

## **The Russian Revolution of 1917**

*What was the Russian Revolution of 1917?* [2-9]

**Capitalist Development and Revolution** [2-5]

**Continuity and rupture between 1905 and 1917** [5-6]

**Nature and limits of the Russian revolution** [6]

**Soviets and party** [7-9]

*The phases of the revolution* [9-106]

**The proletariat in war** [9-16]

**The February Revolution** [16-19]

**Dual Power and the April Theses** [19-38]

**The change of course** [38-39]

**The April days and the coalition government** [39-41]

**The offensive at the front** [41-46]

**The majority of the Petersburg proletariat moves toward Bolshevism** [46-54]

**The July days** [54-66]

**What did the July days signify?** [66-70]

**The counterrevolution gained ground** [70-83]

**From the defeat of July to victory over the Kornilov putsch** [83-85]

**The soviets** [85-91]

**The birth of the communist party in Russia** [91-93]

**The last bourgeois government and the Pre-parliament** [92-94]

**October** [94-104]

**The insurrection** [104-105]

**The second All-Russian Congress of Soviets** [105-106]

## What was the Russian Revolution of 1917?

### Capitalist Development and Revolution

When global capitalism was already reaching the limits of the world market, Russia's situation was socially and economically that of a **semicolonial country** politically subjected to a **feudal autocratic state**.

It is this situation that explains the weakness of the bourgeoisie in the hour of the bourgeois democratic revolution.

*"Arising late, Russian industry did not repeat the development of the advanced countries, but inserted itself into this development, adapting their latest achievements to its own backwardness. Just as the economic evolution of Russia as a whole skipped over the epoch of craft-guilds and manufacture, so also the separate branches of industry made a series of special leaps over technical productive stages that had been measured in the West by decades. Thanks to this, Russian industry developed at certain periods with extraordinary speed. Between the first revolution and the war, industrial production in Russia approximately doubled. [...]"*

*In 1914, small enterprises involving less than 100 workers employed in the United States represented 35 per cent of the total of industrial workers, but in Russia 17.8 per cent. The two countries had an approximately identical relative quantity of enterprises involving 100 to 1000 workers. But the giant enterprises, above 1000 workers each, employed in the United States 17.8 per cent of the workers and in Russia 41.4 per cent! For the most important industrial districts the latter percentage is still higher: for the Petrograd district 44.4 per cent, for the Moscow district even 57.3 per cent. We get the same result if we compare Russian with British or German industry. This fact – first established by the author in 1908 – hardly accords with the banal idea of the economic backwardness of Russia. However, it does not disprove this backwardness, but dialectically completes it.*

*The confluence of industrial with bank capital was also accomplished in Russia with a completeness you might not find in any other country. But the subjection of the industries to the banks meant, for the same reasons, their subjection to the western European money market. Heavy industry (metal, coal, oil) was almost wholly under the control of foreign finance capital, which had created for itself an auxiliary and intermediate system of banks in Russia. Light industry was following the same road. Foreigners owned in general about 40 per cent of all the stock capital of Russia, but in the leading branches of industry that percentage was still higher. We can say without exaggeration that the controlling shares of stock in the*

*Russian banks, plants and factories were to be found abroad, the amount held in England, France and Belgium being almost double that in Germany. The social character of the Russian bourgeoisie and its political physiognomy were determined by the condition of origin and the structure of Russian industry. The extreme concentration of this industry alone meant that between the capitalist leaders and the popular masses there was no hierarchy of transitional layers. To this we must add that the proprietors of the principal industrial, banking, and transport enterprises were foreigners, who realized on their investment not only the profits drawn from Russia, but also a political influence in foreign parliaments, and so not only did not forward the struggle for Russian parliamentarism, but often opposed it: it is sufficient to recall the shameful role played by official France. Such are the elementary and insurmountable causes of the political isolation and anti-popular character of the Russian bourgeoisie. Whereas in the dawn of its history it was too unripe to accomplish a reformation; when the time came for leading a revolution it was overripe”.*

- Leon Trotsky, *History of the Russian Revolution*

As is characteristic of the semicolonial countries, this resulted creating a young proletariat that was very concentrated geographically in the West of the country - which included, in addition to the Petrograd and Moscow areas, the industrial regions of the Urals and the Donest, Poland, Ukraine, Finland, and today's "Baltic republics" - literally surrounded by what Lenin would describe as an "ocean of one hundred million peasants”.

*“Russia at the beginning of the twentieth century had a population of about 150 million, of whom more than three million were in Petrograd and Moscow... the working class in all branches of labor, both city and village, numbered in 1905 no less than 10 million, which with their families amounts to more than 25 million – that is to say, more than the whole population of France in the epoch of the great revolution”.*

- Leon Trotsky, *History of the Russian Revolution*

Prior to 1905 it was clear that the only revolution that could be posed in Russia was a bourgeois revolution that, with a democratic program, would culminate in and extend capitalist development. But this did not mean that the bourgeois revolution was or could be led by the bourgeoisie.

*“No one in the ranks of the Russian Social Democrats (we all called ourselves Social Democrats then) had any doubts that we were approaching a bourgeois revolution, that is, a revolution produced by the contradictions between the development of the productive forces of capitalist society and the outlived caste and state relationships of the period of serfdom and the Middle Ages. In the struggle against the Narodniks and the anarchists, I had to devote not a few speeches and articles in those days to the Marxist analysis of*

*the bourgeois character of the impending revolution.*

*The bourgeois character of the revolution could not, however, answer in advance the question of which classes would solve the tasks of the democratic revolution and what the mutual relationships of these classes would be. It was precisely at this point that the fundamental strategical problems began.*

*Plekhanov, Axelrod, Zasulich, Martov and, following them, all the Russian Mensheviks, took as their point of departure the idea that to the liberal bourgeoisie, as the natural claimant to power, belonged the leading role in the bourgeois revolution. According to this pattern, the party of the proletariat was assigned the role of Left Wing of the democratic front. The Social Democrats were to support the liberal bourgeoisie against the reaction and at the same time to defend the interests of the proletariat against the liberal bourgeoisie. In other words, the Mensheviks understood the bourgeois revolution principally as a liberal-constitutional reform.*

*Lenin posed the question in an altogether different manner. For Lenin, the liberation of the productive forces of bourgeois society from the fetters of serfdom signified, first and foremost, a radical solution of the agrarian question in the sense of complete liquidation of the landowning class and revolutionary redistribution of landownership. Inseparably connected with this was the destruction of the monarchy. Lenin attacked the agrarian problem, which affected the vital interests of the overwhelming majority of the population and at the same time constituted the basic problem of the capitalist market, with a truly revolutionary boldness. Since the liberal bourgeoisie, which confronts the worker as an enemy, is intimately bound by innumerable ties to large landed property, the genuine democratic liberation of the peasantry can be realized only by the revolutionary co-operation of the workers and peasants. According to Lenin, their joint uprising against the old society must, if victorious, lead to the establishment of the 'democratic dictatorship of the proletariat and peasantry'.*

The events of 1905 would attest to the impossibility of the bourgeoisie leading the revolutionary process. In the hour of truth, the bourgeoisie - as had happened in the last wave of European bourgeois revolutions - fearful to a greater extent of the proletariat than of the autocracy, was unwilling to carry the revolution to its logical conclusion.

*"The events of 1905 were a prologue to the two revolutions of 1917, that of February and that of October. In the prologue, all the elements of the drama were included, but not carried through. The Russo-Japanese war had made tsarism totter. Against the background of a mass movement the liberal bourgeoisie had frightened the monarchy with its opposition. The workers had organized independently of the bourgeoisie, and in opposition to it, in soviets, a form of organization then first called into being. Peasant uprisings to seize the land occurred throughout vast stretches of the country. Not only the peasants, but also the revolutionary parts of the army tended toward the soviets, which at the moment of highest tension openly*

*disputed the power with the monarchy. However, all the revolutionary forces were then going into action for the first time, lacking experience and confidence. The liberals demonstratively backed away from the revolution exactly at the moment when it became clear that to shake tsarism would not be enough, it must be overthrown. This sharp break of the bourgeoisie with the people, in which the bourgeoisie carried with it considerable circles of the democratic intelligentsia, made it easier for the monarchy to pick out the units of the army that were loyal to the regime, and to organize a bloody repression against the workers and peasants. Although with a few broken ribs, tsarism came out of the experience of 1905 alive and strong enough”.*

## **Continuity and rupture between 1905 and 1917**

1917, like 1905, began above all as a process of development, self-organization and extension of the workers' struggles against the war and its consequences. This converged with a generalized and amorphous peasant rebellion and culminated in February with the fall of tsarism. The *prologue already contained all the elements of the drama* as Trotsky pointed out, but there was a new factor that allowed the elements of the drama to *develop completely*.

It is impossible to understand the nature of the Russian Revolution without appreciating the profound significance of the first imperialist world war. The great war is a world war because imperialism had already marked the end of the phase of the expansion of the world market. It marks a clear break from where we can say that the fundamental aspects of the great progressive role of capitalism had been accomplished. Since then, accumulation could continue but - there would be long stages of *growth*, the *development of the productive forces* would obviously take place - this development, even beyond the chronic spasms of the crises, would be a monstrous and deformed development, incapable of producing true social development. The stagnation - if not extension- of the working day, the development of state capitalism and militarism, of war as a way of life for national capital, the systematic waste and destruction of productive forces - including the workers themselves -, the exhaustion of art and culture... From 1914 onwards, capitalism crossed a line of no return, it is now and without remedy, a decadent system. At the same time, productive capacities were, for the first time, universalizable on a massive scale. The *objective conditions* of the revolution were given.

It would be the material possibility, the historical necessity and the immediate actuality of the world proletarian revolution that would transform the **perspectives** of the Revolution of 1917. In March, still in Switzerland, writing the summary of a speech he had delivered to local social democratic militants, Lenin advanced the program of a soviet government that declared unconditional peace, called on the workers of the world to overthrow their governments and confiscate the land of the landowners.

*“This wouldn't even be socialism. It would be the victory of the workers and poor peasants that guarantees peace, freedom and bread. For **such** conditions of peace, **we too** are ready to wage a **revolutionary** war! The aid of the proletariat of all countries would be assured. The vile appeals of the social-patriots would vanish like smoke.*

*Long live the Russian revolution! Long live the world workers revolution that has **begun**!”*

- Lenin, *On the Tasks of the RSDP in the Russian Revolution*, March 1917

That would be the message of Lenin's *April theses* and the change that would enable the development of the worldwide proletarian revolution in Russia.

*“The Russian revolution of February-March 1917 was the beginning of the transformation of the imperialist war into a civil war. This revolution took the **first** step towards ending the war; but it requires a second step, namely, the transfer of state power to the proletariat, to make the end of the war a certainty. This will be the beginning of a “break-through” on a world-wide scale, a break-through in the front of capitalist interests; and only by breaking through this front can the proletariat save mankind from the horrors of war and endow it with the blessings of peace”.*

- Lenin, *The Tasks of the Proletariat in Our Revolution*, April 10, 1917

## **Nature and limits of the Russian Revolution**

What was therefore the Russian revolution as a whole? A **permanent revolution**, a *democratic* revolution, that is, a bourgeois revolution, in which the proletariat led a peasantry in rebellion to defeat the autocracy and which the **worldwide proletarian revolution** would immediately equip with a socialist perspective. A perspective that it needed in order to materialize the extension of the socialist revolution at least in Europe.

The defeat of the revolution in Europe would never allow the Russian revolution to reach the socialist stage towards which it was oriented and directed: it would remain a *political* revolution. It is not, as we shall see, a minor triumph. The proletariat destroyed the tsarist state and raised the tools of its own dictatorship: the soviets. As we shall see in the following notebook, they would later be dissolved in practice by the civil war and gradually replaced by the bureaucratic framework created to support them, which would end up leading a counterrevolution that was also exclusively political. It would

liquidate the soviets and destroy the party of the revolution as a useful tool for the class.

*"The Russian revolution did not destroy the economic structure of capital, which does not reside in the bourgeoisie or in the monopolies, but in what Marx called the capital-wage labor social relation; after a moment of vacillation, the capital-wage relation became statified, and the judicial as well the political re-accommodated themselves around this relation... the repressive bodies and the national army did this as well until the social relation capital-wage labor acquired the virulence that continues to distinguish it.*

*It was therefore a democratic or permanent revolution, made by a proletarian power, and dead as such before reaching the socialist stage that motivated it and constituted its aim. Therefore, it was nothing more than a political revolution. And although in the political aspect it went further than the Spanish revolution, the persistence of the mentioned capitalist social relation gave counterrevolution the advantage of being only political as well, though incredibly cruel, in relation to the urgency of world revolution".*

Grandizo Munis. "Reaffirmation", 1979

## **Soviets and party**

We still haven't mentioned an incredibly important element in the Russian revolution: the self-organization of the class. Never before had such a large part of the proletariat developed such a degree of organization and consciousness. There were two fundamental weapons: the soviets and the party.

The first, the soviets, were organs of struggle first, of insurrection afterward and then finally of the fleeting exercise of class dictatorship. The second, the party, was the enzyme that served to politically elevate and refine, through clear and concrete slogans and arguments, thousands and thousands of the most determined and committed workers... many times, as we shall see, in spite of the party's own leadership....

As we will also see, there was no other *method* for this than:

constant and extensive debate linked to action and sustained by the revolutionary will of an organization that gradually grew to bring together, give voice and clarity to the spontaneous direction segregated by the bulk of the class.

*“The masses have a million faces: far from being homogeneous, they are dominated by various and contradictory class interests; the sole means by which they can attain a clear-sighted consciousness – without which no successful action is possible – lies in organization. The rebel masses of Russia in 1917 rose to a clear consciousness of their necessary tasks, of their means and the objectives, using the Bolshevik party as their organ. This is not a theory, it is a statement of the facts. In this situation we can see, in superb relief, the relations between the party, the working class and the toiling masses in general. The party expresses in clear terms – and it materializes- all that is yearned for confusedly by the sailors at Kronstadt, the soldiers in Kazan, the workers of Petrograd, Ivanovo-Voznesensk, Moscow and everywhere, the peasants ransacking the landlords’ mansions; in sum, what they all want, but lacking the power to express their hopes firmly, to match them against the economic and the political realities, to formulate the most practical aims and choose the best means of attaining them, to select the most favorable moment for action, to extend the action from one end of the country to the other, to provide the exchanges of information and the necessary discipline, to co-ordinate the innumerable separate efforts that are going on – it is what they really want, without being able to constitute themselves into (in a word) a force of the requisite intelligence, training, will and myriad energy. What they want, then, the party expresses at a conscious level, and then carries out. The party reveals to them what they have been thinking. It is the bond which unites them from one end of the country to the other. The party is their consciousness, their organization.*

*When the gunners of the Baltic fleet grew anxious for the perils hanging over the revolution, and sought a way forward, it was the Bolshevik agitator who pointed a way. And there was no other way, that much was clear. When the soldiers in the trenches wanted to voice their determination to finish with the butchery, they elected, to the committee of their battalion, the candidates of the Bolshevik party. When the peasants became tired of the procrastinations of ‘their’ Socialist-Revolutionary party, and began to ask whether it was not time to act for themselves, it was Lenin’s voice that reached them: ‘Peasant, seize the land!’ When the workers sensed counter-revolutionary intrigue all about them, it was Pravda that brought them the slogans of action that they already half-knew, the words of revolutionary necessity. In front of the Bolshevik poster the wretched folk passing by in the street stop and exclaim, ‘That’s just it!’ That is just it. This voice is their own.*

*That is why the progress of the masses towards revolution is reflected in one great political fact: the Bolsheviks, a small revolutionary minority in March, become in September and October the party of the majority. Any distinction between the party and the masses becomes impossible, it is all one multitude. Doubtless, scattered among the crowds, there were many other revolutionaries: Left S-Rs (the most numerous), anarchists and Maximalists, who also aim towards the revolution. These are a handful of men swept along by events, leaders who are being led. How clouded their perception of realities is, we shall see by many instances. It is the Bolsheviks who, owing to their accurate theoretical appraisal of the dynamism of events, become identified both with the labouring masses and with the necessity of history. ‘The Communists have no other interests distinct from those of the working class as a whole’: thus the Manifesto of Marx and Engels. This sentence, written in 1847, now appears to us as one of fantastic foresight.*

*Since the July days, the party has passed through a period of illegality and persecution, and is now barely tolerated. It forms itself into an assault column. From its members, it demands self-denial, passion and discipline; in return, it offers only the satisfaction of serving the proletariat. Yet we see its forces grow. In April, it had numbered seventy-two organizations with a membership of 80,000. By the end of July its forces numbered 200,000 members, in 162 organizations”.*

- Victor Serge, *Year One of the Russian Revolution*

## **The phases of the Revolution**

Editor's note. In the account of the facts we will make intensive use of Trotsky's History of the Russian Revolution. All quotations are by default from such a work. In order not to be redundant, we will not put the source in the footnotes.

## **The proletariat in war**

The imperialist war, sustained by the Russian bourgeoisie with the joy that the big business guaranteed by the war brought it, interrupted a process of long-term struggle that was in direct continuity with the 1905 revolution.

*“The figures, reduced to their simplest expression, relate only to enterprises undergoing factory inspection. The railroads, mining industries, mechanical and small enterprises in general, to say nothing of agriculture, for various reasons do not enter into the count. But the changes in the strike curve in the different periods emerge no less clearly for this.*

*Number in thousands of participants in political strikes*

*Year*

*\*1903 - 87\*\**

*\*1904 - 25\*\**

*1905 - 1,843*

*1906 - 651*

*1907 - 540*

1908 - 93

1909 - 8

1910 - 4

1911 - 8

1912 - 550

1913 - 502

1914 (first half) - 1,059

1915 - 156

1916 - 310

1917 (January-February) - 575

*The **industrial boom** beginning in 1910 lifted the workers to their feet, and gave a new impulse to their energy. The figures for 1912-14 almost repeat those for 1905-07, but in the opposite order: not from above downwards, but from below up. On a new and higher historical basis – there are more workers now, and they have more experience – a new revolutionary offensive begins. The first half-year of 1914 clearly approaches in the number of political strikes the culminating point of the year of the first revolution. But war breaks out and sharply interrupts this process. The first war months are marked by political inertness in the working class, but already in the spring of 1915 the numbness begins to pass. A new cycle of political strikes opens, a cycle which in February 1917 will culminate in the insurrection of soldiers and workers. The sharp ebbs and flows of the mass struggle had left the Russian proletariat after a few years almost unrecognizable. Factories which two or three years ago would strike unanimously over some single arbitrary police action, today have completely lost their revolutionary color, and accept the most monstrous crimes of the authorities without resistance. Great defeats discourage people for a long time. The consciously revolutionary elements lose their power over the masses. Prejudices and superstitions not yet burnt out come back to life. Grey immigrants from the village during these times dilute the workers' ranks. Skeptics ironically shake their heads. So, it was in the years 1907-11. But molecular processes in the masses are healing the psychological wounds of defeat. A new turn of events, or an underlying economic impulse, opens a new political cycle. The revolutionary elements again find their audience. The struggle reopens on a higher level...*

*At the first sound of the drum the revolutionary movement died down. The more active layers of the workers were mobilized. The revolutionary elements were thrown from the factories to the front. Severe penalties were imposed for striking. The workers' press was swept away. Trade*

*unions were strangled. Hundreds of thousands of women, boys, peasants, poured into the workshops. The war – combined with the wreck of the International – greatly disoriented the workers politically, and made it possible for the factory administration, then just lifting its head, to speak patriotically in the name of the factories, carrying with it a considerable part of the workers, and compelling the more bold and resolute to keep still and wait. The revolutionary ideas were barely kept glowing in small and hushed circles. In the factories in those days nobody dared to call himself “Bolshevik” for fear not only of arrest, but of a beating from the backward workers”.*

*The Bolshevik faction in the Duma, weak in its personnel, had not risen at the outbreak of the war to the height of its task. Along with the Menshevik deputies, it introduced a declaration in which it promised “to defend the cultural weal of the people against all attacks wheresoever originating.” The Duma underlined with applause this yielding of a position. Not one of the Russian organizations or groups of the party took the openly defeatist position which Lenin came out for abroad. The percentage of patriots among the Bolsheviks, however, was insignificant. In contrast to the Narodniks and Mensheviks, the Bolsheviks began in 1914 to develop among the masses a printed and oral agitation against the war”.*

The Bolsheviks had been constituted as a formally independent faction in 1912, almost a decade after the split of the Russian Social Democratic Labor Party (RSDLP). From then on, they signed as the RSDLP (b), (the *b* was for "majority", "Bolshevik" in Russian). However, they were far from forming a body that was organizationally and doctrinally monolithic. As Trotsky tells us above, from the first moment, the Bolshevik leadership in the interior of Russia would take lukewarm, even *defensist*, positions that would re-emerge in the different phases of the revolutionary process. It can be said without fear that if it had been for their leadership during the war, the Bolsheviks could never have become anything other than the left wing of Menshevism, itself being the left wing of an already reactionary bourgeoisie.

But the RSDLP (b) was more than its formal direction. Of course, Lenin was in exile. It was also Rosa Luxemburg, Karl Liebknecht, Jogiches, Trotsky and a few more of the scant minority of leaders of the International that had taken a clear internationalist position at the outbreak of war. Moreover, they had been the first to raise the slogan of *revolutionary defeatism*, converting the call to turn the imperialist war into a revolutionary civil war into the axis of political refinement of revolutionaries of a new period.

*“Let us raise high the banner of civil war! Imperialism sets at hazard the fate of European culture: this war will soon be followed by others, unless there are a series of successful revolutions. The story about this being the “last war” is a hollow and dangerous fabrication, a piece of philistine “mythology” (as Golos aptly puts it). The proletarian banner of civil war will rally together, not only hundreds of thousands of class-conscious workers but millions of semi-proletarians and petty bourgeois, now deceived by chauvinism, but whom the horrors of war will not only intimidate and depress, but also enlighten, teach, arouse, organize,*

*steel and prepare for the war against the bourgeoisie of their "own" country and "foreign" countries*

*The Second International is dead, overcome by opportunism. Down with opportunism, and long live the Third International".*

- Lenin, *The Position and Tasks of the Socialist International*

But the image of a prophetic Lenin *tele-directing* a monolithic party from exile is a Stalinist fantasy that was invented later on for sordid reasons. Lenin, even if he was admired and listened to by the base of the party, was far from unquestioned. On the contrary, he was often isolated and in a minority at critical moments. The party's own leadership, furthermore, often cut off his access to the press and internal communications until the eve of October.

However, the exaltation of centralism in the debate with the ethnic workers groups and the *gymnastics* of the constant reorganizations that succeeded the arrests and repressive waves, had configured the Bolsheviks as a centralized, but not bureaucratic, organization: in spite of the importance of the central organs, the entire organization ended up being a determining part of all strategic decision making.

And the war changed the physiognomy and social composition of the base of the organization. A good chunk of the intelligentsia and the students had deserted the organization. The local committees were isolated in critical moments and could not count on good writers that were better trained than the militant workers. Nor could they count on a relation with the center of the organization. Revolutionary defeatism soon germinated in them, not under the influence of a defensist leadership, but as a direct expression of the experience of the workers who had lived through 1905. Shliapnikov, who would lead the Petrograd committee, recovered the slogans of the local committee of Russia's main workers' center in July 1914 – when the war just beginning. These slogans were far removed from defensist positions.

*"Down with the war!" "War on war!" must roll powerfully across city and hamlet alike across the width of our Russia. Workers must remember that they do not have enemies over the frontier: everywhere the working class is oppressed by the rich and the power of the property-owners... Long live world-wide labor solidarity!!"*

- Alexander Shlyapnikov, *On the Eve of 1917*

But we mustn't delude ourselves. The militarization of production, the direct repression, striking workers being sent to the front as punishment, the arrest of the Bolshevik deputies in the Duma and the general fall in morale temporarily broke down the RSDLP (b).

*"The war produced a dreadful desolation in the underground movement. After the arrest of the Duma faction the Bolsheviks had no centralized party organization at all. The local committees had an episodic existence, and often had no connections with the workers districts. Only scattered groups, circles and solitary individuals did anything. However, the reviving strike movement gave them some spirit and some strength in the factories. They gradually began to find each other and build up the district connections".*

The slogan "Down with the war!" would only begin to resonate a year later, when the conditions imposed by the war would transform the perception of war among the workers.

*"In August 1915, the tsarist ministers were telling each other that the workers "are everywhere hunting out treason, betrayal and sabotage in behalf of the Germans, and are enthusiastic in the search for those guilty of our failures at the front." It is true that in that period the awakening mass-criticism – in part sincerely and in part for the sake of defensive coloration – often adopted the standpoint of "defense of the fatherland." But that idea was only a point of departure. The discontent of the workers was digging a deeper and deeper course, silencing the masters, the Black Hundred workers, the servants of the administration, permitting the worker-Bolsheviks to raise their heads.*

*From criticism the masses pass over to action. Their indignation finds expression first of all in food disturbances, sometimes rising to the height of local riots. Women, old men and boys, in the market or on the open square, feel bolder and more independent than the workers on military duty in the factories. In Moscow in May the movement turns into a pogrom of Germans, although the participants in this are chiefly the scum of the town armed under police protection. Nevertheless, the very possibility of such a pogrom in industrial Moscow proves that the workers are not yet sufficiently awakened to impose their slogans and their discipline upon the disturbed smalltown people. These food disorders, spreading over the whole country, broke the war hypnosis and laid the road to strikes. The inflow of raw labour power to the factories and the greedy scramble for war-profits, brought everywhere a lowering of the conditions of labour, and gave rise to the crudest methods of exploitation. The rise in the cost of living automatically lowered wages. Economic strikes were the inevitable mass reflection – stormy in proportion as they had been delayed. The strikes were accompanied by meetings, adoption of political resolutions, scimmages with the police, not infrequently by shots and casualties.*

*The struggle arose chiefly in the central textile district. On June 5 the police fire a volley at the weavers in Kostroma: 4 killed, 9 wounded. On August 10, the troops fire on the Ivanovo-Voznesensk workers: 16 killed, 30 wounded. In the movement of the textile workers some soldiers of a local battalion are involved. Protest strikes in various parts of the country give answer to the shootings at Ivanovo Voznesensk. Parallel to this goes the economic struggle. The textile workers often march in the front rank. In comparison with the first half of 1914 this movement, as regards strength of pressure and clarity of slogans, represents a big step backward. This is not surprising, since raw masses are to a large extent being drawn into the struggle, and there has been a complete disintegration of the guiding layer of the workers. Nevertheless, even in these first strikes of the war the approach of great battles can be heard. The Minister of Justice, Khvostov, said on the 16th of August: "If there are at present no armed demonstrations of the workers, it is only because they have as yet no organization." Goremykin expressed himself more concisely: "The trouble among the workers' leaders is that they have no organization, since it was broken up by the arrest of the five members of the Duma." The Minister of the Interior added: "We must not amnesty the members of the Duma (Bolsheviks) – they are the organizing center of the movement in its most dangerous form." These people at least made no mistake as to who was the real enemy.*

*While the ministry, even at the moment of its greatest dismay and readiness for liberal concessions, deemed it necessary as before to pound the workers' revolution on the head – i.e. on the Bolsheviks – the big bourgeoisie was trying to fix up a co-operation with the Mensheviks. Frightened by the scope of the strike movement, the liberal industrialists made an attempt to impose patriotic discipline upon the workers by including their elected representatives in the staff of the Military Industrial Committees. The Minister of the Interior complained that it was very difficult to oppose this scheme, fathered by Guchkov. "The whole enterprise," he said, "is being carried out under a patriotic flag, and in the interests of the defense." We must remark, however, that even the police avoided arresting the social-patriots, seeing in them a side partner in the struggle against strikes and revolutionary "excesses." It was indeed upon their too great confidence in the strength of patriotic socialism, that the Secret Service based their conviction that no insurrection would occur while the war lasted...*

*The traditional anniversary of the march of the workers to the Winter Palace, which had passed almost unnoticed the year before, produces a widespread strike on January 9, 1916. The strike movement doubles during this year. Encounters with the police accompany every big and prolonged strike. In contact with the troops, the workers conduct themselves with demonstrative friendliness, and the Secret Police more than once notice this alarming fact".*

The slogan "Down with the war!", raised by the base, was beginning to become incorporated into the demands of strikes that, far from being stopped on their tracks by the granting of concessions by the bosses, were fomented by them. In the RSDLP (b) new perspectives had begun to appear.

*"The underground work revived. In the Police Department, they wrote later: "Ever since the beginning of the war, the Leninists, who have behind them in Russia an overwhelming majority of the underground social-democratic organisations, have in their larger centers (such as Petrograd, Moscow, Kharkov, Kiev, Tula, Kostroma, Vladimir Province, Samara) been issuing in considerable numbers revolutionary appeals with a demand to stop the war, overthrow the existing government, and found a republic. And this work has had its palpable result in workers' strikes and disorders."*

The particular form and acceleration of the crises obscured by the wars, does not lead in itself to the struggle of the workers, but they did encourage its unification.

*"The war industries swelled out, devouring all resources around them and undermining their own foundation. The peacetime branches of production began to die away. In spite of all plannings, nothing came of the regulation of industry. The bureaucracy, incapable of taking this business in hand against the opposition of the powerful Military-Industrial Committees, at the same time refused to turn over the regulating role to the bourgeoisie. The chaos increased. Skilled workers were replaced by unskilled. The coal mines, shops and factories of Poland were soon lost. In the course of the first year of the war a fifth part of the industrial strength of the country was cut off. As much as 50 per cent of production went to supply the needs of the army and the war – including about 75 per cent of the textile production of the country. The overloaded transport proved incapable of supplying factories with the necessary quantity of fuel and raw material. The war not only swallowed up the whole current national income, but seriously began to cut into the basic capital of the country. The industrialists grew less and less willing to grant anything to the workers, and the government, as usual, answered every strike with severe repressions. All this pushed the minds of the workers from the particular to the general, from economics to politics: "We must all strike at once." Thus arose the idea of the general strike. The process of radicalization of the masses is most convincingly reflected in the strike statistics. In 1915, two and a half times fewer workers participated in political strikes than in economic strikes. In 1916, twice as few. In the first few months of 1917, political strikes involved six times as many workers as economic ones. The role of Petrograd is portrayed in one figure: 72 per cent of the political strikers during the years of the war fall to her lot!...*

*By the end of 1916 prices are rising by leaps and bounds. To the inflation and the breakdown of transport, there is added an actual lack of goods. The consumption of the population have been cut down by this time to one-half. The curve of the workers' movement rises sharply. In October the struggle enters its decisive phase, uniting all forms of discontent in one. Petrograd draws back for the February leap. A wave of meetings runs through the factories. The topics: food supplies, high cost of living, war, government. Bolshevik leaflets are distributed; political strikes begin; improvised demonstrations occur at factory gates; cases of fraternisation between certain factories and the soldiers are observed; a stormy protest-strike flares up over the trial of the revolutionary sailors of the Baltic Fleet. The French ambassador calls Premier Sturmer's attention to the fact, become known to him, that some soldiers have shot at the police. Sturmer quiets the ambassador: "The repressions will be ruthless." In November a good-sized group of workers on military duty are removed from the Petrograd factories and sent to the front. The year ends in storm and thunder".*

## The February Revolution

The new year, far from putting a halt to the events, accelerated them. Morale increased with the strikes: Shliapnikov writes to Lenin: *some comrades take the position that we are living in an era of social revolution.* And yet, the possibility of a revolutionary way out seems distant... even to its protagonists.

*"The 23rd of February was International Woman's Day. The social-democratic circles had intended to mark this day in a general manner: by meetings, speeches, leaflets. It had not occurred to anyone that it might become the first day of the revolution. Not a single organisation called for strikes on that day. What is more, even a Bolshevik organization, and a most militant one-the Vyborg borough committee, all workers - was opposing strikes. The temper of the masses, according to Kayurov, one of the leaders in the workers' district, was very tense; any strike would threaten to turn into an open fight. But since the committee thought, the time unripe for militant action-the party not strong enough and the workers having too few contacts with the soldiers-they decided not to call for strikes but to prepare for revolutionary action at some indefinite time in the future. Such was the course followed by the committee on the eve of the 23rd of February, and everyone seemed to accept it. On the following morning, however, in spite of all directives, the women textile workers in several factories went on strike, and sent delegates to the metal workers with an appeal for support. "With reluctance," writes Kayurov, "the Bolsheviks agreed to this, and they were followed by the workers Mensheviks and Social Revolutionaries. But once there is a mass strike, one must call everybody into the streets and take the lead." Such was Kayurov's decision, and the Vyborg committee had to agree to it. "The idea of going into the streets had long been ripening among the workers; only at that moment nobody imagined where it would lead." Let us keep in mind this testimony of a participant, important for understanding the mechanics of the events. It was taken for granted that in case of a demonstration the soldiers would be brought out into the streets against the workers. What would that lead to? This was wartime; the authorities were in no mood for joking. On the other hand, "reserve" soldier in wartime is nothing like an old soldier of the regular army. Is he really so formidable? In revolutionary circles, they had discussed this much, but rather abstractly. For no one, positively no one we can assert this categorically upon the basis of all the data-then thought that February 23 was to mark the beginning of a decisive drive against absolutism. The talk was of a demonstration which had indefinite, but in any case limited, perspectives. Thus the fact is that the February revolution was begun from below, overcoming the resistance of its own revolutionary organizations, the initiative being taken of their own accord by the most oppressed and downtrodden part of the proletariat -the women textile workers, among them no doubt many soldiers' wives. The overgrown breadlines had provided the last stimulus. About 90,000 workers, men and women, were on strike that day. The fighting mood expressed itself in demonstrations, meetings, encounters with the police. The movement began in the Vyborg district with its large industrial establishments; thence it crossed over to the Petersburg side. There were no strikes or demonstrations elsewhere, according to the testimony of the secret police. On that day detachments of troops were called in to assist the police-evidently not many of them -but there were no encounters with them. A mass of women, not all of them workers, flocked to the municipal дума demanding bread. It was like demanding milk from a he-goat. Red banners appeared in different parts of the city, and inscriptions on them showed*

*that the workers wanted bread, but neither autocracy nor war. Woman's Day passed successfully, with enthusiasm and without victims. But what it concealed in itself, no one had guessed even by nightfall.*

*On the following day, the movement not only fails to diminish, but doubles. About one-half of the industrial workers of Petrograd are on strike on the 24th of February. The workers come to the factories in the morning; instead of going to work they hold meetings; then begin processions toward the center. New districts and new groups of the population are drawn into the movement. The slogan "Bread!" is crowded out or obscured by louder slogans: "Down with autocracy!" "Down with the war!" Continuous demonstrations on the Nevsky -first compact masses of workmen singing revolutionary songs, later a motley crowd of city folk interspersed with the blue caps of students. "The promenading crowd was sympathetically disposed toward us, and soldiers in some of the war-hospitals greeted us by waving whatever was at hand"...*

*Throughout the entire [following] day, crowds of people poured from one part of the city to another. They were persistently dispelled by the police, stopped and crowded back by cavalry detachments and occasionally by infantry. Along with shouts of "Down with the police!" was heard oftener and oftener a "Hurrah!" addressed to the Cossacks. That was significant. Toward the police the crowd showed ferocious hatred. They routed the mounted police with whistles, stones, and pieces of ice. In a totally different way the workers approached the soldiers. Around the barracks, sentinels, patrols and lines of soldiers stood groups of working men and women exchanging friendly words with the army men. This was a new stage, due to the growth of the strike and the personal meeting of the worker with the army. Such a stage is inevitable in every revolution. But it always seems new, and does in fact occur differently every time: those who have read and written about it do not recognize the thing when they see it...*

*On February 23, under the flag of "Woman's Day", began the long-ripe and long-withheld uprising of the Petrograd working masses. The first step of the insurrection was the strike. In the course of three days it broadened and became practically general. This alone gave assurance to the masses and carried them forward. Becoming more and more aggressive, the strike merged with the demonstrations, which were bringing the revolutionary mass face to face with the troops. This raised the problem as a whole to the higher level where things are solved by force of arms. The first days brought a number of individual successes, but these were more symptomatic than substantial.*

*A revolutionary uprising that spreads over a number of days can develop victoriously only in case it ascends step by step, and scores one success after another. A pause in its growth is dangerous; a prolonged marking of time, fatal. But even successes by themselves are not enough; the masses must know about them in time, and have time to understand their value. It is possible to let slip a victory at the very moment when it is within arm's reach. This has happened in history. The first three days were days of uninterrupted increase in the extent and acuteness of the strife. But for this very reason the movement had arrived at a level where mere symptomatic successes were not enough. The entire active mass of the people had come out on the streets. It was settling accounts with the police successfully and easily. In the last two days, the troops had been drawn into the events-on the second day, cavalry, on the third, the infantry too. They*

barred the way, pushed and crowded back the masses, sometimes connived with them, but almost never resorted to firearms. Those in command were slow to change their plan, partly because they underestimated what was happening-the faulty vision of the reaction supplemented that of the leaders of the revolution-partly because they lacked confidence in the troops. But exactly on the third day, the force of the developing struggle, as well as the tsar's command, made it necessary for the government to send the troops into action in dead earnest. The workers understood this, especially their advanced ranks; the dragoons had already done some shooting the day before. Both sides now faced the issue unequivocally...

