advocated the "arming of the people under the direction of the workers"¹⁵ and the formation of a popular militia consisting of 95% of workers and peasants.¹⁶

There is no need to go through the details of Lenin's trip to Russia through Germany, or the reception he got at the Finland Station.¹⁷ After a speech to the masses who had come to receive him, Lenin went to Kshesinskaya's house, the headquarters of the Bolsheviks. There he made his memorable April 16 speech which was not only a new 'development' in Marxist thought, but also the herald of a turning-point in History.

Lenin began his speech (which was addressed to Party members and 'guests') by saying that the imperialist war would inevitably turn into a civil war, a worldwide socialist revolution.

14. Ibid., p. 16.

15. Ibid., p. 28.

16. Ibid., p. 41. For a summary of the views advocated by Lenin in his Letters From Afar, see the 5th letter, Ibid., pp. 55-56.

17. For this reception see Sukhanov, op. cit., pp. 269-275.

Then Lenin attacked the peace policy of the Soviet; liaison committees, he said, would never end the war. The Soviet democracy, led by opportunists like Tseretelli, Chkheidze and Steklov, had adopted revolutionary-defensism, thus becoming^a petit-bourgeois tools in the hands of the bourgeoisie. To make the Soviet an instrument of worldwide socialist revolution, it should be conquered. But how? through explanation, enlightenment and persuasion of the masses.

Lenin then proceeded to say that Russia did not need a parliamentary republic or any government except the "Soviets of Workers', Soldiers' and Farm-labourers' deputies."

As for the agrarian problem, Lenin said that the peasants should seize the land without waiting for the sanction of any authority.

The Bolshevik leader did not forget to brand all the socialists who disagreed with him as enemies of the international proletariat. Only the Left Zimmerwald, he said, was guarding the interests of the working class.

Lenin also mentioned his famous theory about the occurrence of the revolution in Russia. According to Sukhanov, Lenin said

that the backwardness of our country [Russia], the weakness of its productive forces, did not allow it to sustain the desperate tension of the whole organism demanded by the war; this was why Russia had been the first to produce a revolution.¹⁸

To-day, Lenin's speech seems 'natural' to those who have some knowledge of Marxism-Leninism, but at the time, Lenin stunned his most radical followers. Sukhanov writes about the speech saying:

18. Ibid., p. 284. For an account of Lenin's speech see Ibid., pp. 281-285.

I shall never forget the thunder-like speech, which startled and amazed not only me, a heretic who had accidentally dropped in, but all the true believers. I am certain that no one expected anything of the sort. It seemed as though all the elements had risen from their abodes, and the spirit of universal destruction, knowing neither barriers nor doubts, neither human difficulties nor human calculations, was hovering around Kshesinskaya's reception room above the heads of the bewitched disciples.¹⁹

On the 17th, Lenin hit his followers with his April Theses. He reprimanded them for having given their confidence to the Provisional Government and told them that they were deceived by the bourgeoisie. He repeated that the task of the Bolsheviks, as long as they were a minority, was to educate the masses and to convince them of the necessity of a new revolution. Lenin even threatened, if his comrades were not to follow him, to stick out alone, confident in victory.²⁰

In the afternoon of the 17th, there took place at the Tauride Palace a session of all the Social Democrats - Bolsheviks, Mensheviks, Interdistrictites and independents - in the hope of uniting the different tendencies into one compromise attitude. However, Lenin talked at the conference of the irreconcilable schism between his faction and the majority. Sukhanov writes:

At this 'unifying' conference, Lenin was the living incarnation of schism; and the whole point of his speech in the given circumstances boiled down to the interment first of all of the idea of unity.²¹

The majority of the Social Democrats stood with Tseretelli at the conference. One of the most active unifiers,

I. P. Golenburg, said in his address to the conference:

19. Ibid., p. 280.

20. For Lenin's scolding of his followers right after his arrival see Deutscher, op. cit., pp. 138-141.

21. Sukhanov, op. cit., p. 286.

Lenin has now made himself a candidate for one European throne which has been vacant for thirty years—the throne of Bakunin! Lenin's new words echo something²²—the superannuated truths of primitive anarchism.... Lenin has raised the banner of civil war within the democracy. It's ludicrous to talk of unity with those whose watchword is schism and who are placing themselves outside the Social-Democracy of their own accord.²²

Even Steklov, the future Bolshevik, said that

Lenin's speech exists of nothing but abstract constructions that prove the Russian Revolution had passed him by. After Lenin becomes acquainted with the state of affairs in Russia, he himself will reject all these constructions of his.²³

Most of the baffled Bolsheviks disagreed with their leader, but took great care to back him fully in public.

Lenin's April Theses appeared in the Pravda on the 20th.²⁴ In them, Lenin declared that under no circumstances should support be given to the bourgeois Provisional Government or to revolutionary defensism. As for the masses, it was the task of the Bolsheviks to explain to them that Russia was in reality not fighting a war of defence but an imperialist war, and that the war could only be ended in a truly democratic fashion if capital was overthrown. The propaganda to such an end should be most widespread at the front where the troops were to be urged to fraternize with the enemy.

As long as the Party remained a minority, its task was to criticize, and to carry on propaganda against, the Government and the opportunists who controlled the Soviet.

The aim of the Party was not to be the establishment of a democratic republic, but of a republic of Soviets planted throughout the whole country. As for the agrarian program, all the landlords' land was to be confiscated

22. Quoted in Ibid., p. 287.

23. Quoted in loc. cit.

24. For the full text of the April Theses see Chamberlin, op. cit., pp. 441-443.

and all land nationalized; peasants were to live on very large collective farms.

As for the immediate task of the Party, it was not the introduction of socialism but the transition to Soviet control of public production and distribution.

Lenin also demanded the nationalization of all banks and their fusion into one central state bank.

Wounding up, he said that a Party Congress should immediately be convoked and a new revolutionary international should be created.

These theses appeared in Pravda in Lenin's name alone. On the 21st, the Petrograd Committee of the Party discussed Lenin's theses and rejected them by thirteen votes to two, with one abstention.²⁵ The same day there appeared in the Pravda an article, signed by Kamenev, which disowned Lenin's April Theses and the general scheme drawn in them as "unacceptable, since it starts from the assumption that the bourgeois revolution is finished and counts on the immediate transformation of this revolution into a socialist revolution."²⁶

In the days following the publication of the April Theses, Lenin carried on a vigorous crusade for the conquest of his own party. Kalenin, Kamenev and others held out against the Teacher's new formulae his previous statements to the effect that Russia was not ripe for socialism and the dictatorship of the proletariat. But Lenin attacked these 'dogmatic' Bolsheviks saying that the theory should be adapted with the changing times. He admitted that Russia alone was not ripe for a socialist order, but that Europe as a whole was, and Russia was to be the spark of the worldwide socialist revolution. This sounded like Trotskiism. Finally,

25. Carr, op. cit., p. 81.

26. Schapiro, op. cit., p. 34; also see Trotsky, op. cit., p. 285.

Quoted in

after many days of argumentation, Lenin carried with him the Party, except a few Rightists who snubbed him as an anarchist, as a new Bakunin,²⁷ and who left the Party for the Mensheviks or for such an intermediary group as that which aggregated around the Novaya Zhizn of Gorky and Sukhanov.²⁸

Before proceeding further, let us see what Ambassador Paleologue, one of the sharpest political observers of his time, had to say about Lenin in his Memoirs, on April 21, 1917:

Lenin, utopian dreamer and fanatic, prophet and meta physician, blind to any idea of the impossible or the absurd, a stranger to all feelings of justice and mercy, violent, Machiavellian and crazy with vanity, places at the service of his Messianic visions a strong unemotional will, pitiless logic and amazing powers of persuasion and command.... When any one attacks his crude fancies with some argument drawn from the realm of reality, he replies with the gorgeous phrase: "So much the worse for reality!" The man is all the more dangerous because he is said to be pure-minded, temperate and ascetic. Such as I see him in my mind's eye, he is a compound of Savonarola and Marat, Blaquiere and Bakunin.²⁹

Lenin's power to affect the masses was in his ability to express the most difficult concepts in the most easy and direct manner. This distinguishes him from the great majority of philosophers and gives him another trait in common with the great religious teachers. Apart from the last phrase, and if we replace the modern words 'slogan' and 'toiling people' by their 'old' synonymes, the following statement about Lenin could have been mistaken for one about Christ:

27. Deutscher, op. cit., p. 140.

28. Trotsky, op. cit., p. 284.

29. Paleologue, op. cit., pp. 304-305.

Lenin's irresistible power lay precisely in the fact that he issued plain, crystal-clear slogans, which everybody, even a poorly educated toiler, could understand. These slogans expressed the cherished aspirations and hopes of the working people, and therefore inspired and roused them for struggle against the class enemy.³⁰

In face of the Bolshevik menace, Kerensky, Dan, Götze, Lieber and other Soviet leaders began veering towards the Right. However, these men feared an imaginary counter-revolution more than they feared a Bolshevik seizure of power. They were also afraid to lose their reputation as revolutionaries, which would be fatal to their relations with the masses. Thus they oscillated between Right and Left, never able to fix their position. This 'oscillation' characterized the moderate socialists until even after the consummation of the Bolshevik coup d'état in Petrograd.

A Petrograd Bolshevik Party Conference met on April 27. Kamenev was the leader of the opposition to Lenin and he said that the Party should not work for the transfer of all power to the Soviets, but should be content³¹ with the most watchful control³¹ over the Government, and no steps whatsoever should be taken to overthrow it. But the resolution of Lenin was passed by twenty votes to six, with nine abstentions.³²

Meanwhile, the bourgeois press was carrying on a great campaign against Lenin, a campaign which reached its culmination towards the end of April. Lenin was attacked for his passage through Germany, "for his past, for his real opinions, for his way of life (!), etc."³³ Many crowds

30. Lenin, a biography prepared by the Marx-Engels-Lenin Institute, Moscow (London, New York, Melbourne: Hutchinson and Co. Ltd., n.d.), p. 116.

31. Quoted in Carr, op. cit., p. 82.

32. Ibid., p. 83.

33. Sukhanov, op. cit., p. 298.

paraded through the streets shouting anti-Leninist slogans. The reaction against Lenin reached such dimensions that even the conciliationist Soviet Majority was appalled and defended him.³⁴

Then came the May Days which we have already discussed. We have seen how Lenin reprimanded those of his followers who did not restrain the masses which Lenin described at the time as being "a thousand times more Left than the Tchernofs and Tseretelys, and a hundred times more left than we."³⁵

Lenin regarded revolution, or armed insurrection, as a rule for the overthrow of classes which have outlived their day. He held that the peaceful development of the revolution was something "extremely rare in history and extremely valuable,"³⁶ and he believed that it could be done in Russia if the Soviets took full power, since, shortly after their assumption of power,

the masses by their own experience, and as a result of the explanatory work of the Bolsheviki, would outlive their illusions about the Mensheviks and Socialist-Revolutionaries, convince themselves by the treacherous part played by these parties and hand over the direction of the state to the Bolshevik Party, which alone was capable of securing peace, land, bread and liberty for the working people.³⁷

Although Lenin at the time called for all power to the Soviets, yet he began to prepare means by which he could seize power independently of it. He saw

that it was necessary to create in each district, sub-district, and factory an organization 'capable of acting as one man' and bound to the Central Committee by strong ties.³⁸

34. For bourgeois attack on Lenin and Soviet attitude see Ibid., pp. 297-299.

35. Leon Trotsky, Lenin (New York: Capricorn Books, 1962), p. 216.

36. History of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union, 1960, p. 222.

37. loc. cit.

38. Schapiro, op. cit., p. 39.

As early as June, the factory and shop committees were organized and they were controlled by the Bolshevik Central Committee. The factories provided recruiting places for the Red Guard which the Bolsheviks went on to build, inspite of a vote by the Ex. Com. prohibiting the maintenance of such a force. The Red Guard numbered around 10,000 men in July and around 20,000 on the eve of the November insurrection.³⁹

The Seventh All-Russian Conference of the Bolshevik Party met at Petrograd from May 7 to 12, and was attended by one hundred and thrity-three delegates with the right to vote together with eighteen consultative delegates, representing 80,000 Party members.⁴⁰ Lenin showed 'leniency' at the Conference, for tactical reasons. Zinoviev and Stalin backed Lenin against Kamenev and the main resolutions were carried by the overwhelming majority of the votes. Lenin linked the assumption of power by the Soviet to the winning ~~assumption~~ by the Bolsheviks of a majority of that body; this pacified the Right wing members of the Party. However, Lenin ridiculed the policy of 'control' of the Government by the democracy. As for the war, the resolution against it was "carefully worded but at the same time vigorous";⁴¹ it said:

It is impossible to terminate this war by the refusal of the soldiers on only one side to continue the fight. The Conference protests against the base slander, spread by the Capitalists against our party, that we sympathize with the idea of a sepearte peace with Germany. Our party will patiently but persistently make clear to the people the truth...that this war can be ended by a democratic peace only through the transfer of all governmental authority in several at least of the belligerent countries to the proletarian class, which is in fact able to put a stop to the oppression of capital.⁴²

39. Ibid., p. 40.

40. History of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union, 1960, pp. 224-225.

41. Schapiro, op. cit., p. 38.

42. Quoted in George Vernadsky, Lenin: Red Dictator (), p. 158.

On the question of coalition, it was resolved that no coalition would be made with parties and groups which supported the war, but that a coalition with internationalist groups and parties was "inevitable."⁴³

The Conference also passed resolutions on the peasant question, these resolutions being later presented by Lenin to the All-Russian Congress of Peasants' Deputies which convened by the end of May. The resolution again spoke about the necessity of the nationalization of all land, and the state to vest the right of administering the land into the hands of local democratic institutions.⁴⁴

The resolutions of the Conference also included one about the self-determination of nationalities, voting in favour of regional autonomy of nations and, if they demanded, complete independence.⁴⁵ In reality, Lenin held that there was no definite answer to the question of national self-determination, no answer to be applied in every case. If national independence strengthened the proletarian class against the bourgeoisie and if "the secession of a given nation from, or its equality with, another nation, will complete the bourgeois democratic revolution,"⁴⁶ then a claim for national independence should be supported. But if national independence strengthens the bourgeoisie at the expense of the proletariat, then it should not be supported by the workers and the proletariat, because, "for the proletariat... the important thing is to strengthen its class against the bourgeoisie and to educate the masses in the spirit of consistent democracy and socialism."⁴⁷

43. Quoted in Schapiro, op. cit., p. 39.

44. Lenin, Alliance of the Working Class with the Peasantry, pp. 189-191 and 197-199.

45. Official History of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union, 1960, p. 227.

46. Vladimir Ilyitch Lenin, The Right of Nations to Self-Determination (Moscow: Marx-Engels-Lenin Institute, 1950), p. 33.

47. Ibid., p. 34.

Finally, a resolution of the Conference demanded the enactment of laws guaranteeing the free development of national minorities.

Now let us take a look at the activities of Trotsky during the early period of the revolution. Trotsky was overtaken by the revolution at the Russian colony in New York. In the two weeks between the revolution and the day he left New York (March 27), Trotsky stated fully and clearly the ideas he was going to elaborate during the year. When Prince Lvov's government called for a return to order, Trotsky wrote: "The powerful avalanche of revolution ^{the} is in full swing and no human force will stem it."⁴⁸ He also wrote:

The nation will now rise, layer after layer, all those who have been oppressed, disinherited, deceived.... At the head of the popular masses of Russia the revolutionary proletariat will carry out its historical work: it will expel monarchist reaction from wherever it tries to shelter; and it will stretch out its hands to the proletariat of Germany and of the whole of Europe. It is necessary to liquidate not only Tzardom but the war as well.

Trotsky accused the Provisional Government of imperialistic designs on the Balkans and the Dardanelles. He hopefully greeted the emergence of the Petrograd Soviet and hoped that it would assert itself against the old administration, now headed by the Cadets. But when it became evident that the Soviet had given support to the Government, Trotsky vehemently attacked it. Tzardom, together with the landlords and the bourgeoisie, had tried to divert the peasantry from agrarian revolution by an imperialist war, and it was the duty of the socialist to

48. Quoted in Isaac Deutscher, The Prophet Armed: Trotsky 18 -1921.
(), p. 244.

49. Quoted in loc. cit.

revert the attention of the peasant to the agrarian revolution. The slogan should be: "The landlords' land and not Constantinople."⁵⁰ Elaborating on this, Trotsky wrote:

The peasant masses will rise in the villages and, not waiting for a decision of the Constituent Assembly, they will begin to expel the landlords from the estates. All efforts to put an end to class warfare... will lead to nothing. The philistine thinks that it is the revolutionaries who make a revolution and who can call it off at any point they wish.⁵¹

But in spite of his clear-sightedness, Trotsky insisted that

the war has transformed the whole of Europe into a powder-magazine of social revolution. The Russian proletariat is now throwing a flaming torch into that powder magazine. To suppose that this will cause no explosion is to think against the laws of historical logic and psychology.⁵²

Trotsky left New York aboard a Norwegian ship which anchored at Halifax where Trotsky and his group were detained by the British authorities. This caused great indignation in the Russian democracy and the Ex. Co. drew a declaration in which it said: "The English government thereby intervenes intolerably in Russia's domestic affairs and insults the Russian revolution by robbing her of her most faithful sons."⁵³ Miliukov asked Buchanan to release Trotsky and his group, but later changed his mind. But the Minister of Foreign Affairs was finally compelled (by the democracy) to renew the demand for the release of the revolutionaries.

50. loc.cit.

51. Quoted in Ibid., p. 245.

52. Quoted in Ibid., p. 246.

53. Quoted in Ibid., p. 247.

After his arrival to Petrograd (May 17), most groups either held a hostile attitude towards Trotsky or treated him with reserve waiting to see his new policy. But the Mezhrayonka group (Interdistrictites), whose influence was confined to a few working class districts in Petrograd, greeted him as their proper leader. This group comprised brilliant men like Lunacharsky, Ryazanov, Uritsky, Manuilsky, Yoffe, ~~Ryazanov~~, Pokrovsky and others. By the time of Trotsky's arrival, the Mezhrayonka had insignificant differences with the Bolsheviks.

Upon his arrival to Petrograd, Trotsky went to Smolny where he expanded, to the Soviet, views similar to those held by the Bolsheviks. On the suggestion of the latter, he was made consultative member of the Ex. Com., 'only' with the right to speak.

The Bolsheviks and the Mezhrayonka met on ⁻⁻⁻May 23, to discuss the merging of the two groups. By this time Trotsky had already come to believe that the breach in the Social Democratic Party could not be healed and that the revolutionary organization should not include social patriots but only militant international socialists (both ideas already held for long by Lenin). Likewise, Lenin had abandoned 'old Bolshevism' and became a 'Trotskiite' when he began to believe in the permanent revolution. Furthermore, Trotsky had foreseen in 1905-1906 the combination of anti-feudal and anti-bourgeoisie revolutions, while Lenin, analysing the situation from a traditional Marxist position then believed that Russia was not ready for a socialist revolution. But with the advent of the war, Lenin began to consider the possibility of revolution in advanced European countries and he began thinking of Russia as only a part of the Europe ripe for revolution. Consequently, he saw no reason why a socialist revolution could not occur in Russia.

Lenin had the advantage of having an organized party while "Trotsky and his friends were a pleiade of brilliant generals without an army," but "nothing suited Lenin better than to be able to introduce the pleiade of propagandists, agitators, tacticians and orators, headed by Trotsky, into the 'general staff' of his party."⁵⁴ So, in the May 23 meeting, the Bolshevik leader asked the Mezhrayonka to join the Bolshevik Party immediately, and he offered them positions in the leading bodies and on the editorial board of Pravda. Lenin also proposed to extend the offer to Martov's internationalists.

