

CHAPTER EIGHT

The Bolshevik Revolution

ON SEPTEMBER 25, 1917, Lenin, from his hiding place in Finland, wrote a letter to the Central Committee of the Bolshevik party in Petrograd. In it he declared that the Bolsheviks must organize immediately for an armed insurrection, a seizure of the state power. He went into detail—squadrs must be gotten ready to take over the telephone and telegraph buildings, the banks, the railroad stations; commissars must be appointed to direct the movements of the regiments; the entire General Staff must be arrested; the Kerensky

government itself must be arrested. The time is ripe, Lenin declared; it would be criminal to wait any longer.

The Central Committee (the inner directorate of the Bolshevik party), in spite of the proclamations, speeches, and slogans, was aghast at these proposals. So terrified were its members by Lenin's demand that they actually burned his letters (copies were preserved). A second All-Russian Congress of Soviets had been called to meet in Petrograd on November second. With control of the Petrograd and Moscow soviets already in Bolshevik hands and soviets all over the country turning Bolshevik, it seemed to the Central Committee that they had only to wait for the congress and then maneuver it into declaring itself the government of Russia.

But Lenin, with his remarkable intuition for mass feeling, insisted that the Bolsheviks could not afford to wait. He raised the specter of another Kornilovist plot; he pointed to the flaming peasantry, the word-weary workers, and the war-weary army. Why couldn't the Central Committee see that all the power was now in its hands? It must prepare to seize power in Petrograd and Moscow and among the ships of the Baltic fleet. When the Central Committee still objected to his proposals, Lenin wrote a letter of resignation. He resigned from the Central Committee, he declared, in order to be free to propagandize his ideas among the lower echelons of the party. The resignation was never acted upon, but it illustrates the lengths to which Lenin was prepared to go to force the Bolsheviks into action. The arguments have much the same ring as the arguments of the preceding April, with Lenin standing almost alone and using the masses of ordinary Bolsheviks to force the hand of their more conservative leadership.

But there was a more precise and urgent reason for his attitude.

Russia was a land of peasants—well over 90 percent of the population. Without their support any revolution must fail; with their support any revolution would succeed. But the peasant is concerned above all else with the seizure of the land. Once that has been accomplished—that is, once the feudal regime of land ownership has been shattered and the land is divided among the peasantry—the peasant loses his revolutionary impulse. He becomes a landowner himself, with many of the interests of landownership. Thus, during the French Revolution the middle classes aroused the peasantry to seize the old feudal estates and kill the nobility. But once that had been done, the peasants in turn supported the middle classes in putting down the revolutionary attempts of the city workers.

Russia in 1917 lacked an energetic and determined middle class. History, as we have seen, passed them by, and when revolution came, they followed rather than led. Because of their weakness, the Russian middle classes were entirely too dependent upon the former aristocracy and the large landowners either to or to prevent a peasant rebellion. After the February Revolution the conservative socialists and their allies, the liberals, had promised the peasantry that the land would be distributed—as soon as legal measures could be devised. But, like all other questions, the land question was continually postponed. All through the early months following the revolution the peasants waited patiently. As a liberal Moscow newspaper described them: "The muzhik [peasant] is glancing around, he is not doing anything yet, but look in his eyes—his eyes will tell you that all the land lying around him is his land." In April the Provisional Government received a telegram from one of the villages of Tambov

province stating: "We desire to keep the peace in the interests of the freedom won. But for this reason, forbidding the sale of the landlord's land. . . . Otherwise we will shed blood, but we will not let anyone else plow the land."

During the summer, as the Provisional Government hesitated and postponed, the peasants began to act. The government, having at its disposal no forces on which it could rely in the provinces, was helpless to interfere. By the beginning of September, Lenin warned: "Either . . . all the land to the peasants immediately . . . or the landlords and capitalists . . . will bring things to the point of an endlessly ferocious peasant revolt." This prediction proved accurate. A typical peasant's raid was described by Begishev, a peasant himself: "In September all rode out to raid Logvin. A troop of wagons and teams streamed out to his [Logvin's] estate and back, hundreds of muzhiks and wenchies began to drive and carry off his cattle, grain, etc." A peasant from Tauride province named Gaponenko related: "The peasants began to raid the buildings, drive out the overseers, take the work animals, the machinery, the grain from the granaries. . . . They even tore off the blinds from the windows, the doors from the frames, the floors from the rooms, and the zinc roofs, and carried them away." Then, usually, the peasants put what remained to the torch. To those who objected that the burning of buildings which might one day be converted to schools and hospitals was senseless the peasants responded with the dearly bought wisdom of centuries of uprisings: We are burning the buildings so that the landlords will have no place to hide—if one destroys the wolves' nests, one must destroy the wolf, too.

