

## Part II: "We Can No Longer Live Like This"—1905-1917

With the Revolution of 1905, the Russian people had won new political and social freedoms. By the time the revolution was put down, newspapers had sprung up, and political parties had been formed. The Duma had also been established. These changes ensured that the tsar could no longer exclusively control politics. Russians had tasted new freedoms and developed a sense of their power to influence events. When the government regained its footing, it realized that it could not revoke the new political freedoms without convulsing society once again. Never again would the Russian people place their full trust in the tsar.

### *How did the various political groups regard the aftermath of the 1905 Revolution?*

The workers and peasants that made up the rank and file of the socialist movements were not nearly as interested in political freedoms as they were in social reform, and they had learned that liberal leadership would not help them achieve their goals. Returning to the harsh drudgery of their jobs, the demoralized former strikers took heart at the numbers of workers who gradually came forward to join their unions. Those who owned property—the more conservative nobles and the small middle class—came away from the 1905 Revolution with genuine fear of the lower classes.

***“The wave of anarchy that is advancing from all sides, and that at the present time threatens the legal government, would quickly sweep away any revolutionary government: the embittered masses would then turn against the real or presumed culprits; they would seek the destruction of the entire intelligentsia [class of intellectuals]; they would begin indiscriminately to slaughter anyone who wears German [i.e. European] clothes.***

—Prince E.N. Trubetskoi, November 1905

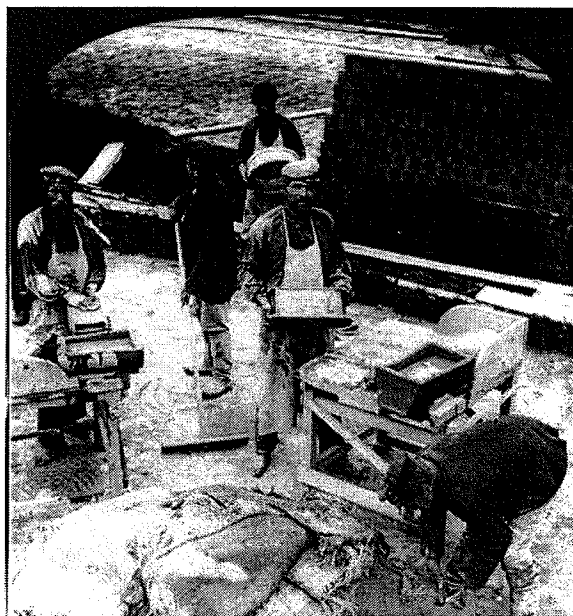
In February 1906 the liberal Kadet party formally denounced the strikes, the land seizures, and the Moscow uprising. Among many intellectuals, deep pessimism prevailed over the future.

***“...whether we remember or forget, in all of us sit sensations of malaise, fear, catastrophe, explosion.... We do not know yet precisely what events await us, but in our hearts the needle of the seismograph has already stirred...”***

—Poet Alexander Blok

### *Who was Petr Stolypin (1862-1911)?*

Onto this uncertain stage stepped Petr Stolypin. Appointed as prime minister in 1906, Stolypin was from an old noble family and supported the monarchy. Stolypin understood that the crown’s survival depended on two factors: the restoration of order and genuine cooperation with the Duma. Stolypin believed that agrarian reform was essential if the problem of peasant rebellion was to be cured. Stolypin believed that a stable land-



Peasants making bricks by hand.

Photo courtesy of the Library of Congress.

owning class of peasants, which would have a comparable stake in Russia to that of the gentry, had to be created.

***“First of all we have to create a citizen, a small landowner, and then the peasant problem will be solved.”***

—Petr Stolypin

Stolypin confronted an enormous task. The country continued to be wracked by peasant unrest and terrorism. During 1906 and 1907, Socialist Revolutionaries and anarchists killed or injured nine thousand people. Forty-five hundred of their victims were officials.

During Stolypin’s first three years in office, the government shut down hundreds of radical newspapers and labor unions. Almost sixty thousand political prisoners were executed, imprisoned, or exiled without trial for participating in allegedly radical activities. The army tried thousands of peasants in field courts-martial. Many were executed. The hangman’s noose became known as “Stolypin’s necktie,” and the railroad cars used to transport political prisoners to Siberia were dubbed “Stolypin carriages.”

### ***How did Stolypin attempt to bring about agrarian reform?***

Stolypin wanted to create a class of prosperous, conservative small farmers, much like the families that worked the land in France and the United States. To achieve his aim, Stolypin sought to break up the village communes in which peasants held land collectively.

Acting with the tsar’s power to rule by decree when the Duma was not in session, Stolypin enacted his most important law in November 1906. This law enabled peasants to separate from the commune and set up private farms.

Stolypin believed that the agrarian problem could not be solved by taking over private estates, as advocated by liberals and Socialist Revolutionaries: there simply was not enough land in private possession to meet the needs

of the rapidly growing peasant population. For Stolypin, the solution lay in more intensive cultivation to yield larger harvests. He wanted to drive the poorer and inefficient peasants off the land by allowing them to sell to more productive and wealthier peasants.

He thought the best means to this end was to allow privatization of peasant landholdings. Stolypin also gave peasants the right to homesteads in Western Siberia where agriculture was possible. Some 2.5 million moved to Siberia.

The new law set up procedures for a household to withdraw from the commune and claim ownership of its allotment of land. The household could then set up its own farm or sell the land. Between 1906 and 1916, 2.5 million households filed petitions to claim ownership of their allotments. This sum represented 14.5 percent of total communal acreage. Those who used the new legislation tended to be poorer peasants who wanted to sell their allotments.

### ***Why did the socialist-bloc refuse to work with Stolypin?***

The Duma’s socialists disliked Stolypin and refused to work with him, in part because the electoral law favored the rich, so that the peasants and workers whom the socialists championed were grossly underrepresented in the Duma. With this impasse, the tsar dissolved the second Duma in June 1907.

Acting when the Duma was dissolved, Stolypin drastically changed election laws. The new system of voting favored large landowners and the wealthy. One percent of the population now elected the Duma. By changing the election laws, Stolypin produced a third Duma with a conservative majority, which then approved the new election laws.

Stolypin’s brutal repression of radicals, persistent attempts to weaken the communes, and high-handed style of governing made him many enemies. In September 1911, while attending the opera, he was assassinated by a double agent who served both the police and the terrorist cause. It was never learned which

side the assassin was working for at the time of the murder. It is even possible that jealous high-level officials in the tsar's government were involved.

## A Country in Turmoil

Russia between 1911 and 1914 was a country in turmoil. The political impasse continued as a fourth Duma was elected in 1912. The new Duma was as unrepresentative of the entire population as was its predecessor. A resurgent conservative bloc hoped to restore its ideal Russian social order. The Union of the Russian People (URP), gained more adherents as it stepped up its street campaigns and violence against Jews and those they suspected of harboring revolutionary ideas. The tsar supported the URP, hoping that someday it would become the basis for a political party able to challenge the socialists. It would never become a significant political factor.

### *What were the economic conditions?*

Although the political environment was chaotic, economic conditions were mixed. In 1906, the Ministry of Finance negotiated a series of massive loans from Western European banks so as not to be dependent on appropriations from the new Duma. This sparked renewed growth of both Russian and foreign-owned industries. Iron and coal production increased as did Russia's imports and exports. Russia was the world's leading grain exporter.

But conflict increased on the land and in the factory. Between 1910 and 1914, seventeen thousand peasant disturbances were reported in European Russia. Workplace violence returned with a vengeance in 1912, after the massacre of 350 striking gold miners in Siberia by government troops. During the following two years, three million laborers participated in over nine thousand strikes.