The leaders in both camps guessed and vacillated, for not one of them could estimate a priori the relation of forces. External indications ceased absolutely to serve as a measure. Indeed, one of the chief features of a revolutionary crisis consists in this sharp contradiction between the present consciousness and the old forms of social relationships. A new relation of forces was mysteriously implanting itself in the consciousness of the workers and soldiers. It was precisely the government's offensive, called forth by the previous offensive of the revolutionary masses, which transformed the new relation of forces from a potential to an active state. The worker looked thirstily and commandingly into the eyes of the soldier, and the soldier anxiously and diffidently looked away. This meant that, in a way, the soldier could no longer answer for himself. The worker approached the soldier more boldly. The soldier sullenly, but without hostility-guiltily rather-refused to answer. Or sometimes now more and more often-he answered with pretended severity in order to conceal how anxiously his heart was beating in his breast. Thus, the change was accomplished. The soldier was, clearly shaking off his soldiery. In doing so he could not immediately recognize himself. The authorities said that the revolution intoxicated the soldier. To the soldier it seemed, on the contrary, that he was sobering up from the opium of the barracks. Thus, the decisive day was prepared-the 27th of February...

In fact, the districts and barracks were left to themselves. The first proclamation to the army was released only on the 26th by one of the Social Democratic organizations close to the Bolsheviks. This proclamation, rather hesitant in character-not even containing an appeal to come over to the people-was distributed throughout all the city districts on the morning of the 27th. "However," testifies Yurenev, the leader of this organization, "the tempo of the revolutionary events was such that our slogans were already lagging behind it. By the time the leaflets had penetrated into the thick of the troops, the latter had already come over." As the Bolshevik center - Shliapnikov, at the demand of Chugurin one of the best worker-leaders of the February days, finally wrote an appeal to the soldiers on the morning of the 27th. Was it even published? At best, it might have come in at the finish. It could not possibly have influenced the events of February 27. We must lay it down as a general rule for those days that the higher the leaders, the further they lagged behind.

At a morning conference in the home of the indefatigable Kayurov, where over forty shop and factory representatives had assembled, a majority spoke for continuing the movement. A majority, but not all. Too bad we cannot establish what majority, but in those hours there was no time for records. Anyway, the decision was belated. The meeting was interrupted by the intoxicating news of the soldiers' insurrection and the opening of the gaols".

## Dual Power and The April Theses

The February revolution had swept away the old tsarist political apparatus with one swipe without any party seeing it coming, not even the Bolsheviks, whose leadership - even in St. Petersburg - was surpassed by the events and their social base. But if no party expected it, in whose hands did power fall?

The bourgeoisie rightly felt that power had fallen into their hands without even having to fight for it... even worse, they had fought on other side of the barricade. The proletariat had handed that power to the bourgeoisie by overthrowing tsarism through a strictly political revolution - that is, without touching the capital-labor relationship - nor proposing an alternative power, since it did not have an insurrectionary organization of its own.

The bourgeois and petty-bourgeois parties (the *socialist-revolutionaries* and the Mensheviks), the majority in the Duma, hastily assembled a committee to elect a "provisional government". Its main function was to call elections and to set in motion a democratic bourgeois parliamentary republic... that would maintain the war effort that had elevated the economic strength of the bourgeoisie over the ruling aristocracy, which in turn was strengthened by its international relations.

But on the same day, the 28th, when there were still scattered battles in the streets of Petrograd and when much of Russia was not even aware that the tsarist regime had fallen, the soviet elections took place.

The initiative had been promoted -before the February days- by the Mensheviks who had seen in the old insurrectionary tool an opportunity to turn the organ of the mass strike and the 1905 insurrection into instrument that would mobilize workers for war. Their form of election gave one vote to each factory, which - in theory - assured them the majority of workers' representation, since their strength was in the small enterprises, and also allowed the petty bourgeoisie to win the majority by giving two-thirds of the representation to the soviets of soldiers. Corresponding to the social demography of the country, the vast majority of soldiers were peasants and the soldiers' soviets were often represented by their officers.

Objectively, two class powers were being established, two subjects of a civil war. But subjectively, the revolution -or, in other words: the proletariat that had led it- was not even posed as a possibility.

However, the goals of February were not just *"Down with autocracy!"* (the slogan of the bourgeois-democratic revolution); February also planted the slogan *"Down with war!"*: a slogan that the Russian bourgeoisie and the agrarian petty-bourgeoisie - the peasantry - could not make their own and that the poor peasantry mistrusted. Only the workers felt it to be at the center of their own struggle. *"Down with war!"* was the transitional slogan, the slogan that is *anti-capitalist in of itself* that drives the struggle beyond where it is placed by its own protagonists.

*"Russia is the most petty-bourgeois country in the world, and the upper sections of the petty bourgeoisie are directly interested in continuing the war. The well-to-do peasants, like the capitalists, are profiting by the war".*

- Lenin, *Speech in Favor of the Resolution on the War April 27 (May 10)*

The underlying contradiction with the dual power of February is actually a fundamental contradiction between the bourgeois objectives of the revolution and the class objectives of the proletariat carrying out the revolution, and ultimately between Russian development – ready for a bourgeois revolution - and development on a global scale- which itself made socialist revolution an *immediate* historical necessity. It is that tension, that contradiction in which the dominant element that defined the situation was, evidently, the global one, converting the Russian revolution into a *permanent revolution*.

Historical contradictions of such depth cannot be saved by temporary arrangements, but neither are they evident at first to their protagonists.

*"For Bolshevism, the first months of the revolution had been a period of bewilderment and vacillation. In the "manifesto" of the Bolshevik Central Committee, drawn up just after the victory of the insurrection, we read that "the workers of the shops and factories, and likewise the mutinied troops, must immediately elect their representatives to the Provisional Revolutionary Government". The manifesto was printed in the official organ of the Soviet without comment or objection, as though the question were a purely academic one. But the leading Bolsheviks themselves also regarded their slogans as purely demonstrative. They behaved not like representatives of a proletarian party preparing an independent struggle for power, but like the left wing of a democracy, which, having announced its principles, intended for an indefinite time to play the part of loyal opposition.*

*Sukhanov asserts that at the sitting of the Executive Committee on March 1 the central question at issue was merely as to the conditions of the handing over of power. Against the thing itself-the formation of a bourgeois government-not one voice was raised, notwithstanding that out of 39 members of the Executive Committee, 11 were Bolsheviks or their adherents, and moreover three members of the Bolshevik center,*

*Zalutsky, Shliapnikov and Molotov, were present at the sitting. In the Soviet on the next day, according to the report of Shliapnikov himself, out of 400 deputies present, only 19 voted against the transfer of power to the bourgeoisie-and this although there were already 40 in the Bolshevik faction. The voting itself passed off in a purely formal parliamentary manner, without any clear counter-proposition from the Bolsheviks, without conflict, and without any agitation whatever in the Bolshevik press.*

*On the 4th of March the Bureau of the Bolshevik Central Committee adopted a resolution on the counter-revolutionary character of the Provisional Government, and the necessity of steering a course towards the democratic dictatorship of the proletariat and the peasantry. The Petrograd committee, rightly regarding this resolution as academic-since it gave no directives for to-day's action-approached the problem from the opposite angle. "Taking cognizance of the resolution on the Provisional Government adopted by the Soviet," it announces that "it will not oppose the power of the Provisional Government in so far as", etc.... In essence, this was the position of the Mensheviks and Social Revolutionaries only moved back to the second line trenches. This openly opportunist resolution of the Petrograd Committee contradicted only in a formal way the resolution of the Central Committee, whose academic character had meant nothing politically but putting up with a fait accompli.*

*This readiness to submit silently, or with reservations, to the government of the bourgeoisie did not have by any means the entire sympathy of the party. The Bolshevik workers met the Provisional Government from the first as a hostile rampart unexpectedly grown up in their path. The Vyborg Committee held meetings of thousands of workers and soldiers, which almost unanimously adopted resolutions on the necessity for a seizure of power by the soviets. An active participant in this agitation, Dingelstedt, testifies: "There was, not one meeting, not one workers' meeting, which would have voted down such a resolution from us if there had only been somebody to present it". The Mensheviks and Social Revolutionaries were afraid in those first days to appear openly before audiences of workers and soldiers with their formulation of the question of power. A resolution of the Vyborg workers, in view of its popularity, was printed and pasted up as a placard. But the Petrograd Committee put an absolute ban upon this resolution, and the Vyborg workers were compelled to submit.*

*On the question of the social content of the revolution and the prospects of its development was no less cloudy. Shliapnikov recalls: "We agreed with the Mensheviks that we were passing through the period of the breakdown of feudal relations, and that in their place would appear all kinds of freedoms proper to bourgeois relations". Pravda said in its first number: "The fundamental problem is to establish a democratic republic". In an instruction to the workers' deputies, the Moscow Committee announced: "The proletariat aims to achieve freedom for the struggle for socialism, its ultimate goal". This traditional reference to the "ultimate goal" sufficiently emphasizes the historic distance from socialism. Further than this nobody ventured. The fear to go beyond the boundaries of a democratic revolution dictated a policy of waiting, of accommodation, and of actual retreat before the Compromisers.*

*It is easy to imagine how heavily this political characterlessness of the center influenced the provinces. We will confine ourselves to the testimony of one of the Saratov organizations. "Our party after taking an active part in the insurrection has evidently lost its influence with the masses, and this has been caught up by the Mensheviks and Social Revolutionaries. Nobody knew what the slogans of the Bolsheviks were...It was a very unpleasant picture".*

*The left Bolsheviks, especially the workers, tried with all their force to break through this quarantine. But they did not know how to refute the premise about the bourgeois character of the revolution and the danger of an isolation of the proletariat. They submitted, gritting their teeth, to the directions of the leaders. There were various conflicting currents in Bolshevism from the very first day, but no one of them carried its thoughts through to the end.*

*Pravda reflected this cloudy and unstable intellectual state of the party, and did not bring any unity into it. The situation became still more complicated toward the middle of March, after the arrival from exile of Kamenev and Stalin, who abruptly turned the helm of the official party policy to the right".*

The historic speciality of the petty-bourgeoisie, "harmonism" (the idea that there can be "harmony" between the proletariat and the bourgeoisie), came to permeate the entire Bolshevik direction. The concept that tried to sustain this impossible harmony revolved, as could not be otherwise, around the attitude to war. This concept came to known as *defensism*.

*"The overthrow of tsarism in February 1917 signaled, of course, a gigantic leap forward. But if we take February within the limits of February alone, i.e., if we take it not as a step towards October, then it meant no more than this: that Russia was approximating a bourgeois republic like, for example, France. The petty bourgeois revolutionary parties, as is their wont, considered the February revolution to be neither bourgeois nor a step toward a socialist revolution, but as some sort of self-sufficing "democratic" entity. And upon this they constructed the ideology of revolutionary defensism. They were defending, if you please, not the rule of any one class but "revolution" and "democracy." But even in our own party the revolutionary impetus of February engendered at first an extreme confusion of political perspectives. As a matter of fact, during the March days, Pravda held a position much closer to revolutionary defensism than to the position of Lenin.*

*"When one army stands opposed to another army," we read in one of its editorial articles, "no policy could be more absurd than the policy of proposing that one of them should lay down arms and go home. Such a policy would not be a policy of peace, but a policy of enslavement, a policy to be scornfully rejected by a free people. No. The people will remain intrepidly at their post, answering bullet with bullet and shell with shell. This is beyond dispute. We must not allow any disorganization of the armed forces of the revolution." (Pravda, No.9, March 15, 1917, in the article No Secret Diplomacy)*

*We find here no mention of classes, of the oppressors and the oppressed; there is, instead, talk of a "free people"; there are no classes struggling for power but, instead, a free people are "remaining at their post." The ideas as well as the formulas are defensist through and through! And further in the same article:*

*"Our slogan is not the empty cry 'Down with war! – which means the disorganization of the revolutionary army and of the army that is becoming ever more revolutionary. Our slogan is bring pressure [!] to bear on the Provisional Government so as to compel it to make, without fail, openly and before the eyes of world democracy [!], an attempt [!] to induce [!] all the warring countries to initiate immediate negotiations to end the world war. Till then let everyone [!] remain at his post [!]."*

*The program of exerting pressure on an imperialist government so as to "induce" it to pursue a pious course was the program of Kautsky and Ledebour in Germany, Jean Longuet in France, MacDonald in England; but it was never the program of Bolshevism. In conclusion, the article not only extends the "warmest greetings" to the notorious manifesto of the Petrograd Soviet addressed To the Peoples of the World (a manifesto permeated from beginning to end with the spirit of revolutionary defensism), but underscores "with pleasure" the solidarity of the editorial board with the openly defensist resolutions adopted at two meetings in Petrograd. Of these resolutions it is enough to say that one runs as follows:*

*"If the democratic forces in Germany and Austria pay no heed to our voice [i.e., the 'voice' of the Provisional Government and of the conciliationist soviet – L.T.], then we shall defend our **fatherland** to the last drop of our blood." (Pravda, No.9, March 15, 1917)*

*The above quoted article is not an exception. On the contrary it quite accurately expresses the position of Pravda prior to Lenin's return to Russia. Thus, in the next issue of the paper, in an article On the War, although it contains some criticism of the Manifesto to the Peoples of the World, the following occurs: "It is impossible not to hail yesterday's proclamation of the Petrograd Soviet of Workers' and Soldiers' Deputies to the peoples of the world, summoning them to force their governments to bring the slaughter to an end." (Pravda, No.10, March 16, 1917). And where should a way out of war be sought? The article gives the following answer: "The way out is the path of bringing pressure to bear on the Provisional Government with the demand that the government proclaim its readiness to begin immediate negotiations for peace."*

*We could adduce many similar quotations, covertly defensist and conciliationist in character. During this same period, and even weeks earlier, Lenin, who had not yet freed himself from his Zurich cage, was thundering in his Letters from Afar (most of these letters never reached Pravda) against the faintest hint of any concessions to defensism and conciliationism. "It is absolutely impermissible," he wrote on March 9, discerning the image of revolutionary events in the distorted mirror of capitalist dispatches, "it is absolutely impermissible to conceal from ourselves and from the people that this government wants to continue the imperialist war, that it is an agent of British capital, that it wants to restore the monarchy and strengthen*

*the rule of the landlords and capitalists." And later, on March 12, he said: "To urge that government to conclude a democratic peace is like preaching virtue to brothel keepers." At the time when Pravda was advocating "exerting pressure" on the Provisional Government in order to induce it to intervene in favor of peace "before the eyes of world democracy," Lenin was writing: "To urge the Guchkov-Milyukov government to conclude a speedy, honest, democratic and good neighborly peace is like the good village priest urging the landlords and the merchants to 'walk in the way of God', to love their neighbors and to turn the other cheek" [CW, (Moscow 1954), Vol.23, Letters from Afar (March 9 and 12, 1917), pp. 315-336]*

*On April 4, the day after his arrival at Petrograd, Lenin came out decisively against the position of Pravda on the question of war and peace. He wrote: "No support for the Provisional Government; the utter falsity of all its promises should be made clear, particularly of those relating to the renunciation of annexations. Exposure in place of the impermissible, illusion breeding 'demand' that this government, a government of capitalists, should cease to be an imperialist government." [CW, Vol.24, The Tasks of the Proletariat in the Present Revolution (April 4, 1917), p.22] It goes without saying that the proclamation issued by the conciliators on March 14, which had met with so many compliments from Pravda, was characterized by Lenin only as "notorious" and "muddled." It is the height of hypocrisy to summon other nations to break with their bankers while simultaneously forming a coalition government with the bankers of one's own country.*

*"The Center' all vow and declare that they are Marxists and internationalists, that they are for peace, for bringing every kind of 'pressure' to bear upon the governments, for 'demanding' in every way that their own government should 'ascertain the will of the people for peace'." [CW, Vol.24, Tasks of the Proletariat in Our Revolution - a Draft Platform for the Proletarian Party (May 28, 1917), p.76].*

*But here someone may at first glance raise an objection: Ought a revolutionary party to refuse to "exercise pressure" on the bourgeoisie and its government? Certainly not. The exercise of pressure on a bourgeois government is the road of reform. A revolutionary Marxist party does not reject reforms. But the road of reform serves a useful purpose in subsidiary and not in fundamental questions. State power cannot be obtained by reforms. "Pressure" can never induce the bourgeoisie to change its policy on a question that involves its whole fate. The war created a revolutionary situation precisely by reason of the fact that it left no room for any reformist "pressure." The only alternative was either to go the whole way with the bourgeoisie, or to rouse the masses against it so as to wrest the power from its hands. In the first case it might have been possible to secure from the bourgeoisie some kind of sop with regard to home policy, on the condition of unqualified support of their foreign imperialist policy. For this very reason, social reformism transformed itself openly, at the outset of the war, into social imperialism. For the same reason the genuinely revolutionary elements were forced to initiate the creation of this new International.*

*The point of view of Pravda was not proletarian and revolutionary but democratic-defensist, even though vacillating in its defensism. We had overthrown tsarism, we should now exercise pressure on our own democratic government. The latter must propose peace to the peoples of the world. If the German democracy proves incapable of exerting due pressure on its own government, then we shall defend our "fatherland" to the last drop of blood. The prospect of peace is not posed as an independent task of the working class which the workers are called upon to achieve over the head of the Provisional Government, because the conquest of power by the proletariat is not posed as a practical revolutionary task. Yet these two tasks are inextricably bound together".*

- Leon Trotsky, *The Lessons Against War and Defensism* from *The Lessons of October*

Trotsky took us by the hand of defensism to the Finnish station in Petersburg on April 3, 1917: the famous arrival of Lenin.

Lenin, who read the Pravda in Zurich and then during his transit through Sweden, was horrified by the defensist content of the articles. He had even begun to argue angrily on the train itself with Kamenev who had come to the Finnish border to meet him on the train.

*"We had hardly got into the car and sat down", writes Raskolnikov, a young naval officer and a Bolshevik, "when Vladimir Llych flung at Kamenev: 'What's this you're writing in Pravda? We saw several numbers and gave it to you good and proper'".*

- Raskolnikov quoted by Trotsky in *History of the Russian Revolution*

A profound difference was being staged between Lenin – linked to the perspective of the left at the base of the party - and Pravda's leadership - that is, the leadership of the party in the interior- which would later be known as the *old Bolsheviks*.

*"Without exception, they all at the time of the February 1917 Revolution adopted the vulgar position of democratic Left Wingers. Not a single one of them raised the slogan of the workers' struggle for power. They all regarded the course toward a socialist revolution as absurd or – still worse – as 'Trotskyism'. In this spirit, they led the party up to the time of Lenin's arrival from abroad and the publication of his famous April Theses. After this, Kamenev, already in direct struggle against Lenin, openly tried to form a democratic wing of Bolshevism. Later he was joined by Zinoviev, who had arrived with Lenin. Stalin, heavily compromised by his social- patriotic position, stepped to the sidelines. He let the party forget his miserable articles and speeches of the decisive March weeks and gradually edged over to Lenin's standpoint".*

Contrary to Stalinist mythology, Lenin was not viewed as a messiah by a mass of people lacking leadership. Lenin rather confronted a confused and divided party whose leadership was "at the gates of Menshevism". When the train stopped at the platform of the station in Petersburg, the band starts with the *Marseillaise*, the anthem of the bourgeois revolution. It was the last straw: Lenin asked them to stop and play the *Internationale*. Very few knew the words.

*"The description of the official meeting which took place in the so-called "Tsar's Room" of the Finland station, constitutes a very lively page in the many-volumed and rather faded memoirs of Sukhanov.*

*"Lenin walked, or rather ran, into the 'Tsar's Room' in a round hat, his face chilled, and a luxurious bouquet in his arms. Hurrying to the middle of the room, he stopped still in front of Cheidze as though he had run into a completely, unexpected obstacle. And here Cheidze, not abandoning his previous melancholy look, pronounced the following 'speech of greeting,' carefully, preserving not only the spirit and voice of a moral instructor: 'Comrade Lenin, in the name of the Petrograd Soviet and the whole revolution. We welcome you to Russia ... but we consider that the chief task of the revolutionary democracy at present is to defend our revolution against every kind of attack both from within and from without ... We hope that you will join us in striving towards this goal.' Cheidze ceased. I was dismayed with the unexpectedness of it. But Lenin, it seemed, knew well how to deal with all that. He stood*

*there looking as though what was happening did not concern him in the least, glanced from one side to the other, looked over the surrounding public, and even examined the ceiling to the 'Tsar's Room' while rearranging his bouquet (which harmonised rather badly with his whole figure), and finally, having turned completely away from the delegates of the Executive Committee, 'answered' thus: 'Dear comrades, soldiers, sailors and workers, I am happy to greet in you the victorious Russian revolution, to greet you as the advance guard of the international proletarian army ... The hour is not far when, at the summons of our comrade Karl Liebknecht, the people will turn their weapons against their capitalist exploiters ... The Russian revolution achieved by you has opened a new, epoch. Long live the world wide socialist revolution'!"*

*Sukhanov is right – the bouquet harmonized badly with the figure of Lenin, and doubtless hindered and embarrassed him with its inappropriateness to the austere background of events. In general, as it happens, Lenin did not like flowers in a bouquet. But doubtless he was far more embarrassed by that official and hypocritical Sunday school greeting in the parade room of a station. Cheidze was better than his speech of greeting. He was a little timid of Lenin. But they undoubtedly had told him that it was necessary to pull up on the "sectarian" from the very beginning. To supplement Cheidze's speech, which had demonstrated the pitiable level of the leadership, a young naval commander, speaking in the name of the sailors, was brilliant enough to express the hope that Lenin might become a member of the Provisional Government. Thus, the February revolution, garrulous and flabby and still rather stupid, greeted the man who had arrived with a resolute determination to set it straight both in thought and in will. Those first impressions, multiplying tenfold the alarm which he had brought with him, produced a feeling of protest in Lenin which it was difficult to restrain. How much more satisfactory to roll up his sleeves! Appealing from Cheidze to the sailors and workers, from the defense of the Fatherland to international revolution, from the Provisional*

*Government to Liebknecht, Lenin merely gave a short rehearsal there at the station of his whole future policy.*

*In the palace of Kshesinskaia, Bolshevik headquarters in the satin nest of a court ballerina – that combination must have amused Lenin's always lively irony – greetings began again. This was too much. Lenin endured the flood of eulogistic speeches like an impatient pedestrian waiting in a doorway for the rain to stop. He felt the sincere joyfulness at his arrival, but was bothered by its verbosity. The very tone of the official greetings seemed to him imitative, affected – in a word borrowed from the petty bourgeois democracy, declamatory, sentimental and false. He saw that the revolution, before having even defined its problems and tasks, had already created its tiresome etiquette. He smiled a good-natured reproach, looked at his watch, and from time to time doubtless gave an unrestrained yawn. The echo of the last greeting had not died away, when this unusual guest let loose upon that audience a cataract of passionate thought which at times sounded almost like a lashing. At that period, the stenographic art was not yet open to Bolshevism. Nobody made notes. All were too absorbed in what was happening. The speeches have not been preserved. There remain only general impressions in the memoirs of the listeners. And these have been edited by the lapse of time; rapture has been added to them, and fright washed away. The fundamental impression made by Lenin's speech even among those nearest to him was one of fright. All the accepted formulas, which with innumerable repetition had acquired in the course of a month a seemingly unshakeable permanence, were exploded one after another before the eyes of that audience. The short Leninist reply at the station, tossed out over the head of the startled Cheidze, was here developed into a two-hour speech addressed directly to the Petrograd cadres of Bolshevism...*

*"On the journey here with my comrades," said Lenin, according to Sukhanov's report – "I was expecting they would take us directly from the station to Peter and Paul. We are far from that, it seems. But let us not give up the hope that it will happen, that we shall not escape it." For the others at that time the development of the revolution was identical, with a strengthening of the democracy; for Lenin the nearest prospect led straight to the Peter and Paul prison-fortress. It seemed a sinister joke. But Lenin was not joking, nor was the revolution joking. "He swept aside legislative agrarian reform," complains Sukhanov, "along with all the rest of the policies of the Soviet. He spoke for an organized seizure of the land by the peasants, not anticipating ... any governmental power at all." "We don't need any parliamentary republic. We don't need any bourgeois democracy. We don't need any government except the Soviet of workers', soldiers', and farmhands' deputies!"*

*At the same time Lenin sharply separated himself from Soviet majority, tossing them over into the camp of the enemy. That alone was enough in those days to make his listeners dizzy!" "Only the Zimmerwald Left stands guard over the proletarian interests and the world revolution" – thus Sukhanov reports, with indignation, the thoughts of Lenin, "The rest are the same old opportunist speaking pretty words but in reality betraying the cause of socialism and the work masses." Raskolnikov supplements Sukhanov: "He decisively assailed the tactics pursued before his arrival by the ruling party groups and by individual comrades. The most responsible workers were here. But for them too the words of Ilych were a veritable revelation. They laid down a Rubicon between the tactics of yesterday and today," That Rubicon, as we shall*

see was not laid down at once. There was no discussion of the speech. All were too much astounded, and each wanted a chance to collect his thoughts. "I came out on the street," concludes Sukhanov, "feeling as though on that night I had been flogged over the head with a flail. Only one thing was clear: There was no place for me, a non-party man, beside Lenin!" Indeed not! The next day Lenin presented to the party a short written exposition of his views, which under the name of *Theses of April 4* has become one of the most important documents of the revolution. The theses expressed simple thoughts in simple words comprehensible to all: The republic which has issued from the February revolution is not our republic, and the war which it is now raging is not our war, the task of the Bolsheviks is to overthrow the imperialist government. But this government rests upon the support of the Social Revolutionaries and Mensheviks, who in turn are supported by the trustfulness of the masses of the people. We are in the minority. In these circumstances, there can be no talk of violence from our side. We must teach the masses not to trust the Compromisers and defensists. "We must patiently explain." The success of this policy, dictated by the whole existing situation, is assured, and it will bring us to the dictatorship of the proletariat, and so beyond the boundaries of the bourgeois régime. We will break absolutely with capital, publish its secret treaties, and summon the workers of the whole world to cast loose from the bourgeoisie and put an end to the war. We are beginning the international revolution. Only its success will confirm our success, and guarantee a transition to the socialist régime. These theses of Lenin were published in his own name and his only, the central institutions of the party met them with a hostility softened only by bewilderment. Nobody – not one organization, group or individual – affixed his signature to them...

What we already know of the activity of the party in March reveals the deepest possible contradiction between Lenin and the Petersburg leadership. This contradiction reached its highest intensity exactly at the moment of Lenin's arrival. Simultaneously with the All-Russian Conference of representatives, of 82 soviets, where Kamenev and Stalin voted for the resolution on sovereignty introduced by the Social Revolutionaries and Mensheviks, there took place in Petrograd a party conference of Bolsheviks assembled from all over Russia. This conference, at the very end of which Lenin arrived, has an exceptional interest for anyone wishing to characterize the mood and opinions of the party and all its upper layers as they issued from the war. A reading of the reports, to this day unpublished, frequently produces a feeling of amazement: is it possible that a party represented by these delegates will after seven months seize the power with an iron hand?

A month had already passed since the uprising – a long period for a revolution, as also for a war. Nevertheless, opinions were not defined in the party on the most basic questions of the revolution. Extreme patriots such as Voitinsky, Eliava, and others, participated in the conference alongside of those who considered themselves internationalists. The percentage of outspoken patriots, incomparably less than among the Mensheviks, was nevertheless considerable. The conference as a whole did not decide the question whether to break with its own patriots or unite with the patriots of Menshevism. In an interval between sessions of the Bolshevik conference there was held a united session of Bolsheviks and Mensheviks – delegates to the Soviet conference – to consider the war question. The most furious Menshevik-patriot, Lieber, announced at this session: "We must do away with the old division between Bolshevik and Menshevik, and speak only of our attitude toward the war." The Bolshevik, Voitinsky, hastened to proclaim his readiness to put his signature to every word of Lieber. All of them together, Bolsheviks and Mensheviks,

*patriots and internationalists, were seeking a common formula for their attitude to the war.*

*The views of the Bolshevik conference undoubtedly found their most adequate expression in the report of Stalin on relations with the Provisional Government. It is necessary to introduce here the central thought of this speech, which, like the reports as a whole, is not yet published. "The power has been decided between two organs of which neither one possesses full power. There is debate and struggle between them, and there ought to be. The roles have been divided. The Soviet has in fact taken the initiative in the revolutionary transformation; the Soviet is the revolutionary leader of the insurrectionary people; an organ controlling the Provisional Government. And the Provisional Government has in fact taken the role of fortifier of the conquests of the revolutionary people. The Soviet mobilizes the forces, and controls. The Provisional Government, balking and confused, takes the role of fortifier of those conquests of the people, which they have already seized as a fact. This situation has disadvantageous, but also advantageous sides. It is not to our advantage at present to force events, hastening the process of repelling the bourgeois layers, who will in the future inevitably withdraw from us."*

*Transcending class distinctions, the speaker portrays the relation between the bourgeoisie and the proletariat as a mere division of labor. The workers and soldiers achieve the revolution, Guchkov and Miliukov "fortify" it. We recognize here the traditional conception of the Mensheviks, incorrectly modelled after the events of 1789. This superintendent's approach to the historical process is exactly characteristic of the leaders of Menshevism, this handing out of instructions to various classes and then patronizingly criticizing their fulfillment. The idea that it is disadvantageous to hasten the withdrawal of the bourgeoisie from the revolution, has always been the guiding principle of the whole policy of the Mensheviks. Inaction this means blunting and weakening the movement of the masses in order not to frighten away the liberal allies. And finally, Stalin's conclusion as to the Provisional Government is wholly in accord with the equivocal formula of the Compromisers: "In so far as the Provisional Government fortifies the steps of the revolution, in so far we must support it, but in so far as it is counter-revolutionary, support to the Provisional Government is not permissible".*

Lenin's theses were not received like a ray of light that suddenly exposed to everybody a previously hidden perspective. On the contrary, the reception was hostile and fearful. This reaction furthermore was not limited to the leadership of Stalin and Kamenev's *Pravda*.

*"On April 4 Lenin appeared at the party conference. His speech, developing his "theses," passed over the work of the conference like the wet sponge of a teacher erasing what had been written on the blackboard by a confused pupil. "Why didn't you seize the power?" asked Lenin. At the Soviet conference not long before that, Steklov had confusedly explained the reasons for abstaining from the power: revolution is bourgeois – it is the first stage – the war, etc. "That's nonsense," Lenin said. "The reason is that the proletariat was not sufficiently conscious and not sufficiently organised. That we have to acknowledge. The material force was in the hands of the proletariat, but the bourgeoisie was conscious and ready. That is the monstrous fact.*

*But it is necessary to acknowledge it frankly, and say to the people straight out that we did not seize the power because we were disorganized and not conscious." From the plane of pseudo-objectivism, behind which the political capitulators were hiding, Lenin shifted the whole question to the subjective plane. The proletariat did not seize the power in February because the Bolshevik Party was not equal to its objective task, and could not prevent the Compromisers from expropriating the popular masses politically for the benefit of the bourgeoisie. The day before that, lawyer Krassikov had said challengingly: "If we think that the time has now come to realize the dictatorship of the proletariat, then we ought to pose the question that way. We unquestionably have the physical force for a seizure of power." The chairman at that time deprived Krassikov of the floor on the ground that practical problems were under discussion, and the question of dictatorship was out of order. But Lenin thought that, as the sole practical question, the question of preparing the dictatorship of the proletariat was exactly in order. "The peculiarity of the present moment in Russia," he said in his theses, "consists in the transition from the first stage of the revolution, which gave the power to the bourgeoisie on account of the inadequate consciousness and organization of the proletariat, to its second stage which must give the power to the proletariat and the poor layers of the peasantry." The conference, following the lead of Pravda, had limited the task of the revolution to a democratic transformation to be realized through the Constituent Assembly. As against this, Lenin declared that "life and the revolution will push the Constituent Assembly into the background. A dictatorship of the proletariat exists, but nobody knows what to do with it."*

*The delegates exchanged glances. They whispered to each other that Ilych had stayed too long abroad, had not had time, to look around and familiarize himself with things. But the speech of Stalin on the ingenious division of labor between the government and the Soviet sank out of sight once and for ever. Stalin himself remained silent. From now on he will have to be silent for a long time. Kamenev alone will man the defenses...*

*On the question of the appeal of the Soviet "to the people of the whole world" – which caused the liberal paper Rech at one time to declare that the theme of pacifism is developing among us into an ideology common to the Allies – Lenin expressed himself more clearly and succinctly: "What is peculiar to Russia is the gigantically swift transition from wild violence to the most delicate deceit." "This appeal," wrote Stalin concerning the manifesto, "if it reaches the broad masses (of the West), will undoubtedly recall hundreds and thousands of workers to the forgotten slogan 'Proletarians of all Countries Unite!'" "The appeal of the Soviet," objects Lenin, "– there isn't a word in it imbued with class consciousness. There is nothing to it but phrases." This document, the pride of the home-grown Zimmerwaldists, is in Lenin's eyes merely one of the weapons of "the most delicate deceit." Up to Lenin's arrival Pravda had never even mentioned the Zimmerwald left. Speaking of the International, it never indicated which International. Lenin called this "the Kautskyanism of Pravda." "In Zimmerwald and Kienthal," he declared at a party conference, "the Centrists predominated ... We declare that we created a left and broke with the center ... The left Zimmerwald tendency exists in all the countries of the world. The masses ought to realize that socialism has split throughout the world ..."*

*Three days before that Stalin had announced at that same conference his readiness to live down differences with Tseretelli on the basis of Zimmerwald-Kienthal – that is, on the basis of Kautskyanism. “I hear that in Russia there is a trend toward consolidation,” said Lenin. “Consolidation with the defensists – that is betrayal of socialism. I think it would be better to stand alone like Liebknecht – one against a hundred and ten.” The accusation of betrayal of socialism – for the present still without naming names – is not here merely a strong word; it fully expresses the attitude of Lenin toward those Bolsheviks who were extending a finger to the social patriots. In opposition to Stalin who thought it was possible to unite with the Mensheviks, Lenin thought it was impermissible to share with them any longer the name of Social Democrat. “Personally, and speaking for myself alone,” he said, “I propose that we change the name of the party, that we call it the Communist Party.” “Personally, and speaking for myself alone” – that means that nobody, not one of the members of the conference, agreed to that symbolic gesture of ultimate break with the Second International.*

*“You are afraid to go back on your old memories?” says the orator to the embarrassed, bewildered and partly indignant delegates. But the time has come “to change our linen; we’ve got to take off the dirty shirt and put on clean.” And he again insists: “Don’t hang on to an old word which is rotten through and through. Have the will to build a new party ... and all the oppressed will come to you.” Before the enormity of the task not yet begun, and the intellectual confusion in his own ranks, a sharp thought of the precious time foolishly wasted in meetings, greetings, ritual resolutions, wrests a cry from the orator: “Have done with greetings and resolutions! It’s time to get down to business. We must proceed to practical sober work!”...*

*One of the prominent Bolshevik leaders in the provinces, Lebedev, writes: “On Lenin’s arrival in Russia, his agitation, at first not wholly intelligible to us Bolsheviks, but regarded as Utopian and explainable by his long removal from Russian life, was gradually absorbed by us, and entered, as you might say, into our flesh and blood.” Zalezhski, a member of the Petrograd Committee and one of the organizers of the welcome to Lenin, expresses it more frankly “Lenin’s theses produced the impression of an exploding bomb.” Zalezhski fully confirms the complete isolation of Lenin after that so warm and impressive welcome. “On that day (April 4) Comrade Lenin could not find open sympathizers even in our own ranks.”*

*Still more important, however, is the evidence of Pravda. “On April 8, after the publication of the theses – when time enough had passed to make explanations and reach a mutual understanding – the editors of Pravda wrote: “As for the general scheme of Comrade Lenin, it seems to us unacceptable in that it starts from the assumption that the bourgeois-democratic revolution is ended, and counts upon an immediate transformation of this revolution into a socialist revolution.”*

*The central organ of the party thus openly announced before the working class and its enemies a split with the generally recognized leader of the party upon the central question of the revolution for which the Bolshevik ranks had been getting ready during a long period of years. That alone is sufficient to show the depth of the April crisis in the party, due to the clash of two irreconcilable lines of thought and action. Until it surmounted this crisis the revolution could not go forward”.*

What is certain is that *Pravda's* warning about the text could not be more true: just as Lenin said, *the bourgeois democratic revolution had come to an end*. The revolution was going *in the direction of being transformed immediately into a socialist revolution*.

That was the core of the theses of April: when the war posed the *historical need* for world proletarian revolution, the Russian revolution, at first a bourgeois democratic revolution led by a minority proletariat in a semi-colonial and backward society, could endow itself with a socialist objective and aspire to political power. Since the world revolution was on the agenda, the Russian revolution became -although few were cognizant of it- *a permanent revolution*.

That the bourgeois-democratic phase of the revolution could be considered finished does not imply that the political coup in February would immediately bring factories to Russia. Nor does this imply that it would create a modern infrastructure, that it would capitalize the countryside, or that it would transform the culture. It doesn't even imply that there was such a thing as a modern bourgeois state.

