

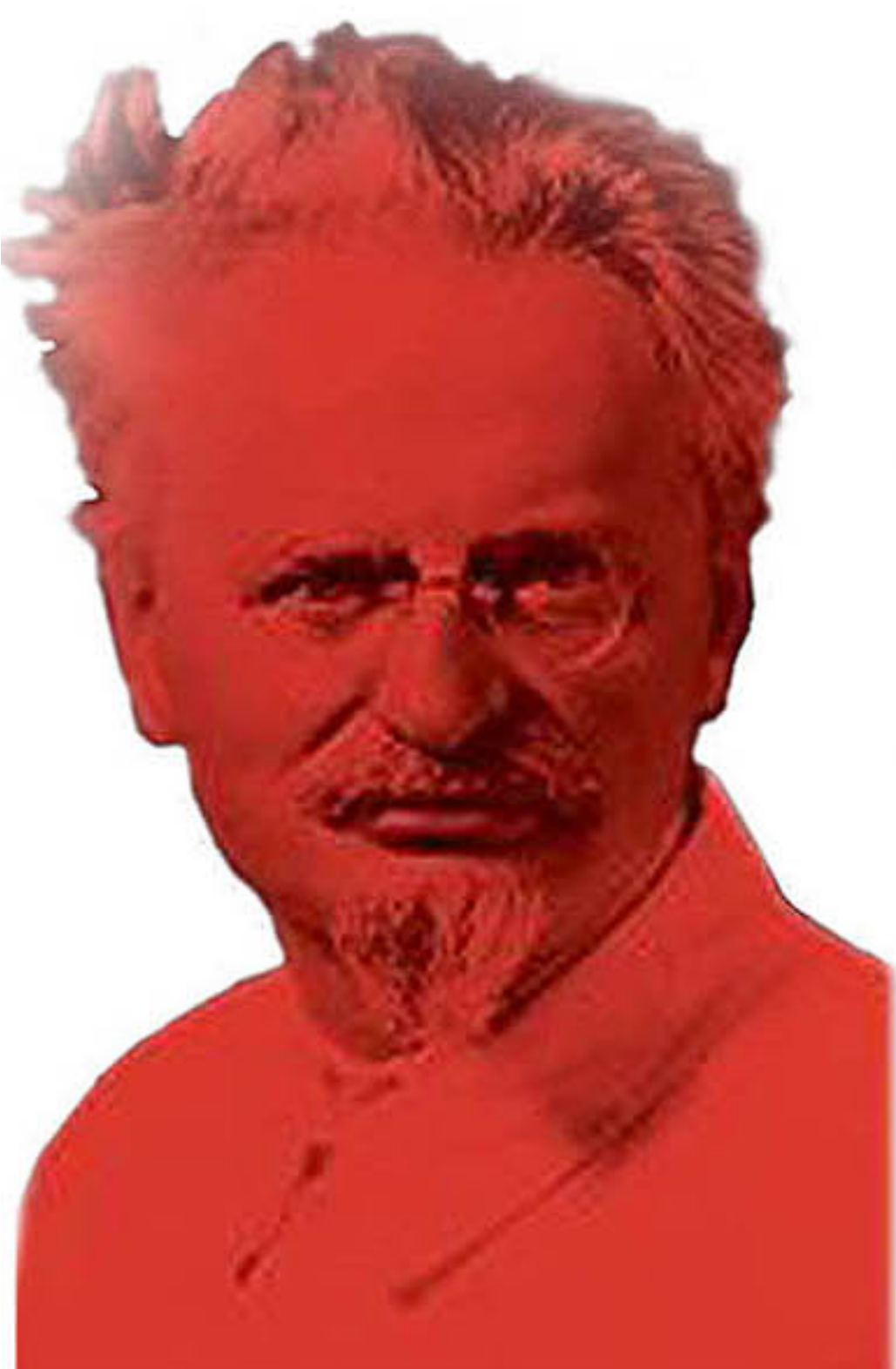
HOW WE MADE THE OCTOBER REVOLUTION

By

LEON TROTSKY

[BOLSHEVIST MINISTER OF WAR]

