MARC FERRO

The Russian Soldier in 1917: Undisciplined, Patriotic, and Revolutionary

1917. A revolution explodes, the most violent in history. Within a few weeks a society rids itself of all its leaders: the monarch and his lawyers, the police and the priests, the landowners and civil servants, the officers and employers. There is no citizen who does not feel free—free to make his own choices and decide his own future. Before long everyone has a plan in his pocket for remaking the country. As the bards of the revolution foretold, a new era in the history of man is beginning.

A great cry of yearning rose from the depths of all the Russias, mingled with the voices of the downtrodden and wretched. They laid bare their sufferings, their hopes, their dreams. And, as in a dream, they had a few truly unforgettable moments. In Moscow, workers forced their employer to learn the fundamentals of the labor law of the future. In Odessa, students dictated to their professor a new curriculum for the history of civilizations. In Petrograd, actors took over from their theater manager and chose their own production. In the army, soldiers invited the chaplain to attend their meetings "in order to give some meaning to his life." Even children demanded "for those under fourteen the right to learn boxing so that they could make their elders listen to them." It was a world turned upside down.[1]

1. These facts will be presented in volume 2 of the present author's *Révolution de 1917* to be published by Aubier-Montaigne this year.

See the bibliography of Gerhard Wettig in "Die Rolle der russischen Armee im revolutionären Machtkampf 1917," *Forschungen zur osteuropäischen Geschichte*, 12 (1967): 46–389, which discusses revolutionary events up to July. On the behavior of the troops, three recent works should be cited: Alexander Rabinowitch, *Prelude to Revolution: The Petrograd Bolsheviks and the July 1917 Uprising* (Bloomington, 1968), which puts forward some very interesting points of view; A. L. Sidorov, ed., *Revoliutsionnoe dvizhenie v armii i na flote v gody pervoi mirovoi voiny* (Moscow, 1966); L. S. Gaponenko, ed., *Revoliutsionnoe dvizhenie v russkoi armii v 1917 g.* (Moscow, 1968), which publishes documents showing the Bolshevization of the army, though not others. At least these texts are published unabridged.

This article is based on an analysis of certain archival records: Central State Archives of the October Revolution (TsGAOR), Moscow Regional Archives (GAOR-MO), Leningrad Regional Archives (GAOR-LO), Leningrad Historical Archives (TsGIAL), Central State Military-Historical Archives (TsGVIA). References to Soviet archives give in order the number of *fond*, section, file, and, if applicable, the document. The evidence

The dismay of those whose authority was supposedly based on ability, knowledge, public service, if not just the good old divine right of kings, may be easily imagined. Even the priests of the most extreme faith, socialism, united with the others in thinking that if they bided their time the temper of the people would in the end moderate. In March Stalin appealed for a return to military discipline; in June Kropotkin went even further. Maxim Gorky had for some time been angered because there was no getting down to work again: "Enough of talking," he said, "enough of talking."

By no means the least perturbed were the military commanders. To be sure, the February Revolution had broken out in the streets and was the handiwork of all, but the part played by the soldiers had been all-important —as it was in April and again in June, July, September, and October. But now not only the troops at the rear were involved; those at the front had also joined in the movement and, in the face of the Germans, had thrown into question one of the oldest traditions—army discipline.

Historical tradition, based mainly on material provided by military or political leaders, has relegated these troops to the background. They appear only when spotlighted in the messages of congratulation from their superiors or in the words of political oracles. This study deals with their reactions, both at the front and at the rear, and seeks to analyze the feelings of the ordinary soldier faced with war and revolution.[2]

At the fall of the tsarist government, there was an outburst of joy among the soldiers at the front that was equaled by those at the rear. The letters and telegrams they sent to the Petrograd Soviet and the Provisional Government divulged their miseries, desires, and aspirations.[3] In this respect they behaved like other sections of the population, but with one difference. For the workers the Soviet to which they appealed was one of two powers born of the February Revolution, the organ of their class confronting the government—but there was no such duality for the soldiers. The majority expressed confidence in the Soviet and considered the government to be merely an executive body; only a small minority declared their confidence in the government or recommended that the two should come to agreement.[4] Besides,

for some points is to be found in archives of the French Military Mission in Russia, referred to as Vincennes, and of the Russian Chancellery in Helsinki.

2. I hope to answer the question put by Leonard Schapiro in Richard Pipes, ed., *Revolutionary Russia* (Cambridge, Mass., 1968), p. 208.

3. A thematic analysis of letters and resolutions sent by workers and peasants can be found in *Revolutionary Russia,* pp. 197–99. The appendix to this article gives a table relating to the first hundred resolutions from soldiers published in *Izvestiia* (see p. 512).

4. In one hundred texts, they declare their confidence in the Petrograd Soviet twenty times compared with eight times in the government; seven times they request the two to come to an agreement. These last telegrams are often cosigned by soldiers and officers. See the table appended.

the workers were often members of trade unions or political parties which spoke on their behalf. No one spoke for the soldiers except the soldiers themselves. Consequently for most of them the Petrograd Soviet was the only body whose legitimacy they recognized, and it was also their sole means of expression. In answer to its call they had set up committees at company or battalion level (soon to be called soviets), and their representatives took part in debates in the Petrograd Soviet, where they felt at home. The reactions of militant workers and party men confirm this impression. Military representation having evaded the politicals' grasp, they sought to reduce or eliminate it on the pretext that "the soldiers constituted the most counterrevolutionary element of the revolution."[5] Within a few months the soldiers came to realize this and their behavior changed.

In March and April front-line soldiers, like those at the rear, expressed hopes that to some extent reiterated and developed various items of Order No. 1. The soldiers aired grievances against their officers for abuses they had suffered: excessive penalties, acts of violence, coarse language, injustice, and arbitrary punishment. Soldiers were human beings—they would no longer accept humiliating practices such as the use of familiar forms of address and other degrading formulas like saluting and standing at attention. As citizens they demanded the rights that henceforward would be enjoyed by civilians—access to information, right of assembly, petition. Order No. 1 stated that soldiers in the ranks and on active duty were under the strictest military discipline, but that in their private and political lives they could not be denied the rights, possessed by all other citizens, of assembly and debate, information, and political representation. These wishes were constantly reiterated in the great number of resolutions that were intended to transform the entire army statute.[6] To these complaints were added those of the soldiers of all countries. They had lived through a nightmare for more than two years and were old before their time. And who behind the lines appreciated this and could truly judge the extent of their sacrifice? They asked that their living conditions be improved and that the government and General Staff give some thought to their daily existence and to the bad food they were reduced to eating. Then too, remembering the state of penury of their wives and children, often destitute since the mobilization, they asked for higher pay, an increase in the family allowance, and guarantees in case they became permanently disabled and could no longer work and support their families.

The double status of the Russian soldier as citizen and combatant is evident in these demands, but not his social origin, even though most of the

5. In Marc Ferro, *La Révolution de 1917: La chute de tsarisme et les origines d'octobre* (Paris, 1967), pp. 252–53.

6. In twenty-five resolutions out of a hundred.

troops came from the peasantry.[7] The soldiers of non-Russian extraction sometimes exhibited ethnic concerns. Though the Jewish soldiers of the Twenty-fifth and Twenty-ninth Corps, for example, ignored the fact that they were Jews and identified with the democracy in the making, other Jewish troops, as well as Ukrainians and Balts, relied on the revolution to carry out the principles which it claimed to embody. They expected the new regime to acknowledge their identity as well as that of the nation to which they belonged. The non-Russians frequently declared that their attitude toward the new government would depend on whether they would be allowed to form separate military units. This was true of many of the Ukrainian, Baltic, and Polish troops as well as of Jews and Georgians.[8]

The large number of texts proposing modifications of the military regulations, referring to combatants' rights within the nation, or demanding the right of national minorities to have separate military units proves that the fighting men did not expect to return home soon. True, they hoped that the establishment of the new regime would hasten the end of the war, but this did not imply that they thought of taking any direct steps themselves to bring it about. Instead they reiterated that "to take into consideration the soldiers' wishes would strengthen the fighting spirit of Free Russia," and they specified that alterations of the statute "did not apply on duty or on active service."[9] They displayed a strong awareness of their patriotic duty, not only the Russians but the Ukrainians and other non-Russians as well, for whom (apart from the separatist mental reservations already entertained by some) this was an opportunity to demonstrate that it was not just in uniform that they were as good as the Russians. They had equaled the Russians only on the battlefield, but to some extent their status as soldiers had enlightened and stimulated them, which partly explains why some non-Russian troops subsequently rallied to the military command, later embodied in Kornilov and others.

Consequently in the minds of the soldiers Order No. 1 and subsequent developments in no way implied "the death of the army" any more than the "denial of discipline." After the Stokhod alarm on March 10 the soldiers wrote, "Contrary to what has been said, discipline tightened up during the fighting, for the soldiers now had a sense of their responsibilities; not one failed even at the worst moments." At most the troops demanded the eradi-

7. This topic is mentioned in letters even more frequently than in resolutions; see *Soldatskie pis'ma 1917 g.* (Moscow, 1927), with preface by Pokrovsky. Demands for land appear only seven times in the first hundred resolutions published by *Izvestiia.*

8. On the Jews: GAOR-LO, 7384, 9, 143, 60, and 7384, 9, 161, 17. On other nationalities see the article by the present author in *Cahiers du monde russe et soviétique*, 2 (1961): 145–47.

