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# On the Russian Revolution: The Petrograd Workers and the Fall of the Old Régime - III - Chapter Four

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## **Chapter 4: The Honeymoon Period - From the February to the April Days**

From the standpoint of the evolution of working-class politics in 1917, the dominant issues of this period revolved around the question of the workers' relationship to census society. The February Revolution left the workers ambivalent on this score. The historical experience of the labour

movement had bequeathed a legacy of deep and pervasive distrust of the bourgeoisie, which had generally been hostile to working-class aspirations. But this distrust was now counter-balanced by two new factors: the workers' unwillingness to assume responsibility for running the state and economy, and the ultimate, if belated, rallying of census society to the cause of the revolution.

This ambivalence found its political expression in the system of dual power: formally, state power resided in an all-census government standing on a platform agreed upon with the Soviet; but the Soviet reserved for itself the right to 'control' this government and ultimately to intervene directly when it saw fit. And as far as the workers were concerned, the Soviet was the sole source of legitimate authority in Russia, the Provisional Government merely an executor of its will.

In the economic sphere, the workers were at once more and less radical. While they refused to yield on the social aspects of the revolution, as they conceived it, regardless of the threat this may have posed to their political alliance with census society, they nevertheless showed no intention of challenging the economic dominance of the capitalists. One must add, however, that even in the early weeks of the revolution, one could discern a certain wariness among the workers regarding the intentions of the owners and management and the first hints that the workers would not stop even before direct intervention into administration if they felt the interests of production and the revolution called for it.

In this way, a hesitant alliance was established between the working class and census society, each eyeing the other with unconcealed suspicion.

## **Background to February -The Labour Movement during the War**

The February Revolution in Petrograd occurred against the immediate background of growing economic dislocation, military reverses and the deepening alienation of all classes from the Tsarist regime.

At the root of the economic problems lay the war and the backwardness of the Russian economy, which was simply unequal to the task of meeting the needs of the front and the rear. Moreover, the Tsarist state proved incapable of organising the economic base that did exist. The military reverses were in large part a result of these factors. While census society was turning away from the regime for its inability successfully to prosecute the war and hold the increasingly militant workers in check (without, however, daring actually to break with it), the workers' anti-government mood was fired by the deterioration of their economic conditions caused by a war which, by the winter of 1916, the majority had come to view as imperialist, as well as by the severely repressive political regime.

In the winter of 1916-17 the workers experienced the effects of the war and economic crisis in the form of production stoppages due to shortages of fuel and raw materials, declining living standards resulting from the galloping inflation and the outlawing of strikes, scarcity of consumer goods and the appearance of long queues before bakeries and food stores. Work conditions had also deteriorated, overtime was unlimited, laws protecting female and child labour abrogated. The management, now virtually free of all restraints and enjoying the active support of the state, met workers' demands with the very real threats of the front, jail or exile. The labour press, trade unions and most other forms of workers' organisation had been shut soon after the outbreak of war, the Bolshevik State Duma delegates exiled to Siberia for anti-war agitation. So efficient was police repression that the average career of the underground activist was reduced to only three months. [1]

In the eyes of many observers, the eve of the war in Petrograd had had the markings of a revolutionary situation reminiscent of 1905. [2] The strike of 6-12 July 1914, the culmination of a

movement begun in 1911-12, started as a protest against a police attack on the Putilov workers and soon escalated into a general political strike, replete with barricades and pitched battles.

The mobilisation and intensified repression put an abrupt end to this movement. The anniversary of Bloody Sunday, 9 January and May Day 1915 were not marked, by strikes or street demonstrations as in previous years. But the spring and summer of 1915 saw a resurgence of strike activity, though it was now predominantly economic in nature except for a strike of 30 000 workers protesting against the bloody repression of a textile strike in Ivanovo-Voznesensk in the summer of that year.

But if in the first year of the war less than one-third of the 180 864 worker-days lost were due to political strikes, in the second year a full one-half of the 596 039 worker-days lost were due to political actions. [3] On 9 January 1916, 100 000 workers put down their tools. In February, the Putilov workers began an economic strike which soon put forward the political demands of the Social-Democratic minimum programme, and over 100 000 workers struck in solidarity. [4]

The movement in the autumn of 1916 continued to grow, its political character becoming more and more pronounced, culminating in a protest strike of 120 000 workers against the court martial of Baltic sailors accused of membership in an underground Bolshevik organisation. Confronted with a lockout, the workers responded with yet another strike. The largest strike of the war to date occurred on 9 January 1917, with estimates running between 200 000 and 300 000. No one at this point foresaw a revolution only six weeks away, but the potential of this mighty upsurge of militancy was not lost upon the workers' leaders. The Executive Committee of the Bolshevik Petersburg Committee (PC) reported: 'The success of the demonstration of January 9 very much raised the spirits of the masses. In the factories the mood is very buoyant and politically conscious; this opens wide revolutionary possibilities'. [5] In the six months from September 1916 to the start of the revolution a little over one million worker-days were lost in Petrograd, three-quarters of these in political strikes.

## **The February Revolution - The Birth of Dual Power**

The general strike that resulted in the overthrow of Tsarism grew out of two separate actions. [6] On 17 February one of the shops of the Putilov Works struck for higher wages and the reinstatement of several dismissed activists. Other shops soon joined, and when on 22 February the administration declared a lockout, the whole 36 000 work force struck. A strike committee was formed, and delegations dispatched to other factories to drum up support. One of these prophetically informed Kerenskii, then a Trudovik (right-wing populist) duma delegate, that this could be the beginning of a major political offensive. [7] But no one guessed just how close the denouement was.

International Women's Day fell on 23 February, and the mood among the women workers was very militant against the background of high prices, the queues and especially the recent disappearance of bread from a number of bakeries. The day began with meetings featuring anti-war speeches, but no other actions were planned. Among the Bolsheviks, who tended to be the most militant, the strategy was to conserve energy for a decisive general strike on May Day. [8] Nevertheless, in the Vyborg District the women workers of several textile mills quit work and, gathering outside the nearby metalworking factories, easily persuaded the men to join them. I. Gordienko, a worker at the Nobel Machine-construction Factory, recalled the following scene:

*"On the morning of February 23 one could hear women's voices in the lane which the windows of our department overlooked: 'Down with the war! Down with high prices! Down with hunger! Bread for the workers!' Myself and several comrades were at the windows in a flash.... The gates of No. 1 Bol'shaya Sampsion'evskaya Manufaktura were wide open. Masses of women workers filled the lane,*

*and their mood was militant. Those who caught sight of us began to wave their arms, shouting: 'Come out! Quit work!' Snowballs flew through the window. We decided to join the demonstration.... A brief meeting took place outside the main office near the gates, and we poured out into the street.... The comrades in front were seized by the arm amidst shouts of 'Hurray!', and we set off with them down Bol'shoi Sampson'evskii Prospekt."* [9]

That day, the demonstrators concentrated their efforts on 'taking out' (*snyatie*) the other factories. Singing revolutionary songs, the crowd would stop in front of a factory and exhort those inside to join. If no response followed, some would steal inside to agitate, and that failing, to threaten. At Metallicheskie, the administration took the precaution of locking the gates, but the crowd broke them down. Along the way, the workers disabled trams and attacked isolated policemen. Several bakeries and food shops were sacked. The geographical goal of the movement from the very outset was Nevskii Prospekt, the city's main thoroughfare. But the police were still able to keep most demonstrators from crossing the river. According to the Okhranka (secret political police), 87 534 workers from 50 factories struck that day. [10] Although anti-war and anti-government slogans could be heard from the start, the most popular on that day by far was 'Bread'!

