An analysis of the inability of the provisional government to prevent the Bolshevik seizure of power and the failure of Kerensky's coalition politics in 1917

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This thesis examines the weaknesses of the Provisional Government and Kerensky's coalition politics. It is argued that a teleological deterministic view of Russian history must be laid aside if the study is to progress. It is shown that whilst Provisional Government policies were not successful on the key issues of bread, land and peace, these issues were not resolvable in the short term, and the Bolshevik promise of bread was fallacious. On the question of peace, however, the Provisional Government failed to recognise Russia's need for peace, and consequently failed to prioritise Russia's withdrawal from the war, which was a major factor in the Provisional Government's inability to win widespread support. It is shown that the war was a financial and logistic crisis for the Provisional Government. There was an implicit contradiction in the soldiers' desires to retain their new rights and freedoms, and the desire of senior command to restore order in the army. The position of the Petrograd workers was crippled by the failure of moderation and legitimate means to improve workers living conditions. As a result, 1917 saw a definitive move to the left in the workers' movement. The three moderate political parties all lacked a firm party organisation and discipline, and had no experience of coalition politics. The two socialist parties were unable to reconcile their differences constructively, and allowed personal enmity to interfere with political life in 1917. The SR-Menshevik alliance had the potential to prevent the Bolsheviks from gaining control of the Soviets, and combined the popular support of the SR's with the mature leadership of the Mensheviks. Although Miliukov and the Kadets had the greatest political experience, they handicapped the coalition because they would not accept radical social change. Assessment of the role of Alexander Kerensky in the events of 1917 shows that much of the criticism he has faced is unjust, and that he acquitted himself well in 1917.

Contents

Note: All dates prior to February 1st 1918 are listed in the old (Julian) calendar, as this was the calendar in use in Russia at that time. To convert the dates to Gregorian calendar, add thirteen days to the date listed in Julian calendar.

All citations in the footnotes give the surname of the author referred to, and the date of the publication in question. Full title and publication details are available in the bibliography.

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Introduction

This thesis has been produced with the intention of offering a broad picture of 1917, taking in political, economic and social perspectives. It will be shown that the allure of the Bolshevik party was based on promises it could not possibly fulfill, and that the main achievement of the Provisional Government was to avert civil war for eight months. The actions of the workers, peasants and soldiers in 1917 were not anarchic and irrational, but followed a very clear logic. It will be proposed that many Russian workers, soldiers and peasants resisted the Provisional Government not to fulfill some mysterious Marxist master plan, but in response to the difficult material conditions facing them. The aim of this thesis is to point to the problematic nature of the Provisional Government's position, and to see if there were viable alternatives to the courses that they followed.

The groundwork for the thesis is laid in the first three chapters. The first chapter introduces the theoretical debate surrounding 1917, knowledge of which is necessary to legitimise study of the Provisional Government, which has been treated lightly by some historians. Chapter two starts with a summary of the political events between February and October of 1917, and introduces the personalities involved in the political scene preceding more in-depth analysis of the three defining issues of 1917; bread, land and peace. The third chapter discusses the leadership, composition and policies of the three moderate parties, who set the tone for the coalition government. Chapters four and five look at the role of the army and the workers in 1917. These social-based studies complement the work on the political scene that has preceded them, and are an important factor in understanding the period more completely. The concluding chapter focuses on Alexander Kerensky, on why his role was important, on the comments of his detractors, and on his personal response to 1917. By concentrating on the most prominent individual of the Provisional Government epoch, a personal insight is shed on the period, and a more impartial picture of Kerensky emerges.

For source material, memoirs of participants in 1917 have been drawn on extensively as well as published documents from 1917, both in Russian and in English. The most frequently quoted source is the collection of documents compiled by Robert Browder and Alexander Kerensky[1]. There has been doubt thrown upon the fairness and worthiness of

[1] Browder and Kerensky [1961] (3 volumes)

this collection by Boris Elkin[2], but the Browder and Kerensky collection is the biggest collection on the Provisional Government in the English language, and contains a lot of material of great value to the historian[3]. Particular care has been taken when using Browder and Kerensky to note the source, and any editing marks. As many documents find their source in the newspapers, which had strong political delineations, a list of party affiliations of the newspapers mentioned is included in the appendix[4].

[2] Elkin [1964]

[3] Vishniak [1966] , responds to Elkin's criticisms, and points out that any collection of documents is forced to be selective to a certain extent.

[4] See table 9, p. 136

CHAPTER ONE

Theoretical debate on 1917; some implicit problems for the Provisional Government

The theoretical debate surrounding the events of 1917 is extensive, and involves a number of fundamental disagreements amongst the protagonists. Much of the writing has considerable bearing on the study of the success or failure of the Provisional Government. To look at the reasons for the failure of the Provisional Government, these theoretical problems must be tackled, as without an understanding of them the Provisional Government period can be viewed as an historical irrelevance. Determinism, and looking into the past in terms of the present, detectable in many histories of Russia[1], has recently been subject to criticism by Michael Confino[2]. This determinism has placed the Provisional Government period in something of a limbo. When the historian looks at 1917 while implicitly accepting that the Bolshevik coup of October was inevitable, the Provisional Government period becomes nothing more than a failed experiment, a democratic aberration in Russian history, since it is allotted no more potential than the eight months it occupied. This chapter examines a selection of the major issues tackled by the theorists, and highlights some of the problems they raise for the study of the Provisional Government. Thus it will offer some insight into the way in which one can avoid the theoretical pitfalls that litter the study of Russia in 1917.

Russian exceptionalism; no chance for liberalism?

This concept often underlies what historians write about Russia, and has serious implications for studying the viability of the Provisional Government. It propounds that Russia has to be studied apart from the rest of Europe, as its conditions were exceptional. Though rather dated, the articles by Theodore Von Laue[3] in the 1960's put forward a variation on this case very clearly, in a way which would be more difficult to do now due

[1] Pipes [1990] , for an oft criticised example.
[2] Confino [1994]
[3] Von Laue [1965] and [1967].

to burgeoning political correctness. Von Laue argued that the 'Russian temperament' opposed westernization, and did not respond appropriately to democracy. The compromise necessary for the success of a liberal regime was not to be found in Russia; Chernov said,

'Hearts and minds can be moved only by an idea which marches fearlessly to its logical conclusion'[4]

This notion is confirmed by Miliukov, who said that Russia lacked 'the cement of hypocrisy', that was compromise[5]. Von Laue concludes by saying that there was no chance for liberal constitutionalism in Russia, as Russia lacked the necessary unity and cohesion. Whilst nothing written more recently expresses these views so clearly, there is an element of this thinking in the writing of a number of modern historians. Pipes and Figes like to emphasise the anarchic, brutish nature of the Russian masses, which they use to reinforce their politically based arguments on why Bolshevism became the inevitable step for the disassociated masses[6]. The research of the social historians has if nothing else shown that the Russian 'masses' are not adequately described as such, as their multifarious nature and specific interest groups show.

As Confino so astutely points out[7], a surreal 'west' has been created, into which most of western Europe did not actually fit. The function of this west is to serve as a comparison point between the smooth and sensible course of western European nations, and Russia's awkward society, awkward classes, and awkward political change. On the template of the mythical west, Russia does not fit. Significant contributions have been made to the myth of the west by the Russian intelligentsia writing in the nineteenth and early twentieth century. The liberal intelligentsia tended to look towards western Europe as an ideal model, since countries like Britain and France had liberal regimes towards which they felt Russia ought to aspire. This longing for a free and liberal west had curious repercussions. Herzen, in his autobiography, poignantly portrays the corruption at all levels of Russian society, but pays particular attention to official Russia[8]. Though Gogol clearly had considerable affection for the Russian 'soul', he lost no time in subjecting the Russian national character to abuse, focusing specifically on the activities of what one could describe as 'the lunching classes', and the *chinovniki*, or bureaucrats. His criticisms are deeper than criticisms of individuals, and specific corruption. He needles the entire

[4] Chernov [1936] p. 140
[5] Von Laue [1965]p. 42.
[6] Figes [1996] pp. 319-323, for one example, and Pipes [1990].
[7] Confino[1994] p. 854
[8] Herzen [1980]

Russian mentality, from the state of the roads to the habitual drunkenness and ignorance of the peasants[9]. This subtle denigration of all things Russian (often compared to the German model) has crept into the historical analysis of Russia. The unspoken implication of these criticisms is that such levels of corruption and slothfulness did not exist in more 'advanced' nations like Germany, Britain and France. Such assumptions about national character should have no place in dispassionate historical analysis, as they serve only to mystify the past.

The upshot of this creeping anti-Russian sentiment is that historians often make subtle value judgements about Russia's worthiness, instead of trying to assess just what was going on in Russia in 1917. Hence, 'the Russian people were not ready for democracy', implies that other countries were somehow much *more* ready for democracy. Von Laue, then, uses his template of 'the west' and westernization to compare Russia to, and finds that Russia does not fit, thus apparently proving his argument of Russian exceptionalism. Confino sums up the excessive teleological bent shown by scholars of the Russian revolution thus,

' the dominant view remains that nothing in Russia was as it should have been. This normative nonsense amounts to a bastardization of Russia's history'[10]

Prior to the collapse of the old Soviet Union, Soviet historians tended to use a strictly Marxist- Leninist interpretation of the revolution . The title inevitably awarded the October coup illustrates the attitude well, *'Velikaia Oktiabrskaia Sotsialisticheskaia Revoliutsiia'*, or the 'Great October Socialist Revolution'. The title alone implies important judgments; both that the accession of the Bolsheviks was a good thing, and that it was fundamentally socialist in nature. The standard Soviet interpretation was that the union of toiling proletarian workers and poor peasants swept away the self seeking bourgeois Provisional Government, and initiated the transition of Russia into a socialist state. The workers and the Bolshevik party are unfailingly portrayed as homogenous and united, whilst the poor peasant part of the equation tends to be rather neglected. There was a strong tendency towards the teleological determinism that has already been seen in the Western historians, though in this case the bent was towards the idea that the Bolshevik victory was evidence of the inexorable path of history, and inevitable.

A notable element of reading Soviet historians is their preponderance to quote the works of Lenin extensively to prove their argument, the footnotes often reading as a long list of citations from Lenin. The moderate socialists are treated, as Lenin taught, with the utmost

[9] Gogol [1937]
[10] Confino[1994] p. 855

disrespect. They were bourgeois betrayers of the proletariat, attempting to lead the working classes into domination by the old ruling classes. This attitude can be found in relatively recent Soviet articles, such as one by Stishov, discussing the SR/Menshevik conception of the October revolution[11]. Stishov starts his discussion by stating that the SR's and Mensheviks could not possibly have a conception of the October Revolution,

'For where could ideologists of the petty bourgeoisie get a conception of the proletarian revolution?'[12]

Since the momentous recent breakdown of the old Soviet Union, there has been a radical overhaul in historical writing, as historians are no longer constrained by institutionalized official Marxism, and are made forcibly aware of the inadequacies of the rather thin theories they have been touting for years. This has forced a real crisis in Russian historical writing, as there is a search for a new focus[13]. The question for West European historians, however, is to ask if there is need for historical reappraisal in the light of the fall of the Soviet Union. It is inevitable that historians are influenced by their present, and that this will reflect on their interpretation of the past. If this new situation opens new passages for historians to escape the determinism that has plagued Russian historical writing, then that can only be positive, in so far as it does not involve any desperate quest for the answers of 1991, dredged from the history of Russia. Instead of trying to find answers from the past, one ought to attempt to conduct a dispassionate review of specific areas of 1917, in order to formulate a clear view. It is possible that historians will switch from seeking causes for the endpoint that was October and the Communist regime, to seeking causes for the events of 1991, and seeking precedents for reformism in pre-1917 history. This is dubious historically, as one can look, and indeed find, specific 'answers' from the study of the past, without necessarily improving one's understanding of historical events.

Kerensky's central belief was that the Provisional Government was not doomed to fail as some commentators suggest, but on the contrary that it was poised to lead Russia to constitutional democracy with a Constituent Assembly, had the will of two irresponsible men, namely Kornilov and Lenin, not thwarted it. Melgunov and later Daniels[14] both favour this conservative-accidentalist approach, that October was in no way inevitable, but that the Bolshevik victory was as a result of the indecision of the Provisional Government and the absolute determination of the Bolshevik party led by Lenin. Both Daniels and Melgunov exaggerate the influence of Lenin, portraying him as something of a power

[11] Stishov [1971]
[12] Stishov, [1971] p. 300
[13] Confino, [1994] p. 842

dervish who single-handedly forced a rift in Russian society. The sole influence of Lenin and the Bolshevik party has since been discredited by closer study of the Bolshevik party, which has revealed it to be a less homogenous body than communist myth and western antipathy would have us believe[15]. Also, while admitting the importance of individuals in 'making history', Lenin should not be given sole credit for the whole range of circumstances that led to the October coup.

The individual versus society

Alexander Herzen, the Russian radical émigré, wrote in 1855,

'Nothing in the world can be more stupid and more unfair than to judge a whole class of men in the lump, merely by the name they bear and the predominating characteristics of their profession. A label is a terrible thing.'[16]

Herzen's memorable statement applies most aptly to studies of the Russian revolution. All too often there is a simplification of people and their lives into the categories of 'the working classes', 'the peasants' and worse still, 'the masses'. In his history of Russia, Pipes[17] makes little of the Russian 'masses', a term he favours, and places the impetus of the events of 1917 firmly on the shoulders of the intelligentsia, a few unscrupulous individuals, the most notable being Lenin, whom he loathes. Though Keep[18] appears to be taking a rather different view by studying the revolution from the perspective of the mass organizations, he actually reinforces traditional interpretations of the revolution. He concludes that moderate socialism was doomed by the radicalization of the workers that drew them inevitably towards Lenin, by the weakness of the Provisional Government and by the skilled manipulation of the 'masses' by the Bolsheviks. This view, like Pipes', rather neutralizes the mass movements and consigns the majority of Russian citizens into one lumpen mass. Both these historians write their history from the front back, that is, with an eye on both the October coup of the Bolsheviks, and the subsequent Stalinist dictatorship.

Social historians have revised this traditional view of 1917 as a year dominated by high politics, and more particularly by the dynamic force of individuals. Subjugating the politically prominent figures of 1917, the social historians look rather to the motivations and actions of particular social groups in Russia, with the most work focused on the

[14] Melgunov [1953] and Daniels [1967]
[15] Longley [1972]
[16] Herzen [1980] p. 172
[17] Pipes [1990]
[18] Keep [1977]

workers of Petrograd and Moscow[19]. There have also been some interesting regional studies on the peasant movements of 1917[20], and Allan Wildman has made an in depth study of the soldiers[21]. These studies have had the welcome effect of breaking down the notion of the Russian populace as a lumpen undistinguished mass, ruled only by base instinct and historically based anarchism. Instead, there have emerged clear pictures of separate groups with clearly focused interests and needs, acting in a logical way. For example, Koenker and Rosenberg's study of the strike movement in 1917 shows clearly that the process of striking was a learning process, which their study displays as illuminating the reasons for the drift to Bolshevism in 1917. These studies of particular groups and their specific desires and motivations is undoubtedly a way forward to greater understanding of the events of 1917. The social historians come in for some fierce criticism from Marot for allegedly forcibly extruding the role of political competition and reducing the scale of the Bolshevik triumph, from their otherwise worthy works[22]. Marot claims to be in favour of their work, which implicitly draws away from a political elite manoeuvring the working classes, whilst his own hypothesis claims that the Bolsheviks alone determined the path of 1917, in particular the events of October[23]. To suggest however, that the Bolsheviks alone determined the course of 1917 devalues the work of the social historians who, by intimate study, conclude that the material conditions and the situation of 1917 impelled the workers towards Bolshevism.

The curious thing about these diametrically opposed theories is that both accept a deterministic view of history. The political historians, by emphasising the influence of specific individuals, imply that the presence of the 'historic individuals' necessitated the turn of events, whereas the social historians, using the inexorable pattern of events and circumstances, again suggest that there was no alternative to the events of 1917. This teleological approach must be treated very cautiously. It is the nature of history that, apparently, the 'whole picture' is viewed when one looks back. This is an illusion, however; just because it is now known that the rule of the Provisional Government ended in ignominious defeat in October, it should not be assumed that this path was the only one available in 1917. The changing face of historiography in the last twenty years should demonstrate that history is never finally written.

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[19] To name just a few of these studies, Mandel [1983], Smith, [1993], Koenker and Rosenberg [1989].
[20] Figes [1989] was groundbreaking work in this area.
[21] Wildman [1987]
[22] Marot [1994]
[23] Marot [1994] pp. 155-6

Haimson's works on difficulties in the social 'classification' of Russia highlight the problem of defining class in Russia, and demonstrate that more subtle class definitions are required if we are to gain any understanding of the social complexities of Russia[24]. His work in the 60's set the agenda for the social historians to look more intimately at the complexities of social composition, and in 1988 he wrote an update of his theories. Mandel's work on the Petrograd workers is a good example of how the work of the social historians has both clarified and complicated the picture of 1917; Mandel, by studying the workers, and using the labour history pioneered by E.P. Thompson[25], detects numerous divisions within their ranks according to skill levels and profession[26]. This work demonstrates that the interaction between different groups in 1917 Russian society was very complex, and the old denominations of 'working class', 'intelligentsia', and so on are not adequate in describing the social groupings of 1917.

So, while Von Laue suggested that sociological study would show that there was no way forward for liberal constitutionalism in 1917, the work of the social historians suggests that all sorts of possibilities were open for Russia in 1917, and denies the simplifications both of the Soviet and western historians who thought that they saw inevitable patterns emerging in 1917. The old teleological determinism deserves now to be shed.

A point worth noting when considering the role of individuals compared with 'society' is the amount of attention devoted to the working class, particularly of Petrograd and to a lesser extent Moscow. This artificial lean towards the significance of the workers' movement is evident when one surveys the available literature on 1917, and stems from Bolshevik claims for legitimacy. The Bolsheviks, who styled themselves as representatives of the proletariat, felt a need to emphasise the political awareness and autonomy of the proletariat, as only this fitted in with Marxist doctrine on a country's readiness for revolution. This concentration has resulted in an imbalance of the writing on 1917. The social historians Koenker, Rosenberg, Smith and Mandel, have all focused their studies on the working classes. These studies have actually played a significant part in debunking the communist myth of a homogenous, united working class. The upshot of this, though, is surely a need to move away from study of their significance in isolation, and into a look at their significance within a broader picture. Whilst the working populations of Petrograd and Moscow had inordinate influence on events, because of their proximity to the centre

[24] Haimson [1988], p.2
[25] Thompson [1963]
[26] Mandel [1983] chapters 2 and 3

of power, their concentration and their relatively high level of organisation, this should not be allowed to overwhelm the study of 1917.

Power and authority; the significance of *dvoevlastie*

When addressing the difficult question of power and authority, there are a number of issues which become prominent; is there a real difference between the power of being influential and able to exercise one's will, and authority which comes from delegated power? Where does power lie, and are some seats of power of greater significance than others? Can there be authority without power? These issues go right to the heart of the debate about the existence and significance of the duality of power between the Petrograd Soviet and Provisional Government in 1917.

In 1917, Soviets were formed at grass root level in the factories as early as 24th February[27]. Though these initial efforts were crushed by the Tsarist authorities, they were an indication of the strong urge felt by the working population towards the construction of Soviets. The Petrograd Soviet, however, was constructed on the initiative of members of the central workers group who had just been released from prison, led by Gvozdev, and several socialist Duma members, including the Menshevik Chkheidze. They formed the Provisional Executive Committee of the Soviet of Workers' Deputies in the afternoon of 27th February. One of the first tasks of the Executive Committee was to form a Military Commission, to defend the young revolution. Mstislavskii, an SR who was involved with the military commission, gives a poignant description of these first frantic hours[28]. The early days of the Soviet set the tone for the domination of the intelligentsia over the mass working class and soldier support, in the form of the Executive Committee. The popularity of the Soviet secured it power however. There was a scramble from workers and later soldiers to elect their delegates to the Soviet. For the working people and soldiers of Petrograd this was a real manifestation of democracy. Where only a couple of days before they still ran the gauntlet of arbitrary policing and the Tsarist state, now they were freely electing real representatives to 'their' political assembly. The remnants of liberal Russia and the Tsarist regime that made up the first Provisional Government could not hope to compete in this context. Whilst the Soviet did have mass membership, its decision making body, the Soviet Executive Committee, was made up predominantly of the intelligentsia, including many radical party leaders.

[27] Anweiler [1958] p. 104
[28] Mstislavskii [1988] pp. 17-56.

Power in one context lay with the Soviet, by virtue of its undoubted popularity and mass support. The Duma Committee, which was to evolve into the Provisional Government, was on a different plane of political life in many respects. Its legitimacy lay in its origins as the Duma, the elected consultative and nominally legislative body of Russia. This legitimacy claim is more strained when one considers that the electorate of the Duma was a tiny percentage of the Russian population. As there were no precedents, however, for mass representation, it is hard to see what the alternatives for Russian succession to power were. Miliukov identified this problem, and believed that the only way to avoid a crisis of power and authority was to ensure the succession of the Tsar's uncle to the throne. This shows Miliukov's inability to come to terms with the new situation; though his political theory was quite correct in wanting a legitimate succession after the abdication of Nicholas II, it is difficult to envisage a policy less in tune with the desires of the insurgents on the streets of Petrograd. It can be established that whilst the legitimacy of the Provisional Government was tenuous, there were no alternatives that could claim greater legitimacy. The claims to legitimacy later made by supporters of 'All power to the Soviets' were fallacious. Deputies elected in open meetings by shows of hands, in limited areas, did not mirror accurately the wishes of the population. Direct democracy may have been the only practical and popular alternative, but it was certainly not representative of the Russian nation. The only body which could claim real legitimacy was the short lived Constituent Assembly, which was freely elected by the whole of Russia. As the Provisional Government's main task was to arrange the elections for the Constituent Assembly, it can claim legitimacy as the precursor to the Constituent Assembly.

Authority, however, did not spring from legitimacy in 1917, or at least not legitimacy in its more formal sense. Authority, that is, delegated power, was notable for its absence for the better part of 1917. The Soviet, considered to have support and therefore authority, was swept by the tide of public opinion as a result of their dependence on their supporters. When decisions were made that were not popular, the effect was that the Soviet leadership lost credibility, not that they asserted their authority. One can argue that the power delegated by the population of Petrograd was never allocated to any one body. This is amply illustrated by the frantic efforts of the Duma committee to come to some agreement with the Soviet in order to secure some semblance of legitimacy. The Duma Committee accepted the moderate demands of the Soviet, in return for the Soviet's unreserved support for the new Provisional Government, and their assistance in restoring law and order to the capital. This attempt on the part of the Provisional Government to harness the mass support of the Soviet was shrewd, but did not take into account that the

Soviet leaders and the people who supported the Soviet were not inseparably linked. Within twenty four hours of the agreement, order no 1[29] had been issued, which secured the support of the soldiers for the Soviet, and Steklov offered the Provisional Government the *conditional* support of the Soviet. Hasegawa pinpoints the problem of dual power as lying with the inconsistency between the wishes of the leaders of the Soviet, and the wishes of their mass support[30].

Both bodies were, then, invested with some measure of power, the Soviet by virtue of its popular support, and the Provisional Government by virtue of its perceived legitimacy. The usual explanation is that though the Soviet had the power, and therefore the capacity to rule, its Menshevik leaders, in submission to Marxist doctrine that there had to be a capitalist-bourgeois stage of the revolution, *handed over* their power to the Provisional Government, with the aim that the Soviet should take a supervisory role, ensuring that the new Capitalist government did not restrict the Russian people's new found freedom. This quote from Sukhanov embodies this view,

'...a new programme had now been presented to the democracy: to prevent the revolution, once accomplished, from becoming the foundation of a bourgeois dictatorship, and ensure that it formed the starting point for a real triumph of the democracy.'[31] *['democracy' here means 'demos', or the ordinary people, defined here as the working class led by the intelligentsia in the form of the Soviet]*

Whilst this explanation holds an element of truth, it is misleading. A glance at the memoirs of the major political participants in the first days of the revolution shows that there was no firm adhesion to Marxist doctrine, but fear and confusion. There was fear of counter-revolution, and fear of the 'great unwashed' of Petrograd, great swathes of unruly workers and soldiers that trumpeted their new found voices. To quote Sukhanov again, he says of the first days of revolution, 'dreadful rifles, hateful greatcoats, strange words!'[32], expressing the fear and veiled disgust of the leaders of democracy for their soldier followers. Confusion and uncertainty came from men who had not anticipated a revolution in their lifetime, who had no contingency plans, who had only the experience of 1905 to guide them. To suggest that they handed over power to the Provisional Government is misleading, as though they undoubtedly had a massive support base in Petrograd, this did not mean they actually wielded political power.

A further point to make is that while there was certainly an element of Marxist doctrine in their attitude towards power, there were also more practical considerations. Without the

[29] Chapter 4, pp. 68-69 for details on order no. 1.
[30] Hasegawa [1972] p. 626
[31] Sukhanov [1955] p. 69

gloss of legitimacy offered to the new regime by the Provisional Government, the army generals may not have acceded to the institution of a new democratic regime. Without the support of the army command at this early stage of the revolution, the authority of both Provisional Government and Soviet would have been paper thin. If not an immediate suppression of the revolution (or insurrection?), then civil war could well have been the result. One can argue that the aims of the Provisional Government and the Soviet leadership were in relative harmony at a basic level; both desired a restoration of some sort of order, the establishment of civil liberties, the convocation of a Constituent Assembly, and a successful conclusion of the war. In this context it made absolute sense for the Soviet to allow the more politically experienced members of the Provisional Government to accept the burden of administering the state. The difficulty with this suggestion is that the Soviet delegates changed both composition and viewpoints quite radically through 1917, most notably felt at the times of crisis for the Provisional Government, in May, July and September. Whilst the leadership of the Soviet was more stable in composition, it was far from united on policy lines, the major problems being the war, the Nationalities question, and the Agrarian crisis. The Soviet was a body in flux, and its leadership was compelled to pay some attention to the demands of the Soviet delegates, who represented worker and soldier opinion in Petrograd. This makes any clear line difficult to draw when trying to generalise about common policy areas with the Provisional Government.

One can suggest that an essential problem for the Provisional Government was one of image. The Provisional Government was increasingly identified as a class based body, rather than as a national body[33]. The image of the Soviet was as a body allied solidly to people's democracy, even though its decision making body was composed of the same narrow group of society as the Provisional Government. The use of the word 'bourgeoisie' as a term of abuse is interesting, and can be considered in relation to the problems the Provisional Government faced in consolidating support. Kolonitskii's discussion of this problem focuses on the importance of this term of abuse in the control of power in 1917. He points out that the socialists commandeered the most potent symbols of the revolution, like the red flag. Though this may seem of limited significance to the control of power in 1917, these pervasive details of life must have taken their toll. As the revolution championed the new era, it was difficult for the Provisional Government, the vestige of a defunct system, to keep in step. Curiously, this fashion for socialism meant that even the moderate liberals found themselves engaging in anti-bourgeois rhetoric, fanning the flames

[32] Sukhanov [1955] p.60
[33] Suny [1983] p. 37

of the assault on themselves. What the term bourgeois actually meant was subject to a wide range of definitions. To some, it was a term describing real people; blood sucking capitalists who could be identified by their way of dress and manner of speech. The term took on broader connotations as well; anyone behaving in a greedy and egotistical way, regardless of social class, could be described as bourgeois. Kolonitskii concludes that the spread of anti bourgeois sentiments was a major contributing factor in the failure of coalition politics and dual power in 1917[34].

An instance supporting Kolonitskii's theory was the common perception of Provisional Government policy on the war. Bolshevik propaganda labelled the war as intimately connected with class interests, that the bourgeoisie of all the nations involved were using the war as a method of suppressing the proletariat. This bore slogans like 'Proletarians of All Countries Unite!', a slogan which the Soviet used in its, 'Appeal to the Peoples of the World' in March[35]. This shows clearly the essential conflict within the dual power agreement. Although the Soviet professed conditional support for the Provisional Government, the wording of this declaration implies that they accepted that the war was continued by the machinations of the bourgeoisie. This simple idea that worker-soldiers linking hands over the trenches could end the war was popular in 1917, and the Provisional Government seems to fit into this picture only insofar as it was obstructing the process[36].

The coalition government formed by Kerensky in May saw the involvement of leaders of the Soviet in the Provisional Government. On one interpretation this can be seen as a blurring of the lines of dual power; by becoming involved in the Provisional Government so intimately, it became hard to distinguish between the 'democratic' Soviet and the 'bourgeois' Provisional Government. How then, does one explain the continued calls for Soviet power, and the increasing hostility towards the Provisional Government? Involvement in the coalition increasingly alienated the Soviet Executive Committee from its main body in the Soviet, and was symptomatic of the increasing rift between the intelligentsia who nominally headed the Soviet, and their supporters in Petrograd.

In recent debate, there have been fundamental analyses of the foundations of dual power. Haimson[37] argues that dual power was nothing more than a reflection of the profound rift in society that had emerged between the propertied classes and the workers, particularly in

[34] Kolonitskii [1994]
[35] Browder and Kerensky [1961], 2, doc. 942, p.1077
[36] See chapter 2, pp. 39-43, for the Soviet leaders' attitude towards the war.

Petrograd. This view is supported by Suny, who suggests that dual power was an active model of the polarisation within society[38]. However, although the Provisional Government's lack of solid support can be seen as a vote of no-confidence from the people it professed to represent, dual power does not display any neat polarisation of views. A point often neglected is that Petrograd did not represent the views of the whole of Russia. If dual power reflects accurately the rift in the whole of Russian society that Haimson favours, one must look not only at Petrograd but at the individual areas of Russia. This is something which has not been done adequately. Michael Melancon makes an attempt to look at mass attitudes towards the Provisional Government and the Soviet, but the figures he gained from analysis of 350 varied documents, whilst interesting, did not provide any significant conclusions[39]. Rather, they confirmed that if one wants to find out the mood of the nation, one must do it bit by bit. The only way to get really meaningful results is to focus research on one particular region, and scan available material exhaustively. When this has been done in a wide swathe of regions in Russia, it will be possible to advance more specific hypotheses regarding the connections between dual power and the alleged polarisation of society.

