

The Old Bolsheviki in 1917



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In memory of the Vyborg Bolsheviks

'The trouble with us is that comrades have wished to remain "old" Bolsheviks and "old" Bolshevism needs revising.' (Vladimir Ulyanov, April 1917)

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Contents

<i>Abbreviations</i>	4
<i>Preface</i>	5
1. Black bread and watery soup	6
2. The February revolution	12
3. The end of the autocracy	31
4. All power to the soviets	54
5. Polarisation and splits	63
6. Down with the ten capitalist ministers!	70
7. The July Days	80
8. The bony hand of hunger	95
9. The soldiers are not going to fight any more	103
10. October	110
11. Brest-Litovsk	126
12. The Constituent Assembly	135
<i>A working conclusion</i>	142
<i>Sources</i>	147
<i>References</i>	152

Abbreviations

Bund	General Jewish Workers' Union in Russia and Poland
CC	Central Committee
Cheka	Extraordinary Commission for the Repression of Counter-Revolution, Speculation, Espionage and Desertion
EC	Executive Committee
Flottenzentrale	Fleet Headquarters (Germany)
Gruppe Internationale	International Group (Germany)
Kadets	Constitutional Democratic Party
LSDP	Social-Democratic Party of Lithuania
LSDSP	Latvian Social-Democratic Workers' Party
Mezhraionka	Interdistrict Group
Mezhraiontsy	Members of Mezhraionka
MSDP	Majority SDP (Germany)
Octobrists	Union of 17 October
Okhrana	Department for the Protection of Public Safety and Order
Ozakom	Special Transcaucasian Committee
PPS	Polish Socialist Party
Pre-Parliament	Provisional Council of the Russian Republic
Rada	Ukrainian Central Council
PSI	Italian Socialist Party
RUP	Ukrainian Revolutionary Party
RSDRP	All-Russian Social-Democratic Labour Party
SD	Social Democrat / Social-Democratic
SDKP	Social-Democracy of the Kingdom of Poland
SDKPIL	Social-Democracy of the Kingdom of Poland and Lithuania
SDPS	Social-Democratic Party of Switzerland
Sovnarkom	Council of People's Commissars
Spartakusbund	Spartacus League (Germany)
SPD	Social-Democratic Party of Germany
Spilka	RUP splinter group
SR	Social Revolutionary
SSDVP	Swedish Social-Democratic Left Party
SSDP	Social-Democratic Party of Finland
State Duma	Consultative parliament
Trudovaya Gruppya	Labour Group
Trudovik	Member of the Labour Group
Tsentrobalt	Baltic Fleet sailors' organisation
Tsentrosibir	Central Executive Committee of Siberian Soviets
USPD	Independent Social-Democratic Party (Germany)
Vizhkel	Railway Union EC
VPSR	All-Russian Party of Socialist-Revolutionaries
VSNKh	Supreme Council of the National Economy
VTsIK	All-Russian Soviet Central Executive Committee

Preface

This book examines the fate of Vserossiyskaya sotsial-demokraticheskaya rabochaya partiya (the All-Russian Social-Democratic Labour Party, or RSDRP) during 1917 and it focusses on the 'Old Bolsheviks'. Initially they were those who supported the majority at the Second Congress of the RSDRP in summer 1903, though the term was not in general use, even in the RSDRP, until late 1904, and the cut-off date to qualify was later established as the end of that year. In 1912 the RSDRP (Bolsheviks) and RSDRP (Mensheviks) were effectively separate organisations. The leaders met occasionally, and though a merger did not happen, workers in several places sometimes collaborated.

This book tries to answer three main questions. What was the state of the Old Bolsheviks in January 1917? What was the relationship of Old Bolshevik *intelligenty* (those with a secondary, and quite often a higher education) with Bolshevik *rabochy-intelligenty* (worker-intellectuals) and *praktiki* (practical workers) during 1917? What was the state of the Old Bolsheviks at the end of 1917?

Most books in English and French about the Old Bolsheviks focus primarily on intelligenty, and use one of their *klitchki* (underground pseudonyms) rather than their family and given names; yet in 1901, when a letter signed 'Lenin' arrived at the RSDRP press in Munich, nobody realised it was from Vladimir Ulyanov, and he used at least 160 other klitchki before and after that. In 1902 Nadezhda Krupskaya greeted Lev Bronstein as 'Piero' when he arrived in London, though Jews were barred from travelling in Siberia, so he had used the passport of an Irkutsk Russian called Trotsky to escape. Ioseb Jughashvili evidently did not sign himself 'Stalin' in print until 1912, and he was exiled to Siberia in 1913. This book uses the Old Bolsheviks' real names whenever possible.

Several Old Bolshevik intelligenty and a few rabochy-intelligenty and praktiki appeared in my previous books, so information about them will not be repeated. Others appear for the first time, sometimes with the barest biographical detail, or only a surname, and many disappear into emigration, prison, deportation or exile, often without trial. Capital punishment had been abolished in the mid-18th century, yet there were executions for a long time after the Moscow rising was defeated late in 1905 and crushed early in 1906, and tsarist prisons were rife with fatal diseases. Gosudarstvennyye prestupniki (state criminals, or 'politicals'), were often exiled to western and central Siberia, but Jews were sent to Yakutsk in the far northeast, where temperatures could reach over 70 degrees Fahrenheit below zero, making survival problematical for those without the necessary resilience and resources.

By 1917 the British government had tightened its rules on accepting political émigrés, and the French government offered limited sanctuary. The Swiss, Scandinavian and US governments were more welcoming for those who could afford to get there, though most were intelligenty, and very few were workers.

The reader does not need to be able to read Russian, or what Anglophones call Biełarussian, Estonian, Finnish, Georgian, German, Latvian, Lithuanian, Polish, Ukrainian, Yiddish or any of the other 170 or so other languages used in the Empire. The names of subject nations used here are those familiar in the west, but since the autocracy sought to 'Russianise' the names of the towns and cities, this book uses those preferred by a majority of their inhabitants. So the capital of Finland was Helsinki, not Helsinchi or Helsingfors, that of Estonia was Tallinn, not Reval, that of Latvia was Rīga, not Riga, that of Lithuania was Vilnius, not Vilna, Vilno or ווילנע, that of the Russian-controlled Kingdom of Poland was Warszawa, not Varshava or וואַרשע, that of Ukraine was Київ (transcribed here as Kyiv), not Kiev, that of Galicia in Austrian-controlled Poland was Lwów, not Lviv or Lemberg, that of Georgia, where capital letters were not used, was თბილისი (transcribed here as Tbilisi), not Tiflis, and that of Azerbaijan was Baki, not Baku.

This book uses the Russian calendar for events in the Empire, and the western calendar, which was 13 days ahead in the 1900s, for events abroad; but it gives both when confusion might arise. Russian measures, weights and distances are given in contemporary British quantities, as is the value of the ruble, whenever possible.

The author of this book is a retired academic with 25 years' experience in a British revolutionary socialist party. I have tried very hard to avoid academic and sectarian squabbles and speculation, and I indicate when information is more or less doubtful; but the book will challenge the haters of the devils Lenin, Trotsky and Stalin, and the worshippers of saints Vladimir, Lev and Ioseb. It is based on Karl Marx's premise that 'the emancipation of the working classes must be conquered by the working classes themselves', and on his mottos: 'doubt everything', 'ignorance never helped anybody' and 'go your own way, and let people talk'.

I thank Frank Ellis very warmly for his comradely criticism and Eide O'Callaghan for putting this book online at www.marxists.org/history/etol/writers/harker, along with my other books about the formation and development of the Old Bolsheviks.

1. Black bread and watery soup

The January crisis

Before the war began in summer 1914 the tsar's Empire covered almost 13.9 million square miles,¹ or around one-sixth of the world's landmass. It included 8.8 million square miles in the European provinces, and the rest was in Siberia.² In autumn the tsar changed the name of the capital, St. Petersburg, which he thought sounded too German, to Petrograd.³ By 1917 German and Austro-Hungarian troops had occupied 500,000 square miles, including some of the most fertile land and the industrial centres of Warszawa, Lublin, Radom and Łódź in Russian-controlled Poland, which had supplied a tenth of Russia's iron ore, a fifth of its coal and two-thirds of its chemicals.⁴

The Empire's population in 1917 has been estimated at 182 million.⁵ In European Russia there were six million or so peasant households,⁶ and almost half held communal land, but did not own it.⁷ Most had separate strips, though some had consolidated theirs into farms.⁸ Peasant *kulaki* ('fists') held three-quarters of agricultural land,⁹ and about 100,000 well-to-do landowners,¹⁰ who owned about ten percent, leased much of it to peasants, though around 4.5 million in 13 provinces were involved in cottage industry.¹¹

Around 19 million overwhelmingly peasant men aged between 18 and 43 had been called up since 1914, but by 1917 there were barely a dozen rifles for every 250 under training, and most were so old that they could not be used. Some infantry received a better rifle at the base depot, but others got one only at the front.¹² The army's front-line strength was 6.9 million,¹³ though the desertion rate, especially among those aged 40 or over, was very high,¹⁴ and one army had ten days' supply of food.¹⁵ There were around 2.5 million reserves in Russia,¹⁶ but they could not enter trams or restaurants, had to travel in 3rd class railway carriages, eat in 3rd class buffet cars, and address officers as 'Your Excellency' or 'Your Honour', and endure bullying and beating,¹⁷ though the over-40s had persuaded many to refuse to go to the front because of the carnage.¹⁸ The army had taken 2.6 million peasants' horses, and 30 percent of households had none.¹⁹ Much agricultural work was done by women, old men, children,²⁰ prisoners of war,²¹ and refugees,²² and barely a third of land could be sown.²³ Most used scratch ploughs and hand sickles, and produced mainly for their own consumption, so the government's grain stocks were insufficient.²⁴

Around a million people lived in Siberia, including many political exiles, and around one third lived in cities on the Trans-Siberian railway which had populations of over 100,000, including Irkutsk, Omsk, and Vladivostok on the Pacific coast.²⁵ By 1917 about 540,000 tons of military equipment were in Vladivostok, though only 100 railway wagonloads left each day.²⁶ Nationally there were 16,750 engine drivers for 20,600 locomotives,²⁷ though around 1,200 had broken down,²⁸ 36,000 wagons had no locomotives to pull them, and those on the Petrograd-Moscow line had enough coal for four days.²⁹ Transporting soldiers to the Romanian border, after the Romanian army collapsed, exacerbated the transport situation.³⁰

Nationally around 27 percent of male industrial workers were exempt from conscription, including 53 percent of metalworkers.³¹ There were around 546,000 metalworkers and 724,000 textile workers. During the war the proportion of women in factories had risen by almost seven percent to 34.2 percent, and that of youths and juveniles by over two percent to 11.7 percent. Women worked in mines, though not at the face,³² yet women, youths and children worked night shifts in factories.³³ Government factory inspectors were not responsible for around 1.5 million construction workers, 1.2 million railway workers, 800,000 miners, 500,000 waterway workers and 400,000 in state-owned factories, but they inspected around 3,643,000 in other factories and workshops which employed 16 or more.³⁴ Two-thirds of male workers aged 30 or over were literate, but fewer females.³⁵

The government's gold reserves had declined substantially. By 1917 it had issued almost ten billion paper rubles since 1914,³⁶ and issued them in sheets for people to cut.³⁷ Bread prices were rising on average by over two percent a week, potatoes and cabbage by three percent, milk by five percent, meat and sausage by seven percent and chocolate and sugar by ten percent or more. Most workers and their families ate no eggs, meat or fruit, or drank milk, and many survived on black bread and watery soup.³⁸

The RSDRP claimed 23,600 members, or around 0.013 percent of the total population. They included 14,200 factory workers, 6,100 white-collar staff and 1,800 peasants.³⁹ The affiliated Latvijas Sociāldemokrātiskā Strādnieku Partija, (the Latvian Social-Democratic Workers' Party, or LSDSP), was the largest group in the RSDRP and outnumbered the Russians.⁴⁰ Membership requirements had almost been suspended. Many recent recruits knew little about Marxism,⁴¹ and the line between members and supporters was blurred.⁴² The Bolsheviks claimed around 10,000 members, or around 0.0055 percent of the total population,⁴³ yet they claimed organisations in 200 towns, cities and parts of the armed forces, or an average of 50 in each.⁴⁴

Petrograd

Two Bolshevik intelligently members of RSDRP CC were in Switzerland and two were exiled in Siberia.⁴⁵ A fifth member, the 31-year-old skilled engineer, worker-intelligent Old Bolshevik Alexandr Shlyapnikov had returned to Petrograd in October 1916. He aimed to organise demonstrations on 9 January 1917, the 12th anniversary of 'Bloody Sunday' massacre of peaceful demonstrators in 1905 and left for Moscow in mid-December to contact Bolsheviks in Nizhny Novgorod, Voronezh, Kyiv, Tula, Ukraine, the Urals, and elsewhere in Siberia.⁴⁶ He had recruited two men to help him rebuild the Bolsheviks' leading bureau in Petrograd, though neither was an Old Bolshevik.⁴⁷ Petr Zalutsky had been born into a peasant family in a Мaгилёў province village in Biełarus in 1887. He became a revolutionary in 1904, took part in the 1905 revolution and joined the RSDRP in 1907. He worked illegally in Vladivostok, then moved to the capital in 1911, where he got a factory job, joined the Bolsheviks and helped to distribute their papers, *Pravda* (*Truth*) and *Zvezda* (*The Star*).⁴⁸ Vyacheslav Skryabin had been born into a merchant's family in a Vyatka province village in 1890. He joined the RSDRP as a school student in 1907 and the Bolsheviks in 1908. He was deported to Vologda province in northwestern Russia for two years in 1909, but in 1911 he studied at the capital's Polytechnic and worked on *Pravda*. He moved to Moscow in 1914, and was exiled again, but escaped to the capital in 1916 and joined the Bolshevik city committee.⁴⁹

By 1917 the population of Petrograd had grown from around 1.26 million in 1914 to around 2.42 million, or about 1.5 percent of the national population, a growth rate well above the national average.⁵⁰ Almost three-quarters of the population were peasant immigrants,⁵¹ and a sixth held land in villages.⁵² The industrial workforce had grown by 150,000, or 60 percent, to almost 393,000, or 417,000 including those in the suburbs, where factories employed an average of 409 workers.⁵³ Heavy industry employed 60 percent of factory workers, compared to 42 percent in 1914.⁵⁴ The number of metalworkers had increased by over 134 percent, and chemical workers by 98.6 percent, though that of textile workers had decreased by 3.9 percent. The percentage of adult male workers had fallen from 65.2 to 58.5 percent, and the number of under 16s, the legal minimum age, from 9.4 to 8.6 percent.⁵⁵ The 379 metalworks employed over 327,000 workers, 100 textile mills over 44,000 and 58 chemical factories around 40,000.⁵⁶ Metalworks employed 37 percent of the national total,⁵⁷ and produced two-thirds of Russia's war-related materiel.⁵⁸ The five largest factories employed over 80,000 between them, and the 17 largest over 160,000.⁵⁹ Half of factories employed over 500, including 68 percent with over 1,000,⁶⁰ and 38 with over 2,000.⁶¹

Factory workers were concentrated in a few districts outside the city centre. The 91,000 population of Petergofsky district included almost 36,150 workers, of whom almost 33,750 were metalworkers. The 268,000 population of Vasilievsky Island included approaching 52,000 workers, and almost 37,350 were metalworkers. Vyborg was home to 15 of the 21 largest machine-building factories, and almost 69,000 workers included almost 58,000 metalworkers.⁶² The government had sequestered the Putilov metal and armaments works in Petergofsky district to the southwest of the city centre,⁶³ which was the largest military works in the Empire.⁶⁴ Its workforce had grown from around 13,500 in 1914 to almost 24,500 by 1917,⁶⁵ and included 5,000 Poles,⁶⁶ and 10,000 unskilled labourers.⁶⁷ The government had also sequestered Nevsky Shipyard, and taken a 35 percent share in the German-owned Siemens Company.⁶⁸ The Pipe Works employed 19,000, an increase of 186 percent since 1914, Okhta Explosives employed 10,200, the Cartridge Works almost 8,300,⁶⁹ one of the two Parviainen metalworks 7,000, Petrograd Metals 6,700, compared to 3,500 in 1914,⁷⁰ and New Lessner metalworks over 6,500,⁷¹ compared to 1,700 in 1914.⁷² The Izhora arms workforce near the city had increased by 194 percent to 8,900 since 1915.⁷³ Since 1914 about 40,000 male workers in the city had been conscripted, including 6,000 forcibly mobilised on political grounds, and state-owned factory workers were subject to military discipline. The North-Western railway workshops and the carriage and locomotive workshops on the Petrograd-Moscow line each employed over 2,000, and the government's printing works about 8,000. Obukhov metalworks near the city employed 5,000 unskilled labourers among the 13,000 who produced cast-iron, steel and copper mouldings, shells, mines and artillery.⁷⁴ Overall around 15 percent of factory workers were from Tver province, nine percent from both Petrograd and Pskov provinces, seven percent from Vitebsk province and six percent from both Novgorod and Smolensk provinces.⁷⁵ About two-thirds of recent recruits at the largest works were unskilled and barely literate. The percentage of male workers had fallen from an average of 32 percent in 1914 to under 19 percent by 1917, and around 14 percent were skilled, but there were 68,200 more women and 8,900 more youths than in 1914. The 129,800 women factory workers included around 48,000 in metalworks, 30,000 in textile mills, and about 10,000 of the 15,000 at Treugolnik rubber works. Almost 52 percent of workers at 60 or so machine-building works were men, though about 30 percent were women and ten percent were youths. Women formed 81 and 90 percent of the workforce at the two Nevsky district cotton spinning mills. The 31 state-owned factories employed almost 135,000 between them, and the ten run by the Artillery Administration employed 53,000. Pipe Works made time-fuses, percussion caps and explosives. About 14 percent of the workforce were skilled men, while women formed a third of the total. Five other state-

owned factories employed 36,000 workers between them. They included the Cartridge Works, and the Baltic Shipyard, which employed 7,645 workers building battleships, submarines, minelayers and other vessels.⁷⁶

The average working day in factories was 10.1 hours, but tended to be longer in metalworks, textile mills and leather works. A first-class fitter or metal turner could earn 15 to 18 rubles a day, but an unskilled labourer two to three.⁷⁷ One ruble had bought 1,400 calories in 1914, but 168 by 1917.⁷⁸ The 23 workers' cooperatives claimed 50,000 members,⁷⁹ but the 11 tiny illegal trade unions were subject to police attacks. The print workers', pharmacy employees' and shop assistants' unions were legal, but almost ineffective.⁸⁰ There were workers' committees at 120 factories.⁸¹ Some ran canteens,⁸² and the 11 in Vyborg could feed 30,000 workers and 100,000 dependents.⁸³ Fashionable restaurants were thriving,⁸⁴ though champagne could cost the equivalent of £6 10s a bottle, whisky £7 10s and the best butter about eight shillings a pound. The government had closed commercial bakeries and opened others where people with tickets could buy a little black bread, but queues were sometimes a mile long and four abreast in freezing temperatures,⁸⁵ and many women queued for 40 or more hours a week.⁸⁶ Factory wages had risen by 50 to 100 percent since 1914, but prices by 100 to 500 percent, and many foods were unavailable,⁸⁷ as were boots, galoshes, soap and fabric, while the stocks of rye flour were barely enough for 20 days.⁸⁸ Little grain came from nearby peasants, and most of it had to be brought on railways short of locomotives and rolling stock, and clogged with military traffic. Stand-pipes were the only source of water in some districts.⁸⁹ Most was not fit to drink and had to be boiled.⁹⁰ Most workers' families had long been unable to afford eggs, meat, sugar, fruit, and milk, and made do with black bread and watery soup.⁹¹

The Okhrana (the political police) had 371 agents. Some were based abroad, but most were in European Russia, above all in Petrograd, where the headquarters had almost three million coloured cards with information about suspects.⁹² The Okhrana's gendarmes,⁹³ who knew that children were starving, warned the tsar's ministers that hunger riots could easily turn into a revolution,⁹⁴ and believed that 'two-thirds of former and current troops would support' it.⁹⁵ The 'Left parties' were arguing that the government would not make concessions, and there would be 'a spontaneous and anarchic revolution', and 'the basis will be laid for transforming Russia into a state free from tsarism and constructed upon new social principles'. The situation was 'very similar to the time just before the first revolution of 1905'.⁹⁶

Around 152,000 of the 180,000 or so reserve troops were on the outskirts,⁹⁷ but housed in crowded barracks and often poorly fed.⁹⁸ Morale was poor and getting worse.⁹⁹ Half of several garrison regiments had no rifles, and four had enough for between a third and a half of troops. The city governor told the tsar that he had 12,000 reliable troops,¹⁰⁰ though many poor Cossacks were from the Don and Kuban regions. Around 200,000 other troops were not far from the city.¹⁰¹ The military district included Finland, Kronstadt and the Baltic Fleet,¹⁰² and there were 466,800 troops and sailors,¹⁰³ though most soldiers were new recruits, recuperating veterans,¹⁰⁴ and married men temporarily exempt from front-line duty.¹⁰⁵ There were over 384,000 troops in garrisons near the northern front, but the Twelfth Army had suffered 45,000 casualties, and around 2,000 of the 9,000 Latvian riflemen had been killed.¹⁰⁶ A general told members of the State Duma (the toothless parliament) that victory was impossible with the current ministers, and if they staged a coup they could count on military support. Many agreed, but did not act.¹⁰⁷

The city's RSDRP committee included 58 Russians and 42 non-Russians,¹⁰⁸ and around 2,500 of the 3,000 claimed members in 115 cells were workers. Between 40 and 50 percent were *cadre*, who were capable of acting without waiting for orders.¹⁰⁹ There were 19 Bolsheviks among the 15,000 workers at the Treugolnik rubber works, 15 among the 10,000 at Obukhov metalworks, 14 among the 2,500 at one of the Erikson factories and nine among the 1,500 or so at the Nobel engineering works. Revolutionaries collaborated at Okhta Explosives, Aviaz and Obukhov metalworks, Siemens & Halske electrical works and the Siemens-Schuckert factory, which made fighter aircraft.¹¹⁰

Konstantin Yurenev had been born into a railway watchman's family on the Riga-Orlov line in 1888. He joined the RSDRP in 1905 and the Bolsheviks in 1906. In 1908 he was exiled to Arkhangelsk in northern Russia for three years, and on his release he settled in the capital, but left the Bolsheviks. In 1913 he co-founded Mezhraionka, an inter-district group of unaligned SDs. He was arrested in 1916, but acquitted for lack of evidence, hid for two months, then went to Simferopol in Crimea. He was drafted, but escaped, returned to the capital and lived illegally.¹¹¹ Menshevik internationalists who opposed the 'defencists' who supported the war published leaflets,¹¹² aiming to build a one-day strike on the 9th. The Bolsheviks published nothing,¹¹³ yet some city committee members, Menshevik internationalists and Mezhraiontsy were arrested.¹¹⁴

The anniversary of 'Bloody Sunday'

On 9 January government troops manned machine-guns at strategic locations in the capital.¹¹⁵ Mezhraiontsy spoke at large factory meetings, and workers walked along Petersburg highway singing *Vy Pozhertvovali Soboy* (You

Sacrificed Yourself), but Cossacks and mounted police dispersed them and beat up Obukhov metalworkers.¹¹⁶ Soon almost 90,000 workers from 56 factories were on strike, though police blocked their attempts to reach the State Duma at the Tauride Palace.¹¹⁷ Eventually around 150,000 demonstrated from over 100 factories, including around 40,000 from large metalworks,¹¹⁸ included the Franco-Russian engineering works and Baltic shipyard.¹¹⁹ There were around 500 Bolsheviks in Vyborg.¹²⁰ In Vyborg and Nevsky the strike was universal,¹²¹ and some factories struck for the first time since 1905, and some soldiers tipped their hats and cheered red banners with revolutionary slogans;¹²² but by 7.00pm most demonstrators had gone home and the police dispersed the rest.¹²³

On the 10th the police reported that people 'in the streets, on the streetcars, in Theatres, in the stores' had criticised the government 'in an impermissibly sharp manner',¹²⁴ and ministers ordered the city authorities to suppress further demonstrations;¹²⁵ but on the 14th 90,000 workers from 58 works went on strike in response to an appeal by the workers' section of the joint workers' and employers' Central War Industries Committee,¹²⁶ which had been founded in 1915 to mobilise resources behind the war effort and supply the army more efficiently.¹²⁷ On the 15th eight of the 35 members of the Bolshevik city committee thought that most workers were ready for an uprising, though six were uncertain and five thought it inopportune.¹²⁸ By the 19th Mezhraionka had recruited more workers. They had committees in Narva, Neva and Vyborg, and on Vasilievsky Island, and had infiltrated Bolshevik organisations in order to recruit.¹²⁹ The Okhrana noted that liberals believed that a revolution was 'unavoidable'.¹³⁰

On the 24th the workers' section of the War Industries Committee published an appeal.

The resolute elimination of the autocratic regime and the complete democratisation of the country is now the task which demands immediate attention, a question of life and death for the working class and democracy. The entire country and army must hear the voice of the working class: only the establishment of a government, relying on the people organised for struggle, can lead the country out of its blind alley and fatal ruin, strengthen political liberty and guide it to a peace on conditions acceptable to the Russian proletariat and to the proletariat of other countries.

It argued for a march to the Tauride Palace when the Duma reopened,¹³¹ but the tsar postponed its opening for three days, and replaced several ministers with reactionaries.¹³²

At the huge Thornton woollen mill three-quarters of the workforce were women. They went on strike on the 25th and set up a strike committee of between 30 and 40.¹³³ On the night of the 26th there were mass arrests of trade union leaders and other activists,¹³⁴ including 11 of the 14 members of the Trudoviki military committee'.¹³⁵ (The Trudoviki, or Labour Group, had been founded by a soldier after the failed 1905 revolution and had broken away from the VPSR.¹³⁶) On the 28th the Okhrana warned ministers that the economic crisis was 'affecting the entire population',¹³⁷ and members of the central munitions committee were arrested, even though they supported the government.¹³⁸ The worker's section of the War Industries Committee called for a constituent assembly,¹³⁹ described the government as 'incapable of dealing with problems raised by the war', which it used 'to strengthen the oppression of the people'; but they were arrested.¹⁴⁰ The government had ordered ambassadors to reassure the governments of France and Italy that Russian foreign policy 'would remain unshakable both in its general principles and in particular in its close unity' with allies,¹⁴¹ and the tsar postponed the opening of the Duma to 14 February.¹⁴² The RSDRP CC bureau published 'Information leaflets' about the activities of local organisations. The Vyborg Bolshevik committee, which had replaced the arrested city committee, exhorted workers to strengthen their *kruzhki* (underground cells), build new ones, contact other workers and prepare a 'general offensive',¹⁴³ since 'events are moving with incredible speed'; but it warned against 'separate actions'.¹⁴⁴

Hectograph duplicators transferred a master text in a special ink to a pan of gelatine using spirits, and copies were made by pressing paper against it;¹⁴⁵ and a few copies of an anonymous hectographed leaflet had appeared.

Two years ago, the tsarist autocracy carried out trial and reprisals against our deputies. Those who found the courage to raise their voices of protest against the international war, against the adventures of the irresponsible bourgeoisie, against the age-old enemy of the people, the tsarist autocracy, were put in the dock. Our chosen ones were judged by those who have long been condemned by history, those who are waiting for the merciless judgment of the people. Tried and condemned. Tsarist justice has been done: representatives of the working class are languishing in the cold boundless tundra of Siberia. Who came to the defense? Who supported them in this difficult moment? It hurts to tell the truth, but it would be criminal to hide it. The workers did not support their representatives, they left them to the mercy of the tsarist autocracy, [so] they lost heart, lowering their mighty hands. But maybe our representatives were supported by the State Duma, of which they were members. Perhaps the 'parliament' protested against violence against the Social Democratic faction of the State Duma? Oh no, the pitiful counterfeit of democracy, the State Duma, has renounced those who tore off the guise of popular representation from it, who sharply and mercilessly castigated the bourgeoisie and the tsarist autocracy. It is with a feeling of deep indignation, with a feeling of boundless disgust, that we read the miserable pages of unknown faces calling us, comrade workers, to support the servile 'opposition' Duma at all costs. Leaflets are being distributed to factories and works in which you are invited to strike and demonstrate on the opening day of the State Duma. ... Comrades, the

nameless leaflets are the work of a handful of renegades of the working class who are trying to subjugate the labour movement to the bourgeoisie, and you must regard them with the distrust of staunch fighters for the people's cause. ... Only the peasantry and the suffering army will be our allies in the struggle for a democratic republic. Only relying on them, the proletariat will prepare for the revolutionary struggle against the autocracy, and the powerful organized proletariat will not be afraid of it. We, the united Social-Democrats Bolsheviks and Mensheviks, we call you to an independent revolutionary struggle, we call you, comrades, to gather your forces for the last and decisive battle against autocratic arbitrariness. The working class needs to strengthen its illegal organizations; it needs to unite all its forces in a single Social-Democratic Labour Party. We need to use our labour kopecks to create a free illegal press. ... Comrades, February 14 is not the day of the working class, but the day of its enemies; on this day we will not go out into the streets; we will not organize demonstrations. Long live the revolution, down with the autocracy, down with the war, long live the international solidarity of the proletariat, long live the Provisional Revolutionary government, long live the Constituent Assembly, long live the Democratic Republic!

The leaflet called for a general strike on 13 February, but the Bolshevik and Menshevik leaders were opposed.¹⁴⁶

On the 31st most of the workers' section of the War Industries Committee were charged with being 'a criminal association striving for the overthrow of the present system and the establishment of a socialist republic', and the only one who escaped arrest was a police spy.¹⁴⁷ The police had seized the Bolsheviks' *Proletarsky Golos* (*Proletarian Voice*). None of their 47 leaflets had mentioned the call of the émigré Bolshevik CC members in Switzerland for fraternisation at the front, characterised the war as imperialist and Russia's defeat as a lesser evil, or denounced defencists as 'social patriots'.¹⁴⁸

During January Petrograd had received an average of 39 railway wagonloads of flour a day, instead of the 120 it needed,¹⁴⁹ and in the last ten days several factories had received less than a day's supply of coal.¹⁵⁰ The managers of a large textile mill had tried to lengthen the working day by an hour. Women already worked 12 hours, and some destroyed the list of those who agreed to the extension and went on strike. Managers moved compliant workers to another floor, but the strikers got them reinstated. The Okhrana reported that mothers, 'exhausted from the endless queues at shops' and 'suffering the sight of their ill and half-starved children', were 'a mass of inflammable material which needs only for a spark for it to break into flames to revolution'.¹⁵¹ The 48-year-old writer Alexei Peshkov (known by his literary pseudonym of 'Maxim Gorky') was alarmed. 'If transport stops for two weeks famine will set in.'¹⁵² According to the factory inspectors, there had been 270,000 strikers in the city;¹⁵³ and a third had raised political slogans, including 'Down with the War!'¹⁵⁴ The 135 strikes deemed politically-motivated had involved almost 152,000 workers, and just over 144,100 working days had been 'lost', while 34 strikes deemed economically-motivated had involved approaching 24,500 workers, and just over 59,000 working days had been 'lost';¹⁵⁵ but in other major industrial regions the response to 9 January had been patchy at best.

Moscow and other key regions

By 1917 Moscow's population was over two million and it was the second largest city.¹⁵⁶ Less than one percent of citizens could vote in elections to the city duma, but only a third usually did so.¹⁵⁷ Many industrial workers had left their jobs since 1914, though 206,000 remained.¹⁵⁸ Metalworkers formed over 27 percent of industrial workers, or around nine percent of the national total, and almost all worked on military-related contracts and were aged 16 or over, so they were exempt from conscription. A majority of workers were of peasant origin, and at least 27 percent of held land, but only two percent left to help with agricultural work occasionally, and many had never seen their parents' villages. The largest works were in Zamoskvoreche district, while several gigantic state works and the Kursk and Kazan railway workshops were to the east, though there was sometimes not enough fuel, and some works had closed partially or altogether. One works making heavy artillery employed over 3,000 soldiers, and another 3,300. Around ten percent of metalworkers were involved in steel production and two-thirds were at the Gustav List works, while the Bromley metalworks employed 2,000 and the Russia Electricity Company's Dinamo detonator works 2,200. In privately-owned textile mills the average workforce was 236; though there were 5,400 at the Danilovskaia textile mill and 6,000 at the Prokhorov mill. Metalworkers and textile workers formed just over half of the city's industrial workforce, though 46 percent were in small workshops. Highly-skilled machine-builders earned high wages, and most lived in private housing, from a shared cot to a small cottage; though the average weekly cost of food had risen by 157 percent since 1916 and took 50 to 70 percent of an average family budget. The city was receiving half the grain it needed, and citizens survived on an average of 2.5 pounds of bread a day, which provided 56 percent of the necessary calories. Over 30 percent of males, and around 25 percent of females, were literate,¹⁵⁹ though the number of printers had fallen from 23,000 to 19,000 since 1914.¹⁶⁰ The liberal daily *Russkoe Slovo* (*Russian Word*) sold between 600,000 and 700,000 copies across Russia;¹⁶¹ but most workers read one kopek

newspapers.¹⁶² On the 2nd Moscow Bolsheviks began preparing for the 9th,¹⁶³ and on the day the Okhrana estimated that over 28,000 workers from 41 factories went on strike and demonstrated. At 1.00pm, at the suggestion of the RSDRP committee, between 2,000 and 3,000 assembled in the city centre and while those carrying red flags or singing revolutionary songs were arrested and imprisoned, others, including some students, assembled elsewhere with a red banner calling for the fall of the government and sang *Rabochaya Marselyeza (The Workers' Marseillaise)*, whose Russian lyrics had become popular in 1905.¹⁶⁴

There were 794,000 workers in the central industrial region around Moscow,¹⁶⁵ which included Vladimir, Voronezh, Kaluga, Kostroma, Orel, Smolensk, Ryazan, Novgorod, Tambov, Tula, Tver and Iaroslavl provinces,¹⁶⁶ where textile production predominated.¹⁶⁷ Vladimir province mills employed an average of 482,¹⁶⁸ and around 93 percent of the 150,000 or so workers in the Ivanovo-Kineshma district worked in cotton mills.¹⁶⁹ The Bolsheviks had separated from the Mensheviks in Tula, Kolomna, Nizhni-Novgorod and its Sormovo suburb.¹⁷⁰ The Old Bolshevik Ivan Radchenko, a 42-year-old intelligent, was president of Bogorodsk soviet in Novgorod province.¹⁷¹ In Murom in Vladimir province leaflets argued for rebellion against the tsar and his government. A Tver leaflet announced that 'Only revolution can end the war', overthrow the autocracy, and save the people from starvation, so they must prepare for civil war. The Tula governor reported that the food supply was so poor that he was 'sitting on a powder-keg'.¹⁷² On 9 January there were strikes in Nizhni Novgorod and Voronezh.¹⁷³

In Ukraine there may have been just over 195,000 industrial workers in Kyiv, 171,500 in the Kharkiv-Ekaterinoslav region, 74,900 in Odesa,¹⁷⁴ and about a million in the Donbas region included around 280,000 miners and metalworkers.¹⁷⁵ Real wages had declined to an average of 60 percent of the pre-war level.¹⁷⁶ There had been ten Bolsheviks in Iuzovka during the war, and they had separated from the Mensheviks, but were scattered and had not formed a committee since they feared the police.¹⁷⁷ There had been 71 strikes involving 73,000 or so Donbas workers since the start of the war, and by 1917 they were more intense and lasted longer. The Old Bolshevik Iury Lutovinov, a 29-year-old metalworker, had left Petrograd for Makiivka, where strikes were increasingly violent. After writing a leaflet for the anniversary of Bloody Sunday he went to Luhansk to organise at the Cartridge Works, which had no Bolshevik organisation, then went on to Ekaterinoslav, Odesa and Mykolaev to organise a Bolshevik conference.¹⁷⁸ In Shostka in Chernihiv province revolutionary leaflets argued that it was time to end the war with Germany and fight 'the real enemy – tsarism and the government'.¹⁷⁹ On 9 January there was a one-day strike in Kharkiv and the Donbas.¹⁸⁰

On the middle Volga the Saratov governor had recently compared the situation to 1905, and the head of Kazan Okhrana reported that people were openly criticising the government.¹⁸¹

In Transcaucasia there were 18,600 or so industrial workers, plus 63,600 in the Caspian region and 65,000 in the Rostov-na-Donu region.¹⁸² On 9 January there was a one day strike in Rostov-na-Donu and Novochoerkassk, the Don Cossack capital in Rostov province.¹⁸³ During January a secret SD conference in Georgia decided to declare independence if Russian troops were withdrawn.¹⁸⁴ There, and in the Kuban and other southern regions, 4.3 million peasants owned over 16 million acres, while three million Cossacks owned just over six million, and paid no tax in return for military service. Wealthy Cossacks could afford the equipment, though it was a heavy burden on the poor,¹⁸⁵ and front-line troops suffered from scurvy and were eating their horses.¹⁸⁶

In Azerbaijan Muslims accounted for 74 percent of unskilled workers in and around the capital, Baki,¹⁸⁷ and on 9 January 14,000 demonstrated in the oilfields.¹⁸⁸

That month, nationally, factory inspectors had recorded 472 strikes involving almost 250,000 workers, and deemed almost 163,000 'political'.¹⁸⁹ The strikes had cost employers almost 750,000 rubles, and almost a third of strikers had raised slogans including 'Down with the War!' and 'Down with Autocracy!'¹⁹⁰

2. The February revolution

Bread!

By February many railway wagonloads of food, fuel and fodder were buried beneath snow across Russia, and a minister told the tsar that 'We have grain at flour mills that have no fuel, flour where there aren't any cars to move it, and freight cars where there is no freight for them to carry.' Some factories had no fuel and no steel.¹

Petrograd was receiving 21 railway wagonloads of flour a day instead of the 120 it needed,² and its stock would last 12 days.³ Bread queues were longer; but it soon spoiled, so women bought stale bread and made cookies which lasted weeks.⁴ Ration tickets had not been printed, and the size of the ration was unknown. On the 8th the city received 17 railway wagonloads of flour, and bakers got barely one third of what they needed.⁵ Around 20,000 demonstrated,⁶ and the government detached Petrograd military district from the northern front and gave its commander special powers.⁷ On the 9th the RSDRP city committee circulated leaflets at the Izhora arms works in Kolpino, 16 miles south-east of Petrograd city centre, and workers went on strike about low wages. C. G. Panov, Mareev, Zimin and others demanded that the Bolshevik Duma deputies be freed, the war ended and a democratic republic established.⁸

Boris Bogdanov had been born in 1884. He later became a Menshevik, then a Bolshevik, but by 1917 he had rejoined the Mensheviks. At the soviet he noted that wages had risen by 200 percent, but workers needed more. The soviet demanded reforms, including an eight-hour day without loss of earnings.⁹ Trudoviki cooperated with SRs, agitated for a revolution,¹⁰ and accepted Bogdanov's proposal for a general strike.¹¹ On the 10th 1,000 leaflets argued that the government and big business were robbers and murderers, called on workers to wage 'war on this war', overthrow the tsar,¹² and organise a demonstration on the anniversary of the exile of the Duma deputies.¹³ (It was based on one by the 53-year-old intelligent and SR turned Old Bolshevik Mikhail Alexandrov in Moscow.¹⁴) Petrograd Mezhrainitsy and some Mensheviks tried to unify SDs in the city and the province.¹⁵

When confused news of the Petrograd events reached New York,¹⁶ Shlyapnikov decided to set off for Russia.¹⁷ On the 11/24th he wrote to the other Bolshevik CC members in Switzerland that Moscow Bolsheviks had a bureau, others were organizing along the middle Volga and in the south, while those in the Caucasus were demanding literature and people.¹⁸ A 'revolutionary hurricane' could occur any day,¹⁹ and though the Bolsheviks had the only national organisation and had some 'good, stable, capable cadres', there were too few.²⁰

A.K. Skhorokhodov had become a Bolshevik in 1912. He was exiled, and after his release he worked at the Navy factory in Nikolaevsk, then moved to the capital and worked at a small factory in Petrograd district. He led kruzhki, chaired illegal gatherings and forged 'ties' with soldiers. Ivan Churugin had been born in Sormovo in 1883. He attended the school at the railway wagon shop where his father worked. He became a roofer in 1894, but in 1897 he travelled through Samara and Astrakhan provinces, then returned home and worked at the railway wagon shop. He joined the RSDRP in 1902, but in 1903 he was arrested for allegedly belonging to a group which had beaten to death a worker who they suspected was a spy. He spent a year in prison, and though the charge could not be proved, he was charged with being a member of the RSDRP. In 1911 he left for Geneva. When he returned to Russia he was exiled to Siberia, but escaped after two years, and by 1916 and he had joined the Vyborg RSDRP committee in Petrograd.²¹ In February 1917 he was a member of the RSDRP city committee.²²

By the 12th food prices in Petrograd had risen steeply, and Putilov forge workers demanded a 50 percent rise. Managers refused, strikers stayed on the premises.²³ Many older workers had left Mezhrainka, though it included some intelligence. The students Isaak Kroshinsky and Maria Ratner spoke at a large rally of workers, and Anatoly Slutsky spoke at a meeting in Lesnoy district, which had been co-organized with the RSDRP city committee.²⁴ They called for a one-day strike and pressed Vyborg Bolsheviks to join them.²⁵ The Bolshevik committee called for a general strike at the opening of the Duma,²⁶ and so did some Mensheviks.²⁷

On the 13th the tsar signed a document dissolving the Duma in case it should be needed.²⁸ About 20,000 Petrograd workers came out that day, but by the 14th the city had around ten days' supply of flour, and women emptied bread and food shops in a few hours.²⁹ Women tram workers on Vasilievsky Island asked a nearby regiment if they would shoot demonstrators, and they said they would not.³⁰ Around 16,000 workers came out on strike. Around 46 percent were metalworkers, 32 percent were tram workers and 12 percent were print workers.³¹ Hundreds of students marched down Nevsky Prospekt,³² and after about 95 per cent of Nevsky workers came out, around 90,000 from 58 factories were on strike, and Putilov workers' slogans included 'Down with the war', 'Down with the government',³³ 'Long live a democratic republic!', and 'Long live the Second Russian Revolution!' New Lessner metalworkers marched through the city singing revolutionary songs, and shouting 'Down with the war!'

and 'Bread!'³⁴ There were demonstrations in Narva and Neva districts.³⁵ Workers ignored police threats³⁶ and around 400 reached the Tauride Palace.³⁷

Viktor Shklovsky had been born in Petrograd in 1893. His father was a Lithuanian Jew who had converted to Orthodoxy, and his mother was of German-Russian origin. Viktor later attended the University, and during the war he volunteered for the army and became a trainer in an armoured car unit.³⁸ On 14 February 1917 about 200 marched along the streets, shouting 'Dirty cops, dirty cops'.³⁹ New Mezhraionka cells were set up on Vasilievsky Island, and at the Siemens-Schuckert and two other factories. In Gorky's dining room the Mezhraionets Konstatin Yurenev argued that there was a need for printed propaganda and agitation in the army, though moderate socialists and liberals were unenthusiastic.⁴⁰ An RSDRP city committee leaflet argued that it was time for 'an open struggle'. It called on workers to overthrow the autocracy, form a provisional revolutionary government that would establish a democratic republic, introduce an eight-hour day and transfer all gentry land to the peasantry. At 3.00pm the police dispersed the demonstrators and made arrests.⁴¹ The government closed trade unions, and ordered police to watch cooperative societies, and civil and military authorities to supervise workers' mutual insurance offices.⁴² The British and French ambassadors asked it to suppress the RSDRP as well.⁴³

At 6.00am on the 16th the director closed the Izhora arms works.⁴⁴ The government cut the civilian bread ration in Petrograd to 17.6 ounces a day,⁴⁵ and flour did not reach workers' cooperatives.⁴⁶ On the 17th Putilov gun-carriage workers' committee demanded the reinstatement of sacked workmates, and a 50 percent rise, but managers refused.⁴⁷ On the 18th 486 gun-carriage punching shop workers went on strike demanding a rise and the reinstatement of members of the administration who they believed had been sacked unfairly. The whole workforce supported them,⁴⁸ though some were sacked,⁴⁹ and others were locked out;⁵⁰ but delegations visited other factories to seek support.⁵¹ On the 19th Petrograd strikers set up a strike committee and demonstrated.⁵² There was enough flour in the city for a week.⁵³

On the 20th long queues of women bought up all the bread,⁵⁴ and some female textile workers, soldiers' wives,⁵⁵ and workers' wives looted bread shops.⁵⁶ Around 4,000 Putilov shipyard workers went on strike demanding higher pay, and on the 21st they stood by their machines but did not work.⁵⁷ Other munitions workers went on strike in solidarity,⁵⁸ and around 200,000 demonstrated and their slogans were 'Bread!', 'Down with the War!' and 'Down with the government!' The police reported that some people had had no bread for two days or more and noted that women who got two or three loaves crossed themselves and wept with joy.⁵⁹

By the 22nd, officially, 807,000 city metalworkers had been involved in 568 of the 791 strikes across Russia since the start of the war. Over 100,000 textile workers had struck 105 times, and Petrograd and Petrograd province metalworkers and machine-builders had formed over 70 percent of strikers deemed 'political'.⁶⁰ A Vyborg policeman reported that the 'working masses' were 'in ferment, since there had been a shortage of bread for two or three days. More factory workers went on strike, and some were involved in disturbances. Around 900 workers at four textile mills, Pipe Works and other factories stopped work, stood by their machines and discussed how to respond to the bread shortage, and Putilov managers closed the plant. The railways were short of 80,000 wagons and 2,000 locomotives, and the 'lack of fuel, metal and electricity had forced many enterprises to close'. The tsar was warned that the situation was 'catastrophic'.⁶¹ He prorogued the Duma,⁶² and left for Army headquarters, around 490 miles south at Mагілёў in Bielarus.⁶³

Nina Agadzhanova had been born into a merchant's family in Kuban province in 1889.⁶⁴ In 1907, while studying to be a teacher, she joined the RSDRP, and helped to create Bolshevik networks in Voronezh, Orel and the capital. From 1914 she was a member of the Petrograd Vyborg RSDRP committee and a secretary of *Rabotnitsa (Women Worker)*, the Bolshevik paper for women. She was twice exiled to Siberia, but escaped. By 1917 she was a machine operator at Pipe Works, where Bolshevik women, including the intelligentki Dora Itkind and B. Ratner, led *kruzhki*, and Agadzhanova exhorted women workers to demonstrate against the regime.⁶⁵

Maria Vydrina had been born in 1895. She had joined the Bolsheviks in Moscow in 1915, distributed SD literature and collected funds. By 1916 she was a Petrograd machine-tool driller, and organised women workmates. In February 1917 she argued at mass meetings of soldiers' wives that they should demonstrate on the 23rd, International Women's Day, release political prisoners, search for arms and join first-aid units.⁶⁶ Mezhraiontsy persuaded the Bolshevik city committee and Menshevik and SR leaders to organise an information and contact bureau, which printed an agitational leaflet that called on workers and soldiers to fight the regime.⁶⁷ The Mezhraionka worker Elena Sakharova, and Anna Itkina, plus T.T. Shelaginova and other Bolshevik intelligentki, prepared for the 23rd,⁶⁸ and persuaded the Vyborg RSDRP committee leaders to organise a meeting on the war and inflation. They also issued a leaflet.

Dear women comrades, are we going to put up with this in silence much longer, now and then venting our anger on small shop owners? After all, they are not responsible for the people's suffering, they are being ruined themselves. The

government is to blame! It started the war and cannot end it. The government is ruining the country and causing us to go hungry. The capitalists are to blame! The war brings them profits. It's high time to cry out to them: 'Enough! Down with the criminal government and its whole gang of robbers and murderers! Long live peace!'

SR internationalists distributed leaflets about the 23rd,⁶⁹ but the RSDRP press was broken.⁷⁰

The Bolsheviks were concentrated in Vyborg, Vasilievsky Island and Narva districts, but their headquarters were in Petrograd district.⁷¹ The CC attended only the first meeting of the information and contact bureau,⁷² but sent speakers to urge workers to join the demonstration on the 23rd. Demands for speakers were referred to the apartment of the student Tolmacheva, who sent them to another apartment where speakers gathered.⁷³ Benjamin Yurenev had been born into a worker's family in 1876. He joined the RSDRP in 1900 and the Bolsheviks in 1903. By February 1917 he worked at the Erikson factory in Vyborg, and was a member of the district committee. Benjamin Kayurov had been born in 1876. He had joined the RSDRP in 1900 and the Bolsheviks in 1903.⁷⁴ By February 1917 he worked at the Ericsson factory in Vyborg and was a member of the district committee. During a demonstration he and several other workers had taken off their caps and asked 'Brothers-Cossacks' to 'help the workers in a struggle for their peaceable demands; you see how the Pharaohs [police] treat us, hungry workers'.⁷⁵ The Vyborg Bolshevik committee was organizing for May Day, but on the 22nd Kayurov was sent to a women's meeting in Lesnoy district. He described the significance of 'Women's Day' and the women's movement, but urged them 'to refrain from abortive deeds and act exclusively in accordance with the instructions' of the Party committee.⁷⁶

International Women's Day

On 23 February many Petrograd women joined bread queues by 3.00am, hoping to get two rolls before going to work for 12 hours in a mill or metalworks at 7.00am. Some had gone two or three days without food. In Vyborg 7,000 low-paid women came onto the streets, demanding 'Bread!'⁷⁷ They also called for the overthrow of the monarchy and an end to the war.⁷⁸ The Old Lessner, New Lessner, Aivaz, Erikson, Rosenkrantz, Renault, Phoenix, Promet and other large plants were in Vyborg, but it was mainly women textile workers who initiated action, and those at the Neva Thread Mills heard others outside demanding that they join them.

'Into the street! Stop! We've had it!' And the entire first floor of the thread mill opened its windows in a flash, or rather they were knocked out with sticks, stones, and pieces of wood. The women thread-workers surged noisily into the passageway ... All the doors were thrown open. And thousands of thread-makers pushed out into freedom.⁷⁹

A woman tram conductor later recalled how the strikes spread to Vasilievsky Island.

We began to leave the yard to board the municipal trams when suddenly we saw a crowd of workers coming towards us, shouting 'Open the gate to the yard!' There were several hundred people. They stood on the rails and on the stairs of the Garnyi Museum which was opposite the yard. The workers were from a Pipe Works, a tannery and a paper factory. They told us that today all the works in the city were on strike and the trams were not running. The strikers were taking the tram drivers out of control of the management. From all sides we heard 'Down with the war!', and one woman shouted 'Return our husbands from the front!'

A woman tram driver recalled that the streets were packed.

The trams had stopped running, cars lay overturned across their tracks. At the time I didn't know, didn't understand what was happening. I screamed along with the rest. 'Down with the tsar!', yet when I wondered 'how will it be without a tsar?' I felt as if a bottomless pit had opened up in front of me, and my heart sank. Yet still I shouted over and over again, 'Down with the tsar!' It felt as if my old life was collapsing, and I rejoiced in its destruction.⁸⁰

Troops and police had been ordered to hold the Neva bridges at all costs,⁸¹ yet women tram workers, housewives and soldiers crossed the frozen river with banners bearing and 'Bread!' and 'Our Children are Starving!'⁸²

The Bolshevik CC bureau had issued no detailed instructions, so Bolsheviks in each plant had to decide what to do. At the Erikson factory in Vyborg five met in a hallway and Nikifor Ilin reported about women textile workers' strikes. Some arrived and asked for support; Mensheviks and SRs decided to support them, and Ivan Zhukov reported to the district committee. An SR recalled that workers were asking what to do, and leaders told them to strike and demonstrate with the slogans of 'Down with the autocracy!', 'Down with the war!' and 'Give us bread!'

Boys were the first to respond, and called on other workers to attend a meeting, which decided to turn up next day, but not work. Around 3,000 workers in the Franco-Russian engineering works machine shop discussed the situation. Most talked about the economic situation, especially the bread supply, but also about the war. Some favoured supporting the Vyborg strikers, but most were against 'disorders', and the meeting postponed taking a decision about action until next day. The Menshevik and SR leaders remained inactive.⁸³

Nikolai Tolmachev, a 22-year-old engineer, had been born near Petrograd. As he was walking to the Nobel works early on the 23rd he 'found himself' in 'a demonstration of 20,000'.⁸⁴ He saw Cossacks, but noted that up to 100 workers, mainly women and youngsters, had crossed the Neva to the city centre. Strikers from Neva Thread Mills, the New Lessner and Russian Society metalworks and one of the Erikson plants threw stones and lumps of ice at the Arsenal windows. Erikson strikers had gone to the other Erikson factory, and Bolsheviks, Menshevik internationalists and Mezhraintsy wanted to bring out other workforces and lead the demonstration.⁸⁵ Ilia Gordienko, a Bolshevik worker at the Nobel works, 'could hear women's voices in the lane which the windows of our department overlooked'. A nearby factory's gates were open and women were shouting 'Down with the War! Down with High Prices! Down with Hunger! Bread for the Workers!' 'Masses of women filled the lane, and their mood was militant. Those who caught sight of us began to wave their arms, shouting "Come out! Quit work!" and snowballs flew through the window'. After a brief meeting the workers 'poured out into the street'. 'Those in front were seized by the arm amidst shouts of "Hurray!" and we set off down the Bolshoi Sampsionevsky Prospekt'. Their main slogan was 'Bread!' ⁸⁶ They went to plants along the Neva embankment, but Cossacks and mounted police herded them together near the Finland Station. Speakers exhorted them to go to Nevsky Prospekt and call out workers on the way. At the Lorenz works in Petrograd district Ziablikov rushed in and informed his workmates that striking women were on the streets. Somebody yelled 'Stop work' and in a few minutes workers poured out into the street, turned over a tram, and made for a square near the Neva.⁸⁷ Nevsky Prospekt and other streets were flooded with peaceful demonstrators, but when a car crashed into a crowd, some wanted to attack the driver, but others stopped them, and Cossacks did not interfere.⁸⁸ Putilov workers, and men and women from the Ekaterinhof mills, met at the Narva Gate, and a cry rang out: 'To Nevsky! March in ranks!' 'Down with the war!' Police stopped Putilov workers at the Kalinkin Bridge, but small groups crossed the Neva and reached the city centre.⁸⁹ As Metal Works employees met in the yard women from the Havana cigar factory rushed up, waving red banners. One shouted: 'Comrades, we have had enough meetings. Get onto the streets and demand bread and freedom!'⁹⁰ Around 20,000 Cartridge Works employees came out.⁹¹ Some demonstrators were armed, mainly with knives, metal tools and pieces of iron, since they expected to fight police and Cossacks. Some threw rocks and chunks of ice at police and broke shop windows.⁹² Some women tried to grab soldiers' rifles and begged them to put them down and join them.⁹³ Young workers clashed with police and warned others when they and troops were approaching.⁹⁴ Demonstrators sang revolutionary songs, and 'if nobody came out of a factory, some would steal inside to agitate and, if that failed, to threaten. At one works demonstrators broke down the gates which managers had locked, and sacked bakeries and other food shops on the way to Nevsky Prospekt'. They shouted anti-war and anti-government slogans, but the most common cry was 'Bread!'⁹⁵ By 10.00am Bolshoi Sampsionevsky Prospekt was full of demonstrators, and by noon there were 50,000.⁹⁶

The police later reported that over 3,000 workers from Aivaz metal factory had met in the automotive section after lunch, decided to stop work to discuss the 'bread crisis'. The Bolshevik worker A. Taimi recalled a meeting at his machine-building factory. At first workers spoke about International Women's Day, but Taimi spoke about bread, the war and revolutionary struggle. Hundreds responded to his proposal to go on strike, and they headed for Nevsky Prospekt.⁹⁷ By around 1.00pm more Vyborg workers had come out and demanded bread.⁹⁸ Women from the Sampsonevskaya cotton-spinning mill and young men from the New Lessner metalworks went to the Reno car factory in Vyborg.⁹⁹ Mounted police failed to stop them, and though government troops arrived at 2.00pm,¹⁰⁰ more engineers joined the demonstrators until there were around 90,000. Women and teenagers smashed open Vyborg and Petrograd district food shops,¹⁰¹ demanding bread and an end to the war.¹⁰²

Fyodor Ilyn had been born near the capital in 1882. He was the illegitimate son of an Orthodox priest, a widower who could not re-marry. When Fyodor was eight he was sent to a boarding school for deprived children. His father died in 1897 and his widow found it hard to keep him and his younger brother. In 1909 Fyodor entered the capital's Polytechnical Institute and was exempt from tuition fees for several terms. He read works by Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels, and joined the RSDRP in 1910. He worked on the Bolsheviks' *Svezda* (*The Star*), and by 1912 he was the editorial secretary of *Pravda*. He was sentenced to three years' exile in Arkhangelsk province, but his mother got that commuted to banishment, and he set off for Paris. On the way, in Germany, he was arrested as a spy and sent back, and just after crossing the border again he fell ill and was taken to a sanatorium. In 1913, after the tsar's amnesty to mark the tercentenary of the Romanov dynasty, he returned to the capital, and in summer 1914 he volunteered for the navy. On 23 February 1917 he and other sailors were shut up in their Petrograd barracks, but

saw women workers, soldiers' wives and some men at the corner of Bolshoi Sampsionevsky Prospekt and Gavanskaya Street. They had been 'driven to despair by their hard conditions, a prey to the torments of hunger', and demanded 'bread, freedom and peace'. Mounted police were 'roughly pushing them apart with the muzzles of their horses and hitting them with the flats of their drawn swords'. When they rode onto the pavement, the crowd, 'without losing their composure, broke up briefly, heaping curses and threats upon them', but as soon as the police returned to the road they closed 'into a solid mass'. Over 3,000 women at Aviaz metalworks were on strike, and urged the men to join them.¹⁰³ The metalworker A. Kuznetsov saw mounted police and workers with 'gray, sullen faces' at the Moscow Gate, and a 'small piece of red cloth' appeared above them.

Kovalev's loud voice was heard. 'Comrades! For the third year rivers of blood of working people of all countries have been flowing. The rich have used the proletariat to protect their capital' ... 'The Pharaohs are coming!' the crowd suddenly began to cry. Everyone shuddered. The speech abruptly stopped. A detachment of mounted police rushed to confront the workers. The demonstrators pressed together closely but continued their advance, for the threat of reprisal roused their will to fight. Stones began flying at the approaching police. People shouted, groaned, sang out, and cursed. Sabres clashed, whips whistled. The square was filled with moans. ... The people were cruelly beaten and forced to retreat ... [but] a small group of brave souls savagely defended themselves with stones.

Then forced their way to the city centre.¹⁰⁴

The police chief noted that 'dense crowds moved slowly and peacefully along the sidewalks, conversing animatedly and laughing' in Vyborg, with 'low-pitched, mournful chanting: Bread, Bread'. Around 3.00pm a 'large group, composed mostly of women, queued at the Filippov bakery on Nevsky Prospekt. When the bread was exhausted, they tore the place apart'.¹⁰⁵ The police did not interfere.¹⁰⁶ A crowd attacked Petrograd district food shops.¹⁰⁷ Women outside bakeries shouted 'bread ... bread!' Thousands wrecked, looted and demonstrated, and the level of civil disorder was unparalleled.¹⁰⁸ By around 4.00pm about 4,000 had crossed the Neva from Vyborg and many more followed. On Liteiny Prospekt around 1,000 brought out 5,000 or so workers from an armaments works and a nail factory.¹⁰⁹ Some women shot police and shouted. 'You don't have long to enjoy yourselves – you'll soon be hanging by your necks!',¹¹⁰ and 'Down with the tsar!'¹¹¹ The police chief saw young men raiding shops, and the police 'who tried to interfere were assaulted',¹¹² and a hand grenade injured two horses and one rider.¹¹³ At 4.40pm a crowd approached Kazan Bridge, singing The Workers' Marseillaise.¹¹⁴ Agitators called for more strikes and mass demonstrations. By 7.00pm most of the city was quiet, but the commander of the military district, who had had no combat experience, ordered the issue of the *nagaika*,¹¹⁵ a whip with a stock about 15 inches long and a leather thong of about 20 inches, at the end of which were two small pieces of leather with lead between them.¹¹⁶ It could tear the flesh from someone's back.¹¹⁷ By 8.00pm most demonstrators had gone home, but decided to return next day.¹¹⁸ The Okhrana reported that 78,444 workers from 43 factories had demonstrated, though the police put it at 87,534 from 50.¹¹⁹ Another report gave 99,700 strikers,¹²⁰ or around 20 percent of the city's workers, including 30 percent of textile workers.¹²¹ A later report put the number at 128,000. Officially, 21 workers had been arrested,¹²² but the revolutionary parties had been nowhere to be seen.¹²³

Ivan Naumov, a 22-year-old New Parviainen machine-builder, had been a delegate to three city Party conferences and spent time in prison. By February 1917 he was a member of the Vyborg RSDRP committee, the city committee and the central soviet of factory committees.¹²⁴ On the evening of the 23rd the RSDRP CC bureau met at Pavlov's apartment at 35 Serdoboltsk Street in Vyborg.¹²⁵ The CC bureau were unenthusiastic about a soviet; but the city and Vyborg committees were in favour.¹²⁶ Across the city Bolshevik meetings became stormy confrontations,¹²⁷ and late that evening 23 Bolsheviks met in the room of the worker I. Alexandrov in Golovinsky Alley in Vyborg. One member of the CC bureau, others from the Vyborg and Petrograd district committees, and workers from elsewhere agreed to increase agitation, form 'ties' with soldiers, acquire weapons, continue the strikes, visit factories next day, lead as many workers as possible to an anti-war demonstration to Kazan Cathedral, then organise a demonstration on Nevsky Prospekt the following day. The Duma had discussed the food situation, and the Okhrana had noted that some soldiers were threatening to shoot in the air if an uprising began.¹²⁸

By Friday the 24th Petrograd's bakers had no flour, but the military commander promised them at least 564 tons a day and the support of 1,500 army bakers.¹²⁹ According to an Okhrana agent at an early morning meeting at Stetin metalworks in Primorsky district, Petr Tikhonov shouted to his workmates.

Comrades, as you all know, yesterday 23 February, the entire Vyborg District did not work. So, comrades, we must quit our work today, support union with other comrades and go to get bread by ourselves. ... If we cannot get a loaf of bread for ourselves in a righteous way, then ... we must go ahead and solve our problem by force. Only this way will we be able to get bread for yourselves. Comrades, remember this also. Down with the government! Down with the war! Comrades, arm

yourselves with everything possible – bolts, screws, rocks, and go out of the factory and start smashing the first shops you find!¹³⁰

Other workers held factory meetings and some had knives, hammers, spanners and pieces of iron. The city centre soon looked like 'a continuous mass-meeting' and the main slogan was 'Down with the War!' Official posters were torn from walls, and though some of the largest factories were besieged by troops, other workers held factory meetings and some had knives, hammers, spanners and pieces of iron.¹³¹ Workers at the Langenzippen engineering works and other metalworkers did not report for work,¹³² and workers and speakers from socialist parties called for an end to the war and bread at mass meetings in many of the largest factories.¹³³ In Vyborg workers built barricades of telegraph poles and trams,¹³⁴ and the police barricaded themselves in their stations.¹³⁵ Demonstrations began around 8.00am.¹³⁶ Around 1,000 Vyborg workers crossed the Neva and broke through a double line of mounted police and cavalry, though the police drew their sabres and pressed them back. Petrograd district demonstrators tried to bring out other workers. Demonstrators sang revolutionary songs, and some shouted 'Down with the government!' and 'Down with the Tsar!'¹³⁷ Around 40,000 Vyborg workers crossed Liteiny Bridge, pressed back the mounted police and broke through a line of Cossacks. Others were driven back, but crossed the frozen Neva. Laferme tobacco workers Siemens & Halske workers joined them and sang The Workers' Marseillaise in the city centre. Young people picketed out more workplaces and stopped trams, and demonstrators shouted 'Down with the tsarist government!', 'Down with the war!' and 'Down with the monarchy!' Cossacks on Bolshoi Sampsonievsky Prospekt expected a clash, but women workers cried out.

'We have husbands, fathers, and brothers at the front! ... Here there is hunger, intolerable toil, insult, outrages against us, and humiliation. You too have mothers, wives, sisters, [and] children: we are demanding bread and an end to the war!' The officers, fearing the influence of this agitation upon the Cossacks, gave their command. The Cossacks put their horses into a gallop. People dashed out of the way, each with a rock or a wrench at the ready, but the Cossacks passed us by, didn't touch us, and rode back to their former position. They were welcomed with cries of 'Hurrah!'

Kayurov recalled the situation elsewhere in the city.

The Cossacks drew themselves up about sixty or seventy feet in front of the demonstration. ... The officer's command rang out, and the Cossacks, sabres bared, drove down on our totally defenceless unarmed column. ... Forcing their way through with their horses, their eyes bloodshot, the officers were the first to break into the crowd, and the Cossacks galloped behind, across the full width of the boulevard. ... But such joy! The Cossacks rode single file into the aperture the officers had just opened. Some of them smiled, and one of them actually winked at the workers. There was no end to our delight. Yells of 'Hurrah' for the Cossacks rose from thousands of chests.¹³⁸

Artisans, white-collar workers and intelligently joined the demonstrators, and there were anti-war slogans and calls for a democratic government, an eight-hour factory day and other SD demands. The police moved around in groups for safety.¹³⁹ Workers from every industrial district were out, shops had closed, and a few policemen were wounded.¹⁴⁰ As 2,500 Vyborg workers went along Bolshoi Sampsonievsky Prospekt Cossack officers ordered their troops to disperse them, but they winked at the crowd and steered through them, and when the officer repeated the order they allowed demonstrators to pass beneath their horses.¹⁴¹ Around 9.00am about 500 soldiers, Cossacks and mounted police barred access to Alexandrovsky Bridge,¹⁴² yet other Cossacks ignored looters.¹⁴³ Some refused to help the police.¹⁴⁴ One shot a police inspector,¹⁴⁵ and the crowd finished him off with a spade.¹⁴⁶ Tens of thousands were on the move in four more districts, and Nevsky Prospekt was full of demonstrators. Their slogans included 'Bread!', 'Down with the War!' and 'Down with the Autocracy!' After a policeman struck a woman with a knout, a Cossack chased him away.¹⁴⁷ Around 10.00am up to 10,000 Vyborg workers tried to break through a cordon on Neva Bridge three times, and at least 3,000 succeeded by 11.00am. Agitators spoke at factory mass meetings.¹⁴⁸ Siemens-Schuckert and Baltic shipyard workers came out. In Narva district 24,000 or more Putilov workers were out, as were Obukhov metalworkers, and Treugolnik rubber workers clashed with police.¹⁴⁹ Students, shopkeepers, bank clerks, cabbies, children and some well-dressed women and men joined the demonstration.¹⁵⁰ Some demonstrators threw stones at police, and some soldiers, who were mainly raw recruits or family men, refused to attack them.¹⁵¹ Police barred women from crossing bridges, so they crossed the ice, led by a red flag, and reformed.¹⁵² They sang The Workers' Marseillaise, reached Kazan Cathedral and the Duma,¹⁵³ and set fire to buildings. Some soldiers fired on the police who were sniping from rooftops, then returned to their barracks and urged others to join them. The Bolshevik leaders had refused to distribute guns to workers, but women and students invaded garrisons and seized guns.¹⁵⁴ Vyborg workers urged others to 'take their tools, pick up some rocks', and 'smash shops they passed'. Up to 40,000 from the most important armaments and metal-working factories

headed for Liteiny Bridge, which was heavily guarded by Cossacks. When ordered to charge they approached the crowd but kept their sabres and whips in place. Police blocked the demonstrators, but they walked across the Neva. Troops stopped them on the opposite bank, yet they pelted the police who tried to stop them with bottles and rocks, broke into food shops, cleared the shelves and stole cash. Workers and students in Petrograd district went to Troitsky Bridge, but police shot several of them.¹⁵⁵ Around 150,000 workers were on strike.¹⁵⁶ The tram worker Alexandra Rodionova had 'lost touch with solid ground and flew in giddy uncertainty. And suddenly, all at once, the unknown future became real'.¹⁵⁷

About 1.00pm large crowds assembled between the Kazan and Police bridges. They sang revolutionary songs, raised red flags and cried 'Give us bread', 'Down with the tsar!', and 'Down with government!'¹⁵⁸ By 2.30pm demonstrators had freed socialist leaders and intelligentsy from prisons. Some formed a provisional soviet EC,¹⁵⁹ and some factories elected deputies.¹⁶⁰ The 46-year-old Menshevik lawyer Nikolai Sokolov convened a meeting in his apartment, which agreed to discuss the situation next day.¹⁶¹ Around 3.00pm crowds broke into Znamenskaya Square, pelted mounted police with stone and pieces of wood, and the frightened horses carried their riders away. The Cossacks did not attack, and after the crowd shouted 'Hurrah', they bowed low. Other Cossacks, soldiers and police attacked crowds on Nevsky Prospekt, but even after dragoons arrived they held firm.¹⁶² A Cossack commander refused a police request to disperse a crowd, and another freed arrested workers.¹⁶³ The Mezhraionka city committee called on workers to hold a three-day protest strike against the arrest of Putilov workers, and sent agitators to speak on Nevsky Prospekt and elsewhere.¹⁶⁴ Crowds gathered outside Kazan Cathedral, and speakers urged them to attack the war and tsarism.¹⁶⁵ Shops and cafes closed early.¹⁶⁶ By evening, after most demonstrators went home, the situation was quieter, though about 3,000 paused at a house where a speaker called for the overthrow of the existing system and urged them to demonstrate next day.¹⁶⁷ According to the Okhrana, almost 158,600 workers had gone on strike,¹⁶⁸ though the police reported over 196,600,¹⁶⁹ and another report gave almost 300,000.¹⁷⁰ The Bolshevik CC bureau met for the first time since the demonstrations began.¹⁷¹ That night one person trying to break into a bread shop was killed.¹⁷²

On Saturday the 25th some trams did not run and newspapers did not appear.¹⁷³ At the New Parviainen machine-building works the Bolshevik A. Kondratev recalled that workers sat in front of half-finished products, and applauded speeches by Bolsheviks, Mensheviks and SRs. They decided to march to Nevsky Prospekt,¹⁷⁴ and shop clerks, waiters, cooks and cab drivers joined them. They sang two songs.¹⁷⁵ Polish nationalists had sung one in the 1830 uprising, but which had Russian lyrics by 1905 *Warszawianka* (the *Song of Warszawa*),¹⁷⁶ and The Workers' Marseillaise, a Russian version of a poem by Petr Lavrov published in London in 1875.¹⁷⁷ Clashes were more frequent,¹⁷⁸ and some demonstrators ruthlessly assaulted police,¹⁷⁹ and wore padding under thick coats to ward off blows from nagaikas.¹⁸⁰ Crowds of soldiers met at their barracks and in army hospitals to discuss what to do.¹⁸¹

Konstantin Shelavin had been born in Voronezh in 1886. He attended a gymnasium, joined the Bolsheviks in 1906, and was active in Vasilievsky district soviet in Petrograd and other district organisations in 1917.¹⁸² By 1.00pm on 25 February no trams ran in nine districts, and there were demonstrations in Petrograd and Moscow districts and on Vasilievsky Island.¹⁸³ More workers held brief meetings and took to the streets, and students joined them.¹⁸⁴ About 3.00pm demonstrators with machine-guns rode in cars along Nevsky Prospekt. Government troops killed hundreds of demonstrators,¹⁸⁵ but 30,000 on Znamenskaya Square called for a soviet,¹⁸⁶ and shouted 'Long Live the Republic'.¹⁸⁷ Anti-war and anti-government slogans predominated, along with demands for an eight-hour day and a constituent assembly.¹⁸⁸ At another meeting there were cries of 'Down with the Tsar!' and 'Down with the government!'¹⁸⁹ Cossacks charged,¹⁹⁰ and killed about 40, wounded 40 more and arrested about 100, including five members of the Bolshevik city committee,¹⁹¹ including Elena Stasova, a 44-year-old Old Bolshevik intelligentka,¹⁹² yet when mounted police opened fire on demonstrators, some Cossacks shot them. Elsewhere troops shot three demonstrators and wounded ten; but crowds attacked police stations and police took off their uniforms and fled.¹⁹³ Others slashed at every side with sabres, but a Cossack ran one through with his lance,¹⁹⁴ and other Cossacks charged police.¹⁹⁵ Some Bolsheviks, and Menshevik and SR internationalists decided to launch a general political strike, demonstrate on Nevsky Prospekt, agitate soldiers, disarm police and take their weapons.¹⁹⁶ Virtually every factory and many commercial and service enterprises were closed. White-collar workers and teachers joined the demonstrations. Some workers had pistols, and many police, who were under orders not to fire, hesitated to stop them.¹⁹⁷ After women workers begged soldiers to join them, some put down their rifles and disappeared;¹⁹⁸ but gendarmes mingled with the demonstrators and arrested revolutionaries.¹⁹⁹ At 6.00pm troops killed a policeman, but when they returned to their barracks the leaders were taken to the Fortress. The government had bought all the grain that nearby peasants did not need.²⁰⁰ There were 90,000 tons of flour in the city,²⁰¹ and the military commander asked bakers to stop selling it on the black market, and summoned troops from Nizhni Novgorod,²⁰² where the Bolsheviks claimed 300 members.²⁰³ In Petrograd Vyborg was in the hands of revolutionaries.²⁰⁴ Between

30 and 35 workers' leaders met at the Union of Workers' Cooperatives, decided to create a soviet,²⁰⁵ and meet next day.²⁰⁶ The police arrested half of them,²⁰⁷ but the government postponed the opening of the Duma.²⁰⁸

Shlyapnikov, the senior member of the Bolshevik CC bureau, had arrived in Petrograd and asked a woman what people were saying in the streets. 'Liberty-flibberty, it's all the same, there's nothing to be had', and 'the rich keep fleecing the poor. The shopkeepers are the only ones making money.'²⁰⁹ Shlyapnikov recalled that no Bolsheviks 'thought that the movement then underway would be the last and decisive battle with the Czarist regime', and some were pessimistic. 'Give the workers a pound of bread and the movement will peter out'. Their 'flatfootedness or, more properly, their incapacity to think their way into the political problem and formulate it' was depressing.²¹⁰ One Bolshevik proposed forming an armed militia, but Shlyapnikov feared antagonising regular troops,²¹¹ since over 60,000 had refused to shoot demonstrators.²¹² He also refused to sanction a search for arms, and 'demanded that soldiers should be drawn into the uprising to get them', but they got only a few dozen revolvers.²¹³ Several members of the city committee were in prison, but Shlyapnikov was soon 'in no position to give orders',²¹⁴ since he had an accident involving a tram and was hospitalised.²¹⁵

Around 9.00pm the military commander received an order from the tsar,²¹⁶ who had not been told about the political character of the demonstrations.²¹⁷ If demonstrators were aggressive, cavalry had to disperse them, and if they carried banners with disloyal slogans, they had to give three warnings and then fire.²¹⁸ That night 11 members of the workers' group of the Central War Industries Committee were arrested,²¹⁹ as were around 100 revolutionaries.²²⁰ The military commander threatened that workers with military deferments would be sent the front if they did not return to work in two days; yet an enlarged Mezhraionka committee believed strikes would continue and published a leaflet.²²¹ It called on workers to prepare for a three-day strike in support of the 30,000 locked-out Putilov workers, and a revolution.²²² Under pressure from the Vyborg Bolsheviks, the CC bureau drafted a leaflet, but it is unclear if it was published.²²³ The police reported.

Since the military units did not hinder the crowd and in individual cases even took measures to paralyse the initiative of the police, the masses have acquired a sense of certainty that they will go unpunished, and now after two days of unhindered marching about the streets, when the revolutionary circles have put forward the slogans 'down with the war' and 'down with the government', the people have become convinced that the revolution has begun, that success is with the masses, that the government is powerless to suppress the movement since the military units are not on its side, that victory is close since the military units will soon cross over to the revolutionary forces.²²⁴

According to the Okhrana 201,248 workers had gone on strike, though the police put it at 240,000.²²⁵ Other estimates put it at over 271,200,²²⁶ including at least 15,000 students,²²⁷ and 305,000,²²⁸ including 74,840 from Vyborg, 19,500 from Moscow district, 23,248 from Vasilievsky Island and 16,420 from the central districts.²²⁹ The latter figures meant that over half of the industrial labour force and 71 percent of textile workers had gone on strike. The women who had been killed were buried in a common grave,²³⁰ and Kayurov 'saw little or no hope of any outcome other than the crushing of the movement',²³¹ but more soviet delegates had been elected.²³²

On Sunday the 26th most factories,²³³ shops, restaurants and cafés were closed.²³⁴ Many soldiers were confined to barracks,²³⁵ but the city centre looked like a military camp,²³⁶ and a British engineer noticed that shops with barred windows hid large numbers of small arms and machine-guns with live ammunition.²³⁷ Workers at state plants, including Pipe Works, the largest on Vasilievsky Island, voted to strike, and after a manager called in troops, and one shot a worker, the rest took to the streets. By 9.00am workers from several plants, including the state-run Obukhov metalworks, headed for Nevsky Prospekt. Vyborg workers pulled the police chief from his horse, crossed Liteiny Bridge and threw heavy objects at police. Trams stopped running and cabmen disappeared. University students, secondary school students and members of the petit-bourgeoisie joined the demonstrators. A woman student member of Mezhraionka, R. Kovnator, recalled that banners bearing 'Down with the autocracy!' and 'Long live the revolution!' appeared. After workers at print shops, workshops and other small establishments came out, the strike was almost general.²³⁸ Around 10.00am troops fired on demonstrators in the suburbs.²³⁹ Anyone who wanted to reach the city centre had to have a special pass, and some who attempted to do so without one faced rifle fire.²⁴⁰ Their slogans included 'Down with the War!' and 'Away with the Autocracy!'²⁴¹ The few SRs were uncoordinated, but individuals agitated and propagandised in the outskirts, using home-made leaflets, and some internationalists, including P.A. Alexandrovich and Sergey Maslovsky, cooperated with Mezhraiontsy.²⁴² Maslovsky had been born into the family of an Irkutsk military academy professor in 1876. He later went to the capital and graduated at the University in 1901. He joined the VPSR in 1904, took part in the 1905 revolution,²⁴³ and the Moscow rising, and was convinced that a revolution could be successful only if peasants and workers led it. He became an officer and librarian in the General Staff Academy in the capital,²⁴⁴ composed a manual on street fighting,²⁴⁵ and led the All-Russian officers' union; but spent a year in the Fortress in 1910.²⁴⁶

Some SRs, Mensheviks, and non-party people fought alongside Bolsheviks for the minimum RSDRP programme, which included a democratic republic, an eight-hour day and the confiscation of landowners' estates.²⁴⁷ Demonstrators sang *Smelo, tovarishchi, v nogu (Comrades, Boldly in Step)*, which Leonid Radin had written in 1896,²⁴⁸ and other revolutionary songs, and their slogans merged into 'Down with tsarism!' By noon masses of unarmed workers had crossed the Neva on the ice and headed for Nevsky Prospekt. Many were shot, first with rifles, then with machine-guns often manned by military cadets and police; but they scattered, then reformed, and some fired back.²⁴⁹ Tens of thousands gathered near Kazan Cathedral, with their backs padded with rags, towels and bits of blanket as protection against the nagaika. Other troops had been ordered to shoot, but some shot into the air.²⁵⁰ Around 1,500 soldiers had mutinied and some had killed their commander.²⁵¹ Putilov workers had formed a provisional revolutionary committee and fighting detachments,²⁵² to 'lead the struggle against the police' and 'establish the revolution'.²⁵³ Crowds visited barracks for support and there were more mutinies. Others attacked police stations,²⁵⁴ though many were killed.²⁵⁵ Cossacks had killed at least 50,²⁵⁶ and wounded 100, but other soldiers had tried to stop them.²⁵⁷ Mutinies became widespread, political prisoners were freed,²⁵⁸ and some workers took arms from police and gendarmes.²⁵⁹ A police officer had tried to disperse the crowd on Znamenskaya Square and capture their banners, but was cut down by a Cossack,²⁶⁰ and others shot policemen, and soon there were none to be seen.²⁶¹ Up to 5,000 demonstrators had reached Nevsky Prospekt, including professionals, civil and domestic servants and artisans, who laughed when troops ordered them to disperse. Some were killed, others threw stones and blocks of ice,²⁶² but were machine-gunned.²⁶³ Military cadets shot 40 or so and injured hundreds,²⁶⁴ yet the crowds kept reforming.²⁶⁵ Nevsky Prospekt was 'strewn with corpses of innocent passers-by'. Soldiers shot and killed nine demonstrators, but Cossacks opened their ranks for demonstrators to pass through.²⁶⁶

Loyal infantry cordoned off the Neva bridges, isolated several districts and 'set about clearing the streets'. Around 1.00pm, after 'rifle-fire of great intensity',²⁶⁷ other troops tried to persuade them to stop and exchanged shots with mounted police.²⁶⁸ Bolshevik and Mezhrainitsy leaflets exhorted troops to fraternise with civilians,²⁶⁹ yet the Bolshevik CC bureau refused to arm workers.²⁷⁰ Military patrols were 'strolling around the city', but were 'disarmed in many places without offering serious resistance', and an enormous number of soldiers were 'organically assimilated' into the crowds.²⁷¹ Troops in the Volynsky barracks decided not to shoot demonstrators;²⁷² but at 3.00pm military cadets opened fire along the Moika Canal, leaving dead and wounded. At the corner of Znamenskaya Square at least 40 demonstrators were killed and as many wounded.²⁷³ Most demonstrators on Bolshoi Sampsonievsky Prospekt had no firearms, but used bolts, nuts, pieces of ice, and scraps of iron to attack police, and pulled mounted police from their horses and beat them.²⁷⁴ There were scores of casualties, but 150 soldiers replied to gunfire from mounted police.²⁷⁵ At 5.00pm the tsar was told that the Cossacks were in control of the situation,²⁷⁶ and the city governor believed that the 'disorders' had been crushed,²⁷⁷ since loyal troops had killed approaching 2,000 civilians.²⁷⁸ About half were workers, though 100 army officers had also been killed.²⁷⁹ The military commander telegraphed the tsar that a majority of army units had refused to fire on the 'rebels', and some had fired on loyal soldiers.²⁸⁰ Crowds had refused to disperse when fired on,²⁸¹ and there was 'anarchy', so it was 'Essential immediately to order persons having the confidence of the country to form a new government. Delay impossible'.²⁸² The number of mutinous troops was around 600. Demonstrators began returning to their districts determined to come out next day.²⁸³ About 6.00pm 150 soldiers, led by a non-commission officer, shot police.²⁸⁴ Around 7.00pm some soldiers killed their colonel and went over to the people, and whole regiments followed. Barracks and police stations were set on fire and some police burned to death.²⁸⁵ Two regiments refused to shoot civilians.²⁸⁶ The shooting stopped, but two companies of a reserve machine-gun regiment were summoned from Oranienbaum on the Gulf of Finland. Chugurin, Kayurov, Lebenev, and other members of the RSDRP CC met in the worker Pavlov's apartment and decided that the Vyborg committee should take over the functions of the city committee and win over troops. The Vyborg Bolshevik committee decided to form factory committees, publish a leaflet, send delegates to Moscow and Nizhni Novgorod and meet again next morning to erect barricades, disconnect electrical equipment and telephones, and shut off the water supply, if the government continued to use repressive measures. The newcomers N.I. Medvedev and Moiseev were elected to the EC, but another who had spoken against fraternising with soldiers was a police agent. Zalutsky told the RSDRP city committee that 'ties' with the barracks had been mended and agitation had increased, and a leaflet advocated a 'national revolution that could foster revolution in other countries'.²⁸⁷ The Bolshevik bureau drafted a manifesto which called for the confiscation and distribution of food and gentry estates, a constituent assembly based on universal suffrage and a secret ballot, negotiations with the proletariat of belligerent countries, a 'revolutionary struggle against their oppressors' and 'termination of the bloody human slaughter' of 'enslaved peoples'. It also called on troops to elect representatives to a provisional revolutionary government which would establish a republic and introduce reforms, including the eight-hour day.²⁸⁸ It expressed 'indignation' at the demonstrators' failure to abide by their instructions and 'show restraint and discipline', but was not printed in sufficient quantities.²⁸⁹ A small group of petit-bourgeois

activists met at Sokolov's apartment.²⁹⁰ Recently-freed Menshevik defencist leaders and other SD intelligentsy wanted a soviet,²⁹¹ though the Bolshevik CC did not agree.²⁹² Mezhraiontsy and SR internationalists printed leaflets for the following day. One called on workers to continue to strike and another exhorted soldiers not to attack demonstrators.²⁹³

That night some infantry protested about shooting civilians, and 19 were taken to the Fortress under heavy guard, and 16 to the guardhouse. Soldiers and NCOs in the Volynsky Regiment decided not to shoot demonstrators, attack battalion headquarters or kill hated officers.²⁹⁴ Skhorokhodov, the secretary of the RSDRP city committee, and the committee members A. N. Vinokurov and E. K. Eizenshmidt were arrested.²⁹⁵ The police reported that 50 people had attended a meeting in a cooperative building in Vyborg and decided to call on workers not to work next day, but attend the funeral of a Pipe Works employee at 10.00am. Bolsheviks and Mezhraiontsy on Vasilievsky Island had decided to continue the strikes and demonstrations and look for arms.²⁹⁶ Reportedly 37 factory workforces had brought out others that day, though 144 had joined of their own accord,²⁹⁷ and there had been over 314,000 strikers.²⁹⁸

At 6.00am on Monday the 27th 400 soldiers from the Volynsky Regiment decided to obey only their NCOs and trusted officers. When an officer they distrusted confronted them they shot him, raided the armoury and distributed rifles and cartridges. The Preobrazhensky Regiment joined them, and the Engineer Regiment killed their quartermaster then marched along Liteiny Prospekt with their band playing. There were around 10,200 mutineers.²⁹⁹ About 80 percent of city workers ignored the order to go back to work, including those from state factories including Obukhov metalworks, Okhta Explosives, the Arsenal, Admiralty shipyards, Baltic shipyard, Ordnance works, Cartridge Works and Pipe Works.³⁰⁰ At a Mezhraionka safe house on Kolomenskaya Street, the Latvian I. Yurenev joined other agitators and organizers. 'In the room next to ours, a gathering of communist anarchists took place. They were mostly young, declassed people' and were 'counting hand grenades and distributing revolvers'.³⁰¹ (There were about 200 organised anarchists in the city.³⁰²) Around 40 workers' representatives met at Kayurov's flat,³⁰³ including the freed members of the workers' section of the War Industries Committee. They supported a soviet of soldiers' and workers' deputies,³⁰⁴ composed a leaflet urging workers to continue the fight, tasked Churugin with distributing it, and then dispersed to their factories. Kirrill Shutko reported to the RSDRP committee that a majority of workers had voted to continue the struggle.³⁰⁵ (Shutko had been born in 1884. He joined the RSDRP in 1902, worked in the capital and other cities, and was arrested several times. From 1916 he was a member of Petrograd Bolshevik committee.³⁰⁶) He and Skryabin were elected to the soviet EC.³⁰⁷ According K. Zaitseva, around 16,000 Treugolnik rubber workers greeted armed Putilov workers, and set off for the Neva Gate. They organised rallies near barracks and struck up conversations with soldiers, and some headed to Vyborg.³⁰⁸ By 9.00am four more garrison regiments had mutinied, and around 10.00am so did some gendarmes.³⁰⁹ Soldiers joined demonstrators hunting police and raiding arsenals.³¹⁰ They attacked police stations, and one district commander told his men to change into civilian clothes. The city's prisons had been designed to hold 4,000, but held around 7,600, including 2,400 in solitary cells in Kresty Prison, over 1,400 in katorga prisons, and over 950 in the House of Preliminary Detention. Workers and soldiers attacked Kresty Prison from two sides, disarmed the guards, freed the prisoners and burned the prison records in the yard. The Bolsheviks who were released included Ivan Emelianov from the Phoenix Factory, Nikolai Bystrov from the Rosenkrantz Works, Kazenkov from the Putilov works, Sergey Gessen, the secretary of the Putilov workers' medical fund, Georgy Pylaev, Semen Roshal, Fyodor Lemeshev, V. Schmidt and Nikolai Antipov of the Bolsheviks' city committee.³¹¹ Antipov had been born into a peasant family in a Novgorod province village in 1894. He later trained as a fitter, worked as a locksmith in a shipyard in the capital, and later in the Dinamo works in Moscow. In 1912 he joined the Bolsheviks, but was arrested in 1913 for his revolutionary activities. He was arrested again in 1914, and spent a year in prison. He was later arrested for running an underground printing press, but was released after the February 1917 revolution and became a soviet deputy.³¹² The Bolsheviks claimed 150 members in the Putilov works, 75 to 80 in the Old Lessner factory, around 30 in both the Baltic and Izhorsk shipyards, and smaller numbers in other works. The Vyborg Bolshevik committee discussed how to transform the strike into an uprising.³¹³

Fyodor Linde had been born into the family of a chemist and a peasant woman of German ethnicity in Finland in 1881. In 1899 he went to the capital, entered the University and became politically active. In 1905 he organised students to propagandise workers, but was taken to Kresty Prison. When he was free he left for Western Europe, but returned after the 1913 amnesty. He was conscripted in 1914 and was soon promoted to sergeant. Late in February 1917 he led 5,000 garrison soldiers who killed police, Cossacks and officers. They broke into the main Arsenal and took 40,000 rifles and 30,000 revolvers, plus 100,000 from weapons-making factories, commandeered a truck and hung a banner on it with the words 'The First revolutionary Flying Squad'. They occupied the Artillery Department, telephone exchange and some railway stations. They used field telephones to spread the mutiny to other regiments, put armed pickets on Neva bridges and at major intersections, and built barricades.³¹⁴

The police and Okhrana had had just over 1,500 informants,³¹⁵ spies, provocateurs and agents,³¹⁶ including 13 women.³¹⁷ The chief of police ordered books containing the addresses of employees and agents to be destroyed, and their 'photographs, fingerprint albums relating to ordinary criminals, thieves, swindlers and murderers were 'solemnly burnt'.³¹⁸ After police communications were cut, the chief left the city and other police committed suicide.³¹⁹ Around 11.00am demonstrators burned a district court and destroyed the criminal records. They freed prisoners at the Palace of Justice and Liteiny Prospekt prison. Many were common criminals, but they received weapons and attacked a police station. Women hacked police corpses to pieces, and one tried to tear one's face 'with her bare fingers'.³²⁰ Police corpses were left where they fell, and the wounded received no medical assistance. There were cases of live police being tied to their beds, covered with kerosene and set alight. One was literally torn limb from limb, while several were pushed through the Neva ice.³²¹ Suburban police stations were set on fire, and some police were killed, while many others donned civilian clothes and fled.³²² Crowds at a Neva bridge asked army officers for their weapons. Those who handed them over went free, but those who refused were shot.³²³ The young Bolshevik Vasily Alexeev organised young Putilov workers to attack police and seize their weapons, and Bolsheviks agitated factory workforces and barracks.³²⁴ Around 25,000 soldiers had joined demonstrators on Liteiny Prospekt. Others had freed 958 from Kresty Prison, burned the records,³²⁵ and freed prisoners from the House of Preliminary Detention.³²⁶ The number of mutinous troops had grown to around 25,700. Insurgents controlled Vyborg, including the armoury, plus parts of Petrograd district and much of Liteiny Prospekt. Some Bolsheviks called for a soviet, and called for deputies to meet at the Finland Station, but Kalinin hesitated to give a lead. Some Mezhraiontsy and SRs had issued a similar appeal, but did not specify a plan.³²⁷ The VPSR claimed 400 members, plus sympathisers, but they were mainly intelligently, and most propagandised other intelligently.³²⁸ The 83 captured gendarmes were taken to the Tauride Palace. At noon the police made their last report. Tsarist troops fired on demonstrators on Nevsky Prospekt and near the Palace,³²⁹ but mutinous troops attacked them.³³⁰

I. Milchik later recalled that Vyborg workers and soldiers visited the barracks of a Guards Regiment at about 1.00pm, and a truck full of soldiers with rifles roared down Bolshoi Sampsonievsky Prospekt.³³¹ Vyborg workers fraternised with soldiers. Military commanders posted 1,500 reliable troops at the Winter Palace and 2,000 at the Admiralty,³³² and others neared the Tauride Palace.³³³ Many workers, including some Mensheviks and SRs, declared a republic and demanded the end of the war. Two regimental commanders and many other officers had been killed by their own men, and 12 police stations had been set on fire.³³⁴ Around ten percent of demonstrators were soldiers. A sergeant forged his company commander's name on a requisition for rifles, and another told his commander that his troops would not fire at civilians, then shot him. Insurgents stormed a military prison and the women's transit prison and destroyed their files. Armoured Car division troops joined in, and a Bolshevik weapons-maker volunteered to drive an armoured car with a machine gun.³³⁵ Shklovsky's squadron had been ordered to disable their vehicles, but repaired them, moved them to Nevsky Prospekt, painted 'RSDRP' on them and attached a red pennant.³³⁶ Agadzhanova saw an incident involving Cossacks. 'The officer shouted a command, after which he and his squadron began to accompany the columns of workers.' One worker cautiously asked, 'Is singing songs allowed...?' The Cossacks didn't respond, and one voice, and then others, began singing the *Warszawianka* and The Workers' Marseillaise. The Cossacks silently escorted them to the end of the street and then dispersed. Arishina Kruglova, a Promet factory worker and a Bolshevik, recalled that Cossacks 'bore down on us quickly. But we did not waver; we stood in a solid wall as though turned to stone'. An officer yelled 'You are being led by an old crone.' I said: 'No old crone, but a sister and a wife of soldiers at the front.' Someone yelled: 'Cossacks, you are our brothers, you can't shoot us'.³³⁷ They smiled, bowed and turned their horses around.³³⁸ Bystanders urged military cadets not to fire, and their officers held them back.³³⁹ Tsarist machine-gunners were 'absurdly confused, and no longer scary'. At 2.00pm the Mezhraionka committee decided to call on workers and soldiers to begin a rising, elect soviet deputies and send agitators to the districts. Most garrison troops took a wait-and-see position, though one regiment scattered in different directions after officers commanded them to fire on demonstrators.³⁴⁰ Menshevik intelligently and worker activists met at the Tauride Palace and called themselves the Provisional EC of the Soviet of Workers' Deputies. The soviet EC announced that the full soviet would meet at 7.00pm at the Palace.³⁴¹ The crowd of 25,000 or so outside the Tauride Palace were mainly soldiers,³⁴² and their representatives announced that they had been mandated to say that they 'no longer want to serve against the people'.³⁴³ It was agreed that they could elect one deputy per company,³⁴⁴ as could every 1,000 workers.³⁴⁵ The soviet included two workers for every five soldiers,³⁴⁶ though most were unelected.³⁴⁷ At 2.30pm a self-appointed group of Duma deputies formed a 'provisional committee',³⁴⁸ which consisted of 12 members, including Nikolov Chkheidze,³⁴⁹ a Georgian Menshevik, and the Trudovik Alexandr Kerensky,³⁵⁰ who claimed to represent the soviet, though he had not asked for its permission.³⁵¹ The committee intended to hold power until a constituent assembly was elected,³⁵² dismissed the tsar's ministers and appointed commissars to replace them.³⁵³ It ordered military units to capture strategic

locations, and 12,000 infantry and officers marched to the Tauride Palace to pledge loyalty to them.³⁵⁴ The full Duma did not meet at 3.00pm.³⁵⁵

Maslovsky was tasked with organising a revolutionary headquarters and the soviet EC's military commission, along with Sokolov and Vasily Filippovsky.³⁵⁶ (Filippovsky had been born into an engineer's family in Far East Siberia in 1882. He graduated from the Rīga University of Applied Science, joined the VPSR and became a member of its military committee. He took part in the 1905 revolution and was deported to Vologda province, but had become a Navy lieutenant by 1917.³⁵⁷) Maslovsky's wife told him that about 20,000 automatic revolvers had been handed out from the tsarist armouries, and a Menshevik summoned him to the Tauride Palace. He and Filippovsky had no artillery, but other weapons arrived 'in bushels', including four machine-guns which needed oiling, though there was no oil. They and a few young women and male students sorted the rifles, revolvers and shells, and prepared machine-gun belts, and people brought dead police and gendarmes' weapons.³⁵⁸ They had no field communications or commanding officers, and if tsarist troops attacked them Maslovsky thought that they had 'as much chance as a snowball in hell'.³⁵⁹ Most demonstrating workers could not use firearms, and hundreds of tsarist troops who believed that they would not follow them into churches had placed machine-guns in belfries, but they were killed. Many police wore the uniforms of well-known regiments.³⁶⁰ When soldiers surrendered, workers took their arms to their factories. When ordered to shoot, some sergeants shot their regimental commander, then toured other barracks to win support and shot more officers.³⁶¹ The Fortress surrendered without a shot.³⁶² By 5.00 pm the Mezhraionka committee meeting was crowded. 'Everyone's nerves were on fire', and they appealed to workers and soldiers 'to fight to the bitter end' and elect soviet deputies.³⁶³ Some textile workers elected a committee and soviet deputies.³⁶⁴ Reportedly 66,700 garrison troops had mutinied,³⁶⁵ and those who had previously obeyed orders to shoot demonstrators had decided not to do so again.³⁶⁶ Opposition to the demonstrators had come mainly from 5,000 military cadets,³⁶⁷ but mutinous troops and workers controlled most of the city.³⁶⁸

Nikolai Himmer had been born in Moscow in 1882. His father, a Jew of German descent, was a railway worker, and his mother was a midwife. They split up soon afterwards and Nikolai's mother remarried. She was exiled to Siberia for seven years for bigamy; though that was commuted to a year in prison. Himmer gave private lessons at his secondary school and was captivated by the works of Leo Tolstoy. From 1900 he travelled through Russia, and later met leading émigré Menshevik intelligentsy in Paris. In 1903 he studied at Moscow University, joined the VPSR and lectured and propagandised on agrarian reform. In spring 1904 he was sentenced to 18 months in Taganka Prison for possessing illegal literature, but was freed by a revolutionary crowd late in 1905, and took part in the rising. He later published two books on agricultural reform and argued with VPSR leaders. In 1911 he was exiled to Archangelsk, but was released after the 1913 amnesty. He returned to the capital, worked at the Ministry of Agriculture, and edited the radical journals *Sovremennik (The Contemporary)* and *Letopis (Chronicle)*, and opposed the war in summer 1914. By February 1917, as a Menshevik internationalist, he noted that 'the doubts of the troops were nearing their final resolution'. By late that month no officers were visible, and there were 'great numbers of politically conscious and party elements in all the units'.³⁶⁹ There were 650 laws limiting Jews' activity,³⁷⁰ but Himmer heard workers arguing for 'bread, peace and equality for the yids'.³⁷¹

