ALEXANDER KERENSKY AND THE KORNILOV AFFAIR

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CHAPTER I

THE BACKGROUND

No incident of the chaotic Russian Revolution of 1917 has received more varied or impassioned interpretations than the enigmatic Kornilov Affair. The affair concerned the efforts of a conservative group of politicians and army officers, led by the Supreme Commander of the Russian army, to replace the vacillating Provisional Government of revolutionary Russia with a stronger regime. Alexander Kerensky, Prime Minister of the Provisional Government and one of the main protagonists in the affair, has stubbornly clung to the idea that the incident was deliberately planned by counter-revolutionary groups behind the Supreme Commander, and that it provided the turning point of the revolution. In his book, Prelude to Bolshevism, he claims that without this rebellion, the Provisional Government could have weathered the political storms of the late summer of 1917 and saved Russia from the Bolsheviks.

More objective views see the incident as merely one of a series of crises facing the Provisional Government, which was ill-prepared to meet a crisis of any kind. Regardless of

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[1]Alexander Kerensky, Prelude to Bolshevism, (New York, 1919) 103.

the final results of the affair, historians and participants alike disagree on the facts of the case. They disagree on whether the affair was a deliberately planned attempt to overthrow the Provisional Government and set up a military dictatorship, or just a misunderstanding between Kerensky and Kornilov. Neither can the experts agree on the ultimate motives of either of the main characters, or on the relative importance of the many other persons involved in the incident. Finally, no one has proved beyond doubt who was actually responsible for the episode.

On the surface, the incident possessed all the characteristics of a coup d'etat on the part of an insurgent army general and certain right wing groups against the democratic revolutionary civil government of Russia. Within four days, however, the rebellion crumbled completely, less from the opposition of the Provisional Government than from its own inherent weakness and blundering. Perhaps the whole matter would have been forgotten if the Provisional Government, believing itself the victor in putting down the rebellion, had not appointed a special commission to investigate the affair. The investigation produced a mass of conflicting evidence and touched off a storm of controversy which has not been resolved to this day.

The Kornilov Affair happened late in the summer of 1917, during the waning days of the Provisional Government. Some understanding of the preceding events is necessary to set the scene for the affair itself.

The advent of World War I found Russia ill-prepared for the role she was called to play, in spite of the fact that the army had been completely reorganized following the Russo-Japanese War. There was much popular support for the war, however, from both the military and civilian population, and the serious political conflict between the Duma and the Tsar almost vanished in an outburst of patriotism which united all Russians. The only exceptions were a small group of Bolsheviks who were quickly exiled. From the beginning of the war the Russian losses were staggering. In addition, the political situation at home became more unsatisfactory each day, with the dissolute Rasputin and the autocratic Empress Alexandra interfering in the government in every possible way. Despite a slight recovery during the winter of 1915-1916, the situation rapidly became intolerable. Government scandals, rapidly soaring inflation, railroad and communication problems, and serious food and fuel shortages were only a few of the problems facing the already helpless and corrupt government. During the winter of 1916-1917 dissatisfaction grew rapidly and the frustrated population began to protest with an increasing number of strikes and demonstrations. Both the army and the civilian population were ripe for revolution.

In spite of all these problems and all the talk about the inevitability of the revolution, when it came it was a completely spontaneous and leaderless event. It began on

March 8,[2] almost unnoticed, among the weary women in food lines in Petrograd; was aided by a demonstration of the workers of the giant Putilov Works in the suburbs, and soon grew to overwhelming proportions. The demonstrations continued through the next four days. The government was unable to put down the crowds with troops, for most of the soldiers of the Petrograd garrison quickly joined the revolution themselves. By the evening of March 12, the revolution was in full control of Petrograd. The rest of the Empire capitulated quickly; there was almost no resistance from the imperial government. The tottering hulk needed only a shove to collapse completely. The people had given it that shove.

The Imperial Duma had been in session when the disorders began, but on March 12 the Tsar ordered its dissolution. Although the Duma obeyed the order, the members met in unofficial sessions where they organized a committee to restore order and deal with the events of the revolution. At the same time, revolutionary leaders in other parts of the city began the election of a Soviet of Workers' Deputies, later to be joined by delegates from the garrison regiments. On March 16 the Provisional Government took office. This government grew out of the emergency committee formed by the Duma and was the official government of the country. It was soon recognized

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[2]In 1917 Russia still followed the Old-Style Calendar, which is thirteen days earlier than the New-Style. The dates in this thesis have been changed to correspond with the New-Style Calendar.

by most foreign powers and claimed supreme authority until a constituent assembly could meet to form a constitution and a permanent government. The Petrograd Soviet, on the other hand, was a loosely constructed lower class representative body led by the more liberal elements in Russia, which challenged the Government's claims. Throughout the summer of the revolution, these two bodies viewed each other in an atmosphere of suspicion and distrust. They constituted a Dual Power in Russia, neither one nor the other being strong enough or self-confident enough to get the situation in hand.

It soon became evident that the new government did not in fact possess real authority. Its first decree was written under pressure from the Soviet. The decree declared a general amnesty for all political, religious and military prisoners, freedom of speech and of the press, and freedom for unions and strikes. It abolished all social, religious, and national distinctions, called for the summoning of a constituent assembly, set up a people's militia to replace the police, called for elections based on universal suffrage, and gave soldiers the same rights as civilians when not in active service.[3] In short, it made Russia the most democratic and free nation in Europe. Neither the government nor the Soviet seemed to consider for a moment that Russia had no experience at democracy

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[3]Izvestiia, March 16, 1917, as quoted in Frank Alfred Golder, Documents of Russian History (New York, 1927), 308-9. Also, Alexander Kerensky, Crucifixion of Liberty (New York, 1934), 296-7.

and that freedom to these long suppressed people meant no restraint at all. If there were voices of dissent among the more conservative members of the Government, they were quickly silenced by the Soviet.

In spite of the fact that this declaration was a compromise between the Soviet and the Provisional Government, the Soviet issued another declaration without the knowledge or approval of the Provisional Government. This was the notorious Order No. 1, which many members of the government and the army staff claimed was the principal agent of destruction of the Russian army.[4] The order called for soldier's committees virtual control over the armed forces. Each detachment was instructed to obey the orders of the military commission of the state Duma only if those orders did not contradict the orders of the Soviet. Saluting and other formalities between officers and men were abolished, and the political control of the army was placed squarely in the hands of the Soviet.

It was plain that the balance of the Dual Power lay with the Soviet, although lack of political experience and internal dissention prevented them from seizing complete control. The Provisional Government was indispensable to the Soviet because it was at least the nominally recognized authority for the country. But the Provisional Government itself was hampered by the inexperience of its members as well as by the constant

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[4]Alexander Kerensky, The Catastrophe (New York, 1927), 161-64.

interference of the Soviet. Most of the members of the first cabinet, organized under Prince George Lvov, Zemstvo leader and probably the least controversial figure in Russia at the time, were members of the Kadet party.[5] They attempted to apply the principles of European constitutionalism to revolutionary Russia with disastrous results. They were not to realize their mistake until much later. The peculiar strength of the Soviet lay in the fact that it had much closer contact with the masses than did the Government. Soon after the revolution every village and hamlet had formed its own soviet. The method of election to these bodies varied greatly, but at least the soviets offered some semblance of representation to the eager populace.

The miraculous alliance which had been formed between the Soviet and the Duma to depose Nicholas II began to crumble almost immediately, and the Provisional Government was denied a stable political basis at the outset. While the government was forced to wrestle with the grave problems inherited from the corrupt and inefficient autocracy - food shortages, war, agrarian and labor unrest, price inflation - it also became the center of a struggle for power between the revolutionary factions. In March, 1917, the politically articulate segment of the Russian population could be divided into several groups. On the right were the so-called bourgeois parties around which

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[5]Kadet was the popular name for the Constitutional Democratic Party.

clustered all the non-socialist elements. Represented in this group were the leading members of the Duma, the bureaucrats, the commercial and industrial interests, and the military organizations. Their contradictory political aspirations covered the whole spectrum between the liberal conservatism of the Constitutional Democrats to the reactionary conservatism of the monarchical Octobrists.[6] The most reactionary groups were, for the moment, leaderless and silent. The remaining non-socialists were therefore led by the Constitutional Democrats, a small but vocal group of university professors and other professionals whose political and economic philosophy was in the tradition of nineteenth century liberalism. In the Provisional Government, the Kadets exercised a political sway far out of proportion to the interests of the bourgeoisie, but their members also monopolized the majority of the ministerial seats to the extent that the terms "Provisional Government" and "Kadets" were almost synonymous during the early part of the revolution.

As for a specific political program, the Kadets defended private property, moderate social change, and parliamentary government. They looked upon a constitutional monarchy as the most workable means of implementing their program and favored the continuation of the war with a goal of territorial annexation in the Balkans.

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[6]Paul Miliukov, Russia Today and Tomorrow, (New York, 1922),28.

In the center of the political scheme was the Social Revolutionary party, which, in spite of its radical sounding name, favored a moderate, constitutional government. The SR's were agrarian socialists rather than Marxist proletarian socialists, and until September they hald a voting majority in the Soviet. Alexander Kerensky was a member of the SR party, although he was not very close to the party.

On the left stood the Social Democratic Party, divided into two main groups. The Mensheviks, or moderate members of the party, were more numerous than the Bolsheviks, but lacked the coherence and discipline of the more radical group. The Bolsheviks were the smallest organized political party in Russia, but deliberately so, for they conceived of themselves as an elite corps of leaders firmly dedicated to revolutionary principles. Of all the rival groups, the Bolsheviks alone thought of victory in terms of complete elimination of all other parties. The Bolshevik program was both consistent and violent; the social revolution with its dictatorship of the proletariat could only be realized through the complete destruction of capitalism and all its trimmings. Lenin wrote, "The replacement of the bourgeois by the proletarian state is impossible without a violent revolution."[7] His leadership of the party after his return from exile in April gave strength and direction to the party program.

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[7] V.I. Lenin, Toward the Seizure of Power, The Revolutions of 1917: From the July Days to the October Revolution, Vol. XXI of Collected Works, translated by Moissaye J. Olgin (New York, 1932), Book II, 166.

In such a disunited atmosphere the Provisional Government faced three basic tasks: the re-establishment of the destroyed machinery of state administration, the continuation of the war, and the problems of social and political reform which had arisen from the collapse of the monarchy.[8] The first period of the revolution, from March until July, found the government undertaking a tremendous amount of legislation, giving it, on the surgace, the aspect of intense and constructive activity. Actually, this activity is rendered less important by the realization that much of this legislation was merely a series of endless laws legalizing already spontaneously established facts.[9] The government was neither a free agent, nor an effective one.

The first crisis facing the Provisional Government was in the field of foreign policy. At first the Government took the position that the revolution had made no change in Russia's foreign policy. The Foreign Minister, Paul Miliukov, espoused the theory that the revolution was primarily a protest against the failure of the imperial government to organize the country for war.[10] This idea, though warmly accepted by the Allies,

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[8]Alexander Kerensky, "The Provisional Government of 1917," The Slavonic and East European Review, XI, No. 31 (July, 1932), 6.

[9]W. E. Mosse, "Interlude, the Russian Provisional Government of 1917," Soviet Studies, XV, No. 4 (April, 1964), 410.

[10]Michael T. Florinsky, Russia, A History and an Interpretation (New York, 1958), II, 1375.

was far from the actual truth. The war did play an important part in the motivation of the revolution, but the truth was that the Russian army was demoralized and simply did not wish to continue fighting. Composed largely of peasants, the army had quickly lost its enthusiasm for war, and was obsessed with only one idea; peace and to return to their farms.

Chief among the objectives of Miliukov's foreign policy were the continuation of the war and the annexation of Constantinople. The socialists, however, particularly those who dominated the Soviet, felt that the war was essentially imperialistic in character and demanded an early peace. On March 27, the Soviet issued a "Manifesto to the Peoples of the World," calling on them to oppose the annexationist policies of their governments.[11] Even though the manifesto touched off demonstrations for peace in Petrograd, Miliukov commented in a press interview on April 5 that the annexation on Constantinople and the Straits, as well as the liberation of the Slavic peoples of Austria-Hungary, were among the war aims of the new government.[12] The interview created a sensation. The following day the Provisional Government issued a statement to the effect that Miliukov was expressing only his personal opinions and not those of the Provisional Government. After long negotiations between the Provisional

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[11] Izvestiia, March 28, 1917, as quoted in Golder, 325-6.

[12] Reich, April 3, 1917, as quoted in Alexander Kerensky and Robert Browder (eds.), The Russian Provisional Government of 1917 (Stanford, 1963) III, 1196.

Government and the Soviet, accompanied by mass demonstrations of unprecedented violence by supporters of both sides of the question, order was restored, but the reorganization of the government was imperative. Miliukov stubbornly maintaining his own policy, was forced to resign.[13] His resignation was preceded by that of the Minister of War, A. I. Gutchkov, another member of the cabinet who was considered anathema by the Soviet because of his early attempt to retain the monarchy. With these two members out of the way, the path was open for the Soviet to join the government, but they did not immediately seize the opportunity. Under continued pressure from the government and growing public criticism, the Soviet at last agreed to allow its members to accept positions in the cabinet, and a new government was formed. The new coalition cabinet was composed of six socialist and nine non-socialist ministers, each of them responsible to the parties they represented. In terms of political stability, the new cabinet was hardly any improvement over its predecessor. Although the resignations of Gutchkov and Miliukov removed two of the most unpopular members of the cabinet, the conflict between the Soviet and the Provisional Government was merely transferred within the confines of the ministry itself. The

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[13] Irakli K. Tseretelli, "Reminiscences of the February Revolution: The April Crisis," The Russian Review, XIV (1955), 185. Actually Miliukov was offered the portfolio of Minister of Education, but refused to accept this demotion. See V. B. Stankevitch, Vospominaniia, as quoted in Browder and Kerensky, Documents, II, 1268.

Dual Power was over in name only. The Kadet party continued to dominate the ministry, and Prince Lvov continued as Prime Minister, but the real leader of the government was Alexander Kerensky. Kerensky was Minister of Justice in the first cabinet, and in the new coalition he advanced to the position of Minister of War.

CHAPTER II

KERENSKY'S RISE TO POWER

The most spectacular member of the Provisional Government was the fiery young lawyer, Alexander Kerensky. When the revolution broke out, Kerensky was only thirty-six years old yet he was already one of Russia's leading lawyers and the leader of the small non-Marxist Trudovik Party in the Duma. He was also the vice-chairman of the Petrograd Soviet, an office which was to put him in the position of the unofficial liaison between the Soviet and the Provisional Government.[1]

Kerensky's mother was Jew, and his father was the supervisor of high schools in Tashkent, where the family had been briefly connected with the family of V. I. Lenin.[2] Kerensky, after a liberal bourgeois upbringing, became a left-wing politician and attracted some notice as a defense lawyer in political trials. Up to the outbreak of the Revolution he had not been considered an important political figure, but his popularity with the people was well known and his connection with both the Soviet and the bourgeoisie democracy made him a valuable addition to the cabinet.

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[1]Kerensky, Crucifixion of Liberty, 180-1.

[2]Kerensky, The Catastrophe, 79.

Perhaps Kerensky's most valuable asset was his ability to inspire confidence; his capacity to ingratiate himself with any faction. He was an excellent orator, spoke with no trace of a provincial accent, and had a readiness of tongue and a vocabulary of objurgation that was surpassed by none of his colleagues in the Duma. His oratorical prowess was to work both for and against him, for as the revolution progressed, Kerensky was often accused of doing more talking than acting, and his frequent emotional harangues fell on less attentive ears as the days went by. In personal appearance Kerensky was anything but commanding. He was of medium height and build, with sandy hair and pleasant, though not striking, features. Throughout the days of the revolution, he constantly wore baggy trousers, laced boots, and an ever-present black workman's jacket such as worn by the proletarian workers of Petrograd.

Kerensky's enemies had a tendency to dismiss him as ineffective and garrulous. Kornilov, for instance, developed a hearty dislike for him and referred to him as "an eternal talker who accomplished little."[3] Trotsky characterized him as follows:

> He was not a revolutionist; he merely hung around the the revolution . . . He had no theoretical preparation, no political schooling, no ability to think, no political will. The place of these qualities was occupied

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[3]Cited in Abraham Ascher, "The Kornilov Affair," The Russian Review, XII (October, 1953), 239.

> by a nimble susceptibility, an inflammable temperament, and that kind of eloquence which operates neither upon mind nor will, but upon the nerves.[4]

In Lenin's view, Kerensky was "a fresh-baked member of the Social Revolutionary party," and "a pawn of the Kadets" who was "intoxicated by his own eloquence."[5] Shulgin, the arch-monarchist, described him as being theatrical and erratic in both speech and action.[6] Sir George Buchanan, the British ambassador, wrote of him:

> He was a man who did not act up to his professions, and every time that a crisis came he failed to rise to the occasion. He was a man of words and not of action; he had his chance and he never seized them; he was always going to strike and he never struck; he thought more of saving the revolution than of saving his country, and he ended by losing both.[7]

Such characterizations indeed have some basis in fact. Kerensky's oratory did have its theatrical aspects and late in the revolution it took on an almost hysterical urgency. He did exhibit an inability to act on many measures. But he was hampered on all sides by the lack of real power of the Provisional Government, the harrassment of the Soviet, and the factions within the cabinet itself. To see only one side of his actions and personality is to neglect his great popularity and to ignore his meteoric rise to power.

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[4]Leon Trotsky, The History of the Russian Revolution, 3 vols. (Ann Arbor, 1932), I, 183.

[5]Lenin, Works, XXI, Book I, 78.

