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On the Russian Revolution : The Petrograd Workers and the Fall of the Old Régime - VI - Chapters Seven & Eight

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Chapter 7: The Struggle for Power in the Factories in April-June

The issue of economic regulation, one of the focal points of the intensifying political struggle around the demand for soviet power, found its analogue in this period in the unfolding struggle for power in the factories under the banner of workers' control.

The conflict at the Langezipen Machine-construction Factory is a case in point. At the end of April, the Senior Factory Inspector for Petrograd Guberniya reported:

"Guards posted by the workers on April 27 refused to allow the administration to leave before the end of work. As a result, the factory director was forced to remain in his office until 4:00 p.m. The workers of this factory suspect the administration of holding up defence production. Accordingly, the issue is being discussed by a mixed commission of the Soviet of W and SD, the Society of Factory and Mill Owners, the Union of Engineers and the Central War-Industry Committee." [1]

The conflict came to a head on 2 June when the director announced his intention of closing operations, citing a 33 per cent decline in output, 10 million ruble losses on state orders, and lack of funds, all due to the eight-hour day, a 50 percent decline in labour productivity, constantly rising prices, and finally, shortages of fuel and raw materials.

At the request of the workers, the Central Soviet (CS) of Factory Committees (elected at the conference in early June) enquired into the company's ownership. Although the director refused to cooperate, it was finally ascertained that the original owner had been the Azov-Don Bank, but it had transferred its stocks to a certain Zhivotov, who in turn transferred them to the Siberian Bank of Commerce, which registered them in the name of Kislyanskii. However, by this time, the director informed the workers that he had quite unexpectedly 'come across 450 000 rubles, borrowed from an acquaintance, and production would go ahead full speed.' [2]

But in the interim, the workers had set up full control over management. On 5 June, the factory committee reported:

"The situation of late at the factories of the Langezipen Co. Inc., i.e. 1) the refusal of the factory administration to recognise the control commission of the workers and employees 2) the violation by the administration of the decision of the conciliation chamber of May 6, 1917 on the amount of wages for employees and 3) the latest declaration of the administration on the closure of the plant - have placed us before the necessity of taking the following measures: 1) No goods or raw materials may be shipped out from the factory without permission of the factory committee, and also manufactured goods ready for shipment must be registered by the factory committee and are stamped by it. 2) All orders of the factory committee are binding on all workers and employees, and no order from the administration is valid without the sanction of the factory committee. 3) No papers or correspondence relating to the factory can be destroyed without the factory committee reviewing them. 4) To carry out the above tasks the elected control commission will begin to fulfil its duties from today. 5) The firemen and guards are duty-bound to keep watch over the factory's buildings against fire." [3]

Two weeks later, this control commission asked the government to hold up payment of dividends pending a full state investigation. The commission itself began work on a counter-report to that of management and requested that the Ministry of Labour obtain for it the necessary documents. Finally, it turned to the CS of Factory Committees for aid in drawing up regulations and working procedures for the factory committee. [4]

Izvestiya described this conflict as characteristic of a 'whole series of declarations on closure by the owners' that had been reaching the CS of Factory Committees. The paper observed that despite the variety of reasons given, in most cases they boiled down to lack of funds and financial losses. 'However, at the first attempt of the workers' organisations to verify the reasons offered by the entrepreneurs, very often the most complex and crafty machinations aimed at a lockout by the capitalists are uncovered'. [5]

What is characteristic in the Langezipen conflict is the workers' perception of their actions as essentially defensive, aimed at forestalling a further decline in production or a total shutdown, which they suspected – in this case clearly not without foundation – were the result of passive, or even active, sabotage on the part of the administration. Thus, the 5 June declaration states that the owner's intention to close 'placed us before the necessity of taking... measures'. The overriding motivation was to safeguard the workers' livelihood, their factory and, in the last analysis, the revolution, as the assembly of the Voronin and Co. Cotton Printing Factory forcefully pointed out:

"On hearing the report of the systematic decline in production at the factories of Voronin and Co.... [we resolve that:] The observed decline in production of late at the factories of Voronin and Co. is the conscious activity of the industrialists, aimed at bringing the country to ruin and thus destroying the freedom won by the great Russian Revolution. Taking into account the seriousness of this hidden counterrevolution, the general assembly mandates the factory committee, together with the committees and employees of the other factories belonging to the given company, to elect a control commission which must control the activity of the company in its production of goods. In so far as a desire to disorganise production in the enterprises is discovered, inform the Soviet of W and SD and the PG." [6]

An estimate of the proportion of conflicts in which the workers' suspicions were justified is beyond the scope of this study. However, an investigation by *Torgovo-promyshlennaya gazeta*, the newspaper of the industrialists, in the spring of 1917 found that of the 75 plant closures in Petrograd since April, 54 had been motivated by the desire to break the workers' pressure and 21 by supply difficulties. [7] According to Den', a non-socialist paper, 'If in some cases these closures are motivated by lack of raw materials, in many others the aim is to intimidate the workers and the Provisional Government'. [8] At any rate, these suspicions had firm basis in a sufficient number of cases [9] almost automatically to raise doubts in the workers' minds whenever a serious problem arose. Perhaps more importantly, the workers viewed these conflicts against the background of both the government's plan to 'unload' Petrograd and the long history of recourse to lockouts by Petrograd industrialists as a favourite means of struggle against the workers' political as well as economic demands.

The defensive or reactive nature of workers' control explains why the demand did not really come into its own until May when the situation had become sufficiently serious. Even so, control in the sense of access to documents and comprehensive monitoring of management was still very rare in this period. A Soviet study of 'instances of control' for May and June in 84 Petrograd factories (employing 230 000 workers) found that only 24.5 per cent of all cases involved any sort of control over production, with another 8.7 per cent over finances and sales. For the rest, 24.6 per cent had to do with 'control over conditions of work', 24.1 per cent with hiring and dismissals, and 7.5 per cent with guarding the plants – all areas previously subsumed under the March demand for 'control over internal order'. [10]

In other words, workers' control was a practical demand born of the new situation in which the workers found themselves. As V. M. Levin, a Left SR member of the CS of Factory Committees, stated:

"No party programme foresaw the intervention of the working class into the bourgeois economy with a bourgeois government [in power]. Now all recognise its necessity. True, they were forced to this in order to avoid finding themselves out on the streets." [11]

In fact, it was only on 19 May that the Bolshevik PC issued its first call to the workers to establish control, and the wording of this appeal is significant: 'In response to a series of declarations from factory committees on the need for control and its establishment, it was decided to recommend to

the comrade workers to create control commissions in the enterprises from workers' representatives'. [12]

There is no doubt that the movement for workers' control originated from below, from the factories. 'When the factory committee arose', wrote the committee at the Putilov Works,

"it was given neither a programme of action nor a charter by which to guide its work. As the functions of the committee developed, its practical instructions became the basis for its guiding principles. In this way, the factory committee had the best teacher - life." [13]

The same is true of the initiative for city-wide and national organisation of workers' control. Osipov, a worker from the Benois Factory, told the First Factory Committee Conference:

"At our factory, the boss announced that there isn't any money and he is throwing 500 workers out... The factory committee of Benois answered with a resolution sent to the ministries showing that production is being conducted in an irregular manner and demonstrating the incompetence of the entrepreneur. We showed figures that production is rising, but that there are neither materials nor money. Yesterday, workers from the factory spoke to Pal'chinskii [acting Minister of Trade and Industry]. He sent them to the Military Authority. They said they couldn't help. It shows that we cannot work alone - only the proletariat as a whole." [14]

Even the idea of a city conference appears to have come from below, [15] and its timeliness was demonstrated by the fact that the Central Soviet was swamped with appeals for aid immediately upon its creation by the conference.

The practical nature of the movement also explains why workers' control developed so unevenly. In June it ranged from full control, as instituted at Langezipen, to merely searching for additional supplies. It was noted at the Second Conference in August that some factories still did not even have factory committees. [16]

Since the most pressing problem initially was fuel and raw materials, supply questions were the first and most widespread area of worker intervention into administrative functions. In fact, a workers' conference on fuel and raw materials preceded by some weeks the First Conference of Factory Committees, [17] and many factories had sent out workers' delegations to the Donbass and elsewhere to facilitate and speed up the delivery of supplies. [18]

The Factory Committee of the Rozenkrantz Copper Foundry described its early activity in the following manner:

"Our first steps were to struggle for better wage rates, and we achieved this. Then we took decisive measures to enlarge the work force. The factory was very poorly supplied with fuel, and only a trip by representatives of the factory committee fixed this. The factory committee had to put pressure on the administration for the speedy execution of orders. On the other hand, there were whole piles of [finished] orders that our clients refused to accept. The factory committee took the regulation of this matter upon itself and achieved favourable results. We observed that the furnaces in the foundry were stopping due to a lack of bricks, and only thanks to the intervention of the factory committee did we obtain what was needed." [19]

This report illustrates how the workers saw themselves being forced into action to compensate for the lack of initiative of management or, as Levin put it at the Conference, its 'Italian strike'.