Conclusions

This brief excursion through the minefield of theoretical debate about the study of 1917 shows that a teleological deterministic view of Russian history must be laid aside if the study is to progress. Social historians have already contributed valuable work in breaking down the standard interpretations of class behaviour, and reallocating identity to the peoples of Russia. This work should be considered within a broad spectrum, in an attempt to escape the determinism that tends to creep in. The problem of dual power is a complex one, and the simplistic suggestion that dual power is a reflection of the polarisation in Russian society belies this complexity. Finally, while Russia did have a number of unique features that merit careful study, the historian should avoid the tendency to view Russia and all things Russian in a negative light, particularly in comparison with an idealised western model.

An eclectic approach to the history of 1917 may prove more fruitful by considering all schools of thought and examining subjects which would normally be considered high politics in connection with the work of social historians, exploring the links between, for

[37] Haimson [1988]
[38] Suny [1983] p. 36
[39] Melancon [1993]

example, 'high politics', and the workers' movement. It is intended that this eclecticism will bypass some of the pitfalls of the study of 1917 outlined in this chapter.

Table one, documenting the holders of ministerial positions within the Provisional Government

Ministerial post	Dates of the formation of the new governments, and the political affiliation of the members									
	March 3rd		May 5th		July 25th		September 1st		September 25th	
Prime minister	Prince GE Lvov	IND	Prince GE Lvov	IND	AF Kerensky	SR	AF Kerensky	SR	AF Kerensky	SR
Foreign affairs	PN Miliukov	KAD	MI Tereschenko	PROG	MI Tereschenko	PROG	MI Tereschenko	PROG	MI Tereschenko	PROG
War	AI Guchkov	KAD	AF Kerensky	SR	AF Kerensky (Savinkov)	SR (SR)	General Verkhovskii	IND	General Verkhovskii	IND
Army	AI Guchkov	KAD	AF Kerensky	SR	AF Kerensky (Lebedev)	SR (SR)	General Verkhovskii	IND	General Verkhovskii	IND
Navy	AI Guchkov	KAD	AF Kerensky	SR	AF Kerensky	SR	Admiral Verderevskii	IND	Admiral Verderevskii	IND
Transport	NV Nekrasov	PROG	NV Nekrasov	PROG	Yurenev	KAD			Liverovskii	SR
Trade and industry	AI Konovalov	KAD	AI Konovalov	KAD	Prokopovich	IND			AI Konovalov	KAD
finance	MI Tereschenko	PROG	AI Shingarev	KAD	NV Nekrasov	PROG			Bernadskii	RD
Education	AA Manuilov	KAD	AA Manuilov	KAD	Ol'denburg	KAD			Salazkin	IND
Holy Synod	VN Lvov	NAT	VN Lvov	NAT	Kartashev	KAD			Kartashev	KAD
Agriculture	AI Shingarev	KAD	VM Chernov	SR	VM Chernov	SR			Maslov	SR
Justice	AF Kerensky	SR	PN Pereverzev	SR	Zarudnyi	IND			Maliantovich	MEN
Labour			MI Skobelev	MEN	MI Skobelev	MEN			Gvozdev	MEN
Post and telegram			IG Tsereteli	MEN	AM Nikitin	PS	AM Nikitin	PS	AM Nikitin	PS
food			AV Peshekhonov	PS	AV Peshekhonov	PS			Prokopovich	IND
Welfare			Prince Shakhovskoi	KAD	Yefremov	PROG			Kishkin	KAD
State Controller			IV Godnev	KAD	Kokoshkin	KAD			Smirnov	MEN
Interior					Avksentev	SR			Nikitin	PS

Key to abbreviations in table

IND - Independent, with no party affiliation
PS - Popular Socialist party
MEN - Menshevik party
NAT - Nationalist party
KAD - Kadet Party
RD-RadicalDemocrat
SR - Socialist Revolutionary Party
PROG - Progressive party

CHAPTER TWO

The composition and policies of the Provisional Government

Chapters three to five will look at the difficulties the Provisional Government faced in 1917 Russia. In this chapter the focus is placed on the composition and the policies of the Provisional Government. Throughout, the Provisional Government is referred to as if it were a single entity, when in fact its structure and membership evolved considerably through 1917, as the table opposite shows. The composition of each of the five administrations will be commented on, along with an assessment of the locations of power in each one. This will enable the reader to gain a better understanding of the sometimes abrupt changes of policy witnessed in 1917. There will then be an assessment of Provisional Government policies on the issues where they most conspicuously failed - bread, land, and peace. The purpose of this chapter is to highlight the weaknesses of coalition, and the specific ways in which the Provisional Government attempted to tackle the problems facing Russia. In this chapter, the documents collected by Browder and Kerensky are used extensively, as they are a particularly rich source of information on the personnel and policies of the Provisional Government.

A chronological summary of the Provisional Government

The first administration of the Provisional Government was formed from the Provisional Committee, an informal meeting of Duma members, in response to the indications that the disturbances in the streets of Petrograd threatened to overturn the Tsarist administration. It was dominated by Kadets and their allies, the Progressives, who were moderate liberals. Kerensky was the only socialist, and the only Soviet member in this first administration. He was involved in the administration only because he defied the Soviet Executive Committee, who forbade their members from participating in the Provisional Government, and appealed directly to the large membership of the Soviet, who sanctioned his membership of both bodies. The members of this first government remarked on the overwhelming spirit of unity and resolution of purpose[1], with all working resolutely for the

[1] Kerensky said, 'these people [the first Provisional Government], who had taken the full weight of authority upon their shoulders at the most critical moment in the history of Russia. . . realised that the time had come when they must act only in the name of Russia, deleting from memory all their former political doctrines, all their personal interests and the interests of their class. Having assumed the

achievement of the radical reforms demanded by the revolution, including the abdication of the Tsar.

It was difficult for the liberals to reconcile their position as hangmen of the Tsarist regime, as Miliukov's attempts to save the monarchy showed[2]. This first administration is often described as the 'honeymoon of the revolution', as the members of the government basked in the reflected glory of the young revolution. In this short period much valuable legislation was passed, particularly by Kerensky in the Ministry of Justice, whose role it was to legislate those freedoms that the new era demanded. Russian citizens now had freedoms which were denied to the citizens of mature democracies due to the war. This honeymoon feeling was only superficial, however, as conflicts brewed between the liberals in government and the Menshevik led Soviet, who took the role of supervisors of what they deemed the 'bourgeois' revolution[3]. The conflict between Soviet and government was kicked off with crisis over who should control the army, and the issuing of order no. 1[4], and came to a head over the issue of war aims[5]. Miliukov's unwavering stance in favour of Imperialist war aims alienated the Soviet, and precipitated the first major crisis for the new administration, with demonstrations against Miliukov and the war[6]. The prime minister Prince Lvov and Kerensky made overtures to the socialists in the Soviet to join the Provisional Government, but they were reluctant to do so, both because they wanted to remain on the outside as supervisors, and because they feared being associated with a potentially unpopular government[7]. The forced resignation of Miliukov and Guchkov's exit from the government decided the Soviet, however, that they had to enter into coalition with the liberals.

The first coalition involved the leading lights of the moderate socialist parties; Tsereteli, the leader of the Mensheviks, became Minister of Post and Telegram, Chernov, the prominent SR, stoked great hopes with the peasantry when he was made Minister of Agriculture, and Kerensky took over the post vacated by Guchkov as Minister of the War, Army and Navy. This ministry was dominated by the drive for a June offensive, which was backed by the whole cabinet. In view of the state of the army[8], its failure was unsurprising,

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leadership of Russia at this "its fatal hour", the Provisional Government did its duty to its country honourably and conscientiously, and gave no thought to any other consideration' Kerensky [1934] p. 260

[2] See chapter 3, p. 46

[3] See chapter 3, p. 53

[4] See chapter 4, p. 70

[5] See below, pp. 39-43

[6] Browder and Kerensky [1961] ,3, pp. 1236-1249.

[7] See chapter 3.

[8] See chapter 4.

but left the young coalition in a difficult position. Having given its support to military offensive, it was now faced with a rapidly disintegrating army, and falling support.

Other areas of contention were in agriculture, where Chernov, who proved an ineffective minister[9], was seen to be flouting Provisional Government directives on the land issue, and following his own line[10]. This alienated other members of the cabinet. Another area of dissent emerged over the Ukraine. An indication of the strength of nationalist feeling in the Ukraine was that in the Constituent Assembly elections in December, the Ukrainian nationalist party won in excess of 70% of the vote in the Ukraine region[11]. The Ukrainians were understandably reluctant to wait until the convocation of the Constituent Assembly for the granting of local autonomy, and on June 10th the Ukrainian *Rada* issued a statement which set it on equal terms with the Provisional Government in legal and administrative matters[12].This declaration was considered a step too far by the liberals and socialists alike, as is clear from their respective press responses. A compromise was made with the Ukrainians by a delegation sent to the *Rada*[13], but was then rejected by the Provisional Government. The Kadets were unwilling to accept the agreement which, in their opinion, 'abolished all authority of the Provisional Government in the Ukraine'[14]. The six Kadets resigned on July 2nd , purportedly over this issue. Some commentators argue that in fact the Kadets used this issue as a pretext for their resignation, and were in truth keen to escape from coalition with the socialists who they felt were not taking their opinions into account[15]. This political tumult was accompanied by extensive disturbances on the streets of Petrograd between July 3rd and 5th, commonly known as 'the July days'. The demonstrations were characterised by their forceful demands for 'All power to the Soviet', and were regarded by the Provisional Government and the Soviet as a Bolshevik bid for power. In fact, Lenin had not sanctioned the demonstrations, as he was aware that the 'time was not yet ripe', and the disturbances seem to have originated from anarchist and Bolshevik splinter groups[16]. The Provisional Government reacted to the challenge of their authority with repressive measures against the chief instigators, and the organised

[9] See chapter 3, p. 52
[10] See below, p. 33
[11] See tables 7 and 8 on Constituent Assembly election results, pp. 133-135
[12] Browder and Kerensky [1961] , 1, doc. 349
[13] Browder and Kerensky [1961] , 1, doc. 354
[14] Browder and Kerensky [1961] , 1, doc. 355
[15] John D. Basil [1984] pp. 99-101
[16] Rabinowitch [1968] p. 157, commented of the Bolsheviks in the July days that 'We will not take the initiative, but we will not put out the fire', thus confirming that the Bolshevik attitude towards the July uprising was circumspect and opportunist.

Bolshevik party. Lenin escaped, but Trotsky, Kamenev and other Bolsheviks were arrested.

The crisis was compounded by the resignation of Prince Lvov on July 7th[17], provoked primarily by the policies put forward by Chernov in the Ministry of Agriculture, but also by 'numerous differences of opinion between myself and the majority of the Provisional Government'[18]. Lvov recommended Kerensky as his successor, on the grounds that

'at such times a strong government is needed. And to bring it about, a combination of elements of authority is needed such as are embodied in the person of Kerensky '[19]

To add to the confusion, the news broke on July 9th that the so-called June offensive had turned into a rout, and that the Germans had started a counter-offensive. On July 11th, *Volia naroda* reported that the Soviet had decreed that

' The revolution and the country are in danger. It is necessary to form a government to save the revolution. Unlimited plenary power must belong to the Provisional Government. Twice a week, it must give an account to the Soviets.'[20]

This granted the Provisional Government absolute power, but conversely retained Soviet supervision. Kerensky was given authority to form his own cabinet on July 13th. The Kadets refused to enter any government which involved Chernov. In the meantime, the Kadets had mounted a campaign vilifying Chernov in their newspapers. Chernov resigned on July 20th, on the grounds that he required

'full freedom of action... in order to defend my political honour and to prosecute libelers who are private persons'[21].

Whilst this resignation apparently left Kerensky free to include the Kadets in a new coalition, on July 20th Kerensky was told by the Soviet that he should reinstate Chernov. Kerensky, placed in an impossible position resigned, in suitably dramatic fashion. This forced the hand of the rest of the political players, who refused Kerensky's resignation, and held a conference that night embracing the five major parties. Its unanimous conclusion was that Kerensky be given the plenitude of power, to form a cabinet of his choice. Kerensky's resignation had what one imagines was the desired effect; the Kadets and Socialists managed to suppress their differences in order to renew the coalition. The new government was announced on July 25th, and included Kerensky's personal friend

[17] Browder and Kerensky [1961], 3, doc. 1184
[18] Browder and Kerensky [1961], 3, doc. 1186
[19] Browder and Kerensky [1961], 3, doc. 1187
[20] Browder and Kerensky [1961], 3, doc. 1193, p. 1399
[21] Browder and Kerensky [1961], 3, doc. 1201, p. 1417

Zarudnyi in the Ministry of Justice, and the SR's Savinkov and Lebedev shadowing Kerensky in the Ministries of War and the Army respectively. Savinkov was an unpopular figure, who had been an SR terrorist, but worked as commissar of the southwestern front in July, meeting up with Kornilov, 'in whom he recognised a kindred spirit'[22], as Savinkov was ardently in favour of the war[23]. If civil war was to be avoided, it was imperative that liberals and socialists worked together for a resolution of the problems gripping Russia. Ironic, though, that what was the most socialist government of the period was also to take the most suppressive measures against the press and the Bolsheviks.

Kerensky set about trying to cement alliances with any political groups that were willing to support the Provisional Government and, in this spirit of alliance, arranged the convening of the Moscow State Conference between August 12th and 14th. This was intended to be a vehicle for securing a spirit of national unity and co-operation, and thus strengthening the Provisional Government. The conference began inauspiciously; the Moscow Bureau of the central trade union called a strike, which brought trams and small businesses to a standstill. A large crowd met the delegates outside the *Bolshoi* theatre, and though there were no demonstrations, the atmosphere was sullen and hostile[24]. Once the conference was underway, the problems that had dogged Kerensky's attempts at coalition were highlighted. The delegates sat in the hall arrayed according to political inclination from the left to the right, and remained allied to their 'sides' throughout the conference. Kerensky and his close supporters held the middle ground, but were heavily outnumbered by the partisans on either side. The underlying bitterness between the two camps was brought to the surface by the confrontational atmosphere of the conference, as this description of the scene before the speech of General Kornilov, the supreme commander, and figurehead of the right, displays,

' The whole audience, with the exception of representatives of the Soviets of workers' and soldiers' deputies, rises from the seats and applauds the supreme commander, who has ascended the rostrum. Growing shouts of indignation are heard from different corners of the audience, addressed to those on the left who remain sitting. . . Shouts ring out: "Cads!" "Get up!" No-one rises from the left benches, and a shout is heard from there: "Serfs!" The noise, which has been continuous, grows even louder.'[25]

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[22] Radkey [1958] p. 316

[23] Savinkov would seem to have been a fascinating character. This comment is in Sukhanov [1955] p. 488 'Boris Savinkov, famous SR terrorist and writer. After the October Revolution worked against the Soviet government; caught by GPU on secret trip to Russia, tried and sentenced to jail for ten years, where he died. Winston Churchill thought him one of the most extraordinary men he had ever met'

[24] Browder and Kerensky [1961] , 3, doc. 1229

[25] Browder and Kerensky [1961] , 3, doc. 1233, p. 1474

Kornilov's speech dwelled on the disintegration of the army, and was met with great enthusiasm by the rightist press[26]. The Moscow conference did have positive points; it showed that the different parties were able to sit down together and discuss Russia's problems, and were agreed, apparently, that there could be 'no salvation for the revolution or for Russia outside the democracy'[27]. However, there was also a strengthening of the right at the conference, focused around General Kornilov, and no resolution of the problems facing Russia.

Russia's military position continued to worsen, with the loss of Riga to the Germans on August 25th. The military loss was quickly followed by another political crisis for the Provisional Government. General Kornilov's attempts to move troops on Petrograd were interpreted by Kerensky as an attempted counter-revolution[28], which inspired a national move to crush any rightist movement. It was in this period that the Bolsheviks regained power and credibility that they had lost after the July days, as men like Trotsky were released from prison to help the workers organise to 'protect the revolution'. The most serious result of this so-called 'counter-revolution' from the point of view of the Provisional Government was that the chances for coalition between liberals and socialists were crushed. The Kadets were implicated in the affair, as indeed was Kerensky himself, which finally alienated the Menshevik-led Soviet from any collaboration with the Kadets[29].

With the chances for successful coalition apparently gone, Kerensky formed a 'directory' of five men to take control of the country in the absence of any other form of government. As two of these posts were filled with practising military men, it was effectively a triumvirate that was to control the affairs of state. Tereschenko and Nikitin, the other two men involved in the triumvirate, were both men without strict party affiliation, and close colleagues of Kerensky. There was a shift to the left after the Kornilov affair among the moderate socialists, as well as in popular opinion, which was detrimental to any further attempts at renewing the coalition. The Democratic Conference, called on September 14th, at the initiative of the Soviets, was a last gasp attempt to unite 'all forces of the country' in an attempt to save revolutionary Russia, and was attended by socialists of all affiliations, including the Bolsheviks. The proceedings of the conference were stormy, and witnessed the same partisan breakdown as at the Moscow conference, although the Democratic conference did not have representatives

[26] Browder and Kerensky [1961], 3, doc's 1254-5
[27] Browder and Kerensky [1961], 3, doc. 1257, from a commentary on the conference in *Delo naroda*.
[28] See chapter 4, p. 83

from the right of political opinion. The conference voted narrowly in favour of coalition, but subsequently passed an amendment excluding the participation of the Kadets in any coalition. This impasse was renegotiated by an additional resolution presented by Tsereteli which proposed the establishment of a Democratic Council, with members drawn from the Democratic Conference, whose purpose would be to assist in forming a government. The thorny issue of Kadet participation was bypassed by leaving the decisions in the hands of this council. Tsereteli's resolution was passed with a large majority, and the Menshevik Chkheidze was selected as chairman. On September 24th the Democratic Council met, and consulted with the Provisional Government and with 'representatives of bourgeois elements'. The council resolved that the Democratic Council would be reconvened, with the inclusion of bourgeois elements, to form a preparliament, with the right to put questions to the Provisional Government, but with no formal legal responsibility of the government to the conference. The Bolsheviks, represented by Trotsky, opposed any coalition with the Kadets, as did the left SR's, but the vote went narrowly in favour of coalition. The moderates had won the day, but it was clear that the coalition hung by a thread.

What was to be the last administration of the coalition forces made its first declaration on September 25th. It included more elements from the right than any of the previous coalition administrations, yet seemed to inspire the confidence of nobody;

'The Kadets speak of the new ministry with great reservation. . . On the other hand, the Bolsheviks look upon the new coalition as an openly provocative action and strongly advocate the idea of a "second revolution". It is curious that even the Mensheviks and SR's, the true spiritual fathers of the coalition, did not contribute to it a single outstanding party leader, so little confidence did their own child inspire in them.'[30]

Although such a comment was harsh, it was apt. The third coalition never came close to being a forum in which liberals and socialists could work together. Rather, the strong anti-Kadet strain dominant at the Democratic Conference continued in the 'democratic' section of the pre-parliament. Dispute raged over foreign policy aims, with most of the Kadets and Kerensky favouring a continuation of the defensive policy they had pursued thus far, with the help of the allies, while the Mensheviks clung to their belief that a general peace without military victories could be accomplished by the combined efforts of socialists of all nations[31]. Technical dispute arose over government monopolies on grain

[29] Browder and Kerensky [1961], 3, doc. 1341, p. 1655, for a clear declaration of this from the leader of the Mensheviks, Tsereteli.
[30] Browder and Kerensky [1961], 3, doc. 1380, p. 1721, from an editorial in *Novaia zhizn*, a leftist paper. The comments made expressed grave doubts in the ability of the new coalition to hold together.
[31] See below, pp. 39-43

and fuel, and the debate was turned into an opportunity for the socialists to attack the liberals for their money grabbing tendencies, whilst the liberals accused the socialists of damaging the economy by trying to cut out private interest. The arguments were unproductive by this stage, and where the leaders had promised a 'union of national forces' the issues instead turned into political platforms with no prospect of resolution. The incidence of peasant unrest increased dramatically in September and October, which placed further pressure on the administration. Kerensky's last attempt to salvage something from the problems in the countryside came with Maslov's land programme. This resolution failed, as it was too late to glean the peasants' support, and it was criticised from all sides of the political spectrum, as all, with the exception of Lenin, favoured waiting for the convocation of the Constituent Assembly for the resolution of the land question. Another major factor in the fall of coalition politics was the breakdown of the Menshevik and SR parties into factional groups. Though there had always been a broad sweep of opinion in both parties, they remained in nominal agreement from March onwards. But by September, the strain of participation with the liberals was too much, and inter-faction squabbling was rife, culminating in the leaders of the Mensheviks Tsereteli and Chkheidze being rejected by the party. Such disagreements weakened the potential for the moderate socialists to be a significant force, and allowed the Bolsheviks greater freedom to consolidate their support.

The Central Committee of the Bolshevik party made the decision to seize state power on October 10th[32]. As a result of the collapse of the Menshevik/SR alliance in the Petrograd Soviet, the Bolsheviks gained control of that organisation. Lenin's plans for a seizure of state power were no secret; in *Rabochii put* on October 13th, the editorial declared

'The moment has arrived when the revolutionary slogan "All power to the Soviets" must finally be realised.'[33]

In retrospect it is remarkable that the Provisional Government made no concerted efforts to suppress the Bolsheviks in the light of their open intention to seize power. The moderates' unawareness of their own vulnerability is clearly exposed by this excerpt from the rightist paper *Rech*, on October 21st;

'There is no doubt that Bolshevism is undergoing a severe crisis. Whether action takes place or not is now a matter of indifference. If it takes place, it will be crushed and will cause a severe reaction which will bring upon the Bolsheviks the curses of all those whom they have lured from the [right]

[32] Browder and Kerensky [1961], 3, doc. 1398
[33] Browder and Kerensky [1961], 3, doc. 1399, p. 1764

path. If the action does not take place, they will lag behind the moods which they themselves have kindled, and their credit will be undermined.'[34]

The Bolsheviks did their groundwork well. On October 22nd a Military Revolutionary Committee was organised, with the intention of controlling the actions of the Petrograd Military District Headquarters. The commander of the troops, Colonel Polkovnikov, refused to accept the orders of the Military revolutionary Committee, so the Bolsheviks went over his head and issued a telegram direct to all the units in Petrograd requiring them to obey orders only if they were signed by the Military Revolutionary Committee[35]. This order gave the Bolsheviks assured military support when they made their move. Yet Kerensky's reaction to this, in his drawn out speech on October 25th was that

'...although there was every reason for adopting immediate, decisive and vigorous measures , the military authorities, following my instructions, believed it necessary first to give the people the opportunity to realize their own intentional or unintentional mistake.'[36]

He continued by stating that

'the obvious, definite, over-all condition of a certain part of the population of Petersburg [must be termed] a state of insurrection... This is the situation from the legal standpoint, and I have proposed that judicial investigations be started immediately. *[noises from the left]* Arrests have also been ordered. *[protests from the left]*'

In retrospect, the myopia of the forces of democracy was remarkable. Kerensky proposed 'judicial investigations', as if the situation were nothing more than a court room disagreement. The expected sense of desperate urgency is not present; still, the opposing factions were bickering, and the internationalists remained sternly unmoved by all Kerensky's appeals. By the following morning, the Bolsheviks occupied the stations, the telegraph and telephone exchange, and had thrown out the members of the preparliament in the Marinskii Palace. The Military District Headquarters were seized, and remaining government forces in the city were overwhelmed by the Red Guard. Kerensky had gone to the front, but the rest of the Provisional Government were in the Winter Palace, and were arrested in the early hours of October 26th. The preparliament dissolved itself 'in protest against the use of violence'[37] that day, thus eliminating the last source of organised dissent to the Bolsheviks in Petrograd. Lenin and the Bolsheviks had control of Petrograd, and the seat of Russian government. The Provisional Government had been vanquished.

[34] Browder and Kerensky [1961] , 3, doc. 1405
[35] Browder and Kerensky [1961] , 3, doc. 1406
[36] Browder and Kerensky [1961] , 3, doc. 1407, p. 1775
[37] Browder and Kerensky [1961] , 3, doc. 1418

Kerensky's article on the policies of the Provisional Government[38] identified the tasks of the Provisional Government as threefold; to re-establish the destroyed state administration, to continue the war, and to bring about the radical social and political reforms demanded by the revolution. The chief object of all Provisional Government internal policy was to prevent civil war. Civil war could only be averted by coalition government, keeping the divergent sides of political thought around the same table, working for the good of Russia. He concluded that the Provisional Government successfully carried out its threefold objectives, and that only the treacherous coup d'etat of Lenin's Bolsheviks prevented Russia from escaping the threat of anarchy, and moving towards stable democratic rule. This study of the Provisional Government suggests that Kerensky was unrealistic. As early as July 1917, it became increasingly clear that coalition politics were not lasting the political storm they faced, despite Kerensky's best efforts to hold things together. The study of Provisional Government policies on the main issues of 1917 reveals that whilst the government had enormous problems in certain areas, there were areas where more could have been done to prevent civil war, most notably on the issue of peace.

The slogan on which the Bolsheviks based their successful bid for power was 'bread, land, peace', and it dominated 1917. The issues highlighted by this slogan can be seen as the issues on which the Provisional Government failed most obviously. This chapter studies the problems the Provisional Government faced in these areas, and the policies which they proposed to combat them. This chapter will show that Bolshevik promises to solve these three essential problems were empty, as they were issues that were not soluble in the short term.

The land question

There was a widespread land redistribution in the Russian countryside in 1917, which satisfied the peasants' age old aspirations. Keep estimates that in 1917 96% of the former estates were liquidated and redistributed[39]. Whilst the size of this figure may be accounted for in part by the Bolshevik decree on land on November 8th declaring that private ownership was abolished[40], it is an indication of the strength of the movement to repartition the land in 1917. Gill asserts that the peasants' actions in 1917 were not

[38] Kerensky [1932]
[39] Keep [1977] p. 406
[40] Note that the Bolsheviks actually adopted an SR draft on settlement of the land question, but reneged in February 1918, when they declared that all land was the property of the state.

politically motivated[41], but whether or not this was the case, their actions had major political repercussions.

The Provisional Government's task with regard to the land question can be seen in two ways. In one sense it was straightforward; as the peasants saw the issue, land could not truly be owned, but should be in the hands of the toilers, of those that worked it. In this straightforward sense, the path for the Provisional Government was clear; it should satisfy the peasants' demands, and supervise the transfer of state and privately held lands into peasant hands, with no remuneration made to the private owners who lost their land. So much for the straightforward view. The difficult approach, which was the one which the Provisional Government took, was that the reallotment of land, whilst it seemed inevitable and would benefit the toiling peasantry who had suffered much in the hands of arbitrary Tsarism, was a serious matter and had to await the convening of the Constituent Assembly for a decision. Another consideration in the land question was that while the army was still mobilised, it would be almost impossible to distribute land fairly, and conversely, to prevent the already dispirited troops from deserting en masse to return to their homes for their allocation of land. A final and serious consideration was the essential difficulties of an equitable redistribution of land. The geographical diversity of Russia meant that there were different agricultural problems in different areas. In the most land hungry areas, the redistribution of all lands would have led to nothing more than a general poverty, as there was patently insufficient land to go round. Studies of the land problem in Russia concluded that massive resettlements to virgin soils would be required from some areas if all the toilers were to get a viable portion of land. Such complexities were not brushed aside by the Provisional Government, which was anxious to remain true to liberal principles.

Further hold-ups were caused by individuals within the Provisional Government. Whilst the Russian intelligentsia evinced great affection for the peasantry, whom they viewed naively, as the salt of the Russian earth, people simple and worthy[42], they often had little understanding of the aspirations of the peasants. Men like Prince Lvov typified the patriarchal role 'enlightened' Russian landowners took towards their peasants. He was an active *zemstvo* man, who worked to improve peasant welfare in education, health and housing. Radkey asserts, however, that for all this good will, he did not wish to see his great estates dispersed into peasant holdings, and was very circumspect about the issue of

[41] Gill[1978B] p. 64
[42] See Koulomzina [1991] p. 52

land redistribution[43]. There was then, a confused response in the Provisional Government; whilst the general feeling accepted the need for land redistribution, there was little practical understanding of the peasants, and individuals within the government were concerned to retain owners' rights of property. One must remember that the first Provisional Government was drawn from the State Duma, on which there was a property qualification for entry. The Kadets had substantial influence throughout the Provisional Government's tenure, and though they accepted the need for redistribution of land, they were firmly committed to the policy of remuneration for dispossessed landowners, a policy that was fiercely resisted by the peasantry.

The means by which the Provisional Government attempted to implement its land policy was a range of land committees, set up at *volost* [district], *uezd* [county] and *gubernüia* [province] levels, with a central land committee based in Petrograd to supervise the whole structure. The role of these land committees was to prepare for coming land reform[44] by studying the problems of land reform in the given area and drawing up plans and estimates for their solution. The committees were also to be responsible for the 'settlement of questions, disputes, and misunderstandings arising in the field of land and agricultural relations, within the limits of existing statutes and laws of the Provisional Government, [and] setting up, if necessary, chambers of mediation and conciliation for the adoption of measures to regulate relations which may arise as a result of the arbitrary violation of anyone's rights and interests'[45]. They were also charged with 'halting the acts of private persons leading to the depreciation of land and agricultural properties'. The exact composition of these committees varied according to their level, but at *volost* level, the lowest of the committee levels, the members were elected by the *volost zemstvo* assembly. As the *zemstvo* assemblies were little regarded by the peasantry, and in some areas broke down altogether after the revolution, they may well have been overruled or ignored.

This description of the functions of the land committees makes the duality of their position clear immediately. Whilst they had been elected by local people, and were called upon to settle local disputes, and to prepare for the incipient land reform, they were also expected to prevent the peasants' seizure of the land, and to uphold Provisional Government policies. This effectively meant that the committees were to carry out policies that were unpopular with the peasantry, but were formed of the peasantry. It is unsurprising that the land committees became increasingly unmanageable as 1917

[43] Radkey [1958] p. 255
[44] Browder and Kerensky [1961] , 2, doc. 478
[45] Browder and Kerensky [1961] , 2, doc. 471

progressed. The demands of the peasantry, with regard to the functions of the land committees, make this clear.

'prior to the solution of the land question by the Constituent Assembly...the Soviet of Peasants' Deputies deems it necessary... to transfer to the management of the *volost* committees all plow lands and fields, *pomeschik*, state, *udel*, monastery, church, *Kabinet*, and municipal lands.[46]'

The peasantry demanded nothing less than that all land should be placed in the hands of the local land committees. The Provisional Government was committed to protecting the principle of private property, and to waiting on the decision of the Constituent Assembly, which made this demand absolutely untenable.

