LEWIN: THEORIST AND POLITICIAN

THESIS

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

This thesis is a study of Lenin and his ideas and actions during the first five months that he was political leader of Russia. Its primary purpose is to discover the particular relationships between theory and expediency as roles in influencing Lenin's actions as head of state for that period, hoping that a basic understanding of the mind of Vladimir I. Lenin will evolve. The topics chosen to implement the study were Lenin's treatment of other political parties in relationship to the Bolshevist party, the development of an effective police system and the process of socialization of industry.

By the early 1900's almost everyone in Russia was ready for a revolution of one kind or another. Russian manufacturing had grown gradually during the nineteenth century, and true industrialization with the modern factory system and the large-scale use of modern technology began in the 1800's. Industrialization created in Russia a modern working class and a modern middle class, both of which had been

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lacking before. Both groups were politically ignored by the monarchy. By the 1890's the talk of revolutionaries began to sound appealing. Likewise, the peasants, who were concerned about land, began also to lend an ear to the plans and promises of the revolutionaries. Nearly everyone was against the existing government; the government knew it but yielded to no one. The institution of the monarchy, both brittle and unyielding, was fast crumbling from internal decay and mass disaffection. The stage was set for revolution.

Unfortunately for the continuance of the monarchy, Russia entered World War I; and three years later, in 1917, revolution erupted. The March Revolution was precipitated by a rash of strikes and food riots in Petrograd. Crowds got out of hand, army units refused to fire, and the police power broke down. Nicholas II suddenly discovered that no one would obey him any longer; on March 15, 1917, he abdicated.³

The vacuum left by the collapse of tsarist order was quickly, but only partially, filled by the formation of the Provisional Government. Simultaneously socialist underground leaders in Petrograd revived an old institution, the workers' council or soviet, and they were organized elsewhere in Russia. The soviets gained considerable de facto

governmental power, since the masses of workers, soldiers, and peasants had more contact with them than with the Provisional Government. It was to be upon the base of the soviets that Lenin would build his power; however, his attitude toward them varied from his romantic slogan "All Power to the Soviets" to a rather cool evaluation in the fall of 1917.

Lenin had been abroad when the Tsar fell. Within a month he secured the aid of the German government in crossing from Switzerland to Scandinavia, and then he proceeded through Finland to Petrograd. Immediately upon his arrival he launched his attack, the April Theses, against the Provisional Government. The third point of the April Theses was: "No support for the Provisional Government; the utter falsity of all its promises should be made clear." And he continued, "The masses must be made to see that the Soviets of Workers' Deputies are the only possible form of revolutionary government. . . ." Thus, from the beginning of Lenin's active involvement in the Russian Revolution, his intolerance of opposition and his absolute faith in his convictions were apparent. His thinking was ideological and dogmatic; he had long planned for the victory of socialism.


Certainly Lenin was a Marxist. Before the revolution he had developed a vast ideological system. The numerous volumes of his Collected Works testify to that fact. As far back as 1905, he had insisted that the proletariat, in alliance with the majority of the peasantry, could establish a revolutionary dictatorship of the proletariat. 6 Trotsky, who after the Bolshevik revolution held an official position on the Council of Peoples' Commissars, made note of Lenin's devotion to revolutionary Marxism in reference to the Tula period,

Lenin did not go abroad as a Marxist in general, . . . but as leader of that revolution that was growing and that he palpably perceived. He went to create within the shortest time the ideological tools and the organizing apparatus for the revolution.7 Lenin's devotion to the ideal of Marxism was clear in those early days of revolution. "To him the socialist theory of Marx was an indisputable dogma, an inescapable law of human development."8 N. Valentinov recalled Lenin's reaction to certain non-Marxist philosophical conceptions: "When you find a stinking heap in your path," said Lenin, "you don't have to dig your hands into it to know what it is, your nose


8Chamberlin, Russian Revolution, I, 134.
will tell you it's dung and you'll pass it by." He continued to say, "... All of those who give up Marxism are my enemies, I refuse to shake hands with them, and I do not sit down at the same table with Philistines ..." When in early November, 1917, Lenin's party finally overthrew the Provisional Government, the goal of socialism was spoken of first. At the Second Congress of Soviets which opened near midnight on the 7th, Lenin appeared as the obvious leader. John Reed, who was an observer, described the scene.

Now Lenin, gripping the edge of the reading stand, letting his little twinkling eyes travel over the crowd as he stood there waiting, apparently oblivious to the long-rolling ovation, which lasted several minutes. Then it finished, he said simply, "We shall now proceed to construct the Socialist order!"

Again the overwhelming human roar.

Lenin's goal of socialism was to be ever before him in the formation of the infant Soviet state. At last he had the opportunity for which he had long been waiting—the opportunity to transform Russia into a Marxist state. Facing such a task, Trotsky, who had been appointed Commissar of Foreign Affairs, remarked, "Everything had to be begun at

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13Y. I. Lenin, "Decision to Form the Workers 'and Peasants' Government," Collected Works, XXVI, 262.
the beginning, had to be wrung from the ground. We could not offer precedents, for history knew none.\textsuperscript{14} The mass of legislation that issued forth from Lenin’s desk represents, in part, his attempt to make socialism a reality. He said, "Delay may indeed prove to be fatal, and the new regime is setting up milestones in the development of new forms of life by issuing laws to meet the aspirations and hopes of the broad masses."\textsuperscript{15} One of the complications was that what the masses wanted did not necessarily coincide with Marxism. Other problems included the German threat of invasion, the counter-revolutionary forces in southern Russia, the refusal of bank employees to function and virtual anarchy in industry. The result was a hodgepodge of decrees dealing with even such topics as the production of alcoholic drinks.\textsuperscript{16} "Not all, by no means all, the decrees were in harmony, and Lenin joked more than once, even openly, at the discords in our product of decrees," said Trotsky.\textsuperscript{17} The decrees did not follow the pattern which was theorized before the revolution, Lenin had a decree for every problem, great or small, whether it was important or insignificant to the basic tenets of socialism.

Although he was a socialist, Lenin, after taking power, did not immediately change Russia into a socialist country.

\begin{footnotes}
\item[14]Trotsky, Lenin, p. 143.
\item[15]V. I. Lenin, "Meeting of the All-Russian Central Executive Committee," Collected Works, XXVI, 287.
\item[16]Reed, Ten Days, p. 349.
\item[17]Trotsky, Lenin, p. 143.
\end{footnotes}
Many of his prerevolutionary goals seem to have been partially ignored. For example, there was no sweeping nationalization of business property. By mid-May of 1918 only 304 plants had been nationalized, and these were mainly in mining and heavy industry. Even an obvious measure, the separation of church and state, was not announced until after the Archbishop Tikon launched an anathema against the Soviet government. At one point before the revolution Lenin had this to say about the nationalization of the banks: "Nationalization of the banks has only to decree and it would be carried out by the directors and employees themselves." However, it was not until December 27, 1917, that a decree which declared banking to be a state monopoly was passed, and then it was done in response to the persistent obstruction of the banks to Bolshevik use. Lenin moved slowly toward his goals.

Immediately after he took power, a series of measures were passed; and as his government became crowded with pressing problems, he seems to have played the political instrument

18Schuman, Russia Since 1917, p. 99.


20V. I. Lenin, "Impeding Catastrophe and How to Combat It," Collected Works, Stepan Apreysan and Jim Riordan, translators and editors (Moscow, 1964), XXU, 334-335.

by ear. The propose of this thesis is to discover an explanation for his actions as head of State. Furthermore, its purpose is to ascertain what ideas or combination of ideas can be used to get a glimpse into the mind of Vladimir Ilyich Ulyanov, the son of an inspector of schools who became the supreme genius of Russian revolutionary leadership.

Perhaps Lenin was afraid that the perspective of revolution might fade, that the formidable enemies both within and without his country would prevent the continuance of the Soviet government, that his leadership was simply a brief experiment soon to disappear. Certainly, the difficulties which faced him were serious. From such a viewpoint, perhaps Lenin wished to pass socialistic decrees as rapidly as possible simply to be known by historians as an active socialist. In relation to being known to posterity, a contemporary newspaper, Novaya Zhizn described the mass of decrees as "socialism on paper--likely designed for the stupefaction of our descendants."22 Possibly he wished to justify his existence by making himself known to the generations that would come after him as a champion of people's liberties.

Lenin's relationship to strict theory is a worthy question for consideration. Was his dogmatism unyielding? In

22Reed, Ten Days, p. 264.
his resolution "On Party Unity" he indicated there could be no loyal opposition. Possibly he meant within the Bolshevik party, perhaps he meant in all of Russia. There is a question concerning the influence of Marxist ideology upon his every action. Perhaps, to Lenin, the only truth for guiding policy was socialism in the Marxist sense. Maybe Lenin was just another fanatic.

Or perhaps Lenin was, in the main, simply a good politician who enjoyed his share of power. It was Lenin who drove the masses after the collapse of Tsarism to the final act of seizure of power by the Soviets. In many of his speeches and pamphlets the ability to use propaganda to sway the people was apparent. "Not all the peasants have as yet realized that their Soviets of Peasants' Deputies are the true, authentic, supreme state power, but they soon will," he said once when he desperately needed the support of the peasantry. Perhaps power meant more to the Bolshevik leader than theory. There is a question over whether he consciously subordinated theory to his will to power.

Possibly Lenin used the theory of Marx with a view of the particular event which was happening in mind. In the postscript to the first edition of his book, The State and

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23v. I. Lenin, "Preliminary Draft Resolution of the Tenth Congress of the R. C. P. on Party Unity," Collected Works, Yuri Slobnikov, translator and editor (Moscow, 1965), XXII, 241-244.

24v. I. Lenin, "Foreword to the Pamphlet: How the SRs Cheated the People and What the New Bolshevik Government Has Given the People," Collected Works, XXVI, 313.
Revolution published first in 1918, he said, "It is more pleasant and more useful to live through the experience of a revolution than to write about it."25 Perhaps he meant that the historical situation of a revolution as it developed was more important to him than the theory of revolution.

In brief, what part did theory play in his action, and what part expediency? This research effort will deal with the time period November 1917 - March 1918, the months between the Bolshevik takeover of power and the beginnings of peace negotiations with Germany. Its purpose is to discover, as nearly as possible, the intellectual and political motives for Lenin's actions as head of state during that space of time.

In order to attack the problem, domestic policy as opposed to the conduct of foreign affairs was chosen as a topic. This plan seems appropriate because Lenin himself centered attention on Russia rather than the world as a whole, even though his Works deal in part with the propagation of international socialism. Again, Lenin was the one who took the responsibility for Russia's withdrawal from the World War. He seemed to say: If the other countries wish to continue mass destruction of themselves, they may; but Russia has suffered enough defeat and loss. So, a confinement of the thesis to domestic problems seems reasonable.

Within the realm of domestic affairs, three main topics have been chosen from which to work and discover information about the motives of the Soviet ruler: political parties, police system and industry. These were subjects that Lenin had to face, topics which he could not ignore. Indeed, these items cannot be laid aside by any head of state.

The first of the three topics concerns the exercise of political power; this thesis will attempt to discover information not only about Lenin's party, the Bolshevik party, but also the relationship of the Bolsheviks to the other parties, the Cadets, the Social Revolutionaries and the Mensheviks. Lenin's treatment of other political parties is not consistent; this thesis will attempt to discover the intellectual and political reasons underlying his various reactions to other political parties.

The second topic relates to the power structure on the domestic scene. Any government which proposes to exist for any length of time must make use of some sort of police system or power structure. In the early stages of Leninism in action the methods used were extremely mild; however, within a matter of months a secret police system was established. There is a question over whether the secret police fitted the model for the workers' militia as expounded in Lenin's pre-revolutionary theory. This thesis will attempt to attack the problem of why Lenin's plans were modified.

The third and last topic is the industrial system in post-revolutionary Russia. Perhaps the most basic question
dealt with by the theory of socialism as propounded by Marxist-Leninism is the matter of the industrial system. Lenin's organization and treatment of industrial policy followed a rather halting course. What were Lenin's thoughts behind his measures taken regarding industry and banking as it is related to industry?

Of the general histories dealing with the Soviet state, many simply ignore the question with which this thesis deals. Others disagree about Lenin's motives. An attempt has been made to delve deeper into the question and resolve the issue as far as is possible from the sources available in English.

Sources for this thesis include such works as John Reed's *Ten Days That Shook the World*, which was assessed by Lenin himself as giving "a truthful and most vivid exposition of the events so significant to the comprehension of what really is the Proletarian Revolution and the Dictatorship of the Proletariat." Reed had been in Russia during the revolution; he observed and set down what he saw. "This book is a slice of intensified history--history as I saw it," said Reed. "It does not pretend to be anything but a detailed account of the November Revolution..." Nadezhda Konstantinova Krupskaia, the wife of Lenin, set down her *Memoirs of Lenin*, which was published first in two parts and later translated into one English edition. According to

Krupskaya, the reminiscences were intended "to give a picture of the conditions in which Vladimir Ilyich lived and worked." Her *Memories* does that and in addition often gives valued insight regarding the nature of the man Lenin. Leon Trotsky who, of course, was a close revolutionary associate of Lenin's, wrote a biography entitled simply, *Lenin*. This work also proved invaluable in its relation of Lenin's personal reactions to the events connected to the revolution. Other sources include *The Russian Provisional Government 1917 Documents*, published in three volumes and edited by Robert Browder and Alexander Kerensky who at one point was the head of the Provisional Government. Jane Dugan's *Soviet Documents on Foreign Policy* were also useful. *The Russian Revolution and Leninism or Marxism*, by Rosa Luxemburg, who was a prominent European socialist of the time, was consulted. In addition, *The Papers Relating to the Foreign Relations of the United States 1917: Russia*, published by the United States Department of State, were used.

Lenin himself was an active journalist, and the mass of letters, pamphlets, decrees and speeches that he produced form the basis around which this thesis is constructed. Many editions of Lenin's writings collected in various forms were available. A volume published in 1937 entitled *The Letters of Lenin* was consulted, along with Emil Burd's

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A Handbook of Marxism. Lenin's Selected Works, in twelve volumes, published in 1943 are organized in a topical arrangement. However, by far most useful of all sources, were the Collected Works of Lenin which consist of thirty-eight volumes published in Moscow in 1964. These volumes were used extensively in preparation of this thesis.

The purpose of this thesis is to develop a basic understanding of the mind of Vladimir Ilyich Lenin, the most outstanding active revolutionary of Russian history. The goal is to discover the underlying motives or reasons of his conduct of public affairs and legislation during the period November 1917 through March of 1918. Three particular areas have been chosen for investigation: the relationship of the Bolshevik party to other political parties, the development of a forceful police system and the process of socialization of industry.
CHAPTER II

LENIN AND HIS THEORY

Born in April, 1870, in the provincial capital of Simbirsk, Lenin was the son of a respectable school administrator, Ilya Nikolaevich Ulyanov. The senior Ulyanov's labors had brought him to the post of Director of Primary Schools with the bureaucratic grade of "Actual State Councillor." According to the Table of Ranks, this dignity automatically made its bearer a member of the hereditary nobility. That is, the descendants of Ilya Nikolaevich became members of the most privileged class in Russia.

Lenin thus entered life under decidedly favorable conditions, yet he devoted his life not to the pursuit of some legally acceptable form of success, which surely could have been his, but to the seemingly impossible task of destroying the old Russian government and replacing it with a dictatorship of the proletariat led by himself.

In boyhood, Lenin received a good education of the orthodox type. He attended the High School of Simbirsk and took first place in the final examinations there, thus earning a gold medal at the graduation exercises.2 Such an

achievement sheds a remarkable light on his mind and character, especially since his brother, Alexandre, had just died on the scaffold that spring for participation in an attempt on the life of the Czar. To come through the examinations as he did, under such circumstances, Lenin displayed a strong mind and an extraordinary power of self-mastery and concentration for a youth of seventeen. These qualities of mind stayed with him and developed throughout his life.

From school in the autumn of 1887, Lenin went to the University of Kazan in order to study law. His career there was a short one, for in his first semester Lenin joined a demonstration against an official of the school. He was arrested and later expelled from the University. His desire for knowledge of law was not destroyed. He continued his studies and made repeated efforts to secure readmission to Kazan. The requests were refused, but Lenin kept working, following the prescribed courses and acting as his own tutor. In 1891, Lenin was permitted to take the law examination at the University of St. Petersburg. In the following year he received his certificate as an assistant attorney. This training helped prepare Lenin for his role in Russian revolutionary history.

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4Fischer, Life of Lenin, p. 16.
5Chamberlin, Russian Revolution, I, 123.
Lenin's extraordinary mind and his almost unending capacity for work were both dedicated completely to the idea of revolution. His definiteness of purpose was always concrete; a deep devotion to the concept and reality of revolution pervaded his existence. For example, when Trotsky suggested the title Council of People's Commissars as the name for the government, Lenin replied, "That is splendid. That smells of revolution." His basic commitment was also evident during the daily meetings of the Council of People's Commissars, for Lenin presided tirelessly for five or six hours at a time. Since the debate was unprepared and he did not know in advance what would be discussed, his work required a strong creative imagination. Lenin's strength lay in his "realistic imagination." Though he was an important Marxist theoretician, practice surely meant as much as theory for the Bolshevik leader. As a practical politician he diluted theory with expediency and moved with ease from nationalism to internationalism and back again. Later,

7Trotsky, Lenin, p. 132.
8Ibid., p. 145.
10Fischer, Life of Lenin, p. 90.
when he was in charge in Russia, Lenin spoke about the militia and admitted that it was not full blown socialism, but he said,

Theoretical classification doesn't matter now. It would indeed be a grave error if we tried now to fit the complex, urgent, rapidly unfolding practical tasks of the revolution into the Procrustean bed of a narrowly conceived theory, instead of regarding theory first of all and above all as a guide to action.11

Clearly, Lenin was not blind to the area of events. Theory was always important; the goal of Marxist socialism was ever before him, but Lenin did not lose sight of the historical situation as it developed.

