

The Revolution in Russia

Leon Trotsky
16 March 2017

The WSWS is publishing new translations of Leon Trotsky's writings from February-March 1917. In many cases, these articles are now in English for the first time.

This article was published in the Russian-language New York newspaper Novy mir (New World) on March 16, 1917. It was published in Russian in Trotsky's 1923 Voina i Revoliutsiia (War and Revolution), Vol 2, pp. 432-434. It is translated here in full for the first time. (Translator: Fred Williams; Copyright: WSWS).

What is now happening in Russia will go down in history for all time as one of its greatest events. Our children, grandchildren and great-grandchildren will speak of these days as the beginning of a new epoch in the history of mankind. The Russian proletariat has revolted against the most criminal of regimes, against the most despised of governments. The people of Petrograd have risen up against the most disgraceful and bloodiest of wars. Troops of the capital have assembled under the red banner of rebellion and freedom. The tsarist ministers are under arrest. The ministers of Romanov, the sovereign of old Russia, the organizers of the all-Russian autocracy, have been placed by the people into one of the prisons which until now have opened their iron gates only for champions of the people. This fact alone gives a true evaluation of the events, of their scale and power. The mighty avalanche of the revolution is sweeping ahead—no human force will stop it.

Standing in power, as the telegraph wire announces, is the Provisional Government made up of representatives of the Duma majority, under the chairmanship of Rodzianko. [1] This Provisional Government—the executive committee of the liberal bourgeoisie—neither came to the revolution nor summoned it, nor does it lead it. The Rodziankos and Miliukovs have been raised to power by the first great wave of the revolutionary upsurge. What they fear most

of all is drowning in it. After taking the places that had not yet grown cold after the ministers were taken away to solitary prison cells, the leaders of the liberal bourgeoisie are prepared to consider that the revolution is finished. Such is the thought and the hope of the entire bourgeoisie throughout the world. Meanwhile, the revolution has only begun. Its driving force is not those who have chosen Rodzianko and Miliukov. And the revolution will not find its leadership in the executive committee of the Third-of-June Duma.

Hungry mothers of starving children indignantly raised their emaciated hands toward the windows of palaces, and the curses of these women of the people resounded as the voice of a revolutionary tocsin. That was the beginning of events. The workers of Petrograd sounded the alarm; hundreds of thousands poured out of the factories onto the city's roadways, which already know what barricades are. Here is the strength of the revolution! A general strike has shaken the powerful organism of the capital, paralyzed the state power, and driven the tsar into one of his gilded dens. Here is the revolution's path! The troops of the Petrograd garrison, as the closest detachment of the all-Russian army, responded to the call of the rebelling masses and made possible the first major conquests of the people. The revolutionary army—that is who will have the deciding word in the events of the revolution!

The information which we have is incomplete. There was a struggle. The monarchy's ministers did not leave without a fight. Swedish telegrams tell of blown-up bridges, street battles, uprisings in provincial cities. The bourgeoisie, with its Colonel Engelhardt and Gronsky censors, remained in power in order "restore order." Those are their own words. The first manifesto of the Provisional Government calls upon citizens to remain calm and engage in peaceful activities. As if the purifying work of the people is done, as if the iron broom of the revolution has already completely swept

away the reactionary filth which has accumulated for centuries around the Romanov dynasty that is covered in disgrace!

No, the Rodziankos and Miliukovs have spoken too soon about order, and calm will not arrive tomorrow in agitated Rus' [old Russia]. The country will now arise, layer by layer—all the oppressed, the impoverished, those robbed by tsarism and the ruling classes—in the entire and boundless expanse of the all-Russian prison of peoples. The Petrograd events are only the beginning.

At the head of Russia's popular masses, the revolutionary proletariat will carry out its historical work; it will drive out the monarchist and aristocratic reaction from all its places of refuge and extend its hand to the proletariat of Germany and all Europe. For it is necessary to liquidate not only tsarism, but the war as well.

The second wave of the revolution is sweeping over the heads of the Rodziankos and Miliukovs, who are worried about restoring order and compromising with the monarchy. From its own depths, the revolution will advance its own power—the revolutionary organ of the people marching to victory. Both the main battles and the main victims lie ahead. And only then will a full and genuine victory follow.

The latest telegrams from London say that Tsar Nikolai wants to abdicate the throne in favor of his son. With this deal, the reaction and liberalism want to save the monarchy and the dynasty. It is too late. Too late. Too great are the crimes, too monstrous the suffering, and too great the scope of the people's rage.

It is too late, servants of the monarchy! It is too late, liberal suppressors! The avalanche of revolution has been set in motion—no human force will stop it.

Novy mir, 16 March 1917.

Footnote

[1] The telegrams of the American press mixed up the Duma Committee and the Provisional Government. – LT



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