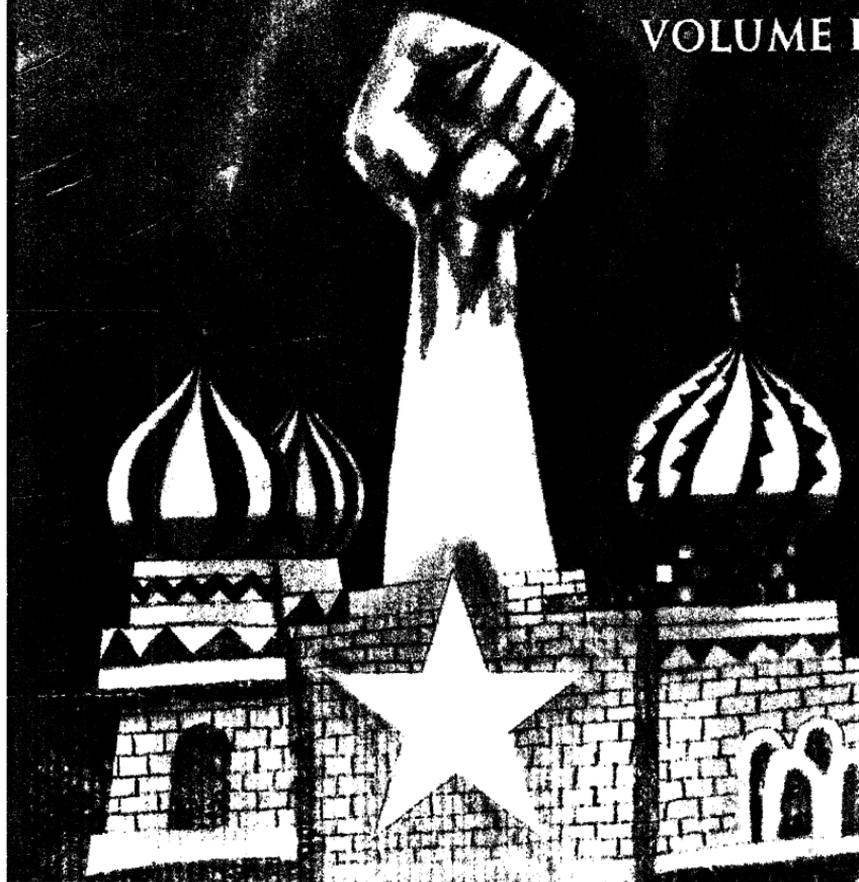


THE RUSSIAN REVOLUTION

1917 EYEWITNESS ACCOUNT
BY N. N. SUKHANOV

EDITED, ABRIDGED AND TRANSLATED BY JOEL CARMICHAEL

VOLUME I



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The Russian Revolution



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THE
RUSSIAN
REVOLUTION
1917

EYEWITNESS ACCOUNT



VOLUME II

N. N. SUKANOV

Edited, abridged and translated by

JOEL CARMICHAEL

from Zapiski O Revolutski

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The Russian Revolution

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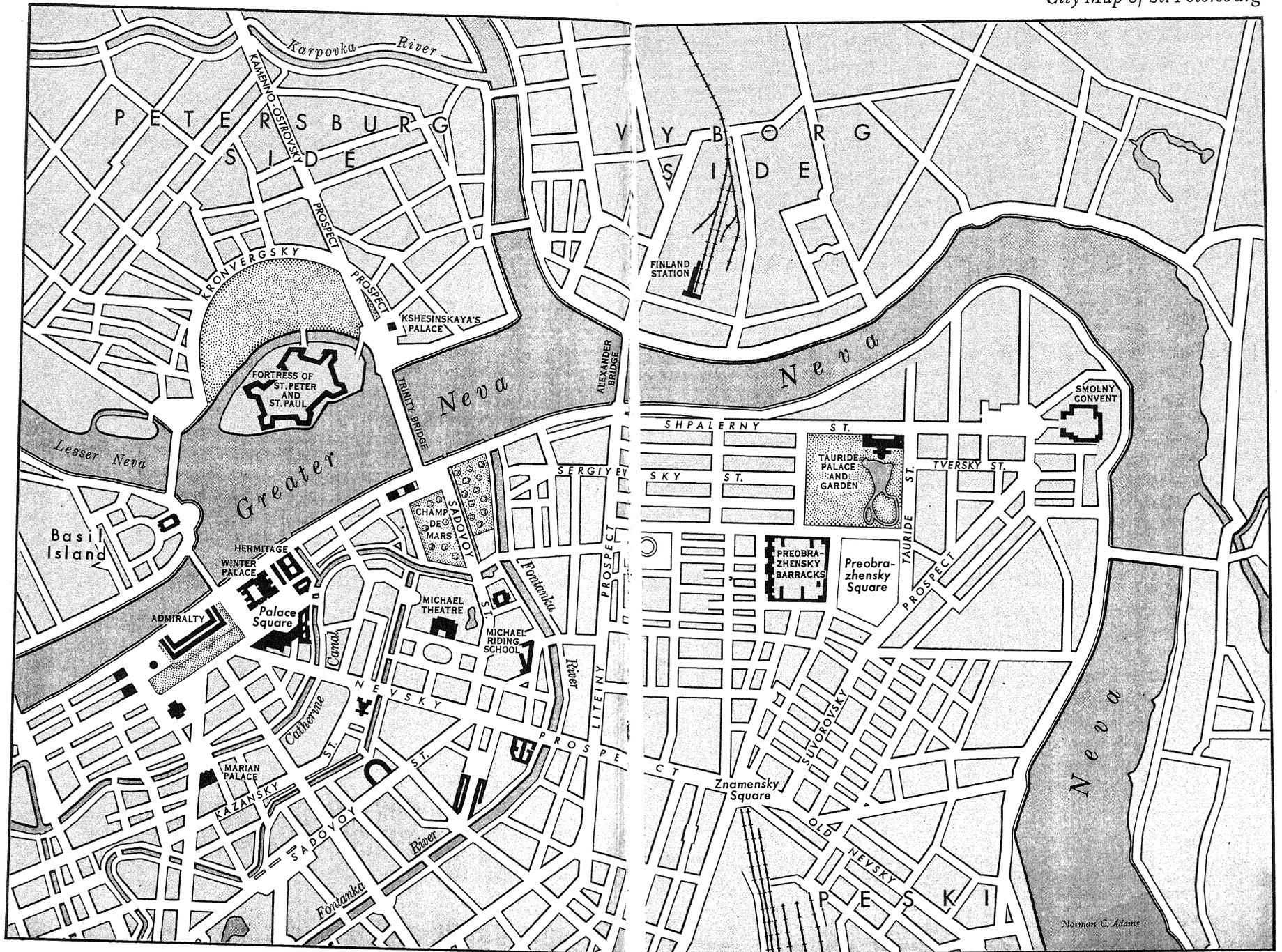
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Part IV

THE TRIUMPH OF THE REACTION

May 6th–July 8th

CHAPTER 16

THE COALITION

WITH the birth of the Coalition Government events slowed down and lost their former dizzy speed. However urgently *history* continued to move forward, the *revolution* had begun to mark time. Between May and October tremendous events took place, but the *phase* of the revolution did not change and constituted a single unified period. The line of development was as straight as an arrow. Two attempts to turn it aside interrupted this straight line, but did not change its direction: the revolution quickly and easily returned to its previous course both after the *July Days* and after the *Kornilov putsch*.

This evidently means that towards the beginning of May 'political relations' in the revolution were completely crystallized, and had arrived at some sort of stable point. The bloc of the big and petty bourgeoisie was completely stable, unshakeable, and even formal—from the beginning of May until October; and the policy of the united bourgeois front was the suffocation of the proletariat, Zimmerwald, and the entire revolution. It moved along a straight road to liquidation.

This was the obverse side of the Coalition period. The reverse side was simply the enormous growth of discontent amongst the masses of the people, headed by the proletariat of the capital. Worn out by the war, hunger, and chaos, disillusioned by the policy of the Government, thirsting for the fruits of victory—the masses of the people rallied in the struggle for the revolution and prepared themselves for new and decisive battles.

Anyone looking at the policy of the Coalition was also seeing the success of Lenin, for these were two sides of the same medal. And amongst the genuine revolutionaries from the beginning of May on it was already being said: 'Bolshevik mole, you're digging magnificently!'

* * *

Soon after the March revolution the whole of the Russian plutocracy was consolidated in the Cadet Party. And the Cadets, while Miliukov was a Minister, were of course a completely

Government party: any differences within the party were then expressed externally only in the degree of exasperation with the democracy and the Soviet.

After the April Days, with the liquidation of Miliukov and the formation of a Coalition Government, things changed. The Coalition was a sort of external expression of how far the revolution had advanced.

The Coalition had been created against the will of the leading Cadet circles. The Cadets, consequently, could in the nature of things no longer be a Government party as before. The course of events had left them *behind* the official Government. They became the *Right Opposition*—an officially reactionary, counter-revolutionary force. And the differences within the Cadet Party were now expressed externally in the degree of opposition to the *Government*.

There were, to be sure, still some members of the party left in the Cabinet. The Cadets neither could nor wanted to break with the official Government. Since they were no longer capable of disrupting the Cabinet, and a boycott by them could no longer be dangerous to the revolution, the situation compelled them to cling to the Government with the utmost tenacity. Their opposition could only be 'diplomatically' disguised. They had to promise the new Cabinet their confidence and support, even though with an unmistakably sour expression. But in the nature of things there could be no question here of any real support—since there was no confidence.

* * *

The Cadets were the big bourgeoisie, together with the liberal professional classes who served them. The specific gravity of this party was of course very great. It was precisely with these strata that the revolutionary democracy had formed a Coalition. And their relationship to the new Government was characteristic.

But of course the largest party at this time was the SRs. They were the petty-bourgeois democracy—peasants, shop-keepers, Co-operators, minor officials, the Third Estate, the great mass of the indigent intelligentsia and all the unthinking ordinary people and odds and ends who had been stirred and shaken up by recent events. The intellectual SR circles, who shouted so

loudly for 'Land and Freedom' were based in the cities on a dense stratum of soldiers of peasant origin and even of workers who had not been fully digested by the cauldron of the factories. And in the country this exclusive SR slogan had won exclusive control of all the peasantry.

Generally speaking, in our peasant country this peasant party occupied its rightful place, and already it seemed to have laid the foundations of future supremacy. Growing at the beginning of the Coalition like an immense snowball, it had lately become the last word of fashion and begun to overflow far beyond its natural limits, encompassing spheres completely alien both to 'Socialism' and to 'revolution'. This, the largest party, had attracted into itself both some of the temperamental upper bourgeoisie and some of the effusively liberal landowners, and in the footsteps of the highly popular new War Minister, Kerensky, solid masses of military people—regular officers and even generals—had begun to enter the party. Two and a half months before, presumably, not one of the latter would have hesitated to shoot or hand over to the executioner any passer-by he even suspected of being an SR. But—my God!—what cannot 'public opinion' and disinterested devotion to duty do with a man?

And now this party, the biggest and most powerful in the revolution, was, in the person of its majority, giving the new Government the whole weight of its confidence and support, both in words and in deeds. . . The intermediate intellectual strata, as we know, had from the very first days of the revolution insisted on a coalition. Now their dreams were coming true; the philistines were revelling in their victory, and the unattached nondescripts wallowed in beatitude.

The SR Party, the biggest and most powerful, at that time had two centres—one more Right, the other more Left. One centre was Kerensky, the other Chernov. In addition, there was a tiny little centre in the person of the Bolshevik sympathizer Kamkov. Even before this, however, people like him had been invisible to the naked eye amidst the limitless sea of SR philistinism. But the whole of this mass was drawn towards the new Cabinet by these first two centres; for both Kerensky and Chernov were Ministers. The biggest party, having rightfully gathered under its banners the bulk of our petty-bourgeois

country, was giving itself up entirely to the support of the new Government.

It would have seemed that the Coalition was standing on the firmest of foundations. But alas! the leaders of the petty-bourgeois SR masses proved faithful to the nature of their party. Flabby creatures without political personality, caught between the mighty millstones of capitalist society, they were bewildered by the dizzying events and failed to grasp their meaning. Buffeted by the tempest and shackled by the traditions and fetters of capitalist dictatorship, they cravenly renounced their own minimum programme and surrendered, with the revolution and the popular masses into the bargain, to the mercy of the bourgeoisie. But in doing this they also lost these popular masses, who rejected their leaders and trampled them into the mud. When the masses saw with their own eyes that their leaders were incompetent and deceitful, and were not leading them forward, the petty-bourgeois political docility of the masses turned into a petty-bourgeois elemental outburst, and these same masses threw themselves headlong into the open arms of the Bolsheviks.

At that time the SR Party was the biggest and the most powerful. But it was a colossus with a head of clay; it was not destined to become a really firm foundation for the new Government. The SR Party gave itself up entirely to the Coalition, it gave it everything it had. The loveliest girl in France could have given no more. But giving everything doesn't mean giving enough. And in the end Kerensky's and Chernov's million-headed flock in city and country was of no assistance to the Coalition.

* * *

The question of the Mensheviks' attitude to the Coalition was not settled so simply. The Mensheviks, to be sure, had also given the new Cabinet two Ministers—and, what is more, one of them was very important and the other very clever. But here of course there could not be the same ingenuousness, the same triumph, nor the same simple-minded confidence and support as those with which the petty-bourgeois populists greeted the Coalition. I've already related how during the birth-pangs of the new Government, at luncheon in the restaurant and after-

wards on the platform, Skobelev vainly appealed to his hot-blooded heart and only under the irresistible pressure of his cold-blooded mind was compelled to accept a ministerial portfolio. Tsereteli had, one might say, simply yielded to force, and as Minister of Posts and Telegraphs considered himself the victim of an unexpected chain of circumstances that had formed against his will. And the Menshevik chairman of the Soviet, Chkheidze, had resisted to the last ditch and was only reconciled in the face of an already accomplished fact.

The then leaders of the Mensheviks, bound by international Socialist traditions, were in general inclined to shun this whole dubious enterprise. Perhaps the principal reason for this was doubt as to how the Menshevik party masses would accept these Social-Democratic portfolios. The doubt was justified; for the Menshevik section of the ruling Soviet bloc had somehow its special character, distinct from that of the SRs, and its own special fate.

It's true that from the beginning of the revolution a mass of philistine elements, 'former' people, and the casual public, with nothing in common with the proletarian movement, had flooded the Menshevik Party as well as the SRs. Nevertheless, unlike the SRs, the Mensheviks had been protected up to a point by their reputation as a proletarian class party and their ties with the International. Hence the influx of obviously bourgeois and reactionary elements into this party was substantially smaller. And its proletarian core, which before the revolution had given an enormous preponderance to the Zimmerwald tendency in Menshevism, was incomparably stronger. And we know that *after* the revolution Zimmerwald continued to dominate the Menshevik Party up to the April Days themselves. Up to that time, even during the Coalition, the organizations in both Moscow and Petersburg were overwhelmingly Left and Internationalist. It was only the provincial fellow-travellers who took their line from Tsereteli and succeeded in dragging many organizations into the quagmire of patriotism and conciliationism.

The attitude of the Mensheviks to the Coalition Government and to the acceptance of portfolios by party members was still unclear, and aroused the fears of the Menshevik Ministers themselves. The decisive word was to be pronounced by the All-

Russian Conference of Mensheviks, which opened in Petersburg on May 9th.

* * *

The Conference got off to a flying start, and the very first morning session on May 9th settled the hash of the central problem of the whole Conference, the attitude of the party to the Coalition, and the entry of members into the Cabinet. The debate was fierce and on both sides blows rained down heavily. But the results were fatal.

A resolution approving of the Menshevik entry into the Coalition and promising the new Cabinet complete confidence and support was passed by a majority of 44 votes to 11, with 13 abstentions.

This meant that the Menshevik-SR-Liberal bloc had definitely taken shape. The Mensheviks, like the SRs, had conclusively and officially become a Government party. And moreover, in spite of the passionate onslaught of the minority, the Conference had settled its basic problem very easily and swiftly. Conclusively and officially—the hegemony of opportunism and capitulationism in the Menshevik Party had been confirmed in some two or three hours.

That same day I too went to the evening session of the Menshevik Conference. At that time I had, as before, no formal connexion with this party. To be sure, being present even as a spectator at meetings which were to decide the fate of Menshevism in the revolution was far from uninteresting. But this was not what drew me to the Conference: I went to see Martov, whom I hadn't seen for just three years.

Martov had arrived that same day, about 2 o'clock. A rather large group had come with him, including those eminent leaders of our movement and future distinguished figures of the revolution: Axelrod, Lunacharsky,¹ Ryazanov,² and others.

¹ Lunacharsky, Anatol Vasilyevich (1875-1933): educated in Switzerland; in the revolutionary movement from the age of seventeen; a Bolshevik from 1903, but with highly personal opinions, especially in philosophy. People's Commissar for Education after the October Revolution. (Ed.)

² Ryazanov, (Goldendach) David Borisovich (1870-1935?): celebrated as scholar of Marxism; founder and director of Marx-Engels Institute. Joined Bolsheviks in July 1917 together with Interdistrictites. After the 1931 Trial of the Mensheviks he was removed from all his posts and left for the countryside, where he died. (Ed.)

All of them, like Lenin but more than a month later, had passed through Germany in a 'sealed train'.

A triumphal welcome at the Finland Station had been arranged for them, as for the leaders of the other parties. But, though I very much wanted to, this time I couldn't get to the station, because of their daytime arrival. For the same reason—doubtless—the welcome was less crowded and impressive than that for the SRs, and especially for the Bolsheviks. I was a little vexed for Martov—not only because of my personal weakness for him, but also because of his incontestable objective importance. Moreover, while awaiting his arrival I had for some days been scowling with jealous spite at the 'ministerialized' Soviet Menshevik chiefs, who were awaiting without special enthusiasm or impatience, but rather with alarm and ill-will, the appearance in the revolutionary arena of the acknowledged ideological leader of the Mensheviks.

It had been demonstrated more than once during the preceding weeks that Martov occupied as before a consistent internationalist position, sharply inimical to the ruling Soviet bloc. There was no doubt that he would take a firm stand against those participating in the Coalition. Truly an untimely guest.

Now, when the basic question was being decided at the Conference and the correlation of forces was still unclear—God knew in which direction the party ship might be turned by the influence of this old, experienced, most authoritative and popular helmsman! In any case the ministerial question appeared so urgent that it seemed completely impossible to delay the debate on it. Axelrod, the founder of Russian Social-Democracy, and Martov, its leader, were faced by the Conference with a *fait accompli*—just as the Conference itself had been faced with the *fait accompli* of the Coalition. How could one fail to be reminded of the Latin legal maxim: *beati possidentes*?

I was late for the evening session and it was already breaking up when I arrived. The spacious hall and its corridors were filled by a dense crowd. The external aspect of the Conference was extremely imposing. A guest like myself might easily not even have been allowed into the meeting-hall, but they let me in anyhow, though without much pleasure. But Martov was surrounded by a dense barrier; 'seeing each other' was clearly out

of the question, we had to limit ourselves to a handshake and a few words, hoping to renew our former friendly relations.

It appeared that Martov had already spoken and rebuked the Soviet majority, now the party majority as well, both for the policy of compromise and for the Coalition. As in his telegrams from abroad he had defended the irreconcilable proletarian position, the position of class *war*, the position of a real struggle for peace, and not sugary hypocritical lispings about peace.

But in spite of the passionate support of the minority, Martov's isolation from the compact group of Menshevik leaders, his former followers, friends, and disciples, and simultaneously his rupture with the party majority, stood out in full relief. Tradition prevented the partisans of Dan and Tsereteli from attacking Martov directly: that was still left for the near future. But the prevailing mood of hostility had already completely crystallized, and coldness was already evident at the first reunion.

Martov, the begetter of Menshevism, its incomparable, almost its sole theoretician, its most authoritative and popular chieftain—was now no longer the leader of his own party. Philistine notions and their exponents had led the Menshevik Party away from Martov—far away, into neither more nor less than the camp of the bourgeoisie. Only a small group remained with Martov. It was a catastrophe.

It didn't shake Martov. He stood his ground, with his small group and without the old Menshevik Party, until October. After October a reconquest of the Menshevik Party by Martov began, and by a year after October he had returned to his customary position as the generally acknowledged leader of Menshevism. But that was too late.

* * *

Martov—a vast theme. I won't attempt a thorough-going treatment of it, in view of my constant references to him: we worked side by side both before and after October. Nevertheless it's very tempting now to note his basic traits, to establish, so to speak, the general pattern of this distinguished figure, not only of our own but of the European working-class movement. All the more so since there was relatively little interest in him during the revolution. The fates decreed that he should not play a prominent part in the events of these last years, but never-

theless he was and remains a star of the first magnitude, one of the few whose names were characteristic of our epoch.

I had seen Martov for the first time in Paris in 1903. He was then 29 years old. At that time he, with Lenin and Plekhanov, made up the editorial board of *Iskra*, and he gave propaganda lectures to the Russian colonies abroad, waging a bitter struggle against the SRs, who were increasing in strength. He was already famous among the expatriates and lived somewhere on Olympus, amidst other such deities, and people in the Russian colony, meeting his spare, hobbling figure, would nudge one another.

Although I was not convinced by his arguments at that time, I remember very well the enormous impression made on me by his erudition and his intellectual and dialectical power. I was, to be sure, an absolute fledgeling, but I felt that Martov's speeches filled my head with new ideas; without sympathizing with him, I watched him emerge victorious in his bouts with the populist chiefs. Trotsky, in spite of his showiness, did not produce a tenth of his effect and seemed no more than his echo.

In those days Martov also revealed his qualities as an orator. These are rather singular. He has not a single external oratorical gift. A completely unimpressive, puny little body, standing if possible half-turned away from the audience, with stiff monotonous gestures; indistinct diction, a weak and muffled voice, hoarse in 1917 and still so now; his speech in general far from smooth, with clipped words and full of pauses; finally, an abstractness in exposition exhausting to a mass audience. Tens of thousands of people retain this impression of him. But all this doesn't prevent him from being a remarkable orator. For a man's qualities should be judged not by what he does but by what he may do, and Martov the orator is, of course, capable of making you forget all his oratorical faults. At some moments he rises to an extraordinary, breath-taking height. These are either *critical* moments, or occasions of special excitement, among a lively, heckling crowd actively 'participating in the debate'. Then Martov's speech turns into a dazzling firework display of images, epithets, and similes; his blows acquire enormous power, his sarcasms extraordinary sharpness, his improvisations the quality of a magnificently staged artistic production. In his memoirs Lunacharsky acknowledges this and says that Martov

was the incomparable master of the summing up. Anyone who knew Martov the orator well can confirm this.

In our Paris days I didn't know him personally. Then, in 1904-5, cooped up in the *Taganka*¹ in Moscow, and carefully studying *Iskra*,² I perceived other qualities of Martov's—as a remarkable writer and journalist. Our foreign, illegal, Social-Democratic press, thought to be beyond the pale of Russian journalism, introduced a whole group of first-rate writers—Plekhanov, Martov, Trotsky, and perhaps Lenin. All these of course should stand in the front rank of our journalistic history. But surely Martov must be given the palm; no one had a pen like his; no one showed himself so completely its master in the full meaning of the word. He was capable, when necessary, of giving his writing the brilliant wit of Plekhanov, the striking power of Lenin, the elegant finish of Trotsky.

One of Martov's basic traits is effectively illustrated in his writing. Here, however, it may not appear uniquely exceptional; but in any personal encounter with him, whether private or concerned with public affairs, it leaps to the eye at once. This trait is a *mind* of extraordinary power and development. In my time I've had the fortune to meet not a few remarkable contemporaries—scientists, artists, and statesmen with world names. But I have never doubted for a moment that Martov is the most intelligent man I've ever known.

It used to be said of our ancient magicians that they saw three yards into the earth beneath you. Martov constantly reminds you of this. An incomparable political analyst, he has the capacity of grasping, anticipating, and evaluating the psychology, train of ideas, and sources of his interlocutor's argumentation. Hence a conversation with Martov always has a special character, as with no one else in the world, and always provides a peculiar enjoyment, however disagreeable the theme, however sharp at times the disagreement and virulent the recriminations. When you talk to him, it does not occur to you that you won't be *understood*; you can feel no doubts on this

¹ A gaol in Moscow, for both criminal and political offenders. (Ed.)

² A Social-Democratic paper founded in 1900 by Lenin, Martov, and Potresov, under the sponsorship of Plekhanov, Axelrod, and Vera Zasulich; after the Social-Democratic split into Bolsheviks and Mensheviks in 1903 it was in Menshevik hands until 1905, when it ceased publication. In 1917 Martov started a bulletin also called *Iskra*. (Ed.)

score. Here the slightest hint or gesture is enough to provoke a response that pierces to the very hub of the question and forestalls any further arguments around its periphery.

Martov is an incomparable political thinker and a remarkable analyst because of his exceptional intellect. But this intellect dominates his whole personality to such an extent that an unexpected conclusion begins to thrust itself on you: Martov owes not only his good side to this intellect, but also his bad side, not only his highly cultivated thinking apparatus but also his *weakness in action*.

Of course it's impossible to blame only his omnivorous intellect for his incapacity for practical combat. A lot must be ascribed to other general qualities. Nevertheless, in speaking of Martov, it would be perfectly just to develop the theme of *Woe from Wit*.¹

First of all, to understand everything is to forgive everything. And Martov, who always has an exhaustive understanding of his opponent, is to a substantial degree condemned by virtue of this very understanding to that mildness and submissiveness to his ideological adversaries that characterizes him. To a considerable extent it is precisely Martov's breadth of view that ties his hands in intellectual combat and condemns him to the rôle of critic, of perpetual 'Opposition'.

Secondly, it must be said that since the birth of the most famous of analysts, Prince Hamlet, analysis, as the supreme quality of a character, is never divorced from Hamletism. That is, an intellect that dominates everything is a source of softening of the will and of indecisiveness in action. With Martov, who is a thinking apparatus *par excellence*, the centres of restraint are too strong to allow him the free and reckless acts of combat, the revolutionary feats that no longer demand the reason, but only the will.

'I knew,' Trotsky said to me much later, not long before these lines were written, 'I knew Martov would be destroyed by the revolution!'

Trotsky expressed himself too one-sidedly. His words actually mean that in a revolution Martov could not occupy a place corresponding to his specific weight, for reasons inherent in

¹ A famous satirical comedy by Alexander Sergeyevich Griboyedov (1795-1829). (Ed.)

himself. This is not so. Reasons outside himself had much greater significance. But it is true that Martov's sphere is theory, not practice. And when this epoch of fabulous exploits, of the greatest deeds in history began, then this star of the first magnitude of the underground period, the equal of Lenin and Trotsky, was eclipsed by the light even of comparatively minor luminaries like Dan and Tsereteli. There are a number of reasons for this—as we shall see later on. But again the same paradoxical reason stands out among them: Martov was *too* intelligent to be a first-class revolutionary.

His excessive, all-embracing analytical thinking apparatus was no help and was sometimes a hindrance in the fire of battle, amidst the unprecedented play of the elements. And later we shall see—even in my account, the account of a follower and apprentice—to what criminal inactivity Martov was condemned more than once by his Hamletism and his ultra-refined analytical web-spinning at moments demanding action and aggressiveness. These moments—critical moments!—will always remain my bitterest memories of the revolution. For the consequences of his errors in these critical moments were enormous, if not for the revolution as a whole, at least for his party and for himself.¹

* * *

The Menshevik Conference had given the victory to the petty-bourgeois, conciliationist Soviet majority and turned the Mensheviks into a Government party. But the differences within the party were too great: the internationalist minority at the Conference, headed by Martov, stood, so to speak, on the other side of the barricades, side by side with Lenin's party. The party split.

This was, to be sure, more *de facto* than formal, and was seen principally in the big centres, remaining unknown and obscure to the many thousands of converts in the remote provinces.

It goes without saying that the Central Committee elected was conciliationist. Its decisions, however, did not commit either the party minority or its (two or three) internationalist members to anything whatever. The extremely influential and

¹ After the October Revolution, to which Martov was hostile, he was exiled (in 1921). He was one of the founders of the so-called '2½ International', and together with Dan edited the *Sotsialisticheskii Vestnik*. He died of tuberculosis. (Ed.)

very large Petersburg organization was entirely in the hands of the internationalist minority, and was sharply hostile to the Central Committee. The defensist minority in the capital, loyal to the Central Committee, was hostile to the Petersburg Committee and didn't recognize it. In the Soviet fraction the Internationalists were in a minority and formed a completely independent group. They always voted with the extreme Left against Dan and Tsereteli, who led the majority; they introduced their own independent resolutions, sometimes in concert with the Bolsheviks. And the line of the Soviet struggle—the struggle of the united big and petty bourgeoisie against the proletariat—lay at that time just between the Menshevik majority and the Menshevik-Internationalists.

The only thing needed for a definitive formal split was the departure of the Internationalists from the Central Committee and the formation of an all-Russian Internationalist centre. Throughout the whole summer there were endless debates in the Petersburg organization about a definitive split, but fear of the provinces delayed matters amongst the minority. Aside from this the minority was, generally speaking, in quite a 'winning' position: it lost only from polemical reproaches for its formal alliance with Tsereteli. But while it retained the possibility of a struggle 'within the party' it really enjoyed at the same time the most complete freedom of action and didn't submit to any decision of the majority. The position was, of course, quite false and ridiculous, but in point of fact it was the majority who found it intolerable. There were standing discussions amongst them also, about excluding the Internationalists, but all the same they weren't excluded.

All this shilly-shallying was unendurably tedious for both Left and Right. The more resolute Internationalists carried on an energetic agitation for a split. With Martov's arrival after the Conference, I was personally convinced that a definitive split was a question of the immediate future. Martov, however, who was living with his sister, Dan's wife, although not yielding an iota of the essence of his internationalist principles, was *against* a split. In mild and cautious form, with constant references to prematurity, he upheld the existing unnatural status. In those days Dan would say: 'I'm working on defence night and day. Every night I talk to Martov until four in the morning.'

A few days after the Conference, foreseeing a definitive split of the Mensheviks, I finished at last with my 'wild' situation, that had already dragged on so long, and registered in the Petersburg organization of the Menshevik-Internationalists. My party sponsor, who introduced me, was of course Martov.

* * *

Thus the Cadets, the SRs, and the official Mensheviks—some from fear, others from conscience, some with sincere feeling, others with a sourly scornful smile—brought their 'confidence and support' to the cradle of the Coalition.

The Menshevik-Internationalists, in view of the particularly strong desire to emphasize that devotion to the new Government was nation-wide, would be disregarded as simply a party minority. Every family, after all, has its black sheep. . .

Unfortunately, though, there still remained the Bolsheviks. But these were in the first place also notoriously black sheep, and secondly, black sheep outside the family, who were not worth talking about. This was how the faithful Coalition press reassured itself in those days, thinking it was brushing aside a gang of malefactors, and not the immutable course of history. . .

* * *

In the Soviet itself and the Ex. Com. things were completely satisfactory. But beyond their walls the efforts of the Compromisers collided with an indifference of the masses that was no better than downright hostility. Of course, resolutions of confidence were successfully carried even in working-class districts, but they fairly regularly alternated with enactments of this kind: 'We, the workers of the *Neuka* factory, having debated in general assembly the question of the entry of the Mensheviks and Populists into the Coalition Cabinet, consider such entry directly inimical to the international proletarian movement. We consider that the right method of combating the supply crisis and of ending the fratricidal war most rapidly is not entry into a bourgeois imperialist Government, but the transfer of all power to the Soviet. We demand that the representatives of the democracy leave the bourgeois Government at once.'

* * *

Relations within the Soviet and the Ex. Com. were now conclusively defined. The Ex. Com. had fallen into sharply hostile camps which never agreed on anything and one of which dictatorially and mercilessly oppressed the other with all its weight. And generally speaking in the Soviet at this time all the 'i's had been dotted in the dictatorship of the conciliationist Menshevik-SR Praesidium. This merely consummated a process long since begun. But now, after the Coalition, this process was completed by a certain formal crystallization of the dictatorship of a narrow little circle of opportunists.

First of all, the Praesidium of the Soviet, from being an organ of internal order, as it should have been, was definitely converted into a substitute for the Ex. Com., and began to replace it in its executive and legislative functions. Proposals to refer to the Praesidium were very often heard both in trivial and important matters—most of these proposals emanating from the Praesidium Group itself.

Secondly, the Praesidium Group from now on was concentrated into a continuously operative, quasi-official though still backstage institution, that had been given the name of Star Chamber. It consisted not only of the members of the Praesidium but also of a kind of camarilla, loyal intimates of Chkheidze and Tsereteli. At that time I was so far from these ruling spheres that I never knew exactly, and still don't know just who was in this Star Chamber. The official members of the Praesidium themselves, Chkheidze and Skobelev, were of course in it—but more *ex officio*, and they were, of course, not its controlling personages. Its leading spirit was, of course, Tsereteli. Consequently half of the Soviet dictatorship and all the corresponding honour, and all the odium—must be laid to his account.

But life in the Ex. Com. had not changed. In particular its whole pre-Coalition organization survived. To be sure, the Liaison Commission, now permanently transferred to the Marian Palace, was abolished—that is, as far as I recall, it died a natural death without any special decision.

Of the new members Trotsky used to attend, though not often. He had joined the Interdistrictites, the autonomous Bolsheviks; together with Lunacharsky, who had not yet appeared in the Ex. Com. at all, Trotsky had already begun

holding numerous meetings and was looking for a literary organ. In the Ex. Com., against the grey, tedious background, he did not attract much interest, and he himself showed even less interest in the central Soviet institution.

At that time I personally avoided making the acquaintance of Trotsky, for quite specific reasons: Trotsky had many grounds for entering into more or less close relationship with the *Novaya Zhizn*, and he himself was counting on this. My getting acquainted with him would indicate an immediate discussion of this subject. But his contributions might prove quite unsuitable. Indefinite rumours were circulating about him, while he was still outside the Bolshevik Party, to the effect that he was 'worse than Lenin'. Before we could discuss the *Novaya Zhizn* this new star had to be inspected.

* * *

This is what the new Government said in its official statement of May 6th: 'In foreign policy, while rejecting, in accord with the entire nation, any thought of a separate peace, the Provisional Government openly sets as its goal the attainment of a general peace, without annexations or indemnities, on the basis of the self-determination of nations.'

But concretely? Methods? Guarantees?

'The Provisional Government will undertake preparatory steps towards an agreement with the Allies on the basis of the statement of March 27th.'

That was all. Even in words, even in naked promises, the Coalition went no further. Let anyone who can be satisfied by that.

On the other hand, 'persuaded that a defeat of Russia and her Allies could not only be a source of the greatest disasters, but would also make impossible the conclusion of a general peace on the basis indicated, the Provisional Government firmly believes that the revolutionary army of Russia will not allow German troops to destroy our Allies in the west and attack us with the full force of their arms. The strengthening of the foundations of the democratic army, and the organization and strengthening of its fighting force for offensive as well as defensive operations, will be the chief task of the Provisional Government.'

This was what the new Cabinet said about the first and basic point of the immutable, indispensable, and inevitable programme of the revolution—the question of peace.

* * *

Now, in the two capitals and in the provinces, as though at a signal, there began an orgy of chauvinism and a frenzied war-dance of journalists and mass-meeting orators demanding an immediate renewal of the slaughter. The whole of the big press set up a fiendish howl, playing variations on the patriotic slogan 'Take the offensive!' The gallant Allies who had inspired the campaign helped it not only with gold but with their personal participation. In huge, specially organized meetings advertised in the bourgeois yellow press there appeared, together with Kerensky and various counterfeit 'sailor' adventurers, the representatives and even ambassadors of the Allies. The agents of Anglo-French financial interests, Thomas and the newly-arrived Vandervelde,¹ again began turning up in the Ex. Com., demanding blood, and they now entered into more and more intimate contact with the top leaders of the Soviet majority.

At army Headquarters, at an officers' meeting, Alexeyev, the Commander-in-Chief, declared the 'Government' formula—'without annexations or indemnities'—to be a utopian phrase and demanded an offensive for the sake of total victory.

All this began at one stroke on the very day the new Cabinet was formed. And it was all directly connected with this. The atmosphere had suddenly become imbued with a chauvinism not hitherto seen in the revolution. Militaristic attacks rained down from all sides with a long-forgotten effrontery.

On May 14th Kerensky published an Order to the army—concerning an offensive. Properly speaking, it was not quite an order to attack but only a preliminary official proclamation. . . 'In the name of the salvation of free Russia,' Kerensky said, 'you will go where your commanders and your Government send you. On your bayonet-points you will be bearing peace, truth, and justice. You will go forward in serried ranks, kept firm by the discipline of your duty and your supreme love for the revolution and your country. . .' The proclamation was written with verve and breathed sincere 'heroic' emotion.

¹ Vandervelde, Emile (1866–1938): Belgian Socialist leader. (Ed.)

Kerensky undoubtedly felt himself to be a hero of 1793. And he was of course equal to the heroes of the great French Revolution, but—not of the Russian.

At this time Kerensky displayed astonishing activity, supernatural energy, and the greatest enthusiasm. Of course he did everything within human power. And not for nothing does the chilly and malevolent historian Miliukov, in whose interests Kerensky was working at this time, recall, with a shade of tenderness and gratitude, the 'comely figure of the young man with a bandaged arm' appearing first at one point then at another of our limitless front (apparently everywhere at once) and calling for great sacrifices, demanding that the wayward and indifferent rabble should pay tribute to the impulses of idealism.

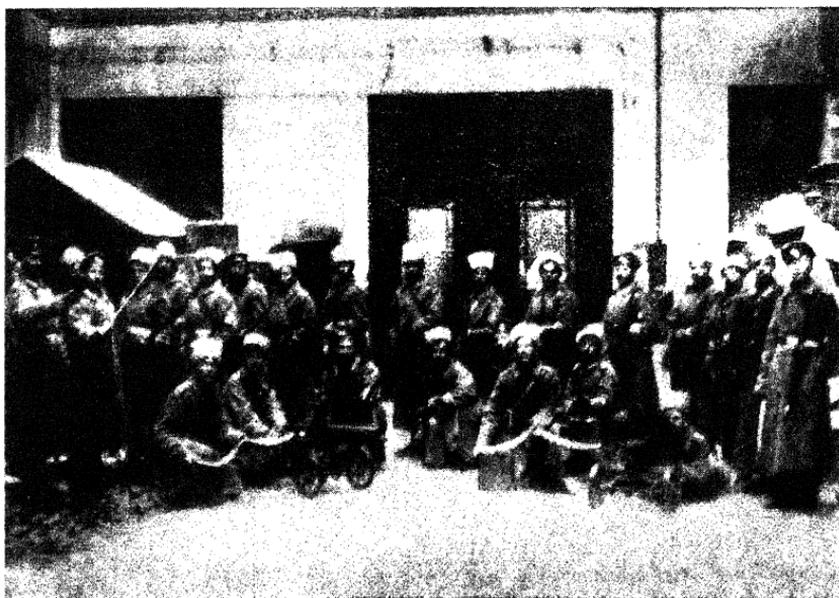
Kerensky, who as Minister of Justice had put on a dark-brown jacket in place of his sports coat, now changed it for a light-coloured, elegant, officer's tunic. His hand had been bothering him nearly all that summer, and in a black sling gave him the appearance of a wounded hero. I have no idea what was wrong with Kerensky's hand—it was a long time since I had talked to him. But it is just like this that he is remembered by tens and hundreds of thousands of soldiers and officers from Finland to the Black Sea, to whom he addressed his fiery speeches.

Everywhere, in the trenches, on ships, at parades, at meetings at the front, at social gatherings, in theatres, town-halls, Soviets—in Helsingfors, Riga, Dvinsk, Kamenets-Podolsk, Kiev, Odessa, Sebastopol—he kept speaking about the same thing and with the same enthusiasm, with sincere and unfeigned emotion. He spoke of freedom, of the land, of the brotherhood of nations, and of the imminent glowing future of the country. He called upon the soldiers and citizens to defend and conquer all this by force of arms, and show themselves worthy of the great revolution. And he pointed to himself as a guarantee that the sacrifices demanded would not be in vain, and that not one drop of free Russian blood would be shed for other, secondary goals.

Kerensky's agitation was (almost) a complete triumph for himself. Everywhere he was carried shoulder-high and pelted with flowers. Everywhere scenes of unprecedented enthusiasm took place, from the descriptions of which breathed the legendary air of heroic ages. Men flung their Crosses of St. George at the feet of Kerensky, who was calling on them to die; women



MARTOV AND DAN



SIEGE OF THE TELEPHONE EXCHANGE
in the October Revolution

stripped off their valuables and in Kerensky's name laid them on the altar of the (for some unknown reason) longed-for victory. . .

Of course a sizeable portion of all this enthusiasm was generated by the middle classes, the officers and the philistines. But even amongst the front-line soldiers, in the very trenches, Kerensky had an enormous success. Tens and hundreds of thousands of fighting soldiers, at tremendous meetings, vowed to go into battle on the word of command and die for 'Land and Freedom'.

There is no doubt that the army had been roused by the agitation of this Minister, the 'symbol of the revolution'. The commanding officers cheered up and said good-bye to Kerensky with assurances that now the army would justify the hopes of the country. . .

By May 19th Kerensky had already telegraphed the Premier: 'Report: I have seen situation on south-eastern front and come to positive conclusions I shall communicate upon arrival. Position in Sebastopol highly favourable. . .'

There was some 'roughness' too, some of it substantial and important: we shall speak of it later. But there were also grounds for Kerensky's positive conclusions. The whole bourgeoisie had leapt to its feet: the agreeable smell of blood was in its nostrils again, and once again almost abandoned imperialist illusions had revived.

The Coalition had grouped itself around the offensive; it regarded the offensive as its central task, and it was *only* in the organization of the offensive that the new Government manifested itself. What with Kerensky's agitation the situation was becoming unendurable.

* * *

As soon as the new Cabinet's statement was wired to Europe, a question was asked in the British Parliament on the 'Russian formula' for peace. Philip Snowden proposed that Russia's renunciation of annexations and indemnities be welcomed. Robert Cecil, the Foreign Secretary, replied to this with extreme disapproval. He called it senseless and misplaced. But he added: if there were any question of Russia's renouncing its obligations to the Allies, Great Britain would know what to do.

The Cadet *Rech* was, of course, delighted. It had already drawn the conclusion that the Coalition would never think up anything beyond the continuation of the policy of Miliukov.

Nor did either Lvov, or Tereshchenko, or Tsereteli, or even Skobelev, really think up anything more. And every now and then Tereshchenko gave renewed proof of his fidelity to Miliukov's policy. It goes without saying that our whole Diplomatic Corps stayed on at their posts, as they had under the Tsar and Miliukov. Tereshchenko's closest collaborators and advisers were on the one hand the Star Chamber of the Soviet, and on the other Rasputin's protégés (almost). And now, against the background of Kerensky's agitation in the army, Tereshchenko started direct relations with the Allied Governments. He sent a wire to Ribot, the French Premier, in which there was not a word about any peace, or about any requests on the part of the new Russian Government: nothing but compliments, raptures, and assurances of unshakeable fidelity to everything as it had been before.

When Ribot read aloud this wire in the *Chambre des Députés* he aroused the liveliest sensation. He couldn't find appropriate words to congratulate the Russian Government, 'made up of prominent, bold and energetic statesmen, but subject to outside influences'. And Ribot concluded correctly that nothing had changed for the worse—'Coalitionary' Russia was true to the Russia of the Tsar and of Miliukov.

The next day a similar scene took place in the British House of Commons. Questions were put from the Left about the unfavourable impression made in Russia by Robert Cecil's reaction to the 'Russian formula' for peace. But this worthy gentleman explained that (apart from intriguers and anarchists) there had been no unfavourable impression. Quite the contrary—all was well. . .

All these facts, that deeply discredited the Russian Revolution, practically liquidated the question it had raised about peace. They strengthened, of course, not only Allied imperialism, but also that of Austria and Germany, and on the other hand generated the deepest depression in the advanced proletariat of all countries.

The overt formulation of the old rapacious war programme of the Entente automatically placed the German command on

its own kind of 'defensive' positions, reinforced the idea of 'national self-defence' and once again rallied the masses, longing for peace, around the Kaiser, Kühlmann, and Hindenburg. The aggressiveness and chauvinism of the 'great democracies' were extremely favourable to the German imperialists, who set all their hopes on the naked power of arms.

The Austro-German diplomats and military chiefs did not of course cease to be interested in an 'honourable' separate peace with Russia, nor did they cease to take steps to achieve it—steps that were sometimes quite risky. A German agent, a certain D. Rizov, Bulgarian Ambassador to Berlin, had the nerve to write a letter to Gorky proposing that he should become mediator for a separate peace; he gave humanitarian considerations as his motive. Rizov's letter, with a postscript by Gorky, was printed in the *Novaya Zhizn* and caused a stupendous sensation, which fed the whole gutter-press for several days.

* * *

A bitter struggle developed in the press. The bourgeois press examined all the Bolshevik leaders in turn, accusing them of every possible crime. Every day whole tubs of filth were poured over Gorky because of Rizov's letter and for other reasons, some connected with the *Novaya Zhizn* and some not. I personally became the favourite target of the *Rech* and was never called anything but 'dear to the German heart', or 'so highly appreciated by the Germans'. I began getting letters almost every day from the capital, the provinces or the army: some contained admonitions and jeers, others questions: 'How much did you get?'

An extraordinary amount was done to inflame the chauvinistic atmosphere by the Entente agents who had arrived in Russia, Thomas, Vandervelde, and Henderson.¹ The first two were quite familiar to us. We could not say that about Henderson at this time, since his policy speech in the Ex. Com. shed an unexpected light on his—one can't say impudence so much as a unique kind of *naïveté*. Henderson, calling a spade a spade, expounded the war programme of British finance—including the liberation of Mesopotamia, Africa, Constantinople, and

¹ Socialists who supported the First World War, either participating in their respective governments or backing them. (Ed.)

Armenia from the German or Turkish yoke. For all these idealistic goals he demanded from the Russian Revolution cannon-fodder and practical self-immolation. Henderson talked for two hours, but alas! he merely confused even the Mamelukes.

At this same time the representatives of still another gallant Ally, Italy, had appeared in Petersburg. I don't think there were any Ministers in the delegation, but as 'Socialists' the Italian 'patriots' who came, Arturo Labriola, Giovanni Lerda, Orazio Raimondo, and Innocenzo Cappa, were perhaps even more dubious than the above-mentioned trio. At the same time the position of Italy in the World War was the most nakedly piratical. These gentry, with nothing in their minds but the badgering of neutral Italy into the war and the struggle against the honest Italian Socialists, presented themselves to the Ex. Com. only once and 'hailed' the revolution more in Ministerial circles, but they did their bit to intensify the chauvinist atmosphere by their interviews and public speeches.

The French Social-patriotic delegates, Cachin, Moutet, and Lafont, kept the promise they had given the Ex. Com., and after they got home insisted on the French Social-chauvinist majority's taking part in the Stockholm Conference.¹ This resolution was passed by the National Council of the French Socialist Party. It was based on an effort to confine the mighty Russian Revolution within definite limits and keep it from any radical measures and within the sphere of Entente influence. For this it was essential to meet the Soviet, which controlled the army, half-way. The honourable Citizen Cachin, agitating amongst the Socialists, tried to persuade his own ruling bourgeoisie to get along with the Soviet and refer to it as little as possible in public as a gang of vagabonds and German agents—which for that matter was quite untrue, since the Soviet was now headed by quite statesmanlike patriots.

It was the same thing in England. The radical press maintained that it would be dangerous for the Allies to forbid the Stockholm Conference, but the Government decided that it would nevertheless be better not to let the British Socialists go to the Conference. There was a united conference of the Independent Labour Party and the British Labour Party in Leeds

¹ An international conference of Zimmerwaldites scheduled for June 25th, but never held. (Ed.)

during the last third of May. More than a thousand delegates backed the 'Russian formula' and decided to take part in the Conference. This was an impressive force, and it was awkward for the Government of the 'Great Democracy' simply not to 'allow' it, in the face of the aroused proletariat. A slippery path was chosen. They staged 'workers' demonstrations of protest' against the trip of MacDonald and other delegates to Petersburg—*via* Stockholm. The Seamen's Union was induced to refuse to service the ship in which MacDonald was to travel to Russia. The trip of the British workers' minority was prevented, while the majority refused of its own accord to take part in an 'International with the Germans'.

It was the same everywhere in Europe. Some parties—the British and French minorities, the German independents, the Czech, Hungarian, Austrian, and Italian—backed the Russian formula and were ready to go to the Conference, but they were not allowed to and were attacked in their own countries for their attitude.

CHAPTER 17

IN THE DEPTHS

‘OUR country is definitely turning into some sort of madhouse with lunatics in command, while people who have not yet lost their reason huddle fearfully against the walls.’ (*Rech*, May 17th.)
‘Russia is turning into a Texas, into a country of the Far West.’ (*Rech*, May 30th.)

The bourgeois gutter-press, without respite or repose, in creative self-forgetfulness and patriotic rapture, played variations on this theme in all conceivable styles—sorrowful, menacing, and playful. ‘Anarchy’ in large letters made its appearance as a standing headline. This press was now filled with descriptions of every possible excess and disorder. ‘Arbitrary arrests’, ‘lynch-law’, ‘collapse’, ‘riots’. The struggle of the bourgeoisie against the revolution had expanded to its full scope.

There were indeed many excesses, perhaps more than before. Lynch-law, the destruction of houses and shops, jeering at and attacks on officers, provincial authorities, or private persons, unauthorized arrests, seizures, and beatings-up—were recorded every day by tens and hundreds. In the country burnings and destruction of country-houses became more frequent. The peasants were beginning to ‘regulate’ land-tenure according to their own ideas, forbidding the illegal felling of trees, driving off the landlords’ stock, taking the stocks of grain under their own control, and refusing to permit them to be taken to stations and wharves. The terrific destruction of a great lord’s estate in the Mtsensk district caused a special uproar in the first half of May. Quite a few excesses were also observed amongst the workers—against factory administration, owners, and foremen. But more than anything else of course it was the unbridled rioting soldiers who were ‘destroying law and order’.

In the idle garrisons of the capital and the provinces, in an atmosphere of unprecedented freedom, military discipline naturally collapsed. The iron shackles had weakened. The ignorant wantonness of the grey mass made itself felt. All garrison service in the rear became more or less disrupted; there was almost no training; orders were frequently ignored, sentries

not stationed. There were masses of deserters both in the rear and at the front.

The soldiers, without leave, went off home in great floods. They filled all the trains, hectoring the administration, kicked out the passengers, and threatened the entire transport system with catastrophe. The deserters were given a period of time to report back, then this time was extended and reinforced by threats. The soldiers flowed through the countryside from the rear and the front, recalling a great migration of peoples. In the cities they blighted the trams and boulevards, and filled all the public places. There were reports here and there of drunkenness, rowdiness, and disorder.

In Russia generally, under the Coalition, in the summer of 1917, there was very little order. The man in the street, following bourgeois initiative, began complaining about it menacingly and grumbling ill-naturedly about the revolution as such. It was precisely the fact of the revolution that he held responsible for our not having any law or stable authority. Once again Miliukov's catchword came to mind: the man in the street is stupid.

The same thing took place amongst the soldiers. There were not only *excesses* here, but also a profound process, a shift in mood, a movement only the blind could fail to notice. . . We have seen how the minds of the soldiers reflected the problem of war and peace two months before. The mere notion of peace would have made them impale 'traitors and openers up of the front' on their bayonets. I have noted an embryonic shift as early as a month after the revolution, around the time of Lenin's arrival. Now, two months and a bit later, against the background of the Coalition, the soldiers' temper began turning into its opposite.

This process was obscured in the eyes of the Soviet leaders by the fact that the mass of the Petersburg soldiery was in this respect far behind the provinces. In the Soviet the soldiers as before were in an extremely patriotic mood (they were, by the way, better protected than any of the others against despatch to the front). But in Moscow and the provinces this upheaval in the minds of the soldiers gradually made its presence felt. As early as May 9th Thomas met with a petty unpleasantness in the Moscow Soviet: he was publicly told in the name of the soldiers that our army was tired and wanted peace; that there

was no party in Russia for a *separate* peace, but if the war was going to drag on it was impossible to vouch for the consequences. Thomas 'experienced an uncomfortable impression'.

But with Kerensky these little unpleasantnesses went still further. While agitating at the front he began meeting with argumentative resistance from the soldiers. It's true that these were isolated cases, and that the impression was smoothed over at once by patriotic enthusiasm. But after all the surroundings were also exceptionally unfavourable for any argument against an offensive. In the last week of May, in the loyal Twelfth Army, Kerensky came across a minor scandal. Under the pretext of asking a question, a soldier declared the Government ought to conclude peace very soon. Kerensky interrupted the soldier with a thunderous exclamation of 'Coward!' and ordered him to be dismissed from the army. The regimental commander, however, asked permission to dismiss, together with the unsuccessful debater, several others who 'dishonoured the whole regiment' with these same thoughts on war and peace.

Once at the end of May, from the balcony of the *Novaya Zhizn*, looking out on the Nevsky, we watched a strange demonstration. Its beginning and end were lost in the distance; the demonstration stretched for practically two-thirds of a mile. Rows of elderly men were moving along in vaguely military uniforms. They were walking slackly with their heads bowed, in an unusually deep, glum silence. They had no banners, but wretched little signs with inscriptions: 'The land has no one to work it!' 'Our land isn't sown!' 'We can't get bread for the workers!' 'Our families are starving on the land!' 'Let the young men fight!'. . .

These were soldiers over forty years old. For a long time they had been demanding to be demobilized, with no success. And now this morose demonstration, organized by no one knew whom, showed they were beginning to lose patience. . . The 'over-forties' were on their way to the Marian Palace. There Minister of Agriculture Chernov, closest to their hearts, was ordered out to them. He made them a long, flowery speech promising something and nothing at the same time. The over-forties dispersed unsatisfied and definitely resentful.

The war was becoming more and more intolerable. The elemental forces against war, against support of it and against

its entire organization, were accumulating drop by drop and day by day.

* * *

The names of Lenin and his companions-in-arms, daily spattered with filth, were still heard with hatred and suspicion by the ignorant masses. At an Officers' Congress on May 20th his arrest was demanded; it was said that otherwise the people would kill him. But that same day Lenin appeared at the Peasant Congress. Generally speaking Lenin held himself aloof in those days, like some great noble. He was never seen either at Soviet sessions or in the lobbies; as before he was staying somewhere 'underground', in intimate party circles. Whenever he appeared at a meeting he would ask for the floor out of turn, upsetting the agenda. An attempt of this kind a few days before at the Peasant Congress, as though he were a Minister, had failed, and he had to leave: it was against his principles to wait for the floor. But now, on the 20th, with the absorbed interest of the Peasant Congress, Lenin developed his programme of 'direct action', his tactics of land seizure regardless of the legally-appointed limits. It would seem that Lenin had landed not merely in a camp of bitter enemies, but you might say in the very jaws of the crocodile. The little muzhiks listened attentively and probably not without sympathy. But they dared not show it. . .

Around this time we in the Ex. Com. once heard that Lenin was making a speech to the Soldiers' Section in the White Hall. This was the most faithful support Chaikovsky¹ and Tsereteli had—the Praetorian Guard of the Coalition. Lenin was not likely to get on well. I hurried over. He had already been on the platform a long time and was making the same speech as at the Peasants' Congress. I sat down in about the seventh row, in the heart of the soldier audience. The soldiers were listening with the greatest interest as Lenin berated the Coalition's agrarian policy and proposed that they should settle the matter on their own authority, without any Constituent Assembly. . . But the speaker was soon interrupted by the chair: his time was up.

¹ Chaikovsky, Nikolai Vasilyevich (1850–1926): prominent in Co-operative movement. After the October Revolution he joined the 'White reaction' against Bolshevism. (Ed.)

Some arguing began about whether to allow Lenin to continue his speech. The Praesidium evidently didn't want to, but the assembly had nothing against it. Lenin, bored, was standing on the platform wiping his bald spot with a handkerchief; recognising me from a distance he nodded to me gaily. I heard comments around me: 'Talks sense, hey? Hey?' one soldier said to the other.

By a majority vote the assembly ordered that Lenin be allowed to finish speaking. The ice was broken: Lenin and his principles had begun penetrating even the nucleus of the Praetorians.

Trotsky and Lunacharsky were not of course members of the Bolshevik Party at that time, but these first-class orators had already succeeded in the course of two or three weeks in becoming most popular agitators. Their successes began, perhaps, in Kronstadt, where they very often played guest rôles. By the middle of May, Kerensky, who was preparing the offensive, already figured in Kronstadt under the epithets: 'Socialist-plunderer and blood-drinker'.

The 'Bolshevik question' was coming to the surface as the current problem of state, though the Soviet leaders in the Tauride Palace were calmer about it than anyone else. Tsereteli himself was blind as an owl in the dazzling light of the revolution, and he blinkered his neighbours' eyes too. In the Tauride Palace the Soviet leaders, yawning, repeated endless platitudes about how they personally were shaping the country's fate and saving the revolution in the name of the 'whole democracy'.

Meanwhile the facts spoke more and more eloquently for themselves. If in the Soldiers' Section they were still no more than listening to Lenin with sympathy, in some regiments of the capital, recently loyal to Rodzianko, they were solidly *obeying* the Bolsheviks. In particular, Lenin already had the allegiance of the 1st Machine-Gun Regiment, where a certain 2nd Lieut. Semashko was active. At the end of May, when the latter was accidentally arrested, the entire Machine-Gun Regiment turned out in full formation, freed Semashko, and carried him shoulder-high out of the Commandant's headquarters. Here already was *military power* in the hands of the Bolshevik Central Committee.

But of course it was first and foremost the Petersburg *proletariat* that rallied to the banner of Bolshevism.

On May 30th a conference of the Factory Committees of the capital and its suburbs opened in the White Hall. The Conference grew up from the bottom; it was planned in the factories—without the participation either of the official organs of labour or of the Soviet institutions. It was initiated and organized by the Bolshevik Party, which was making an appeal to the masses directly, and quasi-directly, obliquely, to the Soviet. It was inspired by Lenin, and carried out primarily by Zinoviev.

Unlike the Workers' Section of the Soviet, whose composition was changed, not very quickly, by a series of partial elections, the members of the Factory Committee Conference had just been elected *en bloc* and reflected with precision the real physiognomy of the Petersburg proletariat. The Conference really represented it, and workers from the bench in great numbers took an active part in its labours. For two days this workers' parliament debated the economic crisis and the ruin throughout the country. And of course it combined economics with politics. The Government Mensheviks, and also a few Internationalists, sponsored the organization of economy by the State—ignoring the question of *just which* State. But the Bolsheviks, Lenin and Zinoviev, with the support of the worker speakers, now for the first time developed their slogan of 'workers' control'.

When the vote was taken, 335 of the 421 workers voted for the Bolsheviks. The victory of Bolshevism was complete. In conclusion the Conference of the Factory Committees resolved to 'organize in Petersburg an all-city centre of the representatives of all factory committees and trade unions; this centre must play the leading rôle in the realization of all measures indicated above (control *et al.*) within Petersburg'.

This centre, which fell completely into the hands of the Bolsheviks, was naturally bound to become from now on altogether the most authoritative centre for the Petersburg proletariat. It was bound to supplant the conciliationist Soviet. If this didn't happen it was for only one reason: the Soviet Workers' Section—both in Petersburg and Moscow—was day by day irresistibly filling up with Bolsheviks. They still had no majority, and it was impossible to say when they would have. But it would come, and in the not too distant future—there could be no doubt of that.

Meanwhile Kerensky was harvesting laurels in Moscow. Crowds thronged into the streets he passed through. Flowers were showered on his car. Standing up in it Kerensky hailed 'the people'. He was at the peak of his popularity. He was a hero and object of adoration—for philistines and nondescripts. Meanwhile Lenin with a firm tread was striding on and on, strengthening each step with the steel of proletarian ranks and anchoring himself in the sole unshakeable basis of the revolution.

* * *

One fine day during the last week of May I heard that three generals of the revolution wanted to have a talk with the editorial board of the *Novaya Zhizn* about their more intimate association with it. These were the three non-party Bolsheviks, Trotsky, Lunacharsky, and Ryazanov. Lunacharsky and I had had a rather intensive correspondence during the period of the *Sovremennik*, for which he did a good deal of writing. I knew him of course as a most talented writer, of great culture and many-sided gifts. I naturally not only valued his contributions, but actively sought him out, and in spite of the dubiousness of the *Sovremennik* with respect to fees, so necessary to an *émigré*, Lunacharsky gladly responded to my suggestions. Without any prompting from me he often sent me agreeable notes, such as an expression of sympathy for my activity in Russia during the war years. Accordingly I not only had a high regard for him but also felt myself drawn to him before seeing him.

After he arrived in Russia on May 9th, together with Martov, he at once, and quite naturally, came to the *Novaya Zhizn*. There we became personally acquainted and quite soon intimate. He didn't appear immediately in the Ex. Com. and didn't come often: he was not yet in Lenin's party and had a rather 'soft' disposition; we still felt ourselves to be comrades-in-arms in politics as well as literary collaborators.

But we also became rather close friends on purely personal grounds. You might say I spent almost all my unoccupied time with Lunacharsky. He often spent days and nights with us in the *Letopis*, where my wife and I had a *pied-à-terre*. Sometimes at night he would come to see me at the printer's, to have a little more talk and look at the next day's edition. And when we were

detained in the Tauride Palace we used to spend the night at Manukhin's and again talk away endlessly.

We discussed everything: regardless of the theme, Lunacharsky's talk, stories, and repartee were interesting, clear and picturesque, just as he himself was interesting and brilliant, glittering with every hue and attractive through his culture and the astonishing inborn talent that permeated him from head to foot.

I remember hearing a woman I knew, who didn't know Lunacharsky, tell of her trip home from some boring meeting. Sitting opposite her in the tram Lunacharsky, also on his way back from the same place, was telling his neighbour about the meeting. Though the meeting had bored her to death the entire evening, it now, as reported by Lunacharsky, flashed and glittered, adorned with colours whose existence had not been suspected by the average person there. Lunacharsky's account of it was more interesting than the reality itself. Lunacharsky was like that always and in everything.

The great people of the revolution—both his comrades and his opponents—almost always spoke of Lunacharsky with sneers, irony, or scorn. Though a most popular personality and Minister, he was kept away from high policy: 'I have no influence,' he once told me himself.

In a word—*sum cuique*. Lunacharsky is not one of those who can create an era or an epoch. The lot of Lenin and Trotsky is not for him. In general his *historical* rôle in world events is comparatively small. But it is small only in comparison with these cosmic titans. After them, of course, for a long, long, long time there is nothing. Then it is no longer individuals that are visible, but groups, constellations. Among these Lunacharsky of course is one of the first. But that is his *historical* rôle; for brilliance of *talent*, to say nothing of culture, he has no equal in the constellation of the Bolshevik leaders.

It is said that when he became a Minister Lunacharsky more quickly and completely than others acquired a ministerial manner, with its negative qualities. I don't know. After the October Revolution I completely broke with him, unlike what happened with many others. For two and a half years, down to this very moment, I've only had a few fleeting encounters with him, and not very agreeable ones at that. He really took a

ministerial air with me. But I don't know how much he was to blame for all this, and I know very well how much I was, with my rather disagreeable character. My continual polemics were really bitter and unendurable, when we ceased to be companions-in-arms and became political enemies.

We shall have to deal further on with the little human foibles of this most important figure of the revolution, and with some of his blunders, that everyone, small and great, thought ridiculous. But these spots on the sun cannot in any way obscure for me, now an alien, indifferent, and polemically disposed man, either the brilliance of this remarkable figure or the attractive personal qualities of the man with whom I spent the summer of 1917.

* * *

In order that the editorial staff might all be present, the conference was arranged for the evening of May 25th in the *Novaya Zhizn* printing-house. I don't remember that the conversation was particularly interesting. I was silent, busy with an article, and the conversation was almost over when I spoke, and I daresay definitely turned the tide against any editorial alliance. The talk had been chiefly about the most immediate political perspectives and the fate of the Coalition. I said that however negative my feelings towards it, as shown by daily articles, I didn't think it right to hasten its liquidation and the transfer of all power to the Socialists: it was obvious that the country and the democracy had still not digested the idea of a Socialist Government, while the Coalition in any case would collapse very shortly without any urging, through the spontaneous course of events. In general, I said, with respect to high policy I was closer to Martov than to Trotsky.

Trotsky spoke last and briefly; everything was clear for him. For his part he sharply dissociated himself from Martov, who 'while in the Opposition was only on the side of the defensists', and he considered the position of the *Novaya Zhizn* to be really an approach to Martov, but not to 'revolutionary Socialism'. Trotsky finished with some rather remarkable words, which made a strong impression on me, and which I remember more or less as follows:

'Now I see there is nothing left for me to do but found a newspaper together with Lenin.'

Afterwards, almost three years later, just a short while before I wrote these lines, Trotsky corrected the wording.¹

‘Not “nothing is left for me to do”,’ he answered when I gave him my account of this episode, ‘but “it remains for me and Lenin to make our own newspaper”.’

Trotsky explained that he and Lenin had agreed beforehand to make an attempt to ‘conquer’ the *Novaya Zhizn*, and in case of failure to create their own organ jointly. Of course I won’t dispute this. . .

But at that time Lenin and Trotsky did not create their joint organ. Soon after this, to be sure, Lunacharsky started telling me about projects for a big newspaper with Bolshevik editors (the trio of Lenin, Zinoviev, and Kamenev) and Interdistrictites (Trotsky and Lunacharsky). But no such newspaper saw the light. Instead Trotsky and the Interdistrictites founded a little magazine *Vperyod* (Forward), where he worked independently of Lenin. This made a very small audience for Trotsky and was rather thankless work for him.

I think we left the *Novaya Zhizn* conference without any special regrets, at least on our side. Only Steklov, on his way to the composing-room with me, expressed his chagrin at the results of the talk. ‘We’ve lost some useful collaborators,’ he said.

But the question had nothing to do with acquiring new collaborators. Lunacharsky went on working on the paper on the old arrangement, together with many other Bolsheviks. But Trotsky we never saw inside our walls again.

¹ Trotsky corrects it still further in his own version of all this, given in Appendix III, Volume I of his *History of the Russian Revolution*. (Ed.)

CHAPTER 18

THE FIRST ALL-RUSSIAN CONGRESS OF SOVIETS

THIS was properly not the first, but the second Soviet Congress. The first one assembled, as we know, at the end of March. This March Congress, which was very far from dull, had been a sufficiently full and authoritative exposition of the contemporary moods of the democracy. But at that time these moods had still been wavering, whereas now the course was quite definite—towards an unrestricted capitulation to the bourgeoisie. There was absolutely no question but that the Compromisers and the Praetorians of the Coalition would have a decided advantage at the Congress. If only for this reason it was impossible to expect anything decisive from the forthcoming Congress, or any change in direction. All its activities would be reduced to ‘support’ of the Government and a struggle against the Left ‘irresponsible’ minority. Nevertheless the Congress was of enormous interest as a large-scale review of the forces of the revolution.

The general physiognomy of the Congress and its results were clear in advance, but the review of the revolutionary forces might come out in various ways, depending on the specific weight of the Opposition. The SRs were assured of a majority, but the eyes of all the thinking elements of the Tauride Palace were fixed on the Bolshevik and Menshevik-Internationalist fractions. It was plainly an absorbing question, what Bolshevism had done in the provinces.

For me, however, another question was just as interesting: what would be the situation within the Menshevik Party?; how many would be Right and how many Left?; what section of the Menshevik Swamp would join Martov’s independent internationalist fraction and take the chance of splitting from the conciliationist majority?

Alas! the reality disappointed even the pessimists. Out of 777 delegates definitely committed to a party, 105 proved to be Bolsheviks. But with the Mensheviks the position was quite unexpected: the Internationalists among them didn’t even

number thirty-five; all the rest were the troops of Tsereteli and Tereshchenko. It was a stunning and bitter outrage. The whole Menshevik-Internationalist fraction, headed by Martov and the group that had come with him from abroad, together with those present in an advisory capacity, didn't even amount to one-sixth of all the Mensheviks.

Besides this there was at the Congress the fraction of the 'United Internationalists', which Steklov was trying to turn into a party and which the Interdistrictites led by Lunacharsky and Trotsky had joined. But this fraction didn't have more than from thirty-five to forty people either.

* * *

The SRs had just concluded their third All-Russian Party Conference, which had produced absolutely nothing new or interesting. At the Soviet Congress these same SRs proved a decisive force. They did not have an absolute majority, but together with the Right Mensheviks they made up five-sixths of the Congress. The Opposition fractions, taken together, including delegates without votes, did not amount to more than 150-160; while in the voting not more than 120-125 hands were raised against the ruling bloc. They formed a narrow strip extending from the left side of the chairman's platform along the wall and not going further than the middle of the hall. Looking at it from the platform itself, this strip was divided from the remaining mass by its external appearance also: it wore almost exclusively *civilian* clothes, and especially *workmen's* jackets.

The remaining mass was almost all military. There were 'real' soldiers, peasants; but there were more mobilized intellectuals. There were more than a hundred junior officers, who still represented a great part of the army in the field. And what figures they cut! It goes without saying that they were all 'Socialists'. It was absolutely impossible to represent the masses or appeal to them without this label. But judging by their sympathies, and by quite intangible factors, it was not only the *secret* Cadets, Octobrists, and anti-Semites that had joined the SRs or Mensheviks; there were also people there *known* to be liberal, and even not very liberal lawyers, physicians, teachers, landowners, and government officials, in the guise of 'populists' or 'Marxists'.

* * *

The Congress opened on June 3rd at 7 in the evening. On the following day the question of the relationship to the Provisional Government was taken up. The debate went on for five whole days.

With complete *naïveté* Lieber and Tsereteli sang the praises of the Coalition Government, the 'all-national' Government of all the living forces, all the responsible elements of society, the only one possible, which had completely justified itself. This blind and vulgar bragging about the Coalition's counter-revolutionary policy did not, of course, nauseate only the Bolsheviks. But there was nothing either novel or interesting here.

The novelty and interest began when Lenin himself spoke in rebuttal, having left his underground cave for the light of day. In unaccustomed surroundings, face to face with his ferocious enemies, surrounded by a hostile crowd that looked on him as a wild beast—Lenin clearly felt himself insignificant and had no special success. In addition, the cruel fifteen minutes allotted to a fraction speaker weighed on him. But Lenin wouldn't have been allowed to speak at all except for the enormous curiosity every one of the provincial Mamelukes felt for this notorious figure. His speech was not very well arranged and had no central pivot, but it contained some remarkable passages for whose sake it must be recalled.

In it Lenin gave his own solution of the question of the Government, and also a general 'schematic' outline of the programme and tactics of this Government. Hear ye! Hear ye!

'The citizen Minister of Posts and Telegraphs', said Lenin, 'has declared that there is no political party in Russia that would agree to take the entire power on itself. I answer: There is. No party can refuse to do this, all parties are contending and must contend for the power, and our party will not refuse it. *It is ready at any moment to take over the Government.*'

This was novel, interesting, and very important. This was Lenin's first open statement of what the slogan 'All Power to the Soviets' meant in his mouth. Lenin's proletarian party was struggling for the *entire* power. The other aspect of the matter was that Lenin was ready to accept all power *at any moment*, that is, when his party was known to be in a minority. This was no less interesting and important.

In general this fragment of Lenin's speech is unusually rich in

content; it comprises a complete political system that now replaced, developed, and interpreted Lenin's original schema of April. At *that* time the Bolshevik leader had enjoined his party to learn how to be in the minority, to have patience, to win over the Soviets, to get majorities in them and transfer all power to *them*. Now Lenin, without patience, without having got a majority or won over the Soviets, was demanding all power against their will, and a dictatorship for his own party alone. It's possible that in the recesses of Lenin's mind there had never been any other interpretation of the original April slogans, and that only now for the first time he thought it appropriate to proclaim them.

