BRITISH DIPLOMATIC PERSPECTIVES ON THE SITUATION IN RUSSIA IN 1917:

An analysis of the British Foreign Office Correspondence.

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ABSTRACT

During the third year of the Great War 1914-1918 Russia experienced the upheaval of revolution, precipitating the abdication of Tsar Nicholas II and installation of the Provisional Government in March, and culminating in the Bolshevik takeover of November, 1917. Due to the political, military, and economic chaos which accompanied the revolution Russia was unable to continue the struggle on the eastern front.

Russia was not fighting the war against the Central Powers of Germany and Austria-Hungary alone, however, and her threat to capitulate was of the gravest concern to her Allies, Great Britain and France. In fact the disintegration of Russia's war effort was the pivotal issue around which Anglo-Russian relations revolved in 1917. Britain's war policy was dominated by the belief that the eastern front had to be maintained to achieve victory. It appeared that any interruption to the eastern front would allow Germany to reinforce her lines on the western front, then to win and control the economic destiny of Europe. Britain could not allow this to happen.

This study focuses on the reportage from British diplomats and representatives in and outside of Russia to their superiors at the Foreign Office in London from December 1916 to December 1917. A vast wealth of documentation is available in the Foreign Office Correspondence. Analysis of these notes reveals certain trends which were dictated by the kaleidoscopic turn of events in Russia and the national ethos of these representatives. A minute analysis demonstrates a great diversity of opinion regarding the situation in Russia, ranging from optimism to pessimism and objectivity to prejudice in all phases of the year 1917. To a limited degree this diversity can be correlated with the geographical location and diplomatic status of the individual representatives.

Above all it is clear that when historians quote from these sources, they choose the quotations which support the conclusions they have already reached because they know the outcome of the developments that they are describing. The individuals on the spot at the time were far less prescient and insightful. They were much more affected by their
own historical prejudices and rumours, as well as the vagaries and short-term shifts of their immediate environment. Many of them believed in the great-man theory of history; a number attributed all developments and difficulties to some aspect of the Russian national character; some explained certain events during the year by conspiracies, especially of the Jews, with whom they tended to equate the Bolsheviks. Only a few were consistently solid and realistic in their appraisal of events, attributing them to factors favoured by our most respected historians.
# TABLE OF CONTENTS

Abstract. .......................... ii

INTRODUCTION ..................... 1

Chapters
I. December 1916 - The March Revolution. ... 16
II. The March Revolution - The May Crisis .... 31
III. The May Crisis - The July Offensive. .. 49
IV. The July Offensive - The Kornilov Revolt ... 66
V. The Kornilov Revolt - The Bolshevik Revolution . 83
VI. The Bolshevik Revolution - Year End. ... 101

CONCLUSION .......................... 115

BIBLIOGRAPHY ..................... 121
INTRODUCTION

For Britain, the most important aspect of the Russian Revolution in 1917\textsuperscript{1} was its effect on the Allied effort in World War I.\textsuperscript{2} The British wanted above all to defeat Germany and implicit in that goal was the assumption that active Russian participation on the eastern front was imperative. The consequences of an interruption in Russia's contribution would be staggering to the Allies since Germany would presumably bring enormous additional pressure on the armies in the west.

From 1914-16 Russia's contribution had strongly assisted the Allied position on the western front. Formidable in numbers only\textsuperscript{3} Russia's armies faced superior German armament time and again, often with the sole object of relieving pressure on the Allies as opposed to serving her own strategic needs.\textsuperscript{4} This contribution was offset by the country's inefficiency as an instrument of war. Russia was neither administratively nor industrially equipped to engage in warfare on the scale called for in the Great War.\textsuperscript{5} By November 1915 Russia had lost Poland, 750,000 men were prisoners, and the number of deserters had reached approximately one million.\textsuperscript{6} Only in the field of diplomacy did 1915 yield a major coup for the Russians, when in the spring Britain and France agreed to the Russian acquisition of the coveted Dardanelles Straits and Constantinople - after Allied victory of course.\textsuperscript{7}

The military outlook for Russia on the eve of 1916 showed some signs of improvement. A faction in the Duma known as the Progressive Bloc\textsuperscript{8} began a campaign aimed at unifying the country during the latter part of 1915 and various officials in the government and military were replaced. The government began to utilize the efforts of voluntary organizations to aid the war effort. Most notable were The Zemstvo Union and the Union of Towns under the chairmanship of Prince George E. Lvov\textsuperscript{9}, the War Industry Committee (WIC) led by industrialist Alexander I. Guchkov\textsuperscript{10}, and the Red Cross. In addition, Allied war material and financial assistance were stepped up during the summer.
However, 1916 was marked by the deterioration of the government's integrity. The tsar had fatally weakened his position politically by assuming personal command of the armies in the field on 5 September 1915. In doing so, Nicholas II identified himself with Russia's defeats and placed himself in the hands of the generals. This deprived the country of an effective authority in Petrograd when the Empress Alexandra and her infamous advisor, Rasputin, were left in charge. Throughout 1916, ministers changed rapidly in what has been described as the ministerial leapfrog. By the winter of 1916-17 the Russian "steam-roller," as the Russian army was nicknamed owing to the sheer weight of her numbers, was grinding to a halt. This, coupled with the turmoil caused by an inept government and disabled economy rendered a revolution imminent.

During the months that followed the overthrow of the tsarist regime in March 1917, Britain's active policy toward her ally remained much the same as it had been from 1914 to 1916, i.e. to induce the Russian government to fight Germany with maximum efficiency. However, these months were marked by continued deterioration of the Russian war effort. The fall of the tsar left a duality of power between the Provisional Government and the Petrograd Soviet (council) of Workers' and Soldiers' Deputies. These bodies were separated initially by a narrow gap which gradually widened until the Bolsheviks seized power. The Russian generals, preoccupied with the war effort, at first looked to the liberal politicians in the Provisional Government to stabilize the home front. But the task was to prove beyond the politicians' powers. Brought into prominence by an old electoral system that had disfranchised the mass of the population, these political leaders' names held no magic for the masses. They had acquired administrative experience in the wartime committees that had made a contribution to the organization of industry and supply services, but had never shared governmental power. They had inherited the identical problems of national defense and inefficient organization from the Imperial Government, but not the huge administrative, legal, and long established governing apparatus which was the tool for enforcement.
The Provisional Government's lack of understanding of the demands posed by the revolutionary situation in which Russia found itself was evident in its perception of itself (the primary one being that sovereignty rested with the Russian people), and the tasks it should perform. The view of sovereignty meant that the Provisional Government had to be a purely temporary body, in existence solely to fulfill the will of the people by preparing for the convocation of the Constituent Assembly, the nationwide representative body slated to decide a permanent governmental system to replace the monarchy. This, in turn, required the protection of the existing, albeit temporary, order which meant that any threat of a counter-revolution had to be thwarted. Because the high command represented a potential force for counter-revolution, one aspect of revolutionary defensism, or the protection of the revolution, was that the Provisional Government allowed the Soviet's notorious Order No. 1 be implemented. The charter urged the army to obey the government's orders only if they did not conflict with instructions from the Soviet and called for the election in every unit of committees which would cooperate with the Soviet. In accordance with the new democratic principles of the revolution, the Provisional Government released political prisoners in Siberia, extended invitations to those political exiles abroad to return, and upheld the rights to freedom of the press and speech. The death penalty for desertion was also done away with.

An even more serious weakness was the government's determination to continue the war "to a decisive victory" at the expense of major social changes, while the masses longed for immediate peace and democratic reforms. The irreconcilability of the Provisional Government's foreign and domestic policies was demonstrated when soldiers, eager to share in the spoils of the March revolution, to quote Lenin, "voted with their feet" and began leaving the front en masse. Workers' demands, generated by memories of class oppression and the war induced reduction in their standard of living, coupled with the peasant seizures of landed estates further demonstrated dissatisfaction.
Perceiving that the mass of the Russian people were apathetic, dreading another winter of war, and short of food, Lenin ordered soldiers loyal to the Bolsheviks to seize the Winter Palace, home of the Provisional Government, on 6 November. An armistice was arranged on 5 December, and the peace Treaty of Brest-Litovsk was signed between Russia and Germany on 3 March 1918.

This course of events was described in reports by British representatives in the foreign service. These reports are compiled in the British Foreign Office files for 1917, now available in a microfilm edition of the Public Record Office Collection. These documents consist primarily of communications between the Foreign Office and various British embassies, consulates, and military and civilian personnel in Russia, Europe, and abroad concerning events in Russia and Anglo-Russian relations. In addition, the collection includes public proclamations by various national leaders, governments and organizations, pertinent publications, personal requests made to the Foreign Office by private citizens and groups, drafts of material originating in and sent out of London, records of questions asked by Members of Parliament directed to the Foreign Office, and many miscellaneous dispatches and papers. The records provide a wealth of information in that they describe the day to day political, military, and economic events in wartime Russia. The drama of the Russian Revolution is played out in its entirety. They provide a rare insight into the workings of British diplomacy, as it was then, and into the attitudes, outlook, and Edwardian frame of mind of the writers. And, they enable one to assess the services provided by the diplomatists during Britain's darkest year in the war, as well as evaluate, with the advantage of hindsight, the accuracy of their reporting.

The most recent study to make extensive use of this primary source is that of Keith Neilson, Assistant Professor of History at the Royal Military College of Canada. In *Strategy and Supply: The Anglo-Russian Alliance, 1914-17* Neilson has dealt almost entirely with the procurement, financing, transporting, and use of war materials by the Anglo-Russian partners, from the outbreak of World War I to the Bolshevik revolution.
Neilson contends that the relationship revolved around two issues. Firstly, Russia required a vast amount of industrial and financial assistance from her allies in order to contribute to the success of the Entente, and she assumed that Britain would be able to furnish the money and supplies required. Hence, the relationship was comprised of the former being the debtor and petitioner, and the latter being the creditor and benefactor. Secondly, because of the importance of maintaining a military presence on the eastern front, the situation there became one of the major determining factors for the climate of Anglo-Russian relations. Neilson then traces in detail the interaction between the British search for victory and the strategic and economic decisions designed to keep the Russians in the war.

In his final chapter, entitled "Between The Revolutions," Neilson argues that, with the abdication of Nicholas II and the subsequent collapse of the Russian army, Britain's attitude towards Russia changed.

For the remainder of 1917 the British treated Russia much more cautiously than before, always aware that Russia could soon drop out of the war. . . . Most [within the British government] agreed that Russia was unlikely to help the Allies in 1917, but there were sharp divisions over what this meant for Allied strategy.21

Despite these divisions, Neilson asserts that

Russia was still considered an important ally, if not for what she could do in 1917 then for what she might do in 1918 or for what her continued presence in the war meant that the Central Powers could not do.22

In other words, those who established British policy towards Russia considered that even a nominal presence on the eastern front was important for defensive purposes: so long as Russia 'officially' remained in the war, Germany would be compelled to direct at least some of her energy eastward, thus alleviating the western front of total German pressure.

Neilson argues that those who made British policy towards Russia considered the Provisional Government incapable of carrying on the war.23 This same conclusion was
reached by L. P. Morris in his article "The Russians, The Allies and The War, February-July, 1917." The historians differ over the point at which British confidence in Russia as an active and viable ally ended. According to Morris, the Foreign Office files for 1917 show that the British were already pessimistic about Russia's fighting capacity before the March revolution. What tipped the scales and convinced the British that Russia was no longer an effective ally, was the failure of the July Offensive. Morris contends that the British government's refusal, to send British socialist delegates to participate in the Stockholm Conference in August, sent the final signal of British disillusionment with the Provisional Government. Neilson, however, contends that British confidence in Russia ended earlier, in March and April, as evidenced by the

British policy, adopted in March and maintained until July, not to send guns to Russia. The illusion of success which the Kerensky Offensive provided in July led to a temporary reversal of this policy, a reversal which was maintained until the failure of the Kornilov revolt signaled the final collapse of Russian military power. After the Kornilov episode, the British policy reverted to its earlier form and supplies for Russia were delayed once again.

Neilson's analysis is based on the level of supply of arms to Russia as a measure of British confidence in the Provisional Government.

These historians use different criteria to attempt an explanation of official British policy towards Russia in 1917. Their arguments can be contested, however. For example, there were other considerations which influenced the British decision not to send socialists to Stockholm. There were signs of an increase in the activities of the pacifist movement in Britain at the time, and under such circumstances the dispatch of British socialists to Stockholm to meet German ones could have had a calamitous effect on public opinion in Britain. Furthermore, in accordance with her Allies, Britain had to consider the French and American positions, the latter of which was particularly opposed to the conference. Regarding Neilson's criteria, historian W. B. Fest emphasizes that Britain herself was
having supply difficulties and, therefore, used the pretext of withholding supplies in return for Russia's performance; while Norman Stone argues in _The Eastern Front 1914-1917_ that only when Britain feared that Russia would make a separate peace, after July, did she generously supply Russia. Moreover, both Neilson and Morris use the Foreign Office notes, which are documents primarily authored by British diplomats and representatives in the field, as well as a few civil servants, to support and give substance to their analyses which focus on official British policy. A detailed study of these documents reveals that such a range of perspectives and sentiment exist regarding the situation in Russia, that it is possible to substantiate almost any position. The critical theme which emerges is that the Foreign Office notes for the entire year of 1917 reflect various degrees of preparedness and willingness to support any leader who appeared capable of managing the war effort, as well as impatience with and rejection of any leader viewed as incapable of doing this. The diversity and complexity of reportage will be addressed below. But first, it is important to note that the relationship between official British policy towards Russia and the Foreign Office notes ran in two directions.

The flow of foreign policy was initiated by Prime Minister Lloyd George and the Cabinet members, then sent to the War Department in the Foreign Office. Directives were sent on to the embassy in Petrograd headed by Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary Sir George Buchanan, who would in turn issue instructions to the diplomats across Russia. As far as the execution of foreign policy was concerned, the job of the British representatives in Russia was to encourage, coach, and nourish active Russian participation on the eastern front.

Coming from the other direction were the communications sent by the British sources of information in Russia, as well as locations outside Russia when those dispatches concerned the situation there. In addition to the embassy in Petrograd, there were seven legations and forty-three consulates - all containing consuls, vice-consuls, pro-consuls, first, second, and third secretaries, counselors, and attaches. These diplomats all submitted
notes, minutes, and/or reports to their respective superiors, who would amend and submit them to their respective superiors. Although the diplomatic service in 1917 was the preserve of a socially exclusive and exclusively educated class of men, it must be emphasized that there was a distinction between salaried and unsalaried diplomats. The former tended to be professionals and devoted their entire careers to the service. Salaried diplomats were generally represented in the higher ranks of the foreign service. Owing to the fact that a private income was essential, unsalaried diplomats were often businessmen, recruited on the basis of their knowledge of locations and/or preparedness to represent their country in return for only office space and prestige. By and large, unsalaried representatives in Russia were found in the southern regions of Russia where British commercial interests were great. Britain also had military, naval, and civilian representatives in Russia at the time. Ultimately, Ambassador Buchanan would compile reports, compose a cover dispatch, which often included his own assessments of the situation in Petrograd itself, and send them on to the War Department where a decision would be made whether or not to refer them to the Cabinet. The information which eventually reached the Prime Minister's desk was probably thrice-distilled. However, how far these reports influenced the formulation of foreign policy is not entirely clear, given the independent nature of Prime Minister Lloyd George's policy making.

The purpose of this paper is to demonstrate that although the analysis of official policy in the work of both Neilson and Morris can be supported by some parts of the documentation, other parts refute, or at least lend no credence to their claims. It will further be demonstrated that as a body of primary information, these documents reflect general trends in Russia as witnessed by a collection of people. It can be shown that certain trends in the documentation are based on the self interest of the representatives and their Edwardian views. It will be evident that the British representatives shared a common national and cultural ethos. Generally, the representatives possessed an upper class, public school mentality, typified in certain set ideas, such as King and country before
anything, patriotism, honour, decency, and doing the 'right' thing. Thus, a certain national character was ascribed to Russians which will be evidenced throughout.

In order to demonstrate the variety of reportage in an orderly fashion, four general types of views, or perspectives, appear in these documents. The "objective" perspective was identified when a statement or report was borne out by historical evidence or carried a frank, realistic, or unbiased description. The second perspective was identified as "prejudiced". The third category, the "pessimistic" perspective, was identified when there was a tendency to concentrate on the worst aspect of things or expect bad results. Finally, the "optimistic" perspective was identified when a piece of uplifting news would be cited which gave reason to be hopeful or when there was an inclination to take a favourable view of the situation.

The following excerpts from a set of reports submitted by the Odessa district consul in South Russia in December of 1916 serve as examples of each perspective, as well as demonstrate common Edwardian viewpoints. Regarding the claim that official corruption would be blamed for the shortage of supplies, one consul noted objectively that

\[\text{In my opinion official corruption has had nothing to do with... disorganisation and shortage of supplies... The question of transport is naturally the root cause.}\]

Speaking of the shortages and general disruption in his residence, another British representative demonstrated his prejudice when he wrote that it all

\[\text{... points to official corruption for officially no foodstuffs are permitted to leave town. The mill owners are Jews. Jews are known as keen men of business but we also know that there are Russians enough who are quite as ready if not so able to take advantage of the present conjuncture [sic] to "feather their nests."}\]

And still another representative considered pessimistically that it

\[\text{amazing to see in a country which is full of the necessaries of life, how meagre the supply of provisions is, and it is certain that with active proper control the possessors could be made to produce them, but it would be an expensive and difficult operation, and the government would have to employ directly... efficient men... As it is at present attempted to be done, the efforts to supply provisions properly can never be successful.}\]

Finally, one consul noted optimistically that:
on the whole, the situation was satisfactory and that there was no absolute lack of articles of the first necessity. [He assured his superior that] the people realize its a rigid economy which the present war conditions demand.40

Thus, four separate individuals simultaneously provided the range of explanations.

It is important to note that the perspectives are not mutually exclusive. In many instances more than one perspective was found in a single report, especially when it discussed a variety of subjects. Because they were inextricably linked to Russia’s war performance, the Russian government; socialist, Bolshevik, and pro-German propaganda; the army; the industrial and agricultural dislocation; labour and peasant unrest; and the supply situation and its related aspects of transport, rising prices, speculation, and hoarding were all found to be common subjects. These are categorised under the major headings of Political, Military, and Economic entities not only for practical purposes, but also because they evolved with the course of events. General political, military, and economic disorganisation and deficiencies were constants throughout 1917. However, there were also variants which changed or progressed, such as the deterioration in morale of the soldiers, the rise in labour agitation, and the increase in peasant dissatisfaction.

The chapter divisions agree with the events as well. Chapter I covers the period before the March revolution, beginning with December 1916, since the first documentation included in the 1917 correspondence begins with this date. Chapters II - V deal with the trend of events from the March revolution itself to the Bolshevik seizure of power, which can be divided broadly into four phases. The first phase lasted from the March revolution to the May crisis, when a coalition government was formed. The second phase went to the July Offensive. An abortive revolution occurred shortly after the failure of the July Offensive and an abortive counter-revolution, the Kornilov revolt, signaled the beginning of the fourth phase. During this period the Bolsheviks prepared for their coup. Chapter VI covers the period immediately after the Bolshevik takeover and up to the end of 1917. This year was a long and tumultuous one. In order to explain it, we begin with December 1916.
1. There were two revolutions in Russia in 1917. The first was the upheaval that occasioned the deposition of Tsar Nicholas II, and inaugurated the eight month rule of the Provisional Government. Although it is called the February Revolution, it actually took place on 8 March, the difference being due to the fact that Russia was still using the Julian Calendar, which is in this century thirteen days behind the Gregorian Calendar used in the west. The second revolution, known as the Great October Revolution, occurred on 6 November when the Bolsheviks seized power from the Provisional Government. The Gregorian Calendar was adopted in Russia on 17 January 1918. Dates are herein referred to according to the New Style.