On the morning of 24 February, the workers appeared at their factories as usual but after brief meetings again took to the streets. Events followed the pattern of the previous day, and clashes with the police became more and more frequent. Bread was still the most widespread slogan, but anti-war and anti-government cries were gaining in prominence. The strikers now numbered about 200 000 [11] and came from all districts of the city. Now students began to appear in significant numbers. The demonstrators were also more successful in getting across to the centre. Among certain army and Cossack units there were signs of favourable disposition towards the demonstrators. The next day the City Governor's office reported 240 000 striking workers (Leiberov's estimate: 305 000). For all practical purposes the strike had become general. Non-working-class elements - artisans, white-collar employees, members of the intelligentsia - joined in larger numbers, creating an atmosphere of general sympathy that further raised spirits. The police were now definitely on the run, moving only in groups on the street. Anti-war and anti-government slogans predominated alongside calls for a democratic republic and the other traditional Social-Democratic demands: the eight-hour workday and the convening of the Constituent Assembly. Nevskii Prospekt belonged to the demonstrators.

It was at this point that the people began to sense that the movement would end in victory, that what was happening was a revolution. A police informer reported on that day:

*"Since the military units did not hinder the crowd and in individual cases even took measures to paralyse the initiative of the police, the masses have acquired a sense of certainty that they will go unpunished, and now after two days of unhindered marching about the streets, when revolutionary circles have put forward the slogans 'down with the war' and 'down with the government', the people have become convinced that the revolution has begun, that success is with the masses, that the government is powerless to suppress the movement since the military units are not on its side, that victory is close since the military units will soon cross over to the revolutionary forces."* [12]

On Sunday, 26 February, the number of strikers remained about the same as the previous day. The police began to retaliate by firing into the crowds, especially on Nevskii Prospekt, but the crowds scattered only to reassemble as soon as the shooting died down. The sacking and firing of police stations began. Isolated cases of mutiny among the garrison occurred.

27 February marked the victory of the revolution. Virtually the entire Petrograd working class was out. From the morning, crowds approached the barracks in efforts to persuade the soldiers to join them. By afternoon, the mutiny was a mass phenomenon. The remainder of the day was spent in

firing police stations and liberating political prisoners.

Meanwhile, at the Tauride Palace, seat of the State Duma, the two remaining Social-Democratic (Menshevik) deputies, Chkheidze and Skobelev, along with the recently freed Menshevik-Defencist leaders of the 'Workers' Groups' of the Military-Industrial Committee and a number of independent Social-Democratic intellectuals (Sukhanov and Sokolov), seized the initiative in organising a Soviet of Workers' Deputies to take charge of the movement. Declaring themselves a Provisional Executive Committee (EC, they set up military and food commissions and invited the factories to send delegates to the Soviet that evening.

In another section of the palace, the State Duma, having recently been dissolved by the Tsar, met in 'private session' (still reluctant openly to defy the will of the autocrat) and formed a Provisional Committee of Members of the State Duma for the Restoration of Order and for Contacts with Persons and Institutions.

On the night of 28 February-1 March, these two bodies, the one speaking in the name of revolutionary democracy, the other for census Russia, reached an agreement on the formation of a government constructed exclusively from among the census delegates of the Duma. The Duma Committee, for its part, accepted the Soviet's programme, including full political freedoms, political amnesty, and immediate measures for the convocation of a Constituent Assembly. On 2 March, the soviet plenum approved this arrangement overwhelmingly, though emphatically qualifying its support of the Provisional Government upon the latter's conscientious execution of the Soviet's programme. The plenum also decided to establish an 'observation committee' to monitor the activities of the government. The dual power system was born.

### **The Workers' Attitudes on State Power and their Relationship to Census Society**

The idea of a soviet of workers' deputies, part of the legacy of the 1905 Revolution, was close to the hearts of the workers, and the question of its election was raised in some factories as early as 25 February, even before the initiative of the Provisional Executive Committee (EC of the Soviet). [13] At the same time, however, there can be little doubt that the overwhelming majority of the workers were not prepared for the Soviet itself to take power and that the dual power arrangement hit upon by the EC corresponded to their own understanding of the tasks at hand.

At the 2 March plenum, the formula of conditional support, '*postol'ku-poskol'ku*' (inasmuch), was passed by 400 votes to 19. But the establishment of an 'observation committee', which had not been among the EC's recommendations, indicated the existence of a somewhat greater distrust of the census government among the rank-and-file delegates than among the leadership.

Some Bolsheviks and the Menshevik-Internationalist Bazarov spoke against the position of the EC majority. The protocols note that 'in the debate a current emerged that rejected any possibility of contact with the Duma Committee and demanded the creation of a Provisional Revolutionary Government by the Soviet of Workers' and Soldiers' Deputies' (W and SD). [14] But as Shlyapnikov, a member of the Russian Bureau of the Central Committee (CC) and the Soviet's EC, admitted, even many of 'our own people' voted with the majority. [15] And the Bolshevik Petersburg Committee in its majority also rejected the slogan of a Provisional Revolutionary Government to be created by the Soviet in favour of a lukewarm formula of conditional support for the government: '*We will not oppose the Provisional Government [PG] inasmuch*'... [16]

In the factories, the attitude to the Soviet's position was also overwhelmingly favourable, with many

of the resolutions passed at meetings closely echoing the Soviet. An 8 March meeting of the workers of the Izhorskii Factory, a mixed production metalworking plant in Kolpino, near Petrograd, resolved: 'All measures of the PG that destroy the remnants of the autocracy and strengthen the freedom of the people must be fully supported on the part of democracy. All measures that lead to conciliation with the old régime and that are directed against the people must meet a most decisive protest and counteraction'. The resolution went on to state the necessity of defending by all means the SD minimum programme, the 'Three Whales' - the democratic republic, the eight-hour day and the confiscation of lands and their transfer to the peasantry - and it called upon the Soviet to appeal to the working classes of the world and conclude a democratic peace. [17] Nevertheless, despite the profession of support for the government, the very mention of the possibility that the government might turn against the people betrays a basic distrust. The resolution is at once an expression of support and a threat.

Yet even this formulation appears relatively positive when compared to many other resolutions. A meeting of leatherworkers in early March expressed support for the Soviet's tactics on power (significantly omitting any direct expression of support for the government itself) but added that 'even now, when all classes are caught up in the powerful revolution created by the workers and soldiers, we must not completely trust the bourgeoisie. We must establish unremitting control of the Soviet of W and SD over it'. [18] Even more explicit is the resolution of the general assembly of the Petrograd Cable Factory on March 3. Having heard a report of the factory's Soviet delegate, it resolved (by about 1000 to 3) that

*"We consider the most essential issue of the current moment to be the establishment of strict control over the ministers who were appointed by the State Duma and who do not enjoy popular confidence. This control must be constituted by representatives of the Soviet W and SD."* [19]

Similarly, on March 3, about 2000 woodworkers meeting in the Chinzelli Circus declared that they 'trust only the Soviet W and SD'. Calling on the latter to exert vigilant control over every step of the PG, the resolution instructed the Soviet 'to immediately inform the workers and soldiers and the whole population of this [any retreat by the PG from its promises] and to call them out into battle against it'. [20]

The workers' resolutions of March all point to a conclusion that was obvious even to the leaders of census society: the PG itself had little legitimacy in the eyes of the workers, and the support that they did give it was a function of the legitimacy and 'control' of the Soviet. In fact, the Duma Committee had attempted to persuade Skobelev, Chkheidze and Kerenskii, members of the Soviet EC to enter the government. Failing this, Milyukov insisted that the Soviet at least express publicly its support. [21] It was the Soviet, not the government, that issued the call to end the general strike. All this was a conscious admission of the government's lack of authority among the masses. Nor was this the case in Petrograd alone. An analysis of workers' resolutions from the provinces found all addressed either to the Soviet or to Kerenskii; [22] none to the PG. [23]

In their actions too, the workers showed that for them the Soviet was the real source of authority. Thus, several state factories turned to the Soviet, not the government, to sanction changes they had made in the administration. [24] Others asked the Soviet to enact various reforms. When on March 4 the general assembly of the Patronnyi Factory decided that alcoholic beverages should go the same way as the old régime, it resolved to 'enter into contact with the Soviet to work out a decree on its prohibition'. [25] Many factories specifically petitioned the Soviet for a law on the eight-hour day [26] and almost all turned to the Soviet to issue an appeal to the peoples of the warring countries. [27] When suspicions or open conflicts arose in relations with management, it was again the Soviet that was summoned to investigate. [28]