Yet the prospect of the triumph of socialism seemed immediate to him. "We wanted to train everybody to consider all questions in the setting of their socialistic structure, not in the perspective of the goal but of today and tomorrow."12 He believed in what he said. His spirit of realistically taking hold of every task indicated it. The appeal was immediate, for his first words to the Second Congress of Soviets were, "We shall now proceed to construct the Socialist order."13 However, Lenin was not so foolish to suppose that this could be accomplished overnight. Certainly he recognized that a certain amount of time would

12Trotsky, _Lenin_, p. 146.
be needed. For example, in the thesis on peace written in January, 1918, he said: "For the success of socialism in Russia, a certain period of time of at least a few months is necessary." 14 Repeatedly he emphasized this point; at the Council of People's Commissars at Smolny Lenin said over and again that "within a half year socialism would rule." 15 Six months seems a very short length of time to transform a primitive peasant country rent with confusion and crisis into a thoroughgoing dictatorship of the proletariat; however, Lenin's statement at least shows that he did not believe that a mere week of issuing decrees would suffice. Lenin was not unaware of the condition of Russia. He said, "Russia is a peasant country, one of the most backward of European countries. Socialism can not triumph there directly at once." 16

Even before the revolution, Lenin pondered about the development of events relating to the workers. In his "Letters from Afar" the question was asked, "Will the mass of Russian workers have sufficient class-consciousness, self-discipline and heroism to show the wonders of proletarian organization?" 17 He went on to indicate that such questions are answered only by life itself. Hence, even in his pro-revolutionary writings, Lenin seemed alert to the effect of

14Trotsky, Lenin, p. 148. 15Ibid.
16Lenin, "Farewell Letter to Swiss Workers," Selected Works, VI, 17.
events upon the development of a socialist society. He was aware of the impossibility of anticipating the process of the revolution or of the ensuing establishment of the administrative details which would bring Marxist socialism to Russia.

Indeed, Lenin planned for the future with developing events in mind. With reference to the agrarian program he said:

It is possible that the peasantry may seize all the land and the entire power. Far from forgetting this possibility, far from confining myself to the present moment only, I definitely and clearly formulate the agrarian programme in accordance with the new phenomenon, the profound cleavage between the agricultural labourers and the poor peasants, on the one hand, and the peasant owners, on the other. . . . Many things are possible. It would be a profound mistake to forget the agrarian movement and the agrarian programme. But it would be equally mistaken to forget reality. . . .

He admonished the "old Bolsheviks" who merely repeated formulas,¹⁹ and went on to say, "It is essential to realize the incontestable truth that a Marxist must take cognizance of actual events, of the precise facts of reality, and must not cling to a past theory."²⁰ Surely an element of Lenin's greatness lay in his ability at decisive moments to separate himself from any illusions or comforting visions bred by doctrine. As it turned out in November, events such as the

¹⁹V. I. Lenin, "Letters on Tactics," Selected Works, VI, 36.
²⁰Ibid., p. 33.
resistance of the bureaucracy to Bolshevik power and the ill-managed workers' control of industry delayed the enactment of socialism.

Lenin was entirely capable of decisive political action. Once, in *Iskra*, Lenin said, "One must in the complicated chain of political action always seek out the central link for the moment in question in order to seize it and give direction to the whole chain." This became his second nature. He took hold of a problem from all sides. And it was for this reason that Trotsky called him "the greatest revolutionary of history." In the midst of chaos in November, Lenin did not remain silent; he issued statutes, decrees and commands in the name of the government, a government that at that time was only an idea. It had no apparatus, no money, no army.

Lenin was a man dedicated to the idea of revolution, gifted with the agility of mind to grasp the theory of it, and politically capable of maneuvering events to suit its purpose. And yet the man himself seemed unaltered by his accomplishments. He dressed like a somewhat rumpled bourgeois professor—black sack suit, vest, white collar and black cravat. He wore the cloth cap to represent the proletariat. According to his secretary, he wore the same black overcoat from his return to Russia in 1917 until his death. Lenin

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21 Trotsky, *Lenin*, p. 146
22 Ibid.
did not seek external symbols of revolutionary authority such as a military uniform. His whole being spoke through and through of revolution.

When on the third of April, Lenin arrived in Petrograd from abroad, he came believing that the Russian bourgeoisie was incapable of leading its own revolution.Russia was now controlled by the Provisional Government, which as set up on March 16 consisted of conservative and bourgeois members, except for Alexander Kerensky, who was a moderate socialist. From the beginning this government faced the impossible task of stemming the tide of revolutionary fervor inside Russia and continuing the World War. Basically, the Provisional Government stood for political-legal reforms of the legacy of tsardom. Lenin planned for a genuine revolution by the poorer elements of Russia, the wage-worker and the peasantry, his goal being a dictatorship of the proletariat.

The next day after his arrival Lenin presented to the party a short written exposition of his views, which under the name of Theses of April has become one of the most important documents of the revolution. The theses expressed simple thoughts in simple words comprehensible to all: The republic which has issued from the February revolution is not our republic, and the war which is now waging is not our war. The task of


the Bolsheviks is to overthrow the imperialist government. But this government rests upon the support of the Social Revolutionaries and Mensheviks, who in turn are supported by the trustfulness of the masses of the people. We are in the minority. In these circumstances there can be no talk of violence from our side. We must teach the masses not to trust the compromisers and defensists. "We must patiently explain." The success of this policy, dictated by the whole existing situation, is assured, and it will bring us to the dictatorship of the proletariat, and so beyond the boundaries of the bourgeois regime we will break absolutely with capital, publish its secret treaties, and summon the workers of the whole world to cast loose from the bourgeoisie and put an end to the war. We are beginning the international revolution. Only its success will confirm our success, and guarantee a transition to the socialist regime.26

Lenin believed that with the establishment of the Provisional Government, the democratic revolution was not completed; that indeed, without really beginning, it had already begun to drop into the past. He believed that only the rule of a new class could complete the revolution, and that it could be accomplished by aligning the workers and the soldiers with Bolshevik party, thus drawing them away from the influence of the liberal bourgeoisie.27 In the process of working toward his goal the most potent instruments at Lenin's disposal were the Bolshevik party and the numerous products of his pen. Lenin wrote something on almost every possible topic between March and November. Of particular importance were his writings on the three subjects that this thesis is examining, that is, political parties, the development

26Ibid., pp. 314-315.  
27Ibid., p. 333.
of a domestic police system and the process of socialization of industry.

The first topic to be considered is political parties. Through Lenin's party, the Bolshevik Party, the masses who if left to themselves would be incapable of fulfilling their destiny, would be led toward true socialism. In a description of the political parties of Russia, Lenin spoke of his party as being composed of class-conscious proletarians, wage-workers and members of the poor peasantry. It was for socialism immediately and against any form of monarchy.

The Bolsheviks wanted a government of the Soviets of Workers, Soldiers, Peasants and other Deputies which would abolish the standing army and police and arm the whole people instead. The Bolsheviks would not support the Provisional Government, which failed to call for the election of a Constituent Assembly. They did not believe that the ordinary bureaucracy was necessary; instead they proposed elected officials who would be paid as ordinary workers. Land, according to the Bolsheviks, should be taken immediately by the peasants, and banks should be merged into a simple central institution. Lenin suggested a red flag for the Bolsheviks because they stood for the international proletarian revolution.28

Lenin believed that true revolutionary tactics would be impossible if the Bolsheviks compromised with other

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socialist parties which were not equally dedicated to the idea of revolution. To certain Bolsheviks who in March were returning to Russia from exile, Lenin warned, "Absolute mistrust, no support of the new government . . . no rapprochement with other parties." When asked to participate in various conferences of socialistic parties, Lenin often refused Bolshevik support. When, in May, 1917, a Danish socialist, Borgberg, sponsored a conference in support of a peaceful end to World War I, the Bolsheviks would not participate. The Central Committee of the party did, however, agree to send a delegate to the Zimmerwald Conference; his instructions were to "walk out if the Conference declares itself in favor of any association or joint discussion with social-chauvinists."

Lenin had little use for those who did not agree with the point of view of the Bolsheviks; however, when members of other parties adopted his ideas, Lenin would work with them. Regarding municipal elections of May 5 in the city of Petrograd he stated, "I am decidedly in favour of placing on our tickets the names of the Menshevik candidates who are


30 Lenin, "Social-Chauvinists and Internationalists, Collected Works, XXIV, 342.

breaking with chauvinism."32 Here Lenin consented to a joint ticket when agreement on fundamental issues was certain. But only a month later he addressed a group, "Workers and soldiers, all toiling people! Not a single vote to the Mensheviks and Narodniki! Vote for the Bolsheviks!"33 Clearly, the Bolshevik party was striving for political domination for itself. The usual idea of the man in the street about the Bolsheviks was that they would never agree to a compromise with anybody.34 "The idea is flattering to us as the party of the revolutionary proletariat," said Lenin, "for it proves that even our enemies are compelled to admit our loyalty to the fundamental principles of socialism and revolution."35

A large portion of Lenin's journalism from March to November of 1917 was dedicated to denouncing the other political parties in Russia. There were three basic groups other than the Bolsheviks: (a) to the right of the Constitutional-Democrats, (b) the Constitutional-Democratic Party itself and (c) the Social-Democrats and Social-Revolutionaries. Lenin said that the group to the right of the


33Lenin, "The Dark Forces are for the Cadets, the Mensheviks and Narodnik," Collected Works, XXIV, 530.

34V. I. Lenin, "On Compromise," Collected Works, Stepan Apresyan and Jim Riordan, translators and editors (Moscow, 1964), XXV, 305.

35Ibid.
Constitutional-Democrats was composed of feudal landowners and the most backward of capitalists who hated socialism because it threatened their profit; a constitutional monarchy with absolute power for the bureaucracy and police would have been their type of government. Really, a restoration of the Romanov dynasty would have pleased them, but this group was afraid to speak out for they feared the people. Their support of the Provisional Government was based upon its protection of their class. This group did not want a Constituent Assembly elected from and by the people; they feared the possibility of peasants taking their land. Lenin recommended a black flag for this group for he said, "They are the real Black Hundreds." This group had no organized political party which formed a real threat to the rising power of the Bolsheviks; consequently Lenin’s writings failed to deal with them in detail.

The Constitutional-Democratic Party, commonly known as the Cadets, however, is dealt with at length in Lenin’s Works. It was this party which by and large had control of the Provisional Government. Lenin did not hesitate to condemn them.

The Cadet Party has always been monarchist both in 1905 and from 1905-1917. After the people’s victory over tsarist tyranny it proclaimed itself a republican party . . . The Cadet Party pays lip service to people’s freedom but it actually stands for the capitalists.  

36Lenin, "Political Parties of Russia," Collected Works, XXIV, 96-106.

Many times he referred to the Cadets as the major political force of the bourgeois counter-revolution in Russia, as a group opposed to rule by the common people. The Cadets were composed of landowners and capitalists, the typical bourgeoisie element. They opposed the advance of socialism because it threatened their way of living. A parliamentary republic which would keep the old bureaucracy and police intact was the kind of government that would please the Cadets. At one time they had supported the notion of putting a brother of Nicholas on the throne, but had dropped this idea when the people clearly showed that they would have no part in such a proposal. The Cadets believed that the acquisition of land by peasants should follow rather than precede the election of the Constituent Assembly, with banks and industry remaining in private hands. According to Lenin, the flag of the Cadets should be yellow for that is the banner of workers who serve capitalism willingly with heart and soul. 38

Though Lenin rightly regarded the Cadets as enemies, he did not discount their understanding of the situation in Russia. "The Cadets are wily businessmen in trade, in finance, in safeguarding capital, as well as in politics.

38 Lenin, "Political Parties in Russia," Collected Works, XXIV, 96-106.
They know the situation is a revolutionary one so they agreed to reforms." Referring to particular Cadet politicians, Lenin said:

Milyukov and Maklokov, like all capitalist and counter-revolutionary leaders of any merit, are men of action who appreciate full well the meaning of the class struggle when it concerns their class... The Cadets certainly know their business. They know that the question of an offensive is now posed by reality as a political and not as a strategic question, as a radical turn in the Russian revolution as a whole.

The Cadet government, according to Lenin, was simply incapable of solving the problems of the people of Russia because of their own class interest of continued rule by the bourgeoisie. Referring to the Guchkov-Milyukov government,

At best, it might ward off famine. It can't give the country freedom no matter how many promises it makes, because it is bound to the interests of landlordism and capital. From the very start it tried to arrange a deal with the dynasty, the object being to restore the monarchy.

Lenin wrote, "It would be foolish to speak of the revolutionary proletariat of Russia supporting the Cadet-Octobrist

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39 Lenin, "What Could the Cadets Have Counted on When They Withdrew From the Cabinet," Collected Works, XXV, 152.


41 V. I. Lenin, "Letters from Afar," Collected Works, M. S. Levin, Joe Fineberg, and others, translators, M. S. Levin, editor (Moscow, 1964), XXIII, 356.
imperialism—it is as abominable as tsarist imperialism."® Throughout his writings of March-November, 1917, Lenin's utter disdain for the Cadets is evident.

The political groups in Russia which theoretically lay closest to the Bolsheviks were the Mensheviks and the Social-Revolutionaries. Composed of small proprietors, small and middle class peasants and some workers, the Mensheviks and SRs Lenin believed could be labeled petty bourgeoisie. Socialism was the avowed goal of the Mensheviks and S. R.s, yet they took few practical steps toward its realization. Opposed to a restoration of the monarchy, they favored a bourgeois parliamentary republic with reforms for workers and peasants. They supported the Provisional Government, but wanted an election for the Constituent Assembly as quickly as possible. Being unsure about the role of the traditional police, the S. R.s and Mensheviks believed that the Bolshevik proposal to expel the bureaucracy was premature. Like the Cadets, they believed that the peasants should wait for the Constituent Assembly before taking land. In a weak sort of way they favored nationalization of banks and industry, but feared that power in the hands of the masses perhaps was premature in 1917. Lenin suggested a pink flag for the Mensheviks and S. R.s, for he said, "Their whole policy is a rose-water one."®

®Ibid., pp. 301-302.

®Lenin, "Political Parties in Russia," Collected Works, XXIV, 96-106.
According to Lenin, the root of the problem lay in the refusal of the S. R.'s and Mensheviks to understand the class struggle. "They wanted to replace it or reconcile it by means of phrases, promises, resolutions, and commissions... Lenin was not willing to forget the class struggle, for on it hung his entire political position. He felt that the position of near-socialism led the S. R.'s and Mensheviks to a weak political viewpoint. Their whole policy seemed to consist of vacillations between the bourgeoisie and the socialists. Lenin interpreted their position in the following manner:

The petty bourgeoisie is in such an economic position, the conditions of his life are such that he cannot help deceiving himself, he involuntarily and inevitably gravitates one minute towards the bourgeoisie, the next towards the proletariat. It is economically impossible for him to pursue an independent line.

The S. R.'s and Mensheviks wanted a middle course; because they were afraid to trust the revolutionary proletariat, they were forced to trust the bourgeoisie. For Lenin there was no middle way.

Lack of faith in the people, fear of their initiative and independence, trepidation before their revolutionary energy instead of all-round and unqualified support for it—this is where the S. R. and Menshevik Leaders

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144 Lenin, "Has Dual Power Disappeared?", Collected Works, XXIV, 446.

have sinned most of all. This is where we find one of the deepest roots of their indecision, their vacillation, their infinite and infinitely fruitless attempts to pour new wines into the old bottles of the bureaucratic state apparatus.

He further accused them of petty bourgeois cowardice which led them to say, "Let us for the time being leave all affairs in the hands of the capitalists. Perhaps dislocation will wait until the Constituent Assembly meets."46

The lesson of the Russian revolution is that there can be no escape for the working people from the iron grip of war, famine, and enslavement by the landowner and capitalist unless they completely break with the Socialist-Revolutionary and Menshevik parties and clearly understand the latter's treacherous role, unless they remove all compromises with the bourgeoisie and resolutely side with the revolutionary workers. Only the revolutionary workers, if supported by the peasant poor, are capable of smashing the resistance of the capitalists and leading the people in gaining land without compensation, complete liberty, victory over famine, and the war, and a just and lasting peace.47

Political domination for the Bolshevik party was clearly within Lenin's design for power, a design by which he hoped to lead the masses to true socialism.

Lenin's plan for true socialism and freedom for the people also involved the creation of a peoples' militia. Less than two weeks after Lenin arrived in St. Petersburg, he announced his plan to the Congress of Peasants' Deputies.

46Lenin, "One of the Fundamental Questions of Revolution," Collected Works. XXV, 370.

He said that the creation of the militia of the entire people was a practical job that could be tackled immediately. Lenin expressed his belief then that "not only the rural proletarians and semi-proletarians, but nine-tenths of the peasantry probably will follow us if we explain our proposals clearly ..." Specifically, those proposals included deletion of three institutions which had been present under the czars: the police, the government officials who belonged to the capitalist or landowner class and a standing army which was separate from the people. To replace these, Lenin proposed to "teach the people ... the art of government not only in theory but in practice ..." The poor themselves, by forming a people's militia were to take the organs of state power directly into their own hands. The purpose of the militia was to make safe and sure the gains of the revolution by preventing the restoration of the police, which would inevitably lead back to bourgeois domination because the police was always the chief weapon of the bourgeoisie, either because it was bribed or because it enjoyed patronage or protection. No important radical reforms in favor of the working masses could have been implemented through the police; Lenin believed this would have been objectively impossible.

49 Ibid.
50 Lenin, "They Have Forgotten the Main Thing," Collected Works, XXIV, 252-253.
By April, 1917, people's militias were being introduced in parts of Russia. Lenin warned the people,

... in most of the bourgeoisie revolutions of the usual type, this reform was always extremely short-lived, and the bourgeoisie—even in the most democratic and republican—restored the police of the old, tsarist type, a police divorced from the people, commanded by the bourgeoisie and capable of oppressing the people in every way.\(^51\)

A genuine people's militia would be the only way to prevent this. The triumph of liberty would be the merging of the people and the army. This would safeguard freedom for all. A true people's militia would mean education of the masses in the practices of democracy, government of the poor by the people themselves rather than by the rich only, control over factories, dwellings, and distribution of products by the people.\(^52\) A people's militia would make the reforms wanted by the Narodniks and Mensheviks more than pious wishes. It would insure effective municipal reforms in the interests of the working people.\(^53\) In addition to its military duties, the people's militia would do such things as distribute bread and act as sanitary inspectors.\(^54\)

It would ... see that every child has a bottle of good milk and that no adult in a rich family dare to take extra milk until all

\(^{51}\) Lenin, "Tasks of Proletariat in Our Revolution," Collected Works, XXIV, 70.