Pēteris Stučka, a 51-year-old Latvian Old Bolshevik intelligent, was a member of the Petrograd committee and the soviet EC. He noted that though workers and soldiers had made the revolution, the 'counter-revolutionary' bourgeoisie ran the government. It had been obliged to take some real steps forward on account of popular pressure, but if 'it loses the support of the revolutionary people, it will fall'. Only a 'government of workers and peasants' could lead Russia out of its crisis and meet the demands of the people', so 'the immediate task of revolutionaries was to reject 'moderation', raise 'direct revolutionary slogans' and 'criticise every step' of the government, while supporting steps that did not go against the development of the revolution'.³⁷²

Vladimir Mayakovsky had been born in Baghdati in Kutaisi province, Georgia, in 1893. His father, who had noble Russian ancestors, was a forester, and his Cossack wife did the housework and looked after the children. In 1902 Vladimir entered Kutaisi gymnasium. The family spoke Russian at home, but Vladimir spoke Georgian at school. His father died in 1906, and his mother took the family to Moscow. Vladimir read Marxists classics, and joined a secret kruzhok of SD gymnasium students who were active alongside the RSDRP in 1907 and took part in socialist demonstrations in Kutaisi. By 1908 his mother could not afford the gymnasium fees, but he attended a school of industrial arts. In 1909, as a Bolshevik, he distributed propaganda leaflets, possessed a pistol without a license, and helped to smuggle female political activists out of prison. This resulted in an 11-month sentence in a Butyrka Prison solitary cell, where he started writing poems. On his release he remained a socialist, but left the RSDRP. In 1911 he entered Moscow Art School and joined others who read their poems on street corners, threw tea at their audiences, and annoyed the art establishment. Late in 1912 Mayakovsky made his first public performance at the Stray Dog, an artistic basement in the capital and some of his poems appeared in the Futurists' manifesto *Poshchekchina obshchestvennomu vkusu (A Slap in the Face of Public Taste)*. He was expelled from the Art School in spring 1914,

volunteered for the army in summer, but was rejected as 'politically unreliable'. In summer 1915 he moved to Petrograd and wrote humorous verse for a satirical magazine. Gorky invited him to write for *Letopis*, but in autumn he was drafted, but Gorky helped him to join the Petrograd Military Driving School as a draftsman.³⁷³ On 27 February 1917, with other members of the School, he joined the revolution.³⁷⁴

The tsar's ministers had tried to put the city under martial law and given the military commander full authority. At 7.00pm 600 loyal troops had 12 artillery pieces and 40 machine-guns.³⁷⁵ Kerensky and the Menshevik Matvey Skobelev had joined the soviet along with four members of the Menshevik secretariat and eight others. Around 150 deputies attended the soviet at first, though some credentials were dubious.³⁷⁶ Shlyapnikov telephoned leading Bolsheviks to join him, but they did not arrive. At 9.00pm Sokolov ruled that 50 of the 250 deputies present could vote, even though they had apparently been enfranchised on the basis of personal acquaintance.³⁷⁷ They elected the Georgian Menshevik Chkheidze as chair, and Kerensky and Skobelev as his deputies. There was no agenda, and the meeting was chaotic. The deputies decided to include three more Bolsheviks, three more Mensheviks and three more SRs in the EC. The Bolsheviks were Shutko, Zalutsky and Skryabin, and the Latvians I. Yurenev and Pēteris Stučka and the Pole M. Kozlovsky supported them. The deputies agreed to organise a food supply commission empowered to requisition all stocks of grain. The soviet military committee formed units of soldiers and workers and sent them to strategically important locations and soldiers' canteens appeared everywhere. That night the soviet EC appointed district commissars, including Shlyapnikov in Vyborg, and decided to publish *Izvestia (News)*. They sent messengers to factories and military units to ensure that they elected deputies, and workers arrested tsarist ministers, officials and generals.³⁷⁸ At midnight trainee army NCOs agreed not to fire on demonstrators. The First and Second Machine-Gun Regiments and the Second Artillery Division at Oranienbaum and Strelna arrested or lynched their officers. Other units joined them on the way to Petrograd,³⁷⁹ some with red ribbons on their rifles.³⁸⁰ Some of the 36,000 members of the First Machine-Gun Regiment and the 36,000 members of the Second Machine-Gun Regiment broke into their armouries and took weapons, and soldiers at Tsarskoe Selo followed their example.³⁸¹ The military commander told the tsar the city was out of his control,³⁸² and he suspended the Duma.³⁸³

Ivan Skvortsov had been born into a factory clerk's family in a Moscow province village in 1870. He graduated from Moscow Teachers' Institute in 1890 and taught at an elementary school. He joined the revolutionary movement in 1892, and the RSDRP in 1898, but was exiled to Tula district. After his release, late in 1904, he joined the Bolsheviks. In 1906 he was a delegate to the RSDRP congress. In 1911 he helped to launch the Bolshevik paper *Mysl (Thought)*, but was repeatedly arrested and exiled.³⁸⁴ The soviet announced that a workers' militia would replace the police, and commissars would liaise and collect weapons.³⁸⁵ Gleb Krzhizhanovsky, a former Bolshevik intelligent, had ceased political activity after the failed rising in 1905, but late in February 1917 he led the fuel section of soviet.³⁸⁶

At 2.00am on the 28th the 'provisional committee' of the Duma decided to take power,³⁸⁷ but backdated its decree to the 27th.³⁸⁸ The government ordered the arrest of the tsar's ministers.³⁸⁹ It assured commanding officers that the war would not slacken or stop, but soldier soviet deputies obeyed only soviet orders. By 3.20am insurgents had captured most railway stations.³⁹⁰ Around 50,000 troops from the First and Second Machine-Gun Regiments and the Artillery Division arrived at dawn. Members of a training unit shot their captain and sent emissaries to persuade other units to join them, and some soldiers took over 1,000 rifles, four machine guns and 30,000 rounds from an armoury.³⁹¹ After men on two armoured vehicles shot members of the bicycle brigades, the rest surrendered.³⁹² A British governess saw a company of Cossacks with a large crowd around them. 'Sometimes they were calling for bread, next moment the Cossacks and crowd were singing together. Suddenly the Cossacks charged the crowd with their long whips. I had been warned that this might happen, so I dashed into a shop and the man shut the door and barred it, and the Cossacks clattered past.'³⁹³ Grocery shops opened and queues formed.³⁹⁴

Ivar Smilga had been born into a farmer's family in the Baltic region in 1892. His father was active in the 1905 revolution and was elected as chair of the district's revolutionary committee, but was killed by a punitive expedition in 1906. Ivar later joined the RSDRP, but was arrested at a May Day demonstration, and again in 1910, for taking part in a Moscow student demonstration to mark the death of Leo Tolstoy, which called for the abolition of the death penalty, and spent a month in prison. He joined the RSDRP Lefortova district organisation, but was arrested in summer 1911 and spent three months in prison and was deported to Vologda for three years. In August 1914 he went to Petrograd and joined the Bolshevik city committee, but in summer 1915 he was sentenced to three years' exile in Yeniseisk in the Krasnoyarsk province of Siberia. By late February 1917 he was a leader of the Bolshevik organisation at Kronstadt.³⁹⁵ By the 28th there were 100,000 sailors,³⁹⁶ who were 'almost exclusively' former proletarians. Almost half were under 23 and over 80 percent were literate, compared to under 50 percent of infantry. The admiral had formerly sentenced some to 30 days in jail for not springing to attention instantly, jailed those wearing civilian clothes off duty,³⁹⁷ and sailors risked being shot for possessing a socialist pamphlet.³⁹⁸ Around 2,000 uniformed and armed sailors left for Petrograd.³⁹⁹

In Petrograd some military cadets and most Guards regiments supported the demonstrators,⁴⁰⁰ who wore red armbands or tied red ribbons to their buttonholes.⁴⁰¹ Some troops had returned to their regiments,⁴⁰² though many refused to shoot demonstrators. Others turned on their officers,⁴⁰³ and it was dangerous for one to go out in uniform,⁴⁰⁴ even though many had non-aristocratic origins. Around 8.00am 600 infantry and about 500 cavalry remained loyal, and had 12 artillery pieces and 15 machine-guns, but only 80 cartridges,⁴⁰⁵ and few rifle bullets,⁴⁰⁶ and some troops announced their neutrality.⁴⁰⁷ Shlyapnikov had had to sleep at different addresses to avoid arrest. The CC had received 1,117.5 rubles in two months, though well-paid comrades had been reluctant to contribute. They had 'many active comrades around us', but full-timers got less than 100 rubles a month, the CC could not guarantee a month's financial support for agents sent to the provinces.⁴⁰⁸

Nikolai Emelianov had been born into a worker's family in Sestroretsk in 1871, and later worked in the arms factory. He joined an SD organization around 1899 and the RSDRP in 1904. He organized an armed workers' detachment in 1905, and transported arms and revolutionary literature,⁴⁰⁹ but was deported to Nizhni-Novgorod for five years. On his release he was active in Sestroresk, but late in February 1917 he became a Petrograd soviet deputy.⁴¹⁰ He spoke to workers at the Sestroresk arms plant, and he and the Bolshevik worker V.I. Zov argued for a revolutionary committee to run the factory and the town. The workers elected them as deputies to Petrograd soviet, and armed themselves with revolvers, rifles and cartridges. When the 4,000 workers at the Shlisselburg gunpowder mills, 21 miles east of the city, heard about Petrograd events they marched to the city and crossed the Neva with banners and slogans.⁴¹¹ Workers at the Cartridge Works in Petrograd elected a committee and authorised it to enact an eight-hour day, win a 20 percent bonus for the past year, plus a 100 per cent rise, and sack 'toadies' and 'spies'.⁴¹² The Vyborg Bolshevik committee was quite strong in machine-building works,⁴¹³ and as were Mensheviks among printers, though some of the 175,000 textile workers and 400,000 metalworkers were moving towards the Bolsheviks,⁴¹⁴ and many Menshevik and SR workers had joined them.⁴¹⁵ The Bolsheviks claimed 3,000 members in the city,⁴¹⁶ in 84 factory cells, including 600 in both Vyborg and Narva districts, 100 or so at the Putilov works with 140 to 150 supporters, 130 in both the Petrograd district and the city centre, 75 at the New Lessner works, 50 in Nevsky district, 45 at the Russian Society, and 30 students, but few elsewhere, and the police seized all the copies of *Proletarsky Golos* before they were distributed.⁴¹⁷ Mutinous troops broke into the gendarmes' barracks and the engineers' cadet school. Others cut firefighters' hoses and freed prisoners from Litovskiy Castle. By 11.00am thousands of demonstrators at the navy cadets' building demanded the keys to the armoury.⁴¹⁸ Insurgents controlled the strategically important buildings and some loyal troops threw down their arms and joined them. The military commander did not control any police and had no food at his disposal.⁴¹⁹ Only a third of efforts to fix grain prices and delivery quotas had been successful.⁴²⁰

At 1.00pm demonstrators overwhelmed troops guarding a Neva bridge and killed several officers. They released prisoners from a Guard's Regiment stockade, broke into the armoury and took rifles and cartridges, agitated sailors on the cruiser *Aurora*, which was in a dry dock, and killed the commander. By 1.30pm the last loyal troops had surrendered, but refused to obey the orders of commanders appointed by the soviet military commission. The 2,000 prisoners in the katorga transfer prison, led by Bolshevik sailors, freed themselves.⁴²¹ Around 2.00pm demonstrators put the telegraph office out of commission and seized the Finland Station;⁴²² but some Bolsheviks refused to 'go against' the Duma: 'We were too weak organisationally' and 'leading comrades were in jail, exile and emigration', though it was necessary to 'terrorise all initiatives' that were 'directed against revolutionary action'.⁴²³ Around 400,000 workers from 900 factories had participated in strikes, and laundresses had formed a trade union.⁴²⁴ Workers returning to their factories destroyed the 'black book' of 'undesirables'.⁴²⁵ They had 'tried their utmost to throw off the tutelage' of Bolsheviks, but could not 'parry the learned arguments about the bourgeois nature of the revolution' made by the Mensheviks.⁴²⁶ At 4.00pm the Admiralty surrendered.⁴²⁷ A prison guard shouted at Stasova and other women to leave, and they found firemen shouting 'Liberty!' in the courtyard. The Old Bolshevik worker Anastasia Deviatkina, who was in her early forties, had agitated soldiers' wives since 1914, and the Bolshevik workers Nikiforova, Pankina and Olga Chernysheva were undeterred by the nagaika in February 1917.⁴²⁸ Cossacks 'rode along laughing good-heartedly', and one killed a policeman who had struck a woman with his sabre, while soldiers broke into Shklovsky's unit's guardhouse and freed the prisoners. They persuaded several small units to join them and patrolled Liteiny district.⁴²⁹ The tsar's ministers had moved to the Mariinsky Palace for their own safety,⁴³⁰ then resigned.⁴³¹ The new government established a police force,⁴³² ordered the arrest of police chiefs and generals, amnestied political prisoners, abolished the Okhrana, repealed the death penalty, banned discrimination against religious and ethnic minorities and declared freedom of association and the press.⁴³³ They established a military commission led by a colonel to prevent the restoration of the monarchy and restore order in the garrison,⁴³⁴ and around 7.00pm they declared martial law.⁴³⁵ The workers' group of the War Industries Committee launched a campaign for 'the democratization of the country' and immediate release of the exiled Duma deputies.⁴³⁶ A Menshevik leaflet called on workers' representatives to go to the Tauride Palace,⁴³⁷ and around 20

activists called on industrial workers to elect deputies.⁴³⁸ Menshevik and SR intelligentsy held 'flying elections' in factories and barracks.⁴³⁹ Demonstrators had freed many Bolsheviks and Mensheviks. The Bolsheviks joined the demonstrating workers, while Mensheviks went to the soviet,⁴⁴⁰ which wanted to prevent money going to the former tsarist authorities. It stationed guards at the State Bank, the Mint and the Currency Exchange; and wanted to entrust this responsibility to the new government, but it refused.⁴⁴¹ Bolsheviks formed no more than five percent of soviet deputies, and most were mainly Mensheviks or SRs.⁴⁴² The soviet exhorted workers to organise 'defense centres', elect workers' militias in their districts,⁴⁴³ establish food commissions,⁴⁴⁴ and feed mutinous troops.⁴⁴⁵ After Shlyapnikov proposed that the EC include members from each socialist party was accepted,⁴⁴⁶ it was expanded to 42 members,⁴⁴⁷ including four Bolsheviks, three Trudoviki, one SR and 18 moderate socialists,⁴⁴⁸ and a veteran Menshevik worker, an SR and Shlyapnikov were elected to the EC presidium.⁴⁴⁹

Ovsii Nakhamkis had been born into a Jewish merchant's family in Odesa in 1873. In 1893 he became an SD and led workers' kruzhs. In 1894 he was sentenced to ten years' exile in Yakutsk, but escaped in 1899 and lived in Paris from 1900. In 1903 he contributed to *Iskra* (*The Spark*) and other Bolshevik publications, and joined them after the split at the RSDRP's second congress when *Iskra* became a Menshevik publication. Late in 1905 he went to the capital, was active in the soviet, worked for the Bolsheviks' *Pravda* and *Zvezda* and was briefly arrested. From 1907 he led the SD Duma deputies, but in 1910 he was expelled from Russia. He taught at the Party school at Longjumeau near Paris in 1911, but in 1914 he returned to the Russian capital and entered the University in 1916.⁴⁵⁰ He recalled that by late February 1917 the Bolsheviks were 'surrounded by various soldiers' units' without NCOs, but 'we had not yet succeeded in formulating any political program'. 'There were rumours that five regiments were marching on us from the north', and 'if not shoot us, take us away'.⁴⁵¹ On the 28th Nakhamkis was elected to the soviet EC and tasked with helping to organise the editorial board of *Izvestia*.⁴⁵² The soviet EC ordered the closure of monarchist presses.⁴⁵³ Vladimir Bonch-Bruевич, a 44-year-old intelligent and former Old Bolshevik, had rejoined,⁴⁵⁴ and volunteered to print it,⁴⁵⁵ and Iury Steklov agreed to help. Bonch-Bruевич and a detachment of soldiers took a machine gun and used the press of the popular *Gazeta Kopeika* (the *Kopek Gazette*) to print the paper.⁴⁵⁶ It included a manifesto written by Vyborg Bolsheviks, and 100,000 copies were distributed in factories, mills and barracks, and sent all over Russia.⁴⁵⁷ The paper demanded a 'new republican movement' to enact basic laws and call a constituent assembly. The Bolshevik CC sought support from the soviet EC for a revolutionary government and tasked Skryabin with producing a legal newspaper. The soviet sent emissaries to factories, and by 9.00pm more deputies had been elected,⁴⁵⁸ though they could be replaced at any time.⁴⁵⁹ Workers from small firms also sent deputies, and regular meetings of the soviet began.⁴⁶⁰ There were around 600 worker deputies, though around 2,000 of the 3,000 were soldiers. There was no agenda and decisions were taken by acclamation.⁴⁶¹ The soviet aimed to organise 'the people's forces in the struggle for political freedom and people's rule', 'annihilation of the old regime and the convocation of a constituent assembly elected by universal, impartial, direct and secret ballot'.⁴⁶² The soviet elected 12 more EC members who included one Menshevik internationalist,⁴⁶³ five other Mensheviks, two Bolsheviks, two SRs, six non-party intelligentsy,⁴⁶⁴ and a Bundist.⁴⁶⁵ Many of the Bund's claimed 34,000 members agreed with the Mensheviks,⁴⁶⁶ though many of the 300,000 members of Poale Zion (Workers of Zion) had given up hope of a better future in Russia and looked to Palestine.⁴⁶⁷

SR internationalists and Mezhrainontsy urged soldiers to 'Take power into your own hands!' and elect company committees and officers, but obey the soviet.⁴⁶⁸ A Mezhrainonts and some youths printed about 300,000 copies of two leaflets which were taken to all districts and barracks.⁴⁶⁹ The Mariinsky Palace had been sacked and a member of the Duma had led the seizure of the ministry of transport.⁴⁷⁰ The numbers of demonstrators had diminished,⁴⁷¹ and though some loyal troops still shot at them,⁴⁷² 127,000 refused to do so.⁴⁷³ The military commander reported that revolutionaries had taken the railway stations, artillery supplies, and probably the whole city. He had very few reliable troops and his phones were not working.⁴⁷⁴ The Sormovo-Mykolaev *zemliachestvo* (mutual aid society) had a branch in Petrograd's Vyborg district,⁴⁷⁵ and veterans of 1905 were active in the February 1917 demonstrations.⁴⁷⁶ A district soviet was formed in Vyborg.⁴⁷⁷ The Bolsheviks' city committee decided not to challenge the new government as long as it acted in the interest of the 'broad democratic masses',⁴⁷⁸ and so did many industrial workers.⁴⁷⁹ Himmer, who agreed with the transfer of power to the new government,⁴⁸⁰ met Shlyapnikov in Gorky's apartment. Gorky found it 'impossible to expect' slogans or 'any efforts at a systematic struggle in accordance with a prepared plan' from the Bolsheviks.⁴⁸¹

Evgeny Onufriev had joined the Bolsheviks in 1904 as a 20-year-old. In 1905 he formed a kruzhek at the Obukhov metalworks, and joined the Narva district committee and city committee. He attended the Prague Bolshevik conference in 1912, and was often imprisoned and exiled; but returned to Petrograd by late February 1917,⁴⁸² and pulled fellow factory workers out on strike.⁴⁸³ Elected representatives from 156 works accepted a Menshevik proposal to form a Red Guard,⁴⁸⁴ and Onufriev organised them.⁴⁸⁵ They had no formal constitution,⁴⁸⁶ but had to be 18 or over, without criminal records, of irreproachable conduct, familiar with military matters and preferably

literate. (Around three quarters of the 3,500 whose dossiers were subsequently studied were metalworkers, the same proportion as in the workforce, and perhaps 44 percent were Bolsheviks. Almost three-quarters were under 31, 52 percent were under 26 and 26 or so percent were under 21.⁴⁸⁷ Around 95 percent were workers, and though 53 percent were politically unaffiliated, 1.9 percent belonged to left-wing parties.⁴⁸⁸ Women formed a majority of those ready to work as stretcher-bearers and maintain communications.⁴⁸⁹) Shlyapnikov was tasked with arming Red Guards, but held back Vyborg Bolsheviks from agitating for a rising, since preparations were inadequate.⁴⁹⁰ The soviet EC opposed forming Red Guards,⁴⁹¹ but by midnight it had its own military section.⁴⁹²

Feodosy Krivobokov had been born into a wealthy merchant family of Old Believer dissenters in Rostov-na-Donu in southern Russia in 1876. He joined an illegal kruzhok in 1895 and organised an illegal SD kruzhok in 1897. He joined the RSDRP in 1898, as a student at Moscow University, but was sent home under police supervision. He later returned to Moscow, but was arrested in 1901, and spent eight months in prison before being exiled to Voronezh, where he helped to set up a distribution network for *Iskra*. He joined the Bolsheviks in 1903, and left for Geneva in 1904, but later went back to Russia. From 1906 he was a member of the Petrograd Bolsheviks' city EC, and in 1907 he helped to prepare the RSDRP congress in London, and was a delegate from the Caucasus. He was arrested in 1908, but released in 1909, and graduated in 1910. He was a delegate to the Prague Bolshevik conference in 1912, but though he was arrested on the way, he was co-opted onto the CC. In February 1917 he was exiled to Ekaterinburg in Siberia, but soon escaped to Petrograd and became the 'idol of the soldiers'.⁴⁹³

For six months three-quarters of just over a million days of strikes across Russia had officially been deemed political.⁴⁹⁴ Since the start of the year 268 strikes in Petrograd had involved 320,000 workers,⁴⁹⁵ and 12 percent of strikes were deemed 'economic';⁴⁹⁶ though metalworkers produced 84 percent of Russia's war materiel.⁴⁹⁷ Officially 1,315 people had been killed or wounded on the 28th, including 53 officers, 602 soldiers, plus 73 police, 587 civilians,⁴⁹⁸ including 433 demonstrators, and 1,214 civilians had been wounded.⁴⁹⁹ The city authorities estimated that 585 soldiers, 315 factory workers and 106 office workers had been killed. Members of the Vyborg RSDRP committee, the CC bureau and worker-activists recently released from prison met in Kayurov's apartment on Bolshoi Sampsonievsky Prospekt to re-establish the Bolshevik city committee.⁵⁰⁰

A key participant in the Petrograd events recalled that late in February 1917 all the 'party men' were 'sound asleep like the foolish virgins of the Gospel'. 'So many of us had spent years under the Tsarist regime preparing underground for those days with tense and eager faith, and when at last it happened – the long-awaited and ardently-desired revolution – we had nowhere to go.'⁵⁰¹

Moscow and other key regions

On 5 February Moscow Okhrana had warned that the food question 'forces the average citizen, including even the conservative strata of the bureaucracy, to curse everyone having anything at all to do with food', and 'hunger mutinies' were increasing.⁵⁰² Almost 206,000 industrial workers included over 76,000 in textile mills employing an average of 302, while almost 55,000 metalworkers were in works employing an average of 189,⁵⁰³ and their wages averaged three rubles a day. On the 12th 12,000 Moscow Metalworks employees went on strike and blamed the tsar's ministers for the food crisis.⁵⁰⁴ The RSDRP city organisation, which had been broken 25 times in recent years, was reviving.⁵⁰⁵ On the 13th Bolsheviks called for a strike on the anniversary of the trial of the socialist Duma deputies. Around 200 met in the Dinamo works' grounds, and 13 marched to Tsindel cotton-printing mill, unfurled a red flag and shouted 'Down with the war!' and 'Bread!'⁵⁰⁶ The Okhrana issued another warning. 'Every day the masses are becoming more and more embittered. An abyss is opening up between the masses and the government.'⁵⁰⁷ By the 22nd workers at two gunpowder mills lacked enough food.⁵⁰⁸ Most large factories went on strike,⁵⁰⁹ and there were strikes on the 24th.⁵¹⁰ The mayor believed 'the final hour is beginning to strike'. Officials had suppressed news of the Petrograd events,⁵¹¹ but *Russkoe Slovo*, whose circulation was approaching one million, reported about them on the 27th,⁵¹² and around 30,000 workers downed tools,⁵¹³ at a third of factories,⁵¹⁴ including 45 percent of the metalworks. Officials were arrested, police stations in industrial districts were attacked, arms were seized,⁵¹⁵ armed students requisitioned supplies,⁵¹⁶ and confectionary workers fraternised with soldiers.⁵¹⁷ The Okhrana reported on the protests,⁵¹⁸ and arrested workers with banners bearing 'Down with the War!'⁵¹⁹

Ivan Skvortsov had been born into a factory clerk's family in a Moscow province village in 1870. He graduated from Moscow Teachers' Institute in 1890 and taught at an elementary school. He joined the revolutionary movement in 1892, and the RSDRP in 1898, but was exiled to Tula district. After his release, late in 1904, he joined the Bolsheviks. In 1906 he was a delegate to the RSDRP congress. In 1911 he helped to launch the Bolshevik paper *Mysl (Thought)*, but was repeatedly arrested and exiled.⁵²⁰ On 27 February 1917 150 revolutionaries from a wide range of organisations elected a provisional EC of 15,⁵²¹ including the Bolsheviks Skvortsov and the veteran

Alexandrov. The chair was a Menshevik, Petr Smidovich was vice-chair and Skvortsov edited *Izvestia*.⁵²² (Smidovich had been born into a noble family in 1874, joined the RSDRP in 1898 and had worked on *Iskra*.⁵²³) The soviet announced that a workers' militia would replace the police, and commissars would liaise and collect weapons.⁵²⁴ Gleb Krzhizhanovsky, a former Bolshevik intelligent, had ceased political activity after the failed rising in 1905, led the fuel section of soviet.⁵²⁵

Timofei Sapronov had joined the Bolsheviks by 1912.⁵²⁶ In January 1917 the 29-year-old itinerant organiser had used a pseudonym to get a job at the Provodnik rubber works near Moscow. He joined the construction workers' medical fund, met RSDRP members and Latvian supporters who had been active in 1905, and they formed three cells of five or six. Trade union membership soon rose from 250 to 400, and Sapronov, the union branch chair, was tasked with writing a leaflet about factory conditions and printing it on a home-made hectograph. By the 28th the 16-year-old Bolshevik Eduard Dune and two dozen others had decided to disarm the factory guards, who handed over their revolvers and sabres and disappeared. Sapronov argued for a strike for an eight-hour day, freedom to meet, pay for strike days and other demands, and he and his supporters were elected to a strike committee. The director caved in, and the committee organised security and hiring and firing, banned alcohol, and read Dune's books, some of which were unopened. Sapronov lectured on Marx and the First International, explained what 'socialism', 'democracy' and other terms meant, and why a Third International was necessary. He and the union secretary Eduard Mazul enrolled members into a legal Bolshevik branch. Sapronov had never gone to Moscow, for fear of being spotted, and did not know if a Moscow soviet existed, so a delegation went to find out, and when they returned Sapronov proposed that the branch affiliate. Workers read Bolshevik, Menshevik and SR papers, and one ran from shop to shop shouting about Petrograd events and exclaiming 'Down with the tsar'. Around 3,500 left the after lunch, and moved towards Moscow 'like an avalanche'. They clashed with police, who shot one of them, though the workers threw at least one policeman into the river before proceeding quietly to the Kremlin.⁵²⁷

Jānis Rudzutaks had been born into a farmhand's family in Courland province in the Baltic region in 1887. In 1901, after two years at a parish school, he worked as a swineherd, but ran away to work in a Riga factory in 1903. He joined the RSDRP in 1905, but was sentenced to ten years' *katorga* in 1907. He served part of it in a Riga prison and was then transferred to Moscow's Butyrka Prison. He was released after the February revolution in 1917 and worked in the Bolshevik organisation and trade unions.⁵²⁸ Moscow Metalworks closed on the 28th, but workers listened to members of 16 parties debating about revolution and the war.⁵²⁹

Nikolai Muralov had been born into a farmer's family near the port of Taganrog in southern Russia in 1877. His father, who had attended a gymnasium, admired the émigré utopian socialist Alexander Herzen, subscribed to his journal, *Kolokol* (*The Bell*). He taught Nikolai to read and write at an early age. The boy worked on the farm, then attended an agricultural school in 1894, graduated in 1897, and became an estate manager in Tambov district and then Moscow district. He volunteered for the army and was stationed near Taganrog. In autumn 1899 he ran a distillery and creamery in Maikop in the Caucasus, joined an illegal *kruzhok* and read SD literature, including *Iskra*. Early in 1902 he went to Moscow and was imprisoned for three months, but then joined an SD *kruzhok* at Serpukhov in Moscow province. In 1903 he was an assistant agronomist in Podolsk and joined the Bolsheviks. In autumn 1905 he took part in the Moscow rising and escaped. He was active in the Don region in 1906; but was arrested in Taganrog and imprisoned in Mykolaev. After his release he briefly returned to Moscow, but became an estate manager in Tula district in 1907, where he helped to open a 'temperance society' tea room as a cover for underground activity. From summer 1914 he served in infantry and transport regiments, and after the February 1917 revolution he was a Bolshevik organiser, and helped to form the soldiers' section of Moscow soviet.⁵³⁰

Maria Kostelovskaya had been born into the family of a minor official in Ufa, western Siberia, in 1878. She later studied at the Higher Women's Courses in the capital and joined a radical student *kruzhok*, but was expelled in 1901. She joined the RSDRP in 1903, the Bolsheviks in 1904, and took part in the 1905 revolution in Crimea. In 1906 she was a propagandist in the RSDRP Vasilievsky Island committee in the capital, then went to Finland, and organized illegal border crossings for comrades. She later worked in Novocherkassk, Ekaterinodar, Sevastopol, Odesa, Luhansk and Orenburg, but was often arrested. By 1916 she was a propagandist in Moscow's Presnya district and was co-opted onto the RSDRP's regional bureau. After the February 1917 rising she became the secretary of the district committee, and by late that month the city's Bolsheviks claimed 600 members.⁵³¹

During February 1,234 railway wagonloads of flour had reached Moscow,⁵³² less than half of what it had received in January.⁵³³ Officially 120,000 workers had been on strike, over twice the number for all of 1916.⁵³⁴ The entire RSDRP committee were jailed, but underground *kruzhki* were established, lithographed leaflets targeted workers and soldiers, and students were recruited.⁵³⁵ Moscow and Moscow province RSDRP organisations met openly.⁵³⁶

Alexandra Artiukhina had been born into a textile worker's family in Tver province in 1889. She spent three years at a primary school, and when she was 12 she became a seamstress to support her family, since her mother and other family members were in prison or exiled for socialist activities, including attending workers' meetings and

going on strike. In 1903 the police searched their apartment for banned pamphlets, and Alexandra's mother was barred from working in local factories, so she moved to the capital. Alexandra later joined her, worked in the same factory and encountered Bolshevik ideas in 1905. She joined the textile workers' union in 1908 and the Bolsheviks in 1910. She worked at Aviaz metalworks and joined the union, and by 1913 she was part of the leadership and worked for the Bolshevik paper *Rabonitsa (Woman Worker)*, but was exiled to Siberia. In February 1917 she returned to Tver province.⁵³⁷ She and her female workmates were exhausted. 'Rising before dawn, we ran to the shop for bread, and then, downtrodden and drained from standing in the queue, we went to work. Cursing God, the tsar, and our wretched life, we slumped down at the machines.'⁵³⁸ The Bolsheviks claimed 120 to 150 members in Tver,⁵³⁹ and a governor was assassinated.⁵⁴⁰ By 22nd workers at Tula armaments works around 120 miles south of Moscow had insufficient food.⁵⁴¹ By the 25th rumours about strikes in Petrograd had reached Vyatka, and a soviet was established. Zemstvo (local authority) and city дума representatives convinced soldiers and officers to support them. On the 28th railway workers received a telegram confirming the revolution,⁵⁴² and Bolshevik and Menshevik workers struggled for hegemony.⁵⁴³ The revolutionary movement had begun in Orel, 230 miles or so south-southwest of Moscow, and in Penza, around 390 miles southwest of Moscow.⁵⁴⁴

Andrei Bubnov had been born into a merchant's family in Ivanovo in the Donbas in 1883. He later studied at Moscow Agricultural Institute, joined a revolutionary kruzhok by 1900 and the Bolsheviks in 1903. By summer 1905 he was a member of the Ivanovo RSDRP committee, and its delegate to Party conferences in Stockholm in 1906 and London in 1907. He joined the Moscow RSDRP committee and the Bolshevik regional committee, and was arrested in 1908, but on his release he became a CC agent in Moscow. In 1910 he was interned in a fortress, but after his release in 1911 he was sent to organize workers in Nizhny Novgorod. In 1912 he was an organiser of the Prague Bolshevik conference, and was elected as a candidate member of the Bolsheviks' CC in his absence. He was later sent to the capital to assist in launching *Pravda*, but was deported to Kharkiv. In 1915 he was involved in the anti-war movement, but was deported to Poltava. He moved to Samara, but was exiled to Siberia in February 1917.⁵⁴⁵

By March 83 percent of the 350,000 industrial workers in the Urals region of Siberia, 1,360 miles or so east of Petrograd, were miners or metalworkers;⁵⁴⁶ but 44 of the 92 blast furnaces were working, and the region produced 3.5 percent of the Empire's industrial output.⁵⁴⁷ Average real wages were 50 to 70 percent higher than before the war,⁵⁴⁸ and generally higher than in European Russia, but though skilled workers earned up to three times more than unskilled workers, conditions were hard, with long hours and barrack accommodation or poor quality housing. Most farmers had joined consumers' cooperatives, and butter brought in twice as much revenue as gold.⁵⁴⁹ Bolsheviks had separated from Mensheviks in Ekaterinburg and Perm,⁵⁵⁰ and there were around 45,000 industrial workers in the Urals;⁵⁵¹ but many districts of Siberia lacked sufficient flour, meat, sugar and kerosene.⁵⁵²

In Ukraine the Bolsheviks claimed 400 members in Ekaterinoslav by February 1917, 200 in both Kharkiv and Kyiv, and 180 to 200 in Makiivka.⁵⁵³ On the 9th a mass meeting of Kharkiv workers from several factories heard speakers calling for a general strike and the ending of the war, and arguing that the Duma was deceiving the people. On the 13th University students began a two-day strike in protest at the punishment of the Duma worker-deputies, and demanded a provisional revolutionary government. Their journal, *Klich (Call)*, demanded 'Revolution, Revolution, Revolution', 'Down with the war!' and 'Down with the government!' On the 25th Valukenco, a worker at the German-owned Helferikh-Sade engine factory, read a Petrograd leaflet and argued for a political general strike.⁵⁵⁴ The population of the Donbas was around 60,000,⁵⁵⁵ though steel production had fallen sharply, since only 28 of the blast furnaces were working.⁵⁵⁶ A chief engineer reported shortages of flour, barley, other foods, oil for lighting and lubrication, and fodder. Late in February news of the Petrograd rising reached Gorlovka and Luzovka by telegraph.⁵⁵⁷ In nearby Rostov-na-Donu the Bolsheviks claimed 170 members.⁵⁵⁸

Anna Andzhievskaya (as she became) had been born in 1898. She later worked at Piatigorsk in southwest Russia, and by 1917 she and her friends were 'terribly serious' young women. During February they attended a workers' rally and were expected to speak. SRs and Mensheviks spoke about continuing the war, and there were shouts of 'Bolshevik demagogue!' An 'exhausted, pale soldier in a hospital gown' who shouted 'Down with the War!' was threatened with being sent back to the front, but Bolshevik sympathisers rallied round him. He chaired his regimental committee, demanded fresh elections and was re-elected. The commander threatened to disband the regiment and send them home, but they refused to go, and propagandised workers.⁵⁵⁹ On the Volga the Bolsheviks claimed 150 members in Samara,⁵⁶⁰ and the revolutionary movement had begun in Kazan and Tsaritsyn. By late February it had begun in Rybinsk.⁵⁶¹

Pilipe Makharadze had allegedly been involved in the assassination of a prominent public figure in 1907, and led Bolshevik groups in Transcaucasia. Late in February 1917 he co-founded Tbilisi Soviet of Workers' Deputies.⁵⁶² Between 35 and 40 Bolsheviks attended, but they had 'no contact either with the central committee', or with Moscow. He was the only delegate from Tbilisi at the All-Russian Bolshevik conference in Petrograd, and had a

voice, but no vote. At midnight on the 27th a telegram arrived with the message that 'Mr' Government 'suddenly died'.⁵⁶³ SDs spoke openly, and 20 of the political prisoners arrested in 1906 were freed.⁵⁶⁴

During February there had been demonstrations in Baki in Azerbaijan,⁵⁶⁵ and late that month factory and oilfield workers set up committees.⁵⁶⁶ The Baki Committee of Muslim Social Organizations wanted a democratic republic to guarantee their rights, and Musavat (Equality) was influenced by socialist ideas.⁵⁶⁷

What turned out to be the last draft for the army had been on the 3rd.⁵⁶⁸ Soldiers' wives' allowances and pensions had cost 1.6 billion rubles.⁵⁶⁹ Front-line troops received food intermittently, and there was too little bread, meat, fat and groats. They ate once a day and in smaller amounts than previously. 'They serve us food fit for fast days and rotten fish,' and 'porridge dogs wouldn't even eat'.⁵⁷⁰ Rice was sent to Siberia by train, roofing materials to the front, and munitions from the Allies were side-tracked or unloaded at the wrong stations;⁵⁷¹ but German troops and civilians were suffering too.

The turnip winter

By 1917 British mines and warships still prevented vessels entering or leaving German ports,⁵⁷² and though Norway, Sweden, Denmark and Holland supplied Germany with some food, war materiel and other vital goods,⁵⁷³ food froze in cellars, and around a quarter of the previous potato harvest, which was half the pre-war figure, never reached the market,⁵⁷⁴ so many citizens had to endure a 'turnip winter'.⁵⁷⁵ The army's Supreme Commander had insisted that unless unrestricted U-boat warfare was operational by 1 February (according to the western calendar) he could no longer take responsibility.⁵⁷⁶

Rosa Luxemburg, the Polish intelektualistka and founder-member of Socjaldemokracja Królestwa Polskiego (the Social-Democracy of the Kingdom of Poland, or SDKP) in 1893, but by 1917 the 45-year-old was an influential member of the SPD. By late January she was under 'military protective custody' in Wronke Prison in Poznań in German-occupied Poland,⁵⁷⁷ charged with having 'no regard for the interests of the fatherland', being 'a danger to the safety of the Reich' and a 'particularly influential agitator'.⁵⁷⁸ By February she was translating Vladimir Korolenko's Russian autobiographical novel *Istoriia Moego Sovremennika* (*The History of My Contemporary*) into German, and was banned from sending or receiving letters,⁵⁷⁹ but she and her typist Mathilde Jacob corresponded secretly. Luxemburg suffered from depression and stomach pains,⁵⁸⁰ but on 7 February she told Jacob that it was 'precisely when everything has the outward appearance of being terrible with absolutely no way out, just then a complete turnaround is being prepared'. She was found guilty of shouting 'You're just an ordinary police spy and a swine' at a court official, and was sentenced to ten more days in prison and had to pay costs.⁵⁸¹

In Berlin the SPD was divided about war loans, bourgeois parties and the government.⁵⁸² The Collective for Social-Democratic Work organised a conference on 7 February and the 157 delegates included 35 members of the Spartakusbund (Spartacus League),⁵⁸³ which had been founded in August 1914.⁵⁸⁴ Its members had remained in the SPD to 'combat the policy of the majority in every way', protect the masses from the 'imperialist policy pursued under the cloak of Social Democracy and recruit for the proletarian, anti-militarist struggle'.⁵⁸⁵ They saw themselves as representing the tradition of Marx, Engels, Ferdinand Lassalle and August Bebel,⁵⁸⁶ and the key intellectuals Karl Liebknecht, Karl Kautsky, Eduard Bernstein were members,⁵⁸⁷ as was Clara Zetkin, the women's secretary and the editor of the SPD paper for women, *Die Gleichheit* (*Equality*).⁵⁸⁸ At the SPD conference a Spartakusbund member suggested not paying membership fees to the Vorstand (the EC), as comrades in Stuttgart and Bremen had already done, though this was defeated. The Spartakusbund had 91 local organisations, including those in Berlin, Leipzig, Bremen and Brunswick; but the Vorstand announced that the organisation had 'placed itself outside the Party' and expelled them, and the Bremen and Hamburg groups argued for an independent revolutionary party. On the 24th a senior official wrote to a leading general. 'We can hardly win the war without the industrial workers. Now no one had much influence on them, by a long way, as the trade-union leaders. Without these leaders, and even more so against them, nothing can be done.'⁵⁸⁹

The kaiser agreed to a U-boat campaign on the 9th,⁵⁹⁰ and it involved 110 vessels,⁵⁹¹ but after they sank several US vessels the US government declared war.⁵⁹² US troops could not reach Europe for over a year, but its government sent war materiel and food to the Allies, including Russia.⁵⁹³

During February German coal production had lagged behind requirements, yet the owners of armaments works made huge profits, and Krupps' averaged almost 80 percent; yet steel production was 250,000 tons below target, and Army leaders cut investment drastically in favour of current output. U-Boats had sunk ten percent of vessels leaving British ports;⁵⁹⁴ but late that month the government issued feelers about a separate peace through a Bulgarian diplomat.⁵⁹⁵

3. The end of the autocracy

The tsar's abdication

By March Petrograd garrison was around 180,000 strong,¹ but most infantry were recently recruited and untrained peasants.² Around 170,000 had refused to shoot demonstrators,³ and some would not to let their officers return, even if they declared loyalty to the revolution;⁴ but the new government ordered officers not to disarm them.⁵ Some Kadets were accused of preparing a counter-revolution,⁶ and they and others were taken to the Fortress.⁷ Gorky was alarmed.

The police, hidden in attics, shoot at the crowd and the soldiers with machine-guns. Automobiles full of soldiers drive around with city with red flags; they are looking for policemen in civilian clothes, to arrest them. Sometimes they kill them, but usually they take them to the Duma. ... Looting has begun. What will come of this situation? I have no idea. We will not go back, but we will not go forward very much. And, of course, there will be much bloodshed, an incredible amount. ...

'I do not believe in a revolutionary army. I think that lack of discipline and organisation is mistaken for revolutionary spirit.' He believed that the entire garrison 'sided with the Duma', and 'officers, up to a certain point'. 'Only visionary minds' could 'expect the army to support the soviet'.⁸

On 1 March a Cossack regiment announced that it was joining the revolution.⁹ The VPSR committee called on soldiers to make the government take a clear position about land and ending the war,¹⁰ and SR internationalists denounced the imprisonment of the Kadets.¹¹ The Vyborg RSDRP district committee held its first legal meeting. It called for the abolition of the government,¹² and demanded that the soviet declare itself the 'provisional revolutionary government'.¹³ Their poster called on the government to stand down, since it was a bastion of the tsarist regime. Bolsheviks, Mezhraiontsy and some SRs called on soldiers not to hand over weapons to officers. Rallies of workers took place in Vyborg and speakers called for all power to the soviet.¹⁴ Its EC met at 11.00am, and three Bolsheviks, two SR internationalists and a Mezhraionets called for a provisional revolutionary government.¹⁵ Almost half the EC members were trade unionists, white-collar workers, servants, porters, shoe-makers or soldiers, and though a majority repudiated the war and annexations,¹⁶ they opposed a provisional revolutionary government,¹⁷ unless certain conditions were met, but argued that socialists should not accept ministerial posts.¹⁸ Between 20 and 25 delegates at a VPSR conference dissociated themselves from SR internationalists and supported the government 'in so far as' it carried out its stated policy.¹⁹

Many Mensheviks and a smaller number of SRs had joined the Bolsheviks,²⁰ who claimed 25,000 members across Russia, including 1,000 veterans.²¹ Some in Petrograd called for mass agitation for an armed rising, but most leaders believed that would be dangerously premature, since most workers supported the moderate socialists in the soviet, and developments outside the capital lagged behind.²² More factory workforces had elected soviet deputies, and about 120 attended by 1.00pm, though their credentials were not checked and there was no agenda.²³ At 6.00pm the EC agreed by 13 votes to eight that no member should join the government,²⁴ though Menshevik, SR and Bundist EC members backed participation.²⁵ Chkheidze had turned down the post of minister of labour, but Kerensky accepted that of the minister of justice and promised to bring back the exiled Duma deputies.²⁶ At 9.00pm, at the full soviet,²⁷ Bolsheviks claimed around 400 of the 600 deputies, and Mezhraiontsy and SR internationalists about 20, but most others were unaligned,²⁸ and 15 Bolsheviks voted against conditional support for the government.²⁹ Mensheviks unanimously repudiated the war and annexations,³⁰ but supported the government on condition that it announced political freedoms, declared a general amnesty, promised speedy elections to a constituent assembly, granted full civil rights to soldiers, abolished the police and replaced them with a people's militia, organised local elections, defended the revolution and established a licensing system for newspapers; but they made no statements about peace, the eight-hour day or land.³¹ The EC had chosen some soldiers and Sokolov to draw up Army Order Number One.³² Four Menshevik defencists, three Menshevik internationalists, two Bolsheviks and one SR dictated it.³³ It called for elected committees of front-line soldiers,³⁴ but did not insist on the election of officers, though that was already happening.³⁵ It banned abusive language by officers and abolished corporal punishment and the death penalty.³⁶ Courts with equal numbers of troops and officers would replace courts martial,³⁷ except at the front, where it demanded military discipline,³⁸ but 'under no circumstances' were arms to be handed to officers.³⁹ It ordered garrison troops to elect company and regimental committees, send deputies to the soviet and obey its orders, and instructed regimental committees to take arms from non-compliant military units. It called on the peoples of Germany and Austro-Hungary to 'break the yoke of their half-despotic

governments',⁴⁰ and banned the execution of government orders unless the soviet had agreed to them. Order Number One was sent by telegraph to garrisons across the country, and the EC agreed that it would appear in *Izvestia* next day.⁴¹

The tsar was still at army headquarters in Mariñë. At 2.00am he learned that 60,000 troops and officers in Petrograd supported the new government,⁴² and boarded his train to go to Tsarskoe Selo. At 2.30am he there were armed revolutionaries on the line ahead, so he decided to go via Pskov, about 12 miles east of the Estonian border, where the military headquarters had a Hughes apparatus, a teletype machine which could transmit around 20 words a minute.⁴³ Railway workers at Malaya Vishera told the engine driver that a bridge ahead had been damaged, so he went back to Bologoe, but railway workers blocked his progress.⁴⁴ At 8.00am the Petrograd military commander told the tsar that he had 600 infantry, 500 cavalry, 15 machine guns and 12 artillery pieces and 80 shells; but he had no control of technical and supply matters, and was cut off from other military units. The police had 'ceased to exist', and insurgents controlled the railway stations.⁴⁵ The tsar's train reached Pskov by around 8.00pm,⁴⁶ where he was told that revolutionaries had taken Moscow, and Kronstadt sailors had recognised the new government,⁴⁷ which was convinced that the 'dynastic question' had to be resolved. Two cabinet members arrived in Pskov about 10.00pm,⁴⁸ and told the army commander in chief that they had 'no real power', and their orders were 'carried out only to the extent' that the soviet allowed.⁴⁹ At 11.30pm a general warned the tsar that it was impossible to wage war 'while a revolution is in progress in the rear',⁵⁰ and the cabinet members told him that the government would accept his abdication only if it included that of his son. At midnight he agreed, but probably had no legal right to do so.⁵¹ He agreed to a 'responsible ministry', but insisted on appointing the ministers for the armed forces.⁵² He gave his abdication to the army commander in chief,⁵³ and before he left for Mariñë he telegraphed the government that he was stepping down, and had appointed his brother as regent until his son came of age; but the telegram was held up. The government requested a new commander of Petrograd military district, and the tsar agreed.⁵⁴

Lavr Kornilov had been born into a Cossack family in Siberia in 1870. His father was a smallholder who had become a low-ranking army officer. Lavr later joined the army in central Asia, learned Turkic languages and had a bodyguard of Tekke Turkomans. By 1914 he was a divisional commander, but was wounded and taken prisoner in 1915. In 1916 he escaped, dressed as a US soldier, and walked to Petrograd, where he received a hero's welcome.⁵⁵

On the morning of the 2nd printed copies of Order Number One circulated in Petrograd,⁵⁶ and its contents were broadcast from Tsarskoe Selo radio station,⁵⁷ though the full soviet had not voted on it.⁵⁸ The government agreed to the soviet's demands. Kerensky offered his resignation as deputy chair of the soviet, but deputies asked him to remain in place, and he announced that he had joined the SRs. Released former members of the RSDRP city committee were among 40 people at the Stock Exchange who elected a provisional committee, with V. Schmidt as secretary and Mikhailov as chair. Ten district committees and an SD student group were operating. Many garrison units were replacing officers,⁵⁹ and some burst into the soviet,⁶⁰ which became the Soviet of Worker and Soldier Deputies,⁶¹ and voted confidence in Kerensky.⁶² Formal requirements for RSDRP membership were almost suspended, but a Vyborg Bolshevik committee leaflet characterised the government as 'representative of the grand bourgeoisie and big landowners', and argued for a provisional revolutionary government.⁶³

A woman rubber worker had previously considered herself 'lost forever', but 'suddenly I was resurrected, I grew up.' 'I put on Russian boots and my husband's cap, a worker's overcoat, said farewell to my children and left. I didn't appear at home for four days, until March 2. My family thought I had been killed.'⁶⁴ An RSDRP CC leaflet noted that women had been the first to take to the streets on 23 February.

In the bleak war years, women assumed unprecedented burdens: heartfelt pain for their dear ones swallowed up by the war alternated with pain for their hungry children. Yet women did not yield to desperation. They raised the banner of revolution. ... Women's Day – was the day of the Russian Revolution, the first day of the Third International.⁶⁵

Many intelligentsy had joined the SRs,⁶⁶ and a VPSR conference supported the government.⁶⁷

A female thread mill activist found that nine of the 30 women she questioned read newspapers, though the rest were not 'interested in matters of culture and politics'. Three seamstresses who had grown up in towns or cities had had some formal schooling, and the literacy rate among others was over 68 percent, compared to under 38 percent for cotton workers; yet Vladimir Perazich, a 49-year-old mill worker and trade unionist, regarded most textile workers as 'totally benighted', and thought that 'very few' were politically 'conscious'.⁶⁸

Ekaterina Olitskaya had been born on her parents' estate near Kursk in 1898. Her father, a Zurich-educated agronomist, former revolutionary, political prisoner and émigré, had become a gentleman farmer who admired the peasantry and was enthusiastic about scientific agriculture. His wife, a wealthy aristocrat, was a doctor with a Swiss degree, but was not allowed to practice in Russia. Ekaterina had a Russian nanny and French and German

governesses before she was sent to a school in Kursk, where she became a socialist. In autumn 1916 she entered the Agricultural Institute for Women in Petrograd,⁶⁹ and on 2 March 1917 she went to the Tauride Palace, joined the SRs, checked passes to Kerensky's office, but also made sandwiches for the soviet deputies.⁷⁰ There were mass meetings in factories, barracks and outside Bolshevik headquarters.⁷¹ A ballerina had fled abroad two days earlier, and on 2 March the Bolshevik CC occupied her former mansion in Petrograd city centre,⁷² and shared it with the committee of a reserve armoured car unit, the RSDRP committee and its CC.⁷³

The average working day in the city's factories had fallen from 10.2 to 8.4 hours, from 10.4 to 8.6 in the metal industry, 9.6 to 9.1 in chemical works, 9.5 to 8 in textile mills, 11.6 to 9.8 in paper mills, 9.8 to 8.2 in woodworking factories and 10.2 to 8.6 in the food industry.⁷⁴ Around 82 percent of the city's industrial workers were in workplaces employing 500 or more, and 400,000 or so, including almost 250,000 metalworkers in 900 factories, had been on strike for a week.⁷⁵ Office staff at the Putilov works were driven out in wheelbarrows with sacks on their heads, and a leading Black Hundred reactionary had red lead poured over his head and was dumped in the street. The workforce elected 45 soviet deputies, including nine Bolsheviks.⁷⁶ Workers killed the director and his aide and threw their bodies in a canal.⁷⁷ The workers' committee, which represented around 30,000 employees, put the administration in the hands of the Petergofsky RSDRP district committee, whose 30 members included eight or nine Bolsheviks.⁷⁸ At the 1886 Electric Power works 45 volunteers were armed. They wore red arm bands, carried permits issued by the factory committee, and the firm paid their patrollers.⁷⁹ Dinamo detonator workers voted to fight for 'Freedom', 'Land', 'Liberty' and 'An End to the Bloody War', and Izhora arms workers called for a 'decisive protest' against 'measures that would lead to conciliation with the old regime'.⁸⁰ Some workforces had food committees.⁸¹ Several Vyborg workforces formed a workers' militia. Cable factory workers called for 270 men and women volunteers aged over 18,⁸² and voted by 1,000 to three for the soviet to establish 'strict control' of government members who 'do not enjoy popular confidence'. A brickyard foreman was dismissed for being rude and imposing overtime, which had caused one worker to be hospitalised with exhaustion. At the Baltic shipyard 60 members of the administration were demoted, transferred or wheeled out of the yard. At the Cartridge Works up to 80 percent of technical staff were expelled, as were dozens at the Admiralty and New Admiralty shipyards. Pipe Works director and 14 senior managers were sacked, as were 25 administrative staff at the Baranovsky gunpowder mills, and 18 were carted out. At the Tentelevaky chemical works 16 managers were sacked, and women at Thornton cotton mill chased 30 factory police from the premises.⁸³ The Skorokhod shoe factory employed 1,508 men, 2,687 women and 705 adolescents.⁸⁴ They abused the director, who conceded a minimum wage of ten rubles for men and the abolition of piece rates,⁸⁵ and donated 10,000 rubles to the tanners' union and 100,000 to help free political prisoners.⁸⁶ Some factory workforces had won a 50 percent rise.⁸⁷

Anton Vasiliev had been born into a peasant family near Nizhni Novgorod in 1885. He worked at the Putilov works in the capital from 1898, became a skilled turner and joined the Bolsheviks in 1904. He was an organiser, and was arrested 13 times between 1908 and 1913, but after the February amnesty he returned to the works, organised in Narva district and chaired Putilov workers' committee.⁸⁸ Grigory Evdokimov had been born in 1884. By 1899 he was a sailor, and he joined the Bolsheviks in 1903. By 1913 he was a cutter at the Putilov works, and in 1917 he was a soviet deputy.⁸⁹ The Bolsheviks claimed 100 members at the works.⁹⁰

Most Bolshevik workers were in Vyborg factories,⁹¹ and the district supplied agitators, propagandists and speakers for other districts and nearby towns.⁹² In Petrograd district there were Bolshevik organisations and soviets.⁹³ Seymon Roshal, a Bolshevik student, was released from Kresty Prison,⁹⁴ and spoke to a crowd of 20,000, and argued for the overthrow of the government. The crowd agreed, but Roshal was expelled from the soviet EC.⁹⁵ Ten deputies, including some Bolsheviks, voted against a Bolshevik proposal for a revolutionary government, and 19 were in favour.⁹⁶ Himmer confiscated Bolsheviks and SR leaflets arguing that soldiers should kill their officers from Skryabin; yet the Bolshevik city committee did not oppose the government 'in so far as' its activities corresponded with the interests of the proletariat' and the 'broad democratic mass of people'.⁹⁷ The soviet appealed to citizens and soldiers to support the government 'in so far as it executes its commitments and fights against the old regime'.⁹⁸

Street fighting had almost ceased,⁹⁹ and the foreign minister assured the Allies that Russia would remain in the war.¹⁰⁰ The US government recognised the new Russian government, and the British and French governments soon followed;¹⁰¹ but the British military attaché insisted that his government would send no more war-related materiel until order was restored in Petrograd.¹⁰² The government avoided statements about the war and land,¹⁰³ but gave women the same political and civil rights as men. It abolished special courts, made judges and courts independent, ordered political cases to be tried by juries, re-established the Orthodox Church, and allowed other churches to proselytize.¹⁰⁴ It also decided to create a popular militia with elected leaders accountable to elected local authorities,¹⁰⁵ and gave its military commission 24,000 rifles and 400,000 cartridges.¹⁰⁶ It announced an amnesty for political, religious and military prisoners, freedom of speech and the press, freedom to join trade unions and go

on strike, the abolition of all class, religious and national discrimination, and the democratisation of local government. It granted soldiers not on active duty the same democratic rights as citizens, promised not to remove those who had supported strikers, and prepared for democratic elections to a constituent assembly.¹⁰⁷ That night members of the soviet EC met members of the government,¹⁰⁸ and discussed a common political programme,¹⁰⁹ including a food system.¹¹⁰

There were stocks of six million pounds of grain across Russia, but peasants refused to sell more, since they could not buy the industrial products they needed. Transport was in chaos and over 45,500 railway wagons needed repair.¹¹¹ A liberal British businessman believed that 'several thousands' had been killed in Petrograd, and 'many thousands badly wounded', but 'to call it the revolution of restraint would not be far off the mark'. The population had been short of food because of the disruption of rail traffic and the police had been reinforced to provoke a revolt and then crush it. Soldiers had killed officers who had treated them harshly and they had received 'their just deserts', as had the police. 'If the old regime were reinstated, their brutality and inhuman practices would be multiplied a hundredfold, and forever reduce the population of Russia to a state of slavery.'¹¹²

By the 3rd Cable factory workers had established 'strict *kontrol*' (oversight) of production.¹¹³ Around 1,300 soviet deputies met the Tauride Palace.¹¹⁴ They authorised the publication of liberal papers,¹¹⁵ established commissions for food supply, agitation, transport, communications, literature, publishing houses and finance. It also established a commission to control the government, backed the resumption of the tram system and post and telegraph services, and discussed what to do with the former tsar and his family. It wanted district soviets to include soldiers; but around 400 soldier soviet deputies formed their own organisation, and got the government to promise that troops who had taken part in the revolution would not be disarmed.¹¹⁶ Around 1,000 soldiers and workers insisted that the soviet become a provisional revolutionary government.¹¹⁷ Menshevik conference delegates disagreed about how to achieve peace.¹¹⁸ In Vyborg between 500 and 600 overwhelmingly Bolsheviks workers published a leaflet calling for the soviet to remove the government and declare itself the provisional revolutionary government. It favoured all means, including armed struggle, but the RSDRP city committee banned the leaflet,¹¹⁹ and the soviet EC rejected it. Mezhraintsy and some SRs supported the Vyborg perspective,¹²⁰ but did not believe that the German and Austro-Hungarian armies were ripe for revolution, and wanted direct negotiations with German workers.¹²¹ The government legalised workers' committees, stripped the Orthodox Church of its privileges, promised Poland independence after the end of the war, abolished the Pale of Settlement, so Jews could live where they liked. It abolished administrative exile (without trial) and granted political exiles free railway tickets.¹²²

The government could not guarantee the safety of the tsar's brother, and he refused to accept the throne unless and until a constituent assembly asked him to do so, and he was placed under surveillance.¹²³ That night the government decided to ration food.¹²⁴

On the 4th *Pravda* characterised the government as 'essentially counter revolutionary', because it consisted of 'representatives of the big bourgeoisie and the nobility, and thus there can be no agreement with it'. The 'revolutionary democracy' had to create a provisional revolutionary government that was 'democratic in nature (the dictatorship of the proletariat and the peasantry)'. Bolsheviks at a large Vyborg factory agreed.¹²⁵ Copies of newspapers which published the names of the cabinet members were auctioned in the streets, and sometimes sold for fantastic prices. Eight of the 12 had been deputies in the Fourth Duma, two had been members of earlier Dumas, and Octobrists and SRs were also represented. Six were freemasons and the prime minister was a prince.¹²⁶ One minister acknowledged that the government could not send a telegram without the soviet's approval,¹²⁷ but it abolished the Okhrana's powers to arrest political suspects, put them in solitary confinement, keep them in prison without trial, or deport and banish them.¹²⁸ The foreign minister reassured the Allies that it would make the efforts and sacrifices needed for 'a decisive victory over the enemy'.¹²⁹ The RSDRP city committee discussed resuming work at plants making war materiel, and the Bolsheviks were split. The full soviet decided to end all strikes by 1,170 to 30, and though the Dinamo works and six other workforces and the Moscow district RSDRP committee disagreed 7,000 New Lessner workers decided to go back.¹³⁰ The Society of Factory and Works Owners, which mainly represented large factories which employed a total of 280,000 workers,¹³¹ authorised workers' committees 'elected on the basis of universal, equal and direct suffrage'.¹³² Most of the 101 workforces reporting it went back,¹³³ though many stopped after eight hours.¹³⁴ Skorokhod workers demanded the right to control hiring and firing, and radio-telegraph workers voted to 'work out rules and norms of the internal life of the factory'. Soviet deputies at 15 factories producing war materiel called for workers' control over production.¹³⁵ More garrison soldiers had formed soviets which collaborated with the workers' section of the soviet.¹³⁶ When a woman shouted to a Cossack 'Go for the police not us', he replied that 'We shall settle accounts with the police later'. Kerensky had failed to get most Kronstadt navy officers released, though ten or 20 were allowed to go to Petrograd.¹³⁷ Kerensky resigned as deputy chair of the soviet, but remained on the EC. Kronstadt workers had formed factory committees and demanded to see key management documents.¹³⁸ Helsinki sailors had shot an admiral,¹³⁹ and Helsinki and Sveaborg sailors had

killed the head of the Finnish Okhrana,¹⁴⁰ arrested many officers and pushed the most hateful under the ice.¹⁴¹ Baltic and Black Sea sailors were forming committees. A general wanted it made clear that Order Number One applied only to Petrograd, and the soviet EC agreed.¹⁴²

Konstantin Eremeev had born into the family of an NCO of peasant origin in Minsk, the capital of Bielarus. From 1893 he was a volunteer in an infantry regiment in Vilnius, the capital of Lithuania, and was promoted to an NCO. In 1896 he joined an SD organization, but was arrested in 1897, imprisoned in Warszawa Fortress, exiled to Urzhum in Vyatka province, and then to Petrozavodsk, nearer Petrograd, for two years. In 1903 he joined the Bolsheviks, but was exiled again. In 1904 he escaped and emigrated, but returned in 1906, and got involved in revolutionary work. From 1910 he worked in the editorial offices of *Pravda* and *Zvezda* in the capital. From 1915 he edited *Voprosy Strakhovaniya (Problems of Insurance)*, and joined the RSDRP city committee. From 1916 he led the Bolsheviks' North Baltic military organization, propagandised soldiers, and returned to Petrograd on 4 March 1917.¹⁴³

By the 5th Gorky had provided 3,000 rubles,¹⁴⁴ and around 100,000 copies of *Pravda* were printed,¹⁴⁵ and distributed free of charge.¹⁴⁶ The paper was now the organ of the RSDRP CC and the Petrograd district committee.¹⁴⁷ It announced that RSDRP district organisations were growing 'by the hour', and some workers were forming cells in sub-districts and factories.¹⁴⁸ Skryabin was senior editor, Mikhail Kalinin, a 41-year-old Old Bolshevik, was his assistant, and the editorial board included Eremeev and the 42-year-old Bolshevik Alexandrov.¹⁴⁹ The paper included the Bolshevik manifesto and a slightly modified version of Order Number One.¹⁵⁰ No newspaper could be published without the soviet's permission, and it banned all Black Hundred publications,¹⁵¹ but revolutionary pamphlets were pasted on city walls.¹⁵²

Alexandr Ilyn, Fyodor's younger brother, had been born in 1894. He later left for Geneva, where he joined the Bolsheviks, but returned to Petrograd after the amnesty in 1917,¹⁵³ and distributed *Izvestia*. By 5 March the RSDRP had emerged from the underground and some members had joined the city committee which met upstairs in a small and uncomfortable house in Kronwerk Prospekt in Petrograd district. Ilyn went there to pick up a Party card, which he had not held underground in case of arrest, and was sent to the Vyborg Bolshevik committee. He joined comrades going to found a Bolshevik organisation in Helsinki, and they spent their last cash on railway tickets and food. On the way, at Kronstadt, a sailor explained that soviet deputies had small buttons on their tunics, and EC members had large ones. The Petrograd Bolsheviks had decided to publish a paper for sailors called *Volna (Wave)*, on a badly-equipped press. Alexandr Ilyn was tasked with editing, proof-reading and publishing it, and took material from Petrograd publications; but members of the left fraction of Suomen Sosialidemokraattinen Puolue (the Social-Democratic Party of Finland, or SSDP) who had read *Volna* allowed Bolsheviks to use their excellent press.¹⁵⁴

In Petrograd the soviet EC condemned delegates from 90 factories, most of whom were politically unaligned, for discussing the formation of Red Guards.¹⁵⁵ At the full soviet 30 Bolsheviks insisted that the revolution was bourgeois in character;¹⁵⁶ but the soviet agreed by 1,170 to 30 that strikes should end two days later.¹⁵⁷ The Old Bolshevik Stasova had become the secretary of the Party CC bureau. Her duties included 'receiving comrades, answering their questions on all aspects of party activities, and supplying them with literature,' as well as taking the minutes of the Organizational Bureau, circulating its directives and managing its finances.¹⁵⁸ Skryabin failed to persuade a majority of the RSDRP city committee to criticise the government, but argued for 'overthrowing the old authorities', forming a federation of local soviets as a provisional revolutionary government, 'arming the people, democratising the army, expropriating the land and carrying out the RSDRP minimum programme'.¹⁵⁹ A worker differed. 'With the old conditions still in existence, freedoms are useless'. It was necessary to win the eight-hour day and a minimum wage. Five other workers insisted that strikes should continue until these conditions had been won, but five soldiers demanded an immediate end to the strikes.¹⁶⁰ Menshevik defencists supported peace without annexations or indemnities, but internationalists abstained.¹⁶¹ That evening armed workers surrounded the barracks next to Fyodor Ilyn's quarters, and faced recently-recruited sailors. Ilyn heard rifle-fire, and learned that cars with armed workers and soldiers were rushing around.¹⁶² Gorky invited writers and artists to his apartment,¹⁶³ to form Kommissia po Delam Iskusstva (the Commission of Beaux Arts), whose aim was to protect Russia's treasures.¹⁶⁴

By the 6th not all of the city's factories were back at work, and though 18 Vyborg workforces had returned, they had made economic demands, and most had introduced an eight-hour day 'in a revolutionary manner' - unilaterally.¹⁶⁵ At Nevsky shipyard, where technical constraints prevented an eight-hour day, the workers' committee of two Mensheviks, two Bolsheviks and one SR agreed to count work over eight hours as overtime. They drew up a list of 25 foremen and assistants who had abused their authority, and insisted that their cases be examined through the conciliation procedure. It found they had no case to answer, but the workers refused to take them back. Almost all factory workforces insisted on electing foremen and administrators. At Pipe Works five members of the soviet and four former members of the administration took charge of wages, production and security. Workers' committees at the Phoenix engineering works, Okhta Explosives and Tentelevsky chemical works

insisted on being fully informed about all hiring and firing. Workers' committees at the New Admiralty, Baltic and Putilov works got sacked workmates reinstated, and a mass meeting at the Treugolnik rubber works sacked foremen who had hidden tools to sabotage production. Workers at the Putilov, Cable, New Lessner, Skorokhod and many other factories worked an eight-hour day unilaterally, and the workers' committee out at the Sestroresk arms plant appointed a new director; though Cartridge Works employees in Petrograd agreed to a maximum of 12 hours a day 'to support our brothers at the front'.¹⁶⁶ Workers at the Admiralty, Military-Medications, Duflon and New Lessner metalworks had gone back, and 2,000 Vyborg workers had reluctantly agreed to do so, yet those at the Old Parviainen metal and machine-building plant and the Dinamo works refused to do so because the revolution had not spread across the country. The Bolshevik city committee turned down a proposal from the Vyborg committee for a demonstration against a return to work.¹⁶⁷ Kornilov had arrived with unlimited powers, including sacking the highest officers, and had large sums of money for propaganda.¹⁶⁸ He ordered factory machinery to be kept running continuously.¹⁶⁹ The soviet EC decided to arrest the former tsar and place his brother under surveillance.¹⁷⁰ Under pressure from the soviet, the government declared that its objective 'was not domination over other peoples, nor depriving them of their national possessions, but a stable peace based on national self-determination',¹⁷¹ and it forced the foreign minister to renounce annexations.¹⁷² It recognised the Finnish constitution,¹⁷³ but insisted that its government remain accountable to the Russian governor-general until after the constituent assembly,¹⁷⁴ which it would call at the earliest possible date;¹⁷⁵ but it sent a Polish legion to the front.¹⁷⁶ Provincial governors were often large landowners,¹⁷⁷ and the government ordered governors and vice-governors to hand their powers to zemstvo ECs,¹⁷⁸ and empowered 'reliable people' to establish new ones.¹⁷⁹ Some new governors and vice-governors were appointed as 'provisional commissars',¹⁸⁰ and zemstvos were to replace peasant committees in elections based on universal adult suffrage.¹⁸¹

On the 7th trams ran again in Petrograd.¹⁸² *Pravda* announced that 'there is no question among us of the downfall of the rule of capital, but only of the downfall of the rule of autocracy and feudalism'.¹⁸³ Skryabin and Zalutsky decided to expand the CC bureau and co-opted Eremeev, Kalinin, Shutko, Bokii, the 52-year-old Old Bolshevik intelligentka Anna Elizarova, her 39-year-old Old Bolshevik sister Maria Ulyanova, plus Alexandrov, M. Khakharev,¹⁸⁴ from the Vyborg committee,¹⁸⁵ and Konstantin Shvedchikov,¹⁸⁶ who had joined the Party in 1904 as a 20-year-old.¹⁸⁷ Skryabin, Kalinin and Eremeev formed the editorial board of *Pravda*, with Elizarova as their secretary, and Ulyanova helped. There were almost no trained printers, proof-readers, sellers and people to post copies to the provinces. The soviet EC appointed Steklov as the commissar of publications, and Bonch-Bruевич as a member of the *Izvestia* editorial board. The first issue of the Mensheviks' *Rabochaya Gazeta (The Workers' Newspaper)* argued that Russia faced a long period of capitalist development, and would be 'illusory and 'immediately lead to civil war' without the support of the bourgeoisie.¹⁸⁸ It noted that women had faced bullets, yet no woman was a member of the soviet.¹⁸⁹ Mensheviks and SRs had a majority, though most deputies came from medium and large factories where Bolsheviks had influence.¹⁹⁰ At the soviet EC Gorky argued that the Bolsheviks were in danger of 'sacrificing to the Russian peasantry the small but heroic band of politically educated workers and all the genuine revolutionaries of the intelligentsia.' This 'single active force' would be 'thrown like a handful of salt into the vapid bog of village life, and would dissolve without leaving any trace', 'without effecting any change in the mind, life or history of the Russian people'.¹⁹¹ He believed that Bolshevik aims 'could only be achieved by subjecting the instincts of the village to the reason of the town,' and creating 'conditions which would lead to the development of the cultural forces of the country' by the 'scientific and professional intelligentsia'.¹⁹² A soldier was 'a dark Russian peasant dressed in uniform', and 'Down with the war' was an 'idiotic' slogan, since a German victory would favour Russian reactionaries,¹⁹³ but his appeal to preserve artistic treasures was pasted up around the city,¹⁹⁴ and he sponsored a financial collection to support arrested Bolsheviks and Menshevik internationalists.¹⁹⁵ The soviet EC called on workers to end their strikes, since 'the onslaught on the old order by the insurgent people has been successful', and continuing 'threatens to disrupt to an alarming degree the economic forces of the country', and the full soviet agreed by 1,130 votes to 70.¹⁹⁶

In factories associated with the owners' Society unskilled workers earned 2.25 to 3.5 rubles a day, and though 28 had resumed work, including 18 in Vyborg, 83 had not,¹⁹⁷ including the Putilov works.¹⁹⁸ Women workers in Moscow district called for a ban on overtime, there was a strike at Osipov leather works,¹⁹⁹ and workers at state factories tried to ensure that 'the last functions of management' were 'liquidated'; though workers at the Izhorsky machine-builders at Kolpino supported the government 'in so far as' it worked to 'destroy the remnants of the autocracy' and furthered democracy. They wanted the RSDRP minimum programme, and called on the soviet to appeal to the international working class to conclude a democratic peace. They removed the director, returned to work, and elected around 50 managers, including six engineers. Most Petrograd strikers had returned,²⁰⁰ and there was little inter-party struggle in the elections to soviet commissions, though Shlyapnikov and other Bolsheviks were outnumbered by Menshevik internationalists on the propaganda commission.²⁰¹ The EC suspended the

organisation of a separate people's militia and decided to merge it with the Red Guards, though the Bolshevik military committee became its directing centre.²⁰² It met daily and sometimes twice a day,²⁰³ but delegated some functions.²⁰⁴ A volunteer had to get two existing Red Guards to vouch for them, or have a recommendation from the RSDRP, a factory committee or a trade union.²⁰⁵ *Rabochaya Gazeta* acknowledged that 'the bases of capitalism remain in place', but fighting the government was 'beyond the forces of the proletariat'. With the agreement of the full soviet, the government issued Order Number Two,²⁰⁶ which allowed garrison soldiers to object to appointed officers. Order Number Three explained that Orders One and Two applied only to Petrograd and front-line troops,²⁰⁷ though it bore only the signatures of the soviet EC chair and the government's military commissioner.²⁰⁸ There were more district soviets,²⁰⁹ and 1,500 deputies attended the central soviet. Skryabin demanded 'a revolutionary government of a democratic nature' and the 'dictatorship of the proletariat and peasantry'.²¹⁰ The war minister acknowledged that he had no power over the garrison,²¹¹ which was largely composed of convalescents and those beyond military age; but they lacked warm food,²¹² and only one regiment was loyal to the government.²¹³ The revived All-Russian Peasant Union, cooperatives and SRs called an All-Russian Congress of Peasant Deputies. The 1,115 delegates were elected on the basis of one for every 150,000, in two stages, and included 537 SRs and 14 Bolsheviks.²¹⁴ Shlyapnikov had tasked Stasova with forming a Bolshevik CC secretariat,²¹⁵ Ulyanova and Alexandrov were tasked with improving links with provincial organisations and the émigré CC.²¹⁶

By the 8th 59 of the 102 largest city factories were working.²¹⁷ The US government refused to give a loan to the government 'without assurance that it will continue war until victory and no separate peace',²¹⁸ and while bankers and diplomats in London and Paris promised loans, they did not deliver.²¹⁹ On the 9th *Pravda* argued that the soviet must 'get rid of this government of the bourgeoisie and declare itself to be the provisional revolutionary government'.²²⁰ Two or three soldier soviet deputies supported the Bolsheviks,²²¹ and nine joined the EC, though most were politically unaligned.²²² Bolshevik leaders argued for transforming the imperialist war into a civil war.²²³ Mensheviks and SRs led most industrial workers' committees. Cartridge workers had begun to eliminate 'undesirables' from the administration.²²⁴ Skorokhod workers' committee demanded an eight-hour day, a dinner break of 90 minutes, and a minimum wage of five rubles for men, 2.50 for women and two for youths, plus the continuation of the 70 percent war bonus, the end of paying for their own materials, double pay for overtime, a joint commission to examine wage rates, payment for the February strike days and soviet deputies, the dismissal of undesirable elements and control of hiring and firing. Managers agreed to a 48-hour week, a 20 percent rise and time and a half for overtime, and accepted the committee's right to be informed about hiring and firing and request the removal of an administrator. They offered 300,000 rubles towards the cost of a canteen; but refused to change hours or fines and pay elected representatives. When it was clear what was happening elsewhere, Skorokhod workers' demands were referred to a conciliation chamber which recommended a 40 percent rise in the minimum wage.²²⁵ The owners' Society agreed with the soviet about the eight-hour day,²²⁶ and that that workers' committees should represent workforces with the administration and the government,²²⁷ and negotiate overtime; but banned the removal of foremen and administrators.²²⁸ Gorky privately acknowledged that he was an SD, but believed that 'the time for socialist reforms has not yet come'.²²⁹

On some days the city's grain supply had been enough for no more than 48 hours,²³⁰ and the government's supply committee decided to pay peasants extra for the timely fulfilment of quotas. The agriculture minister was authorised to draft a law to make buying and selling grain a state monopoly, to be paid for in cash, except for what peasants needed for subsistence.²³¹ The government recognised district soviets,²³² began introducing local self-government in border territories, abolished restrictive legislation on minorities,²³³ and replaced senior commanders at the fronts. Twelfth Army soldiers had a main committee and several lower-level committees,²³⁴ and its EC in Riga consisted mainly of SRs and Mensheviks;²³⁵ but hundreds of thousands of front-line soldiers had enough bread for half a day.²³⁶ The British government had offered to give the tsar and his family asylum,²³⁷ though the king disagreed and the offer was withdrawn,²³⁸ so the Russian government put under house arrest at Tsarskoe Selo on the 9th,²³⁹ and assured the soviet that they would not leave Russia without its agreement.²⁴⁰

The Bolshevik worker Tolmachev wrote to his family on the 10th.

I wasn't able to regain my senses till the last few days. I was everywhere of course: at the first demonstrations during the shooting, and when the troops rose, then together with the soldiers in the arsenals of Peter-Paul, stole revolvers, rifles, rode in a car to arrest police, was at meetings, assemblies, spoke myself. In such days one cannot stand aside. And only in the last few days have I sobered up. Having fallen into the whirlpool of events, you become a chip of wood, carried along and spun around.²⁴¹

The government abolished the police and sent gendarmes to the front.²⁴²

On the 11th around 1,000 textile workers elected 20 members of a new union board, and half were women.²⁴³ The soviet EC called on European workers to 'refuse to serve as an instrument of conquest and violence in the hands of kings, landowners and bankers'. The revolution 'will not retreat before the bayonets of conquerors',²⁴⁴ and it would 'defend our liberty from all reactionary attempts from within, as well as from without'.²⁴⁵

On the 12th the RSDRP CC bureau and the soviet EC permitted a small detachment of soldiers to take over the press of *Selskii Vestnik* (the *Village Herald*) to print *Pravda*, and it published the names of some Okhrana agents.²⁴⁶ Yakov Zhitomirsky had been born in 1880,²⁴⁷ and was recruited in 1902, while studying at the University of Berlin. He was active among RSDRP émigrés, reported about their activities, and was also a vital link in the Russian and émigré Bolsheviks' *Iskra* organisation.²⁴⁸ During the war he was a doctor in the Russian army in France, and reported about revolutionary propaganda.²⁴⁹ Vasily Shurkanov had been born in 1876. He became a worker, and a Bolshevik, and was a Third Duma deputy from Kharkiv province in 1907. He had been an Okhrana agent since 1913.²⁵⁰

On 12 March 1917 around 2,000 Petrograd metalworkers elected an organising commission consisting mainly of Mensheviks.²⁵¹ At the Mars Field in the city centre 184 fighters were buried in mass graves, and there were reportedly up to a million mourners.²⁵²

The return of the Bolshevik and other political exiles

On 3 March Bolshevik exiles in the industrial town of Novo-Nikolaevsk on the Trans-Siberian railway, over 2,000 miles east of Petrograd, had received a one-word telegram: 'Revolution'. Bolsheviks and Mensheviks formed a soviet EC. A Menshevik was chair, Semën Kanatchikov, a 37-year-old worker-intelligent and Old Bolshevik, was his deputy, and was elected as a delegate to the All-Russian congress of soviets in Petrograd. On his return he was elected to the EC of the provincial congress of people's assemblies in Tomsk, 150 miles away, and to the provincial committee as commissar of labour, so he and his family moved there.²⁵³

On the 4th, in Minusinsk, around 2,960 miles east of Petrograd, Ekaterina Breshkovskaya, a 73-year-old SR and former terrorist, heard about Petrograd events. On the train to Moscow she noticed that 'At every station and crossroads there is only one demand. It is the groan of the people for books and teachers'.²⁵⁴ In Minusinsk Eva Broido, a 40-year-old Menshevik internationalist intelligentka, noted that the police disappeared overnight, and political exiles 'amused themselves by looking for their personal folders in the files of the police station', though one 'lifer' could not readjust and shot himself. Locals objected to losing professionals and negotiated a staggered departure, but when Broido reached Petrograd she was elected as a secretary of the Menshevik CC.²⁵⁵

On the 5th Maria Spiridonova, a 32-year-old intelligentka and former SR assassin, was released from Akatui Katorga Prison in the Transbaikal region, 4,460 miles east of Petrograd,²⁵⁶ and left for Chita 240 miles to the west.²⁵⁷ She was elected as mayor, and her first order was to blow up the prison.²⁵⁸ Then she and other women 'politicals' left for European Russia.²⁵⁹ On the 10th, at Stretensk, they saw a parade for those who had died in the revolution, and soldiers and Cossacks swearing loyalty to the new government. By the 12th news of the amnesty had reached Serentui Katorga Prison. The governor was pale and 'looked like a figure straight from hell. There he stood, helpless and petrified, his chin was trembling with excitement' and he 'had been spat on all over'. Two women successfully argued that he should not be lynched, though he was imprisoned.²⁶⁰

Iosef Jughashvili, a 38-year-old Bolshevik intelligent and RSDRP CC member, was in Krasnoyarsk, around 2,870 miles east of Petrograd. Vera Shveitzer lived in Achinsk, 144 miles west of Krasnoyarsk, with Suren Spandarian, an Old Bolshevik Armenian intelligent in his mid-thirties from Georgia, who had been elected to the Bolshevik CC in 1912.²⁶¹ Shveitzer visited Jughashvili and told him that Spandarian had died, and he successfully applied to live in Achinsk and moved in with her.²⁶² News of the tsar's abdication reached them on 7 March and Jughashvili, the 33-year-old intelligent Bolshevik CC member Lev Rozenfeld, plus Matvei Muranov, a 43-year-old former Duma deputy and Old Bolshevik, telegraphed the Bolshevik RSDRP CC members in Switzerland from Perm. They arrived in Petrograd on the 12th.²⁶³ Jughashvili carried a wicker basket and a typewriter.²⁶⁴ He had written to his friend, Sergey Alliluev, a 50-year-old worker and Old Bolshevik, and he stayed with his family.²⁶⁵ Jughashvili, Rozenfeld, Zalutsky, Muranov, Stasova and Shlyapnikov were elected to the Bolshevik presidium.²⁶⁶ On the 13th a CC member who was an editor of *Rabochy i Soldat* (*Worker and Soldier*) claimed the right to veto content.²⁶⁷ On the 14th *Izvestia* insisted that Russia would defend its freedom to the last drop of blood.²⁶⁸ It supported a provisional revolutionary government and included the Bolshevik manifesto. Bonch-Bruевич sent copies all over Russia.²⁶⁹ The Bolshevik CC demanded fraternisation at the front, and negotiations between the proletariats of belligerent countries to end to the war.²⁷⁰ On the 15th the Bolshevik presidium appointed Jughashvili and Rozenfeld to edit *Pravda*, with Skryabin as the official publisher,²⁷¹ and Rozenfeld supported defencism in the paper.

When one army is against another army, it would be the most absurd policy to suggest that one of them lay down their arms and go home. That would not be a policy of peace but a policy of slavery, a policy which would be indignantly rejected by a free people. No, it will stand firmly at its post, answering bullet for bullet and shell for shell.²⁷²

Jughashvili joined the editorial boards of *Prosveshchenie*, and that of *Vypered*, though it was closed.²⁷³ The Bolsheviks published *Rabochy Put (Workers' Path)*,²⁷⁴ and Jughashvili and Rozenfeld joined the soviet EC.²⁷⁵ Five trainloads of Siberian exiles arrived that day.²⁷⁶ On the 16th Jughashvili made an announcement at an All-Russian Bolshevik conference. 'To the extent that the government fortifies the march of the revolution, we must support it. To the extent that it is counter-revolutionary, we cannot support it'; but Party unity was possible on the basis of the Zimmerwald platform. The number of strikers had fallen to 24,840 from 20 factories, but some demanded the expulsion of the *Pravda* editors from the Party.²⁷⁷ On the 17th *Pravda* republished the Bolsheviks' 1905 position on soviets as 'embryos of revolutionary power', and argued that they must become a provisional revolutionary government after a proletarian-led rising.²⁷⁸ On the 19th the soviet appointed military commissars.²⁷⁹ The government appealed to peasants not to seize land, but wait for the constituent assembly.²⁸⁰

In Irkutsk, 2,770 miles east of Petrograd, the 31-year-old former Old Bolshevik intelligent Wactaw Woytinsky asked a young SD soldier about the front, and he replied loudly, so people nearby could hear. 'If they do not make peace soon, there will be a revolution.' The city was 'filled with rumours' of 'strikes, street riots, clashes' between the Duma and the government', and newspapers reported food shortages and mounting tension.²⁸¹ Woytinsky considered the 'consolidation and strengthening of the state apparatus' a priority.²⁸² Crowds carried red flags and sang revolutionary songs. On the 11th 40 or so exiles left, and they arrived in Petrograd on the 20th.²⁸³ Woytinsky found his perspective was to the right of the majority of the soviet EC, but they invited him to be an editor of *Izvestia*. The full soviet was 'loose and shapeless', and he argued that they must 'strengthen the front and the rear', and 30 of the 50 or 60 members agreed. He spoke to up to 3,000 soldiers, who questioned him. 'When will the war end?' 'Why should we reinforce the front?' 'Why do the officers who opposed the revolution remain in command?'²⁸⁴

Alexandra Kollontai, a 44-year-old Bolshevik intelligentka, was in the USA,²⁸⁵ but sailed to Norway when she heard about Petrograd events.²⁸⁶ She went on to Stockholm, and asked the émigré CC members in Switzerland for instructions. One replied. '*Never again* along the lines of the Second International! *Never again* with Kautsky! By all means a *more revolutionary* programme and more revolutionary tactics,' and 'revolutionary propaganda, as heretofore, agitation and struggle for an international proletarian revolution and for the seizure of power' by the soviets, 'arming the masses' for a fight for bread, peace and freedom. 'Spread out! Raise new sections! Awaken fresh initiative, form new organisations in every layer and prove to them that peace can come' with armed soviets in power. He asked her for contacts in Petrograd,²⁸⁷ but wanted her to stay in Stockholm, where Hjalmar Branting an SDPS right-winger demanded that left-wingers stop unauthorised protests against the war, and they left the party.²⁸⁸ Kollontai dressed like a lady, put the émigré CC letters in her corset, and on 16/29 March she travelled north by train. On the way, at Charlottenburg, she met a Russian underground worker and a policeman who were both assigned to accompany her. At Haparanda, after a fairly lackadaisical body search, she took a train to Tornio, the only legal crossing point to Russia, though the guards expected her. She telegraphed the writer Tatiana Schepkina to meet her at the Finland Station in Petrograd, and when she arrived she telephoned the *Pravda* offices on the Moika Canal, where the Bolsheviks had their headquarters, that she would bring the émigré CC letters next day, and asked to join the paper's staff. Some Bolsheviks, including Shlyapnikov and Skryabin, were not sure about her, but she met Ulyanova, and discovered that the most radical soldiers, and workers in metalworks, textile mills, and on factory committees, demanded that the government guarantee their promised reforms. On the 21st she contributed an article to *Pravda*,²⁸⁹ which also included one of the Swiss émigré CC's letters, but without the sharp criticism of other parties. It criticised the slogan 'Down with the government', but accepted the soviet's ban on demonstrations,²⁹⁰ as did the RSDRP CC. The soviet EC deployed armed men,²⁹¹ but the commander of the military district ordered the trainees at the Artillery School to deal with military students and officers who refused to obey orders.²⁹² Female textile workers demonstrated demanding bread and an end to the war. Bystanders jeered them as 'Stockingless! Uneducated riff-raff! Ignoble sluts!' and when one demonstrator pointed out that they were 'wearing hats made by our hands' a fight broke out involving hat-pins.²⁹³ Some demonstrators were killed and wounded on Nevsky Prospekt.²⁹⁴ The government proclaimed the equality of all citizens, including those of German heritage,²⁹⁵ and approved a 'freedom loan' of three billion rubles.²⁹⁶ The soviet supported the loan by over 2,000 to 212, and 'revolutionary defencism' by over 2,000 to 13, and Mensheviks and SR defencists' formed a bloc.²⁹⁷

Nikolai Podvoisky had been born in a Chernihiv province village in 1880. His father was a former teacher who had become a priest. Nikolai entered Chernihiv Seminary, and after he was expelled for his political activity in 1901, he studied law at Iaroslavl University. He joined the RSDRP, and after the 1903 congress he joined the Bolsheviks.

He was briefly arrested in 1904 and 1905 for helping to organise railway workers' strikes. He was injured in a demonstration, and sought treatment in Germany and Switzerland, but returned to Russia in 1906 and worked illegally as an organiser in the capital, Kostroma and Baki. In 1913 he settled near the capital and smuggled in Bolshevik literature. He was arrested late in 1916, but freed after the 1917 amnesty.²⁹⁸ In March he heard Kollontai speak outside the Tauride Palace and asked to meet her.²⁹⁹ He introduced her to a large group of soldiers at Bolshevik headquarters. They responded cheerfully to her speech, but were not keen to send her to the soviet. Podvoisky assured them that they would be adequately represented and she got her mandate. She was elected to the EC, where she joined three or four women workers.³⁰⁰ She was one of the few deputies with a proper mandate, and tackled Rozenfeld, who argued that the most that could be done was to persuade Kerensky to propose peace.³⁰¹ Podvoisky and others invited garrison representatives to join the Bolshevik military committee.³⁰² The soviet claimed 3,000 deputies, including around 800 workers and 2,000 soldiers, and though their mandates were not checked, seven of the 42 EC members were workers,³⁰³ and nine were soldiers. Shlyapnikov was the only Bolshevik, but the EC grew to between 80 and 90, and delegated much of its power to a secret committee.³⁰⁴

On the 22nd another Swiss émigré CC letter appeared in *Pravda*, but without the attacks on Chkheidze and Kautsky and the warnings about the government's imperialism.³⁰⁵ According to the paper 1,382 demonstrators had been killed and wounded in Petrograd, though other estimates put it at between 4,000 and 8,000. On the 23rd the dead were buried in the Field of Mars, though the cold was so intense that a trench had had to be blasted out with dynamite. There were 69 coffins in two processions from Nevsky district, 51 from Vyborg, eight from Petrograd district and four from Vasilievsky Island. No churchmen were allowed to officiate, and there were up to a million mourners,³⁰⁶ and they carried red banners and sang *The Workers' Marseillaise* and funeral hymns.³⁰⁷ The foreign minister admitted that the army was fighting to win the Ukrainian parts of the Austro-Hungarian Empire and control Constantinople and the Straits.³⁰⁸

On the 25th Petrograd trams did not run, though everything else on Vasilievsky Island seemed normal. Fyodor Ilyin had been promoted to sub-lieutenant in his absence, and he and Roshal set off for the *Pravda* offices. On the way they saw a large crowd near Kazan Cathedral facing a solid wall of police, and crowds on Nevsky Prospekt and the surrounding streets 'seethed, murmured' and 'uttered protests'. There was sporadic rifle fire,³⁰⁹ though some Cossacks and infantry supported the workers. At Nikolaevsky Station thousands fraternised with Cossacks. A mounted police officer ordered a bugle to be sounded, but a Cossack shot him dead.³¹⁰ The Mensheviks resolved to organise workers to pressure the government and appeal for workers in other belligerent countries to do the same, but opposed disorganising defensive troops. The Bolshevik bureau argued that the government was 'incapable of resolving the tasks set by the revolution', but could be made to introduce meaningful reforms.³¹¹ It cut ordinary criminals' sentences in half,³¹² but raised the price of grain by 60 to 70 percent,³¹³ and appointed commissars.³¹⁴

Yakov Sverdlov, a 32-year-old Old Bolshevik intelligent and RSDRP CC member was in Krasnoyarsk province, and early in March he learned that something important had happened in European Russia. His partner, Klavdia Novgorodtsev, a 41-year-old Old Bolshevik intelligentka, later recalled the situation.