By mid-September the Russian countryside was in flaming rebellion. The objectives of the peasants' uprising

ings had not changed, but more and more often they were following a Bolshevik lead. They were falling away from the Social Revolutionary party and the liberals as they saw that these groups would not help them seize the land. Referring to this fact, one peasant declared: "The Cadets never wore *armyaki* and *lapti* and therefore will never defend our interests." *Armyaki* were homemade woolen coats, *lapti* shoes of woven strips of tree bark. The fact that the Russian peasant was wearing bark for shoes in 1917 goes far to explain the intensity and ferocity of his struggle. It was this spirit of open rebellion that Lenin realized must be seized upon at once. To wait for the peasantry to get the land was to wait for them to become satisfied and even counterrevolutionary. This helps explain his sense of urgency.

While Lenin slowly won his argument with his own Central Committee the Kerensky government and those moderate socialists who still supported it in the Executive Committee of the All-Russian Soviet—a committee now stranded without backing, since the Bolsheviks had won control of the Petrograd Soviet itself—decided to call yet another conference of the conservative, liberal, and anti-Bolshevik socialist forces, this time in Petrograd. After much debate the conference elected members to a body to be known as the "Pre-Parliament"—an advisory body which would help rule Russia until the meeting of a Constituent Assembly. In so doing they hoped to bypass the now-Bolshevik-controlled soviets. All questions were to be postponed until the meeting of the Constituent Assembly, which would draft a parliamentary constitution for Russia. Lenin urged the Central Committee to ignore the Pre-Parliament—which, he maintained, was only a disguise for more postponement and plotting. But over his bitter objections the Bolsheviks sent a delegation of

sixty, led by Trotsky, to the opening of the Pre-Parliament. But if Lenin was afraid this marked a weakening of Bolshevik determination, he need not have worried. After Kerensky made an opening speech, Trotsky was allowed ten minutes for "an emergency statement." While the more than five hundred delegates held their breaths, tension mounted feverishly. After condemning the Kerensky government as plotting to turn revolutionary Petrograd over to the Germans, and amid a storm of catcalls, insults, and rage, Trotsky concluded: "No, the Bolshevik faction announces that with this government of treason to the people . . . we have nothing whatever in common. . . . In withdrawing from the provisional council we summon the workers, soldiers, and peasants of all Russia to be on their guard and to be courageous. Petrograd is in danger! The revolution is in danger! The people are in danger! . . . We address ourselves to the people. All power to the soviets!" Having delivered this open declaration of war, the Bolsheviks walked out of the Pre-Parliament. Later, reporting on the walkout to the Petrograd Soviet, Trotsky cried: "Long live the direct and open struggle for a revolutionary power throughout the country!" These carefully chosen words meant exactly what they implied: Long live the armed insurrection!

The Bolsheviks, through the Petrograd Soviet, which had become an instrument of their policy, set up a Military Revolutionary Committee with Trotsky as its chairman. Representatives from all the trades unions, regiments, fleet units, Red Guards units were appointed to it. It was to be the instrument of insurrection, and although Lenin remained in overall authority, the actual uprising was to be led and inspired by Trotsky. Under the authority of the Military Revolutionary Committee was created a body known as the Permanent Conference of the Garrison—a uniting of the sol-

diers' committees of the various regiments in Petrograd for concerted action. Commissars were appointed for each regiment from the Military Revolutionary Committee.

On the surface, then, as the Bolsheviks prepared for a direct struggle for power, authority in Petrograd was divided among the Provisional Government of Kerensky, the conservative socialists of the All-Russian Executive Committee, and the Petrograd Soviet. The Pre-Parliament represented generally the interests of the Provisional Government and the conservative socialists, while the Military Revolutionary Committee represented the power of the Bolshevik-dominated Petrograd Soviet.

The question around which Trotsky decided to rally the uprising was that of whether to permit the Petrograd regiments to be sent away from the city by the General Staff.