(FIRST INSTALLMENT)



This narrative of the events that led to the overthrow of the Kerensky Government and the advent of the Bolshevik revolution in Russia is the official Bolshevik version of those events. It is part of a long treatise first drafted by Leon Trotsky in the intervals between the sessions of the Russo-German Peace Conference at Brest-Litovsk. In the preface, dated Feb. 25, 1918 the object of the work is declared to be "to acquaint the international proletariat with the causes, the development, and the significance of the revolution accomplished at Russia in October, 1917". It was addressed to the workers of Germany, Austria-Hungary and all Europe. The work was published serially in French at Paris in the Summer of 1919 by the Archives de la Grande Guerre, from which the essential portions are here translated for CURRENT HISTORY and presented without comment.



THE revolution was born directly from the war, and the war became the touchstone of all the revolutionary parties and energies. The intellectual leaders were "against the war"; in the time of Czarism many of them were considered affiliated with the left wing of the Internationale and were Zimmerwaldians. But scarcely had they assumed "responsibilities" when their whole attitude changed.

To practice the policy of revolutionary socialism was, in these conditions, to break with the Russian and allied bourgeoisie. But the intellectual and semi-intellectual lower middle class sought to cover its political incapacity by an alliance with bourgeois liberalism. Hence the pitiful and really shameful rôle played by the leaders of the lower middle class in the question of the war.

Sighs, phrases, exhortations or secret pleas addressed by them to the "allied" Governments was all that they could mentally devise; but factively they continued to walk in the footsteps of the liberal upper bourgeoisie. The soldiers dying in the trenches could evidently not infer that the war, in which they had fought for nearly three years, had suddenly taken another turn through the sole fact that in Petrograd certain new personalities, calling themselves Revolutionary Socialists, or Mensheviki, had become a part of the Government.

Milyukov succeeded the official Prokrovsky, and Tereschenko succeeded Milyukov; that is, in simple words, instead of bureaucratic disloyalty, there was first the militarist imperialism of the Cadets, and then the absence of all principle, and political "complaisancy"; but there were no objective changes, and no real issue from the terrible struggles of war was shown.

DISINTEGRATION OF THE ARMY

To this, precisely, was due the gradual disintegration of the army. The agitators explained to the soldiers that the Government of the Czar sent them without rhyme or reason to be slaughtered like so many cattle. But the successors of the Czar were unable in any way to modify the character of the war, just as they were unable to pave the way for an effort to obtain peace. In the first months not a foot of advance was made, and the impatience of the army, as well as of the allied Governments, was caused thereby. This led to the offensive of June 18, [1917.] The Allies insisted on the offensive, presenting at the cashier's window, so to speak, old letters of exchange received from the Government of the Czar.

The leaders of the petite bourgeoisie, intimidated by their own impotence and the growing impatience of the masses, yielded to this demand. They began really to imagine that only a push by the Russian Army was needed to bring about peace. The offensive seemed to them to be the only way to escape from their difficulties, the solution of the problem; in short, salvation.

No more monstrous and criminal error could be conceived. At that time they spoke of the offensive as they did in the first days and the first weeks of the



war; the patriotic Socialists spoke of the necessity of defending "the country," of inner peace, of the "holy union," &c. All their Zimmerwaldian and internationalist enthusiasm appeared to have been swept away.

We, who combated them uncompromisingly, were well aware that the offensive might prove a frightful peril, and might even bring about the end of the revolution. We pointed out that they should not send into battle an army which had, as it were, just awakened to consciousness, and which had been shaken by the force of events whose import it still did not understand, without previously giving it new ideas which it might consider as its own. We resorted to exhortation, demonstration, threat. But as there was no other possible solution for the factions in control, who in their turn were allied with the Russian and the allied bourgeoisie, they showed us only a hostile attitude and an implacable hatred.