What it does imply is that **none of those objectives, the basics of the bourgeois revolution, were on the agenda for the proletariat in an age of world revolution**, an age where capitalist development could only take the monstrous forms of imperialism and state capitalism. The revolution, led by the workers, could only advance with their historical program. It made no sense to support the bourgeoisie from the left to build a bourgeois state, necessarily deformed and decadent - as its orientation towards war was demonstrated from the very beginning - when the workers were organized in soviets (an organization of the whole class that could become insurrectionary tools and the basis of the proletarian state that organized its own class dictatorship). It is not a problem of *Russian tactics*, it is has to do with what capitalist decadence signifies and how it translates into the politics of the proletariat in the colonial, semicolonial and backward countries.

Let us follow Lenin himself in *The Tasks of the Proletariat in Our Revolution*, a text of April 10, 1917, which he subtitled as the *Draft Platform for the Proletarian Party*.

### **1. The bourgeois democratic revolution has been completed**

*“State power in Russia has passed into the hands of a new class, namely, the bourgeoisie and landowners who had become bourgeois. To this extent the bourgeois-democratic revolution in Russia is completed”.*

## **2. The state of the bourgeoisie in power can only be oriented towards the continuation of the imperialist war**

*"In the field of foreign policy, which has now been brought to the forefront by objective circumstances, the new government is a government for the continuation of the imperialist war, a war that is being waged in alliance with the imperialist powers—Britain, France, and others—for division of the capitalist spoils and for subjugating small and weak nations...*

*Not only, therefore, is the new government unworthy of the slightest confidence in the field of foreign policy, but to go on demanding that it should proclaim the will of the peoples of Russia for peace, that it should renounce annexations, and so on and so forth, is in practice merely to deceive the people, to inspire them with false hopes and to retard the clarification of their minds. It is indirectly to reconcile them to the continuation of a war the true social character of which is determined not by pious wishes, but by the class character of the government that wages the war, by the connection between the class represented by this government and the imperialist finance capital of Russia, Britain, France, etc., by the real and actual policy which that class is pursuing".*

## **3. Only the proletarian revolution can stop the imperialist war**

*"The war is not a product of the evil will of rapacious capitalists, although it is undoubtedly being fought only in their interests and they alone are being enriched by it. The war is a product of half a century of development of world capitalism and of its billions of threads and connections. It is impossible to slip out of the imperialist war and achieve a democratic, non-coercive peace without overthrowing the power of capital and transferring state power to another class, the proletariat".*

## **4. Soviets constituted by then the form of a socialist state**

*"The [soviets] reproduce the type of state which was being evolved by the Paris Commune and which Marx described as "the political form at last discovered under which to work out the economic emancipation of labor"".*

## **5. The existence of soviets *controlling* the provisional government indicates that a dual power has been established... a temporary and fragile situation that would be resolved in the direction of the interests of one of the two classes in conflict.**

*"The second highly important feature of the Russian revolution is the fact that the Petrograd Soviet of Soldiers' and Workers' Deputies, which, as everything goes to show, enjoys the confidence of most of the local Soviets, is voluntarily transferring state power to the bourgeoisie and its Provisional Government, is voluntarily ceding supremacy to the latter, having entered into an agreement to support it, and is limiting its own role to that of an observer, a supervisor of the convocation of the Constituent Assembly (the date for which has not even been announced as yet by the Provisional Government).*

*This remarkable feature, unparalleled in history in such a form, has led to the interlocking of two dictatorships: the dictatorship of the bourgeoisie (for the government of Lvov and Co. is a dictatorship, i.e., a power based not on the law, not on the previously expressed will of the people, but on seizure by force, accomplished by a definite class, namely, the bourgeoisie) and the dictatorship of the proletariat and the peasantry (the Soviet of Workers' and Soldiers' Deputies).*

*There is not the slightest doubt that such an "interlocking" cannot last long. Two powers cannot exist in a state. One of them is bound to pass away; and the entire Russian bourgeoisie is already trying its hardest everywhere and in every way to keep out and weaken the Soviets, to reduce them to nought, and to establish the undivided power of the bourgeoisie.*

*The dual power merely expresses a transitional phase in the revolution's development, when it has gone farther than the ordinary bourgeois-democratic revolution, but has not yet reached a "pure" dictatorship of the proletariat and the peasantry".*

## **6. The main function of the party is to extend the development of consciousness in the class... especially when its a minority**

*"This peculiarity of the situation calls, in the first place, for the "pouring of vinegar and bile into the sweet water of revolutionary-democratic phraseology"...*

*Our work must be one of criticism, of explaining the mistakes of the petty-bourgeois Socialist-Revolutionary and Social-Democratic parties, of preparing and welding the elements of a consciously proletarian, Communist Party, and of curing the proletariat of the "general" petty-bourgeois intoxication.*

*This seems to be "nothing more" than propaganda work, but in reality it is most practical revolutionary work; for there is no advancing a revolution that has come to a standstill, that has choked itself with phrases, and that keeps "marking time", not because of external obstacles, not because of the violence of the bourgeoisie (Guchkov is still only threatening to employ violence against the soldier mass), but because of the unreasoning trust of the people.*

*Only by overcoming this unreasoning trust (and we can and should overcome it only ideologically, by comradely persuasion, by pointing to the lessons of experience) can we set ourselves free from the prevailing orgy of revolutionary phrase-mongering and really stimulate the consciousness both of the proletariat and of the mass in general, as well as their bold and determined initiative in the localities— the independent realization, development and consolidation of liberties, democracy, and the principle of people's ownership of all the land...*

*The leaders of the petty bourgeoisie "must" teach the people to trust the bourgeoisie. The proletarians must teach the people to distrust the bourgeoisie...*

*The sooner we shed the old prejudices of pseudo-Marxism, a Marxism falsified by Plekhanov, Kautsky and Co., the more actively we set about helping the people to organize Soviets of Workers' and Peasants' Deputies everywhere and immediately, and helping the latter to take life in its entirety under their control, and the longer Lvov and Co. delay the convocation of the Constituent Assembly, the easier will it be for the people (through the medium of the Constituent Assembly, or independently of it, if Lvov delays its convocation too long) to cast their decision in favor of a republic of Soviets of Workers' and Peasants' Deputies. Errors in the new work of organizational development by the people themselves are at first inevitable; but it is better to make mistakes and go forward than to wait until the professors of law summoned by Mr. Lvov draft their laws for the convocation of the Constituent Assembly, for the perpetuation of the parliamentary bourgeois republic and for the strangling of the Soviets of Workers' and Peasants' Deputies.*

*If we organize ourselves and conduct our propaganda skillfully, not only the proletarians, but nine-tenths of the peasants will be opposed to the restoration of the police, will be opposed to an undisplaceable and privileged bureaucracy and to an army divorced from the people. And that is all the new type of state stands for”.*

Let us briefly interrupt this series of quotations from Lenin with some comments from Trotsky that point out clearly where the resistances came from at this point.

*“The Bolsheviks are a tiny minority in the Soviet, and Lenin dreams of seizing the power; isn’t that pure adventurism? There was not a shadow of adventurism in Lenin’s statement of the problem. He did not for a moment close his eyes to the existence of “honest” defensist moods in the broad masses. He did not intend either to lose himself in the masses or to act behind their backs. “We are not charlatans” – he throws this in the eyes of future objections and accusations – “we must base ourselves only upon the consciousness of the masses. Even if it is necessary to remain in a minority – so be it. It is a good thing to give up for a time the position of leadership; we must not be afraid to remain in the minority.” Do not fear to remain in a minority – even a minority of one, like Liebknecht’s one against a hundred and ten – such was the leitmotif of his speech. “The real government is the Soviet of workers’ deputies ... In the Soviet our party is the minority ... What can we do? All we can do is to explain patiently, insistently, systematically the error of their tactics. So long as we are in the minority, we will carry on the work of criticism, in order to free the masses from deceit. We do not want the masses to believe us just on our say so; we are not charlatans. We want the masses to be freed by experience from their mistakes.” Don’t be afraid to remain in the minority! Not for ever, but for a time. The hour of Bolshevism will strike. “Our line will prove right ... All the oppressed will come to us, because the war will bring them to us. They have no other way out”.*

- Trotsky, *History of the Russian Revolution*

## **7. We need a new party and a new International because war opened up the era of the world revolution and internationalism is a class border that was crossed by social democracy.**

*“It is not a question of shades of opinion, which certainly exist even among the Left [of the International]. It is a question of tendency. The thing is that it is not easy to be an internationalist in deed during a terrible imperialist war. Such people are few; but it is on such people alone that the future of socialism depends; they alone are the leaders of the people, and not their corrupters.*

*The distinction between the reformists and the revolutionaries, among the Social-Democrats, and socialists generally, was objectively bound to undergo a change under the conditions of the imperialist war. Those who confine themselves to “demanding” that the bourgeois governments should conclude peace or “ascertain the will of the peoples for peace”, etc., are actually slipping into reforms. For, **objectively, the problem of the war can be solved only in a revolutionary way.***

*There is no possibility of this war ending in a democratic, non-coercive peace or of the people being relieved of the burden of billions paid in interest to the capitalists, who have made fortunes out of the war, **except through a revolution of the proletariat.***

*The most varied reforms can and must be demanded of the bourgeois governments, but one cannot, without sinking to Manilovism and reformism, demand that people and classes entangled by the thousands of threads of imperialist capital should tear those threads. And unless they are torn, all talk of a war against war is idle and deceitful prattle...*

*Let us harbor no illusions. We must not deceive ourselves. To “wait” for international congresses or conferences is simply to **betray internationalism**.*

*Our Party must not “wait”, but must immediately found a Third International. Hundreds of socialists imprisoned in Germany and Britain will then heave a sigh of relief, thousands and thousands of German workers who are now holding strikes and demonstrations that are frightening that scoundrel and brigand, Wilhelm, will learn from illegal leaflets of our decision, of our fraternal confidence in Karl Liebknecht, and in him alone, of our decision to fight “revolutionary defensism” even now ; they will read this and be strengthened in their revolutionary internationalism.*

*To whom much is given, of him much is required. No other country in the world is as free as Russia is now. Let us make use of this freedom, not to advocate support for the bourgeoisie, or bourgeois “revolutionary defensism”, but take a bold, honest, and proletarian step, worthy of Liebknecht, by founding the Third International, an International uncompromisingly hostile both to the social-chauvinist traitors and to the vacillating “Centrists”.*

*After what has been said, there is no need to waste many words explaining that the amalgamation of Social-Democrats in Russia is out of the question.*

*It is better to remain with one friend only, like Liebknecht, and that means remaining with the revolutionary proletariat, than to entertain even for a moment any thought of amalgamation with the party of the Organizing Committee, with Chkheidze and Tsereteli, who can tolerate a bloc with Potresov in Rabochaya Gazeta, who voted for the loan in the Executive Committee of the Soviet of Workers’ Deputies, and who have sunk to “defensism”.*

*Let the dead bury their dead.*

*Whoever wants to help the waverers must first stop wavering himself”.*

## **8. The proletariat, through the proletarians of the countryside, has a role to play in the agrarian revolution**

*“At the present moment we cannot say for certain whether a mighty agrarian revolution will develop in the Russian countryside in the near future. We cannot say exactly how profound the class cleavage is among the peasants, which has undoubtedly grown more profound of late as a division into agricultural laborers, wage-workers and poor peasants (“semi-proletarians”), on the one hand, and wealthy and middle peasants (capitalists and petty capitalists), on the other. Such questions will be, and can be, decided only by experience.*

*Being the party of the proletariat, however, we are unquestionably duty bound not only to immediately advance an agrarian (land) program but also to advocate practical measures which can be immediately realized in the interests of the peasant agrarian revolution in Russia.*

*We must demand the nationalization of all the land, i.e., that all the land in the state should become the property of the central state power...*

*Without necessarily splitting the Soviets of Peasants' Deputies at once, the party of the proletariat must explain the need for organizing separate Soviets of Agricultural Labourers' Deputies and separate Soviets of deputies from the poor (semi-proletarian) peasants, or, at least, for holding regular separate conferences of deputies of this class status in the shape of separate groups or parties within the general Soviets of Peasants' Deputies. Otherwise all the honeyed petty-bourgeois talk of the Narodniks regarding the peasants in general will serve as a shield for the deception of the propertyless mass by the wealthy peasants, who are merely a variety of capitalists"...*

## **9. Socialist Revolution is the Proletarian Solution to the Problem of Nations and Nationalities**

*"All statements, declarations and manifestos concerning renunciation of annexations that are not accompanied by the realization of the right of secession in practice, are nothing but bourgeois deception of the people, or else pious petty-bourgeois wishes.*

*The proletarian party strives to create as large a state as possible, for this is to the advantage of the working people; it strives to draw nations closer together, and bring about their further fusion; but it desires to achieve this aim not by violence, but exclusively through a free fraternal union of the workers and the working people of all nations.*

*The more democratic the Russian republic, and the more successfully it organizes itself into a Republic of Soviets of Workers' and Peasants' Deputies, the more powerful will be the force of voluntary attraction to such a republic on the part of the working people of all nations.*

*Complete freedom of secession, the broadest local (and national) autonomy, and detailed guarantees of the rights of national minorities—this is the program of the revolutionary proletariat".*

## **10. It is not a question of "introducing" socialism nor of attacking the capital-labor relationship before the extension of the world revolution. The immediate perspective was a state capitalism led by the soviets.**

*"Under no circumstances can the party of the proletariat set itself the aim of "introducing" socialism in a country of small peasants so long as the overwhelming majority of the population has not come to realize the need for a socialist revolution.*

*But only bourgeois sophists, hiding behind "near-Marxist" catchwords, can deduce from this truth a justification of the policy of postponing immediate revolutionary measures, the time for which is fully ripe; measures which have been frequently resorted to during the war by a number of bourgeois states, and which are absolutely indispensable in order to combat impending total economic disorganization and famine.*

*Such measures as the nationalization of the land, of all the banks and capitalist syndicates, or, at least, the immediate establishment of the control of the Soviets of Workers' Deputies, etc., over them—measures which **do not in any way constitute the "introduction" of socialism**—must be absolutely insisted on, and, whenever possible, carried out in a revolutionary way".*

- Lenin, *The Tasks of the Proletariat in Our Revolution*

## The change of course

Lenin's internal campaign was intense and met with much resistance from the leadership, as we have seen. However, he ended up winning a complete victory, causing tension in the party base and attracting over to the new program the groups of militants who already in 1905 had rejected both the Menshevik position (which wanted the proletariat to act as the left wing of the bourgeoisie) and the Bolshevik position with its theory of the *democratic dictatorship of the proletariat and the peasantry*.

*"Against the old Bolsheviks Lenin found support in another layer of the party already tempered, but more fresh and more closely united with the masses. In the February revolution, as we know, the worker-Bolsheviks played the decisive role. They thought it self-evident that that class which had won the victory should seize the power. These same workers protested stormily against the course of Kamenev and Stalin, and the Vyborg district even threatened the "leaders" with expulsion from the party. The same thing was to be observed in the provinces. Almost everywhere there were left Bolsheviks accused of maximalism, even of anarchism. These worker revolutionists only lacked the theoretical resources to defend their position. But they were ready to respond to the first clear call".*

-Trotsky, *History of the Russian Revolution*

When finally a new RSDLP conference met in the last days of April, the triumph of Lenin's positions was total. There were only two dissenting opinions. The first was presented by the *luxemburgist* Dzerzhinski who grasped the contradiction between the Leninist position that defends for the *oppressed nations* the *right to self-determination* -in other words, the demand of the bourgeois revolution- while denying it in Russia.

*"As a pupil of Rosa Luxemburg, Dzerzhinsky spoke against the right of nations to self-determination, accusing Lenin of protecting a separatist tendencies which weakened the Russian proletariat. To Lenin's answering accusation of giving support to Great-Russian chauvinism, Dzerzhinsky answered: "I can reproach him (Lenin) with standing at the point of view of the Polish, Ukrainian and other chauvinists"...*

*The opposition was obviously on the wane. It did not muster more than seven votes on the questions under debate. There was, however, one curious and sharp exception, touching the international relations of the party. At the very end of the conference, in the evening session of April 29, Zinoviev introduced in the name of his commission a resolution: "To take part in the international conference of Zimmerwaldists designated for May 18 (at Stockholm)." The report says: "Adopted by all votes against one." That one was Lenin. He demanded a break with Zimmerwald, where the majority had been decisively with the German Independents and neutral pacifists of the Swiss Grimm type. But for the Russian circles of the party, Zimmerwald had during the war become almost identified with Bolshevism. The delegates were not yet ready to give up the name of Social Democrat or break with Zimmerwald, which remained moreover in their eyes a bond with the masses of the Second International...*

*The abruptness of the turn in the policy of the party was obvious to all. Schmidt, a worker-Bolshevik, afterwards People's Commissar of Labour, said at the April conference: "Lenin gave a different direction to the character of the work." According to Raskolnikov - writing, to be sure, several years later - Lenin in April 1917 "carried out an October revolution in the consciousness of the party leaders ... The tactic of our party is not a single straight line, but makes after the arrival of Lenin a sharp jump to the left." The old Bolshevik, Ludmila Stahl, more directly and also more accurately appraised the change. "All the comrades before the*

*arrival of Lenin were wandering in the dark," she said, at the city conference on the 14th of April. "We know only the formulas of 1905. Seeing the independent creative work of the people, we could not teach them ... Our comrades could only limit themselves to getting ready for the Constituent Assembly by parliamentary means, and took no account of the possibility of going farther. In accepting the slogans of Lenin we are now doing what life itself suggests to us. We need not fear the Commune, and say that we already have a workers' government; the Commune of Paris was not only a workers', but also a petty bourgeois government." It is possible to agree with Sukhanov that the rearming of the army "was the chief and fundamental victory of Lenin completed by the first days of May." Sukhanov, it is true thought that Lenin in this operation substituted an anarchist for a Marxist weapon.*

*It remains to ask – and this is no unimportant question, although easier to ask than answer: How would the revolution have developed if Lenin had not reached Russia in April 1917? If our exposition demonstrates and proves anything at all, we hope it proves that Lenin was not a demiurge of the revolutionary process, that he merely entered into a chain of objective historic forces. But he was a great link in that chain. The dictatorship of the proletariat was to be inferred from the whole situation, but it had still to be established. It could not be established without a party. The party could fulfill its mission only after understanding it. For that Lenin was needed. Until his arrival, not one of the Bolshevik leaders dared to make a diagnosis of the revolution. The leadership of Kamenev and Stalin was tossed by the course of events to the right, to the Social Patriots: between Lenin and Menshevism the revolution left no place for intermediate positions. Inner struggle in the Bolshevik Party was absolutely unavoidable. Lenin's arrival merely hastened the process. His personal influence shortened the crisis".*

### **The April Days and the Coalition Government**

Meanwhile, the revolution continued on its course marked by the spasms produced by the fundamental tension between the rejection of war by the proletariat that carried out the revolution, and the bourgeoisie's need to continue it. The bourgeoisie, furthermore, was beginning its attempt to reap the benefits of the revolution from the seat of the provisional government.

One of these spasms will be fundamental to understanding the turn of the whole party around Lenin: *the April days*.

The April days started off with a provocation by Miliukov, the Kadet leader of the provisional government. He published a warmongering message that tried to send a clear sign to the allied governments, match up their strength with the soviets -mainly SR and Mensheviks- and, eventually, to repress the workers militarily and defeat them strategically. The Soviet committee hesitated, and sought a conciliatory response that it was unable to find... and the soldiers, regiment by regiment, initiated armed demonstrations where the workers join and finally take leadership. Miliukov sees his opportunity and Kornilov appeared on the scene for the first time. The provisional government then considered striking a bloody blow to the workers, thereby *establishing order*... but it did not have the capacity to do so.

It was the first clash between the provisional government and the workers. It had two important political repercussions: first, the workers moved for the first time en masse towards Bolshevism.

*"As for the proletariat, its movement to the side of the Bolsheviks assumed during April a clearly expressed character. Workers came to the party committees asking how to transfer their names from the Menshevik Party to the Bolshevik. At the factories they began insistently to question the deputies about foreign policy, the war, the two-power system, the food question; and as a result of these examinations Menshevik and Social Revolutionary delegates were more and more frequently replaced by Bolsheviks. The sharp turn began in the district soviets, as these were closer to the factories. In the soviets of the Vyborg side, Vasiliev Island, Narva district, the Bolsheviks seemed suddenly and unexpectedly to find themselves toward the end of April in a majority. This was a fact of the greatest significance, but the Executive Committee leaders, busy with high politics, looked with disdain upon the fussing of the Bolsheviks in the workers' districts. However, the districts began to press on the center more and more perceptibly. In the factories, without orders from the Petrograd Committee, an energetic and successful campaign was carried on for the re-election of representatives to the municipal soviet of workers' deputies. Sukhanov estimates that at the beginning of May the Bolsheviks had behind them a third of the Petrograd proletariat. At least a third of the Petrograd proletariat constituted the most active elements. The March formlessness had disappeared; political lines were sharpening; the "fantastic" theses of Lenin were taking shape in the Petrograd workers' districts".*

The second political repercussion: the coalition government

*"From the crisis created by the April rehearsal of future events, three outcomes were theoretically possible. The power might have gone over wholly to the bourgeoisie; that could have been achieved only through civil war; Miliukov made the attempt, but failed. The power should have gone over wholly to the soviets; this could have been accomplished without any civil war whatever, merely by raising of hands – merely by wishing it. But the Compromisers did not want to wish it, and the masses still preserved their faith in the Compromisers, although it was badly cracked. Thus both of the fundamental ways out – the bourgeois and the proletarian – were closed. There remained a third possibility, the confused, weak-hearted, cowardly half-road of compromise. The name of that road was Coalition...*

*On April 26, when the ground was sufficiently prepared, the Provisional Government announced in a special appeal the necessity of bringing in to the governmental work "those active creative forces of the country which have not yet participated in it." The question was thus presented point blank.*

*The feeling against coalition was nevertheless pretty strong. At the end of April the following soviets declared themselves against the participation of socialists in the government: Moscow, Tiflis, Odessa, Ekaterinburg, Nizhni - Novgorod, Tver, and others. Their motives were very clearly expressed by one of the Menshevik leaders in Moscow: If the socialists enter the government, there will be nobody to lead the movement of the masses "in a definite channel." But it was difficult to convey this idea to the workers and soldiers against whom it was directed. The masses, in so far as they were not yet for the Bolsheviks, stood solid for the entrance of socialists into the government. If it is a good thing to have Kerensky as a minister, then so much the better six Kerenskys. The masses did not know that this was called coalition with the bourgeoisie, and that the bourgeoisie wanted to use these socialists as a cover for their activities against the people. A coalition looked different from the barracks and from the Mariinsky Palace. The masses wanted to use the socialists to crowd out the bourgeoisie from the government. Thus two forces tending in opposite directions united for a moment in one...*

*The staff of the Coalition Government, and its program, were approved by the Petrograd Soviet on May 5. The Bolsheviks mustered 100 votes against it. "The meeting warmly greeted the orator ministers," Miliukov ironically tells of this meeting. "It greeted with the same stormy applause, however, 'the old leader of the first revolution' Trotsky, who had arrived the day before from America, and who sharply condemned the entrance of socialists into the ministry, asserting that the 'double sovereignty' is not destroyed, but 'merely transferred into the ministry,' and that the real single power which will 'save' Russia will arrive only when 'the next step is taken, the transfer of power into the hands of the workers' and soldiers' deputies'; then will begin 'a new epoch, an epoch of blood and iron, but not in a struggle of nation against nation, but of the suffering and oppressed class against the ruling classes.'" Such is Miliukov's rendering. In his conclusion Trotsky formulated three rules for the policy of the masses "three revolutionary articles of faith: do not trust the bourgeoisie; control the leaders; rely only on your own force." Speaking of this speech, Sukhanov remarks: "He evidently did not expect any sympathy for his words." And in truth the orator left the hall amid far less applause than had greeted his entrance. Sukhanov, very sensitive to what is going on in the couloirs of the intelligentsia, adds: "Although Trotsky did not belong to the Bolshevik Party, rumors were already going around to the effect that he was worse than Lenin."*

*The socialists appropriated six departments out of fifteen. They wanted to be in the minority. Even after deciding openly to enter the government, they continued to play this game of give-away".*

### **The offensive at the front**

The bourgeoisie was willing to sacrifice Miliukov in government - and elsewhere - if that served to appease the workers and continue the war. Not so much because it believed in the possibility of victory, but because it hoped to draw strength from the war - its point of union with the allied bourgeoisie - in order to put an end to the revolution.

*"In the army as in the country there was a continual political regrouping of forces, the lower ranks moving to the left, the upper to the right. Just as the Executive Committee was becoming an instrument of the Entente for taming the revolution, the soldiers' committees, having arisen to represent the soldiers against the commanding staff, were being converted into assistants of the commanding staff against the soldiers. The membership of these committees was variegated. There were not a few patriots who sincerely identified the war with the revolution, courageously joined an offensive imposed from above, and laid down their heads in an alien cause. Beside them stood the heroes of the phrase, namely, the Kerenskys of the divisions and the regiments. Finally, there were not a few petty cheats and chair-warmers who got into the committees to keep out of the trenches, always on a hunt for privileges. Every mass movement, especially in its first stages, inevitably raises up on its crest all these human varieties. But the compromise period was especially rich in charlatans and chameleons. People form programs but programs also form people. The school of "contact" politics becomes in a revolution a school of trickery and intrigue.*

*The two-power régime made it impossible to create a military force. The Kadets were hated by the mass of the people, and were compelled in the army to re-title themselves Social Revolutionaries. The democracy could not resurrect the army for the same reason that it could not take over the power. The one was inseparable from the other. As a curiosity, which nevertheless very clearly illumines the situation, Sukhanov remarks that the Provisional Government did not organize a single parade for the soldiers in Petrograd. The liberals and generals did not want to participate in a parade organized by the Soviet, but they understood perfectly well that without the soviets a parade was impossible...*

*“Surely, the fact is evident,” wrote one wise German to another on September 26, 1851, “that a disorganised army and a complete breakdown of discipline has been the condition as well as the result of every victorious revolution.” The whole history of humanity proves this simple and indubitable law. But along with the liberals, the Russian socialists – with the experience of 1905 behind them – did not understand this, although they called the two Germans, one of whom was Frederick Engels and the other Karl Marx, their teachers. **The Mensheviks seriously believed that the army after making a revolution would continue the war under the old command.** And those people called the Bolsheviks Utopian!...*

*On June 4, less than two weeks before the beginning of the offensive, the chief of the headquarters staff reported: “The northern front is still in a ferment, fraternisation continues, the infantry is opposed to the offensive ... On the western front the situation is indefinite ... On the south-western a certain improvement of mood is noticeable ... On the Rumanian no special improvement is observable, the infantry does not want to advance...*

*At a meeting of the soviet Congress on June 9, Trotsky asked how it could happen that “in that model Black Sea fleet which had sent patriotic deputations throughout the country, in that nest of organised patriotism, an explosion of this nature could occur at such a critical moment? What does this prove?” He received no answer.*

*The headless and brainless condition of the army tortured everybody – soldiers, commanders and committee-men. There was no choice but to look for a way out of that situation, whatever it was. To the chiefs it seemed that the offensive would overcome this reign of bedlam and bring definiteness. And to a certain extent this was true. While Tseretelli and Chernov expressed themselves in Petrograd in favour of the offensive with all the careful modulations of the democratic rhetoric, the committee-men at the front had to wage a campaign hand-in-hand with the officers against the new régime in the army – a régime incompatible with War, but without which the revolution was unthinkable. The results of the change were soon visible. “With every day that passed, the members of the committee were noticeably moving to the right,” recounts one of the naval officers, “but at the same time there was an obvious decline in their authority among the soldiers and sailors.” It happens, however, that soldiers and sailors are just what is needed for war...*

*The offensive promised by the staff to the Allies for early spring had been postponed from week to week. But now the Entente firmly refused to accept any further postponements...*

*Although supporting the demands of the Allies by waging a frantic agitation for the offensive, the Russian bourgeoisie withheld its own confidence from the offensive by refusing to subscribe to the Liberty loan [launched by the provisional government with the support of the Soviet committee]...*

*Justice demands the observation that in the Allied camp not all agreed with Vandervelde, Thomas and Cachin in pushing the Russian army over the precipice. There were warning voices. “The Russian army is nothing but façade,” said General Pétain, “it will fall to pieces if it makes move.” The American mission had also expressed that view. But other considerations prevailed. It was necessary to take the heart out of the revolution. “The German fraternization,” explained Painlevé later, “had caused such ravages that to leave the Russian army inactive would risk its rapid disintegration”...*

*The preparation for the offensive was accompanied, of course, by a redoubled struggle against the Bolsheviks. They were being accused now of oftener and oftener of working for a separate peace. The possibility that a separate peace would be the only way out, was evident in the whole situation-the weakness and exhaustion of Russia in comparison with the other warring countries. But nobody had yet measured the strength of the new factor, revolution. The Bolsheviks believed that the prospect of a separate peace could be avoided only in case the force and authority of revolution were boldly and conclusively set against the war. For this was needed first of all a break with our own bourgeoisie. On June 9, Lenin announced at the congress of the soviets: "When they say that we are striving for a separate peace, that is not true. We say: No separate peace, not with any capitalists, and least of all with the Russian capitalists. But the Provisional Government has made a separate peace with the Russian capitalists. Down with that separate peace!" "Applause," remarks the report. That was the applause of a small minority at the congress, and for that reason especially fervent.*

*In the Executive Committee some still lacked decision, others wanted to hide behind the more authoritative institutions. At the last moment it was resolved to bring to Kerensky's attention the undesirability of giving the order for the offensive before the question had been decided upon by the soviet congress. A declaration introduced at the very first session of the congress by the Bolshevik faction had stated: "An offensive can only, utterly disorganise the army, bringing one part into antagonism with the other, and the Congress should either immediately oppose this counter-revolutionary onslaught, or else frankly assume the whole responsibility for this policy."*

*The decision of the soviet congress in favour of the offensive was merely a democratic formality. Everything was already prepared. The artillery had for a long time been aimed at the enemy's positions. On June 16, in an order to the army and the fleet, Kerensky, referring to the commander-in-chief as "our leader fanned by the wings of victory," demonstrated the necessity of "an immediate and decisive blow," and concluded with the words "I command you - forward!" In an article written on the eve of the offensive, commenting on the declaration of the Bolshevik faction at the soviet congress, Trotsky wrote: "The policy of the government completely undermines the possibility of successful military action ... The material premises for an offensive are extremely unfavourable. The organization of supplies for the army reflects the general economic collapse, against which a government constituted like the present one cannot undertake a single radical measure. The spiritual premises of the offensive are still more unfavourable. The government ... has exposed before the army ... its incapacity to determine Russia's policy independently of the will of the imperialist Allies. No result is possible but the progressive breakdown of the army ... The mass desertions ... are ceasing in the present conditions to be the result of depraved individual wills, and are becoming an expression of the complete incapacity of the government to weld the revolutionary army with inward unity of purpose ..." Pointing out further that the government could not make up its mind "to an immediate annulment of landlordship - that is, to the sole measure which would convince the most backward peasant that this revolution is his revolution," the article concluded: "In such material and spiritual conditions an offensive must inevitably have the character of an adventure".*

It was clear that the June offensive and the behavior of the soldiers - that is, of the armed peasantry mobilized into the ranks of the military - would determine the correlation of forces in the revolution, which in the end translated into the correlation of delegates between socialists and Bolsheviks in the soviets.

*"The newspapers meanwhile carried joyful news: "The Paris Bourse greets the Russian offensive with a rise in all Russian securities." Those socialists were trying to estimate the stability of the revolution by the stock-ticker. But history teaches that bourses feel better the worse it goes with revolutions. The workers and the garrison of the capital were not for one minute infected by this wave of artificially warmed over patriotism. Its sole arena was the Nevsky Prospect. "We went out on the Nevsky," relates the soldier Chinenov in his memoirs, "and tried to agitate against the offensive. Some of the bourgeois took after us with their umbrellas... We grabbed them and dragged them into the barracks ... and told them that tomorrow they would be sent to the front." That was a preliminary symptom of the advancing explosion of civil war. The July days were drawing near.*

*On the 21st of June a machine gun regiment in Petrograd resolved in general meeting: "In the future we will send forces to the front only when the war shall have a revolutionary character." In answer to the threat of disbandment, the regiment answered that it would not hesitate to disband "the Provisional Government and the other organizations which support it." Here again a threatening note far in advance of the Bolshevik agitation. The Chronicle of the Revolution remarks under date of June 23: "Detachments of the 2nd Army have occupied the first and second line trenches of the enemy ..." And right beside this: "At the Baranovsky factory (6,000 men) there were re-elections to the Petrograd Soviet. In place of three Social Revolutionaries, three Bolsheviks were elected." By the end of the month the physiognomy of the Petrograd Soviet had already considerably changed. It is true that on June 20 the Soviet adopted a resolution of greeting to the advancing army. But with what majority? – 472 votes against 271, with 39 abstaining. That is a totally new correlation of forces, something we have not seen before. The Bolsheviks, together with the left groups of Mensheviks and Social Revolutionaries, constitute already two-fifths of the Soviet. This means that in the factories and barracks the opponents of the offensive are already an indubitable majority. The Vyborg district soviet adopted a resolution on June 24 every word of which strikes like a heavy hammer: "We ... protest against the adventure of the Provisional Government, which is conducting an offensive for the old robber treaties ... and we lay the whole responsibility for this policy on the Provisional Government and the Menshevik and Social Revolutionary parties supporting it." Having been pushed out after the February insurrection into the backyard, the Vyborg district was now confidently advancing to the leading position. The Bolsheviks already completely dominated the Vyborg Soviet.*

*Everything now on the fate of the offensive – that is that is upon the trench soldiers. What changes had the offensive made in the consciousness of those who were supposed to carry it through? They had been irrepressibly longing for peace. But the rulers had succeeded to a certain degree –at least among a part of the soldiers and for a short time – in converting this very longing into a readiness to advance. After the revolution the soldiers had expected from the new power a swift conclusion of peace, and had been ready until then to defend the front. The peace did not come. The soldiers resorted to attempts at fraternization with the Germans and Austrians, partly under the influence of Bolshevik agitation, but chiefly seeking their own road to peace. But a drive had been opened against fraternization from all sides. And moreover it was discovered that the German soldiers were still far from casting off obedience to their officers. Fraternization, not having led to peace, dwindled rapidly...*

*Having failed of their goal, both through the diplomacy of the Provisional Government and through fraternization, a part of the soldiers undoubtedly inclined to this third scheme: to give that push which would make the war crumble into dust. One of the front delegates to the congress reported exactly in this way the mood of the soldiers: "At present we have before us a thinned out German front; there are at*

*present no cannon; and if we advance and overthrow the enemy then we will be close to the wished-for peace.*

*The enemy at first actually did seem extremely weak, and retired without accepting the battle, which incidentally the attackers were not able to give. But instead of crumbling, the enemy regrouped and concentrated his forces. Penetrating a few score kilometres inland, the Russian soldiers discovered a picture sufficiently familiar to them in the experience of the preceding years: the enemy was waiting for them in new and reinforced positions. Here it became evident that although the soldiers had agreed to give a push in the direction of peace, they were not in the least desirous of war. Having been dragged into it by a combination of force, moral pressure, and most of all deceit, they so much the more indignantly turned back...*

*On June 12 the commander-in-chief of the western front, Denikin, returned to his headquarters, as he says, "with despair in my heart, and with a clear consciousness of the complete collapse of the last flickering hope for ... a miracle." The soldiers did not want to fight. The rear troops, to whom the weakened units turned for replacements after occupying the enemy trenches, answered: "What did you advance for anyway? Who told you to? It's time to end the war, not attack." The commander of the 1st Siberian Corps, considered one of the best commanders, reported how at nightfall the soldiers began to abandon the unattacked first line in crowds and whole companies. "I understood that we, the officers, were powerless to alter the elemental psychology of the soldier masses, and I sobbed bitterly and long...*

*conditions of prolonged and unsuccessful war could only hasten and sharpen the process of revolutionary disintegration of the army. That miserable and criminal offensive of the democrats did the rest. The soldiers were now saying, to the last man "Enough of bloodshed! What good are land and freedom if we are not here?" When enlightened pacifists try to abolish war by rationalistic arguments they are merely ridiculous, but when the armed masses themselves bring weapons of reason into action against a war, that means that the war is about over".*

The war intensified the fundamental contradiction that propelled the revolution, impulsing the confrontation between the proletariat and the bourgeoisie. A large part of the peasantry, being mobilized as soldiers, ended up setting in motion the peasant revolution that the Bolsheviks had predicted.

