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Alexander F. Kerensky; The Political Career of a Russian Nationalist.

Michael James Fontenot

Louisiana State University and Agricultural & Mechanical College

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ALEXANDER F. KERENSKY; THE POLITICAL CAREER

OF A RUSSIAN NATIONALIST

A Dissertation

Submitted to the Graduate Faculty of the
Louisiana State University and
Agricultural and Mechanical College
in partial fulfillment of the
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Doctor of Philosophy

in

The Department of History

by

Michael James Fontenot
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December, 1976
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FOREWORD

Standard difficulties exist regarding the treatment of Russian history, and the approach adopted in this paper requires a short explanation. The Julian calendar, which was abandoned only in 1918, was thirteen days behind the western one in 1917. Since the Russians themselves prefer to use the old style calendar in their works on the revolution, that system of dating will be used consistently within the text. But citations from western sources, such as the New York Times, will remain in conformity with the Gregorian calendar.

The system of transliteration will follow System II, cited in J. Thomas Shaw, The Transliteration of Modern Russian for English Language Publications (University of Wisconsin, 1967). Exceptions will be made in the cases of well-known political figures, such as Leon Trotsky and Alexander Kerensky, whose names have become standardized in western usage.
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ABSTRACT

An investigation of Alexander F. Kerensky's political activities is of vital importance, for his public career affected perhaps the most crucial period in modern Russian history: the years that spanned the enfeeblement and collapse of tsarism, the February revolution of 1917, and the Bolshevik seizure of power. As a radical deputy in the State Duma and then as a minister in the various provisional regimes that attempted to guide the revolutionary state in 1917, he exercised an increasing degree of influence upon political events. Because of his offices, personal inclination, and initial prestige, Kerensky managed to dominate the Russian Provisional Government and, through it, to determine state policy.

While Kerensky was a populist and a revolutionary, he was also a fervent nationalist. Because of his nationalism, he became the primary advocate of political moderation as a means of preserving national interests in the midst of war and still bringing to his country a democratic, egalitarian order based on agrarian socialist principles. In pursuit of those aims, he distorted the interplay of political parties and the course of the revolution. His refusal to adopt a partisan posture when the internal and external pressures upon the country demanded such a stance contributed significantly to the Bolshevik victory.
in October of 1917.

Kerensky failed to recognize the dangers inherent in his mediative policy because he underestimated the power of class interests and overestimated the self-discipline of the population. His populist belief in the virtues of the people and his fiery patriotism combined to blind him to the true depths of popular discontent. Because he expected too much of the revolution, and too much of the Russian people, he relied upon his undoubted talent as a political tactician to solve problems through the creation of coalition regimes; confusing appearance with reality, he thought that parliamentary devices would assure the effective cooperation of socialists and non-socialists. He succeeded only in isolating the government from the populace and antagonizing the parties on the Right and the Left. Ultimately, the results were political turmoil, attempted counterrevolution, the disintegration of the army, spreading anarchy, and the seizure of the state by an extreme leftist party, the Bolsheviks. By October, Kerensky's moderate policies were in such disrepute that his presence within the government actually hindered efforts at resisting the Bolshevik insurrection of October
INTRODUCTION

The political and social conflicts of the Russian revolution have been the subject of intensive historical scrutiny. But despite the attention devoted to the liberal and socialist forces that struggled for mastery of the Russian state in 1917, the subject has not been thoroughly covered. The focus has generally been upon the decisions and reactions of distinct political parties, such as the Bolsheviks, Socialist Revolutionaries, and Cadets, or popular revolutionary institutions such as the Petrograd Soviet and the All-Russian Congress of Soviets.¹ To often, Alexander Kerensky and the other moderate politicians who attempted to direct the state through the mechanism of the Provisional Government have suffered neglect. Their activities and goals have either been treated piecemeal or as part of the general context in which specific groups operated. As a result, a certain distortion in emphasis has affected historical treatments of the period. That neglect is not justified, for the

leaders of the Provisional Government adopted concrete policies that directly affected the course of the February revolution. In the process, they either created or aggravated many of the conditions which the Bolsheviks successfully exploited.

The intention of this paper is to alleviate the present unsatisfactory situation by examining the political career of Alexander F. Kerensky, initially the most influential figure within the new revolutionary state. Because of the special circumstances of the February revolution Kerensky, a radical deputy in the Fourth State Duma, rose to a position of exceptional prominence and authority. As Minister of Justice, Minister of War, and finally Minister-President of successive cabinets, he was at the center of events from February to October of 1917. By virtue of his offices, personal inclination, and prestige, Kerensky won a position of dominance within the Provisional Government; its membership and policies increasingly reflected his desires, and he eventually became the primary determinant of its responses to revolutionary necessities. Thus, an examination of his ministerial activities provides sustained insight, at the cabinet level, of the multifarious problems of provisional rule and the decisions taken to meet those problems.

While Kerensky's ministerial role was significant in itself, his relationship with the major socialist and liberal parties had an even greater impact upon the outcome of the February revolution. A skilled political manipulator in unstable conditions and an ardent champion of interclass cooperation for the realization of nationalistic goals, he attempted to divert the revolution into channels compatible with the extension of Russian power. He was not alone in that effort; many
Mensheviks and Socialist Revolutionaries and all Cadets, to varying degrees, wished to pursue traditional state objectives in spite of the revolution. But Kerensky's chosen methods, which forced the Left and the Right into a closer political association than they desired, had a deleterious effect upon attempts to reconstruct the state. The resultant coalition cabinets, given the superficial appearance of enhanced authority, were lured into aggressive policies that increased class tensions and magnified the difficulties of waging war in a revolutionary environment. At the same time, the interparty cooperation that Kerensky fostered had a tactical, qualified nature that was inimical to the continuity of moderate programs. His persistent revival of non-party tactics after their manifest bankruptcy was directly related to the radical upsurge in September and October of 1917, for it both antagonized those party politicians associated with his efforts and compromised them in the eyes of the impatient populace.

Since Kerensky had such a pervasive effect on the political life of the nation, a study of his activities offers a new perspective on the interactions of the political forces that, in uneasy alliance, vainly sought to impose their wills upon the revolution. It also contributes to a fuller understanding of the manner of their failure and the resultant anarchic conditions that facilitated the Bolshevik seizure of power.

Kerensky was so closely identified with the unfortunate outcome of the February revolution that his role in its events provoked extraordinarily sharp reactions. After all, the incapacity of the Provisional Government to restrain radicalism had severe consequences; as the former Minister-President noted in 1922, the establishment of
a communist regime in Russia carried enormous implications for the future of his country and for the world at large. The failure of political compromise became his personal failure, for he had been its main advocate and had attempted to implement its techniques long after Russia plunged into an environment of class warfare. While evaluations of Kerensky's leadership qualities and political decisions have been almost uniformly unfavorable, the specific criticisms differ according to the perspectives adopted. To a great extent, Kerensky was judged as the Provisional Government was judged.

As could be expected, the communist attitude toward Kerensky is one of implacable hostility. V. I. Lenin set the tone for later soviet approaches. Identifying Kerensky as one of the "heroes of falseness," Lenin noted that he was a "Right wing, so-called socialist" whose policies did not "differ substantially from the Cadets in anything." While "maintaining democratic appearances," he was a Bonapartist pursuing reactionary policies "behind the backs of the people." Joseph Stalin agreed that Kerensky provided a cover for counterrevolution. While deluding the masses, Stalin claimed, he was "standing guard over the interests of the landlords and capitalists, resolutely protecting the latter against attacks by workers and peasants." Trotsky's assaults were more virulent than those of Stalin. Kerensky, the former Red army leader asserted, "had no

2A. Kerenskii, "Fevral' i Oktiabr'," SZ, IX (1922), 292.
theoretical preparation, no political schooling, no ability to think, no political will." Moreover, his policies lacked the "force of Bonapartism" while retaining "all its vices." Soviet historians have been careful to remain within that doctrinal framework, for their writings on the period routinely identify Kerensky as a "socialist compromiser" and a "disguised counterrevolutionary" who led the "agents of reaction" against the revolutionary masses.

While those who defeated Kerensky had a vested interest in destroying his reputation, the non-communist Left was scarcely more charitable. Victor Chernov, the leader of the Socialist Revolutionary Party, admitted that Kerensky welcomed the revolution with "genuine enthusiasm." But the veteran populist maintained that Kerensky was an "overrated personality" whose obsession with compromise undermined the social basis of provisional rule. Nikolai Sukhanov, a Left Menshevik, offered a variant of Chernov's evaluation:

Kerensky was a sincere democrat. He believed in the truth and the correctness of his line and hoped that his actions would lead the country to the triumph of democracy. He was terribly mistaken. A feeble politician, without schooling or the wisdom of a statesman, he strayed into anti-democratic policies and, as far as his influence was effective, buried himself and the revolution.

The political Right was even more vindictive than the Left.


7Morozov, 86; Soboleva, 92.


9N. N. Sukhanov, Zapiski o revoliutsii, 7 vols. (Berlin, 1922), I, 68.
Vladimir Nabokov, a Right Cadet and one of Kerensky's colleagues in the Provisional Government, dismissed him as a "fortuitous little man" who suffered from the "mania of greatness."

S. I. Shidlovskii, a prominent Octobrist and the leader of the Progressive Bloc of the State Duma, claimed that Kerensky was an "adventurer utterly unfit for a large role in politics." Perhaps the harshest evaluation was that of the eminent Russian historian P. N. Miliukov, the head of the Cadet Party. Comparing Kerensky with Boris Godunov, whose policies led to the Time of Troubles in the early seventeenth century, Miliukov claimed that his political skills consisted of "thrusting himself forward at the right moment." The former Minister-President, Miliukov continued, "could never make a clear choice" and was paralysed by "interminable hesitations between the Right and the Left."

Western historians have tended to accept the verdict of Kerensky's non-communist contemporaries. The standard chronicler of the Russian revolution, William H. Chamberlin, maintained:

Just as some of Kerensky's traits predestined him for leadership in the early phase of the Revolution, other qualities, inability to think coldly and realistically outside of the haze of his own glowing phrases, sentimentality that occasionally verged on hysteria and led to alternations between extreme optimism and extreme pessimism, capacity for self-hypnotism, marked him out

for disastrous failure when the romantic illusions of national unity were shattered on the hard facts of class antagonism.\textsuperscript{14}

Donald W. Treadgold, a noted student of modern Russia, echoed Chamberlin. Kerensky's weakness, he observed, was that "oratory became a substitute for action."\textsuperscript{15} T. H. Von Laue offered a slight shift in emphasis; Kerensky, he felt, was the "first of the great orators of revolutionary mass politics in the modern age." Nevertheless, Von Laue added, the "exalted quality" of his appeal was "devoid of political realism."\textsuperscript{16} Perhaps the most severe criticism of the former head of state was advanced by O. H. Radkey, the leading American historian of the Socialist Revolutionary Party. Kerensky failed, Radkey asserted, because:

He was neither a socialist nor a revolutionary; but a nineteenth- or early twentieth-century radical of the French, or perhaps even more, the British type, a St. Petersburg attorney who consorted with the Left without accepting its ultimate objectives.\textsuperscript{17}

That opinion, advanced thirty-six years after the revolution, was surprisingly reminiscent of the one held by V. M. Purishkevich, a monarchist, in July of 1917. Kerensky, Purishkevich argued, was a "crystal pure man" who was "removed from the daily life of his own land and did not realize it."\textsuperscript{18}


\textsuperscript{15}D. Treadgold, \textit{Twentieth Century Russia} (Chicago, 1964), p. 35.


\textsuperscript{17}Radkey, \textit{Agrarian Foes}, p. 463.

\textsuperscript{18}Speech of Purishkevich before a meeting of the State Duma, cited in \textit{Izvestiia}, July 20, 1917, p. 3.
Those strongly negative views have not gone unchallenged. Kerensky has vigorously defended his conduct; while conceding a lack of "personal strength and ability," he claimed that the "main lines" of his policy were "correctly traced." Only through a policy of class cooperation, he insisted, could Russia have avoided "civil war and a separate peace." Robert P. Browder, who has worked extensively with Kerensky, has come to his defense. While admitting that the former Russian statesman was unable to meet the challenges that were presented to him, Browder argued:

Kerensky failed, not because he was weak-willed, emotional, or politically inept. He was a moderate at a time and place where moderation was inappropriate. Kerensky displayed considerable skill as a political maneuverer and demonstrated an ability to manipulate and compromise which, in normal circumstances, might have been successful over a considerable period of time. But he had to operate in abnormal times.

None of these interpretations are entirely satisfactory. While Western historians have duly recorded Kerensky's activities, they have consistently underestimated his actual impact upon the course and outcome of the February revolution. The primary cause of that attitude is the undeniable fact that Kerensky's policies failed to meet the needs of the country. But as a result, there has been an unfortunate tendency to assume that the Provisional Government, paralysed by Kerensky's commitment to unrealistic political ideals, was unable to have a direct influence upon revolutionary developments. Accordingly,


historians have been disposed to accept the corollary that in the main the real political struggle proceeded independently of Russia's formal leadership. In view of those misleading propensities, a reassessment of Kerensky's role in the events of 1917 should proceed carefully and comprehensively. A logical point of departure would be an inquiry into his pre-revolutionary career, where indications of his later behavior might be found.

CHAPTER I

ALEXANDER KERENSKY'S PRE-REVOLUTIONARY CAREER

Alexander Kerensky was deeply influenced by his social origins, and to a considerable extent his family position was a result of changing conditions in Russia during the latter part of the nineteenth century. Kerensky's parents were commoners and would have remained in relative obscurity in the Russia of Nicholas I. But while the Great Reforms of Alexander II did not abolish privilege, they did provide increased opportunities for greater portions of the population. Taking advantage of loosened political restrictions, the Kerensky family obtained status equivalent to that of the gentry. Their route to prominence was service in the state bureaucracy. Through it, they acquired a social position somewhat comparable to the Noblesse de Robe in old regime France.

Fyodor Mikhailovich Kerensky, Alexander's father, was primarily responsible for that success. He had been born in 1842 into the large and impoverished family of a district (uezd) priest in Penza Province (Gubernia). As the son of a clergyman, Fyodor was assured access to a basic education. But his attendance at the Theological Seminary at

1Alexander F. Kerensky Archives, the Humanities Research Center, University of Texas, Austin, Texas, folio 75.
Penza and his later graduation from the University of Kazan were achieved only through considerable effort; while noble birth was no longer a requirement for entrance into a university, he had experienced difficulty in financing his course of study. After acquiring a degree in classical philology, Fyodor advanced rapidly. Physically imposing and exceptionally able, he held a succession of increasingly responsible posts in the tsarist educational system.

Early in his teaching career, Fyodor contracted an advantageous marriage to Nadezhda Adler, a former student of his at the Radionov Institute at Kazan. An attractive and graceful woman, Nadezhda felt at ease in her husband's professional and social circles. Her background lent the necessary assurance; Nadezhda's father, an army major, directed the Topographical Division at the headquarters of the Kazan Military District, and her maternal grandfather had been a wealthy Moscow merchant.

By the time of Alexander Kerensky's birth, on April 22, 1881, his parents were prosperous and respected. Fyodor Kerensky directed two gymnasiums in Simbirsk and was firmly accepted into provincial upper society. The family success continued, for in 1899 Fyodor became the Director of Education in Turkestan, a position he held for

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2 I ibid.


4 Kerensky Archives, folio 75.

5 Ibid.
over twenty years. At times, Alexander was to regret his prominent origins; when later attempting to enter radical political circles in St. Petersburg, he felt hampered by his "bureaucratic descent."7

As could be expected of a political émigré, a certain wistfulness accompanies Alexander Kerensky's childhood remembrances. Nonetheless, there can be little doubt that his early years in Simbirsk and Tashkent were happy ones. The Kerensky family enjoyed superior government-provided housing and could afford governesses, servants, and nurses.8 Daily life possessed a stable core of routine amply supplemented by excursions and social events;9 by his own account, Alexander was surrounded by demonstrations of attention and affection.10

Evidently, Fyodor Kerensky exercised a stabilizing and beneficial influence upon his son. Although Fyodor held traditional attitudes and was conservative in outlook,11 he was intellectually curious, catholic in his reading tastes, and impatient with bureaucratic abuse. As the Kerensky household combined a basic commitment to the Imperial status quo with a somewhat sympathetic attitude regarding reformist movements, Alexander's personal development proceeded smoothly in a conventional but non-repressive atmosphere.


7Crucifixion, p. 119.

8Crucifixion, p. 56. Alexander had two sisters, Anna and Yelina, and a brother, Fedya.

9Ibid.

10Kerensky Archives, folio 75.

11Kerensky, Crucifixion, p. 58.
His father's background and interests assured educational progress. Alexander had access to a wide range of political reading materials, and Fyodor took an active interest in his scholastic work. A particular encouragement of proficiency in debate and composition was rewarded; Alexander's oratorical ability later became a striking political asset.12

Fyodor's attempts to provide security and stimulation were remarkably successful, for Alexander could recall only one childhood episode when he felt strongly that something was seriously wrong with his country. This was occasioned by his parent's discussion of Leo Tolstoy's opposition to the Franco-Russian Alliance of 1892; significantly, Fyodor's partial agreement with Tolstoy's criticism of autocracy was not knowingly expressed in his son's presence.13

Alexander Kerensky's early years left a clear imprint upon his character. Of course, many of his beliefs were later altered. Support of monarchism, respect for the rites and ceremonies of the Russian Orthodox Church, the acceptance of Russification, the acknowledgement of social distinctions—these attitudes, to which Kerensky was exposed automatically by reason of birth, were left behind. While the form of his beliefs changed, however, important elements remained.

Certainly, nationalism was one of Kerensky's enduring traits. It was constantly on or near the surface and was easily recognized, regardless of the socialist or internationalist vocabulary which he sometimes adopted. Iraki G. Tsereteli, a Menshevik leader and close

12Kerensky Archives, folio 75.

13Kerensky, Crucifixion, p. 60.
associate in 1917, maintained that an "ecstatic nationalism" was Kerensky's outstanding characteristic.\textsuperscript{14} Victor M. Chernov, the head of the Socialist Revolutionary (SR) Party, noted the force of that quality and observed that it was tinged with a kind of "hysterical-stilted inspiration."\textsuperscript{15} Sir George Buchanan, the British ambassador to Russia during the revolution, frequently commented on that attribute and suspected that Kerensky's strong personal magnetism was linked to his "patriotic fervour."\textsuperscript{16} Kerensky's speeches and writings revealed a strong emotional commitment to his country, for he considered Russia a "living body"\textsuperscript{17} created by the "blood and sweat of generations."\textsuperscript{18} Political exile in 1918 did not alter his attitude. During the Russian Civil War, he urged the Western Allies to respect the "entire territorial integrity of Russia" and advocated their "complete disinterest" in Russian internal affairs.\textsuperscript{19} His patriotism also survived the Bolshevik victory; when Germany invaded the Soviet Union in 1941, he supported national resistance in a telegram to Joseph Stalin.\textsuperscript{20}


\textsuperscript{17}A. Kerensky, \textit{Russia and History's Turning Point} (New York, 1965), p. 15.

\textsuperscript{18}GD, session 2, special meeting, July 26, 1914, cols. 18-19.

\textsuperscript{19}Telegram addressed by Alexander Kerensky to Moscow by the Quai d'Orsay. The V. A. Maklakov Archive of the Russian Embassy in Paris, 1917-1924, 4 boxes, Collection of the Hoover Institute at Stanford University, box 1, accession no. 26003-937.

\textsuperscript{20}Kerensky Archives, folio 149.
An essentially religious outlook was another lasting quality. Although Kerensky opposed bureaucratic formalism in the Russian Orthodox Church, calling it "soulless officialism," he remained strongly drawn to certain native religious currents. He has implied that his belief in personal sacrifices for the people originated in the Russian kenotic tradition, and he was so impressed by Vladimir Soloviev's mystical writings that they later found secularized reflection in his political statements.

There were other legacies from Kerensky's early years. Qualified confidence in the effectiveness of legal opposition to tsarism, reliance upon moral exhortation and example, acceptance of service obligations to the state, and confidence in a personal capacity for leadership were natural outgrowths of his family's prominence and administrative background.

In view of his fundamental orientation, it is easy to understand how Kerensky so quickly accepted the tenets of political radicalism when he entered the University of St. Petersburg. They did not involve a serious break with old beliefs; Kerensky adapted them, shifted their emphasis, and used them as a bridge to pass into new activities and alliances. Thus, a basis existed for his claim of being a revolutionary while still in Tashkent.

21Kerensky, Crucifixion, p. 58.

22Ibid. Kenoticism referred to a voluntary yielding of needs or an "emptying" of personal qualities for the salvation of others.

23Kerensky, Russia, p. 34. For example, see Kerensky's discourse on truth in GD, session 2, meeting 4, October 23, 1913, col. 245.

24Kerensky, Crucifixion, p. 56.
While Kerensky's radical political education dated from his entrance into the law faculty at the University of St. Petersburg in 1899, he refrained, to a remarkable degree, from direct political activity.25 Opportunities for such involvement existed, for student disturbances continued from 1899 to 1904, although at a diminished rate compared with previous years.26 But he refused to associate with specific political groups and remained a "rank and file" member of disruptive student activities.27 Kerensky took an active part in only one demonstration. In the spring of 1901, at a gathering in support of student rights, he condemned narrow personal goals and called for union with the nation in the struggle for political liberation.28 That first impulsive experiment did not turn out well. He was temporarily suspended from the university and released to the custody of his father.29 Fyodor Kerensky was not pleased with his son's behavior. He told Alexander that he was still inexperienced and immature and, while he could do as he wished later, he should concentrate upon his studies until graduation.30

Alexander found his father's conditions easy to accept, for

25Crucifixion, p. 77.


27Kerensky, Crucifixion, p. 77.

28Kerensky, Russia, p. 26.

29Ibid.

30Russia, p. 27.
there were other outlets for his energies and a number of ways to satisfy his present needs. He claimed to have often felt an "inner loneliness," and he sought relief in an active social life. Kerensky rented a dormitory room—rather than an apartment away from campus—in order to meet more people, attended theatrical productions with friends, and enthusiastically joined literary discussion groups.

Although successful in gathering a reliable circle of friends and acquaintances, which included his future wife, Olga Baranovskii, Kerensky was not completely comfortable in his new environment. Offended, as provincials often were, by the doctrinaire rigidity and apparent conceit of Europeanized Russian students, he purposely emphasized his Asiatic heritage. Kerensky asserted that he felt most at ease in a Turkestan fraternity, and he became prominent in that organization's activities.

Kerensky also found solace in a carefully chosen curriculum, enrolling in courses that supported his intuitive attitudes. Nicolas Losskii's idealistic philosophy and legalist Lev Pehazhskii's emphasis on an innate sense of duty reinforced his system of values.

31Russia, p. 16.
33These included Olga's brother, Vladimir, a member of the Guards Artillery, and her cousin Sergei Vasil'ev, a fellow student.
34N. Sukhanov, Zapiski o revoliutsii, 7 vols. (St. Petersburg-Berlin, 1919), I, 47.
35Kerensky, Russia, p. 23.
36Russia, p. 29.
and provided him with specific arguments against materialist doctrines, and exposure to historians S. F. Platonov and Tadeus Zelinskii encouraged his sympathy with democracy. By his graduation in 1904, Kerensky had acquired a defeasible set of political views. They found expression in his acceptance of the populist (narodnik) ideology, which provided a suitable vehicle for his belief in the positive role of the human will, his aversion to a pronounced class orientation, and his commitment to democracy and political freedom. He was also strongly attracted to populism's native roots and sympathy with the peasantry.

Personal motives prevented an immediate translation of Kerensky's populist beliefs into radical political action. He had married immediately upon graduation, and while his new wife, the former Olga L'vovna Baranovskii, shared his political viewpoints, he recognized new obligations and inhibitions. Nevertheless, Kerensky did not completely accommodate himself to tsarism. He spurned an overly close relationship with the autocracy by rejecting state service, and he considered graduate work in criminal law, which at least would have permitted some obstruction of repressive tsarist policies. But a clash with an influential law professor put an end to even that limited oppositionist course. Lacking alternatives, Kerensky decided to enter private legal practice.

37 Russia, pp. 30-34.
38 Kerensky, Crucifixion, p. 104.
39 She also shared his social eminence. Olga's father was a colonel attached to the Russian General Staff (Stavka), and her maternal grandfather was V. P. Vasil'ev, a well-known Chinese scholar. Kerensky Archives, folio 78.
40 Kerensky, Crucifixion, p. 104.
In the fall of 1904, Kerensky applied for membership in the St. Petersburg Bar Association. He found it to be an instructive experience. Rebuffed because of his association with "higher bureaucratic circles," he gained admission as a Junior Barrister only when vouched for by lawyers holding appropriately anti-governmental views. According to his own testimony, Kerensky's determination to acquire a radical political reputation dates from that initial rejection. Ashamed of his privileged past, he wished to atone for it by becoming a "political lawyer" specializing in politically sensitive cases. Unconditional acceptance by established radical lawyers was quite difficult; as a step toward that end, he became active in the konsultatsiya, a legal aid organization. That decision required some courage and endurance. Kerensky deliberately ignored potentially profitable family contacts and served a hard and obscure apprenticeship which involved tedious work for small remuneration.

As it was largely prompted by embarrassment, Kerensky's initial political activity was of questionable duration. But the events of January 9, 1905, in which he witnessed the Imperial Guards firing upon a peaceful demonstration, made him an irreconcilable foe of tsarism. "The part of an onlooker," he said later, "became quite unbearable after the Red Sunday." While he was in no position to lead, or even significantly to shape, events during the 1905 revolution, Kerensky still took an active part in protest work. He joined a Bar Council

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^1Kerensky, Russia, p. 44.
^2Kerensky, Crucifixion, p. 107.
^3Crucifixion, p. 107.
committee formed to assist the victims of Bloody Sunday, and in the October general strike he aided the Barrister's Union in disrupting proceedings in the State Senate. Kerensky also took individual action, breaking off relations with acquaintances in privileged circles and seeking outlets for propagandistic work. In November of 1905, he associated with the Organization of Armed Rebellion, headed by a Socialist Revolutionary, N. D. Mironov. Actually, that action was less daring than it might seem; despite its grandiloquent title, Mironov's group was rather harmless and confined itself to publishing an illegal newspaper, Burevestnik (Stormy Petrel). Through that medium, Kerensky attacked the autocracy and supported the projected State Duma as a potentially disruptive influence upon the government.

Apparently, Kerensky's hostility to tsarism had become so intense that he attempted to enter the terrorist Battle Organization of the SR Party; having previously dismissed terrorism as revolutionary romanticism, he now wished to take part in the assassination of Nicholas II. In his latest memoirs, Kerensky asserted that his contacts with the Battle Organization, Boris Moisenko and Boris Savinkov, were willing to consider his application, and he was rejected only through the direct intervention of the group's leader, Evgenii Azev. While Azev's motives were suspect—he was later exposed as an agent of the tsarist secret police—he apparently advanced the quite reasonable objection that Kerensky was inexperienced and therefore

44Crucifixion, p. 108.
45Kerensky, Russia, pp. 49-50.
46Russia, p. 59.
Kerensky's oppositional activity came to the attention of the Okhrana (the state security police), and he was arrested when found possessing manifestos of the Organization of Armed Rebellion. Although he successfully conducted a week-long hunger strike in protest against procedural irregularities, Kerensky found imprisonment at Kresty (the Cross) frustrating and pointless and possible conviction on charges of treason frightening. He was particularly resentful that the Okhrana raid on his apartment had not been directed specifically at his activities but had been part of a general search for an escaped terrorist.

Outside events intervened in Kerensky's favor. His imprisonment coincided with the meeting of the First State Duma and, as part of a limited and informal amnesty program, he was sentenced to several years' banishment from major cities. Once out of prison, Kerensky improved the conditions of his release. Utilizing once-despised

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47 Russia, p. 61. Neither Boris Nicolaevskii, Azev's biographer, nor Boris Savinkov mention Kerensky's attempt to enter the Battle Organization, although Nicolaevskii indicates that Azev often intervened in the screening of new applicants. V. M. Zenzinov, a close friend of Kerensky's implies that Kerensky was known to the Battle organization, but does not go into detail. See B. Nikolajewsky, Azef the Spy: Russian Terrorist and Police Stool (New York, 1934), p. 71; Boris Savinkov, Memoirs of a Terrorist, trans. Joseph Shaplen (New York, 1931); V. M. Zenzinov, Perezhitoe (New York, 1953), p. 114.

48 Kerensky, Crucifixion, p. 118.

49 Kerensky, Russia, p. 68; Padenie tsarskogo rezhima; stenograficheskie otchety, doprosy i pokazaniia, dannikh v 1917 g. v chrezvychnoi sledstvennoi komissii Vremennogo Pravitel'stva, ed. P. E. Shchegoleva, 7 vols. (Moscow-Leningrad, 1924-27), VII, 353.

aristocratic connections, he obtained from Senator Zwolianskii, the director of the police department, an annulment of his sentence. That was accomplished with the understanding that he would avoid future association with revolutionary groups and spend some time with his father in Tashkent.51

The consequences of Kerensky's prison experiences were tangible and far-reaching. He assumed a realistic attitude toward political possibilities and ended experimentation with revolutionary illegality. Convinced that the government had stabilized and consolidated its position, he felt that work aimed at educating the Russian people and solidifying their hostility to autocracy was the only remaining alternative.52 The means to that end were now available, for imprisonment had erased the taint of his privileged past and he was accepted into the fellowship of the political lawyers.

Kerensky received his first important political case shortly after his return to St. Petersburg. In October, 1906, a legal group headed by N. D. Sokolov requested that he replace them in the defense of peasants accused of pillaging an estate near Reval (Tallin).53 While he had only a few days to acquaint himself with the relevant documents, Kerensky had no difficulty in adopting a mode of defense. In the tradition of the political lawyer, he gained the acquittal of most of the accused by attacking the brutal methods of retribution applied by local authorities.54 The successful outcome of the Reval

51Kerensky, Russia, p. 72; Padenie, VII, 353.
52Kerensky, Russia, p. 68.
53Russkie Vedomosti, August 26, 1906, p. 3.
54Kerensky, Russia, pp. 74-75.
trial launched Kerensky on an outstanding legal career and revealed the exceptional oratorical ability that he would subsequently put to vigorous use.

The Reval case also established a pattern which Kerensky followed with great consistency until his entrance into the State Duma in 1912. He specialized in controversial cases, travelling throughout the Russian Empire at the standard fee of ten rubles a day and the price of a second-class round-trip railway ticket. That course offered several advantages. It increased his familiarity with conditions in many parts of the country, afforded opportunities for the gathering of anti-governmental material, and enhanced his reputation as a defender of liberty. Furthermore, he was able to focus attention upon shortcomings in Russian society in an effective, if theatrical, way.

Kerensky's chosen path revealed a considerable degree of political maturity, for through it he was able to attack social evils in a strictly legal manner and to expose them through vivid and telling examples.

By 1910 Kerensky was sufficiently well-known to attract the favorable attention of L. M. Bramson and S. Znamenskii, leaders of a populist party, the Trudoviks (Toilers). Numerically small, the group was primarily composed of intellectuals dissatisfied with the ideological rigidity of the SR's and the Constitutional Democrats.

55Russia, p. 76.


57Kerensky, Russia, pp. 83-84.
The Trudovik Party had compiled an impressively radical record in previous Dumas but was not of the extreme Left. It apparently consisted of men holding basically moderate views who, at the same time, harbored easily-aroused sympathies with revolutionary action. That essential duality made categorization difficult; it was not certain whether the Trudoviks were a splinter from the Right SR's or the Left Cadets.

While the Trudoviks never realized their potential (they had only ten members in the Fourth State Duma), they did represent an alternative to the major political parties. They emulated the SR's in advocating land nationalization and considered themselves populist in orientation. But at the same time, they courted industrial workers and had a noticeable influence in some urban areas. Their affinity with liberalism was also evident. They valued constitutionally protected political rights such as freedom of speech and assembly, seeing in these guarantees a way to further political reform, and were willing to embark upon parliamentary maneuvers aimed at creating an

58 For an evaluation of Russian political parties, see the Maklakov Archive, Box 1, accession no. 26003-937, number 24.


61 Tsereteli, I, 217; V. A. Maklakov, The First State Duma: Contemporary Reminiscenses, trans. Mary Belkin (Bloomington, 1964), p. 120; Maklakov Archive, Box 1, accession no. 26003-937, number 24.


effective coalition of progressive and radical parties in the Duma. The Trudovik's political elasticity appealed to Kerensky. He had previously identified with the SR's, but had been disappointed in that party's decision to boycott the elections to the State Duma and had found its leadership overly doctrinaire. He did not feel so confined within the Trudovik Party, for its membership shared his professional background and attitudes and was susceptible to his leadership. Finally (this, to Kerensky's mind, was probably the Trudovik's greatest attraction), they afforded him an opportunity to gain entrance into the State Duma. Liberals saw that institution as a path to the creation of a limited monarchy on the English model and placed great stress on numerical majorities and party platforms; Kerensky viewed it as a podium from which to attack the government and, perhaps, as an eventual focal point of revolution. He readily accepted an offer to stand as a candidate in the upcoming Fourth State Duma, and in the fall of 1912 won election as an unopposed delegate from Volsk, a district capital of Saratov Province.

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67 GD, session 1, meeting 6, December 3, 1912, cols. 182-184.

68 GD, session 1, meeting 3, November 23, 1912, col. 29. At this time, Kerensky also entered the masonic movement. While conclusions must be tentative, it appears that Russian Masonry had a pronounced political complexion. Representatives from a wide political spectrum
A badly mishandled miners' demonstration provided Kerensky with a unique opportunity to participate in the State Duma's activities before his election to that body. On April 4, 1912, local authorities at the Lena gold fields in Irkutsk panicked in the face of mass unrest and allowed troops to fire upon assembled workers; as a result, the incident was transformed into a massacre which claimed 340 victims. The central government compounded the error, for in response to Duma demands for an explanation the Minister of the Interior, N. A. Maklakov, supported the use of force. "The crowd," Maklakov insisted, "lost self-control and moved toward the troops. There was no choice but to fire." In an inflammatory conclusion, Maklakov provocatively added, "This is how it was in the past, and how it will be in the future."

Because of the Interior Minister's performance, the Duma ignored a governmental investigation into the matter and appointed Kerensky to head its own commission of inquiry.

Kerensky accepted the appointment with obvious enthusiasm. His investigation, unexpectedly aided by officials in the provincial were members, indicating that the organization provided a medium through which opponents of tsarism could work together. See Miliukov, Vospominaniia, II, 332-333; Kerensky, Russia, p. 88.


70For an example, see Alexander Guchkov's speech in GD, session 5, meeting 99, April 9, 1912, cols. 1674-1675.

71GD, session 5, meeting 102, April 11, 1912, col. 1953.


73Shidlovskii, II, 126.
administration, revealed flagrant exploitation by mine owners and incompetence on the part of the local army commander. The government, embarrassed and unable to defend itself adequately against the accusatory material compiled by Kerensky, moved to rectify conditions.

The company's monopoly was abolished, the administration was reorganized, and the miners were provided with better food, housing, and working conditions. The Lena goldmining case occurred at a timely moment. Kerensky's able performance, which attracted nationwide attention, allowed him to enter the Duma with an enhanced political reputation.

Almost from its convocation in November 1912, deputy Kerensky was a fractious influence in the Fourth State Duma. His first speech was violently critical of Duma politics, for Kerensky accused the deputies to his Right of trying to "worm their way into power" and observed that success would result only in the replacement of one form of privilege with another. As would frequently occur in the future, his maiden speech was cut short after degenerating into an acrimonious exchange with the conservative Duma President, M. V. Rodzianko.


75 Kokovtsov, II, 57; Shidlovskii, II, 126.

76 Kerensky, *Russia*, p. 82.

77 Padenie, VII, 353; Pares, *Fall*, p. 155.

78 GD, session 1, meeting 6, December 3, 1912, cols. 182-184.

Thus, Kerensky established his position at the very outset of his Duma career. He refused to tolerate compromise if it was directed toward partisan ends; the nation, not specific parties, should be the beneficiary of political action.

In pursuit of that goal, Kerensky willingly took part in disruptive activities in the Duma. An example of that tactic occurred in April, 1914, when deputy Nicholai Chkheidze, a leading Menshevik, created a sensation by predicting the imminent arrival of a republic.\(^\text{80}\)

In a strong reaction, the Right wing of the Duma introduced a "freedom of speech" bill aimed at restricting opposition deputies. An attempt by moderates on April 22 to evade conflict by advancing discussion of the current budget failed, for the maneuver provoked a disorderly Left demonstration in which Kerensky played a leading role. Chants of "freedom of speech" paralysed proceedings, and order was imposed only through the ejection of thirty Left deputies, including Kerensky, and their suspension from the Duma for fifteen meetings.\(^\text{81}\) The return of the barred deputies on May 7 was almost as tumultuous as their eviction. Amid great disorder, Kerensky read a prepared statement which condemned expulsion and praised the explosive revolutionary power of 1905.\(^\text{82}\)

Kerensky's impatience with the Duma majority stemmed from a conviction that it was unrepresentative and reactionary. Accordingly, he refused to take an active part in legislative activity and used his

\(^{80}\)Novoe Vremia, April 18, 1914, p. 2.

\(^{81}\)GD, session 2, meeting 62, April 22, 1914, cols. 792-798.

\(^{82}\)GD, session 2, meeting 77, May 7, 1914, cols. 114-118.
position mainly to influence public opinion through inquiries.  

A pale, slender young man—he was only 31 years old when he entered the Duma—with great aplomb and a compelling manner, Kerensky gained a deserved reputation for being direct and fearless in debate. His intensity won involuntary respect from all sections of the Duma and in a subtle way set him apart from prominent Left deputies such as N. S. Chkheidze and Matvei I. Skobelev. In part, Kerensky's distinction was due to an unnerving eloquence; he was a powerful and imaginative speaker, and when inspired reached a passionate fury that threatened to sweep everything before it.

While Kerensky's talents were generally recognized, he exercised a continuous influence only upon those holding liberal or radical views. Even then, he looked beyond the framework of the State Duma. The Octobrist deputy S. I. Shidlovskii correctly observed that the Left-Center was always making new interparty agreements with Kerensky, but Shidlovskii revealed a severe parliamentary bias in a further comment that these efforts were of no significance. Uninterested in establishing limited and temporary working compromises, Kerensky attempted to transcend ideological barriers, forge the narodnik parties and their allies into a great populist movement, and prepare

83Shidlovskii, II, 127.


85Pares, Fall, p. 154.

86Shidlovskii, II, 127.

87Chernov, Rozhdenie, p. 335; Visniak, p. 229.

88Shidlovskii, II, 127.
for the revolution. He adhered to that non-partisan policy in the face of great temptation. In 1914, Kerensky refused a request from the Central Committee of the SR Party that he act as their spokesman in the Duma because acceptance would hinder his attempts at political unification.89

Kerensky continued his organizational work in frequent and rapid trips throughout the country. His provocative speeches before cooperatives, trade unions, and labor clubs attracted the attention of the Okhrana, and their reports noted the regularity with which he met politically unreliable individuals and groups.90 Association with the energetic radical deputy could prove dangerous; in the summer of 1914 a meeting of primary school teachers in Ekaterinburg (Sverdlovsk), at which he spoke, was raided. Kerensky found protection in his Duma status, but 150 others in attendance were arrested.91

Kerensky's confidence in parliamentary immunity was justified, for it had survived severe testing during the famed Beilis trial of 1913. That case, in which a Jewish youth, Menakhil-Mendel Tev'ev Beilis, was accused of the ritual murder of a Christian child, aroused great controversy within Russia and abroad. The government exposed itself to charges of anti-semitism and distortion of evidence, and Kerensky actively exploited the issue.92 While not officially engaged in the trial, he assisted in the successful defense of Beilis through

89Kerensky, Crucifixion, p. 163.
90Assorted Okhrana reports, Kerensky Archives, folio 81.
91Russkie Vedomosti, July 3, 1914, p. 4.
92Evidence of A. B. Liadov, Padenie, VII, 271; GD, session 2, meeting 4, October 23, 1913, col. 245.
advice and legal work. Beilis' acquittal represented only one stage of the conflict, for on October 23, 1913, Kerensky moved a resolution, adopted by the St. Petersburg Bar Association, which protested against the propagation of racial hatred. The government, infuriated by its defeat and humiliation, brought charges of slander against the signers of the Bar petition. As mover of the resolution, Kerensky was sentenced to eight months' imprisonment and denied the right to seek office. Fortunately, a prolonged public outcry altered the verdict; the sentence was suspended and Kerensky retained his Duma seat.