"Strangely, after the first weeks of the revolution, in one factory after another there was no fuel, raw materials, money. More important, the administration took no steps to secure what was necessary."

All saw that this was an Italian strike. The factory committees sent representatives all over in search of fuel to other factory committees, to railroad junctions, warehouses, etc.... As a result of their activity, oil and coal, orders, money were found. Why, it is no secret that an end to the economic dislocation is not only not in the interests of capital, but contradictory to them. To end the dislocation would mean to strengthen the young growing organisms of our revolution – and no one knows how that revolution will end up: at the least, in the deprivation of capital of a part of its rights; at the most, who will say that from a Russian revolution it will not become a world revolution?” [20]

The workers, on their part, were by no means averse to cooperating with management and even to making considerable sacrifices, as long as they believed that management was acting in good faith. In mid-July the management of the Baltic Wagon-construction Factory announced its intention of closing down automobile production because of its unprofitability. When the factory committee produced figures that put this assertion into question, management offered to continue production if the workers would guarantee the profitability of operations. The workers agreed but put forth a condition – workers’ control over production and all accounts – which management rejected as ‘unprecedented’. [21] The workers were willing to cooperate and more but they refused to be used. [22] At the August Factory Committee Conference, Antipov, a 23-year-old Vyborg worker, explained why he opposed worker participation in public economic bodies alongside the capitalists.

“Can our comrades achieve anything by participating in conferences with the industrialists? It would be possible to liquidate the ruin by such means if the owners were really unable correctly to manage production. But here it is a question of an absence of desire on the part of the owners, and we will not be able to force them by means of these conferences. They are making no concessions, and therefore we have no reason to go to them.” [23]

Perhaps the most forceful expression of the real motive behind workers’ control – concern for production – issued from the committee of the Schlusselfurg Powder Factory, whose chairman, Zhuk, was, significantly, an anarchist. It will be recalled that the manager had praised the workers in March for their conscientiousness. At the First Factory Committee Conference, however, Zhuk brought evidence of the administration’s desire to close down. He then read his committee’s declaration, which took note of the sorry state of industry and the often negligent attitude of management and continued:

“Tarrying not a single moment, the toilers must organise a better management... and not trust the owners. The workers themselves must elect specialists in each area so that work will begin to move ahead at full throttle and every kopek will be accounted for. In these elections the workers should be guided not only by personal sympathies for individual managers, engineers and foremen, but also by the latter’s experience and knowledge. Not one hour of wasted work: all time only for useful labour!” [24]

There is not the least trace of the anti-specialist attitudes that appeared during the civil war.

As for anarchist influence in the movement at large, the vote at the conference showed this to be minimal, and this is confirmed by the very limited number of takeovers before October. The above-mentioned study found that only 1.4 percent of the cases involved actual workers’ self-management. But even these followed the generally defensive pattern, occurring when the only alternative was passively to accept closure. And even so, the workers turned to the state for aid and demanded it sequester the factory. There was no thought of setting up any sort of workers’ cooperative. [25]

But, as noted, cases of takeover were very rare in this period, the main thrust of the movement being for ‘control’, in the sense of monitoring and observation. No claim was put forward for actually

running the factories. 'We demand control over production from the ministries', stated Levin at the August Conference.

"But here we meet on their part with indecision and reluctance to act; and on the part of the industrialists - with anger and fear for their property. Many consciously or unconsciously confuse the concept of 'control' with 'seizure of the mills and factories', although the workers are not at all conducting a tactic of seizure, and if such did occur, then only in exceptional and isolated cases." [26]

This is not to say that there were not already voices raised for full takeover of management. But these were decidedly a small minority. When the Central Bureau of Petrograd Trade Unions met on 11 May to discuss the coming Factory Committee Conference, according to Novaya zhizn' some union representatives defended the view that the workers should demand the socialisation of production, and that the factory committees should carry it out. But the other group of representatives, 'incomparably larger, spoke for control of production. They argued that one has to consider the objective possibilities and not one's subjective desires'. [27]

In at least one textile mill, agitation by some union activists for takeover seemed to have had an effect on the rank-and-file. At the end of May, after management had rejected the workers' wage demands, they voted to take over the mill. However, the factory committee threatened to resign if this occurred. On 3 June, another general assembly was held, and some tough questions were put to the workers: Where will you get money for wages? Will the technical personnel agree to work? The workers had no satisfactory answers, and, in fact, many now explained that their earlier decision had been misunderstood, that they had really only had control in mind. Only a few continued to demand a takeover, but the majority voted to go to conciliation on the wage issue, and the matter was closed. [28]

This exception really proves the rule - that the workers, especially when the issue was posed on a practical footing (and, of course, the factory committees were closer to this practice than the worker masses), were only interested in seizing the factories as a last resort, as an alternative to closure. But just for that reason, this incident was an indication of things to come, when conditions would become truly desperate and the rank-and-file would begin to push their reluctant factory committees, awed by the enormity and complexity of the task, to assume more and more of the tasks of management. But in May and June this was not yet the case.

Even on an abstract, theoretical level, the workers did not identify control with socialisation. As Naumov stated at the First Conference of Factory Committees.

"We, as Marxists, must look on life as always moving forward. The revolution continues. We say - our revolution is a prologue to the world revolution. Control is not yet socialism 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 [state] 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. That will lead to socialism... 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." [29]

Similarly, the factory committee of the Putilov Works declared that through its activity

"the workers are preparing themselves for the time when private ownership of the factories and mills will be abolished and the means of production, along with the buildings erected by the workers' hands, will be transferred to the working class. Therefore in doing this small matter, one must

continually keep in mind the great and principal aim towards which the people are aspiring.”
[[Putilovtsy v trekh revolyutsiyakh, p. 333.]]

Without doubt, then, workers' control was seen as a step towards socialism, a school for socialism, but the ultimate goal at this time was still quite distant.

This period witnessed the emergence of two parallel and mutually reinforcing power struggles – one in the state, the other in the factories. But whereas in the factory arena the workers were still at the stage of 'control', they had already gone beyond it in the larger political arena, demanding direct management of state affairs by revolutionary democracy through the soviets. Both struggles, however, were conceived by the workers as primarily defensive responses to the onslaught of census society against the democratic revolution of February. It would still be some time before they realised that the very logic of their struggle for the democratic revolution was fast leading them towards a new one of a very different social and political character. The July Days would be a major, if painful, step towards this realisation.

Chapter 8: The July Days

The Workers and the Soviet Majority

The almost universal support for the slogan 'All power to the soviets' by those who wanted to end the alliance with census society indicates that, despite the political disagreement, the workers still viewed the moderate socialist leaders as part of 'revolutionary democracy', as 'comrades'. Since these people were still a majority in the Soviet, the slogan obviously implied that the workers were willing to entrust state power to them. In fact, the basic idea behind the 18 June demonstration had been to impress upon the moderate Soviet leadership that the workers wanted them to take power. At this stage, any idea of breaking with the 'conciliationist' elements of democracy – the Soviet majority and the majority of peasants, soldiers and democratic intelligentsia that supported them – was something most workers could not even contemplate, as it would have meant almost complete isolation of the working class and a civil war against nearly impossible odds. Belief in the coming Western European revolution was strong, but it could not be counted upon too heavily in a calculation of forces.

Thus, the shift away from support of an alliance with the census society in May and June was premised upon the assumption on the part of the workers that the leaders of the Soviet would ultimately heed their demands. The idea of taking power against the Soviet majority was not even entertained.