The police officer, Kibirov, did the most intelligent thing he could think of, which was to keep the news from the exiles. They heard it through personal telegrams, which the post office clerks handed over without asking Kibirov's permission. Sverdlov was one of the first to know. Boris Ivanov, already in high esteem among the soldiers of the 14th Siberian Infantry Regiment in Krasnoyarsk, had sent Sverdlov a congratulatory telegram and some money collected by the soldiers. Orders came from Yeniseisk. Alexander Maslennikov, a local Bolshevik, had been appointed Commissar of the territory. He was to relieve Kibirov of his functions and resources, and send Sverdlov to Krasnoyarsk. There was no time for delay; it was hundreds of miles to Krasnoyarsk and the only possible route was the Yenisei, where the ice might begin to break up at any moment. The only hope was to travel day and night, without rest; otherwise he would be stranded and it would be two or three months before the river was free of ice and navigable. Sverdlov was not prepared to wait.'³¹⁵

He went to Krasnoyarsk and found people who read *Pravda* and argued against supporting the government. He advised them to agitate soldiers and workers, especially the 5,000 in the railway depot, and recruit them to the RSDRP. Together with other activists and a Menshevik internationalist, Sverdlov formed a committee which removed tsarist officials, impounded police records and gave monastery lands to peasants. On the 22nd Sverdlov convinced the soviet to send a delegation to the All-Russian congress of soviets in Petrograd,³¹⁶ and they set off on the 29th. He was not clear about current Party tactics, but the congress adopted a Bolshevik platform and elected a five-person committee, including Sverdlov, and elected him as a delegate to the All-Russian Bolshevik conference and as a member of the new CC, and head of its secretariat. He attended a conference of Party workers and listened carefully to the mainly Bolshevik delegates who were more in touch with events. He had met most of them in the underground, prison or exile.³¹⁷ Jughashvili and Rozenfeld sent Sverdlov back to the Urals,³¹⁸ where he spoke in

factories, and tried to prepare a regional conference of representatives of 43 RSDRP organisations. He suggested an appropriate regional headquarters, a newspaper and all-Bolshevik organisations.³¹⁹

By late that month there were 67 soviets in Siberia, and the RSDRP CC Siberian bureau in Krasnoyarsk was organising Red Guards.³²⁰ The eight-hour movement had spread to Perm, and Ekaterinburg,³²¹ where the Bolsheviks claimed 40 members.³²² The amnesty had freed 100,000 Siberian exiles.³²³ Politically experienced exiles and émigrés reached Petrograd every day, and were assigned posts all over the country, and the Bolshevik military committee sent thousands of agitators to the villages,³²⁴ where soviets had begun to appear,³²⁵ and deposed tsarist officials.³²⁶

On the 26th *Pravda* advocated arming the people.³²⁷ Fyodor Ilyn's quarters 'looked like an armed camp', but two colleagues insisted that they would not shoot demonstrators if ordered to do so and would fire into the air.³²⁸ On the 27th an All-Russian meeting of RSDRP workers included 120 Bolsheviks.³²⁹ On the street the 25-year-old seamstress Evgenia Liepiņa, the Bolshevik Vyborg district secretary, appealed to Cossacks not to shoot demonstrators, and they lowered their rifles and rode away.³³⁰

In Petrograd Alexandr Ilyn saw 'a regular battle', though midshipman cadets were disarmed. On the 28th soldiers broke into an armoury, and Ilyn attended a meeting of about 15 Bolsheviks.³³¹ The RSDRP headquarters were on the top floor of the Labour Exchange in Kronwerk Prospekt, and Fyodor Ilyn proposed that the city committee form a military committee. He and Daniil Sulimov, who was 26, were tasked with drafting a document demanding the election of army officers, and they took it to the People's House, where soldiers endorsed it. Alexandr Ilyn was tasked with editing *Golos Pravdy* (*The Voice of Truth*). The sailor Stepanov was treasurer. Every evening there were classes in Marxism next door to the editorial office. At Kronstadt Roshal, Fyodor Ilyn, and T.I. Ulyantsev, a sailor who had been sentenced to katorga the previous December, and Kirrill Orlov, a former *Potemkin* mutineer, gave lectures. Roshal was the principal agitator, and he and the sailors Pavlov and Kolbin spoke to meetings of women. Fyodor Ilyn received many articles written by sailors, soldiers and workers for *Golos Pravdy* in Petrograd, and wrote articles himself, but after he left for Kronstadt he saw red flag with 'Kronstadt Committee of the RSDRP' in big letters flying over a small house. He met Roshal, Orlov, Ulyantsev and Dmitry Zhemchuzhin. Every sailor had graduated from a trade school and had a 'certain intellectual development' and 'class spirit, even sometimes a Bolshevik cast of mind', and army officers could be distinguished from troops only by the better cloth of their blouses. Police and gendarmes had surrendered, but six had been killed and eight arrested, while seven sailors and soldiers had died.³³² Officially 60 officers had been killed, plus 39 at Helsinki and six elsewhere.³³³ Petr Smirnov had been born into a worker's family in a village near Vyatka in 1897. He went to school, then worked as a smith in a timber mill from 1913. He joined the Bolsheviks in March 1917, became a Red Guard,³³⁴ studied at Petrograd Polytechnic and helped to publish *Golos Pravdy*.³³⁵

Near Petrograd the workers' committee at Izhora arms works coordinated others.³³⁶ In Petrograd the Ouf metalworking factory had operated for ten days in February, due to alleged shortages of materials and fuel, and 340 workers were sacked in March, even though they did not work eight hours unilaterally or ask for a raise. They appealed to soldiers not to believe the propaganda that workers did not support them.³³⁷ There were refugees from Poland and western Russia in the city. Crowding and filth caused diseases such as smallpox, scarlet fever and typhoid, though medicines cost 50 times more than before the war.³³⁸ Menshevik leaders were split about the government,³³⁹ but after SR internationalists and Bolsheviks sponsored an anti-war motion,³⁴⁰ the war minister resigned.³⁴¹ Jughashvili argued for unity with the Mensheviks; but other Bolsheviks criticised his and Rozenfeld's *Pravda* policy as conciliationist, and argued for preparing for an armed struggle against the government,³⁴² which knew that 'parties, trade unions and various hybrid organisations were sending agents to the villages to spread 'programmes for agricultural reform'.³⁴³

On the 29th *Pravda* published the RSDRP conference decision in favour of fraternisation at the front.³⁴⁴ The government nationalised imperial and council land, decreed that none should be transferred to peasants immediately,³⁴⁵ and envisaged its eventual transfer to those who worked it by elected local branches of a central land committee.³⁴⁶ It issued regulations for rural committees to collect data for land reform, carry out decrees and settle agrarian problems, but peasants felled forests, appropriated harvests, equipment and land.³⁴⁷

On the 30th the government supported an independent Poland after the constituent assembly.³⁴⁸ I. Yurenev had been elected to the soviet EC, and argued that the 'displacement of political workers caused confusion at the fronts and, according to the statement of one authoritative comrade', 'created an unstable situation among the commissar apparatus'.³⁴⁹

Alexandr Afanassiev had been born in 1869. In 1905 he became a member of the RSDRP regional committee and fighting squad and joined the Bolsheviks, and in 1917 he took part in strikes and demonstrations, joined the Red Guards, and led the revolutionary committee.³⁵⁰ On the 31st an All-Russian RSDRP conference refused to recognise soviets as the embryos of revolutionary power, or call for recruiting Red Guards.³⁵¹ Petrograd Red Guards claimed between 10,000 and 20,000 members,³⁵² though few were armed.³⁵³

Kronstadt workers, soldiers and sailors organised a soviet faction which met before the plenary session, though the Bolsheviks formed barely four percent. The presidium chair was unaligned, but his deputies were SR internationalists.³⁵⁴ A delegation of Donbas workers arrived at Kronstadt and promised to supply coal. The soviet established very close links with Petrograd soviet via a sailor called Pavlov. Doshevoy, a recently graduated doctor from Iuriev University, arrived to help to edit a paper and agitate, and invited L.A. Bregman, an SD intelligent from Iuriev University, to join him. He was an excellent lecturer and could chair meetings. Roshal toured warships. Around 3,000 sailors joined the Party, and the number of sympathisers rose to 35,000. *Golos Pravdy* soon sold out. Party papers from Petrograd and Moscow and other literature arrived, and warship crews formed libraries.³⁵⁵ During March a Bolshevik motion at the soviet opposing the government had fallen by 400 votes to 19. In Petrograd Fyodor Ilyin and Rozenfeld required weekly reports.³⁵⁶

When Potieva Glizer, a 19-year-old seamstress, heard that the tsar had been overthrown early in March, she made a red banner with the slogan 'Long Live Freedom!' Her workmates demanded hot water and ventilators, but managers refused, so Glizer met the trade union secretary, the Bolshevik Anna Sakharova, who sent someone to help her negotiate, and managers agreed. They women joined the union and Glizer joined the district soviet and the Bolsheviks.³⁵⁷ Stasova had been elected as the Bolshevik CC's technical secretary. She took notes, and could speak and vote, but rarely did so. She and three or four other women corresponded with provincial organisations, assigned workers to various jobs, kept accounts and distributed money.³⁵⁸ At the Kozhenikov cotton-weaving factory five female Bolsheviks and two unaligned women had been elected to the workers' committee, and the five men were also unaligned. The Bolsheviks Maria Nikiforova and Sofia Bazulenkova, who had worked at the factory, returned from exile and were co-opted. Male apprentices and workers at another works had shouted down two women workers. One was Olga Chernysheva, who worked in the factory shop, and was a Jewess, though she was subsequently accepted. Galina Lotkova had become the first woman to chair the Bolshevik committee at the New Bumagopriadilnaya shell factory in Moscow district, which they ran after the managers left. None of the 11 women on the textile union's 20-strong EC was aligned, though three of the nine men were Bolsheviks.³⁵⁹ Women at the Mignon chocolate factory had complained to the soviet about intolerable working conditions, and women tobacco workers had demanded protection for pregnant workmates. Workers at the Frolic textile mill demanded a 100 percent rise for men and 125 percent for women. Maids were organising and restaurant workers had formed a union, as had 35 soldiers' wives.³⁶⁰

By the end of the month factory workers' earnings had risen by 35 to 50 percent,³⁶¹ but the grain supply was 81 percent of what was needed. The bread ration was 1.5 pounds a day for those doing heavy work, and one pound for others,³⁶² and the sugar ration was 2.5 ounces a week.³⁶³ Officially over 6,600 workers had been involved in 74 lockouts that month,³⁶⁴ and 41,000 had gone on strike.³⁶⁵ Some factory committees had 'cultural-enlightenment commissions', and Rozenkrantz metalworks managers had given the workers' committee 10,000 rubles for a school, where Olga Stetskaya taught workers to read by writing Bolshevik slogans on the blackboard.³⁶⁶

Finland and the Baltic region

By March news of the tsar's abdication had reached Finland, and an Okhrana captain and his wife poisoned themselves.³⁶⁷ The governor-general was arrested on the 2nd. The SSDP had a majority in the Sejm, the highest parliamentary body,³⁶⁸ and though the 'united bourgeois' parties were drawing closer to the government, the Sejm refused to pay taxes since the war had not ended.³⁶⁹ On the 3rd three men established a soviet in Viipuri near the border with Russia. Groups of 50 to 100 could send one deputy, those of over 100 could send two and every additional 50 could send another. Soldiers arrived and elections were held on the 8th.³⁷⁰ By the 13th a Sejm coalition had recognised the Russian government, and it agreed to carry out its orders on the 22nd.³⁷¹ Finnish SDs wanted to be independent for internal affairs, and though the government should handle foreign affairs, it should not station troops there. On the 24th the SSDP CC promised to support the RSDRP, sent 10,000 rubles to be shared between Mensheviks and Bolsheviks, and backed Finnish independence if the people voted for it.³⁷² Around 63,000 soldiers and sailors had been politicised, many by Bolshevik propaganda,³⁷³ and trade unions claimed 100,000 members.³⁷⁴

The Latvian Bolshevik committee in Rīga had decided to recognise the government on the 10th. By mid-March the city's soviet had 150 delegates from 30 organisations.³⁷⁵ The central welfare committee supported the war effort, but demanded a 'free Latvia in a free Russia', and Nacionāldemokrāti (the National Democratic Party) demanded autonomy and a government elected by universal suffrage. Latvian riflemen and workers who had been evacuated to central Russia supported the Bolsheviks,³⁷⁶ and on the 20th Rīga soviet voted for an all-Bolshevik EC.³⁷⁷

In Estonia SRs and Mensheviks dominated the soviets.³⁷⁸ Tallinn workers had joined the revolution,³⁷⁹ and on the 30th 40,000 people demonstrated on behalf of Estonia's claims to independence,³⁸⁰ in Petrograd. They included 12,000 to 15,000 soldiers, and the government agreed to self-government in the Baltic region.³⁸¹

In Lausanne the émigré bureau of Lietuvos socialdemokratų partija (the Social Democratic Party of Lithuania, or LSDP), reported that there were 150,000 homeless and starving people in Lithuania and 400,000 devastated farms. The only Lithuanian language paper in Switzerland was the Germans' *Dubartis (The Present)*.³⁸²

There were very few RSDRP organisations of any size outside Petrograd,³⁸³ but Bolsheviks and Mensheviks had merged everywhere except in Petrograd and Moscow.³⁸⁴

The Moscow region

News of the tsar's abdication had reached Moscow by 1 March,³⁸⁵ and a former head of the Okhrana shot himself.³⁸⁶ About a quarter of the 420,000 workers were in metalworks and a third were in textile mills.³⁸⁷ A provisional revolutionary committee called on workers and soldiers to elect soviet deputies,³⁸⁸ at the rate of one for every 500 workers, and up to three per factory, while those with 400 or fewer between them could also send one. Around 80 percent were workers, 362 had been politically active by 1905, most had been active by 1917 and 157 had been arrested at least once. They claimed to represent 469,000 workers. Metalworkers sent 230 deputies, textile workers formed 12 percent,³⁸⁹ and 28 professionals represented factories or trade unions. The presidium of seven included three Bolsheviks, two SR internationalists and one Mezhrayonets. The soviet demanded a provisional revolutionary government based on soviets.³⁹⁰ The deputies came from 51 factories, and they and a committee of social organisations controlled the city. The RSDRP leaders had no clarity about major issues,³⁹¹ though the Bolsheviks, who claimed 600 members,³⁹² argued that the revolution was bourgeois.³⁹³ The price of rye had risen by 333 percent since 1914.³⁹⁴ Citizens could buy about a pound of bread a day and workers received their ration at work. This required 25 railway wagonloads of grain a day and 46 arrived.³⁹⁵ Military commanders reported: 'Total revolution in Moscow.' Military units were joining the revolutionaries, and crowds looted and burned police stations.³⁹⁶ On the 2nd the soviet chair resigned, but the deputies elected another Menshevik to replace him.³⁹⁷

Zinaida Volkova had been born in a small Urals town in 1887. Her father was the head physicist at a French-owned factory, but both her parents died when she was 10, and she was sent to an orphanage for aristocratic girls in Moscow. After she graduated she studied natural science at Geneva University, and then attended the Women's Institute of Higher Education in Moscow. She later married a doctor called Zhemchuzhny, and bore a daughter, but her husband was drafted in summer 1914. By 1917 she had become an SR and tried to explain the situation to 'the masses'. News of the tsar's abdication caught her 'completely unawares'. She was the only woman prepared to address a large crowd, but felt that she 'had joined the common flow of our country's life'.³⁹⁸ On the 3rd the Moscow *Russkoe Slovo* argued for supporting the government,³⁹⁹ and the Okhrana offices were ransacked,⁴⁰⁰ and then burned.⁴⁰¹ Bolsheviks had founded a central bureau of trade unions. Workers at the huge Rokhorovskaya textile mill elected nine Bolshevik soviet deputies and called for factory committees, though 30 already had one.⁴⁰² Bolsheviks claimed no more than four members at Moscow Metalworks, and Simon Ivanov and Latvians were 'sometimes pulled down from the podium and not allowed to speak'. Average real wages were half what they had been four years earlier, and workers went on strike. When they returned 500 or so implemented an eight-hour day unilaterally and elected a factory committee which decided to hire and fire managers, and support the government if it did not delay calling the constituent assembly.⁴⁰³ By the 4th the soviet had over 600 deputies,⁴⁰⁴ though most had been co-opted on the recommendation of political parties,⁴⁰⁵ and the 75 EC members included a number of Bolsheviks.⁴⁰⁶ Workers at 29 factories, including seven machine-building works with an average of 1,670 workers, had formed committees, though some secretaries were illiterate.⁴⁰⁷

On the 16th a Menshevik successfully proposed that the soviet EC should include 60 members elected at a plenary meeting, plus eight from political parties and ten who were co-opted.⁴⁰⁸ By the 18th the eight-hour day had been implemented in a third of the city's factories.⁴⁰⁹ By the 19th there were 51 Bolshevik soviet deputies, and the soviet agreed to include up to 300 workers and soldier deputies, but exclude members of small political groups.⁴¹⁰ Workers at a military factory issued a declaration. 'We consider the establishment of the eight-hour day not only an economic victory' but 'a fact of enormous political importance in the struggle for the liberation of the working class'.⁴¹¹ Bolsheviks at Moscow Metalworks had recruited four or five more members, but they were 'poorly developed', and 'repeatedly called upon the district committee for help'. The workers' committee decided when shifts started and ended, cut the night shift to seven hours and demanded consultation about sackings.⁴¹²

In Irkutsk, 3,430 or so miles east of Petrograd, the 48-year-old Bolshevik intelligent Nikolai Rozhkov's *Golos Sibiri (Voice of Siberia)* had a circulation of about 4,000 by March, and argued for educating and organising the masses

to a higher level. News of the revolution reached the mayor of Novo-Nikolaevsk, and he resigned on the 2nd. A Committee for Social Order and Safety was established with an SR chair, and another SR and Rozhkov as deputies. Rozhkov left his newspaper in a colleague's hands and joined SRs, SDs, and others on an express train to Moscow. On the 20th Rozhkov and his wife settled there, and he attended meetings of district delegates.

They called me back to work immediately but, at the same time, they announced here is our platform, we have sufficient reason to adopt it, only local conditions prevented you from arriving to it; your views for us are something already obsolete and therefore unacceptable; you must adopt our platform. I could not work under such conditions and left.

He joined the RSDRP 'unifiers', became a leader and kept in touch with Zimmerwaldists in Siberia.⁴¹³ On the 21st the soviet introduced an eight-hour day unilaterally.⁴¹⁴ Most industrial workers worked eight hours,⁴¹⁵ or demanded overtime.⁴¹⁶ Some managers had refused,⁴¹⁷ but those at a military factory agreed.⁴¹⁸

Early that year Iosif Tarshis, a 35-year-old worker-intelligent and Old Bolshevik exiled near Krasnoyarsk in Siberia, had found his life 'unbearably dull'. Some exiles had adapted to the low level of local culture, and constant study was beyond his endurance, so he taught peasant children to read, which was illegal. He organised a co-operative, because the peasants had begun to feel the pinch, and on 9 March he received news about Petrograd.

A political exile turned peasant, who did not live in our village, rushed in and excitedly announced that a revolution had taken place in Russia. I told him that I was not in a joking mood just then; but he insisted that the wife of an exile in Pochet had been to Kansk and had witnessed a large mass meeting at which even soldiers had been present. The inhabitants were congratulating each other on their new freedom, and the houses were decorated with red flags.

Exiles sent scouts along the main roads, and one found an SR leaflet which stated that 'tsarism was overthrown and that the power was in the hands of the State government,' so everybody should 'rally around the Committee of Public Safety'. In hours the exiles produced leaflets giving the ministers' names, but were disappointed that Kerensky was the only one who claimed to be a socialist. On the 10th Tarshis borrowed money and travelled to Kansk on horseback. He arrived on the 12th and found a soviet of soldiers' deputies and two telegrams. One was about the amnesty, and the other invited him to Petrograd. The train was crowded with former political exiles and he reached Moscow on the 23rd. It had never occurred to him that SRs 'might play first fiddle' and form a bloc with Mensheviks; but it was 'quite obvious' that 'the future struggle would be, not against tsarism, but against the bourgeoisie'. He decided to settle in Moscow and agitate railway workers.⁴¹⁹ There were a few Anarcho-Syndicalists in the city, but more Anarcho-Communists. They were railway workers, printers, bakers and leatherworkers, and a federation of Anarchist groups with about 70 members used the former Merchants' Club as their headquarters.⁴²⁰ The average worker's wage had fallen to 2.1 rubles a day, and one workforce had voted by 7,000 to six to carry on striking.⁴²¹ SRs claimed 33,400 members, Mensheviks 29,400, Bolsheviks 22,700 and Mezhraintsy 9,200; and though 868 railway wagonloads of grain had arrived, the city had six days' supply of flour.⁴²²

In the central industrial region a brigadier-general had been assassinated in Penza, 480 miles from Moscow, on 1 March.⁴²³ News of the Petrograd rising reached Vyatka, over 550 miles northeast of Moscow, by the 2nd, and a soviet of workers and soldiers established co-operatives, professional unions, soldiers' committees, officers' councils, and a committee of public safety, which included representatives from the major political parties and had district and county branches.⁴²⁴ Over 61 percent of around one million workers in the region were in textile mills.⁴²⁵ Vladimir had no large plants, but was home to 25,000 troops, and on the night of the 3rd workers prevented a commander from arresting a delegation from Moscow. Tver soviet held its first meeting, and in Tula 40,000 workers at two state armaments works, who faced a garrison of almost equal size, went on strike, and 43 factories elected soviet deputies. There were 23,000 workers in the Nizhni Novgorod suburb of Sormovo, and 21,000 came out on strike. On the 12th a one-day celebration in Vladimir in support of the government consisted mainly of textile workers from 21 mills.⁴²⁶ That month delegates from 70 workers' and 36 soldiers' soviets in the region had elected a provisional bureau of 16.⁴²⁷ There had been 'rural disorders' in the region,⁴²⁸ and at the instigation of Moscow soviet a peasant conference had met near the city.⁴²⁹

Ukraine

By early March 28 of the 63 blast furnaces in the Donbas region of Ukraine were working;⁴³⁰ but almost 284,000 coal miners, including 70,000 prisoners of war, formed 90 percent of the national total,⁴³¹ and workers went on strike in Ivanovo, a town of 200,000 people.⁴³² The Bolsheviks claimed ten members,⁴³³ and when an intelligent spoke against the war in Shcherbinovka he was denounced as a German spy and sent for trial in Ekaterinoslav. The

Bolshevik Ivan Vishniakov left Ekaterinoslav for the Donbas with leaflets calling for an end to the war and for an armed rising to overthrow capitalism, but he was jailed on the way. News of the tsar's abdication appeared on a handwritten notice at Iasinovata station that evening; but when the Bolshevik Sernin argued that the real enemy was the capitalist class, and the war should be turned into class war, he was denounced as a provocateur. On the 3rd Vishniakov was freed, thanks to the intervention of a Makiivka Bolshevik. After around 2,000 workers at the New Russia factory in Iuzovka heard about the Petrograd rising, they elected a committee to organise elections for soviet deputies. Each one had to represent 1,000 workers, though works with 25 to 50 could combine to elect one, but when workers told peasants about the Petrograd events they listened eagerly, but were confused. By the 4th most of Iuzovka soviet's 400 deputies and EC of 50 were unaligned. The 12 inexperienced Bolsheviks had only recently emerged from the underground, but the intelligent, Shulem Gruzman, who had returned from exile in Siberia, impressed a mass meeting of miners in the Shcherbinovka-Gorlovka district, and they formed an organisation and elected him as chair.⁴³⁴ There were around 20,000 women workers in Ivanovo, and the 1905 veterans Matrena Razumova, Maria Nagovitsyna, Daria Sergeicheva and Elena Razorenova were elected to the soviet.⁴³⁵ In Bakhmut the period of office of soviet deputies was shorter than in Iuzovka. The workers' committee and others at the Seleznev mines asked for large shipments of literature from Petrograd. Donbas soviets disarmed the police and handed them over to the army, while two Mensheviks led a militia. The region's soviets began to form networks and industrial workers expelled managers.⁴³⁶ Soldiers soon dominated Kyiv soviet, though few were Bolsheviks.⁴³⁷ In Kyiv Ukrainian nationalist leaders had formed Tsentralno Rada (a central council).⁴³⁸

By the 10th Pokrovsk workers had established a soviet and it soon had 2,000 deputies.⁴³⁹ Soviets had also been formed in the Krivoi Rog iron ore district of the Donbas. On the 15th 138 representatives of 48 soviets attended a conference,⁴⁴⁰ in Bakhmut, and claimed to represent 187,000 workers. Mensheviks outnumbered Bolsheviks; but a majority voted for peace without annexations, recognised the leading role of Petrograd soviet, established a five-person information bureau in Bakhmut, chaired by a Bundist, emphasised the importance of a collective appeal to the government, urged the formation of workers' cooperatives and called for leaders to publish a newspaper and on workers' to recover fines. By the end of March Donbas employers had accepted the eight-hour day, except where production had fallen.⁴⁴¹ Peasant soviets had set up an EC in Bakhmut district and liaised with workers' soviets. A student sent to the Vetka factory near Iuzovka had formed a 20-member kruzhok, and persuaded them to join the Bolsheviks.⁴⁴² Donbas miners had negotiated a 50 percent rise and a minimum daily wage of 2.5 rubles, and overtime pay 50 percent higher.⁴⁴³ In the south Odesa soviet had reached an agreement with employers like that in Petrograd,⁴⁴⁴ and there had been a mutiny in the Black Sea fleet.⁴⁴⁵

The Volga region

Early in March over 47 percent of able-bodied peasants in Saratov province in the Volga region had been conscripted. Well over 30 percent of households lacked male labourers,⁴⁴⁶ and over 100,000 of the 114,250 industrial workers had come from war zones.⁴⁴⁷ At least a third of the city of Saratov's skilled workers and labourers had been drafted, and 25,000 to 75,000 refugees included Polish and Latvian workers from near the front, plus Kyiv University students.⁴⁴⁸ The city garrison included 60,000 to 70,000 troops, and the district population was between 204,000 and 300,000. The population of Tsaritsyn was over 134,000,⁴⁴⁹ including 20,000 garrison troops. And there were 9,000 in Atkarsk, two regiments in Balashov, Kuznetz, Petrovsk and Volsk, and one in Serdobsk. In spite of the previous good harvest, the price of grain had risen by 50 percent. The Saratov governor had withheld news of the Petrograd rising, but soldiers formed a provisional military committee including SRs and Bolsheviks, and arrested the governor and other prominent officials. They sent a telegram supporting the new government,⁴⁵⁰ and elected a garrison committee.⁴⁵¹ In Kineshma and elsewhere women workers agitated from mill to mill.⁴⁵²

On the 2nd Saratov newspapers published information from Petrograd. Revolutionaries visited factories and urged workers to elect soviet deputies.⁴⁵³ It soon had over 80 from 49 plants.⁴⁵⁴ One was the Old Bolshevik Mikhail Vasiliev, and the Bolshevik Vladimir Miliutin, three Mensheviks and one SR were elected to a provisional EC.⁴⁵⁵ Vasiliev was 40, had been arrested several times, and was chair of the Bolsheviks' provincial committee.⁴⁵⁶ Miliutin was 32 and had joined the Bolsheviks by 1910.⁴⁵⁷ The Bolshevik tobacco workers I. A. Galaktionov and K.I. Pletsk were also soviet deputies. The soviet called for the election of factory committees,⁴⁵⁸ a one-day general strike,⁴⁵⁹ and a demonstration next day.⁴⁶⁰ A factory workers' committee established a militia,⁴⁶¹ and formed armed detachments. In Tsaritsyn wounded soldiers persuaded the garrison to join workers from large armaments and metalworks in freeing political prisoners and burning the prison. The workers' group of the War Industries Committee formed a soviet heavily influenced by Mensheviks, and soldiers formed a separate soviet. In Balashov the Bolshevik A.L. Bankvitser appealed to workers to elect soviet deputies. Late that evening armed workers and

soldiers arrested police officials, but were suppressed. On the 4th Saratov soviet sent agitators to Serdobsk, and they arrested the deputy governor, police chief, gendarmes and leading Black Hundreds. On the 5th a provisional revolutionary committee declared it was in power in the district.⁴⁶² The soviet became a soviet of workers' and soldiers', and the commander of Kazan military district called for provincial military committees.⁴⁶³

Valerian Kuybishev had been born in Omsk in Siberia in 1888. He later studied at the Siberian Military Cadet School, joined the Bolsheviks in 1904, and entered the Military-Medical Academy in the capital in 1905. He was active across the Empire, and though he was exiled to Narym in Siberia in 1906, he helped Sverdlov to organize the Bolsheviks. In May 1912 he escaped to Omsk, but was soon imprisoned for a year, then sent to Tambov under police surveillance; but he escaped and spent 1913 and 1914 agitating in the capital, Kharkiv and Vologda.⁴⁶⁴ He was arrested in spring 1916, sentenced to five years' exile in Siberia in autumn and reached Krasnoyarsk late in February 1917. He and seven other 'politicals', including Bubnov and 15 common criminals, had their hands chained together and were marched north at 16.5 miles a day. On 6 March news of the amnesty appeared in a paper, and three hours later a soldier unlocked their cells. Kuybishev went to Samara on the Volga and was elected as chair of the Party committee and the soviet.⁴⁶⁵ In Samara province the 14-year-old peasant V.G Lysov had just left school. His father and three uncles were at the front and told him that the tsar had abdicated and 'we shall soon come home and seize all land from the rich'. Their womenfolk feared famine and begged them to come home, since fieldwork had stopped and they had sold everything they could to survive. Lysov's mother and aunt had sold their last calf for 52 rubles.⁴⁶⁶ By the 7th recuperating soldiers had formed a committee in Saratov,⁴⁶⁷ and Izhevsk workers had set up a soviet.⁴⁶⁸ By the 8th the Saratov militia included 300 to 500 armed workers,⁴⁶⁹ and the soviet EC had replaced tsarist officials.⁴⁷⁰ Soldiers, sometimes with workers, arrested police, gendarmes and garrison commanders and officers, but other soviets in the region included few SDs.⁴⁷¹ Saratov soviet urged soldiers to elect soviet deputies,⁴⁷² and by the 9th the soviet included deputies from 60 percent of the city's factories.⁴⁷³

On the 10th workers at one Saratov factory instituted an eight-hour day 'in a revolutionary manner', and the soviet sent agitators to set up others in Kvalynsk, Atkarsk, Rtischevo and Volsk.⁴⁷⁴ By the 11th the Saratov soldiers' committee included junior officers who were mainly SRs or Trudoviki. Order Number One inspired the troops to form committees at company, battery, detachment and regimental levels, and on the 12th SRs claimed 1,000 members in Saratov garrison and published *Zemlia i Volia (Land and Freedom)*. By the 14th there were company committees in most Volga garrison towns, and Petrograd soviet asked Saratov soviet to organise a regional conference. Some peasants had elected district soviets,⁴⁷⁵ arrested or removed local officials and village and district police. On the 17th Serdobsk workers' soviet met for the first time, and Saratov Mensheviks published a paper, *Proletary Povolzhin (Workers of the Volga Region)*. The soviet called for the transfer of idle private land to public organisations and put prisoners of war to work. The regional soviet conference opened with over 30 delegates from 16 urban centres, plus one from the village of Arkadak. Others came from Astrakhan, Orenburg, Penza, Samara, Uralsk and Cheliabinsk, and 41 percent were workers, two-thirds of whom were metalworkers. Five had joined the movement after 1910, 24 were SDs, nine were SRs and one was a Bundist. The delegates demanded that the government stop military offensives. They dismissed the slogans 'Down with the War' and 'War to a Victorious End', but voted for the immediate election of local authorities by a universal, direct and secret ballot. By the 29th Saratov soviet had 248 deputies in the workers' section, and the 144 in the soldiers' section were overwhelmingly from the lower ranks, including 28 Bolsheviks, 16 Mensheviks, six SRs and five Trudoviki.⁴⁷⁶ Around 62 percent of deputies had had a secondary or a higher education, and the EC included 15 elected members and nine nominated by five organisations.⁴⁷⁷ SR internationalists supported the Bolsheviks against SR and Menshevik defencists. The internationalists lost an anti-war motion by 325 votes to 57, with 20 abstentions, but refused to split from the defencists.⁴⁷⁸ The soviet EC took most decisions,⁴⁷⁹ and reached an agreement with the employers' association like that in Petrograd.⁴⁸⁰ Bolsheviks and some Mensheviks cooperated in Saratov and Tsaritsyn, and there was a soldiers' soviet in Balashov.⁴⁸¹

Pavel Lebedev had been born in Melenki in Vladimir province in 1881. He joined the RSDRP in 1902, but in 1908 he and his partner left for Geneva. In 1914 he helped to reconstitute the Vpered (Forward) group, and argued that many European socialists needed scientific education. He went to Saratov and joined the Bolsheviks.⁴⁸² On 30 March he proposed new дума elections and allocating seats according to the parties' votes.⁴⁸³ There were now soviets in most Saratov province towns,⁴⁸⁴ and Tsaritsyn's claimed to rule the city.⁴⁸⁵

That month Samara province peasants had disputed rent, demanded access to common land,⁴⁸⁶ and resolved that private property should be abolished and land communalised.⁴⁸⁷ The government had ordered the suppression of disturbances in Kazan province,⁴⁸⁸ and taken peasants who had threatened property to court.⁴⁸⁹ There had been at least 31 peasant attacks on landlord, state and church land in Saratov province. There were factory committees in Tsaritsyn, Volsk and Petrovsk;⁴⁹⁰ but in Kazan 'at least three-quarters' of Menshevik defencists were former Bolsheviks, and George Denike, a 29-year-old unaligned SD intelligent was vice-chair of the committee of public

safety and the soviet. There were 40,000 or so soldiers in and around the city, and some were soviet deputies. The Alokuzov clothing and footwear workforce had grown to 10,000, and striking women barracked Denike at a mass meeting. They demanded to see their employers' books so they could calculate how much they could hope to gain. A Bolshevik pamphlet from Petrograd advocated all power to the soviets. When *Pravda's* line changed in mid-March Denike headed a delegation to Petrograd and visited the *Pravda* offices. He knew Rozenfeld, but had 'very little idea' about Jughashvili, though by the end of the month Denike was a Menshevik.⁴⁹¹

Transcaucasia

By 1 March the SD paper *ianamedrove azri* (*contemporary opinion*) had published no news of the Petrograd events, but by the 2nd a Bolshevik conference opened in Tbilisi, and the 26 delegates claimed to represent well over 8,400 members. They elected 36 candidates for the constituent assembly elections and organised a regional militia. On the 3rd Makharadze called a meeting of the Bolsheviks in the city to establish a workers' soviet, but on the 4th the Menshevik intelligent Noe Zhordania ousted Makharadze as chair, and the 46 deputies announced that they were the soviet. The Old Bolshevik S. Khanoyan was a deputy, and the elected EC of 15 included the Menshevik-inclined RSDRP intelligent Sibilistro Jibladze and three other Mensheviks. The soviet ordered the arrest of top tsarist officials and the police chief, organised commissions for finance, supply, public safety and military matters, set up workers' patrols, called for arbitration to solve workplace disputes and banned the sale of alcohol. There were 120,000 troops in the garrison, and on the 5th a British journalist saw an army officer take off his hat and pledge loyalty to the new government. Zhordania dissuaded troops from arresting officers,⁴⁹² and SRs wanted to build the broadest possible coalition. On the 6th 52,000 workers elected 52 soviet deputies and agreed to cooperate with employers, but called for the Bolshevik Stepan Shaumian, an Armenian in his late thirties, to be chair in his absence. (He read about this later on a train from Saratov). The soviet presidium included a non-factional SD, an SR and a socialist-nationalist Dashnak.⁴⁹³ Around 500 soldiers, including ten officers, formed a soviet of soldiers' deputies, and elected an EC consisting mainly of SRs, with a Russian as chair. The Armenian mayor, a Dashnak, declared that the дума was a revolutionary organ and proposed a political amnesty, free elections and the municipalisation of the police. On the 9th the government empowered Osobyi Zakavkazskii Komitet (the Special Transcaucasian Committee, or Ozakom) to establish order in the region.⁴⁹⁴

Shaumian had arrived in Tbilisi on the 8th and a provisional Party committee was elected on the 10th. On the 14th representatives of non-industrial unions formed a soviet. The garrison, most of whom were Russians and sympathised with SRs, supported Petrograd soviet's refusal to support a war 'to a victorious conclusion'. On the 16th the soviet sent greetings to the 'revolutionary army' and urged them to guard against counter-revolutionary attempts from within and without. In Azerbaijan Baki soviet had adopted a policy of 'revolutionary defencism', and set up courts to resolve disputes between workers and employers. Most delegates at a congress of Transcaucasian soviets in Tbilisi were Georgians and they called on German and Austro-Hungarian workers to overthrow their monarchs.⁴⁹⁵ They supported the government and wanted the constituent assembly to resolve key issues, including land. Tbilisi workers' and soldiers' soviets amalgamated with the дума, major parties and other organisations. It had 59 members and the bureau of 12 included three Mensheviks. Other cities formed soviets, and Armenians and Azerbaijani-Turks formed councils and bureaus, though Socialist-Federalists called for political autonomy. After Order Number One arrived, Tbilisi soldiers' soviet formed committees of officers and men.⁴⁹⁶

On the 15th Chkheidze had telegraphed Zhordania that 'Mr Governmentson has died: inform friends and relatives,' and Zhordania told the viceroy, who left the city on the 18th,⁴⁹⁷ with a Cossack bodyguard singing *The Workers' Marseillaise* and carrying red flags. The members of Ozakom reached Georgia, and Akaki Chkhenkeli, a member of Petrograd soviet, became the government commissar on the Turkish front. Tbilisi soldiers' soviet warned that a Russian defeat would threaten freedom, so deserters would be 'punished by the full severity of the law'. On the 26th underground Dashnaks voted to support the government, and SRs shouted down SDs at the elections for soviet deputies.⁴⁹⁸ Telegrams arrived ordering the abolition of the Okhrana and the release of political prisoners, and one regiment came with its band playing *The Workers' Marseillaise*, though another announced its loyalty to the government. On a train journey from Georgia to Moscow, a British journalist saw Cossacks wearing red ribbons and singing *The Workers' Marseillaise*. They had dismissed their ataman (leader) for inciting ethnic tensions, and selected their own commanders and civil governors, though one Kuban ataman supported the government.⁴⁹⁹ The journalist saw offices of the 'Alliance of Soldiers' Deputies' at every station, and old peasants at bookstalls 'eagerly asking for news from Petrograd', especially about land. When he reached Moscow the police had been sent to the front. A cotton mill owner told him that the government had allowed railway rolling stock to

deteriorate to help the Germans win. He had cut output by 15 percent the previous year, and would soon reduce it by a further 30 percent, allegedly because there were not enough workers or fuel.⁵⁰⁰

In the first quarter of the year the production of pig-iron across the Empire had fallen by 17.6 percent compared the previous year. Factory output had fallen by an average of 40 percent and skilled workers were refusing overtime.⁵⁰¹ There had been strikes in at least 18 provinces,⁵⁰² and 27 involving around 8,530 workers challenged management authority, while around 38 percent of 41,640 had made economic demands.⁵⁰³ Wages had risen by an average of 35 percent,⁵⁰⁴ and machinists' by up to 50 percent,⁵⁰⁵ but an average of 6.6 percent of workers failed to turn up for work, including over 11 percent of metalworkers,⁵⁰⁶ though railway workers were forming a new union. Hardly any of around 100 workers' petitions to the authorities mentioned soviets, but 51 percent demanded a shorter working day and 18 percent higher pay, while 15 percent complained about hygiene and 12 percent claimed rights for workers' committees.⁵⁰⁷ There were 79 provincial committees of workers, soldiers and some intelligently, 651 at county level and about 1,000 in towns,⁵⁰⁸ and Bolsheviks claimed to lead 27 of the 242 soviets.⁵⁰⁹

What are we fighting for?

During the war the Allies had sent around 8,000 cannon, four million shells, almost 20,000 machine guns, 1.75 million rifles and 500 million cartridges to Russia; yet by March 1917 the war cost the Russian government almost 67 million rubles a day and the national debt had risen by almost two billions,⁵¹⁰ and stood at 28 billion altogether.⁵¹¹ Almost 11.8 billion paper rubles were in circulation.⁵¹²

There were 6.9 million front-line troops, and while the number of over-40s was high, their average level of fitness was low. They learned about Petrograd events from placards hoisted above German trenches, foreign broadcasts,⁵¹³ and some soviets.⁵¹⁴ There were 45 infantry and eight cavalry divisions on the northern front, 50 and 8.5 on the western front, 71 and ten on the southwestern front, 50.5 and 13 on the Romanian front and 15.5 and 11 on the Caucasian front, though around 500,000 soldiers had been discharged or deemed unfit.⁵¹⁵ Many of the rest were filthy and suffered from epidemics, including scurvy and typhus. Some had murdered officers,⁵¹⁶ and desertions averaged 200,000 to 300,000 a month.⁵¹⁷ SR and Menshevik Petrograd soviet deputies sent copies of Order Number One,⁵¹⁸ and commissars.⁵¹⁹

Jews and half-Jews tended to be literate, and formed around 40 percent NCOs, but were not promoted further. Shklovsky was sent as a commissar to the southwestern front. On the way, in Kyiv, he found no soviet, and his unit went on to army headquarters at Kamenets-Podolsk in western Ukraine. Companies were often 40-strong, barefoot and sick, while some divisions had 900 men, instead of 10,000 or more. Reinforcements rarely arrived, and those who did demoralised survivors.⁵²⁰ Ammunition was running out, and, as grain supplies slackened, soldiers mainly ate lentils.⁵²¹ On the 7th they were ordered to repeat an oath of allegiance to the government word for word.⁵²²

Botchkareva's company of 15 women were 'terribly weary' and asked 'How long shall we continue this fighting?' and 'What are we fighting for?' One returning from leave in Petrograd reported that the city was 'flaming with revolution'; but after the regimental commander read out Order Number One troops responded enthusiastically to his appeals for discipline. The Germans stopped firing, but when Botchkareva ordered a soldier to go to the firing point he refused. 'I will take no orders from a *baba*'. (A rude term for an old woman.) Officers who troops disliked disappeared, but Botchkareva believed most troops 'knew almost nothing of the various parties and factions'.⁵²³

Delegates from 104 units listened to a debate about the government and Petrograd soviet, and 87 voted for a defensive war.⁵²⁴ Officers criticised Petrograd workers for not supporting them, though anti-war sentiment was spreading in the ranks. There was some fraternisation,⁵²⁵ though they secured their defences.⁵²⁶ On the 20th some Ukrainian companies refused work details and replacing casualties.⁵²⁷ At the committee of soldiers' soviets on the western front, 26 SRs voted for socialists to enter the cabinet, though 25 SDs voted against.⁵²⁸ On the 22nd Russian troops were defeated in Ukraine.⁵²⁹ There were lower-level army committees on the western front, though up to 150,000 deserted each day. There were soldiers' committees on the northern front, and 204 delegates, who included two soldiers and one officer per regiment, attended a congress. *Izvestia* arrived irregularly, and soldiers mainly read bourgeois dailies, but delegates visited Petrograd to see if workers were producing enough munitions.⁵³⁰ On the 30th the army commander in chief ordered company committees to include one officer for every three soldiers.⁵³¹

Florence Farmborough, a British front-line nurse was a 'firm Royalist', and on the 4th she and her colleagues had been 'stupefied' that the tsar had abdicated. Newspapers were 'seized and treasured as though made of gold, read, and re-read.' Farmborough left for Moscow and noticed the discontent.

Railroads are damaged; industrial works destroyed; large factories and mills burned down; workshops and laboratories looted. Now, rumour is turning towards the military chiefs. Why are the armies at a standstill? Why are the soldiers allowed to rot in the snow-filled trenches? Why continue the stalemate war? 'Bring the men home!' 'Conclude peace!' 'Finish this interminable war once and for all!' Cries such as these penetrate to the cold and hungry soldiers in their bleak earthworks, and begin to echo among them. ... Now that food has grown scarce in Petrograd and Moscow, disorder takes the shape of riots and insurrections. We are told that mobs of the lower classes parade the streets shouting 'Peace and Bread!' They are aware that the war is at the root of their hardships.

On the 6th Farmborough returned to the front, and on the 23rd her *letuchka* (mobile medical unit) left for Trotstyanitse, between Sumy and Kharkiv in Ukraine. Few wounded arrived,⁵³² since there was a virtual truce; but at the end of the month the Germans attacked in northwestern Ukraine.⁵³³

In the Russian countryside some remote villages had not heard about the tsar's abdication until the end of March.⁵³⁴ Young peasant men, including soldiers, and some young women had replaced village elders.⁵³⁵ Officially there had been 49 cases of peasant direct action on gentry-owned estates that month,⁵³⁶ disturbances in 34 counties,⁵³⁷ and 378 'riots'.⁵³⁸ One percent of the peasants involved had been soldiers.⁵³⁹

There were 150,000 or so reserves in Petrograd, Kyiv, Helsinki and Tbilisi, up to 80,000 in Iaroslavl and Ekaterinoslav, 60,000 in Ekaterinburg, and 30,000 to 50,000 in other cities. In Saratov, Samara, Tambov, Omsk and many other soviets, soldiers had an overwhelmingly majority, and won control 'wholly without struggle';⁵⁴⁰ but though there was little international support, there was some movement in Germany.

The Independent Social-Democratic Party of Germany

By March (according to the western calendar) over 300 neutral vessels had entered the ports of Germany's neighbours, though the US government embargoed most exports to Scandinavia, Holland and Switzerland,⁵⁴¹ and many German citizens were desperately short of food.⁵⁴² On the 2nd military leaders promised that troops would not shoot if the Russians did not attack;⁵⁴³ yet Germans wiped out a Russian corps in northwest Ukraine.⁵⁴⁴

The number of women industrial workers had risen from around 9.5 million in 1914 to 15 million, and almost four million male workers were members of social insurance schemes.⁵⁴⁵ Since January there had been strikes for higher wages and better conditions in the Ruhr, Berlin,⁵⁴⁶ Nuremberg, Magdeburg, Hamburg, Bremen and elsewhere. The head of the Berlin police reported that 'nearly all the trade-union activists in the metalworkers' union who can be regarded as setting the opinion in the factories are political members of the opposition', and mainly of the Spartakusbund, whose slogan was 'End the War by Strikes!' They had distributed a leaflet about the Russian revolution. 'Take your own destiny in Hand! Power will be yours if you are united!' The SPD Vorstand welcomed the Russian revolution and expressed solidarity with the soviet's policy of peace without annexations and indemnities, and the free development of all peoples. A speaker at a Bremen SPD meeting argued for a struggle against social-patriots and centrists, though oppositionists would 'not be able for the foreseeable future to construct a party capable of acting'. Some SPD members in Hamburg also wanted an independent revolutionary party,⁵⁴⁷ as did others in Rüstingen.⁵⁴⁸ On the 7th the founding congress of Unabhängige Sozialdemokratische Partei Deutschlands (the Independent Social-Democratic Party of Germany, or USPD), opened in Gotha.⁵⁴⁹ The delegates included 42 Reichstag deputies,⁵⁵⁰ skilled metalworkers, revolutionary shop stewards,⁵⁵¹ other revolutionaries and a few intellectuals, and they adopted the Erfurt Program. They gave the EC a consultative voice without the power to appoint local or regional secretaries, who would be paid by local organisations. The EC was barred from controlling party enterprises, including newspapers, and had to consult representatives of all the regional organisations about 'major political matters',⁵⁵² before important decisions were taken.⁵⁵³ The congress demanded peace without annexations, the end of censorship and conscripted labour, freeing political prisoners, lifting the state of siege and universal suffrage. The USPD strongholds were Berlin, Leipzig, Frankfurt am Main, Brunswick, Halle and Erfurt.⁵⁵⁴ A Spartakusbund member announced that they based their policy on Luxemburg's *Juniüsbrochure*,⁵⁵⁵ and their members joined the USPD with reservations, as did moderate socialist intellectuals like Bernstein and Kautsky,⁵⁵⁶ who argued that the use of force to further industrial development in Russia was doomed to failure. It would cause dislocation and be a barrier to the self-determination of the proletariat and lead to civil war, while the transition to socialism required peace and security.⁵⁵⁷ The Mehrheits (Majority) SDP claimed 170,000 members, and the USPD 120,000, but in Berlin the figures were 12,000 and 14,000 respectively. Another account gave a national of 248,000 in the MSPD and 10,000 in the USPD. On the 10th USPD members in Bremen acknowledged that they were a 'small army', but were 'the nucleus of the future radical party of the Left'.⁵⁵⁸ The

kaiser promised that the three-class electoral system would be abolished in Prussia, and the Bundesrat, which represented all 16 Länder (states), would be reformed after the war.⁵⁵⁹

Clara Zetkin had joined the USPD.⁵⁶⁰ On the 13th Luxemburg wrote to tell her that she regarded Russian events as 'a small overture', though it was 'bound to develop into something colossal' and 'an echo throughout the world is inevitable'. She had subscribed to *Die Gleichheit*, but only two copies had arrived, and she had not renewed her subscription; though she received two copies of *Vorwärts*, when one was 'bad enough'.⁵⁶¹ She argued in *Spartakusbrieife* that German troops were stabbing the Russian revolution in the back.⁵⁶²

The government appealed for workers to accept restrictive measures. When women at a demonstration outside Leipzig town hall demanded bread, the police arrested 16. On the 14th over 500 workers converged on the town hall, demanded an improved supply of food and were promised that measures would be taken. In Berlin a metalworkers' union meeting had intended to discuss a strike for better food, but officials were complicit in the arrest of Richard Müller, a leader of the revolutionaries, and members heard about this on the 15th. The government announced that the weekly civilian bread ration would be reduced from three pounds to one, yet when right-wing union members proposed to strike on the 16th, the MSPD's *Vorwärts* did not condemn them. By the 16th 200,000 to 300,000 workers from 300 factories were on strike,⁵⁶³ and USPD and radical Reichstag deputies demanded universal suffrage on the 17th.⁵⁶⁴

At Wilhelmshaven young SD sailors, stokers and petty-officers met in the boiler room or munitions store of a cruiser. The stoker Willy Sachse and the sailor Max Reichspietsch read out pamphlets by Marx and Bebel and circulated the Erfurt Program. When they learned that canteen committees to supervise food would include sailors, they contacted other warship crews, and began building Liga der Soldaten und Matrosen (the League of Soldiers and Sailors). In weeks it had links to soldiers.⁵⁶⁵

26 addresses

Early in January 1917 (according to the western calendar), there were over 200 mainly Russian political émigrés in Zurich.⁵⁶⁶ Vladimir Ulyanov, the 46-year-old émigré intelligent, Bolshevik leader and RSDRP CC member, and Nadezhda Krupskaya, the 47-year-old Bolshevik intelligentka, lived at 14 Spiegelgasse. Their second-floor sitting-room cost 28 francs a month,⁵⁶⁷ Krupskaya suffered from chronic thyroid problems and bronchitis, but did all the chores. She shared a kitchen with the landlady, Frau Kammerer, though lunch was often scorched. Nobody arrived from Russia with news.⁵⁶⁸ Krupskaya had 'ties' with over 300 Russian prisoners of war in Allied camps,⁵⁶⁹ but 26 addresses of Bolsheviks in Russia. Only three were outside Petrograd, Moscow and Siberia, and only ten of the 26 were active.⁵⁷⁰ Ulyanov was pessimistic about a revolution in his lifetime,⁵⁷¹ and his bank account held five francs and five centimes;⁵⁷² but 808 francs arrived from a sister on 1 February.⁵⁷³

Sophia Ravich had been born in Kharkiv in 1879. She became an intelligentka, joined the RSDRP in 1903, worked in Kharkiv and the capital, then went to Switzerland and joined the Bolsheviks.⁵⁷⁴ By February 1917 she and a few others at La Chaux-de-Fonds were prepared to go to Russia via Germany.⁵⁷⁵ Ulyanov told her that the Sozialdemokratische Partei der Schweiz (the Social-Democratic Party of Switzerland, or SDPS) was 'riddled with opportunism'. It was 'nothing more than a charitable institution for petit-bourgeois clerks', and he was contemptuous about Robert Grimm and Fritz Platten.⁵⁷⁶ On the 19th Ulyanov had received an 'extremely gratifying' letter from Moscow and told the 42-year-old Bolshevik intelligentka Inessa Armand in Baugy sur Clarens about it.

They write that the mood of the masses is a good one, that chauvinism is clearly declining and that probably our day will come. The organisation, they say, is suffering from the fact that the adults are at the front, while in the factories there are young people and women. But the fighting spirit, they say, is not any the less. They send us the copy of a leaflet (a good one) issued by the Moscow Bureau of the Central Committee. We shall print it in the next issue of the Central Organ.⁵⁷⁷

He invited her to Zurich, since he was thinking about 'turning over the *Party funds*' to be kept '*on your person*, sewed up in a special little bag'.⁵⁷⁸ 'We are making arrangements via Scandinavia'.⁵⁷⁹ On the 23rd *Sotsial-Democrat* argued that it was impossible to predict accurately when a revolution might occur.⁵⁸⁰

On 6 March Ulyanov telegraphed Petrograd Bolshevik leaders via Stockholm about his 'absolute lack of confidence' in the new government.⁵⁸¹ Krupskaya wrote to the Bolshevik Kasparov in Switzerland that 'an old friend, an experience person', was optimistic about the mood of workers and educated young people in Petrograd, though the level of the organisation was poor since 'all the adults are either at the front or subject to call-up', and the 'influx of women and adolescents into the workforce is lowering organisational capacity'. The Petrograd CC bureau had sent a 'fine' leaflet, and organisations in the Volga region and the south were 'functioning quite well', but he

would 'have to get to Russia right away or else you won't get in on "the beginning"'.⁵⁸² What happened next is partly based on speculation by western historians.

Vatslav Vorovsky had been born into the family of a Russified Polish nobleman and engineer in Moscow in 1871, though his father soon died. Vatslav attended a secondary school, then Moscow University in 1890, where he led a *kruzhok* of revolutionary Polish students. In 1894 he contacted workers' *kruzhki*, but in 1897 he was taken to Taganka Prison, then banished to Vyatka for three years in 1898, but wrote articles for an SD literary review published in Perm in Siberia. In 1899 he was deported to Orlov in Vologda province, under surveillance, but joined an RSDRP *kruzhok* in autumn. In 1901 he escaped to Geneva, joined the Bolsheviks in 1903 and became an editor of *Vpered*. In 1905 he returned to Russia, joined the Bolshevik 'centre' and edited papers and periodicals. In 1907 he was deported to Vyatka province for three years, but escaped by 1909 and joined the Odesa committee. He was arrested in 1910, but he was active in the elections for the Fourth Duma by 1912. He was deported to Vologda, but was in Petrograd in 1915,⁵⁸³ and worked as an engineer.⁵⁸⁴ Early in 1916 the firm sent him to Stockholm and he contacted Jakob Fürstenberg.⁵⁸⁵ He had been born into a brewer's family of German-Jewish descent in Warszawa in 1879. In 1896 he joined the SDKP, moved to Germany in 1901, and studied at universities in Berlin, Heidelberg, and Zurich. By 1902 he was a professional revolutionary based in Kraków in Austrian-controlled Poland, where he organised the transport of illegal literature to Russia. In 1903 he was one of the SDKPiL's two delegates at the RSDRP's second congress, and became an alternate (non-voting reserve) member of the CC. He was arrested several times, but escaped. In 1915 he settled in Copenhagen and formed a wholesale import/export company. Half the start-up capital was provided by Georg Sklarz, a German agent, and the other half by the wealthy one-time Russian revolutionary Alexandr Helphand.⁵⁸⁶ (He had been born in 1867, but settled in Germany in 1906.⁵⁸⁷) In January 1917 Fürstenberg was charged with exporting goods from Denmark to Sweden without a licence, fined heavily, and put on a ferry to Stockholm, but he re-established his wholesale business. After the February revolution he offered to help émigré Russian revolutionaries return,⁵⁸⁸ and after Ulyanov asked him for money he sent 500 rubles.⁵⁸⁹ The German government wanted the 'extremist revolutionary movement' in Russia to 'create the greatest possible' 'chaos'.⁵⁹⁰ It authorised payment for 'peace propaganda',⁵⁹¹ and ordered the minister in Bern to offer political émigrés a passage to Russia through Germany.⁵⁹²

Mieczysław Broński had been born into the family of a Łódź cotton mill owner in Poland in 1882. He graduated from a secondary school in 1900 and studied at the Technical University of Munich. He joined the SDKPiL in 1902, and by 1905 he had moved to Warszawa and joined the city committee as a propagandist. In 1906 he edited the SDKPiL newspaper, *Czerwony Sztandar (Red Flag)*, but was arrested in Lublin in autumn, and was in prison until the end of 1907. After his release he went to Switzerland, and after the SDKPiL split in 1911 he joined the left faction. In 1915 he was a founder of the Zimmerwald movement and a delegate to its Kienthal conference in 1916, where he supported the Bolsheviks. By 1917 he lived in Zurich, and in mid-March he brought Ulyanov and Krupskaya news of the Petrograd rising.⁵⁹³ Ulyanov insisted on a break with Zimmerwald and a return to Russia,⁵⁹⁴ but feared 'we shan't be able to leave this cursed Switzerland'.⁵⁹⁵ He told Armand he had 'practically completed' an article on 'Marxism and the state' and wanted to publish it and the 3rd and 4th issues of *Sbornik Sotsial-Democrata (the Social-Democratic Review)*, but had no money.⁵⁹⁶ He summoned the other émigré RSDRP CC member and Bolshevik, 33-year old Hirsch Apfelbaum, to Zurich,⁵⁹⁷ and they completed theses about the situation in Russia.⁵⁹⁸

Karl Sobelsohn had been born into a Lithuanian Jewish family in 1885. By 1917 he lived in Switzerland and was a left Zimmerwaldist.⁵⁹⁹ Helphand assured him and Fürstenberg that the German government would give substantial financial aid to the émigré RSDRP CC. The money went via Fürstenberg, who deposited it in a Stockholm bank, then transferred it to Mrs Sumerson's account,⁶⁰⁰ at the Siberian Bank in Petrograd.⁶⁰¹ Sobelsohn went to Basel to meet Paul Levi, a member of the Zimmerwald bureau, then returned to Bern. Sobelsohn persuaded the Swiss correspondent of the *Frankfurter Zeitung* to find out what the German government thought about Russian political émigrés returning to Russia via Germany. They responded positively, and Grimm and Platten negotiated the details. Ulyanov told Armand that after a year of mutual recriminations he and Sobelsohn were now 'the closest friends', since he had contacts with the German Left. Ulyanov suggested that Sobelsohn attack Grimm's defencism, challenge his right to call himself a socialist and get the SDPS to repudiate him.⁶⁰² Ulyanov met the German minister and members of the Zimmerwald Left in Bern, and the young USPD member Willi Münzenberg in Olten,⁶⁰³ and argued that a Russian revolution was approaching.⁶⁰⁴ Grimm asked the Swiss foreign minister about the terms the German government would accept for peace, but Russian newspapers denounced him as a German agent, and there was a campaign of slander against Zimmerwaldists.⁶⁰⁵ Ulyanov telegraphed Petrograd comrades via Stockholm. 'Our tactic; absolute lack of confidence in and no support to the government', 'suspect Kerensky especially', and no cooperation with other parties. Arming the proletariat was the sole guarantee of success, plus immediate elections to the Duma.⁶⁰⁶

In Switzerland Mikha Tskhakaya, the 51-year-old émigré Georgian and Old Bolshevik, had his bags packed, and Ulyanov invited him to Bern.⁶⁰⁷ Ulyanov was ready to travel to Russia without the approval of the government, though others were not.⁶⁰⁸ He read bits of the Russian CC's manifesto in German newspapers, and agreed that 'the indispensable thing for peace is relations with proletarians of all the belligerent countries'.⁶⁰⁹ Krupskaya wrote to a comrade in a tuberculosis sanatorium in Davos. 'It is hard to make sense today because of the telegrams have excited all the Russians here: about the victory of the Revolution in Russia.'⁶¹⁰ Helphand met the German envoy in Copenhagen and proposed mobilising Russian socialists against the government, arming workers, indicting the tsar, proclaiming a republic, confiscating the Imperial family's land, partitioning other large landholdings, convoking a constituent assembly, granting an eight-hour day for industrial workers and declaring peace. He contacted a Bavarian socialist who had access to the German government. The Swiss foreign minister told the German minister in Bern that 'outstanding Russian revolutionaries desire to return to Russia via Germany since they are afraid to go through France', and did not want to risk a British submarine attack in the North Sea.⁶¹¹ Helphand wrote in his *Die Glocke (The Bell)* that Germany 'must offer democratic Russia a helping hand for the achievement of peace' and cooperation in 'social and cultural' matters.⁶¹² The German minister in Copenhagen told the foreign ministry that Helphand had told him that Russian troops wanted peace and recommended working with émigré socialists, and the foreign ministry told the army General Staff that it favoured allowing Russian revolutionaries to return via Germany in a special train with a reliable escort. The German minister in Bern reported that a 'reliable source' had told him that 'socialist and nihilist committees' in Bern, Zurich and Geneva had asked German newspaper reporters to campaign against a military offensive. The political section of the General Staff suggested that 300 to 400 Russian émigrés, including about 40 Bolsheviks, should be allowed to travel to Russia via Germany, and the minister in Bern assured the foreign ministry that they 'would work for the release' of German prisoners of war in Russia.⁶¹³

Alexandr Kesküla had been born in Livonia in the Baltic region in 1882. He later studied politics and economics in the universities of Tartu, Berlin, Zürich, Leipzig and Bern. By 1905 he was a Bolshevik, and reportedly worked with the Japanese agent Motojiro Akashi. By 1913 Kesküla was an Estonian nationalist, and in 1914-1915 he told the German government about what he knew of Ulyanov's plans to return to Russia. Kesküla may have passed on 200,000, or even 500,000 German marks to Ulyanov in a series of small secret donations.⁶¹⁴

By April Ulyanov knew of ten other Russian émigrés who wanted to return via Germany, and he telegraphed Fürstenberg to earmark 10,000 kronen.⁶¹⁵ He told the police that he and Krupskaya were leaving and asked for the return of their deposit of 100 Swiss francs.⁶¹⁶ The German minister in Copenhagen reported to the foreign ministry that they could not 'break the power of the Russians by military action', but there was a way in which they could 'count on the disintegration' of Russia 'in three months'. He asked the State Secretary to meet Helphand when he arrived in Berlin, since he could influence SDs in Germany, Austria and Scandinavia.⁶¹⁷ The German treasury gave the foreign ministry five million marks for 'political purposes', and Helphand told Ulyanov that transit across Germany for him and Apfelbaum was assured.⁶¹⁸ The German minister in Bern reported to the foreign ministry that they sought passage for 20 to 60 'at the most'. They wanted extra-territorial rights in transit, and agreed that Platten and a German officer could travel with them to the German border, then take them across one by one. The German minister's undersecretary confirmed that no passport formalities would be observed.⁶¹⁹ The émigrés would travel on a scheduled train to the border and board a German train on the other side.⁶²⁰ Nobody would enter it without Platten's permission, and there would be no inspection of baggage.⁶²¹ Platten negotiated with the German minister in Bern,⁶²² who understood that about 20 were ready to leave. They could take three baskets of luggage, though they wanted to travel third class, since many could not afford a higher fare, and the State Secretary asked the minister in Stockholm to make arrangements with the Swedish government 'in confidence'.⁶²³

The 38-year-old intelligentka Anzhelika Balabanov, a Left Zimmerwaldist, was in Switzerland, and had contacts in Germany and Sweden.⁶²⁴ A French intelligence agent reported that she, a Swiss socialist, the editor of the French SD journal *Demain (Tomorrow)* and Ulyanov had discussed the journey to Russia with a member of the German embassy at a Bern restaurant.⁶²⁵ Sobelsohn declared himself an unshakable supporter of the émigré RSDRP CC, and put himself at their disposal, though Ulyanov insisted that they 'had to break with Zimmerwald'.⁶²⁶ Ulyanov received over 1,000 Swiss francs and sent 200 to an unknown comrade.⁶²⁷ He left his papers with Vyacheslav Karpinsky,⁶²⁸ the 37-year-old intelligent and Bolshevik archivist and librarian who had previously worked on *Sotsial-Demokrat*.⁶²⁹

Zlata Lilina had been born into a poor Jewish family in a Vilnius province town in 1882. She received a primary education at home, then attended a secondary school in Mitave. By 1902 she was a schoolteacher. She joined the RSDRP in 1903, and left for Bern, but returned by 1905 and was active in the revolution. In 1908 she returned to Switzerland, worked on *Pravda and Zvezda* and married Apfelbaum in 1912, and from 1914 to 1917 she was the RSDRP émigrés' secretary in Bern.⁶³⁰ Ulyanov and Krupskaya went to Bern,⁶³¹ and met Apfelbaum and seven other émigrés at the Volkshaus (People's House) to confirm the conditions under which they would return to Russia. Armand translated the terms into French and German, and copies were sent to émigrés in the main Swiss cities.⁶³²

Ulyanov asked her if any émigrés in Baugy sur Clarens would give up their passports without knowing who they were for,⁶³³ and sent her 100 francs. There was 'more money for the journey', thanks to comrades in Stockholm.⁶³⁴

On 8 April those willing to travel met in the Bern Volkshaus. They included Ulyanov, Krupskaya, Armand, Apfelbaum, Ravich and their son, Sobelsohn,⁶³⁵ Fyodor Linde,⁶³⁶ and Moisei Kharitonov.⁶³⁷ Kharitonov had been born in 1887. He joined the RSDRP in southern Russia in 1905,⁶³⁸ and the Bolsheviks in Switzerland in 1912.⁶³⁹ Altogether there were 19 Bolsheviks and six Bundists,⁶⁴⁰ and ten of the 32 were women.⁶⁴¹ They agreed that Platten would lead them,⁶⁴² and signed a declaration that they wanted to contribute to 'an uprising of the proletariat in other countries', especially Germany and Austria.⁶⁴³

On the 9th, in a farewell letter to Swiss workers, Ulyanov acknowledged that Russia was a peasant country and the proletariat was 'less organised, prepared and conscious than the workers of other countries', but 'historical conditions' had 'developed in a special way'. Socialism could not 'triumph there directly and immediately', and a revolution could not create a world-wide revolution, but it 'would, in a certain sense, start it', so the Russian '*proletariat for a certain and perhaps very brief time*' might be 'the pioneer of the revolutionary proletariat of the whole world'. The immediate task was to secure soviet 'control of production and distribution of commodities'.⁶⁴⁴ Then the émigrés set off for the station,⁶⁴⁵ where about 100 other émigrés who were not joining them shouted 'Provocateurs! Spies! Pigs! Traitors!' The train left at 3.10pm. Platten had agreed that they would not leave the train or speak to anyone on the way, and distributed numbered papers in lieu of passports. Swiss customs officials waved them through the border without formalities, and on the other side the German train consisted of a carriage with three 2nd class and five 3rd class compartments, and a baggage wagon. Two German officers in the end 3rd class compartment drew a chalk line on the floor which only Platten could cross,⁶⁴⁶ and the external doors were locked, except for their compartment.⁶⁴⁷ The single male émigrés occupied 3rd class compartments with wooden seats, while married couples and children occupied 2nd class compartments.⁶⁴⁸ There was no sleeping car so they slept on their seats, and there was no dining car,⁶⁴⁹ but the German officers gave out beer and sandwiches.⁶⁵⁰

They missed their connection in Berlin, so the train was shunted into a siding and the émigrés slept in a locked room.⁶⁵¹ After they left they noted the absence of young men in the countryside. When they reached Sassnitz on the Jasmund peninsula they boarded a ferry to Sweden. Fürstenberg met them at Trelleborg, where they took a train to Malmö, then a night train to Stockholm. Ulyanov had decided that Russia could leap over from a bourgeois to a socialist revolution, if all power was vested in Petrograd soviet linked to soviets across the country. Sobelsohn edited *Russische Korrespondenz 'Pravda'* (the '*Pravda*' Russian Bulletin), which was mostly extracts from Petrograd and Moscow papers and statements from the émigré CC. On the train Ulyanov and Apfelbaum met Sobelsohn and Fürstenberg privately,⁶⁵² and asked them to represent the Bolshevik bureau in Sweden.⁶⁵³ Petrograd Bolshevik leaders telegraphed Fürstenberg that 'Lenin must come immediately', but 'Avoid all risk',⁶⁵⁴ and the émigrés set off for Finland on sledges.⁶⁵⁵ At Tornio on the border British and French officers made them undress for inspection, but let them through, and Ulyanov telegraphed his sister Ulyanova in Petrograd that they would arrive at 11.00pm on 3 April (according to the Russian calendar).⁶⁵⁶

4. All power to the soviets

Wandering in the dark

By April the Petrograd Bolsheviks claimed 15,000 members, or around 18 percent of the national total.¹ Almost all the newcomers were workers, and no more than 200 were Old Bolshevik,² aged between 30 and the mid-40s. Elena Rozmirovich had returned to from Siberia, and her sister, Konkordia Samoilova, had arrived from Moscow.³ Kalinin argued for supporting the government, and cooperating with the Mensheviks, and was against an armed rising.⁴ Ludmila Stahl, who joined the RSDRP in 1897 and the Bolsheviks in 1905,⁵ arrived after 11 years abroad.⁶ 'We knew only the formulas of 1905 and 'many comrades were wandering in the dark'.⁷

On the 2nd Vyborg Bolsheviks readied posters and streamers announcing 'Lenin arrives today', agitators in Narva district also announced his arrival, and Kronstadt sailors decided to mount a guard of honour with a band.⁸ On the 3rd *Pravda* published one of the émigré CC's letters,⁹ without the characterisation of Mensheviks as 'traitors'.¹⁰ Ulyanova, Rozenfeld, Stahl,¹¹ Kollontai and Shlyapnikov travelled to Beloostrov, near the border with Finland, to meet the émigrés' train,¹² and Ulyanov tackled Rozenfeld about *Pravda*. Late that night the émigrés' train arrived at Petrograd's Finland Station.¹³ Soviet leaders met them,¹⁴ Churugin presented Ulyanov with a Party card,¹⁵ and Roshal led the Kronstadt sailors.¹⁶ Red banners bore slogans including 'Long Live the Revolution!', 'Down with the War!', 'Long Live the 8-Hour day!' and 'Land to the Peasants!'¹⁷ Ulyanov mounted an armoured car,¹⁸ and argued that the immediate task was to control the production and distribution of goods,¹⁹ and raised the slogan of 'all power to the soviets'.²⁰ Stahl urged Krupskaya to speak to women workers, but 'words utterly failed' her.²¹ Woytinsky rode with Ulyanov to the Smolny, and thought that his perspective 'utterly unrealistic'.²² The Bolshevik headquarters was at the Smolny Institute, a former school for daughters of the nobility in Rozhdestvensky district, was at the end of a tram line.²³ It was well over a mile from the city centre,²⁴ and had 100 huge rooms.²⁵ After Ulyanov told leading Bolsheviks that they lacked discipline and unity of thought, they were 'stunned into silence'.²⁶ That night Ulyanov and Krupskaya stayed with Elizarova in Shirokaya Street. The flat was guarded around the clock by 15 Old Parviainen metalworkers, though none were Bolsheviks.²⁷

At dawn on the 4th Ulyanov sang the *Internationale*, *Warzavianka*, *The Workers' Marseillaise* and Ivan Krylov's *Muzykanty (Musicians)*,²⁸ whose chorus praised 'a light machine-gun instead of drums'.²⁹ The *Pravda* editors rejected a pessimistic article by Gorky,³⁰ but published the émigrés' reasons for travelling through Germany,³¹ and supported the government conditionally.³² Delegates at an All-Russian Party conference claimed that they represented 58 organisations. Jughashvili's proposal that the bourgeois phase of the revolution would last some time, and won almost universal approval; but while 71 voted for nationalising land, 39 were against and eight abstained.³³ Some wanted a war against exploiters, and saw the soviet as the precursor of 'revolutionary power', but suggested no practical steps.³⁴ Most Bolshevik committee members wanted to merge with the Mensheviks,³⁵ though Shlyapnikov and Skryabin were against,³⁶ as was Viktor Nogin, a 39-year-old Old Bolshevik from Moscow. (He had joined the RSDRP in 1898 and the Bolsheviks in 1903.)³⁷ Others from Moscow agreed. A proposal for a separate Bolshevik platform was defeated,³⁸ though that for a joint conference passed by one vote.³⁹ Ulyanov argued for all power to the soviets, a soviet republic which controlled the production and distribution of all goods, abolition of the police, confiscation of landlords' estates and fraternisation at the front. He repudiated 'revolutionary defencism';⁴⁰ and as long as Bolsheviks were a minority they should patiently explain their policies.⁴¹ Most of the 200 or so delegates were speechless;⁴² but a former Bolshevik accused him of being an Anarchist.⁴³ Ulyanov attended a meeting of Bolshevik soviet deputies, who had formed a 'fraction' in the EC.⁴⁴

The output of Petrograd metalworks had fallen by 20 to 40 percent,⁴⁵ but that was 22 percent of national output,⁴⁶ and a factory committee conference had demanded the power to examine accounts and correspondence and have a say in hiring managers.⁴⁷ Leonid Krasin, a 46-year-old one-time leading Bolshevik intelligent, managed the Putilov works,⁴⁸ and supported a merger of the RSDRP factions.⁴⁹ He had not expected the revolution, but had transferred funds from industry to academia for research with practical applications and helped to set up a commission to inspect, value, catalogue and preserve items of artistic and historical merit. Avel Enukidze, a 39-year-old peasant-born intelligent and Old Bolshevik, had been sent to the front in February 1917,⁵⁰ but was in Petrograd early in April, and hoped that Krasin and Ulyanov would cooperate. He arranged two meetings; but Krasin refused.⁵¹ If 'the working class behaves like sons of bitches, we Social Democrats should be the first to say so'.⁵²

By the 5th many workers had an eight-hour day, but others burst into an employers' meeting brandishing revolvers, and they conceded.⁵³ An admiral's son organised a meeting of wealthy businessmen, a banker, and the

editor of *Novoe Vremya* (*New Times*), and they told industrialists and bankers their decisions.⁵⁴ Alexei Putilov had founded a 'Union for the Economic Revival of Russia' and had raised four million rubles to support Kornilov.⁵⁵

On the 6th *Pravda* announced that Ulyanov had joined the editorial board.⁵⁶ The revised 'April Theses', as they became known,⁵⁷ bore only his signature,⁵⁸ since Apfelbaum found them 'perplexing'.⁵⁹ The RSDRP bureau rejected them by 13 votes to two, with one abstention, and Rozenfeld and Jughashvili spoke against them at the Bolshevik CC.⁶⁰ Shlyapnikov was against seizing power immediately, since he believed that more preparation was needed.⁶¹

On the 7th more April theses appeared in *Pravda*. They did not include a proposal for a people's militia,⁶² but stressed the importance of soviets of agricultural labourers, the need to abolish the police, army and bureaucracy, the merger of banks, the immediate convocation of a Party congress, changing the line on imperialism and the state, altering the Party name to 'Communist', and founding a Third International; but they did not mention turning the imperialist war into a civil war.⁶³ The Bolshevik military committee claimed the support of around 500 of the 160,000-strong garrison,⁶⁴ though recruitment was hampered by the lack of experienced agitators and rumours about the émigrés return;⁶⁵ but the Finland Regiment marched to Mariinsky Palace with red banners denouncing the government.⁶⁶ The soviet sanctioned the émigrés' trip through Germany,⁶⁷ but appealed to people to buy the government's 'liberty bonds'.⁶⁸

On the 8th Rozenfeld wrote in *Pravda* that 'any assumption that the bourgeois-democratic revolution is completed and subject to the immediate transformation into a socialist revolution' was unacceptable.⁶⁹ Rozhkov argued in *Vypred* that a socialist revolution was 'almost inevitable', but would be fully realisable only on an international scale, and he favoured supporting the government as long as it moved towards 'civilised capitalism'.⁷⁰ The soviet EC decided that local soviets could send delegates to a national congress, two each from those representing 25,000 to 50,000 workers, and one extra for every 25,000 up to 200,000, while those with fewer could combine to send one. Ten more deputies, including six from army organisations, joined the EC.⁷¹ Ulyanov took two hours to explain his theses at the RSDRP CC.⁷² He argued that peasants should not wait for the constituent assembly and that it was necessary to nationalise land immediately.⁷³ On the 9th demonstrators' slogans included 'Feed the Children' and 'Better Rations for Soldiers'.⁷⁴ Apfelbaum, Rozenfeld and Ulyanov attended a Menshevik meeting, and offered them a seat on the editorial board of *Pravda*,⁷⁵ and Ulyanov addressed the Izmailovsky Regiment;⁷⁶ but the admiral's son resigned his lucrative post in the oil industry to become Kornilov's orderly.⁷⁷

Konstantin Mekhonoshin had been born in rural Perm province in 1889,⁷⁸ into the family of factory school teachers. In 1909 he went to the capital and entered the University, but was twice expelled for revolutionary activity. He joined the RSDRP in 1913 and a reserve battalion in 1915. After the February 1917 revolution he became a soviet deputy and joined the Bolshevik committee. By early April he was a leader of the military organization,⁷⁹ and recruited Red Guards.⁸⁰ By the 10th Skorokhod shoe workers had decided to recruit 1,000, and asked the soviet for 500 rifles and 500 revolvers, though the government took away the right of soldiers' committees to remove commanders or interfere with battle orders, and officers were empowered to use force on insubordinate troops.⁸¹

On the 11th a soviet congress attracted 570 delegates who claimed to represent 337,000 workers in 236 factories,⁸² and had been elected on the basis of one worker for one soldier. They were mostly from the capital, though 138 soviets were represented, with 47 other organisations,⁸³ including military committees who claimed to represent seven armies, 26 front-line units and 13 rear units. Rozenfeld's proposal to transform the revolution into an 'uprising of the peoples of all the warring countries against the war and imperialism' won 57 votes, though a defencist motion received 325, and 20 abstained;⁸⁴ yet a huge majority voted for a Bolshevik motion demanding workers' control of industry.⁸⁵ At the soviet EC Kollontai, Ulyanov and Apfelbaum argued against supporting the 'liberty loan';⁸⁶ but delegates agreed to do so by 33 votes to 16,⁸⁷ and it passed by 2,000 to 123 at the full soviet.⁸⁸ Around 15,000 soldiers' wives demanded a rise in allowances and an end to the war.⁸⁹ At Pipe Works 2,600 of almost 19,000 workers were indignant at bourgeois newspapers' attempts to divide workers and soldiers.⁹⁰ By the 13th Pipe Works managers had sacked 120 workers, allegedly because of the lack of orders, copper and fuel, but the workers' committee found enough raw material.⁹¹ Ulyanov spoke to more regiments and factory workforces.⁹² Jughashvili had moved closer to his theses, but did not support turning the imperialist war into a civil war, or the 'dictatorship of the proletariat', and wanted land transferred to peasants without conditions.⁹³ By the 14th Skorokhod workers had voted against an annexationist war and demanded that the government publish the secret treaties and propose peace terms.⁹⁴ The Putilov workers' committee included six Bolsheviks, two SRs, plus one Menshevik internationalist, one Anarchist and six who were unaligned.⁹⁵ The 90 members of the soviet EC elected commissions, co-opted experts and engaged clerks and typists.⁹⁶ The Bolshevik Kharitonov was a member a district committee and the city committee,⁹⁷ and delegates at a conference of Bolshevik workers accepted the 'April theses' by 37 votes to four,⁹⁸ and opposed the government with six votes against.⁹⁹ Around 2,500 Old Parviainen metalworkers demanded its removal, publication of the secret treaties, requisitioning of food for the 'broad masses', fixed prices for consumer goods and the seizure of monastery and Imperial family land by peasant

committees.¹⁰⁰ Naumov complained: 'The masses do not understand our calls to end the war.' 'Those who ask: Does it mean sticking our bayonets into the grounds? – are right.' They had to 'clarify it for the masses and ourselves.'¹⁰¹ By the 15th the minimum average daily wage for was four rubles for women workers and five for men, but over 10 for skilled workers,¹⁰² and workers had raised 65,000 rubles for a Bolshevik press.¹⁰³

The most radical soldiers' committees were on the northern and western fronts, while SRs were influential on the southwestern, Romanian and Caucasian fronts, and there was some fraternisation.¹⁰⁴ Soldiers had sent 3,000 agitators to establish peasant soviets.¹⁰⁵ On the 16th the army chief of staff reported that 'Defeatist literature' had 'built itself a firm nest in the army',¹⁰⁶ and desertions were 'unabated'.¹⁰⁷ In Petrograd Reno metalworkers demanded the formation of a Red Guard and arming 'the whole people'.¹⁰⁸ Workers' militias elected three Mensheviks and two Bolsheviks to draw up a constitution for a city-wide organisation,¹⁰⁹ and recruitment was brisk, since illusions in the government had had begun to dissipate. Alexandr Ilyin left Kronstadt for Petrograd, where he, Podvoisky and Krivobokov began building a Bolshevik military committee,¹¹⁰ based at the Smolny.¹¹¹ There was a 'non-party' Club Pravda in the basement, and meetings drew thousands,¹¹² though the canteen provided little more than tea and chunks of rye bread.¹¹³ (Water had to be boiled, because tap water was not fit to drink.¹¹⁴) The government abolished property and taxation requirements for voting in duma elections, and enfranchised men and women over 20, while soldiers could vote where they were stationed.¹¹⁵ Some Kronstadt sailors were influenced by the rumours about Ulyanov being a German agent,¹¹⁶ and some leaders were influenced by Anarchist ideas. The soviet, which consisted mainly of sailors, decided to take power on the island.¹¹⁷

On the 18th Gorky's *Novaya Zhizn* (*New Life*) appeared.¹¹⁸ Krasin was its business manager,¹¹⁹ and Himmer and former *Letopis* colleagues were editors. It supported the government, but its perspective was mostly to the left of the Menshevik internationalists,¹²⁰ and it accepted contributions from both RSDRP factions and unaligned writers.¹²¹ Gorky argued that Ulyanov was 'laying on the altar of the Russian peasantry the whole of the numerically negligible but heroic army of politically educated workers', so 'the genuinely revolutionary intelligentsia' would be 'thrown like a handful of salt into the flat, stagnant pool of the rural world and become dissolved there without a trace, changing nothing in either the spirit, the life or the history of the Russian people'.¹²² His relations with Ulyanov 'could not have been different from what they were', since he had 'little faith in the reason of the masses in general, and in the reason of the peasant masses in particular'.

I was oppressed by the fact that the illiterate villages had such an overwhelming preponderance over the town. I was oppressed by the zoological individualism of the peasantry and its almost complete lack of social emotions. A dictatorship of the politically educated workers in close alliance with the scientific and technical intelligentsia was, to my mind, the only possible way out of the difficult situation, particularly aggravated by the war which had rendered the rural world more anarchic still.¹²³

Since 'we are living in the jungle of millions and millions of practically illiterate and socially uneducated people' who were 'politically and socially dangerous', and 'did not know what they want', it was necessary to 'work for the general development of culture'. 'Science must become democratic' and be 'accessible to all the people.' He protested against the 'idiocy and cruelty' of summary executions and people who 'try to prove something with bullets, bayonets, or punches in the face'.¹²⁴ 'Intellectual force is qualitatively the first and foremost productive force' so Russians had to 'cleanse ourselves of the grime and filth of the past' to achieve 'a new structure of the soul', and he was angry about the government sending 'musicians, artists, actors and other people indispensable to the proletariat's soul' to the front.¹²⁵ Himmer recalled that when he met 'fairly responsible Bolshevik leaders' at Gorky's flat, 'their incapacity to think their way into the political problem and formulate it' was depressing.¹²⁶

Soldatskaia Pravda (*Soldier's Truth*) also appeared on the 18th.¹²⁷ It was published by the Bolshevik military committee,¹²⁸ and Lilina, who worked for Petrograd soviet, was an editor. Soldiers had sent articles, and the editors wrote others in 'a very colloquial style', and 'always started with the ABC of any question'. Around 50,000 copies were printed, but selling more seemed possible, so they recruited a children's writer, plus Lydia Borisova, who had married Alexandr Ilyin,¹²⁹ and Maria Sulimova, a Bolshevik staff worker.¹³⁰ There were soviets in most army units,¹³¹ and the paper reached the northern front.¹³² In Petrograd delegates from 90 factories with 170,000 workers had established Red Guard units.¹³³ The soviet EC rejected imperialist goals, ordered military units to stay out of the city and banned demonstrations.¹³⁴ Around 700 Putilov workers suggested evacuating the bourgeoisie rather than factory workers. The trade minister resigned;¹³⁵ but the foreign minister sent a note to Allied governments renouncing imperialist aims, and Petrograd newspapers decided to publish it next day.¹³⁶

On the morning of the 20th the Bolshevik CC did not call for a demonstration; but Sergey Bogdatiev, the secretary of the Putilov workers' committee and the city committee, reportedly wrote a leaflet which called for the overthrow of the government.¹³⁷ Workers from Vyborg, some of them armed, marched to the Mariinsky Palace,¹³⁸ along with

25,000 to 30,000 soldiers with fixed bayonets and some Kronstadt sailors.¹³⁹ That afternoon some Bolsheviks, including members of the military committee, called for the overthrow of the government.¹⁴⁰ Two Vyborg factory workforces voted to replace it with the soviet,¹⁴¹ and workers, protected by armed guards, crossed the Neva. Loyal officers failed to get their troops to stop them, and they reached Nevsky Prospekt. Loyal troops beat up those carrying placards with Bolshevik slogans,¹⁴² but the demonstration continued. There was gunfire near Kazan Cathedral, but after members of the government addressed them, most dispersed peacefully. At 6.00pm the government organised a demonstration outside Kazan Cathedral, and there was an armed clash with workers from Vasilievsky Island. At 10.00pm the workers' armed guard became separated from the demonstration, and counter-demonstrators seized a banner. Shots were fired, and the remaining demonstrators dispersed.¹⁴³ The soviet condemned the armed demonstration, and urged support for the government.¹⁴⁴

On the 21st around 100,000 demonstrators demanded all power to the soviets. They carried banners reading 'Publish the Secret Treaties!', 'Down with the War!', 'No Confidence in the government!' and 'Down with the Capitalist Ministers!'¹⁴⁵ A crowd of mainly female textile workers clashed with female supporters of the government, who grabbed their banners, but sailors escorted the demonstrators to the soviet.¹⁴⁶ Fyodor Linde persuaded the Finland Regiment to march to the Mariinsky Palace, and two other regiments and Kronstadt sailors joined them, until there were between 20,000 and 30,000 armed troops. District delegates appealed for the overthrow of the government, and some members of the Bolshevik CC supported them.¹⁴⁷ The movement spread to workers' districts and Bolsheviks got involved. The demonstrators included Putilov workers, and Treugolnik rubber works,¹⁴⁸ where most were peasants, though 'elders' had begun to control the factory.¹⁴⁹ There were armed confrontations with government supporters,¹⁵⁰ and several workers and soldiers were killed on Nevsky Prospekt.¹⁵¹ The soviet EC deployed armed men, and Kadets organised a counter-demonstration of thousands of wounded soldiers who shouted 'War to the end. Our wounds demand victory!' The RSDRP CC had accepted the ban on demonstrations, and criticised the slogan 'Down with the government'.¹⁵² The Bolshevik CC blamed the government for the violence,¹⁵³ but called for mass meetings and demonstrations.¹⁵⁴ Kornilov ordered troops to suppress the demonstrations, though many refused,¹⁵⁵ so he ordered two batteries from the Artillery School to tackle students and officers who refused to obey his orders.¹⁵⁶ His forces controlled the radio station, and he stopped the government appointing a Bolshevik commandant of the Fortress.¹⁵⁷ The government dissociated itself from the foreign minister's note,¹⁵⁸ and decreed that district peasant committees should make proposals about land. Higher committees would include between a third and a half of administrative, technical or legal experts, while landlords and peasants would be equally represented.¹⁵⁹ Ulyanov had complained to Sobelsohn and Fürstenberg that he had received no letters, packages or money;¹⁶⁰ but Helphand's agent Mieczysław Kozłowski sent 2,000 rubles and Sobelsohn sent more.¹⁶¹

On the morning of the 22nd thousands of workers, sailors and soldiers converged on the city centre,¹⁶² but three were killed by machine-gun fire.¹⁶³ Military units and whole regiments, armed and in military order, arrived at Mariinsky Palace, but soviet EC members persuaded them to return to their barracks. That evening workers, soldiers and sailors, some of them armed, called for the resignation of the foreign minister, and clashed with counter-demonstrators whose slogans included 'Down with Lenin'. Several people, mainly soldiers, were killed. The soviet EC accepted the government's repudiation of the foreign minister's note by 34 votes to 19,¹⁶⁴ but 117 Bolsheviks and other internationalists at the full soviet voted against supporting the 'liberty loan'.¹⁶⁵ The Bolshevik city committee denounced demonstrators as 'hotheads', and announced that it would call for the overthrow of the government only when they had a majority in the soviet.¹⁶⁶ Some of the 2,000 women at Pipe Works had read radical literature, and though none was confident enough to address a mass meeting, around 50 women, including 22 from Pipe Works, discussed how to organise women.¹⁶⁷ The Bolsheviks needed 75,000 rubles for a printing plant,¹⁶⁸ and had received over 75,300. The average donation per worker had been one day's pay.¹⁶⁹ The government recognised factory committees which negotiated with it and employers.¹⁷⁰ Six moderate socialists, including two Mensheviks, entered the cabinet, and Kerensky had become the minister of war.¹⁷¹

By the 23rd the streets were calm,¹⁷² though Kornilov's orderly launched a pro-war weekly.¹⁷³ The government agreed that factory workers' committees should engage in cultural work; but did not mention 'control' of production.¹⁷⁴ A leaflet in the name of the RSDRP city committee appealed for its overthrow,¹⁷⁵ but the Bolshevik CC condemned it,¹⁷⁶ as premature, and wanted new elections of soviet deputies and broad explanatory work.¹⁷⁷

Alexandr Shapovalov had been born in 1871. He became a revolutionary in the early 1890s, but was arrested in 1896 for taking part in a textile workers' strike, and was exiled to Minusinsk in Siberia in 1898. In 1901, after he was released, he joined the *Iskra* organisation, but was arrested in 1905 for participating in an army mutiny in Kharkiv. In 1906 he was released under caution, went abroad and worked with Bolshevik émigrés, and in April 1917 he returned to Russia and worked for the Bolsheviks in the soviets.¹⁷⁸

Feliks Dzierżyński, an SDKPIL leader, had spent the best part of his adult life in prison or exile. The 40-year-old had been freed from Moscow's Butyrki Prison in March 1917, and by April he had joined the Petrograd Bolshevik committee as a representative of the SDKPIL,¹⁷⁹ and the 36-year-old intelligent Old Bolshevik Alexei Rykov had returned from Siberia.¹⁸⁰ Vladimir Miliutin had been born into a teacher's family in a Kursk province village in 1884. His mother was banned from teaching because of her anti-tsarist views. Vladimir joined the Mensheviks in 1903, but he was a Bolshevik by 1910. He was arrested almost immediately and deported to Saratov; but after the February 1917 revolution he was elected as chair of the soviet.¹⁸¹

On the 24th an All-Russian RSDRP conference opened in the Women's Medical Institute in Petrograd district,¹⁸² though later plenary sessions were held in a school.¹⁸³ It was legal,¹⁸⁴ and Sverdlov had left the Urals to attend.¹⁸⁵ The delegates claimed to represent well over 79,000 members, with 14,000 in both Petrograd and the Urals, and 13,000 in the central industrial region,¹⁸⁶ including 7,000 in Moscow and its province.¹⁸⁷ They were overwhelmingly workers,¹⁸⁸ or soldiers.¹⁸⁹ The 133 voting delegates included 78 Bolsheviks, and a majority endorsed the 'April theses', though 34, including Dzierżyński, objected to subject nations having the right to self-determination, and some Old Bolsheviks, led by Rozenfeld and Rykov, were opposed or abstained.¹⁹⁰ Miliutin and Nogin opposed the 'April theses'.¹⁹¹ Rykov argued that the Bolsheviks were too weak to make a revolution, but his motion against the slogan 'Down with the government' was rejected.¹⁹² Ulyanov wanted a unified 'democratic proletarian-peasant republic'.¹⁹³ He agreed that it would be 'insane to introduce socialism at this point, but the soviets can take the first steps,' including nationalising land and establishing banks in every village to finance improvements in agriculture. 'It is imperative to undertake immediately, everywhere, the organisation of separate soviets of agricultural workers and semi-proletarian peasants, and the independent organisation of these groups in all existing soviets of peasant deputies and other organs of local administration'.¹⁹⁴ 'Only if power is transferred to the working class with the support of the majority of the peasantry can one expect a potent revolution to break out in Western Europe, which will destroy the yoke of capitalism and bring the war to an end.'¹⁹⁵ His proposal that the revolution was the 'first phase of many proletarian revolutions inevitably triggered by the war' passed by 71 votes to three, with eight abstentions.¹⁹⁶ He argued for a rapprochement with 'local groups of workers who were associated with the Menshevik internationalists, and unification, if they broke 'unconditionally with the petty bourgeois traitors to socialism' (the defencists).¹⁹⁷ This passed with ten abstentions.¹⁹⁸ Delegates demanded the immediate nationalisation of land and its transfer to peasant soviets, or 'other really and fully democratically elected organs of self-government',¹⁹⁹ by 74 votes to 39, with eight abstentions.²⁰⁰ An overwhelming majority agreed that the government was following an imperialist policy and had to be overthrown; so 'proletarians of town and country' should prepare for 'the rapid transfer of all state power' to the soviets, or other organisations expressing the will of the majority of the people.²⁰¹ Delegates backed the right of subject nations in the Empire to self-determination by 56 votes to 16, though 18 abstained. A majority agreed that a long period of bourgeois-democratic rule had begun, though none supported a proposal to break with the International.²⁰² A majority called for the eventual transfer of all power to the soviets, but Krivobokov called for mobilising troops immediately.²⁰³ Ulyanov inveighed against those who 'more than once already have played so regrettable a role in the history of our Party by reiterating formulas senselessly learned by rote'.²⁰⁴ They wished 'to remain "old" Bolsheviks and "old" Bolshevism needs revising'.²⁰⁵ Kollontai,²⁰⁶ and two others of the 15 leading Bolsheviks, supported him; but Jughashvili and Rozenfeld spoke against.²⁰⁷ Kalinin was astonished that Ulyanov considered Old Bolsheviks an obstacle.²⁰⁸ Krupskaya was worried about Ulyanov. 'It seems that Ilyich is out of his mind'.²⁰⁹ Apfelbaum was elected as an editor of *Pravda*,²¹⁰ and as a member of the CC, with Ulyanov, Jughashvili, Smilga, Sverdlov, Rozenfeld, Nogin, Miliutin and Grigory Fedorov,²¹¹ a moderate metalworker,²¹² who was 26.²¹³ Their average age was 34, though Jughashvili was 38, Nogin was 39 and Ulyanov was 47. Six were of non-Russian origin, six were from middle-class families, and most had had at least a secondary education.²¹⁴ Apfelbaum's proposal to send delegates to the Zimmerwaldist conference in Stockholm passed by 71 votes to 31, with eight abstentions, and Kollontai was elected to lead it, but almost all the other women opposed her proposal for a systematic approach to women workers.²¹⁵

By the 25th Narva Bolsheviks had organised a trade union with 11,000 members and unions in Petrograd and the First and Second City districts. Mensheviks led a union with all but 6,000 members in Vyborg, though Mensheviks and Bolsheviks were equally represented on the board. Mensheviks dominated a Moscow district union with 7,500 members, while SRs dominated a Nevsky district union, and when they amalgamated they claimed 50,000 members. A factory delegates' conference recommended that those employing 500 to 1,000 should have a committee of 11 to 13, and those with 3,000 to 6,000 13 to 15, and they should form a network. On the 26th Petergofsky RSDRP committee called on workers to join the Red Guards, though they should be 'the flower of the working class' and recommended by district committees of socialist parties.²¹⁶ By the 29th more Red Guards had been recruited in working-class districts. In Vyborg they had set up command units in factories in every ward and had a headquarters in the city centre.²¹⁷ Membership was open to men and women who could prove they were in

a socialist group or trade union, or whose workmates recommended them, and they were accountable to district soviets, which were mostly controlled by Bolsheviks.²¹⁸ Ivan Kotliakov had been born into a carpenter's family in Kursk province in 1887. He joined the RSDRP in 1902, and later went to the capital and worked in a factory. In 1917 he was a Bolshevik member of the Petrograd дума and Vyborg Red Guard.²¹⁹ They distributed arms from Kronstadt and engaged in 'comradely discussion' with 'backward comrades'.²²⁰ Members from 156 factories formed units to 'struggle against the counter-revolutionary intrigues of the ruling class' and 'defend with arms in hand all conquests of the working class'. The soviet EC refused to take part,²²¹ or join the government, by 23 votes to 22.²²² Most barracks and factories sent deputies to the soviet.²²³ The EC sent loyal troops back to their barracks,²²⁴ but the foreign minister resigned.²²⁵

Alexander Egorov had been born into a middle-class family near Samara in 1883. He graduated from a gymnasium, joined the army in 1901 and the SRs in 1904. He graduated from Kazan military cadet school in 1905 and was sent to suppress protests in Tbilisi, Gori and Baki. He left the SRs in 1909, and for four months in 1915 he commanded a reserve regiment in Tver, then spent two months training ensigns in Riga. He became a lieutenant colonel and commanded an infantry regiment, and was injured three times. During the February 1917 revolution he re-joined the SRs and became a representative of the divisional military council. He later joined the RSDRP and was one of its few trusted officers.²²⁶ Late in April he told Petrograd soviet that his regiment would not 'go back down into the trenches any more'.²²⁷ The garrison commander ordered artillery to fire on demonstrating workers and soldiers, but the gunners insisted that the soviet had to countersign his orders.²²⁸ Kronstadt soviet included 112 SRs, 107 Bolsheviks, 97 who were unaligned and 30 Mensheviks, though a majority voted with the Bolsheviks.²²⁹

By the 31st the Bolshevik Petrograd military committee included Sulimov and Bogdatiev, and rallies attracted thousands.²³⁰ The main decisions at factory meetings were taken by a show of hands. All but four district ECs were led by Bolsheviks.²³¹ The printers' union's EC included three Mensheviks and two Bolsheviks, and it formed a militia, though SRs and the soviet EC condemned them.²³² Many Nevsky workers supported SRs and Mensheviks, and 30 young Bolsheviks had lost the respect of workers owing to their lack of experience. Former colleagues telegraphed Anna Boldyrova, a 47-year-old Old Bolshevik exile in Siberia, and asked her to represent them in Petrograd soviet.²³³ That month five regiments had joined anti-government demonstrations.²³⁴

Nationally there were around 17,600 locomotives, and 590,000 wagons, but 88,000 more were needed.²³⁵ An average of 230 wagonloads of food had arrived in Petrograd each day that month, compared to 351 the previous April, and the bread ration was 12 ounces a day. Only 34 percent of basic foods had arrived and attempts to impose fixed prices had created a black market.²³⁶ Hundreds of railway workers, mostly in the higher grades, had formed an All-Russian union and elected an EC of 15, called *Vizhkel*, which included 12 moderate white collar socialists.²³⁷

The Party secretariat had telegraphed 34 local organisations and interviewed 17 visitors,²³⁸ though the chaos in transport and communications made regular work impossible outside the capital.²³⁹ There were reportedly 700 soviets,²⁴⁰ with 300,000 deputies,²⁴¹ and half included Mensheviks and Bolsheviks.²⁴² It was difficult for agents to explain the difference between Bolsheviks, Mensheviks and SRs, and unaligned people led many soviets.²⁴³

Moscow and other key regions

Valerian Obolensky had been born into the family of a Kursk province stud farm manager in 1887. In 1905 he distributed revolutionary literature among students at Moscow University and contributed to *Izvestia*. In 1907 he joined the Bolsheviks, helped to organise a large student demonstration, and he and two other young economists challenged lecturers. When the Bolshevik faction split over participating in the Duma, Obolensky backed a boycott. He was exiled to Tver in 1911, but wrote under a pseudonym. From 1914 he was deputy head of the statistical department of Kharkiv Agricultural Society's commissioner for coal transport, studied the economics of agriculture and published two books. In 1916 he was mobilized into the army as a quartermaster, and after the February 1917 revolution he was elected to the Moscow Bolshevik bureau.²⁴⁴ On 3 April an RSDRP conference opened in Moscow. The Bolsheviks claimed 6,000 members in the city, and their elected city committee included Obolensky, Tarshis, the 52-year-old Old Bolshevik intelligent Pavel Sternberg, and the 41-year-old Old Bolshevik intelligentka Rosalia Zemliachka.²⁴⁵ On the 10th the Petrograd *Pravda* published an article by Obolensky. He argued that the bourgeois revolution was incomplete, but the imperialist war should be transformed into a civil war.²⁴⁶

On the 11th the soviet agreed that the three largest socialist parties should nominate 60 members of the EC and seven of the presidium.²⁴⁷ Many industrial workers worked an eight-hour day,²⁴⁸ though their output had fallen by 30 percent so far that year.²⁴⁹ By the 17th citizens received around 12 ounces of bread a day.²⁵⁰ On the 18th 500,000 people, including soldiers from three reserve regiments and other units, and delegations from most factories,

publicly celebrated May Day.²⁵¹ On the 19th, at a conference of 22 SD Moscow province organisations, Armand defended the 'April theses',²⁵² and a Latvian SDP congress in the city largely agreed.²⁵³

On the 21st Rozenthal metalworkers joined strikers at a sister plant and authorised their committee to send greetings to *Sotsial-Demokrat*.²⁵⁴ On the 22nd the RSDRP city committee supported the slogan of 'Down with the government'.²⁵⁵ Armand attended an All-Russian women's conference in Petrograd as a representative of Moscow soviet, and led a walkout, because bourgeois and working women had nothing in common.²⁵⁶ Some male mill workers and a few women had arms,²⁵⁷ and Armand wanted soldiers to turn theirs on the government and bring about a 'proletarian peace'.²⁵⁸ She was elected to the city дума and organised a school for female agitators.²⁵⁹ Many industrial workers worked an eight-hour day,²⁶⁰ though output had fallen by an average of 30 percent so far that year.²⁶¹ Average wages had risen by a ruble to 3.1 a day, but the cost of living had risen by more. That month 679 railway wagonloads of grain had reached in the city.²⁶² Near Moscow the Mensheviks had a small branch and social club at the Provodnik rubber works, and they put up hand-drawn posters in railway stations, villages and hamlets a long way. Peasants attended the club, and white-collar staff attended its theatre,²⁶³ but Kursk province peasants, around 450 miles south of Moscow, had not heard about the Petrograd events until mid-April.²⁶⁴

In Ukraine Kharkiv soviet claimed 444 deputies by April.²⁶⁵ They called a regional conference of soviets and 80 delegates arrived, though there were 150 soviets in the Donbas and many included soldiers. Bolsheviks were arming in Luhansk. There was a May Day demonstration with revolutionary slogans and speeches, though luzovka Bolsheviks were jailed.²⁶⁶ Metalworks owners had conceded a 35 percent rise, and the minimum daily wage was 2.5 rubles, though the overtime rate was 50 percent higher.²⁶⁷ The eight-hour movement had spread to foundries and mines,²⁶⁸ and some miners had adopted the syndicalist program of the US Workers of the World, and there were Anarchist groups in Ekaterinoslav, Karkhiv and Odesa. A peasant soviet elected Breshkovskaya to its EC, and she travelled through south Russia, speaking to peasants and soldiers, establishing presses, supervising the distribution of pamphlets, and established branches of Zemlia i Volia in Simferopol and Sevastopol. She criticised the 'numerous Bolshevik agitators', but acknowledged that anti-war propaganda influenced soldiers 'anxious to return to their homes'.²⁶⁹ That month national coal production had fallen by just over 20 percent.²⁷⁰

On the Volga the 16 trade unions in Saratov claimed to represent 26,000 workers, including 3,000 metalworkers. There were SDs at the largest works; but around 4,400, including 13 percent of skilled workers, were unemployed.²⁷¹ There were long queues for bread, meat was a luxury and tea was unobtainable. The same was true in neighbouring towns, and rumours about rationing pushed up bread prices,²⁷² so the soviet established a food supply committee. Around 200 attended the soviet's workers' section,²⁷³ which merged with the military committee and elected an EC which included 13 SRs, nine Bolsheviks and eight Mensheviks. The liberal *Saratovski Vestnik* (*Saratov Herald*) claimed that the soviet was all-powerful in the province.²⁷⁴ The SRs' paper had a circulation of 30,000, *Sotsial-Demokrat* 10,000, and the Menshevik paper 5,000. The Bolsheviks claimed 400 supporters in the garrison, and trained agitators to work in unrepresented districts. E.K. Romanenko, E.N. Bogdanova and E.R. Peterson had recruited women workers to a separate section of the Party. By the end of the month 50 factory committees claimed 10,000 members, and 30 percent had joined trade unions. The Bolsheviks had organisations in factories, the railway yard and on the riverside. There were small committees in Volsk, Nikolaevsk and Novouzensk on the Lower Volga, and unrest in five of Saratov province's ten counties on 48 occasions.²⁷⁵ Volga peasants had become increasingly violent, and though SRs had formed peasant soviets at provincial, district and some at village level, peasant illiteracy had allowed intelligentsy to control them. Arrests where private landholding was common had reached serious proportions, and the government used force to quell the disturbances.²⁷⁶ A VPSR conference recommended that the constituent assembly should settle the land question.²⁷⁷ Some SRs, including Breshkovskaya, disassociated themselves from the centrist *Delo Naroda* (*The Cause of the People*), and published *Volya Naroda* (*The Will of the People*).²⁷⁸ Poor peasants from the north were migrating to the region.²⁷⁹ Army deserters and 20,000 troops aged over 40 on furlough around Saratov tried to get land, and troops had refused to take part in an offensive. In Tsaritsyn SRs and Bolsheviks dominated the soviet.²⁸⁰ Saratov Bolsheviks claimed 1,600 members, but when Vasiliev returned from Petrograd the soviet refused to print his report.²⁸¹

In Georgia an RSDRP conference had opened in Tbilisi on 10 April. Shaumian predicted a permanent social revolution in Western Europe and delegates called the government 'counter-revolutionary', though the Mensheviks got that term removed with a majority of 23.²⁸² Soldiers on the Caucasian front had asked the Chkheidze to send 'books with popular accounts' of what a constituent assembly would mean for them from Petrograd,²⁸³ but 40,000 copies of *Pravda* intended for the front arrived. The soviet confiscated them, but Zhordania successfully campaigned for their release. An SD member of the soviet EC argued for taking over the Caucasian army congress on the 23rd,²⁸⁴ but an overwhelming majority of the 150 delegates voted for an SR motion calling for the socialisation of land,²⁸⁵ after the constituent assembly. They elected a presidium of 26 with an SR chair, gave the government conditional support and favoured 'an energetic defense of revolutionary Russia' until there was a peace 'without

annexations and contributions'. Peasant soviets across the region merged with Tbilisi soviet to form a regional soviet, and the major parties formed an information bureau, while an arbitration court of employers and workers attached to the soviet tried to end strikes.²⁸⁶ The garrison opposed Georgian autonomy, and late that month it wanted to postpone the 'national question' until the constituent assembly, and Mensheviks opposed socialists joining the government.²⁸⁷ Prokofy Dzhaparidze had been born into a landowning family in a Georgian village in 1880. His father soon died, but Prokofy attended a village school, then learned to be a bootmaker. In 1898 he attended the Teachers' Institute in Tbilisi, joined the RSDRP, helped to prepare a May Day demonstration in 1900 and was jailed for 11 months, but led a tobacco workers' strike in Kutaisi in 1901. In 1904 he moved to Baki in Azerbaijan and helped to found Hümət (Endeavour), an SD organization which drew many Muslims behind the Bolsheviks. He led the Caucasian Union delegation at the RSDRP congress in London in 1905, and was a leader of a strike in Baki late that year, and helped to publish Bolshevik journals and magazines. In 1909 he was deported to the northern Caucasus for five years, but returned to Tbilisi in 1913. Just before May Day in 1915 he was deported to Vologda Province, but escaped to Tbilisi in 1916.²⁸⁸ In January 1917 he visited Petrograd,²⁸⁹ then went to Trabzon in Turkey, where he heard about the February revolution. He returned to Tbilisi,²⁹⁰ then joined the Bolsheviks' Baki Committee.²⁹¹ An All-Caucasian Muslim congress had opened on 15 April.²⁹² It supported federalism and autonomy,²⁹³ and called for a governing centre with legislative powers. Shaumian and Dzhaparidze had not held a factional meeting until after the All-Party conference,²⁹⁴ but on the 22nd the Bolsheviks' *Bakinsky Rabochy (Baki Worker)* criticised soviet leaders, because 'agitation and lectures are not organised, the listing of members is going on unsatisfactorily; there is no definite line; and the "apparatus," uniting and tying together the members of the party has been badly set up'. The five Bolsheviks elected to the bureau included Dzhaparidze and Shaumian, who was editor-in-chief of the paper, while 21-year-old Anastas Mikoyan was an editor of an Armenian-language paper. Bolsheviks met separately from Mensheviks. The food supply committee adopted rationing.²⁹⁵ On the 23rd the first All-Russian Muslim women's conference attracted 59 delegates and 300 spectators. The speakers included the socialists Zulaykha Rahmanqulova and the 22-year-old poet Zahida Burnasheva. Delegates agreed ten principles, including equality of the sexes, women's right to vote and making the hijab optional.²⁹⁶

By the 24th the Ekaterinburg Bolsheviks in Siberia claimed 1,700 members.²⁹⁷ SR internationalist organisations there, and in Tomsk and Ufa, formed an 'organisational bureau' to coordinate activity with Bolsheviks, Menshevik internationalists, Mezhrayontsy and Anarchists.²⁹⁸ On the 28th 156 mainly unaffiliated delegates from 90 factories discussed forming Red Guards.²⁹⁹ The soviet EC was opposed, but the workers claimed to represent 170,000 workers and demanded all power to the soviet.³⁰⁰

Late in April an SSDP leader in Finland argued that 'the beginnings of national independence' were 'on a firm footing'.³⁰¹ Vyborg soviet aimed to transform workers' militias into Red Guards,³⁰² but *Viatskasya Rech (Vyatka Speech)* warned about the growing influence of Bolshevism in the garrisons.³⁰³

During April, officially, there had been 35,500 strikers nationally.³⁰⁴ Around 92 percent of 17,700 had made economic demands, 5,840 had challenged management authority,³⁰⁵ and around 90 percent of provincial strikes had been successful.³⁰⁶ By the end of the month large works throughout Russia worked an eight-hour day.³⁰⁷

Peasant hostility to the government's grain monopoly had resulted in 62 percent of its target not being met.³⁰⁸ There had been 51 cases of land seizure by peasants, 123 of other forms of theft,³⁰⁹ and unrest in 174 counties.³¹⁰ Peasants had felled trees or stolen equipment on 204 occasions and destroyed 21 manor houses.³¹¹ There had been 378 cases of attacks on gentry-owned estates,³¹² and eight percent of those involved were soldiers.³¹³

Doomed to suffer a crushing defeat

During April the Russian army reportedly consisted of 'an exhausted mass of undernourished men in rags, full of bitterness and united only' by 'resentment and thirst for peace'.³¹⁴ A soldiers' congress in Minsk in Biełarus formed an organisation, and by mid-April almost 7,700 troops had deserted from the western and northern fronts,³¹⁵ and the war cost the government 54 million rubles a day,³¹⁶ but military leaders were preparing an offensive.³¹⁷ The war minister released men aged over 43 from military service and allowed those over 40 to till their fields until 28 May.³¹⁸ The government appointed commissars on the major fronts,³¹⁹ but soldiers had elected 280 representatives.³²⁰ A congress of northern front soldiers opened in Pskov. The delegates included 18 from the Twelfth Army, 16 from the Fifth, ten from the First and 28 from elsewhere. There were 39 infantry, ten officers, three military bureaucrats and one zemstvo employee. The Bolsheviks' *Okopnaia Pravda (Trench Truth)* appeared on the 30th.³²¹ Soldiers had raised 1,000 rubles to fund it,³²² and a regimental committee in Riga published it.³²³ Russian casualties had been expected to be 6,000, but were almost 400,000, plus deserters, and the retreat allowed the enemy to control millions of square miles of territory.³²⁴

In Germany, by mid-April, (according to the Western calendar), handwritten leaflets had been distributed in nearly all Leipzig factories. They called on workers to hold lunchtime meetings to decide whether to strike to force trade union bureaucrats to give a lead. Work stopped in many factories, and when a leader of the metalworkers' union spoke to over 10,000, and called for a return to work next day, he met a storm of protest. Workers called on the government to declare peace without annexations, end censorship, lift the state of siege and the conscription of labourers, free political prisoners and permit universal suffrage at all levels. They elected two union officials and three members of the USPD to take these demands to Berlin,³²⁵ where they were promised that workers would form part of municipal food committees; but the strike committee decided to continue until the turners' leader was freed, and there were strikes in Halle, Brunswick and Magdeburg.³²⁶

A leftist was one of 18 at a secret meeting arranged by a woman in woods near Hamburg who produced a leaflet for women workers in war industries and soldiers. They distributed 5,000 copies and stuck them on walls. There were strikes in war-related industries, though dozens of strikers and leaflet distributors, plus the printer, a businessman who was not a member of the movement, were sentenced to hard labour.³²⁷ Munitions workers went on strike, though suspected radicals were sent to the front. Some USPD members were against a 'revolutionary experiment', since they believed freedom could be won only through the Reichstag. In prison Luxemburg received *The Times* and *Le Temps* occasionally, and wrote in *Spartakusbriefe* that the Bolsheviks' most urgent task was to end the war, but unless there was an international revolution, they were 'doomed to suffer a crushing defeat'.³²⁸

In Berlin Spartakusbund leaflets called on workers to support the Leipzig demands. A narrow majority of USPD workers called for a return to work, but USPD Reichstag deputies toured factories and called for the struggle to continue. Over 50,000 workers elected a workers' council with a revolutionary leader, but the military arrested three of the council and threatened to put workers under military discipline. Majority SDP leaders insisted that civilian officials and military representatives meet the Leipzig strikers' representatives and promise that the turners' leader would be freed. Some factory workforces had elected committees which included USPD members, though Berlin and Leipzig strikers decided to return to work on the 18th.³²⁹ On the 19th the MSPD unanimously accepted the demand for peace without annexations or indemnities,³³⁰ and the government cancelled a cut in food rations.³³¹

On the 21st a foreign ministry official reported that Ulyanov was 'working exactly as we would wish' in Russia.³³² On the 27th *Vorwärts* demanded that strikes had to be avoided, which increased the prestige of the USPD.³³³ Bernstein argued for the right of nations to self-determination, restitution for Belgium and acknowledgement of its independence, a plebiscite about Alsace and Lorraine, an independent Poland and an international league of nations;³³⁴ but the government demanded to annex Lithuania, Estonia, Eastern Poland and Luxemburg, plus the southern tip of Belgium, the Lorraine coalfield and the Romanian oilfields, and other territory for Austro-Hungary.³³⁵

German U-boats had sunk around 866,000 gross tons of Allied and neutral vessels, including 526,000 tons of those from the British Empire, and a quarter of those that left British ports.³³⁶ Some Germans troops were being moved to the western front, where 'fraternization platoons' of officers disguised as privates crossed No Man's Land,³³⁷ and detected a change in the mood of Russian troops.³³⁸

5. Polarisations and splits

Neither independent thinking nor organizational base

In New York Lev Deutsch, a 57-year-old former SR terrorist turned SD, had begun publishing *Novy Mir* (*The New World*) in 1912, and by 1917 he accepted articles by Mensheviks and Bolsheviks.¹ Nikolai Bukharin, a 26-year-old Bolshevik intelligent and former student organiser, had arrived in New York late in 1916 and divided his time between studying in libraries and editing the paper. In March 1917 he argued that power would soon pass from the bourgeoisie to the proletariat, and be 'the first step' in a world revolution, but he doubted whether the proletariat could cope with a backward peasantry.² He left for Russia in early April, but was detained in Japan,³ and Mensheviks briefly arrested him for agitating troops in Chelyabinsk in Siberia;⁴ but he reached Moscow by May,⁵ and joined the Bolshevik committee and the soviet.⁶

By May an inter-district conference of factory committees in Petrograd had elected a Menshevik as chair,⁷ and a Menshevik conference had voted for participating in the government by 59 votes to 55, with two abstentions.⁸ The soviet EC included 21 Bolsheviks, 17 Mensheviks, 13 socialist defencists, five SR maximalists, seven other SRs and five from the Edinstvo group.⁹ They believed that the Russian revolution was 'the first stage of the world revolution', and appealed to socialists in belligerent countries to reject war and¹⁰ but by 41 to 18 for 'strengthening the fighting force at the front'.¹¹ By 44 votes to 19, with two abstentions, they voted for a government coalition, but insisted on a serious effort to end the war on the principles of self-determination, no annexations, democratisation of the army, some workers' control over industry and the distribution of its products, protections for workers, taxes on the wealthy, democratic local administration, the transfer of land to the peasantry, movement towards a constituent assembly,¹² and the 'most energetic measures against anarchistic, illegal and violent action'.¹³ Those voting against included 12 Bolsheviks, four SR internationalists and three Menshevik internationalists.¹⁴ The Bolsheviks almost had a majority in the workers' section of the soviet,¹⁵ which agreed to participating in the government by 172 to 37, with five abstentions,¹⁶ though SR internationalists noted that 'the only possible solution' to the crisis was 'the creation of revolutionary power in the name of the soviet'.¹⁷

On the 2nd *Pravda* published an optimistic view of the situation outside the capital.