When war was declared in 1914, Kerensky suspended harassment of the autocracy. He was susceptible to patriotic enthusiasm, but his altered tactics also resulted from a reassessment of political chances. Unable to anticipate the future incompetence and reactionary nature of the government, Kerensky felt that military strains would force fundamental democratic reforms. His shift toward a pro-war liberal position did not lead automatically to the inter-party cooperation that he expected. The liberal groups had also veered to the Right in insisting on unconditional support of tsarist endeavors, and Kerensky remained as isolated as before.

Accordingly, delicate phrasing was required for an acceptable declaration at the Duma special meeting of July 26, 1914, called to

94 *Russkie Vedomosti*, June 7, 1914, p. 3.
95 *Padenie*, VII, 353.
97 Kerensky, *Crucifixion*, p. 214.
98 *GD*, session 2, special meeting, July 26, 1914, cols. 24-25.
deal with the outbreak of war. Kerensky wished to retain links with
the Left and, at the same time, open possibilities for cooperation
with the liberal parties. Plans for a unified Left statement, which
he was to read, proved incompatible with his desires; he was willing
to condemn the origins of the war, but he refused to countenance
serious reservations regarding national defense.99 Kerensky's July 26
address, delivered solely in the name of the Trudovik Party, was a
skillful blending of radical phraseology and nationalistic sentiments.
Observing that there were "no enemies in the laboring classes," he
blamed the outbreak of war upon an alliance between Europe's privileged
groups and the governments that represented them. "The war would not
have occurred," he continued, "if democracy, liberty, equality, and
fraternity" had been real forces in the community of nations. None­
theless, aggression must be opposed, and he expressed confidence that
the "great elemental force of Russian democracy would offer a
determined and successful resistance to the enemy. . . ." Signifi­
cantly, Kerensky refused to identify the government with the nation.
Defense of the country, he maintained, would win release from its
"terrible shackles."100 His attitude toward financing of the war
revealed a similar mixture of doctrine and patriotism. He refused to
vote for war credits,101 stating that the working classes were forced
to bear the brunt of taxation.102 But he acted in the certain

99Kerensky, Crucifixion, p. 211.
100GD, session 2, special meeting, July 26, 1914, cols. 18-19.
101Tsereteli, I, 217.
102GD, session 2, special meeting, July 26, 1914, cols. 18-19.
knowledge that the requested credits would be approved and later revealed that his position reflected the Trudovik attitude rather than his own.103

Kerensky was soon disappointed in his hopes that the State Duma would become an effective agent of democratic reform. When the government cited the exigencies of war in intensifying reactionary policies, the parties to Kerensky's right refrained from protest and adhered to a policy of "sacred union" with the Crown.104 The passivity of Duma liberals became unmistakable following the arrest of the Bolshevik faction in the State Duma in November 1914. Paul Miliukov, the noted Cadet leader, and I. N. Efremov, an influential Progressist, were willing to join Kerensky and Chkheidze in an informal inquiry in Rodzianko's office.105 Nevertheless, Kerensky failed to provoke debate on the issue in the next Duma session. In direct response to Kerensky's fervent declaration that he "could not stand by uncritically,"106 Miliukov stated that the Cadets would not join struggles against the government.107

Continued governmental incompetence forced the Duma liberals to abandon their position of non-interference. Gradually accumulating

103GD, session 3, meeting 2, January 28, 1915, col. 151.


105A. E. Badaev, Bol'sheviki v Gosudarstvennoi Dume (Leningrad, 1930), p. 349.

106GD, session 3, meeting 1, January 27, 1915, cols. 44-45.

107GD, session 3, meeting 1, January 27, 1915, col. 50.
evidence of serious mismanagement in transport and munitions was dramatically confirmed by military disasters in Galicia in the spring of 1915, and the Cadets responded with demands for reform and reorganization. Moderates and some conservatives followed the Cadet lead; in August 1915 the Progressive Bloc, containing two-thirds of the Duma membership, was formed. The Bloc's platform, which included creation of a ministry enjoying public confidence, administrative respect for legality, religious and political amnesty, freedom for trade unions, and increased rights for national minorities, closely resembled proposals Kerensky had advanced at the outbreak of the war.

But Kerensky was no longer satisfied with reformist tactics. The events that revived political criticism in others caused him to resume a radical posture. Of course, he welcomed the appearance of the Progressive Bloc and promised cooperation, but he remained outside it. An unexpected prorogation of the State Duma on September 3, 1915, provided an excellent opportunity for his return to pre-war methods. While indignation at the Ukase of Prorogation was general,


109 N. Lapin, "Kadety v dni galitsiikogo razgroma," KA, LIX (1933), 120-123.

110 N. Papin, "Progressivnyi blok v 1915-1917 gg.," KA, L (1932), 117.

111 Miliukov, Vospominania, II, 219-220.

112 Kerensky, Russia, p. 129.

113 Shidlovskii, II, 44.
Bloc deputies agreed to moderate their expressions of resentment.\textsuperscript{114} Kerensky, though, took part in a very disorderly Left demonstration. He attempted to obtain a refusal of submission to the prorogation and, in an access of zeal, even demanded that the Duma declare itself a Constituent Assembly.\textsuperscript{115} As could be expected, his proposals generated great excitement and it was some time before the proceedings could be brought to a decorous close.\textsuperscript{116}

Kerensky's return to the forefront of the Duma Left was brief, for illness at the end of 1915 caused his temporary withdrawal from active politics. He had rarely been in vigorous health, but a serious operation forced him into seven months of convalescence at the Grankula Sanitorium near Helsingfors (Helsinki), Finland.\textsuperscript{117} His recovery coincided with a major Muslim uprising in Turkestan, and his investigation of that occurrence delayed his return to St. Petersburg until late September, 1916.\textsuperscript{118}

Upon his arrival at the capital, Kerensky found a drastically changed political atmosphere. During his absence support of the Imperial family and the government had seriously eroded, and various proposals for a \textit{coup d'etat} were beginning to circulate in the Duma.

\textsuperscript{114}Evidence of Rodzianko, \textit{Padenie}, VII, 153.


\textsuperscript{116}GD, session 4, meeting 16, September 3, 1915, col. 1208.

\textsuperscript{117}Testimony of Fromkin, Kerensky Archives, folio 68.

and the army command. While his radical reputation kept him at the fringes of such conspiracies, he was occasionally approached for expressions of general support. Kerensky was not opposed to a palace coup, and made preparations to influence public opinion in that event, but he had little faith in concrete results. He looked beyond the privileged groups to the nation, preserving confidence in "powerful forces that would not remain passive."

The waning months of the Tsarist Empire were filled with his attempts to awaken those "powerful forces." He multiplied clandestine contacts with workers groups and, through his wife's cousin, Sergei Vasil'ev, gained influence with young officers in the St. Petersburg garrison. Kerensky supplemented these covert activities with major anti-governmental assaults in the State Duma. On November 1, 1916, he expressed opposition to the inclusion of B. V. Sturmer and A. D. Protopopov in a reconstructed ministry by instigating a Left protest which prevented Council President V. F. Trepov's reading of the cabinet declaration. At the same session, he preceded Miliukov's famous "treason or stupidity" speech with one even more violent, during which

119Evidence of Rodzianko, Padenie, VII, 152.

120Evidence of S. I. Beletskii, Padenie, IV, 490; Kerensky, Russia, p. 147.


122Pokrovskii, p. 30.

123GD, session 5, meeting 20, February 15, 1917, col. 1359.


125Evidence of Miliukov, Padenie, VI, 349.
he labeled the new ministers "cowards" and "betrayes." His strenuous opposition, which included an investigation into Grigorii Rasputin's influence, alarmed the government. By December, Protopopov, the Minister of the Interior, had decided to "really get Kerensky," and was prevented only by Nicholas II's refusal to approve an order of arrest.

Protopopov's hostility was justified, for in mid-December Kerensky openly began to advocate revolution. On the thirteenth of that month, in defiance of government wishes, he publicized suppressed motions of the Moscow Congresses of the Zemstvo Union and the Union of Towns which called for a change of cabinet and the formation of a ministry responsible to the Duma. While adding that adoption of these motions would contribute to the "salvation of the country," he urged a more drastic solution. Kerensky returned to the same theme three days later. Citing the example of an unwilling French revolutionary, Count Honoré Mirabeau, he suggested that events were forcing the Duma toward revolutionary activity.

The State Duma went into recess on December 17, 1916. By the time of its reconvenetion on February 14, 1917, conditions seemed to have reached their "last limits." Rasputin's assassination on

126GD, session 5, meeting 1, November 1, 1916, cols. 29-34.
127Evidence of Beletskii, Padenie, IV, 419.
128Evidence of Beletskii, Padenie, V, 249.
129GD, session 5, meeting 15, December 13, 1916, cols. 1095-98.
130GD, session 5, meeting 18, December 16, 1916, col. 1222.
131GD, session 5, meeting 20, February 15, 1917, col. 1345.
December 19 had only intensified governmental repression; labor groups were disbanded and their members arrested, and in an ominous move the Petrograd Military District was separated from the Northern front and its commander, General S. S. Khabalov, was granted extraordinary authority. Industrial strikes were increasing, and a serious food shortage afflicted the army and major cities. The Duma itself was acutely threatened, for Nicholas II, particularly antagonized by Kerensky's December performances, was actively considering an order of dissolution.

These disturbing developments provoked Kerensky, on February 15, into the most dramatic and violent speech of his political career. In an emotional appearance before the uneasy Duma deputies, he charged that the futility of Rasputin's assassination had proven the "forces of darkness" to be an illusion. The blame for Russia's present catastrophe did not lie with the government, for its membership came and went "like shadows." The true source of Russia's ills, the "root of evil," was "personal rule." The Duma, Kerensky continued, must abolish the "medieval regime immediately, at all costs," or events would pass into the hands of more "energetic forces." "Look upward," he cried. "See the lightning, here and there, beginning to lace the skies of the Russian Empire!"

In a passage prudently stricken from

133 Miliukov, Vospominaniia, II, 285.
134 OD, session 5, meeting 20, February 15, 1917, cols. 1343-45.
135 Evidence of Beletskii, Padenie, IV, 491.
136 OD, session 5, meeting 20, February 15, 1917, cols. 1353-59.
the official records by Rodzianko, Kerensky concluded with a reference to Brutus in a thinly-disguised plea for the Tsar's assassination.\textsuperscript{137}

Kerensky was unable to move the Duma into a revolutionary position; as Shidlovskii, the Chairman of the Progressive Bloc, had predicted, it preferred even a discredited monarchy to the dangers of revolutionary upheaval.\textsuperscript{138} On February 23, when riots were already beginning in the capital, Kerensky declared himself at "the very limits of patience." The Duma, he stated angrily, was "exclusively preoccupied with its own troubles" and was indifferent to the "tragedy in the streets."\textsuperscript{139}

Ironically, Kerensky contributed to the Duma's preoccupation. His February 15 address infuriated the Court and the cabinet, and an attempt was made to obtain \textit{verbatim} transcripts of his recent speeches. The government was frustrated by the obduracy of Rodzianko, who provided Prince N. D. Golitsyn, Trepov's successor, with altered copies of the requested speeches. The bulky, irascible Duma President also denied the occurrence of obvious changes and omissions and refused to rescind Kerensky's parliamentary immunity.\textsuperscript{140} The government, which had intended banishment or trial for treason, contented itself with a refusal to allow Kerensky's speeches in the newspapers.\textsuperscript{141}

While Kerensky's dramatically defiant gestures exposed him to

\textsuperscript{138}Pokrovskii, p. 29.
\textsuperscript{139}\textit{GD}, session 5, meeting 23, February 23, 1917, cols. 1649-58.
\textsuperscript{140}Evidence of Prince Golitsyn, \textit{Padenie}, II, 162.
\textsuperscript{141}Evidence of V. A. Apushkii, \textit{Padenie}, II, 220-221.
obvious danger, they were undertaken with judicious calculation. He fully realized that the Duma could neither initiate nor survive revolution, but he also felt that outside forces could prod it into constructive action. To his mind, the Duma contained elements indispensable to the composition of a future government; political organization and administrative expertise were concentrated in it, and at least the illusion of continuity and legitimacy—important to the popular acknowledgement of authority—could be fostered through it. Also, Kerensky believed that compromise and mutual adjustment, so essential in an unsettled period, could be expected from parties in the parliamentary tradition. In a characteristically theatrical manner, he attempted to rivet the nation's attention on the Duma and to force recognition of its potential. In that way, he hoped to preserve its possibilities as the nucleus of a new order.

In important respects, Kerensky's revolutionary actions were logical extensions of his Duma policies. He consistently pursued nationalistic and democratic aims and—while this was frequently obscured during his ideological struggles with the autocracy—attempted to achieve them through unification and conciliation. Kerensky always cherished the vision of an alliance of liberal and socialist forces dedicated to the reconstruction of Russia, and he tried to dissolve doctrinal barriers by stirring appeals to national interests.

142 Pokrovskii, p. 30.


His criticism, in May of 1915, of Miliukov's opposition to the formation of special councils to facilitate military organization was typical: he accused the Cidets of taking theoretical considerations (in this case, cooperation with discredited ministers) as their starting point, repudiating useful things not in accord with their assumptions. His intolerance of doctrinal rigidity seemed greater following the collapse of tsarism, but that was a response to broadened opportunities rather than a change in methods or convictions.

Misconceptions regarding Kerensky's values and goals hindered awareness of this basic continuity and encouraged misunderstandings. Most of the revolutionary leadership had, since the turn of the century, engaged in unceasing interparty struggles and had, in the process, evolved rigid and mutually exclusive positions. While willing to take part in tactical accommodations, these party veterans extended their conflicts into the revolutionary period in attempts to impose their particular wills upon the new situation. Since it was assumed that Kerensky would do the same, his shift from mutinous obstructionism to non-partisan compromise baffled and ultimately alienated potential allies. Miliukov sought an explanation in "self-glorifying obtrusion," Tsereteli suggested "giddiness with popularity," and Chernov saw the sudden embracing of a "mission."

These evaluations were inadequate. Tsarism had nourished and

146Miliukov, Vospominaniia, II, 327.
147Tsereteli, I, 121.
148Chernov, Pered burei, p. 338.
sharpened Kerensky's polemical intransigence; the collapse of Imperial Russia ended it and stripped away the radical patina that had coated his behavior. A somewhat more accurate interpretation was advanced by Nikolai N. Sukhanov, a close acquaintance and eventual Menshevik, who felt that Kerensky was the "consummate middle-class radical." Indirect support for Sukhanov's view came from Pitirim Sorokin, an eminent sociologist and Kerensky's personal secretary in the Second Coalition, who exclaimed in 1917: "Who are we, but Russian Girondists!"

Yet neither "Girondist" nor "middle-class radical" sufficiently described Kerensky's political orientation. As his Duma career adequately demonstrated, he was a nationalist, a populist, and a democrat. While those beliefs were not mutually exclusive, and while he certainly tried to promote all of them, circumstances determined which one predominated at any specific time. Under the imperatives of the First World War, Kerensky's nationalism became his salient characteristic and he tended to subordinate other concerns to the realization of national goals. In practice, the result was a provisional commitment to political moderation and class cooperation as the best means of simultaneously protecting the country and the revolution. To the extent that his Duma theatrics obscured those attitudes, Kerensky entered the Russian revolution under false pretenses.

149 Sukhanov, I. 51.

150 Sorokin, Leaves from a Russian Diary (New York, 1924), p. 93.
CHAPTER II

KERENSKY AND THE FEBRUARY REVOLUTION

When the Russian monarchy collapsed in February of 1917, the forces that had undermined it survived in aggravated forms. While a violent revolution could normally be expected to eliminate those issues that provoked its outbreak, the special circumstances of Imperial defeat produced a different result. Force had been present, but it had been neither well-coordinated nor decisive; the Romanovs had been dethroned only because vital segments of the state apparatus, the military, and society refused to rally in support. The February Days represented little more than the sudden crumbling of a feeble and despised regime in an outward direction from an unsupported center. Shorn of defenders, tsarism discredited only itself by its fall; there were few victims and no claimants with a clear title to power. There was also no consensus regarding future policies.

The coincidence of war with revolution assured that the Tsar's successors would inherit a welter of obstinate problems, and the particularly inconclusive nature of the revolution, which left competitive groups intact and motives clouded, increased the burden of that legacy. Simplification was impossible as long as politically viable groups opposed each other on vital issues such as the reconstitution of authority, war, or foreign policy. It was obvious that
Russia faced a difficult transitionary period, for revolutionary goals awaited definition and the strength of hostile forces was still untested.

The locus of that gathering conflict was the Tauride Palace, whose wings housed the State Duma and its emerging rival, the Petrograd Soviet. But there was great confusion within that new center of power, for the revolution disconcerted its first inheritors and produced in them an initial inability to master events. Hesitation was most apparent among moderates and liberals, who had anticipated an orderly ascension to state power and observed outbreaks in the streets and military barracks with dismay. Unable to identify fully with rebellion and fearing the consequences of either failure or success, the Duma seemed incapable of independent action.¹ Socialists, of course, welcomed the revolution, but they were also hindered by various considerations. They suffered from the absence of exiled party leaders and, as doctrine forbade the immediate exercise of formal authority, were uncertain of the precise attitude to assume toward the Duma. Furthermore, their necessary alliance with privileged groups was extremely fragile, and they feared the disruptive effects of provocative unilateral decisions.² The composite result was a temporary extension of the political vacuum created by the disappearance of the state. Sudden inheritance of responsibility under the pressure of an external enemy, the latent threat of civil strife, and prevailing

¹M. V. Rodzianko, "Gosudarstvennaja dum i fevral'skaia revoliutsiiia 1917 goda," ARR, VI (1922), 57.

²N. Sukhanov, Zapiski o revoliutsii, 7 vols. (Berlin, 1922-23), I, 95.
confusion combined to check the momentum of the revolution.

That condition of partial arrest was perpetuated and eventually institutionalized by a series of maneuvers and political coups executed by Alexander Kerensky. Possessed of a rare freedom of action derived from popular acclaim and strongly held convictions, he manipulated the Duma and the Petrograd Soviet, asserted control over centrifugal social forces, and struck a political balance which inhibited conflict. Yet the resulting situation was artificial, for it required constant adjustment and a dampening or deflection, rather than a resolution, of antagonisms. Kerensky's policies were often disingenuous and ultimately unsuccessful, but as long as they endured, liberals and socialists held to a relationship which possessed some resiliency and allowed a measure of interim government.

While Kerensky was unable to foresee either the future complications of the revolution or his prominent role within it, he had expected the eventful developments that occurred in Petrograd toward the end of February. On the evening of February 22, he had been informed of the impending strikes by a deputation of workers from the Putilov Works which visited him at the editorial office of Severnye Zapiski (Northern Notes). Addressing Kerensky as "citizen deputy," the Putilov delegates stressed the exclusively political nature of the movement they were about to initiate. As discontent was endemic in the Vyborg district, Kerensky knew that a new round of strikes would not, in itself, be unusually significant. But ebbing support in the

3V. Zenzinov, "Fevral'skie dni," NZ, XXXIV (1953), 196-197. Zenzinov, an influential Socialist Revolutionary, arranged the interview between the Putilov delegation and Kerensky.
army command, the Duma, court circles, and the Petrograd garrison had so weakened the government that a recrudescence of internal pressure clearly contained revolutionary potential.

A significant broadening of popular unrest required the concurrence of military units stationed in Petrograd, and Kerensky was increasingly optimistic that their cooperation would be forthcoming. While representatives from all the major parties had established links with the garrison, none seemed to have enjoyed success comparable to his in acquiring information or in maintaining an effective conspiratorial network. Through his contacts, which included popular officers such as V. B. Stankevich, M. N. Petrov, and Sergei Vasil'ev, Kerensky was able to monitor and to influence the political radicalization occurring in the barracks. The results were encouraging. In his opinion the garrison, no longer politically reliable, was likely to sympathize with mass demonstrations and was capable of being directed toward at least an abridgement of autocratic rule. Accordingly, his practical activities were aimed at ways to organize and to guide the soldiery in the event of insurrection.

While Kerensky retained confidence in the imminence of revolution, he seriously underestimated the importance of the February 23 movement. In part, he discounted it because intervention by the

4Sukhanov, I, 83.
Petrograd garrison appeared unnecessary. The industrial strikes that had been predicted materialised, but their significance was obscured by a nearly simultaneous demonstration over food shortages. As the scarcity was more artificial than real (the result of a temporary breakdown in transportation and distribution), a restoration of order was expected through routine police and administrative procedures.

Three days of uncontrolled riots, increasing fraternization between soldiers and civilians, and an abortive mutiny by the Pavlovskii regiment were required for Kerensky to recognize the gravity of the situation. Even then, the full implications of the disorders escaped him, for he considered only the possibility of limited concessions from the monarchy in the shape of a reorganized ministry or, at most, the transformation of the Duma into a true parliament.

There was a simple explanation for Kerensky's passivity through February 25; along with other Left politicians, he had been discouraged by the anarchic temper of the crowds. The demonstrations were disorganized, lacked clear purpose, and resisted discipline. He later admitted that the "moment of collision" had appeared sooner than anticipated, and others were more explicit. Vladimir Zenzinov,

7Evidence of General S. S. Khabalov, Padenie, I, 183.
8Novoe Vremia, February 24, 1917, p. 5.
10Sukhanov, I, 31.
11Evidence of Khabalov, Padenie, I, 195.
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a Socialist Revolutionary, observed that "an organized political force did not exist in Petrograd at that time," and the radical journalist Sukhanov, who remained in constant touch with major socialist organizations, felt "unable to influence events in any way." In the absence of leadership, little more could be expected than minor governmental concessions followed by a dissipation of revolutionary energy.

It was not until February 26 that Kerensky became convinced that Petrograd was indeed on the verge of revolution. He had spent a frustrating morning in the Tauride Palace, vainly attempting to persuade the Duma to abandon its loyalist stance, when Stankevich arrived with an urgent message: the Preobrazhenskii regiment (which had quelled the Pavlovskii mutiny of the previous day) was preparing to revolt, and its officers appeared willing to accept the authority of the State Duma. Such an occurrence would entirely transform the situation, and Kerensky, at a gathering of Left representatives at his apartment that evening, felt justified in asserting that the "wave was rising" and that they should expect "decisive events."

The meeting ended unsatisfactorily, for several of the participants were convinced that Kerensky's optimism was unfounded. There were, in fact, valid grounds for pessimism since Petrograd had temporarily reverted to governmental control. February 26 had been a

14Sukhanov, I, 46.
15Evidence of D. N. Dubenskii, Padenie, VI, 394.
16Stankevich, p. 65.
Sunday, and the factories in the Vyborg district, the principal industrial area, were closed and unavailable as gathering places for demonstrations. Furthermore, Nicholas II had finally directed General Khabalov to suppress disorder by all available means, and crowds that did form were dispersed by gunfire from the Imperial Guards and from special gendarme units armed with automatic weapons. Under those conditions, it was not surprising that K. K. Iurenev, a Bolshevik sympathizer who claimed to be in close touch with worker sentiment, called Kerensky's conclusions "exaggerations" and dismissed his desire to force events as "hysteric."  

Kerensky was quickly vindicated. On the following day, February 27, the Petrograd garrison mutinied and joined the street crowds. Begun by the training detachment of the Volinskii regiment, which was immediately joined by the Preobrazhenskii, Litovskii and Moscow regiments, the rebellion either encompassed or immobilized almost every military unit stationed in the capital. By the early afternoon arsenals, prisons, and the Fortress of Peter and Paul were in the hands of the insurgents, and loyalist forces were confined to the vicinity of the Winter Palace and the Admiralty building. A revolutionary situation now prevailed and it required only a directing center to become self-sustaining.

18 Evidence of Khabalov, Padenie, I, 190.
19 Evidence of Rodzianko, Padenie, VII, 159.
22 Evidence of Khabalov, Padenie, I, 203.
Kerensky was determined that the State Duma exercise such a function, and he was singularly qualified to accomplish that task. Possessed of an impeccable radical reputation and great popularity, Kerensky was the most influential political figure in the capital. The revolution had provided him with an intense sense of release and a concomitant ability to act; within the emotional context of the February Days, that combination of passionate enthusiasm and personal fame was overwhelmingly effective. By articulating, and thereby representing, a particularly nationalistic and idealistic interpretation of the revolution, he was able to mold the still inchoate aspirations of the population and to transmit to them "tremendous shocks of moral electricity." Kerensky directed these considerable talents toward the Duma in order to adapt it to the needs of revolution and to force its assumption of state responsibility.

The Duma complied reluctantly and only under constraint. When Kerensky arrived at the Tauride Palace on the morning of February 27, he found the deputies prepared to obey a governmental ukase of prorogation, and despite support from N. V. Nekrasov, I. N. Efremov, and Chkheidze, his arguments against submission were unavailing. Kerensky bitterly resented the Duma's acquiescence to prorogation,


26Evidence of Rodzianko, Padenie, VII, 160.

27Evidence of Dubenskii, Padenie, VI, 394.
considering its decision "tantamount to . . . political suicide at the very moment when its authority was at its height."\(^{28}\)

Yet a passive stance was understandable, for to the majority of the Duma deputies there were no satisfactory alternatives. Active support of the government was impossible on ideological and practical grounds, while adherence to the revolution raised great dangers. The deputies hesitated to support a movement over which they had no control and which, if defeated, would embrace them in its ruin. Under the circumstances, delay "until the character of the disturbances became clarified" was an attractive option.\(^{29}\) Admittedly, the Duma's submission was not unqualified; Rodzianko protested the prorogation vigorously to Nicholas II by telegram,\(^ {30}\) and the Council of Elders (composed of the various Duma party leaders) agreed to call an informal, unofficial session in an adjoining hall.\(^ {31}\) Still, those tactics were unsatisfactory; if they guaranteed the continued existence of the Duma as a functional political body, the fact remained that it was reduced in status to a gathering of private citizens. But the deputies were not allowed to temporize. During the course of the day several developments, most of which Kerensky contrived, set them upon an irreversibly revolutionary course.


The first of those events was the appearance before the Tauride Palace, at about 2:00 p.m., of large detachments of soldiers from the Preobrazhenskii regiment. Kerensky had attempted to move troops in the direction of the Duma since the early morning, and upon their tardy arrival he charged them with its defense. The presence of mutinous troops on the grounds of the Tauride Palace did not immediately have a decisive effect, for the Council of Elders continued to resist demands of solidarity with the revolution. Indeed, Kerensky's arbitrary decision to summon the garrison provoked substantial alarm and resentment; N. V. Savich, an Octobrist, responded typically in protesting that a "mob cannot hand us authority," and Vasilii Shul'gin, a Progressive Nationalist, expressed an earnest wish to address the intruders with the "flaming tongues of machine guns." Nevertheless, the now compromised deputies were imbued with an increased sense of urgency. Rodzianko regretfully abandoned his exclusively loyal position and agreed to the creation of a special committee which, if required, could assume governmental power.

That need soon arose, for Kerensky so entangled the Duma with the revolution that participation in it proved unavoidable. A striking example was the seizure and confinement in the Ministerial Pavilion of

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33 V. Shul'gin, *Dni* (Belgrade, 1925), p. 162.

34 Minutes of an unofficial meeting of the Duma, R. Browder and A. Kerensky, eds., The Russian Provisional Government, 1917; Documents, 3 vols. (Stanford, 1961), 1, 46.

35 Shul'gin, p. 163.

cabinet members and lesser functionaries of the tsarist regime. Kerensky organized the search for governmental officials,37 and when they were located he personally arrested them in the name of the State Duma "until the creation of the Duma's Provisional Committee."38 In doing so, he went against the expressed desires of many deputies; when I. G. Shcheglovitov, the President of the State Council, was brought in, Kerensky overrode attempts to treat him as a guest and insisted, against scandalized opposition, upon placing him under guard.39 A similar procedure was followed with A. D. Protopopov and V. A. Sukhomlinov, and Kerensky expanded his activities by confiscating funds and state documents.40 Resentment among deputies continued to smolder: when the bewildered, hastily dressed ex-minister V. N. Kokovtsov appeared at the Duma in the custody of enthusiastic students, he was told to "leave all this nonsense alone and go home before Kerensky sees you."41 But as the evening progressed, it became generally accepted that tsarist officials should be placed in Kerensky's keeping.42

The de facto Minister of Justice acted primarily from expediency, for he later observed that the release of those arrested would have "given rise to a profound distrust of the Duma among the masses" and

37Evidence of M. A. Beliaev, Padenie, II, 226.
38Miliukov, Vospominaniia, II, 296.
40Evidence of Protopopov, Padenie, IV, 55.
42Evidence of Beliaev, Padenie, II, 226.
therefore would have been "sheer madness." His measures won eventual approval, but for quite different reasons. Kerensky's fervent declaration that the "State Duma does not shed blood" caught the popular imagination, and it became widely felt that he had averted a serious outburst of excesses. David Francis, the American ambassador, was impressed by the relative lack of bloodshed during the February Days and declared: "Too much credit cannot be given Kerensky for his conduct" in the containment of violence. Vasili Shul'gin, a fiery conservative who had always felt a strong antipathy for Kerensky, exclaimed that "He was magnificent," and Nikolai Makeev, a Socialist Revolutionary active in Zemstvo affairs, overheard assertions in Moscow that Kerensky's name would be "written in letters of gold on the tablets of history" for his rejection of vindictiveness.

Kerensky also succeeded because of confusion and demoralization among his Duma associates. Most conservatives had absented themselves when the disorders began, and those that remained felt unable to oppose him. "We were powerless," Shul'gin recalled. "What did we understand?" Stankevich, who was struck by the bafflement of Duma members as they tried to cope with the flood of workers and soldiers in the Tauride Palace, concluded that while the deputies "created the

43Kerensky, *Catastrophe*, p. 17.
44Shul'gin, p. 171.
46Shul'gin, p. 171.
48Shul'gin, p. 168.
atmosphere that called forth the explosion, they were completely unprepared for such an explosion." Assured the obedience of the "pure public" and thus unaffected by the general paralysis within the Duma, Kerensky automatically acquired a dominant position within it. Accordingly, his ardently revolutionary speeches to the crowds before the Tauride Palace, his seizure of foreign office materials, and his independent decision to send revolutionary detachments against Okhrana offices provoked only helpless expressions of frustration and dismay. The anomalous character of the Duma had often been recognized, but its feebleness had never been so manifest as when Kerensky forcibly associated it with the dissolution of the old order.

While Kerensky had included the Duma in the revolution, he had failed to move it into a position of active leadership. That was finally accomplished on the evening of February 27 by the creation of the Petrograd Soviet by revolutionary workers and soldiers. The implications were clear to every deputy: power had to be seized before it was usurped by "some scoundrels in the factories." The Council of Elders reacted to the threat by activating the previously proposed Provisional Committee of the Duma, and with the exceptions of Kerensky and Chkheidze selected its membership from the parties of the

49Stankevich, p. 71.
50Shul'gin, p. 169.
51Shidlovskii, II, 55.
52Evidence of Protopopov, Padenie, IV, 55.
54Shul'gin, p. 179.
Progressive Bloc.55 Ostensibly, the powers of the Provisional Committee were limited to the restoration of order and the promotion of contacts with various public groups.56 But that was only a cautious formula, designed to protect the Duma from retribution in the event of successful counterrevolution and to afford a degree of flexibility if the revolution prevailed. The real aims of the committee, as its members fully realized, were the assumption of state power and the corresponding diminution of Soviet authority.57

Despite the conviction that the Soviet's ascendency had to be forestalled, the Provisional Committee could not issue a direct challenge to that rival institution. As Kerensky observed, because the Soviet represented the first "primitive social and political molds into which the molten revolutionary lava began to flow and cool off," opposition to it would have been opposition to the revolution itself.58 He could also have added that such a course would have been suicidal. Although its elections had been irregular, the Soviet was far more representative of the population than was the Fourth Duma, and its standing among the workers and soldiers in Petrograd was unassailable.


56Sbornik ukazov i postanovlenii Vremennago Pravitel'stva, 2 vols. (Petrograd, 1917), 1, 4.

57Miliukov, Vospominaniiia, II, 293; A. V. Peshekhonov, Pervyia nedeli; iz vospominanii o revoliutsii (Riga, n.d.), p. 263.

58Kerensky, Catastrophe, p. 111.
The conclusion was inescapable; in order to consolidate power, the Provisional Committee had to reach a suitable accommodation with its rival.59

A temporary adjustment of relations was possible, for the Petrograd Soviet's hostility to the middle classes was tempered by the imperatives of socialist theory. The classic Marxist attitude, which considered tsarist Russia an essentially feudal state and insisted that a socialist government could only replace a future bourgeois regime, turned the Soviet's leadership against an outright assumption of state responsibility. Tactical considerations also exerted an influence. The Soviet was convinced that it did not command sufficient strength to maintain a purely socialistic government and feared that such an effort would drive the liberals into an alliance with tsarism. But if the liberal parties assumed formal power, a wedge would be driven between tsarism and its former allies and revolutionary gains would be preserved.60 There were other grounds for the Soviet's evasion of direct governmental responsibility: only the middle classes possessed the administrative expertise necessary to a well-ordered state; as a result of persecution, the socialist mentality was negative toward authority; and the spectre of directing a war government was an ideological nightmare.61

The acknowledgement of such contradictory needs could produce the Soviet's sanction of a government drawn from the Progressive Bloc

59Evidence of Rodzianko, Padenie, VII, 159.


of the Duma, but it could not guarantee stability. While the Soviet demanded a condition of "dual power," in which it could yield formal authority and still retain the ability to block actions detrimental to its interests, the Duma leadership was determined eventually to solidify its position at the expense of its rival. Both sides, then, considered the existing class truce to be partial and temporary. The socialist leadership tolerated liberalism as a historically necessary, but transitory, political force to be exploited, and the Duma sought socialist cooperation only in order to "sheathe the Soviet knife." If the events surrounding the October insurrection provide a reliable guide, the rigidity built into such an arrangement would surely have produced a rapid deepening of antagonisms and the eruption of civil war.

Kerensky was determined to prevent that result, and his persistent attempts to eliminate dual power spanned the length of the February revolution. He proceeded from the assumption that the revolution could be consolidated through a union of liberal and socialist forces, without class warfare, and by the utilization of parliamentary mechanisms. The State Duma, the primary source of leadership, would remain sensitive to national interests, and the Soviet would provide the medium through which popular support of the government could be organized and expressed. There were indispensable conditions to such an arrangement: the opposing centers of power had to face each other

63 Miliukov, Vospominaniia, II, 321.
64 Evidence of Rodzianko, Padenie, VII, 159.
from positions of equality, and the resulting government required a
grip upon the Left in the form of socialist ministers.65 Under the
circumstances, those ends could only be realized at the expense of the
Soviet. Kerensky's methods were Machiavellian; as he had enmeshed a
recalcitrant Duma in the revolution, he began to enmesh the Soviet,
to its detriment, in a partnership with the Duma. Within a remarkably
short interval, he twisted the relationships between the liberal and
revolutionary forces into a tangled knot of interdependence.66

Kerensky's purposeful manipulations were evident in two minor,
but suggestive, developments on February 27. The first of these was
his success in physically associating the Soviet with the State Duma.
Acting from a characteristic appreciation of symbolic effect,67 he
arranged premises for the TsIK (Petrograd Soviet Central Executive
Committee) in the Duma Budget Committee room.68 The Tauride Palace
might still be divided into "right" and "left" wings, but proximity
implied unity. It is significant that the later Provisional Govern­
ment moved to the Marinskii, and then Winter, palaces only after
achieving a degree of independence from the "democracy." A second
revealing incident was Kerensky's fusion, under Duma leadership, of

65A. Kerenskii, "Politika Vremennogo Pravitel' stva, " SZ, L
(1932), 419.

66Chernov, Rozhdenie, p. 254.

67V. A. Maklakov, The First State Duma; Contemporary
Reminiscenses, trans. Mary Belkin (Bloomington, 1964), p. 174; see
Kerensky's discussion of the value of symbols in: A. F. Kerenskii,
"Patrioty svoego Korolia," Izdakeka, sbornik statei (Paris, 1922),
p. 103.

(New York, 1934), p. 244.
the committee charged with the revolutionary defense of Petrograd. Among the first acts of the TsIK had been the hurried formation of a rudimentary military staff to organize the Petrograd garrison, and the thoroughly alarmed Provisional Committee quickly followed suit. Relying upon his personal influence, Kerensky managed to unite the two bodies into a new Military Commission of the State Duma, to win a place for himself within it, and successfully to promote the appointment of Colonel Boris A. Engel'hardt, a Duma deputy, as its chairman. While the Soviet brought superior resources into the union, Colonel Engel'hardt was able to subordinate the commission to the Provisional Committee. By March 1 the imbalance was so evident that the outmaneuvered Soviet, citing the "menacing" attitude of the Military Commission, urged an expansion of its membership to include representatives from the lower military ranks. Although the emergence of the Provisional Government on March 2 made the commission obsolete, it had, during a critical transition period, contributed to the authority and security of the liberal forces.

As the essentially anti-Soviet nature of Kerensky's measures escaped general notice in the turmoil of the revolution, he was able on February 28 to continue his political ascendancy with a timely change of membership from the minuscule Trudovik Party to the more

69"Fevral'skaia revoliutsii v Petrograde," KA, XLI (1930), 63.
70Rodzianko, "Gosudarstvennaia duma," p. 64.
71Sukhanov, I, 88.
72Minutes of the March 1 session of the Petrograd Soviet, cited in Izvestiia, March 2, 1917, p. 1.
powerful SR Party. His action, aimed at acquiring increased leverage with revolutionary groups, resulted in his immediate election to the vice-chairmanship of the TsIK. By February 28 Kerensky occupied a truly enviable position. As a member of the Soviet Presidium, the Provisional Committee of the State Duma, and the Duma Military Commission, and with the streets reverberating with demands for his appearance, he was the most influential political figure in the revolution. Kerensky was aware of his unique status. "Everyone," he recalled, "seemed to treat me in a manner subtly changed, different, as though some special power were in my hands, some peculiar influence with the stormy masses." 

But regardless of his standing, and despite his assiduous efforts, Kerensky failed to reverse an increasing trend toward the formalization of dual power. Party doctrine could not be overcome, for by February 28 the TsIK had firmly decided to oppose direct socialist participation in the projected Provisional Government. Yet the situation was not entirely hopeless. Considerable wavering had occurred during the course of the floor debates, and some delegates had even tried to justify their attitudes by referring to the sudden appearance of an unwritten constitution in which the liberal parties provided a ministry responsible to the Soviet "legislature." While such arguments were too specious to merit consideration, they did

74Gaponenko, I, 8.
75Kerensky, Crucifixion, p. 259.
indicate a certain confusion and elasticity in outlook of which some advantage could be taken.

Kerensky initially responded to the Soviet's decision with a renewed attempt to buttress the position of the political Right. Accordingly, he encouraged Rodzianko's February 28 proposal of an extraordinary convocation of all previous Dumas--since the first two had been selected by general franchise, he thought the resulting popular support might limit the Soviet's interference with an official government. But the Cadets spurned that approach, maintaining that the assembling of bodies with no present claim to power was a legalistic absurdity. Miliukov's party evidently refused to accept the implications of the revolution and persisted in acting as if parliamentary modes and traditional state forms still retained validity. Justifiably dismayed by the "academic" attitudes of these "bookish men," Kerensky became convinced that only unilateral action could break the impasse between the Duma and the Soviet.

The solution was obvious; Kerensky would have to defy the TsIK's injunction against socialist participation in the new government. He was in a position to do so, for along with Chkheidze he was assured the offer of a portfolio in the projected cabinet. He could accept that post and as a member of the Soviet Presidium demand a hearing before a plenary meeting, where opinion was more malleable and ideology


78Miliukov, Vospominaniia, II, 303.

79Kerensky, Crucifixion, p. 249.