Nevertheless, among the Vyborg metalworkers and some of their like-minded comrades in other districts, anger at the 'conciliationists' was fast reaching the boiling point. This became clear from the workers' reactions to the Soviet Congress's ban of the proposed demonstration on 10 June. One of the congress delegates sent out to dissuade the workers filed the following report:

"Vyborg District. June 10. 1) Nobel Factory 2) Old Parviainen 3) New Parviainen 4) New Lessner [all machine-construction]. Everywhere the attitude is sharply hostile to the Congress of Soviets of W and SD, 'dragging itself after the bourgeoisie and [which] is petty bourgeois in essence'. Nowhere do

they intend to demonstrate on the tenth, but not because the Congress of Soviets is calling for this but only because the CC of the RSDWP [Bolshevik] is suggesting not to demonstrate today.

The impression is such that one can expect a 'coming out' in the nearest future, if the [Bolshevik] CC calls for it. At the Nobel and Old and New Parviainen Factories I was able to speak only with the council of elders [factory committee], since it was not possible to hold a meeting as work was in progress. At the N. Lessner Factory there was a workers' meeting, but it was impossible to speak since they would not let me finish." [30]

According to *Novaya zhizn'* also,

"The attitude to the orators, Congress delegates, is hostile... They did not want to hear the orators and interrupted them with shouts: 'We are not comrades to you'. It was decided not to demonstrate until a new call by the CC RSDWP [Bolshevik]."

At certain metalworking factories in the Vasilevskii ostrov district the hostile workers interrupted the congress orators with shouts of 'bourgeois'. [31] One orator sent to the Putilov Works, where the atmosphere was very heated over the economic conflict, reported:

"Near the shops where work was in progress, I was met by about 300 people. They met the automobile in an extremely hostile manner. 'There were already two before you; there's no sense in your coming to disturb people. As it is, we barely managed to keep them at work. And then you come and take people from their work, etc.' There were no meetings at the factory. Work was in progress.

Declarations of the workers in relation to the All-Russian Congress: 'Some characters arrived from the boondocks to teach us; we already know everything without you. We won freedom here with our own blood, and where were you?'

They would not let me speak and asked me to leave. The car left amidst whistles and angry rumbling. A Bolshevik who made a speech waved his revolver. Our visas were demanded, although in the great state of agitation they forgot to look at them. The attitude to the Soviet W and SD is hostile, a series of ironic remarks about the army at the front and Kerenskii." [32]

This same hostility was vented in several factory resolutions. After hearing a report on the Conference of Factory Committees, the workers of the Optico-machine-construction Factory resolved: 'We welcome the correct path of struggle against the adventurism of capitalism upon which our representatives have embarked, despite the various disgraceful ruses of the ex-socialists'. [33] This was already very strong language, a move away from the view of Soviet leaders as 'nevertheless comrades' towards seeing them as class traitors, accomplices of the counterrevolution. The general assembly of the Aivaz Machine-construction Factory, reacting to the government raid on the Durnovo dacha, resolved to protest

"against the inactivity of the Soviet in the struggle against the counterrevolution and demand that the Soviet authoritatively affirm the rights of all revolutionary groups to free revolutionary activity and take decisive steps to end the world slaughter. The meeting declares that while power is in the hands of the bourgeoisie and while it, under the cover of the Soviet, is digging the grave of the proletarian revolution, the workers will not hesitate before any means of struggle for the victory of the cause of the people." [34]

Again, fighting words, unthinkable a few weeks earlier. On 19 June the workers of the Baranovskii Factory warned the Soviet: 'We are horrified by the thought, which involuntarily creeps into our consciousness, that this blow was directed consciously, having turned your eyes from reality'. They called on the Soviet to re-examine its policy and promised support 'if the latter will express our will

and carry out our desires'. [35] Here was the old formula of conditional support, but now addressed to the Soviet itself! [36] But these expressions of opposition and outrage should not necessarily be taken as signs of readiness to act against the moderate leaders. The July Days show quite conclusively that the 'conciliators' had not yet been written off as counterrevolutionaries. In the last two cited resolutions especially, one can sense the workers' hedging.

This very issue was, in fact, raised at the 20 June session of the Bolshevik PC, when it had become clear that the 18 June demonstration had produced no concrete results. Discussing the great agitation in various districts, some spoke in favour of rejecting the 'parliamentary means of struggle', i.e. trying to win a left majority in the soviets. They argued that the Congress and the Petrograd Soviet had in effect sanctioned the raid on Durnovo, proving their readiness to use force against the left and effectively ruling out the parliamentary, legal path of struggle.

The majority, however, did not support this. Echoing other speakers, Naumov (who, incidentally, was on the left) argued: 'We should present the Congress with an ultimatum: either take power, or we do not guarantee what will happen. We must direct the movement into an organised channel'. [37] The question was, thus, still being put to the Soviet. Latsis, party organiser for the Vyborg District, wrote in his diary on 20 June: 'At the PC and CC the idea is to prevent a demonstration, but if it happens to assume the leadership and direct it toward pressuring the soviets to take power'. [38] The Bolsheviks were not about to initiate action but they would use the threat of it to pressure the Soviet leadership into taking power.

A delegate from the Vyborg District offered his appraisal of the workers' position:

"I'll tell you how the workers of the Nobel Factory reacted to the events. When the question arose at the meeting - What, then, should we do? - the workers replied: The situation is complex. We have to wait, to clarify what forces we have, and be on the ready. The question of parliamentarism is a serious one. When the masses are straining to come out, we have to explain to them against whom exactly they are going. Why, we can't come out against our own comrades who haven't yet understood that which we know. We have to tear those comrades away from the politics of conciliationism with the capitalists and push them towards the politics of a break... Our task is to go to the workers and soldiers who still haven't understood that and we will call them to understand us... When our comrades have understood us, we'll rise up face to face with the enemy of our class and join battle." [39]

Given these attitudes among even the most radical workers, the July Days could be nothing but a repeat of 18 June, at least on the part of the workers. On the other hand, the reaction of the Soviet leadership, the government and census society would indeed be something new; for the workers-shockingly new.

The Demonstrations of 3-4 July

The 18 June demonstration [40] achieved none of the demonstrators' goals. Just the contrary. In the interval between 18 June and 3 July, the deterioration of the political and economic situations continued unabated. The 'insolence' of the counterrevolution, as the workers put it, was becoming more and more intolerable: the raid on Durnovo, [41] the offensive at the front, patriotic demonstrations accompanied by physical assaults and arrests of workers and soldiers for refusing to remove their caps, or for no reason at all.

On the economic plane, the major government initiative was the following message of the socialist Minister of Labour to the workers:

"Comrade workers, remember not only your rights, not only your desires, but also the possibility of their realisation; not only your welfare, but also sacrifices in the name of consolidating the revolution and the victory of our ultimate ideals." [42]

Not a word about economic regulation or the policies of the industrialists. A few days later a member of the Tsvernin Factory committee wrote to Skobelev: 'Having read the appeal of the Minister of Labour to the workers, I consider it necessary to report on our factory'. The directors had decided to dismiss half of the work force and place the other half on a three-day week, citing lack of orders and raw materials at their client factories. The workers sent representatives to these factories and found all but one to be working at full steam. 'From this, it is obvious that it is not the workers who undermine industry but these same Roms and Kitel'bergs [the directors]. Therefore we ask our respected comrade Minister Skobelev to take decisive measures against such phenomena up to and including arrest'. [43] It is difficult to miss the intended irony in the address 'our respected comrade Minister'.

The ripening wage disputes coupled with growing intransigence on the part of the owners were also important elements of the immediate pre-July situation. Although the Putilov dispute is the best known, conflicts had arisen in many factories as the workers struggled to retain their level of real wages in face of the galloping inflation. [44]

The food situation, though not desperate, was again worsening, for the first time since the winter. On 26 June bread rations were reduced by 15 per cent; the same for meat and butter on 1 July. An entry in Latsis' diary for 2 July reads: 'A meat speculator was caught, and the crowd wanted to mete out its own justice'. [45]

The offensive produced in the workers a bitter sense of betrayal. But among a part of the garrison the anger was perhaps even more intense, as various units, including the extremely militant First Machine-gun Regiment, learnt they were about to be disbanded and sent to the front. [46]

Deeply alarmed at the course the revolution was taking and exasperated at the obstinacy of the Soviet leadership, the workers needed little coaxing to lay down their tools when the factory whistles sounded on 3 July. "'Finish up! Into the yard! Into the yard!' We already knew what this meant', recalled Metelev, a Bolshevik worker in a Vyborg District factory.

"We knew to put away our tools, dress and go to the general assembly. Among the workers no one thought to stay in the shops after these shouts – that would be worse than strike-breaking. We could only think that this was the result of some extraordinary political event.