CAMPAIGN AGAINST BOLSHEVIKI

The historian of the future will not read without emotion the Russian papers of May and June, 1917, period of the moral preparation of the offensive. The articles of the official and Governmental organs, almost without exception, were directed against the Bolsheviki. There was no accusation, no calumny which was not "mobilized" against us at this period. In this campaign the principal part, as was only to be expected, was played by the Cadets. Their class instinct told them that not merely the offensive, but all the subsequent developments of the revolution, and even the whole future of the State, were involved in this offensive.

The bourgeois machinery of so-called "public opinion" was then revealed in all its workings. Divers organs, divers authorities, publications, platforms, and pulpits, all were used to bring about the common objective: to make the Bolsheviki, as a political party, impossible. The tenseness and dramatic qualities of the press campaign directed against the Bolsheviki, all ready before the appointed hour had come, foreshadowed the civil war which was destined to break out in the following revolutionary phase.

This campaign of hatred and calumny was intended to excite the working masses against "cultivated society" and to divide the two radically by erecting between them a water-tight compartment. The liberal upper class understood that it could not succeed in placating the masses without the intervention and assistance of the democratic lower middle class, who held provisionally the directing power of the revolutionary organizations. The political hue and cry against the Bolsheviki had, then, as its immediate object, the stirring up of relentless hostility between our party and the deep-lying strata of "intellectual socialism," which, once isolated from the proletariat, would be bound to fall into subjection to the liberal upper class.

It was at the time of the first Congress of the Soviets of all Russia that the first muffled roar of thunder was heard presaging the terrible events which were about to occur. Our party had planned for the 10th of June an armed



demonstration in the streets of Petrograd. The object of this demonstration was to act directly on the Congress of the Soviets of all Russia. "Seize the power!" the workmen of Petrograd said thereby to the social revolutionaries and the Mensheviki, who had come from all the corners of the earth: "Break with the bourgeoisie, renounce coalition with it, and seize the power!"

AN ABORTIVE DEMONSTRATION

It was manifest to us that a rupture of the Social Revolutionaries and the Mensheviki with the liberal upper bourgeoisie would force the former to seek support in the most advanced ranks of the proletariat, and that they would thus assure themselves a preponderance to the disadvantage of the upper bourgeoisie. But it was precisely this probability that frightened the leaders of the latter. When they learned the plan for a demonstration, they launched, in common with the Government, in which they had representatives, and with the liberal and counter-revolutionary bourgeoisie, a veritably insane campaign against the demonstration.

All the trumps were played. We had at this time in the Congress only an insignificant minority, and we were obliged to retreat. The demonstration did not occur. But this abortive demonstration left deep traces in the consciousness of the two parties; it accentuated contrasts, and embittered hostilities. At a special session of the presiding officers of the Congress, at which the representatives of our group were present, M. Tseretelli, who was then Minister in the Coalition Government, declared, with all the uncompromising dogmatism of the doctrinaire petit bourgeois of limited horizon, that the only danger threatening the revolution came from the Bolsheviki and from the Petrograd proletariat armed by them. He concluded that men "who did not know how to use arms" should be disarmed. This applied to the workmen and to members of the Petrograd garrison who had joined our party. This disarmament, however, did not take place, for the political and psychological conditions which would justify the carrying out of such a radical measure were not at hand.

In order to offset the effect of the failure of the demonstration on the masses, the Congress of Soviets announced a general demonstration, without arms, for June 18. That day was a day of triumph for our party. The masses marched through the streets in solid columns, and though, inversely to what had taken place in our demonstration project for June 10, they had been called out by the official power of the Soviets, the workmen had inscribed on their flags and standards the rallying cries of our party: "Down with Secret Treaties!" "Down with the Policy of an Offensive!" "Hurrah for an Honorable Peace!" "All Governmental Power for the Soviets!"