September and early October had seen renewed German successes in the north. Riga had fallen and now Reval was threatened. The way to Petrograd seemed open. To Kerensky and the General Staff this seemed a golden opportunity to rid the city of its revolutionary regiments by sending them to the front to defend the city. Some transfers had been made and more were being ordered all the time. The Bolsheviks maintained that these maneuvers were part of a plot to destroy the Petrograd Soviet. In actuality there seems little doubt that there was an urgent necessity for troops to defend Petrograd at that moment, and the garrison regiments were obvious candidates for this task. After all, Petrograd was the capital of their revolution. That, at least, was Kerensky's attitude. But it is also true that many of the General Staff officers and the liberal and conservative groups saw in this necessity the opportunity of weakening the city's spirit. And in any event

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the workers and soldiers no longer trusted Kerensky any more than they did the General Staff—all had been tainted by well-founded suspicions of Kornilovism.

On the night of October twenty-third Lenin made his way into Petrograd in disguise. He wore a wig to cover his baldness and had shaved his beard. He had come to attend a secret meeting of the leading members of the Bolshevik Central Committee. For ten hours they debated whether or not the time was ripe for rebellion. Lenin hammered hard on the urgency of the project. He was opposed by Kamenev and Zinoviev but supported by Trotsky and most of the others. Stalin, as usual, did not commit himself until he saw how the majority would go. In the end Lenin won his point. A resolution was passed declaring that "an armed uprising has become inevitable and acute." From that night on, while Lenin returned to his hideout in Finland, the Bolsheviks took direct steps to raise a new revolution.

The first question was that of arming the workers. Although many had retained the weapons issued them by the Provisional Government when they defended the city against Kornilov, thousands had no rifles. Trotsky, chairman of the Military Revolutionary Committee, recalled in later years: "When a delegation from the workers came to me and said they needed weapons I answered: 'But the arsenals, you see, are not in our hands.' They answered: 'We have been to the Sestroretsk Arms Factory.' 'Well, and what about it?' They said that if the Soviet ordered they would deliver.' I gave them an order for five thousand rifles and they got them the same day. That was a first experiment." And one which was to be repeated successfully time and again in the coming days. The truth was simply that the factories and regiments had come more

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and more to recognize the Soviet as the only legitimate government. Therefore they accepted orders from it but not from Kerensky. More important than this, the Military Revolutionary Committee had already taken a poll among the Petrograd regiments and found that only one of them, the Ninth Cavalry, was against an uprising, while the Cavalry squadrons of certain Guards regiments would maintain neutrality.

In those days of feverish activity and speculation, it seemed that everyone in Petrograd was trying to figure out what the Bolshevik timetable would be. That an attempted rebellion would take place none doubted—only the date remained obscure. Most independent observers were convinced that the Bolshevik uprising would occur when the Second All-Russian Congress of Soviets met on November 7. What few seemed to understand was that a revolution was already in progress. Thus, for example, a delegation of workers would arrive from such-and-such an arsenal. The Military Revolutionary Committee would order them to issue weapons or to withhold them. And these orders were obeyed. But control of arsenals is one of the first prerogatives of a government. Likewise, the typographical workers' union approached the Committee to complain of an increase in the number of reactionary pamphlets. Henceforth the union agreed to print only those which met with the approval of the Committee. But this is a form of censorship—another function of a government. What was happening in bits and pieces was simply the transfer of actual power to the Soviet and its Military Revolutionary Committee away from Kerensky's government.

On Sunday, November fourth, the Petrograd Soviet called for mass meetings throughout the city. These were not to be street demonstrations but gatherings within the factories, meeting halls, and barracks—an

informal review of the forces which would seize power. And the masses poured out in hundreds of thousands to hear the Bolshevik speakers, to swear undying loyalty to the Soviet, to listen and try to comprehend what was about to take place. Describing the huge crowds that crammed every possible meeting place in the city, Sukhanov—a non-Bolshevik—remarked that “there was a mood very near to ecstasy,” while Trotsky recalled how “the experience of the revolution, the war, the heavy struggle of a whole bitter lifetime, rose from the deeps of memory in each of those poverty-driven men and women, expressing itself in simple and impressive thoughts: This way we can go no farther, we must break a road into the future.” The same day the Military Revolutionary Committee warned the commanders that from now on they must obey only the commands of the commissars sent to them.

