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On the Russian Revolution : The Petrograd Workers and the Fall of the Old Régime - V - Chapter Six

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Chapter 6: From the April to the July Days

On 18 April (1 May, New Style) the Russian workers celebrated May Day for the first time in conditions of political freedom – indeed, by Lenin’s own testimony, the broadest political freedom of any of the belligerent countries. It was early spring, and also the spring of the revolution. The hearts

of the demonstrators were brimming with hope and enthusiasm, and spirits soared.

In keeping with the spirit of February, May Day was not merely a day of labour demonstrations and meetings but a national holiday, a holiday of the revolution. In Petrograd, the number of demonstrators exceeded even the turnout for the 23 March funeral for those who had fallen in the insurrection. 'In general', recalled Sukhanov, 'the entire city, from large to small, if not at some meeting, was out in the streets'. [1] The Menshevik-Internationalist *Novaya zhizn'* remarked how different the day was in Petrograd from May Days abroad, which were demonstrations of the proletariat against the bourgeoisie. 'The [Russian] proletariat can say with legitimate pride that on that day all of democracy of the country was to a greater or lesser degree an active participant of its proletarian socialist holiday'. [2]

Of course, 18 April could not claim quite the same sense of national solidarity that had marked the first days of the revolution. The campaign against the workers' alleged egotism in the non-socialist press had already created a wedge of bad feeling. Still, it seemed that much had already been accomplished and that the alliance with census society was working. Few suspected that May Day would be the last event of the revolution to bear an all-national stamp, that on the very same day events were being set in motion that would bring down the curtain on this 'honeymoon phase' of the revolution.

The April Days

It was noted earlier that the workers' 'revolutionary defencism' was premised upon the assumption that the government, prodded by the Soviet, would pursue an active peace policy and in the meanwhile conduct a purely defensive war. But almost immediately, the workers were given grave cause for concern. On 7 March, the official government organ pledged to spare no effort to provide the army 'with all that is necessary to pursue the war to a victorious conclusion'. [3] Less than a week later, Minister of Foreign Affairs, P. N. Milyukov, stated in an interview that 'we need a decisive victory'. [4] Meanwhile, the non-socialist press stubbornly insisted that the entire nation was now more than ever united around this goal of victory.

Such claims notwithstanding, the nation was far from united around this goal. The general assembly of the Dinamo Factory declared:

"The people and army went into the street not to replace one government by another but to carry out our slogans. And these slogans are: 'Freedom', 'Equality', 'Land and Liberty' and 'an end to the bloody war' - for us, the unpropertied classes, the bloody slaughter is not necessary." [5]

Although the 14 March declaration of the Soviet 'To the Peoples of the Entire World' calling them to struggle against the annexationist policies of their governments was met with enthusiasm, statements by representatives of the government and the attitude of the non-socialist press continued to agitate the workers. *Rabochaya gazeta* printed the following report from the Pechatkin Paper Mill:

"On March 19 a general assembly took place at which a series of reports from the factory council of elders and others from the P[etrograd] O[rganization] of the RSDWP [Menshevik] were heard.

The meeting, having discussed the question of the attitude of the proletariat to the war, unanimously passed the following resolution:

We the workers of the Pechatkin Mill, greet the Soviet of W and SD for its internationalist position in

relation to the war.

But we consider it totally insufficient on the part of the Soviet of W and SD in its striving for peace to limit itself to the publishing of manifestos.

For a speedy end to the war it is necessary immediately to undertake pressure upon the PG in order that it, submitting to the will of Russian democracy, also declare its rejection of annexations and reparations and its readiness at any time to enter peace talks on the conditions declared in the Manifesto of the Soviet of W and SD.

At the same time, the meeting protests against the slogan 'War until complete victory' that is being unfurled now on the banner of the PG and the entire bourgeois press: for under this slogan hide the annexationist aspirations of the capitalist class of Russia and the whole world.

The path to peace is not a bloody war but the revolutionary pressure of the popular masses of Europe on their predatory ruling classes and governments." [6]

Under pressure from the Soviet, the government finally issued a declaration to the citizens of Russia on 27 March which rejected all annexationist aims, yet, curiously enough, pledged Russia's determination to fulfil all her treaty obligations with the Allies (treaties that, in fact, determined the new division of the world upon Allied victory, Russia receiving, among other prizes, Constantinople and the Dardanelles). [7]

All the same, the Kadet Party's Central Committee and its leader Milyukov continued to speak out for the annexation of the Dardanelles. [8] As a result, the Bolshevik demand for the publication of all secret treaties began to gather considerable working-class support, despite the workers' 'defencism'. A meeting of 3000 workers of the Skorokhod Shoe Factory declared, after hearing a report from their district soviet delegate:

"We support the [district] soviet's demand that the PG immediately publish all treaties and that the PG propose peace terms and convene a peace conference. We do not want to find ourselves in the position of conducting an annexationist war." [9]

Again, after prodding from the Soviet, Milyukov agreed to transmit the 27 March declaration (intended originally for domestic consumption) to the Allied governments but on the condition that it be accompanied by a note of clarification. This note was sent on 18 April and became public through the newspapers on 20 April. It affirmed Russia's determination to carry on the war in full agreement with the Allies, to fulfil all treaty obligations. It also claimed that the revolution had merely strengthened the popular will to bring the war to a victorious conclusion.

The publication of this note caused a spontaneous explosion of popular indignation in the form of workers' and soldiers' meetings and demonstrations on 20 and 21 April. On the whole, these were not directed against the PG or dual power as such but at forcing the resignation of Milyukov and, somewhat less insistently, that of the Minister of War, Guchkov. There were, however, relatively small working-class groups with banners reading 'Down with the PG' and 'Power to the soviets'. [10]

One need not dwell here upon the events themselves. *Rabochaya gazeta* gave the following account of 20 April.

"Petrograd reacts unusually sensitively and nervously to the burning political issues of the day. Milyukov's note, published yesterday, called forth great agitation on the streets. Everywhere were groups of people, meetings, which have of late become usual sights, but in immeasurably larger numbers. Everywhere, at street meetings, in trams, passionate, heated disputes over the war take

place. The caps and handkerchiefs stand for peace; the derbies and bonnets - for war.

In the working-class districts and in the barracks, the attitude towards the note is more defined and organised. A sharp protest is being expressed against the politics of annexation, against the challenge to democracy that the government has made in its note.

Already in the morning, the Finland Regiment came out. Carrying red flags bearing the inscriptions: 'Down with annexationist politics', 'Milyukov and Guchkov into retirement', and so forth, they moved toward the Mariinskii Palace, where the PG sits in session...

After the Finlyandtsy move the other regiments. Towards evening, workers' demonstrations make their appearance. The banners, for the most part, are old ones, left over from May Day. But there are also new ones, and they protest against the policy of annexations, demand peace without annexations or indemnities, greet the Soviet of W and SD. A part of the demonstrators moves to the building of the Morskoi Korpus on Vasilevskii ostrov, where the general assembly of the Soviet is in session.

From time to time counter-demonstrations appear. Small, disorderly crowds of petty bourgeois [*obyvateli* - literally, inhabitants; at any rate, not workers or soldiers] among which one can also see officers, but especially many women. They run along Nevskii Prospekt with placards and shout: 'Long live the Provisional Government', 'Down with Lenin'.

By evening the atmosphere becomes even more excited. And just as the mood that reigns in the working-class districts and in the barracks is sympathetic to the Soviet of W and SD, so does an attitude hostile towards it predominate on Nevskii Prospekt." [11]

The next day the demonstrations recurred, but on a much larger scale and with more serious consequences. Again, Rabochaya gazeta reported:

"Yesterday on the streets of Petrograd the atmosphere was even more agitated than on April 20. Everywhere were small meetings, everywhere demonstrations. In the [working-class] districts a whole series of strikes took place...."

The inscriptions on the banners were of a most varied nature, but all the same, one noted a common feature: in the centre, on Nevskii, Sadovaya and others, slogans in support of the PG predominate: in the outskirts - the opposite. There, decisive protests against the foreign policy of the PG and its inspirer Mr Milyukov reign undividedly....

Clashes between demonstrators of the different groups are frequent. The initiators are defenders of the PG, who often charge at the banners protesting against Milyukov. The demonstrators of the other side repulse them, but this often takes the most unfortunate forms. There are many rumours of shootings. But who is to blame - has still to be clarified.

After midday, when the Executive Committee published its order to the soldiers not to go into the streets armed, one began to observe curious scenes where soldiers try to persuade their comrades to refrain in general from participation in the demonstrations, whatever their character [armed or otherwise]. Often the soldiers also appealed to civilians for calm....

In the evening the situation in the streets became more acute. The gunfire was very strong." [12]

As the report notes, upon learning of the Soviet's order, the soldiers generally refrained from demonstrating, entrusting resolution of the conflict to the Soviet leadership. The workers, however, did not take so passive or trusting a position and came out in even larger numbers than the previous

day. As usual, the Vyborg District was in the van. But there were also many workers from less skilled factories, including several thousand from the Petrograd Trubochnyi (Pipe) Factory, from the Putilov Works, and even two or three textile mills. [13] All strata of the working class were united in their opposition to an imperialist war.

On 21 April, the Kadet Party organised counter-demonstrations in support of Milyukov. Several workers and soldiers were killed or wounded in the clashes – the first blood to be shed since the insurrection. By all accounts (official hearings were held) the shooting was begun by provocateurs in the midst of the ‘proper public’. [14] One of these clashes involved textile workers. According to Perazich:

“On April 21 the women of these mills [Novaya Bumagopryadil’nya, Kozhevnikovskaya and part of Okhtenskaya Bumagopryadil’nyal moved with the demonstrators onto Nevskii on the odd-numbered side. The other crowd moved in parallel fashion on the even side: well-dressed women, officers, merchants, lawyers, etc. Their slogans were: ‘Long live the PG’, ‘Long live Milyukov’, ‘Arrest Lenin’. At Sadovaya a clash occurred. Here a hail of curses descended upon our workers: Bezulochnitsy! [trollops] Illiterate rabble! Filthy scum! P. Romanova could not hold back: ‘The hats [15] you’re wearing are made from our blood!’, and a fistfight broke out. The bearer of the Novaya Bumagopryadil’nya banner was knocked off her feet and the banner torn. The same occurred to the Kozhevnikovskaya banner. In response, our workers tore some of the opponents’ banners and in the scuffle tore off the fancy hats and scratched the faces of the bourgeois women. At that moment, a detachment of sailors approached, led by an orchestra, and the Kadet demonstration retreated. After this, with the remainder of the red banners, the workers moved to Vasilevskii ostrov to the Morskoi korpus, where the Soviet was in session. From there our demonstrators were accompanied by a detachment of Putilov workers to Ekaterinov Prospekt.” [16]

These clashes made a deep and lasting impression. ‘That day opened the eyes of everyone. The repressed hatred towards the bourgeoisie intensified’, recalled a Vyborg worker. [17] The cleavage in Russian society, papered over in February, was beginning to show through. According to the letter of a Putilov worker printed in the SR *Delo naroda*, it was the clashes that finally brought the factory out on 21 April. At a meeting that afternoon, attended also by workers of the neighbouring Treugol’nik Rubber Factory,

“The mood wavered, some speaking for a street demonstration, others advising against it. It was decided to wait for a decision from the Soviet. But before that decision could arrive some workers returned from the centre with news of clashes, the tearing of banners and the arrests. A leaflet summoning to demonstrate in favour of Milyukov was also read. The mood suddenly shifted. ‘What?! They’re chasing us off the streets, tearing our banners, and we’re going to watch this quietly from a distance? Let’s move to Nevskii!’ The vote supported this overwhelmingly.” [18]

Here, besides indignation over the betrayal by the government, one can see at work the powerful factor of class pride, with its corollary-class hatred.