80Shul'gin, p. 168.
more diluted than in the TsIK. The matter carried considerable personal risk, and Kerensky proceeded cautiously. On March 1 he avoided attending the desultory Soviet debates concerning coalition, for their outcome had already been determined and he would only have compromised himself by participating in them. Instead, he questioned several close friends about the advisability of entering the projected regime as a self-proclaimed representative of the socialistic parties. To his dismay, the responses were not wholly encouraging—Zenzinov was in favor, but Sukhanov and Stankevich expressed grave reservations about the wisdom and effectiveness of such a course. Kerensky was obviously vexed by the decision he was weighing; that night, at a conference between the delegates of the TsIK and the Provisional Committee called to determine the platform of the future government, he remained "sunk in sullen meditation" and refused to enter the discussions.

As Kerensky anticipated, the position of Minister of Justice was offered to him on the morning of March 2. He accepted that afternoon and proceeded to a plenary session of the Soviet, determined to win its approval and to retain his vice-chairmanship within it. In a

81Chernov, Rozhdenie, p. 251.


83Sukhanov, Revolution, I, 118. Among the points agreed to were: the convocation of a Constituent Assembly which would determine the final form of government; freedom of speech, press, and assembly; abolition of all class, nationality, and religious restrictions; amnesty for political or religious crimes; the organization of the army on the basis of self-government; and the retention in Petrograd of those military units that took part in the revolution.
brilliant and emotional speech, during which he declared himself the
"spokesman of the democracy" to which other ministers had to be
"particularly considerate," Kerensky gained the enthusiastic support
of the majority of the delegates. The Soviet's confirmation had
taken the form of an extended ovation and had not been reaffirmed by
an official vote. But Kerensky's victory had been incontestable, and
the TsIK accepted his action as a fait accompli even though its
posture toward the new government had been seriously compromised. A
Socialist Revolutionary party conference that followed the Soviet
plenary session offered the new Minister of Justice the public endorse­
ment that the TsIK withheld. Describing him as the "defender of the
people's interests and freedom," it welcomed his entrance into the
government and "approved everything" that he had done.

Although he emerged with a personal triumph, Kerensky's defiance
of the TsIK had really been a desperate attempt at salvaging the
remnants of his non-partisan (nadpartiinost') program. He had failed
to establish institutional barriers against dual power, and as an
alternative accepted the difficult position of mediator between the
Soviet and the central power. Nevertheless, much had been rescued.
He was the conscience of the Provisional Government, the recognized
"eye of the democracy" that would guarantee the preservation of the
revolution until its final consolidation by the Constituent Assembly.

85 Chernov, Rozhdenie, p. 252.
87 Stankevich, p. 70.
As a bridge between the Right and the Left, he might yet lure liberals and socialists into political amalgamation or at least mitigate the worst effects of friction between them.

While Kerensky derived satisfaction from solidifying his "above party" role, he regarded his standing within the new government with even more assurance. He was confident of possessing a strong, perhaps decisive, voice in the cabinet; N. V. Nekrasov and M. I. Tereshchenko, the ministers of Transportation and Finance, were reliable political friends, and both A. I. Konovalov, the Minister of Trade and Industry, and Prince G. E. L'vov, the Minister-President and Minister of the Interior, were non-partisan in orientation and pronouncedly sympathetic to his views. Also, there was reason to believe that his influence within the government would increase with the passage of time. As the emissary of the democracy, his authority extended far beyond the limits of the Ministry of Justice, and he could anticipate even greater prominence if future events demonstrated the correctness of his nadpartiinost' line.

Unfortunately, the very strength of Kerensky's position blinded him to its weaknesses and enticed him into ultimately fatal policies. Ephemeral popularity was no substitute for a reliable political apparatus, and he could not expect continuously to duplicate his

88 Chernov, Pered burei, p. 338.
89 P. N. Miliukov, Istoriia vtoroi russkoi revoliutsii, 1 vol in 3 parts (Sofia, 1921-23), part I, p. 46.
90 Kerensky, Crucifixion, p. 267; T. I. Polner, Prince L'vov's biographer, recalled that on most issues the Minister-President was "definitely disposed to Kerensky's point of view." See T. I. Polner, Zhiznennyi put' Kniazia Georgia Evgenievicha L'vova (Paris, 1932), p. 251.
victory of March 2. But Kerensky was not fully aware of the limits of a purely personal authority or the extent to which he was exposed to adversity. In retrospect, there is an ironic ring to his insistence at a March 7 meeting of the Moscow Soviet that it should undertake nothing without his advice.91

While Kerensky overestimated his control over the soviets, he also overestimated the degree to which his inclusion in the Provisional Government increased its effectiveness. The population, predominantly agrarian and thoroughly war-weary, was unlikely to sympathize long with the strident patriotism and privileged orientation of a cabinet drawn mainly from the Progressive Bloc of the State Duma. An indicated compliance by the government with Kerensky's will did not alter its unrepresentative composition and corresponding debility or blur the distinctions between liberalism and socialism. Yet, in part because he was included within it, Kerensky assumed that the government possessed a plenitude of power and could cope simultaneously with reform and the waging of war.92 In fact, the Provisional Government possessed only limited authority and would find even the restoration of public order and preparations for the convocation of the Constituent Assembly considerable strains upon its resources.93 The advantages that the government did possess--a half-articulated desire for harmony in time of crisis, the support of the army command and the middle

91Russkoe Slovo, March 8, 1917, p. 3.
92Shidlovskii, II, 65.
classes, and a lingering toleration of rule by decree—could easily be swept away by a general reaction to the overambitious exercise of power.\(^94\)

Yet the precariousness of the new government's position was not immediately apparent, and there were rational grounds for tempered optimism. The Soviet's intransigence was dampened by Kerensky's presence within the cabinet, the negotiations between the Provisional Committee of the Duma and the TsIK had indicated that some common aims existed, and mob action in Petrograd appeared to be abating. Furthermore, it was expected that the irreconcilable differences that might arise could be postponed for action by the future Constituent Assembly, which would theoretically be capable of combining forceful action with democratic methods. These hopes eventually proved illusory. Nevertheless, the new cabinet looked forward to internal stabilization and, with a truly blind belief that the revolution was an act of nationalistic revulsion against tsarist military ineptitude, to a continuance on an effective basis of Russia's participation in the war.\(^95\)

Those assumptions were shaken by a crisis concerning the liquidation of the monarchy. Were the matter entirely in the hands of the Duma and the Soviet, the tenuous unity which characterized their relations would have been shattered and the government would have fallen. But the course of events was also influenced by the army command, the British government, Kerensky, and the Imperial family.


Under the impact of these various forces, a partial solution was found which allowed a continuation of the newly formed order.

The problem of the monarchy was considerably eased by the fact that the Tsar, after perfunctory resistance, decided against contesting the revolution. The attitude of the army leaders was decisive; deeply disenchanted with the previous conduct of the war, they deserted Nicholas II in the expectation that a new regime would revive the faltering war effort. Even before the March 2 arrival at Pskov of Alexander Guchkov and Vasilii Shul'gin, who had been sent by the Provisional Committee in order to obtain an abdication in favor of the Tsarevich Alexis, Nicholas II had recognized his isolation and capitulated. But the two Duma deputies were startled by the form which Nicholas' acquiescence assumed. The Tsar, declaring that he could not bear to be parted from his hemophilic son, brushed aside Guchkov's proposals of a regency and abdicated in favor of his brother, the Grand Duke Michael Alexandrovich. While Nicholas' decision was an unexpected violation of the Imperial laws of succession, it was fully acceptable. Guchkov's object was the preservation of the monarchy, and as Michael was popular with the army command and the middle classes, the question was opened in a favorable way.

96 For examples of the military pressure on the Tsar, see "Dokumenty k 'vospinaniiam' Gen. A. Lukomskago," ARR, III (1922), 251, 263.

97 N. M. Tikhmenev, Iz vospinaniii iposlednikh dniakh prelyvaniia imperatora Nikolaiia II v stavke (Nice, 1925), p. 18.

98 Evidence of A. I. Guchkov, Padenie, VI, 265.

99 Evidence of Dubenskii, Padenie, VI, 407.

100 Evidence of Guchkov, Padenie, VI, 267.
Although he was a member of the Provisional Committee, Kerensky had not been informed of the Guchkov-Shul'gin mission. The pro-monarchist deputies' distrust of Kerensky did appear to be justified; his republicanism was well known, and since February 27 he had repeatedly warned the Duma that a reincarnated tsarism would never be accepted, regardless of its guise. But Nicholas' abdication under the auspices of the Provisional Committee would necessarily increase the prestige of liberal elements within the revolution, and for that reason alone Kerensky would have supported Guchkov's effort. Although it was not generally known, he had opposed the Soviet's interference with a similar attempt on March 1; when the TsIK had prevented Rodzianko from reaching the Tsar by withholding transportation, Kerensky staked his reputation upon his ability to block an accommodation with tsarism. He strenuously insisted that he was sufficient guarantee against a pact with Nicholas, that the Provisional Committee be allowed to act freely, and that lack of confidence in his colleagues reflected adversely upon his personal integrity. The TsIK grudgingly gave way. While it was fearful of granting so much authority to Kerensky, it was reluctant to antagonize such a popular and tempestuous personage.

The TsIK soon felt regret over the carte blanche it had been browbeaten into granting. After Miliukov's public advocacy of a constitutional monarchy on the morning of March 3, Kerensky was subjected to a hostile cross-examination by an aggrieved Petrograd

101Shul'gin, p. 238.
102Sukhanov, Revolution, I, 112.
103Chernov, Rozhdenie, p. 192.
Soviet. Forced into a defensive position, Kerensky asserted his innocence; he had not been consulted, the plan to establish a constitutional monarchy would fail regardless of Miliukov's efforts, and he would resign from the government if that proved necessary. In fact, the Soviet's suspicions regarding Kerensky were unwarranted, for he had been aware of Miliukov and Guchkov's intentions and had feverishly countered them. His tactics consisted of "pathos and threats," and Rodzianko later conceded their effectiveness; because of Kerensky's arguments, "it was quite obvious that the Grand Duke would have reigned only a few hours and that terrible bloodshed, marking the beginning of a general civil war, would have immediately started. . . ." By the morning of March 3 Kerensky had garnered enough support in the cabinet and the Provisional Committee to request resolution of the issue through a conference with the Grand Duke. Only Miliukov and Guchkov remained in opposition, and a draft of Michael's abdication had even been drawn up.

But none of these measures guaranteed the Grand Duke's capitulation, and Kerensky entered the conference in an apparent state of nervousness. His behavior there left a painful impression. Completely determined to force the Grand Duke's abdication, he was frequently rude and threatening. He warned Michael that an acceptance

104Kerensky, Russia, pp. 208-209.
105Sukhanov, Zapiski, II, 42.
107Evidence of Guchkov, Padenie, VI, 273; Kerensky, Russia, p. 215.
108Miliukov, Istoriiia, part 1, p. 53.
of the crown would be physically dangerous,\textsuperscript{109} attempted to prevent the full elaboration of Miliukov's counter arguments that stability required a visible head of state,\textsuperscript{110} and accused Guchkov, who arrived late and tried to second Miliukov's efforts, of willful and malicious disruption.\textsuperscript{111} In a final maneuver that offended his colleagues but apparently amused the Grand Duke, Kerensky guarded the telephone after the conclusion of formal discussions, hoping in that way to exclude outside consultation on the question.\textsuperscript{112} Fortunately, Michael succumbed to the campaign Kerensky had mounted and agreed to resign his position. The problem of the monarchy was resolved, the newly formed Provisional Government began its legal existence, and Kerensky's debt to the Soviet was discharged. While ungraceful in execution, his new victory was as significant as the one of the previous day.

The question of Romanov power was settled, but the problem of the Romanov family remained. Kerensky had not exaggerated greatly in describing popular hostility to Nicholas, and the TsIK had responded to it on March 3 by calling for the arrest of the Imperial family.\textsuperscript{113} But since the entire cabinet was opposed to such an action and the TsIK, uncertain of success, had expressed itself with unusual

\begin{itemize}
  \item \textsuperscript{109} N. A. Basily, Nicolas de Basily, Diplomat of Imperial Russia, 1903-1917. Memoirs (Stanford, 1973), p. 143.
  \item \textsuperscript{110} Miliukov, Vospominania, II, 316.
  \item \textsuperscript{111} Evidence of Guchkov, Padenie, VI, 274. The exchange between Guchkov and Kerensky was apparently very sharp. At any rate, when Guchkov recalled the incident some months later, his resentment was still very evident.
  \item \textsuperscript{112} Basily, p. 144.
  \item \textsuperscript{113} Izvestiia, March 4, 1917, p. 1.
\end{itemize}
restraint, the issue was allowed to smolder for several days.\textsuperscript{114} The government moved toward a settlement on March 6. After consultations with General M. V. Alekseev, who represented Nicholas, and Sir George Buchanan, the British ambassador, the cabinet agreed to send the Romanov family abroad to England.\textsuperscript{115} Correctly assuming that the potentially controversial cabinet decision would meet with a better reception outside of Petrograd, and probably hoping in that way to muffle criticism, Kerensky unveiled the British offer of asylum in a March 7 appearance before the Moscow Soviet. His speech was well received, and he drew almost uninterrupted applause when he declared that he would "never be the Marat of the Russian revolution" and that he would personally escort Nicholas to a suitable port.\textsuperscript{116}

But Moscow was not the center of the revolution, and Kerensky's tactic failed. Immediately after Kerensky's Moscow speech, the Petrograd Soviet demanded that the Provisional Government take prompt and vigorous steps to gather all members of the Romanov family in one place under dependable guard,\textsuperscript{117} and reaffirmed its stand on March 9 with a decision to "carry out the arrest of Nicholas Romanov at all costs, including the severance of relations with the Provisional Government."\textsuperscript{118} The impending conflict was averted when the British

\textsuperscript{114}Miliukov, Vospominaniia, II, 350.

\textsuperscript{115}"Fevral'skaia revolutsiia 1917 goda," pp. 54-55; Buchanan, II, 104.

\textsuperscript{116}Russkoe Slovo, March 8, 1917, p. 3.

\textsuperscript{117}"Trebovanie naroda o zakluchenii Nikolaia Romanova v kfrepost," KA, LXXXI (1937), 123.

\textsuperscript{118}Izvestiia, March 10, 1917, p. 1.
government, fearful of provoking labor unrest in its own country, withdrew its initial offer. Suddenly lacking suitable alternatives, the Provisional Government imprisoned the Romanov family in the Imperial Palace at Tsarskoe Selo. The issue was not really settled; extremists in the Petrograd Soviet advanced demands for a speedy trial and execution of the former tsar, and the government was determined to exile Nicholas as soon as possible. As a provisional measure, and in order to buy time, Nicholas remained confined and Kerensky instituted a carefully circumscribed investigation into the prior activities of the Imperial Court.

With the problem of the monarchy at least tentatively disposed of, Kerensky and his fellow ministers finally devoted their full attention toward constructing the new order. They had been exceptionally fortunate. The old regime's belated sanction of the revolution salved many violated consciences, and Britain's withdrawal of its offer of asylum for the Romanovs averted a dangerous break with the Petrograd Soviet. The Provisional Government, anxious to heal its rupture with the socialists, emphasized non-controversial legislation, and orders began to flow from governmental departments that were at long last freed from inertia.


Because of his temperament and his training, Alexander Kerensky could not have wished for a more suitable position than that of Minister of Justice. To many people in those intoxicated and deceptively mild days, before ideological and class lines hardened on a national scale, the Russian revolution symbolized the eradication of evil and the inauguration of a superior way of life. In that respect Kerensky's office, more than any other, symbolized the renovative power of the revolution. It was the instrument that would destroy the causes of old wrongs and create the conditions necessary for the emergence of an egalitarian society. In a very real sense, then, it could be argued that the guiding hand of the Ministry of Justice also held ultimate responsibility for the fulfillment of Russia's highest aspirations. While some cautious men disputed these conclusions on the grounds that the revolution was a wholesale violation of laws and rights and provided an extremely unfavorable environment for reform, Kerensky had no doubt that a new era had arrived. His enthusiastic attitude was revealed in a March 2 message to the Councils of the Bar, when he claimed to act "in the name of the salvation of our native land" and called upon the legal apparatus to raise "true justice" to

the "heights that correspond to the greatness of the people and the importance of the historical moment."² By placing Russian law on an "unrivaled plane,"³ he hoped to surpass the English and French juridical systems that he had so long admired:⁴

While aware of the unique opportunities for legal reform, Kerensky still recognized limitations upon his activities. These boundaries, to which he had adhered from his first days in office, were described in his April 13 speech before a special commission charged with the revision of judicial charters. The primary task facing them, he maintained, was the "cleansing . . . of all unethical layers that the fallen regime had created." The Provisional Government, Kerensky continued, was not empowered to pass new laws, for that would amount to an illegal anticipation of powers belonging to the Constituent Assembly. Nevertheless, "the revolution should be borne in mind" and statutes should be "adjusted to modern life."⁵ That essentially realistic and flexible policy, for which Kerensky had full cabinet approval,⁶ called for a return to the legal purity of the 1864 reforms and at the same time allowed considerable room for discretion.⁷

⁵SVFP, April 14, 1917, p. 2.
⁷The 1864 acts, part of Alexander II's great reforms, abolished the class courts and established an equitable system based on the
appeared to be in keeping with the resources of the government, and in view of the multitudinous abuses introduced since the 1880's promised to satisfy the most stringent of critics.

Kerensky's measures involving amnesty and the recall of banished political prisoners were certainly in accordance with the expectations of revolutionary justice. His first directives on March 2 required the immediate release of all political prisoners currently held by public prosecutors;\(^8\) the conveyance to Petrograd, with honors, of the aged populist heroine, Catherine Breshkovskaia;\(^9\) and the release of the five Bolshevik Duma deputies who had been exiled for sedition, against his strenuous protests and despite his legal defense of them, in the first year of the war.\(^10\) Kerensky was allotted 500,000 rubles for the benefit of those returning from exile, and he applied part of those funds toward preparations for elaborate official welcomes.\(^11\) A formal and comprehensive declaration of amnesty followed on March 6 for the purpose of realizing the "complete triumph of a new order founded on law and freedom." To achieve that end, law code articles referring to religious crimes, sedition, subversive activities, and laxity in official duties were voided. Further provisions met the specific needs of the revolution. All politically motivated criminal

French model. Procedure was modernized and simplified, jury trial for criminal offenses was introduced, and judges, except for misconduct in office, were irremovable. Alexander III's counter reforms undermined the integrity of those improvements.

\(^8\)VVP, March 7, 1917, p. 1.  
\(^9\)Izvestiia, March 4, 1917, p. 4.  
\(^10\)Izvestiia, March 3, 1917, p. 4.  
\(^11\)VVP, March 9, 1917, p. 3.
acts except treason against the Provisional Government that took place between February 23 and March 6 were nullified, and the rights of petition and appeal were established to deal with ambiguous cases.12

The governmental declaration on amnesty signalled a general relaxation of legal penalties and an amelioration of the conditions of imprisonment. The most significant of these acts was the March 12 abolition of the death penalty.13 The replacement of capital punishment by an unspecified term at hard labor was solidly within the traditions of the Russian intelligentsia. As Vladimir Nabokov, the noted liberal jurist, observed in the Cadet newspaper Rech' (Speech), "in no other country has opposition to this worst kind of murder been so powerful as in ours." Most party newspapers subscribed to Nabokov's conclusion that the new act was a "comforting phenomenon, a sign of genuine magnanimity and wise foresight."14 The SR organ Delo Naroda (The Cause of the People) expressed satisfaction that "the most disgraceful blot . . . on our conscience and that of all mankind had been removed,"15 and the conservative Novoe Vremia (New Times) called the voiding of the death penalty an "act of colossal majesty" and a "lofty example of the ennobling of mores. . . ."16

Among non-socialists, editorial enthusiasm carried strong overtones of relief. The action was justified; the Provisional Government

14Rech', March 18, 1917, p. 3.
16Novoe Vremia, March 18, 1917, p. 3.
had been involved in an unpublicized struggle with left elements in the Soviet that had delayed passage of the law for four days and its publication for another six. If abolition of capital punishment had been blocked, liberals and conservatives would have felt dangerously exposed to Jacobin tendencies in the Soviet and an important check against intensification of the radical revolution would have been removed.

That conflict, the actual course of which is difficult to reconstruct, apparently stemmed from the controversy surrounding the disposition of the Romanov family. As with the dispute over Nicholas, the catalyst was Kerensky's March 7 visit to Moscow. In a speech before a liberal group, the Committee of Public Organizations, he revealed that he had drawn up, and would sign on March 8, an order providing for the abolition of the death penalty. Immediately upon his return to Petrograd, Kerensky was approached by Iu. M. Steklov, a pro-Bolshevik member of the TsIK and the new Editor-in-Chief of the Soviet newspaper Izvestia (News). The Minister of Justice was startled by the tenor of the interview: Steklov informed him that the TsIK was extremely dissatisfied with his Moscow revelations and advised him to reconsider the proposed abolition of the death penalty. Since the implication was that the Petrograd Soviet wished to retain capital punishment for use against the deposed tsar, Kerensky took a serious view of the matter. He postponed signature of the act until March 12, when an agreement reached with the Soviet concerning Nicholas

17Izvestia, March 9, 1917, pp. 6-7.
incarceration at Tsarskoe Selo made the issue less urgent, and allowed its promulgation in the official *Vestnik Vremennogo Pravitel'stva* (Provisional Government Herald) only on March 18. It is difficult to ascertain whether Steklov had been speaking for a permanent minority or a transitory majority of the TsIK. Preservation of the death penalty was not advocated on the floor of the Soviet, but such a line could have been considered by the TsIK in the general furor surrounding Nicholas' proposed exile. Two non-socialist editors were convinced that a vindictive minority campaign was being waged in the Soviet. On March 14 the liberal *Den'* (Day), charging that an attempt was being made to "smear democracy and cast a shadow over it," demanded that "outside pressure" be removed from the government with regard to the bill, and *Rech'* expressed similar sentiments in a March 15 editorial. Hostility from the extreme Left was expressed indirectly after March 18, for both Steklov's *Izvestiia* and the Bolshevik *Pravda* (Truth) maintained a disapproving editorial silence when the law went into effect.

Obviously, Kerensky's handling of the issue had been impeccable. He had played patiently for time, simplified the problem, and relied upon popular support to undermine or isolate opposition. As a result, a disturbing threat from the Left had been turned aside, revolutionary idealism survived intact, and the political Right was assured some

19*Izvestiia*, March 10, 1917, 1.


immunity from the worst consequences of past or future defeats.

Abolition of the death penalty had been the only really controversial reform advocated by Kerensky, and associated measures encountered no difficulty. On March 17 major reductions of penalties for non-political crimes were carried out, and corporal punishment, including the use of irons and strait jackets, were eliminated from prison practices. Furthermore, on April 26 banishment to Siberia, an especially hated practice of the old regime, was replaced by imprisonment in a fortress or removal to a correctional workhouse.

Changes in prison administration and the parole system were natural adjuncts to legal reform, and Kerensky insured that the Central Prison Administration was responsive. On March 17 disabled military officers were encouraged to become wardens, courses in prison supervision were drawn up, and procedures were instituted to guarantee the rectification of abuses. On the same day, plans were announced regarding the expansion of Societies of Guardianship. These organizations, created to facilitate the transition of released prisoners to civilian life, were broadened to include representatives from all social classes.

Kerensky's legal and correctional reforms were in accordance with Western progressive doctrines, but it would be erroneous to view them primarily in those terms. While he would have agreed with the

24Browder, I, 207.
25VVP, March 18, 1917, p. 2.
26VVP, March 18, 1917, p. 2.
argument that the strictness of the tsarist law code and the brutality existing within the prison system had been necessary consequences of the class character of the old regime and that a democratic order would be able to sustain itself without resort to such draconian measures, he based his actions on still other assumptions. As a Russian populist he tempered Western socialist precepts with a religious faith in the goodness and wisdom of the uncorrupted peasantry. That set of beliefs allowed him to equate the removal of repressive devices with an immediate liberation of the potentialities of the people. Rather than acts of expediency undertaken to buttress a personal popularity, as they later appeared to some observers, Kerensky's reforms were intended to facilitate the moral and spiritual transformation of the nation. 27 Despite the adoption of foreign terminology, his measures were really justified by an optimistic ideology that was almost exclusively Russian in character.

On March 9 the ministerial council requested that Kerensky strike down the legal inequities that had formerly existed throughout the Russian Empire, and he responded on March 20 with the abolition of restrictions based on religion and nationality. 28 Rights of residence and travel were affirmed, bringing to an end tsarist restrictions such as the Pale of Settlement, so that trades, professions, and institutions of learning were thrown open to all on an equal basis.

27 Alexander F. Kerensky, "Genesis of the October Revolution of 1917," unpublished manuscript, Hoover Institute, Stanford, California, p. 31.

28 Izvestiia, March 12, 1917, p. 4; Sbornik, I, 46-49.
Rights of ownership and use of movable and immovable property, including participation in joint-stock companies, were extended, civil and military service was opened to all groups, and participation in elections, the holding of elected offices, and registration as jurors were guaranteed to all. Finally, the use of non-Russian dialects and languages was permitted in business proceedings and private schools. None of these provisions jeopardized the traditional liberal conception of an indivisible Russian state, and the various nationality groups were certainly not satisfied, but the measure represented a clear rejection of past efforts to promote Russification. Non-socialist newspapers applauded the act. Novoe Vremia observed that the triple formula of "Autocracy, Orthodoxy, and Nationality," which had disguised a "divide and rule" policy, had come to an end, and Russkie Vedomosti (Russian Gazette), the liberal Moscow daily, welcomed the elimination of long-standing conditions of "oppression, violence, and disfranchisement." Since the effects of that law were combined with a prior affirmation of freedom of the press, assembly, and association, most political requirements for an open society had been met. Voter qualifications remained to be worked out and the government hesitated to dispense entirely with aristocratic titles and

29Sbornik, I, 46-49.

30The term refers to a systematic governmental policy that discouraged the expression of cultural pluralism within the Empire.


32Russkie Vedomosti, March 23, 1917, p. 3.

33Sbornik, I, 8.
honorary ranks, but the short period of Kerensky's ministry was notable for its progress toward a democratic, egalitarian society.

The Ministry of Justice was also responsible for determining the culpability of members of the old regime and applying appropriate punishment. Kerensky found that a difficult part of his duties and did his utmost to alleviate the burdens of those placed in his charge. His solicitude was most apparent with respect to the former tsar. Kerensky had expressed concern for the safety of the royal family as early as March 1, when the fate of the revolution was still in doubt, and Nicholas expressed surprise at the consideration and courtesy extended to him at Tsarskoe Selo. Similar treatment was accorded to such arrested functionaries of the former government as Protopopov, Sturmer, and Shcheglovitov, for their imprisonments were really forms of protective custody.

Kerensky's reluctance to take revenge on members of the old regime was shown in a number of other ways. Reactionary senators were advised to resign their positions in order to spare themselves the embarrassment of forced removal and to preserve the principle of senatorial immunity. Also, with the notable exception of personnel in the Ministry of the Interior, officials of tsarist departments were

34Izvestiia, March 12, 1917, p. 4.

35Evidence of Dubenskii, Padennie tsarskogo rezhima; stenograficheskie otcheti, doprosov i pokazanii, dannikh v 1917 g. v chrezvychainoi sledstvennoi komissii Vremennogo Pravitel'stva, ed. P. E. Shchegoleva, 7 vols. (Moscow-Leningrad, 1924-27), VI, 408.

36"Dnevniki Nikolaia Romanova," KA, XXI (1927), 94.

37Evidence of Protopopov, Padennie, IV, 55.

38Browder, I, 193.
encouraged to remain at their posts. But the most revealing example of Kerensky's determination to limit retribution was his denial of Kirghiz demands for an investigation of the Turkestan revolt of 1916. As an oppositionist Duma deputy, he had investigated that outbreak, which had been sparked by the illegal conscription into the army of the draft-exempt natives and had claimed over 30,000 casualties. In September of 1916 he had sharply condemned the conduct of Sturmer and other involved officials, but he now evaded the issue on the entirely unconvincing basis that the amnesty decree applied to everyone involved in the disturbances.

There was a particular blatancy about Kerensky's refusal to reopen the Turkestan question, for he had just been appointed the Prosecutor General of an Extraordinary Commission of Inquiry for the investigation of "malfeasance in office of former ministers, chief administrators, and other persons in high office of the civil and the military and naval services." The intent of the commission was the investigation of governmental illegalities, and its findings were to be turned over to the Prosecutor General for appropriate action. Kerensky managed to shield former tsarist functionaries even in the

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\[39\text{VVP, March 8, 1917, p. 3.}\]

\[40\text{VVP, March 18, 1917, p. 1.}\]

\[41\text{M. N. Pokrovskii, "Politicheskoe polozhenie Rossii nakanune Fevral'skoj revoliutsii v zhandarmskom osveshchenii," KA, XVII (1926), 29.}\]

\[42\text{VVP, March 18, 1917, p. 1.}\]

\[43\text{Introduction by P. E. Shchegolev, Padenie, I, v.}\]

\[44\text{VVP, March 12, 1917, p. 1.}\]
face of such definite orders. To be sure, his commission displayed considerable investigative zeal, for when the October insurrection interrupted its activities over eighty witnesses had been examined at length and the accumulated testimony, published in 1924-27 in Moscow and Leningrad under the title Padenie tsarskogo rezhima (The Fall of the Tsarist Regime), comprised seven volumes. Nevertheless, the intent of the law was evaded. Tightly controlled by the Minister of Justice, who appointed its membership and exercised continued supervision over its activities,45 the commission undertook to provide a "complete picture of the old regime" in the light of revolutionary principles.46 Much of the testimony focused upon quite legal practices such as the use of undercover agents47 and the measures taken by the tsarist authorities to contain revolutionary outbursts,48 or the sensational, but frequently irrelevant, activities of Rasputin and the tsarina's confidante, Anna Vyrubova.49 The result was a condemnation of the old order and the justification of revolution, but in the process, questions of malfeasance in office were shunted aside. In this case, as in so many others, Kerensky tried to persuade the political Right that it had nothing to fear.

Those who profited most from Kerensky's protection later

45VVP, March 12, 1917, p. 1.
46VVP, March 9, 1917, p. 3.
47Evidence of V. L. Vurtseva, Padenie, I, 297.
48Evidence of Khabalov, Padenie, I, 197.
condemned him, arguing that leniency fostered the spread of anarchy and hindered the consolidation of power. That interpretation, eloquently expressed in Vasilii Shul'gin's accusation that Kerensky "burned Russia on the altar of freedom,"50 was only partially justified. Admittedly, Kerensky overvalued the power of exhortation and example. He acted from the dubious premises that "all could be obtained through good will" and that "a socialist could persuade his people to do anything,"51 and his populist confidence in the "inexhaustible storehouse of political wisdom and creative power of the people"52 proved to be woefully unrealistic. Nonetheless, he was undoubtedly correct in assuming that the bitterness of the past should not be projected into the present, for such a development would disrupt the existing fragile political balance and would threaten the survival of the Provisional Government. Kerensky's fervent belief in voluntary obedience, the innate goodness of man, and the "inviolability of the human personality"53 lent force to a necessary, if controversial, policy. Later efforts to impose discipline were compromised by Kerensky's characteristic blending of pragmatism and humanitarianism, but if he had not adopted that moderate course in February, there might well have been no government to consolidate in August.

A swift and comprehensive re-establishment of order and authority would have been impossible in any event, for the Ministry of Justice

50V. Shul'gin, Dni (Belgrade, 1925), p. 171.
52Izvestiia, April 14, 1917, p. 2.
53Kerensky, "Genesis," p. 16.
was virtually bereft of enforcement mechanisms. The Okhrana, the Gendarme Corps, and the Police Department had been destroyed during the February Days, and only months of careful administrative reorganization could produce their revolutionary equivalents. In the interim, law enforcement depended upon a hastily organized and ineffectual police administration established by Prince L'vov on March 10, and after its abolition on April 17 responsibility devolved upon a municipal militia of notorious inefficiency. The system of courts had also collapsed, and Kerensky was forced to create temporary ones (composed of a Justice of the Peace, a worker, and a military representative) even before he formally eliminated their tsarist counterparts. Although he was able on May 4 to institute a network of local courts presided over by competent personnel, that was the only implemented measure that promised immediate results. In the general administrative disintegration following the revolution, Kerensky had few instruments at his disposal besides appeals to conscience.

The limitations of that approach and the paucity of governmental resources in the face of organized resistance were demonstrated in an almost perpetual crisis at the Kronstadt naval base. The Kronstadters had welcomed the revolution with a massacre of many of their officers,

54V. Zenzinov, "Fevral'skie dni," NZ, XXXV (1953), 218.
56Izvestiia, April 18, 1917, p. 1.
58Russkie Vedomosti, May 13, 1917, p. 3.
including the unpopular commander, Admiral Viren, and the imprisonment in dungeons of the survivors. The sailors' hostility to authority did not diminish after the February Days; a personal appearance by Kerensky failed to alter their attitudes, and in late April a judicial commission sent to the naval base to establish governmental control narrowly escaped execution. A strongly disapproving stand by the Petrograd Soviet temporarily softened the resistance of the Kronstadt Soviet, and the last of the imprisoned officers were finally released after the suppression of the July disorders in Petrograd, but the island fortress preserved its independence. The Kronstadt imbroglio, an excellent illustration of the Provisional Government's incapacity to master the forces of disruption, was a grim augury of the future.

Regardless of its disquieting implications, the Kronstadt situation was only one problem among many, and the ministry devoted its major attention to greater needs. As a caretaker regime, its essential tasks were the maintenance of order and the preparation for its replacement by an elected body. But as challenging as they were, those obligations were beset by complicating factors. Clearly, the war was a dangerously disruptive force; the pursuance of the struggle

60Izvestiia, March 17, 1917, p. 4.
61North Winship to Robert Lansing, April 30, 1917, Records of the Department of State Relating to the Internal Affairs of Russia and the Soviet Union, 1917, the National Archives, Washington D. C. Record Group M 316, R61.00/386.
62Izvestiia, May 27, 1917, p. 4.
63Kerensky, Russia, p. 230.
against the Central Powers, which carried in its wake questions regarding relations with allies and the military ambitions of the new society, threatened to place enormous strains upon the government's resources. The issue of land reform, which could not escape factional controversy, and the restiveness of national minorities posed similarly obdurate challenges. Also, party disputes, at times expressed within the cabinet, then again in the Soviet's intervention in cabinet affairs, complicated attempts at establishing effective rule. Those difficulties magnified Kerensky's influence within the government, for his position as the "defender of the people's interests" provided him with a mandate to act authoritatively in a steadily increasing number of areas. Kerensky's efforts within the cabinet and on behalf of it testified to his energy, his breadth of interests, and his conviction that he had a right to supervise every aspect of the Provisional Government's activities.

Kerensky had an immediate impact upon governmental policy, for from the outset he dominated the ministerial council. His observation that the new ministers "had unconsciously seen things in their true proportions and realized what was necessary for the whole nation" was an indirect admission that their decisions had conformed to his will. Kerensky's control of the cabinet was not total, for on issues such as Ukrainian self-government or foreign policy a minority composed of Miliukov, Guchkov, A. A. Manuilov, and A. I. Shingarev held to traditional liberal principles. But Prince L'vov, N. V. Nekrasov,

64 Izvestiia, March 4, 1917, p. 1.

M. I. Tereshchenko, V. L'vov, A. I. Konovalov, and I. V. Godnev (the State Controller) consistently followed the lead of the Minister of Justice. Vladimir Nabokov, who served as Head of Chancellery to the new cabinet and was present at all of its meetings, noted that the "real power" was exercised by Kerensky and that most of the other ministers deferred to his wishes. As that acquiescence was translated into a seven-to-four majority on controversial topics, Miliukov was justified in asserting that Kerensky possessed the "only voice of authority." The overall policy of the first Provisional Government was that of its Minister of Justice, and his ascendancy within the cabinet was probably more pronounced in March than it would ever be again.

Kerensky did not limit himself to the control of general policy; he also intervened in the affairs of specific ministries. As befitted a socialist, his first actions were directed toward a land settlement in accordance with his populist desires. Considering land reform to be the "crucial problem of Russian life" and the only issue able to "penetrate the heart of the country and pierce the mystery of the popular soul," he moved to convince the peasantry that their interests would be protected. In an abrupt and legally questionable move on March 2, he abolished the Stolypin-established Land Surveying

67 V. Nabokov, "Vremennoe Pravitel'stvo," ARR, I (1922), 40.
68 Miliukov, Vospominaniia, II, 333.
Department, thus serving notice that he favored the traditional communal system of land tenure. He was also the first minister to suggest impediments to the transfer of land, so that a land fund would be readily available for distribution by the Constituent Assembly. Kerensky had the satisfaction of witnessing a prompt cabinet response to the question. On March 19 the government authorized the creation of a land committee for the study of projected reforms, and by April 23 the commission, under the chairmanship of A. S. Posnikov, had made sufficient progress to attract the favorable notice of the SR newspaper Delo Naroda. Liberals and moderates bitterly resisted the restrictions on the transfer of titles necessary for the amassing of a substantial land reservoir, but Kerensky's proposal would finally pass into law on July 12.

Kerensky was more tentative in dealing with the aspirations of national minorities than he had been with regard to the land question. He joined readily in the granting of Polish independence, for that act not only reversed acknowledged injustices dating back to the Congress of Vienna but caused problems for the occupying Germans. He also showed sympathy for the Finns. On March 5 he arranged for the

70 Izvestiia, March 2, 1917, p. 1.
72 Russkie Vedomosti, March 22, 1917, p. 3.
74 For an example of such protests, see Russkie Vedomosti, July 29, 1917, p. 1.
75 P. Miliukov, Istoriia vtoroi Russkoi revoliutsii, 1 vol. in 3 parts (Sofia, 1921-23), part 1, p. 64.
conveyance from Siberia of P. E. Svenhufved, a former president of
the Sejm (the Finnish parliament), according him the honors due to a
returning revolutionary hero, and supporting a cabinet decision to
restore the violated constitution of the Grand Duchy of Finland.
Finally, he extended to Finnish citizens the amnesty provisions
already implemented within Russia. But Kerensky realized that the
national minorities would press for greater gains than the unitary
state could tolerate (he privately told Sir Bernard Pares of his fears
that Russia might have to apply the principle of self-determination to
itself), and because of the danger inherent in separatism he was
reluctant to go beyond the redressing of obvious tsarist wrongs. For
example, he declined to answer a telegram from the Ukrainian Rada
reminding him of his Duma advocacy of an autonomous Ukraine,
evidently hoping to discourage further discussion of the issue. He
subsequently made it clear that only the Constituent Assembly could
determine the future relations between the peoples of the former
empire. While separatism did not become a serious issue while
he was at the head of the Ministry of Justice, from the first he was
cconcerned about its disruptive potential.

While Kerensky displayed caution concerning the future status of
the national minorities, he was forthright about prosecution of the

76Izvestiia, March 7, 1917, p. 3.
79Browder, I, 370.
war. Since he believed that patriotic outrage against tsarist military ineptitude had been an important cause of the revolution, he saw no major obstacles to a vigorous continuation of the allied struggle against the Central Powers. "The whole army," he claimed in a Times interview, "from the commander down to the last soldier" realized that anything less would "betray the revolution."\(^81\) Allied representatives were quick to realize Kerensky's commitment to the war effort. On March 15 Maurice Paleologue, the French ambassador, informed his government that Kerensky "alone was capable of making the Soviet realize the necessity of continuing the war and maintaining the alliance,"\(^82\) and on March 20 the United States consul at Petrograd, North Winship, reported to his superiors that the entire cabinet, including its socialist representative, was determined to mount a vigorous military effort against the Central Powers.\(^83\)

Kerensky's pro-war activities were not confined to the reassuring of Allied missions. On March 1 he had tried to obtain a retraction of Order Number One, which had been issued by the Soviet without his knowledge and which threatened to destroy the cohesion of the armed forces, arguing that its contents were so offensive to non-socialists that they would not participate in the Provisional Government.\(^84\) When

\(^{81}\)The Times (London), March 23, 1917, p. 5.

\(^{82}\)Maurice Paleologue, La Russie des tsars pendant la grande guerre, 3 vols. (Paris, 1922), III, 234.