*"Lenin nevertheless was getting ready in April for a less favorable variant; namely, a stable bloc of the landlords, bourgeoisie and broad layers of the peasantry. "To try to attract the peasant now," he said, "means to throw ourselves on the mercy of Miliukov." Hence the conclusion: "Transfer the center of gravity to the soviets of farm-hand deputies." But the more favorable variant was realized. The agrarian movement, which before was merely a prophecy, became a fact, revealing for a brief moment, but with extraordinary force, the superiority of the caste ties of the peasantry over the capitalistic antagonisms. The soviets of farm-hand deputies attained significance only in a few localities, chiefly the Baltic provinces. The land committees, on the contrary, became the instruments of the whole peasantry, who with their heavy-handed pressure converted them from chambers of conciliation into weapons of agrarian revolution.*

*This fact that the peasantry as a whole found it possible once more – for the last time in their history – to act as a revolutionary factor, testifies at once to the weakness of capitalist relations in the country and to their strength. The bourgeois economy had not yet by any means sucked up the land relations of medieval serfdom. At the same time the capitalist development had gone so far that it had made the old forms of*

landed property equally unbearable for all layers of the village. The interweaving of landlord and peasant property—quite often consciously arranged in such a way as to convert the landlord's rights in a trap for the whole commune – the frightful striped owners of the village land, and finally the very recent antagonism between the land commune and the individualist owners – all this together created an unbearable tangle of land relationships from which it was impossible to escape by way of half-hearted legislative measures. Moreover, the peasants felt it more deeply than any agrarian theoretician could. The experience of life handed down through a series of generations led them all to the same conclusion: we must bury both hereditary and acquired rights in the land, erase all boundary marks, and hand over the land, purged of historic deposits, to those who work it. This was the meaning of the muzhik's aphorism: the land is no man's, the land is God's. And in this same spirit the peasantry interpreted the Social Revolutionary program: socialization of the land. All Narodnik theories to the contrary notwithstanding, there was not in this one grain of socialism. The most audacious of agrarian revolutions has never yet by itself overstepped the bounds of the bourgeois régime. That socialization which was to guarantee to each toiler his "right to the land," was with the preservation of unrestricted market relations, an utter Utopia. Menshevism criticized this Utopia from the liberal bourgeois point of view. Bolshevism, on the other hand, exposed the progressive democratic tendency which was finding in these theories of the Social Revolutionaries a Utopian expression. This exposure of the genuine historic meaning of the Russian agrarian movement was one of the greatest services of Lenin...

The Bolsheviks are not to blame that those colossal peasant movements of past ages did not lead to a democratization of social relations in Russia – without cities to lead them it was unattainable! – nor are the Bolsheviks to blame that the so-called liberation of the peasants in 1861 was carried out in such a way as to involve stealing of the communal land, enslavement of the peasant to the state, and complete preservation of the caste system. One thing is true: the Bolsheviks were obliged to carry through in the first quarter of the twentieth century that which was not carried through – or not even undertaken at all – in the seventeenth, eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. Before taking up their own great task, they had to clear the ground of the historic rubbish of the old ruling classes and the old ages. We may add that the Bolsheviks at least fulfilled this preliminary task most conscientiously. This Miliukov will now hardly venture to deny”.

### **The majority of the Petersburg proletariat moves toward Bolshevism**

The start of the agrarian revolution coinciding with the disaster of the offensive could not but aggravate the economic situation and impose a sense of urgency on the consciousness of the workers. In mid-June,

*“The food situation in the cities was becoming worse and worse. The agrarian movement had established its center in 43 provinces. The flow of grain to the army and the towns was dangerously dwindling...*

*The mechanism of the market, broken by the war, had not been replaced by that state regulation to which the advanced capitalist governments had been compelled to resort, and which alone permitted Germany to hold on through four years of war...*

*The bourgeoisie as a whole was entering upon a policy of economic defeatism. Temporary losses and deficits due to economic paralysis were in their eyes the overhead expenses of a struggle with the revolution which threatened the foundations of “culture”.*

The bourgeoisie was also radicalizing, advocating ever more openly for the imposition of a counterrevolutionary dictatorship. It had also been exerting pressure through the wielding of its economic weapons.

*"In the middle of June a Congress of Trade and Industry demands of the Provisional Government "a radical break with the system of developing the revolution." We have already heard this demand made by the generals: "Stop the Revolution." But the industrialists make it more concise: "The source of all evil is not only the Bolsheviks, but also the socialist parties. Only a firm iron hand can save Russia."*

*Having prepared the political setting, the industrialists passed from words to deeds. In the course of March and April, 129 small plants involving 9,000 workers were shut down; in May, 108 with a like number of workers; in June, 125 plants with 38,000 workers were shut down; in July, 206 plants threw out on the streets 48,000 workers. The lockout developed in a geometric progression. But that was only a beginning. Textile Moscow got into motion after Petrograd, and the provinces after Moscow. The manufacturers would refer to an absence of fuel, raw materials, accessories, credits. The factory committees would interfere in the matter and in many cases indubitably establish the fact of a malicious dislocation of industry with the goal of bringing pressure on the workers, or holding up the government for subsidies...*

*In a letter addressed to the Ministry of Finance the bankers "prophesied" a flow of capital abroad and a transfer of papers to the safes in case of radical financial reforms. In other words the banker-patriots threatened a financial lockout to complete the industrial one. The government hastened to accede: after all, the organizers of this sabotage were respected people who had been compelled as the result of the war and the revolution to risk their capital, and not any old Kronstadt sailors who risked nothing but their heads".*

The peculiarity of the Russian revolution can clearly be seen here: despite the fact that a workers' revolution was underway, the bourgeoisie directly conserved a good part of its economic power. The soviets here, the factory committees, were political organs. The revolution had failed to strip itself of its original bourgeois-democratic impulse. Inside the factory or workshop, the employer ruled. The workers had not taken over production, much less subverted the capital-labor relation. The workers could only confront *lock-outs* through *control* by the factory-committees, which, little by little, were being armed with small militias. But even though the employers were pressured by the workers, production continued to operate under the law of value and it would continue to do so throughout the entire revolution. Why? What was it if not the impossibility of linking up with a peasant revolution that still operated within the framework of the bourgeois revolution? Only the extension of the workers revolution to the Russian countryside itself at least, or to the countries of the capitalist heartland most importantly, could have allowed the logic of exchange to be subverted. In other words, unlike the Spanish revolution, the Russian revolution was an exclusively political revolution, which left the law of value intact, because it was a permanent revolution.

*"The bond between economics and politics was being revealed. The state, accustomed to appear in the quality of a mystic principle, was operating now oftener and oftener in its most primitive form, that is, in the form of detachments of armed men. The workers in various parts of the country were subjecting the bosses who refused to make concessions or even negotiate, now to enforced appearance before the soviet, now to house arrest. It is no wonder that the workers' militia became an object of special hatred to the possessing classes".*

But although the historical necessity - to link up with the bourgeois revolution of the peasantry - translated into the impossibility of even minimal subversion of productive relations, under the strictly political character of the revolution with SRism and Menshevism dominating the soviets, there were hidden material conditions born out of the war itself and the situation of Russian capitalism within a world capitalism that gave it form and had entered into full decadence. Let us pause for a moment to draw up a picture.

*"In the proletariat itself, in its make-up, its political level, we must seek supplementary causes for the temporary entrenchment of the Mensheviks and Social Revolutionaries. The war brought vast changes in the constitution and mood of the working class. If the preceding years had been a time of revolutionary afflux, the war sharply broke off that process. The mobilization was thought out and conducted not only from a military, but still more from a police viewpoint. The government made haste to clean out from the industrial districts the more active and restless groups of workers. We may consider it established that the mobilization of the first months of war tore away from the industries as many as 40 per cent of the workers, chiefly the skilled workers. Their absence, having a very damaging effect on the course of production, called out hot protests from the industrialists in proportion to their high profits from the war industries. A further destruction of the workers' cadres was thus stopped. The workers indispensable to the industries remained in the capacity of men on military duty. The breaches effected by the mobilization were made up by immigrants from the villages, small-town people, badly qualified workers, women, boys. The percentage of women in industry rose from 32 to 40 per cent.*

*The process of renewal and dilution of the proletariat reached its extreme dimensions in the capital. For the years of the war, 1914-17, the number of workers in large enterprises, those hiring more than 500, almost doubled in the Petrograd province. In consequence of the liquidation of plants and factories in Poland, and especially in the Baltic states, and still more in consequence of the general growth of the war industries, there were concentrated in Petrograd by 1917 about 400,000 workers in plants and factories. Out of these, 335,000 were in the one hundred and forty giant plants. The more militant elements of the Petrograd proletariat played no small part at the front in giving form to the revolutionary moods of the army. But those yesterday's immigrants from the villages who replaced them, often well-to-do peasants and shopkeepers hiding from the front, women and boys, were far more submissive than the ranking workers. To this we must add that the qualified workers who found themselves in the position of men on military duty-and of these there were hundreds of thousands-observed an extraordinary caution through fear of being, thrown over to the front. Such was the social basis of the patriotic mood, which had prevailed with a part of the workers even under the tsar. But there was no stability in this patriotism. The merciless military and police repression, the redoubled exploitation, defeats at the front, and industrial breakdown, pushed the workers into the struggle. Strikes during the war were predominantly economic in character, however, and distinguished by far more moderation than before the war. The weakening of the class was increased by the weakening of its party. After the arrest and exile of the Bolshevik Duma deputies, there was carried out with the help of a previously prepared hierarchy of provocateurs a general smash-up of the Bolshevik organizations, from which the party did not recover until the February revolution. During 1915 and 1916 the diluted working class had to go through an elementary school of struggle before the partial economic strikes and demonstrations of hungry women could in February 1917 fuse in a general strike, and draw the army into an insurrection.*

*The Petrograd proletariat thus entered the February revolution not only in a heterogeneous condition, not yet having amalgamated its constituent parts, but with a lowered political level even of its advanced layers. In the provinces it was still worse. It was this revival of political illiteracy and semi-illiteracy in the proletariat, caused by the war, which created the second condition necessary for the temporary dominance of the Compromise parties. A revolution teaches and teaches fast. In that lies its strength. Every week brings something new to the masses. Every two months creates an epoch. At the end of February, the insurrection. At the end of April, a demonstration of the armed workers and soldiers in Petrograd. At the beginning of July, a new assault, far broader in scope and under more resolute slogans. At the end of August, Kornilov's attempt at an overthrow beaten off by the masses. At the end of October, conquest of power by the Bolsheviks. Under these events, so striking in their rhythm, molecular processes were taking place, welding the heterogeneous parts of the working class into one political whole. In this again the chief role was played by the strike.*

*Frightened by the lightning of revolution striking in the midst of their bacchanalia of war profits, the industrialists made concessions in the first weeks to the workers. The Petrograd factory owners even agreed, with qualifications and exceptions, to the eight-hour day. But that did not quiet things, since the standard of living continually sank. In May the Executive Committee was obliged to concede that with the increasing cost of living the situation of the workers "borders for many categories upon chronic starvation." The mood in the worker districts was becoming more and more nervous and tense. What depressed them most of all was the absence of prospects. The masses are capable of enduring the heaviest deprivations when they understand what for, but the new régime was more and more revealing itself to them as a mere camouflage of the old relations against which they had revolted in February. This they would not endure. The strikes were especially stormy among the more backward and exploited groups of workers. Laundry workers, dyers, coopers, trade and industrial clerks, structural workers, bronze workers, unskilled workers, shoemakers, paper-box makers, sausage makers, furniture workers, were striking, layer after layer, throughout the month of June. The metal-workers were beginning, on the contrary, to play a restraining rôle. To the advanced workers it was becoming more and more clear that individual economic strikes in the conditions of war, breakdown and inflation could not bring a serious improvement, that there must be some change in the very foundations. The lockout not only made the workers favourable to the demand for the control of industry, but even pushed them toward the thought of the necessity of taking the factories into the hands of the state. This inference seemed the more natural in that the majority of private factories were working for the war, and that alongside them were state enterprises of the same type. Already in the summer of 1917 delegations began to arrive in the capital from the far ends of Russia, delegations of workers and clerks, with a plea that the factories should be taken over by the treasury, since the shareholders had stopped financing them. But the government would not hear of this; consequently it was necessary to change the government. The Compromisers opposed this. The workers began to shift their front against the Compromisers. The Putilov factory with its 40,000 workers was a stronghold of the Social Revolutionaries during the first months of the revolution. But its garrison did not long defend it against Bolsheviks. At the head of the Bolshevik attack most often was to be seen Volodarsky, a tailor in the past. A Jew who had spent some years in America and spoke English well, Volodarsky was a magnificent mass orator, logical, ingenious and bold. His American intonation gave a unique expressiveness to his resonant voice, ringing out concisely at meetings of many thousands. "From the moment of his arrival in the Narva district," says the worker Minichev, "the ground in the Putilov factory began to slip under the feet of the Social Revolutionary gentlemen, and in the course of something like two months the Putilov workers had*

*gone over to the Bolsheviks."*

*The growth of strikes, and of the class struggle in general, almost automatically raised the influence of the Bolsheviks. In all cases where it was a question of life interests the workers became convinced that the Bolsheviks had no ulterior motives, that they were concealing nothing, and that you could rely on them. In the hours of conflict all the workers tended toward the Bolsheviks, the non-party workers, the Social Revolutionaries, the Mensheviks. This is explained by the fact that the factory and shop committees, waging a struggle for the life of their factories against the sabotage of the administration and the proprietors, went over to the Bolsheviks much sooner than the Soviet. At a conference of the factory and shop committees of Petrograd and its environs at the beginning of June, the Bolshevik resolution won 885 out of 421 votes. This fact went by utterly unnoticed in the big newspapers. Nevertheless it meant that in the fundamental questions of economic life the Petrograd proletariat, not yet having broken with the Compromisers, had nevertheless as a fact gone over to the Bolsheviks. At the June conference of trade unions it became known that in Petrograd there were over 50 unions with no less than 250,000 members. The metal workers' union numbered about 190,000 workers; its membership had doubled in the course of the one month of May. The influence of the Bolsheviks in the union had grown still more swiftly. All the by-elections to the soviets showed a victory for the Bolsheviks. By the 1st of June in the Moscow Soviet there were already 206 Bolsheviks against 176 Mensheviks and 110 Social Revolutionaries. The same shifts occurred in the provinces, only more slowly. The membership of the party was growing steadily. At the end of April the Petrograd organization had 15,000 members. By the end of June, over 82,000".*

And what was it all about? What did it do, what was the party?

*"The soviets lagged behind the shop committees. The shop committees lagged behind the masses. The soldiers lagged behind the workers. Still more the provinces lagged behind the capital. Such is the inevitable dynamic of a revolutionary process, which creates thousands of contradictions only in order accidentally and in passing, as though in play, to resolve them and immediately create new ones. The party also lagged behind the revolutionary dynamic-an organization which has the least right to lag, especially in a time of revolution. In such workers' centers as Ekaterinburg, Perm, Tula, Nizhni-Novgorod, Sormovo, Kolomna, Yuzovka, the Bolsheviks separated from the Mensheviks only at the end of May. In Odessa, Nikolaev, Elisavetgrad, Poltava and other points in the Ukraine, the Bolsheviks did not have independent organizations even in the middle of June. In Baku, Zlatioust, Bezhetsk, Kostroma, the Bolsheviks divided from the Mensheviks only towards the end of June. These facts cannot but seem surprising when you take into consideration that within four months the Bolsheviks are going to seize the power. How far the party during the war had fallen behind the molecular process in the masses, and how far the March leadership of Kamenev and Stalin lagged behind the gigantic historic tasks! The most revolutionary party which human history until this time had ever known was nevertheless caught unaware by the events of history. It reconstructed itself in the fires, and straightened out its ranks under the onslaught, of events. The masses at the turning point were "a hundred times" to the left of the extreme left party. The growth of the Bolshevik influence, which took place with the force of a natural historical process, reveals its own contradiction upon a closer examination, its zigzags, its ebbs and flows. The masses are not homogeneous, and more over they learn to handle the fire of revolution only by burning their hands and jumping away. The Bolsheviks could only accelerate the process of education of the masses. They patiently explained. And history this time did not take advantage of their patience".*

One last finishing touch to finish the picture: parliamentarianism and the elections mobilized the urban petty bourgeoisie for the first time. Here we see for the first time - that was to be seen in less than two years in Germany - the use of suffrage and parliamentarism, of democracy, against revolution, directly attacking the legitimacy of class organs and seeking to demoralize the workers.

*“While the Bolsheviks were resolutely winning the shops, factories and regiments, the elections to the democratic dumas gave an enormous and apparently growing advantage to the Compromisers. This was one of the sharpest and most enigmatic contradictions of the revolution. To be sure, the дума of the Vyborg district, which was purely proletarian, prided itself upon its Bolshevik majority. But that was an exception. In the city elections of Moscow in June, the Social Revolutionaries got more than 60 per cent of the votes. They themselves were astonished at this figure, for they could not but feel that their influence was swiftly dwindling. In the effort to understand the mutual relation between the real development of the revolution and its reflection in the mirrors of democracy the Moscow elections have an extraordinary interest. The vast layers of workers and soldiers were already hastily shaking off their Compromisist illusions. Meanwhile, the broadest layers of the small town people were also beginning to stir. For these scattered masses the democratic elections offered almost the first, and in any case one of the very rare opportunities to show themselves politically. While the worker, yesterday’s Menshevik or Social Revolutionary, gave his vote to the Bolshevik Party and drew the soldier along with him, the cabman, the deliveryman, the janitor, the market woman, the shopkeeper, his assistant, the teacher, in performing so heroic a deed as giving their vote to the Social Revolutionaries, for the first time emerged from political non-existence. The petty bourgeois layers belatedly voted for Kerensky because he personified in their eyes the February revolution, which had only today seeped down to them. With its 60 per cent Social Revolutionary majority the Moscow Duma glowed with the last flare of a dying luminary. It was so also with all the other organs of democratic self-administration. Having barely arrived, they were already stricken with the impotence of belatedness. That meant that the course of the revolution depended upon the workers and soldiers, and not upon that human dust which had been kicked up and was dancing in the whirlwind of the revolution.*

*Such is the deep and at the same time simple dialectic of the revolutionary awakening of the oppressed classes. The most dangerous of the aberrations of the revolution arises when the mechanical accountant of democracy balances in one column yesterday, today and tomorrow, and thereby impels the formal democrats to look for the head of the revolution where in reality is to be found its very heavy tail. Lenin taught his party to distinguish head from tail”.*

The First All-Russian Congress of the Soviets had been meeting since June 3 in Petersburg and had celebrated an authentic *conciliatory mass*, supporting a union with the bourgeoisie, rejecting the eight-hour day and entrusting everything to the election of a Duma, to which they hoped to hand over power and thus be able to dissolve the Soviets once and for all.

But a minor incident on the ninth - the eviction of a farm occupied by the cultural organizations - gets Vyborg to rise up and for dozens of factories to confront the Congress afterward. The assemblies approved a demonstration the next day that would be held in front of Congress and raise the slogan “All power to the Soviets”. The Bolsheviks feared that this demonstration would take on a premature insurrectionary character. Congress banned all demonstrations for three days and warned - in code - that an armed reaction to the demonstration could be triggered.

*“Confronted with the categorical resolution of the congress – and moreover with a mysterious reference to a threatening blow from the right – the Bolsheviks decided to reconsider the question. They wanted a peaceful demonstration, not an insurrection, and they could not have any motive for converting a forbidden demonstration into a half-insurrection. On its side the praesidium of the congress decided to take measures. Several hundred delegates were grouped in tens and sent out to the workers’ districts and the barracks to prevent the demonstration. They were to meet in the morning at the Tauride Palace and compare notes. The executive committee of the peasant deputies joined in this expedition, appointing 70 from its membership. Thus, in however unexpected a manner, the Bolsheviks achieved their goal. The delegates of the congress found themselves obliged to get acquainted with the workers and soldiers of the capital. If the mountain was not allowed to come to the prophet, the prophet at least went to the mountain. The meeting proved instructive in the highest degree. In the Izvestia of the Moscow Soviet, a Menshevik correspondent paints the following picture: “All night long, without a wink of sleep, a majority of the congress, more than 500 members, dividing themselves into tens, travelled through the factories and shops and military units of Petrograd, urging everybody to stay away from the demonstration ... The congress had no authority in a good many of the factories and shops, and also in several regiments of the garrison ... The members were frequently met in a far from friendly manner, sometimes hostilely, and quite often they were sent away with insults.” This official Soviet organ does not exaggerate in the least. On the contrary, it gives a very much softened picture of this nocturnal meeting of two different worlds.*

*The Petrograd masses at least left no doubt among the delegates as to who was able henceforth to summon a demonstration, or to call it off. The workers of the Putilov factory agreed to paste up the declaration of the congress against the demonstration only after they learned from Pravda that it did not contradict the resolution of the Bolsheviks. The first machine gun regiment – which played the leading rôle in the garrison, as did the Putilov factory among the workers – after hearing the speeches of Cheidze and Avksentiev representing the two executive committees, adopted the following resolution: “In agreement with the Central Committee of the Bolsheviks and their military organization, the regiment postpones its action”...*

*The masses submitted to the decision of the Bolsheviks, but not without protest and indignation. In certain factories they adopted resolutions of censure of the Central Committee. The more fiery members of the party in the sections tore up their membership cards. That was a serious warning”.*

The Congress then discussed disarming the workers, breaking up the Bolsheviks... but it was still premature... for both sides.

*“The Soviet majority and the Soviet minority confronted each other breast to breast three days as though for a decisive battle. But both sides stepped back at the last moment. The Bolsheviks gave up the demonstration. The Compromisers abandoned the idea of disarming the workers...*

*At the same session of the congress which condemned the Bolsheviks in their absence, a representative of the Mensheviks unexpectedly moved to appoint for the following Sunday, the 18th of June, a manifestation of workers and soldiers in Petrograd and other important cities, in order to demonstrate to the enemy the unity and strength of the democracy. The motion was carried, although not without bewilderment. Something over a month later Miliukov fairly well explained this unexpected turn on the part of the Compromisers: “In delivering Kadet speeches at the congress of the soviets, in disorganising the armed demonstration of June 10 ... the minister socialists felt that they had gone too far in our direction, that the*

ground was slipping under their feet. They got frightened and backed away abruptly toward the Bolsheviks." The decision to hold a demonstration on June 18 was, of course not a step in the direction of the Bolsheviks, but an attempt to turn toward the masses as against the Bolsheviks. Their nocturnal experience with the workers and soldiers had caused a certain amount of trepidation among the heads of the soviets. Thus, for instance, in direct opposition to what had been in mind at the beginning of the congress, they hastily produced in the name of the government a resolution calling for the abolition of the State Duma and the summoning of a Constituent Assembly for the 30th of September. The slogans of the demonstration were chosen with this same idea of not causing any irritation to the masses: "Universal Peace," "Immediate Convocation of a Constituent Assembly," "Democratic Republic." Not a word either about the offensive or the coalition. Lenin asked in Pravda: "And what has become of 'Complete Confidence to the Provisional Government,' gentlemen? . . . Why does your tongue stick in your throat?" This irony was accurately to the point: the Compromisers did not dare demand of the masses confidence in that government of which they themselves were members.

The Soviet delegates, having a second time made the rounds of the workers' districts and the barracks, gave wholly encouraging reports on the eve of the demonstration to the Executive Committee. Tseretelli, to whom these communications restored his equilibrium and inclination towards complacent sermonizing, addressed some remarks to the Bolsheviks: "Now we shall have an open and honest review of the revolutionary forces ... Now we shall see whom the majority is following, you or us." The Bolsheviks had accepted the challenge even before it was so incautiously formulated. "We shall join the demonstration on the 18th," wrote Pravda, "in order to struggle for those aims for which we had intended to demonstrate on the 10th"...

The delegates of the congress, assembled on Mars Field, read and counted the placards. The first Bolshevik slogans were met half-laughingly – Tseretelli had so confidently thrown down his challenge the day before. But these same slogans were repeated again and again. "Down with the Ten Minister-Capitalists!" "Down with the Offensive" "All Power to the Soviets!" The ironical smiles froze, and then gradually disappeared. Bolshevik banners floated everywhere. The delegates stopped counting the uncomfortable totals. The triumph of the Bolsheviks was too obvious. "Here and there," writes Sukhanov, "the chain of Bolshevik banners and columns would be broken by specifically Social Revolutionary or official Soviet slogans. But these were drowned in the mass. Soviet officialdom was recounting the next day 'how fiercely here and there the crowd tore up banners bearing the slogan "Confidence to the Provisional Government."'" There is obvious exaggeration in this. Only three small groups carried placards in honour of the Provisional Government: the circle of Plekhanov, a Cossack detachment, and a handful of Jewish intellectuals who belonged to the Bund. This threefold combination, which gave the impression with its variegated membership of a political curio, seemed to have set itself the task of publicly exhibiting the impotence of the régime. Under the hostile cries of the crowd the Plekhanovites and the Bund lowered their placards. The Cossacks were stubborn, and their banners were literally torn from them by the demonstrators, and destroyed. "The stream which had been flowing quietly along until then," writes Izvestia, "turned into a veritable river at the flood, just at the point of overflowing its banks." That was the Vyborg section, all under the banners of the Bolsheviks. "Down with the Ten Minister-Capitalists" One of the factories carried a placard: "The right to Life is Higher than the rights of Private Property." This slogan had not been suggested by the party.

*Dismayed provincials were looking everywhere for their leaders. The latter lowered their eyes or simply went into hiding. The Bolsheviks went after the provincials. Does this look like a gang of conspirators? The delegates agreed that it did not. "In Petrograd you are the power," they conceded in a totally different tone from that in which they had spoken at the official sessions, "but not in the provinces, not at the front. Petrograd cannot go against the whole country." That's all right, answered the Bolsheviks, your turn will soon come – the same slogans will be raised...*

*The last days of June pass in a continual commotion. A machine gun regiment prepares for an immediate attack on the Provisional Government. Workers from the striking factories make the rounds of the regiments calling them into the streets. Bearded peasants in soldiers' coats, many of them grey-haired, pass in processions of protest along the pavements: these middle-aged peasants are demanding that they be discharged for work in the fields. The Bolsheviks are carrying on an agitation against going into the streets: The demonstration of the 18th has said all that can be said: in order to produce a change, demonstrating is not enough; and yet the hour of revolution has not yet struck. On the 22nd of June, the Bolshevik press appeals to the garrison: "Do not trust any summons to action in the Street delivered in the name of the Military Organisation." Delegates are arriving from the front with complaints of violence and punishments. Threats to reorganize the unsubmitive regiments pour oil on the fire. "In many regiments the soldiers are sleeping with weapons in their hands," says a declaration of the Bolsheviks to the Executive Committee. Patriotic demonstrations, often armed, lead to street fights. These are small discharges of the accumulated electricity. Neither side directly intends to attack: the reaction is too weak, the revolution is not yet fully confident of its power. But the streets of the town seem paved with explosive material. A battle hovers in the air. The Bolshevik press explains and restrains. The patriotic press gives away its fright with an unbridled baiting of Bolsheviks. On the 25th, Lenin writes: "This universal wild cry of spite and rage against the Bolsheviks is the common complaint of Kadets, Social Revolutionaries and Mensheviks against their own flabbiness. They are in a majority. They are the government. They are all together in a bloc. And they see that nothing comes of it. What can they do but rage against the Bolsheviks?"*

## **The July days**

July began with the resignation of the Kadet ministers. The bourgeoisie wanted to force Mensheviks and SRs into a confrontation with the Bolsheviks that had been implied in June. The military offensive had been defeated and it was urgent for them to rearm themselves politically.

*"The moment chosen was suggested by the collapse of the offensive – not yet officially acknowledged, but no longer a matter of doubt to the well-informed. These Liberals considered it expedient to leave their left allies face to face with defeat, and with the Bolsheviks.*

*The rumor of the resignation of the Kadets immediately spread through the capital, and generalized all the existing conflicts politically in one slogan – or rather, one cry to heaven: "Let us have an end of this coalition rigmarole!"*

*The soldiers and workers considered that all other questions – that of wages, of the price of bread, and of whether it is necessary to die at the front for nobody knows what – depended upon the question who was to rule the country in the future, the bourgeoisie or their own Soviet. In these expectations there was a certain element of illusion – in so far, at least, as the masses hoped with a change of power to achieve an immediate solution of all sore problems. But in the last analysis they were right: the question of power determined the direction of the revolution as a whole, and that means that it decided the fate of everyone*

*in particular. To imagine that the Kadets may not have foreseen the effect of this act of open sabotage of the Soviet would be decidedly to underestimate Miliukov. The leader of liberalism was obviously trying to drag the Compromisers into a difficult situation from which they could make a way out only with bayonets. In those days Miliukov firmly believed that the situation could be saved with a bold bloodletting”.*

For the soldiers, the question is literally one of life or death: the confrontation between the provisional government and the soviet is imminent, and the first move of the provisional government is to send the troops stationed in the capital to a collapsing front. A feeling of anguish and urgency caught on among the soldiers.

*“On the morning of July 3, several thousand machinegunners, after breaking up a meeting of the company and regimental committees of their regiment, elected a chairman of their own and demanded immediate consideration of the question of an armed manifestation. The meeting was a storm from the first moment. The problem of the front intercrossed with the crisis in the government. The chairman of the meeting, a Bolshevik, Golovin, tried to apply the brakes, proposing that they have a preliminary talk with other units and with the Military Organization. But every suggestion of delay set the soldiers on edge”.*

In fact, what the soldiers and workers wanted was to call for the Soviets and Bolsheviks to capture power.

*“Specially appointed delegates were already making the rounds of the shops and regiments with an appeal for support. The machine-gunners had not forgotten, either, to send their men to Kronstadt. In this way, one step below the official organizations, and partly under their protection, new temporary relations were established between the more restive regiments and the factories. The masses had no intention of breaking with the Soviet; on the contrary, they wanted the Soviet to seize the power. Still less did the masses intend to break with the Bolshevik party. But they did feel that the party was irresolute. They wanted to get their shoulder under it – shake a fist at the Executive Committee, give the Bolsheviks a little shove”.*

The mobilization grew rapidly despite the resistance of the Bolshevik agitators. The workers end up joining the regiments that take to the streets.

*“At three o’clock in the afternoon, two delegates from the machine-gunners came to an all-city conference of the Bolsheviks, sitting that day in the house of Kshesinskaia, with the information that their regiment had decided to come out. Nobody had expected this, and nobody wanted it. Tomsky declared: “The regiments which have come out have acted in an uncomradely manner, not having invited the Central Committee of our party to consider the question of a manifestation. The Central Committee proposes to the conference: in the first place, to issue an appeal in order to hold back the masses; in the second, to prepare an address to the Executive Committee urging them to take the power in their hands. It is impossible to talk of a manifestation at this moment unless we want a new revolution.” Tomsky, an old worker-Bolshevik who had certified his loyalty to the party with years at hard labor – famous subsequently as leader of the trade unions – was in general more inclined by character to restrain the masses from action than summon them to it. But on this occasion he was merely carrying out the thought of Lenin: “It is impossible to talk of a manifestation at this moment unless we want a new revolution.” Even the attempt at a peaceful demonstration on June 10th had been denounced by the Compromisers as a conspiracy. An overwhelming majority of the conference was at one with Tomsky. **We must at all costs postpone the final conflict. The offensive at the front is holding the whole country at high tension. Its failure is inevitable – as also the determination of the government to throw all the responsibility for the defeat upon the***

**Bolsheviks. We must give the Compromisers time to ruin themselves completely.** Volodarsky answered the machine-gunners in the name of the conference to the effect that the regiment must submit to the decisions of the party”.

Mobilization was **premature**, it advanced an insurrection that the Petersburg proletariat already saw as necessary but for which the soviet itself was not prepared. The July slogans, which were those of June, were just. The problem was that the timing was off: an armed mobilization can only begin with the intention of seizing power. But were the soviets, still with a compromisist majority, ready to seize power?

Let us stress once again: this was a just yet **premature** action. It was not a trap, it was not carried out under slogans that weaken the class *per se*, it did not compromise the program of the revolution, it simply advanced its implementation before the conditions were met. It confused the perspective - one that was neither vague nor nebulous - with the immediate tasks, which included, among others, the conquest of the soviets. This confusion threatened to leave these immediate tasks unfinished and make impossible what was already within reach.

However, in less than four hours, the movement was unstoppable. Where does the class party fit in? Obviously it is with the most determined sectors. It cannot oppose a **premature** action. It must embrace it and **try to lead it so that it becomes the generator of the absent conditions.**

*“At eight o’clock in the evening, the Machine Gun regiment, and soon after it the Moscow regiment, came up to the palace of Kshesinskaia. Popular Bolsheviks – Nevsky, Lashevich, Podvoisky – speaking from the balcony, tried to send the regiments home. They were answered from below: Dolo! Dolo! Such cries the Bolshevik balcony had never yet heard from the soldiers; it was an alarming sign. Behind the regiments the factories began to march up: “All Power to the Soviets!” “Down with the ten minister capitalists!” Those had been the banners of June 18th, but now they were hedged with bayonets. The demonstration had become a mighty fact. What was to be done? Could the Bolsheviks possibly stand aside? The members of the Petrograd committee, together with the delegates to the conference and representatives from the regiments and factories, passed a resolution: to reconsider the question, to end all fruitless attempts to restrain the masses and guide the developing movement in such a way that the governmental crisis may be decided in the interests of the people; with this goal, to appeal to the soldiers and workers to go peacefully to the Tauride Palace, elect delegates, and through them present their demands to the Executive Committee. The members of the Central Committee who were present sanctioned this change of tactics. This new decision, announced from the balcony, was met with welcoming shouts and with singing of the Marseillaise. The movement had been legalized by the party. The machine-gunners could heave a sigh of relief. A part of the regiment immediately went to the Peter and Paul fortress to influence its garrison, and in case of necessity protect from its blows the Palace of Kshesinskaia, which was separated from the fortress only by the narrow Kronverksky canal”.*

When the demonstrations had reached the soviet, the situation could be clearly appreciated in all its dimensions... it exposed the Compromisers and gave rise to the new Bolshevik majority that was forming in the workers section of the soviet.