Kerensky, now at last thoroughly alarmed, called a special cabinet meeting for the evening of November fifth, and an emergency was declared to exist. The military governor of Petrograd, Colonel Polkovnikov, was placed in overall command of all forces in the city. The Military Revolutionary Committee was declared illegal, and the arrest of Trotsky and other Bolshevik leaders was ordered. Additional guards were posted outside the Winter Palace, where the Provisional Government met, and Cossack squadrons were ordered to the streets. But events had left Kerensky far behind. That same day the Military Revolutionary Committee had already dispatched telegrams to the various regiments ordering them to take up defensive positions in their areas with machine guns. The garrison of the Fortress of Peter and Paul, which at first refused to heed the commissar sent to them, were persuaded by Trotsky that afternoon to join the rebellion and turn over the arsenal to his committee.

In these last hours before the Bolshevik Revolution there were two Petrograds. The old, stately imperial city, which, in spite of the February Revolution, presented much the same appearance it had under the czars, showed until the last moment no signs of vanishing. True, there were little red flags stuck into the hands of the czarist monuments and long red streamers hanging down the fronts of the government buildings, but the palaces and ministries carried on their everyday work much as in years past. Militiamen with rifles slung over their shoulders had replaced the police on street corners, and the Czar and his family had been moved from Tsarskoe Selo to the Siberian province of Tobolsk (Rasputin's home province); but the army high command was still composed of czarist generals, and the members of the government bureaucracy still wore the uniforms appropriate to their rank—uniforms they had worn since the time of Peter the Great. Schoolboys still studied the same textbooks, and the children of the middle classes still told the old fairy tales about Ivan Czarevich. The ballet and opera carried on as before, and gay parties were still being held in restaurants and clubs.

The other Petrograd centered around the Bolshevik Soviet at Smolny Institute. John Reed, an American correspondent who later became a Communist, described this other Petrograd in his book *Ten Days That Shook the World*. Entering Smolny, he noted that the former classrooms for aristocratic young ladies were “white and bare, on their doors enameled plaques still informed the passer-by that within was ‘Ladies Classroom Number 4,’ or ‘Teachers’ Bureau’; but over these hung crudely lettered signs, evidence of the vitality of the new order, ‘Central Committee of the Petrograd Soviet,’ etc. The long, vaulted corridors, lit by bare electric lights, were thronged with hurrying shapes

of soldiers and workmen, some bent under the weight of huge bundles of newspapers, proclamations, printed propaganda of all sorts. The sound of their heavy boots made a deep and incessant thunder on the wooden floor." Going downstairs, Reed bought a meal ticket for two rubles and joined a long line of workers, soldiers, and Red Guards in line as women ladled out cabbage soup and served chunks of meat. Outside, beneath a steady drizzle of rain, he saw hundreds of workers and soldiers rushing about on various missions, protective barricades being set up around Smolny itself, and machine guns being placed.

Early on the morning of November sixth government officials with a detachment of officers closed down the Bolshevik printing plant and sealed the doors. At once several of the workers ran over to Smolny, where they found Trotsky. If the Military Revolutionary Committee would give them a guard, they would bring out the paper. Immediately Trotsky ordered detachments of the Litovsky regiment to open the plant and protect the workers against the Provisional Government forces. Within hours the Bolshevik newspaper was back on the streets. The cruiser *Aurora*, packed with Bolshevik sailors, was at anchor in the Neva. The Provisional Government ordered it to sea. Instantly the sailors asked Smolny whether they should obey the order. Trotsky replied that they were to stay where they were and prepare for action—an order which was immediately obeyed. This was clear-cut insurrection. And from the Fortress of Peter and Paul, wagonloads and truckloads of guns were being carried away—on Trotsky's orders—to arm the Red Guards, while within the fortress troops were cleaning and preparing their Colt machine guns.

Meanwhile Kerensky found time to make yet another speech to the delegates of the Pre-Parliament,

meeting at the Mariinsky Palace. He read out one of the Military Revolutionary Committee's orders which had fallen into his hands. It was addressed to the Petrograd regiments and instructed: "Make the regiments ready for battle and await further orders." Now, Kerensky declared, he had proof positive that the Bolsheviks intended to rise. He would deal with them ruthlessly, and he asked for a vote of confidence from the meeting. He left the palace soon afterward—and never did receive his vote of confidence, as the delegates within fell to arguing and bickering among themselves.

That night the Bolsheviks struck. The city had already been divided into convenient districts. Within each district were posted patrols and squads from the garrison regiments, Red Guards detachments, and workers' committees. Each of the districts had a well-thought-out plan of operations for the seizure of the strategic buildings and services within the district. All night long the plan went forward: seizure of the railroad stations, the telephone exchange, the telegraph building, the state banks, the printing plants, the regimental barracks. A guard would be posted, and a commissar appointed by the Military Revolutionary Committee would take over the direction of operations in each institution. Where the workers were not already Bolshevik, sentries would be posted inside as well as outside the building. Nowhere was there any resistance; in most places the workers cheered when their buildings were occupied.