\(^{52}\) Lenin, "They Have Forgotten the Main Thing," Collected Works, XXIV, 353.

\(^{53}\) Ibid., p. 352. \(^{54}\) Krupskaya, Memories of Lenin, p. 253.
children are supplied, that the palaces and rich homes do not remain unoccupied, but that they shelter the homeless and destitute. The proletarian militia should actually educate the masses to take part in all state affairs.\textsuperscript{55}

The militia would exclude no one; Lenin indicated that everyone should learn to use arms and belong to the militia. It should extend to citizens of both sexes between the ages of fifteen and sixty-five.\textsuperscript{56} The example of St. Petersburg was drawn. With a population of around two million, about one half would be between the ages of fifteen and sixty-five. One fourth could be subtracted as physically unfit, thus leaving 750,000 who could serve in the militia one day in fifteen. These workers would receive pay by their employers.\textsuperscript{57} This would be a real people's militia. It would be the executive arm of the Soviets of Workers' and Soldiers' Deputies. It would train the masses for all the affairs of state and teach the young of real democracy.\textsuperscript{58}

Repeatedly, Lenin called for the immediate establishment of the militia. On April 16, 1917, he referred to its establishment as "a practical job that can and should be tackled immediately."\textsuperscript{59} Again, on May 8, he said, "The future

\textsuperscript{55}Ibid.
\textsuperscript{56}Lenin, "Tasks of Proletariat in Our Revolution," \textit{Selected Works}, VI, 58.
\textsuperscript{57}Ibid.
\textsuperscript{58}Lenin, "Letters from Afar," \textit{Collected Works}, XXIII, 325.
is working for us. Let us start it the militia immediately."60 Though he was very definite that the task of building a workers' militia should begin at once, Lenin was vague concerning exactly how this should come about.

Just how this people's militia can be brought into existence is something which experience will show . . . Whether we should first organize a workers' militia by drawing upon the workers employed at the large factories, the workers who are best organized and most capable of fulfilling the task of militiamen, or whether we should immediately organize general compulsory service for all adult men and women, who would devote this service one or two weeks a year or so on, is not a question of fundamental importance. There is no harm in the different districts adopting different procedures—in fact, it would make for richer experience, and the process of organization would develop more smoothly and come closer to life's practical requirements.61

He called upon the workers themselves to organize; he said,

Comrade workers, make the peasants and the rest of the people see the need for a universal militia. Introduce it through the Soviets of Workers' Deputies, through the Soviets of Peasants' Deputies, through the organs of local self-government that fall into the hands of the working class.62

The more initiative, variety, daring, and creativeness the masses contributed to this militia, the better.63

60Lenin, "Foolish Gloating," Collected Works, XXIV, 224.

61Lenin, "They Have Forgotten the Main Thing," Collected Works, XXIV, 352.


Lenin refused to be discouraged even by tremendous obstacles. He said, "We shall not be put out by the malicious glee of our enemies, we shall not be daunted by occasional errors and shortcomings. We shall correct them. The future is for us. Let us start it the militia immediately." Here Lenin's definiteness of purpose, his utter disregard for opposition is evident. Aware that mistakes and errors were inevitable, he planned to "try out" socialism in the arena of practical events.

Despite all the emphasis on a workers' militia and a people's government, Lenin was not a utopian or an anarchist. He said, "Marxism differs from anarchism in that it recognizes the need for a state and for state power in the period of revolution in general, and in the period of transition from capitalism to socialism in particular." He did recognize the need for a state but one different from the bourgeois state. In addition to the revolutionary state, the disciplined party was also planned to serve as a guide to the masses. Yet the emphasis before November remained upon the people themselves, on their participation in the revolutionary government to come.

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64 Lenin, "Foolish Gloating," *Collected Works*, XXIV, 224.
65 Lenin, "Tasks of the Proletariat in Our Present Revolution," *Collected Works*, XXIV, 68.
67 McNeal, *Bolshevik Tradition*, p. 34.
Lenin's pre-November plans for the socialist society which he hoped to command not only included worker initiative and participation in the formation of a people's militia but also nationalization of industry and banks with particular emphasis upon workers' control over those institutions. In industry as well as in the political-government realm, the people were to rule, of course with the guiding influence of the Bolshevik party ever available. To insure more benefit for the common man, Lenin planned for true socialism which he defined as "merely state-capitalist monopoly which is made to serve the interests of the whole people." The point of emphasis was upon the action by the state for the interests of the people. As has been noted, Lenin was not an anarchist; rather he had definite aims for the state as an institution. It should be noted at this point that Lenin did not expect an immediate transition to socialism. The small scale economy of Russia posed theoretical problems for the Marxist thinker whose basis for communist revolution was an advanced capitalistic society. Lenin indicated that the transition to socialism could not be achieved in Russia directly, but transitional measures would be required. Yet he spoke of socialism as being achievable some time in the future.

68Lenin, "Impending Catastrophe and How to Combat It," Collected Works, XXV, 358.

the peasantry formed the larger portion of the population of Russia and that the peasants had little knowledge of or desire for a revolution involving industry. He said, "Under no circumstances can the party of the proletariat set itself the aim of introducing socialism in a country of small peasants so long as the overwhelming majority of the population has not come to realize the need for a socialist revolution."70 If or when the peasantry became convinced of the idea of a socialist revolution, Lenin foreshadowed certain problems in the transformation to socialism. "We shall not be able to nationalize petty enterprises with one or two hired labourers at short notice or subject them to real workers' control."71 Though Lenin's mind was focused upon Marxist theory, his idealism did not lead him to blindness concerning practical limitations in setting that theory to work in Russia. Lenin took a very realistic approach to the problem: "Our immediate task shall not be the introduction of socialism; but to bring social production and distribution of products at once under the control of the Soviets of Workers' Deputies."72 The same point was made in June.

What makes socialism objectively impossible is the small scale economy which we by no means

70 Lenin, "Tasks of the Proletariat in Our Present Revolution," Collected Works, XXIV, 73.


presume to expropriate, or even to regulate or control. What we are trying to make something real instead of a bluff is the state regulation of which the Mensheviks, the Narodniki, and all bureaucrats talk . . . 73

Thus, for a beginning Lenin simply introduced the idea of state regulation with overtones of worker control.

The banks seemed to be the focal point for the beginning of socialistic change. "The nationalization of the banks was the simplest and most concrete item in the Bolshevik financial programme."74 The banks were seen as the controlling factor in planned socialist society. Lenin said:

The banks, as we know, are centres of modern economic life, the principal nerve centres of the whole capitalist economic system. To talk about "regulating economic life" and yet evade the question of the nationalization of the banks means either betraying the most profound ignorance or deceiving the "common people" by florid works and grandiloquent promises with the deliberate intention of not fulfilling these promises.

It is absurd to control and regulate deliveries of grain, or the production and distribution of goods generally, without controlling and regulating bank operations. It is like trying to snatch at odd kopeks and closing one's eyes to millions of rubles. Banks nowadays are so closely and intimately bound up with trade (in grain and everything else) and with industry that without "laying hands" on the banks nothing of any value, nothing "revolutionary-democratic," can be accomplished.75

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With control of banking, socialism could indeed be made possible in Russia. Lenin described the ideal bank: "A single State Bank with branches in every rural district, in every factory, will constitute as much as nine-tenths of the socialist apparatus. This will be the skeleton of a socialist society." Such a bank would help not only the workers but also the peasants and small industrialist. It would save labor and put operations into reach of more people by its many branches. Credit could be made available for small owners and peasants. The state could then review the chief monetary operations, control them and get money for state transactions without paying interest. The small owners should have no fear of bank nationalization, for it "would not deprive any owner of a single kopek. The shares, bonds, bills and receipts would not be invalidated or altered." The purpose would not be to take from individuals but to aid the government in knowing when and how the money flows. Again Lenin emphasized this point,

As far as individual capitalists are concerned, the proletariat has no intention of taking their last shirt from them, no intention of taking everything from them. On the contrary, it intends to put them on useful and honourable jobs—under the control of the workers.

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77 Lenin, "Impending Catastrophe and How to Combat It," Collected Works, XXV, 332.
78 Ibid., p. 330.
79 Lenin, "Inevitable Catastrophe and Extravagant Promises," Collected Works, XXIV, 429.
Lenin believed that once the banks were socialized, the next step would be industry. "Banks and the more important branches of industry have merged." So when banks were nationalized, it would affect the syndicates. Such industries as oil, coal, sugar, and metallurgy should and could be nationalized at once, indicated Lenin. Insurance companies also being tied to banking could simultaneously be nationalized. "The congresses of insurance company employees could carry out this amalgamation immediately and without great effort . . . if a decree were issued which held the directors and big shareholders strictly accountable for it. This would lead to lower insurance rates and better service." Relating to the whole gamut of his plans for nationalization Lenin named the tremendous advantages of them. " . . . It would imply a tremendous saving of national labour, the possibility of economising forces and means of production, and also an improvement in the conditions of the working masses, of the majority of the population.

All of these changes in industry and banking were referred to as being relatively easy to achieve. In criticism

80 Lenin, "Impending Catastrophe and How to Combat It," Collected Works, XXV, 335.
82 Lenin, "Impending Catastrophe and How to Combat It," Collected Works, XXV, 334-335.
83 Ibid., p. 360.
of the political parties of Russia which controlled the
Provisional Government, Lenin issued this denunciation.

We shall see that all a government would have
to do, if its name of revolutionary-democratic
government were not merely a joke, would have
been to decree, in the very first week of its
existence the adoption of the principal mea-
sures of control, to provide for strict and
severe punishments to be meted out to capital-
ists who fraudulently evade control and to call
upon the population itself to exercise super-
vision over the capitalists and see to it that
they scrupulously observed the regulations on
control.84

Again the same point was observed,

Nationalization of the banks has only to be
decreed and it would be carried out by the
directors and employees themselves. No spe-
cial machinery, no special preparatory steps
on the part of the state would be required. . . .
This could be carried out in a few weeks.85

One of Lenin's first promises to the people on November 7,
1917, the date of the Bolshevik seizure of power, was "na-
tional control over the banks."86

Throughout Lenin's speeches and pamphlets, prepared
during the March-November period concerning the nationali-
ization of industry, the promise of workers' control was
included. There was the suggestion of a conflict between
state control and workers' control. At one point Lenin said,

Power to the Soviets means the complete
transfer of the country's administration and
economic control into the hands of the workers

84Ibid., p. 328.  
85Ibid., p. 331.  
86Lenin, "Meeting of the Petrograd Soviet," Collected
Works, XXVI, 241.
and peasants, to whom nobody would dare offer resistance and who, through practice, through their own experience, would soon learn how to distribute the land, products and grain properly. 67

Did he mean that the workers individually would proceed to do as they pleased, thus creating a kind of industrial anarchy? In early September of 1917, Lenin wrote a pamphlet titled "The Impending Catastrophe and How to Combat It." In this pamphlet a vague outline of his industrial policy is made. In order to fight against economic dislocation Lenin advocated

... control, supervision, accounting, regulation by the state, introduction of a proper distribution of labour-power in the production and distribution of goods, husbanding of the people's forces, the elimination of all wasteful effort, economy of effort. 68

Lenin supported five specific measures:

(1) Amalgamation of all banks into a single bank, and state control over its operations, or nationalization of the banks.
(2) Nationalization of the syndicates, the largest, monopolistic capitalist associations.
(3) Abolition of commercial secrecy.
(4) Compulsory syndication of industrialists, merchants and employers generally.
(5) Compulsory organization of the population into consumers' societies, or encouragement of such organization and the exercise of control over it. 69

67 Lenin, "One of the Fundamental Questions of Revolution," Collected Works, XXV, 373.
68 Lenin, "Impending Catastrophe," Collected Works, XXV, 324.
69 Ibid., p. 329
Within this plan workers' control had its place. He said, "The initiative of the workers and other employees must be drawn on; they must be immediately summoned to conferences and congress; a certain proportion of the profits must be assigned to them, provided they institute overall control and increase production."90 The implication was control over capitalist by worker, yet the emphasis was upon state control. Certainly, Lenin desired order in the process of socialization of industry and introduction of workers' control. To clarify this point Lenin issued the following statement:

We suggest nothing like the ridiculous transfer of the railways to the railwaymen or the tanneries to the tanners. What we do suggest is workers' control, which should develop into complete regulation of production and distribution by the workers, into "nationwide organization" of the exchange of grain for manufactured goods... What we suggest is the transfer of all state power to the Soviets of Workers', Soldiers' and Peasants' Deputies.91

Workers' control here was equated with control by the proletarian Soviets; thus Lenin's extraordinary skill in satisfying the masses and at the same time remaining true to his theory was shown.

The months between April and November found Lenin active in the realm of practical political events and yet he was all

90 Ibid., p. 329.
91 Lenin, "Economic Dislocation and Proletariat's Struggle," Collected Works, XXV, 44.
the while formulating notions of how socialism in Russia would have its beginning. Through the leadership of the Bolshevik party, the masses would be won to the side of a proletarian revolution and enlisted in the practical tasks to complete it. The Bolshevik party, because it was the party of the proletariat, was the only possible party capable of leading the revolution. The Cadets were interested more in maintaining their economic capitalistic positions to provide genuine leadership for revolutionary Russia. The Mensheviks and Social Revolutionaries who according to Lenin were petty-bourgeoisie were also incapable of leading the masses. Though the Mensheviks and S. R.'s favored social legislation, they lacked the political inner strength to stand alone from the bourgeoisie in a position of leadership. Thus only the Bolsheviks were qualified, according to Lenin. The masses were to throw off the shackles of tsardom such as the old police and form the new institution—the workers' militia which would provide everything from milk for babies to police protection to homes for the destitute. The workers' imagination at this point was to fill in where Lenin's concrete proposals left off. Regarding economic policy, the state as led by Lenin and the Bolshevik party was to nationalize the various industries after a State Bank had been formed. Thus with the structure of state-capitalism formed, the workers were to participate locally in workers' control, the term workers' control being used in a very general sense.
Clearly, during this period Lenin was forming theory which he hoped to put into practice as soon as the opportunity presented itself.
The Kerensky government proved itself unable to satisfy the needs and desires of the people. The Provisional Government postponed the distribution of land; encouraged by the Social Revolutionaries, the peasants struck out for themselves, using violence against the landlords in many places. A food shortage resulted. Grain deliveries were sabotaged. The failure to satisfy the peasants' desire for land proved an important mistake of the Provisional Government.¹

During July the Provisional Government also failed to satisfy the workers and soldiers. Industrial production was very low, metal production having been cut 40 per cent and textiles 20 per cent. Supply of necessities decreased while inflation was on the rise. The workers were steadily becoming more excited about revolution and disgusted with the indecisive government. In the large Putilov factory a strike broke out on June 21; other factories had similar outbreaks. "The factory masses were seething, seeking an outlet. Every plant had its conflict, and all these conflicts

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tended upward toward the government.° Perhaps the soldiers in Petrograd were more impatient than the workers; they were in constant danger of being sent to the front; also they were inclined to believe that just a little force would overthrow the Kerensky government. They remembered the relative ease of the March revolution. At this point Lenin appealed to the Petrograd workers and soldiers to wait for a better time for revolution. He said, "We understand your bitterness, we understand the excitement of the Petersburg workers, but we say to them: Comrades, an immediate attack would be inexpedient." Perhaps Lenin wished to wait until the Kerensky government had time to disgrace itself completely; then the struggle for power would be easier to win. Lenin had by no means given up the idea of a true socialist revolution. During one of the many demonstrations during July, he spoke to the masses. Trotsky described the scene:

... Most of all the demonstrators wanted to hear Lenin himself... An irresistible wave of ecstasy, a genuine Kronstadt wave, greeted the leader's appearance on the balcony. Impatiently—and as always with some embarrassment—awaiting the end of the greeting, Lenin began speaking before the voices died down. His speech, which the hostile press for weeks after growled over and tore to pieces in every possible manner, consisted of a few simple phrases: a greeting to the demonstrators; an expression of confidence that the


3Ibid., p. 521.
slogan, "All Power to the Soviets," would conquer in the end, an appeal for firmness and self-restraint. With renewed shouts the procession marched away to the music of the band.4

The speech was typical; Lenin was simply waiting for the right time to create the Bolshevik revolution.

By July 25, the Provisional Government had become aware of its perilous situation and called for "more energetic measures."5 Trotsky wrote, "Everything was going against the government, even its own thin-blooded good intentions."6 Consequently, the government called for a conference to be held at Moscow. Referring to the financial turmoil of Russia, Chkheidze reported: "The finances of the country are undermined. The railways are completely disorganized. Industry is being ruined and can neither satisfy the demands of the army or the population. Famine is creeping up on the cities."7 In response to this situation, on August 27, the Provisional Government introduced government control over industry. This movement had come about suddenly; control was passed on to the workers, who were not capable of handling the situation. Managers were dismissed. Work discipline grew lax; production dropped to about 30 or 40 per cent of

4Ibid., p. 547.
6Trotsky, The Attempted Counter-Revolution, p. 517.
7Golder, "The Moscow State Conference," Documents of Russian History, p. 496.
the pre-revolutionary level. The Kerensky government thus had proved to be a failure in the establishment of a constructive economic program.

The All-Russian State Conference, which met in Moscow on August 26-28, was called by Kerensky not only to remedy the acute economic situation but also to prevent further political disintegration of his government. Its delegates numbered nearly 2,500 and represented peasants, trade unions, soviets, army committees, liberal, socialist and bourgeois groups. Neither the extreme Right (Monarchists) nor the extreme Left (Bolsheviks) was invited. This meant that Lenin's party, the mightiest party of the revolution, which in only ten weeks was to take power, was left outside the conference. By this conference, the government had hoped to promote unity; instead of unity the conference revealed the existence of a division between those who favored the government and those who opposed it. The conference proved a "wordy fiasco."