*“The Menshevik, Voitinsky, to whom was allotted the task of protecting the Executive Committee, let the whole thing out later in his retrospective survey: “The entire day of July 3rd was spent in getting together troops to fortify the Tauride Palace... At one time we had absolutely no forces. Six men stood at the doors of the Tauride Palace without power to hold back the crowd” ...*

*And again: “On the first day of the demonstration we had at our disposal only a hundred men – we had no other forces. We sent out commissars to all the regiments with a request to give us soldiers to form a patrol. But each regiment looked to the next to see what it was going to do. We were compelled at whatever cost to put a stop to this outrage, and we summoned troops from the front.”*

*It would be difficult, even with malice aforethought, to devise a more vicious satire upon the Compromisers. Hundreds of thousands of demonstrators were demanding the transfer of power to the soviets. Cheidze, standing at the head of the soviet system and thus the logical candidate for premier, was hunting for armed forces to employ against the demonstrators. This colossal movement in favor of power to the democracy, was denounced by the democratic leaders as an attack upon the democracy by an armed gang. In the Tauride Palace at that same time the workers’ section of the Soviet was meeting after a long intermission. In the course of the last two months this section had so far changed its composition, as a result of by-elections in the factories, that the Executive Committee had well-grounded fears of a predominance of Bolsheviks. The artificially delayed meeting of the section – finally called a few days before by the Compromisers themselves – accidentally coincided with the armed demonstration. In this the newspapers saw the hand of the Bolsheviks. Zinoviev in a speech to the section convincingly developed the thought that the Compromisers, being allies of the bourgeoisie, were unable and unwilling to struggle against the counter-revolution, since that word meant to them only individual manifestations of Black Hundred hooliganism; it did not mean what it was – a political union of the possessing classes for the purpose of strangling the soviets as centers of the resistance of the toiling masses. His speech hit the mark. The Mensheviks, finding themselves for the first time in a minority on soviet soil, proposed that no decision should be arrived at, and that they should disperse to the districts to preserve order. But it was already too late! The news that armed workers and machine-gunners were approaching the Tauride Palace produced a mighty excitement in the hall. Kamenev ascended the tribune: “We did not summon the manifestation,” he said. “The popular masses themselves came into the street ... But once the masses have come out, our place is among them... Our present task is to give the movement an organized character.” Kamenev concluded with a proposal that they elect a commission of twenty-five men for the leadership of the movement. Trotsky seconded the motion. Cheidze feared a Bolshevik commission, and vainly insisted that the question be turned over to the Executive Committee. The debate became fiercer. Convinced finally that all together they constituted only a third of the assembly, the Mensheviks and Social Revolutionaries left the hall. This was becoming a favorite tactic with the democrats; they began to boycott the soviets from the moment they lost the majority there. A resolution summoning the Executive Committee to take the power was adopted in the absence of the opposition by 276 votes. Elections were immediately held for the fifteen members of the commission. Ten places were left for the minority – and these ten would remain unoccupied. This fact of the election of a Bolshevik commission signified both to friends and enemies that the workers’ section of the Petrograd soviet would henceforth become a Bolshevik base. A vast step forward! In April the influence of the Bolsheviks had extended to approximately a third of the Petrograd workers; in the Soviet of those days they occupied a wholly insignificant sector. Now, at the beginning of July, the Bolsheviks were sending to the workers’ section about two-thirds of its members. That meant that among the masses their influence had become decisive.*

*Through the streets leading to the Tauride Palace there is flowing a steady column of working men and women and soldiers, with banners, songs and bands playing. The light artillery comes along, its commander reporting amid rapture that all the batteries of his division are at one with the workers. The thoroughfares and square near the Tauride are filled with people. All are trying to crowd in around the tribune at the chief entrance to the palace. Cheidze comes out to the demonstrators with the gloomy look of a man who has been unnecessarily torn from his work. The popular soviet president is met with an unfriendly silence. In a tired and hoarse voice Cheidze repeats those commonplaces which have long puckered his mouth. Voitinsky, who comes out to help him, is no better received...*

*From the lips of the Bolshevik orators the demonstrators learned of the victory just won in the Workers' Section, and that fact gave them almost as palpable a satisfaction as would an entrance upon the epoch of soviet power.*

*The joint session of the Executive Committees met again a little before midnight. (Just then the grenadiers were lying down on the Nevsky.) On a motion from Dan, it was resolved that only those could remain at the meeting who should bind themselves in advance to defend and carry out its decisions. This was a new note! From a workers' and soldiers' parliament, which was what the Mensheviks had declared the Soviet to be, they were trying to convert it into an administrative organ of the compromise majority. After they have become a minority – and this is only two months away – the Compromisers will passionately defend the principle of democracy in the soviet. Today, however – as indeed at all decisive moments in social life – democracy is held in reserve. A number of Mezhrayontsi left the hall with a protest. The Bolsheviks were not there; they were in the Palace of Kshesinskaia getting ready for tomorrow. During the further course of the meeting the Mezhrayontsi and the Bolsheviks appeared in the hall with the announcement that no one could take from them the mandate given them by their electors. The majority greeted this announcement with silence, and Dan's resolution was quietly dropped into oblivion. The session dragged out like a death agony. In tired voices the Compromisers kept on assuring each other that they were right...*

*Delegates from the demonstrators, now surrounding the Tauride Palace on all sides, demanded admission to the meeting. They were admitted with alarm and hostility. The delegates, however, sincerely believed that this time the Compromisers could not help coming to meet them. Had not today's issues of the Menshevik and Social Revolutionary papers, wrought up over the resignation of the Kadets, themselves exposed the intrigues and sabotage of their bourgeois allies? Moreover the workers' section had come out in favor of a soviet government. What else was there to wait for? But their fervent appeals, in which hope still mingled with indignation, dropped impotent and inappropriate into the stagnant atmosphere of that parliament of compromise. The leaders had but one thought: how quickest to get rid of their uninvited guests. To suggest that they withdraw to the gallery, to drive them back into the street to the demonstrators, would be indiscreet. In the gallery machine gun men were listening with amazement to the evolving debate, which had only one goal – to gain time. The Compromisers were waiting for reliable regiments.*

*"A revolutionary people is in the streets," cried Dan, "but that people is engaged in a counter-revolutionary work." Dan was supported by Abramovich, one of the leaders of the Jewish Bund, a conservative pedant whose every instinct had been outraged by the revolution. "We are witnesses to a conspiracy," he asserts, in defiance of the obvious, and he proposes to the Bolsheviks that they openly announce that "this is their work." Tseretelli deepens the discussion: "To go out into the streets with the demand, 'All Power to the Soviets' – is that to support the soviets? If the soviets so desired, the power could pass to them. There is no obstacle anywhere to the will of the soviets ... Such a manifestation is not along the road of revolution, but*

*of counter-revolution." These considerations the workers' delegates could not possibly understand. It seemed to them that the high-up leaders were a little bit out of their heads. The meeting at last resolved once more, by all votes except 11, that an armed manifestation would be a stab in the back at the revolutionary army, etc., etc. The meeting adjourned at five o'clock in the morning.*

*The masses were gradually gathered back into their districts. Armed automobiles traveled all night, uniting regiments, factories and district centers. As in the last days of February, the masses spent the night casting the balance of the day's struggle. But now they did this with the aid of a complicated system of organizations-factory, party and regimental-which conferred continually. In the districts it was considered self-evident that the movement could not stop half way. The Executive Committee had postponed the decision about the power. The masses regarded that as wavering. The conclusion was clear: we must bring more pressure to bear. A night session of Bolsheviks and Mezhrayontsi, meeting in the Tauride Palace simultaneously with the Executive Committees, also cast the balance of the day and tried to foretell what the morrow would bring. Reports from the districts testified that today's demonstration had merely set the masses in motion, presenting to their minds nakedly for the first time the question of power. Tomorrow the factories and regiments would go after the answer, and no force in the world could hold them in the suburbs. The debate was not about whether to summon the masses to a seizure of power – as enemies later asserted – but about whether to try to call off the demonstration the next morning or to stand at the head of it.*

*Late in the night, or rather at about three o'clock in the morning, the Putilov factory approached the Tauride Palace – a mass of eighty thousand workers, many with wives and children. The procession had started at eleven o'clock in the evening, and other belated factories had joined it on the road. In spite of the late hour, there was such a mass of people at the Narva Gate as to suggest that nobody stayed home that night in the whole district. The women had exclaimed: "Everybody must go – we will watch the houses." At a signal from the belfry of the Church of the Savior shots had rattled out as though from a machine gun. From below a volley was fired at the belfry. "Near Gostiny Dvor a company of junkers and students fell upon the demonstrators and tried to tear away their placards. The workers resisted. The crowd piled up. Somebody fired a shot. The writer of these lines got his head broken, his sides and chest badly mashed by tramping feet." These are the words of the worker Efimov, already known to us. Passing across the whole town, silent now, the Putilov men finally arrived at the Tauride Palace. Thanks to the insistent efforts of Riazanov, closely associated at that time with the trade unions, a delegation was admitted to the Executive Committee. The throng of workers, hungry and dead-tired, scattered about on the street and in the garden, a majority immediately stretching themselves out, thinking to wait there for an answer. The entire Putilov factory lying there on the ground at three o'clock in the morning around the Tauride Palace, where the democratic leaders were waiting for the arrival of troops from the front – that is one of the most startling pictures offered by the revolution on this summit of the pass between February and October. Twelve years before no small numbers of these same workers had participated in the January procession to the Winter Palace with ikons and religious standards. Ages had passed since that Sunday afternoon; other ages will pass during the next four months.*

*The sombre image of these Putilov workers lying down in the courtyard hung over the conference of Bolshevik leaders and organizers as they debated about the next day's plans. Tomorrow the Putilovtsi will refuse to work – yes, and what work would they be good for after the night's vigil? Zinoviev was summoned to the telephone. Raskolnikov had rung up from Kronstadt to say that tomorrow early in the morning the*

*garrison of the fortress would start for Petrograd and nobody and nothing could stop it. The young midshipman was holding on in suspense at the other end of the wire: Would the central committee order him to break with the soviets, and ruin himself in their eyes? To the picture of the Putilov factory as a gypsy camp was thus joined the no less suggestive picture of the sailors' island getting ready in those sleepless hours of the night to support workers' and soldiers' Petrograd. No, the situation was too clear. There was no more room for wavering. Trotsky inquired for the last time: Can we, nevertheless, try to make it an unarmed demonstration? No, there can be no question of that. One squad of Junkers can scatter tens of thousands of unarmed workers like a flock of sheep. The soldiers and the workers, too, will regard that proposal as a trap. The answer was categorical and convincing. All unanimously decided to summon the masses in the name of the party to prolong the demonstration on the next day. Zinoviev hastened to relieve the mind of Raskolnikov, languishing at the other end of the telephone. An address to the workers and soldiers was immediately drawn up: Into the streets! The afternoon's summons from the Central Committee to stop the demonstration, was torn from the presses-but too late to replace it with a new text. A white page in Pravda the next morning will be deadly evidence against the Bolsheviks: Evidently getting frightened at the last moment, they withdrew the appeal for an insurrection; or maybe, just the opposite - maybe they renounced an earlier appeal for a peaceful demonstration in order to go in for insurrection. Meanwhile the real decision of the Bolsheviks was issued on a separate leaflet. It summoned the workers and soldiers "by way of a peaceful and organized demonstration to bring their will to the attention of the Executive Committees now in session." No, that was not a summons to insurrection.*

*From that moment the direct leadership of the movement passed conclusively into the hands of the Petrograd committee of the party, whose chief force as an agitator was Volodarsky. The task of mobilizing the garrison was assigned to the Military Organization...*

*The machine-gunners returned to their barracks at dawn, tired and, in spite of the July weather, shivering. A night rain had soaked the Putilov men also to the skin. The demonstrators did not assemble until eleven o'clock in the morning. The military sections got there still later. Today the 1st Machine Gun regiment was on the street to the last man. But it will no longer play the role of initiator as it did yesterday. The factories have moved into the front rank. Moreover, those plants have been drawn into the movement which yesterday stood aside. Where the leaders wavered or resisted, younger workers had compelled the member-on-duty of the factory committee to blow the whistle as a signal to stop work. In the Baltic factory, where Mensheviks and Social Revolutionaries dominated, about four out of five thousand workers came out. In the Skorokhod shoe factory, long considered a stronghold of the Social Revolutionaries, the mood had so sharply changed that an old deputy from that factory, a Social Revolutionary, did not dare show his face for several days. All the factories struck and held meetings. They elected leaders for the demonstration and delegates to present their demands to the Executive Committee. Again hundreds of thousands moved in radii toward the Tauride Palace, and again tens of thousands turned aside on their way there to the Palace of Kshesinskaia. Today's movement was more impressive and organized than yesterday's: the guiding hand of the party was evident. But the feeling too was hotter today. The soldiers and workers were out for a solution of the crisis. The government was in despair, for on this second day of the demonstration its impotence was even more obvious than on the first. The Executive Committee was waiting for loyal troops, and getting reports from all sides that hostile troops were moving on the capital. From Kronstadt, from New Peterhoff, from Krasnoe Selo, from the Krasnaia Gorka fort, from all the nearby centers, by land and sea, soldiers and sailors were marching in with music, with weapons, and, worst of all, with Bolshevik standards. A number of regiments were bringing their officers with them, just as in the February days,*

*pretending to be acting under their command...*

*General Polovtsev published on the morning of July 4th an announcement that he was going to cleanse Petrograd of armed hordes. The inhabitants were strictly advised to lock their doors and not go into the streets except in case of absolute necessity. This threatening order fell flat. The commander of all the troops of the district was able to bring out against the demonstrators only petty detachments of Cossacks and junkers. In the course of the day they caused some meaningless shootings and some bloody clashes...*

*The "mutinous" troops came out of the barracks in companies and battalions, taking possession of the streets and squares. The government troops acted from ambush, or made raids in small detachments – that is, they functioned exactly as insurrectionary bands are supposed to. This exchange of rôles is explained by the fact that almost the whole armed force of the government was hostile to it – or at the best, neutral. The government was living by the authorization of the Executive Committee; the power of the Executive Committee derived in turn from the hopes of the masses that it might at last come to its senses and take the power.*

*The demonstration attained its highest point with the appearance on the Petrograd arena of the Kronstadt sailors. Delegates from the machine-gunners had been working the day before in the garrison of the naval fortress. A meeting had assembled in Yakorny Square, unexpectedly to the local organization, on the initiative of some anarchists from Petrograd. The Orators had appealed to the sailors to come to the help of Petrograd. Roshal, a medical student, one of the young heroes of Kronstadt and a favorite on Yakorny Square, had tried to make a speech counseling moderation. Thousands of voices cut him off. Roshal, accustomed to a different welcome, had been compelled to leave the tribune. Not until night did it become known that in Petrograd the Bolsheviks were calling the masses into the streets. That settled the matter. The Left Social Revolutionaries – and in Kronstadt there could be no right ones – announced that they intended to take part in the demonstration. These people belonged to the same party with Kerensky, who at that very moment was at the front collecting troops to put down the demonstration. The mood at that night's session of the Kronstadt organization was such that even the timid commissar of the Provisional Government, Parchevsky, voted for the march on Petrograd. A plan was drawn up; transports were mobilized. For the necessities of this political siege, two and a half tons of arms and ammunition were given out from the stores. Crowded on tugs and passenger steamers, about 10,000 armed sailors, soldiers and workers came into the narrows of the Neva at twelve o'clock noon. Disembarking on both sides of the river, they formed a procession with bands playing and with rifles slung over their shoulders. Behind the detachments of sailors and soldiers came columns of workers from the Petrograd and Vassilievsky Island districts, interspersed with companies of the Red Guard flanked by armored cars and with innumerable standards and banners rising above them.*

*The Palace of Kshesinskaia was but two steps away. A little lank man, black as tar, Sverdlov – one of the basic organizers of the party elected to the Central Committee in the April conference – was standing on the balcony and in a businesslike manner, as always, shouting down instructions in his powerful bass voice: "Head of the procession, advance – close up ranks – rear ranks come closer." The demonstrators were greeted from the balcony by Lunacharsky, a man always easily infected by the moods of those around him, imposing in appearance and voice, eloquent in a declamatory way – none too reliable, but often irreplaceable. He was stormily applauded from below. But most of all the demonstrators wanted to hear Lenin himself. He had been summoned that morning, by the way, from his temporary Finland refuge. And the sailors so insisted on having their will, that in spite of ill health Lenin could not beg off. An irresistible*

wave of ecstasy, a genuine Kronstadt wave, greeted the leader's appearance on the balcony. Impatiently – and as always with some embarrassment – awaiting the end of the greeting, Lenin began speaking before the voices died down. His speech, which the hostile press for weeks after growled over and tore to pieces in every possible manner, consisted of a few simple phrases: a greeting to the demonstrators; an expression of confidence that the slogan, "All Power to the Soviets," would conquer in the end, an appeal for firmness and self-restraint. With renewed shouts the procession marched away to the music of the band...

At about eight o'clock in the evening, when the demonstration was in full swing, two Cossack squadrons with flying artillery rode up as a guard for the Tauride Palace. On the way they stubbornly refused to enter into conversation with the demonstrators – in itself a bad sign. These Cossacks seized armored automobiles wherever they could and disarmed individual small groups. Cossack weapons on streets occupied by workers and soldiers seemed an intolerable challenge. Everything pointed to a clash. Near the Liteiny Bridge the Cossacks drew near to a compact mass of the enemy, who had here, on the road to the Tauride, succeeded in throwing up some sort of barrier. There was a moment of ominous silence broken by shots from neighboring houses. Then the fight began. "The Cossacks used up cartridges by the box," writes the worker, Metelev. "The workers and soldiers, scattering to shelter, or simply lying down on the sidewalk under fire, replied in the same fashion." The soldiers' fire compelled the Cossacks to retreat. Having fought their way through to the quay along the Neva, they fired three volleys from cannon – the cannon shots are also remarked upon by Izvestia – but under the long-range rifle fire they retired in the direction of the Tauride Palace. Running into another workers' column the Cossacks received a decisive blow. Abandoning their cannon, horses, rifles, they sought shelter in the entrances of bourgeois houses, or dispersed altogether.

That encounter on Liteiny, an actual small battle, was the biggest military episode of the July days...In the encounter on the Liteiny seven Cossacks were killed, and nineteen wounded or knocked out by shell explosions. Among the demonstrators six were killed, and about twenty wounded. Here and there lay the dead bodies of horses...

The demonstrators again besieged the Tauride Palace and demanded their answer. At the moment the Kronstadt men arrived, some group or other brought Chernov out to them. Sensing the mood of the crowd, the word-loving minister pronounced upon this one occasion a very brief speech. Sliding over the crisis in the problem of power, he referred scornfully to the Kadets who had withdrawn from the government. "Good riddance!" he cried. Shouts interrupted him: "Then why didn't you say so before?" Miliukov even relates how "a husky worker, shaking his fist in the face of the minister, shouted furiously: 'Take the power, you son-of-a-bitch, when they give it to you.' Even though nothing more than an anecdote, this expresses with crude accuracy the essence of the July situation. Chernov's answers have no interest; in any case, they did not win him the hearts of the Kronstadters...

In just two or three minutes someone ran into the hall where the Executive Committee was sitting, and yelled that the sailors had arrested Chernov and were going to end him. With indescribable excitement the Executive Committee delegated several of its prominent members, exclusively internationalists and Bolsheviks, to rescue the minister. Chernov testified subsequently before a government commission that as he was descending from the tribune he noticed in the entrance behind the columns a hostile movement of several people.

*"They surrounded me and would not let me through to the door... a suspicious looking person in command of the sailors who were holding me back, kept pointing to an automobile standing near ... At that moment Trotsky, emerging from the Tauride Palace, came up and mounting on the front of the automobile in which I found myself, made a short speech." Proposing that Chernov be released, Trotsky asked all those opposed to raise their hands. "Not one hand was raised. The group which had conducted me to the automobile then stepped aside with a disgruntled look. Trotsky, as I remember, said: 'Citizen Chernov, nobody is hindering you from going back.' ... The general picture of this whole episode leaves no doubt in my mind that there was here a planned attempt of dark elements, acting over the heads of the general mass of the workers and soldiers, to call me out and arrest me".*

*A week before his own arrest Trotsky stated at a joint session of the Executive Committees, "These facts are going into history and we will try to establish them as they were ... I saw that a bunch of thugs was standing around the entrance. I said to Lunacharsky and Riazanov that those were okhranniki and they were trying to break into the Tauride Palace (Lunacharsky from his seat: 'That's correct.') ... I would know them, I said, in a crowd of ten thousand." In his testimony of July 24th, Trotsky, already in solitary confinement in Kresty Prison, wrote: "I was first minded to ride out of the crowd in the automobile along with Chernov and those who wanted to arrest him, in order to avoid conflict and panic in the crowd. But Midshipman Raskolnikov, running up in extreme excitement, called to me: 'That is impossible ... If you ride away with Chernov, they will say tomorrow that the Kronstadters arrested him. Chernov must be freed immediately.' As soon as the trumpeter had summoned the crowd to silence, and given me a chance to make a short speech, which ended with the question: 'Those here in favor of violence, raise their hands,' Chernov found it possible to go back immediately into the palace without hindrance." The testimony of these two witnesses, who were at the same time the chief participants in the adventure, exhausts the factual side of it. But that did not in the least hinder the press hostile to the Bolsheviks from presenting the Chernov incident, together with the "attempt" at an arrest of Kerensky, as the most convincing of proofs that an armed insurrection had been organized by the Bolsheviks...*

*After the Cossack squadrons, who were the sole obstacle on the road to the Tauride Palace, had been swept away, it seemed to many demonstrators that victory was assured. In reality the chief obstacle was sitting in the very palace itself. At the joint session of the Executive Committees, which had begun at six o'clock in the evening, there were present 90 representatives from 54 shops and factories. The five orators, who were given the floor by agreement, began by protesting against the denunciation of the demonstrators as counter-revolutionists in the manifestos of the Executive Committee. "You see what is written on our standards," said one. "Such are the decisions adopted by the workers ... We demand the resignation of the ten minister-capitalists. We have confidence in the Soviet, but not in those in whom the Soviet has confidence ... We demand that the land be seized immediately, that control of industry be established immediately. We demand a struggle against the famine which threatens us ..." Another added: "This is not a meeting, but a fully organized manifestation. We demand the transfer of the land to the peasants. We demand an annulment of the orders directed against the revolutionary army ... At this time when the Kadets have refused to work with you, we ask you with whom further you want to dicker. We demand that the power pass to the soviets." The propaganda slogans of the manifestation of June 18th had now become an armed ultimatum of the masses. But the Compromisers were still bound with too heavy chains to the chariot of the possessing classes. Power to the soviets? But that means first of all a bold policy of peace, a break with the Allies, a break with our own bourgeoisie, complete isolation, and in the course of a few weeks, ruin. No! A responsible democracy will not enter on the path of adventurism! "The present*

circumstances," said Tseretelli, "make it impossible in the Petrograd atmosphere to carry out any new decisions whatever." It remains, therefore, "to recognize the government with the staff it has left ... to call an extraordinary session of the soviets in two weeks ... in a place where it may be able to work without interference, best of all in Moscow."

But the course of the meeting was continually interrupted. The Putilovtzi were knocking at the door of the palace: they came up only towards evening, tired, irritated, in extreme excitement. "Tseretelli – we want Tseretelli!" This mass, thirty thousand strong, sends its representatives into the palace, somebody shouting after them that if Tseretelli won't come out of his own accord they must bring him out. It is a long way from threat to action, but nevertheless the thing is taking a rough turn, and the Bolsheviks hasten to interfere. Zinoviev subsequently reported: "Our comrades proposed that I should go out to the Putilov men ... a sea of heads such as I never saw before. Tens of thousands of men were solidly packed together. The cries of 'Tseretelli' continued ... I began: 'In place of Tseretelli, it is I who have come out to you.' Laughter. That changed the mood. I was able to make quite a long speech ... And in conclusion I appealed to that audience to disperse peacefully at once, keeping perfect order, and under no circumstances permitting anyone to provoke them to any aggressive action. The assembled workers applauded stormily, formed in ranks, and began to disperse." This episode offers the best possible illustration of the keen discontent of the masses, their lack of any plan of attack, and the actual role of the Bolshevik party in the July events.

During the moments when Zinoviev was exchanging views with the Putilovtzi outdoors, a large group of their delegates, some of them with rifles, burst stormily into the hall where the Executive Committees were in session. The members of the Committees jumped up from their seats. "Some of them did not reveal a sufficient courage and self restraint," says Sukhanov, who has left a vivid description of this dramatic moment. One of the workers, "a classic sansculotte in cap and short blue blouse without belt, with a rifle in his hand," jumped up on the speaker's tribune, trembling with excitement and wrath: "'Comrades! How long are we workers going to stand for this treachery? You are making bargains with the bourgeoisie and the landlords ... Here we are, thirty thousand Putilovtzi ... We are going to have our will!' Chaidze, before whose nose the rifle was dancing, showed great presence of mind. Calmly leaning down from his elevation, he thrust into the quivering hand of the worker a printed manifesto: 'Here, comrade, take this, please, and I ask you to read it. It says here what the Putilov comrades should do ...'" In the manifesto it said nothing at all except that the demonstrators ought to go home, as otherwise they would be traitors to the revolution. And what else, indeed, was there left for the Mensheviks to say?...

The battle on the Liteiny produced a sharp break in the development of the demonstration. Nobody was now watching the procession from window or balcony. The more well-to-do part of the public, besieging the railroad stations, were leaving town. The struggle in the streets turned into a scattered skirmishing without definite aim. During the night there were hand-to-hand fights between demonstrators and patriots, unsystematic disarmings, transfers of rifles from one hand to another. Groups of soldiers from the dispersed regiments functioned helter-skelter. "Shady elements and provocateurs, attaching themselves to the soldiers, incited them to anarchistic activities," adds Podvoisky. On a hunt for those who had shot from the roofs, groups of sailors and soldiers carried out searches in the cellars. Here and there, under the pretext of a search, plunderings would occur. On the other side deeds of a pogrom character were perpetrated. Merchants furiously attacked the workers in those parts of the town where they felt strong, and ruthlessly beat them up. Says Afanassiev, a worker from the New Lessner factory: "With cries of 'Beat the Yids and Bolsheviks! Drown them!' the crowd attacked us and gave it to us good." One of the victims

died in the hospital. Afanassiev himself was dragged by sailors, bruised and bloody, from the Ekaterininsky Canal.

*Skirmishes, victims, fruitlessness of the struggle, and indefiniteness of practical aim – that describes the movement. The Central Committee of the Bolsheviks passed a resolution: to call on the workers and soldiers to end the demonstration. This time that appeal, which was immediately brought to the attention of the Executive Committee, met hardly any opposition at all in the lower ranks. The masses ebbed back into the suburbs, and they cherished no intention of renewing the struggle on the following day. They felt that the problem of “Power to the Soviets” was considerably more complicated than had appeared. The siege of the Tauride Palace was conclusively raised. The nearby streets stood empty. But the vigil of the Executive Committees continued, with intermissions, with long-drawn-out speeches, meaningless and fruitless. Only afterwards did it become clear that the Compromisers were waiting for something. In neighboring rooms the delegates of the factories and regiments were still languishing. “It was already long after midnight,” relates Metelev, “and we were still waiting for a ‘decision’. Irritated with weariness and hunger, we were wandering through the Alexandrovsky hall ... At four o’clock in the morning on the 5th of July our waiting came to an end ... Through the open doors of the chief entrance to the palace burst in a noisy crowd of officers and soldiers.” The whole building was filled with the brassy sounds of the Marseillaise. The trampling of feet and the thunder of the band at that hour before the dawn, caused an extraordinary excitement in the session hall. The deputies leapt from their seats. A new danger? But Dan was in the tribune. “Comrades,” he shouted, “don’t get excited. There is no danger. Those are regiments loyal to the revolution that have arrived.” Yes, the reliable troops had arrived at last. They occupied the corridors, viciously fell upon the few workers still remaining in the palace, grabbed the weapons of those having them, arrested them and led them away. Lieutenant Kuchin, a well-known Menshevik, ascended the tribune in field uniform. The chairman, Dan, received him with open arms to the triumphal notes of the band. Choking with delight, and scorching the Lefts with their triumphant glances, the Compromisers seized each other by the hand, opened their mouths wide, and poured out their enthusiasm in the notes of the Marseillaise. “A classic picture of the beginning of a counter-revolution,” angrily muttered Martov, who knew how to see and understand many things. The political meaning of this scene – recorded by Sukhanov – will become still more clear if you remember that Martov belonged to the same party with Dan for whom it represented the highest triumph of the revolution.*

*Only now, as they observed the joy of the majority bubbling like a fountain, did the Left Wing of the Soviet begin to understand in a downright way how isolated was this highest organ of the official democracy when the genuine democracy came into the streets. For thirty-six hours these people had been alternately disappearing behind the scenes, running to a telephone booth to get in touch with headquarters or with Kerensky at the front, to demand troops, to appeal, to urge, to beseech, to dispatch agitators and ever more agitators, and again to come back and wait. The danger was past, but the fear retained its momentum. The tramping steps of the “loyal” at five o’clock in the morning therefore sounded to their ears like a symphony of liberation. At last from the tribune came frank speeches about the lucky putting down of an armed revolt, and about the necessity of settling with the Bolsheviks this time for good”.*

The counterrevolution had indeed been set in motion. The military offensive was accompanied by a propagandistic offensive. The provisional government presented documents “proving” that Lenin was a German spy. The Bolshevik seat was razed to the ground and repression had begun. Two phenomena can be observed here: on the one hand, the vacillations of the battalions that until then

had been *neutral* in regards to what they considered to be an internal battle within the soviet. This was the peasantry, the petty-bourgeoisie. It was, by instinct, indecisive in the face of every change in the correlation of forces. On the other hand, the proletariat was drawing lessons from the experience at full speed, lessons capable of overcoming the repercussions of the slander directed against Lenin, and capable of *recapturing* the undecided and doubtful element. These lessons also *encouraged* the adventurers, who learned their lesson by now, to pay attention to the military committee and avoid launching an insurrection that the counterrevolution wanted.

*“Already in April the Mensheviks and Social Revolutionaries had begun to appeal to the provinces against Petrograd, to the soldiers against the workers, to the cavalry against the machine-guns. They had given the troops representative privileges in the soviets above the factories; they had favored the small and scattered enterprises as against the giants of the metal industry. Themselves representing the past, they had sought support in backwardness of all kinds. With the ground slipping under their feet, they were now inciting the rear guard against the advance guard. Politics has its own logic, especially in times of revolution. Pressed from all sides, the Compromisers had found themselves obliged to direct Admiral Verderevsky to sink the more advanced battleships. Unfortunately for the Compromisers, the backward ones upon whom they were relying were more and more striving to catch up to those in advance. The submarine command was no less indignant at Dudarev’s orders than the commanders of the battleships”.*

### **What did the July days signify?**

July, above all, signified the rupture of the illusions of the February regime. It was therefore a very important moment in the development of consciousness in the class.

*“In spite of the paradoxical character of the February régime – scribbled all over to boot with Marxian and Narodnik hieroglyphics by the Compromisers – the actual interrelation of classes is easy enough to see. It is only necessary to keep in view the twofold nature of the compromise parties. The educated petty bourgeois oriented himself upon the workers and peasants, but hobnobbed with the titled landlords and owners of sugar factories. While forming a part of the soviet system, through which the demands of the lower classes found their way up to the official state, the Executive Committee served at the same time as a political screen for the bourgeoisie. The possessing classes “submitted” to the Executive Committee so long as it pushed the power over to their side. The masses submitted to the Executive Committee, in so far as they hoped it might become an instrument of the rule of workers and peasants. Contradictory class tendencies were intersecting in the Tauride Palace and they both covered themselves with the name of the Executive Committee – the one through unconscious trustfulness, the other with cold-blooded calculation. The struggle was about nothing more or less than the question who was to rule the country, the bourgeoisie or the proletariat”?*

The most important thing: consciousness is like the owl of Athena. Without the days of June and especially without those of July, it would have been impossible to move forward. The proletariat does not "receive" consciousness, it "draws" it from the consequences of its action.

*“Although able to seize the power, they nevertheless offered it to the Executive Committee. The proletariat of the capital, although inclining toward the Bolsheviks in its overwhelming majority, had still not broken the February umbilical cord attaching it to the Compromisers. Many still cherished the illusion that everything could be obtained by words and demonstrations – that by frightening the Mensheviks and Social Revolutionaries you could get them to carry out a common policy with the Bolsheviks. Even the advanced*

*sections of the class had no clear idea by which roads it was possible to arrive at the power.*

*Lenin wrote soon after: "The real mistake of our party on the 3rd and 4th of July, as events now reveal, was only this ... that the party still considered possible a peaceful development of the political transformation by way of a change of policy on the part of the soviets. In reality the Mensheviks and Social Revolutionaries had already tangled and bound themselves up by compromisism with the bourgeoisie, and the bourgeoisie had become so counterrevolutionary, that there was no longer any use talking about a peaceful development".*

The outcome of the July days is often presented as disastrous. In the party, the right wing revived its confrontation with Lenin that would not stop intensifying up until October. The party revealed within itself the same tensions that the class as a whole was suffering.

*"We had to make a retreat, under onerous conditions. The party, to the extent that it was preparing for the insurrection and the seizure of power, considered – as did Lenin – that the July demonstration was only an episode in which we had to pay dearly for an exploration of our own strength and the enemy's, but which could not alter the main line of our activity. On the other hand, the comrades who were opposed to the policy aimed at the seizure of power were bound to see a pernicious adventure in the July episode. The mobilization of the right-wing elements in the party became increasingly intensive; their criticism became more outspoken...*

*The opportunist attitude toward the question of power and the question of war determined, of course, a corresponding attitude toward the International. The right made an attempt to draw the party into the Stockholm Conference of the social patriots...The road to Stockholm was, in effect, the road to the Second International, just as taking part in the Pre-Parliament was the road to the bourgeois republic. Lenin was for the boycott of the Stockholm Conference, just as later he was for the boycott of the Pre-Parliament".*

- Leon Trotsky, *The Lessons of October*

The outcome of July in any case was costly. Nevertheless, the first blow of the repression was far from decisive in spite of the confusion that followed among the ranks of the workers and, above all, among the soldiers.

*"The failure of the offensive became catastrophic on the 6th of July, when the Germans broke through the Russian troops on a front twelve versts long and to a depth of ten versts. The breach became known in the capital on July 7, at the very height of the punitive and repressive activities...*

*If it had been possible to restrain the masses from demonstrating on July 3-4, the demonstration would inevitably have broken out as a result of the Tarnopol breach. However, a delay even of a few days would have brought important changes in the political situation. The movement would have assumed at once a broader scope, taking in not only the provinces but also, to a considerable degree, the front. The government would have been exposed politically, and would have found it incomparably more difficult to lay the blame upon "traitors" in the rear. The situation of the Bolshevik party would have been more advantageous in every respect. However, even in that case the thing could not have been carried to the point of an immediate conquest of power. Only this much, indeed, can be confidently affirmed: If the July movement had broken out a week later, the reaction would not have come off so victorious. It was just that "mysterious sequence" of the date of the demonstration and the date of the breach which counted heavily*

*against the Bolsheviks. The wave of indignation and despair rolling back from the front fell in with the wave of shattered hopes radiating from Petrograd. The lesson received by the masses in the capital was too severe for anyone to think of an immediate renewal of the struggle. Moreover the bitter feelings caused by the meaningless defeat sought expression, and the patriots succeeded to a certain extent in directing it against the Bolsheviks...*

*During the February overturn all the many preceding years work of the Bolsheviks came to fruition, and progressive workers educated by the party found their place in the struggle, but there was still no direct leadership from the party. In the April events the slogans of the party manifested their dynamic force, but the movement itself developed independently. In June the enormous influence of the party revealed itself, but the masses were still functioning within the limits of a demonstration officially summoned by the enemy. Only in July did the Bolshevik Party, feeling the pressure of the masses, come out into the street against all the other parties, and not only with its slogans, but with its organized leadership, determine the fundamental character of the movement. The value of a close-knit vanguard was first fully manifested in the July Days, when the party – at great cost – defended the proletariat from defeat, and safeguarded its own future revolution. “As a technical trial,” wrote Miliukov, speaking of the significance of the July Days to the Bolsheviks, “the experience was for them undoubtedly of extraordinary value. It showed them with what elements they had to deal, how to organize these elements, and finally what resistance could be put up by the government, the Soviet and the military units ... It was evident that when the time came for repeating the experiment, they would carry it out more systematically and consciously.” Those words correctly evaluate the significance of the July experiment for the further development of the policy of the Bolsheviks. But before making use of these July lessons, the party had to go through some heavy weeks, during which it seemed to the shortsighted enemy that the power of Bolshevism was conclusively broken”.*

The Kerensky government knew that, before it could deal a direct and bloody attack on the workers, it had to deepen the confusion among the workers and, above all, that of the soldiers. The old smear campaign directed against Lenin was reinitiated and, this time, the slander was directed against the entire party and was backed up by “new evidence” and “testimonies” that “proved” that the whole Bolshevik policy was guided by the German high command.

The same state that was unable to centralize Russian capitalism to secure the basics of production and distribution proved to have a unique ability to create a massive smear campaign. The slander furthermore proved capable of weakening and paralyzing the class more effectively and for a longer period of time than could the meager Cossack forces that the Soviet Executive had attempted to mobilize during the July days.

*“The slander of those years of war and revolution was striking, we remarked, in its monotony. However, it does contain a variation. From the piling up of quantity we get a new quality. The struggle of the other parties among themselves was almost like a family spat in comparison with their common baiting of the Bolsheviks. In conflict with one another they were, so to speak, only getting in training for a further conflict, a decisive one. Even in employing against each other the sharpened accusation of German connections, they never carried the thing through to the limit. July presents a different picture. In the assault upon the Bolsheviks all the ruling forces, the government, the courts, the Intelligence Service, the staffs, the officialdom, the municipalities, the parties of the soviet majority, their press, their orators, constituted one colossal unit. The very disagreements among them, like the different tone qualities of the instruments in an orchestra, only strengthened the general effect. An inept invention of two contemptible creatures was*

*elevated to the height of a factor in history. The slanders poured down like Niagara. If you take into consideration the setting – the war and the revolution – and the character of the accused – revolutionary leaders of millions who were conducting their party to the sovereign power – you can say without exaggeration that July 1917 was the month of the most gigantic slander in world history”.*

As each day passed by, the costs for the party and the class grew. To sum up, the main tactical lesson of those weeks and months was to not be dragged by the tide.