And now—what would Lenin have done if at any moment he had found himself in power?

'The first step we should take if we had the power would be to arrest the biggest capitalists and smash their intrigues. Without that all the phrases about peace without annexations and indemnities are the emptiest of words. Our second step would be to announce to the nations, independently of their Governments, that we hold all capitalists to be plunderers, both Tereshchenko, who is not one whit better than Miliukov, just slightly more stupid, and the French capitalists, and the British, and all of them. . .'

Lenin didn't enumerate any further steps, being distracted by random ideas. He simply said further that a Bolshevik Government would come forward with a proposal for a *general peace*. But the first and the second steps in any case were enough to make the entire hall gasp at the unexpectedness and absurdity of such a programme. Not that the prospect of arresting a hundred of the biggest capitalists definitely displeased the majority of the respected gathering: let's not forget that very many of the then Mensheviks were future 'Communists', nor that nearly a majority of the peasant SRs became *Left* SRs in the near future. Arresting capitalists—that was very pleasant, and as for calling them plunderers—quite right.

Aside from junior officers, liberal lawyers, and similar people, the class instinct of the workers' and peasants' section of the meeting may even have been on Lenin's side, though prejudice prevented their displaying this while their most authoritative leaders lingered in the embraces of these same capitalists. But as

a *programme* for a future Government, both of Lenin's 'steps' were really absurd, and didn't seem the least bit attractive even to the tiny Left sector, where both the faces and the talk reflected an absolutely unambiguous bafflement at Lenin's speech.

At the end of this session I remember meeting Trotsky on the stairs; as usual he had been 'with the masses' and had come after the fair. He stopped me with 'Well, what's happening there? Debates interesting? Have I missed much?'

'Nothing,' I said; 'Lunacharsky was best of all; he was really wonderful.'

'Yes?' Trotsky's eyes flashed with satisfaction. Lunacharsky, after all, was the second biggest star in the tiny Interdistrict group.

Peshekhonov, the Minister of Supply, was another of the Socialist Ministers who spoke at the Congress; unlike the others, however, he didn't touch on high policy in his speech, which was entirely devoted to supply. Here is his philosophy of the supply problem.

'The productivity of the working class understandably fell after the revolution; . . . the scope of its demands is far more than normal. With the raising of wages the value of money falls, the cost of commodities goes up, and the situation must again be ameliorated by raising wages. But after all, a time will come when that will be impossible. *The whole difficulty lies, not in overcoming the resistance of the bourgeoisie, which gives way in everything, but in winning over the toiling masses, who must be summoned to the most exacting labour and the indispensable sacrifices.* If we succeed in overcoming these psychological difficulties of the masses, and drawing them after us, then we shall solve our problems.'

That's what Peshekhonov said. One scarcely knows what to be more amazed at—this 'Socialist Minister's' theoretical innocence or his political cynicism. No one, however, noticed any of this in his speech, while Trotsky, who succeeded him, spoke as follows:

'I have listened to Peshekhonov's speech with enormous interest, since it's always possible to learn from one's theoretical opponents. What should come next is the collaboration of the Ministers of Labour and Industry, but Konovalov has left, after sabotaging the organization of industry. For three weeks a replacement has been looked for, but can't be found. Put twelve

Peshekhonovs in power, and that would already be an enormous step forward. Find another Peshekhonov to replace Konovalov.

'You see that I'm not proceeding from fractional considerations, but only from the point of view of efficiency. The working class must know that its own Government is at the top, and it will not try to snatch crumbs for itself but will deal with the Government considerately. We are not undermining your régime, but are working to prepare tomorrow for you. We say that your policies of procrastination may sap the foundations of the Constituent Assembly. We criticize you because together with you we suffer from the same pains.'

In this speech Trotsky called the Coalition Government an Arbitration Court. But he himself spoke at the Congress as a kind of arbitrator.

I remember very much later, when Trotsky, after reading the first part of these Notes of mine, made fun of me:

'You had *conversations* with Kerensky!' he exclaimed, sarcastically histrionic. 'You tried to "persuade" him, the known creature of the bourgeoisie, the representative of an enemy class. Well, don't tell me you're not a *Zemstvo* liberal! Only one path is permissible for a revolutionary: to go to his *own* class and call on it to fight!'

In his speech about the Government at the first Congress Trotsky did not, as we see, follow these sage principles. On the contrary, he generously lavished the most opportunistic, *Zemstvo*-liberal 'persuasions' on the servants of the bourgeoisie. In the Ex. Com. I too had recommended putting some Peshekhonov or other (or still better a Socialist without quotation marks) in place of Konovalov—a fortnight before this. But for me such a Peshekhonov was only an unavoidable element, the extreme Right wing of a democratic Government, and in my eyes a *dozen Peshekhonovs* could never be the workers' 'own' Government.

From my point of view the Government that succeeded the Coalition would be a Government of the worker-peasant bloc, where the representatives of the petty bourgeoisie, the Peshekhonovs, Chernovs, and Tseretelis, would be allied with the real leaders of the proletariat, with Lenin, Martov, and Trotsky. Even though the former would be in a majority, and would tend as before to a 'procrastinating' bourgeois policy, still the

proletariat, to make up for that, would be the master of the revolution. The right course of events would be ensured by such a régime, and *only* by such a régime.

In any case the above-quoted excerpt from Trotsky's speech would seem to indicate very clearly that in spite of Lenin Trotsky did not put the question of the Bolshevik seizure of power on the order of the day. By 'Power to the Soviets' he would really seem to have meant just that. There are no signs here of any seizure of power by the minority of the Petersburg proletariat. In what sense are Trotsky's words to the *Novaya Zhizn* to be understood, that from then on his path lay solely with Lenin? Hadn't I made a thoughtless mistake that time, when the three generals swooped down on our paper, in refusing an alliance with Lunacharsky and Trotsky?¹

* * *

The concluding act of the Congress was to create a new plenipotentiary Soviet organ, in place of the former Petersburg Ex. Com. The body it set up was called the All-Russian Central Executive Committee of the Soviets of Workers' and Soldiers' Deputies (the Central Ex. Com.). It was to consist of 300 members, of whom half were to be elected by the Congress from anyone it liked—of the 'most worthy'. One hundred members had to be local provincial workers: they were supposed to return home or to specially designated points at once to carry on their work as plenipotentiaries of the Central Soviet organ. The remaining fifty people were to be taken from the Petersburg Ex. Com.

The Central Ex. Com., minus its 100 provincial members, was to be permanently active with 200, while on special occasions it was supposed to convoke an emergency plenum. This was most convenient for the ruling clique: any decision it liked could be declared so important or so controversial that it would have to be shelved 'until the plenum of the Central Ex. Com.'

The Central Ex. Com. membership included, of course, both Kerensky and Lenin. But they never came once. In general a good half was made up of dead souls, who scarcely ever appeared

¹ For Trotsky's comments on this see Appendix III to Volume I of his *History of the Russian Revolution*. (Ed.)

in the Soviet centre. No importance was ascribed to it, and it was not taken seriously; no one felt that this body could have any effect on the destinies of the revolution.

Having left in its place its plenipotentiary organ to guard the revolution, the Congress had finished its programme. It quietly closed on June 24th, after working for three weeks and a few days.

CHAPTER 19

THE COALITION SPLITS UNDER STRESS

ALL over the country disorders, anarchy, seizures, violence, and 'republics' still continued; people took the law into their own hands, soldiers mutinied, and regiments disbanded.

In Petersburg, among other things, the anarchists were intensifying their 'activity'. They had a territorial base on the Vyborg Side, in the distant and secluded villa of the former Tsarist Minister Durnovo. They had seized this villa long before and held it firmly. This anarchist nest enjoyed an enviable reputation in the capital as a sort of Brocken, where the powers of evil assembled, witches' Sabbaths were held, and there were orgies, plots, dark and sinister and doubtless bloody doings. Of course no one doubted that Durnovo's mysterious villa was stocked with bombs and all sorts of weapons. The official and Soviet authorities understandably looked askance at this indecent spot in the heart of the very capital, but—without sufficient courage, they waited for an excuse and meanwhile were patient.

The anarchists had recently begun to find not a few supporters amongst the working-class masses densely settled throughout the Vyborg Side. At the same time they began to undertake offensive operations. Up to then in Petersburg they had tried to seize only dwelling-houses, from which they were quickly evicted. But on June 5th they decided to make an attempt to set up an anarchist régime in some industrial enterprise. For this experiment they chose the magnificent printing-plant of the muddle-headed yellow paper *Russkaya Volya* (Russian Freedom).

About seventy armed men appeared at the printing-plant, occupied all the entrances and exits, and told the local workers that from now on the plant was theirs. The workers, however, were not sufficiently sympathetic, and the authorities, in the person of some Ex. Com. members, turned up at the spot of the anarchist revolution.

The anarchists arrested the management, dismissed the

workers, and refused to leave the plant. While negotiations were going on they printed their own proclamation, in which they declared they were killing two birds: liquidating a vulgar newspaper and giving its own property back to the people. An enormous excited mob collected around the building. Two companies of soldiers were sent; they occupied the adjacent street and didn't know what else to do.

Then the matter came, not very appropriately, before the Soviet Congress itself. The Congress immediately passed an emergency resolution—condemning the seizure and suggesting the evacuation of the occupied premises. That evening the anarchists 'surrendered' under the double pressure of the Congress and a passive siege. A few dozen men were disarmed, arrested, and brought to—the Military Academy, where they were kept under guard. The next day the *Rech* flew into a rage: why had the prisoners been brought to the Congress? Surely there were more suitable premises? Weren't there any lawful authorities, a lawful court and justice? But these were all empty questions.

* * *

In any case, after this the legal authorities decided to act. On June 7th the Minister of Justice prepared to evict the Anarchist-Communists from the Durnovo villa. They were given twenty-four hours' notice.

On the morning of June 8th twenty-eight factories on the Vyborg Side came out on strike, and crowds, processions, and armed workers' detachments began moving towards the Durnovo villa. An enormous mass-meeting formed, and delegates were sent to the Ex. Com. to ask it to take steps against the eviction and secure to the 'toiling people' the possession of the villa. The Ex. Com. met the delegation quite coldly. Then another delegation was sent from the Durnovo villa, this time with a declaration that the anarchists would defend the villa themselves, if necessary by force of arms.

This might not have been an empty threat: the Vyborg Side was in the right mood and had enough arms. Then the Ex. Com. once again referred the question to the Congress.

Meanwhile the direct executor of the sentence, the Procurator Bessarabov, arrived at the Durnovo villa. He got into the

building without much difficulty and found an unexpected sight. He discovered nothing either dreadful or mysterious: the rooms were in perfect order; there was nothing dilapidated or broken, and the only disorder was that a great number of chairs and arm-chairs had been put into the largest room and destroyed the harmony of the ministerial background by their heterogeneous appearance: the room was meant for lectures and meetings.

The crowd showed no aggressiveness, giving the Procurator another surprise. The Durnovo villa, empty and deserted, really had been occupied by the Anarchist-Communists; but now there were all kinds of organizations there that had nothing to do with the anarchists: a bakers' trade union, a People's Militia organization, etc. They had nowhere else to go. The villa's enormous garden, always thronged with children, served as a resting-place for the whole workers' district nearby. All this explained a good deal of the popularity of the Durnovo villa on the Vyborg Side.

So the 'legal authorities' had to go back on their word, explaining that the Minister's decision did not concern either the garden or any organization except the anarchists, amongst whom lurked 'criminal elements'. The authorities also muttered something about provocation by irresponsible people, who were exciting the workers and attempting to force the authorities to shed blood. But for the time being it was best to smooth over the affair. These problematic criminal elements were obviously not worth a wave of strikes and excitement in the capital.

But the affair was already being aired in the supreme organ of the whole democracy. Through the efforts of the zealous servant of 'the legal authorities', the All-Russian Congress again interrupted its labours to turn to police functions.

The hue and cry was raised. As usual it had by no means the results counted on by the sage politicians of the petty-bourgeois majority. The anarchists did not submit but stayed on at the villa; and amongst the Petersburg proletariat the police exploits of the 'Congress of the whole democracy' of course had a depressing effect. In the eyes of the workers the Soviet majority and its leaders were changing hourly from a theoretical adversary into a class enemy. Lenin was reaping a rich harvest.

The Bolshevik Central Committee controlled most of the Workers' Section in the Soviet, as well as the majority of the Petersburg proletariat. In addition, the organizations closest to the workers—the Factory Committees—were now united in a single centre, completely forgotten by the official Soviet and fully in the power of the Bolsheviks. They acted as feelers among all the working class of the capital.

But from one hour to the next a similar situation was being produced amongst the troops of the Petersburg garrison. For some time now the Bolshevik *Military Organization* had been successfully operating under the careful supervision of Lenin himself. This organ did not restrict itself to propaganda and agitation: it had managed to spread a fairly good organizational network over both capital and provinces, as well as at the front. It had also made a good many converts amongst junior officers. And in Petersburg, in addition to the 1st Machine-Gun Regiment, the Bolsheviks now had others too: the Moscow, the Grenadiers, the 1st Reserve, the Pavlovsky, the Michael Artillery School with its big guns, and others. There were also Bolshevik organizations in the other regiments. If these were as a whole against Lenin, they were not for Chernov-Tsereteli, and even less for the Provisional Government. They were 'for the Soviet' in general. There's no doubt of this.

In any case the Petersburg garrison was no longer fighting material. It was not a garrison but half-disintegrated military cadres. And in so far as they were not actively for the Bolsheviks, they were—with the exception of two or three regiments—indifferent, neutral, and useless for active operations either on the foreign or on the domestic front.

The ruling Soviet bloc had already let the masses of the soldiers slip through its fingers: the Bolsheviks had taken a strong hold on some sections and were hourly penetrating deeper into the others.

* * *

And now things began to happen. . . At the evening session of the Congress on the 9th Chkheidze took the floor for an emergency statement. He said big demonstrations were scheduled in Petersburg for the next day, Saturday June 10th; the Congress might have to sit all night; if it didn't take the right steps the next day would be fatal.

Chkheidze's statement, though not quite clear, was extremely impressive, and aroused the greatest excitement amongst the delegates. There was a great hubbub, exclamations, questions from the floor. Everyone demanded information about exactly what had happened. To calm the delegates and give them information privately an adjournment had to be announced. The delegates separated into fractions and groups, and this is what they found out about the situation in the capital.

The disturbances on the Vyborg Side had not subsided since the day before. And indeed these disturbances had not begun the day before, with the eviction of the anarchists: they were tied up with the general dissatisfaction of the workers and their distressing condition. For some days now obscure rumours had been going around the city about some sort of 'demonstrations' by the Petersburg workers—against the Government and its supporters. Now the unrest had seized all the working-class parts of the capital, and especially Basil Island, where the Congress was in session. And in the Durnovo villa there sat a special assembly of workers' delegates, which had announced an armed demonstration against the Provisional Government for the next day. Kronstadt had also sent representatives to this meeting.

But it goes without saying that matters were not restricted to the kindling of the workers' elemental instincts. Without the interference of solid workers' centres the situation could not have become so acute at this moment.

And the Bolsheviks, of course, were such a centre. On June 9th proclamations signed by the Bolshevik Central Committee and the Central Bureau of the Factory Committees were pasted up in the working-class districts. These proclamations summoned the Petersburg proletariat to a peaceful demonstration against the counter-revolution at 2 o'clock on June 10th.

This proclamation was very important. It won't hurt to become familiar with it. First, in powerful fighting language it gave an acute and accurate description of the general state of affairs and of the Coalition Government. Then, referring to the rights of free citizens, it called for a protest against the policy of the Coalition. The slogans of the demonstrations were these: 'Down with the Tsarist Duma!' 'Down with the Ten Minister-Capitalists!' 'All Power to the All-Russian Soviet of Workers',

Soldiers' and Peasants' Deputies!' 'Long Live the Control and Organization of Industry!' 'End the War!' 'Neither a Separate Peace with Wilhelm nor Secret Treaties with the French and British Capitalists!' 'Bread, Peace, Freedom!'

I don't know whether the proclamation was in the hands of the Congress delegates on the 9th. But in any case, it was known to them that the 1st Machine-Gun Regiment, the Izmailovsky, and some others had decided to take part in the demonstration. Consequently, the demonstration proved in fact to be *armed*. This naturally heightened the excitement.

It must be said, however, that the bulk of the delegates were wrought up largely through the efforts of the Praesidium, the ruling circles, and their hangers-on in the capital. These circles had really fallen into a panic and tried to infect the Congress with it, but they lacked enough facts. News came to the Star Chamber that the demonstration was supposedly known to be armed. Then there were obscure rumours about some special plans of the Bolsheviks. The main source of this information was said to be Lieber. But nothing at all definite was known. Meanwhile a pacific demonstration by no means seemed such a dreadful thing to the mass of delegates. All Russia, after all, was constantly demonstrating in those days. The provinces had all become accustomed to street demonstrations. And in Petersburg too, in those same days, the 'over-forties' and the women were demonstrating—in general everyone was demonstrating who wasn't too lazy! No permission was required. Up to then the Soviet hadn't stopped anyone (aside from some special cases in April) and any group could come out into the street and 'enjoy the rights of free citizens'.

The cause of the alarm amongst the leaders was not entirely clear to the mass of delegates. Those who were not particularly timid soon expressed their dissatisfaction: the All-Russian Congress had not met to deal with one local affair after another; if any disorders were being prepared it was up to the local Petersburg Soviet, not to the Congress, to prevent them.

And, of course, this was an elementary truth. Between the masses in the capital and Soviet circles there was not only no ideological contact or organic ties, there were no relations at all. The Ex. Com., quietly expiring in the Tauride Palace, was

absolutely impotent. And it was appealing to the Congress as the last resort.

For its part the 'legal Government', on the evening of the 9th, was taking steps. It 'enjoined calm on the populace', and promised to 'suppress' any attempts at violence with all the strength of the State.

This, of course, was all nonsense. They had no strength. But patrols were driving about the city, showing the state of alarm in the capital.

At the same time it was asserted that it was not only a question of the Bolsheviki, but that monarchist elements were also preparing to 'come out' simultaneously. 'Rumours' kept coming from all sides. The delegates, wandering about the rooms and corridors, were excited and worn out in the heated atmosphere.

The Congress met again in the Military Academy at 12.30 a.m. The Bolshevik fraction showed some confusion. It was evidently rather at sea about the affairs of the capital and of its own leaders. And the leaders were absent. Lenin, Zinoviev and Kamenev were busy with important matters elsewhere. Trotsky was also absent. Krylenko¹ was on the platform of the Praesidium for the Bolshevik fraction, and the Interdistrictite Lunacharsky was acting on its behalf.

The Chairman proposed to create a bureau for resolute action against any who declared war on the Congress. Lunacharsky entered it, but he said he would leave if it started a direct struggle. He added that the Bolsheviki had empowered him to emphasize the pacific character of the proposed demonstration. Krylenko for his part protested against the actions of the Congress: why was it carrying out its decisions without entering into negotiations with the Bolsheviki, who would gladly meet it half-way?

Kerensky said unequivocally: 'The rumours about troops drawn into Petersburg from the front, to fight against the workers, are completely false. There is not a single soldier in Petersburg who does not belong to the garrison of the capital.

¹ Krylenko, Nikolai Vasilyevich (1885-1937): leader in the student movement (1905-08). Repeatedly arrested; after the October Revolution, in which he played an active part, became People's Minister of Justice, and then State's Attorney. Was Prosecutor at many state trials, including the 1931 Trial of the Mensheviks. Vanished in 1937. (Ed.)

The troops, on my orders, are moving and will move only from the rear to the front, to fight against the foreign enemies of the revolution. But the other way round, from the front to the rear, to fight against the workers—never!

Splendid. We'll keep that in mind. . . Martov also spoke, against the disorganizing activities of the Bolsheviks, but exhorting the Congress to calm and *sang-froid*.

Then, of course, a new proclamation to the soldiers and workers was passed, followed by an appeal that no one should go to the demonstration the next day and by a ban on street meetings and processions for the next three days.

This did not finish the work of the Congress on the eve of June 10th. The delegates were divided up among the Petersburg districts and sent out to the factories, regiments, and companies to prevent the demonstration. The delegates worked all night. It was agreed to meet at the Tauride Palace at 8 o'clock that morning for an accounting. At 2 o'clock in the afternoon a meeting was also scheduled there for all battalion committees of the capital garrison—on the question of armed troop demonstrations.

But it will be asked what the chief heroes of the day and the authors of the turmoil were doing at this time. To summon a pacific demonstration with any slogans they liked was their inalienable right. But for some hours now the sharply negative will of the Congress and of the Soviet majority concerning their enterprise had been absolutely clear.

Now, how were the Bolsheviks reacting to this? The activity of the Bolshevik centres was of course cloaked in deep secrecy. No one knew anything of what Lenin, Zinoviev, Kamenev, and Stalin, who had been hiding away from the Congress somewhere, were doing or thinking. And, by the way, where was Trotsky, who two days before had been calling for twelve Peshkhnovs, and now had also vanished from the Congress to avoid taking a stand on the question of the demonstration? None of them, of course, was sleeping that night. But Catiline did not report his machinations to Cicero.

* * *

Early next morning the Congress delegates learned of some of the results of the nocturnal labours of the Bolshevik leaders.

Krylenko had obviously known what he was saying that night at the Congress: the Bolsheviks really came half-way to meet the ruling Soviet majority. That night their Central Committee *cancelled* the demonstration.

At 9 o'clock in the morning of June 10th, the delegates who had spent the night among the Petersburg masses began crowding into the Tauride Palace: a conference opened in the White Hall. The first part, dealing with 'principles', was brief but extremely typical. Lunacharsky reported the cancellation of the demonstration and told the history of the whole affair. The demonstration had actually been initiated at the Durnovo villa, where a self-appointed committee representing ninety factories was in session. As for the Bolsheviks, they were against it, and in any case today there wouldn't be one. The incident was liquidated; now they ought to put a stop to the inter-party quarrel, forgetting the mistakes of the past for the sake of the tasks ahead.

Lunacharsky's information was clearly not authentic. The Bolshevik centre had made no bones about leading him astray. But his conclusions were not only honest and humanly sensible but also the only correct ones politically. However, he was immediately attacked by Dan—not for his information, but precisely for his conclusions.

'After everything that's happened unctuousness is out of place,' declared the venerable member of the Star Chamber. 'Once for all we have to finish with a situation in which such unexpected complications are possible. There must be a careful investigation to show who is to blame. . .'

Dan's speech was drowned in applause. Lunacharsky tried to explain again that it was not a question of who was responsible, nor of the Bolsheviks, pursuit of whom would simply exacerbate the situation. The most profound discontent among the workers had been aroused by general causes, which ought to be paid attention to.

Summed up before us in a nutshell were the classic inter-relationships between the Government and the Opposition, or—between a rootless dictatorship and the champions of democracy. The situation was acute; but for the blind rulers there was no doubt of the correctness of their path to the truth and no obstacles except malefactors.



THREE BOLSHEVIK LEADERS: TROTSKY, LENIN, KAMENEV

Trotsky was now there too. He was vigorously urged to the platform, but he held his tongue and didn't go. Why?

The second, *informational* part of this conference was equally interesting. The delegates who had spent the night among the Petersburg masses reported on the situation in the regiments and factories. These reports seemed to leave no doubt that the Coalition's cause could not be improved by looking for the malefactors or taking reprisals against them. About fifteen speakers succeeded one another on the platform—supporters of the Coalition and of the ruling Soviet bloc. They all said roughly the same thing:

The delegates were met everywhere with extreme unfriendliness and allowed to pass only after lengthy disputes. On the Vyborg Side there was nothing but Bolsheviks and Anarchists. Neither the Congress nor the Petersburg Soviet had the slightest authority. They were spoken of just like the Provisional Government: the Menshevik-SR majority had sold itself to the bourgeoisie and the imperialists; the Provisional Government was a counter-revolutionary gang. In particular people at the Durnovo villa had declared that the decision of the Congress didn't mean anything and that the demonstration would take place. On Basil Island it was the same thing. 'Demonstrating' was extremely popular amongst the workers, and held out the only real hopes for a change. Among the regiments the Congress was proclaimed a gang of landlords and capitalists, or their hirelings; the liquidation of the Coalition Government was considered urgent. Only the Bolsheviks were trusted, and whether the demonstration took place or not depended solely on the Bolshevik Central Committee. The Socialist Ministers were sneered at as traitors and hirelings.

There was hardly any information of a different character; one or two exceptions served to confirm the rule. In any case the delegates' impressions boiled down to this: there was no possibility of holding back the working-class masses; if the demonstration were prevented today, it was inevitable tomorrow; there could be no contact, reconciliation, or agreement between the working class of the capital and the ruling Soviet bloc.

The foundation of the Coalition was splitting at every seam.

Nevertheless June 10th passed without any demonstrations. In the course of the day the Ex. Com. and the Star Chamber received a whole series of reassuring reports. In many factories and military units resolution against the scheduled demonstration were passed. There were even a few reluctant expressions of loyalty to the All-Russian Congress of Soviets.

The spirits of the Star Chamber went up. It evidently took the exceptions to be the rule, and the military organizations for the masses of the soldiers, while the Socialist Ministers laid confidence in the Congress to their own account, that is, the account of the entire Coalition.

But did the Soviet leaders pull themselves up? Did they think of taking advantage of the breathing-spell to change the Coalition policy and proceed resolutely towards the fulfilment of a programme of peace, bread, and land?

Alas! The wisdom of the Star Chamber was accessible to only one kind of measure. Having overcome their panic and plucked up their courage, the Menshevik-SR leaders flung themselves into an offensive against the Bolsheviks.

On Sunday June 11th, around 5 in the afternoon, in one of the classrooms of the Military Academy, a closed joint session of the highest Soviet Institutions, the Ex. Com., the Praesidium of the Congress, and the Bureau of each of its fractions, was called. In all about 100 people were there, including the majority of the Soviet party leaders. Trotsky was there too; I don't remember Zinoviev, but Lenin of course was absent.

It will be remembered that the object of the meeting was known only to the intimates of the Star Chamber. But the atmosphere was extremely tense and saturated with passion. There was no longer merely excitement here, but also bitter hatred. It was obvious that the ruling clique was preparing some surprise.

At the chairman's table, the teacher's desk, sat Chkheidze; he announced that the question of the demonstration that hadn't taken place the day before would be debated. Some of his intimates, or simply pushful people, were sitting on primitive benches or standing around the chairman, in an untidy-looking fashion. The others, distributed at the pupils' desks, were waiting in concentrated silence to see what would happen.

It seemed that a 'Special Commission' had been formed to prepare this conference. Dan spoke in its name.

'The Bolshevik action,' he said, 'was a political adventure. In future, demonstrations of individual parties ought to be permitted only with the knowledge and approval of the Soviet. Military units as such may take part only in demonstrations arranged by the Soviets. Parties which do not submit to these requirements ought to be excluded from the Soviets.'

The point of all this was elementary. In the Soviets the Bolsheviks were in a minority; by introducing a licensing system for demonstrations the 'Special Commission' was putting Bolsheviks in the power of the Mensheviks and SRs and practically depriving them of the right to demonstrate. This was done to stop the Bolshevik criminals from using the right of demonstration for uprisings like the one in April, or for any other schemes against the ruling bloc. It was actually a special decree directed against the Bolsheviks.

The wisdom of the Star Chamber was incapable of devising anything more for the salvation of the revolution. But Dan had forgotten Camille Desmoulins's winged words: A decree cannot prevent the seizure of the Bastille. If it was a question of an uprising, then—good God! how comical it was to try to fight it with a decree, even a special one.

But Dan also forgot something else, no less vital. As ironical exclamations, protests, sarcasms and laughter began in the hall, a very Right-wing Menshevik, the worker Bulkin, reminded him of this elementary fact. He said that times change, and today's majority might turn out to be tomorrow's minority. It might turn out that it was preparing to repress itself and introducing into revolutionary practice methods of political struggle that would result badly for their initiators.

This, of course, was the sacred truth, but still not all: the transformation of the majority into a minority and *vice versa* was not only possible; it was *inevitable* in the very near future. And for those who knew the Bolsheviks as well as Dan and his comrades knew them, one would think it must have been clear that in the event of a real victory of Lenin the ruling bloc would not have too good a time of it. . . . But nothing was clear to the Menshevik-SR leaders. They were blind as owls at high noon.

The conference wanted to hear the Bolsheviks themselves.

Kamenev responded. He tried to be calm, sober, and ironical—under the gaze of a majority filled with hatred and contempt. He even tried to take the offensive. What—in reality—was all the fuss about? A pacific demonstration had been scheduled, which flowed out of the right of the revolution and had never been forbidden before by anyone. Then the demonstration had been cancelled, simply because the Congress wished it. Where, in all this, was there even the shadow of illegality in the first place, or disloyalty in the second?

I think Kamenev's argument was completely clear and convincing. It evidently appeared incontestable to a very great many. But for some reason his irony was unsuccessful. One would have thought he knew how to be in the minority and was used to glances of hatred, but he was strangely pale and agitated, and his state of mind was communicated to the whole group of Bolsheviks.

Kamenev was asked a series of questions. But Tsereteli leaped up and demanded that the questioning should cease: it was not a matter of details, and the entire problem required to be stated quite differently. Tsereteli was just as pale as Kamenev, and, agitated as never before, was hopping violently from one foot to the other. He was plainly preparing to say something really out of the ordinary.

And as a matter of fact it was already out of the ordinary for Tsereteli to speak against Dan in public: in the 'Special Commission' he had evidently been in the minority and was now appealing to the meeting. Dan's resolution was of no use at all; Tsereteli waved a contemptuous hand at it. What was needed now was something else, also very much out of the ordinary.

'What has happened', he cried, the vein on his temple swelling up, 'is nothing but a plot against the revolution, a conspiracy for the overthrow of the Government and the seizure of power by the Bolsheviks, who know that they can never get this power in any other way. The conspiracy was rendered harmless when we discovered it. But it may be repeated tomorrow. They say that counter-revolution has lifted its head. That's not true. Counter-revolution has not raised its head, but lowered it. Counter-revolution can penetrate to us only through one door: through the Bolsheviks. What the Bolsheviks are doing now is no longer ideological propaganda, it is a plot. The weapon of

criticism is being replaced by criticism with weapons. Let the Bolsheviks accuse us as they will, now we shall go over to other methods of struggle. Those revolutionaries who cannot worthily wield their arms must have those arms taken away. The Bolsheviks must be disarmed. We will not permit any conspiracies. . .'

Tsereteli sat down. A tempest swept over the meeting—complete consternation. Some were overwhelmed by the extraordinary content of Tsereteli's words, others by their strangeness and lack of clarity. The Opposition demanded an explanation. Kamenev cried out: 'Mr. Minister, if you're not talking wildly don't confine yourself to words, arrest me and try me for plotting against the revolution!'

Tsereteli was silent. The handful of Bolsheviks all noisily got to their feet and left the hall protesting. . .

But even without the Bolsheviks there was still someone left to pick a bone with Tsereteli. The Interdistrictite Trotsky remained in the hall. Martov asked for the floor at once. But even amongst the majority the mood was far from favourable to Minister Tsereteli. Some officer, completely shaken up by what had happened, let out hysterical shrieks. A general attack was launched on two fronts: both against the Bolsheviks and against Tsereteli.

First of all—what special information had Mr. Minister in fact? If definite information of an attempt at a *coup d'état* exists—then communicate it. If not, don't draw these conclusions. Then, what do you mean by conspiracy? Is it the malevolence of a clique towards the Provisional Government and the existing order? In your blindness you can think as you please, but to anyone with eyes it's obvious that we are faced by a vast popular movement, that this can only be a question of an uprising on the part of the proletarian and soldier masses of the capital, and that no repressing of *cliques* or even of *parties* can help. What is needed here is a change of régime, martial law and an iron hand with the workers. The only logical thing now is a *bourgeois dictatorship*, and the end of the revolution.

Tsereteli proposed '*disarming the Bolsheviks*'. What did that actually mean? Removing some special arsenal that the Bolshevik Central Committee possessed? Nonsense—the Bolsheviks, after all, had no special stores of arms: all arms were in

the hands of the soldiers and workers, the great mass of whom followed the Bolsheviki. Disarming the Bolsheviki could only mean disarming the proletariat. More than that, it meant the troops. This was not only bourgeois dictatorship, but also childish nonsense. Perhaps it meant setting brother against brother in the workers' camp, dividing the proletariat into white and black, handing out arms according to party labels—or perhaps creating special cadres of Praetorians for Tsereteli and Tereshchenko?

Well, all right. Let us grant that this is a splendid programme. But the question arises how to realise it. Was Tsereteli going to take arms away from the proletarian-soldier masses with his own hand, to throw them at Tereshchenko's feet? 'We shall go over to other methods.' But how?

In Petersburg there were of course very many workers and even more soldiers who would not take part in a Bolshevik conspiracy, or overthrow the Coalition by armed force. But where was there even a shadow of reason to think that with these arms they would advance against their comrades, the soldiers and workers of the neighbouring factories and regiments?

It was even plainer that the *Bolshevik* workers and units would not willingly hand over the rifles given them by the revolution. They could be disarmed only by *force*, which didn't exist. Mr. Minister's programme was a utopia.

In the course of the debate Martov recalled Cavour's remark that any donkey could govern by means of a state of siege. That's how the Bolsheviki governed later on. Alas! It would have been beyond Tsereteli's capacity even with the help of a siege.

I don't remember all the course of this 'historic' meeting. But in any case it should not be thought that the Minister of Posts and Telegraphs was left without support. Still in the same taut atmosphere, saturated with passions, there came to his aid the sworn Bolshevik-eater, the rabid Lieber, on the point of bursting. He was undoubtedly the principal source of information concerning the conspiracy. I have no idea where he got his information, or just what he'd heard. But here at the meeting, in any case, he had no more to tell than Tsereteli. His support didn't consist of any new information but in deepening the statesmanlike wisdom of his leader. Raising two fingers, he fell

on the Bolsheviks with the ferocity of a famished beast, in a sort of sensual ecstasy. Hopping on the tips of his toes, shrilling away and working on the nerves of his audience, he frenziedly demanded the most 'decisive measures'—the repression, eradication, and punishment of all the disobedient workers with all the means at the State's disposal.

Suddenly, from the bench where Martov was sitting, there was heard the word 'Merzavets!' [scoundrel].

The hall gasped and then froze, and so did the chairman and the speaker himself. The atmosphere was incandescent, this kind of 'exchange of ideas' in the revolution was still unheard of.

Later it appeared that the epithet Martov had hurled at Lieber was not 'merzavets' but 'versalets' [i.e., Versaillesan]. It was not a term of abuse, but a description. And an absolutely accurate one.

The debates lasted many hours, to the point of total exhaustion. But the results were not clear. The meeting was interrupted and not re-opened until night. The passage of Dan's resolution was secured, but Tsereteli refused to be reconciled and insisted on the acceptance of other, non-verbal measures. He fought with characteristic energy, one might say desperately. Unceremoniously abusing his ministerial position he was continually taking the floor out of order. Finally I could no longer endure it and shouted at him some phrase like the one flung by Louvet at Danton, when the latter began to speak without the Chairman's permission: 'You are not yet king, Danton!' Tsereteli was silent for a few seconds, shuffling from one foot to the other, not knowing how to express his contempt, then he snapped, shrugging his shoulders, 'I'm not speaking to the Sukhanovs!'

Nevertheless he failed to convince the others either. I don't recall exactly how the meeting ended, at early dawn: but the fact is that in general it agreed with the *majority* of the Star Chamber and not with its extremist leader.

* * *

At the end of the June 12th session Bogdanov took the floor for an emergency resolution in the name of the Praesidium. His resolution was interesting; I later learned that Dan had

originated it. It was proposed to organize an 'official Soviet workers' and peasants' peaceful demonstration the following Sunday, June 18th, in Petersburg, and in other cities as far as possible. At this tense moment of internal struggle in the Soviet it ought to illustrate the unity of the democracy and its strength in the face of the common enemy. The slogans of this demonstration ought to be only those common to all Soviet parties. In the opinion of those proposing the resolution these slogans were: the unification of the democracy around the Soviets, peace without annexations or indemnities, and the earliest convocation of the Constituent Assembly.

The idea of this demonstration revealed the triumph of a softer line within the Star Chamber with respect to the Bolsheviks. In any case the June 18th demonstration was the tribute of vice to virtue. The resolution was, of course, passed in the absence of the Bolsheviks. It goes without saying that the Bolsheviks had no grounds for objection either. Let us see what came of it.

* * *

At that time, in the summer of 1917, the truth about the abortive demonstration of June 10th seemed to be exactly what I have described in the preceding pages. But now, just three years later, I can add the following. What the Bolsheviks said at meetings, and what *Pravda* printed, was in any case not the entire truth about the demonstration. A few people 'instinctively' divined the real truth, but nobody knew it except a dozen or so Bolsheviks. I personally learned it very much later, not before 1920.

There was no real *conspiracy*. Neither strategic dispositions nor plans for the occupation of the city and its individual points and institutions were worked out. Nor on the other hand do I think the *political* intentions of the insurgents were any more developed. Nevertheless the smoke was not without fire.

It is essential to understand clearly that a Bolshevik 'plot' or uprising, if it had taken place at that time, would have had an irrefragable logic. What objective goal could it have had? Of its *negative* aspect there could be no doubt—the Coalition must be annihilated, a thing which could not have been easier in itself. But from a positive point of view? This was—verbally—expressed by the words: 'All Power to the Soviets'. But the

Soviets, after all, were all at hand, in the form of the Congress. They stood *for* the Coalition and were categorically refusing power. To force power on them against their will was impossible. An uprising *might* have pushed them into taking power, but it was more likely that it would have rallied Soviet-bourgeois elements against the Bolsheviki and their slogans. In any case it was obvious that if an uprising were to be started it would have to be started not only against the bourgeoisie, but also *against the Soviet democracy*, embodied in the Congress that was its highest authority. The Petersburg proletariat and the Bolshevik regiments, as the minority that began it all, with their slogan of 'All Power to the Soviets', would have had to advance against the Soviets and the Congress. That meant that with the liquidation of the Provisional Government, the power could have passed only to the *Bolshevik Central Committee*, that had initiated the uprising.

But the Bolsheviki had not begun an uprising aimed directly at this goal. The dense smoke that went on curling around us for a long time after June 10th came from a little fire burning around Lenin in the conspiratorial chambers of the Bolshevik Central Committee. This was the situation: Lenin's group was not directly aiming at the seizure of power, but *it was ready to seize it in favourable circumstances, which it was taking steps to create.*

Speaking concretely, the target of the demonstration scheduled for June 10th was the Marian Palace, the residency of the Provisional Government. That was where the working-class detachments and the regiments loyal to the Bolsheviki were to make their way. Specially appointed individuals were to express 'popular discontent' while the Ministers were speaking, and work the masses up. When that mood was at the right temperature the Provisional Government were to be arrested on the spot. The capital, of course, was expected to react to this at once, and the Bolshevik Central Committee, under that or another name, depending on the character of the reaction, was to declare itself in power. If in the course of the 'demonstration' the mood was sufficiently favourable and the resistance of Lvov-Tsereteli was not great, that resistance was to be crushed by the force of Bolshevik regiments and arms.

According to the data of the Bolshevik 'Military Organization', it was assumed that action against the Bolsheviki would be

taken by these regiments: the Semyonovsky, the Preobrazhensky, the 9th Cavalry Reserve, the two Cossack regiments, and of course the military cadets. The Bolshevik centres regarded the four Imperial Regiments of Guards—the Izmailovsky, the Petrogradsky, the Cuxholm, and the Lithuanian—as wavering and doubtful. The Volhynian Regiment also looked unreliable. But in any case these regiments were considered not an active hostile force but merely neutral. It was thought they wouldn't come out either for or against a revolt. The Finnish Regiment, which not long before had been the chattel of non-Bolshevik internationalists, ought to observe at least a *benevolent* neutrality. The Armoured Division, an extremely important part of the garrison and a first-class factor in an uprising, was in those days evenly divided between Lenin and Tsereteli; but if the matter was decided by a majority of its personnel then the workshops definitely gave Lenin the advantage.

As for the regiments that were completely loyal to the Bolsheviks, and ready to serve as an active force in the revolt, they were the following: the 1st and 2nd Machine-Gun Regiments, the Moscow, the Grenadiers, the 1st Reserve, the Pavlovsky, the 180th (which had a substantial number of Bolshevik officers), the garrison of the Peter-Paul Fortress, and rank-and-file of the Michael Artillery School, which *had the artillery*. It must be remarked that all these units were located on the Petersburg and the Vyborg Sides, around the Bolshevik centre, Kshesinskaya's house. In addition, active support for the uprising ought to come from the suburbs: first, Kronstadt; then Peterhof, where the 3rd Army Reserve Regiment, which the Bolsheviks controlled, was stationed, and Krasnoe Selo, with the 176th Regiment, where the Interdistrictites were firmly established. If necessary these units could have been summoned to Petersburg at once.

All these 'insurrectionary' regiments, taken together, were to crush the resistance of the Soviet-Coalition armed forces, terrorize the Nevsky Prospect and the lower middle classes of the capital, and serve as the real support of a new Government. The above-mentioned leader of the 1st Machine-Gun Regiment, 2nd Lieutenant Semashko, was appointed commander-in-chief of all the armed forces of the 'insurrectionaries'.

On the military-technical side the success of the revolt was

practically assured. In this respect the Bolshevnik organization was already competent even then.

In the *political* core of the 'uprising', the Central Committee, the matter was put, as we have seen, conditionally, optionally. The revolt and the seizure of power ought to be accomplished, given a favourable conjuncture of circumstances. Here there was embodied in action what Lenin had said at the Congress three days before: that *the Bolshevnik Party was ready to take power into its hands alone at any moment*. But *readiness* to take power into one's hands means only a mood, a political attitude. It still does not mean a definite intention to take power at a *given moment*. The Bolshevnik Central Committee could not make up its mind to put the question in *that* way. It had simply decided to create conditions favourable to a violent reversal of the situation. And this excellently reflected its vacillations during those days. It was willing, but hesitant. It was both ready, and not ready; it could and it could not.

The waverings of the Bolshevnik Central Committee reflected the position of its individual members, the focal personalities of the Bolshevism of the time. It is understandable that the more their temperament and will to action dominated their common sense the less they wavered. Stalin, supported by Stasova and also by all those who, while not in central positions, were in the know, and thought that a whiff of powder would not pollute the revolutionary atmosphere, stood inexorably for the overthrow of the Government. Lenin occupied an *intermediate*, most unstable and opportunistic position—the same as the official position of the Central Committee. Kamenev, of course, and I think Zinoviev, were *against* the seizure of power. Of this pair of cronies one—*soit dit*—had been a Menshevik and the other, in addition to his great abilities, possessed the well-known qualities of the cat and the rabbit. I don't know who else of the Bolshevnik leaders determined the fate of the overturn at that time.

On the night of the 9th, when 'the conspiracy was discovered', the persons mentioned, in accordance with the plan they had adopted, were discussing the question of *cancelling the demonstration*. Stalin was against cancellation; he thought that the opposition of the Congress by no means altered the objective conjuncture, and that Cicero was to be expected to 'forbid' Catiline to act. From his point of view Stalin was right. On the

other hand, the 'cronies', of course, stood for submission to the Congress and for cancelling the demonstration. But it was naturally Lenin who decided the matter. In his opportunistic mood he was given a push and—indecisively held back. The 'demonstration' was called off.

What was the Interdistrictite Trotsky's rôle in all this business? I don't know anything about it. Two or three days before the 'demonstration' Lenin had said publicly that he was ready to take the whole power into his own hands, but Trotsky said at the same time that he wanted to see twelve Peshekhonovs in power. There's a difference there. Nevertheless I think Trotsky was attracted to the affair of June 10th. I have no other grounds for this than some features of his behaviour: while they may be insufficient to characterize his attitude they show very clearly that he was *informed*, and also that Lenin even then was not inclined to enter a decisive battle without this dubious Interdistrictite. For Trotsky, like Lenin, was a monumental partner in the monumental game, and in Lenin's own party, after himself, there was nothing for a very, very, very long time.

Such was the June 10th affair, one of the most significant episodes of the revolution.¹

It was 'favourably' liquidated by the Star Chamber with the help of the Congress and the Petersburg Soviet. But obviously this changed nothing in the general political conjuncture. The leaders didn't recover their sight, the rulers did not change, the temper of the masses remained as before. The capital was plainly living on a volcano. The Government was 'ruling' in the Marian Palace; the Congress and its sections were carrying on 'organic labours' in the Military Academy. All this, however, could hide the real perspective only from the most case-hardened philistines, while the essence of the situation lay in this, that now, in the cracks that had split the democracy asunder, the shadow of the barricades could be most distinctly seen.

Passions went on seething in the Military Academy. Both sides were preparing for a review of strength in the official Soviet demonstration of June 18th.

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¹ Trotsky has some special comments on this episode in Appendix III to Vol. I of his *History*. (Ed.)

Around this time Dr. Manukhin turned up in the Military Academy, and sought me out among the throng on urgent business.

Manukhin, as a trustworthy and well-known figure, was the prison physician at the Peter-Paul Fortress. There had already been a number of instances where Manukhin, recognizing that conditions in the Fortress were deadly for the prisoners, had demanded the transfer of some of them to other places of detention. Now he was demanding that Vyrubova, the Tsarina's famous lady-in-waiting, be transferred from the Peter-Paul. The Procurator had agreed and made all the necessary arrangements, but the Fortress garrison had said that regardless of what the practice in the past had been, in the future it would not allow any of the Tsar's servants to be transferred from the Fortress: it didn't trust the Government and didn't see any other guarantees that justice would be done on its hangmen than keeping them in the Fortress, guarded by its own bayonets. This was a sign of the times, a product of the decay of the Coalition.

The agitated Manukhin hastily explained to me why emergency measures were necessary. A mood was finally becoming defined in the garrison in favour of dealing with the prisoners arbitrarily. A kind of plot had been discovered, of which the first victim was to be Vyrubova. Only that night a number of the sentries' revolvers had been missed. A massacre was hourly to be expected.

Manukhin heatedly insisted that I go off with him to the Peter-Paul Fortress at once. As an Ex. Com. member I ought to impress on the garrison the complete inadmissibility of this kind of action, pacify it, and personally conduct Vyrubova out of the Fortress. The excursion upset my plans, but nevertheless I needed no lengthy urging. I had never yet set foot in the famous Fortress. I was tempted by the opportunity of visiting it, while the task didn't seem difficult to me. I thought the garrison would yield before the name of the Ex. Com. For greater assurance I invited Anisimov, a member of the Soviet Praesidium I ran into, to go with me: as a completely official personage it was up to him to defend Coalition law and order. A member of the Soviet Praesidium might prove more authoritative for the 'loyal' part of the garrison, while I might be useful as a representative

of the Left Opposition, which was protesting in my person against the soldiers' usurpation of authority. Essentially I had no doubt that the Government, of course, deserved no confidence; as citizens, the soldiers could and should protest against its activities and try to get rid of it, but while it was still in power, they, as *soldiers*, were obliged to execute its orders. In any case the arbitrary behaviour of individual groups should cease; workers and soldiers could make policy only according to the will of the Soviet. That had always been my line.

In awe and trepidation I passed through the gates of the Russian Bastille, past stalwart sentries who spent a long time studying our papers. In my capacity as one of the 'authorities' I was behind the walls where the vanguard of many a Russian generation had drained their cups. Manukhin was very worried about how the garrison would meet us, and what would come of our expedition; he even doubted whether the guard would allow us into the Trubetskoy Bastion. But I was more occupied with observing my surroundings.

Everything, however, went off perfectly. The commandant, a recently-appointed, modest, young, disabled soldier, with one arm, was summoned to the crude, gloomy commandant's quarters. It was clear that he had no real contact with a garrison which was inclining towards Bolshevism, and he was quite unable to vouch for its temper. His detail hadn't expected our arrival, and had scattered in various directions on their own affairs. The commandant collected the representatives of the separate sections of the garrison, and we members of the Ex. Com. made admonitory speeches to them. Our listeners did not argue, and if they did not agree, at any rate they were ready to submit. It is true that they hinted, with a tinge of censure, at the mood of their units, which, they said, got excited over nothing and might call them to account for taking the decision on themselves. But they finally accepted the responsibility for releasing Vyubova from the fortress—if the sentries in the prison itself would only agree.

We all had to make our way at once into the Trubetskoy Bastion. There was absolutely nothing either menacing, frightening, or gloomy in the broad grass-covered square or the surrounding buildings. Led by the commandant past some tumbledown carts, rusty kettles, and other quite prosaic objects,

we came to the crude and unimpressive gate of the Trubetskoy Bastion. The sentry let us through quite indifferently.

Manukhin, who was used to these surroundings, was still uneasy; he kept hurrying on and distracting me with talk about the affair in hand. He didn't understand me; I was completely absorbed in studying the prison, fell behind the procession, and worried the slightly perplexed commandant with questions. But in a way I was quite disappointed with the prison.

We were taken to an office to which Vyubova was also to be brought. There were two or three rooms which looked not merely unprisonlike, but even unofficial, with their shabby, almost homelike furnishings. There we had to wait for some special personage who had got lost somewhere and who was the only one who had the right to penetrate under the sacred vaults, to the cells themselves.

The two-storey prison building formed a triangle. At this time only the cells of the second floor, where the office was also located, were occupied by Tsarist dignitaries. Perhaps it was in this cheerful little office that newcomers were searched with extraordinary thoroughness. A triangular little garden, overgrown with thick grass, could be seen from its windows, which looked on the interior of the triangle. A boarded walk was laid out along the walls of the triangle, around the little garden, where prisoners were walking about. In the corner, under a tree, a tiny hut could be seen, looking quite pastoral: this was the bath-house.

While waiting for the supervisor, I expressed a strong desire to go into the cells themselves and see the very entrails of the prison. The guard on duty, a soldierly-looking fellow, didn't object for his part, and merely expressed doubt that the sentry standing at the iron gate opposite the office would let me pass. But after a few words the latter did so. We entered a broad corridor that went along the outer side of the triangle, and were met by a warder who according to the old custom was in silent felt boots. He was practically the only one in all three wings. The duty guard suggested that we go into the cells and talk to the prisoners. But that would perhaps have been awkward and unsuitable, although not without interest, and I declined. But I couldn't help looking through the peep-hole into a number of

the cells. The guard and Manukhin, who was at home here, told me the names of their occupants.

For myself, quite used to imprisonment, this looking through a peephole at someone caged up was also perfectly matter-of-fact. How many friends and comrades had I seen in the course of my life *only* through a peephole! And now, when my own gaolers were before me, curiosity easily overcame squeamishness. I remember that Protopopov was sound asleep with his back to the door. Stürmer was sitting on a bunk holding a small book. And then I heard the name of an old friend of mine, Vissarionov, one of the most talented and pernicious of the Tsarist Secret Police. While he was an assistant Procurator in Moscow he used to visit my cell in the *Taganka*. Later, during the war, when he was the chief Petersburg censor, I had to turn hastily away whenever he appeared, when I visited the censor's office on *Sovremennik* and *Letopis* business: I was living in the capital illegally, and the keen eye of the Secret Policeman might have recognized me even after ten years.

Now Vissarionov, sitting at a table, was attentively reading a sheet of note-paper.

A denunciation! flashed through my mind, though in the circumstances such an occupation would have been quite meaningless.

On my request an empty cell was opened. Splendid cells in the Peter-Paul! Light, clean, and about twice as large as in a 'model' prison.

'This isn't too bad!' I summed up my impressions. 'We've seen a lot worse.'

Then we heard that Vyubova was now ready to go. We went to her cell. A pretty young woman, with a simple, typically Russian face, got up to meet us, very excited at the imminent change, as is always the case in prisons. She was on crutches, I think as a result of a railway accident.

'But I haven't a coat!' she said, naïvely and confusedly.

She had to go without one. Manukhin was extremely excited: our slow-moving procession had to get past a whole series of sentries. Indeed, the times were such that a sentry was no less important than the Minister of Justice. The sentries watched our procession rather gloomily and suspiciously, but made no attempt to detain it. Manukhin insisted that we should personally con-

duct Vyubova outside the gates of the fortress and into a prison hospital. Everything went off all right.

* * *

In the preparations of the Soviet parties for the June 18th demonstration, the ruling bloc took part without undue urgency. First of all, it had no doubts as to its victory—under an ‘official Soviet’ banner; secondly it had neither the proper attraction to the masses, nor any skill in dealing with them. In general, the Menshevik-SR bloc was at that time a model of a decaying Government, congealed in its assurance and self-satisfied blindness. The Bolsheviki, on the contrary, were feverishly busy in the entrails of the proletarian capital, ploughing up virgin soil and forming their converts into fighting columns.

But the masses were rushing to battle. The June 10th affair, not having given their temper a vent, had only exasperated them. An official Soviet demonstration, of course, did not satisfy the Bolshevik workers and soldiers in the least. Objectively—it ought to have served as a sort of safety-valve against explosion: an official Soviet demonstration was obviously of no use *against* the Soviet. But for some reason it was subjectively unsatisfactory: the worker-soldier masses, while accepting June 18th as an excuse to *display* their strength, were hoping to *employ* it in the near future.

I don't recall that the Ex. Com. made any special preparations for its own official demonstration; when the matter was raised it was in the following, peculiarly characteristic manner. On Saturday June 17th, the eve of the demonstration, in the heat of the ‘organic labour’ of the Congress, the Ex. Com. assembled in one of the uncomfortable rooms of the Military Academy. A lot of members were there, most of them on their feet with nowhere to sit, squeezing around a crude table and two or three ancient benches. The heat was suffocating, and there was an atmosphere of irritation.

I think all the leaders were present; but it was Lieber who brought up the subject of the demonstration. Once more, with uncontrolled fury, he began to tell us of the Bolshevik ‘preparations’ and the dangers that threatened freedom and the existing order. Bolshevik detachments of workers and soldiers were preparing to come armed; excesses, bloodshed, attempts to attack

the Government, were inevitable, and had to be nipped in the bud by the most determined measures: under no circumstances must arms be allowed in the streets. For this a reliable detachment must be placed at the gates of every doubtful barracks and every factory from which the demonstrators would come; if they showed themselves with weapons the reliable detachments must disarm them.

This is how the Menshevik-SR bankrupts of the Coalition, in the person of Lieber, defended freedom and order. I don't recall who else spoke for the Right in support of the Lieber recipe, but I myself lost my calm and attacked Lieber with as much fury as he had the Bolshevik traitors and plotters. I acknowledged the risk of senseless bloodshed and unauthorized activities if the streets of Petersburg were filled with arms. But it was obvious that Lieber's statesmanlike wisdom and his methods by no means prevented this, but on the contrary, made it all inevitable. After all, it was ridiculous to imagine that a detachment of workers or soldiers leaving an assembly point with arms in their hands against the Soviet's orders would hand over these arms without a struggle to a Lieberite 'national guard'. A clash was made absolutely inevitable by the very presence of a detachment blocking the way. And ten such clashes would mean tremendous bloodshed, the beginning of an absurd rebellion, and civil war created by panic and political stupidity. This was the purely practical side of the matter. As for the principle of it, things were no better.

I made a practical proposal, in view of the alarming mood of the masses, that we should at once scatter through the factories and barracks, directly explain the significance of the next day's demonstration, and try to persuade our hearers not to take arms with them, in order to avoid senseless accidental bloodshed. I was supported by many, including, if I'm not mistaken, Chernov. And that's what was decided. 'Danger' points were determined at once and two or three comrades assigned to each one, the Bolsheviks also taking part. It was decided to assemble again in the Tauride Palace that evening at 10 o'clock for each delegation to report on its expedition.

I was sent to the most ticklish spot, the Durnovo villa. I left for the mysterious nest of the terrible anarchists full of doubts. Would they let me in? Would they talk? Or, if they had any

serious plans for the following day, would they not hold me as a Soviet hostage? The mission, however, was concluded quite safely.

We went into the shady courtyard of the villa unhindered. On the steps there were no sentries, no passes were demanded, and nobody took notice of us. It was evident that outsiders who wished to could come in with complete freedom and that they often did so. We asked where we could converse officially, in the name of the Soviet, with the official representatives of the anarchist organization. We were invited into the club. The news of our arrival had spread instantaneously and we were surrounded by curious faces, with rather ironical expressions. The rooms were in order and completely furnished, though with total confusion of styles. While we waited for the official spokesmen we settled ourselves in a large room, converted into an auditorium and adorned with black banners and other anarchist emblems.

Bleichman, whom we knew as a habitual Soviet speaker, fairly quickly appeared as the representative of the local leaders. He had with him a number of people of different kinds, both workers and intellectuals. I explained the purpose of our visit, laying the main emphasis on the possibility of unfortunate incidents, unintentional excesses, and guns going off of their own accord. I told them what the Soviet insisted on and asked for an account of the intentions and views of the anarchists themselves. Bleichman replied without wasting words: for the anarchists the Soviet was quite without authority; if the Bolsheviks chose to join in its decisions that meant nothing—the Soviet was essentially the servant of the bourgeoisie and the landlords; the anarchists had no definite intentions for the next day; they would take part in the demonstration—with their black flags; and as for their coming armed—they might not, and then again they might.

The dialogue got rather long-winded. I couldn't get a more definite answer: had they decided to go armed or unarmed? Nor did either my diplomacy or my attempts at persuading them to leave their arms at home have any definite success. I kept coming up against a quite simple and yet insurmountable obstacle: it was, they said, just because they would not submit to anyone but acted as the good Lord inspired them that they were

anarchists. It was only when the official conversation became private that my interlocutors began to emit rather more soothing sounds.

'Don't worry, we're not that sort; everything will go off all right,' they said directly or obliquely.

They took us off as private guests to show us their premises. We went out into an enormous shady garden where large groups of workers were quietly strolling about. The lawns were overrun with children. There was a kiosk at the entrance where anarchist literature was sold or given away. A speaker was standing on a tall stump making a naïve speech about the ideal structure for society. Not very many people were listening to him. There was obviously more relaxation here than concern with politics. The very widespread popularity of this anarchist nest amongst working-class circles in the capital was quite understandable.

I would not have minded starting a general conversation with the local public, or perhaps even climbing up on the stump in my turn, but a warm, heavy shower started to fall; accompanied by a large and benevolent group of people, we found our car and went home.

That night the Ex. Com. reassembled in the Tauride Palace. There was quite a large crowd. The delegates reported on their visits to the unreliable places. All the reports were optimistic: the mood everywhere was 'loyal'; no excesses were expected; people were not preparing to go armed. The most doubtful point remained the Durnovo villa; but—it was hoped that 'everything would go off all right'.

I don't know just why, but suddenly, under the influence of these favourable reports, Tsereteli triumphantly addressed the Bolsheviks, especially Kamenev, in an indignantly didactic speech:

'Here we have before us now an open and honest review of the forces of the revolution. Tomorrow there will be demonstrating not separate groups but all the working class of the capital, not against the will of the Soviet, but at its invitation. Now we shall all see which the majority follows, you or us. This isn't a matter of underhand plots but a duel in the open arena. Tomorrow we shall see. . .'

Kamenev was discreetly silent. Was he as confident of his own

victory as Tsereteli of his? Was he holding his tongue for secrecy, or because he was not confident in the results of the review? I myself was not quite confident in them when I left late that night to sleep on the Petersburg Side, in the *Letopis* offices.

* * *

The next day, Sunday the 18th, I left the house around noon. As usual, I had no intention of taking part in the procession—even though it had been decided that the Congress would go in full force. . . I left for Gorky's nearby. He or some literary friend might go with me to watch the demonstration. But there were no literary people around, and Gorky said: 'The demonstration's a failure. I've heard from a number of places; only handfuls of people are marching. The streets are empty; there's nothing to see. I'm not going. . .'

Hm! Somewhere someone already had his conclusions ready. At the same time these conclusions, if correct, could be interpreted in two ways. The demonstration was a 'failure' because the revolutionary energy of the masses was drying up; they no longer wanted to come out when the Soviet called them and demand peace, etc., but to pass on to peaceful labour and finish the revolution—in spite of the exhortations of Soviet demagogues and loudmouths. It was obvious which circles, thirsting for the reaction, had been anticipating just these conclusions. . .

But there might be another interpretation: the democracy of the capital remained relatively indifferent to the demonstration because it was official, 'Soviet', and its slogans did not correspond to the mood of the masses; the revolutionary energy had perhaps long since definitely rolled past the boundary at which the Star Chamber had been trying to stop it.

But one moment! the failure of the demonstration might be utter nonsense. All the Soviet parties, after all, had decided to take part in it, and prepared for it! I went out alone, turning towards the Champ de Mars, through which all the columns were to march. In the Kamunno-ostrovsky Prospect, near Kshesinskaya's house, near Trinity Bridge, it was really rather deserted. It was only on the other side of the Neva that detachments of demonstrators were visible. It was a magnificent day, and already hot.

There wasn't a dense crowd blocking the Champ de Mars, but thick columns were moving towards me.

'Bolsheviks!' I thought, looking at the slogans on the banners.

I went over to the graves of those who had been killed, where familiar Soviet people were standing in compact groups taking the salute. Apparently the demonstration was rather behind time. The districts had started from the assembly points later than schedule. It was still only the first detachments of the Petersburg revolutionary army that were parading through the Champ de Mars. Columns were still on the way from every part of Petersburg. There was nothing, however, to be heard of any excesses, disorders or upsets. No arms could be seen amongst the demonstrators.

The columns marched swiftly and in close order. There could be no question of a 'failure', but there was something *peculiar* about this demonstration. On the faces, in the movements, in the whole appearance of the demonstrators—there was no sign of lively participation in what they were doing. There was no sign of enthusiasm, or holiday spirits, or political indignation. The masses had been called and they had come. They all came—to do what was required and then go back. . . . Probably some of those called from their homes and private affairs this Sunday were indifferent. Others thought this was a government demonstration, and felt that they were doing not their *own* business but something compulsory and perhaps superfluous. There was a businesslike veneer over the entire demonstration. But it was on a magnificent scale. All worker and soldier Petersburg took part in it.

But what was the political character of the demonstration?

'Bolsheviks again,' I remarked, looking at the slogans, 'and there behind them is another Bolshevik column.'

'Apparently the next one too,' I went on calculating, watching the banners advancing towards me and the endless rows going away towards Michael Castle a long way down the Sadovoy.

'All Power to the Soviets!' 'Down with the Ten Capitalist Ministers!' 'Peace for the hovels, war for the palaces!'

In this sturdy and weighty way worker-peasant Petersburg, the vanguard of the Russian and the world revolution, expressed its will. The situation was absolutely unambiguous. Here and

there the chain of Bolshevik flags and columns was interrupted by specifically SR and official Soviet slogans. But they were submerged in the mass; they seemed to be exceptions, intentionally confirming the rule. Again and again, like the unchanging summons of the very depths of the revolutionary capital, like fate itself, like the fatal Birnam wood—there advanced towards us: 'All Power to the Soviets!' 'Down with the Ten Capitalist Ministers!'

An astonishing, bewitching slogan, this! Embodying a vast programme in naïve and awkward words, it seemed to emerge directly from the very depths of the nation, reviving the unconscious, spontaneously heroic spirit of the great French Revolution.

At the sight of the measured advance of the fighting columns of the revolutionary army, it seemed that the Coalition was already formally liquidated and that Messrs. the Ministers, in view of the manifest popular mistrust, would quit their places that very day without waiting to be urged by more imposing means.

I remembered the purblind Tsereteli's fervour of the night before. Here was the duel in the open arena! Here was the honest legal review of forces in an official Soviet demonstration!

A few steps away from me Kamenev's stocky figure was visible in the thin crowd, rather like a victor acknowledging a parade. But he looked more perplexed than triumphant.

'Well, what now?' I said to him. 'What sort of Government is there going to be now? Are you going into a Cabinet with Tsereteli, Skobelev and Chernov?'

'We are,' Kamenev replied, but somehow without real assurance.

The programme of action in the minds of the Bolshevik leaders was evidently completely vague. And Kamenev himself was vacillation incarnate.

A detachment was approaching with an enormous, heavy, gold-embroidered banner: 'The Central Committee of the Russian Social-Democratic Workers' Party (Bolsheviks)'. The leader demanded that, unlike the others, the detachment be allowed to stop and go right up to the graves. Someone who was acting as master of ceremonies tried to argue with them, but yielded at once. Who and what could have stopped the victors

from allowing themselves this trifling indulgence, if that was what they wanted?

Then a small column of anarchists appeared. Their black flags stood out sharply against the background of the endless red ones. The anarchists were *armed*, and were singing their songs with a fiercely challenging look. However, the crowd on the Champ de Mars merely greeted them with ironical merriment: they didn't seem at all dangerous.

Such was June 18th in Petersburg. It was a stinging flick of the whip in the face of the Soviet majority and the bourgeoisie. It was an unexpected revelation to the Star Chamber and its purblind leader. But as a matter of fact what could a blind man make of a blow on the head from an axe-butt in the dark?

The bourgeoisie and the politically-minded man in the street evaluated things better. But what could they do? The men in the street, tormented by forebodings, simply whispered among themselves. And the bourgeoisie? Its Ministers, of course, didn't retire voluntarily. In the given circumstances they would have gained nothing by that and lost everything. It was after all really impossible, while retaining a bourgeois dictatorship, to take seriously the trust or mistrust of the masses of the people. It was after all really impossible to abandon power voluntarily when it might pass easily and painlessly into the hands of enemies. The experiment of resigning would be permissible only when it created difficulties, disorganized the enemy camp, and served to strengthen the reaction and the bourgeois dictatorship. But what could be done, when the lower depths of the revolutionary capital appeared before their very eyes?

It was obvious what could be done. First of all, take no official notice. Secondly, prove by means of 'public opinion'—i.e., the big newspapers—that the demonstration had been a failure, and that the miserable fragments of the 'revolutionary democracy' who had been in the streets with their demagogues and loudmouths reflected precisely nothing. Thirdly, hide from them behind the real 'revolutionary democracy', behind its overwhelming majority: not the Bolsheviks of the capital, but the All-Russian Congress; not Lenin and Trotsky, but Chaikovsky and Tsereteli. To be sure, these must be kicked at once, to teach

them their place; nevertheless it must be hoped that they wouldn't give up. The 'big press' harped on all these themes.

* * *

The capital was seething. The temper of the masses and the desire for decisive action were growing daily. In the capital there was no longer any need to agitate against the Coalition.

Everywhere, in every corner, in the Soviet, in the Marian Palace, in people's homes, in the squares and boulevards, in the barracks and factories, everyone was talking about some sort of 'demonstrations' that were expected any day; nobody knew exactly who was going to 'demonstrate', or how or where, but the city felt itself to be on the eve of some sort of explosion.

On Sunday July 2nd, a splendid sunny day, I spent the morning chatting amiably and strolling about with Lunacharsky, who had stayed with us overnight. At this time I had already moved from the *Letopis* to my own place in the Karpovka. That morning the Bolsheviks were arranging a mass-meeting for their 1st Machine-Gun Regiment in the huge hall of the People's House. Lunacharsky was obliged to speak there, with Trotsky and others: the Bolshevik powers thought this meeting very important.

Lunacharsky went to the People's House; but after speaking returned and we went for a walk. We admired the beauties of Petersburg, and then the three of us—Lunacharsky, my wife, and myself—went to dinner in the famous 'Vienna'. The restaurant of literary Bohemia now swarmed with political figures of the more or less democratic camp. I had a short talk with Chernov, who was now very chilly towards me.

There was to be an all-city conference that day of the Inter-district Party. Lunacharsky, one of the leaders of the group, thought it very important. After dinner we set off on foot for the conference, somewhere far down the Sadovoy. Lunacharsky tried unceasingly to make a convert of me; my wife was already converted.

The conference agenda included, among other things, the question of uniting the Interdistrictites with Lenin's party. It was a foregone conclusion. . . Lunacharsky had invited me to the conference as a guest; he had no doubt that sooner or later

I would join the Bolsheviks; but we didn't know whether I should be let in.

After some preliminary negotiations by Lunacharsky, they willingly let me into the little hall, which held about fifty delegates and roughly as many guests. The star performer, sitting near a chairman I did not know, was Uritsky. Trotsky was also among the delegates, and he was delighted to have me sit by him. Steklov was also there as one of the guests. But the majority were workers and soldiers unknown to me. There was no doubt that here—despite the miniature quality of the conference—the authentic worker-soldier masses were represented.

We arrived during the 'reports from the floor'. They were listened to with interest, and really were interesting. Party work was being feverishly carried on and its successes were perceptible to everyone. There was one hindrance: 'What distinguishes you from the Bolsheviks, and why aren't you with them?' All the speakers reiterated this, ending with exhortations to flow into the Bolshevik sea.

I well remember the report of the representative of the garrison of Krasnoe Selo. He said that they had a monopoly of influence there; and the 176th Regiment was fully at the disposal of the central organs of the group—for *any purpose*, at any time. The report was clear, full of interesting details, and important in its implications.

The discussion of principles began. I think the question of uniting with the Bolsheviks was settled then and there while I was present. But I particularly recall the debates on the new programme of the party. Here glances turned, naturally, to Trotsky.

Around this time Lenin had composed his draft of the Bolshevik party programme. I don't think it had yet been published, but it was passing through a few hands in the form of a printed pamphlet. It contained a detailed elaboration of *political* questions: parliamentarism, the Soviets, the judiciary, the remuneration of officials and specialists. Here were collected all the elements of that utopian structure of the state which Lenin afterwards passionately defended in his pamphlet *State and Revolution*, and then later still—soon after the bitter lessons of practice—threw overboard as childish delusions and worthless rubbish. It was quite remarkable. And it was even more re-

markable that side by side with this detailed working out of the *political* side the *economic* programme was allotted only the most perfunctory attention. It hardly existed. Its place was evidently taken simply by a proposal for 'direct creation from below' and 'expropriating the expropriators'.

I was amazed when at the Interdistrict Conference the party programme was arrived at: Trotsky repeated Lenin. He took Lenin's draft as a basis and introduced a few amendments. Incomprehensible! It's true that Trotsky, Lunacharsky, and Uritsky were not economists. But they were highly educated and the most advanced Socialists in Europe. Why wasn't it clear to them that Socialism is primarily an *economic* system and that without a strictly worked out programme of economic enterprises nothing could come of a dictatorship of the proletariat? It was precisely from their point of view that a party programme must necessarily contain a detailed, purely practical, and concrete schedule of economic reforms. For their programme was the programme of the liquidation of capitalism.

Let us grant that at a mass-meeting this disregard of real economic tasks was tolerable. But here, when dispositions were being elaborated for the guidance of the revolutionary staff itself? I, a guest, a member of another party, was itching to ask for the floor—at least to put some puzzled questions. And they might have given it: there were no theoreticians present, and the discussion was lackadaisical. Nevertheless it was out of place for me to speak, and I didn't like to ask. Lenin and Trotsky, by the way, were here disregarding just those urgent problems they were to come up against a few months later when they were the Government. But the political system that absorbed all their attention wasn't the slightest use to them then. They at once abandoned all their constructions in this field.

I had to leave: some Commission or other was to meet in the Tauride Palace. I went out into the street alone—with strange feelings, honestly not understanding how people's minds worked. Tired by my earlier walk, I plodded off to the distant palace of the revolution.

* * *

The first Coalition against the revolution, not waiting to be swept away by an explosion of popular wrath, broke up as a

result of internal crisis. It had survived exactly as long as the first Guchkov-Miliukov Cabinet.