Lenin's offer was not one of merger of two groups, but of the complete loss of Mezhrayonka identity in the Bolshevik Party. This was too much for the proud Trotsky to accept immediately and for some time he remained a political free-lance, founding the Mezhrayonka paper Vperyod which, however, lacked the backing of any strong organization and was therefore unsuccessful. But Trotsky and Lunacharsky became very popular orators and the former was almost idolized by the naval garrison of Cronstadt. As for Lenin, "he had no intention of weakening or diluting the instrument which he had created; the party must remain supreme and intact. He could afford to wait."⁵⁵

Now let us discuss the trade-unions and ~~their~~ organization. Trade-unions were semi-legal before the revolution but sprang with great rapidity after the establishment of the new order. In the first two months following the revolution, 2,000 trade-unions were organized, 130 of them in Petrograd and Moscow,⁵⁶ with a total membership of 200, 000.⁵⁷

54. Ibid., p. 257.

55. Carr, op. cit., p. 89.

56. Florinsky, op. cit., p. 1418.

57. Chamberlin, op. cit., p. 266.

Most of these trade-unions were small and included members of only one establishment. But there followed a movement of merging of unions, and regional central councils and central bureaus of trade-unions were set.

The Third All-Russian Congress of Trade-Unions met in July. In this Congress, 51 central bureaus and 976 unions participated, with a total membership of 1,475,000.³⁸

This Congress was dominated by no party and the All-Russian Central Council of Trade-Unions it elected contained Bolsheviks, Mensheviks and SRs. The Congress passed resolutions concerning the eight-hour day, factory inspection, industrial disputes, and other things.

The trade-unions were somewhat 'lasting' bodies and did not represent the mood of the workers as much as the factory committees. The latter were more 'fluent' and were Bolshevik-controlled from the first days of their formation.

The factory committees convened a First Conference at Petrograd, between June 12 and 18. The Conference formulated its main objective as the establishment of workers' control of the administration of business enterprises, a Bolshevik resolution which became the law of the land after the second revolution.

Meanwhile, many factories were seized by the workers, and the owners, managers and engineers were turned out. The Government threatened the factory committees with penalties if they surpassed their prerogatives, but it was unable to enforce any such penalty.

During May and June, the Bolsheviks were rapidly gaining power among the masses: Lenin and Zinoviev were constantly haranguing the crowd from Kshesiskaya's house while Trotsky wrote especially brilliant and sarcastic articles about the opponents of Bolshevism. The Bolsheviks

were tireless in holding meetings in the factories, in the parks and in the streets, and they energetically sowed their propaganda in the army and in the rear. Among the troops in active service, the Bolsheviks were engaged in a bitter struggle with Kerensky who was trying to revive the waning patriotism of the soldiers at the front by his dramatic speeches.

At the beginning of June, shortly before the opening of the First All-Russian Congress of Soviets, municipal elections were held at Petrograd. The Cadets got a negligible following while the Mensheviks got half the votes.⁵⁸ But the Bolsheviks were the real victors, getting a majority of thirty-seven out of sixty-three seats in the proletarian Vyborg District.⁵⁹

As early as June 13, the Workers' section of the Soviet passed a resolution with the Bolshevik formula 'All Power to the Soviets' by a majority of 173 to 144 votes.⁶⁰ But the soldiers' delegates were still mostly Mensheviks and SRs. Yet at a much earlier date, the Soviet of Helsingfors (that bed of revolution) had declared that it was ready "at any moment to support with armed force demands for the withdrawal of the Provisional Government."⁶¹

The First All-Russian Congress of Soviets met at Petrograd, from June 16 to July 7. Of the 1,090 delegates, 822 possessed the right to vote, the remainder being present in a consultative capacity. Of the voting members 285 were SRs, 248 Mensheviks, 105 Bolsheviks, 32 Menshevik Internationalists, 73 non-party socialists, and the remainder divided

58. Deutscher, The Prophet Armed, p. 262.

59. Chamberlin, op. cit., p. 156.

60. loc. cit.

61. Quoted in Ibid., p. 146.

among smaller parties and groups⁶² such as the Mezhrayonka group which was represented by ten delegates.⁶³ But these numbers were representative of Russia as a whole and not of Petrograd and Moscow and the other industrial centres whose workers were far ahead in their swing to the Left than the soldiers and the rural community. Sukhanov tells us that at the Congress, the 'opposition' included a higher ratio of workers than the rest of the assembly.⁶⁴

The aim of the Congress was to make the Ex. Com. more representative of Russia as a whole by adding to it delegates from the front and from the provincial Soviets. This would automatically strengthen the moderate majority. The peasants were invited to send delegates but the Right SRs who controlled the Peasant Congress insisted on proportional representation (about 80%) and the matter was left to drop.⁶⁵

When Lenin's turn to speak at the Congress came, the Bolshevik leader accused the bourgeoisie of causing the anarchy in the country. He asked the arrest of fifty or a hundred of the biggest capitalists and said that then all would be well. He also said that the war could only be ended by the further development of the revolution. Many delegates laughed at Lenin. Kerensky stood to reply to Lenin, but before ending his speech the latter "picking up his brief case, with head bent, he stole out of the hall sidewise, almost unnoticed."⁶⁶

On the second day of the Congress, Tseretelli spoke and pleaded for a coalition. "At this critical moment," he said, no social force should destroy the balance as long as it is

62. Ibid., p. 159.

63. Carr, op. cit., p. 89.

64. Sukhanov, op. cit., p. 379.

65. Buchanan, op. cit., p. 148.

66. Kerensky, op. cit., p. 216

useful to the cause of the people."⁶⁷ He then declared: "There is no political party in Russia which at the present time would say: 'Give us Power'."⁶⁸ Lenin called out from his seat: "Yes, there is."⁶⁹ Then Lenin continued: "Our party will not refuse it [power]. It is ready at any moment to take over the government."⁷⁰ a storm of laughter swayed the Congress.

The Left used the success of the Mensheviks and the SRs against them at the Congress: since they represented the overwhelming majority of the nation, then why did they not take power from the Cadets who had no significant popular support? This theme was harped upon by both Lenin and Trotsky in their speeches. Trotsky demanded from the Mensheviks and the SRs to break their alliance with the bourgeoisie and not make the government a chamber of conciliation between classes for "a chamber of conciliation," he said, "cannot exercise power in a revolutionary epoch."⁷¹

However, the majority of the Congress supported the Provisional Government and its policy of resuming the offensive⁷² and rejected the demand for the transfer of all power to the Soviets. The Congress gave itself a regular constitution and decided to meet every three months. Moreover, it created a central organ, the All-Russian Central Executive Committee of the Soviet of Workers' and Soldiers' Deputies (Vtsik) whose decisions bound all Soviets in the intervals between congresses. The Vtsik consisted of 250 members, only 35 of them Bolsheviks,⁷³ But this organ was powerless and no one took it seriously.

67. Trotsky, The Russian Revolution, vol. I, p. 397. Quoted in

68. Quoted in Chamberlin, op. cit., p. 159.

69. loc. cit. Quoted in

70. Quoted in Sukhanov, op. cit., p. 380.

71. Quoted in Deutscher, Trotsky The Prophet Armed, p. 263.

72. Kerensky, op. cit., p. 215.

73. Carr, op. cit., p. 90.

Meantime, discontent was becoming acute in Petrograd among the workers and the soldiers (the latter because of Kerensky's interpretation of the Declaration of the Rights of Soldiers which will be discussed later). The discontent and the tension were heightened by the useless commotion the Government created by its ultimatum and 'attack' on the Durnovo villa, occupied by the anarchists.⁷⁴ The Bolshevik Party, seeing the discontent, decide on June 21, after a great deal of controversy between the Bolshevik leaders themselves,⁷⁵ to organize a huge street demonstration on the 23, the principal object of which was to impress the Congress with Bolshevik power. At the moment, Lenin did not want the overthrow of the Provisional Government as held by his opponents. Trotsky tells us that only a few Bolsheviks wanted a coup on the 23,⁷⁶ but the majority were against such a step as witness the slogans of the Party at the time: 'Bread, peace, Liberty,' 'Down with the Ten Capitalist Ministers' and not 'Down with the Provisional Government.'

On June 22, Bolshevik pamphlets appeared calling on the Petrograd proletariat to join a peaceful demonstration on the afternoon of the 23.⁷⁷ When the Star Chamber (an inner clique of 'opportunists', organized within the Praesidium of the Soviet and controlled by Tseretelli; for some time it was in control of the Soviet) heard of the demonstration they ordered the Bolsheviks to cancel it. But the Bolsheviks refused and merely proposed to emphasize the peaceful character of the demonstration. However, Tseretelli got the All-Russian Congress of Soviets to pass a resolution forbidding demonstrations for three days and stigmatizing anyone who

74. For details see Sukhanov, op. cit., pp. 386-388.

75. Chamberlin, op. cit., p. 161.

76. Trotsky, La Revolution Russe, vol. I, p. 403.

77. Sukhanov, op. cit., p. 390.

disobeyed this order as "an enemy of the revolution."⁷⁸
The Bolsheviks wavered and Lenin did not make up his mind until late in the night, almost at the last possible moment when the appeal for the demonstration in the Pravda could be eliminated. Then the Bolsheviks and delegates from other socialist parties went to the factories and persuaded the workers not to demonstrate.⁷⁹

After the cancelling of the demonstration, Tseretelli tried, on June 24, to convince the Ex. Com., the Praesidium of the Congress, and the Bureau of each of its fractions, united at the Military Academy, that the Bolsheviks were planning an insurrection on the 23, but he was unable to produce any evidence and no measures were taken against the Bolsheviks.⁸⁰ Sukhanov says that he later heard that there was really a plot, but Lenin was hesitant and called it off at the last moment.⁸¹ But no evidence substantiates this declaration.

Then the moderate socialists passed a resolution (June 25) through the Congress, authorizing a demonstration for July 1, as an expression of confidence in the Soviet. Sukhanov tells us that the Soviet majority, confident of its power, virtually made no preparation for the demonstration while the Bolsheviks worked feverishly amidst the proletarian ranks.⁸²

July 1, was a great victory for the Bolsheviks. The overwhelming majority of the workers bore placards with Bolshevik slogans. After the demonstration some Bolsheviks told Lenin that nothing was left for the more moderate parties but to hand power to the Bolsheviks. "Power," retorted the Teacher, "is not handed over, it is taken by arms."⁸³

78. Quoted in Chamberlin, op. cit., p. 162.

79. loc. cit.

80. For this session see Sukhanov, op. cit., pp. 396-401.

81. For details of "Sukhanov's" plot see Ibid., pp. 402-406.

82. Ibid., pp. 411-414.

83. Quoted in Chamberlin, op. cit., p. 163.

CHAPTER VI

The First Coalition Government - The Peasant Question - The July Offensive and the July Days

The First Coalition Government came into being on March 18. It included two Mensheviks (Tseretelli and Skobelev), two SRs (Chernov and Peshekhonov), two independent socialists (Kerensky and Perverezev), four Cadets, and four or five other bourgeois ministers. This coalition was supposed to strengthen the power of the Government by giving it full support of the Soviet, and also to strengthen Soviet control over the Government. But the moderate socialists, faced by the great responsibility of ruling and partly hampered by the administrative machinery run by the old official classes and the bourgeoisie, took no effective measures to end the war or to speed the redistribution of land, with the result that there was a serious split in the moderate Leftist parties, between those members who supported and those who attacked the socialist ministers.

The new Government published its manifesto on May 19.¹ It rejected "any thought of separate peace" and set as its goal "a peace without annexations and contributions, on the basis of self-determination of the peoples." The manifesto also promised that the Government would work towards the establishment of a general peace, and in fact, it communicated a note to such effect to the Allies, but the reply was so that Tereschenko decided to drop the whole matter.

The most important personage in the new Government was Kerensky who assumed the Ministries of War and the Navy.

1. For the full text of the manifesto see Chamberlin, op. cit., pp. 447-449.

It was he who, in the two following months, worked tirelessly for the success of the offensive on which the fate of Russia largely depended. Thus, before going into the details of the politics of the period, let us try to understand the personality of Kerensky, relying on the description of people who knew him or who had to deal with him.

It is little doubt that Kerensky had a charismatic personality -at least when addressing the masses -, and his devotion to Russia is beyond question. Moreover, he was a gifted orator and greatly aroused the feelings of his audience. Sukhanov tells us that the man believed in his mission and was greatly irritated by those who failed to see him as a man of destiny.² He used to put his right hand on his breast in imitation of the great Napoleon, but he was as big a dreamer and idealist as Napoleon III and shared a fate quite similar to his. The Brilliant Paleologue himself was somewhat 'magnetized' by Kerensky and wrote that Kerensky alone was capable of making the Soviet realize the necessity of continuing the war and that he was the only man of action in the First Provisional Government.³ But Paleologue soon saw through the facade of oratory and wrote that as far as oratory was concerned, Kerensky

plays on all the strings and his genius has all forces and artifices at his command.... But what is there behind this theatrical grandiloquence and these platform and stage triumphs? Nothing but Utopian phantasies, low comedy and self-infatuation.⁴

Sorokin, a Right SR and secretary of Kerensky after the July Days, says that Kerensky was devoted to his country,

2. Sukhanov, op. cit., p. 115.

3. Paleologue, op. cit., p. 234 and pp. 269-270.

4. Ibid., p. 238.

but he was weak-willed, incompetent, and knew nothing whatsoever of the art of governing. Force, coercion and cruelty were abhorrent to him, and he thought he could rule through kind words and lofty sentiments. He was a very good human being but a very poor leader of men at critical moments.⁵

Lloyd George, a more sympathetic man, says: "Kerensky was a man of genius, but it was not the genius of action."⁶ "Men of his temperament are doomed to failure in revolutionary times. They can not reconcile idealism to action. Statesmen who hesitate in quiet times often gain thereby a reputation for moderation and sagacity. But in a tumult they are a national calamity."⁷

But, in spite of its bluntness, the evaluation of Kerensky as statesman is most comprehensively given by Trotsky. Kerensky, he shows, lacked most of the pre-requisites needed in a leader in a time of revolution when means and ends and ideologies and ways of life clash in mortal struggle. Kerensky, says Trotsky

had neither the theoretical preparation, nor the political discipline, nor the capacity for generalizations, nor the will as a politician. All these qualities were replaced by a fleeting emotionality, by an easy effervescence, and by that eloquence which acts not on the intellect and the will, but on the nerves.⁸

Now let us return to the political scene. The document of the Declaration of the Rights of Soldiers was confirmed by Kerensky on May 22, but after he had modified it at two points, namely, the restoration to commanders of

5. Sorokin, *op. cit.*, p. 76.

6. David Lloyd George, *War Memoirs* (London: Ivor Nicholson and Watson, 1936), vol. V, p. 2550.

7. *Ibid.*, p. 2565.

8. Trotsky, *La Revolution Russe*, vol. I, p. 176.

the right to use force against subordinates who refused to obey commands (though at the risk of the officer himself), and the right of commanders to remove officers of lower status without consulting the army committees.⁹ In its broad outline, this Declaration granted soldiers, when off-duty, the same civil rights enjoyed by officers and civilians. It also effaced any discrimination in the army due to religion, nationality, economic status and the like, and tried to defend soldiers from the abuses of officers.¹⁰

This Declaration enraged the army officers and the High Command, but it did not satisfy the soldiers and the extreme Leftists. Lenin branded it in Pravda as "The Declaration of the Lack of Rights of Soldiers."¹¹

Shortly after the formation of the Coalition Government, Kerensky, Tereschenko and Nekrasov established themselves as a kind of triumvir and, through Tseretelli, reached understandings with the Soviet without paying attention to, or informing, the other ministers. During this period, Kerensky grew in dimensions until he became the 'indispensable' man of Russia.

It is relevant to mention here that in the afternoon of May 22, Martov, together with Axelrod, Lunacharsky, Ryazanov and others, arrived to Petrograd via Germany. The All-Russian Congress of Mensheviks had already passed a resolution ratifying the entrance of the Menshevik leaders in the Coalition Government. Martov stood out against the Coalition and found himself isolated, with only a small number of followers. A split, more de facto than formal, ensued between the Internationalist Mensheviks of Martov who

9. Kerensky, *op. cit.*, p. 151 and. 187.

10. For the main points of the Declaration see Denikin, *op. cit.*, p. 174

11. Quoted in Kerensky, *op. cit.*, p. 187.

controlled the Petrograd Party Organization, and the defensist Menshevik Central Committee. The Internationalist Mensheviks formed a separate group in the Soviet and "always voted ... against Dan and Tsereteli."¹² Martov held out apart from the Party until the Bolshevik Revolution when he began the task of reconquering the Party which he accomplished in a year, but then it was too late.

Meanwhile, there was movement among the officers. The Commanders-in-chief of the fronts received drafts of the yet unsigned and unpublished 'Declaration of the Rights of Soldiers' and, in the hope of preventing the Declaration's issue, the C-in-Cs decide, after a conference on May 15 at Moghilev, to go to Petrograd "and address to the Provisional Government a stern warning and definite demands."¹³

On May 17, a conference took place at Petrograd, all the C-in-Cs being present (except that of the Caucasian front), together with representatives of the Provisional Government and the Ex. Com. of the Soviet. Many commanders spoke at this conference and agreed that the only way to save the army from disintegration was to carry on an offensive. Alexeiev spoke against the Declaration saying that if it was published, then "the last flimsy foundations [of discipline in the army] will fall into dust and the last hope will be dashed."¹⁴ Alexeiev also asked that those who issued Order No I, issue a series of orders and declarations to counter-act the effects of that order.

Tseretelli and Skobelev replied saying that Order No I was justified by the circumstances and that it was the only method to safeguard the revolution from officers loyal

12. Sukhanov, *op. cit.*, p. 357. For a few words about Martov from a follower see pp. 352-256.

13. Denikin, *op. cit.*, p. 176.

14. Quoted in *Ibid.*, p. 183. For a full account of the conference see *Ibid.*, pp. 176-186.

to the old regime.

The conference came to a close and nothing came out of it except a campaign of abuse from the Soviet press against some generals. A few days later, Kerensky signed the Declaration and, in his Order of the Day, stated that it was inadmissible for senior officers to resign "in order to shrink responsibility."¹⁵ Kerensky claims that he thus nipped in the bud the intention of some senior officers to resign in protest against the Declaration.¹⁶

With the revolution, the officers were disgraced as a class and for some time were atomized and unable to play any role of importance. But towards the middle of April, the idea arose among the Stavka officers to organize a "Union of the Officers of the Army and the Navy." The initiators of the union (two lieutenant-colonels of the General Staff, Lebedev and Pronin) believed that it was necessary for the officers to act in co-ordination and that they should have a say in the grave events that were taking place at the time.¹⁷

On May 20, at Moghilev, Alexeiev convened the First Congress of officers. Over 300 delegates were present, of whom 76% from the front, 17% from fighting units in the rear, and 7% from the rear.¹⁸ In his opening speech, Alexeiev said: "Russia is perishing. She stands on the brink of an abyss. A few more shocks and she will crash with all her weight into it."¹⁹ The C-in-C urged all officers to unite and to strive towards one aim, namely, to save Russia from the dangers surrounding her.

15. Quoted in Ibid., p. 187.

16. Kerensky, op. cit., p. 186.

17. Denikin, op. cit., p. 229.

18. Ibid., p. 230.

19. Quoted in Ibid., p. 231.

The Congress of Officers passed a series of resolutions at thirteen general meetings. The officers demanded authority - a strong, national government dependent "on the trust of the nation, not on irresponsible organization," and they were prepared to obey such an authority, "quite irrespective of differences of political opinion."²⁰ The Congress ended on June 4, after having left a permanent institution, the "Chief Committee of the Officers' Union." This Committee was weak during the first months of its existence, but it gradually organized branches in the army and gained strength. "The Committee," says Denikin, "undoubtedly reflected the general spirit with which the command and the Russian officers were then imbued, a spirit which had become hostile to the Provisional Government."²¹ This was largely due to the Government's distrust of the officers as counter-revolutionaries and their consequent isolation even from liberal circles.