Representatives of the machine-gunners and some other factories were waiting. On the way, we heard that the regiment was ready to move, part of the automobiles, mounted with machine-guns, had gone downtown, and the Lessner and Erikson workers were already in the streets.

Excitement. Everyone wanted to hear something new, something good. Hearts beat excitedly. A speaker appealed to await exact instructions from the Bolshevik CC, but this caused an even louder racket and the stubborn demand is repeated to open the factory gates. To argue: Why? Where? Against Whom? – this was totally superfluous. Everyone knew the meaning of the demonstration. It had been ripening for a long time... Ten abreast we filed out onto Sampsionevskii Prospekt. The Red Guards went ahead. All power to the soviets! Then the unarmed men, women and youths... Hope beat in the hearts of the workers, hope that already soon the dawn would come, the great dawn which would light up with its social light all the corners of their dark and slave-like life." [47]

Over in the Petergof District, in the cannon shop of the Putilov Works, rumours had been circulating

since the morning of a meeting to be held in the street. The workers learnt of the resignation of the 'capitalist ministers' on the previous night [48] and of the government's intention to send more troops to the front. 'On hearing this, the workers' mood turned militant', recalled the Putilov worker, Efimov, a Bolshevik. At about 2 p.m. a delegation from the Machine-gun Regiment arrived, asking for a meeting, but the Bolshevik-dominated factory committee opposed this. [49] 'The workers, burning with impatience, gathered in front of the main office, shouting: Start the meeting!' At that moment a soldier entered and confirmed the reports that they had already been ordered to the front but that the soldiers had decided 'not to fight the German proletariat but against their own capitalists'. By now, about 10 000 workers had gathered and hearing this, began to shout: 'Down with this kind of minister!' When the machine-gunners announced that they were coming out at 4 p.m. with machine-guns mounted on lorries, the crowd roared: 'Let's move'. The factory committee argued for the need to act in a more organised fashion, but the workers had already begun to assemble in the street.

Efimov ran to the Bolshevik district committee, where the consensus was, that they 'could not leave the workers to the whims of fate; and so we'll go with them'. By this time they had learnt that the whole city was moving. 'We assembled and left. At the Narva Gates there was such a throng, it seemed as if no one was staying behind. The women shouted: Everybody has to go. No one should stay behind. We'll take care of the homes'.

The huge Putilov column did not arrive at the Tauride Palace, seat of the TsIK, until 2 a.m. Camping down in the park, they declared their intention to stay put until the TsIK took power. The latter replied that the matter would be taken up 'today or tomorrow', but the workers insisted on a definite answer. However, at 4 a.m. they began to file back to the factory. At 10 a.m., after meetings, they dispersed to their homes. [50]

A number of observations can be made about the first day of demonstrations. In the first place, the initiative undoubtedly came from below: not only did the TsIK expressly forbid a demonstration, but all political parties opposed one. The workers had to force the hand of their (by now, mostly Bolshevik) leadership. And if the machine-gunners provided the spark, the mood among the workers was already red hot. The workers were also the more organised and disciplined element. Most active on 3 July were the more working-class districts - Vyborg, Petergof, Vasilevskii ostrov. [51]

On 4 July, after considerable wavering, the Bolshevik CC issued a call to continue the demonstrations, stressing the necessity of maintaining their peaceful character. The vast majority of factories voted to participate, the exceptions being those still under SR influence in the Nevskii District, Okhta and Moscow Districts as well as most textile mills and printing houses. Despite the TsIK's ban, between two-thirds and three-quarters of the capital's industrial workers participated. On the other hand, the soldiers by now were already wavering, with some of yesterday's demonstrators deciding to stay inside. Of the 100 000 men in the garrison, about one half came out on the fourth. [52]

In retrospect, the 'July Days' seem a paradox within a paradox, the essence of which was expressed by the anonymous worker who, shaking his fist at the SR Minister of Agriculture, Chernov, shouted: 'Take power, you son of a bitch, when they give it to you'. [53] Here were workers and soldiers marching in their thousands to demand that the TsIK leadership, already quite compromised in their eyes, take power. This TsIK, apparently more willing to commit political suicide than to take power, states that it alone will decide the composition of the new government at a forthcoming plenary session (the resignation of the Kadets ended the first coalition), thus acknowledging itself as the supreme power in the land. And yet this same TsIK describes the workers and soldiers clamouring for soviet power as counterrevolutionaries. And when 'loyal' troops arrive to put down the insurgents demanding soviet power, their commanders solemnly declare that the Soviet is the only

authority the army will obey and unconditionally serve, that the TsIK alone will decide the fate of the revolution.

The workers had one goal: to be rid of the 'ten capitalist ministers' and to press the Soviet to take power. To this end they ignored the Mariinskii Palace, seat of the government, going directly to the Tauride Palace. There was no intention of using violent means, except for self-defence against the 'philistine' and bourgeois crowds in the centre. Among the demonstrators were women and children. The Kronstadt 'raiding party' was led by an orchestra, an unusual battle formation indeed. In fact, the entire affair was marked by the rather naïve conviction of the demonstrators that the leaders in the TsIK would be unable to resist their moral pressure.

The workers' attitude towards the moderate Soviet leadership was clearly very ambivalent, but this ambivalence was rooted in what to the workers seemed a highly contradictory state of affairs: the Soviet, the political organ of revolutionary democracy, which held all real power, was using it to support 'bourgeois' policies which were aiding the counterrevolution. Nevertheless, at this point, before the lessons of July had sunk in, there could be no question of moving against the Soviet or 'our comrade socialist ministers'. Given this state of mind, all the workers could do was to hope that with a little more prodding the Soviet leadership would see the light.

On 4 July, one of the four workers representing 54 factories who were allowed to address the TsIK, stated:

"It is strange when one reads the appeal of the TsIK: workers and soldiers are called counterrevolutionaries. You see what is written on the placards. The same question was discussed in all the factories. These are decisions taken by the workers. You know these resolutions. We are threatened with hunger. We demand the resignation of the ten capitalist ministers. We trust the Soviet but not those whom the Soviet trusts. Our comrade socialist ministers have taken the road of conciliation with the capitalists, but these capitalists are our blood enemies. We demand that all the land be seized immediately, that control over production be instituted immediately! We demand a struggle against the hunger that is threatening us." [54]

'We trust the Soviet, but not those whom the Soviet trusts.' Or perhaps: we want and need to trust the Soviet, but it does not seem to want to let us because it stubbornly continues to yield its positions to our enemies.

Of course, there were various shades of this attitude. At this same session, an excited Putilov worker suddenly leaped onto the platform, rifle in hand. *"Comrades! Must we, the workers, endure betrayal for much longer?! You have gathered here, you reason, you make deals with the bourgeoisie and the landowners. You busy yourselves with the betrayal of the working class. Then know that the working class will not endure that! We Putilovtsy are here 30 000 strong, all to a man. We will achieve our will! Absolutely no bourgeois! All power to the soviets! Our rifles are in our hands. Your Kerenskies and Tseretelis won't fool us."* [55]

This sounds very determined and threatening. But when Chkheidze handed him a note stating merely that the TsIK was currently discussing the matter and that he should tell his comrades to return to their factories, the bewildered worker simply walked off. To shout and threaten was one thing; to take any sort of decisive action against the Soviet was still quite another. Even Metelev who was in the very thick of it, mentions no calls to use force against the TsIK. [56] He himself, delegated by the workers, patiently waited out the night inside the Tauride Palace and, totally dejected, was forced to leave at dawn by the arrival of the 'loyal' troops. [57]

By the evening of the fourth, the streets around the palace had emptied and the movement, for all

practical purposes, was at an end. The two days saw perhaps 400 dead and wounded, the victims of clashes between the demonstrators and provocateurs. Underworld elements had also been active looting shops.

After the demonstrators had returned to their homes and barracks, the situation took a drastic turn. While Tsereteli addressed the TsIK on the night of 4-5 July, the assembly was thrown into a panic by the sound of marching boots. Dan calmed them down. 'No danger. These are regiments loyal to the Revolution and have come to defend its legitimate organ, the TsIK'. Sukhanov recalled:

At that moment in the Ekaterinskii Hall, a powerful refrain of the Marseillaise was struck up. In the hall – enthusiasm. The Mamelukes were radiant. Jubilant, they cast dirty looks in the direction of the Left and in an effusion of sentiment grasped each other by the hand. Standing bareheaded, they sang the Marseillaise.