Only three signs expressed confidence in the Coalition Ministry, those borne by the Cossack regiment, the Plekhanov group, and the Petrograd section of the Jewish "League," which comprised elements alien to the proletariat.

This demonstration proved not only to



our enemies, but also to ourselves, that we were much stronger in Petrograd than we had supposed.

OFFENSIVE OF JUNE 18

Following this demonstration of the revolutionary masses, a Governmental crisis seemed absolutely inevitable. But news from the front that the revolutionary army had taken the offensive effaced the impression of the demonstration. The very day that the proletariat and the Petrograd garrison demanded publication of the secret documents, as well as categorical offers of peace, Kerensky launched the revolutionary army into the offensive.

This was not purely a gratuitous coincidence. The engineers of the political backstage had already prepared everything in advance, and the time of the offensive had been determined not on military but on political grounds.

On June 19 the so-called patriotic manifestation occurred in the streets of Petrograd. The Nevsky Prospekt—the principal artery of bourgeois circulation—was filled with animated groups, among whom were officers, journalists, and elegant ladies, all agitating against the Bolsheviki. The first news regarding the offensive had been favorable. The liberal press asserted that the main object was attained; that the attack of June 18, whatever its subsequent military effects might be, was a deadly blow at the revolution, for it would re-establish in the army the old system of discipline, and would assure to the liberal upper middle class the domination of the State.

We had predicted otherwise. In a special statement which we had presented to the first Soviet Congress a few days before the June offensive we said that this offensive would destroy the inner unity of the army, would bring its different branches into opposition, and would give a great preponderance to the counter-revolutionaries, for the enforcement of discipline in an army in a progressive state of demoralization and without any new moral principle to support it would lead to bitter reprisals.

In other words, we predicted in this statement the consequences which were fulfilled later on under the general name of the Kornilov affair. We pointed out that in every case the revolution was threatened by the greatest danger, whether the offensive succeeded, which we doubted, or whether it failed, which seemed to us almost inevitable. The second theory proved to be the correct one. The news of victory did not last long. Instead came the announcement of sad events, such as the refusal of numerous army corps to support the attacking units, and the killing of officers, who, in some instances, were the only attackers.

Military events were also complicated by the ever-increasing difficulties in the inner life of the country. In respect to the agrarian question, industrial organization, and national harvests, the Coalition Government made absolutely no progress. The question of food and transport became increasingly difficult and local conflicts became more frequent every day.



THE GOVERNMENT HESITATES

The Socialist Ministers asked the masses to wait. All urgent decisions and measures, notably the question of the Constituent Assembly, were deferred. The irresolution of the Government was obvious. There were only two possible solutions—either the bourgeoisie must be expelled from power and the revolution must go on, or else, by severe reprisals, the popular masses must be muzzled. Kerensky and Tseretelli backed and filled between these two extremes and only confused the situation more.

When the Cadets, who were the shrewdest and most penetrating members of the Coalition Government, saw that the failure of the offensive of June might deal a fatal blow, not only to the revolution, but also to the directing parties, they hastened to withdraw, throwing as they did so all responsibilities on the shoulders of their associates of the Left.

On July 2 occurred the Ministerial crisis, the direct cause of which was the question of the Ukraine. From all points of view this was a moment of extreme political tension. From different parts of the front thronged delegations and isolated representatives to describe the chaos which reigned in the army following the offensive. The "Governmental" press demanded stern reprisals. Similar demands became more and more frequent in the columns of the "Socialist" press.