The problem was made more complex by the chain of command and authority involved in the hierarchy of land committees, from the central committee at the top, to the *volost* committee at the bottom. Though the higher level committees were meant to have their decisions followed by the lower level committees, they had no power to enforce their decisions[47]. From the outset there was confusion as to the roles and authority of the land committees. This confusion intensified as 1917 progressed. Chernov's circular to the land committees in July offered them wide ranging powers, including the authority to release timber for the local population where necessary, to place land in 'suitable hands', to fix rents, and to detail prisoners of war for land work. In short, the land committees were to regard themselves as organs of state authority[48]. This circular was directly contradicted by other Provisional Government circulars[49], and was a reflection of Chernov's isolation in the government. Although there were other SR's in government, Chernov was by far the most radical, and clung to SR populist policies on the land question, that the land must be redistributed without compensation. This view was in no way representative of Provisional Government policy. Such contradictions inevitably led to frustrations for the committees, who in the absence of any clearly defined policy on the land question, often took matters into their own hands. This resolution from the Kuznetskii *uezd* land committee effectively summarises the problem;

'The absence of guiding instructions from the Provisional Government that correspond clearly and explicitly to the abrupt change.. in the peasants' relations to landowners and their land... the Provisional Government's indecisive policy on the land problem, and the vaguely defined powers of the *guberniia* land committees, have placed the committees in an impossible position, because the frameworks and standards established by the old pre-Revolutionary laws have now been outgrown. It is impossible for the land committees to work...between the frying pan and the fire. When the peasants become convinced that the land committees cannot answer to their aspirations, they will

[46] Browder and Kerensky [1961] , 2, doc. 509, p. 586
[47] Gill [1978A], p. 249
[48] Browder and Kerensky [1961] , 2, doc. 487
[49] Browder and Kerensky [1961] , 2, doc's 487-9

then lose confidence; if, on the other hand, the committees carry out the general will of the people that is authoritatively confirmed by the resolutions of the All Russian Congress of Soviets of Peasants', Workers' and Soldiers' Deputies and all the socialist parties, and thus adopt a realistic course, they will violate the letter of the dead law and will be held legally responsible...The Kuznetskii *uezd* land committee believes that since the passage of land laws through the Constituent Assembly would require at least two years, it is the duty of the government to hasten with the publication of temporary laws.'[50]

If these temporary laws were to have gained any popular support, they would have had to ride roughshod over private property rights, and set a precedent that the Constituent Assembly would have had extreme difficulty in revoking. Their commitment to the absolute authority of the Constituent Assembly to make any final decisions meant that the Provisional Government had their hands tied in this matter. In their meticulous approach to the question the Provisional Government lost their already tenuous support in the countryside. The peasants looked to lawless but more productive means of acquiring land.

As 1917 progressed, agrarian disorder intensified, and was expressed in the seizure of land, refusal to pay rent, the theft of animals, wood and equipment, and in some cases destruction of owners' property. In the Tambov province, Prince Viazemsky's estate at Lotarevo was overrun by local peasants who broke into his cellars, got drunk, and then called the prince to 'justice', declaring that he ought to be sent to the front. Whilst at the station at Griazi he was captured and killed by deserting soldiers[51]. Figes, in his commentary on the Volga region, remarks that there were relatively few such lawless appropriations, a pseudo-legal gloss being given to many seizures[52]. The regional variation in actions must be taken into account when considering peasant disturbances. Gill asserts that the peasant unrest was primarily a result of land hunger[53]. This is substantiated by the fact that the agricultural unrest was most pronounced in the areas where pressure on land was most severe; the central agricultural region, the middle Volga, little Russia and the southwest, Belorussia and Lithuania[54]. The most common forms of unrest were land and wood seizure.

The Provisional Government's response to peasant unrest altered as 1917 progressed. On March 9th, in relation to disorders in Kazan, it was resolved that 'the use of armed force for the suppression of agrarian disorders is at the present time inadmissible'[55]. Rather than attempt to use the already malcontent peasant army to put down peasant risings, which

[50] Browder and Kerensky [1961] , 2, doc. 495
[51] Account taken from Moynahan [1992] pp. 223-4
[52] Figes [1989] pp. 51-55
[53] Gill [1978A] p. 258
[54] Gill, [1978B] p. 69
[55] Browder and Kerensky [1961] , 2, doc. 504

was a dangerous prospect, the Provisional Government instead tried to appeal to the better nature of the peasant, and condemned arbitrary land seizures in the press, whilst at the same time appealing for compliance with Provisional Government policy, and patience to wait for the convocation of the Constituent Assembly. There was a rapid turnaround in the policy of not using troops however. On April 8th, it was resolved that 'the *gubernii̇a* committees would be responsible for *suppressing immediately with the use of legal means of any kind* any kind of attempt in the sphere of agrarian relations against the person or property of citizens if such attempts have taken place'[56].

This decision to use troops where necessary to put down agrarian disorder further damaged Provisional Government credibility in the countryside, as forced suppression was intimately connected with the old regime. In this the Provisional Government could not win. When they issued only appeals, this was regarded by the peasantry as a sign of weakness. When they were forcibly suppressed, however, the peasants immediately bemoaned the return of strong-arm tactics. The only way the Provisional Government could have won support in the villages was to allow the land committees total jurisdiction over all land, thus forestalling any decision the Constituent Assembly might make, and ensuring breakdown of the coalition. Whilst rational and lawful solution to the land problem lay, as Provisional Government policy dictated, in waiting for the convening of the Constituent Assembly, the situation in the countryside became neither rational nor lawful. Perhaps the members of the Provisional Government should have been concerned less with the letter of the laws that they proposed and more with the political realities surging around them. If they did not sanction the reapportioning of land, well, then the peasants would take it anyway. The government had no means to prevent them, and so its lack of authority and of support was exposed.

The Grain crisis

A major factor in the February revolution was the grain shortage afflicting the urban areas. In 1917, Petrograd received by rail only 44.1% of the grain it had received in 1913. These shortfalls became even more marked as 1917 progressed[57]. The overall crop yield was not much down on former years, but problems arose because the yield increased in Siberia and the north, but decreased markedly in European Russia. Russia's transport system was unable to cope with the demands of 1917, which meant that the good crops in the north were not accessible to the major conurbations of Petrograd and Moscow. Peasant unrest

[56] Browder and Kerensky [1961] , 2, doc. 506
[57] Gill [1976] p. 47

and reluctance to surrender grain aggravated the problem. The Provisional Government had to tackle this problem if it was to survive. The inadequacy of the measures which it took are illustrated by the potency of the Bolsheviks' promise of bread.

The Provisional Government responded to the food crisis in a number of ways. On March 9th they set up a central food supply committee to guide the Ministry of Agriculture[58]. This was replaced by the Ministry of Food, established on May 5th, whose role it was to supervise the nascent local food supply committees[59]. Bread rationing was introduced in Petrograd on 24th March, and was unpopular. The rationing did not go smoothly. The state committee on food supply reported,

'The rationing of bread went into effect on March 24th. However, misunderstandings are occurring in certain areas of the city, and soldiers, as well as persons who have not received their ration cards, are demanding that bread be released to them without ration cards...*Bread shall not be received without ration cards*...the procedure of *standing in queues* should apply to the distribution *of bread*...The State Committee on food supply is appealing to the citizens to remain completely calm and to abide by the regular procedure of bread sales, since it is only under these conditions that everyone will be able to receive his required amount of bread'[60]

This statement reveals a note of extreme concern. For them to have had to state that queues ought to be formed when waiting for bread would rather suggest that the onset of rationing had seen no queues. This suggests the scene of a scrum of people outside the bakeries. Similarly, the stern note that 'bread shall not be received without ration cards', coupled with the gloomy appeal for calm, indicate that rationing got off to a very poor start.

A grain monopoly was established in an attempt to prevent grain merchants from driving prices up, and to assure the supply of grain to the cities and the army. All grain produced was to be at the disposal of the State. A fixed price was set for grain, and the peasants were obliged to surrender all grain that was not for their own needs. To ensure the effective local organisation of the monopoly, food supply committees were established. These had wide ranging duties, from ensuring the appropriate use of land, and protecting the land from damage and destruction, to ensuring that the peasants were adhering to Provisional Government policy, and surrendering all their grain. The food supply committees were difficult for the Provisional Government to monitor, let alone control. Volobuev asserts that they were created in only half the provinces, and that they were usually in food consuming provinces, rather than producers[61]. Where they did exist, they

[58] Browder and Kerensky [1961], 2, doc. 530
[59] Browder and Kerensky [1961], 2, doc 544
[60] Browder and Kerensky [1961], 2, doc. 532, p. 617
[61] Volobuev [1962] p. 393

were under the same pressures as those other troublesome bodies, the land committees. Where they flouted peasant desires and carried out Provisional Government policies, they were ignored or even assaulted. Though this report comes from the conservative *Russkie vedomosti*, it may be taken as an indication of the problems the local food supply committees had,

'The officials and food supply delegates report from everywhere about their helplessness to do anything. The population refuses to listen to them, throws them out, beats them unmercifully, and hides the grain' [August 24th][62]

The functions with which the local food supply committees were burdened would have been onerous even for well established administrations. These ad-hoc delegations of locals could not possibly fulfill these functions. On April 29th, a highly detailed pronouncement placed grain of all kinds under rationing. The distribution of these grains was determined by local food supply committees in the rural regions. A proviso was added that those in work involving heavy labour were to receive extra rations. Such a procedure was a challenge to the long established British administration; it had no chance in 1917 Russia.

The most serious difficulty in persuading peasants to relinquish their grain came from the trade imbalance between town and country. Because Russia's manufacturing strength had gone into the war effort, and exports were halted by the war blockade, there was a shortage of all manufactured goods. The peasantry had no access to the manufactured goods they needed. In 1917 the price of nails was five times what it had been in 1914, the price of boots five times the 1914 equivalent. A resolution from the All-Russian Soviet of peasants' deputies in May, whilst supportive of the grain monopoly, and of fixed prices on grain, clearly requested a solution to this problem;

' The peasantry surrenders all the produce of its labor and economy at established prices. Without further delay fixed prices must be introduced on manufactured goods to correspond with the prices on grain...This must be done to correct the injustice, also to prevent the ruin of the working peasantry'[63]

The Provisional Government was aware of this problem, and proposed an attempt to fix prices on the goods required in the countryside, and make them available, in order to facilitate the exchange of goods between town and country[64]. This monumental enterprise required nothing less than control over the whole economy, and never got beyond committee stage[65]. There was popular socialist hostility towards all capitalists, and the

[62] Browder and Kerensky [1961], 2, doc. 552, p. 640
[63] Browder and Kerensky [1961], 2, doc. 545, p. 631
[64] Browder and Kerensky [1961], 2, doc. 535
[65] Mau [1994] p. 37

speculators had been excluded from the monopoly process. It was to be entirely state run. The Provisional Government were proposing effective state control of agriculture and industry. This was a step way beyond the potentials of the Provisional Government, who, as Kerensky pointed out, had no state mechanism of control available. Also, the regime was essentially liberal in character, and had no ambition for state control. This was symptomatic of the ad-hoc measures that the Provisional Government took, without having the means or the motivation to make the measures effective. Mau points out the essential dichotomy between the use of anti-market, administrative levers to stabilise the economy, and the use of democratic norms and procedures to implement them[66].

In an attempt to stimulate the release of grain, the Provisional Government doubled the fixed price of grain in August, despite having vehemently denied that such an action would be forthcoming. It was a desperate measure, but Prokopovich, the Minister of Food, reported in October that the doubling of prices had been the only alternative to coercive measures;

'...our reserves became entirely depleted... owing to this desperate situation, and to the complete depletion of grain reserves both at the front and within the country, the Provisional Government was forced to resort to a desperate measure; namely, it was forced to double the price. We were confronted by a dilemma: either we could attempt to obtain grain by voluntary means, by means of this doubling of prices, or we could turn directly to repressive measures, to the use of armed force, and confiscate the grain from the people...We could not bring ourselves to use armed force.'[67]

The government and the Petrograd Soviet tried to coerce the peasants by reminding them of their important national role, and their duty to protect freedom and the new Russia[68]. But these were not norms the peasants easily identified with. The peasants were essentially opportunist; just as they saw the fall of the Tsar, and the physical weakness of the new regime as an opportunity to seize land, so they saw no reason to surrender grain for money that could not buy them anything they needed. Another factor was the old gap between the town and the country; the peasants tended to see the doings of the town as of little interest to them, and felt that they had no obligation to feed the townspeople, who were, to their minds, living in great luxury. What did the town know of the life of the peasants? In this context the peasants' behaviour, hiding and distilling spare grain, and feeding themselves and their animals better, in the midst of a national grain crisis, was perfectly logical. The stark alternative was to seize grain, as the Bolsheviks did in the civil war. Lenin passed a series of ad-hoc emergency measures, but when these failed, as the

[66] Mau [1994] p. 36
[67] Browder and Kerensky [1961], 2, doc. 561, pp. 648-9
[68] Browder and Kerensky [1961], 2, doc. 542

Provisional Government's had done, armed detachments were sent into the countryside to forcibly extract grain[69]. The Bolshevik promise of bread was a fallacy.

Any chance for peace?

The Bolsheviks owed much of their rapid rise of popularity, particularly amongst the armed forces, to their promise of peace. Why did the Provisional Government not match that promise? In an interview taped at Mills College, America, Kerensky said that that was one of the questions he faced most often from students of the revolution[70]. His response was simple; that a separate peace was not possible, both because of Russia's commitment to her allies, and because the Russian people would not have countenanced a shameful, separate peace. This response is typical of liberal Russian politicians with regard to the war. Before the revolution, the liberal politicians were keen to gain western support for a ministry enjoying public confidence. In pushing the line that 'the nation' was absolutely behind the war effort, but absolutely opposed to the Tsarist administration, the liberals convinced themselves that the revolution was a response to the Tsar's inadequate handling of the war effort. This was the view put forward by Kerensky in a number of his writings;

'Our revolution broke out in the very heat of military operations, and psychologically the most immediate occasion for it was the fear of a separate peace, that is, it was bent on the continuation of the war in the name of national defence'[71]

Such are the doubts surrounding this view that the editor felt compelled to add a footnote that the historical accuracy of this view was 'more than open to question'. Reports from Petrograd and the provinces confirm that there was increasing war-weariness among the workers, peasants and rear soldiers. Banners proclaiming 'Down with the War!' were seen on the streets of Petrograd as early as January[72]. Allied residents of Petrograd noted that even if anti war slogans were not prominent in the first days of revolution, there was certainly no enthusiasm for the war[73]. This evidence confirms that Kerensky's belief in the Russian people's enthusiasm for the war was gravely misplaced.

Joining the coalition was difficult for the socialists while Miliukov remained part of the government. Miliukov continued to cherish expansionist desires for Russia, earning him the nickname 'Miliukov-Dardanel'ski', from his ardent desire to secure the straits of the Dardanelles and Constantinople for Russia. Miliukov's struggle was to retain his stubbornly

[69] Sheila Fitzpatrick [1982] pp. 74-5
[70] From audiotape of an interview with Kerensky, taken at Mills College, America, 1965
[71] Kerensky [1932] p. 3
[72] Morris [1972] pp. 31-33
[73] Morris [1972] p. 36

Imperialist war aims, whilst appearing to submit to Soviet war aims. When Miliukov was forced out of the Provisional Government as a result of his resistance to Soviet war aims[74], the socialists reluctantly agreed that the only way to ensure their policies were being carried out was to join the government themselves.

Socialist enthusiasm for the war was always more muted than the liberals, and ranged from cautious defencism to outright pacifism. There was a strong commitment to the belief that the war was a machination of the exploiting capitalist classes, both in the allied nations and in Germany. This uncompromising view was clearly stated in the Soviet's declaration on the war on the 14th March. Their demands became more moderate; the definition of Soviet war policy in April stressed the importance of the Provisional Government in securing revised war aims. In order to be a part of the new government, the socialists had to offer their support of the war as a defensive measure. Kerensky was an ardent supporter of the war, and managed, with his lawyer's tongue, to convince the cabinet that a military offensive could be part of a war of defence. All the socialists, by being involved in government, were implicated in these war policies, which damaged their credibility.

The socialists intended that by entering the coalition, they could facilitate the ending of the war by pressure of international public opinion. This notion betrayed the naiveté of the Russian socialists, both in their over-estimation of the influence of socialists in the allied nations, and their underestimation of the power of the allied governments to suppress unwanted pacifist propaganda, and pursue their own line. Their actions in trying to secure a peace agreement were under the aegis of the Soviet, but as they were in the Provisional Government's coalition, their efforts can be considered within the context of this chapter.

The allied governments sent socialist representatives to Russia to liaise with the new administration. The Russian socialists considered themselves very distinct from the west European socialists, particularly with regard to the war, but were nevertheless very cordial towards their guests[75]. Whilst the Russian view continued to hold that the capitalists of all nations were responsible for the war, the allied socialists believed that they were victims of German attack. Thomas insisted that a condemnation of German war guilt would be necessary if any talks with German socialists were to go ahead. Tsereteli refused to accept any delineations of guilt, as he held all the capitalist governments equally responsible[76]. Despite these differences, the Mensheviks Tsereteli, Skobelev and Dan sought to utilise

[74] See chapter three, pp. 47-49
[75] Basil [1984] p. 74
[76] Basil [1984]p. 76

the allied socialists, and involve them in a peace conference. Participation of German socialists in the conference proved the major stumbling block, with the British delegate, Henderson, and the Frenchman Thomas both expressing grave caution, whilst the Belgians, whose soil was occupied by the Germans, were openly hostile to the conference. Henderson was keen to wrest control of the peace conference from Russian socialist hands, as he had serious doubts about the abilities of the Soviet leaders in international affairs[77]. Henderson proposed a meeting of allied socialists in London later in the year. Tsereteli, however, refused to involve the Soviet in what he considered to be a partisan conference, as it omitted the Germans. As a conciliatory measure he agreed to send an observer to the London conference, which was eventually held at the end of August. The London conference was not a success, although the Soviet supporting *Izvestiia* described it as 'a complete moral victory for the platform of the minority'[78]. This attitude reflected the Russian socialists' unhelpful resistance to any form of compromise. By determinedly voting against the common draft on peace terms, the conference ended in 'complete failure'.

Despite this disparity between the Russian and the allied socialists, the allied socialists returned to their home countries on good terms with the Russians, and with some revised perceptions. This was a source of some alarm for the allied governments. The Stockholm conference, set for September, was the focus of this concern. The Americans refused to attend, and while the French socialists were initially willing to participate, their government later reneged and withdrew the participants' passports. The effect a socialist peace conference might have on the war wearied French troops was not something the government wished to consider. Petain warned that he could no longer maintain his hold over the army if the socialists were allowed to go to Stockholm[79]. The Soviet persisted despite this setback, but with Italians, Americans and the French refusing to attend, the conference looked increasingly thin. Arthur Henderson, a British Socialist and member of the war cabinet, was left out on a limb by the withdrawals. Tereschenko authorised that the text of a telegram he had sent to Nabokov be issued to Lloyd George, in which he stated that,

'although the Russian government does not deem it possible to prevent Russian delegates from taking part in the Stockholm conference, they regard this conference as a party concern and in no ways binding upon the liberty of action of the government.[80]'

[77] Basil [1984] p. 78
[78] Browder and Kerensky [1961], 2, doc. 1032, p. 1187
[79] Morris [1972] p. 44
[80] Browder and Kerensky [1961], 2, notes to document 1030

In addition to this damning report, an off the cuff remark that Kerensky made to a French ambassador Petit that he did not support the Stockholm conference was reported, via Thomas, to Lloyd George, who then told the Commons that Kerensky had personally communicated his opposition to the Stockholm conference. Though this was untrue, and Kerensky later published a statement of sympathy for the Stockholm Conference in the *Manchester Guardian*, this withdrawal came too late for Henderson[81]. Henderson's position was made untenable, and he was forced to leave the cabinet. The Third Zimmerwald conference did meet in Stockholm at the start of September 1917, but without the participation of the allies, its results were negligible.

The Russian socialists had their hopes confounded by the harsh reality of how little influence the socialists had in the other allied nations, and by their refusal to compromise with the allied socialists. Their efforts to secure a peace engendered by popular international pressure were noble; they tapped the widely felt desire to end the terrible conflict, and in the Stockholm conference offered an opportunity for reasoned discussion of the problem. Their own inexperience of international diplomacy, however, and their unwillingness to compromise, brought the plans to nothing.

Browder and Kerensky document the indirect approaches that Germany made to Russia on the subject of a separate peace, or of initiating talks on a forthcoming general peace[82]. These seem to have been added more as an addendum then anything else. There is no report of Russian responses to these approaches, apart from the occasional note to say that, of course, they were not welcomed. Kerensky's hand in this is probable; in all his writings, he liked to emphasise that Germany did make approaches to Russia, but that Russia, as a loyal ally, never even considered such propositions. This reveals a blind spot in Kerensky's attitude towards the war. Buchanan, in a letter to the Foreign office on July 12th recognised that the Russian army was no longer in a fit state to continue the war[83]. Had Kerensky accepted this gloomy reality, he would perhaps have been more willing to consider the possibility of that 'shameful separate peace'. The first time any member of the Provisional Government declared that 'we cannot fight' was General Verkhovskii on October 19th. The response to his declaration was outrage from Tereschenko, and Verkhovskii left the government not long afterwards, pressured, one suspects, by his declaration against the war[84]. Whilst Russia would indeed have made territorial losses, and

[81] Abraham [1987] p. 241
[82] Browder and Kerensky [1961] , 2, doc's 933-940, and doc's 1006-1015
[83] Buchanan [1923] pp. 150-1
[84] Abraham [1987] p. 309

lost international prestige, the alternatives were stark. Russia lost a lot of territory at the separate peace which was concluded at Brest-Litovsk on 3rd March; 62 million citizens of the old Russian empire were lost, and land including 32% of Russia's arable land and 75% of the iron and coal mines, though Poland and Finland had already broken away. Lenin recognised, however, that peace at any price was what the Bolsheviks needed to stabilise their regime, so he was willing to make great concessions to get Russia out of the war.

Conclusions

The coalition governments were marked by relatively petty disputes and wrangles among its members, but also by profound differences between Kadets and socialists on war aims and the nationalities question.

The three issues of 'bread, land and peace', were not easily solvable by any administration. It is hard to see how the Provisional Government could have improved its policy on the land question, short of authorising the random redistribution of land that was already going on.

The grain monopolies were not a big success, but, like land, it was hard to see how the Provisional Government could have improved matters without resorting to the measures that the Bolsheviks were forced to employ; the forcible extraction of grain from the peasants.

Finally, the issue of peace was not adequately addressed by the Provisional Government, and though the socialists' efforts to secure a general peace were worthwhile, without the involvement of the Provisional Government, they were futile. Kerensky and the liberals failed to consider the interests of Russia before the interests of the allies. The socialists' efforts indicate that securing a general peace by internationalist methods was viable, but that the allied governments were too powerful to be seriously influenced by their minority socialist colleagues.

CHAPTER THREE

The moderate political parties in 1917

The actions of the moderate political parties in 1917 are critical to the shape of events and arguably, to the Bolshevik seizure of power. The three best known moderate parties; the Constitutional Democrats [Kadets], the Mensheviks and the Socialist Revolutionaries [SR's] will be focused upon. This trio of parties held a plenitude of power in the Soviet and in the Provisional Government, and were all involved in the coalition to some extent. It is essential to assess their contribution to the failure of the coalition, in order to see if such a failure could have been avoided. Any success the moderate parties may have found in 1917 tends to be deflected by the success of the Bolsheviks in seizing, and holding, power. Whilst this is understandable, it diminishes the role the moderates played. The moderates, not the Bolsheviks, were supported by the majority of the Russian population, and they played a significant role in consolidating the February revolution, and in legislating its central tenets. How they failed to lead Russia forward into some form of constitutional democracy is an essential question in understanding 1917. In this chapter, the Kadets, Mensheviks and SR's will all be assessed, on their organisation and leadership, and their policies towards the war, the Provisional Government, the Constituent Assembly, and the future of Russia.

The Constitutional Democratic Party[Kadets]

The Kadets consisted of a wide association of individuals who were committed to the same basic political aims. This basic programme was a commitment to a constitutional democratic regime, wide ranging social reforms to raise the living standards of the lower classes, broad based nationalism, and the creation of a civil society based on social justice[1]. The concern of the Kadets was for political rather than social change, and they disregarded the class based politics of the socialists. Party theory regarded the Kadets as representative of all Russia, regardless of class. The theory of a party which superseded class boundaries was attractive but, in the case of the Kadets, unrealistic. Their membership was made up almost entirely of educated professionals; doctors, lawyers,

professors. Kerensky described them as a 'faculty of politicians'[2]. The rank and file Kadets can be categorised as "urban intellectual types" who were "quite poorly informed about the peasant and rural population, and quite uninterested in them"[3].

The party was loosely organised, and based around a series of provincial and urban 'clubs', which were groups of local people, not usually more than 12, who joined together and declared support for the Kadet programme. There were no formal requirements for admission, and the Central Committee of the party, based in Petrograd, rarely issued any directives on the Kadet programme and tactics. This club structure reflected the middle-class, professional membership of the Kadets, and was not accessible to peasants and workers, despite Kadet intentions. In the downturn of political activity after 1907, only the St. Petersburg Kadet group retained strong political affiliations, and the provincial clubs faded; in 1911, there existed less than 50 provincial party organisations[4]. The tenuous structure of party organisation meant that the support of the Kadets was difficult to assess accurately, and made it difficult for the party to organise their 'membership' into an effective political force.

The Kadets had their heyday as staunch opponents to the Tsarist regime in the State Duma, and were instrumental in the weakening of the Tsar's position[5]. Anin[6] suggests that the collapse of Tsarism, by taking away the Kadets' main opponent, also took away their cohering element. He implies that the Kadets were not radical enough to have looked beyond Tsarism. Certainly, they failed to adapt their long held policies and staunch liberal beliefs in the face of a rapidly changing political system. Their political beliefs were so incompatible with the fashion for socialist ideals in 1917 that they were condemned to political irrelevance.

An example of the Kadets' patent inability to reform their policies rapidly can be seen by their response to the February Revolution, and their policy towards the succession. When the members of the Provisional Committee went to Grand Duke Michael offering him the Regency on March 3rd, Miliukov was the most ardent advocate of a continued monarchy. He pleaded with the Grand Duke, suggesting that the new regime needed the legitimacy and authority ensconced in the Royal figurehead. This argument was entirely consistent

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[1] Galai [1992] p. 90
[2] Rosenberg [1974] p. 20
[3] Rosenberg [1974] p. 22
[4] Rosenberg [1974] pp. 22-24
[5] For example, Miliukov's 'Is it stupidity or is it treason?' speech in November 1916 sent shockwaves through Russia. For full text see Golder [1964] pp. 154-166
[6] Anin [1967]

with the Kadets political philosophy, but confirms that the Kadets had not comprehended the onset of a new era. The mood of the Petrograd masses clearly eluded Miliukov.

Trying to sweep the class issue under the carpet did not in any way make the Kadets classless. By refusing to acknowledge Marxist analysis of class relations, the Kadets sidestepped the fundamental collision of interests between 'the exploiters and the exploited'. The Kadets did not seek any fundamental social change, yet it is hard to see how this fitted in with, respectively, their vision of a democratic Russia and the huge mass of ill educated land hungry peasants, with whom they did not seriously concern themselves. The land issue was heavily demarcated by class. The Kadets were cautious about wide scale reallocation of land, but where it did occur, they insisted on compensation for the landlords. Compensation was resented by the peasants as an unbearable strain on themselves, and an unacceptable sop to the wealthy landlords, who would, one way or another, make the peasants pay. It went against the peasants' most fundamental belief about the land, which was that those who worked the land should own it.

The Kadets were determined that the major issues facing the country, that is, the land issue, self determination for national minorities, and Russia's new form of government, could not be finally decided until the Constituent Assembly was convoked. There were long delays in the convening of the Constituent Assembly. The special council elected on March 25th to draft an elections statute did not meet till May 25th. The actual date of the elections was delayed repeatedly from the initial date of September 17th to the actual date of November 12th -14th. This two month delay must be cited as the deciding factor in the failure of the Constituent Assembly; it was broken up by the Bolsheviks after a single session on January 5th 1918. Chernov identifies the decision to allow postponement of the Constituent Assembly as the Provisional Government's most serious mistake.

In the light of such urgency, it is surprising that the Kadets' attitude towards the convening of the Constituent Assembly was rather haphazard. Lionel Kochan claimed that the Kadets were guilty of deliberate delaying techniques, with the intention of benefiting their own party cause, and inadvertently opened the door for the successful Bolshevik coup[7]. Kochan implies that the Kadets felt that the delaying of the Constituent Assembly would be of benefit to them, without actually specifying what that benefit would be. Other accusations of this kind are broadened to include some right of centre SR's. Vishniak

[7] Kochan [1967]

condemns such accusations as Bolshevik slander[8]. The account of Miliukov, however, indicates that there is some validity in these accusations. In his memoirs Miliukov claimed that the Constituent Assembly was held back to allow for a lull in army operations, and to give the peasantry time to assimilate their new politically responsible condition[9]. The Kadets had no support amongst the peasantry, but were inclined to believe that the peasants were inherently conservative, and that once the peasants understood the political system, they would surely support the Kadets. The results of the Constituent Assembly elections show quite clearly that the Kadets gained no benefit from the delayed holding of the Constituent Assembly[10]. The charge that the Kadets deliberately delayed the convocation of the Constituent Assembly would seem to hold some validity, and as such is perhaps the most serious charge against any of the moderate parties in preventing Russia's transition to constitutional democracy.