9. As from March 10, see *Izvestiia* of that date, p. 8.

cation of a certain conception of discipline. At that time, though they may have held some officers responsible for abuses, they still ascribed the general disciplinary regulations to the autocracy, and it seemed to them that their radical modification by the new regime went without saying. Gerhard Wettig has seen clearly that except for outrages against those who opposed the triumph of the revolution "the soldiers were not conscious of attacking their officers regarding fundamentals; they wanted to participate in the revolutionary movement. It was not in their minds to change the military system but to take part [in all that was to be decided]. If the officers declared their loyalty to the revolution they were acknowledged as legitimately in command and the soldiers became 'loyal' again."[10]

But the reaction of most of the officers made the soldiers realize that the military set-up was an expression of the old regime. Order No. 1 had outraged the officer class, for it struck a blow at their rights of decision and command. The roles were reversed in that the soldiers had dictated a decision, and it was one that had the specific effect of restricting officers' rights. Already some among them considered themselves dishonored for having submitted to the change of government or, on the other hand, for not having taken part in it. Consequently in the eyes of the soldiers the officers identified themselves with the old discipline and by that very fact with the old regime.

No doubt the tradition of obedience to the hierarchy inhibited a good many of the officers so that they could not ignore the directives of the General Staff, which was hostile to any transformation. But when it came to taking soldiers' wishes into consideration concerning the democratization of the army, General Alekseev stated to Guchkov that in his capacity as commander in chief he refused to consider methods which would lead to the destruction of *his* army. He gave the tone, and in spite of all the committees (including officers) and the proposals for declarations on soldiers' rights, from then on many officers thought that any alteration of the rules made under compulsion was an insult to their rank, a slur on their honor, a "blow struck at Russia." The same was true of questions regarding recognition of soldiers' political rights and of the legitimacy of political discussion within the army.

Such questioning of the military establishment aroused the indignation of the officers. Some tried to justify its continuation, and in this they were helped by the efforts of the Allied Military Mission. General Janin, for instance, asked the Ministry of War in Paris to send him the military regulations of the time of the French Revolution, especially those pertaining to deserters: "I recall that de Hoche gave very strict orders on this subject, and Gouvion St. Cyr remarks on the severity of regulations in the Rhine-

10. Wettig, "Die Rolle der russischen Armee," pp. 186 ff.

Moselle Army." Another time he wanted to know "how many deserters had been shot in the French Army."[11]

But most officers did not even attempt to support their arguments by recourse to history. To admit that ordinary soldiers were citizens like themselves, to discuss matters in a "committee," on equal terms with them, was intolerable. They believed the soldiers incapable of dealing with problems which they considered strictly within their own jurisdiction. They began to realize with misgivings that they had never pondered the issues now being broached at the meetings, whether those issues were political or merely disciplinary. Protected by an institution as old as the army was, they had never bothered to analyze it or work out its relation to the social and political systems. Besides, they had always shown a complete lack of interest regarding public affairs (Denikin and Kerensky agreed in deploring this attitude), and they had no idea how to handle general political questions.[12] Even more than in the armies of the other belligerents, Russian officers had lived apart from civilian society, and the first meetings held in March and April brutally revealed their political ignorance, their complete incapacity to deal with questions that some junior officers, noncommissioned officers, or soldiers were able to handle with ease. During the first weeks of the revolution many officers had taken part in political meetings, but they soon withdrew, for their inability to discuss problems of war or peace could have endangered their authority as officers and could have raised doubts about the legitimacy of their right to command. But the wind changed, and one of the first concerns of the General Staff, in August, was to control the discussions and to oblige soldiers to inform their superiors of the subject of their contribution to the debate before taking the floor. They intended next to abolish all political discussion within the army, but the Kornilov affair interrupted this process and brought it to an end.

An important minority of junior officers adopted a different attitude. This group seems to have been composed mainly of sergeant-majors and lieutenants who lived with the soldiers in the trenches and ran the same risks. A kind of "spirit of the front" was able to draw together men who had nothing in common in civilian life. These junior officers and soldiers shared strong feelings of resentment against the General Staff and everyone else who was unaware of the price of their sacrifice—those behind the lines and others who profited from war.

The fact remains, however, that for the great majority of officers—

11. Vincennes, Na. 6, cartons 4 and 9.

12. To this known evidence we can add General Verkhovsky's private remark to the chief of the French Military Mission: "Our officers lack political education and know how to cope with extremist parties only. . . . They do not even try to gain the confidence of their men." Vincennes, Bulletin 12 of the 2è Bureau, p. 19.

revolution or not—relations with the troops were of the simplest. The soldier was judged by his capacity to obey, to salute, to stand at attention. The salute was the true test of obedience. But after Order No. 1, soldiers no longer saluted as before; nor did they obey as before: "Up till now every time I gave an order the soldiers carried it out; this is no longer done. Invariably one of them, referring to the printed text in his hands, would say, no, this is not done any longer. If I asked to see the text, he would not give it to me."[13]

These were the first consequences of Order No. 1 which the General Staff and the Provisional Government tried to obviate by the device of making the soldiers swear loyalty to the new regime. This oath would allow a revival of the habit of obedience without discussion or comprehension. The soldiers contested this oath with as much vigor as the Soviets and the political parties. They felt that "this was a way to rob them of their freedom." A provincial soviet went even further: "It is the government that should take an oath of loyalty to the soldiers." Some units took the oath, others did not, and that was as far as it went. But the officers were indignant, for they were convinced that without the oath and the salute there would be no discipline, and without discipline, no army. In the face of the enemy, lack of discipline was the equivalent of treason, and from treason to the scaffold was but a short step. This syllogism constituted the entire mental framework of many of the officers. No hatred was involved; rather they felt some pity for those they considered untutored, intoxicated with freedom, and in need of being saved against their will from the effects of a propaganda that might lead them straight to the scaffold.

For no one doubted that "it could not last." But it did, in spite of all the Orders and all the proposed reforms.[14] After the setback of the July Days some cherished the illusion that the period of rot had come to an end and order would once more reign. The officers had shown for some time, as the soldiers and noncommissioned officers of the fortress of Kiev had pointed out, that "they could make no sense of our revolution."[15] Six months after the fall of the tsar, General Ostriansky sent a report to General Headquarters asking what steps were being considered to re-establish the power of the army. According to him, "at all costs preventive measures [*sic*] had to be taken to revive the habit of obedience in the soldier and so to be able to rescue him from the death penalty. Above all, the practice of saluting should be reinstated, but with modifications. For instance, it could be abolished in

13. See *Revoliutsionnoe dvizhenie v Rossii posle sverzheniia samoderzhaviia* (Moscow, 1957), pp. 613 ff.

14. On the oath and reforms planned by Guchkov and Kerensky, refer to all works on the army and finally to Wettig.

15. GAOR-LO, 7384, 9, 228, 7.

railway stations and in the trenches, and the distance could be reduced to forty paces and even to five in certain cases."[16] That same summer a general of the Army of the Caucasus thought that the virtues of obedience could be revived by substituting physical exercise for the gambling and card-playing that were indulged in during off-duty hours. Tired out, the soldiers would not have the energy to disobey. The troops in question were Georgians, Armenians, and Azeris. They mutinied, and the unfortunate officer, for having shown such a lamentable ignorance of psychology, soon died a victim of their brutalities.[17]

In the background there was obviously the problem of peace. But its connection with questions of discipline and officers' behavior was not evident; it came to light only through experience. The soldiers in their petitions did not dare—with some exceptions—to express their desire for peace, no matter how natural, until the appeal of the Soviet on March 14. Before the fall of the tsarist regime it had been a constant theme in their letters and demands. Thus it was that for two to three weeks the soldiers, dreaming only of peace, expressed themselves solely in terms of their patriotic duty. Let us make an effort to understand them.[18]

On the morrow of the fall of the tsar, yearnings for peace were rarely expressed. Like everyone else the troops called for the meeting of a constituent assembly, the setting up of a democratic republic, and a whole series of measures of political and social import, none of them very specific, whose true significance was not yet clear. For the rest they confined themselves to demands bearing on their status as both combatants and citizens, which implied that they did not expect an immediate end to the war. To be sure, their desire for it was undiminished even though they declared their readiness to fulfill their patriotic duty—had they been fully sure about this, they might

16. July 28, the 136th Infantry Division, Southwest Army, TsGVIA, 2067, I, 60–71.

17. TsGAOR, 3, I, 362, 369 ff. Another writes, "The misfortune is that the soldiers, having had scarcely any military training, do not know how to *obey*" (TsGVIA, 2148, I, 813, 305). Regarding relations between officers and men the following example concerning Czech soldiers may be quoted: "Soldiers of the Second Regiment appalled their commanding officer, Khotkevich, by responding to his morning salute with the words, 'Thank you, Colonel.' The old colonel left his headquarters in great haste to confer with his aide-de-camp under the impression that his regiment had mutinied. He then learned that the title of Excellency had been abolished by a staff order." Quoted by J. F. N. Bradley in *La Légion Tchécoslovaque en Russie, 1914–1920* (Paris, 1965), p. 52.