2. The Allied Powers, otherwise known as the Triple Entente, were comprised of Britain, France, and Russia, who in the Great War of 1914-18 fought against the Central Powers of Germany and Austria-Hungary. The original Allies were supported by eighteen other states, the most important being Japan (August 1914), Italy (May 1915), Rumania (August 1916), and the USA (April 1917). The Bolshevik Government made peace with the central powers on 3 March 1918 at Brest-Litovsk.

3. Allen K. Wildman, _The End of the Russian Imperial Army_ (New Jersey: Princeton UP, 1980), 1: XV; Pierre Sorlin, _The Soviet People and Their Society_ (New York: Grosset & Dunlap, 1963), p. 223. During Russia's participation in the war 15 million men were called up for military service. From 1914 until the March revolution the Russian army lost 4 million men - the equivalent of the entire French army. At the time of the March revolution, Russia had about 9 million men under arms.

4. Michael Kettle, _The Allies and the Russian Collapse_ (Great Britain: Ebenezer Baylis & Son Limited, 1981), 1:23. For example, the offensive into East Prussia which opened the hostilities ended in a catastrophic defeat of the Russians in the Battles of Tannenberg (26-30 August 1914), when over 100,000 Russians were captured, and Masurian Lakes (6-15 September 1914), when 125,000 men were taken. This sacrifice made possible a French recovery on the Marne by causing the rapid dispatch of two German corps from the western front.

5. Lieutenant-General N. N. Golovine, _The Russian Army in The World War_ (New Haven: Yale UP, 1931) p. 52-3; F. S. Northedge, _The Troubled Giant_ (London: G. Bell & Sons, 1966) p. 46; Nicholas V. Riasanovsky, _A History of Russia_, 4th edition (Oxford: Oxford UP, 1984) p. 418; Roger Pethybridge, _The Spread of the Russian Revolution_ (Great Britain: R. & R. Clark Ltd., 1972), p. 6-11; and Sorlin, _Soviet People_, p. 42. The enormous mobilisation of manpower, estimated to have taken about half of the younger able-bodied male peasants from rural districts, could not fail to dislocate the economy of the country. The acute shortage of weapons and ammunition accounted for up to 25% of Russian soldiers being sent to the front in 1915 unarmed, with instructions to pick up what they could from the dead. On the eve of 1915 Russian armies possessed 60 batteries of artillery to Germany's 380; Russia estimated that 6 1/2 million rifles would need to be produced for the war, whereas 18 million were later found to be required; and in the first few months of the war Russia had 1 shell factory to every 150 British factories, and was producing 35,000 shells a month and using 45,000 a day. While shell production was estimated to have increased 1300% in the first few months as compared with Britain's 1900%, the gap between supply and demand was never closed. The inefficiency of the transportation system, which affected the food
supply in both the military and urban sectors, as well as the delivery of war supplies to the front, was another aspect of Russia's ills. The shortage of doctors, nurses, and medical supplies, and the incompetence of a good portion of the military leadership further demonstrated Russia's ill-preparedness for the war. Whatever gains the tsar had made in the sphere of public relations when Russia entered the war, the combined effect of all these factors was to erode gradually morale in the army and general support for the war.


7. Michael G. Ekstein "Russia, Constantinople & The Straits, 1914-1915," in *British Foreign Policy Under Sir Edward Grey* edited by P. H. Hinsley (London: Cambridge UP, 1977), p. 434-5. The generally accepted interpretation of the Straits Agreement of March 1915 is that the British used the promise of Constantinople and the Straits to obtain Russian cooperation in the war. This historian credits Sir Edward Grey, the then British Foreign Secretary, with a special kind of intuition, whereby he 'knew' in his heart that to 'promise' the Straits to Russia did not necessarily mean that they would hold to it. The gesture was merely a 'pill to cure an earthquake'.

8. The Progressive Bloc was from August 1915 to March 1917 an alliance of most of the deputies in the Duma, who called for a "government of public confidence," which would prosecute the war more effectively and strengthen the authorities in the face of popular unrest.

9. Prince George E. Lvov (1861-1925) - Cadet leader, premier of the Provisional Government March - July 1917. Tsuyoshi Hasegawa, *The February Revolution: Petrograd, 1917* (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 1981), p. 19. These two voluntary organizations were concerned with providing relief for the wounded and the sick, supplying sanitary trains and hospitals, aiding evacuees, combating epidemics, and getting food to the populace. Although this author concedes that some of the activists in the Union of Zemstvos and the Union of Towns sought to make them instruments of political reform, he does not go as far as George Katkov in *Russia 1917: The February Revolution* (London: Longmans, Green & Co. Ltd., 1967), p. 3-11 who indicts the voluntary organizations as a Trojan horse from which the liberals attempted to take over the entire state machinery. The Unions were discussed in great detail in Buchanan to Balfour, 22 January 1917, FO 371/2995/18985. [Reel 2; pp.126-56]

10. Aleksander I. Guchkov (1862-1936) prominent Moscow Industrialist, a founder and leader of the Octobrist Party; became first Minister of War in the Provisional Government, March - May 1917.

11. Petrograd - the capital of Russia from 1712 to 1917; called St. Petersburg before 1914, but renamed with the Russian suffix after 1914; renamed Leningrad in 1924.


15. *Ibid*, p. 242. When more than four fifths of the pre-war population of the Russian Empire lived in villages it is not difficult to see how the desires of the peasant-soldiers to stop fighting and claim the land constituted an incredible measure of mass support to take advantage of the opportunities which flowed from the tsar's demise.

16. These are located in the Government Publication section of the Main Library at U.B.C., file index DA 47.65 G74 V.1-4 Mcr. At first glance it can be a confusing exercise to try to locate specific information in these documents. Some files are quite lengthy, containing up to perhaps 50 pages or more. For example, an incoming dispatch may have a file cover, then an explicationary letter usually composed by the Ambassador, and then an explicationary letter addressed to the Ambassador and usually composed by the District Consul, and then the actual report filed last. So within a file there are sometimes several enclosures. An incoming dispatch to the Foreign Office would begin with the most junior deskman and filter upwards to heads of departments. The junior would minute the document, usually on the jacket, in which it would thereafter be filed by the registry on its arrival, attach past correspondence and perhaps suggest a draft reply. For further information about the nature of this operation see Valerie Cromwell, "United Kingdom: The Foreign and Commonwealth Office" in *The Times Survey of Foreign Ministries of the World* edited by Zara Steiner (London: Times Books, 1982) pp.541-575 and D. C. Watt *Personalities and Policies* (Great Britain: Longmans, Green & Co. Ltd., 1965) pp. 1-15. The standard method of footnoting is to enter the Public Office Reel no., followed by the Public Office Volume no., and the Public Office File no. last. However, the writer has not only used the standard method of footnoting, but employed a more direct method, by including the U.B.C. Reel number and Library's Reel page number in each footnote for the reader's convenience. There are 25 reels for the year 1917.


18. Connell, Office, p. 1-20; W. B. Fest, "British War Aims & German Peace Feelers During The First World War (December 1916- November 1918)" in *Historical Journal* XV (1972) pp. 285-308; Samuel Hynes, *The Edwardian Turn of Mind* (Princeton: Princeton UP, 1968) p. 307-48; Sir Charles Petrie, *Diplomatic History 1713-1933* (London: Hollis & Carter Ltd., 1946) p. 64; Priestly, *Edwardians*, p. 49; Alan O'Day, ed., *The Edwardian Age: Conflict & Stability 1900-1914* (London: The MacMillan Press Ltd., 1979) p. pp. 2-80 & 161. Prevalent Edwardian sentiments were marked by general characteristics such as: Britain was isolated geographically and insular culturally almost to the point of being xenophobic; the Edwardians viewed Britain as a world power rather than a European one, whose civilization was advanced; these fostered the ideas that the rest of the world
regarded them as the world's policeman, and that Britain had to rescue the world by making it in her image. These attitudes were governed by a proud tradition of incorruptibility, patriotism, and a strict rule of conduct.

19. F. S. Northedge and Audrey Wells, *Britain and Soviet Communism: The Impact of a Revolution* (London: The MacMillan Press Ltd., 1982), p. 25. The British army was pinned down in Flanders with staggering losses rising day by day; the French suffered a shattering reverse in the Neville Offensive on the Aisne in the spring, resulting in army mutinies so frightening that Haig, commanding British forces, dared not set the facts down on paper for fear of their becoming known to his men; Italy was practically knocked out of the war by a combined Austrian and German thrust at Caporetto in November; and the German submarine campaign threatened the country's food supply.

20. This is a solid and informative work on a neglected area of Anglo-Russian relations as well as World War I. While largely a study of the military nature of the relationship, it also serves as the precursor to R. H. Ullman's detailed and authoritative account of British-Soviet relations after 1917. A major shortcoming of this book is that Neilson could not gain access to Soviet sources. Although Neilson makes it clear at the outset that the study is from a British perspective, the Russian/Soviet side of the story remains to be investigated.


22. Ibid.

23. Ibid., p. 296.


25. Ibid., p. 29.

26. Ibid., p. 45. The July Offensive, or sometimes labelled the Kerensky Offensive, was undertaken by the 7th, 8th, and 11th Russian armies of the Southwestern front commanded by General A. E. Gutor until July 7 and General L. G. Kornilov between 7 - 18 July. It was launched by the Provisional Government with the idea that a victory would raise its authority, call forth a wave of defensist attitudes, and satisfy the persistent demands made by Russia's allies.

27. Morris, "Russians", p.45. The Stockholm Conference was the centrepiece of the Petrograd Soviet's peace effort in the spring and summer of 1917. Its main purpose was to reconvene the Socialist International and through it to work out a peace program to end World War I. Invitations to Socialist delegates were issued as early as 2 June and to the end of July. It convened on 9 September.

28. See Chapter V.


30. Morris himself discusses these on pp. 43-5, citing minutes of War Cabinet, no. 115, 6 April 1917, CAB 23/2/115 as evidence.

32. The War Department was created especially during the war to, as one member later described it, "deal with the political affairs of practically all the countries of the world". See Lancilot Oliphant, Ambassador in Bonds (London, 1946) p. 15; and Zara Steiner, "The Foreign Office and The War," in British Foreign Policy Under Grey, Hinsley, ed. pp. 516-31. A small department, never numbering more than six clerks, the War Department was the centre of activity in the Foreign Office. All the correspondence to and from Russia travelled through this department.


34. Thus, most dispatches are noted as: Buchanan to FO, when in fact they might contain a report from, say the Consul in Moscow.

35. It is well known that during the First World War the influence of the Foreign Office in the making of foreign policy eroded. See Doreen Collins, Aspects of British Politics 1904-1919 (London: Peregramon Press, 1965) Chapter 4; Roberta K. Warman, "The Erosion of Foreign Office Influence in the Making of Foreign Policy," in Historical Journal XV (1972) pp. 133-59; and Cromwell, "United Kingdom", pp. 541-73. However, among historians there is a debate over the extent to which foreign policy was made exclusively by the Prime Minister, and especially over Lloyd George's personal Secretariat, known as the 'Garden Suburb', and its role in the erosion of Foreign Office influence over foreign policy. See John Turner, Lloyd George's Secretariat (Cambridge UP, 1980) Chapters 4 & 7, which paints a sympathetic portrait of this short-lived and irregular body of public servants. Given Lloyd George's lack of respect for traditional institutions and established routine; his preference for private rather than 'official' diplomacy and intrigue; his appointment of Arthur James Balfour - a passive, pliable man, whose interest in intellectual aspects and philosophical arguments of events tended to obscure the need for quick and effective decisions - as Secretary of State; and his ignorance of technical matters and his refusal to read reports which might have overcome this shortcoming; it is not difficult to imagine the hegemony over foreign policy the Prime Minister and those who were close to him possessed. For further reading on this topic, see: Peter Fraser, "The Impact of the War of 1914-18 on the British Political System" in War & Society: Historical Essays in Honour and Memory of J. R. Western 1928-1971 ed. M. R. D. Foot (London: Paul Elek, 1973) pp. 123-39; Neilson, Strategy, p. 13; V. H. Rothwell, British War Aims And Peace Diplomacy 1914-1918 (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1971) pp 1-17; and Steiner, "The Foreign Office".

36. This study analysed over 500 reports and identified a total of 1,205 perspectives.

37. Buchanan to FO, 1 January 1917, FO 371/2995/ 811. [Reel 2; p. 47]

38. Ibid. [Reel 2; p.42]

39. Ibid. [Reel 2; p.34]

40. Ibid. [Reel 2; p.35 & 37]
CHAPTER I
December 1916 - The March Revolution

A. Political

By the beginning of 1917 it was clear to the British that not only was the position of the tsar and his government uncertain, but that political change in Russia was imminent. Observers frequently wrote that the "attitude of [the] Duma remains hostile to [the] Government," the "representatives of the Nobility met and attacked the whole Rasputin System," the "troops [have] lost all confidence in the Government," and "even the peasant [has] lost all respect for and confidence in the Emperor."\(^1\) The last comment confirmed the tsar's complete isolation, for the Russian peasant was traditionally a 'monarchist' in the sense that he could conceive of no source of worldly authority other than that emanating from the tsar.\(^2\) F. O. Lindley, the Counselor of the Embassy in Petrograd, noted that one "never hears a good word about the Emperor or Empress, and their assassination is quite openly discussed."\(^3\) Members of the tsar's government were described as "violent" and "extreme" reactionaries, while the tsar and tsarina were branded respectively as "hopelessly weak" and "pro-German".\(^4\) The Empress was a Princess of Hesse-Darmstadt and it was assumed that she retained a natural sympathy for the land of her birth. It was well known that the Germans had been sending peace-feelers to the tsar and his government by any overt or covert means available.\(^5\) The British viewed the autocratic regime of Russia in the same light as that of Germany. These preconceptions may have had an influence on the way in which the representatives viewed the tsar's plight. The representatives were decidedly critical of the tsar and his government, despite the their stated commitment to war to a victorious conclusion.\(^6\) Most observers were in accord with the tsar's opponents, such as Prince Lvov,\(^7\) and the representative view was expressed by Bruce Lockhart, the Acting Vice Consul in Moscow:

Great pessimism prevails here regarding the political situation. Prince Lvoff [sic], who has always been very optimistic in spite of everything . . . said we were drawing near the end and drifting into anarchy and revolution. . . . ninety per cent of the Russian people were for the war, [Lvov assured Lockhart] but
...ninety nine per cent were against the Government [and] Russia could not be defeated unless she defeats herself. The danger [is] that the conviction...[is] growing stronger every day that under [the] existing conditions the war cannot be won. ...8

To shore up the faltering Russian war effort, the representatives followed a line of lending all assistance possible, to the limit of physical intervention. Thus, the bolstering of the faltering regime was through words and not deeds. This policy was piecemeal, but allowed time for the course of events to dictate a firmer line. For example, there were requests that England use her great influence to restore some sort of order in the interior or to put pressure on the Emperor9, and it was at this point that Ambassador Buchanan embarked on what he considered to be a last ditch effort to "bring the facts home to the Emperor." The Ambassador made his views clear to the Foreign Office in the following way.

The situation is becoming so serious that it is in my opinion a duty which we owe to the Emperor himself, to Russia, and to ourselves as Russia’s ally, to speak plainly. With the exception of a small clique of interested persons, the whole country is united in opposition to the Emperor’s present policy which is also condemned by the majority of his Ministers. With a divided Government and a country on the verge of revolution, it’s impossible for us to count on receiving any support from Russia in the war. ...I’m quite prepared to assume the whole responsibility for what I may say...and it is my opinion it is the psychological moment for us to speak. If we defer doing so, it may be too late, and the consequences may be incalculable.10

Buchanan met with the tsar on 12 January 1917, and suggested that he break down the barrier separating him from his people to regain their confidence. The reply has become one of the most infamous and often quoted instances of the tsar’s arrogance. Drawing himself up to Buchanan, he asked: "Do you mean that 'I' am to regain the confidence of my people or that they are to regain 'My' confidence?" The Emperor did agree, however, "that a united Government was necessary and that there must be a strong man at its head for the present situation demanded firmness." This admission was conclusive evidence that the tsar was not the man for the job at hand.

The type of leadership that the representatives felt was needed is indicated in the following passages:
This country is thirsting for a complete renewal and for a change in the spirit of the authorities and in the system of government. Whither is our guiding star leading us? . . . There is no authority for the government has none. 12

And,

There is only one issue out of the present position which is leading Russia to undoubted ruin - a reorganization of the present Government and the creation of a responsible Ministry. The Imperial Duma must with unfailing energy and strength carry out to the end its struggle with this shameful regime. In this struggle all Russia is behind it. 13

These statements show the pessimism about the current situation and lack of confidence in the existing leadership. Finally, in a burst of sarcasm, Buchanan concluded, "In short, the more one sees of Russia the more convinced one becomes of the truth of the dictum that every country has the Government it deserves." 14

Events demonstrated that pessimism was justified indeed. Many reports were very well informed and demonstrate that the Foreign Office was receiving accurate information about Russia. 15 Opposition to the tsar was becoming more vocal and Lvov warned that if the Emperor would not change then the country would have to change Emperors. In response to this threat, Lockhart warned that one of three things would happen:

one, that the Emperor will give in [to pressure to democratise the government], which is unlikely. Two, that the people. . . will take control in name of the Emperor. . . [or] three, that the country will drift along to defeat, to peace, [and] to anarchy." 16

He added prophetically that the third possibility was most likely.

One Russian General, Obolshev, was quoted by Lockhart as follows:

... if [the] upper classes don’t act, revolution will come from below. This will mean anarchy and social disorder. . . . If this is allowed to happen there is certain to be a strong reaction in favour of any form of government that can keep order. . . . the impossible authorities, in striving to save their outlived privileges and prerogatives, have become a toy in the hands of a gang of dark swindlers and have continued. . . . to wage a treacherous struggle with society and its people. This government. . . . which has disorganized the country and weakened the army cannot be trusted either with the prosecution of the war or with the conclusion of peace. 17

Lastly, one report about Russia’s performance in the war up to February 1917 argued that the discontent was born in the nineteenth century and fostered by the 1905 revolution. It explained that such discontent, as well as the the economic and geographic
conditions peculiar to Russia, such as insufficient development of communications and industry and immense distances, hindered Russia's war performance. This type of reporting was frank and lacking in polemic.

For a variety of reasons, including frustration and self interest, prejudice often appeared in pessimistic reports:

To-day [sic] civilian Russia is saturated with German propaganda, this is well known. . . . Unfortunately the top layers of society are more saturated than the lower, and are so near the top that they are well nigh our reach. The next layer willingly absorbs, and as willingly distills the insidious poison, for its own personal ends ----- [sic] the merchant class. The first for love of power. The second for love of money bear the name Judas. The lower classes, with true Russian apathy seem to be indifferent as to who wins this war. They feel that the Germans must win in the end. They remember that Germans gave them cheap goods in plenty, now there is nothing. They are tired, unused to making efforts, mental or physical they would willingly fold their hands and accept what the Germans offered them.19

The message in this report is one of mistrust and questions the loyalty of civilian Russia to the Allied cause.