Miliukov's political maneuvering within the Provisional Government in his tenure at the foreign office accentuated his inability to comprehend Russia's new political climate. Miliukov's discordance with the popular mood culminated in the April crisis, sparked by his secret note to the allies regarding war aims, assuring them of Russia's unchanged position. Miliukov was unswerving in his determination to see Russia gain the strategically important Dardanelle straits and Constantinople. Goldenweiser[11] points out that maintenance of the war aims was strictly in accordance with allied treaties, and to forsake them would break the statesman's codes of diplomacy. Miliukov was following another central tenet of Kadet belief, that Russia was a great power, and that Imperialist policies were perfectly acceptable in world affairs. Germany's only crime had been to resort to violent methods to pursue these legitimate policies[12]. This theory did not sit easily with popular attitudes towards the war. One of the most potent weapons of the Bolsheviks was their attacks on the Provisional Government as motivated in the war by interests of financial gain to themselves and the *bogachi*, or wealthy, of the allied nations. This accusation held great weight with the soldiers, who were heartily sick of the war, and enraged at the thought that they might be suffering and losing their lives for the sake of lining the pockets of the rich[13]. The imperialistic capitalism that was implicitly embraced by the Kadets was rejected by many of the seven million soldiers that fought the war. Not only were annexationist policies unpopular; they also ignored the perilous state of the

[8] Radkey [1958] p 356
[9] Miliukov [1967] pp.68-69
[10] See tables 7 and 8 summarising results of the Constituent Assembly elections, appendix, pp.133-135
[11] Goldenweiser [1957]
[12] Rosenberg [1974] p. 39

Russian army, which made even defence of Russia's borders problematic. It was clear to all the men intimately connected with the Russian army that the war ought to be concluded as soon as was reasonably possible, if the army was not to collapse altogether[14].

Miliukov became something of a thorn in Kerensky's side after his forced resignation at the end of April. It is ironic that Miliukov, who repeatedly claimed to be a real statesman, did not see that the despised figure of Kerensky was not the major threat to constitutional democracy. Whilst Kerensky struggled to bring together in coalition the divergent forces of left and right, Miliukov continued to snipe at Kerensky and the coalition, thus damaging any attempts at uniting the moderate front against the forces of extremism. Whilst Kadets continued, in varying degrees, to form a significant proportion of the Provisional Government[15], their refusal to make any significant political compromises with the parties of the left was a major contributing factor to the failure of the coalition governments[16]. Despite remarkably similar policies to the moderate left on all areas except the land question, Miliukov castigated the parties of the left, and accused them of bringing Russia to ruin[17]. Radkey categorises the second coalition as one of opportunities lost, when constructive measures could have secured the situation, but with the Kadets acting as if there was no revolution[18].

The Kadets remained staunchly committed to the policy of political legitimacy throughout 1917, continuing to cling to it even after the Bolshevik seizure of power in October. The arrest of Panina, a leading and very popular Kadet, and her public trial in which the Kadets felt themselves thoroughly vindicated, only heightened Kadet confidence that it was only a matter of time before the temporary aberration of Bolshevism gave way before political legitimacy and the force of public opinion. They simply did not grasp that the Bolsheviks were no longer paying any heed to the legal restraints that the Kadets so revered. Only the murder of Kokoshkin and Shingarev in Bolshevik custody, and the dissolution of the Constituent Assembly on 5th January, persuaded the Kadets to reject further constitutional attempts at influencing power, and instead to turn to what was by then the only alternative; civil war.

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[13] For example VOSR, avgust, doc. 121.

[14] For evidence, General Alexseev and General Lukomskii's reports on the state of the Russian army in mid-March, Browder and Kerensky [1961], 3, doc's 809-10, pp. 923-5

[15] See table 1 on Provisional Government membership, p. 20

[16] Rosenberg [1968]

[17]. An example of this is Miliukov's speech before the Kadet party conference on May 9th, in which he associates the wave of agrarian and civic disturbance with the activities of the Socialist parties. Browder and Kerensky [1961] , 3, doc 1110, p. 1290.

[18] Radkey [1958] p. 360

The Kadets seriously considered support of General Kornilov in his plans to put down the insurgent Bolsheviks, and establish a new 'strong' government. Chernov maintained that Miliukov was 'the centre of all political and civic support for the Kornilov plot'[19]. Whether or not this is the case, the Kadets gave the matter considerable thought, and it opened fissures in the party. In a meeting on August 20th, the issue was discussed, and whilst Shingarev pointed out the danger of polluting the party's record by association with a military coup, Tyrkova said, 'there is no way out; only through blood'[20]. The Kadets did not really resolve this key issue, and remained ambivalent, with the result that Kornilov acted with the expectation of some political support, but received very little. The blank page on the Kadet newspaper *Rech* the day after the attempted Kornilov rising indicated that the editorial was to have been a triumphant one, which was not appropriate to the climate after the failed rising. This was taken as evidence by the socialists of Kadet complicity.

The Kadets can be fairly viewed as the dinosaurs of the Russian political scene. They did wield considerable influence in the political scene of 1917, as we can see from a cursory glance at the composition of the five Provisional Governments[21]. Their rigid adhesion to the principle of legitimate authority, however, meant that they failed to acknowledge the sense of urgency in 1917 over the land question, the war and the minority nationalities. This is best shown in their stalling of the Constituent Assembly, coupled with their determination that the major issues could be decided only by that body. Their weakness in 1917 was inherent, and came from their rigid liberal-capitalist policies, and their inability to be acceptable to the Socialists that were their bedfellows in the Provisional Government.

The Socialist Revolutionary Party

The Socialist Revolutionary Party originated in the populist movement of the 1870's, and existed as a party from 1904, but did not adopt a party programme until 1906, at the first party conference in Finland. This programme, formulated by Chernov, was never more than a declaration of principles, and did not go into the detail of how the programme was to be implemented. The basic tenets of the programme were socialisation of the land, expropriation of the land without compensation, and a federal republic state. The organisation of the party was based in the provinces initially, with the Saratov Peasants'

[19] Riha [1967] p. 118
[20] Riha [1967] p. 118
[21] See table 1 on Provisional Government membership, p. 20

union its first head[22]. The party organisation expanded very rapidly, and a Central Committee was established as the head of the party. There were no oganisations, however, to bridge the gap between the local committees in the provincial capitals, and the Central Committee at the top. This made the party organisation very weak, and almost impossible to mobilise and control effectively. The breakdown of the SR Party organisation in 1917 is unsurprising in this respect.

The disunity and heterogeneity that was to be inherent in the SR party was spelt out by the party's chief theorist Chernov in 1901,

> 'Every vital developing social movement which comprehends reality according to local conditions of strength cannot expand without certain programmatic and tactical disagreements. Moreover, these disagreements may rightly be called the moving force to develop a party programme. A party must be able to guarantee to its members in each given moment freedom of opinion, full freedom of speech in defining their tactics [while] uniting with this full discipline to act in the completion of those [tasks] accepted by majority decision. The party must be organised democratically.'[23]

In 1917, this moving force of disagreement was to crush the party's chances of being a significant force. The range of political opinion within the SR's was bewildering; they went from the staunch defensists and moderates on the right like Mark Vishniak and Breshkovskaia, to the extreme left who drifted to the Bolsheviks from the First Party Conference in March onwards. The focusing issue of this discord was the war. Many of the far left favoured more extreme internationalism, that is, that the working people of all nations should unite, and reject the war effort outright. They saw the war in essentially class terms, as the wealthy capitalists of all nations abusing the toiling masses. This view was essentially irreconcilable with the centre and the right of the party, where views ranged from patriotic defencism to moderate international defencism, which accepted the involvement of the class issue, but maintained the need to defend Russian soil. 1917 saw a desperate struggle on the part of the party apparatus to keep these conflicts under wraps, and prevent an open party split.

The other main defining issue for the SR's was the land issue, on which their party's support was based. The SR's are commonly described as a party for the peasants; its origins were in populism, and the linchpin of the party and of its popularity was its championing of the cause that the land should belong to those who worked it. The Bolsheviks claimed that this policy was forsaken in 1917, for the sake of a share in the 'bourgeois' Provisional Government. The schisms within the SR's make this claim hard to deny. Certainly those on the right had accepted the coalition as an end and not just a

[22] Radkey [1958] p. 53

means, and had concomitantly postponed the idea of a social revolution which would come about by the reapportioning of land. Many others within the SR party remained committed to the principle of social revolution and the fulfilment of a radical land policy. Chernov is an example of one who remained committed to these principles, though this did not translate into action when he was a member of the Provisional Government.

The SR's had been crushed by the activities of the Okhrana after 1905, and many of their activists were in exile, where some of them became more remote from the realities of Russia. They lacked leaders that possessed the levels of charisma and political acumen required to guide them through 1917. This is reflected in the tendency of the SR Soviet deputies to follow the lead of the gifted Menshevik Tsereteli. Radkey described Gotz, Boldyrev, and Livshits, the SR leaders in the Soviet, as 'hopelessly outclassed' by the Menshevik leaders[24]. The SR's lacked a suitable individual to lead the discordant party. Chernov's abilities were considerable, but he lacked the political acumen necessary to capture both public affection and political loyalty. One could forward Kerensky as a potential popular leader of the SR's. His fat Okhrana file shows that he was a very active worker for the SR's before the revolution[25]. He had shunned party restrictions, however, in his attempts to create a cross party union, and as a result lost a good deal of his influence with the party; the loss of his seat on the party's executive body at the Third Party Congress was symptomatic of the personal feuds raging within the SR's and also of Kerensky's loss of influence within the SR's. Also, both Kerensky and Chernov were the figureheads of the right and left of the party, respectively. If the SR's were to remain one party, they needed a leader that could embrace both ends of the political spectrum.

The centre and right of the SR party gained nominal authority over the rest of the party in 1917, and theirs were the policy statements issued in the name of the SR's. Their commitment to the coalition, and to the war effort, meant that they turned to moderation on the land question, repeating Provisional Government policy that the peasants must wait until the convocation of the Constituent Assembly for the reallocation of land. This was seen as betrayal by the peasantry, whose support for the SR's was based on their desire for land. Chernov's involvement in the government as Minister of Agriculture raised expectations, as Chernov was regarded as the peasants' champion. Chernov proposed three measures; the suspension of the Stolypin reforms, the prohibition of all land transactions, and the placing of all land under the control of the regional land committees.

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[23] Cross, [1967] pp. 356-357.
[24] Radkey [1958] p. 136
[25] Abraham [1987] pp. 81-2.

The first was accepted, the second turned down on the grounds of economic disruption, and the third was not even considered by the Provisional Government. This exposed the weakness of the coalition; where changes were proposed that called for fundamental alterations of society, the more conservative elements resisted. Changes in land distribution would fundamentally alter the nature of Russian society, and this was something that the Kâdets were unwilling to approve.

Ministerial office exposed Chernov's limitations. Whilst he was clearly a talented theorist, he had little aptitude for the mechanics of legislation. He was active in writing articles and editorials, but devoted himself to this occupation, rather than to the business of government, even to the point of writing in cabinet meetings;

'Sometimes Tsereteli would nudge him and say, "Please listen Victor Mikhailovich; this is important," to which Chernov would answer, "The editorial must be written, and, anyhow, I shall vote the way you do."[26]

This casual attitude to the business of legislation did SR credibility serious harm. His impotence whilst a member of the Provisional Government, though partly due to his lack of political allies within the government, was also a result of his inability to deal with practical politics. As well as the failure to implement any meaningful land policy, Chernov was damaged when it emerged that the vote on the reintroduction of the death penalty was unanimous. The measure had caused consternation amongst the Petrograd Soviet and a broad swathe of SR's. By failing to vote against it as the party supporters might have expected, Chernov implicated the SR's directly in the death penalty's reintroduction.

The SR Party enjoyed a level of popular support which gave them a significant majority in the elections for the Constituent Assembly[27]. Because of this, they are the party looked to by wistful democrats as a potential alternative to the Bolshevik seizure of power, and subsequent civil war and authoritarian regime[28]. What then, prevented the SR's from utilising their phenomenal support and ushering in a new constitutional democracy for Russia? The Bolshevik seizure of power doomed the Constituent Assembly from its inception. In theory, the SR's coalition with Kadets and Mensheviks in the Provisional Government should have assured its success until the convocation of the Constituent Assembly, on which it waited. This question raises a number of issues, among them the commitment and depth of SR support, the disproportionate influence of the major

[26] Radkey [1958] pp. 333-4. This anecdote is the product of an interview Radkey had with Tsereteli in 1949.
[27] See tables 7 and 8 showing results of the Constituent Assembly elections, pp. 133-135
[28] Anin [1966] p. 457

Russian cities on political events, and the wisdom of the SR decision to participate in the coalitions.

The SR party won extraordinary support in the rural areas. It is here that the problem of their actual influence becomes clear. Whilst the peasantry was immensely strong numerically, making up some 80% of the Russian populace, they were notoriously weak in political influence and awareness. Though it has been well documented[29] that the peasantry had the capacity to act collectively and rationally in order to fulfill their local political requirements, they tended to have less understanding of and interest in the national political scene. Levels of literacy were low in the villages, and the capacity to question, and to think in non-material concepts even lower[30]. Whilst the peasantry had the potential to make an enormous impact on national political life (the grain crisis being the most obvious example), it is difficult to find much evidence of the rural peasantry organising in an attempt to influence more abstract political life. The shortsightedness of the peasantry in relation to matters not directly concerning them is well known; they were unlikely to organise in an attempt to empower their political favourites.

Further, one can begin to question if the SR's were political favourites. Unlike the Bolsheviks, whose attempts to win the rural peasantry were relatively new, the SR's were descendants of the Populist movement, which had worked in the villages since the late 1800's, giving them a strong advantage in terms of familiarity. It is easy to suggest that their support came from their long standing promise to give the peasants land, and from their long association with the village. There are reports, too, of crude recruitment techniques, whereby the whole village would be signed up as SR members, on the promise that 'When we get power, you shall have the land'[31]. Despite the apparent depth of support for the SR's in the villages, there is evidence that party ties were forgotten when it came to the crunch. Some reports tell of the peasants rapidly removing delegates on local committees if they did not do exactly what the peasants wanted. It was less a matter of the parties manipulating the peasantry, and more a matter of the peasantry manipulating individual party members[32]. If the peasants had been recruited to the SR banner by the promise of land, then with the participation of the SR's in the Provisional Government, with no apparent progress on the land question, one can envisage that their support would melt away.

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[29] For example Figes [1989] pp. 30-61, Bukhovets [1988]
[30] For example Gill [1978B] and Haynes [1997]
[31] Radkey [1958] p. 236
[32] Gill [1978B] p. 82

Because of Russia's vast size, weak communications network, and large ill-educated rural population, the influence of the populations of Petrograd and Moscow on national political decisions was extraordinary. The difficulty for the SR's was that it was in Moscow and Petrograd that their support was lowest. They polled only 12% in Petrograd and Moscow in the Constituent Assembly elections, far lower than in any other region, whilst the Bolsheviks, conversely, had their greatest concentration of support in those cities. Having said this, while the SR's remained in coalition with the Mensheviks, as they did for most of 1917, they retained joint control of both the city Soviets. The Bolsheviks gained control of the Petrograd Soviet only when the alliance between the SR's and Mensheviks collapsed. The first all Russian Soviet conference cemented the alliance at the end of March, and there was very little conflict between Mensheviks and SR's until the alliance finally foundered at the end of September. This offers another alternative to the Bolshevik seizure of power. Even if the alliance with Kadets in the Provisional Government was unviable, this socialist-populist alliance within the Soviet added an alternative dimension to the slogan of Soviet power. For this to have been successful, however, the leaders of both parties would have had to initiate the transfer of power to them. The crisis for the Provisional Government in July showed that the means for a transfer of power were available. But the SR leaders were committed to following the path of collaboration with the Provisional Government, and can be seen to have avoided power in 1917. There was an infamous incident during the July days when Chernov was seized by an angry crowd, and the cry was heard, 'Take power when its offered to you, you son of a bitch!'. Chernov's life was saved by the quick actions of Trotsky, who retained composure, and released him from the mob[33]. This incident sums up the reluctance of the SR leaders to take the political power their popular support made available to them.

The Menshevik Party

The Mensheviks were the leading force in the Soviet in 1917. Though the SR's overwhelmed them numerically, the exceptional leadership of Tsereteli, Chkheidze and Dan ensured that their policy was predominant. The organisation of the Menshevik party was however plagued with the same weaknesses and vagaries as the other moderate parties. The Mensheviks were originally part of the Marxist Social Democrat party. At the second party congress in 1903, Lenin introduced a number of measures aimed at restricting membership of the higher echelons of the party, and of preventing the membership from challenging the decisions of the party leadership. These measures were vehemently

[33] See Sukhanov [1955] pp. 444-7, for an eye witness account.

opposed by the prominent Russian Social Democrat Martov, who was followed by the majority of the Social Democratic party. Lenin had his proposals approved by the remainder of the party at the truncated second conference, but astutely labelled his own group the Bolsheviks, meaning the majority, and those in the party who did not support him the Mensheviks, meaning the minority. The split in the Social Democrats was not to be healed, and each faction became a party in its own right. The Mensheviks had been formed in opposition to centralisation of power, and became champions of free discussion and decentralization. Whilst such sentiments were admirable the Mensheviks, like the SR Party, failed to construct a cohesive party structure, or to have significant cohesion in policy. This lack of cohesion was to afflict the Mensheviks with disunity and impotence as 1917 progressed.

The Mensheviks did have more cohesive policy lines than the SR's. They were agreed in the belief that Russia was an exceptional model, and dominated not by class struggle but by bureaucracy. The Russian peasant was underdeveloped, and was not ready for socialism in 1917. Any attempt to introduce it was premature, as the bourgeoisie had to develop politically and economically before socialism could be feasible. For this reason, February was regarded as a bourgeois revolution, and it was imperative that the Socialists did not attempt to gain power. The Mensheviks essentially stood by this belief in 1917, consistently refusing on the behalf of the Soviet the power that was offered it. Dual power was their acceptable interim measure, as reflected in the writings of Martov, Plekhanov and Axelrod[34].

Initially, they pledged that the Soviet should not be involved in the Provisional Government, as its role was to supervise the bourgeoisie, and not to become entangled with them. They also held a long-standing antipathy towards the liberals, as a result of their Marxist origins, which had them view the liberals as their imperialist enemies. This made any collaboration difficult. The demonstrations provoked by the April crisis over war aims decided Tsereteli that the Provisional Government could not stand without assistance from the socialists, and in view of the external threat facing Russia, there was to be a temporary alliance of enemies against a foreign enemy. This attitude was at the heart of the difficulties faced by the Provisional Government.

The main problem with their attitude towards the Provisional Government was that the compromise with the liberals was always tenuous, and when placed under any strain, it disintegrated into open hostility. The irony of this was that the basic policies of the Kadets

and the Mensheviks often had similar aims. On the Nationalities question, for example, which caused the fall of the first Coalition government with the Kadets' resignation on July 2nd, the basic aims of Kadets and Mensheviks were similar. Neither wanted a splintering of Russia, but were aware of the need for stronger local government, and both wanted to await the convening of the Constituent Assembly for such matters to be decided. Yet these common aims could not prevent the respective party's factional attitudes from coming to the fore. The Kadets resigned in frustration, and Tsereteli tried to exclude them from the next coalition. Closer collaboration with the Kadets could have improved the viability of the coalition, but this was a step that both sides seemed unwilling to make.

The Kornilov affair sealed the ill will between the coalition members. The apparently stark choice between a military coup for the restoration of order, and continuation of the new revolutionary freedoms caused a polarisation between the parties. The Mensheviks fled to the political left, where aided by Bolsheviks and SR's, they hastened to defend the revolution[35]. The Kadets, as we have already discussed, responded uncertainly, which created even greater mistrust amongst the socialist camp. From being dubious bedfellows, the Kadets became untenable ones, and the Provisional Government coalitions after August were in name only, as the Mensheviks shied clear of any collaboration with the Kadets. The Kornilov affair resulted in making the coalition quite unfeasible.

Tsereteli, who was the leader of the Menshevik party in 1917, was an exceptional politician in many ways. He was an outstanding orator, and had the ability to mix with men of different political loyalties. He was the defining factor for the Mensheviks in 1917, and held the Menshevik party together, ensuring that it led the Petrograd Soviet. In some respects one can see that he shared some of Kerensky's more worthy characteristics; he was relatively young, yet understood that the coalition was essential if Russia was to avoid civil war. Unlike Kerensky, though, he was calm and thoughtful, and his oratory carried intellectual clout. He had a number of weaknesses as a political leader however. There were no real efforts made to strengthen the party organisation and to combat factionalism, or to increase mass membership. This meant that they lacked a solid support base from which to work effectively. The Mensheviks effectively disregarded the peasantry, but in Moscow and Petrograd, which should have been their strongholds, they polled only 2% of the vote

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[34] Basil [1984] p. 35

[35] Browder and Kerensky [1961], 3, doc's 1284-1286, describe the Soviet reaction to the Kornilov affair, the arming of the workers, and the release of Bolsheviks arrested for their part in the July days.

in the Constituent Assembly elections[36]. Tsereteli's steadfast determination that Socialists should not have power in 1917 was not to be shifted by the changing political scene in Russia, and displayed a dangerous remoteness from the real political situation.

The reaction of the Mensheviks to crises displayed a certain political naiveté. Despite Lenin's open professions that he intended to seize power, they could not stomach any really harsh measures against the Bolsheviks. This is typified by their reaction to the July crisis. Though they launched a bitter campaign in their papers against the Bolsheviks, many Mensheviks were reluctant to see Lenin punished, and could not accept that there was a danger from the left. Their attitude towards the working classes, their apparently natural followers, was ambiguous. Though they encouraged the working class to press for improved conditions and wages, and castigated factory owners, they chided those involved in the workers' control movement, since this was beyond what could be permitted within their theoretical structure.

As with the SR's, Menshevik party disunity focused around the war. One can categorise four main streams of thought regarding the prosecution of the war. On the far right was Plekhanov's group, which called for defeat of the Central Powers. Potresov's group favoured self-defence, encouraging socialists to support all defensive measures. The moderate Zimmerwaldists accepted that defensive measures were necessary, but called for a socialist peace. The extreme Zimmerwaldists, led by Martov, opposed all measures, like the war industry committees, that prolonged the war, even in the name of defence of Russia[37]. The Soviet 'Appeal to the Peoples of the World' was a compromise measure, which succeeded in uniting a wide swathe of Menshevik support. Whilst laying responsibility for the war on the shoulders of the Imperialists, and calling for a prompt peace, it also emphasised the need for the defence of Russia, which made it acceptable to the defencists and the moderate Zimmerwaldists. This apparently successful compromise on war policy was only ever a veneer. The followers of Martov who confusingly called themselves Menshevik internationalists became increasingly errant, and though they didn't actually break away from the body of the Menshevik party until after Lenin's seizure of power, they were a constant irritant to Tsereteli. The Mensheviks did pursue internationalist aims throughout 1917, though they met with scant success. The plans for a

[36] See tables 7 and 8 showing results of the Constituent Assembly elections, pp. 139-141
[37] Basil [1984] p. 36

Stockholm peace conference foundered, as Menshevik internationalism proved inadequate to its task[38].

One begins to get a real feel of the Mensheviks and their peculiar halfway position when studying the proclamations of the Soviet. On the one hand, they congratulated the workers, soldiers, or whoever, on their new freedoms and dignities, but on the other, chided them, and asked for their obedience to the Provisional Government. And while they accused the liberals, or the capitalists, of being partly to blame for the problems the country faced, they were co-operating with the self same liberals and capitalists within the Provisional Government. There was always a note of reserve in the Soviet support for the Provisional Government, as indeed the policy of the Soviet and the Mensheviks was that the Soviet should take the role of a critical supervisor[39]. Though Tsereteli saw that the Provisional Government could not survive without the support of the socialists, he perhaps overestimated the buoyancy of the Provisional Government and its ability to be criticised. Kerensky said of the pressure the Soviet exerted on the Provisional Government;

'Conscientiously executing the part of a kind of responsible opposition to the government, the soviets never measured their own pressure by the weakness of resistance both of the broken administrative machinery and of the bourgeois classes, crushed by the weight of the fall of the monarchy'[40].

The Menshevik Party programme was unimplementable in 1917. They desired the development of the bourgeois phase of the revolution. They recognised that the bourgeois liberals required the support of the socialists if the revolution was to continue at all. Yet they did not take the next step, which was that if Russian democracy was to have a chance there had to be an agreement amongst the forces of society that were working towards that goal. And for all the differences in philosophy between the Kadets, the Mensheviks, and the SR's, they all wanted to have a Constitutional Assembly summoned, that would debate and resolve the issues facing Russia. If this had been placed before empty theory and party affiliation, perhaps the coalition would have fared better.

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[38] See pp. 39-43 on Menshevik led attempts for peace.

[39] Editorial in *Izvestiia*, March 29th, on the question of dual power, Browder and Kerensky [1961] [1961], 3, doc 1052, pp. 1218-9. Another excellent example of the confused stance of the Soviet with regard to Provisional Government policy is the *Izvestiia* editorial which urges that economic demands be made by labour with the resumption of work. This combined encouraging worker militancy with a request to return to work. [Browder and Kerensky [1961], op cit., 2, doc 609, pp. 709-10]

[40] Kerensky [1932] p. 14

Conclusions

The three moderate parties all foundered partly as a result of their lack of coherence and a firm party organisation and discipline. It is clear that for the socialists, the effects of years of underground organisation damaged their chances of proving an effective force in 1917. As for the Kadets, their organisation of gentlemen's clubs could not possibly provide the sort of assertive leadership and unity required to challenge the Bolsheviks. All three parties lacked experience of coalition politics, and in compromising their principles. The two socialist parties saw the need for coalition politics in 1917 if civil war was to be avoided, yet were unable to reconcile their differences constructively. One gets a feeling from all three parties that there was too much doctrine and not enough practical politics. A more unforgivable aspect, though, was the degree to which personal enmity interfered with political life in 1917 and obscured certain political necessities.

This brief study of the moderates does offer some alternatives to the Bolshevik coup. The SR-Menshevik alliance, which was strong between March and September, had the potential to prevent the Bolsheviks from gaining control of the Soviets, and to bring together the popular support of the SR's and the mature leadership of the Mensheviks. The inability of the moderate socialists to recognise or respond to 'a threat from the left' made them very vulnerable to Lenin's machinations.

Miliukov and the Kadets emerge as a real spanner in the works of effective coalition. Although they had the greatest political experience, their policies were so far from those of the socialists that reconciliation on certain key issues seems impossible. They would not accept radical social change that was surely inevitable in 1917, preferring to cling to their old principles of legitimacy and constitutional democracy.

CHAPTER FOUR

The Military Crisis in 1917

The Provisional Government's most significant inheritance from the Tsarist regime was the war. The war had bearing on every conceivable area of policy, and severely restricted the Provisional Government's scope for making any immediate improvements in the lives of most Russians that could have afforded the new government a measure of goodwill. Instead, although ground breaking legislation in terms of human rights were enacted, Russia's new government spent most of its time tussling with the problems that the war burdened Russia with including, critically, the legacy of the previous administration and the composition and political mood of the army. The government was essentially at an impasse between the demands from the newly revolutionized army to retain its new found rights and freedoms, and the expectations of the general staff that the government had to take stern measures to restore military discipline. To step too far from either set of demands was to risk plunging into the mire of civil war that Kerensky and his government sought to avoid.

Logistical problems of the war

Britain declared war on Germany on 4th August, and Russia, as her ally, promised a mobilisation of unprecedented speed. This was achieved, but at the expense of the recruits receiving in many cases only the most perfunctory training. There were a number of serious logistical problems associated with the running of a modern war that were peculiar to Russia[1].

Russia faced a total blockade on trade. With the western frontier and the Dardanelles closed, Russia had no ice-free sea port in the first months of the war. The railway link to Murmansk was not constructed until autumn 1915, so until then all foreign trade had to go through Vladivostok. In autumn of 1914, exports fell by 99%, and imports by 97.5%[2]. All domestic industry had to be converted for military production in order to furnish the war

[1] Kerensky [1930] pp. 503-507
[2] Kerensky [1930] p. 504

effort, and this led to a trade break between town and country[3]. Unable to buy the goods they wanted, the peasants were increasingly reluctant to part with their grain. The evidence shows that the peasants ate more grain and fed their animals better in the years 1915-17. This food crisis in the towns was exacerbated by army consumption; in 1916 the army consumed 17 million tons of grain, a figure which was two thirds of total pre-war consumption[4]. One can estimate a similar proportion of consumption in meat, fats, sugar and leather. The prohibition of vodka sales deprived the treasury of one third of its revenue, as vodka sales were a state monopoly, and gave the peasants further cause to keep their grain. With no vodka to buy, the peasants, and even the soldiers, in one account[5], used their grain in illicit stills to assuage their thirst.

Russia's weak infrastructure was accentuated by the blockade. The railways, although greatly expanded since the 1880's, were limited, and the amount of rolling stock was insufficient for transporting vast numbers of troops and supplies around Russia. As the rolling stock was worn out, there was no way of acquiring replacements. An extra strain on the rail network was the fuel shortage. Pre-war, Petrograd metal factories had functioned on coal imported from England. Supplies were utilised from the Donets basin to evade the blockade, but the transportation of this coal only placed further strain on the rail network[6].

There were no telephone lines established, and few telegraph lines, making rapid communication between commanders very difficult, and as the roads were very patchy, commanders often had to rely on dispatch riders to get their messages through. This was slow and unreliable. These very simple factors were major problems for conducting a large modern war over a very broad front. The difficulties with the railways meant that movement of troops was slow and inefficient; troops often had to cover great distances on foot, which sapped morale and strength. Just as critical was the movement of supplies for the troops and fodder for the horses, which was seriously impeded[7].

Profile of the Soldiers

Whilst these logistical considerations are important factors in assessing the difficulties faced by the Provisional Government in administering the war, their problems focused

[3] See chapter 2, pp. 35-39, for details of the consequences of the trade break.
[4] Kerensky [1930] p. 506
[5] Wildman [1987] ,2, p. 144
[6] Kochan [1966] p. 171, details figures of coal production in Russia, and states that prior to the war the government had run down rail expenditure, so that by 1916 there were fewer locomotives than at prewar levels, and carriage production was at 60% of pre war levels.

around the response of the soldiers involved in the war to the situation they faced. In order to assess this adequately, it is important to know who these soldiers were, and what motivated them in 1917.

The sheer numbers of men mobilised during the Russian campaign are mind boggling. Estimates vary, but Wildman estimates a total mobilisation figure of 15.3 million[8]. Another estimate puts the figure at 13.7 million mobilised by April 1917, adding to a peacetime army of 1,423,000[9], making a total of 15.123 million. Of these troops, the casualties, including those captured, are estimated at between 6 and 7 million. This casualty rate was unprecedented in any of the other combatant armies[10]. The rapidity and relative ease of the mobilisation has been cited as evidence of peasant enthusiasm for the war[11]. The weight of evidence, however, suggests that the general attitude to the war was sullen resignation, with Oskin characterising the young soldiers as lighthearted and indifferent, and the older men as depressed. There was no open rebellion, but there was a general reluctance[12].