'A classic scene of the start of counterrevolution', Martov (Menshevik-Internationalist leader) spat out. But in fact, as Sukhanov observes, there were really no need for the troops, since no one threatened the TsIK. [58] Nevertheless, the troops had arrived, some from outside the capital, others from garrison regiments that had opposed the demonstration. This influenced other units that had been neutral or undecided.

But more important in the sudden shift in the correlation of forces were the rumours and then the publication in the morning newspapers of documents alleging complicity between Lenin and his associates and the German General Staff. This 'leak' by the Minister of Justice was particularly calculated to influence the garrison. [59] For the workers, a 'debauch of counterrevolution' was about to begin.

The Aftermath

The July Days resulted in a sudden shift in the political correlation of forces away from revolutionary democracy (and especially its left wing, the working class) in favour of census society. The immediate cause of this was the TsIK's sanctioning of repressions against the workers and the left socialists. Although the beginnings of the Soviet's loss of influence over the government can be traced back at least to April, the repression that followed the July demonstrations marked a watershed. For it became clear that henceforth the TsIK would not and could not call on the support of the politically most active and conscious segment of revolutionary democracy. This turn of events, on the other hand, greatly encouraged census Russia, which now moved to the offensive in an effort to recoup the losses of the first months of the revolution.

But this is only one side of the story. For not only were the workers objectively unable to push further for their goal of a non-census government, they were also subjectively in no way prepared to do this, since it now entailed the violent overthrow of the TsIK along with the government and, in fact, the possibility of a civil war within revolutionary democracy. Unwilling to proceed, they were forced back into defensive positions until they could rethink their assumptions about the nature and course of the revolution.

In order fully to appreciate the workers' reactions to the July Days, two aspects of the new situation must be especially emphasised: the unprecedented scale of the bloodshed of 3-4 July and of the repressions that followed, and the complicity of the Soviet leadership in the latter. This first real taste of civil war shook the workers to the core and initially left them in a state of shock. But soon a different emotion began to push to the fore, a deep and growing rage directed not only at census society but more and more at the 'conciliationist' leaders of revolutionary democracy. The two

emotions – fear and rage – continued to coexist, each struggling for the upper hand. For most workers, this struggle would be resolved only in October itself.

On 3 July, most of the casualties resulted from clashes between armed demonstrators and provocateurs among the hostile crowds and in the buildings that lined their route. On 4 July, however, regular government troops began to fire, often at point-blank range, on the workers' columns, [60] and soon ordinary citizens began to get into the act. D. Afanas'ev, a worker at the New Lessner Factory, related what was by no means an isolated incident:

"At the Tauride Palace the Putilov workers declared they would stay until the Soviet took a decision one way or the other. When I learnt of the Soviet's decision not to decide under pressure from the street, I went to a relative who lived nearby. The next day I went home with two comrades and argued with anyone abusing the Bolsheviks.

At Shukin Market we came across a well-dressed nurse in the middle of a crowd saying that Trotsky and Lunacharskii were arrested, that Lenin and Zinoviev were in hiding, that they had taken money from Wilhelm, etc. She called to mercilessly kill the Bolsheviks. We ask: Who gave you money to slander the Bolsheviks and the workers? We argued for ten minutes exposing the lies. Then about twenty merchants, probably butchers, arrived and started to curse the Bolsheviks – Beat the Jews and the Bolsheviks! Into the water with them! – and the crowd thrashed us soundly. One comrade ran away, the other died in the hospital two weeks later from the beating, they took away my nagan [pistol] and threw it into the canal and began throwing stones.

Six sailors arrived and dispersed the crowd, pulled me, all bloody, out of the canal. I dragged myself homeward but could not keep myself from cursing two **burzhui** (bourgeois, well-to-do) who, talking among themselves, called Lenin a provocateur. I called them provocateurs. They took me to the Aleksandr-Neveskii Militia Station, where there were already many arrested workers. I was there until July 7. Three Don Cossacks and two sailors gave me something to eat and freed me. I was sick for about a month." [61]

On 14 July the general assembly of the Langezipen Factory resolved unanimously to

"bring to the attention of the TsIK of the Soviets of W and SD that a worker of the Langezipen Factory, T. Sinitsyn, was killed at the Vologda Station for verbally defending the Bolsheviks. We draw the attention of the TsIK of W and SD to the fact that this is the total destruction of freedom of speech and a victory of the counterrevolution." [62]

Reports poured into the TsIK of 'excesses' taking place in the city. In certain districts crowds pushed their way into the trams seeking out the 'Leninists'. Once again, the jails of Petrograd filled up with 'politicals'.

On the night of 4-5 July government troops ransacked the premises of the Bolshevik CC and PC. In effect, nearly the entire top stratum of the party was taken out of action for the whole of July and most of August. But the middle and lower levels were also hard hit-during the month of July the PC reported it had been unable to conduct any agitational work to speak of. [63] The Bolsheviks' newly purchased printing shop was totally demolished, and *Pravda* shut down along with a number of provincial Bolshevik papers. The Minister of the Interior was empowered to close any publications calling for insubordination to military authorities or to violence and civil war. [64] Yet, however critical the Bolshevik press had been of the government, appeals to violence and civil war at this time were indeed far from party policy.

The government also immediately began to disarm the workers as well as the military units that had

participated in the demonstrations. [65] At Sestroretsk outside the capital, the local soviet had been long running things, much to the disgust of the non-socialist press that continued to rail against this 'Sestroretsk Republic'. But the time for revenge had come. A full-scale military operation was mounted including several hundred Cossacks, Junkers and six armoured trucks. The commander was even empowered to shoot all resisters and raze the town. But there was no resistance. After indiscriminate searches in workers' homes, the expedition left, taking with it the entire factory committee and leaving the premises of the workers' and Bolshevik organisations in shambles. [66]

On 11 July, *Novaya zhizn'*, which had not yet closed, printed an editorial entitled 'Blossoms' (from the Russian proverb: These are only the blossoms; the berries are yet to come).

"The counterrevolution is making great strides, not by the day but by the hour. Searches and arrests - and what arrests - the secret police of Tsarist Russia did not permit itself such insolent conduct, the likes of which the bourgeois youth and Cossack officers have of late undertaken in an effort to 'restore order' by Petrograd."

Other repressive measures not relating directly to the workers that should be mentioned are the reintroduction of the death penalty at the front, an act of immense symbolic meaning to the workers, the dissolution of the Finnish Parliament, whose Social-Democratic majority had voted for internal autonomy, and the attempted dissolution and arrest of the CC of the Baltic Fleet for disobeying an order to send ships to the capital during the July events. [67]

Where did the TsIK stand on all of this? Although it protested against 'excesses' and somewhat restrained the government's repressive zeal, for example, by obtaining the release of the delegation of the CC of the Baltic Fleet and refusing to grant Kerenskii his wish to declare the Bolsheviks totally outside the law, [68] the fact is that after the Kadet ministers resigned on 1 July, the TsIK's ministers actually formed a majority in the government (6 against 5). Moreover, the second coalition, formed on 7 July, was in fact, if not officially, a 'soviet government': the Prime Minister as well as the other key ministers were members of the TsIK (including Tsereteli as Minister of Internal Affairs), and this cabinet had, in fact, been formed solely on the decision of the socialist ministers, officially adopting the TsIK's programme as its own. 'Formally, a dictatorship of the PG has been declared', wrote *Rabochaya gazeta*, 'but in fact the TsIK of W and SD is participating in this dictatorship'. [69] In fact, Tsereteli, leader of the TsIK, declared in response to Martov's protests: 'I take upon myself responsibility for these arrests. [70] The TsIK also approved the introduction of the death penalty at the front.

This apparent assumption of direct control by the TsIK of the government, in fact, was merely a prelude to new and more far-reaching concessions to census society. For after a brief scuffle between the centre-left of the TsIK, on the one hand, and Kerenskii and the political leaders of census society on the other, a third coalition was formed which included five Kadets. For the first time, the government announced no programme, nor was the TsIK's approval even sought. Tsereteli himself admitted this was a major surrender of the Soviet's power when he told the Petrograd Soviet that 'the workers are a large part of the population. But they are not the whole country, and we must march under the banner of an all-national platform. The power of the revolutionary organisations must be limited'. [71]

In sum, whatever the actual sentiment in the TsIK, Tsereteli succeeded in obtaining its approval at every crucial step. In the final analysis, the TsIK proved unwilling to use its still considerable authority to restrain the government or to prevent the further erosion of the Soviet's power.