18. On the desire for peace before the February Revolution, see Sidorov, *Revoliutsionnoe dvizhenie v armii i na flote,* pp. 146–313. Of the one hundred resolutions published during March in *Izvestiia* fifty-one deal with the question of war and peace. Twenty-four of these confirm the determination of the petitioners to "carry out their patriotic duty." Another twenty-four broach the question of peace, but all but three are subsequent to the appeal of the Soviet.

not have emphasized it so strongly. All the same, on March 4 sailors of the Helsingfors testing grounds "demanded that the government officially approach the German people with a note inviting them to overthrow the kaiser and initiate peace negotiations." Some soldiers informed the Soviet that "for the troops a change of regime betokened the end of the war."[19] On March 10 a group of soldiers of the 202nd Regiment wrote, "As regards the war and its continued prosecution we believe that as long as 'our dear cousin' is at the head of the German nation, any agitation against national defense . . . is untimely. . . . In actual fact the public is weary of it, the misery of the people is beyond measure, and there is no shadow of doubt that it is essential to bring the war to an end. But in order to do so the Soviet and other workers' organizations with authority must take the first steps and make contact with the workers' parties of the allied or enemy powers to hasten the end of the war and conclude peace. Where a Sazonov, a Lloyd George, a Bethmann-Hollweg cannot succeed, a Kerensky, a Liebknecht, a Guesde should be able to. But until then the Russian army must hold its external enemy in check."[20]

This was the feeling of the majority. Still influenced by official propaganda, the soldiers of the Sixth Artillery Park asked the Petrograd Soviet if those who talked of making peace or who supported the views of workers on strike should not be considered agitators.[21] They were not alone in this opinion. Discussions among Bolsheviks or Menshevik-Internationalists bear witness that on the question of peace, no matter what the proposed attitude, militant workers had the greatest difficulty in talking to the troops about peace.[22] In Russia as in all other belligerent countries a silent antagonism, cutting across class barriers, had for a long time set the men at the front against those at the rear. In the opinion of the soldiers, those behind the lines were all shirkers and profiteers—above all the bourgeoisie and kulaks, but also the workers. The latter especially enraged the soldiers because they had the effrontery to make demands when their lives were not endangered. Undoubtedly the workers led a miserable life, but it was still preferable to the life of the fighting men. Numerous letters from soldiers point out that "while workers complain of working more than eight hours a day, soldiers stay in the cold in trenches round the clock." The sailors felt the same way. Three years of war had given many combatant troops a veterans' mentality. The tsar, priests, and officers were no longer the only ones to identify themselves with Russia—the fighting men did too. Moreover, they refused to admit that the war could be discussed by anyone who had not taken part in

19. TsGIAL, 1278, 5, and 1329, 1 to 4, and *Revoliutsionnoe dvizhenie v Rossii posle sverzheniia samoderzhaviia,* p. 627.

20. 202nd Mountain Regiment, GAOR-LO, 7384, 9, 244, 63a and b, 64.

21. GAOR-LO, 7384, 9, 244, 33.

22. See Ferro, *Révolution de 1917,* pp. 260–64 and 278–82.

it; it was inadmissible to criticize the war if one had not been a participant. Such a right was theirs and theirs alone. To point out the imperialistic nature of the war amounted to questioning the justification for their sacrifice, which was horrible and not to be borne. Witness the demonstration of the disabled in mid-April, when those poor wretches shook their fists at Lenin. His victory would mean that for three years they had been made fools of.[23]

The government's propaganda for "war until victory" thus met with a favorable response. In March it began to have results, and the General Staff, like the bourgeois leaders, were agreeably surprised. In Petrograd, bands of armed soldiers kept a close watch on factories to see that the workers kept on working. Everywhere squads of soldiers marched in procession carrying banners reading, "Soldiers to the trenches, workers to the factories." In Moscow there were difficulties. The intellectuals who controlled the Moscow Soviet mistrusted the soldiers, because in the light of Marxist doctrine they were regarded as peasants and "the most counterrevolutionary element of the revolution." The intellectuals could not see that these soldiers, even if they had never been at the front, behaved *like* the fighting men: in keeping watch on the workers and preventing them from going on strike they believed they were carrying out their patriotic duty.[24]

The militants from the workers' parties found it very difficult to combat this attitude. Leading circles unwittingly helped them by preventing any real transformation of the military system, or democratization, or liberalization.

From then on, among the soldiers, it was a question of what would get the upper hand, their resentment of the General Staff and other officers or their animosity toward the objectors and shirkers in the rear. The militant action of the Soviet representatives tipped the balance; from April onward numerous contingents of soldiers began to declare their solidarity with the working class. A certain ambiguity, however, accompanied the process; for example, to a message of friendship and unity with the working class, the soldiers and citizens of the Irkutsk Thirteenth Hussars added a rider: "But produce arms for *us* so that *your* liberty can be defended."[25]

23. GAOR-LO, 7384, 9, 259 for the soldiers, and TsGAOR, 1244, I, 15, 118 for the sailors. This psychological factor is more often expressed in novels and films than in archives. It is no less important for that and is encountered in all countries at war.

24. This fact is constantly confirmed in A. Shliapnikov, *Semnadtsatyi god,* 4 vols. (Moscow and Leningrad, 1925–31), 2:136 ff., and in N. N. Sukhanov, *Zapiski o revoliutsii,* 7 vols. (Berlin, St. Petersburg, and Moscow, 1922–23), 2:307 ff. He explains above all the need for the workmen to form their own guard. On other aspects of the problem see V. I. Startsev, *Ocherki po istorii petrogradskoi krasnoi gvardii rabochei militsii* (Leningrad, 1965).

25. "There are encouraging symptoms of a military reaction"—the French ambassador, Maurice Paléologue, to his minister, toward the end of March. "The troops reproach the workmen for their despotism, their arrogance, excessive wages. This explains the

Naturally the soldiers' animosity was mainly toward the bourgeoisie—all those who advocated "war to the bitter end," "war to the death," and who "fill their bellies while we die of hunger like dogs." *Citizen Soldier* treated this subject with eloquence: "To the end of time caws the crow, scraping clean the human bones on the field of battle! . . . what matters to him the aged mother awaiting the return of her son or the octogenarian steering the plow with trembling hands? War to the bitter end, cries the student, who draws thousands to the marketplace and assures them that all our misfortunes are caused by the Germans. Meanwhile his father, who has sold oats at sixteen rubles per bushel, sits in a noisy restaurant where he holds forth on the same ideas. Can the soldiers who line the trenches cry 'war to the bitter end'? No. What they say is very different. Comrade, let those who call for war to the bitter end be sent at once to the front—we will see what they have to say then." This theme, like the rallying cry "the bourgeois to the trenches, the bourgeois to the factories," made its appearance at the start of the revolution in much the same way as the first pacifist slogans.[26]

All this was changed on March 14, when the Soviet called for peace without annexations or indemnities. This initiative removed a weighty obligation: it was no longer irresponsible groups but the revolutionary authorities who were publicly broaching the question of war and peace. Given such official support, messages urging peace abruptly multiplied, often quoting word for word one or another passage from the March 14 appeal. From then on, the struggle for peace (without annexations or indemnities) did not conflict with protection of the homeland. Implementation of this new policy was in the hands of those who enjoyed the new legitimacy, the Congress of the Soviets. The word of the Soviet was the revolutionary truth. It was also that of the country, and thanks to the soldiers it would become that of the government. Like a torrent it swept from its path all obstacles, including Guchkov and Miliukov in the April crisis.

The authority of the Petrograd Soviet was at its height, as is proved by the fact that the soldiers at once obeyed its orders to stop fraternizing. This

patriotic demonstrations" (Vincennes, Na. 6-4, code telegram 404). On the justice of these criticisms see above. On the solidarity with the working class see GAOR-LO, 7384, 9, 158 (about forty documents). Text from the Thirteenth Hussars, GAOR-LO, 7384, 9, 158, 29. Again in May, soldiers of the Northern Army asked railway workers to stop their strike so that the soldiers could "save them." See TsGVIA, 2031, I, 1585.

26. *Soldat Grazhdanin* text of May 25, 1917. Other complaints, for instance those of the 302nd Reserve, are found in *Spartak*, June 6, p. 29. As the soldiers of the Thirteenth Motorized Section said, "We who eat only cabbage and kasha" (TsGAOR, 6978, I, 356, 40). The idea of sending to the front all those calling for "war to the bitter end" is expressed as early as March (see TsGIAL, 1278, 5, 1251, 48). This was not peculiar to Russia; for France see the trench newspapers, and for Italy the testimony collected by M. Isnenghi, *I vinti di Caporetto* (Padua, 1967).

fraternization bears eloquent witness to the way the troops had tried to reconcile their patriotic duty and their yearnings for peace, and can only be understood by referring to the relations between officers and soldiers.