Despite the general air of gloom, rumours still occasionally stimulated optimism in the reports. For example, in late January Buchanan wrote that "an impending great event is in the air,"20 apparently expecting a protest against the tsar's mismanagement of the war effort. Optimism also took the form of reassurances of a fatalistic nature:

It is of course possible that, as often happens in this country, there may be a sudden change for the better.

Or,

. . . in this country some unexpected change for the better may always take place. . . .

And,

There are times when I despair of the ability of the Russian people to carry this great war to a successful end, but I have seen so many instances of recovery from difficult positions by sheer brutal force, that I still believe they will muddle through in spite of themselves, or rather of their leaders.21

This type of statement is a confirmation of the mythical regard, due to a lack of knowledge, that some representatives had for their ally, in spite of the depressing reports regarding action in the military sphere.22
B. Military

A decisive factor in Russia's war performance and in the deepening of the revolution was the disintegration of the army. The crisis in morale began in December 1916 and was rooted in the feeling that the slaughter would never end and that victory could not be achieved. While the inadequate supply system had a negative influence on morale, a dangerous new element was the combination of the mood at the front with the deteriorating political situation in the rear. By the end of 1916 recruits consisted of peasant youths and old men who bitterly resented being torn away from their families and plots of land. Because they had been involved in student revolutionary and political organizations, the new officers were susceptible to political ideas and badly disposed towards the tsarist government. Thus, a very unreliable element, from the government's point of view, was being brought into contact with the soldiers in the trenches.

These circumstances all conspired to created a belief among the British representatives that the situation at the front was deteriorating. The mood of reporting was generally pessimistic, as typified by Lockhart in his dispatch of 21 December 1916:

> The food question in the army [is] now very serious, and . . . the feeling amongst the troops [is that they have] lost all confidence in the Government. [And he warned that] unless things [improve] we [shall] have trouble in the army before long.24

Buchanan concurred in a telegram in January, and considered that since "the whole future of the country lies in their [the army] hands the change is of the greatest significance."25

The low standard of levies drew comment:

> The medical examination is practically omitted, [observed Buchanan] and many are too old, cripples, or in some way defective. This points to great losses, and an exhaustion of resources in men.26

Blame for disaffection in the army was placed ultimately on the government:

> The Government . . . has prevented the army from carrying out its difficult task [observed Lockhart].27

Obviously most British representatives agreed that a change in authority would put things right.
Major General Alfred Knox, the Military Attache in Russia, was a much respected yet feared man by the Russian officers for his open criticisms of Russian inefficiency and incompetence. Russian military personnel were often quoted in *communiques* passed on by Knox.

General Manikovski, the chief of the Artillery Department . . . hoped the time was coming soon when [their] beloved Ally England would help Russia to settle her internal affairs even as she was helping her to re-arm. . . .[and] General Savinkow [sic], the Chief of Staff of the 9th Army privately asked that [the] English should use their great influence to restore some sort of order in the interior of Russia.28

This type of report supported the view that the Russians were committed to the war, but required leadership.

Major John F. Neilson, a British military representative attached to the Russian armies on the South-western front, pointed out in his lengthy report *The Outlook of The Russian Army* that although he was certain of the Russian army's commitment to continuing the war, he was also convinced that, owing to universal dissatisfaction with the tsar, his government, and his maladministration of the war and country, revolution was inevitable.29 Neilson concluded that Russia was clearly incapable of managing her own house [and] her trade [could] not expand without outside help. English or Germans will develop Russia, which of these two powers does so depends on the feeling in Russia towards England. [and Germany]. . . by its nearness, looms largest in the eye.30

This observation was one of the first of many of this type in the correspondence for 1917. It demonstrated that Germany's future in continental affairs was a major concern. Here was a real fear that a battered and vulnerable Russia was easy prey for Germany, both during the war when Russia's infrastructure could be tapped in order to fuel the German war effort on her western front, and after the war when German domination over Russia would tip the balance of power on the continent.31 Neilson rightly recognised that every social sector in Russia was represented in the army ranks, and thus, the strains of Russian society were carried over into it. For, "However carefully the feelings of the nation may be in tuned, the passage of the Russian Army across the keys will play the tune the Army wishes."32 The potential for future mass support, therefore, was great.
The remedy, as Neilson naively saw it, was to convince the Russian soldiers of Britain's worthiness as an ally by inviting Russian officers to the western front, so that they will see that "England was not the 'Perfidious Albion' they thought her to be", as well as see "what a nation at war really means."  

Neilson was not, however, without his prejudice.

I consider Russia a fickle friend. Russians are easily influenced and... Their horizon is very limited, and they have no understanding of perspective... The Russian mind is utterly unbalanced, so illogical, so often child-like in its unreasoning that it is capable of evolving the most fantastic and utterly unlikely decisions. We must be prepared for anything from Russia, even war.34

Clearly, Major Neilson did not credit the Russians with much intelligence, and in doing so, he demonstrated his lack of confidence and trust in Russia as an ally.

On 5 January Buchanan sent a telegram to Balfour indicating that the latest reports from the front did not reflect such a depressing impression as that conveyed by Prince Lvov in earlier reports, thus adding an optimistic dimension to this section.35 And Lindley gave the assurance that "The army remains and so long as the war lasts, it is hoped it will be too busy to be able to take an active part in politics."36 Thus, the Ambassador and Counselor took refuge in hopeful thinking. In the economic sphere, however, there were few examples of such an outlook.

C. The Economy

The breakdown of the supply system was one of the most significant factors leading to the tsar's downfall, and the subsequent collapse of the Provisional Government. The difficulty was a disorganised transportation system due almost entirely to the inadequacy of rolling stock and locomotives within the rail system.37 Other factors which put pressure on the supply situation were the influx of peasants from the countryside to the urban areas, due to the demand for labour in the new war industries; refugees flooding into Russia's western cities as the German Army advanced; and bad food distribution. These factors led to rapid increases in food prices and the hoarding of goods.38 Manufactured goods and the lack of fuel for factories contributed to falling output. Food
shortages and political friction between owners and workers led to labour inefficiency. These factors reinforced each other to pull the entire system down.

The position of the representatives in the South of Russia, most of whom were unsalaried, highlights this tense scenario since their reports reflect common concerns and grievances. Picton Bagge, the Acting Consul General in Odessa, and his correspondences serve as some of the best examples of the British notes for 1917: as a collection they demonstrate the whole range of assessment concerning a single subject at one point in time. During this period, the failure of transportation was considered as the most serious problem. The blame for this, however, was attributed to a variety of things. In an extremely long report, in which the acute shortages were described, a typical pessimistic view was expressed by Bagge:

It is strictly forbidden. . . to hoard goods and to speculate in them. . . . Prices continue to rise, and goods come to the market in small quantities. . . . It is with the greatest difficulty that the munition factories are supplied. . . . I believe the local authorities are endeavoring to cope with the situation, but the transport difficulties are almost insuperable. . . . [and] I am of the opinion that disorganisation of transport. . . and. . . speculation. . . are the main causes of the present economic distress. If only transport could be organised. . . speculation would be largely eradicated.42

The conclusion to this report is typical for the 1917 correspondence in that; the writer reasoned that things might improve 'if only' some such thing would occur. Brown, the unsalaried Vice Consul in Nicolaev, indicated that proper organisation was the issue:

. . . it is beyond dispute that were the [railway] lines efficiently organised, as British lines are, a greater volume of traffic could be handled in about half the time as present occupied.43

It is important to discriminate between the generally salaried representatives in the North of Russia, and the unsalaried representatives in the South. The latter had their own interests to protect and naturally these reports reflected certain biases. Thus pessimism often gave way to unadulterated prejudice in their reports. The typical anti-Semitic view was expressed by Douglas, in Kiev.

. . . it is my belief that the Jews who are one and all without exception [sic] pro-German, are to a great extent responsible for the exceedingly high prices prevailing and the non delivery or holding up of commodities and they
are also participators in a great many of the intrigues going on.\textsuperscript{44}

Regarding corruption, Douglas had the following to say:

I am only stating a well known fact when I say that there is a great deal of corruption existing [sic] amongst Government officials in responsible positions and it is this corruption combined with the attitude of the Jews which is responsible for the pitiful condition of Russia today.\textsuperscript{45}

The extreme view was represented by Brown, in Nicolaev:

When dealing with any situation in...this city, it is impossible to get away from the Jew and his influence on the same....There is no disguising the fact that the responsibility of much of the speculation in all communities and the consequent rise in prices rests with them; their trading instincts have not been slow in grasping the present position and turning it to their advantage....I have of course no positive information on the point, but all indications point to the problem that the Jews got wind of the impending search [for hoarded goods] and successfully appealed to their co-religionists in other trades to...remove [the goods] without detection....As regards their influence on politics, the position they hold in the commercial world gives them every opportunity for propagating their views....strange to say the venom of this propaganda seems...to be directed against Britain and British interests. Every reference made to Great Britain and her...struggle is made with little or no attempt to conceal the sneer and sarcasm that accompanies it and they will tell you that after the war all will be as before and that Germany will come into her own again.\textsuperscript{46}

Anti-semitism has had a long history in England (as well as in Russia\textsuperscript{47}). The myth of an international Jewish conspiratorial network was widely accepted and the tendency to see the Jew's hand in everything was closely linked to the popular view of the Jews' wealth and influence, both in the domestic and at the international level. The Edwardian logic behind these beliefs was articulated by Lord Eustace Percy, Balfour's Private Secretary. Since the Jew did not enjoy territorial sovereignty, "he must either pull down the pillars of the whole national state system [in which he lives] or he must create a territorial sovereignty of his own." Percy held that Jewish agitation lay at the roots of republican and socialist thought

not because the Jew cares for the positive side of radical philosophy, not because he desires to be a partaker in Gentile nationalism or Gentile democracy, but because no existing Gentile system of government is ever anything but distasteful to him."\textsuperscript{48}

This attitude also serves as an explanation why some of the British representatives tended to blame the Jews for Russia's ills in the latter part of 1917, when Bolshevism was having
an impact on the course of the revolution. The connection between Bolshevism and the Jews was, in short, their common goal of the destruction of the state system. Of course, the fact that some Bolsheviks were Jews substantiated the association.

The British generally believed that Russian public life was corrupt and that Russian bureaucrats and politicians could be bought. Corruption did exist in Russian public life, but historian Richard Pipes has written that the notorious venality of Russian officials, especially those working in the provinces far removed from the capital cities, was due not to some peculiar characteristic of the Russian national character or even to the low calibre of the people who chose a bureaucratic career. Rather it was inherent in a government which, lacking in funds to pay for the administration, had for centuries paid its civil servants no salary (in rather the same way as the unsalaried British diplomats), and insisted that they "feed themselves from official business." Hence, when corruption was recognised by the British it was judged in terms of the Edwardian ethic.

Some writers had quite a different perspective, however. Oliverly, the unsalaried Vice Consul in Taganrog, wrote that it was not just the Jews, but everyone who was "engaged in the game of grab," and that the "Jews and pro-Germans should. . .be classed [rather] as anti-Russian." Major Neilson, though admitting he was no champion of the "chosen race", considered that the Jews' position had been a difficult one.

Despite the fact that little optimism was expressed during this period, so long as it was just a matter of leadership and the "masses" were considered to be "for the war," something would happen to turn it around. "Something or someone will appear to save the situation," wrote Lockhart. Oliverly, Walton, and Brown related that the situation was altogether satisfactory and that the labourers had never been so well off. While there were shortages, there was no lack of articles of necessity. Greeves' footnote to this general assessment read "so long as the people do not suffer hunger and cold all will be well but if provisions and fuel fail there will be a riot. Finally, Bagge wrote that:

I have seen so many instances of recovery from difficult positions by sheer brutal force, that I still believe [the Russians] will muddle through in spite of
themselves, or rather their leaders.56

From December 1916 to the March revolution British reports were generally gloomy in outlook and marked by unfavourable assessments of the entire Russian effort. The representatives tended to blame the tsar and his government for all Russia's political, military, and economic ills. The Jews were also blamed, and especially so by their competitors, the unsalaried diplomats in the South. The representatives, as well as their sources of information advocated that the Russian leadership required the public's confidence. Other than a few words of gentle persuasion and support, the representatives generally advocated a policy of "wait and see". The level of pessimism did not reach desperation, however. Nor was there a loss of hope, especially when the March revolution appeared to deliver the long hoped for one strong leader, capable of restoring political integrity, military stability, and economic order.
CHAPTER I - ENDNOTES


2. Richard Pipes, Russia Under The Old Regime (Great Britain: Fletcher & Son Ltd., 1977) pp. 161-62 and 169-170. It is important to note, however, that the peasant's loyalty was a personal loyalty to the idealised image of a distant ruler whom he saw as his terrestrial father and protector. It was not a loyalty to the institution of the monarchy as such.


5. Frank Alfred Golder, ed. Documents of Russian History 1914-1917 (New York: The Century Co., 1927), p. 40-49. The German Government set to work after a few months into the war to make trouble for the Russian camp and to separate Russia from her allies. For example, the Tsarina's brother, the Grand Duke Ernest of Hesse was consigned to approach their Imperial Highnesses on several occasions. See also Buchanan to FO, 1 January 1917, FO 371/2995/812. [2:57]


7. Prince Lvov was Lockhart's main source of information during the first half of the year, and the man he was predicting to be the most likely candidate for the Premiership. Buchanan to Balfour, 5 January 1917, FO 371/2995/4247; Lockhart to Buchanan, 5; 18; and 22 January 1917, FO 371/2995/16232; 23643; 30807. [2:78, 121, 175, 215]


9. Lockhart to Buchanan, 21 December 1916, FO 371/2995/4247. [2:70] Lockhart replied to a particular request that "it was impossible for us to interfere in Russia's own affairs." Also see: Buchanan to FO, 22 January 1917, FO 371/3004/16783. [11:1]; 11 January 1917, FO 371/3002/8110. [9:340]


15. This study singled out a total of 38 extremely insightful, well-written, and accurate reports. For a few random samples see: Lockhart to Buchanan, 14 February 1917, FO 371/2995/4829. [2:236]; Buchanan to Balfour, 5 April 1917, FO 371/2995/71216. [2:522]; Locker Lampson to FO, 20 April 1917, FO 271/2996/81396. [3:228]; Townley to FO, 1 June 1917, FO 371/2996/108843. [3:444]; Buchanan to FO, 2 July 1917, FO 371/2997/131118. [4:52]; Buchanan to Balfour, 26 May 1917, FO 371/2998/105139. [5:343]; Cecil to FO, 1 December 1917, FO 371/2999/228705. [6:477]; Villiers to Balfour, 20 July 1917, FO 371/3011/143327. [18:509]; Political Intelligence Bureau to FO, 8 May 7 20 October 1917, FO 371/3012 & 3016/93027 &204303. [19 & 23:286 & 425]; and Wolf to FO, 1 September 1917, FO 371/3015/171081. [22:294]


17. Lockhart to Buchanan, 26 December 1916, FO 371/2995/9759. [2:105-110] The influence of 'dark powers' or 'dark swindlers' were also spoken of in Lockhart to Buchanan, 14 February 1917, FO 371/2995/48290. [2:262]; and Buchanan to Balfour, 18 January 1917, FO 371/2995/23644. [2:186]

18. Lockhart to Buchanan, 14 February 1917, FO 371/2995/48290. [2:238-53]

19. DMI to FO, 16 January 1917, FO 371/3003/12005. [10:364]


22. Maurice Baring Landmarks in Russian Literature (London: Methuen & Co Ltd., 1910), p. 9-10. Baring, a contemporary 'authority' on Russia, devoted his later years to dispelling what he described as the extraordinary ignorance the English had about Russia and Russians. Baring observed that an obstinate grit of resistance was indeed a Russian characteristic. The British representatives obviously applied this rule to Russia's present condition as a hardened fact. And see endnote #49.

23. For a few random samples, see Lockhart to Buchanan, 21 December 1917, FO 371/2995/4247. [2:70]; Buchanan to Balfour, 12 January 1917, FO 371/2995/9759. [2:85]; and DMI to FO, 16 January 1917, FO 371/3003/12005. [10:301]

24. Lockhart to Buchanan, 21 December 1917, FO 371/2995/4247. [2:70].

25. Buchanan to Balfour, 12 January 1917, FO 371/2995/9759. [2:85]


27. Lockhart to Buchanan, 26 December 1916, FO 371/2995/9759. [2:110]


29. DMI to FO, 16 January 1917, FO 371/3003/12005. [10:301]

30. Ibid.

32. DMI to FO, 16 January 1917, FO 371/3003/12005. [10:301]

33. Ibid.

34. Ibid.

35. Buchanan to Balfour, 5 January 1917, FO 371/2995/4247. [2:64]


38. Ibid., p. 85. Given that the total urban population before the war was about 22 million, this represented an increase by 27 per cent.

39. Ibid., p. 89-90.

40. Eight in all, these reports came from all the important commercial towns in the south, including those from J.F. Douglas in Kiev, C. Blakely in Kharkov, W. S. Walton in Mariupol, E. Olively in Taganrog, H. D. Brown in Nicolaev, J. E. Greeves in Berdiansk, A. Youngman in Elisabethgrad, and the Acting Consul General himself Picton Bagge in Odessa.

41. Buchanan to FO, 1 January 1917, FO 371/2995/811. [2:18-21]

42. Buchanan to Balfour, 24 January 1917, FO 371/2995/19309. [2:160]

43. Buchanan to FO, 1 January 1917, FO 371/2995/811. [2:24, 36, 38, and 43]

44. Ibid., [2:25]

45. Ibid.

46. Ibid., [2:35-41]

47. Ralph T. Fisher Jr., "Anti-Semitism in Russia," in The Modern Encyclopedia of Russian and Soviet History, Vol. 2., ed. Joseph L. Wieczynski, (USA: Academic International Press, 1976), pp. 30-9. Tsarist Russia was always hostile to its Jewish subjects, although the degree varied from tsar to tsar or tsaritsa. Under Nicholas II anti-Semitism was much in evidence. Nicholas II himself was an honourary member of the openly anti-Jewish Union of the Russian People. During the First World War the Pale was the battleground: Russia's chaotically administered evacuation of civilians of western borderlands hit the Jews hard. Often suspected of spying for Germany and such allegations served as a convenient excuse for some Russian commanders when they were defeated. No doubt British representatives succumbed to blaming the Jews when they received their information from Russian 'officials'.

49. Neilson, *Strategy*, pp. 1-2, and 20. Other commonly held beliefs were: that the Russian government was arbitrary and oriental in nature and thus the result of such misgovernment was a drunken and boorish race of people, and kept so deliberately by the repressive regime. *The Annual Register: A review of public events at home and abroad for the year 1914* (London: Longmans, Green, and Co., 1915), p. 197. Another was that Russia was invulnerable militarily and that her soldiers were capable of superhuman feats of bravery and endurance. Hence, alleged sightings of Russian soldiers in Scotland en route for Belgium and France, and with snow still on their boots, substantiated this myth. To the British, Russia seemed a socially and politically reactionary backwater.