The most serious challenge to the existing government which was voiced at the conference came from General Lavr G. Kornilov, the Commander-in-Chief of the Russian armies. He denounced the anarchy in the army and held the socialists

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8Rauch, History of Soviet Russia, p. 51.


responsible for it. Kornilov quickly became the hero of the Right. In early September, he ordered his troops to march on Petrograd, ostensibly to protect the Provisional Government from the Bolsheviks and from the German armies that were marching toward that city. His coup quickly evaporated. The uprising had not been a surprise to Lenin, whose forces were the first to appear at their posts ready to cooperate in the defense of the capital. Korensky did not lend his support to Kornilov; railway workers refused to move trains loaded with his troops; telegraph workers refused to send his orders; and many soldiers remained loyal to the government.

After the failure of the Kornilov coup, Kerensky's prestige in liberal circles sank and the government of the Soviets became generally favored as a result. In these circumstances, Kerensky made a number of concessions to the socialist parties. In the middle of September a number of Bolshevik leaders who had been arrested in July were released. Gradually Kerensky lost control of the political situation. The socialist groups developed left wings which demanded land and peace. They withdrew their representatives from the

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11Dmytryshyn, USSR, p. 55.
14Rauch, History of Soviet Russia, p. 55.
Cabinet. Thus, against his will, the balance of Kerensky's government had once again shifted to the right.

The Bolsheviks had participated in the suppression of the Kornilov revolt, and the new situation increased power. They won a majority in the St. Petersburg Soviet, and within the Soldiers' Councils of the Army, they were gaining support. The slogan "All Power to the Soviets" took on new meaning, power for Lenin's party as the representative of the majority. The exact timing of the Bolshevik uprising was dictated by Kerensky, who began a rather feeble effort to suppress Lenin's forces on the morning of November 6. Trotsky, as leader of the Military Revolutionary Committee, counter-attacked by ordering military units to occupy strategic places in Petrograd. The party press simultaneously called for the overthrow of the Provisional Government. By the morning of November 7, 1917, most of the city of Petrograd was in the hands of the Bolsheviks, and the military Revolutionary Committee of the Soviet proclaimed the transfer of power to itself. Only two objectives remained at nightfall; the Winter Place and the Second All-Russian Congress of Soviets, which convened at 10:45. Both fell easily, the Palace by military force and the Congress to Leon Trotsky's cunning

15 Ibid.

The entire city had been taken over by Lenin's forces almost without firing a shot; the Provisional Government had very few defenders in Petrograd. In Moscow the Bolsheviks gained control after only a week of fighting. In the industrial centers of central and northern Russia, Lenin's socialist revolution met little resistance. In the Urals and western Siberia, the Bolsheviks won easily. Opposition existed in some areas; in the Georgian capital of Tiflis and also in Kiev resistance was encountered. Fighting went on in most of the provincial capitals, some of which did not surrender to the Bolsheviks until the following spring. The November Revolution conformed to all the requirements of a proletarian revolution. It was not simply a spontaneous uprising of the masses of workers; rather it was a coup d'état in which the "vanguard of the proletariat," the Bolshevik party, had organized and directed elements of the proletariat.

Thus Lenin's government began with an almost effortless coup. The mood was idealistic and optimistic, and it seemed that the vast majority of the population supported the revolution. In a famous statement recorded by Trotsky, Lenin commented concerning the coup: "The transition from the

state of illegality being driven in every direction, to power—is too rough. It makes one dizzy." 21 Trotsky said, "After this one more or less personal remark that I heard him make about the acquisition of power he (Lenin) went about the tasks of the day." 22 It was truly characteristic of the man Lenin that he immediately concerned himself with the nearest task. And fortunate it was for the Bolsheviks that Lenin possessed this quality, for certainly there was work to be done and to be done quickly. The ease with which Lenin assumed power over Russia was not comparable to the severe struggle that was to be his in retaining, consolidating, and solidifying that power. The problems which faced Lenin as master of the new government were certainly not easy ones. He had to translate the policies he had proclaimed into concrete governmental and administrative terms. The war had to be terminated quickly. The counter-revolutionary movement had to be dealt with before it became a challenge too great to be solved. 23 As long as Lenin and the Bolsheviks had been the opposition party, it had been easy to criticize the governmental policies and to make attractive promises to the people. Now they were faced with the task of using the vast governmental machinery inherited from Kerensky to build Russia into a socialist country.

22Ibid.
"Everything had to be begun at the beginning, had to be wrung from the ground," Trotsky wrote concerning the new government. "We could not offer precedents, for history knew none." The first step obviously was the establishment of some kind of governmental apparatus. The Congress of Soviets approved of a cabinet to be called the Council of People's Commissars. The slate was made up entirely of Bolsheviks, the Left Social Revolutionaries refused to join a government not open to all socialists. On November 8, 1917, the All-Russian Congress of Soviets of Workers', Soldiers' and Peasants' Deputies announced the members of the Council of the People's Commissars:

Chairman of the Council—Vladimir Ulyanov (Lenin); People's Commissar of the Interior—A. I. Rykov; Agriculture—V. P. Milyutin; Labor—A. G. Shapnikov; Army and Navy Affairs—a committee consisting of V. A. Ovseyenkov (Antonov), N. V. Krylekov and P. Y. Dybenko; Commerce and Industry—V. P. Nogin; Education—A. V. Lunacharsky; Finance—I. I. Skvortsov (Stepanov); Foreign Affairs—L. D. Bronstein (Trotsky); Justice—G. I. Oppokov (Lumov); Food—I. A. Teodorovich; Posts and Telegraph—N. R. Avilov (Glebov); Chairman for Nationalities Affairs—J. V. Jugashvili (Stalin).

The new administration had been organized, the new government launched. During the first few weeks, the new administration tolerated an array of opposition, perhaps because they underestimated their own potential or overestimated their opponents.

24 Trotsky, Lenin, p. 143.
25 Wren, Course of Russian History, p. 551.
26 V. I. Lenin, "Decision to Form the Workers' and Peasants' Government," Collected Works, Yuri Dseobikov and George Hanna, translators, George Hanna, editor (Moscow, 1964), XXVI, 262-263.
weaknesses. The imposing title Chairman of the People's Commissars which was given to Lenin failed to impress many people in those early days. Some of his first experiences as ruler brought a sudden realization of how lightly governmental authority, indeed any authority, was held in revolutionary Russia. After only being in office two days he needed to use the navy which was in the Baltic to defend Petrograd. When Lenin asked for aid, the sailor to whom he talked would merely inquire about news, and only after an explanation of the political situation did help come.27

The intellectuals and the middle classes also gave evidence of distrust of the Bolsheviks, even after the fact of the revolution had been established. In the eyes of many, they were simply agents of the Central Powers. Most members of the intelligentsia and the middle class considered the new government a wild swing of the political pendulum which would soon be corrected. It seemed doubtful that the Bolsheviks could hold power for more than two or three weeks, and government employees everywhere felt it was neither wise nor necessary to throw in their lot with a temporary regime.28 Every move to take over the government apparatus was resisted. There was a strike by government employees which was financed


by banks and commercial establishments. In the office of the Ministries of War and Marine, the Army committees and high command blocked the Soviets in every way possible, even to the extent of neglecting the troops on the front. "Every troop-train that left Petrograd was taken out by force and railway officials had to be arrested each time."30

Since most of the intelligentsia was anti-Bolshevik, it was very difficult to replace the existing government staff that was proving uncooperative. Many of Lenin's top aides were met with cool indifference. When Trotsky went to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, the functionaries refused to recognize him. He had to force possession of the keys to the archives. Upon examination, he discovered that Neratov, the assistant Foreign Minister, had disappeared with the secret treaties. Likewise, when the new Minister of Labor, Shliapnikov tried to take office, no one would light the fires for him or even show him to the proper office. Alexandra Kollontai, who was appointed Commissar of Public Welfare in charge of charities and public institutions, was greeted by a strike of all but forty of the functionaries in the Ministry. It was also discovered that the former Minister, Countess Panian, had taken the funds. She only gave them up on the order of the Constituent Assembly. Similar incidents occurred in the Ministry of Agriculture, the Ministry of Supplies and the Ministry of Finance.31

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29 Ibid. 30 Ibid., p. 263. 31 Ibid., p. 262.
The first and most basic problem for Lenin was to achieve a minimum of public acceptance for the rule of his party, his goal all the while being political domination by the Bolsheviks as the vanguard of the proletariat. The first six weeks posed for Lenin's party its most difficult trial period. During this time Lenin used seemingly impossible situations to his advantage, the end result being more power for the Bolshevik party. Lenin's relationship to the other parties seems to have been based either upon how much he needed their cooperation, as in the case of the Left Social Revolutionaries or upon his political security, which would allow him to denounce publicly a party he disliked such as the Cadets. Throughout the period there was one goal—political domination for the Bolshevik party led by Lenin himself.

The Bolsheviks had taken power on November 7, in the name of the Military Revolutionary Committee of the Petrograd Soviet, an act that had the support of the people of Petrograd and reflected a preference in most parts of the country for the rule of the Soviets instead of the Provisional Government.

But most of the supporters of the coup, including some of Lenin's own lieutenants, conceived of the new revolutionary regime not as a purely Bolshevik affair, but as a coalition of the three main socialist parties—Social Revolutionary, Bolshevik and Menshevik.32

32McNeal, The Bolshevik Tradition, p. 49.
Thus the newly born Bolshevik regime had to make itself acceptable to a large part of the populace if it was to retain exclusive control of the instruments of power. From the beginning, those who opposed Lenin tried to discredit his party before the people. The Committee for Salvation of Country and Revolution, which was composed of the Council of the Russian Republic, the Municipal Duma of Petrograd, the Executive Committee of the Peasants' Soviets, factions of the Social Revolutionaries, Mensheviks, Populist Socialists, Unified Social Democrats, and the group "Yedinstov," sent a broadcast over Russia and the rest of Europe:

Contrary to the will of the revolutionary masses, on November 7 the Bolsheviks of Petrograd criminally arrested part of the Provisional Government, dispersed the Council of the Republic, and proclaimed an illegal power. Such violence committed against the Government of revolutionary Russia at its greatest external danger, is an indescribable crime against the fatherland. The Committee for Salvation summons you, citizens, to refuse to recognize the power of violence. Do not obey its orders!

Posters from the Social Revolutionary party, the Mensheviks, the Peasants' Soviet and the Central Army Committee appeared in Petrograd. "... Famine will crush Petrograd. The German armies will trample on our liberty. ... Do not trust the promises of the Bolsheviks! The promise of immediate peace—is a lie! The promise of bread—a hoax! The promise of land—a fairy tale! ..." The newspapers were also

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33 Reed, Ten Days, p. 115.  
34 Ibid., p. 116.
violent. Izvestia proclaimed: "As for the Congress of Soviets, we affirm that there has been no Congress of Soviets! We affirm that it was merely a private conference of the Bolshevik faction!"

Lenin met the challenge boldly, quickly improvising a program designed to win popular support at any cost. On the evening of November 8, less than twenty-four hours after the fall of the Winter Palace, Lenin appeared at the second meeting of the Second All-Russian Congress of Soviets. He issued two decrees, the first on peace, the second on land. The chief Bolshevik slogan had been "Peace--Land--Bread." The slogan was popular; fulfillment of it was supremely important. The Decree on Peace, a document of only a few hundred words, repeated the word "immediate" or "immediately" ten times in calling for a peace without annexations. The essential point seemed to have been the fostering of the association in the minds of the people of a magic "immediate peace" with the Bolshevik regime. The same attempt to make an immediate impression marked the Decree on Land. It began, "The right of private ownership of land is abolished forever; land cannot be sold, nor leased, nor mortgaged, nor alienated in any way." To gain popular acceptance for

35Tbid.
his party, Lenin not only made this immediate decision, but also sacrificed his long term program. Traditionally Lenin had spoken for nationalization of all the land by the state. In April he had made the point that, "... it is necessary to think about going over to large scale farming conducted on public lines ... "38 Now Lenin omitted any mention of nationalization; instead he guaranteed that property of small, ordinary peasants would not be confiscated.39 Loud applause followed Lenin's announcement.40 For the moment he was most interested in achieving a popular image for the rule of his party.

At this point popular support, or the appearance of popular support, was of utmost importance to Lenin, for his leadership of Russia in the name of the Bolshevik Party was anything but secure in those first tedious weeks after the revolution. Before the revolution Lenin's denunciations of other political parties could not be proclaimed loudly or often enough; after the revolution he was silent about them. Now the relationship between the Bolsheviks and the other socialist parties was of tremendous importance to Lenin.


40Lenin, "Second All-Russian Congress of Soviets," Collected Works, XXVI, 261.
Although in the glow of enthusiasm following the decree on peace and land the establishment of one-party rule had gone off easily enough, Lenin still faced the possibility that a coalition of socialist parties might become necessary.

Late in the evening on the day of the revolution, the Second All-Russian Soviet Congress had met. Although the Bolsheviks did not have an absolute majority, they had been able to rely on the support of the Left Social Revolutionaries. The opening session of the Congress had been stormy, but factional strife among the non-Bolshevik delegates prevented them from forming a solid opposition to the Bolshevik seizure of power. The sessions had hardly begun when the right wing Social Revolutionaries and Mensheviks walked out in protest against the insurrection. Because they surrendered power to the Bolsheviks at that key moment, the Right Social Revolutionaries and Mensheviks after the completion of the revolution sought any opportunity to regain their lost position.

Relative to the Right Social Revolutionary and Menshevik retreat from the Second All-Russian Soviet Congress on November 7, Lenin remarked in Bolshevik defense, "The Soviet government received power from the people--from the Soviets. We have not excluded anyone. The Mensheviks and

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Rauch, History of Soviet Russia, p. 60.

Dmytryshyn, USSR, p. 72.

Rauch, History of Soviet Russia, p. 60.
and S. R.'s have gone, but that is a crime on their part." Lenin seemed to believe that his infant government needed protection, defense and the illusion that it was a government of the Soviets, for his defense of it in those early days was constant.

There must be no government in Russia other than the Soviet Government . . . The majority at the Second All-Russian Soviet Congress belonged to the Bolshevik Party. Therefore the only Soviet Government is the one formed by that party.

It should be mentioned that the Bolshevik majority was secure only after the Menshevik and Right Social Revolutionaries walked out; Lenin was stretching a point for the purpose of enhancing the power that he did have. He continued his bluff, "We do not want any bargaining over power, we don't want any bids or counter-bids. We shall keep the City Council away from power because it is a Kornilovite Center." In reality Lenin's power was not secure. Certainly he did not want any bids for power. His reference to the City Council seems beside the point, an effort to distract attention from the more realistic threat to his power—the other socialist parties.

The drive toward coalition came as much from within Bolshevik ranks as it did from rival parties. A notable

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45Lenin, "From the Central Committee of the Russian Social-Democratic Labour Party, Collected Works, XXVI, 303.

group of Bolshevik leaders, including Kamenev, Zinoviev, Rykov and Lunacharsky, did not believe that the Bolsheviks would be able to gain enough popular support to survive alone.  Some were worried about rumors that counter-revolutionary troops were en route to Petrograd.  This controversy within the party, acute as it was, nevertheless proceeded under the organized rule that party members retained their freedom of action until the party decision had been made.  After the vote had been taken, and majority well established, Kamenev and Zinoviev continued their revolt against the party policy of excluding other parties from the Soviet Government. At this point Lenin demanded a written reply to the question: "Does the minority undertake to submit to Party discipline and to carry out the policy formulated in Comrade Lenin's resolution which was adopted by the Central Committee?"  Facing the defiance of Zinoviev and Kamenev, the Party could not reasonably have been denied the right to discipline its members. Zinoviev replied with a letter of submission; the others remained obdurate and were excluded from the Central Committee.  Thus this crisis

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47McNeal, Bolshevik Tradition, p. 51.
49Carr, Bolshevik Revolution, I, 187.
ended only with an ultimatum and several resignations. Clearly the Bolshevik party had not yet become the dictatorial one-party power that it was to become. The Bolsheviks were the ruling party, but other parties still existed. Dissenting Bolsheviks could and did join other parties or political groups. Fluidity of membership between the parties which survived the revolution—Bolsheviks and Mensheviks, Left and Right Social Revolutionaries—was still to some extent operative.52

From the day of the revolution, the Left Social Revolutionaries and the Bolsheviks maintained a kind of uneasy partnership. At the meeting of the Second Congress of Soviets, while the Mensheviks and Right Social Revolutionaries had walked out, the Left Social Revolutionaries had remained. They were useful to Lenin, for while the Bolsheviks stood for the proletariat, the Left Social Revolutionaries stood for the poor peasantry. Though this vague coalition lasted only a few months, Lenin's claim to have realized his slogan of "dictatorship of the proletariat and the poor peasantry" and his contention that there was a Soviet government rather than a purely Bolshevik government in power rested upon the the participation of the Left Social Revolutionaries.53

52 Carr, Bolshevik Revolution, I, 186.
53 Treadgold, Twentieth Century Russia, p. 150.
Although the Bolsheviks invited them to join in the Council, the Left Social Revolutionaries, in the beginning, did not participate in the actual formation of the new government. Over and over again, Lenin reminded the public that this was the decision of the Left Social Revolutionaries.

... On the day the present government was formed, the Central Committee invited three representatives of the Left Social Revolutionaries to attend its meeting and formally proposed that they should join the government. Their refusal... places on these Left Social Revolutionaries the entire responsibility for the fact that an agreement with them was not reached.54

During the first weeks of the Bolshevik regime the support of the Left Social Revolutionaries was sought after diligently. Lenin repeatedly betrayed the fact that he felt the weakness of his position. By November 19, his plea had become urgent.