Kerensky drew nearer, or rather publicly nearer, to the Cadet Party and the Cadet generals, and he showed publicly not only all the hatred which he had for the Bolsheviki, but also his aversion for all revolutionary parties in general. Meanwhile the Entente diplomats exerted pressure on the Government, and demanded the re-establishment of discipline and the continuation of the offensive. In Governmental circles the greatest heedlessness prevailed. In the breast of the working masses an accumulation of anger awaited impatiently the moment of explosion. * * *

THE COALITION DISSOLVED

I remember the meeting of the Executive Committee of July 2. The Socialist Ministers had come to report on the new Governmental crisis. * * * The spokesman was Tseretelli. He explained at length to the Executive Committee that the concessions which he and Terestchenko had made to the Kiev Rada were far from signifying the dismemberment of Russia, and were consequently not a sufficient motive for the Cadets' withdrawal from the Cabinet. Tseretelli reproached the Cadet leaders with their centralizing doctrinarianism, their inability to grasp the necessity of a compromise with the Ukraine, &c.

From all the previous experiences of the coalition only one issue seemed possible—to break with the Cadets and to constitute a Soviet Government. The equilibrium of forces in the Soviets was then such that the Government of the Soviets, from the point of view of party policy, would have come into the hands of the revolutionary Socialists and the Mensheviki. We boldly defended this policy. But even after the Ministerial crisis of July 2 Tseretelli and his



associates did not renounce their idea of the "coalition." They declared to the Executive Committee that though the Cadet leaders were infected with doctrinarianism, and even with counter-revolutionary tendencies, there were in the provinces numerous bourgeois elements which could still act harmoniously with the Revolutionary Democracy, and that to obtain their collaboration representatives of the upper bourgeoisie must be admitted into the new Government.

The announcement that the coalition was dissolved, only to be succeeded by a new coalition, spread immediately through Petrograd and aroused a storm of indignation in the workmen's quarters. Thus was laid the foundation for the events of July 3, 4, and 5.

THE DAYS OF JULY

The Executive Committee of All-Russia, created by the July Congress and supported by the unprogressive provinces, relegated the Petrograd Soviet further and further to the background, and even seized control of affairs in Petrograd. A conflict was inevitable. The workmen and soldiers expressed violent dissatisfaction with the official policy of the Soviets and demanded more energetic action on our part. The position of our party in relation to the movement of July 3, 4, and 5 was clearly drawn. The agitators of the party, distributed through the lower strata of the population, went with the mass and fomented an agitation based on no half measures.

The Central Executive Committee was in session at the Tauride Palace when the palace was invested by tumultuous bands of workmen and soldiers bearing arms. These elements (including anarchists, "Black Hundreds," and paid agents) demanded the arrest of Tschernov and Tseretelli, the dispersal of the Executive Committee, &c. They even tried to seize Tschernov. The bourgeois press represented the whole movement as a pogromist and counter-revolutionary as well as a Bolshevik exploit, the immediate object of which was to seize the Government and to do violence to the Central Executive Committee.

All the strategy of Tseretelli, Tschernov, and others on July 3 was to try to gain time and thus give Kerensky the possibility to bring "safe" troops to Petrograd. In the hall of the Tauride Palace, which was surrounded by a large crowd of armed people, deputation after deputation arrived, demanding an immediate break with the upper bourgeoisie, absolute social reforms, and the opening of overtures of peace. We, the Bolsheviks, received each new detachment in the street or in the courtyard, and exhorted them to be calm, expressing our certainty that in view of the attitude of the masses the party of the Centre would not succeed in forming a new Coalition Government. The most excited were the militant ones who had come from Kronstadt, and we had great difficulty in keeping them in bounds.

On July 4 the demonstration assumed even greater proportions, already under the immediate direction of our party. The Soviet leaders were lacking in decision, their words were evasive; the replies that "Ulysses" Tseretelli made



the delegations were void of any political import. It was clear that all the official leaders were in a state of expectation.

On the night of the 4th the first "safe" troops arrived from the front. During the session of the Executive Committee there resounded from within the walls of the palace the strains of a brass band playing the "Marseillaise." The faces of the members of the committee were immediately transformed. The self-assurance which they had lost during the last few days returned to them. It was the Volhynian regiment which was entering the Tauride Palace, the same regiment which, a few months later, marched under our flags in the vanguard of the October revolution.