The only wage- or salary-earning groups to express direct support for the government were white-collar employees and railroad workers. The latter, especially outside the big cities, constituted a huge semi-proletarian mass with strong peasant ties and were under the influence of the Kadets and right-wing socialists from among the higher administrative personnel. [29] The white-collar employees (*sluzhashchie*) of the Russian Company of United Machine-construction Factories pledged 'full support to the PG and the Soviet in their responsible work to create a new organisation of society and to summon the Constituent Assembly'. [30] Similarly, the workers and employees of 26 railway lines resolved jointly to 'support the Soviet and the PG'. [31] According to Tanyaev's history of the railroad workers in 1917, they indeed viewed the PG as a popular democratic government. 'No other part of the working class placed so much hope in it'. [32]

On the other hand, despite the misgivings and qualifications, there were few industrial workers in Petrograd who did not accept dual power as a viable arrangement. The only exceptions were in the Vyborg District. A large meeting on March 1 at the Sampson'evskii Brotherhood was extremely hostile to the State Duma and its Provisional Committee and voted by a large majority to subordinate the Committee to a Provisional Revolutionary Government. [33] Another meeting at the Brotherhood hall on March 3 called on the Soviet 'to remove the PG of liberal bourgeoisie and to declare itself the Provisional Revolutionary Government'. [34] According to the Bolshevik worker Sudakov, meetings here were famous for their anti-Duma and anti-PG tone. [35] The Vyborg Menshevik organisation indirectly confirmed the existence of such a mood in the district, at least among some of the workers, reporting that 'with the exception of the attitude to the PG, all questions - land and the future political system - are being decided clearly and categorically'. [36] And the Menshevik paper wrote: 'The calls to overthrow and even to arrest the PG that we heard from irresponsible street orators in the first days of the revolution evoked applause but they led to no practical results'. [37]

Within the Petrograd Bolshevik organisation itself, apparently only the Vyborg District (500-600 overwhelmingly working-class members in March 1917) held to this left position. In fact, the PC was forced specifically to forbid the distribution of the Vyborg organisation's leaflet containing the March 1 resolution of its general assembly demanding the resignation of all members of the Duma, that 'pillar of the Tsarist regime' and the formation of a Provisional Revolutionary Government. [38] Shlyapnikov comments that the Vyborg Bolsheviks, 'somewhat apt to force events', were for immediate, even armed, struggle by all means against the PG. [39]

It is possible that support for soviet power at this early date was somewhat more widespread than these few items of evidence indicate, since before the formation of the PG and its endorsement by the Soviet on March 2, some factories seem merely to have taken for granted that the Soviet itself would become the government. The Soviet delegate elected at the Shchetinin Aircraft Factory in Novaya derevnya, next to the Vyborg District, presented the following mandate: 'The general assembly of workers... has elected Grachev to the Provisional Revolutionary Government - the Soviet of Workers' Deputies....' [40] Similarly, the Schlussemburg Powder Factory on March 1 mandated its Soviet delegates 'to enter into relations with the Provisional Revolutionary Government to receive information and directives'. [41]

Moreover, immediately upon Lenin's return in early April (before the April crisis, the first open clash between the workers and the government), several Vyborg metalworking factories passed antigovernment resolutions. One can thus surmise that Lenin's support for soviet power and the eventual victory of this slogan within the party facilitated the open expression of views that were already held by some workers but which had been suppressed in face of the apparently unanimous support for dual power and the failure of the local Bolshevik cadres, bound by party discipline, to put forth an alternative.

On April 4 (actually before Lenin's arrival), the general assembly of the Nobel Machine-construction

Factory resolved:

*"1) that the liberation of the working class is the affair of the workers themselves 2) that the way of the proletariat to its final goal – socialism – lies not on the path of compromises, agreements and reforms, but only through merciless struggle – revolution 3) that the bourgeoisie has taken into account the danger that threatens it from the proletariat and from time to time arranges a blood-letting of the working class: in 1905 we had January 9; 1912 – Lena; after Lana – Kostroma (June 1915) and Ivanovo-Voznesensk (August 1915) 4) that the working class cannot trust any government comprised of bourgeois elements and supported by the bourgeoisie 5) that our PG, composed almost totally of bourgeois elements cannot be a popular government to which we can entrust our fate and our great victories."* [42]

This extreme statement of irreconcilability towards the bourgeoisie based, significantly, upon an historical argument and not upon the current situation, in the prevailing atmosphere of support for dual power, stopped short of concrete proposals for action. But a meeting of 5000 workers and soldiers went a little further, unanimously demanding legislation on the confiscation of land in favour of the people, the eight-hour work day, a war tax on the capitalists, arming of the workers, a declaration by the PG, with the agreement of the Allies, rejecting all annexations and retributions and calling for immediate peace talks, and finally, the publication of all secret treaties.

*"These five main demands of the people, of course, will not please the bourgeois-aristocratic government, by which we mean the PG. Putting forth these demands we will let all those parts of the people that are wavering and trusting the PG know the impermissibility of the existence of such a government."*

In the case of the inevitable refusal by the PG to directly and unconditionally satisfy these basic demands of the people, the Soviet W and SD must declare itself the unique supreme power and publish in its name these and other laws needed by the people.

Such a second stage of the revolution by its example (and not by declaration) will have an effect on the toilers of the other countries and, in particular, Germany. The German people, seeing against them a workers' government, will more boldly turn against their own oppressors, against Wilhelm and the bourgeoisie. That is when the truly defensive war will begin... Until then the war will be one of plunder." [43]

In addition, two other Vyborg factories, the Old Parviainen Foundry and Mechanical Factory and Russian Renault (13 and 15 April respectively) called directly for soviet power. [44] But in all these cases, again, the rejection of census society rested not so much upon anything that had already occurred, but rather upon an implicit analysis of the class nature of the bourgeoisie, itself based upon historical experience. To the majority of workers, and particularly those recently arrived from the village, who shared neither this experience nor the analysis, such conclusions seemed totally unwarranted, indeed dangerous. They needed contemporary and concrete proof, the kind the above quoted resolution wanted to provide.

Even aside from the mass of resolutions in favour of the Soviet's position, the overwhelmingly 'revolutionary defencist' attitude among the workers towards the war points indisputably to their support for dual power. Rejecting what they saw as the imperialist aims of all the belligerent governments, the workers declared, nevertheless, that we will not under any circumstances allow Wilhelm and his underlings to fill the place left by Nikolai the Last. We want peace without annexations and retributions, peace which the toiling masses of the warring countries will sign. The Soviet of Workers' and Soldiers' Deputies and the Provisional Government must facilitate such an agreement'. [45] Since the imperialist inclinations of the Russian bourgeoisie and its unflinching

support for the war under the old régime were well known to the workers, their support for a war of defence conducted by a census government could only mean either they believed the bourgeoisie had undergone a change of mood or, much more likely, that the Soviet, through 'its control', could ensure the adherence of the government to a democratic and active peace policy. Even factories that subsequently proved among the most radical, such as the Franko-russkii Shipbuilding Factory, apparently shared this belief, calling on the people to exert

*"energetic influence on the PG in the aim of forcing it to make a categorical declaration on the war in the sense that Russia in this war no longer pursues annexationist goals. On the other hand, we consider it extremely necessary that the PG immediately press the states allied with Russia to make similar declarations."* [46]

On the war issue, the Bolsheviks did put forward an alternative position, but one that made little sense to the workers and even aroused considerable hostility. The party retained the pre-revolutionary slogan 'down with the war', arguing that the 'bourgeois government' was imperialist, but nevertheless continued conditionally to support the 'bourgeois government'. As a result, many workers saw 'down with the war' as a threat to the revolution itself. And the Bolsheviks had trouble explaining their contradictory position. At the First Bolshevik Petrograd City Conference in early April, the worker Naumov complained:

*"The masses do not understand our calls to end the war. Something here is missing. Those who ask: Does it mean sticking the bayonets into the ground? – are right. That is what the masses say. We have to clarify it for the masses and ourselves. One feels that something is lacking."* [47]

Given the Bolsheviks' premisses, the more consistent stand would have been to call for the replacement of the census government with one formed by the Soviet, one that would and could conduct a revolutionary defensive war as well as an active democratic peace policy. It is not surprising, then, that the only place where there was any support for the Bolshevik position on the war was the Vyborg District. [48] For it was only here that there was any readiness to oust the census government. (After the return of Stalin and Kamenev in mid-March, the editorial policy of *Pravda* did, in fact, take a sharply defencist turn and changed again only after Lenin's arrival.)

