

Learning from the Past

Bolshevik Work Among Soldiers

The Bolshevik Party's work in winning over the rank-and-file soldiers of the Russian Army was crucial to their success in leading the revolution. In 1905 the army had remained loyal to the government and had crushed the workers' uprisings. After the February 1917 overthrow of the Tsar, the army showed considerable loyalty to the Congress of Soviets, controlled by the Mensheviks and Social-Revolutionaries. These violent enemies of the Bolsheviks initially promised an end to war, more "democracy" for soldiers, and to intercede for the soldiers with the bourgeois-controlled, and thus dis-trusted, Provisional Government.

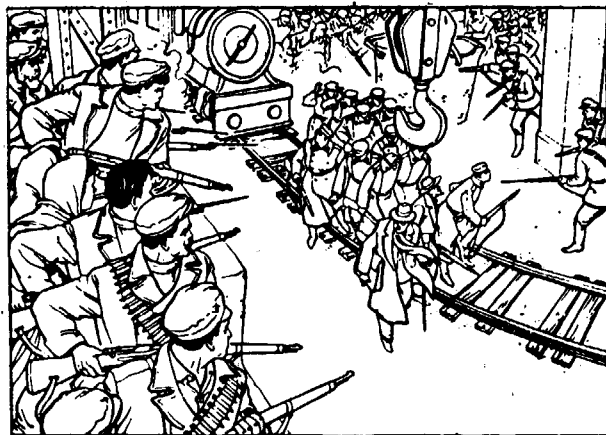
THE RUSSIAN SOLDIERS were partly at the front facing the German forces, partly in garrison and reserve units guarding the cities. Somewhat different organizational tactics were used in each case. Everywhere, though, the Bolsheviks concentrated exclusively on the enlisted men, encouraging them to disobey the officers and organize themselves (into regimental, divisional, etc. soviets or committees). Thus the Bolsheviks aimed to destroy the bourgeois standing army by destroying the chain of command. This they succeeded in doing by November. In this way the officer corps—quite large and well-trained, as well as fiercely anti-socialist—was isolated from the soldiers and unable to act against the revolution until 1918.

All major political parties formed organizations to work among the soldiers after Feb. 1917; the Bolsheviks were not unique in this. What distinguished them was: (1) the great attention and effort they paid to agitation among the soldiers; and (2) their political line. Ultimately it was their line which enabled them to win over many soldiers and neutralize most of the others. The Bolsheviks stood for: immediate peace without preconditions; revolutionary fraternization

with enemy soldiers; abolition of the standing army; confiscating land of landlords and distribution to the peasants; no co-operation in any way with the bourgeois Provisional Government or bourgeois parties; political power to the working class and the Soviets. In early March 1917, this program still seemed "extreme" to many workers and soldiers in the euphoria of the Tsar's overthrow and the apparent "support" of the Soviet. Within a few weeks, however, the soldier masses were flooding into Bolshevik organizations as the bourgeoisie and their allies in the phony "socialist" parties which led the Soviet proved that they intended to continue the imperialist war at the expense of millions more soldiers' lives.

On March 10 the Petersburg Committee of Bolsheviks began setting up the Bolshevik Military Organization (BMO), in order to spread Lenin's line among the increasingly receptive soldiers. The BMO set up special newspapers: *Soldatskaya Pravda* (*Soldiers' Truth*) for the Petrograd garrison troops, and *Okopnaya Pravda* (*Truth of the Trenches*) for the frontlines. Here is a description of the former:

Soldatskaya Pravda focused attention almost exclusively on political issues of particular interest to the troops and on the hardships of everyday life in the armed forces... (and) issued a steady stream of propaganda on such important aspects of the Bolshevik program as the removal of the Provisional Government, the transfer of all power to the Soviets, the confiscation of farmland, and immediate peace. (Its) inaugural issue launched a campaign to encourage fraternization at the front, and in subsequent articles practical



ways of initiating fraternization were discussed in detail. Each day... articles, often written by the soldiers themselves, attacked government attempts to reestablish a minimum of discipline in Petrograd regiments and to transfer soldiers from the garrison to the front while an endless stream of letters and resolutions from frontline soldiers sketched a disturbing, albeit distorted, picture of conditions there.