Everybody knows that the Central Committee... summoned to its session three of the most prominent members of the group of Left Social Revolutionaries... We regret that they refused! We are ready at this moment to include Left Social Revolutionaries in the government.55

At a special conference of the Peasants' Soviets which met in Petrograd on November 23, Lenin again opened

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54 Lenin, "Resolution of the Central Committee of the R.S.D.L.P. on the Opposition within the Central Committee," Collected Works, XXVI, 287.

negotiations with the Left Social Revolutionaries. When Lenin began to speak, he at first was shouted down. However, he managed to convince the peasants and the Left Social Revolutionaries that there could be an honest coalition with the Bolsheviks. At this point Lenin was also concerned with the larger problem of cooperation between peasants and proletariat in the formation of a working socialism. The Left S. R.'s were persuaded to participate in the government, thus making impossible a common front of all non-Bolshevik socialists. Lenin's successful mastery of political maneuvers proved most useful.

By mid-December, Lenin began a slightly different approach regarding other political parties in Russia. His position as leader of the Bolshevik party had become more secure, and the position of the Bolshevik party as the leading party in Russia had solidified. On December 12, he issued the following statement, "Members of leading bodies of the Cadet Party, as a party of the enemies of the people, are liable to arrest and trial by revolutionary tribunal." Since the revolution in early November, the Cadets had not been a very real threat to the Bolsheviks; the revolution

56 Rauch, History of Soviet Russia, p. 66.


58 Lenin, "Decree on the Arrest of the Leaders of the Civil War Against the Revolution," Collected Works, XXVI, 351.
had been a reaction of the people of Petrograd against the Cadets. However, it was only after a month that Lenin felt secure enough in his own position and power to outlaw the Cadets.

Thus during the period of the first six weeks of Lenin's rule, his action concerning the other political parties may be characterized as cautious; he had a skillful political sense which aided him in turning an unfavorable situation his way. Only when he was in control of the situation did Lenin act politically in such a way as to openly challenge the power of another party.

Secondly, Lenin's promise for a workers' militia as a replacement for the old tsarist police had to be considered; such a militia would be the most appropriate means of domestic discipline and protection in a dictatorship of the proletariat. Lenin believed that his government was to be the first regime in history in which power would be exercised by the class which made up the majority of the population. And since this would be rule by the vast majority, the dictatorship of the proletariat would require less force to maintain itself than other societies. "Far from being a rule of violence, it would pave the way for the disappearance of the use of violence as a social sanction, for the dying away of the state."59 Yet the plan for a

59Carr, Bolshevik Revolution, I, 151.
people's militia eventually gave way to the formation of a secret police.

The first few days of the revolution were spent in an idealistic, optimistic mood. Even the seizure of power had been almost bloodless. "The boast of the Bolsheviks that the revolution itself cost remarkably few lives, and that most of these were lost in attempts by their opponents to wrest the victory from them when it had already been won, was justified." From the beginning Lenin called on the people to fulfill the promise of a dictatorship of the proletariat themselves. "All power in localities shall pass to the Soviets... These must guarantee genuine revolutionary order," proclaimed Lenin on November 7. By November 10, a decree was issued which called for the promised Workers' Militia.

All Soviets of Workers' and Soldiers' Deputies shall form a Workers' Militia. This Workers' Militia shall be entirely at the orders of the Soviets of Workers' and Soldiers' Deputies. Military and Civil authorities must render every assistance in arming the workers and in supplying them with technical equipment even to the extent of requisitioning arms belonging to the War Department of the Government.

There was considerable confusion within the city of Petrograd in the beginning; Lenin hoped that the Workers' Militia

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60 Ibid., p. 152.


62 Reed, Ten Days, p. 342.
would take the initiative in bringing order. "The wholesale arming of the people and the abolition of the regular army is a task we must not lose sight of for a single minute. The workers should meet every day. They should take a hand in guarding the city."63

In the first weeks, Lenin spoke as a tutor to the masses, constantly urging them on in the realization of socialism. On November 19, he pleaded, "Establish the strictest revolutionary law and order, suppress any attempts to create anarchy by drunkards, hooligans, counter-revolutionary officer cadets, Kornilovites and their like."64 Lenin had to encourage the people; he had to explain what socialism was.

Comrades, working people! Remember that now you yourselves are at the helm of state. No one will help you if you yourselves do not unite and take into your hands all affairs of the state. . . . Rally around your Soviets. Get on with the job yourselves; begin right at the bottom, do not wait for anyone."65

Again he emphasized, "The art of practical government . . . must be mastered."66 The people simply were not responding as as Lenin had hoped they would

As mentioned above, Lenin's revolutionary government by the masses was begun with a notable absence of force or terror.

63 Lenin, "Speech on Restoring Law and Order in the City," Collected Works, XXVI, 272.

64 Lenin, "To the Population," Collected Works, XXVI, 297.

65 Ibid.

"In fact the initial effect of the revolution had been to encourage a freedom and publicity of discussion . . ."67 The socialists had hated the Okhrana of the tsarist regime,68 and when accused of resorting to terrorism Lenin replied, "... We have not, and I hope will not resort, to the terrorism of the French revolutionaries who guillotined unarmed men. I hope we shall not resort to it, because we have strength on our side."69 Though Lenin hoped the Bolsheviks would not have to resort to terror, though he preferred unchallenged strength of position, there was no basic aversion to terror or violence when employed for the survival of the ideals of the revolution. "Reared in the Jacobin and Marxist schools of revolution, Lenin accepted the terror in principle, though in common with all Marxists he condemned as futile isolated terrorist acts."70 Two months before the November revolution, he had warned his followers that any kind of revolutionary government could scarcely dispense with the death penalty as applied to exploiters, landowners or capitalists.71

Lenin's actions at the outset, however, showed an almost gentle approach in dealing with his opposition. Referring to the day of the revolt, Lenin made this statement, "When we

67 Carr, Bolshevik Revolution, I, 188.
68 Ulam, The Bolsheviks, p. 418.
69 Lenin, "Speech at a Meeting of the Petrograd Soviet and Delegates from the Fronts," Collected Works, XXVI, 293.
70 Carr, Bolshevik Revolution, I, 154. 71 Ibid., p. 156.
arrested anyone we told him we would let him go if he gave us a written promise not to engage in sabotage. Such written promises have been given."72 Even the members of the Provisional Government who had been captured and placed in the Peter and Paul fortress on the day of the revolution were quickly released and subjected only to a nominal form of supervision.73 Rebellion within his own party was treated mildly. Lenin's response to the waywardness of Kamenev and Zinoviev was only an ultimatum that they follow party policy or resign their positions on the Central Committee.74 Even when his direct orders on very important matters were disregarded, Lenin did very little. Dukhonin, the head of the army, refused to send peace messages to the belligerents. Lenin simply removed Dukhonin from his position and issued the statement, "It was clear to us that we were dealing with an opponent of the people's will and an enemy of the people."75 At this point Lenin could not be sure of the loyalty of the generals; it would not have been politically wise to have risked their antagonism.

72 Lenin, "Speech at a Joint Meeting of the Petrograd Soviet and Delegates from the Fronts," Collected Works, XXVI, 294.

73 Carr, Bolshevik Revolution, I, 152.

74 Lenin, "From the Central Committee of the R.S.D.L.P.," Collected Works, XXVI, 301.

75 Lenin, "Meeting of the All-Russian Central Executive Committee," Collected Works, XXVI, 315.
Though the Workers' Militia had been decreed, the problem of defense before both foreign and domestic enemies had to be faced. The socialists had hoped to be able to avoid a political police by the use of a peoples' militia, but the militia proved to be just a dream. In actual practice the plan failed. Six weeks after the revolution, Cossack armies and other "white" forces were gathering in southeastern Russia. They were urged on by British and French hints of intervention. Almost open hostility against the Soviet power existed. The Bolsheviks were forced to create some kind of order at home in the face of military danger on the border. The Germans were a standing threat in the west. In such a time of turmoil and revolution some kind of control had to be gained; Bolshevik rule had to be consolidated or lost. On the day of the revolution, Lenin had made this statement:

... The transition to a new system is an extremely involved process and requires a firm government to make it easier. ... There must be a firm power, coercion is necessary, but we shall direct it against the handful of capitalists, the bourgeois class. We shall always retaliate with coercion against any attempts—hopeless and mad attempts they must be—to resist Soviet power. In every case, responsibility for this will fall upon those who resist."

Yet, it was Trotsky, not Lenin, who during the first weeks of the revolution made the most militant pronouncements.


78Lenin, "Speech at the First All-Russian Congress of the Navy," *Collected Works*, XXVI, 342.
It was he, who after the suppression of the Cadets issued the fierce public warning: "We hold the cadets as prisoners and hostages. . . . They thought we would be passive, but we showed them that we could be merciless when it is a question of defending the conquests of the revolution."79

By mid-December it was clear that the Workers' Militia was not sufficient as a protective instrument for Bolshevik power. Steps were taken to form a commission to protect the gains of the revolution from further disintegration: the title was Extraordinary Commission for the Combat of Counter-revolution (Cheka). "The extraordinary part of the name was clearly a reassurance and perhaps an indication of guilt at recreating an institution running against the grain of revolutionary idealism."80 The development of the Cheka was a gradual and largely unpremeditated process.81 It grew out of a series of emergencies, yet its appearance marks a break in the characteristic toleration of the first weeks of the revolution. The Workers' Militia had proven only a dream; the Bolsheviks had to resort to a political police to suppress their enemies.

The last topic to be considered is Lenin's execution of his industrial and financial policy during the first six weeks of his new government. The financial policy of the

79Dmytryshyn, USSR, p. 76.  
80Ibid.  
81Carr, Bolshevik Revolution, II, 72.
Bolsheviks before November could have been summed up in one statement: nationalization of the banks. When the moment for action came, the new regime found its policies dictated, in this matter as in others, by the political situation of the moment. They were met with open resistance. "Deprived of arms, the opposition, which still controlled the economic life of the country, settled down to organize disorganization, with all the Russian genius for cooperative action—to obstruct, cripple and discredit the Soviets." The private banks remained stubbornly closed. "When the Bolshevik Commissars entered, the clerks left, hiding the books and removing the funds. All the employees of the State Bank struck except the clerks in charge of the vaults and the manufacture of money." The workers and soldiers were on the side of the Bolsheviks. They believed that the employees were sabotaging, starving the Army, and starving the people.

In the face of such obstacles a decree on the nationalization of the banks was not passed until November 22. Those who refused to comply with the decree were warned that they were responsible as enemies of the revolution to the mass of the population, before the Revolutionary Tribunals.

By late December, the situation had not improved and troops had to be sent to occupy the principal private banks in

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83 Ibid., p. 262.  
84 Ibid., p. 283.  
85 Ibid., 354-355.
Petrograd. It became clear that confusion was the key word for the financial situation for the first six weeks of Bolshevik rule.

Before the revolution, industrial policy had been stated by Lenin as a rather simple proposition: the control of industry would simply be taken over by the workers acting in their own behalf. In reality, the issue proved to be more difficult.

From the time of the March revolution, the workers' movement had been growing. Beginning gradually and increasing in frequency the workers began to interfere with management and to take possession of the factories. Lenin had encouraged such action, for the mounting tide of anarchy in the factories served his revolutionary purposes. What had been impossible to see was that workers' control was difficult in practice to reconcile with his policy of nationalization of industry.

On the day of the revolution Lenin had proclaimed, "We shall institute genuine workers' control over production." At this time the workers had already begun taking over the factories spontaneously. In many ways this was embarrassing to Lenin and the Bolshevik party, but they had

86 Carr, Bolshevik Revolution, II, 136.
87 Ibid., I, 160.
88 Ibid.
helped create the situation and now were forced to ride out the storm. Lenin planned to issue a decree on the subject of workers' control at the same time as the ones on peace and land, but the subject proved more complex.90 A week later Pravda published a draft of the decree written by Lenin. It provided that workers' control was to be organized in the form of trade unions and their congresses, through elected representatives.91 He emphasized strict order, discipline and maintenance of property. In reality the situation Lenin was aiming for was operation of the enterprises by the employers and their technical staffs under the vigilant eye of workers' control.92 The final decree was issued on November 27. It placed the management of industry in the hands of local bodies of workers, a scheme which was basically incompatible with Lenin's long-term desire for a centrally planned economy.93 Perhaps he felt that his position was so insecure in November that he had to concede enough to popular demand to gain the acceptance of the population, if not their actual support. Although the party later had to revoke some of Lenin's concessions, he was astute in recognizing that this price had to be paid. In a

90 Carr, Bolshevik Revolution, II, 67.
91 Lenin, "Draft Regulations on Workers' Control," Collected Works, XXVI, 264-265.
92 Carr, Bolshevik Revolution, II, 67.
93 McNeal, Bolshevik Tradition, p. 51.
way it was not a high price, for the workers were already taking over the factories. Since the Bolsheviks were yet powerless to prevent this trend, they at least were able to take advantage of it by feigning support for what was popular, and at the same time create the impression that they were the one party that took the initiative.

The process of economic disintegration occurred rapidly. By early December, 1917, bread rations had diminished to one-eighth of a pound per day. The countryside was invaded by armed gangs and many wanted to barter for grain and potatoes. There was also a fuel crisis, for the producing regions were not then under Bolshevik control. Many factories were closed; streetcar service was curtailed, and many theaters and restaurants were deprived of light.

The economic breakdown had been an important part of Lenin's policy when he was discrediting the Provisional Government, but after the Bolsheviks became the government, continued dislocation threatened the very existence of his regime. The idea that the problems of production and the relations of classes in society could be solved by direct and spontaneous action of workers in individual factories was not socialism, but syndicalism. The goal of socialism was not anarchy in production. Workers' control as a form of organization scarcely outlived the first few weeks of

\[94\] Dmytryshyn, USSR, p. 76. \[95\] Ibid. \[96\] Carr, Bolshevik Revolution, II, 72.
the revolution. When on November 27, 1917, the decree was passed to institutionalize it and thus neutralize its effects, it ended in failure. "The decree became a dead letter." 97 Some other means had to be found to restore the economy. The instrument chosen was the Supreme Council on National Economy, which was set up in December, 1917. 98 Thus with industry and banking, as it was with the peoples' militia, Lenin was forced by the events of the first six weeks to modify his pre-revolutionary goals. In order to survive politically he sacrificed theory. The goals of socialism while subordinated to the demands of the times were certainly not sacrificed in Lenin's plans for the long run.

It is obvious that the first six weeks of Lenin's leadership were marked more by confusion than by progress. The strictest of pre-revolutionary dogma was replaced by an effort to meet the particular demands of the moment. Lenin's goal of a one-party state proved impossible. The other socialist parties, Mensheviks and Right and Left Social Revolutionaries, still had the support of a large part of the population. Because the Left Social Revolutionaries in particular were closely connected with the peasants, Lenin was forced to recognize their position. When he needed an alliance with them to give the illusion of popular for his party, he was willing for that time to subordinate his goal of a one-party state. Lenin's actions toward other political

97 Ibid., p. 73. 98 Ibid.
parties were in direct relation to his own political security. Another goal, the workers' militia, was impossible to achieve during the first six weeks. Planning to replace the old tsarist secret police by the arming of all the people, Lenin found that such a loosely organized institution as a peoples' militia was unable to keep order or protect the government. Responding to the situation, the Bolshevik secret police, the Cheka, was formed. In industry and banking also the pre-revolutionary ideals did not immediately come about. The employees of the banks, though they were partially within the proletarian class, did not immediately welcome Lenin's nationalization program. Consequently, what was to have been accomplished on the first day of the revolution was only decreed almost a month later and was not put into practice until well after that. In industry the process of workers' control proved to produce confusion and anarchy. Lenin was unable in the first few weeks to nationalize industry as he had planned. It seems that Lenin took almost every step during that time as either a reaction to some pressing emergency or a reprisal for some action, or threatened action against him.99

At the time of the revolution, an opposition newspaper characterized the Bolshevik leadership in the following manner:

Having easily conquered power . . . the Bolsheviki can not make use of it. The new government acts and threatens, it sprays the country with decrees, each one more radical and socialist than the last. But in this exhibition of Socialism on Paper--more likely designed for the stupefaction of our descendants--there appears neither the desire nor capacity to solve the immediate problems of the day. 100

Certainly the new government was weak in the beginning; however, it seems that Lenin did desire to solve the basic problems of Russia as he saw them. Perhaps this reaction to his actions in those first shaky weeks is partially correct: "Out of fear that he might, at least for the time being, fail, and the perspective of revolution might fade, Lenin advocated and practiced a type of active leadership which was governed not by morality but merely by expediency." 101

100 Reed, Ten Days, p. 264.
101 Treadgold, Twentieth Century Russia, p. 66.
Throughout the period of late December to March the problem of ending the war with Germany was of paramount interest to Lenin. The peace negotiations at Brest-Litovsk represented one of the most vital and yet one of the most difficult problems of the Soviet government. Lenin knew that finding an end to the war was mandatory because the overwhelming majority of the Russian soldiers on the front were no more inclined to fight for him than they were inclined to fight for Kerensky. In fact, much of Lenin's support from the soldiers came from his promise of peace. The possibility of continued fighting against Germany, at that time the most powerful single army in the world, seemed ridiculous. Lenin approached the problem in a realistic manner:

We cannot fight at the present time, for the army is against the war and is unable to fight. The week of war against the Germans, in the face of whom our troops simply ran away from February 18-24, 1918, has fully proved that we are prisoners of German imperialism.1

This left no alternative except peace on the harsh terms of the Germans. The multitude of details accompanying the process

1V. I. Lenin, "Note on the Necessity of Signing the Peace Treaty," Collected Works, Clemens Dutt, translator, Robert Dagish, editor (Moscow, 1963), XXVII, 57.
of accomplishing the peace were present in Lenin's thinking throughout the period of late December to March. No matter what other difficulties he had, Lenin could not ignore the ever-present German threat. His domestic policy was, in a fashion, secondary to the more demanding problem of making peace with Germany.

After military opposition to Lenin's government in northern and central Russia had been crushed and after such groups as the Committee for Salvation of Country and Revolution, the Central Army Committee and the Petrograd City Council had become mute, the opponents of Lenin and the Bolsheviks held one faint hope. This was the summoning of the long-awaited Constituent Assembly, the elections to which had, after several delays by the Provisional Government, been set for November 25. Lenin's relationship with other political parties is best illustrated by his dealings with that assembly.