The workers' reactions to all this were complex and varied widely, especially between those who had participated in the demonstrations and those who had abstained.

A relatively small segment of the workers, apparently mainly from the Vyborg District, actually attempted a counter-offensive. On 5 July, there were a number of political strikes and even efforts to renew the demonstrations. [72] Metelev recalled Vyborg Red Guards and worker youths stuffing bombs into their pockets and boots and crossing the river in boats to the aid of the Kronstadt sailors besieged in the Peter-Paul Fortress. [73] According to Latsis, 'The Vyborg [Bolshevik] district committee instinctively raised the entire district to its feet. I personally made the rounds of the factories and asked to keep the Red Guards at the ready. A plan for the defence of the district was even drawn up.' However, the Executive Committee of the Bolshevik PC narrowly rejected Latsis' plan for a general strike. Lenin, himself, already in hiding, heatedly opposed this idea. [74]

These scattered and fundamentally defensive responses of the most militant segment of the working class really only confirm that the dominant mood was far from militant. The prevailing reaction among those who had demonstrated was rather one of shock and dismay. They were caught totally off-guard by this outcome. Not only had an originally peaceful demonstration resulted in what in 1917 appeared as massive bloodshed, but the political tables had completely turned overnight, and it was anyone's guess as to how it would all end. For the first time, the workers understood the full extent of their isolation in society.

On 5 July, some factories in the Vyborg District had started up, but 'not all workers have come. Those at the lathes cannot get back into the routine. "My hands shake from emotion", say the workers. "My hands won't obey me" '. Despite the decision of the various parties, in many places the factory committees had to let the workers go home after lunch because they were so on edge. [75] On Vasilevskii ostrov, among the women, fear was the dominant emotion. [76]

Then the depression set in. 'We felt inexpressibly sad', recalled Metelev. [77] Naumov described the mood at Lessner:

"At the factory the workers are morose. They don't believe the slander, but all the same not all are sufficiently armed to repulse the poisonous fumes of slander seeping into the shops... Not a day passes without some new 'revelation'. Instead of them giving us the opportunity to express our point of view, our views are passed on in their words in a distorted manner, and repression, repression everywhere." [78]

A certain fatigue began to set in. Some observers noted a tendency to draw back from politics. In the Narva District, 'the mood of the worker masses is sluggish, apathetic. This especially strikes the eye at the Putilov Factory... This is to be explained by the fatigue from the exertion of the last days'. [79] At the Factory Committee Conference in early August, Skrypnik noted a 'temporary apathy into which they [the broad worker masses] have fallen as a result of fatigue'. [80]

As always when threatened from without, the workers began to assert a powerful desire for unity. Unable to break with the Soviet majority, the workers seemed to cling to the hope that now, at last, the moderate socialists would join with them against the onslaught of counterrevolution. 'Among the workers', noted Latsis, 'the question is being raised of joining with the SRs and Mensheviks on the basis of the estimation that now the eyes of all have been opened to the counterrevolution and the need to rally in struggle against'. [81] Such attempts at overcoming party differences did, in fact, occur at many factories, including Metallicheskie, New Parviainen, Orudiinyi, Promet, Dinamo and others. [82] (All, as it turned out, failed.)

Nor did the desire for unity stop at the factory level. Speaking for the Bolshevik fraction at the 10 July session of the Petrograd Soviet, Fedorov called for unity of all revolutionary forces against the danger from the right, and when Dan presented the TsIK's resolution appealing for support for the new government (which had officially adopted the TsIK's programme, with the socialist ministers

promising to report to the TsIK at least twice weekly), only about ten votes were cast against it, with a full one-quarter of the plenum abstaining. [83] As Sukhanov noted, to the Bolshevik abstainers, 'the hated Kerenskii already seemed preferable to much else that could still happen'. [84]

There is little doubt, then, that at least initially the workers along with a good part of Bolshevik organisation remained wedded to the tactic of pushing the TsIK to the left. This was also reflected in factory resolutions which now took on a rather defensive tone, passing over in silence the issue of state power, and limiting themselves to protests against the repressions and demands that the TsIK take some action. The general assembly of Old Parviainen, for example, condemned the rising tide of counterrevolution in the strongest terms but now merely concluded that 'unity of all revolutionary forces is needed in order to repulse counterrevolutionary acts against the Soviet of S and SD and the further development of the revolution'. [85]

But this picture is still incomplete. For as serious as the demoralisation was, the surrender of political initiative and the drive for unity in no way involved the abandonment by the workers of their resolve to replace the coalition with a soviet government. The retreat was merely tactical and the demoralisation did not touch the workers' fundamental goals nor their conviction of the counterrevolutionary nature of census society. One need only note that the Bolsheviks were able to hold on to the allegiance of practically all the workers who had supported them up before the July Days, and this in face of the most intense and virulent defencist agitation that strove to pin the blame for the bloodshed squarely on the Bolsheviks.

Korotkov, a Bolshevik worker at the Admiralty Shipyards, described the scene he found at the plant when he was released from jail a few days after the demonstrations:

"We found a meeting in progress. The SRs had come with their 'big guns'. The workers' mood was depressed. The SRs wanted to exploit this in order to let the Bolsheviks have it. When they demanded that the instigators of the demonstration at the factory be surrendered, individual voices were even heard: 'Into the Neva with Pakhomov, Korotkov and other Bolsheviks'. They failed. Pakhomov answered well, calling them cowards covered with the workers' blood. After him the workers would not let the SRs speak and said firmly that they [the big guns] had better not set foot again in the factory. And the workers kept their word in this." [86]

Similarly, the local Bolsheviks reported from Kolpino:

"The Izhorskii Factory [located some distance from Petrograd] took part in the demonstration according to the resolution of the Workers' Section of the Soviet of W and SD. This participation took the form of sending a delegation to the Tauride Palace (25 people) and [the factory] stopped work... From the moment the demonstration was liquidated, the mood turned clearly not in our favour. Accusations, the authors of which were the SRs, were levelled at us that we allegedly duped the workers by saying that the factories in Petrograd were striking. (They referred to the Nevskii District. [87]) On the evening of July 5 the SRs called a meeting of five or six thousand which gave us the chance to turn the mood around again in our favour. After this, attempts to try our comrades for allegedly reporting falsely on the events in Petersburg totally fell through. There were cases of resignation from the party but they bore an individual character. On the other hand, there were cases (also of an individual character) of transfers from the SRs. In general, the mood has settled down and has become relatively calm, and if there were small excesses, they were against the SR leaders." [88]

The situation was the same at the Putilov Works. [89]

The Bolsheviks also did well in elections that were held soon after the July Days in a series of

factories, including the overwhelmingly female Treugol'nik Rubber Factory, where they won two-thirds of the seats, finally displacing the SRs. [90] As a result of all this, Volodarskii was able to tell the Bolshevik City Conference on 16 July that judging by the information coming in from the districts, the mood is good everywhere'. [91] Perhaps not quite everywhere, but, even where it did not yet favour the Bolsheviks, it was in the process of changing.

One of the most graphic and moving expressions of the mood in the factories among the July Days participants is a letter endorsed unanimously on 11 July by the workers of the cannon shop of the Putilov Works. Its authors are anonymous, but the style bears the unmistakable imprint of the self-taught worker-*intelligent*. On both counts, it merits being cited at length.

"Citizens!

Like an ancient oak amidst the forest, the great Putilov Factory stands amidst the nation's industry, shaking the earth with the heavy blows of its hammers. Workers from all corners of Russia are here, and working, they think their thoughts. Amidst the whistling of saws and howling of wires, under the depressing gaze of gun carriages and cannons, gloomy thoughts creep into our minds. In their toil, as in a hard labour penal regime, the mothers and fathers who bore us die. We also are dying here in bleak estrangement from that envied happiness, from that prosperity and culture which, not far from us, separated by the rich [zhirnyi] monument of old, the Narva Gates, the rich, carefree, 'educated' minority enjoys.

Where, then, is justice? Where are the results of the blood and lives of the fighters who fell in the Revolution? Where is the new life? Where is that paradise-like, joyous, green-red bird that so temptingly flew over our land and disappeared... as if to deceive?