It goes without saying that there was only one sensible solution of the problem of power, the establishment of a dictatorship of the democracy. In place of the Coalition of the big and petty bourgeoisie against the proletariat and the revolution there must be created a new coalition: a coalition of the Soviet parties, the proletariat, and the peasantry—against capital and imperialism. There was no other solution. But this solution could be arrived at only by a united front, by the united will of the Soviet.

All power had long been in its hands. The dictatorship of the Soviet democracy could have been established—*formally*—by the simple proclamation of a Government of the Soviet bloc. The overturn could have been consummated with complete ease, without shedding a drop of blood. And the dictatorship of the democracy would have been created as a fact simply by the realization of the effective power and the accomplishment of the programme of peace, bread, and land. Here the road seemed smooth, but only if the Soviet *came out* for the overturn.

In any case the question was now posed in all its scope—by the internal collapse of the Coalition. But at this point, on Sunday July 2nd, while I walked slowly to the Tauride Palace from the Interdistrict Conference—nothing was known about this. It was not until late that evening that the rumour that the Cadets had left the Coalition Government began to get all over the city by 'phone.

Now, as before, the city was saturated with other rumours—about various 'demonstrations' by the Bolsheviks, the workers, and the regiments—against the Government and the Soviet. The capital was seething. The slogan of the turbulent masses was also—'All Power to the Soviets'. It might have seemed that events were hitting the same target from various directions. It might have seemed that the movement of the masses, expressing the 'public opinion' of the worker-soldier capital, would serve as a favourable factor for the correct solution of the problem of power. But this wasn't so.

The elements were rising without restraint or reason. And those who led them, by continually proclaiming these same slogans of Soviet power, radically undermined the possibility of a

correct solution of the crisis. For they were known to be acting *against* their own slogans, *against* the Soviet, and not in a united Soviet front against the bourgeoisie. Their aim was to hand the power not to the Soviet, in the form of a bloc of Soviet parties, but to an 'active minority' in the form of the Bolshevik Party alone.

In such conditions the movement of the Petersburg 'depths' infinitely confused the situation. Now the mounting tide of popular passion could not serve the revolution as it had in the April Days. Then the Soviet had ruled the elements; now they had gone beyond any obedience. If anyone still retained some little power over them, it was the Bolsheviks, who were mixing up all the cards and in the *name* of the Soviet directing the elements *against* it.

But the power of the Bolsheviks over the elements was not great. In the heart of the capital, still invisible to the outsider's eye, the tempest was raging irresistibly. Tens and hundreds of thousands of workers were really plunging towards an inevitable outbreak; it was impossible to hold them back. This outbreak threatened to be fatal. That was just how I estimated it at that time, in view of all the circumstances, and that is just how I estimate it now, three years later, looking at its consequences *sub specie aeternitatis*.

But then as well as now, independently of political results, it was impossible to look on this stupendous movement of the masses with anything but enthusiasm. Even if you thought it fatal you could only rejoice in its gigantic elemental sweep.

Tens and hundreds of thousands of proletarian hearts veritably burned with passion, hatred, and love combined, and with yearning for some vast and intangible exploit. They were rushing to sweep away all obstacles with their own hands, crush all enemies and build a new destiny then and there. But how? Just what destiny? This the elements did not know. But they surged out, all aflame; they *had* to come out. Such was the decree of the historical destiny that ruled the elements. It was a magnificent spectacle; only blind men could fail to sense its greatness.

And what came of it all? An 'episode' heavy with consequences, that will go down in history as the *July Days*.

CHAPTER 20

THE 'JULY DAYS'

Monday, July 3rd. The next day I went to the Tauride Palace in the morning. In spite of the comparatively early hour I found a great deal of excitement. In the Ex. Com.'s rooms there were almost as many people as during the whole summer. There was no session, but Mameluke and Opposition groups seemed to have shaken off their torpor and were conferring excitedly here and there.

Amongst these groups I also noticed the members of my own fraction, the Menshevik-Internationalists, headed by Martov. They had already had time to arrange an impromptu session and even to pass an important political resolution.

Martov, having learned the night before that the Cadets had left the Coalition, had drawn it up beforehand. The resolution stated that it was *imperative to create immediately a purely democratic Government, made up solely of 'Soviet' parties.*

It was only now, after the 'spontaneous' collapse of the Coalition, that the Menshevik-Internationalists had decided to say this. It was only now, a month after the opening of the All-Russian Congress of Soviets, that Martov thought it possible to authorize this slogan for his group. He was not too late—contrary to his habit—only because from that day on events took a very special turn.

This was the day when the famous July week began. The story is not only very important and interesting, but very complicated, and also very obscure and confused. As usual I shall not assume the slightest obligation to disentangle it; I shall write it down as I personally recall it.

I think it was announced that morning that a session of the Central Ex. Com. was to be held that afternoon, when the Socialist Ministers had finished their business in the Marian Palace and the Star Chamber. It was said that the Star Chamber already had a plan ready for settling the crisis.

The Coalition Cabinet had collapsed—through internal bankruptcy. The 'living forces of the country' in the person of the

entire organized bourgeoisie embodied in the Cadet Party, had now left the revolution formally, officially, and openly—for the camp of its enemies. But our revolution, after all, was 'bourgeois'. This the Star Chamber knew very well, and that was all it knew. Its special logic pushed these deep thinkers to the conclusion that the bourgeoisie *must* be in power. And the only plan the Star Chamber could have was this: if there was no Coalition, it would have to be invented. If the Cabinet of May 5th had now crumbled, a new one must be concocted in its likeness. If the real, the organized bourgeoisie had gone, leaving in the Cabinet only a few individuals representing no one but themselves, then at all costs substitutes for it must be found, deceiving the country, the democracy, the plutocracy, and oneself.

But it wasn't so easy to do all this: the desired Capitalist Ministers were not to be picked up in the street. Meanwhile it was impossible to prolong the interregnum in the stormy atmosphere prevailing. The masses might take a hand; the Opposition might take advantage of the interregnum, and who knew what that might threaten the principle of the Coalition with?

It was impossible to leave the situation vague. And this is what the wily Tsereteli had thought up.

The decision of the question of the Government was to be declared outside the jurisdiction of the available personnel of the Central Ex. Com., when a whole third of the members elected by the Congress were in the provinces. Loyalty, constitutionality and democratic principles demanded that the question of the future composition of the Government and of the replacement of the members who had left should be decided by a plenum of the Central Ex. Com. A plenary session could be arranged in two or three weeks; meanwhile the Star Chamber proposed not to replace the missing Cadet Ministers at all, but to appoint in their places suitable heads of departments for 'organic' work while the *political* Cabinet would be left at its present strength, of eleven Ministers (with a 'Socialist' majority of one!).

Rumours of this plan had spread throughout the Tauride Palace and the delegates were hotly discussing it. The Opposition was filled with rage and contempt, and indeed the 'plan' merited rage and contempt. It was, of course, a ruse, and

predetermined a new Coalition just as surely as two and two make four. Objectively, to be sure, the question would be decided with the most intimate participation of the masses of the people, but, while it *knew* that those forces existed, the Star Chamber did not *believe* in them, and within the confines of parliamentary Soviet machinations its game was almost unbeatable.

The whole difficulty consisted in the one fact that there were waverers among the majority—under the influence of the enormous movement of the rank and file; especially among the ignorant Rightist masses of the *Peasant Ex. Com.*, very many could not understand why they should strive for a bourgeois régime; not having mastered the ‘Marxist’ theories of Dan and Tsereteli they were not at all averse from taking the whole power into their own peasant hands and personally unleashing anarchy. After all, it was obvious that the bourgeois government would not give the peasants land without payment; nothing had been accomplished in the agrarian question—except sabotage. It wouldn’t be at all a bad idea to seize all the power, in order to seize all the land. Then the peasants would start to establish exemplary order themselves, to squeeze the Kaiser’s partisans, put a stop to the unreasonable demands of the workers and—beat up the Yids.

This was how many of the ‘ignorant masses’ who had overrun the central Soviet bodies thought and spoke. Speaking *generally*, these little SR peasants constituted the most reliable foundation of the Star Chamber. But *specifically*, in this matter of the composition of the Government, the ‘Marxist’ leaders had to be very careful with them. The whole difficulty for the Star Chamber lay in the mood of these little peasants and the waverings of the more Left elements of the Soviet majority.

Nevertheless the Star Chamber’s game was almost unbeatable. In the two or three weeks before the plenum met they could do their best to convince the waverers (Right and Left). During this interval they could rout out some sort of Capitalist Ministers and present the plenum with an accomplished fact.

* * *

The Star Chamber appeared around 2 o’clock, when the small former Ex. Com. room was quite full. Members of the

peasant Central Ex. Com. were also present—some looking like professors, some like seminarists, and some like shopkeepers. In all there were about 200 people present. The hall, buzzing like a beehive, had long since forgotten such a bustle.

Tsereteli of course took the floor. He made a short report which included all the known facts and, at the end, the plan described above. I immediately rose on a point of order: Tsereteli, by uniting two questions with nothing in common, wanted to push one through with the help of the other; these two questions should be decided separately. But I don't know the fate of the point of order in the debates that it started. Unfortunately—for a reason which had nothing to do with the political crisis—I had to leave the meeting for about an hour.

I needed a car for that hour and painfully tearing myself away from the—*soit dit*—'historic' meeting, excited by the great day and the new events of the revolution, I feverishly hustled about after one, so as not to be late for my business and to return as quickly as possible. Hurrying through the next room, which was empty, I heard a ring from the telephone booth. I hurriedly picked up the receiver.

'Is that the Ex. Com.?' said a voice, obviously a worker's. 'Call some member of the Ex. Com. Hurry up; it's urgent!'

'What's the matter? Quick! This is a member of the Ex. Com. speaking.'

'This is the *Promyot* Factory. A few workers and soldiers have just come in here, and they say that all the factories and regiments have already demonstrated against the Provisional Government, and others are demonstrating now. They say ours is the only factory that isn't demonstrating. In the Factory Committee we don't know what to do. Tell us, what are the Ex. Com.'s instructions? Should we go and demonstrate or detain these people as *provocateurs*?'

I answered: 'The Ex. Com. is unconditionally against the demonstration. Anyone telling people to go out into the street is acting on his own initiative, against the Soviet. The Ex. Com. has no knowledge of any demonstrations by factories or regiments. It's probably not true. The people who have come to you talking about other factories and regiments are simply trying to get you out into the street. Don't go anywhere till the Ex. Com. orders you. Don't try to keep those people there, but be sure to

try and find out who they are and who sent them. Tell them and the factory that the Ex. Com. is in session right now debating just this question of the new Government and the transfer of all power to the Soviet. Ring back again later.'

I thought it essential to hurry back to the Ex. Com. for a moment and tell them about this conversation. I don't recall whether I succeeded, but at the meeting I found the whole picture changed. The political discussion had been suspended. In my absence information had been received that the 1st Machine-Gun Regiment had already come out into the street and was now making its way towards—no one knew where. In a flash the whole appearance of the meeting had changed. Most of the faces showed anger, irritation, and boredom: this was the old atmosphere of 'demonstrations' which had become quite customary during the preceding weeks, and which was supposed to have been changed by 'high policy' but was now so inopportunately renewed.

The Ex. Com. knew by rote what it had to do, and was already behaving by rote: it decided to send someone at once to intercept the Machine-Gun Regiment and persuade it to go back. But the question was, *whom* to send? Though I was late and agitated, nevertheless for a few minutes I watched the meeting lackadaisically talking things over, choosing between candidates.

Who, indeed, should be sent? Representatives of the Soviet majority, partisans, or members of the Star Chamber? But they were not in the least likely to persuade anybody. No one would listen to them, and perhaps they might be arrested. Even they themselves realized this. The Bolsheviks of course would have been persuasive. But it was impossible to send them—*they couldn't be trusted*: God knew where Kamenev or Shlyapnikov would lead the intercepted regiment—to the barracks or to the Marian Palace?

No candidate was found and nobody was sent while I was there. The atmosphere of demonstrations had become habitual. The minds of the leaden 'authorities' were turning over slowly and heavily. I left, and during my mad rush in the car thoughts were dancing about in my head, one interrupting the other, about the political crisis and the demonstration that had begun. Great events were beginning!

My recollections of that day begin again at about 6 or 7 in the evening. At 7 o'clock a meeting of the Workers' Section of the Soviet began in the White Hall. The overwhelming majority was Bolshevik. Was this meeting connected with the movement that had begun, and what, in general, was the Bolshevik Party's relation to it? I don't know for certain. According to all the data, the Bolshevik Central Committee did not organize a demonstration for July 3rd—unlike what had happened on June 9th. I know that the temper of the masses was considered somewhat 'worse', a little softer, less well-defined, than three weeks before. It was somewhat dejected by the fiasco of the 9th and by the official Soviet demonstration of the 18th. An uprising, of course, was considered inevitable, for the capital was seething and the general situation was unendurable. The Bolsheviks were getting ready for it—technically and politically. But it was clear that they had not scheduled it for July 3rd. And the Bolsheviks in the Soviet, after meeting during the day, agreed to go to the factories and barracks to agitate against the demonstration.

From various outskirts of the city, beginning with the Vyborg Side, masses of workers and soldiers were moving towards the centre. The workers had left their benches in thousands and tens of thousands. The soldiers were coming out armed. Both had banners bearing the slogans that had predominated on the 18th: 'Down with the Ten Capitalist Ministers!' 'All Power to the Soviets!'

It was reported that some workers' detachments and two regiments, the 1st Machine-Gunners and the Grenadiers, were approaching the Tauride Palace. An enormous agitation began in the hall. The aisles and the seats for the public, empty up to then, as at ordinary sessions, suddenly filled up with people. Kamenev suddenly leaped up on to the speaker's platform. And this indecisive Right Bolshevik was the first to give official sanction to the uprising.

'We never called for a demonstration,' he cried out, 'but the popular masses themselves have come out into the streets, to show their will. And once the masses have come out our place is with them. Our task now is to give the movement an organized character. The Workers' Section must here and now elect a special body, a Commission of twenty-five people to control the

movement. The others should go to their own districts and join their detachments.' There was no doubt that Kamenev's resolution would be accepted. Whether on his own initiative or according to instructions received, Kamenev was far from trying to isolate the Bolsheviks as the instigators of the uprising; as always, he acted conciliatorily. But I cannot find in my memory the slightest trace of any activities during the July Days of the newly-elected 'Commission'.

* * *

Meanwhile the movement was already pouring through the city. The tempest was unleashed. Everywhere in the factories the same thing as had been reported by the *Promyot* worker on the 'phone was going on: workers' and soldiers' delegations would turn up, refer to 'all the others', and demand in someone's name that they 'come out'. Only a minority, of course, demonstrated, but everywhere work was abandoned. Trains ceased to leave from the Finland Station. In the barracks short mass-meetings took place, and then from all sides enormous detachments of armed soldiers made their way towards the centre—some of them to the Tauride Palace. Some started shooting into the air: the rifles went off by themselves.

From early evening, lorries and cars began to rush about the city. In them were civilians and soldiers with rifles at the trail and with frightened-fierce faces. Where they came hurtling from and why—no one knew.

The city fairly quickly took on the look of the last days of February. Since then four months of revolution and liberty had passed. The garrison of the capital, and even more the proletariat, were now strongly organized. But the movement appeared to have no more 'consciousness', discipline, or order. Elemental forces raged.

One of the insurgent regiments, led by a Bolshevik lieutenant, was moving along the Nevsky, from the Sadovoy towards the Liteiny. It was an imposing armed force. It was probably enough to hold the city—unless it came up against a similar armed force. The head of the regiment had started to turn into the Liteiny, when some shots were heard from Znamensky Square. The commander of the column, who was riding in a car, turned around and saw the heels of the soldiers, running off

in all directions. A few seconds later the car was left alone in the middle of a jeering crowd on the Nevsky Prospect. There were no casualties. . . I was told all this by the commander himself—now a well-known Bolshevnik military leader. Something similar was going on at this time at various points of the capital.

The insurgent army didn't know where it should go, or why. It had nothing but a 'mood'. This wasn't enough. The soldiers led by the Bolshevniks, in spite of the complete absence of any real resistance, showed themselves to be really worthless fighting material. But not only Bolshevniks led the soldiers' groups that 'came out' on July 3rd: unquestionably there were also some completely obscure elements present.

The 'over-forties' also came out: that day their representatives had again seen Kerensky and again pleaded to be allowed to go home to work on the land. But Kerensky refused: after all, the offensive against the insolent enemy still continued, for the glory of the gallant Allies. So the 'over-forties' gladly joined the 'uprising' and in enormous numbers for some reason moved on to the Tauride Palace.

* * *

We hurried out of the meeting of the Workers' Section, through the crowd that filled the Catherine Hall and the ante-chamber of the palace, into the rooms of the Central Ex. Com. But there was no meeting, simply disorder, excitement, and incoherence. No Bolshevnik leaders were there: after the meeting of the Workers' Section they had hurried off to their own party centres.

Crowds kept coming to the Tauride Palace until late at night. But they looked 'disorganized'. They were capable of excesses, but not of revolutionary action, conscious and purposeful. They plainly did not know why they were in that particular place. And because they had nothing to do they called for speakers—members of the Soviet. The speakers went out to them. Chkheidze tried to persuade them to disperse, referring to the forthcoming meeting of the Central Ex. Com., but he was unsuccessful and was interrupted more than once by hostile shouts. The crowd was in a nasty mood. Voices were heard: 'Arrest the Ex. Com., they've surrendered to the landlords and the bourgeoisie!'

But there was no one to do any arresting, nor any reason for it. They were saying in the crowd that the Provisional Government had already been arrested. But nothing of the sort had taken place. More than that, evidently nothing of the sort had been intended for that day.

The remnants of the Government, with the 'Socialist' majority, were having a meeting in the undefended apartments of Prince Lvov. Any group of ten or twelve people that wanted to could have arrested the Government. But this wasn't done. The sole attempt at it was completely futile.

Around 10 o'clock a motor-car with a machine-gun and ten armed men dashed up to the Premier's house, where they asked the hall-porter to hand over the Ministers. Tsereteli was summoned to negotiate with them, but before he got to the entrance the men in the armed motor-car had vanished, contenting themselves with taking Tsereteli's own car with them. It was obvious that this was a completely 'private enterprise'. But through all the July Days there were no other attacks on the Capitalist Ministers.

In general, contrary to what had been expected on June 10th, the Marian Palace, where the Provisional Government was supposed to be, had not proved to be at all a centre of attraction for the demonstrating masses. It was in fact to the *Tauride*—the residency of the central *Soviet* bodies—that they were attracted. And it was precisely against these, as we see, that their ire was directed.

Around the same time some speakers of the Soviet Opposition, proclaiming the transfer of power to the Soviet, also came out to the square of the Tauride Palace. These met with a completely different reaction—especially Trotsky, whose speech aroused vociferous enthusiasm. But with the darkness the crowd thinned out a great deal. The detachments melted away, scattered, and went off somewhere. There were fewer people in the halls of the Palace too. The 'uprising' seemed to be coming to an end.

* * *

Around midnight some faces from the Star Chamber finally became visible in the Tauride Palace. They had a very triumphant and rather provocative air: they must have been going to propose something special, which in fact they did.

The halls were fairly empty. At a few points some soldiers, standing or lying down, were grouped around stacks of rifles like patrols. And the representatives of the regiments of the capital, loyal to the Soviet majority and without the least authority over the masses, were wandering about with nothing to do, having been summoned by telephone messages. . .

The deputies were beginning to be summoned into the White Hall, when news came about a brawl and the first casualties on the Nevsky, around the Town Council. The Council session, where Lunacharsky, among others, had also spent the evening, had just finished. When the Town Councillors went into the street they encountered volleys of machine-gun fire going on without rhyme or reason between two groups of armed people who had taken each other for enemies. Just then some motor-cars with machine-guns also passed by. This was enough to produce panicky and random firing. Some wounded were brought into the Town Council. These, of course, were not part of the 'demonstration'. The Town Councillors went back to the meeting-hall and hurriedly got out an appeal—to refrain from further bloodshed. The total number of casualties was unknown.

The joint session of the Central Ex. Com. probably opened around one in the morning. The White Hall had a look unusual in the revolution: it was not full. About 300 deputies occupied at most half the seats, while the remaining chairs were not taken up by the crowd. No crowds were standing about the corridors or clustering around the platform, nor was there a soul in the galleries. Exceptional measures had been taken to keep the session really closed. It was sedate, as in the good old Duma. And it was quiet.

There was a feeling of great tension in the air. The deputies were gloomy and taciturn. Everyone was waiting to see what surprise the Star Chamber sitting on the platform had thought up. Chkheidze, pale and morose, was chairman. He had been assigned the presentation of the surprise by the Star Chamber, and opened the meeting with something like this:

'This is an exceptionally serious occasion,' he said, slowly, with difficulty and with many pauses. 'The Praesidium has taken an exceptional decision. We declare that the decisions which will be taken at once must be binding on every one. All

those present must undertake to carry them out. Those who refuse to undertake this obligation should leave the meeting-hall.'

Chkheidze stopped. His assignment was evidently limited to this. The hall was motionless for some seconds—a part waiting for something further, a part stunned by surprise.

But Chkheidze sat down. And from the benches on the extreme right, where the Interdistrictites were located, there began a movement towards the way out on the left—Trotsky, Ryazanov, Uritsky, and Yurenev, followed by Steklov. Not wishing to undertake such an obligation 'in the dark' they were obediently leaving the meeting. The hall was silent.

To my own surprise, I rushed on to the platform from the top-most bench on the left, where I had been sitting with Martov and others. Chkheidze failed to stop me.

'In extraordinary circumstances,' I said, 'you may take any extraordinary steps you like. But be aware of what you're proposing. You, the majority, did not appoint us to our deputies' seats. We were sent here by the workers and soldiers. We will answer to them for our acts, but you cannot deprive us of our rights. You can remove us illegally—without our having committed any crime. But we will not give you any promises nor will we leave the hall voluntarily.'

My closest comrades were in accord with me, while the Praesidium was perplexed and didn't react at all. At that point there appeared on the platform the diminutive figure of the famous Spiridonova. As a Left SR she had joined the Kamkov group as soon as she got back from Siberia. The Peasant Congress had elected her to its Central Ex. Com. But amongst ourselves, in Soviet circles, she was speaking for the first time. I didn't even know her by sight and asked who was following me on the platform. . .

In the midst of the stillness and tension Spiridonova cried out hysterically:

'Comrades! A terrible crime is being prepared! Our Minister-leaders are demanding complete obedience from us before explaining what is at issue. It's clear that they are going to propose a decree against the people. They are preparing to shoot down our comrades, the workers and soldiers!'

The Praesidium group was discomfited. It was plain to every-

one that the Star Chamber had blundered and that nothing would come of its stupid trick.

In the silence and embarrassment Chkheidze's 'resolution' was voted on. Hands were raised. Against it there were only twenty-one votes—ourselves, the Menshevik-Internationalists and the Left SRs. According to the resolution and the vote we ought to undertake the obligation required of us or leave. But of course we didn't do one or the other. We were left in peace—as, indeed, we were bound to be. The meeting went on. Nothing had come of this stupid enterprise.

When Tsereteli got the floor I went off to look for the Interdistrictites who had gone out. They were conferring nearby on what they should do. They were already coming to the conclusion that they had left in vain and ought to return to the hall. I too urged them to do so, and they really did return at once. Trotsky made the following statement in their name:

'Chkheidze's resolution is illegal and nullifies the rights of the minority. In order to defend the rights of their electors the Interdistrictites are returning to the meeting and will appeal to the proletarian masses.'

The debates were endless. One speaker followed another, all saying the same thing—either about the crimes of the Bolsheviks or about the salvation to be found in the Coalition. The 'little peasants' demanded martial law and similar nonsense. The SR intellectuals, finding the setting appropriate, gave vent to their patriotic feelings.

But the meeting, on this 'exceptionally serious occasion', had no positive content.

Meanwhile the sun came up. The hall filled with bright daylight. The plenipotentiary organ of the revolutionary democracy was wasting its time in idle talk. . .

Bogdanov came on to the platform with a practical proposal:

The meeting was to be stopped. The worker-soldier section of the Central Ex. Com. was to remain in the Palace. All those with any capacity at all for speaking in public were to share out the factories and barracks at once and leave immediately on their missions, before the city woke up, in order to persuade the workers and soldiers on the spot to refrain from any

demonstrations. The deputies were to stay in the factories and barracks as long as necessary for this purpose.

And on this the meeting dispersed.

* * *

Pale and hungry, we moved off to the rooms of the Central Ex. Com., while the peasants dispersed homewards.

Aided by two or three people, Bogdanov, with a list of factories and barracks, peremptorily 'billeted' the deputies present—a hundred and a few—on factories and troop units. There was a furious clatter of typewriters, on which whole packets of credentials were being written. Cars were hastily got ready. The deputies scattered like shadows. Not only the Opposition, but also those faithful to the Coalition showed neither enthusiasm nor any desire to embark on this doubtful course after a sleepless night.

Bogdanov called out the names—two for each point. The Interdistrictites declined to go. Gots and myself were sent to the Preobrazhensky Regiment. But Gots had disappeared somewhere. After waiting a quarter of an hour I went alone. The battalion I was going to was quartered quite near the Tauride Palace, at the corner of the Zakharevsky. I went on foot and going out under the colonnade of the porch breathed in the fresh air with pleasure.

It was probably 7 o'clock. A magnificent morning was coming up. The square was empty. On my left there loomed up two or three armoured cars, with no sign of an attendant. The adjoining streets were silent. There was no sign of any uprising or disorders.

Apparently there had been no new shooting during the night. The crowds had dispersed and the streets were empty.

In the Preobrazhensky Regiment—I forget which battalion—my task was not difficult. This regiment was considered reactionary and wasn't on the side of the Bolsheviki. It was likely that it wasn't going to demonstrate and would not have demonstrated regardless of my intervention.

Life in the battalion was just beginning. The sleepy soldiers were just beginning to wander about the huge courtyard. I called out the commander, asked about their mood and what 'steps' were required. The young officer, although he had stood

watch all night, was sure of his battalion. He thought there was no need for a general meeting and we decided to assemble only platoon representatives. Some solid, heavy-set little peasants assembled, looking like nothing less than revolutionaries. I explained the political situation to them and told them by what strange methods the movement had been called forth, how dark and obscure its origins were, and what harm it was bound to do. I asked that no one go out into the street armed without a summons from the Ex. Com. . . .

The soldiers' representatives listened respectfully: but none of this was necessary—they were not going anywhere.

My audience didn't show much interest in politics. The attempts of the soldiers to get into conversation with me were limited to a few malicious remarks aimed at Lenin and the Bolsheviks, and at once I had to switch over to the other front—go to the defence of Lenin and his friends, as a proletarian party that was carrying on a legal and necessary struggle for its principles and the interests of the proletariat. The soldiers' uncalled-for attacks were an out-and-out repetition of the filthy, slanderous phrases in the gutter press about all internationalists generally.

My task in the Preobrazhensky Regiment was fulfilled. I could leave with an easy conscience. . . .

It was 8 o'clock. I didn't want to start a row at Manukhin's, and I went to the Old Nevsky to 'Comrade Governor' Nikitsky's, to rest a couple of hours. Nikitsky wasn't home: he had been at the Town Council all night in case of an alarm. But what could the Town Council have done about it?

* * *

While dozing off I remembered that during the night the party Bolsheviks had not been either at the meeting or in the Tauride Palace.

That night their Central Committee had a stormy and feverish debate about what to do. . . . In general the situation was the same as on the night of June 9th. The debates and plans were apparently also the same. One way or the other, whether started by the party, or spontaneously, or by some unofficial party groups—the movement had begun and assumed enormous dimensions. Should they continue it, by placing themselves at

the head of the rebellious masses? Or should they capitulate again to the conciliationist majority of the Soviet and deprive the movement of their sanction?

This was the first question that confronted the Bolshevik Central Committee.

It was apparently decided contingent, on the strength and character of the movement. This was a question of fact—that is, of judgement and calculation. And here the outlook was uncertain. First of all, the movement had calmed down during the night; the overwhelming majority of the masses had slept peacefully and shown no desire for action. Secondly, the movement *had begun in a dubious way*; the Bolshevik Party was far from controlling it, and God knew who was at the head of a great many detachments. Thirdly, the movement had shown quite clearly its internal feebleness and rottenness. The uprising had no striking power, nor any real fitness for battle. The outlook was dubious. Now the chief hope lay in the Kronstadters, whose arrival was expected hourly. But in general—was it worth taking *this* movement into one's own hands? It is true that at the session of the Workers' Section Kamenev had already tied the Bolshevik Party to it, but nevertheless it was quite possible to change front as on June 9th. It was a question, after all, of the following day, Tuesday July 4th.

This was the first question that confronted Lenin and his comrades that night. And I think it was the only one that demanded an answer. For the second was probably already decided. This was the question of *where to lead the movement*. This was not a question of concrete fact but of party position. And that had already been determined—a month before. We recall what it reduced itself to: *the movement was beginning as a peaceful demonstration*, and if it developed adequately it would at a favourable conjuncture pass over into *the seizure of power by the Bolshevik Central Committee*, which would rule in the name of the Soviet, with the support at the given moment of the majority of the Petersburg proletariat and the active army units. *This* question was doubtless decided this way now too: a renewal of the debates concerning it was hardly timely now, in the smoke of an uprising.

But how was the first point decided: Whether to take over the movement? Speaking concretely this meant: Should they call

for a continuation of the 'peaceful demonstration' in the name of the Central Committee of the Party? According to all the evidence this point made the Bolshevik leaders go through tormenting doubts and vacillations the whole night.

In the evening the question was decided *positively*. Corresponding local orders were given. And a corresponding sheet was prepared for the first page of *Pravda*. The Bolsheviks officially and definitely put themselves at the head of the uprising.

But later the mood changed. The lull in the streets and the districts, in connexion with the firm course of the Star Chamber, inclined the scales to the opposite side. Irresolution came to the fore. And in this irresolution the Bolsheviks held back once again. The type for the first page of *Pravda* was not only set up, but in the matrix: it had to be cut out of the stereotype machine. The Bolsheviks *countermanded* their summons to a 'peaceful demonstration'. They *declined* to continue the movement and stand at its head. . . . On July 4th *Pravda* came out with a yawning blank strip on the first page.

I have been speaking of the Bolsheviks of Lenin's party. But the Interdistrictites headed by Trotsky were in the Tauride Palace that night. Evidently neither Trotsky nor Lunacharsky took part in the wakeful night of the Bolshevik Central Committee or shared Lenin's torments. But during the night, I don't remember when, I happened to run across Uritsky, one of the Interdistrict leaders. I asked whether *their* group was calling for a 'peaceful demonstration' the next day. It may be that Uritsky yielded to my somewhat ironic tone, and he answered with emphasis and a certain irritation:

'Yes, we're calling a demonstration tomorrow!'

Well, everyone to his taste, I thought, dropping off to sleep on Nikitsky's bed and turning over in my mind the events of the first 'July Day'.

* * *

Tuesday, July 4th. I went out into the street around 11 o'clock. At the first glance it was obvious that *the disorders had begun again*. Clusters of people were collecting everywhere and arguing violently. Half the shops were shut. The trams had not been running since 8 o'clock that morning. A tremendous excitement was felt—tinged with anger, but not with anything like

fanaticism. It was just this that distinguished July 4th from February 28th in Petersburg's external aspect. They were saying something in the groups of people about the *Kronstadters*. . . I hurried to the Tauride Palace.

The nearer I got the more people there were. Around the Palace—enormous throngs, but as it were no demonstrations, no detachments, no columns, nothing organized. A mass of armed soldiers, but split up, solitary, with no command. The square was so packed it was hard to pass through. Ugly black armoured cars as before towered above the crowds.

The halls looked exactly the same as in the first days of the revolution. But the heat was stifling. The windows were open, and armed soldiers were climbing in. With some difficulty I forced my way through to the rooms of the Central Ex. Com.

The open windows looked out into the luxuriant Potemkin Garden, and armed soldiers were jostling one another to look in. The hall was quite crowded, and very noisy. Lunacharsky, whom I hadn't seen all the previous day, was standing at the other end arguing violently with someone. He turned abruptly away from his companion and hurried to my end of the room. He was clearly excited and irritated by the argument. And as though continuing it he flung out at me, without saying good morning, in the angry tone of a challenge, some naive words of justification:

'I've just brought 20,000 *absolutely peaceful people* from Kronstadt.'

In my turn I opened my eyes wide. 'Really? You brought them? Absolutely peaceful?'

The Kronstadters were unquestionably the chief trump of Lenin's party and the decisive factor in his eyes. Having decided the night before to summon the masses to a 'peaceful demonstration', the Bolsheviks were of course taking steps to mobilize Kronstadt. During the hours of nocturnal wavering, when the movement began to die down, Kronstadt became the sole trump of those members of the Bolshevik Central Committee who sponsored the uprising. . . Then they countermanded the insurrection. But they had evidently not taken the appropriate steps with respect to Kronstadt—or else one Bolshevik hand didn't know what the other was doing. I don't know exactly what the facts were.

But in any case this is what happened: at around 10 o'clock in the morning there came up to the Nicholas Embankment, where there was a tremendous concentration of people, upwards of forty different ships with Kronstadt sailors, soldiers, and workers. According to Lunacharsky some 20,000 of these 'peaceful people' had landed. They were armed and their bands came with them. Landing at the Nicholas Embankment, the Kronstadters formed columns and made their way—to Kshesinskaya's house, the Bolshevik headquarters. They evidently had no precise strategic plan, and only quite a vague idea of where to go or just what to do. They were simply in a mood definitely hostile to the Provisional Government and the Soviet majority. But the Kronstadters were led by Roshal and Raskolnikov—and led to Lenin.

Once again the chances of a new revolution had risen extraordinarily high. Lenin must have very much regretted that the summons to the Petersburg proletariat and garrison had been cancelled as a result of his overnight vacillations. At this point it would have been quite possible to lead the movement as far as he liked. And it was also quite possible to bring about the desired overturn, that is, at least to liquidate the Capitalist Ministers, and the Socialist Ministers and their Mamelukes into the bargain.

In any case Lenin must have begun wavering again. And when the Kronstadters surrounded Kshesinskaya's house, expecting to receive instructions, Lenin made an extremely ambiguous speech from the balcony. He didn't demand any concrete action from the impressive force standing in front of him; he didn't even call on his audience to continue the street demonstrations—even though that audience had just proved its readiness for battle by the troublesome journey from Kronstadt to Petersburg. Lenin merely agitated strongly against the Provisional Government and against the Social-traitors of the Soviet, and called for the defence of the revolution and for loyalty to the Bolsheviks.

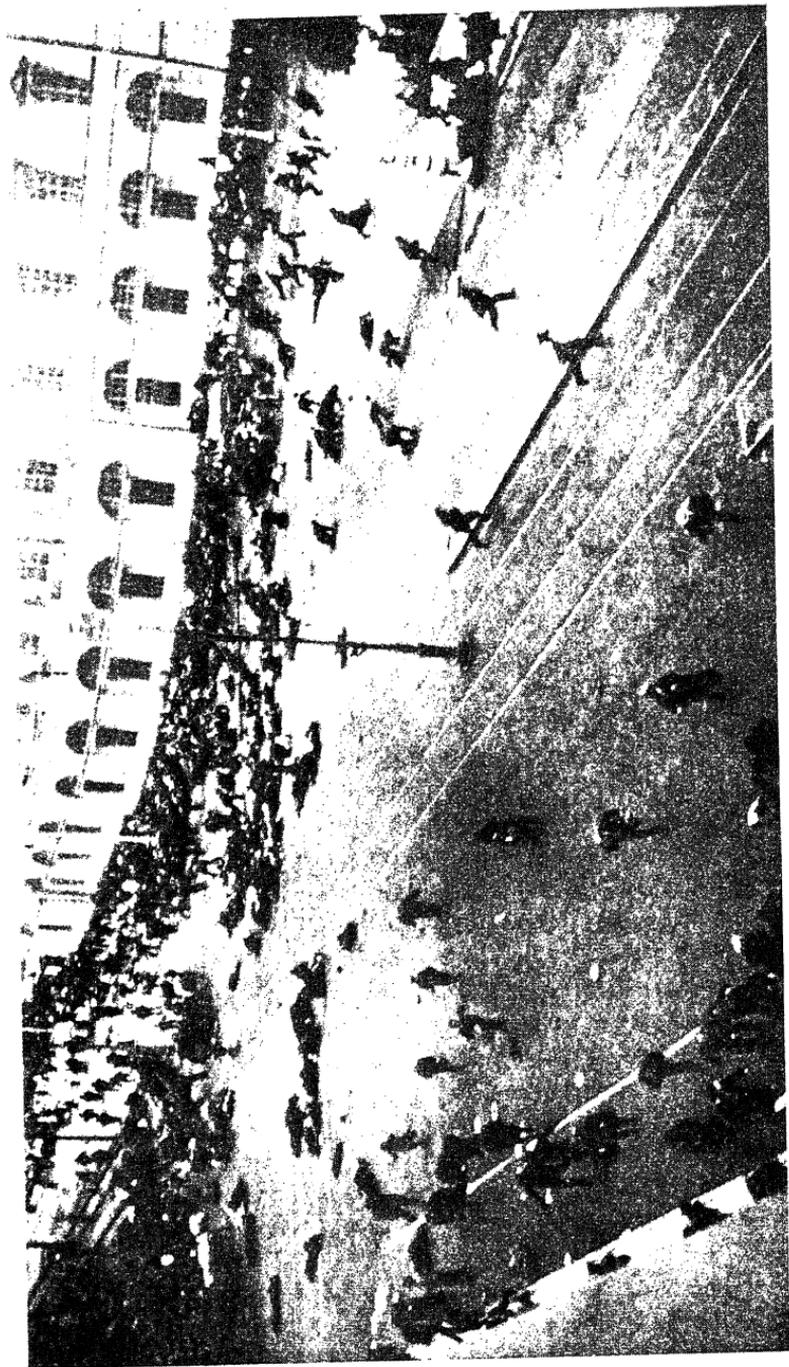
According to Lunacharsky, he, Lunacharsky, had been passing Kshesinskaya's house at exactly that time. During the ovation given Lenin by the Kronstadters, Lenin called him over and suggested that he speak to the crowd. Lunacharsky, always ablaze with eloquence, didn't wait to be urged and gave a

speech on roughly the same lines as Lenin's. Then he led the Kronstadters towards the centre of the city, in the direction of the Tauride Palace. On the way this army was joined by the workers of the Trubochny and Baltic Factories. They were in a truculent mood. In the columns, headed by bands and surrounded by the curious, there was some extremely strong language directed at the Capitalist Ministers and the Compromisers of the Central Ex. Com. It was clear that Kronstadt had come out as one man to save the revolution, bringing ammunition and equipment; only the old and the young had been left at home.

But just where they were going or what for, they didn't really know. Lunacharsky had said he had 'brought' the Kronstadters. But in my opinion they had got stuck somewhere on the Nevsky or near the Champ de Mars. I don't think Lunacharsky *brought* them to the Tauride Palace; as far as I remember they only appeared there around 5 o'clock in the afternoon.

The movement was also pouring out again apart from the Kronstadters. From the early morning the working-class districts were stirring. Around 11 o'clock a unit of the Volhynian Regiment 'came out', followed by half the 180th, the whole 1st Machine-Gun Regiment and others. Around noon firing began at various points of the city—not skirmishes or fights, but firing: partly into the air, partly at people. There was shooting on the Suvorovsky Prospect, Basil Island, the Kamenno-ostrovsky, and especially on the Nevsky—near the Sadovoy and the Liteiny. As a rule it began with a chance shot; panic would follow; rifles began to go off at random. There were dead and wounded everywhere. . .

There was absolutely no sign of any plan in the movement of the 'insurrectionaries'. But there could be no question of systematically localizing or liquidating the movement. The Soviet and Government authorities despatched loyal detachments of military cadets, Semyonovskys, and Cossacks. They paraded and encountered the enemy. But no one dreamed of a serious battle. At the first shot both sides panicked and scattered helter-skelter. Passers-by of course got the great bulk of the bullets. When two columns met each other neither participants nor spectators *could distinguish where either side was*. Perhaps only the Kronstadters had a distinctive look. As for the rest it was all



THE 'JULY DAYS'
A demonstration is fired on in the Nevsky Prospect

muddle, spontaneous and irresistible. But the question is, were the first shots that started the panic and fighting accidental or not?

Small, isolated pogroms began. Because of shots from houses, or with them as a pretext, mass-searches were conducted by soldiers and sailors. The searches were a pretext for looting. Many shops suffered, mainly wine and food shops and tobacco-nists. Various groups began to arrest people on the streets at random.

Around 4 o'clock, according to rumour, the number of people wounded or killed already amounted to hundreds. Dead horses lay here and there.

* * *

The Tauride Palace was packed, stifling and full of disorder. Some mass-meetings were going on in the Catherine Hall, but there were no sessions.

At 2 o'clock, in the midst of the disorder, a session of the Soldiers' Section opened in the White Hall, packed with various armed people. I was detained by some business in the Central Ex. Com. and wasn't there. Dan reported on the situation and, to judge by the newspapers, did so in definitely Rightist tones. But there is no doubt that a good half of these old Soviet praetorians had a contemptuous and plainly hostile attitude towards what Dan said. The movement against the Coalition was gathering too much momentum. The only thing that helped the Star Chamber was that by the will of fate it was directed simultaneously at the Soviets. It was this fact too that ought to make the 'rebels' and their Bolshevik inspirers lose their footing.

The Soldiers' Section dispersed without having taken any practical decisions, and the White Hall had to be cleared for a joint session of the Worker-Soldier and the Peasant Central Ex. Coms. From the city, as before, came news of more and more demonstrations, clashes, shootings, people killed.

I was not at the beginning of the meeting but stayed in the rooms of the Central Ex. Com. It was reported that a workers' army of 30,000 men was coming out of the Putilov Factory. There was talk of two enormous fighting columns with artillery and machine-guns on the Nevsky and the Liteiny. The situation

had become extremely grave; there was no apparent way of preventing a possible general pogrom and tremendous bloodshed.

But suddenly a heavy downpour fell on Petersburg. One minute—two—three, and the 'fighting columns' succumbed. Officers who witnessed it told me later that the insurgent soldiers ran off as though under fire and filled up all the doors and gateways. Rain had routed the insurgent army. The demonstrating masses could no longer find their leaders, nor the leaders their sub-commanders. The officers said that the army could no longer be reorganized and that the last chance for any systematic operations had completely vanished after the downpour. But the unruly elements remained. . .

It was around 5 o'clock. Someone hurried into the Ex. Com. rooms and reported that the Kronstadters had come to the Palace. Under the leadership of Roshal and Raskolnikov they filled all the square and a large part of the Shpalerny. They were in an ugly, fighting mood. They were asking for the Socialist Ministers, and a whole mass of them was pouring into the Palace.

* * *

I went to the meeting-hall. From the windows of the crowded corridor looking on to the square I saw an endless multitude packing the entire space as far as the eye could reach. Armed men were climbing through the open windows. A mass of placards and banners with the Bolshevik slogans (of June 9th) rose above the crowd. As before in the left corner of the square the black, ugly masses of armoured cars loomed up.

I forced my way into the ante-chamber, which was completely packed; lines and groups of people, in the midst of the noise and clanking of arms, for some reason or other were excitedly pushing back and forth. Suddenly someone tugged at my sleeve. Lesha Emelyanova, an old SR friend recently back from prison and now on the staff of *Izvestiya*, stood before me. She was pale and trembling violently.

'Go quickly—Chernov's been arrested—the Kronstadters—here in the courtyard! Quickly, quickly. . . They may kill him!'

I rushed towards the doors. Just then I saw Raskolnikov push-

ing his way towards the Catherine Hall. I seized him by the arm and pulled him back with me, explaining on the way what the trouble was: if Raskolnikov couldn't pacify the Kronstadters, who could? But it wasn't easy to get out: there was a crush in the porch. Raskolnikov followed me obediently, but answered me ambiguously. I was perplexed and began to lose my temper. We had already pushed through to the steps when Trotsky, shouldering aside the crowd, overtook us. He was also hurrying to Chernov's rescue.

It seemed that this was what had happened. When the Central Ex. Com. was told that the Kronstadters were demanding the Socialist Ministers, the Praesidium sent Chernov out to them. No sooner had he appeared at the top of the steps of the entry-way that the Kronstadters became very aggressive; shouts arose from the armed crowd of many thousands: 'Search him! See whether he's armed!'

'In that case I won't speak,' Chernov declared, and started back into the Palace.

Then the crowd got relatively calm. Chernov made a short speech about the Government crisis, sharply condemning the Cadets who had left the Government. The speech was interrupted by shouts of a Bolshevik character. And towards the end some enterprising person in the crowd demanded that the Socialist Ministers at once declare the land national property, etc.

There arose a frantic din. The crowd, brandishing its weapons, began to surge forward. A group of people tried to get Chernov inside the Palace, but strong hands seized him and put him in an open car standing close to the steps at the right of the porch. Chernov was declared under arrest as a hostage.

A group of workers immediately rushed off to report all this to the Central Ex. Com.; bursting into the White Hall they produced a panic by shouting out: 'Comrade Chernov has been arrested by the mob! They're tearing him to pieces right now! To the rescue! Everyone out into the street!'

Chkheidze, restoring order with difficulty, proposed that Kamenev, Martov, Lunacharsky, and Trotsky should hasten to rescue Chernov. I don't know where the others were, but Trotsky got there in time.

Raskolnikov and I had stopped on the top step near the right

side of the porch—when Trotsky, two steps below us, climbed up on the bonnet of a car. The mob was in turmoil as far as the eye could reach. Around the motor-car a number of sailors with rather savage faces were particularly violent. Chernov, who had plainly lost all presence of mind, was in the back seat.

All Kronstadt knew Trotsky and, one would have thought, trusted him. But he began to speak and the crowd did not subside. If a shot had been fired nearby at that moment by way of provocation, a tremendous slaughter might have occurred, and all of us, including perhaps Trotsky, might have been torn to shreds. Trotsky, excited and not finding words in this savage atmosphere, could barely make the nearest rows listen to him. But what was he saying?

‘You hurried over here, Red Kronstadters, as soon as you heard the revolution was in danger! Red Kronstadt has once again shown itself to be the champion of the proletarian cause. Long live Red Kronstadt, the glory and pride of the revolution! . . .’

Nevertheless he was listened to with hostility. When he tried to pass on to Chernov himself, the ranks around the car again began raging.

‘You’ve come to declare your will and show the Soviet that the working class no longer wants to see the bourgeoisie in power. But why hurt your own cause by petty acts of violence against casual individuals? Individuals are not worthy of your attention. . . Every one of you has demonstrated his devotion to the revolution. Every one of you is ready to lay down his life for it. I know that. Give me your hand, Comrade! Your hand, brother!’

Trotsky stretched his hand down to a sailor who was protesting with especial violence. But the latter firmly refused to respond, and moved his hand—the one which was not holding a rifle—out of reach. If these were people alien to the revolution or outright *provocateurs*, to them Trotsky was just as bad as Chernov, or much worse: they might be waiting only for an opportunity to settle accounts with both advocate and defendant. But I think they were Kronstadt naval ratings who had, in their own judgement, accepted Bolshevik ideas. It seemed to me that the sailor, who must have heard Trotsky in Kronstadt more than once, now had a real feeling that he was a traitor:

he remembered his previous speeches and was confused. Let Chernov go? Then why had he been summoned?

Not knowing what to do, the Kronstadters released Chernov. Trotsky took him by the arm and hurried him off into the Palace. But I, remaining on the scene of events, made a row with Raskolnikov.

'Take away your army at once!' I demanded. 'You must see that the most senseless fights may occur. What can be the *political* objective of their staying here, and of this whole movement? They have made their *will* clear enough, and there's nothing to be done here by *violence*! You know the question of the Government is being debated, and everything going on in the streets is simply killing the possibility of a favourable decision.'

Raskolnikov looked at me angrily and mumbled some monosyllables. He obviously didn't know just what more he could do at the Tauride Palace with his Kronstadters, but he clearly didn't want to take them away.

I understood quite well what a spontaneous movement was. But I completely failed to understand Raskolnikov at that moment. He had obviously not finished saying something he knew but didn't want to tell me. I failed to understand him just because at that time I didn't know the real position of his commanders, the Bolshevik Central Committee: I didn't know that for at least a month the Bolsheviks had been completely prepared (not in words, but in deeds) to take all power into their own hands 'in favourable conditions'. Raskolnikov had his instructions.

However, though the movement was tremendous, the overturn didn't come off. This reflected the whole futility of vacillating and half-hearted decisions at critical moments. In view of the Chernov incident and Trotsky's speech, Raskolnikov could now no longer lead his army straight to the Central Ex. Com. and liquidate it. The moment had passed, the mood was destroyed, the impulse was confused; the affair might miscarry—especially in view of the armoured cars looming up to the left. Raskolnikov and Roshal, after all, had received only conditional, not direct, orders. But it was also impossible for the crowd of many thousands, who had been fetched to 'save the revolution', to stand still and do nothing. The mood might

easily turn against the Kronstadt generals themselves, as it might have turned against Trotsky.

Irritated by my brush with Raskolnikov, I was on the point of climbing up on the bonnet of the same car, even though I knew it would do no good. But at that moment Roshal jumped up there himself. Lispering like a child, in ingratiating language, he extolled the Kronstadters for having performed their revolutionary duty—and then invited them to go away and rest at points shown to them, where the army would be given food and shelter. But the gallant Kronstadters must remain on the alert: at any moment they might again be needed by the revolution and they would be summoned once more.

I didn't wait for the results. I left for the room where the Central Ex. Com. met.

* * *

But I quickly got bored and went out to 'the people'. The crowd in the Catherine Hall seemed to be getting a little thinner, but generally speaking there was the same scene of crowded, senseless fuss. The square was also emptier: the Kronstadters really had vanished somewhere. But there were new crowds. . .

Just then a particularly dense crowd appeared at the left-hand gates opening on to the Shpalerny. Columns of soldiers with a rather special appearance were entering the square. Dirty and dusty, the soldiers, soaked by the rain, had a look of active service, with their packs on their backs, their rolled-up great-coats slung round their shoulders, their mess-tins and cooking-pots. The crowd made way before their dense columns. Taking up the whole courtyard of the palace, from one gate to the other, the detachment halted and began settling itself in the most businesslike way: they stacked their rifles, shook out their wet coats, and piled up their belongings.

This was the 176th Reserve Regiment, the same as I had heard a detailed report of two days before at the above-mentioned Interdistrict Conference. This was another Bolshevik 'insurrectionary' army. At the request of the Bolshevik organizations, the regiment had marched from Krasnoe Selo—to 'defend the revolution'.

Well, and what did this remarkable regiment intend to do?

And where were the leaders who had called it out for some purpose or other? The leaders were invisible. And the regiment once again had no idea of what it should do. Doubtless after its hard march it would not object to a rest. But nevertheless it must have been aware that this was not what it had been summoned for. No one, however, ordered it to do anything.

Dan appeared at the door of the palace. It was evidently to him that a delegation of the regiment, sent to reconnoitre, had spoken. Dan had come out to 'welcome' the regiment. And he gave it something to do. The regiment, of its own free will, had performed a difficult march to defend the revolution? Splendid. The revolution, in the person of the central organ of the Soviet, was really in danger. Reliable protection for the Central Ex. Com. must be organized. And Dan personally, with the co-operation of the officers of the 'insurrectionary' regiment, posted some of these mutinous soldiers as sentries at various points in the Palace, for the defence of those against whom the insurrection was aimed.

Yes, such things happen in history! But it's hardly likely that history of that kind will repeat itself. Dan didn't know what sort of a regiment this was and why it had come, and he found a use for it. And the regiment didn't know what it was to do when it reached its destination, received no other orders, and unprotestingly put itself at the service of the enemy. Now it was all over: the regiment was scattered, its soldiers' minds were hopelessly muddled and it could not be turned back again into a fighting force of the uprising.

* * *

This was around 7 o'clock. I went back to the meeting. There was nothing new there. Suddenly like an arrow the news sped through the meeting: the men from the Putilov Factory had come, 30,000 of them, bearing themselves extremely aggressively; some of them had burst into the Palace looking for Tsereteli, who at that moment was not in the hall. They were said to have hunted all over the Palace for him without finding him. The hall was full of excitement, hubbub and frenzied yelling. Just then a crowd of about forty workers, many of them armed, burst in tempestuously. The deputies leaped from their seats. Some failed to show adequate courage and self-control.

One of the workers, a classical *sans-culotte*, in a cap and a short blue blouse without a belt, with a rifle in his hand, leaped up on to the speakers' platform. He was quivering with excitement and rage, stridently shouting out incoherent words and shaking his rifle:

'Comrades! How long must we workers put up with treachery? You're all here debating and making deals with the bourgeoisie and the landlords. . . You're busy betraying the working class. Well, just understand that the working class won't put up with it! There are 30,000 of us all told here from Putilov. We're going to have our way. All power to the Soviets! We have a firm grip on our rifles! Your Kerenskys and Tsereletis are not going to fool us!'

Chkheidze, in front of whose nose the rifle was dancing about, showed complete self-control. In answer to the hysterics of the *sans-culotte*, pouring out his hungry proletarian soul, the chairman tranquilly leaned down from his height and pushed into the worker's quivering hand a manifesto, printed the evening before:

'Here, please take this, Comrade, read it. It says here what you and your Putilov comrades should do. Please read it and don't interrupt our business. Everything necessary is said there.'

The manifesto said that all those who had gone out into the street should go back home, otherwise they would be traitors to the revolution. The ruling Soviet clique and Chkheidze could think of nothing else to propose to the rank-and-file at a moment of extreme tension.

The baffled *sans-culotte*, not knowing what else to do, took the appeal and then without much difficulty was got off the platform. His comrades too were quickly 'persuaded' to leave the hall. Order was restored and the incident liquidated. . . But to this day I can still see that *sans-culotte* on the platform of the White Hall, shaking his rifle in self-oblivion in the faces of the hostile 'leaders of the democracy', trying in torment to express the will, the longings, and the fury of the authentic proletarian lower depths, who scented treachery but were powerless to fight against it. This was one of the finest scenes of the revolution. And with Chkheidze's gesture one of the most dramatic.

The speakers were holding forth again. It was as boring as before in the hall: everybody was conscious of the total futility of all these polemics.

It was interesting to watch the mood of the little peasants. Like the praetorians of the Soldiers' Section, they were not in the least averse from driving the bourgeoisie from power and furthering the revolution, that is, strictly, the agrarian revolution. All power, after all, had long been in Soviet-peasant hands—so why be afraid of proclaiming the fact? This is how the little peasants talked in intimate corners. But that was only one side of the matter. The other was that they were mortally afraid of the Bolsheviki and the Internationalists, traitors to the fatherland, lackeys of the Kaiser, universal destroyers, atheists, who talked gibberish about class war and international proletarian solidarity. The peasants were peasants, and the more substantial they were the more clearly their speech and whole appearance showed their old reactionary anti-Semitic principles.

It was this fear of Bolshevism that the leaders of the Soviet majority were playing on. They could not explain their theories to the peasants, but it wasn't so difficult to scare them with Lenin and anarchy. They clung tight to the Star Chamber without understanding its politics—in order not to fall into the maw of the Bolsheviki.

I was called away from the meeting to talk to somebody. The corridors and rooms had become much less crowded by evening. The Putilov workers had soon gone away. On their way to the Palace they had been caught in the rain and were wet to the skin, and this probably influenced them more strongly than any arguments. The great majority of the Kronstadters had also gone directly from the Tauride Palace to the Nicholas Embankment, boarded their ships and gone home. Only two or three thousand of them were left, with Raskolnikov and Roshal in command; they were somewhere around Kshesinskaya's house and the Peter-Paul Fortress.

Altogether, according to the rumours that reached the 'centre of the revolution', by evening the streets had quickly grown calm. The blood and filth of this senseless day had had a sobering effect by evening, and evidently evoked a swift reaction. Nothing was heard of further 'demonstrations'. The 'uprising'

had definitely crumbled. There remained only the *excesses* of a wanton mob. There were some 400 killed and wounded.

* * *

Our session still continued. The speeches dragged on. The darkness drew on imperceptibly, and in the glass roof invisible little lamps began to burn brightly all round the hall.

Martov was speaking, as intelligently as usual, and persuasively, but in an 'unrevolutionary' tone, trying to persuade the Soviet majority to take power.

In the endless list of speakers my turn came. I spoke in support of Martov, so badly, boringly, and confusedly, that it's painful to recall.

I don't remember that Trotsky spoke, but he was there, sitting in a small group with Lunacharsky and some others on the extreme upper right benches. This little cluster had been the target of savage catcalls and ferocious looks from the rest of the hall throughout the day. But now the little group had melted away. I saw that Lunacharsky was left alone. Something stirred in me, a spirit of protest and solidarity: under the spiteful looks of the Mamelukes I went right across the hall to Lunacharsky, sat down beside him and began to talk to him.

'Why don't you speak? After all, they'll take this for the meekness of a schoolboy who has been up to mischief.'

'I'm on the list,' he replied, 'but I don't feel like speaking. Do you think I ought to?'

'Without any doubt.'

Lunacharsky went over to Chkheidze to see whether his turn was coming soon. Only two or three people were before him. We sat and waited, idly chatting.

Suddenly a rifle-shot rang out, very close, and then another. Someone yelled out hysterically from the empty galleries something about some shootings. The hall was filled with panic and hubbub. The little peasants and the intellectuals jumped up and dashed wildly about. It was ludicrous and disgusting to see the scared 'leaders of the revolution'.

These shots were all that happened. It was explained later that they were accidental: apparently some horses had broken

loose in the square and caused an alarm in the midst of which a few rifles had gone off of their own accord.

Chkheidze gave the floor to Lunacharsky. He spoke well, as he always did, but without conviction or fire. He attributed the popular movement to general causes and demanded their removal by a decision on the Government question. He looked exhausted and dejected. He was evidently beginning to suffer a real hangover.

A break was announced, and everyone made for the garden, or filled the buffet and the cool rooms of the Ex. Com. It was about 11 o'clock. The Tauride Palace looked as it did during the first days of the revolution, in the dead of night. Along the endless walls of the Catherine Hall and the ante-chamber, soldiers slept beside their stacked-up arms.

* * *

There was a crush in the buffet, around the tea and sandwiches. I had squeezed myself into a seat at the table when Lunacharsky hurried over to me. Just then I was talking to some outsider about the day's events. Without sparing either irony or merriment, I turned to Lunacharsky:

'So, Anatol Vasilievich, those 20,000 were completely peaceful people?'

Lunacharsky turned on his heel and walked away from me. More than once that day I had already poked fun—a bad habit I have—at his *début* as a regimental commander. But just now my joke evidently was out of tune with his mood. I followed him and asked what it was all about.

It was something really sensational. Nothing more nor less than that reports had been received about Lenin's connexion with the German General Staff. The newspapers had documents intended for publication the next day.

The Praesidium was hurriedly taking steps to prevent it—before the 'responsible' Soviet spheres considered the matter. Tsereteli and others were feverishly conferring on the 'phone with Premier Lvov and the newspaper editors.

It goes without saying that not one of the people really connected with the revolution doubted for a moment the absurdity of these rumours. But—my God!—what talk began amongst the majority, the hangers-on, and the average ignoramuses from

town and country. In any case our Star Chamber correctly evaluated both the degree of seriousness and the essence of this contemptible affair.

* * *

The session reopened. Only three or four regular speakers were left. But there were also some emergency ones: to the stormy patriotic raptures of the Mamelukes, with their angry glances directed at us, there spoke 'a representative of the 12th Army', just rushed in by car from Dvinsk at a summons from the Soviet authorities. This was the fairly well-known Right Menshevik Kuchin, who was daring to speak in the name of the army. Making an impression by his martial 'trench-like' appearance, he called the demonstrations, organized against the Government and the Soviet itself by irresponsible and sinister elements, a stab in the back of the army, which was straining all its efforts in the struggle for the freedom of the fatherland. He spoke of the readiness of the front to 'defend the revolution' by all its means, stopping at nothing in order to liquidate the disorders.

Oho! The front was getting involved!

Kuchin's speech was not the only one of its kind. Other couriers from some units stationed in the suburbs also spoke along the same lines. . .

Around then someone reported that two or three hours previously the Bolshevik *Pravda* had been destroyed. It was plain that the affair was taking an abrupt turn.

The initiator of the attack on *Pravda* was the conscientious Minister of Justice, Pereverzev. He thought it timely to pick the evening of July 4th to give an order for the liberation of the printing-shop occupied (I think on my order) by *Pravda* in the first few days of the revolution.

No sooner said than done. Then and there a detachment had been sent to the printing-shop and offices; they arrested everyone present, confiscated manuscripts, documents, etc. All this was taken to the Staff in a district where the Minister of Justice himself resided. He probably did this in connexion with the reports at hand of Lenin's having been hired by the German General Staff.

After the legal authorities the mob began lording it on the

Pravda premises. 'War-wounded' and other Black Hundred elements completely destroyed the editorial offices; they tore down, smashed, and burnt everything.

It was plain that things had taken an abrupt turn.

Numerous arrests were reported to be taking place that night throughout the city. From everywhere dozens of all kinds of people 'suspected of shooting' and of inciting to riot were being taken to the same General Staff. Soldiers, workers, and sailors especially were being seized on the streets and at home. They were interrogated there and sent to different prisons. Weapons were being brought in from all sides—revolvers, rifles, and machine-guns.

* * *

The session continued. The speakers were already coming to an end. Suddenly a noise was heard in the distance. It came nearer and nearer. The measured tramping of thousands of feet was already clearly audible in the surrounding halls. . . The hall again grew agitated. Faces looked anxious, deputies leaped from their seats. What was it? Where was this new danger to the revolution coming from?

But Dan appeared on the platform as though out of the ground. He was so filled with glee that he tried without success to conceal it, at least partially, by assuming a somewhat more serene, objective, and balanced expression.

'Comrades!' he called out, 'be calm! There is no danger! Regiments loyal to the revolution have arrived to defend the Central Ex. Com.'

Just then in the Catherine Hall a powerful *Marseillaise* thundered forth. Enthusiasm in the hall—the faces of the Mamelukes lit up. Squinting triumphantly at the Left, they took hands in an outburst of emotion and standing with bared heads ecstatically chanted the *Marseillaise*.

'A classic scene of the beginning of a counter-revolution!' Martov snapped angrily.

The Left sat there motionless, watching with scornful faces the triumph of the victors.

Certain 'loyal' units had indeed appeared in the Tauride Palace—I think a battalion of the Izmailovsky Regiment, and of course the Semyonovskys and the Preobrazhenskys. As a

matter of fact this had very little value. At night, when the capital was completely tranquil, they could be brought over to the Tauride Palace in complete safety—'to defend the revolution and protect the Soviet'. We know that these were units as yet untouched by Bolshevism, who were against any 'demonstration', in spite of the change in mood that was taking place. Bringing them over was worth very little.

But it was also quite useless. The revolution, in the person of its 'plenipotentiary organ', was not threatened by anyone at all. But in case of real danger, of an attack—these regiments would doubtless not have endured a single volley. The 'classic scene of counter-revolution' was not a cause but merely a symptom of the radical change in the situation. But facts remained facts.

The commander of the newly-arrived units mounted the platform. The deputies, with sidelong glances at our little group, gave him an enthusiastic reception. And he replied with a speech about their devotion to the revolution and readiness to defend it with their blood. It was a most remarkable speech: it reflected all the absurd contradictions and incomparable confusions in the relationships of this revolutionary period.

The commander spoke of his loyalty to the *Soviet* and his readiness to defend it with his life: he called the Soviet the sole authority to which the army owed obedience. No party centres or separate groups! Only the central Soviet organ, which was called to decide the fate of the revolution. Not a word about the Provisional Government, Lvov, or Tereshchenko, as though they had never existed. All power was laid at the feet of the *Soviet*. But did not the 'rebels' insist on this very point?

What was confusing here was only the *form*. For in essence the 'rebels' were demanding a dictatorship of the Soviet which would carry out their immutable programme: peace, bread, and land. They demanded all power for it, and insisted that it use that power as a worker-peasant Government should, while the 'loyalists' acknowledged the Soviet as a dictator without conditions; they *blindly* followed their blind leaders and were ready to do (without risk to themselves!) absolutely everything it commanded.

As on the evening before, the Bolsheviks were not present at this session. Their leaders again spent the night at their Central Committee. This was a very hard night for them. *Pravda* had

been destroyed; the slandering of Lenin was taking unheard-of forms and the movement for which they had accepted practical responsibility was obviously and very ingloriously collapsing.

That night in their Central Committee the Bolsheviks came to the decision 'to end the demonstration, in view of the fact that the workers' and soldiers' actions of July 4th and 5th have forcefully emphasized the danger in which the country has been placed by the disastrous policy of the Provisional Government' (!).

So everything was over. The Mamelukes had triumphed. For the time being the only thing to do was disperse and go home. Through the glass roof the hall had been full of daylight for some time. It was about 4 o'clock.

The courtyard, drenched in the rising sun, was empty and calm. The armoured cars were no longer there; they had been moved into the garden behind the Palace. Nor were there any signs on the streets of the recent tempest.

I don't remember where I spent the 'night' that morning.

* * *

Wednesday, July 5th. That day all the Petersburg newspapers actually did come out without the material prepared in the editorial offices on Lenin's treachery. Only one newspaper disobeyed Lvov and Tsereteli, so that the material on Lenin became public property that day anyhow, and on the next day it was reprinted by the whole bourgeois gutter press.

But just what kind of material had zealots of the truth got hold of in connexion with this monstrous affair? And what were they called, those patriots who had unmasked Lenin as a traitor?

One was Pankratov, an old inmate of the Schlüsselburg Fortress, now an SR, known in the '17 revolution for nothing more than this; and the other was the Second Duma-ite Alexinsky,¹ whose name speaks for itself and with exhaustive

¹ Alexinsky, Grigorii Alexeyevich (1879-): an ex-Bolshevik, the most popular speaker for the Bolshevik wing of the Social-Democratic fraction in the Second Duma and a former collaborator of Lenin's. At the outbreak of the First World War he made a sharp turn to the Right, becoming a 'Social-patriot' and even working with monarchists. In 1917 he was refused admission into the Soviet, and went to extreme lengths in his struggle against the Bolsheviks. He left Russia in 1918 and became an ideologist of the 'White' reaction to Bolshevism. (Ed.)

fullness characterizes the value of the material *a priori*. I refer to them to show the level of baseness of our liberal press, which now began to speak of Lenin's venality as documentarily established.

Messrs. Alexinsky and Pankratov were publishing a thoroughly 'official' document. This was the record of the interrogation of a certain Lieut. Yermolenko in Staff Headquarters, dated May 16th, 1917. Yermolenko testified that he had been 'transferred' by the Germans to our rear in order to agitate for an immediate separate peace. He accepted this assignment on the insistence of some 'Comrades'. But he was informed in the German General Staff that such an agitation was already being carried on in Russia by other German agents, among them Lenin. Lenin had been commissioned to try by all his means to 'undermine the confidence of the Russian people in the Provisional Government'. Money for agitation and instructions were being received from someone in the German Consulate in Stockholm. . .

No one knows whether an obscure person by the name of Yermolenko, who agreed to become a German agent, ever really existed, or whether this kind of document was ever really sent to the staff of the Minister of War, Kerensky, from the head of the General Staff. It may have been fabricated completely in Palace Square, where Black Hundred officers swarmed around Kerensky. But helpful hands evidently got hold of this paper from there for Alexinsky. *He* surely had an established reputation! *He* would surely put the paper to the right use!

And Alexinsky published the document as an incontrovertible proof of Lenin's treachery.

It would seem to have been unusually strange for such a 'record' to serve as a proof of this kind in the eyes of the 'public'. It would seem that any conclusions might be drawn from this document except that of the Bolshevik leader's corruption. It would seem, in particular, that it added precisely nothing to the daily tubs of slander from the gutter press.

But against the background of the July events, and the frenzied malice of bourgeois and Right-Soviet elements, against the background of the terrible hangover of the 'insurgents'—the published document made a quite special and very powerful impression. No one wanted to study it in substance. There was a

document about corruption—and that was enough. And for the *reaction* that had begun it served as just such a factor as had the senseless bloodshed of the day before.

No further material at all was published during the days that followed. But for the period that was beginning even this proved sufficient. No quotations are needed for one to imagine the war-dance that began in the bourgeois press, based on the proof of Lenin's corruption. The Tsarist Secret Police and real agents of the German General Staff were undoubtedly trying to play on the July disorders. All sorts of riff-raff in the capital were trying to exploit the confusion, muddle, brawls, and shifts in mood of the day before. But of course it was the Bolsheviks who were unanimously declared to be the culprits for all crimes. And on July 5th, the first day of the reaction, the 'big press' was filled with a campaign of Bolshevik-baiting.

That day the *Novaya Zhizn* came out with only a few copies, looking very miserable: the printing-shop had been seized the night before, and another one had given us refuge. I was disturbed at not going to the editorial offices for a second day. That day I decided to appear without fail.

* * *

This is how that Wednesday reappears to me now, three and a half years later:

There were no trams, but generally speaking the streets had gone back to normal. There were almost no crowds or street meetings: the shops were almost all open. Now and then patrols, led by officers, would be met. In the shops and in the streets there was talk of the German money Lenin had received. Bitter anger with the Bolsheviks was sharply expressed.

The Tauride Palace also looked almost ordinary. I think the encampment in the Catherine Hall of the evening before was gone by around noon. But the armoured cars with their crews and guards were still standing in the garden behind the Palace.

There was no session of the committee, but the Bureau was to meet. There were lots of deputies in the Central Ex. Com.'s rooms, again unoccupied. Some reports came in that armed people were again appearing at the factories and demanding that work be stopped. Dan insisted that someone at once write

an appeal to the workers—against strikes and new demonstrations: he, Dan, was too exhausted to write the proclamation himself.

Someone took it in hand and for about twenty minutes plugged away at it. But Dan, without mincing his words, declared the result unsuitable and as a last resort insisted that I write the appeal, which I did. Dan seized the sheet of paper and hurried off with it. I think this was the sole instance during the six months of the Coalition in which I collaborated with the Soviet majority.

As before there were no Bolsheviks in the Palace. As far as I recall neither Trotsky nor Lunacharsky was visible. The Left was weakly represented. . .

But suddenly there was an outburst of indignation amongst the Left wing. It appeared that the *summoning of the troops from the front for the pacification of Petersburg was an accomplished fact*. Some 'scratch detachment', of unknown composition and leadership, was moving on Petersburg.

We recall Kerensky's solemn declaration that troops were moving and would move only from the rear to the front to defend the freedom that had been won, and never in the opposite direction, against the citizens of a free country. This was how these phrases were now being justified.

* * *

In the Bureau an extraordinary commission was of course appointed to investigate the events of the preceding days. The question of calling out troops to pacify the capital was raised.

There were only two of us Menshevik-Internationalists in the Bureau—Martov and I. We fought stubbornly and well. In the given situation, when the 'mood' might easily lead at any moment to an anti-Bolshevik, and then an anti-Soviet pogrom, there was no question but that front-line troops *might* serve as a factor in the insurrection and the source of a blood-bath: after all, we knew neither the composition of these troops, their leaders, nor their 'mood'. Martov and I demanded that they should be stopped and sent back.

Once more there were no Bolsheviks at the meeting, but Zinoviev turned up in the midst of the debates on the troops. Without sitting down he went straight to Chkheidze and asked

for the floor on an emergency matter. He looked wretched, upset and confused, and was plainly in a great hurry.