On the eve of World War I, the highly volatile Russian Empire stood poised on the edge of disaster. In addition to the sharp political divisions, ethnic tensions simmered just under the surface. Ukrainians, Jews, Poles, Finns, Latvians, Armenians, and many other

ethnic groups harbored grievances against the Russian rule. They also had their own political aspirations. They often resented each other as well as the Russians who ruled and lived among them.

All these passions were held in check only by a weak tsar and weak government. Sooner or later there would again be violence.

### *How did World War I affect Russia?*

In August 1914 Russia joined World War I as a member of the Allied Powers. Despite Russia's progress between 1885 and 1914, the country's industrial capacity still lagged far behind that of the other countries fighting in WWI. Serious weapons shortages were one major problem that Russian troops faced.

***“Unarmed men had to be sent into the trenches to wait till their comrades were killed or wounded and their rifles became available.”***

—Report from a British officer in Russia

Germany's heavy artillery often destroyed Russian units before they ever saw their foe. The Russian armies lacked the guns and shells to respond. By the end of 1916, Russia's casualties were approximately 3.6 million dead or badly wounded, in addition to 2.1 million prisoners of war.

***“They drove us and we went. Where was I going and why? To kill the Germans! But why? I didn't know. I arrived in the trenches, which were terrifying and appalling. I listened as our company commander beat a soldier, beat him about the head with a whip. Blood poured from the poor man's head. Well, I thought, as soon as he begins to beat me, I'll skewer him with my bayonet and be taken prisoner. I thought who really is my enemy: the Germans or the company commander? I still couldn't see the Germans, but here in front of me was the commander. The lice bit***

***me in the trenches. I was overcome with dejection. And then as we were retreating I was taken prisoner.”***

—A Russian draftee

Poorly armed, poorly trained, and led by cruel and often incompetent officers, the Russian armies and soldiers suffered greatly.

When Russian armies retreated, the Russian military commanders applied a “scorched-earth policy” of destroying anything that might be of use to the advancing German military, including shelter and food supplies. Millions of Russian refugees streamed eastward where they interfered with the movements of the Russian military. In addition the refugees required shelter and food which were in short supply. The influx of hungry and discontented refugees brought more problems to Russia’s cities.

#### ***How did Russia finance its war effort?***

Russia financed its war effort by increasing taxes, securing foreign loans, and increasing the supply of paper money six times over. Government debt and inflation skyrocketed. Between 1914 and 1916, prices tripled, but wages only doubled. The pressures on the urban population rose even higher as some six million war refugees and new hires crowded the cities. Capitalists raked in record profits while workers strained to pay daily expenses.

#### ***How did the Russian public regard the war?***

While the war had initially been greeted by public displays of patriotism, the huge losses and obvious incompetence of the tsar’s government demoralized both soldiers and civilians. Just as with the famine of 1891-2, educated society decried this mismanagement and created its own voluntary organizations (approved by the government) to increase war production, coordinate the military supply effort, and provide social services.

During the summer of 1915, the Duma, which had not been in session for almost a year, reconvened. Two-thirds of its members

formed a broad coalition called the Progressive Bloc, composed of all factions—except extremists—on both the socialist and conservative sides. The Bloc’s chief concern was winning the war, and its members were convinced that this could not happen unless the tsar appointed a new ministry supported by the public. Remarkably, some of the tsar’s own ministers openly agreed with the Bloc and volunteered to step down in favor of new appointees acceptable to the Duma.

Defying the Bloc’s demands, Tsar Nicholas fired many of his ministers and dismissed the Duma. In addition, he decided to go to the front and, despite his total lack of military experience, assume personal command of the army. He did so in the hopes of reviving the morale of the troops.

### **The Monarchy Self-Destructs**

Nicholas’ decision to go to the front allowed his wife, the Tsaritsa Alexandra (who was German by birth), to play a more significant role in Petrograd (as the capital had been renamed in 1914, in a patriotic change from the German-sounding St. Petersburg). Opposed to any sort of political reform, the empress persuaded her absent husband to replace many of his remaining ministers with her own favorites. She, in turn, relied on the counsel of Rasputin, the peasant “holy man,” who had acquired considerable influence at court due to his mysterious healings of her hemophiliac son. Convinced that she and Rasputin were Nicholas’s only indispensable advisors, Alexandra peppered her husband with letters on governmental matters.

***“And guided by Him [God] we shall get through this heavy time. It will be hard fighting, but a Man of God [Rasputin] is near to guard yr. [your] boat safely through the reefs—little Sunny [Alexandra] is standing as a rock behind you, firm and unwavering.”***

—Tsaritsa Alexandra

**Who was Rasputin?**

Nicholas's dependence on his wife, together with her complete trust in the semi-literate Rasputin, severely damaged the prestige of the monarchy. Rasputin's reputation was scandalous. He openly bragged of his control over jobs in the government and church hierarchies. He received bribes and sexual favors from those who desired his intervention on their behalf. Rasputin himself encouraged false rumors that he had been sexually intimate with Alexandra. These tales alienated Russians of all social backgrounds, from other members of the royal family to the lowest-ranking foot soldier.

This appearance of appalling corruption in high places extended to the war effort. It was said that the tsaritsa and her circle were German spies and that Nicholas gave his cousin, Kaiser Wilhelm II, advance notice of Russian troop movements. These rumors, although untrue, nevertheless infuriated many members of the public, who increasingly directed their wrath over Russia's wartime failures at the royal family. Some prominent Russians, including members of the royal family, privately discussed the need for a coup d'état. They became persuaded that a change in leadership could revive the war effort, preserve the state, and stave off a revolt. In December, 1916 Rasputin was murdered in a plot involving three nobles, including the tsar's favorite nephew. After Rasputin's death, Nicholas and Alexandra grew ever more isolated and more resistant to reform.

**How did the war affect the civilian population?**

World War I both created and exacerbated severe economic difficulties. By late 1916,



Rasputin (center) surrounded by members of the court.

Photo courtesy of Jupiter Images.

with the mobilization of some fifteen million men and the direction of all resources to the war effort, the population endured shortages of boots, firewood, kerosene, soap, sugar, and textiles. While good harvests produced plenty of food in rural areas, the railroads could not get food to the cities fast enough to satisfy demand. By the winter of 1916-17, the cities confronted a critical food shortage.

Led by women (who stood in line for hours to secure food for their families), riots began to occur. To make matters worse, during that winter a serious fuel shortage coincided with the coldest weather in years. The temperature in public workplaces and private homes in Petrograd was reported to have stayed between forty-four and fifty-nine degrees Fahrenheit. The police, whose job it was to monitor urban unrest, recorded ominous signs. Unrest and anxiety grew in intensity, reaching new sections of the general population.

***“Mothers, exhausted from standing endlessly at the tail of queues, and having suffered so much in watching their half-starving and sick children, are perhaps much closer to a revolution than (the Duma leaders).”***

— Police report

***“We will soon have a famine.... In the suburbs of Petrograd you can see well-dressed women begging on the streets. It is very cold. People have nothing to burn in their stoves. Here and there at night they tear down wooden fences. What has happened to the twentieth century! What has happened to Civilization! The number of child prostitutes is shocking. On your way somewhere at night you see them shuffling along the sidewalks, just like cockroaches, blue with cold and hungry.”***

—Writer Maxim Gorky

At the same time, the number of strikes approached that of the pre-war period. Workers began to call openly for a change of regimes. These strikes stimulated the socialist parties to renewed recruiting activity in the factories, universities, and army garrisons. In the barracks, demoralized soldiers, disgusted at the futility and the huge human costs of the war, decried governmental paralysis.