There are inherent problems in trying to categorise the motivations and mentalities of over 15 million men. The 'grey masses' were not after all, a single homogenous mass, but men drawn from all over the empire, holding a bewilderingly wide range of desires and opinions. Despite this difficulty, one can establish some common ground amongst the mobilised men, and look for the basic driving forces within them that were to shape their reactions to 1917. This chapter will deal with factors with direct bearing on the events of revolution, and avoid the factors which , though significant in the decline of Tsarism (such as the Rasputin affair) did not effect the Provisional Government's tenure.

It is clear that the First World War was an unprecedented drain on Russia's manpower, and that it drew not just on the youth one traditionally associates with call up, but on the older generation, men who were veterans of the Russo-Japanese war, and did not, perhaps, expect to be called up again. The figures below show that reservists, territorials and exemption holders were in a substantial majority of the mobilised men.

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[7] Browder and Kerensky [1961] , 2, pp. 647-652, doc. 561, as one example
[8] Wildman [1987] ,1, p. 52
[9] Meyendorff [1932] p. 16
[10] Wildman [1987] ,1,p. 84
[11] For example Ferro [1972] p. 4; describing the mobilisation in glowing terms, with the Russian soldiers 'as one in their desire to defend their native soil'.
[12] Wildman [1987] ,1, p. 76.

Table two, showing ages of enlisted men

Age range	Class	number
24-26	peacetime- pre 1914	1,400,000
18-24	enlisted 1914-1919	4,200,000
27-40	Reservists	8,100,000
20-43	Territorials and exempt	6,400,000

One can reflect that Japanese war veterans were particularly threatening to the morale of the troops; they had been involved in Russia's major and humiliating defeat, and no doubt carried tales of inept leadership and defeat. There was widespread dissatisfaction amongst the older men about having been called up. In the protests in Petrograd in the first few days of July, there was a specific contingent of 40 year old servicemen demanding discharge[13]. In May, the Provisional Government authorised leave for the over 40's to help in the fields, and released the over 43's[14]. For Kerensky to have released them on the eve of the great planned offensive is an indication of the persistence of their demands, or of senior incompetence. This measure had potential to win the Provisional Government some measure of support, but was frustrated by the placing of restrictions on the number of men who could be away from any company at one time. The chaos of competitive demands to be released must have caused a nightmare of administration for the officers, and no doubt fostered ill will at the inequity of the measure.

Due partly to the speed of the mobilization, the training of the new recruits was skeletal. New recruits were given just six weeks of training, and reservists, even the older ones, were often simply issued some equipment and put in marching order. This had a number of implications. Bushnell[15] suggests that the Tsarist army was ineffective as a militarising force, and that in the garrisons one could see echoes of the peasant communities the soldiers had come from. The perfunctory training men underwent in the First World War meant that the already sketchy militarisation, which was critical in forming the peasant

[13] Browder and Kerensky [1961], 3, p. 1336
[14] Wildman [1987] ,2, p. 367
[15] Bushnell [1980]

masses into soldiers that would obey orders unquestioningly, was impaired. This alone places serious doubts on the arguments of scholars like Ferro[16] and Ashworth[17] who argue that the actions of the soldiers in 1917 were defined by their militarized, coherent nature. A second implication was that men were going into battle ill-prepared, unaccustomed to military drills and orders, with boots that were not yet worn in, and without the narrow mind required of a professional soldier in obeying orders and ignoring his own discomfort. There were instances of soldiers being trained and sent to the front without rifles[18]. The lack of formal militarisation was a major factor in the rapidity of the deterioration of military discipline.

The first few months of the war betrayed the Tsarist government's absolute incompetence and lack of foresight in the requirements of a modern war. There were very serious supply problems, with armaments, with food and supplies, and with boots and clothing. Though the voluntary organisations, headed by the War Industries Committee, did much to remedy the situation, so that by the June offensive of 1917, the army had unprecedented amounts of weaponry and ammunition, the mental scar left on soldiers asked to fight with only one round of ammunition, or with no gun at all, must have been severe. The relationship between command and the troops had to be based on an element of trust; the troops had to believe that the command would care for their needs, and ensure that they received what they required to live, and fight the war. The breakdown of supply so early in the campaign seriously damaged this trust relationship. An additional strain on this relationship was the numerous incidents of senior incompetence. The disastrous campaigns of 1914, so poignantly described by Solzhenitsyn[19], undermined faith in the abilities and the motivations of the senior command. There were widespread rumours about the treasonous actions of 'Germans in high places', a reference to Tsarina Alexandra and her coterie[20]. Although the abdication of the tsar removed 'that German woman' from positions of influence, the rumours of treason in high places persisted when the actions of officers or senior command were perceived to be deliberately incompetent[21].

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[16] Ferro [1971]
[17] Ashworth [1992]
[18] Wildman [1987] ,1, p. 87
[19] Solzhenitsyn [1974]
[20] This suspicion was widespread, but can be typified by Miliukov's famous speech to the Duma, in which he repeatedly asked, 'Is this stupidity or is it treason?', a loosely veiled assault on the palace coterie. Full text of speech in Golder [1964] pp. 154-166
[21] Wildman [1987] ,2, p. 191

The influence of the national minorities in the army is difficult to quantify, but as 45% of the Tsarist empire was non-Great Russian, the inclusion of non-Russians must be considered. White suggests that an attempt was made to distribute the national minority groups widely[22], but this was balanced by the volunteer forces formed from exempt nationalities, including the famous Caucasus Wild Divisions, which became a Bolshevik hotbed. There were also two Latvian brigades, and a Polish division, all of which became staunchly Bolshevik[23]. Ferro comments on the demands of the national minorities to be drafted into their own divisions after the revolution[24], which supports the notion of local allegiances superseding garrison ties. Further evidence for the maintenance of local ties may be seen in the results of the Constituent Assembly in November[25], where the national minority parties gained in all some 14% of the vote from the armed forces.

Regional mixing went on at an unprecedented rate as a result of mobilisation. There were twelve military districts, and each district had a huge network of garrisons usually centred around conurbations. Villagers were billeted in towns, ethnic minorities brought into urban centres, and Great Russians into the ethnic regions. Considering the basically static state of Russian society in terms of people's movement[26], even in 1914, with industrialization progressing steadily, this was a tumultuous change to Russian society. Members of the garrisons brought their own local cultures, beliefs and grievances to the communities in which they were billeted, along with the bustle of military life. A two way social exchange went on, with the garrisons affecting the towns in which they were billeted, as the populations affected the members of the garrison. This factor must be given due consideration when considering the rapidly changing political climate and attitudes of Russia in 1917.

The Petrograd Garrison

The interplay between garrison and host town was nowhere more significant than in Petrograd. Because of the exceptional influence that this garrison had on national events in 1917, its composition and motivations will receive special attention. A critical point for the

[22] H. White, [1992] p. 153
[23] Wildman [1987] ,1, p. 103
[24] Ferro [1971] p. 486
[25] See tables 7 and 8 showing results of the Constituent Assembly elections, pp. 133-5.
[26] Waldron [1997] p. 80 claims that the rural community was not static, citing the growth of cities and the migrations to Siberia. This interpretation is open to debate however, as the percentage of the community moving was still small when the 1897 census was taken; only one in seven was found to have been away from their birth town. Note too, that it was often difficult for peasants to break their

Provisional Government was whether it could have better secured the support of the Petrograd Garrison, which was to prove so influential in the power broking of 1917. Shliapnikov predicted that the key to success or failure of the workers' riots in Petrograd lay with the soldiers. The widespread mutinies of the Petrograd Garrison on February 27th were a turning point of revolution; from being another hunger *bunt*, or riot of the Petrograd workers, the movement in Petrograd became a shifter of nations, toppling Russia's autocracy, and ushering in a new era in Russian history. Refusal of the troops to fire on the protesting workers and mutinies in the barracks sealed the fall of Tsarism.

Wildman estimates that the Petrograd Garrison numbered 180,200, with an additional 151,900 stationed in the suburbs. Of the 180,200, the overwhelming majority [117,000] were reservists, made up mostly of new recruits and recuperating veterans[27]. Ashworth suggests that 30,000 of these reserves were recovering veterans[28], making the vast majority of the reserves new recruits. Several authorities refer to the large numbers of new recruits that had come from the ranks of the workers who had lost their exempt status through strike action[29]. Though this element is hard to quantify, it was an example of the political shortsightedness of the authorities. Placing radicalised workers into the garrison was surely the quickest way of ensuring a spread of radical ideas within the garrison, and enhancing soldier sympathy for the striking workers.

Though no accurate figures are available, the presence of the over 40's in the reserves is commented on frequently enough to make it a factor worth consideration. This age group were notorious for their hostility towards the war and their high desertion rate[30]. It is important to note that many of the veterans were in Petrograd from the front to recover from wounds and illness[31]. Their low morale may have affected the new recruits, and increased their fears of what lay ahead at the front. Ashworth's argument that the mutiny of the garrison was based upon military responses, the use of wartime tacit truce experience, and of the strong bonds felt between men training and fighting together, is not supported by these figures. The camaraderie and group co-operation that Ashworth cites

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links with the commune; in 1902, roughly 90% of industrial workers in Moscow were legally peasants. (in Johnson [1976] p. 652)

[27] Wildman [1987] ,1, p 124-5

[28] Ashworth [1992] p. 457

[29] Wildman [1987],1, p. 157, and Sukhanov [1955] p. 37, claimed that ' there were great numbers of politically conscious and party elements in all the units of the Petrograd garrison'. Though there is no direct reference to formerly exempt workers, here, I suspect it was an allusion to it, for the party elements were chiefly to be found among workers.

[30] Wildman [1987] ,1, p. 157

[31] Schapiro [1984] p. 37

as evidence for his theory can be explained by group mentality and the mutineers' fear of reprisal causing them to cling together in large numbers, as a sort of collective responsibility.

Some commentators[32] have suggested that had the officers acted decisively and boldly, widespread mutiny could have been averted. The evidence rebuts this proposal. There were strong reasons for the partly trained peasants in greatcoats to have refused orders to fire on unarmed civilians, and to rebel against the discipline which held them in place only nominally. The ease and rapidity with which the mutiny spread is a reflection on the fallacy of discipline in the corps. It demonstrates that any show of obedience and discipline was a facade, which when threatened by orders the troops were unwilling to obey, simply crumbled away. The actions of individual officers were ineffective against this tide of revolt. The heroic, but ultimately doomed stand of the Bicycle Battalion does not, as Katkov[33] suggests, display the potential for the success of brave and forthright officers; rather, it shows that such gestures were gestures alone, and futile in the face of the flood. Further evidence of the ineffectiveness of good leadership in the midst of the mutiny was that of General Kutepov who, fresh from the front, was sent by Khabalov, the district commander, to restore Petrograd to order. He started the day with a group of disciplined men, and when he saw large groups of soldiers milling about, clearly undecided about the course of action, he successfully enjoined them to accompany him. As the day progressed, however, his new recruits melted away into the swirling crowds, and he saw the necessity to return to barracks at once before his own men, thought to be loyal, succumbed to the temptations of joining the milling crowds[34].

The Petrograd garrison's mutiny was important on the basis that it led the workers' demonstrations from insurrection into revolution. The garrison's importance took on a whole new aspect, however, when considering its influence on the political decisions taken in Petrograd. Kerensky was unique among the Duma members, in that he recognised immediately the significance of the soldiers, both in the making of the revolution, and its maintenance. It was Kerensky that called on the troops to assemble at the Winter Palace, thus identifying the Duma with the newborn revolution. Though other Duma members were rather sneering, asking him throughout the 27th February, when 'his' troops would

[32] For example Katkov [1967] pp281-2, p. 277; states that the officers did not act, the implication being that had they acted, the mutiny could have been averted.
[33] Katkov [1967] p. 275
[34] Wildman [1987] ,1, pp.148-50. Full account in Katkov [1967] pp. 278-80, taken from the memoirs of General Kutepov.

arrive, arrive they did, albeit on the following day[35]. Their presence was to give the Provisional Government a good measure of its authority. The events had shown, after all, that the power brokers, for a few hours at least, were not the politicians and the generals desperately negotiating with the old regime, but the 'grey masses', the people of Petrograd in the streets. In this sense, for a short while, the Petrograd Garrison can be said to have truly made this revolution a revolution of the people. That said, the soldiers who cluttered the once exclusive halls of the Winter Palace were not reliable guardians of the young revolution. Kerensky, quick to seize on the moment when he greeted the first surge of troops, welcomed them as the protectors of the revolution, and selected some to guard the Palace[36], but they were soon swept away by the incoming waves of soldiers.

The concern that the revolutionary troops would not be disciplined enough to protect their revolution prompted Kerensky to enlist the help of Sokolov in the newly formed Soviet, who recommended Mstislavskii and Fillipovski as SR officers that could organise some sort of defence[37].The Petrograd Garrison wielded its political might at an early stage. The Soviet, initially called the Soviet of Workers' Deputies, quickly came alive to the need of the support of the soldiers, causing them to call for the election of soldier deputies to its ranks. The hostility towards the officers expressed by these deputies, along with the need of the Soviet to win support and to have some military backing for the new revolution saw the rapid evolution of order no. 1. This order legitimised the radical changes that had taken place in Petrograd, and initiated a new era of soldier-officer relations, including the abolition of saluting and formal address, the recognition of the soldiers' rights to form committees and be treated respectfully by their superiors, and their full citizens' rights when off duty. A critical factor, though, was that it was addressed solely to the troops of Petrograd, and stated that they would not be sent to the front, but that they would remain in Petrograd as guardians of the revolution. This, essentially, granted the Petrograd Garrison its primary demands, something that was perhaps necessary to gain the political support the Soviet required. What made order no 1 earth shattering however, was that it was printed in large numbers and sent through the whole army, which despite Order no. 2 trying to limit its content to Petrograd, legitimised the revolutionary changes in the whole army.

[35] Kerensky [1927] pp.8-14 for a rather breathless account of events as Kerensky saw them. Whilst lacking breadth of vision, this account serves to give some insight into the heated pace of events.
[36] Kerensky [1927] pp.14-15
[37] Mstislavskii [1988] pp. 33-34

Provisional Government policy

The Provisional Government faced a difficult situation from the very beginning. They were aware of the general need for peace, but were compelled, by their commitments to the allies, by the real external threat Russia faced, and by the demands of patriotism, to continue the war until victory. From the earliest days, there was pressure over what terms this victory should be under. This conflict precipitated the first real crisis for the Provisional Government in April, over Miliukov's note to the allies assuring them that despite the Provisional Government and Soviet declarations on revised war aims, Russia would hold firm to the secret treaties agreed with the allies. The publication of this note provoked a flurry of demonstrations in Petrograd. It was particularly significant for the soldiers, since it was the first mistake on the part of the Provisional Government, and left them wide open to Lenin's claims that the Provisional Government was using the war for the pursuance of their own gains, at the expense of the toiling masses[38]. This encouraged a move of soldier loyalty towards the Soviet, which , as the body instigating order no. 1 and issuing the statement of revised war aims, 'without annexations, indemnities or contributions', was increasingly identified as the body which protected soldiers' interests.

The 'Soviet Appeal to the Peoples of All the World, and the Resolution of War Aims[39]' is a useful illustration of the way in which political statements were misunderstood. The declaration was taken by some to mean that the Soviet had declared defensive warfare only, leading to mistrust of the officers, who the men felt were misleading them in attempting to get them to make any advance[40]. Whether this misreading of the meaning was deliberate or inadvertent is hard to assess, but one must bear in mind that the peasant population had generations of experience in interpreting official measures to their own advantage.

The most notorious piece of legislation credited to the Provisional Government is, of course, order no. 1[41]. This legislation was actually published before the Provisional Government was in formal existence on March 3rd; it was issued by the Soviet on March 1st, and was intended to apply only to the Petrograd Garrison. Whilst one cannot deny that the contents of order no. 1 were far reaching, it was not as significant as the generals

[38] VOSR, avgust, doc. 121, for example.
[39] Browder and Kerensky [1961], 2, p 1076, doc. 941
[40] Gaponenko [1968] p. 42
[41] See Browder and Kerensky [1961], 2, doc's 744-7 for details of order no 1

asserted. The generals and the right wing generally[42] blamed the order for the collapse of discipline in the army, but the only way of preventing this collapse of discipline at the front would have been to totally isolate the front from the news of the new situation at the rear. This was patently not possible. The situation at the front was already demoralised, with levels of fraternisation and desertion rising, and the news of the revolution, once its full implications were established, could not fail to revolutionize the relations between officers and men. The officers, after all, were the representatives of the Tsar in the field, and the war that they fought was widely recognised as the Tsar's war. When the potent symbol of Tsarism fell, what was left to keep the soldiers in obeisance to the officers? Study of Provisional Government legislation in the early months of the revolution sees an attempt to ride the mood of the times, to harness support by legitimising the existing situation. The bill of soldiers' rights is an adequate example of this damage limitation exercise; whilst saying little that did not already exist about soldiers' rights, it attempted to place restrictions on the freedom the soldiers enjoyed, leading the Bolsheviks to coin the phrase that it was the 'Declaration of soldiers' rightlessness'[43]. For example, article 14 stated that in times of active engagement with the enemy, the officer had the right to apply armed force if necessary to ensure that his orders were carried out. That such a measure should be so fiercely resented in a time of active war is a reflection of the problems the Provisional Government faced in continuing an active war campaign.

The decision abolishing the death penalty, however, was one which fitted not only the mood of the nation, but also the mood of the intelligentsia that framed it. For men like Kerensky, who had spent much of his adult life campaigning against barbarity of all kinds, it was highly satisfactory to have removed the death penalty. The problem was, of course, that this measure removed an element of compulsion from military discipline, which from a human rights standpoint was a positive thing, but from the point of the generals was seen as a direct cause of the deterioration of discipline. And certainly, if the demoralisation of the troops was as bad as some sources suggest[44], it would take nothing short of the death penalty to force the men to obey orders.

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[42] See the conference at Stavka on July 16th, in which the commanding staff express their views, for example. Though the generals, particularly Denikin, refer to a number of matters, the general trend opposes the committee system and the relaxation of old measures of discipline embodied in order no. 1.Browder and Kerensky [1961], 2, doc. 875,pp. 989-101. Also, General Knox [1921] pp. 567, 572, 574-6, and Tereschenko in Browder and Kerensky [1961], 3, p. 1420

[43] Wildman [1987] ,2, p. 23

[44] VOSR, mai-iiun, pp. 336-7; a soldier's letter describing the troops' utter alienation, and the overwhelming demand for peace.

The committee system, which was legitimised by order no. 1, involved the election of soldier representatives to committees intended to monitor the wishes of the troops, and took on a far more significant role than was intended by the Provisional Government, in some cases superseding the authority of the commanding officer. Initially, there was a lot of senior command hostility to the committees, which were felt to intrude on the prerogatives of officers. Denikin, for example, claimed never to have cooperated with a committee, and was staunchly hostile to them[45]. General Alexseev, however, was perceptive to recognise the committees as a source of support for the command structure, and suggested that officers, instead of resisting them, actually participate. This strategy was to prove remarkably effective in the months leading to the offensive in June, and the committee system became one of the staunchest supporters of the June offensive.

When Kerensky took over the portfolios of the War and the Army and Navy on May 5th, and Tereschenko replaced Miliukov as Foreign Minister, there was a definite change of tone, if not of actual policy content. Kerensky played a double game, trying to reassure the allies that Russia would remain a leading force, the officers and the generals that he would strive to restore order, and above all, the ordinary soldier that the Provisional Government, embodied in Kerensky, was acting in their best interests, and appealed to them to defend her new Government and Russia, with their lives if necessary. There are some real contradictions here, not least that the restoration of army discipline that the military command required was at loggerheads with the needs of the soldiers to have their new rights protected. These new rights were precisely what the command objected to, attributing the collapse of army discipline to the new regime.

The June offensive was the linchpin of Kerensky's policies as Minister of War. The offensive had been promised to the allies, and was initially part of a plan for a joint offensive with the French. The big question was whether the disparate Russian troops would be capable of reforming and going on the attack. Reports from the generals varied[46]. Kerensky himself is widely attributed with having made the offensive possible at all. His tours of the front, and tireless oratory, gave many officers the capacity to give their troops orders at all. Denikin suggested that Kerensky was in a state of 'self hypnosis'[47], not recognising the true rocky state of affairs. This is not altogether fair. He turned up,

[45] Wildman [1987], 2, 177

[46] Browder and Kerensky [1961] , 2, doc's 808-814, pp. 921-928. These anomalies may be due in part to different generals reporting on different fronts, and also a political element; Katkov asserts that Brusilov foolishly supported Kerensky's bid for an offensive as he was anxious not to break with the government. (Katkov, [1980] p. 26)

gave his speech, won the apparently undying devotion of the men he addressed, and moved on[48], except in a few exceptional cases where there was organised Bolshevik dissent[49]. From the response he received, he would have every reason to believe that he had succeeded in galvanising the Russian front for an offensive. He was not fully aware that the power of his oratory to sway the soldiers was only skin deep; the overwhelming drive for an end to the war overwhelmed his rhetoric.

The offensive began on June 12th, and after initial success was hailed as a great victory. This was premature, however, as reserves refused to relieve the men in new forward positions, and the endless meetings endemic on the front were renewed at every officers' order[50]. It is difficult to categorise the soldiers' resistance to the offensive, as it took many forms, but it is clear from the generals' reports and from the results of the offensive that resistance was widespread. There was some outright mutiny, while some units were unworkably rowdy. The only form of punishment available to the soldiers was disbandment, which was rarely used, and besides only distributed the rebellious elements more widely[51]. The barrage of disorder and mutiny in early July after the failure of the offensive initiated wide scale disarming operations, a real irony when only a month before the Government had pushed for offensive.

The evidence shows that men were reluctant in the extreme to make any advances, citing the Soviet declaration on war aims as evidence that they had no business on foreign soil. Also, when retreating men hit Russian soil, they showed much more willingness to dig in and defend their motherland, than some unknown place. Here, Ferro's suggestion that the soldier masses were basically patriotic, in the sense that they wanted to defend their country against invaders, is supported. This essential patriotism conflicted in the soldier with suspicions that the war was not essentially about defending Russia, but about lining

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[47] Heenan [1987] p. 104

[48] Browder and Kerensky [1961], 2, doc. 851, pp.962-966, Sukhanov, p. 362-3

[49] Kerensky [1966] p. 282, for a poignant account of Kerensky confronting a so-called Bolshevik agitator, and successfully winning over the man's comrades, and shaming the agitator himself. Knox [1921] pp. 638-9, tells of a more unnerving incident when Kerensky, visiting the Southwestern front, addressed 6,000 of the 10,000 men of the 2nd division of the guard, while the other 4,000 held a rival meeting, refused to listen to Kerensky, and chanted anti-war and anti-bourgeois slogans.

[50] See Heenan [1987] chapter 8, for a detailed account of the offensive, and Wildman [1987] ,2, chapter 3, for in-depth analysis of the forms of soldier resistance against the offensive.

[51] Wildman [1987] ,2, pp. 73-104

the pockets of the rich[52], and that the senior command was not to be trusted as the organisers of the defence of Russia.

The use of Shock Battalions, that is, individuals or regiments who volunteered to lead the attack, had mixed results. Though the concentration of loyal forces did enable them to spearhead attacks effectively, they faced unusually high casualty rates because they were leading the assaults, which meant that the core of the Provisional Government's most loyal forces were wiped out. Kerensky had hoped to inspire a move towards the shock battalions by offering a special insignia to be worn on the sleeve, but there was little real enthusiasm for the scheme; many shock battalion personnel were loyalist officers eager to escape the pressures of their unruly troops. This policy is a good example of a Provisional Government initiative which was misguided; though aiming to strengthen the war effort, it actually had a negative effect in the army overall.

The June offensive can be seen as a real turning point in the fortunes of the army. Its resounding defeat, and the criticism the soldiers faced in the bourgeois press, served to alienate them and look away from the committees, who had supported the offensive and the Provisional Government initiatives. This contributed to the disenfranchisement of the soldiers, whose interests were no longer represented by the bodies that they had elected to represent them. Many examples of this conflict can be seen in the literature on the period, where the delegations from the front spoke in Petrograd with resoundingly patriotic and upstanding tone, whereas the letters from the trenches imparted a tone of defeatism, bitterness and even despair[53].

Army disintegration

The response to the new legislation that hit the army after the February revolution has already been studied. The creeping insubordination of 1916 gave way to open refusal of orders, and the 'organising' of the soldier masses. This statement may seem too broad; some regiments did remain loyal to their commanders, and maintained discipline. Those unchanged by revolution were in a minority however. Kerensky's vision for the army was that the army would be transformed, on the model of the French revolution, into the

[52] VOSR, avgust, doc. 244, p. 260; a soldier's letter accusing the Provisional Government of being in league with other European capitalists to gain whatever they can from the war.
[53] VOSR, avgust, doc. 244, p. 260. Compare this with reports of improved morale in the army in August, in Browder and Kerensky [1961] , doc's 890-893, pp. 1026-1029. One may infer that the commissar sending such a report was being unduly optimistic.

great, free, Russian revolutionary army, with every man giving his all in the defence of Russia's newly won liberty. The evidence shows that Kerensky's optimism was misplaced.

Heenan reports that on average, of drafted reinforcements trained in the rear in April and the first half of May, between 137 and 215 out of 250 deserted[54]. This meant that few drafted reinforcements actually reached the front, though the transfers were a cause of great unrest and even mutinies in the rear. The rate of desertion is estimated to be much lower at the front than at the rear, but even there, based on General Lukomskii's estimate of 5-7 men per day per division deserting, if extended to the whole army for March 1917 this would amount to 100-150,000 men out of a front army of 7,500,000[55]. In the early stages of 1917, there was still a lot of hostility felt by the men remaining at the front for deserters, where the mood was definitely defensive but not defeatist. There are accounts, too, of deserters who returned to their village being beaten and sent back to their regiment. One can surmise that the attitude towards desertion became more lenient in the latter half of 1917, when persistent rumours spread of imminent peace. What of the significance of these mass desertions? While they do indicate the mass dissatisfaction with the war, particularly at the rear, one should attribute them too much significance. After all, the revolution had engendered a massive turnaround in staff, which surely led to considerable administrative confusion. This made desertion for individuals relatively easy. If the opportunity was there, it is hardly surprising that it was taken, and it reveals nothing exceptional about the Russian troops, except that they were reluctant to go to their deaths. Ferro asserts that individual desertion numbers are exaggerated, and that the desertion of whole regiments in order, while classified as desertion, was in fact a mutiny[56]. He argues that group solidarity held firm, with the defence of mother Russia every man's foremost thought[57].

Though the front initially saw little desertion, Wildman points to the unusually high rate of Russian prisoners of war, and suggests that surrender might have been a form of desertion. There were some 2.4 million Russian prisoners of war, which make categorisation of exact numbers of deserters difficult. He also points out the use of self mutilation and the overstaying of leave, which are not categorised as desertions but ought perhaps to be considered in the figures. This would make the overall rate of desertion from the front much higher.

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[54] Heenan [1987] p. 72
[55] Wildman [1987] ,1, 235
[56] Ferro[1971] p. 511

The Germans made significant efforts to establish fraternisation and a 'virtual peace' on the Russian front. Accounts of how successful they were vary; germanophobia restricted the success of some of their initiatives, but in other areas of the front there was a cease-fire of sorts, particularly in April and May. There are numerous accounts of German agitators sent to Russian troops to negotiate with the troops and to try to convince them that the war was not for their benefit[58]. Bolshevik support of fraternisation is a controversial point as although there is evidence that the mood of the troops was still defensive prior to the June offensive, other sources say that *Pravda's* declaration in favour of fraternisation on June 6th caused a stir, because it was a Russian paper, which gave its claims more legitimacy[59]. It is very difficult to quantify fraternisation, but from accounts of officers, letters from the soldiers, and German accounts of events, it was clearly a factor at the front prior to the June offensive. There are numerous examples of conflicts between the infantry and the artillery, as the artillery were used to disperse fraternisation[60]. It took the Soviet some time to reach a position on fraternisation, as there was considerable appeal in the idea of the working men linking hands over the trenches, but eventually the Soviet declared itself strongly opposed to fraternisation, as its commitment towards support of the war hardened[61].

The Provisional Government did frame a response of sorts to the problems of fraternization and desertion. In their 'Appeal to Deserters and Shirkers'[62], so characteristic of the many appeals for goodwill issued, the Provisional Government offered an amnesty to all deserters returning before May 15th, terms which were generous, and displayed the impotence of the Provisional Government to actually do much about the problem. As Kerensky said, the mechanics of the state had crumbled along with the Tsarist regime, so that the Provisional Government had to 'replace police compulsion by moral conviction'[63].

The soldiers at the front felt increasingly disenfranchised as 1917 wore on; the bodies that purported to represent them, the soldiers' committees, were increasingly dominated by defencist soldiers and officers who supported Provisional Government policy in continuation of the war, yet in the trenches support for an immediate peace grew all the time. This ideological gap between soldier and committee fostered the growth of a

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[57] Ferro [1971] p. 509
[58] Heenan [1987] pp. 92-95
[59] Heenan [1987] p.96
[60] Browder and Kerensky [1961] ,2, doc. 793
[61] Browder and Kerensky [1961], 2, doc. 796, 'Appeal of the Soviet to the army to cease fraternisation'.
[62] Full text in Browder and Kerensky [1961], 2, doc. 791
[63] Kerensky [1932] p. 12

phenomenon Wildman describes as trench bolshevism; that is the bowdlerized form of Bolshevism that became popular in the trenches. This form of Bolshevism was far from the doctrine of Lenin and Krylenko; rather, it adopted the motto for peace, and the hostility against the bourgeoisie, in which categorisation the Provisional Government and the coalition Soviet members were included. That the Bolshevism in the trenches was a hybrid can be seen by the wordings of declarations and letters from the front, which often included the doctrine and wording of the more traditional peasant party, the Socialist Revolutionaries. Heenan suggests though that SR co-operation with the Provisional Government, and their support of the continued war, was a major factor in the turn of the soldiers from them to the Bolsheviks, the only party apparently prioritising peace[64]. The Command blamed reinforcements from the rear for spreading propaganda. Woytinsky suggests that the efforts to involve the men of the Petrograd Garrison in the June offensive was a major factor in the bolshevisation of the troops, as the Petrograd reinforcements arrived at the front full of Bolshevik rhetoric, and bitter about what they perceived as the broken promises of the Provisional Government and the Soviet. The disenfranchisement the front soldiers felt was mirrored in the Petrograd Garrison's relationship with the Soviet.