Both in the lines and at the rear these relations continued to deteriorate. The attitude of the officers toward peace was an additional reason for this. Proponents of war to "total victory," they drew support from the position of the Kadets and the majority of ministers. The latter had high hopes that a continuation of the war would stifle the revolution. More specifically they realized that the old structures of state and society had been shattered and that the military establishment was the only one that might survive, provided it had a reason for being—which could only be the need to combat the enemy. From this point of view any military operation initiated by the Germans would aid the opponents of the Soviets, for it gave them the opportunity to resume control of the troops under cover of necessity. The General Staff could again play its proper part, demand reinforcements from the rear, impose control on civilian authorities, and put the Soviet in an awkward position. Militant workers, Soviet leaders, and the Soldiers' Section had then realized very well that in carrying out offensive operations on the pretext of safeguarding defense lines the army could be transformed into an obedient tool, the first step in a counterrevolution. Thus any operational order or decision emanating from the discredited officers and aimed at reviving fighting spirit was suspect.[27]

Wettig has clearly discerned that for innumerable soldiers who as yet knew nothing of Bolshevism, the officer might thus appear to be an even more dangerous enemy than the Germans. The soldiers were afraid that officers would suppress "genuine orders" in the same way that they had tried to conceal from the troops the extent and significance of the events in Petrograd. They also feared that the officers might deliberately hand over positions to the enemy in order to have a legitimate excuse for resuming military operations that would allow them to regain control over the army. The General Staff was thought capable, with the complicity of the artillerymen, of creating a disastrous incident at a time when a period of calm might become a prelude to peace.[28] Thus one might suggest that by fraternizing, as they increasingly did in April, the soldiers were not only expressing their ardent desire for peace, they were also accomplishing an act of patriotism. Did not the "treachery" of the officers carry the risk of opening the road to the enemy when an absence of military operations might ward off the twofold danger of invasion and counterrevolution that was

27. This point is developed later on.

28. Wettig, "Die Rolle der russischen Armee," pp. 192 ff., 264 ff. See also the letters published in *Spartak*, June 6, 1917, pp. 27 ff.

threatening Russia? Such a situation was to arise in September and October after the loss of Riga.

Their fellows in the enemy trenches were men like themselves: they were living out the same tragedy. It might be possible to come to an understanding with them, to throttle any attempt, whatever its source, to resume active military operations, and to prove to the Germans that they were tools in the hands of the kaiser's militaristic and imperialistic ambitions. The simple manifestations that occurred when soldiers, filled with emotion, exchanged rations and souvenirs should be regarded as no more than a stammer in favor of peace. (There had been instances of fraternization before the 1917 Revolution, but only at holidays, especially Easter. In 1917 the soldiers also fraternized at Easter time.)[29] Fraternizing might be a way of making a return to active operations impossible. This in any case is how the fighting men reasoned. They tried to ignore the fact that it was often the German High Command that took the initiative in encouraging fraternization. When their own officers tried to explain how the Germans might profit from doing so, the soldiers refused to believe them. They were in fact more willing to trust the German soldiers and even German officers than their own officers. The dispersal by gunfire of soldiers who were fraternizing gave further grounds for the troops' hatred of the General Staff and the artillerymen.

Bolshevik propaganda, now in favor of the movement, had not been so in the beginning. Lenin had even thought the first fraternizing moves to be tinged with anarchy. Nevertheless he encouraged them as soon as they became substantial, and sought to gain profit thereby for the party. But the militants who had been sent to the armies, such as Mikhailov (Frunze), had to change their tune when the Petrograd Soviet officially condemned fraternization (April 30). Once again the soldiers obeyed the legitimate revolutionary authority, and it alone: the Bolsheviks had gone to all their trouble for nothing. Just the same, they managed to take advantage of the situation by condemning the methods used by the officers to put an end to fraternizing.[30]

29. See the Sidorov anthology, *Revoliutsionnoe dvizhenie v armii i na flote,* as well as *Tsarskaia Armiia, v period mirovoi voiny v fevral'skoi revoliutsii,* documents assembled by M. Volfovich and E. Medvedev (Kazan, 1932), pp. 87–91.

30. Wettig is mistaken in asserting that the Soviets were "in agreement from the beginning with fraternization." He adds that "there is no proof that they collaborated, as the Duma accused them of doing, but they did not dissociate themselves from fraternization and tried to defend it." The fact is that at first, surprised by fraternization, the Soviet leaders unequivocally condemned it. See *Izvestiia,* April 30, and documents published by the Soviets regarding Mikhailov's tour in L. S. Gaponenko et al., eds., *Revoliutsionnoe dvizhenie v Rossii v aprele 1917 g.: Aprel'skii krizis* (Moscow, 1958), pp. 547–58, and D. A. Chugaev et al., eds., *Revoliutsionnoe dvizhenie v Rossii v mae-iiune 1917 g.* (Moscow, 1959), pp. 331–32.

In the rear the analyses and propaganda of anarchist and Bolshevik circles had helped the soldiers, better informed there than those at the front, to work out the relation between the "Miliukov Note," discussions on the need for active operations, their own transfer to the front, and their replacement by units less well informed politically. This explains the fact that the soldiers at the rear took the initiative in the April days. The appointment of Kerensky, vice president of the Petrograd Soviet, as minister of war, however, bewildered the soldiers. But for many of them active military operations again became legitimate because the supreme revolutionary authority supported them. "Defensist" ideas thus gained ground in May, and Kerensky's tour helped revive the fighting spirit.[31] No doubt, as liberal officers remarked, "only a handful of soldiers were prepared to carry out their military duty even though a great many proclaimed their readiness to do so." May indeed saw the beginnings of the campaign of soldiers over forty asking to go home. Nevertheless the fact remains that a great many units sent messages to the Soviet along these lines, some going as far as to applaud the temporary halting of leaves. Others approved the "rotation of combatants" planned by Kerensky for troops that had not been at the front, a step which at that time might have had the effect of setting the fighting men at loggerheads once again with the troops in the rear. This period was also the most prolific in petitions against deserters.[32]

The June 16 offensive took place; numerous units volunteered, and the troops took a very active part. Even so, for many of the combatants, any decision that resulted in restoring authority to the officers or General Staff was already automatically suspect and counterrevolutionary, whatever the aims supposedly or in fact pursued. This is why a number of units refused to take part in the offensive, while others refused to be transferred and demonstrated against Kerensky and the government's action. It is, therefore, a mistake to attribute the origin of the July Days to the failure of the offensive (and even more a mistake to blame it on the resignation of the Kadet ministers, which occurred only later and served merely to call attention to what

31. Numerous resolutions from Russian units were in favor of active operations—for example, First Light Battery of the Sixty-sixth Artillery, TsGAOR, 1244, I, 15, 246; First Siberian Rifles, Artillery Park of the Seventeenth Infantry Division, Fourteenth Don Cossacks; Fifteenth Cavalry Division; Second Siberian Corps; Seventieth Infantry Regiment; 718th Infantry; Sixth Squadron of Cossack Cavalry, TsGVIA, 2031, I, 1585; also the Thirty-eighth Regiment of the Third Army and the hospital ship *Ariadna*. All these resolutions emanated from units on the northern front, including a certain number of non-Russian units that had volunteered.

32. For example, the 669th Infantry, Second Battery of the Twelfth Heavy Artillery, TsGAOR, 1244, I, 15, 241 and 242. The Second Battery of the Twenty-fourth Siberian Regiment in item 3 asks for "action against deserters but also against shirkers," in item 7 "that the Death Battalions be sent to the trenches instead of parading in the rear," in GAOR-LO, 7384, 9, 243, 3.

had happened). The true cause is found in the fact that an offensive was even attempted. Whether it succeeded or failed, it was the start of a process to resume control of the army and thereafter of society, which ran counter to the deepening of the revolution. Moreover, the decision to take the offensive played its part in a wider context which confirms its significance. The campaign against anarchy, the flare-up of anti-Semitism, and the stirring of nationalist sentiments were all elements that the authorities relied on to be at work among those forces that were reorganizing themselves—the Church, the Cossacks, the Stavka Officers' Congress, the Kadets (considered by the troops to be the officers' party).[33]

In order to understand the way in which the forces of authority weakened before disappearing, let us forsake for awhile the history of the revolution in the large and immerse ourselves in the life of the soldiers as seen in one of the regiments of the Second Grenadier Guards Division. Their story is known in detail because on June 20 they refused to take part in the offensive and remained in the village of Krasno. Sixty-seven of them were court-martialed after the July Days. The formal charges show how the soldiers and officers lived through the first months of the revolution:

> In March a regimental committee and company committees were elected as in other regiments. They included representatives of the soldiers and the officers. Lieutenant Dzevaltovsky, commander of the Fourteenth Company, was elected chairman. At first the committee dealt only with everyday affairs and did not concern itself with military operations.
>
> At the end of March Lieutenant Dzevaltovsky was named regimental delegate to Petrograd. He returned about April 20. Until then he had been an excellent officer of considerable ability, but following this visit to Petrograd there was an abrupt change in his behavior. In the first place he declared that the way in which the committee had been elected was not democratic and that there should not be separate representatives of officers and soldiers on the regimental committee. He insisted on holding another election in which officers and soldiers would stand for membership on a single list.
>
> On May 13 a new committee was elected. It comprised a captain, two lieutenants, an ensign, and thirty-two soldiers. Dzevaltovsky was again elected chairman, and at his request the committee took the name of soviet.
>
> From then on the committee began to interest itself not only in the lives of members of the regiment but also in military matters not excepting operational questions. Things reached a point where no decision could be taken in the regiment without the agreement of the soviet. Moreover, Lieutenant Dzevaltovsky gained control over the soviet to such an extent that he became the effective head of the regiment, while the regimental commander was no longer able to give the smallest order without having consulted him.

33. The same conclusions are reached by Rabinowitch, investigating the causes of the July Days. For the general context see the present author's *Révolution de 1917,* pp. 438–67, and O. N. Znamensky, *Iiul'skii krizis 1917 g.* (Moscow, 1964), pp. 12–22.