By this time, the government, led by an obstinate tsar, had proven itself to be incompetent. The divisions in Russian society were clear. Conditions were ripe for a revolution.

## **The 1917 Revolution Begins: The February Days**

In February 1917, the capital city of Petrograd experienced the first upheavals of the Russian Revolution. The weather that winter was unusually bitter, with the average temperature for the month an icy fifteen degrees below zero. Petrograd’s latitude made matters worse. The city was located so far north that the sun, when it was visible at all, could be observed just a few fleeting hours each day.

### ***How did geography affect the revolution?***

Petrograd’s geography played a significant role in the course of the revolution. The city was built where the Neva River emptied into the Gulf of Finland. The river, its branches, and a network of canals divided the city into

separate districts. The city center, surrounded by the Neva and the Fontanka Canal, was the enclave of the prosperous and the powerful. It contained the tsar’s splendid Winter Palace, government buildings, and elegant residences. Smaller palaces and fashionable stores lined the well-policed main street which radiated southeast from the city center. Ringing Petrograd’s core were the gritty industrial suburbs; these districts were situated on islands. The largest factories were located here, along with the grimy apartment buildings which housed the workers. The city’s stylish core could be isolated from the industrial suburbs by drawbridges.

Early 1917 saw two great strikes in the capital, each of which idled tens of thousands of workers and scores of factories. Labor unrest and student protests occurred daily. On February 22, in response to a labor dispute, managers at Russia’s biggest metal and munitions plant locked out all thirty thousand of their workers. Angry workers marched toward the city center but were stopped by police. Some workers met with Alexander Kerensky, a socialist leader in the Duma. They warned him that “something very serious might happen.”

Compared with the preceding weeks, Thursday, February 23, was a somewhat warmer day, with a high temperature of 5 degrees below zero. It was the start of several days of mild weather, with high temperatures from February 24-28 ranging from 6 to 46 degrees above zero. The better weather prompted Petrograd’s residents to emerge from their homes onto the streets. These days witnessed the demonstrations and bloody clashes which brought the 300-year-old Romanov dynasty to an end.

### ***What was the strike of the women textile workers?***

February 23 was International Women’s Day for the socialists. That morning, at several factories in the industrial district of Vyborg, frustrated women textile workers met to vent their anger over the serious food shortage. They were furious that ten to twelve hours of labor a day had to be followed by hours

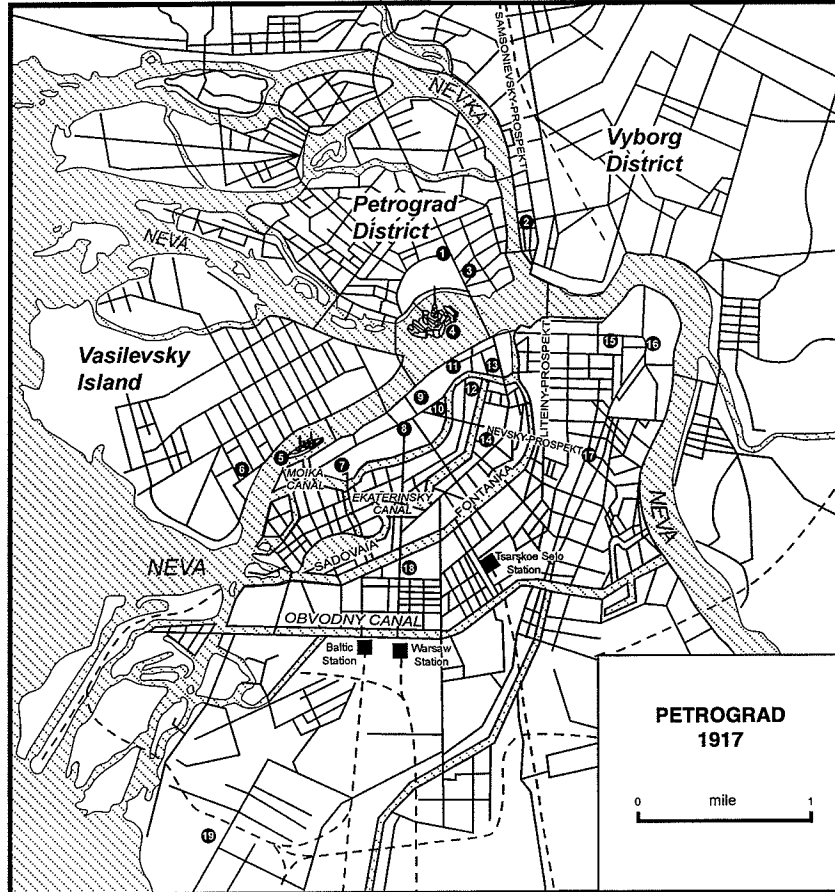
waiting in line at the food stores, with no guarantee that any provisions were available. Clamoring for “Bread!,” they left their factories and headed for the metal plants, looking for their men.

**“Down with the war!  
Down with the high  
cost of living! Down  
with hunger! Bread  
for the workers!”**  
—Chant of women textile  
workers

Thronges of militant women textile workers surged from one factory to another as additional workers joined the crowd. Eventually, over 100,000 workers, one-third of the city’s total, went on strike, and some tried to march to the city center before going home.

On Friday, February 24, workers went to their factories, but not to perform their normal tasks. Instead, they met to organize a continuation of the strikes and demonstrations of the previous day. More than 200,000 strikers—the largest number since the start of the war—left their jobs and tried to march to the city center. Many were armed with tools, knives, and pieces of iron.

**“Comrades, if we cannot get a loaf of bread for ourselves in a righteous way, then we must do everything: we must go ahead and solve our problem by force.... Comrades, arm yourselves with everything possible—bolts, screws, rocks, and go out of the**



- |   |  |
|---|--|
| 1 Gorky's house                           | 11 Winter Palace                               |
| 2 Bolshevik headquarters, Vyborg District | 12 Pravda editorial offices and printing plant |
| 3 Kshesinskaya Mansion                    | 13 Pavlovsky Regiment                          |
| 4 Peter and Paul Fortress                 | 14 City Duma                                   |
| 5 Aurora                                  | 15 Tauride Palace                              |
| 6 Finland Regiment                        | 16 Smolny Institute                            |
| 7 Central telegraph office                | 17 Znamenskaya Square                          |
| 8 War Ministry                            | 18 Petrograd Regiment                          |
| 9 Palace Square                           | 19 Putilov factory                             |
| 10 General Staff headquarters             |  |

***factory and start smashing the first shops you find.”***

—A striker

Despite opposition from the authorities, many strikers, joined by students, housewives, shop clerks, and other sympathizers assembled at Znamenskaya Square in the city center. This square was an enormous open space centered on a mammoth statue of the tsar’s father, Alexander III, on horseback. Before dispersing, the throng listened to fiery anti-tsarist speakers.

It was difficult if not impossible for many to hear what was being said. But after years of political repression, those in the square knew that they were witnessing the beginning of something important. The open defiance of the tsar in front of the police meant that the old order was crumbling.

### ***What role did soldiers play in the growing demonstrations?***

During the next two days, events became increasingly violent. On Saturday, a general strike nearly shut down private businesses and public services as marchers filled the streets. Middle-class residents began to join the protests. The crowds became bolder, while some soldiers, assigned to assist the police, openly expressed hesitation about taking action against the marchers.

Many of these soldiers were new recruits and came from the working-class areas of Petrograd. As a result, many of the soldiers had much in common with the demonstrators. Women demonstrators often pleaded with the soldiers, telling them of the hardships their families faced while their male relatives were away fighting in the war.