Meanwhile, the Second All-Russian Congress of Soviets were gathering at Smolny. For days the delegates had been arriving. The Bolsheviks intended to have already captured the power before the Congress opened, but their schedule was slightly faulty. At three thirty in the morning, while Bolshevik detachments were seizing control of Petrograd, a Menshevik who was present at

the Congress reported: "A meeting of the Central Executive Committee together with the delegates to the Congress of Soviets is in progress with an overwhelming majority of Bolsheviks. Trotsky has received an ovation. He has announced that he hopes for a bloodless victory of the insurrection, since the power is in their hands. The Bolsheviks have begun active operations. They have seized the Nikolaevsky Bridge and posted armored cars there. The Pavlovsky regiment has posted pickets on Milliony Street near the Winter Palace, is stopping everybody, arresting them, and sending them to Smolny Institute. . . . The Baltic railroad station is also in the hands of the Bolsheviks. If the front does not interfere, the government will be unable to resist. . . ."

At 10 A.M. on November seventh Trotsky issued a proclamation declaring that the Provisional Government had fallen and that all power had passed into the hands of the Soviet and its Military Revolutionary Committee. As Trotsky was later to admit, "In a certain sense this declaration was very premature. The government still existed, at least within the territory of the Winter Palace. . . . the provinces had not yet expressed themselves. . . . In order to get complete possession of the power it was necessary to act as a power."

At noon, squads of Red Guards and a few armored cars arrived at the Mariinsky Palace, where the Pre-Parliament was sitting. The delegates, in a state of acute alarm, were being told that all would be well—that Kerensky had gone off to the front to raise loyal regiments—when soldiers of the Litovsky regiment appeared in the hall. Their commander ordered the delegates to leave the building. After a hasty protest, the delegates dispersed, bringing the Pre-Parliament to an end after eighteen days of life. The news about Kerensky

sky was correct, however. He had borrowed a car from the American Embassy and, over the Embassy's protests, driven off with the American flag on the fender as his protection. The ruse was successful, and he slipped out of the city.

Now all attention centered upon the Winter Palace. There, in the ornate Malachite Chamber, the ministers of Kerensky's government endlessly debated what they could or should do. The debate was meaningless, since they had no forces at their disposal other than a volunteer Women's Battalion and the young cadets of a few military academies who were posted on guard around the immense building. Their leader, Kerensky, had promised troops from the front—but would there be time? From their windows the ministers could see the cruiser *Aurora* landing detachments of sailors and, beyond, the guns of the Fortress of Peter and Paul pointed threateningly in their direction. By 6 P.M. the Winter Palace had been surrounded by Bolshevik detachments. Seven warships from the Baltic fleet had also arrived, crammed with revolutionary sailors. The Bolsheviks now sent an ultimatum to the ministers within: either surrender or we shall start shelling the palace. After a hasty discussion the ultimatum was rejected, and the ministers moved into a room deeper within the palace.

"We wandered," one of the ministers later recalled, "through the gigantic mousetrap, meeting occasionally, either all together or in small groups, for brief conversations—condemned people, lonely, abandoned by all. . . . Around us vacancy, within us vacancy, and in this grew up the soulless courage of placid indifference."

Two blank shots were fired—one from the *Aurora* and one from Peter and Paul, at 9 P.M. They were the signal for a not very effective, slow, and indifferently

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accurate shelling of the Winter Palace. A few windows were broken, a few stones sent flying. But the shelling decided the Women's Battalion to flee, with a few Cosacks and Cadets. Soon groups of Red Guards penetrated the huge building, wandering through its echoing corridors, where they occasionally ran into and captured officers and Cadets. John Reed was admitted into the building on the strength of his American passport and recalled that the porters on duty at the main entrance, still wearing their ornate uniforms, politely took his coat. Meantime the shelling continued slowly and without inflicting casualties.