\(^{83}\)Winship to Lansing, March 20, 1917, Russian Internal Affairs, 861.00/284.

that tactic failed, he ended his first formal speech as Minister of Justice with an emotional appeal for military discipline. Kerensky continued to emphasize that theme throughout the term of the first cabinet. He returned constantly to the concepts of duty and obedience to authority, arguing that without them the new Russia would become a "State of rebellious slaves" and that the aspirations of the revolution would be "drowned in blood." His appointment to a newly-established war cabinet created to control the Stavka (the army General Headquarters) gave him a convenient platform for the furthering of these views. Kerensky's new position also allowed him to participate actively in the efforts of A. I. Guchkov, the Minister of War, to increase the efficiency of the armed forces. In public appearances with Guchkov, he linked the success of the revolution with success in war, claiming that the defense of the "hearth of democratic freedom" would allow the "achievement of everything we desire." It was his tragedy, and that of his country, that Kerensky never altered that stand. He remained convinced that as a "free, self-liberated state" Russia was honor bound to prove its worth on the field of battle.

applying officially only to the Petrograd garrison, the order affected all elements of the armed forces to some degree. Important articles of that document called for the subordination of the military command to the Soviet in all political actions, the formation of military committees through election from the lower ranks, adherence to military discipline only in the performance of active duty, and the control of weapons by the elected battalion committees.

86Vn, April 30, 1917, p. 2.
87VVP, March 11, 1917, p. 1.
88Izvestiia, April 14, 1917, p. 2.
Kerensky's activities regarding land reform, national self-determination, and the position of the army in the revolutionary state were partially acceptable to the ministers involved. His intervention in foreign policy was not, and that action shattered the cabinet, clearly revealed the antagonisms and contradictions aroused by the revolution, and contributed to the failure of succeeding governments to meet the demands imposed on them. There are strong ironic overtones to the struggle between Kerensky and Miliukov, the Minister of Foreign Affairs, for they were in agreement regarding the objectives of Russian foreign policy and differed only with respect to the tactics that should be employed. Both were partially justified in their approaches; Kerensky possessed a sure instinct for domestic necessities and Miliukov had a fine awareness of international complexities. But the results of their duel satisfied the requirements of neither and promoted the destruction of the principles they were both trying to preserve.

Russia's relations with its allies and the postwar settlement lay at the heart of the controversy. Miliukov shared the rightist conviction that the revolution had resulted from dissatisfaction with the tsarist conduct of the war, and he was firmly persuaded that the success of a military offensive and the resulting revival of patriotism within the country would sweep away the half-formed socialist formula of peace without victory. Therefore, Miliukov was determined to maintain the incentives for a continuance of the struggle. The agreements with the Allies should be affirmed vigorously, and, in

90Miliukov, Vospominaniiia, II, 337.
particular, Russia's acquisition of Constantinople and the Straits should be defended. The new Minister of Foreign Affairs, dignified and cosmopolitan in manner, fit the traditional mold and would have been at ease in the foreign offices of any of the major European powers. He felt that national interests dictated an advantageous material settlement, for altered boundaries and the corresponding shift in material resources would represent the only significant change in the postwar relations among states. Miliukov also understood that the Allies had agreed to Russian territorial expansion only out of real or imagined necessity. Accordingly, they would be delighted to see a one-sided Russian repudiation of annexations so long as that action did not jeopardize their own annexationist plans.91

Kerensky, who had never been abroad, lacked Miliukov's expertise in foreign affairs and misunderstood the inflexibility and selfishness of the Western Allies with regard to their war objectives.92 Still, he was as sensitive to Russian national interests as was Miliukov. Victory had its own logic, and Kerensky was privately determined that Russia would control European Turkey at the war's end.93 But he had a sincere aversion to Miliukov's methods. The revolution had to be taken into consideration, and demands for war trophies had to be replaced by an emphasis upon national defense. Since the revolution was expected to open a new era in the relations between peoples, it was necessary to abandon the imperialistic vocabulary of the old

91Miliukov, Vospominaniiia, II, 337.


93Kerensky, L'Expérience, p. 112.
regime. A new language, one that appealed simultaneously to revolutionary idealism and patriotism, had to be adopted before the government could be assured of sufficient support for the resumption of military operations.94

The ultimate objective of Kerensky's intervention in foreign policy was successful prosecution of the war with unreserved popular backing, but his immediate aim was the avoidance of conflict with the Petrograd Soviet. Kerensky had not kept in close personal contact with the TsIK, for he wished to "stay on the boundary between the bourgeoisie and the Soviet democracy" in order to appear as the leading "exponent of the all-national character of the revolution."95 Nevertheless, he still realized that Miliukov's course of action would lead to a serious clash with that body. Hoping to forestall the Soviet's intervention, he embraced the principles of revolutionary defensism in order to settle the issue within the cabinet. Kerensky's campaign began on March 6 with a suggestion that Constantinople and the Straits be internationalized. A few days later, probably on March 10, he linked that proposal to a general revision of war aims. He reproached the Allies for cooperating with tsarism while pretending to wage a war of liberation, argued that full support of free Russia and its policies would redress that wrong, and claimed that the war could now be transformed into a legitimate struggle between the forces of

94 A. Kerenskii, "Znachitel'nyia stroki," Izdaleka, pp. 244-245.

autocracy and those of freedom. 96

Kerensky's timing was unfortunate. On March 7 the Petrograd Soviet, disturbed by his attitude concerning the Romanovs, created a Liaison Commission to exert direct pressure upon the government. 97 Plainly, the TsIK lacked full confidence in Kerensky and was prepared to broaden its demands and increase its rate of intervention. Proof of Kerensky's diminished influence came on March 14, for in an "Appeal to the Peoples of the World," the Petrograd Soviet formulated its own stand on foreign policy. While the declaration was couched in defensist language, it called for a "decisive struggle against the acquisitive ambitions of the governments of all countries" and proclaimed opposition by "every means" to the "policy of conquest of its ruling classes. . . ." 98 Once the revolutionary democracy entered into the dispute over foreign policy, Kerensky's plans were ruined. He had wished to attack Miliukov on his own grounds and for objectives of his own choosing, and really desired no more than concessions in terminology. Instead, trapped in a net of his own weaving, he became a reluctant accomplice in a drastic reorganization of the principles affecting nations.

Miliukov, intimidated by neither Kerensky nor the Petrograd Soviet, strenuously defended his conduct in a Rech' interview on March 23. Appealing to Wilsonian principles, the Foreign Minister argued that alterations in the southern European map, especially with

96 Comments of Kerensky cited by J. Dillon, Great Britain, Parliamentary Debates (Commons), XCII (1917), col. 301.

97 Tsereteli, I, 122.

regard to the reorganization of Austro-Hungary and the "liquidation of European Turkey," would guarantee future peace and should not be considered annexations. "Peace without annexations," he continued provocatively, was a German formula camouflaging itself as an internationalist one. Indulging in dubious self-righteousness, he further maintained that the Turks, even after four and a half centuries, were "strangers" in Constantinople and retained their hold there exclusively through force. Consequently, the transfer of the Straits to Russia would not contradict the principle of self-determination of nations. Miliukov concluded with a classic affirmation of Realpolitik: possession of the Straits, he said, was the possession of the "doors to our home," and that protection "should belong to us."  

Miliukov's interview placed Kerensky in an intolerable position. The March 23 evening session of the Petrograd Soviet revealed growing suspicions that the Minister of Justice had defaulted on his socialist obligations, and in the heat of debate he even appeared in some danger of formal disavowment by his own party. When a personal appearance on the floor of the Soviet failed to dispel the gathering tension, Kerensky decided upon vigorous measures. On March 24, he broke openly with Miliukov by declaring publicly that the Foreign Minister had expressed only his own personal views, and he pressed his attack in a cabinet meeting of the same day. Angrily waving the offending copy of Rech before the assembled ministers, Kerensky insisted that


100Russkie Vedomosti, March 28, 1917, p. 5.

101Delo Naroda, March 26, 1917, p. 3.
Miliukov should not be allowed to "get away with" personal diplomacy, that only a decision of the ministerial council could be advanced as official policy, and that an immediate retraction of the Rech' interview was imperative. For the moment, Miliukov's position was quite impregnable. The Foreign Minister correctly observed that he was only countering similar tactics pursued by Kerensky and that, to the best of his knowledge, his conduct of his ministry had the approval of the majority of the cabinet. In this case, Prince L'vov felt obliged to reprove Kerensky; he noted the lack of prior ministerial criticism of Miliukov's policies and formally endorsed his conduct.  

The Cadet leader's victory did not last. While Kerensky was forced into temporary silence, other socialists intensified their demands for a governmental repudiation of annexations and indemnities. The sharpest of the public responses to Miliukov's cabinet vindication was a March 25 editorial by Vladimir Zenzinov in Delo Naroda. In a signed article entitled "The War Aims of the Provisional Government," the rotund, energetic SR issued a direct challenge to Prince L'vov. The cabinet, Zenzinov stated bluntly, had to decide between Miliukov's imperialism and revolutionary defensism. If it chose territorial expansion, the Soviet democracy could only reply with civil war.  

The timing and content of the Delo Naroda editorial indicate collusion between the author and the Minister of Justice. An old friend of Kerensky's, Zenzinov had been moved to tears by his eloquence during

102 Nabokov, p. 58.

the February Days and was firmly under his influence. Also, he was currently acting as an informal liaison between the socialist minister and the Petrograd Soviet; in that consultative role, he was surely aware of Kerensky's needs and desires. While direct evidence is lacking, it appears unlikely that Zenzinov would have launched such a strong attack upon the government without the approval of his mentor. But regardless of its source of inspiration, the March 25 editorial was effective in restoring Kerensky's position among his colleagues. On March 24, Prince L'vov had resisted demands by the Liaison Commission for an official clarification of Miliukov's views, but by March 26 he was willing to expose the issue to a cabinet vote. On that day, by a seven-to-four margin, Miliukov was ordered to draft a compromise document on war aims.

The tenacious Minister of Foreign Affairs managed to preserve a considerable part of his program. His March 27 statement, which was approved by the cabinet and the Liaison Commission, rejected "dominion over other nations, deprivation of their national possessions, or forcible occupation of foreign territories." But it avoided the slogan "without annexations or indemnities" and maintained that the "Russian people would not allow its Motherland to emerge from this struggle humiliated and undermined in its vital forces." Furthermore, the declaration upheld all obligations assumed toward Russia's allies.

104 Zenzinov, "Fevral'skoe dni," p. 231.
106 Nabokov, p. 59; Sukhanov, Zapiski, II, 353.
It was apparent that the document could be viewed in a number of ways; Miliukov certainly reserved the right to interpret it to his own satisfaction, and the Liaison Commission was willing to allow him to do so if that fact could be hidden from the rank and file delegates of the Petrograd Soviet. As a compromise solution, the March 27 declaration had only one serious defect. Since it was directed solely to the citizens of Russia and was not a diplomatic note, it had no direct bearing upon official relations with Russia's allies.

Had Miliukov conducted himself with circumspection after March 27, that deficiency would probably have been overlooked. The Petrograd Soviet expressed satisfaction with the compromise, and Kerensky's objections concerning terminology had been met. But the Foreign Minister continued to behave in a provocative manner. On April 1 he notified the Allies that Russian abandonment of the Straits would be an abandonment of previous agreements and mutual obligations, and attributed contrary assertions to "weakened and undermined" groups on the extreme Left. He also pressed for an immediate assault on Constantinople, hoping in that way to present his political opponents with a fait accompli. But Miliukov's maneuver failed, for the Stavka refused to cooperate. The officers consulted argued that the

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108Nabokov, p. 59.
110Izvestiia, March 31, 1917, p. 3.
111Browder, II, 1058.
assault would be politically ill-timed, that the major military threat lay on the German front, and that the army lacked the discipline and organization required for such a difficult operation. Kerensky was convinced that Miliukov's actions would be taken as evidence of bad faith on the part of the cabinet, and he responded by adopting an uncompromisingly internationalist posture. The Justice Minister unveiled his new line at a reception for British and French socialists at the Marinskii Palace on April 6, when he took sharp issue with the surprised Foreign Minister. While Miliukov spoke of increasing Russian military pressure upon the Central Powers, Kerensky attacked Allied war aims, repudiated annexations, and urged the embarrassed foreign envoys to emulate the example of Russian socialists. Thus, in a typically dramatic fashion, he publicly re-opened the cabinet split that ostensibly had been healed on March 27.

The Petrograd Soviet moved into the widening breach. Its intervention carried new dangers, for on April 8 Victor Chernov, the veteran SR leader, had arrived from exile in Great Britain. A dedicated internationalist, Chernov immediately attacked the tenor of Miliukov's foreign communiques and mobilized support for a diplomatic note based on the March 27 declaration. Kerensky was alarmed by his


114Kerensky, Russia, p. 245.

115Nabokov, p. 60.


117A. Chugaev, et al., eds., Revoliutsionnoe dvizhenii v Rossii v Aprile 1917 g.; April'skii krizis (Moscow, 1958), p. 313.
declining influence and decided to force the issue in the cabinet, thereby eliminating the need for outside intervention. The Justice Minister began his campaign on April 13; in violation of a ban imposed by Prince L'vov against individual revelations regarding cabinet activities, he announced the preparation of a note to the Allies affirming the socialist position. His plans backfired when Miliukov, who was not even considering such a project, indignantly demanded an official governmental denial. Kerensky tried to defend himself; he claimed that he had been misquoted, that he had really meant that a revision of war aims was being discussed, and that some concessions were necessary in any event. But the rights of the Foreign Minister had been clearly infringed upon, and a majority of the cabinet agreed that he was justified in his demand. On April 14 the Provisional Government, fully aware of the danger it was courting, officially announced that Kerensky's statement was inaccurate.

The governmental retraction provoked a violent response in the Petrograd Soviet, and its new spokesman, the Georgian Menshevik leader I. G. Tsereteli, made continued socialist support of the government dependent upon the direct transformation of the March 27 declaration into a diplomatic document. Kerensky's policy lay in shambles. His attempt to ward off Soviet intervention had produced the opposite

118 Nabokov, p. 58.
119 Miliukov, Vospominaniiia, II, 352.
120 Kerensky, Russia, p. 246.
121 VVP, April 14, 1917, p. 1.
122 Tsereteli, I, 85.
effect, and in the approaching conflict he had to stand with Miliukov to preserve some flexibility in the conduct of international affairs.

The embattled cabinet adopted a bold line; it agreed to Tsereteli's demands but attached a covering statement that contradicted large parts of the declaration. While Kerensky was uneasy regarding the tenor of some of the passages, he endorsed the final draft, claiming that it "should have satisfied the most extreme critics of Miliukov's imperialism." That assertion was insupportable. The covering statement made it apparent that the cabinet had no thought of peace short of total victory, that war aims would be revised only within the bounds "established by previous agreements," and that "guarantees and sanctions" meant punitive measures against the Central Powers, with the accompanying territorial gains that these measures implied. The cabinet's challenge to the Soviet was emphasized by the peremptory fashion in which the matter was handled. The Soviet had not been informed that an explanation would accompany the diplomatic statement, and it was not notified of the contents of the covering note until that document had been dispatched. The cabinet also aroused the Soviet's resentment by issuing the note on April 18, which coincided with the Russian observance of May Day, the international socialist holiday. The matter had come to a head in the

123Nabokov, p. 63.
124Kerensky, Catastrophe, p. 135.
125Chugaev, p. 725.
126Tsereteli, I, 86.
127Chugaev, p. 727.
128Izvestiia, April 21, 1917, p. 1.
worst way possible: as open defiance of the Petrograd Soviet by the
government.

If the now unified cabinet had had to contend solely with the
Soviet leadership (which had been remarkably sympathetic in the past),
it probably would have prevailed. But the TsIK was not the Soviet
democracy, and the immediate result was a serious outbreak of violence.
The streets of Petrograd filled with protesting soldiers and workers,
and some military units even considered direct assaults against the
government. A conciliatory stance by the TsIK and the cabinet eased
the situation. Both leadership centers appealed for sufficient time
to work out further compromises, and Kerensky persuaded the
commander of the Petrograd garrison, General Lavr Kornilov, to refrain
from forcibly dispersing the crowds. On April 20 and April 21, in
a series of extended meetings, the ministerial council, the TsIK, and
the Temporary Committee of the State Duma (resurrected to buttress the
position of the government) discussed ways to appease the unruly
population. A really workable solution to the dispute over foreign
policy could wait. Of greater importance was the diminution of popular
passions and a restoration of confidence in the present leadership.

129 V. Rakhmetov, ed., "Aprēl'skie dni 1917 goda v Petrograde,"
KA, XXXIII (1929), 78-80.
130 Chernov, p. 368.
131 E. Varneck and H. Fisher, The Testimony of Admiral Kolchak
132 Nabokov, p. 62.
133 Tsereteli, I, 87.
Kerensky took little part in the proceedings and was absent much of the time. Since his ventures into foreign affairs had proved uniformly disastrous, the government position was defended mainly by Prince L'vov and N. V. Nekrasov.

While the resulting compromise ended the "April Days," it was a clearly inadequate solution. The government agreed, over Miliukov's strenuous protests, to release a suitable interpretation of the April 18 note to the internal press and to forward it as a non-diplomatic item to the Allies. The explanation, published on April 22, represented a Soviet victory. "Guarantees and sanctions," the sensitive passage of the April 18 statement, was interpreted as arms limitations and the formation of international tribunals, and "decisive victory" as the creation of a stable international order based on national self-determination. Miliukov immediately claimed, with technical accuracy, that nothing had been officially conceded. But it was obvious that the April 21 agreement had been an interim measure passed to pacify the masses, that Miliukov, defeated in his own ministry, was in an untenable position, and that the issue could be resolved safely only when a more flexible and less controversial person assumed direction of foreign affairs.

135 Tsereteli, I, 105.
136 Nabokov, p. 64.
137 Izvestiia, April 22, 1917, p. 3.
On April 26, Kerensky publicly opened the question of governmental reconstruction and linked political stabilization to the inclusion within the cabinet of representatives from the TsIK. In an open letter to Delo Naroda, he declared that the situation had changed drastically since he had first entered the government. The "toiling democracy," initially disorganized, was now so strong that it was obliged to participate actively in the life of the state. A coalition including the leaders of the principal liberal and socialist parties, he continued, was imperative. The Provisional Government lacked the authority to govern, and while he was willing to remain at his post "to the end," his position was "perhaps too difficult to bear alone."

Suspicion that Kerensky was again playing a lone hand were soon dispelled; on April 27 Prince L'vov, in the name of the ministerial council, formally requested that the TsIK consider the question of coalition. While the Soviet debated the issue, Kerensky continued his campaign within the cabinet. Since concessions would have to be made before the Soviet would agree to participation in the government, he suggested that foreign policy be conducted by a ministerial commission and demanded, on the threat of resignation, that Miliukov be transferred to the Ministry of Education.

The TsIK split sharply over the question of coalition. The populist parties, less bound than the Social Democrats to a Marxist interpretation of political development, supported the proposal to

139 Delo Naroda, April 26, 1917, p. 3.
140 Izvestiia, April 28, 1917, p. 2.
141 Kerensky, Catastrophe, p. 137.
allow their representatives into the cabinet, but the Mensheviks and Bolsheviks opposed it, and enforced their will on April 29 by a close twenty-three to twenty-two vote. Events forced the TsIK to reconsider its position. In the first place, the Soviet's opposition was eroded by continued popular pressure for coalition; by April 30, those sentiments reached such a pitch that they were "very difficult to resist." But the decisive point occurred on May 1, when Alexander Guchkov resigned on the grounds that he was unable to fulfill his obligations as Minister of War. A renewed request for coalition by Prince L'vov followed by a personal appearance by Kerensky on the floor of the Soviet provided the opportunity for a socialistic volte face. On May 2, by a decisive forty-four to nine margin, the TsIK agreed to allow socialistic participation in the government.

The Soviet's reversal appeared to be a vindication of Kerensky's long-held policies. He had finally realized the "union and cooperation of all living, creative forces of the country," and believed that coalition ended the destructive Soviet formula of conditional support.

142 Delo Naroda, April 26, 1917, p. 1.
143 Russkie Vedomosti, April 30, 1917, p. 5.
144 Izvestiia, April 29, 1917, p. 3.
145 Tsereteli, I, 135.
146 Russkie Vedomosti, May 2, 1917, p. 5.
147 VVP, May 2, 1917, p. 1.
148 Kerensky, Russia, p. 248.
149 Tsereteli, I, 136.
of the Provisional Government. The TsIK seemed to agree. While it took the precaution of binding prospective socialist ministers to their parties' will, its newspaper, Izvestiia, proclaimed that "so long as our comrades are in the government, it is our government." The resulting cabinet possessed greater authority than its predecessor, but it was compromised by the problems that had called it forth. The Allies had interpreted Miliukov's forced resignation on May 2 as a renunciation of Constantinople and the Straits; the new cabinet could not contradict that view publicly, but most of its members were firmly committed to preserving Russia's anticipated war prizes. That determination lured the government into a major military offensive in its efforts to regain the respect and consideration necessary for diplomatic concessions, and the results were shattering: military defeat, the July uprising, and the disintegration of the cabinet. Of course, no cabinet could have circumvented the war and its related problems. But the First Coalition's difficulties were vastly increased by the legacy of Miliukov's doctrinaire inflexibility and Kerensky's badly-handled intervention in foreign affairs.

150 Kerensky Catastrophe, p. 141.
151 Izvestiia, May 6, 1917, p. 4.
152 Izvestiia, May 6, 1917, p. 3.
154 Kerensky, Catastrophe, p. 130.
155 Miliukov, Vospominaniia, II, 378.
CHAPTER IV

THE COALITION EXPERIMENT

The First Coalition, formed on May 5, ended the governmental instability that had lasted since mid-April and opened a new phase of the revolution. Kerensky had often insisted that effective rule was impossible without the participation of those who previously had been "objects rather than subjects" of power,¹ and his prediction had been fulfilled. As the embattled cabinet admitted on April 26, the absence of direct socialistic representation had so fostered internal disintegration that the country was on the verge of civil war.² The April disorders had been almost as disturbing to the members of the TsIK as to the liberals, for they had not previously realized the full extent of their strength. They had wished only to bend the government to their will, and had had no desire actually to destroy it. But that was no consolation, for the Soviet's opposition to Miliukov's foreign policy had shattered the authority of the cabinet and had fostered the spread of anarchy. Since the moderate socialists in the Soviet were unwilling to adopt the Leninist position of uncompromising hostility

¹A. F. Kerenskii, "Politika Vremennogo Pravitel'stva," SZ, L (1932), 419.
²_omin_, April 26, 1917, p. 1.
to the middle classes, they felt compelled to retrieve the situation through a broadening of the governmental base.

While a cabinet able to provide vigorous national leadership required a fusion of liberals and socialists, both groups undertook serious risks in adopting that approach. Under the previous regime, the Soviet leaders had enjoyed the easy popularity stemming from an adversary position. In sharing formal responsibility for state actions, they were exposed to the same kinds of criticism that they previously had engaged in. The moderate majority of the TsIK agreed to coalition in the dubious expectation that they could successfully resist pressure from the extreme Left and exercise a continuing control over the masses. Were they to fail, as Kerensky had during the April crisis, the resources of moderation would be exhausted. The Cadets, who represented the viable political Right, were also placed in a difficult position. They freely acknowledged their current helplessness in the face of popular disenchantment and recognized that the political situation could only be alleviated through socialistic representation in the cabinet. But they resented the ouster of their party leader, Miliukov, and were concerned that the socialist ministers,

3Pravda, April 7, 1917, p. 1.
4Izvestia, May 6, 1917, p. 4.
6Izvestia, May 6, 1917, p. 3.
7Russkie Vedomosti, May 6, 1917, p. 3.
8V. Nabokov, "Vremennoe Pravitel'stvo," ARR, I, (1922), 64.
answerable to their party organizations, would not possess sufficient independence to deal effectively with controversial issues on a cabinet level. They also feared that the socialists would use their liberal associates as a front behind which to pursue purely partisan policies.

Demonstrating his usual impatience with party concerns, Kerensky recalled that negotiations were complicated by a formidable array of "theoretical formulae and dead political blueprints" advanced by both the Right and the Left. He should have expected that response. Liberals were thrown on the defensive and afraid that defeat would be transformed into an ideological rout, and socialists were exposed to possible attacks from their own volatile supporters. Under those conditions, it was only to be expected that difficult and protracted debates would ensue. As the editors of *Russkie Vedomosti* observed, an experiment was being introduced that "could be attempted effectively only once."

The Minister of Justice succeeded in reducing the impact of those "deadly class antagonisms." His open letter in *Delo Naroda* had been


10See the report of the April 27 meeting of the Fourth State Duma cited in *Izvestiiia*, April 29, 1917, p. 3.


12*Russkie Vedomosti*, May 6, 1917, p. 3.

a cogent and timely appeal for coalition, and his successful authoring of a council resolution to transfer Miliukov to the Ministry of Education, which provoked the Foreign Minister's May 2 resignation, had been an indispensable preliminary to socialist cooperation.

Kerensky's conciliatory efforts continued throughout the period of the governmental crisis. From May 2 to May 5, he acted as a vital link between the cabinet, the TsIK, a special delegation of the TsIK created to negotiate with the cabinet, the Stavka, and the Cadet Central Committee, all of whom participated in various stages of the coalition discussions.

While the negotiations were acrimonious and extended, they took an unexpected turn that greatly strengthened Kerensky's position. Ironically, that situation arose from a tactical decision on the part of the Cadets, the very group that had come to view Kerensky with grave suspicion. Under adversity, the Cadet Central Committee abandoned its February position of social reconciliation and reverted to the tested parliamentary tactics of a minority party. In a partial softening of Miliukov's original program, they decided to insist on only two matters of principle: a vigorous prosecution of the war and a

14Delo Naroda, April 26, 1917, p. 3.
15Miliukov, Vospominaniia, II, 369.
18Miliukov, Vospominaniia, II, 371.
firm stand against internal disorganization. The rest of the governmental platform was considered temporarily expendable, counters to be bartered for a majority of non-socialist posts within the cabinet. Thus, they adopted the ancient device of reculer pour mieux sauter, for they relied upon future cabinet maneuvers to regain the ground lost by unavoidable verbal concessions to socialist sentiments.

While the new Cadet policy was certainly venturesome, it rested upon several dubious assumptions: that domestic stabilization would proceed to the point that orthodox parliamentary manipulations could succeed; that the period of non-party politics was over, so that ministerial votes would consistently split along ideological lines; and that an active resumption of the war would result in a popular shift to the Right, with a subsequent relaxation of socialist pressure upon the government. In short, the Cadets took a calculated risk. They assumed that socialist participation in the new ministry would allow a normalization of the political process and that their greater parliamentary skills would assure the protection of their essential

19Russkie Vedomosti, May 6, 1917, p. 3.

20I. G. Tsereteli, Vospominaniia o Fevral'skoi revoliutsii, 2 vols. (Paris, 1963), I, 15*. The Cadets gained both points. The new platform rejected annexations and called for a revision of war aims but pledged to continue the war and to provide strong rule. Military power was to be increased while the army was democratized, and the introduction of self-government into the provinces would be speeded up. Also, vital industries would be nationalized, preparations for land reform would begin, and income would be redistributed. Finally, the government pledged to convoke the Constituent Assembly as quickly as possible. The full text is cited in VVP, May 6, 1917, p. 1.

21Examples of those sentiments can be found in Rech', May 5, 1917, p. 3; Russkie Vedomosti, May 6, 1917, p. 3; and Izvestiia, May 11, 1917, p. 2.
interests.

In retrospect, of course, it is obvious that Miliukov's followers erred on almost every point. But their pivotal mistake, the one that determined the complexion of the new government and nullified their strategy from the outset, was the belief that non-partisan politics were in fact a thing of the past. They had assumed that a serious contest for cabinet supremacy would take place, and to counter that imagined danger they had insisted that the Cadets occupy at least as many ministerial positions as the socialists. That safeguard, designed to produce a liberal majority within the cabinet, became a snare. The TsIK, concerned primarily with pacifying its followers, stressed the importance of the projected platform but was markedly reluctant to invest its members with governmental portfolios. The surfeit of positions that suddenly appeared gave Kerensky unexpected room for anti-party manipulations and allowed a limited revival of his nadpartiinost' line.

As a result, the First Coalition was practically tailored to Kerensky's desires and was a testament to his skill in exploiting opportunities. He had insisted upon an impressive socialist presence and Victor Chernov, I. G. Tsereteli, and M. I. Skobelev, all influential members of the TsIK, agreed to enter. Admittedly, his new colleagues showed little enthusiasm for their posts. Tsereteli had resisted Kerensky's first approaches and became Minister of Post and

\[22\text{Stankevich, p. 131.}\]

\[23\text{W. S. Woytinsky, Stormy Passage: a Personal History Through Two Russian Revolutions to Democracy and Freedom, 1905-1960 (New York, 1961), p. 276. Voitinskii was a Left member of the TsIK.}\]
Telegraph only after receiving assurances that he would be exempted from administrative duties. Chernov bitterly protested his transfer from the Soviet, made his entrance into the cabinet dependent upon Tsereteli's, and finally accepted the sensitive office of Minister of Agriculture with the understanding that Kerensky's support would assure the success of a land policy based on SR principles.

Skobelev also raised difficulties; he made a strong attempt to acquire control over naval affairs and was persuaded to enter the ministry of labor only after the intervention of the Stavka and the cabinet.

But those dissatisfactions could be ignored, for the new ministers had been opposed to the general principle of coalition and they would naturally resent the specific conditions of their participation. The important point was that they assured a government of popular confidence.

Once that was accomplished the portfolio Kerensky particularly desired, that of War and Navy, acquired great importance. The government was totally committed to an offensive, for it felt that

24See Tsereteli's explanations before a plenary session of the Petrograd Soviet, cited in Izvestiia, May 9, 1917, p. 5.
26S. I. Shidlovskii, Vospominaniia, 2 vols (Berlin, 1923), II, 121.
27Tsereteli, I, 161.
28Stankevich, p. 131.
30Chernov, Rozhdenie, p. 373.
success in the field would protect the revolution from German interference and so restore domestic confidence that violent political oscillation would be eliminated. As the coalition was predicated upon a vigorous military effort, much would have to be subordinated to the needs of the army and the wishes of the Minister of War. Since Alexander Guchkov resigned on May 1 under unusual conditions, with the proper approach the ministry of war was virtually in Kerensky's hands.

Guchkov's letter of resignation, which had been given wide currency in the press, made it clear that a conservative minister could not hope to reverse the debilitating effects of Order Number One. As the Cadets were excluded on that basis, and as the Stavka was completely opposed to an unabashedly leftist candidate, Kerensky came under active consideration. The military leadership did advance an alternative name: that of P. I. Pal'chinskii, an efficient administrator and a former member of the Military Commission of the State Duma. But Kerensky countered Pal'chinskii's candidacy by seeking the approval of the cabinet and the TsIK for himself, and the two groups responded so vigorously that his appointment was virtually a "directed governmental decision." A brief conversation between Prince L'vov and General M. V. Alekseev, the Supreme Commander and the acknowledged spokesman of the Stavka, settled the issue. Prince L'vov

31 See Kerensky's comments cited in Izvestiia, April 14, 1917, p. 2.

32 Russkie Vedomosti, May 2, 1917, p. 5.

33 Stankevich, p. 131.

34 See the excellent analysis in Birzhevye Vedomosti, May 3, 1917, p. 4.
reminded the aged general of Kerensky's prior support of the army and the war, his still considerable influence with the populace and the Soviet, and his potential to moderate the disruptive effects of military democratization. When the Stavka yielded to the Minister-President's arguments, Kerensky's appointment was formalized.35

Kerensky's acquisition of the ministry of war allowed continuity, on an efficient basis, with Guchkov's policies, and was thus an indirect assault on the verdict of the April Days. His success in placing M. I. Tereshchenko, the urbane former finance minister, into the ministry of foreign affairs strengthened that attack by permitting a sophisticated continuation of Miliukov's policies. Even more than in Kerensky's case, Tereshchenko's nomination involved a timely recognition of opportunity. Prior to the May 2 negotiations, Victor Chernov had been considered Miliukov's most likely successor. He had led the Soviet's resistance to governmental foreign policy, and most socialists thought that as foreign minister he could best protect their interests.36 But the Cadets opposed his candidacy for that very reason, and Kerensky suggested that Tereshchenko fill the disputed position37 when they threatened to boycott the cabinet unless Chernov occupied another post.38 While the Ukrainian sugar producer's entry was due more to general exhaustion by the various disputants than to

36Stankevich, p. 131.
37Tsereteli, I, 159.
38D. Francis, Russia from the American Embassy: April 1916, November 1918 (New York, 1921), p. 119.
his actual qualifications, he completely satisfied Kerensky's requirements. Tereshchenko's imperialist leanings were disguised by an idealistic posture; he was fluent in French and familiar with international affairs; and he had, as of yet, acquired no dangerous political enemies. Furthermore, the new Foreign Minister was a firm advocate of interclass cooperation and had already demonstrated his affinity with Kerensky in a series of clashes with Miliukov. His presence in the cabinet significantly increased Kerensky's ability to influence governmental policy.

The TsIK's reluctance to become entangled in governmental administration provided Kerensky with further opportunities to determine the political complexion of the First Coalition. A dearth of prominent candidates for socialist-orientated posts allowed him to sponsor successfully the appointments of two personal supporters: A. V. Peshekhonov, a Popular Socialist, as Minister of Food, and a former deputy, P. N. Pereverzev, a Right SR, as Minister of Justice. As these men were only minor political figures, their contributions to

39Stankevich, p. 132.
41Tsereteli, I, 159.
42Nabokov, p. 46.
43Miliukov, Vospominaniia, II, 329; Shidlovskii, II, 133.
44Kerenskii, "Iz vospmominani," p. 305.
45Stankevich, p. 130.
the popularity of the new regime were marginal. Their real significance lay in the resultant expansion of Kerensky's influence in the ministerial Left.

Kerensky also established a solid foothold on the Right. Of the five Cadets in the ministerial council, only three, A. A. Manuilov, the Minister of Education, A. I. Shingarev, the Minister of Finance, and D. I. Shakhovskii, the Minister of Welfare, were reliable party agents.47 A. I. Konovalov, the Minister of Trade and Industry, and N. V. Nekrasov, the Minister of Transport, had broken with Miliukov and defended Kerensky in the first government.48 The Minister of War also retained the core of his support from the previous regime. As V. N. L'vov, I. V. Godnev, and Prince G. E. L'vov were in possession of their former seats,49 Kerensky was in a position to do considerably more than determine the direction of foreign policy and the conduct of the war. He controlled a powerful voting bloc theoretically able to dominate the cabinet.50

While Kerensky held tangible advantages—concrete popular backing in the form of socialist ministers, an institutionally powerful post, a picked successor to his major rival, and imposing support within the cabinet—his "nadpartiinost'" program faced new obstacles. The Cadet return to political orthodoxy presented the primary difficulty. It

47Miliukov, Vospominaniiia, II, 380.


50Kerensky had the potential virtually to engulf the ministerial Left, for Tsereteli and Skobelev sided with him with great consistency. See Miliukov, Vospominaniiia, II, 374; P. Sorokin, Leaves from a Russian Diary (New York, 1924), p. 89.
had been the cause of Kerensky's opportunities from May 2 to May 5, but it revived a situation with which he had never had success. His political ascendancy began only after the revolution weakened the strength of traditional party precepts, and their full resurrection threatened him with a reversion to his Duma ineffectiveness.

Kerensky's creation of an intermediate bloc within the cabinet accelerated that dangerous development, for it increased the intensity of the Cadet response and jeopardized the support of Nekrasov and Konovalov. The Left Cadets' previous differences with Miliukov had been more over methods than aims; finding their party in an unfavorable position, they were increasingly drawn to the minority devices of obstructionism, protest, and resignation. Since Kerensky's approach to provisional rule was based upon the softening of class antagonisms, his effectiveness diminished as class and party lines hardened.

Finally, the presence of Tsereteli and Chernov in the cabinet significantly reduced Kerensky's tactical elasticity. At a stroke, the War Minister was deprived of his most dramatic argument: the claim that he alone in the cabinet represented the democratic masses, that defiance of his will was denial of the revolution. While Kerensky could still advance a modified version of that claim, it did not carry the same force and he could not use it with the imaginative freedom that he had in the past.

51 After initial vacillation, Nekrasov decided to remain with Kerensky. Konovalov chose a different course; on May 20, he resigned from the government in protest of a cabinet decision to permit worker control over factory policy. He was replaced by V. A. Stepanov, a fellow Cadet. See VVP, May 21, 1917, p. 2.

52 Nabokov, p. 40.
Thus, the state of the cabinet and of Kerensky's position within it were altered. The First Coalition was more representative than its predecessor, and was therefore more powerful and better able to command the obedience of the population. At the same time, it lacked its previous homogeneity and was exposed to grave internal conflict. Dual power had not been abolished; it had been transferred from public view to the cabinet, where it assumed more subtle, but sharper, forms. The Cadet denial of the spirit of coalition and the influx of new socialist ministers also caused a serious erosion of Kerensky's moral authority. While he did not fully understand the implications of those two related events, Kerensky still surrendered unique assets in his quest for enhanced power. His institutional advantages were impressive, but they could endure only as long as the coalition itself.

Because of its increased obligations, the longevity of the new government was problematical. Its ability to act decisively in matters of war, foreign policy, and internal reconstruction were hampered by the disastrous legacy of the April Days, and the magnitude of its tasks promised to introduce stresses that could easily shatter it from within. Had the cabinet been able to choose a policy of guarded retrenchment and compromise rather than one of headlong retrieval, its history would perhaps have been different. In that special sense, and in a way that he did not intend, Chernov was correct in observing that the new regime was "trying to remedy a mistake of the past rather than solving the problems of the present and the future." In pursuit of

53 Tsereteli, I, 121.

54 Chernov claimed that the time for class harmony had vanished and the period of class struggle was at hand. Chernov, Rozhdenie, p. 374.
that goal, especially with regard to the war, the government expended its strength in defiance of the increased risks of failure.

Kerensky had sought command of the war ministry because the war was the major problem facing the country, but he was aware of his own shortcomings and of the difficulties that lay ahead. He was a lawyer, not an expert in military affairs, and he felt the lack of a formal military training. But his tours with Guchkov had revealed the serious extent to which demoralization within the army had progressed, and that destructive process had to be reversed. Furthermore, only a figure of revolutionary stature could attempt the military reconstruction necessary to an offensive.

While the new War Minister confronted a host of specific problems, most of them resolved themselves into one central difficulty: how best to re-establish discipline within the revolutionary climate fostered by Order Number One.

That declaration, issued unilaterally by the Petrograd Soviet on March 1, threw the relationships between upper and lower ranks into a state of great confusion. Each of its major articles (subordination of the military command to the Soviet in political matters, the formation of military committees through election from the lower ranks, the relaxation of off-duty discipline, and control of weapons by the elected battalion committees) contributed severely to military

55 VVP, May 11, 1917, p. 3.
56 See Kerensky's speech in VVP, April 30, 1917, p. 2.
57 Izvestiia, May 5, 1917, p. 2.
58 M. V. Rodzianko, "Gosudarstvennaia Duma i Fevral'skaia 1917 goda revoliutsiia," ARR, VI (1922), 74.
disorganization throughout the armed forces. Alexander Guchkov, Kerensky's predecessor in the war ministry, had made a sincere effort to strike an effective balance between the rival needs of discipline and democratization. On March 5, he abolished the use by enlisted men of honorifics in military address and accepted the existence of soldier's committees as a fait accompli. On the following day, he announced the creation of a special commission, headed by General A. A. Polivanov but composed equally of military personnel and Soviet delegates, charged with defining the mutual relations of officers and men. Until the latter part of April, Guchkov believed that a satisfactory compromise was possible. Just prior to his resignation, in a proclamation approving the principle of elected military courts, he maintained that respect of authority could coexist with individual freedom.

Guchkov's inability to moderate the Soviet-backed proposals of the Polivanov Commission finally caused him to re-evaluate his position. Unable to accept the abolition of saluting, corporal punishment, and the powers of commanders to appoint and dismiss officers, he resigned in protest. While the War Minister's May 1 resignation was symptomatic of the malaise affecting the entire government, he still managed to transform it into an asset for his successor.

60 V. I. Nevskii, "Verkhovnoe komandovanie v pervye dni revoliutsii," KA, V (1924), 228.
63 VVP, April 20, 1917, p. 2.
achieved that result by refusing to coordinate his retirement with Miliukov's and by insisting that his action was provoked by conditions which he, personally, had been unable to alter. He thus separated military issues from the current crisis over foreign policy, dramatized the difficult plight of the armed forces, and implied that a more popular minister could prevail where he had been defeated.