In mid-June, the Cossaks held an All-Russian Cossak Congress at Petrograd, but nothing much came out of it.²²

Now let us discuss the ~~present~~ agrarian problem. After the revolution, the peasantry felt lost; it did not know what to do or what to believe in. As one peasant from Siberia said: "We feel that we have escaped from a dark cave into the bright daylight. And here we stand, not knowing where to go or what to do."²³ True or apocryphal, this utterance clearly represented the state of mind of the peasants.

Land hunger was clearly manifested early in the revolution, but for the first one or two months there was

20. Quoted in Ibid., p. 233.

21. Ibid., p. 237.

22. For an exposition of the Cossak attitude after the revolution see Ibid., pp. 239-247.

23. Michael T. Florinsky, The End of the Russian Empire (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1931), p. 253.

↑ Quoted in

almost no violence.²⁴ The Government issued an appeal to the people on March 30, saying that "the land question can not be solved by means of any kind of seizure,"²⁵ and promising to collect preliminary material on the agrarian problem, to be used by the Constituent Assembly. On April 2, the Government promulgated its agrarian reform which was to give land to those who worked it. The same day, a Central Land Committee was formed which was to study the agrarian problem and to draft a basic land law to be presented to the Constituent Assembly.²⁶

Meanwhile, the food situation in the cities was becoming precarious and the Government, anxious to feed the cities and the enormous army, proclaimed on April 7, a state monopoly of grain, decreeing that all grain which was not consumed by the agriculturalists and their domestic animals or used for seeds, should be sold to state organizations at fixed prices. However, this did not solve the problem. The currency was constantly depreciating and the peasant found himself flooded by paper money which had constantly diminishing value and with which he could buy very few manufactured goods, since many industries had come to a standstill. So the peasants stopped selling their grain and began hoarding it instead, thus creating a food shortage in the cities. The Government threatened to punish those who hoarded grain, but these threats were never supplemented by action.

In the belief that the peasants (the overwhelming majority of Russia) ought to have a hand in determining the

24. About peace in the country-side see e.g. Buchanan, op. cit., p. 110.

25. Quoted in Chamberlin, op. cit., p. 103.

26. Kerensky, op. cit., p. 121.

fate of their country, the Right SRs began preparations for the convention of an All-Russian Congress of Peasants.

Soviets of peasants began to appear right after the revolution, and on April 1, a conference of peasant delegates met at Moscow and decided that the Peasant Soviets should take their place, side by side with the Soviet of Workers' and Soldiers' Deputies.²⁷

The All-Russian Congress of the Soviets of Peasants' Deputies met at Petrograd between May 17 and June 10. There were about 1,000 representatives of peasants and soldiers²⁸ and Sorokin tells us that the majority of the delegates were still patriots and ready to support the Government.²⁹

Lenin appeared at the Peasant Congress and spoke to the representatives, but his speech was met coldly. Following this, Pravda and other Internationalist newspapers attacked the Congress, calling it a "citadel of the social patriots and the little bourgeoisie."³⁰

On May 24, Lenin addressed, in the Soldatskaya Pravda, an "Open Letter to the Delegates to the All-Russian Congress of Peasants' Deputies," in which he urged the peasants in the various localities to "take the land at once, without paying any rent to the landlords or waiting for the Constituent Assembly."³¹ However, Lenin urged the peasants "to do it in as organized a way as possible, under no circumstances allowing damage to property...."³² Then Lenin went on

Further. For all the land to pass over to the working people, a close alliance of the urban workers and the poorest peasants (semi-proletarians) is essential.

27. Florinsky, Russia, vol. II, p. 1414.

28. Sorokin, op. cit., p. 47

29. loc. cit.

30. Quoted in Ibid., pp. 47-48.

31. Lenin, Alliance of the Working Class and the Peasantry, p. 192,

32. Ibid., p. 193.

Unless such an alliance is formed, the capitalists can not be defeated. And if they are not defeated, no transfer of land to the people will deliver it from poverty. You can not eat land, and without money, without capital, there is no way of obtaining implements, livestock of seed. The peasants must trust not the capitalists or the rich muzhiks (who are capitalists too), but only the urban workers. Only in alliance with the latter can the poorest peasants insure that the land, the railways, the banks, and the factories become the property of all working people; if this is not done, the transfer of the land to the people cannot alone abolish want and pauperism.³³

On June 7, the Peasant Congress passed a resolution calling for the abolition, without compensation, of private land ownership, "and the establishment of a system of equalitarian labor tenure involving no payment of rent."³⁴ But the liberals stood for the private ownership of land by the peasants, each peasant receiving a piece of land to be his private property, and there was a great deal of wrangling on the subject between the socialists and the radicals in the Cabinet.³⁵ Thus, the final settlement of the question was left to the Constituent Assembly. The Congress voted for the formation of a Peasants' Soviet and elected an Ex. Com. for it. Kerensky and Chernov received each over eight hundred votes in the elections to the Executive Committee of the Peasants' Soviet, while Lenin got only twenty votes.³⁶

We have already mentioned that Lenin held that the period of dual power was a transitional stage. In this stage the bourgeoisie and the proletariat would both struggle for the support of the peasant masses, and the class organ which

33. loc. cit.

34. Florinsky, Russia, vol. II, p. 1414.

35. Milioukov, op. cit., p. 1273.

36. Florinsky, Russia, vol. II, p. 1414.

would get peasant support would eventually crush the other. In April, Lenin acknowledged "the fact of class cooperation between the bourgeoisie and the peasantry," and he agreed with the Mensheviks that the Soviets were still "an annex of the bourgeois government." But if and when the peasantry would seize the land for itself, then it would break away from the bourgeoisie and ally itself with the proletariat; "this will be a new stage in the bourgeois-democratic revolution."³⁷ The Party would overthrow the Government only when it had rallied behind it the peasant masses, and its job at the moment was still to educate and win these masses.

Kerensky, upon his assumption of the War Ministry, immediately began preparations for an offensive. On June 4, he dismissed Alexeiev from the High Command of the army because of the latter's opposition to the democratization of the army, and Kerensky himself assumed the Supreme Command. Towards the end of May, the new C-in-C visited the front and made speeches to the soldiers in which he spoke to them of liberty, of the republic and of peace, and he urged them to fight for the safeguard of their newly-won liberties. His almost poetical speeches and idealistic tones inflamed the soldiers and kindled their waning patriotism, but as soon as he left a unit, and with the return of the daily routine of life and the propaganda of the Bolsheviks and other defeatists, the enthusiasm again receded. Kerensky urged the soldiers: "Forward to the battle for freedom! I summon you not to a feast but to death!"³⁸ But Lenin's slogan at the front carried with it deadly force: "We call you to social revolution!" it ran, "We summon you not to die for others but

37. Quoted in Carr, op. cit., p. 82.

38. Quoted in Kerensky, op. cit., p. 195.

to destroy others, to destroy your class enemies in the rear."³⁹

Kerensky made two tours of the front and then returned to Petrograd. On June 26, he left again for the front to watch the launching of the offensive. On June 29 and 30 the Russian artillery poured on the German trenches fire of an intensity unprecedented on the Russian front,⁴⁰ and destroyed many of the enemy's defences. Then the Russians, who had numerical superiority over the enemy, both in men and in guns, attacked on July 1, and broke through the enemy's front, capturing two or three fortified lines.⁴¹ Other victories followed and the moral of the Russian troops was greatly enhanced.

The Austro-German army was re-inforced and stubborn fighting followed, many points frequently changing hands. Kornilov carried his Army through a brilliant operation and broke through the Third Austrian Army on a front of twenty miles, capturing one-fifty officers, ten thousand soldiers, and about one hundred guns.⁴²

On July 2, Kerensky sent telegrams to Petrograd announcing a brilliant commencement of the offensive and this immediately caused patriotic demonstrations. But it was short-lived. As Buchanan puts it, Kerensky

Kerensky had done all that a man could do who relied on speeches and on speeches alone to produce a sustained offensive in a war-weary army whose discipline has already been undermined.⁴³

39. Quoted in Ibid., p. 196.

40. Florinsky, Russia, vol. II, p. 1409.

41. Deniken, op. cit., pp. 272-273.

42. Ibid., p. 274. For more details about the July offensive and the German counter-offensive see Ludendorff, op. cit., pp. 434-437.

43. Buchanan, op. cit., p. 149.

Meanwhile, bread grew scarcer in Petrograd and inflation was still going on. The workers and the garrison saw that they gained nothing from the revolution and they felt cheated by the bourgeoisie and their confidence in the moderate socialists was greatly reduced. The costly offensive increased the restlessness of the urban masses. However, the regime was discredited only in the two capitals and in some industrial towns, but it still retained support in the country-side.

There were many strikes and demonstrations in Petrograd and early in July there was a demonstration of soldiers over forty who, earlier in the year, had been furloughed from the front for rear work, but who were recalled on July 3 and 4 to participate in the offensive. These soldiers also demonstrated in provincial towns and provoked riots in quite a few places.⁴⁴

The July Days were more or less spontaneous, though Bolshevik propaganda partly paved the way for such spontaneity to appear. The people wanted peace and bread, but all they got was a new offensive and empty grain stores.

Finally, came the resignation of the four Cadet ministers, a step which opened a government crisis and gave the finishing touch to the maturing feeling of dissatisfaction among the masses of Petrograd. The crisis began when the four Cadet ministers refused to sign an agreement concluded between some ministers and the Ukrainians, granting the latter a large measure of autonomy, on the grounds that the Constituent Assembly alone could take such a radical step.⁴⁵ To this must be added that the policy of

44. Chamberlin, op. cit., p. 1167; and Sukhanov, op. cit., pp. 368-370.

45. Milioukov, op. cit., pp. 1275-1276.

the Government was out of harmony with the aspirations of the Cadets, so the four Cadet ministers resigned, thereby opening a governmental crisis which was prolonged for three weeks.

The Bolshevik propaganda was so powerful and the discontent so acute that on July 16, many regiments and thousands of workers eagerly joined the demonstrations. The July revolt was first set into motion by the First Machine-Gun Regiment. On the morning of July 16, a meeting of their company committees spoke out in favour of an armed insurrection and messengers were sent out to other regiments inviting them to participate. Trotsky tells us that the Bolsheviks knew nothing of that decision. At 3 P.M., he says, before a general conference of the Bolsheviks of Petrograd held at Kshesinskaya's house, there appeared two delegates of the Machine-Gunners come to communicate the decision to demonstrate adopted by the Regiment. Tomsy and the majority of the Bolsheviks present were against such a demonstration and Volodarsky told the protesting delegates that they ought to abstain from any such act.⁴⁶

At 4 P.M. the Central Committee of the Bolshevik Party affirmed the decision of Tomsy and his comrades and sent Bolsheviks to the factories and the barracks to stop the manifestation.⁴⁷ But it was too late. The call of the Machine-Gun Regiment for an armed uprising had met with a ready response. The Machine-Gunners advanced to Kshesinskaya's house at 8 P.M. and were soon followed by great masses of soldiers and workers. Some Bolsheviks tried to urge the

46. Trotsky/Leon, Histoire de la Revolution Russe, trans. Maurice Parijanine (Paris: Editions du Seuil, 1950), Vol. II, p. 30.

47. Ibid., p. 30. For Stalin's account of how the Bolsheviks tried to prevent the July Days, see Deutscher, Stalin, pp. 148-149.

crowds to stop the demonstrations, but they were shouted down. Finally, it was decided to make a peaceful march on the Tauride Palace and to elect delegates from among the masses to formulate their demands in front of the Ex. Com.⁴⁸

When the crowds reached the Soviet, they were met by Trotsky and other Bolshevik orators. A plenary session of the Soviet was called at once and Dan opened the session by demanding

that at this meeting only those members be seated who will swear to submit themselves to the decisions of the Soviet, who recognize that its authority is supreme, and will not attempt to repudiate, try to overthrow, or even try to attack this highest organ of the Russian Revolutionary Democracy. Secondly, all members of the Soviet here present must swear to do everything, even to die, if necessary, in order to suppress this criminal revolt against the Soviet and the Revolution. Those who are unwilling to take this oath shall immediately withdraw.⁴⁹

The Bolsheviks and related groups protested against this, but on the insistence of the majority they left the Soviet session and went out to the masses.

The demonstrations began to recede very late in the night. The Ex. Com. held a session around 1 A.M. on the morning of the 17th, and there were endless debates which lasted till daylight.⁵⁰ Then the usual remedy was resorted to: all members of the Ex. Com. who had any capacity for public speaking were immediately to go to the different barracks and factories to urge the soldiers and the workers not to demonstrate. The Interdistrictites refused to go. As for the Bolsheviks, they were absent from the Tauride during the whole night.

Meanwhile, the Bolsheviks, whose leader Lenin was

48. Trotsky, La Revolution Russe, vol. II, p. 31.

49. Quoted in Sorokin, op. cit., p. 63.

50. Sukhanov, op. cit., p. 432.

at the moment at Finland recuperating after a slight illness, spent the night of 16-17 in feverish debate: should they place themselves at the head of the rebellious masses or should they, as on the night of June 22, give up to the conciliationist Soviet majority and try to pacify the workers? The movement had calmed down late in the night; it was not organized and the Bolsheviki had no effective control over it. Was it worth taking over the leadership of such a movement? After much vacillation, the Bolsheviki decided to take over the movement, but as the demonstrations calmed down they changed their mind in time to stop the printing of a call for a "peaceful demonstration" on the front page of Pravda.⁵¹ A large blank appeared next day on the front page of Pravda.

But on the morning of the 17, the masses returned to the streets and the Bolsheviki saw that they were unable to restrain them so they decided to lead them, this time again to the Tauride Palace, under the slogan 'All Power to the Soviet.' Lenin arrived on the morning of the 17, and approved of the tactics of his followers.

On the morning of the 17, the Bolsheviki brought to Petrograd about 20,000 fully armed, "absolutely harmful people"⁵² from Cronstadt. The Bolsheviki decided to call off the demonstrations too late in the night to stop the mobilization of the Red Cronstadt sailors which, most probably, they had begun. Trotsky tells us that in the early

51. For an account of the Bolshevik vacillation that night see Ibid., pp. 437-439. Trotsky, in La Revolution Russe, vol II, p. 39, claims that the first page of Pravda was white because the Bolsheviki had decided to print on it an appeal to the workers and the soldiers calling on them to end the demonstrations. But they changed their mind at the last moment.

52. Quoted in Sukhanov, op. cit., p. 440.

morning of the 17, there was a telephone talk between Raskolnikov and Zinoviev. The latter asked the Cronstadt leader to prevent the sailors from coming to the capital, but Raskolnikov retorted that if he so tried he would only loose face. Then Zinoviev asked Raskolnikov to bring the sailors unarmed, and the latter said that the mere suggestion of such an idea would arouse the indignation of the sailors as much as if they were invited into a trap.⁵³

The sailors, led by the Bolsheviks Roshal and Raskolnikov, were taken, upon their arrival to Petrograd, to Kshesinskaya's house where they were addressed by Lenin who attacked the Government and the Soviet majority but

he didn't demand any concrete action from the impressive force standing in front of him; he didn't even call on his audience to continue the street demonstrations—even though that audience had just proved its readiness for battle by the troublesome journey from Kronstadt to Petersburg.⁵⁴

The subject of whether Lenin decide to seize power in the July Days has given rise to much controversy. Some authors believe that for some time during the July Days, Lenin considered taking power.⁵⁵ This might have been true, but it would have been nothing by a fleeting thought of the moment. The absence of Lenin from Petrograd during the day and night of the 16, his moderate speech to the Cronstadters, and the fact that the Bolsheviks went to the Soviet on the 17, and that the Red Guards were not mobilized for battle, all point towards the lack of any organized plan of insurrection. Lenin most probably knew at the time that if he was strong enough to overthrow the Government, he would be unable to

53. Trotsky, La Revolution Russe, vol. II, pp. 38-39.

54. Sukhanov, op. cit., p. 441. For Trotsky's summary of Lenin's speech to the Cronstadters see Trotsky, La Revolution Russe, vol II, p. 44.

55. See for instance Sukhanov, op. cit., p. 438; and Schapiro, op. cit., p. 42.

retain power since the majority of the people in the country-side still followed the Mensheviks and the SRs, and it would be a matter of time before the collapse of a Bolshevik dictatorship at Petrograd.

The sailors were led by the Bolsheviks to the Tauride Palace, but for some reason or other they reached it only at 5 P.M. Meanwhile, there was fighting at many points in the capital, but most of it was spontaneous and with no definite plan or aim, often begun by a stray shot. No one felt like fighting a real battle, except perhaps the Cronstadt sailors. In the street fights, Sukhanov says, "at the first shot both sides panicked and scattered helter-skelter. When two columns met each other neither participants nor spectators could distinguish where either side was."⁵⁶ The few serious incidents that took place were between the sailors and the Cossaks, the most bloody of those encounters having occurred on the Liteiny, with a good number of casualties on both sides.

Meanwhile, the Tauride Palace was surrounded by a great crowd of soldiers, sailors and workers who were asking the defenceless and terrified Soviet to assume all power. The mob was shouting against Chernov, the principal theoretician of the SRs and the Minister of Agriculture. Chernov went out to address the crowds and as he appeared, a worker clenched his fist to the Minister saying: "Take power, son of a bitch, when it is given you!"⁵⁷ Then some sailors sprang from amidst the hostile crowds, and seized Chernov, and put him in a nearby automobile. The Minister might have been lynched had not Trotsky interfered. Trotsky addressed the crowd and told the sailors that they were the "pride and beauty of the revolution";

56. Sukhanov, op. cit., p. 442.

57. For this incident see the letter of Buchanan to Lloyd George, in Lloyd George, op. cit., p. 2554; see also Francis, op. cit., p. 137; and Sorokin, op. cit., p. 68.

then, after a dramatic speech in which he spoke against unnecessary and unprovoked arrests, he ended thus: "Let any one who is for violence raise his hand."⁵⁸ No one spoke or raised his hand. Then Trotsky triumphantly declared with a wave of the hand: "Citizen Chernov, you are freed,"⁵⁹ thereupon inviting the frightened Minister to leave the car and return to the Assembly Hall.

Seeing that the Soviets would not accept power and that the conditions were not favourable for a coup, the Bolsheviki urged the Cronstadters to go to specified places where they would be given food and shelter; however, to placate them, they were told to stay on the alert in case they would be needed.⁶⁰ The tired mob was already dispersing when troops, loyal to the Soviet, arrived from the front. One of the leaders of this force, lieutenant Koutchine, a Right Menshevik, went up on the stand in the Duma Hall and was received as a hero by the conciliationists whose voices mingled with the Marseillaise. The great polemist, Martov, thus grumbled: "This is the classic scene for the beginning of counter-revolution."⁶¹

Following this, secret and half-secret Rightist organizations went into the streets and after a few clashes the remnants of the tired Bolshevik mob dispersed.⁶²

Thus ended the Leftist demonstrations of the July Days, with about four hundred dead and wounded.⁶³ It could have been much worse had not the Bolsheviki restrained the masses and had not the Government restrained the Cossaks.