These pleas weakened military discipline. In a memorable incident, one unit of Cossacks (irregular cavalry) refused to help the police quell a demonstration. Furthermore, this

unit charged the police and killed their commander. That night the tsar, having received reports of the strife in the capital, sent a telegram from his military headquarters ordering the use of decisive armed force to suppress the conflict. Sunday was a day of bloody confrontation. Large numbers of demonstrators converged on the city center, where they were met by soldiers under orders to fire into the crowds. Hundreds of demonstrators were gunned down. The worst clash occurred at Znamenskaya Square, where soldiers of the Volynsky Regiment killed over fifty protestors.

### ***Why was the soldier's mutiny important?***

Monday, February 27, was the turning point in the events: the day of the soldiers' mutiny. It began with troops of the Volynsky Regiment who, repelled by their own part in the previous day's carnage, had decided to disobey future orders to fire on demonstrators. When their commander issued this order, he was shot in the back. The Volynsky soldiers left their barracks and set out for other regiments to persuade their troops to join the mutiny. By day's end about 66,000 uniformed soldiers had cast their lot with the striking workers. The military cohesion of the Petrograd garrison was gone. At least 170,000 firearms made their way from military arsenals and weapons factories onto the streets.

Not surprisingly, the streets became even more violent. The crowds invaded prisons and released eight thousand inmates, the vast majority of them common criminals. They took destroyed police stations, along with their records, the court buildings, and prisons. Armed gangs looted shops and broke into the houses of the well-to-do. Some robbed or raped their inhabitants. The February Revolution in Petrograd was violent and bloody.



Men and women stand in line to collect their bread.

Photo courtesy of Jupiter Images.



Casualty statistics varied, but ranged from approximately 1,500 to 7,500 killed or wounded.

Having squandered the support of its own people, and having lost the loyalty of its armed forces, the Romanov dynasty collapsed. On March 2, Nicholas II abdicated, or resigned.

### ***What was the reaction to the abdication of the tsar?***

In the aftermath of February's events, many Russians felt a sense of euphoria. A three-hundred-year old dynasty had collapsed in a few days. For several weeks, Russians experienced what seemed to be absolute freedom.

***“A miracle has happened, and we may expect more miracles...almost anything might happen.”***

—March 23, 1917 poet Alexander Blok

Many viewed the revolution as a great moral rebirth of the Russian people—some likened it to Christ's resurrection on Easter.

Others believed it would take Russia in a more Christian direction and that evil, drunkenness, and theft would vanish.

### **Dual Authority**

As the soldiers' mutiny and prisoner releases of February 27 sealed the monarchy's fate, the would-be leaders of a new Russia gathered in the two wings of the Tauride Palace, the center of a new governing authority in Russia. With some reluctance, several leading officials in the Duma appointed themselves as the new leaders of a Provisional Government. The Provisional Government met in the right wing of the Tauride Palace. In addition to the self-selected Provisional Government, workers and soldiers voted in elections for representatives to a new governmental body—the Petrograd Soviet of Workers' and Soldiers' Deputies. The Petrograd Soviet met in the palace's left wing. And in March and April, these two bodies attempted to provide leadership in the wake of the tsar's abdication.

The first concern of this new “dual authority” was to restore public order, which



Protesters gather at Znamenskaya Square in February 1917.

Photo courtesy of Getty Images.



Headline in *The New York Times* on Revolution in Russia.

could only be accomplished by convincing the thousands of mutinous troops to return to their barracks. Fearful of retribution for their mutiny, the soldiers sought immunity and protection. In response, on March 1 the Soviet unanimously approved Order Number One which gave the soldiers immunity. The Soviet could overrule any military order. As a result, the Soviet received the soldiers' allegiance.

The Provisional Government was led by the Constitutional Democrat party (Kadets). The Kadets were able to seize this power (which in the end proved slight) because many of their more radical socialist counterparts were not interested in negotiating for power within the existing society. Instead, these socialists wanted to create a new society altogether. They advocated revolution rather than gradual change through political development. Additionally, many socialist leaders had been exiled under the tsar and were just beginning to return at the time that the Provisional Government was established.

The Provisional Government sought to exercise formal authority over Russia's domestic and foreign affairs. Prince Georgii Lvov, a well-respected "public man" who had previously gained renown for his services to his country in times of famine and war, was chosen as prime minister.

During its first weeks the Provisional Government passed a series of dramatic reforms. The government outlawed capital punishment, reformed the judicial system, and took steps to place the police under control of local government. The Provisional Government also granted the political freedoms of assembly, press, speech, and universal suffrage. The government repealed legal restrictions that applied to religion, class, and race. Russian citizens struggled to keep track of the new laws and freedoms.

### ***How did the Revolution spread throughout Russia?***

The revolution quickly reached the rest of the country by telegraph. In each major city, a Petrograd-style dual authority model was followed, with a Public Committee taking the role of the Provisional Government, while a soviet of workers' and soldiers' deputies represented the lower classes. This process occurred with breathtaking speed, amid much popular acclaim. During March and early April, the revolution also came to small towns and villages.

## Spring 1917: Russia Debates its Future

The Provisional Government considered itself to be a temporary entity charged with holding Russia together until future elections could be held for a Constituent Assembly, which would create the country's new permanent government. What that government would be was far from certain.

Despite the appearance of dual authority, actual power rested with the Soviet, which was an elected body supported by workers and, most importantly, rank-and-file soldiers. By contrast, the Provisional Government had no support from armed men and existed as the result of decisions made by a small number of political leaders who lacked any popular mandate.

***“The Provisional Government has no real power of any kind and its orders are carried out only to the extent that is permitted by the Soviet of Workers’ and Soldiers’ Deputies. The latter controls the most essential levers of power, insofar as the troops, the railways, and the postal and telegraph services are in its hands. One can assert bluntly that the Provisional Government exists only as long as it is allowed to do so by the Soviet.”***

—The Minister of War Alexander Guchkov,  
March 9, 1917

The dual authority of the Provisional Government and Petrograd Soviet reflected the divisions between the upper and lower classes. Workers and soldiers identified with the Soviet and distrusted the educated and land-owning members of the Provisional Government.

### ***Who was Alexander Kerensky?***

One person linked the Soviet with the Provisional Government: Alexander Kerensky. A charismatic personality, the thirty-six-year-old Kerensky was both a skilled orator and a

respected attorney. Although he did not hold the highest job in either entity, he was considered one of the top two or three leaders in both the Soviet and the Provisional Government, and was the only individual who held such a distinction. In his many speeches, he often referred to himself as the “hostage of democracy” who would protect lower-class interests from any hint of infringement by the Provisional Government.

### ***What happened after Lenin’s return from abroad?***

Prior to 1917, all the major socialist leaders were exiled or imprisoned. None of these exiles had played a role in the February Revolution. The Petrograd Soviet was led by middle-level Social Democrats and Socialist Revolutionaries, who had been engaged in political agitation among workers during the war. After the tsar’s abdication, the Provi-



Workers toppled the statue of Tsar Alexander III in protest of the Romanov Dynasty.

Photo courtesy of the New York Public Library.

sional Government permitted the top socialist leaders to return to Petrograd where they began to assume leading roles in shaping their homeland's future. It became the custom to welcome returning leaders with a reception at the railroad station. Near midnight on April 3, 1917, such a reception was held for Lenin, the Bolshevik leader who had accepted German help to travel via a special train from Switzerland. Except for six months in 1905-6, Lenin had lived outside of Russia for seventeen years. He was greeted in the tsar's former waiting room at the Finland Station by a delegation from the Petrograd Soviet.