But if the great majority of workers supported the Soviet leadership on dual power, their positions were still not identical, and it was, significantly, over the war issue that this discrepancy first revealed itself. While the workers took for granted that the government, voluntarily or under pressure, had adopted the Soviet's peace policy, the architects of dual power were far from certain about this. And yet, they went ahead and agreed to support the government. Thus, Rifes, a Bundist, reports that Sukhanov, who had a major hand in the negotiations, argued that 'there can be no talk of the participation of democracy in the PG, since this would mean participation in the war being conducted by them'. [49] Sukhanov himself wrote that in the negotiations both sides avoided the question of the war, knowing that it would lead to a collision. [50] This discrepancy may also explain why the Soviet plenum did not object to Kerenskii's entering the government, while the Soviet EC had opposed it.

These differences first surfaced around the 'Liberty Loan', launched by the government in early April. The Soviet EC endorsed the loan by 21 votes to 14 on 7 April, but the plenum decided to wait until the government had shown concrete initiative towards securing a democratic peace. However, on 22 April, the plenum gave in, endorsing the loan against the opposition of only 117 Bolsheviks and Internationalists. [51] But in the factories, almost everywhere, opinion was strongly hostile both to the loan and the EC's endorsement of it. The most common reaction to the appeal to support the loan were resolutions demanding a special tax on capital and war profits and a government initiative to press the Allies to renounce all annexationist aims. On 10 April, the engineering department of

the Russko-Baltiiskii Wagon-construction Factory resolved (by over 400 to 7):

*"Recognising that the 'Liberty Loan' has as its aim the continuation of this fratricidal war which is of benefit only to the imperialist bourgeoisie, we do not consider it possible for the socialist proletariat to take part in this loan. At the same time, we recognise that the matter of supplying the army with all it needs requires financial means and we point out to the Soviet that this money should be taken from the pockets of the bourgeoisie that has instigated and continued this slaughter making millions in profits from this bloody frenzy.*

We energetically protest against the conduct of the 21 members of the EC of the Soviet of W and SD who accepted the 'Liberty Loan' and we consider such an attitude to the cause of the proletariat a betrayal of the International." [52]

Indeed, the Soviet's support for the loan served as the first occasion for the recall of delegates. At the Novaya Bumagopryadil'nya Mill, both delegates, Menshevik sympathisers, were censured and recalled for agitating in favour of the loan. [53] At the Skorokhod Shoe Factory, the four SR delegates ignored the factory general assembly's rejection of the loan and went ahead to vote for it at the district soviet. These, too, were recalled, and Bolsheviks elected in their place. One of the four, however, offered a public recantation and was left at his post. [54]

But as strong as the reaction on the 'Liberty Loan' issue was, it did not produce any perceptible shift in the workers' attitudes towards dual power (or, for that matter, towards the moderate socialist leadership of the Soviet, whose stock may have fallen somewhat but, nevertheless, remained high). Once again, only from the Vyborg District came urgings for the Soviet to take power.

### **Dual Power in the Light of pre-February Attitudes**

The 'Liberty Loan' episode, however, underlines a problem implicit in the entire preceding analysis: given that the workers' support for the government was so guarded, their distrust of the aims of census society so profound, and their readiness to make concessions for the sake of this alliance so small, why, in fact, did they lend their support to dual power rather than opt directly for a government of revolutionary democracy through the soviets? But before attempting to answer this, we must ask if the workers' position in March 1917 represented a break with, or a continuation of, their pre-revolutionary positions.

From the start of the revolution on 23 February until 2 March there is little evidence for the existence of any concrete ideas among the workers on the nature of a transitional government. The revolution's slogans were the Social Democratic 'Three Whales', but these said nothing about an interim government. Nor did the socialist parties offer much guidance. According to Sukhanov, the leaders did not even raise the issue. When the Soviet met for the first time on 27 February, this seemingly most urgent question was not even discussed. [55] A police report of a meeting of 26 Bolsheviks and Menshevik-Internationalists on 26 February on Vasilevskii ostrov contains a resolution which limits itself exclusively to questions of tactics for street fighting. [56] At this point, all attention was focused on one goal – the overthrow of the autocracy. Only on 27 February did the Bolshevik Central Committee issue its call to set up a provisional revolutionary government with its organising centre at the Finland Station in the Vyborg District. But by this time, the Soviet had already been formed.

But if the workers failed to express any clear ideas on the provisional organisation of state power, it is still possible to examine their attitudes toward the State Duma and census society for the period immediately preceding the insurrection.

These attitudes found their clearest expression in the debate over participation in the War-Industry Committees and the workers' response to the tactics of the 'Workers' Group'. The War-Industry Committees were established in the summer of 1915 by the Congress of Representatives of Trade and Industry to facilitate the organisation of Russian military industry. In the autumn of that year, the leadership of the Central War-Industry Committee, which included such prominent capitalists as A. I. Guchkov (future Minister of War in the first Provisional Government) and A. I. Konovalov (future Minister of Trade and Industry), obtained permission to organise two-stage elections to 'Workers' Groups' that would be attached to the committees. This electoral campaign was the first legal opportunity since the outbreak of war for public discussion by workers of the government's domestic and foreign policy.

Three main currents emerged. The Bolsheviks and Left SRs decided against entering the committees since that would mean participation in the war effort. However, they would participate in the first stage of the elections and exploit the legal opportunity for anti-war and revolutionary agitation. Menshevik-Internationalists, such as Chkheidze, while opposed to the war, supported participation in the committees, but solely with the aim of organising anti-government forces and fighting to ameliorate the conditions of the working class. [57] Finally, Menshevik-Defencists, such as Ovozdev, admitting that the war aims of the government were imperialistic, nevertheless stood for defence of the country against the Germans, at the same time as they advocated the overthrow of Tsarism as the principal means of this defence.

The meeting of electors took place on 27 September and gave the Bolsheviks a majority of 90 to 81. However, Gvozdev disputed the validity of these elections on the grounds that a Bolshevik worker had substituted himself for an elector from the Putilov Works who had declined to participate. [58] A second meeting of electors was held on 29 November, during which the Bolsheviks and Left SRs walked out. Those remaining voted unanimously (with eight abstentions) for participation.

On the surface, it might appear that the issue was the attitude to the war. But in fact, both the Bolsheviks and the Menshevik-Internationalists opposed participation in the war effort, even under the guise of defence; yet the latter rejected the Bolsheviks' boycottist position. Even the Defencists equivocated in their position on the war. As Maevskii, a Menshevik-Defencist member of the 'Workers' Group' wrote: 'Defence of the country was understood by the Workers' Group, despite what the anti-defencists said, not as the establishment of civil peace or reconciliation with the old régime, but first and foremost as an irreconcilable struggle against the Tsar and autocracy'. [59] Only towards the end of 1916 did the defencism of Gvozdev's group emerge clearly, causing Chkheidze and other Menshevik-Internationalists finally to disown the Workers' Group.