[6]Cited in Florinsky, Russia, II, 1387.

[7]Sir George Buchanan, My Mission to Russia and Other Diplomatic Memories, 2 vols. (London, 1923), II, 216.

Despite his faults, Kerensky was a man of great sincerity and intense revoluntionary idealism. Sir George Buchanan, who admittedly did not like him, and who criticized him sharply for his "lost opportunities," still saw Kerensky as "an ardent patriot [who] in the early days of the revolution . . . displayed an energy and courage which marked him out as the one man capable of carrying out the war to a democratic peace and combatting the forces of disorder in his country."[8] Sir George's main disappointment in Kerensky seemed, understandably, to be his inability to restore the Russian Army to an effective position at the fighting front. N. N. Sukhanov, who was politically far to the left of Kerensky and no great admirer of him personally, still observed, "For Kerensky, democracy was an absolute good; he sincerely saw it as the goal of his service to the revolution." He went on, "He had selflessly served it under the Tsarist autocracy, ever since he had appeared before the world as the ardent champion and if you like, the poet of democracy."[9]

Kerensky himself explained his role in the revolution in these words: "During those critical days in the destiny of Russia, considerations of dogma or of party simply did not

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[8] Ibid.

[9] N. N. Sukhanov, The Russian Revolution, 1917: Eyewitness Account, Edited, abridged, and translated by Joel Carmichael, (New York, 1955), II, 485.

exist for me . . . All one could do was to build the new order with such human material as was at hand." He felt he was inseparably connected with the destiny of the revolution. "Everyone round me seemed to treat me in a manner subtly changed," he wrote, "as though some special power was in my hands, some peculiar influence over the stormy masses. No doubt my position was an historical accident, but there it was!"[10]

It was no accident that Kerensky was included in the first cabinet of the Provisional Government. His enthusiasm and energy surpassed that of the other members of the revolutionary government almost as far as did his popularity. Besides, as vice-chairman of the Soviet, he was an important link between the opposing sides of the Dual Power in Petrograd. Kerensky had hesitated not at all at the provision of the Soviet that refused to let its members accept portfolios in the new government. He accepted the post of Minister of Justice, and presented himself at a meeting of the Soviet where he made an impassioned plea for their support of his decision. He claimed that only his presence in the cabinet could save the political prisoners from lynching and give the masses a representative on the Provisional Government. His own story of the first chaotic days of the

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[10]Kerensky, Crucifixion of Liberty, 291-2.

revolution pictures himself as self-assured, effective, and completely caught up in the fervor of the revolution.[11]

Actually, Kerensky's position in the cabinet was ambiguous and difficult from the beginning. Although vice-chairman of the Soviet and virtual spokesman for the Social Revolutionary party, he was often either politically or personally in disagreement with several of the socialist ministers, particularly Chernov, who later became Minister of Agriculture in the coalition government. He was more often than not allied with the bourgeois ministers like Nekrasov or Tereschenko in opposition to the policies of the Soviet. He adopted a moderate, conciliatory position in the government, which partially explains his ability to maintain a workable arrangement among such contradictory elements as were represented within the ministry for as long as he did. It also placed him in the position of being a fair target for attack from extremists from both Left and Right. Like most middle-of-the-roaders, Kerensky ended up by pleasing no one, and yet he clearly saw that without compromise the revolution would result in anarchy. He always felt that he could coordinate the political diversities among his followers and make the revolution work. What he failed to recognize was that, far from being ready for a democratic experiment, the Russian leaders were politically naive and inept, and what was worse,

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[11]Kerensky, The Catastrophe, 58.

they failed to judge the temper of the masses. While they were right in realizing that the desires of the people could not be fulfilled immediately, they misjudged the intensity of those desires. By the time the bourgeois leaders had realized their half-hearted efforts and ineffective promises would not satisfy the temper of the masses, the Bolsheviks had consolidated their power and captured both the support of the masses and the revolution itself.

In his capacity as War Minister in the first coalition cabinet, Kerensky threw himself enthusiastically into the problem of restoring the fighting spirit to the thoroughly demoralized Russian troops. His confidence in his own ability knew no bounds, as is evidenced by his speech before the Congress of the All-Russian Soviet of Peasants' Deputies on May 18, when he told the deputies, "I, a stranger in military circles, shall instil in the troops iron discipline, and it will be the discipline of honor and duty towards the country."[12]

On July 1, the long-awaited offensive on the Eastern front was launched. With the advance of Russian troops into Galicia went the hopes of the Allies and the Russian nationalists alike that the offensive might mark a turning point in the war. The Allies, of course, hoped that the revived activity on the Eastern front would serve to draw German troops

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[12]Kerensky, The Catastrophe, 217. Also Robert Warth, The Allies and the Russian Revolution (Durham, North Carolina, 1954), 111.

from the Western front and relieve the critical situation there. The attack was to take place with the aid of the British armies in France, which incidentally, was not forthcoming when the time came. The officers were uncertain whether the troops would obey orders for only a few units were unquestionably loyal, while some were openly mutinous. Kerensky relied largely on his powers of persuasion to encourage the war-weary troops to action. He toured the front, haranguing the soldiers with words, "Warriors, Our Country is in danger! Liberty and revolution are threatened . . . Officers and soldiers! Know that all Russia gives you its blessing on your undertaking, in the name of liberty, the glorious future of the country, and an enduring and honorable peace. Forward!"[13] Kerensky retained his popularity throughout the summer, but his efforts to revive the fighting spirit of the forces were futile, or at best, temporary.

On July 19 the Germans launced a counter-offensive in Galicia. The element of surprise and the superiority of the Russian troops in both numbers and arms gave Russia a few victories in the first days of the offensive, but the counter-offensive forced the Russians into a retreat that soon became a rout. In some instances whole divisions fled before mere companies. In others the army committees argued the fine

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[13] Izvestiia, July 3, 1917, as quoted in Golder, Documents, 425.

points of a defensive war until it was too late to fight. Conditions became so bad that on July 20 General Kornilov, now commanding the Southwestern front since his resignation at Petrograd, wired Kerensky demanding that the offensive be halted immediately.

General Lavr Kornilov was a man whose life had a story book aspect that made him a natural choice for the role of hero of the Right. Born in 1870, in Ust'-Kamenogorodsk in Siberia, the son of a Cossack officer, he chose a military career at an early age. After completing his training at a cadet school and military college, he was commissioned an office in the Turkestan artillery brigade in 1892. He was able to speak at least fifteen different languages, including several Oriental ones - a fact which contributed to his success as an explorer of Chinese Turkestan and the Eastern provinces of Persia.[14]

Early in 1915 he was promoted to divisional commander and led the attack on Przemsyl, an Austrian fortress in Galicia. Instead of following orders to retreat, Kornilov pushed forward against the enemy and was captured. This earned him a year's detention in Austria and the displeasure of the Supreme Commander, General A. A. Brusilov, whom he was later to replace.

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[14]Leonid I. Strakhovsky, "Kornilov," Collier's New Encyclopedia, XI (New York, 1950), 670. Also Strakhovsky, "Was There a Kornilov Rebellion," The Slavonic and East European Review, VXXIII, No. 81, (June, 1955), 374.

In 1916 Kornilov managed a dramatic escape by paying 20,000 gold kronen to a Czech, Franz Mrnak, who helped him through the Austrian line.[15] Back in Russia, the episode became widely known and with it, Kornilov's reputation as an adventurer grew.

After the dismal failure of the July offensive the need for reshuffling the higher ranks of the Russian army became apparent. The Supreme Commander, General Brusilov was both old and ill, and was regarded by many as incapable of decisive action and without real influence over his officers and men. Kornilov, on the other hand, was much younger, known as a brave and patriotic soldier, and held the fervent devotion of his men, particularly that of the so-called "Savage Division," a unit made up of fierce mountaineers and tribesmen from the Caucasus. His Siberian blood and his fluency in their language formed a bond between Kornilov and these men.

Kornilov, like Kerensky, had his detractors. Kerensky himself said he never doubted that Kornilov loved his country, but that his lack of understanding and great political inexperience caused him to be used by "cunning enemies of freedom, or by mere political sharpers."[16] Miliukov characterized

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[15] Victor Chernov, The Great Russian Revolution (New Haven, 1936), 324. Unfortunately, Mrnak's role in the affair also became well known, and he was sentenced to twenty-five years in an Austrian prison for his efforts.

[16] Kerensky, Prelude to Bolshevism, Preface, vii.

Kornilov as "first of all a soldier, a brave fighter capable of inspiring an army in time of battle by his personal example, fearless in his plans, resolute and persistent in executing them. But his intellect was not on a level with his will."[17]

Early in the summer of 1917 Sir George Buchanan reported to his home office that Kornilov was a much stronger man than Kerensky, and "were he to assert his influence over the army and were the latter to become a strong fighting force he would be master of the situation."[18] The London Times printed the following glowing tribute to Kornilov at the height of his popularity: "The physique of the man harmonized with his intellectual and moral qualities. Of middle height, spare and erect, he is hardy and untiring, like his Cossack ancestors." It went on, "He impresses you as a man who has infinite control over himself, kindly but adamant."[19] General Gourko, who was involved in a counter-revolutionary plot himself, said Kornilov was a "splendid man of action, able to show the necessary personal initiative, with extraordinary energy, just, soldier-like opinions, great austerity in relation to himself, which gave him the right to be exacting with his subordinates."[20]

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[17]Cited in George Stewart, The White Armies of Russia: A Chronicle of Counter-revolution and Allied Intervention (New York, 1933), 41.

[18]Buchanan, Mission to Russia, II, 69.

[19]Times (London), September 11, 1917.

[20]Basil Gourko, War and Revolution in 1914-1917 (New York, 1919), 200.

General Denikin regarded him as a "fighting general who carried the fighting men with him by his courage, coolness, and contempt for death."[21]

Then there were the harsher opinions. Trotsky viewed him as a "bold young commander whom even his admirers regarded a bit simple."[22] General Verkovsky declared that Kornilov had a "lion's heart, a sheep's brain."[23] Chernov attributed these words to Verkovsky, too, but softened the translation a bit by saying, "Kornilov has the lion's heart, you feel the hot blood of a fighter pounding in his veins . . . but when he begins to talk politics, you sense that it is not his element."[24]

Regardless of personal opinions, no one intimated that Kornilov was not a brave and patriotic soldier. In addition to those personal qualities which seemed to suit him for revitalizing the dispirited Russian army, Kornilov exhibited slightly more liberal tendencies than most of the Russian generals. He did not hold the Provisional Government solely responsible for the disintegration of the army. He spoke of the "original and long-standing deficiency of the commanding staff" and the specific and useful function which the commissars and army committees should perform. True, he later

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[21]A. I. Denikin, The Russian Turmoil (London, n.d.), 298.

[22]Trotsky, History of the Russian Revolution, I, 252.

[23]Cited in Trotsky, History of the Russian Revolution, I, 252. Also Stewart, White Armies of Russia, 41.

[24]Chernov, Great Russian Revolution, 323-24.

tried to do away with the committees entirely, but his initial impression on Kerensky was encouraging.

Kornilov's telegram from the Southwestern front, which constitutes his future political program, read as follows:

> An army of ignorant men, which has lost its mind, which was not protected by the government from systematic depravity and corruption, which has lost all feeling of human dignity, is on the run. In the field, which could not be called a field of battle, there reigns such utter horror, infamy and disgrace, as the Russian army has not displayed from the time of its very foundation. This calamity can be brought to an end and this shame wiped out by the revolutionary government, but if it fails to do so it will be replaced by the inexorable march of history by other leaders, who whilst removing the dishonour at the same time will destroy the fruits of the revolution and hence will not give happiness to the country. There is no choice: the revolutionary government must adopt a definite and firm way. Only in such a manner the salvation of the fatherland and of liberty is to be found. I, General Kornilov, whose whole life from the first day of conscious existence to this day has been spent in devoted service to the fatherland, declare now that the fatherland is perishing and therefore, although not asked for an opinion, I demand the immediate termination of the offensive on all fronts for the purpose of preserving and saving the army by means of a complete reorganization on the basis of strict discipline, so as not to sacrifice the lives of those few heroes who have the right to see better days. It is urgent therefore to introduce the death penalty as a temporary extraordinary measure, necessitated by the extreme gravity of the situation and to establish the field court-martial in the theatre of military operations . . . I hereby declare that if the government will not enact the measures proposed by me and thus deprive me of the only means to save the army and to utilize it for the proper purpose - the defense of the fatherland and of liberty - then I General Kornilov, will resign my office of commander-in-chief unconditionally.[25]

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[25]Golder, Documents, 428. Also Chernov, Great Russian Revolution, 330.

The General's demands were backed up by most of the generals of the Russian armies, and on July 25 the Provisional Government restored the death penalty and promised to consider further measures to restore the army.

The complete breakdown on the front was accompanied by riots and a political crisis in Petrograd. The atmosphere in the capitol was tense in any event, and the news from the front only accentuated the discontent. The Petrograd garrison was hostile to the offensive, largely because the men feared they would be transferred to the front.[26] The resignation of four Kadet ministers on July 15 aided in bringing the crisis to a head. The Kadets were dissatisfied with their lack of influence in the Cabinet, and the question of Ukrainian autonomy provided the immediate cause for their departure. On the morning of July 16, the First Machine Gun Reserve Regiment, followed by other detachments, declared for open insurrection.[27] Despite appeals from the Soviet and the Provisional Government, soon other military units and thousands of factory workers poured into the streets.[28] When the Bolsheviks saw the crowds would not disperse they hastily

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[26] Rech, July 5, 1917, as quoted in Browder and Kerensky, Documents, III, 1383.

[27] I. Tobolin, "Iiul'skie Ini v Petrograde," Krasnyi Arkhiv, XIII (1927), 13-20, 58-63; XIV, (1927) 63-64, as quoted in Browder and Kerensky, Documents, III, 1338-1345.

[28] Ibid., Vol. III, 1345-46. Also Izvestiia, July 18, 1917, as quoted in Golder, Documents, 454-5.

attempted to put some direction into the demonstration. They gave the movement slogans and helped attract the sympathy of the workers. Crowds surrounding the Taurida Palace demanded that the Soviet assume power; rioting broke out in many parts of the city and the dead and wounded numbered several hundred. The members of the Petrograd garrison who did not join the demonstration declined to join the government either, so the troops at the disposal of the Provisional Government were negligible. The members of the Provisional Government narrowly excaped the temper of the mob. Chernov, Minister of Agriculture, was saved from a mob of angry sailors only by the intervention of the Bolshevik leader Trotsky.[29]

The Soviets, however, refused to heed the demands of the crowd and take over the government, and during the stalemate that followed most of the crowd simply got tired and went home. The Provisional Government ordered troops from the front to put down the uprising,[30] and at a most propitious moment, the Minister of Justice, Pereverzev, permitted the release of some material collected by the government indicating that Lenin and his supporters were in the pay of the German government. Weak as the evidence was, it was enough to cause a change in the atmosphere of the city. Neutral

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[29]Sukhanov, Revolution of 1917, II, 444-46. Also Trotsky, History of Russian Revolution, II, 40-41.

[30]Trotsky, History of Russian Revolution, II, 85. Also Browder and Kerensky, Documents, III, 1358, and Bernard Pares, My Russian Memoirs (London, 1931), 464.

troops rallied to the support of the government and some of the demonstrators were visibly shaken. The uprising dissolved as quickly as it had begun. Although any real organization on the part of the Bolsheviks would certainly have resulted in the capture of the government, the time was inopportune. As Trotsky declared, "It is not enough to seize power - you have to hold it."[31] Neither Lenin nor Trotsky thought the Bolsheviks were strong enough to hold the power at this time.

The reaction of the government was relatively mild, but the July demonstrations seriously damaged the position of the Bolsheviks for a few months. The government adopted a legislation against incitement to mutiny, regiments that had taken part in the uprising were disbanded and the men sent to the front, and several Bolshevik publications were closed.[32] Despite their momentary victory over the Bolsheviks, the government did little to win the support of the masses. Lenin was allowed to escape, and although Trotsky and A. V. Lunacharsky were both arrested they were later released.

On July 20, the disheartened Prince Lvov resigned as head of the government. Kerensky became premier and immediately encountered much difficulty in composing his cabinet. For two weeks Kerensky and the Soviet wrangled through negotiations and discussions, only to have Kerensky himself resign

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[31] Trotsky, History of the Russian Revolution, II, 68.

[32] Izvestiia, July 7, 1917, as quoted in Browder and Kerensky, Documents, III, 1358.

on August 3.[33] As be expected, he was prevailed upon to return and within twenty-four hours had formed a new coalition cabinet which he declared was independent of parties.[34] Actually, both the Right and the Left used considerable pressure on him to favor their choices. Of the eighteen members of the cabinet, eleven were socialists but of the most moderate kind. The government became increasingly identified with the person of Kerensky, and Kerensky became increasingly obsessed with the trappings of power. The position of the government did not become more powerful because of its apparent victory over the Bolsheviks, but instead grew weaker and more ineffectual every day. The Soviet was dissatisfied with the restoration of the death penalty, the offensive had proved a fiasco of the worst sort and cries for a strong authority and a more secure government began to be heard from many quarters. Although the majority in the government was now socialist, the government was more conservative than ever, but it was still not strong enough to throw off the restraining hand of the Soviet and establish a stable government. The chief weakness of the government was that it did not really represent anybody. It was too socialist to please

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[33] Rech, July 22, 1917, as quoted in Browder and Kerensky, Documents, III, 1417-19.

[34] Kerensky, The Catastrophe, 243-5. Also Rech, July 23, 1917, as quoted in Browder and Kerensky, Documents, III, 1427-8.

the conservatives, it was too bourgeois to please the Soviet and the leaders of the proletariat, and it was not backed by an assembly that represented the Russian people. Only lack of any other strong body or person to take its place prevented the fall of the government in July.