58. Quoted in Chamberlin, op. cit., p. 174.

59. Quoted in loc. cit. For this 'rescue' see also Sukhanov, op. cit., pp. 444-447.

60. Sukhanov, op. cit., pp. 447-448.

61. Quoted in Trotsky, La Revolution Russe, vol. II, p. 55.

62. Deutscher, The Prophet Armed, p. 273.

63. Sukhanov, op. cit., p. 452.

But the restraint of the Bolshevik masses was necessary to save the Party from a disastrous defeat, while the restraint of the Cossaks was a wrong move on the part of the Government which thus lost an opportunity to deal a limping blow to the Bolsheviks and also lost the confidence of the Cossaks.

Late in the evening of the 17, Perverezev, the Minister of Justice, released to the press material collected by the Provisional Government about the relations of Lenin, Zinoviev, and other Bolshevik leaders with the Germans. This material was widely distributed in pamphlet form among Guard Regiments and the next day it was published in newspapers. Upon reading this material, many formerly neutral regiments turned anti-Bolshevik,⁶⁴ but this was of no great importance since the demonstrations had already subsided.

On the late evening of the 17, news arrived to Petrograd about the breakdown of the offensive, and the Rightists blamed the Bolshevik agitation at the front for the failure.⁶⁵ This breakdown of the offensive gave great impetus to the Rightist reaction.

On the night of 17-18, the Bolshevik Central Committee passed a resolution to end the demonstrations.⁶⁶

Before going into the Rightist reaction let us mention that the Soviet passed, on the night of July 17, a resolution presented by Tseretelli to the effect of keeping the incomplete Cabinet until the full session of the Soviet (including provincial members) would decide upon the nature of the government to be formed. This prolonged the life of the Government for two weeks.⁶⁷

64. Kerensky, op. cit., p. 239

65. Deutscher, Trotsky, p. 273. The Prophet Armed, p. 273.

66. Sukhanov, op. cit., p. 457.

67. Milioukov, op. cit., p. 1277; and Chamberlin, op. cit., p. 175.

On the morning of the 18. Pravda called off the strike and the demonstrations. Later in the morning, an officer and a few men raided the offices of Pravda, sacked the files, smashed the furniture and arrested some employees. A newly-established Bolshevik printing-shop, Labour, was also raided and demolished.⁶⁸

On the 19, the Kshesinskaya house itself was occupied by Government troops. The same day, Stalin (who, curiously enough, was not arrested) went to the Fortress which was occupied by Cronstadters, Machine-Gunners and civilian Red Guards who were preparing for a long and bloody siege, and, aided by official assurances that the rebels would not be penalized, Stalin finally convinced the 'garrison' to surrender to the Ex. Com. Thus, a blood-bath was averted.⁶⁹

On the same day, an order was issued for the arrest of Lenin and Zinoviev. These two leaders wavered: should they give themselves up and go to trial to show that they were not German spies, or would they go into hiding? Lunacharsky and Kamenev put forth the view that if the two leaders went into hiding, this would confirm, to the masses, the charges levelled against them. But Stalin said that if they gave themselves up they might be assassinated. Stalin then approached the Ex. Com. and told them that Lenin would face trial if they guaranteed his personal safety. The Mensheviks and SRs refused to shoulder any such responsibility and Lenin and Zinoviev went into hiding, the former crossing the border into Finland.⁷⁰

68. Chamberlin, op. cit., p. 177.

69. Deutscher, Stalin, pp. 150-151.

70. Ibid., p. 151.

On July 19, after strong artillery preparations, German shock troops attacked the Eleventh Army and broke through it. The front was opened to the Germans by the demoralized 607th Mlynov Regiment whose members left the trenches of their own accord. But the front broke not only because of the cowardice of this regiment but also because the rest of the soldiers were war-weary, and after initial enthusiasm had returned to their anarchy and indifference as to the outcome of the war.⁷¹

The defeat soon turned into a rout. There was a great number of deserters, sometimes whole divisions, pillaging and murdering the villagers as they retreated.⁷² The Russian army was ended as a fighting machine of any worth.

On July 24, Lenin, Zinoviev and Kamenev repudiated the accusations levelled against them, in a letter published in Gorky's *Novaya Zhizn*.⁷³ By this time, Lenin had decided to give up his slogan 'All Power to the Soviets', since the latter was no more representative of the proletariat, but an organization completely under bourgeois domination. Now, the proletariat could take over power only through an insurrection. Lenin told the Party to concentrate on factory committees which, he believed, would be used as the organs of the forthcoming uprising.⁷⁴ To put the subject in an 'official' way:

By their treachery, the Socialist-Revolutionaries and the Mensheviks had wrecked the peaceful course of the development [of the revolution]. Now that all power has passed into the hands of the counter-revolution, the working class could only take power by an armed insurrection.⁷⁵

71. Denikin, op. cit., p. 275.

72. For an account of the rout see the letter of General Knox, British Military Attache to the Russian command, in Lloyd George, op. cit., pp. 2542-2549.

73. Chamberlin, op. cit., p. 182.

74. Ibid., p. 185.

75. History of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union, 1960, p. 237.

As for Trotsky, he was not arrested for he was not officially a Bolshevik. But he was fiercely attacked by the bourgeois press and Miliukov's own paper said that he had received \$ 10,000 from Germany. Trotsky, who did not appear at the Soviet for some time after the uprising, defeated all slanders against him in two brilliant Open Letters.⁷⁶

Failing to prove his involvement with Germany, the bourgeois press began publishing stories about how Trotsky had broken with that German agent Lenin. Therefore, on July 23, Trotsky addressed an Open Letter to the Provisional Government in which he declared: that

I share in principal the attitude of Lenin, Zinoviev and Kamenev.... I am just as irreconcilable an opponent of the general policy of the Provisional Government as the above-mentioned Comrades. My exempt from arrest only underlines the counter-revolutionary and wanton character of the action you have taken against them.⁷⁷

After the publication of this letter, Trotsky re-appeared at the Soviet where he vehemently defended Lenin and told the socialists that counter-revolution has chosen the Bolsheviks as its first target and that the moderate socialists would soon be its next victims. Trotsky was arrested on March August 5. Reaction was triumphant.

76. Deutscher, The Prophet Armed, p. 275.

77. Quoted in Ibid., pp. 276-277.

CHAPTER VII

Second Coalition - Moscow State Conference - The Kornilov Affair

During the July uprising, the Provisional Government was completely defenceless and at the mercy of the mob. For many hours its members held a meeting at the private apartment of Prince Lvov, and "any group of ten or twelve men could have arrested the Government."¹ But the masses were interested in forcing power on the Soviet, and nobody bothered with the Cabinet.

Kerensky, who had left for the front on July 16, for matters concerning the offensive, returned to Petrograd on the 19, and went immediately to a Cabinet session. At his session it was decided to bring to trial the people responsible for the July Days.² The moment was favourable for Kerensky to cripple the Bolsheviki, but he did not take the necessary measures, partly because of the opposition of the Soviet to harsh measures against socialists, lest reaction would benefit, and partly because Kerensky thought that the Bolsheviki were sufficiently discredited after the July uprising, to cause him no worry for some time.

On July 20, Kerensky with his SRs, together with the Mensheviki, decided that Prince Lvov should resign. The Mensheviki favoured such a step in the hope of checking the counter-revolution which was daily gaining momentum.³ As for Lvov, he had had enough of the whole affair and was relieved to hand in his resignation.

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1. Quoted in Sukhanov in Chamberlin, *op. cit.*, p. 172. That nobody arrested the defenceless Cabinet is another proof that the Bolsheviki were not executing a pre-meditated coup d'etat.
 2. Sukhanov, *op. cit.*, p. 470.
 3. *Ibid.*, p. 474.

On July 21, Kerensky became President of the Council of Ministers and ruled with a rump government. The bourgeois parties protested against this Government, but on July 22, the Soviet issued a manifesto to the Russian people in which it called Kerensky's Government "the government for the Salvation of the Fatherland and the Revolution,"⁴ and urged the soldiers, peasants and workers to grant full confidence to, and to obey, the Provisional Government. Furthermore, the troops of the Petrograd garrison held a general meeting and unanimously approved of a resolution expressing confidence "only in the Provisional Government."⁵

Following Kerensky's assumption of the Premiership, some measures were taken against the Bolsheviks. Kamenev, Kollontai, Antonoy-Ovseenko, Krylenko, Lunacharsky and later Trotsky were arrested. Some of the more unruly regiments, including the First Machine-Gun Regiment, were broken up. People were forbidden to carry weapons and searches for arms were carried in places and factories regarded as fortresses of Bolshevism. Restrictions were imposed on the press and Bolshevik papers were suppressed, especially at the front, and for the first time since the revolution, Rightist political organizations such as the Union of Officers and the Union of Merchants and Industrialists, openly manifested themselves. The Government even felt strong enough to arrest the local prominent Bolsheviks of Cronstadt, Raskolnikov and Dybenko, and to crown anti-Bolshevik reaction, Kerensky assisted at the religious funeral of the Cossaks killed during the uprising. Even the full conference of the Soviet at Moscow, proposed by Tseretelli, was substituted by a State Conference which would consist of nearly equal numbers of bourgeois and socialist representatives.

4. Quoted in Kerensky, *op. cit.*, p. 249.

5. Quoted in *Ibid.*, pp. 249-250.

Meanwhile, Kerensky was trying to construct a new Cabinet. The negotiations between the Premier and the central committees of the different parties continued for ten days,⁶ but no agreement was reached. The Cadets refused to join a government subservient to the Soviet. Finally, unable to form a government acceptable to the Right and to the Left, Kerensky resigned on August 3.

Kerensky was distrusted by the officers, the industrialists and even by the middle-class people as too much under Soviet influence. He was also distrusted by the moderate socialist leaders of the Soviet as insufficiently sound in the socialist faith and always too ready to compromise with the bourgeoisie. But he was indispensable for any government since he was widely known and tolerated both the Right and the Left. His replacement by a Leftist or a Rightist would have meant civil war.

Faced by Kerensky's resignation, representatives of all parties met in the Malachite Hall of the Winter Palace on the evening of August the 3rd, to discuss the situation. The meeting lasted till four in the next morning.⁷ It was resolved to entrust Kerensky with the task of forming a government as he saw fit, "without being hampered by pressure, claims or demands from any of the parties."⁸ However, Kerensky tells us that the Right and the Left privately threatened him with militant hostility if he chose ministers they did not approve of.⁹

According to Miliukov,¹⁰ this marked the climax of Kerensky's power. However, the man's indispensability was

6. Ibid., p. 251.

7. Ibid., p. 253.

8. Quoted in loc. cit.

9. loc. cit.

10. See Miliukov, op. cit., p. 1279.

not due to qualities of leadership but, as we have already mentioned, due to the lack of another man who would be acceptable to the majority on both sides of the fence. As for the masses, they had lost faith in Kerensky after the failure of the offensive and were looking elsewhere for leadership. Even the Soviet majority was losing ground to the Bolsheviks, and together with Kerensky, this majority interminably hesitated and oscillated between the Right and the Left.

The new Cabinet was completed on August 7. Kerensky retained the Premiership together with the Ministries of War and the Navy. Savinkov, and ex-terrorist of the SR fighting organization and commissar of the South-western front, was made assistant to the Minister of War. Tereschenko retained the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, and Tseretelli did not participate in the Government in order to consolidate his position in the Soviet. In number the new Cabinet had a slight preponderance of socialist over non-socialist ministers, but Miliukov tells us that "the real preponderance in the Cabinet definitely belonged to the convinced supporters of the bourgeois democracy."¹¹ The ministers of this Government were, theoretically, to be responsible "only to their country and their own conscience,"¹² and not to the Soviet or any other body. Yet from the first day, the Cabinet could not agree on a program and, instead, an Appeal was published, signed by Kerensky alone.¹³

Now, before going into the Moscow State Conference, let us trace the activities of Kornilov and his sympathizers, from the early days of the revolution.

11. Quoted in Chamberlin, op. cit., p. 187

12. Quoted in Kerensky, op. cit., p. 255.

13. Milioukov, op. cit., p. 1286.

General Kornilov was quite a romantic character. He was rather brilliant as a general and had great physical courage which won him a reputation in the army during the war. Ambassador Francis tells us that Kornilov spoke seventeen languages.¹⁴ The General's patriotism is no matter of doubt, but he was extremely inexperienced politically, and it may well have been that unscrupulous members of his Staff tried to use the reputation and the iron character of the General towards the fulfilment of their ends. And as the revolution progressed and anarchy spread, many Rightist and middle-class people came to see in the General their last hope, while for the Leftists, the scepter of the "General on the White Horse" soon began haunting many, as early as the end of July.

We have mentioned that Kornilov, appointed on March 15, as Commander of the Petrograd Military District, resigned his command towards the middle of May and went to join the South-western front. Soon afterwards, Kerensky dismissed the much-respected General Alexeiev and replaced him by Brussilov in the Supreme Command. Brussilov was an opportunist and the general of the High Command least disliked by the Soviet.

Then came the July Offensive where Kornilov led a brilliant and successful offensive before the general rout overcame the army. On July 21, Kornilov was appointed to the Supreme Command of the South-western front, after its breakdown. Kornilov's strength of character and his unflinching attitude and unshrinking from responsibility made him a good candidate for the job, inspite of the distrust he was held in by the Revolutionary Democracy and by Kerensky himself. The Premier Believed that Kornilov's were too dangerous in

14. Francis, op. cit., p. 145. But the old Ambassador's statements and remarks should be taken with a good deal of reserve.

case of success, but would be useful in case of a panic-stricken retreat. "When the Moor has done his work, let the Moor go...."¹⁵

Meanwhile, the army leaders and the Rightists, including the Cadets, felt that the Government was weak and that Russia was moving towards the Left and towards anarchy, and they began contemplating a coup d'etat as the only means to save Russia. The army officers wanted the restoration of normal military discipline, the unity of command, and the abolition of the system of commissars and army committees. The Stavka saw that if it had to achieve these measures and to restore order in Russia, it had to seize power.¹⁶

As to the character of the coup d'etat, Denikin tells us that the core of the movement was not reactionary or counter-revolutionary, although he admits that some arch-reactionaries allied themselves with it.¹⁷ However, if such a movement succeeded, one could not tell to what measures of reaction its authors would resort.

The man chosen by the Rightists to effect the proposed coup was -for his obvious qualities and position - General Lavr Kornilov.

On July 24, three days after his appointment to the command of the South-western front, Kornilov sent a telegram in reply to his appointment, stressing on the Government the importance of the immediate cessation of the offensive on all fronts (an already accomplished fact) and the immediate introduction of capital punishment in the territory of military operations. Kornilov threatened to resign if these measures were not confirmed.¹⁸ The tone of the telegram was arrogant, very similar to that of a petty dictator.

15. Quoted as Kerensky's in Denikin, op. cit., p. 302.

16. Ibid., p. 78.

17. Ibid., p. 102.

18. See Ibid., pp. 278-279 and 302; and Kerensky, op. cit., pp. 302-303.

On July 25, in compliance with Kornilov's telegram, the Government restored capital punishment to the front, and established Revolutionary Military Tribunals which replaced the former Field Court-Martial. However, not enough experienced judges were found since they were elected (three officers and three men) from the list of the juries or from Regimental Committees. Few of these judges were willing to impose the death penalty in such times and, on the whole, this restoration of the death-penalty was useless.¹⁹

In addition to the re-introduction of the death-penalty at the front, volunteer battalions were formed of military cadets and volunteers to hunt deserters and to stop plunder and violence. Meetings at the front were forbidden and were to be stopped by force of arms if necessary. These measures, taken by Kornilov at his own risk, and his resolute stand against the Provisional Government, enhanced his authority with the officers and with the circles of the Liberal Democracy. Even for a time the Revolutionary Democracy had to put up with him as the only man capable of restoring discipline to the army.

Late in July, Brussilov convened a conference, upon the suggestion of Kerensky, and invited to it the prominent C-in-C in order to discuss the actual condition at the front and the consequences of the July disaster, and in order to determine the course of the future military policy. The conference was to be held on July 29, and the Stavka sent a telegram to Kornilov telling him not to come, because of the precarious position of the South-western front, but instead to send his views in writing.

The conference was attended, in addition to Alexeiev and Brussilov and important commanders, by Kerensky, Tereschenko, Savinkov, and a few young aids of Kerensky.

19. See Denikin, op. cit., p. 156; and Chamberlin, op. cit., pp. 234-235.

General Denikin made a long speech at the conference.²⁰ He attacked the commissars and the committees and the 'Declaration of the Rights of Soldiers'. The Bolsheviki, he said, did not disrupt the army,

the army has been disrupted by others, and the Bolsheviki are like worms which have bred in the wounds of the army. The army has been disrupted by the regulations of the last four months....²¹

After this attack on the Provisional Government, Denikin made his demands in eight points. These amounted to the restoration of complete order in the army, a desirable end in ordinary times, but at the time it would have with marble paved the way for a military dictatorship. The first point even demanded that the Government recognize its mistakes and its guilt, as it had doubted the sincerity of officers!!

Later, Kerensky said of Denikin's speech at the conference: "General Denikin had for the first time drawn a plan for the Revanche—that music of the future military reaction."²¹

Kornilov's telegram to the conference was also read. It demanded the extension of capital punishment to the rear, the vesting of disciplinary powers in Commanding Officers, the banning of all delegations and agitators from the front and the prohibition of all meetings there. As for commissars and army committees, Kornilov did not demand their abolition but only spoke in favour of the curtailment of their functions.²²

Kerensky made the closing speech in which he tried to justify the democratization of the army as inevitable, and he strongly attacked the Ancien Regime. Says Denikin about Kerensky:

Finally, he gave us no definite directions for future work. The members of the Conference dispersed with a heavy feeling of mutual misunderstanding. I was also discouraged....²³

20. For Denikin's speech see Denikin, *op. cit.*, pp. 282-294.

21. Quoted in *Ibid.*, p. 294.

22. *Ibid.*, p. 295.

23. *Ibid.*, p. 296.

Two days after the Moghilev Conference, General Brussilov was relieved of the Supreme Command. Kerensky explained Brussilov's dismissal by the catastrophical condition at the front and by the possible development of a German offensive while there was no firm hand to hold the army and no definite plan. Brussilov's lack of influence over both officers and men was also given by Kerensky as a reason for the General's dismissal.

On August 1, Lavr Kornilov was appointed Supreme Commander of the Russian Army. This appointment was somewhat due to the efforts of Savinkov who was the active administrator of the War Ministry and who saw the need of a strong government towards the fulfillment of which, Kornilov could be used.²⁴ Moreover, Kornilov's message to the July 29 Moghilev Conference seemed to Kerensky somewhat progressive, since, unlike the speeches of other generals, it agreed that the commissars and the committees had their function in the army and should not be abolished but only placed under certain limitations.

Immediately following his appointment, Kornilov sent a telegram to the Government, which was immediately made public by the press, in which he informed the Government that he had accepted the Supreme Command only on the following conditions:

1, That his responsibility be only to his conscience ~~direct~~ and to the people direct; 2, that there be no interference in his orders and appointments; 3, the application to the rear, where army reserves were located, of recent measures at the front i.e. restoration of capital punishment; and 4, acceptance of his proposals as wired to the military council at General Headquarters on July twenty-ninth.²⁵

Upon receiving Kornilov's telegram, Kerensky suggested to the Cabinet the immediate dismissal of the General and his

24. Chamberlin, op. cit., p. 193.

25. Kerensky, op. cit., p. 306.

prosecution. But the Government was inclined to believe that the General was unfamiliar with political phraseology. Also Captain Filonenko, Chief Commissar attached to the Stavka, told Kerensky that "responsibility... to the people direct" which Kornilov demanded, meant responsibility to the representative of the people direct, namely, the Government.²⁶ Furthermore, Kornilov was for the moment indispensable to Kerensky, and the Premier agreed to keep him in the Supreme Command.