Following the reception, Lenin was driven to Bolshevik headquarters at the Kshesinskaya Palace. Speaking from the balcony to a waiting crowd, Lenin assailed the war, denouncing "capitalist pirates...defending the fatherland means defending one set of capitalists against another." With Russia still engaged in fighting World War I, Lenin's words angered soldiers in the crowd who found his words defeatist and pro-German.

### ***What did Lenin call for in his "April Theses"?***

The next day, Lenin spoke at a meeting of the Social Democrats. His address scathingly criticized the Provisional Government and the Petrograd Soviet leadership. He called for Russia's immediate withdrawal from the war; a new revolution empowering the workers and the peasants; an end to support of the Provisional Government; abolition of the police, army, and bureaucracy; and the placing of all political authority in the hands of the soviets. Lenin's speech, which became his "April Theses," amazed and enraged many in his Social Democrat audience, who responded to his remarks with boos, catcalls, and whistles.

Each night, irate crowds gathered outside the Kshesinskaya palace, railing at the "German agent" inside. The conservative press attacked Lenin. Soldiers in Moscow protested what they claimed were his pro-German leanings.

***“How convenient it is to be friends with the enemies of Russia. The Bolsheviks are given a safe and free-of-charge passage through Germany. In Russia royal waiting rooms are opened for them at railway stations and they live in a luxurious palace—also free of charge.”***

—Newspaper *Novoe Vremia*, April 7

Many believed that Lenin was out of touch with the political sentiments of the day. Lenin's arrival exemplified the political upheaval that followed the February days.

***“For months in Petrograd, and all over Russia, every street corner was a public tribune. In railway trains, street-cars, always the spurting up of impromptu debate, everywhere...”***

—John Reed, *Ten Days that Shook the World*

### ***How did ordinary Russians get involved?***

Competing voices clamored to be heard as Russians considered the political options for their future. Millions of Russian people poured into the streets and clamored for "democracy"—something they had never experienced. They were tired of the oppression of the tsar and the secret police, tired of the hunger and shortages after three years of war. At rallies and meetings they sang an anthem from the French Revolution: the *Marseillaise*, but with their own words.

***“We renounce the old world,  
We shake its dust from our feet,  
We don't need a Golden Idol,  
And we despise the Tsarist Devil  
Arise, arise, working people!  
Arise against the enemies, hungry  
brother!  
Sound the cry of the people's  
vengeance!  
Forward! ”***

—Russian adaptation of the *Marseillaise*

The people wanted change, but what was it that they wanted exactly?

The leaders of the new Provisional Government had their own ideas of what the people wanted and what the cries for democracy meant. So many new laws were passed, that Russians had a hard time keeping track of all their new freedoms. Lenin called Russia “the freest country in the world.”

The new political freedoms let loose a torrent of political speech. Kept silent for centuries during the rule of the tsars, Russians everywhere debated what their future should hold.

***“The servants and house porters demand advice as to which party they should vote for in the ward elections. Every wall in the town is placarded with notices of meetings, lectures, congresses, electoral appeals and announcements.... Two men argue at a street corner***

***and are at once surrounded by an excited crowd. Even at concerts now the music is diluted with political speeches by well-known orators.... Book hawkers line the pavement and cry sensational pamphlets about Rasputin and Nicholas, and who is Lenin, and how much land will the peasants get.”***

—Harold Williams, a British journalist in  
Russia

But for the socialists and others outside of the Provisional Government, democracy not only meant choosing a government, but changing society and social conditions as well. For them, the moment presented a chance to gain autonomy and a chance to exact revenge on those who had repressed and misused them.

In the spring of 1917, Russia’s future was uncertain. A tremendous contest for the future of Russia was about to commence. In the coming days you are going to recreate the debate that took place at the time.

## Options in Brief

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### Option 1: Create a Liberal Democracy

The time has come to build a liberal democracy in Russia! We support the Provisional Government until a Constituent Assembly can be elected to enact needed political and social reforms. Representatives of the people must be chosen by universal suffrage; government is best guided by the ballot box, not mob violence. Educated persons can provide necessary leadership. Russia deserves to be guided by the rule of law—law that respects the freedom and dignity of every human being. Individual rights, such as the right to speak, write, and worship freely, should be safeguarded. Private property should be protected and free enterprise should be encouraged. The civil and cultural rights of minority peoples should be respected, but the integrity and unity of the Russian state has to be preserved. The sacrifices of our brave soldiers and sailors must not be in vain. We will defend the fatherland!

### Option 2: Respect the Peasants

The exploitation of the peasants must end! Land and liberty! The peasants are the backbone of Russia, yet it is they who suffer the most. All land should be granted to the peasants without compensation to the nobility. The traditions of the commune will be observed; the equality of all peasants will be guaranteed, while private ownership of land will not be reintroduced. Peasants and workers share the brotherhood of toil. Agriculture is more important than urban industries, which will only grow if the rural economy progresses first. We support the civil and cultural rights of minority peoples. Participation in the soviets, the Provisional Government, and the upcoming Constituent Assembly will help to achieve these aims. We should work with the Socialist Revolutionary Party to advance the cause of the peasants. Abroad, Russians must fight to defend their country and, after the war, we will work internationally for a peace of justice.

### Option 3: Work Toward a Future Socialist Society

Karl Marx's ideas mirror what is happening now in Russia. Russia is industrializing rapidly, and this process is both creating an urban lower class and exacerbating class conflict. However, Russian capitalism is still in its infancy, and it will be a long time before Russia is ready for socialism. We must trust in our wise Menshevik leaders to guide us to that eventual goal. For now, active participation in the soviet's development of a strong labor party to prepare for future Constituent Assembly elections, and cooperation with the Provisional Government will move Russia toward a better tomorrow. We support self-determination for minority groups, but this must be decided by the Constituent Assembly. Russia should defend itself against aggression. After the war, together with our brothers throughout the world, we will strive for a just peace.

### Option 4: Organize Now for a Second Revolution

Marxist theory is sound, but must be adapted to Russian conditions. With the February Revolution, the time is ripe for radical change. It is true that, at present, Russia's urban lower class lacks sufficient class-consciousness to overthrow capitalism. However, an elite group of well-organized, highly-disciplined, dedicated revolutionaries can teach and lead the workers to achieve this goal. A second revolution is needed in Russia! All power to the soviets! Peace, land, and bread! All peoples of Russia should join the cause of the Bolsheviks! The Provisional Government is an empty shell; after a period of organization and subversion, we can topple it. Russia must withdraw from the war and conclude an immediate peace. Land should be confiscated from the nobles and redistributed by the peasants themselves. City workers must be fed. Long live the international socialist revolution!

## Option 1: Create A Liberal Democracy

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The time has come to build a liberal democracy in Russia! With the February Revolution and the abdication of the tsar, we can create a society guided by the rule of law. In the spirit of our French, British, and American historical ancestors, we have the opportunity to establish here, in our beloved Russia, a state characterized by limited government and the protection of individual rights.

The days of tsarist coercion are gone, never to return. We support the Provisional Government until a Constituent Assembly can be elected to enact needed political and social reforms. Already, Russia has transformed itself into a beacon of freedom. The Provisional Government has passed measures

- a. to guarantee freedoms of speech, press, and assembly;
- b. to rescind legal restrictions based on class, race, and religion;
- c. to provide a general amnesty;
- d. to establish universal adult suffrage;
- e. to reform the justice system (including abolishing capital punishment); and
- f. to introduce democratic local self-rule.

We have an optimistic faith in the goodness of the Russian people. Despite the many challenges that face us, the resilience and cooperative spirit of our people will carry us through the difficult days ahead. Our liberal leaders seek to look after the welfare of all people, not just one class. The people can be relied upon to be patient while a legal framework is put in place to safeguard public order and private property.