CHAPTER III

KORNILOV'S APPOINTMENT AS SUPREME COMMANDER

The government's position in the days following the July uprising seemed to improve on the surface at least, but this period proved to be only a lull before the storm. The disorganization of the army was nearly complete, and the economic condition of the country worsened daily. In spite of the fact that the government lacked the support of the people, its members could not agree to call the Constituent Assembly any earlier than November. Meanwhile, the conservatives and reactionary elements of the country intensified their search for a strong leader. General Lavr Kornilov appeared to have the necessary characteristics for a leader of authority, and he became the focal point for all those unhappy elements who thought they saw anarchy and chaos in the future.

Kornilov, as commander of the Eighth Army during the July offensive, was one of the few who had any success. It was there that he became commander-in-chief of the entire Southwestern front and sent his first telegram to Kerensky, demanding restoration of the death penalty. It was also on the Southwestern front that Kornilov became acquainted with Boris

Savinkov and Maximilian Filonenko, two men who played an important part in the Kornilov Affair. Savinkov had been a member of the Terroristic Organization of the Socialist Revolutionary Party in Russia prior to the Revolution of 1905. Captured and sentenced to death, he escaped and lived from 1906 to March, 1917, in Paris, where he wrote revolutionary novels and articles under the psuedonym of V. Ropshin. He was responsible for the assassination of the Grand Duke Sergei and Plehve and had figured in several other assassination attempts.[1] Savinkov was an adventurer of great resourcefulness and imagination. He was also a man who evoked strong opinions in his contemporaries. The eminent Russian historian, Bernard Pares, characterized him as "one of the most romantic figures of the Russian Revolution . . . a man of action, who was heart and soul for winning the war, saving the honor of Russia, and showing a firm front to the Bolsheviks."[2] General Denikin, characteristically, did not share this opinion. He said Savinkov was "strong-willed and cruel by nature, completely lacking in conventional morality."[3]

Savinkov and Filonenko were serving as commissars on the Southwestern front during the July offensive, and both agreed

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[1]For an account of Savinkov's terroristic activities prior to 1911 see his book Memoirs of a Terrorist (New York, 1931).

[2]Pares, Russian Memoirs, 568.

[3]Denikin, Russian Turmoil, 305.

with General Kornilov on the matter of strict discipline. Savinkov had even added a postscript to the General's famous telegram, saying, "On my part I fully share the opinion of General Kornilov and support everything he has expressed word for word."[4] At least one historian even attributes the writing of the telegram to Savinkov and Filonenko instead of to the General,[5] while others claim the dispatch was written by the General's civilian orderly, Zavoilo.[6]

As for Zavoiko, little is known of this shadowy figure. Trotsky says he was a "former landlord, oil speculator, and adventurer . . . who impressed Kornilov with his pen."[7] He became Kornilov's unofficial press agent, drawing up his reports and documents. In any event, he impressed Kornilov enough to attain the position of orderly to the General and exercised a great deal of influence over him.[8]

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[4]Paul N. Miliukov, Istoriia vtorov russkov revolutsii, (Sofia, 1921), 58, as quoted in Strakhovsky, "Was There a Kornilov Rebellion," 376.

[5]Boris Savinkov, "LAffaire Korniloff," Mercure de France, CXXXII (1919), 138, as cited in Abraham Ascher, "The Kornilov Affair," The Russian Review, XII, No. 4 (1953), 237.

[6]Kerensky, The Catastrophe, 304. Also Prelude, 14-15 and Chernov, Great Russian Revolution, 330.

[7]Trotsky, History of Russian Revolution, II, 145.

[8]Pares, Russian Memoirs, 530. Also Kerensky, Crucifixion of Liberty, 353, in which Kerensky says Zavoiko was a shady financier who lived in London incognito under the name of Kurbatov. Later he became an agent of Kolchak in the United States. In Great Russian Revolution, 342, Chernov characterized him as a big landowner and president of the nobility of Gaisinsky District of Podolsk Province and therefore against the violation of property rights.

On July 29, Kerensky called a military conference at Mogilev in order to discuss the grave situation which had been created by the collapse of the July offensive. Among those attending the meeting were Generals Brusilov, Supreme Commander-in-Chief; Denikin, commander of the Northern front; and Lukomsky, Brusilov's chief of staff. In addition, Commissars Savinkov and Filonenko were present at Kerensky's request. As for Kornilov, a telegram was sent to him advising him to remain at the Southwestern front and to send his recommendations to the conference by telegram. Chernov states that Kornilov was not invited because he was in disfavor with Kerensky and the General Staff,[9] but Kerensky maintained that while Brusilov did not fully trust Kornilov because of his impetuosity, military matters, not personal ones, dictated Kornilov's absence from the Mogilev Conference.[10]

At the Conference, General Denikin began with a scathing attack on the Provisional Government and set forth the measures which the government must take in order to save Russia from complete military collapse. First, Denikin insisted that the government should recognize its mistakes and its guilt for the tragic state of military discipline. The government, stated Denikin, "has not understood and estimated the noble

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[9]Chernov, Great Russian Revolution, 331.

[10]Kerensky, Prelude to Bolshevism, 10.

and sincere impulses of the officers who had greeted the news of the revolution with joy and had sacrificed innumerable lives for their country."[11] Second, Denikin demanded that full military power be given to the Supreme Commander-in-Chief; Petrograd should cease enacting military regulations. Third, he said politics had to disappear from the army. Fourth, he demanded that commissars and committees be abolished and the "Declaration of Soldiers' Rights" be rescinded. Commanding officers should be restored to power and discipline and good conduct must be restored, he went on. Denikin also held that appointments to important military posts should be made on the basis of experience in the field and administration. Special law abiding units of all the armies should be placed at the disposal of the commanding officers as a bulwark against mutiny, and finally he demanded that military revolutionary courts should be established and capital punishment should be re-introduced in the rear for troops and civilians who were guilty of the same crimes.[12]

In spite of this severe criticism of the government, Prime Minister Kerensky shook hands with Denikin after the report and said, "Thank you, General, for your outspoken and sincere speech."[13] Later Kerensky described Denikin's speech

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[11] Denikin, Russian Turmoil, 293.

[12] Ibid., 293-4.

[13] Ibid., 294.

as the first instance of the military reaction which inspired many partisans of the Kornilov movement.[14]

Denikin's report was followed by the reading of General Kornilov's telegram. The tone of this dispatch closely followed that of his earlier telegram from the front. Kornilov also urged that capital punishment be re-introduced in the rear, that disciplinary powers be restored to the commanding officers, that meetings for political purposes at the front be stopped, and the spreading of anti-national propaganda and visits of delegations and agitators to the front be prohibited. He did not propose the abolishment of the army committees and commissars but demanded that their powers and responsibilities be restricted and fixed. He also suggested that the commissars be given the right to confirm the verdicts of the Military Revolutionary Tribunal and to effect a cleansing of the commanding staffs.[15] This recommendation was by no means a concession on Kornilov's part to the revolutionary democracy. Denikin explained that Kornilov sought to rid the army not of men of solid military traditions, but of the hirelings of the revolution.[16] Chernov commented that Kornilov was merely transferring to the commissars the odium of passing death sentences while attempting to replace opportunists with irreconcilables.[17]

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[14]Kerensky, Prelude to Bolshevism, 13.

[15]Denikin, Russian Turmoil, 295.

[16]Ibid.

[17]Chernov, Great Russian Revolution, 332.

Kornilov's points, later known as the Kornilov Programme, appealed to Savinkov, the Provisional Government, and especially to Kerensky. Kornilov's acceptance of the commissars and committees was a welcome measure, and then, Kornilov did not place all the blame for the condition of the army on the government. He criticized the officers as well.

Kerensky was convinced that the disagreement between Kornilov and the government was only one of method, not purpose. He protested the tone, not the actual content of the General's telegrams. Kerensky wrote, "As to the form of Kornilov's demands, here the Provisional Government as a body was obliged to protest emphatically against Kornilov's ultimative manner of addressing the government, in order to safeguard the rights and prestige of the Provisional Government's supreme authority of the State."[18]

Savinkov and Filonenko accompanied Kerensky on the trip back to Petrograd after the conference. During the trip, Savinkov urged Kerensky to appoint Kornilov to the post of Supreme Commander. Relations between Kerensky and General Brusilov had been strained for some weeks, and Chernov suggested that Kerensky was personally affronted by Brusilov's failure to meet him personally when he arrived at Mogilov for the conference.[19] In explaining his decision to replace

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[18]Kerensky, Prelude to Bolshevism, 26-28.

[19]Chernov, Great Russian Revolution, 331.

Brusilov, Kerensky merely contended that Brusilov was too undecided, too unstable to remain.[20] The Galician campaign made it apparent that a change was needed, and General Kornilov was the most likely candidate. "His defects, especially his impetuosity in success, did not then seem to offer any danger; moreover, the views that he professed seemed to exclude the possibility of a conflict," Kerensky wrote.[21] Accordingly, Kerensky requested the appointment of General Kornilov as Supreme Commander-in-Chief.

The appointment was made on July 29, with the approval of all the members of the cabinet. The news was greeted with approval by the conservative groups, both civilians and military, who hopefully thought the General's appointment meant a trend to the Right. Along with the General's appointment also came the appointment of Savinkov as Deputy Minister of War under Kerensky.

Kornilov was not ready to accept this high office unconditionally, however. On July 31, he sent Kerensky another telegram, stating that he accepted the command only on the following conditions; that he should be responsible to his own conscience and to the whole nation; that he should have full freedom from interference in operational orders and hence in the appointment of higher commanders; that measures

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[20]Kerensky, Prelude to Bolshevism, 19-20.

[21]Ibid., Introduction, xiii.

recently adopted at the front be applied to those regions of the rear where the army reserves were stationed, and that his program as stated at the Mogilev conference be accepted.[22] This was the strongest declaration the General had yet dared to put forth. Even his close associate General Denikin expressed surprise at the first condition, noting that it was "a highly original form of suzerainty on the part of the Supreme Command."[23] Kerensky immediately took offense at the imperious tone of the telegram, but before the matter could come to a head, another incident further complicated relations between the Prime Minister and the future Supreme Commander.

At the same time as Kornilov's appointment, and without his knowledge, Kerensky had appointed General Cheremissov commander-in-chief of the Southwestern front. Kornilov considered this a violation of his rights and threatened to resign unless Cheremissov was dismissed. Kerensky impulsively suggested that it was Kornilov who should be dismissed, on the ground that if discipline was to be restored to the army, it must begin by giving an example in high quarters.[24] It is more probable that Kerensky resented any challenge to his authority and was beginning to feel that Kornilov was going

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[22]Golder, Documents, 514-15. Also Chernov, Great Russian Revolution, 332, and Kerensky, Prelude to Bolshevism, 28.

[23]Denikin, Russian Turmoil, 303.

[24]Kerensky, Prelude to Bolshevism, 27.

too far with his dictatorial demands. Interestingly, Kornilov used the same argument in demanding the dismissal of Cheremissov. Cheremissov declared he was not in the personal service of Kornilov and would obey only the Provisional Government, threatening to bomb his way to Headquarters in order to establish his rights as commander. Kornilov argued that Cheremissov should be dismissed because if army discipline was to be strengthened, it must be applied to all ranks.[25]

Through the efforts of Savinkov and Filonenko, a compromise was reached. It might better be called a stalemate, for it was highly unsatisfactory to all sides. On August 2, Kerensky informed Kornilov he accepted his ideas in principle, and announced he was sending Filonenko to discuss the matter of Cheremissov's appointment. After a series of conferences between Filonenko and Kornilov, Kornilov accepted Filonenko's interpretation of his first condition, "responsibility to the people at large" to mean responsibility to its authorized organ, the Provisional Government. Kerensky sent a telegram to Cheremissov relieving him of his duties on the Southwestern front and putting him at the disposal of the Provisional Government. The result as far as Cheremissov was concerned was quite unacceptable, and though he could do nothing about it immediately, he was so resentful of Kerensky's actions that he refused to move a finger to help the unfortunate prime

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[25]Chernov, Great Russian Revolution, 334.

minister when the Bolsheviks took over the government in November.[26]

Finally, Kornilov left for Mogilev at midnight, August 5, and assumed the Supreme Command of the Russian army. The army had been virtually without a commander for almost a week. To make matters worse, this crisis coincided with a crisis within the Provisional Government itself, during which ministers resigned and took back their resignations with such haste and confusion that at one time only Nekrasov, the Deputy Prime Minister, represented the government. The clash between Kerensky and Kornilov was only a preview of the conflicts that developed between the two men. Although they were in accord concerning the need to restore the discipline of the army, they were in complete disagreement as to the limits of their respective spheres of action. Kornilov interpreted the office of Supreme Commander-in-Chief in the most literal sense, while Kerensky regarded the Supreme Commander to be subordinate to the will of the Provisional Government. In view of their divergent opinions and the dramatic and impulsive nature of both men, it was inevitable that the rivalry that was building between them would increase in the hectic weeks to follow.

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[26] Ibid.

CHAPTER IV

THE SEARCH FOR A HERO

While the rivalry between Kerensky and Kornilov was building to a danger point the activities of the non-socialists - that vast and heterogeneous Right - the industrialists, landowners, officers, Kadets, allied diplomats, and other men of conservative sentiment who were beginning to look upon General Kornilov as the Proverbial "man on the white horse," were beginning to move more quickly. There is no evidence that General Kornilov himself was involved in a counter-revolutionary activity before August, 1919, but Kerensky declared he had direct information of a plot by certain groups at Mohilov against the government.[1] It is difficult to pinpoint the beginnings of the various counter-revolutionary movements, because there was no real counter-revolutionary organization as such. The activities of the various individuals and groups were carried on separately and sporadically from the beginning, and even when the General's clash with the Provisional Government became imminent, there was no efficient cooperation between the groups. Many of the men and organizations who were connected with efforts to

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[1]Kerensky, Prelude to Bolshevism, 53.

combat the growing influence of the Left and who directly or indirectly lent support to Kornilov preferred to keep their participation strictly behind the scenes. Later, in view of the failure of the attempt to establish a dictatorship, either with or without Kerensky's help, some accounts were undoubtedly altered by those who wished to deny any connection with the ill-fated and confusing events. Nevertheless, there was a large body of sentiment, growing stronger every day, that favored replacing the impotent Provisional Government with a stronger government, possibly a dictatorship.

Kerensky himself, in his later writings, was convinced that a conspiracy developed slowly and systematically, beginning with Gutchkov's departure from the cabinet in May, 1917. In his opinion, this conspiracy began in a limited circle of Petrograd bankers and financiers, and finally rallied around General Kornilov late in August.[2] In Gutchkov's Memoirs, the date of the first counter-revolutionary organization is placed earlier - April, 1917. Gutchkov states that a private committee of representatives of banks and insurance companies was organized to establish a large fund of money for supporting moderate bourgeois candidates to the Constituent assembly and for combating the influence of the socialists at the front. They called themselves the "Society for the Economic Rehabilitation of Russia." "In the end," he writes,

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[2]Kerensky, The Catastrophe, 288.

"we decided to place the large funds that we collected at the disposal of General Kornilov for the purpose of organizing an armed struggle against the Soviets."[3] A. I. Putilov, the originator of the Society, recalled that there was no doubt in his mind that Kornilov had Kerensky's consent to move the troops to Petrograd, and that when the Society placed its funds at Kornilov's disposal the members thought Kornilov and the government were acting together. Putilov admitted only the desire to move against the Soviets and denied any counter-revolutionary efforts against the Provisional Government.[4]

Another group who harbored counter-revolutionary sentiments was the Union of Officers, which was organized in May. Its president was Colonel L. Novosiltzev, who, in Kerensky's view, served as the connecting link between the civilian and military organizers of the counter-revolution.[5] Kerensky gave the Colonel more credit than he deserved, for the connecting link was tenuous at best. Nevertheless, Chernov thought the Union of Officers was an important counter-revolutionary force. Its main job was to move officers to Petrograd to form a shock unit to take over the city in case

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[3]Posledniia Novosti, September 30, 1936, as quoted in Browder and Kerensky, Documents, III, 1527.

[4]Posledniia Novosti, January 20, 1937, and January 24, 1937. Interviews with A. I. Putilov, as quoted in Browder and Kerensky, Documents, III, 1533.

[5]Kerensky, The Catastrophe, 289.

of necessity.[6] However, Chernov states that the counter-revolution actually began with the organization of officers on the Southwestern front by General Krymov. This group included not only the officers of the Southwestern front, but also parts of the Third Cavalry Corps, the Kiev Garrison, the Guard's Cavalry Regiment, and various officer and technical schools. The strategy of this military group was to allow the front to collapse slowly, while retreating to the interior and in turn, forcing the organization of the rear on a basis of iron discipline.[7]

Still another organization, this one more closely connected with General Kornilov from the early months of the revolution, was the Republican Center. This group was organized in Petrograd in May and had the backing of several important financiers, including a member of the board of the Siberian Bank. At the initial meeting of this group General Kornilov was present, although the idea of establishing a dictatorship was not discussed at that time.[8] The Republican Center was organized and worked independently of the Society for the Economic Rehabilitation of Russia until after the July uprising. The most important part of the Republican

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[6]Chernov, Great Russian Revolution, 337-38.

[7]Ibid.

[8]Poslednila Novosti, February 27, 1937, and March 6, 1937. Interviews with P. N. Finisov, as quoted in Browder and Kerensky, Documents, III, 1534.