‘Comrades, a horrible thing has happened. A monstrous slander has appeared in the press and is already having its effect on the most ignorant and backward strata of the masses. There is no need for me to explain to you the meaning of this piece of baseness and its possible consequences. This is another Dreyfus affair, which Black Hundred elements are trying to stage. But its significance is hundreds of times greater. It is bound up not only with the interests of our revolution, but also with the entire European working-class movement. There is no need for me to try to prove that the Central Ex. Com. ought to take the most resolute measures to rehabilitate Comrade Lenin and suppress all the conceivable results of this slander. I’ve been charged to come here in the name of the Central Committee of our party.’

Zinoviev ended, and without sitting down waited for the majority’s reaction. Many faces had an ironical look, others showed complete indifference. But the answer of the whole Central Ex. Com. was already predetermined by the Star Chamber’s preventive measures of the night before. Chkheidze replied that the situation was clear to all present and that all measures within the Central Ex. Com.’s power would of course be taken without delay. Chkheidze’s tone was icy—as though he were addressing a grown-up schoolboy in disgrace. But there was nothing left for Zinoviev to do but express satisfaction at the assurances he had received. Then he hurried off; we never saw either him or Lenin again in Petersburg until ‘October’ itself.

Yet another investigating Commission was formed then and there, for Lenin’s rehabilitation. I don’t know anything about its activities. But I recall that two days later there were discussions of some other elections to this Commission: the ‘inconvenience’ emerged that its original membership consisted only of Jews, five in all—including Dan, Lieber, and Gots. The rehabilitation of Lenin by a Commission like *that* could serve only as the source of another Black Hundred campaign—against the whole Soviet for concealing high treason. . .

However, I don’t think there were any new elections, and the matter died down of itself. In any case, the Commission understood that what it had to investigate was not the question of

whether Lenin had sold Russia, but only the sources of the slander. . . There was much talk in those days, amongst other things, about the extreme disorder of *Pravda's* finances; the sources of its income in the shape of donations and collections could not always be established with precision; and the possibility could not be excluded that unknown elements, even of German origin, gambling on the Bolsheviks, might palm off some sum of money or other on them without their knowledge. That was always possible with any party or newspaper in the situation of the Bolsheviks and *Pravda*. A complete rehabilitation in this respect too would have been an indispensable result of the activities of an investigating commission, but as far as I know nothing like it was ever established concerning Lenin and his party.

* * *

Meanwhile rumours had begun to come in that the mob, with a Black Hundred tendency, was again getting out of hand in the city. Certain groups were beginning to seize Bolsheviks in the streets. It was said that some had been beaten up.

Some units from the city and suburbs began to appear in Staff Headquarters to place themselves at the disposal of the 'legal authorities', and throughout the day these 'legal authorities' carried out numerous arrests. Russian gaols, after a pause of four months, were again filled with 'politicals'. And Dr. Manukhin, who until now had been treating only Tsarist dignitaries, was now enriched by a great many new prison patients from amongst the Bolsheviks.

Alarming news also came in about the Kronstadters. We know that most of them had gone off home in their ships the night before, but two or three thousand had remained in Petersburg. After hanging about in Trinity Square for a while, around Kshesinskaya's house, the Kronstadters, led by Raskolnikov and Roshal, decided that it would be a good idea to go to the Peter-Paul Fortress. Of course they were not admitted, but without much difficulty they occupied the Fortress by force and became masters of the situation there. But exactly what was to be done with the conquered Fortress, once again neither the army nor its leaders had any idea. It was a 'base', just 'in case'. They broke into the arsenal, duly armed themselves, and put their weapons

into readiness for battle. But there was nothing else to do, and the Kronstadters spent the night quite peacefully.

Nevertheless the seizure of a fortress under the leadership of Bolshevik fighting commanders was a manifest and very important 'disorder'. The Fortress must be freed. And in the morning the Soviet authorities began to busy themselves with this. In the name of the Central Ex. Com., General Lieber was sent off to retake and pacify the fortress; but he didn't go alone. He found Kamenev and asked him to go too, in the firm belief that it would be easier for him to talk to Roshal and Raskolnikov. Kamenev went with Lieber: his Central Committee, in the early morning atmosphere of July 5th, obviously endorsed this without any difficulty.

But getting into the Peter-Paul was not so easy. Although the bridges were open, the entire district from the Palace Square to the Peter-Paul was held by troops 'loyal to the legitimate Government' and to 'order', who wouldn't let anyone go from any point to any other without special passes from the Staff. This was all very impressive, but I wonder what these 'loyal' troops would have said if they had been ordered to *take* the Peter-Paul Fortress. . .

In any case Kamenev and Lieber had to go to the General Staff to get a pass. While Lieber was fussing about there, the rumour spread amongst the soldiers that the famous Bolshevik Kamenev was in their midst, and they arrested him without thinking twice. The sensation filled practically the whole district. They began demanding an immediate investigation and trial—there was even a danger that both might be dispensed with. Lieber rushed to the rescue. But—*horribile dictu!*—he was taken for Zinoviev and also arrested; the officers behaved even worse than the soldiers. It was with difficulty that the prisoners were got into the Staff, where the misunderstanding was cleared up. The square held by the 'loyal' troops remained in a state of agitation for a long time. Kamenev and Lieber, somehow making their way out of the Staff, went off on their mission.

They arrived at the Peter-Paul Fortress around 3 o'clock. Its garrison had already managed to be 'assimilated' by the conquerors and, incited by Raskolnikov and Roshal, were not averse from showing their readiness for some warlike action. Their hearts had simply been set on fire by the fighting speeches

of their ardent leaders. Nevertheless Kamenev and Lieber were able to make an agreement 'honourable to both sides' with the garrison. It was achieved at the price of the great disappointment of Raskolnikov and Roshal, but without much trouble: Kamenev, after all, had brought instructions from the Central Committee itself, to the effect that the game must be considered irredeemably lost. The Kronstadt leaders declared that the sailors, machine-gunners and all the outsiders would leave the Fortress and return the weapons taken from the arsenal. But at the same time they demanded that their own arms should be left to them, and that they should be guaranteed an unimpeded and honourable journey home. The Central Ex. Com. delegates made a vague reply to this. But in any case agreement to restore order in the Fortress was considered to have been reached.

Lieber told us all this at this same session of the Bureau, arriving at the very end of it. He felt like a hero: he had taken the Fortress, pacified the Kronstadters, and at the risk of his life saved his bitter enemy from lynching.

* * *

There were reports of more fighting and bloodshed somewhere on the Liteiny. And there was no doubt that it had been originated by certain 'loyal' units. Lunacharsky had been arrested near the Staff. He was detained for about two hours, vouched for and released. In general they were now arresting in the street anyone who said a word in favour of the Bolsheviks. It was no longer possible to say that Lenin was an honest man: you'd be arrested.

Towards evening complete calm had been restored in the streets. The weather was wonderful. A huge, gay, bourgeois throng poured into the Nevsky. I can't remember at all where I spent these hours, but around 11 o'clock I went back again to the Tauride, which looked just as it had the day before. There were not many people in the halls or at the buffet. The windows were open, but the air was bad; the floor was dirty; there was no real order; the recent presence of a crowd of outsiders could be felt. The buffet was still selling tea and sandwiches, but there were hardly any customers. What was happening in the Ex. Com.?

I went in and saw something quite extraordinary. Lieber was sitting at a table in the Chairman's place. He looked like a conquering hero, but was trying, with very poor success, to put on a dour, stony expression. Bogdanov, tranquil and slow-moving as usual, was sitting on Lieber's right, while Anisimov could be seen on his left. Further off at the table or on sofas and in arm-chairs along the walls, there were a few deputies, who were evidently only looking on. A handful of men, huddled together, stood facing Lieber. They were Raskolnikov, Roshal, two or three sailors, and two or three workers.

The whole group recalled wolves at bay—or, perhaps more precisely, rabbits driven into a corner. Raskolnikov, gesticulating in his sailor's oilskins, was making an anxious, excited, and incoherent speech on their behalf, pleading with the trio sitting in front of him:

'Comrades, after all, you can't—you must—— We can't do that, comrades, you must understand—— Comrades, after all, you must make some concessions. . .'

What I saw in front of me was evidently some kind of unprecedented court of justice. The presiding judge, listening to his victim, had an immobile, stony expression. He was trying to appear inexorable and deaf to entreaties, but his eyes flashed with the enjoyment of power, and his lips struggled with a triumphant smile.

'Eh! Lieber is playing Marshal Davoût,' I thought, remembering Pierre's trial in *War and Peace*. I sat down at the end of the table to see what would happen.

It was a question of the Kronstadters. After giving up the weapons taken from the arsenal, some of them had stayed on in the Fortress, while others remained in the open not far off, waiting to be sent home. But the reaction had grown stronger, and the material strength of the Soviet-bourgeois bloc was growing hourly. Whatever agreement had been arrived at in the afternoon, the 'lawful authorities' were now demanding the *disarming* of the Kronstadters. Raskolnikov naturally refused to agree to depriving his army of their 'military honour' and was begging Lieber and his colleagues to let them take their arms back with them. He swore that this would not cause the slightest danger to anyone, and that disarming the Kronstadters could have no practical result whatever, except their humiliation.

Only Lieber spoke for the court. He was implacable. He kept saying the same few phrases over and over again:

‘I suggest that you should consent at once and go to your army to make them comply with our request. This decision is final. There can be no changes or concessions. But in two hours it will be too late. In two hours decisive steps will be taken; they won’t be in your interests.’

Lieber didn’t explain exactly *whose* decision this was, or what had provoked it, or what kind of steps would be taken and by whom. This actually was more effective. Let us have mysterious hints and frightening words! Just let these cornered rabbits try to argue with us!

Raskolnikov and his comrades could not oppose anything to this but a plea for forgiveness. It was intolerable to see and hear. Neither side, in the given situation, in fact aroused much sympathy: all the same, for me one of them was the age-old enemy, the other a schoolboy who had made a fool of himself.

The fruitless, hollow, and tiresome disputes had already lasted a quarter of an hour. Suddenly Lieber announced that he had that moment received new instructions and could no longer give the respite of two hours he had promised before. Now Lieber-Davoût could only give ten minutes. If at the end of that time the response was unsatisfactory, then ‘decisive steps’ would be taken at once. The reaction was attaining its full strength.

Raskolnikov asked for a pause to consult with his comrades who were present. The handful of Kronstadters huddled in a corner. I went out to the buffet. . . There I saw a group of Bolshevik leaders sitting at a table in the corner, Kamenev, Trotsky, and three or four others. I never, either before or after, saw them in such a miserable, confused, and dejected state. They were evidently not even trying to cheer up. Kamenev was sitting at the table completely overwhelmed. Trotsky came over to me: ‘Well, what’s going on there?’

I reported the trial in two words.

‘But what do you think should be done? What would you advise?’

I shrugged my shoulders in perplexity. I had not the slightest idea what to do. It was impossible to say whether Lieber could or couldn’t take decisive steps—involving bloodshed or the most extreme forms of humiliation. But one ought not to go in for

bloodshed oneself or try to break through by force. Perhaps it would be better to surrender and hand over the arms.

I don't remember that Raskolnikov and Roshal conferred with Trotsky and Kamenev during the interval, but when the trial was resumed, Raskolnikov, as before, would not give a definite answer, but again made incoherent attempts at persuasion. He finished by saying that the Kronstadt leaders would go off to their army at once and 'do everything possible'. The judges rose again. Lieber finally gave up trying to maintain his rôle and broke into a smile.

Raskolnikov looked round, perplexed, for sympathizers and friends amongst us. His glance rested on me; he came over to ask a favour of me. He was extremely agitated and afraid of being arrested, if not on the spot, then in the street; he had no hope of reaching his Kronstadters. It was essential that he should be given an escort, or at least reliable documents to allow him to make his way freely about the city. They had been told that Bolsheviks were being seized and beaten up. And if they were recognized. . .

Those around were amused by the excitement of the youthful commanders. No escort was needed; they would get through. But they could have passes. They went into the next room, the office, which was dimly lit and extremely untidy. Passes were typed out. I was stopped by Roshal, whom I hadn't known before. Lispng and mumbling like a child, he asked me to look after his Browning: if they caught him with a weapon it would be worse.

A fine business indeed!

I went off to spend the night at Manukhin's. Lunacharsky was already lying on a bed made from some arm-chairs tied together, next to my sofa. He was very shaken by all that had happened. Lying in the dark we had a long talk. I was irritated, and our conversation was not especially agreeable.

'Well, Nikolai Nikolayevich,' he asked me hesitatingly: 'what d'you think? Ought I to leave Petersburg?'

This made me furious. Leave? Why? What for? Was the situation so clear that there was nothing left but flight from the field of battle? Had an irresistible terror already begun? Was anything serious threatening Bolshevik heads? And if not, surely they must unravel the knot they had tied themselves?

To whom will you leave the masses, whom you have just led or dragged along after you? What will they think and feel when they see themselves abandoned? Or will you take your masses with you as well?

Lunacharsky made no rejoinder. For a long time we went on tossing about on our couches.

Later I was told that the homeless Kronstadters had wandered about the whole night, not knowing where to go. Their leaders weren't with them. They were the irresolute, uncomprehending fragments of an unsuccessful experiment, left to the mercy of fate. . .

* * *

Thursday the 6th. From early morning on, troops withdrawn from the front were arriving in Petersburg at the Warsaw and Nicholas Stations. There arrived a part of the 14th Cavalry Division, the 177th Izborsky Regiment, the 14th Don Cossacks, etc.—in a word, quite enough to take the capital. They were drawn up in Palace Square. They were received there by the Socialist Minister Skobelev and someone else from the Star Chamber. The triumphant Soviet victors admired their Praetorian Guards and made welcoming speeches to them from the windows.

These troops were called a 'scratch detachment', and it was quite obvious they were a very rich soil for Black Hundred propaganda. If any enterprising groups were on hand to annoy this beast, then the blood-bath in Petersburg might turn out to be far from a joke.

Meanwhile, during these days Black Hundred elements became very familiar with the whole charm and all the advantages for the cause of reaction of the 'disorders' and killings. And now, upon the liquidation of the revolt, they did everything they could to prolong and renew the disorders. Looting, violence, and shooting continued here and there in the capital on Thursday the 6th too. . . There was still no 'pacification'. And all the excesses, now aimed *at the Left*, were inspired exclusively by the fragments of Tsarism.

The Soviet victors could rest content: once again the Coalition was set on firm foundations. Moreover, it looked as though the General Staff might at any time initiate a *coup d'état*.

However transitory, a great counter-revolutionary upheaval was nevertheless quite possible. But the Soviet authorities had not yet turned their gaze to the Right.

On the morning of that same day Gots and Avksentiev¹ had led a scratch detachment to Kshesinskaya's house and the Peter-Paul Fortress. The first point was the citadel of the Bolsheviks, and Kronstadters or other pernicious elements might still remain in the second. Crossing Trinity Bridge, they were about to begin a regular siege, and were ready to open fire when it turned out that the Bolsheviks had already abandoned Kshesinskaya's house. Bursting into the quiet, empty rooms, the soldiers arrested a dozen people who happened to be wandering around the rooms, and thus brought the expedition to a victorious conclusion. As for the Peter-Paul Fortress, there too there was nothing to justify the campaign. The Kronstadters had left, the garrison had lost its head and 'repented'; the Fortress was 'taken' without a shot, and order was restored without the slightest trouble.

The Durnovo villa was taken in the same fashion during the afternoon. The anarchists had left. A few weapons and a great deal of literature were found there.

The mood of the workers was indefinite. On the one hand only half the factories were working; the workers were still keeping up their previous positions by a strike. In particular the Putilov Factory was idle, and there were even some unimportant attempts to come out again into the streets in a demonstration. But, on the other hand, depression was taking more and more hold of the proletarian masses. Mass-meetings, which passed resolutions condemning the 'instigators' of the rebellion, were taking place in the factories. The advanced groups were isolated. The Petersburg proletariat was once more scattered and unfit for battle.

It was much worse among the soldiers. These ignorant masses, having received a stunning blow, flung themselves headlong into the arms of the Black Hundreds. Here all shades of reactionary agitation were already bearing rich, ripe fruit. Hundreds and thousands of yesterday's 'Bolsheviks' had been swept out of the

¹ Avksentiev, Nikolai Dmitriyevich (1878-1943): one of the oldest SR leaders. Very hostile to the October Revolution, he emigrated in 1919, and continued actively fighting the new Soviet régime. (Ed.)

reach of any Socialist parties whatever. And in the eyes of the garrison even the *Soviet* banner had definitely begun to waver. There were mass-meetings in the barracks too, where out-and-out pogrom speeches were beginning to be heard. The whole force of anger and 'patriotism' was of course coming down on the Bolsheviks. And the other Socialist elements as well were now definitely tacked on to the Bolsheviks.

As for the petty bourgeois, philistines, and 'intelligentsia'—there things were really abominable. These strata not only deliberately lumped together the Bolsheviks and the whole Soviet, but were also prepared to use any and every method of struggle against everything Soviet. Here feigned panic and unfeigned spite reached their extreme limits. A military dictatorship, perhaps even a restoration, would have been accepted, if not with enthusiasm at least without any attempts at resistance.

The word 'Bolshevik' had already become synonymous with scoundrel, murderer, Judas, and anybody else whom it was essential to seize, maul, and beat up. And to make it more vivid a charming phrase was coined in the twinkling of an eye and put into circulation: an 'ideational Bolshevik'. This was the unhappy creature who through *naïveté* and obtuseness had fallen from decent society into the clutches of a gang of bandits and deserved to be treated indulgently. But there were extremely few of these.

* * *

Around 9 o'clock on the evening of the 6th, Kerensky came back from the front and went straight to the session of the Provisional Government. At this time a formal decision had already been taken to put all instigators of and participants in the uprising of July 3rd-4th on trial. But although many hundreds of people had been arrested the Bolshevik leaders were still at large. . . . On his arrival Kerensky immediately displayed great aggressiveness and demanded that decisive measures should be taken against the Bolsheviks, especially their leaders.

An order was at once issued for the immediate arrest of Lenin, Zinoviev, Kamenev, and others. Besides this an order was drawn up and signed by Lvov for the disbanding of all army units which had taken part in the revolt and their reassignment at the discretion of the Minister of War.

At about 2 in the morning the militia came to Lenin's flat, but it was empty. Lenin, like Zinoviev, had vanished.

Lenin's disappearance under the threat of arrest and trial is noteworthy in itself. No one in the Central Ex. Com. expected Lenin to 'get out of the situation' in just this way. His flight produced an enormous sensation amongst us and was hotly discussed for a long time in every possible aspect. There were some Bolsheviks who approved of Lenin's action, but the majority of the Soviet people were sharply against it. The Mamelukes and the Soviet leaders loudly boomed forth their noble indignation. The Opposition kept its opinion to itself. But this opinion reduced itself to a definite censure of Lenin—from a political and moral point of view. And I personally was completely in accord.

I've already said (in connexion with Lunacharsky) that—first of all—in the given circumstances the shepherd's flight could not help but be a heavy blow to the sheep. The masses mobilized by Lenin, after all, were bearing the whole burden of responsibility for the July Days. They had no means of ridding themselves of this burden. Some remained in their factories or in their districts—isolated, slandered, in sick depression and unspeakable confusion of mind. Others were under arrest and awaiting retribution for having done their political duty according to their feeble lights. And the 'real author' abandoned his army and his comrades, and sought personal salvation in flight!

Why was it necessary? Was he in any real danger? Absurd, in the summer of 1917! There could be no question of lynch-law, of the death penalty or of hard labour. However biased the court, however minimal the guarantees of justice—nevertheless Lenin risked absolutely nothing but imprisonment.

Lenin of course may have prized not his life or health, but his freedom of political action. But in a prison of the time could he have been more hampered than in his underground retreat? He could unquestionably have written his fortnightly *Pravda* articles from prison, while from the point of view of the political effect the very fact of Lenin's imprisonment would have had an enormous positive significance. His flight had only a negative one.

The example of Lenin's comrades completely confirms all this. Many of them were arrested and put on trial for the same

crimes. They safely sat out six weeks or two months in prison and went on with their writing there. With their martyrs' haloes they served as an inexhaustible source of agitation against the Government of Kerensky and Tsereteli. And then, without the slightest evil consequences for anyone, they returned to their posts.

From a political and moral point of view the flight of Lenin and Zinoviev, devoid of any practical sense, was reprehensible. And I'm not surprised that this example was not followed by their own comrades.

But, as is well known, there was another circumstance that heightened the odium of Lenin's flight a thousandfold. For after all, besides the accusation of insurrection, a monstrous slander, which was believed by hundreds of thousands and millions of people, had been directed at Lenin. Lenin was accused of the crime, vile and shameful from every point of view, of being in the pay of the German General Staff. . . It was impossible *simply to ignore this*. And Lenin had not ignored it; he had sent Zinoviev to the Central Ex. Com. to defend his honour and his party. This was not at all difficult to do. After a little time had passed the nonsensical accusation went up like smoke. Nobody had adduced anything in its support and people ceased to believe it. There was no longer the slightest risk that any charge would be brought on this count. But Lenin *went into hiding* with *such* a charge hanging over him.

This was something quite special, unexampled, and incomprehensible. Any other mortal would have demanded an investigation and trial even in the most unfavourable conditions. Any other mortal would personally and publicly have done everything possible, as energetically as he could, to rehabilitate himself. But Lenin proposed that others, his adversaries, should do this, while he sought safety in flight.

I consider that the fact of Lenin's disappearance must lie at the very root of any description of the personality of the future ruler of Russia. In the whole world only he could have behaved thus.

* * *

That same night the session of the Provisional Government was succeeded by a meeting of the Soviet Star Chamber. Towards 2 o'clock in the morning Kerensky arrived at Sko-

belev's flat, where Tsereteli was living. Dan, Gots, and Chkhaidze were also there. . . In the presence of the newly-arrived Kerensky the Star Chamber revised its judgement of the state of affairs.

The Right was evidently represented by Kerensky (probably together with Gots) and the Left by Dan and Chkhaidze. The Right carried on the line of reaction and repression, the Left the line of restraining the repressions. Kerensky insisted on the liquidation of the Bolsheviki as a party. Dan insisted on the freedom of parties and on the responsibility of individuals. Tsereteli was in the centre. The result was that Dan was formally on top, but Kerensky was given satisfaction in fact.

* * *

Friday the 7th. Early in the morning the Menshevik Central Committee met. Dan and Tsereteli probably went there straight from the session of the Star Chamber. The Menshevik leaders were definitely beginning to display an understanding of the conjuncture: they continued a line of halting the counter-revolution. And by 7 in the morning the Menshevik Central Committee had already passed a resolution directed *against the Right*. I can say with assurance that Dan initiated it.

The Provisional Government, following the lead of the ruling Soviet bloc, also met very early, at about 8.30. I don't know whether it was a stormy session, but in any case it was 'dramatic': what was in question was forcing the resignation of the revolutionary Premier, that visionary intellectual and humane landowner, Prince Lvov.

The campaign had doubtless been prepared the night before, at Skobelev's flat. The 'Marxist' section of the ruling group had evidently managed to unite the entire Star Chamber.

Why had the SR part of the Star Chamber agreed to this? I think there is only one way to explain it: Kerensky was now convinced that it was time for him to become Chief of State. And for him concessions to the democracy, however undesirable and 'untimely' in themselves, were a means of exerting pressure on Lvov which the latter, God willing, would be unable to sustain. Thanks to this pressure from the Left, there must be new upheavals in the Cabinet, and then Kerensky could not fail to get the Premiership.

I even think it was precisely Kerensky, the SR, who was the direct or indirect *initiator* of the 'Left' campaign against Lvov. In Kerensky's present mood he was quite unconcerned with counter-revolution or the struggle against it. He was interested only in bringing about changes in the Government and setting up his *own* Cabinet. For the 'Star Chamber' Menshevik Dan, on the contrary, it was necessary to stop the reaction. As for changes in the Government, it was, after all, only two days earlier that Dan and Tsereteli together had wholeheartedly insisted, before the entire revolutionary democracy, on the lack of authority to decide these questions until a plenum of the Central Ex. Com. could meet, and on the maintenance of the *status quo* as the last word in statesmanship. And now, suddenly, the campaign against Lvov!

In any case, the Star Chamber SRs and the Mensheviks had arrived at the same 'platform' from different directions. The first wanted changes in the Cabinet, the others a strengthening of the Soviet 'line' against the counter-revolution. The result was the joint campaign to force the resignation of the head of the Government.

The session ended at about 1 o'clock. And it ended with the resignation of the first revolutionary 'Premier'. Lvov had announced his resignation. Now he had to be replaced. This was done without any delay or difficulty. I do not think I am mistaken if I say that during the night the Star Chamber had not only worked out its campaign but also redistributed the portfolios.

Lvov had occupied two posts: Premier and Minister of the Interior. Kerensky, while remaining War Minister, was 'appointed' to the first at once, and Heraklion Tsereteli, while remaining Minister of Posts and Telegraphs, to the second.

This was at 1 o'clock in the afternoon.

At 2 o'clock the Bureau slowly began to assemble in the Tauride Palace. But the leaders were not to be seen. The deputies dejectedly wandered about, argued lazily, or sat about in arm-chairs, hiding behind newspapers. God knew when the Praesidium would appear.

Just then it was reported that one of the units that had come from the front had been fired on by machine-guns not far from

the Nicholas Station. The firing still continued; it could be heard from the windows of the Tauride Palace.

Eh! This was a serious business, and might end badly. This monstrous provocation could only be the work of German agents—to disorganize the Government in Petersburg in the interests of an offensive at the front; it might have been carried out by the Black Hundreds, the Tsarist servitors who were already convinced of the advantages of a street brawl, and who could not but be tempted by the possible results of a provocation of front-line troops. A direct attack on the pacifiers might really be a match thrown into the powder-keg. The pacifying troops might shatter working-class Petersburg to smithereens rather than entrust some upstart with power over them for five minutes. Nor was this an accidental shooting: it was a well-organized attack, complete with machine-guns.

The firing did not begin to die down until evening, and it was renewed during the night. The militia reported shooting in eleven different districts of Petersburg.

There is no doubt that on Friday the 7th we lived through a critical moment. The ordinary people, after all—the petty bourgeoisie, the ‘intelligentsia’, and the soldiery—were again blaming the Bolsheviks for the new bloodshed. The disorders on that day did an excellent service to the profound and thorough-going reaction. Nevertheless the acuteness of the crisis, and the danger of a counter-revolutionary catastrophe, vanished quite swiftly.

Around noon an important meeting of garrison representatives, arranged the night before, took place in the Tauride Palace. The delegates of the newly-arrived troops also came. The meeting was supposed to reveal the state of mind of the garrison of the capital after the July Days. Had the blow it had received really thrown it back into undisguisedly bourgeois hands?

I don't know just what happened at the meeting, but its results proved favourable enough. Both the speeches and the resolution showed that the garrison would do its best to keep its promise of loyalty to the Soviet. The resolution stated that the garrison ‘submitted unconditionally to the Central Ex. Com. and would unquestioningly obey all its orders’. Even the Mamelukes sighed with relief.

The Bureau session probably began around 3 o'clock.

It was, of course, Tsereteli who reported on the situation. I shall not undertake to say just how he explained the change of front. Doubtless, while announcing the successful liquidation of the insurrection, he pointed out the danger of a reaction which went too far, and consequently the necessity for resolutely carrying out the programme of the All-Russian Congress, for Lvov's resignation, and for the formation of a new Cabinet—temporarily, of course, until a decision could be reached by a plenum of the Central Ex. Com. Tsereteli also named the new Ministers. I remember his being unable to keep back the embarrassed smile of a schoolboy who has distinguished himself, when he said: 'Minister of the Interior—Tsereteli. . .'

Properly speaking, nothing particularly bad had happened in reality. But *how* it had all happened! A tiny handful of people had been whirled about by the irresistible caprice of the revolution, flung now to one side, then to the other. It was not only the masses who had had no part in their machinations, but even their 'authorized representatives', who had handed over to the Star Chamber all their rights and duties, were obedient, silent servants of their masters. This was a sign of the profound weakness of the revolution, and the source of a profound reaction. It was a depressing picture.

But it was interesting to look into the real nature of the affair too. Kerensky's new Cabinet was, after all, a *Soviet* Government. At its head was a member of the Central Ex. Com. Socialist Ministers formed its most important kernel. They not only *could* shape, but in fact did shape the whole Government as they saw fit. They announced that the Government was to act in accordance with the instructions of the Congress of Soviets. They also formally and in practice acknowledged the Congress and the Central Ex. Com. as the sole sources of power. Indeed, there were now no others at all. If one adds to this that the real power and authority were as before in their hands and in their hands alone, then the situation would seem to be clear: no matter how the Soviet leaders had refused power before, now they had formally received it.

So it seemed. At the same time another side of the matter was also plain. The new Chief of State, a member of the Central Ex. Com., the Soviet protégé Kerensky—would not have anything

to do with any Soviet. He had become Chief of State not as a representative of the organized democracy, but by himself, seeing himself as a being above class who had been called, and was able, to save Russia. And Kerensky, together with his 'Soviet' colleagues, was of course using his newly acquired rights primarily in order to return the bourgeoisie to power formally and in fact. This 'Soviet' Government would of course make its chief concern the creation of a new Coalition against the revolution. It was a depressing picture.

* * *

In the heat of the debates there was a sudden commotion and tumult. The stunning news flew round the room like lightning. It was the news of the defeat at the front of the attacking Russian army. On the preceding day, the 6th, our lines had been pierced on a front of twelve versts near Tarnopol to a depth of ten versts. The enemy was continuing his advance.

No well-informed person had had any doubt that our offensive was not only bound to collapse in the immediate future, but might end in a tremendous disaster. There were many army people amongst the Right Soviet deputies who had scented the truth from the very beginning. But none of them had wanted to display anything but patriotic enthusiasm. And now the news of the rout hit the whole Tauride Palace like a thunderbolt.

It was as patriots that the Mamelukes were shaken, but the Opposition was well aware that a defeat at the front would free the hands of internal reaction still more. After all, no matter how well aware Kerensky was that a wretched ending to his enterprise was inevitable, he blamed the *Bolsheviks* and the July uprising for it, both to himself and aloud. Of the Mamelukes, the yellow press, and the petty-bourgeois mass, there is no need to speak. For them the Tarnopol defeat and the collapse of the whole longed-for offensive was the work of Bolshevik hands from beginning to end. And indeed, in the official communiqués from Headquarters Bolshevik agitation was directly blamed for the defeat.

There was consternation in the Central Ex. Com. Even the most honest Right-wing deputies, on hearing of the collapse of the front, turned their thoughts and glances primarily on these same Bolsheviks. The less honest ones, greatly exaggerating the

danger of the position, definitely hinted that there was now no reason to object to a rightful settling of accounts with the traitors.

* * *

Towards evening a joint session of the Central Ex. Com. and the Peasants' Central Ex. Com. was held. It was expected to listen once more to the same old speeches on the subject of the Government. But first it had to concern itself with other things. During all this time arrests had been going on in the city as before, and the prisons were being filled to overflowing. In the working-class quarters the proletarian detachments and individual workers were being disarmed. It was not only the spontaneous reaction of the masses that was in full swing, but a governmental and police reaction as well.

The Menshevik-Internationalists did everything in their power to fight it. Before the Central Ex. Com. got to the fundamental item on the agenda, the Government, Martov asked for the floor for an 'emergency statement', and made a short speech protesting against the arrests. A statement over our signatures was later published in the papers. Just now it would have been possible not to answer an 'emergency statement', but nevertheless the brave Tsereteli spoke in reply. He said what he had said many times before. Why did these second-class Bolsheviks exist at all, when there were first-class ones? He, Tsereteli, preferred to have to do with Lenin rather than Martov. With the former he knew how to deal, but the latter tied his hands. As for the repressions and arrests, they were called for by necessities of state and the interests of the revolution. 'Irresponsible groups' ought to hold their tongues.

'I take the responsibility for these arrests,' said the new Minister of the Interior, clearly and distinctly, amidst the silence.

Indeed, Citizen Tsereteli? You're very bold. You're sowing excellent seeds. What will you reap?

* * *

Once again on a sunny morning, around 6 o'clock, I left the Tauride Palace and went off to Manukhin's to spend the 'night'. As usual, they had been expecting me since the evening. A bed had been made up for me on the sofa in the study. And Luna-

charsky, stretched out on his arm-chairs next to it, was sleeping the blameless sleep of youth. He hadn't turned up that day in the Tauride Palace, and it seemed as though I hadn't seen him for a long time.

My coming in woke him up; he asked where I'd come from. Full of despair and rage I congratulated him on the new Coalition and told him of the events of the last day. We talked over the whole of the July Days, united by our awareness of the catastrophe and hatred of the victors. Both of us forgot about the 'authors' of the defeat, in our preoccupation with the general calamity. And then Lunacharsky told me the unknown details of the July uprising. They were unexpected.

According to him, on the night of July 4th Lenin was definitely planning a *coup d'état*. The Government, which would in fact be in the hands of the Bolshevik Central Committee, would officially be embodied in a 'Soviet' Cabinet made up of eminent and popular Bolsheviks. For the time being three Ministers had been appointed: Lenin, Trotsky, and Lunacharsky. This Government would at once issue decrees about peace and land, thus attracting the sympathies of the millions of the capital and the provinces and consolidating its power. An agreement of this kind had been come to between Lenin, Trotsky, and Lunacharsky. It was concluded while the Kronstadters were making their way from Kshesinskaya's house to the Tauride Palace. The *coup d'état* itself was to proceed in this way: the 176th Regiment (the same one Dan had posted on guard in the Tauride Palace), arriving from Krasnoe Selo, was to arrest the Central Ex. Com., and at about that time Lenin was to arrive on the scene of action and proclaim the new Government. But Lenin was too late. The 176th Regiment was intercepted and became disorganized. The 'rising' had failed.

This is what Lunacharsky told me—that is, this is the form I remember it in, and in this form I pass it on to anyone into whose hands this book happens to fall. It may be that the content of this story is not a fully-established historical fact. I may have forgotten, confused, or distorted the story. Lunacharsky may have been 'poeticizing', confusing, and distorting the reality. But the precise establishment of an historical fact is the business of historians, and I'm writing my personal memoirs; I pass this on as I recall it. . .

How things were in reality I will not undertake to say. I didn't investigate the matter. Only once, much later, I asked another candidate for the triumvirate—Trotsky—about it. He strongly objected when I gave him Lunacharsky's version. Among other things he brushed aside Lunacharsky as a person completely unsuited for this kind of action.

'The belletristic side of the plot,' Martov said later, when I reported my conversation with Lunacharsky. So be it. But if the Bolshevik Central Committee, in organizing the *coup d'état*, had provided for the creation of a centre to direct the fighting and take the first steps, that centre could really only have been the triumvirate—Lenin, Trotsky, and Lunacharsky.

But none of this proves in any way that on July 4th Lenin was definitely and directly aiming at a *coup d'état*, that he had already distributed the portfolios, or that it was only because he came too late that he did not command the 176th Regiment! Some elementary facts tell against Lunacharsky's version. For instance, the Kronstadters were present in addition to the 176th Regiment. They undoubtedly constituted the principal—not only technical but you might say political—force. And on July 4th at 5 in the afternoon, the 'triumvir' Trotsky stood face to face with them. What did he do? At the risk of losing his popularity, if not his head, he freed Chernov, whereas by putting the conspiracy into effect he could have stood at the head of the Kronstadters and, to their utter joy, liquidated the Central Ex. Com. in five minutes.

Besides, Trotsky later arranged, so to speak, a confrontation with Lunacharsky, addressing a puzzled question to him. Lunacharsky said that I had mixed up and distorted my conversation with him. I'm inclined to maintain that I remember the conversation well, and that Lunacharsky had mixed up the events. But let industrious historians sort it all out.¹ If in the preceding

¹ As a result of Trotsky's inquiry, Lunacharsky sent me a letter, maintaining that I had distorted his story. But I can't give his second version *instead of* the first. The principle I'm adhering to in these Notes is to write down everything I recall as I recall it. This does not become a historian; Lunacharsky is right there. But I'm not writing a history. All I can do to 're-establish the truth' is to print his letter of March 30th, 1920. I do this gladly.

'Dear Nikolai Nikolayevich,

'Yesterday I received from Comrade Trotsky the following note: "N. N. Sukhanov has told me that in his book on the revolution there is an account of the

pages I have not described historical *events*, then perhaps this page may serve as a description of historical *personages*.

At that time, in the early morning of July 8th, lying on my sofa, I listened to Lunacharsky's account in utter dejection. The devilish grimacing mask of the July Days, looming over me like a nightmare, passed before my eyes. So then, there had been not only the spontaneous course of events but a malevolent political blunder.

'Peaceful demonstration' and—distribution of portfolios. 'Down with the Capitalist Ministers' and—an attack on the Socialist Ministers. 'All Power to the Soviets' and—the arrest of the supreme Soviet body. And as the result blood, filth, and the triumph of reaction. . .

At that moment, while Lunacharsky and I were talking about the days that had just passed, in the Palace Square the disarming and vilifying of the 'insurgent' Bolshevik army was proceeding.

It was already about 8 o'clock. Lunacharsky began dressing and left me alone.

* * *

July Days in which he relates, in your words, that in July the three of us (Lenin, you and myself) wanted to seize power and set about doing so !?!?!?"

'It is clear, Nikolai Nikolayevich, that you have fallen into a profound error, which may have disagreeable consequences for you as well as for the historian. In general reference to personal conversations is bad documentation. In this instance, if you've really written something of the kind, your memory has completely distorted our conversation. It never, of course, occurred to Comrade Lenin, Comrade Trotsky, or myself to agree on the seizure of power, nor was there even a hint of anything in the nature of a triumvirate.

'In the minds of all the leaders of the movement the July Days had only the meaning we put forward with complete frankness: "All power to the Soviet of Workers', Soldiers', and Peasants' Deputies."

'Of course we did not conceal from ourselves that if the Menshevik-SR Soviet had seized the power, it would have slipped away to more resolute revolutionary groups further to the Left.

'Your error was probably caused by my telling you that at a decisive moment of the July Days, I told Trotsky in conversation that I should consider it calamitous for us to be in power just then, to which Comrade Trotsky, who was always far more resolute than I and surer of victory, replied that in his opinion that would not have been so bad at all, since the masses would of course have supported us.

'All this was said merely by way of weighing up the situation in a private conversation at a flaming moment in history.

'I beg you to take this letter of mine into account in the final version of your history, so that you yourself do not fall into error or lead others into it.

'People's Commissar

Yes, the reaction was triumphant. Everything gained by the revolution in the past months had gone to rack and ruin.

Before the July Days the Coalition with the bourgeoisie had been shaken, and had crumbled of itself. The spontaneous course of events led immutably to the liquidation of the ruling bourgeois bloc and to the dictatorship of the authentic worker-peasant democracy. The conquest of the Soviets by this authentic democracy was a matter of the immediate future. And the end of the reign of the bourgeoisie was bound to come in conditions that favoured the further course of the revolution while preserving its enormous and still fresh energies.

But a 'political blunder' intervened—naturally, a 'logical' one. The Coalition was on firm ground again and strengthened for a long time. The vast energies of the revolution had been squandered in vain and cast to the winds. The revolution had suffered a profound strain and been flung a long way back.

March–December 1920.

Part V

[COUNTER-REVOLUTION AND THE
DISSOLUTION OF THE DEMOCRACY]

July 8th—October 20th

CHAPTER 21

[AFTER 'JULY': THE SECOND AND THIRD COALITIONS]

HEROES have indeed their destiny! For Kerensky democracy was an absolute good; he sincerely saw it as the goal of his service to the revolution. He had selflessly served it under the Tsarist autocracy, ever since he had appeared before the world as the ardent champion and, if you like, the *poet* of the democracy.

Now, after the July Days, Kerensky had become the head of the Government and the State. And this epoch—the Kerensky epoch—was an epoch of *dissolution, stifling, and destruction of the democracy*. Of this epoch Kerensky was the most active and responsible hero.

His premiership began in an evil hour and ended badly. It began under the sign of the birth-pangs of counter-revolution and its attacks on the democracy. These attempts failed: the revolution still retained too much accumulated strength and the plutocracy lacked everything but rage, slanders, and the miserable shattered remnants of Tsarism. The counter-revolution failed in the July riots, but a firm, stubborn, and profound reaction set in.

There had been this reaction before, at the beginning of the First Coalition; now, under Kerensky, the reaction became dynamic. Before, the reactionary classes had been defending themselves; now the bourgeois bloc had passed to the offensive. Before the July Days the reaction expressed itself in random sabotage; now, under Premier Kerensky, the *active* liquidation of the achievements of the workers and peasants began.

* * *

The Second Coalition, created on July 7th under Kerensky's leadership, didn't last long—a fortnight in all. This term was quite inadequate either to 'save' or to destroy the revolution, but quite enough to reveal itself properly.

This was done with complete success.

First of all the new Government energetically continued the searches, arrests, disarmings, and persecutions of all kinds that had already been begun. Self-appointed groups of officers, military cadets, and I think the gilded youth too, rushed to the 'help' of the new régime, which was obviously trying to present itself as a 'strong Government'. It was not only the mutinous regiments and battalions that were disarmed: almost more attention was devoted to the working-class districts, where the workers' Red Guard was disarmed. Enormous quantities of arms were collected.

Every Bolshevik that could be found was seized and imprisoned. Kerensky and his military friends were definitely trying to wipe them off the face of the earth, but the Soviet restrained the patriotic enthusiasm of the victors, and an attempt at the formal outlawing of Bolshevism as such was a failure. Repressions, however, came directly down only on the Bolshevik 'officer-corps' and rank-and-file. I think only Kamenev, of the *generals*, was arrested during the July Days; then a few days later, on her way back from Stockholm, Kolontai was arrested at the border—naturally with 'important documents' on her; finally the same fate overtook Roshal. Lenin and Zinoviev had officially, so to speak, gone into hiding. Trotsky, Stalin, Stasova, and many others meanwhile avoided spending nights at home and their whereabouts were 'unknown'. Raskolnikov was staying in Kronstadt, under the protection of his own army. But it must be said that the police apparatus of this Government of the revolution, even though it was being restored, was still very weak; the authorities simply did not know the secondary Bolshevik leaders, whose names did not appear in the newspapers.

In one way or another all the Bolshevik leaders temporarily vanished from the horizon after the July Days. Lunacharsky and Ryazanov remained, and in addition Nogin, one of the most important figures of the Moscow Soviet, and one of the oldest Bolsheviks—rather negligible, however, in substance—was sent from Moscow as a representative on the Central Committee. At this time Steklov was disavowing the Bolsheviks right and left, paying vigorous court to us, the Menshevik-Internationalists, and trying to persuade us, in view of the rout of Bolshevism, to

unite with its remnants and take over the leadership of the extreme Left. But Steklov's diplomacy was inadequate.

Nor was Steklov himself helped by his equivocations. On the night of July 10th, when a high-spirited detachment of military cadets was looking for Lenin at Bonch's Finnish villa, they didn't find Lenin, but were satisfied with another toothsome morsel in the person of the famous Steklov, who was taken by a reinforced guard directly to the General Staff in Petersburg. Since he had 'absolutely nothing in common with the Bolsheviks', he was quickly let go. But he didn't go home. Many days later he could be seen wandering about like a shadow in his Tauride sanctuary at the most unseasonable hours, replying to astonished questions: 'I'm not budging from here night or day. They'll kill me. You know what there is against me.'

But the military cadets didn't hunt down only Steklov, who had 'nothing in common with Bolshevism'. After destroying the Bolshevik organizations, which were legal, they went further and executed a raid on the Government Mensheviks themselves, whose party was headed by the Minister of the Interior. Was this excessive? But it was completely compatible with the 'general mood', and especially with the line of the bourgeois press. This press evidently considered that the Bolsheviks were done for; and after despatching the humiliated, fallen, and despised enemy, the Cadet *Rech* and its gutter-press imitators began striking out more and more Rightwards: at Chernov, Tsereteli, the Mensheviks and SRs, and at the Soviet generally. This was inevitable, quite consistent, and far-sighted. In the interests of the bourgeois dictatorship that had become so imminent and possible, it was precisely the *Soviets* that must be wiped off the face of the earth. For after all, from the point of view of the plutocracy, they were just what constituted the original sin of the revolution, the source of 'dual power' and the root of evil. The campaign had begun to develop quite openly.

* * *

Now the question that naturally and inevitably arose was that of a *dictatorship*. Indeed, three days after Kerensky's 'appointment' as Premier, the Star Chamber appeared before the Central Ex. Com. with a demand for a dictatorship.

The groundwork was thoroughly prepared. For after the July Days the reaction and despondency of the masses of the people were enormous. They had penetrated deep into the vanguard itself, the most reliable prop of the revolution—the thick of the Petersburg workers. During the July Days themselves we had already seen some factory resolutions against the Bolsheviks. That was a shock. Now it was worse. A whole series of factories, dissociating themselves from the Bolsheviks and following the army units, ardently supported a new Coalition.

We had been thrown a long way back. The enormous store of revolutionary energy had been scattered to the winds. The masses were humbled and enfeebled. The bourgeoisie had plucked up heart and was eager for battle. The atmosphere of deep and lasting reaction could be plainly felt by everyone. The ground was favourable for a real dictatorship.

The entire period of the Second Coalition was spent in an uninterrupted, frenzied, self-forgetting *hunt by Kerensky and Tsereteli for new bourgeois Ministers*.

The Second Coalition had organized itself 'on its own authority', but it was incomplete; there were some Ministerial vacancies. After the July blow, Kerensky, having become head of the Cabinet, with quite childish enthusiasm set about forming 'his own' Government. Swiftly losing all sense of proportion, he began displaying his capriciousness in these operations. Without waiting for any 'authority' from the Central Ex. Com. he started looking for 'supplementary' lieutenants and colleagues immediately after July 7th. And when the Central Ex. Com. formally untied his hands he had already set himself the straightforward goal of forming a completely new cabinet—the Third Coalition—to his own taste.

By the 23rd a Cabinet was ready. Kerensky had left himself the Army and Navy Departments, and named as his deputies for naval and military affairs Savinkov¹ and Lebedev, both SRs, but especially offensive to the democracy. Nekrasov, Deputy Chairman in the Council of Ministers, was given Finance. Tereshchenko, Skobelev, and Peshekhonov stayed where they

¹ Savinkov, Boris Viktorovich (1879–1925): famous SR terrorist and writer. After the October Revolution worked against the Soviet Government; caught by GPU on secret trip to Russia, tried and sentenced to gaol for ten years, where he died. Winston Churchill thought him one of the most extraordinary men he had ever met. (Ed.)

were. Yefremov got Public Welfare, Prokopovich Industry and Commerce, and Avksentiev Internal Affairs. The Minister of Justice was now Zarudny, a non-party radical and a personal friend of Kerensky's. Nikitin, a lawyer who was considered a Social-Democrat but was actually no nearer to being one than Prokopovich, was summoned from Moscow for Posts and Telegraphs. Then there came four longed-for Cadets: Kokoshkin—Comptroller of Finances, Kartashev—Procurator of the Holy Synod, Yurenev—Communications, and Oldenburg—Education. And to crown it all—the Zimmerwaldite and defeatist Chernov.

Such was the Third Coalition. *It did not publish the briefest programme* or declaration.

* * *

On the night of July 22nd, in the very heat of the shuffling of portfolios, Trotsky and Lunacharsky, accused of the July uprising, were arrested at home.

* * *

For the first time I tore myself away from the centre, away from the inferno. I had not yet seen the New Russia. And as a matter of fact I was not to see it during my 'furlough'. I stayed in the country near Yaroslavl, giving myself over to literature, sun, and sloth. My impressions of the province were casual and meagre. I visited, in the Governor's house on the banks of the Volga, the local Soviet—which was in the hands of the Mensheviks. I did not attend any meetings, nor did I see the masses. But I was at the Ex. Com., in the centre, the laboratory, and with my own eyes witnessed the provincial scarcity of workers and the extraordinary concentration of party-functions in the hands of two or three men. It was clear that if you took them out of the city, all the activity of the Soviet would die away, agitation would cease, the Soviet would close down, and candidates for the Town Council and the Constituent Assembly would vanish. Meanwhile all local power was in the hands of the Soviet, without which the provincial commissar and all the other official authorities would have been mere puppets.

Generally speaking, the July disturbance had touched the provinces very little. Its echoes were to be found in the

psychology of the *leaders*; the masses, who had not seen with their own eyes what had happened, reacted feebly. Here the 'normal' process of the conquest of the masses by the Bolsheviks still went on.

More particularly I, as an inhabitant of the capital, was astonished at the extensive street life of the ordinary people: in this respect the capital had long since shrunk and in its 'July' atmosphere begun to resemble old Petersburg. In Yaroslavl my eye was gladdened by free demonstrations of workers, 'prohibited' among us and obsolete.

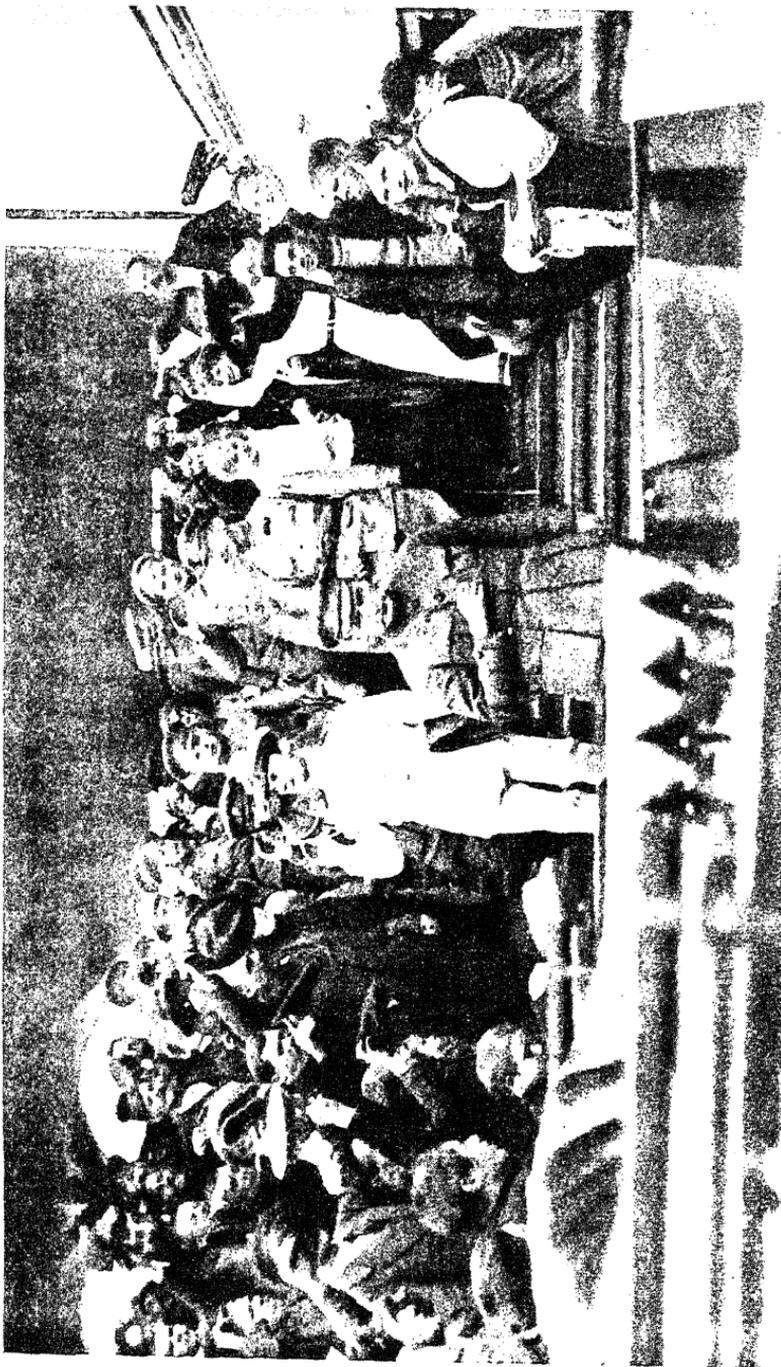
A provincial Menshevik conference took place there around then. It was a rather pitiful spectacle. The handful of people who had convened displayed an extremely low level of political and party consciousness. Among other things the local leaders were incapable of distinguishing between the official Mensheviks and the Menshevik-Internationalists. Dan was easily distinguished from Lenin, but not from Martov. This seemed rather strange to me: I thought that—if not theoretically, then *historically, practically*—it was easier for them to confuse Martov with Lenin than with Dan (as all the bourgeoisie did). But no, it was evident that it was the word Menshevik as distinct from Bolshevik that had the decisive significance here. They knew the *word* quite well, but were unprepared for a deepening of the concept and had no interest in it.

This was a surprise to me. And I may say I was at my wit's end when I thought about a Menshevik *schism*, which in the capital appeared to me inevitable and indispensable. It was clear that for these provincials a schism at this moment would have been incomprehensible, indigestible. And consequently unrealizable. After my return to Petersburg I told Martov all this—to his great satisfaction.

* * *

The July events had destroyed Bolshevism. But a month passed and the joint labours of Kerensky and Tsereteli revived it again. Recuperating from the rout themselves, the masses poured life and vigour into the Bolshevik Party. They grew together with it: it grew together with them.

By the end of July a new Bolshevik congress had met. It was already a 'united' conference where the party of Lenin, Zinoviev,



KERENSKY ARRIVING IN MOSCOW FOR THE STATE CONFERENCE

and Kamenev formally coalesced with the group of Trotsky, Lunacharsky, and Uritsky. The leaders couldn't attend—they could only inspire the congress from afar. But somehow things were managed even without them.

At this congress the Bolsheviks put their post-July ideology in order. Its general framework, of course, remained as before, but the Bolshevik fighting slogans underwent some characteristic changes. 'All Power to the Soviets' was discarded. This slogan, which before 'July' the masses had become used to and regarded as their *own*, was replaced by one more diffuse and less refined: 'A Revolutionary Dictatorship of the Workers and Peasants', etc. . . . The reason for this was twofold. First of all, 'All Power to the Soviets' had become very shabby in the July events; secondly, the contradiction between this slogan and the unavoidable *de facto* struggle against the existing Soviets had become too flagrant. The 'Soviets', after all, in the form of the Central Ex. Com., had definitely embarked on the support of the counter-revolution. It was not worth while to demand power for *such* Soviets.

A characteristic fact, almost the only one of its kind: Martov's fraction addressed a welcome to this Bolshevik Congress which underlined our differences (Bolshevik anarcho-Blanquism), but expressed our solidarity in the struggle against the Coalition and a protest against the persecution of the party of the proletariat.

I've already mentioned that the defeat of Bolshevism in July affected mainly the capital, touching the provinces very little. The provincial delegates to the Congress, by their accounts of continuing successes, poured a great deal of energy and good cheer into the party, which again reckoned up its assets and was once more ready to develop the struggle to its full extent. Its seeds must have fallen on excellent soil. And the work amongst the masses was already proceeding at full speed.

The results of this work were soon made known within the Petersburg Soviet, too, where now only the secondary Bolshevik leaders were active—Volodarsky,¹ Kurayev, Fedorov, and others. *The Workers' Section* of the Soviet set up its own

¹ Volodarsky (Goldstein), Moisei Markovich (1891-1918): a revolutionary from the age of fourteen. Lived in USA (1913-1917) where he was a member of the American Socialist Party. (Ed.)

Praesidium, which it hadn't had before. And this Praesidium proved to be Bolshevik—headed by Fedorov. Actually, the composition of the section remained as before—that is, it had an enormous majority of deputies elected under the Bolshevik banner. But we have seen the great depression and instability in the behaviour of the Workers' Section after the July Days. One might have thought that the Bolshevik fraction was routed and disorganized and that its members had betrayed the party. But in the last analysis that had not happened. The election of the Praesidium put the leadership of the section into firm Bolshevik hands.

Finally, on August 7th, the second Conference of Factory Committees opened in Smolny. It wasn't as showy and noisy as the first one in May. Its scope was substantially less. Its formulation of questions was more modest, more businesslike, less politico-demagogic. This was a tribute to the defeat that had compelled insurgents and utopians to shrink into themselves. But again the *composition* of the conference was Bolshevik. Once again the leadership was completely in the hands of Lenin's party.

In general, towards the date of the Moscow Conference, a little over a month after the July Days, it was already quite clear that the movement of the popular masses had resumed its former course. The Third Coalition, like the one before it, was hanging in the air. The Menshevik-SR Soviet was being followed by quite compact groups of burgherdom, but not by the masses of the workers and soldiers. The rank-and-file of the people as before were turning their eyes to the Bolsheviks alone—while Tsereteli and his friends came before bourgeois-landlord Russia and proletarian Europe in the name of 'the whole democracy'.

CHAPTER 22

THE SCANDAL IN MOSCOW

FROM the beginning of August the whole bourgeoisie and the 'whole democracy' were preparing for the sensational 'State Conference'. But no one could tell why this strange and unwieldy affair was undertaken just then. The press was strenuously trying to make the man in the street take an interest in this enterprise—not without success. The man in the street, like everyone else, saw that something was decidedly out of tune in our revolution. No matter what they tried in the Marian and Winter Palaces—still nothing happened. Well, maybe the Moscow Conference would 'produce' something.

Before the Central Ex. Com. delegation actually left for Moscow the news came out that Savinkov, Kerensky's deputy in charge of the War Department, had resigned. Savinkov was hand in glove with Kornilov: together they had just handed Kerensky a report demanding that the army committees be dissolved and capital punishment be introduced at the rear. Kerensky was vacillating between Headquarters and the Star Chamber, which didn't agree and was exerting pressure through the SR Central Committee. Hence Kornilov decided to go his own way, and Savinkov resigned. But the resignation wasn't serious; it was simply a household mutiny, for Savinkov, after all, was Kornilov's *alter ego*, and was not a Cadet but his own man—a Socialist Minister and famous SR terrorist.

On the evening of the 11th I left the Yaroslavl countryside for Moscow. I got into a train at one of the stations *before* Yaroslavl, but the train was already overflowing, and in all classes you had to stand up all night. In Yaroslavl, by using my title of Central Ex. Com. member, I penetrated into an almost empty military carriage. I was delighted at my success, but something rather disagreeable happened as a result. I was naïve enough to remove my boots, which were gone when I happened to wake up an hour or two later. The extraordinary stupidity of my situation prevented me from going to sleep again.

In Moscow, astounding the crowd with my stockinged feet, I made my way to the station-master and spent about two hours

telephoning to people at random, to see whether some friend could bring a pair of boots to the station for me. This was all quite typical of travelling at this time.

I finally found someone with a spare pair of boots. But bringing them proved to be more difficult than could have been expected. The trams in Moscow had stopped, and there were almost no drozhky-drivers in the streets either. There was a strike, not a general one, but very impressive and sufficient to manifest the will of the masses. A number of factories and works were on strike, as was every municipal undertaking except those satisfying the daily needs of the population. Restaurants, waiters, and even half the drozhky-drivers were on strike. This whole working-class army was following the Bolsheviks *against its own Soviet!* Towards evening the demonstration would become still more perceptible: Moscow was to be submerged in darkness, since the gas works was also on strike.

In somebody else's enormous boots I set out on foot to look for the Soviet delegation. *En route* I dropped into the journalists' office (somewhere near the post-office), to see the *Novaya Zhizn* correspondent assigned to the Conference. The journalists' office was a tower of babel: whole crowds of them were struggling, each one against all the others, for a place at the Conference. The hubbub, excitement, and play of passions attained absolutely extraordinary limits. In this street it was a real holiday and a great day. And this one picture of frenzied reporters was enough to define the historical importance of the Moscow State Conference. A good two-thirds of its weight, after all, depended on the journalists' interest in it.

The magnificent hall of the Bolshoi Theatre was glittering with all its lights. From top to bottom it was filled with a triumphal and even brilliant crowd. Oh, here in truth was all the flower of Russian society! Only a few accidental unfortunates were missing from among the big and little political 'names'. Keeping guard around the theatre was a dense column of military cadets—Kerensky's only reliable force. A niggling control-system stopped one at every step inside the theatre too. Nevertheless, going into the stalls, I could scarcely make my way to my seat through the dense throng of supers crowding round the doors. . .

I was late for the opening. But even before catching sight of Kerensky, I heard him emotionally holding forth on the high notes in his first speech for the Provisional Government.

I shall not, of course, follow the course of this 'State Conference'. It was foredoomed to contribute nothing whatever to the formation of a Government: the Government had already been formed, everyone was content with it, and nothing more was asked. Nor was the Conference supposed to replace a parliament. Why should it? Kerensky and his colleagues, after all, were responsible only to their own consciences. To discover and say something new about 'the needs of the country'? Come now, this was, after all, a time of the flowering of a thousand-voiced press, which it was clearly unthinkable to surpass. Only one thing was left: to crush the opinion of the 'whole democracy' by means of the opinion of the 'whole country'—for the sake of a definitive and complete liberation of the 'all-national Government' from the tutelage of all the workers', peasants', Zimmerwaldite, half-German, half-Jewish, hooligan organizations. To compel the Soviets to efface themselves once and for all before the overwhelming majority of the rest of the populace, which demanded an 'all-national' policy. And perhaps at the same time to enforce silence on the handful of upstarts on the Right, who were shouting too immoderately about General Fist as the sole recourse. It was all bizarrely trivial and naïve, but I could find no other explanation in history for this stupidity.

CHAPTER 23

THE UNITED BOURGEOISIE DEMONSTRATES

ELECTIONS for the central Petersburg Town Council were scheduled for Sunday, August 20th. Up to then our 'commune' had been composed provisionally of the delegations of the district councils elected in May. Now its final composition was to be determined by city-wide direct elections.

All the parties naturally ascribed enormous importance to these elections. No one knew what turn the revolution would take. And circumstances might arise in which the capital's 'commune' might play a decisive rôle, as in the time of Robespierre. But at the same time indications of the fatigue and apathy of the masses of the people came from everywhere; many abstentions were expected. The Right Soviet elements and newspapers pointed this out with especial frequency.

And in some strange inscrutable way the conclusion they drew from it was that in such conditions it was impossible to disown the Coalition or struggle against it; in such circumstances nothing was left but to support it. Wouldn't one have thought the contrary? Fatigue, disillusionment, depression, had been engendered, after all, precisely by the Coalition policy, that had brought the revolution into an impassable bog. One would have thought that the end of the Coalition would mean a renaissance, towards which no other paths even existed. But no, burgherdom and the Mamelukes reasoned otherwise.

In any case all the parties had long been frenziedly preparing for the elections.

The Mensheviks had a single list of candidates. And it was entirely *internationalist*. On the eve of the election Larin proposed that we should all go to various parts of the city to do some electoral campaigning for the Menshevik ticket. I personally was assigned to two places: first to the proletarian Vyborg Side, then to the bourgeois Mokhovoy. I was to speak at one SR and one Cadet meeting. Influenced by the talk about

apathy I was in a rather slack mood. And as a matter of fact, in spite of the animation of the dusty 'democratic' streets of the Vyborg Side, I found in the meeting-hall a boring little group of workers sleepily listening to an SR speaker. It would have been tiresome and futile to speak. I thought the bourgeoisie would be mobilizing far more energetically. But when I arrived at the Tenishevsky School, I looked in vain for the meeting scheduled there. It evidently was not taking place at all. Unbearably fatigued I glumly wandered back to the newspaper offices.

The election results, however, were unexpected. The voters were fed up with meetings, but that did not mean at all that they were neglecting their civic duties. In all 549,400 votes were cast on August 20th. There is no doubt that the *overwhelming majority* turned out to the poll.

But it was not the *activity* of the masses that was the chief blow; that was still to come. The SRs kept the first place with 37 per cent of the votes; in comparison with the May elections, however, this was no victory but a substantial setback. The victors of July, the Cadets, had also held their ground since the district elections: they got one-fifth of all the votes. Our Menshevik list got a wretched 23,000 votes. The others simply did not come into the reckoning.

But who was the sole real victor? It was the Bolsheviks, so recently trampled into the mud, accused of treason and venality, utterly routed morally and materially, and filling till that very day the prisons of the capital. Why, one would have thought them annihilated for ever. People had almost ceased to notice them. Then where had they sprung up from again? What sort of strange, diabolical enchantment was this?

In the August elections in the capital the Bolsheviks got just short of 200,000 votes, i.e., 33 per cent. A third of Petersburg. Once again the whole proletariat of the capital, the lord of the revolution! Citizens Tsereteli and Chkheidze, leaders of the all-powerful organ, orators of the whole democracy—*now* do you see the Bolsheviks? *Now* do you understand?

No! *Still* they see nothing, *still* they don't understand what is going on around them. . .

Miliukov, Rodzianko, and Kornilov—they saw and understood something. In any case their press was stunned by the success of the Bolsheviks. And these gallant heroes of the revolution began, at express speed, though in secret, to prepare their own ‘demonstration’. To cover it up they began shouting loudly that the Bolsheviks were on the point of ‘demonstrating’. Sometimes, it is true, their tongues slipped. For instance, the respectable Cadet *Rech*, in response to the hearty tone of the Kronstadt Soviet newspaper, in an uncharacteristic colloquial style, snapped back with two excellent Russian proverbs: ‘the birdie sang before the cat sprang’, and ‘he laughs best who laughs last’.

The cat about to spring was preparing to have a good last laugh. But this couldn’t be said to be so very easy. A plot was hatched by some monarchist elements, with the participation of the Romanov Grand Dukes, in the middle of August, but it was discovered in time and the participants were arrested together with the Romanovs. The bourgeois press, for its own reasons, didn’t make anything very sensational of this plot. But the masters of this press had been warned, nevertheless, that you can’t take a republic with your bare hands, and that they must make solider preparations. But this slight warning had no effect on the sleepy, half-disorganized ‘national’ Central Ex. Com. . .

* * *

Around then I glanced into Smolny Institute, the school for daughters of the nobility, which the Central Ex. Com. had started moving into on July 18th, the same day the Provisional Government moved to the Winter Palace and the Premier took up residence there. I wanted to see what was going on in the new quarters of the ‘all-powerful organ’. But I received little satisfaction and still less benefit. I did not like Smolny at all, and never ceased to regret the loss of the Tauride. This famous place was located on the outskirts of the capital and consumed an enormous amount of everyone’s time in getting back and forth. It was all right to keep ‘young gentlewomen’ in, but not for making a revolution with the proletariat and garrison of the capital. But I don’t know whether the young ladies and the children liked it there, either. There were, to be sure, magnificent architectural monuments nearby, especially the monas-

tery: I remember gasping and standing stockstill on seeing it for the first time. Smolny also had a remarkable, divinely clean, harmoniously finished assembly hall: from now on this was the principal, as it were *internal*, arena of the revolution. But those interminable, dark, gloomy, gaol-like, monotonous, stone-floored corridors! Those arid, barrack-like classrooms, with nothing in them to rest the eye! It was dreary, uncomfortable, and uninviting.

Life was concentrated for the most part on the second floor, the lightest and most handsome. There the big assembly hall, holding 1,500 or 2,000 people, took up the whole right wing. This was where the Soviet sections and plenum, the Central Ex. Com., and the Second All-Russian Congress of Soviets held their sittings. Near it there was an uncomfortable buffet with rough tables and benches and extremely meagre food: not far off was the office of the Praesidium. All the other classrooms were occupied by sections of the Central Ex. Com. The furniture was manifestly inadequate. There was neither order nor cleanliness.

Remembering the Tauride, I wandered sadly around the new citadel of the revolution. It was deserted and melancholy. Both in the sections and in the meeting of the Bureau there were oddly few people. But it seemed to me that amongst them there were oddly many new faces. Chkheidze was enthroned in an extraordinary wing-chair, but this failed to lend any solemnity to the session. Why it had assembled, what it talked about—I simply don't remember. But I very well remember feeling that what was talked about there made no difference at all.

* * *

Sunday, August 27th, marked the end of six months of revolution. It was a rather wretched jubilee. It was not only not showy and noisy, but it passed almost without notice in the repulsive atmosphere of those days. The whole affair was limited to a few mass-meetings and a 'ceremonial' session of the Central Ex. Com., which I did not attend; nor indeed did almost anybody else.

On that day, at 10 in the morning, I was giving a workers' lecture in a cinema not far from the Nicholas Station. I've just now seen in one of the newspapers that the topic of my

lecture was 'The Moscow Conference'. This seems strange to me. To be sure, the lecture given on the 27th had obviously been scheduled for around the 20th, immediately after my arrival from Moscow. But nevertheless—why was it necessary, in the midst of all that was happening, for me to speak to workers about this silly business? It was obviously the fashion.

After the lecture, I went to the Petersburg Side to the *Cirque Moderne*, where Lunacharsky was giving a lecture on Greek art. A huge working-class audience was listening with great interest to the popular speaker and his unfamiliar stories. The lecture was already almost over. We had actually agreed to meet only in order to lunch and spend the holiday together.

The two of us, together with my wife and someone else, strolled to the 'Vienna', then wandered about the streets and quays for a long time, talking about aesthetics and 'culture'. . . There was a breath of autumn already in the sky. The unforgettable summer was ending, and the sun set early in the sea. We could not sufficiently admire our marvellous Petersburg. Already tired, we strolled homewards to the Karpovka across Trinity Bridge and along the Kamenno-ostrovsky. We sat there till dark, chatting over tea.

The 'phone rang. Someone from Smolny:

'Why are you at home? You know the Bureau's been sitting since morning, and a plenum of the Central Ex. Com. is just going to begin. Smolny is full. . . Why aren't you here?'

'But what's the matter?'

'What? Don't you know? Kornilov is moving on Petersburg with troops from the front. He's got an army corps. . . Things are being organized here. . .'

I dropped the receiver. In two minutes Lunacharsky and I had already left for Smolny. I related to him the few words I'd heard on the 'phone; they gave both of us an equal shock. We scarcely discussed the stupefying news. Its meaning was instantly apparent in its full scope and in the same light to both of us. A deep, extraordinary sigh of relief escaped from both of us. We felt excitement, exaltation, and the joy of liberation.

Yes, this was a threat that would clear the unbearably oppressive atmosphere. This was the starting point for a radical transformation of the whole conjuncture. And in any case it was a full revenge for the July Days. The Soviet might be reborn!

The democracy might take new heart, and the revolution might swiftly find its lawful course, long lost. . .

That Kornilov could attain his goal we didn't believe for a single second. That he might get as far as Petersburg with his troops and there establish a real dictatorship we so thoroughly disregarded that I don't think we even mentioned it on our way to Smolny. There was still enough powder left in the magazine to prevent that! If not one Tsarist echelon got to Petersburg at the moment of the March revolution, in the complete chaos of ideas and in spite of the old discipline, the old officers, the age-old inertia, and the terrible and unknown *novelty*—a Tsarist general could not now seize the army and the capital. Now we had a new, democratically organized army and a powerful proletarian organization in the capital. Now we had *our own* commanders, ideological centres, and traditions. . .

Kornilov, the Tsarist general, had of course all the organized bourgeoisie behind him. He might also have behind him a small military apparatus in Petersburg, with its centre in the Staff and controlled by his accomplices.¹ But he had no real power. Kornilov could have had only a scratch detachment, even though a very big one. But *Petersburg* would meet him as it should—if the field army did not settle him on the spot.

There was no danger from this quarter. Here the revolution would lose nothing; but how much it would gain from the fact that Kornilov, Rodzianko, and Miliukov behaved like Lenin, Zinoviev, and Stalin! In July, to be sure, the Bolsheviks had been in a hurry to pluck the unripe fruit and got poisoned. The fruit would have ripened, and then have benefited the revolution. The Kornilovites had not committed so gross a blunder: their fruit was quite ripe, but it might turn rotten, or the revolution might at any moment pull the tree up by the roots. Unlike the Bolsheviks, the Kornilovites had reason to be afraid of allowing the moment to pass, and to consider the present conjuncture the *most* favourable for a 'demonstration'.