(Rabinowitch, p. 52)

The BMO was organized as close to the rank-and-file soldier as pos-

sible, with cells at battalion and, where possible, at company level. In addition, a "Club Pravda" was set up, with a hall in Petrograd where garrison troops could come to meet workers and Bolshevik agitators. Study groups were organized, and party literature distributed. By June 1917, there were 2000 members of the BMO and about 4000 soldiers in "Club Pravda" in Petrograd, out of a total garrison force of about 250,000.

(Next week: The Bolsheviks work among the soldiers through July.)

Sources: Rabinowitch, *Prelude to Revolution*; Rabinovich, in *Proletarskaya Revoliutsia*, 1928; and in *Voينا i Revoliutsia*, 1927.

Robots: the New Workers?

"The nice thing about robots," says Bernard Sallot, executive director of the Robot Institute of America, "is that they take no coffee breaks, never get pregnant, never go out on strike, draw no pensions—and uncomplainingly do various nasty jobs that a human worker disdains." (*Newsweek*, April 23) It seems that the capitalist class has found the ideal "worker"—it works and works and works... without fighting back against racism, lousy working conditions or low wages.

SINCE ITS BEGINNING, CAPITALISM has always tried to use automation (machines) to get more profits

Communists do not oppose technological advances. Under socialism we will develop technology to the fullest in order to eliminate all the dangerous and boring jobs. But capitalism, because of its profit-making nature, will never use technological advances for the well-being of the working class. In general, technological advances are used by the capitalists to eliminate jobs and increase their profits at the expense of other capitalists.

When a capitalist introduces a new technology, he gets a temporary lead over other capitalists, producing super profits. Once the other bosses acquire the same machinery, the

Learning from the Past

The Bolshevik Military Organization

At the founding convention of the Bolshevik Military Organization (BMO) Mar. 31/Apr. 13, 1917, its functions were outlined by the Petrograd branch thus:

Each military collective must

- 1) maintain close ties with the BMO;
- 2) discuss all current questions at collective meetings;
- 3) recruit new members;
- 4) read and circulate our newspapers and books;
- 5) put forth all our views at battalion and regiment meetings, offer our resolutions, expose all counter-revolutionary plots;
- 6) put forth our supporters in all regimental, etc. elections;
- 7) closely watch the activities of committees and elected soldiers' representatives and criticize them at regimental, etc. meetings;
- 8) pay special attention to check-up on the delegates to the Soviet of Workers' and Soldiers' Deputies, organizing recalls and re-elections when necessary;
- 9) exhort our comrades to take great care at every election and demand secret ballots on important questions;
- 10) instruct all elected representatives, and insist on precise fulfillment of the instructions;
- 11) build for organized struggle while warning against unauthorized demonstrations.

SMALL AT FIRST, THE BMOs

grew rapidly as they took the lead in exposing the betrayals of the Provisional Government (PG). On Mar. 23/Apr. 5 Foreign Minister Miliukov affirmed the Government's dedication to the Tsar's imperialist war aims, and on Apr. 18/May 1 he confirmed its intention to continue the war. The BMO, together with Bolshevik workers, organized massive soldier demonstrations on Apr. 20-21/May 3-4, forcing Miliukov's resignation. They also pointed out to the soldiers how the Menshevik- and S-R (Social Revolutionary)-controlled Soviet leaders betrayed them and supported the PG by forbidding further demonstrations against it. The Soviet leadership also allowed 6 phony "socialists" to join the PG and lend some credibility in the eyes of the masses.

Throughout the month of May this coalition PG stepped up preparations for a major offensive against the Germans. Kerensky, the "socialist" Minister of War, reinstated corporal punishment, the firing squad, and punitive transfer to the front lines, as ways to enforce unpopular orders. He prepared to disarm or dissolve those Petrograd garrison units which had led the overthrow of the Tsar and which the PG thus considered unreliable. The BMO responded by organizing a massive soldier demonstration for June 10/23 to expose the PG and popularize the call for proletarian revolution.

The demonstration was carefully planned in secret; its major demand: "all power to the Soviet." True to form, the Menshevik and S-R Soviet

leadership rallied to the Government's support and banned the demonstration. Thousands of soldiers, together with the BMO leadership, wanted to have it anyway. But Lenin and the Central Committee recognized that the PG and Soviet would consider an armed demonstration as an attempt to seize power; they would attack it with force. The Bolshevik leadership agreed that a seizure of power in Petrograd alone while possible, would be premature. As Kalinin pointed out June 11/24, Petrograd was far more revolutionary in mood than other cities, and the frontline troops were not yet sufficiently won away from their illusions about the Soviet. Although the BMO leadership disagreed, they submitted in disciplined fashion to the Central Committee, and were able to call the demonstration off.