51. Buchanan to FO, 1 January 1917, FO 371/2995/811. [2:33]


53. Lockhart to Buchanan, 23 December 1916, FO 371/2995/4248. [2:79] and see footnote #35.

54. Buchanan to FO, 1 January 1917, FO 371/2995/811. [2:28 and 32]

55. *Ibid.*, [2:43]

56. *Ibid.*, [2:21]; R.H.B. Lockhart, *The Two Revolutions: An eye-witness Study of Russia 1917*. (London: The Bodley Head, 1967), p. 74. Russian historian Kliuchevsky has written "There is no people in Europe more capable of tremendous effort for a short space of time than the Great Russian. But there is also no people less accustomed to regular, sustained, unceasing labour than this same Great Russian. No doubt in both instances the realisation of such feats depended on the measure of incentive."
CHAPTER II

The March Revolution - The May Crisis

Strikes and riots broke out in Petrograd on 8 March, and the troops sided with the rioters two days later. On 12 March the Duma chose a Provisional Government under Prince Lvov's Premiership. On the 15th, the tsar abdicated. The Cabinet as a whole was controlled by the liberal Constitutional-Democratic (Cadet) party, whose leader Paul N. Miliukov was appointed as Foreign Minister. Also represented in the Cabinet were the Conservative Nationals (Octobrists), whose leader, Guchkov, became Minister of War. Factory workers, soldiers and peasants formed their own soviets, which were headed by the Petrograd Soviet. This, in turn was controlled by the Social-Revolutionaries (SRs). An SR deputy, Alexander F. Kerensky, a lawyer of moderate leftist sympathies, was appointed Minister of Justice.

The power struggle between the Provisional Government and the Petrograd Soviet was closely watched by the British. During this period the struggle centred on foreign policy. Miliukov wanted to abide by the secret treaties and to continue the war. As a result of his strict adherence to this policy he was strongly opposed by the Soviet, which advocated a policy of 'peace with out annexations'. The political turmoil resulted in an impasse, the Soviet forced Miliukov's resignation and a new coalition government was formed in May. M. I. Tereshchenko now became Foreign Minister, and Kerensky replaced Guchkov, who resigned as Minister of War. Lvov remained as titular head of the government.

A. Political

Coverage of the revolution itself was rather low-keyed. The Ambassador characterised the revolution as "nothing serious" and quoted Lindley's opinion that trouble would soon blow over "as it has always done before." Commander Oliver Locker-Lampson, a British military representative, concluded that

There never was a more bloodless and orderly Revolution. . . . It may be that the Russian lacks imagination, but this tremendous change has been wrought
without excess. . . . The crowds are not nearly as noisy as those in an English election.6

This hopeful anticipation was due to the expectation that the change in government would lead to a renewed war effort. On 15 March Buchanan felt that the situation had greatly improved and that, as the revolution was now an accomplished fact, there appeared to be no longer any danger as regards a vigorous continuation of the war.7 In a lengthy and optimistic report Hugh Walpole, the famous writer who was serving in the Russian Red Cross at this time, concluded that as the revolution was a demonstration against the tsar's mismanagement of the war, all would go well now that the leadership problem had been rectified.8

During March and April the British were "watching" the new regime with anxious anticipation and "waiting" to see whether the Provisional Government intended to fulfill their expectations. Because he firmly believed that internal political unrest would have disastrous repercussions for Russia's military effort, Buchanan adopted an attitude of sincere and amicable sympathy towards the new Russian Ministry.9 His description of the newly formed government was as follows:

Parties of the Duma and of Socialist Revolutionaries though not yet in open opposition are likely to become so very shortly. The former is for war and if it prevails quickly will render Russia stronger than before. The latter is for peace at any price and its advent to power will mean disaster from [a] military point of view.10

The Ambassador concluded that the Ministry was a very strong one and that it should unite the whole country. He went on to suggest that it would strengthen the new leaders' hands "were His Majesty's Government to recognise them at once as de facto [sic] Government."11

Lockhart's views on the new Ministry were particularly optimistic and confident.

Certainly [Lvov's] appointment is the most popular one that could have been made at the present moment. . . .[Lvov is] a good organizer and the hardest worker I've ever seen. . . .[and a man of] high integrity of character and . . .honesty. . . .Of all the men I've met in Russia he is certainly the one who inspires me with the greatest confidence and respect.12
The envoy emphasised other virtues which Lvov possessed, the most noteworthy in his view being that the President was a direct descendent of Rurik. Considering that the British foreign service was a preserve for the aristocratic professional classes, it is not surprising that Lockhart wrote as though bloodline determined character.

While Buchanan was confident that throughout Russia the government was supreme, he cautioned that

It is certainly necessary for [the] government to go very slow in dealing with them [the Soviet] and they [the government] fully recognize this... I am not... without hope that things will (?settle) [sic] themselves as excitement dies down.

This theme was reiterated by Lindley in his weekly summary in mid-April. The government seems to have strengthened its position, though a week ago it looked like losing ground... the government... does not yet consider its position sufficiently strong to assert itself on any controversial question. It has not yet got out of the stage when any false step might result in its being swept away.

These analyses exemplify both the indeterminate nature of the Provisional Government and British optimism that the government would secure authority. Until that happened, however, the British representatives believed that their government should 'watch' and 'wait' for some firm resolve.

Another opinion at this stage was that the British should be careful to avoid any confrontational stance which might provoke Russian antipathy towards the war and Britain. At the same time encouragement was to be given to Russian policies which were aligned with Britain’s goals. In an attempt to strengthen the hands of the Russian government, Britain officially recognised the new Russian government on 23 March. Lockhart considered it imperative that official communiques from Britain be stepped up to offer enthusiastic support. A better showing on the Western front was also considered important for purposes of raising the morale of their Russian counterpart. The Ambassador considered it most important that all telegrams to and from the U.K. should be censored, so as to avoid any news being published in the press of disheartening nature. Buchanan also warned that any news printed in the British press regarding the
revolution should emphasise that it was the work of the entire nation. This demonstrates that the British were aware that Russia was observing Britain carefully too. The perception in Russia that the British were unsympathetic to the revolution would certainly be detrimental to the war effort since public opinion and morale were essential tools of war. For example, Lockhart cautioned that speculation about the safety of the ex-Emperor could be misconstrued in Russia, especially by the socialists as evidence that "we’ve thrown in our lot with the Russian bourgeoisie."21

Faced with inactivity following the revolution, due to general chaos22, the initial optimism gave way to more pessimistic reports concerning the long term outlook in Russia. Guchkov was quoted as saying the situation was not desperate and he hoped that the mutinous troops could be kept under control. Buchanan, however, was alarmed at the prospect of force being employed. "To try to suppress them...would mean the beginning of civil war." And he advised Guchkov, in the same manner as he had done previously with the tsar, that "A policy of concessions and conciliation was the only one to follow."23 Buchanan then relayed to his superiors the following:

For fear of provoking a Socialist outbreak, the [government] have had to adopt a temporising policy and they don't use force to maintain order...I hope all will yet go well, [but] I feel it right to make it clear that the situation is a precarious one.24

And on another occasion he wrote:

[The] Minister for Foreign Affairs whom I saw this morning took a gloomy view of the situation. He said...order and discipline must be restored and it would be necessary to appoint at once a general who possessed the confidence of the Army as dictator and to proclaim state of siege.25

This was one of the first inferences that a general was viewed as a viable, alternative leader capable of establishing order. M. Montgomery, a British military representative, wrote that the present Russian Cabinet was composed of

useless and incompetent men. [He accused them of] pandering to the demands of a small section of extreme revolutionaries [and was of the opinion that] unless matters mended rapidly...men would be found who were capable of governing and leading the country...the enormous majority of Russians were...sound on the question of driving out the Germans and they only required leading of a strong government.26
Lindley lapsed into despair when he noted that the Provisional Government had no control. As a result, he asserted, it was impossible to enforce anything.

[No one] exists in Russia capable of restoring and willing to restore order...though the real government have [the] bulk of Russia behind them the extremists would at present carry the day here. They are of course the more active, as they have no construction work to take up their time and can devote themselves entirely to propaganda and stirring trouble.27

The inability of the Provisional Government to control anti-war propaganda, and especially that of the Bolsheviks was particularly disturbing.28 The Minister of Foreign Affairs assured the Ambassador that:

the popular feeling was swinging against Lenin and his cohorts [and that]...the troops were ready to arrest them when the Government would give the word. ...[however] the Government did not wish to precipitate matters for fear of provoking civil strife.

The fear that confrontation would spark civil war was well understood by Buchanan. However, he cautioned Miliukov that selective pruning of the opposition would produce greater stability. The Ambassador wrote that he could not see how Russia could expect to win the war unless they arrested Lenin who incites crowds of soldiers whom he addressed to desertion, seizure of land and to murder...[Buchanan urged] it was time for the government to act...unless it was going to abdicate all semblance of authority.29

The Russian Minister assured Buchanan that the Government was awaiting the "psychological moment, which was not far off in the distant future, to suppress dissent."

In an attempt to step up the pace, the Ambassador told Miliukov that the supply of war material to Russia would be stopped "unless I receive proper assurances both as regards the question of discipline and the continuation of the war," to which the Minister replied Russia had to "proceed cautiously."30 On another occasion the Ambassador told Kerensky that the "present position with two Governments was impossible." The Minister lamely replied that he hoped that the Germans would advance as it would unite the country.31 By the end of April, with no positive results achieved, Buchanan observed that "Everything seems to point to a new crisis at an early date and I see no hope of things righting themselves without further bloodshed."32
These pessimistic reports were natural in view of a growing peace movement. Lockhart was especially discerning and well informed. On 23 March the Vice Consul estimated that:

...although the revolution was in every sense a national one, the actual tool which forged it was furnished by the working classes. For that reason it would be, I think a mistake to represent the revolution as an expression of the Russian peoples' desire for a more vigorous prosecution of the war. The war may have been an excuse for the revolution, but it was actually caused by political and economic conditions which had become unbearable. (The war) is secondary to the Russians and especially [the] Socialists. ...Mr. Lloyd George's declaration that the revolution in Russia had been brought about by those people who desired a more vigorous prosecution of the war was severely criticised, and one deputy...stated that Russia had made the revolution for herself and not for her Allies. ...Russia is now on the verge of a great struggle between the bourgeoisie and the proletariat. It would be idle to deny that in the coming struggle the Socialists will have certain advantages. In the first place, the Government...has been left a most unenviable legacy by its predecessors...[and] will be engaged in the enormous task of restoring order and carrying on the war. The Socialist party...will be free to criticise and to carry on its propaganda throughout the country...the chief danger at the moment lies in the possibility of a reverse on the Russian front. This...would give a very dangerous support to the anti-war party in Russia. ...Even now...the country is undoubtedly tired of the war...it is improbable that a country in the state in which Russia is at present can pass through so disintegrating an upheaval of her forces without further revolutions and counter-revolutions.

This report demonstrates that at least some of the diplomats had an understanding of the situation. His report is factual and his observations concerning Bolshevism were particularly astute, almost anticipating the swift rise of Bolshevism and the struggles for power after the collapse of the July offensive (see chapter four).

The relationship between understanding the gravity of the situation and impotence often resulted in frustration, and name-calling as the last resort. The Ambassador himself was not without his prejudice. In one report Buchanan maintained that:

The revolution has not changed the Russian character which remains unusually resentful of anything in the nature of outside interference or "superior" advice. It is...most necessary to avoid saying or doing anything which can be twisted as indicating a desire to show in the immature Russians the path they should follow.

The Ambassador's comments are condescending and epitomise a chauvenistic Edwardian attitude towards the Russians.

The Jews also received their share of blame. For example, the Riga Consul wrote:
I am grieved to have to state that the Jews [in Riga] are not behaving well. They have become free citizens of Russia, but do not display a sense of the responsibility befitting their new position.35

Another report, from Ambassador Spring-Rice in Washington D.C., warned that

It is most important that the Jewish communities should be warned if the Revolution results in withdrawal of Russia. . .Jews will be held mainly responsible.36

The extreme view was authored by Brown in Nicoliev.

I do not hate Jews. . .but [the bulk of Jews] have gone to such an extent of pro-German tendencies that they have engendered a positive dislike of Britain.

. . .those of us who. . .know the Russian Jew [know that this is so because they] fear. . .commercial competition from Britain.37

There can be no doubt that Jews, like Russians, were involved in the revolution, wanted peace, and had many business interests. However, they are singled out as a race of people for blame due to their perceived characteristics. Both the unsalaried representatives and Russian businessmen had interests in laying the blame at the feet of the Jews.38 The coincidence of some Russian socialists being Jewish was further proof that the Jews were allied with Germany, as the following intimated:

an important movement has been started among Socialists [in New York] financed by Jewish (and possibly ultimately by German) funds, with the object of securing the return to Russia of revolutionary Socialists under the expected political amnesty, who would overthrow the present government.39

The return of Lenin and other socialists to Russia with the aid of German officials was also taken as proof that the Bolsheviks were in German pay.

German agents. . .[are] using [the] extreme Left as they had formerly [before the revolution] used [the] extreme Right in order to sow discord between Russia and England.40

The course of events made the British representatives increasingly pessimistic concerning the political situation. A similar pattern can be seen in the military sphere, as the two are inextricably linked.

B. Military

The disintegration of the Russian army did not occur abruptly, but was a protracted and varied process revealing military, social, and geographical sides. The peasant-soldiers
received news of the revolution with joy and enthusiasm, as this meant the end of subjection to the landlords back home and to the officers at the front. Although no longer fearing the latter's power, the soldiers did fear that the officers would scheme to regain their lost position. Hence chronic breaches of discipline were often connected with suspicions of the command's preparations for regaining authority.

Deterioration in morale and obedience increased proportionately with distance from the front. Faced with the presence of the enemy across the wire, the soldiers at the front were more disposed than their comrades in the rear to observe military routine. A geographical pattern also emerged, emanating first from the chief centre of the revolution, Petrograd, and then from Moscow. This meant that the southwestern front was in a healthier state. And the Rumanian front, being on foreign soil and farthest from the heart of revolution, made the best showing in terms of discipline. Refusal to obey orders, to fight, and desertion were common features. Other instances found expression in the lynching and beating of officers and commissars.

During March Buchanan and the British Assistant Military Attache, Major Thornhill, embarked on a diplomatic exercise of congratulating soldiers in barracks in and around Petrograd on their new found freedom. The Ambassador observed that socialist orators "had been given free run of the barracks," but he was certain that with General Kornilov now in command of the Petrograd Garrison, the troops would be brought into line. Buchanan also believed that the general disruption was due to excitement over the end of autocracy, and that once all of the commotion died down army discipline would improve and the war's prosecution would recommence. The Ambassador related that all the soldiers, and especially the Kuban Cossacks, had agreed on the necessity of defeating the German barbarians, and maintained that things would gradually right themselves "if we have patience."

In contrast to these optimistic observations, a number of more pessimistic observers were concerned about the breakdown in discipline and the difficult position the officers now
found themselves in. This list of soldiers' demands was long: the cessation of saluting, membership of the political party of choice, and NCOs made subject to veto by the ranks of men, were a few examples. This reported breakdown in discipline was coupled with stories of joy-riding soldiers on trains, drinking, arbitrary execution of officers and gambling.47

Dispatches related that the lot of the officers was so bad, due to the paralysing effect of Order No. 1, that they were flocking to Allied embassies with hopes of serving as privates in Allied armies. This proved that there was a pro-war sector in Russia.48 The typical conclusion was conveyed by Brown:

... if it were possible at the present time to put up a Government having [the] power to make its orders obeyed, and having the will to better the lot of the army, particularly that of the private soldier, the army would not be long in taking a more healthy view of it duties and responsibilities.49

Montgomery was harsher in his indictment of the government when he said that the present Cabinet was composed of useless and incompetent men. . .[and] unless matters mended rapidly. . .men would be found who were capable of governing and leading the country. . .the enormous majority of Russians were . . .sound on the question of driving out the Germans and they only required leading by a strong government.50

Clearly, representatives agreed that the Russians were committed to the war. These were grim times indeed, yet the suggestion in these reports is that those Russians who wished to fight were being prevented from doing so by an ineffective and incompetent government.

In defense of Russia's new leaders, Buchanan pointed out that they [the Provisional Government] would not however like to see [the] Army become too strong by achieving some great victory as in that case, it would be master of the situation and might effect [a] counter-revolution.51

This articulated the Russian government's revolutionary defensist position succinctly.

Finally, Lockhart hit a sober note when he wrote on 10 May that

Without being unduly pessimistic, . . .we [the Moscow Allied representatives] are all convinced that as far as the war is concerned, in the words of the American Consul, "Russia has gone out and America has come in."52

Other reports contained more objectivity. For example, Lockhart wrote that:
It is not a question of discipline but that so many of the best technical officers have been killed or removed.53

And Lindley explained that:

...[the] old discipline, now usually referred to as something almost Prussian in its perfection, was, ...lax and ineffective. The desertions before the revolution were on a scale unknown in any modern army, they ran into hundreds of thousands. ...the pillaging of Russian troops behind their lines has been notorious all through the war. This lack of discipline has been equally noticeable in the higher ranks, where it is indeed traditional.54

While this did not mitigate the existing circumstances, it did offer a more realistic analysis than the following report.

...[The] Soldiers are in favour of war as long as they do not have to go to the Front themselves, but they have no patriotism and no idea of their obligations to their allies. There is grave danger that they may be corrupted by peace propaganda which [the] government permits.55

Now the entire Russian army was characterised by the derogatory characteristics of laziness, dishonour, and corruption. In all likelihood these remarks were fueled by frustration. However, the Edwardian ethic of a strict rule of conduct must have played a part in the formation of such prejudice. Despite such harsh judgements, it was in the economic sphere that improvements were hoped for in particular.

C. Economy

Peasant support for any new government was contingent upon the rectification of their traditional desire to own the land they tilled. The peasants' worst fears were soon substantiated as government policy ran counter to their hopes.56 The Provisional Government not only considered agrarian reform to be the job of the Constituent Assembly, but also felt it was an impossible task so long as the war lasted: to raise the issue of land reapportionment in the midst of war was to risk mass desertion as so many soldiers were peasants. Over the course of the year, peasant unrest spread as did the military disaffection. In a geographical route and emanating from those regions which provided the highest levels of productive land, a central band of disruption extended from the west eastward. Of course desertions from the front carried with them to the interior the message of revolt. Thus the regions immediately behind the front were affected since
it was through these areas that the deserters had to pass.\textsuperscript{57} Seizure of fallow land and refusal to pay rent were common during the spring.