Kerensky effectively exploited Guchkov's resignation. When its impact was added to his still considerable status as a guardian of the revolution and the government's renewed dedication to a strong military effort, he had little difficulty in revising the Polivanov recommendations. As a result the new act, Order Number Eight (also known as the Declaration of Soldiers' Rights), contained two vital clauses that Guchkov had fought vainly to obtain. It now provided for the use of force to inspire obedience under combat conditions, and it allowed commanders exclusive power in the appointment and temporary suspension of officers. Kerensky's modifications were not entirely unopposed; Pravda launched a blistering attack upon them, and the All-Russian Congress of Soviets expressed concern over the powers invested in the Officer Corps. But the dominant socialist institution, the TsIK, offered adequate support for Kerensky's actions and the reforms went


68Izvestiiia, June 29, 1917, p. 5.
into effect without serious difficulty.69

Order Number Eight strengthened discipline among the lower military grades, but it did not provide adequate control over the army command. Kerensky approached that problem in a direct and brusque manner. Prior to his May 11 publication of Order Number Eight, Kerensky announced that he required aid in "carrying the burden of the Fatherland." Accordingly, no resignations would be accepted from the high command if such actions were designed to avoid responsibility or to protest against democratic reform in the army.70 Evidently, he anticipated a rash of resignations in response to Guchkov's, and he was determined to prevent depletion of the Officer Corps.

The Minister of War was quickly provided with the opportunity to demonstrate his sincerity. On May 15 General V. I. Romeiko-Gurko, the Commander-in-Chief of the Western front, declared that he could not tolerate the contents of Order Number Eight, denied all moral responsibility for the satisfactory performance of his duties, and indicated an intention to return to private life. Kerensky refused to accept his resignation, demoted him to the rank of divisional commander, and made it clear that only Gurko's previous record prevented his being reduced to the lowest ranks.71 Kerensky's treatment of the recalcitrant general had been harsh. But at the same time, it had been an indication to the Officer Corps that the major upheavals of the Guchkov ministry (during which over a hundred generals had been

69Izvestiia, May 14, 1917, p. 2.
70VVP, May 6, 1917, p. 2.
Kerensky emphasized that point with great intensity. Officers, he maintained, could look forward to a period of personal security and military stabilization. The "process of revolutionizing the country and the army" had been completed, and "creative work" could begin.73

As much as Kerensky wished to retain the confidence of the army leadership, he was forced to accept some changes in command. General L. G. Kornilov, the Commander of the Petrograd Military District, had resigned immediately before Guchkov74 and was immune from Kerensky's injunction. Since Kornilov's relations with the Petrograd garrison were strained in any case, Kerensky felt it best to transfer him to the front75 and to tolerate his replacement by General P. A. Polovtsev, a former member of the Duma Military Commission.76 The War Minister also decided to replace General M. V. Alekseev, the Supreme Commander, with General A. A. Brusilov, the former Commander of the Southwestern (Galician) front. While widely respected by the Officer Corps,77

72VVP, April 5, 1917, p. 2; Chernov, Rozhdenie, pp. 392-393.

73A. I. Denikine, La décomposition de l'armée et du pouvoir, Février-Septembre, 1917 (Paris, 1921), p. 287. Kerensky's attitude regarding promotions from the ranks is a good illustration of his desire to placate the Officer Corps. Apparently, the only step he took in that direction was an order on May 6 that authorized the elevation of non-commissioned officers who lacked scholastic qualifications to the rank of sub-lieutenant upon the recommendation of their commanding officer. VVP, May 7, 1917, p. 2.

74Birzhevyye Vedomosti, April 30, 1917, p. 5.

75VVP, May 9, 1917, p. 3.

76Birzhevyye Vedomosti, April 30, 1917, p. 5.

77VVP, May 24, 1917, p. 5.
Alekseev had been a continual trial to Guchkov,78 sought every opportunity to decry the democratic reforms that had taken place,79 and continually advocated the postponement of offensive activities.80 Dismissal of the conservative general had not been completely within Kerensky's power, for it required cabinet approval. That was provided on May 7, however, after Alekseev's public declaration that a peace without annexations or indemnities was impossible.81 In many respects, Brusilov was an excellent choice. Since he had a deserved reputation as a fighting general, his appointment was expected to have a catalytic effect upon army morale.82 Also, he had often opposed the ideological rigidity of the traditional army leadership, understood the necessity of democratic reforms, and expresses a willingness to second Kerensky's efforts.83 The War Minister recognized the mark of personal ambition in Brusilov's political resiliency but still felt that he would be a reliable associate. The new Supreme Commander, he claimed, was a "strong man" able to "create, to act, and to take risks."84

While Kerensky had been at pains to strike a good working relationship with the traditional military leadership, he chose to rely primarily upon officers of a liberal cast. Accordingly, he surrounded

78Nevskii, p. 238.
79"Fevral'skie revoliutsii 1917 goda," KA, XXL (1927), 69.
80M. Pokrovskii, "Stavka i ministerstvo inostrannykh del," KA, XXX (1928), 29.
81Iyp, May 11, 1917, p. 4.
82Rech', May 24, 1917, p. 2.
83Denikine, p. 256.
84Kerensky, Catastrophe, p. 198.
himself with persons of his own political persuasion. General B. S. Romanovskii, one of the youngest generals in the army and a partisan of Kerensky, was appointed Chief of Staff within the Stavka, where he exercised considerable control over appointments. Lieutenant General A. A. Manikovskii, Colonel P. Iakubovich, and Prince Tumanov were withdrawn from the Stavka and assigned positions as Deputy Ministers of War. Those choices demonstrated impeccable judgement. Manikovskii had been one of the few general officers to advocate compromise with socialist demands, and both Iakubovich and Tumanov had aligned themselves with the revolution from its outbreak, had served in the Duma Military Commission, and continued on good terms with the Petrograd Soviet. The Minister of War also asked Colonel V. L. Baranovskii, his brother-in-law, to head a military cabinet designed to oversee political matters concerning the armed forces. The army had proven itself the arbiter of the revolution, and Kerensky intended to control it through the appointment of

85Miliukov, Vospominanija, II, 379.

86VVP, May 26, 1917, p. 1. General B. S. Romanovskii should not be confused with General P. I. Romanovskii, who was involved deeply in the Kornilov revolt.

87Manikovskii's appointment is noted in Stankevich, p. 143; Tumanov's can be found in VVP, May 26, 1917, p. 1; and Iakubovich's is cited in VVP, May 11, 1917, p. 1.


89A. Kerensky, The Prelude to Bolshevism; the Kornilov Rising (New York, 1919), pp. 286, 310.

90Tsereteli, I, 134-135.

91Stankevich, p. 143.
reliable subordinates.

Within a short period, Kerensky managed to retard the erosion of authority affecting the lower ranks, to stabilize the Officer Corps, and to submit the military to a supervisory organization of his own creation. But he could gain real freedom of action only by securing command of the Soviet-appointed commissars attached to the various area headquarters and by obtaining the respect of the army committees that determined, to a great extent, the attitudes of the rank and file. The War Minister easily accomplished both of these objectives. The practice of sending commissars to military commands had begun under the first government, when the Soviet still feared counterrevolution; at that time, socialist control over the political activities and internal affairs of the army had been justified. Under a coalition government and a socialist Minister of War, though, that no longer seemed the case. On May 6, after consultations with Skobelev and Tsereteli, Kerensky was given complete jurisdiction over all military commissars. Technically, the Petrograd Soviet retained some influence, for Kerensky was obliged to notify it of specific actions that he had taken. But since the Soviet was dependent upon the Ministry of War for any information that it might receive, it lost practical control over the armed forces. The army committees, for similar reasons, yielded as completely as had the Soviet. Headed in

92Stankevich, p. 169.
93Tsereteli, II, 36.
94While in effect from May 6 as an informal agreement, an official proclamation transferring the commissars to Kerensky's control was composed only on July 14. VVP, July 28, 1917, p. 2.
large part by moderate SR's and Mensheviks, they gave Kerensky their full support and contributed heavily to his popularity among the masses of the soldiery.95

Demonstrating his usual political sensitivity, Kerensky had balanced the needs of the Left and the Right without seriously compromising essentials in the revitalization of the military leadership. He adopted the same approach with the disciplinary mechanisms of the armed forces. In a characteristic appeasement of socialist sentiments, he began with a judicial reform of the military courts. Provisions were made for the election of regimental court judges, and the resulting boards had to be comprised of an equal number of officers and soldiers. Juries, also comprising an equal number of officers and men, were introduced into military circuit courts and army corps military courts, to which crimes of a really serious nature were referred. Jury decisions were determined by majority vote; in case of a tie, the view most favorable to the defendant was adopted.96

Kerensky also invested military committees with considerable powers. They were granted the right to share communication facilities (except under urgent wartime conditions), they were given authority to enforce discipline under normal circumstances, and they had an unrestrained right to conduct political education sessions among the soldiers. Furthermore, the committees were placed in possession of broad powers in the examination of complaints and the conducting of


96Russkie Vedomosti, June 17, 1917, p. 2.
appropriate investigations. They were also allowed a significant share in the determination of work loads and schedules.  

Those concessions allowed Kerensky to move into a quite different area. On May 30, he imposed severe penalties upon persons convicted of evasion of orders, open revolt, voluntary abandonment of assigned positions, refusal to carry out orders, or incitement to those crimes. Punishments included penal servitude and the loss of all civil rights. The latter penalty was a particularly harsh one, for it included the inability to serve in any public capacity, to take part in elections, or to own property. In the case of mass evasions of duty, when it proved impossible to evaluate individual guilt, the recalcitrant military units were subjected to disbandment.

The passage of these disciplinary regulations completed Kerensky's administrative reorganizations. In order to assure the "combat preparedness of the army," which he defined as his particular mission, he had one other major duty: the generation of sufficient enthusiasm for an offensive by a "free army of citizen soldiers." He began that task on May 12 with a whirlwind tour of the front. Adopting an emotional approach, in which he argued that the army would be "accursed" if it failed to defend the "honor and dignity" of free Russia, he kindled patriotic demonstrations at almost every place

98Izvestiia, June 1, 1917, p. 1.
100Izvestiia, May 14, 1917, p. 2.
101Izvestiia, May 14, 1917, p. 2.
that he appeared. By the end of May, reports flowing into the Stavka from various army headquarters testified to Kerensky's effectiveness and revealed heightened confidence in the probable success of the offensive. Except for occasional moments of self-doubt, the War Minister shared in the general optimism that was infecting governmental circles and widening portions of the army leadership. It would have been difficult to react otherwise: his appearances before the troops produced such excitement that his right arm was disabled by the handshakes of fervent admirers.

Active military operations were again feasible by the middle of June. At the same time, internal political developments dictated that such attempts should be pressed forward without delay. The general euphoria over coalition had faded, and there were disturbing intimations that the Left was reviewing its commitment to an aggressive war policy. Kerensky received his first indications of impending difficulties shortly after June 6, when the TsIK secretly informed him that he should obtain the support of the All-Russian Congress of Soviets before launching an offensive. The Congress' response,

102 Pokrovskii and Ia. A. Iakovlev, eds., Razlozhenie armii v 1917 goda; 1917 goda v dokumentakh i materialakh (Moscow, 1925), p. 91.

103 Razlozhenie, p. 89.

104 Denikine, p. 266.

105 Stankevich, p. 160.


107 Tsereteli, II, 212.
that the army should remain in a condition to "take either the
offensive or the defensive" and that a "purely military and strategic
point of view" should dictate the choice,\textsuperscript{108} indicated a return to
strict revolutionary defensism. Other revolutionary institutions
displayed the same tendency. The Third All-Russian Conference of the
SR Party refused to offer Kerensky membership in its Central Committee
because of his zealous militarism,\textsuperscript{109} and a sizable minority of the
Petrograd Soviet declined to send fraternal greetings to the army for
the same reason.\textsuperscript{110} The final, and perhaps most ominous, sign of
gathering discontent was increasing restiveness in the Petrograd
garrison. Kerensky's efforts to move its personnel and weaponry to the
front had been bitterly resented,\textsuperscript{111} and some units had flatly refused
to cooperate.\textsuperscript{112} Direct intervention by the TsIK moderated the
garrison's attitude, but that was accomplished only by equating
defiance of Kerensky with a "stab in the back" of comrades at the
front.\textsuperscript{113} Those warning signs could not be ignored; the offensive had
to begin before disenchantment in the rear affected the newly estab-
lished situation on the front lines.

The Minister of War responded quickly to the altered political

\textsuperscript{109}Delo Naroda, June 9, 1917, p. 1.
\textsuperscript{111}Izvestiia, June 23, 1917, p. 2.
\textsuperscript{112}I. Toblin, "Iiul'skie dni v Petrograde," \textit{KA}, XXIII (1927), 47.
\textsuperscript{113}Izvestiia, June 25, 1917, p. 7.
circumstances. His orders were dispatched on June 16,114 and fighting broke out on June 18 on the Galician front, July 7 on the Western, July 8 on the Northern, and July 9 on the Rumanian front.115 Initial successes in Galicia, due chiefly to elaborate artillery preparation, superior manpower, and the low morale of the opposing Austrian troops,116 supported the liberal thesis that victory would promote internal stabilization. The All-Russian Congress of Soviets reversed its previous stand and expressed complete approval of the offensive,117 restlessness within the Petrograd garrison diminished,118 and the capital was swept by patriotic outbursts unknown since the first year of the war.119

Unfortunately, the celebrations were premature. On July 6 a German counter-blow shattered the Russian drive in Galicia,120 transformed the Russian divisions there into disorderly and panic-stricken mobs,121 and reduced the Russian assaults on other fronts into localized holding actions.122 On July 13 Kerensky acknowledged defeat

114VWP, June 20, 1917, p. 1.
115Denikine, pp. 266-267.
116Milioukov, Histoire, III, 1236-1237.
117Izvestiia, June 20, 1917, p. 4.
119Delo Naroda, June 20, 1917, p. 1; Novoe Vremia, June 20, 1917, p. 3; Birzhevye Vedomosti, June 22, 1917, p. 1.
120VWP, July 11, 1917, p. 2.
121V. Vladimirova, "Bol'shevizatsiia fronta v prediiul'skie dni 1917 g.," KA, LVIII (1933), 98.
by ordering the armies on all fronts to stand on the defensive. Galicia was lost, over 40,000 casualties had been sustained,\textsuperscript{123} and irreparable damage had been inflicted upon the cohesion of the revolutionary armies. The First Coalition's military gamble had failed, and its bargaining power with the Allies, as well as its ability to keep political extremism in check, dissolved along with its armies in the field.

Kerensky was forced to endure heavy criticism for the failure of the summer offensive. Derisively called a Persuader-in-Chief by many conservative officers, he was condemned for relying too much upon moral exhortation and too little upon traditional methods of military discipline. That argument was perhaps best expressed by General A. I. Denikin, then the commander of the Western front:

Kerensky called on the army to do its duty. He spoke of honor, of discipline, of obedience to commanders. Vain Words! When Russia was consumed in flames, he cried out to the fire: Extinguish yourself!\textsuperscript{124}

While accurate in part, that interpretation ignored both the narrow framework in which the Minister of War was forced to operate and the real administrative accomplishments that were due to his efforts. Furthermore, the inevitability of military failure was clear only in retrospect. The short-lived enthusiasm of the troops was easily taken for patriotic dedication,\textsuperscript{125} and not even the most skeptical officers


\textsuperscript{124}Denikine, p. 253.

\textsuperscript{125}Danilov, p. 542.
anticipated the extent and rapidity of the Russian collapse.\textsuperscript{126} Given the political strictures that he was forced to tolerate and the state of the army since February, Kerensky achieved as much as was possible. His failure, and that of the coalition as a whole, lay in the erroneous assumption that a strong war posture could coexist with fundamental domestic experimentation.

The resounding military catastrophe that destroyed the Russian army as an effective instrument of state power was accompanied by the disintegration of the government. That event had been likely from the beginning, when the Cadets renounced the conception of a \textit{Union Sacrée} and considered their alliance with socialism as a temporary stage in an ongoing political struggle. But exposed though the cabinet was to serious strains, a remarkable number of problems were required to disrupt it. Disputes over agrarian policy, a major crisis over the status of the Ukraine, renewed disorders in Petrograd, and the political repercussions of military defeat finally combined to discredit the notion of coalition and to destroy the fragile balance that had retarded the deepening of the revolution. By the first week of July, Kerensky's policy of class mediation had become obsolete. Although he would elaborate brilliant stratagems to revitalize that concept, his efforts would be frustrated by a diminishing base of popular support.

An important element in the failure of the coalition experiment was the inability of the government to formulate an effective agrarian policy. While the peasantry remained passive during the first weeks

of the revolution, incidents of agrarian disorders rose dramatically in April and May.\textsuperscript{127} Governmental ineffectiveness apparently reinforced that trend,\textsuperscript{128} for in June the number of land seizures and rural disturbances doubled over the preceding month.\textsuperscript{129} Chernov admitted that irreversible action relating to land ownership would compromise the work of the Constituent Assembly, but he was convinced that interim measures were necessary to pacify the rural population. As a result, he moved to halt the conversion of communal holdings into private property and proposed a ban on land transactions to preserve a land fund upon which the Constituent Assembly could act. In order to facilitate those two measures, the Minister of Agriculture further proposed to establish land committees that would specify the conditions of land use until a permanent solution could be achieved.\textsuperscript{130} These proposals were familiar, for Kerensky had advanced them in the first cabinet. But there was a substantial difference between a statement of principle and the direct threat of implementation. Prince L'vov, charging that such actions would "undermine the people's respect for the law" and "confront the Constituent Assembly with an accomplished fact," led the liberal opposition that blocked Chernov's program.\textsuperscript{131} As the embattled Agriculture Minister refused either to modify or to shelve his proposals, the issue remained in public view. Socialist

\textsuperscript{127}VVP, July 14, 1917, p. 1.

\textsuperscript{128}M. P., "Bor'ba za zemliu v 1917 g.," KA, LXXVII (1936), 90.

\textsuperscript{129}M. Marminov, "Agrarnoe dvizhenie v 1917 godu po dokumentam glavnogo zemel'nogo komiteta," KA, XIV (1926), 215.

\textsuperscript{130}Delo Naroda, July 9, 1917, p. 1.

\textsuperscript{131}Russkie Vedomosti, July 4, 1917, p. 4.
demands for land reform intensified, and the publicity generated by the cabinet's internal conflict increased the serious unrest already afflicting the countryside. The nationality problem posed an even more severe challenge to the cabinet than the agrarian issue. Fundamental land reform assured a gradual redistribution of wealth and a realignment of classes, but the status of the Russian borderlands immediately affected the power, resources, and international standing of the nation. Furthermore, the integrity of the centralized state was definitely threatened. The breakdown of imperial order throughout the country allowed the outlying nationalities to gather local authority into their own hands, and the feeble machinery of the Provisional Government was insufficient to reverse that process. Because of the ingrained resentment of the national minorities against the Russification policies of the old regime, de facto autonomy automatically revived separatist tendencies in the border regions.

Influenced by its nationalistic liberal majority, the cabinet vigorously defended the principle of national unity. Kerensky, as committed as any liberal to the doctrine of an indivisible Russia, upheld that position in a June 11 speech, when he asked the democrats of the Ukraine, the Caucasus, and Finland to maintain their ties with Russia. The Constituent Assembly, he declared, was the only organ

132Izvestiia, June 27, 1917, p. 9.

133VVP, July 14, 1917, p. 1.

134The V. A. Maklakov Archive of the Russian Embassy in Paris, 1917-1924, 4 boxes, Collection of the Hoover Institute at Stanford University, box 1, accession no. 26003-937.
empowered to fix the relations between the Russian people and its outlying nationalities. Any premature attempt at dismemberment, he continued, would result in the collective ruin of all concerned parties. The nationalistic Minister of War had already indicated a readiness to supplement persuasion with force. At a speech in Helsingfors on May 10, he warned Finnish separatists that the government would not move beyond the restoration of the Finnish constitution. Extremists, Kerensky added, should be especially careful not to "confuse love with weakness." Revolutionary Russia, the source of "creative strength," could mobilize power superior to that of tsarism and had to be "taken into account."

That threatening stance helped to keep most of the centrifugal forces in check. The intimidated Finnish Sejm resisted considerable popular pressure for a formal declaration of independence, pleading that the moment was not propitious. Estonia, Latvia, and Livonia followed Finland's general lead, but showed a greater tolerance for the concept of autonomy within a loosely federated republican system. A similar pattern of temporary restraint appeared in most other outlying regions of the former empire. In the Caucasus, the various national committees kept full control over local affairs. But for the sake of military defense against Turkey, they were careful to

135 Russell Diary, July 8, 1917.
137 Izvestiia, June 23, 1917, p. 6.
138 Miliukov, Vospominaniia, II, 391.
139 S. M. Dimantshtein, ed., Revoliutsiia i natsional'nyi vopros (Moscow, 1930), pp. 226 ff.
recognize the principle of national unity.\textsuperscript{140} Turkestan also maintained the tenuous balance between submission to the central government and \textit{de facto} independence. The government-appointed Turkestan Committee, which supposedly administered the province, exercised little meaningful influence.\textsuperscript{141} Yet serious political differences between traditionalists and westernizers divided the Moslem ranks, and mutual suspicion between Russian settlers and the indigenous population checked an immediate drive for full autonomy.\textsuperscript{142}

The Ukraine did not feel a comparable need for prudent measures. The most important and populous of Russia's border regions, possessed of a proud cultural tradition and led by fervent nationalists, it moved steadily toward collision with the Provisional Government. The March 20 governmental declaration removing restrictions on national minorities had only a palliative effect,\textsuperscript{143} and throughout April and May Ukrainian demands for effective self-government multiplied. Michael Hrushevskii, a lifelong proponent of Ukrainian independence and the President of the Central Rada (the dominant organ of regional government) brought the issue into the open on May 30. In a note addressed jointly to the Provisional Government and to the TsIK, Hrushevskii issued a clear challenge to established minority policy. He called for the recognition of the Ukrainian right to autonomy; the

\textsuperscript{140}Dimanshtein, pp. 392-402.

\textsuperscript{141}"Iz istorii natsional'noi politiki Vremennago Pravitel'stva," \textit{KA}, XXX (1928), 79.

\textsuperscript{142}"Iz dnevnika A. N. Kuropatkina," \textit{KA}, XX (1927), 65.

\textsuperscript{143}Sbornik ukazov i postanovlenii Vremennago Pravitel'stva, 2 vols. (Petrograd, 1917), I, 46-49.
admission of Ukrainian delegates to international conferences dealing with the rectification of national borders; the formation of Ukrainian military units in the rear and, where possible, at the front; the immediate consolidation of the Southwestern provinces into a discrete Ukrainian political unit; and the transfer of state funds to the Rada.\textsuperscript{144} There is no doubt that Hrushevskii's demands reflected popular sentiments. April congresses of the Ukrainian Socialist Revolutionary and Socialist Democratic parties, the Ukrainian National Congress (convoked by the Rada to broaden its popular base), the All-Ukrainian Peasant Congress, and the First Ukrainian Military Congress passed similar resolutions.\textsuperscript{145}

The cabinet rejected the Ukrainian demands on the tested grounds that the self-appointed Rada had not been elected democratically and that the will of the Constituent Assembly could not be compromised.\textsuperscript{146} But it soon became apparent that a mutual accommodation was necessary. The political freedom that existed within the armed forces promoted contact between Ukrainian nationals, and after the convocation on May 6 of the First Ukrainian Military Congress the formation of ethnic units advanced at an alarming rate. While Kerensky was completely opposed to the fragmentation of the army, which jeopardized the pending offensive,\textsuperscript{147} he was unable to halt the process.\textsuperscript{148} His helplessness

\textsuperscript{145}Choulguine, p. 97.
\textsuperscript{146}VWP, July 2, 1917, p. 2.
\textsuperscript{147}I. V. Demkin, ed., \textit{Velikaia Oktiabr'skaia sotsialisticheskaia revoliutsiia na Ukraine}, 3 vols. (Kiev, 1957), I, 304-305.
\textsuperscript{148}Izvestiia, June 2, 1917, p. 2.
was demonstrated on June 5 by the convocation, against his orders, of a Second Ukrainian Military Congress. Meeting under the protection of the Central Rada, the congress declared its intent to create a separate national army despite the wishes of the government or the war ministry. That action placed Kerensky in an extremely difficult position. He could remain true to his Great Russian proclivities, refuse to treat with the Rada, and accept the continued disintegration of the army; or he could seek an agreement that would at least protect the integrity of the armed forces. In a typical display of tactical elasticity and faith in the future, he chose the latter course.

The opportunity for a settlement arose after the June 10 proclamation of the First Universal by the Ukrainian Central Rada. That declaration, virtually one of independence, announced the complete rejection of the Provisional Government's authority within the boundaries of the Ukraine. It also established the Rada as the temporary ruling body of that area, promised the swift convocation of a national assembly to establish a permanent government, and called for the creation of a national army. Neither a direct appeal by the Provisional Government to the Ukrainian population nor the open airing of the possibility of civil war by the Russian liberal press

149Pravda, June 2, 1917, p. 2.
150Stankevich, p. 148.
152VVP, June 17, 1917, p. 1.
153For example, see Russkie Vedomosti, June 18, 1917, p. 3.
proved to be deterrents. The broadening crisis, exacerbated by the appearance of a Ukrainian General Secretariat that gave immediate form to the threat of self-rule, was met by a proposal from Tsereteli, Chernov, and Skobelev for direct negotiations. On June 26, despite strong Cadet misgivings that Russian national interests would be sacrificed by such a precipitous move, the cabinet resolved to dispatch Kerensky, Tsereteli, and Tereshchenko to Kiev.\(^{154}\)

In all probability, Cadet fears were aroused by Tsereteli's inclusion in the cabinet delegation. Socialistic distrust of the unitary nation-state was well known, and recent debates on the Ukrainian question in the All-Russian Congress of Soviets had revealed considerable sympathy for the principle of regional autonomy.\(^{155}\) But if the Cadets depended upon Kerensky to defend the inviolability of the centralized state at that particular time, they were to be seriously disappointed. The Minister of War realized that the cohesion of the army depended upon the results of the Rada negotiations. Since further decomposition endangered the offensive and, through it, the very existence of revolutionary Russia, he was willing to subordinate all other considerations to military needs.\(^{156}\)

At the Kiev Conference, which lasted from June 28 to June 30, he achieved that end at the exclusion of almost everything else. The essential Ukrainian demands were accepted. The General Secretariat was acknowledged to be the central administrative institution, the

\(^{154}\) Tsereteli, II, 133.

\(^{155}\) Izvestiia, June 16, 1917, p. 4.

\(^{156}\) Choulguine, p. 123.
Southwestern provinces were merged into a single area under the authority of the Rada, and the legislative acts of the Rada were accepted as complete and binding upon the cabinet. A final concession, one that further alienated the Cadets, specified that the Constituent Assembly would determine the transfer of land within the Ukraine according to Socialist Revolutionary principles. In exchange, the Rada agreed to moderate its military demands. Ukrainian national units were to be formed only where the combat effectiveness of the army would not be imperilled, governmental recruitment within the Ukraine was allowed to continue, and the Russian military command in Kiev was freed from interference by local authorities.157

The Ukrainian agreement was presented on a non-negotiable basis to the ministerial council on July 2, despite Cadet objections that such a course was "judicially incompetent" and a "betrayal of Russian interests."158 Kerensky's passionate insistence that the document immediately be approved won the requisite cabinet support, but the Cadets responded with wholesale resignations.159 Kerensky's reaction was both vitriolic and theatrical. He condemned the Cadet ministers for needlessly complicating the government's position during a time of crisis,160 urged the rump cabinet to retain power with its present membership until a convenient time could be found for its expansion,

158Miliukov, Vospominaniiia, II, 391.
159Izvestiia, July 4, 1917, p. 3.
160Kerensky, "Iz vospominaniiia," p. 301.
and made a dramatic departure from Petrograd to prepare for the impending offensive on the Western front.161

The cabinet's disruption was particularly untimely, for it coincided with a serious increase of tension within the capital. Chronic unrest within the Petrograd garrison162 was supplemented by a general disenchantment with the failure of Chernov's agrarian proposals163 and recent governmental refusals to expedite worker control over the factories.164 But perhaps the most important cause of popular disaffection was the steadily growing influence of the Bolshevik Party among the revolutionary workers and soldiers of Petrograd. Under the vigorous leadership of V. I. Lenin, the Bolsheviks had been hammering incessantly at the government. Their objections to the launching of an offensive prior to a suitable revision of war aims165 were especially effective; that approach inflamed a garrison manifestly opposed to fighting and an urban population increasingly resentful of the sacrifices demanded by the war. The abrupt Cadet resignations touched off the gathering violence.166 From July 3 to July 5, Petrograd was exposed to mass disorders of a magnitude unknown since the fall of the monarchy.167

162Tobolin, p. 58.
163Izvestiia, July 6, 1917, p. 2.
164VVP, June 28, 1917, p. 3.
166Kerenskii, "Iz vospominanii," p. 301.
167Solobev, II, 458.
The predominant characteristic of the radical uprising during the July Days, and one that detracted seriously from its effectiveness, was its unplanned and uncoordinated nature. As B. O. Bogdanov, a member of the TsIK, observed, confusion was so widespread that he could not determine whether the movement was an armed uprising or an armed demonstration. The disturbances possessed a Leninist complexion from the outset, for they were conducted under the slogans "Down with the Ten Capitalist Ministers" and "All Power to the Soviets." But so long as they retained their spontaneous nature, neither the truncated cabinet nor the Petrograd Soviet dared to attempt forcible suppression. That situation changed on July 4 when the Bolsheviks assumed responsibility for the movement. With the July Days clearly identified with a radical leftist party, revolutionary spontaneity was transformed into conspiracy and Kerensky was able to intervene. The War Minister was delighted at the opportunity to strike at the major anti-war party in the country. Acting with the consent of the cabinet, he directed loyal troops toward the capital and allowed the release of information linking Lenin with the flow into Russia of German funds. The arrival in Petrograd of government troops, together with charges of treason against the Bolshevik leadership, produced a rapid restoration of order. By July 5, the

168Tobolin, XIV (1927), 69.
169Nabokov, p. 77.
171VVP, July 6, 1917, p. 2.
172VVP, July 8, 1917, p. 1.
The leaders of the moderate Left greeted the quelling of the July disorders with open relief, for the socialist party organizations, far more than the Provisional Government, had been the targets of mass hostility. But their sentiments turned into consternation on July 5, after Kerensky declared a vendetta against the entire radical Left. The public accusations of treason against Lenin served a valuable purpose in pacifying the garrison, but they were not sufficiently substantiated to warrant the widespread arrests of Bolshevik leaders and the governmental seizure of the Bolshevik headquarters at the Kshesinskaia Palace. The TsIK also resented Kerensky's arbitrary manner. His decision to dismiss Pereverzev and General Polovtsov on grounds of incompetence, his summary disbandment of garrison units, and his countenance of excessive force in the confiscation of weapons and the dispelling of street gatherings seemed unnecessary. The TsIK still retained confidence

174VVP, July 9, 1917, p. 1.
175Izvestiia, July 5, 1917, p. 1.
176Izvestiia, July 4, 1917, p. 2.
177Dem'ianov, pp. 93-94.
178Kerenskii, "Iz vospominanii," p. 305.
179VVP, July 9, 1917, p. 3. Pereverzev was replaced in the Justice Ministry by I. N. Efremov. VVP, July 11, 1917, p. 3.
181VVP, July 8, 1917, p. 1.
182VVP, July 8, 1917, p. 1. For additional information, see Kerenskii, "Arest' Bol'shevikov," p. 169.
in the purity of Kerensky's motives, but they agreed to approve his methods only after he coupled revelations about the extent of the Galician defeat with a threat of resignation.183

Although the TsIK accepted the necessity of an anti-Bolshevik crusade, they began maneuvers designed to limit the scope of reaction. The outlines of that prudent campaign appeared on the evening of July 5, when the SR and Menshevik Central Committees demanded that for the time being the rump cabinet act in accordance with the wishes of the All-Russian Congress of Soviets.184 Their demand, born of an awareness of vulnerability and a fear of counterrevolution, created a very dangerous situation. By unilaterally reducing the independence of the cabinet and reintroducing dual power in the midst of a serious political crisis, it cleared the way for open class warfare.

Kerensky, determined to retain the initiative, immediately sought an understanding with the moderate Left. On the night of July 6, in an informal meeting with the leading figures of the Soviet democracy, he advanced concrete proposals for future political tactics.185 His preferred solutions were characteristic, and included opportunism and the balancing of class interests. The July Days and the current difficulties at the front, he maintained, had served to discredit Left extremism. In an excited manner, which Tsereteli later described as "joyful and stimulated," the War Minister claimed that a "blessed turning point in the mood of the country" had been reached and that

183Kerensky, Catastrophe, pp. 243-244.
184Russkie Vedomosti, July 9, 1917, p. 4.
185The participants were Tsereteli, Chernov, Skobelev, Chkheidze, F. I. Dan, and A. R. Gots. See Tsereteli, II, 348.
the opportunity was finally present for the exercise of "solid power."
While the imposition of strong rule was both desirable and inevitable,
Kerensky continued, it should be prefaced by a demonstration of
socialist strength and proceed with socialist participation. In that
way, counterrevolution would be checked and the restoration of the
government could be accompanied by tangible concessions to popular
demands.\textsuperscript{186} Despite some spirited opposition, especially from the
Menshevik F. I. Dan, Kerensky's arguments prevailed.\textsuperscript{187}

That demonstration of socialist strength, designed in large part
to place Kerensky at the head of a cabinet of his own choice, assumed
a dramatic form. On July 7, the All-Russian Congress of Soviets
confronted the government with a list of controversial demands: the
dissolution of the State Duma; proclamation of a republic; immediate
passage of Chernov's agrarian legislation; and adoption of an active
peace policy.\textsuperscript{188} Prince L'vov, justifiably angered by their peremptory
tone, attacked them as a "deviation from non-party principles" in favor
of "purely socialistic aims" and withdrew from the cabinet.\textsuperscript{189} Upon
his resignation, he suggested that Kerensky occupy his vacated
position.\textsuperscript{190}

Kerensky has sturdily defended his analysis of July 6, main-
taining that Prince L'vov's resignation opened the way to genuine

\textsuperscript{186} Sereteli, II, 348.
\textsuperscript{187} Sukhanov, Revolution, II, 473.
\textsuperscript{188} Pelo Naroda, July 8, 1917, p. 2.
\textsuperscript{189} Russkie Vedomosti, July 9, 1917, p. 4.
\textsuperscript{190} I. Polner, Zhiznennyi put Kniazia Georgiiia Evgenievicha
political stabilization. In the first weeks following the collapse of the July rising, he claimed, unrest subsided in the countryside, the factories, and the front. That constructive process, which protected and extended the gains of the revolution, was reversed only by the intervention of "reckless generals" who had an inferior understanding of state needs. Even before the formation of the ill-fated Second Coalition, however, there were indications that the lull would prove temporary, that the July Days and the military reverses had produced a sharpening of class antagonisms, and that further revolutionary spasms lay ahead. Kerensky's conviction that Bolshevism was a political aberration blinded him to the real meaning of July 3. He joined liberals and moderate socialists in attributing the disorders to conspiracy, but the tardy Bolshevik response to the July Days indicated that the Petrograd masses were more radicalized than even they had suspected. If such substantial and continuing popular dissatisfactions could build up while the government leaned on the Petrograd Soviet, it was unlikely that a Right resurgence would dispel them.

At the same time that mass support for the Provisional Government was eroding, Kerensky chose to court the political Right. Since in many respects he was more nearly a liberal than a socialist, he was drawn naturally to that course of action. Yet the past months had

191 A. Kerenskii, "Fevral' i Oktiabr'," SZ, IX (1922), 287.
194 VVP, July 9, 1917, p. 1.
demonstrated the popularity of radical socialist ideals, and the non-socialist parties could no longer look forward to ideological vindication in the Constituent Assembly. Under those circumstances, adherence to strict non-partisan policies and democratic principles was a form of political suicide. Kerensky hoped to exploit the July Days in order to establish a powerful, independent government that could protect state interests and exercise control over disruptive forces at each end of the political spectrum. In fact, he placed himself and his moderate allies between a weakened but resentful Left and a frightened, belligerent Right. That course of action led directly to the political convulsions of August and September.
Prince L'vov resigned on July 7 because of a conviction that the rupture between liberals and socialists could not be healed and that the country was on an unavoidable course toward civil war. His participation in the Provisional Government had been based on the premise that moderate policies would preserve the best of the old order and provide a painless transition to the new one.\(^1\) The July Days and the attendant polarization of politics shattered that belief. Although the former Minister-President assumed a public position of confidence in the possibilities for compromise,\(^2\) he revealed his acute discouragement to T. I. Polner, a close friend and future biographer. He made way for Kerensky, Prince L'vov told Polner on July 9, because it was time for a strong leader to assume control of the state. The salvation of Russia required the forcible dispersion of the soviets and the firing upon of the populace, and while he could not issue such orders, Kerensky could.\(^3\)

\(^1\) Iv. Chernov, Rozhdenie revoliutsionnoi Rossii; Fevral'skaia revoliutsiia (New York, 1934), p. 334.

\(^2\) Russkoe Slovo, July 12, 1917, p. 3.

Kerensky certainly had not manipulated Prince L'vov's resignation in order to wage war indiscriminately upon the socialist forces, but he did agree that the former Minister-President's usefulness had come to an end. It was necessary, Kerensky recalled later, to complete the rout of the extreme Left and to curb anarchy. Unfortunately, Prince L'vov's nature was too gentle to permit the external compulsion that was now required. Kerensky's decision to assume formal leadership did seem to be a sound one. The collapse of the Galician front, the July uprising, and the Cadet resignations had created a dangerous situation, and it was evident that the nation was gravely imperilled. Kerensky's personal standing among the masses was still unrivaled, he had demonstrated a capacity for decisive action in the suppression of the Bolshevik disorders, and he was guaranteed support from the socialist leadership in the introduction of disciplinary measures. In that crucial time, replete with danger and with opportunity, it seemed imperative that he be in a position to implement fully his nadpartiinost' program.

Kerensky was equally confident that the political Right would accept his leadership and, in particular, that the Cadet Party would extend full cooperation. Since his attempt to strengthen the

4A. Kerenskii, "Iz vospominaniia," SZ, XXXVIII (1929), 251.


8Kerenskii, "Iz vospominaniia," p. 251.
non-socialist forces and still exert control over them came to such a
dismal end, it is useful to examine his evaluation of the current
political situation. Kerensky's key assumption, and in retrospect his
most surprising one, was that liberal disenchantment with coalition
politics could be totally discounted. In referring to the July 2
resignations of the Cadet ministers, he argued that their "unfounded
dissatisfaction" was of "no particular significance." The Cadets,
Kerensky continued, had simply panicked under stress; in less difficult
circumstances, the crisis would have dissolved "quickly and without
trouble." An important factor in his calculations was a conviction
that neither agrarian reform nor the Ukrainian problem were at the
root of Cadet discontents. The real issue that had provoked the
ministerial withdrawals was the disproportionate influence of the
Petrograd Soviet in the conduct of governmental affairs. Since the
previous imbalance had been corrected by the defeat of Left extremism,
liberals could re-enter the cabinet with clear consciences.

Kerensky's optimism stemmed from confidence in the beneficent
effects of the Bolshevik rising and from faith in his ability to
establish an effective regime under those new conditions. Yet, he did
have specific cause to believe that the Cadets would prove tractable.
N. V. Nekrasov, who acted as Kerensky's link to the Cadet Central
Committee in much the same fashion as Vladimir Zenzinov did with

9A. Kerensky, The Catastrophe: Kerensky's Own Story of the
10Kerenskii, "Iz vospominaniia," XXXVII (1928), 301.
11Tsereteli, II, 348.
regard to the TsIK, informed him that serious stresses existed within the Petrograd party leadership. Miliukov had encountered grave difficulties in a crucial meeting on July 1, and he had barely been able to win approval for the ministerial resignations of the following day. The obvious connection between the Cadet withdrawals and the beginning of the Bolshevik uprising served further to undermine Miliukov's authority, and important segments of the liberal press were sharply critical of his ideological inflexibility. Nekrasov's public airing of the supposedly confidential Central Committee proceedings, which Kerensky had probably encouraged, generated lively polemics among liberals throughout the country, and it appeared entirely possible that Miliukov's hard-line policies would be repudiated.