Center was its military section. From July, 1917, this section was headed by a member of the General Staff, Colonel L. P. Desimet'er. The military section worked out an elaborate plan for seizing all the strategic points in the city in case of a Bolshevik uprising, and holding them until troops from the Stavka entered Petrograd. P. N. Finisov, vice-president of the Republican Center, recalled that the aim of the group was not to destroy the Provisional Government, but to place it under General Kornilov, who would change its membership, after discussion of the final membership with Kerensky [his italics]. There was no plot, he maintained, but the organization did not intend to retain Kerensky whom they viewed as a prisoner of the Soviet.[9]

In addition to these societies and organizations, there was also the Military League, which had connections with Colonel Lebedev of the General Staff, and which supposedly had over two thousand men in arms by the end of August,[10] and the Council of the Union of Cossack Troops, loyally devoted to Kornilov,[11] not to mention other fringe groups who lent force to the counter-revolutionary plot at the Stavka, as well as in the country generally, but he was equally convinced that General Kornilov had nothing to do with it. The General's

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[9] Ibid., 1538.

[10] Lukomsky, Memoirs of the Russian Revolution. Translated by Mrs. Vitale (London, 1922), 104.

[11] Chernov, Great Russian Revolution, 342.

dissatisfaction with the policies of the Provisional Government, Savinkov declared, made him receptive to the suggestions of Lukomsky and other instigators.[12] On August 25, Rabochaia Gazeta [Worker's Gazette] carried an article referring to the "highly suspicious work carried on systematically by someone at Stavka . . . directed against the revolution . . . and against the Provisional Government," and mentioned in connection with these suspicious activities grand dukes, officers and members of the former State Duma.[13]

Throughout most of the summer of 1917 these organizations and individuals engaged in printing and distributing propaganda leaflets and posters, collecting funds, and looking for a leader for the growing counter-revolutionary sentiment. Feelers in the direction of General Alekseev and Admiral Kolchak proved fruitless. Alekseev was sympathetic to the counter-revolution but declined to be a director. Kolchak was ordered to the United States at the head of a naval mission for the Provisional Government.[14] Kerensky claimed he, too, was approached by the partisans of strong power, who found

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[12] Birzhevyia Vedomosti, September 12, 1917, Statement of Savinkov, Browder and Kerensky, Documents, III, 1554. Also, Rech, September 13, 1919.

[13] Rabochaia Gazeta, August 25, 1917, as quoted in Browder and Kerensky, Documents, III, 1554.

[14] Kerensky, The Catastrophe, 289-90. Also Elena Varneck and H. H. Fisher, The Testimony of Kolchak and Other Siberian Materials (Stanford, 1934), 228.

him unreceptive to their offers.[15] General Kornilov seemed to be the logical choice as the savior of Russia. Kerensky felt that the General became the central figure of the counter-revolution early in July. One historian states that though Kornilov was not an outspoken reactionary, he attracted the conservatives who "scented the banner of counter-revolution long before the object of their attentions had done so himself and [they] flocked to his support."[16]

The question of dictatorship in connection with Kornilov was raised first at the time of his appointment as commander-in-chief on the Southwestern front. On July 21, Kornilov's orderly, Zavoiko, approached Commissars Savinkov and Filonenko and asked how far they would go with Kornilov in resisting a plan of dictatorship to be put in operation by the Grand Duke Nikolai Nikolaievitch. Savinkov and Filonenko immediately became suspicious that Kornilov might be planning to set himself up as a dictator and confronted Kornilov with their idea. Kornilov denied that he was planning a dictatorship, but said that he was in favor of certain changes in the Provisional Government which would make it independent of the Soviet.[17]

At a Council of Chiefs of Departments at the Stavka shortly afterward, an incident occurred which indicated to

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[15]Kerensky, Prelude to Bolshevism, Introduction, xvii.

[16]Warth, Allies and the Russian Revolution, 119.

[17]E. H. Wilcox, "Kerensky and Korniloff," Fortnightly Review, CX (July-December, 1918), 334.

General Denikin that Kornilov did not entertain any counter-revolutionary motives as early as July. After the meeting was over Kornilov asked Denikin to stay, and when the others had gone, he lowered his voice to a whisper and said a certain "N" had come to see him at the front with a scheme to seize the government by a coup d'etat and place the Grand Duke Dmitri on the throne and asked for Kornilov's cooperation. Kornilov flatly told the mysterious "N" he would take no part in any Romanov adventures. He added that he had been offered an opportunity to join the government, but that he declined as they were too much entangled with the Soviets and could not decide on anything. "I have told them that if authority is given me I shall carry on a decisive struggle. We must lead Russia to a Constituent Assembly and then let them do what they like. I shall stand aside and not interfere in any way," he told Denikin.[18]

However, by late August General Kornilov, increasingly impatient with Kerensky's policies, was making moves that aroused the suspicions of his close associate, General Lukomsky. On August 19, Kornilov ordered General Lukomsky to concentrate the Third Cavalry Corps, with the Native Cavalry Division, in the area about two hundred fifty miles south of Petrograd. These units comprised the reserve of the Roumanian front, and knowing there was no danger of a German

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[18]Denikin, Russian Turmoil, 306-7.

advance in the sector to which they were being moved, Lukomsky questioned General Kornilov as to the purpose of the transfer. The General parried with an excuse which did not satisfy Lukomsky, who protested that "a Chief of Staff can only remain at his post if he enjoys the full confidence of his chief." Kornilov then replied, "You are right. There are certain considerations which I have not yet spoken to you about. I beg you to give the necessary orders for moving the cavalry, and urgently to call . . . General Krymov to the Stavka. I will tell you everything in detail on my return from Petrograd."[19]

Something was taking place in Kornilov's mind by this time, but whether or not he meant taking over the government by force, or whether he and Kerensky were in full accord and the measures were only to provide protection for the Provisional Government against the Soviets, is still not clear. On his return from a trip to Petrograd on August 24, Kornilov told Lukomsky he had requested the removal of troops to the vicinity of Petrograd because a Bolshevik uprising was expected on September 10 or 11. Kornilov felt that either the Provisional Government, whose members he referred to as molluscs, would fall to the Bolsheviks, or, if by some miracle it did not, the Bolsheviks would go unpunished for their uprising. He wished to insure their punishment and "to deal

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[19]Lukomsky, Memoirs, 96. Also General Lukomsky's Account, as quoted in Browder and Kerensky, Documents, III, 1546.

with the traitors of Russia as they deserve to be dealt with."[20] He went on to say that he had no intention of going against the Provisional Government, but hoped to come to an agreement with them at the last moment. He feared to tell them of his plan because Kerensky and Chernov were sure to spoil it. If he could not come to an agreement with them, he would deal the death blow to the Bolsheviks without their consent and they [the Provisional Government] would thank him later for the opportunity to form a strong government, independent of all kind of traitors. "I have no personal ambition. I only wish to save Russia, and will gladly submit to a strong Provisional Government, purified of all undesirable elements," General Kornilov confided in Lukomsky.[21] Of course, this does not indicate any conspiracy to overthrow the government on the General's part, but it does suggest that Kerensky may not after all have been a part of Kornilov's plans, or at least, did not understand just what those plans were. Kornilov was intent on giving the Provisional Government what he thought they needed, whether they wanted it or not.

Whatever Kornilov had in mind himself, it was clear by the end of August that he had been chosen by the conservative and reactionary elements in Russia to be their leader. Kerensky accused the members of these groups of waging an intensive press

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[20]Lukomsky, Memoirs, 99. Also General Lukomsky's Account, as quoted in Browder and Kerensky, Documents, III, 1548.

[21]Ibid., 101.

campaign against the government which deliberately exaggerated the difficulties at the front and the condition of the army, demanded too stringent measures for the restoration of discipline, vilified the democratic organizations of the army - the commissars and the committees - and relentlessly put forth the idea that Kornilov was the only possible savior of Russia.[22] These things were happening, but hardly on an organized basis, as Kerensky claimed.

To add to the problems of the Provisional Government, a number of meetings of the various organized groups in Russia were held to prepare for a coming national political conference. These meetings indicated the division of sentiments that would soon become evident. Some of these conferences were prompted by rumors that General Kornilov was about to be removed as Supreme Commander. On August 19, the Moscow millionaire, Ryabushinsky, presiding at a conference of industrialists in Moscow, branded the Soviets as "a gang of thieves, led by Jews," and pointed out the need for a strong man to remedy the situation.[23] Also on August 19, the Council of the Cossack Troops' League decided to inform the Provisional Government and to publish in the newspaper the resolution that General Kornilov could not be removed from command, as he was the only general capable of regenerating the army's

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[22]Kerensky, The Catastrophe, 296.

[23]Philips Price, My Reminiscences of the Russian Revolution (London, 1921), 69.

fighting force and extricating the country from its serious situation. They declared that the League would not be responsible for the behavior of the Cossack army at the front or rear if General Kornilov was discharged.[24]

On August 20, the Central Committee of the League of Army and Navy Officers telegraphed the Minister of War and almost all the commanders of the army their resolution to assist the General in all his lawful demands "to the last drop of our blood" and to protest the possibility of interference by any persons or institutions in his acts sanctioned by the government. On the same day, the Union of Knights of Saint George passed a resolution declaring that if the Provisional Government dismissed General Kornilov, the Union would take joint action with the Cossacks against the government. Similar resolutions were carried out by the Military League and other organizations.[25] Trotsky was quite correct when he called such organizations the military levers of counter-revolution.[26]

A few days later, on August 22, a private meeting of the moderate parties was convened in Moscow under the chairmanship of the past president of the Duma, Rodzianko. This Conference of Public Workers was attended by over two hundred

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[24]Kerensky, Prelude to Bolshevism, 90. Also Browder and Kerensky, Documents, II, 1022-23.

[25]Kerensky, Prelude to Bolshevism, 91.

[26]Trotsky, History of the Russian Revolution, II, 5.

public men, soldiers, and civilians, who heard speeches by Generals Alekseev, Kaledin, and Brusilov.[27] The Conference sent the following telegram to Kornilov: "The Conference of Public Workers, welcoming you, the Chief Leader of the Russian army, declare that they consider all attempts to prejudice your authority in the army and in Russia to be criminal and join their voices to the voices of officers, Knights of Saint George and Cossacks. In the terrible hour of heavy trial, all thoughtful Russia looks to you with hope and faith."[28] Regardless of Kornilov's own intentions, clearly he had captured the imagination of those who wanted to arrest the revolution and remove the Soviets from power. These proofs of strong support reinforced Kornilov's determination to do something to establish strong government in Russia. What Kornilov did not realize was that most of those supporting him had no real popular backing themselves. In addition, the counter-revolutionary had no direction or organization. It was composed of many individuals and groups, each engaged in much activity, but each out of touch with the other. Even at the moment of Kornilov's move against the government, there was little cooperation between the various groups. The atmosphere was also charged by the emotional oratory for which every Russian seems to possess a

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[27] Times (London), August 25, 1917.

[28] Kerensky, Prelude to Bolshevism, 91-2.

particular gift, making the movement seem much stronger and more intense than it actually was. There was much counter-revolutionary sentiment in Russia, particularly in Petrograd, but it is doubtful that even a well-organized counter-revolutionary movement could have marshalled enough support among the masses to be successful. The conservatives simply did not offer the Russian people what they wanted - peace, bread, and land.

CHAPTER V

TWO IMPORTANT VISITS

While the counter-revolutionary sentiment was finding new impetus throughout the country, the relations between Prime Minister Kerensky and General Kornilov were becoming increasingly strained. The General proceeded to work out a program of reforms for the armed forces, based on the Kornilov Programme as he had presented it to the Mogilev meeting on July 16. He was visited at Headquarters by Savinkov, now Deputy War Minister, and by Tereschenko, Minister of Foreign Affairs, and on August 10, the liberal newspaper Rech reported: "An agreement seems to have been reached, and the conditions laid down by Kornilov for taking command accepted."[1] Kerensky answered through an official press release, " The communications of some newspapers that the conditions laid down by General Kornilov have been accepted by the Provisional Government do not conform to reality, but at any rate an understanding between the Provisional Government and General Kornilov has been reached."[2]

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[1] Rech, August 10, 1917, as quoted in Golder, Documents, 515.

[2] Miliukov, Istoriia, 70-71, as quoted in Strakhovsky, "Was There A Kornilov Rebellion," 380.

On August 16 General Kornilov made the first of two important visits to the Provisional Government in Petrograd. He was to deliver a secret report on the military situation before the Provisional Government. The General proposed to submit his plans for reform at the same time and to press for their acceptance. Kerensky believed that the General's plans would be unacceptable to the Soviet, hence to the socialist ministers on the cabinet, and succeeded in postponing the presentation of the General's reforms at least for the time being. He argued that he could not possibly present them for cabinet approval before he had studied them himself, and finally got Kornilov to agree to limit his report to the general military situation.[3]

As the General began to paint his gloomy picture of the instability of the army and the possibility of an enemy offensive on the Riga front, Savinkov handed a note to Kerensky which read, "Does the Prime Minister feel sure that the communication by General Kornilov of the secrets of our government and its Allies will not become known through 'comrades' to our enemies?" In some reports, Kerensky read the note and handed it on to Kornilov, who cut his talk short.[4] In his own explanation of the Kornilov Affair, Kerensky wrote that he tore the note up and threw it away.[5]

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[3]Kerensky, Prelude to Bolshevism, 35.

[4]Ascher, "The Kornilov Rebellion," Russian Review, 239.

[5]Kerensky, Prelude to Bolshevism, 35.

However, in his testimony at the government investigation following the affair, Kornilov states, "When I broached the subject of a possible offensive . . . the prime minister, who sat next to me, bent over and whispered that I should be careful about what I was saying. This warning was provoked by a note handed to Kerensky by Savinkov and Tereschenko . . ." The General was stunned and deeply disturbed that the Supreme Commander could not speak freely in the Council of Ministers of the Russian State. "At the end of the meeting it became clear to me from certain remarks made by Savinkov that the warning had in view Chernov, the Minister of Agriculture," Kornilov testified.[6] He emphasized that he found it impossible to have faith in a government whose members might be suspected of treason.

Before leaving the capitol in the early hours of August 17, Kornilov and Kerensky had a private interview. The exact record of this interview is unknown, but there are varying reports of what occurred. Kornilov said that Kerensky put the following question to him: Should Kerensky, in the opinion of the General, remain at the head of the government? In the account of the conversation given in Kerensky's Prelude to Bolshevism, Kerensky assured Kornilov that the existing coalition government was the only possible combination of

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[6]Miliukov, Istoriia, 166, as quoted in Strakhovsky, "Was There a Kornilov Rebellion," 380.

forces and that any other course would be fatal. "I and the other members of the government did all we could to restrain Kornilov from politics, which were not within the range of his intellect," said Kerensky. "What are you aiming at? You will simply find yourself choked in an airless space; the railways will stop, the telegraph will not work," he said to Kornilov.[7] In The Catastrophe, Kerensky gives a slightly different version of the interview;"In a tete-a-tete in my office . . . I repeated to him what in May I said at the front . . . that if anyone would try to establish a personal dictatorship he would find himself the next dangling in space without railroads . . . telegraphs, without an army." To which Kornilov, according to Kerensky, replied, "Well, what of it . . . Many will perish, but the rest will finally take the army into their hands."[8]

Still another account of the meeting says that Kerensky "mildly rebuked Kornilov for the imperious and ultimative tone of his dispatches to the government." Then he asked the General this question: "Did he think it desirable that Kerensky remain at the head of the government?" Without hesitation, Kornilov reportedly answered that while the military setback had caused Kerensky to lose some popularity and influence, he could not imagine anyone else in his place,

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[7]Kerensky, Prelude to Bolshevism, 64-5.

[8]Kerensky, The Catastrophe, 309.

since he was the acknowledged leader of the democratic parties.[9]

Before leaving Petrograd, Kornilov gave an interview to the press. On August 17, the liberal newspaper Rech carried the following article: "General Kornilov proposed certain measures for the imporvement of conditions in the army. He is convinced, and feels that the Provisional Government is of the same mind, that without these measures, the enactment of which he expects in the next few days, it is impossible to restore the fighting ability of the army."[10] Izvestiia, the organ of the Soviet, gave this version of the interview: "The demands of General Kornilov, in the form of an ultimatum, supported by the possibility of a new attack by the enemy, put the Provisional Government in a very difficult position, and the future alone knows how it will act. This, however, may be said at present; the sympathies of the democracy are not on the side of General Kornilov."[11] Still another paper reported, "Thanks to the decisive measures of the government, the condition of the army is satisfactory . . . but this does not mean that everything has been done - there is still much to do."[12] In the usual manner of the press, all sides were

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[9]J. W. Bienstock, "La revolution russe; Kornilov," Mercure de France, CXXV (1918), 20-21, as quoted in Ascher, "The Kornilov Affair," 240.

[10]Rech, August 4, 1917, as quoted in Golder, Documents, 516.

[11]Izvestiia, August 4, 1917, as quoted in Golder, Documents, 506.

[12]Russkiia Vedomosti, August 4, 1917, as quoted in Browder and Kerensky, Documents, II, 1021-22.

able to read whatever they wished into the General's words. Indeed, the General himself was optimistic if he seriously expected his measures to be enacted by the Provisional Government in the next few days.

During those next few days - a week to be exact - that passed until Kornilov's next visit to the capital, Kerensky stubbornly refused all Savinkov's entreaties to read the proposed reforms, even after they had been revised by Savinkov and Filonenko. The substance of the document now read as follows: 1) the establishment of revolutionary court martials at the rear, 2) the restoration of disciplinary powers to commanding officers, 3) the militarization of the railroads and 4) the militarization of defense enterprises.[13] Kerensky knew, of course, that his support of these measures would cost him the support of the Soviet, and besides, his growing irritation with Kornilov made him consider the General's dismissal.