Private property should be protected and free enterprise should be encouraged. Russia's economy will thrive when the people become aware that entrepreneurial initiative will be rewarded. Previously, the Russian state has spearheaded the process of modernization. Today, economic leadership roles need to be assumed by individuals themselves—whether they are peasants, workers, landholders, or industrialists. Capitalism is the wave of the future in Russia. The integrity and unity of the Russian state must be preserved. We support the authority of the state and oppose federalism. The blood of many gallant soldiers and sailors has been spilled in defense of the Russian Empire. Their sacrifices must not be in vain. All Russians must unite to defeat the Central Powers. We will defend our fatherland!

### Beliefs and Assumptions Underlying Option 1

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1. Liberal democracy and capitalism represent the leading edge of modern political and economic thought. Russia needs to look forward, not backward.

2. The road of revolution is fraught with danger to law and order. We must proceed cautiously, with an eye to appropriate historical precedent.

3. The current international borders of the Russian state must not be altered, and there should be no concessions to those ethnic groups seeking even limited autonomy within Russia.

4. We must honor our dead by defending Russia against the Central Powers.

## Supporting Arguments for Option 1

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1. The February Revolution has provided Russia with an opportunity to join the family of civilized western nations. Our political and economic models can be such successful countries as France, Great Britain, and the United States.

2. All the peoples of Russia need to be a part of this process. Hasty elections to the Constituent Assembly would produce a poorly-designed legislature. The Provisional Government will serve ably as temporary

guardian of the state until a fair electoral process is established.

3. Russians have long been the dominant ethnic group within the old Russian Empire. Russian political and cultural leadership needs to be maintained as a basis for unity within the new Russian state. At the same time, the civil and cultural rights of minority peoples must be respected.

4. With military victory, the Russian people will have higher regard for their new government.

## From the Historical Record

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*N.V. Nekrasov, January 1917*

“In the trials Russia will face, we will not appear in the role of suppressors of the revolution. The government has destroyed itself. Our task will be entirely constructive; in the storm and chaos we will have to create a new government that will be able to calm the country immediately and get down to vast creative work.”

*Paul Miliukov, January 1917*

“Revolution must not take us by surprise. We are the only restraining and organized force, the only force that could save the government and reconcile it with the rough raging sea of people.”

*Declaration of the Provisional Government, March 27, 1917*

“The old regime has gone. The State Duma has forgotten its party differences, has united in the name of the salvation of our homeland and has taken upon itself the creation of a new regime. All citizens should have confidence in this regime and should combine their efforts to allow the government created by the Duma to complete its great task of liberating Russia from the external enemy and establishing peace inside Russia, on the basis of law, equality and freedom.... Forget all your party, class, estate and national differences! The

united Russian people should rise up and create conditions in which all citizens can live peacefully....”

*Central Committee of the Constitutional Democrats in connection with the formation of the Provisional Government, March 3, 1917*

“Citizens!... The old regime left the defense of the country in a seriously disorganized state. Its criminal inaction and clumsy measures have brought ruin to our finances, to production and transport and to supplying the army. It has seriously damaged our economic structure. The Provisional Government, with the vigorous and active cooperation of the people, will devote all its strength to remedying these defects which the old regime left behind. But time does not stand still. The blood of many sons of Russia has been needlessly spilt over the last 2 1/2 long years of war, but the country is still exposed to a powerful enemy, occupying whole regions of our state and now, at the birth of Russian freedom, threatening us with new and decisive pressure. The defense—at whatever cost—of our own national honor and the expulsion of the enemy from inside our borders: this is the first urgent and vital task of our troops, defending the freedom of the people.”



*Prince Georgii E. Lvov, head of the first Provisional Government, April 27, 1917*

“The great Russian revolution is truly miraculous in its majestic, quiet progress under the red glow of the World War.... The miraculous thing about it is not the fairylike unbelievableness of the change itself, not the colossal alterations that have taken place... but the very essence of the guiding spirit of the revolution. The freedom won by the Russian revolution is permeated by elements of a world-wide, universal nature.... The soul of the Russian democracy has turned out to be, in its very nature, the soul of the world democracy. It is ready not only to merge with the world democracy but also to take a position of leadership and guide the world democracy on the road of human development laid out by the principles of liberty, equality and fraternity.”

## Option 2: Respect the Peasants

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The peasants are the backbone of Russia. Approximately 80 percent of Russia's population are peasants, while most of the remainder are but one or two generations removed from peasantry. The peasants grow the food that keeps Russia alive. Thanks to their toil, Russia was the world's leading pre-war grain exporter. If there is a social class that deserves respect, it is the peasantry. Tragically, far from receiving anything resembling respect, the peasants instead receive horrible abuse. Russian peasants were the last in Europe to be released from serfdom. Since then, the peasants have still been heavily dependent on their former masters—the nobles.

Under the old regime, the government has attempted to “help” the peasants. May the Good Lord preserve us from such “help” again! The “reforms” of Alexander II and bloody Nicholas drove good people off the land and redoubled human misery. These “reforms” brought nothing but Stolypin’s neckties and carriages. Thank God that those accursed bloodsuckers are gone for good! The exploitation of the peasants must end!

Land and liberty! It is time that the peasants received their due. All land should be granted to the peasants without compensation to the nobility. The timeless traditions of the Russian commune will be observed. Equality of all peasants will be guaranteed. Russia will only progress if the rural economy progresses first. Agriculture, the most important sector of our economy, will feed the factory workers in our cities. The Russian people must be a single family of brother-laborers. The Russian people have pulled themselves free and thrown off the heavy chains of tsarist oppression. Now Russia can be rebuilt, like a beautiful new house, by all its inhabitants.

Participation in the soviets and the Provisional Government are necessary so that the voice of the people can be clearly heard. In addition, we should work with the Socialist Revolutionary Party to advance the cause of the peasants. Countless peasant members of our brave Russian army have enriched our soil with their own blood, shed by the hated invaders. The sacrifices of our heroes must be repaid through the defeat of the Central Powers! After victory, we will seek a peace of justice with our international brothers.

### Beliefs and Assumptions Underlying Option 2

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1. Since the peasants are the foundation of Russian society, any serious attempt to improve conditions in this country must begin with the peasants.

2. Land should belong to those who make it productive. Peasants have a right to the land and the gentry do not.

3. The current international borders of the Russian state should remain intact.

We are reluctant to consider limited autonomy for ethnic groups within Russia.

4. The Russian army is a peasant army, and peasants are men of the soil. Countless peasants have given their lives to defend that soil; their sacrifice must not be in vain. We must defeat the Central Powers and seek a peace of justice!

## Supporting Arguments for Option 2

1. The great mass of the Russian people are either peasants, or one or two generations removed from peasantry. Since they comprise what is, by far, the largest social class, their needs should take first priority in post-tsarist Russia.

2. For centuries, Russian peasants have been treated abominably by the landowners and the state. Our leaders must seek to right countless grievous wrongs committed against the peasants. Only then will the people bear true loyalty to the new Russian society.

3. Only the Constituent Assembly has the legitimate right to decide basic political questions for all of Russia, including the minority areas.

4. Participation in the soviets and the Provisional Government represents our best hope for an eventual government of national unity, to be chosen by all the people. Land reform will come, but it can wait for the moment. Our first task is to defend our Russian homeland against invasion.

## From the Historical Record

*Maxim Gorky (1868-1936), "On the Russian Peasantry"*

"For hundreds of years the Russian peasant has dreamt of a state with no right to influence the will of the individual and his freedom of action, a state without power over man."