The ‘April Days’ strengthened the workers’ desire for their own armed force. The general assembly of the Skorokhod Shoe Factory, roundly condemning the ‘imperialist scheme of the government’, and ‘considering the counterrevolutionary designs of the bourgeoisie, which is attempting to use armed force against the workers’, decided to form a Red Guard of 1000 and asked the Soviet for 500 rifles and 500 revolvers. [19] On 23 April at a meeting of factory delegates on the organisation of Red Guards, one speaker, referring to that ‘regrettable day’, argued:

“The bourgeoisie attacked on the streets on April 21.... One can conclude much from that. The Soviet put too much trust in the Kadets. The Soviet doesn’t go out into the streets. The Kadets did. Despite

the Soviet, the workers went into the street and saved the day. If we have a Red Guard, they would take us into account.... At the head of the districts would march red guards. Then they wouldn't tear down our red flags." [20]

An indication of the broad support for a workers' armed force is the city conference of Red Guards that met on 28 April with delegates from 90 factories employing some 170 000 workers. [21] On the other hand, the moderate Soviet leadership qualified it as unnecessary and even harmful in view of the fact that the soldiers were revolutionary and might see in the Red Guard a threat directed against them. [22] Yudin, representing the EC, told the conference: 'As a true friend of the working class I must tell you openly that our worker lives in ignorance. One can hold a rifle in one's hand when one has a strong head'. This raised such a storm of indignation that the conference even voted to deprive Yudin of the floor. In reply, the conference asked the Soviet to reconsider its position. After all, had not the Soviet itself distributed arms to the workers in February? It might well find itself faced with the necessity of disarming the workers, it argued prophetically. At any rate, the EC's opposition apparently put a temporary halt to this attempt at a city-wide organisation, although work continued on the factory level. [23]

But if on the psychological and social levels the April Days did much to restore the pre-revolutionary class polarisation of urban Russian, and especially Petrograd, society, this was not at the time translated directly into politics. Judging from the resolutions of factory meetings, from the voting in the Soviet and the workers' general continued support for the policy of the Soviet's moderate leaders, the predominant reaction was to reaffirm, in yet stronger terms, the earlier position on dual power. Demanding the resignation of Milyukov and Guchkov, the workers asked the Soviet to tighten its control over the government, to press it harder on foreign policy, and they reaffirmed their support for the Soviet in this task.

A meeting of 2000 workers at the Siemens and Gal'ske Electrotechnical Factory demanded 'firmer control' over the government and 'to remove those who stand for an annexationist policy, Milyukov and Guchkov in particular, and to put in people who will guarantee a more democratic defence of the interests of the broad popular masses'. [24] At the Baltic Shipbuilding Factory, the workers demanded the repudiation of the note and expressed their full confidence in the Soviet, and we are sure that the Soviet, basing itself upon our trust and the support of organised revolutionary democracy, will be able to force the PG to take into account the wishes of the revolutionary people and army'. [25] What the workers had in mind was most directly expressed in the resolution of the Voronin Cotton Mill: 'All power must belong to the Soviet, and the PG must execute its will'. [26] This was a reaffirmation of the position of February.

Some, in effect, offered the bourgeoisie a last chance. A meeting of the workers of the Nevskaya Nitochneya Mill declared that 'the act of the PG was no error but a conscious plan to dupe the people.... The Soviet must watch every step of the PG and force the PG to publish the secret treaties and call all warring states to end the war.... If there is any new anti-revolutionary step by the PG, take all measures up to taking power. [27] The workers at Dinamo called to replace the entire government if it refused to remove Milyukov and Guchkov. [28]

Once again, most of the demands for a break with census society came from the Vyborg machine-construction plants (and a few others in other districts [29]), i.e. factories where at least a good part of the workers may have already been hostile to dual power. The general assembly of the Optico-machine-construction Factory resolved that

"The PG by its composition does not represent the population of Russia. Representing a bunch of capitalists and landowners who made up the Fourth State Duma, having seized the power won by the people, Milyukov and Co. have unmasked themselves. We declare that we do not want to shed

blood for the sake of Milyukov and Co. in cooperation with the capitalist oppressor of all countries. Therefore, we find the Milyukov-Guchkov Co. not corresponding to their appointment and recognise that the only power in the country must be the Soviets of the WS and PD, which we will defend with our lives.” [30]

However, now for the first time, workers from other sectors besides metalworking, though still rare, began to speak for the soviet power. The Nevskii Shoe Factory, for example, called to 'reorganise both the EC of the Soviet of W and SD and also the Soviet itself, which are not able to take a decisive revolutionary class stand for a break with bourgeois policy, and for their replacement with representatives who stand for a revolutionary path of struggle, for full transfer of power to the hands of the proletariat and peasantry'. [31] Similar positions were taken by the Needleworkers' Union [32] and the Delegates' Council of the Upholsterers' Section of the Union of Woodworkers. [33] (Both industries, as noted, were relatively skilled.)

The Vyborg District Soviet, for its part, resolved merely 'to give a decisive rebuff to this betrayal of the interests of democracy. Inform the Soviet of this, calling it to decisive action, promising our full support'. [34] This may have been a veiled call to take power, veiled because the district soviet did not want to oppose directly the central Soviet. Or perhaps there was still not a majority here for soviet power.

In any case, for the great mass of workers the April crisis did not produce an immediate qualitative shift in political attitudes. For the most part, those who now called for soviet power had already been inclined in that direction. What the majority of workers had in mind in responding to the note was expressed by a Putilov worker in reply to a student's question whether the Soviet had authorised the demonstration: 'No. No permission from the Soviet. We don't want to make a civil war but we'll show the bourgeoisie that they have to take us into account. [35] Most workers still believed that they could force their will on census society and were, therefore, unconvinced of the need for a break with it and for the civil war that might follow.

Fear of civil war remained a significant factor in the workers' continued support for dual power. 'We fully support the tactics of the Soviet', resolved the general assembly of the Leont'ev Textile Mill,

“directed at maintaining the unity of the revolution and at the energetic rebuff of any attempt to divide the revolutionary forces.... The meeting rejects the anarchistic calls of Lenin to seize state power that can only lead to civil war, which in the given moment would threaten to ruin the cause of freedom, which is far from secured.” [36]

Relatively few, as yet, were swayed by the Bolshevik argument 'that there was no sense in fearing a civil war. It had already arrived, and only as a result of it would the people achieve their liberation'. [37] Most agreed with the SR leader Stankevich who stated on 20 April at the Soviet:

“So what do we do now? ...Certain people decide it very simply: it is necessary, they say, to overthrow the PG and arrest it... Why, comrades, do we have to 'come out'? ... At whom should we shoot? Against the masses who stand behind you? Why, you do not have a worthy opponent: against you no one has any power. As you decide, so it will be. It is not necessary to 'come out', but rather to decide what to do ... Decide that the PG should not exist, that it should resign. We will inform them over the telephone, and in five minutes they will hand in their resignations. By seven o'clock it will not exist. What is the purpose here of violence, demonstrations, civil war?”

This speech was met with 'stormy applause and 'cries of enthusiasm'. [38] To these workers the conclusion was simple: rally ever more resolutely round the moderate Soviet leadership so that it can all the more easily force the government to tow the mark.

The crisis was finally 'liquidated' with the government's agreement to dispatch a new explanatory note to the Allies reiterating the original 'Declaration to the Citizens of Russia' and stressing that Milyukov's 'sanctions and guarantees of firm peace' actually meant arms limitation, international tribunals, etc. This 'clarification', of course, totally contradicted the original note. Yet both stood, as the note was never repudiated. Nor, for that matter, were Milyukov or Guchkov forced to resign, although they both left the government within a week or so.

This solution was accepted by the Soviet's EC on 21 April by a vote of 34 to 19. It also passed in the plenum of the Soviet by a large majority. Despite the alarm, the defencist majority of the Soviet seemed to be riding higher than ever on the wave of popular support.

The First Coalition

It was quite natural at this point that the representatives of census society should raise the question of a coalition. The crisis had demonstrated dramatically that the government had neither the authority nor, failing that, the physical resources to keep the masses in line. The Soviet, on the other hand, was more or less in full control of the workers and soldiers, yet shared no responsibility for government policy. Accordingly, the government, with the non-socialist press following suit, began to press for the formation of a coalition with representatives of the Soviet. Kerenskii threatened to resign if the Soviet refused.

The EC at first was totally opposed to the idea, voting unanimously on 26 April against participation in the government. But on 28 April, a joint conference of the ECs of the Petrograd and Moscow Soviets barely missed reversing this. Guchkov's resignation on 30 April as Minister of War forced a reorganisation of the government and added urgency to the situation.

Until now, Tsereteli, the undisputed leader of the Soviet majority, had opposed a coalition. His party's paper, *Rabochaya gazeta*, putting forth the traditional Social-Democratic position, maintained that socialists in the government would soon find themselves compromised in the eyes of the masses, the targets of 'anarchist demagogues' (i.e. the socialist left) and would quickly lose all influence among the workers. [39] Another argument was that one could more effectively pressure the government from the outside; once on the inside, such pressure would be difficult to exert. Nevertheless, on 1 May, Tsereteli spoke for a coalition, and it passed in the EC by 44 to 10 with 2 abstentions. Opposing were the Bolsheviks, Menshevik-Internationalists and Left SRs. [40]

In the ensuing negotiations, Milyukov was forced out by his colleagues in the government, despite posturing by the Kadet CC threatening to recall all its ministers. As a result, six representatives of the Soviet, a sizeable minority, entered the government. On 13 May, the Soviet plenum voted overwhelmingly full confidence in the new coalition government. February's formula of conditional support was now abandoned. Trotsky's resolution opposing the government gathered a mere 20-30 votes. [41] *Izvestiya* explained the EC's new position. First of all, the government was unable to govern and save the country from the approaching ruin because no one obeyed its representatives and it was distrusted by the masses. On the other hand, it was impossible at this time for the Soviet to take power alone as this would unleash a civil war, and the Soviet already had enough enemies. The 'broad masses' would not follow the Soviet in such a move. Finally, with Soviet representatives in the government, it would be more decisive in carrying out the programme of revolutionary democracy. [42]

At least on the surface, the Soviet's action seemed in accord with the will of the majority of workers (although the opposition was clearly larger than the 20-30 votes cast for Trotsky's resolution - the recall campaign was only just beginning). The workers who had supported dual power, that peculiar

form of political alliance with census society, saw the Soviet's action mainly as a means of asserting firmer control: with the Soviet's people inside the government, the census ministers would be totally under the Soviet's thumb. There would be no more room for manoeuvres such as the Milyukov note.

But while the Soviet majority pledged full confidence in the coalition government as a whole, the workers in the factories typically sent greetings and expressed support only for the socialist ministers. Thus, the workers of the Ust'-Izhora Shipyards sent their 'warm greetings to the socialist ministers', [43] while the general assembly of the Wireless Telephone and Telegraph Co. Factory promised 'full support for our comrades in the government. [44] Finally, the Zigel' workers, 'having heard a report on the coalition from our representatives to the Soviet ..., pledge full support for the Soviet and its representatives in the PG ... We are sure they will carry out their work honestly before the people'. [45] Even the factories that followed the Soviet in expressing support for the coalition government as a whole did not fail to make clear that real legitimacy lay only with the Soviet and its representatives in the government. A meeting of 7000 workers at the Admiralty Shipyards resolved

"to support the PG and to organise around the Soviet of W and SD, which must serve as the centre of revolutionary democracy, consciously and unswervingly striving to increase socialist influence over the organs of power. We approve of the entrance of our comrade socialists into the government. We welcome their intention to carry out the financial programme developed by the economic department of the Soviet of W and SD." [46]

But once again, the main opposition to the coalition, came from factories that had already spoken out against the dual power. The thrust of their position was that the socialist ministers would only serve as a screen for the continued machinations of the bourgeoisie, that the only solution to the crisis of power was a soviet government. [47]

There were, thus, two divergent interpretations of the Soviet's action. The minority of workers, convinced that census society was opposed to the programme of revolutionary democracy, maintained that the representatives of the Soviet would become hostages of census society and the result would be a blunting of the revolutionary policy of the Soviet. The majority, on the other hand, saw the coalition as the logical extension of their position that cooperation with census society should not be rejected but that control by the Soviet should be reinforced. These workers believed that the formation of a coalition would inject radicalism and decisiveness into the PG, and this was certainly how their leaders presented it to them.