In many provincial areas the revolution is moving through the independent organisation of Soviets by the proletariat and the peasantry, the spontaneous dismissal of old authorities, the creation of a proletarian and peasant militia, the transfer of all the land into the hands of the peasantry, the institution of workers' control in the factories, the introduction of an eight-hour working day, the raising of wages, the maintenance of a steady flow of production, the establishment of worker supervision over food distribution, etc.¹⁸

On the 4th *Pravda* published a letter from Ulyanov which argued that poor peasants should organise themselves, and the 30,000 or so gentry estates should become model farms and 'cultivated socially' with the help of agricultural experts.¹⁹ An All-Russian congress of peasant soviet deputies opened in the capital. Around 750 of the 900 delegates were soldiers.²⁰ There were 537 SRs, and many were from the central fertile 'black earth' provinces, 89 Mensheviks,²¹ and 14 Bolsheviks.²² The delegates voted to support the government,²³ nationalise land 'for equal working use',²⁴ without compensation, and distribute it to those who worked it, irrespective of sex, and banning hired labour.²⁵ The Menshevik cabinet members, Skobolev and Tsereteli,²⁶ were present,²⁷ and Ulyanov pointed his finger at them. 'Capitalists with 800 percent war profits are walking the country, just as before. Why don't you publish the figures of their profits, arrest some fifty of them and keep them locked up for a bit?' 'You talk about peace without annexations and contributions', but 'what about in Finland and Ukraine?'²⁸ The 37-year-old unaligned SD intelligent Lev Bronstein, who had formerly been a Menshevik, had become an editor *Nashe Slovo* in Paris,²⁹ then left for the USA, but arrived in Petrograd on 4 May.³⁰

Turners' pay at one of the Petrograd's Parviainen works had risen by 59 percent since February.³¹ The metalworkers' union claimed 54,000 members nationally,³² and a delegate conference approved its statutes. The elected board included a Menshevik, Shlyapnikov, and the 34-year-old former Bolshevik revolutionary syndicalist Alexei Gastev.³³ On the 6th the soviet supported the government, though the Bolsheviks won 100 votes to oppose it.³⁴ The soviet made its military commissars accountable,³⁵ introduced the eight-hour day in state factories,³⁶ and issued regulations about factory committees. They were to represent workers on wages, hours, working conditions, relations between workers and between workers and legal and social institutions, and assist with cultural and educational matters, while conflicts between committees and employers were to be settled by arbitration.³⁷

On the 7th 88 Menshevik conference delegates claimed to represent 54 organisations, including those in Kharkiv, Kyiv, Saratov, Nizhni Novgorod and Riga, and 67 claimed to have been active since 1905 and 28 for longer, while 80 had been arrested at least once, and the average was 3½ times. They had spent an average of two years in prison and 2½ years in exile. Currently 58 were leading members of soviets and 30 were members of soviet ECs. The 23 from organisations which claimed 44,830 members between them had two or three votes each, while those from smaller organisations had one. Two-thirds of the 35 leaders were from Petrograd or Moscow,³⁸ and most others were recent recruits.³⁹ Himmer was pessimistic unless the revolution spread to Western Europe, since 'utterly to destroy all the old state apparatus in the desperate conditions of war and famine meant to consummate the destruction of the productive forces of the country, and not to fulfil the most urgent tasks of peaceful construction aimed at the cultural and economic elevation of the labouring masses'. Attempts to construct a 'proletarian Socialist State' in 'a vast, economically-shattered peasant country meant taking on oneself tasks known to be utopian'.⁴⁰ Tskhakaya and Makharadze from Tbilisi urged delegates to be internationalists,⁴¹ but a majority supported 'revolutionary defencism' and the Mensheviks who had entered the cabinet.⁴²

A British journalist found about 100 gendarmes and Okhrana agents in very bad conditions in a Kronstadt prison. Several admirals, generals and other navy and army officers had been there for three months without trial. Many sailors told him that they had been imprisoned and beaten with a knout, while several had been exiled to Siberia, but had escaped, and carried out revolutionary propaganda.⁴³ The soviet had included 93 Bolsheviks, 91 SRs, 46 Mensheviks and 68 independents, but after new elections there were 100 Bolsheviks, 75 SR internationalists, 12 Menshevik internationalists and seven Anarchists.⁴⁴ Half of the 3,000 or so Bolshevik sailors were 22 or younger, and almost all were literate. Bolshevik sailors at Helsinki controlled most battleships, while Mensheviks controlled cruisers, SRs destroyers and Anarchists other warships.⁴⁵ Sailors elected officers, including the commander of the fleet. Workers' committees ran factories and workshops, and an eight-hour day was compulsory, though three hours' overtime was permissible for urgent work. Trade unions were being formed, and one discussed unemployment and sickness insurance.⁴⁶

On the 8th Kerensky took over the Admiralty and War Office in Petrograd.⁴⁷ The government declared Poland independent, but rejected a separate peace.⁴⁸ It aimed for a just peace and the right of nations to self-determination, but would strengthen the army for defence and attack, tackle the agricultural crisis by increasing production, if necessary by seizing idle lands on big estates and transferring them to peasants, improve the output of coal, iron and steel and the performance of the railways, and fight speculation and the black market; though its intentions about the labour market were vague,⁴⁹ and it refused to fund the Petrograd soviet EC since it was a 'private institution'.⁵⁰ *Vestnik Vremennogo Pravitelstva* (the *Government Herald*) promised a full and immediate amnesty in political and religious cases, but diplomats abroad were to prevent internationalists from returning.⁵¹

Leading Menshevik émigrés wanted to travel to Russia,⁵² and the 43-year-old intelligent Iuly Tsederbaum wrote to the 66-year-old intelligent and former terrorist Pavel Axelrod in Stockholm. 'After agonising vacillations and doubts' he had decided that to 'step aside for the time being was a more correct outcome than to remain in the role of opposition', since the Bolsheviks were deciding 'the fate of the revolution';⁵³ but he telegraphed Chkheidze in Petrograd that 'any participation in a coalition ministry is inadmissible'.⁵⁴ The German chancellor ordered the minister in Bern to offer the émigrés free passage,⁵⁵ and the foreign ministry requested five million marks.⁵⁶

Anatoly Lunacharsky had left Russia early in 1907. In spring 1917 the 41-year-old former Old Bolshevik intelligent was in Switzerland, and when news of the February revolution arrived,⁵⁷ he visited Zurich and placed the remnants of the Vypered group at the service of the émigré Bolshevik CC,⁵⁸ who accepted the offer.⁵⁹ Representatives of 23 organisations formed an 'evacuation committee' in Switzerland,⁶⁰ and on 5/18 May 257 boarded a train for Russia. They included 58 Mensheviks, 48 Bundists, 34 SRs, 25 Anarcho-Communists, 22 who were unaffiliated and 18 Bolsheviks,⁶¹ including Lunacharsky, Balabanoff and Dmitro Manuilsky.⁶² Manuilsky had been born into an Orthodox priest's family in a Ukrainian village in 1883. After secondary school he attended the capital's University in 1903, joined the Bolsheviks in 1904, was sent to Kronstadt in July 1905 and took part in the sailors' revolt. He was imprisoned, then exiled in 1906, but escaped to Kyiv, left for Paris in 1907 contributed to *Vpered* (*Forward*), and *Nashe Slovo* (*Our Word*),⁶³ which appeared at the start of 1915, and was partly financed by Rakovsky.⁶⁴

The émigrés reached Petrograd on 9 May 1917.⁶⁵ Axelrod told a large crowd that he rejected the slogan of 'Down with the government', since workers could not govern the country, and urged Mensheviks not to break with the 'progressive' middle class. He agreed that the war must end, but disagreed with a separate peace, proposed an international congress of labour parties to develop a programme for world peace and sanctioned a Menshevik split if some resisted a peace policy. (*Izvestia* subsequently endorsed his programme.)⁶⁶ Menshevik internationalists controlled the Petrograd, Kharkiv and Donbas organisations, and Tsederbaum claimed to speak for them. He argued for withdrawing support from the government, and that the bourgeois-democratic revolution was incomplete.⁶⁷ He could not make himself heard above the defencists' uproar, but he managed to persuade Himmer to join the

internationalists,⁶⁸ even though they had no newspaper or agreed policy.⁶⁹ Balabanoff stayed in her brother's empty apartment in Petrograd and told her sister that she was a Bolshevik.⁷⁰ Lunacharsky joined the Mezhraiontsy, who agreed with the Bolsheviks on many issues, but not on a narrow and exclusive party.⁷¹ Around 1,250 Putilov engineers voted for a Bolshevik motion demanding soviet power.⁷² The soviet EC called for the First All-Russian congress of workers' and soldiers' soviets. Those claiming to represent 25,000 to 50,000 workers could send two delegates, and one more for every additional 50,000, and front-line troops could elect theirs at army congresses.⁷³ The Petrograd Mezhraiontsy numbered around 300, and included experienced SD intelligentsy such as 48-year-old Mikhail Pokrovsky,⁷⁴ 47-year-old David Goldendach, 43-year-old Khristian Rakovsky, 37-year-old Miron Vladimirov,⁷⁵ and Manuilsky. The 44-year-old intelligent Mosei Uritsky had spent ten years in prison and exile in Siberia, where he became an agricultural statistician. He returned to Petrograd after the February 1917 revolution and joined the RSDRP committee EC in April. By May he disagreed with the line of *Pravda*, and Ulyanov did not impress him. 'You don't write in Russian', and 'we can't all understand your articles'.⁷⁶ The Mezhraiontsy had abandoned hope of a unified RSDRP, and on 10 May representatives met leading Bolsheviks,⁷⁷ and they agreed to unify,⁷⁸ though Bronstein could not call himself a Bolshevik.⁷⁹ The Bolshevik CC had asked him and Lunacharsky to stay in Mezhraionka to be able to join the Bolsheviks with 'the maximum number of supporters'.⁸⁰ The government approved new rights for soldiers, including joint committees with officers.⁸¹

On the 11th *Izvestia* advocated 'the most energetic measures against the workshy'.⁸² Less than a third of Kronstadt soviet deputies were Bolsheviks,⁸³ but on the 13th the soviet declared that it supported the government,⁸⁴ but would deal only with Petrograd soviet.⁸⁵ By then Ulyanov had spoken to tens of thousands of industrial workers in the capital.⁸⁶ By the 14th *Pravda's* circulation had risen rapidly, and Ulyanov showed the Bolsheviks' new press to Alexandr Shotman, a 36-year-old former Finnish worker and Old Bolshevik.⁸⁷ At the soviet Bronstein called for all power to the soviets,⁸⁸ though no more than 30 out of almost 1,000 in the workers' section supported his motion of no confidence in the government.⁸⁹ Many workers and soldiers who had supported SRs or Mensheviks backed the Bolsheviks, whose military committee claimed over 1,000 supporters,⁹⁰ and Podvoisky and Krivobokov sent veterans of the 1905 revolution to train Red Guards in recruiting, forming squads, drilling and firing rifles. Each battalion was to have a machine-gun section, an armoured car corps, a communication corps, and an ambulance unit.⁹¹ Some factory managers had granted wage rises of 30 to 50 percent above the January levels, though only 20 to 28 percent agreed to change working hours.⁹² On the 16th the soviet demanded workers' control of the national economy.⁹³ On the 18th Fedorov ordered Fyodor Ilyin and Roshal to go to Petrograd to meet Ulyanov. Ilyin went alone, and got a 'dressing-down' for not consulting the CC about major decisions.⁹⁴

On the 20th, a majority at the congress of peasant soviet deputies endorsed government policy,⁹⁵ and voted for land to be controlled by peasant committees on the 22nd.⁹⁶ Viktor Chernov and Kerensky both received over 800 votes in the EC elections, and Ulyanov barely 20.⁹⁷ A British man visiting the Duma 'heard violent ideas and wild words bandied about'. One peasant said 'when I look upon this palace my blood boils; it was built out of the blood and the sweat of the poor'. 'I hate, hate, hate the rich!'⁹⁸ Tsederbaum told a comrade that he and his supporters would remain as Mensheviks, to recruit more internationalists, but adopt a 'position of irreconcilable opposition' to the government. They would not join the Menshevik leadership or work on *Rabochaya Gazeta*, and would produce their own paper and 'agitate among the masses' for an 'immediate universal armistice for the purpose of general peace negotiations'.⁹⁹ By the 27th leading Mensheviks, Bolsheviks and other SDs argued about attending the conference organised by the soviet EC.¹⁰⁰ Shlyapnikov chaired the first meeting of the metalworkers' union's central board,¹⁰¹ and Bolsheviks won a majority in the First City district дума.¹⁰² A Red Guards conference decided that members had to be recommended by a factory committee, trade union or political party.¹⁰³ Sverdlov took over as Party secretary from Stasova, though she remained as his assistant.¹⁰⁴ Woytinsky was a member of the joint Menshevik-Bolshevik commission on the war;¹⁰⁵ but on the 29th, when he spoke to a crowd of between 10,000 and 15,000 at Kronstadt, he was severely heckled.¹⁰⁶

On the 30th an All-Russian congress of factory committees opened in Petrograd.¹⁰⁷ The 570 delegates claimed to represent 337,000 workers in 236 plants.¹⁰⁸ The largest group were from those employing 100 to 500 and 18 employing over 5,000.¹⁰⁹ By 297 to 21, with 44 abstentions, they supported a Bolshevik motion for workers' control in all areas of economic life,¹¹⁰ and 336 voted for factory committees to be 'elected on the basis of the widest possible franchise'.¹¹¹ In the elections for the railway workers' union EC Bolsheviks won eight of the 17 seats.¹¹² The workers' section of the soviet voted by 173 to 144 for a Bolshevik motion condemning the government's plans to evacuate plants producing military materiel.¹¹³ At the Bolshevik CC Ulyanov insisted that Bronstein should edit a 'popular organ'.¹¹⁴ Himmer later recalled that except for Ulyanov, there was 'nothing and no one' in the Bolsheviks, 'neither independent thinking nor organizational base', though he reserved judgment on Bronstein.¹¹⁵ Tsederbaum accepted a seat on the Menshevik CC, but reserved the right to criticise it.¹¹⁶

Rabotnitsa

Sofia Goncharskaia had been born into a Ukrainian coalminer's family in 1889. She was active in Odesa in the 1905 revolution, but left for the USA in 1911, joined Socialist Party and represented émigré Bolsheviks.¹¹⁷ After the February 1917 revolution she returned to Russia, and was tasked with organising Petrograd laundresses,¹¹⁸ with the Bolsheviks Anna Sakharova, Iadviga Netupskaya and Ekaterina Shalaginova. Around 4,000 women worked 14 hours a day for a pittance in steamy, squalid, subterranean places, and many suffered swollen legs and rheumatism.¹¹⁹ On 1 May laundresses from 100 small and medium laundries went on strike and doused the boilers with buckets of water.¹²⁰ They demanded better sanitary conditions, an eight-hour day, four to six rubles a day, a pay book, polite address by their employers, more and better quality food, a fortnight's paid holiday each year, a fortnight's notice of dismissal, and one month's sick leave, and their jobs to be left open for six months if the sickness lasted longer. By the 2nd laundresses from almost 200 laundries were on strike. Employers brought in scabs, and some poured boiling water on strikers and chased them with pokers and revolvers, but the strikers got financial support from factories and district soviets.¹²¹ One owner tried to attack Goncharskaia with a crowbar, but other women stopped him.¹²² They demanded the arrest of owners, mechanisation and municipalisation. Sakharova invited Kollontai to speak and she encouraged them to use Bolshevik slogans against the war and publicised the names of strike-breakers in letters to *Pravda*. She proposed that every local Party organisation should have a women's bureau. Most leading Bolshevik women, including Krupskaya and Armand, scorned the idea;¹²³ yet women bakery workers went on strike and ignored a government order to return to work.¹²⁴

Bertha Bronislavovna had been born into a middle-class Jewish family in Minsk province, Biełarus, in 1874. She later trained as a dentist, and was a revolutionary by 1898, but was arrested, and was under police surveillance by 1901. She joined the Bund, and from 1902 she worked in the RSDRP. In 1903 she drew close to the Bolsheviks, and joined a combat organization. She was active in Minsk and the capital in 1905, led Party work and was a delegate to the congress in 1907. In 1909 she left for Germany, then went to Switzerland, but returned to the Russian capital in 1912. She was often arrested, and deported to Lyuban in Minsk province; but in 1914 she organized women workers in the capital and was the secretary of the Vasilevsky district committee,¹²⁵ and the city committee, where she successfully proposed the creation of a Bolshevik women's bureau and the resuscitation of *Rabonitsa (Woman Worker)*.¹²⁶ She and Kollontai recruited intelligentki as editors, including the SR veterans Breshkovskaya and Vera Figner.¹²⁷ The RSDRP city committee agreed to form a group to agitate female workers, but made Bronislavovna promise that it would not be a separate organisation.¹²⁸ At the Tauride Palace Kollontai shouted 'All power to the soviets', but soldiers pointed their bayonets at her and she was dragged off by a 'patriotic ruffian'. She spoke to soldiers outside, and some lifted her on their shoulders and repeated her slogans of 'Bread for our Children!' 'Down with the War!', 'Return our Husbands!' and 'Long live the Soviets!' The city Party secretary tasked her with joining the soviet and gave her the wood-workers' union address; but they had read that she had been exchanged for German prisoners of war, and after a Menshevik agitator arrived she was hustled out.¹²⁹ On the 7th around 350 mostly female dyeing and dry-cleaning workers went on strike for four rubles a day for women and five for men, and the end of piece-work.¹³⁰ Liberal and conservative papers mentioned the laundresses' strike once or twice, but socialist papers reported almost daily, and by the 8th 40 owners had agreed to the strikers' terms.¹³¹ At the elections of soviet deputies in Narva district, Bronislavovna and 15 male Bolsheviks were successful, and she played a key role in the elections to the Bolshevik committee.¹³²

The editors of *Rabotnitsa* included the 57-year-old Old Bolshevik intelligentka Praskovia Kudelli, who had been an editor of the 1914 paper and had worked on *Pravda* and *Izvestia*,¹³³ A. Vasileva,¹³⁴ and Klavdia Nikolaeva. She had been born into a worker's family in the capital in 1893, later trained as a bookbinder and joined the RSDRP in 1909, but was arrested. Afterwards she worked underground and by 1917 she was a member of the First City district committee and led the women's section.¹³⁵ She had worked on the first *Rabotnitsa*,¹³⁶ and the new one appeared on 10 May.¹³⁷ Women workers had provided the money, and the paper argued that the RSDRP was the only party which demanded women's equality, and criticised union leaders' discriminating against women. A letter from a female factory worker noted that male colleagues were 'all for equal rights in words, but when it comes to deeds it turns out that the chicken is not a bird, and the Baba is not a human being'. The 40,000 copies soon sold out, and tens of thousands of women at rallies used the slogans of 'Down with the War' and 'Down with High Prices'.¹³⁸

On the 11th an anonymous editorial in *Pravda* announced that the 'time had passed when the success of the workers' cause will be decided by organising men'.¹³⁹ The government sent troops to close the paper, but women workers moved its press to a factory. Female workforces elected representatives onto the editorial board of *Rabotnitsa*, which met weekly to hear reports,¹⁴⁰ though many Party members criticized the paper for its 'reek of feminism'.¹⁴¹ Kollontai wrote about the cost of living. She had to jump off trams if she was recognised, yet she and other women Bolsheviks organised women-only meetings,¹⁴² and those at the Cinizelli Circus and Cirque Modern

were full to overflowing.¹⁴³ Bronislavovna organised packed meetings on Vasilievsky Island, Itkina spoke to women in Narva district, and Krupskaya spoke to men and women in Vyborg. Kollontai and Rozmirovich spoke to soldiers, and Stahl explained the purpose of *Rabotnitsa* to Kronstadt sailors, and recruited some of them and their wives. Kudelli and other women who had been active in workers' clubs since 1905 opened a school to train women revolutionaries.¹⁴⁴ Women at the Mignon chocolate factory complained to the soviet about their intolerable working conditions, women tobacco workers demanded protection for pregnant workmates, and Frolic mill textile workers demanded a 100 percent rise for men and 125 percent for women. By the 21st the laundresses had received almost 16,000 rubles in donations, and the strike was settled by arbitration on the 25th.¹⁴⁵ The women won an eight-hour day, pay rises and an annual rest period,¹⁴⁶ and Ravich joined the city committee. Sergei Zorin had been born in 1890. From 1911 he worked as a paper-hanger in New York and joined the Socialist Party.¹⁴⁷ In March 1917 he returned to Petrograd, where he worked in an arms factory and joined the Bolsheviks in May.¹⁴⁸

Balabanoff had joined the Mezhrainitsy,¹⁴⁹ and late in May she went to Stockholm, and recruited Zeth Höglund, Fredrik Strom and Kata Dalstrom to the Zimmerwald committee.¹⁵⁰ Sobelsohn and Fürstenberg had encouraged leftist Swedish SDs to split, and at the founding congress of Svenska Socialdemokratiska Vänsterpartiet (the Swedish Social Democratic Left Party, or SSDVP) during May, Sobelsohn had begged them, through a translator, to support the Bolsheviks.¹⁵¹

Moscow and other key regions

Vladimir Smirnov had been born into a middle-class Moscow family in 1887. He later attended a gymnasium and was active in revolutionary politics in 1905. In 1907 he joined the Bolsheviks at the University. After an arrest in 1910, he helped to rebuild the city's RSDRP organisation. He was mobilised in 1914 and served as a warrant officer until the February 1917 revolution, and in summer he and his former students friends Bukharin and Obolensky took control of the Bolshevik publications *Sotsial Demokrat* and Theoretical journal *Spartak*, from older Bolsheviks who opposed Ulyanov's line that the Bolsheviks should aim to take power in a second revolution.¹⁵² Bukharin was elected to edit those publications,¹⁵³ and argued that peasants would support a revolution until they got land, but would then draw back.¹⁵⁴

Moscow RSDRP claimed 30,000 members, and 38 trade unions were affiliated to a central bureau.¹⁵⁵ Workers from organisations opposing the government were replacing its supporters.¹⁵⁶ On the 1st Muslim Duma deputies organised a conference in the city, and 900 delegates arrived. Almost a quarter were women, and Selima Jakubova was elected to the presidium,¹⁵⁷ and as president.¹⁵⁸ The conference supported federalism, and adopted a programme of women's rights, including opposing polygamy,¹⁵⁹ and supporting gender equality.¹⁶⁰ On the 8th male and female staff in Moscow restaurants, clubs, coffee shops and hotels went on strike, and the waiters won 400 rubles a month by the 12th. Militiamen earning 150 rubles a month went on strike for a rise.¹⁶¹

Workers out at the Provodnik rubber works had discussed one of Ulyanov's letters in *Pravda*, though Sapronov had to explain who he was. Mensheviks argued that workers had to learn how to run a factory and the country; though the factory committee had long been replaced by a Bolshevik branch, whose influence was growing daily,¹⁶² and they had raised almost 4,550 rubles for the Bolshevik paper.¹⁶³ The militia included around 150 mainly young male workers, and around three dozen older ones, and some women had formed a nursing corps. Twice a week the men learned drill, tactics, camouflage and the rifle manual, though their 'rifles' were made of wood. Sapronov attended the Bolshevik committee in Moscow.¹⁶⁴ On the 27th Bolsheviks won 75,000 votes out of almost 650,000 in the duma elections,¹⁶⁵ but Mensheviks won 76,000 and SRs 374,000.¹⁶⁶ Machine-builders, especially in Zamoskvoreche district, called for a soviet government.¹⁶⁷

A concert in aid of the SR Breshkovskaya's fund raised 12,000 rubles. Zemlia i Volia distributed SR literature across Russia, and subsidised the defencist *Volia Naroda (The Will of the People)*.¹⁶⁸ On the 31st Spiridonova and other former SR exiles attended the first legal VPSR congress in Moscow,¹⁶⁹ though the police believed that the party no longer existed. Spiridonova was proposed for the CC, but not elected, and defencists won support for strengthening the army and working with the Allies as long the war lasted, by 190 votes to 33.¹⁷⁰ A motion in favour of peace fell by 100 votes to 13, and one to end the death penalty also fell.¹⁷¹ Some SR internationalists established a secret information centre,¹⁷² and Spiridonova left to propagandise in Petrograd.¹⁷³

The cost of living in Moscow had increased by 22 percent that month, but the average workers' daily wage had fallen by 60 kopeks to 2.5 rubles. SRs and Mensheviks who dominated the soviet replaced the Bolshevik editor of *Izvestia*, and sent out agents to search for grain. They found twice as much as in April, and though the cost was 50 percent higher, around 2,000 railway wagonloads reached the city that month.¹⁷⁴

The central industrial region was home to about 37 percent of Russia's population.¹⁷⁵ In Kolomna 88 percent of workers were metalworkers.¹⁷⁶ Hundreds of thousands of textile workers had to pay up to six rubles for food which had cost one ruble in 1914, when it bought 14,000 calories. It now bought 168, and if workers spent all their wages on food they could buy half the calories they needed.¹⁷⁷ Some demanded a 600 percent rise and won 210 percent.¹⁷⁸ Almost 100,000 workers went on strike and it spread to Vladimir and Moscow.¹⁷⁹ Bolsheviks won elections in Ivanovo, Orekhovo and Luhansk.¹⁸⁰ On the 14th a village assembly in Voronezh province decided to occupy land without compensation and that it belong to those who worked it.¹⁸¹

On the 18th about 700 military delegates attended a congress in Ukraine,¹⁸² and Kyiv Bolshevik committee established a military bureau on the 20th.¹⁸³ Soldiers' wives in Kherson province forced their way into rich people's houses, took what they wanted and beat a merchant who refused to discount grain.¹⁸⁴

On the Volga Saratov Bolsheviks claimed 2,500 members,¹⁸⁵ 248 soviet deputies, and six of the nine seats on the presidium.¹⁸⁶ The Bolshevik garrison committee claimed 400 members. Around two-thirds of metalworkers approved the policies of Petrograd soviet, but on the 6th the soviet endorsed the decision to enter the government by 153 votes to 76, with 11 abstentions. Veteran SDs led soviets elsewhere in the region, and though Mensheviks just outnumbered them,¹⁸⁷ they established a regional bureau.¹⁸⁸ There were strikes, including one by 3,000 dockers,¹⁸⁹ for an eight-hour day, higher wages, limits on night work and child labour, improved medical care and job security. Some opposed the government's 'liberty bonds' and called for workers' control of industry,¹⁹⁰ and several of the 85 elected factory committees were forming militias. By the 13th the 322 worker and 210 soldier soviet deputies included 52 Bolsheviks, 32 Mensheviks, 30 SRs and five Trudoviki, though 202 were unaligned. On the 22nd, at a conference of Volga soviets, there were 30 Menshevik, 30 Bolshevik and 12 SR delegates, but a majority rejected the Bolshevik slogan of 'All Power to the Soviets'. Saratov RSDRP committee had two Bolsheviks among its 17 members, while other groups no more than four. There was a small group of Bolsheviks at the Titanik metalworks and workers demanded control. Saratov province peasants confiscated estates, removed prisoners of war and set rents. SRs claimed ten members in Tsaritsyn and 98 in Serdobsk.¹⁹¹ In Kazan soldiers' wives had taken their grievances to the soviet and were told to elect a deputy. They marched around the city with banners and placards. At a meeting called by the soviet they won cheap firewood and subsidised meals.¹⁹² By late that month the Saratov Bolsheviks' military committee had joined the soviet.¹⁹³

In Azerbaijan Baki Bolsheviks and Mensheviks worked together. Bolsheviks had a majority of conference delegates, but most did not support all power to the soviets. A motion to oppose the government fell by 166 votes to nine, with eight abstentions, but a Menshevik, SR and Dashnak motion supporting the government passed.¹⁹⁴

In northern Russia the Vyatka province commissar was an SR,¹⁹⁵ and soviets in many central Siberian towns and cities were in power.¹⁹⁶ Krasnoyarsk soviet had 320 deputies,¹⁹⁷ and had arrested tsarist officials.¹⁹⁸ In mid-May a Kirghiz-Kazakh congress in Semipalatinsk sent greetings and solidarity to Petrograd soviet, but insisted on 'cultural-national self-determination'.¹⁹⁹

Peasants across Russia were determined to get land. Officially there had been 259 'risings' during May, including 76 to 100 in Minsk, Tula, Voronezh, Tambov, Penza and Simbirsk provinces, and 101 or more in Pskov, Mariñë, Riazan, Kazan and Samara,²⁰⁰ and the war was going badly.

The war

By May the Russian army had suffered over 5.5 million casualties since 1914,²⁰¹ though there were around six million front-line troops and 2.3 million in reserve.²⁰² Self-styled 'Bolshevik' agitators, who were not members, were influential in front-line soldiers' committees,²⁰³ especially in Latvia, Gomel and Smolensk.²⁰⁴ On the western front one who claimed to have credentials from Petrograd soviet had persuaded several divisions to vote no confidence in officers and some were attacked.²⁰⁵ A general reported that he was 'demoralising the whole regiment with his discussions about the land', and ordered him back to his village so the peasants would know that the revolution had 'no need of cowards'. The agitator fainted and reportedly soon became 'an example' to others.²⁰⁶

Desertions had averaged 34,270 a month since March,²⁰⁷ and the police had rounded up 1,300 in Zhitomir, 3,000 in Astrakhan and thousands in Ekaterinoslav.²⁰⁸ The government ordered deserters to return in 11 days or face 'the full severity of the law'. It made katorga the penalty for desertion, looting, refusal to obey orders and mutiny;²⁰⁹ though it claimed that the army would 'never permit German troops to destroy our Allies in the West and then turn on us with their full military might'. Yet agitators arrived at the front with reinforcements, and though Bolsheviks brought quantities of literature, there were few influential speakers.²¹⁰

On the 12th a colonel told the peasant congress in Petrograd that millions had deserted, and a million officers and men were 'skulking in the rear'. When some 1,000-strong units were sent to the front, only 150 to 250 arrived,

and there was 'anarchy' on the railways. There were enough shells for six months, but shortages of forage and food, and there had been a mass outbreak of scurvy. Around 20 percent of engineers on the southern front subscribed for *Pravda*.²¹¹ On the 21st 1,500 Petrograd women responded to Botchkareva's appeal for volunteers, and between 250 and 300 were accepted. They came from a wide range of backgrounds and the oldest was 48; but they were forbidden to elect committees, discipline was harsh, and the only concession was a lighter rifle.²¹² By the end of May the government had had to print another 729 million paper rubles;²¹³ but the German U-boat campaign was faltering, and the number of sinkings of Allied and neutral shipping was falling.²¹⁴ Around 24,700 troops on the western front and 25,700 on the northern front had deserted.²¹⁵ Others refused to obey orders and drove officers away. 'What the devil do we need another hilltop for when we can make peace at the bottom?'²¹⁶

6. Down with the ten capitalist ministers!

SR and Menshevik internationalists

By June about 1,000 trade unions claimed 1.4 million members across Russia.¹ Over 50 Petrograd unions claimed 240,000. The post and telegraph union EC included 11 SRs, four Mensheviks and six who were unaffiliated, and the textile workers' union was trying to recruit more women.² Around 80 percent of workers were involved in war production,³ though the overall workforce had begun to contract.⁴ Since January men's wages at 30 paper mills had risen by 214 percent, women's by 234 percent and youths' by 261 percent,⁵ yet the price of butter had risen by 54 percent, milk by 90 percent, rye bread by 140 percent, meat by 186 percent and potatoes by 663 percent;⁶ and some workers negotiated rises in terms of food and clothing.⁷ The eight-hour day was not in force everywhere,⁸ but factory owners had closed 54 plants to try to break workers' control. Some had sold up, sent the cash abroad and followed it.⁹ Managers at the Langezipen machine-building factory and Voronin cotton printing mill threatened to close them, but the workers' committees took control of production,¹⁰ and 400 city committees claimed to represent over 300,000 workers.¹¹

Nationally the VPSR claimed 600,000 members,¹² the Bolsheviks 240,000,¹³ and the Mensheviks 200,000,¹⁴ and around 700,000 copies of Menshevik and 300,000 Bolshevik papers were published.¹⁵ Petrograd Mensheviks and SRs stood outside factories, and when they got a name they reportedly added it to their list of members.¹⁶ Mensheviks and Zimmerwaldists led the soviet.¹⁷ But the Bolsheviks claimed just over 36,000 members,¹⁸ and the overwhelmingly majority were workers.¹⁹ Applicants had to fill in a list of questions including how long they had been involved in illegal work, which Bolsheviks had they worked with and had they been in prison or exile? Workers who had joined before the February revolution were preferred for secretary posts.²⁰

The seamstress Zhenia Egorova from Rīga had joined the RSDRP in 1911 and arrived in the capital in 1916. By 1917 she was a member of the Vyborg district committee along with 22 men. Alexandr Stetsky had been born into a white-collar worker's family in 1896 and later went to the capital. He studied at the Polytechnic from 1914, joined the Bolsheviks in 1915, and the Vyborg committee and the soviet military committee in summer 1917. The two oldest committee members were 41, and it included the intelligently Skryabin and Jānis Sudrabs.²¹ Sudrabs had been born into a poor peasant family in Latvia in 1888. He later trained as a schoolteacher, but after an arrest he worked underground. He fought in the 1905 revolution and joined the Bolsheviks. In February 1917 he arrived Petrograd and joined the Vyborg and city committees,²² and Skryabin was elected to the city committee.²³ Bolsheviks led several workers' committees,²⁴ and the Phoenix machine-building factory was entirely composed of Bolsheviks;²⁵ but Naumov was cautious.

We, as Marxists, must look on life as always moving forwards. We say - our revolution is a prologue to the world revolution. Control is not yet socialisation and not even the taking of production into our hands. But it already passes outside of the bourgeois framework. It is not socialism that we propose to introduce. No. But having taken power into our hands, we should direct capitalism along such a path that it will outlive itself. The factory committee should work in that direction. ... Having strengthened our position in Production, having taken control into our hands, we will learn in a practical manner how to work actively in production and in an organised fashion we will direct it towards socialist production.

There were 10,000 labourers at the Putilov works.²⁶ Skilled workers had assigned 20 percent of their wages to the lowest paid,²⁷ and donated 5,000 rubles for a banner with a slogan. 'We swear to achieve the brotherhood of all peoples. Long live the Russian Revolution as a prologue to the Social Revolution in Europe.'²⁸

A Bolshevik-Menshevik conference about a merger was inconclusive, but both produced scores of leaflets and hundreds of thousands of pamphlets. Representatives of the garrison and the Bolshevik military committee agreed to a demonstration. The soldiers in the district were mostly wartime conscripts, and the Bolsheviks expected 60,000 to turn out.²⁹ Delegates from workers' militias had formed a council of 11 members, including seven Bolsheviks and at least one SR internationalist, with an Anarchist as chair.³⁰ The soviet unanimously supported a demonstration.³¹ Bronstein addressed soldiers as 'We, Bolsheviks and internationalists'.³²

The All-Russian congress of soviets opened that day.³³ The 1,090 delegates claimed to represent around 400 organisations with 20 million members,³⁴ and included 123 Mensheviks, 119 SRs and 57 Bolsheviks,³⁵ though 32 Mensheviks were internationalists,³⁶ and the 23 SR women included Spiridonova.³⁷ She was a member of the editorial boards of *Znamia Truda* (*The Banner of Labour*) and *Nash Put* (*Our Way*),³⁸ and led the SR internationalists,³⁹ but was leaning towards the Bolsheviks.⁴⁰ The delegates with a vote each claimed to represent

at least 25,000 workers.⁴¹ There were 822 of them, and 285 of the 777 who filled in a questionnaire were SRs, 248 were Mensheviks, 28 sympathised with both, and 105 were Bolsheviks. There were a few trade unionists,⁴² and almost 150 belonged to small political organisations, and 45 were unaligned.⁴³ Most delegates supported the SR-Menshevik majority in the soviet EC.⁴⁴ Some Anarchists had been released from prison in February and others had returned from abroad by June. They occupied a late interior minister's villa in Petrograd on 3 June, and government troops attacked them, but they called on workers to support them, and some Vyborg workers went on strike. They claimed 100 members in the Metal Factory, the Putilov works, Pipe Works, and at Kronstadt.⁴⁵

Pavel Dybenko had been born into a peasant family in a Chernihiv province village in Ukraine in 1889. He was one of six children, and the family had an eight-acre farm, one horse and one cow. In 1907 he worked in the zemstvo treasury, but was sacked as 'untrustworthy' for distributing revolutionary literature, and went to work as a port labourer in Riga. He was forcibly enlisted in 1911 and posted to a warship in the Baltic Fleet, and some of the crew were veterans of 1905. In 1912 he joined the Bolsheviks, and in 1915 he took part in a mutiny, and was imprisoned for six months, then sent to the front as a soldier, but propagandised against the war and was imprisoned for six months. After the February revolution in 1917 he returned to the Baltic Fleet,⁴⁶ and on 4 June hundreds of sailors commemorated those killed in the revolution.⁴⁷

Kollontai attended the Finnish SDP congress with instructions to argue for a break with the International and she supported national autonomy, then went to Stockholm,⁴⁸ where an SSDPV member argued that separation from Russia was 'the only way to avoid continued friction'.⁴⁹ Kollontai visited Kronstadt and agitated sailors. Thousands had read her pamphlet against the war and the Bolshevik *Volna*. The government had tried to disband the Helsinki garrison, but Kollontai reported that they would soon be Bolsheviks. Dybenko told her he had thrown Kerensky over the side of a warship.⁵⁰

By the 5th SR and Menshevik defencists in Petrograd had won almost 785,000 votes, almost 75 percent of the total, in 12 district дума elections. Bolsheviks won 20 percent overall, but 58 percent in Vyborg,⁵¹ 61 percent in Petergofsky and 86 percent of those cast by soldiers.⁵² In the workers' committee elections at Pipe Works, SRs won 56 percent of votes, Bolsheviks and Menshevik internationalists 36 percent and Menshevik defencists seven percent.⁵³ Around 300 delegates from 26 textile mills elected an EC of 16, though monthly delegate meetings were sovereign.⁵⁴ Around 70 mainly young Anarcho-Communists with rifles, hand grenades and machine guns, attacked a right-wing newspaper press, but government troops disarmed them. On the 6th the justice minister gave the Anarchists 24 hours to leave the villa, which also housed the bakers' union's headquarters and the commissariat of the workers' militia, and the Anarchists called on Kronstadt sailors to join the Petrograd demonstration.⁵⁵ The Vyatka province RSDRP committee arrested the Bolshevik sailor Grigory Tselishchev, and asked the government to 'take immediate steps to stop the dispatch of Leninists' to 'prevent their harmful influence'.⁵⁶

Vladimir Ovseyenko, a 34-year-old former Menshevik had returned to Helsinki and joined the Bolsheviks. He was briefly head of the RSDRP organisation and chair of the northern congress of soviets.⁵⁷ Pavel Malkov had been born into a peasant family in Kukarka near the Urals in 1887. He became a worker, joined the Bolsheviks in 1904 and was active in 1905. In 1910 he joined the Baltic Fleet. By 1917 he was a member of Syezd Baltiyskogo Flota, (the First Congress of the Baltic Fleet, or Tsentrobalt), and the Helsinki sailors' committee.⁵⁸ Early in June he and a woman recruited workers.⁵⁹ At Kronstadt there were three experienced Bolshevik intelligentsy. One ran the paper, another agitated and the third lectured.⁶⁰ Sailors demanded the release of arrested comrades and threatened to free them by force.⁶¹ All the sailors' soviets sent delegates to Tsentrobalt,⁶² which announced that any order it had not countersigned was void. Tsentrobalt members were elected for three months by secret ballot on the basis of one for every 1,000 sailors, and its 33 members included six Bolsheviks and four sympathizers. Dybenko was chair, and he and two Bolshevik sailors from the soviet, and representatives of warship committees, met on a transport ship.⁶³ The 535 soviet deputies included 125 to 130 Bolsheviks, including Fyodor Ilyin and the sailors Kolbin and Semyonov, plus three SR internationalists and one Menshevik internationalist. The soviet agreed to send a delegation to the Baltic Fleet in Helsinki and Tallinn. Ilyin summoned his brother Alexandr to help Roshal at Kronstadt, and on the 7th the delegation left by train for Viipuri in Finland, where the 168 soviet deputies included 62 SRs, 21 Bolsheviks and 17 Mensheviks. The EC of 16 included eight mostly defencist SRs, four Menshevik defencists, and two Bolsheviks, though the 'masses' were further to the Left. Vyborg Bolsheviks, who recognised the soviet as the 'vanguard' of 'revolutionary democracy', saw them off at the station on the evening of the 8th.⁶⁴ In Petrograd 3,000 armed Vyborg workers supported the Anarchists.⁶⁵ On 7/20 June a train left Switzerland for Russia with 206 passengers, including 29 Mensheviks, 27 SRs, 26 Anarcho-Communists, 25 Bundists, 22 Bolsheviks, plus 19 who were unaffiliated and 39 non-émigrés.⁶⁶

The Kronstadters arrived in Petrograd on the 9th, and Ovseyenko reported that two battleship crews supported the Bolsheviks, but the rest favoured SRs.⁶⁷ The Bolshevik CC insisted that its military committee must not act without its approval,⁶⁸ and appealed to workers and soldiers not to listen to calls to demonstrate in its name, but

to demand credentials signed by its president and secretary. Sudrabs knew that Rosenkrantz factory workers had asked the Moscow Regiment and the First Machine-Gun regiment in Vyborg to strike, and neither could be 'held back', and other Bolsheviks warned that Putilov workers could strike any day.⁶⁹

On 9 June Six Bolshevik CC members, including Ulyanov, Nogin, Rozenfeld and Apfelbaum, plus six from the city committee and two from the military committee, decided by 14 votes to two to call a demonstration.⁷⁰ Lieutenant Flavian Khaustov, a leading member of the Bolshevik military committee, was chair of his regimental committee in the Twelfth Army, and a founding editor of *Okopnaia Pravda*, the paper for soldiers. He was arrested and charged with treason for publishing articles against the offensive and taken to Kresty Prison. Six other members of the Bolshevik military committee were also arrested.⁷¹

Iukka Rakhia had been born into a workers' family in Kronstadt in 1886. By 1902 he was a metalworker and a member of the RSDRP committee. He led a rising of sailors and soldiers in 1905 and was active in the Finnish workers' movement. By 1913 he was in the capital, and after the February 1917 revolution he joined the Bolshevik committee and agitated the First Machine-Gun Regiment.⁷² He wanted to seize the stations, arsenal, banks and post and telegraph offices on the 10th. The Bolshevik slogans were to include 'Down with the ten capitalist ministers!', and 'Bread. Peace. Freedom'. Many military units wanted to be armed;⁷³ as did hundreds of workers.⁷⁴ Very early on the 10th the RSDRP CC banned the demonstration.⁷⁵ The Bolshevik CC members Rozenfeld, Sverdlov and Nogin agreed, but Ulyanov and Sverdlov abstained,⁷⁶ yet *Pravda* called for a demonstration,⁷⁷ and it and *Soldatskaya Pravda* published the route.⁷⁸ A Menshevik paper argued that it was 'time to brand the Leninists as traitors and betrayers of the revolution'.⁷⁹ *Pravda* had appealed to 18 and 19-year-old workers to establish a socialist youth organisation.⁸⁰ Krupskaya had been elected to Vyborg дума.⁸¹ She aimed to form a 'Union of the Working Youth of Russia' with no necessary connection to the Bolsheviks, and established classes for workers on company time and public reading rooms with newspapers,⁸² and was responsible for education. She had organised a council of representatives of working men and women from shops and factories, and wrote in *Gorod i Zemstvo* (*City and Zemstvo*). 'Everyone who can work as a librarian who can teach people to read and write, who can deliver lectures, etc. – anyone who has training in any field – all Social-Democrats, all Bolsheviks – must join in the work, must bring their knowledge to the workers.' She kept in touch with the First Machine-Gun Regiment, helped to arm workers and taught hundreds of women workers about first aid,⁸³ while other women organised supplies and feeding points.⁸⁴ The Bolshevik CC, the central bureau of factory committees and trade unions had put up posters across the city; but the soviet EC, the All-Russian soviet of peasant deputies EC and the Menshevik and VPSR CCs forbade demonstrations for three days.⁸⁵ Ulyanov, Apfelbaum and Rozenfeld met former Mezhraionka leaders, but they refused seats on the editorial board of *Pravda* and the organising committee of the RSDRP congress, and Ulyanov unsuccessfully proposed inviting Bronstein to edit *Pravda*.⁸⁶ Adolf Joffe, a 33-year-old intelligent and Old Bolshevik had been freed from exile in Siberia after the February revolution, and had reached Petrograd and joined Mezhraionka by April.⁸⁷ In June he and Bronstein published *Vypered* (*Forward*).⁸⁸ Some Bolshevik workers censured the CC and tore up their membership cards.⁸⁹

Vyborg district committee met representatives of four military units and 28 factory committees, who had planned to carry arms on the demonstration, but by evening there were government military patrols across the city.⁹⁰ The All-Russian peasant congress delegates claimed to represent 17 million.⁹¹ The EC consisted entirely of SRs,⁹² and Spiridonova was elected as president.⁹³ Both shifts at the Old Parviainen metalworks unanimously resolved that 'conciliation with our capitalists and through them with the capitalists of the whole world', was 'ruinous' for 'Russian and International Revolutions', and called on peasants to break with imperialism.⁹⁴

The Petrograd metalworkers' union leaders were registering the unemployed, mediating conflicts with employers and publishing *Metallist* (*Metalworker*).⁹⁵ By the 11th the union board was split between Bolsheviks and Mensheviks, and called for the subordination of factory committees to trade unions.⁹⁶ On the 12th Old Parviainen metalworkers had a letter printed in *Pravda* which included the slogans 'Peace to the Hovels! War against the Palaces!', 'Down with Counterrevolution!' and 'Down with the ten capitalist ministers!' Menshevik leaders called for an unarmed demonstration,⁹⁷ and the soviet EC agreed,⁹⁸ but Putilov workers voted to demonstrate armed.⁹⁹ SR internationalists on the northern region RSDRP committee dissociated themselves from the EC.¹⁰⁰ The government taxed enterprises with annual profits of less than 1,000 rubles at 30 percent and those with profits of over 100,000 rubles at 60 percent. People whose income was under 1,000 rubles would pay no tax, those earning 1,000 to 1,100 rubles would pay 12 rubles and those with over 400,000 would pay 120,000.¹⁰¹ A delegation of Kronstadt sailors went to Turku, where the 149 soviet deputies included 40 Bolsheviks, and the EC of 26 included four or five. On the 13th the delegation left for Helsinki, and reached Tallinn by the 15th. About 57 of the soviet's 311 deputies were Bolsheviks, about 90 were SRs and 11 were Anarchists, though the Bolsheviks had won 70 votes in secret ballots. The EC of 20 included two Bolsheviks, two Mensheviks and two Anarchists, though the rest were SRs or unaligned, and the chair was an SR.¹⁰²

Nikolai Gorbunov had been born in Krasnoye Selo near the capital in 1892. His father, an engineer, was a director of a paper factory and had founded a school for the workers' children. His wife was the joint owner of the factory, and the couple owned a number of middle-sized houses. In 1911 they bought about 1,650 acres over 90 miles north of the Arctic Circle, but Nikolai entered the capital's Institute of Technology and considered himself an SD when he graduated. He took part in the February revolution in 1917 and joined the Bolsheviks that summer.¹⁰³

Sergey Cherepanov had been born into a worker's family in the Urals in 1881. He joined the RSDRP in 1903, and worked in Perm, Ekaterinburg, Ufa, and Samara on the Volga. In 1916 he was drafted and propagandised soldiers. After the February 1917 revolution he was a leader of the Bolshevik military organization, and joined the All-Russian CC bureau by June.¹⁰⁴ Attendance had varied between six and 16 out of 21,¹⁰⁵ and Rozenfeld, Apfelbaum, and Nogin argued that the RSDRP's strength in the countryside did not justify a demonstration in Petrograd.¹⁰⁶ Fedorov wanted it to be unarmed, and Krupskaya argued that an armed demonstration would not be peaceful, 'so perhaps it should not be started'. Podvoisky, the head of the soviet military organisation, wanted to demonstrate.¹⁰⁷ Ulyanov and Sverdlov were in favour, as long as workers took part, Stasova and Jughashvili wanted it to go ahead,¹⁰⁸ and Apfelbaum argued that the Bolsheviks should create 'a demonstration within a demonstration' and carry banners with Bolshevik slogans.¹⁰⁹ The Bolshevik CC, its military committee and city committee, and representatives from trade unions and factory committees approved an armed demonstration by 131 to six, with 22 abstentions,¹¹⁰ and Menshevik and SR defencists and the soviet failed to call it off.¹¹¹ The Bolshevik military committee persuaded hundreds of soldiers to demonstrate at the last minute,¹¹² including some from the First and Second Machine-Gun Regiments.¹¹³ The RSDRP congress decided to meet in Petrograd every three months, and in between the decisions of Vserossisky Tsentralny Ispolnitelny Komitet (the All-Russian Central Executive Committee, or VTsIK) would be binding.¹¹⁴ A Menshevik suggested that 200 members should be from Petrograd and 100 from the provinces, but the total was subsequently reduced to 250.¹¹⁵ Mensheviks won 104 of the 247 seats, SRs 100 and Bolsheviks 35. The First Machine-Gun Regiment sent emissaries all over the city to announce the demonstration.¹¹⁶ VTsIK included six soldiers, four workers and a sailor.¹¹⁷

Nikolai Krylenko, a 31-year-old Old Bolshevik, had been elected as chair of his regimental and divisional committees, opposed the government in April, and was elected as chair of the Eleventh Army committee, but resigned for lack of support in May. In June he was a member of the Bolshevik military organization and was elected to VTsIK.¹¹⁸ There were Bolshevik cells in almost all the city's military units and factories, though most had joined recently. Many had rifles and leaders told them to prepare for a decisive clash 'in the near future'. Krylenko believed most front-line soldiers were not politically organized, though 'they tend to Bolshevism' and 'won't go into the attack'. 'Desertions have stopped, but the soldiers do not come back from leaves.' Petrograd soviet ordered garrison units to join the demonstration unarmed, and provincial soviets to organise similar demonstrations.¹¹⁹ Thousands of Petrograd Bolsheviks had banners inscribed with 'All Power to the Soviets'. Helsinki sailors had threatened that if the Bolsheviks did not organise a demonstration they would come to Petrograd and do so.¹²⁰ The owner of a small copper-smelting and engineering works had told the workers' committee that he had no funds in May, and threatened to close the works for two weeks, but the committee found orders worth 420,000 rubles. Early in June they appealed to the ministry of labour and the soviet, and on the 16th Petergofsky soviet examined the books and put a worker in charge of production.¹²¹ Delegates from 150 factories attended an Anarchist meeting.¹²²

The Bolshevik press *Trud* (Labour) was at 40 Cavaliergrad Street in Petrograd,¹²³ and on the 17th *Pravda* announced that Bolsheviks would join the demonstration,¹²⁴ though Rozenfeld hinted against a rising in *Novaya Zhizn*.¹²⁵ The city governor closed the paper, but it reappeared as *Svobodnaya Zhizn* (*Free Life*).¹²⁶ The workers' and soldiers' sections of the soviet supported the demonstration by 472 votes to 271, with 39 abstentions.¹²⁷ At the RSDRP congress Tsereteli argued that no party was ready to take power,¹²⁸ but Ulyanov insisted that the Bolsheviks were 'ready at any moment',¹²⁹ and Bronstein warned what would happen if there was no revolution in Western Europe.

Russian liberty will be crushed anyway by the united strength of both our Allies and enemies. All the social experiments which the course of events imposes on us constitutes a threat to European capital. Will it not attempt by the use of universal violence to liquidate the Russian revolution? He who does not believe in the possibility of the European revolution must expect our entire freedom to go up in smoke.¹³⁰

Ten former Mezhraincy, including Bronstein and Lunacharsky, voted with the Bolsheviks.¹³¹ Tsereteli unsuccessfully proposed sending an ultimatum to the Allies to begin peace negotiations on the basis of a universal armistice, and, if they refused, to wage a separate war.¹³² He denounced the Mensheviks who collaborated with the government,¹³³ but the delegates supported doing so by 543 votes to 126, with 52 abstentions.¹³⁴ Worker Mezhraincy, Bolsheviks and SR internationalists condemned the military offensive,¹³⁵ though many more others

supported it.¹³⁶ A majority insisted that Finland had the right to independence,¹³⁷ and recognised the right of all non-Russian nationalities in the Empire to self-determination, after the constituent assembly, but reached no decision on the eight-hour day.¹³⁸ The government had nationalised Church elementary schools,¹³⁹ but a schoolteacher complained that the old teachers, inspectors, directors and district overseers, including many former Black Hundreds, remained in place, and used reactionary textbooks. Broido declared that the Mensheviks would not join a Bolshevik demonstration; but Bronstein successfully proposed forming a military committee with sections for defence, supply and communications, an information bureau, despatch room and command post. Two leaders were SR internationalists, and had no principled differences with the Bolsheviks.¹⁴⁰ Over half of the 80 members were in their twenties, and a majority were Bolsheviks, including the intelligent Stestsy from Vyborg committee.¹⁴¹

There were dozens of mutinies in nearby garrisons,¹⁴² and when the Latvian riflemen's soviet elected a new EC all but one was a Bolshevik.¹⁴³ A travelling Bolshevik agent who knew no Bolsheviks asked soldiers and usually found 'at least one Bolshevik, through whom he could manage to reach the remainder'. Bolsheviks secured the support of 160 soldiers who claimed to represent 26,000. Alexandr Ilyin visited Kronstadt, where the soviet had voted for an unarmed demonstration, though most soldiers disagreed.¹⁴⁴

The attempted Bolshevik coup

Early on 18 June armed Anarchist-Communists freed political prisoners from Kresty Prison in Petrograd,¹⁴⁵ including Khaustov and the six other members of the Bolshevik military committee. Before dawn the government ordered a raid on the Anarchists' villa,¹⁴⁶ and a worker was killed and around 60 were imprisoned.¹⁴⁷ Many factories closed,¹⁴⁸ and eventually almost 500,000 demonstrated,¹⁴⁹ and some soldiers demanded that VTsIK seize power.¹⁵⁰ Russian troops had attacked on the southwestern front, and a majority of Petrograd soviet deputies supported the offensive,¹⁵¹ but few demonstrators.¹⁵² Menshevik and SR defencists' slogans included 'Universal Peace' and a 'Democratic Republic'.¹⁵³ Bolshevik slogans included 'All Power to the Soviets', plus 'Down with the Ten Capitalist Ministers' and 'Proletarians of all Lands, Unite!'. Most demonstrators were workers,¹⁵⁴ and there were members of 12 of the 14 garrison regiments,¹⁵⁵ and Menshevik and SR internationalists marched behind Bolshevik banners.¹⁵⁶

Moisei Goldstein had been born into to a Jewish craftsman's family in Ukraine in 1891. By 1905 he was active in the Bund, but soon joined Spilka, who were aligned with the Mensheviks. He was briefly imprisoned in 1908, and exiled to Arkhangelsk in 1911, but was freed by the 1913 amnesty. He left for Philadelphia in the USA, where he was active in the International Trade Union of Tailors and the Socialist Party during the war and sided with the Menshevik internationalists. In 1916 he contributed to *Novy Mir*. In May 1917 he returned to Petrograd and was elected to the дума, joined the Bolsheviks and worked in Petergofsky and Narva districts.¹⁵⁷ On 19 June factories with a high proportion of unskilled workers went on a go-slow. The minister of labour turned down the Putilov workers' wage claim. They went on strike, but the workers' committee asked Goldstein to persuade them to return.¹⁵⁸

On the 20th Naumov argued that the Bolshevik CC should give VTsIK an ultimatum: 'either take power, or we do not guarantee what will happen'. Sudrabs wrote in his diary that the idea was 'to prevent a demonstration, but if it happens to assume the leadership and direct it towards pressuring the soviet to take power'.¹⁵⁹ The Bolshevik city committee recognised that economic struggle was feeding political radicalism,¹⁶⁰ and Putilov workers had 'come over decisively to our side'. At an All-Russian conference of trade unions, the first since the February revolution, the 247 delegates claimed to represent 976 unions and 51 workers' committees with a total of well over 1,475,000 members, including around 400,000 metalworkers and 178,500 textile workers.¹⁶¹ They included 73 Bolsheviks, 36 Menshevik defencists, six Menshevik internationalists, 11 Bundists, 31 other SDs and 25 SRs, plus seven who were unaffiliated.¹⁶² A majority resolved that everyone in an enterprise should join the same union,¹⁶³ and factory committees should play a subsidiary role,¹⁶⁴ and be elected on the basis of party slates.¹⁶⁵ A Bolshevik reported a 'sharp shift in mood in our favour' in Narva and Moscow districts.¹⁶⁶ The First Machine-Gun Regiment was militant, highly literate and by far the largest unit in the garrison, and their Vyborg barracks was next door to the Bolshevik headquarters; but the government ordered half its crews to the front,¹⁶⁷ and gave them seven days to comply.¹⁶⁸

On the 21st *Pravda* appealed to workers and soldiers not to demonstrate until the 'heavy reserves' came over to their side, but skilled men among the 36,000 Putilov workers went on strike.¹⁶⁹ Around 100,000 demonstrators demanded all power to the soviets with banners reading 'Publish the Secret Treaties!', 'Down with the War!', 'No Confidence in the Government!' and 'Down with the Capitalist Ministers!'¹⁷⁰ The 40-year-old conscript demonstrators had a slogan. 'They asked us to sow more grain: so let us harvest it'.¹⁷¹ Armed Kronstadt sailors and two regiments added between 20,000 and 30,000 to the demonstration. At the Mariinsky Palace some district delegates argued for the overthrow of the government and there was support in the Bolshevik CC.¹⁷² Bolshevik

troops consulted other regiments.¹⁷³ The First Machine-Gun Regiment had decided to overthrow the government if it sent revolutionary regiments to the front,¹⁷⁴ but reluctantly agreed to send ten detachments instead of 30.¹⁷⁵

On the 22nd the Bolshevik city committee criticised the Kronstadt sailors' attempt to overthrow the government,¹⁷⁶ as premature, and argued for strengthening soviets and broadening explanatory work. It condemned the government's call for new elections to workers' and soldiers' soviets,¹⁷⁷ but would call for the overthrow of the government only when they had a majority on the soviet.¹⁷⁸ Representatives of 70 factory workers' committees resolved that 'the cause of the Putilov workers is the cause of the whole Petrograd proletariat',¹⁷⁹ though some metalworkers negotiated with the owners' Society.¹⁸⁰ Thousands of workers, sailors and soldiers converged on the city centre,¹⁸¹ but three were killed by machine-gun fire.¹⁸²

By the 23rd 63,000 copies of *Soldatskaya Pravda* were printed for garrison soldiers, and 15,000 of between 90,000 to 95,000 copies of *Pravda* for the front.¹⁸³ It reported that the Bolshevik soviet deputies had pressed the EC for an emergency meeting of the workers' section about to deal with counter-revolutionaries.¹⁸⁴ The soviet's *Izvestia* backed the government's plan to send 500 machine-guns to the front and arrest 8,000 recalcitrant front-line soldiers.¹⁸⁵ Around 5,000 metalworkers demanded that the government establish unemployment insurance.¹⁸⁶ Representatives of 73 factories and labour organisations met at the Putilov works and pressed for control of production and all power to the soviet.¹⁸⁷ At the Treugolnik rubber factory, after workers insisted, foremen walked out to protest at the sacking of 20 forewomen.¹⁸⁸ Olga Belova had been born in 1883,¹⁸⁹ in Ivanovo in the Donbas. She married Gavrilov, a factory clerk, joined the Bolsheviks in 1903 and was very active, but was arrested in 1905. Her father, who worked for the police, was sacked, and Gavrilova could not find work, so she set up a sewing workshop and propagandised. By 1914 she was an influential Bolshevik in Petrograd, but was sentenced to eight months in a fortress in 1915.¹⁹⁰ By 23 June 1917 she was struggling to lead 30 inexperienced young Bolshevik workers in the suburbs.¹⁹¹

Many delegates at the RSDRP congress had been concerned about the 'extremely tense' mood of garrison soldiers, and Sverdlov argued that it 'would be enough for the personnel of one workshop at any big factory to come out for ferment to seize all the workers and soldiers'. The Bolsheviks were trying 'to extinguish the blaze' since they did not believe direct action was advisable.¹⁹² The congress ended on the 24th.¹⁹³

On the 25th *Rabotnitsa* published a letter from the munitions worker Maria Kutsko. Some women got four rubles a day, but when the factory committee learned about wages elsewhere they increased theirs to 6.8 rubles.¹⁹⁴

On the 26th the civilian daily bread ration was cut by 15 percent,¹⁹⁵ to half a pound.¹⁹⁶ The First Machine-Gun Regiment, Anarchists and some Bolsheviks were ready to demonstrate.¹⁹⁷ Bolshevik motions were passed in Vyborg and other districts,¹⁹⁸ and Bolsheviks organised a conference of district soviets.¹⁹⁹ Around 2,000 soldiers supported the Bolshevik military committee and 4,000 were associated with 'Club Pravda'.²⁰⁰ The Putilov workers' committee and the district soviet established a 'revolutionary committee' to keep order.²⁰¹ Lesser-skilled workers were mainly SRs, and while skilled workers tended to be Menshevik defencists, they had little influence, except among printers, and Menshevik internationalists influenced a few factory workforces on Vasilievsky Island. In Vyborg, Narva and Petergofsky districts over 85 percent of the Bolshevik committee members were workers, as were over 82 percent in Petrograd district and over 83 percent in Nevsky district; and most other districts included 50 to 76 percent of workers.²⁰² In the Second City district 789 workers, 49 sailors, 25 soldiers and eight low-waged and salaried staff had joined the Bolsheviks,²⁰³ whose military committee claimed the support of 26,000 garrison troops.²⁰⁴ It planned a rising and sent emissaries to Vyborg factories, garrison units and Kronstadt.²⁰⁵ Stasova had been warned that there might be police raids next day, and Ulyanov spent the night at trade union offices in Furshtadtsky Street.²⁰⁶

News of the military defeats arrived by the 28th.²⁰⁷ The government banned meetings it deemed harmful to security or the war,²⁰⁸ and Rozhkov resigned as deputy minister of posts and telegraphs.²⁰⁹

On the 29th 37 delegates formed the All-Russian Union of Metallurgical Workers in Petrograd and elected a provisional CC,²¹⁰ which included one Menshevik, Gastev, and four Bolsheviks, with Shlyapnikov as chair.²¹¹ The All-Russian peasant congress merged with VTsIK, which claimed to represent over 20 million workers and soldiers.²¹² Delegates from a front-line regiment told the reserve battalion in Petrograd that Czech troops were driving them onto the offensive with machine-guns.²¹³

On the 30th the government abolished land commanders,²¹⁴ and removed police and district elders, so peasants could develop their own institutions.²¹⁵ In Petrograd restaurant and tea shop workers walked out, marched to the city centre,²¹⁶ and demanded a rise, better sanitary arrangements, and the abolition of child labour and body searches. They wanted to be addressed with the polite form of 'you', and the industry to be nationalised. Women rubber workers forced the dismissal of 20 forewomen for disrespectful treatment and got an abusive apprentice sacked, and the union supported them.²¹⁷

Ulyanov wrote to Sobelsohn in Stockholm that the Zimmerwald movement was a 'hindrance' and the sooner Bolsheviks 'break with it the better'. He asked for 3,000 or 4,000 rubles.²¹⁸ He and Ulyanova visited the radical poet

Demyan Bedny in Finland,²¹⁹ then walked to Bonch-Bruевич's dacha.²²⁰ On the 18th there had been mass demonstrations in Helsinki.²²¹ On the 30th Finnish SDs joined the Zimmerwaldists,²²² and the Russian government granted Finland independence.²²³

In an incomplete survey of Petrograd district committee members, a third were under 27, 60 percent were under 32, 22 percent were 33 to 36 and 18 percent were 37 or over. A.F. Smorodkina, an Optical Factory worker, recalled that 'Youths who had barely turned 20 were, at times, hardened fighters for the revolution'. They had joined the party 'at 17-18 or even 16 years, conducted illegal underground activity', and had 'sat out time in jail and exile'.²²⁴

During June, officially, 128 lockouts had involved over 38,400 city workers,²²⁵ and there had been 175,000 strikers,²²⁶ though 125 factories with 38,000 workers had closed.²²⁷ At the Putilov works 10,000 had been laid off, and output had fallen by over half so far that year.²²⁸ Workers requisitioned and distributed bread fairly, though strikes and lockouts had often turned into clashes with foremen and bosses.²²⁹ The city had received 62 percent of the grain it needed.²³⁰ The civilian monthly ration included 2.2 pounds of sugar, seven ounces of buckwheat, 17.6 ounces of fats, 28.2 ounces of meat and 20 eggs, though stocks were sometimes insufficient.²³¹ In a year the consumption of potatoes had been 71 percent of the 1916 figure, flour 53 percent, fish 51 percent, sugar 49 percent, vegetable fats 39 percent, butter 22 percent, eggs 18 percent, lard and pulses 14 percent, rice four percent and cheese three percent.²³² Since January the cost of living had risen by 70 percent.²³³

Since March Petrograd soviet had spent 490,000 of its 820,000 ruble income. The largest amount was for propagandising soldiers, while 51,000 rubles had been sent to provincial soviets and organisations.²³⁴ The RSDRP secretariat had interviewed 30 visitors and sent telegrams to 46 local organisations, but the Bolshevik CC acknowledged that their machinery 'creaked badly' outside Petrograd.²³⁵

The Moscow region

By June the Moscow soviet EC had 75 members and 700 deputies elected on the basis of one for every 500 workers, though no factory could send more than three. They included 205 Bolsheviks, 172 Mensheviks and 110 SRs. THE Bolsheviks had a majority in several district soviets,²³⁶ and though Mensheviks and SRs led the vast majority of factory committees,²³⁷ the Bolshevik-led committees had more members.²³⁸ Women predominated in chemical, food processing and tobacco factories, formed almost half of cotton workers and over 18 percent of metalworkers, though around 20,000 were in small workshops.²³⁹ Prices had risen by 276 percent since January,²⁴⁰ and by almost 83 percent in the past three months.²⁴¹ Moscow Metalworks employees agitated for an occupation and threatened managers and office staff.²⁴²

Over 60 trade unions claimed 474,000 members, but on the 13th the soviet rejected a Bolshevik proposal to give control to unions and factory workers' committees, though it voted for government intervention in disputes by 262 to 182.²⁴³ On the 18th there was a mass demonstration against the government.²⁴⁴ Zemliachka spoke to 5,000 at Moscow Metalworks and silenced SR defencists by suggesting that 'whoever wants war' should 'volunteer for the front'.²⁴⁵ She called on the RSDRP committee to get arms, but lost the vote.²⁴⁶ On the 19th the workers' committee at Moscow Metalworks submitted demands about pay and conditions, including some on behalf of the 400 or so women. On the 20th the owner threatened to close the works, but the government sequestered it.²⁴⁷ On the 21st there were demonstrations,²⁴⁸ and the three main socialist parties published lists of candidates for the duma elections, though only 40 were women. The 92 on the Bolshevik list were workers and a third were soviet deputies. The Menshevik list included 65 workers and the SR's 45. Over half of the Bolshevik and SR candidates, and almost half the Mensheviks, worked in metalworking or machine-building works. Most were aged under 39, and 44 percent of the Bolsheviks were under 30. Around 63 percent of 296,000 workers cast their ballots.²⁴⁹ SRs won almost 375,000 votes, Mensheviks just over 76,400 and Bolsheviks just over 75,400,²⁵⁰ yet Bolsheviks won 67 seats and Mensheviks eight.²⁵¹ Bolsheviks and Mensheviks at the Pokhorovskaya textile mill both won around 20 percent of the votes, though SRs won 58 percent.²⁵² A car plant director and his assistant were carted out in wheelbarrows.²⁵³ On the 28th Mensheviks voted against the government,²⁵⁴ and after Petrograd Mensheviks supported the government, Moscow Mensheviks followed suit. Skilled workers demanded six rubles a day and won 4.8, but unskilled workers much less. The cost of living had risen by a 17 percent that month, though around 1,050 railway wagonloads of grain had arrived. Armand carried out assignments for the RSDRP, then she and Zemliachka left for Kyiv.²⁵⁵ Kollontai was arrested at Tornio at the Finnish border, and taken to a Petrograd prison.²⁵⁶ She was charged with anti-war propaganda,²⁵⁷ transferred to Moscow's Butyrki Prison, interrogated, put in a solitary cell with a police guard,²⁵⁸ and denied literature and writing paper.²⁵⁹

Varvara Iakovleva had been born into the family a Moscow tradesman of Jewish descent who had converted to Orthodox Christianity in 1885. By 1904 she was studying at a women's college, joined the Bolsheviks and distributed

illegal literature. In 1905 she was violently assaulted on the chest at a demonstration. She was arrested in 1906 and 1907, and barred from the city, and late in 1910 she was sentenced to four years' exile in Narym in Siberia. She contracted tuberculosis, but escaped to Berlin for treatment, then went to Kraków in Poland and smuggled illegal literature and letters across the border. By autumn 1912 she was a CC agent in Moscow, but was exiled to Narym in 1913. She escaped to the capital, but was soon arrested and deported to Astrakhan. She returned to Moscow late in 1916, and by 1917 she was the secretary of the Moscow region committee,²⁶⁰ which had authority over the Moscow committee. It included Ivan Stukov, who had been born in 1887 and had joined the Bolsheviks in 1905.²⁶¹ By the end of June retail prices in the city had increased by 775 percent since January.²⁶²

During June, in the central industrial region, an Ivanovo workers' factory committee had thrown a sack over an unpopular worker and carted him out in a wheelbarrow.²⁶³ The nearby Teikovo soviet claimed to represent 6,000 cotton workers and argued for control of production.²⁶⁴ In the regional дума elections SRs won over half the seats in 33 places, and 44 percent in 240. The RSDRP factions won 28 percent between them,²⁶⁵ though Bolsheviks and other internationalists won a majority in Kolomna,²⁶⁶ Ivanovo, Luhansk and Orekhovo.²⁶⁷

Other key regions

In June the elections to the Estonian Maapäev (assembly) had been contested for the first time, and 150 delegates at the first military congress claimed to represent 50,000 troops.²⁶⁸ The government permitted the 'temporary organisation of local self-government' in Livonia and Courland.²⁶⁹ Bolsheviks triumphed in the дума elections in Tallinn, and in Minsk in Biełarus, and on the 18th there were demonstrations in Tallinn and Rīga.²⁷⁰ In Smolensk the metalworkers' union demanded workers' control on the 23rd,²⁷¹ and Bolsheviks won leading positions at the textile workers' union's regional conference.²⁷²

In Ukraine Serafima Gopner, a 36-year-old Old Bolshevik intelligentka, had returned from Paris, joined the RSDRP and held responsible positions.²⁷³ Bolsheviks were influential in Ekaterinoslav and elsewhere in the Donbas.²⁷⁴ The regional organisation had been 'very thin', but now claimed 11,500 members.²⁷⁵ Bolsheviks had a majority in many factory committees, and workers had won an eight-hour day by negotiation or by imposing it unilaterally.²⁷⁶ On the 10th the Rada claimed 'exclusive competence' in Ukrainian affairs,²⁷⁷ though a quarter of the population were Russians, Jews or Poles.²⁷⁸ On the 18th there were mass demonstrations in Kharkiv and Kyiv.²⁷⁹ Over 700 delegates at a military congress in Kyiv claimed to represent almost a million soldiers,²⁸⁰ and Rada leaders wanted separate Ukrainian army units.²⁸¹ On the 21st a peasant subscribed for three copies of *Izvestia*.²⁸² Kharkiv foundry workers threw a bucket of heavy oil and lead over the director and carried him out of the works. On the 27th a metalworkers' conference gave the owners five days to meet their demands or be replaced by elected engineers.²⁸³ In Iuzovka unpopular managers and engineers had been chased out of several mines and the New Russia factory, and workers had extracted pay rises by threats of violence. The Bolsheviks elected two delegates to the All-Russian congress of soviets, and re-established the Iuzovka-Makiivka-Petrovsky committee, which had 17 members and five non-voting alternates. They organised large-scale propaganda, contacted the CC, required members to subscribe to *Pravda* and ordered 50 copies of *Golos Pravdy*. The flight of industrialists had left many workers without jobs, money and food, though Luhansk Bolsheviks took weapons from secret stores dating back to 1905, or from soldiers, and set up armed units. On the 29th Bakhmut soviet supported VTsIK.²⁸⁴ Mensheviks and SRs encouraged troops to agitate workers,²⁸⁵ and Mensheviks wanted 'cultural-national autonomy'.²⁸⁶ The average wage in Donbas metalworks was twice that in 1916, though production had almost halved,²⁸⁷ and coal output had fallen by 36 percent since 1914.²⁸⁸

In Saratov on the Volga Mensheviks and Bolsheviks had separate lists of candidates for the soviet elections on 1 June. Bolsheviks won 85 to 90 seats, Mensheviks 65 to 70 and SRs 44, though Bolsheviks won 98 seats in the soldiers' section, Mensheviks 97 and SRs 50. In the EC elections 12 Bolsheviks, 12 Mensheviks and six SRs were successful. The Menshevik paper sold 5,000 copies, the Bolsheviks' daily *Sotsial-Demokrat* 10,000, and the SR paper 30,000. Nikolaevsk soviet sacked the district commissar and installed their own. On the 6th an army deserter was shot and 1,000 were arrested. By the 12th, after *Sotsial-Demokrat* published the April theses, the Bolsheviks had a city-wide organisation and called for an end to the war. Over 1,000 reserve soldiers aged over 40 petitioned to be allowed to remain until after the harvest. The soviet supported the military offensive on the 18th, though some reserves refused to take part, and insisted that the ten capitalist ministers 'had to go'. The same happened in Tsaritsyn, where Bolsheviks and SR internationalists led the garrison. On the 19th, after consulting workers in five Volga organisations, a Bolshevik conference concluded that 'a bridge cannot be built' with all the Mensheviks, though it might be possible with internationalists,²⁸⁹ and delegates accepted the April theses.²⁹⁰ On the 24th Saratov soviet elected a new EC. SRs won 13 seats, Bolsheviks nine and Mensheviks eight. SR internationalists and Bolsheviks dominated the full soviet, but a majority refused to back an anti-war demonstration. Around 5,000 troops elected

a committee and days later it merged with the soviet's soldiers' committee. The Mensheviks formed a separate organisation, and they and SR defencists formed a bloc for the дума elections,²⁹¹ but the Bolsheviks were more successful.²⁹² During June the Saratov authorities had rationed bread and there had been riots. Citizens had beaten thieves and hooligans, and formed night patrols in some districts to support the militia. Around 20,000 soldiers had returned to Saratov province villages on furlough, and officially there had been peasant unrest on 48 occasions. Delegates from 26 factories in Saratov, Samara, Simbirsk and Penza provinces had discussed economic issues, their employers' efforts to avoid military service and attempts to sow dissent among workers, between workers and peasants and between workers and soldiers. The SRs' main strength in Saratov was in the barracks, where anti-war sentiment was increasing, though the soviet held sway over the province.²⁹³ Peasants in Penza province were 'seizing the land without compensation or paying a quarter of the rent', and 'taking over the landlord's stock'.²⁹⁴ Around 2,000 Samara clerks and hotel workers had gone on strike,²⁹⁵ and SR internationalists in Kazan had formed a peasant soviet.²⁹⁶

In Transcaucasia troops foraged in the countryside, or deserted to Tbilisi, where they formed most of the audiences at Bolshevik meetings.²⁹⁷ The city's Bolsheviks and Mensheviks had separate organisations,²⁹⁸ and on the 10th the Bolsheviks won 14 seats on the soviet, SRs 12 and Mensheviks eight. In Kutaisi and Batumi garrison soldiers protested against the military offensive.²⁹⁹ On the 17th the grain reaching the region's cities was less than ten percent of that in January. Menshevik defencists held a conference on the 24th,³⁰⁰ but around 4,000 soldiers voted for a Bolshevik motion calling for an end to the offensive, and on the 25th around 10,000 joined a Bolshevik-led protest march.³⁰¹ Bolsheviks marched separately from Mensheviks, but were beaten up, and their banners with political slogans were torn down.³⁰² Troops shouted down Menshevik speakers, supported Bolshevik motions,³⁰³ condemned the soviet's support for the offensive, and threatened to lynch its EC. On the 26th the garrison commander reported that the soldiers would not fight, and military training school cadets were the only trustworthy unit.³⁰⁴ The soviet banned soldiers' meetings.³⁰⁵ Five Georgian SDs attended VTsIK, where Chkhenkeli argued that the struggle for socialism was also a struggle for national liberation. On the 29th a crowd in Tbilisi listened to Bolshevik speeches for four hours.³⁰⁶ SDs supplied food to over 300,000 people in the city and around 500,000 front-line soldiers, but peasants would not sell grain for paper money, or pay rent and taxes, and occupied land illegally. The RSDRP regional congress attracted 231 delegates who claimed to represent 60,000 members, and agreed that the constituent assembly should nationalise land. The Menshevik spokesman argued for an eight-hour day in factories, except defence works, plus social security, employment protection for women and children, powers for trade unions to control hiring and firing and freedom to strike as a last resort. Delegates adopted *ertoba* (*unity*) as their paper. That month there had been at least eight strikes in Tbilisi, though the Menshevik Zhordania had agreed to the arrest of striking water workers,³⁰⁷ and the Bolsheviks had conducted a campaign against the Mensheviks in *Kavkazsky Rabochy* (*Caucasian Worker*).³⁰⁸

By June SRs dominated Baki soviet in Azerbaijan. On the 1st around 1,000 people attacked an official who they mistakenly took for a member of the food supply committee. On the 4th three Mensheviks left the editorial board of *Bakinsky Proletary* (*Baki Proletarian*),³⁰⁹ but the Bolsheviks' *Bakinski Rabotchi* (*Baki Worker*) had received 2,116 rubles by the 7th.³¹⁰ On the 17th Musavat merged with Turkic federalists, and became the main political force among Muslims,³¹¹ whose leaders radically criticised the government's handling of the war.³¹² A council of Muslim public associations met in in Gəncə, and a south Ossetian congress called for a national administration.³¹³

During June around 12,000 workers and soldiers in the Kuban region had telegraphed the government and VTsIK to end the 'counter-revolutionary' actions of 'the right and the extreme left and bring us closer to peace without annexations or indemnities on the basis of the self-determination of peoples,' and lead the country until the constituent assembly.³¹⁴

Officially, across Russia, there had been 988 cases of peasants taking direct action in 280 districts,³¹⁵ and 120 cases of organised violence to every 100 instances of unorganised violence since mid-April.³¹⁶ Nationally peasants had seized land, felled trees or stolen equipment 577 times and destroyed 22 manor houses.³¹⁷ Since February peasant committees and other organisations had had virtually unchallenged control of rural affairs,³¹⁸ though they ignored the request of 30 women to postpone the division of land until their husbands returned from the front. Soldiers' wives had rioted in Voronezh province, scattered boundary posts and encouraged others with cries of 'Smash it, women, you won't be punished'. They raided farms of well-to-do peasants, destroyed kitchen gardens, removed windows and doors, broke stoves, and demolished or stole furniture, household implements and other property. In one village, where their allowances were delayed, they rioted for three weeks.³¹⁹ Wholesale prices had risen by 702 percent on average since January and retail prices by 365 percent.³²⁰

Nationally the 500,000 workers' cooperative members were largely under Menshevik influence,³²¹ though Bolsheviks in Minsk, Tbilisi, Nizhni-Novgorod, Omsk, Tomsk, Odesa, Mykolaev, Zlatoust, Kostroma, Sevastopol and Vitebsk had separated from the Mensheviks. There were 288 city committees,³²² and Bolsheviks led almost all the

major soviets,³²³ Nizhni Novgorod, Odesa, Tbilisi and Ekaterinburg the soviets were against socialists entering the government.³²⁴ Officially 91 percent of 114,270 strikers had made economic demands,³²⁵ and the average size of the workforces involved was 228. Another account claimed that there had been 174,700 strikers.³²⁶ Another claimed that 51 strikes had involved 61,970 workers who had challenged management authority.³²⁷ The number of provincial strikes had doubled, and included one in Kokland in Central Asia.³²⁸

The government believed Russia faced bankruptcy. There was runaway inflation and the transport situation was 'dreadful'. There were shortages of food and other necessities in the cities,³²⁹ and the production of fuel and raw materials had fallen by at least a third so far that year.³³⁰ Since March the government had printed three billion rubles,³³² including 869 million in June.³³³ Around 11.2 billion were in circulation;³³⁴ but a US mission announced 'No war. No loans'.³³⁵ Altogether the war had cost 10.5 billion rubles,³³⁶ and during June it cost 55.2 million a day.