What was really at issue – and what had always been the fundamental bone of contention within Russian Social Democracy – was the question of revolutionary strategy and, specifically, the relationship between the working class and census society in the revolutionary struggle. The war, which was wholeheartedly backed by the bourgeoisie, was only one aspect of the more general issue debated at the electors' assemblies. Speaking at the first assembly in November 1915, Emel'yanov, a Menshevik-Defencist worker from the Trubochnyi Factory, argued:

*"This war, as any other, is conducted only in the interests of the bourgeoisie, not the workers. Such is our principled view of the war. And still our opponents call us nationalists... And yet, following the Zimmerwald Conference, we merely repeat: 'peace without annexations and retributions'. We strive for this peace in union with all of revolutionary democracy. How can we achieve such a peace? Our opponents do not go together with other classes. They are thinking of a revolutionary overturn which they will achieve solely by their own forces, while the achievement of this goal and of peace is possible only through the mobilisation of all the vital social forces of the country around our slogans.... The only salvation of the country lies not in technical defence, not in participation in*

*committees and commissions on defence, but in the radical change of all our lives in the interests of democracy... If you adopt this point of view, then the mobilisation of all vital forces of the country standing for the democratisation of public life is necessary for the democratisation of the public order. We disagree with our opponents in our evaluation of the active forces: they trust solely in their own forces in the revolution; we strive to rally all those strata of Russian society that are able to strive for the democratisation of the public order and that want to fight... The political struggle isn't a call to strike, not a meeting in front of the factory, not a loud resolution or outcry, but a long preparation for struggle... Our enemies say that we betray the interests of the revolution and they say so chiefly because of our evaluation of the bourgeoisie. Our bourgeoisie cannot reconcile itself to the rule of autocracy and itself strives towards power, but in a cowardly and slavish manner. We shall criticise and push it towards a decisive battle with the obsolete régime. In the final battle [i.e. for socialism] we must depend on our own forces, but in the struggle for political freedom we must go in contact with the bourgeoisie."*

Emel'yanov added that questions of labour policy could also be raised in the committees, noting that the laws protecting female and child labour had been abrogated and that low-paid Chinese and Persian workers were being imported. Participation in the committees would open legal possibilities for organising the working class. He concluded: 'Our aim is victory over the internal enemy, a rebuff of the German army and peace without annexations or retributions'. [60]

Dunaev, a Bolshevik worker, replied:

*"The Military-Industry Committees are an institution of the liberal bourgeoisie - say our opponents. We can march arm in arm with them. It follows that Guchkov [Chairman of the Central W-I Committee] will go hand in hand with us against the contemporary Stolypins. This same Guchkov, who together with the deceased Stolypin, hanged our comrades? Chinese, Persians and Koreans are being brought in. To listen to Gvozdev and Emel'yanov, it would seem that the government is bringing them in, and the industrialists have nothing to do with it. But comrades, tell me, who is it that needs these coolies and Persians? ... The coolies are being imported by the liberal industrialists, the same industrialists with whom you are about to enter into an alliance against the yellow peril. Female and child labour is being used widely now. Who sought the abrogation of the miserable rights of the women and children? The aristocracy? ...No, this was sought by the Guchkovs, Konovalovs and Ryabushinskiis. The factory owners pressed the buttons, and the rights of the workers were abrogated. This is whom you call revolutionary elements and invite to go arm in arm with you. All the attempts of the workers to improve their situation have ended in their being sent to the front at the direction of the factory owners. Where are our comrades from Lessner, Phoenix and the other factories? They were sent by messieurs the liberal factory owners to the front and the jails. This is honoured company! And with its help they want to create the organisation of the working class. Our opponents say that we depend only on our own forces, and you, messieurs liquidators, desire to conduct the struggle in union with all revolutionary forces. Fine. Where, then, do you seek your allies? Did you go to the peasantry? No, you need something different. You go to the Military-Industry Committee and act in the backyard of a bourgeois organisation. [Noise, protests.] This is where you seek allies for yourselves, in the bosses' organisation, who before the war organised lockouts and are now stuffing their pockets on war orders. [Noise, agitation.] You used the occasion with Kudryashev and decided to arrange new elections. To whom did you appeal? To the worker masses? Did you go to the factories and mills and conduct agitation among the workers? No, you went to Guchkov and somewhere behind the scenes, hidden from the workers, conducted some sort of shady negotiations. In union with Guchkov you want to undermine the will of the entire Petrograd proletariat... [At this point Dunaev was cut off by the chair.]" [61]*

These two speeches offer a graphic illustration of the basic issue separating Bolsheviks and the Mensheviks: the relationship of the working class to the bourgeoisie. The Bolsheviks and their

supporters were irreconcilable on this score, basing themselves on the long history of intimate cooperation between capital and the Tsarist state against labour, on the conclusion that the bourgeoisie needed the Tsarist state against a working class that it feared to face alone. The Mensheviks, on the other hand, held that at least a part of the bourgeoisie was liberally minded and that under working-class pressure these 'vital forces' of census society could be – indeed had to be – forced to break with the régime. As a corollary, they tried to draw a clear line between the economic struggle, directed against capital, and the political struggle against the Tsar. [62]

Maevskii nicely summed up the differences underlying the debates on participation in the War-Industry Committees:

*"The Workers' Group saw the coming revolution not only as bourgeois but also correctly evaluated the role that could be played by such misshapen representation as that of Fourth Duma. Fighting the Bolsheviks and the semi-Bolsheviks, the Workers' Group had often to stress that, whatever the Duma was now, in a revolutionary upsurge it could be transformed into a base for the future revolution. It was necessary to fight boycottism and indifference to the Duma, i.e. to fight against Bolshevik agitation... The supporters of the Workers' Group argued before the workers the need, in the name of the revolution, to coordinate their efforts with those of certain circles of the progressive bourgeoisie and to use the Duma as an all-Russian centre, which, in its clashes with the government, could focus the attention of the entire nation. In their criticism of the Workers' Group, already then, we saw the Bolshevik and semi-Bolshevik argument that contrasted the internationalism of the proletariat to the task of national defence, the proletariat to all other classes as a single solidly reactionary bourgeois mass'."* [63]

Of course, there was also an intermediate position, such as that of the worker Kuz'min, who stated that, while he put no hope in 'Guchkov and Co.', the legal opening should be exploited to aid and organise the workers. At Kuz'min's plant, the Trubochnyi Factory, under the guise of giving reports, they had been able to hold meetings and conduct agitation. [64] Thus, the final vote in itself did not necessarily imply acceptance of the defencist position. Even so, the vote both times was very close, allowing one to conclude that a good half of the workers of Petrograd opposed even the intermediary position of the Menshevik-Internationalists of 'non-organic' participation. These workers rejected any semblance of political cooperation with the bourgeoisie or the war effort. In view of the extremely limited opportunities for organisation and the deteriorating economic situation of the workers, the support for this position should not be taken lightly.

But what best showed the workers' actual attitude was their failure to support tactics of the Workers' Groups. Maevskii admits that attempts to encourage the workers to exert pressure on the Duma by sending delegations to its chairman or to those of the different factions met

*"in broad worker circles with chronic Bolshevik-boycottist outlooks covered over with verbal radicalism.... The only form of movement which, with the aid of the Bolsheviks and semi-Bolsheviks, certain circles of the Petrograd working class had mastered was 'strikism', which in the opinion of the Workers' Group and its supporters, in conditions of war, was the least active and effective of forms. The representatives of the Workers' Group spared no effort to make the masses, infected by Bolshevik maximalism, understand the simple revolutionary truth – that not every measure, even if externally super-radical, is really revolutionary in content."* [65]

Despite the continuous growth and politicisation of the strike movement during the war, until 1917 no working-class action had anything to do with the State Duma. Sukhanov confirms that the '[Workers'] Group enjoyed no popularity among the worker masses. The overwhelming majority of the conscious proletariat of the capital and also in the provinces took a strongly anti-defencist position and were sharply hostile towards the cooperation with the plutocracy by a small group of

Social Democrats headed by Gvozdev'. [66]

When at the October 1916 session of the State Duma a number of census delegates made some strongly oppositional noises – it was here that Milyukov gave his famous 'stupidity or treason' speech [67] – the Workers' Group decided that they 'could not wait until the working class realised the revolutionary significance of organised intervention into the clash of bourgeois society with the autocracy' and so decided to call a strike for 14 February, the opening of the Duma session. The striking workers were to go to the Tauride Palace. [68] The Bolsheviks and Menshevik-Internationalists, for their part, supported the call to strike but agitated against going to the Duma. [69]

According to the police, 90 000 workers struck on the fourteenth but only two small groups, numbering in the low hundreds, were reported in the area of the Tauride Palace and they were quickly dispersed. [70] Maevskii claims that the movement was forestalled by extreme police measures. [71] But this argument is weak, since even on the first day of the revolution the police were not able to keep determined demonstrators from the city centre.