This event changed the aspect of everything. The Executive Committee threw off all restraint in replying to the delegations of workmen and soldiers and to the representatives of the Baltic fleet. From the balcony of the committee came words referring to armed rioting, which "troops faithful to the Government" had just repressed. The Bolsheviki were declared a counter-revolutionary party. The anguish of the upper bourgeoisie during the last two days of armed demonstration now gave way to an intense hatred, not only in the columns of the papers, but also in the streets of Petrograd, and especially on the Nevsky Prospekt, where the workmen and soldiers who were arrested in the act of "criminal agitation" received a frightful beating. Ensigns, officers, shock troops, Knights of St. George, remained the masters of the situation. At their head stood the uncompromising counter-revolutionaries. In the city the offensive against the labor organizations and the institutions of our party was pitilessly pursued. Arrests, domicile visits, bastonnades and assassinations occurred on every hand.

During the night of the 4th the Minister of Justice, M. Pereversev, gave out for publication "documents" which purported to show that the leaders of the Bolshevik Party were paid German agents. The leaders of the Socialist-Revolutionist Party and of the Mensheviks had known us too long and too intimately to believe these charges; but they were too much interested in having them believed to repudiate them openly. To this day we cannot think without disgust of those orgies of falsehood overflowing the pages of all the bourgeois and moderate press.

Our own papers were stifled. The Petrograd revolutionists felt that the province and the army were far from being in their favor. In the workmen's quarters there was a short period of disorder. Repressive measures began in the garrison against disbanded regiments, and various units were disarmed, while the leaders of the Soviet "manufactured" a new Ministry, including the representatives of the landholding bourgeois parties, who were not only incapable of supporting the Government in any way, but could only take from it the last iota of revolutionary initiative.

MILITARY COLLAPSE

And at the front events merely followed their course. The organism of



the army was shaken through and through. The soldiers had convinced themselves that the majority of the officers who at the beginning of the revolution, with a view to personal protection, had displayed the red cockade were hostile to the new régime. At the main headquarters counter-revolutionary elements were openly chosen. The Bolshevik publications, meanwhile, were relentlessly pursued.

The offensive was soon transformed into a tragic retreat. The bourgeois press overflowed in furious calumnies against the army; and, though on the eve of the offensive, the directing parties had told us that we were a completely negligible quantity, that the army knew nothing about us, and wanted to know nothing about us, now, that the opening of the offensive had come to such a tragic end, these same individuals and parties sought to throw all the responsibility for this failure upon our shoulders.

The prisons were packed with workmen and soldier revolutionists. The Magistrates of the former courts of the Czaristic period were charged to investigate the events of July 3, 4 and 5. It was under these conditions that the Socialist-Revolutionist Party and the Mensheviks invited Lenin, Zinoviev and our other comrades to give themselves up voluntarily into the hands of "Justice."

AFTER THE DAYS OF JULY

The period of disorder in the workmen's quarter lasted but a short time, and was succeeded by great revolutionary activity, not only among the proletariat, but also in the Petrograd garrison. The moderates lost all influence, the stream of Bolshevism began to overflow from the urban centres over the whole country, and, overcoming all obstacles, invaded the army.

The new Coalition Government, headed by Kerensky, openly began reprisals. The Ministry re-established the penalty of death for offenses committed by soldiers. Our papers were stifled and our agitators imprisoned, but this only strengthened our influence. Despite all the impediments put in the way of reelection to the Soviet of Petrograd, the balance of forces had been so shifted that in some important questions we already had a majority. It was the same with the Moscow Soviet.