Shortly after Kornilov's telegram, the Central Committee of the Union of Officers, meeting at Moghilev, sent a telegram to the Government declaring that all members of the Government would be "responsible with their heads for failure to approve the measures proposed by General Kornilov."²⁷ Soon, central committees of other military organizations issued resolutions similar in content. The Cossak Council, the Union of the Knights of St. George, the Conference of the Military League, and other such organizations proclaimed Kornilov as permanent and irreconcilable C-in-C. The Cossak Council went so far so as to threaten the Government with mutiny in the event of Kornilov's removal. When representatives of this Cossak Council appeared before Kerensky with the resolution embodying the threat, they were severely reprimanded by the Premier.²⁷

On August 16, Kornilov went to Petrograd with a memorandum outlining the measures which he believed were necessary for the restoration of the fighting capacity of the army. Savinkov and Filonenko looked at the memorandum and, finding its political language unacceptable, persuaded Kornilov to let them take it and re-write it. When Kornilov met

26. Chamberlin, op. cit., p. 195.

27. Kerensky, op. cit., p. 303.

Kerensky he showed him the original memorandum which Kerensky later characterized as

setting forth a number of measures, the vast majority of which were quite acceptable, but they were set down in such form and with such arguments that the publication of the memorandum would have led to unfavorable results.²⁸

During his second visit to Petrograd (August 23) Kornilov's relations with Kerensky had so much deteriorated that the C-in-C took with him guards armed with two machine-guns lest Kerensky attempt to arrest him. This time, Kornilov presented Kerensky the memorandum, revised and softened in its phrasing by Filolenko, but new proposals were inserted concerning the militarization of the railroads and the war industries.

The triumver (Kerensky, Nekrasov and Tereschenko) discussed the memorandum and decided that the first draft was 'better' than the second. However, the decision adopted by the Cabinet, even after the pressure exerted by the Cadet Minister Kokoshkin, was indefinite:

To recognize in principle the possibility of applying various measures, including the death penalty in the rear, but to carry them out only after the discussion in legislative order of each concrete measure, according to the circumstances of time and place.²⁹

Kornilov returned to the Stavka disgusted by the wavering Kerensky. At the Stavka, the C-in-C explained to his Chief of Staff, Lukomsky, why he had ordered the Third Cavalry Corps and the Savage Division in a way as to be able to strike a blow at Petrograd and Moscow. The Supreme Commander said:

28. Chamberlin, *op. cit.*, p. 196.

29. Quoted in *Ibid.*, p. 199.

It's time to hang the German supporters and spies with Lenin at their head, and to disperse the Soviet of Workers' and Soldiers' Deputies so that it would never reassemble. I am shifting the cavalry corps mainly so as to bring it up to Petrograd by the end of August [August 27, Old Style, was the six-month 'anniversary' of the March Revolution] and, if a demonstration of the Bolsheviks takes place, to deal with these traitors as they deserve. I want to commit the leadership of this operation to General Krimov³⁰ I am convinced that he will not hesitate, in case of necessity, to hang every member of the Soviet.³¹

However, Kornilov told his Chief of Staff that he did not intend to go against the Provisional Government but was striving to act in agreement with it, although, failing to achieve that, he would strike the Bolsheviks on his own account. "I want nothing for myself," concluded the Supreme Commander. "I only want to save Russia and I will obey unconditionally a cleansed and strengthened Provisional Government."³²

On August 21, with the convocation of the Conference of Public Workers, Rodzianko sent a telegram to Kornilov, expressing in the name of the Conference his agreement with the afore-mentioned resolutions of the central committees of military organizations. This Conference included the President and many members of the Duma, members of the former Imperial Council, members of the nobility, of the industrial and financial aristocracy, and spokesmen of the academic and the journalistic worlds, in addition to two former Supreme Commanders of the army, Alexeiev and Brussilov.³³ The backing of these personalities was calculated to enhance Kornilov's prestige at the forthcoming Moscow State Conference.

30. The same Krymov who offered the Government in April to 'cleanse' Petrograd in two days.

31. Chamberlin, op. cit., p. 199.

32. Ibid., p. 200.

33. Kerensky, op. cit., p. 314.

The Government decided to convoke an All-Russian State Conference in Moscow right after the resignation of Prince Lvov, in order to get support and to strengthen its position and achieve some measure of stability in the country. The Government also hoped to get an idea of the political forces within the nation and the power of each.

The Moscow Conference opened on August 25, at the Bolshoy Theater. All elements were represented except a few arch-reactionaries and the Bolsheviks. The right side of the Theater was occupied by representatives of the bourgeoisie and the officer caste, while peasants, workmen, soldiers, and representatives of the Soviet sat on the left side. Among the 2414 delegates, 488 were from members of the four Dumas, 313 from the co-operatives, 176 from trade-unions, 150 from commercial and industrial organizations and banks, 147 from municipalities, 129 from the Ex. Com. of the United Soviets of Workers' and Soldiers' and peasants' Deputies, 117 from the army and the navy and 300 from the Soviets of Workers and of Peasants' Deputies, each receiving 100 places.³⁴

The Bolsheviks, who were not at the Conference, nevertheless made themselves felt. On the opening day of the Conference a strike of several hundred thousand workers was initiated and successfully carried on by the Bolsheviks, despite the fact that the Moscow Soviet voted^h had voted against such a strike.³⁵

Kerensky opened the State Conference with a typical dramatic speech:

34. Chamberlin, *op. cit.*, p. 200.

35. See *Ibid.*, p. 201; and Trotsky, *La Revolution Russe*, vol. II, p. 201.

Let all those who already once attempted to raise armed hands against the people's power know that such an attempt will be crushed with iron and blood. Still more let those plotters beware who think the time has come to overthrow the revolutionary government, relying on bayonets.... Here, in attempts at open attacks or hidden plots is the limit of our patience. And anyone who transgresses that limit will meet a power which in its repressive measures will make the criminals remember what was under the old autocracy.³⁶

But these brave words were ephemeral since they did not command obedience through action.

On the 26, General Kornilov arrived with his guard to Moscow so that, says Miliukov, he would enter into an open fight with Kerensky if the latter tried to dismiss him.³⁷ Likewise, Kerensky later wrote that the Rightist conspirators planned to proclaim Kornilov dictator at Moscow had circumstances proved favourable during the course of the Conference.³⁸ These two statements demonstrate the mutual rivalry between Kornilov and Kerensky, a rivalry which dominated the Moscow Conference and the political arena for some time.

General Kornilov was received in Moscow with great pomp and ceremony, and a guard of honour drawn from the military schools of the city lined up at the station where the Supreme Commander was met with bands playing and banners flying. The entire élite of the old capital was at the station to meet him. Then, following the old Tzarist custom, Kornilov went straight from the station to the Kremlin to pray at the shrine of the Iversk Madonna. He then returned to his railway carriage where various delegations and deputations visited him, and even reports were submitted to him about the various aspects of the general condition of Russia.

36. Quoted in Chamberlin, op. cit., pp. 202-203.

37. Milioukov, op. cit., p. 1281.

38. Kerensky, op. cit., p. 313.

The Conference only served to accentuate the split between the Right and the Left in Russia. When a speaker was applauded by the Right, he was hissed by the Left and vice versa. General Kaledin, Ataman of the Don Cossaks and outspoken Rightist, said that "all Soviets and committees must be abolished, both in the army and in the rear."³⁹ As expected, the General was met with approval from the Right and with hisses and protests from the Left.

When Kornilov appeared at the Conference, the entire Right sprang up to its feet and greeted him with deafening applause, while the Leftists kept their seats and some of them even hissed to the C-in-C. In his speech, Kornilov demanded the imposition of rigorous disciplinary measures at the front and the establishment of the death penalty in the rear. Kornilov did not attack the Government directly and he said that he was not against army committees, but merely demanded the restraint of the powers of these committees, including their exclusion from meddling in operative affairs.

On the last day of the Conference (August 28) there occurred a 'touching' scene when Tseretelli, chief spokesman of the Left, and Bublikov, a leading representative of industrial and financial Russia, shook hands on the stage of the Bolshoy Theater, signifying an armistice between capital and labour. A fleeting though dramatic gesture.

Kerensky's closing speech was more typical of a third rate poet who would sometimes rise to certain melodramatic heights, rather than an experienced and disciplined statesman: "Let my heart become stone," bragged the man hysterically, "let all the strings of faith in man perish, let all the flowers and wreaths of man dry up...."

39, Chamberlin, op. cit., p. 204.

I shall throw far asay the keys of my heart, which love
men, I will think only of the state,⁴⁰

A woman's cry intensified the sentimental pathos: "You cannot do that; your heart will not permit it."⁴¹

The Premier was in such a state of nervousness and exhaustion and lack of self-possession that he had to be applauded into stopping his rambling speech. He then started to walk off the stage and had to be reminded to return and officially end the Conference.

As we have already mentioned, the State Conference only served to accentuate the differences between the Right and the Left. As for the representatives, they were doomed men who wrangled in vain as in the streets and among the masses the Bolsheviki rang the shrill notes of doom.

After the State Conference, the Rightists were determined to carry on a coup d'etat. Buchanan, who had many links in 'distinguished' circles, tells us that many Rightists were optimistic towards the end of August, since they believed in the success of the proposed coup, and they believed that the Government and the Soviet would capitulate without struggle.⁴² A Russian bank director even told the British Ambassador on September 5, that the troops would begin moving on the 8, and he even asked Buchanan to put the British armoured cars at the disposal of the would-be rebels, a request which the Ambassador turned down.⁴³

The details of the negotiations between Kornilov and Kerensky immediately preceding the General's mutiny have been the object of much dispute and mutilation. There is no doubt that Kornilov's revolt was not an urge

40. Quoted in Ibid., p. 205.

41. Quoted in loc. cit.

42. Buchanan, op. cit., p. 175.

43. Ibid., pp. 175-176.

of the moment but a carefully planned march supposed to coincide with Bolshevik or even Soviet demonstrations in Petrograd, in protest against the stern measures applied to the army by the new C-in-C and commemorating the lapse of six months since the March popular upheaval. As early as September 3, Quartermaster-General Romanovsky, one of the main plotters, signed an order for the distribution of hand grenades to the three cavalry units which later marched on Petrograd. The hand grenades were much more useful for street fighting than for trench warfare against the Germans. Other orders were also given for the provision of a ten-day food supply for these troops. While these three units were to move from the South, the Fifth Caucasian Cavalry Division was to move on Petrograd from the north. A definite date for the operation was set "as soon as news is received about the beginning of disorders in Petrograd and not later than the morning of September 14."⁴⁴

Early in September, Kornilov asked that the troops of the Petrograd garrison be subordinated to him instead of the Provisional Government, but his request was not granted. On September 5, Kerensky sent out the Assistant War Minister Savinkov to the Stavka, with instructions to ask Kornilov, among other things,⁴⁵ to send troops to Petrograd to defend the Government from any attack, especially from the side of the Bolsheviks. Kerensky ordered Savinkov to tell Kornilov that while he was at liberty to pick the troops to be sent to the capital, yet he was under no circumstance to send the troops under General Krymov, or to include the Savage Division. These demands of Kerensky were motivated by information he received to the effect that Krymov and many

44. Quoted in Chamberlin, *op. cit.*, p. 206.

45. For Kerensky's other demands see *Ibid.*, p. 208.

officers of the Savage Division were part of the hatching Rightist conspiracy. On September 6, Kornilov promised Savinkov to comply with the Premier's instructions⁴⁶ but in reality changed nothing of his plans.

On September 7, in a secret order, General Kornilov placed Krymov in command of the Savage Division which immediately moved towards Petrograd. In his order to the troops, Krymov said that a Bolshevik uprising had broken out in Petrograd and that the troops were going to the aid of the Government.⁴⁷

The more ambiguous part of the negotiations between Kerensky and Kornilov were those carried out through the intermediary of V.L.Lvov, Procurator of the Holy Synod in the first revolutionary government. During these negotiations Lvov presented himself to Kornilov as the official envoy of Kerensky and to Kerensky as the official envoy of the C-in-C, although later both men denied that they had charged him with any mission.⁴⁸ On September 8, Lvov presented himself to Kerensky with what sounded like an ultimatum from Kornilov. Kerensky, acting on his lawyer's instinct, hid an officer in the corner of his room to hear and later to testify on Lvov's words, and he also asked Lvov to write down Kornilov's 'ultimatum', article by article. Thereupon, Lvov wrote Kornilov's message:

1. Proclamation of martial law in Petrograd,
2. Immediate resignation of the Government.
3. My [departure] the same night, together with Savinkoff, for General Headquarters, where we were to put ourselves at Kornilov's disposal.⁴⁹

Formerly, Lvov had spoken to Kerensky and afterwards went to see Kornilov. According to Buchanan, Lvov offered, on Kerensky's instructions, three courses of action to the C-in-C, any of them bound to create a strong

46. Kerensky, op. cit., p. 318.

47. loc. cit.

48. see Denikin, op. cit., p. 321, for Kornilov's Order of September 11.

49. Kerensky's paraphrase. In Kerensky, op. cit., p. 319.

government with Kornilov and his military power at its axis.⁵⁰ Kerensky admits that he had spoken to Lvov before the latter's voyage to the Stavka, but denied that he charged him with any mission.⁵¹ Then Lvov returned from the Stavka with the demands of Kornilov which we have discussed earlier and which were considered as an ultimatum by Kerensky.

On the late evening of the 8, Kerensky phoned Kornilov. Kerensky claims that he questioned the General and got sure that the ultimatum was truly sent from him. But in his account of the revolution, the Premier is careful not to write anything of the details or even of the broad lines of the conversation. Then Kerensky: "Am I to come to General Headquarters?" and Kornilov replied: "You, and with Savinkoff."⁵²

It is most probable that Kerensky assured the politically inexperienced Kornilov, at least by double-meaning speech, that he would back him. And the General, confident in the support of the Government, spent his night imperturbed.

Meanwhile Kerensky had learned that Krymov was advancing on Petrograd at the head of the Savage Division. It seemed clear to the Premier that the troops were not only come to aid him crush the Bolsheviks but also to end his 'regime'. He had tried to use the extreme Right against the extreme Left but now was double-crossed, a victim of his own double-crossing.

Kerensky discussed the situation with Nekrasov and Savinkov and rejected the latter's plea for direct

50. For these three courses, only mentioned by Buchanan, see Buchanan, op. cit., p. 177.

51. Ibid., p. 179.

52. Quoted in Kerensky, op. cit., p. 319.

negotiations with the C-in-C. He then asked the advice of the military experts about ways of resisting Kornilov.

At about 4 P.M. on the 9, Kerensky convoked a Cabinet session and explained the situation to the astounded ministers who thereupon conferred on the Premier unlimited power to deal with the crisis and offered their resignations. The Cadet Ministers followed up their negotiations by staying away from their offices till the crisis was over. As for the other ministers, they continued to carry on their functions as directors of their respective departments.⁵³

Immediately after this session, Kerensky sent the following wire to Kornilov:

I order you immediately to turn over your office to General Lukomsky who is to take over temporarily the duties of Commander-in-chief. You are instructed immediately to come to Petrograd.⁵⁴

This curt telegram of dismissal was a surprise to Kornilov who immediately decided to remain at his post. As for Lukomsky, he refused to assume the Supreme Command, though temporarily. The Chief of Staff sent a telegram to Kerensky telling him that "for the sake of Russia's salvation you must go with General Kornilov, and not against him."⁵⁵ But Jove was already balancing the pans.

Kerensky issued orders stopping all troop movements towards Petrograd, but Kornilov countermanded these orders and instructed the cavalry units to proceed to the capital as planned. Miliukov tells us that the troops had orders to annihilate the Soviet and even to kill its most important members.⁵⁶

53. Chamberlin, op. cit., p. 212.

54. Quoted in loc. cit.

55. Quoted in Ibid., p. 213.

56. Milioukov, op. cit., p. 1282.

At the capital, the power of Kornilov was greatly over-estimated. On September 10, the ambassadors of the Allied Powers resolved to offer their good offices as mediators, in order to avert a possible civil war, but they received only thanks for their offer. Even as late as the evening of the 10th, Miliukov suggested that Kerensky resign in favour of General Alexeiev to whom Kornilov would almost surely submit. Even Tereschenko suggested that "both Kerensky and Kornilov should obtain satisfaction at the price of mutual sacrifices."⁵⁷ Nekrasov advised the Premier to retire. But Kerensky received moral re-inforcement and decided to continue the fight when a delegation of the Soviet asked him not to compromise with Kornilov, but to firmly crush the revolt.

The four C-in-Cs of the European front supported Kornilov, but their support was only moral since none of them was able to despatch troops to the General's aid. As for Petrograd, Kornilov supposed that he could count there on two conservative societies, 'The Union of Military Duty' and 'The Republican Center'. These took their strength very seriously and believed that they would be able to provoke and to quell Bolshevik disturbances, and "to seize armoured automobiles, to arrest the Provisional Government, to arrest and execute the more prominent and influential members of the Soviet."⁵⁸ But when Kornilov's troops lingered on their way to the capital, most of the leaders of these Rightist societies virtually evaporated, usually taking with them the funds of their organizations.⁵⁹

57. Quoted in Chamberlin, op. cit., p. 216.

58. Quoted in Ibid., p. 207.

59. For the 'evaporation' of the Rightists at Petrograd see Trotsky, La Révolution Russe, vol. II, pp. 211-12.

Kerensky demanded the aid of the Soviet, and the latter, as we saw, insisted that he crush the rebellion. Then the Soviet majority made their peace with the Bolsheviks so as to be able to effectively fight counter-revolution.

Following a proposal by the Menshevik Weinstein, a "Committee for the Struggle with Counter-revolution" was formed. It consisted of three Bolsheviks, three Mensheviks, three SRs, five representatives of the Vtsik and the Executive Committee of the Peasants' Deputies Soviet, and two representatives each from the trade-unions and the Petrograd Soviet.⁶⁰

The Bolsheviks accepted to co-operate, and their policy was, as Lenin said: "We will fight with Kornilov, but will not support Kerensky."⁶¹

The Bolsheviks secured the acceptance of the Committee for the formation of an armed workers' militia. This was little more than the legalization of the Red Guard which had gone underground after the July Days. This militia was furnished with rifles and machine-guns.⁶² Kerensky also called on the Kronstadt sailors to rally to the defense of the Government. The sailors sent a delegation to the Fortress where Trotsky, Raskolnikov and other prominent Bolsheviks were imprisoned. "Is it not time to arrest the Government?" asked the sailors. But Trotsky and his comrades replied: "Not yet. Put the gun on the shoulder of Kerensky and shoot on Kornilov. Later, we will settle accounts with Kerensky."⁶³ Following this, the Cronstadders prepared to defend the capital, and the Aurora entered the Neva to protect Kerensky and the Winter Palace!⁶⁴

60. Chamberlin, op. cit., p. 217; see also Trotsky, La Revolution Russe, vol. II, p. 208.

61. Quoted in Chamberlin, op. cit., p. 217.

62. For the arming of the Red Guards see Trotsky, La Revolution Russe, vol. II, p. 215.

63. Quoted in Ibid., p. 219; also see Deutscher, The Prophet Armed, p. 281.

64. Trotsky, La Revolution Russe, vol. II, p. 218.

As for the Petrograd garrison, it declared itself with the Government. And Kerensky, who was trying to keep a balance between the Right and the Left, appointed the Rightists Savinkov and Filonenko as Military Governor of Petrograd and his assistant, respectively.