In fact, the workers began to show interest in the Duma only after the victory of the revolution, on the afternoon of 27 February, when the soldiers mutinied en masse. For the first four and a half days, when the movement had been predominantly working class, the Duma had been ignored. The common goal of the demonstrators had been Nevskii Prospekt, with gathering points at Kazan' Cathedral, Znamenskaya Square, and the corner of Liteinyi and Nevskii.

### **Why Dual Power in February?**

However, it was not the case, as Trotsky and Sukhanov both imply, that only or mainly soldiers went to the Tauride on 27 February. [72] The Soviet historian, Burdzhakov, correctly observes that there were many workers, including Bolshevik workers, among these crowds. [73] Several of these worker Bolsheviks, on being freed from jail, stopped only long enough to remove their chains and arm themselves before setting off directly at the head of a Cossack regiment for the Tauride Palace. [74]

Clearly, something had changed with the victory of the revolution, and Maevskii appears justified in his claim that the strategy of the Workers' Group, 'after certain errors', was finally adopted by the working class in the February Revolution. [75] Certainly, the Bolsheviks were genuinely surprised suddenly to find themselves in a minority in the Soviet, since they had had the strongest underground organisation. [76] At the time, they tended to explain this in terms of technical and organisational factors: the Bolsheviks, being largely an underground organisation, were little known to the wider circles of workers; the Mensheviks and SRs were better speakers; the Bolsheviks were engaged in street fighting when the elections took place, while the Mensheviks and SRs were in the factories, etc. But to Shlyapnikov, at least, these arguments seemed one-sided. The revolution had indeed created a new situation. 'What had begun as a proletarian movement [had] taken on an all-national character. One had to evaluate slogans and agitational tasks accordingly'. [77] Here Shlyapnikov hints at the crucial shift produced by the revolution in the workers' consciousness: on the one hand, the form the revolution had taken did indeed create an appearance of national unity; on the other hand, the victory itself gave rise to an intense longing for national unity that predisposed the workers to accept this appearance as reality. Something, indeed, had changed. 'The events of February', observed the Left SR paper, 'made people forget what only a few days earlier had been their irreconcilable differences with the landowners and capitalists. It seemed like all were united'. [78].-

Much at the time supported this feeling of national unity. After all, had not the Duma finally adhered

to the revolution, making its victory so much easier, since the Duma alone could command the allegiance of the state and military bureaucracies and of census society generally? And had not the Duma Committee accepted the Soviet's programme? Was not the capital's entire population sporting red ribbons? [79]

On the highest levels, too, the political leaders of census Russia were preaching the gospel of national unity and reconciliation. The Central Committee of the Kadet party proclaimed on 3 March:

*"The old régime has disappeared. The State Duma, having forgotten party differences, united in the name of the salvation of the Fatherland and took upon itself the creation of a new government... Let all differences of party, class, estate and nationality be forgotten in this country... Let the hope burn strong in all hearts that this time we will be able to avoid ruinous disunity [an allusion to 1905-6]."* [80]

Thus could the February Revolution appear as a vindication of the Workers' Group, and this, no doubt, was not lost upon the workers. All the same, in view of the unhappy history of working-class-bourgeois relations, one can at least understand Shlyapnikov's surprise at 'how easily the worker masses were taken in by the trap of national unity and the unity of revolutionary democracy, in which the capitalists were included'. [81]

Part of the answer lay in the reigning atmosphere after the victory - a strange mélange of euphoria, disbelief and anxiety, all of which nudged the workers towards the alliance with census society.

It would be difficult to exaggerate the elation that seized the workers, once conscious of victory. Participants often described the mood in dream-like terms, a state of intoxication, as being swept up by an irresistible force. N. Tolmachev, a Bolshevik worker at the Nobel Machine-construction Factory, wrote to his family in the first week of the revolution:

*"I congratulate you on the joyous holiday of Russian liberation, my dear ones. In these days of general amnesty, please amnesty me for my criminal silence. Caught up in the revolutionary movement, I thought of nothing and no one, forgot everything and everyone ... On February 22 on my way to work, I found myself in a demonstration of 20 000 persons and I wasn't able to regain my senses till the last few days. I was everywhere of course: at the first demonstrations and during the shooting, and when the troops rose, then together with the soldiers in the arsenals of Peter-Paul, stole revolvers, rifles, rode in a car to arrest police, was at meetings, assemblies, spoke myself. In such days one cannot stand aside. And only in the last few days have I sobered up. Having fallen into the whirlpool of events, you become a chip of wood, carried along and spun around."* [82]

A woman at the Treugol'nik Rubber Factory recalled the exhilaration, the sense of coming of age:

*"I can't express my joy... I considered myself lost forever at the boss's. And suddenly I was resurrected, I grew up. That night I put on Russian boots and my husband's cap, a worker's overcoat, said farewell to my children and left. I didn't appear at home for four days, till March 2. My family thought I had been killed."* [83]

The left Bolsheviks and Left SRs, who were convinced that the struggle had really only just begun, could only sit by and let matters take their course. 'The people are expressing a state of intoxication with the great act that has been accomplished', wrote Kollontai to Lenin and Krupskaya. 'Amidst the feverish commotion, amidst the desire to create, to build something new, different from what went before, the note of the already achieved victory rings too loudly, as if everything has already been done, completed'. [84] Mstislavskii, a Left SR leader, described his feelings at the 2 March Soviet plenum that overwhelmingly ratified the dual power arrangement:

"The most sensitive [of the Bolshevik delegates] refrained from speaking. For was this the place, at the matins, to preach one's disbelief? Not to convince but only to darken human joy, joy that for many was the first... I envied these people who believed so sincerely that it was all over, that the revolution was completed – the last bullets will be fired, and a whole new way of life will begin to flow in a broad powerful current, and we will gather in the fruits of the February exploit.... But I could not help feeling that it was not so, that ahead lay a difficult path... one through which it would not be so easy to cut with a single blow, as the first knot had been cut in the February Insurrection." [85]

However, as important as the appearance of national unity and the joy of victory were, the Petrograd workers did not simply decide to bury the hatchet but retained very strong reservations and suspicions concerning their new-found allies and demanded guarantees in the form of Soviet 'control' over the government. There was yet another factor in the immediate post-February situation that argued strongly for the alliance and without which dual power would hardly have won the overwhelming support it did. This was the fear of counterrevolution and the related fear of civil war. Although the Soviet may have been in control of Petrograd, in those early days no one had any idea what the rest of the country, and in particular the army at the front, were up to. Rumours were afoot of loyal troops headed for the capital. And troops had indeed been summoned but were won over to the revolution before reaching their destination. [86] Rafes recalled the Petrograd of this period:

*"There was no certainty in the durability [of the victory] in any district of the capital.... The mood of the outsider elements, the public, was the same – at every shot, they ran for the gates. There were no trams in those days. We had to walk for miles but we felt no fatigue. All were feeling such a mood of exhilaration that the distance did not tire them."* [87]

In some factories, workers only with great reluctance acceded to their election to the Soviet. At the James Beck Textile Mill on 28 February, the general assembly elected a spinner, I. A. Tikhonov, known to the workers for his political activism dating back to the 1905 revolution. But Tikhonov, tears in his eyes, pleaded to be let off the hook – he was married, had been exiled in 1906 to his native Tver Gubernia, if the old régime were to return, he argued, he would have a rough time of it. At last he yielded, but the story was repeated in electing his deputy. [88] At the Thornton Mills, the workers finally decided to elect the factory committee en masse, 'since they are, by the way, all single'. [89]

One of the first acts of the workers upon returning to the factories was to destroy the administration's 'black book' of 'undesirables', workers blacklisted by the Society of Factory and Mill Owners. At Thornton, all the personnel cards were burnt, despite the director's assurances that they had no political significance. The workers, noting English writing next to the names, decided to burn the cards for good measure. [90]

Given this state of uncertainty, it was important to the workers to retain census society on the side of the revolution, or at least not actively opposed to it. It was one thing to overthrow the government in the capital, but quite another to obtain the allegiance of peasants and soldiers throughout the country and to set the state and economic machines working efficiently. The workers did not feel prepared to attempt this on their own. They needed the authority that the Duma presumably enjoyed outside the capital and especially within educated society.