At meetings of the soviet, as also at regimental meetings . . . the soldiers, under the influence of Lieutenant Dzevaltovsky's personal charm, paid attention only to his speeches, believed only in him and in him alone. In order to achieve this result, he used methods not usually employed by officers. For instance, when asked if he was rich he replied that he had no money himself, that his parents did, that no doubt their wealth was ill-gotten but that he did not know by what means. And so he destroyed any confidence the soldiers might have had in their officers. . . .

He had brought back with him from Petrograd a draft declaration of soldiers' rights. He authorized the application of this declaration before it had been officially promulgated, and he evinced great surprise [that it had not already been applied], thus throwing on the officers the suspicion of having concealed the existence of this declaration from the soldiers.

At about this time Lieutenant Dzevaltovsky began to proclaim openly that he belonged to the Bolshevik group, the Lenin Faction. . . . He started to organize the party within the regiment and increased the number of meetings reserved for members of the party only. The others therefore could not attend, particularly the officers. At these meetings he reiterated that this was nothing but a bourgeois and capitalist war, that it served no purpose for the proletariat, that it had to be stopped through peace negotiations.

Until then there had been no fraternization with the Germans. It began immediately after the return of Dzevaltovsky from Petrograd. He believed that by fraternizing one could converse with the enemy, influence him, and soon put a stop to the war. In reply to a question from the Staff bearing on the prohibition of fraternization he answered evasively, and when fraternization stopped in other regiments, Lieutenant Dzevaltovsky said that the subject was very complicated and should be approached with caution. "You find it detrimental and I consider it useful," he said.

Moreover, anticipating the soldiers' grievances . . . , Dzevaltovsky expressed the opinion, to which the uneducated masses are so susceptible, that the government was not concerned with the real interests of the public. On the agrarian question he said the land should be taken over at once: the *uezd* committees had seized the land and their action should be imitated because there could be no confidence in the government. . . . He told them that they should refuse to take part in the offensive, for if they died, liberty would be of no use to them. He reiterated that in any case they were not obliged to obey orders, because from now on all decisions should come from the soldiers themselves.

Regulating the private life of members of the regiment, Lieutenant Dzevaltovsky introduced censorship of incoming correspondence. All newspapers went through the hands of the soviet, and many to which officers subscribed were seized, such as *Kievskaia mysl'* and *Kievlianin*. Others to which the officers subscribed were distributed to the ranks. Letters were censored too, and one witness even had a letter stamped by the Ninth Company censor. . . . At one of the meetings of the soviet it was decided to set up a liaison service so that company soviets could have access to all information received by telegraph by the regimental commander. This decision was put into force and it appears in the formal records of the June 18 meeting. In fact, according to witnesses, one company received only two telegrams in all, because they lacked a representative.

At meetings, proposals by Lieutenant Dzevaltovsky were adopted, it being

impossible not to take them into consideration or to disagree with them, for immediately . . . the soldiers booed the speaker and forced him to leave the platform. Soon those who were not approved could no longer speak. For instance, when Lieutenant Itkin, representing a delegation of Black Sea sailors, visited the regiment to "boost the morale of the Grenadiers" and inform them of decisions taken (at Sevastopol) regarding the war, Lieutenant Dzevaltovsky told him plainly that it was nothing to do with them, that he would not be allowed to speak, and that in any case there was no point in listening to him. Similarly, when the commissar of the Second Army wanted to instruct the troops, Lieutenant Dzevaltovsky said that the soldiers understood perfectly well what their responsibilities were [through the newspapers] and that any meeting or speech on the subject was useless.

In mid-May Lieutenant Dzevaltovsky went as a delegate to the Congress of the Eleventh Army. At the time the First Corps had been ordered to proceed from Luck in Galicia, in the Tarnopol area. . . . The regiment left Korytnits village on May 19 and proceeded in full marching order to the sector they had been assigned. A timetable had been worked out, but under the influence of the regimental committee the soldiers . . . refused to march more than fifteen versts [ten miles] in twenty-four hours. Although the purpose of the transfer had not been made clear, the troops were soon convinced that the regiment was going to take part in offensive operations. During the transfer, on May 27, Lieutenant Dzevaltovsky reappeared in a village four and a half miles outside Galicia. He held a meeting, said that there should be no fighting, that it was possible to have peace without shedding blood, and that only capitalists and the bourgeoisie were in favor of continuing the war. . . .

At another meeting on June 14 he explained . . . that the bourgeois government should be swept away by the power of the people. The war should be terminated not by an offensive but by a policy of friendship toward the German proletariat. An offensive would be a stab in the back, and the German High Command could wish for nothing better . . . , for it could point out to the German people that the Russians were not sincere in their calls for a socialist peace, because true socialists did not resort to armed force. The only result of the attack would be to sound the death knell of the International. . . . As for us [the Russians], once the government was overthrown, we would have to transfer power to the soviets, replace bourgeois ministers by socialists, and make it clear to the leaders that the Russian people's distrust extended to the whole government including the socialist ministers. These plans were realistic, the lieutenant added. In fact he asserted that the Bolsheviks were in a position to pass from words to deeds, for they had bayonets and machine guns. At the end of the meeting a proposal was adopted of complete lack of confidence in the Provisional Government and refusal to take part in the offensive. . . .

On June 16 it was learned that Kerensky would be arriving shortly. The Grenadiers refused to join the other contingents and to listen to the minister. They ostentatiously took a position three hundred paces away from the others, remained seated, and in spite of repeated invitations on the part of the minister, they refused to come nearer. At the Staff's entreaty Kerensky himself went over to the Grenadiers. Lieutenant Dzevaltovsky told him rudely that they knew perfectly well what he was going to say, since the gist of his remarks had already appeared in the newspapers. It was therefore totally unnecessary for him to repeat them. The text of a resolution inviting him to resign from his position was transmitted to Kerensky. The motion also opposed the launching of the offensive.

It was obvious, Commissar Kirienko concluded, that in these circumstances it was no longer a question of a difference of opinion but that a whole apparatus had been set up in order to resist openly the orders of the Provisional Government in general and of Minister Kerensky in particular. In a conversation with General Gurevich it emerged quite clearly that from that moment . . . only by force could discipline in the regiment be restored.[34]

Like some others this regiment had refused to move up into its positions.[35] The attack failed, and the General Staff publicly laid the blame for defeat on the Bolsheviks. They waited until the failure of the July Days before adopting this interpretation officially. An official statement on July 7 declared that "our defeat is specifically due to the fact that, under the influence of the Bolsheviks, many soldiers who had received orders went to meetings and did not carry out their orders."

This report outraged the troops that had taken part in the offensive operations; they were being blamed for a failure that had innumerable causes. For instance, in the 506th Infantry Division, specifically mentioned in the report, 2,513 soldiers had been killed or wounded out of 3,000. An annex to a report by General Gavrilov and General Gostov stated that "this defeat was due to the enemy's overwhelming superiority in artillery, two hundred guns against sixteen." But the General Staff stuck to the wording of its communiqué![36] Since the troops were well aware of the true circumstances of the offensive, their indignation knew no bounds. To them this was one more defeat in a series of defeats that had occurred well before the revolution and in which their comrades had died. The participants blamed the failure on the military heads who had rashly launched the attack. The circumstances are reminiscent of those that led to mutiny in the French army, except that in Russia there was a more deeply rooted distrust and hostility toward the General Staff.[37] Not only were they accused of being capable of sending soldiers needlessly to their death, but they were suspected of having

34. TsGVIA, 2148, I, 813, pp. 3–23. Gaponenko has reproduced this text in the original, *Revoliutsionnoe dvizhenie v russkoi armii,* pp. 234–62, and every statement is backed by one or more testimonies.

35. See TsGVIA, 2048, I, 27, 14; further examples in *Revoliutsionnoe dvizhenie v Rossii v iiule 1917 g.* (Moscow, 1959), pp. 395–451; *Revoliutsionnoe dvizhenie v Rossii v avguste 1917 g.* (Moscow, 1959), pp. 253 ff., and in Gaponenko, *Revoliutsionnoe dvizhenie v russkoi armii.*

36. This dispute, published in *Spartak,* is only one example of the soldiers' vigilance. Who is right, we do not know. From that time they checked all statements issued by the General Staff.

37. On the French army mutinies see Guy Pedroncini, *Les Mutineries de 1917* (Paris, 1967). These had no connection with the pacifist movement, just as the revolt of the Russian soldiers in France had nothing to do with the outburst of mutinies. On these questions see the present author's book, *La Grande Guerre, 1914–1918* (Paris, 1968), pp. 338 ff.

mounted these attacks to rid the army of revolutionary soldiers or for some other Machiavellian purpose. No doubt the General Staff nurtured a few ulterior motives of a political kind, but many officers who had remained close to the soldiers did not share these views. They suffered intensely from their moral degradation and from the general confusion of which they were all now the victims.[38] A letter from a certain Captain Gilbich to his wife has been preserved in the archives. Wounded, he died before finishing it: "Darling, today for the first time for many months I am happy, I am overflowing with happiness. I am here, caught in the German barbed wire and beside me there is someone I call 'my brother' without being stigmatized as a bourgeois or provocateur."