Kerensky was to be disappointed, for the Cadet Party was not at all ready to topple into his hands. Liberal dissatisfaction with the coalition experiment ran too deep to be easily expurged, and Miliukov kept control over his forces. Furthermore, he came to his own conclusions about the meaning of the July Days, and they were wholly incompatible with Kerensky's. The acting Minister-


13Kerensky, *Catastrophe*, p. 236.

14Russkie Vedomosti, July 9, 1917, p. 2.

15Russkie Vedomosti, July 4, 1917, p. 4.

16Russkie Vedomosti, July 9, 1917, p. 2.

President saw in the disorders a discrediting of irresponsible extremism and a growing socialist commitment to political restraint. The Cadet statesman discerned in them a welcome division in the previously united socialist ranks and an ebbing of socialist power.\(^{18}\) The satisfaction with which he noted the appearance of that rift indicated that he saw an opportunity to consolidate the state on his own terms. Most liberals, significant elements of the army command, and virtually the whole of privileged Russia would arrive at a similar interpretation. The results would be the political isolation of the Provisional Government, attempted counterrevolution, and the intensification of the radical revolution. Since the February Days, Kerensky's political instincts had been remarkably trustworthy. But on this occasion his self-confidence, his natural optimism, and his persistent underestimation of the power of class interests blinded him to the evident discontents of the Right and the real danger inherent in its revitalization.

But at first events occurred much as Kerensky anticipated. He assumed control over the cabinet immediately upon Prince L'vov's withdrawal,\(^{19}\) and the Soviet leadership responded with an abandonment of its demands for the dissolution of the Duma, the proclamation of a republic, and the deference of the cabinet to the will of the All-Russian Congress of Soviets. In fact, the July 8 declaration of the truncated government conceded very little to the socialist pressures that had been applied in the recent past. Prior demands for an active

\(^{18}\)Miliukov, \textit{Vospominaniia}, II, 394.

\(^{19}\)V. Nabokov, "\textit{Vremennoe Pravitel'stvo}," \textit{ARR}, I (1922), 79.
peace policy found reflection in a renewed dedication to revolutionary defensism, and the cabinet merely promised to "propose" an Allied conference for the revision of war aims. The intense agitation of Petrograd workers for an eight-hour day and control of factory administration was met by an agreement to draft bills "concerning" those issues. The only firm commitments that Kerensky and his surviving colleagues accepted were the holding of elections to the Constituent Assembly on September 17, the abolition of civil ranks and orders, and an agreement that the land should be transferred to the toilers.20

The cabinet's ambiguous stand on these vital issues won the complete acceptance of the VTsIK (the All-Russian Central Executive Committee) and the Executive Committee of the Soviets of Peasants Deputies, and on July 9 they named the Provisional Government the "Government to Save the Revolution." The title was meaningful. Kerensky's rump cabinet was invested with "unlimited power" to restore military discipline and combat extremism,22 and an Izvestiia editorial urged the population to "give it all your strength and all your resources."23

The July 9 Soviet debates had revealed the precarious state of the army and the pressing need for forceful measures against military dissolution,24 and the government responded on July 12 with a limited reintroduction of the death penalty for servicemen. While the

20VVP, July 8, 1917, p. 1.
21Izvestiia, July 11, 1917, p. 6.
23Izvestiia, July 11, 1917, p. 1.
24See the speeches of Dan and Tsereteli in Birzhevye Vedomosti, July 11, 1917, p. 3.
cabinet agreed unanimously that the act was necessary,25 Kerensky signed it reluctantly and only after erecting numerous safeguards for the benefit of the accused. The measure applied only in the zones of active military operations, the special courts which conducted the proceedings were composed equally of officers and men, and initiative for a trial had to come from at least the level of divisional commander. Also, simplified procedures were established for the mitigation of sentences. As he explained in the promulgation of the decree, its passage had been a "painful decision" taken to correct a "tragic" situation.26 Kerensky's entire approach to government in the post-July period was foreshadowed in the way he handled the restoration of the death penalty. The turn to the Right was to be both gradual and qualified, revolutionary idealism was to be preserved as much as possible, and only after threats failed was actual punishment to be carried out. As much as any other factor, it was Kerensky's continued dedication to moderation and restraint in times of crisis that led to the profound liberal and conservative disenchchantment with his leadership.

Non-socialists were also disgruntled with Kerensky's abrupt July 12 ban on land transactions. But in his view, that act resulted from a happy coincidence of necessity and principle. He had long advocated the preservation of a land reservoir that the Constituent Assembly could draw upon on short notice, and the new law would certainly accomplish that aim. Land speculation, fictitious sales,


26VVP, July 13, 1917, p. 3.
and the encumbering of property with mortgages were hindered by a requirement that all deeds passed since March 1, 1917, be approved by both the ministry of agriculture and local gubernia land committees. Furthermore, any property put up for public auction could be taken under state management at the discretion of those two agencies. The act satisfied Kerensky's populist sentiments, he was convinced that it marked an important step in pacifying the restive peasantry, and it discharged a personal promise that he had made to the socialist Star Chamber on July 6. The new ban, which Russkie Vedomosti promptly termed "monstrous," also served to remind liberals that they had only harmed themselves by boycotting the cabinet.

After the passage of the agrarian legislation on July 12, Kerensky was prepared to negotiate with the Right for the reconstruction of the ministry. But while he was convinced that the "quick rehabilitation of the nation" required the presence within the cabinet of liberal ministers, he was determined that the new ones would prove more adaptable than their predecessors. Accordingly, he tried to circumvent Miliukov's militant Petrograd organization, which had expressed strenuous opposition to the July 8 declaration. On July 12, in a transparent effort to exploit the recent dissension in liberal ranks, he offered portfolios to the Moscow Cadets N. I. Astrov and

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28Tsereteli, II, 348. The term refers to those prominent socialists, including Chernov, Tsereteli, Dan, Chkheidze, Gots, and Skobelev, who dominated the TsIK and the VTsIK.


30Kerensky, Catastrophe, p. 250.
N. M. Kishkin and the Moscow Trade-Industrialist S. N. Tret'iakov. While Kerensky had chosen candidates who were strongly attracted to the principle of coalition, his attempt to dispense with the Petrograd Cadets failed. When they arrived in the capital from Moscow on July 14, the three prospective ministers were immediately closeted with the Temporary Committee of the State Duma and the Cadet Central Committee, where they were given an intensive course in power politics. As a result, they placed stringent conditions upon their entry into the cabinet. In those uncertain times, the pressures to present a common liberal front were too great to resist; in the last analysis, that meant Kerensky would have to contend with Miliukov after all.

A July 15 letter to Kerensky from Astrov, Kishkin, and V. D. Nabokov, in which Miliukov's influence was clearly visible, set forth the Cadet requirements for coalition. At the moment, the liberal demands were impossible to fulfill. The new government was to pledge itself solely to the "preservation of the revolution" and was to avoid any measures that would cause "civil strife" or hinder the powers of the Constituent Assembly. Thus, interim social reforms such as the restrictions on land transactions or constitutional experimentation such as the Ukrainian agreement were to be renounced. The Cadets further required "total union" with the Allies in matters of war and peace, the creation of a strong, disciplined army, and the abridgement of the rights of soldiers' committees. They also demanded an end to

31Russkie Vedomosti, July 18, 1917, p. 4.
32Birzhevye Vedomosti, July 16, 1917, p. 4.
33See the detailed interview with Astrov in Russkie Vedomosti, July 18, 1917, p. 4.
the "many authorities" participating in the administration of the state and insisted that cabinet members be freed from responsibility to outside organizations. Finally, since their influence in the country had suffered a recent decline, the Cadets implied that elections to the Constituent Assembly should be postponed so that the "true national will" could be expressed. It was evident that the Cadets were interested in far more than a repudiation of the July 8 declaration. They sought no less than a reversal of all the political setbacks sustained since the outbreak of the February revolution, and they were willing to accept coalition only if their socialist colleagues acted as liberals.

While Kerensky rejected the Cadet demands, he attempted to prove that the practical differences separating them were relatively minor. In moves obviously aimed at mollifying liberal opinion, the Minister-President began investigations aimed at further discrediting political extremists, ordered the closing of the Bolshevik newspapers Pravda and Okopnaia Pravda (The Trench Truth), and appointed a known disciplinarian, General Lavr G. Kornilov, Supreme Commander of the armed forces. Furthermore, in a short written reply to the July 15 Cadet letter, he argued that the present national emergency erased the distinction between the July 8 declaration and previous cabinet platforms. In light of the present necessities, Kerensky informed the

34The text is cited in Russkie Vedomosti, July 18, 1917, p. 4.
36Birzhevye Vedomosti, July 16, 1917, p. 5.
Cadets, "the statement contained in your letter does not prevent your entry into the government." Kerensky had been very explicit, and Miliukov's party could hardly have misunderstood him. He had indicated that the necessary adjustments to the revolution had been made, and they had to be accepted. But no further concessions were required, and the way was finally clear to the curbing of excesses and the strengthening of state authority.

The Cadets would have accepted Kerensky's offer at any previous time, for it represented a definite commitment to governmental consolidation and stabilization. But they now thought they could afford to wait; the July Days and the military crisis had weakened the entire Left, not just the Bolsheviks, and they were confident that Kerensky would recognize his isolation and meet their specific terms. The formal Cadet answer, which was both stilted and unnecessarily rude, came on July 20. In a deliberate misrepresentation of Kerensky's position, the Cadets accused him of attempting to alter the program and purpose of the Provisional Government for partisan ends. They further charged that he had remained inflexible in the face of significant concessions (a reference to their decision not to demand Chernov's resignation from the cabinet), and they concluded with an assertion that Kerensky's attitude amounted to an "abandonment of any attempts to come to an agreement with us on a really national program." 

The sharp Cadet rejection of Kerensky's offer was preceded by

other reverses. A meeting of the State Duma on July 18 had revealed severe dissatisfaction with Kerensky, and there had been several instances when he had been personally vilified. More importantly, Miliukov had delivered two very disturbing speeches to the Duma members. While he admitted that Kerensky's leadership was still required, he claimed that the present situation "would not last." It would soon become essential, the Cadet statesman continued, for the Minister-President either to "yield his post or to take as his assistants military leaders" who would exercise the real authority.\footnote{Izvestiia, July 21, 1917, p. 3.}

Shortly after Miliukov predicted either Kerensky's dismissal or his effacement before a thinly-disguised military dictatorship, the Minister-President was given a foretaste of the treatment he could expect. Victor Chernov had been the object of defamatory attacks since the July 12 passage of the agrarian reforms, and on July 20 he resigned in order to prosecute his libelers in the courts.\footnote{Izvestiia, July 21, 1917, p. 5.} Under other conditions, Kerensky would have welcomed Chernov's departure. The relationship between the former Trudovik and the SR veteran (who considered his younger rival an upstart and an interloper) had often been strained, and Kerensky was already considering excluding Chernov from the projected cabinet.\footnote{Boris Savinkov, K Delu Kornilova (Paris, 1919), p. 9.} But it was one thing for Kerensky to use liberal discontent to ease Chernov from power, and quite another to see the Agriculture Minister virtually driven from office while he himself was similarly threatened. If the Right could force such a
noted socialist from the ministry, Kerensky could well be the next victim.

The final blow came from the Left. Antagonized by the liberal demands, the socialist leaders forbade any alteration of the July 8 declaration\textsuperscript{43} and proposed that the cabinet be reconstructed without recourse to the Cadets.\textsuperscript{44} Kerensky was now placed in a completely untenable position, for he was charged with the creation of a new government yet prevented from reaching any accommodation with the necessary participants. He broke the impasse on July 21 in a defiant and theatrical fashion. In a dramatic re-creation of Ivan Groznyi's flight from Moscow in 1564, he resigned his office, declared Nekrasov acting head of state, and left Petrograd. His letter of resignation, which was promptly released to the press, was brief and direct. In it, Kerensky stressed the impossibility of expanding the government sufficiently to meet the present requirements. As a result, he could no longer retain power and still remain true either to his conscience or to his understanding of current political needs.\textsuperscript{45}

Kerensky's angry gesture spread consternation among almost the entire political leadership of Petrograd. As the cabinet itself was caught by surprise, the first impulse of most ministers was to place their resignations alongside that of the Minister-President's. But after a confused interval, Nekrasov observed that some governing body

\textsuperscript{43}Tsereteli, II, 382.

\textsuperscript{44}Kerensky, Catastrophe, p. 251.

\textsuperscript{45}Russkie Vedomosti, July 22, 1917, p. 2.
ought to exist in the event that Kerensky chose to return.46 Accordingly, the ministers agreed temporarily to remain in office, decided to reject Kerensky's resignation, and called for an extraordinary conference of the major political parties and organizations in Petrograd.47 The response was immediate. On the evening of July 21, the representatives of the principle socialist and liberal groups assembled in the Malachite Hall of the Winter Palace in order to resolve the acute governmental crisis.48

The long and difficult session, which lasted from 10:30 p.m. to 6:00 a.m., resulted in a grudging and embittered admission that the class truce should, after all, be extended. A number of speakers succeeded each other, and some of them, notably the Right Socialist Revolutionary N. D. Avksent'ev, the Trudovik A. V. Peshekhonov, and the Cadet-echappé Nekrasov, delivered stirring appeals for genuine cooperation and non-partisan compromise.49 But the conference proceedings were dominated by Miliukov and Tsereteli, the protagonists of the Right and the Left, and they probed mercilessly into the wounds of the past months. Neither accepted responsibility for the current governmental paralysis, each accused the other of a systematic subversion of state authority, and they both refused to yield on the main points of controversy. Miliukov again rejected the July 8 declaration and reiterated his disapproval of the recent agrarian

48Tsereteli, II, 382.
49Russkie Vedomosti, July 22, 1917, pp. 3-4.
reforms, and conceded only that a resolution of those issues should
await the reconstitution of the cabinet and the recovery of state
power. Tsereteli proved equally obdurate. He refused to abandon
demands for a revision of war aims and maintained that socialist
ministers would continue to report to their party organizations,
arguing that such actions represented an exchange of information
rather than actual supervision. Both agreed, however, that neither
the socialists nor the liberals were prepared to assume sole responsi-
sibility for the state and that recourse to coalition was again
necessary. They also admitted that only Kerensky possessed sufficient
popularity to form such a government.

The various party resolutions marking the end of the conference
followed the outlines of the debates. The Menshevik and SR statements,
delivered by Dan and Gots respectively, gave Kerensky the right to
choose ministers who would support the July 8 declaration. The Cadet
resolution, presented by M. V. Vinaver, permitted Kerensky to select
ministers on an "all national basis" and stressed that they had to be
exempt from party control. The small Trudovik and Radical Democratic
parties, which occupied the interstices between the Cadets and the
SR-Menshevik nexus, expressed complete confidence in Kerensky and
refused to set any conditions on the formation of the ministry.

After being informed of the results of the extraordinary conference,

50Birzhevye Vedomosti, July 22, 1917, p. 4.
51Delo Naroda, July 22, 1917, p. 3.
52Russkii Vedomosti, July 22, 1917, p. 3.
53Delo Naroda, July 22, 1917, p. 3.
Kerensky returned to the capital, withdrew his resignation, and opened negotiations for the rebuilding of the government. The Minister-President indicated immediately that the new cabinet would be free of partisan restrictions. In a July 22 announcement to the press, he condemned "party controversies," warned that he would not tolerate interference with necessary changes in the "order and distribution" of governmental work, and hinted that he might assume extraordinary governing powers.54

The membership of the Second Coalition reflected Kerensky's unique position and testified to his victory of July 21. While party disputes flared as soon as he began to distribute portfolios,55 he came very close to the cherished goal of a non-partisan cabinet. The diminution of the Petrograd Soviet was particularly evident; Tsereteli had retired from the government, and just two ministers, Chernov and Skobelev, held posts in the TsIK.56 Furthermore, Chernov's presence was the only real imposition on the Minister-President. Kerensky attributed his recent exclusion from the Central Committee of the SR Party directly to Chernov, actively disliked him as a result, and would have preferred to see the ministry of agriculture in other hands.57 But in this case, Kerensky had to yield to the will of his nominal party. The intensive Right campaign against the SR leader had

56Tsereteli, II, 386.
inflamed socialists at all political levels,\textsuperscript{58} and the Soviet demanded that he retain his previous position.\textsuperscript{59} The Minister-President was almost as successful in restricting the ministerial influence of the Right as he had been with the Left. While four Cadets joined the new government, only F. F. Kokoshkin and P. P. Iurenev were closely identified with Miliukov.\textsuperscript{60} The rest of the cabinet consisted either of personal friends such as I. N. Efremov, A. V. Peshekhonov, and Nekrasov, or relatively uninfluential but compromise-orientated figures such as S. N. Protopovich and N. D. Avksent'ev.\textsuperscript{61}

Kerensky's initial pronouncements demonstrated his freedom from direct party control. To the discomfiture of Miliukov and Chernov,\textsuperscript{62} the Minister-President signaled his disdain for the recent doctrinal disputes by refusing to release a governmental platform.\textsuperscript{63} Instead, he issued a "Declaration to the Citizens of Russia" which promised an

\textsuperscript{58}For example, see \textit{Delo Naroda}, July 25, 1917, p. 1; \textit{Izvestiia}, July 23, 1917, p. 7.


\textsuperscript{60}\textit{Kerensky, Catastrophe}, p. 256.

\textsuperscript{61}The cabinet membership was as follows: Kerensky, Minister-President and Minister of War and Navy; Nekrasov, Deputy Minister-President and Minister of Finance; Tereshchenko, Minister of Foreign Affairs; Skobelev, Minister of Labor; Peshekhonov, Minister of Food; Chernov, Minister of Agriculture; S. F. Olsenberg, Minister of Welfare; Iurenev, Minister of Transport; Prokopovich, Minister of Trade and Industry; A. M. Nikitin, Minister of Posts and Telegraph; Kokoshkin, State Controller; A. V. Kartashev, Ober-Procurator of the Holy Synod; Avksent'ev, Minister of the Interior. See \textit{Izvestiia}, July 25, 1917, p. 3.


\textsuperscript{63}Kerensky, "Iz vospominaniia," XVIII (1929), p. 256.
"iron government" that would weld national unity and restore the country's honor. Both the Right and the Left viewed Kerensky's independent stand with deep misgivings: Russkie Vedomosti criticized the peremptory tone of the declaration, which seemed to exclude any consultation with liberal organizations, and Izvestia warned that further social reforms were imperative. Nevertheless, the Minister-President's first actions passed without serious challenge. Kerensky had apparently attained the position that he had envisioned on July 6. While he had not silenced his critics, he had certainly intimidated them, and he was confident that his advantage could be maintained into the foreseeable future.

Kerensky had badly miscalculated. He had attributed his success on July 22 to the belated recognition that only a true union of social forces could extricate the country from its difficult position. In fact, the Second Coalition had been made possible only by the sudden weakening of the Soviet and a concurrent dispersion of liberal strength. As the enforced solidarity of the Left and the Right was based on little more than a present lack of suitable alternatives, it could not be expected to endure. Kerensky had temporarily bridged a widening gap between two antagonistic blocs in his victory at the Malachite Hall, but he had not forged a new Union Sacré. As soon as liberals or socialists found a new point of leverage, his regime would

64Izvestia, July 26, 1917, p. 6.
66Izvestia, July 25, 1917, p. 2.
67Izvestia, July 23, 1917, p. 5.
come under severe pressure. Also, the above-party configuration of
the Second Coalition prevented an effective response to the revival of
social or political tensions. Largely sundered from supportive party
institutions, the new cabinet lacked the capacity to moderate conflict
and was exposed to outside assault.

It was Kerensky's ill fortune that he provided the instrument
through which that precarious political balance was disrupted. That
occurred when he appointed General Lavr Kornilov to the post of Supreme
Commander on July 1868 and reaffirmed his original decision, after
some hesitation, on July 2269. Kornilov's promotion appeared to be a
logical step in the recovery of state power. The new army leader was
highly respected in military circles,70 and as he had been invaluable
in containing the German advance in Galicia,71 he seemed an excellent
choice to replace the demoralized Brusilov.72

But Kornilov immediately indicated that he would not be a pliant
tool in Kerensky's hands. As conditions to his acceptance of the post,
the Supreme Commander insisted that he be held responsible only to his
conscience and the will of the nation, that he be freed from inter­
ference in the conduct of military affairs, and that the death penalty
be extended to all areas where military reserves were stationed.

68Birzhevye Vedomosti, July 20, 1917, p. 3.
69Savinkov, p. 20.
70A. I. Denikin, Ocherki Russkoi smuty, 5 vols. (Paris, 1921-25),
II, 15.
72Denikin, Smuty, II, 15.
Kornilov also demanded that his recommendations at the July 16 Stavka conference, which included a purging of the Officer Corps, the prohibition of soldiers' meetings, and restrictions on the activities of military committees, be implemented without delay. Kornilov's strong stand attracted national attention, and non-socialists saw him as the awaited "general on a white horse" who would lead Russia away from the abyss. The discontents of the Right, previously so diffused, had found an object about which to coalesce. From the moment of the Supreme Commander's appointment, liberal toleration of Kerensky depended upon the degree to which he aligned himself with his unruly subordinate.

After the Kornilov putsch, that unfortunate general was cast in a distorted mold which left serious traces in historical works on the period. The major contributors to that view were Kerensky, who wished to salvage the reputations of the Officer Corps and the Cadets, and Boris Savinkov, the famed terrorist, who was interested in enhancing his own reputation. According to Kerensky, the Supreme Commander was a true "man of the people," a straightforward patriot unfamiliar with political subtlety. Kornilov's faults stemmed from his virtues; outrage at the excesses of the Left and the decomposition

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73 *Russkie Vedomosti*, July 28, 1917, p. 3.


76 Kerensky, *Catastrophe*, p. 298.
of the army permitted his exploitation by unscrupulous advisors like
N. N. Filonenko and Savinkov, and his fighting qualities led to
impetuous, ill-considered acts.\textsuperscript{77} The Minister-President further
maintained that Kornilov was slowly guided into treasonous activities
and that his final decision to establish a dictatorship was due to an
erroneous conviction that the government harbored German agents.\textsuperscript{78}

Kerensky’s assertions, which really amounted to a partial
exoneration of the Supreme Commander, were indirectly supported by
Savinkov, the Assistant Minister of War during the Second Coalition.
From almost the beginning of the revolution, Savinkov claimed, he had
used the general to advance his own ambitions. In need of a \textit{deus ex
machina} to help him replace Kerensky, Savinkov had assured Kornilov’s
promotion to Corps Commander and then Supreme Commander;\textsuperscript{79} in fact, he
had even shown contempt for the general’s intelligence by indicating
his fraudulent intentions.\textsuperscript{80} The conclusions, at least by inference,
were that Kornilov was first misled and then victimized by a small
clique of adventurers and that his revolt was an aberration in an
otherwise constructive political process.

That interpretation was oversimplified. An impatience with the
nuances of coalition politics was not the same thing as political
naiveté, and there is ample evidence that the slight, Asiatic appearing

\textsuperscript{77A} A. Kerensky, \textit{The Prelude to Bolshevism; the Kornilov Rising}
(New York, 1919), xiii.

\textsuperscript{78} \textit{Prelude}, p. 51.

\textsuperscript{79} Savinkov, p. 9.

\textsuperscript{80} Savinkov, pp. 21-22.
general was neither obtuse nor credulous. His natural talents were beyond dispute; born a commoner, he rose to the level of general officer at a time when family status was still an important factor in promotions. Furthermore, Kornilov's disenchantment with governmental policy was the result of personal experience, first as the commandant of the demoralized Petrograd garrison and then as a corps commander on the Galician front, and was thus based on practical rather than ideological considerations. Because his alienation from the revolution had developed gradually, it was actually less complete than that of many officers. For example, even after the military debacle at Tarnopol, at which he had been present, he was less vehement than his colleagues in urging corrective measures; under questioning by a commission of inquiry, Kerensky later admitted that the restrained tone of Kornilov's proposals at the July 16 Stavka conference had been an important consideration in his promotion two days later. The editors of Izvestia were also appreciative of Kornilov's past services and previously conciliatory attitude and applauded his appointment in the belief that it preserved the safety of the revolution. Kerensky and the moderate socialists had misjudged Kornilov's reliability, but they did so only because they failed to take the times into account. While the Supreme Commander was less disillusioned with compromise than the majority of the Right, the difference in degree was of little

81 Birzhevye Vedomosti, July 20, 1917, p. 3.
82 Por an example of Kornilov's efforts, see VVP, March 7, 1917, p. 1.
83 Kerensky, Prelude, p. 19.
84 Izvestia, July 20, 1917, p. 5.
significance. In common with the great majority of non-socialists, he
was now firmly convinced that the state was in mortal danger and that
extraordinary measures were necessary. After July 18 he was in a
position to act upon those convictions.

But at first Kornilov was inclined toward cooperation with the
government. His startling declaration of responsibility only to his
conscience and the will of the nation on July 19 had not been the claim
to dictatorial power that Kerensky had suspected. Instead, it had
been a variation of the same rather self-righteous argument that the
Minister-President had often applied against both the Left and the
Right. Events quickly changed the Supreme Commander's attitude.
Kerensky sympathized with the Kornilov program, but he delayed imple­
mentation because he wished to introduce it gradually and in less
abrasive forms. Kornilov, on the other hand, had been assured by
Savinkov that his demands would be accepted, and he became increas­
ingly resentful of the Minister-President's imagined breach of
promise.

The developing conflict became public knowledge and its
progression was well documented in the press. A strong editorial
urging the immediate adoption of Kornilov's proposals appeared in

85Stankevich, p. 221.
86Chernov, Pered burei, p. 339.
87VVP, August 15, 1917, p. 3.
88Savinkov, p. 20.
89Denikin, Smuty, II, 17.
Russkie Vedomosti on July 28, 90 and the barren results of a meeting between the Supreme Commander and the cabinet on August 3 produced increased liberal criticism of Kerensky's "obstructionist" tactics.91 A second conference between Kornilov and Kerensky, held at the general's request on August 10, served only to underline their differences. The meeting was preceded by rumors of the Supreme Commander's impending dismissal,92 which gained credence when he arrived in Petrograd with bodyguards carrying machine guns.93 The conference was conducted in a strained atmosphere and had an inconclusive result. Kerensky again refused to implement Kornilov's original program, turned aside a request to militarize the war industry and the rail system, and agreed only to "consider" the extension of the death penalty to the rear.94 In the opinion of non-socialists, the unsatisfactory meeting of August 10 defined the issues. Their sentiments were perhaps best expressed by an incorrigible monarchist, the English-born Grand Duchess Marie, whose preferences allowed the drawing of sharp distinctions. The choice, she maintained, was now between the "great Russian patriot General Kornilov" and the "Kerensky faction with its wordy vacillation."95

90Russkie Vedomosti, July 28, 1917, p. 3.
91Rech', August 4, 1917, p. 3.
92Izvestiia, August 6, 1917, p. 3.
93Izvestiia, August 11, 1917, p. 4.
94Izvestiia, August 11, 1917, p. 3.
Ironically, the furor surrounding the Kornilov program obscured serious efforts by Kerensky to consolidate state authority. From the latter part of July to the middle of August, the harried Minister-President enacted measures that had been far beyond the capacity of the First Coalition and that, in less critical times, would have been warmly welcomed by the liberal forces. On July 15, he imposed strict penalties upon the violation of censorship regulations, thus converting an ineffectual voluntary policy into one that had real force. A week later, he assumed the right to close any meetings or disperse any assemblies that threatened the success of the war effort or imperilled the security of the state. On July 30, he extended the death penalty to the navy on the same terms as the army. On August 3, Kerensky created a special political administration, directly responsible to the war ministry, that subordinated soldiers' committees to the will of military commissars. Also, on August 5 he provided severe penalties, including banishment to Siberia, for those guilty of insulting Allied countries or their agents by "word, deed, or in publications."

Those vigorous measures were accompanied by others specifically designed to placate liberal sensibilities. On August 5, he ordered

96VVP, July 15, 1917, p. 1.
98Izvestiia, August 18, 1917, p. 4.
99VVP, August 10, 1917, p. 2.
100VVP, August 23, 1917, p. 3.
101VVP, August 6, 1917, p. 2.
the transfer of the Romanov family from Tsarskoe Selo to Tobol'sk,\textsuperscript{102}
where they would be secure from interference by the Petrograd Soviet. On August 9, Kerensky postponed elections to the Constituent Assembly from September 17 to November 12,\textsuperscript{103} providing the Cadets with additional time to develop their political campaigns throughout the country. The Minister-President also hardened the tone of his speeches and proclamations. For example, he applied the term "counter-revolution" to Left protests against state centralization,\textsuperscript{104} and he substituted "Directives to the Population of the State" for "Appeals to the People" in official pronouncements.\textsuperscript{105} A new firmness was also evident in his approach to nationality problems. Kerensky sharply turned aside a Finnish bid for full independence and insured that their inevitable protests would remain uncoordinated by dissolving the Finnish Sejm.\textsuperscript{106} Furthermore, he issued to the Ukrainian Rada a set of unexpectedly restrictive instructions that partially negated the concessions of July 2. While Ukrainian nationalists objected to the content of the new directive, which nullified the Rada's right to ratify laws passed by the Provisional Government and seriously reduced its authority over minority groups in Ukrainian territory,\textsuperscript{107} they

\textsuperscript{102}\textit{VVP}, August 6, 1917, p. 1.

\textsuperscript{103}D. A. Chugaev, et al., eds., \textit{Revoliutsionnoe dvizhenie v Rossii v Avgust 1917; Razgrom Kornilovskogo miatezha} (Moscow, 1959), p. 177.

\textsuperscript{104}\textit{Rech'}, August 5, 1917, p. 4.

\textsuperscript{105}\textit{VVP}, July 20, 1917, p. 1.


\textsuperscript{107}\textit{VVP}, August 5, 1917, p. 3.
avoided an open clash with Kerensky and agreed to continued negoti­ations.\textsuperscript{108} The Minister-President also assumed a firm stance in the conduct of foreign policy. Official declarations to the Allies reflected a determination to restore the fighting capacity of the armed forces and to wage further military campaigns, and the issue of revised war aims was carefully avoided.\textsuperscript{109} Kerensky had completely fulfilled the Cadet demands of July 1, and except for an immediate implementa­tion of Kornilov's program, there was little more that he could have done to pacify the Right.

His efforts were wasted, for the Kornilov program had become an inflexible standard by which all else was measured. While the Left viewed Kerensky's actions with growing alarm,\textsuperscript{110} the Right impatiently aligned itself on the side of the Supreme Commander. Kerensky was unable to halt that attrition in popularity. His differences with Kornilov concerned only questions of emphasis and timing, and an outright repudiation of the general would have had severe repercussions on his own policy. Under those conditions, the sole alternative was a form of passive resistance; he was forced to endure a progressive loss of influence in both political camps in hopes that the passage of time would reduce the clamor form the Right and still allow a continuation of his own platform.\textsuperscript{111}


\textsuperscript{109}For example, see \textit{VVP}, July 19, 1917, p. 1.

\textsuperscript{110}\textit{Delo Naroda}, August 22, 1917, p. 1.

\textsuperscript{111}See Kerensky's speech before the Democratic Conference, cited in \textit{Izvestiia}, September 15, 1917, p. 4.
That enforced passivity was very hard to bear. Kerensky had always reacted to opposition in an aggressive fashion, and the present lack of resources left him increasingly despondent. After a particularly disturbing interview with Kokoshkin on August 11, when mass Cadet resignations were threatened unless the Kornilov program was instituted, Kerensky revealed his discouragement. "They accuse me of inefficiency," he complained to Pitirim Sorokin, his private secretary. "They think a dictatorship is necessary. How tired I am with all this hopeless striving..." The beleaguered Minister-President had ample cause to be disheartened. He had almost lost control of the cabinet, and he faced the certainty of renewed criticism at the approaching Moscow State Conference.

The Moscow State Conference, scheduled to meet at the Bolshoi Theatre from August 12 to August 15, had been originally conceived as a means to bolster the government's influence in the country and to garner support for its aggressive policies. The optimistic days of the Government to Save the Revolution were past, however, and the controlled turn to the Right had become a desperate holding action against political extremism. Kerensky had seriously considered cancellation, for he recognized the dangers of allowing a rallying point for Kornilov's supporters. But liberal pressure for a public

112Kerensky, Prelude, p. 38.

113P. Sorokin, Leaves from a Russian Diary (New York, 1924), pp. 79-80.

114VVP, July 13, 1917, p. 3.

115Kerensky, Prelude, p. 33.
appearance by the Supreme Commander had been unremitting, and the Minister-President finally agreed to let "everything be openly expressed." Kerensky did take some precautions; he ordered Kornilov to speak only of the current situation at the front, and he urged Petrograd socialists to send impressive delegations to Moscow. But those measures were clearly inadequate, and he dreaded the coming test of strength with the Right.

As Kerensky had feared, the Moscow conference turned into a prolonged demonstration of liberal solidarity with the Supreme Commander. The 2,414 delegates were drawn equally from socialist and non-socialist ranks, but "frock coats and starched shirts overshadowed blouses" in the enormous crowds surrounding the Kremlin. Furthermore, the propertied elements obviously had come to support Kornilov. Although the Minister-President arrived with an impressive retinue, he was unable to distract attention from his rival. He later recalled, with considerable bitterness, that he had been virtually ignored while the "popular hero," Kornilov, was treated as the titular head of state by some and as a savior by others.

116Izvestiia, August 11, 1917, p. 4.
118Kerensky, Prelude, p. 82.
119Izvestiia, August 11, 1917, p. 4.
120Sorokin, p. 89.
121Izvestiia, August 13, 1917, p. 2.
122Kerensky, Catastrophe, p. 315.
That disparity in treatment continued into the conference proceedings. Kerensky's opening address, a lengthy defense of coalition interspersed with warnings against counterrevolution, was listened to with visible impatience by the audience. But Kornilov's speech, which consisted of little else than repeated demands for the immediate adoption of his program, was often interrupted by tumultuous ovations from the Right. The Supreme Commander's appearance marked the beginning of a general liberal attack upon Kerensky. Vasilii Maklakov, a Right Cadet, charged that Russia had reached the crucial point where "salvation, not revolution," was required and Miliukov, continuing in the same vein, asserted that Kerensky had failed completely to take effective measures for the "restoration of order or the protection of lives and property." But the sharpest assault at the conference was delivered by the newly-elected Cossack Ataman, General A. M. Kaledin, who expressed disdain for the Minister-President and urged the creation of a "really strong government resting in capable hands." Kerensky was badly shaken by the criticism directed against his leadership, and his closing speech, which Rech' accurately characterized as a reaction of "nervous sensitivity to the new

123VVP, August 15, 1917, pp. 2-3.
125Izvestiia, August 15, 1917, p. 3.
126A. A. Iakovlev, ed., Gsudarstvennoe Soveshchanie; 1917 god v dokumentakh i materialakh (Moscow, 1930), p. 117.
127Izvestiia, August 16, 1917, p. 2.
128Iakovlev, p. 76.
wave,"129 was an open admission of personal defeat. He agreed to abandon the "middle course," to suppress revolutionary idealism, and to think "solely of the state." Finally, in an emotional peroration that startled the delegates, he promised to satisfy their "yearning for autocracy, for a power that applies pressure from above."130 The Minister-President's agitated performance only underlined his desperate position. It was apparent that he had lost control of the conference, that his leadership had been rejected, and that his political isolation was almost total. Kerensky's repudiation by the Right had been so complete that, in looking back at the Moscow events, he took solace in the fact that he had not been ousted by Kornilov through the simple device of acclamation.131

The Moscow State Conference was followed by the Kornilov revolt. The Supreme Commander, increasingly irritated by governmental hesitations that "bordered on the criminal,"132 had considered the possibility of a military coup for some time, and his adulatory reception in Moscow reinforced his opinion that the moment for direct action had arrived. The political signs were certainly favorable. The Left had been in steady decline since the July Days, Kerensky's authority had been seriously undermined, and the entire Right awaited the establishment of a stronger form of rule. "Unwilling to miss such

130Izvestiia, August 16, 1917, p. 2.
131Kerensky, Catastrophe, p. 316.
an opportunity," Kornilov set several cavalry divisions in motion against Petrograd on August 20. He acted in the belief that resistance would be minimal and that unreserved liberal support would assure a rapid re-establishment of the state apparatus.

It was a measure of Kerensky's isolation that he was unaware of Kornilov's intentions. While Petrograd liberals were not informed of the details, they knew that a major assault against the government was in preparation. On August 13 Kornilov had warned Miliukov that an "open conflict" with Kerensky was imminent, and he had apparently even sent subordinates to the State Duma to investigate the deputies' attitudes toward a military coup. But the Minister-President's control over the Stavka had completely broken down, and he received only faint indications of approaching difficulties. While he placed the Grand Duke Nicholas under house arrest in response to tenuous reports of counterrevolutionary plots, he failed to extend his suspicions to the Supreme Commander. In fact, he unintentionally facilitated Kornilov's plans. Riga had fallen to the Germans on the night of August 20, and the way was suddenly open for a rapid enemy advance toward Petrograd. The unexpectedly poor showing of the

133 P. Miliukov, Istoriia vtoriiia Russkoi revoliutsii, 1 vol. in 3 parts (Sofia, 1921-23), part 2, p. 173.
134 Denikin, Smuty, II, 22.
136 Nabokov, p. 44.
137 Miliukov, Istoriia, part 2, p. 173.
138 Shidlovskii, II, 141.
139 Russkie Vedomosti, August 24, 1917, p. 2.
defending troops, who had allowed the crossing of the Dvina by numerically inferior forces,\textsuperscript{140} persuaded Kerensky that the Kornilov program had to be adopted after all. Accordingly, he dispatched Savinkov to the Stavka with a proposal for the extension of the death penalty to the rear,\textsuperscript{141} he further reduced the influence of soldiers' committees in military affairs,\textsuperscript{142} and he announced plans to transfer the government to Moscow.\textsuperscript{143} Anticipating that those actions would provoke disorders, the Minister-President also directed the Third Cavalry Corps to Petrograd for the enforcement of martial law.\textsuperscript{144}

Kerensky's concessions completely misled the Supreme Commander. Since they involved a drastic break with the Left which carried the threat of civil war, and since the Third Cavalry Corps was already advancing against the capital, Kornilov evidently assumed that his superior had uncovered the plot and had chosen compliance rather than resistance. Coordinated action with the government suddenly appeared possible, and N. V. L'vov was dispatched to Kerensky with the Supreme Commander's terms. The conditions were practically identical to Miliukov's proposals at the State Duma meeting of July 18; a military dictatorship was to be established, and Kerensky was offered a minor post, the portfolio of justice, in the projected regime.\textsuperscript{145}

\textsuperscript{140}Novoe Vremia, August 22, 1917, p. 3.
\textsuperscript{141}Savinkov, p. 19.
\textsuperscript{142}VVP, August 26, 1917, p. 3.
\textsuperscript{143}Russkie Vedomosti, August 27, 1917, p. 3.
\textsuperscript{144}See Kerensky's speech in Izvestiia, September 15, 1917, p. 4.
That illusory period of unanimity, during which both Kerensky and Kornilov thought they were in control of the situation, was shattered on August 26 when N. V. L'vov arrived at the Winter Palace. After confirming the accuracy of the former Ober-Procurator's message in a cautious telegraphic conversation with the Supreme Commander, Kerensky assembled the cabinet and demanded absolute authority to suppress the rebellion. The ministers reacted to Kerensky's charges with a mixture of skepticism and alarm. Kokoshkin, speaking for the Cadets, protested against the Minister-President's "dictatorial character," argued that a misunderstanding had occurred, and threatened to resign unless a suitable accommodation was reached with Kornilov. But when Kornilov refused a direct order to yield his position to General V. N. Klembovskii and raised the standard of civil war, the cabinet submitted to Kerensky's will. While Chernov left the government, judging accurately that he would be needed in the Soviet, the rest of the ministers stayed at Kerensky's disposal in hopes that they could exert a moderating influence upon events.

To the frustration of the Petrograd Cadets, who tried to strike an understanding with the Supreme Commander, Kerensky adamently resisted negotiations. His response was characteristic, for an association with overt counterrevolution was a serious violation of

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146 *Russkie Vedomosti*, September 1, 1917, p. 5.
149 *Russkie Vedomosti*, August 30, 1917, p. 3.
150 Chugaev, p. 452.
his fundamental beliefs. In that respect, the Minister-President was as ideologically inflexible as the party leaders that he had so often castigated. Despite his unquestioned sympathy with liberalism, Kerensky's commitment to the revolution was unqualified. He could agree to harness it, or even temporarily to compromise its integrity if national goals were at stake, but he was unable to participate in its destruction. He later indicated that if the choice had been between extremism of the Right and the Left, he would have supported the former on the grounds that the chances for democratic evolution were greater where liberal values existed. But Kerensky considered the Kornilov revolt to be a reactionary challenge to moderation, and for that reason he was compelled to oppose it with all the resources at his command.