But this subjective side of the matter has no meaning. *Objectively* Kornilov and his friends, when they lost the game,

¹ General Lukomsky, in his memoirs (Vol. 5 of the *Archives of the Revolution*), reports that the Staff really did have a military apparatus in Petersburg consisting of officer and cadet cadres, which even numbered many thousands. This would have been an adequate force, if only . . .

would accept all its consequences, like the Bolsheviks in July. The *coup* of the generals and financiers, with the consequent opening of the front to the Kaiser, shifted the centre of gravity of the whole situation to the opposite side—a feat which the Bolsheviks could not accomplish a millionth part of. And as for the rest. . . It's true that the rest was still unknown, but after all it depended to an enormous extent on ourselves alone. . . To Smolny, then, as quickly as possible!

* * *

Smolny was indeed full. Strings of people were scurrying about the corridors, dimly lit as always. Only the assembly hall, with its snow-white columns, was shining brightly. This was now the centre of Smolny. But there was no meeting of the Central Ex. Com., though a great many deputies and nearly all the leaders were there. There were impromptu meetings in the hall, groups formed, people wandered about in pairs. Tsereteli, downcast and dejected, was walking up and down with one of the Bolsheviks. As I appeared I heard him say listlessly: 'Well! Now you have a holiday in your Bolshevik alley, you'll be taking the bit between your teeth again. . .'

Indeed! So Lunacharsky and I hadn't been mistaken. Tsereteli felt depressed, foreseeing the same results of the Kornilov rising as we had. So we really could pluck up heart again.

* * *

Rumours of the Kornilov *coup* had reached Smolny that morning, I think while I was giving my lecture in the cinema near the Nicholas Station. There were a few people there at this time who were about to set out for mass-meetings to celebrate the first six months of the revolution.

They tried to call the Bureau together. It proved to be a miserable session with scarcely a quorum. It 'completely approved the decision of the Provisional Government and the steps taken by A. F. Kerensky'. Just what steps these were I don't know, and the Bureau, *in concreto*, must also be thought not to have known. But the 'decision' that had been approved referred to Kornilov's dismissal.

The Bureau, assembled in a small casual conclave, actually couldn't take any other decision. Not only because it was its

natural 'line' to support the Coalition and associate itself with it in every way, but also because it did not, after all, even suspect the real state of affairs. In Smolny only one thing was known: that General Kornilov, who had just surrendered Riga to the Germans, had 'come out' against the Provisional Government as a pretender to power, while Kerensky had declared him a rebel and was taking decisive steps against him. Obviously, this could only be approved.

Kornilov, with his civilian and military friends, had been crystal clear to us from the very beginning. He was the 'mathematical centre' of the bourgeois dictatorship, relieving the sham dictatorship in order to liquidate the revolution. It was only Premier Kerensky, the head of the Third Coalition, who baffled us. But even this perplexity had only a partial and local, not a general, character. His *general* rôle, of course, needs no clarification, hardly even a brief formulation.

Kerensky, just like Kornilov, had set himself the goal of introducing a bourgeois dictatorship (even though, also like Kornilov, he didn't understand this).

These two 'mathematical centres' had fallen out over the question of which could be the bearer of this dictatorship. One represented the Stock Exchange, capital, and the rentiers; the other the same, plus the still to a large extent indeterminate groups of petty-bourgeois democratic artisans, intelligentsia, the Third Estate, and the paid managers of home industry and commerce.

But Kornilov and Kerensky each needed the other, so great was the yet undissipated power of the masses. The contending sides had been forced into an alliance, but they still remained contending sides.

Each was trying to use the other for his own aims. Kornilov was striving for a pure dictatorship of finance, capital, and rentiers, but had to accept Kerensky as hostage of the democracy. Kerensky was aiming at a dictatorship of a bloc of the big and petty bourgeoisie, but had to pay heavy tribute to his ally as the *wielder of the real power*. And each was trying to ensure that at the finishing post he would be the actual and formal master of the situation.

Hence came all the 'interrelationships' of the two enemy allies, which were sometimes strange, absurd, and incomprehensible.

This was the source of the 'lack of clarity' of this dirty but not obscure business.

* * *

Now the Central Ex. Com. came on the scene. I have a rather dim recollection of the night session to which Lunacharsky and I had hurried. I recall only a certain amount of hubbub in the hall and disorder in the conduct of the meeting. One would have thought the deputies ought to have got ready, pulled themselves together, and been filled with revolutionary energy and consciousness of the gravity of the moment. But none of this was to be seen. No one here believed in any real danger, and since the revolution people had become accustomed and inured to dramatic situations. The Commander-in-Chief's march on Petersburg and the beginning of a civil war under the nose of the advancing German Army had neither more nor less effect on the imagination than at one time a street demonstration against Tsarist arbitrariness.

The debates proceeded along two lines. The first led to the formation of a new Government, the second to the organization of the defence of the capital against Kornilov's troops.

The second was by far the more important and interesting. Only the night before, the Right Menshevik Weinstein had proposed, in the name of his fraction, that a special 'committee for the struggle against the counter-revolution' be formed. But what should this special committee do? Its initiators were not quite clear about that. In any case it must give every kind of technical aid to the official organs of government in the struggle against Kornilov.

The Menshevik resolution was of course passed. Later the new body received the name of Military Revolutionary Committee. It was this institution that bore the whole brunt of the struggle against the Kornilov campaign. It was this, and only this, that liquidated the conspiracy (if we leave aside the generally unfavourable atmosphere that precluded Kornilov's success, independently of the activity of any institutions at all). . .

But, in spite of the exceptional rôle of the Military Revolutionary Committee in liquidating the Kornilov revolt, we must assume that the Soviet bloc would not have taken on itself the

initiative in the matter if it had foreseen what that rôle would be in the future. From now on we shall do our best not to lose sight of this Military Revolutionary Committee, which did not die after the Kornilov revolt, but simply fell into a state of suspended animation, to revive on different foundations later on and tower aloft in October.

Anyone capable of penetrating the general situation at this time must grasp a basic point: the Bolshevik attitude towards this new body. It was precisely the Bolsheviks who were to define its whole character, fate, and rôle. The Star Chamber and its Mamelukes more or less failed to see this, but so it was. The Military Revolutionary Committee, in organizing the defence, had to set in motion the masses of workers and soldiers, and these masses, in so far as they were organized, were organized by the *Bolsheviks* and followed them. At that time theirs was the only organization that was large, welded together by elementary discipline, and united with the democratic rank-and-file of the capital. *Without* them the Military Revolutionary Committee was impotent; without them it could only have passed the time with makeshift proclamations and flabby speeches by orators who had long since lost all authority. *With* the Bolsheviks, however, the Military Revolutionary Committee had at its disposal all organized worker-soldier strength, of whatever kind. What attitude, then, did the Bolsheviks adopt?

The evening before, the Bolsheviks had declared that their party had already taken steps to inform the masses of the danger that threatened them, and had set up a special commission for the organization of defence. This commission would establish contact with the newly created organ of the Central Ex. Com. The Bolsheviks sent their representatives into the Military Revolutionary Committee, although they were bound to find themselves in a negligible minority there. And then, in the morning, when a resolution to give Kerensky a free hand was being voted on, the Bolsheviks, voting *against* it, declared that if the Government was really going to fight against the counter-revolution, they were ready to co-ordinate their entire activity with that of the Provisional Government, and conclude a military-technical alliance with it.

The beginning was excellent. The Bolsheviks had shown extraordinary tact and political wisdom, to say nothing of

devotion to the revolution. To be sure, when they entered into an uncharacteristic compromise they were pursuing certain special goals their allies did not foresee, but this made their acumen all the greater.

* * *

The same night and morning of the 28th the Central Ex. Com. issued a series of proclamations and instructions to the various organizations of the democracy. First of all—to committees and Soviets of the army and at the front. Then to the railwaymen, the postal and telegraph workers, and the Petersburg garrison. These addresses gave an account of what had happened and asked people not to obey orders from Headquarters, to watch the movement of counter-revolutionary troops and put every kind of obstacle in their way, to detain the conspirators' letters, and to obey at once the orders of the Soviet organs and the Provisional Government. They also pointed out that the conspiracy lacked deep roots and could be overcome by solidarity and dash. And then the Provisional Government, which was of course taking most resolute steps and hence ought to be the centre of such solidarity, was given a puff.

The Military Revolutionary Committee, speaking generally, had not a particularly brilliant array of names, but the composition of the collegium was rather typical: the Right Soviet bloc, in the person of their stars of the first magnitude, continued to operate primarily in the sphere of 'higher policy' on the parquets of the Winter Palace; while in the Military Revolutionary Committee the *well-known* names were Leftists. And despite their being in the minority it was quite clear that in the Military Revolutionary Committee *control was in the hands of the Bolsheviks*. This followed from the nature of things. First of all, if the committee wanted to act *seriously*, then it had to act *revolutionarily*, that is, independently of the Provisional Government, of the existing constitution, of the acting official institutions. Only the Bolsheviks could operate like this, not the Soviet Compromisers. Secondly, only the Bolsheviks had the material means for revolutionary activity, in the form of control of the masses.

On August 28th the Military Revolutionary Committee began with the investigation and localization of all possible Kornilov bases in Petersburg: these were, of course, all the military

academies and officers' organizations—undoubtedly strong counter-revolutionary cells that had to be paralysed. To the Soviet emissaries, however, the gallant military cadets energetically painted themselves in coalitionary and Right-Soviet colours. Arrests were still exceptional. . .

Then steps were taken to cut off the Kornilov troops. Some orders to this effect may have been given by Kerensky, though this is more than doubtful. In any case, however, the railwaymen's organizations were completely at the disposal of the Soviet.

But perhaps the most effective measures taken that day were for arming the workers. It goes without saying not only that this was on the initiative of the Bolsheviks but also that they issued an ultimatum on the subject. As far as I know it was a condition of their participation in the Military Revolutionary Committee. The majority of the committee could not help accepting this condition, if it took a serious view of its tasks. But it had an excellent appreciation of the principled significance of this measure, and did not yield without a struggle. The Military Revolutionary Committee resolved, in view of the necessity of 'opposing the armed forces of the counter-revolution by mobilizing the forces of the workers, that the arming of individual groups of workers for the defence of the workers' districts and factories, under the closest guidance of the district Soviets and the control of the Committee, be considered desirable. In case of necessity these groups would join field army units and be completely subject to the general army command.'

The swiftness and thoroughness with which the Military Revolutionary Committee entered into the rôle of the real headquarters and core of the besieged capital may be seen, for instance, in the following manifestations of its 'organic labours' on that same August 28th: it received reports on the supply situation in the capital from Nikitsky, the 'Governor', and Grohman, the chairman of the Central Supply Committee. It also ordered the mobilization of all supply organs for especially intense activity under the control of the corresponding trade-unions—and the reduction of the *bread ration in the capital to half a pound per food-card*.

The democratic, military, and trade-union organizations in the suburbs of Petersburg wired the Military Revolutionary

Committee their readiness to place themselves completely at its disposition. Without any superfluous words the Kronstadt Soviet eliminated the post-July authorities and installed their own commander in the fortress. The Central Committee of the Fleet also went over to a revolutionary position and was ready for battle—on sea or land—at the first demand from the Central Ex. Com.

That same night and early morning the Bolsheviks had begun to display a feverish activity in the workers' districts. Their military apparatus organized mass-meetings in all the barracks. Everywhere instructions were given, and obeyed, to remain under arms, ready to advance. By and large Smolny was meeting Kornilov with all its lights blazing.

* * *

But what was going on in the Winter Palace? Was the head of the State, the sole hope of the revolution, doing anything at this terrible hour?

Kerensky, to save the revolution and liquidate the Kornilov rising as quickly as possible, insisted on a Directory. And there and then, on August 28th, as a beginning,¹ he conferred Directory portfolios on the following indubitable Kornilovites—Savinkov, Tereshchenko, and Kishkin.²

But the same irritating and tiresome people, who actually had no business having been born at all, even if they were party comrades, kept interfering. Tsereteli and Gots turned up from Smolny and began arguing again: 'How can you?' said they.

Kerensky's 'superhuman' wisdom was impossible for simple people to grasp. As far as can be judged from a great deal of evidence, he answered at first: 'Well, all right—we can leave a sixth place in the Directory for some representative of the revolutionary democracy, say Nikitin'. But the tiresome people from Smolny persisted in demanding closer relations with the Soviet and the representation of SRs and Mensheviks in the Directory.

But the deal was spoilt, and the head of the State appointed

¹ Later Kerensky also declared himself Commander-in-Chief. (Ed.)

² Kishkin, Nikolai Mikhailovich (1864–1930): physician; Cadet; member of Provisional Government; Commissar of Moscow in summer of 1917. Arrested a number of times for political reasons after the October Revolution, but spent last years of his life in the People's Commissariat for Health. (Ed.)

Savinkov Governor-General of Petersburg and its suburbs. In addition, all troops in the area were subject to him. Thus the entire official weight of the struggle against Kornilov rested on Savinkov, while on Kerensky rested the entire responsibility for this—incomprehensible choice. Kerensky, after all, *knew* Savinkov to be a Kornilovite; the latter had very often declared his solidarity with the General, and handed his resignation to the Premier, who disagreed, and even now, on August 28th, continued to insist on the Kornilov programme. Let us allow that the head of the State was really incapable of regarding Tereshchenko or Maklakov (both frequenters of Supreme Headquarters) as Kornilovites, but you would have thought there could be no possible doubt about Savinkov.

All this only *seems* unnaturally absurd. As a matter of fact it was the logic of Kerensky's position, which he himself, of course, was unaware of. For he really couldn't, after all, start a serious struggle against Kornilov instead of this unworthy and distasteful game. He felt this without understanding it, for he himself was a Kornilovite—on condition that he himself head the Kornilov rising—and all the people he looked to for support were unconditional and unqualified Kornilovites. In these circumstances Kerensky could do nothing else in fighting the plot but appoint someone known to be one of the plotters, as the fully authorized and official commander of all the forces mobilized for its liquidation.

But why didn't *Smolny* declare that this was manifest treason? Or was the Star Chamber too in the plot with Kornilov? Oh no—it was decidedly not guilty of that. The point is that *Smolny* didn't know anything about the quibbling and pettifogging in the Winter Palace. As before it knew only one thing: that Kornilov was marching on Petersburg with troops to set up a military dictatorship, while Kerensky had declared him a rebel and was taking decisive steps to defend the revolution. It was only by degrees that the truth began, in the midst of the tumult, to filter through, and then only in the following days.

* * *

But it's time to take a look at how the 'revolt' was getting on. What was being done at the Headquarters and on the new Petersburg front of the civil war on August 28th?

'Coming out openly' on the night of the 27th, the official chief of the rebels immediately set about consolidating the whole field army behind him. He sent a proclamation and an order throughout the front to the commanding generals to support his *coup*. For the front commanders there was undoubtedly nothing unexpected in this; there was probably not one non-Kornilovite among them. Nevertheless it was evident that a majority had not been calculating on a war with the *Government*, but on the destruction of the revolution with the '*maximum of legality*'.

Kornilov's appeal was responded to at once by Kaledin, the Cossack ataman, then by the even better-known Denikin, the commander of the south-western front. Finally the commander of the very important north-western front, General Klembovsky, Kerensky's worthy choice, appointed by Kerensky himself to Kornilov's post, came over to the side of the rebels.

But it would seem that the dissemination of Kornilovism in the army ended there. At least there seemed to be no other outward show of it. Here, of course, it was Kerensky's demonstrative action that played the primary rôle; in declaring the Kornilov coup to be a rebellion against the legitimate Government and in outlawing it, Kerensky was demanding an open active insurrectionary move from the Kornilovite generals. The majority couldn't make up their minds to this, and this introduced confusion, vacillation, and disorganization into the Kornilovite *milieu*. However they may have sympathized with Kornilov and despised the Premier, they had not expected to take *such a form* of action and were not prepared to do so.

The highest command did not place itself at Kornilov's disposal, and this inflicted a cruel blow on the Kornilov revolt at the most decisive hour. Other commanders began asking *Petersburg* what they were to do. Some went back on their word immediately and began to work 'in contact' with the Government commissars, while the official Kornilov adherents simply undertook no action and lost precious moments.

But the army itself? The rest of the commanders? The officers? The soldiery? We know that on the night of the 27th the Central Ex. Com. had already circulated instructions to its army organizations, which forestalled the Kornilov *coup* in the army as a whole. Kornilov's orders were in the hands only of the staffs at the front, where they were held up by Soviet agency and

didn't reach the army. On the contrary, the position of the supreme Government and of the Soviet was widely popularized amongst the officers and soldiers by the concerted efforts of the army organizations from the morning of the 28th on. Here the results were manifest. The army units took no action *against* Kornilov, since they had received no instructions, but there could be no question of any *support* for the revolt. If Headquarters cannot be said to have been isolated, at any rate its rebellion was localized at the very first, decisive moment.

In the last analysis the practical calculations of the rebels could be based now only on the 3rd Cossack Corps, which was marching on Petersburg. The Corps should have been stationed in the suburbs of Petersburg by the evening of the 27th. Those were the directives given to Krymov, the commanding officer. But they were not carried out: Krymov was late for technical reasons. In particular the 'Savage Division' got stuck at the Dno junction.

With the morning of the 28th the Kornilov echelons began arriving in the town of Luga. There were eight echelons in all, led by Krymov himself. The troops occupied the town, the municipal and government offices, the premises of the Soviet; but everything was orderly and calm. There was no resistance. The Soviet didn't show itself. There was nothing there for Krymov to do, but it was impossible to go any further because the line had been torn up.

The newly-arrived units mingled with the Luga garrison. The local party and Soviet elements at once started most extensive agitation amongst the Kornilovites; while Krymov, out of touch with Headquarters, hesitated to liquidate them and begin on his own personal initiative a serious policy of iron rule. Amidst the inaction and agitation Kornilov's Cossacks naturally became disorganized, and it was fairly simple to get at them.

It goes without saying that their commanders, in so far as they had prepared them for the march, had cited riots started in Petersburg by the 'Bolshevik German agents'. But the Soviet agitators had documents to show that the rebel general was leading the 3rd Corps against the *legitimate* Government, and that there had been no riots in Petersburg. The complete bewilderment of the Kornilovites was inevitable. Decisive

action, with *no time to think*, might have helped, but there were no instructions for that.

The local Soviet authorities had quickly begun to raise their heads. Around 8 o'clock in the evening the local Ex. Com. assembled, together with delegates from the army units. It became clear that more echelons were on their way to Luga. It was decided to stop them at all costs, even by joining battle. It was already too late to liquidate *now* the Luga Soviet and garrison. It was no longer possible with the available echelons. Krymov was in quite an absurd position.

So on the morning of the 28th the echelons of the Savage Division left Dno Station on another line. At 4 o'clock in the afternoon two echelons had got within forty-two versts of Petersburg, where the line was cut and timber-wagons had been overturned. A small reconnaissance detachment left the Kornilov train. From the other direction a special delegation of Muslims and Caucasians, specially sent by the Central Ex. Com., went to meet them, to influence their kinsmen in the Savage Division. The delegates suggested that they be taken to the echelons. The detachment willingly agreed, and gave their word of honour that those sent to parley should not be touched. *En route* they had time to talk, always on the same simple theme.

But a group of Kornilovite officers who had left the train refused to allow the delegation to see the echelons. After long and stormy arguments the delegates had to go back, since it was already after 9 o'clock. But they had already done enough to undermine the morale of the detachment: the 'Savages' had been informed of the real state of affairs. Later they told of how they had been lured to Petersburg: first they had been told they were being taken north of Riga to repel the Germans; after Dno they were assured that the Bolsheviks were slaughtering people in Petersburg, and that these traitors had to be repressed. To make things more convincing a *provocateur* threw a bomb at the echelon not far from Dno, which heightened morale. But simple information made it fall again. After August 28th, while Miliukov and Kornilov were asserting they had all the real power, that real power, in the form of an isolated Corps, was already coming apart at the seams.

On the evening of the 28th all roads were barred to Kornilov

not only by the destruction of all the railways, but also by men. The garrisons of all the nearby cities—Gatchina, Pavlovsk, Tsarskoe, Krasny—having been put under arms, were spread out in a fighting front on the railways and roads. Units of the capital garrison were stationed around Petersburg, mixed in with the workers' Red Guard. The Military Revolutionary Committee had called out a few units from Finland to reinforce them. I myself watched them arrive at the Finland Station, and mingled with the mob of soldiers; a part of them, apparently the smaller, were consciously going to the defence of the revolution; the others, with a businesslike look, were simply carrying out orders. The thinking proletarians were in the minority: most of them were rugged, clumsy country boys; but the minority served as a sufficient cement for the whole army.

The Petersburg suburbs had been turned into an enormous camp. Smolny commissars visited the regiments. Intense, unflagging activity continued day and night in the heart of Petersburg itself. The workers were being armed. Where had the weapons come from? From wherever they could be found. Nobody asked about legal principles. It was quite enough that the arming went on systematically under the direction of the Military Revolutionary Committee agents. Quite a lot of weapons were found, especially in the Putilov Factory, which gave them all to Smolny to arm the Red Guard. The official authorities of the General Staff, around the Kornilovite Savinkov, grumbled, snorted, became indignant, and lost their tempers. But this had no importance; people had other things to think about. Not the slightest excesses were observed in Petersburg.

It was quite clear that Kornilov's hours were numbered. On the morning of the 29th news came that he had been arrested with his staff. Then it was learned that Pskov, Vitebsk, and Dno were in the hands of troops loyal to the Government. And, finally, the advance on Petersburg had definitely been stopped.

* * *

A favourable turn in the revolution, a thorough revenge for the July Days, and especially the strengthening of Bolshevism, as a result of the Kornilov uprising, not only were obvious to Lunacharsky, Tsereteli, and myself, but now, after the collapse

of the adventure, had become obvious for Kerensky, Miliukov, and the whole reaction too. Now, in the eyes of the united plutocracy, this Bolshevick 'peril' came to the fore.

While Kornilov was still at the gates, the newspapers were already making a bogey of the Bolsheviks, as once again seizing the streets, calling for battle and arming the workers. 'In the streets', *Rech* announced with horror, 'groups of armed workers have already appeared, frightening peaceful citizens. In the Soviet the Bolsheviks are energetically demanding the release of their arrested comrades. In connexion with all these facts everyone is profoundly convinced that as soon as General Kornilov's enterprise is definitely liquidated, the Bolsheviks, whom the Soviet majority has now once again ceased to consider traitors to the revolution, will use all their energy to force the Soviet to embark on the realization, even though partial, of the Bolshevick programme.'

In these rather naïve terms the general conjuncture is depicted not at all badly. But the conclusions? Obvious. Barrages, bastions, barricades must be built at once. There must be emergency reinforcement of the positions adopted after July, at the Moscow Conference, before the Kornilov revolt. How could this be done? The details would become clear later, but for the time being it was necessary at all costs to retain a maximum of power in the hands of the post-July, i.e., Kornilovite elements. And the *Cadets*, at the head of the stock-marketeers, business men, industrialists, and generals, pestered the remains of the Government, demanding power. They clamoured that they would not refuse to make this sacrifice for their country, and presented their conditions: (1) that representatives of the army should be invited to accept the military posts in the Cabinet, i.e., the generals should be given political power; (2) that representatives of commerce and industry (over and above the Cadets themselves) should be invited into the Cabinet; (3) that the Kornilov revolt should be crushed without destroying the unity of the army, i.e., without reprisals against the counter-revolutionary generals. It was all very consistent.

* * *

Only a few small illustrations of the Directory's great deeds are warranted.

The day after it began ruling a report appeared in the papers, as a 'rumour', that the Government was moving to Moscow.

This idea was far from new. The Petersburg proletariat was the most dangerous internal enemy—during the revolution as well as before—and after the fall of Riga the danger from without was a good pretext. It was essential for the all-national Government to get away from the Bolshevik city. During the State Conference Moscow, to be sure, showed that it was not benevolent either—nevertheless . . .

For some days the theme of evacuating the Government was harped on in every key. But on September 7th the Moscow Soviet also passed a Bolshevik resolution [like one passed by the Petersburg Soviet on September 1st]. The ancient capital was in the hands of the Bolsheviks too. There was no place to flee to. A denial of the 'rumours' followed: the Government was not preparing to go anywhere.

But then the same goals were approached by other routes. The *removal of excess manpower from Petersburg* was taken up in detail for some weeks. If it was impossible to escape from the enemy—was it also impossible to remove the enemy?

This was a long-drawn-out business, but it didn't have much success. Led by the Bolsheviks, the workers, both in the Workers' Section and in the Government institutions, resisted firmly. The political lining of the project was swiftly and easily unmasked; its technical unfeasibility and economic incoherence were explained—while incidentally a mass of spicy details about the ruses and speculations of the industrial and financial magnates was disclosed. No workers were removed, but this affair has its place among the good intentions of the Directory.

* * *

On August 31st, at Smolny, I learned that Palchinsky, the 'Governor-General', had ordered two Petersburg newspapers, *Rabochii* (The Worker) and *Novaya Zhizn*, to be shut down. The first was the central organ of the biggest proletarian party, the Bolsheviks, and the other was a non-party independent organ that had been carrying on a consistent policy of internationalism and of proletarian class struggle. They had been shut down at the moment when the revolution was being defended from the

attacks of Tsarist generals and Stock-Exchange magnates, at a moment of solidarity of the whole Soviet democracy.

There had been no formal occasion, no apparent reason, for shutting down the papers. It was such a blatant and impudent affront that it brought protests from quite disinterested circles remote from the proletariat. It was an affront first to the whole Russian working class, which had rallied as one man to the defence of the revolution and of Kerensky himself, and secondly to the entire free, independent press. The next day even the *Izvestiya* called this act of the Government, in black and white, a filthy provocation. Meanwhile it soon became clear that Mr. Palchinsky was simply the executor of instructions given by Kerensky. Wonderful!

On the morning of September 1st I went to Smolny, principally on *Novaya Zhizn* business. I was met on the stairs by Karakhan, who said by way of greeting: 'Aha! One of the best representatives of the petty-bourgeois democracy!' I goggled, but Karakhan laughed and passed on. The same thing happened when I met various other people. Upstairs it was cleared up: a copy of *Rabochii* was thrust into my hand, with a long article by Lenin devoted to me, which started off by calling me one of the 'best representatives of the petty-bourgeois democracy'. My *Novaya Zhizn* articles had given Lenin, in his hiding-place, an opportunity for some lofty theoretical constructions.

At that time the article, entitled the 'Root of Evil' (a shot at me), did not seem of any special interest. But now, on the contrary, it seems to me instructive in the highest degree; perhaps I shall still return to these thoughts of the great revolutionary later on.

In the small hall where the Bureau usually sat I saw Avksentiev, the Minister of the Interior, and decided to question him about the *Novaya Zhizn*. Round him stood a group of people asking about what was going on in the Winter Palace.

'And what d'you think of Kerensky's treachery?' one of the Left workers naïvely blurted out.

Avksentiev, quite taken aback, was silent for a moment. 'Treachery? I don't understand. How can there be any question of treachery?'

Avksentiev, from the Winter Palace, really failed to grasp

something generally acknowledged in the working-class suburbs of the capital.

He was also in complete confusion concerning the *Novaya Zhizn*. Not only had he had no part in closing it down, but he had no information about it and was in no position to give any help. I ought to discuss it with the 'Governor-General', Palchinsky. I knew that myself. I was also being urged to do so on the paper. But I didn't want to. To go and talk to an ambiguous *parvenu* from the semi-Kornilovite Staff, an impotent dummy impudently playing at supreme command—for me, a member of the Central Ex. Com. etc.—was decidedly out of harmony with my dignity and self-esteem. I refused as long as possible. However, pressure was put on me, and I left Smolny for the General Staff where the so-called Governor-General was to be found.

Philippovsky, the chairman of the Military Revolutionary Committee, and I went off together by car. And I was given one more opportunity to convince myself of the acute shift the Kornilov revolt had brought about in the minds of the 'loyal' elements.

'When you get to the Staff', said Philippovsky, 'you'll see the insolent vileness of the place. Talking to Palchinsky will get you nowhere. But why do you hesitate? After all, *Rabochii* has come out again. You just take 30 Kronstadt sailors and get the paper out tomorrow. They will be very willing to go. . . Anarchy? Inconsistency? The hell with all that! That's over with now. . .'

At the Staff I was immediately plunged into an atmosphere of the most impudent bare-faced counter-revolution. First I went to the room of our Soviet delegation, where two or three of our Smolny military people were on duty. These were people from the majority, my opponents. And they surprised me by their friendly reception, which I explained by the fact that here, on the territory of the Winter Palace, they felt they were in a profoundly hostile atmosphere. Here these people, who were breaking their necks on 'support and confidence' for the 'unrestricted' Coalition, were definitely thrown back on the united democratic front of Smolny.

They were on 'duty' in the Staff; but they actually did nothing—they simply grew depressed and spiteful at their impotence.

Here on the terrain of the supreme legal authority they were ignored and even slighted—just as this sham supreme authority was ignored and slighted throughout the territory of Russia.

The rooms were noisy and disorderly, and somewhat faded since the revolution. Inscrutable, exquisitely polite cadet sentries. Long-forgotten, sulky, arrogantly obsequious, *ancien-régime* functionaries' faces. Glossy, brilliant officers slithering over the dubious parquet. Inquisitive glances of contempt were shot at me from all sides, as though I were some alien body. I mechanically drew myself up at once and assumed an extremely haughty air. I gave my name to the adjutant who had turned up at my elbow and asked that it be given to Palchinsky, refusing to explain the point of my visit. Much whispering; the looks multiplied. I was pointed out to the passing officers and generals by glances. . . . But Palchinsky did not keep me waiting.

Visibly aware of the fullness of his power, he was sitting at a desk, somewhat strangely placed in the *front* of a huge study. I sat down opposite. The conversation was extremely brief, but not without some characteristic features.

'D'you intend to cancel your order to close down the *Novaya Zhizn*?'

'No, that order was actually given at the Premier's personal request. Your paper can't be tolerated. In these difficult hours it's carrying on its former bitter opposition to the State, and appealing for out-and-out disorders. . . . And your methods! Somehow your paper is always—emphasizing . . .'

Palchinsky resorted to a gesture; his face showed unfeigned hatred of the newspaper which had hounded him personally quite often. . . . However, there was no reason for me to maintain the conversation on this level.

'Well,' I said, 'after all, you know we can publish the same newspaper tomorrow under another name. And of course we will. Consequently if anyone loses it will be . . .'

Palchinsky looked rather pleased at this.

'Aha! You want to publish again? But have you read the decree which I signed specially for such a case? According to that decree you'd be liable . . .'

I hadn't read any decree—but in any case it was obviously futile to continue the conversation. I got up without hearing the end of the speech about the punishments lying in wait for me.

Just then the 'phone rang, and Palchinsky, not without triumph, as though concluding an audience, told me: 'The Premier wants me to go to him.'

We went out of the study at the same time and separated. When I had reported to the office the question stood thus: whether to publish the *Novaya Zhizn* next day under the old name, or change the name for the same paper. In either case (in view of the new 'decree') an indispensable condition of publication was an armed detachment at the printing-press. This could be got at Smolny without any difficulty. . . The person formally responsible, Gorky, was not in Petersburg. To act in a sharply *revolutionary* manner could only be done with his knowledge and consent. So it was decided to act more mildly—to publish the paper *in spite* of the decree, but under *another* name. . .

A concluding act of the Kornilov episode was taking place just then at Smolny. Going there around 8 o'clock in the evening I met Martov on the stairs.

'Hurry,' he said, 'there's an interesting spectacle. The Savage Division has arrived with a confession of guilt. The Praesidium and others are receiving delegates from it.'

The 'Bureau' was packed tight with Caucasian greatcoats, fur caps, felt cloaks, galoons, daggers, glossy black moustaches, astounded prawn-like eyes, and the smell of horses. This was the *élite*, the cream, headed by 'native' officers—in all perhaps 500 men. The crowd kept the deepest silence while the delegates of the individual units, with their caps in their hands, made broken speeches in the names of those who had sent them. On the whole they all said one and the same thing. In naïvely grandiloquent language they extolled the revolution and talked about their devotion to it to the tomb, to the last drop of their blood. Not one man in their units, not one of their people had gone or would go against the revolution and the revolutionary Government. A misunderstanding had taken place, dissipated by the simple establishment of the truth. The 'Savages' were the bearers of solemn vows.

Not one of the speakers missed a chance of emphasizing their special pride, that the Russian Revolution was headed by their countrymen, who were now receiving them in the name of the 'great' Soviet. Every one of them devoted a part of his speech, and sometimes a good half of it, to the 'Chairman Chkheidze,

and especially to Tsereteli; some of them even addressed him as 'thou', calling him 'great leader . . .'. Tsereteli answered his countrymen in a very sympathetic speech. His characteristic oratorical quality, and the very poverty of his vocabulary, which to my mind reflected his entire intellectual range, was this time compensated for by an extraordinary warmth of tone. And of course Tsereteli also spoke not only as a Soviet leader; he welcomed the 'Savages' also as Caucasians, as natives of those same hills he came from himself.

Kamenev was also sitting at the Praesidium table, and behind him Ryazanov was standing in a group of Soviet people. I elbowed my way through the crowd and tried to persuade Kamenev that he absolutely must speak for the Bolsheviki. He too was aware that that was vital, but couldn't make up his mind. The 'Savages', now in contact with the Soviet and identifying it with the 'legitimate Government' and with the revolution, still, as before, imagined that the *Bolsheviki* were evil-doers from some alien universe. They would have been ready to fling themselves on the *Bolsheviki* with their former violence even now. It was essential, then and there, while the air was being cleared, to expose the hollowness of the bogey to them; they must be given a rudimentary understanding of the Bolshevik Party, which represented the interests of the working class; and it was especially necessary to emphasize the united Soviet front with the Bolsheviki in the face of the Kornilov revolt. As far as I recall, Kamenev didn't speak, but Ryazanov made a very emotional and explosive speech.

* * *

This was how the Kornilov 'manifestation' was liquidated. The Winter Palace farce retained its previous character; as before, the bourgeoisie was advancing, attempting to strengthen its pre-Kornilov and post-July positions, and convert its formal dictatorship into a real one. The Kerensky and Tereshchenko clique were aiming as before at liquidating any influence of the organized democracy and establishing the dictatorship of capital. . . While Smolny, the Star Chamber, and the Soviet majority were as before betraying the revolution into the hands of the bourgeoisie.

Both the Winter Palace and Smolny retained their positions

after the Kornilov campaign. But this was merely on the surface, and shouldn't conceal from us the essence of the matter. The enormous impetus from the Right given by Kornilov definitely disengaged the revolution from the atmosphere of the July reaction; it threw it far to the Left and gave it a big push forward.

CHAPTER 24

THE DISSOLUTION OF THE DEMOCRACY AFTER THE KORNILOV REVOLT

THE course of the revolution had been defined even before the Kornilov rebellion, but this gave it a tremendous push forward. And the wretched floundering of the 'reigning' capitulators and reactionaries merely formed the setting of a basic historical process—the mass movement of the people.

The news of the bourgeois *coup* profoundly stirred the surface and the depths of Russia. The entire organized democracy rose to its feet. All Soviet Russia bristled and took up arms, not only metaphorically but quite literally. Hundreds of thousands and millions of workers, soldiers, and peasants rose up in arms, for defence and for attack, against the class enemy.

Their desire for a decisive battle grew irresistibly, hour by hour. Here there was class instinct, a small portion of class consciousness, and the influence of the ideas and organization of the gigantically growing Bolsheviks: but more than that there was weariness of war and other burdens; disappointment in the fruitlessness of the revolution, which up to then had given the masses of the people nothing; bitter resentment against the masters and the wealthy rulers; and a yearning to make use of the sovereignty that had been won.

In any case, directly after the Kornilov upheaval the mood grew extraordinarily firm; and the formation of fighting columns correspondingly began at a feverish tempo—against the Coalition and the bourgeoisie, against Kerensky and the Compromisers, against the official régime and its loyal servants, the traitors to the working class.

In the provinces the Bolsheviks already controlled a great many Soviets. That is, the administrative authority, which moreover was quite unlimited, was virtually in the hands of Lenin's party. In such cities the bristling Soviets formed purely Bolshevik local Military Revolutionary Committees, which

during the Kornilov revolt put out their sharp, though clumsy claws, and refused to pull them in again afterwards.

At this time the Bolshevik centres revived their slogan of 'All Power to the Soviets!' It was a matter of course in these conditions for the general Kornilov situation to be reflected in the simple minds of the local Bolshevik leaders. Almost mechanically, without any clear conception of the significance of their own actions, the local Bolshevik-Soviet organs began to 'annul' the official 'power' and make use of their opportunities on the widest possible scale. This, from the point of view of the 'Directory' and all the loyal elements, was a vast new explosion of 'anarchy'. But whatever the process is called, one thing is clear: after the Kornilov revolt Bolshevism began blossoming luxuriantly and put forth deep roots throughout the country.

Even before the Kornilov mutiny, before the fall of Riga and after the Moscow Conference, the entire bourgeois press had sounded the alarm about the Bolshevik peril, in connexion with 'reliable reports' about forthcoming 'demonstrations' by the Bolsheviks. But that was a false alarm, with the object of putting public opinion on to a false scent and covering up the conspiracy of Headquarters.

Now the press was once more full of panic and rage. But now this panic and rage were quite sincere. The peril was at hand. By now it was not only the central Soviets of the capital and the leaders of all the others that were *in Lenin's hands*—that alone now had decisive importance. But the army in the field! And the garrisons in the rear! All this, after all, meant a brimming over of all real power and State sovereignty no longer even to the tame, enfeebled, and self-stultifying Soviets, but into the hands of the Bolshevik 'outsiders' firmly united with the masses. There was something to sound a real alarm about.

* * *

The Kornilov incident, however, not only accelerated the Bolshevization of the Soviets and the worker-peasant masses, but was also sharply reflected in the current policies of Lenin's *Soviet opponents*. The Mensheviks and SRs who ruled in the Central Ex. Com. were just as far from Bolshevism as before; but they too had shifted their positions and swung further Left.

Martov's group, the Menshevik-Internationalists, still had

nothing in common with the central organ of the Mensheviks, but we had no ideological grounds for moving Left under the influence of the Kornilov revolt. Our fraction had already stood for a long time for a *dictatorship of the Soviet democracy*. We were divided from the Bolsheviks not so much by theory, as by practice, which made itself felt later on; we were divided not so much by slogans as by a profoundly different conception of their inner meaning. The Bolsheviks reserved that meaning for the use of the leadership and didn't carry it to the masses. This had to do not with Lenin's *Leftism*, but with his methods. The Kornilov episode could not graft these on to us.

However, it did not pass without having had some effect on the Menshevik-Internationalists. They had in their hands the entire Menshevik organization of the capital: the Petersburg Committee consisted of Martovists only. The working-class districts, especially Basil Island, had long since insisted on a formal split with official Menshevism. The affair dragged on all summer, and you might say was sabotaged by the efforts of old and influential Mensheviks, close to Martov. But now Tsereteli & Co. became unendurable to many Petersburg leaders and to the solid working-class cadres in the districts. A mass exodus from the organization began. An example was set by Larin, who was followed by more than ten active figures. Almost all of them went directly over to the Bolsheviks. And then, in the first part of September, a split took place in the strongest of our working-class organizations, on Basil Island. At the time of the Democratic Conference practically the entire district went into Lenin's party. This provoked a ferment in other districts too, which was carried into the provinces. The crisis of Menshevism began all along the line and developed rapidly.

It was reflected rather strongly in the political 'new formation' familiar to us—in the party of the *Novaya Zhizn* people, officially the United Internationalists. This 'party' (of which the renowned Steklov was also a member from now on) began growing quite strongly at the expense of the Mensheviks, thanks to that irreplaceable medium, a big and widely read newspaper. Our editorial board began intensifying its 'party' activity. And in the near future an All-Russian conference of provincial *Novaya Zhizn* groups was being prepared.

As for the Bolsheviks, they also had nowhere to shift Leftwards. Their business was simply to gain time to form the ranks of their army, which was growing by the hour. But after the Kornilov revolt it was possible—for an attentive eye—to observe that the Bolsheviks had again begun to anticipate, you might say touch, the power snatched away in July. Lenin and Zinoviev, taking advantage of their leisure, began deepening their current programme and tactics—tactics of finished Jacobinism and a programme of general explosion, as an example to proletarian Europe.

In one of the first numbers of *Rabochii Put* (Workers' Way) (which had replaced *Rabochii, Proletarii*, and *Pravda*), Lenin proposed a 'compromise'. Let the Menshevik-SR bloc, having driven out the bourgeoisie, set up a régime unconditionally responsible to the Soviets. The Bolsheviks would not create any obstacles on condition, first of all, of complete freedom of agitation, and secondly, of the transfer of all power to the local Soviets. It is quite clear that for the knights of the Coalition this was a 'compromise', but what Lenin's 'compromise' amounted to, on the other hand, is not particularly clear. The principal perspectives, however, that presented themselves to Lenin's mind are quite obvious. If the Bolshevik Party was now growing like a snowball and becoming a decisive force, Lenin was assured of a majority in the Congress of Soviets in the very near future. Apart from 'freedom of agitation' this would be furthered by the entire objective course of events, and especially by the inevitable marking time to please the bourgeoisie that the Mensheviks and SRs would undertake if they agreed to the 'compromise'. Then it would be possible to drive the ruling bloc out of power (or even further) without resorting to the risky experiments of June 10th and July 4th. Lenin's party would have 'full power' painlessly and safely. Well, and what would it do? We are familiar with its programme in general. But now, in *Rabochii Put* Zinoviev filled it out and made it concrete: One of the first steps of any Government which had broken with the bourgeoisie would be to refuse to pay any debts contracted in connexion with the war. The second step would be the partial expropriation of the 'richest people' in favour of the State.

This was unquestionably highly alluring. And note—in the absence of an elementary economic programme, and given the

systematic replacement of Marxist concepts by anarchist slogans ('organized seizure', 'workers' control', etc.)—what terms are used by Citizen Zinoviev: Rich people! This is both scientific and statesmanlike, and—it can be understood by any lumpen-proletarian. This is why the Bolsheviks' correct theoretical formulas about the worker-peasant dictatorship could not draw into Lenin's party the extreme Left Marxist elements. During those days I personally used to say that if it hadn't been for these persistent suspicious and nasty notes in their 'ideology' then I too might have entered the Bolshevik Party. But I didn't, and a good thing too. . .

CHAPTER 25

THE LAST COALITION

THE 'Democratic Conference' should have opened on the 12th, but was postponed until September 14th, just a month after the Moscow State Conference. It proceeded on its futile, tiresome business: a debate on whether we should have a Coalition or a purely democratic Government. Not one of the speeches deserves to be expounded here. Everything had been heard or read already.

We were back in the old *post-July, pre-Kornilov* situation. A fourth, irresponsible Coalition was revived, which once again confirmed the formal dictatorship of the bourgeoisie. This 'sovereign' bourgeois régime was formed exactly two months after the Third Coalition, one month after the Kornilov *coup* and one month before—but let's not anticipate events. I shall simply recall something that apparently does not require any special explanation. The dictatorship of the Stock Exchange was formally evident, though as before this was nothing but a sham. But, unlike the last time, when some attributes of power were in the hands of the *friends and accomplices* of the bourgeois 'dictators'—*now* the whole power was in the hands of their known class enemies. In July and August the petty-bourgeois Soviet had still preserved some fragments of its power; but now all the power, and the Soviets into the bargain, had gone over to the Bolsheviks. The whole situation was more absurd and intolerable than before. There was no state power, and no State.

This was so clear that even the yellow bourgeois press did not exult. The new Coalition was greeted without enthusiasm. The Right wing of the democracy demonstratively, though not convincingly, rejoiced over its infant. To make up for this the Left, Internationalist section set to work at once and, without giving it a breathing spell, took a direct line toward the overthrow of the new 'Government'.

* * *

Trotsky had been released from prison on September 4th, just as suddenly and causelessly as he had been arrested on July 23rd.

Now he became chairman of the Petersburg Soviet; there was a hurricane of applause when he appeared. Everything had changed! Since the April Days the Soviet had gone against the revolution and been the mainstay of the bourgeoisie. For a whole half-year it had served as bulwark—against the people's movement and their wrath. It had been the Praetorian Guard of the Star Chamber, at the disposal of Kerensky and Tsereteli. Now it was once again a revolutionary army inseparable from the popular masses of Petersburg. It was now Trotsky's guard, ready at a sign from him to storm the Coalition, the Winter Palace and all the citadels of the bourgeoisie. The Soviet, reunited with the masses, had once again recovered its enormous energies.

The conjuncture, however, was no longer the same as it had been before. Trotsky's Soviet did not act like an acknowledged State power carrying on a revolution. It did not act by methods of opposition, pressure, and 'liaison'. It was a latent potential revolutionary force, gathering together the elements for a general explosion. This hidden potentiality blinded the wretched sham 'rulers', the man in the street, and the old Soviet majority. But that didn't alter anything: the success of the forthcoming explosion was assured. Nothing could withstand the new destructive power of the Soviet; the only question was where Trotsky would lead it. For what did it contain but destruction? Well, we shall live and learn.

In his first speech as chairman Trotsky said that actually he had not taken Chkheidze's place, but, on the contrary, Chkheidze had been occupying his (Trotsky's) place: in the 1905 Revolution the chairman of the Petersburg Soviet was Trotsky. Now, however, the perspectives were different; the new Praesidium had to form part of a new upsurge of the revolution, which would lead to victory. . .

But then he added a few words, not thinking that in time he would have to disregard them and create a theory to justify their opposite. He said:

'We are all party people, and we shall have to cross swords more than once. But we shall guide the work of the Petersburg Soviet in a spirit of justice and complete independence for all fractions; the hand of the Praesidium will never oppress the minority.'

Heavens! What liberal views! What self-mockery! But the point is that about three years later, while exchanging reminiscences with me, Trotsky, thinking back to this moment, exclaimed dreamily:

‘What a happy time!’

Yes, wonderful! Perhaps not one person in the world, not excluding himself, will ever recall Trotsky’s rule with *such* feelings.

At the session on September 25th the Soviet passed this resolution on the new Government by an enormous majority: ‘The new Government will go down in the history of the revolution as the Government of the civil war. The Soviet declares: “We, the workers and the garrison of Petersburg, refuse to support the Government of bourgeois autocracy and counter-revolutionary violence. We express the unshakeable conviction that the new Government will meet with a single response from the entire revolutionary democracy: ‘Resign!’”’

Such was the unusual greeting of the Petersburg Soviet to the new Government.

As we went down the Smolny stairs, discussing the new events, someone called up from below: ‘Eh, Volodarsky, where is it tomorrow?’

‘Tomorrow?’ answered Volodarsky, who was going out with me, ‘at the Patronny plant.’

Yes, the Bolsheviks were working stubbornly and without let-up. They were among the masses, at the factory-benches, every day without a pause. Tens of speakers, big and little, were speaking in Petersburg, at the factories and in the barracks, every blessed day. For the masses they had become *their own people*, because they were always there, taking the lead in details as well as in the most important affairs of the factory or barracks. They had become the sole hope, if only because since they were one with the masses they were lavish with promises and sweet though simple fairy tales. The mass lived and breathed together with the Bolsheviks. It was in the hands of the party of Lenin and Trotsky.

* * *

Around this time new elections on a proportional basis took place for the Petersburg Ex. Com. Of the forty-four members

elected two-thirds were Bolsheviks. The Mensheviks numbered five in all, whereas our group, the Menshevik-Internationalists—the group that had made up the fundamental core of the *first* Ex. Com., which had begun the revolution—did not get a single seat.

This may have been distressing for us, but it was not at all surprising.

It was not actually because we had to take the blame for official Menshevism, with which the Martov group had not yet conclusively broken, or because the group still didn't have a literary organ, a basic instrument of agitation. Nor was it, finally, that we, the leaders, had abandoned work in the Soviet, hardly showed ourselves in Smolny and were separated from its rank-and-file.

The cause was something basic: our position, at least in its positive part, was superfluous for the masses. In its *negative*, critical part we—Martovites and *Novaya Zhizn* people—were in accord with the Bolsheviks. In the arena of the struggle going on at that time against the Coalition and the bourgeoisie we stood at their side. We did not fuse with them because a number of features of the positive creative strength of Bolshevism, as well as its methods of agitation, revealed to us its future hateful countenance. It was based on an unbridled, anarchistic, petty-bourgeois elemental explosion, which was only smothered by Bolshevism when once again it was not followed by the masses. We were afraid of this elemental explosion.

But the masses were not afraid of it, for they could neither perceive it nor appreciate its significance.

Our Marxist theories were incomprehensible and irritating to the masses, which had just barely tasted the blessing of free political development. Our logical proletarian class ideology was useless and offensive to the workers and soldiers of our petty-bourgeois country. The disappointed, weary and hungry masses swept over our heads—from SR-opportunist philistinism to the devastating fury of Bolshevism. Our proletarian Marxist outlook did not find a place for itself amidst the turbulent elements. Our 'interstitial' group was easily pounded to bits by the gigantic oncoming billows of the imminent civil war.

In the new Petersburg Ex. Com., where we had once played a

leading rôle, we now did not get a single seat. However, in the kaleidoscope of the dizzying events, the masses not only did not remember, they did not *know* about our rôle in the first period of the revolution. Only the leaders knew about it, and, evidently in remembrance of the first magnificent weeks, the Bolshevik Ex. Com. at its first session resolved to co-opt our group with a consulting voice: Sokolov, Kapelinsky, Sokolovsky, our leader Martov, I think Steklov, and myself.

* * *

During those days I remember one session of our—Martovite—‘centre’ devoted to the elections for the Constituent Assembly. We had gathered in a place that was new to me—on the third floor of Smolny, near the galleries giving on to the big hall. I raised the question of a bloc with the Bolsheviks. There were some sympathetic responses, but Martov rebelled outright and said, among other things:

‘At the present moment a drift to the Bolsheviks is absolutely out of place. Now the revolution is endangered not by the Right, but by the *Left!*’

Martov may have shown great acumen here, but I must admit that to me personally, after the Kornilov *coup*, the Democratic Conference, and the restoration of the bourgeois dictatorship, a movement from the Left did not seem a peril but salvation.

As far as I recall, the question of a bloc with the Bolsheviks was never finally settled: it came up against the consideration that under no circumstances would the Bolsheviks agree to enter a bloc with us; they were too strong and ‘self-sufficient’ for that, and were carrying on their preparation for the elections too energetically, having already put forward everywhere prepared lists of candidates, headed in most instances by Trotsky himself.

I don’t think it superfluous to remark that my differences with Martov at this time had become more or less systematic. Two tendencies had begun to reveal themselves in our group. Martov had with him the group of old Menshevik *émigrés*—Semkovsky, Astrova, Martynov—who had gravitated to the old core of the party. But on the Left, together with me, were the Petersburgers and especially the active workers of the old Ex. Com. Martov rather jealously guarded his influence and the

representation of the entire organization by elements close to him.

* * *

On the day, I think, when we discussed the Constituent Assembly, I went to Smolny after working in the evening on the newspaper. I wanted to see Trotsky and 'feel out the ground' concerning an electoral bloc of the Bolsheviks and the Martovites. Trotsky was at Smolny, but at a meeting in the Bureau, at a council of 'Elders' of the forthcoming Pre-Parliament.¹

I went into the committee-room to see Trotsky, my hated face shocking all these 'Elders' so familiar to us. Didn't this Sukhanov want to put something indiscreet into his paper? The Bolsheviks (Trotsky and Kamenev) were sitting to one side, in their usual places to the right of the chairman. Trotsky looked a bit different from usual, in a long grey overcoat and spectacles with metal rims instead of pince-nez.

He spoke politely of the bloc with the Menshevik-Internationalists, but with such reserve that the outcome was clear. I sat down at his side to listen to what the 'Elders' were saying and hear Tsereteli's philippics. Even the Stolypin Duma under Rasputin's boot seemed the ideal of an all-powerful Parliament, filled with grandeur, compared with the Pre-Parliament, that unspeakable product of stupidity and treachery.

I recall this evening very well. I had never yet suffered such a sharp and unendurable feeling of dejection and shame: to what a point they had led the great revolution! I remember that I began choking, partly with anger, and partly with something else, that blocked up my throat.

'What's going on?' I said, naïvely and 'unconsciously' turning to Trotsky.

But Trotsky merely laughed his soundless laugh with his mouth half-open. At the time I didn't understand his indifference, but actually it was obvious. For Trotsky, after all, all questions had by then been settled. He was already living on the *other* side, and as for what was being done on *this* side—that didn't concern him. Perhaps the worse it was, the better.

I returned to the *Novaya Zhizn* in the Shpalerny to get out the

¹ Decided on at the Democratic Conference. Sukhanov uses the word 'Elders' ironically. (Ed.)

paper. At this time we were implacably and with unusual energy bombarding Kerensky, the Konovalovs, and their whole beneficent Government. There was an excellent atmosphere on the paper, and more and more attention was being paid us—by both enemies and friends.

In general, as far as I recall, I derived some satisfaction from the paper, more than previously. But I also remember the physical strain. I was still living on the Karpovka, and the endless trips there in the damp Petersburg autumn nights after publication now come to mind quite differently from the enchanting walks through the streets of the Petersburg Side into the roseate, carolling mornings of that unforgettable spring. . .

* * *

‘Disorders’ were taking on absolutely unendurable, really menacing proportions in Russia. Anarchy was really getting under way. The city and the countryside were both in revolt. The first was demanding bread, the second land. The new Coalition was met with hunger riots and savage pogroms throughout Russia. I happen to have in front of me reports of such riots in Zhitomir, Kharkov, Tambov, Orel, Odessa, etc., etc. Troops were sent everywhere, Cossacks whenever possible. There were repressions, shootings, martial law. But nothing helped. Petersburg was quiet; it simply hungered and—waited.

But the peasants, finally losing patience, began settling the agrarian question at first hand—by their own methods. It was *impossible* not to give them land: it was *impossible* to torture them any longer by uncertainty. It was *impossible* to make speeches to them about the ‘regulation of rural relations without the destruction of the existing forms of land-holding. . .’

But this was the *essence of the Coalition*. And the peasants began acting on their own. Estates were divided up and tilled, herds were slaughtered and driven off, country-houses were destroyed and set on fire, arms were seized, stores were plundered and destroyed, trees and orchards were chopped down, there was murder and violence. These were no longer ‘excesses’, as they had been in May and June. It was a mass phenomenon—tidal waves heaving and billowing throughout the country.

Worst of all, however, was the position in the field army. This was as before the root and core of the entire situation.

Famine was assuming horrifying proportions at the front. It was obvious to any honest observer that our army, even though it was pinning down 130 German divisions on the Eastern front, could not hold out the winter, nor even the autumn.

As early as September 21st at a Petersburg Soviet session an officer who had been at the front made a speech saying:

'The soldiers in the trenches don't want either freedom or land now. They want only one thing now—the end of the war. Whatever you may say here, the soldiers are not going to fight any more. . .'

This caused a sensation even in the Bolshevik Soviet. Exclamations were heard: 'Even the Bolsheviks don't say that!' But the officer, no Bolshevik, calmly waited, conscious of duty done.

'We don't know and we don't care what the Bolsheviks say. I'm reporting what I know and what the soldiers have sent me to tell you.'

It was impossible to go on like this. This 'Government' had to be torn out by the roots. I harped on this over and over again, every day, in the paper. And I was right.

But how could such a situation be ended? Martov said, during those days: 'I know only two methods of forming a Government: either the citizen's gesture of throwing his ballot into the voting urn, or the citizen's gesture of loading his rifle.' It happened that the last Coalition had been created by a *third* method, but now we were confronted by the two first. In the immediate future one of these was going to decide matters.

* * *

The Pre-Parliament was going to open—powerless, sickly, alien, and repugnant to every revolutionary principle. But compared with the comic-opera Government it was a *de facto* power. It *could* have decided the fate of the 'ruling' Coalition by the first method—the *parliamentary* method. The results—were another question. But there could be no doubt as to the *possibility*.

And if not? Then the capitulationism of Smolny and the provocative attitude of the Winter Palace would do their work. The real democracy of Russia, after all, had already loaded its guns.

CHAPTER 26

THE PRE-PARLIAMENT

THE official title conferred on the Pre-Parliament was: 'The Provisional Council of the Russian Republic'. The opening was scheduled for October 7th. Premises were looked for. Something fitting was wanted—not too primitive or provincial, for the Government itself and the most respectable social elements (not workers or soldiers) would have to be there often. But not too ceremonial or official either, for this wasn't the State Duma or any plenipotentiary organ. The *Rech* thought the Smolny Institute would be a very suitable location. And as a matter of fact, it was quite free: only the Central Ex. Com. and the Petersburg Soviet, which should never have seen the light of day, were there. But could the Bolsheviks be cleared out of Smolny. . .? The row of dots meant: 'Oh, for Kornilov!' But suitable premises couldn't be found, and the Marian Palace had to do.

The 'democratic' majority consisted of 308 people, of whom sixty-six were Bolsheviks, about sixty official Mensheviks, and 120 SRs, about twenty of whom were Leftist. Then there were some Co-operators in the 'democracy', who included extreme Right Mensheviks and SRs.

Our fraction, the Menshevik-Internationalists, numbered about thirty. We had never had so many; with such a 'mass' we could at any rate produce enough of an uproar, or start verbal obstruction.

At the beginning the bourgeois representatives demanded 120 seats, but then they increased that to 150. Then I think they did some more bargaining, of no particular interest to us. They, like the democracy, had heaped up the most improbable social classes, strata, and groups, and the unlikeliest combinations. Well-to-do peasants were affiliated with propertied elements. . . There were about seventy-five Cadets. The majority of the rest, sent by every possible organization of industrialists and land-owners, was more Right: old Octobrists and Nationalists. For some reason they were still stubbornly fighting against formally pouring their streamlets into the Cadet sea. But in practice they

acknowledged Cadet hegemony and had the same programme: the iron dictatorship of the plutocracy.

But there were also 'intellectuals' amongst the propertied elements, for instance the 'academic' delegation. Others were divided up this way: the Society of Journalists was represented in the democracy, while the Society of Editors got a place amongst the propertied elements.

This Pre-Parliament was officially powerless, a concoction unworthy of the revolution and pathetic as an institution. But it had an interesting quality, unlike perhaps most real parliaments. Its composition was exceptionally brilliant. It concentrated within itself, indeed, the flower of the nation. It owed this precisely to the unprecedented method of its selection. All the political parties and other associations sent their *best people*, without subjecting them to the risk of losing their place in an election to the popular but insignificant hero of some provincial ant-hill. Hence there were rather few people who did not have an all-Russian reputation. And all the 'names' were included. All the party Central Committees were represented in the Pre-Parliament *in corpore*; exceptions were few, accidental and unimportant. This in itself proclaimed the concentration of all the country's political *strength* and the quintessence of all its political *thought*.

Some individuals were absent. Plekhanov, old, ill, and ignored by events, wasn't there; he had played no part in the revolution. Nor was Lenin there: our powerful and forthright Government kept renewing its orders for his arrest every week; as before he was hiding 'underground', though unlike Plekhanov he played a part, a very powerful part, in current events. But Lenin's place was successfully taken by Trotsky. The time had now passed when in the Bolshevik Party, as in the First International, after the Thunderer himself—there was nothing for a long, long, long time. Now Trotsky was side by side with him. He was quite different, and speaking generally quite unfitted to replace Lenin, but, I'm inclined to think, he was no less important a man, whom Lenin could not have replaced either, and without whom the forthcoming events could not have come about.

There was one other who was absent—Tsereteli. He had gone away to the Caucasus to rest—for 'a few weeks'. He was

not to return—politically. His rôle was played out, finished. He had botched and ruined as much as one able man could. And he had gone away. . . Enough of him; I shall not speak of him again—it has all been said.¹

* * *

On October 7th at 5 o'clock, amidst rain and slush, Kerensky opened the Pre-Parliament. This was no mere democratic conference! This time Kerensky wasn't late. Also, something unheard of in the revolution happened: the Pre-Parliament opened on time. No one could have foreseen that. And that, it was said, was why there were not very many people in the hall and it was just as boring and dreary in the Marian Palace as in the streets of Petersburg.

It was quite late, and happening for some reason to go in by a way I didn't know, I wandered about for a long time through the endless corridors and rooms of the Palace. I came out somehow into the Press Gallery, from which I heard the end of the speech from the Throne. The head of the Government and the State was speaking in hollowly official but loftily patriotic tones. I don't remember, nor can I extract from the newspaper accounts, one living concrete idea. In any case the entire speech was full of the 'war dangers' under the impact of the latest events at the front and the news, just received, that the Germans were threatening Reval. . . But really, all the political interest of the opening of the Pre-Parliament revolved around the Bolsheviks.

Their whole large fraction arrived late, almost at the same time as I did. They had had an important and stormy meeting at Smolny, which had only just ended. They had been making a final decision on what to do about the Pre-Parliament: stay or go? After a first session, at which the question was left hanging in the air, they had had a bitter dispute. This, as a piquant incident in Smolny circles, was of great interest. The opinions of the Bolsheviks were almost evenly divided, and it wasn't known which way the majority would go. It was reported that Lenin was demanding that they should leave. Trotsky also defended

¹ After the October Revolution Tsereteli was one of the leaders of the Menshevik Caucasian Republic, after the repression of which by the Soviet Government he emigrated, eventually to New York City. (Ed.)

this position with great vigour. Ryazanov and Kamenev were fighting against it. The Right wing was demanding that the rupture with the Pre-Parliament be postponed at least until the moment the Pre-Parliament exposed itself on some issue, for instance refused to make some important decision in the interests of the working class. They said the rupture would otherwise not be understood by the people. But Trotsky, for whom all questions were settled, insisted that there should be no obscurities, that the boats should be conclusively and publicly burnt. Let both hostile armies see and understand!

In an interval, a sensational rumour circulated in the corridors of the Marian Palace: Trotsky had won by a majority of two or three votes, and the Bolsheviks would leave the Pre-Parliament immediately. That was the least of it; the Menshevik and SR leaders, very disturbed, were saying that before they left the Bolsheviks would create a tremendous row. The most unlikely rumours passed from mouth to mouth. A kind of panic began. One of the officials was told off to make private enquiries of the Bolsheviks.

'Nonsense!' answered Trotsky, standing not far off from me in the rotunda adjoining the meeting hall, 'nonsense, a few pistol-shots. . .'

But Trotsky looked rather nervous—in anticipation of the shots. The Right Bolsheviks, around Ryazanov, were grumbling angrily. This whole affair was very disagreeable to me, and I didn't go over to Trotsky.

At the end of the session Trotsky was given the floor for an emergency statement. There was a sensation in the hall. For most of the bourgeois the famous leader of the bandits, idlers, and hooligans was still a novelty.

'The officially stated aim of the Democratic Conference', Trotsky began, 'was the elimination of the personal régime that fed the Kornilov revolt, and the creation of a responsible Government capable of liquidating the war and promoting the convocation of a Constituent Assembly at the appointed time. Meanwhile, behind the back of the Democratic Conference, directly contrary results have been achieved by way of the backstage deals of Citizen Kerensky, the Cadets, and the SR and Menshevik leaders. A Government has been formed in and around which both avowed and clandestine Kornilovites play

the leading rôle. The non-responsibility of this Government [to the Council of the Republic] has been formally established. The Council of the Russian Republic has been declared a consultant body. Propertied elements have come into the Provisional Council in numbers to which, as all elections throughout the country indicate, they are not entitled. Despite this it is precisely the Cadet Party that has made the Government independent of the Council of the Republic. Propertied elements will undoubtedly occupy a much less favourable position in the Constituent Assembly than in the Provisional Council. The Government cannot help but be responsible to the Constituent Assembly. If the propertied elements were really preparing for the Constituent Assembly in a month and a half, they would have no grounds for defending the non-responsibility of the Government now. The whole point is that the bourgeois classes have set themselves the goal of preventing the Constituent Assembly . . .'

There was an uproar. Shouts from the Right: 'Lies!' Trotsky tried to show complete indifference, and didn't raise his voice.

'In the fields of industry, agriculture, and supply the policy of the Government and the possessing classes is aggravating the havoc produced by the war. The propertied classes, who provoked the uprising, are now moving to crush it and are openly steering a course for the bony hand of hunger, which is expected to strangle the revolution and the Constituent Assembly first of all.

'Nor is foreign policy any less criminal. After forty months of war the capital is threatened by mortal danger. In response to this a plan has been put forward for the transfer of the Government to Moscow. The idea of surrendering the revolutionary capital to German troops does not arouse the slightest indignation amongst the bourgeois classes; on the contrary it is accepted as a natural link in the general policy that is supposed to help them in their counter-revolutionary conspiracy.'

The uproar grew worse. The patriots leaped from their seats and wouldn't allow Trotsky to go on speaking. Shouts about Germany, the sealed car and so on. One shout stood out: 'Bastard!' I make the point now that *throughout* the revolution, both before and after the Bolsheviks, neither in the Tauride, nor in Smolny, however stormy the sessions and however tense the atmosphere, there was *never once* such an outcry at the meetings

of our rank-and-file. But it was enough for us to come into the fine society of the Marian Palace, the company of polished lawyers, professors, financiers, landowners, and generals, for the tavern atmosphere of the bourgeois State Duma to revive immediately.

The chairman called the meeting to order. Trotsky was standing there as though none of this were any concern of his, and finally found it possible to go on.

‘We, the Bolshevik fraction of the Social-Democratic Party, declare that with this Government of national treachery and with this “Council” we—’

The uproar took on an obviously hopeless character. The majority of the Right got to their feet with the obvious intention of stopping the speech. The chairman called the speaker to order. Trotsky, beginning to lose his temper, and speaking by now through the hubbub, finished:

‘—that we have nothing in common with them. We have nothing in common with that murderous intrigue against the people which is being conducted behind the official scenes. We refuse to shield it either directly or indirectly for a single day. In leaving the Provisional Council we call upon the workers, soldiers, and peasants of all Russia to be stalwart and courageous. Petersburg is in danger, the revolution is in danger, the nation is in danger. The Government is intensifying that danger. The ruling parties are increasing it. Only the nation can save itself and the country. We appeal to the people: Long live an immediate, honourable democratic peace, all power to the Soviets, all land to the people, long live the Constituent Assembly!’

Trotsky got off the platform, and a few dozen men of the extreme Left left the hall amidst hubbub and shouting. The majority gazed after them disdainfully, waving their hands—good riddance! The majority saw nothing: after all, this was only sixty specimens of a peculiar breed of wild beast who were leaving the society of mankind. Just the Bolsheviks alone. Good riddance! It was calmer and more agreeable without them.

But we, the closest neighbours of the Bolsheviks and their companions-in-arms, sat there utterly depressed by all that had happened.

Despite all the power and brilliance of his speech Trotsky, as we see, was far from having *proved* the necessity of the break. He had not proved it because he didn't wish to finish what he had to say. But from their point of view the ones who left were logical enough. If they were *on the other side* of this entire order, then there was really nothing for them to do in the Pre-Parliament.

But this was just how the matter must be understood: if there was nothing for them to do there and they left, consequently—they were *on the other side*. There was only one road for them out of the Pre-Parliament—to the barricades. If they cast away the 'electoral ballot', they must take up the rifle. And that, indeed, is what happened. But the majority didn't understand this, didn't see it, didn't believe it. We, their neighbours and companions-in-arms, did understand it. But we thought it wrong.

'Just the Bolsheviks alone.' For the Pre-Parliamentary majority they were a handful who could be liquidated by repression. For *us* they were an overwhelming section of a proletariat straining into battle and nourished on class hatred, and also of the tormented soldiery, and of the peasant depths that had despaired of the revolution. They were a vast landslide of people. They were millions. Repress them? And with our comic-opera Government!

For us Internationalists the question was not posed on that plane at all. It was not a question of its being impossible to liquidate the Bolsheviks. The point was that the proletariat, the soldiery, and the peasant rank-and-file, led by the Bolshevik Party and finding themselves outside the existing 'political order', were now taking up arms against the entire old world, to raze the millennial bourgeois system to the ground. By the strength of their own proletarian vanguard party alone, surrounded by millions of casual and unreliable fellow-travellers, they wanted to create a new unheard-of proletarian state and an unprecedented social and economic order. They wanted to do this in our ruined, half-wild, petty-bourgeois, economically-shattered country. They wanted to do this against the organized petty-bourgeois elements, after putting an end to the united front of the democracy for ever.

This was a fateful mistake. It was a disastrous programme and tactic for the revolution.

A new revolution was admissible, an uprising was legitimate, the liquidation of the existing régime was indispensable. But all this was so—*on condition of a united democratic front*. That meant an armed struggle *only* against big capital and imperialism. It meant *only* the liquidation of the political and economic rule of the bourgeoisie and the landowners. It did *not* mean the definitive destruction of the old State and the rejection of its heritage. It meant the plenipotentiary participation of the petty-bourgeois, *Menshevik-SR* groups in the construction of a new State *together with* the proletariat and the peasantry. These were all *unconditionally essential* elements of the new society that was springing up on the ruins of the empire of the exploiting minority. And in the conditions of our revolution this was the only correct formulation of the problem.

But the leaders of the Bolshevik Party were hostile to all this. They formulated the basic task of the revolution *incorrectly*. And they continually carried on, *not* a policy of alliance, but the contrary policy of rupture, split, and mutual isolation.

The Bolshevik departure from the Pre-Parliament was an important step. In flinging aside their voting papers the Bolsheviks, in the eyes of all those with eyes to see, were taking up their rifles. They had no chance of arousing the sympathy of the Mensheviks and SRs by this demonstration and every chance of repelling them far away. The Bolshevik leaders were heading straight for this and calculating on it.

What we Internationalists were depressed by was not that the Bolsheviks had taken to the barricades to make a legitimate revolution. It was not the burning of the boats that disconcerted us. What was depressing was that with the declaration of civil war the democratic front was almost hopelessly disrupted by the Bolsheviks, and that they were turning their weapons against elements *vital to themselves* and to the realization of the tasks of the revolution as correctly formulated.

Well, and what would have happened if the Bolsheviks had *stayed* in the Pre-Parliament? What would have happened if in liquidating Kerenskyism they had shown an inclination for a *rapprochement* with the old Soviet bloc, as had happened in the short period of the liquidation of the *Kornilov* revolt?

Let us note two circumstances. First of all the new Coalition, like every product of 'Kerenskyism', was quite unfit for survival.

Its fate was pre-determined by the whole conjuncture, and especially by the fact that the real power was already in the hands of the Bolsheviks. Secondly, the Bolsheviks would have been a very strong inspirational minority in the Pre-Parliament; together with the Internationalists and the allied SRs this minority could have amounted to 30 per cent; if the situation ever became more acute and there was a split in the Menshevik-SR bloc (as had happened in Smolny during the Kornilov revolt), the *majority* of the Pre-Parliament would have been on the side of the former Soviet Left.

All these abstract calculations would have been significant if the Bolsheviks hadn't been Bolsheviks.

* * *

Rumours of the internal collapse of the Coalition kept growing stronger and stronger. The loyal elements were beginning to lose patience. . . And they were egged on by various factors from all sides.

On the one hand a Congress of Soviets was already assembling at Smolny. Here the Bolsheviks were completely sovereign; the Congress was a rather serious factor, while the intentions of the Bolsheviks—in any case promised unpleasantness.

On another side the Cossacks, who had been attracting attention for a long time, began to allow themselves absolutely infamous conduct: in Kaluga, on the 20th, a Cossack detachment had besieged the local Soviet and demanded its surrender, but when the surrender took place, nevertheless opened fire and killed a few members of the Soviet. Kaluga today, Poltava tomorrow, Moscow the day after. . .

From a third side, the internal collapse of the Coalition was progressing before everybody's eyes.