To try to put a fig-leaf on their betrayal, the Soviet leadership itself called a peaceful demonstration June 18/30. Here the strength of the Bolsheviks among both workers and garrison troops was dramatically shown. Almost all the 400,000 marchers paraded under Bolshevik banners, including almost every garrison unit. The Menshevik Sukhanov noted

Here and there the chain of Bolshevik flags and columns was interrupted by specifically S-R and official Soviet slogans. But they were submerged in the mass; they seemed to be exceptions, intentionally confirming the

rule. Again and again, like the unchanging summons of the very depths of the revolutionary capital, like fate itself . . . there advanced towards us: "All power to the Soviets!" "Down with the 10 capitalist ministers!"

The imperialist Miliukov himself admitted that "in Petrograd undoubtedly the Bolshevik slogans and mood predominated . . . to speak of support for the coalition government was simply impossible."

Precisely during this period of "turn towards revolution" (as Lenin called it) the All-Russian Conference of Bolshevik Military Organizations was meeting in Petrograd. One hundred-twenty representatives of newly-formed BMOs from throughout Russia and—most important—from almost all front-line units, were exposed to and infected with the revolutionary determination and optimism of the Bolshevik-led workers and soldiers of the capital. And on the same day as the march began the Russian offensive that was to destroy any confidence front-line soldiers still had in the Government and phony "socialists."

*(Dates: old style/new style).
(Next week: the All-Russian Conference of BMOs.)*

Justice in America

If anyone still has doubts as to whether we have two systems of justice—one for the rich and one for everyone else—let them ponder these facts: When the two top executives of the giant Fruehauf Corp. were convicted of defrauding the U.S. government of \$12.3 million in excise taxes

Learning from the Past

The Conference of Bolshevik Military Organizations

The Bolshevik Military Organization (BMO), founded Mar. 31/Apr. 13, was at first confined to Petrograd, Moscow, a few industrial centers (like Ivanovo-Voznesensk and the Donbass), plus the radical naval garrisons in Finland and Kronstadt. It was very weak beyond Petrograd and especially at the front. Its first job then was to grow—to form Bolshevik cells throughout the army. Immediately after organizing the anti-imperialist demonstrations of early May (see last article), the BMO issued a nation-wide call for an All-Russian Conference.

Organizers were sent from Petrograd throughout Russia to help form BMOs which then elected delegates to the Conference. Party members everywhere introduced resolutions supporting the Conference and forming cells. In this way 25,000 soldiers were organized into the Bolshevik Party through the BMOs in a little over a month. Called at first for May 25/June 7, it was postponed til June 8/21, and a second time to June 16/29, as more BMOs were formed and delegates journeyed to Petrograd.

The Conference opened June 16/29 with about 130 delegates representing 43 front and 17 rear units. Delegates attended the conference during the day and devoted evenings to agitation in the barracks of the Petrograd garrison. June 17/30 was spent entirely in preparation for the demonstration of the following day, which showed overwhelming support for the Bolshevik position (see last article).

The Conference took place at a crucial time in the development of the revolution. Opposition to the Provisional Gov't and to Kerensky, phony 'socialist' Minister of War (soon to be Prime Minister), was solidifying everywhere. The subject on the lips of Petrograd workers was the need for the proletariat to seize power.

Reporters at the Conference included several veteran Bolsheviks in military service. They and the delegates gave important information to the Party about the mood of the soldiers. Anti-war sentiment was on the rise at the front. Fraternalization between German and Russian soldiers was rife; at one point the German command was forced to replace 4 divisions of troops which refused to fire upon Russian soldiers after they had been gassed. Despite severe repression, the Bolshevik papers Soldatskaya Pravda and Okopnaya Pravda were very influential, while the P.G.'s propaganda was widely distrusted.