The strains caused by the February revolution were superimposed on Russia's wartime needs. Gigantic bottlenecks on the Trans-Siberian railway, in part due to fuel shortages, disrupted the supply system. The miners took it upon themselves to run the coalfields, and coal supplies dwindled. Refugees, troops and military deserters from the west, aristocratic and bourgeois families fleeing from their estates and from the cities, as well as those peasants who had only gone to the cities seeking war related employment, crowded the trains to the limit of their capacity.\textsuperscript{58}

Given this scenario, the British representatives could find little justification for optimism, especially when factory production was reported to be 30\% to 60\% of pre-revolutionary levels. "If some factories are doing better than others it is because the wave [of disaffection] has not yet reached them," noted Buchanan.\textsuperscript{59} Lindley related that the men in the munitions factories were refusing to work\textsuperscript{60}. Hanbury-Williams, the head of the British Military Mission at the Stavka (Russian GHQ), wrote that the factories were thoroughly disorganised and there was no regular work.\textsuperscript{61} More disturbing was the story relayed by Buchanan that businessmen who had begun payments for buying factories before the revolution

have dropped them, preferring to lose. . .[a] large deposit guarantee[s] rather than [be saddled] with the responsibility which a Russian factory entails at the present.\textsuperscript{62}

And finally, Lindley described the difficult relationship between the landlords and peasants:

peasants have no inducement to sell as they are unable to purchase what they require and landowners see no reason to invest in a harvest when they cannot see any profit.\textsuperscript{63}

Responsibility for these depressing conditions was once again placed with the government:

The general lack of confidence in the Government stifles all sense of patriotism. . .for instance there is considerable anxiety at present because the peasants are holding up their grain in hope that low prices fixed . . .will be raised. Requisitioning from peasants is difficult. As long as everyone is united in
abusing the Government, the peasant cannot expect to act with a view to anything but his own individual gain.64

Like the soldiers, the peasants were accused of being unpatriotic. However, they were not blamed for their actions because the peasants were considered too childlike to know better.

Lockhart submitted a report drawn up by a leading English industrialist from Orechevo-Zuevo, Mr. Harry Charnock.

. . . agitation for control of working mills is directed by a bolshevik - a student - a jew who controls the workers . . . The thing [agitation] has gone so far that even Austrian prisoners of war (German by race) have been allowed to make speeches [using] . . . the most affectionate terms [sic].65

Finally, Lindley observed that:

of all the characteristics of the Russians, laziness, both physical and intellectual, is one of the most prominent. It requires . . . little imagination to realise that the . . . absence of . . . authority must, if it continues, leave a disastrous effect on the whole life of the country and the prosecution of the war.66

These vitriolic diatribes are some of the best examples of the prejudiced perspective. It is interesting to see the method of association: the gaining of control by subversive means is blamed on Bolsheviks, who are Jews, and finally must therefore be in the pocket of the Germans because of the presence of Austrians. Lindley by contrast just sticks to name calling.

During this period there was a general confusion on the representatives' part regarding the extent of the new government's authority. The revolution in the political, military, and economic spheres was met with optimism and support. But new democratic freedoms, such as the return of political exiles, Order #1, rights to land, and labour reform, tended to be viewed as disruptive forces. The quarrel between Miliukov and the Soviet did not help the new leaders' image either.

Neilson maintains that it was at this point that official British policy had come to regard the Provisional Government as incapable of carrying on the war. To be sure, there are reports which demonstrate that the British representatives were disgruntled. The gap between British expectations and the immediate results is expressed in the overt disappointment and frustration articulated in the reports. In the extreme cases, prejudiced
criticisms emerged. While responsibility was ultimately placed with the government, some representatives demonstrated a readiness to attribute the absence of improvement to the soldiers and peasants. Also, the reverse opinion expressed that the Russians were now in a far better frame of mind to assist the Allied effort and expedite the war.67

Other than the remedial efforts designed to encourage and foster their new partners, there was no alternative open to the British representatives other than to 'wait and see'. The results of the May crisis appeared to deliver the promise of a strong leader, as Buchanan concluded in late April:

The situation has once more become so serious that [the Ministerial changes] offer the only hope for [the] management of the war and order.68
CHAPTER II - ENDNOTES

1. Rex A. Wade. The Russian Search For Peace February - October 1917 (Stanford UP, 1969) p. 9-50. Paul N. Miliukov (1859-1943) - Russian historian and politician; an ardent admirer of the western democracies and felt that a revolution would in no way affect Russia's continuation in the war. Miliukov possessed a remarkable self-confidence that no adversity could shake. Years later, in 1925, he was asked by the American historian Frank Golder if he thought anybody could have saved the situation in the summer of 1917. Says Golder: "He hesitated a bit and finally said that he could have."

2. Octobrists - a party named for its support for Nicholas II's manifesto of October 1905 establishing the Duma. It favoured the monarchy, and was the party of the large commercial, industrial, and landowning bourgeoisie.


4. The Socialist Revolutionary Party was founded in 1902 from among several Narodnik groups. (Narodnik was a general name from the 1870's on for Russian socialists who "went to the people" to spread socialist ideas.) The party oriented mainly toward the peasants rather than the workers, and had a strong following among radical intellectuals. It was the largest party in Russia in 1917 and, together with the Mensheviks, (the more moderate wing of the Russian Social Democratic Labour Party, and who favoured cooperation with the liberals on the grounds that Russia would have to go through a relatively long stage of capitalist development) was the main influence in the Soviets until September 1917.


8. Buchanan to Balfour, 5 April 1917, FO 371/2995/71223. [2:528-29] This was a day by day account of the March revolution and despite a few distortions, remains as one of the most vivid accounts of the first few days of the revolution. See also Buchanan to Balfour, 14 March 1917, FO 371/2995/54639. [2:311] for another report.


11. Buchanan to Balfour, 15 March 1917, FO 371/2995/56484. [2:344] The next day the Foreign Office authorised Buchanan to acknowledge the Provisional Government when the Ambassador felt it expedient. "Doubtless your action in this matter will largely depend upon the attitude of the new government towards the war.", counselled a senior
clerk in the War Department.

12. Lockhart to Buchanan, 19 March 1917, FO 371/2998/71225. [5/218-22]

13. The most famous of the three Scandinavian (Varangian) brothers who went to the land of Rus', invited by the indigenous Slavs to reign over them.


15. Buchanan to Balfour, 23 March 1917, FO 371/2995/61378. [2/435-39] This piece of news caused a Foreign Office clerk to minute happily, "This is the most encouraging information I have seen for some days." See also: Buchanan to Balfour, 19 & 26 April 1917, FO 371/2996/80675 & 85500. [3:190 & 289-90]

16. Buchanan to Balfour, 26 April 1917, FO 371/2996/85500. [3:290]

17. Buchanan to Balfour, 24 March 1917, FO 371/2995/62233. [2:441]

18. Lockhart to Buchanan, 18 April 1917, FO 371/2996/79828. [3:141]; Buchanan to FO, 7 April 1917, FO 371/3009/72022. [16:406] "M. Kerensky hints that public opinion in Russia is somewhat hurt by un-expressiveness of Buchanan's sympathy: suggests that more sympathetic telegrams should be sent."


22. Ariadna Tyrkova-Williams, the Russian born wife of Hanbury-Williams, wrote in 1919 "During the months after the Revolution. . . .The people, freed from the stifling prison of Tsarism, were drunk with unwonted liberty as with wine. . . .an inevitable fermentation accompanying every revolution. In Russia it was intensified by war-weariness." See Ariadna Tyrkova-Williams From Liberty to Brest-Litovsk (London: MacMillan and Co., Ltd., 1919) p. 125.

23. Buchanan to Balfour, 13 March 1917, FO 371/2995/54543. [2:310-12]


25. Buchanan to Balfour, 13 March 1917, FO 371/2995/53859. [2:301]

27. Buchanan to FO, 7 April 1719, FO 371/2996/72862. [3:30-33]; Buchanan to Balfour, 9 April 1917, FO 371/2996/73018. [3:41]; and Buchanan to Balfour, 10 April 1917, FO 371/2996/73889. [3:55]

28. Michael Pearson The Sealed Train, (New York: G.P. Putnam’s Sons, 1975) p. 121-9. Lenin and 32 other Russian emigres were escorted across German territory in a sealed railcar (upon Lenin’s request) and arrived at Finland Station in Petrograd on the evening of 16 April. In an impromptu speech, Lenin in no uncertain terms denounced the Provisional Government and called for the world wide socialist revolution.

29. Buchanan to FO, 29 April 1917, FO 371/2996/87383. [3:316] It is interesting to note that for the English - a democratic, freedom loving people - it was alright to experience the temporary censorship which the war had compelled the government to impose. However, to have expected the Russians to show restraint once the floodgates had opened was naive. See above note #22.


33. Lockhart to Buchanan, 23 March 1917, FO 371/2996/74117. [3:65] and Lockhart to Buchanan, 10 May 1917, FO 371/2996/105144. [3:405]

34. Buchanan to Balfour, 19 April 1917, FO 371/2996/80675. [3:190-2]

35. Bosanquet to FO, 30 March 1917, FO 371/2995/66910. [2:469] and see Lockhart to Buchanan, 19 April 1917, FO 371/2996/80673. [3:176] "They have got to realise that if they are to keep their freedom, they’ll have to fight for it.

36. Rice to FO, 9 April 1917, FO 371/2996/73701. [3:53]

37. Buchanan to Cecil, 6 May 1917, FO 371/2996/105140. [3:370]

38. See for example, Howard to FO, 13 March & 14 April 1917, FO 371/3005/54134 & 77528. [12:302 & 335]

39. See: DID to FO, 11 April 1917, FO 371/3009/75155. [16:235]; Buchanan to Balfour, 10 April 1917, FO 371/2996/73890. [3:60] "The extreme element consists of Jews"; and in Paget to FO, 10 May 1917, FO 371/3011/94948. [18:415]; Lockhart to Buchanan, 23 March 1917, FO 371/2996/74117. [3:65]; Buchanan to FO, 11 March 1917, FO 371/2996/94865. [3:331]; and Buchanan to Balfour, 2 April 1917, FO 371/2998/80681. [5:257] See Katkov February, pp. 48-62 for a succinct discussion of the deplorable persecution the Jews suffered in Russia during the First World War, and the intense bitterness against the regime that had inflicted this treatment upon them (which in turn led to an increase in revolutionary feeling). "But it is quite certain that, however strong these feelings, they could not have had a direct bearing on the course of revolutionary events in 1917. The Jewish refugees were far too depressed and
alienated a body to exert any political influence. . . .For the millions of Russian Jews, the revolution . . . came as a liberation. [and] . . . Like any miraculous event . . . The fear that it might not be true [or last]. . . . was . . . connected with a feeling that a counter-revolutionary movement might come from the army as long as any of the old traditions were still alive in it." It was because of this fear that Jews turned to left-wing movements in defence of 'the conquests of the revolution'. p. 61.

40. Buchanan to FO, 29 March 1917, FO 371/2998/65868. [5:178-9]


42. Wildman, _The End_, p. 375.


44. Chamberlin, _Revolution_, p.224.


49. Buchanan to Cecil, 23 April 1917, FO 371/2996/105140. [3:368]

50. Montgomery to FO, 29 March 1917, FO 371/2995/65853. [2:464]

51. Buchanan to FO, 18 May 1917, FO 371/3011/101280. [18:421]

52. Lockhart to Buchanan, 10 May 1917, FO 371/2996/105144. [3:405]

53. Buchanan to FO, 2 April 1917, FO 371/2995/69963. [2:505]

54. Buchanan to Balfour, 12 May 1917, FO 371/2996/96045. [3:335]

55. Buchanan to Balfour, 31 March 1917, FO 371/2995/68075. [2:482]


58. Pethybridge, Spread, pp. 11-16.

59. Buchanan to FO, 10 April 1917, FO 371/2996/73890. [3:61]

60. Buchanan to Balfour, 19 April 1917, FO 371/2996/80675. [3:188]

61. Buchanan to FO, 11 April 1917, FO 371/2996/75039. [3:106]

62. Buchanan to FO, 18 April 1917, FO 371/2996/79828. [3:140]

63. Buchanan to Balfour, 26 April 1917, FO 371/2996/85500. [3:290]

64. Buchanan to Balfour, 12 March 1917, FO 371/2995/53302. [3:295] See Pipes, Russia, p. 141-170 for an excellent portrait of the peasant mentality. Having no 'inkling' of 'the system' outside their village (world), the peasants took what was 'theirs'.

65. Lockhart to Buchanan, 8 May 1917, FO 371/2996/105142. [3:383] Lockhart explained that he had known Mr. Charnock for years and he was an "intelligent, well read, and broad minded man."

66. Lockhart to Buchanan, 6 May 1917, FO 371/2996/105142. [3:384]


68. Buchanan to FO, 14 May 1917, FO 371/2998/98510. [5:285]
CHAPTER III

The May Crisis - The July Offensive

In the preceding chapter it was explained that the Soviet forced the resignation of Miliukov, Minister for Foreign Affairs, in May after they had quarreled over the terms of the new government’s war aims. Miliukov’s successor, M. Tereshchenko, was an affable man and an ardent admirer of Kerensky, who succeeded Guchkov as Minister of War. As the new coalition government was committed to the war’s prosecution, Kerensky staked everything on a successful summer campaign: the Kerensky Offensive was thus slated to commence on 1st July.

A. Political

The reorganisation of the Provisional Government included more moderate socialists. Despite this, Buchanan did not take "a pessimistic view. . . .I believe if only [the] government acts with firmness and energy things will gradually right themselves.” Lockhart believed that Kerensky was the one strong leader who could save the country from ruin. The Moscow envoy’s views were particularly upbeat and confident, regarding Kerensky’s talent for mob oration:

...his energy is almost super human, enthusiasm [is] extraordinary. Dressed in a Khaki [sic] uniform and looking more like an English war correspondent than a Russian. . .[he constantly reiterates to the people] without suffering, nothing that [is] worth having could be won. He himself looked the embodiment of suffering. The deathly pallor of his face, the restless movements of his body as he swayed backwards and forwards, the raw almost whispering tones of his voice....

To Lockhart Kerensky was the one strong leader the representatives had been waiting for. Lockhart did not mention Prince Lvov.

One sequel to the May Crisis was the British decision to enlist the support of a British labour leader, Arthur Henderson, to represent his country in the Franco-British Socialist delegation. The purpose of this was to demonstrate that other prominent Allied Socialists had taken positions in support of the war effort. Henderson, having no knowledge of the Russian language, history, and customs, or the political and social structure of Russia, found himself "a 'deaf and dumb witness,' of a revolutionary movement which he failed to
understand. His impressions were as erroneous as they were superficial." The Russian Socialists received their western counterparts coldly, and viewed them as unprincipled opportunists who had sold out to their own imperialists. A result of Henderson's ill-fated trip was that he became convinced that it was imperative for Britain to support the Provisional Government as the only alternative was Bolshevism.6

At any rate, Henderson and Mr. Albert Thomas, the French Government's Socialist delegate, were optimistic. Henderson concluded that, since the government now had force at its disposal, the situation was on the mend. When the Peasant's Congress passed a resolution to support the government and the war, he wrote that "these indications appear to furnish some justification for quiet optimism."7 And,

Generally speaking [the] people were recovering their balance and [the] desire for [a] firm Government was gaining ground even among the Council of Soldiers' and Labourers' Delegates [Soviet].8

Thomas felt that

The situation was still precarious but the Revolution has been securely established. . . .[the] Position might be difficult but [is] not desperate. . . .[the] Lenin movement had reached its height and was now on the decline. . . .[and] there were elements in [the] present Government quite strong enough to prevent. . . .chaos.9

The typical optimistic view was that the situation in Russia was improving and that the government was capable of bringing the situation around.10 The representatives were content with the present leadership - albeit temporary - on the condition that it assert itself. For example, Lindley was certain that

the new Government is stronger than the old. . . .they certainly have the tacit support of the majority of the population.11

The latter point is significant, since it reiterated the general line of thinking: as long as the masses were considered to be for the war, Russia could be revived. And Buchanan concurred:

[The] Government is prepared to use force and any previous humiliation on [the] part of [the] Government [was] due to [the] fact that they did not know what public support they had and any action without knowing [the] extent of support would have meant irreparable disaster. Now that they were fully satisfied they had requisite authority and power, they were determined to maintain order even at cost of bloodshed.12
Other reports were less optimistic. Lindley summed up by saying that "looking back over the month [it is] impossible to say [there is] any improvement." Brown reported that there is not a lot of difference between [the] old and new regimes. . . . [the] Government will not last. . . . [the] general feeling is one of uneasiness, unrest, and distrust. For some reason the moderate party seems unable to organise itself in the same way as the labour party has done. Could it but do so, it would be sufficiently powerful to make its views respected and would no doubt have a very beneficial effect upon politics. 14

Implicit in this report was a belief that the government's position could be turned to advantage with only the smallest modicum of effort on the part of those in power.

Another aspect of the typical pessimistic view was that the coalition government offered the last hope of rescuing the country "from anarchy and the army from decomposition." Buchanan stated that All its members including [the] Socialists were bent on carrying on the war and on fulfilling Russia's military obligations to the Allies. [The] Next three or four weeks would show whether their efforts to this end would be successful. 15

The Ambassador added that he had assured Tereshchenko that his government would support "any" government which was "prepared to fight to [a] victorious finish". The Department of Information contributed a lengthy memo on the situation in Russia. The author recognised that

the Coalition Government is the only safeguard against civil war and that if it fails Russia must be regarded as practically out of the war. Its stability very largely depends on the sympathetic attitude of the Allied Governments towards [Russia]. 16

This rather pompous attitude places the existence of the coalition government at the feet of the British. In fact the stability of this body depended on its own ability to walk a tightrope between international pressure and the needs of its own people.

In a report addressed to the Prime Minister in early June, Henderson observed that public opinion in Russia was in favour of firmer action by the Government. Nevertheless he questioned "whether there is in the country any force capable of making good intentions effective." Later, the envoy wrote that disorganisation was so great that "there is no
hope of [the] Government working through it in time to make a successful offensive.'\textsuperscript{18}

Henderson therefore placed the blame squarely on the shoulders of the government.

Regarding the issue of propaganda, Lindley reported on the eve of the July Offensive's commencement, that the "Bolsheviki. . .attack the new Government as violently as they did before."\textsuperscript{19} Similarly, Lockhart observed that the Bolshevik press attacks [the] Allies and Kerensky with unabated vigour. [They] do not believe England is free. [And assert that] In England [the] socialists are groaning in prisons for their political faith.\textsuperscript{20}

In an effort to answer such allegations, Buchanan released a statement to the Russian press in late May:

Though we were [a] monarchical [country] we were the freest people in the world and our sovereign [is] but the first Servant of his people and had far less power than the President of the United States or France.\textsuperscript{21}

In 1917 the Foreign Office received weekly reports from the Political Intelligence Bureau\textsuperscript{22}, a branch of the Department of Information, which were compilations or summaries of events and trends in important foreign countries, based largely on Foreign Office telegrams and dispatches. The reports contained in the Foreign Office Correspondence records are initialed by one R.A.L. With the advantage of hindsight, this clerk's perceptions demonstrated objectivity and much insight. In one, for example, R.A.L. composed an account of the May Crisis which explained that the new political order wanted nothing to do with the secret agreements negotiated by the old order and recommended that Britain and France harmonize with the point of view of the Moderate Socialists. . .[for] we should consider how it will appear to [them]. . . .They are filled with the idea that a new world has come into being with the Russian Revolution [and where] they differ from the Extremists is in their conception of how the new ideas are to spread. . . .[And, their new foreign policy means] they will not admit that the ill-treatment of peoples by the Germans and Turks gives us the right to annex the territories concerned now, though they are willing to acknowledge our motives and perhaps accept our conclusions provided we agree to the principle of free discussion at the peace conference. Otherwise they regard our explanations as excuses or cloaks for Imperialism.