The official Menshevik leaders, widely at variance with each other, had been trying up to now to contrive a *Left-Centre* bloc, cutting off the Martovites and the Left SRs on the Left, and finding alliances on the Right. Now the orientation had changed. Instead of the Left-Centre bloc Dan was fussing about trying to concoct a *Left* bloc. He was stretching out a hand to Martov. That meant he was ready to sacrifice the Centre and was calculating on finally drawing the SRs into the Opposition.

But we didn't have time to finish our debates. The Left Centre

was creeping further and further towards the Left with every step. Events were dragging along behind them the hopeless interstitial ordinary people who had no class backbone—dragging along those who would not go along of their own free will. We didn't have time. . . Do you miss my point, Reader? Then I'll try to explain it all to you now, as well as I can.

January–July 1921.

Part VI

THE OCTOBER INSURRECTION

October 3rd–November 1st

CHAPTER 27

THE SOFTENING-UP

IN the softly glittering halls of the Marian Palace there was no revolution at all. It was all in Smolny, in the working-class sections of the capital and in the provincial towns and districts. And that revolution was racing down an inclined plane to a *dénouement*. . . The Bolsheviks had definitely embarked on a violent revolutionary destruction of the Coalition and its replacement by 'Power to the Soviets'. They had embraced the cause of a *coup d'état*.

We shall have to deal with three groups of problems, for every *coup d'état* has, in the first place, its ideology or philosophy; secondly, its politics; and thirdly, its strategy. Perhaps this can be expressed more concretely and less pretentiously: we shall be dealing with the *programme* of the overturn, its *tactics*, and its *organization*.

From the last days of September on, the salient points of spoken and written Bolshevik propaganda were the following. First of all, this last Coalition of ours was a gang of usurpers, who had seized autocratic power through private agreement among a couple of dozen men. This was the incontestable and shameful truth which the Bolsheviks strove to make every worker and soldier aware of. Apart from a resolution of the Petersburg Soviet refusing support to the newly born Coalition, a wave of mass-meetings swiftly poured over both capitals and the whole country; hundreds of thousands of workers and soldiers protested against the very fact of the formation of a new bourgeois Government, and demanded power for the Soviets.

Moreover, the existing Government was not only a gang of usurpers; it was a Government of *counter-revolutionary rebels*. That Kornilov was such a rebel everyone knew: it had been officially announced. But by now, after all, the whole affair had been sufficiently exposed. Kerensky had been in league with Kornilov, and he himself had summoned the Third Corps to destroy the Soviets, and agreed to enter Kornilov's Cabinet. The Bolsheviks had raised the question of the Kornilov revolt;

and the Central Ex. Com. Bureau had supported them; but the Ministers didn't even consider explaining themselves.

Further—it followed from this that the existing Government, Kornilovite by nature, could not help but prepare a *new* Kornilov revolt. Any day now it might launch a decisive onslaught on the revolution, and then—good-bye to everything that had been won! It was necessary to defend oneself.

On the other hand, this Government of conspirators and counter-revolutionaries was allowing itself a base mockery of the working class, its press, and its representatives. In the Kornilov affair exactly five men had been arrested, who were in the custody of their own guard of honour, and could escape when they saw fit, while the real gaols were full of Bolsheviks on hunger-strike, incapable of obtaining either their release or any coherent charges.

The shameful attempt at evacuating the Government to Moscow was taken up with special fury. The plotters were betraying the revolutionary capital! Incapable of defending it, they did not even want to do so. . . The Germans were continuing their naval operations, the sailors were staking their lives, while the Allies, not lifting a finger to help, were covering our heroes with dirt. And the Government? It was not only fleeing to Moscow, but preparing the surrender of Petersburg.

The new Government had issued orders to clear the revolutionary *troops* out of the capital; these orders were also directed to the same aims. Things were serious at the front, and reinforcements were needed. That we believed. But was there even one worker or soldier who would believe that Kerensky was removing these troops without any political end in view? No, after the Kornilov revolt it would have been stupid and criminal to believe this. We would all go to the front. But we would go when we were sure that this would close the road to the Germans and not open it to the counter-revolution. . .

But in that case what about defence? There was only one solution: we must take it *into our own hands*. We were ready to defend the revolution from the Germans, as our brothers, the sailor-heroes and the Lettish Rifles, had defended it. But we could not say to the garrison: put yourselves in the hands of Kerensky, who will turn you against the working class. The situation was

absurd and unendurable. Yes—and the only way of changing it was to liquidate the Government of national betrayal. . .

The following fact was characteristic both of the state of defence and of the mood of the politically active masses. Our 'commander-in-chief' addressed the sailors in his usual tactless shout: the fleet was becoming disorganized, it was unreliable, it must expiate its crimes against the revolution, and so on. In reply the Second Congress of Sailors of the Baltic Fleet produced this resolution: '. . . to demand from the Central Ex. Com. of the Workers, Soldiers, and Peasants the instant removal from the ranks of the Provisional Government of the Socialist, with and without quotation-marks, the anti-political adventurer Kerensky, as a blackguard who, by his shameless political blackmail on behalf of the bourgeoisie, is destroying the great revolution and with it the whole revolutionary people. As for you, Kerensky-Bonaparte, traitor to the revolution, we send you our curses, while our comrades are being slain by bullets and shells or drowning at sea, calling for the defence of the revolution, and while we all as one man are prepared to lay down our lives for liberty, land, and freedom, and perish in battle against the enemy without, or on the barricades against the enemy within, calling down curses on you, Kerensky, and your gang. . .'

A document undoubtedly not without a certain eloquence.

These were the principal points of Bolshevik agitation during those weeks. This agitation met with no opposition whatsoever. But there was one special point that had to be concentrated on. That the Coalition was unendurable and criminal had been proved a million times, and was clear without proofs. But that wasn't enough. . . If it was impossible to endure the *Coalition*, then let the Constituent Assembly assemble soon—that would provide salvation, and peace, bread, and land. So the worker, the peasant, and the soldier might think. That was where all their hopes lay.

This would not do. Faith in the Constituent Assembly had to be destroyed. That is, it had to be proved that under a Coalition it was impossible. It was just this the Bolsheviks were directing their special attention to.

The bourgeoisie and the Coalition were undermining the Constituent Assembly! Not one Bolshevik speech, resolution, statement, or newspaper article could dispense with this. It

might have been said that their whole agitation was being carried on under the banner of the Constituent Assembly and its defence.

To those conversant—but not specially conversant—with affairs, this might seem somewhat odd. Lenin, after all, only an hour after his arrival, had attacked the parliamentary republic and rejected any Government except that of the Soviets. Nor did the slogan of ‘Soviet power’, which had later become the cornerstone of Bolshevism, suggest that the Soviet Government would be a *Provisional* Government. The Constituent Assembly seemed definitely *excluded* by all this. . .

But no—the Bolshevik Party put the matter otherwise: down with the Coalition and long live a Soviet régime in the name of the Constituent Assembly!

I have noted in its place that it was actually not the Bolshevik Party as a whole that had to keep quiet about the Constituent Assembly, but merely its head, Lenin, who did not show his cards within the confines of the Bolshevik Party. Lenin conspired away from the party, and the party, not putting two and two together, accepted the Constituent Assembly at its face value and sponsored it whole-heartedly. That was how it had been at first. . . But that could hardly have continued until now? What sort of Asiatic perfidy on the part of the leader was this? And boundless innocence of the party’s ‘officer-corps’?

There was here, of course, a substantial degree of both one and the other. But that didn’t exhaust the matter. The point was that Lenin, after first giving the Constituent Assembly a kick, and then deciding to keep a diplomatic *silence* about it, had soon arrived at the idea of *exploiting* it. No sooner thought of than done. The Constituent Assembly began to conceal ‘Power to the Soviets’. Lenin not only did not keep silent but shouted with the party; in his central organ he would write about how ‘to ensure the success of the Constituent Assembly’.

But could there really be people in the world who could fail to remember Lenin’s thrust at the parliamentary republic and the Constituent Assembly? What could be done about that now, before fighting began? Very simple: ‘Our opponents maintain that Lenin was against the Constituent Assembly and for a Soviet republic. This assertion is obviously false. Lenin was never “against” the Constituent Assembly. From the very first

months he, together with our whole party, has exposed the Provisional Government for delaying the Constituent Assembly. Events have now demonstrated that these accusations of ours were right.' That was all, as explained by the *Rabochii Put*.

Well, but how about a new constitutional theory? For after all it's impossible to count indefinitely on everyone's being as trusting as a child and as short-sighted as a sheep. It was necessary, after all, to have some kind of 'theory', to conceal the secrets of diplomacy and plaster over the yawning logical vacuum. Of course! And such a theory was created—just as easily as the malicious inventions about Lenin's position were refuted. 'A Soviet republic,' said this theory, 'far from excludes the Constituent Assembly, just as, conversely, a Constituent Assembly republic doesn't preclude the existence of Soviets. If our revolution is destined to conquer, then in practice we shall see a combined type of Soviet republic and Constituent Assembly.' And that was all.

This article in the *Rabochii Put* of 4 October was not signed by the modest author. But—oh, gallant Zinoviev! I should recognize your inimitable boldness of thought, your celebrated courage in defending difficult positions a thousand miles away! It is true that besides a central newspaper the Bolshevik Party in those days had a *draft programme*. It was impossible to find in it any signs of a 'combined type'; what it contained was simply the Soviet *worker-peasant dictatorship*, which excluded the bourgeois-parliamentary Constituent Assembly. But that doesn't matter. Everyone understands that a theoretical document for oneself is one thing—and a practical idea for general use is another.

In all this both the perfidy of the shepherd and the innocence of the sheep are evident. But we see that both the one and the other, in spite of our initial impressions, have here not a crudely primitive but, on the contrary, a highly qualified character. As we see, it's not a question here of a comparatively minor and private deception aimed at one's own friends and companions-in-arms, or of a simple childish readiness to be deceived. Here the deception has a general mass character and a national scale. Mass slaughter on a national scale, of course, is not a reprehensible action, but gallantry and heroism. Deception in such circumstances is called diplomacy or tactics, or

politics. For the subject of the deception it must be considered in the aspect of statesmanship—*sui generis*—and for its objects in the aspect of intellectual solidarity and party discipline—also *sui generis*.

* * *

So 'Down with the Coalition' and 'Long live a Soviet régime'—in the name of the Constituent Assembly! Only when the Soviets have the power will the fate of the Constituent Assembly be in safe hands. Well, and what *else* will the power of the Soviets give us?

A Soviet Government, it was said, is not only the guarantor of the Constituent Assembly, but also its *mainstay*. First of all, 'capitalists and landowners might not only jeer at the Constituent Assembly, but also dismiss it, as the Tsar dismissed the first two Dumas'. The Soviets wouldn't allow that. Secondly, the Soviets would constitute an apparatus for putting into practice the plans of the Constituent Assembly. 'Suppose that on November 30th it decrees the confiscation of all land-holdings. What could the municipal and rural local authorities do for the effective realization of this demand? Practically nothing. But what could the Soviets do? Everything.' (*Rabochii Put*, 3 October.)

Further: it goes without saying that the Soviets were called to realize everything the masses could no longer live without, and which the Coalition couldn't give them: peace, land, and bread. This was so simple and obvious, and filled all the articles and speeches of the Bolsheviks at this time so naturally, that there is no need to dwell on it. It was simply the other side of the struggle against 'Kerenskyism'.

The question could only lie in exactly *how* and *when* the Soviets would give land, peace, and bread. Here the question of land was extremely clear: the Soviets would give the land to the peasants *immediately*. The question of peace was not so clear-cut: a Soviet Government would at once propose peace to the countries at war, appealing to the ruined and destroyed nations; with full confidence it could be expected that we would obtain a just and general peace.

But the question of *bread* was completely vague: it was an involved complex of ideas (collecting actual bread from the countryside, raising real wages, and so on) and this demanded a

system of correspondingly various measures; but in the process of agitation this complexity was not without its advantages, since it allowed everyone to chatter on and on without saying anything. . . For in the last analysis, after all, to go into details and explain just how and what would be done, was not at all obligatory. In the given circumstances it was quite enough to show the party's firm intention of realizing the most vital demands of the people.

But it was quite clear that all these conditions and the whole character of the campaign of agitation made irresistibly for the most unprincipled *demagogy*, which the Bolsheviki, inflaming the atmosphere, plunged into. Their demagogy was brazen and unbounded. It had nothing to do with science, elementary truth, or common sense. And it was not only the rank-and-file agitators, who lacked all these, who proved themselves in the demagogic arena. The leaders behaved with the same primitive lack of self-restraint.

Lenin, by 'giving the peasants the land at once' and preaching seizure, was in fact subscribing to anarchist tactics and an SR programme. Both one and the other were pleasing and understandable to the peasant, who was far from being a fanatical upholder of Marxism. But both one and the other had been railed at night and day by the Marxist Lenin for at least fifteen years. Now this was flung aside. To please the peasants and be understood by them Lenin became both an anarchist and an SR.

Trotsky too in one breath resolved all supply difficulties with the utmost boldness. The Soviet Government would send out a soldier, a sailor, and a working girl (at dozens of meetings for some reason Trotsky said 'working girl') into every village; they would inspect the stores of the well-to-do, leave them as much as they needed and take the rest gratis for the city or the front. . . The Petersburg working masses hailed these promises with enthusiasm.

It is obvious that all these 'confiscations' and 'seizures without payment' scattered left and right with regal lavishness were captivating and irresistible in the mouths of the friends of the people. Nothing could withstand them. Hence the spontaneous and irresistible development of this method of agitation. . . There are rich and poor; the rich have a lot of everything, the poor have nothing; everything will belong to the poor, will be

divided amongst the have-nots. This is the message of your own working-class party, followed by the millions of poor of the city and country,—the sole party fighting against the rich and their Government for land, peace, and bread.

All this flooded the whole of Russia in endless waves during the final weeks. Every day all this was listened to by hundreds of thousands of hungry, tired, and angry people. This was an inalienable element of Bolshevik agitation, even though it wasn't the official programme.

* * *

But a delicate question arises—was there any Socialism in this 'platform'? No. I maintain that in a *direct form* the Bolsheviks never harped to the masses on Socialism as the object and task of a Soviet Government; nor did the masses, in supporting the Bolsheviks, even think about Socialism. But in an *indirect*, confused form the problem of 'immediate Socialism' was nevertheless posed. In general the central leaders of Bolshevism were evidently firmly bent on carrying out a Socialist experiment: this was demanded by the logic of the situation. But once again—before the eyes of the masses—they did not dot any of their 'i's.

Socialism is, of course, primarily an *economic* problem. I have indicated that the Bolsheviks were weak on this. Neither Lenin, elaborating the programme of his party, nor Trotsky, doing the same for the former Interdistrictites, appreciated the significance of an *economic* programme as such, or gave it priority; indeed, they simply almost forgot about it. Even now, in October, the new Bolshevik convert, Larin, loudly complained that in place of an economic programme the Bolsheviks had 'almost a vacuum'. (*Rabochii Put*, 8 October.) He was asked to fill it as an emergency measure. He proposed the cancellation of the national debt, compulsory collective contracts, the extension of working-class legislation to domestic servants, annual vacations for workers, and much more, all very fine. But there is no question here of Socialism proper. The Soviet Government is based on the existence of private property.

If we turn to the official statement read by Trotsky at the Democratic Conference, the economic programme of a Soviet Government is expounded as follows: only a Soviet Government is 'capable of introducing a maximum of planning into

the economy at present disintegrating, helping the peasantry and rural workers to exploit the now available means of agricultural production, limiting profits, establishing wages and, in conformity with the regulation of production, assuring real labour discipline, based on the autonomy of the workers and their centralized control over industry'. This is all very obscure and insubstantial, but is quite alien to utopianism. The statement is far from placing Socialism on the agenda of a Soviet régime. In essence its content does not go beyond the limits of the May 16th economic programme which was accepted by the old Ex. Com. to be carried out by a Coalition Government. The Coalition could not, of course, carry it out, for this programme undermined at its root the economic hegemony of capital. For Konovalov that was the same as Socialism, but essentially it was a far cry from it.

This was the economic platform of the Bolshevik Party on the eve of its decisive *coup*.

Nevertheless there was a point in it that has special significance for us. This was the *workers' control* over production. This was a fighting point at all proletarian meetings. As a specifically *working-class* demand it was figured equally with *land*. And, if you like, it was *here and only here* that the Bolshevik leaders approached a public declaration of Socialist principles. However, this 'Socialism' was extremely timid and modest: in their theory the Bolsheviks, while moving along a different road, went no further than the Right Menshevik Grohman, with his programme of the 'regulation' or 'organization of national economy and labour'.

So the masses were politically prepared for the liquidation of Kerenskyism and ready for a Soviet régime. They were awaiting the summons to technical action, but speaking generally were not thinking about it at all. They were being told: 'Let's wait—for what the Congress¹ decides on October 20th or 25th'.

I detected a different note for the first time that same October 7th, the day the Bolsheviks left the Pre-Parliament. But this was no more than a *note*—a suggestive one to be sure, but not as yet burning the smallest boat or binding anyone to anything. In a stormy article devoted by Lenin to a peasant uprising we read: 'There's not the slightest doubt that if the

¹ i.e., the Second All-Russian Soviet Congress. (Ed.)

Bolsheviks allowed themselves to fall into the snare of constitutional illusions, "faith" in the convocation of the Constituent Assembly and the "expectation" of a congress of Soviets, etc.—there is no doubt that such Bolsheviks would be miserable traitors to the proletarian cause.'

Lenin considered that a peasant uprising embracing all Russia would decide matters. 'To allow the crushing of a peasant uprising at such a moment means falsifying the elections to the Constituent Assembly even more, and more grossly, than the Democratic Conference and the Pre-Parliament were falsified. The whole future of the Russian Revolution is at stake. The whole future of the international working-class revolution is at stake. The crisis is at hand.'

Trotsky, leading his army out of the Pre-Parliament, had definitely set course towards a violent overthrow. Lenin had declared that it was criminal to wait for the Congress of Soviets. As yet nothing more. The masses were still in the same position. But it was clear that within the party the question of *how* had been placed next in order. It ought to be decided at once.

On October 10th it was posed by the supreme authority. The Central Committee of the Bolshevik Party assembled in full strength. . . Oh, the novel jokes of the merry muse of History! This supreme and decisive session took place in my own home, still at the Karpovka. But—without my knowledge. As before I would very often spend the night somewhere near the office or Smolny, that is about eight versts from the Karpovka. This time special steps were taken to have me spend the night away from home: at least my wife knew my intentions exactly and gave me a piece of friendly, disinterested advice—not to inconvenience myself by a further journey after work. In any case the lofty assemblage had a complete guarantee against my arrival.

For such a cardinal session not only did people come from Moscow, but the Lord of Hosts himself, with his henchman, crept out of the underground. Lenin appeared in a wig, but without his beard. Zinoviev appeared with a beard, but without his shock of hair. The meeting went on for about ten hours, until about 3 o'clock in the morning. Half the exalted guests had to sleep somehow in the Karpovka.

However, I don't actually know much about the exact course of this meeting, or even about its outcome. It's clear that the

question of an *uprising* was put. There was evidently also a question about its relation to the Soviet Congress: should it depend on the time and circumstances of the Congress? The question of the revolt was decided in the affirmative, and evidently it was decided to raise it as quickly as possible—depending on the course of its speedy technical preparation and on the most favourable external conditions. It was possible to confront the Congress of Soviets with an accomplished fact; political conditions allowed of this, and there could be no doubt of the support and sanction of the Congress. But aside from that, because of weighty considerations the Congress *ought* to be confronted by an accomplished fact. For it was, after all, clear to the enemy camp that the Congress would *decide* to take power and—at least—*make an attempt to realize that decision*. It would be absurd for a Government which was not prepared to yield voluntarily to the Bolsheviks to await that moment. It was clear that it would attempt to forestall the action of the Congress, doing everything possible either to forbid or to disperse or shoot down the Congress. If an uprising had been decided on, then it was absurd to wait for this to happen. Common sense demanded that the people in their turn forestall the Government's offensive. This was elementary tactics and strategy.

It was decided to begin the uprising as quickly as possible, depending on circumstances but not on the Congress.

In the Central Committee of the party this decision was accepted by all but two votes. The dissenters were the same as in June—Kamenev and Zinoviev. . . This of course could not confound the Thunderer. He had never been confounded even when he remained practically alone in his own party; now he had the *majority* with him. And, besides the majority, *Trotsky was with Lenin*. I don't know to what degree Lenin himself valued this fact, but for the course of events it had incalculable significance. I have no doubt of that. . . The 'cronies' were for the time being left to their own opinion, but without any attention from the others. The order was accepted and matters followed their course.

* * *

The decision put events on a new footing. The boats had been burnt. Now direct preparations for an uprising were started—

politically and technically. It is clear that an uprising against the Coalition, and its destruction, were incumbent on the Petersburg proletariat and garrison. Hence the official agency of the uprising was the Petersburg Soviet. The political and technical work had to proceed from there.

But it goes without saying that the decision of the party Central Committee was not brought to the knowledge either of the Petersburg masses or of the Soviet. The *political* change was expressed only in a few additions to the earlier agitation. 'Further delay is impossible.' 'It's time to pass from words to deeds.' 'The moment has come when the revolutionary slogan of "All Power to the Soviets" must be realized at last.' Etc.

It was clear that an uprising was necessary. 'Action' was plainly imminent. The proletariat and the garrison had to be ready at any minute to obey revolutionary orders. . . . Such was the new political phase of the movement.

It may be asked whether the Petersburg proletariat and garrison was ready for dynamic action and bloody sacrifice, just as it was for the acceptance of a Soviet Government and all its blessings? Was it capable not only of passing a menacing resolution, but also of really going into battle? Was it burning, not only with hate, but with a real longing for revolutionary exploits? Was its mood firm?

There are various answers to all this. It is quite fundamental. Not because the outcome of the movement depended on it—the success of the overturn was assured because there was nothing to oppose it. But the mood of the masses who were to act is important because in the eyes of history this is what determined the *character* of the overturn.

Personally, as a witness and participant in the events, I have no single answer. *There were various moods*. The only common ones were hatred for 'Kerenskyism', fatigue, rage, and a desire for peace, bread, and land. . . . During just these weeks I, more than ever before, made the rounds of the factories and spoke to the 'masses'. I had the definite impression that the mood was ambiguous, conditional. The Coalition and the *status quo* could no longer be endured; but whether it was necessary to come out, or necessary to pass through an uprising, was not clearly known. Many well remembered the July Days. What if once again nothing came of it?

I'm speaking of the mood of the *average* rank-and-filer. That doesn't mean that the Bolsheviks could not have assembled, summoned, and launched into battle as many revolutionary battalions as they wanted. On the contrary: they had a sufficient number of advanced, active cadres ready for sacrifice. The most reliable were the workers and their Red Guard; then the sailors. There was enough fighting material. But good-quality fighting material made up a small part of the Bolshevik following at this time. On the average, the mood was strongly Bolshevik, but rather slack and wavering with respect to action and a rising.

So, after the decision of the Bolshevik centre on October 10th, the masses were told that it was time to pass from words to deeds. For the time being they were told nothing else. This was quite natural. The main results of the vote on October 10th could not be spoken of. Policy might remain almost the same; but now it had to yield its primary position to *strategy*. The direct preparation of the uprising now had to pass to the *Staff*. It was impossible to work out dispositions before the whole army, before the eyes of the enemy. The enemy was to be left in the dark, while the army stood at the ready, working up steam.

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During those days, in view of the acute situation at the front, discussions were going on everywhere about defence; on October 9th, before the decision of the party Central Committee, this question was raised in the Petersburg Ex. Com. also. It was, of course, provoked primarily by political considerations. And the discussion itself was tied up with the question of evacuating troops from the capital. It was said that the Staff demands for troops to be sent to the front had, as always, a political motivation, and that in general it was impossible to trust the Government in matters of defence. Consequently it was necessary first of all to organize *control over the Staff* and determine the evacuation of troops as circumstances demanded, and secondly to take the defence question into one's own hands and create a special organ for it—a committee of revolutionary defence.

The Mensheviks and SRs talked of the dual power and the inappropriateness of forming a Staff of one's own. But seeing the

weakness of their position they gave in and themselves proposed a resolution which was accepted by the Bolshevik Ex. Com., demanding, in the main: (1) the creation of a board of representatives of the Petersburg Soviet and the Central Committee of the Fleet, to be informed of the evacuation of any given unit; (2) extraordinary measures for the purging of the General Staff; and (3) the formation of a committee of revolutionary defence, which would clarify the question of the defence of Petersburg.

That same day the question was taken before the plenum of the Petersburg Soviet. However, the Ex. Com. resolution proposed by the Mensheviks was turned down. A *Bolshevik* resolution was passed, which spoke of the need for a Soviet Government that would propose immediate peace; of the necessity, before the conclusion of peace, of taking the defence of the capital and the whole country into the hands of the Soviets; and of the necessity of arming the workers for defence. And the Ex. Com., the Soldiers' Section and the garrison deputies were charged with the organization of a revolutionary committee of defence which 'would concentrate in its own hands all data relevant to the defence of Petersburg'.

'All data'—rather happily put. But nevertheless we see that things were still going along under the banner of *military defence*. All this was *before the Bolshevik Central Committee session at my flat*.

On October 12th a new meeting of the Ex. Com. was held to execute the Soviet resolution. It was a closed meeting. In a matter such as defence (*sic!*) the Bolsheviks thought it necessary to violate the principles they were still continuing to fight for. But this wasn't secret diplomacy—it was a plot. However, it must be kept in mind that it could not be fully realized; in this closed session there could be no freedom of discussion, for there were a few 'Social-traitors' in the Ex. Com. So one thing was said and another meant. Nor did the published decision, as a matter of fact, have the same inward meaning as appeared to the world in the lines below.

This was the decision:

'A Military Revolutionary Committee is being formed by the Petersburg Ex. Com. and is its organ. It is composed of: the Praesidiums of the plenum and of the Soldiers' Section of the Soviet, representatives of the Central Committee of the Fleet, the Railwaymen's Union, the Union of Post Office and Tele-

graph Employees, the Factory Committees, the Trade Unions, representatives of the party military organizations, the military section of the Central Ex. Com., and the workers' militia, as well as individuals whose presence is thought necessary. The Military Revolutionary Committee's first tasks are the allocation of combat and auxiliary forces, necessary for the defence of the capital and not subject to evacuation; then the registration of the personal composition of the garrison of Petersburg and its suburbs, and also the registration of supply sources; the elaboration of a working plan for the defence of the city; measures of protection against pogroms and desertions; the maintenance of revolutionary discipline amongst the working class and soldiery. . .'

We can see that none of this is honest or legitimate *co-operation* in defence. It is, in essence, the illegal *elimination* from defence affairs of the 'legitimate' agencies of the Government and the transference of all their functions to the Petersburg Soviet. But that was the least of it: under the banner of defence against the foreign enemy the Ex. Com. concentrated in its own hands *all military power* in the capital and the provinces. That is, it officially arrogated to itself all real power whatever.

In fact, of course, this power had long belonged to the Bolshevik Soviet. Does this mean that the decrees of October 12th made the overturn an accomplished fact? No, it doesn't. But only because the Bolsheviks themselves said that there was nothing in it but co-operation for external defence. They gave such explanations right down to October 23rd.

But the Mensheviks, in the closed session of the Ex. Com., revealed the true meaning of these decrees. The Military Revolutionary Committee was an apparatus for the overthrow of the Government and the seizure of power by the Bolsheviks.

* * *

And on October 16th this 'motion' was presented to the Soviet plenum for approval. There were heated protests from a Menshevik orator, whose fraction, in this meeting of a thousand men, numbered fifty people.

'The Bolsheviks won't answer the straight question whether or not they are preparing a *coup*. This is either cowardice or lack of confidence in their own strength' (laughter in the audience).

'But the projected Military Revolutionary Committee is nothing but a revolutionary staff for the seizure of power. . . We have many local reports that the masses are out of sympathy with a *coup*. There is a 'Provisional Military Committee' attached to the Central Ex. Com., whose object is real co-operation in the defence of the northern front. The Petersburg Soviet ought to send its representatives there and reject the proposal for a military revolutionary committee.'

Trotsky got up. In this gathering his task was not especially difficult.

'The Menshevik representative is preoccupied with whether the Bolsheviks are preparing an armed demonstration. In whose name has he asked this question: in the name of Kerensky, the counter-intelligence, the Secret Police, or some other body?'

This was a tumultuous success. But even without this the resolution on the Military Revolutionary Committee would have been passed by an overwhelming majority of the Soviet that session of October 16th.

The Military Revolutionary Committee was created and rapidly got to work. Both the Mensheviks and the Right SRs refused to go into it. The Left SRs did enter it. Its principal figures were Trotsky, Lashevich, then the leaders of the Bolshevik Military Organization, Podvoisky and Nevsky, Yurenev, Mekhonoshin, the Left SR Lazimir, and others, until then less well-known.

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The camp of the bourgeoisie and the interstitial groups grew alarmed. Outcries and complaints about 'proposed Bolshevik *coups*' had actually never ceased. They were permanent. But now, apart from 'rumours', they had real grounds. The general atmosphere was so oppressive that the country and the masses were plainly stifling. The crisis was manifest to everyone. The movement of the masses was clearly overflowing its banks. The workers' districts of Petersburg were boiling over before everyone's eyes. Only the Bolsheviks were listened to. At the famous *Cirque Moderne*, where Trotsky, Lunacharsky, and Volodarsky appeared, you kept seeing endless queues and throngs of people for whom there was no longer room in the enormous crowded

circus. Agitators were calling for deeds, not words, and promising the imminent achievement of a Soviet régime. And in Smolny, finally, they were working on the creation of a new and more than suspect organ of 'defence'. . . There were real grounds for alarm.

It was not that they were afraid of a Bolshevik victory. It was something else. Amongst the Right, in the bourgeois newspapers, this was the basis of an agitation in favour of immediate decisive repressions, in favour of the assumption of the 'attributes of a real Government' (let us recall Guchkov's golden words!), that is, in favour of a new Kornilov revolt. As for the SRs and Mensheviks, the press alarm meant a real fear—not of the success of the Bolshevik enterprise, but of new July Days.

Besides the written and spoken agitation there appeared a series of appeals in the names of parties, a few institutions, and, of course, the Central Ex. Com. These appeals were all in the same spirit: street action under a separate Bolshevik banner would play into the hands of the counter-revolution. One such appeal was also published by a group of Martovites—over a few of our signatures. On October 18th Gorky came out with a flaming article: 'Rumours are being spread more and more insistently about a Bolshevik *coup*. The repellent scenes of July 3–5th may be repeated. That is—once again lorries tightly packed with people holding rifles and revolvers in hands trembling with fear, and these rifles will go off at random into the windows of shops and at people. They will fire only because the people armed with them want to kill their own fear. All the dark instincts of the mob, infuriated by the destruction of life and the lies of politics, will flare up and begin to smoke—people will kill each other, unable to overcome their own bestial stupidity. In a word, there will be a repetition of that same senseless bloody carnage which we have already seen and which has undermined the moral significance of the revolution throughout the country. It is highly likely that this time events will take on a still more bloody and destructive character. . . The Bolshevik Central Committee has done nothing to confirm the rumours of a *coup*, though it hasn't refuted them either. . . It is its duty to refute them, if it really is a powerful and freely acting political organ capable of directing the masses and not

the passive toy of the moods of a savage mob, or a tool in the hands of shameless adventurers or unbalanced fanatics. . .'

* * *

But what was the Government thinking and doing? All hopes, after all, were on it! Moreover, it had once been entrusted with 'limitless power' and even been called the Government of the 'salvation of the revolution'.

It had had a debate on the 'disorders' on the day when the Military Revolutionary Committee was finally approved, October 16th. 'The most resolute measures would be taken and were already being taken.' What these were simple mortals didn't know. What measures our Government could take *at all* was also a mystery to everyone.

However, *there was no alarm*. The tranquil assurance of a powerful Government reigned there. First of all, the *coup* was considered doubtful, once the plans had been disclosed. Secondly, all these plans were very well known to the splendidly organized Government. The Chief of Staff of the Petersburg region reported to the head of the Government: the Bolsheviks were preparing a 'demonstration of protest against the Government': the 'demonstration would have a peaceful character, but nevertheless the workers would come out armed'. The Chief of Staff reported on the measures he 'was prepared to take to forestall the possibility that the demonstration would turn into disorders'. The measures were evidently excellent, since they were approved by the head of the Government.

In general only the man-in-the-street could fall into a panic, while there was no reason at all to be distracted from serious state affairs because of this gossip. In the last analysis this was only the Bolsheviks, while against them was the whole country, which—was with the Government.

Speaking seriously, it is possible to explain the failure of our comic-opera Government to attempt any serious measures of self-defence at this time only by its complete *naïveté* and childishness. Kerensky couldn't, of course, win, but he could and ought to have made an attempt. It was, after all, not May and not June outside. Now he had nothing to lose. He had to take a risk, and play all or nothing.

Kerensky wasn't making any political concessions—out of

considerations of the highest statesmanship. Consequently his only method was—*Kornilovism*. Kerensky was of course ready for this: wasn't he with the whole country and its democracy against its enemies? But he was weak. The 'Commander-in-Chief' had no troops at all. He wouldn't be able to carry his Kornilovism through. . .

Very well. But a risk had to be taken. He had a thousand military cadets and officers in Petersburg. There were even a few more. That was a force. An attempt could be made to paralyse the Bolshevik centres, decapitate the party, and arrest a hundred men in suitable conditions. That might smash the movement. . . In May and June this method was unsuitable. Only the man-in-the-street, wise after the event, lamented this without understanding the point. In May and June, even in July, repressions and violence only *helped the rise* of the movement. But the atmosphere then was *completely different*, the revolution had not yet delivered point-blank its irrevocable ultimatum: either the total destruction of Bolshevism, or its total victory. Now, when there was nothing to lose and it was vital to take a risk, an attempt to smash the movement by a bold and stormy onslaught was the only solution for those who called themselves the Government.

But for this it was necessary to understand at least something. The inflated puppets of the Winter Palace understood nothing. Thinking themselves strong they felt no alarm, and busied themselves with more important affairs of state. They told each other that steps had been and would be taken, and composed decrees to tell the entire nation that the most resolute measures, including . . . etc., etc.

And nothing else.

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On the grey and gloomy afternoon of October 14th there was a session of the Central Ex. Com. in the great hall of Smolny. During the period of the Pre-Parliament the sessions of the Central Ex. Com. plenum had almost ceased: only the Bureau was in session. There were very few delegates even now, and hardly any public; the hall was empty. I remember that the Bolsheviks for some reason were not sitting in their places but were clustered along the left side of the platform in a small

group, as though entrenched there in their camp, against the besieging majority. But neither Trotsky nor Kamenev was there. The group was headed by Ryazanov.

The 'defence of the capital' was on the agenda. Dan, of course, reported to the meeting. He began quickly and resolutely to deal with 'the dissension in the heart of the democracy'.

'Exactly at this time, in these days of danger, an agitation is being carried on by the Bolsheviks that is sowing confusion amongst the worker and soldier masses. We must definitely ask our Bolshevik comrades why they are carrying on this policy. Do they know how their agitation is being received by the soldiers and workers? Will they take the responsibility for the consequences? I demand that the Bolshevik Party give a straightforward and honest reply to this question: Yes or no?'

Dan concluded his report on the defence of the capital with this resolution: all workers, peasants, and soldiers were to remain calm and do their duty, while any kind of *coup* was completely inadmissible and could only unleash a destructive movement and thus lead to the wreck of the revolution.

The atmosphere in the hall was very tense. Heads turned towards the cluster of Bolsheviks, from whom protests and contemptuous exclamations were heard. This made the Right lose its temper. The Bolsheviks, after a two-minute consultation, sent Ryazanov to the platform to get away from the question of the *coup* and concentrate attention on defence.

There arose a long argument on procedure, which simply infuriated the majority. The Bolsheviks saw they had to explain themselves on this point, and asked for a break to discuss the resolution, which they hadn't known about up to then. In the absence of their leaders the position of the little group was not easy. An exhausting and boring interval dragged on till evening. Still no leaders. . .

The session was resumed and there was Ryazanov on the platform again, agitated and pale as never before. He was the victim of party duty, but his performance was heroic. What, however, could he say? He was confronted, after all, with the task of explaining himself without giving a straightforward reply. He began:

'I'm sincerely sorry we're debating such a serious question in an empty hall. But I have no desire to have recourse to for-

malities and raise the question of a quorum. I should merely like to recall our sessions in June and July.'

But the chairman was not to be bamboozled: he wouldn't allow any indulgence in reminiscences and asked him to stick to the point. Ryazanov came a little closer to it and beat about the bush for about an hour.

'As long as the matter of defence is in the hands of the Coalition it will be in the same miserable state it's in now. Starting from this point, we set up the Military Revolutionary Committee, which the Mensheviks voted against. You haven't the resolution to say to the Government "hands off!" Consequently don't say you seriously want to defend the revolution. We are asked whether we want to organize an uprising, but Dan knows that we are Marxists and do not prepare uprisings. The uprising is being prepared by the policy you have supported for seven months. The uprising is being prepared by those who are creating despair and apathy in the masses. If the policy remains the same in future, and if as a result there is an uprising, then we shall be in the first ranks of the insurgents.'

Lenin complimented Ryazanov highly on this speech. The audience, however, was more indignant than satisfied. But what could they do? That was that; you can't squeeze out answers by force.

Fraction speeches followed. Bogdanov spoke for the Mensheviks: 'Ryazanov hasn't given a definite reply, but in any case it's clear the Bolsheviks are preparing an armed uprising; the masses, however, will not go out into the streets. Only hand-fuls will go, who will be crushed by the Government; Dan's resolution is feeble and colourless, it counts on Bolshevik support, but it should be voted for.'

For our fraction Martov declared that he also would vote for the resolution, though disagreeing with the Bolshevik appraisal of the situation. He also thought street demonstrations a hazardous undertaking. To say that in the interests of defence it was necessary to change the structure of the régime was self-delusion. Civil war would not help defence; for this reason it was impossible now to regard insurgent elements as a method of creating the régime we needed. Ryazanov was right—it was the Government that was preparing the uprising. But each party was also a political factor. We were bound to fight against any

attempts at unleashing the elements and we ought to warn the masses. We could not depend on the Bolsheviki's listening to us, but to do our duty we ought to tell the masses that an uprising would be a source of counter-revolution.

Not only the Right but also the *Left* SRs supported Dan's resolution. One more resolution. . .

And the leaders of the old Soviet majority turned to current tasks. . .

* * *

Ryazanov's speech at the Central Ex. Com. enquiry and his references to Marxism called forth an immediate response in the *Novaya Zhizn*, from our accredited theoretician, Bazarov. This began what I may call a *theoretical discussion* of the theme of the uprising. It was rather pathetic. But its political significance lay in the fact that it was *only here* that all the 't's were crossed and it was officially acknowledged that 'going from words to deeds' meant—making an uprising. But even this acknowledgement was at first indirect and academic, and for the masses changed nothing. It was not until October 21st that, by way of closing the discussion, Lenin said in straightforward language that he was calling for insurrection. It was not until then that the political preparation was finished, and only technical instructions remained. It would seem that this was a little too late. But no matter—it came off. The fruit, after all, was so ripe it fell into one's hand by itself.

Bazarov (in his article of October 17th) in reality produced very little theory: 'Ryazanov', he wrote, 'declared that "we" would lead the insurrection; if "we" means individuals, then it is nobody's business; if "we" is the party, then it is a crime, for the party, which embraces the entire working class, will be crushed together with the insurrection, which will lead to the total collapse of the revolution. Violence is inevitable because the "despair and apathy" proclaimed by Ryazanov has never yet been victorious, for Marxism demands an objective calculation of the chances of an insurrection. Amongst the Bolsheviki themselves there are numerous and authoritative dissenters; it is their duty to come out before the masses and fight against this adventure in public, but they have done no more than issue a manuscript leaflet that is being passed from hand to hand.'

As we see, none of this was at all terrible, while the *Novaya Zhizn* attack on Bolshevik plans and methods was far from the first. Each pin-prick from our newspaper, however, had a greater effect on the Bolsheviks than the tempestuous fire of all the rest of the press put together. They were *enemies*; their attacks were merely a source of clarity and strength. But up to now we had been *allies*; this was 'obfuscation' and deadly sabotage. The Bolsheviks broke into a frenzy. Every effort had to be made to trample the *Novaya Zhizn* into the mud in the eyes of the proletariat: our paper was read and considered *their own* by many thousands of advanced Petersburg workers.

The propagandists of *Rabochii Put* took up the cudgels at once. The very next day, amidst a tub of filth, they displayed an interesting quotation from Marx, thinking it was in their favour. Marx's pamphlet, *Revolution and Counter-Revolution in Germany*, gives two important and eloquently expressed directives: 'First, don't undertake an insurrection until you are fully prepared to deal with the consequences; and secondly, once embarked on a revolution act with the greatest resolution and as the attacking side.'

On the basis of this the Bolshevik theoreticians evidently thought their position sound: they were preparing to attack and to act with resolution. And that was as correct as 2 plus 2 makes 4. But the whole point was in that '*once embarked*', that is, if it was necessary. *Was it necessary?* When was it necessary? When was it possible? Only when you were 'fully prepared to deal with the consequences'.

This was not so at all. Bazarov at once seized on this the following day in a new article. But once again, to my mind, he did not focus attention on the heart of the matter. He spoke again of the chances of success and failure of the insurrection; again he indicated the inadequacy of material and moral strength. These assertions were no more than the writer's own pessimism, but could not serve as the theoretical ground of his conclusions.

Nevertheless Marx's statement was at the very core of the Bolshevik position and damaged it mortally. For you had to be ready to deal with the consequences. The consequences of victorious insurrections can be and have been in history extraordinarily varied. The working class has not always raised an

insurrection in order to take the state into its own hands. This time that's just what it was. In spite of all the chances of victory of the uprising, the Bolsheviks knew in advance they could not deal with its consequences, knew in advance that, in view of the whole complex of circumstances, they could not perform the consequent tasks of state.

This was shown in practice, but only later; at this time there had been no practice. But at this time there should have been *theory*; the Bolsheviks should have had clear ideas and precise plans as to what they would do with the State they had won, how they would run it, and how in our conditions they would perform the tasks of a new proletarian State and satisfy the immediate, day-to-day needs, which had produced the insurrection, of the labouring masses. I maintain the Bolsheviks had no such plans. And personally, both in speeches and in articles, I directed attention precisely to this aspect of the matter.

I maintain the Bolsheviks had no other ideas than the immediate handing over of the land for seizure by the peasants, readiness to propose peace at once, the most confused ideas about 'workers' control', and the most fantastic notions of methods of extracting bread, with the help of the 'sailor' and the 'working girl'. . . Lenin had more 'ideas', borrowed whole from the experience of the Paris Commune and Marx's pamphlet on it, and also—from Kropotkin.¹ These of course included the destruction of the system of credit and the seizure of the banks; the thoroughgoing revision of the whole government apparatus and its replacement by administrators from among the working class (this in peasant, limitless, and half-savage Tsarist Russia!); the liability to election of all officials; compulsory parity between specialists' wages and the average worker's. And there were some other fantasies, which all vanished at the first contact with reality. But all these 'ideas' were, first of all, so disproportionately few in comparison with the immensity of the tasks, and secondly were so unknown to anyone in the Bolshevik Party, that you might say they were completely irrelevant.

Lenin's pamphlet, *State and Revolution*, was very soon to become gospel. But first of all this gospel, as always, served merely as something to swear by—God forbid that anything

¹ The celebrated philosopher of anarchism. (Ed.)

should be done in accordance with its visionary words!—and secondly it had not yet been published.

So far only 'materials' for a programme were present. And these materials, as Larin put it, revealed a vacuum instead of a financial-economic plan.

The Bolsheviks didn't know what they were going to do with their victory and the State they would win. They were acting *against* Marx, *against* scientific Socialism, *against* common sense, *against* the working class, when by way of an insurrection, under the slogan of 'Power to the Soviets' they attempted to hand over to their own Central Committee the totality of state power in Russia. The power of a single isolated proletarian vanguard, though it was based on the confidence of millions of the masses, obliged the new Government and the Bolsheviks themselves to perform tasks they knew to be beyond their strength. This was the core of the problem. The Bolshevik Party was utopian in undertaking to perform these tasks. It made a fateful error when it started an insurrection without thinking about them.

* * *

But let us return to the 'discussion'. Bazarov had mentioned the manuscript leaflet of two prominent Bolsheviks, who were protesting against the insurrection. Bazarov surmised (quite rightly, of course) that there was in the party a group which dissented from the official line. But the *Rabochii Put* said at once there was nothing of the sort—the authors of the sheet remained in splendid isolation. These were none other, of course, than the well-known 'cronies', Kamenev and Zinoviev.

Once the garbage was out of the house and there was nothing to lose, Kamenev decided to give a public explanation. For this, of course, they didn't allow him into the *Rabochii Put*. The 'communication' appeared in the *Novaya Zhizn*. He, Kamenev, and Zinoviev appealed to the largest party organizations in a letter, and in it they expressed themselves 'decidedly against the party's taking on itself the initiative of any armed moves in the immediate future. Everyone understands that in the present situation there can be no question of anything like an armed demonstration. The question can only be *of the seizure of power by force of arms*: any kind of mass demonstration can be undertaken only after clearly and definitely setting before oneself the task of

an armed insurrection. Not only Comrade Zinoviev and I, but also a large group of our fellow practical workers think that taking the initiative of an armed insurrection at the given moment, with the given correlation of forces, independently of and a few days before the Soviet Congress—would be inadmissible, and fatal to both the proletariat and the revolution.’ The Bolshevik Party, of course, was striving towards the realization of its programme with the help of the state power already achieved. It would not, of course, shrink even from an insurrection. But ‘now it would be doomed to defeat’. ‘To risk the fate of the party, the proletariat and the revolution and rise up in the next few days—would be to commit an act of despair. And the party is too strong, too great a future lies ahead, for it to take such desperate steps.’

Not especially profound, but quite eloquent. In any case we see that Kamenev’s argumentation says no more and no less than what the Socialists of the other parties were saying at that time. Here, too, attention was focused on the chances of the insurrection and its destruction in unfavourable conditions. This is attested by the fact that no basic questions about what would happen *afterwards* were given priority even by Bolshevik opponents of the insurrection. But in any case this evaluation of the chances was very convincing in the mouth of a Bolshevik.

* * *

Lenin was living in those days somewhere a few hours’ journey away from Petersburg. He received the *Novaya Zhizn* number with Bazarov’s article that same October 17th, at 8 o’clock in the evening. At that time he was finishing a very long ‘Letter to the Comrades’ to counterbalance the ‘cronies’ letter. He hadn’t intended it to be printed and hence didn’t intend to pronounce the word ‘uprising’ publicly in connexion with the party’s plans. But Bazarov’s article made Lenin indignant. Seeing the reference to the manuscript leaflet, which had fallen out of party hands into those of the ‘fools on the *Novaya Zhizn*’, Lenin made arrangements to have his letter, too, printed at once. ‘If that’s how things are, we must agitate even *for* an insurrection.’

The letter was printed in three long instalments (October 19th–21st). Lenin was afraid the ‘cronies’ would create con-

fusion in the ranks of the party, and hastened to intervene—in spite of his having been ‘placed by the will of fate a little to one side of the main stream of history’. Oh, of course, *that* could not stop Jupiter! But the point is that this document, intended to clarify the minds of the comrades in the hour of destiny, *adds precisely nothing* to the ‘theory’ of the insurrection. If we leave aside some sour notes produced with Lenin’s inherent violence, the rest of this document is a complete vacuum. And the letter might be ignored if it were not a document of the epoch, a memorial to a great act of history. Just take it as it is.

‘Rejection of the insurrection is rejection of the transference of power to the Soviets and a placing of all hopes in the well-meaning bourgeoisie who have “promised” to convoke the Constituent Assembly. Either an open rejection of the slogan of “All Power to the Soviets”, or else insurrection. There is no middle way. Either idly fold your useless arms and wait, vowing fidelity to the Constituent Assembly, while Rodzianko & Co. surrender Petersburg and smother the revolution, or else insurrection.’

Meanwhile these are merely menacing preliminary remarks; Lenin is only causing a fright with the terrible words ‘There is no middle way’. Further on, however, he comes to grips with his opponents’ *arguments*. Well, let’s listen. It’s our duty.

Lenin quotes his opponents: ‘There is nothing in the international situation that actually obliges us to demonstrate at once; we should, rather, harm the cause if we allowed ourselves to be shot.’

Here is Lenin’s reply to this ‘magnificent argument, which Scheidemann himself could not have improved on’:

‘The Germans, with Liebknecht alone, without newspapers or mass-meetings, made an insurrection in the fleet, and we, with dozens of papers, a majority in the Soviets and so on—are to refrain from insurrection! “Let’s demonstrate our good sense. Let’s pass a resolution of sympathy with the German insurgents, and overthrow the revolution in Russia”.’

Hard to resist this: it’s very powerful. But it’s not enough—*comparaison n’est pas raison*.

The following argument: ‘Everyone is against us. We are in isolation. Both the Central Ex. Com. and the Menshevik-Internationalists, both the *Novaya Zhizn* and the Left SRs have published and are publishing proclamations against us.’

Lenin's answer to 'this most powerful argument':

'Up to now we have fought the vacillators, and this is what has won us the sympathy of the people and gained us a majority in the Soviets; shall we now exploit the Soviets we have won in order to go over ourselves into the camp of the vacillators? What a splendid career for Bolshevism! On account of the betrayal of the peasant insurrection by the Martovs, the Kamkovs, and the Sukhanovs, it is now proposed that we betray it too. This is what the policy of ogling the Left SRs and the Menshevik-Internationalists boils down to.'

Evidently, for the comrades who were the objects of the agitation, this was enough to convince them of the safety and even utility of their isolation. Let's make a proletarian State against the parties, that is, against the subjective will and the objective class interests of the overwhelming majority of the population. Well, all right, do so!

Further: 'But we haven't even firm ties with the railwaymen and postal employees; is it possible to win without them?'

Lenin's answer: 'It's not a question of stocking up on ties beforehand, but of the fact that only a victory of the proletarian and peasant insurrection can satisfy the masses of railwaymen and postal employees.'

Here the simplification is quite childish! No, it is not the *victory* of the insurrection that will satisfy these masses, but the *right organization* and functioning of the new State. Is that as easy as it is to win an insurrection with dozens of newspapers and a majority in the Soviets? Or is it somewhat harder?

Argument: 'There is bread in Petersburg for two or three days. Can we give the insurgents bread?'

Lenin's answer: 'Sceptics can always doubt, and nothing but experience will convince them; it is precisely the bourgeoisie that is preparing the famine; there is not and cannot be any other means of salvation from hunger than an insurrection of the peasants against the landlords in the country and the victory of the workers against the capitalists in the cities and the capital. Any delay in the insurrection is like death—that is the reply that must be made to those who have the miserable courage to watch the growth of chaos and dissuade the workers from insurrection. . .'

This plainly needs no comment. Let's go on.

Argument: 'The situation at the front is not yet dangerous; even if the soldiers concluded a truce by themselves it would still be no calamity.'

Lenin's answer: 'But the soldiers are not concluding any truce; for this the state power is necessary, and it cannot be obtained without an insurrection. The soldiers are simply running away. Waiting is impossible without making it easier for Rodzianko to come to an agreement with the Kaiser.'

Now this would have been true—if, instead of a Bolsheviki insurrection with utopian aims, it had been a question of a dictatorship of the Soviet democracy proceeding to replace the Cadet-Kornilov Coalition in order to fulfil the real programme of the revolution.

Argument: 'And if we take power and obtain neither a truce, nor peace, then the soldiers might not come along into a revolutionary war. What then?'

Here the Thunderer lost patience: 'One fool', he replied, 'can ask ten times as many questions as ten wise men can answer. . . We have never denied the difficulties of ruling, but—we will not allow ourselves to be frightened by the difficulties of revolution.'

Lenin devoted three columns to the argument we have met with not only from the 'cronies' but also from other Soviet people and parties: 'the masses, as everyone reports, are not belligerent'.

Lenin, 'placed to one side of the stream', makes a correction: first of all, everyone says that the mood is one of 'concentration and expectancy'; secondly, the workers do not want to come out for a manifestation, but 'there is the approach of a general struggle hovering in the air'; thirdly, the 'broad masses are near despair, and it is on this soil that anarchism is growing'; fourthly, 'excitement' is not necessary either, what is necessary is just a 'mood of desperate concentration. . .'

Well, now you can take your choice. Personally I have absolutely never agreed that the mood of the masses excluded a successful insurrection. The only question was rather how many of them might go to the barricades. But I see no need to linger over Lenin's verbiage, even though it is directed towards the same conclusion.

This was the final argument of his opponents: 'A Marxist

party cannot reduce the question of an insurrection to the question of a military conspiracy.'

In essence this is correct. But this time Lenin too was right, that this was quite irrelevant. To talk about a military conspiracy instead of a national insurrection, when the party was followed by the overwhelming majority of the people, when the party had already *de facto* conquered all real power and authority—was clearly an absurdity. On the part of the *enemies* of Bolshevism it was a *malicious* absurdity, but on the part of the 'cronies'—an aberration based on panic. Here Lenin was right. . . But even on this basis I can by no means renounce the estimate I placed on the entire document: I'm not responsible for the fact that the 'cronies' said some absurd things.

So—the arguments are exhausted. And the theoretical material of this time is also, I think, all exhausted. Now we are familiar with the whole philosophy of the insurrection at that time. There was no other. He who has ears, has heard.

As for the 'cronies', it was as though they had simply been waiting to be called to heel. Two days later Zinoviev published a letter—that he was 'postponing the dispute until more favourable circumstances', and 'closing the ranks'. Kamenev announced the same thing in the Soviet, the same day his views were published in the *Novaya Zhizn*.

Everyone was asking: and what about Lunacharsky? What does he think? Wasn't he probably against 'all that'? Personally at this time I saw him rarely. The party command had long since forbidden him to write in the *Novaya Zhizn*. He was spending a lot of time in the Town Council, where he was a colleague of the 'Governor's'. He was beginning to get involved in cultural and municipal work, and told me he wanted to go over to it entirely. The reason for this was primarily the fact that the party didn't let him into 'major policy' and was treating him badly. I don't think I ever spoke to him at this time about Bolshevik activities and plans, and I don't know what he thought. But because of all the newspaper rumours libelling his position he declared in print, neck and neck with Zinoviev: I stand with the party.

But it's time to leave 'ideas'. In those days, actually, there was no time for them.

THE FINAL REVIEW

THOSE were the days of the final mobilization and final review of strength. Everywhere in the provinces at this time there were Soviet congresses, and almost everywhere they gave predominance to the Bolsheviks, while in Moscow a movement again began going out into the streets. On the 15th a large manifestation took place—with the most violent slogans, especially from the soldiers: 'We would rather die in Moscow on the barricades than go to the front!' In the Soviet and the Ex. Com. it became evident that it was no longer possible to hold back the Moscow masses. In other corners of Russia, even where there was no peasant uprising, the movement, under the slogans of 'Soviet power', was clearly sweeping over the countryside.

In general there was no doubt that Moscow would lend complete and active support; the greater part of the provinces would give support; the rest would be 'assimilated'.

The *front* was more doubtful. Here party influence was diverse, but, generally speaking, they had no time there for politics: they refused to know or think of anything but peace. What worked *against* the Bolsheviks was their not letting the Petersburg garrison out of the capital as reinforcements. But the Bolsheviks had every hope of immediate peace proposals. It was scarcely possible to assemble any real force against any Government that proposed peace. No one would have marched against Petersburg. And nothing more was needed.

But even at the front there were substantial Bolshevik organizations. Corps, divisions, batteries, and other units were sending to the papers a multitude of Bolshevik resolutions. There were also congresses that took place under the exclusive influence of the Bolsheviks.

I should like to mention just this about the front. Once more strings of delegations from the front were not only filing into Smolny, appearing at big Soviet meetings with their messages and speeches: besides this they were stubbornly seeking *intimate conversations* and authoritative direct explanations from the old

Soviet leaders. But there was no time for them. They were almost never received. When they did succeed in getting hold of a leader they could get no satisfaction from him. Non-party or SR-minded delegates, disappointed and angry, immediately turned to the Bolsheviks. They poured out their hearts to them at Smolny, and at the front became conductors of their influence. Our editorial office (and others too no doubt) was literally swamped at this time with letters from the trenches. These were remarkable human documents. Pouring their souls out to the dregs, the soldiers showed what the unbearable suffering of wartime had turned them into. If only it would end: nothing else mattered—parties, politics, or revolution. Anyone would be supported who produced even a ghost of peace.

There was nothing there to be afraid of. Though the front might give no active *support*, it would not be actively *hostile*. Though it might not be helpful, it wouldn't be harmful. The non-party and SR mass would easily be assimilated by the Bolshevik minority. And doubtless even 'scratch detachments' would not easily be turned against the Bolsheviks in this atmosphere.

Besides the Soviet organizations there were also some *municipalities* in the hands of the Bolsheviks. One way or another in such conditions the overturn definitely did not recall either a military conspiracy or a Blanquist experiment.

But the active and deciding rôle belonged to Petersburg, and partly to its suburbs. Forces were mobilized here most of all, in the main arena of the drama.

Trotsky, tearing himself away from work on the revolutionary staff, personally rushed from the Obukhovsky plant to the Trubochny, from the Putilov to the Baltic works, from the riding-school to the barracks; he seemed to be speaking at all points simultaneously. His influence, both among the masses and on the staff, was overwhelming. He was the central figure of those days and the principal hero of this remarkable page of history.

* * *

On the evening of October 18th, after a speech by Miliukov in the Pre-Parliament, I went to Smolny. The Soviet was in session. The great hall was glittering brightly with its chandelier and snow-white columns. It was packed. The mood was

obviously exalted. In the stuffy, smoky air an endless mass of excited faces was looking up at the platform from out of clouds of tobacco smoke. The aisles and the seats behind the columns were packed with disorderly groups.

The file of men from the trenches had already long since passed by. When I got there Trotsky was on the platform talking heatedly about something.

I pushed my way to the platform stage. I had something quite special in mind. An anniversary of Gorky's was coming up on Sunday the 22nd—his twenty-five years as a writer. The importance of this, especially to the Petersburg worker-soldier Soviet, seemed self-evident to me, but almost no one knew about it. I wanted the Soviet to pass a motion and send him greetings.

But how could this be done? If I spoke in my own name it would only produce embarrassment, and might end in a scandal. The meeting would look questioningly at the leaders—and what would they say? The point was that the Bolsheviks had now been subjecting our paper, and Gorky, its director, to a particularly heavy fire. And it happened that Gorky had picked just that day to come out with an article against the uprising.

I knew very well what the Bolshevik traditions were, and that this wasn't a moment when the Bolsheviks would distinguish between the world-famous writer, the artistic ideologist of the proletariat, and—their political antagonist on a current question of tactics.

I began looking for someone on the platform with whom I could make arrangements beforehand. I didn't want to appeal to Trotsky: we hadn't met for about three weeks, during which our paths had radically diverged, and the question was rather delicate. I looked around, and hit upon someone highly suitable.

That was Ryazanov. I had no doubt of his sympathy. But to my surprise he began to give me hurried evasive answers and seemed somewhat embarrassed. He refused to speak himself, but promised to tell Trotsky when the latter had finished his speech. I waited. . .

But what was Trotsky so hot about? Why were the soldiers' faces so excited?

Trotsky had exposed a scandal. He was resisting an impudent encroachment on the soldiers' vital interests. That's why he was so emotional and why the hall was aroused.

The Petersburg Town Council, in order to help out its totally ruined exchequer a little and rescue its tram-cars from rapid deterioration, had decided to ask the soldiers to pay a fare of about five copecks instead of the twenty paid by all simple mortals, not excepting even the workers. Up to then the completely idle Petersburg garrison had been riding around without paying, packing the trams even for only one or two stops. Both the populace and the municipal finances suffered bitterly. Finally a reform was decided on, that went directly counter to the interests of the revolution.

I saw a group of Bolshevik Town Council members, led by Joffe, the future famous diplomat and ambassador, on the platform. These council-men had already explored the question in the Town Council and admitted that the proposed measure was completely sensible. Nevertheless they had appeared in the Soviet to give Trotsky authoritative backing. Everything else had to stop for considerations of higher policy!

But Trotsky, who was carrying on this higher policy, was describing to the soldiers the whole outrageous injustice of the five-copeck fare in vivid colours and demanding its abolition.

In his demagoguery the future ruler did not hesitate to preach the most primitive capriciousness and anarchy. A rather miserable scene—an episode in the softening-up.

I couldn't stay long enough to propose that Gorky be honoured. Trotsky was obviously out of sympathy. The Soviet passed over the anniversary of the writer who had brought down on his head innumerable blows, filth, and slanders—for his revolutionary services.

* * *

It was already late at night when my wife and I left the meeting. Outside we were met by pitch darkness, with a down-pour into the bargain. We were in a bad mood. And now another delight! How to get to the other end of the city, to the Karpovka, with my tubercular wife, who couldn't resist going to this meeting and missing all the trams. There was quite a crowd

in the darkness of the gardens quarrelling about a couple of snorting motor-cars the Bolshevik Soviet had succeeded in getting away from the Menshevik-SR Central Ex. Com. The cars of course were out of the question: Trotsky was about to go up to one of them, but after standing there a moment and looking at it he laughed, splashed off through the puddles, and vanished in the darkness.

About to start off on foot, we found out that some special trams, standing in the square, had been supplied for the delegates. We rushed over. Another success! The tram for the Petersburg Side had already left. The only thing we could do was to ride to the corner of Sadovoy and Inzhenerny. But it was still a good five versts from there.

Standing on the platform of the tram I was extraordinarily irritable and gloomy. A short fellow with a modest look was standing near us, with a pince-nez, a black goatee, and flashing Jewish eyes. Seeing my mood he set about cheering me up, and tried to distract me with some advice about the route. But I answered him disagreeably and monosyllabically.

'Who's that?' I asked, when we left the tram.

'That's our old party worker, the Town Councillor, Sverdlov. . .'

In my bad temper I should undoubtedly have cheered up and laughed a great deal if someone had told me that in a fortnight this man would be the titular head of the Russian Republic.

* * *

The Petersburg garrison was the primary and most important factor. This was obvious to everyone. During this period the Soldiers' Section was being 'dealt with' practically every day. But this wasn't enough: the garrison had to be sounded out and strengthened in every possible way.

That same day, the 18th, the Military Department of the Petersburg Soviet had wired all units: (1) To refrain from any unauthorized action; (2) To carry out regional Staff orders *only after their approval by the Military Department*. And the telegram carried an invitation to come to Smolny that same day for personal explanations.

This wire was held up in the Central Ex. Com. Nevertheless representatives of most of the units appeared at Smolny. In the

name of the Central Ex. Com. the meeting was declared incompetent. As you like! It took place anyhow, and of course Trotsky took the floor. One of the Central Ex. Com. members asked for the floor at this incompetent meeting, but didn't get it.

The unit delegates, however, had not been gathered together to be agitated at again, but to be listened to. The 'speeches from the floor' were in the last analysis all alike: the Izmailovskys, Chasseurs, Volhynians, Grenadiers, Cuxholms, Semyonovskys, Rifles, Pavlovskys, the Electro-Technical Battalion, the Moscow Regiment, the 89th, and others—all said the self-same thing: Power to the Soviets; they would come out at the first call; mistrust and contempt for the Government—and sometimes for the Central Ex. Com. into the bargain. Of those present only the *cavalry* units declared either their passivity or their refusal to come out at all. This was 'neutrality'—a term often used at this time.

The next day, the 19th, the Central Ex. Com. convened another, 'competent', garrison meeting. This time the organizers obviously preferred to *talk*, not listen. Dan thought it necessary to say that a Soviet Congress in his opinion was now 'unsuitable', although no one was thinking of disrupting it. But for the most part of course he spoke of the 'unsuitability' and calamitousness of a demonstration. He was opposed by Trotsky—in the customary spirit. But the delegates themselves spoke up, showing the Star Chamber the same scene as the evening before: *we shall obey the Petersburg Soviet absolutely and come out only on its summons.*

Finally, on Saturday the 21st there was another meeting—of the regimental and company committees of all units. Once again—Trotsky. Again the everlasting 'current moment', but three decisions.

First of all, the Soviet Congress was assembling and would take power in order to secure land, peace, and bread; the garrison solemnly promised to place all its forces down to the last man at the disposal of the Congress.

Secondly, the Military Revolutionary Committee was now formed and in operation; the garrison welcomed it and promised it full support in everything it undertook.

Thirdly, the following morning, Sunday the 22nd, the Day of the Petersburg Soviet, was a day of the peaceful muster of forces; the garrison, without demonstrating anywhere, would

watch over order and in case of need resist any provocative attempts of the bourgeoisie to carry discord into the revolutionary ranks.

Some minor misunderstandings arose with the Cossack delegates, who referred to Lenin's articles, in alarm about a possible uprising the following day; they were actually preparing for a ceremonial procession, and moreover would never bend the knee to the Germans for peace. There was a hubbub at first, but then a 'common language' was found: an appeal was made to the Cossack brethren inviting them as dear guests 'to our meetings on the holiday of our peaceful muster of forces'.

No one voted against Trotsky's resolution. Only fifty-seven people remained neutral and abstained. It seemed that one could remain calm. Things were firm enough here.

On October 21st the Petersburg garrison *conclusively acknowledged the Soviet as sole power, and the Military Revolutionary Committee as the immediate organ of authority.*

Two days earlier the District Commander had again reported to the Premier: 'There is no reason to think the garrison will refuse to obey the orders of the military authorities'.

One could remain calm. The Winter Palace was calm. 'Steps had been taken.'

* * *

I spent that night in the Karpovka because I had to speak the next day at noon at a mass-meeting in the People's House.

The decisive day came. The Cyclopean building of the People's House was packed to the doors with a countless throng. They filled the enormous theatres to overflowing in the expectation of mass-meetings. The foyer, buffet, and corridors were also full. Behind the scenes people kept asking me: Just what did I intend to talk about? I replied—about the 'current moment', of course. Did that mean—*against the coup*? They began trying to persuade me to speak on foreign policy. After all, that was my speciality! The discussion with the organizers took on such a character I absolutely refused to speak at all. But that was no use either.

Irritated, I went out from backstage, to watch events from the hall. Trotsky was flying along the corridor towards me on to the

stage. He glanced at me angrily and rushed by without any greeting. That was the first time. . . Diplomatic relations were broken off for a long while.

The mood of the people, more than 3,000, who filled the hall was definitely tense: they were all silently waiting for something. The audience was of course primarily workers and soldiers, but more than a few typically lower-middle-class men's and women's figures were visible.

Trotsky's ovation seemed to be cut short prematurely, out of curiosity and impatience: what was he going to say? Trotsky at once began to heat up the atmosphere, with his skill and brilliance. I remember that at length and with extraordinary power he drew a picture (difficult through its simplicity) of the suffering of the trenches. Thoughts flashed through my mind of the inevitable incongruity of the parts in this oratorical whole. But Trotsky knew what he was doing. The whole point lay in the mood. The political conclusions had long been familiar. They could be condensed, as long as there were enough highlights.

Trotsky did this—with enough highlights. The Soviet régime was not only called upon to put an end to the suffering of the trenches. It would give land and heal the internal disorder. Once again the recipes against hunger were repeated: a soldier, a sailor, and a working girl, who would requisition bread from those who had it and distribute it gratis to the cities and front. But Trotsky went even further on this decisive 'Day of the Petersburg Soviet'.

'The Soviet Government will give everything the country contains to the poor and the men in the trenches. You, bourgeois, have got two fur caps!—give one of them to the soldier, who's freezing in the trenches. Have you got warm boots? Stay at home. The worker needs your boots. . .'

These were very good and just ideas. They could not but excite the enthusiasm of a crowd who had been reared on the Tsarist whip. In any case, I certify as a direct witness that this was what was said on this last day.

All round me was a mood bordering on ecstasy. It seemed as though the crowd, spontaneously and of its own accord, would break into some religious hymn. Trotsky formulated a brief and general resolution, or pronounced some general formula like 'we

will defend the worker-peasant cause to the last drop of our blood'.

Who was—for? The crowd of thousands, as one man, raised their hands. I saw the raised hands and burning eyes of men, women, youths, soldiers, peasants, and—typically lower-middle-class faces. Were they in spiritual transports? Did they see, through the raised curtain, a corner of the 'righteous land' of their longing? Or were they penetrated by a consciousness of the *political occasion*, under the influence of the political agitation of a *Socialist*? Ask no questions! Accept it as it was. . .

Trotsky went on speaking. The innumerable crowd went on holding their hands up. Trotsky rapped out the words: 'Let this vote of yours be your vow—with all your strength and at any sacrifice to support the Soviet that has taken on itself the glorious burden of bringing to a conclusion the victory of the revolution and of giving land, bread, and peace!'

The vast crowd was holding up its hands. It agreed. It vowed. Once again, accept this as it was. With an unusual feeling of oppression I looked on at this really magnificent scene.

Trotsky finished. Someone else went out on to the stage. But there was no point in waiting and looking any more.

Throughout Petersburg more or less the same thing was going on. Everywhere there were final reviews and final vows. Thousands, tens of thousands and hundreds of thousands of people. . . This, actually, was already an insurrection. Things had started. . .

* * *

At about 5 or 6 o'clock, I don't remember just why, a meeting of our Pre-Parliament fraction was scheduled in the Marian Palace. But almost no one was there. In the reading-room I came across two or three comrades, in deep arm-chairs, lazily exchanging remarks. I began to tell them what I had seen and heard that day. But I don't think it made much impression. Dr. Mandelberg, coming to the point, began talking about what was going to happen in the Pre-Parliament on Tuesday or Wednesday.

'What?' I stopped him. 'D'you think there's still going to be a Pre-Parliament on Tuesday and Wednesday? Don't delude yourself! In two or three days the Pre-Parliament will no longer exist. . .'

But they ironically waved me aside. Two hours passed. The time assigned for our fraction meeting had already gone by. I didn't go away because at about 8 or 9 o'clock an *inter-fraction* meeting was scheduled on the question of a peace formula. While waiting I wandered about the empty half-dark rooms. All at once a group of people from other fractions appeared—Peshekhonov, Kuskov, Skobelev, and someone else. They were already looking for the other delegates in order to begin the conference. Well, what had they seen and heard today? What did they think? I went up to them and abruptly flung out: 'So the insurrection's begun! What are your impressions?'

For a long moment the group looked at me in frowning silence, not knowing what to say. Insurrection? No, they didn't know a thing. Should they believe me? How should they reply? Whether you believed it or not you shouldn't get into this sort of conversation. After all, if the insurrection really had begun Sukhanov of course would be in it. . .

The inter-fraction meeting began, but we didn't have time to finish. We were interrupted by a group of people who had rushed over from Smolny with extraordinary news.

CHAPTER 29

OVERTURE

IN actual fact the overturn was accomplished the moment the Petersburg garrison acknowledged the Soviet as its supreme authority and the Military Revolutionary Committee as its direct command. Such a decision, as we know, was made at the meeting of the garrison representatives on October 21st. But in the unprecedented setting this act may be said to have had an *abstract character*. No one took it for a *coup d'état*.

And no wonder. The decision, after all, did not really change the situation: even earlier the Government had had no real power or authority. The real power in the capital had already been in the hands of the Bolsheviks of the Petersburg Soviet long before, and nevertheless the Winter Palace had remained the Government, and Smolny—a private institution. Now the garrison had declared officially, *urbi et orbi*, that it did not recognize the Government and was subject to the Soviet. But did it matter what was said in Smolny, where there was nobody but Bolsheviks?