The war

By June the Russian army had lost over 5,330,000 troops since the start of the war,³³⁷ but there were 7.2 million on the front lines.³³⁸ Most of those who were politically-aligned supported SRs or Mensheviks,³³⁹ though Bolsheviks were replacing them on committees,³⁴⁰ and the Latvian NCOs Fyodor Linde and Dmitry Oskin were commissars.³⁴¹ Latvian Bolsheviks claimed to represent over 1,500 troops and 200 reserves,³⁴² and controlled workers' councils.³⁴³

Over 60,000 revolutionary leaflets had been smuggled into Germany.³⁴⁴ The minister in Bern had heard that 'peace propaganda is growing steadily stronger', and around 300,000 copies of *Pravda* were being printed in Russia.³⁴⁵ Russian troops in western Ukraine read it, though others read the Russian language paper published by the German General Staff.³⁴⁶ The Swiss legation in Petrograd sent a coded telegram to Grimm on the 3rd to say that German troops would not launch an offensive while an agreement with the Russian government seemed possible, but after the Swiss government published the telegram,³⁴⁷ the police deported Grimm.³⁴⁸ On the 6th, when Kerensky visited the front, a bomb partly wrecked his train.³⁴⁹ Some German front-line troops had been transferred to the west,³⁵⁰ and the Galician front had been fairly quiet.³⁵¹ There were 31 Russian divisions,³⁵² which outnumbered the Austro-Hungarians.³⁵³ Thanks to Britain, France and the USA the Russians' heavy guns outnumbered the enemy's by over five to one, and were around 30 yards apart along a 60 mile front. They opened a breach over 18 miles wide on the 10th,³⁵⁴ and after a two-day bombardment, Austro-Hungarian troops abandoned their trenches.³⁵⁵ On the 16th Russian troops attacked on 28 mile front towards Lwów. One corps took the first trenches in 20 minutes, though an artillery colonel's watch was eight minutes slow and his guns killed Russians.³⁵⁶ By the 19th the Austro-Hungarians had counter-attacked feebly, since reserves had not arrived.³⁵⁷ Russian troops had taken 28,000 prisoners;³⁵⁸ but were exhausted and had no reliable reserves,³⁵⁹ but German reinforcements had arrived by the 21st,³⁶⁰ and stopped the Russian advance.³⁶¹ Sokolov and other members of the soviet EC visited the front and tried to persuade two regiments to fight, but were beaten up.³⁶²

Botchkareva's battalion had shaved their heads and had to wear ill-fitting men's uniforms.³⁶³ She was promoted to ensign, and on the 23rd the battalion set off for Bielarus.³⁶⁴ In western Ukraine Shklovsky's unit and other troops had consolidated their position, but three regiments deserted, and another did not go where it was told to, and the front collapsed. Shklovsky was shot in the stomach and sent to a Petrograd hospital, but was soon discharged. He was posted as a commissar to the occupying army at Tabriz in Persia, saw the chaos that followed the withdrawal of Russian troops and was posted as a commissar on the southwestern front. On the way he found no soviet in Kyiv, and went on to army headquarters at Kamenets-Podolsk. Companies were often only 40 strong, and were barefoot and sick, while some divisions had 900 men. Reinforcements rarely arrived, and those that did demoralised survivors. Some trains did not contain one literate person, even among the officers.³⁶⁵

The Seventh Army on the southwestern front had lost around 15,000 troops, including well over 1,700 killed and over 6,500 wounded, but had captured 4,250 enemy troops.³⁶⁶ Kerensky privately conceded that the 'breakthrough' was 'unstable',³⁶⁷ and on the 25th shock battalions arrested 12,000 deserters.³⁶⁸ On the 27th some front-line troops complained about 'Bolshevik Anarchists' from Petrograd who were 'travelling up and down' with the slogans of 'Down with the war' and 'Down with the offensive!'³⁶⁹

The post of governor-general of Poland had been abolished and Polish prisoners of war had been freed.³⁷⁰ Many front-line commanders reported indiscipline and fraternisation, and morale had fallen even lower.³⁷¹ Around 8,540 soldiers had deserted from the western front, over 13,750 from the northern front and almost 3,800 from the Romanian front.³⁷² Generals on the Caucasian front tended to favour a constitutional monarchy, and their troops were mainly based around Chişinău in Bessarabia; but the army was disintegrating,³⁷³ and Russian advances stopped on the 30th.³⁷⁴ By then there were 2.3 million reserves in the rear,³⁷⁵ plus up to 1.3 million deserters.³⁷⁶

7. The July Days

Only a fool could conclude that the demonstration should not take place

By July the RSDRP published 29 periodicals in Russian, nationally, and 12 in other languages.¹ The Bolsheviks published 27 in Russian, five in Latvian, two each in Lithuanian and Estonian, and one each in Polish, Georgian and Azerbaijani, and 14 of the 17 dailies were in Russian, including *Pravda*. Five other papers were bi-weeklies, seven were weeklies, three were fortnightly and one was a monthly.²

The Bolsheviks claimed 30,620 members in Petrograd, and three-quarters were workers. The Vyborg committee had included over 50 since February, and Bolsheviks had a majority in the workers' section of the soviet. The city's metalworkers' union claimed 82,000 members and the textile workers' union claimed 28,000. Men's shifts at a Vyborg spinning mill had fallen from 11.4 to 8.7 hours a day, while women worked from ten to 7.8 hours.³ Workers in 84 factories employing 230,000 had control, and another quarter of plants had some control.⁴

Vladimir Mescheriakov had been born in Tambov province in 1885. He studied at Tambov realschule and later the capital's Polytechnic. In 1908 after some time in prison, he was sentenced to three years and four months of exile without trial in Irkutsk province in Siberia. In 1912 he escaped and in 1913 he left for France. After the February 1917 revolution he returned to Russia and was soon elected as a member of the Rozhdestvensky rural district council in Petrograd, and later appointed as the responsible organizer of the district committee. In July he became the chair of the Union of Leaders in Vyborg, and the organizer of the Bolsheviks' district committee.⁵

Krupskaya and Bronislavovna focussed on three young female Bolsheviks. Liza Pylaeva spoke to 3,000 workers, was elected to the youth organisation's EC and joined the Red Guards,⁶ who claimed 20,000 single, literate and skilled members, and half were aged under 25.⁷ The city's grain stocks would last 20 days,⁸ but there was a shortage of wood for heating,⁹ and post workers went on strike for more pay.¹⁰ Mekhonoshin, Podvoisky and Krivobokov led the Bolshevik military committee,¹¹ and Goldstein was the chief agitator.¹² With some Anarcho-Communists they had agitated the First Machine-Gun Regiment for a fortnight,¹³ and a machine-gunner announced at a Bolshevik conference that they were seeking support from other units and workers for a demonstration. The RSDRP CC argued against, but the machine-gunner insisted that 'leaving the party was preferable to opposing a decision of their Regiment'. The Bolshevik military committee sent agitators to other regiments,¹⁴ and Krivobokov 'gave advice in such a way that only a fool could conclude that the demonstration should not take place'.¹⁵

On the 2nd Bronstein argued in *Pravda* that there were no differences between the Mezhraiontsy and the Bolsheviks,¹⁶ and he and Lunacharsky told units of the First Machine-Gun Regiment that only soviet power could stop the war.¹⁷ Most Mezhraiontsy were intelligently, and about 60 percent supported the Bolsheviks and 40 percent the Mensheviks,¹⁸ though Mensheviks formed around 55 percent of the delegates at a national trade union conference, and Bolsheviks around 36 percent.¹⁹ A newspaper reported heavy losses at the front,²⁰ and a government delegation returned from Kyiv and reported that they had agreed to recognise the Rada,²¹ including the command of over 900,000 soldiers.²² Four Kadet ministers resigned,²³ and 11,340 members of First Machine-Gun Regiment denounced Kerensky.²⁴ The Bolshevik CC called for a 'peaceful, organised demonstration',²⁵ and sponsored a concert to raise money for anti-war literature;²⁶ but the *Rabonitsa* editors hid their type and back numbers.²⁷ Several regimental committees refused to join the demonstration, though others maintained a 'benevolent neutrality'. Half of VTSIK's 300 members had been elected on the basis of proportional representation of political groups, with 100 from workers' and soldiers' soviets and 50 from the Petrograd soviet EC. Vyborg factories stopped work, and the director of the main food store was plastered with rotten meat and dragged through the streets.²⁸ The Anarcho-Syndicalist Vsevolod Eichenbaum had returned from the USA and was struck by the number of advertisements for Bolshevik meetings all over the city. An Anarcho-Syndicalist movement did not exist,²⁹ though one activist called for the immediate overthrow of the government. By noon a provisional 'revolutionary committee', including Bolsheviks and Anarchists, had been elected, pending a meeting of delegates from military units and factories. They sent out patrols, posted guards, armed civilians, commandeered military vehicles,³⁰ identified key points to capture and called on soldiers and workers to demonstrate.³¹ A tram worker had 42 rifles hidden at the depot.³² Red Guards borrowed armoured cars, and were supported by large numbers of women fighters and medical assistants.³³ The First Machine-Gun Regiment had readied their weapons, and their committee met other military activists. Thousands of soldiers aged over 40 decided to demonstrate against being sent to the front, and the Bolshevik military committee was put on alert.³⁴ The government could count on three regiments,³⁵ and eight squadrons of Don Cossacks,³⁶ and it ordered a general to disarm the machine-gunners and occupy Bolshevik headquarters.³⁷ Kronstadt sailors telephoned Jughashvili to ask if they should come to the

demonstration armed. He replied: 'We scribblers always carry our arm, the pencil. As for you, with your arms, it is for you to decide.'³⁸ Around 50,000 troops surrounded the Tauride Palace, which had 18 defenders until a loyal regiment arrived. Late that afternoon storm clouds broke and most demonstrators dispersed,³⁹ and Krylenko left for army headquarters.⁴⁰

By 2.00am on the 3rd tens of thousands of armed soldiers were on the streets.⁴¹ The SRs' *Zemlya i Volya (Land and Freedom)* had been closed,⁴² but SR internationalists decided to demonstrate. About 2.5 tons of arms had been distributed,⁴³ and Red Guards and Vyborg metalworkers marched to Bolshoi Sampsonievsky Prospekt and joined the machine-gunners by late afternoon.⁴⁴ At Kronstadt there was an army corps and around 70,000 sailors, but the commander reported that there was 'not one unit that I can rely on',⁴⁵ and the soldiers' and sailors' soviets demanded that Petrograd soviet take power. Tsentrobalt had learned about the government's plan to send four destroyers to the capital, and the Helsinki commander intended to stop warships going there, even if it meant sinking them.⁴⁶ Tsentrobalt warned other crews,⁴⁷ and sailors killed 120 officers, including an admiral,⁴⁸ and many others were jailed or fled.⁴⁹ A First Machine-Gun Regiment delegation, led by a woman and Fyodor Ilyin, visited Kronstadt, and spoke about the attack on the Anarchists in Petrograd.⁵⁰ Anarchists urged sailors to join the demonstration,⁵¹ and around 10,000 armed sailors boarded barges for Petrograd.⁵² The First Machine-Gun Regiment and two other units marched to the Smolny, booed two speakers who wanted them to return to their barracks,⁵³ then went to the Tauride Palace and demanded that the soviet take power. They had appealed to Putilov workers to ignore their factory committee and join them, and late that day they marched to the Palace.⁵⁴ Some members of VTsIK argued that the attempt to impose the will of a few regiments on Russia was 'plunging a dagger into the back of the revolutionary army';⁵⁵ but a majority of the soviet's workers' section disagreed.⁵⁶ The government ordered the military district commander to rid the streets of demonstrators,⁵⁷ and around 11.00pm troops with machine-guns shot them, but the Bolsheviks called for a demonstration next day. E.I. Spets of the Bolshevik military committee and the First Machine-Gun Regiment asked the third battalion in Oranienbaum to leave for Petrograd next morning 'with all available machine-guns and rifles and as much ammunition as possible'. By midnight around eight regiments surrounded the Tauride Palace, and the crowd was between 60,000 and 70,000;⁵⁸ but the soviet and All-Russian peasants' soviet ECs branded demonstrators as 'counter-revolutionary' and blamed the Bolsheviks.⁵⁹

Around 1.00am on 4 July the Bolshevik CC called for a 'peaceful organised demonstration' in support of all power to the soviets,⁶⁰ though demonstrators should be armed. By 2.00am 30,000 Putilov workers surrounded the Tauride Palace,⁶¹ and announced their intention to stay until the soviet took power.⁶² By 4.00am Jughashvili had composed a leaflet calling on workers to support the demonstration. It was backed by the Bolshevik CC, and their Petrograd and military committees.⁶³ The Bolsheviks' new press could print 300,000 copies of *Pravda*.⁶⁴ Apfelbaum and Rozenfeld had written a front-page article calling for the demonstration to be abandoned, but it was withdrawn and nothing was put in its place,⁶⁵ yet a *Pravda* seller was shot dead.⁶⁶ The telephones at the *Pravda* offices were disconnected, and at 5.00am army officers and Cossacks ransacked the place,⁶⁷ beat and arrested guards and workers and destroyed the rotary presses and linotype machines.⁶⁸ A civilian with a rifle addressed the crowd outside the Tauride Palace. 'Comrades, how long are we workers going to put up with treachery?!' The soviet had made 'deals with the bourgeoisie and the landlords' and were 'betraying' the working class.⁶⁹ Tens of thousands denounced SRs and Mensheviks for surrendering to them.⁷⁰ By mid-morning over 270,000 workers were on strike.⁷¹ Most shops and banks had opened, but then closed. Trams had stopped running,⁷² and up to 500,000 demonstrators were on the streets.⁷³

At Kronstadt government troops had stopped some sailors from leaving and lynched some Bolsheviks and workers,⁷⁴ though Anchor Square was 'filled with orderly columns' of sailors, soldiers and workers with bands and red flags.⁷⁵ About 20,000 sailors reached Petrograd by 10.20am and seized the Fortress.⁷⁶ They had at least 60,000 rifle rounds, 500 revolver rounds, a medical team and a band,⁷⁷ and wore their cap ribbons inside out to avoid their warships being identified.⁷⁸ The soviet military committee had appointed Alexandr Ilyin as commissar of his battalion and a grenadier regiment, and they kept three of the Neva bridges open.⁷⁹ Demonstrators set up machine-guns on bridges, overturned trams, and clashed with Black Hundreds. The Bolshevik military committee had persuaded 8,000 garrison troops to join the demonstration,⁸⁰ including many aged over 40.⁸¹ A military attaché at the French embassy had told a Russian official that Sumenson had withdrawn 800,000 rubles from her 980,000 ruble account, and showed copies of telegrams about money transfers to Fürstenberg.⁸² Around 3.00pm the government announced that the émigré Bolsheviks had received money from the German General Staff,⁸³ and the justice minister asked Ensign Dmitry Ermolenko and the former Bolshevik Grigory Alexinsky to compile a communiqué based on this unchecked material.⁸⁴ According to Himmer, 'not one person really connected with the revolution' believed it, and the chief of the intelligence section of the military district had no proof.⁸⁵ A worker who claimed to represent 54 factories addressed VTsIK. 'We demand that all the land be seized' and 'control over

production be instituted immediately!' 'We are threatened with hunger. We demand the resignations of the ten capitalist ministers. We trust the Soviet but not those whom the Soviet trusts.'⁸⁶ A worker shook his fist at the SR leader Chernov and shouted furiously. 'Take the power, you son of a bitch, when they give it to you', and Bronstein had to save him from the angry crowd.⁸⁷ A Putilov worker, rifle in hand, declared that they were determined not to disperse 'until the ten capitalist ministers are arrested and the soviet takes power'. When the Menshevik Gurvich, the soviet chair, demanded that those unwilling to accept the results of a vote should leave a meeting, Bolsheviks and Mezhraiontsy walked out.⁸⁸ By midnight the demonstrations had ended, but at least 400 had been killed or wounded,⁸⁹ though another report gave 700.⁹⁰ Seven Cossacks had been killed and 19 wounded.⁹¹

That night Ulyanov and Krupskaya stayed at Sulimova's flat on the Karpovka embankment in Petrograd district, and very early on the 5th, after visiting the *Pravda* press, they walked to Kayurov's flat in Vyborg, and passed government troops on their way to wreck the press.⁹² An article by Ulyanov called for all power to the soviets, but a right-wing newspaper published the allegations against him,⁹³ and Sobelsohn left for Stockholm.⁹⁴ The RSDRP CC and the Mezhraiontsy had decided not to demonstrate.⁹⁵ At dawn the city authorities closed the bridges.⁹⁶ The government banned Bolshevik papers,⁹⁷ and ordered the dispersal of the Council of the Popular Militias, even though it had kept a low profile.⁹⁸ A Bolshevik CC member wrote to the provinces. 'We are temporarily without newspapers,' though the organisation was not broken.⁹⁹ The organiser Ekaterina Tarasova overheard another woman worker. 'We who were nothing and have become everything, shall construct a new and better world'.¹⁰⁰ Tarasova was organising a first-aid unit at an armaments works in Vyborg, but that morning a Menshevik woman had agitated her workmates. They threw nuts and bolts at her and screamed that she was a German spy, but when her face and hands were bleeding profusely some of them helped to dress her wounds.¹⁰¹ Around 11.00am, at the Baltic shipyard, where Mensheviks and SRs predominated, about 4,000 of the 5,000 workers came out on strike, and armed soldiers arrived with a band and banners bearing Bolshevik slogans.¹⁰² Militants had stolen arms from the Artillery School.¹⁰³ Formerly neutral regiments marched to the Tauride Palace and pledged support to the soviet and the government, but government troops raided the metalworkers' union headquarters. The Bolshevik CC asked comrades, workers and soldiers to do their utmost to call off the demonstrations.¹⁰⁴

By noon government troops had cleared the streets;¹⁰⁵ but Red Guards were in a state of readiness, and there were political strikes in Vyborg. Sudrabs argued for a general strike, but though the Bolshevik city committee narrowly rejected the idea,¹⁰⁶ the Vyborg district secretary disobeyed CC instructions and called for action.¹⁰⁷ Around 5,000 men and women out at the Shlisselburg gunpowder mills demanded that the soviet EC take power.¹⁰⁸ In the capital rumours circulated about plans to arrest soldiers who had demonstrated.¹⁰⁹ A delegation from the First Machine-Gun Regiment told Putilov cannon shop workers that the government intended to send more troops to the front, and though the Bolshevik-led factory committee opposed an armed demonstration, when the delegation announced to a crowd of 10,000 that they had machine-guns on trucks, the workers shouted 'Let's move'.¹¹⁰ At 3.00pm two delegates from the First Machine-Gun Regiment reported to the Smolny. 'Our regiment is at the point of being broken up. We are being mocked at. We cannot wait any longer. We have decided to rise'.¹¹¹ Around 25,000 armed Putilov workers and 30,000 from Vyborg, plus machine-gunners and sailors, arrived at Bolshevik headquarters,¹¹² and after leaders failed to persuade them to leave, the military committee announced that it would lead the movement,¹¹³ though Ulyanov spoke to workers and soldiers,¹¹⁴ and called for self-restraint.¹¹⁵ Troops and armed Vyborg workers neared the Tauride Palace; but by mid-afternoon government snipers fired on demonstrators,¹¹⁶ and others fired canon, killing five.¹¹⁷ By 4.00pm hundreds had been killed.¹¹⁸ The soviet EC announced a meeting in two weeks' time to 'decide the question of organising a new government'. Mensheviks and SR defencists demanded a socialist government 'capable of moving the revolution forward'. Around 90 delegates from 54 factories and several regiments entered the Tauride Palace.¹¹⁹ They insisted that the ten capitalist ministers had to resign, industry had to be nationalised under workers' control, land had to be seized and transferred to the peasantry and army orders had to be annulled.¹²⁰ At 5.00pm more workers and parts of two military units joined the demonstration.¹²¹ Regiments left their barracks fully armed, and the commander of the military district begged headquarters for reliable troops.¹²² At 6.00pm the soviet called for troops,¹²³ and some left the northern front.¹²⁴ In Petrograd machine-gunners on trucks headed to the Vyborg factories still at work, and closed them, and four regiments looked set to join the demonstration.¹²⁵ At 7.00pm Putilov workers reached the Tauride Palace, 'bearing themselves extremely aggressively'.¹²⁶ One waved his rifle in the air and insisted that 'We're going to have our way. All power to the soviets!'¹²⁷ The soviet had few troops to guard the entrances, though they managed to clear the building.¹²⁸ Machine-gunners took the Finland Station, and trucks with machine-guns rushed along Nevsky Prospekt. Around 7.45pm one arrived at the Baltic Station to arrest Kerensky, but he had left two hours earlier. Delegates at a conference of factory workers tried to restrain the demonstration, but at 8.00pm three battalions of the First Machine-Gun Regiment assembled in battledress on Samsonievsky Prospekt, and the provisional revolutionary committee gave the order to march.¹²⁹ Two formerly neutral regiments went to defend

the Tauride Palace,¹³⁰ and government troops disarmed demonstrators. Naumov noted that the workers at the Lessner works were 'morose' after hearing the claims about the Bolshevik émigrés, but 'not all are sufficiently armed to repulse the poisonous fumes of slander seeping into the shops', 'our views are passed on in a distorted manner', and there was 'repression, repression everywhere'.¹³¹ Anarcho-Syndicalists defended Ulyanov.¹³² The Bolshevik military committee's units in the garrison were put on alert. By 9.00pm hundreds of others had joined them, but were defeated.¹³³ Young Bolshevik workers who sought to 'defend Ulyanov's honour' had been beaten up and some had been jailed. When one returned home and told his parents he had been punched in the mouth at a police station, his 48-year-old father, a Putilov forge worker and a veteran of 1905, 'leaped up, knocking over his chair, and shouted: "And you let him get away with it, you mangy one? You should have given him one in the mug, with an inkwell, a revolver, a chair. A worker should not tolerate a blow from a bourgeois. He hit you? Well, then return it. Akh, you shithead"'. The father joined the Red Guards,¹³⁴ who had lost members.¹³⁵ The First Machine-Gun Regiment returned to barracks, and the drenched Putilov workers went home.¹³⁶ Fyodor Ilyn was appointed as commandant of the Smolny,¹³⁷ and the Bolshevik CC met in the Reno factory watchman's hut.¹³⁸

Anarcho-Communists had decided to mobilise on the 6th, but at 3.00am government troops launched a major offensive against the Bolsheviks.¹³⁹ More newspapers published the smears against the returned émigrés,¹⁴⁰ but *Sotsial-Democrat* vehemently refuted them.¹⁴¹ *Rabochy i Soldat* reappeared, and Krivobokov toured provincial military units in disguise.¹⁴² In Petrograd, at dawn, government troops on Palace Square heard speeches by soviet leaders, then surrounded the Fortress.¹⁴³ They took the defenders' arms, but released them,¹⁴⁴ and many garrison troops surrendered. At 7.00am the commander of the military district, supported by the soviet EC, ordered that the telephone lines between the Smolny and disloyal regiments be cut. Many Bolsheviks had moved to the Fortress, and the commander insisted that they surrender unconditionally. Pylaeva, Nina Bogoslavskaya, who worked for the Bolshevik city committee, and Lisa Koksharova from a Red Guard first-aid unit,¹⁴⁵ dressed as nurses and slipped out of the Fortress, carrying Party funds and documents under bandages. When government troops demanded to know what was in their baskets, Pylaeva replied 'Dynamite and revolvers!' The troops criticised her bad taste but let them go,¹⁴⁶ though the 500 fighters at the Smolny surrendered.¹⁴⁷ Most sailors had returned to Kronstadt,¹⁴⁸ though some remained.¹⁴⁹ In Petrograd district fewer than 100 of about 4,000 Bolsheviks had left the organisation, though many were inactive,¹⁵⁰ and hid their weapons.¹⁵¹ More government troops arrived,¹⁵² and the Anarchists were ordered to leave the villa, but several thousand workers from 28 factories went on strike to support them.¹⁵³ Reportedly 29 demonstrators had been killed and 114 wounded, and about as many government troops.¹⁵⁴ At Nevsky shipyard 30 of the 8,000 workers were Bolsheviks,¹⁵⁵ and Bolsheviks won two-thirds of the delegates to the All-Russian congress of soviets. Many SR internationalists had been arrested, but two SRs assassinated the German ambassador. Spiridonova admitted that she ordered the execution and 13 SRs were shot.¹⁵⁶

Marta-Ella Liepin had been born into a carpenter's family in a small town in northern Latvia in 1892.¹⁵⁷ She joined the Bolsheviks in 1911,¹⁵⁸ and smuggled in revolutionary literature. In 1915 she was exiled to Siberia, but got a fellow exile's legal passport,¹⁵⁹ and escaped to Petrograd in 1916. In 1917, after the February revolution,¹⁶⁰ she became the secretary of the Vyborg Bolshevik committee and helped to set up an illegal press.¹⁶¹ On 6 July when she returned to the office after lunch a man stood in the doorway. When she asked what he wanted he shoved her out of the way, but she fought back. It was Jughashvili.¹⁶² Most leading Bolsheviks, including him, were not molested.¹⁶³ He liaised between the CC and Ulyanov, and wanted to 'discard the obsolete idea that only Europe can show us the way. There exists a dogmatic Marxism and a creative one. I am opting for the latter'.¹⁶⁴ That evening, in Vyborg, the Bolshevik CC met Krivobokov and Podvoisky, who wanted another demonstration, and though Ulyanov, Sverdlov, Jughashvili and Fedorov were in favour, Rozenfeld, Nogin, Apfelbaum and others were against. Ulyanov argued unsuccessfully that the slogan of all power to the soviets was outdated and should be changed to 'All power to the working class led by its revolutionary party – the Bolshevik Communists'.¹⁶⁵ The CC removed Jughashvili from the editorial boards of *Prosveshchenie* and *Pravda*,¹⁶⁶ and unanimously elected Bronstein.¹⁶⁷ Krupskaya, Elizarova and an illiterate servant woman had been taken to military headquarters for questioning, but were released late that night.¹⁶⁸ The government announced that anyone 'inciting officers, soldiers, and other military ranks to disobey the law would be 'punished as for state treason',¹⁶⁹ and anyone involved in 'arbitrary actions, arrests and searches', disobeying lawful orders or perpetrating violence would be severely punished.¹⁷⁰ It ordered the arrest of Ulyanov, Apfelbaum and Rozenfeld.¹⁷¹

Nikolai Poletaev had been born into a peasant family in a Kostroma province village in 1872. He later went to the capital and was a lathe operator at the Putilov works by 1891. He joined an SD kruzhok led by the intelligent Mikhail Brusnev, and then the League of Struggle for the Emancipation of the Working Class in 1895. After several arrests and exiles, he settled in Germany in 1898. From 1901 he worked in Ukraine, and in the capital from 1904. In 1905 he was a member of the soviet EC, and from 1907 he led the Bolshevik wing of the SD faction in the Duma. In 1908 he was a delegate to the RSDRP conference and participated in many meetings abroad. In 1910 helped to

publish *Pravda* and *Zvezda* and was a delegate to the International congress in Copenhagen. In 1913 he was a member of the capital's RSDRP committee, contributed to *Prosveshchenie (Enlightenment)*, and channelled correspondence between Bolsheviks and the émigré CC. After the February 1917 revolution he was in charge of the *Pravda* printing works.¹⁷² On 6 July Ulyanov hid in Poletaev's flat,¹⁷³ then in the Alliluyevs' flat, where joined Apfelbaum was hiding,¹⁷⁴ though Apfelbaum was arrested.¹⁷⁵

On the 7th between 10,000 and 15,000 government troops marched through the city.¹⁷⁶ A Menshevik soviet deputy reported that trade union presses had been wrecked, and civilians 'who look like workers or who are suspected of being Bolsheviks' were 'in constant danger of being beaten'. Ivan Volnov, a 23-year-old Bolshevik who worked in the circulation room of *Pravda*, was arrested for distributing *Listok Pravdy (Leaf of Truth)*, which had replaced *Pravda*. He was struck on the head with a sabre and died instantly.¹⁷⁷ Grigol Orjonikidze had been born in Georgia in 1886. He joined the Bolsheviks in 1903, but was exiled to Siberia in 1907. After the February revolution in 1917 he left for Petrograd and joined the Bolshevik CC.¹⁷⁸ On the evening of 7 July the CC members Orjonikidze, Jughashvili and Stasova persuaded Ulyanov not to give himself up.¹⁷⁹ He acknowledged that 'One must know how to retreat', but insisted that 'the best and most class-conscious workers and peasants' had had a crucial role in raising 'the educational and cultural level of the mass of the population'.¹⁸⁰ *Golos Pravda* circulated widely among workers. Fyodor Ilyin left for Kronstadt via Oranienbaum, to avoid having his papers checked.¹⁸¹ Stasova was arrested.¹⁸² Ulyanov sent a note to Rozenfeld. '*Entre nous*: if they do me in, I ask you to publish my little note-book, "Marxism on the State", it got left behind in Stockholm. Bound in a blue cover.' Ulyanov told Krupskaya that they might never meet again,¹⁸³ and went to stay with Sulimova. He told her gloomily that she might be arrested. 'But me, they will hang'.¹⁸⁴ Bronstein was pessimistic. 'We're actually dead. All we need is for someone to bury us'.¹⁸⁵

On the 8th Sumenson was arrested and acknowledged that over two million rubles had reached her account, and she had given Kozłowski whatever he wanted without receipts.¹⁸⁶ Kerensky had become prime minister,¹⁸⁷ and claimed unlimited powers.¹⁸⁸ The soviet EC agreed to give the government almost dictatorial powers, on condition that it reported to it at least twice a week,¹⁸⁹ and it ordered raids on Mensheviks, even though one was the interior minister.¹⁹⁰ Menshevik leaders stopped supporting the government,¹⁹¹ but Kerensky wrote a list of 20 leading Bolsheviks to be arrested, though they did not include Bronstein or Nakhamkis. He did not know Bolsheviks whose names or pseudonyms had not appeared in the papers, and he reduced the number of arrests to six,¹⁹² and Podvoisky, Krivobokov and others escaped.¹⁹³ Some army units and factory workforces dissociated themselves from the Bolsheviks,¹⁹⁴ though others hid their arms.¹⁹⁵ The government disbanded several regiments, and sent small detachments, including 40-year-olds, to the front.¹⁹⁶ Units that had demonstrated were disarmed, dissolved and put at the disposal of the war and navy ministers. Red Guards were disarmed, and 'enormous quantities of arms were collected'. At Kronstadt there was very little difference between the Bolsheviks and Anarchists, 67 members of Tsentrobalt were arrested.¹⁹⁷ In Petrograd print workers condemned a 'significant irresponsible minority' who had 'attempted with the help of bayonets and machine guns' to 'impose their will on all of the revolutionary democracy'.¹⁹⁸ The 61-year-old former terrorist turned SD intelligent, Georgi Plekhanov, believed Ulyanov was a German agent. He applauded the attacks on the Bolsheviks and denounced the Mensheviks Chkheidze, Tsereteli and Chernov as 'semi-Leninists'; but declined a seat on the soviet EC,¹⁹⁹ which opposed another demonstration. Late that afternoon the Bolshevik military committee and representatives of 28 factories heard that some civilians were still armed.²⁰⁰ Bronstein moved no confidence in the soviet EC, and it became the first Bolshevik motion to pass the full soviet.²⁰¹ The Bolshevik CC met in the Reno factory watchman's hut,²⁰² and supported another demonstration by 14 votes to two. Sverdlov sent material to RSDRP committees in the provinces, including procedures for the election of delegates to the All-Russian congress of soviets. He favoured an alliance with Menshevik internationalists, and giving them and Mezhraintsy 'deliberative' status.²⁰³ That evening the Bolshevik CC, the military committee, the city committee and regimental, trade union and factory committees supported another demonstration by 131 votes to six, with 22 abstentions.²⁰⁴ By 58 votes to 37, with 52 abstentions, they agreed that workers were ready to strike, but whether they would do so passed by 47 to 42, with 80 abstentions, and Bronstein successfully proposed that a final decision be postponed for a day. He persuaded some Mezhraintsy to take part,²⁰⁵ though Lunacharsky was opposed.²⁰⁶ VTsIK supported the government and banned armed demonstrations without their agreement. Sudrabs wrote in his diary. 'The Vyborg district has become an asylum for all. Here have come both the Petrograd committee and the persecuted members of the Central Committee.' 'All our printing works in the city are destroyed. Nobody dares print our newspapers and leaflets. We are compelled to set up an underground press.'²⁰⁷ The influx of new members had stopped, but there was 'not as yet a flight from our ranks'.²⁰⁸ Around 200 members of the Bolshevik military committee had been arrested, and the premises of several district and factory committees had been wrecked, but Bolshevik membership remained stable in Vyborg and Narva, yet that night Rozenfeld was arrested,²⁰⁹ and Elizarova's home was ransacked.²¹⁰

On the 9th the proofs of *Pravda* argued for mass protests against the eviction of Anarchists from the villa.²¹¹ Kerensky ordered an investigation into the disorders and created military courts of three reserve officers and three soldiers.²¹² The Bolshevik CC entrusted Ulyanov and Apfelbaum's safety to Shotman. Ulyanov shaved his beard and wore Shotman's old coat and grey cap.²¹³ At 11.00pm on 9 July Ulyanov reached Sestoresk, disguised as a railway worker, then went to Razliv and boarded Hugo Yalava's locomotive. At Beloostrov station he uncoupled the locomotive, took it to the water tower, returned, and left before the police could inspect Ulyanov's documents.²¹⁴

Very early on the 10th Emelianov and Ulyanov reached the Finnish village of Jalkala. Ulyanov contacted the Bolshevik CC by coded notes sent to Krupskaya, who sent replies. He asked Shotman to return his manuscript about the state and revolution.²¹⁵ Petrograd soviet had banned demonstrations for three days,²¹⁶ and the soldiers' section had agreed,²¹⁷ as had five members of the Bolshevik CC,²¹⁸ including Apfelbaum,²¹⁹ who wanted to wait for VTsIK to seize the post and telegraph offices and the Arsenal. He and Jughashvili offered their resignations from the CC, but they were not accepted,²²⁰ though Bronstein insisted on being taken to Kresty Prison.²²¹ That night 500 soviet deputies failed to convince many workers not to demonstrate.²²²

After the February 1917 revolution the 26-year-old Bolshevik Dmitry Grazkine had joined the revolutionary committee in the Twelfth Army and then the Bolshevik military committee in summer. He was an editor of *Okopnaia Pravda*, attended the congress of soviets as a peasant delegate, and became president of the Bolshevik faction and second secretary of the soviet's peasant EC.²²³ Bolshevik newspapers sold around 600,000 copies, nationally,²²⁴ and they claimed the support of around 6,000 army reserves, and 1,700 in the Twelfth Army.²²⁵ *Okopnaia Pravda* had become its organ and that of the Riga Bolshevik committee,²²⁶ but on 10 July the editor, Khaustov,²²⁷ was arrested and charged with treason for criticising the army offensive.²²⁸

Krasin had moved his family to Norway in June, but he stayed in Petrograd.²²⁹ He called the Bolshevik program 'the delirium of a utopian', and Ulyanov 'a maniac, dangerous dreamer, and petty demagogue' who 'ought to be destroyed like a mad dog'.²³⁰ On 11 July he wrote to his wife about the Bolshevik leaders.

Anything might have been achieved at first if they had had an ounce of leadership amongst them – at a time when the 'many-headed government' was in a state of utter chaos; but babblers they were and babblers they have remained, and when it was a question not simply of making speeches or hurling thunderbolts in their articles, but of putting their slogans into practice, the stern leaders of the world's Proletariat made no effort whatsoever to profit by the situation; instead of putting up a constructive programme which they might have made a reality, blood was spilt in the most reckless, horrible and unnecessary manner.

The Bolsheviks had 'made a mess of things'.²³¹

There were more arrests at Kronstadt,²³² and Kerensky ordered military units which had demonstrated to be sent to the front, if need be by force, though this was only partly carried out.²³³ He closed publications which advocated disobeying military orders,²³⁴ and told the Allies that the government was preparing military campaigns.²³⁵ Ministers banned demonstrations in Petrograd and agreed to the death penalty for insubordination in the rear.²³⁶ Spiridonova denounced this in *Nash Put* and dashed to factories to barracks to address mass meetings,²³⁷ but the paper was closed.²³⁸ *Izvestia* declared that Bolsheviks were friends of the tsar and kaiser.²³⁹ Some Bolsheviks in large factories voted no confidence in the CC,²⁴⁰ and those at the Metal Works demanded that it be investigated or they would no longer consider themselves members,²⁴¹ though Krupskaya published Ulyanov's record, hoping to counter the smears.²⁴² Apfelbaum had managed to join Ulyanov in Finland, and they wrote to the government to deny being German agents. They claimed that they had had no dealings with Sumenson, or 'received a kopek' from Fürstenberg or Kozłowski.²⁴³ The Bolshevik worker Alexandra Tokarova brought them clean clothes,²⁴⁴ papers, food and bedding. Shotman visited almost daily, and the Emelianovs brought a few papers. After government troops surrounded the district,²⁴⁵ one of Emelianov's children guided the fugitives to the shore, where they took a boat, then walked through swampy ground to a barn,²⁴⁶ which belonged to a peasant.²⁴⁷

On the 12th ministers closed publications which called for insubordination to military authorities or incited civil war,²⁴⁸ but several regiments and factory workforces demanded all power to the soviets.²⁴⁹ Ulyanova was ill and left the city,²⁵⁰ but Skryabin was elected to the Bolshevik city committee from Vyborg and supported an armed rising.²⁵¹ Some SR and Menshevik soviet deputies agreed.²⁵² A British journalist got three-quarters of a pound of black bread a day, but no meat or sugar. He felt that famine was likely and the insurgency would end in autumn.²⁵³

On the 13th Kadet ministers demanded that the socialist ministers resign,²⁵⁴ and Gorky turned on the Bolshevik leaders. 'I detest and abhor people who arouse the dark instincts of the masses, no matter what names these people bear and no matter how considerable their service to Russia may have been in the past.'²⁵⁵ A revolution would be an 'ignominious tragedy' and a 'symbol of heavy Russian imbecility', since its 'moral conception and cultural meaning' had been destroyed.²⁵⁶ The Bolshevik CC survivors met members of the city committee,²⁵⁷ and

rejected Ulyanov's perspective,²⁵⁸ by ten votes to five.²⁵⁹ Bolsheviks had persuaded some garrison troops to organise a conference of regimental representatives who rejected government efforts to send reserves to the front. The delegates demanded 24 machine-guns per battalion and the right of troops to elect and dismiss officers. Factory councils discussed workers' grievances. Bolsheviks predominated and an overwhelming majority demanded all power to the soviets. Tsereteli had persuaded Kronstadt soviet to reverse its policy, though sailors demanded its reinstatement.²⁶⁰ In Petrograd some Bolshevik workers and Anarcho-Communists planned a demonstration next day, and the Bolshevik CC agreed to join it and call for all power to the soviets.²⁶¹

Overnight the Kronstadt Fortress commander ordered the arrest of Fyodor Ilyin and Roshal. On the 14th, in Petrograd's Kresty Prison most political prisoners were youngsters. Ilyin heard that he might be executed. The cells were cold and damp and the food was appalling, though he read newspapers and received visitors. The guard often left, and Ilyin smuggled out manuscripts.²⁶² Jughashvili had argued for calling off the demonstration and it did not take place,²⁶³ but Bolsheviks and Menshevik internationalists won control of Vasilievsky Island soviet.²⁶⁴

On the 15th a letter from Ulyanov and Apfelbaum in the Kronstadt Bolshevik paper *Proletarskoe Delo (Proletarian Cause)* explained why they could not surrender.²⁶⁵ The authorities closed SR internationalist papers, their Kronstadt paper and those of garrison troops.²⁶⁶ In Petrograd the finances of the main anti-government employers' organisations dwarfed the 1.5 million rubles raised by the Republican Centre.²⁶⁷ In Petrograd Cossacks who had been killed were solemnly buried.²⁶⁸ Bolsheviks held almost a third of soviet deputies,²⁶⁹ and appealed to socialists in all countries to work for peace without annexations or indemnities, national self-determination, and an international conference of all parties and factions.²⁷⁰ There were arrests in Helsinki, meetings were forbidden at the front,²⁷¹ and Krylenko and other Bolsheviks were arrested near Mariĭĭ.²⁷²

On the 16th Kadet ministers demanded the cancellation of the soviet programme,²⁷³ and annulled the 1881 law establishing the Okhrana,²⁷⁴ but workers, soldiers and sailors took to the streets.²⁷⁵ Delegates from all the fronts attended an All-Russian conference of Bolshevik military committees. Most were rank-and-file soldiers, though a few were officers or civilians. They claimed to represent 26,000 from 43 front and 17 rear units. The majority had joined during 1917, and around 100 experienced agitators brought their rifles.²⁷⁶ The conference decided to create revolutionary bases inside and outside the army, and establish courses for Bolsheviks ordered to the front.²⁷⁷ A soviet deputy reported that Vasilievsky Island workers were 'hearty', except in a few factories,²⁷⁸ and that the Kronstadt garrison had rejected the government's authority.²⁷⁹

By the 17th Petrograd Bolsheviks were increasingly influential in trade unions and among soldiers and sailors, though Mensheviks and SRs dominated the cooperative movement, which claimed 12 million mainly peasant members nationally.²⁸⁰ Tsereteli ordered provincial commissars to condemn peasants' 'arbitrary land reforms'.²⁸¹

On the 18th Rozhkov argued in *Proletarskoe Delo* that the path to a peaceful republican revolution was closed, and called on Bolsheviks to prepare an armed rising.²⁸² The government claimed that Kollontai and Fürstenberg had deposited German money from Helphand in a Stockholm bank and transferred it to a Petrograd bank, to which leading Bolsheviks had access, and charged Ulyanov and Apfelbaum with high treason. The Bolshevik CC vehemently denied the 'monstrous libel' and demanded that the government and soviet clear up the smears, but the story appeared in patriotic newspapers.²⁸³ The foreign minister called for a military dictatorship,²⁸⁴ and around 2,300 Erikson telephone works workers argued that the government was helping to form a 'dictatorship of the counter-revolutionary bourgeoisie'.²⁸⁵ VTsIK accepted the government's right to 'restore order and discipline in the army' by 252 votes to 47, and some Bolsheviks and SR and Menshevik internationalist members agreed,²⁸⁶ though representatives of 120 factory committees and soviet deputies argued that committees had to consist of revolutionary socialists 'directed towards developing the class-consciousness of the proletariat'.²⁸⁷ SR internationalists and Bolsheviks supported insurgent peasants, but Plekhanov warned that 'wilful and illegal' acts against landowners would be punished by 'the firmest and most energetic laws'.²⁸⁸

On the 19th *Rabotnitsa* printed a letter from a woman worker among the 2,000 at Pipe Works.

Sometimes you see how the women will read something, and from their conversations it becomes clear that a desire to step forward has been kindled in their heart. But to our great regret, at present there is very little organisation among the women of Pipe Works. There are no women comrades among us to fan the spark of consciousness or point out to us the path to truth. We really need a comrade who can speak on the tribune in front of a sea of faces and tell us where to go, who to listen to and what to read.²⁸⁹

Around 1,000 domestic servants demonstrated,²⁹⁰ and the Red Guards claimed around 25,000 armed members.²⁹¹

On the 20th the Kadet *Rech (Speech)* claimed that German officers had told a Russian lieutenant that Ulyanov, Helphand and Fürstenberg were German agents.²⁹² Kerensky refused to accept Kadet ultimatums, resigned, and left for Finland, and some non-socialist ministers also resigned.²⁹³ Petrograd soviet put Kronstadt sailors on trial.

The foreign minister was chief prosecutor and Bronstein led the defence.²⁹⁴ By 580 votes to 162, with 74 abstentions, they were convicted as Anarchists.²⁹⁵

The 15 cabinet members included five socialists,²⁹⁶ though all except Chernov were moderates.²⁹⁷ On the 21st Kadets accused him of 'anarchism' and being pro-German.²⁹⁸ On the 22nd the soviet EC supported Kerensky by 146 votes to 47, with 48 abstentions,²⁹⁹ and he declared that he was responsible only to his own conscience and the Russian people. He demanded freedom to issue orders, appoint army officers and impose the death penalty in the rear.³⁰⁰ By the 23rd around 20,000 copies of *Rabochy i Soldat* were printed.³⁰¹ On the 24th many printers refused to produce Bolshevik papers,³⁰² though almost 1.5 million copies appeared each week and many went to the fronts and distributed free.³⁰³ The soviet EC approved the cabinet by 147 votes to 46, with 42 abstentions.³⁰⁴ Trade union delegates called for a general strike, with one vote against and one abstention, and 152 unskilled workers from 52 factories backed this decision on the 25th.³⁰⁵ Goldstein spoke in Petergofsky district,³⁰⁶ and around 6,000 Putilov workers supported the Bolsheviks.³⁰⁷ Late that day a Bolshevik congress met clandestinely in Vyborg.³⁰⁸

On the 26th Sverdlov reported to a Bolshevik congress that the number of organisations nationally had grown from 78 to 162, and estimated membership at around 200,000,³⁰⁹ including 50,000 or so in the Moscow region, 41,000 in the Petrograd region, 22,000 to 25,000 in the Urals,³¹⁰ and 15,000 in the Donbas. All the delegates who were newcomers were workers,³¹¹ and around 94 percent had joined since 1914,³¹² and workers from the Petrograd region varied between one and 12 percent of the workforces in 25 towns.³¹³ Of the 171 who filled in a questionnaire, 157 with a vote claimed to represent 112 organisations with 176,750 members. Five were aged 18 to 19, 25 were 20 to 24, 49 were 25 to 29, 49 were 30 to 34, 30 were 35 to 39, 11 were 40 to 44 and two were 45 to 47. Four had been members for less than a year, two for less than two years, eight for less than three years, 14 for less than four years, 15 for less than five years, six for less than six years, four for less than seven years, and four for less than eight years, five for nine years, eight for ten years, 15 for 11, 24 for 12, 19 for 13, 16 for 14 and four for 15.³¹⁴ Around 150 had been arrested a total of 549 times, 110 had spent a total of 245 years in prison, 55 had been exiled for a total of 127 years, 24 had spent a total of 73 years in katorga prisons and 27 had lived abroad for a total of 89 years.³¹⁵ The delegates had been SDs for an average of ten years, 119 had been arrested between one and five times, 28 from six to nine times and three from 11 to 15 times.³¹⁶ There were 92 Russians and 29 Jews.³¹⁷ There was a substantial minority of soldiers and sailors,³¹⁸ though 70 factory workers and 101 were white collar workers. Apart from army officers, the Finnish delegates included no intelligenty.³¹⁹ Lunacharsky acknowledged that 'the ranks of the worker-intelligentsia have thinned significantly'. Many proletarians had moved left, but most intelligenty had moved right.³²⁰ Kronstadt delegates reported that 'students and teachers do not undertake local work'. Jughashvili insisted that the Bolsheviks 'must be prepared for anything', but stop believing that 'only Europe can show us the way',³²¹ since 'Russia may prove the very country that paves the way to socialism'.³²² Bukharin and other intelligenty wanted to transform soviets into Bolshevik organs by new elections and organise more,³²³ and he and two older comrades became responsible for the Moscow region.³²⁴ The Petrograd military committee and factory committees were getting back on their feet. In the elections for the CC Ulyanov received 133 votes out of 134 and Apfelbaum 132 in their absence. Rozenfeld and Bronstein received 131,³²⁵ and Nogin, Kollontai, Jughashvili, Sverdlov, Rykov, Bukharin, Joffe, Uritsky, Miliutin, Uritsky, Fyodor Sergeyev and Georgy Oppokov were elected.³²⁶ Oppokov had been born into a bank manager's family in Saratov in 1888. He joined the Bolsheviks in 1903, led a combat squad in 1905 and was a member of the Moscow RSDRP committee by 1907; but in summer 1910 he was exiled to Arkhangelsk for three years. After the 1913 amnesty he returned to Moscow and was a co-founder of the metalworkers' union. He was expelled in 1914, and returned to Saratov. In spring 1916 he was deported to Irkutsk, but after in spring 1917 he returned to Moscow under a pseudonym.³²⁷ Kollontai, aged 45, was the first woman to be elected to the CC, and received the fifth highest vote to be a candidate in the constituent assembly elections.³²⁸

Sergeyev had been born into a peasant family in a Kursk province village, 500 or so miles south of Moscow, in 1883. His father was a builder, and in 1888 the family moved to Ekaterinoslav in Ukraine. In 1901, after six or seven years at a non-classical secondary *realschule*, Fyodor attended a technical college. He joined the RSDRP, but was arrested for joining a student demonstration and spent four months in Voronezh Prison. After his release he left for Paris, studied at the Russian Higher Free School and returned to Ekaterinoslav in 1903 as a Bolshevik. He worked as a stoker, moved from factory to factory and was a prominent agitator. In 1905, in Kharkiv, he led the Bolshevik organisation and the workers' strike late that year. Late in 1906 he was imprisoned, but escaped, and was sent to lead the Bolshevik organisation in Perm in Siberia. In 1909 he was deported, but in 1910 he escaped through Korea and Japan to Brisbane in Australia, where he organized a union of Russian émigrés. In 1912 he edited *Echo of Australia*, joined the Socialist Party and was involved in the trade union opposition to the war in 1914. After the February revolution in 1917 he had returned to Kharkiv and led Bolshevik дума deputies.³²⁹

Of the 19 CC members about whom information is available, ten had received a higher education and eight a secondary education, while 16 were of middle-class origin and 13 were non-Russians.³³⁰ In the elections to the

presidium Ulyanov won 104 votes out of 107, Apfelbaum 101, Jughashvili 97, Rozenfeld 95, Miliutin 82, Nogin 76, Sverdlov 71, Smilga 53 and Fedorov 48.³³¹ Ulyanov was the oldest at 47, 11 were in their 30s and three were younger.³³² The representatives of the 4,000 Mezhraiontsy agreed that the organisation would join the Bolsheviks.³³³ Sverdlov was tasked with replacing Krupskaya in the secretariat, and he and Stasova, with assistants, were to supervise provincial committees, peasant societies, trade unions and factory and workshop committees.³³⁴ The five or six members of the secretariat formed the only specialised body in the CC. Novgorodtseva was appointed as an editor of *Rabochny i Soldat*,³³⁵ and Jughashvili as an editor of *Pravda*, though Bronstein lost by 11 votes to 10.³³⁶

Jānis Sudrabs had been born into a Latvian peasant family in 1881. He later qualified as a teacher and propagandised peasants. He joined the RSDRP in 1902, but was deported to Olonets province in the far north of Russia in 1904. He was active in 1905, but was arrested in December. On his release in 1907 he settled in the capital, and became the secretary of the RSDRP committee and was a delegate to the London congress, but left for Switzerland in 1908. He took part in the Zimmerwald conference in 1915 as a representative of the Latvian SDSP, and published *Proletariāta Cīņa* (*Proletarian Struggle*). In 1916 he left for Boston in the USA and edited the émigré *Latviešu Strādnieks* (*Latvian Worker*) and contributed to *Novy Mir*. He returned to Russia after the February revolution in 1917 and was elected to the LSDSP CC. By summer he was also a member of the RSDRP, and was elected to the Bolshevik CC late in July. He was one of the 21 CC members who favoured seizing power.³³⁷

On the 28th the government banned factory workers' committee meetings on the premises during working hours,³³⁸ and from monitoring hiring and firing.³³⁹ The owners' Society rejected obligations to workers' committees, except for providing a meeting place,³⁴⁰ and refused to pay workers for attending. The Bolshevik members of VTsIK protested that it had not met for two months,³⁴¹ though the Bolshevik military committee claimed 1,800 members.³⁴² At an RSDRP congress over a third of Menshevik delegates were internationalists.³⁴³ Many provincial delegates, including those from Penza and Orekhovo, reported that soviets were in power.³⁴⁴ The congress moved to near the Narva Gate,³⁴⁵ and on the 30th it adopted the policy of 'all power to the soviets'.³⁴⁶

By the 31st a majority of Bolsheviks agreed that Ulyanov and Apfelbaum should not turn themselves in.³⁴⁷ The Petrograd committee conducted little agitation,³⁴⁸ and Goldstein reported that there were 'very few intellectual forces. All organisational work, and a significant part of the agitational work, is carried out by the workers themselves. The members of the CC took little part,' but the organisation had 'grown from below'. The CC had been bombarded with requests for 'literary forces', and 'at least one intellectual', but Sverdlov insisted that 'nobody could be spared'.³⁴⁹ Party workers had 'unlimited influence in the factories',³⁵⁰ and Fyodor Ilyn knew there was no loss of heart in workers' districts.

Even those factories that had been politically colourless were beginning to gravitate towards us and passing resolutions of protest against the leaders of the proletariat. Among the advanced section of the proletariat there was now a strong tendency in favour of arming the workers. The army units that had marched under our flag remained loyal to it and kept up their capacity to fight.³⁵¹

There were 200 to 300 Bolsheviks at the Metallist factory, and Vyborg district Bolsheviks claimed well over 6,600 members.³⁵²

During July the government had given the vote to men and women over 20, except convicts, deserters, the insane and the Imperial family,³⁵³ and allowed women to serve on juries and train as lawyers.³⁵⁴ Bolsheviks had won 156 of the 801 seats in the zemstvo elections, and the SR-Menshevik bloc 299.³⁵⁵ The soviet's workers' section was filling up with Bolsheviks,³⁵⁶ and they and Menshevik internationalists won their first major victory with a motion against 'unloading' factories to the provinces,³⁵⁷ and there were explosions and fires at some factories involved in war production. Transport was in chaos and food was becoming scarce.³⁵⁸ The Petrograd military district commander imposed martial law and stationed troops in workers' districts.³⁵⁹ The government had disbanded four regiments, but mutinies proliferated.³⁶⁰ There were 50,000 to 60,000 army deserters in the capital, and bands of up to 6,000 were allegedly 'terrorising' the countryside.³⁶¹ Krupskaya led the Vyborg organisation for the relief of soldiers' wives, and set up a council with representatives from all the district factories, which registered illiterate workmates. It included Kayurov, young Bolsheviks, Mensheviks, Anarchists and unaffiliated people.³⁶² Women workers learned to agitate and recruited in their factories, while Krupskaya and Liepin in Vyborg, Bronislavovna on Vasilevsky Island, Itkina in Narva and Stahl at Kronstadt campaigned to increase the sale of *Rabotnitsa*.³⁶³

Since January Petrograd textile workers' wages had almost doubled, and Pipe Works employees had given the soviet 15,000 rubles.³⁶⁴ Since February war-related production in the city had fallen by up to 40 percent, and the output of metal and machine-building works was almost a third lower than in 1916.³⁶⁵ Since March 1917 568 factories – mainly textile and flour mills employing a total of 104,000 workers - had closed,³⁶⁶ including 206 with 48,000 workers during July.³⁶⁷ The Putilov works received four percent of the coal it needed, and two to three

percent of oil. It normally consumed almost ten percent of the fuel reaching the city, but had received 62 percent of what it needed.³⁶⁸ Gun shop workers fined or drove away young workers who broke machinery or were absentees. Bolsheviks had won 64 seats on the Skorokhod workers' committee, along with ten SRs and five Anarchists.³⁶⁹ Bolsheviks led Petergofsky district soviet,³⁷⁰ and a few Menshevik internationalists had joined the Bolsheviks.³⁷¹ The Red Guards claimed around 26,000 members in 60 factory units,³⁷² while the RSDRP military committee had 1,000 or so members. Five leaders suggested a demonstration against the government, but the CC ordered them to take no political steps without consultation.³⁷³ Sestroretsk arms factory employed 6,200 workers and Bolsheviks led the soviet,³⁷⁴ but even with a cut in rations Petrograd's grain stocks would last barely two months, since authorities in several provinces did not allow it to be transported.³⁷⁵

Lunacharsky later claimed that Ulyanov had been 'definitely planning a coup' in July, and if it was successful Lunacharsky and Bronstein would be 'ministers'.³⁷⁶ Ulyanov later admitted privately that the Bolsheviks had 'committed a lot of blunders' in July,³⁷⁷ but he had abandoned hope of a peaceful development of the revolution.³⁷⁸

The Moscow region

Moscow Bolsheviks had planned a peaceful demonstration for 4 July.³⁷⁹ After news of the Petrograd events arrived that afternoon they called on workers to march to the city centre to demand soviet power. By 10.00pm a few hundred had reached the soviet building, but a hostile crowd outnumbered them,³⁸⁰ and only one demonstrating army unit was armed.³⁸¹ The soviet banned demonstrations, and most workers, including the Bolsheviks, backed down.³⁸² On the 5th the RSDRP committee called for a demonstration to demand all power to the soviets, but many leaders were arrested,³⁸³ and the government banned a Muslim congress in the city.³⁸⁴ Some workers were organising Red Guards.³⁸⁵ Bubnov argued unsuccessfully for occupying the post office, the telegraph and telephone stations, and the *Russkoe Slovo* press. The Mensheviks claimed 8,000 members in and around the city.³⁸⁶ Thousands of women were leaving the Bolsheviks, though the Menshevik intelligentka Broido took a similar line to Kollontai.³⁸⁷ By the 9th the Bolsheviks had increased their membership in the soviet, but lost a motion for a general strike by 342 votes to 310.³⁸⁸ Nevertheless there was something like a general strike on the 11th,³⁸⁹ and the Bolsheviks claimed 15,000 members by the 15th,³⁹⁰ including 2,000 garrison troops. Provodnik rubber workers near the city had no rifles, but contacted another factory and a nearby regiment and established a Bolshevik committee. Hundreds of Bolsheviks failed to help peasants organise,³⁹¹ and on the 23rd, at a conference of factory committees, a Bolshevik motion received 191 votes out of 682.³⁹² By the 25th Bolsheviks had won 11.5 percent of the votes in the duma election, and the central workers' cooperative claimed 44,000 members.³⁹³ Since May the RSDRP committee had sent 574 rubles to the CC.³⁹⁴ Armand led a group around *Zhizn Rabotnitsy (Life of the Woman Worker)*,³⁹⁵ whose circulation may have reached 15,000, but there were insufficient funds for a third issue.³⁹⁶ The city's fuel reserves were almost exhausted and the authorities appealed to the government to help. That month the productivity of factories with military orders had fallen considerably, and the average worker's daily wage from 4.8 to 4.3 rubles. The cost of living had risen by 17 percent.³⁹⁷ The number of wagonloads of grain reaching the city had fallen to 883,³⁹⁸ and while prices had risen by 14 percent, nationally, bread cost 21 percent more in Moscow.³⁹⁹ Around 89,000 metalworkers,⁴⁰⁰ and 45,000 tobacco workers, had gone on strike,⁴⁰¹ but a police raid in Khitrovo market captured 300 army deserters.⁴⁰²

The 26-year-old émigré Russian Jewish intelligent Ilya Ehrenburg had heard about the tsar's abdication in Paris in March, and he and his friends toasted the republic. Days later he and the Polish SD Lieutenant Stanisław Łapiński went to the Russian embassy and found the tsar's portrait on the floor. The ambassador promised to help them to return to Russia, though German U-boat warfare had intensified, and their boat would have to be accompanied by British destroyers. The first to leave would be émigrés belonging to important political parties, and Ehrenburg and his friends might have to wait until summer. On 1 May Russian troops and some officers held a big meeting and the band played *The Workers' Marseillaise* and *Internationale*. Ehrenburg heard Chernov argue for defencism and attended no more SR meetings. At another meeting, when a speaker argued about getting rid of the kaiser, the audience came to blows. Eventually Ehrenburg obtained a passport and visas for Britain and Norway. He went to London, and he, other political émigrés and Russian soldiers boarded a train. Some passengers were defencists, but others supported the Bolsheviks. At Aberdeen they boarded a troopship, which was accompanied by two destroyers. Ehrenburg did not have a place in a lifeboat, but after they spotted a U-boat a sailor gave him a lifebelt. From Bergen they travelled to Stockholm, and Ehrenburg took a train to Tornio, and was put under guard, since he was liable for military service.⁴⁰³ When he arrived at Petrograd's Finland Station a middle-aged woman wearing a pince-nez asked him to follow her. Like other returning political émigrés he was granted military deferment. He collected his fees from *Birzhevka* (the *Stock Exchange Gazette*), where a poet thought that Kornilov was their only

hope. He saw deserters being hunted in the streets, and two officers stealing a bag of sugar from a woman. 'In the shops you could buy Havana cigars, Sèvres vases and the poems of the Comtesse de Noailles. In the teashops you were served coffee with honey' and 'thin slices of bread with plum jam'. A Bolshevik told him that the Mensheviks were traitors, and intelligentsy were 'in the way'. In July he left for Moscow where he met artists who did not understand what was going on,⁴⁰⁴ though at least two-thirds of workers opposed the government.⁴⁰⁵

In the central industrial region the Bolsheviks' relations with workers had weakened.⁴⁰⁶ Membership had declined, especially in the southern provinces, and had stopped in some places. Mensheviks and SRs dominated factory committees in Kaluga, 90 or so miles southwest of Moscow, Riazan, 120 or so miles to the southeast, and Tambov in the Black Earth region.⁴⁰⁷ In the Donbas around 40,000 demonstrated in Ivanovo in support of the Petrograd rising, and many were armed, but the soviet retreated after it heard about the defeat.⁴⁰⁸ Many zemstvo and dumas were elected by universal suffrage.⁴⁰⁹ In mid-July the Bolshevik regional committee reported disarray and resignations, and Tarshis noted 'panic even in certain members'. Some were beaten up. The Bolsheviks claimed 5,440 members in Ivanovo, though intelligentsy were 'practically absent'. In the Vladimir дума elections SRs won 12 seats, Mensheviks ten and Bolsheviks six. In Yaroslavl SRs won 35 of the 102 дума seats, Mensheviks 34 and Bolsheviks 12. In Tula the Menshevik-SR bloc won 85 seats and the Bolsheviks five.⁴¹⁰ Tver soviet had 350 deputies, though there were 89 Bolsheviks among 35,000 workers,⁴¹¹ and there were no Bolshevik intelligentsy in Kuznetsov.⁴¹² There had been anti-government activity in Nizhni Novgorod, where the soviet had censored post and telecommunications, and the soldiers' committee had briefly controlled the city.⁴¹³ After government troops killed several citizens,⁴¹⁴ there was little anti-government activity,⁴¹⁵ but RSDRP candidates won four seats in the дума, and the numbers of female textile worker-activists increased. Troops who refused to go to the front were disarmed, but others wounded and killed government troops.⁴¹⁶ Orel soviet had 162 deputies,⁴¹⁷ and metalworkers had struck for higher wages.⁴¹⁸ By 26 July a Bolshevik was president of Ivanovo soviet, which sent greetings to Ulyanov. Bolsheviks won 58 of the 102 seats in the дума, SRs 24 and Mensheviks four. On the 30th an SR soldier told Moscow soviet that peasants opposed the Bolsheviks, but land and power 'in a Bolshevik manner'.⁴¹⁹

P.G. Zamogilnaya had been born into a peasant family in Moscow around 1900 and worked in a confectionary factory when she was ten. In February 1917 she and her father joined demonstrations and he introduced her to Bolsheviks. She found Theoretical arguments hard to follow, but joined in May, and she organised young people and her male mentor encouraged her to read newspapers in July. She joined the Red Guards, cooked, learned first aid, loaded machine-guns and took them through the streets.⁴²⁰

Other key regions

In Siberia white-collar workers had formed 156 of the 416 trade unions by July, though 40 percent included workers. Irkutsk's 20 unions claimed 8,000 members.⁴²¹ Ekaterinburg Bolsheviks claimed 2,800 members,⁴²² and controlled the soviet,⁴²³ which supported a soviet government. Tomsk Bolsheviks had split from the Mensheviks,⁴²⁴ as had those in Zlatoust. During July around 10,000 people had demonstrated in Krasnoyarsk and 5,000 troops had occupied the Fortress and army headquarters, arrested the commander and the head of the militia. They were defeated, though some asked bourgeois parties to stop sending literature which they burned to heat water for tea.⁴²⁵ A western Siberian conference and one Urals soviet passed leftist resolutions on the war, land and power,⁴²⁶ and by late July the Bolsheviks claimed around 40,000 members in the region.⁴²⁷

By July workers formed 14 percent of Finland's population, and SDs won 103 of the 200 parliamentary seats,⁴²⁸ and proclaimed sovereignty, but some were arrested. Smilga and other Bolsheviks tried to establish soviets from their base in Tampere. The food crisis had worsened and large strikes broke out in Turku,⁴²⁹ where garrison troops killed most officers, imprisoned others and threatened to march on Helsinki and Viipuri.⁴³⁰ Russian SRs and Mensheviks tried to persuade the parliament to submit their decision about sovereignty to the Russian government, and it agreed not to interfere in foreign policy, military law and administration; but the government dissolved it, sent troops,⁴³¹ called new elections and the SDs lost their majority.⁴³²

By July the Bolsheviks had increased their membership in Baltic region soviets,⁴³³ and dominated the Latvian SDSP congress.⁴³⁴ Representatives of eight regiments had adopted the slogan of 'all power to the soviets' almost unanimously.⁴³⁵ Intelligentsy were 'practically absent' in Riga,⁴³⁶ but important organisations claimed the right to self-determination.⁴³⁷ In Estonia 38,000 Tallinn workers had gone on strike and it spread across the city.⁴³⁸ The Bolshevik candidate for the chair of the Estonian congress of soviets was defeated by 34 votes to 24, but the Estonian regiment had grown to 8,000 men.⁴³⁹ Lithuanian émigrés in Britain had asked the Russian government and Petrograd soviet for advice and support, but their telegrams were intercepted. Most émigré organisations had been closed, and men aged between 18 and 41 were to be conscripted into the Russian army. Some socialists wanted to

return, but there was no money for travel. In Lanarkshire 700 of the 1,800 émigrés joined the British forces late in July, though the Lithuanian relief fund raised almost £1,500 to support the 1,100 who preferred deportation.⁴⁴⁰

Nationally Bolsheviks had left some soviets and unions, but in some provinces their publications were read until they fell to pieces and articles were learned by heart, recited, copied and reprinted.⁴⁴¹ Around 600 copies of *Pravda* reached Minsk in Bielarus;⁴⁴² and 58 Bolsheviks, 28 Mezhraintsy and 11 Mensheviks cooperated in Vitebsk.⁴⁴³

The population of Ukraine was 30 million,⁴⁴⁴ and the Rada claimed sovereignty.⁴⁴⁵ It convened a soldiers' congress, even though Kerensky banned it, and the delegates claimed to represent 993,400 soldiers. Around 200 copies of *Pravda* reached both Luhansk and Odesa.⁴⁴⁶ Emanuel Quiring had been born into a family with German roots in Friesenthal, Samara province, in 1888. He was an SR by 1906, but joined the Bolsheviks in 1912. By 1917 he led Luzovka committee. During July CC agents held a conference in Ekaterinoslav and decided that a regional committee in Kharkiv, where they claimed 13,650 or so members, would distribute *Donetsk Proletary (Donbas Worker)*. The Ekaterinoslav committee also included the Old Bolshevik intelligent Fyodor Sergeyev.⁴⁴⁷ Kyiv's Bolshevik military organisation claimed 1,000 members,⁴⁴⁸ though there was little anti-government activity. The Bolsheviks claimed 4,000 members, including 3,500 in Ekaterinoslav and almost 2,600 in Luhansk. Across the region membership varied from one to 12 percent of factory workforces, and the average was 5.4 percent.⁴⁴⁹ Makiivka Bolsheviks claimed 300 members, and called for the nationalisation of industry and workers' control. In Luzovka the wages of around 12,000 factory workers and coal miners varied between 3.85 and 12 rubles a shift, and the Donbas-Krivoi Rog Bolshevik committee claimed 16,000 members. Bolshevik agents arrived to build organisations, but when one left some collapsed.⁴⁵⁰ Ukraine's sugar output was half of that in 1914.⁴⁵¹ Around 2,000 coal miners supported SRs or Mensheviks, and would 'never listen to the Leninists',⁴⁵² though their productivity had declined by almost 50 percent. Bolsheviks had increased their numbers in Kharkiv soviet,⁴⁵³ and M. Y. Ostrogorsky represented the Shcherbinovka-Petrovsky committee. The Verka Bolshevik organisation was half underground,⁴⁵⁴ and though Russian workers in large factories supported them, they were weak in Kyiv, where artisans and most workers backed Mensheviks or Bundists. Some Bolsheviks argued for cooperating with the Rada, though the 38-year-old Old Bolshevik intelligentka Jevhenija Boš denounced them. She had been instrumental in establishing the Kyiv region Bolshevik committee.⁴⁵⁵ In Kyiv the SR-Menshevik bloc won over 35,300 of almost 174,500 votes in the duma elections, and the Bolsheviks just over 9,500,⁴⁵⁶ and their daily paper became a weekly.⁴⁵⁷ At the end of the month a Bolshevik was elected as chair of Shcherbinovka soviet, and most unaligned deputies sympathised with the Bolsheviks.⁴⁵⁸ In Voronezh there were 140 soviet deputies among 20,000 workers.⁴⁵⁹ Kharkiv locomotive workers and Rostov-na-Donu woodworkers had gone on strike.⁴⁶⁰

On the Volga the output of Saratov factories had fallen by up to 50 percent by July, because of the lack of materials and fuel, worn-out equipment and owners unwilling to switch to peacetime products; and four flour mills, two butter creameries, and a metalworks had closed, throwing 1,500 out of work.⁴⁶¹ After the Bolsheviks heard about the Petrograd events they ignored the ban on demonstrations,⁴⁶² organised a mass meeting on Theatre Square and workers prevented moderate socialists from speaking. A committee of evacuated soldiers invited others to demonstrate,⁴⁶³ but thousands were ignominiously discharged. Some citizens broke into meetings about the duma elections, tore Bolshevik leaflets from people's hands and beat agitators. Many resigned and others hid,⁴⁶⁴ though Titanik workers demanded a rise. The RSDRP decided to re-register members, and allowed supporters to join their Maiak Club. The Bolshevik paper was closed, and they could not find a printer, but the soviet's *Izvestia* appeared on the 20th.⁴⁶⁵ The Bolsheviks claimed 3,000 members,⁴⁶⁶ but Mensheviks won 73 of the 113 seats in the duma elections and the Bolsheviks 13. Tsaritsyn had a population of 134,000, and a larger percentage of workers than other towns in the region. S.K. Minin had been born in 1887 and joined the Bolsheviks in 1903.⁴⁶⁷ By July 1917 he led Tsaritsyn soviet, which influenced 20,000 garrison troops who had been ordered to the front, and there were several SR internationalists.⁴⁶⁸ In the duma elections Bolsheviks won 39 of the 102 seats;⁴⁶⁹ but the government annulled the results and introduced censorship. A right-wing paper called for the dissolution of the soviet,⁴⁷⁰ and though senior army officers tried to establish a military dictatorship, they failed to win support.⁴⁷¹ Samara factories with from 20 to 100 workers could send one delegate to the soviet, those with from 200 to 300 two, those with from 300 to 1,000 three and those with up to 2,000 five.⁴⁷² In Kazan smears against the Bolsheviks had led to beatings, though not by workers or soldiers, and Bolshevik numbers had risen.⁴⁷³ In Kostroma province 303 Gagarin district peasants wrote to the government and Petrograd soviet EC calling 'all the speeches of Lenin and those who agree with him' a 'symptom of counter-revolution'. They wanted 'the most decisive measures to eliminate anarchy and all those individuals who are causing the breakdown in strengthening our hard-won freedom'.⁴⁷⁴

During July the EC of the Caucasian soviet of peasants' deputies had joined the regional soviet, which was led by SRs and SDs. The soldiers' soviet permitted only those meetings which the Tbilisi garrison and soviet EC approved. Deserters and agitators against the war had been arrested, and though the Bolsheviks' *Kavkazsky Rabochy (Caucasian Worker)* was banned at the front, SDs won 50 of the 120 seats in the Tbilisi duma and SRs 20.⁴⁷⁵

In Azerbaijan the cost of living in Baki had risen by 475 percent since 1914, and Bolsheviks led a demonstration during July. The Mensheviks joined forces with non-Bolshevik SDs, though SRs occasionally supported the Bolsheviks, who had formerly had 20 to 25 members in soviet, but now dominated it.⁴⁷⁶ There were 27 trade unions in the city, and the seamen's union claimed 4,800 members and the oil workers' union 3,000.⁴⁷⁷ Average industrial workers' wages had increased by over 50 percent since February.⁴⁷⁸ Baki Bolsheviks stopped meeting Mensheviks, relations between Armenians and Azerbaijanis disintegrated, and 1,000 or so Azerbaijanis demanded grain.⁴⁷⁹

By the end of July there were reportedly 52 provincial soviets, and 388 in 95 percent of counties, 90 and 58 percent in Ukraine, 59 and 39 percent in the Caucasus and 17 and eight percent in Siberia,⁴⁸⁰ though members of the propertied classes led the governments in Siberia, Poland and the Caucasus.⁴⁸¹ In 27 towns and cities with populations of over 100,000, Bolsheviks had won an average of 12 percent of duma seats, including over eight percent in those with populations of 50,000 to 100,000 and around 1.4 percent in those with fewer than 50,000.⁴⁸² Officially over 500,000 workers had gone on strike nationally since mid-April,⁴⁸³ including 384,560 in July.⁴⁸⁴ Around 70 percent of strikes had been successful,⁴⁸⁵ and 32 involving 12,870 workers had challenged management authority.⁴⁸⁶ Since January around 980,000 fewer railway wagonloads of food had been loaded than in 1916,⁴⁸⁷ and factory output had declined by an average of 50 percent since February 1917.⁴⁸⁸ Vizhkel had called a national conference and delegates arrived from all except the Petrograd to Moscow and Moscow to Kursk lines. They elected a leadership of 14 right-wingers, 11 centrists and 15 left-wingers.⁴⁸⁹ Over 25 percent of locomotives needed repair,⁴⁹⁰ as did 50 percent of rolling stock, and the railways had enough coal for a fortnight.⁴⁹¹ During July, officially, 889 of 1,727 agrarian conflicts had been about land.⁴⁹² There had been unrest in 325 counties,⁴⁹³ especially in the central and middle Volga provinces, and almost a third involved serious violence.⁴⁹⁴ Peasants had seized land, felled trees or stolen agricultural equipment on 1,122 occasions and destroyed 27 manor houses.⁴⁹⁵ They had attacked landlords in over three-quarters of counties and damaged 503 properties.⁴⁹⁶ Mensheviks and SR defencists had lost credibility, while Bolsheviks had gained prestige,⁴⁹⁷ and propagandised peasants.

Comrades! For 300 years the bourgeoisie and the landlords drank your blood! Now we have to overthrow the tsarist regime, but are we free? Not at all! Instead of the tsarist government we have Kerensky. Who is Kerensky? He is a hireling of the Russian and foreign bourgeoisie! Kerensky forces you to continue this senseless, criminal war. Do you need this bloody criminal war? (No, we don't ...) Do you need Turkish or German territories? (No, we have enough of our own ...) Do you want to shed your blood for the interests of English and American capitalists? (No ...) Do you want peace? (Yes ...) Listen, the Mensheviks and Socialist Revolutionaries are betraying the working people; they have sold themselves to the Russian, English and American bourgeoisie', and 'that is why they want to send you into battle again and again. Only our party, the Bolshevik party, will give you peace! ... Do you need more land? (Yes, of course we do ...) Do you have as much land as the landlords do? (No, they have much more than we have ...) You see! But will the Kerensky government give you land? No, never. It protects the interests of the landlords. Only our party, the Bolsheviks, will immediately give you land ...⁴⁹⁸

The government had ordered 'quick and energetic measures' to stop 'arbitrary actions' about land, and had peasant land committees arrested.⁴⁹⁹

In the Don and Kuban region 4.3 million poor peasants held around 16 million acres, while three million Cossacks held 47 million. Cossacks paid no tax in return for military service, and could afford expensive equipment, though it was a heavy burden on the poor. There were 162 Cossack regiments and 171 squadrons in the army, and the government had used 45 regiments and 45 squadrons in the rear and at the front to enforce its will.⁵⁰⁰ The government 'freedom loan' had raised 3.2 billion rubles, but in July it had had to issue over a billion paper rubles.⁵⁰¹

The war

By July garrisons in several provincial cities, including Saratov, Astrakhan, Kyiv and Taganrog, had been threatened with being sent to the front.⁵⁰² There were 44 Bolshevik groups on the southwestern front and 30 on the Romanian front,⁵⁰³ and some had formed a 'republic'.⁵⁰⁴ Russian offensives began on the western front on the 7th, the northern front on the 8th and the Romanian front on the 9th.⁵⁰⁵ A railway battalion called on Kerensky 'to let all troop units freely express their opinions about the war and about politics, and if the majority turn out to be on the side of Lenin', then 'let them lead Russia down whatever path they choose'.⁵⁰⁶ An officer reported that most units were in 'a state of ever growing disintegration', and mutinous, and some had threatened officers with violence.⁵⁰⁷

Austro-Hungarian troops held almost all of Galicia,⁵⁰⁸ but were unable to advance,⁵⁰⁹ and the Russians had taken over 10,000 prisoners, including many Germans,⁵¹⁰ though one Russian regiment had refused to fight.⁵¹¹ After Austro-Hungarian troops sent 200,000 Russian prisoners to the front,⁵¹² up to 60,000 others deserted,⁵¹³ and their

columns stretched for miles,⁵¹⁴ even though accelerated field courts martial could recommend the death penalty.⁵¹⁵ Headquarters reported that they were retreating in good order,⁵¹⁶ but front-line commanders warned the government about refusals to obey orders and mass desertions.⁵¹⁷ Kerensky sacked the general in charge of the offensives,⁵¹⁸ made Kornilov commander in chief,⁵¹⁹ with the former SR terrorist Boris Savinkov as his commissar, and authorised 'exceptional measures'.⁵²⁰ Kornilov banned Bolshevik newspapers and political meetings at the front.⁵²¹ Russian troops retreated to cover Moscow.⁵²² On the northwestern front the Bolsheviks claimed almost 3,900 supporters in the Twelfth Army.⁵²³ Riga riflemen who sympathised with the Bolsheviks had forced a patriotic battalion to retreat,⁵²⁴ but German troops took a town near Riga,⁵²⁵ then occupied the city.⁵²⁶ One million Russians were retreating and even more had deserted.⁵²⁷ A whole front-line regiment mutinied, and some soldiers beat their commander to death with rifle-butts. Several soldiers were shot for fraternising,⁵²⁸ but that led to a further drop in morale.⁵²⁹ The Russians had lost the ground they had won in June, and taken 40,000 casualties, compared to the enemies' 12,500, while troops were immobilised near Pskov, since railway workers had sabotaged the railways.⁵³⁰ German troops took Stanislaŭ in Biełarus,⁵³¹ but after the army commander in chief vetoed peace without annexations, senior commanders sent their resignations to the chancellor, who resigned.⁵³² German troops were 50 miles from Lwów, and had captured over 36,600 Russians, over 400 machine-guns and 93 artillery pieces.⁵³³ Petrograd soviet EC members visited front lines and argued that soldiers should obey orders, but were badly beaten.⁵³⁴ Some read the German socialists' Russian-language *Tovarishch (Comrade)*,⁵³⁵ and the number of Russian deserters averaged 1,200 a week.⁵³⁶ Rudolf Siviers had been born in the capital in 1892. He joined the Bolsheviks during the 1914 war, and after the February revolution in 1917 he was an editor of *Okopnaia Pravda*. At the end of July Lieutenant Siviers was arrested on a charge of defeatism,⁵³⁷ yet some liberal and centrist leaders in Petrograd were thinking about peace negotiations.⁵³⁸ The Menshevik Woytinsky, who had become a government commissioner, left for Riga and found 'hopeless confusion' in the Twelfth Army. A Latvian regiment which supported the Bolsheviks published *Pravda Okopov (Truth of the Trenches)*, and the commander closed it; yet when Woytinsky told soldiers and workers that fraternization was treason, even Bolshevik troops returned to duty.⁵³⁹

During July Farmborough had noticed that the troops' enthusiasm in Mariľė had waned. Half were illiterate, but they argued that freedom 'implies liberty to say, think and act as each individual thinks fit'. Criticism of Kerensky was more frequent and discipline was 'tottering'. The letuchka heard that the situation at the front was getting worse and there were many deserters. They were sent to the Romanian front, where they heard that a regiment had left over a mile of trenches unguarded. Several crack German divisions had been transferred from their western front to Galicia. The letuchka moved to near the front-line and ate the same rations as the soldiers. Farmborough found the salt-fish soup hard to swallow and the buckwheat bread with butter which contained so many lumps that she preferred black bread and tea. The letuchka heard that Tarnopol in western Ukraine had fallen, whole regiments had deserted and many soldiers had willingly become prisoners of war. Someone called 'Lenin' had attempted a coup in Petrograd, but government troops had suppressed it, and he had either been arrested or fled. The letuchka saw deserters pass by, and others formed committees which dictated to the officers. German troops had taken over Austro-Hungarian trenches, and their heavy guns caused enormous Russian casualties,⁵⁴⁰ which eventually amounted to 60,000.⁵⁴¹ Germans distributed propaganda in Russian trenches, hoping to spread unrest with promises of peace.⁵⁴² There were 'vociferous celebrations' among Russian troops, with large red flags, and all the photographs of the tsar and imperial emblems disappeared. The letuchka left for western Ukraine, then went on to eastern Ukraine, where soldiers sat and smoked in the presence of officers, yet after Kerensky exhorted over 2,000 to carry on fighting until victory, they responded enthusiastically. The letuchka dressing tent was packed, and several regiments had to be patched up before they could return to the front, but many left for Russia. Motor vehicles with machine-guns were sent after them with orders to fire, but the troops manning them insisted that the regimental flag be preceded by a red flag, and some denounced their commanders. The letuchka treated women soldiers. One wounded 'Amazon' insisted on returning to her company in case comrades thought that she had deserted. A newspaper reported that a Siberian woman had been a soldier since 1915. When she heard that soldiers were deserting in large numbers, she had gone to Moscow and Petrograd to recruit a Woman's Death Battalion. 'If the men refuse to fight for their country, we will show them what others can do!' The recruitment was successful. 'Young women, some from aristocratic families, rallied to her'. 'They were given rifles and drilled and marched vigorously.' Botchkareva was wounded twice and decorated for valour three times.⁵⁴³ They went over the top in Biełarus,⁵⁴⁴ and broke through German lines, at the cost of 50 percent casualties, but reinforcements failed to arrive and they had to give up the ground they had won.⁵⁴⁵ Botchkareva was knocked unconscious when a shell landed near her, and she was taken to a field hospital with shell-shock, then transferred to a Petrograd hospital, where she was promoted to second lieutenant.⁵⁴⁶ By the end of the month about 50 women soldiers had been killed and over 100 wounded, and though 200 survivors reached the third line of German trenches, some retreated. Botchkareva appealed for reinforcements, but they were holding a meeting. They eventually decided not to attack,

but would defend their positions if attacked. Botchkareva was summoned to Petrograd, where Red Guards were 'plentiful', and 'Bolshevism walked the streets openly and defiantly'. When she recovered she went to Moscow, but women soldiers rejected her discipline. She returned to the front and was promoted to captain.⁵⁴⁷ She bayoneted a woman having sex during a battle, though the man escaped.⁵⁴⁸ The Moscow women's battalion had 1,000 to 1,500 members, and there were smaller units in Kyiv, Odesa, Saratov, Perm and Ekaterinodar, though only the Perm battalion had gone into action.⁵⁴⁹

The German minister in Bern had reported that a 'reliable' Swiss SD had asked permission for 18 Russian political émigrés in Brussels to travel through Germany to Russia, and the military attaché reported that they would accept financial support.⁵⁵⁰ There were rumours in Germany that the U-boat policy had failed. A Majority SPD leader called for peace negotiations, and others warned that the military prospects were frightening. Nationalists formed a separate party subsidised by industrialists and supported by the army's propaganda unit. Over a million members demanded annexations in the east and a dictatorship by the army commander in chief.⁵⁵¹ The Reichstag agreed that territorial acquisitions and political, economic and financial oppression were incompatible with a negotiated peace,⁵⁵² by 212 votes to 126; but called for more war credits; though the Austro-Hungarian emperor knew his army could not survive the winter.⁵⁵³

A majority of German navy sailors were skilled men who found the cramped conditions and harsh discipline increasingly intolerable. Since the warships were kept in port they could get radical literature from dock and shipyard workers, and young sailors, stokers and petty officers who had formerly been workers were influenced by SD ideas and wanted peace. A small group at Wilmenshaven met regularly in the boiler room or the munitions store of a cruiser, and the stoker Willy Sache and the sailor Max Reichpietsch read them pamphlets by Marx and Bebel. When Reichpietsch heard that canteen committees including sailors were being introduced, he argued that they were the 'first step towards constructing sailors' councils on the Russian model'. At Keil there was a hunger-strike on a warship, followed by a large-scale walkout. Flottenzentrale (Fleet Headquarters) which claimed to lead over 5,000 sailors, was established. SDs in Bremen and Hamburg formed 'an action committee to take the first practical steps' to form a new party, and *Arbeiterpolitik, Wochenzeitschrift für Wissenschaftlichen Sozialismus (Workers' Politics, The Weekly Journal for Scientific Socialism)*, claimed that the USPD was 'dead'.⁵⁵⁴

8. The bony hand of hunger

A worker has no fatherland – he has a fist!

By August the British government had withdrawn the invitation to the Imperial family,¹ and Kerensky sent them to Tobolsk in Siberia,² without consulting the cabinet,³ which moved into the Winter Palace and Kerensky used the tsar's former suite.⁴ The government empowered the interior minister to detain people without trial,⁵ and deport those deemed dangerous to internal security.⁶ It imposed martial law across the country, introduced the death penalty for civilians, banned strikes under the threat of capital punishment, militarised railways and defence plants, imposed compulsory production quotas, prescribed the sack for failure to meet them,⁷ and postponed the constituent assembly elections to 12 November.⁸ Factory managers across Russia were resisting wage rises and the eight-hour day. They sacked over 100,000 workers,⁹ and at least a third more were unemployed,¹⁰ though the metalworkers' union claimed 138,000 members.¹¹ In Petrograd three-quarters of workforces had some control over production,¹² and averaged 389. Metalworkers formed 60 percent of industrial workers; but 25 works were due to close and production cut at 137.¹³ A government committee wanted 47 large factories, state plants and private engineering and chemical works to be evacuated immediately. Some workers would go with them, but others would get a fortnight's notice. Managers at Baranovsky gunpowder mills announced 1,500 redundancies and blamed fuel shortages, but the workers' committee cut hours and transferred workers from one shop to another.¹⁴

The Bolsheviks claimed 40,000 members in the capital, or around 22 percent of the national total,¹⁵ and their 40 or so soviet deputies were prepared to tolerate the government 'in so far as' it acted 'in the interests of the proletariat'.¹⁶ The soviet had well over 1,000 deputies and Bolsheviks sometimes received 100 votes more than the Mensheviks and SRs combined.¹⁷ They led the presidium of the workers' section,¹⁸ and Petrograd district soviet, and had a majority in the ECs of all of the industrial unions except the printers' and paper workers'.¹⁹ Vyborg Bolsheviks claimed 200 to 300 members at the Metallist factory,²⁰ and there was 'a clear understanding of class interest' among Putilov workers.²¹

Krivobokov recalled the scene at the Bolshevik military organisation headquarters in Liteiny Prospekt.

Here is a soldier who has tied up a big bundle of newspapers, swung them over his shoulder and with a groan is making his way to the door to take the papers to his unit: here is a worker who asks for an agitator to be sent to his factory immediately, where a party of soldiers had refused to obey an officer, and every advantage must be taken of their mood. Here, another worker is asking for literature for distribution in an army unit quartered in the vicinity of the factory. Here, a young girl is writing down a soldier's story of a captain's misdeeds; over there a soldier with a pencil firmly grasped in his gnarled fingers, is writing a story for the newspaper. In another corner a group of workers is arranging with two soldiers the practical details of the removal of rifles from the store-room, while in the opposite corner peasants in their home-spun coats, bast shoes and felt caps are seated on benches are slowly munching bread and in front of them stands a young soldier who is trying to explain something to his elders. These are peasant messengers who have come on foot from some villages to find out about the land; the soldier, the son of one of them, could not think of anything better than to bring them to us for our advice.

There were around 12,000 Red Guards in the city, and their leaders reportedly operated outwith Party control,²² since 12 or 13 had set up a committee of four Bolsheviks,²³ including Valentin Trifonov and Iustin Zhuk.²⁴

Trifonov had been born into a Cossack family in 1888. He joined the RSDRP in 1904 and was active in 1905. He was sent to katorga prisons several times, but by 1917 he was a secretary of the Bolshevik fraction in Petrograd soviet.²⁵ Zhuk had been born into a poor Kyiv peasant family in 1887, though they had managed to send him to school. He was active in 1905, but imprisoned as an anarchist-syndicalist in 1909. He was freed after the February revolution in 1917, became a fitter at Shlisselburg gunpowder mills, joined the workers' committee, became its chair, and agitated for the workers to take over. They worked a six hour day, then trained to use weapons.²⁶ Around 72 percent of Sestoresk armaments workers voted in the committee election. Bolsheviks won eight seats, SRs five and Mensheviks two. On 2 August, at the elections to the workers' committee at one of the Parviainen works, Bolsheviks won 1,800 votes and SRs 300.²⁷ Bolsheviks won a huge majority on the Lessner metalworks workers' committee and the Treugolnik rubber works and Erikson telephone factory sickness funds.²⁸ The Mensheviks held some important positions. Gurvich edited *Izvestia*, the joint organ of the soviet and VTsIK, and *Golos Soldata* (*Soldier's Voice*),²⁹ but Tserdobaum told the Bolsheviks he was deeply indignant at the slander against Ulyanov.³⁰ On the 3rd delegates at a Bolshevik congress voted almost unanimously for the 'Liquidation of the dictatorship of the counter-revolutionary bourgeoisie' and the 'Dictatorship of the proletariat and the poorer peasantry'.³¹ On the

4th, after *Pravda* was banned, the Bolshevik CC decided that *Rabochy i Soldat* should be the central organ, but refused to allow the city committee and military committee have their own paper, and when *Soldat (Soldier)* appeared the CC insisted on a seat on its editorial board with the right to veto content.³²

On the 6th a VPSR conference voted not to oppose the death penalty,³³ though Spiridonova, who led the growing internationalist faction, argued for cooperating with the Bolsheviks, since 'the masses are with them'. She wanted an immediate armistice, giving peasants land and workers control of production; but a majority voted for a military offensive, so the internationalists propagandised returning soldiers and other peasants,³⁴ and they separated from defencists in Kherson, Kaluga and Pskov. There were worker-only SR organisations in Taganrog, Luhansk, Mykolaev, Kansk, Atkarsk, Novo-Nikolaevsk, Penza, Kursk, Riga, Omsk and Mariľë.³⁵ Boris Kamkov had returned to Petrograd after the February revolution and joined the SR internationalists. He and Spiridonova opposed a split, though the internationalists were powerful in Kazan, Finland, Ufa in Siberia, and at Kronstadt,³⁶ where there was a large group of Bolsheviks.³⁷ Around 15,000 sailors, soldiers, workers and peasants protested against the arrest of the Bolshevik leaders, and demanded the transfer of power to the soviets and workers' control of industry. A large meeting in Helsinki passed a similar motion unanimously.³⁸ On the 7th a conference of factory committee delegates opened in Petrograd,³⁹ and a motion for all power to the soviets passed by 213 to 26, with 22 abstentions.⁴⁰ A Sestroretsk carpenter argued that the 'absence of intelligenty in no way impedes the work of the sections. It is high time the workers abandoned the bad habit of constantly looking over their shoulder at the intelligenty. It is necessary that all participants at the conference enter some section and work there independently'; but a skilled metalworker remarked that 'we have become so used to tutelage that it is hard to free ourselves from the habit'.⁴¹ Obukhov workers' committee had 12 members and 24 shop stewards to represent 8,000 workers, and the Admiralty committee of 24 represented 800, though Baltic shipyard committee membership had declined from 103 to 40,⁴² and union leaders accepted to a pay offer below what was claimed. The workers' section of the soviet demanded the abolition of the death penalty and Putilov workers gave a day's pay for the Bolshevik press.⁴³ On the 8th the government banned night work for women in factories, and youths under 17, except in armaments works.⁴⁴ On the 9th delegates from Kronstadt, Helsinki and Tallinn voted for a revolution, and a Bolshevik government in Finland.⁴⁵ By the 10th 60,000 copies of *Rabochy i Soldat* were being printed.⁴⁶ Jughashvili, Sokolnikov and Miliutin were narrowly elected as editors of Bolshevik publications,⁴⁷ and Miliutin was co-opted onto the Bolshevik CC, but was arrested and deported to Saratov.⁴⁸

By the 11th Jughashvili and Smilga stole the RSDRP military committee's funds,⁴⁹ and *Proletary* reappeared.⁵⁰ Around 43,000 Obukhov workers elected a new committee. SRs won over 74 percent of the vote, though 26 were internationalists, and the Bolsheviks won just over 11 percent. A conference of 80 delegates from 24 textile mills voted for all power to the soviets,⁵¹ but Black Hundreds and pogromists were freed from prison.⁵² The owner of a small engineering works had told his 200 workers at the end of May that he had no money and the factory would close, but they had occupied. The owner insisted it would close on 7 June, but the workers' committee discovered that he had received advance payments of over 500,000 rubles and was trying to stop deliveries of materials and rejecting new orders, so they occupied again. In July the Treugolnik rubber factory committee gave them 15,000 rubles and Putilov workers sent raw materials. On 12 August the government sent troops and sequestered the works.⁵³ At Kronstadt the Party had lost about 250 members, and the Bolshevik paper replaced those suppressed in the capital.⁵⁴ By the 15th, in Petrograd, *Novaya Zhizn* claimed 4,000 readers, but *Proletary* accused the editors of refusing to enter the struggle and dividing the workers.⁵⁵ The soviet's military committee included 48 Bolsheviks, 14 SR internationalists and four Anarchists.⁵⁶ The Bolshevik CC appointed Sverdlov to lead their military committee,⁵⁷ with Dzierżyński,⁵⁸ who had recently joined the Bolsheviks.⁵⁹ Breshkovskaya accused leading SRs who opposed the war of treason, though others called for an all-socialist government.⁶⁰ The Putilov works had normally consumed ten percent of the coal delivered to the capital, but now received around a quarter of that amount.⁶¹

Ivan Teodorovich had been born into the family of a Smolensk land-surveyor in 1875. His great-grandfather had been active in the Warszawa rising in 1830, and his father and two uncles had been active in the 1863 rising. As a child Ivan suffered severe poverty, and his mother worked as a seamstress and laundress to support him and his five brothers, and Ivan hated 'tsarism'. He later managed to attend Moscow University, where he joined an SD kruzhok in 1895. From 1902 he was a member of the RSDRP city committee, and was exiled to Far Eastern Siberia, but escaped to Switzerland. In 1905 and returned to the capital and joined the Party CC in 1907. He was arrested in summer 1909, and sentenced to katorga and exile. In March 1917, after the amnesty, he returned to Petrograd and was elected as a candidate member of the CC in April. By August he was the deputy chair of the city duma, and responsible for the supply of food.⁶² The official grain price had doubled,⁶³ and there were two days' supply of bread in the city,⁶⁴ though mutual societies with around 350,000 members distributed basic goods.⁶⁵ In the first half the month 15 percent of the government target for grain to feed citizens had arrived, and 28 percent of that for the army.⁶⁶ Around 26 percent of locomotives and eight percent of rolling stock were under repair.⁶⁷ The Kadet CC felt

that a dictatorship was desirable, but would be premature,⁶⁸ and at a congress of industrialists and bankers a millionaire believed it would 'take the bony hand of hunger to grab the people's false friends by the throat – those members of various committees and soviets – for them to come to their senses'.⁶⁹ On the 16th Metal Works managers sacked 633 workers and announced that the factory would close in three weeks, but the workers' committee found enough fuel and raw material for six months.⁷⁰ On the 17th the government threatened anyone using violence to change the state structure, separate any part of the Empire, or prevent it using its powers or removing its organs, with prison or indefinite periods of *katorga*,⁷¹ and announced that the death penalty applied to troops in the rear.⁷²

Golos Truda (Labour's Voice) had been founded in New York by émigré Russian Anarcho-Syndicalists in 1911, but it had moved to Petrograd after the March 1917 amnesty.⁷³ Most editors were former émigrés, and though only three or four propagandised,⁷⁴ they formed a Union of Propaganda.⁷⁵ The paper could not compete with Bolshevik papers in Petrograd factories, but made rapid progress out at Obukhovo, Kolpino and Kronstadt, and reached the provinces.⁷⁶ On 18 August it argued that factory committees would 'deliver the decisive and mortal blow to capitalism' and be 'cells of the future socialist society';⁷⁷ though its press suffered an intermittent supply of electricity and around half the printed copies were 'lost' at the post office.⁷⁸ The soviet voted by about 500 to four to demand the abolition of the death penalty. On the 19th Jughashvili published Apfelbaum's arguments against a rising in *Proletary*, which was closed, but reappeared as *Rabotnik (The Worker)*. After a Kadet CC member spoke of 'the fatherland', a worker shouted back. 'A worker has no fatherland – he has a fist!' When the Kadet reminded him that bitterness in France had ended with people chopping off heads, a sailor shouted 'your head should be chopped off too!' ⁷⁹ Cable factory workers were told that the works would be moved to Voronezh in two weeks, though their committee knew there were unfulfilled orders and enough fuel for three months, and negotiated a delay; though another factory's machines were sent to near Moscow overnight,⁸⁰ and the government dissolved the Finnish parliament.⁸¹

On the 20th the Menshevik list of candidates for the city дума elections was composed entirely of internationalists.⁸² SRs won 205,000 votes, Bolsheviks 184,000, Kadets 114,000 and Mensheviks 24,000;⁸³ and despite a 30 percent decline in turnout the Bolsheviks won absolute majorities in Vyborg and Petrograd districts.⁸⁴ Bolsheviks increased their seats from 37 to 67, Mensheviks won two, as compared to 40 previously, Kadets won 42, and SRs 75.⁸⁵ Fyodor Linde convinced the Finland Regiment to demonstrate against the government,⁸⁶ and an informal RSDRP meeting agreed by 58 votes to 37, with 52 abstentions, and by 47 to 42, with 80 abstentions, to do so even if the soviet forbade it.⁸⁷ Sestroresk arms workers demanded pay for the days of demonstrations, which they intended use to pay for literature for the front. The Helsinki organisation, which claimed between 4,500 and 4,600 members,⁸⁸ demanded all power to the soviets, the transfer of Cossacks to the front, the disbandment of the death battalions and the seizure of bourgeois newspapers. On the 21st Petrograd Bolsheviks presented demands to the soviet EC, including dissolving the Duma, an end to disbanding regiments and mass arrests, and abolishing the death penalty at the front.⁸⁹ Rumours about evacuating plants were rife, but workers at one large works increased their control, and over 250,000, mostly metalworkers, went on strike.⁹⁰ Gorky and Krasin had raised 5,000 rubles bail for Kollontai, and she went to live with her son, until her heart condition improved.⁹¹ Krylenko, Dybenko and other Bolsheviks were still in Kresty Prison,⁹² as was Bronstein, who was accused of being on the train through Germany.⁹³ He wrote pamphlets and articles,⁹⁴ but dissociated himself from Helphand.⁹⁵ Members of the Bolshevik military committee and Petrograd committee issued a leaflet with the slogan 'Down with the government!'⁹⁶

On the 22nd the Bolshevik-led workers' committee at one of the Parviainen works negotiated an agreement about an orderly evacuation.⁹⁷ The VPSR committee was aware of its declining influence, since workers were leaving for the Bolsheviks in droves.⁹⁸ One of the four largest groups of Bolsheviks was at Kronstadt,⁹⁹ and 100 were on the soviet, along with 75 SR internationalists, 12 Menshevik internationalists, and seven Anarchists, though 90 were unaligned. Smilga was elected as president of Helsinki soviet.¹⁰⁰ On the 23rd Petrograd SR internationalists won the largest contingent on Vizhkel and the chair.¹⁰¹ On the 24th their *Znamya Truda (Banner of Labour)* was optimistic. 'We especially feel the absence of intellectual forces', but there were 'agitators and propagandists from among the workers themselves. There is a collegium of orators – 17 workers. In the near future the district will be able to conduct party work by its own forces'.¹⁰² *Izvestia* published the government plan to close plants, and Menshevik and SR defencists on the soviet supported it by 147 votes to 46, with 42 abstentions.¹⁰³ An interdistrict soviet conference demanded that the government declare Russia a democratic republic. They announced the formation of armed squads of employed and unemployed workers to defend the revolution, and Vikzhel cooperated.¹⁰⁴ Kollontai, Samoilva, Stahl and Nikolaeva organised a conference for women workers. Some Bolsheviks disapproved, but Sverdlov was supportive,¹⁰⁵ and 5,000 women demanded that the imprisoned Bolsheviks be freed and the war ended.¹⁰⁶ The Bolshevik CC nominated Ulyanova as a candidate in the constituent assembly elections,¹⁰⁷ yet while

Rozhkov voted for capital punishment at the Menshevik unification conference, but became one of the eight internationalists in the 25-member CC,¹⁰⁸ and internationalists led the VPSR.¹⁰⁹

At 4.00am on the 26th the government announced that grain prices would be raised four days later. Peasants would receive 70 percent of the proceeds, and penalties for hiding grain would be reduced.¹¹⁰ They allowed capitalists to buy grain,¹¹¹ though government agents were to impound stocks if peasants refused to cooperate.¹¹² *Rabochy i Soldat* reported that Fürstenberg and Kozłowski worked for Helphand,¹¹³ who had published a pamphlet which read like Bolshevik propaganda, though he denied giving them money.¹¹⁴

The attempted military coup

Since 1914 the Russian army had lost between seven and eight million troops. Early in August a Siberian brigade lost 9,000 taken prisoner, and one offensive resulted in 17,339 being killed, wounded or missing.¹¹⁵ By the 7th Russian troops were retreating in Galicia,¹¹⁶ and mass executions were ineffective.¹¹⁷ Officially 365,000 had deserted, and with 'slackers' the total was about 1.5 million.¹¹⁸ Peace talks between Russia, Turkey and Bulgaria were underway, and the Austro-Hungarian government signalled a readiness to conclude peace.¹¹⁹ Food supply problems threatened Russia's war effort, and the supply of grain to the army on the northwestern and southwestern fronts was 23 percent of what was required.¹²⁰ Don Cossacks and Kadets had formed a bloc for the constituent assembly elections, though Cossacks on the southwestern front regarded Kadets as 'sworn enemies and enslavers of the working people', and Cossacks on the northern front fraternised with other soldiers and sailors. A general reported that the mood of the infantry, except for the death battalions, was 'very unstable'.¹²¹ Front-line troops asked Petrograd soviet EC to explain 'who these Bolsheviks are'. 'We are little by little going over entirely to the Bolsheviks'. On the 13th Kornilov complained about indiscipline in the army.¹²² He sent officers to Petrograd to tell Duma deputies that plans to overthrow Kerensky were well advanced and should be carried out in the Duma's name. Most deputies did not take it seriously, but industrialists agreed to put up 3.5 million rubles.¹²³ German troops were ten miles from Riga, yet Kornilov withdrew his forces from the city.¹²⁴ On the 18th Kerensky accepted some of Kornilov's perspectives,¹²⁵ and appointed him as supreme commander of the army.¹²⁶ On the 19th the Germans broke through Russian lines,¹²⁷ and Kornilov demanded command of Petrograd military district, but Kerensky refused.¹²⁸ Kornilov ordered the Savage Division of Caucasian cavalry to be ready as soon as disturbances began in Petrograd, and no later than 12 days' time. The 1,150 cavalymen were short of 600 rifles, 1,000 lances and 500 spears,¹²⁹ yet they and the First Don Cossacks moved towards Pskov.¹³⁰ In Petrograd several members of the cabinet got foreign passports.¹³¹ The minister responsible for food supply ordered provincial committees to adopt 'coercive measures, including armed force', if peasants refused to sell grain.¹³² Kerensky asked Kornilov for a cavalry corps, though not the Savage Division, to enforce martial law in the capital.¹³³ Bolsheviks had a majority in the Riga duma elections, but by the 21st German troops occupied the city,¹³⁴ and Kornilov ordered his troops to prepare to march on Petrograd.¹³⁵ The cavalry had hand grenades and ten days' supply of food and forage.¹³⁶ He ordered Don Cossacks to attack Moscow. Using a Hughes apparatus at the War Ministry in Petrograd Kerensky asked him, in the presence of witnesses, if he planned a coup. When Kornilov confirmed that he was, Kerensky sacked him, then discussed it with the cabinet, but cancelled the next meeting. Kornilov refused to step down, but while many of his officers in Petrograd pocketed their 159 rubles and disappeared, the industrialists remained keen about a coup.¹³⁷ Front-line soldiers told Kerensky that they would hold their positions until autumn, but if the war had not ended by then they would 'take our weapons and head out for our own hearths to save our fathers, mothers, wives, and children from death by starvation (which is nigh)'. They would 'rather die with them' than 'be killed, poisoned, or frozen to death' and 'cast into the earth like a dog'.¹³⁸