Meanwhile, the troops of Kornilov were advancing on Petrograd, but the operation was badly carried and the troops were ill-prepared, for instance the **Savage Division**, which consisted of 1350 horsemen, was short of 600 rifles, 1000 lances and 500 spears. In addition, the units carried no field telegraph apparatus to enable them to contact with each other and with the Stavka.⁶⁴ Topping all this, Kornilov failed to take the field himself, because, according to one source, he was "suffering from a severe **attack of fever.**"⁶⁵

Communication workers alone created havoc in the ranks of the mutinous troops. Railroad workers refused to co-operate and delayed the despatch of trains which were to carry the troops. At many points, the railroads were even destroyed. As for the telegraph operators, they refused to transmit the messages of the officers. And worse of all, Leftist propagandists gathered around the troops at every station and explained to them that they were not sent to crush the Bolsheviks, but the Soviet and the legal Government.⁶⁶

Soon, the troops became desperately dispersed and in no condition or mood to fight their way into Petrograd over corpses. On September 11, the failure of the mutiny became a fact and the following day, General Krymov was arrested and brought to Petrograd where, after a private interview with Kerensky, the General committed suicide.

65. Chamberlin, *op. cit.*, p. 218.

66. Florinsky, *Russia*, vol. II, p. 1440.

67. For the sabotage of communications see Trotsky, *La Revolution Russe*, vol. II, p. 224; and for Krymov's march and the defence of the revolution see Sukhanov, *op. cit.*, pp. 509-513.

On September 12, Kerensky assumed the Supreme Command of the army and appointed Alexeiev as his Chief of Staff. Alexeiev accepted office to make the liquidation of the abortive coup as easy as possible for the participants. On September 14, Kornilov and other generals were arrested and preparations started for their trial.

Thus ended the Kornilov coup which was perhaps favoured by the Allies⁶⁸ but which was a suicidal move. Following this coup the officers lost the little authority they had hitherto possessed, and discipline in the army broke down once and for all. Stankevitch describes the situation in the army after the fall of Kornilov:

The authority of the commanders was destroyed once for all. The masses of soldiers, seeing how a General, Commander-in-chief, had gone against the Revolution, felt themselves surrounded by treason on all sides and saw in every man who wore epaulettes a traitor. And whoever tried to argue against this feeling also seemed a traitor.⁶⁹

The great significance of the **failure** of the Kornilov coup is that it ended the period of anti-Bolshevik reaction, sharply turned the masses to the Left, and paralysed the Right. It also cut the last cord between Kerensky and the officers and the Rightists, thus isolating the Premier from the Right. This coup also caused the distribution of arms to the Red Guard, arms which would soon be used in the November Revolution.

68. See Kerensky, op. cit., p. 315.

69. Quoted in Chamberlin, op. cit., pp. 236-237.

CHAPTER VIII

The Bolsheviki from July to October-
The Democratic Conference-
The Agrarian Problem-
The Pre-Parliament

After the July Days, the Bolshevik leaders (except Stalin) were either imprisoned or went underground.

The Bolsheviks held their Sixth Party Congress at Petrograd from August 8 to the 16th. The Congress was held in semi-illegality and often changed its meeting place to avoid the surveillance of the Government agents. It was presided over by Svédlov and the main political reports were presented by Stalin and Bucharin, but it was Lenin who guided the Congress with his pamphlet "On the Slogans," in which he argued for the withdrawal of the slogan "All Power to the Soviet" since the bourgeoisie had shown its determination to fight and since the existing Soviets were tools of the bourgeoisie. However, Lenin also said that the time was not yet ripe for an armed Bolshevik uprising in the immediate future.

The representatives of 200,000 workers took part in the Congress, in contrast with the membership of 80,000 in the Bolshevik Party in April.¹ The following are the important portions of the resolution:

The Soviets live through a painful agony, disintegrating as a result of the fact that they did not take all the state powers into their hands at the right time...

At the present time peaceful development and the painless passing of power to the Soviets have become impossible, because power has already in fact passed into the hands of the counterrevolutionary bourgeoisie.

1. Chamberlin, op. cit., p. 186. In Deutscher, Stalin, p.153, it is mentioned that representatives of 240,000 workers attended the Congress. Trotsky, in La Revolution Russe, vol. II, p. 286, states that there were 175 delegations, representing 112 organizations consisting of 176,750 members.

The correct slogan at the present time can only be the complete liquidation of the dictatorship of the counterrevolutionary bourgeoisie. Only the revolutionary proletariat, on condition that it is supported by the poorest peasantry, has the power to fulfil this task.²

As Trotsky later pointed, Lenin's theory of the ending of the dual power in July was "to say the least, inaccurate."³ For why would the military clique make a bid for power in September when they had already seized it in July?

At this Congress, the Mezhrayonka, some 4,000 strong, officially joined the Congress.⁴ Shortly afterwards Trotsky, though still in prison, was elected to the Central Committee of the Bolshevik Party.

The anti-Bolshevik reaction following the July Days scarcely touched the provinces, and by the time of the Moscow State Conference the workers of the two capitals were again returning to the Bolsheviks. By that time, the workers' section of the Petrograd Soviet had set up a separate Praesidium with a Bolshevik majority.⁵ Furthermore, the Second Conference of Factory Committees which opened at Smolny on August 20, was predominantly Bolshevik in composition.⁶

As for the front, the military situation of Russia was extremely precarious. On August 31, the Germans launched an attack on the northern part of the Russian front and a few days later they occupied Riga and became in a position to threaten Petrograd.⁷ On September 3, the Provisional Government made the following decisions:

2. Quoted in Chamberlin, op. cit., p. 186.

3. Quoted in Florinsky, Russia, vol. II, p. 1444.

4. Carr, op. cit., p. 91.

5. Sukhanov, op. cit., pp. 491-492.

6. Ibid., p. 492.

7. For some military details of the German attack on Riga see Ludendorff, op. cit., pp. 506-507.

1. To begin preparations for the government's removal to Moscow,

2. To transfer the troops of the Petrograd military district to the direct jurisdiction of the C-in-c,

3. To create a separate military area, consisting of Petrograd and its environs, under the jurisdiction of the Provisional Government,

4. To bring from the front a detachment of reliable troops, to be placed at the government's disposal.⁸

The transfer of the Provisional Government to Moscow was to take place at the end of November.

The first article of the above decision of the Government was partly due to the fear of the fall of Petrograd, by it was principally motivated by the belief that Moscow was a less revolutionary city and that the Government would be more secure there than in the capital. The last three articles were supposed to strengthen the Government against the Right and the Left opposition.

As the Government began preparations for leaving Petrograd, the Bolsheviki (and the whole Left) started a fierce campaign against it, accusing it of an anti-revolutionary plot designed to destroy the Soviet and the revolution. The commanders of the army were blamed for the defeat at Riga and they were sometimes even accused of outright treachery. The Bolsheviki assumed a defensist attitude and called on the workers to defend Petrograd, the head of the revolution and not of the Empire. The moderate socialists also clung to their defensist attitude.

The German threat to Petrograd continued throughout September and October, and many Rightists wanted the German armies to re-establish "order and law" in Petrograd, this being publicly stated by Rodzianko,⁹ although perhaps in a moment of desperation.

Meanwhile, the Bolsheviki had taken control of the Soviet and on October 19, Trotsky, now president of the Soviet,

8. Kerensky, *op. cit.*, p. 317.

9. Deutscher, *The Prophet Armed*, p. 296.

put forward the following proposal to the soldiers' section of the Soviet in the presence of delegates from all regiments in Petrograd:

If the Provisional Government is incapable of defending Petrograd, then it ought either to conclude peace or to make room for another government. The transfer of the government to Moscow would be a desertion from a responsible battle position.¹⁰

On October 20, Trotsky spoke on the platform of the pre-Parliament. "The idea of surrendering the revolutionary capital to the German troops," he said, "was a natural link in a general policy designed to promote... counter-revolutionary conspiracy."¹¹

Kerensky denied, in October, that the Government planned to surrender Petrograd and he was preparing for a redistribution of the army by means of which troops would be sent from Petrograd to the front, the real object of this move not being the avowed purpose of defending the capital but of ridding it of the most revolutionary and most Bolshevik infiltrated units. Trotsky had to frustrate this design so he claimed, not untruly, that the departure of troops from Petrograd would expose the capital to a German invasion; To stop this shifting of troops the capital's garrison had to be put under Soviet control and for this purpose the "Committee for the Struggle against Counter-revolution" was resuscitated, under the name of "The Military Revolutionary Committee" (from now on referred to as M.R.C.).

On September 2, when the Rightists thought that they had mustered enough forces to enable them to attempt a coup d'état in the following days, elections (which we have already mentioned) for the Petrograd Town Council were held.

10. Quoted in Ibid., pp. 296-297.

11. Quoted in Ibid., p. 297.

The SRs, who had had a majority in the May elections, got only 37% of the votes, while the Cadets got only 20%. But the real victors of the day were the Bolsheviks who got 33% of the votes, with a majority in the working-class Vyborg District.¹²

Then came the Kornilov coup, and the afore-mentioned creation in the Soviet of the "Committee for Struggle against Counter-revolution." The Bolsheviks were by that time the most influential group in the working-class districts and the only one which commanded a following of any discipline. Were it not for them, the Committee for Struggle would have been helpless. Kerensky tried to disarm the Red Guards after the defeat of Kornilov, but he was unable to perform such a task.

After the Kornilov Affair, the non-Bolshevik Soviet groups drifted to the Left. The Internationalist Mensheviks who controlled the Petrograd Menshevik Organization, began demanding from their leader Martov to split from the Rightist majority of the Party. But Martov did not split and many important Left Menshevik leaders and organizations turned Bolshevik.¹³

Immediately after the failure of Kornilov, Lenin proposed a compromise to the SR-Menshevik Bloc. Lenin proposed that the socialists drive out the bourgeoisie and set a regime fully responsible to the Soviet. The Bolsheviks, Lenin said, would not oppose this, if complete freedom of agitation was guaranteed and if all power was transferred to the local Soviets. Lenin hoped to get a majority in the forthcoming Congress of Soviets, and if the compromise was accepted, then he might reach power bloodlessly. But the

12. Sukhanov, *op. cit.*, p. 497.

13. *Ibid.*, pp. 523-524.

SR-Menshevik majority refused this compromise. The text of the compromise, written by Lenin in Finland on September 14, appeared in Pravda on the 19 (after the Bolshevik seizure of the Soviet) with a postscript containing the following passage:

Perhaps the offer of a compromise is already too late. Perhaps the few days in which a peaceful development was still possible are also over. Yes, it is evident by all the signs that they are already past.¹⁴

On September 14, the Petrograd Soviet passed for the first time a Bolshevik resolution, calling for the exclusion from power not only of the Cadets but of all the bourgeoisie, the creation of a proletarian government which would propose peace, the publishing of secret treaties, the abolishment of landed property and of the death penalty at the front, and the guarantee of the liberty of propaganda among the soldiers, and other things.¹⁵ However, the attendance at his session was thin (279 against 115 votes with 51 abstentions¹⁶) and a more decisive trial of strength took place on the 22nd. Trotsky, who had been released on the 17th, hit on a very clever idea: He told the Soviet that Kerensky was still formally a member of the Praesidium, and he introduced into the voting the element of confidence or lack of confidence in the Premier. The Bolsheviks won by 519 against 414 votes, with 67 abstentions.¹⁷ At this session, the Mensheviks and SRs in the Praesidium offered their resignation, after a vote of no confidence in them was successfully carried through the Soviet.

Shortly afterwards, the Moscow and other Soviets turned Bolshevik. Kerensky, seeing the danger of the Left,

14. Quoted in Carr, op. cit., p. 92.

15. Milioukov, op. cit., pp. 1284-1285.

16. Chamberlin, op. cit., p. 277.

17. Ibid., pp. 277-278.

concentrated the Fifth Caucasian Cavalry Division, under Krasnov, near Petrograd. This Krasnov was a Kornilovite who had been supposed, at the time of the Kornilov Affair, to attack Petrograd from the north, but he was paralysed by Krymov's failure. In addition to this, Kerensky, who was making negotiations for the creation of a new government to succeed the one that had resigned on September 9, made desperate efforts to include the Cadets in his government. Would the Rightista be able (and willing) to effectually support the Premier against the Left?

On October 6, Trotsky was elected President of the Petrograd Soviet. In his presidential address he called for Kerensky's resignation and for the assumption of all power by the Soviet. He also argued against the Mensheviks and SRs "as trenchantly as ever, but without ill-feeling, without a trace of the craving for revenge which might have been expected from a leader of a party so recently proscribed."¹⁸ A new Ex. Com. was elected about 2/3 of its members being Bolsheviks, with five seats for the Mensheviks¹⁹ and the rest for other parties. In the Praesidium also, all parties were represented according to their Soviet strength. Whether this was merely a legal stratagem or a display of respect for the rights of minorities, it is difficult to tell. Perhaps the two factors were present. However, Trotsky very well knew that a few moderates in the Praesidium could not fetter him.

During this period, Lenin, who was still in hiding, returned to his old slogan "All Power to the Soviets." Towards the end of September, Lenin sent two secret letters to the Central Committee, declaring that the time was ripe for a Bolshevik seizure of power by armed insurrection:

18. Deutscher, The Prophet Armed, p. 287.

19. Sukhanov, op. cit., p. 529.

Having obtained a majority in the Soviets of Workers' and Soldiers' Deputies in the two capital cities the can and must take power.... The majority of the people is for us.... The Bolshevik government alone will satisfy the peasantry.... Why should power be taken by the Bolsheviks now? Because the impending surrender of Petrograd would reduce our chances a hundredfold. And we can not prevent the surrender of Petrograd while the army is headed by Kerensky and Company. One can not 'wait' for the Constituent Assembly.... Our party alone, by taking power, will assure the convocation of the Constituent Assembly.... Separate peace between the British and the German imperialists can and must be prevented only by rapid action.... The issue would be made clear to the party: to put on the order of the day armed insurrection in Petrograd and Moscow.... By taking power simultaneously in Moscow and Petrograd we shall win unconditionally and indubitably.²⁰

Trotsky agreed with Lenin that the time was ripe for a Bolshevik insurrection, but while Lenin held that the coup ought to be done by the Bolsheviks in their own name and independently of the Soviet and as soon as possible lest a new Kornilov appear, Trotsky believed that the Party should take power through the Soviet and carry on the slogan "All Power to the Soviets" to its logical conclusion. Seizing power in the name of the Soviet would greatly strengthen the coup and give it backing throughout the country. As for the time of the seizure of power, Trotsky believed that it ought almost to coincide with the opening of the Second Congress of Soviets to which the Bolsheviks would give the seized power, thus garbing their actions with an apparel of legality.

But many Bolsheviks disagreed with Lenin and Trotsky about the wisdom of an imminent insurrection, and their opposition became more pronounced as the moment of the insurrection approached. Lenin, at the time, "had unbounded faith that the masses would and could complete the

20. Quoted in Fiorinsky, Russia, vol. II, p. 1444.

revolution, but he had not the same conviction in regard to the party staff."²¹ So in the early part of October, Lenin moved from Helsingfors to the Vyborg District to be nearer the field of action. Then, seeing the hesitation of the Party leaders, he sent in his resignation to the Central Committee in order to regain his freedom of agitation among the lower strata of the Party, "for it is my profound conviction that if we 'wait' for the Congress of Soviets and let slip the present moment, we shall ruin the revolution."²²

This was due to the fact that the Central Executive of the Soviet (Vtsik), which was elected by the First All-Russian Congress of Soviets, had alone the power to convoke a new Congress. But it had a Menshevik-SR majority which, perceiving the popularity of the Bolsheviks among the masses, was trying hard to postpone the Second Congress in the hope that the masses would turn away from the Bolsheviks. If the Bolsheviks kept postponing the date of their insurrection to coincide with that of the Congress, then they might have well lost the opportunity.

The Mensheviks and SRs and other moderate socialists, seeing that they were losing ground in the Soviets of the two capitals, tried to rally outside these bodies in a conference that would have nation-wide representation. Thus they called for a 'Democratic Conference' to meet at Petrograd on September 27. This was by no means a representative assembly but an assortment of delegations from non-political institutions, calculated to have an anti-Bolshevik majority.²³

In spite of the fact that the members of the Democratic Conference were all socialists (at least theoretically), they were unable to decide upon one course of action or on whether

21. Trotsky, Lenin, p. 86.

22. Quoted in Carr, op. cit., p. 94.

23. Deutscher, The Prophet Armed, p. 238.

the new government should be a coalition or should only include socialists. The Conference at first voted in favour of a coalition, then against it, and then against the exclusion of the Cadets from the government.²⁴

Trotsky appeared at the Democratic Conference as the chief Bolshevik spokesman. He said nothing new, but outlined the Bolshevik policy, fiercely attacked the Cadets for their alleged participation in the Kornilov coup, demanded the arming of the Red Guard to defend the revolution from the enemy within and without, and ended by denouncing the Democratic Conference as unrepresentative and leading the Bolshevik delegates out of the Conference.²⁵

It was at this Conference that a young sailor shook his fist at Kerensky and called him "the sorrow of the motherland."²⁶ The Conference closed on October 4, after having adopted a resolution for the formation of a Council of the Republic (pre-Parliament) which would include representatives of propertied groups and other organizations not represented in the Democratic Conference. This council would act as a consultative and deliberative body and was to stay till the meeting of the Constituent Assembly.

Now let us return to Kerensky and the Provisional Government. We have seen that a governmental crisis was in full swing since the resignation, on September 9, of the whole Cabinet in order to give Kerensky unlimited powers to deal with the rebellion. Shortly afterwards, Kerensky set a Directory of five to negotiate with the different parties the formation of a new government. The Premier badly needed the support of the bourgeoisie, and the moderate socialists also agreed with him that a coalition government should be

24. See Chamberlin, op. cit., p. 282.

25. For more details of Trotsky's speech see Deutscher, op. cit., pp. 284-286.

26. Quoted in Chamberlin, op. cit., p. 281.

created. So when the Bolshevik Soviet passed resolutions against a coalition, Kerensky and the moderate socialists from the Democratic Conference. But as we have seen, the Conference was unable to take a decision, and Kerensky continued his negotiations until October 7, when a government was finally formed. It included ten socialist and six non-socialist ministers.²⁷ The formation of this Third Coalition Government was followed, on October 19, by the burial of the long-deceased, perhaps even still-born Duma.

By this time, disturbances in the country-side were becoming more frequent and more violent than before. To see the matter in perspective let us pass quickly over the agrarian problem before July and then study the disturbances and the measures taken after July.

At the beginning of the revolution, the peasants were cautious and were still afraid of the Provisional Government, but they became aggressive as they realized the Government's weakness and as they became infiltrated by Leftist propaganda - mainly through the arrival of semi-indoctrinated deserters from the front. The murder of the gentry and the destruction of their homes was the exception in the spring but became quiet common in the autumn.

Early in the revolution a Main Land Committee was established in Petrograd with branches in the country-side to submit a land program to the Constituent Assembly. But this Committee contained from Bolsheviks to landowners and it is not surprising therefore that nothing came out of it.

In the Congress of Peasants' Deputies which was held in Petrograd towards the end of May, the SRs had 537 out of a total of 1115 delegates, while the Bolsheviks had only fourteen.²⁸

27. Florinsky, op. cit., vol. II, p. 1442.

28. Chamberlin, op. cit., p. 248.

The following Nakaz, or resolution, based on two hundred and forty-two resolutions adopted at peasant gatherings, was presented to the Congress - and passed by it - and later served as a basis for the land law adopted by the Soviet after its assumption of power. The following were some important points of the Nakaz:

The right of private property in land is abolished forever; land can neither be sold nor bought nor leased nor pledged nor alienated in any way. All land ... is taken over without compensation as the property of the whole people and passes over to the use of those who work on it.... The right of using the land is enjoyed by all citizens (without distinction of sex) of the Russian state who desire to cultivate it with their own labor, with the help of their family, or in a cooperative group, and only so long as they are able to cultivate it. Hired labor is not permitted.²⁹

Peasant outbreaks became more frequent in July and most violent in September and October. Of the 930 reported cases of the seizure of estates, 686 occurred from July to October, and of the 350 reported cases of plunder of manor houses, 271 took place in September and October.³⁰ Beginning with August, the Government tried to create an illusion of strength in the country-side and arrested many members of the land committees who were spreading disorder. The Government even sent troops to the country-side, but these failed to restore order, the soldiers sometimes even joining the rebellious peasants. Moreover, the peasant risings were becoming more violent and more disorganized.