*“In the official soviet histories the opinion has become established, and been converted into a kind of rubberstamp, that the July attack upon the party – the combination of repression and slander – went by almost without leaving a trace upon the workers’ organizations. That is utterly untrue. The decline in the ranks of the party and the ebbing away of workers and soldiers did not, to be sure, last very long – not longer than a few weeks. The revival began so quickly – and what is more important, so boisterously – that it more than half wiped out the memory of the days of persecution and decline. Victories always throw a new light upon the defeats which led up to them. But in proportion as the minutes of local party organizations begin to be published, the picture emerges more and more sharply of a July decline of the revolution – a thing which was felt in those days the more painfully in proportion as the preceding upward swing had been uninterrupted.*

*Every defeat, resulting as it does from a definite correlation of forces, changes that correlation in its turn to the disadvantage of the vanquished, for the victor gains in self-confidence and the vanquished loses faith in himself. Moreover this or that estimate of one’s own forces constitutes an extremely important element in the objective correlation of forces. A direct defeat was experienced by the workers and soldiers of Petrograd, who in their urge forward had come up against the confusedness and contradictions in their own aims, on the one hand, and on the other, the backwardness of the provinces and the front. It was in the capital, therefore, that the consequences of the defeat revealed themselves first and most sharply. The assertion is also untrue, however – although as frequently to be found in the official literature – that for the provinces the July defeat passed almost unnoticed. This is both theoretically improbable, and refuted by the testimony of facts and documents. Whenever great questions arose, the whole country involuntarily and always looked toward Petrograd. The defeat of the workers and soldiers of the capital was therefore bound to produce an enormous impression, and especially upon the more advanced layers of the provinces. Fright, disappointment, apathy, flowed down differently in different parts of the country, but they were to be observed everywhere.*

*The lowered pressure of the revolution expressed itself first of all in an extraordinary weakening of the resistance of the masses to the enemy. While the troops brought into Petrograd were carrying out official punitive activities in the way of disarming soldiers and workers, semi-volunteer gangs under their protection were attacking with impunity the workers’ organizations. After the raid on the editorial rooms of Pravda and the printing plant of the Bolsheviks, the headquarters of the metal workers’ union was raided. The next blow fell upon the district soviets. Even the Compromisers were not spared. On the 10th, one of the institutions of the party led by the Minister of the Interior, Tseretelli, was attacked. It required no small amount of self-abnegation on the part of Dan to write on the subject of the arriving soldiers: “Instead of the ruin of the revolution, we are now witnessing its new triumph.” This triumph went so far that – in the words of the Menshevik, Prushitsky – passers-by on the streets, if they happened to look like workers or be suspected of Bolshevism, were in danger at any moment of cruel beatings. Could there be a more unmistakable symptom of a sharp change in the whole situation?*

*A member of the Petrograd committee of the Bolsheviks, Latsis – subsequently a well-known member of the “Cheka” – wrote in his diary: “July 9. All our printing plants in the city are destroyed. Nobody dares print our papers and leaflets. We are compelled to set up an underground press. The Vyborg district has become an asylum for all. Here have come both the Petrograd committee and the persecuted members of the Central Committee. In the watchman’s room of the Renaud factory there is a conference of the committee with Lenin. The question is raised of a general strike. A division occurs in the committee. I stand for calling the strike. Lenin, after explaining the situation, moves that we abandon it ... July 12. The counter-revolution is victorious. The soviets are without power. The junkers, running wild, have begun to raid the Mensheviks too. In some sections of the party there is a loss of confidence. The influx of members has stopped ... But there is not as yet a flight from our ranks”...*

*The charge that the Bolsheviks were in the service of Germany could not but create an impression even upon the Petrograd workers—at least upon a considerable number of them. Those who had been wavering, drew off. Those who were about to join, wavered. Even of those who had already joined, a considerable number withdrew. Together with the Bolsheviks, a large number of workers who were Social Revolutionaries and Mensheviks had participated in the July demonstrations. After the blow they were the first to jump back under the banners of their own parties. It now seemed to them that in violating party discipline they had really made a mistake. Broad layers of non-party workers, traveling companions of the party, also stepped away from it under the influence of that officially proclaimed and juridically embellished slander...*

*The July reaction established a kind of decisive water-shed between the February and October revolutions. The workers, the garrisons at the rear, the front – in part even, as will appear later, the peasantry – recoiled and jumped back as though from a blow in the solar plexus. The blow was in reality psychological rather than physical, but it was no less real for that. During the first four months all the mass processes had moved in one direction – to the left. Bolshevism had grown, strengthened, and become bold. But now the movement had run into a stone wall. In reality **it had only become clear that further progress along the road of the February revolution was impossible.** Many thought that the revolution in general had exhausted itself. The February revolution had indeed exhausted itself to the bottom. This inner crisis in the mass consciousness, combining with the slanders and measures of repression, caused confusion and retreat – in some cases panic. The enemy grew bolder. In the masses themselves all the backward and dubious elements rose to the surface, those impatient of disturbances and deprivations. **These receding waves in the flood of the revolution developed an overwhelming force. It seemed as though they were obeying the fundamental laws of social hydrodynamics. You cannot conquer such a wave head on – it is necessary to give way to it, not let it swamp you. Hold out until the wave of reaction has exhausted itself, preparing in the meantime points of support for a new advance”.***

### **The Counterrevolution gained ground**

*“During the following two months the Soviet grew weaker. A part of its influence upon the masses went over to the Bolsheviks; a part of its power the minister-socialists took with them into their portfolios in the Coalition Government. From the outset of preparations for the offensive there began an automatic increase of the influence of the commanding staff, the organs of finance capital and the Kadet party. Before shedding the blood of the soldiers, the Executive Committee carried out a substantial transfusion of its own blood into the arteries of the bourgeoisie. Behind the scenes the threads of all this were held in the hands of the embassies and governments of the Entente...*

*The correlation of forces had obviously changed to the disadvantage of the people, but nobody was able to say how much: The appetites of the bourgeoisie, at least, had grown considerably more than their opportunities. In this uncertainty lay the source of the conflict, for the strength of class forces is tested in action, and all the events of a revolution reduce themselves to these repeated trials of force. However great may have been the shift of power from left to right, in any case it very little affected the Provisional Government which remained a vacant space...*

*In reality, in the July Days as in all other critical moments, the constituent parts of the coalition were pursuing different goals. The Compromisers would have been perfectly ready to permit a final wiping out of the Bolsheviks, had it not been obvious that after settling with the Bolsheviks, the officers, Cossacks, Cavaliers of St. George and shock battalions would have cleaned up the Compromisers themselves. The Kadets wanted to carry through, and sweep away not only the Bolsheviks but the soviets also. However, it was no accident that at all acute moments the Kadets found themselves outside the government. In the last analysis what pushed them out was the pressure of the masses, irresistible in spite of the buffer provided by the Compromisers. Even if they had succeeded in seizing the power, the Liberals could not have held it. Subsequent events conclusively proved this. The idea of a lost opportunity in July is a retrospective illusion. At any rate, the July victory did not strengthen the government, but on the contrary opened a prolonged period of crisis which was formally resolved only on the 24th of July, and was in essence an introduction to the four months' death agony of the February régime.*

*The Compromisers were torn between the necessity of reviving their half-friendship with the bourgeoisie, and the need of softening the hostility of the masses. Tacking became for them a form of existence. Their zigzags became a feverish tossing to and fro, but the fundamental line kept swinging sharply to the right. On the 7th of July, a whole series of repressive measures was decreed by the government. But at the same session, and so to speak by stealth, taking advantage of the absence of the "old man" – that is, the Kadets – the minister-socialists proposed to the government that it undertake to carry out the program of the June congress of the soviets. This, however, straightway led to a further disintegration of the government...*

*In dealing blows to the left, the Compromisers would justify themselves by citing a danger to the right. "Russia is threatened with a military dictatorship," declared Dan at the session of July 9th. "We are obliged to snatch the bayonet from the hand of the military dictator. And this we can do only by declaring the Provisional Government a Committee of Public Safety. We must give it unlimited powers, so that it may root out to the bottom anarchy on the left and counter-revolution on the right". As though in the hands of a government fighting against workers and soldiers and peasants there could be any other bayonet but the bayonet of counter-revolution!...*

*Mass movements, even when shattered, never fail to leave their traces. The place of the titled nobleman at the head of the government was now occupied by a radical lawyer. The Ministry of the Interior was occupied by a former hard labor convict. The plebeian transformation of the government was at hand. Kerensky, Tseretelli, Chernov, Skobelev, leaders of the Executive Committee, now determined the physiognomy of the government. Was not this a realization of the slogan of the June Days, "Down with the ten minister-capitalists"? No, this was only an exposure of its inadequacy. The minister-democrats took the power only in order to bring back the minister capitalists. La Coalition est morte, vive la coalition!*

*The comedy is now put on – the solemnly shameful comedy of the disarming of the machine-gunners on Palace Square. A series of regiments are disbanded, the soldiers are sent in small detachments to fill up the ranks at the front. Forty-year-old men are brought to submission, and herded into the trenches. They are all agitators against the régime of Kerenskyism. There are tens of thousands of them, and in the autumn they will accomplish a great work in the trenches. At the same time the workers are disarmed, although with less success. Under pressure from the generals – we shall see in a minute what forms it took – the death penalty is reintroduced at the front. But on the same day, the 12th of July, a decree is published limiting the sales of land. That belated half-measure, adopted under the axe of the muzhik, provokes mockery from the left and a grinding of teeth on the right. While forbidding all processions in the streets – a threat to the left – Tseretelli warns of the prevalence of unlegalized arrests – an attempt to pull up the reins on the Right. In removing the commander-in chief of the forces of the Petrograd district, Kerensky explains to the Left that this is because he broke up the workers' organizations, to the Right that it is because he was not decisive enough...*

*The Kronstadt Executive Committee was ordered by the government, under threat of a blockade of the island, to put Raskolnikov, Roshal and ensign Remnev at the disposal of the Court of Inquiry. At Helsingfors, Left Social Revolutionaries were for the first time arrested along with Bolsheviks. The retired Prince Lvov complained in the newspapers that "the soviets are beneath the level of state morals and have not yet cleansed themselves of Leninists – those agents of the Germans ..." It became a matter of honor with the Compromisers to demonstrate their state morals. On July 13th the Executive Committees in joint session adopted a resolution introduced by Dan: "Any person indicted by the courts is deprived of membership in the Executive Committees until sentence is pronounced." This placed the Bolsheviks in fact beyond the law. Kerensky shut down the whole Bolshevik press. In the provinces the land committees were arrested. Izvestia sobbed impotently: "Only a few days ago we witnessed a debauch of anarchy on the streets of Petrograd. Today on the same streets there is an unrestrained flow of counterrevolutionary Black Hundred speeches".*

*After the disbandment of the more revolutionary regiments and the disarming of the workers, the resultant of the composition of forces moved still farther to the right. A considerable part of the real power was now clearly in the hands of the military chiefs, the industrial and banking and Kadet groups. The rest of it remained as before in the hands of the soviets. The dual power was still there, but now no longer the legalized, contractual or coalitional dual power of the preceding two months, but the explosive dual power of a clique – of two cliques, the bourgeois-military and the compromiser, who feared, but at the same time needed each other. What remained to be done? To resurrect the Coalition. "After the insurrection of July 3-5," says Miliukov quite justly, "the idea of a Coalition not only did not disappear, but acquired for the time being more force and importance than it had possessed before".*

*The Provisional Committee of the state Duma unexpectedly came to life at this time and adopted a drastic resolution against the Government of Salvation. That was the last straw. All the ministers handed their portfolios to Kerensky, thereby making him the focus of the national sovereignty. In the further development of the February revolution, as also in the personal fate of Kerensky, that moment acquired an important significance. In the chaos of groupings, resignations and appointments, something in the nature of an immovable point had been designated around which everything else revolved. The resignation of the ministers served only as an introduction to negotiations with the Kadets and industrialists. The Kadets laid down their conditions: responsibility of the members of the government "exclusively to their own conscience"; complete unity with the Allies; restoration of discipline in the army; no social reforms until the*

Constituent Assembly. A point not written down was the demand that the elections to the Constituent Assembly be postponed. This was called a "non-party and national program." A similar program was advanced by the representatives of trade and industry, whom the Compromisers had tried vainly to set against the Kadets. The Executive Committee again confirmed its resolution endowing the Government of Salvation with "unlimited powers." That meant agreeing to the government's independence of the soviets. On the same day Tseretelli as Minister of the Interior sent out instructions for the taking of "swift and decisive measures putting an end to all illegal activities in the matter of land relations." The Minister of Food Supply, Peshekhonov, likewise demanded an end of all "violent and criminal manifestations against the landlords".

The Government of the Salvation of the Revolution recommended itself above all as a government of the salvation of the landlord's property. But not that alone. An industrial magnate, the engineer Palchinsky, in his three-fold calling as director of the Ministry of Trade and Industry, plenipotentiary administrator of fuel and metal, and head of the Commission on Defense, was conducting an energetic campaign for syndicated capital. The Menshevik economist, Cherevanin, complained in the economic department of the Soviet that the noble undertakings of the democracy were going to smash against the sabotage of Palchinsky. The Minister of Agriculture, Chernov, to whose shoulders the Kadets had shifted the accusation of German connections, felt obliged "for purposes of rehabilitation" to resign. On July 18, the government, in which socialists predominated, issued a decree dissolving the unsubmissive Finnish Seim with its socialist majority. In a solemn note to the Allies on the third anniversary of the World War, the government not only repeated the ritual oath of loyalty, but also reported the happy putting down of an insurrection caused by agents of the enemy. A priceless documentary record of boot licking! At the same time a fierce law was promulgated against transgressions of discipline on the railroads...

In order to drive out of their wits the already frightened members of the Executive Committees, the latest news was handed to them of the deteriorating situation at the front. The Germans were driving the Russian troops, the Liberals were driving Kerensky, Kerensky was driving the Compromisers. The Menshevik and Social Revolutionary factions were in session all night on July 24. Wearied out with their own helplessness, the Executive Committees, by a majority of 147 votes against 46, with 42 abstaining – unprecedented opposition! – finally ratified the turning over of unconditional and unlimited powers to Kerensky. At the Kadet Congress, sitting simultaneously, voices were raised for the overthrow of Kerensky, but Miliukov curbed this impatience, suggesting that they limit themselves for the present to bringing pressure to bear. This does not mean that Miliukov had any illusions about Kerensky, but he saw in him a point of application for the power of the possessing classes. Once having freed the government from the soviets, it would be no labor to free it from Kerensky.

In those days the gods of the Coalition remained athirst. The decree demanding the arrest of Lenin had preceded the formation of the transitional government of July 7. Now some firm act was needed to signalize the resurrection of the Coalition...On the night when the new ministry was created, Trotsky and Lunacharsky were arrested in Petrograd, and ensign Krylenko, the future Bolshevik commander-in-chief, on the front...

The reaction was on the offensive, the democracy in retreat. Classes and groups which had retired in fright during the first days of the revolution began to lift their heads. Interest which yesterday had lain concealed, today came into the open. Merchants and speculators demanded the extermination of the Bolsheviks and – freedom of trade. They raised their voice against all restrictions upon trade whatsoever, even those which

*had been introduced under tsarism. The food commissions which had tried to struggle with speculation were declared to blame for the lack of the necessities of life. From the commissions, hatred was transferred to the soviets...*

*The reaction was on the offensive, the government in retreat. On August 7, the most popular Black Hundred agents, partisans of the Rasputin circles and of Jewish pogroms, were liberated from prison. The Bolsheviks remained in the Kresty Prison, where a hunger strike of arrested soldiers and sailors was impending. The workers' section of the Petrograd soviet sent greetings on that day to Trotsky, Lunacharsky, Kollontai and other prisoners.*

*The industrialists, the commissars of the provinces, the Cossack congress in Novocherkassk, the patriotic press, the generals, the liberals, everybody, thought it would be impossible to hold the elections for the Constituent Assembly in September – best of all to postpone them to the end of the war. To this, however, the government would not agree. A compromise was found. The convocation of the Constituent Assembly was deferred to the 28th of November. The Kadets accepted this postponement, although not without grumblings. They were firmly counting on certain decisive events happening during the three remaining months, which would shift the whole question of the Constituent Assembly to a different level. These hopes were being more and more openly connected with the name of Kornilov.*

*The reclame surrounding the figure of this new "chief" henceforth occupied the center of the bourgeois policy. A biography of the "First People's Commander-in-chief" was distributed in enormous quantities with the active cooperation of headquarters...Kornilov's program, which included the militarization of the factories and railroads, the extension of the death penalty to the rear, and the subordination of the Petrograd military district and therewith the garrison of the capital to headquarters, became known in those days to the compromisist circles. Behind this official program another program – unexpressed but no less actual – could easily be guessed at. The left press sounded the alarm. The Executive Committee advanced a new candidate for commander-in-chief in the person of General Cheremisov. There was open talk of the impending retirement of Kornilov. The reaction became alarmed...*

*The candidacy of Kornilov for the role of savior of the country was thus openly advanced by the most authoritative representatives of the possessing and educated classes of Russia... In the April days he attempted, not without a hint from Miliukov, to inaugurate the first blood-letting of the revolution, but ran into the opposition of the Executive Committee, resigned, was given command of an army, and afterward of the southwestern front. Without waiting for the legal introduction of the death penalty, Kornilov here gave orders to shoot deserters and set up their corpses on the road with an inscription, threatened the peasants with severe penalties for violating the proprietary rights of landlords, created shock battalions, and on every appropriate occasion shook his fist at Petrograd. This immediately surrounded his name with a halo in the eyes of the officers and the possessing classes. But many of Kerensky's commissars, too, would say to themselves: there is no hope left but in Kornilov. In a few weeks this gallant general with a mournful experience as commander of a division, became the supreme commander-in-chief of those disintegrating armies of millions which the Entente was trying to make wage a war to complete victory".*

Motivated by a fear of being displaced by Kornilov, Kerensky decided not to wait for the elections and to convene a *National Conference* in which the classes would be invited by the government and represented by an equal number of representatives. It was met by the workers with open hostility. The conference would take place in Moscow, where the general strike, impulsed by the Bolsheviks,

was a complete triumph. It was the first symptom of the return of the class to the center of the revolution.

*"The Moscow Conference damaged the position of the government by revealing, as Miliukov correctly states, "that the country was divided into two camps between which there could be no essential reconciliation or agreement." The Conference raised the spirits of the bourgeoisie and sharpened their impatience. In the other hand it gave a new impulse to the movement of the masses. The Moscow strike opened a period of accelerated regrouping to leftward of the workers and soldiers. Henceforth the Bolsheviks grew unconquerably. Among the masses, only the Left Social Revolutionaries, and to some extent the Left Mensheviks, held their own...This thickening political atmosphere was pierced by events at the front...*

*After the conference Kerensky's line and the line of the Executive Committee had continued to diverge: the Compromisers were afraid of the masses, Kerensky of the possessing classes. The popular masses were demanding the abolition of the death penalty at the front; Kornilov, the Kadets, the embassies of the Entente, were demanding its introduction at the rear. On August 19, Kornilov telegraphed the Minister-President: "I insistently assert the necessity of subordinating to me the Petrograd district." Headquarters was openly stretching its hand toward the capital. On August 24, the Executive Committee summoned the courage to demand vocally that the government put an end to "counterrevolutionary methods," and undertake "without delay and with all energy" the realization of the democratic transformation. This was a new language. Kerensky was compelled to choose between accommodating himself to a democratic platform, which with all its meagerness might lead to a split with the Liberals and generals, and the program of Kornilov which would inexorably lead to a conflict with the soviets. Kerensky decided to extend his hand to Kornilov, to the Kadets, to the Entente. He wanted to avoid an open conflict on the right at any cost...*

*According to Miliukov, that for the government "the time had come to take some definite measures even at the risk of bringing the Bolsheviks into the street." Savinkov on this subject "frankly stated that with two regiments it would be easy to put down a Bolshevik revolt and break up the Bolshevik organizations."*

*Both Kerensky and Savinkov perfectly understood, especially after the Moscow Conference, that the compromiser soviets would in no case accept the program of Kornilov. The Petrograd soviet, having only yesterday demanded the abolition of the death penalty at the front, would rise with redoubled strength against the extension of the death penalty to the rear. The danger, therefore, was that the movement against the coup d'etat planned by Kerensky might be led, not by the Bolsheviks, but by the soviets. However, we must not stop for that of course: it is a question of saving the country!...*

*In order that there should be no misunderstanding, and the Bolsheviks should not come out "before the proper moment" the following sequence of actions was agreed upon: First concentrate a cavalry corps in Petrograd, then declare the capital under martial law, and only after that publish the new laws which were to provoke a Bolshevik insurrection. In the minutes of headquarters this plan is written down in black and white. "In order that the Provisional Government shall know exactly when to declare the Petrograd military district under martial law and when to publish the new law, it is necessary that General Kornilov shall keep him (Savinkov) accurately informed by telegraph of the time when the corps will approach Petrograd." The conspiring generals understood, says Stankevich, "that Savinkov and Kerensky ... wanted to carry out some sort of coup d'etat with the help of the staff. Only this was needed. They hastily agreed about all demands and conditions..."*

*The evening of the 26th was designated for the adoption by the government of the law on measures for the rear, which was to be the prologue for decisive action by the cavalry corps. Everything was ready – it remained only to press the button.*

*The events, the documents, the testimony of the participants, and finally the confession of Kerensky himself, unanimously bear witness that the Minister President, without the knowledge of a part of his own government, behind the back of the soviets which had given him the power, in secrecy from the party of which he considered himself a member, had entered into agreement with the highest generals of the army for a radical change in the state régime with the help of armed forces”.*

But Kerensky discovered - it was apparent- that Kornilov and the high command intended to get rid of him as soon as they dealt what they hoped would be a decisive blow to the revolution.

*“On the morning of that long-expected day which was to bring the salvation of the country, the supreme commander-in-chief received a telegraphic command from the Minister-President: to turn over his duties to the chief of-staff, and come immediately to Petrograd. This was a totally unexpected turn of affairs. The general understood – to quote his own words – that “here a double game was being played.” He might have said with more truth that his own double game had been discovered. Kornilov decided not to surrender. Savinkov’s urgings over the direct wire made no difference. “Finding myself compelled to act openly” – with this manifesto the commander-in-chief appealed to the people – “I, General Kornilov, declare that the Provisional Government, under pressure from the Bolshevik majority of the soviets, is acting in full accord with the plans of the German general staff, and simultaneously with the impending descent of hostile forces upon the Riga coastline is murdering the army and unsettling the country from within”...*

*Kerensky removed Kornilov upon his sole personal authority. The Provisional Government had by that time ceased to exist. On the evening of the 26th the ministers had resigned – an act which, by a happy conjuncture of events, corresponded to the desires of all sides...*

*A fair idea of the optimistic calculations of the leaders and backers of the plot is conveyed by the code telegram of the aforementioned Prince Troubetskoy to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs: “Soberly estimating the situation,” he writes, “it must be acknowledged that the whole commanding staff, an overwhelming majority of the officers, and the best of the rank-and-file elements of the army, are for Kornilov. On his side at the rear stand all the Cossacks, a majority of the military schools, and also the best fighting units. To these physical forces it is necessary to add the moral sympathy of all the non-socialist layers of the population, and in the lower orders ... an indifference which will submit to the least blow of the whip. There is no doubt that an enormous number of the March socialists will come quickly over to the side of Kornilov in case of his victory.”*

*Troubetskoy here expressed not only the hopes of headquarters, but also the attitude of the Allied missions. In the Kornilov detachments advancing to the conquest of Petrograd, there were English armored cars with English operatives – and these we may assume constituted the most reliable units. The head of the English military mission in Russia, General Knox, reproached the American Colonel Robbins, for not supporting Kornilov: “I am not interested in the government of Kerensky,” said the British General, “it is too weak. What is wanted is a strong dictatorship. What is wanted is the Cossacks. This people needs the whip! A dictatorship – that is just what it needs.” All these voices from different quarters arrived at the Winter Palace, and had an alarming effect upon its inhabitants. The success of Kornilov seemed inevitable”.*

Indeed, while Kornilov was taking his troops to Petersburg, Kerensky was abandoned by all his ministers, including the Kadets. He himself commented that he wandered *almost alone* during the night through the Winter Palace. The bourgeoisie had decided, with its British allies, to enact a military coup.

But the coup failed miserably. In the first place, there was a total lack of organization. The 2,000 men that Kornilov believed was inside the city did not show up. The unit in charge of organizing the provocation to get the workers out into the streets in an insurrectionary coup had acted *too early*. Several of those responsible for the coup, both civilian and military, had fled with the funds.

The soviet, frightened, knew that it needed the Bolsheviks who made up a majority among the proletariat. A *Defense Committee* was organized in which the Bolsheviks made up three out of eight of the members.

*"While Kerensky, bending under the weight of a "more than human responsibility," was measuring the floors of the Winter Palace in solitude, the Committee of Defense, also called the Military Revolutionary Committee, was taking action on a vast scale. Early in the morning instructions were sent by telegram to the railroad workers, and postal and telegraph clerks, and soldiers. "All movements of troops" – so Dan reported on the same day – "are to be carried out at the direction of the Provisional Government when countersigned by the committee of People's Defense." Qualifications aside, this meant: The Committee of Defense deploys the troops under the firm name of Provisional Government. At the same time steps were taken for the destruction of Kornilovist nests in Petrograd itself. Searches and arrests were carried out in the military schools and officers' organizations. The hand of the Committee was felt everywhere. There was little or no interest in the governor-general. The lower soviet organizations in their turn did not await any summons from above. The principal effort was concentrated in the workers' districts. During the hours of greatest vacillation in the government, and of wearisome negotiations between the Executive Committee and Kerensky, the district soviets were drawing more closely together and passing resolutions: to declare the interdistrict conferences continuous; to place their representatives in the staff organized by the Executive Committee; to form a workers' militia; to establish the control of the district soviets over the government commissars; to organize flying brigades for the detention of counter-revolutionary agitators. In the total, these resolutions meant an appropriation not only of very considerable governmental functions, but also of the functions of the Petrograd Soviet. The logic of the situation compelled the soviet institutions to draw in their skirts and make room for the lower ranks. The entrance of the Petrograd districts into the arena of the struggle instantly changed both its scope and its direction. Again the inexhaustible vitality of the soviet form of organization was revealed. Although paralyzed above by the leadership of the Compromisers, the soviets were reborn again from below at the critical moment under pressure from the masses.*

*To the Bolshevik leaders of the districts, Kornilov's uprising had not been in the least unexpected. They had foreseen and forewarned, and they were the first to appear at their posts. At the joint session of the Executive Committees, on August 27, Sokolnikov announced that the Bolshevik party had taken all measures available to it in order to inform the people of the danger and prepare for defense; the Bolsheviks announced their readiness to co-ordinate their military work with the organs of the Executive Committee. At a night session of the Military Organization of the Bolsheviks, participated in by delegates of numerous military detachments, it was decided to demand the arrest of all conspirators, to arm the workers, to supply them with soldier instructors, to guarantee the defense of the capital from below, and at*

*the same time to prepare for the creation of a revolutionary government of workers and soldiers. The Military Organization held meetings throughout the garrison; the soldiers were urged to remain under arms in order to come out at the first alarm.*

*"Notwithstanding the fact that they were in a minority," writes Sukhanov, "it was quite clear that in the Military Revolutionary Committee the leadership belonged to the Bolsheviks." He explains this as follows: "If the committee wanted to act seriously, it was compelled to act in a revolutionary manner," and for revolutionary action "only the Bolsheviks had genuine resources," for the masses were with them. Intensity in the struggle has everywhere and always brought forth the more active and bolder elements. This automatic selection inevitably elevated the Bolsheviks, strengthened their influence, concentrated the initiative in their hands, giving them de facto leadership even in those organizations where they were in a minority. The nearer you came to the district, to the factory, to the barrack, the more complete and indubitable was the leadership of the Bolsheviks. All the nuclei of the party were on their toes. The big factories organized a system of guard duty by Bolsheviks. In the district committees of the party representatives of small plants were put on duty. A tie was formed from below, from the shop, leading through the districts, to the Central Committee of the party.*

*Under direct pressure from the Bolsheviks and the organizations led by them, the Committee of Defense recognized the desirability of arming individual groups of workers for the defense of the workers' quarters, the shops and factories. It was only this sanction that the masses lacked. In the districts, according to the workers' press, there immediately appeared "whole queues of people eager to join the ranks of the Red Guard." Drilling began in marksmanship and the handling of weapons. Experienced soldiers were brought in as teachers. By the 29th, Guards had been formed in almost all the districts. The Red Guard announced its readiness to put in the field a force of 40,000 rifles. The unarmed workers formed companies for trench-digging, sheet-metal fortification, barbed-wire fencing. The new governor-general Palchinsky who replaced Savinkov, – Kerensky could not keep his accomplice longer than three days – was compelled to recognize in a special announcement that when the need arose for the work of sappers in the defense of the capital "thousands of workers ... by their irreplaceable, personal labor achieved in the course of a few hours a colossal task which without their help would have required several days." This did not prevent Palchinsky, following the example of Savinkov, from suppressing the Bolshevik paper, the sole paper which the workers considered their own.*

*The giant Putilov factory became the center of resistance in the Peterhoff district. Here fighting companies were hastily formed; the work of the factory continued day and night; there was a sorting out of new cannon for the formation of proletarian artillery divisions. The worker, Minichev, says: "In those days we worked sixteen hours a day ... We got together about 100 cannon".*

*The newly formed Vikzhel received a prompt baptism of war. The railroad workers had a special reason to dread the victory of Kornilov, who had incorporated in his program the inauguration of martial law on the railroads. And here, too, the lower ranks far outdistanced their leaders. The railroad workers tore up and barricaded the tracks in order to hold back Kornilov's army. War experiences came in handy. Measures were also taken to isolate the center of the conspiracy, Moghilev, preventing movements both towards and away from headquarters. The postal and telegraph clerks began to hold up and send to the Committee telegrams and orders from headquarters, or copies of them. The generals had been accustomed during the years of war to think of transport and communications as technical questions. They found out now that these were political questions.*

*The trade unions, least of all inclined toward political neutrality, did not await any special invitation before occupying military positions. The railroad workers' union armed its members, and sent them along the lines for inspection, and for tearing up railroads, guarding bridges, etc. The workers in their enthusiasm and resolution pushed ahead of the more bureaucratic and moderate Vikzhel. The metal workers' union put its innumerable office workers at the disposal of the Committee of Defense, and also a large sum of money for expenses. The chauffeurs' union put in charge of the committee its technical and transportation facilities. The printers' union arranged in a few hours for the issue of Monday's papers, so as to keep the population in touch with events, and at the same time availed themselves of the most effective of all possible means of controlling the press. The rebel general had stamped his foot, and legions rose up from the ground-but they were the legions of the enemy. All around Petrograd, in the neighboring garrisons, in the great railroad stations, in the fleet, work was going on night and day. They were inspecting their own ranks, arming the workers, sending out detachments as patrols along the tracks, establishing communications with neighboring points, and with Smolny. The task of the Committee of Defense was not so much to keep watch over and summon the workers, as merely to register and direct them. Its plans were always anticipated. The defense against the rebellion of the generals turned into a popular round-up of the conspirators. In Helsingfors a general congress of all the soviet organizations created a revolutionary committee which sent its commissars to the offices of the governor-general, the commandant, the Intelligence Service, and other important institutions. Thenceforth no order was valid without its signature. The telegraphs and telephones were taken under control. The official representatives of a Cossack regiment quartered in Helsingfors, chiefly officers, tried to declare themselves neutral: they were secret Kornilovists. On the second day, a rank-and-file cossack appeared before the Committee with the announcement that the whole regiment was against Kornilov. Cossack representatives were for the first time introduced into the soviet. In this case as in others a sharp conflict of classes was pushing the officers to the right and the rank-and-file to the left.*

*The Kronstadt soviet, which had completely recovered from the July wounds, sent a telegraphic declaration: "The Kronstadt garrison is ready as one man at the first word from the Executive Committee to come to the defense of the revolution." The Kronstadters did not know in those days to what extent the defense of the revolution meant the defense of themselves against annihilation: at that time they could still only guess this. Soon after the July Days it had been decided by the Provisional Government to vacate the Kronstadt fortress as a nest of Bolshevism. This measure, adopted in agreement with Kornilov, was officially explained as due to "strategic motives." Sensing some dirty work, the sailors had resisted. "The legend of treachery at headquarters" - wrote Kerensky after he himself had accused Kornilov of treachery - "was so deeply rooted in Kronstadt that every attempt to remove the artillery evoked actual ferocity from the crowd there." The task of devising a way to liquidate Kronstadt was laid by the government upon Kornilov. Kornilov devised a way: immediately after the conquest of the city Krymov was to dispatch a brigade with artillery to Oranienbaum and, under threat of bombardment from the shores, demand that the Kronstadt garrison disarm the fortress and transfer themselves to the mainland, where the sailors were to undergo mass executions. But while Krymov was entering upon his task of saving the government, the government found itself obliged to ask the Kronstadters to save it from Krymov.*

*The Executive Committee sent telephonegrams to Kronstadt and Vyborg asking for the dispatch of considerable detachments of troops to Petrograd. On the morning of the 29th, the troops began to arrive. These were chiefly Bolshevik units. In order that the summons of the Executive Committee should become operative, it had to be confirmed by the central committee of the Bolsheviks. A little earlier, at midday of*

the 28th, upon an order from Kerensky which sounded very much like a humble request, sailors from the cruiser Aurora had undertaken the defense of the Winter Palace. A part of the same crew were still imprisoned in Kresty for participation in the July demonstration. During their hours off duty the sailors came to the prison for a visit with the imprisoned Kronstadters, and with Trotsky, Raskolnikov and others. "Isn't it time to arrest the government?" asked the visitors. "No, not yet," was the answer. "Use Kerensky as a gun-rest to shoot Kornilov. Afterward we will settle with Kerensky." In June and July these sailors had not been inclined to pay much attention to revolutionary strategy, but they had learned much in a short two months. They raised this question of the arrest of the government rather to test themselves and clear their own consciences. They themselves were beginning to grasp the inexorable consecutiveness of events. In the first half of July, beaten, condemned, slandered; at the end of August, the trusted defenders of the Winter Palace against Kornilovists; at the end of October, they will be shooting at the Winter Palace with the guns of the Aurora.

But although the sailors were willing to postpone for a certain time a general settlement with the February régime, they did not want to endure for one unnecessary day the Kornilovist officers hanging over their heads. The commanding staff which had been imposed upon them by the government since the July Days was almost solidly on the side of the conspirators. The Kronstadt soviet immediately removed the government commander of the fortress and installed their own. The Compromisers had now ceased to shout about the secession of the Kronstadt republic. However the thing did not everywhere stop at mere removals from office: it came to bloody encounters in several places. "It began in Vyborg," says Sukhanov, "with the beating to death of generals and officers by a sailor-soldier crowd infuriated and panic-stricken." No, these crowds were not infuriated, and it would not be possible to speak in this instance of panic. On the morning of the 29th, Centroflot sent a telegram to the commandant at Vyborg, General Oranovsky, for communication to the garrison, informing them of the mutiny at headquarters. The commandant held up the telegram for a whole day, and to questions about what was happening, answered that he had received no information. In the course of a search instituted by the sailors the telegram was found. Thus caught in the act, the general declared himself a partisan of Kornilov. The sailors shot the commandant and along with him two other officers who had declared themselves of the same party. From the officers of the Baltic fleet the sailors required a signed declaration of loyalty to the revolution, and when four officers of the ship-of-the-line Petropavlovsk refused to sign, declaring themselves Kornilovists, they were by resolution of the crew immediately shot.

A mortal danger was hanging over the soldiers and sailors; a bloody purgation not only of Petrograd and Kronstadt, but of all the garrisons of the country, was impending. From the conduct of their suddenly emboldened officers, – from their tones, their side glances – the soldiers and sailors could plainly foresee their own fate in case of a victory of headquarters. In those localities where the atmosphere was especially hot, they hastened to cut off the road of the enemy, forestalling the purgation intended by the officers with their own sailors' and soldiers' purgation. Civil war, as is well known, has its laws, and they have never been considered identical with the laws of humane conduct.

Cheidze immediately sent a telegram to Vyborg and Helsingfors condemning lynch law as "a mortal blow against the revolution." Kerensky on his part telegraphed to Helsingfors: "I demand an immediate end of disgusting acts of violence." If you seek the political responsibility for these individual cases of lynch law – not forgetting that revolution as a whole is a taking of the law into one's own hands – in the given case the responsibility rests wholly on the government and the Compromisers, who at a moment of danger would

run for help to the revolutionary masses, in order afterward to turn them over again to the counterrevolutionary officers.

The entrance of Kornilov's troops into Petrograd would have meant first of all the extermination of the arrested Bolsheviks. In his order to General Bagration, who was to enter the capital with the vanguard, Krymov did not forget this special command: "Place a guard in prisons and houses of detention, in no case let out the people now under restraint." This was a concerted program, inspired by Miliukov ever since the April days: "In no case let them out." There was not a single meeting in Petrograd in those days which did not pass resolutions demanding the release of the July prisoners. Delegation after delegation came to the Executive Committee, which in turn sent its leaders for negotiations to the Winter Palace. In vain! The stubbornness of Kerensky on this question is the more remarkable since during the first day and a half or two days he considered the position of the government hopeless, and was therefore condemning himself to the role of the old-time jail keeper – holding the Bolsheviks so that the generals could hang them.

It is no wonder that the masses led by the Bolsheviks in fighting against Kornilov did not place a moment of trust in Kerensky. For them it was not a case of defending the government, but of defending the revolution. So much the more resolute and devoted was their struggle. The resistance to the rebels grew out of the very road beds, out of the stones, out of the air. The railroad workers of the Luga station, where Krymov arrived, stubbornly refused to move the troop trains, alluding to a lack of locomotives. The Cossack echelons also found themselves immediately surrounded by armed soldiers from the Luga garrison, 20,000 strong. There was no military encounter, but there was something far more dangerous: contact, social exchange, interpenetration. The Luga soviet had had time to print the government announcement retiring Kornilov, and this document was now widely distributed among the echelons. The officers tried to persuade the Cossacks not to believe the agitators, but this very necessity of persuasion was a bad sign. On receiving Kornilov's order to advance, Krymov demanded under threat of bayonets that the locomotives be ready in half an hour. The threat seemed effective: the locomotives, although with some delays, were supplied; but even so, it was impossible to move, since the road out was damaged and so crowded with cars that it would take a good twenty-four hours to clear it. To get free of demoralizing propaganda, Krymov on the evening of the 28th, removed his troops several versts from Luga. But the agitators immediately turned up in the villages. These were soldiers, workers, railroad men – there was no refuge from them. They went everywhere. The Cossacks began even to hold meetings. Thus stormed with propaganda and cursing his impotence, Krymov waited in vain for Bagration. The railroad workers were holding up the echelon of the Savage Division, which also in the coming hours was to undergo a most alarming moral attack.