On the 24th Kornilov summoned around 4,000 officers to headquarters to learn how to use hand grenades, and they agreed to be ready in two days. Representatives from 29 front-line regiments and Kronstadt sailors, plus representatives from 90 Petrograd factories, passed a Bolshevik motion to publicise front-line conditions.¹³⁹ By the 25th German troops had entered Riga in force,¹⁴⁰ then halted. Kornilov had around 2,000 armed supporters in the capital,¹⁴¹ especially in working-class districts,¹⁴² and other troops within striking distance.¹⁴³ He wanted to execute Ulyanov and other alleged German spies, disperse the soviet,¹⁴⁴ enforce martial law, force ministers to resign and hand over power to their deputies until he formed a new cabinet; but Kerensky ordered them to remain at their posts.¹⁴⁵ Hundreds of Petrograd workers, troops and women joined the Red Guards.¹⁴⁶ On the 26th around 12,500 deserters were arrested in Venden and 3,000 in Valk, plus many in Pernik and Pskov. In Petrograd the government gave Kerensky unlimited powers, and liberal ministers resigned;¹⁴⁷ but when he asked the Bolsheviks to help to defend the capital they agreed.¹⁴⁸¹⁴⁹ Kerensky ordered Kornilov to come to Petrograd immediately,¹⁵⁰ and though his troops asked the soviet for instructions,¹⁵¹ Kornilov began to move on the 27th.¹⁵² By the 28th the Savage Division

was approaching Petrograd,¹⁵³ but railway workers had sabotaged the line and immobilised locomotives. Soldiers' committees controlled the southwestern front,¹⁵⁴ though army commanders on the western, Caucasian and Romanian fronts confirmed their loyalty to the government,¹⁵⁵ and soldiers' committees and commissars arrested officers sympathetic to Kornilov and took over his headquarters.¹⁵⁶ Petrograd soviet ordered workers' militias, including around 25,000 Red Guards, to defend the capital.¹⁵⁷ They were mainly Bolsheviks, though there were many Anarchists and SR and Menshevik internationalists.¹⁵⁸ The soviet EC distributed 300 rifles per district, though one had only 420 for 4,000 men. Petergofsky district requested 2,000 arms and Nevsky district wanted 10,000.¹⁵⁹ The soviet authorised the distribution of 20,000 rifles, and Bolsheviks rallied factory and military contacts and flying squadrons across the region.¹⁶⁰ Vyborg soldiers killed army officers who refused to acknowledge the authority of the commissar.¹⁶¹ Kronstadt soviet replaced the Fortress commander with their own, and sent the cruiser *Aurora* to Petrograd. The soviet EC asked for a large number of Kronstadt sailors to come to Petrograd,¹⁶² and around 3,000 reached Vasilievsky Island,¹⁶³ where they prepared for battle.¹⁶⁴ The crew asked Bronstein if they should defend the Winter Palace or storm it, but he advised them to defeat Kornilov first.¹⁶⁵ Around 100,000 troops and armed workers defended the city and occupied the roads to the west and south.¹⁶⁶ Kerensky appointed a provisional governor-general, but the soviet EC 'Committee of Struggle against Counter-Revolution' included members of all three major socialist parties, workers' and soldiers' committees and trade unions, and Krivobokov offered to coordinate strategy.¹⁶⁷ Sestroresk arms workers' committee included several revolutionaries, and the factory was a refuge for Petrograd activists and a transit station for smuggling literature and arms.¹⁶⁸ They gave weapons to workers' battalions, and the Bolsheviks expanded the Red Guards.¹⁶⁹ Those in Vyborg had 1,210 rifles,¹⁷⁰ and the 30,000 Putilov workers had 500,¹⁷¹ though the cannon shop worked around the clock to produce 100 artillery pieces in three days, which usually took three weeks. The workers sent 8,000 to form eight Red Guard units to build fortifications and prepare to agitate Kornilov's troops.¹⁷² Reserve regiments elected new committees with a majority of Bolshevik sympathisers.¹⁷³ The Second Machine-Gun Regiment insisted that 'the only way out of the present situation lies in transferring power into the hands of working people'.¹⁷⁴ The Savage Division reached Tsarskoe Selo, but Muslim troops persuaded them not to continue,¹⁷⁵ and the leader pledged allegiance to the government.¹⁷⁶ A general reported to Kerensky, then shot himself.¹⁷⁷ Except for ten suspect officers drowned in Vyborg, and the shooting of four navy officers who refused to pledge allegiance to the government at Kronstadt, there had been little violence.¹⁷⁸ Kornilov's forces disintegrated.¹⁷⁹ Kerensky ordered his chief of staff to arrest him, and appointed himself as commander in chief of the army.¹⁸⁰

On the 30th Goldstein joined the Petrograd soviet presidium,¹⁸¹ and by the 31st the Bolsheviks had a majority on the soviet.¹⁸² It voted for all power to the soviets,¹⁸³ and passed a Bolshevik motion expressing distrust in the government,¹⁸⁴ by 279 votes to 115, with 51 abstentions.¹⁸⁵ It called for a government of 'revolutionary proletarians and peasants',¹⁸⁶ immediate peace negotiations, the confiscation of larger estates and workers' control of industry.¹⁸⁷ The soviet EC offered Kronstadt sailors four seats with a voice, but no vote, and they accepted.¹⁸⁸ Managers at one Parviainen works announced 1,630 redundancies, but the workers' committee ensured a more economical use of fuel. Putilov managers announced 10,000 redundancies, because of alleged fuel shortages, and when the workers' committee found some, managers claimed that they could not afford it, though the workers' committee refused to accept this. Some male workers wanted married women to be laid off, but the workers' committee prevented that. There was pressure to sack women at the Franco-Russian, Arsenal, Nevsky, Lessner and Russian-Baltic works, but the metalworkers' union, the central council of factory committees and Bolsheviks argued that it would fatally divide the working class.¹⁸⁹ VTsIK members wanted a conference 'free from any compromises to counter-revolutionary elements' that was 'capable of fulfilling the programme of revolutionary Democracy'. Menshevik internationalists dominated the Party committee and were against a coalition government.¹⁹⁰ They had 30,000 rubles, yet students who had joined in 1905 and become successful engineers, doctors and government officials generally ignored them.¹⁹¹ The VPSR CC opposed Kadets entering the government,¹⁹² as did the Menshevik CC.¹⁹³ Up to 50 agitators who claimed to be Bolsheviks were not card-carrying members,¹⁹⁴ though the Bolsheviks claimed that around 90 percent of the garrison supported them.¹⁹⁵

Since July, officially, the cost of living had risen by 75 percent nationally,¹⁹⁶ and during August almost 379,500 workers had gone on strike.¹⁹⁷ The 35 strikes involving over 170,500 workers had challenged management authority.¹⁹⁸ The 206 lockouts in Petrograd had affected over 47,750 workers.¹⁹⁹ In two months the cost of living had risen by 75 percent and real wages in several major factories had fallen by 12 percent,²⁰⁰ though Goncharskaia had helped to organize a laundresses' trade union.²⁰¹ The government was printing 55 million paper rubles a day,²⁰² and almost 20 billion were in circulation,²⁰³ ten times more than 1914.²⁰⁴ The international value of the ruble had fallen from 56 to 27 kopeks,²⁰⁵ and Bolsheviks called for the 'immediate cessation' of the issue of paper currency and the establishment of a property tax.²⁰⁶ The government postponed the first constituent assembly meeting.²⁰⁷

Kustaa Rovio had been born in the capital in 1887.²⁰⁸ He became a turner in Helsinki, but by August 1917 he was the city's police superintendent. Shotman arranged for Ulyanov to hide in his home,²⁰⁹ and he disguised himself as a pastor. Rovio had a fine SD library,²¹⁰ and Ulyanov asked him to get the Petrograd papers each day, and arrange for a courier to carry letters. Rovio knew a reliable engine driver on the line to Petrograd, and Shotman gave him an address for deliveries in the capital.²¹¹ Lidia Parvianen, who was 25, had joined the Bolsheviks in February. She was a Red Guard, and one night Ulyanov hid in her father's house.²¹² On another night he stayed with Karl Wiik,²¹³ a leading SD member of the Finnish parliament,²¹⁴ who found him lodgings in the home of a comrade in Helsinki who was an engine driver and belonged to a workers' organisation.²¹⁵ Krupskaya went to Razliv, and the family Ulyanov had hidden with gave her a relative's passport. She glued on a photograph of herself wearing workers' clothes and wore an older woman's headscarf. Ulyanov had sent her a map of Helsinki in invisible ink, but it was burned by reheating, and it took some time before she found him.²¹⁶ In Petrograd the slander against him and Apfelbaum had begun to dissipate,²¹⁷ and Ulyanov wanted to be nearer the capital. A barber who had formerly worked at the Mariinsky Theatre in Petrograd sold him a wig with grey hair, and late that month Rovio got him eyebrow dye and a passport, and found him lodgings in Viipuri near the Finnish border with Russia.²¹⁸

During August the Party secretariat had interviewed 86 visitors and sent telegrams to seven local organisations. It had posted an average of 165 letters a month since March, and the most common complaint it received was the scarcity of cadre.²¹⁹ Its efforts to unify trade union work were hampered by 'the poor functioning of the mail', and since activity had 'mainly been concentrated' on the capital, it had set up 'a board of travelling agents', particularly for the northwestern and southern regions, and along the Volga, 'where party cohesiveness is lacking'.²²⁰ The Bolshevik CC had also sent agents to provincial organisations.²²¹

Moscow and other key regions

By August around 28 percent of Bolsheviks were in Moscow,²²² and they led most trade unions.²²³ The textile workers' claimed 111,000 members and the metalworkers' 65,000.²²⁴ Skilled metalworkers formed 26 percent of the labour force, and factory workforces averaged 159. Unskilled textile workers formed 37 percent of the total and around 40 percent held land in their villages,²²⁵ but they earned half as much in real terms as in January.²²⁶ The cost of most goods had risen by over 1,100 percent since 1914. Cheese cost 3.5 rubles for about 14.5 ounces, butter 3.2 rubles, veal 2.15, pork two, beef 1.1 herring 52 kopeks, milk 40 kopeks, white bread 20, black bread 12 and eggs 1.6 rubles a dozen, men's shoes 144, a load of firewood 120, matches 50 kopeks a carton and soap 40 kopeks for 36 pounds. The price of black bread had risen by 330 percent in two years, eggs by 443 percent, milk by 471 percent and herring by 767 percent,²²⁷ and by August the city's grain stocks would last about a week.²²⁸ By the 5th Bolsheviks led the soviet.²²⁹ By the 11th the leather industry was strike-bound over workers' demands to control hiring, and around 400,000 strikers were in one district; but the soviet voted by 312 to 284 against strikes.²³⁰ A Bolshevik motion to attend the opening of the government's 'State Conference' fell by 364 votes to 277,²³¹ and the Bolsheviks in VTsIK denounced it as counter-revolutionary and organised a one-day general strike.²³² The government ordered workers not to strike,²³³ but by the 12th 191 of 682 factory committee delegates supported the Bolshevik motion.²³⁴ Among the 2,414 delegates at the State Conference 488 were members of previous Dumas, 313 were from cooperatives, 176 from trade unions, 150 from commercial and industrial organisations, 147 from zemstvos, 129 from soviet ECs, 129 from peasant soviets, 117 from the military, and 100 each from separate workers' and soldiers' soviets.²³⁵ There were few internationalists,²³⁶ since most Bolsheviks had refused to attend,²³⁷ but no trams ran,²³⁸ cab-drivers refused to drive delegates and waiters refused to serve them.²³⁹ Several factories were strike-bound. At the Duks metalworks the vote to strike had been 731 to 716,²⁴⁰ but the Bolsheviks claimed 100 members at Moscow Metalworks, and 3,300 came out.²⁴¹ Workers struck at almost all the municipal undertakings, except those essential to citizens, and that evening gas workers joined came out and the city was plunged in darkness.²⁴² That day around 400,000 workers demonstrated against the government.²⁴³

Leonid Serebryakov had been born into a Samara metalworker's family in 1890. He left school at 1904 to be a lathe-operator in Luhansk in the Donbas. He joined the Bolsheviks in 1905, but was arrested several times, sacked because of his revolutionary activities and deported to Vologda province in 1908. On his release in 1910 he became a Bolshevik organiser, and was a delegate to the Prague conference in 1912. When he returned to Samara he was sentenced to three years' exile in Narym in Siberia, but escaped in 1913. He was sent to Baki to organise a strike, and was shadowed and left, but was arrested in Odesa and sent back to Narym. He escaped in 1914, but was arrested in Moscow and sent back to Narym. He was freed in 1916, but was drafted. Early in 1917 he led a mutiny in Kostroma, and helped to organise a soviet. By mid-August he was a Party organiser in Moscow.²⁴⁴

On the 20th 40,000 of the 71,000 workers' cooperative members attended a meeting in Moscow.²⁴⁵ Late that month Mensheviks and SRs opposed the formation of Red Guards, but many factory workforces, including that at Moscow Metalworks, voted to arm against Kornilov's attempted coup.²⁴⁶ During August the cost of living had almost doubled since June, and the average worker's daily wage varied from one to 5.3 rubles, and though 785 railway wagonloads of grain had reached the city, the bread ration had been cut to 7.5 ounces.²⁴⁷ Nationally prices had risen by four percent, but the price of bread in Moscow by 17 percent,²⁴⁸ yet the soviet controlled military affairs.²⁴⁹

In the central industrial region, early in August, Krasin had persuaded strikers not to destroy Vladimir gunpowder mills.²⁵⁰ By the 4th there were 54 SRs, 36 Mensheviks and 28 Bolsheviks in Nizhni-Novgorod soviet.²⁵¹ By the 11th the central council of trade unions claimed to represent 400,000 workers in the province, and almost all went on strike.²⁵² On the 12th Moscow province soviet demanded all power to the soviets.²⁵³ Tver Bolsheviks won over 10,600 of the around 36,350 votes in the дума elections.²⁵⁴ Iakovleva urged the Party's Moscow regional bureau to propagandise and agitate women workers,²⁵⁵ and by the 13th there was a women's commission.²⁵⁶ Fish, peas, millet, cabbages and mushrooms were unavailable in Totma in Vologda province. Meat cost 90 kopeks a pound and tobacco 12 rubles, and hungry people stole onions, swedes and potatoes from gardens.²⁵⁷ Late in August Bolsheviks won 58 of the 102 seats in Ivanovo дума, SRs 24 and Mensheviks four.²⁵⁸

In the Baltic region Bolsheviks claimed over 3,180 members in Tallinn district by August, including over 2,900 workers, 209 sailors and soldiers and 47 intelligenty, and they were all very young.²⁵⁹ On the 6th Bolsheviks won almost 21,650 votes out of almost 69,900 in the дума elections, SRs around 15,200 and Mensheviks 8,270.²⁶⁰

In Ukraine there was reportedly no 'state authority, inviolability of domicile, or personal safety' in the Donbas by August, but an 'unbroken, continuous conflict'.²⁶¹ On the 6th Bolsheviks won 29 of the 75 seats in Luhansk дума. By the 8th the Bolshevik claimed 900 members in Ekaterinoslav, 1,600 to 1,700 in Odesa, 3,500 in Mykolaev and 4,000 in Kyiv,²⁶² and on the 12th there were strikes in Kyiv against the State Conference.²⁶³ Days later the entire staff of Kharkiv locomotive works was sacked.²⁶⁴ The first Ukrainian congress was held in Siberia and established the Supreme Ukrainian Council and sent a delegate to the Rada in Kyiv.²⁶⁵ On the 20th a Kyiv factory workers' committee carried a Bolshevik motion by 161 votes to 35, with 13 abstentions.²⁶⁶ The government dissolved the Rada and ordered new elections,²⁶⁷ but a Red Guard unit armed at the Iasinovata mine in the Donbas had received pikes, 50 rifles and bombs from Petrograd.²⁶⁸ By the end of the month there was a week's supply of grain in Almazny in Luhansk province,²⁶⁹ but Kyiv soviet controlled military affairs.²⁷⁰

On the Volga there were strikes priesting against the State Conference in Tsaritsyn on the 12 August.²⁷¹ By late that month the soviet controlled military affairs.²⁷² Bolsheviks controlled Samara soviet,²⁷³ and demonstrators smashed their way into a police commissariat in Astrakahn.²⁷⁴ On the 31st Saratov soviet passed a Bolshevik motion calling for an armed workers' militia, all power to the soviets and the speedy convocation of a congress of soviets, by 188 votes to 178,²⁷⁵ and the Bolsheviks had 14 cells in the region.²⁷⁶

Dzhaparidze had been elected as a delegate to the Bolshevik congress from Caucasia, and was elected as a candidate member of the CC.²⁷⁷ On the 12th Tbilisi workers went on strike against the State Conference,²⁷⁸ and the Black Sea sailors' committee demanded all power to the soviets.²⁷⁹ On the 21st the Mensheviks' information bureau called itself the 'National Inter-Party Council'. Most Georgian SDs did not attend the Mensheviks' unification congress, though they had 20 percent of the mandates and claimed to represent just over 40,870 members. By the end of the month 31 Tbilisi trade unions claimed around 25,000 members, though some SDs favoured cooperating with employers. SDs in the soviet set up commissions for finance and food, and rationed bread and sugar. There was almost no contact between workers, who mostly could not speak Russian, and Russian soldiers.²⁸⁰

In Azerbaijan Musavatists had joined Baki soviet, though the provincial food supply committee reduced the grain ration by a quarter. The Bolsheviks branded SRs as 'conciliators'. On the 28th news of Kornilov's attempted coup arrived, and the soviet EC opposed it. The soviet included 23 workers and 46 soldiers among its 180 members. On the 30th Bolshevik and some SR soviet members won a vote to establish an organisation to take on counter-revolutionaries, and the SRs' Bibi-Eibat oil-field committee voted for new elections to Baki soviet.²⁸¹

Boris Shumiatsky had been born into a worker's family in Verhneudinsk in eastern Siberia in 1886. By 1899 he had joined the workers' movement in Chita. He joined the Bolsheviks in 1903, and was active in the 'Krasnoyarsk Republic' in 1905, but left for South America in 1907. He returned in 1913, but was arrested. In 1915 he was drafted into a Krasnoyarsk reserve regiment as a clerk, and in 1917 he became vice-chair of the soviet, led the All-Siberian RSDRP CC bureau, was the Bolshevik CC's representative in Siberia, and a delegate to the Bolshevik congress in Petrograd.²⁸² On the 12 August strikers protested against the State Conference in Ekaterinburg,²⁸³ and Tomsk.²⁸⁴ Representatives of 150,000 Urals trade unionists carried all the Bolshevik motions,²⁸⁵ and on the 17th delegates at a conference of Urals soviets claimed to represent almost 505,800 workers. Bolsheviks had 77 delegates and Menshevik defencists 23.²⁸⁶ By the end of the month 400 tailors had struck in Perm,²⁸⁷ and there were soviets in Krasnoyarsk,²⁸⁸ Ekaterinburg,²⁸⁹ and Vyatka, where the soviet controlled military affairs. Around 600 soviets who

claimed 23 million supporters, but there were hundreds of complaints. 'There are no leaders: there are no politically literate people who can explain to the masses what the Bolsheviks want!'²⁹⁰

Across Russia there had been 760 peasant 'riots' in August,²⁹¹ and large ones in Penza and Tambov.²⁹² Peasants had seized land, felled trees or stole equipment on 665 occasions, destroyed 35 manor houses and attacked 482 landlords,²⁹³ though the number of disturbed counties had fallen to 288.²⁹⁴ Peasants in the eastern and south-eastern central provinces had divided large estates into allotments.²⁹⁵ During July and August, officially, armed force had been used against peasants 39 times,²⁹⁶ and though many troops had refused to take part.²⁹⁷ The food situation was deteriorating, rapidly,²⁹⁸ even in the countryside,²⁹⁹ and the war was going badly.

The war

By August (according to the Western calendar) Luxemburg had been transferred to a prison in Wrocław in Silesia,³⁰⁰ and Jacob followed on the next train. Luxemburg could walk in the prison yard,³⁰¹ and her doctor got her a reader's ticket for the University library,³⁰² but her appeal against her sentence was unsuccessful.³⁰³ A close friend who had been killed at the front and left her 50,000 marks in trust with his sister, but Luxemburg received only four percent interest, barely half what she needed each day.³⁰⁴

During August leftist SDs in Bremen, Frankfurt-am-Main, Rüstingen, Moers and Neustadt had sent delegates to Berlin to organise an internationalist socialist party. They wanted to end the division between workers' parties and trade unions, and activists in Dresden and Pirna supported them. Münzenberg's group of young internationalists smuggled in Bolshevik literature, and Apfelbaum invited Levi to join the Zimmerwald Left bureau.³⁰⁵ The German legation in Copenhagen reported that the idea that Ulyanov was a German agent had been 'energetically countered' in Scandinavia and Switzerland.³⁰⁶ At Keil 49 members of a warship crew walked out and 400 from another crew followed. Late that month a court-martial sentenced five to death, though only Reichpietsch and Albin Köblis were executed.³⁰⁷ USPD leaders expressed sympathy, but distanced themselves from the mutiny.³⁰⁸

Three wounded soldiers from Botchkareva's women's battalion had arrived at Farmborough's letuchka early in August. They had been 'cut up' and retreated. The battalion had 250 effective troops, and though some stayed in the trenches, others 'ran or crawled back to the rear'. The letuchka left for the Austrian-Romanian border, and a woman soldier who arrived with a badly contused leg had little respect for Botchkareva's troops. The letuchka learned that demoralised companies were retreating and hundreds of deserters were hiding near Rīga. Soldiers' meetings had been forbidden unless the commanding officer agreed, but late that month the letuchka heard about a speaker who had argued that the way to bring peace was to refuse to fight and split the land up fairly among the peasants. His audience agreed wholeheartedly, though Farmborough believed he was a German agent. Letters arrived from Kerensky and Kornilov and they called each other 'traitor'. An orderly returned from a nearby town and reported that agitators from a 'secret society' in Petrograd were paid to spread dissension. The letuchka learned that Kornilov's army was advancing towards Petrograd and the government wanted him arrested.³⁰⁹

On 5 September the Zimmerwaldist peace conference opened in Stockholm.³¹⁰ The Spartakusbund sent two representatives.³¹¹ Others arrived from Finland, Romania, Bulgaria, Switzerland and Austria,³¹² though French, Belgian and British SDs had been unable to obtain passports.³¹³ Vorovsky and Semashko represented the RSDRP CC, Axelrod and another Menshevik defencist its CC, Ermansky the Menshevik internationalists and Sobelsohn and Fürstenberg the SDKPiL.³¹⁴ The conference reaffirmed previous Zimmerwald resolutions,³¹⁵ and supported mass strikes in Russia.³¹⁶ Sobelsohn wanted the manifesto published immediately, and though Balabanoff initially refused, it appeared in a Finnish paper controlled by Bolsheviks, and Balabanoff got Swedish SDs to print it in 12 languages. It appeared in the Danish Left's *Politiken (Politics)* and the Italian Socialist Party's *Avanti!* Ulyanov had sent Balabanoff large amounts of money, but stopped after she disapproved. There was no direct mail or telegraph link between Sweden and Russia, and the Zimmerwaldist courier service was irregular,³¹⁷ but Sobelsohn published *Bote der Russischen Revolution (Messenger of the Russian Revolution)* with contributions from Ulyanov Apfelbaum, and Bronstein.³¹⁸

9. The soldiers are not going to fight any more

The Mensheviks had practically ceased to exist

By September, nationally, the VPSR claimed 312 committees and 124 groups,¹ and a million members, including 300,000 in towns,² especially in Petrograd and Voronezh, but also in Finland and Tashkent. SRs dominated three-quarters of peasant committee ECs, but peasants, workers and soldiers were joining internationalists in Astrakhan, Ivanovo, Krasnoyarsk, Tula, Tver and Baki; and SRs had voted for internationalist motions in Tambov, Saratov, Tallinn and several smaller places. The Maximalist SRs were now a separate party.³

In Petrograd the number of SR soviet deputies had fallen from 260 in May to 60,⁴ but SR internationalists claimed to represent 45,000 workers. Spiridonova's proposal to support the government if it introduced socialist control of production passed by 83 votes to seven at a VPSR conference. She and Kamkov were elected to the CC, as editors of the paper and candidates in the constituent assembly elections.⁵ After she spoke to Izhorsk armaments workers they demanded an immediate armistice, an end to the death penalty, the transfer of land to the peasantry, an eight-hour day in factories and the convocation of the All-Russian congress of soviets.⁶

The RSDRP published 75 newspapers and journals nationally.⁷ Mensheviks internationalists controlled the organisation and the Petrograd committee,⁸ and they and SRs led most district dumas,⁹ but the Mensheviks had failed to consolidate their organisation outside the capital.¹⁰ In Petrograd between 200 and 1,000 defencists usually appeared at political assemblies, and up to around 2,000 at most other meetings, though only the internationalists were 'able to carry on agitation'. Those on Vasilievsky Island had insisted on a split with official Menshevism for some time, and some workers had joined the Bolsheviks.¹¹ The 90 Menshevik soviet deputies in May had fallen to four.¹²

The Bolsheviks had been 'hard-hit' in July, but were 'swamped' by September, and had 'fewer resources, in proportion to needs'.¹³ The 50 Bolshevik deputies in May had risen to 156.¹⁴ They claimed a majority in working-class districts,¹⁵ where membership had grown 'immensely';¹⁶ and for every card-carrying member there were 20 to 50 workers and soldiers who considered themselves members.¹⁷ Around 30,000 members of the largest workers' mutual insurance societies were swinging from the SRs to the Bolsheviks, who won 471 votes in the elections to the metalworkers' committee at one of the Lessner metalworks, while non-party candidates had won 186, SRs 155 and Mensheviks 23. Bolsheviks won 1.5 times as many votes as SRs at the Dinamo works, and they held five seats on the Mint workers' committee, along with three non-party candidates and one SR.¹⁸ The Bolsheviks claimed 550 members at the Skorokhod shoe factory,¹⁹ and the Obukhov metalworkers' committee included 11 Bolsheviks and two syndicalists, but no Mensheviks or SRs.²⁰ A typical workers' committee at a large factory might include a dozen Bolsheviks, a few Mensheviks and SRs, and two Anarchists.²¹ The Bolsheviks claimed 5,800 members in the garrison,²² and the Red Guards claimed 25,000.²³ I. Yurenev chaired their 'General Staff'.²⁴ Military training was underway at 79 factories,²⁵ though only 20 percent of Putilov workers and Red Guards had a rifle or a pistol,²⁶ and 25 percent of workers were absent each day on average. The national output of manufactured goods had fallen by 40 percent since the start of the year.²⁷ Petrograd metalworks' output had declined by 30 percent since 1916, and that of chemical works' by 40 percent.²⁸ The owners' Society had decided to stop paying factory committee members, and Putilov workers learned that lathes were being prepared for shipment, and there were plans to evacuate the artillery department. Lebedev aircraft managers announced that the factory was going to Iaroslavl with half the workforce,²⁹ and Vulcan metalworks managers wanted to halve the wages of the workers' committee,³⁰ when 40,000 workers were unemployed.³¹

Very early on 1 September, when half the deputies were absent,³² the soviet passed a Bolshevik motion blaming the government for the attempted coup by 279 votes to 115,³³ and 126 demanded that VTsIK seize power.³⁴ *Izvestia* acknowledged that many soviets 'no longer exist' and 'still more exist on paper'. The network was 'broken in some places, weakened in others and decayed in still others'.³⁵ Ulyanov proposed that SRs and Mensheviks should form a government, though the Bolsheviks would not join them until 'a dictatorship of the proletariat and poor peasants' was in place after the constituent assembly elections, when freedom to propagandise, and form a 'loyal opposition'.³⁶ Kerensky proclaimed Russia a republic and formed a 'directory' with four other ministers to take urgent decisions.³⁷ None was a Kadet.³⁸ Kornilov was arrested at army headquarters, and hundreds of officers were arrested by their men, who killed some of them.³⁹ Kornilov was to be tried for treason,⁴⁰ and he and 30 officers were sent to Bykhov monastery in Biełarus; but Kornilov kept his bodyguards and his family could visit twice a day.⁴¹ On the 2nd the interior minister acknowledged that he was 'powerless to preserve order',⁴² and transferred his powers to the directory.⁴³ Kronstadt sailors and soldiers who supported the Bolsheviks won 100 seats in the soviet,

and SR internationalists 75.⁴⁴ On the 3rd Ulyanov wrote in *Rabochy Put*. 'It would appear that the few days during which a peaceful development was still *possible*' had 'gone by'.⁴⁵ Bronstein and Lunacharsky organised a riot in Kresty Prison,⁴⁶ and by the 4th Bronstein had found 3,000 rubles' bail,⁴⁷ and was freed with other leading Bolsheviks.⁴⁸ Kerensky demanded the dissolution of military committees,⁴⁹ but was ignored.⁵⁰ Elections for Moscow district soviet gave the Bolsheviks 14 seats, and six more SRs joined the city soviet.⁵¹ The garrison had decided that it was exempt from combat duties,⁵² and on the 5th soldiers, poor peasants,⁵³ and Bolshevik soviet deputies voted, by 355 to 254,⁵⁴ for a soviet government,⁵⁵ and a democratic republic which would nullify the secret treaties with the Allies, ban the sale of land before the constituent assembly and establish a national system of workers' supervision of the economy.⁵⁶ Some SRs and Mensheviks refused to take power without Kadets and other liberals,⁵⁷ and when those in the soviet presidium resigned, Bolsheviks replaced most of them.⁵⁸ After new elections the workers' section EC included 13 Bolsheviks, six SRs and three Mensheviks, and the soldiers' section EC included ten SRs, nine Bolsheviks and three Mensheviks.²⁸³ Bronstein was elected as chair of the full soviet,⁵⁹ and the military governor ordered firearms to be registered in 25 days.⁶⁰

On the 6th Ulyanov proposed a government of SRs and Mensheviks accountable to soviets.⁶¹ The Bolshevik CC argued that the soviet presidium should include seven Bolsheviks, seven Mensheviks and seven SRs.⁶² Bronstein argued that the soviet military committee should lead a rising, and was elected unopposed as an editor of *Pravda*,⁶³ along with Lunacharsky, Uritsky,⁶⁴ Rozenfeld and Sokolnikov,⁶⁵ and Bronstein and Jughashvili joined VTsIK.⁶⁶ *Rabochi i Soldat* included instructions on forming and training Red Guards.⁶⁷ On the evening of the 7th, Bronstein denounced the government, then led 53 Bolsheviks out of the hall.⁶⁸ On the 8th two generals from the southwestern front were taken to Bykhov.⁶⁹ On the 9th Petrograd soviet voted for a government of revolutionary proletarians and peasants,⁷⁰ by 519 to 414, with 67 abstentions, and SRs and Mensheviks in the presidium resigned,⁷¹ but a VPSR conference demanded all power to the soviets,⁷² and most new Menshevik CC members were internationalists.⁷³ On the 10th the Bolshevik CC voted for an 'omnilateral and strengthened preparation of an armed rising', by 19 to two, with four abstentions.⁷⁴

In the USA the married journalists Louise Bryant and John Reed had sworn that they would not represent the US Socialist Party at the Zimmerwald conference in Stockholm.⁷⁵ They sailed from Hoboken, New Jersey,⁷⁶ on a Danish vessel,⁷⁷ and reached Petrograd by 10 September.⁷⁸ Reed spoke with Rozenfeld, who was unsure how many delegates would arrive for the All-Russian congress of soviets, but if the Bolsheviks had a majority they would demand that the government resign and transfer its powers to the soviets.⁷⁹ Reed visited the Twelfth Army and saw 'gaunt and bootless' soldiers with 'flesh showing blue through their torn clothing', though they asked him eagerly 'Did you bring anything to read?'

In Petrograd the Bolsheviks had a slim majority on the full soviet by the 11th.⁸⁰ A Menshevik proposal for a coalition government received ten votes, but a Bolshevik proposal for a soviet government was successful.⁸¹ On the 12th *Izvestia* published the soviet EC's demand that land be transferred to peasant committees immediately.⁸² An SR chaired its military committee, which included Bronstein and four other Bolsheviks.⁸³ On the 13th Jughashvili brought two notes from Ulyanov to the Bolshevik CC.⁸⁴ He ordered them to seize power,⁸⁵ since only an alliance of Bolsheviks with sympathetic SRs and Mensheviks, and 'an immediate transfer of all power' to the soviets, 'would make civil war impossible'.⁸⁶ A government representing the interests of the majority should have the first claim on supplies of paper, but only parties with over 100,000 supporters.⁸⁷ Bukharin recalled that 'We were all aghast',⁸⁸ since they could not hope to maintain power across the country.⁸⁹ Hundreds of Bolsheviks had been arrested, and others, including leaders of the military committee, did not believe a rising would occur outside Petrograd and Moscow.⁹⁰ (The CC later voted by six to four, with four abstentions, to keep one copy of Ulyanov's letters.⁹¹)

On the 14th the Democratic Conference (or pre-parliament) opened in the Alexandrinsky Theatre. The 532 SR delegates included 71 internationalists, the 530 Mensheviks included 56, and there were 134 Bolsheviks and 55 Trudoviki.⁹² The 1,582 delegates included 230 from workers' and soldiers' soviets, 230 from peasant soviets, 300 from city dumas, 200 from zemstvos, 125 from military organizations, 120 from cooperatives, 100 from trade unions, of whom 27 were from the railway workers' union, 15 from the teachers' union and 12 from the postal and telegraph workers' union.⁹³ (Nationally unions claimed around two million members.⁹⁴) Conference delegates claimed to represent 300 million people, when the national population was around 180 million.⁹⁵ Breshkovskaya and her SR supporters, whose 149 presses produced literature for peasants, workers and front-line soldiers,⁹⁶ was elected as chair of the conference.⁹⁷ On the 15th Bronstein, who had told the Bolshevik CC that Petrograd and Moscow soviets 'must take state power into their own hands',⁹⁸ using Red Guards,⁹⁹ spoke at a private meeting of RSDRP soviet deputies, and received 86 votes for all power to the soviets, though 97 voted for Tserbaum's proposal for an all-socialist ministry. At the full conference 766 voted for a governing coalition and 688 against, with 38 abstentions, but while an amendment to exclude Kadets succeeded by 595 votes to 493, with 72 abstentions, 813 voted against the amended motion.¹⁰⁰ Rozenfeld tried to organise a coalition with sympathetic Mensheviks and

SRs,¹⁰¹ to form a government of democrats; but the presidium voted by 60 to 50 for a socialist government which did not include Bolsheviks.¹⁰² A proposal that Russia was fighting for democracy fell by 135 votes to 130, with one abstention, and another for the immediate signing of a democratic peace fell by 127 to 95, with 50 abstentions. Delegates voted for a provisional council of the Russian Republic including 120 SRs, 66 Bolsheviks, 30 Menshevik internationalists and 60 Menshevik defencists.¹⁰³ There would be 1,425 voting delegates, though some would have four votes;¹⁰⁴ but peasant EC delegates voted by 102 to 70, with 12 abstentions, to support the government.¹⁰⁵

The cost of living in the city was over 14 times higher than before the war, and factory workers' real wages had fallen. Some were on the verge of destitution¹⁰⁶ Wages averaged 45 a month and luxuries were unaffordable. Coffee cost two rubles a pound in Vladivostok but 13 in Petrograd, and a bar of chocolate cost from seven to ten and a pair of shoes over 100.¹⁰⁷ The Mensheviks tried to heal divisions in the RSDRP and stem the rise of the Bolsheviks, who had made huge gains in the unions.¹⁰⁸ Almost all the Menshevik workers on Vasilievsky Island had joined the Bolsheviks,¹⁰⁹ and the Bolshevik vote had risen in every city district,¹¹⁰ and the 12 district commanders and the 12 workers' militia commissars had formed a city-wide organisation.¹¹¹ At the Kirsten knitwear mill, where 87 percent of the workers were female, and had formerly voted solidly for SRs, gave SRs 1,340 votes and Bolsheviks 965.¹¹²

At Kronstadt 19 sailors' committees flew red flags.¹¹³ The Anarchists' *Volnyi Kronshdadt (Free Kronstadt)*, and *Svobodnaia Kommuna (The Free Commune)*, had become *Burevestnik (The Stormy Petrel)*, the title of a Gorky' poem.¹¹⁴ On the 18th sailors' ignored Kerensky's order to dissolve Tsentrobalt.¹¹⁵ On the 20th the army minister told a closed session of the pre-parliament's international commission that the troops were not in a fit condition to fight, since they were not properly equipped or fed.¹¹⁶ VTsIK congress delegates voted by 60 to 50 against a coalition with liberals,¹¹⁷ and the soviet called for a federation of soviets and the immediate convocation of the All-Russian congress of soviets.¹¹⁸ Two-thirds of the 44 members of the soviet EC were Bolsheviks, and five Mensheviks were defencists, but the EC co-opted internationalists including Tsederbaum and Himmer, with the right to speak but not vote. On the 21st an army officer spoke at the soviet. 'The soldiers in the trenches don't want either freedom or land now. They want only one thing now – the end of the war. Whatever you may say here, the soldiers are not going to fight any more',¹¹⁹ and they would even accept an 'indecent peace'.¹²⁰

Kerensky told the British prime minister that the size of the Russian army would be reduced and the other Allied governments threatened to cut off aid to Russia.¹²¹ Bronstein now called himself a Bolshevik and demanded Kerensky's resignation.¹²² By the 24th around 7,000 in the railway workshops went on strike.¹²³ The civilian bread ration was barely 3.5 ounces a day. Bolsheviks won a majority in the дума elections in 14 of the 17 wards.¹²⁴ Across the city SRs won well over 205,600 votes, Bolsheviks almost 183,700 and Mensheviks just over 23,500.¹²⁵ Uritsky, Dzierżyński and Bubnov joined the soviet's military committee.¹²⁶ If they agreed to join the cabinet Kadets insisted on heading the industrial and military ministries and for minimum steps against supporters of the failed coup.¹²⁷

On the 25th the number of soviet members rose from 313 to 555, and according to incomplete data, they included at least 135 SRs, 92 Mensheviks, 75 Kadets, 58 Bolsheviks and 30 Trudoviki.¹²⁸ The new EC included 22 Bolsheviks, 16 SRs and six Mensheviks, yet the presidium included four Bolsheviks, two SRs and one Menshevik.¹²⁹ The Mensheviks 'had practically ceased to exist' as an organised force,¹³⁰ though internationalists had stayed in the faction to recruit. A Petrograd province SR conference demanded an immediate armistice, an end to the death penalty, the transfer of land to the peasantry, an eight-hour day in factories, an immediate meeting of the All-Russian congress of soviets, the confiscation of excess wealth and control by factory workers' committees.¹³¹ Delegates at the textile workers' national conference elected a provisional all-Bolshevik EC.¹³² Well-to-do people eager to turn their paper rubles into something more valuable bought paintings, and those who could left.¹³³ At 11.50pm the cabinet in the Winter Palace heard shots, then a grenade thrown by sailors.¹³⁴ Ulyanov insisted that there was 'not the slightest doubt that there are noticeable vacillations at the top of our party that may become ruinous', and on the 26th *Rabochy Put* printed a mild piece he had written earlier.¹³⁵ Shlyapnikov told the Bolshevik CC that 'we are the only ones who have an all-Russian organisation'. 'The Menshevik unificationists and others who had split are rejoining the party.' 'The political struggle is growing sharper every day. There is seething unrest throughout the country. A revolutionary hurricane could break out any day.'¹³⁶ Workers at 79 city factories ran training courses in the use of weapons, but there were too few instructors.¹³⁷ On 27th Stasova complained that 34 of the 333 provincial RSDRP committees had paid ten percent of their dues to the CC.¹³⁸ By the end of September 768 Petrograd firms employing 165,372 workers had been closed.¹³⁹ A Menshevik in the Putilov gun shop told the district committee that 50 to 60 artillery pieces had been produced that month, compared to 200 earlier. The administration had tried to send machinery to Saratov, but the workers held up its departure until they were sure that the guns were not needed in Petrograd. Pipe Works managers planned to transfer 4,000 machines to Penza, with 20,000 workers and 40,000 family members, and sack the rest; but workers' committees blocked the closure of Baranovsky, Vulcan, Pulemet, Metal, Erikson, Siemens-Schuckert, Dinamo and one of the Parviainen works.¹⁴⁰

Near Petrograd around 3,500 of the 76,000 or so railway wagons were out of use, and the city had received two-thirds of the coal it needed.¹⁴¹ That month the Party secretariat had sent about 740 letters and 66 telegrams to local organisations and interviewed 37 visitors.¹⁴² During September an All-Russian conference of refugees in Petrograd had claimed to represent 150,000, and many supported the Bolsheviks.¹⁴³ In Finland a joint session of soviets had voted by 700 to 13, with 36 abstentions, for a government of soviets on the 2nd. By the 10th a conference of 66 Bolshevik and 48 SR internationalist soviet deputies claimed to represent 150,000 sailors, soldiers and workers, and VTsIK included 69 Bolsheviks and 48 SR internationalists.¹⁴⁴ Armed workers and Red Guards fought civilian militias backed by Germany.¹⁴⁵ In the Baltic region the 62 members of the Estonian Maapäev included five Bolsheviks, and Tallinn soviet passed a Bolshevik motion on the 5th.¹⁴⁶ By the 10th new soviets in Dorpat and Wenden had strong Bolshevik and SR internationalist majorities;¹⁴⁷ but an elected national council of 20, who were mainly bourgeois, had resolved that Lithuania must be independent.¹⁴⁸

Moscow and other key regions

On 5 September Moscow soviet had voted no confidence in the 'counter-revolutionary' government by 355 to 254.¹⁴⁹ By the 9th SRs formed 34 percent of the deputies, Mensheviks 11 percent and Bolsheviks nine percent,¹⁵⁰ and Mensheviks and SRs resigned from the presidium on the 10th,¹⁵¹ but almost all the VPSR conference delegates were internationalists and they published their own paper.¹⁵² The Zamoskvoreche district soviet and representatives of factory committees voted by 175 to four, with 19 abstentions, to recall deputies who had 'gone against the will of the working class'.¹⁵³ The soviet had the support of 10,000 garrison soldiers and a few Red Guards, while the government relied on 6,000 army officers, 2,500 Cossacks and 2,000 others.¹⁵⁴ The citizens' daily bread ration was about 12 ounces, and by the 17th the population had fallen by around 150,000 to 1,850,000 since January.¹⁵⁵ Bryant ate in a student canteen where a Red Guard militia was being formed.¹⁵⁶ Officers and Cossacks surrounded the Kremlin, shot soviet troops as they left and drove Bolsheviks from telegraph offices. On the 19th Bolsheviks won 32 seats on the soviet EC, Mensheviks 16, SRs nine and Mezhrayontsy three, and the Old Bolshevik Nogin was elected as president.¹⁵⁷ On the 21st 14,000 of the 17,000-strong garrison voted for Bolsheviks in the duma elections,¹⁵⁸ including 95 percent in some units.¹⁵⁹ The Bolsheviks won almost 200,000 votes out of just over 387,000, and 350 of the 710 seats, though only 38 percent of eligible voters had cast their ballots.¹⁶⁰ The SR vote had fallen from around 375,000 in June to under 54,400, and the Mensheviks' from around 76,400 to almost 16,000.¹⁶¹ Bolsheviks won an outright majority in 11 of the 17 city districts,¹⁶² largely at the expense of Mensheviks and SRs.¹⁶³ SRs won 14 seats compared to 53 in summer, Mensheviks won four compared to 12, and Bolsheviks won 47 compared to 11.¹⁶⁴ Soldiers' banners read 'We'll die on the barricades but not at the front.'¹⁶⁵ Anarcho-Syndicalists had recruited some postal workers.¹⁶⁶ On the 27th a resident wrote that 'Utter disorder has broken out' and streets were 'decorated with proclamations from two governments'.¹⁶⁷ By the end of the month the workers' section of the soviet consisted entirely of Bolsheviks.¹⁶⁸ They claimed 100 members at Moscow Metalworks, outnumbering the SRs, and won a decisive vote,¹⁶⁹ though 231 factories employing around 60,000 workers had closed.¹⁷⁰ The duma claimed that one armaments works was losing 250,000 rubles a day, because of 'abnormally high wages' and low production, and would close soon. That month the average industrial worker's wage had increased by 80 kopeks, to 6.1 rubles, though the cost of living had risen by 21 percent. Over 1,280 railway wagonloads of grain had reached the city,¹⁷¹ but the price of rye had risen by 666 percent since 1914.¹⁷² Nationally prices had risen by 9 percent; but the price of bread in Moscow had risen by 14 percent.¹⁷³

The Moscow province soviet bureau had voted for a government of soviets, trade unions, dumas and cooperatives on the 9th.¹⁷⁴ A delegate to the Moscow region Bolshevik conference reported that their influence was 'undivided' in Moscow province, though there was 'neither regular registration nor membership dues'.¹⁷⁵

In Ukraine Ivanovo soviet supported Petrograd soviet.¹⁷⁶ In the Ivanovo-Kineshma region 12 large cotton mills employing 30,000 workers had closed, and the number of unemployed was rising daily.¹⁷⁷ Kyiv soviet had passed a Bolshevik motion by 130 to 66, though only 95 Bolsheviks were deputies.¹⁷⁸

On the Volga Menshevik internationalists had formed a separate organisation in Saratov, and splits with Bolsheviks were developing elsewhere in the region. Much of the SR defencists' mass base had withered, and SR internationalists supported the Bolsheviks on most contentious issues.¹⁷⁹ Saratov soviet included 30 elected members and an unknown number nominated by organisations. The elected workers' and soldiers' presidiums each had 11 members,¹⁸⁰ and on the 3rd they decided to form an armed workers' militia, though only the most 'dependable and prepared workers' recommended by their factory committee, trade union or party could join.¹⁸¹ On the 6th, in new elections for the soviet, Bolsheviks won 103 seats, SRs 103 and Mensheviks 76, though a majority, including Menshevik and SR internationalists, voted for all power to the soviets and recruited Red Guards,¹⁸² 4,000

soldiers voiced their distrust of the government on the 7th. Tsaritsyn soviet voted for soviet power on the 8th.¹⁸³ On the 9th the number of peasant disturbances in Saratov province rose sharply, and on the 10th a peasant congress in Saratov reported about the region's soviets.¹⁸⁴ On the 11th Saratov garrison expressed its deep distrust of the SR leader of the soldiers' section of the soviet and wanted him sent to the front, and SR members of the presidium resigned. Soldiers aged 40 or over demanded demobilisation, and the soviet ignored government decrees.¹⁸⁵ By the 14th SR influence in many rural areas was declining,¹⁸⁶ and the Old Bolshevik Kuibyshev chaired the Samara and regional Party committees.¹⁸⁷ An illiterate old woman told a British journalist. 'Don't believe those newspapers', because 'some say one thing, some another', though they all said what gentry said. He found an appeal from Petrograd soviet nailed up next to religious pictures in an old peasant's house, and late that month he heard peasants discussing the Kornilov 'rebellion'. The chair of a village commune addressed others as 'comrade', though they ignored the Samara soviet. SR soviet leaders included 'three intelligent women' and 'young peasant soldiers'. In Kazan the journalist met SDs who had published *Kizil Bairan (The Red Flag)* since summer. In Kirghiz district, where the tsar had never allowed a press, he saw a book of poems in the Tatar language and a weekly paper published in Orenburg, where a journalist who was president of the soviet was 'completely at the mercy' of the garrison.¹⁸⁸ In Samara Bolsheviks formed 26 percent of soviet deputies, but 75 percent of the EC.¹⁸⁹ Kirrill Plaksin had been born in Orel province in 1881. He joined the Bolsheviks in 1904, but suffered repression from 1906.¹⁹⁰ On 21 September 1917 he chaired the workers' section of Saratov soviet, where the Bolsheviks held 164 seats, SRs 103 and Mensheviks 76, though Bolsheviks held 156 seats in the soldiers' section, SRs 60 and Mensheviks four. The food situation had worsened and there were strikes,¹⁹¹ but by the 22nd 'hunger marchers' were in prison. The soviet selected members of the presidium on a proportional basis, and it included 18 Bolsheviks, eight SRs and four Mensheviks. Vasiliev, Lebedev and another Bolshevik were joint chairs,¹⁹² and *Izvestia* was closed.¹⁹³ The Red Guards claimed 600 members. Bolsheviks won a majority of zemstvo seats in Tsaritsyn. Elsewhere Bolsheviks and SR and Menshevik internationalists controlled key soviets, soldiers' organisations and dumas. Late that month Simbirsk and Syzran soldiers and 40-year-old conscripts along the Volga refused to go to the front.¹⁹⁴

By September average wages in Azerbaijan had risen by 178 percent since 1913. SRs had lost their leading position among garrison soldiers. Bakı soviet reversed its decision to form a separate defensive organisation, but on the 3rd around 3,000 people in Sabunchiny protested against food shortages, and blamed the soviet, the дума and other bodies. Shaumian proposed that soviet deputies should be elected by groups of 500 workers and soldiers, and on the 6th they elected two SRs to attend the Democratic Conference. In mid-September there were strikes by workers at the Nobel works, other factories, and dockers. A conference of factory committees gave employers until the 22nd to negotiate, then five more days to accept an ultimatum or face a strike. On the 19th soldiers demanded a break with the bourgeoisie, all power to the soviets, all land to the peasantry, the purging of counter-revolutionary elements in the military and the end of the death penalty. Strikes began in the region on the 27th and affected 610 firms. Over 52,900 workers in 554 factories came out because employers refused to sign a contract, and over 12,350 because they were owed a two-month advance. Bakı Bolsheviks had strong support among dock and arsenal workers, though navy sailors wavered between them and the SRs.¹⁹⁵

Late in September the first congress of Eastern Armenians opened, and 113 of the 200 or so delegates were Dashnaks. They elected a national assembly of 25 and a council of 15 to coordinate political activity, though they did not demand independence. Zhordania accepted that the Mensheviks were 'losing contact with the proletariat', but delegates acknowledged him as their leader.¹⁹⁶ On the 14th there was violence and looting in Rostov-na-Donu.

In Uzbekistan demonstrators had sacked Tashkent soviet headquarters, which they regarded as too moderate, and replaced it with a provisional revolutionary committee.¹⁹⁷ The grain harvest in central Asia produced 50 million tons, compared to the average pre-war yield of 62 million.¹⁹⁸

Disturbances continued in Astrakhan.¹⁹⁹ On the 2nd the soviet had voted for an SR internationalist motion in favour of soviet power and against including wealthy people in the government.²⁰⁰ During September Astrakhan soviet deputies voted against SR and Menshevik appeals for unity by 276 to 175.²⁰¹

In Siberia Bolsheviks were members of soviets in Krasnoyarsk, Ekaterinburg and elsewhere by September,²⁰² though only Krasnoyarsk soviet was in contact with the CC.²⁰³ Bolsheviks in Taganrog, Simferopol, Vladivostok and Tomsk had broken from the Mensheviks, but not those in Omsk and Irkutsk.²⁰⁴ On the 10th central Siberian soviets solidly backed the Bolsheviks.²⁰⁵ By the 29th Bolsheviks and SR and Menshevik internationalists led more Urals soviets, soldiers' organisations and dumas,²⁰⁶ and 80 soviets demanded all power to the soviets.²⁰⁷

Across Russia industrial workers' average monthly pay had fallen to 19.3 rubles in real terms, and continued falling.²⁰⁸ Looting of supply trains was common,²⁰⁹ and up to 70,000 railway workers had gone on strike.²¹⁰ Officially, around 965,000 workers had struck,²¹¹ though another report gave 1.1 million.²¹² Managers had defeated 60 percent of strikes,²¹³ but 47 involving over 940,000 workers challenged their authority.²¹⁴ SRs held 44 percent of the seats in 84 dumas and the Mensheviks eight percent;²¹⁵ yet almost all urban areas with large-scale industry or

a garrison supported a version of the Bolshevik position on soviet power.²¹⁶ Nationally 351 RSDRP organisations had formerly been joint Bolshevik-Menshevik operations, but few remained by the end of September.²¹⁷

During September the sugar beet harvest from peasant allotments, mainly in Ukraine, had fallen by up to 20 percent. The government requisitioned 126 million tons,²¹⁸ and promised to take the 'most energetic measures', including the use of troops, to quell 'anarchy' in the countryside.²¹⁹ The wheat harvest was under 94 percent of the pre-war level, rye and oats harvests were down to 87.6 percent and barley to 84.7 percent.²²⁰ Livestock needed over a million tons of grain, peasants almost 27.5 million, towns 4.25 million, and the army eight million, leaving 8.4 million, plus 669 million from the previous harvest.²²¹ Peasants stopped grain reaching urban areas and there were severe shortages.²²² In Penza province and elsewhere peasant soldiers' wives supported raids.²²³ Smolensk peasants harvested crops on land they had seized.²²⁴ The great majority of peasant soviets had adopted the Bolshevik policy of not collaborating with the bourgeoisie,²²⁵ and young peasant deserters were replacing village elders.²²⁶ Officially there had been 750 peasant land seizures in one region,²²⁷ and 803 'riots'.²²⁸ Peasants had distributed landowners' equipment and livestock among themselves,²²⁹ seized land, felled trees or stole equipment on 628 occasions, and destroyed 106 manor houses. Around 12 percent of those involved had been soldiers.²³⁰

The war

By September around 15.5 million men had been called up since 1914,²³¹ including half of the peasantry,²³² and only 1.5 million remained liable to conscription. The British military attaché did not know the casualty figures, though he understood that 2.9 million were prisoners of war and 2,260,000 had deserted.²³³ Many had taken their rifles with them,²³⁴ and there were 750,000 in the rear. The 6.3 million front-line troops included around six million infantry and NCOs.²³⁵ They received a pound of bread and an ounce of meat a day;²³⁶ but deserters plundered trains taking food to the northern front, and the railways were staggering as a result of deserters going home.²³⁷ Former urban workers predominated on the northern and western fronts,²³⁸ and the collapse of the Romanian army meant that Russians had to cover a front of around 250 miles.²³⁹ Russians were holding up an Austro-Hungarian and German army of over one million,²⁴⁰ and when they sent prisoners back the Russian collapse continued.²⁴¹ Murders of officers were common on the Caucasian front, and Bolshevik agitators were banned. After news of Kornilov's defeat reached Tbilisi, the soviet called for a democratic socialist government.²⁴² A general reported that the army was short of 674,000 troops. The Tenth Army on the western front had flour for 15 days, and meat for less than five, and commanders reported that hunger riots were likely.²⁴³ In mid-September a general announced that he could not mount an offensive.²⁴⁴ Soldiers on the Caucasian front told VTsIK that they 'used to have bloody Nikolka,' (the tsar), 'and now we have a bloody government'.²⁴⁵ The commander signed an armistice with the Turks,²⁴⁶ and Ehrenburg was appointed as assistant military commissar in the Caucasian military area.²⁴⁷ By the end of September several garrisons supported the Bolsheviks;²⁴⁸ but 336 officers who responded to a poll were Kadets, 263 were Mensheviks, 227 were SRs and one was a Bolshevik.²⁴⁹

Farmborough's love of nursing was fading. Her salary was raised from 50 to 75 rubles a month, because she had worked for more than a year and a half, but a pair of boots cost 100. A nurse returned from Caucasia and reported that food was scarce. Tea and sugar were obtainable only with a 'ticket', and while butter was plentiful it cost 3.5 rubles a pound. There was plenty of black bread at 15 kopeks a pound, but white bread was available only to hospitals, and the letuchka had to pay six rubles. A former nurse reported from Moscow that there was famine and shops were being raided. An ordinary coat which had cost 80 rubles, now cost 500, so everyone wore old clothes. Fuel was scarce. Late in September the letuchka heard of 'Bolsheviks' in Petrograd.²⁵⁰

Sailors and soldiers in Finland repudiated the government.²⁵¹ German troops landed on an island near Riga,²⁵² and 20 battleships, 67 destroyers, six U-boats and other vessels carried 25,000 troops and over 100 planes to attack other islands, though defenders sank 25 warships and auxiliaries and damaged 26.²⁵³

Dmitry Leshchenko had been born into an artisan's family in Mykolaev in Kherson province in Ukraine in 1876. He later became a student at the capital's university, joined the RSDRP in 1900 and graduated in 1902. In December 1905 he was a member of a 'chemical group' created by the RSDRP CC which produced bombs. He was the permanent secretary of the Bolshevik newspapers, worked Ulyanov most days and his three-room apartment was used for meetings which included Ulyanov, Krupskaya, Lunacharsky, Vorovsky and others. Later he helped to create new safe houses, acted as an agitator and was a delegate to the RSDRP congress in 1907. During the war he defended Ulyanov's slogan of turning the imperialist war into a civil war, and fought defencism. He was active in the February 1917 revolution and served as the secretary of the editorial board of the soviet's *Izvestia*. He worked with Krupskaya in the Vyborg дума and was the secretary of the cultural and educational commission. In September, in Razliv, he took Ulyanov's photograph wearing a wig and make-up for a passport in the name of K.P

Ivanov, a worker at Sestroretsk arms plant. The RSDRP CC had banned Ulyanov from returning to Petrograd, but the locomotive driver Yalava agreed to get him across the border disguised as a fireman.²⁵⁴ Ulyanov had told Smilga, the chair of the soldiers', sailors' and workers' committee in Finland, to organise troops to march on Petrograd,²⁵⁵ and argued privately that 'a bloc with the SR internationalists' would give the Bolsheviks 'firm state power and a majority in the constituent assembly'.²⁵⁶ He complained that the CC had censored his letters,²⁵⁷ tendered his resignation, but reserved the right 'to campaign among the *party rank and file*'.²⁵⁸ A member of the Swiss parliament in Bern, who was a German agent, had offered a large sum of money to the Bolshevik CC.²⁵⁹

10. October

A new type of *intelligentsia* is being created

By October over 57 percent of almost 427,300 peasant households held four acres or less. They had around 448,300 horses and 497,500 cows between them, but over 122,800 had no horse and over 77,700 had no cow. Around 30 percent in Tambov province and 37 percent in Penza province had neither, and the agricultural population of Bessarabia had fallen from around 560,000 to 200,000. Around 80 percent of scythes and 90 percent of fertilizer had been imported before the war, but it had interrupted supplies.¹ Officially almost 431,700 prisoners of war worked in agriculture, compared to around 600,000 early that year,² but in some places peasant households had no male worker, so barely a third of land could be sown,³ and livestock were starving.⁴ The government could feed no more than seven million of the ten million troops, the national debt was 52.9 billion rubles,⁵ and the war cost 88 million a day.⁶ The money supply averaged 1.175 billion a month,⁷ and there were 17.29 billion paper rubles in circulation,⁸ but the ruble was worth six percent of its pre-war value.⁹

There were 15 to 18 million industrial workers, but since January real wages had fallen by between ten and 60 percent,¹⁰ and prices had risen by 2,300 percent since February.¹¹ The cost of living was five times higher than in 1916.¹² Sugar, milk, meat and most staples were scarce, and the average worker's calorie intake was 22 percent lower than in 1913. Almost 500,000 had been laid off,¹³ and production had fallen by a quarter.¹⁴ Two-thirds of factories had workers' committees,¹⁵ including 687 with workforces of over 200,¹⁶ but they were uncoordinated.¹⁷ There were over two million trade unionists and the railway workers' claimed 500,000 members and the metalworkers' 300,000.¹⁸ Around 2.5 million workers had struck since February.¹⁹ There were soviets in 67 of the 82 provinces, 437 of the 650 counties and 787 of the 6,770 districts (excluding Finland and enemy-occupied territory).²⁰ They claimed almost 1.5 million supporters,²¹ and 706 included workers and soldiers, 235 also included peasants,²² though 33 consisted only of soldiers and 455 only of peasants.²³ The Red Guards claimed between 70,000 and 100,000 members.²⁴

The Bolsheviks claimed 350,000 members nationally,²⁵ including 30,000 women.²⁶ Workers formed 45 percent, intelligentski 25 percent, white-collar workers 15 percent, aristocrats 12 percent and peasants 1.8 percent;²⁷ but 80 percent were in a few regions.²⁸ Many had joined recently, and around 60 percent were in cities. Around 36 percent had served on city or émigré committees before 1917, though 57 percent held comparable positions by October. Workers and peasants were far less likely to hold a responsible post than men, even though 62 percent of a sample of women had attended a secondary school. The higher the party organisation, the fewer women.²⁹ Many new recruits had little understanding of Marxism,³⁰ and the line between members and supporters was blurred,³¹ while others followed the Bolshevik line without joining.³² The Bolsheviks published 75 newspapers and journals, and the print run of *Pravda* was over 200,000, but many in the provinces could not differentiate between Bolsheviks and Mensheviks.³³ Nevertheless a British journalist found revolutionary organisations and political societies engaged in the 'enlightenment of the masses' in every province, especially among young army conscripts with a primary education, and concluded that 'new type of *intelligentsia* is being created'.³⁴

Petrograd

By October the average real wage of an unskilled worker in Petrograd had fallen by 57 percent since January, but the price of bread had almost tripled.³⁵ The ration had been cut to 10.5 ounces a day and a reduction to seven ounces was imminent. There was no more than four days' supply of grain in the city. Sugar, milk and most other staples were in very short supply and meat stocks were depleted.³⁶ There were queues for everything, though citizens could hire one of the 2,000 or so army deserters to queue for a few rubles, and others sold chocolate at 11 rubles a pound. Droshky drivers had formed a union, and a ride that cost 25 kopeks before the war cost five rubles.³⁷

The metalworkers' union claimed around 190,000 members, the textile workers' 32,000, the printers' 25,300, the woodworkers' 20,500 and the leatherworkers' 16,700, while others claimed between 2,000 and 14,000. About 390,000 workers, at least 90 percent of the city's industrial workforce, were unionised,³⁸ and most union leaders supported the Bolsheviks.³⁹ Early in October pharmacy union members went on strike for higher pay and control of hiring. Almost all hospitals and clinics were affected, but employers refused to accept the decision of mediators.⁴⁰ Mensheviks were strong among printers,⁴¹ though around 1,000 printers and three percent of metalworkers' union members were unemployed, and the shortage of sugar had led to the lay-off of 4,000 confectionary workers.

Around 289,000 workers, or around 74 percent of those in 96 enterprises, exercised some control.⁴² There were 120 workers' committees in plants with workforces of over 200,⁴³ including most large metalworks,⁴⁴ and there were councils of factory committees in Nevsky, Petergofsky and Vasilievsky Island districts.⁴⁵ Mensheviks led VTsIK,⁴⁶ but around 175,000 textile workers and 400,000 metalworkers were moving towards the Bolsheviks,⁴⁷ who claimed 43,000 members. Most were young men, though few were women.⁴⁸ Around 28,250 were workers and 5,800 were soldiers,⁴⁹ who claimed to lead 150,000 others.⁵⁰ The Bolsheviks claimed 7,200 members in Narva district, almost 7,000 in Vyborg, almost 3,500 in Petrograd district, over 3,100 on Vasilievsky Island and 8,000 in the suburbs, and they had a majority in 11 of the 17 district soviets. The Bolshevik city committee had 40 to 50 members from the districts. About a quarter were intelligentsy, and included the Old Bolsheviks Krivobokov, Goldstein, and 27-year old Ivan Moskvina who had joined the Bolsheviks as a student in 1911. Evgeny Peruvkhin had been born in 1873. He later became a medical student in the capital and joined the RSDRP in 1903, but was exiled. In 1917 he worked as a doctor in Petrograd and joined the Bolshevik city committee. Pavel Sudakov had been born in 1877. He became an SD in 1897, worked at a Petrograd metalworks in 1917, and was a Bolshevik soviet delegate. Alexandr Kuklin had been born in 1876. He became a blacksmith, joined the Bolsheviks in 1903 and was chair of Vyborg district soviet in 1917. Lazar Zelikson had been born in 1883. He joined the Bolsheviks in 1904, and was a дума deputy from the Rozhdestvensky suburb of Petrograd in 1917. Ivan Rudakov had been born in 1883. He joined the Bolsheviks in 1905 and was active in Okhta soviet in eastern Petrograd in 1917. Peter Zavlasky had been born in 1890. From 1902 he worked for a Mykolaev coal-merchant, and joined the Bolsheviks in 1905. In 1917 he was summoned from Odesa to join the Petrograd Bolshevik committee. Nikolai Ivanov had been born into a blacksmith's family in 1883. He became a metalworker and joined the Bolsheviks in 1905. In 1917 he was a member of Petrograd district committee in the capital.⁵¹ At Kronstadt the Bolsheviks claimed to lead 80,000 sailors,⁵² and had a majority in Tsentrobalt,⁵³ which radioed the 'oppressed' of all countries for support.⁵⁴ German troops landed on nearby islands on the 3rd,⁵⁵ and the Russian General Staff evacuated Tallinn.⁵⁶

On the 4th *Rabochy i Soldat* called for all power to the soviets,⁵⁷ but some soldier and Menshevik deputies argued unsuccessfully that they were a danger to the revolution.⁵⁸ The government asked industrialists to evacuate plants to Moscow, but the soviet EC forbade it.⁵⁹ There were 10,000 to 12,000 Red Guards,⁶⁰ and Vyborg, which was home to 18 percent of city workers, claimed 5,000. They were poorly armed and trained,⁶¹ though around 110 had established a central body by the 5th.⁶² Krupskaya joined a delegation to the Bolshevik CC, which supported an armed rising,⁶³ though the Menshevik CC voted for an all-socialist cabinet by nine votes to seven, with two abstentions.⁶⁴ The government had allowed older troops to go home,⁶⁵ but on the 6th it ordered half the garrison to the front,⁶⁶ and half the civilian population to defend the city.⁶⁷

Margarita Fofanova had been born into an office workers' family in a Perm province village in 1883.⁶⁸ She joined the RSDRP in 1902, but was imprisoned in 1903. From late 1904 she worked in Arkhangelsk, Simferopol and elsewhere; but in 1910 she settled in the capital and attended the Advanced Agricultural Courses for Women. After the February 1917 revolution she became a soviet deputy for Vyborg,⁶⁹ joined the Bolsheviks in April and sheltered released prisoners.⁷⁰ Her husband did not live with her, and she had sent her children away.⁷¹ She lived on the outskirts of Vyborg,⁷² and Krupskaya arranged for Ulyanov to lodge there.⁷³ He was in Viipuri, five hours away by train,⁷⁴ and the Bolshevik CC asked him to come to Petrograd.⁷⁵ Ulyanov, Bronstein, Kollontai, Bukharin, Rozenfeld and Sokolnikov were tasked with drafting a new RSDRP programme, but never met to do so.⁷⁶ On the 8th Ulyanov spoke about the German navy mutiny.⁷⁷ At the soviet EC 48 of the 66 deputies were Bolsheviks,⁷⁸ and the EC voted to prevent the removal of the garrison.⁷⁹ On the 10th Russian and German warships fought in the Gulf of Riga.⁸⁰ The Bolshevik Galiana Flakserman lived at 32 Karpovka Embankment in Petrograd.⁸¹ She ensured that her husband, Himmer, would not return that evening, and at least 12 of the 21-member Bolshevik CC met at her apartment. Ulyanov made a proposal. 'Recognising that an armed uprising is inevitable and the time fully ripe, the CC instructs all Party organisations to be guided accordingly and decide practical questions.'⁸² Uritsky thought 40,000 rifles were barely enough;⁸³ but while he, Ulyanov, Bronstein, Sverdlov, Jughashvili, Dzierżyński, Kollontai, Bubnov, Sokolnikov and Oppokov voted for a rising, Apfelbaum and Rozenfeld were against,⁸⁴ and others were doubtful.⁸⁵ Kalinin thought it might take place in a year's time;⁸⁶ but Sverdlov, Jughashvili, Bubnov, Uritsky, Dzierżyński, Apfelbaum and Ulyanov were appointed to the leading political bureau.⁸⁷

Mikhail Kokovkhine had been born in 1883. He supported the RSDRP congress majority in 1903, was active as a Bolshevik in the 1905 revolution, but was later imprisoned and deported several times. In 1914 he propagandised against the war, and by 1917 he was a member of the soldiers' soviet on the southwestern front and vice-president of its EC. By October he was as a member of the Special Army soldiers' EC.⁸⁸ The government had some reliable Cossacks,⁸⁹ though other troops could not reach Petrograd quickly because the railway lines had been sabotaged.⁹⁰

On the 11th *Rabochy Put* ridiculed the idea that government wanted to send garrison troops to the front for strategic reasons,⁹¹ and the Bolsheviks convened a congress of northern region soviets,⁹² to prepare for an All-

Russian congress. The delegates included 51 Bolsheviks, 24 SR internationalists, four SR Maximalists, one Menshevik internationalist, ten SR defencists and around 60 Menshevik defencists. They came from 23 places, including Finland, the Baltic Fleet, and garrisons and railway centres near the capital. They voted for a rising with one vote against and three abstentions,⁹³ after the constituent assembly elections.⁹⁴ Bronstein argued that giving all power to the soviets was the only way to save the revolution, bring a lasting truce and an honourable peace, expropriate the wealthy and transfer land to the peasants.⁹⁵ Mensheviks complained that some soviets not led by Bolsheviks had not been invited and walked out. Bolsheviks and other internationalists voted for all power to the soviets,⁹⁶ but Apfelbaum and Rozenfeld wrote to Bolshevik organisations opposing a rising.⁹⁷

The 39-year-old Old Bolshevik Minei Gubelman had been a delegate to Party conferences in 1906 and 1907. After his return to Russia, he was in prison for 18 months, then sentenced to five years in Gorny Zerentu katorga prison in the Nerchinsk region of Eastern Siberia. After the February revolution in 1917 he went to Moscow, and later became an editor of *Okopnaia Pravda*. He moved to Petrograd and was responsible for the RSDRP military committee, and a member of Petrograd soviet. By October he was president of its military committee.⁹⁸

On the 12th, in spite of Menshevik protests, a closed session of the soviet agreed to form a military committee of two members of the Bolshevik CC, two SR internationalists, two from the soviet, two from army organisations, and two from the garrison. Hundreds of Red Guards were being recruited, and thousands at larger factories. After Ulyanov spoke at the Putilov works, A. Vasiliev joined the Red Guards as a machine-gunner. They had no more than 2,000 rifles, though 500 Obukhov metalworkers had a machine-gun and an armoured car. Bolsheviks had been sent to the southwestern and western fronts, Kronstadt and Helsinki. Tsentrobalt sent the vice-chair to Petrograd to get arms from the General Staff, claimed they were for defensive purposes, and took 3,000 rifles, 100 revolvers, cartridges and 5,000 hand-grenades to Helsinki. Bolsheviks were sent to the Urals and the Donbas.⁹⁹

On the 13th SR internationalists in Petrograd soviet supported the military committee, and the soldiers' section did so by 183 to one, with 23 abstentions.¹⁰⁰ Bolsheviks won almost 9,400 votes in the workers' committee elections at the Pipe Works, SRs around 3,800, Anarchists 640 and Mensheviks 520. Baltic Fleet sailors put their radio at the Bolsheviks' disposal.¹⁰¹ By the 14th there were 3.5 days' of grain in the capital, and though almost 13,100 tons were in railway wagons and on canals outside the city,¹⁰² and 1,200 wagonloads of rotten food at Nikolaevsk railway depot had to be thrown away.¹⁰³

By the 15th German troops had captured three islands,¹⁰⁴ and a Russian general reported that the army was unable to fight.¹⁰⁵ There were 35 Bolsheviks at the city committee. Eight thought a rising was possible, six thought it uncertain and five thought it inopportune;¹⁰⁶ but the Vyborg organiser insisted that 'the masses will support us',¹⁰⁷ and six of the 15 district representatives agreed. Krivobokov objected that nothing had been done among the peasantry, and he and others worried that they would withhold grain. The support of railway workers and the Fifth Army on the northern front had not been secured, so a rising would be premature. Rakhia claimed that Finns wanted a revolution and 'the sooner the better',¹⁰⁸ but while several important districts would respond to a Bolshevik summons, none would respond to one from the soviet.¹⁰⁹ Red Guards went on full alert.¹¹⁰ Army representatives decided that no troops should leave the capital without the consent of the soviet EC,¹¹¹ and Sestroresk arms workers sent 5,000 rifles intended for front-line Cossacks to the soviet military committee.¹¹² Putilov workers stood rifles next to their benches, as did Franco Russian turners, who had cartridge pouches over their shoulders, while locksmiths stood theirs in a corner.¹¹³ People from various districts, including Kronstadt, arrived in Petrograd to learn how to organise.¹¹⁴ Bolsheviks and other internationalists now had a majority on VTsIK.¹¹⁵ Around 8,000 workers were unemployed,¹¹⁶ and a pound of stringy black market beef cost more than an average worker's daily wage. Bakers had received 215 tons of flour, but needed at least 725,¹¹⁷ and the metalworkers' union wanted wages linked to the cost of living.¹¹⁸ Duma speakers declared that the situation was 'very close to catastrophe'.¹¹⁹

On the 16th around 25,000 woodworkers went on strike,¹²⁰ and factory committees sealed stocks of raw material and machinery to prevent sequestration.¹²¹ Petrograd papers reported that pro-government troops had gathered at Mariñě, and the government gave land to peasants on a provisional basis, pending the results of the elections to the constitutional assembly, and decided to push for peace.¹²² At an All-Russian Bolshevik conference, 107 delegates from Petrograd, provincial garrisons and military units on the northern, western and southwestern fronts claimed to represent up to 30,000 troops,¹²³ and the government knew that 'revolutionary elements' were organising in the army.¹²⁴

Ekaterina Alexeeva had been born into a textile worker's family in the capital in 1895. She began work in 1905, and joined the Bolsheviks in 1909. She distributed illegal literature, collected money for the press and to support exiles, and took part in strikes.¹²⁵ In mid-October 1917 Kalinin asked her to prepare a secret meeting.¹²⁶ On the 16th members of the Bolshevik CC,¹²⁷ trade unions, factory committees, the RSDRP committee and the soviet military committee met at the premises of Lesnoy district дума.¹²⁸ Sverdlov claimed that the Party had at least 400,000

members nationally,¹²⁹ though 95 percent had joined recently.¹³⁰ Rakhia supported an armed rising.¹³¹ The 45-year-old Ukrainian Bolshevik intelligent Mykola Skrypnyk, who had moved to Petrograd after the February revolution,¹³² and was a member of the soviet's military committee,¹³³ reported that support for a rising was widespread, though I. Schmidt of the Party trade union organisation disagreed,¹³⁴ and soviet military committee delegates doubted if the garrison would support a rising.¹³⁵ Apfelbaum worried that they did not control the railways, post or telegraph,¹³⁶ though his proposal that a rising should not take place before Bolshevik VTsIK delegates had been consulted was defeated by 15 votes to six,¹³⁷ with three abstentions,¹³⁸ and a motion for a rising passed by 19 votes to two,¹³⁹ with four abstentions.¹⁴⁰ Rozenfeld resigned from CC and demanded a Party conference.¹⁴¹ No date was set,¹⁴² but Ovseyenko, Podvoisky and Gregory Chudnovsky were to lead it.¹⁴³ Chudnovsky had been born in 1890, joined the RSDRP in 1905,¹⁴⁴ as a Menshevik,¹⁴⁵ but joined Mezhraionka in May 1917 and the Bolsheviks in July.¹⁴⁶

On the 17th Bolsheviks formed 86 of the 137 delegates at a factory committee conference,¹⁴⁷ and they had the support of 24 SR internationalists.¹⁴⁸ New Lessner and Reno workers in Vyborg took to the streets and sang revolutionary songs, but police attacked them with sabres and whips. Soldiers in a nearby barracks threw rocks and bricks at them, but Cossacks arrived and arrested around 130 soldiers. Their regiment was moved out of the capital,¹⁴⁹ though the government suspended capital punishment in the army.¹⁵⁰ In the election of soviet deputies at the Pipe Works Bolsheviks won 963 votes, Mensheviks 309 and SRs 236.¹⁵¹ That evening district representatives met the Bolshevik military committee at the Smolny and reported that workers, Red Guards, soldiers and Kronstadt sailors were ready for a rising. The military committee decided to defer to the soviet military committee, but get arms from the Fortress. Ministers knew many Cossacks would not support them, but believed most other units would,¹⁵² and there were 5,000 well-armed military students in the capital.¹⁵³

Tens of thousands of workers read *Novaya Zhizn*, and on the 18th Apfelbaum and Rozenfeld wrote that a rising would be 'ruinous to the proletariat and the revolution', and lead to 'the crushing of the Party' and the working class. Chudnovsky told 200 Bolsheviks that the CC's plan was doomed. On the 19th *Rabochy Put* published a letter from Apfelbaum in which he associated himself with both Rozenfeld and Bronstein's positions, and claimed that they hardly differed from Ulyanov's. Jughashvili concurred,¹⁵⁴ though Ulyanov wrote to Party members denouncing Rozenfeld and Apfelbaum for 'strike-breaking'.¹⁵⁵ He suggested purging the organisation of 'a dozen or so spineless intellectuals' and relying on 'revolutionary workers',¹⁵⁶ though his proposal that the CC expel Apfelbaum and Rozenfeld was defeated. The soviet military committee met for the first time,¹⁵⁷ though the Fortress garrison voted not to join a rising.¹⁵⁸ The delegates at the All-Russian congress of trade unions included 73 Bolsheviks, 36 Mensheviks, 31 who were unaligned and 35 SRs,¹⁵⁹ though 24 were internationalists.¹⁶⁰ One delegate pointed out that in some months the delivery of grain had been a 20 to 40 percent lower than what was needed, and 30 to 73 percent of deliveries to the front lasted around three days.¹⁶¹ A soldier reported that the garrison did not trust their officers or committees, and a worker gave examples of management sabotage.¹⁶² An SR internationalist, who had played a major role in organising the defences during the Kornilov affair, chaired the soviet military committee; but other SRs withdrew when they learned that the Bolsheviks planned to use it as a cover for a coup.¹⁶³ The conference established a provisional All-Russian council,¹⁶⁴ with 13 Bolsheviks, 13 Mensheviks and three SRs as leaders.¹⁶⁵ Ivan Flerovsky, a leading Kronstadt Bolshevik, was elected to VTsIK along with a Maximalist SR and an Anarchist,¹⁶⁶ but the soviet EC postponed the VTsIK congress to the 25th.¹⁶⁷ Bronstein assured the soviet that 'no armed actions have been set', but if the soviet was attacked the mass of workers and soldiers would reply with a 'merciless' counter-attack.¹⁶⁸ Up to 75,000 workers from 63 factories had joined a political strike;¹⁶⁹ but though 15 of the 18 members of the Bolshevik military committee were not fully committed to armed action,¹⁷⁰ Ovseyenko reported that Kronstadt and Helsinki sailors were ready.¹⁷¹ The government ordered front-line troops to Petrograd,¹⁷² since it expected a rising on the 25th,¹⁷³ though it could not rely on all the units on the southwestern front, where the commander had received anonymous letters threatening to kill him if peace was not concluded soon.¹⁷⁴

By the 20th Bolsheviks had replaced government commissars in major garrisons, units, arms depots and other military institutions across the country, and a high percentage were well-known and warmly welcomed.¹⁷⁵ Bronstein insisted in *Rabochy Put* that the Bolsheviks had not decided whether the demonstration would be armed. The Bolshevik CC accepted Rozenfeld's resignation by five votes to three,¹⁷⁶ provisionally,¹⁷⁷ and unanimously ordered him to 'refrain from statements against its decisions'.¹⁷⁸ Jughashvili abstained, but offered his resignation as an editor of *Rabochy Put*. The CC refused to accept it, but forbade him to campaign against its decisions. Ulyanov met leaders of the Bolshevik military committee in the worker Pavlov's flat.¹⁷⁹ Bakeries had closed for lack of flour, deliveries of meat were half what had been ordered and the supply of winter footwear was inadequate.¹⁸⁰ Between 12,000 and 14,000 Red Guards had rifles, bayonets, machine-guns and armoured cars.¹⁸¹

On the 21st revolutionaries seized large quantities of arms and ammunition intended for the front. Soviet soldier deputies supported the Bolsheviks,¹⁸² and regarded them as the authority in the garrison.¹⁸³ The commander of the northern front tried to transfer troops out of Petrograd, but they would take orders only from the soviet.¹⁸⁴ By

evening its military committee controlled the Cartridge Works.¹⁸⁵ Bronstein announced that any military district which refused to recognise the soviet military committee would be a 'weapon of the counter-revolutionary forces',¹⁸⁶ and at midnight it announced that orders from government commissars not countersigned by them were invalid.¹⁸⁷ Dzierżyński reported to the Bolshevik CC about the 'total disorganisation' of the soviet EC.¹⁸⁸

By the 22nd Red Guards battalions of between 400 and 600 had a machine-gun section, a liaison section and an ambulance section. Two-thirds were on duty at any one time, and the other third received their wages. They all had a numbered identity-card. Three absences without excuse were grounds for expulsion and the unauthorised use of arms was an offence. Orders had to be obeyed without discussion, and infractions would be dealt with by a rank-and-file jury. NCOs had often been elected, and though some had been appointed by factory committees and other workers' bodies, appointments to higher posts were referred to ward soviets for approval.¹⁸⁹ There were at least 13 Red Guards in almost every major factory.¹⁹⁰ The soviet military committee warned that the revolution was in danger.¹⁹¹ When the soviet called for a peaceful review of its forces, 30,000 showed up,¹⁹² though the Fortress garrison was torn between supporting the Bolsheviks and neutrality. The defenders of the Winter Palace included 37 officers, 75 infantry and 696 cadets. They had six field guns, six armoured cars, 19 machine guns, 684 rifles and 40 revolvers.¹⁹³ Kerensky could count on three Cossack regiments at best, but ordered the artillery at Pavlovsk and officer cadets at Petergofsky to come to Petrograd, though the soviet military committee ordered an attack.¹⁹⁴ Two-thirds of the 300 Kronstadt soviet deputies were now Bolsheviks.¹⁹⁵

By the 23rd a few armed Bolsheviks had taken power in Finland.¹⁹⁶ A Russian general reported that the military situation was beyond repair. The country could not support a front-line and reserve army of 9.5 million, and peace was the only way to undermine the Bolsheviks. The Petrograd military commander ordered that revolvers could not be sold without a licence, and that Ulyanov be arrested, though his orders were not carried out. There were several guard posts near the Winter Palace,¹⁹⁷ but the Bolsheviks had the support of at least 300,000 armed workers, soldiers and sailors, while the government had around 25,000.¹⁹⁸ In Vyborg there were around 6,500 Bolshevik supporters and 4,700 Red Guards.¹⁹⁹ Putilov workers claimed 6,000, and Obukhov workers almost 2,000, though some factories had a few dozen at most. A few hundred soldiers led most of the garrison,²⁰⁰ but though the commander had their weapons locked away, the soviet military committee prevented the despatch of 10,000 rifles to counter-revolutionaries in Novochoerkassk,²⁰¹ and Bronstein persuaded the Fortress garrison to support the rising and secured 100,000 rifles without firing a shot.²⁰² Kerensky ordered the arrest of the soviet military committee,²⁰³ but that afternoon two Bolsheviks walked into the central telegraph office without their rifles. They had no sympathisers among the 3,000 employees, but took over in the name of the soviet military committee.²⁰⁴ At the soviet Mensheviks were shouted down. 'We have stood behind you for a full eight months, and our patience is at an end.'²⁰⁵ At midnight Sverdlov sent coded messages to Kronstadt and Helsinki to summon armed sailors.²⁰⁶ Alexandr Belyshev on the *Aurora* had supported the Bolsheviks in February and got illegal literature from friends at Obukhov metalworks. In March he had been 'accepted into the Bolshevik Party' and was elected as chair of the *Aurora* committee in July. On 23 October he and another committee member were summoned to the soviet military committee. Sverdlov appointed Belyshev as commissar of the *Aurora*, and tugs brought shells from Kronstadt.²⁰⁷

Naumov later wrote about a factory worker he called 'Alexis Udaroff', though that may have been a pseudonym. He lived in Lesnoy district and was working in a Vyborg metalworking factory by late autumn 1917. His pay was 'ridiculous', his wife was ill, his son had no shoes and could not go to school, and they could not afford wood for heating and cooking. Naumov's factory employed 4,000 workers, and he was one of the 13 members of the workers' committee, which had the right to enrol Red Guards and Bolsheviks. He was elected as president, attended the district committee, and picked up literature. There were 7,000 members in Vyborg, almost 7,000 on Vasilievsky Island and several thousands in Neva district. He acknowledged that the Bolsheviks were weak elsewhere in the province, though things were better in Moscow and the Urals, and among front-line troops. Petrograd factories were like 'barrels of gunpowder'. Sudrabs was a member of the Bolshevik military committee.²⁰⁸ Udaroff had to ask permission to enter the committee room, but Sudrabs showed him a letter from Ulyanov, and told him that a majority of the CC favoured a rising, and though a few believed they were insufficiently prepared, Vyborg district was ready. There were many comrades at the district committee meeting, and someone from the 'centre' claimed that Moscow comrades, several garrisons and some peasants supported a rising. There was some hesitation, but the committee voted unanimously in favour. Udaroff's wife was at the end of her tether and their son had tuberculosis. Sudrabs invited Udaroff for a meal, and asked if he had met 'Lenin', and when he replied that he had seen him and been impressed, Sudrabs asked about the situation in Vyborg. Udaroff had no money, so Sudrabs paid for the meal, and they set off for the Smolny, where district secretaries, factory and garrison delegates, organisers and agitators were meeting. Sudrabs pointed out who was for a rising and who was against. After a debate a 'forest of hands' voted for a rising. They learned that the government had ordered the Neva bridges to be raised, and one comrade from each district was to stay behind to hear the city committee's orders.²⁰⁹

On the 24th Kerensky ordered that *Rabochy Put* and *Soldat* be closed,²¹⁰ and at 5.30am military cadets raided the press, destroyed the stereotypes, confiscated 8,000 copies of *Rabochy Put* and sealed the building;²¹¹ but Red Guards occupied the presses of bourgeois papers and printed large numbers of leaflets,²¹² and the *Aurora* moved to near Nikolaevsky Bridge.²¹³

Gleb Bokii had been born into the family of an ethnic Ukrainian nobleman and a chemistry teacher in Tbilisi, Georgia, in 1879. He grew up in the Russian capital, attended school, participated in revolutionary kruzhki and led a kruzhek of Ukrainians. He graduated from the Mining Institute in 1896, became an SD and worked with the Union of Struggle for the Emancipation of the Working Class in 1897 and joined the RSDRP in 1900 as an organizer and propagandist. In 1902 he was sentenced to three years' exile in eastern Siberia, but escaped to the capital, and in 1904 he was elected to the RSDRP committee. In 1905 he participated in fighting on Vasilievsky Island and he joined the RSDRP bureau in 1914. Early in 1917 he was sentenced to exile in Yakutsk, but was released after the February revolution and had joined the Petrograd city committee by April. By October he was a member of the soviet military committee. He and four other members of the Petrograd committee EC warned the CC that their 'political line' would 'result in the abdication of our principles', 'the certain death of our party as a revolutionary vanguard,' and 'would run counter to the opinion of the majority in our party'; so a 'split threatens'. They wanted a special Party conference.²¹⁴ The 1,012 VTsIK deputies claimed to represent 402 soviets. Around half were Bolsheviks, over half the 193 SRs were internationalists,²¹⁵ and the 102 EC members included 62 Bolsheviks and 20 SR internationalists.²¹⁶

Mikhail Lashevich had been born into a Jewish merchant's family in Odesa in 1884.²¹⁷ He attended a gymnasium, and joined the RSDRP in 1901.²¹⁸ From 1913 he was a tutor in Yegoryevsk in Moscow province, and in 1914 he entered Moscow University, but was drafted in 1915. After graduating from the Alexander Military School he served in a reserve infantry regiment, and in February 1917 he was elected as chair of his regimental committee. In March he joined the Bolsheviks and became the chair of Yegoryevsk soviet. At the All-Russian congress of soviets he was elected to VTsIK, and became the secretary of the Bolshevik faction and a member of its military organization,²¹⁹ and opposed a revolution;²²⁰ but by 24 October he was a member of its sub-committee and responsible for capturing the Fortress for the Bolsheviks' base. The sub-committee also included Semashko,²²¹ Bubnov, who was responsible for railway workers, Dzierżyński, who was responsible for communications with workers, and Miliutin, who was responsible for food workers.²²² Sverdlov and Sudrabs were tasked with negotiating with SR internationalists, and Nogin and Oppokov were to 'inform Moscow about everything that is going on here'.²²³ Krivobokov was tasked with organising a railway workers' conference and winning control of the network.²²⁴ He went to Helsinki and Viipuri to work with Dybenko and Smilga, and brought weapons to Petrograd, where Podvoisky organised workers and soldiers to guard the Smolny. Putilov Red Guards were confined to barracks.²²⁵ That afternoon government soldiers raised two Neva bridges,²²⁶ but when military cadets reached Liteiny Bridge an angry crowd forced them to surrender.²²⁷ About 6.00pm cadets marched out of the Winter Palace with two of their four guns, followed by Cossacks who had been promised safety if they left their machine-guns behind, though 137 members of a Women's Death Battalion remained. Bronstein told the soviet that its military committee was preparing to take power.²²⁸

Ivan Eremeev had been born in 1895. He became a revolutionary in Krasnoyarsk in Siberia in 1914, when he was a metalworks hammer man, but was conscripted in 1916. He took part in soldiers' demonstrations, and in February 1917 he and other members of a machine-gun regiment supported Putilov strikers in Petrograd. He joined the Bolsheviks in June, and later the Red Guards, and helped to organise Putilov machine-guns to guard the Smolny in late October.²²⁹ On the 24th Reed saw 24 machine guns in and around the building. There were some on the roof, and there were cannon in front of the portico. Munitions and firewood were piled up in the courtyard and food had been brought in.²³⁰

Fyodor Bykov had been born in 1894. He was conscripted into a reserve motorised unit in Petrograd in 1914. By summer 1917 he was a member of Odesa soviet, and in October he joined the Bolsheviks in Petrograd, chaired the committee liaising between the Smolny and the factories and led a motorised machine-gun unit.²³¹ A Menshevik claiming to speak for the entire army at the congress of soviets argued that a soviet government would last a few days.²³² At the soviet a Menshevik motion of no confidence in Kerensky passed by 123 votes to 102, with 26 abstentions.²³³ That night troops and Red Guards occupied the Tauride Palace, post offices, power stations and other strategically important buildings.²³⁴ Belova was among those from Vyborg who took the Finland Station,²³⁵ and Ulyanova led the capture of the *Russkaya Volia (Russian Will)* press.²³⁶ Soviet deputies and representatives from five regiments met at Kronstadt,²³⁷ and almost 4,500 armed sailors left on trains for Petrograd.²³⁸ Eino Rakhia, lukka's brother, had been born in 1885. In 1903 he joined the RSDRP and supported the Bolsheviks.²³⁹ Close to midnight on 24 October 1917 he and Ulyanov reached the Smolny. The guards refused to admit them without a current pass, but a crowd pushed in and they joined them.²⁴⁰ Ulyanov discussed a soviet government with about half the CC. No record survives,²⁴¹ though 800,000 of a million rubles were withdrawn from Sumenson's account.²⁴²

There were 244 factory workers' committees in Petrograd province.²⁴³ Some had replaced managers,²⁴⁴ and were 'expropriating' their workplaces.²⁴⁵ Bolsheviks led 11 soviets in the region,²⁴⁶ and there were 15,000 to 20,000 Red Guards.²⁴⁷ The Bolshevik CC was in touch with 163 organisations across Russia, though 28 soviets still included both Bolsheviks and Mensheviks.²⁴⁸ Almost 200,000 Estonians lived outside the Baltic provinces, and over half were in Petrograd province. There were 200,000 government troops in Estonia, but by mid-October 26 Estonian delegates to the congress of soviets included 18 Bolsheviks.²⁴⁹

We have been ready for a long time

By October the cost of living in Moscow had risen by 650 percent since the start of the war,²⁵⁰ and a quarter of around 50,000 textile workers were unemployed. Zamoskvoreche district workers called for all power to the soviets,²⁵¹ and the soviet demanded a 'clear and definite course towards' a rising from the RSDRP CC.²⁵² Nogin and Rykov of the city committee and regional bureau were against, though Bukharin, Oppokov, Obolensky and Vladimir Smirnov were in favour,²⁵³ and on 3rd, on behalf of the Moscow region committee, Oppokov criticised the CC for wavering.²⁵⁴ SRs held 26 seats in the soldiers' soviet EC, Bolsheviks 16 and Mensheviks nine; but on the 5th a Bolshevik motion on the current situation at the full soviet passed by 335 votes to 254,²⁵⁵ and 38 trade unions had formed a central bureau mostly led by Bolsheviks. On the 18th at the All-Russian conference of factory committees in Petrograd Moscow delegates voted by 53 to five, with nine abstentions, for all power to the soviets.²⁵⁶ On the 19th Moscow soviet passed Bolshevik motions,²⁵⁷ including arresting capitalists who refused workers' demands.²⁵⁸ The Bolsheviks increased their vote in district elections from 11 to 51 percent since July, while support for SRs and Mensheviks combined had fallen from 70 to 18 percent. Oppokov was tasked with coordinating a rising with that in Petrograd.²⁵⁹ There were 10,000 to 14,000 Red Guards in and around Moscow,²⁶⁰ and though SRs and Mensheviks had tried to disarm them, they made hand-grenades,²⁶¹ and had enough arms.²⁶² The soviet decreed that factory committees could hire and fire, and on the 24th the soviet voted to recruit Red Guards.²⁶³ Bolsheviks controlled railway stations and outlying areas, but were cut off from the soviet.²⁶⁴ The cost of living had risen by 11 percent since June, though workers' average daily wage had risen from 4.1 to 5.1 rubles. Around 800 railway wagonloads of grain had reached the city, but by the 24th the daily bread ration was around half a pound.²⁶⁵

The central industrial region around Moscow was home to 20 percent of the Party's claimed membership.²⁶⁶ The government commissar in Novgorod province called in troops from Moscow,²⁶⁷ but Kineshma workers took over mills to prevent owners sabotaging them,²⁶⁸ and by the 21st they had captured strategic points with few casualties.²⁶⁹ Strike committees controlled Ivanovo textile mills and put armed pickets at the gates. Workers marched to the town centre singing revolutionary songs on the 23rd. Most red banners bore economic slogans, but some demanded 'Down with the government' and 'All Power to the Soviets'.²⁷⁰ On the 24th Mensheviks won 25 of the 560 seats in the Moscow region дума elections.²⁷¹

By October there were a few hundred Red Guards outside Kyiv and Odesa in Ukraine,²⁷² but Kyiv Bolsheviks voted overwhelmingly against the 'anti-Leninist' RSDRP committee.²⁷³ In the Donbas Vetka mine electricians went on strike for higher pay and an eight-hour day, and coke-oven workers instituted it unilaterally. Luzovka Bolsheviks claimed 2,000 members, though attendance at weekly meetings rarely exceeded 40. The flight of administrators and industrialists had become general, and others were arrested. On the 3rd Ivanovo metalworks managers announced that it was losing 100,000 rubles a day, and would close immediately unless workers accepted new conditions. On the 6th a congress of soviets in Krivoi-Rog demanded the removal of Cossacks, but 200 mines had closed by the 7th. Luzovka Bolsheviks complained that the CC had nominated 25 'strangers' as constituent assembly candidates, yet almost all were prominent local activists. The Bolsheviks' Gorlovka-Shcherbinovka organisation included workers from ten large mines, and the Shcherbinovka Bolsheviks claimed 3,000 members, or almost half of all industrial workers. On the 13th Shulem Grozman told the CC that while he was away in Petrograd Shcherbinovka Bolsheviks had not met, and many had left the organisation, yet around 4,000 miners went on strike in Makiivka, and there were 'disorders' because of food problems. On the 16th the government formed a mine and factory committee to requisition and distribute food at set prices, but workers in several luzovka factories threatened to strike for an eight-hour day. Bolsheviks held the deputy chair of the soviet's presidium and the EC secretaryship, and six of the 73 seats in the дума.²⁷⁴ A Bolshevik CC member from Petrograd addressed a congress of soviets in Ivanovo, but many waited for direct orders from the CC.²⁷⁵ On the 21st Stasova wrote from Petrograd to ask Gruzman to send someone to the luzovka-Makiivka-Petrovsky district, but he was busy rebuilding the Shcherbinovka-Gorlovka organisation, so Magidov was sent, and the 39-year-old Old Bolshevik Grigory Petrovsky paid frequent visits.²⁷⁶ Donbas rail-making works were operating at 55 percent capacity, and only 55 of the 102 blast furnaces were in use. Ukraine's textile industry was close to collapse.²⁷⁷ Weavers' wages in Shuya had more

than doubled to 59 rubles a month that year, but the cost of food had doubled or even tripled.²⁷⁸ Shuya was home to the region's largest garrison, and it sent 900 armed men and soldiers to Moscow. After the Bolshevik I.V. Beliaev called on Kineshma soviet to take power a member responded: 'We have been ready for a long time, but we don't know why they are still asleep at the centre'.²⁷⁹ Between 15 and 22 October, nationally, almost 300,000 textile workers went on strike.²⁸⁰ In the south of Ukraine Black Sea sailors were disarming their officers.²⁸¹

By October some upper Volga peasants were starving,²⁸² and on the 23rd Saratov Bolsheviks formed a separate organisation from the Mensheviks, and published *Sotsial-Demokrat*.²⁸³

In Georgia, early in October, the Muslim national council's programme had included a democratic republic. Dashnaks predominated at an Armenian congress which worked out a programme for the constituent assembly elections.²⁸⁴ It included a democratically-elected legislative body to act on behalf of all Armenians.²⁸⁵ By the 11th Dzhaparidze had argued at the first regional congress of Bolshevik organisations that they should take power. In Azerbaijan food prices had risen by 125 percent in Baki since January, and after employers accepted most of workers' demands their strike ended on the 2nd.²⁸⁶ The soviet raised a forced 'loan' of five million rubles from the bourgeoisie, and workers' and soldiers' organisations voted for a soviet regime by 238 to 55 on the 15th.²⁸⁷ On the 19th Shaumian argued at the soviet to support 'our comrades in the centre'.²⁸⁸ A Musavat congress wanted Russia to be a federative democratic republic based on national and territorial autonomy in Azerbaijan, Kyrgyzstan, Turkistan and Bashkortostan, while Turks along the Volga and in Crimea should have cultural autonomy if territorial autonomy was impossible. The congress authorised Georgians, Armenians and Azerbaijanis to control domestic policy, though foreign affairs and the army would remain with the Russian government. They wanted citizens of every religion, nationality, gender or political ideology to be equal before the law, and have the right to move freely inside and outside the region. They demanded freedom of speech, conscience, and the right to form trade unions, though strikes had to be legal. The working day should be eight hours, and all state, crown, noble and private lands should be distributed among peasants free of charge. No citizen should be punished for ignoring the authorities' orders, and there should be universal, free and compulsory elementary and higher education.²⁸⁹ On the 22nd the Bolsheviks won around 11,200 of the 72,800 votes in the elections to Baki soviet, including 2,675 from soldiers. They rejected the result and led a conference of delegates from factory committees and Baki garrison. On the 23rd the Menshevik committee supported 'revolutionary democracy' by eight votes to five, with one abstention.²⁹⁰

Siberian Bolsheviks claimed around 10,000 members,²⁹¹ and led between 88 and 100 of the 145 Urals soviets. They called a regional congress and it opened on the 16th,²⁹² in Tomsk. Delegates from 60 soviets attended, and included 64 Bolsheviks, while 35 of the 85 SRs were internationalists. They backed all power to the soviets, established Tsentralnyy Ispolnitelnyy Komitet Sibirskikh Sovetov (the Central Executive Committee of Siberian Soviets, or Tsentrosibir), and elected Shumiatsky as chair. Tsentrosibir was to propagandise, agitate, and distribute centrally-produced and local Bolshevik newspapers and leaflets with slogans including 'All Power to the Soviets'. The Bolsheviks had some cells among the 250,000 or more soldiers, and in workers' committees independent of Menshevik-led trade unions in large plants. Alexandr Krasnoshchokov had been born into a Chernobyl tailor's family in Ukraine in 1880. He attended a realschule and was active in the workers' movement by 1896. He joined the RSDRP in 1898, and he worked for *Iskra* in 1900. By 1902 he was an RSDRP agent, but was arrested several times. He moved to Germany and then to the USA in 1903, where he was a house painter and was active in the American Socialist Party. In 1912 he graduated as a lawyer from Chicago University and defended workers. In October 1917 he returned to Vladivostok, was elected to the soviet, joined the Bolsheviks, and the CC's Far Eastern bureau. By the 24th Siberian Bolsheviks had won over the Anarchists, and Red Guards claimed 6,000 members out of a national total of 200,000,²⁹³ but the state of readiness for a rising varied considerably elsewhere.