Like Henderson, R.A.L. went on to say that Kerensky and his followers were the only alternative as far as British interests were concerned because
they stand between two extremes - the Imperialists and the Pacifists. . . . It cannot be to our interest that the alternatives in Russia should be Imperialists or Extremists. If such a situation should arise we should inevitably be forced to take the side of the former, which would alienate the sympathies of the vast majority of the Russian people both from the Alliance and the War.23

And regarding Lenin and his cohorts, R.A.L. explained that

It is not correct to say that he is consciously playing Germany's game. He will play the game of no one country as he is an internationalist. . . .His motives are quite honest, but his methods are so extreme. . . .From our point of view his influence is most dangerous, but we can only combat it indirectly through the Moderate Socialists. Anything we can do to strengthen the latter will inevitably weaken the Extremists.24

These excerpts advise practicality and pliancy in policy.

Conversely, Henry E. Metcalf, the Managing Director of a company in Russia,

submitted his impressions of the internal conditions in that country in note form:

...illiterates dictate terms to Government.
- [the] works [are] being run by people who pay themselves and run it as they will.
- instead of preparing harvests, [the] peasants want to divide land up and so nothing is being produced.
- [the] soldiers are entirely out of hand, [they] hijack trains and travel wherever they want and also demand money of towns or they will burn it down.
- [the] Only hope is to persuade army to attack [the] Germans. [There are] Extraordinary stories from the front - soldiers selling guns made in England for Russian money printed in Germany. It is said there are one and a half million deserters.25

Because of his stake in Russia this man wanted order restored in Russia. His frustration is evident in his name calling and he wanted an armed force to protect his investments.

Regarding the Bolsheviks, Brown in Nicolaev argued that

a. . .large number of the peace party are so completely hypnotised by dreams and ideals. . . .as to be utterly incapable of understanding or appreciating the serious after effects a separate peace would have on the country. . . .[they] are so engrossed with their surrounding affairs, that State Affairs are secondary importance and that anything that detracts their work are interpreted as acts of provocation by the old regime, or traps laid by capitalists. . . .or the wicked aims of those plundering imperialists, Britain, France, and Italy. . . .Russia never desired war which was engineered by Great Britain solely for the purpose of crushing German trade rivalry.26
Such a reaction by a diplomat shows how far frustration can blind even clear thinkers. In the later part of the quote, Brown accuses the Russians of precisely the reasoning that he himself displays in dismissing the 'peace party'.

Regarding the Jews' role in the disorder, Consul Barclay in Washington D.C. informed his superior that

There is a bunch of internationalists ready to leave this country to go to Petrograd. This group...is headed by a Jew [.,]...an anarchist-syndicalist - anything but an industrious law-abiding citizen...[He believes] in a separate peace between Russia and Germany...[he] is an example of the kind of political emigrants that are returning to Russia on the invitation of the new Russian Provisional Government - to assist them to restore order! The editor of the Yiddish Socialist daily "Forward" also on the invitation of the new Russian Government is returning to Russia to assist those in authority.27

This view is indicative of the kind of opinion in circulation regarding the ulterior motives of the Bolsheviks. The blame for everything is placed on trouble-making Jews, and the implication is that the Provisional Government is controlled by Jews who are then inviting others to come to Russia to complete her downfall. It was the military, however, that representatives were depending upon for Russia's rejuvenation.

B. Military

Hopeful that the turmoil of the earlier weeks would abate and that the normal functioning of the army be restored, albeit on somewhat altered foundations, the British representatives continued to "watch" and "wait" for signs of improvement. On 1 June news that the Offensive was to resume in the near future prompted Lindley to report that discipline has improved since last summer...measures against deserters have been taken and at Kieff [sic] force was successfully used for the first time against them and elsewhere...[the] army is in [a] position to take [the] offensive.28

Bagge dispatched a very optimistic report in which he described the reception he and other Allied officials in Odessa had received at a meeting of the Congress of Soldiers and Officers.

The Entire theatre [of 2,000 deputies] cheered us vociferously for several minutes...A speech [by the French Consul which said] that could only be attained through victory was most enthusiastically received.29
In an account of his visit with the Russian Prime Minister, Henderson related that the state of the army was improving and soldiers themselves were beginning to assist in [the] restoration of discipline. . .[the] general condition was 80% better than before [the] revolution. [the] Most serious factor was almost complete destruction in the revolution of intelligence and counter espionage service though its loss was . . .compensated for by increased activity of [the] soldiers in tracing out German agents. . . .Generally speaking [the] people were recovering their balance and desire for [a] firm Government was gaining ground even among the [Soviet]. 30

These optimistic accounts were contrasted with others which highlighted more ominous signs of disintegration. Desertions, fraternisation in 'no man's land', defiance of military orders, hardening of attitudes toward command authority, and abuse of officers were cited. 31 In addition, defeatist literature and propaganda both from the enemy and the rear played a part in the deterioration of morale. The influence and success of agitators' propaganda was not due to its acceptance per se. Rather, the soldiers equated the restoration of discipline with a return to the old order and an endless continuation of the war. It did not matter whether the agitators were enemy agents, Bolsheviks, or quasi-intellectuals in uniform: the message articulated their sentiments. 32

The typical pessimistic view was that the widespread anarchy going on in the interior was the work of soldiers defecting from the front. 33 V.H.C. Bosanquet, the Consul in Riga, recounted a discussion he had had with an Infantry Colonel about his regiment.

I could not help being struck by the finality with which he observed that the army was now beyond all possible hope, and that no power on earth would now be able to affect anything with it. 34

Buchanan related that there were 16,000 men between forty and forty-three years of age now in Petrograd who had had to be called back from leave as there is such a shortage of men at the Front. . . .as long as propaganda such as that of Pravda is allowed to continue there can be no improvement in the situation. 35

Lindley observed that the problem was that the efforts of Kerensky have been matched by internationalist pacifists' efforts and attack Kerensky. Unfortunately the Russian soldier is easily swayed and the arrival of a few agitators in a regiment is immediately followed by a complete change of tone. 36
And Brown expressed that

at night [the] soldiers gather in [the] main street and there is a freedom of manner, often accompanied by indecent behavior, which under the old police rule military discipline would not have been tolerated. These gatherings attract a class of women which were conspicuous by their absence in such places under the old conditions.37

The key message in these passages was that soldier disaffection was exacerbated by propaganda, and neither was controlled by the government.

Finally, Bagge indicated that the position of the Officers was particularly difficult as they have to fraternise with their inferiors. . . .[and are] Paranoid as to whether or when they will be arrested and are not blind to [the] fact that [they are] not saluted. . . .Quite a number wish to acquire British nationality or at least to serve in His Majesty's forces. . . .No one takes the offensive seriously.38

The underlying message here was that despite their difficult position, the officers represented a pro-war segment.

Given the gravity of the situation at this juncture, it is sometimes difficult to discriminate between pessimism and objectivity. Indeed many reports could be realistic and pessimistic simultaneously. For example, in a lengthy report on the condition of the army, Bagge concluded that

even if [the] offensive starts, it will be short-lived and will be completely stultified by disorganisation in the rear. As regards the military possibilities of an offensive, the Governor-General. . . .told me that it could only be a movement forward over a very short distance of about 20 miles. [because] the enemy . . . had left, the country immediately behind their lines a desert and that therefore the advancing Russian army would have to rely solely on its rear for supplies. Owing to the lack of rails, railways could not be laid down, and consequently supplies could not be maintained.39

This passage is significant because it stands as one of the few examples where the writer's Russian source of information gave realistic, although disconcerting predictions.

Mr. Thomas Whittmore, who according to Buchanan was an "exceptionally intelligent American and [had] lived in Russia the last three years", submitted a "highly coloured, but. . . .accurately described" report according to a Foreign Office clerk, an excerpt from which read:

Kerensky is a sainted idealist with little constructive power. . . .pacific anarchy . . .[is] summed up as no work, no war, no patriotism. [and are manifesting
themselves into the] general disruption fused by the Romanoffs. The worst features of the military are...indiscipline, the fraternisation with the enemy, [and the] Tolstoyan theory that a man should only work enough to keep himself alive. . . .The soldiers [are] mesmerized by the idea of land and the enormous number of desertions [are] explained largely by the desire to take up land at home before it [is] occupied by others. . . .The Jews will eventually side with [the] bourgeoisie. . . .The Russians are determined to dislike [the] English so do not try any propaganda [schemes]. . . .we should regard Russia as of no use during the present war and when the Provisional Government falls its debts to England will be repudiated. 40

Whittmore certainly identified the crucial issues. But he did not give any indication that he understood the reasons for these serious problems. He did not comprehend the desire of the peasant-soldiers to claim their land, or that they were giving up a fight which they simply did not view as theirs. Instead, the American substituted his subjective analysis that the Russians were lazy, unpatriotic, and dishonourable, and could not be trusted.

The exodus of the peasant-soldiers to their land did not alleviate the problems of production or supply in the economic sphere which the Provisional Government faced.

C. The Economy

The approach to the rural economic problems adopted in the late spring did not differ from that of the first Provisional Government. 41 A succession of ad hoc, unconnected half-measures, such as price controls, requisitions and rations, and 'tinkering' with the established structure remained the order of the day. 42 Like its predecessor, the first coalition government tried to increase production and improve distribution and supply within the old system. 43 The net result was that the basic difficulties described in chapters one and two were left unresolved and rural unrest reached a peak by the beginning of July. Government action to control unrest mainly took the form of appeals to the populace to have patience. 44

The decline of industrial discipline in Russia during 1917 parallels that of military discipline: it was a protracted affair with sporadic outbursts as well as pockets of normalcy. The revolt, initially against the pre-revolutionary harsh factory regime, developed into one against the rising cost of living and food and supply shortages. Worker truancy increased as labourers left work to listen to agitators' speeches, strikes ensued,
and labour productivity declined. A vicious circle developed: the lowered productivity reduced the supply of fuel and manufactured goods, which in turn lowered the capacity for transportation. This further disabled the supply system to the fronts and general populace, which increased discontent leading to still lower productivity.

Still, there was room for optimism. Lindley observed in mid June:

It must not be supposed that the above picture means that Russia is on the point of dissolution. It is probable that most of the symptoms will pass and all that can be said now is that the country is in the throes of a terrific political, economic, and financial crisis.

This optimism, in the face of such chaos and inactivity can only be attributed to hope. The British representatives could not convince themselves that Russia would negotiate peace and had to hope for a change of fortune. These ideas were bolstered by members of the Provisional Government. In one dispatch, Tereshchenko assured that

An economic crisis was [an] inevitable sequence of a Revolution and he believed that when [the] workmen realized that further demands on their part would involve closing down of the factories, [the] situation would greatly right itself.

Along these same lines Prime Minister Lvov told Henderson that

we were now witnessing in industry [the] destructive stage of revolution and that [the] industrial position was in many ways comparable to [the] administrative situation of two months ago. It had however visibly improved in [the] last fortnight and constructive forces which had for some time been at work restoring administration were beginning to make themselves felt in industry. . . . workmen . . . were beginning to understand their first demands had been excessive. . . . all classes were beginning to realize [the] existence of an authority in the state superior both to capital and labour.

The Socialist envoy then mentioned that rumours were circulating in the capital of an experiment to

let the extremists take over, which would bring [an] inevitable schism and [the] revolution would [therefore] swing around and bring [the] Cadet Octobrists to power and would invest [the] government with the authority it lacks.

He considered this scheme very dangerous and advised the Prime Minister that the best course was "steadily forward losing no opportunity to strengthen the hands of the government" Still, this passage demonstrates the way in which the course of the revolution was viewed: if the extremists took over, a counter-revolution would ensue.
A typical pessimistic report was authored by Lindley, who in marked contrast to his earlier report wrote that

\[\ldots\text{the works cannot continue if the management is continuously hampered by the dismissal of foremen and directors and demands for shorter hours and higher wages.}\ldots\text{the industrial situation has certainly deteriorated.}\ldots\text{transport difficulties are as acute as ever.}\ldots\text{there is constant talk of [a] railway strike}\ldots\text{the result that food is shorter than ever.}\]

Lockhart was most pessimistic and reported in no uncertain terms that

\[\text{The economic situation cannot be described except in terms of the gravest pessimism.}\ldots\text{The country is drifting almost inevitably to complete economic ruin.}\ldots\text{[and] some force stronger than the moral persuasion of the present Government will be required before order can be restored.}\ldots\text{The one hope is the army at the front. A successful action on the Russian front would do much to strengthen the position of the temporary Government.}\ldots\text{[and] the Russian Socialists understand perfectly well the economic ruin which awaits Russia in the event of her making a separate peace and of the Allies withdrawing their support.}\]

It is interesting to see that even at the darkest hour and within the gloomiest report, Lockhart can still manage to 'hope' that something, in this case the army, would make all the difference. It is worth noting that Lockhart used the words 'present' and 'temporary' to describe the Provisional Government. Even so, because Lockhart felt that a "measure of success on the Russian front would change the feeling of the masses in a night," he advised that the "Allies should adopt waiting tactics, [while] at the same time pursuing their own line of policy quietly but firmly."

Finally, the War Trade Intelligence Department submitted to the Foreign Office a letter from "a semi-illiterate foreman in a Russian factory, probably of Russian nationality" which substantiated what the British representatives were reporting. Writing of the working conditions and labour relations in Russia, this anonymous author wrote:

\[\text{To be oppressed by an irresponsible Government is bad enough but to be governed by an uncivilised mob suddenly turned loose and dependent entirely on the good naturedness of the darkest element in a dark country is not exactly pleasant.}\ldots\text{One foreman after another is discharged by the workmen and you never know when your turn is coming.}\]

Because this report was authored by a national, it can only have reinforced pessimistic views. Buchanan, in an about turn, now argued that force was necessary:
Force is [the] only thing that will bring [the] workmen to their senses. [The]
Only force that can be relied on are [the] Cossacks but I do not know whether
[the] Government are prepared to resort to this extreme measure. Fresh reports
are received every day as to [the] Anarchy going on in [the] interior of
Russia.54

Regarding the agrarian question, R.A.L. warned that it was crucial to the future of
Russia’s war effort because,

the peasants [are] the most reliable force in the country and if [it were] settled
...a steadying effect on [the] troops at the front, the bulk of whom are peasants,
[would result].55

Lastly, Bagge in Odessa explained why he considered that there was no way out
of the deplorable situation:

...because patriotism is a quality entirely lacking in the mass of the Russian
people...There is no way out because there is no backbone in the people, no
decided public opinion. On the contrary public opinion is violently nonstable and
fickle, fluctuating from day to day, from one extreme to the other. The spirit of
destruction is largely developed in the Russian character, and the spirit of
construction singularly lacking. Another bad trait...is the readiness of the
average Russian to...abandon without warning persons with whom they have
been on good terms...dictated by self interest. My deduction from this is that if
the mass thinks that it is to their advantage to-day to abandon their present
Allies and conclude a separate peace, or even an alliance with Germany, they
will do so...even amongst the educated classes a current of opinion in
the direction of such a policy is...[gathering] to re-establish order and save
themselves and the country from anarchy and disintegration, whilst the
proletariat is tired of war and wishes for peace at any price. The latter does not
seem to understand that a peace concluded now will...mean the doom of their
ideals. The peasant[s] do not concern themselves as to the fate of the...Western Governments. They want to return home, divide the land, and live in
peace and laziness.56

The author’s growing irritation is evident in his prejudiced statements. Bagge credited the
Russians with unflattering characteristics, and called them unpatriotic, childlike in nature,
anarchistic in spirit, disloyal, and lazy. These, and other instances of name-calling, can
only be accounted for here in that they were the ultimate insult. It could well be that
Bagge, and others, genuinely had such opinions of the Russians. However, frustration
probably lay behind their articulation of such prejudiced statements.

In this period, the representatives received the outcome of the May crisis with
optimism. They were anxious and hopeful that in Kerensky, the one strong leader capable
of securing a firm grip on the governing apparatus, administering the war effort, and
getting the industrial and rural unrest under control, had at last been found. When the gap between expectations and positive results was not closed immediately, impatience and frustration with the leadership emerged in reports marked with pessimism, and sometimes with objectivity. The representatives in general, but most often the unsalaried or military ones, blamed the soldiers, peasants, pro-Germans, Bolshevik propaganda, and inevitably the Jews for the situation. The level of pessimism did not reach desperation, however. Nor was there a loss of hope, especially when a successful offensive promised to rejuvenate patriotism, interest in the war effort, and the restoration of order in the interior. Thus, the representatives looked forward to the July Offensive's commencement with great anticipation.
CHAPTER III - ENDNOTES

1. Buchanan to FO, 14 June 1917, FO 371/2996/119034. [3:490]


4. C. Nabokoff, The Ordeal of a Diplomat (London: Documentary Publications, 1976), p. 86; and Lockhart Memoirs, p. 187 & 188. Recalling that meeting in later years, Lockhart wrote of Henderson, "The comrades in the Soviets bewildered him. He did not understand their language. He did not like their manners." And, "Whatever its effect on the Russians, his exposure to even the moderate Russian Socialists had the advantage of curing Mr. Henderson of any revolutionary tendencies for the rest of his life." See note #6. For examples of Henderson's blunders see Graham to Balfour, 14 August 1917, FO 371/2997/159232. [4:245]; Lockhart to Buchanan, 23 July & 1 August 1917, FO 371/2998/159274 & 161627. [5:478 & 503]

5. Kennan, Russia, p. 28. This coolness, incidentally, was reciprocated by the British delegation when they perceived the Socialists of the Soviet as intellectuals with lily white hands who had obviously never touched a lathe or plough.

6. Winter, "Henderson", p. 770-1. For this reason Henderson advocated sending delegates to the Stockholm Conference. And see Buchanan to FO, 11 June 1917, FO 371/3013/116209. [20:86]

7. Buchanan to FO, 15 June 1917, FO 371/3011/120359. [18:5]

8. Buchanan to FO, 8 June 1917, FO 371/3010/115375. [17:355]

9. Howard to FO, 18 June 1917, FO 371/3011/121217. [18:8-9] Mr. Thomas pointed to the expulsion of the Swiss Socialist Grimm as proof of the government's capacity to take strong action. And Katkov, February, pp. 192-3. For many years, Robert Grimm had been an informer for both the Austrian and the German General Staffs on the socialist emigres living in Switzerland. It was Grimm who was originally earmarked to accompany the first 'sealed train' with Lenin through Germany, and who went to Russia in June 1917 to put out peace feelers for a separate peace with Germany.

10. See Buchanan to FO, 30 May 1917, FO 371/2996/108845. [3:446]; 31 May 1917, FO 371/2996/118529. [3:483]; and 6 & 8 June 1917, FO 371/3011/112185 & 115228. [18:443 & 448]

12. Buchanan to FO, 30 June 1917, FO 371/2996/129620. [3:531]

13. Buchanan to Balfour, 16 June 1917, FO 371/2997/130560. [4:3]


16. Department of Information to FO, 26 May 1917, FO 371/3010/105964. [17:263]

17. Buchanan to FO, 8 June 1917, FO 371/3010/115375. [17:356] And for example in Buchanan to FO, 1 June 1917, FO 371/2996/108904. [3:452] A scheme was submitted that recommended Admiral Kolchak as Dictator, "whose resolute character, energy and undoubted patriotism fit him for the part."