*Peasant Duma deputy from Saratov (to a delegate of the nobility), 1907*

"We know about your property, for we were your property once. My uncle was exchanged for a greyhound."

*Alexander Kerensky in a speech to the liberals in the Duma, February 15, 1917*

"The historic task of the Russian people at the present time is the overthrow of this medieval regime but you wish to fight only "by legal means"... You consider your duty done once you have concluded your diagnosis of the ills of the country. I say to you that your speeches on the necessity of calm at all costs are either the naive sentiments of superficial thinkers or just an excuse to avoid the real fight, just a pretext to stay safely in your warm armchairs.... You don't want to listen to anybody but yourselves but soon you will have to listen, for if you do not hear the warning voices, you will encounter the harsh facts."

*Resolutions of the Conference of the Petrograd Socialist Revolutionary Party, March 2, 1917*

"1. In view of the fact that the danger of a counter-revolution is not yet passed, and that the question of the moment is to make fast the political revolutionary conquests already attained, this Conference believes that it is urgently necessary to stand behind the Provisional Government, in so far as it carries out its announced political program...

2. This Conference, however, reserves to itself the right to change its attitude toward the Provisional Government, should it decline to live up to its programs....

3. ...the Conference calls on all members of the...Party to take active part in the organization of the popular masses by participating in the Soviet of Workers' and Soldiers' Deputies, by forming peasants' unions and other organizations having for their object the defense of the interest of the people."

*Resolutions of the Peasants' Union in the Morskoj Korpus, April 8, 1917*

"1. That it is necessary to go on with the war for freedom, but that the Russian people has no need of conquests; that the Russian people, after freeing the areas ruined by the belligerents, needs a peace in the interest of the laboring classes of the world....

2. ...that the Russian people, having thrown off the yoke of autocracy, desires neither a limited nor an unlimited tsarist government, but a democratic republic.

3. ...that the land should be handed over to the workers, and that each person who tills the soil with his own hands has the right to the use of it.”

*Alexander Os'minin, peasant writer, 1917*

“We are standing for the people to become the masters of their own lives, for our country to become a single family of brother laborers, without rich or poor—in short for the Kingdom of God to come to our land.”

## Option 3: Work Toward a Future Socialist Society

The ideas of Karl Marx can guide Russians to a bright future. Marx's ideas mirror what is happening now in Russia. Russia is industrializing rapidly. This process is both creating an urban lower class and exacerbating class conflict. Since the 1890s, Russia has seen population growth in the cities and an increasing number of strikes and labor violence.

But we are not quite ready for socialism. According to Marx, industrial capitalism is the final stage of history. This stage pits factory owners against the factory workers. In a socialist revolution, the workers will overthrow the owners and seize power. Eventually, private property will be abolished and capitalism will be succeeded by an economic system—socialism—in which the people will labor out of a sincere desire to contribute to the well-being of their fellow humans. However, in Russia, industrial capitalism is still in its infancy; and therefore, Russia is not yet ready for socialism. We must be patient and allow the lower classes to develop enough class-consciousness to organize for the final defeat of capitalism. We must also trust in our wise Menshevik leaders to guide us to this eventual goal.

Active participation in the soviets provides us with the best opportunity to contribute to the new Russia. The soviets control the armed forces, transportation, and communications. They are workers' organizations pursuing workers' objectives. The brave deeds of the Petrograd workers of the glorious February Revolution must be advanced through the organization of a strong workers' political party. This workers' party must be active in the upcoming elections to the Constituent Assembly.

Although led by liberals and capitalists, the Provisional Government is putting together a temporary post-tsarist political structure. In time, by working in this political structure, revolutionaries will come to know the true nature of the class enemy, and will be better-prepared to defeat it in the final conflict.

It is true that the Great War is the savage result of destructive competition between corrupt bourgeois states and, as such, is contemptible. However, the progress made in Russia since February must be protected from German invaders. When Russia is under attack, all of her children must lay aside their differences and defend the fatherland. We must win the war so that a just peace will nurture our social revolution!

### Beliefs and Assumptions Underlying Option 3

1. Karl Marx has provided an ideology based on scientific laws of history. This philosophy positions socialist revolutionaries within an historical stream flowing from the dawn of man, through the French Revolution, to a future when man can finally control his own destiny.

2. Industrial capitalism is the crucial fact of modern economic life. Its great promise and its awful pitfalls embody the present and future of Russia. The workers must master industrial capitalism in order to transcend it.

3. The current international borders of the Russian state must not be altered. In principle, we accept the right of ethnic groups to self-determination within Russia. However, we are opposed to any efforts at territorial autonomy or separation before the election of the Constituent Assembly.

4. The progress made in Russia since February must be protected from German invaders. We must win the war so that a just peace will nurture our social revolution!

## Supporting Arguments for Option 3

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1. While the final socialist revolution will eventually occur, Russia has just entered the stage of bourgeois-led industrialization. This stage must be well-advanced before the lower classes acquire enough class consciousness to organize for the defeat of capitalism. We must not interfere with the process of historical inevitability.

2. For the present, we must actively participate in the soviets, which have become the most powerful institutions in Russia. We must organize a strong workers' political party. In addition, cooperation with the Provisional

Government will give a voice to the workers in the post-tsarist political structure.

3. The Constituent Assembly will represent all of Russia, and any important political issues, such as self-determination for nationalities, must only be considered after its election.

4. When Russia is under attack, all of her children must lay aside their differences and defend the motherland. After our victory, the international brotherhood of workers will unite in a just and fair peace.

## From the Historical Record

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*Central Committee of the Social Democrats, February 27, 1917*

“Citizens! The strongholds of Russian tsarism have fallen. The prosperity of the Tsarist gang, built on the bones of the people, has collapsed. The people have risen and the capital is in their hands. Units of revolutionary troops have come over to support the uprising. The revolutionary proletariat [property-less laborers] and the revolutionary army must save the country from the downfall and final ruin which the Tsarist government was preparing. The Russian people through its huge efforts, its blood and at the cost of many lives has thrown off the slavery of centuries.

The task of the working class and the revolutionary army is to create a Provisional revolutionary government which will stand at the head of the new-born republican order. The Provisional revolutionary government must draw up temporary laws to defend the rights and liberties of the people, to confiscate church, landowners', government and crown lands and transfer them to the people, to introduce the eight-hour working day and to summon a Constituent Assembly on the basis of a suffrage which is universal, without regard to sex, nationality or religion, direct, equal and secret....

Citizens, soldiers, wives and mothers! All to battle! To open battle with tsardom and its troops!

The red flag of revolt will be raised right across Russia! Everywhere take freedom into your own hands, overthrow the tsarist lackeys, summon the soldiers to the struggle! ...

Forward, there is no return!

Merciless struggle under the red flag of revolution!

Long live the democratic republic!

Long live the revolutionary working class!

Long live the revolutionary people and the revolutionary army!”

*V. A. Bazarov, March 2, 1917*

“The energy and unity of revolutionary democracy have already forced the bourgeoisie to take a number of steps beyond the line the ruling class was originally unwilling to cross....

But in order to prevent the transformation of this revolutionary path into [one of] counterrevolution, the democratic [camp] should participate energetically in the Provisional Government to prevent it from stopping half-way [and] push it further and further....”

*Resolution of the Second Moscow military equipment factory, March 5, 1917*

“The Provisional Government that emerged from the revolution speaks for the interests of the bourgeoisie, and therefore the working class can support this government only insofar as its policy will not run against the interests of the broad toiling masses. At the same time, the working class must organize itself for the defense of its class interests and the consolidation of all the achievements of the revolution.”