S. Skalov, a Bolshevik worker, explained why he had led a group of insurgents to the Duma on 27 February rather than go to the Finland Station to set up a provisional revolutionary government:

*"I felt that I acted correctly when I didn't go to the Finland Station to group our forces there*

*separately. When we went to the Tauride Palace, on the corner of Shpalernaya and Liteynyi Prospekt we saw a note, I can't remember from what organisation it came, inviting all workers to gather at the Finland Station. By such self-isolation we would immediately have opposed our own very weak organisational forces to those of the State Duma and by this would have untied its hands, giving it full freedom of action and independence, with all the consequences.... We could not go against the Duma on 27 February 1917, nor was there any reason to. We were too weak organisationally, our leading comrades were in jails, exile and emigration. Therefore, it was necessary to go to the Duma, to pull it into the revolutionary current.... It was necessary to create revolutionary chaos, to terrorise all initiative of the Duma directed against revolutionary action; and this was possible only by being inside the Duma, filling up, so to speak, all its cracks with revolutionary reality."* [91]

Similarly, speakers at the First Bolshevik City Conference in April sought to explain how census society found itself in power as a result of the revolution:

*"When the Soviet of deputies was formed - then state power was proposed, but the workers did not consider it possible to take power into their hands.... Did the Soviet of Workers' Deputies act correctly in refusing power? I consider that it did. To take power into our hands would have been an unsuccessful policy, since Petrograd is not all of Russia. There, in Russia, is a different correlation of forces. With its relative weight, the proletariat in Russia could not take power - that would have caused civil war."*

Another delegate confirmed this:

*"When the proletariat still feared to take power into its hands, at that time the bourgeoisie made its way to the Duma and began to issue proclamations and meet deputies. Our best workers, fearing counterrevolution, facilitated the accidental composition of the Soviet of W and SD."* [92]

The Mensheviks put forth a similar argument in support of dual power, warning that a breach in the united all-national ranks of the revolution through an attempt to wrest power from the PG would only play into the hands of those forces of the past yet to be completely destroyed. The Soviet, it was argued, 'cannot enjoy authority in broad strata of the bourgeoisie. Yet, at the given stage of our economic development, the leading role in economic life cannot but belong to the bourgeoisie... If the Soviet W and SD took power, it would be an illusory government, one that would lead to the outbreak of civil war'. [93]

This spectre of civil war, raised at the very start of the revolution, became an inseparable feature of the political landscape of 1917, even as the term itself gradually took on new content. Fear of civil war, and its counterpart, the desire for broad revolutionary unity, continued to haunt the political consciousness of the working class well past the October Revolution.

Finally, one should bear in mind that the government was, after all, only provisional, and scarcely anyone could have suspected that the convocation of a Constituent Assembly would be ten months off. Moreover, in Petrograd, at least, the Soviet controlled all the armed force, and this bolstered the belief that it could effectively 'control' the census government for the interim.

As for the minority of workers centred in the Vyborg District, they submitted to the overwhelming will of the worker and soldier masses once it clearly emerged in the first week of March. For here, too, there was a great concern for unity - not national unity, which these workers considered a sham, but the unity of revolutionary democracy, of workers and soldiers (peasants in military greatcoats) that had made victory possible. [94] But these workers needed little prompting to rally behind Lenin, who declared upon his return in early April that it was better to remain in a minority. 'For one Liebknecht is worth 110 defencists of the type of Steklov and Chkheidze'. [95] This was a

constant feature of working-class consciousness in 1917: in the end, the longing for unity always yielded to questions of principle. At any rate, it was only a matter of a few months before this minority of irreconcilables grew into a majority of the Petrograd working class.

**David Mandel**

*To be followed...*

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## Footnotes

[1] Shlyapnikov, *Kanun semnadtsatogo goda*, vol. II, p. 104.

[2] See, for example, *ibid.*, vol. I, pp. 13-19.

[3] I. P. Leiberov, 'O revolyutsionnykh vystupleniyakh petrogradskogo proletariata v gody pervoi mirovoi voyny i Fevral'skoi revolyutsii', *Voprosi istorii*, no. 2 (1964) p. 65.

[4] E. N. Burdzhakov, *Vtoraya russkaya revolyutsiya* (M., 1967) pp. 32-3.

[5] *Proletarskaya revolyutsiya*, no. 11 (13) (1923) pp. 265-6.

[6] There are a number of useful general accounts of the February revolution written from different points of view: E. N. Burdzhakov, *Vtoraya russkaya revolyutsiya* (M., 1967); N. Sukhanov, *Zapiski o revolyutsii* vol. I (Berlin-Petrograd, 1919); A. Shlyapnikov, *Semnadtsatyi god* (L., 1925); L. Trotsky, *The Russian Revolution*, vol. I, chs. 1-15, W. H. Chamberlin, *The Russian Revolution*, vol. I, chs. 1-4 (1935); S. Mstislavskii, *Sem'dnei* (Berlin-L.-M., 1932). Specific events will be mentioned here only in so far as they touch directly on the main issue: working-class attitudes.

[7] Cited in Burdzhakov, *Vtoraya russkaya*, p. 117.

[8] *Ibid.*, p. 120.

[9] Cited in *ibid.*, p. 122.

[10] 'Fevral'skaya revolyutsiya i Okhrannoe otdclenie', *Byloe*, nos. 7-8 (1918) p. 162. A more recent estimate based on more complete data sets the figure at 128 000. Leiberov, 'O revolyutsionnykh', p. 65.

[11] Burdzhakov, *Vtoraya russkaya*, p. 143; Leiberov, *ibid.*

[12] *Byloe*, nos 7-8 (1918) p. 173. One police official reported a hack driver saying: 'Tomorrow the cabbies will not be taking the general public but only the leaders of the disorders'. *Ibid.*, p. 169. Cabbies were not noted for their radicalism.

[13] *Ibid.*, p. 174.

- [14] *Izvestiya*. Petrogradskogo soveta rabochikh i soldatskikh deputatov (3 Mar 1917).
- [15] A. Shlyapnikov, *Semnadtsatyi god*, vol. I (M.-Petrograd, 1923) p. 240.
- [16] Peka, pp. x-xi. Emphasis my own.
- [17] *Revolutsionnoe dvizhenie v Rossii posle sverzheniya samoderzhaviya* (henceforth: Dok. Feb) (M., 1957) p. 475. For similar resolutions, see *Pravda* (17 Mar 1917) (from Nobel', Vakuum and others); *Pravda* (23 Mar) (Sestroretsk Arms Factory); *Izvestya* (4 Mar) (Petrograd Union of Woodworkers); (8 Mar) (meeting of printers).
- [18] *Pravda* (19 Mar 1917).
- [19] Ibid. For similar resolutions, see Dok. Feb., p. 478 (Sestroretsk Arms Factory); *Pravda*, no. 3 (1917) (tavern and hotel workers), Shlyapnikov, *Kanun semnadisatogo*, vol. II, p. 292.
- [20] *Izvestya* (4 Mar 1917).
- [21] N. Sukhanov, *Zapiski o revolyutsii* vol. I, p. 210. See also W. G. Rosenberg, *The Liberals in the Russian Revolution* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1974) p. 178.
- [22] Although the Soviet EC had decided against direct Soviet representation in the government, Kerenskii, a member of the EC, entered the government on his own initiative. In a typically theatrical and emotionally charged speech before the 2 March plenum of the Soviet, he won approval 'by acclamation' (there was no discussion or vote) for his action. I have been unable to find any evidence of worker sentiment for or against Kerenskii on this. Apparently, it made little difference.
- [23] M. Ferro, *La Révolution de 1917* (Paris, 1967) p. 178.
- [24] Dok. Feb., pp. 543-4; Rab. kon., p.42.
- [25] LGAORSS, f. 24602, op. 7, d.7, 1.68.
- [26] Ibid., (.7384, op. 9, d. 293, 1.3.
- [27] Dok. Feb., p. 446.
- [28] LGAORSS, f. 4601, op. 1, d. 10, 1. 9 ob.; Rab. kon., p. 57.
- [29] A. Tanyaev, *Ocherki po istorii zheleznodorozhnikov v revolyutsii 1917g.* (M.-L., 1925) pp. 3-4.
- [30] *Izvestya* (8 Mar 1917).
- [31] Ibid. (9 Mar 1917).
- [32] Tanyaev, *Ocherki po Istorii*; p. 16.
- [33] F. Dingel'shtedt, *Krasnaya letopis'* (1925) no. 1 (12), p. 193.