At this time I, myself, together with many other comrades, was detained in the Kresty Prison "for agitation and organization of armed revolt on July 3, 4 and 5, at the instigation of the German Government, and with the intention of furthering the war aims of the Hohenzollerns." The examining Judge of the Czarist régime, Alexandrov, who was no nonentity, and who had numerous trials of revolutionists to his credit, received instructions to defend the republic against the counter-revolutionary Bolsheviks.

Under the old régime political and criminal prisoners were distinguished. This distinction was succeeded by a new terminology: the common law criminals and the Bolsheviks.

The majority of the soldiers who had been arrested were perplexed. They were young boys from the country who had

previously known nothing about politics, and who had believed that the revolution had brought them freedom once and for all. But now they were amazed to find themselves behind bolted doors and grated windows. During the daily exercise they asked me each time with great anxiety what it all means and how it would end. I consoled them by assuring them that the ultimate victory would be for us.

THE KORNILOV AFFAIR

[M. Trotsky at this point takes up the Kornilov affair in some detail. He represents it as an attempt of the bourgeois class, including Kerensky and others, to give the Bolshevik revolutionary elements a lesson, and explains Kornilov's subsequent abandonment as due to fear of the consequences of the latter's success. Kornilov's defeat he ascribes to the thoroughness of the Bolshevik propaganda, which turned the revolutionary masses against him as an exponent of imperialism. Despite the favorable outcome of the Kornilov revolt no immediate political transformation could occur, because of the still existing effects of the repression of the July revolts, which had made the revolutionary masses and their leaders much more prudent. One tangible accomplishment, however, was the gaining of a Bolshevik preponderance in both the Petrograd and the Moscow Soviets, and the steady falling into line of the provincial Soviets under the same system. Confident of a majority in the approaching second Soviet Congress, the Bolsheviks favored it in opposition to the plan of a "Democratic Congress." This project was advocated vigorously by the Socialist-Revolutionists as a weapon to be used both against the Bolsheviks and against Kerensky, who had reached an extreme stage of arbitrary irresponsibility, though in reality his belief in his own power was mostly pure delusion. Kerensky, in fact, had become one of those "personal factors" whose elimination it would be the duty of the coming Democratic Congress, composed of Soviet representatives, diplomatic councils, zemstvos, trade bodies, and labor unions, to effectuate.]

This Democratic Congress was convened in the middle of September by Tseretelli and his associates. M. Trotsky characterizes it as "a combination of Soviets and autonomous organs, 'dosed' in such a way as to assure the predominance of the moderate parties." It was, he asserts, a miserable fiasco. The bourgeois landholders, fearing dispossession, showed extreme hostility; the revolutionist proletariat and the peasant and soldier masses condemned the illicit methods employed for the convocation of the Assembly. The voting on the question of a Coalition Government showed extreme inconsistency, the project of coalition with the bourgeois obtaining only a few more votes than the contrary tendency. Coalition with the Cadets was rejected, but secret negotiations ultimately led to their inclusion as—social workers! The Soviet, eliminated from the Democratic Conference, was to be completed by representatives of the landholding class: this pre-parliament would function until the convocation of the Constituent Assembly. The whole result of the conference was a victory of the landholding bourgeois element over the lower middle class. The study of M. Trotsky continues as follows:]

The inner situation, however, became more and more complicated and difficult. The war dragged on, purposeless, meaningless, and hopeless. The new Coalition Government did nothing to escape from this vicious circle. It was at this time that the ridiculous plan was formed of sending to Paris the Menshevik Skobelev to influence the Entente imperialists. But no sensible man took this plan seriously.

Petrograd was threatened, but the bourgeois elements showed a malicious joy, all too obvious, before the danger. The former President of the Duma, M.



Rodzianko, declared openly that the capture by the Germans of a centre of corruption like Petrograd would be no great misfortune. He cited the case of Riga, where, after the entrance of the Germans, the Soviet had been abolished and public order restored by the police organization of the old régime. "The Baltic fleet is lost; but this fleet is gangrened by revolutionary propaganda, and consequently the loss of the fleet deserves no great amount of lamentation," he said. This cynicism of a verbose grand seigneur expressed the secret thoughts of the bourgeois circles.