Finally, on August 21, Kerensky informed Savinkov he would not sign the measures under any circumstances. Exasperated with Kerensky's stubborness, Savinkov declared that it was his opinion that "if the Minister of War Kerensky did not want to sign the report, the Generalissimo would do so," and sent in his resignation.[14] Kerensky refused to

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[13]Kerensky, Prelude to Bolshevism, 35.

[14]Savinkov, "L'Affaire Korniloff," as quoted in Ascher, "The Kornilov Affair," Russian Review, 240.

accept Savinkov's resignation, however, and Savinkov continued his efforts on the General's behalf.

Savinkov learned that Kornilov did not plan to come to the capitol for another effort to get his measures enacted because he feared his life was in danger in Petrograd. Savinkov wired Kornilov, "Your presence here tomorrow is absolutely essential; without your help I shall not be able to defend what both you and I consider right." Filonenko, who was at the wire with Savinkov, added that they planned to give general battle to get the government to accept the program.[15] Accordingly, on August 23, Kornilov arrived at the Winter Palace to plead for the adoption of the report. He was unexpected and certainly unwelcomed by Kerensky, who resented Savinkov's actions and who had also dispatched a telegram to Kornilov stating, "The Provisional Government did not call for you, nor dit it insist on your arrival and therefore does not assume any responsibility in this matter, in view of the existing strategic conditions."[16] The telegram did not reach Kornilov in time to stop his visit.

Kornilov was accompanied to Petrograd by a squadron of the Tekinsky Cavalry Regiment armed with machine guns. His Chief of Staff, General Lukomsky, explained this imposing

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[15]Miliukov, Istoriia, 105-107, as quoted in Strakhovsky, "Was There a Kornilov Rebellion," 382.

[16]Miliukov, Istoriia, 107, as quoted in Strakhovsky, "Was There a Kornilov Rebellion," 382. Also Kerensky, Prelude to Bolshevism, 34.

body guard as necessary because General Kornilov expected to be dismissed when he saw Kerensky and wanted the troops "to come to his help in case of necessity."[17] Once in the capitol, he was received by Savinkov and they went immediately to see the Prime Minister. During Kornilov's conversation with Kerensky, the machine gun squadron stood guard at the doors of the Winter Palace. Kerensky considered this an unforgivable affront on Kornilov's part.[18] It is difficult to say exactly what happened at this meeting, because Kerensky prevented the report from being read to a full gathering of the cabinet. Izvestiia reported that "military questions were discussed, bearing on proposals made by General Kornilov in his report, which he, with B. V. Savinkov, submitted to the Provisional Government."[19] One historian, however, says the report was read and discussed by Kornilov at a private meeting at which only Kerensky, Nekrasov, and Tereschenko were present, at which the latter two argued against the proposals while Kerensky sat by silently.[20] Kerensky's explanation corroborates this report.[21] In fact, the measures were not presented

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[17] Lukomsky, Memoirs, 97.

[18] Kerensky, Prelude to Bolshevism, 66.

[19] Izvestiia, August 11, 1917, as quoted in Browder and Kerensky, II, 1023.

[20] Miliukov, Istoriia, 108-109, as quoted in Strakhovsky, "Was There a Kornilov Rebellion," 383.

[21] Kerensky, Prelude to Bolshevism, 68.

to the Provisional Government as a whole at any time. One member of the cabinet, the State-Comptroller Kokoshkin, handed in his resignation in an attempt to get Kornilov's program adopted. Finally, Kerensky, in an effort to appease the Kadet members of the government, informed the ministers of the contents of the report, but only in its first version and revealing only the parts dealing directly with military affairs. The government decided to accept Kornilov's program in principle from this rather sketchy report of its contents.[22]

So the government went through August without any clear-cut program of reform for the army, but with only another series of worn-out platitudes and high-flown phrases with which they would attempt to satisfy the impatient people. General Kornilov had tried vainly to present his proposals to the Provisional Government, while Kerensky had persistently avoided that very thing. Undoubtedly, Kerensky felt he could not present such a program with approval and still retain the support of the Soviet. The Soviet was not likely to give up its domination in the field of military discipline, and the provisions dealing with the nationalization of the railroads and defense industries would be particularly displeasing. Kerensky's necessity to rely on the support of the Soviet to retain his government forced him into a situation of

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[22]Kerensky, Prelude to Bolshevism, 74-5. Also Miliukov, Istoriya, 109-11, as quoted by Strakhovsky, "Was There a Kornilov Rebellion," 384.

procrastination that only served to verify the fears of the conservatives. The government seemed paralyzed and confused, while Kerensky tried frantically to consolidate his faltering power. General Kornilov appeared more and more to fit the role of the national hero for whom the voices of the Right were calling.

CHAPTER VI

THE MOSCOW STATE CONFERENCE

Early in July Kerensky had called for a meeting of the representatives of all the organized forces in the country to gather in Moscow on August 25.[1] Kerensky claimed the purpose of the meeting was to demonstrate the unity of the country behind the government - "to feel the pulse of the country."[2] Other opinions were not so optimistic. Lenin called it a "coronation of the counter-revolutionary government," and of secondary significance at best.[3] Many felt it was an attempt on the part of the Provisional Government to give the public a substitute for the long-awaited Constituent Assembly.[4]

Chernov said the Conference was called to restore Kerensky's rapidly dwindling popularity,[5] and Sukhanov said the real purpose of the Conference was to compel the Soviets to efface themselves once and for all before the overwhelming

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[1] M. N. Pokrovskii and Ya. A Yakovlev (eds.), 1917 god v dokumentakh i materialakh, Vol. IX; Gosudarstvennoe Soveshchanie, 330-1, as quoted in Browder and Kerensky, Documents, III, 1450.

[2] Kerensky, The Catastrophe, 282.

[3] Lenin, Works, XX, I, 74.

[4] Lenin, Works, XX, I, 287-88 Note 37.

[5] Chernov, Great Russian Revolution, 355.

majority of the rest of the populace . . . "and, perhaps at the same time to enforce silence on the handful of upstarts on the Right, who were shouting about General Fist as the sole recourse. It was all bizarrely trivial and naive."[6]

The Conference was attended by nearly 2,500 delegates representing most of the organized groups of Russia. Because of the numerical apportionment of the delegates, which discriminated against the masses, the Bolsheviks declared the Conference a counter-revolutionary group and refused to participate. At first the members wished to make a declaration in the name of the party and then walk out of the conference, but the presidium refused to allow this.[7]

On the morning of August 25 the atmosphere in Moscow was charged with tension. Despite the appeals of the Soviet of Workers' and Soldiers' Deputies, the Moscow proletariat staged a one-day strike that closed most of the restaurants, stopped tram service, and cut off utilities.[8] Thus, a conference designed to show the unity of the country and the strength of the Provisional Government opened under more or less embarrassing circumstances. Alarming rumors flew about the city, predicting a coup d'etat against the government.[9]

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[6]Sukhanov, Russian Revolution, II, 495.

[7]Trotsky, History of the Russian Revolution, II, 147.

[8]Izvestiia, August 13, 1917, as quoted in Browder and Kerensky, Documents, III, 1456-7. Also Trotsky, History, II, 149.

[9]Price, Reminiscences, 70. Also Kerensky, Prelude to Bolshevism, 87, Trotsky, 151.

Chernov insists that a coup actually was planned by Kornilov's supporters, but the troops were halted before they could reach Moscow.[10] Lenin also wrote, "On August 27 a rumour was spread in Moscow to the effect that some Cossack units were moving toward Moscow from the front and that at the same time 'certain military groups, enjoying the sympathy of certain circles of society in Moscow,' were organizing 'decisive counter-revolutionary actions.'"[11]

Early in the day on August 25 enormous crowds began to gather at the Bolshoi Theater, the scene of the Conference. The district around the theater was blocked off by a triple cordon of soldiers and cadets. The militia had been called in to maintain order, but there were no disturbances. The crowd remained relatively quiet, even hostile, as the delegates arrived. Only a very few were greeted enthusiastically. By 3:00 p.m. the theatre was filled to capacity. The delegates were seated from right to left in the auditorium according to their political affiliation. On the right the seats were filled with past representatives of the Duma and the middle class parties. On the left were the Soviet delegates, the working men and the soldiers. In the center sat the members of the cooperatives and the free professional associations, while the boxes and balconies were taken by the

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[10]Chernov, Great Russian Revolution, 357.

[11]Lenin, Works, XX, I, 104.

groups of small nationalities and the officers' associations.[12] Precisely in the center of the stage sat Kerensky, symbolizing his non-partisan attitude, and around him sat the ministers of the Provisional Government. The imperial boxes were reserved for the diplomatic representatives of the Allied and neutral powers. The stage was set for one of the most ludicrous dramas this venerable theatre had ever seen.

Kerensky delivered the opening speech of the Conference, a dazzling two-hour oratory which reproached both the Left and the Right and appealed for unity.[13] He was interrupted from time to time by applause and cheering. When he spoke of the Pope's peace proposal, he declared Russia's loyalty to her Allies, and the audience stood and faced the boxes where the representatives of the Allied powers were seated and applauded loudly. When the delegates applauded his mention of restoring the death penalty he interrupted them sharply, crying, "Who dares applaud when it is a question of capital punishment? Don't you know that at that moment, at that hour, a part of our human heart was killed?"[14] Despite the dramatic

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[12]Price, Reminiscences, 70-1. Price gives the following breakdown of the seats apportioned at the Conference: 30% Soviets; 5% professional alliances (trade unions); 10% co-operatives; 10% free professionals; 15% Dumas; 15% middle class parties; 20% alliance of cities and zemstvos. Lenin, Toward the Seizure of Power, 287, gives a more thorough breakdown, but largely corroborates Prices' figures.

[13]Gosudarstvennoe Soveshchanie, 1-16, as quoted in Browder and Kerensky, Documents, III, 1457-62.

[14]Ibid.

delivery, the speech was disappointing to most of the delegates. Kerensky's secretary, Pitrim Sorokin, declared the Prime Minister was "a Hamlet wavering to and fro,"[15] while his one-time friend, Zinaida Gippius bitterly wrote in her diary, "He is like a railway carriage that has left the rails. He sways, vacillates painfully . . ."[16]

The most arresting event of the three day conference was the arrival of the Supreme Commander, General Kornilov. Kornilov arrived in Moscow on the 26th, the second day of the Conference, and his reception was one which Kerensky might have dreamed up for himself. As the General's train pulled into the station a group of Tekinsky body guards, dressed in bright red coats and wearing long, naked swords, leapt from the train and formed a cordon to protect the General.[17] He was greeted by a crowd of jubilant admirers who cheered and pelted him with flowers while wealthy, middle-class women fell on their knees before him and begged him to kiss their hands. A guard of honor, composed of officers from the Alexander Military School, stood at attention outside the station, and the streets were lined with crowds anxious to

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[15]Pitrim Sorokin, Leaves From a Russian Diary (New York, 1924), 82.

[16]Zinaida Gippius, Sinyaya kniga, Petersburgskiy dnevnik, 1914-1918 (Belgrade, 1929), 162, as quoted in Strakhovsky, "Was There A Kornilov Rebellion," 384.

[17]Trotsky, History of Russian Revolution, II, 150.

get a glimpse of the national hero.[18] The Kadet, Radichev, greeted him with a short address which ended, "Save Russia, and a grateful people will reward you."[19] As Kornilov's party moved through the streets of Moscow a pamphlet entitled, "Kornilov, the National Hero," was distributed among the people. Kerensky later declared that the pamphlet had been printed at the expense of the British military mission and had been brought to Moscow in General Knox's railway carriage.[20] Kornilov's own conduct was hardly designed to lull the suspicions which were building up in Kerensky's mind about him. He proceeded first to pray at the shrine of the Iberian virgin, customary visiting place of the Tsars. The brief pause was not without its dramatic effect. The British ambassador noted with some alarm, "Our chief safeguard lies in the fact that neither can go on without the other."[21]

That evening, Kornilov was visited by the Minister of Commerce, Iurenov, who urged the General to confine his speech before the Conference to a general discussion of the condition of the army and avoid any mention of a difference of opinion between the High Command and the government. Kornilov refused declaring that nothing could prevent him from speaking his

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[18] Times (London), August 29, 1917.

[19] Trotsky, History of Russian Revolution, II, 150.

[20] Kerensky, The Catastrophe, 315.

[21] Buchanan, Mission to Russia, II, 172.

mind. Kerensky had asked Kornilov earlier, on his August 23 visit to Petrograd, to restrict his speech to purely military matters - the state of the army and the strategic situation - and spoke to the General again at Moscow urging him not to infringe on discipline, but Kornilov remained adamant.[22]

When General Kornilov entered the Bolshoi Theatre on the morning of August 26, he was greeted with another triumphal reception. He took his place in a box with Generals Alekseev and Kaledin at 11:50 a.m. amid a tumultous ovation from the right side of the auditorium, while the left side sat quietly without applauding.[23] A few minutes later Kerensky and his ministers appeared on the stage. The left side of the theatre now rose and applauded Kerensky for more than five minutes while the right remained motionless. The representatives of the officers and generals also refrained from acknowledging

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[22]Kerensky, Prelude to Bolshevism, 81-83. Kerensky cited Filonenko's evidence at the investigation in which Filonenko offered to assist Kornilov in writing his speech. He claimed the speech was dictated by him to Zavoiko, and was read by Kornilov just as dictated. Kerensky added that Filonenko was apparently cognizant of the instructions to Kornilov about the content of the speech and avoided all the controversial points.

[23]Izvestiia, August 28, 1917, as quoted in Golder, Documents, 493-95. In Allies and the Russian Revolution, 121, Robert Warth stated that Kornilov was unnoticed when he first entered the hall so he went out and ostentatiously returned to his box to be greeted this time with an ovation. Strakhovsky, in "Was There a Kornilov Rebellion," 385, accuses Warth of being both innaccurate and biased and quotes Miliukov as his source.

the government and Kerensky. When the General rose to speak, he was again heartily applauded by the Right and twice Kerensky was obliged to call for quiet so General Kornilov could be heard.[24]

In a blunt, soldierly manner, Kornilov addressed the Conference. He told the delegates he was no longer sure the Russian army would perform its duty to the country. He painted an unhappy picture of the disgraceful condition of the army, of the breakdown in discipline, the lack of supplies, and the wholesale desertions. "The enemy is already knocking at the gates of Riga, and if the instability of our armies prevents us from holding our lines along the coast of the Gulf of Riga, then the road to Petrograd will be open," he warned. Then the General outlined the measures which he had proposed in his report to the Provisional Government and which he was convinced were the only measures that could save the army, and hence, the country. The army's predicament, he went on, was the result of a series of legislative measures passed by people whose understanding and spirit were alien to the army. Kornilov declared that the Provisional Government must immediately adopt his report in order to save the

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[24]Izvestiia, August 28, 1917, as quoted in Golder, Documents, 495.

country.[25] "I believe in the genius of the Russian people, I believe in the reason of the Russian people, and I believe in the salvation of the country," the General concluded, " . . . but I declare that there is no time to lose, that not a single minute must be lost. Resolution is necessary and the firm, steadfast execution of the measures outlined."[26] The delegates on the Right greeted the General's speech with warm applause, while from the Left came cries of "Down with the Counter-revolution."[27]

Those who were disappointed in the restrained tone of the Supreme Commander's speech were heartened by the fiery tirade of General Kaledin which followed. He spoke for the twelve Cossack forces and demanded that the army be kept out of politics, all Soviets and committees be abolished, the Declaration of Soldiers' Rights must be revised to include their duties as well as rights, and discipline in the army, both at the front and the rear, must be restored. It is doubtful if

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[25]The report he referred to, of course, was the one prepared for him by Savinkov and Filonenko, which Kerensky refused to sign or to present to the government. It included as its principal measures the restoration of discipline and authority, the improvement in the prestige and material condition of the officers, the restriction of the activities of the committees to economic and internal life of the army, and the adoption at the rear of the disciplinary measures already in effect at the front.

[26]Gosudarstosvennoe Soveshchanie, 60-66, as quoted in Browder and Kerensky, Documents, III, 1474-78. Also, Golder, Documents, 494.

[27]Chernov, Great Russian Revolution, 358.

many of the delegates actually heard Kaledin, for his every sentence was punctuated with shouts of "Right!" and "Bravo!" from the Right and with whistles and noise from the Left. At one point a voice from the Left cried "This is counter-revolution!"[28]

Chkheidze, the chairman of the Petrograd Soviet, made a lengthy speech defending the Soviets and the Provisional Government and calling for a united effort of all democratic elements. "In these days when the enemy invasion is jeopardizing the very existence of the revolutionary State, the democracy demands that all citizens and the government exert every resource for organizing the defense of the country against military devastation," he argued.[29]

After that the Conference lapsed into a series of endless speeches by the important and the unimportant, by the defenders of revolutionary democracy and by those who wanted to turn back the tode of revolution, by the partisans, the army, the navy, the trade unions, the nationalities, including the Jews and the Moslems. Toward the end of the Conference an incident occurred which showed the deep split even among the apparently loyal groups, the Cossacks. Nagaiev, a young Cossack officer, rose and declared that he was speaking for

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[28]Gosudarstvennoe Soveshchanie, 73-76, as quoted in Browder and Kerensky, Documents, III, 1478-80. Also, Times (London), August 29, 1917.