Around midnight the Petrograd City Duma, which had been in session for hours amid the greatest confusion, decided that it must march to the Winter Palace and die by the side of the government ministers. After a series of rousing speeches, the handful of Duma delegates set out under the leadership of Burgomaster Schreider and one of the government ministers, Prokopovitch, who had somehow not yet joined his fellows inside the Winter Palace. Schreider and Prokopovitch carried lanterns and as the little procession marched through the empty streets of Petrograd they sang the "Marseillaise." At the Ekaterininsky Canal the procession was stopped by a patrol of armed sailors who advised them to go home. Someone in the procession called out that they should die on the spot. The sailors shrugged—if that was the way they wanted it. But Prokopovitch spoke to his followers, waving an umbrella, and persuaded them that to die under the sailors' guns would be to tempt the sailors into a grave sin. "Let us return to the Duma," he cried, "and talk over methods of saving the country and the revolution." The procession agreed and returned to the Duma—without singing.

By 1 A.M. on November eighth resistance within the

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Winter Palace was crumbling. More and more Red Guards had infiltrated the building. Government officers rushed about disarming workers, and workers rushed about disarming officers. Soon only confusion reigned, but nobody was hurt. The workers and Red Guards swarmed over the parquet floors of the palace, rushed through the huge, tapestry-hung rooms, burst finally into the room in which sat the government ministers. At 2:10 A.M. on November eighth the Provisional Government was placed under arrest. Later its members were taken to the Fortress of Peter and Paul. With their arrest the Provisional Government, which had ruled Russia since the February Revolution, came to an end.

Meanwhile the Congress of Soviets continued its sessions at Smolny Institute amid an uproar. Mensheviks, Social Revolutionaries, and Independents denounced the action of the Bolsheviks—but the dissenters were in a very small minority. To a demand on the part of Martov's independent group that the Bolsheviks seek a compromise with the conservative socialists and the liberals (all of whom had already walked out on the Soviet Congress) Trotsky replied: "No, a compromise is no good here. To those who have gone out, and to all who make like proposals, we must say, 'You are pitiful isolated individuals; you are bankrupts; your role is played out. Go where you belong from now on—into the rubbish can of history!'"

And amid this uproar news was continually arriving. The Winter Palace had surrendered. The troops Kerensky had dispatched from the front had refused to march. The commanding general of the northern front had agreed to submit to the Congress. "Men weeping, men embracing," John Reed reported the elation with which these messages were received. After electing an

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overwhelmingly Bolshevik Central Committee, the Soviet Congress adjourned until the evening.

During the day (November eighth) the Bolsheviks decided to organize a new cabinet. It would be called the Soviet of People's Commissars and would consist only of Bolsheviks. Lenin, who had returned to Smolny only the day before, and who had been sleeping on the floor of one of the rooms, was to be head of the new government. At 9 P.M. the Soviet Congress reassembled to ratify these measures. Now at last Lenin appeared on the platform and was greeted by an immense ovation. John Reed reported: "Now Lenin, gripping the edges of the reading stand, let little winking eyes travel over the crowd as he stood there waiting, apparently oblivious to the long-rolling ovation, which lasted several minutes. When it finished, he said simply, 'We shall now proceed to construct the socialist order.' Again that overwhelming human roar."

Lenin proposed immediate peace—without indemnities, without annexations. The peace appeal would be directed to all governments—and also to the peoples behind those governments. Next he proposed that all private ownership of land in Russia be abolished. Nothing was to be paid to the landowners. Both proposals were adopted by the Congress. Later the new government appointments (including Lenin as President, Trotsky as Commissar for Foreign Affairs) were approved and the meeting adjourned.

The seizure of power by the Bolsheviks in Petrograd has been characterized by many historians as a mere "stroke" on the part of the Bolshevik leadership, not a revolution. The quiet and bloodless takeover of the machinery of government, the absence of mobs on the streets, the swiftness with which everything moved did seem to give that impression. But, in fact, the revolution had been going on for months. The ultimate sei-

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zure of power was only a minor operation. The very fact that the Bolsheviks required no mobs in the streets, no barricades and regiments—only the patrols sent out to accomplish their various tasks—spoke of tremendous power behind the scenes. Trotsky, the revolution's supreme commander, reflected many years later: "Only with heavy reserves behind them could revolutionary detachments go about their work with such confidence. The scattered government patrols, in contrast, being convinced in advance of their own isolation, renounced the very idea of resistance. The bourgeois classes had expected barricades, flaming conflagrations, looting, rivers of blood. In reality a silence reigned more terrible than all the thunders of the world. The social ground shifted noiselessly like a revolving stage, bringing forward the popular masses, carrying away to limbo the rulers of yesterday."