An impetus was given to the arrival, in the autumn, of self-demobilized troops, many of whom had deserted after the July defeat and after the failure of the Kornilov coup.

29. Quoted in loc. cit.

30. Florinsky, op. cit., p. 1417.

These soldiers brought with them, in addition to a smattering of agitation, a habit for violence.

In a pamphlet printed in September 1917, Lenin demanded the nationalization of all land. The central state power would then

fix the size, etc., of the migration fund, pass legislation for the conservation of forests, for land improvement etc., and absolutely prohibit any middlemen to interpose themselves between the owner of the land, i.e., the state, and the tenant, i.e., the tiller (prohibit all subletting of land). However, the disposal of the land, the determination of the local regulations governing ownership and tenure of land, must in no case be placed in the hands of bureaucrats and officials, but exclusively in the hands of the regional and local Soviets of Peasants' Deputies.³¹

Meanwhile, the food crisis had become acute and not only the poor suffered from it, but also the well-to-do. Professor Sorokin, member of the Soviet and secretary of Kerensky, states that his wife and he had to endure hunger those days.³² This was not only due to the fact that peasants refused to sell their produce (for reasons discussed above), but also because the harvest of 1917 was less than fifty million tons of the main grains, considerably less than the average pre-war level of sixty-two millions,³³ and it was difficult to transport the grain to the main cities since the best crop yield was obtained around the Baltic Sea and in Western Siberia. The bread ration of city dwellers was fixed to one pound a day in the spring of 1917, but was subsequently cut to 3/4 and then to half a pound in Moscow and Petrograd shortly before the November Revolution.³⁴ Ambassador Francis tells us that by August and September,

31. Lenin, Alliance of the Working Class and the Peasantry, pp. 181-182.

32. Sorokin, op. cit., pp. 93-94.

33. Chamberlin, op. cit., p. 265.

34. loc. cit.

bread lines became very long and the supply was often exhausted before all the people got bread.³⁵

Kerensky tried to remedy the problem of peasant disorders. On September 21, the new Supreme Commander issued an order

forbidding the peasants to take other people's land, cattle and machinery, to cut wood which did not belong to them, to interfere in the hiring of agricultural labourers and threatening them with various penalties if they persisted in doing so. It was about as effective as King Canute's proverbial order to the waves to recede.³⁶

On October 23, the Minister of Interior, Nikitin, appealed to the Government commissars in towns and provinces to "rally the healthy elements of the population for struggle with the increasing anarchy, which is steadily leading the country to destruction" and to "fill up the police with selected reliable people."³⁷ On November 3, Nikitin urged the commissars to combat anarchy by the use of cavalry divisions if necessary. The Government which had never really controlled the country-side was trying to impose its authority after the eleventh hour, when its remaining life-span was almost nill.

In this atmosphere the Council of the Republic met. There had been a serious clash in the Bolshevik ranks concerning Bolshevik participation in the pre-Parliament, Kamenev and Rykov and others who opposed the insurrection insisting on Bolshevik participation as opposition, while Trotsky and Stalin and their followers advocated a boycott and held that the time was past when the Bolsheviks could act as an opposition. The Bolshevik delegates had already arrived from all over Russia to attend the pre-Parliament

35. Francis, op. cit., p. 165.

36. Chamberlin, op. cit., p. 255.

37. Quoted in loc. cit.

and the Party was not yet wholly reconciled to the idea of insurrection, so a majority of 72 to 50 voted in favour of participation.³⁸ Lenin put pressure on his followers to boycott the pre-Parliament and in a letter to the Central Committee he wrote: "Trotsky has spoken for the boycott-bravo, comrade Trotsky! The boycott has been defeated inside the group of the Bolsheviki delegates.... We are still for the boycott."³⁹

The Council of the Republic was opened by Kerensky on October 20. and it contained "the flower of the Russian intelligentsia,"⁴⁰ but they were impotent and commanded no support among the masses. About 2/3 of the members were socialists, the rest being representatives of bourgeois parties and institutions.⁴¹

On the day of the opening of the Congress Council, Trotsky spoke on the platform of the pre-Parliament.⁴² In this speech, Trotsky attacked the Government, the Cadets and the moderate socialists. He accused the bourgeoisie of planning to surrender Petrograd to the Germans, of intentionally postponing the Constituent Assembly (which was true, the bourgeoisie hoping that Bolshevik popularity would soon wane), and of "steering a course for the bony hand of hunger which is expected to strangle the revolution and the Constituent Assembly first of all." Then Trotsky ended his speech amidst the tremendous outburst of the indignant Bourgeoisie:

Petersburg is in danger, the revolution is in danger, the nation is in danger. The Government is intensifying that danger. The ruling parties are increasing it. Only the nation can save itself and the country. We appeal to the people: Long live an immediate, honourable democratic

38. *Ibid.*, p. 283.

39. Quoted in Deutscher, *The Prophet Armed*, p. 294.

40. Chamberlin, *op. cit.*, p. 283.

41. Authors disagree on the number of delegates. See, for instance, *Ibid.*, p. 282 and Sukhanov, *op. cit.*, p. 535.

42. For an account of Trotsky's speech see Sukhanov, *op. cit.*, pp. 538-540 and Trotsky, *La Revolution Russe*, II, 383-384.

peace, all power to the Soviets, all land to the people, long live the Constituent Assembly.

Then Trotsky left the platform and walked out of the pre-Parliament, followed by his Bolshevik fellow-delegates.

Meanwhile, the Bolsheviks continued their propaganda campaign against the Coalition Government and told the masses that only under a Soviet regime could the Constituent Assembly meet, and its decisions, granting peace, land and bread, be effectively realized.⁴³

But the time for action had come. The Bolsheviks had to stop the Government from shifting troops from Petrograd to the front. A Left SR, Lazimir, a boy of eighteen, proposed the formation of a Military Revolutionary Committee (henceforward referred to as M.R.C.). The Mensheviks in the Ex. Com. opposed the idea but were silenced by being told that it was a continuation of the "Committee for the Struggle against Counter-revolution." It was decided to form the M.R.C., which was to play the leading role in the insurrection, on October 22. It was placed under the Chairmanship of the uncomprehending Lazimir (to give it a Soviet rather than a Party appearance) and counted among its members Podvoisky, Antonov-Ovseenko and Lashkevitch, the operational leaders of the Bolshevik insurrection. (Later Trotsky became the Chairman of the M.R.C.). This Committee split into seven sections by a resolution adopted at a closed session of the Ex. Com. on October 25. The following are excerpts of this resolution:

A Military Revolutionary Committee is being formed by the Petersburg Executive Committee and is its organ....
The Military Revolutionary Committee's first tasks

43. For more details about this propaganda campaign see Sukhanov, op. cit., pp. 548-554.

are the allocation of combat and auxiliary forces, necessary for the defence of the capital and not subject to evacuation; then the registration of the personal composition of the garrison of Petersburg and its suburbs, and also the registration of supply sources; the elaboration of a working plan for the defence of the city; measures of probation against programs and desertions; the maintenance of revolutionary discipline and the working class and soldiery....⁴⁴

In conformity with precedents, the M.R.C. appointed commissars to represent it with the detachments of the garrison. To anyone who had eyes to see, the gauntlet was already thrown.

44. Quoted in Sukhanov, op. cit., pp. 560-561.

CHAPTER IX

Jove Gives The Verdict

Lenin's afore-mentioned threat to resign from the central committee in order to regain his freedom of agitation in the lower ranks of the Party, reduced the Central Committee to embarrassed silence and there is no record of any answer to him.¹ On October 21, Lenin went to Petrograd in disguise² and on the 23, there took place the fateful meeting at which the Central Committee decided on the course of insurrection.

The irony of Fate is too cruel: the October 23 meeting took place at Sukhanov's home,³ the man's Bolshevik wife taking care that he spent the night at the home of a distant relative. Twelve members of the Central Committee were able to attend.⁴ Three tendencies appeared at this meeting:⁵ one fraction opposed the seizure of power, the other wanted to bind the rising with the Second Congress of Soviets and to postpone the insurrection until the Congress met, while the third fraction wanted to take power independent of the Soviets.⁵

Kamenev and Zinoviev conceived of a new (near Menshevik) state which would be a combination of a Soviet republic and a parliamentary democracy. They believed that it was foolish to gamble the destiny of the proletariat on an insurrection and they preferred the Bolsheviks to act as opposition in the forthcoming Constituent Assembly. Their plea was most eloquent: "Before history, before the inter-

1. Carr, op. cit., p. 94.

2. Deutscher, Stalin, p. 162. Carr, op. cit., p. 94, puts Lenin's arrival on the 22, while History of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union, 1960, p. 251, places it on the 20th.

3. After the trial of the Mensheviks in 1931, the last thing heard of Sukhanov was a sharp telegram of protest sent to Stalin as soon as he reached the concentration camp.

4. Florinsky, Russia, vol. II, p. 1446.

5. Trotsky, Lenin, p. 95.

national proletariat, before the Russian Revolution and the Russian working class, we have no right to stake the whole future on the card of armed uprising."⁶ Kamenev and Zinoviev's attitude was largely due to the fact that the workers at Petrograd, except for a few fervent Bolsheviks, were in a state of apathy and neutral in the fight⁷ and the power of the Provisional Government was almost over-estimated by everyone.

Lenin rose to answer Zinoviev and Kamenev. He began his speech with a reproachful note to the members for not fully complying with the necessity for immediate insurrection which he had been calling for for weeks. He then explained the indifference of the masses by the fact that they were tired of mere words and resolutions and wanted to see some real action. The Bolshevik leader also emphasized that the time was ripe for the seizure of power and that it was only a matter of technical preparation. As for the Constituent Assembly, Lenin said that the Government was always postponing it, and that this would give time to the generals to re-assemble their strength, make a coup, and establish a military dictatorship.⁸ By a vote of ten to two (Kamenev and Zinoviev), the Central Committee endorsed Lenin's resolution that "armed insurrection is inevitable and fully ripe."⁹

The resolution gave the following reasons for this decision: the international situation—mutiny in the German navy, manifest progress of "the world socialist revolution" in the whole of Europe, and the threat of peace among the capitalists of Europe to strangle the Russian proletarian revolution; the military situation—"the unquestionable determination of the Russian bourgeoisie and Kerensky" to surrender Petrograd to the Germans; the Bolshevik majorities in the Soviets; intensification of the popular and swing of the peasants to the Bolsheviks; and finally "the indubitable preparation of a second 'Kornilov movement.'"¹⁰

6. Quoted in Deutscher, Stalin, p. 162.

7. Schapiro, op. cit., p. 55.

8. Chamberlin, op. cit., p. 291; and Deutscher, Stalin, p. 163.

9. Quoted in Florinsky, Russia, vol. II, p. 1446.

10. loc. cit.

After the voting, a Political Bureau was elected, on Dzerzhinsky's proposal, "for the purpose of political guidance during the immediate future."¹¹ This Bureau of seven (Lenin, Zinoviev, Kamenev, Trotsky, Stalin, Sokolnikov, and Bubnov) was to guide the Party day-by-day during the insurrection. Deutscher claims that November 2 was fixed as the date of the insurrection, but this is not certain and, anyhow, not so important.¹²

Following this meeting, Lenin returned to Finland from where he sent a tentative scheme for the proposed uprising, but he was far from the centre of events and his scheme was impractical. Lenin then suggested a rising in Moscow, instead of Petrograd, and he even made the fantastic suggestion for a Bolshevik uprising in Helsinki and a march from there on Petrograd. But Stalin and Trotsky continued to disregard the "counsels of an outsider," as Lenin called himself at the time.¹³

As for Trotsky, he began organizing the M.R.C. and, in addition to that, he made speeches to great crowds. On October 24 and 25, he told a Conference of the Northern Russian Soviets to be ready for great events.¹⁴

On October 24, Kamenev and Zinoviev circulated an appeal to several leading Party organizations, protesting against the Central Committee's decision for an armed uprising. The two dissenters argued that the Government had many forces to rely upon, that war-weariness had spread among the soldiers and that there was little prospect of revolutionary success in other countries. "An armed uprising," they wrote, "means to put at stake not only the fate of our

11. Quoted in Deutscher, Stalin, p. 163.

12. loc. cit.

13. Quoted in Ibid., p. 164.

14. Deutscher, The Prophet Armed, pp. 299-300.

Party, but also the fate of the Russian and the international Revolution.¹⁵ And with all these disadvantages, Kamenev and Zinoviev proceeded, the insurrection would most probably fail. Thus, they concluded, it was more advisable for the Party to strengthen its influence by peaceful means.

The question of insurrection was raised again on October 29, at an enlarged meeting of the Central Committee, attended by Bolsheviks from the Petrograd Party Committee, from the military organization of the Petrograd Soviet and from the trade-unions and factory committees. Lenin addressed the meeting thus:

The position is clear. Either a Kornilov dictatorship or a dictatorship of the proletariat and the poorest strata of the peasantry. We cannot be guided by the mood of the masses: that is changeable and unaccountable. We must be guided by an objective analysis and estimate of the revolution. The masses have given their confidence to the Bolsheviks and ask from them not words, but deeds.¹⁶

Lenin also counted on the support of the proletariat of the rest of Europe, assuring that if the Russian proletariat arose against the bourgeoisie, then all proletarian Europe would come to its aid.

Kamenev and Zinoviev also repeated their opinions at the Conference, but by 19 votes to 2, the meeting re-affirmed the decision to proceed with the preparations for an armed uprising.¹⁷

At the end of this meeting, Kamenev resigned from the Central Committee. Two days later, he wrote an article in Gorky's Novaya Zhizn on his behalf and on that of Zinoviev and "a large number of our fellow practical workers,"¹⁸ in which he openly protested against the decision of the Central Committee and attacked those who believed in immediate insurrection.

15. Quoted in Chamberlin, op. cit., p. 293.

16. Quoted in Carr, op. cit., p. 95.

17. Ibid., p. 96.

He repeated the same ideas expounded by him and Zinoviev on the 23rd and the 29th. He said:

To risk the fate of the party, the proletariat and the revolution and rise up in the next few days— would be to commit an act of despair. And the party is too strong, too great a future lies ahead, for it to take such desperate steps.¹⁸

Thus Kamenev and Zinoviev carried the breach in the Party to the open and divulged the secret of the insurrection. Lenin was furious. On the same day (October 31) he wrote a letter from his hiding place attacking the two dissenters and declaring that he no longer considered them as comrades. Furthermore, Lenin demanded their expulsion from the Party.¹⁹ The next day, Lenin wrote a more detailed letter in the same vein to the Central Committee. He called the two dissenters "heroes of parliamentary illusions and parliamentary cretinism." Then he wrote: "Hunger does not wait. The peasant uprising does not wait. The war does not wait." With bitter sarcasm he replied to the two men's arguments that the defeat of the Bolsheviki would be a blow to the international revolutionary movement:

We will judge as the Scheidemanns and Renandels²⁰: it is more reasonable not to rise up, if they shoot us down, the world will lose such splendid, reasonable, ideal internationalists. We will show our good sense. We will pass a resolution of sympathy with the German rebels and reject uprising in Russia. This will be real, reasonable internationalism.²¹

The dissenters were finally silenced and participated in the insurrection.

18. Quoted in Sukhanov, op. cit., p. 372.

19. Carr, op. cit., p. 97.

20. Leaders of nationalist wings of the German and French socialist parties, respectively.

21. These excerpts are quoted in Chamberlin, op. cit., p. 294.

During the last weeks of the Provisional Government, disorder in the army reached frightful dimensions. The following are excerpts of a secret official report on the sentiments of the army from October 28 till November 12:

In the 141st Regiment of the 12th Army a plan was worked out for the movement to the rear, and it was decided to kill the company commanders, if they opposed, and then to apply to the battalion and regimental commanders, to demand a special train and to go to Pskov.... In the region of the 432nd Regiment trade with the enemy has begun; the trenches are decorated with white flags; and the music is being played.... In the 227th Regiment of the Special Army Ensign Baranov was killed before the eyes of the commander and officers; a private soldier of the 43rd Regiment of the 7th Army with two rifle-shots killed a second lieutenant of the 123rd Regiment...²²

Stankevitch also wrote describing the situation:

The Stavka was occupied with the problem of maintaining public safety in the rear and in the whole country. News continually arrived of terrible robberies, pillaging of estates, demolition of railroad stations, etc. No measures yielded positive results, because the troops on guard were as unreliable as the troops which committed the disorders, and often themselves took part in the rioting.²³

Now that we have discussed the situation inside the Bolshevik ranks and thrown a glance at the situation in the army (that army with which Kerensky hoped to suppress the Bolsheviks and with which the generals hoped to suppress both), let us return to the M.R.C. and see how it assumed control of the garrison and carried out the insurrection.

On October 29, the Soviet plenum overwhelmingly approved the formation of the M.R.C.²⁴ The same day, a Party Centre of five members, headed by Stalin, was set up in order to act as a contact group between the Soviet and the Party. But that Centre does not seem to have come into

22. Quoted in Ibid., pp. 237-238.

23. Ibid., p. 238. Quoted in

24. Sukhanov, op. cit., pp. 560-561.

existence and no references can be found of it in contemporary records.²⁵ Later, Soviet historiographers (under Stalin) claimed that the Party Centre was the organ of the revolution.²⁶

On the same day, the troops of the garrison declared that they would disregard the Government's marching orders and stay in Petrograd. Furthermore, to check his authority, Trotsky signed an order to the arsenal to hand 5,000 rifles to the Red Guard. The order was promptly executed.²⁷

On October 30, the Vtsik postponed the Second Congress of Soviets for a few days.²⁸ This was agreeable to the Bolsheviki since it provided them with time for completing their preparations.²⁹

On November 3, the M.R.C. felt strong enough to send its own commissars to the troops, pushing out the Government commissars and getting almost official control of the garrison. When three members of the M.R.C. called on Colonel Polkovnikov, Commander of the Petrograd Military District, and told him that henceforward his orders were not valid unless countersigned by M.R.C. representatives, the Commander retorted that he needed no such help, and when one of the three visitors told the Colonel that his orders might be badly obeyed, the latter said that he was confident the garrison was in his hands.³⁰

On the same day, at a conference of the regimental committees at Petrograd, it was officially recognized that the M.R.C. was mistress of the garrison and that no orders would be accepted unless countersigned by Trotsky or his assistants, or by duly authorized commissars.³¹ Thus,

25. Florinsky, Russia, vol. II, p. 1447; and Carr, op. cit., p. 96.

26. See, for instance, Lenin, Marx-Engels-Lenin Institute, p. 126.

27. Deutscher, The Prophet Armed, p. 300; and Trotsky, La Revolution Russe, vol. II, p. 410.

28. Deutscher, The Prophet Armed, p. 302.

29. For immediate preparations for coup see Florinsky, Russia, II, 1447-50.

30. Chamberlin, op. cit., p. 302. 31. Deutscher, Stalin, pp. 165-166.

"on October 21st [Old Style for November 3rd] the Petrograd garrison conclusively acknowledged the Soviet as the sole power, and the Military Revolutionary Committee as the immediate organ of authority."³² The following day, the M.R.C. officially invalidated any orders to the garrison not signed by its representatives.³³ The Bolshevik seizure of power in Petrograd was already an accomplished fact.