But despite the apparent continued support for the Soviet leaders among the large majority of workers, the two were in reality far apart, though this was not immediately apparent. For if the workers believed that the Soviet's representatives had entered the government primarily to ensure the execution of the Soviet's will, the Soviet leadership, in fact, moved first and foremost to keep alive the alliance between democracy and census society, an alliance they were convinced was crucial to the survival of the revolution. 'It is necessary by all means to keep the liberal bourgeoisie - the Kadets - in the government', argued *Rabochaya gazeta* emphatically. [48] But such reasoning was alien to the great majority of workers. For them, what was crucial was first of all to defend the revolution, or rather their conception of the revolution and its tasks. Should the alliance between revolutionary democracy and census society prove an obstacle to this, it would have to go. That this was indeed the predominant way of thinking became exceedingly clear in the subsequent two months, during which the idea of Soviet power gradually seized the consciousness of the majority of Petrograd's industrial workers.

The Break with Census Society

In the weeks following the April crisis, the euphoria of March was forgotten amidst the growing sense of political cul-de-sac and approaching economic doom. February's guarded *rapprochement* between the working class and bourgeoisie gave way to an increasingly bitter polarisation in the social, economic and, finally, political spheres. In the following pages, I will first document these developments and then offer an explanation of their dynamics.

Perhaps the most striking indicator of the shift that occurred in May and June is the voting in the Workers' Section of the Petrograd Soviet, made up of representatives of the capital's wage- and salary-earning classes (excluding managerial personnel). Immediately after the April crisis, the Petrograd Bolsheviks, having rallied to Lenin's 'April Theses', launched a campaign in the factories for new elections that met with widespread response. On 1 July the Petrograd Bolshevik leader Volodarskii informed the City Conference that the party now had a majority of the worker delegates to the Soviet. [49] Two days later, less than two months after Trotsky's anti-coalition resolution had received a trifling 20 to 30 votes, a majority of the Worker's Section demanded the transfer of state power to the Soviets. [50] A majority of Petrograd's workers had opted for a break with the bourgeoisie.

On closer examination, certain patterns emerge. The largest and earliest Bolshevik gains were made among the metalworkers and first of all in the machine-construction factories. In the two districts with the largest concentration of metalworkers (in relative and absolute terms), Vyborg and Vasilevskii ostrov, already in May the Soviets had left socialist majorities. The same is true of the Soviet of the small Kolomna District, whose workers were almost all employed in three large shipyards. [51] Elsewhere, the district Soviets remained defencist until at least after the July Days.

At the Sestroretsk Arms Factory elections on 3 May gave the Bolsheviks an overwhelming majority and all three seats to the Petrograd Soviet. [52] The Phoenix Machine-construction Factory, which had originally elected two Mensheviks and one Bolshevik, by early June had exclusively Bolshevik delegates. [53] The general assembly of the New Baranovskii Machine and Pipe Factory spent five hours in mid May heatedly debating the mandate for their delegates and ended by overwhelmingly endorsing the Bolshevik position. [54] In June the workers of the Nobel Machine-construction Factory recalled their SR delegate for failing to follow the Bolshevik mandate as published in *Pravda*. [55] At the Putilov Works the first resolution for Soviet power was passed on 9 May by the 1250 workers of the new engineering shop. [56]

Typical of developments among this stratum of workers was the following report sent to *Pravda* from the Vulkan Foundry and Machine-construction Factory:

"The Vulkan Factory was under the intense influence of the Mensheviks. Noted orators would come to the general assemblies of the workers. Mensheviks, members of the Soviet EC would pay visits. Despite this, their work did not yield the desired results. The Menshevik current did not grow but, on the contrary, declined. On the other hand, the Bolshevik current from the start began to win a firm position for itself. This was evident not only from the expressed opinions of individuals but also through the speeches of worker comrades and their common demands, and little by little it turned into the strong dissatisfaction of the workers with their Menshevik representatives in the Soviet of W and SD. And so it was decided to hold new elections.

Before the elections the Bolshevik faction and the United Mensheviks (Internationalists) decided to work jointly and began pre-election activity. From that moment onward, our work went smoothly and quickly. The comrade workers united around the slogans expressed in the mandate to the representatives to the Soviet of W and SD. At the pre-election meeting, the talented speakers,

Kamenev and Lunacharskii, once and for all rallied almost all those present, and the above-mentioned mandate of ours was voted by the entire meeting. As a result of the new elections, the overwhelming majority elected all four delegates from the Bolshevik and the united faction." [57]

Lunacharskii wrote of this meeting: 'I now know how it is possible in the course of half an hour to leave not the slightest trace of the most hollow defencism'. [58]

Two characteristic traits of the situation among the skilled metalworkers emerge from this. As Lunacharskii indicated, these workers were by now more than ripe for the change. Secondly, the shift in party allegiance was very largely from Menshevik-Defencist to Bolshevik, and to a small degree, to other internationalist parties.

In contrast, 'conciliationist' attitudes held much firmer sway among the less skilled workers, though even here they were beginning to erode, especially where economic conflicts arose to serve as catalyst (see below, pp. 142-5). Moreover, where party allegiance did change in the less skilled factories in this period, it was typically from the SR party to the Bolsheviks. At the Petrograd Pipe Factory, with little more than 10 per cent skilled workers, [59] from the start of the revolution 'the SRs had enormous influence and carried away membership dues by the sackful, ... [while] the Menshevik-Defencists enjoyed less success'. [60] New elections here in June yielded the following results: SRs - 8552, Bolshevik-SD Internationalist Bloc - 5823, and Menshevik-Defencists - 1067. [61] The Internationalists were making inroads into SR territory but were still unable to carry a majority.

The SRs also dominated the textile industry, where few supported the call for soviet power before July. [62] The Kersten Knitwear Min (87 per cent female, largely semi-literate recent arrivals from the village) was represented exclusively by SRs in the Soviet until mid-September when new elections gave the Bolsheviks 965 votes and the SRs 1340. The Mensheviks did not even run a list. [63] At the Treugol'nik Rubber Factory (two-thirds female), despite the growth of Bolshevik sympathies, the SRs often had the upper hand at general assemblies before July. [64] Among the workers at Petrograd's railroad workshops the political struggle was similarly played out largely between the Bolsheviks and SRs. [65]

The fact is that by the end of June there was little sign of any Menshevik-Defencist presence among the industrial workers, except for the printers. In a few factories the Menshevik-Internationalists were popular, especially on Vasilevskii ostrov, with its institutions of higher learning. But on the whole, even these left Mensheviks, had few supporters. When the question of an electoral bloc with them was raised at the Bolshevik City Conference on 20 July, only two delegates were in favour. 'We must be careful about a bloc', warned one speaker, 'since the Menshevik-Internationalists are so unstable and they are so insignificant numerically that a bloc has little meaning. If they are consistent internationalists they should break [with the Menshevik-Defencist organisation]'. A delegate from the Vyborg District noted that here 'there are almost no Menshevik-Internationalists, maybe a few hundred'. 'They are too few to help us, and there is no sense in helping them', added another. [66]

The first speaker hit directly on the main reasons for Menshevik-Internationalist weakness: they failed to take a clear and consistent stand on the question of power, never really espousing the idea of a soviet government that had become so close and comprehensible to the workers. Moreover, their refusal to break organisationally with the defencists (closely connected with their stand on state power) compromised them in the eyes of many workers.

The virtual disappearance of the Menshevik-Defencists from the factories and the concomitant rise of the Bolsheviks, along with the only relative decline of SR influence are explained by the fact that

the shift to support for soviet power came largely, though not exclusively, from the more skilled urbanised sections of the working class. This was the Social-Democratic constituency, the main battleground of its two wings. And by the end of June the battle had been largely played out. [67] On the other hand, the largely Bolshevik-SR struggle among the unskilled stratum was far from decided, though the Bolsheviks were definitely gaining on the SRs.

To the factory masses, the Social Democrats were a workers' party, while the SRs, with their 'Land and Freedom' banner, were seen as a peasant or people's party. Indeed, as opposed to the SRs, the SDs had extremely weak ties with the villages and especially the Mensheviks evinced downright fear of the peasantry. Voitinskii, a Bolshevik turned Menshevik with much experience in 1905 as an agitator in the factories of Petrograd, recalled that

"the main ace up the sleeve of the SRs was their agrarian programme which they willingly laid out before the workers. At these meetings they would ask the Social Democrats: What will your party give the peasantry, the provider of the Russian land? On the questions of terror and land the sympathy of the meeting was clearly on the side of the SRs. But the masses still followed the SDs because they already saw it as their party and they liked its name: 'Russian Workers...'" [68]

Rabochaya gazeta, commenting upon the big SR victory (62 per cent) in the June 1917 municipal elections in Moscow, noted that 'the masses follow the simple slogan - "Land and Freedom", especially those who have not broken with the village'. [69]

The soviets were not the only forum to register a shift towards soviet power and the Bolsheviks. In the elections to the twelve district dumas (municipal government) at the end of May, of a total of 784 910 votes (about 75 per cent of all eligible voters), the Bolsheviks received 159 936 (20.4 per cent), the moderate socialists 439 858 (56.0 per cent), the rest going mainly to the Kadets (see Table 6.1). [70] The Bolshevik showing was impressive, especially considering that most of their support came from the working-class districts. In the Vyborg District, the most homogeneously proletarian district, they received an absolute majority - 34 303 (58.2 per cent), as opposed to 20 568 (34.9 per cent) for the moderate socialists and only 4071 for the Kadets. In the other two districts with a significant amount of industry, Petrograd and Narva (though far less homogeneously proletarian than Vyborg), the Bolshevik vote was 22.6 per cent and 17.1 per cent respectively. Elsewhere, their showing was well below the city average. [71]

TABLE 6.1
Petrograd district дума election returns (number of votes cast)

District	Bolshevik		Moderate socialist a		Kadet		All parties b	
		%		%		%		%
Admiralty	2983	15.8	11105	58.7	4503	23.8	18931	100.0
Aleksandr-Nevski	8737	12.8	49891	73.0 c	9116	13.3	68318	
Kazan'	2219	10.1	9253	41.9	9382	42.5	22077	
Kolomna	6035	14.9	23724	58.4	10241	25.2	40626	
Liteinyi	5085	8.6	30583	51.5	22507	37.9	59423	
Moscow d	6758	9.7	41517	59.4	21667	31.0	69942	
Narva	18202	17.1	73293	68.9	12625	11.9	106392	
Petrograd	30348	22.6	72750	54.2	29323	21.8	134345	

Rozhdestvenskii	2944	5.0	37671	63.5 e	18126	30.5	59358	
Spasskii	4945	13.2	20210	53.8	10885	29.0	37581	
Vasilevskii ostrov	37377	34.3 f	49293	45.2	19299	17.7	108975	
Vyborg	34303	58.2	20568	34.9	4071	6.9	58942	
Total	159936	20.4	439858	56.0	171745	21.9	784910	

a Includes Mensheviks, SRs, Trudoviks and Popular Socialists, the latter two with about 1 per cent of the vote.

b Not included in the breakdown are the minor non-socialist parties with about 1.7 per cent of the vote.

c The Mensheviks and SRs ran separately here, the former taking 10.6 per cent of the vote, and the latter 60.5 per cent.

d Known to be incomplete.

e The Mensheviks and SRs ran separately here, the former taking 32.1 per cent of the vote, and the latter 15.4 per cent.

f This was a Bolshevik-Menshevik- Internationalist bloc. As the majority of the Menshevik organisation was internationalist here, the defencists did not run.

Source: based on W. Rosenberg. *Liberals in the Russian Revolution* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1974) p. 162.