18. Buchanan to FO, 15 June 1917, FO 371/3011/120359. [18:5]


20. Lockhart to Buchanan, 6 June 1917, FO 371/2997/130560. [3:541]

21. Buchanan to FO, 27 May 1917, FO 371/3010/107040. [17:283] A Foreign Office clerk replied to Buchanan: "Your Excellency spoke and acted with great courage and discretion in difficult circumstances. I desire to express to Your Excellency my warmest approval of your actions."

22. V. H. Rothwell British War Aims and Peace Diplomacy 1914-1918 (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1971), pp. 206-07. In 1918 the Intelligence Bureau was transferred to the Foreign Office becoming the Political Intelligence Department. Its transfer reflected a recognition of the need for expertise in dealing with the foreign political problems of the war.


24. Ibid., 15 May 1917, 98072. [289-293] In a footnote to this report R.A.L. re-asserted the need for a good showing on the western front to boost the Russian soldiers and populace in the cities to rejuvenate their war enthusiasm.

25. War Trade Intelligence Department to Balfour, 26 June 1917, FO 371/2996/126153. [3:509-23]


27. Spring-Rice to Cecil, 26 May 1917, FO 371/3013/116930. [20:98]

28. Buchanan to Balfour, 2 July 1917, FO 371/2997/130560. [4:3]
29. Buchanan to FO, 25 May 1917, FO 371/3010/106208. [17:278]; and for a similar reception see Lockhart, Memoirs, p.190.

30. Buchanan to FO, 8 June 1917, FO 371/3010/115375. [17:355] and Buchanan to FO, 15 June 1917, FO 371/3011/120359. [18:4]

31. Wildman, The End, see p. 336 for a five-point summary of the forms of disintegration; and p. 346 for random samples of the multifarious forms of deteriorating discipline.

32. Ibid., pp. 337 and 372. Wildman asserts that after May and June it was Bolshevism which became the chief conduit of rebellion. A significant aspect of this historian's thesis is that the Soviet's acquiescence with the government's decision to launch an offensive created a new political situation: with the Soviet apparently aligned with the government, the soldier masses were left with no outlet for their grievances. Thus, they realigned themselves with the Bolsheviks.

33. See Buchanan to FO, 1 June 1917, FO 371/2996/110596. [3:467] and Lockhart to Buchanan, 31 May 1917, FO 371/2996/118529. [3:483]

34. Bosanquet to Buchanan, 6 June 1917, FO 371/3011/141008. [18:489]; and see Buchanan to FO, 17 April 1917, FO 371/2996/79183. [3:133] for the same message one month previously.

35. See also Buchanan to FO, 29 June 1917, FO 371/3011/130274. [18:470]

36. Buchanan to Balfour, 2 July 1917, FO 371/2997/130560. [4:3] and see Lockhart to Buchanan, 11 June 1917, FO 371/2996/130557. [3:558]

37. Buchanan to Cecil, 22 June 1917, FO 371/2996/124176. [3:493]

38. Buchanan to Balfour, 18 June 1917, FO 371/2997/141013. [4:98]


42. For a full description see Ibid., pp. 75-131.

43. Ibid., pp. 76, 89-90, 93-5, 97-8, and 122 respectively for the food, land, local and government questions.

44. Ibid., 102-5. A line which, incidentally, was employed when speaking with the British representatives.


46. Ibid., p. 267.

47. Buchanan to Balfour, 16 June 1917, FO 371/2997/130560. [4:3]
48. Buchanan to FO, 30 May 1917, FO 371/2996/107532. [3:443]; Buchanan to FO, 5 June 1917, FO 371/3010/112826. [17:338] and Buchanan to FO, 11 June 1917, FO 371/3010/115375. [17:354]

49. Buchanan to FO, 11 June 1917, FO 371/3010/115375. [17:354] and see Buchanan to Balfour, 2 July 1917, FO 2997/130560. [4:3]

50. Buchanan to FO, 15 June 1917, FO 371/3011/120359. [18:4-5]

51. Buchanan to Balfour, 16 June 1917, FO 371/2997/130560. [4:3]


53. War Trade Intelligence Department to Balfour, 12 June 1917, FO 371/2996/116746. [3:477]

54. Buchanan to FO, 1 June 1917, FO 371/2996/110596. [3:466] and for equally depressing reports see: Lockhart to Buchanan, 10 June 1917, FO 371/2996/130554. [3:540] which alleged that Austrian prisoners were strolling about the towns like tourists; and Knox to Buchanan, 1 June 1917, FO 371/2996/10885. [3:450]

55. Political Intelligence Bureau to FO, 21 May 1917, FO 371/3012/102918. [19:298]

56. Buchanan to Balfour, 29 June 1917, FO 371/2997/141013. [4:97] and see Pipes, Russia, p. 159 & 160 for an account of the peasant ethic under the old regime.
CHAPTER IV

The July Offensive - The Kornilov Revolt

On 1 July the Offensive was launched along a fifty mile section of the front in eastern Galicia. Although the offensive was not large, its preparation was extensive. Owing to some initial successes which were inflated by official Russian communiques, the German General Staff stepped up reinforcements for a counter attack. With the arrival of fresh German troops, the thin line of shock battalions and obedient units could not withstand the pressure and the Russian armies were rolled back. By 2 July the losses amounted to 1,222 officers and 37,500 men. By 22 July, the Offensive had completely collapsed.

A. Political

This defeat provoked a political crisis when long-standing disagreements between the Cadet and socialist ministers came to a head over the land policy and the status of non-Russian peoples of the Empire. On 15 July the Cadets resigned because they believed that too broad a recognition had been accorded to the Ukrainian movement. The next day anti-war demonstrations by pro-Bolshevik troops broke out in Petrograd which threatened to turn into a full scale revolution.

The uprising was quelled by the 18 July owing, in part, to its own poor organisation, the Soviet's refusal to lend support, the loyalty of some military units to the Provisional Government, and to the charges made by Kerensky to the effect that Lenin and other Bolsheviks were agents in the pay of the German government. Several Bolshevik leaders fled, including Lenin who went to Finland from where he continued to direct the party. While a few others were jailed, the government did not take action to eliminate its opponents. The uprising increased unrest and perpetuated the government crisis. On 21 July Lvov resigned and Kerensky succeeded him as Prime Minister; Socialists once again gained in the reshuffling of the Cabinet.
At first, when it appeared as though the government was at last suppressing the Bolsheviks, the British representatives were optimistic. Buchanan, in a conciliatory telegram, wrote that

[The] Government's waiting policy will now . . . be justified by [these] events. They were afraid of compromising [the] success of the offensive by taking any action that might provoke disturbance in the rear but they now seem . . . determined to act with firmness.

In several dispatches the Ambassador related conversations he had had with Tereshchenko, offering words of encouragement and support. In one, he urged the Minister for Foreign Affairs that this was the opportunity to seize [control and] suppress anarchy once and for all and now is the time to enforce censorship and disband and disarm all troops and workmen who cannot be relied upon.

In another, upon learning of an assassination attempt on Kerensky's life, Buchanan "begged" Tereshchenko to tell the Minister of War how thankful I was to hear of his escape and to assure him . . . how highly His Majesty's Government appreciated the services which he had rendered to both his own country and to the Allies. [And that] He was the one man . . . who could in my opinion save Russia from [the] state of anarchy.

In a lengthy and highly descriptive summary of the July events Lindley asserted that, "had it not been for Kerensky, the inert government would not have suppressed the demonstration." These passages confirm that, in late July, some British representatives regarded Kerensky as the 'one strong leader' Russia needed to get the job done.

On 24 July news reached the Foreign Office that the Soviet had passed a resolution conferring upon the government unlimited authority to re-establish discipline in the Army, suppress anarchy in the rear, and restore order with an iron hand. Reinforcements and supplies were reportedly being sent to the front. This news caused the Ambassador to remark that the government is really doing its utmost to correct many mistakes which it has made in the past and meet [the] requirements of an almost desperate situation.

Ambassador Spring-Rice, in Washington D.C., similarly reported that the Russian situation was not desperate and recommended that the English press adopt a friendlier
attitude towards Russia. The Consul reached this conclusion after consultation with Elihu Root, the former Secretary of State and Secretary of War of the United States who had recently returned from a good will mission to Russia, the function of which was to spur the Russians on to new enthusiasm for the war.

In Lockhart's estimation, Bolshevism was not in the ascendancy.

The Moscow Consul added confidently that the new government had pledged to fight to the last breath.

The level of optimism in this period was based on a confident perception that the one strong leader had been found in Kerensky. At last, so it appeared, there was a potential for positive results. However, the willingness, or preparedness, to 'watch' and 'wait' for these results began to diminish once the full impact of the failed offensive was felt, and once it was realized that the Bolsheviks were not entirely suppressed. Instead, a growing impatience for a show of force emerged as a trend. Hence, the tendency to scold and chide, as well as to 'hope' for improvements occurred. For example, on 20 July Buchanan felt that the policy of temporisation had gone too far, and angrily told the Minister for Foreign Affairs that the government should "stamp out" the Bolsheviks and anarchy once and for all.

How could it conduct a successful war if German agents and scurrilous papers like "Pravda" were allowed to carry on [an] active campaign against any offensive and...[the] Allies. [The] Government's desire to avoid bloodshed was rational but anarchists and agitators...must be punished or far more blood would be shed later on." Tereshchenko assured Buchanan he could rely on Russia since the Soviet now realised the gravity of the situation. In the course of another conversation with Tereshchenko, Buchanan warned the Minister that "unless stern measures were taken to suppress [the Bolsheviks] they would soon have [the] upper hand." The latter reminded Buchanan that
the "Cadet Ministers had opposed" the reinstitution of the death penalty "for fear lest it might be used for political purposes against anyone suspected of furthering a counter-revolution."

When Buchanan learned that the death penalty and other disciplinary measures had been reinstated at the front, he argued that it was crucial

these are applied to [the] rear in Petrograd otherwise when rear are sent to [the] front they would arrive in an indisciplined [state and be a source of further dissent.]

The constant badgering about the need for strict discipline to be reinstituted was received by Kerensky with steadily increasing irritation. On one occasion, he asked Buchanan what he would think if he were to tell Mr. Lloyd George how to govern England. This question clearly indicated the pressure Kerensky was under. Kerensky was labouring with an unstable political situation, exacerbated by a disintegrating war effort. For their part, the British representatives provided advice intended to bring positive action from the government. Buchanan played the role of a parent scolding an errant child:

. . .though all parties seem for the present agreed to support [the] Government [the] gulf that divides them has not been bridged over. . . .I said that we, as Russia's Allies, took a lively interest in [the] present internal situation as without order and tranquility in the rear it was useless to hope for success at the front. I had been one of the few who had never lost faith in Russia's power of pulling herself together but I could not take on myself [the] responsibility of reporting favourably on [the] situation unless I received satisfactory assurances from him. [And Buchanan then told Kerensky] We had complete confidence in him. . . .Of one thing he could assure me namely that they would never withdraw from the war. . . .[but the] Allies must give [Russia] all assistance in their power with their eyes shut.

Buchanan appears to have been constantly optimistic and sympathetic. However, the circumstances were becoming so grave that the British now entertained alternatives:

. . .the difficulties with which the Government [is] confronted on all sides are so immense that it is useless to expect any military assistance from Russia during the present year. . . .I believe the only policy for Russia to pursue is to reduce the number of troops at the front to what is absolutely necessary for holding the enemy, and to bring the rest home for work in the rear.

And, "A catastropy [sic] is inevitable unless a firm and united Government is established."
Such sentiments signaled the move in some circles to look elsewhere for the firm and strong leader. According to Lindley, that leader was personified in General Kornilov.

The Soviets and Socialists seem to have realized the abyss to which their theories and propaganda have brought the country... The natural trend of events is in favor of...[a] dictatorship...and [with] the presence of men like Korniloff...it seems fairly clear that the country can be saved in no other way from catastrophe.23

Buchanan concurred:

Korniloff is the only man strong enough to [restore order]...and [he]...will be the best guarantee that we can have of Russia's determination to see the war through.24

General Barter believed it was of the utmost importance that Kerensky understand that "the British Government cordially approves of Korniloff's measures."25

The Intelligence Bureau submitted a set of letters from Russians pleading with Britain to send a disciplined military Allied corps, to which the author amended

if Russia does not come to a temporary dictatorship...[then] even [the] publication of...the sending of [Allied] forces in aid to Russia...would be of great utility.26

The British civil servant who submitted these letters agreed: Even the "appearance" of a disciplined military allied corps "would be very useful." The significance of this dispatch was to give credence to certain segments of opinion that if the eastern front was to be maintained, Allied military troops would have to be introduced there.

The following passage demonstrates a realistic assessment of what was by now the deepening of the revolution. Lindley wrote in late August:

There is a noticeable tendency of [the] grouping of [the] population in two different camps...[the first is] represented by [the] Soviets and most of [the] peasants and rank and file of [the] Army and fleet. [the second is the] educated classes, cossacks and certain sections of the army. The first are held together by [a] longing for peace and class hatred...these sentiments give the German agents and the anarchists a favorable soil for their propaganda. The second [is] held together by the wish for order and the defense of Russia.27

In this manner, the Counselor of the Embassy identified the seeds of civil war. Lockhart singled out another crucial issue, namely revolutionary defensism.

...it is possible that under more favorable economic conditions or at an earlier period of the war the recent disasters at the front might have served as a
powerful lesson and a stimulant to a young Government which has yet many lessons to learn. In spite of the...frantic appeals for national unity there are so far no signs of that unity. ...Class hatred dominates national interests, and instead of strong measures which were promised against the bolsheviks, the [Soviet] has passed a resolution condemning the slanderous campaign which is being conducted by the bourgeois press against bolshevism. ...the whole Socialist Press is more [concerned]...with the dangers of a counter-revolution than with the situation at the front.28

These diplomats were able to make accurate reports and assessments, however, the long uphill struggle with the government was beginning to produce frustration and signs of prejudice. This period witnessed a progression from the common benign bigotry mentioned in previous chapters to a type which bordered on contempt. On a more personal level, the British diplomats resorted to name calling, and finding faults in individual characters. For example, recalling a conversation with Kerensky over the bargaining of guns for a better showing, Buchanan reported that Kerensky,

said in his bad French that if we were going to bargain about guns and did not intend to help Russia, we had better say so. ...If the Commander-in-Chief [Kornilov] remains [as C-I-C] we may look forward with confidence to [a] thorough reform of [the] army. If he goes, it will mean [the] situation is hopeless.29

The anonymous civil servant from the Political Intelligence Bureau maintained that

German, Jewish, pure Russian revolutionaries and various other shady elements [are] at work, and Austrian factories were working full time in preparation for the takeover of the Russian market when the war was over.

This individual believed the only answer to Russia's ills was a dictatorship, for the present rulers in Russia were "demagogues" whose sole thoughts were "power" for the sake of power.30

Bagge offered his views on the general situation in the following terms:

No stable government can at present be formed. The Russians are too given to intrigue, too prone to talk much and do little, to allow the political parties coming to any stable agreement. ...Although the Russian is always complaining about the lack of order, yet he is by nature a lover of disorder. He is in addition, ultrademocratic, in fact almost anarchical. ...order will never be established until some one strong man, comes into power. In Russia this man must be a soldier, a man of few words, and not a politician.31

These comments imply that Bagge was not of the opinion that the Russians could ever amount to anything unless they were forced into it. Military men, of course, are the ideal
strong leaders because they are trained disciplinarians. These views were reinforced by the turn about in disciplinary measures taken at the front after the failure of the July Offensive.

B. Military

The effect of the failed offensive was to expose the debilitated condition of the army. The waves of dissent after July emanated from the front. The high command now openly condemned the state of affairs and, mostly out of desperation, resorted to summary executions in order to demonstrate that disaffection would not be tolerated. Kerensky attempted to restore order in the army by appointing General Kornilov Commander-in-Chief, who in turn called for the prohibition of Bolshevik meetings and literature; for the restoration of the officer’s right to inflict summary punishment upon soldiers under his command; and for the restriction of committees’ powers to deal with questions of supply, the internal life of the units, and operative orders of the officers. The death penalty was reintroduced and so-called military-revolutionary courts were formed. But the degree of order which these measures restored to the front was not sufficient to halt the tide of disorganisation.

On 3 September Russia suffered a major defeat when Riga was captured by the Germans. The Left accused the high command of sacrificing Riga in an effort to rejuvenate defensist sentiments. Kornilov used it as an excuse for his revolt against the government.

On 2 July, when the initial successes at the front were made known Lockhart confidently wrote:

To-day the news of the Russian Offensive has caused considerable enthusiasm even among the Socialists. If the success can be maintained, the bolshevik agitation should meet with a short shrift. The character of the street meetings has changed...Interest in the war has again been revived.

And Lindley enthusiastically reported that the efforts of Kerensky have been more successful than most people thought. [The] Effect on [the] army of the offensive has been good, and the tone of the regiments has improved in spite of the efforts of the Bolsheviks. That
the army varies to an extraordinary degree is evident, and all that can be said is that the continued success of the offensive offers the best chance of pulling it together.35

The efforts of General Kornilov were equally praised.

Thanks to [the] untiring efforts of General Kornilov [an] improvement was reported in [the] South-western Army and in [the] rear services. The most stringent measures [are] being taken to re-establish discipline. [A] Considerable number of men [have] been shot and a general who had refused to allow fire to be opened on troops who were running away [has] been tried by Court Martial and [will] also be shot.36

This report conveyed the message that Kornilov was dedicated to working for the restoration of the Russian army. The military reforms were viewed as a very good sign and Tereshchenko assured Buchanan that now the death penalty had been re-introduced it would be possible to reorganise the army in time (?for) [sic] [a] general offensive in September.37

Once news of the Offensive’s failure reached the diplomatic representatives, however, the optimistic reception gave way to pessimism and disappointment. In a comprehensive report entitled 'The State of the Russian Armies on the Front,' Consul Bosanquet cited the most extraordinary examples of disintegration.

Discipline, which was destroyed at [the] outset of the revolution by [the Soviet’s Order No. 1] has never been restored and mischief...is widespread. Fraternisation is rife...Germans...come into the Russian trenches, take photographs of the trenches, measure the distance for correction of artillery fire. ...[but] fraternizations proper have now practically ceased [owing to fact that] their troops have not entirely escaped from demoralisation due to contact with the Russian...forces.

Other evidences were cited by the Riga Consul. Instances of desertions, demonstrations against the war, and street fighting were common. He recounted a story in which General Radko-Dmitriev saw guard soldiers seated and playing cards: he requested that they stand up and do their duty but got no reaction.

When he asked them if they know that he is a General of the army, they replied 'Very Happy to hear it'...The soldiers gamble all day and all night, in the town and in the trenches, and the sums at stake sometimes amount to as much as 2,000 roubles.

"In view of the present condition of the Army," Bosanquet concluded an offensive at the present moment would be an act of folly...The mischief in
the army, or in that which was formerly an army, is...very serious. There is no further room for delay and action of the most energetic kind must be taken if it is not desired that the front shall crumble. A propaganda [scheme on our part] in this sense has begun but it is no use to wait for this propaganda...to produce results. It is for the authorities at Petrograd to act and to stamp out Leninism...with unwavering resolution.38

Implicit here was that the policy of 'waiting' should cease in order to save the eastern front.

Similarly, Consul Villiers in Le Havre reported unfortunate accounts of soldier disaffection.