No matter how spineless and even cowardly the compromiser democracy was in itself, those mass forces upon which it again partly relied in its struggle against Kornilov, opened before it inexhaustible resources for action. The Social Revolutionaries and Mensheviks did not see it as their task to conquer the forces of Kornilov in open struggle, but to bring the forces over to their own side. That was right. Against "compromisism" along that line, it goes without saying, the Bolsheviks had no objection. On the contrary that was their own fundamental method. The Bolsheviks only demanded that behind the agitators and parliamentaries armed workers and soldiers should stand ready. For this moral mode of action upon the Kornilov regiments, an unlimited choice of ways and means was suddenly discovered. Thus a Mussulman delegation was sent to meet the Savage Division on the staff of which were included native potentates who had immediately made themselves known, beginning with the grandson of the famous Shamil who heroically defended the Caucasus against tsarism. The mountaineers would not permit their officers to

*arrest the delegation: that was a violation of the ancient customs of hospitality. Negotiations were opened and soon became the beginning of the end. The Kornilov commanders, in order to explain the whole campaign, had kept referring to a rebellion of German agents supposed to have begun in Petrograd. The delegates, arriving directly from the capital, not only disproved the fact of a rebellion, but also demonstrated with documents in their hands that Krymov was a rebel and was leading his troops against the government. What could the officers of Kornilov reply to that? On the staff car of the Savage Division the soldiers stuck up a red flag with the inscription: "Land and freedom." The staff commander ordered them to take down the flags – "merely to avoid confusing it with a railroad signal," as the lieutenant-colonel politely explained. The staff soldiers were not satisfied with this cowardly explanation, and arrested the lieutenant-colonel. Were they not mistaken at headquarters when they said that the Caucasian mountaineers did not care whom they slaughtered?*

*The next morning a colonel arrived at Krymov's headquarters from Kornilov with an order to concentrate his corps, advance swiftly on Petrograd, and "unexpectedly" occupy it. At headquarters they were obviously still trying to shut their eyes to the facts. Krymov replied that the different units of the corps were scattered on various railroads and in some places were detraining; that he had at his disposition only eight Cossack squadrons; that the railroads were damaged, overloaded, barricaded, and that it was possible to move farther only on foot; and that finally there could be no talk of an unexpected occupation of Petrograd, now that the workers and soldiers had been placed under arms in the capital and its environs...*

*The railroad workers in those days did their duty. In a mysterious way echelons would find themselves moving on the wrong roads. Regiments would arrive in the wrong division, artillery would be sent up a blind alley, staffs would get out of communication with their units. All the big stations had their own soviets, their railroad workers' and their military committees. The telegraphers kept them informed of all events, all movements, all changes. The telegraphers also held up the orders of Kornilov. Information unfavorable to the Kornilovists was immediately multiplied, distributed, pasted up, passed from mouth to mouth. The machinists, the switchmen, the oilers, became agitators. It was in this atmosphere that the Kornilov echelons advanced – or what was worse, stood still. The commanding staff, soon sensing the hopelessness of the situation, obviously did not hasten to move forward, and with their passivity promoted the work of the counter-conspirators of the transport system. Parts of the army of Krymov were in this way scattered about in the stations, sidings, and branch lines, of eight different railroads. If you follow on the map the fate of the Kornilov echelons, you get the impression that the conspirators were playing at blind man's buff on the railroad lines.*

*"Almost everywhere," says General Krasnov, writing his observations made on the night of August 30, "we saw one and the same picture. On the tracks or in the cars, or in the saddles of their black or bay horses, who would turn from time to time to gaze at them, dragoons would be sitting or standing, and in the midst of them some lively personality in a soldier's long coat." The name of this "lively personality" soon became legion. From the direction of Petrograd innumerable delegations continued to arrive from regiments sent out to oppose the Kornilovists. Before fighting they wanted to talk things over. The revolutionary troops were confidently hopeful that the thing could be settled without fighting. This hope was confirmed: the Cossacks readily came to meet them. The communication squad of the corps would seize locomotives, and send the delegates along all railroad lines. The situation would be explained to every echelon. Meetings were continuous and at them all the cry was being raised: "They have deceived us!"*

*“Not only the chiefs of divisions,” says Krasnov, “but even the commanders of regiments did not know exactly where their squadrons and companies were. The absence of food and forage naturally irritated everybody still more. The men ... seeing all this meaningless confusion which had been created around them, began to arrest their chiefs and officers.” A delegation from the Soviet which had organized its own headquarters reported: “Fraternization is going on rapidly ... We are fully confident that the conflict may be considered liquidated. Delegations are coming from all sides ...”*

*Committees took the place of the officers in directing the units. A soviet of deputies of the corps was very soon created, and from its staff a delegation of forty men was appointed to go to the Provisional Government. The Cossacks began to announce out loud that they were only waiting an order from Petrograd to arrest Krymov and the other officers.*

*Stankevich paints a picture of what he found on the road when he set out on the 30th with Voitinsky in the direction of Pskov. In Petrograd, he says, they had thought Tzarskoe was occupied by Kornilovists; there was nobody there at all. “In Gatchina, nobody ... On the road to Luga, nobody. In Luga, peace and quiet ... We arrived at the village where the staff of the corps was supposed to be located ... empty ... We learned that early in the morning the Cossacks had left their positions and gone away in the direction opposite to Petrograd.” The insurrection had rolled back, crumbled to pieces, been sucked up by the earth...*

*In Petrograd, in Moscow, on the Don, at the front, along the course followed by the echelons, here, there and everywhere, Kornilov had had his sympathizers, partisans, friends. Their number seemed enormous to judge by telegrams, speeches of greeting, newspaper articles. But strange to say, now when the hour had come to reveal themselves, they had disappeared. In many cases the cause did not lie in personal cowardice. There were plenty of brave men among the Kornilov officers. But their bravery could find no point of application. From the moment the masses got into motion the solitary individual had no access to events. Not only the weighty industrialists, bankers, professors, engineers, but also students and even fighting officers, found themselves pushed away, thrown aside, elbowed out. They watched the events developing before them as though from a balcony. Along with General Denikin they had nothing left to do but curse their humiliating and appalling impotence”.*

### **From the defeat of July to victory over the Kornilov putsch**

One of the keys to understanding how the brutal defeat caused by the July days was overcome by the class power that defeated the Kornilov coup is... the very nature of the revolution: it was subjected to the permanent imbalance between the proletariat and the rural petty bourgeoisie. The peasantry represented by the soldiers was much more voluble and sensitive to the bombardment of nationalism.

*“If the masses really did change their feelings and thoughts under the influence of accidental circumstances, then that mighty obedience to natural law which characterizes the development of great revolutions would be inexplicable. The deeper the popular millions are caught up by a revolution, and the more regular therefore is its development, the more confidently can you predict the sequence of its further stages. Only in doing this you must remember that the political development of the masses proceeds not in a direct line, but in a complicated curve. And is not this, after all, the essential movement of every material process? Objective conditions were powerfully impelling the workers, soldiers and peasants toward the banners of the Bolsheviks, but the masses were entering upon this path in a state of struggle with their own past, with their yesterday's beliefs, and partly also with their beliefs of today. At a difficult turn, at a*

*moment of failure and disappointment, the old prejudices not yet burnt out would flare up, and the enemy would naturally seize upon these as upon an anchor of salvation. Everything about the Bolsheviks which was unclear, unusual, puzzling – the novelty of their thoughts, their audacity, their contempt for all old and new authorities – all this now suddenly acquired one simple explanation, convincing in its very absurdity: They are German spies! In advancing this accusation against the Bolsheviks, the enemy were really staking their game upon the enslaved past of the people, upon the relics among them of darkness, barbarism, superstition. And it was no fatuous game to play. That gigantic patriotic lie remained throughout July and August a political factor of primary importance, playing its accompaniment to all the questions of the day. The ripples of slander spread out over the whole country, carried by the Kadet press, swallowing up the provinces, the frontiers, penetrating even into the remotest backwoods. At the end of July the Ivanovo-Voznesensk organization of the Bolsheviks was still demanding a more energetic campaign against slander. The question of the relative weight of slander in a political struggle in civilized society still awaits its sociologist.*

*And yet the reaction among the workers and soldiers, although nervous and impetuous, was neither deep nor lasting.*

*The more advanced factories in Petrograd began to recover in the very next days after the raids. They protested against arrests and slanders, they came knocking on the doors of the Executive Committee; they restored their lines of communication. At the Sestroretsk arms factory, which had been stormed and disarmed, the workers soon had the helm again in their hands: a general meeting on July 20 resolved that the workers must be paid for the days of the demonstration, and that the pay should be used entirely in supplying literature to the front. The open agitational work of the Bolsheviks in Petrograd began again, according to the testimony of Olga Ravich, between the 20th and 30th of July. At meetings comprising no more than 200 or 300 people, three men began to appear in different parts of the city: Slutsky, later killed by the Whites in the Crimea, Volodarsky, killed by the Social Revolutionaries in Petrograd, and Yefdokimov, a Petrograd metal worker, one of the ablest orators of the revolution. In August the educational work of the party acquired a broader scope. According to the notes of Raskolnikov, Trotsky, when arrested on the 23rd of July, gave those in prison the following picture of the situation in the city: "The Mensheviks and Social Revolutionaries are continuing their insane baiting of the Bolsheviks. The arrests of our comrades continue, but there is no gloom in party circles. On the contrary, everybody is looking to the future with hope, calculating that the repressions will only strengthen the popularity of the party ... In the workers' districts no loss of spirit is to be observed." And it is true that a meeting of the workers of 27 plants in the Peterhoff district passed soon after that a resolution of protest against the irresponsible government and its counter-revolutionary policy. The proletarian districts were fast coming to life".*

Morale was increasingly on the rise. By the end of July, the crisis was overcome in the main factories and militancy had sprouted again in the neighbourhoods. The military committee was reconstituted and the work among the soldiers began to bear fruit, especially in the patriotic regiments that had been more adversarial. By August, the party's influence has been restored, but now the workers and the most militant regiments have gained strength and self-discipline, and the anarchists have disappeared or had lost their influence. Unexpectedly for the reaction, the class has emerged strengthened from the harsh experience of the July days.

*"The strong weapon of slander proved a two-edged one. If the Bolsheviks are German spies, why does the news come chiefly from sources most hateful to the people? Why is it the Kadet press, which has always attributed to the workers and soldiers the lowest possible motives, that is loudest and clearest of all in accusing the Bolsheviks? Why does that reactionary overseer or engineer who has been crouching in a corner since the insurrection, now suddenly jump out and begin to curse the Bolsheviks? Why have the most reactionary officers begun to swagger in their regiments? And why in accusing "Lenin & Co." do they shake their fists in the very faces of the soldiers, as though they were the traitors?"*

*Every factory had its Bolsheviks. "Do I look like a German spy, boys, eh?" a fitter would ask, or a cabinet-maker, whose whole life history was known to the workers. At times even the Compromisers, in their struggle against the assault of the counter-revolution, would go farther than they planned and unintentionally smooth the path for the Bolsheviks. The soldier Pireiko tells how at a soldiers' meeting an army physician Markovich, a follower of Plekhanov, refuted the accusation of espionage against Lenin, in order the more effectively to attack his political views as inconsistent and ruinous. In vain! "If Lenin is intelligent and not a spy, not a traitor, and wants to make peace, then we are for him," said the soldiers after the meeting.*

*After the temporary halt in its growth, Bolshevism again began confidently spreading its wings. "The compensation is coming fast," wrote Trotsky in the middle of August. "Driven, persecuted, slandered, our party has never grown so swiftly as in recent days. And this process will not be long in running from the capital into the provinces, from the cities into the villages and the army ... All the toiling masses of the country will have learned, when new trials come, to unite their fate with the fate of our party".*

## **The Soviets**

The defeat of the Kornilov putsch not only opened up a moral strengthening of the workers, but also a political one. Consciousness, it bears repeating, lags behind the advances of the class, interpreting the changes and results that its own action has generated.

*"The revolt of Kornilov gave a powerful impetus to the radicalization of the masses. Slutsky has recalled upon this theme a word of Marx: a revolution needs from time to time the whip of the counter-revolution. The danger had awakened not only energy, but penetration. The collective thought was working at a higher tension. There was no lack of data from which to draw conclusions. A Coalition had been declared necessary for the defense of the revolution, and meanwhile the ally in the Coalition had turned up on the side of the counter-revolution. The Moscow Conference had been declared a review of the national unity. Only the Central Committee of the Bolsheviks had given warning: "The Conference ... will inevitably turn into the instrument of a counterrevolutionary conspiracy." Events had verified this. And now Kerensky was declaring: "The Moscow Conference ... this was a prologue to the 27th of August ... Here was carried out an estimate of forces ... Here the future dictator, Kornilov, was first introduced to Russia ..." As though Kerensky had not been the initiator, organizer and president of this conference, and as though it were not he who had introduced Kornilov as "the first soldier" of the revolution. As though it had not been the Provisional Government which armed Kornilov with the death penalty against the soldier, and as though the warnings of the Bolsheviks had not been denounced as demagoguism.*

*The Petrograd garrison remembered, moreover, that two days before the uprising of Kornilov, the Bolsheviks had voiced the suspicion at a meeting of the soldiers' section that the progressive regiments were being removed from the capital with counter-revolutionary aims. To this the representatives of the Mensheviks and Social Revolutionaries had replied with a threatening demand: Do not venture upon a discussion of the military orders of General Kornilov. A resolution had been introduced and carried in that spirit. "The Bolsheviks, it seems, were not talking through their hats!" That is what the non-party worker and soldier must be saying to himself now...*

*The facts were simple, remembered by many, accessible to all, irrefutable and deadly. The echelons of the Savage Division, the torn-up rails, the mutual accusations between the Winter Palace and headquarters, the testimonies of Savinkov and Kerensky – all spoke for themselves. What an irrefutable indictment of the Compromisers and their régime! The meaning of the baiting of Bolsheviks had become utterly clear: it had been an indispensable element in the preparation for a coup d'etat.*

*The workers and soldiers, as they began to see all this, were seized with a sharp feeling of shame. Lenin is in hiding, then, merely because they have vilely slandered him. The others are in jail, then, to please the Kadets, the generals, the bankers, the diplomats of the Entente. The Bolsheviks, then, are not office-seekers, and they are hated up above exactly because they do not want to join that stock company which they call a Coalition! This was the understanding arrived at by the hard workers, by the simple people, by the oppressed. And out of these moods, together with a feeling of guilt before the Bolsheviks, grew an unconquerable loyalty to the party and confidence in its leaders.*

*The old soldiers, the standing elements of the army, the artillery men, the staff of non-commissioned officers, resisted up to the very last days, with all their power. They did not want to set a cross against all their fighting labors, their sacrifices, their deeds of heroism: can it be that all that was squandered for nothing? But when the last prop was knocked out from under them, they turned sharply – left about face! – to the Bolsheviks. Now they had utterly come over to the revolution, their non-commissioned officer chevrons, their soldier's wills tempered in battle, their bulging jaw muscles, and all. They had got fooled on the war, but this time they would carry the thing through to the end. In the reports of local authorities, both military and civil, Bolshevism had become in these days a synonym for every kind of mass activity, every decisive demand, every resistance against exploitation, every forward motion – in a word, it had become another name for revolution. Does that mean that all these things are Bolshevism? the strikers would ask themselves – and the protesting sailors, and the dissatisfied soldiers' wives, and the muzhiks in revolt. The masses were, so to speak, compelled from above to identify their intimate thoughts and demands with the slogans of Bolshevism. Thus the revolution turned to its own uses a weapon directed against it. In history not only does the reasonable become nonsensical, but also, when the course of evolution requires it, the nonsensical becomes reasonable.*

*The change in the political atmosphere revealed itself very clearly in the joint session of the Executive Committees of August 30, when delegates from Kronstadt demanded that they receive seats in that high body. Could it be possible that, where these unbridled Kronstadters had been subjected only to condemnations and excommunications, their representatives were now to take seats? But how refuse them? Only yesterday the Kronstadt sailors and soldiers had come to the defense of Petrograd. Sailors from the Aurora were even now guarding the Winter Palace. After whispering among themselves, the leaders offered the Kronstadters four seats with a voice but not a vote. The concession was accepted dryly, without expressions of gratitude. "After the attempt of Kornilov," relates Chinenov, a soldier of the Moscow garrison,*

*“all the troops acquired a Bolshevik color ... All were struck by the way in which the statement (of the Bolsheviks) came true ... that General Kornilov would soon be at the gates of Petrograd”...*

*The organizations of the party are growing, but its force of attraction is growing incomparably faster. The lack of correspondence between the technical resources of the Bolsheviks and their relative political weight finds its expression in the small number of members of the party compared to the colossal growth of its influence. Events are sweeping the masses so powerfully and swiftly into their whirlpool, that the workers and soldiers have no time to organize themselves in a party. They have no time even to understand the necessity of any special party organization. They drink up the Bolshevik slogans just as naturally as they breathe the air. That the party is a complicated laboratory in which these slogans have been worked out on the basis of collective experience, is still not clear to their minds. There are over twenty million people represented in the soviets. The party, which had on the very eve of the October revolution only 240,000 members, was more and more confidently leading these millions, through the medium of the trade unions, the factory and shop committees, and the soviets...*

*In September the Bolsheviks broke through the cordon and got access to the front, from which they had been cut off in dead earnest for the last two months. Even now the official veto was not removed. The compromisist committees did everything to keep the Bolsheviks out of their units; but all efforts were vain. The soldiers had heard so much about their own “Bolshevism” that they were all, without exception, dying to see and hear a live Bolshevik. The formal obstacles, delays, and complications thought up by the committee men were wiped away by the insistence of the soldiers as soon as the news came that a Bolshevik had arrived. The old revolutionist, Efgenia Bosh, who did a great work in the Ukraine, has left brilliant memoirs of her bold excursions into the primitive soldier jungle. The frightened warnings of her friends, both sincere and insincere, were everywhere refuted. In those divisions which had been described as bitterly hostile to the Bolsheviks, the orator, approaching her theme very cautiously, would soon find out that the listeners were with her. “There was no coughing, or hawking, or nose-blowing – those first indications of boredom in a soldier audience; the silence and order were complete.” The meetings would end in stormy ovations in honor of that bold agitator. In general, the whole journey of Efgenia Bosh along the front was a kind of triumphal procession. Less heroic, less effective, but essentially the same, was the experience of agitators of less distinguished caliber...*

*The fleet was still more clearly, concisely and colorfully going Bolshevik. On September 8, the Baltic sailors raised the battle-flags on all ships as an expression of their readiness to fight for the transfer of power to the proletariat and peasantry. The fleet demanded an immediate armistice on all fronts, the transfer of land to the peasant committees, and the establishment of workers’ control of production. Three days later the central committee of the Black Sea Fleet, less advanced and more moderate, supported the Baltic sailors, adopting the slogan of Power to the Soviets. The same slogan was adopted in the middle of September by 23 Siberian and Lettish infantry regiments of the Twelfth Army. Other divisions followed steadily. The demand for Power to the Soviets never again disappeared from the order of the day in the army or the fleet.*

*“The sailors’ meetings,” says Stankevich, “nine-tenths of them, consisted of Bolsheviks only.” The new head commissar happened to be defending the Provisional Government before the sailors at Reval. He felt the futility of the attempt from the very first words. At the mere word “government” the audience drew together with hostility: “A wave of indignation, hatred and distrust instantly seized the whole crowd. It was clear, strong, passionate, irresistible, and poured out in one unanimous shout: “Down with it!” We cannot*

*withhold a word of praise to this story-teller who does not forget to see beauty in the attack of a crowd mortally hostile to him.*

*The question of peace, driven underground for these two months, now emerges with tenfold strength. At a meeting of the Petersburg Soviet, the officer Dubassov, arriving from the front, declares: "Whatever you may say here, the soldiers will not fight any more." Voices reply: "Even the Bolsheviks don't say that!" But the officer, not a Bolshevik, comes back: "I tell you what I know, and what the soldiers directed me to tell you."*

*Another man from the front, a gloomy soldier in a long coat soaked with the filth and stink of the trenches, declared to the Petrograd Soviet in those same September days that the soldiers needed peace, any kind of peace, even "some sort of an indecent peace. Those harsh soldier words gave the soviet a fright. That is how far things had gone then! The soldiers at the front were not little children. They excellently understood that with the present war map," the peace could only be an oppressor's peace. And for this understanding of his, the trench delegate purposely chose the crudest words possible, expressing the whole force of his disgust for a Hohenzollern peace. But with this very nakedness of his mind the soldier compelled his hearers to understand that there was no other road, that the war had unwound the spirit of the army, that an immediate peace was necessary no matter what it cost. The bourgeois press seized the words of the trench orator with malicious joy, attributing them to the Bolsheviks. That phrase about an indecent peace was henceforward continually to the fore as an extreme expression of the savagery and depravity of the people!...*

*An excellent example of this quid pro quo between the Compromisers and the masses, is to be seen in an oath taken at the beginning of July by 2,000 Donetz miners, kneeling with uncovered heads in the presence of a crowd of 5,000 people and with its participation. "We swear by our children, by God, by the heaven and earth, and by all things that we hold sacred in the world, that we will never relinquish the freedom bought with blood on the 28th of February, 1917; believing in the Social Revolutionaries and the Mensheviks, we swear we will never listen to the Leninists, for they, the Bolshevik-Leninists, are leading Russia to ruin with their agitation, whereas the Social Revolutionaries and Mensheviks united in a single union, say: The land to the people, land without indemnities; the capitalist structure must fall after the war and in place of capitalism there must be a socialist structure ... We give our oath to march forward under the lead of these parties, not stopping even at death." This oath of the miners directed against the Bolsheviks in reality led straight to the Bolshevik revolution. The February shell and the October kernel appear in this naive and fervent picture so clearly as in a way to exhaust the whole problem of the Permanent Revolution.*

*By September the Donetz miners, without betraying either themselves or their oath, had already turned their backs on the Compromisers. The most backward ranks of the Ural miners had done the same thing...*

*The Social Revolutionary Party had not only lost its influence, but had also changed its social constituency. The revolutionary workers had already either gone over to the Bolsheviks or, in taking flight, were going through an inner crisis. On the other hand, the sons of shopkeepers, kulaks and petty officials who had been hiding in the factories during the war, had had time to find out that the perfect place for them was the Social Revolutionary party. In September, however, even they were afraid to call themselves Social Revolutionaries any longer – at least in Petrograd. The workers, the soldiers, and in some provinces already even the peasants, had abandoned that party. There remained in it only the conservative, bureaucratic and philistine strata. When the masses, awakened by the revolution, gave their confidence to the Social*

*Revolutionaries and Mensheviks, both these parties were tireless in praising the lofty intelligence of the people. When those same masses, having passed through the school of events, began to turn sharply toward the Bolsheviks, the Compromisers laid the blame for their own collapse upon the ignorance of the people. But the masses would not agree that they had become more ignorant. On the contrary it seemed to them that they now understood what they had not understood before”.*

As the proletariat became politically refined by experiencing both the defeat of July and the victory of August, the tables had turned for the soviets. This happened at the same time that the Soviet Executive Committee had lost its relevance and had left the Tauride Palace to the future Constituent Assembly and had moved to the more modest Smolni Institute (former school for ladies of the aristocracy).

*“The political revival of the soviets, which coincided with their Bolshevization, began from the bottom. In Petrograd the first voice to be lifted was that of the district locals. On July 21, a delegation from an inter-district conference of the soviets presented to the Executive Committee a list of demands: dissolve the State Duma, confirm the inviolability of the army organizations by a decree of the government, restore the left press, stop the disarming of workers, put an end to mass arrests, bridle the right press, bring to an end the disbandment of regiments and the death penalty at the front. A lowering of the political demands here, in comparison with the July demonstration, is quite obvious; but this was only a first step toward convalescence. In cutting down the slogans, the districts were trying to broaden their base. The leaders of the Executive Committee diplomatically welcomed the “sensitiveness” of the district soviets, but confined their response to the assertion that all misfortunes had resulted from the July insurrection. The two sides parted politely but coolly. Upon this program of the district soviets a significant campaign was opened. Izvestia printed from day to day resolutions of soviets, trade unions, factories, battleships, army units, demanding the dissolution of the State Duma, an end of repressions against the Bolsheviks and indulgences to the counter-revolution. Upon this general background, certain more radical voices were heard. On the 22nd of July the soviet of Moscow Province, considerably in advance of the soviet of Moscow itself, passed a resolution in favor of the transfer of power to the soviets. On July 26 the Ivanovo-Voznesensk soviet “branded with contempt” the method of struggle employed against the party of the Bolsheviks, and sent a greeting to Lenin, “the glorious leader of the revolutionary proletariat.”*

*Elections held at the end of July and during the first half of August at many points in the country brought about as a general rule a strengthening of the Bolshevik factions in the soviets. In Kronstadt, raided and made notorious throughout Russia, the new soviet contained 100 Bolsheviks, 75 Left Social Revolutionaries, 12 Menshevik-Internationalists, 7 anarchists, and over 90 non-party men of whom not one dared openly acknowledge his sympathy for the Compromisers. At a regional congress of the soviets of the Urals, opening on August 18, there were 86 Bolsheviks, 40 Social Revolutionaries, 23 Mensheviks. Tzaritzyn became an object of special hatred to the bourgeois press, for here not only had the soviet become Bolshevik, but the leader of the local Bolsheviks, Minin, was elected burgomaster. Kerensky sent a punitive expedition against Tzaritzyn, a city which was a red rag to the Don Cossack ataman Kaledin – without any serious pretext and with the sole aim of destroying a revolutionary nest. In Petrograd, Moscow, and all the industrial districts, more and more hands were being raised every day for the Bolshevik proposals.*

*The events at the end of August subjected the soviets to a test. Under the shadow of danger an inner regrouping took place very swiftly; it took place everywhere, and with comparatively little debate. In the provinces as in Petrograd, the Bolsheviks-step-children of the official soviet system-were advanced to the front rank. But also in the staff of the Compromise party, the "March" socialists, the politicians of ministerial and official waiting-rooms, were temporarily crowded back by more militant elements tempered in the underground movement. For this new grouping of forces a new organizational form was needed. The leadership of the revolutionary defense was nowhere concentrated in the hands of the executive committees. They were of little use in the form in which Kornilov's insurrection found them for fighting action. Everywhere there were formed special committees of defense, revolutionary committees, staffs. They relied upon the soviets, made reports to them, but represented a new selection of elements, a new method of action corresponding to the revolutionary nature of the task...*

*With various qualifications – at times substantial – this same picture was reproduced almost everywhere. And it was by no means a mere imitation of Petrograd. The mass constitution of the soviets gave the character of a general law to their inner evolution, making them all react in like manner to any great event. While the two parts of the coalition were divided by a civil war front, the soviets had actually gathered around themselves all the living forces of the nation. Running into this wall the offensive of the generals had crumbled into dust. A more instructive lesson could not possibly be demanded. "In spite of all efforts of the authorities to crowd out the soviets and deprive them of power," says the declaration of the Bolsheviks on this theme, "the soviets manifested during the putting down of the Kornilov revolt the irrepressible ... might and initiative of the popular mass ... After this new experience, which nothing will ever drive out of the consciousness of the workers, soldiers and peasants, the cry raised at the very beginning of the revolution by our party – 'All Power to the Soviets!' – has become the voice of the whole revolutionary country...*

*After the Kornilov days a new chapter opened for the soviets. Although the Compromisers still retained a considerable number of bad spots, especially in the garrison, the Petrograd soviet showed such a sharp career in the direction of the Bolsheviks as to astonish both camps-both Right and Left. On the night of September 1, while still under the presidency of Cheidze, the Soviet voted for a government of workers and peasants. The rank-and-file members of the compromisist factions almost solidly supported the resolution of the Bolsheviks. The rival proposal of Tseretelli got only about 15 votes. The compromisist praesidium could not believe their eyes. The Right demanded a roll call, and this dragged on until three o'clock in the morning. To avoid openly voting against their parties, many of the delegates went home. But even so, and in spite of all methods of pressure, the resolution of the Bolsheviks received in the final vote 279 votes against 115. That was a big fact. That was the beginning of the end. The praesidium, stunned, announced that they would resign...*

*The Petrograd Soviet, the parent of all the other soviets, henceforth stood under the leadership of the Bolsheviks, who had been only yesterday "an insignificant little bunch of demagogues." Trotsky, from the tribune, reminded the praesidium that the charge against the Bolsheviks of being in the service of the German staff had not been withdrawn. "Let the Miliukovs and Guchkovs tell the story of their lives day by day. They dare not do it. But we are ready any day to give an account of our activities. We have nothing to hide from the Russian people ..." The Petrograd soviet in a special resolution "branded with contempt the authors, distributors and promoters of the slander".*

*The Bolsheviks now entered upon their inheritance. It proved at once colossal and extraordinarily slender. The Executive Committee had in good season taken away from the Petrograd Soviet the two newspapers established by it, all the administrative offices, all funds and all technical equipment, including the typewriters and inkwells. The innumerable automobiles which had been at the disposal of the Soviet since the February days had every last one of them been transferred into the keeping of the compromiser Olympus. The new leaders had nothing – no treasury, no newspapers, no secretarial apparatus, no means of locomotion, no pen and no pencil. Nothing but the blank walls and – the burning confidence of the workers and soldiers. That, however, proved sufficient”.*

### **The Birth of the Communist Party of Russia**

*“How was it that with this weak apparatus and this negligible circulation of the party press, the ideas and slogans of Bolshevism were able to take possession of the people? The explanation is very simple: those slogans which correspond to the keen demands of a class and an epoch create thousands of channels for themselves. A red-hot revolutionary medium is a high conductor of ideas. The Bolshevik papers were read aloud, were read all to pieces. The most important articles were learned by heart, recited, copied, and wherever possible reprinted...*

*the correlation of forces, did not try to win by shouting. The school of Lenin was a school of revolutionary realism. The data supplied by the Bolshevik press of 1917 are proving, in the light of historic criticism and the documents of the epoch, incomparably more correct than the data supplied by all the other newspapers. This correctness was a result of the revolutionary strength of the Bolsheviks, but at the same time it reinforced their strength. The renunciation of this tradition has subsequently become one of the most malignant features of epigonism. “We are not charlatans,” said Lenin immediately after his arrival. “We must base ourselves only upon the consciousness of the masses. Even if it is necessary to remain in a minority, be it so ... We must not be afraid to be a minority ... We will carry on the work of criticism in order to free the masses from deceit. Our line will prove right. All the oppressed will come to us. They have no other way out.” Here we have the Bolshevik policy, comprehensible from beginning to end as the direct opposite of demagoguism and adventurism...*

*A member of the central committee of the Bolsheviks – perhaps Sverdlov – writes to a province: “We are temporarily without newspapers ... The organization is not broken up ... The congress is not postponed.” Lenin, so far as his enforced isolation permits, attentively follows the preparation for the party congress, and designates its fundamental problem: to plan the further offensive. The congress was described in advance as a joint congress, since it was to bring about the inclusion in the Bolshevik party of certain autonomous revolutionary groups. Chief among these was the Petrograd inter-district organization to which belonged Trotsky, Joffe, Uritsky, Riazanov, Lunacharsky, Pokrovsky, Manuilsky, Karakhan, Urenev, and several other revolutionists known in the past, or still only coming to be known...*

*On July 2, on the very eve of the demonstration, a conference had been held of the Mezhrayontsi representing about 4,000 workers. “The majority,” writes Sukhanov, who was present in the gallery, “were workers and soldiers unknown to me ... A feverish work had been carried on and its success was palpable to us all. There was only one difficulty: What is the difference between you and the Bolsheviks, and why are you not with them?” In order to hasten that fusion which certain individual leaders of the organization were trying to postpone, Trotsky published in Pravda the following statement: “There are in my opinion at the present time no differences either in principle or tactics between the inter-district and the Bolshevik*

*organizations. Accordingly there are no motives which justify the separate existence of these organizations."*

*The joint congress opened on July 26 – in essence the 6th congress of the Bolshevik party – and it conducted its meetings semi-legally, concealing itself alternately in two different workers' districts. There were 175 delegates, 157 with a vote, representing 112 organizations, comprising 176,750 members. In Petrograd there were 41,000 members: 36,000 in the Bolshevik organization, 4,000 Mezhrayontsi, and about 1,000 in the Military Organization. In the central industrial regions, of which Moscow is the focus, the party had 42,000 members; in the Urals 25,000; in the Donetz Basin about 15,000. In the Caucasus, big Bolshevik organizations were to be found in Baku, Grozny, and Tiflis. The first two were almost wholly composed of workers; in Tiflis the soldiers predominated. The personnel of the congress embodied the prerevolutionary past of the party. Out of 171 delegates who filled out a questionnaire, 110 had spent 245 years in prison, 10 delegates had spent 41 years at hard labor, 24 had spent 73 years in penal settlements, 55 delegates had been in exile 127 years; 27 had been abroad for 89 years; 150 had been arrested 549 times.*

*"At that congress," as Piatnitsky, one of the present secretaries of the Communist International, later remembered, "neither Lenin, nor Trotsky, nor Zinoviev, nor Kamenev was present ... Although the question of the party program was withdrawn from the agenda, nevertheless the congress went off well and in a businesslike way without the leaders of the party ..." At the basis of the work lay the theses of Lenin. Bukharin and Stalin made the principal reports. The report of Stalin is a good measure of the distance travelled by the speaker himself, along with all the cadres of the party, in the four months since Lenin's arrival. With theoretical diffidence, but political decisiveness, Stalin tries to name over those features which define "the deep character of a socialist workers' revolution." The unanimity of this conference in comparison with the April one is noticeable at once. On the subject of elections to the Central Committee, the report of the congress reads: "The names of the four members of the Central Committee receiving the most votes are read aloud: Lenin – 133 votes out of 134. Zinoviev 132, Kamenev 131, and Trotsky 131. Besides these four, the following members were elected to the Central Committee: Nogin, Kollantai, Stalin, Sverdlov, Rykov, Bukharin, Artem, Joffe, Uritsky, Miliutin, Lomov." The membership of this Central Committee should be well noted. Under its leadership the October Revolution is to be achieved".*

### **The last bourgeois government and the Pre-parliament**

The initial reaction of Mensheviks and SRs to the change taking place in the soviets was to secure Kerensky at all costs into a new coalition government with the Kadets. This was to be legitimized by a "democratic conference" that would obtain majorities and act as an institution of democracy opposing the Soviets. But it was a failure. The conference ended up falling apart.

*"This Petrograd parade of the democracy proved to be for the Compromisers what the Moscow parade of national unity had been for Kerensky – a public confession of bankruptcy, a review of political prostration. Whereas the State Conference gave an impetus to the insurrection of Kornilov, the Democratic Conference finally cleared the road for the Bolshevik insurrection.*

*Before dispersing, the Conference appointed from its members a permanent body composed of 15 per cent of the membership of each of its groups – in all, about 350 delegates. The institutions of the possessing classes were to receive in addition to this 120 seats. The government in its own name added 20 seats for the Cossacks. All these together were to constitute a Council of the Republic, or Pre-Parliament, which was to represent the nation until the Constituent Assembly...*

*The question was whether the party should accommodate its tasks to the development of a bourgeois republic, or should really set itself the goal of conquering the power. By a majority of 77 votes against 50, this party conference rejected the slogan of boycott. On September 22nd, Riazanov had the satisfaction of announcing at the Democratic Conference in the name of the party that the Bolsheviks would send their representatives to the Pre-Parliament, in order "in this new fortress of compromise to expose all attempts at a new coalition with the bourgeoisie." That sounded very radical, but it really meant substituting a policy of oppositional exposure for a policy of revolutionary action.*

*Lenin's April theses had been appropriated by the whole party; but upon every big question that arose, the March attitudes would swim out from under them. And these attitudes were very strong in the upper layers of the party, which in many parts of the country had only just now divided from the Mensheviks. Lenin was able to take his part in this argument only after the event. On the 23rd of September he wrote: "We must boycott the Pre-Parliament. We must go out into the soviets of workers, soldiers, and peasants' deputies, go out into the trade unions, go out in general to the masses. We must summon them to the struggle. We must give them a correct and clear slogan: To drive out the Bonapartist gang of Kerensky with its fake Pre-Parliament ... The Mensheviks and Social Revolutionaries even after the Kornilov events refused to accept our offer of compromise ... Ruthless struggle against them! Ruthless expulsion of them from all revolutionary organizations! ... Trotsky was for the boycott. Bravo, Comrade Trotsky! Boycottism was defeated in the faction of the Bolsheviks who attended the Democratic Conference. Long live the boycott!"*

*"Either Kornilov or Lenin": thus Miliukov defined the alternative. Lenin on his part wrote: "Either a Soviet government or Kornilovism. There is no middle course." To this extent Miliukov and Lenin coincided in their appraisal of the situation – and not accidentally. In contrast to the heroes of the compromise phrase, these two were serious representatives of the basic classes of society. According to Miliukov the Moscow State Conference had already made it clearly obvious that "the country is dividing into two camps, between which there can be no essential conciliation or agreement." But where there can be no agreement between two social camps, the issue is decided by civil war. However, neither the Kadets nor the Bolsheviks withdrew the slogan of the Constituent Assembly. It was needful to the Kadets as the last court of appeal against immediate social reform, against the soviets, against the revolution. That shadow which democracy cast before it in the form of the Constituent Assembly, was employed by the bourgeoisie in opposition to the living democracy. The bourgeoisie could openly reject the Constituent Assembly only after they had crushed the Bolsheviks. They were far from that. At the given stage the Kadets were trying to assure the government's independence of those organizations bound up with the masses, in order afterward the more surely and completely to subject the government to themselves.*

*But the Bolsheviks also, although finding no way out on the road of formal democracy, had not yet renounced the idea of the Constituent Assembly. Moreover, they could not do this without abandoning revolutionary realism. Whether the future course of events would create the conditions for a complete victory of the proletariat, could not with absolute certainty be foreseen. Exactly as the Bolsheviks defended the compromisist soviets and the democratic municipalities against Kornilov, so they were ready to defend the Constituent Assembly against the attempts of the bourgeoisie...*

*And indeed it actually was too late. On the day the new government was formed, with six bourgeois and ten semisocialist ministers, the Petrograd Soviet completed the formation of a new Executive Committee, consisting of thirteen Bolsheviks, six Social Revolutionaries and three Mensheviks. The Soviet greeted the governmental coalition with a resolution introduced by its new president, Trotsky. "The new government ...*

*will go into the history of the revolution as the civil war government ... The news of the formation of the government will be met by the whole revolutionary democracy with one answer: Resign! Relying upon this unanimous voice of the authentic democracy, the All-Russian Congress of Soviets will create a genuinely revolutionary government." The enemy tried to see in this resolution a mere ritual vote of non-confidence. In reality it was a program of revolution. Exactly a month was required for its realization".*

## **October**

October began with the war knocking on the doors of Petersburg. The fleet, without command or admiralty, defended the capital from the revolution in the Baltic at the cost of many lives. The Kadets responded by proposing the evacuation of the government and the pre-parliament from the capital.