But perhaps the most dramatic success for the proponents of soviet power was the First Petrograd Conference of Factory Committees (30 May-3 June), attended by 568 delegates representing 367 factories employing some 337 000 workers. The resolution on the struggle against the economic dislocation concluded that 'the coordinated and successful execution of all the above measures is possible on the condition of the transfer of power into the hands of the Soviet of WS and PD'. It gathered 297 votes. The moderate socialist and Menshevik-Internationalist resolutions calling for 'state regulation' without defining the nature of that state (but in any case clearly not a soviet one) received a total of 85 votes. The anarchists characteristically ignored the state but obviously wanted a break with census society. Their resolution received 45 votes. Another 44 abstained. Thus, 63 per cent of the delegates present voted for soviet power; 73 per cent, if one includes the anarchist vote. [72]

However, a note of caution is in order. Of all their organisations, factory committees were the closest to the workers, both in terms of continuous daily contact and frequency of elections. But they were elected primarily, though not exclusively, with economic considerations in mind. It also seems likely that most delegates to the conference were elected not by the factory collectives but by the committees themselves. Thus, the 73 per cent vote at the start of June was not necessarily an accurate reflection of the distribution of the workers' political attitudes. What is clear, however, is that those actively involved in factory committee work were strongly inclined towards soviet power.

Before proceeding to an analysis of its causes, one last manifestation of the political shift should be mentioned - the demonstration of 18 June. Without entering into the details here, suffice it is to say that the Bolshevik Central Committee decided to call a demonstration on 10 June in response to pressure from the factories and certain garrison units. However, the Soviet Congress, then in session, got wind of this and fearing a repeat of the 'April Days', banned all demonstrations. (Tsereteli insisted that the Bolsheviks were planning a *coup d'état*.) In search of an alternative, the Soviet majority decided to sponsor a demonstration for 18 June as a show of unity of revolutionary democracy and its support for the soviets. To avoid any discordant notes, the EC proposed only slogans acceptable to all Soviet fractions: general peace, speedy convocation of the Constituent

Assembly, democratic republic, etc. The issue of state power was studiously avoided.

The demonstration, in fact, was a resounding success for the Bolsheviks. In a crowd of between 300 000 and 400 000, all accounts agree that only a small minority carried the Soviet's neutral slogans, not to speak of slogans in support for the PG. [73]

This is how Sukhanov, an eyewitness, described it:

" 'All Power to the Soviets', 'Down with the Ten Capitalist Ministers'. Thus did the vanguard of the Russian and the World Revolutions, the workers and peasants [the soldiers] of Petrograd, firmly and forcefully express its will ... The situation was totally clear and unambiguous. Here and there the chain of Bolshevik banners and columns was broken by specifically SR and official Soviet slogans. But they were drowned amidst the mass; they appeared as exceptions, expressly confirming the rule. And again and again, as the insistent call from the very bowels of the revolutionary capital, as destiny itself, like the fateful Birnam Wood, they came toward us: 'All Power to the Soviets', 'Down with the Ten Capitalist Ministers'..." [74]

Not all workers participated. Only 800 of the 15 000 workers at the state Obukhovskii Steel Mill in the Nevskii District came out. This was true in general of the Nevskii District, which remained an SR stronghold until September. But abstention itself indicated the doubts that were besetting even the most firmly defencist workers. Unwilling to break with the alliance, they were nevertheless unable to give their 'conciliationist' leaders active support when called upon.

Rabochaya gazeta tried to explain away the Bolshevik success, claiming that the Bolsheviks were the only ones to take the demonstration seriously. 'Every little Bolshevik group had a banner'. What this failed to explain, however, is why the supporters of the Soviet majority remained indifferent to a Soviet-sponsored demonstration? The paper concluded sourly: 'It would have been better not to have held the demonstration ..., to have let the Bolsheviks demonstrate alone'. [75]

Pravda noted how far the political situation had evolved since March:

"What strikes one in surveying the demonstration is the total absence of the bourgeoisie and its fellow travellers. In contrast to the day of the funeral ... when the workers were swallowed in the sea of philistines and petty bourgeois, the demonstration of June 18 was a purely proletarian demonstration; its main participants were workers and soldiers. The Kadets already on the eve of the demonstration declared a boycott, proclaiming through their CC the necessity of 'abstaining' from participation - they literally hid. Nevskii, usually bustling and filled with people, was on that day absolutely clear of its usual bourgeois habitués." [76]

Izvestiya, though the official organ of the Central Executive Committee (TsIK) of Soviets [77] and of the Petrograd Soviet, had to agree that 'the bourgeoisie and philistines, scared to death, were almost not to be seen on that day'. [78] The polarisation had gone far indeed.

Underlying Causes of the Shift to Soviet Power

The groundswell of support for soviet power was based upon the conclusion, embraced by increasingly broader circles of the working class, that census society and 'its' government (the socialist ministers were seen as mere captives) were counterrevolutionary. Alarm over the growth and outspokenness of the forces of counterrevolution in the foreign and domestic political spheres as well as in the economic came to dominate the consciousness of Petrograd's workers in this period.

The Political Counterrevolution

On the eve of the demonstration of 18 June, the workers of the Russko-Baltiiskii Wagon-construction Factory by an 'overwhelming majority' passed the following resolution:

"At our general assembly on June 9 we discussed the appeal of the Central Committee of the RSDWP (Bolshevik) to all workers and soldiers of Petrograd for a peaceful demonstration against the counterrevolution that is raising its head and we found this summons timely and corresponding to the interests of the toilers.

Now that the necessity of a demonstration against the counterrevolutionary bourgeoisie has been recognised finally by the All-Russian Congress of Soviets of W and SD too [!], and since the call to demonstrate is supported by the CC RSDWP, we also, as on June 9 have decided to join that demonstration.

We demand the most decisive measures be taken against the Black Hundred forces, that the State Duma and State Council, those centres around which counterrevolutionaries of all sorts and hues are grouping, be immediately dispersed.

We demand the removal from the PG of the ten ministers of the bourgeoisie, appointees of the Third and Fourth Dumas." [79]

It is obvious that these workers had a very different conception of the aims of the demonstration than did its moderate socialist sponsors. Not without interest also is the resolution's emphasis on the approval of the Bolshevik CC. In fact, many factories refrained from demonstrating on 10 June only because the Bolshevik CC decided to respect the ban of the Soviet Congress (see below, p. 158). The fears of the Menshevik leaders were materialising: their 'conciliationism' vis-à-vis the 'class enemy' was compromising them in the eyes of the workers.

To the workers it was obvious: if the bourgeoisie was counterrevolutionary, its representatives had to be eliminated from power, leaving only the socialist ministers, the representatives of revolutionary democracy. The answer, in other words, was soviet power. A meeting of 2000 workers of the Old Parviainen Machine-construction Factory decided on 8 June to 'recognise that the only correct path to forestall the advancing counterrevolution is to take state power into the hands of the All-Russian Congress of WS and PD'. [80]

It was, in fact, the workers' concern over the 'insolence' of the counterrevolution that had persuaded the Bolshevik PC to call a demonstration in the first place. In the debate on its advisability, Stukov, a PC member from the Kolpino District, stated:

"An objective evaluation of the moment gives us hope for success. A demonstration on the widest possible scale is necessary because, on the one hand, the counterrevolutionary movement is growing; on the other hand, we have to oppose it with the organisation of revolutionary forces ... As concerns the workers of Kolpino, they are downright dismayed, [asking] how long the party will put off joining battle with the counterrevolutionary movement."

Tomskii, the trade union leader, noted that 'the atmosphere of class antagonism is extremely heavy - just take a look in the trams. We cannot take for granted that the demonstration will be peaceful. [81]

The most galling symbol of census society's counterrevolutionary turn of mind was the resurrection of the State Duma, to the workers a discredited relic of the old régime, whose distorted representation had made it a tool of the propertied classes. Less than a week after the April Days the

State Duma held an anniversary session, at which the leaders of census society denounced the soviets in unadorned terms, bringing the audience to raptures. Most widely reported in the socialist press were the words of the monarchist Shul'gin, who expressed his 'serious doubts' about the course of the revolution, decrying the fact that the 'honest and gifted PG' lacked 'fullness of power'.

It has been placed under suspicion. A guard has been posted next to it, to whom it is said: Look out! They are bourgeois. Therefore, watch them closely, and in case anything happens, know your duty. Gentlemen, on the 20th we were convincingly shown that this guard knows his job and carried out his duty honestly. But it is a big question whether those who posted this guard are acting correctly.

Turning to the leftist agitation critical of the government, he echoed Milyukov's question of 1916 addressed to the autocratic regime: 'Is this stupidity or treason? Stupidity, but taken all together, it is treason anyway'. [82] The ovation was deafening. 'Clearly they had been hurting!' remarked Sukhanov:

"True, in essence there was nothing new here in relation to what the bourgeois papers were repeating daily. Still, a public declaration of this in front of people, at a large gathering of like-thinkers, in the face of the victorious enemy - this filled to overflowing with enthusiasm the bourgeois souls." [83]

The State Duma continued to meet in 'private session' throughout May and June. The Chairman of the Fourth Duma, Rodzyanko, went so far as to imply that the State Duma was the sole source of legitimate power in the state. [84] 'Keep yourselves prepared', he appealed to its members, 'for soon the time will come for your intervention into the life of the country'. [85]

Meanwhile, with increasing urgency the factories demanded the abolition of the 'State Duma and State Council, those centres around which counterrevolutionaries of all sorts and hues are grouping'. The Petrograd Union of Woodworkers mandated its delegate to the Third All-Russian Conference of Trade Unions to demand the immediate dispersal of the State Duma and Council and the immediate arrest of all open counterrevolutionaries. [86] And according to Izvestiya's account of June 18: 'Again and again the banners: "Proletarians of all lands, unite!", "Confidence in the Congress of S and WD!", "Ceasefire!", "Down with the State Duma and State Council!", "All power to the soviets!", "Down with the counterrevolution!"' [87]

Nor was it only the State Duma. In May, at the Congress of the Kadet Party, the main census party in the coalition, Milyukov was given a standing ovation for his declaration that 'possession of the Straits is the most essential and vital necessity for our country'. And he continued:

"We have been told that one cannot call forth a revolution. That is not true. I think one can call it forth when it is necessary for the welfare of the fatherland. But if one can call forth a revolution, then one can also stop it if that is necessary for the welfare of Russia." [88]

Novaya zhizn' remarked: The physiognomy of the party is now clear: hatred of the red rag'. [89]

It is on this background that one must see the workers' reaction to the 'Durnovo Incident'. The dacha (for some - 'palace') of this former Tsarist Minister of Interior, bloody architect of the defeat of the 1905 Revolution, stood next to the Metallicheskii Factory in the Vyborg District and had been occupied after February by local workers' organisations, its shady park becoming a favourite recreational spot for the workers of this grimy district. The building's entire bottom floor, however, was taken over by anarchists, armed to the teeth. On 7 June, the Minister of Interior ordered all unlawful occupants to vacate the premises, but hastily re-edited the order to include only the anarchists - 28 factories in the district had struck in the meanwhile. The Soviet Congress finally had

the order totally rescinded. However, during the demonstration on 18 June, the anarchists raided the local jail and brought back to the dacha seven of their comrades. Early next morning government troops raided the building, killing one anarchist in a gun battle, arresting 70 other occupants (including members of Metallicheski's factory committee and union activists), and leaving the place in a shambles. [90]

On learning of this, the entire Vyborg District struck, and the rest of the capital awaited only the signal to come out in demonstration against the government. [91] The Soviet EC responded by setting up a committee to report back in 24 hours. On 19 June, the Soviet Congress discussed the EC's conduct and approved its handling of the affair. The workers, however, were not so satisfied.

"Workers from the Petrograd factories, from different parties, appeared to express their attitudes to the events of the night and marched onto the tribunal one after the other. In a direct and unadorned manner they bitterly reproached the government for the raid on the dacha, for the senseless murder. Some were indignant, others laughed at the grandiose military operation organised against a band of people who had never shed a drop of blood, even now, defending themselves from this military pogrom.

The Congress listened silently and sullenly. Maybe the workers were not correct, but they, in one voice, without respect to party affiliation, were live testimony to the fact that an impassable chasm had opened up between the workers of the capital and the coalition majority." [92]

The workers of the Aivaz Machine-construction Factory left no doubt about the nature of this chasm:

"Despite the pressure of the entire Petrograd proletariat on the Soviet of W and SD to take measures to suppress the rising head to reaction, the inactivity of the Soviet, on the one hand, and the cooperation of the bourgeois government, on the other, have given the counterrevolution the opportunity to make great strides forward.