Accordingly, the Minister-President sought the immediate liquidation of the revolt. On August 27, he forestalled further liberal attempts at a rapprochement with Kornilov by publicly declaring the general a traitor "consciously provoking a fratricidal war." He then appealed to the Soviet for aid and appointed Savinkov Governor-General of the Petrograd Military District, investing him with authority to conduct the defense of the capital. As General Klembovskii refused to replace Kornilov and declared solidarity

152VVP, August 28, 1917, p. 1.
153Izvestiia, August 29, 1917, p. 4.
154VVP, August 29, 1917, p. 2.
with the revolt, Kerensky assumed the office of Supreme Commander and appointed the manifestly unwilling Alekseev as his Chief of Staff. In his new role as dictator, he pointedly ignored the majority of the cabinet by selecting Nekrasov and Tereshchenko as his assistants, commanded a halt to all troop movements toward Petrograd, and declared a rail strike to assure the execution of that order.

Kerensky raised the alarm before Kornilov's forces were within striking distance of the capital, and to that extent he took part in the effective defense of the revolution. But after that act, events passed completely out of his hands. While liberals stood aside, the reinvigorated Soviet transformed Petrograd into an armed camp where hastily organized workers' detachments mingled freely with garrison troops. Governmental orders were ignored, and the dispersion of Kornilov's forces along the rail system, their breach of communications with the Stavka, and their demoralization in the face of intensive propaganda were conducted under the auspices of the Petrograd Soviet.

The result was an accelerated re-enactment of the last days of the tsarist regime. Kornilov's troops lost cohesion as they neared

155 Russkie Vedomosti, August 29, 1917, p. 3.
156 Russkie Vedomosti, September 1, 1917, p. 4.
157 VVP, August 29, 1917, p. 3.
159 Izvestiia, August 29, 1917, p. 6.
160 For a vivid portrait of the ineffectiveness of the Provisional Government during the Kornilov revolt, see Sorokin, p. 89.
the capital, and at the first clear opportunity they joined the ranks of the revolutionary forces.161 Even the formal conclusion of the revolt was reminiscent of the February Days. On September 1, against Kerensky's advice, General Alekseev journeyed to Mogilev and obtained the peaceful surrenders of Kornilov, General A. S. Lukomskii, and other participants in the uprising.162 The revolution had inscribed a full circle and was again at the fluid point that had been reached in February.163

But this time the restraints of February had been swept aside. In the space of two months, the failures of the First Coalition had produced their fatal consequences. The social equilibrium was completely disrupted, the advocates of coalition were discredited, and compromise, as understood in the February settlement, had become impossible. If Kornilov's defeat had embraced only the Cadets and the army command, the government, with the aid of the traditional socialist leadership, might well have preserved sufficient authority to bring the country to the Constituent Assembly and an eventual reconstruction of the state apparatus. But a series of governmental blunders, prompted by Kerensky's unrealistic desire to recreate a strong cabinet in the immediate wake of the Kornilov revolt, led to his political disgrace and the enfeeblement of the moderate leadership that had

161Izvestiia, September 2, 1917, p. 3.
162For discussions of that event, see Novoe Vremia, October 4, 1917, p. 3; WVP, September 2, 1917, p. 2.
supported him in the past. While the major forces of the Right withdrew from active politics in sullen anticipation of civil war, important soviets, including those in Petrograd and Moscow, fell under the sway of Bolshevik majorities hostile to the Provisional Government. By early September, Russia was split into irreconciliable factions, with their most extreme elements prepared for a forcible settlement of their differences. In the interim, Kerensky's regime, divorced from real support by either the Right or the Left, was tolerated as an inconvenient relic of an unsuccessful and embarrassing political experiment.

164 See the discussion on the fate of political moderation in Delo Naroda, October 15, 1917, p. 1.
165 Shidlovskii, II, 145.
166 Izvestiia, September 22, 1917, p. 4.
In 1920, Kerensky expressed regret over his participation in the Second Coalition. Its failure had been foreshadowed in the debates at the Malachite Hall, and if he had stood by his resignation of July 21, events might well have taken a different course. The gathering reaction, unable to proceed in the guise of stabilization, would not have gained the same momentum, and its impact would have been less destructive.\textsuperscript{1} Furthermore, if he had escaped involvement with Kornilov he would have preserved his standing among the populace, and in the "darkest days that lay ahead" perhaps could have been of additional use to his country.\textsuperscript{2}

That was a significant evaluation, as important for its omissions as for its affirmations. Without abandoning the charge of Kornilovist treachery, Kerensky tacitly acknowledged the workings of a deeper force—the dissolution of the class truce in the wake of the Galician defeats and the Ukrainian crisis. Yet his populist belief in the renovative power of the revolution forbade the conclusion that the

\textsuperscript{1}A. Kerenskii, "Gatchina," Izdaleka, sbornik statei (Paris, 1922), p. 213.

class rupture was permanent,³ and his nationalistic bias led him to deny a necessary connection between the exorbitant demands of the First Coalition and the Kornilovshchina.⁴ In Kerensky's opinion, his error had simply been one of faulty timing. His return to power on July 22 had been a precipitate act undertaken when the energies of the Russian people had been temporarily depleted, so his subsequent inability to control events did not reflect adversely on either the validity of coalition or the feasibility of state consolidation.⁵ The former Minister-President was particularly insistent on those two vital points. The Second Coalition succumbed to conspiracy, not to a fundamental alteration in the dynamics of the revolution. Since it "accurately expressed resolutions freely adopted by all parties (except the Bolsheviks) that had any weight in the nation,"⁶ its aims and methods conformed to the true will of the population.

Historians of the period have tended either to ignore Kerensky's assertions or to note them with visible impatience.⁷ Their negative reactions are understandable, for his argument contained the typical distortions of the experienced political lawyer, and the consensus to which he referred existed largely in his imagination. Yet it would be

⁵A. Kerenskii, "Politika Vremennogo Pravitel'stva," SZ, L (1932), 422.
a serious error to dismiss Kerensky's statements as still another
round in the seemingly endless recriminations of the emigration, for
they provide valuable insights into the otherwise perplexing denouement
of the Kornilov revolt. Even before the formation of the Second
Coalition, Kerensky believed that popular support for coalition could
only be temporarily dampened. As he was convinced that it could never
be eradicated, he was forced to accept the corollary that extremism was
merely a surface phenomenon that would fail to strike enduring roots in
the national consciousness. Those assumptions were erroneous, but
once it is realized that the Minister-President accepted them as valid
political principles, his initial reaction to Kornilov's challenge
becomes understandable. It is then possible to describe the way in
which Kornilovism discredited Kerensky and, through him, the last
bastion of governmental stability—the moderate bloc in the Petrograd
Soviet.

Of course, the Stavka uprising promised severe repercussions in
any event. Upon its outbreak P. P. Iurenev, the Cadet Minister of
Transport, predicted that it would deliver a "terrible blow to the
reconstruction of the country's forces,"8 and while he spoke, a new
wave of anarchy was erasing the disciplinary gains of the previous
weeks.9 An intensification of the radical revolution was clearly
unavoidable; the established revolutionary leaders had initiated the
swing to the Right that had so quickly surged out of control, and their
disgruntled followers were unlikely to be easily appeased. Even

8Russkie Vedomosti, September 1, 1917, p. 5.
9Izvestiia, September 2, 1917, p. 5.
Kerensky's staunchest supporters in the TsIK accepted the necessity of drastic concessions. At a plenary session on August 30, Tsereteli admitted that the "organized democracy" faced a difficult task in ending the "confusion in the ranks of the popular masses," and Skobelev expressed the general opinion by noting that a tactical shift to the Left was essential to the restoration of order.

Major socialist newspapers had already arrived at the same conclusion. On August 30 Delo Naroda observed that the Provisional Government could provide effective rule only if it "depended fully" upon the revolutionary democracy and prophetically added that there was no other reliable route to the Constituent Assembly. Izvestiia, on the following day, was more explicit. It called for a halt to those reforms that had promoted counterrevolution, demanded that the government become "clearly and consistently revolutionary in both its program and policy," and urged complete reliance upon the "democratic masses." The Kornilovshchina had evidently diminished the ideological inhibitions of the Menshevik and SR parties and they appeared disposed to assume primary direction of the revolution. But their intervention implied the abandonment of a balanced coalition, the termination of cabinet independence, and the renunciation of Great-Power status.

Prompt adoption of the socialist formula might well have

10Izvestiia, August 31, 1917, p. 5.
11Ibid.
12Delo Naroda, August 30, 1917, p. 1.
prevented the Bolshevik insurrection of October. It is necessary to remember that in the last days of August radicalism did not yet mean Bolshevism, and because the Constituent Assembly would soon meet, class rule did not mean unrestrained class tyranny. The Soviet was still committed to the minimum objectives of provisional rule, and a governmental displacement to the Left might have perpetuated that commitment. The timing was also propitious, for the Right, demoralized by the rapid collapse of counterrevolution, was incapable of serious obstructionism. In sum, the Kornilovshchina provided a unique opportunity to sweep away the detritus of the broken class truce and to erect in its place a viable political order.

In the greatest miscalculation of his political career, Kerensky negated that possibility at the very moment of its appearance. While the Minister-President was quite reticent about his decision—he succeeded, after all, only in intensifying the firestorm that was raging on the Left—he evidently thought that vigorous political manipulation could forestall a radical resurgence. Relying upon the resiliency of moderation and the weakness of extremism, he attempted to exploit the Kornilov revolt in order to duplicate the conditions of July 8; in the resulting confusion, he hoped to refurbish his reputation as the guardian of the revolution, to resurrect the class truce, and to preserve the firm policies of the Second Coalition.

Since Kerensky intended to recreate the July settlement, his tactics paralleled those of that period. He had then acquired a marked advantage by attributing the disorders to German money and Bolshevik treason, by selectively regulating the scope and intensity of reprisals, and by extracting significant concessions from the alarmed
and intimidated Star Chamber. His temporary gains—control over the previously fractious Left and the restraint of the Right—dissipated during the Second Coalition, for they had been based upon an ephemeral power vacuum. But the Minister-President, purblind to the causes of political imbalance, saw no reason to alter his previous methods. Acting rapidly to forestall untimely socialist interference, he sought an advantageous accord with the Cadets at the same time that he moved against the "clique of adventurers" gathered about Kornilov. Kerensky chose a bold line, one that conceded little to past reverses or present difficulties. The inauguration of that strategy on August 26 marked the point at which state recovery became impossible.

While the Minister-President clung tenaciously to his program for several days, he encountered difficulties from the outset. The possession of extraordinary authority was essential to his plans; socialists could not be restrained unless they deferred to his lead in the liquidation of counterrevolution, and liberals would accede to his demands only if they could rely upon his protection. Yet Kornilov's ascendency had undermined his prestige, and in the very midst of the Kornilovshchina he was forced to seek assurances of freedom of action from both the cabinet and the Petrograd Soviet. Although Kerensky devoted the evening of August 26 and the morning of August 27 to that end, the results were equivocal. A turbulent night session of the

14Izvestiia, September 15, 1917, p. 3.
16B. Savinkov, K delu Kornilova (Paris, 1919), p. 29; see Kerensky's speech cited in Izvestiia, September 15, 1917, p. 3.
ministerial council produced an abortive liberal revolt on the part of Kokoshkin and Iurenev, and the subsequent resolution that the Minister-President be invested with dictatorial powers appeared to be an expression of cabinet paralysis rather than a vote of confidence. In fact, it was not clear on August 26 whether the Cadets had resigned in protest or simply placed their portfolios at Kerensky's disposal. By the morning of August 27 the regrouped ministers agreed to the latter interpretation. Yet it is entirely likely that Kerensky's decision to admit Nekrasov and Tereshchenko into a Triumvirate, ostensibly motivated by a desire to accumulate a "harmonious group" to deal with the present crisis, was really an oblique commentary on the unreliability of his liberal colleagues.

The socialist response, if less strained, was also less comforting than that of the ministerial council. While Kerensky received general expressions of support from the TsIK on the morning of August 27, it was evident even then that they would not accept a subordinate role in the defense of the revolution. The formal Soviet resolution, passed in plenary session on the evening of August 27, verified that conclusion; Kerensky was encouraged to form a government able to resist Kornilov, but no reference was made to his request for dictatorial authority. Undeterred by the tepid socialist

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17 Russkie Vedomosti, September 1, 1917, p. 4.
18 Russkie Vedomosti, September 1, 1917, p. 4.
19 Interview with Nekrasov, Rech', August 30, 1917, p. 2.
20 Russkie Vedomosti, September 1, 1917, p. 2.
21 Izvestiia, August 28, 1917, p. 3.
stand, the Minister-President chose to believe that he had been granted adequate latitude. But even Tsereteli, who later attempted to place a favorable interpretation on the matter, was forced to admit that the August 27 resolution was primarily distinguished by its ambiguity.

With his hands at least partially freed, Kerensky turned to the next phase of his program—the rehabilitation of the non-socialist forces in the eyes of the aroused populace. Of necessity, the military aspects of that problem claimed his immediate attention. As the Stavka was in revolt, the Right could not be distinguished from rebellion unless the army leadership was associated with the act of repression. The Minister-President waged that necessary campaign with dramatic flair. An eloquent public repudiation of Kornilov was followed on the night of August 27 by the appointment of Savinkov as Governor-General of the Petrograd Military District and an offer to General Alekseev of the post of Supreme Commander. While both reacted with visible ill grace—Alekseev initially refused to cooperate, assuming the lesser position of Chief of Staff on August 30 only in order to limit bloodshed—their attitudes were of little importance. As Kerensky was convinced that the rebellion would collapse without armed conflict, he was satisfied with passive compliance; a simple

23Izvestiia, September 1, 1917, p. 1.
24VVP, August 29, 1917, p. 2.
25Novoe Vremia, October 4, 1917, p. 3.
26VVP, September 13, 1917, p. 2.
27Izvestiia, August 27, 1917, p. 6.
adherence to the government cause was quite sufficient to demonstrate the basic reliability of the higher command. In this case, at least, the Minister-President was proven correct. The conspiratorial nature of the Kornilov revolt precluded a wide circle of accomplices, and the vast majority of officers, caught by surprise, did remain passive. Under those circumstances, Kerensky was able to release to the press extended lists of prominent commanders who declared solidarity with the government.  

Thus, without seriously testing the mettle of the Officer Corps, he was able to develop an impressive argument for Kornilov's "isolation from the rest of the active army and navy." Thus, without seriously testing the mettle of the Officer Corps, he was able to develop an impressive argument for Kornilov's "isolation from the rest of the active army and navy." 

Unfortunately, he was unable to demonstrate Kornilov's isolation from the Cadets. Their sympathies lay with the rebellious general, and so long as the revolt appeared viable party stalwarts such as Miliukov and Vasilii Maklakov pressed for governmental concessions. Kerensky was consistently frustrated in his efforts to moderate liberal hostility. His sharp condemnation of Kornilov on August 27, motivated in part by a desire to discourage the compromising behavior of the Cadets, provoked a barrage of vituperation that was especially focused upon his assumption of dictatorial powers. While the more blatant accusations of jealousy and Bonapartism were confined to hurriedly issued pamphlets, they were hinted at in a Rech editorial

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29VVP, August 29, 1917, p. 1.


31Kerensky, Catastrophe, p. 323.
of August 29. The Triumvirate, Rech' charged bitterly, had adopted an "arrogant stance" that falsely equated "self-defense of the government" with "defense of the country." In its "obsession with phantoms," it lost sight of the fact that Kornilovism was the true source of national order.32 That broadside stopped short of outright identification with Kornilov and, strictly interpreted, remained within the bounds of legitimate political criticism. But it also provided additional proof, if any were needed, of the Cadet affinity with counterrevolution.

Liberal resistance slackened with the visible failure of the Kornilovshchina, but even then extraordinary methods were required to produce cooperation. On the morning of August 30 V. T. Lebedev, an editor of Volia Naroda (The People's Will), provided Kerensky with evidence that Miliukov had planned an editorial endorsement of Kornilov just prior to his defeat; armed with that incriminating information, the Minister-President demanded that the Cadets come to terms. V. D. Nabokov and M. M. Vinaver, representing their Central Committee, proved to be difficult negotiators. In response to threats of exposure, they agreed to participate in a new coalition and to remove Miliukov from all posts of party responsibility.33 But in exchange Kerensky was forced to dismiss Nekrasov, admit military experts into the projected cabinet, and treat Kornilov with consideration.34 The Minister-President's counterstroke, born of long brooding in Kornilov's

34 Russkie Vedomosti, September 1, 1917, p. 4.
disturbing shadow and nourished by a mistaken conception of the stamina
of the Russian people, would have failed in any case. But if the
possibility of success had existed, it surely would have foundered on
the reefs of Cadet intransigence.

Yet until September 1 Kerensky thought that effective political
stabilization was within reach. To external appearances, and within
the limits of his mechanistic formula, his desired goals had been
realized. Overt treason had been confined to a small area centered
about the Stavka while the Right, albeit reluctantly, had rededicated
itself to the techniques of compromise. The Minister-President was
confident of his ability to translate those accomplishments into
tangible advantages; his exposure of Kornilov had again demonstrated
his value to the revolution and his mandate from the Soviet and the
ministerial council, while somewhat tempered, offered a method for the
exploitation of his anticipated popularity. Kerensky's optimism was
evident in a conversation with Savinkov on August 30. In response to
the former terrorist's assertion that governmental provocation of the
Kornilov revolt had destroyed the cohesion of the armed forces and
undermined the revolution, he replied that nothing was further from
the truth. Victory over counterrevolution, he insisted, had removed
the last barriers to national unity. Freed of internal threats, the
country could now present a common front to the external foe.

The cabinet negotiations of August 30-31 reflected Kerensky's
determination to dictate the future expression of that unity. While

35 Those conclusions are implied in Kerensky, Russia, p. 405.
36 Savinkov, p. 29.
he respected the niceties of coalition politics, the Minister-President refused to consider the presence within the government of potentially disruptive personalities; he intended to keep the Chernovs, Kokoshkins and Miliukovs of previous regimes at a safe distance. Kerensky approached A. A. Buryshkin, a Moscow industrialist, strictly because he represented commercial interests. But he offered sensitive positions only to those whom he could dominate or who had proven their reliability in past conflicts. In that respect, the conciliationist Cadets N. M. Kishkin, S. A. Smirnov, and V. A. Kartashev and the departmental functionaries M. V. Bernatskii and A. V. Liverovskii were included in the first category; the loyalists N. D. Avksent'ev, A. V. Peshekhonov, and V. A. Arkhangelskii qualified for the second. The military members of the projected cabinet were also known for their moderate views. Rear Admiral D. V. Verderevskii, the former commander of the Baltic fleet, and General A. I. Verkhovskii, Savinkov's predecessor as the commander of the Petrograd Military District, had accepted the necessity of revolutionary reforms and were not expected to present difficulties. While Kerensky's efforts at governmental reconstruction were prematurely disrupted, they had advanced sufficiently to reveal his purpose. There was to be no deviation from the path of national regeneration. Under his unchallenged leadership, a third coalition would redeem the blighted promise of the second.


38 Lists of considered ministers can be found in Russkie Vedomosti, September 1, 1917, p. 4, and Birzhevoye Vedomosti, September 1, 1917, p. 3.

Those plans were shattered on September 1, when the VTsIK placed Kerensky under its authority, forbade Cadet participation in the government, and announced that a Democratic Congress would preside over the reconstruction of the cabinet. Kerensky later claimed that the VTsIK resolution, which effectively voided his formula for state stabilization, was entirely unexpected. Yet that event was only the logical sequel to his previous actions, for he had courted the wrath of the socialist forces from the outbreak of the Stavka revolt. The TsIK and VTsIK debates of August 30-31, which convincingly demonstrated that the Left regarded the party of Miliukov as the party of treason, provided clear warnings of approaching conflict. Already alarmed by Kerensky's laxity in the treatment of mutineers and his apparent reliance upon the counsel of Alekseev and Savinkov, they strenuously condemned his political overtures to the Cadets.

Initially, the Minister-President sought to dampen socialist hostility through indirect methods. While Skobelev and Avksent'ev defended his tactics before the socialist leadership, he tried to kindle popular enthusiasm for the projected government by announcing that it would have a republican form. But Kerensky was unable to

40Izvestiia, September 3, 1917, p. 7.
41Kerensky, Russia, p. 410.
42Izvestiia, August 31, 1917, p. 1.
43Delo Naroda, August 31, 1917, p. 1.
44Brizhevye Vedomosti, September 1, 1917, p. 3.
45Kerensky, Russia, p. 408; VVP, September 2, 1917, p. 1.
46Izvestiia, September 2, 1917, p. 2.
discourage his critics. On the evening of August 31 Gots and Zenzinov, representing their Executive Committee, formally notified him that Cadet participation would provoke a SR boycott of the cabinet. Forced to issue a direct reply, Kerensky chose to defy his party. The head of a national government, he claimed, was not subject to the will of individual groups. Since the welfare of the country demanded the formation of a representative cabinet, the Cadet appointments would stand unchanged. With the alternatives so starkly outlined, the VTsIK resolution of September 1 was virtually predetermined; the Left, naturally refusing to surrender its newly regained powers, chose instead to bridle Kerensky. Through that act, an intensified form of dual power came into being.

The VTsIK fiat immediately caused the Minister-President to alter his tactics. The issue had shifted from governmental strength to cabinet independence, and he abandoned the Cadets in order to defend that essential principle. Kerensky's counterattack, which spanned the first two days of September, proceeded on the assumption that the VTsIK would not hold to its original intent. Noting that the September 1 resolution revealed a certain disinclination to exercise a strenuous supervisory role over cabinet affairs, Kerensky brought Verkhovskii and Verderevskii into the Triumvirate, which he renamed the Directory. While he justified that maneuver on the innocuous grounds of administrative efficiency, it was really a preliminary step toward

47 *Izvestiia*, September 2, 1917, p. 3.
an independently reconstructed cabinet. On September 2, the
Minister-President opened cautious negotiations with the Moscow Trade-
Industrialists; ironically, the party he tried to use against
Miliukov in July was now enlisted in the struggle against the VTsIK.
Kerensky suspended those activities on September 3 in the face of a
new socialist assault, but they foreshadowed the course that he would
follow until October. He was determined to preserve the national
complexion of the Provisional Government; when the radical revolution
faltered, it could then serve as a rallying point for moderates.

Kerensky's exercise in prudence was a week late. The basic
thrust of his earlier maneuvers had escaped general notice in the
turmoil of the Kornilovshchina, but his persistent courtship of the
Cadets provoked a re-evaluation of those activities. The first
consequences of that increased scrutiny appeared in the September 3
issue of Delo Naroda. Several editorials, penned by Chernov and
unified by a common theme, placed Kerensky's role in the Kornilov
affair in a disturbing perspective. The Minister-President's behavior,
Chernov observed, had been very suspicious. The appointments of
Savinkov and Alekseev to positions of authority, the consorting with
traitorous Cadets, and the summoning of the Third Cavalry Corps to
Petrograd might have a rational explanation, but he, personally, was
unable to imagine what it could be. In the inflamed atmosphere of
September those insinuations, echoed and elaborated upon in the party

50 Kerensky, Catastrophe, p. 322.
51 Rech', September 3, 1917, p. 3.
presses and organizations of the Left, severely damaged Kerensky in the eyes of the radicalized populace. His political eclipse was startlingly rapid; by September 5, even the Moscow Soviet, previously a strong advocate of his policies, condemned his "vacillation" and "accommodation with counterrevolution."

While the denigration of Kerensky’s reputation brought his political effectiveness to a close, it did not automatically mean the abandonment of the February settlement. So long as the charges against him remained within the bounds set by the Moscow Soviet, his allies on the Left possessed the capability to moderate the impact of extremism. The accusations of weakness and incompetence directed against Kerensky could not be broadened to include the leaders of the Petrograd Soviet, for their performance during the Stavka revolt had been beyond reproach. The Bolsheviks played an important part in the defense of the revolution, but the entire Left recognized that their forces had been organized and directed to victory by Menshevik and SR chieftains. Furthermore, the VTsIK resolution of September 1 represented a determined bid to secure that ascendancy. By renouncing the embarrassing relationship with Kerensky that had existed since July 6, assuring the continued isolation of the Cadets, and reducing

53 Delo Naroda, October 15, 1917, p. 1. Chernov's inflammatory editorials were deliberately misleading, for he had participated in the cabinet decision that directed the Third Cavalry Corps to Petrograd. See Izvestiia, September 15, 1917, p. 4.


55 Izvestiia, August 29, 1917, p. 6.

56 Izvestiia, September 2, 1917, p. 3.
the powers of the compromised government, the traditional socialist leaders opened a valuable distance between themselves and the taint of Kornilovism.

Unfortunately, those defenses proved inadequate against the full consequences of Kerensky's actions. In the anarchic aftermath of the Kornilovshchina, the tenuous distinctions that allowed the simultaneous waging of war and revolution were obliterated; by the first week of September the soldiers and workers of Petrograd were convinced that strong rule for any purpose meant counterrevolution. Seen in that harsh light, the Minister-President's actions during the rebellion condemned him as decisively as his former Supreme Commander. The Stavka uprising, according to the radical interpretation, was precipitated by a difference over means rather than ends. Whereas Kerensky wished to strangle the soviets through a gradual process of attrition, Kornilov wanted their suppression by force of arms.57 The counterrevolutionary plot, then, extended at least to the beginning of the Second Coalition and perhaps even to the Government to Save the Revolution. Since Kerensky had been hand in glove with Kornilov until the last week of August, he could not be accused of either weakness or vacillation. That lesser charge applied to the socialist leadership that had allowed treason to develop.58

The importance of the radical critique did not lie in its impact upon the Provisional Government, for Kerensky's disgrace had already determined the fate of that unfortunate institution. Rather, its

57See the discussions in Izvestiia, September 22, 1917, p. 4; Delo Naroda, October 15, 1917, p. 1.
58Chugaev, Sentiubre, p. 148.
significance lay in its ruinous effect upon the prestige of the traditional socialist leadership and the unity of the revolutionary democracy. The veterans of the TsIK and the VTsIK, who had humbled Kerensky in order to assume command of the revolution, suddenly found the political ground cut from under their feet. The immediate result was the crippling of the SR and Menshevik parties and the disintegration of the moderate bloc in the Petrograd Soviet. Kerensky's nominal party split into fragments, with an expanding left wing that sought his expulsion, a rapidly shrinking right wing that vainly tried to defend coalition, and a bewildered center incapable of determined action. The Mensheviks suffered a similar fate, for their Central Committee held diminishing authority over a radicalized following that was increasingly drawn either to L. Martov's Menshevik-Internationalists or to the Bolsheviks. But the major blow to the moderate leadership occurred in the Petrograd Soviet. On September 9

59Delo Naroda, September 8, 1917, p. 1. Two leftist articles, "The Problems of Power and the People's Assembly" and "Our differences with the Bolsheviks in the State Duma" called Kerensky an "obstacle" to "the realization of the democratic revolution." The articles also attached a "dictatorial" label to the Provisional Government.

60Delo Naroda, September 8, 1917, p. 1. V. Lunkevich, speaking for the Right, inserted an article entitled "A Forced Answer." In it, he protested against the defamation of Kerensky, upheld the validity of coalition, and urged the right wing to close ranks against the extreme Left.

61Delo Naroda, September 9, 1917, p. 1. Editorials expressing the confusion of the center revealed the impact of the radical critique. The predominant sentiment was "what are we to do?"

Tsereteli, Dan, Gots, Chernov, Skobelev, and Chkheidze were removed from the TsIK\(^3\) and their places taken by a Bolshevik-dominated committee headed by L. D. Trotsky.\(^4\)

Those developments were decisive to the further course of the revolution. The deepening radicalism of the masses, which the Bolsheviks both inflamed and profited from, was incompatible with the notion of dual power or the aims of the February settlement; their slogan was "All Power To The Soviets," and their dominant sentiment was hostility to the Provisional Government and its works. The moderate socialists, confined to increasingly insecure party presidiums and their temporary stronghold in the VTsIK, were placed in a wholly untenable position. Desirous of regaining control over their alienated followers yet compromised by their relationship to a detested and obstinate regime, they were forced to pursue mutually exclusive policies. The ultimate results were the breakdown of their influence over the populace and the unrestrained intensification of the radical revolution. More immediately, the dissolution of the moderate forces assured in advance the Democratic Conference's failure to effect a meaningful reconstitution of the Provisional Government.

Yet the Democratic Conference convened on September 14, despite the fact that its 1,492 socialist delegates\(^5\) were presided over by a partially-repudiated leadership dedicated to the rejuvenation of a discredited regime. The proceedings reflected the disorganization and

\(^3\)Izvestiia, September 10, 1917, p. 4.

\(^4\)Delo Naroda, September 27, 1917, p. 1.

\(^5\)Izvestiia, September 20, 1917, p. 5.
confusion that existed within the socialist ranks. On September 19, after five days of angry debate, the delegates agreed to coalition by a slender margin of seventy-eight votes. But that decision was effectively reversed by the adoption, by an enormous majority, of an amendment prohibiting a Cadet presence in the new cabinet. The VTsIK, rightly acknowledging that "within the democracy there exists no agreement, no unity of will," proposed a way out of the impasse: the creation of a smaller Democratic Council, composed of 215 representatives from the various party central committees, empowered to form a new government based on socialist principles. With the adoption of that resolution on September 20, the Democratic Conference disbanded.

On September 23, the Democratic Council imposed a ritualistic settlement on Kerensky. As an unavoidable concession to the principle of coalition, Cadets personally uninvolved with Kornilovism were allowed into the cabinet. But the government was ordered to adopt an exclusively socialist platform. The terms, which were cast in unequivocal language, included: the convocation of an interallied conference for the revision of war aims; government-regulated prices for industrial products; increased taxation of the propertied classes; and immediate implementation of Chernov's land program. Also, the principle of national self-determination had to be recognized and the

66 Izvestiia, September 20, 1917, p. 6.
67 Izvestiia, September 20, 1917, p. 7.
68 Izvestiia, September 21, 1917, p. 2.
69 Izvestiia, September 21, 1917, p. 4.
Officer Corps purged of Kornilovist sympathizers. Finally, the Democratic Council authorized the creation of a Preparliament, composed predominantly of socialists, to which the Provisional Government would be responsible. Predictably, no one was satisfied with the outcome. Dan, who read the final resolution to the assembled delegates, confessed that it was "unsuitable both in substance and in form." Trotsky, speaking for the Bolshevik Party, condemned the Democratic Council for exceeding its authority in concluding an agreement with the proscribed Cadets, labeled the results an "incitement to civil war," and urged the creation of an all-socialist government. The most astute assessment came from the editors of Rech'. Speaking for the disenfranchised Right, they declared that the settlement was "wholly incompatible" with the establishment of state authority.

The results of the Democratic Conference and its sequel served only to emphasize the salient characteristics of the post-Kornilov period: that the government and its moderate allies were locked into a mutually destructive relationship, and that the vital forces of the country, at least for the present, lay on the extreme Left. If consolation could be drawn from the events from September 14 to September 25, it consisted in the fact that with the emergence of the Third Coalition a technical center of government again existed.

70Izvestiia, September 24, 1917, p. 4.
71Chugaev, Sentiabre, p. 236.
72Izvestiia, September 24, 1917, p. 4.
73Izvestiia, September 24, 1917, p. 3.
74Chugaev, Sentiabre, p. 256.
The new cabinet, composed of Left liberals, Right socialists, and non-party loyalists, was similar to the one Kerensky had attempted to establish on August 31.\textsuperscript{75} The three Cadet ministers, N. M. Kishkin, A. V. Kartashev, and S. A. Smirnov, had broken with the majority in the Cadet Central Committee and were inclined to accept Kerensky's lead in policy decisions.\textsuperscript{76} The only notable socialist in the ministerial council, the Menshevik K. A. Gvozdev, was also isolated from the main currents of his party; a socialist equivalent of the conciliationist Cadets, he was firmly committed to the techniques of class compromise.\textsuperscript{77} Had that configuration appeared in May, when Kerensky's reputation was still intact and the possibilities for class compromise still existed, it would have contributed substantially to his mastery of the revolution. But as it was fortuitously produced in the backwash of the radical resurgence, it was a further indication of governmental weakness.

The cabinet declaration of September 25 offered evidence of Kerensky's determination to redeem that situation. He refused to

\textsuperscript{75}VVP, September 28, 1917, p. 1. The membership of the cabinet was as follows: Kerensky, Minister-President and Supreme Commander; A. I. Verkhovskii, Minister of War; D. V. Verderevskii, Minister of Navy; A. M. Nikitin, Minister of Post and Telegraph and Minister of Interior; Tereshchenko, Minister of Foreign Affairs; S. N. Prokopovich, Minister of Food; M. N. Bernatskii, Minister of Finance; S. S. Salaskin, Minister of Education; A. V. Liverovskii, Minister of Transportation; A. I. Konovalov, Minister of Trade and Industry; N. M. Kishkin, Minister of Welfare; P. N. Maliantovich, Minister of Justice; K. A. Gvozdev, Minister of Labor; S. L. Maslov, Minister of Agriculture; A. V. Kartashev, Minister of Confessions; S. A. Smirnov, State Controller; S. N. Tret'iakov, Chairman of the Economic Council.

\textsuperscript{76}M. Visniak, Dan' proshlomu (New York, 1954), p. 312.

\textsuperscript{77}Chugaev, Sentiabre, p. 217.
ascribe the new platform to the Democratic Council; the reversal of previous policies was attributed solely to the "national exhaustion" brought about by Kornilovist treachery. The Minister-President then proceeded to undermine the terms of the September 23 settlement. The government did pledge itself to the convocation of an interallied conference for the revision of war aims. But while "striving for peace," it would still defend the common allied cause. Thus, the emphasis was shifted from the attainment of an early democratic peace to that of war in union with the Allies. The army, the government proclamation continued, would follow the "democratic path." But its officers would be selected for their "technical ability to meet the problems of war" as well as for their devotion to the revolution. Land committees were promised increased authority so long as their actions did not violate the "existing forms of land ownership." Tax reform was promised, yet no mention was made of a graduated income tax, and an increased property tax was referred to in deliberately vague terms. Finally, Kerensky renamed the Preparliament the Provisional Council of the Republic to emphasize its tentative nature and stated that it would be empowered only to "query the government, receive answers after a certain time, and deliberate on questions arising before it." Obviously, the Minister-President had reinterpreted the decisions of the Democratic Council to his own satisfaction. If anyone remained in doubt that the cabinet was advancing a claim to independence, the conclusion of his declaration set those doubts to rest. The Provisional Government, Kerensky insisted, remained the
"spokesman of the will of the revolutionary people."78

The Minister-President was able to extricate the government from the reluctant grip of the VTsIK, to issue a verbal challenge to left extremism, and to reaffirm a commitment to traditional national interests. But he could not invest the Third Coalition with meaningful authority. Kerensky's last regime, which endured precisely four weeks, met with severe reverses in every sphere of its activity: agrarian and urban disorders increased; its foreign policy collapsed; and its armies began to disintegrate. As Miliukov observed, the Third Coalition was a passive object at the mercy of forces beyond its control.79

The cabinet's weakness was especially evident in the conduct of military affairs, for it was wholly unable to arrest the decomposition of the armed forces in the aftermath of the Kornilovshchina. Admittedly, Kerensky's official acts revealed an inflexible determination to raise the fighting capacity of the army. He extended the authority of front-line divisional commanders over their rear echelons in hopes of tightening lax discipline,80 reduced the ability of military committees to interfere with command decisions,81 and established penal units to control recalcitrant soldiers.82 He also ordered

78VVP, September 28, 1917, p. 1.


80"Stavka 25-26 Oktiabria 1917 g.," ARR, VII (1922), 283.

81VVP, October 21, 1917, p. 1.

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\textsuperscript{78}VVP, September 28, 1917, p. 1.


\textsuperscript{80}"Stavka 25-26 Oktiabria 1917 g.," ARR, VII (1922), 283.

\textsuperscript{81}VVP, October 21, 1917, p. 1.

\textsuperscript{82}"Stavka," p. 282.
increased efforts for the apprehension of deserters,®3 reduced the scope of the democratically organized military courts,®4 and ordered the demobilization of particularly demoralized regiments.®5 But the practical results of those measures were negligible. By early October the high command, estimating that over one fifth of the ten million men under arms had deserted their posts,®6 harbored very serious doubts that a respectable military force could be kept in the field.®7

Those anxieties, sharpened by the German capture of the Gulf of Riga on October 6,®® led to an extremely revealing episode: the forceful repudiation of Kerensky's policies by his chosen assistant, General Verkhovskii. The populist-orientated War Minister, who had rallied to the revolution in its earliest days, had supported the politics of moderation throughout the political upheavals of August and September. But on October 20, without prior consultation with the ministerial council,®® he reversed his position in testimony before a closed session of the Committees of Foreign Affairs and Defense of the Preparliament. In a move that startled the committee members, Verkhovskii announced his resignation and offered to speak plainly

®3VVP, October 14, 1917, p. 2.
®4VVP, October 21, 1917, p. 1.
®6Chugaev, Vosstanie, p. 224.
®®Izvestiia, October 6, 1917, p. 1.
about the plight of the army and the country. His revelations were uniformly alarming: the government could neither feed nor clothe sufficient troops to maintain the front; Bolshevism had made such inroads that the bulk of the soldiery was unreliable; and the present cabinet policy, rather than alleviating the situation, actually furthered the chances of a Bolshevik coup. The only possible solution, Verkhovskii continued, was the negotiation, with the support of the Allies, of an immediate peace with Germany. That event would allow the rapid demobilization of the army and the formation, largely from the Officer Corps, of elite units able to contain anarchy. Finally, he called for the creation of a "strong personal power" to facilitate state recovery. In subsequent questioning, the War Minister admitted that his proposals meant abandonment of the revolution. "We must decide what we can afford and what we cannot afford," he insisted. At the present, he added, the choices were between destruction and survival.90

Kerensky, whose own alternatives had been reduced to the maintenance of appearances, was openly dismayed by Verkhovskii's defection. Fearful that extremists on either the Right or the Left would exploit the incident,91 he took immediate steps to reduce its impact. The Minister-President avoided an official decision on the matter by declining Verkhovskii's proffered resignation.92 Instead, he

90Chugaev, Vosstanie, pp. 224-225.
91V. Nabokov, "Vremennoe Pravitel'stvo," ARR, I (1922), 80.
attributed the War Minister's "tactlessness" before the Preparliament to mental exhaustion,93 placed him on sick leave,94 and "temporarily" replaced him with General A. A. Manikovskii.95 Apparently, Kerensky also tried to withhold Verkhovskii's testimony from the public. On October 22 Skobelev and F. Znamenskii, the presiding officers of the joint committee meeting of October 20 and personal friends of the Minister-President, issued a curious declaration to the press. General Verkhovskii, they correctly stated, had not advocated a separate peace. But in claiming that he had condemned defeatism in any form,96 they implied that he supported a continuance of the war. Kerensky's name was not associated with the misleading committee declaration. But its timing so closely coincided with the governmental closure of Obshchee Delo (The Common Cause),97 the conservative newspaper that had first published excerpts of the War Minister's speech,98 that his involvement was strongly indicated. Unable to refute the accuracy of Verkhovskii's assertions, the embattled Minister-President evidently sought to counter them through obfuscation.

The Verkhovskii incident was preceded by a far more serious one: an Allied démarche, also provoked by Russia's military decomposition, that shattered the foreign policy of the Provisional Government.

93Izvestiia, October 21, 1917, p. 5.
95Nabokov, p. 83.
96Delo Naroda, October 22, 1917, p. 2.
97Delo Naroda, October 26, 1917, p. 2.
98Delo Naroda, October 22, 1917, p. 2.
Kerensky was aware that only victory on the battlefield would bring success in negotiations with the Allies, but it was a measure of his inexperience in international affairs that he failed to realize the full diplomatic consequences of military defeat. He had been given fair warning that Allied patience was exhausted; on September 26 the French, British, and Italian ambassadors lodged a formal protest against his toleration of anarchy and made further material aid dependent upon the prompt restoration of civil and military authority. As their unprecedented action closely followed the Democratic Council's demand for aggressive peace initiatives, a seasoned statesman would have been forewarned of future complications in foreign policy. But Kerensky attached very little importance to the Allied remonstrance of September 26. According to Buchanan, the doyen of the Petrograd diplomatic corps, he treated the ambassadors "cavalierly" and dismissed them with a "Napoleonic touch."