[29]Ibid., 1480-88. Also Times (London), August 29, 1917.

the Cossack Workers' Section of the Soviet, and began a vitriolic attack on General Kaledin. "I tell you, General Kaledin," he shouted, "do not dare to speak in the name of the working Cossacks and troops of the rank and file!" Shouts of "Traitor!" "Arrest him!" came from the box where the Cavaliers of St. George were seated. The Left came to Nagaiev's defense by yelling and shaking their fists at the officers and the generals.[30]

At the end of a speech by the industrialist Bublikov, Bublikov and Tseretelli shook hands in the center of the stage, symbolizing the unity of the nation, "the armistice between capital and labor in the name of the struggle for Russia."[31] Only the most uninitiated delegate could have accepted such a gesture on face value. The rest of the Conference was largely an exchange of accusations and recriminations.

Kerensky brought the Conference to a close with a speech that bordered on incoherency and hysteria and lent support to the suspicion of some observers that Kerensky himself was eager to become a dictator. Sir George Buchanan wrote, "Kerensky, whose head has been somewhat turned of late and who has been nicknamed 'the little Napoleon,' did his best to act up to his new role by posing in several of Napoleon's favorite attitudes . . ."[32] Chernov charged the Prime

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[30]Price, Reminiscences, 76-77. Also Trotsky, History of Russian Revolution, II, 182.

[31]Kerensky, The Catastrophe, 284.

[32]Buchanan, Mission to Russia, II, 172.

Minister with assuming the attitude of a super-arbiter, an archpriest of a mystical Statehood opposed to the realities of class, national and party hostilities.[33]

Thus ended the fiasco of the Moscow State Conference. Instead of uniting the nation behind the Provisional Government the Conference had actually defined the line of demarcation between the two groups. Neither side won; actually both lost, for now each side was face to face with a formidable and suspicious opponent - at least, formidable in the relative terms of each side's strength. The Conference had done nothing to draw the organized groups of the country together, and had done much to force the fringe groups and middle-of-the-roaders into opposing camps. The Russian newspapers nearly all agreed that the Conference had fallen far short of its objective. On August 30, Rech, the organ of the Cadets, wrote "By contributing to the destruction of the present, the Moscow Conference has undoubtedly helped to shape the near future . . . The Moscow Conference has shifted the line of demarcation between the representatives of the population into two camps."[34]

Russkiia Vedomosti, a daily newspaper of liberal persuasion, praised General Kornilov's speech, but admitted that there was no outburst of feeling that could rally everyone

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[33]Chernov, Great Russian Revolution, 356.

[34]Rech, August 17, 1917, as quoted in Browder and Kerensky, Documents, II, 1517.

around the task of saving the motherland.[35] The Socialist Revolutionary newspaper, Delo Naroda, alone stated that the Government emerged from the Conference stronger than it had been before.[36] After half a year of revolution, the greatest tests of strength still awaited the faltering Provisional Government.

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[35]Russkiia Vedomosti, August 17, 1917, as quoted in Browder and Kerensky, Documents, II, 1516.

[36]Delo Naroda, August 17, 1917, as quoted in Browder and Kerensky, Documents, II, 1519.

CHAPTER VII

THE MOUNTING CRISIS

The Moscow State Conference had only confirmed the belief that Kerensky could never restore strong government in Russia. Leaders of the Right lost no time in urging land owners and financial men to support the cause of General Kornilov. Before the General returned to the Stavka from Moscow he had several meetings that had important bearing on the events to come.

On August 26, Kornilov met with Miliukov and told him that he did not want to miss this opportunity for an open conflict with Kerensky's government, that he had even decided on the date. Miliukov was convinced that Kornilov did not consider himself a conspirator. He wanted to replace the government, but the change could take place in a peaceful way, with the consent of the government and even Kerensky himself. Miliukov warned Kornilov that a fight with Kerensky would be untimely.[1]

Another interview, far more important, was held with A. F. Aladin, a mysterious man who played an important role in the Kornilov affair. Aladin had been a leader of the labor group in the First Duma in 1905, but had fled to

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[1]Miliukov, Istoriya, I, vypusk 2, 173-74, as quoted in Browder and Kerensky, Documents, III, 1543.

England upon dissolution of the Duma, where he worked at various times as a printer's devil, a dock laborer, and a language instructor. Kerensky accused him of being the envoy of the British War Minister, Lord Milner, and of having second place in the entourage of General Kornilov.[2] According to Kerensky, Aladin brought Kornilov a letter from Lord Milner, expressing his approval of a military dictatorship in Russia and giving his blessing to the enterprise.[3] Because of his connections in Britain his presence at General Headquarters during the height of the crisis gave rise to the charge that the British Government was involved in some way in the Kornilov movement. The meeting between Aladin and Kornilov was far from secret, however. The London Times reported, "Alaydin had a long conference with Kornilov befor his departure for the front. He presented a long report to him about the situation in England and France."[4]

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[2]Kerensky, The Catastrophe, 315.

[3]Richard H. Ullman, Anglo-Soviet Relations, 1917-1920, Intervention and the War (Princeton, 1961), 11. Neither this letter nor any hint of it can be found in Lord Milner's papers in New College, Oxford. Chernov, Great Russian Revolution, 354, wrote that Aladin was probably financed by the British government and said that both Aladin and Zavoiko were closely related to Knox. In his History of the Russian Revolution, II, 145, Trotsky gave the following description of Aladin: "He never removed an English pipe from his mouth and therefore considered himself a specialist upon international affairs." He was Kornilov's right hand man while his left was covered by Savinkov and Filonenko.

[4]Times (London), August 29, 1917.

Regardless of whether Aladin was actually employed by the British government in any capacity or not, the sympathies of the British were at least unofficially on the side of General Kornilov. Both General Knox and Sir George Buchanan indicated sympathy with the efforts of Kornilov and his followers to re-establish discipline in the army and especially to create an effective fighting force on the Eastern front. On September 7, Knox presented a personal report to the British War cabinet. In answer to a question regarding the possibility of a coup d'etat headed by Kornilov, General Knox answered that he did not know what preparations were being made, but that Kornilov was a man of strong character, honest, patriotic, and "the best man in sight." He went on to say that Kornilov enjoyed the support of the Cossacks, whose numbers alone would be enough to subdue Petrograd. Knox urged the War Cabinet to consider a joint representation from the Allied governments recommending to the Russian Government that in view of Russia's desparate situation and the peril of putting back democracy, General Kornilov should be fully supported in measures which he wished to take to restore discipline.[5]

Later, on September 9, when Kornilov ordered the troops under his command to march on Petrograd, one of the few units

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[5]Major-General Sir Alfred Knox, With The Russian Army, 1914-1917 (London, 1921), II, 677. Also David Lloyd George, War Memoirs, 1917-1918 (Boston, 1936), V, 101-102.

which proved faithful to the General was a British armored-car squadron under Commander Oliver Locker-Lampson, whose members were dressed in Russian uniform.[6] It is probably safe to say that Knox was aware of their participation and perhaps even arranged for it, for as Robert Warth comments in The Allies and the Russian Revolution, "it is scarcely conceivable that their commander would have done so upon his own initiative and without the knowledge or consent of the British authorities."[7]

The British ambassador, Sir George Buchanan, refused to participate actively, but he knew of the proposed plans and hoped for a Kornilov victory. Sir George had lost his previous confidence in Kerensky and felt that Kornilov was a much stronger man.[8] In his memoirs he wrote that, on September 5, while Savinkov was negotiating with General Kornilov, the director of one of the principal banks of Petrograd came to him and told him that certain persons wished him to assist them by placing the British armored-cars at their disposal and by helping them escape if their enterprise should fail. Buchanan replied that it was "a very naive proceeding on the

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[6] Ullman, Anglo-Soviet Relations, 11.

[7] Warth, Allies and Russian Revolution, 123.

[8] Buchanan, Mission to Russia, II, 171.

part of those gentlemen to ask an ambassador to conspire against the Government to which he was accredited." Buchanan urged them to give up their plot. "If General Kornilov were wise," he added, "he would wait for the Bolsheviks to make the first move and then come and put them down . . ."[9] On September 10, when the outcome of the venture was still in doubt, Sir George wrote, "There is nothing to be done but to await events and to trust that Kornilov will be strong enough to overcome all resistance in the course of a few days."[10] Still later, he commented, "I had always done my best to discourage the idea of a military coup d'etat, as Russia's best hope of salvation lay in a close cooperation between him Kornilov and Kerensky."[11]

In addition to the meetings with Miliukov and Aladin, General Kornilov was visited by several persons representing the counter-revolutionary groups active in Petrograd.[12] The conflicting testimonies of persons involved in this activity in the days prior to the open break between General Kornilov and Alexander Kerensky serves as an indication of the confusion

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[9] Ibid., II, 175-76.

[10] Ibid., II, 181.

[11] Ibid., II, 185.

[12] For testimony concerning counter-revolutionary activity in Petrograd during the summer of 1917, see Browder and Kerensky, Documents, Recollections of A. I. Putilov, III, 1527-34, and Recollections of Finisov, III, 1534-35.

and lack of organization accompanying the Kornilov affair, and the counter-revolutionary movement as a whole. There was no organization, only an impulsive and disconnected planning - too many persons involved, too many secrets being passed on. Most of the groups and individuals had only the haziest notion of what the goal of their activity was and even less of how to accomplish it. Dissatisfaction with the government was the only characteristic any of them had in common; none of them had a really effective plan for strengthening it or replacing it.

Meanwhile, activities were intensified among the troops as well as on the civilian front. General Denikin stated, "On the 20th of August orders were received to move the Caucasion Native Division from under my command northwards; on the 25th the same order was received for the Third Cavalry Corp . . . and later for the Kornilov 'shock'regiment." The destination of the troops was not given; it would have been the Northern front or Petrograd. Denikin had recommended General Krymov for the command of the Eleventh Army, but the Stavka demanded that Krymov come to Mogilev for a special mission first.[13] Denikin was puzzled by the orders from the Stavka, but on September 2, Kornilov sent a personal letter explaining his strategy. The letter said that a rising of the Bolsheviks was to take place at the end of August.[14]

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[13]Denikin, Russian Turmoil, 316.

[14]General Denikin's dates correspond with the Old Style.

by which time General Krymov and the Third Cavalry Corps were to reach Petrograd in order to crush the rising and put an end to the Soviet. Petrograd would be proclaimed in a state of war and laws resulting from the Kornilov program would be published. Kornilov requested that Denikin send him a score or more of reliable officers officially for trench mortar instructions - actually they would be sent to Petrograd and incorporated into the officer's detachment.[15] At the same time, Quartermaster-General Romanovsky ordered the distribution of hand grenades to three cavalry units which were to surround and occupy Petrograd from the south.[16]

On September 3, Riga fell to the Germans. The date is an important one because this opened the road to Petrograd for the German armies and forced the Provisional Government to consider the application of severe military measures in the rear. There is some evidence that General Kornilov may have deliberately planned the abandonment of Riga as an integral step toward bringing about the counter-revolution. In his speech at the Moscow State Conference, Kornilov had warned of the possibility of the loss of Riga, but General Denikin said that the front of the Lower Dvina was in complete preparedness, and that Headquarters knew not only the direction but even the day and the hour of the contemplated attack.

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[15]Denikin, Russian Turmoil, 316.

[16]Ascher, "Kornilov Affair," 245.

"Nevertheless," he wrote, "on the 19th of August [1st of September] the Germans occupied the bridgehead of Uxhull in the face of feeble opposition and crossed the Dvina. . . the 12th Army abandoned Riga."[17] The London Times noted that refugees from Riga told a Times correspondent that the final blow to the city was completely unexpected.[18]

Trotsky disagreed with Denikin on the preparedness of the troops. He wrote that the 12th Army was totally unprepared; everything was lacking - men, arms, gas masks - communications were bad, and many of the men were even furnished with Japanese cartridges for Russian rifles.[19] Trotsky suggested that the Russian generals wanted Riga to fall because it was a "nest of propaganda" in the hands of the workers and soldiers. He was sure the commander of the Northern front was one of the main conspirators.[20]

Kornilov felt the breakthrough was partly caused by the poor state of morale and discipline of the Russian troops. Despite the fact that they were prepared to hold Riga, many men simply refused to fight. Kerensky insisted that the Kornilov group hoped to use the fall of Riga to deprive the Provisional Government of all power. After the Conference

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[17] Denikin, Russian Turmoil, 313-14.

[18] Times (London), September 10, 1917.

[19] Trotsky, History of Russian Revolution, II, 186.

[20] Ibid., 187.

in Moscow and the fall of Riga, Kornilov demanded that the Provisional Government proclaim a state of siege, place full powers in the Stavka and subordinate to the Stavka the garrison of the whole region of Petrograd.[21]

The fall of Riga and the retreat of the Russian army created a panic in Petrograd. Everyone who could leave the capitol was desparately trying to do so, and the government was making preparations for its removal to Moscow. On September 3, the Provisional Government made several decisions; among them was the decision to transfer the troops of the Petrograd Military District to the direct jurisdiction of the Supreme Commander-in-Chief[22]- an almost unbelievable act if Kerensky really did suspect Kornilov of a proposed insurrection against the government. It is not so astonishing if Kerensky and the General were cooperating in a plan to set up a dictatorship.

In addition, the government decided to create a separate military area, Petrograd and environs, under the jurisdiction of the Provisional Government, and to send to the front all the regiments stationed in Petrograd which had participated in the July uprising and to replace them with more reliable units to be placed at the government's disposal.

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[22]Kerensky, "Kerensky and Korniloff: A Reply," Fortnightly Review, CX (July-December 1918), 835.

[23]Kerensky, The Catastrophe, 317.

On September 5, Boris Savinkov, Deputy Minister of War, left for the Stavka to relate these decisions of the Provisional Government to Kornilov and to ask the General to comply with several requests from Kerensky. At the Stavka, Savinkov found the Supreme Commander in an excited state, declaring that he had no faith in the government and could not work with a man like Kerensky. When Kornilov calmed down, Savinkov informed him that his plans had been approved by Kerensky, and that Kerensky requested a cavalry corps to be dispatched to Petrograd to be placed at the disposal of the Provisional Government. Kerensky also wished Kornilov to send the Union of Officers, many of whom he suspected of conspiracy, to Moscow, where, in Kerensky's opinion, they would be out of the way, and to liquidate the political department attached to the Stavka for the same reason. With regard to the cavalry corps, Kerensky stated that he explicitly informed Savinkov to tell Kornilov not to send the Savage Division and not to appoint General Krymov, as both the General and the Division were considered bloodthirsty and reactionary.[23] Miliukov contends, however, that definite orders were given to concentrate the Third Cavalry Corps, of which the Savage Division was a part, in the vicinity of Petrograd at the disposal of the

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[23]Kerensky, Prelude to Bolshevism, 212. This account was written down for Kerensky by Savinkov and was in Kerensky's possession when he wrote Prelude while in the underground in Russia following the fall of the Provisional Government. It was lost along with all of his papers and books when he fled Paris in advance of the German occupation in 1940.

Government.[24] If Miliukov's version is correct, then more evidence points to cooperation between the General and the Prime Minister, at least at this point. Savinkov's statement agrees with Kerensky, and he said the General agreed to the request, and also agreed that now he could work with the Government. Kornilov told Savinkov to convey to Kerensky his complete loyalty to the Government.[25] After Savinkov had presented his report, General Kornilov sent for General Lukomsky and asked him to examine the materials brought by Savinkov, and give his opinion of them. Lukomsky told Kornilov that the report was acceptable, except for the provisions for the commissaries and committees, which still gave these institutions far too much power.

After dinner, in Kornilov's study, Kornilov met Savinkov and Lukomsky, and insisted on the entire suppression of the committees and commissaries. Savinkov refused, and in the end it was decided to present Kornilov's desires to the Provisional Government and if they did not consent to the suppression of the committees, at least they would curtail their activities. Savinkov assured the group that all he said was in strict accord with Kerensky. He also asked Kornilov to wire Petrograd when the corps would be approaching Petrograd, which would then be placed under martial law.

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[24]Miliukov, Istoriia, 162, as quoted in Strakhovsky, "Was There a Kornilov Rebellion," 386.

[25]Birzhevyia Vedomosti, September 12, 1917; Rech, September 13, 1919, as quoted in Browder and Kerensky, Documents, III, 1554.

General Romanovsky and Colonel Baronovsky, Kerensky's Director of Office, were then invited into the study and the plans were repeated in their presence; that after the ratification by the government of Kornilov's measures a rising of the Bolsheviks would follow inevitably, that General Kornilov in strict agreement with the Provisional Government would send a cavalry corps to Petrograd to crush the revolt, and that the area would be placed under martial law.[26]

Upon taking leave of General Kornilov, Savinkov stated that the General said, "Tell Alexander Feodorovitch that I shall support him in every way, for the welfare of the Fatherland requires it."[27] Apparently, Savinkov had made an arrangement with Kornilov that seemed clear to both sides. Except for differences in exact wording, the transactions are reported with a great degree of similarity by all those involved.

Although these events appeared to be leading to an agreement between Kerensky and Kornilov, the actual situation was approaching a crisis. General Kornilov was determined to strengthen the government, with or without its consent, and to deal a final blow to the Soviet. Kerensky was determined to keep the General from overstepping his authority and to

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[26]Lukomsky, Memoirs, 105-109.

[27]Kerensky, Prelude to Bolshevism, 214.

retain his own waning power. Both men were aware that the situation required definite action, but they did not trust each other enough to act effectively together. As Savinkov left the Stavka for Petrograd he was confident the situation was well in hand, but events in Petrograd were already proving otherwise.

CHAPTER VIII

THE UPRISING

Events moved swiftly in the few days following Savinkov's visit to the Stavka. The breach between Kerensky and Kornilov was already serious and the following days insured a complete break. At the same time Savinkov was on his way back to Petrograd, Vladimir N. Lvov, former Procurator of the Holy Synod and unrelated to the former Prime Minister, was on his way in the opposite direction. While Savinkov was conferring with Kornilov, Lvov had gained an audience with Kerensky at the Winter Palace. That meeting was to prove one of the most controversial of the whole Kornilov affair.