Soldiers' *Pravda* ran some 50-60,000 copies, and was the staple influence of trench bolshevism. Rather than getting involved in detailed political argument, which was hard for the average soldier to understand, it addressed simple issues like 'The Land Question', and explained the situation and its Bolshevik solution simply. These articles encouraged class hostility, as they blamed the war on the machinations of the *bogachi*, or the wealthy, in all the hostile nations, and in fraternisation saw an alternative to the bourgeois posturing on peace; let the working people on both sides of the trenches lay down their guns and come to a sensible agreement. Such suggestions made sense to men exhausted by war and mistrustful of their commanders. Accusations have been made that the Bolsheviks were financed by German money, and that Bolshevik activities were run in co-operation with the Germans. Though no doubt the German high command recognised an ally of sorts in Bolshevism, the evidence for German finance of the Bolsheviks has been questioned. Bolshevik action certainly weakened the Russian war effort; but it is difficult to establish proof of any direct alliance with the Germans.[65]

[64] Heenan [1987] p. 128

[65] Kerensky devotes a whole chapter to the Bolsheviks' German connections [1934], ch. 16. Lyandres [1995] has since constructed a detailed argument againsts these accusations.

The Officer Corps

The officer corps faced a truly fearsome challenge when revolution rent the army in 1917. The new administration placed much emphasis on the abilities of the officers to come to terms with the new situations. In Yanushkevich and Filonenko's report on their tour of the front, conducted in March, they concluded[66],

In general our impression is excellent, and if only the officers will manage to reorganize relations in accordance with the new principles- which is absolutely necessary- matters will be settled. In our opinion, the way in which the officer corps accomplishes its task is the most critical issue at the present moment.'

It is difficult to categorise the officer corps, not least because it changed its face so rapidly in the course of the war. Russia began the war with 50,300 officers, and 30,500 reserves[67]. By 1917 there were 145,916 officers. There were an estimated 107,000 casualties amongst the officer corps during the war, which means that by subtracting the number of pre-war officers from the total of casualties and number of officers in 1917, one can estimate a figure of 172,116 officers trained in wartime. This massive and rapid influx of new recruits brought in by the war changed the landscape of the officer corps dramatically.

The truly frightening casualty rate, much higher than that of the men they led, is accounted for by the old fashioned practice which was continued in the Russian army of the officer leading his men on attack. It was his role to lead the way, brandishing his useless sword and shouting 'Hurrah!' in a heartening fashion to inspire his men. Whilst such imagery has considerable romantic appeal, it meant the officers were slaughtered, open targets for enemy bullets, thus depriving the men of leadership and assistance, and the attack as a whole from any planned strategy. Subalterns in the British army in the First World War took on a similar role, and also suffered very high casualties.

The professional military academies tried to maintain their pre-war standards, though even they had to reduce the formal education requirements to six years. This educational requirement kept these schools the preserve of the educated classes. Approximately 50,000 officers were trained at these academies during the war, making up approximately 1/3 of all officers. Graduates from these academies could count on rapid military promotion. The majority of wartime trained officers were trained in hastily set up schools, whose recruits one can surmise were often soldiers recommended from the front for good service. Their requirement was for four years of education. Kenez has a sample of 488 trainees from five

[66] Browder and Kerensky [1961] , 2, p. 862

schools in the years 1914-17. The breakdown of their social background is quite revealing. Of this sample, only 13 had had more than six years of schooling, and most were aged between 20 and 25. The preponderance of the lower classes is striking, and evidence that war offered prospects for social mobility as well as for death. The career of General Denikin is a good example of this, as he rose to the rank of general from humble peasant origins[68].

Table three, showing social standing of officers trained in wartime schools 1914-1917[69]

Social category	Number of trainees	Percentage of whole
Nobles	27	5.5%
Honoured citizens	19	3.8%
Merchants	2	0.4%
Clergy	14	2.8%
Meshchanstvo	134	27.5%
Peasants	285	58.4%
Cossacks	7	1.4%

The poor showing of the nobles and middle classes is also notable. Although one may have expected them to have entered the military academies and not these schools, this still leaves them in a minority in the officer corps. Wildman points out the discrepancy between the 1,200,000 gentry and bourgeois sons available for service, and the mere 200,000 in the officer corps. He suggests that many were involved in the administration machinery and the work of the voluntary sector[70]. These figures showing the background of the officers in 1917 illustrate that the popular image of an elitist upper class officer corps is thoroughly misleading. The officer corps had changed very rapidly in the war

[67] Jones [1976] p.21
[68] For more detail on Denikin, see Kenez [1974]
[69] Kenez [1973]
[70] Wildman [1987] ,1, p 102

years. Large numbers of the junior officers were from a strata of society which was associated neither with the intelligenti traditions nor the professional officer schools, nor the old aristocracy. A significant proportion of the officers were of peasant stock.

To further muddy the waters when attempting to categorise the officers and their actions by class is study of which side the officers and NCO's joined when civil war broke out. The figures show that class analysis is clumsy here, as of 2,682 officers and NCO's in the volunteer army of Alexseev and Denikin, more than 1,976 had the rank of captain or lower, which meant that they were almost certainly recruited during the first world war. The some 8,000 officers recruited by the Red Army meanwhile, included a number of pre-1914 men[71]. This is further confused by the practice of both red and white armies of conscripting officers as well as peasants during the civil war. Sheila Fitzpatrick reports that 'by the end of the civil war, the Red army had over 50,000 former Tsarist officers, most of them conscripted; and the great majority of its senior military commanders came from this group. To ensure that the old officers remained loyal, they were paired with political commissars, usually communists[72]'. The element of coercion brought in here makes the figures of officers joining Red or White in the Civil War rather meaningless in terms of interpretations of political allegiance of the officers.

The dramatic changes in officer-soldier relations, described above, and stated clearly in new legislation like order no.1, threw a real challenge to the officer corps. Whilst the habitual response of the officers was caution, this only damaged their prestige in front of the men they commanded[73]. This excerpt from a report of Duma members Yanushkevich and Filonenko, who toured the front, illustrates this,

' We have noticed that the officers who endeavoured to explain to the soldiers the change that has taken place were forgiven their past errors....; but when things were hushed up, when the soldiers were not called together, when the events were not explained or where the explanation was biased, the ground for dreadful distrust has been created.'[74] [March 13th]

The officers were essentially in a no-win situation. The choice they had was clear enough; they either identified themselves as servants of the new regime, and amenable to the gains of the revolution, or risked the wrath of their troops. This could take various forms, from revolutionary arrest, to beatings, lynching and murder. The officers, regardless of their political orientation, lived in the shadow of danger to their own persons. This can be seen

[71] Jones [1976] p. 22
[72] Fitzpatrick [1982] p. 68
[73] Heenan [1987] p. 77.
[74] Browder and Kerensky [1961], 2, p. 861

in Denikin's speech on July 16th at the military conference at Stavka, discussing the failure of the June offensive. Whilst Denikin is a somewhat unreliable witness, as he was prone to exaggeration, this passionate statement gives an idea of what the officer corps faced.

'The officers' corps is in a terrible position... Sokolov, after touring the army, said: "I could never even have surmised that the officers would be such martyrs." Yes, they are martyrs...They are abused...they are beaten. Yes, they are beaten. Hiding in their tents, they sob, but they will not tell about this. They are being killed. There is only one honest way out for officers- it is death...[75]'

Many officers sought to accommodate the changes facing the army and to work in concert with the soldier committees at various levels in order to restore fighting strength. The development of events after the failure of the June offensive, however, disassociated the officers from the soldiers they commanded still further, and created even greater difficulties.

The changing face - stern measures post July

The collapse of the June offensive put new pressures on Kerensky. The generals, who had called repeatedly for measures to restore discipline, now had well publicised evidence to support their claims. The conference of the senior generals at Stavka in July produced a catalogue of demands for the restoration of the death penalty, the curtailing of the committees to solely domestic regimental matters, an apology from the Provisional Government to the officers for the distress they had been caused, and the censorship of all Bolshevik publications, along with a concerted effort to weed out agitators in the ranks. The Russian defeat at Tarnopol was frequently cited as evidence of the cowardly and undisciplined behaviour of the troops, and contributed to Stavka's argument for stern discipline. Study of the military documentation suggests that the treatment of the Russian troops in this instance was unfair; the Germans had mustered nine new divisions that Stavka was unaware of, and had far superior firepower[76]. There was increasing concern about the influence of the Soviet over policy. In short, the demands encapsulated the belief that only a 'strong arm' could restore the army to a battleworthy state. This view did not take into account Kerensky's political position. As he told them himself, if he were to introduce such measures, he would be unable to stand in the chaotic civil war that would surely sweep the country. And here we see the nub of the matter; the generals were proposing a range of changes that would not stop short of civil war. Kerensky, meanwhile, was absolutely committed to avoiding civil war, and to keeping politics within civilised

[75] Browder and Kerensky [1961], 2, doc. 875, pp.995-6.
[76] Wildman [1987] ,2, 114

spheres. To do this however, he had to accommodate some of these generals' demands, in order to keep them within a legitimate sphere.

The reintroduction of the death penalty, and the stern censorship of Bolshevik papers at the front, were then, essential if Kerensky was to gain any good will from the generals. The reintroduction of the death penalty on July 12th can be considered to be the focus of soldier concern about the repression of the soldier masses, and though command reported an immediate improvement, as one would expect them to, there were reports of an intensification of unrest in areas that were already volatile. There was also a more systematic attempt made to disband any thoroughly rebellious regiments. There was certainly need of some measure of discipline in the troops, if any measure of coherence was to be retained. The difficulty was that the indiscipline inherent in the troops was not of a sporadic, localised nature; rather it was a malaise inherent in the troops at the front and the rear. One could not propose the shooting of whole regiments, so the ringleaders or in exceptional circumstances even the whole regiment was disbanded.

These measures of stemer discipline could not possibly address the deeper malady in the troops that was setting in by August. Wildman talks of a 'truce' between officers and soldiers in July, with no open refusals, but plenty of tacit disobedience. This 'truce' is attributed to the cessation of fighting operations and the hot weather[77]. As autumn approached the main issues of discontent were focused on living conditions, food and clothing. There were also rumours of imminent peace, and the mood which was seizing the soldiers was that there was no way the war could continue through that winter. There were efforts of deliberate sabotage, like the discovery that the local peasants were wearing the newly issued winter boots, and refusal of the men to make any preparations for the winter campaign[78]. The conditions the troops faced by the autumn are eloquently described by Louise Bryant, a young American woman who travelled to Russia in 1917,

'Conditions at the front were alarming. There was a shortage of ammunition, of food, of clothing. Soldiers stood, knee-deep in mud, muttering. Many had no coats and the rain came down in a cold, miserable drizzle; many had no boots. . . One regiment had been without food for three days except for some carrots they had dug from a field behind the lines. When an army gets to such a pass anything is possible. This was in October.'[79]

[77] Wildman [1987] ,2, p.144
[78] Wildman [1987] ,2, p.225, p. 229
[79] Bryant [1970] p. 116

The Kornilov affair

The Kornilov affair is a period which has many interpretations, usually according to the political affiliation of the historian writing about it. The right saw Kornilov as a chance for Russia to escape Bolshevism, and the only way forward[80]. Kerensky viewed it as an ill considered right wing coup attempt, which threatened the progress of Constitutional Democracy in Russia[81]. The left saw it as an attempt by the bourgeois Provisional Government, joined by the forces of the right, to put down once and for all proletarian influence. All this is not helpful to the student of the revolution. What matters is less the 'what could have been's', and more the actual result of the Kornilov affair, which was to erode further the support of the Provisional Government, and to strengthen the left. The sketch that follows of the affair is cursory, but is an attempt to see why the affair had such serious implications in 1917.

Kerensky appointed Kornilov commander in chief on July 10th, replacing Brusilov, who had not been popular with the other generals. Kornilov, reputed to be firm but fair, had won some success in the June offensive and was a popular candidate. Kerensky had been particularly attracted to him by what he saw as his political tact, when he issued quite moderate demands, unlike the other generals, at the Stavka conference in July. Kornilov immediately belied this confidence, however, by issuing a list of conditions of his taking the post. These included the reinstatement of the death penalty, an increased role for the commander in chief, with full authority over all army appointments, and thirdly, perhaps most importantly, that he be responsible only to his conscience and the nation.

On the 30th July, Kornilov reported to Yurenev and Peshekhonov that the rail network was incapable of supplying the army. Kornilov insisted that only 'harsh measures' could save the country from total collapse. He was supported by the other generals on his proposed harsh measures, including an apology to the officers for their suffering, full control of the army to the commander in chief, a ban on politics in the army, and the nullification of the declaration of soldiers' rights. The Moscow conference in August turned into a parade of right-wing support for Kornilov, which disconcerted the left, and steeled them with fear of a right wing coup.

The reforms demanded were clearly not acceptable to the coalition government. Kerensky had promised Kornilov that he would consider his proposals, but Savinkov intimated to

[80] Strakhovsky [1972] is a good example of this view
[81] Kerensky's articles and books all express this view in various forms.

Kornilov that the measures were sure to be passed. This caused Kornilov to offer his support for the Provisional Government. Even at this early stage, there was a web of confusion and deceit spreading round the whole affair. The involvement of VN Lvov further complicated matters. The former procurator of the Holy Synod had been replaced by Kartashev in July, and harboured a deep grudge against Kerensky. His role in this affair is critical, but rather difficult to fathom, as his highly subjective accounts of the events vary. In fact, there is every indication that he was verging on insane when he initiated his strange role. On 22nd August Lvov approached Kerensky, and very mysteriously asked him if he would consider entering into (unspecified) negotiations with (unnamed) persons. Kerensky refused, responding that if somebody wished to negotiate with him, they should come forward openly. On 24th August Lvov went to Kornilov, and intimated that Kerensky was willing to accept his proposals. Kornilov assumed Lvov was a genuine mediator, and was understandably agreeable.

On 26th August, Lvov returned to Kerensky and made proposals to him 'from Kornilov'. These proposals included the establishment of martial law in Petrograd and the transfer of all civil and military authority to the Generalissimo. Kerensky responded to this as a declaration of a right wing rising. Matters went from bad to worse here as Kerensky confusingly contacted Kornilov on the Hughes apparatus, impersonating Lvov, and asked him to confirm [unspecified] proposals. Kornilov, without attempting to clarify what these proposals were exactly, agreed that he had transmitted 'proposals'[82]. Without identifying himself, Kerensky terminated the conversation, so that Kornilov was dismayed and astonished to receive his note of dismissal the following day, having understood that he had come to a sensible agreement with Kerensky. Indeed, the shock was such that he fell ill that day, and active duties were taken over by Lukomskii. On the 27th, Kerensky, against the advice of his cabinet who sought a private settlement of the affair with Kornilov, issued a telegram to the whole country, branding Kornilov as having attempted to seize power, and issuing his dismissal[83]. On the 28th , Kornilov responded angrily, denying that he had conspired to bring down the Provisional Government, and

'I, General Kornilov, the son of a Cossack peasant, hereby declare to all and sundry that I myself seek nothing except the preservation of Russia's greatness, and that I vow to guide the people through victory over the enemy, towards a Constituent Assembly so that they may determine their own destiny and choose their new form of Government.'

[82] Browder and Kerensky [1961], 3, pp.1568-9, doc. 1268 offers a full text of this bewildering conversation.
[83] Browder and Kerensky [1961], 3, p 1572, doc 1270

Kornilov's subsequent move of troops on Petrograd were a dismal failure. General Krymov, who was in charge of the movement of troops towards Petrograd, allegedly to halt a Soviet demonstration that was scheduled for the 28th August, was put in a difficult situation. The first echelons of his troops reached Iamburg, Luga and Vyritsa by the 28th. His ability to get his troops to obey his orders depended on their belief in his story of the demonstration, and that they did not get wind of Kerensky's wild proclamation about the attempted right wing coup, issued as a circular telegram on 27th August. The troops, however, could hardly fail to hear the news, as the Soviet had mobilised its forces, and the railroad workers, telegraph operators and local Soviets quickly disseminated the news. Krymov was faced at Luga with government troops, and in the overnight holdup, his Cossacks discussed matters with the troops who opposed them. By the morning, though the Cossacks were not openly rebelling against Krymov, they refused to believe his version of events, and said they would move only on direct orders from Kerensky. Krymov had no alternative but to go to Petrograd himself and report to Kerensky. After this meeting, which ended with Kerensky refusing to shake hands with Krymov, Krymov went to a friend's apartment and shot himself.[84]

The significance of the Kornilov affair lies not so much in these rather muddled events as in the response it evoked in the soldiers and the populace. The Soldier Committees were ready to combat any right wing coup, commandeering communications and halting movement of the troops to the rear, but the July measures restricting the power of the committees assured their transfer of allegiance from the Provisional Government and the Soviet jointly to the Soviet alone. Later revelations of Kerensky's involvement in the affair discredited both him personally and the Provisional Government as a whole. The authority of the Provisional Government, which had always been tenuous, was irrevocably eroded by the apparent confirmation of Bolshevik accusations that it was intimately connected with the right. The Moscow conference and the fall of Riga confirmed soldier suspicions that the counter revolution was centred not solely with Kornilov, but with army headquarters at Stavka. The affair provoked new hostility from the troops towards the

[84] Browder and Kerensky [1961],, doc. 1282, pp. 1586-7, for Kerensky's version of this last meeting with Krymov. Katkov [1980] p. 106, describes Krymov thus; 'Krymov, a very gallant officer, was one of the most enigmatic figures of 1917. He was tall and burly in appearance, well educated but rough spoken, impulsive and given to fits of depression.. After his meeting with Kerensky he seems to have abandoned all hope for Russia's survival'. His death, though only one of the many personal tragedies of the revolution, is particularly affecting as he retained the strong personal code of honour which was torn by the confusion between Kerensky and Kornilov.

officer corps. There was a resurgence of votes of no-confidence and arrests, though given the strength of feeling there were remarkably few lynchings[85].

Katkov's portrayal of Kerensky in his book on the Kornilov affair is thoroughly unfair and does not give his character and his abilities sufficient credit[86]. To be sure, Kerensky, by proclaiming so rapidly and with such hysteria that there was a counter revolution, contributed to the strength of feeling generated, and to the resurgence that the extreme left enjoyed after the Kornilov affair. Had the matter been dealt with quietly as the other cabinet members had proposed, some of the hyperbole could have been avoided. The intrigue of the communications with Kornilov, too, indicate that Kerensky, if not actually supporting Kornilov's moves, was certainly making his own position very ambiguous. However, the activities of the right indicate that there was some threat to the capital from a right movement, giving Kerensky's dramatic response to the right threat more credibility. He was understandably on edge at the thought of defending 'his' revolution.

Conclusions

The problem of the military crisis was very complex. The Provisional Government faced a seemingly impossible task; there was an implicit contradiction in giving soldiers rights to ensure their goodwill, and restoring order in the army as the generals desired. The force of patriotism is awkward, and does not fit easily into the template of 1917, at least as one would ordinarily define patriotism.

Soldiers made their own political decisions and formulated very definite demands in 1917. The significance of the older generation as a part of the soldier body was considerable as a unsettling influence, as was the lack of basic training for recruits, and the profound supply shortages. The mobilisation engendered by the First World War initiated unprecedented societal mixing, and was a catalyst for change in society, and for its brutalisation. Study of the officers shows that they were not a class based homogenous body, but that many were newly promoted as a result of the first world war, and of humble origins.

[85] Wildman [1987] ,2, p. 212

[86] Katkov [1980]. The subtitle of this book given inside the jacket gives Katkov's approach away from the start. It is 'Kerensky and the break up of the Russian army'. In his introduction, Katkov explains that there is already ample published material giving Kerensky's 'side of the story'; he is referring here to 'Prelude to Bolshevism', Kerensky's first book. Choosing to accept the evidence of other protagonists in the affair is acceptable. Katkov, however, is not content with that, and adds nothing less than a character assassination of Kerensky into his analysis of the affair.

Kerensky erred seriously in 'blowing the whistle' on the Kornilov affair, as by doing so he helped to engender a massive national reaction, and new mistrust of the moderate government. The response of the Provisional Government to the growing crisis in the army was to follow some of the advice of the generals, and attempt to restore old fashioned discipline. The generals were on the whole unwilling to recognise the true nature of the changes afflicting Russia, and clung desperately to their outdated concepts on maintenance of discipline, and unwavering support for the war. Old fashioned discipline and the new Russian army of 1917 were not compatible. In retrospect it is difficult to see any alternatives to rapid withdrawal from the war, and demobilisation of the army if breakdown of society was to be avoided. The Provisional Government could not control the insurgent troops, or satisfy their most fundamental desires, without an end to the war.

CHAPTER FIVE

The workers of Petrograd in 1917

The Petrograd workers were an essential force in 1917, and their shift to the left was a major factor in the Bolsheviks' successful coup in October. The relationship between the Provisional Government, the Soviet and the workers of Petrograd will be investigated in this chapter. When assessing the failure of the Provisional Government and the success of the Bolsheviks, the question of political and economic motivations of the workers is central to a better understanding. This chapter will examine the economic crisis in 1917, what characterised the working classes in Petrograd, what their aims were, and the processes they used to achieve those aims, most notably the strike movement. Finally, development of factory committees and the significance of the worker control movement will be assessed. This chapter will demonstrate the difficulties the Provisional Government faced in winning the workers' support in 1917.

Economic crisis in 1917

The Russian economy faced collapse in 1914. The crash was averted by the war, which brought a boost of work, a growth of foreign capital investment, an extension of credit, intensification of production, and perhaps a workforce made more malleable by the sudden patriotic rush. The war also had the effect of lowering the workers' standards of living, by increasing the worker population so rapidly; in 1914 there were 242,600 industrial workers in Petrograd, but by 1917, this had increased to 417,000[1]. By February 1917 *Rabochaia gazeta* reported large increases in profits, which the workers used as vindication for their pay rise demands. This apparent recovery was to cause problems for the owners later in 1917, when workers, basing estimations of profits on 1916, were increasingly sceptical about owner claims that they were forced to close factories due to lack of profits. Flenley[2] demonstrates that the actions of the owners and workers were made incompatible

[1] Gill [1976] p. 44
[2] Flenley [1991]

by the economic crisis, but that the owners, contrary to general assertions, were logical in their actions.

The revival was very narrowly based, and was dependent on foreign capital, credit from the banks, and the ability of the government to pay for their orders. The upheaval of 1917 frightened foreign investors and the banks, and concurrently allowed the workforce to place new demands upon factory owners. The eight hour day was pressed upon the grudging factory owners of Petrograd by threat of more strike action and disruption, which the owners could not afford. In addition to a shorter day, the workers within the war industries also gained significant pay rises throughout 1917. However, from the summer of 1916 onwards there was decline in the real wages even of the metal workers, who were among the better paid groups of workers. Comparing wages to the cost of living show that the workers were actually worse off in real terms, as this table shows[3];

Table four, showing the reduction of workers' actual wages in 1917

	Nominal monthly wage	Real wages [in roubles of pre-war buying power]
First half 1917	70.5 roubles	19.3 roubles
Second half 1917	135 roubles	13.8 roubles

Factory owners faced serious problems with supply of fuel and raw materials, as well as workers' wage demands. The cost of raw materials and fuel rocketed, caused by increased running costs. An additional problem was transportation of goods, and the supply of fuel and raw materials. Russia's infrastructure was unable to deal with the extra pressure placed on it by a mobilising army. The rail system floundered under the pressure of military use, the roads were inadequate, and the sea routes were cut off by the Germans. This also affected the producers of raw materials. Industrial unrest and the difficulty of procuring supplies decreased the yield of Russia's main coal supplier, the Donets. Workers suspected that the owners were deliberately withholding materials in order to sabotage production. Where workers took control of the plants; they sent out special task forces, 'pushers' to try to acquire the raw materials and fuel they needed to run the factory. The difficulties the salvagers had in procuring materials showed that in many cases the difficulties of supply

[3] Table in Gill [1976] p. 44

were genuine[4]. There is also evidence, however, that the owners were in some cases apathetic, and reluctant to continue operations[5].

The owners responded to the crisis by calling on the state for regulation of prices of raw materials and fuel, and for subsidisation. The state failed to fulfill these demands. On May 21st, Shingarev, the Minister of Finance, declared that the state coffers were empty. Government attempts to control workers' demands and to set up channels for debate between owners and workers faced major problems. The most serious of these was the long-standing attitude of hostility and mistrust that existed between the working class and the industrialists[6]. The initial success of moderation was quite remarkable given the habitual hostility of relationships. The agreement between owners and workers in Petrograd on March 11th[7] was a real victory for conciliation, and indicated that the owners were willing to make some necessary concessions. The agreement was drawn up by the Soviet in association with the Petrograd Association of Manufacturers. It secured an eight hour working day, with no reduction of workers' wages, and overtime only with the factory committee's consent. Factory committees were to be elected to represent the workers, settle inter-factory problems and formulate opinions, and conciliation chambers were established, with equal membership from management and workforce, to settle all misunderstandings arising from labour-management relations. Where agreement was not made, a central chamber settled the matter. The main demand of the workers, the 8 hour day, was conceded immediately, within a proviso that wages would not be reduced with the hours. This was a significant gain. The workers achieved their primary goal in March, yet unrest and accelerated demands continued throughout 1917, culminating in October.

The Petrograd owners sought a conciliatory style of industrial relations. This attitude of consent rather than coercion accorded well with the early policy of the Provisional Government. Smith[8], however, comments that there were deep divisions amongst the industrial bourgeoisie, and that the owners in other areas were outraged at the concessions the Petrograd owners had made, which they felt set unacceptable precedents. The Provisional Government and the Soviet hoped to use trade unions and factory committees as a safety valve for labour discontent, and a stepping stone to conciliatory industrial relations. The owners' response to the legislation on 8 hour days[9], however,

[4] Smith [1983] p. xviii
[5] Gill [1976] p. 46
[6] Galili [1989B] p. 240
[7] Browder and Kerensky [1961] ,2, doc 622. From *Izvestiia.*
[8] Smith [1983]
[9] Browder and Kerensky [1961], 2, doc. 627

displayed the difficulties the Provisional Government and Soviet faced in mediation. They stated that far from the working day being shortened to 8 hours, it should be lengthened 'in view of the unusual circumstances prevailing'. In trying to identify both with the workers and the owners, the organs of state were in an untenable position. A letter from the management of the Nevskii shoe factory to the Minister of Labour on June 6th [10] indicated that the difficulties of mediation did not lie only with the industrialists. The writers claimed that the workforce would not accept the Provisional Government's new legislation on factory committees, as the ministers who implemented it were no longer in government. They requested, therefore, that a new law be issued which the workers would accept. This sort of obtuseness from the workers caused owners and Provisional Government alike considerable difficulties, and indicated a reluctance on the part of the workers to co-operate with the regime.

Conciliation chambers, formed at factory level, and with one central conciliation chamber, apparently settled most local disputes, but could only solve disputes that were resolvable by mutual agreement, and if the workers were willing to act upon their findings. The problem of establishing basic rates of pay for industry in order to establish norms for pay disputes remained unresolved, as both workers and owners were unwilling to submit. The Provisional Government failed to set the precedent of extensive use of conciliation chambers in the state run factories; most state managers preferred to resolve problems individually[11].

The absence of basic rates of pay meant that owners were very resentful of wage demands, which were chaotic. The owners argued that any base rate not linked to productivity was unworkable. The Metalworkers' Union attempted to set up a collective basic rate for metalworkers, but negotiations were halted by the refusal of the Trade Union to accept the principle of a wage linked to productivity. Eventually the Union conceded to the request, but by this time the July days intervened, ushering in a new climate in worker/owner relations. The greatest tension came in negotiations over pay rates for the *chernorabochie*, the unskilled workers. The Union was anxious not to disappoint this group, as it was the largest, but the owners were unwilling to concede too high a rate for the unskilled, as it would give a wage platform for the more skilled workers to base their demands upon. Negotiations finally broke down on July 12th. The owners were anxious to keep channels of conciliation open, and asked for state intervention, but rejected the government plan, even though it tended towards the owners' proposals. The Union offered a further 10%

[10]Browder and Kerensky [1961], 2, doc. 632

cut, but the offer was still refused. The failure of conciliation was to play a vital role in the development of the militancy of Petrograd's working class. The general strike that threatened was deterred by the Union, aware that such action would be a grave threat to the Provisional Government. It is understandable that the workers lost faith in the ability of conciliation to improve their conditions, and of the Provisional Government to protect their interests. Moderation had failed them, and the Bolshevik proposal to end the war and for workers to take over control of production was increasingly appealing.

The result of the owners' refusal to accept the proposals was a dangerous stalemate, but this stalemate was symptomatic of the fundamental crisis affecting Russian industry. In order to maintain profitability, there was actually a need to reduce wages, which was wholly incompatible with the practical needs of the workers. The contraction of production that resulted from loss of profitability was a body blow to the workers' movement, and the Unions called for government intervention, but the government tried to exercise a policy of non-interference with failing businesses. Both workers and employers saw the intervention of government as critical to the resolution of the crisis, but in actual fact the crisis was unresolvable. If the state was to try to enforce a solution, it required the appropriate power to do so. The Provisional Government did not have this power.

Who were the Working Classes?

The defining factor of the working classes of Petrograd was age; the younger workers were traditionally more radical, and made up the bulk of the membership of the Bolshevik party. The younger workers were more likely to be literate, and less likely to have the responsibilities of a wife and children. The younger generation grew up in the shadow of 'the flight of the intelligentsia'; that is, the compromise of the liberals with the Tsarist regime in 1905, which took impetus out of the working class movement, before it obtained the goals it had set. This caused a deep sense of bitterness and irreconcilability towards the intelligentsia and liberalism. This tendency of youth to be radical does not exclude older people from radicalism, but it is a tendency which is borne out by studies of membership of the revolutionary parties[12]. The employment of apprentices was commonplace, and the apprentices were taken on early, in some trades as young as ten[13]. This gave the young recruits ample opportunity to be fully assimilated into urban life, and to learn some level of self awareness. Though evidence indicates that ties to the village

[11] Flenley, [1991] p. 198
[12] Mandel [1983] p. 40
[13] Bonnell [1981] p. 358

were retained, there is other evidence to suggest that some of the skilled workers kept up these links unwillingly, and under duress from the village elder[14].