After the October Revolution Lenin planned to postpone the elections; however, Trotsky reminded him of his frequent promises to convene the Assembly as quickly as possible, once the Bolsheviks had gained power. Trotsky's reasoning was:

"... Postponement of the elections is unfavorable just now. It will be looked upon as liquidation of the Constituent Assembly the

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more so because we ourselves reproached the Provisional Government with putting off the Constituent Assembly.

"Ah, that is folly," Lenin replied. "Bring up the important facts not words. As far as the Provisional Government is concerned the Constituent Assembly would have meant a step forward, or at least might have meant it; as far as the Soviet power is concerned . . . it will unquestionably mean a step backwards . . ."3

Lenin had no intention of handing over his hard-won power to such an assembly; he had long proclaimed that the Soviets which were composed of the working classes represented a higher form of democracy than the Constituent Assembly, which was to be chosen on the basis of universal suffrage. It was decided that the elections should be carried through and the Assembly allowed to meet, but that it should be dissolved if it developed into a real threat. Well before time for the Assembly to meet, Natanson declared at a meeting of Communist leaders: "Well, as far as I am concerned, if it comes to that point, break up the Constituent Assembly with force."4 The Bolshevik press approached the question of the rights of the Constituent Assembly very cautiously. It reported that

the revolutionary workmen and soldiers will not prevent the election. Indeed, they have everything to gain from them, for the Constituent Assembly, when it meets, will either join the Soviets, or only demonstrate its incapacity to lead the Revolution.5

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3Leon Trotsky, Lenin (New York, 1925), pp. 119-120.
4Ibid., p. 121.
The elections went forward and seemed to have been conducted without severe interference from any side, though they were naturally affected by the Bolshevik dictatorship and the general confusion of the times.

A careful consideration of all the factors involved leads inevitably to the conclusion that the normal aspects of the elections far outweigh the irregularities, numerous though these may be. Overshadowing everything else is the circumstance that the Bolsheviks had the power and lost the election. The results speak for themselves. There is not the slightest evidence on the government's part of a master plan to subvert the elections or falsify the returns. The indubitable freedom of voting in the large cities shows that Lenin's regime did not intend to overawe the voters where it had the physical means of doing so, and elsewhere it was too newly established and administratively too weak to have done this even had it been desired. 6

Whatever apprehensions that may have been felt in the Bolshevik ranks were justified; they received only about 25 percent of the recorded votes. No complete accurate record of the votes cast in this election is available. Basing figures on the work of N. V. Sviatitski, a Social Revolutionary whose reports of the election results were accepted by Lenin as correct, the Soviet archives of the October Revolution and additional sources, one study credited 15,848,004 votes for the S. R.'s, 9,844,637 for the Bolsheviks, 1,364,862 for the Mensheviks and 1,986,601 for

the Cadets. More specifically, of the 707 elected members of the Assembly, the Social Revolutionaries could claim 410; the Bolsheviks, 175; various members of "national groups" of which the Ukrainians formed the largest number and which were generally anti-Bolshevik, 86; the Cadets, who were the only surviving bourgeois party, 17; and the Mensheviks, 16.3

The results could be summarized by stating that about 62 per cent of the votes were cast for moderate Socialists of all types, but mostly for the Social Revolutionaries. The Bolsheviks received about 25 per cent of the votes and 13 per cent went for the conservative and middle class liberal parties.

The election results should have indicated to Lenin that the Constituent Assembly could serve as a rallying-point for opposition to the Soviet regime from both wings--from those who remained supporters of the Provisional Government, the bourgeoisie, and from the dissident socialists. Certainly, since Lenin had no basic loyalty to the principle of representative government, he would do all in his power to discredit and eventually destroy the Assembly. He began by sending Bolshevik delegates on a round of agitation to the factories and the soldiers. In addition he formed military units which were capable of using force to destroy the

7 Ibid., p. 16.
8 Ibid., p. 21.
Assembly if that proved necessary. Lenin ordered a Lettish regiment which was composed almost entirely of workers transferred to Petrograd. "The peasant may hesitate in this case," he said. "Proletarian decision is necessary here."  

The opposing groups had reason to be discouraged and doubtful about the outcome of the Assembly. By this time Lenin had proved that the power of the government of Russia was in his hands, even though it had been an unstable and confusing two months. Though the mood was generally one of depression and apathy a few steps were taken in an effort to insure some measures for the opening of the Assembly. The Military Commission brought a few Social Revolutionary soldiers from the front. They also tried, but with little success to recruit potential defenders from the workers who still thought of themselves as Social Revolutionaries. Propaganda was carried on among two Guards regiments, the Semyonov and Preobranzhensky, which at the time had shown anti-Bolshevik feeling.  

When the Social Revolutionary delegates arrived in Petrograd they found themselves in the camp of the enemy and far from the warm welcome that they should have had as representatives of the people.

9Trotsky, Lenin, p. 122.  

10Ibid., p. 122.  


In the nature of the thing these little citizens from the province did not know at all what they should do; the greater part was simply afraid. But they carefully prepared the ritual for the first meeting. They brought candles with them in case the Bolsheviks cut off the electric light, and a vast number of sandwiches in case their food be taken from them. Thus democracy entered upon the struggle with dictatorship heavily armed with sandwiches and candles.13

One of the effects of defeat in the elections was to convince Lenin that a coalition would be to his advantage. It should be noted here that certain Bolsheviks had called for a coalition and when ignored, they resigned from the Central Committee. During the conference of the All-Russian Congress of Peasants Deputies which met in St. Petersburg on November 23, an agreement for a coalition was reached between the Bolsheviks and the Left Social Revolutionary party. In prelude to this agreement, on November 8 at a conference of the Left Social Revolutionary Army leaders an important resolution had been passed which advocated joining the Soviet government "to ensure the dominion of the entire revolutionary democracy instead of one party only."14 The agreement with the Left Social Revolutionaries strengthened the Bolshevik position; it provided them with a strong argument to explain away the election results. The Social Revolutionaries had gone to the polls as a single

13Trotzky, Lenin, pp. 122-123.

party having only one list of candidates. Then three days after the election, the party split, with one section maintaining its bitter feud with the Bolsheviks while the other section formed a coalition with Lenin's group. Lenin indicated that the people had voted for a party which no longer existed. The matter of when the electoral lists had been drawn up entered Lenin's argument.

The Constituent Assembly, elected on the basis of electoral lists drawn up prior to the October Revolution, was an expression of the old relation of political forces which existed when power was held by the compromisers and the Cadets. When the people at that time voted for the candidates of the Socialist-Revolutionary Party, they were not in a position to choose between the Right S. R.'s, the supporters of the bourgeoisie, and the Left S. R.'s, the supporters of socialism. The Constituent Assembly, therefore, which was to have crowned the bourgeois parliamentary republic was bound to become an obstacle in the path of the October Revolution and Soviet power.

Another line of reasoning could have been equally convincing. Even if the total vote had been unfavorable to the Bolsheviks, a distribution analysis showed that the opposition majority was no real menace. In the large industrial cities, the Bolsheviks had almost everywhere been ahead of other parties. In Petrograd and Moscow taken together, they had received an absolute majority. On the other hand, the

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16Ibid.
big Social Revolutionary vote was in the country districts, where the peasants were perhaps out of touch with the growing importance of Bolshevik leadership.\(^7\) Lenin noted a well-known principle and applied it to revolution: "The town inevitably leads the country after it; the country inevitably follows the town."\(^8\) Thus, if the elections did not register a Bolshevik victory, they pointed out the fact that in the decisive places Lenin's party was strong.

Lenin was well prepared for the meeting of the Constituent Assembly. On December 24, 1917, he delivered a proposal to the Central Committee of the Bolshevik Party. First, he suggested that the bureau of the Constituent Assembly group be dismissed; second, that the Central Committee of the Bolshevik Party explain its actions in the form of a thesis; third, that representative institutions be subordinated to the Central Committee according to Party Rule; fourth, a member of the Central Committee should be appointed to lead the Constituent Assembly; and fifth, rules should be drawn up for the group.\(^9\) He continued his campaign to discredit the Assembly and produced a set of "Theses on the Constituent Assembly." It was published anonymously in

\(^7\)Radkey, *Election to the Constituent Assembly*, pp. 24-29.


This document brought into focus everything that he had written since the famous April theses eight months earlier. The point was that the bourgeois revolution in Russia had turned into a socialist revolution. He began by admitting that "in a bourgeois republic the Constituent Assembly represents the highest form of democracy." Lenin thus justified the fact that his party had called for a meeting of the Assembly. Yet, he continued with emphasis upon the Soviets: "... a republic of Soviets is a higher form of democracy than the usual bourgeois republic with a Constituent Assembly." It was indeed the "only form capable of securing the most painless transition to socialism." Lenin said that the elected Constituent Assembly would not represent the people's will because of a regrouping of class interests (much of the peasantry and the army had developed revolutionary thinking) and also because of the split in the Social Revolutionary Party. Thus, Lenin's arguments in his "Theses on the Constituent Assembly" made defense of that Assembly seem like treason to the proletariat. Lenin's conclusion to his theses was a death blow to the Assembly. Either "... the Constituent Assembly ... recognizes Soviet Power ... ."

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21 Ibid., p. 379.
22 Ibid.
23 Ibid., pp. 379-381
or "... the crisis in connection with the Constituent Assembly can be settled only in a revolutionary way by Soviet power adopting the most energetic, speedy, firm and determined revolutionary measures ... ."

Lenin's Collected Works does not record a discussion of his theses in the Central Committee, but whether or not discussion took place, they became accepted party doctrine. The acceptance of the theses had two practical results: first, it meant that the Bolsheviks and other socialist parties such as Mensheviks and the Right S. R.'s could never unite; second, it meant the death of the Constituent Assembly.

In the following weeks force was used. On December 30, Avxentiev, a leader of the Right Socialist Revolutionaries, was arrested. Izvestiya explained that it was not "in his quality as a member of the Constituent Assembly," but "for the organization of a counter-revolutionary conspiracy." The atmosphere on the eve of the opening of the Constituent Assembly became even more tense when on January 14, 1918, shots were fired at Lenin. When the Assembly finally opened on January 18, 1918, in the Marinsky Opera House, Bolshevik guards were stationed there. The seats on the right

24Ibid., p. 383.
26Chamberlin, Russian Revolution, I, 368.
side of the hall were empty, for on December 11, the Cadet Party had been prohibited and its leaders arrested.28 Public galleries could only be entered with permission given by the chief of the Petrograd Cheka.29 "The atmosphere was so electric that, while waiting for the Assembly to open in the lobbies of the Palace, everyone jumped when they heard a door bang. . ."30

The first session was to be opened by an old revolutionary veteran of the Narodniki, Shevetzov, who was also the oldest member of the Assembly. Then in the name of the Central Executive Committee of the Soviets, Sverdlov took away the presiding officer's bell and proceeded to read a document which had been especially designed to dispel the assembly. He presented a long enunciation of principles which was an endorsement of Soviet policy and legislation by the Constituent Assembly and amounted to an outright abdication on the part of the Assembly, the "Declaration of Rights of the Toiling and Exploited People."31 The Assembly did not act on the Bolshevik-prepared document but went on to elect Chernov, a moderate Social Revolutionary, as President. The remainder of the meeting was marked by disagreement, confusion and bad speeches. Early in the morning

30Ibid.
31Ibid., p. 219.
the Bolshevik delegates withdrew from the meeting; and one hour later the Left Social Revolutionaries followed. With these two groups gone, there could be no question of a quorum. The meeting clearly had lost all meaning. Speechmaking went on anyway for hours, but little that was said touched reality; the harsh challenge of the Soviet declaration was ignored.32

When the Bolsheviks left the Assembly, they began to act. As Chernov was reading the decree on land, an anarchist sailor named Zhelenyok, stepped up to him and asked the delegates to disperse, "since the guard is tired."33 It was about 4 a.m. when the session was declared officially closed. There was little opposition to the act of dissolution. The masses in Petrograd did not rise in defense of the Assembly.34 One of the main reasons for the popular indifference toward the fall of the Assembly was that the Bolsheviks, by seizing power and making the decisions which the majority of the people wanted on the questions of land and peace, had robbed the deliberations of the Assembly of most of their interest. It was also significant that the Assembly in its legislative actions simply followed along the Bolshevik path. The Constituent Assembly collapsed because it had no solid foundation.

32Steinberg, Workshop of Revolution, p. 55.


34Steinberg, Workshop of Revolution, p. 56.
Lenin said, regarding his victory, "... The breaking up of the Constituent Assembly by the Soviet power is the complete and public liquidation of formal democracy in the name of the revolutionary dictatorship. It will be a good lesson." He further signalized his victory by calling the Third All-Russian Congress of Soviets into meeting on January 23. At that meeting Lenin introduced a decree that would remove all references to the Constituent Assembly from Soviet laws.

A number of laws, decrees, and decisions taken by the Soviet Government contain references to the Constituent Assembly and its legislative character. All these references naturally become irrelevant and lapse with the dissolution of the Constituent Assembly. Accordingly, any references to the Constituent Assembly shall be expunged from all new editions of decrees and laws of the Soviet Government.

Lenin's victory over the Constituent Assembly was complete. This eliminated the Mensheviks and Right S. R.'s as important foes, and with the Left S. R.'s safely within the Bolshevik Central Committee, Lenin's dominance politically seemed to be complete. Yet the difficult problem of Brest-Litovsk produced additional political challenges for him, this time from within the Bolshevik party itself.

35Trotsky, Lenin, p. 123.
36Lenin, "Third All-Russian Congress of Soviets of Workers', Soldiers' and Peasants' Deputies," Collected Works, XXVI, 455.
37Ibid., p. 478.
On January 21, Lenin began a campaign in the Central Committee of the Bolshevik Party to commit that body to the policy of a separate peace at any price. At this point Lenin found himself unable to bring about an immediate acceptance of the necessity of agreement to what he himself had called a "humiliating peace." Three main viewpoints along with several minor shadings developed among various Bolshevik leaders. Lenin, along with Zinoviev, Kamenev, Sokolnikov and Stalin, stood for the signature of peace. At the other extreme stood a group led by Bukharin who insisted on carrying on a revolutionary war, however suicidal, rather than compromise revolution by making a deal with the class enemy. Trotsky's position was an intermediate one; he, though aware of the impossibility of resuming war, was none the less anxious to play out to the very end an appeal to international socialism.

The group led by Bukharin proved troublesome. On February 24, 1918, the Moscow Regional Bureau expressed lack of confidence in the Central Committee and refused agree to those decisions "that will be connected with the implementation of the terms of the peace treaty with Austria and Germany" and added that it "considers a split in the Party in

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40 Chamberlin, Russian Revolution, I, 396.
the very near future hardly avoidable." An open struggle was on. These so-called Left Communists published a newspaper called the Kommunist in which they argued against the peace treaty.

Lenin, as always, had a retort to make: "Our pseudo-Lefts . . . are trying to dodge the lesson and lessons of history, are trying to dodge responsibility . . . They ignore facts--the army can't and won't fight . . . Bukarin said that it was impossible for the Germans to attack, he must eat his words." Even though Lenin was capable of defending his position by way of arguments of history and reason, he was forced to acknowledge the seriousness of the problem confronting his party.

... The severe crisis which our Party is now experiencing, owing to the formation of a "Left" opposition within it, is one of the greatest crises the Russian revolution has experienced. . . Under no circumstances will it break the neck of our Party . . . although at the present moment it has come very near to doing so . . .

So incensed were the Left Communists at Lenin's expediency approach to the peace problem that both Bukharin and R. E. Dzerzhinsky, who was the head of the Cheka, considered his removal as leader of the party. But none of Lenin's opposition acted decisively against him and Lenin remained

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1Lenin, "Strange and Monstrous," Collected Works, XXVII, 589.

2Lenin, "A Serious Lesson and a Serious Responsibility," Collected Works, XXVII, 79-82.

3Ibid.


45McNeal, Bolshevik Tradition, p. 54.
the acknowledged leader even though he represented the minority on the most important issue of the day. Within the party his position would never again be a violently and fundamentally challenged one as it was in the first three months of 1918. After Lenin had his way about the peace, his word would almost invariably be decisive.

Trotsky described the critical period of latter December to the signing of the peace treaty.

The early part of 1918 weighed heavily upon us. There were moments when one had the feeling that every thing was slipping and snapping, that there was nothing to hold fast to, nothing to support oneself on. ... in the spring of 1918 one asked the question unconsciously whether the life forces of the exhausted, shattered despairing land would last until the new regime was in the saddle. Provisions were not at hand. There was no army. The state apparatus was being put together. Conspiracies were festering everywhere.46

It was clearly a time of a struggle for survival; enemies from within and from without became a threat to Bolshevik power. Though the revolution itself had begun with a notable absence of terror, circumstances called for its use in the preservation or maintenance of the revolution. Certainly, the haphazard, spontaneous formation of the Workers' Militia was not sufficient to meet the challenge. Lenin said, "It is confusion we have, but no dictatorship."47 Thus in the midst of such confusion, it should not seem

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46 Trotsky, Lenin, p. 152.
47 Trotsky, Lenin, p. 137.
unusual that at the critical moment of a hard-fought struggle, instruments of force were called upon to replace the vague authority of the Workers' Militia.

From outside of the capital three separate groups threatened to undo the authority already accomplished by Lenin. Within six weeks after the revolution, Cossack armies and other "white" forces were gathering in southeastern Russia. The Ukraine also was in a state of all but open hostilities to Soviet power. There the British and French were an important factor of encouragement to the rebels. And certainly the most obvious threat came from the German armies, which were a standing threat in the west.48

During the period of the German threat, Lenin emphasized the absolute necessity of terror. He said, "What will become of a dictatorship if one is a weakling? . . . If we are not ready to shoot a saboteur and white guardist, what sort of big revolution is that?"49 According to Trotsky, speeches of this sort represented Lenin's actual feelings, but at the same time they served a definite purpose. With his speeches Lenin "hammered into the heads the consciousness that only unusually strong measures could save the revolution."50 The weakness of the new Soviet government was emphasized at this time by Lenin.