Citizens! This was not the first time the Putilovtsy shed their blood in the interests of the working class. Remember January 9 [1905] and refrain from those indiscriminate accusations that are being heard now on the streets of Piter. In those days, 3-4 July, we went with the clear hearts of loyal sons of the Revolution, and we went not against the Soviet of W and SD, but to support it. That is why on our banner was written: All Power to the Soviets! That is why certain of us in the aim of self-defence took their arms with them. On January 9 the loyal servants of the House of Romanov shot us. Now it has been established with accuracy that the first shots, and also part of the shots fired in return, were organised by provocateurs – enemies of Russian freedom, enemies of the workers.

Citizens! The renewed life does not want to wait. With the iron logic of all the events that have occurred, it inexorably pushes the revolutionary people into the streets, forward, and often the street decides the matter. But to our grief, we are alone and we lack sufficient organised forces. The developed workers are too scattered and often live not by the interests of the class as a whole, but in numerous factions and sects that also do us harm. We are left to ourselves. The 'Soviet of Workers' Deputies' seems to have begun to do without workers and, isolating itself by its composition, loses itself more and more in tedious work of an administrative nature. The Provisional Government has already congealed in dead bureaucratic forms."

In just such a light did the economic and political situation appear to us workers on the eve of the events of 3 -4 July.

Citizens! Look trustingly at the black smokestacks rising from the ground. There, at their foot, the same kind of people as you, creating new values you need, suffer and agonise in a bondage of perfected and fierce exploitation. There, slowly, consciousness is ripening. In our hearts, hate is being stored, and the tender conditions of another life for all humanity are being lovingly written on the bloody banner. Away with fratricidal discord!

All citizens to the active support of the 'Committee for the Salvation of the Revolution', [92] that final effort of the forces of freedom – repeating the words addressed to the workers: 'Neither under the boot of Wilhelm nor backward under the vile yoke of Nicolas the Bloody'. [93]

The almost unbearable tendon between the promise of February and the dismal reality of July cries out from these words. Hatred for the 'rich, carefree, "educated" minority' grows along with the workers' determination to create the new life for which they have sacrificed so much. Yet the overall tone is sad, even apologetic. The Soviet and the government are not spared the workers' wrath, but the letter offers no alternative. 'To our grief, we are alone... We are left to ourselves.' And so, 'Away with fratricidal discord!' Unity in face of the counterrevolutionary offensive – this was the only slogan the workers could put forward, for the present.

This letter is an appeal to the rest of revolutionary democracy and especially to the workers who were blaming the demonstrators and the Bolsheviks for the bloodshed of the July Days. Not having participated in the events, these workers were at first easily persuaded by the aggressive campaign of the moderate socialists. 'The blood lies on the head of those who called out armed people', it was declared in the TsIK. 'This action was a knife in the back of the Revolution'. [94] The Bolsheviks are 'friends of Nicolas and Wilhelm', declared *Izvestiya*. [95]

In the Nevskii District the reaction was especially strong. On 10 July, a delegate from the district to the Bolshevik PC reported:

"The factories did not take part in the demonstration and worked continuously. The mood as regards the Bolsheviks has a pogrom tinge. The SRs are taking an active part in fanning this mood. With their participation, a list of Bolsheviks is being drawn up at the Baltic Factory with repressive intentions. The district committee is threatened with a pogrom by the crowd milling about in the street. The workers for the most part are being fed by rumours and they read the boulevard press. A meeting that took place yesterday at the Obukhovskii Factory was unsuccessful for us. Our main opponents were the SRs." [96]

The two largest factories, Nevskii and Obukhovskii, passed resolutions condemning those irresponsible people and parties that consciously or unconsciously conducted a policy that disorganises the forces of the Revolution'. [97]

The delegate from the Porokhovskii District painted a similar picture:

"The workers milieu of our district represents a standing swamp. After the days of 5-6 July this expressed itself clearly. The Bolsheviks are being vilified and persecuted. We, six people, were thrown out of the factory with the blessing of the [district] soviet. Our soviet and the Mensheviks are working for the benefit of the counterrevolution. They are behaving in a vile manner." [98]

Only two textile mills had demonstrated in full force. Perazich, with considerable understatement, notes that the campaign being conducted by the non-socialist press and supported at meetings by the defencists, 'in places, for a time, confused our workers'. [99] At the Thornton Mills the Bolsheviks were thrown out of all elected offices when they refused to repudiate their party. [100]

A general assembly of printers on 7 July placed full responsibility on 'the left wing, which is a significant irresponsible minority trying to impose its will on all of revolutionary democracy'. [101] The Bolsheviks even had trouble getting their newspaper printed because 'the workers refuse to print a Bolshevik paper'. [102] In one state-owned plant, according to one printer, 'it reached the point where a non-party worker who shared the opinions of the Bolsheviks was put on trial before the general assembly in order that his military deferment be revoked and he be sent to the

front'. [103]

But this reaction, strong as it was, proved merely a brief interlude in the seemingly irresistible swing of the workers to soviet power. By September, even the strongest 'conciliationist' strongholds would have begun to crumble. [104] And it is hard to see how it could have been otherwise. The 'irresponsible' Bolsheviks and their supporters had been defeated in July, but this did nothing to alleviate the problems facing the workers. In fact, each passing day seemed to bring the victory of the counterrevolution nearer. The coalition would have to be replaced by soviet power.

But that was the rub. After the July experience, could soviet power still be seen as a viable political goal? And if not, what was the alternative?

David Mandel

To be continued...

Footnotes

[1] Dok. Apr., p. 444.

[2] FZK, vol. I, p. 148; Izvestiya (17 June 1917); Novaya zhizn' (19 June 1917).

[3] Rab. Kon., p. 104.

[4] Ibid., p. 111.

[5] Izvestiya (17 June 1917).

[6] Rab. Kon., p. 75.

[7] Cited in Ferro, *La Révolution*, p. 400.

[8] *Den'* (17 June), cited in *ibid.*, p. 401.

[9] See, for example, the cases of the Soikin Printing Press (*Rabochii put'*, 7 Sept 1917); Russkaya Univernil' (*Rabochaya gazeta*, 2 July 1917); unnamed (*ibid.*, 18 May 1917); Brenner Factory (*Novaya zhizn'*, 22 July 1917; FZK, vol. I, p. 147; *Revoluyussionnoe dvizhenie v Rossii v iyule 1917g.* (henceforth: Dok. July) (M., 1959) p. 341); Aerowheel Factory (Rab. Kon., pp. 112-14); Petichev Cable Factory (FZK, vol. II, pp. 54-5); Nevskii Shoe Factory (*ibid.*, p. 57); Promet Pipe Factory *Izvestiya*, 17 June 1917; *Novaya zhizn'*, 19 June 1917). These are only a sample of such cases.

[10] V. I. Selitskii, *Petrogradskie massy v bor'be za rabochii kontrol'*, p. 200, cited in Sobolev, *Revolutsionnoe soznanie*, pp. 260-1.

[11] FZK, vol. I, p. 112. Lenin's 'April Theses' did state: 'Not the "introduction of socialism" as our direct task, but the transition to control on the part of the Soviet of WD of the social production

and distribution of goods' (Dok, Apr., p. 5). But this was a question of regulation by a Soviet state. Workers' control involved the immediate establishment of direct control at the plant level, although it by no means excluded state control. In fact, the opposite was true.

[12] *Pravda* (24 May 1917).

[13] *Putilovtsy v trekh revolyutsiyakh*, p. 431.

[14] FZK, vol. I, p. 122. See also the speeches of Fokht, Vakkhanen and Tseitlin, *ibid.*, pp. 123 -4.

[15] *Ibid.*, p. 67.

[16] *Ibid.*, p. 183.

[17] *Rab. Kon.*, p. 75.

[18] *Ibid.*, pp. 70, 80; *Putilovtsy v trekh revolyutsiyakh*, p. 337.

[19] *Nakanune Oktyabr'skogo vooruzhennogo vosstaniya, 1-24 oktyabrya* (henceforth: *Dok. Nak.*) (M., 1962) p. 288.

[20] FZK, vol. I, p. 113.

[21] *Izvestiya* (17 June 1917).

[22] See also the case of the Brenner factory. *Novaya zhizn'* (22 July 1917); FZK, vol. I, p. 147; *Dok.* July, p. 342

[23] FZK, vol. I, p. 181.

[24] *Dok.* April, p. 445; FZK, vol. I, p. 93.