The Kerensky Government had no intention of seriously defending the city; on the contrary, it prepared public opinion for an eventual capitulation. The various branches of the Government had already been transferred to Moscow and to other cities. It was at this juncture that the group of soldiers of the Petrograd Soviet assembled. The state of mind was tense and disquieted. "The Government is unable to defend Petrograd? Then let it make peace! And if it cannot make peace, let it fall and be damned!"

This point of view expressed the opinion of the soldier group. The day of the October revolution was already dawning. At the front the situation was steadily growing worse. Autumn was approaching with its cold, its rain and mire. A fourth Winter of war was imminent. The food was becoming worse every day. The rear had forgotten the front; there were neither relief forces, reinforcements, nor the warm garments required for the regiments. Desertions multiplied. The old Soldier Committees, which had been elected during the first period of the revolution, continued to function and supported the policy of Kerensky. No re-election was authorized. Between the committees and the mass of soldiers an abyss was being created. The soldiers finally reached a point where they felt nothing but hatred for the committees. More and more frequently delegates from the trenches came to Petrograd, and at all the sessions of the Petrograd Soviet they asked the same insistent question: "What is to be done? Through whom and how is the war to be ended? Why does the Petrograd Soviet remain silent?"

STRUGGLE FOR POWER

But the Petrograd Soviet did not remain silent. It demanded the immediate delivery to the Soviets of all the central and local power, as well as the immediate handing over of the land of the peasants; the control of production by labor and the immediate opening of peace negotiations. As long as we were merely an opposition party, our rallying cry and the slogan of our propaganda was "All power to the Soviets." But as soon as we had a majority in all the principal Soviets, this rallying cry imposed on us the necessity of beginning a direct and immediate struggle to obtain this power.

In the country districts the situation was extremely confused and complex. The revolution had promised lands to the peasants, but the directing parties forbade the peasants from touching those lands before the convening of the Constituent. At first the peasants waited

OldMagazineArticles.com



patiently. When they began to lose patience the Coalition Ministry adopted violent measures.

The convening of the Constituent Assembly, meanwhile, was constantly deferred. The upper middle class did not wish to convene the Constituent until after the conclusion of peace. The peasant masses lost patience more and more. What we had predicted at the beginning of the revolution began to be fulfilled—the peasants seized the land on their own account. Reprisals by the Government were intensified; one after the other the peasant revolutionary committees were arrested. In some districts Kerensky had proclaimed martial law.

Rural deputations thronged to the Petrograd Soviet. They complained at the arrest of the peasants for having, in accordance with the program of the Petrograd Soviet, transferred the landed estates to the peasant committees. The peasants counted on our protection. We replied to them that we could protect them only if we were in power. The conclusion was that if the Soviets did not wish to be mere talking bodies they must gain possession of the Governmental power.

Our neighbors of the Right told us that it was an act of folly to begin a struggle to obtain power for the Soviets within a month and a half of the convening of the Constituent. But we were by no means infected with the Constituent fetich, all the less so as we had no guarantee that it would really be convoked.

The demoralization of the army, the wholesale desertions, the food distress, the agrarian revolts, had all created an unfavorable situation for elections to the Constituent. The eventual surrender of Petrograd to the Germans threatened, moreover, to wipe the question of elections from Governmental discussion. And then, even if the Constituent Assembly should meet under the authority of the old parties, and on the basis of the old electoral lists, it would become only a mask and a means of justification for the Coalition Government. Neither the Socialist-Revolutionists nor the Mensheviki would be able to take over power without the assistance of the upper bourgeoisie.

[To be Continued]



The New York Times.

CURRENT HISTORY

A Monthly Magazine of The New York Times

October, 1919

p. 506

OldMagazineArticles.com