*Editorial, Rabochaia Gazeta (Menshevik newspaper), March 31, 1917*

“Time and again we warned the workers against an unorganized economic struggle.... We cautioned the workers against thoughtless steps; we urged on them restraint and organization in the interests both of their class and of the struggle for economic and political freedom being conducted by the proletariat. But in making these comradely appeals we were also well aware of how unavoidably disorganized and chaotic the struggle would be during this early period. One has only to remember how the industrialists exploited the helplessness of workers laboring under wartime regulations and squeezed them of their remaining strength.... After having made a revolution, can one blame such workers for also wanting to attain a more humane existence?”

*Rabochaia Gazeta, March 25, 1917*

“Democracy grew up during the last ten years. The crumbs of freedom that were left in Russia after the struggle in 1905—the shadow of popular representation, the pitiful freedom of the press—slowly but steadily did their educative work. If not for that [work], Democracy could not have proven itself...in the days of the revolution. But now that it has—there is hope for the future.”

*N.S. Chkheidze, speaking in the Petrograd Soviet, March 14, 1917*

“We make this offer with weapons in our hands. The slogan for the revolution is ‘Down with [the German Kaiser] Wilhelm!’”

*Irakli Tsereteli, speaking in the Petrograd Soviet Executive Committee, March 21, 1917*

“We should not consider the defense of the country as something which does not concern us, something we don’t talk about. It should be for us one of the basic tasks of the Revolution, without which we should not be able to conclude a democratic peace and preserve the achievements of the Revolution.”

*Socialist pamphlet directed to the peasants, 1917*

“[Under socialism] want and hunger will disappear and pleasure will be equally accessible to all. Thieving and robbery will come to an end. In place of compulsion and coercion there will be a kingdom of freedom and fraternity.”

## Option 4: Organize for a Second Revolution

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The ideology of Karl Marx provides a superb framework for action, but it must be adapted to Russian conditions. It is true that, at present, Russia's urban lower class lacks sufficient class-consciousness to overthrow capitalism. However, precise, skilled organization of the lower classes can and will make a decisive difference. With the February Revolution, the time is ripe for radical change. The workers can be taught and led to achieve this all-important goal.

We will stop at nothing in our quest to reach the broad, sunlit uplands of socialism. The hard, sharp edge of determination of this vanguard has been forged during years of tsarist oppression. Toughened by persecution, imprisonment, and exile, the revolutionary vanguard understands that now is the time for courage, sacrifice, and boldness, not just in thoughts, but in heroic deeds!

The brave workers of Petrograd showed us the way in February. When they acted, bloody Nicholas and the other Romanov wolves turned tail and ran. But our work is far from done. A second revolution is needed in Russia! All Russians should join the cause of the Bolsheviks! All power to the soviets! Peace, land, and bread!

The Provisional Government is a powerless empty shell. We are told to wait until its leaders see fit to devise elections for a Constituent Assembly, and that this Assembly will be the true government of a new Russia. Political participation in this deceptive farce is laughable. The aims of the Provisional Government are to perpetuate the leadership of the ruling class and to oppress the workers and peasants. After a period of organization and subversion, the lower classes, led by its vanguard, will send the Provisional Government where it belongs—into the dustbin of history.

The present war is a horrible example of bloody imperialist competition over the means of production. Russia should immediately renounce its role in this carnage and conclude a peace. Then we can turn our attention to the daily needs of the real masters of Russia: its workers, peasants, and soldiers. Under the leadership of the soviets, land should be confiscated from the nobles and redistributed by the peasants themselves. Private property is the root of all evil. Class struggle is the only avenue to real social change. Familiar with great personal hardships, the Russian workers and peasants possess the will and stamina for the coming conflict. They only need to be guided by a reliable core of trained revolutionaries. All of Europe is poised for the brave new world of socialism. Russia can show the way through decisive action now! Long live the international socialist revolution!

### Beliefs and Assumptions Underlying Option 4

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1. Russia's suffering people cannot wait any longer. Only a fervent, uncompromising, disciplined elite of trained revolutionaries can organize the urban lower class and peasants for a final successful revolt against the forces of capital.

2. Private property is the root of all evil. The workers and peasants are the ones who make property economically productive. Therefore, they should control that property.

3. Ultimately, the success of international socialism will transform national self-determination into an irrelevancy.

4. The war has been a horrible example of bloody imperialist competition over the means of production. Russia should immediately renounce its participation in this carnage and look after the daily needs of its real heroes: the workers, peasants, and soldiers.



## Supporting Arguments for Option 4

1. Familiar with great personal hardships, the Russian workers and peasants possess the will and stamina for the coming conflict. They only need to be taught and led by an effective revolutionary vanguard.

2. It is useless to work with the bourgeois Provisional Government. Its aims are simple: to perpetuate the leadership of the ruling class and to oppress the workers and peasants. In due time, its fate will be sealed.

3. The Provisional Government has denied the right of self-determination to Finns, Ukrainians, and other national minorities. This is nothing less than a mindless continuation of the immoral policies of the hated former tsar.

4. The war is already a lost cause. It is better to admit it now, save the lives of our surviving soldiers, conclude a peace with Germany, and focus our energies on building the brave new world of socialism.

## From the Historical Record

*Lenin, "Who Are the 'Friends of the People' and How Do They Fight Against the Social Democrats?," 1894*

"The Russian worker, rising at the head of all the democratic elements, will overthrow absolutism and lead the Russian proletariat [property-less laborers] (together with the proletariat of all countries) along the direct road of open political struggle to the victorious Communist Revolution."

*Lenin, 1895*

"The democratic struggle is inseparable from the socialist one; (it is) impossible to wage a successful fight for the cause of labor without the attainment of full liberty and the democratization of Russia's political and social regime."

*Lenin, 1900*

"No single class in history has ever attained mastery unless it has produced political leaders...capable of organizing the movement and leading it.... It is necessary to prepare men who devote to the revolution not only their free evenings, but their entire lives."

*Lenin, 1907*

"Revolution is a difficult matter. It cannot be made with gloves and manicured fingernails.... A political party is no girls dormitory. Party members should not be measured by the

narrow standard of petty-bourgeois morality. Sometimes a scoundrel is useful to our party precisely because he is a scoundrel."

*Lenin, during the early months of World War I*

"Is the feeling of national pride alien to us, Russian class-conscious proletarians? Certainly not. We love our language and our motherland."

*Leon Trotsky, September 1915*

"Working men and women! Mothers and fathers! Widows and orphans! Wounded and crippled! To all who are suffering from the war or in consequence of the war, we cry out, over the frontiers, over the smoking battlefields, over the devastated cities and hamlets: WORKERS OF THE WORLD UNITE!"

*Lenin, March 30, 1917*

"It has fallen to the Russian proletariat to have the great honor of beginning a series of revolutions.... Russia is a peasant country, one of the most backward in Europe. It is not possible for socialism to triumph there directly, presently. But the peasant character of the country...can lead a vast sweep to the bourgeois-democratic revolution in Russia and make our revolution a prologue to the worldwide socialist revolution, a step toward it."

*Lenin, March 16, Cable to the Petrograd Bolsheviks:*

“Our tactics; complete mistrust. No support for the new government. We especially suspect Kerensky. The arming of the proletariat provides the only guarantee.... No rapprochement with the other parties.”

*Lenin, Pravda, April 3 and 4, 1917*

The first stage of the Revolution has ended. This first stage will certainly not be the last stage of our Revolution.... The Russian working class has as its first ally the mass of the... peasant population of Russia, which numbers many millions and constitutes the enormous majority of the population. This mass must have peace, bread, freedom and land.”