Mandel[15] categorises workers simply, as skilled and unskilled, and suggests that these two groups should be studied quite separately. There are other definitions of how to categorise the workers; Koenker and Rosenberg[16] study the actions of a group they define as semi-skilled, and place a great deal of significance upon their actions. They identify this group as the workers involved in new technology, working in mechanised plants and on assembly lines[17], who required a modicum of training, but did not possess the high levels of skill associated with the skilled workers. Such distinctions of skill levels between workers however, are imprecise, and difficult to categorise exactly. Only limited reference to the Koenker and Rosenberg study will be made in this section because, as the authors admit themselves, conclusions drawn from their study are tenuous, even hypothetical. While their conclusions are interesting, there is insufficient solid factual base to support them.

There was a connection between skill, literacy and social concern. That the skilled workers were mostly literate is unsurprising, as skilled factory work often required workers to show initiative, and to work on their own from plans and technical drawings. In the metalworking industry, for example, the workers involved in machine construction had to use plans and construct the machinery accordingly, a task involving a high level of skill, which encouraged free thought. Metalworking was the highest paid industry, and it is generally agreed that the best paid workers are those with the security and free time required to be involved in political activity. A factor that surely influenced the political stance of the skilled workers was that many of them were in demand because their skills made them difficult to replace, with the result that they were better paid, and if they lost a job, had a good chance of securing another quickly[18]. Their abilities would contribute to their feeling of self worth, and a proud awareness of belonging to that particular class. This factor contrasts starkly with the easy replacability of the *chernorabochie.*

Mandel points to skilled workers as the source of 'conscious workers'; that is, the group of workers conscious of their own oppressed economic and political position in society. He points to their rejection of the foundation principles of the Provisional Government, that is, conciliation and liberalism. He points out that Russia's political and social system was

[14] Bonnell [1981] p. 360
[15] Mandel [1983] pp. 9-33
[16] Koenker and Rosenberg [1986]
[17] Koenker and Rosenberg [1986] p. 608
[18] Koenker and Rosenberg [1986] p. 607

based upon a complex system of estates, which gave rise to very rigid feelings, both of belonging to one particular body, and of isolation and hostility towards other groups[19]. The desire for class unity was fundamentally linked to the desire for polarisation of the classes, and separateness from the bourgeoisie. There was strong social pressure towards unanimity in the factories, linked no doubt to the unanimity expressed in peasant actions.

Mandel also proposes that the aspirations of the wealthy in Russian society were fundamentally opposed to the interests of the working class, making attempts at conciliation unworkable, and that there was a deep psychological shame on the part of the workers towards the humility they were accustomed to show towards the ruling classes[20]. The hostility towards liberalism was rooted in the feeling that liberalism was politics for the upper classes. The Provisional Government policy of co-operation and coalition was intimately linked with liberalism. This gives one reason for the problems the Provisional Government faced in winning support from the workers, even when their programmes accorded with much that the workers had been demanding. The workers saw their position as essentially different. The Soviet, on the other hand, immediately enjoyed a strong level of support from the workers, representative of the fact that the Soviets had their roots in the workers actions in 1905, and were therefore identified as representing the working classes. Rosenberg points out that in the sphere of worker relations, dual power was something of a misnomer, as both bodies had the same aims, to improve the conditions of the workers, and to prevent the economy from collapsing[21].

The skilled workers were centred in the Vyborg district, where 84% of the workers were involved in the metal industry. There was a great deal of pride associated with being a part of the Vyborg; far from being an anarchist mass as it is sometimes portrayed, the Vyborg prided itself on organisation and order. In a demonstration on June 18th, the Vyborg contingent turned up in order worthy of an army battalion[22]. Figes uses a case study of a young peasant Kanatchikov, who though newly arrived from the village, longed to shed his rural past, and who later becomes a member of the Bolshevik party. Figes emphasises the need of the conscious workers to divorce themselves from their peasant past, and to shun

[19] A useful discussion of this can be found in Freeze [1986]
[20] Mandel [1983] p. 20.
[21] Rosenberg [1989] p. 269
[22] Mandel [1983] p. 18

vodka, smoking and rural manners. This picture accords with Mandel's, of the ordered, literate, skilled workforce[23].

The exception to the radicalism and separateness of the skilled workers came in the form of the printers, and certain elements of workers in the state sector. Mandel describes them as 'the worker aristocracy', who saw themselves as above the mass of workers, and were often recruited from a higher social strata than the mass of the workers. Printing retained many of the features of a craft industry. The printing centres were small and widely spread, which lost them the sense of power which comes with membership of a large organisation. There was an absence of irreconcilability with the liberals; printing was a traditional Menshevik stronghold, and paternalism from owners was common; wages and conditions were better than average[24]. This categorisation of the working class should be applied cautiously however. Bonnell's study indicates that they were far more heterogeneous than the literature leads one to expect. She points out that only 25% of the workforce in Petrograd were attached to factories, and accords great significance to the artisans[25]. She also points out that the big factories were broken up into workshop type constructions, which contributed to the highly concentrated nature of the Russian work force,

"A large engineering works is like a world in miniature. Some factories contain up to 200 different workshops. Large factories are usually broken up into several divisions...Working conditions are by no means the same in different workshops"[Timofeev, contemporary worker][26]

The unskilled workers are commonly cited as the least politically active element. In labour circles they were referred to as *boloto,* or the swamp. Strike statistics show that unskilled labour was more likely to respond to short term goals than to long- term goals. In contrast to skilled work, which encouraged initiative and freedom of thought, unskilled work was deadeningly repetitive, and initiative was actually discouraged, even if it increased productivity[27]. The table overleaf, drawn from Koenker and Rosenberg[28], illustrates the reluctance of the unskilled workers to strike.

[23] Figes [1996] pp. 112-8. Though the portrayal of this character is rather whimsical, and some of the details surely difficult to substantiate, it is still a useful illustration, and as it accords with the impression given by a highly learned study, seems reasonable.
[24] Koenker and Rosenberg [1986] pp. 618-620
[25] Bonnell [1981] p. 362
[26] Bonnell [1981] p. 376
[27] Mandel [1983] p 24
[28] Koenker and Rosenberg [1986] p 626

Table five, showing percentage of work force striking according to skill categories

	Percentage of Labour force	Percentage of Strike force
Skilled	34	43
Semiskilled	24	55
Unskilled	37	2

The unskilled workers were drawn heavily from the countryside. They were known as *chernorabochie*, or the black workers, and were often *prishlye*, or new arrivals. These uprooted country people had a number of characteristics rooted in their peasant origin. Their peasant origins lent them a close awareness of class separateness, and a characteristically peasant 'closing of ranks'. There are a number of features of peasant mentality which contributed to the *chernorabochie's* lack of political consciousness. They tended to be less able to generalise in social life; every issue was only relevant if it could be directly linked to their own lives. Even the minority of the rustics that were literate tended to lack analytical skills, and to accept what they read unhesitatingly[29]. The patterns of unrest of the unskilled workers echoed the unrest of the peasants; it was exploitation of opportunities, with no concern for consolidation. Unlike the skilled workers, who produced agitators from their own ranks, the unskilled workers depended heavily on outside leadership, and did not like explanations of their situation; they wanted only answers[30].

The unskilled labourers were predominantly women. Their literacy levels were lower than those of men, especially in the older women. Women generally worked very hard, since as well as doing a day's work in the factory, they came home to face their domestic chores of washing, cleaning and the increasingly difficult task of procuring food. This proliferation of duties is cited as a reason for women's lack of contribution to public life, and their apparent disinterest in politics. A senior doctor wrote in 1913,

'one cannot help but note the premature decrepitude of the factory women. A woman worker of fifty sees and hears poorly, her head trembles, her shoulders are sharply hunched over. She looks about seventy. It is obvious that only dire need keeps her at the factory, forcing her to work beyond her strength.'[31]

[29] Mandel [1983] pp. 29-30.
[30] Mandel [1983] p. 32
[31] Figes [1996] p. 113

Such a testimony gives ample reason for women's lack of interest in politics. The attribution of a lack of political consciousness should not be applied based on gender however; it was background, literacy and trade that determined political participation. Women in the skilled needle trades were reported to be literate, educated, and involved in public affairs, showing the characteristics one associates with the male skilled workers[32]. Accusations that women were particularly timid and reluctant to strike ignores the critical role of women workers in February. Whilst it is evident that the addition of household chores to factory work left women with little personal time, it did expose them to an opportunity to discuss grievances and mix freely with other women in the same situation; the bread queues. The events of February 23rd were started by the demonstration of women workers celebrating International Women's day, and calling for bread. Even though the motives behind these women's action can be identified as economic and not political, this should not discount the importance of their actions. Much of the strike action of 1917 was economic rather than political in motivation, but was organised and determined, and had major political repercussions.

Workers' demands

Figures of workers' demands in 1917 support the idea that worker mobilisation was born primarily of terrible economic hardship, and of want, want for bread, want for rest, and the desire to see an end to the war which crippled the country. However, it begs the question of how one can adequately assess the real wants and demands of the workers. It is tempting to over-simplify the complex motivations lying behind the workers' choices. Rosenberg estimated that there were some 250 strike demands through Russia in 1917, and though some of these can be easily categorised, in other cases, in categorisation they lose some of their value[33].

In the survey reproduced overleaf, economic and practical demands have by far the greatest weighting. The 8 hour day, for example, was mentioned in 52% of the surveyed motions, whilst formation of a democratic republic was mentioned in only 14%. This emphasis on pay and working conditions would seem to be representative of the demands of the working class in the early months of the revolution. The implication that workers' demands and aims were primarily economic and not political cannot be used without qualification, however. It is important first to be aware of the limitations of this survey, dealing as it does solely with March, and secondly to balance such attempts to sample the

[32] Mandel [1983] p. 27
[33] Rosenberg [1989] p. 277

vast number of worker demands with study of the workers' actions. Sukhanov reported that the dominant slogan of the workers in the first days of the revolution was 'Down with the war!'[34], yet this demand is mentioned only in a muted form in the table of demands, and in only 3% of the motions. To take another example, only 3% of the motions mention measures against the old administration, yet right through March, members of the old Tsarist administration, particularly the police, were rooted out mercilessly by workers and soldiers, and brought to the Provisional Government or Soviet as prisoners of the new regime[35]. This was perhaps not an issue many meetings voted upon, but clearly many had strong feelings about the fate of the old administrators.

Table six, showing factory workers' demands[36]

(Based on 100 motions voted on in March 1917)

Workers demands	**% mentioned**	**Workers demands**	**% mentioned**
Eight hour day	51	Universal suffrage	5
Pay raise	18	Worker administration	4
Sanitary conditions	15	Measures against the old administration	3
No overtime	14	Confidence in government	3
Formation of a democratic republic	14	Free education	3
Factory committee role	12	Defence proclamations	3
Hasten meeting of constituent assembly	12	In favour of peace without annexations	3
Guaranteed wages and social security	11	Foremen and choice of foremen	2
Distrust of government	11	Measures against the Tsar	2
Land for the peasants	9	Elimination of professional army	1
Hiring question	7	Advocating patience	1
International slogans	7		

[34] Sukhanov [1955] p. 20
[35] Kerensky [1966] pp. 197-8 for an eye witness account.
[36] Ferro [1972] p.115

The way in which the Provisional Government and the Soviet assessed and responded to workers' demands is an essential factor in their loss of support. The Soviet assessment of workers' demands, published on March 7th[37], details the demands the Soviet felt the workers should make on their return to work. These can be divided into those dealing with economic or welfare related issues, and political demands. On the practical side, the Soviet expected pay for the days spent striking, immediate formation of worker, shop and factory committees, and the immediate regulation of women's and children's work. Rather less specifically, they demanded protection for workers from 'exhaustive and excessive labour' in full time work, and suggest a high level of worker solidarity by dividing remaining work equally where workers are operating part-time due to lack of raw materials etc. These practical levels all accord with the demands made in Ferro's table, suggesting that the Soviet leaders were in tune with the workers' demands in that early period. The political demands were more radical than anything the table suggests for March. The Soviet stated that should an employer try to shut down production, the workers should insist the work be handed over to them under the direction of the Soviet, trade union, and party organisation. This was a forerunner of worker control, which was later to be restricted by the Soviet and Provisional Government. The other political recommendation, that workers should guard factories with armed forces, and co-operate with local militia' reflected the fear of the Soviet that the new revolution lacked much organised military support, but interestingly also foreshadows the Red Guard which was to bring the government down.

Though the issues of length of day, and regulation of the labour of women and children are dealt with, these points are very brief, and do not specifically mention the 8 hour day and pay rises. This lack of attention to the critical issues pressing upon the workers is reflective of the fact that the authors of the piece were not workers, but intelligentsia, observers of the crisis rather than participants. Galili reports that the detachment of the Menshevik leaders from the crisis in industry was to infuriate the workers later in 1917, when mediation became increasingly difficult[38]. The Mensheviks' success in the first four months of the new administration did not simply reflect the oft-cited euphoria and good will that came with the February revolution, but was a product of a systematic effort to involve the workers in the democratic process and to meet their needs whilst preventing a total collapse of Russian industry.

[37] Browder and Kerensky [1961], 2, doc 619, in *Izvestiia.*
[38] Galili [1989A] p. 256

In contrast to the populist statement of the Soviet, the Provisional Government's address to the workers on the same day takes a much more sombre tone[39]. It starts with rhetoric typical of this period, emphasising the value of the workers,

'Labor is the basic productive force of the country. The welfare of the motherland depends upon labor's achievements'

The address then outlines the Provisional Government's response to the problems facing the labour force; to form a Ministry of Labour to study the problems of labour, to expand trade unions and develop arbitration boards to promote the growth of labour legislation, and to abolish criminal penalties for meetings and strikes. The only comment affecting the immediate economic needs of the workers was a pledge for the immediate preparation of draft laws on the length of the working day, protection of labour, insurance, arbitration chambers, labour exchanges, and other measures to promote worker welfare. The piece ends with a profession of good faith, and an appeal for an immediate return to work,

'The minister will strive wholeheartedly to satisfy, as much as possible, the needs of the workers. He hopes, however, for vigorous co-operation on their part'.

The tone is predominantly stern, almost academic. Most of the points are dry and bureaucratic; whilst the creation of the Ministry of Labour and details of its specific functions is valuable, it fails to capture the hearts of the readers. The *preparation* of *draft* laws does not convey any sense of immediacy. The intention of the Provisional Government to produce lasting and worthwhile legislation is commendable, but did not accord with the urgent need of the workers for rapid change. Though on careful reading one notes that the minister repeatedly says he will do everything possible to improve the position of the workers, this sentiment is not immediately obvious.

Strike action, and its significance

The single most obviously identified tool for the workers to extract their demands from the ruling body was the strike. The strike is used as the thermometer for labour unrest, and peaks in strike action are associated with political mobilisation. Rosenberg shows how the Soviet and Provisional Government tried to legitimise and thus control the strike movement. Strikes were not generally desperate actions by the workforce, but on the contrary were 'a weapon and strategy adopted by workers in the expectation that their efforts will be rewarded'[40]. In this light, strikes were not necessarily anarchic, but could be constructive bargaining tools, on the proviso that their aims did not clash fundamentally

[39] Browder and Kerensky [1961], doc 620, in *Zhurnaly*, March 7th.
[40] Rosenberg [1989] p. 268

with those of the State. In the context of 1917, when both the Provisional Government and the Soviet saw the need to transform existing institutions and conditions for workers and legitimise strikes, strikes could be a mobilisation of workers without posing a threat to the fabric of society[41].

The Soviet requested on March 6th [42] that the workers return to work, as 'continued strikes would be extremely destructive to the economy of the country'. It also mentioned that a programme of economic demands was necessary, in order to protect the gains of the revolution. In an appeal to the workers on March 9th [43], the Soviet asks that the workers cease their uncoordinated strike action, and continue to work, even if their lists of economic demands are refused by the owners. It stated that the Soviet would draw up a list of general demands, in order that sporadic actions be prevented. It also ruled that 'excesses, such as the damaging of materials...and personal violence are absolutely forbidden'. But whilst offering some more sober commands to the workforce, it also condemned those owners who tried to shut down production when faced with new economic demands. Whilst calling for restraint, it offers no doubts about its loyalties, taking an opportunity to condemn the industrialists. The Soviet leaders attempted to guide the workforce away from confrontation and futile striking that the economy could ill afford, and towards conciliation and mediation with the industrialists. This *Izvestiia* article in April [44] states it clearly;

'the wartime situation and the revolution force both sides to exercise extreme caution in utilising the sharper weapons of class struggle- strikes and lockouts. These circumstances have made it necessary and possible to settle all disputes between employers and workers by means of negotiation and agreements, rather than by open conflict.'*[my underlining]*

The failure of strikes and conciliation to achieve the desired affect however, meant that increasingly workers turned away from conciliation. Before July, strikes had tackled mainly economic issues, such as wages, and questions of respect for the workers; for example, the banning of the degrading form of address *'ty'*, rather than *'vy'*. After July, although there were actually fewer strikes in Petrograd, contrary to the national patterns, the strikes that did occur centred on control and management issues. The owners regarded these strikes as anarchic and irrational, but from a certain perspective they were perfectly rational; the economic based strike procedure had failed to improve worker conditions. It was perfectly logical to take the strikes out of that spectrum and into a more radical one, demanding

[41] Rosenberg [1989] p. 271
[42] Browder and Kerensky [1961], 2, doc 618, in *Izvestiia.*
[43] Browder and Kerensky [1961], 2, doc 621
[44] Browder and Kerensky [1961], 2, doc 649

more. The failure of strikes and conciliation drew workers to Bolshevism, and caused them to reject moderate politics.

Koenker and Rosenberg's study about perceptions of strikes in 1917[45] looks particularly at reporting of strikes in various strata of the press, and the significance of this for perceptions of strikes. What people read offers an explanation of the way their conceptions and demands changed, allowing some explanation of their subsequent actions. Koenker and Rosenberg assert that participation in strikes and positive reporting of strike action had formative roles in the development of the working class, and the increasing polarisation in society. It is problematic to distinguish between how much reporting on strikes influenced increasing polarisation in society, and how much the reporting was formed by the events going on around it, according to the political affiliations of the writer.

A case study will be made of the press response to a Provisional Government appeal in June[46]. There is lack of balance in the selection of documents; no Bolshevik or right wing response to the minister's appeal were offered, both of which would have been illuminating. Despite this, the responses available are still useful in assessing reporting of strikes. The appeal stresses the threat of economic collapse due to the enormous economic problems inherited from the old regime. The appeal mentions the refusal of some workers to negotiate, and to demand their requirements under threat of violence. It asks the workers to desist from spontaneous action, which

'assumes the aspect of a direct threat to the gains of the revolution.'

Reactions to the appeal from the moderate press[47] are in favour of the content and tone of the appeal. *Russkie vedomosti* was a moderate liberal paper, and *Volia naroda* a moderate socialist one, both inclined towards attempts at conciliation politics. *Russkie vedomosti* suggests that the appeal will persuade the workers of the reality of the impending economic crisis, in a way that reports so far have not;

'All the reports in the bourgeois press were not taken seriously by the workers. They were told.. that they lie deliberately to please the industrialists. Therefore the authoritative voice of the minister of Labour Skobelev, whom no-one could suspect of partiality towards the Capitalists... is particularly significant.' *[my underlining]*

[45] Koenker and Rosenberg [1992]
[46] Browder and Kerensky [1961], 2, doc. 642
[47] Browder and Kerensky [1961], 2, doc's 643 and 644

Yet by early September 1917[48] the workers were accusing him of exactly that. This statement shows the extent to which the moderates failed to recognise the depth of the threat to them from the left. The overall tone of the article is optimistic and very positive. *Volia naroda* echoes this, and speaks about the development of the proletariat,

'And our young proletarian movement could not, of course, possess that degree of organisation and preparedness which is formed and forged by years and decades'

The newspaper is showing its political cards here. This statement reflected moderate socialist thought, in particular the Menshevik party, that the proletarian revolution could not take place until the proletariat had developed via capitalism. It is in this light that the Menshevik party were supportive of the Provisional Government in 1917; from the same article,

'It is quite clear that democracy strives for constructive and not destructive work.'

This statement did not accurately portray the mood in Petrograd; for the working classes, it was not at all clear that democracy was constructive, particularly after the July.

The factory committees and worker control

The workers' control movement was centred around the factory committees, a widespread grassroots organisation, intended by the Provisional Government to direct worker activism into productive channels and mediation. Initially the factory committees were dominated by the Mensheviks and the SR's, but the Bolsheviks won increasing influence in the movement, so that by July they were in control[49]. Tensions mounted as factory closures escalated through 1917. Between March and August 568 enterprises employing 104,372 workers closed their doors, and in August and September another 231 enterprises involving 61,000 workers were shut down[50]. Factory committees were left somewhat redundant from late spring of 1917, when trade unions took over the role of wage bargaining. The factory committees increasingly saw their role as implementing workers' control of production. Smith[51] states that worker control should be seen primarily as an attempt to maintain production, rather than a political act. He points out that many of the officers running the state defence works fled during February, forcing workers, many of whom supported the war effort, to take over administration in order to maintain production. For a few weeks, workers were in virtual control of production.

[48] Browder and Kerensky [1961], 2, doc. 635
[49] Avrich [1963] pp. 165-6
[50] Gill [1976] p. 45
[51] Smith [1983]

The Menshevik leaders argued that control of industry should be in the hands of the state, which accorded with orthodox Marxism. The Bolsheviks also favoured control of the state, but their difference was what sort of state was to have control;

'State control- we are for it. But by whom? Who is in control? The bureaucrats? Or the Soviets?' [Lenin][52]

The Bolsheviks sought to escalate the conflict, and to instigate workers' control of the state as well as of the factory. Lenin never satisfactorily theorised on the relation between state regulation of the economy, a central tenet of Bolshevik thought, and worker control. The incompatibility of these two facets became evident only after the civil war, when worker control was drastically curbed, and the factory committees were turned into 'state institutions'. It is ironic that the factory committees were effectively disarmed by the Bolsheviks, as they played a vital role in the seizure of state power in October, serving as mustering points for the Red Guard;

'in the factories the committee rooms were filled with stacks of rifles, couriers came and went, the Red Guard drilled' [John Reed][53]

Western academics tend to view worker control as an attempt to oust bosses and run the factories[54]. There certainly were such Syndicalist movements in Russia, but their significance ought not to be overstated; there is little to suggest that anarchist forces became dominant in Russia; rather, worker control was an attempt to limit economic disruption, and to maintain production and work. This accords with the deep mistrust shown by workers towards the owners' assessments of the economic crisis in Russia. Rumours circled that the owners were reaping large profits, and their claims that they could not continue production because of shortages of fuel or raw materials were disbelieved. The justice of many of the owners' claims would seem to be vindicated by the difficulties the 'pushers'[55] had in acquiring the necessary goods for the factories. As the economic crisis worsened, forms of worker control became increasingly interventionist and offensive. Very few factory committees however, obtained control of company finances, and where they did gain access to the books, workers often found them indecipherable. Where more extreme worker control was instigated, despite some extravagant claims, the evidence suggests that workers' control had a devastating effect on production'[56]; workers' control seemed to be sliding industry towards anarchical collapse.

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[52] Smith [1983] p. xxiv.
[53] Reed [1919] p. 49
[54] For example Keep [1976] p. 89
[55] Workers sent out to requisition supplies for the factories.
[56] Avrich [1963] p. 172

The workers were unable to replace the experienced managers, technical experts and engineers they expelled, and frequently had to hand administration back to those they had ousted[57].

The factory committees crisis in August was sparked by three main factors. The first was the suggestion that the Provisional Government might move the seat of power to Moscow, because of the threat of German seizure of Petrograd. The workers regarded Petrograd as the centre of worker power, and felt that any move of the government to abandon Petrograd was effectively an attempt to crush the proletarian movement. The second factor was the Kornilov affair, which sent shock waves through the capital at the perceived threat of a right wing takeover. A third element which alienated the workers from the Provisional Government was the Skobelev circulars which restricted worker influence over management prerogatives[58]. The first, issued by Skobelev, the Minister of Labour, on August 22nd, confirmed that employers had absolute rights in the matter of hiring and firing, and that factory committees had no jurisdiction in this area. The second circular, sent on August 28th, stated that meetings of all kinds could not go on within working hours, as they affected productivity, and that anybody who took part in such meetings would have the relevant amount removed from their pay.

Worker control had steadily expanded as the economic crisis worsened. These attempts at restriction of it were met with outrage from the labour movement, particularly as the declarations coincided with the Kornilov movement. Violent and unrehearsed incidents, like the beatings and arrests of administrators were not uncommon[59]. This excerpt from a factory committee response to the Provisional Government circulars on September 2nd is characteristic. It was extremely hostile, and stated that the circular was political in nature,

'We are forced to state that the Ministry for the 'Protection of Labour' has as a matter of fact been converted into a Ministry for the protection of Capitalist interests...in order to reduce the country to famine so that the 'bony hand may strangle the Russian revolution'[60]

The language is typical of Bolshevik rhetoric, demonstrating the Bolshevik dominance of the committees. This signified the failure of moderation. The workers had been failed by the Mensheviks leading the Soviet, and failed by the Provisional Government. Their material conditions had not improved despite their attempts to co-operate with the bourgeois regime. Whilst it is easy in retrospect to see that this failure to improve living

[57] Avrich [1963] p. 173
[58] Browder and Kerensky [1961],2, doc's 633 and 634
[59] Smith [1983] p. xix.
[60] Browder and Kerensky [1961], 2, doc. 635

conditions lay not through bourgeois exploitation and bad government, but economic catastrophe, the workers were offered an explanation, and a way forward. The explanation was offered by the Bolsheviks, and the way forward was a proletarian dictatorship, and the seizure of state power.

Conclusions

The economic crisis should be central to any discussion of the workers' movement, and the Provisional Government's failure placed squarely in that context. The Provisional Government played a dual role, as it strove to conciliate both the industrialists and the workers.

1917 saw a definitive move to the left in the workers' movement. This was facilitated by the failure of moderation and legitimate means, including strikes, to improve workers' living conditions. The Bolsheviks' proposed solutions to the workers' problems were increasingly widely recognised. It is difficult to apportion significance for worker activism in any one sector of the Petrograd working class, as even those, like the *chernorabochie*, who were without obvious political enlightenment, played an important role in the shaping of 1917.

On the worker question there was no duality between the Provisional Government and the Soviet. Both bodies sought to regulate workers' conditions, and to improve their standard of living whilst striving to prevent the economy from collapsing.

CHAPTER SIX

A Profile of Alexander Kerensky

The first question to answer is 'Why make a special study of this one man, whose role in 1917 has been so attacked?' Few figures associated with the revolution have faced such a barrage of criticism. Browder describes this criticism of him as symptomatic of the role given to Kerensky in émigré circles. Kerensky became

'the personification of the inadequacies and shortsightedness of the men of March 1917[1].'

There is no need to expand on his roles and actions in 1917 here; study of the composition and policies of the Provisional Government has already been undertaken[2], and clearly illustrate the significance of Kerensky in the events. This chapter is an attempt to highlight why he took on such an important role, and where he erred to have attracted such criticism. This chapter will show that although Kerensky's failings were evident in 1917, they were human failings, and accounted for his success in the early part of 1917, as well as to his failure in the latter part of 1917.

In writing this chapter, Kerensky's own voluminous writings have been studied and have been utilised to a certain extent. Before going on, comment should be made on his work. His style was rather florid, and he was given to poetic language, particularly when describing the, in his terms, almost mythical February revolution. That the criticism he endured for his role in 1917 stung him is evident from the self-justification inherent in his work. This factor makes reading him rather tiresome, particularly in his undoubtedly biased account of the Kornilov affair[3]. Despite this, there is insight to be gained from his work; if one sets aside the most blatant errors and prejudice he displays, one is able to form an impression both of the man, and the period in which he was politically active.

Kerensky had his interest in radical politics awakened as a student at Petrograd University in the years 1899-1904. He qualified in law, and initially worked in a legal aid office for the

[1] Browder [1957] p. 421
[2] See chapter 2.
[3] Kerensky [1919]

underprivileged in a *Narodnyi dom*, organised by the great social worker Countess Panina[4], before defending in a number of important revolutionary cases, including the repression of Latvian socialists in 1906, and the massacre of Siberian miners at Lena in 1912. These very public cases enhanced his reputation as a front-line radical. He was elected to the fourth Duma in 1912, and aligned himself with the Trudovik group, a labour group associated with the Socialist Revolutionary Party. Kerensky made a number of radical and doom laden speeches attacking the regime which frequently got him banned from the chamber, and his speeches edited in the Duma records. It was in this period that he joined the freemasonry, which was to provide him with valuable cross-party contacts in the years to come. Of the twelve members of the first Provisional Government, only Miliukov was not a freemason. Kerensky was very active in the organisation of the SR Party, particularly in the period 1915-16, as his Okhrana records show, though his relations with the SR's in 1917 were decidedly distant[5].

Kerensky's signature policy was his absolute commitment to coalition government. Any modern European politician would agree that the politics of coalition government are difficult even in a stable democracy. To attempt them in Russia at this time, was, one might say, an act of faith. As Louise Bryant commented,

'He tried so passionately to hold Russia together, and what man at this hour could have accomplished that ?'[6]

Kerensky's stubborn persistence in attempting to keep all 'reasonable' elements of political thought was unwavering from the very beginning, and met with some success. His own participation in both Provisional Government and Soviet was the first step of this coalition policy, stemming from his determined refusal to bow to the Soviet ruling that Soviet members could not participate in the Provisional Government. At his insistence, other socialist leaders joined the Provisional Government[7]. Coalition became increasingly difficult as 1917 progressed, however, and the Kornilov affair made further coalition unfeasible. Despite the evident crisis of coalition in late August and September, Kerensky struggled on to keep liberals and socialists in the same cabinet.

Did Kerensky err seriously in attempting to pursue coalition after the August crisis? For Kerensky to reject coalition politics would have been for him to give up the basic tenet of

[4] Countess Panina was a prominent Kadet, but was renowned for her work with the *Narodnyi dom*, or people's house, that provided training, recreational space and introduction to higher Russian culture for the working people of Petrograd. Her arrest and imprisonment in November by the Bolsheviks caused a storm of protest from ordinary people.(see Rosenberg [1968] p. 340)

[5] See chapter 3, p. 51

[6] Bryant [1970] p. 115.