48 Carr, Bolshevik Revolution, I, 159.
49 Trotsky, Lenin, pp. 138-139.
50 Ibid., p. 139.
Yesterday we still sat firm in the saddle, said Lenin, and today we are only holding fast to the mane. But it is also a lesson. And this lesson cannot fail to have an effect upon our cursed negligence. To create order and really to attack the thing, is what we must do, if we do not wish to be enslaved! It will be a good lesson if... if only the Germans, along with the whites do not succeed in overthrowing us.51

With such a military danger facing them, the Bolsheviks were forced to create some kind of order out of the chaos at home. The domestic disorder was in itself a very real challenge to Bolshevik authority. Referring to continued bourgeoisie resistance to Soviet rule, Lenin issued the following indictment:

...this resistance... had proven so stubborn and capable of assuming such diversified forms, that the fight against it will inevitably require some time, and, in its many forms, is hardly likely to end until several months have passed. And unless this passive and covert resistance of the bourgeoisie and its supporters is definitely crushed the socialist revolution cannot succeed.52

His usage of the word "crushed" is itself a prediction of measures which would be taken. Though the most serious political challenges had been taken care of by discrediting the Constituent Assembly and by incorporating the Left Social Revolutionaries into the government, some resistance was still present. In an opposition newspaper the following menace appeared. "Lenin has built his October throne on our

51Ibid.

bones . . . Our October is still ahead . . . 

Lenin's purpose in instigating the policy of force was to make sure that there would be no such further "October."

It would be a mistake to suggest that the measures of repression applied for the defense of the revolution were forced on reluctant Bolshevik leaders in defiance of a revered tradition. The principle of terror was a part of Lenin's revolutionary education. He justified the idea of force in his speeches. "Not a single problem of the class struggle has ever been solved in history except by violence. When violence is exercised by the working people, by the mass of exploited people against the exploiters--then we are for it." Again, he said, "There is no other way to socialism save through destruction . . . The greater the extremes of the exploiters' resistance, the more vigorously, firmly, ruthlessly and successfully will they be suppressed by the exploited." He called for "systematic application of coercion to an entire class." To the people Lenin justified his use of force by identifying the opposition as enemies of the people and as threats to the gains of the revolution.

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54 Lenin, "Third All-Russian Congress of Soviets," *Collected Works, XXVI*, 459.


56 Ibid., p. 402.
No mercy for the enemies of the people, the enemies of socialism, the enemies of the working people! War to the death against the rich and their hangers-on, the bourgeois intellectuals; war on the rogues, the idlers and the rowdies! All of them are the same brood—the spawn of capitalism, ... the society in which a handful of men robbed and insulted the people ... These enemies ... must be ruthlessly punished for the slightest violation of the laws and regulations of socialist society.57

Regarding this matter, McNeal said of Lenin, "Few before Lenin combined so searing a ruthlessness in practical tactics with so sublime a utopian objective."58 Another writer summed it up like this: "Ruthlessness followed from fanaticism as well as from Lenin's conviction that he and sometimes only he, knew the right answer. In the name of future Utopia, horrible things could be sanctioned in the present."59 Trotsky saw the same characteristics in Lenin and regarded them as elements of greatness. "With this gift of a powerful mind Vladimir Ilyich also was endowed with an inflexible will. The combination of these characteristics produce the real revolutionary leader, who is molded out of bold, pitiless mind and hard, unyielding will."60

The instrument of force was created on December 20, 1917. Felix Dzerzhinsky, a Polish Bolshevik with an

57 Lenin, "How to Organise Competition," Collected Works, XXVI, 511.

58 McNeal, Bolshevik Tradition, p. 73.


extraordinarily long record of prison and hard labor for revolutionary activity, carried out Lenin's instructions and formed the Cheka, the Russian abbreviation for its official title: All-Russian Commission for Struggle with Counter-revolution and Sabotage. The Cheka evolved from the Military Revolutionary committee of the Petrograd Soviet which had been highly involved in the November Revolution. After the revolution, the committee concerned itself with counter-revolutionary activities, and when it was dissolved, the Cheka was formed. The Cheka began with modest instructions and powers. The staff was small, its resources limited. Most of the few death sentences which it passed were on bandits and common criminals. Obviously the first tasks of the Cheka were somewhat ordinary, tasks that the Workers' Militia should have been able to take care of. The three offenses which the Cheka was first interested in were sabotage of the administration, destruction, and rioting by drunken mobs and banditry. It even tried to mobilize the masses for discovering counter-revolutionaries; one of its early appeals was:

The Commission appeals to all workers, soldiers and peasants to come to its aid in the struggle with enemies of the Revolution. Send all news and facts about organizations and individual persons whose activity is harmful.

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62 Carr, Bolshevik Revolution, I, 158.
to the Revolution and the people's power to the Commission for Struggle with Counter-revolution and Sabotage. Though the Cheka had been formed, Lenin's appeals to the people to create order and discipline continued. He said, "The socialist revolution is on, and everything now depends on the establishment of a discipline of equals, and the discipline of the working masses themselves, which must take the place of capitalist barrack-room discipline." Though this statement was made in mid-January of 1918, it sounds strangely similar to the early appeals made in connection with the formation of the Workers' Militia. Perhaps at this point Lenin thought of the Cheka as a temporary measure to be replaced eventually by the Militia.

It should be noted that during its first months, the Cheka's actions were bold. The organization developed as it responded to emergencies. On December 23, Lenin addressed a letter to Dzerzhinsky. He said, "The whole situation in the Urals is very acute: the governing bodies of the Works here (in Petrograd) must be arrested at once. They must be threatened with trial for creating a crisis in the Urals. . ."

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64 Lenin, "Extraordinary All-Russia Railwaymen's Congress," *Collected Works*, XXVI, 500.

It was the transfer of the seat of government from Petrograd to Moscow which first contributed to a great power increase for the Cheka. Dzerzhinsky as chief security officer was in charge of the move. His headquarters were set up in the premises of a large insurance company on Lubyanka Square; established within was a prison for suspects. Thus equipped the Cheka began its task in earnest.

Until this time, the Bolshevik regime had been saved by the lack of cohesion and confusion which, though it affected the regime, affected its opponents even more. Genuine, organized counter-revolutionary groups did not exist. The situation was soon to change. At the fourth All-Russian Congress of Soviets the Left Social Revolutionaries had voted against ratification of the Brest-Litovsk treaty. This placed them outside of Lenin's approval. He said, "That the Left S. R.'s, in declaring for war now, have obviously parted company with the peasantry is a fact, and this attests to the frivolity of their policy." After this, the Bolsheviks had no allies within the framework of the government of the Soviet state. By the spring and summer of 1918, Moscow had become a focus around which all the enemies of


68 Lenin, "A Serious Lesson and a Serious Responsibility," *Collected Works*, XXVII, 82.
Lenin's government—allied and German agents, small groups of the Right and Center, and the surviving parties of the Left—spun plots and intrigues. But for the period from late December to March 1918, the Cheka was in a formative growth period; the steps it took were limited responses to particular problems. Lenin's government was not on the offensive at that time.

Therefore, though on November 7, Lenin called for the "power in the localities" to "guarantee genuine revolutionary order"\(^\text{69}\) by the end of December both foreign threats and domestic disorder prevailed. Since he wished to continue the Soviet regime, Lenin turned from the workers' militia, which he had hoped would create domestic discipline, to a special Bolshevik police force. Lenin justified the use of force on the basis that it was necessary to preserve the people's government. He said, ". . . unless the passive and covert resistance of the bourgeoisie and its supporters is definitely crushed the socialist revolution cannot succeed."\(^\text{70}\) The Cheka was the instrument which "crushed" resistance ranging from drunken mobs to genuine sabotage.

The rehabilitation of the economy proved to be much more difficult than the process of gaining political supremacy for the Bolsheviks. In late December the necessity of gaining

\(^{69}\)Lenin, "To Workers, Soldiers and Peasants," Collected Works, XXVI, 24.

a more secure hold on the banks was obvious. Lenin called for "extraordinary revolutionary measures" which would enable all citizens "to undertake the struggle to normalize the country's economic life immediately and comprehensively . . . "71 To implement the process of nationalization which had been begun in November Lenin called for these additional measures: joint stock companies to become state property, members of boards and directors of joint stock companies to observe workers' control, state and foreign loans to be annulled and members of wealthy classes to keep money in the State Bank.72 The problem was not in the ability to pass decrees but to make them effective. It was not until January, 1918, that these measures began to be fulfilled. Lenin said:

Here is what happened . . . A certain specialist . . . came to see me on behalf of 50,000 persons and declared that the banks were prepared to operate entirely under the authority of Soviet power. "High time, too" I said to this spokesman of the bank officials. "We will not refuse to negotiate with any organization, be it an organization of bank officials or any other, provided such recognition of Soviet power is actually accepted by the majority of the working people . . . ."73

This was progress, ever so slight, but none the less, progress. By March Lenin's increased authority allowed him to call for

72 Ibid.
73 Lenin, "Extraordinary All-Russian Railwaymen's Congress," Collected Works, XXVI, 499.
fulfillment of more intricate details with regard to the banking habits of Russia. He requested

standardisation of banking . . . accounts, gradual transition to the compulsory keeping of current accounts in the bank, at first by the largest and later by all the country's enterprises and compulsory deposit of money in the banks and transfer of money only through the banks.\footnote{Lenin, "Seventh Congress of the R. C. P. (B.)," \textit{Collected Works}, XXVI, 499.}

Approach to the problem of industry was facilitated by the moderate gains by Lenin in the area of banking. The crisis in industry had become more and more severe, following the downward path which the economy had entered after the March Revolution. Food rationing had even been introduced.

M. Philips Price, a foreign observer who was sympathetic with the Bolshevik cause, described the fall of his bread ration from one quarter of a pound to an eighth of a pound per day.\footnote{Price, \textit{Reminiscences of Revolution}, p. 308.}

The system of workers' control which had been made legal on November 27 and which had been practiced in effect much earlier plainly was not functioning. Something like anarchy prevailed in the industries. There was no common industrial plan; the factory committees had no source of guidance. The result was chaos and famine.

Lenin spent a great deal of time condemning the saboteurs, on whom he placed the burden of guilt.
I now come to the famine, this horrible curse of our time which threatens us. What is the main cause of the chaos? . . . the sway of saboteurs keep stirring up, while blaming it upon us. We are very well aware that there is enough grain in Russia and that it is stored in Kaledin's realm, in far-away Siberia and in the grain producing gubernias. . . . Sabotage is the effort to restore the old paradise for the exploiters and the old hell for the working people.76

Lenin recognized that the path to socialism in industry was not an easy nor a short journey. On January 24, 1918, to the Third All-Russian Congress of Soviets he mentioned this fact. "I have no illusions about our having only just entered the period of transition to socialism about not yet having reached socialism."77 In an article later published in Pravda, Lenin stated:

... the organisational problems of the socialist transformation of Russia are so immense and difficult that their solution--in view of the numerous petty-bourgeois fellow-travellers of the socialist proletariat, and of the latter's low cultural level--will require a fairly long time.78

As a partial solution to the problem Lenin issued a draft decree on December 20, 1917 in which a set of rules was prescribed where by the rich could be regimented. The wealthy class (classified as such if their income was 500

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76Lenin, "Extraordinary All-Russia Railwaymen's Congress," Collected Works, XXVI, 498-499.
77Lenin, "Third All-Russian Congress of Soviets," Collected Works, XXVI, 464.
rubles per month or if they owned things worth over 1,000 rubles) and employees of banks, joint stock companies, state and public institutions were ordered to present written statements within three days, indicating their address, income, and place of employment and occupation. Persons who were found guilty of contravening the law were to be fined up to 5,000 rubles or imprisoned up to one year or sent to the front. Those who were found guilty of sabotage work in banks, state and public institutions, joint stock companies or railways were also to be likewise punished. Seven days later Lenin called upon the entire population to aid in the battle. He proposed the formation of several thousand groups of ten to fifteen men to spend three to four hours daily in service to the problem of food supply. The factories and regiments that failed to provide the required number of groups were to be deprived of bread cards. The groups were to search railroad stations, warehouses and private living quarters near Petrograd. Punishment for speculators and dishonest workers would be death. Violence was the expected course of events. This was made plain by Lenin in his publication How to Organize Competition.

"... This greatest change in human history from working

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79 Lenin, "Note to F. E. Dzerzhinsky with a Draft Decree on Fighting Counter-Revolutionaries and Saboteurs," Collected Works, XXVI, 374-376.

80 Lenin, "Meeting of the Presidium of the Petrograd Soviet with Delegates from Food Supply Organisations," Collected Works, XXVI, 503-504.
under compulsion to working for oneself cannot take place without friction, difficulties, conflicts and violence against the inveterate parasites and their hangers-on."81

The confusion in the economic realm, partly a result of sabotage, could also be laid at the feet of the policy of workers' control. An attempt was made by a decree of November 27 to institutionalize workers' control and thus neutralize its effects. When this ended in failure, some other means had to be found of setting constructive forces in motion. Amid the anarchy in production and distribution, Lenin called for order. "We cannot dispense with the advice, the instruction of educated people, of intellectuals and specialists. Every sensible worker and peasant understands this perfectly well..."82 In the midst of economic ruin Lenin called for organization of the people.

Workers and peasants, working and exploited people! . . . There is enough bread, iron, timber, wood, cotton and flax in Russia to satisfy the needs of everyone, if only labour and its products are properly distributed, if only a business-like, practical control over this distribution by the entire people is established . . . 83

The instrument chosen for the purpose of increasing government control over industry was the Supreme Council of National Economy, which was set up on December of 1917.

81Lenin, "How to Organise Competition," Collected Works, XXVI, 407.
82Ibid., p. 412. 83Ibid., pp. 410-411.
The purpose of the Supreme Council of National Economy (Vesenkha) was to organize the economic activity of the nation and the financial resources of the government. The Vesenkha thus was to direct the activities of all existing economic authorities; it was to be composed of members of the All-Russian Council of Workers' Control, of representatives of all the People's Commissariats, and of experts who were for purposes of counsel. As such, the Vesenkha replaced, absorbed, and went beyond the power of workers' control. Regarding the Council Lenin said:

In introducing workers' control, we know that it would take much time before it spread to the whole of Russia, but we wanted to show that we recognize only one road—changes from below, we wanted the workers themselves, from below, to draw up the new basic economic principles. Much time will be required for this. From workers' control we passed on to the creation of a Supreme Economic Council. Only this measure, together with the nationalisation of the banks and railways which will be carried out within the next few days, will make it possible for us to begin work to build up a new socialist society.

This statement reflects Lenin's acuteness of mind in dealing with the popular desires of the common people. He was able to lead them to the goals which he set without losing sight of what the people themselves were thinking.

While events at this time were chaotic and every step of Lenin's new regime was halting and vague, the Vesenkha

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84 Carr, Bolshevik Revolution, II, 73.
85 Lenin, "Third All-Russia Congress of Soviets," Collected Works, XXVI, 467-468.
evidently was conceived as the central planning and directing 
organ of the economic life of the country. Lenin described 
it as "the fighting organ for the struggle with the capac-
talists and the landlords in the economic sphere . . ."86 
Actually its functions were undefined, its potential unknown 
at the time.

The first meeting of the Vesenkha was described by 
a foreigner, M. Philips Price. About twenty persons were 
there gathered around a table in a barren unheated room: 
they included representatives of trade unions, workers from 
factory committees, several People's Commissars, and a few 
specialists such as engineers from the railways and metal 
works. Ossinsky, who had been appointed president, made a 
speech in which he spoke of the insufficient nature of 
workers' control and the need for central planning. The 
meeting approved a plan to create special centers for the 
different branches of industry. A plan for the creation 
of local subordinate organs was included.87 What had been 
created was a central economic organization with local offices.

The organization of the Vesenkha seemed to indicate 
that originally it was meant to exercise general control over 
every part of economic activity; however, it was in the 
field of industrial policy that it was to work. The gradual

86Lenin, Sochineniya, XXII, 108, cited in Carr, Bolshe-
vik Revolution, II, 75.

concentration of centralized control over industry by Vesenchka may be illustrated by what happened in the metallurgical industry, which was the most highly organized unit in the Russian economy. Prodamet, the first selling organization for the metallurgical industry, had been created in 1902. Brought about by war demands, Rasmeko which was an official committee for the distribution of metals, was created in 1915. One of the first tasks of Vesenchka was to transform Rasmeko into an executive organ of its metals section and to give it the task of setting prices for metals. By March 1918, the mining section of Vesenchka, built on pre-revolutionary standards, was an active organization with a headquarters staff of 750.

Extensive nationalization of industry at this point was thus not a part of Bolshevik policy. Though extensive powers had been granted by decree to Vesenchka, its first steps were to build upon existing foundations. The nationalization of industry was treated not as a desirable end in itself, but a response to special conditions; it was applied to individual factories rather than industries as a whole. The initial measures were not elements of planning. In fact the nationalization policy of this early period may be

described as punitive and spontaneous. The punitive aspect of early nationalization was illustrated by the fact that the first decrees usually cited the reasons provoking nationalization. According to V. P. Milyutin, 70 per cent of all nationalizations of this period were due to employers either refusing to accept workers' control or abandoning their factories. An electrical company was nationalized because the management had brought the enterprise to "complete financial ruin and disputes with employees." An iron and steel works producing nails was nationalized "in view of the company's inability to continue operating the plant and of its importance to the government."

The spontaneous character of early nationalization was as evident as the punitive element. The nationalization decrees issued by Vesennka related primarily to the Petrograd area. Many, both large and small, enterprises up and down the country were nationalized by regional or local Soviets or by the workers themselves. When a commission was sent to Turkestan to organize supplies of cotton for the textile factories of Moscow and Petrograd, it discovered that the

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91Sobranie Uzakonenii, 1917-1918, No. 9, art. 140, cited in Carr, Bolshevik Revolution, II, 82.