However, the front soldiers were still largely taken in by the "defensive" line of the sell-out Soviet leaders. They were acquiescing (albeit reluctantly) to the Government's call for an offensive "to defend the revolution". Therefore a main aim of the Conference was to win the soldier-delegates to seeing through the revisionist Soviet leadership. As Lenin put it in his report, "Kerensky has done what the capitalist minister Miliukov had been unable to do"—launch an offensive. **NO WORKER'S REVOLUTION WOULD BE POSSIBLE WITHOUT**

REJECTION OF THE PHONY SOCIALIST SOVIET LEADERS, THE MENSHEVIKS AND S-R'S. THIS WAS THE THRUST OF LENIN'S TWO REPORTS, and the first resolution of the Conference. A second resolution opposed the impending offensive and denounced the sham of "defensism". Discussion of these issues dominated the Conference.

Other resolutions dealt with the goals and tasks of the BMO and the question of the standing army. The former were defined as: 1) to spread revolutionary socialism among the masses, with concentration on the peasantry, which made up the majority of the army and the country as a whole. Thus their military work gave the Bolsheviks a modest base among the peasants, where they had done very little work previously; 2) to form the armed support for the workers' revolution.

The "Resolution on Democratization of the Army" put revolution ahead of reform. The very institution of the standing army is nothing but a tool of capitalist oppression. "Therefore a social-democrat must regard the question of democratization of the army as a temporary measure before the complete triumph of the revolution and the consequent destruction of the standing army, which will be replaced by a general arming of the people and a national militia". A special "Resolution on the General Arming of the People" repeated this condemnation of the standing army and discussed the details of a people's militia at greater

length.

All these reports and resolutions were widely publicized both by a special daily BULLETIN published during the Conference for circulation among the soldiers and workers of Petrograd, and by the nationwide Bolshevik press. So, the ideas which Marx and Engels had developed in observing the Paris Commune, and which Lenin was to repeat two months later in THE STATE AND REVOLUTION, reached millions of workers and soldiers through the Conference.

The Conference ended June 23/July 7, five days after the beginning of the Government's offensive. Meanwhile Kerensky, alarmed by the support for the Bolsheviks, demonstrated on June 18/July 1, moved to disarm and transfer the radical 1st Machine Gun Regiment of the Petrograd garrison. Eager for revolution, garrison troops launched the premature revolt known as the "July Days".

(Dates: old style/new style. Next week: "The BMO and the July Days")

*The Bolsheviks called themselves social-democrats, and their party was the Social Democratic Labor Party. Later, in the hands of the right-wing Second International, "social-democrat" took on a different meaning.

Learning from the Past The 'July Days' in Russia 1917

Delegates to the All-Russian Conference of Bolshevik Military Organizations were inspired by the huge pro-Bolshevik demonstration of June 18/ July 1 and by fraternizing with the radical soldiers and workers of the capital (see previous article in *C-D*, May 30). Equally inspired, units of the garrison rejected the Provisional Government's (PG's) attempt to transfer them to the front for the hated offensive and, equally inspired, interrupted the Conference to demand it become the general staff for an immediate uprising against the PG.

LENIN OPPOSED THIS. "THE bourgeoisie... will exercise all its strength in order to provoke the masses into a demonstration that would call forth repressions, that would break and divide them. We must concern ourselves with organization in the most intensive way possible," with careful preparations for an insurrection "if not in days, nor in the coming weeks, then at all event in the near future." On June 18/ July 1, the Central Committee (CC) adopted a resolution opposing any premature uprising. But in the Conference debate on this point many Bolsheviks opposed Lenin and argued for an uprising. A June 22/ July 5 meeting revealed that the Petrograd (workers) Committee and the BMO were still strongly for seizing power.

On July 1/13 the 1st Machine Gun Regiment (1 MGR) rank-and-file

threw over their Menshevik-led regimental committee and called for a massive armed demonstration in two days. The Bolshevik CC instructed the BMO to try to prevent this outbreak. They might have been able to; the 1 MGR was a Bolshevik stronghold. But BMO leaders disobeyed the CC. As one of them (Nevsky) later admitted, "when the Military Organization sent me... to talk to the masses (i.e., the 1 MGR) into not going out, I talked to them but in such a way that only a fool could come to the conclusion that he should not demonstrate." Many BMO soldiers were among those who fanned out across Petrograd on July 3/ 16 to win other troops and workers.