[7] See chapter two and table one, p. 20, for a detailed account of the constitution of the Provisional Government, and the policies it pursued.

his political thought. No great theoriser or political philosopher, he strongly believed in coalition for the greater good. He avoided commitment to any one party, thus avoiding the constraints of the party line, but leaving him without the solid party backing and political alliances that could determine success or failure in a crisis. From his earliest days as a Duma politician he was willing to co-operate with politicians from all sides of the political spectrum, on the condition that they were working for the greater good as he saw it, that is, with progressive intentions[8]. This commitment to coalition politics, while blamed by some for the failure of the Provisional Government, also kept Russia away from civil war for eight months. It is hard to envisage any alternative policy avoiding civil war for any longer. There is a strong case, however, for making the coalition in the latter part of 1917 one solely of socialists. The vote of the democratic conference on September 14th confirmed that this was what the 'democratic forces' wanted. It is not clear what benefits the Kadets brought to coalition in the last months of the revolution.

Kerensky associated himself closely with the continuation of the war, and more specifically with the failed June offensive. His oratorical skills were strained to the limit, as he toured the fronts extensively, giving morale boosting speeches wherever he went. Sir George Buchanan, the British ambassador in Russia in 1917,commented that

'while advocating fighting out the war to a finish, he depreciated any idea of conquest... With his hold on the masses, with his personal ascendancy over his colleagues, and in the absence of any qualified rival, Kerensky was the only man to whom we[*the British*] could look to keep Russia in the war.'[9]

This determination to keep Russia in the war pushed Kerensky to establish stern penalties for deserters, and to re-establish the death penalty, a move which clearly caused Kerensky a great deal of personal distress. The death penalty had been something of a cause celebre for the Russian radical movement, and its abolition in March a cause for great celebration. The burden of its reinstatement was one that was heavy indeed for a man who had been as active as any in struggling for its removal. That he felt this keenly was amply demonstrated by his response at the Moscow conference, when he mentioned the measure;

' While still Minister of Justice I introduced in the Provisional Government the question of abolishing capital punishment. [*Applause. Cries* "Bravo!"]And as Minister of War it was also I who introduced in the Provisional Government partial restoration of capital punishment. [*Cries:* "Right!" *Boisterous applause, suddenly interrupted by the sharp and excited voice of the president.*] Who dares to applaud when it is a question of capital punishment? Don't you know that at that moment, at that hour, a part of our human heart was killed?'[10]

These measures were forced upon Kerensky by his determination to continue the war. Both he and Russia were placed in an untenable position by his stubborn patriotism, and

[8] See Abraham [1987] p. 61
[9] Buchanan [1923] p. 109

determination that Russia could and would fight to the bitter end[11]. By refusing to even consider the possibility of a separate peace, he seriously damaged the Provisional Government's chances of holding on until the convocation of the Constituent Assembly, which was, after all, its main objective. Nowhere in his writings does he adequately address the question of why Russia could not sue for separate peace. The pleas of patriotism and of loyalty to the allies are not enough to account for the continuation of a war that was clearly absolutely destructive to Russia[12]. It is difficult to find any rationale for Kerensky's unbending attitude in this matter; the force of patriotism which he cited so frequently seems to have produced a smokescreen, behind which Kerensky was unable to discern the truly parlous state of the Russian army. Kerensky failed Russia most conspicuously on the war issue. This was one element of 1917 over which Kerensky had the opportunity to extract something of benefit to Russia.

It is ironic, in the light of his policy continuing the war, that Kerensky's most abiding quality was his basic human decency, and desire to avoid bloodshed. A good example of this decency was his attitude towards the old Tsarist ministers and the policemen brought in by the crowds after the outbreak of revolution. Kerensky's intuitive knowledge of the appropriate action for the moment in the early days of the revolution was unmatched by the other leading political figures of the time. He faced demands from crowds outside the Winter Palace for harsh treatment of the former Tsarist ministers on February 27th. His words are appropriate to describe the scene that followed;

'I went to see Shcheglovitov [former president of the Imperial council] and found him in the custody of a hastily improvised guard and surrounded by a crowd of people. Rodzyanko and some of his deputies were already there, and I saw Rodzyanko greet him amiably and invite him into his office as a "guest". I quickly interposed myself between the two and said to Rodzyanko, "No, Shcheglovitov is not a guest and I refuse to have him released." Turning to Shcheglovitov, I said, "Are you Ivan Grigoryevich Shcheglovitov?" "Yes." "I must ask you to follow me. You are under arrest. Your safety will be guaranteed." Everyone fell back, and Rodzyanko and his friends, somewhat embarrassed, returned to their rooms, while I led the prisoner to the ministerial chambers known as the Government Pavilion.[13]'

This description captures the theatrical quality of Kerensky's actions which were absolutely appropriate for the times. Scenes like this, incidentally, may well go some way towards explaining the virulence of Rodzyanko's attacks on Kerensky[14]. Yet despite the noses he put out of joint by his prompt actions in February, he was to save the lives of many members of the old regime. Whilst his colleagues lacked the impetuosity and courage to simply arrest men like Protopopov and Goremykin, for so long symbolic of power in the

[10] Browder and Kerensky [1961], 3, doc. 1230, p. 1461
[11] For a more detailed analysis of the problem of peace, see chapter two, pp. 39-43.
[12] See chapter 4 for details of the military crisis.
[13] Kerensky [1966] pp. 197-8

old regime, Kerensky could see that only legitimising their capture with arrest could protect them from the angry mobs in Petrograd. An alternative version of Kerensky's role adds another facet to his personality in those early days. Mstislavskii wrote this account of his meeting with Kerensky on 27th January;

'[Kerensky said] "well now, Sergei Dimitrievich [Mstislavskii's first name and patronymic] it seems we have lived to see the day!" Quickly and happily he jumped up and stretched, as if to restore circulation to limbs gone numb. Suddenly he laughed out loud, slapped his pocket with boyish playfulness, and took from it a huge and ancient door key. "That's where I have him. That's where I have Shturmer. Oh, if only you could have seen their mugs when I locked him up!"[15]'

This excerpt suggests a youthful, exultant Kerensky, taking an almost childish pleasure in the confinement of the servants of the old regime. When one considers his background, with a spell in prison for harbouring revolutionary materials in 1906, and constant shadowing from Okhrana agents, his joy was not at all surprising. He spent his short political life striving for the fall of autocracy, and now he was overseeing it. This delight at the revolution was tempered with his desire to avoid bloodshed at all costs. In reference to the arrest of the Tsarist ministers, he said,

'If I had moved a finger, if I had simply closed my eyes and washed my hands of it, the entire Duma, all St. Petersburg, the whole of Russia might have been drenched in torrents of human blood, as under Lenin in October. But the Russian revolution did not thirst for blood, did not seek for vengeance. Not a hair on the head of an "enemy of the people" has fallen by the fault or the default of any leader of the February revolution. The crowd is an orchestra in the hands of its leader.'[16]

Whilst his dramatic prose is rather off-putting, the February revolution was remarkably bloodless, and Kerensky's prompt actions and heartfelt efforts to capture the mood as essentially peaceful must be credited for some part of this. The image of Kerensky leading a crowd as a conductor leads an orchestra is a vivid one, and was accurate, at least in the first months of 1917. His faith in the goodness of the Russian people in the first four months of the revolution was moving, and it was faith, I think, which contributed to his popularity and to the success of his speeches. He was able to appeal to people with trust, and without fear. Buchanan commented on Kerensky's oratorical skills,

'Kerensky was the only minister whose personality, if not altogether sympathetic, had something arresting about it that did not fail to impress one. As an orator he possessed the magnetic touch which holds an audience spellbound, and in the earlier days of the revolution he unceasingly strove to instill into the workmen and soldiers some of his own patriotic fervour.[17]'

Over and over in his rather cliché ridden but very successful speeches, he would make direct appeals to 'his' people;

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[14] Browder [1957] p. 421

[15] Mstislavskii [1988] p. 33. Sergei Dmitrievich Mstislavskii was a militant left SR, who was part of the group that joined the Bolsheviks after October. One can imagine he was pretty hostile to Kerensky.

[16] Kerensky [1934] p. 254

[17] Buchanan [1923] p. 109

'Comrades, do you trust me? *[Chorus of voices shout 'Yes!]*I am speaking from the depths of my heart, comrades, I am ready to die, if that will be necessary'[18]

'I cannot live without the people, and in that moment when you suspect me, kill me!'[19]

One observer was disconcerted to see that tears ran down Kerensky's face as he spoke. Though his speaking was melodramatic, it was certainly effective, and helped win a popular mandate to be a member both of the Soviet and the Provisional Government. His speeches were rarely prepared, and so lacked the intellectual content and logical conclusions notable in the speaking of men like Tsereteli, but they would seem to be direct representations of his emotional state. After his ascendancy to the premiership and the attempted Bolshevik rising of July, his tone was increasingly authoritarian. Where once he had appealed directly to the goodness of the people, now he called for the preservation of the State. He spoke publicly relatively little after July, a reflection perhaps of his changing mood towards 'his people'. His inspiration for public speaking came from his optimism and faith in people and in his revolution. As that faith declined, so his public speaking would become more stilted and less convincing. His performances at the Moscow conference in August were embarrassingly overblown[20], but he still received extended standing ovations[21].

Kerensky's personality was captivating. Sukhanov[22], who described himself as a 'convinced political opponent of Kerensky's from the day of our first meeting'[23], was nevertheless on good personal terms with him. This makes his opinion of Kerensky worthy of consideration;

[Kerensky had] 'supernatural energy, amazing capacity for work, and inexhaustible temperament. But he lacked the head for statesmanship and had no real political schooling. Without these elementary and indispensable attributes, the irreplaceable Kerensky of expiring Tsarism, the ubiquitous Kerensky of the February-March days could not help but stumble headlong and flounder into his July-September situation, and then plunge into his October nothingness, taking with him, alas! an enormous part of what we had achieved in the February-March revolution.'[24]

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[18] Abraham [1987] p. 142

[19] Abraham [1987] p. 143

[20] During Kerensky's speech a Moscow Kadet, NI Astrov, turned to his neighbour, an army doctor, and said, "This is more your business than ours. It's not politics, it's hysterics!" (in Katkov [1980] p. 62)

[21] Browder and Kerensky [1961] 3, doc. 1252, p. 1515

[22] Sukhanov, real name Nikolai Nikolayevich Himmer, was a socialist who had no party affiliation for much of 1917, though he was an SR at the start of his political life, and joined with Martov's faction of the Mensheviks in the middle of 1917. He was a principal Soviet figure in the negotiations with the 'bourgeois elements' that led to the formation of the Provisional Government. He was honest and passionate, and objected to the Bolsheviks' seizure of power, though he agreed with many of their principles. He worked as a Soviet functionary in the twenties, without ever becoming a communist, and remained hostile to the political regime. He was tried in 1931 at one of the earliest show trials, the so-called Trial of the Mensheviks. He was sent to a concentration camp in Verkhne-Uralsk, and was heard from no more.

[23] Sukhanov [1955] p. 32

[24] Sukhanov [1955] pp.31-2

...'he was a sincere democrat and fighter for revolutionary victory - as he understood it.....[but] by conviction, taste and temperament he was the most consummate middle-class radical'[25]

This comment from Sukhanov has a number of implications. It is clear that Sukhanov had considerable personal respect for Kerensky, but no political respect. More important than his lack of respect, Sukhanov placed the blame for the collapse of the Provisional Government on Kerensky. To suggest that Kerensky literally led the nation by the nose in 1917 is a dubious statement. The military crisis, involvement in the war, the growth of radicalism in the working population of Petrograd, and the responses of the moderate political parties to the challenges facing 1917[26], were all factors which were to a large extent beyond Kerensky's control. This tendency to place the onus of responsibility on Kerensky's shoulders occurs in many critiques of him. The last comment is a perceptive one, and though Sukhanov may have considered it insulting, it summed up Kerensky very well. He was humane, sincere, an ardent believer in the strength of the Russian people, but he was a radical only in the most tempered sense of the word. His politics in 1917 were moderate and conciliatory, as he fought to keep what he considered to be a sense of decency in the revolution.

On September 27th, Kerensky, under tremendous pressure trying to hold his coalition government together, suffered a total nervous collapse for two days. By the end of October when the Bolsheviks made their confused and chaotic bid for power, Kerensky was vacillating wildly, and lacked a real grasp of the situation. He moved to Gatchina on October 27th to avoid Bolshevik capture, supported by the Cossack unit of General Krasnov. The Cossack move on Petrograd on October 28th was halted by Kerensky at Tsarkoe Selo, when they encountered a group of the Red guard. He would not allow the Cossacks to fire, but instead appealed to the Bolshevik soldiers, a disastrous move that resulted in Cossack fraternisation with the Bolshevik forces. His humanity, which so appeals to the heart of the modern liberal, was a main cause for his failure to oust the Bolshevik insurrection in October. The faith in the people and refusal to allow bloodshed that had made Kerensky the hero of February turned him into the failure of October. In this respect, at least, Sukhanov's description of him, that claimed that the qualities that made him a saviour in February turned him into a pariah towards the end of 1917, would seem justified.

The delicacy of his health and his nerves is a feature of Kerensky which is often understated, but which should be taken into account in 1917. He was repeatedly forced to take breaks in a sanitarium for treatment of his physical maladies, which included problems

[25] Sukhanov [1955] p. 33

with his kidneys and lungs. He was out of political life for much of 1916 due to ill health. As 1917 progressed, the pressures he was under become increasingly evident in his personality; he lost his temper with increasing violence and frequency, showed wild vacillation in policy which had not been evident before, and suffered from a complete breakdown at the end of September. Kerensky may well have suffered some sort of mental breakdown in this period. When Louise Bryant gained an interview with Kerensky in early October, her description of him was somewhat alarming;

> 'Kerensky lay on a couch with his face buried in his arms, as if he had been suddenly taken ill, or was completely exhausted. We stood there for a minute or two and then went out. He did not notice us.' His secretary commented, "He really is hysterical. If he does not weep there he weeps here; and he is so dreadfully alone. I mean, he cannot depend on anybody". The secretary then went on to describe his serious illness, which necessitated him taking brandy and morphine.'[27]

Kerensky's tactlessness and vacillation in political circles meant that he did not solder any effective alliances. By the end of 1917, he simply had no friends left. A factor of his behaviour that becomes clear when one reads accounts of his actions is his inability to restrain from saying whatever first comes to his head, and his willingness to listen to advice from every sphere. This 'honesty', if we may call it that , was immensely dangerous in such a prominent political person, whose every word held great weight. His casual rejection of the Stockholm conference to a French diplomat, for example, was to lose him his only ally on the British War Cabinet, Arthur Henderson. Henderson had publicly supported the Stockholm Conference, which had aimed to revise war aims, and when news got to the British prime minister that even Russia was rejecting the conference, he felt safe to eject the socialist Henderson from his cabinet. Such tactlessness on Kerensky's part was inexcusable in a man that had become so influential, nationally and internationally.

His handling of the Kornilov affair seems in retrospect quite absurd, and one wonders that he did not see that by playing along with Kornilov, Kerensky would inevitably implicate himself. His actions in this affair show him to have perhaps an inflated opinion of his own invulnerability, and a tenuous grasp of political reality. His feeling that he was indispensable he utilised in his repeated threats to resign if he could not obtain the required concessions from his coalition partners. Yet every time he threatened to resign, he obtained the required support or concession, and this held the tenuous coalition together. The impotence of the other leading politicians in 1917 revealed a certain faith in Kerensky as the only man able to stem the flow of anarchy. Such faith in the abilities of one man is

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[26] See chapters 3, 4 and 5.
[27] Bryant [1970] p. 117

more a reflection of the inadequacies of the other leading politicians than a testimony of Kerensky's greatness, however.

It is surely inevitable that given such responsibilities and feeling such weight of expectation, Kerensky's personality altered. He has often been accused of being power hungry, and interested only in his own prestige. Strakhovsky, representing the most virulent of Kerensky's right wing critics, described him as

'Kerensky, the tight-rope walker, the man who clung to power at all costs, even at the cost of Russia's future' [28]

It is hard to find strong evidence for his well reported egotism and power mania. When Kerensky took over the premiership in the third administration of the Provisional Government on July 25th, his manner was reported to become notably more Bonapartist; he moved into the suite of Alexander the third with his mistress, and dressed now not in the common soldier's or workers clothes he had worn previously, but in a well tailored officers' uniform. His speeches, too, became increasingly sombre and less attuned to the popular mood. His allies on the left were increasingly critical, with Chernov baiting Kerensky daily in *Delo naroda.* Lenin described his government as

"merely a screen for the counterrevolutionary Kadets and the military clique which is in power at present"[29]

Such criticism of Kerensky was memorable, but rather unfair; it was directed as a personal attack, but was in fact an assault on the policy of coalition. While his experience and abilities as an international diplomat and politician can be openly doubted, one should omit the personal criticisms his political opponents directed at him from serious consideration. There seems to be no evidence to suggest that Kerensky had great personal ambition, and that this ambition superseded his desire to see a united and free Russia. These suggestions originated in slanderous accusations of other 'nearly were's' of 1917. The mud slinging that went on in the émigré press after 1917 betrayed a lot of personal disappointment and sadness at Russia's fate. Kerensky, who was the only moderate prepared to take on the responsibility of heading Russia, was a convenient scapegoat for these men's frustrations.

There can be no doubt that Kerensky took the leading role amongst the liberal and socialist politicians in the February revolution. He showed a perceptiveness and boldness in trying circumstances that other politicians lacked, most notably in attempting to place

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[28] Strakhovsky [1972] p. 150. Leonard Strakhovsky was a staunch monarchist who served in the Russian armed forces between 1916 and 1920, before emigrating and becoming a professor of Russian history at the University of Toronto.

[29] Abraham [1987] p. 247

the Duma at the centre of the revolutionary movement, of preventing violence against the members of the old regime, and of identifying the cause of the revolution not as some fearful anarchy, but as a positive movement, towards liberty. His greatest weakness was in failing to recognise the need for Russia to get out of the war.

His humanitarian, conciliatory qualities and his faith in the Russian people made him successful in the events of February, but meant that he lacked the ability to resort to extreme measures that were the only way for him to remain in power. As to his success, perhaps one should look at what makes a politician or public figure successful. If the first objective of a politician is to get in power, and once there, to remain in power, in order to best serve the needs of the nation, by implementing their programme, Kerensky clearly failed. He was unwilling (or unable) to take the measures that were required if he was to remain in power. This, however, is surely a harsh assessment, for Kerensky would have had to take some sort of extremist stance, something he had always despised. Should we not admire his refusal to sacrifice those principles of liberty he had long held dear? It is unfair to lay upon one man the problems the Provisional Government faced.

Conclusions

This thesis analyses the failure of the Provisional Government to prevent the Bolshevik seizure of power, and Kerensky's coalition politics in 1917. It first examines the theoretical debate surrounding the issue, which has often restricted the potential of the Provisional Government period. Models of Russian life in 1917 which hold that the civil war conflict and subsequent Bolshevik regime were inevitable, as a result of Russia's essentially backward and disparate social structure are untenable. By showing that a non-deterministic view is the only way of reaping new perspectives on 1917, the first chapter opens the way for more open debate. Study of the Russian soldiers and workers shows that their responses to the Provisional Government were rational reactions to the problems they faced, rather than anarchic and irrational responses. It also indicates that the intelligentsia pedigree of the political elite in 1917 caused them to be somewhat distant from the popular mood, and less able to empathise with the needs of ordinary Russian people. This is particularly evident in policies on the war. The strain of the war placed an impossible burden on the Provisional Government and on Russia. The Provisional Government failed to recognise, as Lenin did, that for Russia to regain equilibrium, she had to be withdrawn from the war.

Recurrent themes in the body of the thesis have been the emptiness of the Bolshevik promises that they would improve Russia's material position, and the threat of civil war, that could only be staved off by coalition politics. Political, social and economic studies of 1917 are not disparate elements, but rather are most worthwhile when considered as a whole. This whole shows that although the Provisional Government did fail, its achievements, within the context of the period, were significant. As well as instigating a wide ranging programme of reforms of the legal and administrative systems, the Provisional Government, guided by Kerensky, succeeded in holding the disparate forces together in government. Its greatest failures were the failure to realise Russia's need to get out of the war, to consolidate the regime's military power, and thus prevent the Bolsheviks' easy takeover of political power in October, and the inability of individual members to put aside petty party squabbles, and to pool their human resources for the benefit of Russia.

One can suggest that the inclusion of the Kadets in the coalition governments after August was of limited benefit to a stable Russia. A possible way out of the coalition deadlock would have been an extension of the Menshevik/SR collaboration, as was seen in the Soviet, to taking control of the affairs of the State. This could have defused Bolshevik accusations that the rightist led government was trying to negate the gains of the revolution, and removed the weakness of the Provisional Government that arose from Kadet participation. The Kadets were unable to contemplate profound social change, on the land issue, and on the position of the working classes. This effectively left the Provisional Government without any options on these questions.

Whilst giving insight into the picture of 1917, this thesis has also given indications of where further work could be profitably done. One such area is solid information about the responses of local party machinery to the revolution, with interest directed particularly towards the SR party, whose rural support was so widespread. Also, this study has looked at the actions and beliefs of Russia predominantly from the view of the political elite, because this is the source material most readily available. It would be worthwhile to examine the views of other groups in Russian society - ethnic minorities, peasants, workers and so on. Another area that could benefit from further study is regional studies of the responses to the Provisional Government, and to the events of 1917. By looking at a wider range of source material, as is available in the Russian archives, we can further deepen our understanding of the period.

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Table 7 showing the results, by area of the Constituent Assembly elections of January 1918

Area	SR	Bolsh	Mensh	o/soc	Kadet	sp. Int	rel/rt	Ukraine	tur/tar	o/nat	total
Northern	532,862 [76%]	21779 [3.1%]	134,162 [19%]	11813 [1.6%]	55276 [7.8%]	3973					700688
North western	635438 [44%]	606987 [42%]	18131	22326 [1.5%]	12304 [8.4%]	16894 [1%]				23233 [1.6%]	1447999
Baltic	3200	217644 [50%]	7046							215034 [49%]	435924
Western	632770 [27%]	1255696 [55%]	47198 [2%]	6809	49579 [2%]	24947 [1%]	5300			213517 [9.4%]	2263902
Central Industrial	1731033 [44%]	2151951 [55%]	120571 [3.1%]	32341	282569 [7.3%]	41495 [1%]	47429 [1.2%]			1067	3865438
Central Black Earth	3607874 [75%]	807813 [16%]	58147 [1.2%]	27838	174987 [3.6%]	47874 [1%]			6222		4780900
Volga	2357509 [51%]	755750 [16%]	38731 [1%]	34375	139881 [3%]	35235	134591 [3%]	4484 JL 53445 [11%]	728731 [16%]	146257 [3.2%]	4553250
Kama Ural	1397959 [39%]	702140 [19%]	57124 [1.6%]	59401 [1.6%]	174227 [4.9%]	173028 [4.8%]	103912 [2.9%]		713172 [20%]		3551786
Ukraine	592684 [8%] +JL Ukraine	869211 [11%]	108888 [1.4%]	85660 [1%]	216210 [3%] +JL 22337	128653 [2%]	82788 [1%] +JL 8068	42662684 [58.5%] +JL 1065511 [14%]		690456 [9.4%]	7291185
Southern- Black Sea	385449 [46%]	57181 [7%]	16614 [2%]	7292	35339 [4%]	82046 [10%]	885	65782 [8%]	68581 [8%]	78840 [9.5%]	828545
South Eastern	770296 [44%]	222927 [13%]	19340 [1%]	11437	54283 [3%]	645628 [37%]	11261				1735172
Caucasus	109557 [5%]	108430 [5.6%]	570320 [29%]	431	32276 [1.6%]	3062		209	458838 [24%]	427335 [22%]	1925870
Siberia	2000095 [71%]	295320 [10%]	52030 [2%] +JL 50780 [1%]	53846 [2%] +JL 57705 [2%]	97966 [3.5%]	95552 [3.4%]	21918 [1%]	3125	27852 [1%]	64379 [2.3%]	27822222
Metropolitan	214490 [12%]	790175 [46%]	50764 [2%]	63599 [3.7%]	510365 [29%]	22659 [1.3%]	46403 [2.7%]	4219			1707096
Fleet	52661 [31%]	75864 [45%]	1943	13249 [8%]		8735 [5%]		12895 [7%]			165447
Army	1506319 [38%]	1597899 [40%]	132900 [3%]	16306	576326 [14.5%]	34449 [1%]	46403 [1%]	456749 [11%] +JL 88596 [2%]	9765	23560 [0.5%]	3,969,438
All districts	16,535,680 [37%]	10536768 [23%]	1433909 [3.2%]	640556 [1%]	2072258 [4.6%]	1420379 [3.2%]	456627 [1%]	4796637 [11%]	2384123 [5.3%]	1862883 [4.2%]	44218555

Table 8 on the returns of the parties in the Constituent Assembly elections, by area

Area	first	second	third
Northern	SR 76%	Mensh 19%	Kadet 7.8%
North western	SR 44%	Bolsh 42%	Kadet 8.4%
Baltic	Bolsh 50%	o/nat 49%	
Western	Bolsh 55%	SR 27%	o/nat 9.4%
Central Industrial	Bolsh 55%	SR 44%	Kadet 7.3%
Central Black Earth	SR 75%	Bolsh 16%	Kadet 3.6%
Volga	SR 51%	tur/tar 16% Bolsh 16%	Ukraine 11%
Kama Ural	SR 39%	tur/tar 20%	Bolsh 19%
Ukraine	Ukraine 58.5% +JL SR 14%	Bolsh 11%	SR 8%
Southern- Black Sea	SR 46%	sp. Int 10%	o/nat 9.5%
South Eastern	SR 44%	sp. Int 37%	Bolsh 13%
Caucasus	Mensh 29%	tur/tar 24%	o/nat 22%
Siberia	SR 71%	Bolsh 10%	Kadet 3.5%
Metropolitan	Bolsh 46%	Kadet 29%	SR 12%
Fleet	Bolsh 45%	SR 31%	o/soc 8%
Army	Bolsh 40%	SR 38%	Kadet 14.5%
All districts	SR 37%	Bolsh 23%	Ukraine 11%

Party abbreviations

SR- Socialist Revolutionary
Bolsh- Bolshevik
Mensh- Menshevik
o/soc- other socialist organisations
Kadet- Constitutional Democrats
sp. Int.- Special interest parties
rel-rt- Religous and right wing parties
Ukraine- Ukrainian Nationalist parties
tur/tar- Turkish and Tartar parties
o/nat- other Nationalist parties

Districts covered by each region.

Northern- Archangel, Vologda, Olonets.
Northwestern- Petrograd province, Pskov, Novgorod.
Baltic- Estonia, Livonia.
Western- Vitebsk, Minsk, Mogilev, Smolensk.
Central Industrial- Moscow province, Tver, Yaroslavl, Kostroma, Vladimir, Kaluga, Tula, Riazan.
Central Black Earth- Orel, Kursk, Voronezh, Tambov, Penza.
Volga- Nizhni Novgorod, Simbirsk, Kazan, Samara, Saratov, Astrakhan.
Kama Ural- Viatka, Perm, Ufa, Orenburg.
Ukraine- Kiev, Volynia, Podolia, Chernigov, Poltava, Kharkov, Ekaterinoslav, Kherson.
Southern-Black Sea- Bessarabia, Taurida[inc. Crimea].
Southeastern- Don Cossack region, Stavropol.
Caucasus- Kuban- Black Sea, Ter-Dagestan, Caspian, Transcaucasus.

Siberia- Tobolsk, Steppe, Tomsk, Altai, Yenisei, Irkutsk, Transbaikal, Amur Maritime, Chinese Eastern railroad, Yakutsk.
Metropolitan- Petrograd city, Moscow city.
Fleet- Baltic, Black sea.
Army- Northern front, Western front, Southwestern front, Rumanian front, Caucasian front, all districts.

JL- This designates a joint list, where two parties decide to collaborate for the election. In the Ukraine, for example, though the SR's won 8% of the vote on their own card, they also collaborated in a joint list with the dominant Ukraine Nationalist party, and won an extra 14% of the vote on this ticket.

Notes on tables

The figures in this table are based upon the work of Oliver H. Radkey[1]. His figures are highly detailed, and include breakdowns for voting at district level as well as at regional level. These very detailed district figures have been amalgamated into regional figures in this table for the purpose of simplification. This amalgamation inevitably obscures certain subtleties in voting patterns, and distorts the interesting voting patterns in some areas. For the purpose of this study though, the summarised information offered in my table offers information about general voting trends in Russia, and the levels of support offered to the main parties in a more accessible form.

The figures in the tables do not all add up to 100%. This is not due to errors, but rather because in an attempt to simplify the figures available, the percentages have been rounded up or down where pertinent, and have omitted the 'residue' column included in Radkey's tables, which included votes which were either joint lists, or votes that could not easily be categorised. This residue figure made up a total of nearly 4.5% of all districts' votes.
The first table gives a detailed picture of voting patterns in the areas of Russia, whilst the second is more simple, and designed to map the relative dominance of parties in different areas more accurately, and to assess which parties won majorities.

[1] Radkey [1977]

Table 9 surveying Russian newspapers in 1917 according to political affiliation

Right wing	**moderate liberal**	**moderate socialist**	**far left**
Russkaia volia	Rech *[Kadet]*	Rabochaia gazeta *[Menshevik]*	Pravda *[Bolshevik]*
Utro rossii	Birzhevye vedomosti	Den *[Menshevik]*	Proletarii
	Russkie vedomosti	Vpered *[Menshevik]*	Rabochii put
	Torgovo-promyshlennaia gazeta	Delo naroda *[SR]*	Sotsial demokrat
	Russkoe slovo	Trud	
		Zemlia i volia *[SR]*	
		Volia naroda *[SR]*	
		Novaia zhizn	
		Proletarii	
		Vlast naroda	
		Edinstvo	
		Narodnoe slovo	
		Izvestia PSRD *[Soviet, Petrograd]*	
		Izvestiia MSRD *[Soviet, Moscow]*	

Note This table serves only as a guide to the approximate political affiliation of newspapers in 1917; the loyalties of some papers veered as the political climate altered. It is useful to bear it in mind, however, when considering the value and bias of sources originating in newspapers.