The presence of V. N. Lvov in the already complicated events of the Kornilov affair is the hardest development to explain or justify. Quite definitely, Lvov had no business projecting himself as an intermediary between Kornilov and Kerensky. Although each man claimed that Lvov had been sent by the other, the evidence indicates more clearly that Lvov merely took it upon himself to straighten out matters between the Government and the Supreme Commander, with no real authority from anyone. The general consensus was that Lvov was at best a well-meaning, but fuzzy-minded individual,

with limited talents.[1] A Constitutional Democrat, he sat in both the Third and Fourth Dumas and had been the Procurator of the Holy Synod in the first cabinet of the Provisional Government. An attempt to trace his movements prior to his September 4 meeting with Kerensky adds little to the reasons for his actions, but it does implicate the mysterious Aladin and his friend, Dobrynski, a member of the Petrograd Publicists' Club.[2]

Lvov gives the following account in his memoirs: right after the Moscow Conference a friend of his named Dobrynski came to see him and related that he had been summoned to a secret meeting to be held at the Stavka on August 30. Dobrynski told Lvov the meeting was probably to discuss Kornilov's dictatorship, whereupon Lvov stated that he could not support such a move. Lvov suggested a national cabinet, in which the Minister of Interior would have special powers to establish order within the country. He thought Kornilov and Kerensky might agree to cooperate in such a government, he stated. After getting Lvov to agree to accept the important post of Minister of Interior if such a government should be accepted, the story goes, Dobrynski left. On September 1

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[1]For opinions of Lvov see Buchanan, Mission to Russia, II, 177; Lukomsky, Memoirs, 101; Kerensky, Prelude to Bolshevism, 127.

[2]E.H. Wilcox, "Kerensky and Korniloff," Fortnightly Review, CX (September-October, 1918), 504.

Dobrynski returned, Lvov said, announcing that Lvov's plan had been accepted by the Stavka. Then Dobrynski added that Kornilov had secretly told him that he already planned to be dictator, but that nobody must know about it. The story takes on an air of utter confusion here, for obviously Lvov's plan for cooperation could not have been accepted if Kornilov was secretly planning a military dictatorship.

The following day, Lvov continued, Dobrynski returned with Aladin, who entered Lvov's room wearing the uniform of a British lieutenant. Aladin complained that he could not get an audience with Kerensky. In the ensuing conversation, it was decided that Lvov should go to Petrograd to see Kerensky and persuade him to change the organization of the government in compliance with the wishes of the Stavka. On his way to Moscow, Lvov related, he engaged in a conversation with a general who shared his train compartment. The general told him he was on his way to attend a military meeting at which an ultimatum would be presented to the government. If it was not accepted, the general said ominously, "events would follow."

At the Winter Palace, Lvov succeeded in getting an interview with Kerensky during which he attempted to persuade Kerensky that he had lost the support of both the Left and the Right, and that the government must be reorganized if it hoped to continue. Lvov claimed that Kerensky agreed to resign if necessary, but said that he must leave power in some other hands. Kerensky then, in Lvov's words, authorized him to

enter into secret negotiations on Kerensky's behalf with all the elements Lvov considered necessary.[3]

Kerensky reported this meeting in an altogether different manner. "Among the infinite number of people who came to me with all sorts of serious propositions and schemes, useful advice and idle talk, . . . came Lvov," said Kerensky. Lvov attempted to persuade Kerensky that he had lost the support of both the Left and the Right, and that the Provisional Government must make some changed in the cabinet to include elements even more moderate than the Kadets. The Prime Minister stated that he answered Lvov in a general way, but that he could tell from the trend of the conversation that Lvov came from some distinct group. When he tried to find out who that group might be, Lvov refused to divulge names, only saying that they were a "considerable force." Kerensky definitely denied that he had given Lvov any authority to negotiate with anyone in his behalf. He did not attach any importance to the conversation in general, although certain details claimed his attention.[4]

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[3]Poslednija Novosti, [Daily newspaper edited by Paul Miliukov, Paris, 1920-1940] , November 30, December 4, 7 and 9, 1920, as quoted in Browder and Kerensky, Documents, III, 1558-68. I. A. Dobrynski's account of his role in the affair was published in Volnyi Den, September 1, 1917, and in Rech, September 8, 1917. It corresponds in most instances with that of Lvov. See Kerensky's note, Documents, III, 1568.

[4]Kerensky, Prelude to Bolshevism, 127-29.

The following day, September 5, Lvov was back in Moscow. He informed Aladin that Kerensky agreed to his proposal to establish a national cabinet, and to resign if necessary. That same evening, Dobrynski and Lvov left for the Stavka to consult with General Kornilov, Lvov apparently convinced that he had been entrusted by Kerensky to negotiate in his behalf. One author suggests that Kerensky actually did allow Lvov to believe this in an attempt to use Lvov to ferret out the counter-revolutionary plot which had become an obsession with him.[5]

There are three accounts of what happened at the meeting of Kornilov and Lvov. Kornilov stated that Lvov's first words to him were, "I have come to you with a mission from Kerensky."[6] Lvov then told Kornilov that Kerensky was prepared to leave the cabinet if Kornilov thought it necessary. Kornilov replied at length to the effect that he was in favor of a collective dictatorship, in which Kerensky and Savinkov would both be included, and asked Lvov to transmit this view to Kerensky and Savinkov and to beg them to come to Headquarters where he could guarantee their safety and liberty.[7]

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[5]Strakhovsky, "Was There A Kornilov Rebellion," 387-88.

[6]Wilcox, "Kerensky and Korniloff," 505.

[7]Ibid., 505-506.

Lvov's account is typically confused. He claimed that when he gave his evidence his health had been broken and his memory impaired by a month's solitary confinement in theWinter Palace where he was obliged to sleep in a room next to Kerensky's. His sleep was continually interrupted, he claimed, by Kerensky singing operatic arias in the adjoining room![8] There are even several versions of Lvov's story. In short, Kornilov demanded all military and civilian power be transferred to him, Petrograd declared under martial law, and the regimental committees to refrain from interference with the military. Lvov noted in passing that Zavoiko seemed to influence Kornilov unduly, and that later at lunch, without Kornilov present, Zavoiko gave him a piece of paper with a complete proposed cabinet written on it. When he asked Zavoiko why it was necessary for him to go to Kerensky if everything was already decided, Zavoiko told him it was necessary to have a legal succession of power.[9]

Another version of Lvov's story says that there was no ultimatum in any form, only "a simple conversation, in the course of which various desires in the sense of strengthening the government were discussed."[10] It is hard to imagine a

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[8]Ibid., 506.

[9]Poslednija Novosti, as quoted in Browder and Kerensky, Documents, III, 1566.

[10]Wilcox, "Kerensky and Kornilof," 506.

simple conversation in connection with V. N. Lvov. After arranging for Lvov's return to Petrograd, Zavoiko told Lvov significantly, "Bring Kerensky!" Lvov related that he then knew Kerensky's life was in danger, and that these demands would be bolstered by bayonets.

Still another version of the meeting is that Lvov told the General that Kerensky was considering three possibilities: organization of a new government with himself as dictator; a new government invested with unlimited powers and consisting of three or five members, one of whom would be Kornilov; or Kornilov as dictator and Supreme Commander at the head of a wholly new government. Kornilov, elated at Kerensky's willingness to capitulate peacefully and of his own accord, expressed his approval of the third alternative. The general also stipulated that Kerensky declare martial law in Petrograd and suggested that both the Prime Minister and Savinkov come to the Stavka, as their safety could not be guaranteed in Petrograd.[11]

In any event, armed with whatever information he possessed, or thought he possessed, Lvov hurried to the capitol for a second interview with the Prime Minister on the evening of

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[11] This version seems to be the one most circulated in Petrograd at the time of the affair. See Buchanan, Mission to Russia, II, 177, and Meriel Buchanan, Ambassador's Daughter (London, 1958), 169-71. It also seems the most unlikely. It is improbable that Kerensky favored any scheme which would hand the government over to his greatest rival, General Kornilov.

September 7. Meanwhile, General Krymov was already at the Stavka, working out plans for the movement of the Savage Division on Petrograd. About six o'clock on the 7th, Lvov met Kerensky in his study. He delivered General Kornilov's message, in the form of an ultimatum. Although there is doubt as to whether the general meant it in that way or not, there is no doubt about how Kerensky accepted it.

Lvov declared to Kerensky that General Kornilov would give no assistance to the Provisional Government in its struggle with the Bolsheviks, and that he would not be responsible for Kerensky's life anywhere except at headquarters. The continuance of the Provisional Government could no longer be permitted and Kerensky must transfer its powers to the General that day. Pending the formation of a new cabinet the assistant ministers were to take over while martial law would be proclaimed throughout Russia. Kornilov invited Kerensky and Savinkov both to the Stavka, where he would offer them portfolios in the new cabinet.[12]

Kerensky was stunned. At first he accused Lvov of joking. When Lvov convinced Kerensky he was absolutely serious, Kerensky asked him to put these demands in writing. Lvov wrote the following: 1) martial law shall be proclaimed in Petrotrad, 2) all military and civil authority shall be placed in

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[12]Kerensky, Prelude to Bolshevism, 132-33.

Kornilov's hands, and 3) all ministers, not excluding the Prime Minister, shall resign, and temporary power shall be transferred to the assistant ministers until the formation of the new cabinet by the General.[13]

In an effort to establish a definite connection between Lvov and Kornilov so the Provisional Government could take action, Kerensky told Lvov he must talk directly to the General. They decided to meet at eight o'clock that same evening at the home of the War Minister to speak to Kornilov over the Hughes apparatus, a type of direct telegraph. Lvov was late in arriving for the appointment, so Kerensky indulged in a little amateur detective work which Trotsky called "appropriate for a detective, not the head of a government."[14] The following conversation took place on the Hughes apparatus, with Kerensky impersonating Lvov:

> 1) "Good day, General. V. V. Lvov and Kerensky at the apparatus. We beg you to confirm the statement that Kerensky is to act according to the communication made to him by V. N."
>
> "Good day, Alexander Feodorovitch; good day, V. N. Confirming again the description I gave V. N. of the present situation of the country and the army as it

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[13]Kerensky, Prelude to Bolshevism, 134; The Catastrophe, 319. Lvov claimed later that he just jotted down a few detached thoughts, which Kerensky snatched from him before he could read through what he had written and declared him under arrest. Lvov's story, as usual, does not correspond with the facts of his arrest. See Wilson, "Kerensky and Korniloff," 507.

[14]Trotsky, History of Russian Revolution, II, 210.

appears to me, I declare again that the events of the past days and of those that I can see coming imperatively demand a definite decision in the shortest time possible."

2) "I, V. N., ask you whether it is necessary to act on that definite decision which you asked me to communicate privately to Kerensky, as he is hesitating to give his full confidence without your personal confirmation."

"Yes, I confirm that I asked you to convey to Alexander Feodorovitch my urgent demand that he should come to Mohilev."

3) "I, Alexander Feodorovitch, understand your answer as confirmation of the words conveyed to me by V. N. To do that today and start from here is impossible. I hope to start tomorrow. Is it necessary for Savinkov to go?"

"I beg urgently that Boris Victorovitch shall come with you. Everything I said to V. N. refers in equal degree to Savinkov. I beg you earnestly not to put off your departure later than tomorrow. Believe me, only my recognition of the responsibility of the moment urges me to persist in my request."

4) "Shall we come only in case of an outbreak, of which there are rumours, or in any case?"

"In any case."

"Good day. Soon we shall see each other."

"Good day."[15]

This incredible conversation, in which Kornilov and Kerensky show the most astonishing candor and absent-mindedness, is one part of the evidence concerning the Kornilov affair which has not been disputed by any historian. It is preserved on the teletype, and allowing for some differences

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[15]Kerensky, Prelude to Bolshevism, 137-38.

in translation, it is cited by almost every writer verbatim. And yet, it is the strangest and most incriminating piece of evidence for both Kerensky and Kornilov. It is difficult to believe that the head of a government and the supreme commander of the army of a major nation could carry on a conversation which would leave so much to the imagination - which could be so easily misinterpreted. The actual facts of the case were not discussed by either man. Neither Kerensky nor Kornilov ascertained exactly what communication they were talking about. The meaning of the conversation depended entirely on what Lvov had said to Kerensky, and much doubt remains about that.

Lvov arrived a few minutes after this conversation took place and he and Kerensky went to the Prime Minister's office in the Winter Palace, where Kerensky told Lvov of the conversation. Lvov again confirmed the message, but warned Kerensky not to go to the Stavka. Meanwhile, an official of the War Ministry sat in a dark corner of Kerensky's office and listened to the whole conversation. At the end of it Kerensky called the officer on guard in the corridor and had Lvov arrested.[16]

The only other explanation for Kerensky's strange behavior at the teletype machine is that he was still trying to set a trap for Kornilov. Chernov suggested this when he wrote,

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[16]Kerensky, Prelude to Bolshevism, 139-40.

". . . he plays the comedian . . . the spiderlike premier weaves his web, and the big wasp, the commander-in-chief, flies straight into it . . . But teh wasp almost broke the spider's web."[17] Most of the evidence points to the truth of this theory. Kerensky considered himself exceedingly clever and probably thought Kornilov would not see through his little snare. In this case, Kerensky was right. Prince Troubetskoy, the Foreign Affairs Minister at the Stavka, wrote that "the General breathed a sigh of relief at the end of the conversation for he believed the government was meeting him all the way."[18]

From this point on events moved very rapidly. Kerensky met with several members of the Provisional Government at 4:00 a.m., September 9, and revealed the contents of the conversation with Kornilov to them. He convinced them that the General had committed an act of open mutiny against the Provisional Government, and in view of the seriousness of the situation, demanded and got dictatorial powers for a period of time necessary to quell the rebellion. Kerensky claimed the members of the Government urged these powers upon him[19]

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[17]Chernov, Great Russian Revolution, 366.

[18]Cited in Trotsky, History of Russian Revolution, II, 211.

[19]Kerensky, Prelude to Bolshevism, 166-67.

but other sources refute this claim.[20] At this same meeting Kerensky rejected Savinkov's advice to negotiate with General Kornilov for a peaceful settlement of what Savinkov was convinced was all a ghastly misunderstanding.[21] Kerensky did allow Savinkov to contact Filonenko on the wire to see if any light could be thrown on the subject from his vantage point at headquarters. There ensued a conversation between Savinkov and Filonenko that put Kerensky and Kornilov's previous exchange far in the shade as far as confusion and misconception were concerned. The conversation was carried on in a special code the two men had worked out for confidential communications which was intended to be unintelligible to anyone reading the teletype, and which succeeded only too well. It was also unintelligible to Savinkov and Filonenko in this particular conversation. Kerensky further hampered the conversation by instructing Savinkov not to let Filonenko know the situation in Petrograd, but at the same time get Filonenko to come to Petrograd himself as soon as possible. The conversation left both men completely confused.[22]

Dismissing the possibility of compromise, Kerensky sent General Kornilov the following telegram: "I order you immediately to turn over your office to General Lukomsky,

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[20]Wilcox, "Kerensky and Korniloff," 510. Also Strakhovsky, "Was There a Kornilov Rebellion," 389.

[21]Kerensky, Prelude to Bolshevism, 161.

[22]Wilcox, "Kerensky and Korniloff," 509.

who is to take over temporarily the duties of Commander-in-Chief, until the arrival of the new Commander-in-Chief. You are instructed immediately to come to Petrograd." In his excitement, Kerensky did not follow accepted procedure and give the telegram an official number or sign his official title. For this reason, Filonenko convinced the General the telegram was not authentic.[23] This was not hard to do, in any case, for the General was quite stunned to receive such a dispatch. He had spent the evening planning the new government, thinking all the while Savinkov and Kerensky would arrive at the Stavka in due time.

Kornilov's abrupt dismissal did not settle the issue by any means. The General stubbornly refused to give up his command. Among many of the ministers there was still the feeling that the whole thing was a misunderstanding. At a conference on September 9, during which Kerensky revealed the contents of a proclamation he intended to make public, the ministers prevailed upon him to allow Savinkov to contact the General for an explanation. Savinkov wrote, "At my own request I was authorized by Kerensky to converse with Kornilov on the phone . . . I tried to point out the inadmissibility of his act and its counter-revolutionary character and urged him to stop the march and come himself to Petrograd . . . but Kornilov replied that he no longer recognized the Provisional

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[23]Kerensky, Prelude to Bolshevism, 176.

Government.[24] Savinkov was still convinced Kornilov was not a party to any plot against the Government, and tried to get Kerensky to stop the publication of his proclamation to the public. It was too late; the paper had already gone to press.

Kerensky's proclamation explained the dismissal of General Kornilov, proclaimed martial law in Petrograd and called on the population to preserve tranquillity and order in the city.[25] General Kornilov quickly countered with a proclamation of his own, in which he accused the Premier of lying and the Provisional Government of acting under the pressure of the Bolshevik majority of the Soviet.[26] Kornilov's proclamation is another testimony to his lack of political information, for the Bolsheviks did not attain a voting majority in the Petrograd Soviet until after the Kornilov affair; but then, the General had a tendency to lump all those with socialist political feelings under the term "Bolshevik." With these two documents, the breach between Kornilov and the government was complete. Subsequent offers of mediation by the Allied diplomats were to no avail. Sir George Buchanan called a meeting of the Allied ambassadors

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[24] Birzhevyia Vedomosti, September 12, 1917, as quoted in Browder and Kerensky, Documents, III, 1556.