The military attaché to the commissar of the southwestern front, in a report, added, "The talk is all of hanging and shooting." Moreover the soldiers' distrust and suspicion were directed not only against the officers or the Staff but extended to *all political leaders, even socialists,* with the exception of the Bolsheviks: "People who speak in the name of these parties are received with open hostility. They are not even allowed to speak. The Bolshevik propaganda gains ground, disseminated *not so much by official party militants* [italics added] . . . as by the spread of ideas. . . . Officers have had their horses and their equipment taken away from them." Others, their uniforms. Many were disarmed. In a relentless inversion of the old discipline, "officers were deprived of two days' rations for having favored the offensive."[39]

Thus it was at the exact moment when distrust and hostility toward officers, the General Staff, and political leaders reached a point of no return that the civil and military authorities meant to proceed to take back into their hands control of the army and of society.[40]

The re-establishment of compulsion, the proceedings against the June and July mutineers, the penalties imposed on them, the reintroduction of the death penalty (which apparently was rarely invoked and even more excep-

38. On this feeling of moral degradation see TsGVIA, 2067, I, 60, 33 (Eleventh Army).

39. TsGVIA, 2067, I, 62, 32 (Eleventh Army). Troops of the Luga garrison sent a petition requesting that officers be disarmed, for they were all "traitors to the revolution" (quoted in *Revoliutsionnoe dvizhenie v avguste,* p. 263).

40. In the following extracts from a private's letter, dated August 9, this anger is forcefully expressed: "In the trenches I read your newspapers and I listen to the soldiers talking. . . . It is all about the war, discipline, punishments, what to do with the soldiers and so on—all just good for the bourgeois. . . . But what have all these others got to say about the country being in danger . . . the Kerenskys, Skobelevs, the Chernovs . . . all of them. We could expect anything from Nicholas II, but from you. . . . I warn you that if peace is not declared before the winter you can pack up. . . . You are betraying Russia; you have sold her to England and France" (TsGAOR, 6978, I, 531, 4–5, quoted in *Revoliutsionnoe dvizhenie v avguste,* p. 240).

tionally carried out) were all unmistakable signs. It was a "return to tsarism" for those soldiers "who needed no orders to die." The officers' point of view was different. A staff report noted that "the reintroduction of the death penalty created immediately a very strong impression. Those persons termed Bolsheviks were dumfounded." In general the officers were relieved at this reaction and were optimistic. They mentioned the "sobering" effect of the military tribunals. A general commented with suitable gravity: "The democratization of the army was not in the natural order of things. It was not in line with its function and it had no scientific basis." Already Colonel Pliushchevsky-Pliushchik was laying down rules regarding the right to hold public meetings: "to have permission to hold a meeting speakers must have previously told their commanding officers what they intend to say. The officers have the right to interrupt and to eject [speakers]."

Persisting in their belief that the ebb and flow of the revolution could be controlled by decree, the Stavka thought that "Orders 51, 213, and 271 contradicted each other. They should be canceled by a new order. . . . Moreover, committees should no longer be formed spontaneously but should be appointed by staff officers . . . and those chosen should continue as such."[41]

In carrying all this out, however, the noncommissioned officers immediately and effortlessly returned to their customary old tricks. A report from the Soldiers' Committee of the Tenth Army Corps bears witness: "On July 28, Private Dmitriev asked Sergeant-Major Bereshchak why the Eighth Platoon was sent off with its equipment and the Seventh without. As he did not answer and went off to the mess, I questioned others. The sergeant came back then and said, 'Riffraff like Dmitriev, that's the start of treason!' And so I was arrested." Private Altukhov reported that his captain struck him on an unhealed wound and threatened him with prison or the death penalty. Private Usachev, for his part, stated: "I asked if it was still possible to complain to the committee about any order, like compulsory saluting, and so on; my officer replied that there were no more committees." Another private inquired why he had been arrested. "Because you keep on talking." "There's no freedom of speech any more?" "No, it has been abolished." An officer said to a private who stepped out of the ranks: "Shut up, don't answer back, there's been enough liberty. That's finished. Now it's back to work." In actual fact most of the sixty-two soldiers imprisoned were released soon afterward.[42]

The principal measures advocated by General Baiov were, "to abolish

41. TsGVIA, 2067, I, 60, 52; TsGVIA, I, 60, 229; TsGVIA, 2067, I, 3829, 52 and 53, quoted in Gaponenko, *Revoliutsionnoe dvizhenie v russkoi armii;* TsGVIA, 2067, I, 60, 61.

42. Gaponenko, *Revoliutsionnoe dvizhenie v russkoi armii,* pp. 278–79.

joint officer-soldier committees and to retain only company committees dealing with day-to-day affairs, to restore the prestige of the officers and their disciplinary powers, to make saluting compulsory." The purpose of all these measures was to restore the chain of command without even trying to give it a basis of legitimacy. Only relations based on force could work. Reconciliation had proved useless, for the officers continued to identify themselves with the state, to assume a monopoly of patriotism, and to consider that they had rights over "their" regiment.

All the same, there were still some attempts at communication between soldiers and officers, but through an exchange of written notes, a clear indication of how things stood. It was a kind of truce—the last. "The right to change accepted practices," the officers of the Ulansky Regiment informed their men, "belongs solely to the minister of war, and the officer corps remains and will continue to remain within the framework of that legality. Besides, secret votes, resolutions, and any action by the committee have only a limited value, because they are taken by an unrepresentative part of the regiment. . . . The Regimental Committee, influenced by the pernicious propaganda of irresponsible elements, exceeds its proper powers and infringes on those of the General Staff and the officer corps. Furthermore, it accuses the officer corps of reactionary sentiments, expresses distrust of it, and even takes the liberty of threatening it if the committee's demands are not met. Confronted with these attacks on their rights . . . the officers intend to maintain order within their regiment. . . . Should it become impossible to guarantee the regiment's fighting capacity, they would request transfer to another unit in order to carry out their duty till the end of the war." This text was in answer to an "address" from the soldiers of the regiment in which the very status of the officers in a revolutionary army was called into question: "Observing with regret that there is no longer any confidence at all between soldiers and officers . . . the committee believes this to be the result of a recruitment of the officer corps dating from the tsarist period. This corps was imbued with class characteristics having no relation to the interests of the people in its revolution. Real democratization had not and could not take place within it. At least a certain number of second lieutenants and sergeant-majors should be ranked as officers. They are the last and only link between officers and privates."[43] Democratize recruiting of the officer corps, expel the officers who behaved like traitors, eliminate the aristocracy from the military establishment, take officers off the active list or put them under surveillance, purify the army—those were the hopes and prospects most frequently expressed during the summer. The military establishment itself was called into question and no longer merely the role it could play.

43. TsGVIA, 2067, I, 3821, 29–30.

Furthermore, during this so-called reactionary period (July–August) the troops no longer confined themselves to demanding the resignation of the bourgeois ministers, the dissolution of the Duma, the transfer of power to the Soviets (not just to the Petrograd Soviet, as in March), the end of the war by concluding a peace treaty without annexations, and release of the Bolsheviks. They refused to put counterrevolutionary orders into effect and frequently protested against the arbitrary powers of military tribunals and, naturally, against the death penalty. For the first time they took up the defense of deserters. An increasing number of them joined in demands for the most radical social reforms: abolition of private property, transfer of land to agrarian committees, workers' control, introduction of a system of compulsory work for the bourgeois, formation of an armed workers' militia, and so forth. A comparison with the petitions recorded in March shows how far they had traveled.[44]

Never had the gap been greater between the determination of the military and political leaders to restore their authority and the soldiers' desire to alter the character of the military institution, to change completely their relationship to the government, and to aspire to a social revolution. The generals who were aware of this phenomenon were extremely pessimistic. By describing all those who opposed the attitude of the generals as Bolsheviks, by prosecuting them before the tribunals, "which was a return to the old regime," the government and General Staff unwittingly credited Lenin's party with a popularity that it owed only partly to its own efforts: "Who are these Bolsheviks? What party do they belong to? . . . The government takes a stand against them, but we do not see what they have done wrong. A short time ago we were against them as the revolutionary government asked us to be, but now, after all its promises—and then nothing—we are slowly going over to the Bolsheviks' side. But send us information."[45] The step had been taken, and in fact from July onward the slogans and key arguments show the Bolshevik influence. Both at the front and among the supporting troops the popularity of Lenin's party was constantly growing, inasmuch as it advocated an immediate peace, the power of the Soviets, and social revolution.[46]

44. To the sources cited in note 35 may be added documents 1 to 14 of TsGAOR, 1244, I, 15; 1236, I, 12; 1235, 53, 9; 6978, I, 580. The very pessimistic report of Generals Markov and Denikin should be mentioned (TsGVIA, 2067, I, 60, 269) and, of course, subsequent works by Russian generals and the allied missions in Russia.

45. *Soldatskie pis'ma,* p. 110, of August 9.