*"The Kadet instigators of the plan understood that a mere transfer of the government would not settle their problem, but they counted on afterward capturing the seat of revolutionary infection with hunger, disease and exhaustion. An internal blockade of Petrograd was already in full swing. The factories were being deprived of orders; the supply of fuel had been cut down three-quarters; the Ministry of Provisions was holding up cattle on their way to the capital; freight movements on the Mariinsky Railroad System had been stopped...*

*On the 6th of October the soldiers' section adopted with a unanimity hitherto unknown the resolution introduced by Trotsky: "If the Provisional Government is incapable of defending Petrograd, it must either make peace or give place to another government." The workers were no less irreconcilable. They considered Petrograd their fortress. Their revolutionary hopes were bound up with her. They did not intend to surrender Petrograd. Frightened by the military danger, the evacuation, the indignation of the soldiers and workers, the excitement of the whole population, the Compromisers, on their side, sounded an alarm: We must not abandon Petrograd to the caprice of fate. Convinced that an attempted evacuation would meet resistance from all sides, the government began to draw back: We were not troubled so much, you know, about our own safety as about the question of a meeting-place for the future Constituent Assembly. But this position, too, they could not maintain".*

Kerensky inaugurated the pre-Parliament and the Bolsheviks had abandoned it.

*"The decision to withdraw demonstratively from the Mariinsky Palace was adopted on the 5th at a meeting of the Bolshevik faction by all votes except one. So great had been the shift leftward during the preceding two weeks! Only Kamenev remained true to his original position – or rather he alone dared defend it. In a special declaration addressed to the Central Committee, Kamenev candidly described the course adopted as "very dangerous for the party".*

The war was the key. The pre-parliament placed its focus on it. The Compromisers wanted to attract the soldiers by convincing them that they defend the revolution while the bourgeoisie tried to mobilize them through force. Neither was possible anymore.

*"Fraternalizing, which had almost stopped since the July days, began again and grew rapidly. Instances not only of the arrest of officers by the soldiers, but of the murder of the more hateful began to multiply. These things were done almost publicly, before the eyes of the soldiers. Nobody interfered: the majority did not want to, the small minority did not dare. The murderer always succeeded in hiding: he was drowned and lost in the soldier mass. One of the generals wrote: "We convulsively grasp at this or that, we pray for some*

*sort of miracle, but the majority of us understand that there is already no hope of salvation”.*

The war minister himself, a Kadet, had come to the conclusion that only unilateral peace could prevent the total collapse of the army and the state. The bourgeoisie then slandered him and threw him out of the government.

The masses of workers and soldiers continued to evolve. Class consciousness is neither fantastic nor chimeric. It is the clarity, the political refinement that is born within a dense web of intertwined conversations.

*“But incomparably more effective in that last period before the insurrection was the molecular agitation carried on by nameless workers, sailors, soldiers, winning converts one by one, breaking down the last doubts, overcoming the last hesitations. Those months of feverish political life had created innumerable cadres in the lower ranks, had educated hundreds and thousands of rough diamonds, who were accustomed to look on politics from below and not above, and for that very reason estimated facts and people with a keenness not always accessible to orators of the academic type. The Petrograd workers stood in the front rank – hereditary proletarians who had produced a race of agitators and organizers of extraordinary revolutionary temper and high political culture, independent in thought, word and action. Carpenters, fitters, blacksmiths, teachers of the unions and factories, each already had around him his school, his pupils, the future builders of the Republic of Soviets. The Baltic sailors, close comrades in arms of the Petrograd workers – to a considerable extent issued from their midst – put forward a brigade of agitators who took by storm the backward regiments, the county towns, the villages of the muzhiks. A generalizing formula tossed out in the Cirque Moderne by one of the revolutionary leaders would take flesh and blood in hundreds of thinking heads, and so make the rounds of the whole country”.*

The function of the party became clear as the movement itself populated it with the most determined workers. The lack of conviction or clarity of slogans by a leadership that remains stagnant or becomes demoralized weakens the general morale and strength of the movement.

*“The mass would no longer endure in its midst the wavering, the dubious, the neutral. It was striving to get hold of everybody, to attract, to convince, to conquer. The factories joined with the regiments in sending delegates to the front. The trenches got into connection with the workers and peasants near by in the rear. In the towns along the front there was an endless series of meetings, conferences, consultations in which the soldiers and sailors would bring their activity into accord with that of the workers and peasants. It was in this manner that the backward White Russian front was won over to Bolshevism.*

*In places where the local party leadership was irresolute and disposed to wait, as for example in Kiev, Voronezh, and many other points, the masses not infrequently fell into a passive condition. To justify their policy, the leaders would point to this mood of depression which they themselves had created. On the other hand: “The more resolute and bold was his summons to insurrection,” writes Povolzhsky, one of the Kazan agitators, “the more trustful and hearty would be the attitude of the soldier mass toward the speaker”.*

The development of the most determined organization of the workers as a party translates into morale and consciousness, and this in turn into the strengthening of the organization of the whole class... which ends up drawing the intermediate oppressed classes into the movement.

*“The Moscow conference of factory and shop committees declared that the local Soviet should in the future decide all strike conflicts by decree, on its own authority open the plants shut down by the lockouts, and by sending its own delegates to Siberia and the Donetz Basin guarantee coal and grain to the factories. The Petrograd conference of factory and shop committees devoted its attention to the agrarian question, and upon a report by Trotsky drew up a manifesto to the peasants: The proletariat feels itself to be not only a special class, but also the leader of the people”.*

However, there are objective, historical limits, given by the fact that the Russian revolution was a permanent revolution. The capitalist relations of production were never questioned in the factory. The world revolution, omnipresent throughout the war, was what gave the socialist perspective to the workers. It wasn't through their independent activity... which would alienate them from the peasants (petty bourgeoisie) and prevent them from seizing power. The bourgeois-democratic roots of the revolution never stopped being present. The revolution stopped at workers' control of a production that continued to correspond to the law of value, the only unquestioned law in the entire course of the revolution until October. Production was still managed by the bourgeoisie and later it would be managed by a state secreted by the soviets. Without world revolution or a workers revolution in the countryside - for which there was no base - any other outcome was unthinkable.

*“The all-Russian conference of factory and shop committees, meeting during the second half of October, raised the question of workers' control to the position of a national problem: “The workers are more interested than the owners in the correct and uninterrupted operation of the plants.” Workers' control “is in the interest of the whole country and ought to be supported by the revolutionary peasantry and the revolutionary army.” This resolution, opening the door to a new economic order, was adopted by the representatives of all the industrial enterprises of Russia with only five votes opposing and nine abstaining from the vote. The few individual abstainers were old Mensheviks no longer able to follow their own party, but still lacking courage to raise their bands openly for the Bolshevik revolution. Tomorrow they will do it”.*

The order of the day of the revolution was not to attack the law of value, but to seize power and destroy the state.

*“No, the government of the soviets was not a chimera, an arbitrary construction, an invention of party theoreticians. It grew up irresistibly from below, from the breakdown of industry, the impotence of the possessors, the needs of the masses. The soviets had in actual fact become a government. For the workers, soldiers, and peasants there remained no other road. No time left to argue and speculate about a Soviet government: it had to be realized”.*

The Executive Committee (born out of the first All-Russian congress of the soviets and controlled by the Mensheviks and the SRs) annulled the resolutions calling for a new congress. They knew that the new congress would diminish the possibilities of success of the Constituent Assembly.

It was the expression within the class organs themselves of the incompatibility between parliamentary democracy and Soviet democracy, between the dictatorship of the class interests of the workers - always modulated, at least until the further spread of the revolution, by those of the peasants - and that of the bourgeoisie.

*“Izvestia buried the soviets in a leading article, declaring them temporary barricades which should be removed as soon as the Constituent Assembly crowns the “edifice of the new structure...”*

*The struggle for and against the Congress gave the last impulse in the localities to the Bolshevization of the soviets. In a number of backward provinces, Smolensk for example, the Bolsheviks, either alone or together with the Left Social Revolutionaries, got their first majority only during this campaign for the Congress or during the election of delegates to it. Even in the Siberian congress of the soviets the Bolsheviks succeeded in the middle of October in creating with the Left Social Revolutionaries a permanent majority which easily placed its imprint upon the local soviets. On the 15th the Soviet of Kiev, by 159 votes against 28, with 3 abstaining, recognized the coming Congress of Soviets as "the sovereign organ of power." On the 16th the Congress of Soviets of the north-western region at Minsk – that is, in the center of the Western front – declared the calling of the Congress unpostponable. On the 18th the Petrograd Soviet held elections for the coming Congress; 443 votes were cast for the Bolshevik list (Trotsky, Kamenev, Volodarsky, Yurenev and Lashevich); for the Social Revolutionaries, 162 – these all Left Social Revolutionaries, tending toward the Bolsheviks; for the Mensheviks 44. Under the presidency of Krestinsky a congress of the soviets of the Urals, where 80 out of the 110 delegates were Bolsheviks, demanded in the name of 223,900 organized workers and soldiers that the Congress of Soviets be called at the appointed date. On the same day, the 19th, an All-Russian conference of factory and shop committees, the most direct and indubitable representation of the proletariat in the whole country, came out for an immediate transfer of power to the soviets. On the 20th Ivanovo-Voznesensk declared all the soviets of the provinces to be "in a state of open and ruthless struggle against the Provisional Government," and summoned them to solve independently the industrial and administrative problems of their localities. Against this resolution, which meant the overthrow of local governmental authorities, only one voice was raised, with one abstaining. On the 22nd, the Bolshevik press published a new list of 56 organisations demanding a transfer of power to the soviets. These were all composed of the authentic masses of the people, and to a considerable degree armed masses.*

*This all-powerful muster-roll of the detachments of the coming revolution did not prevent Dan from reporting to the bureau of the Central Executive Committee that out of 917 existing Soviet organizations, only 50 had responded with an agreement to send delegates, and these had done so "without any enthusiasm." It is easy enough to understand that those few soviets who still considered it necessary to report their feelings to the Central Executive Committee regarded the Congress without enthusiasm. An overwhelming majority of the local soviets and the army committees had simply ignored the Central Executive Committee altogether. Although they had exposed and compromised themselves with these efforts to sabotage the Congress, the Compromisers did not dare carry the work through to the end. When it became utterly obvious that they could not avoid a congress, they made an abrupt about-face and summoned all the local organizations to elect delegates to the Congress in order not to give the Bolsheviks a majority. Having waked up to the situation too late, however, the Central Executive Committee found itself obliged only two or three days before the appointed date to postpone the Congress to October 25.*

*Thanks to this last manoeuvre of the Compromisers, the February régime, and bourgeois society along with it, received an unexpected period of grace – from which, however, it was no longer capable of deriving any substantial benefits. The Bolsheviks, moreover, employed these five supplementary days to great advantage. The enemy acknowledged this later on. "The postponement of the coming-out," says Miliukov, "was made use of by the Bolsheviks, first of all to reinforce their position among the Petrograd workers and soldiers. Trotsky appeared at meetings in the various units of the Petrograd garrison. The mood created by him is exemplified in the fact that in the Semenovskiy regiment the members of the Executive Committee appearing after him, Skobelev and Gotz, were not allowed to speak".*

Everything was being prepared for the Constituent Assembly to replace the provisional government as the organ of the class dictatorship of the bourgeoisie... unbeknownst to the old bourgeoisie. After all, that is what the new bourgeois parties (ex-proletarians such as the Mensheviks) were for. They were much more conscious of the fact that class power needs first and foremost to deceive in order to get the exploitation of one class by another accepted by general consensus and organized in the state. The Mensheviks and SRs, therefore, represented not the *revolutionary democracy* of yesterday - as they themselves believed - but the democracy of today that was born then, organized and oriented to enclose them within the framework of the state instead of the state becoming an organ of these revolutionary forces itself.

*"The question of the Congress of the Soviets remained the central political question throughout the five weeks dividing the Democratic Conference from the October insurrection. At the Conference itself the declaration of the Bolsheviks had proclaimed the coming Congress of the Soviets the sovereign organ of the country. "Only such decisions and proposals of the present Conference ... can find their way to realization as are ratified by the All Russian Congress of Workers', Peasants', and Soldiers' Deputies." The resolution favoring a boycott of the Pre-Parliament, supported by one-half of the members of the Central Committee against the other half, declare: "We place the question of our parties' participation in the Pre-Parliament in direct dependence upon those measures which the All-Russian Congress of Soviets shall take to create a revolutionary government." This appeal to the Congress of Soviets runs through all the Bolshevik documents of this period almost without exception. With the peasant war kindling, the national movements growing bitter, the breakdown going deeper, the front disintegrating, the government unravelling, the soviets were becoming the sole support of the creative forces. Every question turned into a question about the power, and the problem of power led straight to the Congress of Soviets. This Congress must give the answer to all questions, among them the question of the Constituent Assembly".*

The Bolsheviks were beginning to realize the transformation that was taking place with democracy... but only to the extent of the clarification that was developed by the impulse of the revolution itself. This lack of incisiveness would intensify over time, when the Third International would come to support the electoral participation that would systematically serve only to delegitimize class self-organization in its first phases... starting with Germany.

*"Not one party had yet withdrawn the slogan of the Constituent Assembly, and this included the Bolsheviks. But almost unnoticeably in the course of the events of the revolution, this chief democratic slogan, which had for a decade and a half tinged with its color the heroic struggle of the masses, had grown pale and faded out, had somehow been ground between millstones, had become an empty shell, a form naked of content, a tradition and not a prospect. There was nothing mysterious in this process. The development of the revolution had reached the point of a direct battle for power between the two basic classes of society, the bourgeoisie and the proletariat. A Constituent Assembly could give nothing either to the one or the other. The petty bourgeoisie of the town and country could play only an auxiliary and secondary role in this conflict. They were in any case incapable of seizing the power themselves. If the preceding months had proved anything, they had proved that. Nevertheless in a Constituent Assembly the petty bourgeoisie might still win - and they actually did win as it turned out - a majority, And to what end? Only to the end of not knowing what to do with it. This reveals the bankruptcy of formal democracy in a deep historic crisis. It reveals the strength of tradition, however, that even on the eve of the last battle neither camp had yet renounced the name of the Constituent Assembly. But as a matter of fact the bourgeoisie had appealed*

*from the Constituent Assembly to Kornilov, and the Bolshevists to the Congress of Soviets”.*

The bourgeoisie, well aware of what was coming, would play its last card: take out the garrison of Petersburg to disarm the revolution. The Compromisers and the kadets would organize a new patriotic campaign to blame the soldiers who did not want to leave the capital.

*“Attempting to kindle the patriotism of the masses by threatening the loss of Petrograd, the Compromisers introduced into the Soviet on October 9 a motion to create a “Committee of Revolutionary Defense.” whose task should be to take part in the defense of the capital with the active co-operation of the workers. While refusing to assume responsibility for “the so-called strategy of the Provisional Government and in particular the removal of troops from Petrograd,” the Soviet nevertheless had made no haste to express itself upon the substance of the order removing the soldiers, but had decided to test its motives and the facts upon which it was based. The Mensheviks had raised a protest: It is not permissible to interfere in the operative orders of the commanding staff. But it was only a month and a half since they had talked the same way about the conspiratorial orders of Kornilov, and they were reminder of this. In order to test the question whether the removal of the troops was dictated by military or political considerations, competent body was needed. To the extreme surprise of the Compromisers the Bolshevists accepted the idea of a “Committee of Defense.” This committee should be the one to gather all data relating to the defense of the capital. That was an important step. Having snatched this dangerous weapon from the hands of the enemy, the Soviet remained in a position to turn the decision about removing the troops this way or that according to circumstances – but in any case against the government and the Compromisers.*

*The Bolshevists quite naturally seized upon this Menshevik project of a military committee, for there had been conversations often enough in their own ranks about the necessity of creating in good season an authoritative Soviet committee to lead the coming insurrection. In the Military Organization of the party they had even drawn up plans for such a body. The one difficulty they had not yet got over was that of reconciling an instrument of insurrection with an elective and openly functioning Soviet, upon whose benches, moreover, sat representatives of the hostile parties. The patriotic proposal of the Mensheviks, therefore, came up most appropriately, and came up just in time to assist in the creation of a revolutionary headquarters – a body soon to be renamed “Military Revolutionary Committee” and to become the chief lever of the revolution.*

*On that same day the Executive Committee of the Petrograd Soviet made public the creation under its supervision of a special department of the Red Guard. The matter of arming the workers, neglected under the Compromisers and even obstructed by them, had become one of the most important tasks of the Bolshevik Soviet. The suspicious attitude of the soldiers toward the Red Guard was already far in the past. On the contrary, almost all the resolutions of the regiments contained a demand for the arming of the workers. From now on the Red Guard and the garrison stand side by side. Soon they will be still more closely united by a common submission to the Military Revolutionary Committee”.*

The vertigo grew. Even within the party itself, the old leaders (Kamenev, Zinoviev) who were opposed to the insurrection, afraid of the civil war, were entrenched. It has to do with the fact that the nature of the revolutionary class of today is that of an exploited class.

*“The working class struggles and matures in the never-failing consciousness of the fact that the preponderance of forces lies on the side of the enemy. This preponderance manifests itself in daily life, at every step. The enemy possesses wealth and state power, all the means of exerting ideological pressure and all the instruments of repression. We become habituated to the idea that the preponderance of forces is on the enemy’s side; and this habitual thought enters as an integral part into the entire life and activity of the revolutionary party during the preparatory epoch. The consequences entailed by this or that careless or premature act serve each time as most cruel reminders of the enemy’s strength. But a moment comes when this habit of regarding the enemy as stronger becomes the main obstacle on the road to victory”.*

- Leon Trotsky, *Lessons of October*

The discussion about the forces in play was open. The Revolution was armed and organized, but above all it was openly discussed, even its technical aspects. The soviet in Petersburg approved the statute of the Military Committee in the presence of all the compromisist parties. The calculations, even the merely technical ones, were aired in the press. Lenin, from Finland,

*“The government was worried. On the morning of the 14th, a conference of the ministers in Kerensky’s office ratified the measures undertaken by headquarters against the “coming-out” under preparation. The rulers were guessing: Will it stop this time at an armed demonstration or will it go to the point of insurrection? The commander of the district said to the representatives of the press: “In any case we are ready.” Those doomed to death not infrequently experience an afflux of life force just before the end. At a joint session of the Executive Committees, Dan, imitating the June intonations of Tseretelli, who had now taken refuge in the Caucasus, demanded of the Bolsheviks an answer to the question: Do they intend to come out, and if they do, when? From the answer of Riazanov, the Menshevik Bogdanov drew the not unjustified conclusion that the Bolsheviks were preparing an insurrection and would stand at the head of it. The Menshevik paper wrote: “And the Bolsheviks are evidently relying in their plans for a coming ‘seizure of power’ on the garrison’s staying here.” But in this remark the phrase “seizure of power” was in quotation marks. The Compromisers still did not seriously believe in the danger. They did not fear the victory of the Bolsheviks so much as the triumph of the counter-revolution in consequence of new civil war conflicts...*

*The same session of the Soviet took up the regulations of the Military Revolutionary Committee. This institution had barely come into existence when it assumed in the eyes of the enemy an aspect growing every day more hateful. “The Bolsheviks make no answer,” cried an orator of the opposition, “to the direct question: Are they preparing an attack? This is either cowardice or lack of confidence in their forces.” The meeting greeted this remark with hearty laughter: the representative of the government party was demanding that the party of insurrection open the secrets of its heart to him. The new committee, continued the orator, is nothing else but “a revolutionary headquarters for the seizure of power.” They, the Mensheviks would not enter it. “How many are there of you?” cried a voice from the benches: there were indeed only a few Mensheviks in the Soviet, fifty altogether. But nevertheless it seemed authoritatively known to them that “the masses are not in favor of coming out.” In his reply Trotsky did not deny that the Bolsheviks were preparing for a seizure of power: “We make no secret of that.” But at present, he said, that is not the question. The government has demanded the removal of the revolutionary troops from Petrograd and to that “we have to answer yes or no.” The regulations drafted by Lazimir were adopted by an overwhelming majority. The president proposed to the Military Revolutionary Committee to begin work on the following day. Thus one more forward step was taken...*

*The struggle about the garrison interwove with the struggle about the Soviet Congress. Only four or five days remained before the date originally designated. The "coming-out" was expected in connection with the Congress. It was assumed that as in the July Days the movement would develop on the type of an armed mass demonstration with street fighting...*

*"During the last days," declared Trotsky at the end of an evening's session of the Soviet, "the press has been full of communications, rumors, articles about an impending action ... The decisions of the Petrograd Soviet are published and made known to everybody. The Soviet is an elective institution, and cannot have a decision which would not be known to the workers and soldiers ... I declare in the name of the Soviet that no armed actions have been settled upon by us, but if the Soviet in the course of events should be obliged to set the date for a coming-out, the workers and soldiers would come out to the last man at its summons. They say that I signed an order for five thousand rifles ... Yes, I signed it ... The Soviet will continue to organize and arm the workers' guard." The delegates understood: the battle was near, but without them and over their heads the signal would not be given.*

*However, besides a reassuring explanation, the masses had to have a clear revolutionary prospective. For this purpose the speaker united the two questions – removal of the garrison and coming Congress of Soviets. "We are in conflict with the government upon a question which may become extremely sharp ... We will not permit them ... to strip Petrograd of its revolutionary garrison." This conflict is in its turn subordinate to another that approaches. "It is known to the bourgeoisie that the Petrograd Soviet is going to propose to the Congress of Soviets that they seize the power ... And foreseeing an inevitable battle, the bourgeois classes are trying to disarm Petrograd." The political set-up of the revolution was first given in this speech with complete definition: We expect to seize the power, we need the garrison, and we will not give it up. "At the first attempt of the counter-revolution to break up the Congress, we will answer with a counter-attack which will be ruthless, and which we will carry through to the end." Here, too, the announcement of a decisive political offensive was made under the formula of military defense...*

*The Soviet was sufficiently powerful to announce openly its program of state revolution and even set the date. At the same time – right up to the date set by itself for the complete victory – the Soviet was powerless in thousands of great and small questions. Kerensky, politically already reduced to a zero, was still giving out decrees in the Winter Palace. Lenin, the inspirer of this incomparable movement of the masses, was hiding underground, and the Minister of Justice, Miliantovich, had renewed in those days his instructions to the district attorney to bring about Lenin's arrest. Even in Smolny, on its own territory, the all powerful Petrograd Soviet seemed to be living only by grace of the authorities. The administration of the building, of the cashbox, of the despatching room, the automobiles, the telephones – all was still in the hands of the Central Executive Committee which itself only hung on by the mere thread of an abstract right of succession...*

*Not satisfied with its formal denial of the rumor of an insurrection, the Soviet openly designated Sunday the 22nd as the day for a peaceful review of its forces – not, however, in the form of street processions, but of meetings in the factories, barracks, and all the major institutions of Petrograd".*

The soviet and the Military Committee organized themselves against provocateurs, secured the Smolny, and redoubled propaganda in the Cossack garrisons. Both sides reviewed their forces and pressed on the nerve of their social bases. The soviet through assemblies, the government through meetings of commanders.

For the proletariat, frank, open and therefore public discussion is fundamental.

*"To overthrow the old power is one thing; to take the power in one's own hands is another. The bourgeoisie may win the power in a revolution not because it is revolutionary, but because it is bourgeois. It has in its possession property, education, the press, a network of strategic positions, a hierarchy of institutions. Quite otherwise with the proletariat. Deprived in the nature of things of all social advantages, an insurrectionary proletariat can count only on its numbers, its solidarity, its cadres, its official staff.*

*Just as a blacksmith cannot seize the red hot iron in his naked hand, so the proletariat cannot directly seize the power; it has to have an organization accommodated to this task...*

*The organization by means of which the proletariat can both overthrow the old power and replace it, is the soviets. This afterwards became a matter of historic experience, but was up to the October revolution a theoretical prognosis – resting, to be sure, upon the preliminary experience of 1905. The soviets are organs of preparation of the masses for insurrection, organs of insurrection, and after the victory organs of government. However, the soviets by themselves do not settle the question. They may serve different goals according to the program and leadership. The soviets receive their program from the party. Whereas the soviets in revolutionary conditions – and apart from revolution they are impossible – comprise the whole class with the exception of its altogether backward, inert or demoralised strata, the revolutionary party represents the brain of the class. The problem of conquering the power can be solved only by a definite combination of party with soviets – or with other mass organizations more or less equivalent to soviets".*

Because party means *direction*, centralized orientation and clarity of the *political* objectives of mass action. The leadership, the party, cannot be opposed to the class, presenting the alternative "party leadership or self-organization". Why? Because the party is an essential part and moment of the self-organization of the class. To oppose the two would be simply to say that it is better that the most conscious part of the class, the one with the clearest program, should not organize itself or centralize its activity. And that, in the end, is the same as denying that the revolution makes its objectives conscious, because leadership does not exist in the world of ideas: either it has an organizational reality...or it ceases to exist as a material factor in the development of events and the consciousness that follows it. It is not a coincidence that the primary, and openly admitted to, aim of the bourgeoisie in the whole process of the Russian revolution from April to October was to disband the Bolsheviks and detain - or murder - their leaders at all levels, from the factories and neighborhoods to the central committee.

The contrast with the Spanish Revolution is illuminating. It was able to go much further against capital simply because it was not a permanent revolution, but a proletarian revolution. As the proletarian revolution in the countryside accompanied the massive insurrection of city workers, the capital-wage-labour relationship disappeared or was subverted in large regions. The insurrection itself not only defeated the military coup, it disrupted the republican state throughout the country, making it apparently and factually irrelevant... but the proletariat, self-organized into a thousand scattered committees and armed militias united only by a common enthusiasm, was nevertheless unable to finalize it. And that in a revolution means being finished off and massacred. There are many reasons why the Spanish proletariat was unable to understand that it needed to centralize its unitary organizations - the committees and militias - and put an end to the republican state in the territory that the revolution controlled. There is no point in spelling out the reasons here, but what is

key is the fact that the majority of the most conscious and determined workers remained attached to the *apoliticism* and *anti-centralism* of the anarchist tradition. The revolutionaries never managed to act as an effective leadership, not even to promote a real process of organizing the class *as such*, equivalent to the All-Russian Congress of the Soviets. The impossibility of the organization of revolutionaries into a party and of the organization of the class into a unitary organization capable of destroying the bourgeois state are one and the same thing.

*“The process of preparing a revolution consists of making the objective problems involved in the contradictions of industry and of classes find their way into the consciousness of living human masses, change this consciousness and create new correlation of human forces. The ruling classes, as a result of their practically manifested incapacity to get the country out of its blind alley, lose faith in themselves; the old parties fall to pieces; a bitter struggle of groups and cliques prevails; hopes are placed in miracles or miracle workers. All this constitutes one of the political premises of a revolution, a very important although a passive one.*

*A bitter hostility to the existing order and a readiness to venture upon the most heroic efforts and sacrifices in order to bring the country out upon an upward road – this is the new political consciousness of the revolutionary class, and constitutes the most important active premise of a revolution.*

*These two fundamental camps, however – the big property holders and the proletariat – do not exhaust the population of a country. Between them lie broad layers of the petty bourgeoisie, showing all the colors of the economic and political rainbow. The discontent of these intermediate layers, their disappointment with the policy of the ruling class, their revolutionary initiative on the part of the proletariat, constitute the third political premise of a revolution. It is partly passive – In that it neutralises the upper strata of the petty bourgeoisie – but partly also active, for it impels the lower strata directly into the struggle side by side with the workers.*

*That these premises condition each other is obvious. The more decisively and confidently the proletariat acts, the better will it succeed in bringing after it the intermediate layer, the more isolated will be the ruling class, and the more acute its demoralization. And, on the other hand, a demoralization of the rulers will pour water into the mill of the revolutionary class. The proletariat can become imbued with the confidence necessary for a governmental overthrow only if a clear prospect opens before it, only if it has had an opportunity to test out in action a correlation of forces which is changing to its advantage. Only if it feels above it a farsighted, firm and confident leadership. This brings us to the last premise – by no means the last in importance – of the conquest of power: the revolutionary party as a tightly welded and tempered vanguard of the class.*

*Thanks to a favorable combination of historic conditions both domestic and international, the Russian proletariat was headed by a party of extraordinary political clarity and unexampled revolutionary temper. Only this permitted a small and young class to carry out a historic task of unprecedented proportions. It is indeed the general testimony of history – the Paris Commune, the German and Austrian revolutions of 1918, the Soviet revolutions in Hungary and Bavaria, the Italian revolution of 1919, the German crisis of 1923, the Chinese revolution of 1925- 1927, the Spanish revolution of 1931 – that up to now the weakest link in the chain of necessary conditions has been the party. The hardest thing of all is for the working class to create a revolutionary organization capable of rising to the height of its historic task. In the older and more civilized countries powerful forces work toward the weakening and demoralization of the*

revolutionary vanguard. An important constituent part of this work is the struggle of the social democrats against "Blanquism," by which name they designate the revolutionary essence of Marxism.

Notwithstanding the number of great social and political crises, a coincidence of all the conditions necessary to a victorious and stable proletarian revolution has so far occurred but once in history: in Russia in October 1917. A revolutionary situation is not long-lived. The least stable of the premises of a revolution is the mood of the petty bourgeoisie. At a time of national crises the petty bourgeoisie follows that class which inspires confidence not only in words but deeds. Although capable of impulsive enthusiasm and even of revolutionary fury, the petty bourgeoisie lacks endurance, easily loses heart under reverses, and passes from elated hope to discouragement. And these sharp and swift changes in the mood of the petty bourgeoisie lend their instability to every revolutionary situation. If the proletarian party is not decisive enough to convert the hopes and expectations of the popular masses into revolutionary action in good season, the flood tide is quickly followed by an ebb: the intermediate strata turn away their eyes from the revolution and seek a savior in the opposing camp. And just as at flood tide the proletariat draws after it the petty bourgeoisie, so during the ebb the petty bourgeoisie draws after it considerable layers of the proletariat. Such is the dialectic of the communist and fascist waves observable in the political evolution of Europe since the war".

### **The insurrection**

Successful insurrections reflect rather than impose changes in the correlation of forces. The real revolutionary effort was made by the Russian proletariat from the end of July to October. The insurrection consecrated it. But the change since February was so powerful and profound that the bourgeoisie and the ruling classes no longer had real forces to oppose to it.

*"The possessing classes constituted the social force of the other camp. This means that they were its military weakness. These solid people of capital, the press, the pulpit – where and when have they ever fought? They are accustomed to find out by telegraph or telephone the results of the battles which settle their fate. The younger generation, the sons, the students? They were almost all hostile to the October revolution. But a majority of them too stood aside. They stood with their fathers awaiting the outcome of the battle. A number of them afterward joined the officers and junkers – already largely recruited from among the students. The property holders had no popular masses with them. The workers, soldiers, peasants had turned against them. The collapse of the Compromise Parties meant that the possessing classes were left without an army..."*

*Companies of the Red Guard had emerged from their districts. The worker with a rifle, the bayonet above hat or cap, the rifle-belt over a civilian coat – that is the essential image of the 25th of October. Cautiously and still diffidently, the armed worker was bringing order into the capital conquered by him, The tranquility of the street instilled tranquility in the heart. The philistines began to dribble down from their houses. Towards evening they felt even less anxious than during the preceding days.*

*Business, to be sure, had come to an end in the governmental and social institutions, but many stores remained open. Others were closed rather through excessive caution than necessity. Can this be insurrection? Is an insurrection like this? The February sentries have merely been replaced by those of October...*

At 2.35 in the afternoon – the foreign journalists looked at their watches, the Russians were too busy – an emergency session of the Petrograd Soviet was opened with a report by Trotsky, who in the name of the Military Revolutionary Committee announced that the Provisional Government no longer existed. “They told us that an insurrection would drown the revolution in torrents of blood ... We do not know of a single casualty,” There is no example in history of a revolutionary movement involving such gigantic masses being so bloodless. “The Winter Palace is not yet taken, but its fate will be settled in the course of the next few minutes.” The following twelve hours were to show that this prediction was too optimistic.

Trotsky said: “Troops have been moved against Petrograd from the front; it is necessary at once to send commissars of the soviets to the front, and throughout the country, to make known that the revolution has occurred.” Voices from the small right sector: “You are anticipating the will of the Congress of Soviets.” The speaker answered: “The will of the Congress has been anticipated by the colossal fact of an insurrection of the Petrograd workers and soldiers. It now remains only to develop our victory.” Lenin, who appeared here publicly for the first time after emerging from underground, briefly outlined the program of the revolution: To break up the old governmental apparatus; to create a new system of administration through the soviets; to take measures for the immediate cessation of war, relying upon revolutionary movements in other countries; to abolish the landlords’ property rights and thus win the confidence of the peasants; to establish workers’ control over production. “The third Russian revolution,” he said, “must in the end lead to the victory of socialism”.

### **The Second All-Russian Congress of Soviets**

“Just as the Reds are surrounding the Winter Palace, the Petrograd Soviet meets. Lenin comes out of hiding, and he and Trotsky announce the seizure of power. The Soviets will offer a just peace to all the belligerent powers; the secret treaties are going to be published. Lenin’s first words underline the importance of the bond between workers and peasants, which is yet to be consolidated:

All over Russia, the vast majority of peasants have said: Enough of playing with the capitalists, we are marching now with the workers! One single decree, abolishing the landlords’ property, will win us the trust of the peasantry. They will realize that their only safety lies in their association with the workers. We shall inaugurate workers’ control of industry.

The All-Russian Congress of Soviets opens in the evening in the great white ballroom at Smolny, flooded with light from enormous chandeliers. 562 delegates are present: 382 Bolsheviks, thirty-one non-party Bolshevik sympathizers, seventy Left Socialist-Revolutionaries, thirty-six Center Socialist-Revolutionaries, sixteen Right Socialist-Revolutionaries, three National Socialist-Revolutionaries, fifteen United Internationalist Social-Democrats, twenty-one Menshevik supporters of national defense, seven Social-Democratic delegates from various nationalist groups and five anarchists. The hall is packed tight, the atmosphere is feverish. The Menshevik Dan opens the Congress on behalf of the outgoing All-Russian Executive; as the new officers are elected, guns thunder on the Neva. The resistance at the Winter Palace is still dragging on. Kamenev, ‘dressed in his Sunday best, and beaming’, becomes Chairman in place of Dan. He proposes an agenda with three headings: organization of authority; war and peace; the Constituent Assembly. The oppositional Menshevik and S-R parties take the floor first. For the Mensheviks there is Martov, their most honest and talented leader, whose extreme physical weakness seemed to symbolize the bankruptcy, despite his great personal courage, of the ideology he served. ‘Martov, planted on the rostrum as usual, with a trembling, bloodless hand over his hip, an undulating, half-comical figure, shaking his

*head of unruly hair, urges a peaceful solution to the conflict ...' A fine time to say it! Mstislavsky speaks for the Left S-Rs. His party mistrusted the Provisional Government and was sympathetic to the seizure of power by the Soviets, but had refused to join in the rising. His speech is one qualification after another. Yes, all power to the Soviets – particularly since they have already seized power. But military operations must be stopped immediately. How could we deliberate in the middle of gunfire? To this, Trotsky replies with alacrity: 'Who, now, is going to be upset by the sound of the guns? On the contrary, it can only improve our work!'*

*The roar of the guns makes the glass in the windows rattle. The Mensheviks and Right S-Rs denounce the 'crime which is taking place against Fatherland and Revolution', and a sailor from the cruiser Aurora comes to the rostrum to answer them.*

*A bronzed figure he was [Mstislavsky relates], with brusque, confident gestures, and a voice that came straight out, cutting the air like a knife. As soon as he mounted the rostrum, stocky and sinuous, his shaggy chest showing below the high collar that curved back gracefully around his tousled head, the hall rang with cheers. ... 'The Winter Palace is finished,' he said. 'The Aurora is firing at point-blank range.'*

*'Oh!' groaned the Menshevik Abramovich, standing up distraught and twisting his hands. 'Oh!' The man from the Aurora responded to this outcry with a large-hearted, graceful gesture, and made haste to calm Abramovich down with a loud whisper that trembled with quiet laughter: 'They're firing with blanks. That's all that will be needed for the ministers and the ladies of the Women's Battalion.' Tumult in the hall. The Mensheviks of national defense and the right S-Rs, about sixty delegates, leave, determined 'to die with the Provincial Government'. They do not get very far: their diminutive procession finds the streets barred to them by the Red Guards, and disperses one by one ...*

*Late in the night, the Left Socialist-Revolutionaries resolved in the end to follow the Bolsheviks and remain in the Congress.*

*Lenin did not come to the rostrum until the session of the following morning, when the great decrees on land, peace and workers' control of production were voted. His appearance set off an immense acclamation from the whole hall. He waited for it to end, looking out calmly over the triumphant crowd. Then, quite simply, without any gesture, his two hands resting on the stand, his broad shoulders leaning forward slightly, he said:*

*'We will proceed to construct the Socialist order'.*