In the day of the greatest solidarity of the proletariat, the government mobilised the new 'revolutionary gendarmerie' for a violent operation against anarchist groups at the Durnovo dacha. Instead of an open struggle through word and reason against these opponents of principle who disorganise the proletariat, the government resorted to mass arrests without trial or investigation, calling forth a violent counterreaction that divides the forces of the proletariat." [93]

'We recognise that the tactics of our comrade anarchists are impermissible and harmful', admitted the resolution of the New Lessner Machine-construction Factory,

"but the causes for the creation of such conflicts have their root in the counterrevolutionary policies of the bourgeoisie behind the back of the Socialist ministers. This policy, based very nearly upon the old foundations, gives birth to agitation in the masses. It is possible to eliminate these phenomena only by the transfer of power to the Soviets of W and SD (example - Kronstadt. There the anarchists have made no seizures and will not try to)." [94]

One of the 'counterrevolutionary policies of the bourgeoisie' alluded to in the revolution that raised a storm of worker protest in the spring of 1917 was the so-called 'unloading' (razgruzka) of Petrograd. Though moving at a snail's pace on state economic regulation, the government began work as early as April on a plan to evacuate Petrograd's industry to the provinces, arguing that food and raw materials were more easily obtained there. The workers were immediately suspicious. Besides its economic unsoundness [95] (on which there was widespread, if not unanimous, agreement in Soviet circles), the plan appeared to have strong political overtones. To revolutionary democracy, the Petrograd workers were the initiators and the mainstay of the revolution; but they were a sore in the

eye of census society, a sore that was in need of surgery. As the Prime Minister, Prince Lvov, lamented at one of the State Duma meetings,

“All Russia has totally sold herself to that idol, Petersburg, which even under the old régime sucked the juices from the people and continues to do so. Russia is being sacrificed to that loud-mouthed insolence, that chaos which is called Petersburg.” [96]

At any rate, there were no doubts in the workers’ minds about the main intention behind the plan. A meeting of 700 workers of the Kozhevnikovskaya Textile Mill

“having heard and discussed the report on the unloading of Petrograd, protests against the malicious intentions of the factory and mill owners and our coalition government. We find that the factory and mill owners intend by this unloading to exile by stages part of the revolutionary proletariat beyond the Urals, so that it will be easier [for them] to assume the leadership of the counterrevolutionary movement.” [97]

At other factories, it was suggested that it would make better economic sense to rid the capital of its speculators, bureaucrats and other ‘idle strollers along Nevskii Prospekt’. [98]

In fact, the Bolsheviks won their first major victory in the Workers’ Section of the Soviet on this issue. According to *Izvestiya’s* account of the 31 May session,

“In the ensuing debate, representatives of the Central Bureau of Petrograd Trade Unions, the Union of Metalworkers and the Bolsheviks and United SDs [Internationalists] sharply attacked the coalition government and the EC in particular, subjecting the latter to harsh criticism, pointing out the need to transfer power to the hands of the soviets, to demobilise industry immediately, etc. In the plan to unload these speakers saw only a definite move on the part of the bourgeoisie in the interests of the struggle against the political and social aspirations of the proletariat. The Central Bureau of Trade Unions proposed a resolution in the same spirit ... The EC’s resolution received 144 votes; that of the Central Bureau - 173.”

The Bureau’s resolution stated that, not ‘unloading’, but an end to the war and a genuine struggle against economic ruin were needed and that ‘a real struggle against it is possible only through regulation and control of all production by state power in the hands of the Soviet of WS and PD’. [99]

Under intense working-class and soviet pressure, the plan was discreetly shelved, for the time being.

Foreign Policy

Soon after the April crisis the government began preparations for a summer offensive. In this connection Kerenskii moved to rescind many of the rights won by the ranks in February: officers were again given the authority to use force against insubordinate troops under battle conditions, while the elected soldiers’ committees lost the right to remove commanders or to interfere with battle orders. On paper, at least, the power of the mostly counterrevolutionary officer corps was restored.

The workers, still largely ‘revolutionary defencist’, saw in these measures a threat to the revolution, and some factories even expressed sympathy for the soldiers being disciplined for insubordination. The general assembly of the Nevskii Shoe Factory indignantly protested against the disciplinary disbanding of military units:

“The insubordination of these regiments is a consequence of the soldiers’ justified anger over the tactics of offensive. The ruinous tactic of annexations could not but meet with a rebuff on the part of

conscious soldiers. We express our solidarity with the soldiers of the disbanded regiments.” [100]

Also alarming was the government's announced intention to send part of the capital's garrison to the front in disregard of the February accord between the Soviet and the Duma Committee that the garrison remain intact to protect the heart of the revolution.

In fact, under the impact of the government's policies, the workers 'revolutionary defencism' was fast dissolving. It had been premised upon the government's active search for a general peace, but after the April crisis any peace offensive was drowned in the preparation for the military offensive. Meanwhile, the Allies replied to the government's appeal for a general peace and the rejection of annexations and reparations by emphasising the need to 'overthrow Prussian militarism', 'just reparation for losses' and the restoration of Russia's military might. Inside Russia, it was no secret that this offensive was being undertaken under the most intense and varied pressures from London, Paris and, not least, Washington. [101]

In the light of all this, it is not surprising that Kerenskii's attempts to portray the offensive as merely a tactical, but not political, question [102] did not convince the workers. To them the offensive was an unjustified termination of the *de facto* ceasefire that had reigned at the front since February. Given the Allies' rejection of the Soviet's peace policy and the government's at best ambiguous acceptance of it, the offensive could only hurt the chances of peace by severely damaging the international authority of the Russian Revolution as an example to be emulated by the other peoples who wanted to end the slaughter. Even *Rabochaya gazeta*, which supported the offensive, admitted that the slogan 'immediate general ceasefire' was 'very popular'. A mass meeting of workers and soldiers on the Plains of Mars broke into applause at every mention of 'ceasefire'. [103]

Foreign policy was a prominent topic at all factory meetings, where the debates more and more concluded with the demand for soviet power. A joint meeting of the tool and pattern-making shops and the iron and copper foundries at the Putilov Works in early June sent its greeting to the Soviet Congress, adding:

"We hope that foreign policy, which now stands frozen on the issue of peace without annexations.... will at once start to move off that spot... and we similarly hope that the All-Russian Congress will decide the fate of the power of our coalition PG and that the Congress will now declare that power should be transferred to the hands of democracy.” [104]

On 15 June, both shifts at the Old Parviainen Machine-construction Factory resolved unanimously that

"the politics of conciliation with our capitalists and through them with the capitalists of the world [are] ruinous for the cause of the Russian and International Revolutions, for the cause of the world unification of the proletariat.

We call on all our comrade proletarians and semi-proletarians of the village to a decisive break with the policy of imperialism and conciliation with imperialism - a policy directed at reducing the Russian Revolution to the role of executor of the desires of international capital. The Russian Revolution, which calls the toilers of the wide world to struggle against capitalism, must give a worthy example of this struggle... Down with the power of the capitalists! Long live the revolutionary proletariat and peasantry! Away with the politics of powerlessness, politics of conciliation with worldwide plunderers! Peace for the whole world! Peace to the hovels, war to the palaces! ... Neither a separate peace with Wilhelm nor secret treaties with the English and French capitalists. Immediate publication by the Soviet of truly just peace conditions. Against the policy of offensive. Bread. Peace. Freedom." [105]

In an ironic replay of the April scenario, when the May Day celebrations coincided with the dispatch of the Milyukov note, on 18 June, while the workers were in the streets demonstrating their lack of confidence in the coalition, demanding soviet power, the government launched the offensive. The Soviet plenum (Workers' and Soldiers' Section) of 20 June approved it by 472 votes against 271 with 39 abstentions. [106] But considering that the largely conservative garrison was heavily overrepresented in this body and that the Soviet Congress the previous day had lent the full weight of its authority to the offensive, this vote appeared as a victory for the internationalists. To a growing majority of Petrograd's workers, the offensive was nothing less than a stab in the back of the revolution. 'We declare', went the resolution of the New Lessner Machine-construction Factory (one of many similar resolutions),

"that a blow has been dealt to the Russian Revolution and the International by this offensive, and the whole responsibility for this policy lies with the PG and the party of Mensheviks, and SRs supporting it... We need not an offensive at the front but an offensive against the bourgeoisie inside the country for the transfer of power into the hands of the Soviet of W and SD." [107]

The Economy

The appearance in the second half of April of the demand for economic regulation marked a definite deepening of the social content of the revolution, until then largely concerned with destroying the remnants of the old régime and attending to the grievances it had bequeathed. For the workers, economic regulation was a new issue born of the new conditions created by the revolution. But in this instance too, it was intimately bound up with the growing perception of the bourgeoisie as counterrevolutionary. For surely the most concrete and immediate manifestation of the counterrevolutionary mood of the capitalists, for those workers who shared this view, was their perceived sabotage of the economy - on the national level, in their opposition to attempts at state economic regulation, and on the local level, in their growing 'loss of interest' in production and the alarming tendency to cut back and ultimately close down. Nor did the workers see this as merely an economic tactic; it was at least as political, aimed at weakening and disorganising the proletariat, the vanguard of the revolution. 'Of late', wrote *Novaya zhizn'* in early May,

"one observes a curtailment of production in a whole series of enterprises. So far this phenomenon had manifested itself only in medium and small enterprises, but all the same it is beginning to alarm the worker masses. The advanced workers are beginning to ask if there is not any relationship between their new economic gains and the curtailment of production that follows." [108]

This was the period when the flight of capital first became noticeable. *Navoe vremya*, which no one had ever accused of harbouring anti-capitalist sentiments, reported in June that owners were selling their plants, transferring the cash abroad and taking off after it in fulfilment of the old Russian proverb, 'where my treasure is, there lies my heart'. [109]

In Petrograd's largely British-owned textile industry, the entrepreneurs, alarmed at the course of the revolution, had taken to liquidating their current accounts and shipping to nearby Finland finished and semi-finished goods and even, where they could get away with it, raw materials and machine parts. Some mills were already on a reduced week. The Textile Workers' Union journal *Tkach* reported a case where management told the workers it had to curtail production because of insufficient raw cotton, while these same raw materials from the mill were being loaded onto barges for destinations unknown. Another textile entrepreneur, Charles Munken, left for Finland in May to buy spools and ended up in England, soon to be followed by his partners and the English managerial personnel, whose last administrative act was to empty the safes. Even Percy Thornton, who enjoyed a rare liberal reputation among Petrograd's capitalists, was threatening to pack it in. [110]

Before the revolution, and even in the early spring of 1917, the leaders of census society had tended to attribute the economic problems to Tsarist misgovernment and the effects, of the war. Now, all this was forgotten. Kadet CC member and prominent businessman, Kutler, painted a most gloomy picture at his party's congress: the economic mechanism was destroyed by the workers' ousting of various managerial personnel. Productivity had fallen 20 to 40 per cent. Anarchy and disorganisation ruled. But the main problem, he lamented, were the 'inordinate demands' of the workers, 'making management of the enterprises impossible'. [111] Commenting on this speech, Rech' ominously predicted: 'Two or three weeks will pass, and the factories will start to close one after the other'. [112]

As for state regulation of the economy, this hardly got off the ground, mainly due to the opposition of the capitalists. In mid-May the Soviet EC approved an economic plan calling for broad state regulation of production, distribution and finance. Two days later, A. I. Konovalov, Minister of Trade and Industry (himself a wealthy Moscow industrialist), resigned 'in view of the impossibility of working productively in the given conditions'. In his letter to Prince Lvov, he explained that he had no quarrel with the Minister of Labour (Skobelev, Menshevik-Defencist member of the EC on most issues, not even on financial reforms or labour relations. But he was 'sceptical about the form of public control and the measures of economic regulation proposed by the Minister of Labour'. There would be hope of averting the crisis he advised, only if the 'PG demonstrated, at the least, truly full authority, if it at least entered upon the path of restoring discipline that had become lax and showed energy in the struggle against the excessive demands of the extreme Left'. [113] Put bluntly, his alternative to economic regulation was to rein in the workers. At the Congress of War-Industry Committees, he again railed against the 'excessive demands of the workers! and warned: 'If in the near future a sobering of minds does not occur, we will witness the closing of tens and hundreds of enterprises'. [114]

Now, Konovalov was no arch-reactionary. Avilov, a left Menshevik, described him as 'a very conciliatory figure and on the extreme left of the industrial-commercial class, ... a favourite of the Moscow capitalists... who knows this group well'. If Konovalov was unwilling to give up laissez-faire, there was no hope for the rest of his class. [115] And sure enough, the keynote of the All-Russian Congress of Representatives of Trade and Industry (1-2 June) was opposition to any form of state economic control. [116]

Why this opposition to a measure that had been accepted by the capitalist class of other warring countries? Ryabushinskii, another member of the haute bourgeoisie and also a 'leftist' explained:

"In Europe, the state, in intervening into the sphere of national [economic] life, receives full control, to which we do not object. But we fear that such control is impossible in Russia in terms of its usefulness for the state as a whole as long as our government continues to be in the position of being controlled itself." [117]

To put this in non-Aesopian language, the Soviet and revolutionary democracy had too much power in the state for the capitalists to allow it to intervene in the economy, since such regulation could be exerted to the detriment of the interests of capital.