On July 3/16 70,000 armed workers and soldiers surrounded the Soviet, demanding it take power from the PG. The Petrograd Committee and BMO announced they were taking charge of the movement to give it an organized character. So the next day thousands gathered at Bolshevik HQ expecting Lenin to lead the revolution. But Lenin stuck to his guns and urged the correct, but unpopular, course: that the demonstration be peaceful. Lenin knew "insurrection is an art"; this spontaneous outburst could not succeed.

On July 4/17 the crowd around the Soviet reached one-half million. Outside the masses pleaded with the Menshevik and S-R (Social Revolutionary) leaders of the Soviet to "take

power, you son-of-a-bitch, when it's given to you!" (as one exasperated worker yelled to S-R chief Chernov). Inside an anti-communist orgy developed as the Soviet leaders attacked the workers and soldiers as Bolshevik "dupes." Kerensky spread the story that Lenin was a "German agent," and that night loyal troops arrived to guard the Soviet. An hour later the Bolshevik CC publicly called off all demonstrations; the abortive revolt was over.

THE NEXT MORNING A FASCIST reaction was under full steam. Every party, from the "Black Hundreds" (racist, anti-worker gangs, like the KKK) to the phony "socialists" screamed for workers' and Bolshevik blood. Troops hunted armed soldiers and workers all day; middle-class mobs attacked any worker on sight. The *Pravda* offices were wrecked. On July 6/19 PG troops occupied Bolshevik HQ. The party was forced underground; most of the 200 people indicted by the PG were BMO members.

This violation of democratic centralism by BMO leaders occurred because they, and many other Bolsheviks, held dangerous illusions: (1) that state power could be seized through a demonstration; (2) that the Soviet leaders were still socialists instead of the total traitors to the working class that Lenin had always said they were; (3) that the PG, the real seat of power, could be ignored (the masses didn't

even approach its HQ, the Winter Palace).

As Lenin realized, the party's work was temporarily destroyed. But the S-Rs and Mensheviks were now openly committed to the bourgeoisie. In coming weeks, the Bolsheviks would sweep local Soviet elections; until then Lenin dropped "All power to the Soviets" and replaced it with the slogan "All power to the working class, led by its revolutionary party—the Bolshevik-Communists."

Some Bolsheviks wanted to disband the BMO for its disobedience. But Lenin supported it: "those who don't take risks never win; without defeats there are no victories." At Lenin's urging the CC merely moved to supervise the BMO more closely.

BMO leaders and members learned much from their errors of July. "During the second half of September and in October, when the Bolshevik Party was once again divided over the question of seizing power, the high command of the Military Organization insisted on the absolute necessity of careful and thorough preparation before taking the offensive against the PG." As Nevsky put it later, "our experience (especially in the July days) showed us what an absence of thorough preparation and a preponderance of strength means." (Rabinowitch, *Prelude*, p.235)

(Dates: old style/new style. Next week: The BMO and the Kornilov Affair.)

LEARNING FROM THE PAST

Bolsheviks Stop Kornilov's Attempted Coup

The role of the Provisional Government (PG) and Soviet mis-leaders in promoting the offensive and crushing the "July Days" (see C-D, June 13) exposed the phony "socialists" to many workers and soldiers, who soon flocked to the Bolsheviks again. Though in agreement on the need for harsh repression, the Russian ruling class was split into a "conservative" faction, who thought brute force would do the trick, and a "liberal" group, who recognized the need for Kerensky and the Menshevik-S.R. (Socialist Revolutionary) leadership to manipulate the radical masses.

THE CONSERVATIVE GROUP, which represented mainly Petrograd interests, had met in April with the Russian General Staff and agreed on a military dictatorship under Cossack General Lavr Kornilov. As commander of the Petrograd Military District in April 1917, Kornilov had wanted to use machine guns against the Bolshevik-led demonstrations (see C-D, May 23). Zavoiko, an oil magnate, became Kornilov's adjutant and did all his thinking and writing, with promises of money, men, and arms from the British and French (who controlled much of the Russian economy). The more liberal Moscow bourgeoisie were closely connected with the liberal (big business) Kadet Party. They organized two

large conferences of the elite in August to close ranks behind Kornilov, but also insisted that the PG and phony "socialists" were essential; they knew the workers and soldiers were too strong for simple repression.