[25] See Appendix I.

[26] See Appendix II.

at the British Embassy on the eleventh, and the diplomats decided to offer to mediate the dispute. Buchanan was directed by his government to inform Kerensky "that the British Government viewed with the greatest alarm the probabilities of civil war, and urged him to come to terms with General Korniloff not only in the interest of Russia herself, but in that of the Allies."[27]

The Petrograd population knew little of the events taking place until the publication of these two proclamations. General Kornilov ordered the troops under Krymov to advance on Petrograd and the Soviets lost no time in making preparations to defend the city. The Soviet formed the "Committee of People's Struggle against the Counter-Revolution", also known as the Military Revolutionary Committee, and proceeded with the arming of the workers. Trotsky wrote that the committee went into action on a vast scale, sending telegrams to railroad workers, telegraph and postal clerks, saying, ". . . all movements of troops to be carried out at the direction of the Provisional Government only when countersigned by the Committee."[28] They searched out and arrested Kornilovites all over the city. Chernov claimed that before the crisis was completely over at least 7,000 persons were

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[27]Buchanan, Mission to Russia, II, 185.

[28]Trotsky, History of Russian Revolution, II, 228-30.

arrested.[29]

The Bolsheviks were ready and willing to cooperate in putting down the uprising. Sukhanov wrote that the leadership of the Military Committee belonged to the Bolsheviks, and that the masses were with them.[30] In all districts of the city whole crowds of people were waiting to join the Red Guard. Drilling began in marksmanship and handling of weapons, and fighting companies were hastily formed.[31] Ironically, when the rebellion was over, the workers refused to give back their arms and the nucleus of the Red Army had been formed on the appeal of Kerensky himself.

Unfortunately for Kornilov's cause, the Soviet did its work well. The most effective measures against the advancing troops were taken by the Railway Bureau, also organized by the Soviet. It called upon the workers to cripple the lines of communication and transportation, and they did a superb job ot it. Regiments arrived in the wrong place, artillery got lost, and staffes got out of communication with their units.[32] Continuous streams of agitators were sent to meet the troops

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[29]Chernov, Great Russian Revolution, 372.

[30]Sukhanov, Russian Revolution, II, 505.

[31]Trotsky, History of Russian Revolution, II, 230-31.

[32]Ibid., 228-30.

under Krymov. Stopped at Luga because of the transportation difficulties, Krymov's troops were soon infiltrated by the soldiers from the Luga garrison. To get his soldiers free of the propaganda, Krymov moved his troops several versts from Luga, but the agitators followed and were soon joined by the delegations from the Soviet. The troops, many of them primitive-minded Moslem horsemen and Cossacks who did not speak Russian, had been told they were on the way to quell an uprising of the Bolsheviks. Upon learning from the agitators that they were moving against the government, what little enthusiasm they had quickly dissipated and they refused to move further.[33]

On September 10, General Krymov was arrested and brought to the Winter Palace. After a short conversation with Kerensky, Krymov took his own life with a pistol.[34]

Contrary to expectations, things did not go well at the Stavka either. On September 9, Kornilov issued an appeal to

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[33]Trotsky, History of Russian Revolution, II, 236-37. Included in the delegation to deter the troops were several Moslem and Turcoman members of the Soviet, one of whom was the grandson of the famous Shamil who heroically defended the Caucasus against tsarism. The mountaineers would not permit their officers to arrest the delegation; that was a violation of the ancient customs of hospitality. See Edward Ross, The Russian Bolshevik Revolution (New York, 1921), 236.

[34]Kerensky, Prelude to Bolshevism, 114-15; The Catastrophe, 321. Kerensky has been criticized for allowing Krymov the liberty to have access to his side arms, shoot himself, and thereby remove a valuable source of information. It was implied that Krymov "knew too much."

the troops, but the Mohilev compositors, members of the local soviet, refused to set it up. When a squad of Kornilov's savage Tekinski, who spoke no Russian, were sent to force the compositors to work, the printers shrewdly set up both Kornilov's orders and Kerensky's proclamation to the public at the same time, loaded them on the same cars, and distributed them to the troops together, thereby neutralizing the effect of the General's appeal.[35]

Although Kornilov felt the generals of the Russian army would stand by him, one by one they pledged their allegiance to the Provisional Government. Denikin and his staff tried to stand by the Supreme Commander, but even they were not successful. Denikin wrote, "Never again did the future of the country seem so dark or impotence so grievous and humiliating."[36]

On September 10, the General's second appeal reached the public:

> I, General Kornilov, Supreme Commander of the Russian Armed Forces, declare, before the whole nation, that my duty as a soldier, my feelings as a self-denying citizen of Free Russia, and my boundless love for my country, oblige me, at this critical hour of Russia's existence to disobey the orders of the Provisional Government . . . I declare to the whole of the Russian people that I prefer to die rather than give up my post as Supreme Commander. A true son of Russia remains at his post to the end and is always ready to

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[35]Ross, Bolshevik Revolution, 230.

[36]Cited in Trotsky, History of Russian Revolution, II, 241.

> make the greatest of all sacrifices for his country - that of his life.

He informed the people that while the victorious enemy was approaching the Government was frightening them with "the phantom of counter-revolution . . . It is not for me - a son of the people - who has given himself up, heart and soul, to the service of that people, to go against the great liberties and the great future of Russia." He ended with an appeal to the Provisional Government: "Come to Supreme Headquarters, where your freedom and safety are guaranteed on my word of honour, and together we will work out and form such a government of national defence as will make secure the liberties of the people and lead Russia to a great future, worthy of a free and mighty nation."[37]

Kerensky's answer to this passionate appeal was to arrest the General. Kornilov, ill with a fever at the Stavka, did not make a single move to avoid arrest. When a French journalist later asked Kornilov why he had not personally accompanied his troops on their mission, he replied, "I was sick, I had a serious attack of malaria, and was not in possession of my usual energy."[38] On the 14th of September, along with Lukomsky, Denikin, and several other generals, Kornilov was imprisoned in Bykhov

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[37]Golder, Documents, 522-23.

[38]Trotsky, History of Russian Revolution, II, 226. Also Miliukov, Istoriia, I, vypusk 2, 262-63, as quoted in Browder and Kerensky, Documents, III, 1583.

prison, without ever having fired a shot. The rebellion had simply crumbled.

CHAPTER IX

THE AFTERMATH

The threat of the uprising was over, but the incident was not to be forgotten so easily. The quick action of the Soviet and the Bolsheviks had saved the Provisional Government and Kerensky, but in doing so had greatly strengthened their own position. The balance that Kerensky tried so desparately to maintain was gone, and Kerensky now found himself even more dependent on the support of the Left. Although Kerensky was inclined to be lenient with the insurgents, the Soviet and the Bolsheviks demanded something more than a slap on the hand for the arrested generals.

An extraordinary investigating committee was appointed to examine the evidence against the conspirators.[1] This committee dragged on until the Bolshevik revolution in November, unearthing a mountain of testimony and conflicting opinion, but few conclusions. After the November revolution, when Kerensky and his supporters joined the Kornilovites who had fled into exile in September, the charges and the countercharges continued.

Almost everyone who had any connection with the affair at all has left his version of what happened in writing.

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[1] Sobranie Uzakonenii i Rasporiazhenii Pravitel'stva, I, 2, No. 1387, as quoted in Browder and Kerensky, Documents, III, 1599.

Kerensky insisted on presenting the affair as the turning point of the revolution. He contended there was an organized counter-revolutionary plot, designed to place General Kornilov at the head of a military dictatorship. Kornilov's followers maintained they were only interested in the establishment of a strong dependable government consisting of men capable of leading Russia to her salvation.

On Kerensky's side, a letter from General Alekseev to Miliukov on September 25, 1917, has been cited as evidence of a plot. General Alekseev wrote:

> The Kornilov affair was not the affair of a group of adventurers, and you know to a certain degree that certain circles of our society not only knew all about it, not only sympathized with the idea, but helped Kornilov as far as they could . . . I have one more question: I do not know the addresses of Vychnegradski, Poutiloff, and the others. The families of the imprisoned officers are beginning to starve, and I insist on their coming to their aid. Surely they will not abandon to their fate and starvation the families of those to whom they were linked by the common bond of an idea and preparation . . . In that case ie., if this demand is not immediately satisfied General Kornilov will be forced to declare in detail before the court the whole plan of preparation, all the conversations with persons and groups and their participation, in order to show the Russian people with whom he was working, what real aim he was pursuing, and how, abandoned by all in his moment of need, he had to appear before an improvised court with only a small number of officers.[2]

General Alikseev's letter actually proves only that General Kornilov had supporters, a fact which was already

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[2]Kerensky, Prelude to Bolshevism, 278. Also Izvestiia, December 12, 1917, as quoted in Browder and Kerensky, Documents, III, 1603-1606.

well known. He indicates, by threatening blackmail, that these supporters deserted the General as soon as they saw his cause was a lost one, but the letter does not prove conclusively that there was an organized plot afoot.

On the other side, the evidence is more damning, even if it is not more conclusive. Both Chernov and Trotsky thought Kerensky was a party to the projected coup at first, planning either a joint dictatorship with Kornilov or thinking that the General would agree to Kerensky being dictator. They thought he abandoned Kornilov only when he realized the coup was about to fail and wanted to save himself both politically and literally.[3] Sukhanov agrees with this view.[4]

Many of Kerensky's actions point in this direction. His actions on September 3, when he appealed to Kornilov for troops, when logically he should have done exactly the opposite if he suspected the General of a plot against the Government - his ridiculous behavior on the night of September 8 when he had the cryptic teletype conversation with Kornilov, almost as if he wanted to be deceived about the General's intentions, or at least to let others think he was deceived - his refusal to negotiate or to let others negotiate with the General to try to reach an amicable settlement - all these

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[3]Trotsky, History of Russian Revolution, II, 191. Also Chernov, Great Russian Revolution, 366.

[4]Sukhanov, Russian Revolution, II, 509.

things indicate that Kerensky was playing some kind of a game in which all the players were not fully informed of the rules. His actions after Kornilov's arrest were also suspicious. He asked for and received dictatorial power to deal with the uprising. He appointed Savinkov Governor-general of Petrograd, even though he knew of Savinkov's feelings toward the General and was fully aware of Savinkov's complicity in the affair. Kornilov was allowed to write his deposition to the investigation committee rather than appear in person, and lived in comparative comfort in prison, surrounded by his own Cossack soldiers as guards. An most remarkable of all, when Kerensky could find no suitable general to assume the post of Commander-in-Chief, Kerensky took the title himself and ordered that until further notice all Kornilov's instructions with respect to operations on the front were to be faithfully carried out. In effect, he reinstated in the primary military position in Russia a man he had just denounced publicly as a traitor and an enemy to his country.[5]

As for the motives of General Kornilov, they are even more obscure. It is clear that he meant to reorganize the government, even if he had to use force to do it, but whether he aimed at a personal dictatorship or not is a point which must of necessity remain unsolved. In view of the General's

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[5]Wilcox, "Kerensky and Korniloff," 516.

obvious naivete about politics and politicians, it is completely reasonable to assume that he though he had Kerensky's support in his venture all the time.[6]

In any event, the real significance of the Kornilov affair does not lie in the answer to these mysteries. They are provocative and baffling, but of secondary importance. The main significance of the affair lies in its immediate consequences to the course of Russian history. Probably the major result of the affair was to strengthen the Bolshevik cause. The involvement of the non-socialists and Kadet members of the government in the Kornilov affair discredited them in the eyes of the public, and the Central Executive Committee of the Soviet wished to exclude them from further participation in the Government. Although they were not wholly successful in this, large numbers of capable moderate politicians were eliminated from political activity. Furthermore, the workers who had formed the Red Guards refused to give up their arms, a problem that turned out to be serious. The "committee for the salvation of the revolution" also refused to disband and as a sop to his left-wing supporters, Kerensky allowed Trotsky and other Bolshevik leaders to be released from prison. Several measures demanded by the Soviet were enacted by the

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[6]Other than his deposition at the investigation, Kornilov left no testimony about the affair. He escaped from Bykhov prison during the Bolshevik revolution with the help of his Cossack guards and helped form the White army. He was killed during the civil war at Ekaterinodor, April 13, 1918. Stewart, White Armies of Russia, 40.

new government. The Kornilov program for restoring discipline in the army was forgotten, the State Duma was formally abolished, and Russia was declared a Republic. All in all, the Kornilov affair served as a spring board for the advancement of the extreme left wing element in Russia.

Almost as grave as the abrupt shift to the Left on the political scene were the consequences to the army. What was left of the discipline and respect in the army quickly disappeared. The rank and file lost what faith they still had in their officers and a new wave of desertions and violence against officers began. The process of disintegration in the army speeded up. A particular point of resentment with the soldiers was the excellent treatment of the imprisoned generals in Bykhov. Chernov pointed out, "When it was realized that discipline and capital punishment were for soldiers, not for generals, the front swelled with anger and turned black like the sea before a tempest."[7] The Bolsheviks were quick to take advantage of such feelings, and with a mastery of propaganda, played on all the resentments and ill feelings toward the Provisional Government.

As for the long range consequences of the Kornilov affair, there really were not any. Despite Kerensky's complete and unrelenting protestation that, without the Kornilov affair, there could have been no Bolshevik revolution, this simply

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[7]Chernov, Great Russian Revolution, 380-81.

is not true. The Provisional Government could not have lasted even without the Kornilov affair; at most the whole incident merely speeded up a process that was already taking place. The political situation in Russia had already deteriorated to near anarchy by the time of the Kornilov affair, and the moderate to conservative elements could find no common ground upon which to build a stable program. The affair did not cause the fall of the government, but neither could its success have saved the conservative cause in Russia. The revolution could not be turned back, either by Kornilov of Kerensky; neither man was strong enough or politically astute enough to establish a moderate government in Russia in the summer of 1917. The Kornilov affair, for all its intrigue, its emotional charges and counter-charges, its passionate oratory - and its comic-opera aspect - remains merely one more crisis in the life of a regime that was already on its way to oblivion.

APPENDIX I

KERENSKY'S MESSAGE TO THE POPULATION

I hereby announce:

On August 26th [September 8] General Kornilov sent to me the member of the State Duma V. N. Lvov with a demand for the surrender by the Provisional Government of the whole plenitude of Civil and Military authority, with a view to his forming at his personal discretion, a NEW GOVERNMENT for administering the country. The authenticity of Deputy Lvov's authorization to make such a proposal to me was subsequently confirmed by General Kornilov in his conversation with me by direct wire. Perceiving in the presentation of such demands, addressed to the Provisional Government in my person, a desire of some circles of Russian society to take advantage of the grave condition of the State for the purpose of establishing in the country a state of authority in contradiction to the conquests of the Revolution, the Provisional Government has found it indispensable:

To authorize me, for the salvation of OUR country, of liberty and of Republican order, to take prompt and resolute measures for the purpose of uprooting any attempt to encroach upon the Supreme Authority in the State and upon the rights

which the citizens have conquered by the Revolution.

I am taking all necessary measures to protect the liberty and order of the country, and the population will be informed in due course with regard to such measures.

At the same time I order herewith:

I. General Kornilov to surrender the post of Supreme Commander-in-Chief to General Klembovsky, the Commander-in-Chief over the armies of the Northern front which bar the way to Petrograd; and General Klembovsky to enter temporarily upon the post of Supreme Commander-in-Chief, while remaining at Pskov.

II. To declare the city and district of Petrograd under Martial Law, extending to it the regulations for the localities declared under Martial Law . . .

I call upon all the citizens to preserve complete tranquility and to maintain order, which is so indispensable for the salvation of the country. I call upon all the ranks of the army and navy to carry on with calmness and self-abnegation their duty of defending the country against the external enemy.[1]

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[1]Kerensky, Prelude to Bolshevism, 181-83; Vestnik Vremennago Pravitel'stva Daily official newspaper of the Provisional Government , August 29, 1917, as quoted in Browder and Kerensky, Documents, III, 1572-73.

APPENDIX II

PROCLAMATION BY THE SUPREME COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF

The Premier's telegram No. 4163 is in its first portion a lie throughout; it was not I who sent Deputy Vladimir Lvov to the Provisional Government, but he came to me as the Premier's envoy. Deputy Alexis Aladin is a witness to this.

A great provocation has thus taken place, which jeopardizes the fate of the Fatherland.

People of Russia!

Our great country is dying. The hour of its end is near. Being compelled to come forward in the open, I, General Kornilov, declare that, under the pressure of the Bolshevik majority of the Soviets, the Provisional Government is acting in complete accord with the plans of the German General Staff, at the time when enemy troops are landing on the Riga coast; it is killing the army and shaking the foundations of the country.

A grave sense of the inevitable ruin of the country commands me at this threatening moment to call upon all Russian people to save this dying country.

All you in whose breast a Russian heart is beating; all

you who believe in God and in the temples, pray to the Lord to manifest the greatest miracle of saving our native land. I, General Kornilov, the son of a Cossack peasant, declare to all and sundry that I want nothing for my own person, except the preservation of a Great Russia, and I swear to carry over the people, by means of victory over the enemy, to the Constituent Assembly at which it will decide its own fate and choose the order of its new State life.

I cannot bring it upon myself to hand over Russia to its hereditary enemy, the German race, and to turn the Russian people into slaves of the Germans, but prefer to die on the field of honour and battle, so as not to see the shame and infamy of the Russian land.

Russian people, the life of your country is in your hands![1]

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[1]Kerensky, Prelude to Bolshevism, 181-83; Novoe Vremia, September 11, 1917, as quoted in Golder, Documents, 521-22. E.I. Martynov, Kornilov, 110-11, as quoted in Browder and and Kerensky, Documents, III, 1573.

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