Interestingly enough, virtual unanimity reigned in soviet circles, from right to left, in their evaluation of the economic policies of the bourgeoisie. *Rabochaya gazeta*, whose platform was an alliance between the working class and census society and which certainly had no interest in painting the capitalists black, summarised its view of the situation in an editorial that is worth quoting at length:

"In the industrialists' camp there is animation. The brief stupor which seized them in the first days of the Revolution has passed. Now no trace remains of their recent confusion and panicky tendency to

make concessions. In the first month of freedom the united industrialists offering almost no resistance, granted the workers' demands. Now they have decisively passed to the defensive and are quick making ready for an offensive along the entire front...

They are not deciding immediately to declare open war on the workers. The volcanic soil for the Revolution is still too red-hot, the working class still too threatening in its bursts of revolutionary enthusiasm for the industrialists, at least in the given moment, to decide on a frontal assault in order to smash the enemy with a counter-thrust.

But the intensification of the general course of economic ruin, the advancing spectre of mass unemployment, the social fright of the possessing classes - all this will create a favourable ground for carrying out the entrepreneurs' plan for the offensive. And having decided not to advance openly 'down the middle', they are attempting an encircling movement around the flank in order to attack the enemy from the rear. Of late, more and more frequently one hears of an 'Italian strike' [slowdown strike] practised by the entrepreneurs now here, now there. The plants are not being repaired, worn parts are not replaced, work is conducted in a slipshod manner. The entrepreneurs shout at all crossroads that the 'excessive demands' of the workers are not realisable and are directly disastrous to the enterprises. They generously propose, or at least pretend to propose, that the government lift from them the unbearable burden of running the enterprises.

In other cases, they cut back on production, dismiss workers under the pretext of lack of metal, fuel, orders, the competition of imports. We have before us a different means of struggle - the hidden lockout.

In the Labour Department of the Soviet of W and SD one daily encounters facts that confirm the existence of a definite plan of the industrialists." [118]

This was the same analysis shared by growing numbers of the working class itself. Zhivotov, delegate from the 1886 Power Co. to the First Conference of Petrograd Factory Committees in early June, asserted:

"For us workers it is clear that the bourgeoisie is organising a counterrevolution against democracy and especially its vanguard, the working class..."

It has conducted its counterrevolutionary offensive very skilfully, and, at first glance, imperceptibly, disorganising production, aggravating the economic dislocation and the scarcity of goods. It is even prepared to call forth hunger, riot and anarchy in order later to set up a dictatorship and with the aid of the military to do away with anarchy and at the same time with the Revolution, because to them it is anarchy.

You have to be blind not to see this counterrevolutionary work. Sabotage in the Donbass, in the textile industry, in a whole number of Petrograd factories requires the organised intervention of the working class in the form of the immediate establishment of workers' control, which alone can put an end to the counterrevolutionary ideas of the capitalists... It is naive to think that the PG will set up control over its own capitalists... Undoubtedly in the near future life will put forth this demand for workers' control over production, but it will be fully realised not in bourgeois government but in a government of revolutionary democracy." [119]

The conclusion was clear: a government whose task was to control the counterrevolutionary capitalists could not have in it representatives of that same capitalist class. It had to be a government exclusively of revolutionary democracy, i.e. a soviet government. Zhivotov's words were echoed by other worker delegates, such as Tseitlin from the Kersten Knitwear Mill, who took the

'conciliators' to task:

"Foreseeing unemployment, we can't allow it to ruin us. You [Skobelev, Dan and other moderate socialist speakers] say that we can't take power into our hands now because the masses aren't organised. But when they're hungry, we won't be able to do anything. We need to create such a government that will avert hunger - to create those organs mentioned in the resolution. We need a strong centre of factory committees that will be the ministry of labour of the proletariat. It, of course, will act more decisively than that of Skobelev. We need to regulate production, arrange its demobilisation. In this, the workers must show initiative in this direction, not pinning hope on those sitting in ministerial chairs. Where will the money come from? Take it from our marauders who hypocritically cry out about the 'Liberty Loan', which remains on the placards. We should take the money and not act like artists, begging on the streets for a 'Liberty Loan' of pennies from the bourgeoisie. We have to look at things as they are, not like the conciliators with the bourgeoisie tell us they are. We must demand categorically. With conciliations you'll get nothing." [120]

Dan, speaking for the Soviet EC, totally opposed this line of thought: "To say the workers should take on themselves the direction of production means that the workers should take state power. And I protest that such a conference should raise any sort of political questions". [121] But he protested in vain. The very logic of the situation drove the workers most involved in issues of production to call for soviet power. This logic did not escape even the most moderate of the Soviet leaders. When the Economic Department of the Soviet, consisting of Groman and other mostly moderate Mensheviks, presented its plan for state economic regulation to the EC, Skobelev exclaimed: 'You want to seize power!' [122] Skobelev understood only too well that even this mild programme would be unacceptable to the census partners in the coalition; it could be carried out only if their opposition was overcome, i.e. by eliminating them from power. [123]

The two-thirds vote for the Bolshevik-sponsored resolution at the Factory Committee Conference was, thus, no accident, even if it was not an accurate reflection of the strength of support for soviet power among the worker masses as a whole. Work in the factory committees forced even those with 'conciliationist' sympathies to the left. [124] A Bolshevik worker from the Admiralty Shipyards recalled:

"At the First Conference of Factory Committees I was a delegate along with a Menshevik and an SR. My opponents voted with me on all the basic questions... Our [i.e. Bolshevik] resolutions were passed. One of my opponents tore up his card at his party meeting and joined our party several days later." [125]

Of the three types of issues - foreign and domestic political and economic - in which workers perceived the counterrevolutionary face of census society, it was the latter that appeared to play an especially important role in the limited political radicalisation that did occur among the unskilled workers before July. For the majority of these workers the issues discussed in the preceding pages were still too abstract to make much of an impact, including even the issue of economic regulation, as most factories had still not been directly touched by the incipient economic crisis. However, once a serious economic conflict did arise in their particular factory, it often served as a catalyst to political radicalisation, though this was not an automatic process by any means.

As noted earlier, the unskilled workers tended to be much more militant in economic questions than in political ones. Describing the conflicts that began to arise in the textile industry over the issue of declining production, in which the workers saw concealed sabotage, Perazich, a Bolshevik, observed that

"in some mills the local Mensheviks and SRs had managed already by that time [before July] to

compromise themselves sufficiently in the eyes of the worker masses with their speeches in defence of the owners' rights. So it was, for example, at James Beck, where a group of Mensheviks and SRs from the former followers of Gapon lost all credit in the eyes of the [women] workers, who would raise a hue and cry if Manulin, Galybin or E. Tikhon would try to ascend the speaker's platform. But at the same time these workers would listen with approval to the demagogic speeches of other Mensheviks, not from their own plant, who came from neighbouring mills. In general, our masses at that time were still quite benighted politically and followed the Mensheviks and SRs. At Thornton, when the left SR Marusya Spiridonova spoke in that period for the slogan 'All power to the Soviets', they did not let her continue and shouted: 'Get down... Hard labour convict... Murderer!'" [126]

(This was at a time when over in the Vyborg District workers were tearing down the banners of 'conciliationist' agitators. [127])

In early June, at the Bolshevik PC, Slutskii, a delegate from the strongly SR Nevskii District, noted the same phenomenon:

"Listen to what the workers say after the meetings at which they applauded orators standing on the platform of the Soviet of W and SD. In so far as the question touches their essential needs - rates, inflation, raises, the evacuation - if these issues have touched this stratum, then the agitation in the masses is great."

In other words, for these workers to become interested and angry the issue had to be very concrete - on the whole economic - and it had to be directly experienced. Drawing a parallel with peasant political consciousness, Slutskii continued:

"The same can be seen also among the peasants: in politics the peasants are able to orient themselves very poorly. But as far as the solution of the land question is concerned, they are radical. Take only the sixth point of their resolution [May 25, at the First All-Russian Congress of Peasant Representatives] where they say clearly that one must kick out the appointed government commissars." [128]

The classic case of an economic conflict having a directly radicalising effect was that of the Putilov Works, whose 30 000 workers were a microcosm of the Petrograd working class'. [129] During the 1912-14 period, the Bolsheviks became undisputed leaders of this factory which was in the van of the escalating economic and political movement. According to management, the factory struck 102 days in 1913 and 145 in the first half of 1914, mainly over political issues. [130] During the war, however, although the Putilov workers sent a majority of Bolsheviks to the second stage of the War-Industry Committee elections, they were no longer at the militant front of the workers' movement. A police report from February 1916 observed that

"from the start of the war a sharp turn occurred among the workers, and patriotic sentiment got the upper hand over socialist sentiment. Over time, the patriotic sentiment declined significantly, but justice requires one to note the unconditional loyalty and restraint of the Putilov workers, who did not participate in such traditional time-honoured labour demonstrations as May 1 and January 9."

For the entire previous year, the report continued, attempts by the Bolsheviks to draw the workers into the movement failed to yield results. [131]

The reasons for this turn must be sought in the changed social composition of the Putilov workers during the war. About 6000 pre-war workers were drafted, while the total work force more than doubled as the factory expanded massively into ordnance production. There were no less than 10 000 unskilled labourers (*chernorabochie*) by 1917. [132]

However, after their failure to persuade the workers to demonstrate on 9 January 1916, the Bolsheviks changed tactics, playing down politics in favour of economic demands. The results were soon in coming. Indeed, on the very date the report was written, the factory was on strike over economic conditions. [133]

In the first three months after the February Revolution, the Putilov Factory remained among the more politically moderate in the capital, with the exception of the more skilled shops, like tool-making, which supported the demand for soviet power early on. The first election to the Petrograd Soviet in the factory sent only 9 Bolsheviks out of 45 delegates. In the first months 'innumerable defencist resolutions' were passed. [134] On the other hand, in the economic sphere, the Bolsheviks had much more to feel happy about. In local elections to the Metalworkers' and Woodworkers' Unions they did surprisingly well, and in the 14 April factory committee elections, 6 party members and 7 sympathisers were elected, a majority of the 22-member committee. [135] Clearly, the workers preferred the more militant activists when it came to their economic interests.

The change in political attitudes of the majority of the workers began at the end of May, and the catalyst was the festering 'conflict of 7 March', involving new wage rates approved by the director on 19 April, that were to be introduced retroactively from 7 March. But as the weeks went by the difference was not made up. The administration remained silent. Slowdown strikes began. Finally, the board of directors announced that the director had overstepped his authority and had no right to make any such promises. The workers sent delegations to the various ministries (the factory had earlier been sequestered by the state) but to no avail. A strike was set for 8 June, but the Bolsheviks persuaded the workers to wait. On 13 June the Menshevik leader Gvozdev, Vice-Minister of Labour, promised he would fight to obtain the workers' demands, which he admitted were justified. However, at the insistence of the board of directors he agreed to postpone a decision once more until the PSFMO and the Metalworkers' Union completed talks.