[25] See also the case of the Brenner factory. *Novaya zhizn'* (22 July 1917); FZK, vol. I, p. 147; *Dok.* July, p. 342.

[26] FZK, vol. X, p. 171.

[27] *Novaya zhizn'* (13 May 1917). See also Perazich, *Tekstili Leningrada*, p. 80.

[28] *Rabochaya gazeta* (6 June 1917).

[29] FZK, vol. I, p. 126.

[30] *Dok.* May, p. 500.

[31] *Novaya zhizn'* (10 June 1917).

[32] *Dok.* May, p. 501. *Rabochaya gazeta* claimed that these 300 workers were in fact Bolsheviks, and undoubtedly many were. But they were at the same Putilov workers and most, if party members, had joined only since February. (The first meeting of the factory party collective was

attended by only 56 workers (Mitel'man et al., *Istoriya Putilovskogo*, p. 562).) If they did not represent the mood of the entire factory, then at least of a very significant segment.

[33] *Pravda* (1 June 1917).

[34] Dok. May, p. 560.

[35] M. Mikhailov, *Krasnaya letopis*, no. 50 (1932) p. 108.

[36] A week earlier, a representative of the Soviet complained that the factory had stopped making contributions to that body. Ibid., p. 200.

[37] Dok. May, pp. 558-61.

[38] M. I. Latsis, *Proletarskaya revolyutsiya*, no. 5 (1923) p. 106.

[39] Dok. May, pp. 559-60.

[40] Among the historical monographs on the July Days, one should mention especially A. Rabinowitch's *Prelude to Revolution* (1968) and O. A. Znamenskii's *Iyul'skii krizis v 1917g.* (1967).

[41] 'We see', one worker told the Soviet Congress, 'that the government of capitalists desires from time to time to let some workers' blood flow.' Znamenskii, *Iyul'skii*, p. 22.

[42] *Rabochaya gazeta* (28 June 1917).

[43] Ibid. (2 July 1917).

[44] 'Petrogradskie rabochie ob iyul'skikh dnyakh', *Krasnaya letopis*, no. 9 (1924) pp. 19-41 passim.

[45] Latsis, *Proletarskaya revolyutsiya*, no. 5 (1923) p. 111.

[46] Znamenskii, *Iyul'skii Krizis*, pp. 16-17.

[47] A. Metelev, *Proletarskaya revolyutsiya*, no. 6 (1922) pp. 159-61.

[48] They resigned ostensibly in protest over concessions made by the socialist ministers to the Ukrainian Rada, which was demanding autonomy.

[49] Bolshevik policy was to keep the workers from demonstrating at this time.

[50] *Krasnaya letopis*, no. 9 (1924) p. 19.

[51] Znamenskii, *Iyul'skii Krizis*, p. 55.

[52] Ibid., pp. 84, 106; *Rabochaya gazeta* (6 July 1917); Perazich. *Tekstili Leningrada*, p. 81, *Krasnaya letopis*, no. 9 (1924) p. 31.

[53] P. Milyukov, *History of the Second Russian Revolution*, vol. I, p. 244. Cited in Chamberlin, *History of the Russian Revolution*, vol. 1, p. 171.

[54] Dok. July, p. 21.

[55] Sukhanov, *Zapiski o revolyutsii*, vol. IV, p. 430.

[56] It is true that Chernov was arrested by a group of sailors and narrowly rescued by Trotsky. But Trotsky implies that these sailors were in fact provocateurs. At any rate, maximalist and anarchist influence was considerably stronger among the Kronstadt sailors than in the Petrograd working class.

[57] Metelev, *Proletarskaya revolyutsiya*, no. 6 (1922) p. 171.

[58] Sukhanov, *Zapiski o revolyutsii*, p. 440.

[59] Chamberlin, *History of the Russian Revolution*, p. 177.

[60] *Krasnaya letopis*, no. 9 (1924) pp. 25, 34.

[61] Ibid., pp. 30-1.

[62] I. G. Tomkevich, 'Znamya oktyabrya'-ocherki Istorii zavoda (L., 1972) p. 40. See also Perazich, *Tekstili Leningrada*, p. 86 on beatings and arrests of Textile Union activists.

[63] *Vtoraya i tret'ya obshchegorodskie konferentsii bol'shevikov v iyule i sentyabre 1917 g.* (henceforth: *Vtoraya*) (M.-L., 1927) p. 83.

[64] Sukhanov, *Zapiski o revolyutsii*, vol. V, p. 20.

[65] See, for example, Dok. July, pp. 161-4; Peka, pp. 211-14; *Istoriya Leningradskogo ordena Lenina i ordena Krasnogo znameni obuvnoi fabriki imeni Ya. Kalinina* (L., 1968) p. 171.

[66] *Krasnaya letopis*, pp. 38-41.

[67] *Novaya zhizn'* (18 July 1917); Sukhanov, *Zapiski o revolyutsii*, vol. IV, p. 501. It was later learned that Kerenskii had ordered these ships sunk in the event they proved 'undependable'.

[68] Ibid., p. 486.

[69] *Rabochaya gazeta* (11 July, 1917).

[70] Sukhanov, *Zapiski o revolyutsii*, p. 506. It should be noted that in this Tsereteli was acting independently of the Menshevik CC where Dan's position had won out, viz. that the major threat to the revolution was from the right.

[71] Ibid., vol. V, p. 115.

[72] Ibid., vol. IV, p. 474; Tomkevich, 'Znamya oktyabrya', p. 20.

- [73] Metelev, *Proletarskaya revolyutsiya*, no. 6 (1922) p. 172.
- [74] Latsis, *Proletarskaya revolyutsiya*, no. 5 (1923) p. 114; Rabinowitch, *Prelude to Revolution*, p. 211.
- [75] *Izvestiya* (6 July 1917).
- [76] *Vtoraya*, p. 60.
- [77] Metelev, p. 171. See also *Novaya zhizn'* (7 July 1917).
- [78] I. Naumov, *Zapiski vyborzhitsa*, p. 32.
- [79] Peka, p. 211.
- [80] FZK, vol. I, p. 191.
- [81] *Vtoraya*, p. 61. The same was noted by several Bolshevik and non-Bolshevik observers. *Ibid.*, p. 69; *Novaya zhizn'* (11 July 1917).
- [82] *Vtoraya*, pp. 61-2; Peka, p. 210; *Novaya zhizn'* (13, 19, 20 July 1917).
- [83] Sukhanov, *Zapiski o revolyutsii* vol. V, pp. 20-2.
- [84] *Ibid.*, p. 23.
- [85] *Izvestiya* (14 July 1917). See also, e.g., Tomkovich, 'Znamya oktyabrya', p. 40.
- [86] *Krasnaya letopis'*, no. 9 (1927) p. 35. See also Ya. Temkin, *U nas na Galernom ostrovke* (L., 1958) p. 12.
- [87] Few workers from this district participated in the demonstrations. See below, p. 175.
- [88] *Dok.* July, p. 103.
- [89] *Dok.* July, pp. 162-3; *Vtoraya*, p. 63.
- [90] *Vtoraya*, pp. 61-4, 92; B. Shabalin, 'Ot fevralya k oktyabryu', in *Bastiony revolyutsii*, vol. I, p. 293.
- [91] *Vtoraya*, p. 57.
- [92] The reference is apparently to a revolutionary committee set up in the factory to fight counterrevolution.
- [93] *Dok.* July, p. 71.
- [94] *Izvestiya* (5 July 1917). The TsIK expelled Lenin and Kamenev pending the results of an investigation into the charges that the Bolsheviks had taken German gold.

[95] Ibid. (12 July 1917).

[96] Peka, p.212.

[97] *Novaya zhizn'* (7 July 1917).

[98] Poka, p. 213.

[99] Perazich, *Tekstili Leningrada*, p. 86.

[100] Ibid.

[101] *Novaya zhizn'* (8 July 1917).

[102] *Vtoraya*, p. 95.

[103] *Krasnaya letopis'*, no. 9 (1927) p. 32.

[104] To take one measure, in the 20 August дума elections, the Bolsheviks received one-third of the vote, as compared to 20 per cent in the May district дума elections. The SRs gathered only 37 per cent of the vote this time and the Mensheviks 4 per cent, a drastic decline from the 56 per cent received by the moderate socialists in May (*Delo naroda*, 23 Aug). Moreover, among the Mensheviks and SRs the left wings, which stood closer to the Bolshevik position, were gaining steadily.