The Petrograd rising

At 2.00am on 25 October the Petrograd soviet military committee elected the new Bolshevik Bronstein to lead the rising,²⁹⁴ with the support of SR and Menshevik internationalists and Anarchists.²⁹⁵ Most Neva bridges were soon secured and the State Bank captured.²⁹⁶ By 3.30am Red Guards controlled the Nikolai and Baltic railway stations,²⁹⁷ and the Smolny's telephones had been reconnected.²⁹⁸ The cruiser *Amur* steamed upriver,²⁹⁹ to the Nikolaevsky Bridge,³⁰⁰ and by 4.00am it controlled it without firing a shot.³⁰¹ At 10.00am the soviet military committee announced that the government had been deposed and it was in power;³⁰² though SRs and Mensheviks, including some internationalists, denounced the 'revolutionary attempt at seizing power', and called for an immediate transfer of land to the peasantry and peace talks, by 123 votes to 102, with 23 abstentions.³⁰³ The wealthy packed their bags,³⁰⁴ and Kerensky asked the US ambassador not to recognise the rising, since he would bring troops to

'restore order' in five days. The magnetos of the cars in Palace Square had been stolen,³⁰⁵ so Kerensky left in a huge car behind a Renault, and both carried a US flag.³⁰⁶ On the way revolutionaries briefly detained him, but let him go.³⁰⁷ In Pskov he learned that most troops were unwilling to go to Petrograd,³⁰⁸ and the commander countermanded his orders. Cossacks at nearby Ostrov agreed to go,³⁰⁹ but the 600 had few guns.³¹⁰

In Petrograd garrison there were up to 50,000 troops,³¹¹ and the Bolsheviks led between 6,000 and 7,000, plus 2,500 Kronstadt sailors. About 2,500 Red Guards were outside the Winter Palace, while the defenders numbered no more than 2,000. By 7.40pm government ministers controlled only the Palace, and around 9.00pm they were ordered to surrender or the *Aurora* would fire three blanks and the Fortress would fire live rounds. Some military cadets left. The *Aurora* fired three blanks at 9.40pm and live rounds at 11.00pm, the Fortress fired four blanks, two live rounds and 30 or so shrapnel shells, and wounded two cadets. Sailors burned Kadet papers in the streets, and the soviet military committee closed other bourgeois papers and kiosks.³¹² The metalworkers' union EC called on members to 'close ranks under the banner of the Petrograd soviet' and donated 50,000 rubles.³¹³ The second congress of workers' and soldiers' deputies had 670 delegates. SRs had 193, and half were internationalists, and they and the Bolsheviks defeated a proposal for a coalition government. They replaced the EC members in the workers' section, and the new presidium included 14 Bolsheviks, seven SR internationalists and four Menshevik defencists, who refused to take their seats, and Bronstein became the chair.³¹⁴ Soldiers freed Roshal and he left for the Romanian front.³¹⁵

Nikolai Miliutin had been born in the capital in 1889. His father was from a family with noble origins, but had worked as a fisherman and fishmonger until he was injured, then lived on a disability pension. Against his wishes, Nikolai contacted the RSDRP around 1904 and took part in the Bloody Sunday events in 1905, including storming police stations to free political detainees. He joined the Bolsheviks in 1908 as an agent. He wanted to be an architect, but lacked a secondary education, so he studied at the Free Polytechnicum and then the School of Arts from 1910, taking various jobs to make a living. From 1912 he worked for the office workers' union and joined its board in 1913. In 1914 he ran the Putilov workers' mutual insurance fund, the largest in Russia, but was drafted in 1915, and stationed near Petrograd. In February and July 1917 he led his company against government troops and was sentenced to death, but was saved by a soldiers' mutiny. In August his company defenced the capital, and on the night of 25 October they attacked the Winter Palace.³¹⁶

Bronislavovna had trained factory women all over Russia to be medical assistants, and supported a rising at the RSDRP congress in July. She joined the Red Guards,³¹⁷ and became secretary of the Vasilievsky Island Bolshevik committee. She was tasked with agitating women workers and argued that the RSDRP EC should include a women's bureau, though Samoilva was vehemently opposed.³¹⁸ On 25 October Bronislavovna played a key role in Moscow district, as did L.R. Menzhinskaya and D.A. Lazurkina in the First City district and Kruglova in Okhta district. Rodionova had hidden 42 rifles and other weapons at the Vasilievsky Island tram depot, and was tasked with keeping trams running and checking Red Guard posts that night.³¹⁹

At 1.00am on the 26th the Winter Palace defenders reported that 50 besiegers had been arrested, but 300 more had arrived.³²⁰ At 1.20am members of the soviet military committee entered the Palace and demanded that the occupants surrender.³²¹ The Smolny heard that the Palace had been taken at the cost of six dead at 2.04am, and the congress of soviets heard by 3.00am.³²² It had around 650 delegates,³²³ and 505 supported all power to the soviets.³²⁴ Bolsheviks and SR internationalists approved the rising with two votes against and 12 abstentions.³²⁵ Around 4.00am Ulyanov left for Bonch-Bruevich's apartment,³²⁶ and the congress of soviets adjourned around 6.00am.³²⁷ By 7.00am Warszawa Station had been captured, and at 7.10am an ultimatum demanded that the ministers and troops surrender or be shelled, but nothing happened.³²⁸ Shops opened, trams and buses operated normally,³²⁹ as did restaurants,³³⁰ cinemas and theatres.³³¹ At 9.00am a member of the Bolshevik CC and its military committee led machine-gunners and overwhelmed soldiers guarding the government's press, and at 10.00am they published a leaflet addressed to the citizens of Russia. 'The government is deposed. The state power was taken over by the organs of the Petrograd Soviet of Workers' and Soldiers' Deputies' Military Committee.' 'The goals the people struggled for – an immediate democratic peace, abolition of land ownership, workers' control of production, the creation of a Soviet government – are now secured.'³³² The city was completely peaceful.³³³

The soviet opened at 8.40pm.³³⁴ The Bolsheviks had about 390 delegates out of 650, and the Menshevik defencists no more than 80. Some Menshevik internationalists were unsure about the rising,³³⁵ and while many SR internationalists supported it,³³⁶ some were opposed. The former SR Maslovsky was elected to the presidium and argued unsuccessfully for an immediate end to military activity.³³⁷ A VPSR CC member's motion condemning the seizure of power fell, with 93 against, but 60 internationalists were in favour.³³⁸ Bronstein had declined being president of Sovet Narodnykh Komissarov (the Council of People's Commissars, or Sovnarkom), so Ulyanov accepted the role. Bronstein also declined being people's commissar of home affairs,³³⁹ since he was a Jew and 'one has to make some allowance for stupidity',³⁴⁰ but he accepted the post of commissar of foreign affairs. Sovnarkom

published the commissars' names and responsibilities. Rykov was responsible for the interior, Vladimir Miliutin for agriculture, Shlyapnikov for labour, Antonov, Krylenko and Dybenko for army and navy affairs, Nogin for commerce and industry, Lunacharsky for education, Skvortsov for finance, Oppokov for justice, Teodorovich for food, Avilov for posts and telegraphs and Jughashvili for nationalities, while that of railways was 'temporarily vacant',³⁴¹ and left open for Vikzhel.³⁴² Bronstein announced that he would 'publish a few revolutionary proclamations and then close shop'.³⁴³ The commissars had spent over a century in prison or exile between them.³⁴⁴ They called on the peoples of belligerent countries to begin negotiations for a 'just, democratic peace', without indemnities, seizure of foreign lands and the 'forcible incorporation of foreign nations'. They would annul the secret treaties, abolish all land-ownership without compensation, except for that of 'ordinary peasants' and 'ordinary Cossacks', and put the rest at the disposal of peasant committees. Land would be made available to all, without distinction of sex, if they cultivated it themselves,³⁴⁵ and disabled and sick peasants would receive pensions.³⁴⁶ The Old Bolshevik intelligentka, Olga Bronstein, who had married Rozenfeld and was in her mid-thirties, would be in charge of Theatre section of the Commissariat of Education,³⁴⁷ though Krupskaya was unenthusiastic about being responsible for adult education.³⁴⁸ Rozenfeld failed to persuade SR internationalists to join Sovnarkom.³⁴⁹ Lunacharsky told Ulyanov that he feared the 'gross discrepancy between the gigantic size of the tasks and the modest qualifications of the people selected', but Ulyanov smiled. 'We want responsible people for all the posts, and if they're unsuitable we'll find others to replace them', though he sometimes called them 'Soviet big shots' who were 'completely off their heads'.³⁵⁰ At 9.00pm Ulyanov announced that 'We shall now proceed to construct the socialist order'.³⁵¹ Sovnarkom wanted an armistice of at least three months.³⁵² SR defencists left the hall, but were replaced by internationalists, including Spiridonova. The remaining delegates passed the land programme which the Bolsheviks had taken from the SRs.³⁵³ Some VTsIK and the peasant delegates proposed an immediate armistice and the transfer of crown, monastery and individuals' land to peasant committees without compensation. Peasants should receive 'prime necessities' and cities should receive bread. There should be complete democracy in the army, factory workers should control production, and there should be a 'genuine right to self-determination' for 'all nations within Russia'.³⁵⁴ Ulyanov had drafted a decree on workers' control in which 'negligence, the concealment of supplies, accounts and so on' would be punished by 'the confiscation of all property and up to five years' imprisonment'.³⁵⁵

There were some cadets, Cossacks, and members of the Women's' Death Battalion in the Winter Palace. They had six guns and one armoured car, though its crew insisted that they were guarding the art treasures and were neutral. Only three doors were guarded and looters entered, though sailors and soldiers disarmed them. Some cadets borrowed women's greatcoats and escaped with four guns. The Cossacks left, and most of the remaining cadets had followed by 10.00pm. The women soldiers were taken to their Levashovo headquarters,³⁵⁶ while the ministers were taken to the Fortress,³⁵⁷ and put in separate cold and damp cells. (They were soon released, thanks to the intercession of the British military attaché.)³⁵⁸

At 10.40pm the congress of soviets reopened. The 670 delegates included 300 Bolsheviks. More than half of the 193 SRs were internationalists, and the 82 Mensheviks included 14 internationalists.³⁵⁹ After Menshevik defencists unsuccessfully proposed a coalition socialist government,³⁶⁰ they and the SR defencists left,³⁶¹ and Bronstein consigned them to 'the dustbin of history',³⁶² yet Lunacharsky announced that the Bolsheviks had no principled objection to a coalition socialist government.³⁶³ In the elections to the soviet presidium 14 Bolsheviks, seven SRs and four Mensheviks were successful, though the Mensheviks refused to take their seats and left. The overwhelming majority of delegates supported the rising.³⁶⁴ In the elections to VTsIK, 62 of the 101 successful candidates were Bolsheviks, 29 were SR internationalists,³⁶⁵ three were Ukrainian SDs and one was an SR Maximalist.³⁶⁶ Sverdlov was elected to replace Rozenfeld as chair by a margin of five votes, but shared responsibility for the provinces with an SR internationalist.³⁶⁷ A Vizhkel leader demanded negotiations for a coalition socialist government, under its supervision, or it would call a general strike.³⁶⁸ Ulyanov, Bronstein and Sverdlov voted for breaking off negotiations, but were outvoted, and SR internationalists decided to join Sovnarkom.³⁶⁹

Ivan Vakhremeev had been born in Iaroslavl in 1885. By 1908 he was a navy petty officer, and was assigned to the Baltic Fleet during the war. After the February 1917 revolution he chaired a warship committee and that of the Fourth Submarine Division, and was a delegate to Tsentrobalt's second congress. On 26 October he was elected as chair of the revolutionary committee and joined the Bolsheviks at the congress of soviets in Petrograd.³⁷⁰

At 5.00am on the 27th the soviet military committee ordered a raid on the government press,³⁷¹ and closed more bourgeois papers. Sovnarkom endorsed this decision and took powers to suspend newspapers and confiscate presses.³⁷² The soviet threatened editors who attacked Sovnarkom with being charged with a criminal offence. Sovnarkom issued a decree, without seeking soviet approval, to confiscate several socialist papers,³⁷³ including the Mensheviks' central organ,³⁷⁴ by 34 votes to 24,³⁷⁵ and announced that 'measures against the counter-revolutionary press' would end when 'the new order becomes consolidated'.³⁷⁶ The city had food for no more than ten days.³⁷⁷

Red Guards searched warehouses, shops and railway stations,³⁷⁸ as did workers and soldiers, and they found almost 50,000 tons of food in railway wagons.³⁷⁹

In Helsinki and Kronstadt over 1,000 more sailors had joined the Red Guards who numbered almost 10,000.³⁸⁰ Ulyanov ordered Tsentrobalt to send sailors to Petrograd, and 30,000 set off.³⁸¹ In Petrograd Ulyanov had a special switchboard, but preferred the telegraph and direct-wire apparatus. He contacted army headquarters and front-line commanders, though he had to use a civilian line to contact Kyiv.³⁸² The Bolshevik CC abolished the death penalty in the army, but Ulyanov, who was absent, was furious.³⁸³ Bronstein spoke at the congress of soviets. 'If the peoples of Europe do not crush the imperialists in an uprising, we will be crushed.'³⁸⁴ Sovnarkom ordered members to prevent troops from fighting each other and assist the struggle against counter-revolutionaries.³⁸⁵ Counter-revolutionary troops were near Luga, 150 miles south of Petrograd,³⁸⁶ but 20,000 defenders surrounded them,³⁸⁷ convinced them they had been deceived, and they vanished.³⁸⁸ News reached Petrograd that the revolution had been successful in Minsk and Магілёў in Bielarus, Samara on the Volga, and Ufa in Siberia.³⁸⁹

By the 29th Petrograd Red Guards had killed around 200 counter-revolutionaries.³⁹⁰ By 8.50am military cadets disguised as Red Guards captured the central telephone exchange, cut the lines to the Smolny and the Fortress, seized the State Bank and patrolled the streets. Ovseyenko and others got the cadets out of the telephone exchange and some were killed on the way to the Fortress. The Bolshevik CC, without Ulyanov or Bronstein, voted by five to one, with three abstentions, to accept the Vikzhel ultimatum and include members of other socialist parties in Sovnarkom in proportion to their representation in the congress of soviets. Some counter-revolutionary troops had reached Pulkovo, 12 miles away, but faced 50,000 Bolsheviks and retreated to Gatchina.³⁹¹ Rodionova was killed when delivering medicines to fighters near Tsarskoe Selo.³⁹² Cossacks had entered the town and killed eight defenders. In Petrograd mass meetings of railway workers condemned Vikzhel,³⁹³ which had threatened a strike unless fighting stopped that night.³⁹⁴ Sovnarkom issued a decree on the eight-hour day in industrial enterprises, and universal, free and secular education for children. Eleven Bolshevik CC members, without Ulyanov and Bronstein, agreed to talk with SRs and Mensheviks about cooperation on the basis of being able to object to individuals, by five votes to three,³⁹⁵ and to allow SR internationalists to join Sovnarkom. Rozenfeld, Rykov, Sokolnikov and Vladimir Miliutin were ready to accept the exclusion of Bronstein and Ulyanov, but seven voted against.³⁹⁶ (That was later crossed out of the minutes.³⁹⁷) Rozenfeld, Sokolnikov and Riazanov joined Vikzhel.³⁹⁸ A majority of the railway workers' union supported the Bolsheviks and set up a rival organisation.³⁹⁹ They told Kerensky that if his troops marched on Petrograd they would break his lines of communication. In Petrograd British and French officers were active alongside military cadets,⁴⁰⁰ who had seized armoured cars at the riding school and occupied the Astoria Hotel, where several people's commissars lived; but the Red Guards blasted them into submission with artillery.⁴⁰¹ Ulyanov spoke to garrison representatives.⁴⁰² The CC had authorised him, Bronstein, Sverdlov and Jughashvili to deal with 'all emergency questions', though Sverdlov ran the secretariat, so the foursome was often a troika.⁴⁰³ Malkov was appointed as commandant of the Smolny.⁴⁰⁴ Lunacharsky, who was fluent in several European languages, and interested in art and literature from all over the world,⁴⁰⁵ spoke at the commissariat of education. 'A people steeped in ignorance cannot receive full self-rule, and the prerequisite for popular sovereignty is the enlightenment of those very same masses to whom this power is to be entrusted.' Until then 'enlightened absolutism must be chosen. There can be no such thing as the rule of the intelligentsia. There must be rule by the people's vanguard'. He welcomed educational specialists on this basis. As for art, his commissariat aimed to 'supply the people with as much as possible, without destroying anything from the old culture'. 'We have to be up to our throat in blood and filth, but a tide of creativity will come'.⁴⁰⁶

By the 30th *Izvestia* was the organ of VTsIK as well as Petrograd soviet.⁴⁰⁷ At 7.30am Obukhov metalworkers told Rozenfeld, Goldendach and Sokolnikov that 'if workers' blood is spilt for your dirty business' they would 'drop your Lenin, Trotsky and Kerensky in the ice'.⁴⁰⁸ The official with the secret treaties had disappeared. Sovnarkom ordered banks to open,⁴⁰⁹ but the staff went on strike, so Ulyanov ordered the vaults to be dynamited.⁴¹⁰ Skryabin opposed Jughashvili's membership of *Pravda's* editorial board, and nominated Bokii who was elected.⁴¹¹ Around 16,000 garrison troops remained neutral,⁴¹² and the soviet appointed Skryabin to lead the soviet military committee,⁴¹³ which announced that captured counter-revolutionaries would face special military courts.⁴¹⁴ Sovnarkom imposed a state of siege, ordered soviets and industrial workers' committees to mobilise workers to dig trenches, erect barricades and reinforce barbed wire,⁴¹⁵ and large numbers left the city to organise defences.⁴¹⁶ Counter-revolutionary Cossacks had reached the Pulkovo Heights, a few miles south of the centre of Petrograd, but refused to fight against machine-guns without infantry support.⁴¹⁷ Train-loads of government shock troops neared Gatchina, which was defended by no more than 500 sailors and two infantry regiments.⁴¹⁸ The Bolshevik youth organisation and Red Guards fought in the most dangerous situations,⁴¹⁹ and after their artillery on Pulkovo Heights killed between 300 and 500 counter-revolutionary troops, the rest withdrew in disorder.⁴²⁰ At nightfall Dybenko spoke to the Cossacks and thousands surrendered.⁴²¹ They agreed to hand over Kerensky in return for safe conduct

to the Don with their horses and arms, but insisted that Bronstein and Ulyanov had to leave Sovnarkom and abstain from public political activity until they cleared themselves of the charge of working for the Germans.⁴²² Dybenko allowed them to return to the Don with their horses and arms.⁴²³ Revolutionaries arrested their general, but freed him after he gave his word not to fight Sovnarkom,⁴²⁴ and all the officers and military cadets arrested since 23 October were released.⁴²⁵ A Kerensky proclamation threatened terrible vengeance on those who did not submit to his troops, and ordered them to assemble in Petrograd's Mars Field.⁴²⁶ Rozenfeld was tasked with negotiating with Vikzhel. Foreign ministry officials left when Bronstein entered the building, and food supply officials removed all the furniture and locked up the accounts. Post and telegraph workers walked off with the directories and telegram blanks, while medical officials removed pen nibs,⁴²⁷ and bankers refused to grant loans.⁴²⁸ Bankers and industrialists were paying civil servants a month's salary if they refused to work for people's commissars.⁴²⁹ Menshevik officials responded to the Bolshevik use of force by walk-outs, though Bolsheviks replaced them. Around 60 percent of district committee members were workers, 25 percent were soldiers, ten percent were trade unionists and five percent were clerks or members of liberal professions.⁴³⁰ Up to 25,000 workers had joined the Red Guards, though one district had 420 rifles for 4,000. Petergofsky district wanted 2,000, and VTsIK released 300, while the Putilov cannon shop worked around the clock to produce 100 guns, three week's normal output, and sent 8,000 workers to the front, including eight units of Red Guards.⁴³¹ Sovnarkom ordered all army units, military committees and soldiers to declare a 'Merciless war upon all speculators, marauders, embezzlers of public funds, and counter-revolutionary officials with interfering with the food-supply effort', who were to be imprisoned.⁴³²

At Kronstadt Tsentrobalt threatened to crush opposition to Sovnarkom,⁴³³ and sent 500 sailors to corn-growing regions,⁴³⁴ where there was no shortage of food, but landowners and kulaki had hidden 'large quantities'.⁴³⁵ Sovnarkom sent hundreds of commissars to provincial towns and cities to promulgate their decrees, form soviets, impose their authority and close any institution they suspected of counter-revolutionary activity.⁴³⁶ In Petrograd around 48,000 workers were unemployed,⁴³⁷ but Bolsheviks claimed that (not including soldiers) they had 36,000 or so members.⁴³⁸ They had formerly been open to applications from everyone who wanted to join, but had become more selective.⁴³⁹ Sovnarkom announced a future 'voluntary and honourable union of the peoples'.⁴⁴⁰ That night VTsIK agreed that the soviet would be the core of Sovnarkom, but include members of trade unions and the *duma*.⁴⁴¹ Bolsheviks led almost all the workers' organisations, though Vizhkel leaders were largely Mensheviks,⁴⁴² and at midnight they declared a national strike.⁴⁴³ The VPSR CC and a military delegation supported them. Sovnarkom made Krasin 'minister' of industry,⁴⁴⁴ and the Menshevik Broido called for a conference of women workers.⁴⁴⁵

On the 31st the VPSR no longer asked for dues from female workers and some Bolshevik women joined them.⁴⁴⁶ The Menshevik CC agreed to an all-socialist government that did not include Ulyanov and Bronstein, by 12 votes to 11; but after Rozenfeld threatened to publish the names of the 12,⁴⁴⁷ they resigned,⁴⁴⁸ and Bolsheviks replaced the Menshevik leaders of VTsIK.⁴⁴⁹ Ulyanov argued that it was 'impossible to advance from monopolies', even though the war had 'magnified their number', without 'advancing towards socialism'.⁴⁵⁰ By late that day Petrograd soviet included 100 workers, 75 peasants, 100 from both Petrograd and Moscow *dumas*, 50 from Tsentrobalt, 15 from Vikzhel and 20 from other unions.⁴⁵¹ Tsentrobalt met on a yacht in Helsinki harbour,⁴⁵² and negotiated with commanders about operations;⁴⁵³ but readiness for a rising elsewhere varied considerably.

The Moscow region

By 25 October Moscow soviet claimed the support of around 25,000 garrison troops and 3,000 armed workers, who faced about 10,000 government troops.⁴⁵⁴ Around 850 soldiers with front-line experience who had been imprisoned for revolutionary activity arrived.⁴⁵⁵ Red Guards claimed 8,500 members,⁴⁵⁶ though they may possibly have been 6,000. They included 1,500 in Zamoskvoreche district. They were all single, since married men could not join, and about half were Bolsheviks. They were associated with the soviet,⁴⁵⁷ and were ordered to take strategic points.⁴⁵⁸

On the morning of the 26th Nogin brought news of Petrograd events to the soviet and stressed their defensive character.⁴⁵⁹ The soviet decided by 394 votes to 106, with 23 abstentions, to support the rising,⁴⁶⁰ and garrison representatives voted for all power to the soviets by 116 to 18.⁴⁶¹ Military cadets attacked the soviet,⁴⁶² but that evening its EC told citizens that it had assumed power on their behalf. The Bolshevik Lebedev became provincial commissar and other Bolsheviks became district commissars.⁴⁶³

Grigory Usievich had been born into a merchant's family in village in the Urals in 1890. He entered the capital's University in 1907 and became a member of the RSDRP city committee in 1908. He was arrested in 1909 and exiled to Yenisei province in Siberia in 1911, but contributed to the Bolshevik *Prosveshchenie* and *Pravda*. In 1914 he escaped and left for Austria, where he was arrested and confined in a concentration camp. At the end of 1915 he

took up residence in Switzerland. In April 1917 he returned to Russia on the first train of émigrés, and joined the Moscow Bolshevik committee, the Bolshevik faction in the municipal дума and the soviet. By October he was a member of the military committee and responsible for war materiel.⁴⁶⁴

On the 27th the soviet military committee, which included four Bolsheviks, two Mensheviks and one Mezhrayonets, was tasked with organising support for Petrograd.⁴⁶⁵ Smirnov would direct military operations, Oppokov, Muralov and Usievich would be committee members, and Bukharin would edit their bulletin. He argued that an international revolution meant 'the purely *political* reinforcement of the Russian revolution', but also its 'economic reinforcement', though a lasting victory was 'inconceivable without the support of the West European proletariat'.⁴⁶⁶ That night Red Guards took 40,000 rifles from railway wagons at Sokolniki station,⁴⁶⁷ and fighting began.⁴⁶⁸ Government troops occupied some railway stations, the post office, the central telegraph and telephone buildings, but Red Guards armed workers on the outskirts, and Bolsheviks, led by Bērziņš, took the Kremlin, though military cadets prevented the distribution of its arms. There were around 15,000 on each side.⁴⁶⁹

Anna Litveiko had been born into a family of workers in Moscow in 1899. Late in 1905 her father returned home from the last barricade 'all beaten up', his clothes were torn and his pockets were full of cartridges.⁴⁷⁰ Anna began working at the Elektro-lampa factory in Presnya district in 1911, listened to students' political discussions and read their books, and during the war a soldier told her about the horrors at the front. When a foreman struck her workmate with a red-hot iron, the Bolshevik Zamogilnaya organised workers to drive him out of the factory on a wheelbarrow. Litveiko wanted to join a Bolshevik kruzhok, but had to explain why to the Bolshevik Natasha Bogacheva, who was in her thirties, and she allowed Anna to join. Eventually she got the courage to speak in public, and Bogacheva encouraged her to teach other women workers to do so. She took her to the district committee and she was subsequently elected to the district soviet.⁴⁷¹ Late in October she read about the Petrograd rising in the papers. Cossacks arrived from the front, and some officers were lynched, but otherwise 'nothing disturbed the peace'. She and others recruited young workers to the union, so 'eventually they'll want to join the party'. During a lunch break she explained what the Bolsheviks stood for to women workmates and that their social life included boys. They read Engels' critique of the SPD Erfurt programme, though Litveiko believed only two young men understood it. Later they read Gorky's *Pesnya Burevestnika (Song of the Stormy Petrel)* and *Mat (Mother)* at district meetings. They went on long walks and heard how Bolsheviks had organised underground. In July she failed to stop Bogacheva being pulled off a platform when she was speaking to female textile workers, but noticed that the district committee doors were no longer open to all members and closed during meetings. Only key activists heard the Party congress report, and lists of members and other documents were hidden in workers' apartments.⁴⁷² That autumn Bogacheva told her that 'The soldiers are with us', and when she heard the whistle at work she was to 'make sure every person in your shop' and met in the yard. A female district committee member was forming a military detachment, though there were not enough arms, so a delegation went to the Kremlin. There were more SRs and Mensheviks than Bolsheviks in Presnya soviet, but Liveiko and a comrade were sent to take the district stamp from the Menshevik chair, and she felt she 'could do anything'. That evening leading Bolsheviks met the military committee, and told Litveiko and others to guard the district committee with two rifles, only one of which worked. Litveiko and a woman comrade requisitioned sugar, grain and flour. They took weapons from citizens, but gave a receipt to maintain 'revolutionary order'.⁴⁷³ When fighting broke out in late October her sister became a hospital commissar. Anna fed fighters, carried arms across the city accompanied by her five-year-old daughter, took the wounded to medical units and learned how to tend wounds.⁴⁷⁴

On the 28th a colonel loyal to the government ordered the evacuation of the post office. He gave the military committee at the Kremlin 15 minutes to surrender, or artillery would bombard soviet headquarters. Sudrabs agreed if their lives were spared,⁴⁷⁵ but they were ordered to line up in the yard,⁴⁷⁶ and dozens were machine-gunned, though many managed to flee.⁴⁷⁷ Bolsheviks were driven from the telegraph offices, and though reinforcements arrived,⁴⁷⁸ martial law was imposed. By the 29th there were 30,000 insurgents.⁴⁷⁹ Those with armoured cars ordered military cadets to surrender in ten minutes. They replied with rifle fire, but a shell broke their resistance, and those who tried to flee were shot. That evening a 24-hour truce was signed, though government troops broke it and retreated to the Kremlin.⁴⁸⁰ Red Guards fought into the centre from the suburbs.⁴⁸¹ Only 3,000 to 4,000 were armed, and the 6,300-strong civilian militia did not act.⁴⁸²

After seven years in Vladimir, Nikolaev and Alexandrov katorga prisons, the 29-year-old Old Bolshevik Mikhail Frunze had been allowed to live in the Verkholensk district of Irkutsk Province at the end of 1914. In summer 1915 he was arrested for organising political exiles, but escaped, went underground in Chita and helped to edit the Bolshevik paper,⁴⁸³ *Vostochnoe Obozrenie (Eastern Review)*. In February 1917 he led the civilian militia in Minsk,⁴⁸⁴ but when the police got too close he left for Petrograd.⁴⁸⁵ The soviet authorised him to agitate soldiers,⁴⁸⁶ and he organised an underground revolutionary organisation on the western front with sections in the Third and Tenth Armies. Late in October he brought 2,000 men to Moscow,⁴⁸⁷ and 500 sailors arrived.⁴⁸⁸

Vasily Emelianov had been born in 1884. He joined the Bolsheviks in 1904 and took part in the 1905 revolution in Moscow. After the February revolution in 1917 he was a soviet deputy for Presnya district and a leader of the textile workers' union. By late October he had joined the district military committee and the soviet presidium.⁴⁸⁹

In spite of casualties, the Bolsheviks at the Provodnik rubber works claimed 1,000 members, 500 supporters, and 300 Red Guards. The Mensheviks claimed 100 members, and though the internationalists were drawing closer to the Bolsheviks, *Novaya Zhizn* sold more copies than *Pravda*. Soldiers gave the rubber workers 150 old Vetterli rifles and they took them to Moscow.⁴⁹⁰ The weaver Sergey Volkov had joined the Bolsheviks and the soviet EC.⁴⁹¹ Bolsheviks controlled the soviet,⁴⁹² and the military committee led 5,000 troops.⁴⁹³

Liusik Lisinova had been born in Armenia in 1897. She joined the RSDRP at Moscow Commercial Institute in 1916,⁴⁹⁴ and by 1917 she was a student on the Higher Courses for Women and a Bolshevik organiser. She was tasked with building libraries women at two factories.⁴⁹⁵ After the February revolution she was a district soviet secretary, and late in October she was a messenger and scout for the city committee. On the 31st she wrote to her parents that she had toured factories, organised the revolutionary Red Cross and visited the soviet,⁴⁹⁶ but she apparently did not post the letter since she was killed.⁴⁹⁷

In the central industrial region Voronezh province peasants had taken over gentry estates in Pisarevka during October. By the 27th the Bolsheviks had 24 soviet deputies out of 130 in the city of Voronezh, four EC members out of 45, and two of the six in the presidium; and the full soviet voted by 51 votes to 45 for a committee of public safety.⁴⁹⁸ Government Cossacks dispersed Kaluga soviet;⁴⁹⁹ but on the 28th news reached Petrograd that the revolution had been successful in Iaroslavl.⁵⁰⁰

Other key regions

News of the Petrograd rising had reached Kyiv in Ukraine on 25 October, but Georgy (known as 'Yuri') Pyatakov and his brother Leonid opposed it.⁵⁰¹ Yuri and two other Bolsheviks joined the Rada, since they regarded the nationalists as allies, but Boš and other Bolsheviks saw it as a dangerous rival, and the workers' section of the soviet supported the rising. In the Donbas Ekaterinoslav workers controlled several factories and maintained the production of war materiel, but also produced commodities for sale to peasants on two days a week.⁵⁰² In the south the Odesa and Mykolaev Party committees opposed the rising,⁵⁰³ but Ulyanov's brother, Dmitry, an army doctor, agitated for soviet power in Crimea.⁵⁰⁴ Sevastopol soviet took power and sailors forced officers to pledge loyalty to Sovnarkom.⁵⁰⁵ Sergeyev had been elected to the congress of soviets, and on the 27th he organized coups in Kharkiv and the Donbas.⁵⁰⁶ In Kyiv representatives of workers' and soldiers' soviets voted by 489 votes to 187, with 17 abstentions, for soviet power. A counter-revolutionary general announced that he was assuming power and sent troops to occupy Donbas mines,⁵⁰⁷ and dissolve Makiivka soviet. Ekaterinoslav soviet called for soviets to be subordinated to the Rada,⁵⁰⁸ though its EC announced that it was in power.⁵⁰⁹ After they condemned the Petrograd rising, the Bolsheviks walked out and planned a general strike,⁵¹⁰ and around 30,000 Ivanovo textile workers came out against 'the enemy - capital'.⁵¹¹ Anarchists called an All-Russian conference, but only 12 from several cities met in Kharkiv.⁵¹² Mykolaev Bolsheviks won 13 of the 15 seats in the soviet EC.⁵¹³ From June to the end of October the output of Donbas coalmines had fallen by 13 percent.⁵¹⁴

Yakov Zalmaev had been born into a coalminer's family in Iuzovka in 1890. He was active in 1905 and joined the RSDRP in 1906, but was exiled to Yenyseisk in Siberia for four years.⁵¹⁵ Late in October 1917 Zalmaev and a Menshevik internationalist returned from Petrograd and reported to Iuzovka soviet, but did not mention the Bolsheviks' role in the rising. The Mensheviks condemned it as a coup, and demanded a democratic government, but without members of the propertied classes, and won by 71 votes to 18, with eight abstentions. At the next soviet SR defencists walked out, but internationalists remained.⁵¹⁶

Lazar Kaganovich had been born into a Jewish family in Ukraine in 1893. He became a shoemaker, joined the Bolsheviks around 1911 and worked in Iuzovka and Saratov on the Volga. Late in October 1917 he led a rising in Biefarus.⁵¹⁷ Red Guards formed half of the insurgents and held the most important buildings.⁵¹⁸ There had been strikes,⁵¹⁹ but the city had been without grain for a day or two.⁵²⁰ There were street battles in Kazan,⁵²¹ and by the 26th around 40,000 insurgents had taken power.⁵²² Tsaritsyn soviet agreed to form a revolutionary committee. Saratov Red Guards claimed 2,500 armed members, and on the 27th the soviet sent agents to barracks and factories. Around 3,000 soldiers, Red Guards and members of the military committee surrounded the дума building, which had few troops to defend it. Two Red Guards were killed and ten wounded, and one defender was killed and eight wounded. On the 29th 298 military cadets and 75 officers surrendered, and were taken to prison for their own protection, though some were beaten on the way.⁵²³ A reinforced militia was sent to capture the telegraph and telephone buildings, and the soviet formed a military committee including two from the дума, two from soldiers'

committees and one from each socialist party and large trade union, with the Menshevik Anatoly Myshkin, as chair.⁵²⁴ Ivan Alferov had been born in Bieľarus in 1894. He later became an errand boy, then a dock worker, but in 1912 he got a job at a Lessner works in the capital. During the war he was an NCO and won a medal. In September 1917 he joined the Bolsheviks,⁵²⁵ and by late October he was Myshkin's associate.⁵²⁶

Late in October a congress of southern Russian soviets passed Bolshevik motions.⁵²⁷ Anna Andzhievskaya brought news of the Petrograd events to Piatigorsk near the border with Georgia. She worked for the commercial employees' union, a Menshevik 'den', and they and SRs condemned the Petrograd rising. Women Bolshevik supporters spoke against the Mensheviks, distributed newspapers and leaflets and explained Bolshevik policies, though Andzhievskaya was expelled from the union.⁵²⁸ Georgian Mensheviks and members of Dashnakiutin, Musavat and SR defencists had liquidated Ozakom during October, established a Transcaucasian commissariat and signed an armistice with the Turks.⁵²⁹ On the 22nd Tbilisi RSDRP committee and soviet formed a new Ozakom with three seats for SDs, two for SRs, and one each for Armenians and Muslims.⁵³⁰ Valerian Jugheli had been born in Georgia in 1887, and was an SD by the early 1900s. In 1903 he sided with the Bolsheviks, but later joined the Mensheviks. After the October 1917 Petrograd rising he organized a Red Guard detachment.⁵³¹ Bolshevik-oriented troops arrived in Tbilisi, but Red Guards disarmed them, after a bloody struggle. Martial law was declared, an arrest warrant for Bolsheviks was issued and their papers were closed.⁵³²

After news of the Petrograd rising reached Baki in Azerbaijan, Bolsheviks at the soviet EC opposed a new revolutionary organisation, by 18 votes to 13, with four abstentions, and were against the 'peaceful liquidation' of the revolution by 248 votes to 166, with three abstentions; but on the 31st their motion supporting Sovnarkom passed by 279 votes to 25, with 58 abstentions.⁵³³ Nariman Narimanov had been born into an Azerbaijani merchant family in Tbilisi in 1870, and later attended Gori Seminary and Odesa University. He advocated abandoning old customs and superstitions, and taught at a school in a Tbilisi province village. During the 1905 revolution he became an RSDRP organizer, joined the Bolsheviks and led the student movement in Odesa. He graduated in 1908, but was sentenced to five years' exile in Astrakhan in 1909. After the Petrograd rising in October 1917 he chaired Hümmeät,⁵³⁴ which led the struggle in Transcaucasia.⁵³⁵ Red Guards defeated the formation of an independent Muslim government in Uzbekistan, but there were no manufactured goods to exchange for peasant grain.⁵³⁶

After three years in exile the 47-year-old Old Bolshevik intelligent Alexandr Tsiurupa had joined the Ufa Bolshevik committee in Siberia, its military committee and the soviet in October 1917.⁵³⁷ On the 29th Krasnoyarsk soviet seized power.⁵³⁸ On the 30th the Bolsheviks had a majority at a congress of Siberian soviets and appointed Tsiurupa as provincial commissar.⁵³⁹

Officially at least 2.4 million workers had gone on strike nationally since the February revolution.⁵⁴⁰ Since spring strikes had lasted almost five days on average, and the average number of strikers per day had been almost 30,500.⁵⁴¹ During October there were almost 441,500 strikers,⁵⁴² though another account gave 1.2 million,⁵⁴³ and 36 strikes involving approaching 402,000 workers had challenged management authority.⁵⁴⁴ SDs and SR internationalists in 48 European and Asiatic towns had won 65 percent of the votes in local elections.⁵⁴⁵ The revolution had been won in the name of the 900 or so soviets, not the Bolsheviks,⁵⁴⁶ though only in 16 cities had they had to use force to gain power.⁵⁴⁷ The RSDRP CC had sent about 740 letters and 75 telegrams to local organisations, and interviewed over 100 visitors.⁵⁴⁸

Since March there had been 4,000 officially-recorded rural 'disturbances',⁵⁴⁹ including almost 1,300 in the Volga region in September and October,⁵⁵⁰ and at least 16,300 or so nationally.⁵⁵¹ Three Bolsheviks had arrived in Tambov in central Russia,⁵⁵² where there had been 282 'risings', plus 199 in Minsk and 184 in Penza.⁵⁵³ Around 134,000 landlords owned about a quarter of agricultural land, and 30,000 aristocrats each had over 5,000 acres.⁵⁵⁴ In 482 of 624 districts there had been violent attacks on landlords. Most peasant leaders were deserters, or soldiers on leave, and some troops sent to suppress them joined in.⁵⁵⁵ Soldiers formed around 17 percent of the peasants involved. Since September there had been 105 officially-recorded cases of armed force being used against peasants, but during October they destroyed 274 manor houses and raided many more estates.⁵⁵⁶ About half of the 68 peasant soviets supported Sovnarkom, though the rest wanted power transferred to the constituent assembly.⁵⁵⁷ The international value of the ruble had fallen from 25 kopeks to 11, mainly because of the war.⁵⁵⁸

The war

Victor Kibalchich had been born into an émigré Russian family in Brussels in 1890. His parents believed that a revolution in Russia had to begin with a peasants rising, but Victor later became an Anarchist.⁵⁵⁹ In February 1917, in Barcelona, he welcomed the Russian revolution, but 'was certain only that it would not stop half-way'. 'The

peasants will seize the land, and the workers the factories. After that, I don't know'. He wanted to join the Russian military, and went to Paris, but was unsure whether his telegrams reached either Petrograd soviet or the government. Russian officers in Paris usually called themselves SRs, and the mention of Bolsheviks set them 'foaming at the mouth'. Kibalchich knew very little about them, but was sure that the revolution could not succeed unless it developed a social as well as a political character. Workers 'did not kick out the Romanovs just to go back to their workshops', or to 'help the cannon-kings grow rich'. He was sent to a camp at Pr cign , southwest of Paris, where he found many revolutionaries, mainly Russians and Jews, and formed a group of between 15 and 20. He argued with the only Bolshevik, who 'advocated a merciless dictatorship', suppression of press freedom' and 'education on Marxist lines'.⁵⁶⁰ By the end of October there were over two million enemy troops in Russian prisoner of war camps, and the 165,000 Germans included 2,000 officers. Many supported the Bolsheviks.⁵⁶¹

Alexandr Miasnikian had been born into a merchant's family near Rostov-na-Donu in 1886. He was active in underground groups from 1901, took part in the 1905 revolution and joined the RSDRP in 1906, but was deported to Baki. He later went to Moscow and graduated from the University in 1911. From 1912 he was a lawyer's assistant, but continued his political activity. In 1914 he was drafted, joined an underground RSDRP soldiers' *kruzhok* and promoted revolutionary ideas. After the February 1917 revolution he joined the army committee on the western front, led its Bolshevik faction with Frunze, and was an editor of the Bolshevik *Zvezda (Star)* in Minsk in Bieľarus. He was a delegate to the Bolshevik congress in August, and chair of the Bolshevik northwestern army's regional committee by September. After the October revolution he was elected as commander of the western front at the congress of soldiers' deputies. He edited Moscow military committee's paper and was a member of the editorial board of the Moscow province soviet paper.⁵⁶²

The RSDRP military committee on the southwestern front had received between 2,000 and 3,000 rubles to publish a newspaper by early October. Boř was secretary of the RSDRP committee,⁵⁶³ and spoke to the Savage Division, who had been drinking heavily, for about two hours, and persuaded them that the government had to go. In Vinnitsa she persuaded a regiment not to send reinforcements and artillerymen mutinied. The government commissar threatened to send the leaders to the front, but troops rampaged through the town and Bolsheviks supported them. When the commander called in reinforcements, Boř left for Zhmerinka to persuade the Wild Division to oppose them, and led a regiment of infantry into battle.⁵⁶⁴ The Bolsheviks claimed 108 groups on the southwestern front and 65 on the Romanian front.⁵⁶⁵ Some regiments and divisions had never seen a Bolshevik before they attended Boř's meetings,⁵⁶⁶ but around 7,000 troops were represented at a conference. The Bolsheviks claimed almost 49,000 members on the northwestern front and around 7,450 candidate members.⁵⁶⁷ In mid-October some troops complained to the government about 'severe hunger'. 'We walk around in tatters, like beggars. At night we sit by the barbed wire for six hours at a stretch,' and if they got a few hours of rest, 'the lice never give you peace'. 'We have lost the last shreds of our health, while at home our families are going hungry.' They demanded a speedy peace, or 'it will be our sword and your head from your shoulders'. The senior NCO Mikhail Savin wrote to *Izvestia* on behalf of 40 wounded soldiers 'unable to make sense of party affairs', and 'don't know who we should follow. We don't have any books', and 'all we get to hear is a few words from our director' about 'the revolutionary cause'.⁵⁶⁸ Front-line soldiers received poor rations, sometimes including rotten herring, and paper money for wages. There was almost no resistance to the Petrograd rising,⁵⁶⁹ and the troops received Sovnarkom decrees enthusiastically.⁵⁷⁰ On the northern front 112 SR and 22 Menshevik internationalists supported the Bolsheviks, and none backed the Menshevik defencists.⁵⁷¹

On the 31st members of the Twelfth Army voted by 248 votes to 243 to support Sovnarkom, and planned a congress.⁵⁷² Soldiers abandoned the Caucasian front.⁵⁷³ In Tbilisi 36 garrison units, led by Bolsheviks, formed a commission to agitate for new elections to the regional military soviet to challenge the SRs.⁵⁷⁴

When news of the Petrograd rising reached soldiers on the western front they shouted for 'Land and Freedom! Bread! Hurrah for Lenin! Hurrah for Trotsky! Hurrah for Kolontay!' They lynched about 20 women from Botchkareva's battalion and seriously threatened her. She sent survivors away, one by one, every 15 or 20 minutes, then set off for Petrograd. At the Smolny there were Red Guards at every desk, and a 'very rough and brusque' sailor demanded her pistol and sword, then sent her to a dark cellar; but she was soon taken upstairs to meet Ulyanov and Bronstein. Ulyanov apologised for her detention, but she refused to cooperate, and they asked a Red Guard to get her a passport and train ticket to her home-city.⁵⁷⁵

Farmborough had visited Moscow and heard that a general had been shot by his orderlies. The rest of her *letuchka* arrived on 25 October. Food was 'terribly scarce', ration cards were issued only to the 'worthy', and when bread ran out they received two potatoes. 'Men and woman of good families' were 'forced from their homes and compelled to do the most menial tasks', including selling Bolshevik papers. By the 27th the *letuchka* had heard about 'a big uprising of the *Bolshevik* in Petrograd', and by the 31st they saw hundreds of deserters.⁵⁷⁶

11. Brest-Litovsk

In the long run there will be just one man left – a dictator

The 33-year-old Old Bolshevik Alexei Badayev, a former worker and Duma deputy, had returned to Petrograd from Siberian exile after the February revolution in 1917. He took part in the October revolution, then worked in soviets and trade unions. The textile worker Gerasim Sokolov had joined the Bolsheviks in 1903, aged 19, and was active in the 1905 revolution in Kokhma in Ivanovo province. He was conscripted in 1906, but propagandised troops, and was deported in 1913. By November 1917 he worked in the RSDRP organisation and trade unions in Petrograd.¹ The Bolshevik carpenter S. Arbuzov became the commissar at the State Printing House. The former commissar, a Menshevik, and 23 workers, printed Kerensky's appeal against Sovnarkom. When the copies were destroyed, the printers went on strike.² Nikolai Komarov had been born into a peasant family in Tver province in 1886. He arrived in the capital in 1902 and got a job at the Cartridge Works. In 1905 he joined the SRs, then went home. He returned in 1909, got a job at the Putilov works, and joined the Bolsheviks. In 1917, after several arrests, he worked at the Lessner works in Vyborg, and was a member of the district committee. He played a leading part in the duma, though the soviet military committee ran the city by November.³ Mikhail Ivanov had been born into a peasant family in a Grodno province village in 1894. He worked as a labourer in Odesa from 1908, joined the Bolsheviks in 1912, and was arrested, but escaped. He moved to Petrograd in 1915 and worked at the Siemens-Schuckert electrical plant. He married Egorova, and after the February 1917 revolution he was a member the Bolsheviks' city committee and the Central Council of the Factory and Works Committees, and an RSDRP congress delegate. By November, when he was a leader of the Council of the Economy of the Northern Region,⁴ Bonch-Bruevich appointed him as secretary of Sovnarkom, even though he knew no shorthand and his spelling was imperfect. Sovnarkom had very few typists and no shorthand writers, so people's commissars wrote decrees and proclamations by hand.⁵

Bonch-Bruevich also appointed intelligenty to some positions. S.S. Pestovsky, a former SR who had studied finance at London University, and had been a clerk in a French Bank, as director of the State Bank,⁶ though the Bolshevik Obolensky was the chief commissar.⁷ Mikhail Kedrov had joined the RSDRP in Moscow in 1901, aged 23, and supported the Bolsheviks from 1903. He published Bolshevik literature even after the defeat of the 1905 revolution, but was imprisoned in 1909. In 1911 he and his family moved to Switzerland, and he studied at Lausanne and Bern universities. In 1916 he was a military doctor in the Caucasus, and in February 1917 he helped to organise a short-lived soviet in northern Iran. By late March, in Petrograd, he had joined the Bolshevik military committee and was an editor of *Soldatskaya Pravda*. By November he had joined the people's commissariat for war with responsibility for organising demobilisation.⁸ Alexandr Serebrovsky had been born into the family of an exiled wealthy member of Narodnaya Volya in Ufa in 1884. He was arrested in 1902, and joined the RSDRP in 1903. He studied at the Institute of Technology in the capital, but left for Brussels in 1908. In 1911 he graduated from the Higher Technical School in mechanical engineering, then returned to Russia, took engineering and technical jobs and joined the Bolsheviks. After the October 1917 revolution, Bronstein persuaded him to work for Sovnarkom.⁹ The 49-year-old Old Bolshevik intelligent Alexandr Schlichter was the people's commissar for agriculture, and the Old Bolshevik Petrovsky was commissar for the interior. Sergey Bagovsky, who had helped émigrés return to Russia, was tasked with organising public health.¹⁰ Sobelsohn was at the commissariat of foreign affairs.¹¹ He encouraged systematic propaganda, agitation and organisation among prisoners of war of every nationality, especially those who spoke German, and got Russian SD prisoners in Germany to distribute hundreds of thousands of leaflets with Sovnarkom's peace appeal. The *Die Fackel* print run was 500,000.¹² The former Mezhraionets Goldendach worried that the Bolshevik CC had 'tricked the masses' about an all-socialist government.¹³ He feared that they were in danger of being isolated, and that Sovnarkom would have to cut the daily bread ration to eight ounces; so he negotiated with SRs and Mensheviks about a coalition.¹⁴ Alexandr Bezymensky had been born into a middle-class Jewish family in Zhytomyr in Ukraine in 1898. He graduated from Vladimir gymnasium, then entered Kyiv Commercial Institute. He joined the Bolsheviks in 1916, and was conscripted in 1917, but worked as a teacher. He was active in the October revolution and edited the publications of the Vladimir Union of Communist Youth.¹⁵

On 1 November, in Petrograd, ten Bolshevik CC members voted for continuing negotiations with SRs and Mensheviks, though four were against, and Ulyanov insisted on conditions, some of which would be totally unacceptable to Mensheviks and SRs. He demanded the arrest of the Vikzhel leaders, and threatened that if he and his supporters lost the vote, they would 'go to the sailors'. After the Menshevik CC confirmed its willingness to continue negotiations by 12 votes to 11, the defencists resigned, but the rest insisted on conditions that would be unacceptable to Ulyanov,¹⁶ and the Bolshevik CC decided to carry on talking only with SRs.¹⁷ Ulyanov and Bronstein

favoured using regular military officers.¹⁸ Alexandr and Fyodor Ilyin had returned to Petrograd from the front. Alexandr, who had a paralyzed left leg, became the secretary of the deputy people's commissioner for military affairs, Podvoisky, and found 'a lot of disorder' in the commissariat, while Fyodor was to oversee the production of agricultural implements and locomotives.¹⁹ When education officials did not show up for work, Lunacharsky installed 'our people'.²⁰ He argued that it was better to achieve Bolshevik goals peacefully, but feared that 'in the long run there will be just one man left – a dictator'.²¹

On the 2nd Sovnarkom decreed that generals would be elected and removable, and abolished all 'national and national-religious privileges and restrictions'.²² Fyodor Ilyin was ordered to lead a detachment of troops to Moscow, and Alexandr joined him.²³ Vikzhel voted to continue negotiations with Sovnarkom by 40 votes to 31,²⁴ and a delegation met two members of the All-Army committee.²⁵ Menshevik internationalists walked out of VTsIK, and SR internationalists presented an ultimatum.²⁶ The VPSR CC pulled out of talks because the soviet EC's proposals were unacceptable and defencists believed an agreement with the Bolsheviks was impossible. Mensheviks were prepared to negotiate if the Bolsheviks freed political prisoners, restored freedom of the press and speech and ended political 'terror'. At the Bolshevik CC Apfelbaum, Rozenfeld, Rykov, Nogin, Goldendach and others voted against Ulyanov and Bronstein having to be members of Sovnarkom.²⁷ Ulyanov's motion to break off negotiations with the VPSR passed by eight votes to seven.²⁸ Three SR internationalists refused to join Sovnarkom. A majority of the CC rejected an 'ultimatum' from 'vacillators', including Jughashvili and Bronstein, to include members of other socialist parties.²⁹ The Bolsheviks claimed almost 7,000 members in Vyborg.³⁰ At the Vyborg committee Udaroff heard that the struggle in Moscow was reaching a climax, though counter-revolutionary troops had occupied Gatchina. The district committee elected him to the military committee, which was tasked with organising a militia to replace the police, though he knew only the worker Sokoloff. Udaroff also attended the congress of soviets.³¹

On the 3rd Sovnarkom produced a draft programme for workers' control in factories employing five or more people and doing business worth over 10,000 rubles a year. They were to be accountable to a council of workers' control which was subordinate to an All-Russian council.³² It allocated seven seats each to engineers, technicians and the trades union council, five to workers and two to cooperatives. Unions with over 10,000 members could have two more seats, and smaller ones could have one between them. Sovnarkom outlawed child labour, made unemployment and sickness benefits compulsory,³³ but issued its decrees without prior soviet approval.³⁴ Bronstein ordered the removal of materials linking Ulyanov to the German government from the former government's files.³⁵ Ulyanov insisted that VTsIK sign the Sovnarkom programme.³⁶ Rozenfeld was the Bolsheviks' representative,³⁷ but Bronstein replaced him.³⁸ SR internationalists withdrew from the soviet's military committee. The 420 soviet deputies included around 150 Bolsheviks,³⁹ but the Bolshevik CC insisted that those elected to the constituent assembly would be required to resign if the CC asked them to do so.⁴⁰

The 34-year-old Old Bolshevik intelligent Solomon Drizdo had returned from Paris in June and rejoined the Bolsheviks. *Novaya Zhizn* published his letter on 4 November. It included statements beginning 'I cannot, in the name of party discipline stay silent'. He protested against 'embryonic dictatorship', 'lawlessness, arbitrary arrests, conscription, one-party rule,' and other issues.⁴¹ He believed that Bolshevik tactics were leading to the 'isolation of the proletarian *avant-garde* and a civil war within the working class', and only a coalition government could avoid 'political terror'.⁴² He joined the VTsIK committee with Vladimir Miliutin and two SR internationalists, who were to amend Ulyanov's draft economic plan with feedback from factory committees and trade unions.⁴³ Rozenfeld, Rykov, Miliutin, Apfelbaum and Nogin resigned from the Bolshevik CC, and called for a coalition of socialist parties.⁴⁴ Rykov, Miliutin, Nogin and Teodorovich resigned from Sovnarkom.⁴⁵ At VTsIK the proposal to confiscate bourgeois presses and paper,⁴⁶ passed by 34 to 24, thanks to SR internationalists.⁴⁷ The Bolsheviks lacked a secure hold on front-line army committees.⁴⁸ On the 5th *Izvestia* published the CC resignations.⁴⁹ Goldendach, Fedorov and Shlyapnikov resigned as people's commissars, and Rozenfeld, Rykov, Apfelbaum, Nogin and Miliutin wanted a Party congress.⁵⁰

Kollontai was the people's commissar for social welfare, and the only woman member of Sovnarkom.⁵¹ She and other women had invited hundreds women workers in the Petrograd region who represented 500 to a congress which aimed to implement 16 weeks' maternity leave, plus time off and warm rooms for breast-feeding.⁵² The conference opened on the 6th.⁵³ The *Rabotnitsa* editor Emilia Solnin was a delegate from the Aivaz metalworks, the spinner Vasina was from Nitka mill and Miash was from one of the Erikson factories.⁵⁴ Rakhilia Kovnator had been active in the February revolution and she had protested at the trial of Kronstadt sailors and had joined the Bolsheviks in July.⁵⁵ The organisers had expected 80 delegates, but 500 turned up in a Vyborg cinema, and claimed to represent 80,000 workers, unions and Party organisations in Petrograd, Moscow, Ivanovo and Tula. The *Rabonitsa* editors Solnin, Kovnator and Arbuzov were elected to the platform, and Nikolaeva encouraged women to vote for the Bolshevik list in the constituent assembly elections. The printer Prokhorova and the optical worker Vasileva reported about women's working conditions, and Itkina about those in Narva district.⁵⁶ Delegates criticised the Bolshevik leaders who had resigned and internationalists who did not support Sovnarkom.⁵⁷

On the 7th Gorky wrote in *Novaya Zhizn* that the Bolsheviks had 'become poisoned with the filthy venom of power'.⁵⁸ The paper published the rumour that St. Basil's Cathedral and other important Moscow buildings were being bombarded, and Lunacharsky resigned as a people's commissar.⁵⁹ He accused the Bolsheviks of a *putsch*,⁶⁰ but when he heard that the Kremlin guards and officers had not been harmed,⁶¹ he withdrew his resignation.⁶²

Around 7,000 detachments had been sent out to find food, but most did not go far, and found no new sources,⁶³ though speculators and saboteurs risked being shot, so some peasants bartered grain for commodities.⁶⁴ Sovnarkom's negotiations with Vikzhel broke down,⁶⁵ though the soviet EC acknowledged Sovnarkom's leadership of VTsIK by 25 votes to 23,⁶⁶ nominated Rozenfeld for the presidium, and tasked him with working on *Izvestia* and overseeing the constituent assembly elections.⁶⁷ A former tsarist official handed over the secret treaties to Bronstein,⁶⁸ and after he announced that he would publish them,⁶⁹ Shlyapnikov and Teodorovich returned to their posts as commissars.⁷⁰ A Menshevik congress defined the 'dictatorship of the proletariat' as 'violence organised by the state',⁷¹ yet Tsederbaum believed that 'almost the entire proletariat' supported Ulyanov.⁷²

It is not merely the deep belief that it is senselessly utopian to try to plant socialism in an economically and culturally backward country, but also my organic inability to accept the Arakcheev-style [barracks] concept of socialism or the Pugachev-style [violent] notion of class struggle. ... For me, socialism was never the denial of individual freedom and individualism, but on the contrary their highest embodiment, and the principle of collectivism I always saw as opposed to 'the herd instinct' and levelling.

The Bolsheviks' quasi-socialism was based on the "simplification" of everything'.⁷³

On the 8th the State Conference was closed,⁷⁴ and after the CC threatened former members with expulsion, Apfelbaum rejoined,⁷⁵ though Sverdlov became chair of VTsIK.⁷⁶ The soviet EC's finance commission was tasked with controlling the expenditure of people's commissars. Cooperative societies rejected joint candidatures with non-socialists in the constituent assembly elections,⁷⁷ and a women's congress delegate demanded the dictatorship of the proletariat.⁷⁸ Sovnarkom wanted 'a just and democratic peace'.⁷⁹ Bronstein, Ulyanov and Krylenko telephoned the army commander in chief,⁸⁰ and demanded that he negotiate a separate peace, but he refused.⁸¹

Ensign Krylenko became the army commander in chief on the 9th,⁸² and announced that he was going to make peace.⁸³ Ulyanov appealed to front-line soldiers by radio. He called for the 'strictest revolutionary and military order', and noted Sovnarkom's order to elect delegates to negotiate for an armistice.⁸⁴ Shlyapnikov, Apfelbaum, Rozenfeld, Kollontai,⁸⁵ Rykov and Nogin argued that Bolsheviks could not retain power unless Sovnarkom included Menshevik and SR internationalists. The Bolshevik CC accepted this by ten votes to four, though Bronstein and Ulyanov voted against.⁸⁶ Apfelbaum was readmitted to VTsIK.⁸⁷ Kollontai's ten staff had opened the commissariat of social welfare in Vyborg.⁸⁸ They cut wages, fought corruption and raised the price of playing cards and sold them to gaming houses by the hundred for 30 to 360 kopeks. They took over charitable committees, planned new orphanages and homes for the handicapped made homeless by war and revolution, instituted self-government in old people's homes, granted pupils a say in school administrations, demanded that religious instruction be voluntary, stopped funds for church maintenance, put priests on the state payroll, created a committee of physicians to reorganise sanatoria and a department to deal with aid to minorities.⁸⁹ Reisner offered to work for the Bolshevik CC. 'I can ride, shoot, reconnoitre, write, send correspondence to the front, and if necessary die', but she was tasked with cataloguing treasures of the old regime.⁹⁰ On the 10th Gorky wrote in *Novaya Zhizn*.

Lenin is a 'leader' and a Russian aristocrat, not without certain psychological traits of that extinct class, and therefore he considers himself justified in performing with the Russian people a cruel experiment, which is doomed to failure beforehand.

The people, worn out and impoverished by war, have already paid for this experiment with thousands of lives and will be compelled to pay with tens of thousands, and this will deprive the nation of its leadership for a long time to come. This inevitable tragedy does not disturb Lenin, the slave of dogma, or his cronies – his slaves. Life in all its complexities is unknown to Lenin, he does not know the popular masses, he has not lived with them; but he – from books – has learned how to raise those masses on their hind legs and how – easiest of all – to enrage their instincts. The working class is for a Lenin what ore is for a metalworker. Is it possible, under all present conditions, to mould a socialist state from this ore? Apparently, it is impossible; however – why not try? ... What does Lenin risk if the experiment should fail?

... Sensible workers who follow Lenin should realize that a pitiless experiment is being performed on the Russian working class, an experiment which will destroy the best forces of the workers, and will arrest normal development of the Russian revolution for a long time to come.⁹¹

Bronstein published the secret treaties,⁹² and Sovnarkom began reducing the armed forces, and required soldiers to hand their rifles to regimental committees.⁹³ An All-Russian congress of peasant soviets opened in Petrograd.⁹⁴ The delegates included 110 SR internationalists, 50 SR defencists, 40 Bolsheviks plus 15 sympathisers, and 40 who

were unaffiliated.⁹⁵ Spiridonova was elected as chair, and though SR defencists cut off the electricity and stole her bell, she persevered.⁹⁶ The SR defencists left,⁹⁷ and formed a 'Committee for the Salvation of the Fatherland and the Revolution' on the 11th.⁹⁸ Sovnarkom abolished all 'social and civil gradations',⁹⁹ and 54-year-old Mark Elizarov, who was married to Elizarova, became the people's commissar for ways of communication.¹⁰⁰ A mass meeting of soldiers supported Sovnarkom and ordered SR internationalists to join it.¹⁰¹

On the 12th Gorky wrote in *Novaya Zhizn* that it was 'shameful and criminal' to 'frighten by terror and violence those who do not want to take part in Mr. Trotsky's frenzied jig on the ruins of Russia', and he refused to join workers who followed 'crazed leaders'.¹⁰² On the 13th a railway workers' conference opened. Very few intelligentsy were delegates. Two thirds were Bolsheviks, and most of the rest were SR and Menshevik internationalists. They condemned Vikzhel as elitist and unrepresentative by 154 votes to 22,¹⁰³ demanded the release of their members, decided to strike if necessary and discussed the excesses of the soviet military committee. Rozenfeld wanted an all-socialist government, but Sokolnikov was unsure.¹⁰⁴ Sovnarkom gave elected factory committees some control,¹⁰⁵ and VTsIK gave some to shop stewards' councils, economic and control commissions and other elected workers' bodies,¹⁰⁶ and dispersed the city and provincial dumas and rural zemstvos.¹⁰⁷ At the peasant congress SR internationalists split from the defencists and agreed to join VTsIK, whose members included 108 peasants, 100 from the military, 50 from trade unions. There were 113 SR internationalists, 92 Bolsheviks, seven other SD internationalists, three Ukrainian SDs, one Polish SD, four SR Maximalists and one Anarchist.¹⁰⁸

The 33 Anarchist groups across Russia published 21 papers and journals.¹⁰⁹ One paper sold over 25,000 copies, mainly in Vyborg, but also in Kronstadt. Jewish RSDRP members asked Sovnarkom to outlaw other Jewish parties, and especially the Zionists.¹¹⁰ Apfelbaum, the chair of the soviet, was sent to Ukraine to prepare a rising.¹¹¹ Krasin had written to his wife in Norway that Ulyanov and Bronstein were 'as uncompromising as ever', but 'the salvation of the Revolution depends on unity'. 'Please do not imagine that I shall join the Bolshevik Party all of a sudden, or without thinking it over very carefully,' even 'if you hear that I have been asked to become one of the new ministers'. He assumed he would work for 'some kind of "All-grade-of-Socialist" Cabinet', and 'should feel like a deserter if I refused'. He felt that he was uniquely 'qualified to undertake the organisation of trade' and arrange 'orderly demobilisation,' since he had connections among workers and technical experts, and his appointment would be 'looked upon with favour by the professional classes',¹¹² but he thought the revolution was an 'absurd and stupid Leninist adventure' and a result of 'socialist utopianism'. Bronstein arranged two meetings between him and Ulyanov, who asked him to build a new economic and social order, and promised financial security;¹¹³ but he feared that the revolution would bring disorder and famine,¹¹⁴ and believed that the key issue was cultural. 'What I see around me has deepened my conviction that the Russian people has a long way to go yet before it can call itself civilised. The autocracy has embittered and brutalised the masses to their very bones, and very likely two generations will have to grow up in more healthy surroundings before we can begin to behave like ordinary human beings.'¹¹⁵ Yet he accepted the post of people's commissar for trade, industry and transport,¹¹⁶ and Sovnarkom and VTsIK ordered the 'planned regulation of the economy'.¹¹⁷

The VPSR CC had drawn up a list of candidates for the constituent assembly elections, leaving internationalists little time to organise,¹¹⁸ and the list heavily favoured defencists.¹¹⁹ There were no individual candidates, and voters had to plump for a party list.¹²⁰ Ulyanov wanted the elections postponed until the lists were updated and laws passed to allow 18-year-olds to vote, but was unsuccessful.¹²¹ Only Petrograd and Moscow had their own constituencies, though the seven front-line armies and the main navy bases had separate polling stations.¹²² Voting began in many European constituencies on 12 November,¹²³ smoothly and without serious infractions of the electoral code. That night Petrograd Red Guards raided the *Rech* press. Voting ended in European Russia on the 14th. (In remote places only over three months, and not at all in some cases.)¹²⁴ Ulyanov told the Extraordinary All-Russia Congress of Soviets of Peasants' Deputies that the constituent assembly should not distract peasants.

The peasants want land and the prohibition of hired labour; they want implements for the cultivation of the soil. And this cannot be obtained without defeating capital. ... You are throwing down a challenge to capital, you are following a different path from ours; but we are at one with you in that we are marching, and must march, towards the social revolution. As for the Constituent Assembly ... its work will depend on the mood in the country ... but don't forget your rifles.¹²⁵

On the 15th Petrograd's telegraph and telephone operators walked out,¹²⁶ but SR internationalists rejoined the soviet military committee,¹²⁷ formed a coalition with the Bolsheviks,¹²⁸ and accepted the posts of people's commissars of posts and telegraphs, agriculture, justice, local government and state property;¹²⁹ and an ad hoc congress of the Twelfth Army gave the Bolsheviks and their allies three-quarters of the seats on their EC.¹³⁰

On the 16th a conference of factory committee representatives supported Sovnarkom's decree on workers' control with one vote against and 20 abstentions.¹³¹ Sovnarkom decreed that pregnant women, communal

nurseries and canteens would be supported, and women would have full political rights and equal access to education and employment. It made marriage secular,¹³² for men over 18 and women over 15, and announced that divorced women could claim alimony.¹³³ Divorce could be at the request of both parties, but where only one asked for it, judges could dissolve a marriage. Sovnarkom abolished all ranks and titles in the army, gave soldiers' committees power, but while all ranks up to regimental level were to be elected at a general meeting, higher ranks had to be elected at congresses or conferences convened by army committees.¹³⁴ On the 18th, at the Bolshevik CC, Ulyanov proposed a *Pravda* editorial board of Jughashvili, Sokolnikov, Bukharin and Bronstein.¹³⁵ He drafted a programme for peace negotiations on the basis of no annexations or indemnities,¹³⁶ and Bukharin and Yuri Pyatakov were tasked with forming a commission to discuss 'fundamental questions of the government's economic policy'.¹³⁷ On the 19th Sovnarkom decreed that only civil marriage was to be recognised, though children born out of wedlock would have the same rights as those born to married couples.¹³⁸ Sovnarkom limited the income of people's commissars and senior government employees to 500 rubles a month, plus 100 for family members who could not work.¹³⁹ It recognised Finland's right to independence,¹⁴⁰ and an SR internationalist conference elected a CC of 15,¹⁴¹ and rejected terror.¹⁴²

On the 20th Petrograd schoolteachers and water transport workers went on strike.¹⁴³ On the 21st the soviet military committee established a 'commission for struggle against counter-revolution'.¹⁴⁴ At Kronstadt Dybenko put 7,000 sailors on full alert in case the constituent assembly met on the 26th. Around 20,000 sailors, soldiers, workers and peasants resolved to support only a constituent assembly which supported the October revolution, and included no members of the bourgeoisie.¹⁴⁵ Sovnarkom and VTsIK insisted that constituent assembly electors had the right to recall members. On the 22nd Sovnarkom decreed that judicial institutions, including those in the armed forces, were to be replaced by democratically-elected courts.¹⁴⁶ On the 23rd Petrograd Bolsheviks accused the electoral commission of irregularities and had them arrested. (Days later they freed them without substantiating the charges.)¹⁴⁷ On the 24th Sovnarkom evicted other tenants from the Smolny.¹⁴⁸ On the 26th a VPSR congress replaced its CC of eight right-centrists, seven left-centrists, one extreme leftist and four waverers with 11 left-centrists, four right-centrists, two moderate leftists and three who were undecided.¹⁴⁹ SR internationalists and Bolsheviks formed a new soviet EC, and threatened SR defencists with the loss of rations and accommodation.¹⁵⁰ SRs dominated most district soviets and those in a few nearby villages.¹⁵¹ On the 27th the peasant congress backed the soviet EC,¹⁵² but municipal workers in Petrograd went on strike.¹⁵³

Wiesław Mężyński had been born into an aristocratic family in the capital in 1874. His father, a Russified Pole, was a history lecturer, and his wife was a woman of letters who sympathised with revolutionaries. Wiesław graduated from the University in 1898, practised law in Jaroslavl and joined the RSDRP in 1902. In February 1905 his daughter died, and the trauma ended his marriage. He lived with his unmarried sisters, whose apartment was a meeting place for revolutionaries, and Vera worked with Krupskaya. Wiesław was arrested in summer 1906, but released after a fortnight's hunger strike. He left for Belgium, then went on to Switzerland, France and the USA, where he worked in RSDRP branches and joined the Bolsheviks. When the Bolsheviks in Russia split over standing candidates in the Duma elections, Mężyński joined the 'boycottists' and the editorial board of *Vpered*, and when the faction split, he aligned himself with the 'Orthodox Marxists', Alexinsky and Pokrovsky, and rejected the idea of 'proletarian culture'. In summer 1910 he wrote in a Russian émigré journal.

Lenin is a political Jesuit who over the course of many years has moulded Marxism to the aims of the moment ... Lenin, this illegitimate child of Russian absolutism, considers himself not only the natural successor to the Russian throne, when it becomes vacant, but also the sole heir of the Socialist International. Should he ever come to power, the mischief he would do would not be much less than that of Paul I. The Leninist are not even a faction, but a clan of party gypsies who hope to drown the voice of the proletariat with their screams.

Mężyński returned to Russia in summer 1917, joined Mezhrainka, and became the people's commissar for finance. He went to the State Bank with a detachment of sailors,¹⁵⁴ and demanded ten million rubles, but the director refused. Mężyński returned, but still received no money.¹⁵⁵ On 14 November the bank workers went on strike,¹⁵⁶ and on the 24th Mężyński arrived with a larger military force, threatened the staff with being sacked, the loss of their pensions and drafting those of military age. After he sacked the manager most employees walked out;¹⁵⁷ but he forced the others to open the vaults at gun point, took five million rubles and left them on Ulyanov's desk in the Smolny,¹⁵⁸ and Sovnarkom instructed the bank director to hand over a 25 million ruble 'loan'.¹⁵⁹ By the 25th the head cashier, the head book-keeper, and the guardian of the vaults had been arrested at gunpoint and surrendered their keys. On the 27th Sovnarkom decreed that savings accounts worth 5,000 rubles or more, and those earning over 500 rubles a month interest, would be nationalised. On the 28th *Novaya Zhizn* argued that the regime rested 'on the bayonets of the soldiers and workers' who 'were given unpaid bills in place of fabulous but non-existent

riches'.¹⁶⁰ Sovnarkom had more bank managers arrested, and demanded one million rubles for their release.¹⁶¹ On the 28th, after the constitutional election results in major cities were clear, Sovnarkom declared that Kadets were 'enemies of the people', had its leaders arrested, and postponed the constituent assembly until January 1918.¹⁶²

By 30 November the Bolsheviks claimed around 300,000 members,¹⁶³ and they had raised 739 million rubles by requisitions, socialisations and nationalisations.¹⁶⁴ Rykov, Miliutin, Nogin and Rozenfeld asked to rejoin the CC.¹⁶⁵ Sovnarkom closed 60 opposition papers,¹⁶⁶ including most of those in the capital.¹⁶⁷ A Menshevik conference claimed 150,000 members nationally, though many workers had left, some provincial organisations had split and Petrograd and Kharkiv defencists had formed separate organisations. Petrograd Mensheviks claimed 17,000 members, but had lost thousands, and 2,000 in the central industrial region, especially in Tula and Tver. There had been a slight increase in Kostroma, but a dramatic one in Vladimir and Yaroslavl. They had lost members in Saratov and over 7,000 in the lower Volga, but had had a small increase in Nizhni Novgorod, Vyatka province and Ufa and Perm in Siberia. Membership had increased in central 'black earth' provinces, Smolensk, Vitebsk and Minsk, and on the southwestern and Romanian fronts.¹⁶⁸ Conference delegates acknowledged that they had been 'swept almost entirely from the political arena',¹⁶⁹ and condemned Sovnarkom for having 'filled the jails with political prisoners'. They elected Tsederbaum as a leader, but refused to join either the Bolsheviks or an anti-Bolshevik coalition.¹⁷⁰ When soviet leaders called for the cooperation of the literary and artistic intelligentsia, fewer than half a dozen turned up at the Smolny, and the only one of any prominence was Mayakovsky.¹⁷¹ He supported the commissariat of education,¹⁷² but complained that each factory was compelled 'to fight for the interests of its own enterprise, its own labour force, against those of other enterprises'.¹⁷³

Nationally, after gentry estates were split among the peasantry, 250,000 smallholdings were still worked with antediluvian tools.¹⁷⁴ Many peasants refused to sell their produce,¹⁷⁵ though 1,079 railway wagonloads of grain had arrived in Petrograd that month.¹⁷⁶ The daily bread ration had risen by almost 1.6 ounces,¹⁷⁷ and delivered 1,395 calories, yet a labourer needed at least 2,500, and Sovnarkom knew workers would be starving by the New Year,¹⁷⁸ though the Bolsheviks controlled most soviets in northern Russia, after little serious fighting,¹⁷⁹ yet Jughashvili had to ask the soviet military committee's permission in order to contact Moscow.¹⁸⁰

Moscow and other key regions

By November Red Guards from over 25 towns and cities had reached Moscow,¹⁸¹ including about 10,000 from Petrograd.¹⁸² Red Guards from Orekhovo played a key role, Baltic fleet sailors manned artillery,¹⁸³ and SR internationalists led vital actions.¹⁸⁴ On the 2nd Red Guards stormed the Kremlin and disarmed the military cadets,¹⁸⁵ and fighting almost ceased.¹⁸⁶ Around 500 Bolsheviks or their supporters were killed,¹⁸⁷ including 228 Red Guards,¹⁸⁸ while 500 or so were from Gorodsky district.¹⁸⁹ They were buried in coffins draped in red cloth near the Kremlin wall. There were no flowers or a band, but mourners sang *You Sacrificed Yourself*.¹⁹⁰ That evening the last counter-revolutionary troops surrendered, though they were freed after the officers gave their word of honour to play no further military role and they were allowed to keep their side arms.¹⁹¹ On the 3rd the civilian bread ration was cut to 7.7 ounces a day.¹⁹² By the 6th all the socialist parties had freedom of the press, but not those which incited insurrection against Sovnarkom.¹⁹³ On the 10th, in the soviet elections,¹⁹⁴ workers won 62 seats and soldiers 32. Bolsheviks claimed the support of 55, SRs 13, Mensheviks ten and Mezhrainetsy four. The presidium included 11 Bolsheviks, three SR internationalists, one Mezhrainets and no Mensheviks, and the Bolshevik Pokrovsky was in the chair.¹⁹⁵ On the 21st moderate socialists refused to join the soviet EC, which claimed to control the province.¹⁹⁶ Since summer 1914 the average pay of Moscow workers had risen by 51.5 percent, but prices by 566 percent and consumer goods by over 1,100 percent.¹⁹⁷ On the 28th the *Russkoe Slovo* press printed *Izvestia*, and books intended for peasants and 1918 calendars were seized; but after Ivan Sytin agreed to pay the printers' wages since 23 October, and gave Sovnarkom seven million rubles, around half of his bank account, *Russkoe Slovo* reappeared.¹⁹⁸

On 1 November Menshevik resistance to the Bolsheviks collapsed in Nizhni Novgorod in the central industrial region,¹⁹⁹ but on the 2nd the soviet voted almost overwhelmingly for a socialist coalition and the speedy convocation of the constituent assembly. The Novgorod province soviet EC included 25 Bolsheviks, six Mensheviks and five SRs, and the Bolshevik Alexeev was secretary.²⁰⁰ The revolution was almost bloodless,²⁰¹ and Ivanovo Bolsheviks won without firing a shot,²⁰² though the regional RSDRP committee unanimously supported an all-socialist government.²⁰³ An Anarchist who had led a Dvinsk regiment, and sent rifles, machine-guns and ammunition to several factories, was shot.²⁰⁴ By the 4th Mensheviks and SRs had been edged out of the leadership of Nizhni Novgorod дума, and by mid-November the Bolsheviks claimed to control the city.²⁰⁵ The soviet had had 176 deputies, though 150 soldiers and workers were Party members. The provincial CC of 30 were almost all SRs or Mensheviks, and three were Bolsheviks,²⁰⁶ but by the 26th Nizhni Novgorod soviet included 48 Bolsheviks, 55

Mensheviks and 60 SRs, and they condemned the Petrograd rising by 105 votes to 62, with 19 abstentions.²⁰⁷ In the Sormovo suburb 25,000 locomotive builders were armed.²⁰⁸ Fyodor Ilyin arrived and met the Bolshevik members of the city committee. In Staraya Russa, south of Nizhni Novgorod, the soviet had 36 delegates, but while few were Bolsheviks there had been a sharp increase of sympathy towards them,²⁰⁹ In Iaroslavl a joint session of workers' and soldiers' soviets and representatives from smaller organisations voted for soviet power and elected a provisional EC.²¹⁰ Bolsheviks and SR internationalists controlled most major soviets in the northern and central industrial regions,²¹¹ and groups of SRs had joined the Bolsheviks.²¹² Tver peasants rejected SR attempts to turn them against the Bolsheviks. 'We've had quite enough of you, just bring us a Bolshevik!'²¹³

In Ukraine the eight-hour movement had spread to Kyiv and Kharkiv, and also to Rostov-na-Donu.²¹⁴ By the 2nd Kerensky had reached the Don region,²¹⁵ where a general had proclaimed martial law and purged the Bolsheviks.²¹⁶ On the 3rd Petrovsky called a meeting of leading Donbas Bolsheviks, and Gruzman and two others were tasked with establishing a central organisation.²¹⁷ In Kyiv the Rada included 213 peasants, 132 soldiers and 100 salaried workers, and on the 7th it announced that land confiscated from the Orthodox Church and the Imperial family would be distributed to peasants. It decreed an eight-hour day and workers' control of industry, promised energetic measures to end the war, abolished the death penalty, decreed a far-reaching political amnesty, announced a reform of the law 'in the spirit of the people' and gave local institutions a large degree of autonomy.²¹⁸ On the 8th 450 workers in the New Russia Company's blacksmiths' shop in Luzovka condemned the soviet, voted for a Bolshevik motion and withdrew their deputy.²¹⁹ Kharkiv soviet had created a multi-party military committee.²²⁰

By the 12th Kyiv Bolsheviks had pushed through a merger of the workers' and soldiers' soviets, and held 23 seats out of 58. On the 15th the soviet rejected a Bolshevik motion on state power and elected a presidium of SRs and Mensheviks. The Bolsheviks refused two seats, and next day they called a meeting of the workers' section which they led. Radicals in Odesa soviet had launched an unsuccessful bid for power.²²¹ On the 17th the Bolshevik Zalmaev was elected as chair of the Luzovka soviet EC, with the support of SR internationalists.²²² In the elections to the Kyiv soviet EC on the 21st, 19 Bolsheviks, 11 Mensheviks, four Ukrainian SDs and four SRs were successful,²²³ and on the 22nd the soviet organised a military committee to seize power.²²⁴ The Ivanovo initiative group's functions passed to the Bolshevik-controlled EC and дума on the 23rd,²²⁵ and the Rada proposed a general peace on the 26th.²²⁶ Around 150 of 2,000 delegates to a Ukrainian soviet congress were Bolsheviks, but nationalists formed a Soviet Republic.²²⁷

A counter-revolutionary Cossack general led an attack on Sulinsk and Makiivka, disbanded the soviets, arrested their ECs, destroyed their buildings, disarmed militias and killed 30 to 40, then attacked coal mines near Luzovka. A new Bolshevik committee, led by Zalmaev, established a Red Guard of between 1,000 and 2,000 which included army returnees and prisoners of war. The Bolsheviks sent 24 agents to help form a military committee and it grew quickly.²²⁸ On the 26th counter-revolutionary troops put down workers' risings in Taganrog and Rostov-na-Donu, and on the 28th Sovnarkom outlawed counter-revolutionary Cossack leaders. Red Guards from Petrograd, Moscow and Kharkiv, plus Donbas miners, sailors and some army units led by Ovseyenko, attacked Kyiv and Rostov-na-Donu.²²⁹ At a congress of front-line soldiers the Bolsheviks had 260 delegates and the Menshevik-SR bloc 267, though the Bolsheviks won the vote for a military committee and held 18 of the 35 seats and SR internationalists six.²³⁰ A counter-revolutionary general was assembling Cossack regiments on the Don, and Moscow military committee sent an army to confront them.²³¹ On the 27th Kharkiv soviet repudiated the Rada.²³² The Bolsheviks claimed 5,000 members in Kyiv, 4,000 in both Odesa and Mykolaev and 1,600 in Ekaterinoslav.²³³ SRs did not see themselves as enemies or rivals of the Bolsheviks,²³⁴ and the Rada wanted a federal relationship with Russia,²³⁵ but disarmed pro-Bolshevik army units, installed Ukrainian officers, encouraged an anti-Bolshevik general in eastern Ukraine and demanded the right to negotiate separately for peace with Germany and Austria.²³⁶ By the 30th the Rada had expelled several pro-Bolshevik soldiers. Kyiv Bolsheviks called a plenary session of the soviet and 700 or so attended, including peasants and industrial workers. By 302 votes to 250 they deposed the EC and elected a new one led by 23-year-old Jakov Gamarnik, a recent Bolshevik recruit.²³⁷ He had been born into a Jewish family in Zhytomyr in 1894, and later attended the Psychoneurological Institute in the capital and Kyiv University.²³⁸ On the 31st Kharkiv soviet demanded a Ukrainian congress of soviets, though the Rada held power.²³⁹ Vetka Bolsheviks had raised almost 1,055 rubles, and sent 40 percent to the CC, 25 percent to the district committee, ten percent to the regional committee in Ekaterinoslav and kept the rest.²⁴⁰

On 1 November railway workers in Kineshma on the Volga had supported Sovnarkom and criticised Vikzhel.²⁴¹ On the 3rd there was resistance to the Bolsheviks in Samara,²⁴² and fighting in Saratov.²⁴³ On the 12th, at the suggestion of a member of Petrograd soviet, Saratov soviet sent over 300 soldiers to agitate in their home villages.²⁴⁴ By the 14th the city's Bolsheviks were divided about taking power. There was shooting for 24 hours and several casualties, but the new soviet EC was much the same as the Bolshevik city committee, and it dissolved the дума.²⁴⁵ On the 28th Red Guards and soldiers arrested the mayor and other officials, and Bolsheviks sequestered financial institutions. The soviet created a new militia and took responsibility for the economy. Tsaritsyn

revolutionaries had taken power.²⁴⁶ On the 30th a Saratov province peasant congress approved Sovnarkom's land decree, dismissed the peasant soviet and decided to merge with Saratov soviet, which extended industrial workers' control and took over the railways.²⁴⁷ A soldier said that 'Nothing matters except to end this damned war'.²⁴⁸

In Transcaucasia soviet forces controlled Tbilisi in by the 3rd, but freed loyalist military cadets.²⁴⁹ On the 4th the дума was dissolved.²⁵⁰ Mensheviks remained strong in several places and rejected Bolshevik rule,²⁵¹ though some SDs insisted that the arsenal provide arms. On the 19th a Georgian congress attracted 329 delegates from all the major parties. The Menshevik Zhordania argued for a separate army and militia, the nationalisation of judicial and educational institutions and a national council that could legislate, though not for complete independence. The Bolsheviks claimed up to 3,000 members in Tbilisi and had support in the garrison, but little or none from workers, and they were a minority in the soviet. Soldiers in 36 units elected a delegate commission, and on the 28th it demanded new elections to the Caucasian army council and the military section of Tbilisi soviet. It took over the arsenal without firing a shot on the 29th,²⁵² but Menshevik Red Guards disarmed Bolsheviks. In Azerbaijan Bolsheviks and sympathisers had 231 members in Baki soviet by the 3rd, along with 84 SR internationalists, 23 Dashnaks and six Menshevik internationalists. Caspian Fleet sailors supported all power to Baki soviet. On the 4th the VPSR committee recalled its soviet deputies and was split about the revolution, but Musavat supported it on the 7th.²⁵³ Bolshevik workers took Rostov-na-Donu, and counter-revolutionary generals moved to Novochoerkassk.²⁵⁴

Nikolai Yakovlev had been born into a Moscow jewel-maker's family in 1886. He attended a gymnasium, and the University, but did not graduate. He joined the RSDRP in 1904, supported the Bolsheviks and was active in the 1905 revolution. He became an agent in 1907 and was exiled several times. During the war he was conscripted and posted to a reserve regiment in Siberia, and by 1917 he was a leader of the Bolshevik bureau and the RSDRP CC. In November he led 'sovietisation' in Yeniseisk, Omsk, Irkutsk and Vladivostok. Workers' decisions became mandatory in Krasnoyarsk railway workshops,²⁵⁵ and Chelyabinsk and Ekaterinburg, on the Trans-Siberian railway.²⁵⁶

Timofei Krivov had been born into a peasant family in 1886. He later became fitter and was a revolutionary by 1903.²⁵⁷ In 1905 he joined the Bolsheviks,²⁵⁸ and helped to organize strikes and fighting squads, but was arrested and spent seven years in prison and 18 months in emigration, where he was an organizer and propagandist. When he returned to Russia he was sentenced to indefinite katorga in Petrograd Fortress,²⁵⁹ but was released after the amnesty early in 1917, and helped to form military organizations in the Urals. By 8 November Ufa soviet controlled the city and sent Krivov and Tsiurupa to meet Ulyanov.²⁶⁰ On the 22nd the 41-year-old Old Bolshevik Filipp Goloshchekin arrived in Ekaterinburg and successfully proposed that the soviet EC be replaced by a bureau of five.²⁶¹

There had been a general strike in Finland on 1 November,²⁶² and parliament assumed power on the 2nd, by 127 votes to 68.²⁶³ On the 3rd it announced an eight-hour day for industrial workers.²⁶⁴ Conservatives blocked other reforms, and though SDs managed to win some they balked at taking power. There was a general strike on the 13th.²⁶⁵ Jughashvili visited Finland and called on the SDs to follow the Russian example,²⁶⁶ but the parliament appointed a bourgeois senate and voted for independence by 100 votes to 88 on the 16th,²⁶⁷ and waged a bloody war on Finnish SDs.²⁶⁸ Bolshevik-led soviets had taken power in Estonia.²⁶⁹ On the 28th Lithuania declared independence,²⁷⁰ but there was a smooth transfer to soviet power in Biełarus.²⁷¹ Military committees in several provincial cities had overcome resistance,²⁷² and regarded Sovnarkom as provisional, pending the final results of the constituent assembly elections.²⁷³ Krylenko and his sailors had removed the counter-revolutionary generals in Pskov and Dvinsk, but the guards of the imprisoned counter-revolutionary generals allowed them to escape,²⁷⁴ but on the 19th Mariñë soviet in Biełarus formed a pro-Bolshevik military committee,²⁷⁵ and in Orcha the 49-year-old Old Bolshevik intelligent Panteleimon Lepeshinsky and his comrades tried to stop troop trains reaching the front.²⁷⁶ On the 20th Krylenko and 3,000 soldiers and sailors took over army headquarters in Mariñë,²⁷⁷ and met no resistance. They tried to take the commander into protective custody, but soldiers beat him to death,²⁷⁸ and the city soviet appointed a revolutionary committee. Counter-revolutionary troops controlled western Ukraine, and though eastern Ukraine supported the Bolsheviks, their influence ended at Rostov-na-Donu and Taganrog.²⁷⁹ A counter-revolutionary general had army of 3,000 to 4,000 in Novochoerkassk.²⁸⁰ Ovseyenko was tasked with leading the fight against them with 6,000 to 7,000 troops, 30 or 40 cannon and a few dozen machine-guns;²⁸¹ but the Rada refused them permission to cross Ukraine.²⁸²

The war

Early in November the son of a worker in Farmborough's letuchka, who was in his late twenties, admitted that he had spent 15 months in prison in 1906-1907 for being a revolutionary. The letuchka arrived at Jassy near the Romanian-Moldova border, though Farmborough got a ticket in a military staff carriage on a train to Kyiv. When she reached Moscow about 20 armed Bolsheviks inspected her documents, and letters from home told her that the

Imperial family had been taken to Tobolsk.²⁸³ She photographed deserters, then left to stay with a doctor and his wife in Odesa, where Red Guards were in control.²⁸⁴

A German minister had asked for two million marks 'for agreed purposes', plus 15 million for political propaganda in Russia, and would request 'further sums' in 'the near future'. The treasury sent one million marks to the minister in Stockholm, and a German agent received 2,000 kronen (worth around 5,000 German marks), but urgently requested 20,000 more for 'the journey of two confidential agents to Petrograd'. The Austro-Hungarian foreign minister reported that an armistice would make the Russian army 'vanish'.²⁸⁵ In Vienna Helphand noted that the workers enthusiastically welcomed the Russian revolution. He went to Stockholm and offered his services to Sovnarkom via Sobelsohn, who left for Petrograd with Fürstenberg.²⁸⁶ Ulyanov believed that Helphand would compromise the Bolsheviks and resurrect the charges that they were German agents,²⁸⁷ and insisted that the revolution 'must not be sullied by dirty hands';²⁸⁸ though Vorovsky, Sovnarkom's representative in Stockholm, contacted German agents.²⁸⁹

In Germany the USPD controlled the *Leipziger Zeitung* (*Leipzig People's Newspaper*) which praised the Russian revolution as 'an event of world significance', and called on workers to follow its example and 'prepare to demonstrate for peace without annexations', though Bernstein violently attacked the Bolshevik 'dictatorship', and Kautsky predicted that it would end 'in social and political decomposition'. The USPD left's *Arbeiterpolitik* (*Labour Politics*) also hailed the revolution.²⁹⁰ In her prison Luxemburg noted that the Russian events were 'of amazing grandeur and tragedy'. The Bolsheviks 'will not of course be able to win out against the insuperable tangle of chaos, but their attempt, by itself stands as a deed of world-historical significance and a genuine milestone', though she believed that German workers would 'calmly look on while the Russians bleed to death'.²⁹¹

Krylenko was sent over the German lines on the Russian-Polish border.²⁹² Sovnarkom had empowered him to offer an armistice,²⁹³ and on the way he recruited a sailor, a worker,²⁹⁴ two members of the Fifth Army committee,²⁹⁵ and a peasant. In Brest-Litovsk they explained that every word would be broadcast by radio-telegraph, and Sobelsohn distributed revolutionary pamphlets among German soldiers.²⁹⁶ The German negotiators agreed to an armistice,²⁹⁷ to begin four days later.²⁹⁸ Their army had transferred their best divisions to their western front, and their eastern front was quiet,²⁹⁹ though the Central Powers occupied a line west of the Gulf of Riga down to southern Russia.³⁰⁰

Lev Karakhan, as Լևոն Միքայելի Կարախանյան, was known in Russia, had been born into an Armenian family in Tbilisi in 1889. He joined the Mensheviks in 1904, but in May 1917 he joined the Bolsheviks, and by October he had joined their military committee.³⁰¹ In November the Russian negotiators, including Karakhan and Rozenfeld, led by Joffe, left Petrograd for Brest-Litovsk,³⁰² and secured a week's suspension of hostilities to consult in Petrograd,³⁰³ though Rozenfeld told the soviet EC that the Germans might not agree to a general peace.³⁰⁴ The Russian negotiators suggested a six-month armistice, and asked the Germans to evacuate some territory. The Germans agreed to a 12-day armistice,³⁰⁵ and late in November the Russian negotiators returned to Brest-Litovsk.³⁰⁶

12. The Constituent Assembly

We shall not enter the kingdom of socialism in white gloves on a polished floor

By December around 50,000 of the 325,000 unemployed industrial workers in Russia were in the Petrograd region,¹ yet over 70 percent of war-related materiel was produced there. Around 68 percent of over 2,100 factories with more than 200 employees had workers' committees,² and over three-quarters of metalworkers took part in the elections to the soviet. The Bolsheviks won 71 percent of the votes, SR internationalists 21 percent and Mensheviks two percent.³ The Bolsheviks claimed 20,000 members,⁴ and on the 2nd the CC agreed to a government coalition of socialist parties which would give all power to the soviets.⁵ Sovnarkom called for 'iron discipline' in factories, mines and trades unions,⁶ and established Vysshiiy Sovet Narodnogo Khozyaystva, (the Supreme Council of the National Economy, or VSNKh), led by Bolsheviks. Obolensky was its chair, and Bukharin, Miliutin, Sokolnikov,⁷ and Oppokov were committee members.⁸ They could nationalise and requisition whatever they thought appropriate.⁹

In the surviving returns for the Constituent Assembly elections almost 41,687,000 people had voted. SRs won around 15,848,000 votes, Bolsheviks 9,844,600, Kadets 1,986,600, Mensheviks 1,364,800, other socialists 215,590. SRs won 380 seats, Bolsheviks 168, SR internationalists 39, Mensheviks 18 and Kadets 17. In Petrograd Bolsheviks won around 424,000 votes, Kadets 246,500, SRs over 152,200, Mensheviks over 29,100 and Popular Socialists 19,100. In Moscow Bolsheviks won around 366,150 votes, Kadets approaching 264,000, the Democratic Socialist bloc just over 37,600 and Mensheviks almost 21,600. In Vladimir province in the central industrial region the Bolsheviks won a majority. Bolsheviks won 43,000 votes of the over 63,750 from Baltic sailors, over 471,800 out of almost 840,600 on the northern front, approaching 653,500 of around 976,000 on the western front, and around 65 percent of the votes of rural proletarians, especially those living near major urban and industrial centres; though SRs won a majority in other regions, cities, towns and the countryside.¹⁰ Three-quarters of the deputies were aged under 40 and nine percent were over 50. About half were ethnic Russians, almost 20 percent were Ukrainians and 11 percent were Jews. Two-thirds of SRs and a quarter of Bolshevik deputies were ethnic Russians, around ten percent were Jews, nine percent were Ukrainians and five percent were Kadets. Around 40 percent of Jewish deputies and SRs supported the Bolsheviks. The ten successful women included the Bolsheviks Rozmirovich, Boš, Iakovleva and Kollontai, the SRs Spiridonova, Breshkovskaya and Anastasia Sletova, and the Menshevik Figner.¹¹

The Mensheviks acknowledged the disaster – 'five to ten percent of the vote in the towns, less than this in Petrograd, nothing in the countryside'. Apart from the Caucasus they 'did not exist as a party',¹² and they had lost 'any credit in the eyes of the working class'.¹³ Some argued that Russia was not ready for 'socialist transformation', but that the Bolshevik 'dictatorship' was 'permanent anarchy', since it relied on 'terror and arbitrary rule, the suppression of civil liberties and the democratic unleashing of base egoistic instincts', and would lead to civil war.¹⁴ On the 3rd Bronstein insisted that Sovnarkom had the right to use terror. 'We shall not enter the kingdom of socialism in white gloves on a polished floor'.¹⁵ On the 4th Skryabin replaced Smidovich as the Bolshevik leader in Petrograd soviet,¹⁶ which abolished its military committee.¹⁷ Sovnarkom presented four demands to the Ukrainian Rada to be fulfilled in 48 hours, or it would declare war.¹⁸ The RSDRP claimed 203 cells in the countryside with a total membership of 4,122.¹⁹ Some peasants had more land under cultivation than in 1916,²⁰ and almost all the internationalist delegates at a peasant congress in Petrograd were soldiers.²¹ On the 5th Spiridonova argued for socialist unity, resigned as chair, and the SR defencists walked out.²² On the 6th a curfew was imposed in the capital to counter looting.²³ Bonch-Bruевич's office at the Smolny had been the centre of the Bolshevik intelligence network,²⁴ but on the 7th Chrezvychaynaya Komissiya po Podavleniyu Kontrevolyutsii, Spekulyatsiy, Shpionazha i Dezertirstva (the Extraordinary Commission for the Repression of Counter-Revolution, Speculation, Espionage and Desertion) took over,²⁵ and Dzierżyński was appointed as its head. He encouraged soviets across Russia to form similar bodies and act against saboteurs, drunken mobs and banditry 'under the flag of anarchism'.²⁶ The Cheka was responsible to Sovnarkom, not the soviet.²⁷ It could confiscate property, remove ration cards,²⁸ and hand over suspected saboteurs to a court,²⁹ but it could not order executions.³⁰

Semën Lobov had been born into a peasant family in 1888. He joined the RSDRP in 1913, and by 1914 he was a metalworker in Petrograd. In 1915 he was a member of the Vyborg district committee, and in 1917 he was a member of the city committee and joined the Cheka in December.³¹

On the 9th Sovnarkom decreed that factories producing war materiel should convert to peacetime production.³² On the 11th Rozenfeld and other Bolsheviks were excluded from the faction in the soviet EC,³³ Bukharin and Sokolnikov replaced members of the Bolshevik steering committee for the Constituent Assembly,³⁴ and the CC ordered its Constitutional Assembly deputies to follow their line., and some Kadets were arrested.³⁵ Sovnarkom's

call for ambassadors and members of overseas missions to declare loyalty was 'met with silence', and it dismissed 28. In London the 41-year-old Old Bolshevik intelligent Maxim Wallach learned that he was Sovnarkom's representative in Britain from *The Times*. He lacked money, staff and instructions, so he asked an émigré returning to Petrograd to get a code for messages.³⁶

On the 12th Sovnarkom allocated two million rubles for propaganda abroad.³⁷ A Petrograd metalworks carpenter complained that most rural workers had not 'grasped the principle of organising the working masses into unions for permanent, day-to-day struggle', and 'will move only when' their interests were 'directly at stake'.³⁸ Sovnarkom transferred responsibility for public education from the Orthodox Church to the commissariat of education.³⁹ Petrograd soviet EC met after a fortnight's break.⁴⁰ On 13th theses on the Constituent Assembly appeared anonymously in *Pravda*. They argued that it did not truly represent the Russian people because it had not taken account of the split between SR defencists and internationalists, and the 'revolutionary Social-Democracy has ever since the beginning of the Revolution of 1917 repeatedly emphasised that a republic of Soviets is a higher form of democracy than the usual bourgeois republic'.

