
REVIEWS

THE RUSSIAN REVOLUTION: A STUDY IN MASS MOBILIZATION. By *John L. H. Keep*. *Revolutions in the Modern World* series. New York: W. W. Norton, 1976. xviii, 614 pp. \$19.50.

Among the large number of works on the Russian Revolution published in the last ten years, Professor Keep's book deserves special notice. Most historians have concentrated on gripping events at center stage and have devoted themselves to description and analysis of the peripeteia of the fall of the monarchy and the eventual establishment of the Soviet regime, but John L. H. Keep has looked farther afield, where no less significant forces clashed in a struggle that ultimately determined the fate of the Revolution. Chapters 2, 3, and 5, dealing respectively with the rise of urban mass organizations (factory committees, labor unions, the soviets), the situation in the countryside (rural violence, peasant organizations, the soviets), and the Bolshevik neutralization of the peasantry (the partitioning of land, the food crisis, and the "Taming of the Peasant Organizations . . .") are especially informative and enlightening.

Professor Keep has done much research, amassing a rich store of facts which form intricate patterns of meaning and provide a solid base for interpretation. The facts confirm the author's claim that the peasants were at least as important as the workers in making the Revolution possible. They also confirm the impression obtained from all one has read before: that the workers, soldiers, and sailors provided the cadre without whom the Revolution could not have triumphed.

The overthrow of the tsar opened the doors to anarchy which the Provisional Government was never able to overcome. The wobbly coalition of democratic parties was not strong enough to cope with the consequences of military defeat and the collapse of the army, with peasant demands for land, and with the general yearning for peace. Moreover, none of these parties had a disciplined organization capable of mobilizing mass support. In a power vacuum that came into being after the failure of the Kornilov coup, the group that was better organized, more ruthless, and better led than the others had an enormous advantage. The Bolsheviks were such a group. They promoted the organization of workers' militias in the factories and turned them into military forces of the party. They captured the Soviets—those self-proclaimed organs of revolutionary democracy—and through them legitimized the Bolshevik seizure of power. They invited the peasantry to fulfill the ancient dream of taking the land, then proceeded to confiscate the grain to feed their supporters in the cities. Unrestrained by scruples and convinced of the righteousness of their mission, the Bolsheviks dared to use any means and to apply any amount of force necessary to achieve victory.

The detailed account of political activity and economic conditions in the two capitals and in the provinces shows that the Bolsheviks did not unleash the forces that contended for power in 1917. However, late in 1917 and in 1918, they succeeded in absorbing some of the revolutionary forces, neutralizing others, and crushing the rest. With iron consistency the Bolsheviks eliminated all alternative sources of political and economic influence, giving the Communist Party a monopoly of power. Over the party stood Lenin, whose will was frequently a decisive element, and who was himself a historical force.

Though this book deals with less than a year of Bolshevik rule, many of the features that were later to become hallmarks of the Soviet regime are discussed on its pages: the personal authority of the leader, the creation of a one-party state, the

elimination of all political opposition, the reliance on the secret police, the unrestrained use of terror against large segments of the population, the manipulation of information, and the skillful use of rhetoric to achieve ends that often were incompatible with the ideological claims made by party propaganda.

Professor Keep exercises commendable restraint in passing judgment on people and events, though he does not conceal his own liberal-democratic position. Since a reviewer is expected to cavil at something in any book, one might express regret at the excessive use of the pronouns *this* and *that*, both in the singular and the plural (nine times on page 182, fourteen times on page 241). One might also disagree with the author's statement that the bird in the sentence "the *muzhiki* are destroying the squires' nests so that the little bird will never be able to return" is a euphemism for large-scale landed property in general. The *ptichka* is simply the *pomeshchik*, the squire (p. 213). Neither can one who is familiar with Russian idiom find anything curious about the title "commission for the unburdening of Petrograd" (p. 261); the Russian term *gruz* is both burden and load, *razgruzka*, "unloading," is applied regularly to the unloading of trucks, the lightening of a work load, or the decrease of the number of inhabitants in a locality.

Such minor lapses, of course, are of no consequence and detract nothing from the value of this careful, original, and thoughtful study.

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THE BOLSHEVIKS COME TO POWER: THE REVOLUTION OF 1917 IN PETROGRAD. By *Alexander Rabinowitch*. New York: W. W. Norton, 1976. xxxvi, 393 pp. Illus. \$14.95, cloth. \$5.95, paper.

Several recent books have significantly deepened our understanding of 1917. Among these are William Rosenberg's *Liberals in the Russian Revolution; The Constitutional Democratic Party, 1917-1921* (1974), John L. H. Keep's *The Russian Revolution: A Study in Mass Mobilization* (1977), and Alexander Rabinowitch's own *Prelude to Revolution: The Petrograd Bolsheviks and the July 1917 Uprising* (1968; described as a "splendid pioneering work" when reviewed in *Slavic Review*, 31, no. 4 [December 1972]). To this list we must now add Rabinowitch's companion volume, reviewed here.

Rabinowitch, professor of history at Indiana University, has now carried his story of Petrograd and the Bolsheviks through October 1917. In a long introduction and first chapter, the author states his major findings and briefly summarizes events through the July uprising; this is mostly a review of his earlier work. He then devotes four chapters to the aftereffects of the July Days—the sudden decline of the Bolsheviks, the ineffectiveness of government repression, and the rapid Bolshevik resurgence. The next three chapters treat the rise of Kornilov, his struggle with Kerensky, and the Bolshevik role in Kornilov's defeat. The last part of the book gives an account of the post-Kornilov period—the question of a new government, the mood of the masses, Lenin's campaign for an insurrection, the obstacles to Lenin's plan, the crisis in the military garrison, the formation of the Military Revolutionary Committee, the actions of the Kerensky regime, and the final seizure of power in October.

The author's primary aim was "to reconstruct, as fully and accurately as possible, the development of the 'revolution from below'" (p. xvii). In so doing, Rabinowitch comes to several conclusions: First, the Bolshevik program of land, peace, and bread had widespread support among the masses; he states that "as a result, in October the goals of the Bolsheviks, as the masses understood them, had strong popular support" (p. xvii; see also p. 311). Second, the Bolshevik program achieved this popularity precisely because of the inability—or lack of desire—of other political