"Democratic socialist" Kerensky agreed in principle with Kornilov's plans for repression: death for military disobedience; machine-gun soldiers in retreat; martial law and firing squads for workers who didn't meet production quotas. During the summer the bourgeois press tried to build up Kornilov as a "national hero"; Kerensky helped by promoting him twice within 10 days. But Kerensky naturally sided with the Moscow "liberals." So tensions between the two factions remained despite agreement on the general plan. Troops from the front would arrive in Petrograd August 27/Sept. 9 to put down a phony "Bolshevik uprising," to be staged by officers smuggled into the city for the purpose. Kerensky would decree martial law (military rule), and the workers would be crushed. But Kornilov and Zavoiko for the Petrograd group continued to secretly plan a military dictatorship, with all "socialists," including Kerensky, jailed or dead. Moscow representative V.N.L'vov found this out and warned Kerensky, who tried to dump Kornilov and then, failing in this, called on the workers to stop him.

The Soviet mis-leadership supported the PG, but had to work with the hated Bolsheviks; "... the masses, insofar as they were organized, were organized by the Bolsheviks and followed them." as the Menshevik Sukhanov wrote. The Bolshevik Military Organization (BMO) responded by declaring war on Kornilov while making clear Kerensky was no better; Kornilov's "most important strength lies in the readiness of the government to yield to Kornilov rather than permit the full development of the revolution" (*Soldat*, Aug. 29/Sept. 11). BMO members met with their garrison units and then worked alongside the Soviet "while fully retaining our independent political position," as the Bolshevik Central Committee put it. The Bolsheviks demanded all workers be armed; BMO soldiers trained the worker "Red Guards." Workers and soldiers dug trenches while railroad workers sabotaged the rails so Kornilov's troops could not reach Petrograd. BMO-led garrison troops went forth to meet Kornilov while Bolshevik sailors flooded the city, killing any officers who opposed their efforts.

Kornilov had chosen his own troops—Don Cossacks and Moslem tribal units from Asia—for their lack of ties to the workers. But the BMO organized agitators, including an all-Mos-

lem unit and sailors previously stationed with the Asian soldiers, to win them over. Halted by torn-up rails, the "loyal" troops were won to the workers' side in 2 days and imprisoned their own commanders; "there were almost no skirmishes between Kornilov's forces and those on the government's side during the entire affair" (Rabinowitch). Gen. Krymov, commander of the "loyal" troops, committed suicide in dejection.

The result was a great lesson for the soldiers and workers—and a great victory for the Bolsheviks. In resolutions and statements from factories, regiments and soviets, Bolshevik positions were approved: "the politics of compromise with the bourgeoisie must and did lead to the Kornilov conspiracy." A PG military commissar wrote that "every soldier knew that the conflict between Kerensky and Kornilov had been preceded by negotiations between them (for) a return to the ways of the old regime" (Rabinowitch, p. 167). For the first time the Bolsheviks began to win majorities in elections to the Soviets.

(Sources: Rabinowitch, *The Bolsheviks Come to Power*; White, in *Soviet Studies*, 1968; Laverychev, in *Voprosy Istorii*, 1964. Dates: old style/new style. Next week: October).

Learning from the Past

1917: The October Revolution

After the Kornilov-Kerensky attempt at counter-revolution, the workers and soldiers of Russia turned decisively towards the Bolshevik Party. "In the frequent re-elections of deputies to the soviet, the Bolsheviks were steadily increasing their representation" (Hough). Lenin's party had broad support among the troops. The Moscow garrison, for example, had voted 70% for the S-Rs (Social Revolutionaries) in June; in September it went 90% Bolshevik!

YET THE CENTRAL COMMITTEE (CC) and Bolshevik Military Organization (BMO) leaders were very reluctant to seize power. The soldiers still looked to the Soviets; most declared they would only "come out" for a Soviet-sponsored insurrection. Most CC members feared the Mensheviks and S-Rs would quit the Soviet if the Bolsheviks seized power, leaving the party isolated, without soldier support, to be crushed by Kerensky's loyal front troops. They wanted to await the 2nd All-Russian Congress of Soviets on Oct. 25/Nov. 7, where (they expected) a Bolshevik plurality could win a Soviet vote to seize power. Even the Military Revolutionary Committee (MRC) of the Petrograd Soviet, which the Bolsheviks controlled after Sept. 22/Oct. 9 was viewed by the CC as *defensive* only.