Every direct or indirect attempt to consider the question of the Constituent Assembly from a formal, legal point of view, within the framework of ordinary bourgeois democracy and disregarding the class struggle and civil war, would be a betrayal of the proletariat's cause, and the adoption of the bourgeois standpoint. ... The only chance of securing a painless solution to the crisis which has arisen owing to the divergence between the elections to the Constituent Assembly, on the one hand, and the will of the people and the interests of the working and exploited classes, on the other, is for the people to exercise as broadly and as rapidly as possible the right to elect the members of the Constituent Assembly anew, and for the Constituent Assembly to accept the law of the Central Executive Committee [VTsIK] on these new elections, to proclaim that it unreservedly recognises Soviet power, the Soviet revolution, and its policy on the questions of peace, the land and workers' control, and to resolutely join the camp of the enemies of the Cadet-Kaledin counter-revolution.⁴¹

On the 14th Sovnarkom nationalised 48 businesses in the Urals, 14 in Moscow, 11 in Petrograd and eight in Ukraine,⁴² and declared banks a Sovnarkom monopoly.⁴³ VTsIK agreed, and troops occupied the main banks in Petrograd, which were merged with the State Bank. Gold and other bullion in private safes was confiscated, while credit notes were transferred to the State Bank, which was re-named the People's Bank.⁴⁴ Fürstenberg ran it,⁴⁵ and nobody could withdraw more than 250 rubles a week.⁴⁶

By the 15th 391 Constituent Assembly deputies had reached Petrograd, though the quorum was 400.⁴⁷ A railway workers' conference voted by 154 to five, with ten abstentions, to condemn Vikhzhel,⁴⁸ and Semën Terekhov, who worked in the railway wagon repair shop on the Moscow-Kursk line, was one of the 79 delegates who walked out with the Bolsheviks.⁴⁹ Over 30,000 Petrograd teachers, 50,000 bank clerks and almost all telegraphists and telephonists were on strike; but a few telephonists trained replacements. The Smolny's telephone links to factories and barracks were restored, and Duma deputies and their supporters were cut off.⁵⁰ Associated Press offered Sobelsohn the post of chief correspondent in Russia, but he preferred propagandising front-line troops, prisoners of war and Western European workers in the commissariat of foreign affairs,⁵¹ and Sovnarkom published a plan for demobilising the armed forces.⁵² The Cheka had arrested 30 suspected counter-revolutionaries and used their address books to find others,⁵³ and by the 16th they knew the names of 9,777 police informants.⁵⁴ On the 17th *Edvinstvo* was closed, but reappeared as *Nashe Edvinstvo (Our Unity)*.⁵⁵ By the 18th Bukharin was an editor of *Pravda*,⁵⁶ and Sovnarkom had some SR defencists arrested for a 'counter-revolutionary conspiracy'.⁵⁷ The Red Guards claimed around 60,000 members in the city,⁵⁸ and Skryabin successfully proposed a commission to organise its defence. It included two Red Guards, two soviet deputies, one from the city administration, one from a district committee and Kalinin. The soviet established a regional economic council of five, chaired by Skryabin.⁵⁹ The Bolshevik CC decided to create a Red Army.⁶⁰ Volunteers would be recruited from the Red Guards and empowered to elect officers.⁶¹ On the 19th Bronstein called on 'the iron steamroller of the proletarian revolution to crush the spinal column of the Mensheviks',⁶² but a former Bolshevik in Rostov-na-Donu wrote to Ulyanov that 'instead of what you promised, you sold Russia out, gave us no bread' and established a regime like the tsar's.⁶³

By the 20th the German army's advance in Ukraine had cut off supplies of Donbas coal, and 52 train crews on one northern line had abandoned them for lack of fuel, while railway yards were crowded with trucks. Some sections of the Trans-Siberian line had closed because there was no money to pay the workers, who were searching for food in the countryside.⁶⁴ Sovnarkom announced that unless 400 deputies were in Petrograd by 8 January 1918,⁶⁵ the Constitutional Assembly would be abolished.⁶⁶ By the 21st VTsIK had agreed that its congress would take place on 8 January 1918, and an All-Russian congress of peasant deputies a few days later,⁶⁷ though Bolsheviks and SR internationalists at the soviet EC demanded that the Constituent Assembly be closed immediately.⁶⁸ Sokolnikov, who now managed the State Bank, announced that commissars had to be appointed at banks across the country.⁶⁹ By the 22nd Sovnarkom had ordered trade unions to implement unemployment insurance and sickness schemes,⁷⁰

and made issuing dividends and selling shares illegal on the 23rd.⁷¹ Next day Ulyanov, Krupskaya and Ulyanova set off for Kollontai's house in Finland.⁷² On the 27th Jughashvili urgently asked Ulyanov to return to Petrograd.⁷³ *Novaya Zhizn* estimated that 150,000 city workers 'tied to the village' had done so to get 'military deferment'.⁷⁴ All private banks had been closed,⁷⁵ and the owners of the Nobel oil refinery had abandoned it. Two or three of the 4,000 workers attended the Anarcho-Syndicalist Union, and the workforce wanted to run the refinery, but Shlyapnikov refused permission.⁷⁶ The city's industrial production had fallen by almost 35 percent that year, metal production by 65 percent, chemicals by 45 percent and engineering products by over 25 percent.⁷⁷ Sovnarkom decreed that workers producing military materiel should look for work elsewhere,⁷⁸ and 12 Bolsheviks, another SD internationalist and seven SR internationalists joined the presidium of VTsIK.⁷⁹

During December 48 unions had formed an All-Russian organisation based in Petrograd,⁸⁰ but basic commodity prices had more than quintupled since 1913,⁸¹ and Putilov workers had complained to VTsIK that they had received no sugar for a second month in a row, while confectioners still made sweets, and wanted food and clothes belonging to the rich to be requisitioned. Sausage cost eight rubles a pound and a pair of women's boots over 120.⁸² Since April the peasant soviet had sent 1,395 propagandists to the villages.⁸³ The minimum necessary calorie intake per person was 2,300, but it had often been half that in Petrograd,⁸⁴ and by the end of December the civilian bread ration was four ounces a day.⁸⁵

Maria Skrypnyk had been born in 1883. She joined the Bolsheviks in 1905 and worked in Krasnoyarsk and the capital. By 1913 she was an editor of a social insurance journal,⁸⁶ and was the second secretary of Sovnarkom in December 1917.⁸⁷ Rykov was the people's commissar for the interior, though Ulyanov had reluctantly agreed.⁸⁸

Moscow and other key regions

Marina Tsvetaeva had been born in Moscow in 1892. Her mother, who came from a wealthy family with German and Polish ancestry, was a concert pianist and her father was a University professor. The children had governesses, though their mother was their major influence and she stressed their Jewish heritage, but in 1902 the family moved to Western Europe because she had tuberculosis. They lived near Genoa, but in summer 1904 Marina was sent to a school in Lausanne in Switzerland, where she acquired Italian, French, and German. She gave up the strict musical studies that her mother had imposed and turned to poetry, and in 1908 she studied literary history at the Sorbonne in Paris.⁸⁹ In 1912, in Crimea, she married a student from a wealthy family. They bought a house in Moscow and employed servants; but in October 1917 around 25,000 cadets and officers from her husband's regiment were blown up in Moscow, though he escaped. In late November Maria set off to join him in Crimea, though she and other civilians were forced to leave their carriage so Red Army soldiers could use it. On the way, in Usman in Tambov province, her Jewish landlady's husband had refused to let her read novels, but she accepted the revolution and was reading Marx. Maria returned to Moscow in December. At 6.00am the apartment block guard told her to come back at 9.00am, but she forced her way in. She was almost destitute and sold some belongings.⁹⁰ Troops 'ill-clad and with poor footgear stood guard day and night to protect church treasure'.⁹¹ A delegate from Porokhovskiy district told the Bolshevik committee in Petrograd that 'the mood is ours', but it was difficult 'to tear lecturers away from the city centre', though there were 'agitators and propagandists from among the workers'.⁹² That month 546 railway wagonloads of grain had reached the city.⁹³

There were 32,000 unemployed workers in the central industrial region,⁹⁴ and the RSDRP regional bureau argued that the Constituent Assembly was 'unnecessary and harmful'.⁹⁵ By the 18th it wanted to break off relations with the 'diplomatic robbers of all countries',⁹⁶ and declare a revolutionary war on Germany.⁹⁷ Oppokov supervised the reorganisation of the region's power supply and the nationalisation of Moscow's banks and industries,⁹⁸ and was a member of VSNKh, which supplied the Red Army.⁹⁹ On the 31st a demonstration organised by socialists who opposed the Bolsheviks resulted in casualties.¹⁰⁰

Mikhail Muravyov had been born into a peasant family in a Kostroma province village in 1880. He later studied at Kostroma Seminary and entered the army in 1898. He served in the war with Japan from 1904, but was seriously wounded in February 1905. He spent about five years abroad, mainly in France, and attended Paris Military Academy. In 1907 he was influenced by SR ideas and joined Savinkov's group. By 1909 he had joined an infantry regiment in the Caucasus, and later taught at Kazan Military School. In 1914 he was on the southwestern front, and after the February revolution in 1917 he organized volunteers. In May he chaired the Petrograd committee which formed up to 100 'death battalions'. He became the government's chief of security and was promoted to lieutenant colonel; but after the failed coup late in August he joined the SR internationalists. On 27 October he joined the Bolsheviks' Petrograd military committee and was appointed commander in chief of the military district tasked with the defence of the city and tackling the plunder of wine shops, but resigned on 8 November. On 6 December he

became Ovseyenko's chief of staff. After the Red Army entered Kharkiv, and the congress of soviets proclaimed soviet power in Ukraine, Ovseyenko handed command to Muravyov.¹⁰¹

In Ukraine coal production in the Donbas was less than 40 percent of that in January by December. The Bolshevik worker Alferov brought 600 rifles, 30 pistols, eight machine guns and other equipment from Petrograd, and early in December 15 district delegates in Nikitovka formed a military committee. A Red Guard commander with a large staff arrived from Petrograd and required mine and factory workforces to draft ten percent of their number into the Red Guards.¹⁰² Others arrived from Petrograd, Moscow and Kharkiv, and fought Ukrainian troops. Sovnarkom recognised the Ukrainians' right to independence, but when the Rada demanded a broadly socialist government there was a general strike.¹⁰³ Kyiv Bolsheviks and allies convened an all-Ukrainian congress of soviets, but were outvoted, so they walked out and went to Kharkiv, where workers had plenty of arms. Sergeyev chaired the soviet, but SRs and other SDs had supporters.¹⁰⁴ The Rada refused to prevent army officers from joining the counter-revolutionaries,¹⁰⁵ and Luzovka soviet passed a motion of no confidence and demanded an All-Ukrainian congress and the recognition of Sovnarkom and VTsIK.¹⁰⁶ The 77 congress delegates from eastern and central Ukraine claimed to represent 46 of the region's 140 soviets. Odesa Bolsheviks and SR internationalists had the support of an overwhelming majority of around 1,100 conference delegates, who included over 850 soldiers, and by 509 votes to 320, with 38 abstentions, they endorsed the Bolshevik CC line on the Constituent Assembly.¹⁰⁷ The Rada demanded separate representation in the negotiations at Brest-Litovsk.¹⁰⁸ Ovseyenko threatened to send 15 of the wealthiest men in Kharkiv to the Donbas coal mines, allegedly to pay for the miners' Christmas holidays, unless they handed over a million rubles. Rada leaders fled to Kharkiv and organised a Ukrainian Sovnarkom, which Petrograd Sovnarkom recognised,¹⁰⁹ though the separatist *Krainsky Holos (Ukrainian Voice)* was published in Omsk in Siberia.¹¹⁰ Red Guards and troops from Kharkiv cleared Cossacks out of Luzovka station and forced counter-revolutionaries out of the region. By the end of the year 23 of the 62 Donbas blast furnaces were closed and 18 worked at reduced capacity. Around 20 percent of coal mines worked around the clock, but production was barely half of January's,¹¹¹ even though the number of miners had doubled to 80,000.¹¹² They produced over 79 percent of Russia's coal, while blast furnaces produced over 71 percent of its pig iron.¹¹³

Sergey Pushkarev had been one of two delegates from his Kharkiv University department to the soviet of student deputies in March, which operated in parallel with the workers' and soldiers' soviet. He divided his time between studying and attending Menshevik meetings, but by May their discussions were heated, and after he proposed that Mensheviks and SRs should help to rebuild the army he was denounced as a Kadet. In summer he enlisted in an infantry regiment and was sent to Mariupol, where there was 'only one overwhelming desire – to get over the senseless life in the barracks and to return home'. He listened to SRs, Mensheviks and Bolsheviks, but his sergeant was a Bolshevik, and Pushkarev joined the company committee and became its secretary. In September they were sent to the Donbas to quell a riot and defend a vodka warehouse. In October they were sent to Poltava, where the soviet recognised Sovnarkom by November. By December Pushkarev was one of three officers and three cadets sent to Kyiv to attend the Rada, and on their return their units dispersed. Peasants were happy with Sovnarkom's decree on land, but let house-owners, including Pushkarev's mother, stay if a commissar found no weapons.¹¹⁴

On the Volga Saratov soviet included some deputies claiming to represent the peasantry,¹¹⁵ though SR internationalists on the EC marginalised defencists.¹¹⁶ Bolsheviks controlled Simbirsk, though nationalists fought attempts to increase their power,¹¹⁷ yet Samara military committee took cash to free 19 counter-revolutionaries on 25 December.¹¹⁸

In Transcaucasia a regional congress of Georgian soviets had confirmed Menshevik supremacy in Tbilisi by 155 votes out of 248 by December, and Menshevik Red Guards were the most powerful military force in the city.¹¹⁹ That year average industrial wages had risen by 282 percent, but prices by 401 percent, and production had fallen, partly due to the flight of skilled Russian workers. Bolsheviks troops joined the army soviet, but after they left for Baki other SDs outmanoeuvred them. SRs and Mensheviks who formed a minority at an army congress declared that they were the soviet and walked out, and the Bolsheviks left for Baki.¹²⁰ Bolsheviks received 11 votes for all power to the soviets at the soviet EC, though 11 SRs and Mensheviks voted for a coalition government and national councils, and 20 voted for all power to the дума.¹²¹ The city had enough grain for two days. Turkestan cotton production had provided 43 percent of Russia's needs that year, but the sown area had fallen. Merchants had made huge profits, but then the market price collapsed. Rail shipments of grain to Fergana in Uzbekistan had declined disastrously, and the conscription of 50,000 men had exacerbated the situation.¹²²

Petr Veovodin had been born into a worker's family in Sumy in Ukraine in 1884.¹²³ After two years at a zemstvo school he worked in a factory,¹²⁴ in Ekaterinoslav, and joined an SD workers' kruzhek in 1899. He later worked in Saratov, Chita, Tomsk, Omsk, Zlatoust, Samara and other cities, and late in 1905 he led a Bolshevik combat unit in Samara. He left for the USA in 1912, returned after the 1913 amnesty, and worked in Baki,¹²⁵ but was exiled to Naryn in Siberia. He was freed after the February revolution in 1917, became head of the Urals region soviet in

October,¹²⁶ and was chair of its food and economic council by December.¹²⁷ On the 5th Ekaterinburg soviet imposed a tax of 150,000 rubles on capitalists.¹²⁸ Bolsheviks had a majority on factory committees in the region.¹²⁹ The Mensheviks led the Perm дума and the soviet, but the Bolsheviks took over on the 15th. They had a majority on the provincial soviet,¹³⁰ and soviet power had been established in Tomsk, Barnaul and at least two other places.¹³¹ On the 27th the Urals soviet voted to arrest Ekaterinburg mine-owners.¹³²

By the end of December 2,151 industrial workers' committees had been established across Russia, including 687 factories with over 200 employees.¹³³ That year overall large-scale industrial production had been 77 percent lower than in 1913, while prices were 7.55 times higher.¹³⁴ The railways had taken on 400,000 more staff,¹³⁵ 420 locomotives had been built and the network covered about 43,500 miles; but occupying forces controlled around 6,835 miles of track, which was equivalent to the total built during the war.¹³⁶ Railways had carried half the available coal, but metalworks had taken a larger share compared to peacetime, and some non-defence works and citizens lacked fuel. The capital invested in large-scale industry was over four billion rubles, but output was 44 percent of 1916, though it was worth almost 4.8 billion rubles. Workers had an average of 8.9 hours a day, though the value of goods for household consumption was two-thirds of the pre-war level.¹³⁷ The metalworkers' union claimed over 544,500 members in 236 organisations,¹³⁸ the post and telegraph union claimed about 60,000, and the construction workers' around 76,000. Less than one percent of food workers were in the union, but virtually every printer was unionised.¹³⁹ During December 48 of the 95 delegates at their All-Union congress were Mensheviks and six were sympathisers, while 15 were Bolsheviks and four were sympathisers, five were SR defencists, and five were SR internationalists;¹⁴⁰ yet the elected EC included an overwhelming majority of SDs, including Bolsheviks.¹⁴¹ The cost of living had risen by an average of 2.3 times since 1913, but market prices 34 times, and real wages had fallen by between ten and 60 percent.¹⁴² Nationally industrial profits were almost treble those in 1914.¹⁴³

Almost 23,000 ploughs had been manufactured that year, compared to 133,400 in 1916,¹⁴⁴ but in the countryside cereal production was 69 percent of that in 1913,¹⁴⁵ and starving peasants were robbing food trains.¹⁴⁶

Proletkult

Early in 1917 the 44-year-old former leading Old Bolshevik intelligent Alexandr Malinovsky had argued that Proletkult (Proletarian Culture) was an independent, autonomous, mass working class organisation, and 'on an equal footing with other forms of the workers' movement'. A Proletkult conference attracted 288 delegates from factory committees and trade unions, and they declared that soviet organisations 'do not completely reflect the class point of view of the proletariat'.¹⁴⁷ Malinovsky favoured a socialist coalition government accountable to soviets, and worked in the cultural and education department of Moscow soviet. He wrote in *Sotsial-Demokrat* about army discipline and about the rights of soldiers in *Izvestia*.¹⁴⁸ He called for democratic elections to a constituent assembly,¹⁴⁹ and objected to those who sought to change attitudes by oppression in *Novaya Zhizn*.

Every collective re-creates, as far as it can, the whole social environment after its own image and in its own likeness. And if this structure is of the authoritarian type, based on the submission model, albeit in the intellectual spheres, it will inevitably give rise to authoritarian tendencies in the ordering of society itself, however democratic, communist etc. the programme of the organisation may be.

What was needed was a 'cultural revolution', a term he introduced for the first time. He accepted that the soviets were organs of revolutionary struggle, but they were unsuitable as permanent organs of government, since the proportion of electors to delegates varied across the country, and though a turner could earn as much as better-educated members of the bourgeoisie, the latter would take the responsible political positions. The RSDRP had to be unified, yet workers often joined the factions before they grasped SD politics.¹⁵⁰

In May he wrote a pamphlet for *Izvestia* about provocation, and wrote about Party unity in *Novaya Zhizhn*, where he called Ulyanov the 'perfection of authoritarianism'.¹⁵¹ Early in June he was going to inspect prisoner of war camps in Vladimir province, and when he returned to Moscow he would give four three-hour lectures to 500 propagandists attached to the soviet. He told the editors of *Novaya Zhizhn* that he was very busy,¹⁵² but wrote about the 'commune state' for Moscow soviet. He condemned the idea of the permanent transfer of all power to the soviets, since it might lead to authoritarianism, called the idea of permanent revolution across Western Europe wishful thinking, and challenged the idea that a war economy would facilitate a transition to socialism, since class war had been only temporarily suspended. He believed that the socialist intelligentsy were individualists, but did not think that culturally backward workers had succumbed to nationalism. He argued that socialist planning would require the development of technical and social sciences and economic and socio-economic measures. He

predicted that the armed forces would play a central role in restructuring the economies of the Allies and the Central Powers and create conditions for a dictatorship. In autumn he wrote about the attempted coup in *Izvestia*, and later published around 2,000 copies of *Tektology*, which was about a universal science that consisted of unifying all social, biological and physical sciences by considering them as systems of relationships and by seeking the organizational principles that underlie all systems.¹⁵³ He led the Union of Cultural and Educational Organisations,¹⁵⁴ and argued that class-consciousness was of 'primary, basic significance in the life of the proletariat'. The 'leading function' of ideology was exemplified in the broadest definition of culture, including 'speech, cognition, art, customs, and law, rules of propriety, and morals', which 'regulate and control all of the practical life of society'. 'To help develop consciousness in a given class means to develop the very foundations of its organization' and 'participate in the formation of that brain which should control that mighty body'. That required 'proletarian culture' which used every cultural resource and built on 'elements of socialism in the present'. Workers' lack of 'cultural independence' from the bourgeoisie could be 'weakened and perhaps broken', by adopting proletarian 'rules of the game'. A 'vanguard party' was needed, but would not be enough for the construction of socialism.¹⁵⁵

In mid-October Lunacharsky organised a conference of workers to discuss proletarian cultural and educational organisations, and estimated that 75 percent of the 208 delegates were workers. Some were against cooperating with 'bourgeois specialists', since except for natural science and technical skills there was 'nothing worthy of life among them', and believed that 'the proletariat would begin the work of destroying the old culture and creating the new'. Lunacharsky announced that the people, 'consciously or unconsciously, must evolve their own culture', and the 'independent action' of 'workers', soldiers' and peasants' cultural-educational organizations must achieve full autonomy'.¹⁵⁶ He conducted 'the most indefatigable and vehement agitation', mainly in the Cirque Modern, but also in factories. He wanted 'total anarchy of art',¹⁵⁷ though other Bolsheviks called him 'lyrically-minded but muddle-headed'.¹⁵⁸ He acknowledged the need to end the war, but was against a separate peace, and predicted that the war would probably end with a rearrangement of the capitalist powers, rather than their collapse.¹⁵⁹ The Proletkult CC established departments of theatre, literature, clubs, lectures, fine art, music and all education.¹⁶⁰

Malinovsky saw the October revolution as a 'workers'-soldiers' revolt' led by the 'War Communist' party, but believed that the regime was inherently unstable, since a proletarian-peasant alliance was 'unMarxist', though he looked forward to a new workers' party which included 'the social-democratic intelligentsia whose ideals have remained intact'. Lunacharsky offered him 'any post he wished' in the commissariat of education, but he declined, and rebuked Lunacharsky for becoming a commissar. Late that year Malinovsky noted a tendency among Bolshevik leaders to become 'ideologues' who borrowed key ideas, including authoritarianism, from the tsarist regime, and ridiculed the idea of a 'utopia of an immediate transition to socialism', since it would lead to the collapse of the economy.¹⁶¹ He published a second volume of *Tektology*,¹⁶² which announced that its time had come since it complemented the 'class point of view'. He and Lunacharsky were active in the soviet and worked with anarchists and syndicalists to form workers' committees.¹⁶³ Malinovsky insisted that the proletariat was creating its own culture, but could not expect help from all the intelligentsia. Some economic adaptations coincided with the general line of capitalist development, including syndicates and trusts; but others were in contradiction with it, including the restriction of consumption, the monopolisation of some products by the state and state-bureaucratic regulation of distribution and production. 'When war communism, in peace-time, is reduced in scale and the destruction of productive forces ceases, we may assume that the first forms of adaptation will be preserved, and will evolve, whereas the second will become extinct', or 'survive only to the extent that they are in conformity with class interests or the co-relation of class forces'. The wish of Western European and Russian governments to coordinate economic demobilisation would result in replacing finance capital with state-controlled institutions, including nationalising the main branches of industry, transport and land. He defined 'state capitalism' as a 'system of adaptation of modern capitalism' to 'consumption-led war communism', and predicted that it would lead to the 'destruction of the forces of production'.¹⁶⁴ Some Bolshevik intelligentsia, including Lunacharsky and Krupskaya were active in Proletkult, and not all of its organisers were workers.¹⁶⁵ Malinovsky wrote in *Novaya Zhizn* that the appeal to Austro-Hungarian and German proletarians to 'throw off the yoke of semi-authoritarian rule' was unreasonable, since the war had been caused by several capitalist powers competing for world markets.

Did the tsarist government fight for the freedom of Poland and the Jewish people? Did the Austrian government fight for the rights of the Balkan peoples? Did the British government campaign for justice for Ireland, or the Germans for it for Alsace-Lorraine? Annexations and indemnities, the robbery of the weakest – those are the aims of the war.

He called on Sovnarkom to take 'the initiative of negotiations for peace', and fight for an eight-hour day and a constituent assembly, though nothing should be done to weaken the front or disrupt work in the rear.¹⁶⁶ Reportedly his books outsold all others that year.¹⁶⁷

The war

Early in December the Russian negotiators at Brest-Litovsk had signed an armistice,¹⁶⁸ though representatives of the British, French and Italian governments agreed to lend £10 million to the counter-revolutionary generals, and the US government followed suit.¹⁶⁹ The US government had formerly sent materiel worth \$188 million to Russia,¹⁷⁰ and the British government almost £50 million's worth.¹⁷¹ There were about 500 counter-revolutionary officers and cadets at Novocherkassk,¹⁷² and they captured Rostov-na-Donu.¹⁷³ On the 3rd Kornilov reached Novocherkassk in disguise.¹⁷⁴ By the 5th the counter-revolutionaries in the Caucasus had received one million rubles. Next day the Persian government gave the British consul in Tbilisi one million rubles and the British ambassador in Tehran borrowed 2.8 million.¹⁷⁵ The British and French governments concluded a secret concord which would give them control of the Baltic provinces, the Donbas and the Caucasus in the event of an Allied victory. On the 6th Joffe led nine other Russian negotiators to Brest-Litovsk.¹⁷⁶ They included Sobelsohn,¹⁷⁷ who's *Die Fackel* had become *Der Völkerfriede (The Peace of Nations)*. It assumed that readers had a basic knowledge of Marxism, and similar publications had appeared in Magyar, Romanian, Turkish, Serb and Czech. Agents visited prisoner of war camps and organised 10,000 to agitate compatriots. Peace negotiations at Brest-Litovsk got underway on the 9th, and Germany, Austro-Hungary, Bulgaria and Turkey were represented. The Germans demanded that Lithuania, Courland and parts of Livonia and Estonia remain in their hands,¹⁷⁸ while the rest of Lithuania, western Latvia and Poland should be independent.¹⁷⁹ They would permit 'intercourse between the troops' on front lines in groups no larger than 25, the exchange of news, newspapers, letters and everyday goods, and would not transfer troops to their western front except for those already under orders to do so.¹⁸⁰ The tsar's armies were melting away,¹⁸¹ and counter-revolutionary troops massacred 117 miners at Iasinovata in the Donbas,¹⁸² agreed a truce with the Turks, and 30,000 tried to storm Tbilisi.¹⁸³

At Marinëy 42 representatives from Russian front-line armies, except those in Romania and the Caucasus, established a central military committee led by Krylenko.¹⁸⁴ The Bolsheviks had a near monopoly of power on the northern and western fronts, and considerable influence on the others,¹⁸⁵ and they annulled the treaty with Britain, the proposed partition of Turkey and the seizure of Armenia.¹⁸⁶ On the 19th, at Brest-Litovsk, the Russians offered to evacuate 46,000 square miles of former Austro-Hungarian and Turkish territory, but the Central Powers demanded 110,000 square miles of Russian territory, and negotiations were broken off.¹⁸⁷ On the 22nd counter-revolutionaries in the village of Frolovka in central Asia taxed kulaki to buy arms.¹⁸⁸ Next day Sovnarkom called on Muslim workers to rise against their oppressors and hold Constantinople.¹⁸⁹ On the 24th a Ukrainian delegation reached Brest-Litovsk,¹⁹⁰ as did Bronstein, and negotiations resumed on the 27th.¹⁹¹ The Russians accepted the Ukrainian delegates after they agreed to consult about everything,¹⁹² though the Germans were losing patience with the Russians' stalling tactics.¹⁹³ Helphand owned a large number of wharves and warehouses and employed around 1,000 workers, and his freight business guaranteed fixed rates on long-term shipping contracts. He negotiated with mining companies in the Ruhr, and agreed that military pressure would be necessary if the Bolsheviks behaved badly at Brest-Litovsk,¹⁹⁴ though the German government distanced itself from him after he threatened to publish compromising documents and demanded a million marks.¹⁹⁵

That year German exports had brought in 3.5 billion marks, while imports had cost 7.1 billion, and the value of the gold mark had fallen to 20 percent of its pre-war value for exports by 39 percent for imports. An average of around 50,000 workers had been on strike that year, and though the losses of Allied and neutral shipping had amounted to 26.1 million gross tons, new construction had been 2.9 million.¹⁹⁶

The Russian armed forces had cost 26.1 billion rubles.¹⁹⁷ The average monthly value of Russian exports was 464 million rubles, while imports cost 2.316 billion. Sovnarkom's income so far had been 5.7 billion rubles, but they had spent 30.6 billion. The average daily cost of the war was 82.3 million rubles, including 7.5 for each soldier,¹⁹⁸ and by December 19.2 billion paper rubles were in circulation.¹⁹⁹ Officially the Russian armies had lost around 102,400 killed and 454,100 wounded, of whom 165,000 had died, as had 22,000 of the 1,292,600 who had contracted disease and 32,900 of the 918,200 prisoners of war. The army had consumed 4.16 million tons of flour and cornmeal, 1.27 million tons of meat, 180,000 tons of butter and fats and 11 million tons of fodder, at a cost of 882.8 million rubles.²⁰⁰ The Germans had captured about two million Russians, around 1.5 million had deserted, and reinforcements often arrived at the front at half strength.²⁰¹ The Bolsheviks claimed 5,000 members in the Twelfth Army on the northern front,²⁰² but Cossacks propagandised for the counter-revolutionary 'White Army' in the Don region.²⁰³ Nationally, almost 20 percent of Bolsheviks and 28 percent of Red Guards were under 21,²⁰⁴ and over 60 percent were workers, while white collar workers and others formed around 32 percent, and peasants approaching eight percent.²⁰⁵ As Old Bolsheviks and some newer ones, plus trusted supporters, settled into their powerful positions in Petrograd and elsewhere, young Bolsheviks and their supporters in the Red Army fought and died in the vicious civil war that was well underway.

A working conclusion

Before 1914 the tsar's Empire had covered almost 13.9 million square miles, or almost one-sixth of the world's landmass. Around 8.8 million square miles were in the European provinces, and the rest were in Siberia. By 1917 German and Austro-Hungarian troops occupied half a million square miles, including Warszawa, Lublin, Radom and Łódź in what had been Russian Poland, so the Empire had lost a tenth of its iron ore, a fifth of its coal, two-thirds of its chemicals and some of the most fertile land. Millions of conscripted peasant infantry had been killed or wounded, and much agriculture relied on women, adolescents, prisoners of war and old men, who produced mainly for themselves. The railways were chaotic, mainly because of decrepit locomotives and rolling stock, and military traffic, and grain supplies to towns and cities were often insufficient. The autocracy's finances were precarious, and it depended on loans from its Allies, so the opportunity for a revolution had never been higher since late in 1905, especially in the capital.

By 1917 the Empire's population was estimated at around 182 million, including one million or so in Siberia. The VPSR claimed 100,000 members, nationally, and was the largest socialist party, but 30,000 were in towns and cities and 70,000 in the countryside. The RSDRP claimed 23,600 members, and around 14,200 were industrial workers, though they had few 'ties' with peasants. Latvians formed the largest single group, and they outnumbered the Russians. There were more Mensheviks than Bolsheviks, who claimed 10,000 members in 200 organisations, including the armed forces; but many provincial organisations were weak, even though the requirements for membership had been all but suspended. Many recent recruits knew little about Marxism, and the line between members and supporters was blurred. Two Bolshevik RSDRP CC members were exiles in Siberia, and were inactive; and the two in Switzerland had been out of touch with events in Russia, but had recruited a fifth member in 1915. He was a highly experienced engineer-intelligent, and mostly shuttled between Russia and Scandinavia, from where he his messages to Switzerland could avoid interception. In 1916 he recruited a worker and a student to the Bolsheviks' leading Petrograd bureau; but by 1917 CC instructions were often interpreted very freely in Russia.

By 1917 Petrograd was home to around 2.4 million people. There were several very large factories, and many in the inner suburbs were involved in war-related production. At state-owned factories the workers had been conscripted, but were temporarily exempt from mobilisation. Workforces were becoming increasingly feminised, and peasants did many unskilled jobs. Wages lagged badly behind prices, so most relied on watery soup and black bread. Early in January the Okhrana warned that women were forming long queues to buy food. On the 9th around 150,000 women and some male workers demonstrated about the lack of food, and some carried banners with anti-autocracy and anti-war slogans, and sang revolutionary songs. The Bolsheviks claimed 2,500 to 3,000 members in the city, but only around half were cadre. The RSDRP and Bolshevik CC leaders were caught unawares; but the Bolsheviks claimed 500 or so members in Vyborg and the RSDRP committee was largely composed of Bolshevik workers led by a Latvian intelligent, and after city leaders were imprisoned Vyborg committee tried to give a lead.

The weakness of the Bolsheviks outside Petrograd led to a much weaker response on the 9th. In Moscow 30,000 reportedly went on strike and there were strikes in Nizhni Novgorod and Voronezh in the surrounding central industrial region. In Ukraine there were strikes in Kharkiv, and in the Donbas region, which produced most of Russia's coal, iron and steel. Around 14,000 came out in Azerbaijan, whose oilfields were strategically important, and there were strikes in Rostov-na-Donu and Novocherkassk.

By February at least a third of Petrograd workers and their families were reportedly close to starvation. Thousands of women queued for hours to get bread, which was not always available. In mid-February up to 90,000 workers demonstrated against the government and the war and demanded bread. The Bolshevik leaders thought a demonstration on International Women's Day was a waste of energy, though Mezhraionka persuaded the Vyborg RSDRP committee to cooperate. On the 23rd huge numbers of women workers, including many men from Vyborg and some from the Putilov works, took to the streets. Much of the garrison was based in working-class districts, and some soldiers joined the workers, who fought the police, and there were shouts of 'Down with the Tsar!' At Kronstadt sailors killed the hated admiral and many officers and imprisoned the rest. In and around Moscow, and to some extent in Ukraine, on the Volga and in Transcaucasia, there had been some activity, but it was patchy elsewhere. On the 24th, in Petrograd, around 1,000 Vyborg workers broke through a cordon of police and troops, crossed the Neva and headed to the city centre. They sang revolutionary songs and there were shouts of 'Down with the Tsar!' and 'Down with the government!' They freed political prisoners, and officially their numbers grew to between 158,000 and 196,000. They evidently had no firearms, but police shot some of them. On the 25th the police dared not enter Vyborg, where workers led demonstrations whose main slogan was 'Down with the War!' Officially the 314,000 demonstrators included almost 75,000 Vyborg workers, and some mutinous troops exhorted

others to join them. Some demonstrators got hold of vehicles and machine-guns and rode around the city, and after members of the RSDRP city committee were arrested the Vyborg committee tried to give a lead. When the Bolshevik RSDRP CC member arrived from New York he was exasperated by the Bolshevik leaders' 'flatfootedness', but prevaricated when the Vyborg committee asked for a leaflet, so they wrote one themselves and took it to the CC for editing and printing. The CC member refused to form a militia, and was hospitalised after an accident involving a tram. Leading Bolsheviks were indignant that their instructions to demonstrate peacefully had been rejected, but Mensheviks began organising a soviet on the 1905 model. The tsar was at army headquarters around 400 miles south in Mariľě, and ordered the suppression of demonstrations, by force if necessary. On the 26th unreliable troops were confined to barracks, and though loyal troops reportedly killed around 2,000 demonstrators, some shot back, and other troops refused to fire at demonstrators. The military commander reported to the tsar that he could not control the situation and the only way forward was a new government. On the 27th demonstrators attacked Okhrana headquarters and discovered how many secret agents they had employed. Most troops remained neutral, though more mutinied. Demonstrators brutally killed policemen and took their weapons, and many fled. A small group of liberal Duma deputies formed an unelected 'provisional committee' to replace the tsar's ministers. On the 28th demonstrators captured strategically important buildings, yet the RSDRP CC continued to dither. Many Menshevik and SR workers were moving towards the Bolsheviks, and Mezhraiontsy formed new cells in several districts. The Duma committee announced that they were a government and ordered the abolition of key tsarist institutions. The Bolshevik CC, and many workers and intelligentsy, accepted the provisional government 'in so far as' it furthered the revolution, but some Bolsheviks formed Red Guard and the soviet formed a civilian militia.

Early in March the tsar abdicated. Bread was increasingly scarce in the cities and on the front lines, where around 6.9 million troops were increasingly demoralised and desertions were common. In Petrograd the soviet led much of the workers' movement, and members of the garrison sent deputies. In mid-March the exiled Bolshevik RSDRP CC members returned from Siberia, took over *Pravda* and gave the 'provisional government' conditional support.

The British navy blockaded German ports, and though U-boats had begun to break it, citizens had endured a 'turnip winter'. The SPD was polarising between reformists and the revolutionaries who formed the USPD. The German government gave the Bolshevik CC large amounts of money, indirectly, and permission for a few political émigrés to travel via Germany to Russia, and they undertook to undermine Russia's war effort.

By April the Petrograd Bolsheviks were almost all workers, though many were recent recruits, and few were cadre. There were three Bolshevik intelligentsy at Kronstadt, yet the Bolshevik sailors claimed 3,000 members and 35,000 supporters. The émigré Bolshevik CC members and other political émigrés reached Petrograd to find the Old Bolsheviks 'wandering in the dark'. One CC member revised Theses but the other found them 'puzzling', and they appeared only under on CC member's name. He insisted that 'The trouble with us is that comrades have wished to remain "old" Bolsheviks and "old" Bolshevism needs revising'. (It would take weeks before a majority of Bolshevik leaders in Petrograd supported him.) There were armed clashes between 100,000 demonstrators, including 20,000 to 30,000 armed troops, and government supporters, but an attempted coup failed. Bolshevik leaders were imprisoned, but workers made progress and in trade unions and at an All-Russian RSDRP conference. They recruited Red Guards, but many workers elected moderate socialists as leaders. Some workers in Moscow, Ukraine and the Volga region accepted the 'April theses'. There were a few joint Menshevik-Bolshevik organisations across the Empire, but Menshevik and SR defencists and internationalists had polarised in several regions, and some joint organisations had split; while a Bolshevik paper for troops circulated widely at the fronts.

By May Menshevik leaders and other political émigrés in Paris were allowed to travel through Germany to Petrograd, where one veteran Menshevik leader and former terrorist argued for defencism, while a leading internationalist was shouted down; but a Menshevik conference narrowly rejected the idea of joining the government, and factory workers' delegates elected a Menshevik as chair, though many former Menshevik and SR internationalists supported the Bolsheviks, who formed the largest group in the Petrograd soviet EC, and almost had a majority in the workers' section. Bolshevik workers led most large metalworks in Vyborg, and claimed the support of a third of the city's proletariat. A woman member of Mezhraionka and two Bolshevik intelligentki revived *Rabotnitsa*, the former Bolshevik paper for women workers. At Helsinki Bolsheviks led most battleship crews, and self-styled 'Bolsheviks' agitated front-line troops to desert. Moscow RSDRP claimed 30,000 members. Bolsheviks controlled Saratov and were making progress with Volga peasants. Provincial SR internationalists distanced themselves from defencists, as the German U-boat campaign faltered.

By June Petrograd Bolsheviks claimed 36,000 members and application procedures were far more stringent than the Mensheviks', though they led the full soviet. An All-Russian congress of soviets delegated power between congresses to VTsIK, on which Mensheviks and Bolsheviks had roughly equal numbers. At Kronstadt the sailors' soviet refused to accept government orders which it had not countersigned, and agitated other Baltic sailors. In Petrograd troops and the Bolshevik military committee called for a demonstration against the government. On the

10th RSDRP leaders forbade demonstrations for three days, and the Bolshevik CC formally accepted the ban, but *Pravda* published the route. Menshevik and SR internationalists marched behind Bolshevik banners and 2,000 armed troops were among the demonstrators, but the government ordered half of a radical machine-gun regiment to the front. Bolsheviks led several district soviets, and were the largest group at an All-Russian trade union conference. Since January the cost of living had rocketed and wages had not caught up. In Moscow Bolsheviks won fewer votes than SRs the elections for the duma, but far more seats than the Mensheviks. Across Russia most RSDRP committees had split, but except for Ukraine and the Volga region the response to Petrograd events was patchy. Offensives at the front had been defeated, and many troops had deserted, but the US government threatened to stop loans unless Russia stayed in the war. The government sent troops to suppress peasant insurgency, yet the army on the Caucasian front was disintegrating.

By early July Petrograd Red Guards claimed to have 20,000 members. A machine-gun regiment decided to demonstrate, and the Bolshevik CC and military committee sent agents to other units. Around 5,000 troops surrounded the Tauride Palace where the soviet met. SR internationalists joined the demonstration, and though Mezhraintsy held back, 50,000 demonstrators included many of the 30,000 Putilov workers. Many small arms had been distributed, but government troops used machine-guns, and the coup failed. The RSDRP CC voted against armed demonstrations, but some workers, soldiers and sailors had left the Bolsheviks, and demonstrated with arms. Government troops attacked them, and the soviet EC, and surviving CC members were split about further demonstrations. The government recruited a few moderate socialist ministers, but the prime minister successfully demanded unlimited powers. Thousands of loyal troops marched through the city. Menshevik defencists supported the government when it issued arrest warrants for leading Bolsheviks, but two CC members escaped to Finland. Kadets demanded control of the government, which closed more socialist papers. The Bolsheviks had more influence in trade unions, yet VTsIK members, including some Bolsheviks and SR internationalists, acknowledged the government's right to control the armed forces. The soviet's *Izvestia* accused the Bolshevik CC of supporting the tsar and the kaiser, but around 1.5 million copies of Bolshevik papers were printed. After 4,000 Mezhraintsy merged with the Bolsheviks, they claimed 200,000 members nationally, and though many were inexperienced young workers, and most intelligently kept their heads down, Vyborg Bolsheviks claimed over 6,600 members. Kronstadt sailors killed or imprisoned hated officers and Bolshevik women agitated sailors and recruited some of their wives. In Moscow the response to Petrograd events was patchy, though an Old Bolshevik intelligentka helped laundresses to form a union, and more Red Guards units were formed. Elsewhere SR internationalists had separated from defencists. Peasants still refused to sell grain and railway union members disrupted transport. Peasants had land and attacked landlords, and the government sent Cossacks to suppress them. At the fronts desertions followed defeats, but Bolsheviks had toe-holds in the army. In Germany a few navy sailors mutinied. SPD reformists discussed peace, though others insisted on carrying on the war.

By August the Petrograd Bolsheviks were reviving, especially in trade unions and other workers' organisations. Some workers complained about the lack of intelligently cadre, but others took responsibility for leading. More SR and Menshevik internationalists leaned towards the Bolsheviks, and some joined. The government planned to evacuate strategically important factories, but announced some reforms. Late that month, when a counter-revolutionary general attempted a coup, the government accepted the support of Petrograd Bolsheviks and workers, and they and the RSDRP CC sent agents to the provinces. A government-led conference tried to drive a wedge between reformists and revolutionaries, but there were strikes. Bolshevik influence was growing in the central industrial region, though few intelligently were active. They were not very influential in Finland, the Baltic provinces, Ukraine and much of the Volga region, had little influence in Transcaucasia, and less among peasants. Yet peasant 'riots' proliferated, and many peasant troops refused to suppress them. German troops had captured Riga, and others occupied islands in the Gulf of Finland, threatening Petrograd.

By September Bolsheviks and other internationalists were gaining ground in Petrograd workers' organisations including the Red Guards, while Menshevik influence had plummeted. Some counter-revolutionary generals had been killed, though others had been locked up under liberal conditions. The government freed Bolshevik leaders from jail, but formed a five-man leading 'directory'. Bolsheviks in Moscow and elsewhere lagged behind those in the capital. The harvest was lower than the previous year, and peasant 'riots' increased, while the cost of food and other basic commodities in towns and cities was rocketing. In Germany the food situation was desperate.

By October the food situation in urban Russia was critical, as were the government finances. The Bolsheviks claimed 350,000 members nationally, including 30,000 women, and Red Guards up to 100,000. Petrograd Bolsheviks claimed 43,000 members and to lead up to 20,000 garrison troops, the soviet EC and its military committee. The CC split about whether an insurrection could succeed nationally, but established a planning committee on the 24th, and asked 45,000 Kronstadt sailors to come to the city next day. A rising in the name of the soviet began on the 25th, and days later Old Bolsheviks monopolised the most powerful posts in Sovnarkom, the

council of people's commissars. Moscow Bolsheviks claimed to lead up to 14,000 of the Red Guards, several workers' organisations and parts of the garrison. Old Bolsheviks dithered about a rising, but younger ones were enthusiastic. In Ukraine the Bolsheviks claimed to have been ready for a revolution for a long time; but in other industrial regions, and especially in Transcaucasia, they were weak, and even weaker in the countryside, yet peasants organised in a Bolshevik manner. Bolshevik agents were thin on the ground in the provinces, and Bolshevik and other workers, sailors and soldiers were sometimes ahead of them. German revolutionaries welcomed the Petrograd rising, and the government sent huge amounts of money to the Bolshevik CC indirectly.

By November more Old Bolsheviks had been appointed to Sovnarkom positions, with a few young Bolsheviks, a Bolshevik turned Menshevik and an SR; but former government officials went on strike. Several Bolshevik CC members argued for an all-socialist Sovnarkom, but negotiations with Menshevik internationalists broke down, and several Bolshevik CC members and people's commissars resigned. They, together with other leaders and former high-profile supporters, worried about a Bolshevik dictatorship. Sovnarkom's negotiations with railway union's leaders also broke down, and many peasants still refused to sell grain, so the food situation, especially in Petrograd, deteriorated further, and there were strikes. The only female people's commissar and the *Rabonitsa* editors organised a large and successful conference of women workers. Sovnarkom decreed progressive measures and published the secret treaties with the Allies. It closed rival organisations, but took leading positions in others, including VTsIK. In Moscow the food situation was grim, and Bolshevik successes in the central industrial region were patchy, while the movement towards national independence gained ground in some border regions. In the south counter-revolutionary officers, including those who had escaped from captivity, were building an army, which the Allies supported financially, and a Red Army of young and recently-recruited Bolsheviks and Red Guards was being formed. German troops occupied much of western Russia, and a Bolshevik sailor led a delegation to Brest-Litovsk to negotiate an amnesty.

Early in December the final available results of the constituent assembly elections showed that 41,687,000 people had voted. SRs won around 15,848,000 votes, Bolsheviks 9,844,600, Kadets 1,986,600 and Mensheviks 1,364,800. SRs, including 39 internationalists, won 380 seats, Bolsheviks 168, Mensheviks 18 and Kadets 17, but Sovnarkom disenfranchised the Kadets as 'enemies of the people'. SRs had won the largest number of seats in the countryside, though the Bolsheviks were successful in key workers' districts of towns and cities, and among garrisons, mainly in the north, including Petrograd. Food was increasingly scarce and expensive, and the supply of coal for domestic heating and industry was insufficient. Sovnarkom established a commission to direct industry, and established the Cheka, to tackle illegal activity and political opposition. It had no power to execute, but could withdraw the right to rations. A few SR internationalists became minor people's commissars, but soon withdrew. Nationalists were making further progress in border regions. A former leading Bolshevik intelligent argued that there was a serious danger of a Bolshevik dictatorship. For him the key issue was the need for 'proletarian culture', and his books topped that year's best-sellers. At Brest-Litovsk an Old Bolshevik led the Russian delegation. The situation of German citizens was dire, yet their negotiators demanded territorial gains, and Allied governments had made a secret agreement to take some Russian territory. In Petrograd Old Bolsheviks settled into their powerful positions, as young Bolsheviks and workers in the Red Army fought and died in the civil war that was well underway.

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Most western writers about Russia in 1917 appear to have a craft mentality regarding those who do not read Russian, and most have failed to translate many of the surviving workers' autobiographies and biographies in full, though some occasionally quote sentences to suit their political agenda. They often characterise Russian sources as potentially biased, though not the biased works of western Cold Warriors. Like Stalinist and Stalinoid historians, they assume a top-down ranking of almost exclusively male Bolshevik intelligentsy, and refer to them by one of their underground pseudonyms, though very few use those of Bolshevik worker-intelligentsy, praktiki and other revolutionary socialist workers. Most male historians marginalise the role of women, and especially women workers; yet to the best of my knowledge hardly any have had any experience of revolutionary activity, or appear to have seriously considered that female as well as male Bolshevik and other revolutionary socialist workers were the real leaders for much of the time in most of Russia. Virtually all of them assume that what happened in Petrograd generalized more or less automatically to major cities and industrial regions, without providing much or sometimes any evidence. We lack accounts of Bolshevik and other revolutionary socialist workers' activity inside and outside those regions, and though revolutionary socialists of various kinds organised in some places, this does not necessarily mean that they were automatically supported, or that the intermittent issues of Bolshevik publications which some received were accepted unconditionally. Many western writers focus on the fact that Sovnarkom proscribed the 17 Kadets elected to the Constituent Assembly as 'enemies of the people', but not so

much on the tsarist military officers who the Bolsheviks freed after they had given their 'word of honour' not to oppose Sovnarkom militarily, then escaped and did precisely the opposite. Few Russian and western historians consider what might have happened if the Bolsheviks had not filled the political vacuum.

This book has tried very hard to give the Bolshevik praktiki, worker-intelligenty and other revolutionary socialist workers at least some of the credit they are due, and hopefully it will encourage future researchers and translators to carry out the mountain of work remaining to be done, including trying to give full and evidence-based answers to political and operational questions like the following.

How did hundreds of mainly Old Bolshevik intelligenty manage to go abroad after 1905 and live there up to 1917? How many remained at large and active in Russia? Many Bolshevik workers moved around the Empire, but where did they get the money for fares and subsistence: If they left their families behind, how were they supported? The core of Old Bolshevik leaders in Russia were in the capital, but why did they appear to assume that what happened there would automatically generalise across the Empire? In January women workers, not the Bolsheviks, led the demonstrations for bread in Petrograd, and why did Mezhraionka support the women? To what extent was this largely an economic struggle with political implications, given that striking was illegal? Why did the Bolshevik leaders grumble, especially about women workers who had ignored their 'instructions'? Why did they think that organising for International Women's Day in February was a 'waste of energy'? Why did the Old Bolsheviks, including the Bolshevik RSDRP CC leaders who returned to Petrograd in mid-March and took control of *Pravda*, critically support the 'provisional government' 'in so far as' it furthered the February revolution? To what extent can their attitude be attributed to the old mechanical 'Russian Marxist' idea that a bourgeois revolution had to take place before a proletarian revolution would be possible? Why did leaders in Petrograd know 'only the formulas of 1905' and so were 'wandering in the dark'?

After the first émigré train arrived from Switzerland through Germany, Sweden and Finland on 3 April, why did only one CC member modify their 'theses'? Why did these 'April theses' split the CC and other Old Bolsheviks? Why had they been unable to revise their perspective before? How justified were the Bolshevik CC minority in worrying about the lack of revolutionary development outside Petrograd, especially among the peasantry, or did they all dither and then defer? Why did the attempted coup fail, even in Petrograd? As the demand for intelligenty cadre ballooned, why did the largely intelligenty Old Bolshevik leadership remain small and tightly controlled? How rigorous were the recruitment procedures for workers wishing to join the Bolsheviks, and why?

How successful were Old Bolshevik leaders in generalising successes and guarding against failures across the Empire in summer? Why did the attempted coups in June and July have little chance of success, even in Petrograd, let alone elsewhere? How many Bolshevik agents from Petrograd and other major centres were crucial to forming soviets, especially in the countryside, and how many were ignored or marginalised? How many soviets were built mainly, or completely, by non-Bolshevik workers?

What was the precise balance of class forces across the Empire by October? To what extent were Anarchists influential, especially at Kronstadt, and did Baltic sailors and demoralised front-line troops and deserters play a crucial role? Afterwards, why did the Bolsheviks allow counter-revolutionary officers and cadets to escape? Why did the Petrograd Old Bolsheviks not acknowledge that a civil war was underway by the 25th? Why were there too few Old Bolshevik cadre to staff Sovnarkom? Why did Sovnarkom feel it appropriate to treat the SR majority and the Mensheviks in the Constituent Assembly so cavalierly? Why was the Cheka not given the power to execute common criminals, though it did receive the power to remove food tickets from political dissenters, when that threatened them with starvation? Why did it take until 12 December before *Pravda* acknowledged that there had been a 'Soviet revolution', not a Bolshevik revolution in Petrograd, and to a lesser extent in the Moscow region, the Donbas region, the Saratov region and a few other industrial regions? Did the Petrograd rising really generalise across the whole of the Empire with little resistance, or only in a few major industrial regions? Why was the Red Army largely composed of single young Bolshevik and Red Guard men, while women were given only supportive, non-combatant roles? Why did the Old Bolsheviks settle into their leading bureaucratic positions as the civil war got well underway, while potential future Bolshevik leaders began suffering hideous casualties, which effectively guaranteed that many would not be alive to replace the Old Bolsheviks if they won the civil war?

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2. The February revolution

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129 Salisbury 1978: 337
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233 Wildman 1980: 139
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- 60 Acton 1988: 161
- 61 Engelstein 2018: 124
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123 Burdzhhalov 1987: 345-6
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189 Sukhanov 1984: 206
190 Burdzhhalov 1987: 309-10
191 Yedlin 1999: 114
192 Gorky ND: 31-3
193 Salisbury 1978: 418-19
194 Sukhanov 1984: 208
195 Yedlin 1999: 118
196 Smith 1980: 101-2
197 Mandel 1983: 87, 89-90, 97, 104
198 Rappaport 2016: 146
199 Smith 1985: 67, 70
200 Mandel 1983: 67, 88, 105, 108
201 Sukhanov 1984: 164-5
202 Wollenberg 1978: 21
203 Keep 1976: 251
204 Watson 2005: 31
205 Knyazev & Konstantinov 1957:
206 Kotkin 2015: 181
207 Galili 1989: 123-4, 130
208 Burdzhhalov 1987: 336
209 Anweiler 1974: 109, 147
210 Sukhanov 1984: 191-2
211 Kotkin 2015: 181
212 Possony 1966: 225
213 Pope 1943: 119
214 Anweiler 1974: 121
215 Haupt & Marie 1974: 272
216 Turton 2007: 76-7
217 Smith 1980: 102
218 Ferro 1972: 82
219 Neiberg & Jordan 2021: 129
220 Woods 1999: 522
221 Anweiler 1974: 110
222 Sukhanov 1984: 82
223 Elwood 1974: 1: 200-2
224 Anweiler 1974: 110
225 Smith 1980: 121
226 Burdzhhalov 1987: 332
227 Mandel 1983: 100
228 Keep 1974: 69
229 Barratt & Scherr: 200
230 Ferro 1985: 163
231 Keep 1976: 173-4
232 Wade & Seregny 1989: 279
233 Rabinowitch 1991: 141
234 Wildman 1980: 236, 241, 277
235 Steinberg 2001: 121
236 Lincoln 1994: 374
237 Burdzhhalov 1987: 316
238 Service 2023: 125
239 Burdzhhalov 1987: 315
240 Chamberlin 1987: 96-7
241 Mandel 1983: 86
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251 Smith 1980: 197
252 Miéville 2018: 96
253 Zelnik 1995: 25
254 Salisbury 1978: 394
255 Broido 1998: 75-6, 78
256 Steinberg 1935: 151, 153
257 Maxwell 1990: 224
258 Steinberg 1935: 158
259 Maxwell 1990: 225
260 Steinberg 1935: 155-7
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262 Montefiore 2008: 317
263 Salisbury 1978: 393-5
264 Montefiore 2008: 319
265 Service 2004: 118-19
266 Pomper 1990: 297
267 Rabinowitch 1979: 74-5
268 Galili 1989: 130-1
269 Katkov 1969: 488-90
270 Rabinowitch 1991: 42
271 Elwood 1974: 1: 197
272 Le Blanc 2017
273 Pomper 1990: 297
274 Read 2005: 163
275 Elwood 1974: 1: 197
276 Rappaport 2016: 160
277 Salisbury 1978: 327, 394, 396-8
278 Le Blanc 2017
279 Figes 1997: 414
280 Volin 1970: 121
281 Woytinsky 1961: 238-9, 243
282 Galili 1989: 150
283 Salisbury 1978: 392-4
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285 Clements 1979: 102
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287 Krupskaya 1932: 2: 199-200
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289 Porter 1980: 232-3, 233-5, 238, 241-2, 261, 504
290 Elwood 1974: 1: 198, 216
291 Trotsky 1934: 367, 577
292 Mushtukov 1970: 61
293 Cox 2017: 61
294 Engelstein 2018: 141
295 Gatrell 2005: 180
296 Service 2023: 134
297 Galili 1989: 134, 140, 165
298 wiki/Nikolay_Podvoisky
299 Porter 1980: 242
300 Farnsworth 1980: 73
301 Porter 1980: 244
302 Miéville 2018: 95
303 Anweiler 1974: 106-7
304 Liebman 1970: 161, 162
305 Raskolnikov 1982: 56
306 Rappaport 2016: 153-8, 364
307 Burdzhhalov 1987: 339
308 Rabinowitch 1991: 42-3
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310 Kerensky 1966: 189-90
311 Elwood 1974: 1: 198, 204, 207-8
312 Daly 2004: 208
313 Galili 1989: 120-1
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- 337 Steinberg 2001: 92-33
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- 340 Brovkin 1997: 61
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- 344 Elwood 1974: 1: 220
- 345 Kingston-Mann 1983: 134
- 346 Kerensky 1966: 224
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- 349 Yurenev 1924
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- 362 Ferro 1985: 163
- 363 Lincoln 1994: 374
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- 366 Smith 1985: 95-6
- 367 Zavarzine 2011: 281
- 368 Jussila 1999: 92, 94
- 369 Ferro 1985: 103-4
- 370 Raskolnikov 1982: 113-14
- 371 Puntila 1975: 94-5
- 372 Kirby 1975: 150-1, 156-7
- 373 Wildman 1980: 160-1, 202
- 374 Puntila 1975: 99
- 375 Miéville 2018: 90-1
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- 378 Raun 1991: 101
- 379 Lincoln 1994: 336
- 380 Plakans 2011: 295
- 381 Raun 1991: 100
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- 385 Katkov 1969: 485
- 386 Schneiderman 1976: 361
- 387 Smith 2018: 117
- 388 Anweiler 1974: 113
- 389 Koenker 1981: 103-4
- 390 Wildman 1980: 169
- 391 Koenker & Rosenberg 1989: 99
- 392 Cliff 1976: 150
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- 394 Stone 1998: 296
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- 396 Daly 2004: 206
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- 398 Fitzpatrick & Slezkine 2000: 82-3
- 399 Ruud 1990: 169
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- 401 Murphy 2005: 45
- 402 Koenker 1981: 99, 145, 189, 192
- 403 Murphy 2005: 36, 46-8
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- 405 Keep 1976: 124
- 406 Miéville 2018: 89
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- 408 Keep 1976: 124
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- 411 Mandel 1983: 86
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- 416 Mandel 1983: 88
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- 418 Mandel 1983: 86
- 419 Piatnitsky ND: 220-4
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- 421 Trotsky 1934: 258
- 422 Koenker 1981: 110, 116, 119, 194
- 423 Chamberlin 1987: 85
- 424 Eklof & Saburova 2017: 269-71
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- 426 Koenker & Rosenberg 1989: 65, 99-100
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- 428 Salisbury 1978: 420
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- 432 Koenker & Rosenberg 1989: 100
- 433 Cliff 1976: 148
- 434 Friedgut 1994: 234-8, 255
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- 436 Friedgut 1994: 234, 236-8, 263
- 437 Trotsky 1934: 186, 235
- 438 Engelstein 2018: 153
- 439 Raleigh 1986: 87-8
- 440 Koenker & Rosenberg 1989: 101
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- 448 Raleigh 2002: 19, 31
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- 477 Keep 1976: 125, 129
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- 485 Smith 2018: 109
- 486 Miéville 2018: 115
- 487 Hosking 1998: 469
- 488 Volin 1970: 120
- 489 Kingston-Mann 1983: 134-5
- 490 Raleigh 1986: 172, 184
- 491 Haimson 1987: 394-7, 400, 409, 506
- 492 Jones 2005: 246-8
- 493 Suny 1972: 74, 81-2
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- 495 Suny 1972: 76-7, 89, 117, 187
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- 498 Suny 1972: 82-4
- 499 Philips Price 1969: 37-8, 48-50
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- 501 Knox 2018: 2: 624
- 502 Lincoln 1994: 379
- 503 Koenker & Rosenberg 1989: 167, 275
- 504 Galili 1989: 74
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- 506 Smith 1985: 70, 89
- 507 Keep 1976: 68, 105
- 508 Smith 2018: 107
- 509 Acton 2003: 121
- 510 Lincoln 1994: 375
- 511 Philips Price 1997: 52
- 512 Volin 1970: 145
- 513 Westwood 1995: 190, 217, 235
- 514 Anweiler 1974: 117
- 515 Knox 2018: 2: 536, 542
- 516 Salisbury 1978: 433
- 517 Kotkin 2015: 172
- 518 Cliff 1976: 191-2
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- 522 Farmborough 1974: 261
- 523 Botchkareva 1919: 131, 133, 135-7, 139
- 524 Getzler 2002: 37
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- 526 Frankel & Knei-Paz 1992: 79
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- 531 Anweiler 1974: 117
- 532 Farmborough 1974: 254-5, 255-6, 259-60
- 533 Kochan 1986: 242
- 534 Figs 1997: 346
- 535 Figs 2001: 32-3
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- 537 Faulkner 2017: 175
- 538 Bettleheim 1976: 89
- 539 Cliff 1976: 188
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- 541 Hardach 1977: 28
- 542 Williams 1972: 65
- 543 Woytinsky 1961: 261
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- 604 Mushtukov 1970: 7
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- 607 Aline 1958 : 668-9
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135 McDaniel 1988: 315, 361
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141 Kaiser 1987: 66
142 Kingston-Mann 1983: 147
143 Swain 1996: 16-18
144 Miéville 2018: 118
145 Mushtukov 1970: 59
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149 McDaniel 1988: 318
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167 Smith 1985: 192-3
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180 wiki/Alexei_Rykov
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184 Knyazev & Konstantinov 1957: 188
185 Bobrovskaya 1933: 28-9
186 Liebman 1985: 158
187 Schapiro 1978: 173
188 Faulkner 2017: 185
189 Figes 1997: 393
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191 Cliff 1989: 250
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196 Liebman 1970: 137
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203 Rabinowitch 1991: 42, 44
204 Sukhanov 1984: 288
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272 Wade & Seregnny 1989: 275
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305 Koenker & Rosenberg 1989: 167, 275
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5. Polarisation and splits

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- 6. Down with the ten capitalist ministers!**
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- 129 Weber 1974: 134
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- 139 Service 2023: 157
- 140 Volkogonov 1996: 87-8
- 141 McCauley 1991: 26,
- 142 Figs 1997: 418
- 143 Miéville 2018: 140
- 144 Ilyin-Genevsky 1931: 57-9, 61
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- 146 Salisbury 1978: 434
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- 153 Cliff 1976: 185-6
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- 170 Mushtukov 1970: 59
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- 248 Miéville 2018: 119
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- 269 Page 1970: 64-5
- 270 Cliff 1976: 176, 186
- 271 Volin 1970: 26
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- 273 Aline 1959: 925
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- 288 Ferro 1985: 161
- 289 Raleigh 1986: 126-7, 132, 135, 137-9, 128, 164, 166-71
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- 294 Carr 1978: 2: 29
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- 296 Haimson 1987: 411, 414, 416
- 297 Jones 2005: 254-5
- 298 Suny 1994: 188
- 299 Jones 2005: 255
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- 301 Suny 1994: 189
- 302 Friedgut 1994: 258
- 303 Frankel & Knei-Paz 1992: 256
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- 306 Friedgut 1994: 259
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- 319 Hillyar & McDermid 2000: 153-4
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- 350 Pearson 1975: 176
- 351 McMeekin 2011: 218
- 352 Neiberg & Jordan 2021: 126
- 353 Knox 2018: 2: 641-2
- 354 Lincoln 1994: 408-9
- 355 Figes 1997: 418
- 356 Knox 2018: 2: 639
- 357 Swettenham 1967: 19
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- 359 Swettenham 1967: 19
- 360 Figes 1997: 419
- 361 Knox 2018: 2: 648
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- 363 Figes 1997: 413
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- 368 Figes 1997: 419
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- 370 Service 2023: 182
- 371 Neiberg & Jordan 2021: 129-30
- 372 Cliff 1976: 201
- 373 Suny 1972: 102, 195
- 374 Steinberg 1935: 173
- 375 Kotkin 2015: 175, 202
- 376 Salisbury 1978: 433
- 7 Figes 1997: 370
- 8 Smith 1980: 184
- 9 Rabinowitch 1979: 3-4
- 10 Miéville 2018: 169
- 11 Rabinowitch 1991: 155-6, 165
- 12 Trotsky 1934: 543
- 13 Galili 1989: 325
- 14 Mushtukov 1970: 97
- 15 wiki/Vladimir_Nevsky
- 16 Schapiro 1977: 47
- 17 Chamberlin 1987: 168
- 18 Volkogonov 1996: 68
- 19 Liebman 1985: 208
- 20 Rabinowitch 1991: 111, 148
- 21 Service 2023: 169-70
- 22 Koenker & Rosenberg 1989: 214
- 23 Elwood 1974: 1: 239
- 24 Smith 2018: 123
- 25 Pomper 1990: 276
- 26 Miéville 2018: 168
- 27 Stites 1978: 302
- 28 Rabinowitch 1991: 144, 147-51
- 29 Voline 1974: 152-3, 185
- 30 Rabinowitch 1991: 145-6
- 31 Galili 1989: 324-5
- 32 Cox 2017: 59
- 33 Porter 1980: 260
- 34 Rabinowitch 1991: 140, 144
- 35 Serge & Trotsky 1975: 38
- 36 Rappaport 2016: 217
- 37 Cliff 1989: 231
- 38 Souvarine 1940: 167, 184
- 39 Figes 1997: 429, 432
- 40 wiki/Nikolay_Krylenko
- 41 Steinberg 2001: 151
- 42 Ferro 1985: 35
- 43 Trotsky 1934: 546
- 44 Lincoln 1994: 391
- 45 Miéville 2018: 63
- 46 Trotsky 1934: 565
- 47 Raskolnikov 1982: 211
- 48 Montefiore 2008: 337
- 49 Miéville 2018: 64
- 50 Raskolnikov 1982: 141, 147
- 51 Chamberlin 1987: 172
- 52 Trotsky 1934: 546
- 53 Chamberlin 1987: 169
- 54 Koenker & Rosenberg 1989: 214-15
- 55 Chamberlin 1987: 171
- 56 Rabinowitch 1991: 165
- 57 Cliff 1976: 272
- 58 Rabinowitch 1991: 163-5, 167, 171-2, 220
- 59 Steinberg 2001: 153
- 60 Chamberlin 1987: 171
- 61 Rabinowitch 1991: 171, 174
- 62 Mandel 1983: 163
- 63 Rabinowitch 1991: 174-5
- 64 Possony 1966: 248-9
- 65 Service 2023: 171
- 66 Miéville 2018: 186
- 67 Mushtukov 1970: 101
- 68 Trotsky 1934: 561-2
- 69 Getzler 2002: 77
- 70 Smith 2018: 123
- 71 Koenker & Rosenberg 1989: 216
- 72 Rabinowitch 1991: 177
- 73 Faulkner 2017: 155
- 74 Galili 1989: 340
- 75 Raskolnikov 1982: 155
- 76 Figes 1997: 427, 432
- 77 Rabinowitch 1991: 182
- 78 Rappaport 2016: 215
- 79 Ilyin-Zhenevsky 1984: x
- 80 Miéville 2018: 172, 182
- 81 Rabinowitch 1991: 144
- 82 Pearson 1975: 193
- 83 Pitcher 2001: 130

7. The July Days

- 1 Murphy 1945: 99
- 2 Cliff 1976: 163
- 3 Smith 1985: 67, 105
- 4 Mandel 1983: 40, 123, 151, 189, 223
- 5 wiki/Vladimir_Mescheryakov
- 6 McDermid & Hillyar 1999: 167

- 84 Chamberlin 1987: 180
85 Trotsky 1934: 596, 599
86 Mandel 1983: 165
87 Trotsky 1934: 551-3
88 Galili 1989: 326, 330
89 Mandel 1983: 166
90 Acton 2003: 136
91 Trotsky 1934: 549
92 Salisbury 1978: 443
93 Chamberlin 1987: 180
94 Service 2023: 173
95 Rabinowitch 1991: 157
96 Miéville 2018: 185
97 Wildman 1987: 126-7
98 Smith 1985: 102
99 Trotsky 1934: 811
100
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103 Miéville 2018: 173
104 Rabinowitch 1979: 15-16, 43-4
105 Lincoln 1994: 395
106 Mandel 1983: 170
107 Liebman 1985: 156
108 Faulkner 2017: 154
109 Woytinsky 1961: 307
110 Mandel 1983: 163
111 Levine 1933: 109
112 Faulkner 2017: 153
113 Rabinowitch 1991: 162
114 Montefiore 2008: 337-8
115 Trotsky 1934: 547
116 Rabinowitch 1991: 185
117 Miéville 2018: 178
118 Sukhanov 1984: 443
119 Rabinowitch 1991: 194, 196, 200-1
120 Trotsky 1934: 555
121 Cliff 1989: 227
122 Woytinsky 1961: 298
123 Miéville 2018: 180
124 Rabinowitch 1991: 190
125 Cliff 1976: 260
126 Sukhanov 1984: 449
127 Woods 1999: 562-3
128 Woytinsky 1961: 305-6
129 Rabinowitch 1991: 159-61
130 Faulkner 2017: 155
131 Mandel 1983: 169, 171
132 Voline 1974: 262
133 Rabinowitch 1991: 56, 140, 193
134 Mandel 1984: 230-1
135 Frankel & Knei-Paz 1992: 61
136 Trotsky 1934: 544
137 Raskolnikov 1982: 173, 175
138 Trotsky 1934: 561, 596, 757
139 Rabinowitch 1991: 139, 157, 213
140 Chamberlin 1987: 180
141 Elwood 1974: 1: 242
142 Knyazev & Konstantinov 1957: 228-9
143 Rabinowitch 1991: 213-15
144 Knox 2018: 2: 661
145 Rabinowitch 1991: 210, 213-15
146 Miéville 2018: 187
147 Montefiore 2008: 338
148 Chamberlin 1987: 177
149 Raskolnikov 1982: 169
150 Cliff 1976: 283
151 Rabinowitch 1991: 223
152 Sukhanov 1984: 468
153 Miéville 2018: 145
154 Trotsky 1934: 571, 573
155 Knyazev & Konstantinov 1957: 323
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163 Rabinowitch 1979: 52, 57, 66
164 Deutscher 1982: 165, 165
165 Rabinowitch 1991: 56-8, 215-17
166 Pomper 1990: 297
167 Deutscher 1970: 288
168 McNeal 1973: 179-80
169 Cliff 1976: 273
170 Steinberg 2001: 156
171 Woods 1999: 564
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174 Krupskaya 1932: 2: 232
175 Service 2023: 173-4
176 Woytinsky 1961: 308
177 Woods 1999: 566
178 Wiki/Sergo_Ordzhonikidze
179 Mushtukov 1970: 112
180 Lenin CW: 27: 101, 244, 257
181 Raskolnikov 1982: 191-2
182 McDerimid & Hillyar 1999: 153
183 Weber 1980: 135-6
184 Woods 1999: 569
185 Porter 1980: 307
186 Volkogonov 1994: 116
187 Haynes 2002: 29
188 Smith 2018: 124
189 Woytinsky 1961: 308-9
190 Sukhanov 1984: 487
191 Engelstein 2018: 158
192 Knox 2018: 2: 663-4
193 Rabinowitch 1991: 220
194 Sukhanov 1984: 488
195 Rabinowitch 1991: 223
196 Trotsky 1934: 627
197 Rabinowitch 1991: 65, 206, 217-18
198 Steinberg 2001: 183
199 Baron 1966: 348-50
200 Rabinowitch 1991: 70, 72-3
201 Deutscher 1970: 282-3
202 Rabinowitch 1991: 157
203 Elwood 1976: 220
204 Miéville 2018: 145-6
205 Rabinowitch 1991: 61, 71
206 Miéville 2018: 146-7
207 Trotsky 1934: 757
208 Cliff 1976: 282-3
209 Salisbury 1978: 452
210 Miéville 2018: 191
211 Woytinsky 1961: 291
212 Service 2023: 174-5
213 Weber 1980: 136
214 Salisbury 1978: 452-3
215 Mushtukov 1970: 133-4
216 Rabinowitch 1991: 75-6
217 Woytinsky 1961: 291-2
218 Rabinowitch 1991: 90
219 Miéville 2018: 148
220 Rabinowitch 1991: 77, 86
221 Woods 1999: 568-9
222 Rabinowitch 1991: 79
223 Aline 1959: 926
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225 Cliff 1976: 202
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227 Rabinowitch 1991: 107, 218-19, 221
228 Miéville 2018: 146
229 Krassin 1929: 46-7
230 O'Connor 1992: 128
231 Krassin 1929: 48-50
232 Chamberlin 1987: 185
233 Rabinowitch & Kristof 1972: 178-80
234 Steinberg 2001: 156
235 Steinberg 1935: 175
236 Smith 2018: 145
237 Steinberg 1935: 177
238 Maxwell 1990: 230
239 Mandel 1983: 175
240 Liebman 1985: 138
241 Steinberg 2001: 185
242 Haupt & Marie 1974: 13
243 Chamberlin 1987: 181-2
244 Volkogonov 1994: 146
245 Mushtukov 1970: 118, 121-2, 124
246 Possony 1966: 263
247 Levine 1933: 112
248 Daly 2004: 214
249 Rabinowitch 1991: 110
250 Possony 1966: 261
251 Watson 2005: 29-30
252 Rabinowitch 1991: 97-8, 100
253 Phillips Price 1997: 48
254 Galili 1989: 345
255 Gorky 1968: 75
256 Troyat 1994: 132-3
257 Elwood 1974: 1: 246
258 Rabinowitch 1991: 217
259 Woods 1999: 577
260 Woytinsky 1961: 286-7, 289
261 Rabinowitch 1991: 98
262 Raskolnikov 1982: 197, 210, 213-5, 217, 225
263 Rabinowitch 1991: 100
264 Mandel 1983: 55
265 Trotsky 1934: 605
266 Brovkin 1997:
267 Swain 1996: 23
268 Steinberg 2001: 157
269 Cliff 1989: 213
270 Balabanoff 1973: 153
271 Salisbury 1978: 451-2
272 Wildman 1987: 146
273 Galili 1989: 345
274 Daly 2004: 212
275 von Laue 1971: 108
276 Rabinowitch 1991: 104, 111-12
277 Wollenberg 1978: 18
278 Trotsky 1934: 757
279 Rabinowitch 1991: 53
280 Balabanoff 1973: 152-3
281 Kingston-Mann 1983: 165
282 González 2016: 213
283 Zeman & Scharlau 1965: 225-7
284 Acton 2003: 135
285 Steinberg 2001: 195
286 Wildman 1987: 126
287 Smith 1985: 98
288 Kingston-Mann 1983: 165
289 Smith 1980: 222
290 Cox 2017: 69
291 Chamberlin 1987: 217
292 Zeman 1958: 68
293 Galili 1989: 346-7
294 Cliff 1989: 216
295 Trotsky 1934: 443
296 Galili 1989: 348
297 Miéville 2018: 196
298 Kingston-Mann 1983: 166
299 Knox 2018: 2: 670
300 Mandel 1984: 213
301 Salisbury 1978: 452
302 Mandel 1983: 176
303 Schapiro 1978: 176
304 Liebman 1970: 195
305 Smith 1985: 126
306 Volkogonov 1996: 68
307 Cliff 1976: 285
308 Miéville 2018: 197
309 Mushtukov 1970: 123
310 Chamberlin 1987: 185-6

311 Liebman 1985: 158, 206
 312 Acton 2003: 193
 313 Schapiro 1978: 173
 314 Cliff 1976: 161-2
 315 Cohen 1974: 51
 316 Mushtukov 1970: 123
 317 Schapiro 1978: 173
 318 Acton 2003: 193
 319 Cliff 1976: 160
 320 Possony 1966: 265
 321 Montefiore 2008: 343
 322 Service 2004: 136
 323 Anweiler 1974: 173
 324 Cohen 1974: 51
 325 Trotsky 1934: 768, 812
 326 Serge & Trotsky 1975: 48
 327 wiki/Georgy_Oppokov
 328 Clements 1979: 117
 329 wiki/Fyodor_Sergeyev
 330 Mosse 1968: 142
 331 Cliff 1976: 134
 332 Broué 1963: 90
 333 Cliff 1989: 210
 334 Elwood 1976: 218-19
 335 Novgorodtseva 1981: 82, 86-7
 336 Ulam 1974: 147, 150
 337 wiki/Jan_Antonovich_Berzin
 338 Ferro 1985: 156
 339 Raleigh 1986: 241
 340 Mandel 1984: 215
 341 Ferro 1985: 156, 191
 342 Salisbury 1978: 452
 343 Getzler 1967: 161
 344 McDaniel 1988: 349
 345 Knyazev & Konstantinov 1957: 195
 346 Miéville 2018: 197
 347 Rabinowitch 1991: 217
 348 Mandel 1983: 168
 349 Mandel 1984: 238
 350 Trotsky 1934: 768
 351 Raskolnikov 1982: 218
 352 Cliff 1976: 148, 150
 353 Volkogonov 1994: 174
 354 McDermid & Hillyar 1998: 160
 355 Ferro 1972: 234
 356 Sukhanov 1984: 373
 357 Mandel 1983: 134
 358 Rabinowitch 1979: 94
 359 Mandel 1984: 244
 360 Cliff 1976: 195
 361 Sanborn 2003: 173
 362 Krupskaya 1932: 2: 226-9
 363 Stites 1978: 302-4
 364 Keep 1976: 72, 138
 365 Kaiser 1987: 104
 366 Smith 1985: 168
 367 Trotsky 1934: 425
 368 Ferro 1985: 162
 369 Smith 1985: 89, 162
 370 Mandel 1983: 54
 371 Trotsky 1934: 813
 372 Faulkner 2017: 179, 182
 373 Rabinowitch 1991: 53-4
 374 Smith 1980: 372
 375 Cliff 1976: 259
 376 Figes 1997: 424
 377 Trotsky 1918: 82-3
 378 Liebman 1985: 138
 379 Smith 2018: 124
 380 Koenker 1981: 122-3
 381 Trotsky 1934: 581-2
 382 Miéville 2018: 184
 383 Elwood 1992: 210
 384 Trotsky 1934: 760, 895
 385 Koenker 1981: 182
 386 Miéville 2018: 197
 387 McDermid & Hillyar 1999: 169-70, 174
 388 Keep 1976: 149-50
 389 Philips Price 1969: 62
 390 Cliff 1976: 150, 160
 391 Dune 1993: 52-3, 244
 392 Cliff 1976: 244, 285
 393 Koenker 1981: 177
 394 Cliff 1976: 147, 153
 395 Stites 1978: 302
 396 Elwood 1992: 211-12
 397 Koenker 1981: 130-1
 398 Murphy 2005: 54
 399 Galili 1989: 372
 400 Khromov 1981: 159
 401 Koenker & Rosenberg 1989: 245
 402 Koenker 1981: 17
 403 Ehrenburg 1962a: 217-29
 404 Ehrenburg 1962b: 9-17
 405 Kaiser 1987: 92
 406 Trotsky 1934: 761
 407 Hillyar & McDermid 2000: 155
 408 Trotsky 1934: 582
 409 Kerensky 1966: 324
 410 Cliff 1976: 150, 153, 284-5
 411 Anweiler 1974: 115
 412 Cliff 1976: 160
 413 Chamberlin 1987: 178
 414 Miéville 2018: 183-4
 415 Chamberlin 1987: 178-9
 416 Trotsky 1934: 582, 761-2
 417 Anweiler 1974: 115
 418 Koenker & Rosenberg 1989: 245
 419 Trotsky 1934: 801, 872
 420 McDermid & Hillyar 1999: 191-2
 421 Smith 2018: 118, 136
 422 Cliff 1976: 150
 423 Keep 1976: 365
 424 Zelnik 1995: 25
 425 Trotsky 1934: 445, 582-3, 809
 426 Brovkin 1997: 64
 427 Miéville 2018: 197
 428 Trotsky 1934: 893
 429 Ferro 1985: 104-6
 430 Woytinsky 1961: 366
 431 Kirby 1975: 175, 177, 179, 183
 432 Liebman 1970: 222
 433 Keep 1976: 149-50
 434 Miéville 2018: 192
 435 Trotsky 1934: 438
 436 Cliff 1976: 160
 437 Page 1970: 65
 438 Koenker & Rosenberg 1989: 245
 439 Raun 1991: 101
 440 Slatter 1984: 149
 441 Trotsky 1934: 761, 809
 442 Cliff 1976: 164
 443 Smith 2018: 114
 444 Chamberlin 1987: 157
 445 Dune 1993: 44
 446 Cliff 1976: 164, 251-2
 447 wiki/Emanuel_Kviring
 448 Wildman 1987: 45
 449 Cliff 1976: 147, 150
 450 Friedgut 1994: 241, 243-4, 253, 261-2, 269-70
 451 Chamberlin 1987: 264
 452 Siegelbaum & Suny 1994: 148
 453 Keep 1976: 149-50
 454 Friedgut 1994: 252, 261
 455 Clements 2000: 143-4
 456 Cliff 1976: 285
 457 Trotsky 1934: 762
 458 Friedgut 1994: 262
 459 Anweiler 1974: 115
 460 Koenker & Rosenberg 1989: 245
 461 Raleigh 1986: 208
 462 Wade & Seregnny 1989: 290
 463 Raleigh 1986: 192-3
 464 Trotsky 1934: 761
 465 Raleigh 1986: 197, 201, 205, 208
 466 Cliff 1976: 150
 467 Lenin CW: 44: 591
 468 Wade & Seregnny 1989: 290-1
 469 Raleigh 1986: 218
 470 Wade & Seregnny 1989: 291
 471 Swain 1996: 15
 472 Anweiler 1974: 115
 473 Haimson 1987: 412
 474 Steinberg 2001: 235-6
 475 Jones 2005: 254, 256, 259
 476 Suny 1972: 82-3, 96, 104, 124, 144
 477 Smith 2018: 118
 478 Keep 1976: 72
 479 Miéville 2018: 153-4
 480 Keep 1976: 228
 481 Reed 1926: 232-3
 482 Cliff 1976: 147
 483 Figes 1997: 367
 484 Gatrell 2014: 213
 485 Lincoln 1994: 379
 486 Koenker & Rosenberg 1989: 275
 487 Chamberlin 1987: 264
 488 Knox 2018: 2: 671
 489 Keep 1976: 106
 490 Koenker & Rosenberg 1989: 267
 491 Galili 1989: 359
 492 Ferro 1985: 125
 493 Trotsky 1934: 415
 494 Maynard 1942: 69
 495 Cliff 1976: 207
 496 Trotsky 1934: 859, 862
 497 Haynes 2002: 26
 498 Von Mohrenschildt 1971: 122
 499 Cliff 1976: 274
 500 Trotsky 1934: 774-5
 501 Salisbury 1978: 446
 502 Miéville 2018: 183-4
 503 Ferro 1985: 82
 504 Von Mohrenschildt 1971: 173
 505 Trotsky 1934: 395
 506 Steinberg 2001: 201-2
 507 Chamberlin 1987: 164
 508 Rutherford 1992: 272-3
 509 Woytinsky 1961: 298
 510 Neiberg & Jordan 2021: 130-3
 511 Woytinsky 1961: 297
 512 Cliff 1976: 194
 513 Sanborn 2003: 173
 514 Rabinowitch 1979: 22-3
 515 Wildman 1987: 123
 516 Kerensky 1966: 292
 517 Rabinowitch 1991: 110
 518 Figes 1997: 442
 519 Engelstein 2018: 161
 520 Knox 2018: 2: 667
 521 Rabinowitch 1979: 28-9, 32
 522 Trotsky 1934: 395
 523 Cliff 1976: 202
 524 Trotsky 1934: 582
 525 Ferro 1985: 51
 526 Rabinowitch 1979: 94
 527 Rappaport 2016: 230
 528 Trotsky 1934: 763, 772-3
 529 Neiberg & Jordan 2021: 135-6
 530 Sukhanov 1984: 511-12
 531 Rutherford 1992: 272
 532 Craig 1988: 385, 388
 533 Neiberg & Jordan 2021: 134
 534 Steinberg 2001: 149
 535 Kerensky 1966: 290
 536 Lincoln 1994: 407
 537 wiki/Rudolf_Sivers
 538 Miller & Potthoff 1986: 62
 539 Woytinsky 1961: 315-17, 322-3
 540 Farmborough 1974: 86, 270-1, 273, 285-6, 288-90

- 541 Mushtukov 1970: 91, 96
542 Farmborough 1979: 81
543 Farmborough 1974: 265-6, 268, 270, 272, 275-7, 279-82, 298-300
544 Rappaport 2016: 200
545 Wildman 1987: 108
546 Rappaport 2016: 200
547 Botchkareva 1919: 214, 216, 220-2, 225-6, 241-3, 247-8
548 Sanborn 2003: 151
549 Stites 1978: 298-9
550 Zeman 1958: 63-4
551 Carr 1995: 226, 228
552 Craig 1988: 387
553 Carr 1995: 226
554 Broué 2006: 97, 99-100
- 8. The bony hand of hunger**
- 1 Kerensky 1966: 238, 335-6
2 Trotsky 1934: 638
3 Salisbury 1978: 448-9
4 Steinberg 2001: 157
5 Mandel 1984: 213
6 Possony 1966: 264
7 Figes 1997: 445
8 Kingston-Mann 1983: 171
9 Carr 1978: 2: 57n
10 Koenker & Rosenberg 1989: 49-50
11 Keep 1976: 101
12 Kaiser 1987: 70
13 Mandel 1984: 214, 226
14 Smith 1985: 21, 171, 175
15 Broué 2007
16 Elwood 1974: 1: 197
17 Trotsky 1930: 281
18 Sukhanov 1984: 491-2
19 Mandel 1983: 56
20 Cliff 1976: 148, 150
21 Mandel 1983: 29
22 Smith 1980: 381, 383
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28 Cliff 1976: 285
29 Keep 1976: 137
30 Getzler 1967: 163
31 Anweiler 1974: 173
32 Rabinowitch 1991: 226-7
33 Steinberg 1935: 177
34 Maxwell 1990: 231, 235
35 Brovkin 1997: 64
36 Steinberg 1935: 176, 178
37 Broué 2007
38 Cliff 1976: 286
39 Faulkner 2017: 259
40 Anweiler 1974: 126
41 Mandel 1984: 237
42 Smith 1985: 81, 126
43 Trotsky 1934: 768-9
44 Smith 1985: 173
45 Brovkin 1997: 47, 54
46 Salisbury 1978: 452
47 Deutscher 1970: 288
48 wiki/Vladimir_Miliutin
49 Rabinowitch 1979: 74
50 Novgorodtseva 1981: 87
51 Mandel 1984: 221-2
52 Trotsky 1934: 639, 790
53 Ferro 1985: 149-53
54 Trotsky 1934: 759-60
55 McDaniel 1988: 470
56 Avrich 1967: 158
57 Bobrovskaya 1933: 30
58 Novgorodtseva 1981: 84
59 Figes 1997: 124
60 Mstislavskii 1988: 6
61 Kaiser 1987: 104
62 wiki/Ivan_Teodorovich
63 Rogger 1983: 281
64 Smith 1985: 86
65 Gatrell 2014: 169
66 Lih 1990: 107
67 Knox 2018: 2: 669
68 Swain 1996: 30
69 Service 2023: 179
70 Smith 1985: 175
71 Possony 1966: 264
72 Knox 2018: 2: 681
73 Avrich 1967: 140
74 Voline 1974: 185
75 Avrich 1967: 139
76 Voline 1974: 122-3
77 Avrich 1967: 140
78 Voline 1974: 127
79 Trotsky 1934: 692, 705, 995
80 Ferro 1985: 157
81 Cliff 1976: 249
82 Sukhanov 1984: 496
83 Cliff 1976: 285
84 Mandel 1984: 218-20
85 Woods 1999: 589
86 Elwood 1974: 1: 214
87 Liebman 1985: 152
88 Cliff 1976: 154
89 Trotsky 1934: 766, 769, 801
90 Koenker & Rosenberg 1989: 216
91 Porter 1980: 263, 265
92 Cliff 1989: 234-5
93 Trotsky 1930: 257, 264
94 Rabinowitch 1979: 49
95 Zeman & Scharlau 1965: 227
96 Elwood 1974: 1: 214
97 Smith 1985:
98 Mandel 1984: 223
99 Broué 2007
100 Trotsky 1934: 635, 784-5, 801
101 Brovkin 1997: 65
102 Mandel 1983: 50
103 Trotsky 1934: 516, 784-5, 801
104 Miéville 2018: 215, 220-2
105 Clements 1979: 119
106 Cox 2017: 69
107 Turton 2007: 80-1
108 González 2016: 214-15
109 Brovkin 1997: 61
110 Keep 1976: 181
111 Galili 1989: 360
112 Service 2023: 199
113 Possony 1966: 257
114 Zeman & Scharlau 1965: 229
115 Rutherford 1992: 274
116 Swettenham 1967: 19
117 Rabinowitch 1979: 105
118 Chernov 1936: 416
119 Rutherford 1992: 273, 277
120 Lih 1990: 107
121 Trotsky 1934: 773, 776
122 Steinberg 2001: 161, 213-14
123 Swain 1996: 30-1
124 Swettenham 1967: 21
125 Swain 1996: 32
126 Mushtukov 1970: 141
127 Trotsky 1934: 693
128 Miéville 2018: 211
129 Chamberlin 1987: 198, 218
130 Miéville 2018: 211-12
131 Trotsky 1934: 719, 724
132 Service 2023: 183, 199
133 Swettenham 1967: 21
134 Chamberlin 1987: 164
135 Deutscher 1982: 162-3
136 Chamberlin 1987: 206
137 Swain 1996: 32, 36-8
138 Steinberg 2001: 218
139 Trotsky 1934: 712, 767-8
140 Woytinsky 1961: 345
141 Trotsky 1934: 710
142 Mandel 1984: 244
143 Swain 1996: 26
144 Trotsky 1934: 713
145 Kerensky 1966: 345, 349
146 Porter 1980: 265
147 Swettenham 1967: 22
148 Deutscher 1982: 163
149 Chamberlin 1987: 235
150 Miéville 2018: 220
151 Swettenham 1967: 22
152 Cliff 1989: 241
153 Rappaport 2016: 241
154 Trotsky 1934: 736-7, 742, 747
155 Kerensky 1966: 351
156 Frankel & Knei-Paz 1992: 96-7
157 Wollenberg 1978: 24
158 Avrich 1967: 157
159 Mandel 1984: 245-6
160 Sukhanov 1984: 500
161 Miéville 2018: 227
162 Trotsky 1934: 738-9
163 Engelstein 2018: 164
164 Sukhanov 1984: 508
165 Cliff 1989: 243
166 Woytinsky 1961: 252
167 Trotsky 1934: 721, 726-7, 735
168 Mandel 1983: 38
169 Salisbury 1978: 454
170 Cliff 1989: 244
171 Trotsky 1934: 1036
172 Mandel 1984: 246
173 Woytinsky 1961: 358
174 Miéville 2018: 234
175 Engelstein 2018: 164
176 Trotsky 1934: 729
177 Wildman 1987: 196
178 Chamberlin 1987: 220-1
179 Krupskaya 1932: 2: 237
180 Swettenham 1967: 22
181 Mstislavskii 1988: 167
182 Fitzpatrick 1984: 54
183 Woytinsky 1961: 359
184 Anweiler 1974: 179-80
185 Kaiser 1987: 72
186 Galili 1989: 381
187 Chamberlin 1987: 277
188 Trotsky 1934: 784
189 Smith 1985: 175-6
190 Brovkin 1997: 46, 49-50
191 Trotsky 1934: 808
192 Faulkner 2017: 183
193 Mandel 1984: 250
194 Anweiler 1974: 177
195 Salisbury 1978: 457
196 Mandel 1984: 216
197 Gatrell 2014: 213
198 Koenker & Rosenberg 1989: 246, 275
199 Ferro 1985: 147
200 Mandel 1984: 216-17
201 Hillyar & McDermaid: 154
202 Koenker 1981: 139
203 Stone 1998: 291
204 Deutscher 1970: 270
205 Chamberlin 1987: 265
206 Carr 1978: 2: 132
207 Volkogonov 1994: 173
208 wiki/Kustaa_Rovio
209 Mushtukov 1970: 135
210 Possony 1966: 265
211 Bezveselny & Grinberg: 100-1, 104

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- 219 Cliff 1976: 154
- 220 Elwood 1974: 1: 280-1
- 221 Woods 1999: 589
- 222 Broué 2007
- 223 Anweiler 1974: 98
- 224 Koenker 1981: 374
- 225 Mandel 1984: 226
- 226 Gatrell 2014: 208-9
- 227 Reed 1926: 283-4
- 228 Koenker 1981: 129
- 229 Chamberlin 1987: 278
- 230 Koenker 1981: 126, 141
- 231 Ferro 1985: 49
- 232 Chamberlin 1987: 200-1
- 233 Steinberg 2001: 160
- 234 Anweiler 1974: 126
- 235 Chamberlin 1987: 200-1
- 236 Galili 1989: 352-3
- 237 Kerensky 1966: 325-6
- 238 Sukhanov 1984: 494
- 239 Kaiser 1987: 85
- 240 Koenker 1981: 127-8
- 241 Murphy 2005: 56-7
- 242 Sukhanov 1984: 494
- 243 Mushtukov 1970: 139
- 244 wiki/Leonid_Serebryakov
- 245 Koenker 1981: 177
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235 Mawdsley 2005: 6
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241 Cliff 1976: 194
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356 Knox 2018: 2: 709-11, 713, 716
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401 Lincoln 1994: 467
402 Mushtukov 1970: 217
403 Montefiore 2008: 368
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443 Service 2023: 229
444 Swain 1996: 59, 61
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32 Avrich 1967: 161
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45 Cliff 1978: 28
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50 Brovkin 1997: 32-3, 35
51 Kollontai 1972: 35
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83 Engelstein 2018: 194
84 Wildman 1987: 391
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144 Service 2023: 153
145 Darby 1988: 116
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156 Fitzpatrick 2002: 89-90, 92
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167 Valentinov 1968: 250
168 Service 2023: 236
169 Foglesong 1995: 82
170 Reid 2023: 17
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172 Serge 1972: 112
173 Foglesong 1995: 87, 92
174 Lincoln 1991: 48
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