46. From the middle of July, and especially in the August petitions, the letters and messages to the Soviets in Moscow and Petrograd took up the slogans of the Bolshevik newspapers. See *Bol'shevizatsiia petrogradskogo garnizona v 1917 g.* (Moscow, 1935) and the series of documents published in 1957, *Revoliutsionnoe dvizhenie v sentiabre* and *Oktiabr'skoe vooruzhennoe vosstanie v Petrograde.*

The soldiers were alerted. No longer was there a word or gesture on the part of the government and High Command that was not commented on, discussed, and criticized. The Glazov Soldiers' Soviet commented, "The Moscow Assembly is the first political act of the counterrevolution; it includes only a handful of true representatives of the people"; and their resolution, following hundreds of others, concluded, "the only solution is to entrust all power to the Soviets."[47] So the atmosphere was already extremely tense when the Kornilov affair erupted. As the soldiers of the Berdichev garrison wrote, "rumors of an officers' counterrevolution made everyone nervous."[48] The explosive declarations of General Kornilov and Kaledin brought things to a head. The views and activities of the Officers' Union were well known, and the troops had long been asking for it to be dissolved. They were equally distrustful of certain regiments that might, as in July, remain on the side of the forces of repression. Some regiments honestly believed the Bolsheviks were German agents. Others had their own reasons for not joining in the movement for revolt, or they put their trust in Kerensky.[49] There were also many troops who, asking no questions, continued to obey their commanders, especially those soldiers who had the feelings of veterans. When the soldiers of the 440th Regiment read in the papers that Kerensky had decided to send some soldiers from Petrograd into the countryside to help with the crop and they would be paid a few kopeks a day, thirty-five of them wrote: "And nothing for us? We have wallowed in cold and damp trenches for three years. We have to stay while these so-called soldiers who have never fired receive a salary. . . . It is a shame."[50] The dividing lines discernible on the eve of the Kornilov putsch are significant in that they foreshadow those of the civil war.[51]

47. TsGAOR, 6978, I, 356, 31, documents 7, 12, 35, 38, etc.; for the Army of the North see TsGVIA, 2031, I, 1585, and the book by F. A. Shurygin, *Revoliutsionnoe dvizhenie soldatskikh mass Severnogo fronta v 1917 g.* (Moscow, 1958).

48. Letter dated August 20, TsGVIA, 2067, I, 60, 121, 2.

49. Innumerable telegrams of support were sent to Kerensky before and during the insurrection—for example, in the Moscow region, GAOR-MO, 3, I, 164, 233 to 295; TsGAOR, 6978, I, 359, 1; TsGVIA, 2067, I, 3821, 94; TsGAOR, 1241, 1244, I, 15. Many reports to Headquarters give the impression that all was quiet once again. Kornilov must have deluded himself about their significance. The fact is that texts revealing the anger of the troops were not addressed to him; see the archival records, TsGVIA, 2067, I, 60. Moreover, the clashes, often unpremeditated, between the Death Battalions and the Lettish riflemen, and other incidents, meant that part of the army could be won over by the General Staff. It is not the aim of this article, however, to examine the policy of the General Staff or that of the government.

50. Thirty-five soldiers from the second section of the 440th Regiment Buguruslavsky, TsGAOR, 1244, I, 15, 234 (10–7–1917 Old Style).

51. The soldiers were not all in agreement. Officers' characters, personal choice, the greater or lesser influence of political organizations, branch of service, ethnic background —these were all factors which would explain differences in soldiers' behavior—for example,

Addressing Kerensky and the Soviet, Zhordansky and Dashebsky wrote: "According to the newspapers there is a certain hesitancy in the Provisional Government's attitude to Kornilov. Not knowing what truth there is in these rumors, we consider it our duty to say that any hesitancy will weaken the authority of the revolutionary government in the eyes of the army . . . and will be the cause of intense upheaval. The army expects authentic revolutionary action on the part of the revolutionary authorities." Two days later they wrote again: "The mass of soldiers expect that exemplary punishment will be meted out. . . . The front-line troops rely on the Military Tribunal to take action not only against army deserters but also against traitors to the revolution regardless of their rank or office." A stream of letters and telegrams expressed the soldiers' fury and their irrevocable hostility to the military authorities in power—"exemplary punishment," "heavy penalties for Kornilov and his accomplices." In addition to demanding that Kornilov and Kaledin be brought before the Military Tribunal, the Twelfth Army Soldiers' Soviet and its military committee once again requested the dissolution of the Officers' Union, the replacement of the General Staff, an increase in the powers of commissars, and the appointment of representatives to military committees attached to Stavka and to the minister. All senior officers were to be subject to surveillance.[52]

"The troops will not move in defense of anything except on orders from their political committee."[53] They had no further confidence in anyone. They had been duped, had undertaken an offensive operation doomed from the outset, and now the government was not taking action against the rise of the counterrevolution. Kerensky and the mediators were traitors to the revolution, as the Bolsheviks asserted. Officers and men of the Second Regiment of Vyborg fortress inquired: "The bourgeois have met with no resistance on the part of the socialist ministers. The tension mounts daily, the people can get no satisfaction, and reckless offensives like the June one are launched. Even the Democratic Conference, which hardly represents democracy, has declared its opposition to the industrial classes or the Kadets taking any part in the government. Yet Kerensky continues to negotiate with the Kadets. What is it all about? Is this inertia or is it treason?"[54]

Thenceforward Bolshevization was even more rapid, as innumerable messages testify.[55] Many of the soldiers had continued to have faith in

why one regiment would mutiny while its neighbor would take part in an offensive. An attempt is made to assess the effects of some of these differences in the present author's *Révolution de 1917*, vol. 2 (see note 1 above).

52. TsGVIA, 2067, 3815; and 3821 for the Eleventh Army.

53. The 507th Regiment of the Army of the Caucasus, TsGVIA, 2031, I, 1585.

54. TsGAOR, 1244, I, 15, 4, and 6978, I, 248, 1.

55. According to Tkachuk, *Revoliutsionnoe dvizhenie v armiiakh iugozapadnogo i rumynskogo frontov nakunune i v period velikogo Oktiabr'* (L'vov, 1968), who gives the following figures:

Kerensky even after the June offensive, its failure, and the repression—all blamed on Headquarters and the General Staff. His duel with Kornilov had enhanced Kerensky's reputation, and he was believed in once again. But his fear of breaking with the General Staff, his deep-seated hostility to the Soviets, his preference for negotiations at all costs, and his delusion that he could reconcile the irreconcilable were all factors that induced Kerensky to deal gently with Kornilov and his friends. This attitude had the most drastic results. It alienated for good the sympathy of those who had continued to obey the orders of any institutions yet functioning. The most popular leader abruptly found himself the most despised, for the troops had the feeling that he had betrayed their trust. The cleavage in the army became more pronounced: on the one hand were the troops hostile to any functioning institution, who began to desert unit after unit; on the other were those who remained loyal to the military establishment and the General Staff.[56]

Several investigations into the state of the army vouch for its disintegration from September onward. Differences between the northern front near Petrograd and sectors more remote from the capital are very noticeable for the April to July period. After September the situation was the same everywhere (except for the Riga area). The following is an inquiry regarding several battalions of the Army of the Caucasus. The questions are even more revealing than the answers, which have been summarized.

1. What is the general situation? (A tendency toward Bolshevization, but no disturbances.)
2. Fighting proficiency? (Fairly good.)
3. Cases of refusal to obey orders? (Fluctuating.)
4. Cases of failure to obey? (Frequent, but without downright refusal.)
5. Relations with civilian population? (Often difficult.)
6. Influence of Political Committees? (Often adjudged "good" by the Staff.)
7. Influence of reinforcements? (Often "bad.")
8. Influence of political parties? (Often "weak.")
9. Is military justice resorted to? (Rarely.)
10. Desertions? (Not many.)[57]

Number of Bolshevik Groups	*July*	*September*	*November*
Southwestern front	44	108	135
Rumanian front	30	65	145
	74	173	280

56. Applied to Kerensky the phrase "He is deceiving us" appeared first on July 9. It recurred above all after the failure of the putsch, when he took no action against Kornilov and was opposed to excluding bourgeois ministers.

57. GAOR-LO, 7384, 7, 36. The Army of the Caucasus being involved, item 5 concerns the Muslim peoples. Item 6: the existence of a committee often checked the disintegration. The reply to item 9 is the result of the pressure of public opinion. General Janin reported, about the southwestern front, that soldiers accused of cowardice were often acquitted and "carried in triumph" by those present. Vincennes, Source A, Bulletin 15, p. 8 (reported at Tarnopol, October 30).

Another report concerning the Seventh Division is even clearer:

1. Are the regiments in position or not? (Answer varies, depending on the regiment.)
2. Are military exercises carried out? (Usually not.)
3. Do they work or do they refuse? (Variable.)
4. Are relations with officers good? (No.)
5. Is there general hostility to the war? (Yes.)
6. Is an early peace desired? (Yes.)
7. Are there many deserters? (No.)
8. What is the fighting proficiency of the troops? (Nonexistent.)[58]

Several other inquiries indicate, like those above, that there were few deserters.[59] This appears contrary to firmly established tradition. Can the stories of mass desertions be mere fables?

In the absence of comprehensive data, only a few bench marks can be indicated. For instance, desertions among the Finns are amply attested. On August 4 General Demidov estimated that they amounted to 35 percent of total strength. On October 20 the Helsingfors Soviet sent a circular letter to all regimental and battalion committees giving notice that "draconian measures would be taken against the sale and purchase of military equipment."[60] In the Ukraine too, notably in Kiev, "disturbances caused by bands of deserters" are frequently recorded. They are first mentioned toward the end of June—that is, after the failure of the offensive. Subsequently the same phenomenon is reported from the countryside. But though we lack full statistics for desertions in general, those we have are totally unrelated to the figures traditionally put forward. They were estimates and undated at that. In view of the figures preserved in archives, one is led to wonder whether the traditional totals are not the result of intentional confusion. General Golovin, after all, even called "deserters" the delegates from the front who were elected by their comrades and left for the rear to take part in assemblies and speak on behalf of the fighting men. In this way he arrived at a total of nearly eight hundred thousand. He also referred to malingerers as deserters, "whose number has increased 120 percent since the revolution." If one figures on such a basis, the growth rate of millions of deserters soon

58. TsGVIA, 2148, I, 813, 417–79. The report adds, "In the artillery things are different."

59. August 13: desertions stopped in the Eighth Army, TsGAOR, 3, 1, 362, 396. August 19: 305 deserters and 103 returned for the Second Army, TsGVIA, 2067, I, 60, 229. September 4: still few deserters (inquiry concerning fifteen regiments of the Army of the Caucasus), TsGVIA, 2100, I, 276. October 24: few deserters (inquiry about eight regiments of the Seventh Division), TsGVIA, 2148, I, 813, 471–79. Further examples can be found in *Revoliutsionnoe dvizhenie v mae, iiune, avguste,* passim, and for early October in *Razlozhenie armii v 1917 g.,* pp. 140–41 ff., and so forth.