Nevertheless, this is a fact: by October 21st the Provisional Government had already been overthrown, and was non-existent in the territory of the capital. Kerensky and his colleagues, calling themselves Ministers, were still completely at liberty, busy with something or other in the Winter Palace; in many parts of the country they were still recognized as the Government (wherever the Soviets were not Bolshevik), and in addition they might still have some real support outside the capital and theoretically speaking have been able to destroy the Bolsheviks and their Petersburg garrison together. The main thing, however, was that no new power had been proclaimed, and the situation was transitional. It was the same as on February 28th, when the capital garrison turned against the Tsarist Government but there was no new Government; when Tsar Nicholas was at liberty and busy at Headquarters; when his authority was still recognized in many parts of the country and he could still find loyal troops to crush the insurgent capital.

Nevertheless the Government was already overthrown on October 21st, as Tsar Nicholas had been on February 28th. What remained now was essentially to *complete* what had been done—first of all, to make the overturn official by proclaiming a new government, and secondly, to liquidate *de facto* the pretenders to power, thus achieving general acknowledgement of the accomplished fact.

The significance of what was accomplished on October 21st was obscure not only to the man-in-the-street and the spectator; it was not clear to the revolutionary leaders themselves. Glance into the memoirs of one of the chief figures of the October Days, Antonov-Ovseyenko,¹ secretary of the Military Revolutionary Committee. You'll see a complete 'unawareness' of the internal evolution of events. This gave rise to a lack of system and orderliness in the external, military-technical measures of the Bolsheviks. It might have ended for them much less successfully if they had been dealing with a different adversary. It was luck that the adversary was not only unaware, but completely blind; and not only blind, but equal to zero with respect to real power. . .

But here's what must be taken into account: neither Smolny nor the Winter Palace could be fully aware of the meaning of events. It was obscured by the historical position of the Soviet in the revolution. A confusion of ideas inevitably flowed from the fact that for half a year the totality of real power had been in the hands of the Soviet, while at the same time there existed a Government, and indeed an independent and sovereign one. The Soviet, by tradition, did not acknowledge that it was a government; and the Government, by tradition, did not acknowledge that it was a mere sham. . . How many times, after all, had even the garrison passed resolutions almost identical with its vote on October 21st? How many times had it sworn allegiance to the Soviet, both after the July events and during the Kornilov revolt? And this, after all, had not only not been an overturn, but had even been made in honour of the Coalition. How could one tell that now something completely different had taken place?

¹ Antonov-Ovseyenko, Vladimir Alexandrovich (1884–1938): a Bolshevik from 1903; of a military family; a leading figure in preparation of Bolshevik insurrection in October. Member of Trotskyite opposition, 1923–28; sent to Spain by Soviet Government during the Spanish Civil War; on his return to Russia was shot. (Ed.)

In the Winter Palace it was quite impossible to tell. But Smolny didn't appreciate it either. If it *had* been possible to tell in the Winter Palace, one would have thought that a desperate attempt to destroy Smolny then and there would have been inevitable. If Smolny had appreciated it, one would have thought that the inevitability of such an attempt on the part of the Winter Palace should have been manifest; and it would have been vital to liquidate the Winter Palace at once, at one blow, in order to forestall it.

But no, both sides thought the business of an overturn had not yet begun. The Winter Palace didn't care a rap for the vote of October 21st, while Smolny silently, gropingly, cautiously, chaotically, moved on to something that in essence appeared to be an overturn, but was actually only its formal recognition.

* * *

A few hours after the meeting of the garrison, on Saturday night, October 21st, representatives of the Military Revolutionary Committee went to see the District Commander, Polkovnikov. They demanded the right to countersign all Staff orders to the garrison. Polkovnikov categorically refused. The Smolny delegates withdrew.

The General Staff was—*the General Staff of an enemy army*. The correct tactics (according to Marx) required that the insurgents, being the attacking side, destroy, shatter, paralyse, and liquidate this centre of the whole enemy organization in one annihilating onslaught. A detachment of 300 volunteers—sailors, workers, party soldiers—could have done this without the slightest difficulty; at that time the possibility of such a raid had not even entered anyone's head.

But Smolny acted differently. The Bolsheviks went to the enemy and said: We demand power over you.

The action of the Military Revolutionary Committee on the night of October 21st was completely superfluous. It might have proved extremely dangerous, if it had provoked a proper response from the Staff. But it turned out to be completely safe: the District Commander didn't understand this action and didn't respond adequately. He could have arrested the delegates of a 'private organization', which (like Kornilov on August 26th) was demanding power over the highest military authority and

was definitely embarking on a revolt. Then Polkovnikov might have collected 500 military cadets, officers and Cossacks, and made an attempt to destroy, shatter, and paralyse Smolny. At that moment he had more than a few chances of success; in any case, it would seem, nothing else was left for him to do.

But the Staff understood nothing. Indeed, as a matter of fact this was not the first time the Soviet had wished to countersign its orders. During the April Days, after all, something similar had been announced by the garrison without any warning: that the commander was not to take troops out of the barracks without the permission of certain Soviet Mensheviks and SRs. And there was no revolt and no overturn at all there. The matter was very satisfactorily settled with Miliukov and Guchkov in the Liaison Commission. So why should they think of overturns or revolts now? Polkovnikov categorically refused: the delegates left empty-handed. All was well.

The next day, Sunday, the District Commander gave the journalists an authoritative explanation of the inwardness of the conflict that had taken place. The point, you see, was that the Government refused to confirm a Commissar sent to the Staff by the Petersburg Soviet. The Government would not recognize a Bolshevik in such a post. Besides, there was already a Commissar on the Staff, sent by the Central Ex. Com. In addition, in the units of the Petersburg garrison recently new elections for unit Commissars had been energetically proceeding: Mensheviks and SRs were being thrown out and replaced everywhere by Bolsheviks. The Government protested against the elections. That was the essence of the conflict. But it was to be hoped that it would be smoothed over.

The whole attention of the Winter Palace and the Staff was fixed on street demonstrations. It was in case they happened that 'steps had been taken'. But there were no demonstrations. Hence, all was well. It was possible to occupy oneself with current business.

On Sunday, October 22, the Council of Ministers was occupied with it. Kerensky, however, also went into the question of the preservation of order. He had an excellent command of the essence of the conflict between the Staff and Smolny. Polkovnikov had given him a detailed report. You can't baffle sensible, statesmanlike people: Moscow once burned because

of a copeck candle; not so long ago, the World War had begun because of the assassination of an Austrian Crown Prince; and the conflict between Smolny and the Staff arose from the non-confirmation of a commissar. . .

It was all clear enough, but all the same Kerensky, according to reports, insisted on the definitive liquidation of the Military Revolutionary Committee. He was determined. But—Polkovnikov persuaded him to wait a little: he would fix things! Kerensky began waiting.

* * *

Meanwhile the Soviet began assembling in Smolny for an emergency session. The delegates arrived haphazardly. Most of them had been holding mass-meetings in the factories and elsewhere. But the point was not the deputies, it was the representatives of the regiments, who had again been assembled as an emergency measure. Trotsky flew to them and explained the new state of affairs. It seemed the Staff did not agree to submit to the control of the Military Revolutionary Committee. Very odd, what? But one way or another it imposed a 'further step'.

The further step was in the form of a telephone message, sent out at once to all units of the garrison in the name of the Soviet; it read: 'At a meeting on October 21st the revolutionary garrison of Petersburg rallied around the Military Revolutionary Committee as its governing body. In spite of this the Staff of the Petersburg military area has failed to recognize the Military Revolutionary Committee, and refuses to carry on work jointly with the representatives of the Soldiers' Section of the Soviet. By this very fact the Staff has broken with the revolutionary garrison and the Petersburg Soviet. By breaking with the organized garrison of the capital, the Staff has made itself the tool of counter-revolutionary forces. The Military Revolutionary Committee divests itself of any responsibility for the actions of the Staff. . .

'Soldiers of Petersburg! The defence of revolutionary order against counter-revolutionary attacks is incumbent on you, under the leadership of the Military Revolutionary Committee. No orders to the garrison, not signed by the Military Revolutionary Committee, are valid. All Soviet orders for today, the

Day of the Petersburg Soviet, remain in full force. Vigilance, firmness, and unwavering discipline is the duty of every soldier of the garrison. The revolution is in danger! Long live the revolutionary garrison!

The premises of this document are completely hollow: merely awesome agitational words with very naïve content. But the *conclusions* are extremely substantial—the garrison was not to execute the orders of the legal authorities.

Now this was definitely an *insurrectionary act*. Hostilities had definitely begun—before the eyes of the whole nation. But, at the same time, weren't troops moved up to occupy the Staff, railway stations, telegraphs, telephones, and other centres of the capital? And detachments also sent to arrest the Provisional Government? After all, you can't declare war unequivocally and definitely before the country and the army and not begin combat activities, to anticipate the initiative's passing into the hands of the enemy.

This, however, was just what had happened. War had been declared in unmistakable terms, but combat activities were not begun. No one attacked either the Staff or the Provisional Government. . . This, to put it mildly, was not according to Marx. And nevertheless this kind of conduct proved quite safe.

After receiving the declaration of war, without being either arrested or hampered in their movements, did the Staff take the initiative into its own hands? Did it fling itself on the mutineers in a last desperate attempt to defend the State and the revolution against the seditious Bolsheviki? The Staff did nothing of the sort.

Instead of combat activities Polkovnikov scheduled a Staff meeting. Representatives of the Central Ex. Com., the Petersburg Soviet, and the regimental committees were invited to it. Smolny sent the well-known Bolshevik second-lieutenant Dashkevich with two or three representatives of the garrison meeting that had just ended. Dashkevich tersely repeated the decision of this meeting, that is, the content of the telephone message given above: all Staff orders to be countersigned, otherwise they would not be executed. . . Then the Smolny delegation withdrew, having refused to listen to their opponents.

At the Staff they began chattering about what to do. A few representatives from the garrison committees reported on the

mood of their units. They, of course, couldn't tell the district commander anything reassuring. But then the Staff began reassuring itself: the conflict, after all, had arisen because of the non-confirmation of a Commissar; that was nothing; it had happened only because someone selected by the Central Ex. Com. had already been confirmed. Somehow things would be smoothed over. . . In the newspapers we read: 'After a brief exchange of opinions no definite decisions were taken; it was considered necessary to wait for the resolution of the conflict between the Central Ex. Com. and the Petersburg Soviet.' (*Rech*, No. 250.)

Very good. But really—were the Bolsheviks timid, unconscious, and clumsy, or did they know whom they were dealing with? Was this a criminally light-minded risk on their part, or were they acting on a certainty?

* * *

Now, what forces did Kerensky have? There was, of course, first of all, the garrison of the capital in general. After all, all power was in the hands of the Provisional Government; the local army authorities were at their posts, and we are familiar with their reports: 'There are no grounds for thinking the garrison won't obey orders.' Without this conviction, of course, the entire picture of the conduct of the Winter Palace and Staff would have been different.

But nevertheless *especially* reliable units, which could be depended on without any risk and to any extent, might have to be used against the Bolsheviks. This had been acknowledged, after all, even in August, when the 3rd Corps had been called back from the front. And since then specially reliable cadres which might be needed against the internal enemy had been sought. This same 3rd Corps, at the head of which Kornilov himself had placed the arch-reactionary General Krasnov, was stationed in the suburbs of Petersburg. Kerensky, at the beginning of September, in a coded telegram in Krasnov's name, had ordered this corps to be stationed in Gatchina, Tsarskoe, and Peterhof. Part of the corps had recently been distributed in the nearer parts of the province—for the pacification of the rebellious garrisons. Nevertheless Krasnov's Cossacks would have been a grave threat to the Bolsheviks—if the neighbouring Bolsheviks

had not done some serious work amongst them and promised them peace and immediate departure to their beloved Don. . .

But in any case these units were considered especially reliable. Once again, as in August, Kerensky turned to them first of all. The Bolsheviks, however, had taken their own measures. The northern district Soviet Congress had sufficiently strengthened their military organization. The movements of the Cossacks met with every possible technical obstacle. And in the course of the next three days the Cossacks failed to reach Petersburg. But I'm not saying that on the night of the 22nd Kerensky ordered the Krasnov men to advance; rather, he simply told them to stay at the ready.

Besides the Cossacks, the military cadets were of course considered especially reliable. The Bolsheviks—partly through persuasion and threats, partly through technical means—had had an effect on them too. Not many of them came to Petersburg from the provinces on Kerensky's order. But in any case, from the 23rd on the Winter Palace was guarded primarily by military cadets.

That same night Kerensky and Bagratuni¹ gave orders for a bicycle battalion to be called to Petersburg. The battalion was about to move, but then decided to ask Smolny: why were they being called up and must they go? Smolny, 'with fraternal greetings', replied, of course, that it was quite unnecessary. . .

In general this question of calling up specially reliable troops was not easy at all. But there was nothing to be particularly alarmed about. After all, it was only just in case. . . There might be no demonstration. 'Soviet Day' had passed without excesses. . . The Bolsheviks, to be sure, had executed their decision: Staff orders really were being controlled by local unit Commissars. Nevertheless, orders were being obeyed.

But just what orders did the Staff give that night and the following day? Orders about sentries and uniforms. They were checked on, but obeyed. And the sentries and uniforms in those days may be said to have been brilliant. Hence, all was well.

* * *

In the Pre-Parliament, from the morning of Monday the 23rd on, in a rather empty hall, boring debates on foreign policy flowed on peacefully. There had been some alarm the day

¹ A general who replaced Colonel Polkovnikov as District Commander. (Ed.)

before—it was the stormy ‘Soviet Day’—but everything passed over and serious people went back to their current business. . . Various microscopic fractions talked. Yawning deputies lazily heckled the speakers.

I don’t recall any liveliness in the corridors either. I don’t recall any special reaction to the extraordinary events. Bolsheviks? Oh well, after all, *them*. . . I attacked my fraction comrades and demanded a debate on the general political problem. But in spite of the sympathy of many nothing came of it. As before Martov thought untimely a resolute offensive and the line of immediate and thoroughgoing liquidation of ‘Kerenskyism’.

* * *

In Smolny during those hours everything pursued its course. The Military Revolutionary Committee was in session, and the work was ceaseless; but only the Bolsheviks worked. Smolny had changed considerably during those days. The sections of the Central Ex. Com. were doing hardly any work and their second-floor rooms were shut up. But Smolny hummed with a new crowd, quite grey in aspect. Everything was dirty and untidy and smelt of cheap tobacco, boots, and damp greatcoats. Armed groups of soldiers, sailors, and workers scurried about everywhere. Grey wolves lived in Smolny now, and they were going on with their work.

The Military Revolutionary Committee passed on to the next point on the agenda. This was of special importance: the Commissar assigned to the Peter-Paul Fortress turned up with the information that the Commandant refused to recognize him and had threatened him with arrest. Thus the Fortress must be considered to be in the hands of the Government. This created enormous difficulties—apart from the fact that the Peter-Paul had an arsenal of a hundred thousand rifles. To take the Fortress by force *after* the beginning of military action was more than risky; besides, the Government might hide there until troops arrived from the front to rescue them.

It was necessary to take the Peter-Paul quickly, before the Government stopped debating and started doing something to protect itself. Two methods were proposed for taking over the Fortress. Antonov proposed to bring in a reliable battalion of the Pavlovskys immediately and disarm the garrison of the Fortress.

But in the first place this involved a risk; secondly, it was essentially an act of war, after which it would be necessary to attack at once and liquidate the Government. Trotsky had another proposal, namely, that he, Trotsky, go to the Fortress, hold a meeting there, and capture not the body but the spirit of the garrison. In the first place there would be no risk in that, secondly it might be that even after this the Government would go on living in Nirvana and allow Smolny to extend its authority further and further without let or hindrance.

No sooner said than done. Trotsky set off at once, together with Lashevich. Their harangues were enthusiastically received. The garrison, almost unanimously, passed a resolution about the Soviet régime and its own readiness to rise up, weapons in hand, against the bourgeois Government. A Smolny Commissar was installed in the Fortress, under the protection of the garrison, and refused to recognize the Commandant. A hundred thousand extra rifles were in the hands of the Bolsheviks.

What the Government thought about all this, and what they were saying about it on the General Staff—I have no idea. But neither in one place nor the other *did they do anything* in the course of that whole day, until far into the night.

* * *

After an interval, in the early evening hours, the debates in the Pre-Parliament on foreign policy were resumed. I don't recall any talk in the corridors about what was going on; I don't think anything was known about the taking of the Peter-Paul. But in the hall it was somewhat more cheerful. There were lots of deputies. The certified Soviet diplomat Skobelev made a curious speech: in vulgarly threadbare, empty generalities he 'expounded' the diplomatic wisdom of Ribot and Bonar Law. It was comical to listen to.

But the centre was Martov's speech. This was perhaps the most brilliant speech I ever heard him give. Indeed, even the Right had never heard such a speech from its golden-tongued orators in the Duma. They got angry and interrupted. But this poured oil on the fire; Martov got off a whole pyrotechnical display of images welded into a firm artistic monolith. It was impossible not to be gripped by his oratorical power. And the audience gave it due appreciation.

But what did Martov talk about? He spoke of the revolution, and of the crisis, its cause and conditions. It was not only brilliant, but also remarkable for intellectual grasp and profundity. The content of the speech far overflowed the confines of foreign policy; this was the *philosophy* of the moment. And it was a passionate accusation of the ruling circles. But—it was not the *political* act the moment demanded. It lacked the right political conclusions. It by-passed the stupendous current events. At the critical moment of the revolution Martov failed to find the indispensable words or perform the indispensable act he was capable of.

I listened, paying tribute to Martov the orator, but—made deeply indignant in the last analysis by this speech. . . Tereshchenko spoke—a toothless polemic. But the hall was already thinning out. It was near evening. In the ministerial seats the white, exhausted face of Kerensky was glimpsed and vanished. He didn't speak. About 8 o'clock the meeting closed.

'What a brilliant speech Martov made!' Lapinsky said to me in the corridor, with even a note of surprise.

I angrily shrugged my shoulders.

* * *

While the Pre-Parliament was sitting in the Marian, the garrison representatives had gathered again in Smolny. But there was no reason for it. They had been assembled only for liaison and contact. Those who had come were invited to the Soviet session, which opened at 7 o'clock and was very crowded.

It began with the usual type of agitation, not at all reminiscent of the start of the 'final decisive battle'. Only Antonov recalled one to current events, reporting on the activities of the Military Revolutionary Committee.

An odd scene. The chief of staff of the insurgent troops was making a resounding report on all the measures and tactical steps of his staff—listened to not only by his own army, but also by the enemy army and its staff. The commander of the insurgent troops was announcing publicly: we have begun to conquer and disarm the enemy this way and that, and we're going to go on as we see fit.

Antonov reported: the Military Revolutionary Committee officially began operations on the 20th. Since then it had taken

the following steps (of a definitely rebellious nature): (1) All 'suspect' printing orders now required its sanction; (2) there were Commissars in all the garrison units through whom all Staff orders had to pass; (3) there was also a Commissar in the Peter-Paul Fortress and the Fortress arsenal was now available; (4) arms in all the factory stores and others would be given out only on the Military Revolutionary Committee's orders.

He went on to say: the Commissars were objected to by the Staff, but that didn't change anything. Yesterday the Staff suggested that the Military Revolutionary Committee start negotiations with it, but these conversations didn't change anything either. Today the Staff had demanded the cancellation of the telephone message about the preliminary control of its orders; besides this, the Staff proposed to form a Staff Council without the right of veto instead of the Military Revolutionary Committee; but the Military Revolutionary Committee had rejected these demands. And today the Commissars had been holding mass-meetings in all units; the garrison had reaffirmed its adherence to the Military Revolutionary Committee.

He was asked: did he know that troops loyal to the Government had been summoned to Petersburg from various points at the front and from the suburbs? What steps was the Military Revolutionary Committee taking? Antonov replied: the calling up of the troops and their movements were known; some of these troops would be held up, others were themselves refusing to march; it was only a few military cadet detachments there was no information about.

So everyone had heard how the insurrection was going. Did anyone feel like expressing his opinion? . . . The Mensheviks and SRs said that an insurrection was going on, that the Bolsheviks were seizing power and that all this threatened disaster. The Menshevik-Internationalist Astrov, a very bitter controversialist, specially emphasized the disastrousness of the split within the democracy: this was unjustified if only because the Bolsheviks themselves were not unanimous on the question of the insurrection; nothing would come of it but a bloody skirmish. Astrov worked up the meeting to such a point that Trotsky refused to continue as chairman. Trotsky's success as speaker, however, was all the greater.

'Yes,' he said, 'an insurrection is going on, and the Bolsheviks,

in the form of the Congress majority, will take the power into their own hands. The steps taken by the Military Revolutionary Committee are steps for the seizure of power.'

Had everybody heard? Or was it still not clear enough?

A resolution was passed: the Military Revolutionary Committee's measures were approved; it was also charged with taking steps against riots, plundering, and other attempts to destroy order and the safety of the citizenry.

That same evening Smolny got a wire from Helsingfors, from the Baltic Fleet. The Fleet said it was attentively listening for every movement of both camps. At the first call from Smolny it would move its forces against the counter-revolution. This was not only a reliable Bolshevik force, but an active one. A decisive blow without this force would have been risky in the extreme. But—for the time being—Smolny didn't summon it.

* * *

Around 11 o'clock I was sitting in the newspaper office hurriedly finishing my leading article. It was on the same theme I had formulated an hour before at a session of the Bureau. The overturn which was giving the power to the Bolshevik Party was a dangerous adventure. It could only be forestalled and the revolution corrected by a decisive change of front on the part of the Menshevik-SR ruling circles.

An odd little incident arose from this leading article. I read it to Bazarov and Avilov,¹ who were waiting for me to finish. Avilov, who had long since moved far from Lenin, abruptly objected strongly to the expression 'The Bolsheviks are preparing a *coup d'état*.' This still seemed to him doubtful, and such an expression tactless. This made me lose my temper; Bazarov supported me, but Avilov persisted. We were all tense. Bazarov began shouting at Avilov, Avilov at Bazarov, both of them at me, and I at both of them. I flung the article into the wastepaper basket, but it was needed. We got it out and, continuing to shout at each other, went to the door. Avilov and Bazarov went home, and I to the printers' to get out the paper.

* * *

¹ Avilov, Boris Vasilyevich (1874- ?): a Bolshevik until February 1917, later an editor of *Novaya Zhizn*. (Ed.)

During that night of the 23rd work was going on at the General Staff too. Kerensky again went there for the night. But what could he do? It must have seemed time to act. Whatever his thoughts, and however he concealed the danger from himself, it was evidently impossible to wait any longer. The Peter-Paul had been taken, the arsenal had been seized, the Staff's demand that the Commissars should be removed had been refused, and it had been announced in unmistakable terms: 'I, Smolny, will certainly gobble you up, Kerenskyism, whenever I feel like it.' He must act—now or never.

The specially reliable units had now all been called up. If they didn't come, there was nothing to be done about it. Nevertheless detachments had been formed for the defence of the Winter Palace; guard-duties were being performed. In the city, of course, there *were* loyal elements, if not troops. It might be possible to form a detachment of several thousands from military cadets, the women's services, engineers, and Cossacks. A scratch detachment like that might be quite effective. But a firm decision to *act and attack* had to be made.

The Staff had made no effort to form a scratch detachment. It was muddled and vacillating. And it began to 'act'—in the habitual way, quite safely for the adversary, and not involving any risk whatever for itself. That night the Staff wrote a whole pile of orders. First, to avoid the seizure of motor-cars by the insurgents, all owners were ordered to place their cars at the disposition of the Staff; the 'full rigour of the law' was promised for disobedience, but it goes without saying that not one loyal bourgeois responded to this, and during the day the Staff lost even those cars it had. Secondly, all demonstrations were again prohibited 'on pain of arrest for armed rebellion'; execution by the troops of 'orders' emanating from 'various organizations' was also prohibited. Thirdly, an appeal to company, regimental, and brigade committees also announced that the District Commander's orders had to be obeyed: 'there are Central Ex. Com. Commissars on the Staff and therefore (!!) non-execution of orders would cause the disorganization and shattering of the revolutionary garrison'. For his part the Central Ex. Com. Commissar 'seconded the execution of the Staff's orders', pointing out that 'they were issued with his knowledge'.

Are you laughing, reader? Does the picture seem too pathetic?

I can't help it. The sovereign Government could emit only this empty babbling.

But is it possible that it didn't even dare call its enemy, not by an allusion, but by his real name? Can it be possible that it did not even permit itself in the Cabinet—confidentially, between Kerensky and Polkovnikov—to write down something with greater real content? Paper, after all, will stand for anything. Bolder, bolder!

Kerensky and Polkovnikov wrote: 'In view of the illegal activities of the representatives of the Petersburg Soviet assigned as Commissars to the units, institutions, and departments of the War Office, I order (1) all Commissars of the Petersburg Soviet to be removed until their confirmation by a Government Commissar of the district, (2) all illegal activities to be investigated for submission to a court martial, (3) all illegal activities to be reported to me instantly with an indication of the name of the Commissars. Polkovnikov.'

You can see that despair gives courage. The 'court martial', of course, was rhetoric as before. And as for removing the Commissars—who would remove them? In the units, after all, the order would fall into the hands of those very Commissars, who had already removed everyone who didn't obey them. So though it may have been bold enough, it wasn't very businesslike.

But the activity of the Staff that night was not limited to this. Towards morning the Staff had finally grown bold, or else desperate. And it decided to start fighting. . . What, did it send a detachment to seize Smolny, where there was no longer the democracy but only Bolshevik rebels? No, that would have been too much. The Staff did something else. I emphasize: in principle this was no less a destruction of constitutional guarantees and liberties and no less an act of violence than the seizure of mutinous Smolny would have been. But to make up for this the measure undertaken was first customary, secondly facile and cowardly, thirdly empty and futile. This was just as much as the wisdom and efficiency of the Provisional Government were equal to.

At 6 in the morning, on Polkovnikov's order, a few military cadets, headed by a Commissar of Militia, appeared at the offices of the Bolshevik papers *Rabochii Put* and *Soldat* (The Soldier) and announced that the papers were shut down. The responsible editor met the 'legitimate authorities' with wide-

open eyes: what? did Polkovnikov still exist, or any Government at all except the Military Revolutionary Committee? He was assured that they did, and the cadets ruined the matrices, sealed the printing-presses, and destroyed the numbers already printed.

This was what it was equal to! After this, to pass off its cowardliness as democratic spirit and its simple-mindedness as respect for freedom was impossible (as indeed it had been before). The Bolshevik papers, you see, *were calling for an insurrection*, and so were destroyed, only to revive the very next day, while Smolny and the unit Commissars had already *made the insurrection* long ago, and they didn't lay a finger on them—out of democracy and love of liberty!

Nevertheless all the data indicate that the scene in the printing-shop could have been successfully repeated in Smolny too. There too they had so little belief in Polkovnikov that a good scratch detachment wouldn't have had much trouble. Some resistance would probably have been shown, and the affair wouldn't have come off without skirmishing, but the liquidation of Smolny was *possible*.

And the same question again: Why didn't the Military Revolutionary Committee attack and strike a decisive blow? If there is some reason to believe that Smolny could have been smashed, there can be no doubt at all that it would have been easy to occupy the Staff and seize the Ministers. In the last analysis there could be only one answer: from *political considerations* they were postponing the final blow until the Congress on the 25th. This was a tremendous risk which I think it would have been impossible to take on a cold calculation of all possible chances. But it reveals the most characteristic trait of this whole unprecedented insurrection: the insurgent camp, seeing no real strength in its adversary, acted with absolute irresponsibility, allowing itself something that is impossible in war, in manœuvres, or in a chess game.

In those pre-dawn hours of October 24th, when Kerensky started combat activities by swooping down on the Bolshevik press, two torpedo-boats came into Petersburg from Helsingfors. They had been sent by the Baltic Fleet to support the insurrection. Smolny—for the time being—hadn't called them. But the sailors themselves had sent them, under the pretext of 'greeting the Congress'.

CHAPTER 30

OCTOBER 24TH

EARLY in the morning of the 24th the Military Revolutionary Committee learned of the destruction of its press. It immediately set to work. It occupied the city, the Staff, and the Winter Palace, didn't it? Oh no—this is what it did.

First it sent a telephone message to all army units: 'The Petersburg Soviet is threatened; during the night counter-revolutionary conspirators ('very good!') attempted to call out the military cadets and the shock battalions; we order a regiment in battle readiness to be brought up and await further orders. . . For the Chairman, PODVOISKY. Secretary: ANTONOV.'

Then detachments of Lithuanians and Sappers were sent to the printing-presses of the shut-down newspapers. The printing-presses were unsealed and set in motion under the protection of the Military Revolutionary Committee's troops.

Further, two proclamations were drawn up. One said: 'The enemies of the people passed over to the attack during the night and are contemplating a treacherous blow against the Soviet; therefore the regimental and company committees and the Commissars must meet at once; no one must leave the barracks; firmness must be maintained, doubts avoided. The people's cause is in firm hands.' The second proclamation spoke of the struggle against riots and disorders: the Military Revolutionary Committee was on guard; the criminal pogromists and agents of the counter-revolution would be wiped off the face of the earth; the populace was called upon to restrain hooligans and Black Hundred agitators.

But alongside all this the Military Revolutionary Committee thought it necessary to publish this ruling of its own on October 24th: 'In spite of all kinds of rumours, the Military Revolutionary Committee states that it definitely does not exist to prepare and execute a seizure of power, but exclusively to defend the interests of the Petersburg garrison from counter-revolutionaries and pogromist attacks.' A *Novaya Zhizn* reporter asserts that this motion was passed unanimously. This was a

special jibe at the Provisional Government. No one could have believed it any longer.

Finally, together with the order to the garrison about battle readiness, still another important step was taken. Over Sverdlov's signature a telegram in code was sent to Smilga, the chairman of the Finnish district committee in Helsingfors: 'Send regulations.' This meant: send 1,500 picked sailors and soldiers to our aid. But at best, if no one and nothing hindered them, they could not be in Petersburg until twenty-four hours later.

And it was only now, during the day and evening of the 24th, that armed detachments of Red Army militia-men and soldiers began to rally to Smolny to defend the staff of the insurrection. It's impossible to say how staunch or reliable they were. As we know their spirit was only moderate. The soldiers were well-disposed, but scarcely reliable. The workers were reliable, but scarcely steadfast, never having smelt powder in their lives. However, towards the evening of the 24th the defence of Smolny began to look like something.

* * *

And that morning the Provisional Government assembled in the Winter Palace. They busied themselves with 'organic work', supply, etc. Then they proceeded to the 'situation that has arisen'. Kerensky again insisted on the arrest of the Military Revolutionary Committee. But the Minister of Justice, Malyantovich, and someone else objected. Then Kerensky decided to appeal to the Pre-Parliament and immediately set out for it. This was quite unnecessary and absurd. Limitless powers were available. Practice, tradition, and custom also allowed any arrests or attacks to be carried out: after all, hundreds of Bolsheviks were sitting as before in the gaols, going hungry, vainly awaiting inquiries and the formulation of charges; as before, people were being seized and locked up for agitation as opportunity presented itself. So why had a special question arisen about the arrest of a few Bolsheviks who were the core of a clear-cut revolt that had already started? Was it because there was a risk there—of fighting and bloodshed? Nonsense! After all, they had equipped an expedition against the Durnovo villa—with devastation and bloodshed. . . No, here there was simply a lack

of resolution or boldness, just the decrepitude and impotence of 'the sovereign Government'.

But in any case some further combat measures were decided on. Which ones? Those within their capacities. Orders were given to raise all the bridges, except the Palace Bridge, in order to hinder marchers. They had enough forces for this; it had been tried once before—on July 5th; it was futile, and even harmful.

The raising of the bridges at once produced in the city the circumstances of a *coup d'état* accomplished and disorders begun. The whole capital, hitherto quite tranquil, became agitated. Crowds began gathering in the streets. Armed detachments started moving; the bridge-raising had to be stopped, and where it had already taken place to be reversed. For these operations the Military Revolutionary Committee moved up workers and Red Army men. There were some small clashes at the bridges, or rather quarrels and friction. Neither side felt like a serious brawl. Depending on numbers, now the Red Army men would yield, now the military cadets. The bridges were lowered and raised again several times that day.

Excitement and crowds were the sole result of the Government's new measure. Nevertheless there were no disorders. Shooting wasn't seen anywhere. To make up for that the most alarming 'reports' flew around the city all day. On the 24th everyone thought the *coup* had begun.

* * *

Between 12 and 1 o'clock the Pre-Parliament opened. That too started off with 'organic work'. Nikitin, the Minister of the Interior, was making a report on local anarchy and the seizures of supplies in transit. But while he was speaking Kerensky appeared and hurried on to the platform immediately after Nikitin. White, excited, his eyes red with sleeplessness, but a little triumphant, he said the Government had instructed him to make a statement.

But he made a lengthy speech: the Constituent Assembly and the consolidation of the revolution were imminent. The Provisional Government was protecting the freedom and rights of the populace. But enemies of the State—Right and Left—were leading to disaster by invoking dictatorship and insurrection.

The Bolsheviks were preparing a *coup d'état*. There were incontestable proofs of it. Kerensky proved this at length, quoting *Rabochii Put* and the articles of the political criminal Lenin-Ulyanov we are familiar with. Then he made a diversion: and all this while the Government, three weeks before the Constituent Assembly, 'was debating in a final form the question of transferring the land to the hands of the rural committees' and sending a delegation to Paris where 'amongst other questions steps for bringing nearer the conclusion of the war would be submitted to the attention of the Allies'. Then the Premier gave an account of the current conflict between Smolny and the Staff. The Government proposed, in the form of an ultimatum, the cancellation of the telephone message on control of the Staff. 'Even though all data were available for immediate recourse to rigorous measures, the military authorities thought it best first to give the people every opportunity of rectifying their conscious or unconscious error' (exclamation from the Right: 'But that's just what's bad!'). 'We had to do this also because no material consequences of this order were noticed amongst the troops the day it was announced.'

'In general,' said Kerensky, 'I prefer the Government to act more slowly but, to make up for that, more correctly, and at the necessary moment more resolutely too.' But Smolny had delayed its reply to the ultimatum. It was not until 3 o'clock that morning that a vaguely conditional reply had been given. It was accepted as a declaration that the 'organizers had committed an illegal act, which they were repudiating'. (Miliukov from his seat: 'Highly original!') But of course this was a ruse on the part of Smolny: the cancellation of the telephone message was not announced to the regiments. And now Kerensky discovered that a part of the Petersburg population was in 'a state of insurgence'. The Government had begun a 'judicial investigation'. Also, 'appropriate arrests were proposed'. 'The Provisional Government prefers to be killed and annihilated, but it will never betray the life, honour, and independence of the State'.

Kerensky was given an ovation. The audience in the galleries and the entire hall stood up and applauded—except the Internationalists. In his enthusiasm the Cadet Adzhemov ran forward, and cried, pointing his finger at us: 'Take a picture of

them sitting down.' Kerensky went on: 'The Provisional Government is being reproached with . . .'

'Silliness!' Martov shouted out, amidst hubbub and excitement. The chairman called Martov to order. Kerensky went on:

' . . . with weakness and extraordinary patience. But in any case no one has the right to say that for the whole time I've been at its head, and before that too, it has resorted to any measures of pressure whatever until the State was threatened with immediate danger and destruction.'

Kerensky spoke further of his firm support at the front. He had a whole series of telegrams demanding decisive measures against the Bolsheviks and promising support. Then Konovalov came over and handed him the new telephone message of the Military Revolutionary Committee, already known to us: it demanded the immediate preparation of the regiments for battle. Kerensky looked at the document and then read it aloud. 'In legal language this is called a state of insurrection.'

There followed a patriotic statement about the menace of the foreign foe, and more about the virtues of the State and Kerensky's devotion to the principles of democracy. Finally the Premier finished his speech—a warning on the one hand, and on the other, a demand addressed to the Pre-Parliament.

Again everyone stood up and applauded—except the Internationalists.

In general Kerensky's speech, as we see, was quite superfluous. From a *formal* point of view the Government was fully sovereign, and its most 'decisive' steps were lawful. And in *fact* contact had been achieved in the usual conversations with the Star Chamber: there might be conflict with that on *any* ground, but in the given circumstances the usual arrests of Bolsheviks would have passed off without a hitch. Kerensky made a speech simply because there was nothing else he could do. He made a speech *instead* of doing anything real.

Nevertheless, read his speech: this man, after all, really believed he was doing something, just as he believed that in fact it was out of democracy and a feeling of legality and so on that he failed to destroy Smolny. Such was his nature.

After Kerensky's speech the agenda was of course disorganized. It was decided to make an immediate reply to the head of the State. But for this an interval and consultation and

agreements between the fractions were essential. Everyone got up, amidst excitement and hubbub. I had stopped with someone at the end of the long middle aisle leading from the rostrum, and from a distance saw Kerensky, pale and morose, accompanied by his adjutants, advancing straight towards me from the depths of the auditorium.

Step aside and avoid a face to face encounter? For some months we hadn't come across one another. Between us now there were the barricades, *sans phrases*. I had berated him daily in the press. He had shut down my press. From a distance Kerensky, his eyes narrowed, caught sight of me. We looked at each other, like Peter I and the musketeer in Surikov's famous picture. Coming up within a couple of paces, Kerensky evidently didn't know what to do. Then, rather abruptly, with a resolute gesture, but a glum look, he stretched out his hand.

I never saw him again.¹

* * *

The interval dragged on several hours, almost till evening. I must say I have no recollection at all of what *our* fraction decided. The Mensheviks and SRs turned to us and proposed that we should collect a majority under a *Left wing, Opposition* formula. By tacit consent the former delegates, Martov and I, were sent to this conference of Left fractions. We assembled below, doubtless in the apartments of the SR fraction. A gloomy rainy day of Petersburg late autumn looked into the huge windows facing out on Isaac Square. I think Martov was scribbling out a draft for a general Left formula. But the meeting didn't begin. First one of us, then another, then all of us together, were distracted by the alarming rumours from the city and outskirts. There was talk about outbreaks beginning—now here, now there.

But there were none. We know that the Central Ex. Com. Commissar on the Staff had forbidden the soldiers to go out into the streets. But the very same order had been given by the Military Revolutionary Commission, and finally, by the troop

¹ After the October Revolution Kerensky emigrated, eventually to New York City. He wrote a number of articles and books, including *Prelude to Bolshevism* (1919), *The Catastrophe* (1927), etc. He has remained a leading figure in émigré circles. (Ed.)

commander too. Whichever order seemed most convincing to the troops, they didn't leave the barracks. Personally I ascribe this primarily to their *mood*. It was on the side of the Bolsheviks, but there was no intention of *demonstrating* and *acting*, i.e., taking a chance. Without an order in any case they would never have come out. It would be well if volunteers could be found to come out on Smolny *orders*, when armed masses were needed!

But nevertheless there was alarm in the streets. The raising of the bridges, and the cadet patrols, provoked some panic in the central sections of the city. There were not only groups of cadets on guard at the bridges, arguing with small groups of the workers' Red Guard; tiny detachments of them were posted in the railway stations too and at various points of the city, in the power station, the Ministries, etc. Cadet pickets were standing in the main streets, stopping and requisitioning motor-cars and sending them to the Staff.

As a result, at about 2 o'clock government offices and shops began closing. The Nevsky crowd hurried home. In the midst of the tumult some hooligans appeared and began looting with great boldness, tearing clothing, footwear, and valuables off the passers-by. . . . Towards evening, with the onset of the early autumn dusk, the streets were completely empty. But rumours took on the most monstrous forms.

It was in the atmosphere of these rumours that our inter-fraction commission met. As far as I recall, Martov proved to be *beatus possidens*—the happy possessor of a ready-made formula, which naturally was the basis of the discussion. It contained nothing like the confidence and support Kerensky demanded. It laid it down that the movement of the Bolsheviks had been provoked by the policy of the Government, and therefore peace had to be proposed immediately and the land transferred to the rural committees. As for the struggle against anarchy and possible pogroms, this struggle had to be assigned to a special Committee of Public Safety; it should be composed of representatives of the municipality and the organs of the revolutionary democracy, and should act in contact with the Provisional Government.

This did not, of course, satisfy Kerensky's party comrades. But it didn't satisfy me either. Gots and Zenzinov were demanding at least some kind of 'support', while I was insisting on

immediate liquidation. . . As far as I recall we never came to a final settlement.

* * *

The session of the Pre-Parliament was resumed at 6 o'clock. . . I had just stopped by the office for a moment and then hurried off for a bite to eat at the 'Vienna', two steps away from the Marian Palace.

The Pre-Parliament hall wasn't crowded, but was very lively. Kamkov was on the platform and, to an uproar from the Right, was demanding the resignation of the Provisional Government and the formation of a Government of the democracy. Quite sound conclusions, which no one else formulated from the Pre-Parliament rostrum.

But the most interesting to us were the official representatives of the Menshevik-SR groups. Dan spoke in the name of the entire bloc:

'The bulk of the working class will not embark on the criminal adventure the Bolsheviks are urging on it. . . But while we wish to struggle against Bolshevism in the most decisive way, we do not wish to be an instrument in the hands of that counter-revolution which is trying to gamble on the crushing of this uprising. . . It is the duty of everyone to do everything possible for a peaceful settlement of the conflict. . . It is essential to cut the ground away from under the feet of the Bolsheviks. First of all, the outcry of the masses of the people for peace must be satisfied. Not out of weakness, but out of revolutionary strength we must say that we are demanding immediate steps towards peace negotiations. Further, we must raise the question of the land in such a way as to leave no one in any doubt. . . We don't want any government crisis, and we are ready to defend the Provisional Government, but let it make it possible for the democracy to rally round it.'

This was the contribution of the interstitial groups at the final hour: We don't want to be an instrument of the Kornilovites, but we shall defend the Government (and are already doing so).

Limping on one leg Martov came on to the platform.

'Minister in the future Bolshevik Cabinet' was heard from the Right.

'I am shortsighted', retorted Martov, 'and can't see whether that wasn't a former Minister of Kornilov's Cabinet!'

'In no circumstances', he went on, 'shall we collaborate with Kornilovites. The words of Kerensky, who permitted himself to talk about a rabble, when it is a question of the movement of a considerable part of the proletariat and the army, even though it is being directed towards mistaken goals—those words are a summons to civil war. But I have not lost hope that the democracy that is not taking part in the preparation of an armed demonstration will not permit the victory of those people who are trying to prevent the development of the revolution. . . The democracy must tell the Government that it will receive no support from them unless it gives immediate guarantees that the most vital needs of the country will be realized. . . I am sure that the senseless policy of repression and of hasty measures may provoke a desperate attempt on the part of the masses to join an uprising which they do not want. . . Therefore our fraction is appealing to all elements of the democracy to force the official circles now ruling in the name of Russia to carry on a democratic policy and thus prevent civil war.'

In essence Martov said *almost* everything he should. But this 'almost' was the main point. 'Force those ruling . . .' But was this really possible in the final hour? In form this was parliamentary diplomacy—did it have a place amidst the flames?

The official speaker for our fraction, limping on one leg, *was not up to the occasion.*

To make up for it he had a parliamentary success. . . A short interval was announced. And the Left fractions agreed, as an emergency, to vote for Martov's formula. In general we are already acquainted with it. First of all, it expressed a negative attitude to the Bolshevik uprising; secondly, it laid it down that it was the policy of the Government that had prepared the ground for the uprising, and called for immediate guarantees concerning peace and the land; thirdly, it proposed that the technical measures of combating the uprising be entrusted not to the Government, but to the Committee of Public Safety acting in 'contact' with the official authorities.

The other formula—of the Cadets and Co-operative people—'declared confidence in', 'supported', and demanded decisive measures against the uprising.

The tired deputies were nervous, excited, and wrangling with

each other. . . The interval brought a whole series of alarming rumours. The Bolsheviks had begun. . .

The voting began. Martov's formula was passed by a majority of 122 to 102. . .

A storm of applause on the Left. The Right was thunderstruck. First of all, that morning, after all, the Internationalists had been completely isolated—everyone else had taken part in the ovation for Kerensky. Secondly—what was to be done?

The session ended at 8.30. But the deputies did not disperse. The hall was filled with hubbub and mass-meetings. The Right wing fell on the Mensheviks and SRs. What had they started? They had been asked for support, which they were waiting for in the Winter Palace. And what they had done in essence was to express a lack of confidence! The Government now ought to resign. At a critical hour it was left without support, and the country without a Government.

This view of the formula was fundamentally correct. But the Mensheviks and SRs, under the pressure of the Cadets, lost no time in getting confused and began hastily retreating. Come, come! We meant to put no such idea into the formula. We think a crisis untimely. We just wanted—well, after all, the programme promised should be put into effect. . .

* * *

But in the Winter Palace they were waiting for a formula. It was, after all, necessary for 'decisive measures'. . . At 9 o'clock in the evening the Government assembled in the Malachite Hall. The Chairman of the 'Council of the Republic' hurried there with the formula.

The Premier, after a quick glance, expressed surprise. Why wasn't there the usual parliamentary vote of confidence? Avksentiev didn't have to grope for a reply: it was missing by an oversight. The Premier, reading more carefully, exclaimed: 'Why, in a concealed form there's actually *no* confidence!' Everyone in the Malachite Hall was stupefied. No one had expected a surprise like this. No one had had any doubt that the overwhelming majority of the Pre-Parliament would be an adamant wall around its powerful Government and would emphasize the complete isolation of the handful of Internationalists.

Kerensky declared that in these circumstances he thought it

necessary to surrender his mandate. Let the Praesidium of the Pre-Parliament form another Government. But by now the Chairman of the Council of the Republic was at a loss.

'Wait,' he said, 'I'll ask for the assistance of a couple of friends.'

No sooner said than done. Fifteen minutes later the assistance was in the Malachite Hall. All three began to prevail upon Boris Godunov: the terribly able Avksentiev, the terribly influential Gots, and the terribly cautious Dan. Come, come, we meant nothing of the sort! Kerensky himself had declared that morning that the Government would concern itself with the land and with peace. We support this. We emphasized it only to steal the Bolsheviks' thunder, and also to destroy the legend that the Government and the Pre-Parliament were enemies of the people. . .

Kerensky listened, but continued gently reprimanding the mischievous schoolboys: 'Yes, but these satisfactory comments do not change the formula; the country, after all, would understand it only as a lack of confidence, and the Government's prestige would be destroyed.'

This was reasonable. Here Dan was evidently at a loss, even though he thought a 'government crisis untimely'. Judging by the papers, the weight of this last argument fell to the SRs.

The formula, they declared, was the result of a general misunderstanding. Not one of the SRs could have had any thought of a lack of confidence. It was unsuccessful phraseology—the result of haste.

Kerensky said he would consult with his colleagues. And the colleagues assembled to consider decisive measures against the Bolsheviks—on the basis of a formula expressing support. The Minister conferred, and by virtue of patriotic considerations decided to forgive the Pre-Parliament this time in order not to leave Russia without a strong Government at a perilous moment. The Cabinet decided to remain at the helm. All's well that ends well—says the people's wisdom.

* * *

The representatives of the 'whole democracy' had barely dispersed from the Winter Palace when the Premier got a report that all was well in the streets, but that a detachment of twelve

sailors, led by a very well-armed Commissar, had occupied the Government telegraph agency. The Commissar was already lording it there and imposing a censorship on wires to the provinces. . .

The Government immediately took 'decisive steps'. A detachment of military cadets with an armoured car was sent to the telegraph agency. Outnumbered by the enemy, the twelve sailors surrendered without a struggle. And then another decisive step was taken at once. On the order of the authorities the telephone central exchange cut off all Smolny's telephones. The Military Revolutionary Committee found itself cut off from the garrison. Communication was only possible through couriers—a very substantial inconvenience.

As we see, these two decisive steps were highly indicative of the course of the uprising and its character. There is no doubt that the affair had been formulated by Smolny without sufficient seriousness. The twelve sailors, of course, were not much, but to relinquish such a cardinal point as the telephone exchange meant a general delay in the development of fighting action. It was only permissible *when confronting this particular adversary*. But one way or another carelessness was manifest.

* * *

But what was happening all this time in Smolny? Smolny now had a quite impregnable look. Detachments of sailors, soldiers, and armed workers were posted around and inside the enormous building. There were quite a few machine-guns in the square, besides the cannon. Lorries, on which were crowded people with rifles and other weapons, were making a deafening racket. Now it was no longer possible to arrest the Military Revolutionary Committee, or bring up a detachment of 500 men to *occupy* this nest of insurgents. Now Smolny could only be *besieged and stormed*. This would no longer have been a simple 'measure' of a powerful Government, but an act of civil war. If the Government had massed enough strength, with artillery and the activity and skill of Government troops, I don't think success would have been completely excluded as yet. The chances, however, had grown infinitely smaller. The moment had been missed. It was probably impossible to collect forces in the capital for a siege and storm.

While the Pre-Parliament was voting on Martov's formula, a Soviet session was opening in Smolny. There were very few deputies, but the hall was filled with Congress delegates, representatives of regiments, and all sorts of onlookers. The session was declared informational—only for a report on the events of the past night and that day.

Trotsky presented the report:

Both the night and the day had been uneasy and full of events. During the night negotiations were going on with the Staff (already familiar from what has gone before). Towards morning they were broken off. In place of a definitive answer from the Staff, information was received that shock-troops had been summoned from Tsarskoe and from the junior officers' school at Oranienbaum, and artillery from Pavlovsk. The Military Revolutionary Committee had taken steps. Agitators had been sent out in large groups of thirty to fifty men each. As a result the shock-troops and the artillery refused to come out, and the junior officers split, a minority coming out. The printing-presses of the Bolshevik papers were being protected by reliable detachments; the papers' publication was assured. The cruiser *Aurora* was in the Neva, near Nicholas Bridge; its crew was loyal to the revolution. The Government had ordered the cruiser to leave the Neva waters; but the *Aurora* had not obeyed and was standing on guard. In the Pre-Parliament Kerensky had called the proletariat and the garrison of the capital a rabble; he demanded co-operation in the decisive struggle against the Soviet. The Bolsheviks didn't intend to strike a final blow on the eve of the Congress. The Congress itself would do whatever it decided, and take power into its own hands. But if the Government used the remaining twenty-four hours to enter into an open struggle, then the Soviet would give blow for blow and steel for iron.

Trotsky was questioned. For how many days was there bread in Petersburg? For three days. Were the rumours true about the constant searches? Unauthorized searches and looting would not be permitted, but there would be inspections of warehouses and other places, with the aim of requisitioning the excess on behalf of the people and the army. . .

Then the informational session was closed.

There was a united session of the worker-soldier and the peasant Central Ex. Coms. scheduled in Smolny at 11 o'clock in the evening. After hurrying over to the newspaper office again, I went to Smolny around 10 o'clock. Both outside and inside this armed camp passes were demanded. However, a determined look and the statement 'Member of the Central Ex. Com.' was enough to get inside. The stairs and corridors were packed with an armed mob. In the large hall for some reason the lighting was dimmed. But the hall was full, and there was an extraordinary number of all kinds of arms.

Making our way through the unknown crowd, new to Smolny, Martov and I found two empty seats in the second or third row. Hardly any Central Ex. Com. members were visible amongst the mass of newcomers, who didn't yield their seats to the members of the 'supreme Soviet organ'. In front, at the sides, and at the back we saw the greatcoats and grey features of the Bolshevik provinces. The mood too was grey. Faces were tired, dull, even gloomy. There was no enthusiasm.

The meeting began around midnight. Gots was sitting alone at a table on the large, dimly lit platform. He gave Dan, of course, the floor for a report on the 'current moment'. But with his own eyes Dan saw he was not in a meeting of the united Central Ex. Coms. at all, but amongst the direct participants in the insurrection, and it was precisely to them that he addressed his speech. His arguments were rather feeble. They were more of a plea—to refrain from a disastrous *coup* and not obey the Bolsheviks. The audience listened without any special objections, but also without any interest.

'Weak,' I said to Martov. 'He plainly has nothing to say. It's impossible to convince anyone with a naked plea.'

And from the hall there rang out some lazy but angry exclamations: 'All right! We've heard all that! We've stood it for eight months!'

Again they spoke up through yawns: 'We've been listening for eight months! You and your blood-sucker Kerensky! The *provocateur*!'

Dan tried to 'meet them half-way'. He was aware that the Soviet peace policy had been dragging somewhat, and he promised to go forward by 'another, quicker path'. Then he tried to frighten them with hunger, and predicted an im-

mediate Bolshevik attack, transfer of power to the unruly elements of the populace, the triumph of the counter-revolution. . . In vain! From the hall there came an indifferent: 'Too late! We've heard all that!'

Trotsky came out against Dan; though really brilliant, he failed to arouse much enthusiasm in the tired audience. His position, against the background of Dan's attempts to keep up with the revolution, was completely tenable. After all, this was something basic and elementary which the Bolsheviks had been saying for ages, and which was going to realize the power of the Soviets the very next day. This power would be genuinely of the people. For every worker, peasant, and soldier, this was *his* régime. The Soviets would continuously renew their composition. They could not break with the masses and would always be the best exponents of their will. All attempts to frighten them with civil war were in vain.

'There will be none, if you don't falter, since our enemies will capitulate immediately and you will take the place that is rightfully yours, the place of master of the Russian land.'

* * *

And while in the dead of night the interstitial groups were talking this way, neither enemy camp was asleep. One was acting, the other trying to act. At midnight Sverdlov's wire was received in Helsingfors: 'Send regulations.' On the instant work came to the boil. In some two hours the echelons were made up. In place of the 1,500 promised, 1,800 armed sailors with machine-guns and ammunition were already on their way to Petersburg.

But in the Winter Palace around midnight Kerensky was receiving a deputation from the Union of Cossack Troops, headed by the chairman Grekov. The deputation insisted on a struggle against the Bolsheviks and promised its co-operation on condition that the struggle was decisive. Kerensky very willingly agreed: yes, the struggle had to be decisive. Then a telegram was written and sent at once to General Krasnov on the northern front: to bring up his cavalry corps to Petersburg at once. This was, as we know, the same corps that Kerensky had once asked Kornilov for, and which was then declared insurgent. Kerensky was now summoning it again, but Grekov signed the telegram as well, just in case.

However, no Winter Palace signatures at all were valid. Without the name of the Soviet, and under the banner of the Provisional Government, no troops *at all* could now be mobilized on the front for a march on Petersburg. And in this decisive hour Kerensky had to mobilize again the forces loyal to the Soviet. I don't know just when or how this took place. But in view of the obvious inadequacy of his order to the corps commander, on the night of the 24th a parallel order was sent from Petersburg—by the Star Chamber to Voitinsky, the Soviet Commissar of the northern front. It was only through the name of the Soviet and with the closest participation of an authoritative Soviet personality that it was possible to organize an attack on the revolutionary capital by front-line troops.

On the night of the 24th Gots talked to Voitinsky over a direct line. He demanded the immediate despatch of a reliable army against the Bolsheviks. Voitinsky was not sufficiently informed about the state of affairs in Petersburg, and asked whether the order was issued in the name of the Central Ex. Com. Gots asked him to wait until he talked to whomever he had to (Dan, Avksentiev, Skobelev?). A few minutes later Gots said on the direct line that the order was issued in the name of the Praesidium of the Central Ex. Com. Voitinsky acted at once. But he really had no choice; very quickly it was narrowed down to that same Cossack corps of the loyal Tsarist servant Krasnov.

Voitinsky himself told me all about this a few years after the events. The rôle of Voitinsky himself is of relatively little interest here, but it ought to be known just who did most to attack the revolutionary capital and the legal representatives of the workers, peasants, and soldiers. This was the Star Chamber, acting by means of a forgery—of the name of the Soviet, which it knew for certain was not behind it.

That night the Provisional Government left the Winter Palace rather early, at around 2. Kerensky may have taken a rest, but not for more than an hour. He hurried to the Staff.

There very alarming news had been received. It was decided on the spot to send the Cossack troops stationed in the capital into action. But would they go? A telephone message was sent to the 1st, 4th, and 14th Don Cossack Regiments: 'In the name of freedom, honour, and the glory of the fatherland come to the

aid of the Central Ex. Com., the revolutionary democracy and the Provisional Government.'

But the Cossacks did not obey. They got up a mass-meeting and began bargaining. Would the infantry go with them? It was explained at once by authoritative, competent people that in no circumstances would the infantry move for the Government or the Central Ex. Com. Then the regiments declared that they refused to make a living target out of themselves, and would therefore 'abstain'.

Nor did the Staff hope for anything special from these regiments. This is evident from the very text of the order: first, it is propaganda, and secondly, the sovereign Government timidly hides behind the Central Ex. Com. But in any case these regiments were the *last* hope. The cadets and women's shock-troops, taken all together, might have served for the defence of a single point, but weren't enough to defend the whole city.

Indeed, were even the privileged, *ancien-régime* cadets of the capital reliable? The Pavlovsky Academy also refused to come out; the cadets were afraid of the Grenadier Regiment stationed nearby (which was undoubtedly still more afraid of them).

Not one unit came from the suburbs. There was a report that half the armoured cars had gone over to the side of Smolny; the others—no one knew. . . The city lay *undefended*.

CHAPTER 31

OCTOBER 25TH

THE decisive operations of the Military Revolutionary Committee started around 2 in the morning.

Three members of the Military Revolutionary Committee were assigned to work out the dispositions: Podvoisky, Antonov, and Mekhonoshin. Antonov says it was his plan that was accepted. It consisted in occupying first of all those parts of the city adjoining the Finland Station: the Vyborg Side, the outskirts of the Petersburg Side, etc. Together with the units arrived from Finland it would then be possible to launch an offensive against the centre of the capital. But of course—that was only in an extremity, in case of serious resistance, which was considered possible.

But no resistance was shown. Beginning at 2 in the morning the stations, bridges, lighting installations, telegraphs, and telegraphic agency were gradually occupied by small forces brought from the barracks. The little groups of cadets could not resist and didn't think of it. In general the military operations in the politically important centres of the city rather resembled a changing of the guard. The weaker defence force, of cadets, retired; and a strengthened defence force, of Guards, took its place.

From evening on there were rumours of shootings and of armed cars racing round the city attacking Government pickets. But these were manifestly fancies. In any case the decisive operations that had begun were quite bloodless; not one casualty was recorded. The city was absolutely calm. Both the centre and the suburbs were sunk in a deep sleep, not suspecting what was going on in the quiet of the cold autumn night.

I don't know *how* the soldiers behaved. According to all reports, with no enthusiasm or spirit. Occasionally they may have refused to move. A fighting mood or readiness for sacrifice could not be expected from our garrison. But now this had no significance. The operations, gradually developing, went so smoothly that no great forces were required. Out of the garrison

of 200,000 scarcely a tenth went into action, probably much fewer. Because of the presence of the workers and sailors only volunteers could be led out of the barracks. The staff of the insurgents was cautiously feeling its way—you might say too cautiously and *feebly*.

It was natural to try above all to paralyse the political and military centre of the Government, that is, occupy the Winter Palace and the Staff. First and foremost the old authorities and their military apparatus had to be liquidated. Otherwise the insurrection could by no means be considered consummated; and the two powers—one 'legitimate', the other merely future—would have been able to carry on a civil war, with chances greatly favouring the former. So it had to be annihilated first of all. The telegraphs, bridges, stations, and the rest—would take care of themselves.

Nevertheless, throughout the night the insurrectionaries did not even try to touch either the Winter Palace, the Staff or individual Ministers. The objection may be made that the liquidation of the old régime is the *conclusion* of an insurrection. It is very hard and hazardous, for this is the centre of the defence. But was this so in the special conditions of our October insurrection? Had the ground been adequately felt out by Smolny in its cautious movements? Was even the most primitive reconnaissance carried out—by sending a courier to the Staff and to the Winter Palace? No. For the defences of the empty Winter Palace in those hours were absolutely fictitious; while the General Staff, where the head of the Government was located, was not protected at all. As far as can be judged from the scanty data, there was not even the usual pair of sentries at the entrance. The General Staff, together with Kerensky, could have been taken with bare hands. For this few more people were needed than the Military Revolutionary Committee itself contained.

That's how it went on the whole night and the whole morning. It was not until 7 o'clock in the morning, when the telephone exchange was occupied, that the *Staff telephones were cut off*. There you are—revenge for the same operation against Smolny! . . . In general it was all quite frivolous. But in any case let us recall one absolutely credible fact. Kerensky (like all the Ministers, who were at home) might have been seized in the

Staff without the slightest difficulty. This could of course have been done before: now I'm thinking of the period *after the beginning* of decisive combat activities.

In the early morning the troops began to form lines along a few streets and canals. But there was no artillery. And the idea of this operation was more or less obscure. It would seem there must have been some notion of a siege of the Winter Palace and the General Staff nearby. But in any case this wasn't accomplished. The ranks, as I saw them personally, looked not so much like a fighting as a policing force: they did not besiege, at best they surrounded. But they performed even this police task very feebly and without the slightest understanding of its rationale.

* * *

At 5 o'clock in the morning Kerensky summoned to the Staff Manikovsky, the War Minister, who had to come from the Petersburg Side.

At 9 o'clock he hurriedly summoned all the Ministers. As before the Staff was still undefended in any way by anyone. Whole strings of military people were going in and coming out of the entrance. Who they were and why they had come—no one knew. No one asked either for passes or for identification papers. The people going in might all have been agents of the Military Revolutionary Committee, and have declared whenever they liked that the General Staff had passed into Smolny's hands. But this didn't happen.

The head of the Government was in the Staff, but the passers-by didn't know where he was and were not interested in him. The officer on duty ought to have known, but he was not at his post.

Kerensky remained in the study of the Chief of Staff. At the doors there were neither sentries, nor adjutants, nor attendants. The door could simply have been opened and the Premier taken by anyone with the energy.

Kerensky was walking around in an overcoat. He was calling the Ministers together for final instructions. The American Embassy had lent him a car, and he was going to Luga, to meet the troops coming from the front for the defence of the Provisional Government.

* * *

Here is the Smolny estimate of the situation. When all the important points of the city were occupied without any resistance and the ranks, so-called, were placed not very far from the Winter Palace and the Staff, the Military Revolutionary Committee struck the bell. By 10 o'clock in the morning it had already written and had sent to be printed this proclamation: 'To the citizens of Russia: The Provisional Government is overthrown. The state power has passed into the hands of the organ of the Petersburg Soviet of Workers' and Soldiers' Deputies, the Military Revolutionary Committee, which stands at the head of the Petersburg garrison and proletariat. The cause the people have been fighting for—the immediate proposal of a democratic peace, the elimination of private property in land, workers' control of production, and the formation of a Soviet Government—is assured. Long live the revolution of the workers, soldiers, and peasants! . . .'

Roughly the same thing was broadcast by wireless to the whole country and the front. There it was also added that the 'new Government will convoke a Constituent Assembly', and that 'the workers were victorious without any bloodshed.'

To my mind all this was premature. The Provisional Government was still not overthrown. It still existed in the form of the acknowledged official authority and was organizing defences within the capital and the crushing of the rebellion outside. At 10 o'clock in the morning of the 25th the position, to my mind, was no different from what it had been the night or the week before. By the use of its *de facto* influence Smolny had brought the troops out of barracks and distributed them at various points in the city. The Government, having no *de facto* authority, could not hinder this, either the previous night or the week before. But it would be overthrown only when it either was captured or ceased calling itself the Government and *de facto* declined to govern. Now, on October 25th, this was more difficult to attain than the night or a week before: the head of the Government had left for the field army to organize a march on Petersburg, while his colleagues were surrounded by defences they'd never had before in their lives. . . Hence, it was too early to talk about a victory at all, and especially about a bloodless one.

Soon after 12 o'clock I walked to the Marian Palace along the Nevsky and the Moika. The streets were animated, but not alarmed, even though everyone was watching the 'demonstration that had begun'. But some of the shops were shut and others shutting down. The banks, that had hardly opened, were finishing their operations. Government offices were closed. It may be that no alarm was noticeable because the 'demonstration' didn't look at all terrifying. As before there was neither fighting nor shooting anywhere.

In the middle of the Moika I came up against a line of soldiers barring the way. What unit it was I have no idea. There may have been machine-guns there too: since the revolution the eye had become so accustomed to these terrible objects it no longer noticed them. But in any case the soldiers, bored, were standing at ease, and for that matter not close together. This column was not terrifying, not only to any organized military force but to a mob either. Its activity was limited to not letting anyone pass.

But I showed persistence. The Commander hurried over to me—one of the new ones, elected and dependable. I had various credentials on me, including the blue members' card of the Petersburg Ex. Com., signed by Trotsky. But I presented the card of the counter-revolutionary Pre-Parliament, saying that was where I was going. The Commander thought this convincing. He not only willingly ordered me to be let pass, but offered to give me a soldier as escort: he said there was another column to stop me before the Marian Palace. I refused the escort, and as far as I recall wasn't stopped any more. But the Commander, in letting me go, was not averse to a chat and said: 'Incomprehensible! The order was to march. But why—no one knows. Against one's own people, after all. All rather strange. . .'

The Commander smiled with embarrassment, and it was evident that he was indeed rather baffled by everything. There was no doubt about it: there was no spirit; such troops would never fight; they would scatter and surrender at the first blank shot. But there was no one to do any shooting.

I went over to the Marian Palace. There was a lorry standing at the portico steps, and in the portico itself I found a group of some fifteen to twenty sailors and workers. One of them recognized me. They surrounded me and told me they had just driven

the Pre-Parliament out. There was no one in the Palace any more and they wouldn't let me in. But they wouldn't arrest me. No, they didn't want me. Generally speaking they weren't touching members of the Central Ex. Com. By the way, did I happen to know where the Provisional Government were? They had looked for them in the Marian Palace, but hadn't found them. They had to arrest the Ministers, they just didn't know where they were. But just let Kerensky or anyone show his face! The conversation, however, was quite amiable.

* * *

This is what had happened in the Pre-Parliament in my absence. Everything went off very simply. By noon very few deputies had assembled. They were exchanging news with the journalists. This place was occupied, that was occupied. . . Suddenly it was revealed that the Marian Palace telephones had been cut off. Smolny had taken yesterday night's lesson of the Winter Palace to heart.

But the session didn't begin. Fractions were conferring in corners. Then there was a meeting of the expanded Council of 'Elders'. As always, the fateful question was put: What shall we do? But they didn't have time to decide. It was reported that an armoured car, some detachments of the Lithuanian and Cuxholm Regiments, and the sailors of the Guards crew had arrived at the Marian Palace. They were already lining both sides of the staircase and had occupied the first hall. Their commanders were demanding that the Palace premises be cleared immediately.

The soldiers, however, were in no hurry and didn't seem aggressive. The 'Elders' had time for a hasty debate on the new situation and the elaboration of a resolution for the plenum. Then the 'Elders' came to the conference hall, where there were about a hundred deputies. The chairman proposed a motion: that (1) The Council of the Republic had not ceased, but merely temporarily suspended its activities; (2) The Council of the Republic, in the form of its Council of 'Elders', would enter a Committee of Safety; (3) The chairman was charged with launching an appeal to the nation; (4) The deputies would not leave and would assemble at the first opportunity. Then, of course, there was voiced a protest against violence; and finally

it was decided by fifty-six votes to forty-eight with two abstentions to yield to force and go home.

The soldiers and the commanders were patiently waiting. The deputies, having done their duty, began dispersing.

As we see there was nothing theatrical or dramatic about all this; eye-witnesses said so too. You will say that the Thermidorians showed far more energy and quality on the 18th Brumaire. But that was a *revolutionary* bourgeoisie, as it had always openly professed to be. Our bourgeoisie, however, from the first day on, was in the camp of the counter-revolution and had always carefully concealed this. The Right section of the Pre-Parliament voted *against* the voluntary 'temporary' dissolution, but didn't undertake anything further. Those weren't its traditions or spirit. But the Left section, for all its moral indignation, was politically in a difficult situation. On the one hand it was impossible to submit to Smolny's order without protest. On the other, it was impossible, with Gen. Alexeyev, to stand shoulder to shoulder and face the Bolshevik onslaught without palaver.

Perhaps the most interesting thing was at the exit, when the deputies went down the magnificent staircase between the lines of sailors and soldiers. The detachment officers were requesting the deputies' cards and examining them with unusual care—both upstairs and at the actual exits. It was thought there would be arrests. The Cadet leaders were already prepared to go off to the Peter-Paul. But they were let through with the most thorough-going, indeed insulting, indifference. The inexperienced new rulers were carrying out only the letter of the carelessly given order: arrest the members of the Provisional Government. But not one Minister was there. What was to be done? For it was, after all, very important to arrest them. Releasing Miliukov, Nabokov, and other Kornilovite aces, the commanders jumped on the Right Menshevik Dubois; his papers read: Assistant Minister of Labour. One caught! But then a dispute began. After all, he's a Socialist—been in gaol, etc. The soldiers insisted: it was highly necessary to catch a Minister. But excuse me, after all it was this Dubois who arrested Guchkov at the front during the Kornilov days! They couldn't hold out against that, and released this peculiar Minister. But where were the others? They were really wanted; and nobody knew where they were.

And indeed, where were they? This was a first-class puzzle for the Military Revolutionary Committee.

* * *

From the Marian Palace I headed for Smolny. There were no lines of soldiers across the Morskoy. Near the Nevsky, around the arch rising above the Palace square, it was said cadets were holding out near the Palace and were supposed to be shooting. I didn't hear a single shot, but small units were going here and there. The streets seemed to be growing more and more lively. The rifles might begin to go off of their own accord, but the mood was not truculent. The rifles didn't go off.

I got to Smolny around 3 o'clock. It still looked much the same. But there were even more people, and the disorder had grown. There were many defenders, but I doubt whether the defence could have been firm or organized.

I went straight along the dirty, sombre corridor into the great hall. It was packed, without the slightest sign of order or decorum. A meeting was going on. Trotsky was chairman. But it was hard to hear from behind the columns, and armed people were thrusting back and forth.

When I came in an unknown, bald, clean-shaven man was standing on the platform making a heated speech. But he spoke in a strangely familiar, loud, hoarse voice, with a throaty note and a very typical stressing of the ends of sentences. . . Eh—Lenin! He had appeared that day, after a four-month stay underground. So this was the final celebration of victory!

The Petersburg Soviet was once again in session. Opening it, before my arrival, Trotsky, in the midst of applause, hubbub, and disorder, had said this: 'In the name of the Military Revolutionary Committee I declare that the Provisional Government has ceased to exist. Individual Ministers are under arrest, the others will be arrested in the next few days or hours. The revolutionary garrison has dispersed the Pre-Parliament. We were told that the insurrection would provoke a pogrom and drown the revolution in torrents of blood. So far everything has gone off bloodlessly. We don't know of a single casualty. I don't know of any examples in history of a revolutionary movement in which such enormous masses participated and which took place so bloodlessly. The Winter Palace has not yet been

taken, but its fate will be decided in the course of the next few minutes. At the present time the Soviet of Soldiers', Workers', and Peasants' Deputies faces the historically unprecedented experiment of the creation of a régime which will have no other interests but the needs of the workers, peasants, and soldiers. The State must be an instrument of the masses in the struggle for their liberation from all bondage. It is essential to establish control of industry. The peasants, workers, and soldiers must feel that the national economy is their economy. This is the basic principle of the Soviet Government. The introduction of a universal labour draft is one of our most immediate tasks.'

* * *

These programmatic perspectives were not at all clear and were no more than agitation. But don't they reflect a rather bold and swift advance towards Bolshevik Socialism? It was as though the nearer he got to power the more this benevolent process was taking place in Trotsky's mind. A trivial but accurate saying—*noblesse oblige*. . .