- [34] *Pravda* (9 Mar 1917).
- [35] Burdzhakov, *Vtoraya russkaya*, p. 286.
- [36] *Rabochaya gazeta* (13 Mar 1907).
- [37] Ibid. (9 Apr 1917).
- [38] *Pravda* (8 Mar 1917).
- [39] Shlyapnikov, *Semnadtsatyi god*, vol. I, p. 225.
- [40] Burdzhakov, *Vtoraya russkaya*, p. 223.
- [41] Shlyapnikov, *Semnadtsatyi god*, vol. I, p. 222.
- [42] *Pravda* (7 Apr 1917).
- [43] *Izvestiya* (15 Apr 1917).
- [44] Ibid. (16 Apr 1917) and *Revolutsionnoe dvizhenie v Rossii v aprele* (M., 1958) p. 393 (henceforth: Dok. Apr.).
- [45] Dok. Feb., p. 546.
- [46] Ibid., p. 554.
- [47] *Pervaya Petrogradskaya obshchegorodskaya konferentsiya RSDRP (b) v aprele 1917g.* (M., 1925) pp. 16-17. See also M. Mitel'man. B. Glebov and A. Ul'yanskii, *Istoriya Putilovskogo zavoda 1801-1917 gg.*, 3<sup>rd</sup> edn (L., 1961) p. 574.
- [48] Shlyapnikov, *Semnadtsatyi god*, vol. II, p. 142.
- [49] M. Rafes, *Byloe*, no. 19 (1922) p. 194.
- [50] Sukhanov, *Zapiski o revolyutsii* vol. I, p. 127.
- [51] Ibid., vol. III, pp. 217, 223, 310, 313.
- [52] *Pravda* (11 Apr 1917).
- [53] V. Perazich, *Tekstili Leningrada v 1917g.* (L., 1927) p. 28.
- [54] A Smirnov, *Poslednie dni Utemanov, 1917 god na fabrike 'Skorokhod'* (M.-L., 1935) pp. 39-40.
- [55] Sukhanov, *Zapiski o revolyutsii* vol. I, pp. 22 and 96.
- [56] *Byloe*, nos. 7-8 (1918) p. 171.

[57] Shlyapnikov, *Kanun semnadisatogo goda*, pp. 103-4.

[58] Ibid., p. 115.

[59] E. Maevskii, *Kanun revolyutsii-iz istorii rabochego dvizheniya nakanune revolyutsii 1917goda* (Petrograd, 1918) p. 5.

[60] Shlyapnikov, *Kanun semnadtsatogo*, vol. I, pp. 116-19.

[61] Ibid., pp. 119-20.

[62] In a sense, the Mensheviks were driven to insist on the existence of a progressive, potentially revolutionary segment of census society, since they were convinced that the working class alone could never succeed in carrying through the democratic revolution. As for the peasants, whom the Bolsheviks counted on as allies of the workers, they were not to be trusted. In fact, to the Mensheviks, they represented a benighted mass that was a potentially counterrevolutionary force.

[63] Maevskii, *Kanun revolyutsii*, p. 4.

[64] Shlyapnikov, op cit., p. 126.

[65] One should note that strikes, in contrast to the tactics advocated by the Workers' Group, represented an independent working-class tactic. Maevskii, *Kanun revolyutsii* pp. 7-8.

[66] Sukhanov, *Zapiski o revolyutsii* vol. I, p. 18.

[67] Even now, however, the census opposition dared call only for a 'government of confidence' and not a 'responsible government'. As for any action, that was entirely out of the question. R. Pearson, *The Russian Moderates and the Crisis of Tsarism* (London and Basingstoke: Macmillan, 1977) p. 114.

[68] Maevskii, *Kanun revolyutsii*, p. 10. Not that the Kadets were grateful for this help. Rech', the organ of their party, labelled as a provocation the rumours of a demonstration. B. B. Grave, *Burzhuaziya nakanune Fevral'skoi revolyutsii* (M.-L., 1927) p. 181; Maevskii, *Kanun revolyutsii* p. 11.

[69] Grave, *Burzhuaziya nakanune*, p. 184.

[70] Byloe, p. 160.

[71] Maevskii, *Kanun revolyutsii*, p. 12.

[72] L. Trotsky, *History of the Russian Revolution*, vol. I (London: Sphere Books, 1965) pp. 134- 5; Sukhanov, *Zapiski o revolyutsii*, p. 63.

[73] Burdzhakov, *Vtoraya russkaya*, vol. I, p. 203.

[74] Ibid., p. 68.

[75] Maevskii, *Kanun revolyutsii*, p. 12.

[76] Shlyapnikov, *Semnadsatyi god*, vol. I, p. 203.

[77] Ibid.

[78] *Znamya truda* (17 Nov 1917).

[79] Stankevich, an SR, put this phenomenon into perhaps clearer perspective in his memoirs: 'Officially, they celebrated, blessed the revolution, shouted "hurrah" for the fighters for freedom, decorated themselves with ribbons and walked around with red banners. Ali said "we", "our" revolution, "our" victory, "our" freedom. But in their hearts, in intimate conversation, they were horrified, shuddered, and felt themselves captives of a hostile elemental milieu travelling along an unknown path'. Cited in Sobolev, *Revolutsionnoe soznanie*, p. 111.

[80] Dok. Feb., p. 420.

[81] Shlyapnikov, *Semnadsatyi god*, vol. I, p. 224.

[82] Burdzhakov, *Vtoraya russkaya*, pp. 380-1.

[83] B. Shabalin, 'Ot fevralya k oktyabryu – iz istorii zavoda "Krasnyi Treugol'nik" ', in *Bastiony revolyutsii* vol. I, p. 269.

[84] Cited in Sobolev, *Revolutsionnoe soznanie*, p. 237.

[85] S. Mstislavskii, *Sem'dnei* (Berlin-Petersburg-M., 1922) p. 65.

[86] Burdzhakov, *Vtoraya russkaya*, pp. 244-5.

[87] Rafes, *Byloe* (1922) p. 187. Here one can also see the strange coexistence of anxiety and elation.

[88] Perazich, *Tekstili Leningrada*, p. 23.

[89] Ibid., p. 19.

[90] Ibid., p. 22. See also A. Smirnov, *Poslednie dni Utemanov*, p. 29.

[91] Cited in Burdzhakov, *Vtoraya russkaya*, pp. 203-4.

[92] *Pervaya Petragradskaya*, pp. 13, 19

[93] *Rabockaya gazeta* (7 Mar 1917). See also 12 Mar and *Izvestiya* (2 Mar 1917).

[94] Zalezhsksii tried to explain the PC's endorsement of the PG in these terms – it could not go against the will of the Soviet. But in fact, this was the main motivation of only the left minority in February. V. N. Zalezhsksii, 'Pen'vyi legal'nyi Peka', *Proletarskaya revolyutsia*, no. 13 (1923) p. 145. As Lenin stated in April: 'Even our Bolsheviks showed a trusting attitude towards the government, and one can explain this only by the intoxication with the revolution'. V. I. Lenin,

*Polnoe sobranie sochinenii*, 5<sup>th</sup> edn (M., 1962) vol. XXXI, p. 106.

[[95](#)] Lenin, *Polnoe Sobranie*, pp. 106-7.