60. TsGVIA, 2067, I, 60, and Helsinki, I Otdelenie Kantseliarii finliandskogo generala-gubernatora 1917 g., Fb 1270–1276, 2, 49.

reaches inordinate heights. Moreover, it is known that in March and April a number of soldiers took French leave, but many of these so-called deserters rejoined their units when threatened with punishment. It is also open to question whether the term "deserter" should be applied to soldiers who rebelled against a continuation of the war but returned in groups "to take power and arrange an armistice," as apparently happened on the northern front.[61] This was really a collective movement of disobedience and mutiny. But here too the Staff preferred to use the term "deserter," in order to discredit the mutineers and so group together under the same label malingerers, genuine deserters, and revolutionaries. The statistics also confuse all these soldiers with those who, after the armistice was signed, returned home before being demobilized.

For most of them, however, group solidarity had held fast, and by a kind of consensus the troops had together ensured the defense of the country.[62] To be sure, from the General Staff's point of view, the army had disintegrated long ago, since it was no longer possible to give it orders. Nevertheless from the national standpoint the picture was very different. The troops were still ready to defend the homeland insofar as any sacrifice did not serve as a disguise for aims contrary to the country's interests.

No doubt there was complete disorganization and the army was almost powerless. But the troops blamed the General Staff and the other ruling classes. As citizens they were of the opinion that they had not failed in their duties, and with some exceptions they were still in place. Moreover, the strength of their patriotic feelings was displayed in their distrust of the non-Russian troops for their loyalty to the General Staff. Was this a return of ancestral and tacit alliances of the Tatar and Pole, of the baron and the German? Was it as if, in October, at the call of the people and the Bolsheviks to save the capital, the age-old specter haunting Russia rose up once again?

Conclusions

Research reveals that a few of the features handed down by tradition can be accepted, but that some have to be rejected for the simple reason that

61. Léon Trotsky, *Histoire de la Révolution russe,* 2 vols. (Paris: Le Seuil, 1950), 2:287.

62. For the forces in position just before October see L. M. Gavrilov and V. V. Kutuzov, "Novyi istochnik o chislennosti russkoi deistvuiushei armii nakanune Oktiabr'skoi revoliutsii," in *Istochnikovedenie istorii sovetskogo obshchestva* (Moscow, 1964), pp. 131–52. On the formation of the Red Army see the various works of John Erickson.

Soldiers' resolutions regarding deserters went through three stages: in March they condemned those taking advantage of the situation to return home; in May and June they censured them and threatened those who had not rejoined their units with exclusion from benefits from land reform—shirkers are classified together with deserters; after July the troops defended deserters, asserting that the counterrevolutionary military commanders were equally deserving of being tried by tribunals.

history usually relies more on official records left by generals and political authorities than on sources of data emanating directly from the masses.

1. It appears, therefore, that during the 1917 revolution the troops behaved quite as much like old soldiers—or veterans—as they behaved like peasants in uniform, the picture painted by Marxist tradition. This is hardly surprising. They were young and the war was their first overwhelming experience, bringing into contact men of widely differing backgrounds. Until summer, the antagonism of the soldiers against the workers was part of the general resentment felt by many fighting men in all countries against those at the rear, the bourgeois, and other shirkers, including workers who had the effrontery to make demands. When the propaganda of the socialist parties enlightened the soldiers on the respective roles of the workers and the bourgeois, their attitude changed. Their slogan was no longer "workers to the workshop, soldiers to the trenches" but "bourgeois to the trenches, bourgeois to the factories." The antagonism between front and rear was replaced by a conflict of another and strictly social kind.

2. The question of peace lay at the heart of all problems. Yet for a few weeks it was not conspicuous, because the troops trusted the Petrograd Soviet to solve it. They identified the Soviet with the revolution and entrusted the latter to the former. So they did not dare advertise their pacifist hopes openly before the March 14 appeal, and when the Soviet condemned fraternization they stopped it; as soon as the Soviet asserted that an offensive was necessary, most of them took part in it. But the policy of the Soviet leaders had already been called into question. Paradoxically, it was the officers' attitude that helped bring this about; it gave the signal and triggered the alarm. The hostility of most officers toward the democratization of the army and the liberalization of military institutions and their campaign in favor of war to the bitter end and of a resumption of active operations made it clear to the troops that there was a connection between questions of discipline, the army's role in society, the exploitation of patriotic feelings, and the continuation of the war for counterrevolutionary purposes.

Soon, for the soldiers, any action that might restore the authority of the officers was automatically suspect, as for instance with regard to the oath of allegiance and the steps taken to revive "fighting spirit." The Soviet leaders and socialist ministers fell under suspicion in their turn; they shared the discredit which became attached to all leaders, because they adopted the General Staff's point of view regarding the need to re-establish discipline, and later because they supported the June offensive. The damaging identification became firm with the launching of the offensive. So it is incorrect to locate in the failure of the offensive the root of the crisis which overthrew the February regime. The root lay in the decision to launch the offensive.

In the opinion of the troops, whether the attack was successful or not, it was the start of an effort to regain control of the army and of society, an effort that ran counter to the success of the revolution, which from then on was associated with the conclusion of peace.

3. A feeling of fellowship united the fighting men. Whole units might swing from obedience to orders to a disappearance of discipline, but individual acts were rare. Desertions should therefore be reconsidered from this angle, for their extent before October has been grossly exaggerated by tradition. More often than not, departures from the front were undertaken by entire units. They were mutinies, not desertions.

In October the great diaspora had not yet taken place. Through consensus of a sort the troops still held the line even if they fiercely declared their desire for peace. For the General Staff, however, which had lost all authority, "there was no more army" except for a few contingents still loyal to the military establishment, chiefly in the artillery, cavalry, and among the non-Russians—and a list of these has yet to be drawn up.

4. Until the offensive, officers called all soldiers who refused to obey their orders "Bolsheviks." They thought that by so doing they would discredit Lenin's party in the eyes of the soldiers, but the effect was the opposite. Bolsheviks without realizing it, the discontented soldiers began to take an interest in the party's propaganda. It was the only party that approved the soldiers' actions, and the course of events had not ceased to prove their predictions right. Gradually the troops adopted their slogans, and from mid-July onward Bolshevization of the army proceeded apace, especially after the failure of the Kornilov putsch. The soldiers no longer understood why the socialist ministers spared the guilty generals, and they then lost all faith in Kerensky's loyalty to the revolution.

Stigmatizing all those leaders who had not known how to carry out the expected reforms, the soldiers impatiently clamored for the conclusion of peace. But now they also demanded the abolition of private property, distribution of land to the agrarian committees, workers' control of factories, compulsory labor and military service for all—in other words, implementation of the social revolution of which no mention had been made six months earlier. They had no doubt that accomplishment of this program was linked with the taking of power by the Soviets and its legitimation by the Constituent Assembly.

As disappointment followed disappointment the soldiers were gradually transformed into citizen-soldiers. Six months of revolution had taught them how a ruling class could wrongly identify itself with the fatherland and thus impose obligations on other social groups. They were yet to discover that in the name of socialism or revolution other leaders could just as easily seize power and use the same methods.

APPENDIX: Thematic Analysis of the First Hundred Petitions from the Troops Published in *Izvestiia* (March 1–April 3, 1917)

General Politics:	
Request for convening the Constituent Assembly	14
Establishment of a democratic republic	18
Proclamation of equality among all citizens	3
Universal free schooling	3
Confidence in the new government	8
Confidence in the Soviet and in the government if it implements Soviet policy	20
That Soviet and government should reach agreement	7
Various social measures: insurance, limitation of working hours, and so forth	8
Land to "those who work it"	7
Equal rights for women	1
Equal rights for non-Russians	2
Internationalist slogans	1
Socialist slogans	None
War and Questions Concerning Combatants:	
Soldiers will carry out their duties toward the country	24
Desire for peace without annexations	24*
Other pacifist slogans: disarmament	3
"Workers to the benches, soldiers to the trenches"	8
There is no conflict between workers and soldiers	8
Soldiers' participation in new institutions	10
Democratization of the army	22
Liberalization of discipline	25
Maintenance of discipline	3
Suppression of the death penalty	4
Action against deserters	7
Action against reactionary officers	5
Improvement of combatant living conditions, compensation for war wounded and their families	8

Compared to the resolutions of workers and peasants, this table shows that the soldiers were little concerned with matters pertaining to their class; above all they were preoccupied with their status as combatants. Eight months later the situation had changed; they were advocating social revolution.

* Twenty-one times after March 14.