Then Trotsky 'introduced' Lenin to the meeting and gave him the floor for a speech on the Soviet régime. Lenin was given a tumultuous ovation. . . While he was speaking I moved forward and stood with someone I knew behind the columns to the right of the entrance. I couldn't hear very well what Lenin was saying; I think I was more interested in the mood of the crowd. In spite of Trotsky's expansive remarks I didn't notice either enthusiasm or a festival spirit. People may have become too accustomed to dizzying events. They may have been tired. They may have been a little confused as to what would come of all this, and doubtful that anything would.

'Well, Comrade Sukhanov?' a low, effeminate voice, with a slight lisping accent, came from behind me; 'you didn't expect the victory to be so quick and easy?'

I turned around. Behind me stood an unknown man with a beard and close-cropped hair, with his hand outstretched. On close examination, or rather when I remembered whose agreeable contralto this was, I finally recognized Zinoviev. His appearance had radically altered.

'Victory?' I answered. 'Are you celebrating a victory already? Wait just a little longer. Just liquidate Kerensky, who has gone

off to organize an expedition against Petersburg. Besides, in general you and I will hardly find ourselves in complete agreement.'

Zinoviev said nothing but looked at me a moment in silence, then walked away a couple of steps. After all, he had just expressed himself, and even tried to carry on a campaign *against* the insurrection, for fear it would be crushed. And suddenly the thing was going so smoothly! On the other hand, he really had forgotten about Kerensky and much else, and had been in too much of a hurry to congratulate an outsider. Zinoviev's mind was undoubtedly in a whirl.

'No, no, I'm not going to speak now,' I heard the contralto saying, in reply to a suggestion that he speak, brought from the Praesidium.

Meanwhile Lenin was saying:

'The oppressed masses themselves will form a Government. The old state apparatus will be destroyed root and branch, and a new administrative apparatus will be created in the form of the Soviet organizations. Now begins a new era in the history of Russia, and this third Russian revolution must finally lead to the victory of Socialism. One of our routine tasks is to end the war at once. But in order to end this war, closely bound up with the present capitalist order, it is clear to everyone that our capitalism itself must be conquered. In this task we shall be helped by the worldwide working-class movement which has already begun to develop in Italy, Germany, and England. Within Russia an enormous section of the peasantry has said: Enough playing around with the capitalists; we will go with the workers. We shall win the peasants' trust with a single decree which will annihilate landed property. We shall institute a genuine workers' control of industry. We have the strength of a mass organization that will triumph over everything and bring the proletariat to the world revolution. In Russia we must set to work at once on the construction of a proletarian Socialist State. Long live the worldwide Socialist revolution!'

The programme of the new régime, which the chief was addressing to his guard, was not very clear, but it was very suspicious. Suspicious because of the transparent disinclination to take two circumstances into account. First of all, the current tasks of state administration: utterly to destroy all the old state

apparatus in the desperate conditions of war and famine meant to consummate the destruction of the productive forces of the country, and not to fulfil the most urgent tasks of peaceful construction aimed at the cultural and economic elevation of the labouring masses. Secondly, how things stood with the general foundations of scientific Socialism: to construct (not merely a Soviet) but a 'proletarian Socialist State' in a vast, economically-shattered peasant country meant taking on oneself tasks known to be utopian. Now, in the mouth of a Lenin whose mind had not yet digested the jumble of Marx and Kropotkin, this was not yet clear. But it was extremely suspicious.

Then Zinoviev appeared on the platform to give greetings: Lunacharsky also congratulated the Soviet. It was decided not to debate Lenin's speech. Why cloud the triumph by Menshevik speeches? A motion was passed directly: 'The Soviet expresses its confidence that a Soviet Government will firmly advance towards Socialism, the only salvation of the country. The Soviet is convinced that the proletariat of Western Europe will help lead the cause of Socialism to total victory.'

Capital! A long step forward towards Socialism! But meanwhile Trotsky made this statement: 'A telegram has just been received that troops are moving on Petersburg from the front. Commissars from the Petersburg Soviet must be sent to the front and throughout the country at once to tell the broad masses of the people what has happened.'

Voices from the body of the hall: 'You're anticipating the will of the Congress!'

Trotsky: 'The will of the Congress has been anticipated by the tremendous fact of the insurrection of the Petersburg workers and soldiers, which has taken place tonight. It simply remains for us now to develop our victory.'

* * *

It was getting dark when I broke away from the commotion in Smolny and went home. I had left my Karpovka place around then and moved to the Shpalerny, closer to the office, Soviet-Smolny circles, and—the Constituent Assembly, for which the Tauride Palace was already prepared. I went home to eat, anticipating another sleepless night at Smolny. A very

characteristic fact, this dining by the light of a candle-stub in a room not quite ready for habitation. Formerly, amidst similar events, this strange idea of leaving the cauldron for even two hours to sit down to dinner couldn't have entered my head. Now it came into my mind rather easily. It was a question, and not for myself alone, of the blunting of perceptions. People were very used to every kind of happening. Nothing had any effect. But at the same time a feeling of impotence also made itself felt. Of course something *had* to be done; it was impossible not to fight. But it meant so little! The arena was occupied almost in its entirety. The course of events was predetermined by the volcanic eruption of the depths of the remote countryside and by the monopolists of the moment.

* * *

It was around 8 o'clock when I returned to Smolny. There seemed to be even more chaos and disorder. As I went in I met old Martynov, of our fraction. 'Well?'

'The fraction's in session. Of course we shall leave the Congress. . .'

'What? How, leave the Congress? Our fraction?'

I was thunderstruck. Nothing like this had ever entered my head. It was thought possible that the Right Mensheviks would apply a specifically Bolshevik tactic and subject the Congress to a boycott. But for *our* fraction such a possibility seemed to me absolutely excluded.

First of all, no one contested the legality of the Congress. Secondly, it represented the most authentic worker-peasant democracy; and it must be said that not a small part of it consisted of the participants in the first Congress in June, the members of the 'Corps of Cadets'. Of that grey mass of delegates who had once followed the Menshevik patriots, many had been enticed away by Lenin, while most of the Right SRs were becoming Left SRs, if not Bolsheviks. Thirdly, the question was: *Where* would the Right Mensheviks and the SRs leave the Congress for? Where would they go from the Soviet?

The Soviet, after all, was—the revolution itself. Without the Soviet it never existed, nor could it. It was in the Soviet, the combat instrument of the revolution, that the revolutionary masses were always organized and rallied. So where could one

go from the Soviet? It meant a formal break with the masses and with the revolution.

And why? Because the Congress had proclaimed a Soviet régime in which the minute Menshevik-SR minority would not be given a place! I myself considered this fatal for the revolution, but why link this with abandoning the supreme representative organ of the workers, soldiers, and peasants? The 'Coalition', after all, was no less odious to the Bolsheviks than a 'Soviet régime' was to the old Soviet bloc; the Bolsheviks, not long ago, under the dictatorship of the Star Chamber, themselves constituted the same impotent minority as the Mensheviks and SRs now, but they did not and could not draw the conclusion that they had to leave the Soviet.

The old bloc could not swallow its defeat and the Bolshevik dictatorship. With the bourgeoisie and with the Kornilovites—yes; but with the workers and peasants whom they had thrown into the arms of Lenin with their own hands—impossible.

The sole argument heard from the Rightists was this: the Bolshevik adventure would be liquidated from one day to the next; the 'Soviet Government' would not hold out more than a few days, and at such a time the Bolsheviks had to be *isolated* in the eyes of the entire country; they had to be smitten now by every possible means and driven into a corner with whips and scorpions.

I too was convinced that the power of a Bolshevik régime would be ephemeral. A majority of them themselves were at that time convinced of the same thing. I also thought it useful and necessary to *isolate their position* and oppose to it the idea of a united democratic front. But for this why was it necessary to get out? That was the least of it: how was it possible to achieve this by getting out of the Soviet, away from the organized masses, away from the revolution? It could be achieved only in the arena of Soviet struggle.

But the point was that it was not the united democratic front that was opposed to the Bolshevik position. The Mensheviks and SRs—at least their leaders—today just as yesterday kept on opposing the same *Coalition* to the Soviet régime. This of course considerably changed matters. If yesterday it was blindness, today it was—practically—definite Kornilovism. It was the programme of a bourgeois dictatorship on the ruins of the Bolshevik

régime. That was now the *only way the Coalition could be restored*. If that was so, then of course it was not a question of the Soviets, the revolution, or the masses. . . . If that was so, then the arguments in favour of getting out of the Congress had their rationale and did not seem so senseless.

However, only a few *Right Soviet* elements, after all, former adherents of the Coalition, could reason this way. But what connexion could all this have with *our* fraction? Avksentiev and Gots would leave the Soviet for wherever the bourgeoisie was. Would even leave for that luckless Committee of Safety, which was supposed to take on itself the liquidation of the Bolshevik enterprise—'without the bourgeoisie, by the forces of the democracy alone'. Let us admit that out of traditional solidarity Dan would follow Avksentiev out of the Soviet. But where would Martov go? Where would *we* go—partisans of the *dictatorship of the democracy*, opponents of the Coalition, close allies of the proletariat and its fighting organization? We had nowhere to go; torn out of Soviet soil we should perish like a snail torn from its shell.

I didn't formulate all this after my encounter with Martynov, in the midst of the fuss and hubbub of Smolny. But it had long been firmly fixed in my mind. Martynov's communication absolutely stunned me. I rushed off to look for the fraction, and Martov especially. The fraction was not then in session, and Martov wasn't around, but I was told that many of us wanted to get out, and Martov, even though not very resolutely, was also inclined to follow the example of Dan and Avksentiev. A bad business!

My indignation was shared by many—not only the Left section of the Pre-Parliament fraction, but also the provincials. The fraction had not yet come to a final decision. The session had been a joint one with the Rightists. As for us, no one yet knew which side the majority would be on. The fraction had to be assembled.

* * *

I and some others who shared my views called together the fraction of the Menshevik-Internationalists. It assembled in a big unfamiliar room. Rather a large number of people crowded around a rough table with simple rude benches. There were

probably more than a few of the official Mensheviks, of the *Novaya Zhizn* people too, and of the Left SRs who were trying to maintain contact with us. I think Martov arrived towards the end. On the question of getting out he wavered and twisted. But some of his closest lieutenants were definitely for getting out. If I'm not mistaken, Abramovich¹ made a heated speech for leaving. But we on the Left fought hard and didn't yield.

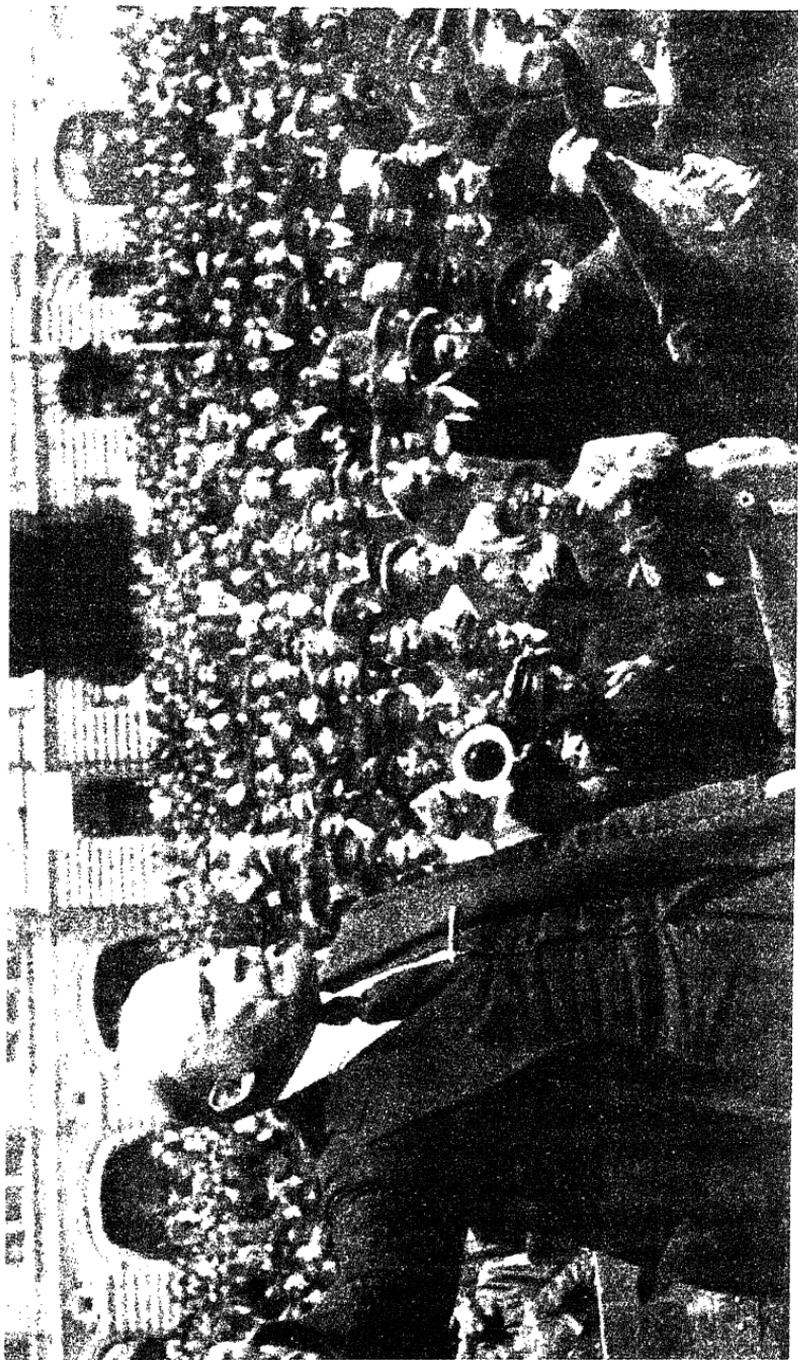
It was learned that the Menshevik Central Committee had resolved that 'responsibility for any completely military overturn be lifted from the party, that it take no part in the Congress, and that it take steps to negotiate with the Provisional Government on the formation of a régime based on the will of the democracy'. Besides this, the Menshevik Central Committee had resolved to form 'a commission of the Mensheviks and SRs for joint work on questions of common security'. The Right SRs had also, of course, decided to leave the Congress.

This news had various effects on the members of our conference. Some recoiled Rightwards—from motives of solidarity and discipline. Others, on the contrary, clearly saw in all this the bankruptcy of the Rightists and their complete rupture with the revolution; any possibility of solidarity with these elements was excluded for them, and this reinforced their *Left* position.

In general there was no definite decision taken on getting out. Martov deflected matters somewhat by proposing this solution: the fraction would demand from the Congress an agreement to create a democratic régime from representatives of all the parties in the Soviet; until the results of the requisite party negotiations were clear the Congress would suspend its functions. A majority of the votes settled on this. The question of getting out was postponed: it was to be decided in due course, depending on events.

The delegates nervously hurried through the rooms and corridors, gathering in clusters, getting in the way, and packing the buffet. Rifles, bayonets, and Caucasian fur-caps could be glimpsed everywhere. The exhausted guard were dozing on the stairs; soldiers, sailors, Red Guards, were sitting on the floor of the corridor close to the walls. It was stifling, filthy. . . The Congress opened in a far from triumphal setting; it opened under

¹ Abramovich, Raphael (1879-): prominent Bundist and Right Menshevik. Emigrated after October Revolution, eventually to New York City. (Ed.)



LENIN SPEAKS TO 'THE PEOPLE'

fire and seemed immersed in the most urgent and primitive drudgery.

* * *

It was not until 11 o'clock that bells began to ring for the meeting. The hall was already full, still with the same grey mob from the heart of the country. An enormous difference leaped to the eye: the Petersburg Soviet, that is, its Workers' Section in particular, which consisted of average Petersburg proletarians, in comparison with the masses of the Second Congress looked like the Roman Senate that the ancient Carthaginians¹ took for an assembly of gods. With masses like *that*, with the vanguard of the Petersburg proletariat, I think it really was possible to be enticed into an attempt to illuminate old Europe with the light of the Socialist revolution. But in Russia this incomparable type is an exception. The Moscow worker is as different from the Petersburg proletarian as a hen from a peacock. But even he, as familiar to me as the Petersburger, is not altogether benighted and homespun. Here at the Congress, however, the hall was filled with a crowd of a completely different order. Out of the trenches and obscure holes and corners had crept utterly crude and ignorant people whose devotion to the revolution was spite and despair, while their 'Socialism' was hunger and an unendurable longing for rest. Not bad material for experiments, but—those experiments would be risky.

The assembly hall was filled with these morose, indifferent faces and grey greatcoats. I pushed my way forward through the dense crowd standing in the aisle to where a place should have been kept for me. It was either darkish again in the hall or else the clouds of tobacco smoke obscured the bright light of the chandelier between the white columns. On the platform, unlike the emptiness of the night before, there were far more people than elementary orderliness permitted. I looked about for Lenin, but I don't think he was on the platform. I had got to my seat in one of the front rows when Dan came on to the platform to open the Congress in the name of the Central Ex. Com.

Throughout the revolution I don't recall a more disorderly and muddled session. In opening it Dan said he would abstain from any political speech: he asked people to understand this

¹ *Sic.* Sukhanov means Gauls. (Ed.)

and remember that at this moment his party comrades were self-sacrificingly doing their duty under fire in the Winter Palace.

Avanesov, sent by the Bolsheviks, had a list of the Praesidium ready. But the Menshevik and SR representatives refused to participate in it. In the name of our fraction someone made a statement that we were 'abstaining for the time being' from participating in the Praesidium, until a number of questions had been cleared up. The Praesidium was composed of the principal Bolshevik leaders and the half-dozen Left SRs. They could scarcely find seats, the platform was so packed and disorderly. Kamenev was in the chair throughout the Congress. He announced the agenda: (1) the organization of a Government, (2) war and peace, and (3) the Constituent Assembly.

Martov asked for the floor on a point of order:

First of all, a pacific settlement of the crisis must be assured. There was blood flowing in the streets of Petersburg. Military activities on both sides must be halted. A pacific settlement of the crisis might be attained by the creation of a régime which would be recognized by the entire democracy. The Congress could not remain indifferent to the civil war now developing, which might lead to a menacing flare-up of the counter-revolution.

Martov's speech was greeted with tempestuous applause from a very large section of the meeting. It was manifest that a very great many Bolsheviks, not having assimilated the spirit of the teaching of Lenin and Trotsky, would have been happy to take precisely this path. But now Lenin and Trotsky were completely at one. Of course we recall the difference between them at the *First Soviet Congress* and much later, but now, in October, Trotsky, lapsing into his 1905 ideas, flew irresistibly into Lenin's open arms and merged with him completely.¹ The Bolshevik mass, however, still insufficiently understood the majestic ideas of its leaders and quite amicably applauded Martov.

Martov's motion was upheld by the *Novaya Zhizn* people, by a front-line group, and—most important—by the Left SRs. Lunacharsky answered for the Bolsheviks: the Bolsheviks had absolutely nothing against it; let the question of a peaceable settlement of the crisis be made the first item on the agenda. Martov's motion was voted on: against it—nobody.

¹ See Introduction. (Ed.)

Here there was no risk whatever for the Bolsheviki. At the Congress, just as in the capital, they were the masters of the situation. But nevertheless things were taking a quite favourable turn. Lenin and Trotsky, meeting their own following half-way, were simultaneously cutting the ground away from under the feet of the Rightists: to leave the Congress when the majority had agreed to a joint debate of the basic questions, which had been considered already predetermined, was not only a blatant rupture with the Soviet and with the revolution for the sake of the same old, decrepit, bankrupt counter-revolutionary ideas; it was simply the senseless stubbornness of counter-revolutionaries. If the Mensheviks and SRs left *now*, they would simply write *finis* to themselves and infinitely strengthen their opponents. One would have thought the Right wouldn't do this *immediately*, and that the Congress, though with a wavering majority, would be set on the right road to the formation of a united democratic front.

But the Mensheviks and SRs did do it. These blind counter-revolutionaries not only failed to see that their 'line' was counter-revolutionary, but also failed to realize the complete absurdity and unworthy childishness of their behaviour. . . *After* Martov's resolution was passed, but *before* the debate was begun, Khinchuk, a pedant and future Bolshevik functionary, spoke for the Menshevik fraction:

The only solution was to start negotiations with the Provisional Government for the formation of a new Government that would be based on all strata. (A terrible din filled the hall; it was not only the Bolsheviki who were indignant, and for a long time the speaker wasn't allowed to continue.) 'The military conspiracy has been organized behind the back of the Congress. We divest ourselves of all responsibility for what is happening and leave the Congress, inviting the other fractions to meet to discuss the present situation.'

This brilliant speech immediately turned the mood against the Compromisers. The Bolshevik mass pressed tightly around Lenin. Indignation was expressed very stormily. You could hear shouts of 'Deserters! Go over to Kornilov! Lackeys of the bourgeoisie! Enemies of the people!'

In the midst of the hubbub the SR Geldeman appeared on the platform, and in the name of his fraction, repeated the same

statement. The temper of the hall rose still higher. Stamping, whistling, and cursing began.

Ehrlich was on the platform: in the name of the [Jewish] Bund he supported the SRs and Mensheviks. The hall began to overflow. The 'pure-in-heart' were going out in small groups, but this was almost unnoticed. They were accompanied by whistles, jeers, and curses. Even the semblance of order finally disappeared. On the platform, where Martov remained because it was impossible to get away or move, the mob, which soon so completely surrounded the orator that you could not see who was speaking, was leaning over the shoulders of the members of the Praesidium.

* * *

The 'pure-in-heart' had left. Well—would Martov's resolution now be debated without them? Now it had lost most of its sense, but it seemed there was no time for that now. 'Emergency statements' hailed down, on behalf of every kind of organization and of individual speakers themselves. The notorious Right Menshevik Kuchin, always accepted as speaking for the front, was also accusing the Bolsheviks of a military conspiracy against the people, and with his 'front-line group' was also leaving the Congress. As usual, he was unmasked: he had been elected to the Army Committee eight months before and for half a year had no longer expressed the army's opinion. The front was going along with the Congress majority. In addition to the front-line Menshevik, a front-line SR also spoke. But by now the meeting was beginning to lose patience.

Abramovich came on—'for the Bund group'. First, he repeated what Ehrlich had said. Secondly, he reported that firing on the Winter Palace had begun; the Mensheviks, SRs, peasant Central Ex. Com., and Town Council had decided to go there and face the bullets.

This was very effective and dramatic, but completely failed to arouse any sympathy. Jeers could be distinguished amidst the tumult, some of them coarse, others venomous. . . Up to then, nevertheless, shooting had not been an everyday occurrence in our revolution, and Abramovich's news made a painful impression on a great many people.

It was dissipated, however, by Ryazanov, who declared in the

name of the Military Revolutionary Committee: 'An hour and a half ago the Mayor came to us and offered to undertake negotiations between the Winter Palace and its besiegers. The Military Revolutionary Committee has sent its representatives, thus doing everything to forestall bloodshed.'

Ryazanov was known to everyone as a man averse to bloodshed, and he was believed. But when would Martov's resolution be debated?

It was begun by Martov himself when he got the floor amidst an endless series of emergency statements.

'The news that's just come——' he began.

But the meeting, which an hour before had passed his resolution unanimously, was now very irritated with every species of 'compromiser'. Martov was interrupted: 'What news? What are you trying to scare us for? You ought to be ashamed of yourself!'

In some detail Martov analysed the motives for his resolution. Then he proposed that the Congress pass a decree on the necessity for a peaceable settlement of the crisis by forming a general democratic Government and electing a delegation to negotiate with all Socialist parties. . . .

Martov's reply came from Trotsky, who was standing at his side in the crowd that packed the platform. Now that the Rightists had left, Trotsky's position was as strong as Martov's was weak.

'A rising of the masses of the people', Trotsky rapped out, 'needs no justification. What has happened is an insurrection, and not a conspiracy. We hardened the revolutionary energy of the Petersburg workers and soldiers. We openly forged the will of the masses for an insurrection, and not a conspiracy. The masses of the people followed our banner and our insurrection was victorious. And now we are told: renounce your victory, make concessions, compromise. With whom? I ask: with whom ought we to compromise? With those wretched groups who have left us or who are making this proposal? But after all we've had a full view of them. No one in Russia is with them any longer. A compromise is supposed to be made, as between two equal sides, by the millions of workers and peasants represented in this Congress, whom they are ready, not for the first time or the last, to barter away as the bourgeoisie sees fit. No, here no compromise

is possible. To those who have left and to those who tell us to do this we must say: you are miserable bankrupts, your rôle is played out; go where you ought to be: into the dustbin of history!

'Then we'll leave,' Martov shouted from the platform amidst stormy applause for Trotsky.

No, excuse me, Comrade Martov! Trotsky's speech of course was a clear and unambiguous reply. But rage at an opponent, and Martov's emotional state, still did not bind the fraction to a decisive and fatal act. Martov, enraged and upset, began pushing his way off the platform. And I called an emergency conference of our fraction, scattered throughout the hall.

Meanwhile Trotsky was reading aloud a harsh resolution against the Compromisers and against their 'wretched and criminal attempt to smash the All-Russian Congress'; 'this will not weaken, but strengthen the Soviets, by purging them of any admixture of counter-revolution'.

We assembled in the Mensheviks' room, while the futile emergency statements continued in the big hall. Fatigue, nervousness, and chaos kept growing. On our way out we heard a statement in the name of the Bolshevik fraction of the Town Council: 'The Bolshevik Town Hall fraction has come here to conquer or die with the All-Russian Soviet Congress!'

The hall applauded. But it was beginning to be fed up with all this—it was around 1 o'clock in the morning.

* * *

During those same hours when the fractions and the plenum of the Congress were in session at Simolny, the old Provisional Government still languished in a quiet, half-dark room of the Winter Palace. For their part they were far from willing to die. On the contrary, they were hoping for assistance and the preservation of their lives and jobs. Nevertheless they were languishing in torment.

The Cossacks had left the Palace. There were fewer defenders. It was reported on the 'phone that some Town Councillors and others, about 300 men, were coming to the Palace. The military cadets were warned not to shoot at them.

Palchinsky made a report: the mob had pressed forward a few times, but after some shots from the military cadets had

retreated. The shots, he said, were in the air. But the clatter of arms and booming of cannon grew more and more frequent. Suddenly there was an uproar and shots in the Palace itself: about thirty or forty armed men had burst in, but were already disarmed and under arrest.

'Great cowards,' reported Palchinsky, and assured his listeners the Palace would hold out till morning.

Again a din, shouts, tramping, and—two explosions one after the other. The Ministers leaped from their seats. Bombs! A few sailors had crept into the Palace and thrown two bombs from a little gallery. The bombs had fallen on the floor near the entrance to Nicholas II's rooms and slightly wounded two military cadets. Dr. Kishkin gave them medical aid. The sailors were arrested; but how had they been able to get in? First forty men had burst in by force, then a few sailors had slipped in secretly. It was obvious that things were proving a bit too much for Palchinsky and his garrison.

It was reported that the women's shock-battalion had gone home. They had felt like it and left, like the Cossacks. It was clear that the besiegers were letting hostile detachments through like water through a sieve.

There was still no real siege at all, but the cross-fire was beginning to take on the character of an out-and-out battle. It was unlikely that they were only shooting in the air, or that there were no casualties. A certain amount of blood was undoubtedly being shed. Why, and what for? *Because* the Military Revolutionary Committee had not thought of arresting the Government before, and had even released those arrested, and the Ministers who had run away from their posts could still console themselves with the thought that they had not run away.

It was reported that cadets from some academy had left. They left as they pleased. The 'Government' didn't hold them back, but gave out telephonic bulletins to the city: 'We are beating them off, we are not surrendering, the attack was beaten off at such and such an hour, we are waiting for reinforcements'. That's the kind of Government we had!

Once again a crowd burst in and was disarmed: once again one of the defence units went off. How many were left now? Which was there more of now in the Palace, defenders or

prisoners? But wasn't it all the same? The Ministers were unconcerned. Outside the walls they were shooting as before; it was after 1 o'clock.

Again an uproar. It kept growing, nearer and nearer, up to the very doors. It was clear the Palace was being stormed and taken. A cadet rushed in to the Ministers and, drawing himself up, reported: 'Ready to defend ourselves to the last man. What are the Provisional Government's orders?'

'It's no use. We give up. No bloodshed! We suppose the Palace is already occupied?'

'Yes. Everyone's surrendered. Only this room is being held.'

'Tell them we don't want bloodshed and give up. We yield to force. . .'

'Go, hurry, hurry! We don't want bloodshed!'

You'll say: now the Ministers were beginning to understand something and had come to a sensible decision. On the contrary: it was already too late for a sensible decision; but the Ministers, having finally lost all understanding, did not see how repellent and ridiculous their hypocrisy was.

A cadet on the other side of the door reported the Ministers' decision to the victorious insurgent troops, who were making an impatient racket but didn't take one step further against the will of these single-minded cadets. The noise suddenly took on another character.

'Let's sit down at the table,' said the Ministers, and sat down, in order to look like busy statesmen.

The doors were flung open, and the room filled up at once with armed men, headed by Antonov himself. Palchinsky adroitly hastened forward: 'Gentlemen, we've just come to an agreement with your people on the 'phone. Just wait one moment, you haven't heard the latest!'

The chiefs of the detachment were within a hair's breadth of being disconcerted, but they pulled themselves together at once.

'Members of the Provisional Government!' shouted Antonov, 'I declare you under arrest! I'm a member of the Military Revolutionary Committee!'

'The members of the Provisional Government yield to force and surrender in order to avoid bloodshed,' said Konovalov.

'Bloodshed! And how much blood have you shed yourselves?'

rang out an exclamation sympathetically taken up by the crowd. 'How many of our people have fallen?'

'That's a lie!' shouted the indignant Kishkin. 'We didn't shoot anyone! Our guards simply shot back when they were attacked.'

* * *

If there were any casualties, then our miserable last Ministers were to blame just as much as the organizers of the insurrection. Smolny was to blame for not avoiding bloodshed, in spite of its having been completely possible, but it was justified by a theory that it could not in the nature of things renounce. But what could the statesmen of the last Coalition have said in justification of their criminal senselessness? They preferred not to acknowledge the very fact of the bloodshed they had caused. But this merely makes them either cowards or fools. Louis XVI, on August 10th, set up a strong Swiss guard in the Tuileries, ordered them to defend themselves, and caused bloodshed. He was well aware that he was defending the monarchy and his own throne—an idea, interests, and a person. His crime has a definite meaning, historical and logical. But as for these sage rulers and liberal-humanitarian intellectuals of ours—what did they want?

The temper of the mob that had burst in, armed to the teeth, was extremely high, vengeful, furious, and impetuous. Antonov tried to calm the particularly hot-headed soldiers and sailors, but lacked sufficient authority. They set about drawing up an official report, while the Ministers began to 'agitate' at the victors. Kuzma Gvozdev was especially excited, trying to persuade everyone right and left that he was one of them—a worker. Tempers would rise, then subside. The report that Kerensky was not around had a powerful effect. There were shouts that the others must be slaughtered so that they wouldn't flee after Kerensky.

After rather lengthy proceedings, with interrogations, roll-calls, and the making of lists, the column of prisoners moved out, in the direction of the Peter-Paul Fortress. In the darkness, between 2 and 3 o'clock in the morning, in the midst of a dense, excited mob, the column moved along the Milliony and over Trinity Bridge. More than once the lives of the former Ministers hung by a hair. But it went off without a lynching.

After eight months of revolution the Peter-Paul was receiving within its walls a third variety of prisoner: first, Tsarist functionaries, then Bolsheviks, and now Kerensky's friends, the 'élite' of the Menshevik-SR democracy. What more were these imperturbable walls destined to see?

* * *

In the great hall of Smolny the enormous meeting was clearly becoming disorganized from muddle, crowding, fatigue, and tension. Speakers from the fractions remaining spoke on Trotsky's resolution. Both the Left SRs and the *Novaya Zhizn* people categorically condemned the behaviour of the Right groups, but protested against the harsh resolution. Then 'emergency' speakers appeared again. But the meeting cried for mercy. An interval was announced.

During this time our fraction, extremely tense and nervous, was discussing the situation. Having settled ourselves in any sort of order just inside the door, about thirty of us, some standing up, others sitting on some kind of garden benches, were quarrelling bitterly. I was vigorously attacking, very excited, and not mincing my words. Martov, having yielded to theatricality at the plenary session, defended himself more calmly and patiently. He seemed to feel that he had no firm ground beneath him, but at the same time to be aware that the whole conjunction of circumstances irrevocably compelled him to break with the Congress and go out after Dan—even though only half-way. . .

I gave a good account of myself and did as much as I could. Throughout the revolution I had never defended my position with such conviction and ardour. Not only logic, political sense, and elementary revolutionary truth seemed to be on my side, but also a technical consideration: after all, the question put by Martov had not yet been debated in the Congress, and we still had only Trotsky's speech as the Congress reply. Leaving the Congress now would not only be criminal in general, but also dishonest and frivolous in particular.

Alas! It was clear that Martov was a victim of Menshevik indecisiveness. He was indeed! For the rupture with the bourgeois Compromisers and adherence to Smolny entailed the most decisive struggle in a definite camp. No place was left for

neutrality or passivity. This was frightening, and far from natural to us. Martov, like Dan, but not together with him, was 'isolating' the Bolsheviks. In this Dan had a point of support Martov could not accept, while Martov had no point of support at all. But . . . to remain in Smolny with nobody but the Bolsheviks—no, that was beyond our strength.

The fraction divided. About fourteen votes against twelve—Martov had won. I felt that I had suffered a disaster worse than any before in the revolution. I returned to the great hall completely numb.

* * *

There the interval was just over and the meeting had started again. But the deputies had had no rest. There was still the same disorder. People were standing with outstretched necks listening to the statement of the Chairman, Kamenev, who was speaking with special earnestness: 'We have just received the following telephone message. The Winter Palace has been taken by the troops of the Military Revolutionary Committee. The whole Provisional Government was arrested there, except Kerensky, who has fled. . . ' etc.

Kamenev read the list of the arrested Ministers. When he mentioned Tereshchenko's name at the end, stormy applause rang out. The broad masses had evidently had time to set a special value on this gentleman's activities.

One of the Left SRs made a statement about the inadmissibility of arresting the Socialist Ministers.

Trotsky answered him at once: First of all, there was no time now for such trifles: secondly, there was no reason to stand on ceremony with these gentlemen who were keeping hundreds of workers and Bolsheviks in the prisons.

Both statements were essentially correct. But what was far more important was the political motive Trotsky didn't touch on: the overturn had not yet been carried to a conclusion, and every Minister left at large, representing the legitimate power, might—in the given circumstances—become a source of civil war. Nevertheless Trotsky's statement—that is, mainly his *tone*—was far from producing, even in Smolny as it was then, a good impression on everyone. This new ruler, on the very first day, was showing his teeth over 'trifles'. An omen for the future.

* * *

So the thing was done. We had left, not knowing where or why, after breaking with the Soviet, getting ourselves mixed up with counter-revolutionary elements, discrediting and debasing ourselves in the eyes of the masses, and ruining the entire future of our organization and our principles. And that was the least of it: in leaving we completely untied the Bolsheviks' hands, making them masters of the entire situation and yielding to them the whole arena of the revolution.

A struggle at the Congress for a united democratic front *might* have had some success. For the Bolsheviks as such, for Lenin and Trotsky, it was more odious than the possible Committees of Public Safety or another Kornilov march on Petersburg. The exit of the 'pure-in-heart' freed the Bolsheviks from this danger. By quitting the Congress and leaving the Bolsheviks with only the Left SR youngsters and the feeble little *Novaya Zhizn* group, we gave the Bolsheviks with our own hands a monopoly of the Soviet, of the masses, and of the revolution. By our own irrational decision we ensured the victory of Lenin's whole 'line'.

I personally committed not a few blunders and errors in the revolution. But I consider my greatest and most indelible crime the fact that I failed to break with the Martov group immediately after our fraction voted to leave, and didn't stay on at the Congress. To this day I have not ceased regretting this October 25th crime of mine.

* * *

Towards the end of the session Lunacharsky read out a proclamation of the Congress to the workers, soldiers, and peasants. It declared: ' . . . Basing itself on the will of the enormous majority of workers, soldiers, and peasants, and relying on the achievement in Petersburg of a victorious rising of the workers and garrison, the Congress takes the power into its own hands. The Provisional Government has been overthrown. The powers of the conciliationist Central Ex. Com. have come to an end. . . The Congress decrees that all power throughout the country be transferred to the local Soviets of Workers', Soldiers', and Peasants' Deputies, who must preserve genuine revolutionary order.'

* * *

Thus the October revolution was *politically* consummated and shaped. The 'proclamation' was passed by all the other votes to two, with twelve abstentions. The meeting lasted until after 5 o'clock in the morning.

In a dense throng, delegates swarmed out of Smolny, after the labours, impressions, and events of this world-historical day. The participants in, witnesses and authors of those events swarmed past the cannon and machine-guns standing by the cradle of the 'worldwide Socialist revolution'. But no attendants were visible near them. The Smolny guard were already enjoying their rest: there was no discipline. But there was also no need for a guard. No one had either the strength or the will for an attack. . .

A cold autumn morning was already dawning on Petersburg.

CHAPTER 32

OCTOBER 26TH

Finale

Two or three hours later the capital awoke—without realizing who were now its rulers. From outside, the events had not been at all impressive. Except for the Palace square, there had been order and calm everywhere. The *coup* had begun rather modestly and ended rather swiftly. But *how?*—the man-in-the-street didn't know. The finale in the Winter Palace had come too late at night, and contact with Smolny was weak.

The man-in-the-street rushed to the newspapers. But he couldn't get much light from them. In the 'Latest News' column there were everywhere a few lines reporting the seizure of the Winter Palace and the arrest of the Provisional Government. The accounts of the Soviet Congress consisted solely of 'emergency statements' and testified to the 'isolation' of the Bolsheviks; but they gave no description whatever of the political status that had been created. The leading articles had been written before the final news that night. In general, they were all on one note: patriotic howlings about our unhappy country, accusations of usurpation and violence by the Bolsheviks, predictions of the collapse of their adventure, descriptions of the *coup* of the day before as a military conspiracy.

The Mensheviks and SRs, by the way, later consoled themselves with this military conspiracy for several months, thrusting it in the faces of the Bolsheviks. Incomprehensible! It would have been better if these sharp-witted people had looked and said: was the Petersburg proletariat in sympathy or not with the organizers of the October insurrection? Was it with the Bolsheviks, or were the Bolsheviks acting independently of it? Was it on the side of the overturn, was it neutral, or was it hostile?

Here there can be no two replies. Yes, the Bolsheviks acted with the full backing of the Petersburg workers and soldiers. And they brought about an insurrection, throwing into it as many (very few!) forces as were required for its successful con-

summation. Guilty as charged: the Bolsheviks threw into it, through negligence and clumsiness, far *more* forces than were necessary. But that has nothing at all to do with grasping the actual conception of the insurrection.

* * *

So on October 26th the man-in-the-street was given into the power of rumours. And of course he was extremely excited. In the streets, in the trams, in public places—nothing but the events was talked of. There was, naturally, a panic at the Stock Exchange, though absolutely no one believed a Bolshevik régime would last. On the contrary, the man-in-the-street had no doubt the crisis would be settled in short order.

Indeed, what sort of power had the Bolsheviks? They had, after all, not yet created a Government. What kind of 'power of the Soviets' was this? All the same, the shops shut tight. The banks did not resume work. In the government offices there were mass-meetings of the employees, and debates about what they should do in case the Bolsheviks sent over their commanders. Almost everywhere it was decided not to recognize their authority, and for the time being stop work. A boycott!

But even without a boycott and without politics nobody could work now. Was everything quiet at home? It was said that plundering and riots would begin at any moment. It was said that there was no bread at all in the city, and what there had been had already been looted. It was said that sailors were making the rounds of the houses and requisitioning fur coats and boots. It was said. . .

But there were also *facts* which powerfully affected the imagination. On the day following the victorious insurrection the Petersburgers found several of the capital's newspapers missing. They had been closed by the Military Revolutionary Committee—for slandering the Soviets and similar crimes. The esteemed Podvoisky, Antonov, and others, acting on Lenin's orders, were not inventive: they borrowed their reasons from the lexicon of the old Tsarist police. But on the strength of their position as revolutionaries and Socialists they allowed themselves the luxury of expressing themselves more crudely and less grammatically. It would have been possible, and better, to give no reasons at all.

Moreover, Podvoisky and Antonov were generally very ham-fisted in carrying out their leaders' directives. For some reason they came down on the second-rate papers and small fry, disregarding the Kornilovite leading semi-official ones. This had to be corrected. That morning some sailors were sent to the distributing centres of *Rech* and *Sovremennoye Slovo* (Contemporary Word). All the numbers they found were confiscated, taken out into the street in an enormous mass, and set fire to then and there. This hitherto unseen *auto-da-fé* collected an enormous crowd.

In the course of that day the *whole* bourgeois press of the capital was shut down. Orders were sent out, and military patrols with them. The type-setters were allowed to stay on in the printing-presses, on condition that they set no type for the closed-down newspapers.

The new Government didn't reveal itself for the time being in any other way. But this *début* made a very powerful impression. Tsarism had never practised any such mass reprisals against the press. Was it necessary? What was the sense of it? References were naturally made to the acute and difficult situation of the new régime in the fire of civil war. But that was nonsense. There was neither civil war nor any particularly difficult situation. Now, in a single day, the insurrection was already actually victorious. Difficulties might begin if Kerensky had some successes at the front, but there was still no news of those. Until now reports on this score had been completely reassuring. Indeed, even if there had been a march on Petersburg, the bourgeois press couldn't have played any rôle. The Socialist press was, if you like, more dangerous, but that wasn't touched.

The destruction of the bourgeois press, completely senseless from a practical point of view, was extremely harmful to the Bolsheviks. It infuriated and alarmed absolutely all the neutral and wavering elements, of which there were many. So this was the start of the new régime! For the time being there was nothing more, but there were already pogroms and senseless violence. The debasement of revolutionary values, the trampling into the mud of elementary democratic principles—were already present.

In the lower strata of the proletariat and soldiery, however, this *début* aroused no protests. For there, after eight months of

revolution, these principles had not yet had time to take root. There the matter was substantially simpler—without principles: they used to beat us and we, having seized a club, are going to smash things right and left. That was how the elements reasoned. That was how—without principles—their champions in Smolny reasoned too.

* * *

Meanwhile work went on at Smolny. The Military Revolutionary Committee was taking what steps it could to preserve order and uphold the prestige of the new régime. But it was even busier getting out proclamations. First of all it addressed the Cossacks in the capital and at the front, exhorting them not to oppose the revolution and not to march on Petersburg. This appeal, distributed in great quantities, undoubtedly had its effect on the strongly prejudiced but far from bellicose Cossacks. Then the Military Revolutionary Committee appealed to the railwaymen to pay special attention to the service; it called on the state employees, and especially the military staff employees, not to interrupt their work, for fear of revolutionary justice, etc.

But naturally their principal concern was defence against Kerensky, who was marching on Petersburg. Nothing trustworthy was known about this march, but, to begin with, the fact *a priori* was obvious. Secondly, quite definite rumours flowed from the Right *milieux* about it; points were named where Kerensky was to be found, with the number of troops at his disposal. Petty-bourgeois and 'social' strata comforted themselves with this and frightened Smolny. The Military Revolutionary Committee took what steps it could.

Besides written and oral agitation, splendidly organized along the roads to the capital, a few detachments were sent out against Kerensky's supposed hordes. But their strength was very meagre. No volunteers who were at all reliable were found in the garrison. Out of the army of 200,000, *two or three companies* were somehow selected. The workers' militia aroused more confidence, but only, after all, from the point of view of their morale. For the combat fitness of this army, which had never smelt powder or seen a rifle until the last few days, and had no conception of military operations or discipline, was more than dubious. To crown all this there were no officers at all.

It was only the sailors that might prove a serious force. Kronstadt could put out 3,000 or 4,000 reliable fighters. And besides, as we know, 1,800 sailors had come from Helsingfors; they had got to Petersburg when everything was already over, but they could be used at once against Kerensky.

This, as we see, wasn't much. And this 'army' also suffered from an exceptional defect: it had no artillery—only rifles and machine-guns. Close to Petersburg itself it was proposed to use the artillery of the ships anchored in the Neva or off the coast. But it was essential, of course, not to allow matters to get as far as an engagement beneath the very walls of the capital.

How unsatisfactory the position was with artillery, and how crude the steps taken, is evident from this fact. The Putilov Factory 'promised' the Military Revolutionary Committee an armoured platform-car for mounting cannon, but no one knew whether the factory would keep its promise. And this matter, in spite of its triviality, was thought so important in Smolny that Lenin himself, together with Antonov, in the midst of the extravagant labours and chaos of the first days, went off to the Putilov Factory to harangue the workers and spur them on. I don't think it led to anything. . .

In general it was quite impossible to count on any substantial military force. What had to be relied on was Kerensky's weakness, his inability to collect and move a large army, and the inevitable dissolution of such an army while still *en route*. Agitation and the influence of ideas were an incomparably more reliable prop of Smolny than military operations. After all the lessons of the revolution it was possible to set one's hopes on 'spiritual' factors with complete justification. Nicholas II, after all, had moved against Petersburg, and then Kornilov, and both had failed—without a shot fired. During the October Days themselves factors of 'morale' were already paralysing the whole activity of Kerensky and the Staff in Petersburg. Why then not hope that these same methods would liquidate the third march on Petersburg in 1917?

An extremely graphic proclamation on Kerensky's personality, rôle, and campaign was also published and distributed. In any case, in the midst of the primordial confusion of this first day of the Soviet régime all possible measures were taken, as I said, of spiritual as well as of military resistance.

Apart from all this, the Military Revolutionary Committee developed some activity of a purely police character. A great many arrests had been made in the city. They were quite casual and pointless, carried out chiefly as a result of the revolutionary initiative of anyone who had the energy. Whole columns of prisoners trailed into Smolny from all directions. This irritated and repelled the passive part of the population very much. But Smolny had become not only the seat of the new Government, not only the General Staff, but also the supreme police institution, the supreme tribunal, and the gaol.

Finally, that day the Military Revolutionary Committee got out one other special proclamation—an order to the Army Committees to bring General Kornilov and his accomplices to Petersburg for imprisonment in the Peter-Paul Fortress and for trial. . .

Just what did that mean? Why an appeal to the Army Committees, and not a wire to Bykhov gaol to transfer the Kornilovites?

Because on the 26th a perfectly reliable piece of news had been spread through Petersburg—Kornilov had escaped from Bykhov gaol.

Kornilov, having heard about the overturn, had—quite simply—decided to leave. He had not been afraid of a Government of his friends, and had agreed to live for the time being in Bykhov under the protection of his reliable Tekins. But with the Bolsheviks the affair might have turned risky; also it had no point. Kornilov decided to leave. There had been no technical hindrances for him previously either.

* * *

Just about this time I had asked Kamenev in passing: 'Tell me, how are you going to govern? Are you going to set up ministers and ministries, as in a bourgeois society?'

Kamenev explained what was evidently being ventilated in the highest Bolshevik spheres:

'It'll be a Government by Boards, like during the Convention. The chairmen of the Boards will constitute the supreme organ of Government.'

And that is how it was formed on October 26th. But what could this Soviet Cabinet of Ministers be called? Though this of

course was not very vital, nevertheless there was a strong desire not to borrow bourgeois terminology. Let everything be quite new and special in the new proletarian State!

They thought and cogitated, and finally Trotsky suggested a name that gratified everyone. It was decided to call the Soviet Cabinet the Council of People's Commissars. Personally I am not very enthusiastic about this great reform. Breaking with bourgeois terminology may have been very agreeable, but philologically the word Minister sounds absolutely correct, while Commissar, on the contrary, definitely smacks of the police. But this, of course, is a matter of taste (and, perhaps, of the new spirit in politics?).

But apart from the name itself, nothing had as yet been changed in the methods of forming a new Government. For the time being the Boards were not and could not be formed. Only the Council of People's Commissars had been constituted, and that had been made up just as cabinets always are.

This is how matters stood politically: The departure of the Mensheviks and SRs had very much simplified and eased the position of Lenin and Trotsky. Now there was no Opposition to get underfoot in forming a proletarian Government. Only the Bolshevik Party could now take power without hindrance and even place all the odium for this on the Mensheviks and SRs themselves. This was what Lenin had been striving for ever since June.

To be sure, there remained at the Congress a rather large group of Left SRs, who had no objection to being the sole representatives of the peasantry. But, to begin with, the Left SRs were in an insignificant minority. Secondly, these Left youngsters were quite harmless as pretenders to power, in view of their lack of anything resembling solidity and of the fact that they could easily be twisted around one's finger. Thirdly, in view of these qualities, bringing the Left SRs into the Soviet Government would even have been useful, for this would have looked like a perfectly popular 'agreement' within the Soviet and a 'broadening of the base' of the new Government—at the expense of the party of the revolutionary peasantry. Fourthly, the Left SRs made absolutely no claim to share power with the Bolsheviks: what they stood for was power for the Soviet bloc, an all-democratic Government.

Consequently the Bolsheviks took power alone. The Council of People's Commissars was expected to act on the directives of the Bolshevik Party Central Committee. This achieved what Lenin had been unsuccessfully striving for—'in a favourable conjunction of circumstances'—on June 10th and July 4th.

It remained to plan the composition of the first Soviet Government. One would have thought that the Bolsheviks must meet with the greatest difficulties. Where could you get people capable of running the State in the given circumstances? I of course wasn't at this meeting of Bolshevik leaders, but I venture to express my conviction that it had no special difficulty in selecting Ministers from its own party people. It produced its best and oldest propagandists, agitators, and organizers. For the difficulties of state administration did not appear in their full scope to the eye of the lofty assemblage.

Lenin was designated Premier without portfolio. Trotsky became the People's Commissar for Foreign Affairs; Lunacharsky for Popular Education. The economist and writer Skvortsov was given Finance. Shlyapnikov, the trade-unionist, whom we know, got the Labour portfolio. Miliutin, author of a brochure on agricultural workers, was appointed Minister of Agriculture, Stalin Minister for Nationalities. A Board consisting of Antonov, the lieutenant Krylenko, and the sailor Dybenko—for Military and Naval affairs. Rykov, whom we haven't met up to now, was given the Interior. Nogin from Moscow was given Industry and Commerce. Lomov, Justice. Teodorovich, Supply. And Glebov, Posts and Telegraphs.

All these were very respected Bolsheviks, with decades of revolutionary work, exile, and imprisonment behind them. But as the supreme power in the Republic, as statesmen entrusted with the fate of the revolution and of the country, this Board as a whole must be acknowledged to be rather unconvincing. We knew most of these new rulers as revolutionaries. Henceforth we were to be acquainted with them as statesmen and learn, by the way, that brilliant work on the platform, underground, and in the emigration, in party circles and as journalists, far from guaranteed their quality as rulers.

We fail to see two stars of the first magnitude amongst the Bolshevik rulers—the 'cronies', Zinoviev and Kamenev. Their absence from the Government might have had a great many

valid reasons. First of all, being somewhat in opposition, they might have declined. Secondly, for tactical reasons it was advisable to cut down as much as possible on the number of Ministers of Jewish origin (the sole exception was Trotsky). Thirdly, we must remember that from now on ministerial posts were in fact not the most important in the State: stars of the first magnitude made all high policy in the Party Central Committee. Fourthly, Kamenev was appointed chairman of the Central Ex. Com., which formally was the highest State body, while Zinoviev received a high appointment as editor of the official state newspaper: the *Izvestiya* of the Central Ex. Com.

Such for the time being was the new Government of the new proletarian State.

Martov appeared at this meeting of the Bolshevik Olympus. He came to intercede for the release of the Socialist Ministers. It must be imagined how absurd such a mediator must have felt before these strange new authorities on such a matter.

Martov, their old comrade-in-arms and, for most of them, teacher, was heard out with chilly reserve. But all the same the Socialist Ministers were transferred to house arrest.

* * *

The second session of the Congress opened at 9 o'clock in the evening. Chairman Kamenev, amidst stormy applause, announced the latest measures of the Military Revolutionary Committee: abolition of the death penalty at the front, and consequently in Russia generally; release of all political prisoners; release of the members of the agrarian committees arrested by the Coalition.

Then Lenin was given the floor to report on war and peace. But according to him the question was so clear that he could read without any preamble the draft of an appeal by the Soviet Government to the peoples of all the countries at war. He read a long document, which I shall summarize:

The worker-peasant Government, created by the revolution of October 25th, suggests to all warring nations and their Governments that immediate negotiations be begun for a just and democratic peace, without annexations or indemnities. The Russian Government, for its part, is ready to take all decisive steps without the slightest delay. By annexations it

means the absorption by a large or powerful State of a small or weak nationality (?) without its consent; the time of annexation, the cultural-economic level of the absorbed country and its location—are a matter of indifference. Disannexation, in the absence of complete self-determination, is the equivalent of annexation. But the Government doesn't put forward these conditions as an ultimatum; it is willing to consider other conditions as well, insisting only that they be proposed as soon as possible and put clearly, openly, and unequivocally. The worker-peasant Government abolishes secret diplomacy; it is proceeding at once to the publication of secret treaties and declares their contents henceforth invalid. The Russian Government is willing to carry on open negotiations for peace in any way desired: in writing, by telegraph, or at a conference. At the same time the Government proposes to all countries at war the immediate conclusion of a three-month armistice which will be sufficient to conclude peace negotiations and ratify the peace. In addressing the above to the Governments and peoples of the warring countries, the worker-peasant Government appeals especially to the workers of the advanced capitalist countries, Great Britain, Germany, and France; the victorious Russian workers and peasants have no doubt that the proletariat of the West will help them to achieve the cause of peace, and at the same time the cause of the emancipation of the toilers from every form of bondage and exploitation.

He closed with a brief epilogue. 'We address ourselves', he said, 'to the Governments and to the peoples, since an appeal to the peoples alone might involve a postponement of the peace. The conditions of peace as reviewed during the armistice will then be confirmed by the Constituent Assembly. The proposal of peace will meet with opposition from the imperialist Governments—we do not close our eyes to this. But we rely on the imminence of revolution in all the countries at war. The Russian Revolution of October 25th will open an era of Socialist revolution throughout the world. We shall of course defend our peace programme in every way, but we must make it impossible for our enemies to say that their conditions are different and therefore there is no reason to start negotiations with us. We must deprive them of this advantage and therefore must not put our conditions as an ultimatum. We are not afraid of a

revolutionary war, but we shall not deliver ultimatums which might facilitate a negative answer to our proposal.'

In general, the proclamation of October 26th was exactly what the revolutionary Government should have done several months earlier. The Bolsheviks, almost before they were in power, had fulfilled this task and met their engagements of March 14th to the proletariat of the West. And they had done it in a correct and worthy form. But it was too late. Several months of revolution had multiplied many times over Russia's collapse and exhaustion. Now, at the end of October, there was no longer even an army in Russia. Now we could no longer fight. Those millions who had until now held back 130 German divisions at the front had begun, from cold and hunger, to run away home. Our peace move of October 26th was objectively no more than a surrender to the mercy of the victor.

I got to Smolny during Lenin's 'epilogue'. The general scene was much the same as the night before. Fewer arms, a smaller crowd. It was easy for me to find an empty seat in the back rows, which I think were for the public. Alas! For the first time in the revolution I came to such a meeting not as one of its fully authorized members, but as one of the public. I found this extremely sad and painful. I felt torn away and separated from everything I had been living by for eight months that were the equivalent of a decade. Such a situation was quite unendurable; I knew I should change it, but didn't know just how.

Lenin finished. Thunderous applause rang out, and didn't die down for a long time. The representatives of the Left SRs and the *Novaya Zhizn* people 'backed' the decree. They merely complained that up to then the text of this document of capital importance hadn't been known to any of those present, and they couldn't make any amendments. They wanted a lot! These requirements of bourgeois parliamentarianism hadn't been complied with by us even in the best of circumstances.

In general, you might say there were no debates. Everyone simply expressed 'support', while the home-spun representatives of the nationalities gave greetings. The 'Peace Decree' was put to the vote without any amendments and passed unanimously. And now there were signs of an unmistakable heightening of mood. Long-drawn-out ovations alternated with singing the *Internationale*. Then Lenin was hailed again, hurrahs were

shouted, caps flung into the air. They sang a funeral march in memory of the martyrs of the war. Then they applauded again, shouted, flung up their caps.

The whole Praesidium, headed by Lenin, was standing up and singing, with excited, exalted faces and blazing eyes. But the delegates were more interesting: they were completely revived. The overturn had gone more smoothly than most of them had expected; it already seemed consummated. Awareness of its success was spreading; the masses were permeated by the faith that all would go well in future too. They were beginning to be persuaded of the imminence of peace, land, and bread, and even beginning to feel some readiness to stand up positively for their newly acquired goods and rights.

Applause, hurrahs, caps flung up in the air. . .

But I didn't believe in the victory, the success, the 'rightfulness', or the historic mission of a Bolshevik régime. Sitting in the back seats, I watched this celebration with a heavy heart. How I longed to join in, and merge with this mass and its leaders in a single feeling! But I couldn't. . .

* * *

Lenin again reported on the next question—land. But once again he didn't make a report, but began directly reading the text of a proposed 'Land Decree'. This time the decree, not having been reproduced or circulated, was not only unfamiliar to everyone: it was so badly written that Lenin stumbled, got confused, and finally stopped altogether. One of the crowd who had squeezed on to the platform came to his rescue. Lenin gladly gave up his place and the illegible piece of paper.

This was what it contained:

Private property in land was abolished immediately without compensation. Estates, whether private, monastic, or ecclesiastical, with all livestock and buildings, were placed at the disposal of rural district agrarian committees and of district Soviets of Peasant Deputies pending the Constituent Assembly. Damage to confiscated property would be considered a serious crime. The peasant 'model decree' written by the editors of the 'Peasant Central Ex. Com. News'¹ on the basis of 242 local

¹ In August. (Ed.)

peasant decrees was to serve as guide in the detailed execution of these measures.

This peasant 'model decree' had been written by SRs, and was nothing but an exposition of the SR agrarian programme. Its basic propositions amounted to the following:

All property in land, not excluding small peasants', was abolished in Russia in perpetuity, and all land within the borders of the State was to become the property of the entire nation.

The right to the use of land belonged to all citizens of the State—provided they worked it themselves. Hired labour was forbidden. The land was to be divided between those working it according to a labour or consumer's norm. The land reserves were subject to periodic reallocation, depending on the growth of the population and changes in agricultural methods, leaving the basic unit untouched.

Then, in conflict with the first point of Lenin's decree itself, the 'model decree' read: the land of ordinary Cossacks and peasants would not be confiscated. Finally, it was twice repeated that the land question could be definitively settled only by the Constituent Assembly.

Personally I had been a partisan of the SR agrarian programme from the very beginning of my political and literary activity. These views of mine were considered a sign of mental confusion, and my SR-mindedness provoked irony and perplexity amongst my fellow-thinkers, the 'consistent Marxists'. However, to this day I persist in them, and maintain that it was precisely in this form that a Socialist agrarian programme in Russia was possible and rational.

This programme laid the foundations of a petty-bourgeois order in the countryside, but in Russia this could not be otherwise, while on the other hand the programme preserves the maximum of Socialist elements possible—in so far as it abolishes private property in land. It gives the proletariat a trump card in its struggle against the reactionary class of petty landlords, and at the same time conforms to the laws of agrarian evolution. Finally, it ensures the conditions for the development of the countryside's productive forces, for (according to Marx) Socialist forms of agricultural production can be realized only by a revolution in the means of production.

However, in order to perceive the rational foundations of the SR agrarian programme, it must be freed of all the utopian and reactionary admixtures, which give it a quite absurd and rather illiterate look. The 'model decree' is full of such admixtures. It attempts to change economic relations by a *decree*. This is vicious nonsense.

Private property in land can be eliminated. Everyone knows this from bourgeois practice. But it cannot be *abolished* by a decree. Every literate person ought to know that too. Hence it is impossible to say that as of a given moment leasehold (between peasants who are neighbours) is prohibited. It is impossible to assert that 'hired labour is prohibited'. This is a futile attack on the fixed principles of economics, which may change organically but cannot be subject to the State's decrees. In addition, it undermines the productive forces of the countryside.

A propos, the first thing I ever published happened to be an exposure of these utopian SR ideas—abolishing leasehold and hired labour by edict. And now Lenin, at the head of his 'Marxist' party, had resurrected and was putting into force this antediluvian piece of SR-ism. But for Lenin in 1917 this was only the flower, the modest beginning; the fruits would come only after the 'Communist Party' began destroying the foundations of capitalist trade by decree, after it began creating a Socialist society by police power, abolitions, prohibitions, and all kinds of violence.

At that time, in October, there was still the press. And the berating Lenin heard from the SRs for this daylight robbery! The SRs cried: A fine Marxist, who for fifteen years baited us from the heights of his grandeur for our petty-bourgeois lack of science, and then executed our programme the moment he took power! And Lenin snapped back: A fine party, that had to be driven out of power for its programme to be realized!

None of this had much point; it was rather like two fishwives in the market-place—cheap, but very agreeable, all the more so since both sides were right.

Now on October 26th, Lenin gave a very interesting commentary—also in an 'epilogue'—on the 'Land Decree':

'Voices can be heard here saying that the decree was drawn up by the SRs. Very well. Isn't it all the same who composed it?

As a democratic Government we could not get round a decision of the rank-and-file, even if we disagreed with it. Life is the best teacher, and it will show who is right. Let the peasants starting from one end and ourselves from the other settle this question. Life will force us to come together in the common stream of revolutionary creativity. We must follow life, and leave the masses of the people complete freedom of creation. . . We believe the peasantry will be able to settle this question better than ourselves. The point is not whether it's in our spirit or in the spirit of the SRs. The point is for the peasantry to be firmly persuaded that there are no more landlords in the country, and to let the peasants settle all the problems and organize their own lives.'

The 'masses of the people', listening to the head of the 'democratic Government', were in raptures. It took a long time for another ovation to die down. But Lenin's words were really interesting and important. Anyone who wants to understand the spirit of the Soviet régime's policy during the first period of its activity is in duty bound to remember them.

* * *

An interval was announced. I dropped into the buffet from the crowded corridor. There was a crush around the counter. In a secluded corner I ran into Kamenev, hastily gulping down some tea:

'Well, so you're getting ready to govern us alone?'

'But surely you're with us?'

'Depends how, within what limits and ideas. Just now, in a Left SR fraction, I was trying as hard as I could to stop your setting up a dictatorship of your party alone.'

Kamenev lost his temper: 'Well, if that's the case, what's the use of talking to you? You think it right to go around other fractions agitating against us . . .'

'And you think that indecent and inadmissible?' I interrupted. 'So I can't use my right to talk to any audience I like? For after all if it's impossible in Smolny, then it's impossible at a factory too. . .'

Kamenev calmed down at once and started talking about the brilliant progress of the *coup d'état*: it was said that Kerensky had

managed to collect only an insignificant and not at all dangerous army.

'So you've definitely decided to govern alone?' I said, returning to the former theme. 'I think that's absolutely scandalous. I'm afraid that when you've made a mess of it it'll be too late to go back. . .'

'Yes, yes', muttered Kamenev irresolutely and vaguely, looking away.

'Although . . . why should we make a mess of it?' he continued, just as irresolutely.

Kamenev was not only a now humiliated opponent of the uprising, but was also against a purely Bolshevik régime, and for an agreement with the Mensheviks and SRs. But he was afraid of being humiliated again. There were quite a few like him. . .

* * *

The session reopened.

Without amendment or discussion the Land Decree was passed. Again the massed crowd applauded, jumped to their feet, and threw their caps into the air. They firmly believed that they had got the land their fathers and grandfathers had yearned for. Spirits were mounting higher and higher. The masses who had hesitated to 'come out' were perhaps ready now to take up arms and defend their new conquests. For the time being this was only in Smolny. But tomorrow the genuine masses in the capital, at the front, and in the heart of Russia, would learn about it.

There was only one question left—that of the Government. Trotsky spoke in defence of a purely Bolshevik régime. He was very clear, trenchant, and largely correct. But he refused to understand the point of his opponents' demands for a united democratic front.

He said: Isolation was a vain threat. It wasn't terrifying. It had been used as a bugbear even before the uprising, but that had ended in a brilliant victory. It was not the Bolsheviks who were isolated, for they were with the masses. Those who were isolated were those who had left the masses. A coalition with the Dans and Liebers would not have strengthened the revolution, but destroyed it. Difficulties and tasks beyond their powers? But Trotsky didn't understand how an alliance with

Lieber and Dan would help the cause of peace and produce bread. . .

The Bolsheviks, however, could not be accused of irreconcilability. 'In spite of the fact that the defensists stopped at nothing in the struggle against us, we did not cast them off. We proposed to the Congress as a whole that it should take power into its own hands. How, after that, is it possible to speak of our irreconcilability? When the party, enveloped in powder smoke, went to them and said, Let's take the power together, they ran to the Town Council and joined up with obvious counter-revolutionaries. They are traitors to the revolution, with whom we shall never ally ourselves. . .'

Here Trotsky, while justly characterizing his enemies, explained his own position in a form that had nothing in common with reality. The Bolsheviks had never taken a single step towards an agreement with the Dans and the Liebers. They had always rejected it. They had carried on a policy that excluded an agreement, and attempted to take power alone. This was quite understandable. Trotsky and the others, after all, couldn't understand why they needed Lieber and Dan, if they had the masses.

Trotsky was always clear and skilful. But you couldn't be seduced by his eloquence: you had to see clearly where he left loose ends, and maintain a critical attitude towards his diplomacy before the masses. He concluded with some characteristic remarks I shall note without comment.

'Don't try to frighten us by talk about a peace at our expense. It's all one—if Europe remains a powerful capitalist society revolutionary Russia must inevitably be crushed. Either the Russian Revolution will lead to a movement in Europe, or else the surviving powerful countries of the West will crush us.'

Such was the outlook of this central figure of the October Revolution.

A rather characteristic episode took place when the representative of the All-Russian Railwaymen's Union spoke. A group of railwaymen had joined the *Novaya Zhizn* people at the Congress and were for an agreement between the Soviet parties. A worker spoke in their name, very excitedly. He began by saying that the railway proletariat had always been 'one of the most revolutionary proletariats', but that didn't mean it was

going to back the Bolsheviks' risky ventures. The Railwaymen's Union demanded an agreement and was ready to back this demand with decisive action—including a general railway strike.

'And just take note of this, comrades. Without us you couldn't have coped either with Kornilov or with Kerensky. I know you've just sent some detachments of *saboteurs* to tear up the lines leading to the capital. But without us, you know, you couldn't even do that. We could fix all the damage in twenty minutes. We tell you we're not going to help you, but will fight you if you don't come to an agreement.'

This speech made a great sensation, like a bucket of cold water poured over the head of the meeting. But the Praesidium had ready their own railwayman, who was unleashed at once with the statement that the preceding speaker hadn't represented the views of the masses. But that wasn't so, while as for the claim by the Railway Union's spokesman that the Congress was incompetent, that wasn't true either: even after the exodus of the 'pure-in-heart' the Congress had a full legal quorum.

The 'Council of People's Commissars' was put to the vote and confirmed by an overwhelming majority. I don't recall any great enthusiasm about this. But the Congress was now becoming thoroughly disorganized, from extreme exhaustion and nervous tension.

The concluding act was the election of a new Central Ex. Com. Amidst total disorder, in a rapidly emptying hall, a long list of unknown names was read out. About 100 men in all were elected, of whom seventy were Bolsheviks, then some Left SRs, *Novaya Zhizn* people, and representatives of nationalities.

The meeting closed around 5 o'clock in the morning. Limp and exhausted, in a hurry to get home, the depleted ranks again filled Smolny with the discordant sounds of the *Internationale*, and scrambled for the way out. The Congress was over.

I waited for Lunacharsky, who was to stay with me overnight in the new flat close by. Picking up another delegate we set off together towards the Tauride Garden. It was still quite dark. Lunacharsky was extremely excited, almost in raptures, and rattled along without a stop. Unfortunately I couldn't respond and was a silent, and even rather glum listener.

'At first Lenin didn't want to go into the Government; he said

he was going to work in the Party Central Committee. But we said no, we wouldn't agree. We made him take first-hand responsibility; otherwise, everyone likes just criticizing. What? Supplies? They're all quite safe.'

'Ah!' Lunacharsky went on, referring to me, 'he won't work with us! He just won't! But what a Foreign Minister he would make! Come to us! After all, there's no other solution for an honest revolutionary. We're going to work! These events are epoch-making! Our children's children will bow their heads before their grandeur!'

We arrived home. My exhausted mind was incapable of digesting the inexhaustible material of the past days.

* * *

The Second Soviet Congress was the shortest in our history. The local delegates had to hurry home, and the centre had no time for meetings. Toils, troubles and difficulties were making their appearance every hour in ever-increasing numbers, like the heads of the Hydra. Most important was the front, where Kerensky was scraping together mixed detachments to crush the 'rebellion'. Until he had been liquidated it was impossible to have an easy mind. Indeed, the revolution could not be considered complete until the head of the old Government had been reduced to submission and taken prisoner. After all, until this had been achieved, the country could—formally—choose which it would consider the lawful Government and which the rebels.

* * *

On the evening of October 27th, information was given at the first session of the new Central Ex. Com. that columns of Cossack troops with artillery were concentrated round Dno Junction and in Gatchina. Emissaries and agitators had been sent there, but the Cossacks had declared that they would march on Petersburg to smash the Bolsheviks. Then the railwaymen told how they had received a telegram which said Kerensky was in Gatchina with troops and heavy artillery.

During the whole of the 28th very disquieting news of Kerensky's offensive continued to be received. The Military Revolutionary Committee's bulletins read: 'Tsarskoe-Selo is

under artillery fire. The garrison has decided to retreat towards Petersburg.' 'There is fighting in Krasnoe Selo; two of our regiments fought heroically but retreated under the pressure of superior forces.' 'Tsarskoe has been taken by Kerensky's troops and we are retreating to Kolpino.'

Smolny took feverish action. On the 28th from morning till night troops, mostly Red Army men, were being moved to the front. A few armoured cars and Red Cross vehicles also passed through the streets leading to the Baltic and Warsaw Stations. Masses of workers were sent outside the town to dig trenches. Petersburg was festooned with barbed-wire entanglements.

In the evening the new Central Ex. Com. met again, and again it was only the news that was interesting. According to Smolny the revolution had taken place painlessly in a whole series of towns: Minsk, Kharkov, Samara, Kazan, Ufa, Yaroslavl, and also Mogilev, the Army Headquarters.

On the 30th it was decided to finish with Kerensky at one blow. The Kronstadt and Helsingfors sailors' detachments were moved *en bloc* to the front. Trotsky himself went too; from now on he was invariably to be present at the most critical points all over the country. . . And by the end of that night Trotsky was already reporting to Petersburg from Pulkov: 'The night of the 30th will go down in history. Kerensky's attempt to move counter-revolutionary troops against the capital has received a decisive setback. KERENSKY IS IN RETREAT—we are advancing. The soldiers, sailors, and workers of Petersburg have shown that arms in hand they can and will assert their will and the power of the democracy. . .'

Kerensky and his counter-revolutionary troops had been broken. If now, after four days of advance and gathering of troops he had been rolled back, he had evidently shot his bolt. It remained only to finish him. . . And the new Government would be the sole lawful Government in Russia.

* * *

The liquidation of Kerensky consummated the October Revolution. Moscow was still an arena of bitter struggle, and the enemies of the Bolsheviks were still far from laying down their arms. Now, however, there was in Smolny a unified and

indivisible Government of the Republic, and its armed enemies had become rebels and nothing more.

The revolution that had placed a proletarian party at the head of a first-class world Power was accomplished. A new chapter had opened in the working-class movement of the world and in the history of the Russian State.

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