This further delay so enraged the workers that they marched in the 18 June demonstration under the banner: 'Comrades, we have been deceived! Prepare for battle! [136]

Was this deception a reference to the economic dispute at the Putilov Works or to the entire policy of the coalition government vis-à-vis the working class? In fact, it was both. Gessen, delegate to the Bolshevik PC from the Narva District (location of the Putilov Works), reported on 20 June:

"In the Narva District there has been a sharp shift in mood in our favour, as the new elections have shown at which Bolsheviks were elected. The Putilov Factory, which determines the mood of the whole district, has decisively adhered to our position with the passing of Trotsky's resolution. The militant mood of the Putilov Factory has deep economic causes. There the question of a wage rise is acute. The workers' demands on rises have not been satisfied since the very start of the Revolution. Gvozdev came to the plant, promised to satisfy the demands that have been put forward but did not carry out his promise. At the demonstration of June 18 the Putilovtsy also carried this placard: 'We have been deceived!' This morning the factory decided to strike. The Union of Metalworkers proposed that the strike be postponed for three days to notify the other factories. The Putilovtsy agreed to work these three days, but certain shops decided on a slowdown strike. The masses consider the strike to be political. The workers decided to arm themselves by Wednesday. Earlier, the Putilovtsy were not at the head of the movement; now they are pushed there by economic causes." [137]

The SR paper reported on 20 June: 'The mood is tense. There are meetings in all shops, and calls for an immediate armed demonstration, not only in defence of the [economic] demands, but also against the general direction of the PG's activity'.

And what of the still very significant working-class minority that continued to support the coalition government? As noted earlier, these were largely unskilled workers (though their numbers, too, were slowly shrinking) and the worker 'aristocracy'. Among the former, there was a marked increase in militancy over economic issues in this period (inflation had already eaten up much of the gains of March [138]) [139] but for the most part this was not directly translated into politics. Nevertheless, the abstention of the 'conciliationist' workers from the 18 June demonstration indicated that here too consciousness had not stood still.

What is striking about the more active and politically conscious elements that still supported the coalition is that they, like the moderate leaders of the Soviet, did not so much disagree with the left's evaluation of census society as they felt that soviet power was not a viable solution. One of the few Menshevik delegates at the Factory Committee Conference in early June, Tkachenko, from the Electric Lighting Co., put it this way:

"Zinoviev [speaker for the Bolshevik Party] already sees in the attempts of the West European workers at protest battalions coming to storm the bastions of capitalism. He told us of our age-old hatred of the capitalists, of the millions they have made from our blood, of the insults of our enemy exploiters that we suffer on our hides every hour of every day. He said that the socialist ministers are being led around by the bourgeois plunderers and told us to expect nothing from them. But... he did not show us who in the final victory will accompany us in the struggle for power. Workers alone cannot hold power without the peasantry. You all know who the peasantry said they would support at their congress... Let us not forget that we live in a period of the bourgeois-democratic revolution under very difficult conditions. We must act cautiously and not take steps that are too risky, so that we don't add problems that we won't be able to solve to the already existing ruin... The workers by themselves will not be able to cope with the tasks of control and distribution without the cooperation of all democracy and against the open opposition of the big bourgeoisie and intelligentsia. Fear total isolation from the rest of democracy. For once we are alone, we will be smashed, and over our bodies the captains of industry will climb onto the ship and seize the helm of power." [140]

Tkachenko offered no positive arguments in favour of the coalition; he merely argued that if the soviets took power the working class would find itself isolated and would go down to defeat. *Novaya zhizn's* correspondent at the Food Supply Conference in May reached a similar conclusion. He found a left and a right faction and a majority of centrists, who

"do not believe in the capitalists but are afraid of any decisive measures directed at the liquidation of property privileges. The path of Russia's future development appears to them as a struggle against insurmountable obstacles; now and then they point to the 'greyness' and ignorance of the masses, their tendency to anarchy, the absence of firm government, the obstinacy of the merchants and industrialists." [141]

Similarly, resolutions in support of the moderate Soviet leadership never referred to any achievements of the coalition. The most positive note sounded was the call for unity - against the Bolsheviks who are depicted as splitters. On 16 June, the printers of the Otto Kirchner Bindery and Printing House, after a lengthy debate on slogans for 18 June, resolved:

"We consider that the Bolsheviks are making a gross mistake in their evaluation of the current moment, which calls for the unity of the forces of revolutionary democracy, and that they are harming the cause of the Revolution by introducing disorganisation into the midst of the working class. We propose that the whole Petrograd Proletariat demonstrate on June 18 against their capitalist class who are the main culprits behind this war which drags on." [142]

Here the capitalists are also seen as the enemy, but soviet power is opposed to the need for unity.

Given that the main remaining basis for their support of the coalition was essentially negative [143] (and fear was always a major element in the psychological make-up of women and peasant workers), it is not surprising that most of these workers failed to come out on 18 June. In fact, the local defencist leaders were put in a very embarrassing situation – they did not have any affirmative slogans they could put forward. On 20 June at the Bolshevik PC the delegate from the Moscow District reported: The SRs are still very strong. The Soviet's marking time and our [cancelled] June 10 demonstration saw a shift in the workers' mood in our favour... Before the eighteenth the SRs were totally disoriented, not knowing what slogans to put forward'. And in the Nevskii District, 'until the demonstration we were, or at least we seemed, very weak. The Mensheviks and SRs were thrown into confusion and did not put forth their slogans. Before the demonstration they were busy scaring the people, and few went out'. [144]

In less than four months the political attitudes of all in Petrograd had undergone a major transformation. Does one explain so sudden and drastic a shift in terms of the fickleness of disoriented and unstable masses, uneducated to the ways of democracy, as Western historiography has traditionally sought to do? I have tried here to argue that what occurred in these four months was rather a process of clarification, a deepening of consciousness on the basis of the unfolding of events.

Besides the evidence I have cited above, I am supported in this by the views of contemporary observers on both the right and the left of the socialist camp. Comparing 18 June to 23 March and 18 April (May Day) Lenin wrote:

"Then, it was a universal celebration of the first victory of the Revolution and its heroes, a glance thrown backward by the people at the first most successfully and swiftly completed stage toward freedom. May First was a holiday of the aspirations and the hopes tied up with the history of the worldwide labour movement, with its socialist ideal.

Neither demonstration set as its goal to show the direction of the further movement of the Revolution, and they could not have shown it. Neither posed to the masses the concrete, specific and burning questions of whether and how the Revolution should proceed.

In this sense the eighteenth of June was the first demonstration of action, a clarification – not in pamphlet or newspaper, but through the masses – clarification of how the various classes act, want to act, will act in order to carry the Revolution further." [145]

Izvestiya, which unlike Lenin was the big loser on 18 June, concurred:

"The characteristic difference between the present demonstration and those of March 23 and May 1 was the abundance of banners and the precision of slogans. If the former unity no longer exists, now at least everyone is more acutely aware of what he is struggling for and what the next tasks of the struggle are." [146]

David Mandel

To be continued...

Footnotes

- [1] Sukhanov, *Zapiski o revolyutsii*, vol. III, p. 244.
- [2] *Novaya zhizn'* (20 Apr 1917).
- [3] *Vestnik Vremennogo pravitell'stva* (7 Mar 1917).
- [4] *Rabochaya gazeta* (14 Mar 1917).
- [5] Dok. Feb., p. 465.
- [6] *Rabochaya gazeta* (21 Mar 1917).
- [7] In May, Milyukov stated publicly that this declaration was worded so that its true content would be in total contradiction to what it appeared to say.
- [8] Ibid. (12 Apr 1917); *Pravda* (13 Apr 1917).
- [9] *Rabochaya gazeta* (15 Apr 1917).
- [10] A group of left Bolsheviks of the Petrograd Committee led by a certain Bagdat'ev published a leaflet calling for full power to the soviets. They were taken to task by Lenin and the CC and accused of adventurism. V. I. Lenin, *Polnoe sobranie sochinenii*, vol. XXXI, pp. 319-20. Apparently these Bolsheviks were largely from the Vyborg District. At the 22 April session of the First Petrograd City Conference of Bolsheviks, one speaker noted: 'Yesterday we did not take into account the circumstances of the situation and put forth unsuitable slogans. The Vyborg comrades understand this especially keenly'. *Pervaya petrogradskaya obshchegorodskaya konferentsiya RSDRP (b)* (M.-L., 1925) p. 59.
- [11] *Rabochaya gazeta* (21 Apr 1917).
- [12] Ibid. (22 Apr 1917).
- [13] Sobolev, *Revolutsionnoe soznanie* pp. 223-30.
- [14] Dok. Apr., pp. 740-50.
- [15] Hats, as opposed to kerchiefs, symbolised 'society'.
- [16] Perazich, *Tekstili Leningrada*, p. 42.
- [17] P. F. Kudelli *Leningradskie rabochie v bor'be za vlast'sovetov v 1917g.* (L., 1924) p. 15.
- [18] *Delo naroda* (25 Apr 1917).
- [19] Kudelli, *Leningradskie rabochie*, p. 23.
- [20] Dok. Apr., p. 167.

- [21] Startsev, 'K voprosu', p. 11.
- [22] Dok. Apr., p. 438.
- [23] Ibid., p. 438; Startsev, 'K voprosu', pp. 116-22.
- [24] *Rabochaya gazeta* (22 Apr 1917).
- [25] V. V. Grebach, *Rabochie Baltiitsy v trekh revolyutsiakh* (L., 1959) p. 115; Dok. Apr., p. 733.
- [26] *Izvestiya* (27 Apr 1917).
- [27] Dok. Apr., p. 773.
- [28] *Rabochaya gazeta* (22 Apr 1917).
- [29] Among these were: Rozenkrants Copper Foundry (*Pravda* (28 Apr 1917)); Old Parviainen (Kudelli, *Leningradskie rabochie*, p. 24); Russkii Renault, Langezipen Machine-construction Factory, Puzyrev Auto Factory, New Lessner Machine-construction Factory, Russko-Baltiiskii Wagon-construction (Dok. Apr., pp. 732-68, *passim*); Sestroretsk Arms Factory (*Bastiony revolyutsii*, vol. I, p. 236); and others
- [30] *Pravda* (22 Apr 1917).
- [31] *Soldatskaya pravda* (26 Apr 1917), cited in Sobolev, *Revolutsionnoe soznanie*, p. 237.
- [32] Ibid.
- [33] *Pravda* (26 Apr 1917).
- [34] Dok. Apr., p. 733.
- [35] Ibid., p. 748.
- [36] *Rabochaya gazeta* (14 Apr 1917).
- [37] Sukhanov, *Zapiski o revolyutsii*, vol. III, p. 276.
- [38] Ibid., pp. 275-6.
- [39] *Rabochaya gazeta* (25 Apr 1917).
- [40] *Novaya zhizn'* (2 May 1917).
- [41] Ibid. (14 May 1917).
- [42] *Izvestiya* (3 May 1917).
- [43] *Rabochaya gazeta* (9 May 1917).

[44] Ibid. (12 May 1917).

[45] Ibid.

[46] Ibid. (25 Apr 1917).

[47] Among the factories calling for soviet power that were not heard from were: United Cable (Dok. Apr., p. 895); Voennopodkovnyi (ibid., p. 844); 1250 workers of the new mechanical shop of the Putilov Works (Pravda (9 May 1917)); Tseitlin (ibid. (18 May, 1917)); and also two textile mills - Nevka and Nevskaya Nitochneya (Perazich, *Tekstili Leningrada*, p. 42).

[48] *Rabochaya gazeta* (3 May 1917).

[49] *Vtoraya i tret'ya obshchegorodskie konferentsii bot'shevikov v iyuk I sentyabre 1917 g.* (M.-L., 1927) p. 26.