November 4, was celebrated as "the Day of the Petrograd Soviet." Huge masses of workers and soldiers and of the poorer classes filled the streets. Trotsky says that the purpose of this demonstration was to make the masses forget their defeat in the July Days and to make them feel their strength.³⁴ Trotsky inflamed the crowds with his words and to his appeal "who will stand for the cause of the workers and the peasants to the last drop of Blood," all the throng of thousands raised their hands.³⁵

On the 5th, the M.R.C. completed the plan for insurrection and the picked units were ready for the signal. The only serious opposition was expected to come from the Fortress where the garrison wavered. Antonov-Ovseenko prepared a plan to storm the Fortress, but Trotsky went in the afternoon, and finding a garrison conference under way, persuaded the soldiers to join forces with the Soviet.³⁶

Trotsky, ready for battle, sat waiting for provocation from the Government - which did not take long to come. On the night of November 5, the Cabinet met and decided to close the Bolshevik newspapers 'Soldier' and

32. Sukhanov, op. cit., p. 583.

33. Chamberlin, op. cit., pp. 302-303.

34. Ibid., p. 303.

35. Quoted in Ibid., pp. 303-304.

36. Ibid., p. 306; and Chamberlin Deutscher, The Prophet Armed, p. 306.

Rabochyi Put (Workers' Road) under which name Pravda had appeared after the July Days. It also decided to arrest all the Bolsheviks who had been arrested after the July Days and who, after their release, engaged in anti-Government activity. Finally, criminal proceedings were to be initiated against members of the M.R.C., and loyal military units were to be brought to Petrograd from the outskirts of the capital.³⁷

On the morning of the 6th, a Government commissar, with a detachment of junkers, appeared at the printing-press of the Bolshevik newspapers, broke the type and confiscated the copies. Moreover, a women's battalion was called to the defense of the Winter Palace and cadets were posted to guard Government buildings and stations and bridges, and even tried to isolate the workers' quarters across the Neva from the centre of the city. Moreover, the battleship Aurora, stationed in the Neva dangerously close to the Winter Palace, was ordered out to sea and the telephone connections of the Smolny Institute were disconnected.³⁸

The M.R.C. retaliated quickly. The soldiers of the Lithuanian Regiment and of the Sixth Reserve Sappers' Battalion were given "the honourable duty of guarding revolutionary printing shops against counter-revolutionary attacks."³⁹ This, the soldiers executed by eleven o'clock the same morning,⁴⁰ Furthermore, Trotsky issued orders to the Aurora to stay in the Neva and lie there in readiness.⁴¹

Around noon on October 6, Kerensky addressed the pre-Parliament. He said that part of the population of Petrograd was in revolt and he demanded that the Government

37. Chamberlin, op. cit., p. 308.

38. loc. cit.

39. Quoted in loc. cit.

40. Florinsky, Russia, vol. II, p. 1448.

41. Deutscher, The Prophet Armed, p. 309.

be supported in the decisive measures which it was going to adopt in order to crush the uprising.⁴² Confident that the pre-Parliament would back him, Kerensky left it after his speech, to the Staff Headquarters.⁴³

But the pre-Parliament spent its time in useless debate. Finally, not long before midnight, the Council adopted a resolution presented by Martov, by a vote of 113 to 102, with 26 abstentions.⁴⁴ The resolution censored the insurrection but it also spoke for

an immediate decree transferring the land to the administration of the land committees and a decisive move in foreign policy, with a proposal to the Allies to proclaim conditions of peace and begin peace negotiations.⁴⁵

The resolution also spoke for the formation of a committee of public safety consisting of representatives of the revolutionary democracy and the municipal council to be set up in Petrograd and to act in co-ordination with the Provisional Government. Thus, we see that the pre-Parliament tried to cut the ground from under the feet of the Bolsheviki by adopting their program, but it was too late.

This resolution was carried to Kerensky by Dan, Gotz and Avskentiev, who asked the Premier to immediately proclaim the Government's adoption of the resolution. Dan also told Kerensky that the situation was not grave and that his reactionary ministers were exaggerating developments.⁴⁶ Dan also told Kerensky that the Bolsheviki were ready to stop the insurrection, that the moderate socialists were making negotiations with the Bolsheviki to that effect, and that the interference of Kerensky in these negotiations might ruin them.⁴⁷ The meeting was not amicable. Kerensky

42. Chamberlin, op. cit., p. 309.

43. Kerensky, op. cit., p. 326.

44. Chamberlin, op. cit., p. 309.

45. Quoted in op. cit., p. 310.

46. Kerensky, op. cit., p. 327.

47. Ibid., pp. 327-328.

refused to adopt the resolution of the pre-Parliament saying that he considered it a vote of no confidence in him and that he did not need the help of others but could cope with the uprising alone;⁴⁸ the Premier even threatened to resign.⁴⁹

During the night of November 6, Trotsky convened an extraordinary session of the Petrograd Soviet. In his speech, the President boasted of the first victories of the insurrection in forcing the publication of the Bolshevik newspapers and the retention of the Aurora in the Neva. Then he characterized the Provisional Government as

a semi-government that awaits a sweep of the broom of history, in order to clear the way for a real government for the revolutionary people. If the government tries to exploit the twenty-four or forty-eight hours which remain at its disposition, in order to plunge a knife into the back of the Revolution, then we say that the vanguard of the Revolution will answer blow with blow and iron with steel.⁵⁰

On this night Smolny turned into a real fortress with a canon and machine-guns.⁵¹ At 2 A.M., on the orders of Sverdlov, 1,800 sailors armed with machine-guns left Helsingfors for Petrograd to help the thousands of the Red Guard.⁵²

In spite of all that, the moderate socialists did not take any 'military' measures on the night of the 6th, although their party organizations had some volunteer military forces at their disposal.⁵³ After midnight the Vtsik, with a majority of moderates, held a meeting at which many of the delegates to the Congress of Soviets were present. The speech made by Dan was characteristic of the attitude of the

48. Chamberlin, op. cit., p. 310.

49. Florinsky, Russia, vol. II, p. 1449.

50. Quoted in Chamberlin, op. cit., pp. 311-312.

51. Sukhanov, op. cit., p. 614.

52. Ibid., p. 617.

53. Kerensky, op. cit., p. 333.

whole moderate socialists at the time and accounts for the lack of resolute action on their side against the Bolshviks. "Counterrevolution," said Dan, "was never so strong as at the present moment.... The Black Hundred press enjoys more success in the factories and barracks than the socialist press."⁵⁴ Then Dan said that the provinces would cut the bread supply from the capital and any Bolshevik government would crumble due to the lack of popular support.

Sukhanov tells us that the moderate socialists wanted to stop the Bolshevik insurrection, but were afraid to be thus turned into "instruments into the hands of... counter-revolution,"⁵⁵ and so they were trying very hard to achieve a peaceful compromise, partly by voting for the Martov resolution at the pre-Parliament. Sukhanov says: "And while in the dead of the night the interstitial groups were talking... neither army camp was asleep. One was acting, the other trying to act."⁵⁶

Around one o'clock in the night,⁵⁷ right after the pre-Parliament deputation left Kerensky, delegates of the three Don Cossak regiments in the capital went to the Premier and informed him that they would fight with the Government provided that their blood would not be spilled in vain, as in the July Days. Kerensky assured him of his determination whereupon the delegates declared that all the Cossak troops in Petrograd would fight with the Government. By while Kerensky was receiveing this delegation, the Council of Cossak troops, which had been in session for hours, proclaimed the neutrality of the Cossaks in the forthcoming struggle.⁵⁸ Learning of their decision, Kerensky spent hours

54. Quoted in Chamberlin, op. cit., p. 312.

55. Sukhanov, op. cit., p. 610.

56. Ibid., p. 617.

57. Kerensky, op. cit., p. 329.

58. Ibid., pp. 329-330.

trying to negotiate with the Cossaks but they stubbornly refused to fight.⁵⁹ Kerensky also sent a message to General Krasnov on the northern front ordering him to send his cavalry corps to Petrograd at once⁶⁰ but the Kornilovite General did not comply. The Premier tried to get the support of the Staff Headquarters at Petrograd, but the attitude of the officers towards him was hostile and Kerensky even says that Colonel Polkovnikov, the Commander, was initiating a movement for his arrest.⁶¹

The naive Gleb Botkin, son of the Tzar's physician, sums up the way of thinking of the Rightists at the time. 'Nobody', he says, imagined that Lenin and his associates could retain power for long. The monarchists believed that Kerensky was the real enemy, thus they were happy to see Lenin rid them of Kerensky, a step after which, they thought, the restoration of the power of the Right would not be difficult.⁶² As Fernand Grenard, the French Consul-General at Moscow at the time, later wrote:

At the critical hour the upper classes of Russia continued with their vague and illogical policy. They might have rallied all their forces, which were still great at the time [sic], to the assistance of the temporary ~~assie~~ defenders of the state. They might have helped the Provisional Government to combat the terrible danger and the threat of disaster, plunder and massacre. They refrained from doing so, the majority of the ruling classes putting their hopes in a double blow: to have Kerensky killed by the Bolsheviks—who were supposed to be too weak to stand on their own—un order to beat the victors themselves on the day after the victory.⁶³

It seems clear that the Rightists over-estimated their own

59. *Ibid.*, pp. 332-333.

60. Sukhanov, *op. cit.*, p. 612.

61. Kerensky, *op. cit.*, p. 333.

62. Gleb Botkin, *The Real Romanovs* (New York, London, Edinburgh: Flemming H. Revell Co., 1931), p. 168.

63. Quoted in R. H. Bruce Lockhart, *The Two Revolutions: An Eyewitness Study of Russia, 1917* (London: Phoenix House Ltd., 1957), p. 104.

power and under-estimated the strength of the Bolsheviks.

After midnight, and in the morning of November 7, the insurrection made decisive progress. Main railroads were occupied, the state bank was taken over, the central telephone station was occupied and the telephones of the Winter Palace and of the Staff Headquarters were disconnected.⁶⁴ (Although the Winter Palace still retained the use of two unregistered telephones by means of which the Government stayed in contact with the city Duma and other sympathetic organizations and issued appeals to the Stavka⁶⁵). The insurrection was surprisingly bloodless and the take-over of roads and bridges by the Red Guards from the cadets often could easily be mistaken by the casual observer as a change of guard.

Kerensky, seeing the helplessness of his position, left Petrograd in a car with an American flag at about 10 A.M. on the 7th, in the hope of bringing troops from the front to quell the insurrection. At almost exactly the same time, the M.R.C. issued a printed declaration in which it said:

To the citizens of Russia: the Provisional Government is overthrown. The state power has passed into the hands of the organ of the Petersburg Soviet of Workers' and Soldiers' Deputies, the Military Revolutionary Committee which stands at the head of the Petersburg garrison and proletariat. The cause the people have been fighting for the immediate proposal of a democratic peace, the elimination of private property in land, workers' control of production, and the formation of a Soviet Government-is assured. Long live the revolution of the workers, soldiers and peasants!...⁶⁶

A communiqué roughly the same as this was broadcast to the whole country by wireless.

64. Chamberlin, op. cit., pp. 312-313.

65. Ibid., p. 317.

66. Quoted in Sukhanov, op. cit., p. 623.

Early in the afternoon, the Bolsheviks surrounded the Mariinsky Palace and ordered the Council of the Republic to disperse. The Council, perceiving the hopelessness of resistance, dispersed after registering a formal protest against "the violence of the irresponsible elements interrupting the work of the Council with the threat of bayonets."⁶⁷

The same afternoon, Trotsky boasted before an extraordinary session of the Petrograd Soviet: "We have been told that insurrection will bathe the revolution in torrents of blood... we have not yet been told of the fall of one victim."⁶⁸ Strange how Illusion can deceive even the great.

At about six in the evening, the siege of the Winter Palace (the seat of the ministry) began under Antonov-Ovseenko began. We will not go into the details of this most interesting and somewhat funny episode (like the bombardment of the Palace by duds from the battleship Aurora), nor will we go into the details of the pathetic march of the 'gentlemen' to relieve the Palace. Suffice it to say that the number of people killed during the siege was extremely small and that the Palace surrendered at 2:10 A.M. the following day,⁶⁹ about three hours after the opening of the Bolshevik-dominated Second Congress of Soviets.

Lenin, who had arrived at Petrograd on the evening of November 6 to direct the insurrection, was lying near Trotsky on ~~the~~ a rug on the floor of an almost empty room in Smolny, when the news of the capture of the Winter Palace reached him. Upon hearing the news, Lenin smiled and said:

67. Quoted in Chamberlin, op. cit., p. 316.

68. Quoted in Trotsky, La Revolution Russe, vol. II, p. 534.

69. Florinsky, Russia, vol. II, p. 1450.

"The transition from the state of illegality, being driven in every direction, to power-is too rough." "It makes one dizzy," he at once added in German and made the sign of the cross before his face.⁷⁰ Then the Thunderer, the Lord of Hosts, "went about the tasks of the day."⁷¹

70. See Trotsky, Lenin, p. 102.

71. Quoted in loc. cit.

CHAPTER X

Conclusion

The Bolshevik coup d'etat in Petrograd and Moscow met with practically no opposition. This was followed by the long and bloody civil war, a struggle from which the communists emerged victorious and were thenceforth free to mould Russia according to their wishes and dreams.

But many questions remain to be answered about the epoch that directly preceded the Bolshevik seizure of power in the two capitals, these questions ranging from the broadest and most general, like the question of whether the course of Russian history necessitated the rise of a dictatorship after the fall of Tzardom, to the more specific questions like whether it was historically inevitable that Lenin himself - and nobody else - would lead the revolution.

Whether the March Revolution was inevitable is beyond the scope of this thesis. Our concern is only the second revolution, the question of the inevitability of its occurrence and to what extent were its details accidental.

We must first look into the history of Russia. The three hundred years of Romanov sway preceding the revolution were years of blood and iron, years abounding in deeds of barbaric cruelty and in repeated outbursts of primitive elemental passions that splashed forth in mad rage under the stress of autocracy and knew no expression or aim other than that provided through direct physical destruction. The Russian peasant was very patient but he was also primitive and barbaric and it can be safely said that the Russian peasants were sadists in power and masochists when under the whip. The poor, wretched, God-fearing peasant could turn, almost overnight, in the absence of the Tzarist police, into a bloodhound striving for the landlord's wealth and blood.

Thus, under the Romanovs, the great majority of the

Russian people (the peasants) were either under the whip or in revolt. For some time before the revolution an experiment in local self-government, represented by the Zemstvos and the village mir had been going on, but this did not spring from the experiences and the history of the people but was a complete superstructure imposed on the population by the autoeracy which controlled the whole experiment. Thus it can be safely said that no true tradition of local self-government or democracy existed in Russia under the Romanovs. Autocracy was the controlling spirit of the Third Rome and to the Black People freedom only meant that they would be free to practice their sadism on their present oppressors. Such cases of freedom have often been witnessed in spontaneous peasant revolts. And the same elements of barbarity and blood-thirstiness arising from the Pugachov and other peasant rebellions in Russia appeared after the March Revolution and glowed in all their magnificence during the Civil War.

We thus conclude that the Russian masses understood, in 1917, the language of the whip and that language alone, and that freedom to them included the freedom to oppress those who had heretofore held the whip, and freedom to indulge in everything taboo. It is evident that they did not take freedom from the Lockian point of view but almost equated it with anarchy. Thus, when the Black People took power, anarchy prevailed, and the only way for the Russian state to function was the assumption of the whip by the heir to the autoeracy. But who was best fit to be the heir?

Let us first discuss the Left and try to find which group was most likely to be the candidate for power - and why. Of all the Leftists, the Marxists had the most solid, clear-cut and organized ideology. This ideology, preached by Marx and Engels, was a dynamic philosophy which, with some

on creating party 'volunteer troops'. But offensive and defensive forces are often the same and at the decisive moment the moderate socialists found themselves in possession of extremely small 'fighting organizations' which they even did not use. By the nature of their irresolute and pacific attitude during revolutionary days and because they did not fight for their beliefs when the time for fighting had had come, the moderate socialists were doomed to drift through fearful days without leaving a trace.

Here, it is relevant to mention that the belief in a Messianic mission and in a manifest destiny had been entrenched in Holy Russia throughout the ages. The moderates of the Right and of the Left stripped Holy Russia of much of her holiness and considered it trailing behind the West in historical development. Only the extreme Rightists and the Bolsheviki continued to believe in the Messianic mission of Russia, the former stretching the rotten, outmoded tradition, while the latter supplementing it with a new, dazzling theory of manifest destiny, claiming that Russia would be the spark of the Last Revolution, leading to the millenium.

We thus see that on the Left, the party most likely to achieve power was the Bolshevik Party. It alone believed in dictatorship, which was the only way of governing Russia at the time, and it alone had the intention of seizing power and moved towards that end armed by great weapons, namely, a great dynamic ideology, strict party discipline and organization, the belief in the necessity of the scientific use of force and, on top of all that, promises of an imminent paradise on earth to be realized by the incomparable muzhik.

On the Right, the moderates believed in democracy and did not want to seize power by armed force. Only the extremists had the intention of seizing power and establishing a dictatorship. Thus, as the interstitial groups were striving to maintain the

impossible, chaotic state of dual power, the extreme Rightists and the Bolsheviks were preparing for battle. But the extreme Rightists had been friends and even pillars of the Ancien Regime and were thus discredited with the Black People whose caprice had become the law of the land and the determining factor of its future. It was no accident that the troops sent to fight the revolutionary capital, both in March and in September, disintegrated on the way. The people were tired of three hundred years of reactionary rule and had clearly thrown their lot with the socialists. But the petty bourgeois socialists oscillated, clung to the myth of the necessity of the development of capitalism in Russia, and refused power when it was presented to them in July. Their fate was similar to that of many interstitial groups in revolutionary epochs. As for the extreme Rightists who, historically, could have taken power, they were at a disadvantage compared to the Bolsheviks from the point of view of ideology, organization and popular support.

A point pertinent of discussion is whether a Kornilov-Kerensky Bloc could have crushed the Bolsheviks. In reality, it would have been improbable to build such a bloc and, if built, it was almost impossible to maintain. The great majority of the socialists would have fought against such an alliance, and they might have had the support, though passive and inconsequential, of a great number of moderate Rightists. The consummation of such an alliance would have only advanced the civil war by a year. Furthermore, it would have been inevitable that the arch-revolutionary Kornilov would 'purge' Kerensky as Koltchak did with his progressive Socialist-Revolutionary partners' a year later. As for the non-Bolshevik parties of the Left, they were impotent organizations and could not play a serious role in the conflict. Thus, in the final instance, the conflict would have developed in its broad lines exactly as it did, between arch-reactionaries and Bolsheviks.

One very important factor would not be overlooked for it, in the final analysis, led the Bolsheviks to power. This factor was Lenin. Without him, Marxism might have never left the realm of the theoretical and the Social Democratic Party of Russia might have degenerated into a petty bourgeois party like those Social Democratic parties that 'flourished' in middle and western Europe before and after the First World War. Without Lenin's genius, his determination, his cold logic, his dominating character and his belief (as many other great men) in his near-infallibility in matters of revolutionary theory, the Bolshevik Party might have never existed and 1917 might well have been a year of a year of protracted, yet abortive revolution. Furthermore, the tactics Lenin used from April to November and the way he manipulated circumstances to fit his ends were largely responsible for the success of the November Revolution. As to what (or who) brought Lenin into the arena, was it capricious luck or Fate, we will never know for sure. All we can say is that his presence in the struggle between the extreme Right and the extreme Left was a very important factor in tipping the balance in favour of the latter and that, without him, the outcome might have well been different.

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