92Ibid., art. 130.
Turkestan Soviet had already nationalized the local cotton industry. The disorderly procedure of workers' control seems to have been the main source of nationalization.

The Supreme Council of National Economy up until the time of the Treaty of Brest-Litovsk served only as a guide, as a hint that Lenin had plans for more effective wholesale economic planning. As long as the factory rather than the industry was the unit of nationalization, the tendencies of syndicalism had not been overcome. In order that socialism might be realized it was necessary that the whole industry or branch of production, and ultimately the whole national economy be considered as a single entity.

The period of late December until the signing of the Treaty of Brest-Litovsk was a time marked by a gradual increase of Bolshevik solidarity of power under Lenin's guidance. The period was filled with turbulence and was dominated by the German threat of invasion. The Bolsheviks were threatened from within their own ranks as well as from other surviving parties. The group of so-called Left-Bolsheviks accused Lenin of betrayal of the revolution. Trotsky even recorded doubt expressed by common persons.

Once Vladimir Ilyich said to me in a particularly difficult hour of 1918, "Today a delegation of workmen came to me. And at my words one of them said, "one sees that you too, Comrade"

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Lenin, take the side of the capitalists." You know that was the first time I have heard such words. I confess that I was disconcerted and did not know what to answer. . . . "

It seemed that the gains of the revolution were being threatened on every hand. Though the decree forming the Supreme Council of National Economy had been issued, chaos reigned in the areas of production and distribution. Various opposition groups concealed grain supplies and committed other such acts of sabotage. Despite effort on Lenin's part, the Russian economy seemed on a downward spiral. Food was rationed; supplies limited; obviously the victories of socialism at this point were scant.

In desperation the Cheka was formed, yet in its first months of existence its activities were limited. It began with modest instructions and powers. Most of its actions during 1918 were taken against those suspected as enemy agents or counter-revolutionary agitators and speculators. Yet the action taken in the beginning was mild and can by no means be described as real terror.

The entire period was overshadowed by the German threat and by economic and political chaos at the domestic front. Trotsky's words were appropriate: "I have the impression," he said to Vladimir Ilyich, "that the country, after the fearfully severe illness that it has gone through, now needs better nourishment, rest, and care to live on and recover;"

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94 Trotsky, Lenin, PP. 152-153.
the slightest blow can overturn it now." Yet facing the difficulties of the time, Lenin managed to steadily increase his power. The victory over the Constituent Assembly, the formation of the Cheka, the beginning toward economic planning as evidenced by the formation of the Supreme Council of National Economy—all of these pointed to increased power and authority for the man Lenin. In addition, the Fourth All-Russian Congress issued the following statement: "The Congress confirms the peace treaty signed by our representatives at Brest-Litovsk on March 3, 1918." This marked the end of one period of difficulty, although Lenin's government was to be shaken later by other threats to its authority. The period of December to early March formed the basis on which Lenin could become the unchallenged master of Russia.

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95 Ibid., p. 153.
96 Lenin, "Fourth All-Russian Congress of Soviets," Collected Works, XXVII, 200-201.
CHAPTER V

CONCLUSION

Before the revolution which brought him to power, Lenin had a vast ideological system, but afterward his actions did not coincide with his own pre-revolutionary goals. The problem is to discover as nearly as possible the varying roles of theory and expediency in Lenin's political activities during the first months after the revolution.

Before the revolution, Lenin held up the Bolshevik party as the party of the people, the party which was alone capable of leading the masses to true socialism.\(^1\) Compromise with other parties would be unthinkable. Many times Lenin warned his followers "... no rapprochement with other parties."\(^2\) Political domination without compromise with other parties was clearly Lenin's goal for the Bolshevik party. But immediately after the success of the November revolution, Lenin did not outlaw any other political parties even though posters from the Right Social

\(^1\) V. I. Lenin, "Political Parties in Russia," Collected Works, Bernard Issagus, translator and editor (Moscow, 1964), XXIV, 96.

Revolutionary party and the Mensheviks appeared which said, "... Famine will crush Petrograd ... Do not trust the promises of the Bolsheviks."\(^3\) For the first few months the other parties worked openly; dissenting Bolsheviks even were free to join them.\(^4\) Furthermore, Lenin invited one party, the Left Social Revolutionary party, to join in the formation of his government.\(^5\) Though the Left Social Revolutionaries refused the coalition in early November, by the 23rd of that month at a conference of the All-Russian Congress of Peasants' Deputies the agreement was sealed.\(^6\) To this point, Lenin's reaction to other political parties bears little resemblance to his pre-revolutionary idea of a one-party state. Perhaps he felt that his political strength in November was not secure enough to outlaw other parties. In the beginning it seemed doubtful that the Bolsheviks could hold power for more than a few weeks. The Bolshevik party could not command the allegiance of a majority of the people in Russia. The elections to

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\(^6\)Carr, *Bolshevik Revolution*, I, 112.
the Constituent Assembly were proof of that. The largest percentage of votes was recorded for the Social Revolutionary party, which had the support of the peasantry, while the Bolsheviks received only about 25 per cent of the votes. Perhaps the loyalty of the peasants to the Left S.R.'s explains Lenin's coalition with that party. Indeed, the agreement with the Left Social Revolutionaries strengthened the Bolshevik position; it provided Lenin with a strong argument to explain away the election results. It seems clear that Lenin's break with his theory by seeking union with another party was for the purpose of insuring eventual Bolshevik domination. The first weeks were so unstable that if he were to retain the power that the Bolsheviks had, Lenin had to break with the dogmatic policy of one-party rule. While this seems like a break with theory, Lenin's purpose was to put the Bolshevik party in the position of dominant leadership.

In early December the Cadet Party was prohibited by Lenin. Its leaders were arrested. By this time Lenin's political authority had sufficiently solidified to permit such a measure. Later at the long-awaited meeting of the Constituent Assembly, Lenin cleverly discredited the Right

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8Lenin, "Decree on the Arrest of the Leaders of the Civil War against the Revolution," Collected Works, XXVI, 351.
Social Revolutionaries and Mensheviks, thus taking further steps toward the fulfillment of his political goal. Regarding Lenin's relationship to and policy toward other political parties it seems that the goals of his pre-revolutionary theory were never ignored, but that initially Lenin compromised so that eventually he could fulfill his ideal of a Bolshevik state.

Before November Lenin's plan for true socialism included, along with the one-party state, the creation of a people's militia which would replace the tsarist police. Lenin was vague about the formation of the militia though he did emphasize local control and initiative. Many times, also, Lenin indicated that such a militia could be formed immediately. Only three days had passed after the revolution when Lenin issued a decree which provided for the creation of the promised workers' militia. This action leaves room for little doubt about the relationship between theory and practice in the mind of Lenin; however, the actual formation of the militia proceeded in a halting fashion. The masses were involved in the general confusion and disruption of the times and proved unable to create the order for which Lenin called. Though the Bolsheviks as well as the masses had hated the tsarist police, Lenin eventually created the Cheka, the


Bolshevik police, which bore little resemblance to the idealistic workers' militia. From within and from without, the Bolshevik regime faced formidable enemies. In a time of such turmoil Bolshevik rule had to be consolidated or lost. The development of the Cheka was based upon response to specific emergencies; in the first months it does not seem that Lenin was planning specifically for an instrument of terror.

In the case of the workers' militia, Lenin's actions seem to have been based in the beginning upon his theory; however, when he was faced with the problem of survival, Lenin easily disregarded the workers' militia in preference to a workable tool, the Cheka. Lenin was clearly in touch with reality; certainly he must have realized that if the Bolsheviks were not able to survive as the leading party of Russia very few, if indeed any, of his goals could be met. He sacrificed theory for survival.

Before the revolution, Lenin had spent much time writing about his plans for socializing the industrial system of Russia. The banks, which were identified as the key to the financial and industrial structure, were to be nationalized at once.¹¹ Lenin believed that once banks were nationalized, industry would naturally and easily follow.¹²

¹²Ibid., p. 335.
Lenin's pre-November writings indicated his sense of reality with regard to the process of socialization of industry. He said in April, "Our immediate task shall not be the introduction of socialism; but to bring social production and distribution of products at once under the control of the Soviets of Workers' Deputies." He certainly did not expect socialism to emerge in industry full-blown with a simple decree. Throughout Lenin's speeches and pamphlets of the March-November period, the promise of workers' control during the nationalization of industry was included. However, workers' control seems to have been subordinated to state control. Actually workers' control resembled syndicalism more than socialism. In November when it was time for action, Lenin's policies were dictated largely by the political situation of the hour. Lenin's ideas were met with open resistance. The private banks closed and all the employees of the State Bank struck except the clerks in charge of the vaults and the manufacture of money. With these difficulties facing him, Lenin did not issue a decree nationalizing the banks until November 22. Even then little actual control by Lenin's forces was felt by the banking facilities.

14Lenin, "One of the Fundamental Questions of Revolution," Collected Works, XXV, 373.
The confusion that reigned in the area of banking was also present in industry. The process of workers' control proved to be unorganized and in some cases destructive. Lenin's plan for state control was subordinated to workers' control in a decree issued on November 27. In November Lenin did not have the full support of the people; perhaps this was one way of gaining the acceptance of the population. Thus with industry and banking, as it was with the people's militia, Lenin was forced by events of the first six weeks to modify his pre-revolutionary goals.

By late December the economic situation in Russia was in complete turmoil. Prices were up; food rationing was introduced; chaos and famine ruled. Referring to the dreadful situation Lenin said, "I have no illusions about our having reached socialism." By this time it was clear to Lenin that the socialist transformation of Russia would require "a fairly long time." Lenin chose the Supreme Council of National Economy to increase government control by directing the activities of the existing economic authorities. This council replaced, absorbed and went beyond the

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21 Carr, Bolshevik Revolution, II, 73.
power of workers' control. Actually, the specific functions of the council were undefined. The Vesenkha, as it was called, at first simply built upon existing foundations. Industries were not nationalized in a wholesale manner. The Vesenkha until the time of the Treaty of Brest-Litovsk served only as a guide, as a hint that Lenin had plans for more effective economic planning. It was during this period that a minimum amount of control was gained in the area of banking.22

Obviously Lenin did not immediately enact his theory of nationalization of industry and banking. He had not anticipated the reaction of the bank employees when he promised "immediate amalgamation of all banks in the country into a single national bank . . ."23 With the response of the people in mind, Lenin modified his goals. Again, the process of socialization of industry proved more complex than anticipated in theory; the steps taken by Lenin were slow and spoke softly of socialism. The practical situation demanded a revision of policy.

The opinions of historians about Lenin and his motives vary from those of the loyal Communists to those of the right-wing extremists. Trotsky, of course, regarded Lenin

22Ibid., p. 81.

as both a great politician and a true theorist; he called Lenin "the greatest revolutionary of history." 24 Trotsky said of the first Communist ruler of Russia, "He believed in what he said." 25 Regarding the multitude of decrees passed by Lenin, Trotsky remarked, "Lenin took hold of everything by means of statutes, decrees, and commands in the name of the government." 26 Though these decrees did not at times follow the strictest of Marxist theory or, for that matter, even avoid obvious contradictions, Trotsky still upheld Lenin as the genius of revolution. He said, "... in the end these contradictions, even if uncouth viewed from the practical tasks of the moment, were lost sight of in the work of revolutionary thinking, that, by means of legislation, pointed out new ways for a new world of human relations." 27 Though it is debatable as to whether Lenin was able to "take hold" of the political and economic problems of the new Soviet state, it is certain that he was one of the greatest or most effective revolutionaries of history.

Fischer, one of Lenin's biographers, regarded him as a man completely dedicated to the idea of revolution. Speaking about the terror, Fischer said, "Lenin had neither an emotional commitment to terror nor a revulsion against terror... Lenin's first philosophical commitment was to

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24 Trotsky, Lenin, p. 146. 
25 Ibid., p. 149. 
26 Ibid., p. 135. 
27 Ibid., p. 143.
revolution and to violence and terror in connection with revolution.28 Everything was subordinated to the goal of revolution; with this in mind Fischer described his view of Lenin's personality.

He never mixed sentiment with politics. He had nerves but no feelings. Personal pride did not turn his head nor did humility bow it; he knew one truth—his own. He was cantankerous, intolerant, irritable. He pursued the goal of revolution with the optimistic persistence of a hunter.29

Though Fischer saw Lenin as a Marxist committed to the ideal of revolution, he also considered Lenin to be a practical politician. "As a practical politician he diluted theory with expediency..."30 Such a conclusion seems to be in compliance with the events of the first months of the revolution. Fischer, however, stated his belief that on one particular matter Lenin did follow through with his ideal. This was on the matter of the one-party state which Fischer described as "his prerevolutionary goal and his postrevolutionary practice."31 Fischer's estimate of Lenin and his interchanging of expediency and theory is similar to the conclusion of this thesis.

Edward Hallett Carr in his three-volume work, The Bolshevik Revolution described in detail the beginning weeks and months of Lenin's reign. Details concerning decrees, the

29Ibid., p. 43. 30Ibid., 123. 31Ibid., p. 90.
actual political and economic situation, and the relationship between the two were given. Though Carr did not refer to Lenin and his motives in particular, he did refer to the Bolshevik leaders in general.

In the desperate chaos of the first weeks of the revolution the new leaders had little time for concerted action or even for consistent thinking and planning; almost every step taken by them was either a reaction to some pressing emergency or a reprisal for some action or threatened action against them. In seeking to ride the storm they were driven before it.32

Surely Lenin was the most important of the Bolshevik leaders; therefore, it seems that Carr regarded Lenin's actions as simply responses to practical situations rather than as embodiments of his theory. Carr did not speculate upon Lenin's desires for the fulfillment of his theory, he simply described the multitude of stumbling blocks which prevented the direct socialization of Russia after the revolution. His detailed account of the problem which faced Lenin leaves little doubt that in order to stay in power, Lenin had to recognize and give attention to the specific political and economic situation that developed in Russia in 1917.

In his book The Russian Revolution William Henry Chamberlin presented a narrative of the revolution, and as a narrative the work largely omitted any detailed explanation of Lenin's motives. Chamberlin's book, however, viewed Lenin as both a theorist and a practical politician. Using

the agrarian program Chamberlin illustrated Lenin's ability to leave his theory to meet the demands of the hour.

... Lenin's adoption of a peasant programme of agrarian change... was a masterpiece of political flexibility, of which a more stubborn doctrinaire would scarcely have been capable. For Lenin, as a Marxist did not believe in the disirability... of equalitarian small holdings... But Lenin as a political leader understood the supreme importance of obtaining the support... of the peasant majority of the population during the first months of establishment of the new regime... Lenin's decision to give the peasants a free rein was a brilliant piece of political insight.33

Chamberlin summarized the proceedings of the Soviet government during the first months as simply "giving the masses pretty much what they wanted."34 He, however, hinted that Lenin was more than a politician when he referred to the early decrees. "Lenin was anxious to use a term of power which might be long or might be short in order to give as extensive a practical illustration of his policies as possible."35 It is undoubtedly true that Lenin was a practical politician, but it seems that he was a devoted Marxist also.

The view of Lenin as held by Georg von Rauch in his A History of Soviet Russia was that of a man with "demagogic passion, cold cynicism, demonic will to power, fanatic

33 Chamberlin, Russian Revolution, I, 326.
intolerance and unscrupulous ability." Rauch's adjectives for Lenin included such words as ruthless and brutal. Throughout Rauch's work he tried to show that democracy could have succeeded in Russia if only the Bolsheviks and Lenin had not appeared; clearly a bias was present in his book. Rauch did, however, identify Lenin as a true Marxist, but one with a view of the present. He said, "The Marxist ideology was his basis for action. But he knew how to learn from experience and he was very much aware of changing power relations and changing opportunities." Though Rauch appeared anti-Bolshevik, he identified the Bolshevik leader as both a theorist and an effective practical politician.

In his book *Lenin: The Compulsive Revolutionary*, Stefan Possony seemed more interested in tracing vague hints about the women in Lenin's life than in making a reliable estimate of his political or theoretical importance. What he does have to say about Lenin's leadership of the Bolshevik party and Russia is unfavorable; the reader might guess this at the beginning when Possony quoted Psalms, 74:20 "For they filled the endarkened places of the earth

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with habitations of cruelty." He described Lenin's actions as cheating, lying, betrayal and disruption, and summarized him as the "inviolable and infallible ruler" who forgot his aims. Such an interpretation hardly seems based upon facts.

In the three areas studied, the relationship with political parties, the creation of a police system and the socialization of industry, Lenin did not strictly follow his pre-November theory. What part, then, did theory play in his actions? Lenin's own writings in part have the answer. He said in April,

> Our teaching is not a dogma, but a guide ridiculed, the learning and repetition by rote of formulas which at best are capable of giving only an outline of general tasks that are necessarily liable to be modified by the concrete economic and political conditions of each particular phase of the historical process.

Lenin did not regard his theory as binding in any particular situation, but he thought of theory as a guide to action. Clearly this viewpoint can be seen in his treatment of other political parties, the formation of the workers' militia and the limited socialization of industry during the first five months that he was in power. Each of the three areas studied was beset with individual, difficult unforeseen problems. Before the revolution Lenin said, "It is important to realize that in revolutionary times the

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41 Ibid., p. 256.  
42 Ibid., p. 250.  
43 Lenin, "Letter on Tactics," Selected Works, VI, 32.
objective situation changes with the same swiftness and
abruptness as the current of life in general. And we must
be able to adapt our tactics and immediate tasks to the
specific features of every given situation." This pre-
cisely describes Lenin's actions. He emphasized the point
many times, "... It is essential to realize the incon-
testable truth that a Marxist must take cognizance of actual
events, of the precise facts of reality, and must not cling
to past theory..."45 When Lenin abandoned the Workers'
Militia for the creation of the Cheka, this principle was
put into action. His thinking was ideological and dogmatic,
but his actions were pragmatic and effective.

44V. I. Lenin, "Letters from Afar," Collected Works,
M. S. Levin, Joe Fineberg, and others, translators, M. S.
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45Lenin, "Letters on Tactics," Selected Works, VI, ee.
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**Articles**

**Primary**


**Secondary**