Convinced that Russia's membership in the Entente guaranteed a respectful consideration of its views, the Minister-President placed great emphasis on the significance of the impending interallied conference. There is no indication that Kerensky actually thought that the London meeting, scheduled for October 25, would lead to a

negotiated peace with the Central Powers. He did expect Allied acknowledgement of the diplomatic principles of the Russian revolution. Failing that, he could at least establish Russian desires for "peace and the earliest return to peaceful cooperation among nations" in a "clear, explicit, and befitting manner." In either case, he felt, the benefits would be substantial. The government would demonstrate its devotion to the ideals of the revolution, socialist qualms about the nature of the war would be stilled, and the morale of the army would be strengthened.

Characteristically, Kerensky intended to elicit Allied cooperation through the dual tactics of moral exhortation and political compromise. He actively solicited American support; if Wilsonian principles were joined to revolutionary idealism, the western European delegations would be put on the defensive. The Minister-President intended to supplement his ideological offensive with a moderate political formula combining a technical condemnation of annexations with a clear recognition of national interests. Tereshchenko, his spokesman in the foreign ministry, outlined the government's approach in a speech before the Preparliament on October 16. The Russian delegation, he stated, would demand the "renunciation of foreign conquests and indemnities imposed on our enemies and a similar repudiation on the part of our enemies." Once that problem was resolved, "progress toward the self-determination of smaller nations"

104VVP, October 8, 1917, p. 3.
105Kerensky, Crucifixion, p. 360.
106Chugaev, Vosstanie, p. 200.
could commence. At the same time, Tereshchenko continued, Russia (and by implication its Allies) would avoid a peace that would "humiliate her or undermine her vital interests." The thrust of Tereshchenko's speech was unmistakable. The Provisional Government sought a cosmetic agreement that would mask the substance of imperialism with the flavor of international socialism. It was admirably suited to a conference composed of Right socialists and Left liberals.

The pragmatic war cabinets of David Lloyd George and Georges Clemenceau lacked that political complexion, and they were disinclined to accept the dictates of an enfeebled ally. Their rebuff came without warning. On October 16 the British Chancellor of the Exchequer, Andrew Bonar Law, stated that the London Conference would confine itself strictly to methods of prosecuting the war. His Majesty's government, Bonar Law continued under questioning, had at no time addressed itself to the reconsideration of war aims or to the expectations held by the Kerensky regime. On October 18 Jules Cambon, the General Secretary of the French foreign ministry, completed the destruction of Kerensky's foreign policy initiative by issuing a similar statement. The Minister-President did not respond to the Allied démarche; unless he were willing to exploit it by seeking a separate peace, any comment would only magnify his defeat. But he undoubtedly had that incident in mind in 1920, when he declared: "In the times of its greatest

107 Rech', October 17, 1917, p. 2.
108 Parliamentary Debates (Commons), LCVIII, col. 1187.
difficulties, the Russian democracy had no true friends among the Great Powers of Europe."¹¹⁰

The paralysis of the Third Coalition was as evident in internal as in military or diplomatic matters. To a certain extent, its ineffectiveness was the result of administrative decomposition; denied the cooperation of the soviets and most revolutionary factions, the Provisional Government was unable to maintain its machinery in large parts of the country.¹¹¹ Kerensky acknowledged the severity of the domestic crisis in a speech before the Preparliament on October 7. The state, he noted, lacked the present capability to "establish elementary law and order in Russia" or to "restore industrial production." Those essential tasks, he continued, could be undertaken only if a more popular body mobilized and directed the "energies and initiatives of the public."¹¹² The Minister-President's appeal, which could have come only from desperation, was fruitless. The Preparliament, divided within itself¹¹³ and estranged from the radicalized populace by its affiliation with the Kerensky regime,¹¹⁴ was unable to render effective aid. Forced to rely upon dwindling resources, the government attempted to counter anarchy through the only means left at its disposal: the use of military units detached from the front.¹¹⁵ But even that


¹¹²VVP, October 8, 1917, p. 3.

¹¹³Russkie Vedomosti, October 13, 1917, p. 4.

¹¹⁴Russkie Vedomosti, October 20, 1917, p. 3.

¹¹⁵Chugaev, Vosstanie, pp. 201-202.
option was limited, for so few politically reliable soldiers could be spared that they were able only to conduct random patrols in especially disturbed areas. 116

Yet governmental passivity could not be wholly ascribed to external circumstances, for the cabinet displayed a marked aversion to measures that might alleviate popular discontent. That reluctance was particularly evident in the field of agrarian reform. In the four weeks of its tenure, the ministerial council succeeded only in reaching a general agreement on the principles governing land transference. Furthermore, those terms fell decidedly short of Chernov's proposals and the stipulations of the Democratic Council. According to S. L. Maslov's program, state lands were to fall under the jurisdiction of the land committees, but private lands worked by the owner's tools were exempt. Thus, the capitalized estates of prerevolutionary Russia were to be preserved. 117 While the Bolshevik uprising halted further consideration of the issue, there was no indication of additional concessions to socialist ideology. A similar trend was evident in other areas. Cabinet work on compulsory arbitration of labor disputes, an inheritance tax, and the establishment of state monopolies over specified consumer goods reached only preliminary stages. 118

In part, governmental apathy was a result of demoralization. The radical revolution had a corrosive effect upon those charged with its

117 Delo Naroda, October 18, 1917, p. 1.
containment; Kerensky experienced periods of acute depression during October, and the morale of the ministerial council was no better than his own. Evidently, there was a strong impulse to defer all responsibility to the Constituent Assembly, for the only bright spot in the otherwise dismal record of the Third Coalition was its rapid progress toward convocation of that long-awaited body. Legislative timidity was also prompted by fear of another costly interregnum. Because many ministers felt that a new cabinet crisis would deliver the country into the hands of extremists, they hesitated to raise topics that would provoke severe internal dissension.

Yet there was also a certain premeditation behind the government's immobility. While Kerensky often fell prey to discouragement, he had not abandoned hope of a return to strong rule; anticipating a Bolshevik rising, he expected it to suffer the same fate, and to bear similar consequences as the one in July. The Minister-President revealed those convictions to Buchanan on October 12. While admitting that the currents of civil and military dissolution were presently beyond control, he expressed confidence that a radical uprising, which should materialize "within weeks," would permit a rapid restoration of state order. Kerensky returned to the same theme on October 24, the very day of the Bolshevik insurrection, in a conversation with

119Kerensky, Russia, p. 428; Stankevich, p. 251.
120Dem'ianov, p. 119.
121VP, October 21, 1917, p. 3.
122Delo Naroda, October 18, 1917, p. 1.
123Buchanan, II, 196.
Stankevich. The Bolsheviks, he maintained, were playing into the hands of the government. This time, "The Chernovs would not be able to rescue the Kamenevs and the Zinovievs."\(^{124}\) Kerensky's refusal to grant concessions to radical demands was influenced by those considerations. With a resurgence of the native optimism that had carried him through so many crises, he looked beyond an uprising to the reconstruction of the country's forces. The Provisional Government, he felt, could best guide that process if it preserved its reputation as the mainspring of political moderation.\(^{125}\)

On October 21 the event that Kerensky would have held a "special prayer meeting" to witness\(^ {126}\) finally materialized; the Bolshevik-controlled Petrograd Soviet openly defied the government by granting its Military Revolutionary Committee (VRK) formal authority over the capital's garrison.\(^ {127}\) The VRK, a revival of the Soviet's anti-Kornilov Committee for the People's Struggle against Counterrevolution, had ostensibly been created on October 9 to protect Petrograd in the event of a German breakthrough on the Northern front.\(^ {128}\) But Kerensky, who rightly considered it an instrument of insurrection,\(^ {129}\) recognized

\(^{124}\)Stankevich, p. 258. L. B. Kamenev and G. E. Zinoviev were prominent Bolsheviks.


\(^{126}\)Nabokov, p. 36.

\(^{127}\)Izvestiia, October 24, 1917, p. 5.


its bid to control the garrison as the prelude to an armed uprising.\textsuperscript{130} He had already received assurances from Colonel G. P. Polkovnikov, the Commander of the Petrograd Military District, and General A. V. Cheremisov, the Commander-in-Chief of the Northern front, that adequate defensive measures had been taken to suppress disorder.\textsuperscript{131} Armed with that encouraging information, he planned to launch an immediate pre-emptive attack against the VRK and its ruling spirit, the Bolshevik Party.

Unfortunately, the left wing of the cabinet did not share his views. The socialist ministers refused to countenance a major assault against the VRK simply on the basis of Bolshevik resolutions, and Polkovnikov's success on October 22 in expelling the VRK commissars from the garrison\textsuperscript{132} added force to their arguments. Kerensky later attributed the government's inactivity on October 22 to humanitarian motives. The VRK, he claimed, had deliberately been allowed time to "realize its mistake" and "reverse its stand."\textsuperscript{133} Actually, he had been immobilized by a cabinet majority frightened by the prospect of civil war and still unconvinced that a direct threat to the state existed.\textsuperscript{134} The ministerial council finally sanctioned limited measures against the Bolsheviks on the night of October 23; in response to Kerensky's repeated urgings, the Menshevik Minister of Justice,

\textsuperscript{130}\textit{Izvestiia}, October 25, 1917, p. 2.
\textsuperscript{131}Kerensky, "Gatchina," p. 195.
\textsuperscript{132}\textit{Izvestiia}, October 25, 1917, p. 5.
\textsuperscript{133}\textit{Izvestiia}, October 25, 1917, p. 2.
\textsuperscript{134}Buchanan, II, 204; Vishniak, p. 313.
Maliantovich, proposed the formation of a commission to investigate the VRK and authorized the closure of the Bolshevik newspapers *Rabochie Puti* and *Rabochii i Soldat.* But those tentative steps were taken unwillingly, and the cabinet insisted that further action would have to be approved by the Preparliament.

Kerensky appeared before the Preparliament at 11:00 a.m. on October 24 "firmly convinced" that he would gain permission for strong punitive measures against the Bolsheviks. His timing was regrettable; as Stankevich recalled, the "streets were totally calm" that morning, with "no sign of any kind of uprising." The Minister-President's speech reflected the apparent reality; unable to provide concrete proof of insurrection, he fell back on the same arguments that had proven so ineffective with the cabinet. He claimed that the abortive takeover of the garrison on October 22 and manifestos by Lenin and the VRK calling for resistance to the government were adequate proof of a matured conspiracy. A "technical" state of insurrection existed which threatened the convocation of the Constituent Assembly, encouraged a counterrevolutionary movement "perhaps even more serious than that of General Kornilov," and undermined the morale of the army. Kerensky concluded with a request for sufficient authority to direct the "immediate, final, and definite liquidation" of those groups.


137Kerensky, Russia, p. 435.

138Stankevich, p. 258.
attempting to subvert the "free will of the Russian people." 139

The Preparliament resolution, adopted that evening after bitter and prolonged debate, revealed a deep suspicion of Kerensky's motives and an earnest desire to placate the restive populace. It admitted that the "developing revolutionary movement" was a threat to the Constituent Assembly and the precarious stability of the army and the country. Nevertheless, the resolution continued, discontent was partially justified by the government's "delay in carrying out urgent measures." Above all, the country required a decree on the transfer of land to the land committees and an immediate search for peace. The Preparliament did agree that steps should be taken to combat an outbreak of anarchy. To achieve that end, it proposed the formation of a Committee of Public Safety, composed of representatives from municipal governments and socialist parties, that would act in concert with the Provisional Government. 140 Enraged and astonished by the resolution, Kerensky threatened resignation on the grounds that it virtually amounted to a vote of no confidence in the cabinet. 141 As that maneuver failed to evoke a suitable response, he icily informed the Preparliament that the government "had no need of admonitions or instructions" and would conduct the struggle against the Bolsheviks under its own auspices. 142

139Izvestiia, October 25, 1917, p. 3.

140Izvestiia, October 25, 1917, p. 4.

141Stankevich, p. 160; Kerensky, Catastrophe, p. 327.

It is impossible to determine whether Kerensky's acceptance of the Preparliament's terms would have permitted the suppression of the Bolshevik uprising of October 24-25. But there can be little doubt that his refusal significantly undermined his position. During the three days that the Minister-President vainly sought authority for a pre-emptive attack, the Bolsheviks were able to mobilize and arm their Red Guards without serious interference. Because of Kerensky's self-imposed isolation from the Preparliament, they were also allowed to portray rebellion as a protective reaction to counterrevolution, a fulfillment of Trotsky's pledge that reactionary assaults would be answered by a "ruthless counteroffensive carried out to the end."

Socialist protests against the VRK's "thoughtless adventure" did little to dispel that impression; the uprising was condemned on the grounds that it would provoke Black Hundred pogroms, jeopardize the Constituent Assembly, and open the front to the Germans. But neither the Mensheviks nor the SRs could actually bring themselves to call for an active defense of Kerensky's unpopular regime. On the night of October 24 the TsIK, defying its Bolshevik members, mounted a tardy campaign to effect a rapprochement between the Provisional Government and the Petrograd populace. But in advancing land reform, an active peace policy, and the formation of a Committee of Public Safety as prerequisites for the re-establishment of governmental

143 Chugaev, Komitet, I, 81.
144 Izvestiia, October 18, 1917, p. 5.
integrity, they offered a solution that Kerensky had already rejected.

The failure of the socialist parties to equate rebellion with treason probably determined the attitude of the troops charged with the defense of the Provisional Government. Commissar Stankevich wryly recalled a revealing incident that occurred on October 26. Upon encountering a detachment of Cossacks near Tsarskoe Selo, he delivered an impassioned plea for resistance to the Bolsheviks. After he concluded, one of the soldiers shrugged his shoulders, spat, and with a "malicious glance" loudly replied:

I don't know about that. In the beginning everything was clear, but now no one understands anything. Everyone talks and everyone is confused. One wants this, another wants that. Everyone has his program, his party. Everyone's muddled, no one is certain. The devil take all orators.

Kerensky also noted the close connection between leftist ambivalence and military demoralization. On the morning of October 24 he had "firm assurances" of armed backing from several Cossack regiments stationed within Petrograd, but by October 25 the major units earmarked for the defense of the capital had chosen a policy of neutrality. Unable to counter the Bolshevik attack with the slender forces at his disposal, he left for Pskov in search of aid. The

147Izvestiia, October 26, 1917, p. 3.
148Stankevich, p. 269.
150Izvestiia, October 26, 1917, p. 3. Those forces consisted of a few Cossack detachments, perhaps 1,000 young cadets from military schools, and a showcase woman's battalion that had never seen action.
151Delo Naroda, October 26, 1917, p. 1.
capital passed under Bolshevik control within hours of his hurried departure.152

Far more than Petrograd was lost on October 25, for the commanders of the Northern front showed a remarkable indifference to the plight of the government. In part, their attitude reflected Kerensky's failure to purge the Officer Corps of Kornilovist sympathizers.153 But if Commissar Voitinskii's observations were accurate, General Cheremisov's refusal to follow Kerensky's orders154 was based on more than personal animosity. His reaction was symptomatic of a general disaffection with the Provisional Government and expressed the feeling, prevalent among the Left as well as the Right,155 that the struggle against Bolshevism should be conducted by other principals and under other auspices.156

Thus, the Minister-President's policy of class mediation in an environment of class warfare yielded its ultimate consequences. Having alienated every important political force in revolutionary Russia, he was nearly as isolated as Nicholas II had been eight months before. Since July, Kerensky had resisted enormous pressure in his

152Izvestiia, October 26, 1917, p. 3. For detailed accounts of the actual course of the Bolshevik uprising, see: Eduard Burdzhalov, Vtoraja Russkaia revoliutsiia, 2 vols. (Moscow, 1967-71), I; R. V. Daniels, Red October, the Bolshevik Revolution of 1917 (New York, 1967), chapters 8 and 9.

153Delo Naroda, October 23, 1917, p. 3.


vain attempts to restore the vanished balance of the February revolution. He succeeded only in hopelessly dividing the anti-Bolshevik forces at a time when their coordination was imperative.

Nevertheless, the confusion surrounding the Bolshevik coup permitted a final effort to regain Petrograd by storm. Still unaware that the socialist parties "had broken off relations with the government," Voitinskii persuaded General P. N. Krasnov to move elements of the Third Cavalry Corps to the Minister-President's aid. Krasnov's "risky campaign" proved to be little more than a defiant gesture. With great difficulty, he did manage to move a small mixed force of Cossacks and artillery past Tsarskoe Selo on October 30. But he was hampered by the lack of infantry support, and after an inconclusive skirmish at the Pulkovo heights near Petrograd he withdrew to Gatchina, the historic stronghold of Paul I. It was at that site, the hereditary estate of the last tsar to be deposed by a political coup, that Kerensky's own deposition took place.

Yet as late as October 31 it appeared that something could be salvaged from the wreckage of the Provisional Government. The Petrograd SRs, on their own initiative, had attempted to dislodge the Bolsheviks on October 29; meeting with an unexpectedly sharp defeat, their newly-formed Committee of Salvation belatedly authorized active

157Woytinsky, p. 371.
159P. N. Krasnov, "Na vnutrennem fronte," ARR, I (1922), 177.
160Chugaev, Komitet, I, 438.
support of Kerensky's efforts. As several members of the SR Central Committee, including Gots, Chernov, and Avksent'ev, were canvassing the front for additional forces, the Krasnov venture promised to gain renewed impetus. Kerensky certainly held that conviction; in a fresh display of energy, he ordered General Baranovskii to replace Cheremisov as Commander-in-Chief of the Northern front and called a "war council" to determine future tactics. The Minister-President's decisions, reached after consultations with Krasnov, Savinkov, and Stankevich, were in keeping with the perceived opportunities. He chose to initiate armistice negotiations with the VRK in order to gain time for the mobilization of additional forces, and as a token of good faith to the Committee of Salvation, he proposed the formation of a new government drawn from the democratic organs of Petrograd. In the midst of civil war, Kerensky finally admitted the need for a drastic political shift to the Left.

Those concessions came too late, for the negotiations of November 1 led to the complete disintegration of the government forces. P. E. Dybenko, the principal VRK representative at the Gatchina Conference, skillfully played on the Cossacks' awareness of their military isolation and won their approval for Kerensky's and Krasnov's

161 Delo Naroda, November 2, 1917, p. 2.
162 Stankevich, pp. 272-273.
163 Woytinsky, p. 385.
165 Stankevich, p. 280.
166 Delo Naroda, November 2, 1917, p. 2.
Forewarned of his peril, Kerensky escaped from Gatchina in a sailor's uniform and disappeared in the forests near Luga. His precipitant flight marked the formal end of the Russian Provisional Government.

The denouement at Gatchina also reduced Kerensky's status to that of a state criminal and ended his effective participation in the political life of his country. During the Winter of 1917-1918, his withdrawal was almost total; apart from arranging publication of his testimony on the Kornilov affair, his sole public contribution was an open letter to Delo Naroda urging continued opposition to Bolshevik rule. But that episode further illustrated his political isolation, for the editors felt compelled to insert a covering article entitled "The Fate of Kerensky" that carefully dissociated him from the current activities of the SR party. The former Minister-President's attempt to gain entrance to the Constituent Assembly in January of 1918 prompted an even sharper rebuff from his former associates. Zenzinov, Kerensky's contact with the SR Executive Committee, refused to provide the necessary credentials on the grounds that his appearance at the Tauride Palace, besides entailing a serious personal risk, would accomplish nothing of value. The message was clear; Kerensky's

167Chugaev, Komitet, I, 519.
169Delo Naroda, November 12, 1917, p. 4.
170P. Sorokin, Leaves from a Russian Diary (New York, 1924), p. 143.
172Kerensky, Russia, p. 467.
intrusion, by exacerbating old wounds, would hinder attempts to rebuild party unity.

Zenzinov was surely correct, for so long as the radical revolution was in progress, Kerensky's participation in political events would only spread dissension in socialist ranks. Also, from a personal standpoint his enforced passivity had a beneficial effect. Sorokin, who met him in Moscow at the beginning of May, was struck by the extent of his recovery. The former head of state, Sorokin recalled, had lost all traces of nervousness and irritability. Improbably disguised by a beard, long hair, and "thick blue spectacles," he spoke in a "quiet and simple" manner that befitted a "teacher or a preacher." The mental and physical exhaustion of the October days had vanished, and Kerensky was capable of renewed endeavors.

A limited opportunity soon appeared, for the disastrous treaty of Brest-Litovsk, the dissolution of the Constituent Assembly, and the spreading Red terror produced a revival of interest in united cooperation among the opponents of Bolshevism. The most promising of those efforts, the Union of Regeneration, won Kerensky's full allegiance. His reaction was certainly understandable: in advocating a national coalition, the restoration of the German front, and the reconvocation of the Constituent Assembly, the Union adhered to the basic principles of the defunct Provisional Government. Because it

173Sorokin, p. 143.
174Stankevich, p. 251.
175Telegram from the Quai d'Orsay to the Russian Embassy in Paris, the V. A. Maklakov Archive of the Russian Embassy in Paris, 1917-1924, 4 boxes, collection of the Hoover Institute at Stanford University, box 1, accession no. 26003-927.
promised an effective revival of nadpartijnost', Kerensky quickly agreed to a proposal, probably extended by Sorokin and N. I. Astrov, to solicit material and diplomatic aid for the Union from the West.\textsuperscript{176}

In late May of 1918, in his first trip beyond the boundaries of Russia, Kerensky departed from Murmansk for conferences with the Allies.\textsuperscript{177}

The new emissary's arrival in western Europe caused considerable alarm in Communist circles; in a telegraphic conversation with Stalin, Trotsky described him as "one of the chief agents-provocateurs working on behalf of foreign imperialism."\textsuperscript{178}

Trotsky's anxieties were unfounded, for Kerensky's mission on behalf of the Union of Regeneration was singularly unsuccessful. To a certain extent, that was a reflection of his inexperience in the conduct of diplomatic affairs. Constantine Nabokov, the Russian Charge d'Affairs in London, noted that Kerensky comported himself as if he were a fully accredited ambassador of a stable government,\textsuperscript{179} and his telegrams to the Union of Regeneration do convey an exaggerated sense of importance.\textsuperscript{180} Thus, it is not surprising that the Allied governments, faced with Kerensky's brusque demands for Russian representation at future peace conferences and his insistence that they refrain from

\textsuperscript{176}The Times (London), June 27, 1918, p. 7.

\textsuperscript{177}Kerensky, Russia, p. 494.


\textsuperscript{179}Nabokoff, Ordeal, p. 258.

\textsuperscript{180}Telegram from Kerensky to Moscow by the Quai d'Orsay, Maklakov Archive, box 1, accession no. 26003-937.
interference in the internal politics of national regimes, would react with deep misgivings. But his failure was due more to internal developments in Russia than to diplomatic maladroitness. The various anti-communist national fronts broke down in the heat of civil war, and as they gave way to dictatorships Kerensky's tenuous influence dwindled. Finally discouraged by Allied support of Admiral A. V. Kolchak, who forcibly dispersed the democratic Directorate at Omsk, Kerensky abandoned his diplomatic efforts in favor of journalistic ones.

Freed from the constraints of political responsibility, Kerensky reverted to the style of polemical advocacy so natural to him. As the editor of a succession of populist-orientated journals, of which the most notable was the Berlin-based Dni (Days), he defended interclass cooperation and Russian national interests throughout the civil war. Upon its conclusion, he established a reputation as an acute critic and informed observer of the Soviet Union. Through articles, memoirs, and association with émigré organizations, Kerensky remained an articulate spokesman of Russian democratic ideals and a leading advocate of political freedom until his death in 1970.

181 The Times (London), October 31, 1918, p. 8.
182 Kerenskii, "Mir soiuznikov v Rossii," Izdaleka, p. 121.
183 Bureau d'informations Baltique, no. 47, Maklakov Archive, box 1, accession no. 26003-937.
184 Kerenskii, "Vse malo," Izdaleka, p. 83.
185 The Times (London), June 25, 1919, p. 12.
186 Sorokin, p. 309.
CHAPTER VII

CONCLUSION

Alexander Kerensky's political career, which extended from his election to the State Duma in 1912 to the Bolshevik seizure of power in October of 1917, covered a crucial phase in the history of his country. In turn, those years witnessed the enfeeblement and collapse of tsarism, the open struggle for power among the claimants to state leadership, and the emergence of the Bolshevik Party from relative obscurity to a position of dominance. In the process, the basic framework was established for the future course of the nation. An active participant in those significant events, Kerensky had a growing, and at times decisive, influence upon their outcome. As could be expected, his activities were often dictated by ideological considerations; no less than other politically active figures, he attempted to shape developments according to personally held values and convictions.

While Kerensky's public impact was comparatively minor until the February revolution of 1917, his predilections were revealed by his political maneuvers while a deputy within the Fourth State Duma. Indeed, without the perspectives gained by an examination of his Duma activities, it would be very difficult to discern the thrust of his policies during the revolution. Although he gained a radical reputation because of his determined opposition to tsarism, Kerensky
was a consistent advocate of interparty cooperation for the attainment of national and social objectives. The leader of a small populist party, the Trudoviks, he actually occupied an amorphous area between socialism and liberalism. Fully dedicated to populist conceptions of social justice, he nonetheless wished to achieve them by adopting, as a transitional measure, a non-partisan attitude toward the major problems facing the country.

In part, Kerensky adhered to that approach because of a sentimental affinity with Russian liberalism. His formative years had been spent in privileged, professional surroundings and he was very much at ease with the jurists, physicians, and academicians who dominated the Cadet Party. But his solicitude for the moderate Right also had a programmatic basis. To his mind the value of liberalism, its irreplaceable contribution to the Russian political process, was its unswerving commitment to nationalistic ideals. With liberal participation, Kerensky felt, the social transformation of the state could proceed along populist lines without the sacrifice of its power or position in the international arena.¹ That belief, more than any other factor, explains how Kerensky could be a moderate and, at the same time, a revolutionary. Above all, the future Minister-President was a nationalist, with an exalted sense of the special destiny of Russia. His fervent nationalism blended easily with a tendency, common to all populists, to idealize the people; as a result, his expectations regarding the future of his country were suffused with an emotional

¹For example, see Kerensky's speech in GD, session 5, meeting 20, February 15, 1917, col. 1359; A. Kerenskii, "Ocherednaia zadacha," Izdakea, sbornik statei (Paris, 1922), p. 47.
intensity that was almost mystical in nature. Since those feelings were accompanied by strong humanistic impulses, also derived from the populist tradition, he was naturally drawn to a course of action that furthered democratic, egalitarian aims while avoiding unnecessary political dislocation.

Kerensky's Duma colleagues, misled by the polemical, internationalist flavor that opposition to tsarism lent to his public statements and political acts, were inadequately aware of his fundamental orientation. His hostility to the Central Powers and his encouragement in May of 1915 of special councils, composed of Duma members and tsarist officials, to facilitate the war effort were illuminating examples of his desire to reconcile national and revolutionary needs. Yet to socialist and non-socialist deputies alike, those superficially incongruous actions seemed more the product of a tempestuous disposition than of a well-defined, carefully considered policy.

Within the relatively stratified environment of the State Duma, Kerensky's attempts to create a broad, multi-party revolutionary movement failed to arouse real enthusiasm even when he was taken seriously. Liberals, regardless of their own tendency to praise the virtues of nonpartisanship, were unwilling to immolate themselves in its service. Their hesitation was understandable, for they could scarcely be sympathetic to a form of moderation that exploited their patriotism while denying the validity of their political programs. Furthermore, the major populist party, the SRs, had boycotted the elections to the Fourth State Duma; as a result, most Left deputies were Marxists.

Kerensky's particular interpretation of *nadpartiinost'*, which would have struck a responsive chord in many Right SRs, was alien to Marxist politicians like Chkheidze and Skobelev. They appreciated his oratorical gifts, his hostility to autocracy, and his obstructionist talents, but they viewed his anti-party arguments with a mixture of skepticism and puzzlement. Within the confines of the State Duma, Kerensky had a sustained effect only upon the Left-Center—individuals such as S. Znamenskii and Nekrasov, who vacillated between liberalism and radicalism. In sum, Kerensky's proposals appealed to a numerically insignificant portion of the Duma membership. If the revolution had not intervened, he would probably have remained an ineffectual advocate of politically sterile tactics.

But when the February revolution did occur, no one was better prepared than Kerensky to exploit its unique possibilities. Because of his recognized opposition to tsarism, which had recently been emphasized in a series of daring and dramatic Duma speeches, he possessed an immense following that was disposed to accept his will as a valid expression of revolutionary goals. That heightened popularity, combined with Kerensky's own enthusiasm and the confusion that affected the liberal and socialist leaders during the collapse of the old regime, permitted a drastic expansion of his influence.

He responded immediately with attempts to bridge the differences between the socialist and non-socialist parties. In all probability,


the State Duma and the Petrograd Soviet would have reached a temporary accommodation without Kerensky's intercession. Nevertheless, the Duma's promptness in accepting an active role in the transfer of power, the rapidity with which the vexing problem of the monarchy was solved, and much of the authority that the first Provisional Government possessed in the eyes of the revolutionary populace were due to his strenuous efforts. To his bitter disappointment, Kerensky failed to create a broad coalition of liberal and socialist forces. But in entering the cabinet as a self-proclaimed hostage of the democracy, he blunted the disruptive impact of dual power and laid the groundwork for a future multi-party alliance.

Most of Kerensky's efforts within the first cabinet were devoted to extending the precarious class truce that had been struck on March 2. Despite the initial flush of revolutionary enthusiasm that affected virtually the entire country, there can be little doubt that, left to themselves, the liberals in the government would have come into violent conflict with the Petrograd Soviet. As the negotiations between the Temporary Committee of the State Duma and the Soviet had revealed, each was deeply suspicious of the other. In fact, the emergence of the new regime under the anxious gaze of the TsIK signified an armed truce rather than a genuine agreement to fulfill common objectives.

Kerensky's attempts to moderate that dangerous situation assumed two forms. First of all, he tried to reassure the Right that the revolution would not rage out of control, that possibilities for coexistence were present, and that a Red terror was not in the offing.
His cautious conduct of the governmental inquiry into the actions of tsarist officials, his appeals for discipline within the armed forces, and his speeches assuring professional and industrial organizations that their interests would be protected were examples of that tactic. He also tried to diminish tensions by prompting timely governmental concessions to popular demands. Kerensky's sponsoring of measures for land reform and his insistence that the language of diplomacy adapt itself to socialistic formulas expressed the second part of his approach. Thus, the basic pattern that Kerensky would follow throughout the course of the February revolution was established at the very outset. Assuming that the nation was predisposed toward his methods, he intended to promote political cooperation through a combination of moral exhortation and cabinet maneuvers.

An unexpected consequence of Kerensky's mediative policy, his conflict with Miliukov over the expression of war aims, was probably the seminal event of the February revolution. Because of the Justice Minister's clumsy attempts in April to moderate the tone of Miliukov's diplomatic correspondence, the Allies assumed that Russia was prepared to surrender its claims to Constantinople and the Straits. As a direct result, succeeding cabinets were forced into an overly aggressive stance toward the war in order to regain the diplomatic leverage necessary to the protection of Russia's vital interests.

Yet the controversy produced other ramifications as well. Since it evolved as a series of clashes within the cabinet as well as between the government and the Petrograd Soviet, it was accompanied by compromises at almost every stage of its progress. Thus, quite fortuitously
and somewhat paradoxically, the prolongation of the conflict between Kerensky and Miliukov over foreign policy reduced its severity and allowed a temporary resolution without a decisive break between liberals and socialists. Furthermore, because of Miliukov's abrupt resignation (an event that Kerensky forced by cabinet maneuvers), the government occupied an ambiguous position. Partly rehabilitated in the eyes of the aroused populace, it nonetheless was incapable of maintaining order in the aftermath of the April Days. Under those difficult and unforeseen circumstances, and in response to Kerensky's repeated urgings, the Petrograd Soviet reluctantly agreed to socialist participation in a coalition cabinet.

Kerensky viewed the appearance of the First Coalition as a vital step toward the realization of his political program. The nation, he claimed, had finally marshalled its "living, creative forces" under a single banner. He was badly mistaken; although he headed a powerful voting bloc within the ministerial council, he had not forged a Union Sacré able simultaneously to pursue Great Power objectives and bring an egalitarian social order in Russia. The Cadets, in particular, had no intention of passively accepting the role of a loyal opposition. Led by Miliukov, whose defeat only stiffened his partisan attitude, they intended to bolster their deteriorating position within the revolutionary state by parliamentary maneuvers or, failing that, by obstructionism. The leading socialist ministers within the cabinet also retained a pronounced class outlook; bound to the wills of their

party organizations, they were obliged to resist the Cadet demand that
social experimentation be exclusively conducted by the Constituent
Assembly. The fundamental differences between the socialist and the
non-socialist forces had not been erased on May 5. Because of
political exigencies, dual power had simply been transferred from the
public view to the ministerial council.

Thus, the First Coalition, which did enjoy popular confidence but
was badly divided within itself, was ill equipped to withstand the
serious strains that were inherent in a policy of national resurgence.
In retrospect, it is obvious that the cabinet should have adopted a
policy of guarded military retrenchment and concentrated upon the swift
convocation of the Constituent Assembly. But for a combination of
reasons—a moral obligation to resist the Central Powers, revolutionary
idealism, a belief that victory in battle would promote internal
stabilization, and, above all, a desire to protect Russia's inter­
national standing—it chose instead to expend its strength upon tasks
that were beyond its ability to accomplish. That rash decision,
exemplified by the cabinet's approval of a major military offensive
directed by Kerensky, was decisive to the further course of the
revolution.

The results were fatal to the political balance struck in
February. Despite Kerensky's brilliant efforts to raise the fighting
capacity of the Russian armies within the framework of democratic
reforms, he succeeded only in establishing the cohesion necessary to
strict revolutionary defensism. Furthermore, the shattering defeat of
the midsummer offensive erased even those modest gains. In various
ways, the efforts required to launch the ill-fated Russian offensive
promoted the disintegration of the First Coalition in July. The Cadets, already antagonized by Chernov's agrarian proposals, were infuriated by Kerensky's tactical concessions to Ukrainian separatism. Convinced that their presence in the cabinet only provided the socialists with a front behind which to pursue strictly partisan policies, they resigned in protest and demanded the formation of a government that would uphold national interests. At the same time the Petrograd garrison, especially alarmed by the war ministry's efforts to activate its units and therefore increasingly inclined to the Bolshevik position, joined the Petrograd workers in a series of bloody riots. Because the June offensive collapsed in the midst of civil disorder and governmental decomposition, the basis of interparty cooperation was destroyed.

Until July, Kerensky's impact upon the February revolution had generally been constructive in nature. While his patriotic sentiments contributed to the government's tendency to overreach itself, he had successfully promoted a considerable degree of interclass cooperation through cabinet manipulations; the first and second provisional regimes, imperfect though they were, owed much of their effectiveness to his political skills.

But after the July Days, the period of Kerensky's beneficent influence came to an end. At the very moment the political Right, judging that the revolution had become a threat to the survival of the nation, withdrew all toleration for compromise, Kerensky decided to implement his version of nadpartiinost'. Taking advantage of a temporary political vacuum following his suppression of the July uprising, he supplanted Prince L'vov with the aid of the socialistic
Star Chamber and assumed technical leadership of the government. After unilaterally instituting vital populist reforms, he forced the creation of a Second Coalition and called upon the Right for aid in stabilizing the endangered country. That crucial decision, which relied upon a desperate and disenchanted group for the salvation of the state and the revolution, was the prelude to his political destruction.

The entire course of the Second Coalition demonstrated the futility of utilizing the Right as an agent of change and consolidation in an atmosphere of class conflict. The socialist leadership, weakened by the abortive radical uprising of July, uneasily stood behind Kerensky's efforts to reorganize the state and the army. But the liberal and monarchist forces demanded an unabashedly anti-socialist policy. When Kerensky refused to compromise the revolution, they deserted him and, in their search for a strong national government, rallied behind the new Supreme Commander, General Kornilov. That dangerous process, which culminated in the ill-fated Kornilov revolt in late August, ended all possibilities for moderate rule. In the wake of Kornilovist treason the radical revolution, checked in February, April, and July, regained its lost initiative.

By providing governmental sanction for a turn to the Right in July, Kerensky had inadvertently increased the impact of Right extremism. In his efforts to preserve the disciplinary gains of July and August in the immediate aftermath of the Stavka revolt, he alienated the Left, sundered the bonds between the traditional socialist leaders and their radicalized followers, and helped to increase the force of the radical revolution. From September to the
Bolshevik rising of October, his presence within the Provisional Government was actually an obstacle to the reconstitution of central authority. Discredited in the eyes of both the Right and the Left, Kerensky was unable to retard the disintegration of the army or check the spread of anarchy in the cities and the countryside. From its formation on September 25 until its overthrow a month later, Kerensky's Third Coalition was exposed to liquidation.

Yet, throughout the final weeks of provisional rule, Kerensky refused to abandon his moderate position. Persuaded that extremism was a transient phenomenon that would soon be rejected by the Russian people, he tried to preserve the government as the nucleus of a future national revival. His insistence upon the necessity of coalition policies in the midst of the radical resurgence was the final factor that propelled the Bolsheviks into power. Because neither the Right nor the Left was willing to come to the defense of a government that would not adopt a partisan stance, a coordinated defense against the Bolshevik coup of October 25 proved to be impossible. Although it resulted from a planned uprising instead of a spontaneous mass movement, the "Red October" bore a startling resemblance to the February Days. As in the case of tsarism, Kerensky's regime was not overthrown by the application of overwhelming force. It suffered defeat because all major elements of Russian society refused to come to its aid.

Kerensky's fate, and that of the Provisional Government which he headed, provides an example of moderate policies producing immoderate results. By artificially extending the February balance beyond its term, he distorted the interplay of political forces within Russia, magnified the violence of their reactions, and facilitated the triumph
of the very party to which he had been most opposed. While Kerensky's decisions inflamed the class antagonisms that he wished to dampen, they were derived from impeccable motives. The Minister-President acted sincerely, for the good of his native land and in conformity with nationalistic, democratic, and humanitarian principles. The fundamental cause of his defeat was not the unpopularity of his ideals; with the exception of continued Russian participation in the war, his aspirations were not incompatible with those of the majority of his countrymen. Nor did he fail through personal weakness or the lack of a strong party base. He demonstrated adequate firmness during the July Days and the Kornilov revolt, and until September the support of the traditional socialist leadership provided him with a sufficient hold on the Left. Rather, he was repudiated because he refused to reduce his expectations of what the revolution could accomplish.

In the first months of the revolution, Kerensky's doctrinal rigidity was not a handicap to interim rule. His policy of interparty mediation for the realization of national and populist aims was quite suited to a limited government operating during a limited span of time. But the difficult environment produced by the war and the revolution demanded that moderate policies be accompanied by moderate goals. The inordinate ambitions of the First Coalition, which brought the relationship between socialists and liberals to the breaking point and the state to the brink of disaster, reinforced the necessity for curtailed governmental activities. After July, Kerensky might have brought the country to a condition of relative stability only by choosing between statism and populism. It was no longer possible to preserve a strong state and wage the revolution.
Since Kerensky could not disentangle his nationalistic and his populist ideals, he was unable to respond adequately to the changed situation. His populist belief in the patience and good will of the Russian masses precluded the conclusion that the class truce was permanently ruptured. Also, by persistently identifying liberalism with patriotism, he refused to accept the possibility that the Right would abandon the Provisional Government in a time of crisis. Unaware that the dynamics of the revolution had altered, he acted on the assumption that the situation could be stabilized by controlling the leadership of the major parties through political manipulations at the apex of the political structure. In the fervid environment of class warfare, that inadequate approach only intensified the difficulties facing the government and the country. In the final analysis Kerensky, and the cause of moderation in general, was discredited because he overestimated the restraint of a populace unused to political freedom and subjected to enormous pressures, and because he underestimated the insidious power of class interests. In trying to accomplish too much with inadequate means, he only succeeded in subverting the values that he defended.
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