Lenin fought this attitude vehemently! From Sept. 12/25 until midnight of Oct. 25/Nov. 7 Lenin struggled to convince party leaders that *state power never comes from any "institu-*

tion." "To wait for the Congress of Soviets is idiocy, for the congress *will give nothing and can give nothing*" (Sept. 27/Oct. 14). "We are confronted by problems which are not to be solved by conferences or congresses, . . . but exclusively by . . . the struggle of the armed people. . . . The people have the right . . . to decide such questions not by a vote, but by force; in critical moments of revolution, the people have the right . . . to give directions to their representatives, even their best representatives, and not to wait for them. The government is tottering. It must be *given the deathblow* at all costs" (Oct. 24/Nov. 6). Among all Bolshevik leaders, only Lenin pushed for a seizure of power before the Congress, and he finally won out; the Congress met just as the Winter Palace was being taken.

Bourgeois scholars regard this "pragmatic" hesitation by the BMO and CC leadership as "correct" and Lenin wrong. When Kerensky moved on Oct. 24/Nov. 6 to close Bolshevik papers and persecute the MRC, the Bolsheviks could seize power "in the name of the Petrograd Soviet," whereas the soldiers would not have supported an insurrection by the Bolsheviks alone. Trotsky, too, later boasted that it was his "plan" to *pretend* hesitancy, so as to hide behind Soviet "legitimacy" (bourgeois scholars today say Trotsky was lying to make his role look "more aggressive").

In fact, this hesitation by the BMO and CC leaders was wrong. (1) Kerensky had no "loyal troops" to speak of. (2)

There was mass support for "All Power to the Soviet"; e.g., only 300 delegates to the Congress were Bolsheviks, but over 500 supported this slogan. (3) The Mensheviks and right S-Rs walked out of the Congress anyway, thus demonstrating their phony commitment to "democracy." (4) The Menshevik and S-R leadership made a clever last minute effort to out-flank the Bolsheviks. On Oct. 24/Nov. 6 they urged Kerensky to do what none of them really supported—declare peace, give land to the peasants and power to soldiers' committees. They hoped this would confuse the soldiers and workers, divide the Bolshevik party, and permit the bourgeois-controlled Provisional Government (PG) to retain power. Kerensky was too short-sighted and refused; if he had been smarter, more "liberal," the revolution might have been delayed, for the Congress would not have voted to oust him.

Finally, *active* soldier support for the insurrection never materialized anyway. Even with Soviet backing, most troops simply stayed neutral. As Lenin knew, the old state apparatus, including the army, could not be taken over; it had to be smashed. The armed force of the insurrection was: (1) Red Guards, armed workers given brief training by soldiers and filled with revolutionary dedication, later the basis of the Red Army (Collins, 271); (2) the radical, pro-Bolshevik sailors from Helsingfors (Helsinki) and Kronstadt; (3) some pro-Bolshevik soldiers organized by the BMO. The main thing was that the army was neutralized; the PG

had no forces, and Petrograd was seized with only a few shots fired.

Upon Lenin's urging, the Bolshevik CC formed, on Oct. 16/29, a Military Revolutionary Center to direct the party's work in the Soviet MRC. After a week of garrison conferences, beginning Oct. 20/Nov. 2 the MRC began replacing garrison commissars loyal to the PG with those loyal to the Soviet. Most were BMO members. On Oct. 22/Nov. 4 the MRC announced that it would control the garrison.

When Kerensky tried to get soldiers to crush the MRC, his commanders told him the troops would refuse. Kerensky fled and five days later sent 1,000 loyal Cossacks (all he could muster) against 10,000 Red Guards and sailors at Pulkovo Heights. His demoralized troops fought one battle, then agreed to turn Kerensky over to the Bolsheviks in return for safe passage back home. The soldiers of the old army continued to flee the front, and by March 1918 the army had disappeared. The revolutionary Red Army, with the Red Guards as its nucleus, was totally separate.

(Sources: Rabinowitch, A. *The Bolsheviks Come to Power*; Hough, J. *How the Soviet Union Is Governed*; Collins, on the Red Guards, *Soviet Studies* 10/72; Longley, *Soviet Studies* 7/73. Dates: old style/new style).

*See the Summer '79 issue of PL Magazine for a discussion of the Red Army after 1917.