[50] *Novaya zhizn'* (4 July 1917).

[51] *Raisovety Petrograda v 1917 g.* (henceforth: Raisovety) (M.-L., 1966) vol. I, pp. 71, 123.

[52] *Bastiony revolyutsii* vol. I, p. 131.

[53] *Stankostroiteli imeni Sverdlova* (L., 1962) p. 76.

[54] *Ek. Pol.*, vol. I, p. 42.

[55] *Pravda* (16 June 1917).

[56] *Putilovtsy v trekh revolyutsiakh* (L., 1933) p. 338.

[57] *Pravda* (27 June 1917).

[58] *Literaturnoe nasledstvo* (M., 1971) no. 8, p. 341.

[59] M. Bortik, 'Na Trubochnom zavode' in *Professional'noe dvizhenie Petrograda v 1917 g.* (L., 1928) p. 296.

[60] A. Arbuzova, *Krasnaya letopis*, no. 6 (1923) p. 175.

[61] Bortik, 'NaTrubochnom', p.272.

[62] Perazich, *Tekstili Leningrada*, p. 42.

[63] Suknovalov and Fomenkov, *Fabrika 'Krasnoe znamya'*, pp. 62, 79; *Ek. Pol.*, vol. I, Table 7.

[64] Shabalin, 'Ot fevralya k oktyabryu', pp.278-9.

[65] I. M. Frantishev, *Leningradskie Krasnostroiteli* (L., 1962) p. 67. See also *Vtoraya i tret'ya*, p. 63.

[66] *Ibid.*, p. 94.

[67] As noted, the principal exception were the printers. At their All-Russian Congress in December 1917, of 95 delegates, there were 48 Mensheviks and 6 Menshevik sympathisers, 15 Bolsheviks and 4 sympathisers, and only 5 SRs and 5 Left SRs (*Znamya truda* (19 Dec 1917)). Thus, although generally rejecting the Bolsheviks (in Petrograd itself, the Bolsheviks briefly controlled the Printers' Union in the October period), the printers, as urbanised skilled workers, supported the SDs overwhelmingly and even gave the Bolsheviks twice as much support as the populists.

[68] V. S. Voitinskii, *Gody pobed i porazhenii*, vol. I (Berlin, 1923) p. 185. Unlike the SDs, the SRs had been advocates of individual terror. The renown of their exploits had been a factor in the early weeks of the revolution in attracting to their party the mass of politically illiterate workers who had arrived during the war. On the other hand, the work of the SDs, and the Bolsheviks in particular, had been largely underground and anonymous during the war.

[69] Cited in *Novaya zhizn'* (28 June 1917).

[70] The campaign was run on national as well as municipal issues.

[71] Some heavily working-class districts such as Petergof, Nevskii and Novaya derevnya were not incorporated into the city until the summer.

[72] FZK, Vol. I, p. 107.

[73] *Rabochaya gazeta* (20 Apr); *Pravda* (20 Apr); *Novaya zhizn'* (20 Apr); *Izvestiya* (20 Apr 1917). See also Chamberlin, *History of the Russian Revolution*, p. 162.

[74] Sukhanov, *Zapiski o revolyutsii*, Vol. III, pp. 339-40.

[75] *Rabochaya gazeta* (20 Apr 1917).

[76] *Pravda* (20 June 1917).

[77] This TsIK was elected at the All-Russian Congress of Soviets in June and took over from the old EC that had consisted of the Petrograd EC plus some provincial delegates.

[78] *Izvestiya* (29 June 1917).

[79] *Pravda* (1 July 1917).

[80] *Dok. May*, p. 492.

[81] *Ibid.*, pp. 489-90.

[82] Sukhanov, *Zapiski o revolyutsii* Vol. III pp. 347-8; *Novaya zhizn'* (28 Apr 1917); *Rabochaya gazeta* (29 Apr 1917).

[83] Sukhanov, *loc. cit.*

[84] *Novaya zhizn'* (9 June 1917).

[85] Dok. May, p. 186.

[86] *Ibid.*, p. 311.

[87] *Izvestiya* (20 June 1917).

[88] *Rabochaya gazeta* (10 May 1917); *Novaya zhizn'* (11 May); *Rech'* (14 May).

[89] *Novaya zhizn'*.

[90] N. S. Sergeev, *Istoriya Leningradskogo Metallicheskogo zavoda imeni XXII S' "ezda KPSS* (L., 1967) pp. 391, 398; Dok. May, p. 493; *Novaya zhizn'* (9 June); *Izvestiya* (19 June 1917).

[91] Latsis, *Proletarskaya revolyutsiya*, no. 5 (1923) p. 107.

[92] Sukhanov *Zapiski o revolyutsii* vol. III, pp. 357-8.

[93] Resolution of the general assembly of 19 June. Note how these very 'leftist' workers rejected anarchism out of hand. It was not among this element that the anarchists found the very limited support they did before October. *Pravda* (24 June 1917).

[94] Dok. May, p. 567. In Kronstadt power was effectively in the hands of the local Soviet.

[95] To mention one counter-argument: a major cause of the economic crisis was the disorganisation of transport. Yet, according to one estimate, 200 000 railroad cars were needed to move the factories. Surely it made better sense to use them to move the raw materials to the factories, rather than tie up so many badly needed cars. Moreover, the owners refused to commit themselves to a date for resuming production, some saying it was impossible before January 1919. Petrograd was the main centre of war production! FZK, Vol. II, p. 31, and Sukhanov, *Zapiski o revolyutsii*, Vol. VI, p. 64.

[96] *Novaya zhizn'* (1 July 1917). *Novaya zhizn'* correctly pointed out to the Prince that, to the degree that such chaos did exist in Russia - pogroms, lynching and other 'anarchistic acts' - it was found almost exclusively in the provinces.

[97] Rab. Kon., p. 43.

[98] *Rabochaya gazeta* (26 May 1917). See also *ibid.*, 28 May and Dok. May, pp. 280-1.

[99] *Izvestiya* (2 June 1917).

[100] Dok. May, p. 301.

[101] L. Kochan, *Russia in Revolution* (London: Paladin, 1970) pp. 218-20.

[102] *Rabochaya gazeta* (25 May 1917).

[103] *Ibid.* (28 May 1917).

- [104] *Rabochaya gazeta* (18 June 1917). See also the Vulkan resolution in *Pravda* (7 June).
- [105] P. Kudelli, *Leningradskie rabochie v bor'be za vlast' sovetov v 1917 g.* (L., 1924) pp. 34-5.
- [106] *Izvestiya* (23 June 1917).
- [107] *Dok. May*, p. 567. See also, *ibid.*, pp. 564-9 *passim*.
- [108] *Novaya zhizn'* (10 May 1917).
- [109] *Novoe vremya* (20 June 1917).
- [110] Perazich, *Tekstili Leningrada*, p. 85.
- [111] *Rabochaya gazeta* (14 May 1917); Sukhanov, *Zapiski o revolyutsii* Vol. III, p. 109.
- [112] *Rech'* (13 May 1917).
- [113] *Novaya zhizn'* (20 May 1917).
- [114] *Ibid.* (19 May 1917).
- [115] *Ibid.* (21 May 1917).
- [116] *Ibid.* (2 June 1917); *Dok. May*, p. 197.
- [117] *Izvestiya Moskovskogo Voенно-promyshlennogo komiteta*, no. 13 (1917) p. 15. cited in P. V. Volobuev, *Ekonomicheskaya politika Vremennogo pravitel'stva* (M., 1962) p. 35.
- [118] *Rabochaya gazeta* (20 May 1917). This analysis could easily have appeared in *Pravda*, only the practical conclusions would have been very different. While *Pravda* called for Soviet power, *Rabochaya gazeta* counselled restraint and caution in the choice of means of struggle. Only thus, it argued, could the working class avoid a repeat of November 1905 when the Petersburg industrialists responded to a general strike for the eight-hour day with a general lockout that was a prologue to total defeat. For the Mensheviks, the revolution was doomed to defeat if it could not retain the support of the liberal elements of census society. (Who these were in the late spring of 1917 was a different question.) For the Bolsheviks, the revolution could not succeed unless revolutionary democracy, led by the working class, took power on its own, removing census society, whose interests were opposed irreconcilably to those of revolutionary democracy. The only way to retain the alliance with census society that the Mensheviks so valued was to sit by and watch the revolution go down the drain.
- [119] *FZK*, Vol. I, pp. 105-6.
- [120] *Ibid.*, p. 123.
- [121] *Ibid.*, p. 100.
- [122] Sukhanov, *Zapiski o revolyutsii*, Vol. IV, p. 110.

[123] See, e.g. Bogdanov's reaction to the plan in the EC, *ibid.*, p. 113.

[124] This point is worth emphasising because of the long-standing tendency in the Western historiography to argue that the Bolsheviks merely 'used' the factory committees to gain a political foothold on their way to seizing power, only to discard them once they had secured a majority in the Soviets. The above discussion should make clear that Bolshevik success in the factory committees was not a matter of demagoguery or manipulation. In the workers' minds, state economic regulations, workers' control and Soviet power were inseparably intertwined.

[125] 'Petrogradskie rabochie ob iyul'dinakh dynakh', *Krasnaya letopis'*, no. 9 (1924) p. 33.

[126] Perazich, *Tekstili Leningrada*, p. 81.

[127] Dok. May, p. 481.

[128] Dok. May, p. 481.

[129] See also the case of the Kenig Sugar Refinery, *Izvestiya* (10 May and 10 June 1917) and Peka, p. 185.

[130] *Pudlovtsy v trekh revolyutsiyakh*, p. 236.

[131] *Ibid.*, p. 291.

[132] E. E. Kruze, *Petrogradskie rabochie v 1912-14 godakh* (M.-L., 1961) p. 72; Stepanov *Rabochie Petrograda*, p. 27; Mitel'man et al., *Istoriya Pudlovskogo*, p. 631.

[133] *Pudlovtsy v trekh revolyutsiyakh*, p. 236.

[134] Mitel'man et al., *Istoriya Putilovskogo*, p. 577.

[135] *Ibid.*, p. 590.

[136] *Ibid.*, pp. 614-23. In August at the Second Factory Committee Conference, Ivanov, a Putilov worker, told the assembly that 'when you discuss the current moment you must say loudly to the entire people how the bourgeoisie wants to saddle and ride us. Take note how for five months they have led us Putilovtsy by the nose, not letting us work calmly and then they place the whole blame on us. If the masses are agitated, it is because they are half-hungry, and as toilers yourselves... you will raise your voice for all of Russia to hear what sort of deception has been committed in regard to the foremost fighters of the working class, the Putilov workers. 'FZK, vol. I, p. 210.

[137] Dok. May, p. 558.

[138] According to *Novaya zhizn'* (16 May 1917), prices rose more in the first two and a half months of the revolution than in the entire preceding two and a half years. For a lower estimate of the rate of inflation, see *Istoriya SSSR*, no. 3 (1959) p. 224.

[139] Perazich, *Tekstili Leningrada*, pp. 69-73; *Rabochaya Gazeta* (6 June 1917).

[140] FZK, vol. I, pp. 102-3.

[141] *Novaya zhizn'* (28 May 1917).

[142] *Rabochaya gazeta* (18 June 1917). See also the resolutions of the printers of Kibbel (*ibid.*, 5 July 1917); the general assembly of delegates of Petrograd printing plants (*ibid.*, 8 July 1917); Leont'ev Textile Mills (*ibid.*, 14 Apr 1917).

[143] Compare *Rabochaya gazeta's* pre-election editorials: 'Who votes for the Leninist votes against the Soviet of Deputies for fratricidal struggle within revolutionary democracy for the disintegration and ruin of the revolution.... Who can vote for a party that calls for anarchistic demonstrations, a party on whose conscience lies the responsibility for introducing a split into the Russian Revolution?' (*ibid.*, 26 and 18 May 1917).

[144] Dok. May, pp. 563-4.

[145] Lenin, *Polnoe Sobranie*, vol. XXV, pp. 91-3.

[146] *Izvestiya* (20 June 1917).