The latest news shows...that losses in action have been relatively slight and that more than two thirds of the wounds have been self inflicted on the fingers of the right hand. The feeling excited by these acts of cowardice is so strong that...If the Provisional Government have the courage to...assume a position enabling them to enforce their decisions [to act] it may be hoped that [the] offensive operations will be continued. If not, the constant decrease of the effectiveness will render impossible even resistance in the trenches.39

This sense of urgency was heightened when news arrived that Riga had fallen and the Army was in retreat. In conjunction with this, news arrived that the Bolsheviks imprisoned during July had been released. "Panic in the capital - food shortages - Archives moved to Moscow" read a 9 September cable from Buchanan.40 General Walsh, of the French Army, related an extremely harsh account of the situation in Russia to the Assistant Secretary of State, Sir R. Graham. The General's opinion was

that the Allies' attitude towards the Russians was too good natured....He had himself found that the only method of dealing with the Russian Generals was to use extremely strong language, and that on one occasion when he had completely lost his temper at having found a large amount of French guns and material which had been lying unused for months and had spoken his mind to the Russian Staff, the results had been immediate.41

Hence, he advocated the get tough approach. Consul Barclay in Jassy was uncertain as to the possibility of the Russian Army withstanding a fourth winter campaign. He suggested that, if only a Japanese force, along with the "backbone of the Cossacks," could be dispatched in the South, a rejuvenated front would be ensured.42

Lockhart was consistently insightful and particularly astute:

It [is] a mistake to ascribe [the refusal of regiments at the front to fight] to bolshevik agitation...the real cause of [bolshevik] success...was...on one clear fact with which the Allies must reckon, and that is the tiredness of the war
which is felt by the whole Russian people. Physically and morally Russia is almost at the end of her strength, and not even a hundred Kerenskys [sic] will be able to make Russia fight another year.43

Bosanquet expanded on Lockhart's theory and argued that the reasons for the demise of the spirit for an offensive were:

the...general weariness of the war, the desire to take full advantage of the newly acquired liberty, certain individual causes, ...and...the terrific propaganda carried on by the Germans, the pro-Germans, and the Leninists on the front.44

The relationship between propaganda and general war fatigue was not often put into such proper perspective, as these passages demonstrate.

Bagge, in Odessa, did not hold back his prejudice with regard to the soldier.

"Introduction of the death penalty has come too late," the Consul complained.

The natural indolence of the Russian peasant soldier, the instability of his character and ineptitude of the Russian in general to carry a task through to the end...have proved too favourable a soil for German pacifist agitation. ...the men are all mad...45

A letter from Dr. Clemow, who until the war was the physician at His Majesty's Embassy at Constantinople and thereafter in charge of a Red Cross unit at Odessa, held similar sentiments to Bagge:

If only Russia could and would she could break through the line at any moment and their inaction just now is maddening....the spirit of the men...is hopelessly defiant and mutinous and they are all for ending the war and going home....The Russian peasant is...likeable...but his ignorance is colossal and unfathomable and when he takes an idea into his head nothing will drive it out. ...Soldiers insist on choosing their own officers and on the latter obeying them. [sic]46

Once again name calling clouded the real issue of war weariness. Obviously, the attitude of the Russians was greatly affected by the lack of food and supplies, both at the front and in the interior. These huge problems were caused by the government's inability to initiate a cohesive policy for the rejuvenation of the economy.

C. Economy

Like the first and second provisional governments, there was no fundamental change in this government's approach to the rural problems. The food question remained its main
focus, but the government managed only to toy with the already established policy. Government action mainly took the form of appealing to the populace to have patience. By the end of August widespread food shortages threatened a major food crisis. Rural unrest peaked when the government placed higher importance on increasing agricultural productivity than on distributing land to the peasants. As a result, land was seized, first through occupation, and then in late August through violence. Assault, robbery, and murder were common occurrences. This situation was therefore made worse when the retreating peasant-soldiers arrived on the scene.

The impact of the decline in the food supply and raw materials on urban areas became more acute as the year progressed. Labour productivity came close to a standstill while discontent and demands escalated. Widespread disturbances went beyond the bounds of ordinary strikes and factory control. Worker 'excesses' now included the firing, arrests, beatings, and sometimes murder of managers. The railway workers' economic interests were no different from those of the industrial labourers.

Given this depressing scenario, it is hardly surprising that the British reports were pessimistic. The following report was typical for this period.

The root of the whole evil lies in [the] defective transport system, and I see no hope of Russia being able unaided to remedy this. Locomotives, rolling stock, and permanent ways are all getting worn out. . . . The only remedy which I can see is for the Allies to come to Russia's assistance by sending out [a] large mission composed of experts in all branches of working and organization of railways, together with [a] staff of workmen and foremen.53

The transport system being blamed for Russia's military ills is by now a familiar theme. However, observers now openly advocated intervention.

In another dispatch, Buchanan noted that the Russian General Staff had been complaining to him about the "coldness of England's attitude." In an attempt to appease Russian officials, Buchanan suggested that a statement be made in Parliament expressing sympathy to the plight of Russia.

with a delicate hint that while we are ready to . . . help a Russia with a strong Government out, our duty to ourselves and our other Allies might make us question the advisability of helping a Government that delayed to take
necessary steps to restore discipline.54

This not very subtle hint was along the same line as the attempt to negotiate law and order in return for arms, but perhaps had more effect that the directly confrontational stance taken in that instance.

In mid-August news reached the Foreign Office that a programme had been sketched out for the militarisation of the railways and industry. Buchanan considered the idea an excellent one, but warned that "they must move faster if they are to prevent [a] catastrophe."55 The sense of urgency was confirmed when in early September Kerensky warned Buchanan that the economic situation was causing a complete collapse at the Front, and that a counter-revolution was imminent.56 Lockhart struck a similar note when he argued that Bolshevik propaganda was alarming the peasants by their warnings that if they do not seize the land they will never get it. . . .this propaganda is doing more harm than people realised. [and] If reform is not pushed forward vigorously there are serious grounds for fearing that the state of anarchy which is at present noticeable in the country will attain such proportions as to make the restoration of order almost impossible.57

The sense of urgency and belief that Russia could turn events around so long as something was immediately done, stimulated British interest in Kornilov. On 1 September Buchanan wrote that Kerensky was "played out" and warned that "unless he changes and shows by his acts real strength of character he will when next crisis comes have to cede his place to a stronger man."58

Overall, this period saw several developments. The British representatives received the initial news of the Offensive with optimism. The realisation of its failure, coupled with the government's failure to suppress Bolshevism once and for all, signaled a change. The representatives no longer advocated a policy of 'watch and wait', and instead began suggesting plans of action in the form of military and economic intervention. They concluded that unless something was done quickly, a catastrophe was imminent. Even the
words of encouragement became noticeably harsher and more threatening - words which were motivated by frustration and a sense of urgency.

This fits with Morris' assertion that British officials lost confidence in the Provisional Government after the ill-fated offensive. On the one hand it could be argued that the Provisional Government never had the blessing of anyone. On the other hand, it was after all the only government to deal with. So long as the hope for the restoration of order in the military sphere was promised by Kornilov, optimism therefore remained. The British representatives were not united in their advocacy of a turn to Kornilov, however. The Ambassador, for example, was absolutely opposed to Kornilov's plan to march on the capital, as it could "only lead to civil war and end in disaster." The Ambassador thought that the best policy was to support the 'legitimate', albeit temporary, government. Buchanan's words were prophetic and foresaw another crisis for the Provisional Government, which would divert energy from the real objective as the representatives saw it, winning the war and maintaining order in the interior.
CHAPTER IV - ENDNOTES


5. Pearson, *Sealed*, pp. 196-7. The real facts were that the Germans had increased their financial and other assistance to the Bolsheviks after the March Revolution, but that the Bolsheviks continued to pocket it as before and do as they pleased. The Bolsheviks needed no outside orders or encouragement to attack the Provisional Government, regardless of who or what supplied them with funds. The coincidence of Bolshevik funds originating from the enemy camp merely provided Kerensky with an excuse to launch a violent campaign against them. In this regard, Kerensky underestimated the Bolsheviks. For if they had been man agents, mere venal adventurers, they would have proved much less dangerous and easier to quell than they turned out to be. Like Kerensky, the British representatives underestimated the Bolsheviks. Their view of the Bolsheviks being in German pay, though naive and simplistic, is not surprising given their opinion that bribery was endemic to the Russian character as well as the 'sealed train' event. Hence, as the Bolsheviks gained support, the British viewed their rise in popularity as one of the causes rather than a result of Russia's internal chaos. See Buchanan to FO, 19 & 21 July 1917, FO 371/2997/142144 & 144202. [4:117-18 & 147]


7. Buchanan to FO, 4 July 1917, FO 371/2997/132356. [4:65]


11. Buchanan to FO, 24 July 1917, FO 371/2997/145933. [4:180]

12. Buchanan to FO, 26 July 1917, FO 371/2997/147056. [4:185]


14. Kennan, *Russia*, pp. 29-30. When the offensive was underway, Root gained the impression that everything was in order; that the Provisional Government would carry on the war successfully if only it received adequate support.

15. Lockhart to Buchanan, 26 July 1917, FO 371/2997/159277. [4:273]
16. Buchanan to FO, 20 July 1917, FO 371/2997/143107. [4:130-3]
17. Buchanan to FO, 26 August 1917, FO 371/30122/167058. [19:5-6]
20. Buchanan to FO, 31 August 1917, FO 371/2998/171455. [5:539-43] and see Buchanan to FO, 3 September 1917, FO 371/3012/171644. [19:50A] Buchanan believed if all would sink party differences and focus on the war, they would be able to make the army once more a fighting force.
21. Buchanan to FO, 3 August 1917, FO 371/2997/152327. [4:204]
22. Buchanan to FO, 4 August 1917, FO 371/2997/153098. [4:218]
23. Buchanan to Balfour, 17 August 1917, FO 371/2997/161629. [4:303]
24. Buchanan to Hardinge, 15 August 1917, FO 371/2998/172561. [5:548] Contrary to this, Buchanan wrote that the government under Kerensky "offers the only hope of safety. See Buchanan to FO, 5 August 1917, FO 371/2998/153773. [5:451]
30. Political Intelligence Bureau to FO, 25 August 1917, FO 371/2997/166641. [4:328-31]
31. Buchanan to Balfour, 3 August 1917, FO 371/2997/170517. [4:341]
32. Chamberlin, Russian, p. 235.
34. Lockhart to Buchanan, 2 July 1917, FO 371/2997/145767. [4:158] He also commented on the success of Henderson's visit - with the bourgeoisie that is. And see Lockhart to Buchanan, 26 July 1917, FO 371/2997/159277. [4:273] when he said the troops were in a satisfied state.
35. Buchanan to FO, 9 July 1917, FO 371/2997/145769. [4:166]
36. Buchanan to FO, 31 July 1917, FO 371/2997/151687. [4:201] and see Buchanan to FO, 4 & 12 July 1917, FO 371/3011/133407 & 137482. [18:476 & 480-2]

37. Buchanan to FO, 24 July 1917, FO 371/3011/146814. [18:513]


40. Buchanan to FO, 9 September 1917, FO 371/3012/175883. [19:57] And see Buchanan to FO, 22 August 1917, FO 371/3011/166108. [18:541]

41. Graham to FO, 14 August, 1917, FO 371/3011/160633. [18:515-17] and see Buchanan to FO, 6 August 1917, FO 371/2997/153782. [4:220-1] In which General Barter advocated the 'get tough' approach and tell the Russian politicians to stop their "polemical discussions" and get down to the real business of conducting the war.

42. Barclay to FO, 1 August 1917, FO 371/3015/151143. [22:33] and see Graham to FO, 14 August 1917, FO 371/3011/160633. [18:517] who felt that the dispatch of Japanese forces was not feasible.

43. Lockhart to Buchanan, 23 July 1917, FO 371/2998/159274. [5:494]

44. Buchanan to Balfour, 30 July 1917, FO 371/3012/170514. [19:33-5]

45. Buchanan to Balfour, 3 August 1917, FO 371/2997/170517. [4:340]

46. Clemow to FO, 18 August 1917, FO 371/2997/162392. [4:319] The Foreign Office Minute read "Clemow is a good Russian scholar."

47. Gill, Peasants, p. 84-85. For example, rationing was expanded to limit the consumption of a wider range of food goods; an attempt was made to make articles of necessity easier to obtain; the government trained agitators to go into the countryside to encourage the peasants to surrender their grain in an effort to increase the flow of grain to collection and distribution points; and it established regional committees to coordinate the transport of supplies.

48. Ibid., p. 102.

49. Ibid., pp. 106-7.

50. Ibid., pp. 184-5. From March to July 568 factories in the country employing 104,372 workers closed their doors as a result of the decline in productivity. In August and September a further 231 enterprises involving 61,000 workers shut down. Naturally the unemployment rate soared. Many who could not find work fled back to the villages.

51. Chamberlin, Russian, pp. 269-71.

52. Pethybridge, Spread, pp. 26-56. For a description of the standstill to which the country was brought owing to railway disruption.
53. Buchanan to FO, 1 August 1917, FO 371/2997/152327. [4:204] The Foreign Office acted upon the Ambassador's remedial scheme and telegrammed Spring-Rice in Washington urging the Consul to put out feelers for such aid; as "if it could be done at all, it can be done by America". And see: Buchanan to FO, 2 August 1917, FO 371/1997/153098. [4:218]; Buchanan to Balfour, 6 August 1917, FO 371/2997/161629. [4:303]; Buchanan to Balfour, 28 August 1917, FO 371/2997/176585. [4:353]; and Buchanan to Balfour, 17 July 1917, FO 371/2997/141013. [4:97]

54. Buchanan to FO, 6 August 1917, FO 371/2997/154559. [4:229]

55. Buchanan to FO, 17 August 1917, FO 371/3011/162463. [18:532] and see Buchanan to FO, 2 August 1917, FO 371/2997/151687. [4:201]

56. Buchanan to FO, 3 September 1917, FO 371/3011/171644. [18:35]

57. Lockhart to Buchanan, 24 July 1917, FO 371/2998/159273. [5:471]

58. Buchanan to FO, 1 September 1917, FO 371/2998/170957. [5:534-7] A Foreign Office clerk wrote "Sir George Buchanan's forecasts are always most carefully weighed and never given except on grounds of which he is very sure, and his statement that M. Kerensky has played his part is therefore of great importance." And see Buchanan to Hardinge, 15 August 1917, FO 371/2998/172561. [5:549-553] When in pointing out that the government had lost a unique opportunity of putting down the Bolsheviks once and for all after the July episode, Buchanan noted that although the Provisional Government did not inspire much confidence, he did not believe "any other Government would do better than this one. . . . I still believe that Russia will pull through though the obstacles [sic] in her path - whether they be of a military, industrial or financial character - are appalling. . . . we and the Americans will soon have to face the fact that we shall have to finance her to a very considerable extent if we want to see her carry on through the winter. In this report Buchanan also expressed his concern about the possibility that America might join forces with Germany after the war for the exploitation of Russia.

59. Buchanan to FO, 5 September 1917, FO 371/3015/174458. [22:345] Hardinge could not understand why Buchanan was so strongly opposed to a military coup. "There will certainly be bloodshed before discipline in the Army is restored and it seems that it is only through the Army that the Soviet can be abolished and order and discipline restored."
CHAPTER V
The Kornilov Revolt - The Bolshevik Revolution

In many respects August-September was the decisive month. An apparent alliance between Kerensky and Kornilov against the Bolsheviks took a sudden turn when Kerensky, perhaps out of fear that Kornilov would indeed overthrow the entire government, backed out of their agreement and charged him with conspiracy. On 9 September Kornilov began the march towards the capital to seize power. By 12 September Kornilov’s advance, largely due to his own inept planning, failed and the Commander-in-Chief was arrested and replaced by Kerensky.

A. Political

The Kornilov episode determined the shape of the new government that replaced the second coalition. It reinforced distrust of the Left towards those on the Right and vice versa. This was reflected in Soviet and SR Central Committee resolutions which called for the exclusion of the Cadets from the government Kerensky was forming. Simultaneously, the Cadets withdrew either because they were in sympathy with Kornilov or because they refused to share responsibility for Kerensky’s action. Thus, Kerensky, who for nearly a month could not organise a regular government, formed a ‘Directory’ government, consisting of five people. As late as 25 September the coalition was formed. On 13 September, the Bolsheviks obtained a clear majority in the Soviet. From this event Lenin concluded that the time had come for his party to seize power, and so began the preparations for an insurrection. The remainder of this period was marked by Kerensky’s last desperate attempts to rule, or rather his incapacity to rule.

During the interval between the time that Kornilov set out for the capital and the General’s failure, the British representatives remained hopeful and optimistic. The Ambassador reported on 9 September that the Commander-in-Chief...had...decided to declare himself Dictator...[the] Cabinet...condemned [the General’s] action as treason...So far Korniloff has refused to relinquish his post...[The] Most extraordinary part of the story is
the role played by Lvoff [Vladimir N., Procurator of the Holy Synod and not to be confused with the former Premier, Prince George E. Lvov] who some days ago told Kerensky that he ought to get more in touch with other groups and on the latter expressing his willingness to do so went to headquarters and informed Korniloff that he was authorized by Kerensky to offer him Dictatorship. . . .I cannot believe he [Kornilov] will tamely submit as it seems incredible that he should have embarked on his present course unless he has a strong military force to support him. Why he gave Kerensky [a] warning by sending [a] message through Lvoff instead of marching on Petrograd is more than I can understand.7

On 10 September the Foreign Office authorised Buchanan to take any action which might "bring about a reconciliation between Kornilov and Kerensky," for

the services of M. Kerensky and General Kornilov are necessary to save Russia and to restore to her the order and security which are essential to her life.8

The same day the Ambassador informed his superiors that he had urged the Minister for Foreign Affairs that

at a moment when the fate of the country was at stake personal feelings must be set aside and urged that if it was explained to Kerensky that in what Lvov [Vladimir] said to him about a dictatorship Lvov was acting on his responsibility and without any authority from [the] Government, [then] Korniloff might be induced to withdraw his manifesto accusing [the] Government of having wantonly provoked [a] crisis.9

Then, on 13 September Buchanan wrote:

[The] Government troops [have] surrendered pretty freely to Commander-in-Chief forces. . . .As any agreement between [the] Government and Commander-in-Chief appears to be out of [the] question [the] only hope of avoiding bloodshed is if [the] Government troops do surrender.10

As always, the Ambassador’s overriding concern was the prevention of civil war. Later that day, Buchanan telegrammed that the other Generals in Russia, the Petrograd Garrison, and Cossacks had gone over to the side of the government.11 On 14 September, Buchanan confirmed that "Kornilov’s attempt has failed."12 This signaled a point when some representatives considered that there was still hope - that Russia could saved and rejuvenated. Some suggested that this could be accomplished by supporting those segments in Russia considered still to be in favour of continuing the war. Others, however, considered that all was lost - that the Russians could no longer be counted on to maintain
the eastern front. Of course the idea in that event, was that the allies maintain the eastern front.

Writing in favour of support, Buchanan argued that

It is too soon to gauge [the] effect which events of past few days are likely to have, but in General (?Korniloff) [sic] [the] Allies have lost their most valuable (?aid) [sic] as regards vigorous prosecution of the war by Russia... Bolshevists are said to be already preparing for [a] new rising... Desperate as the situation is I do not abandon all hope and it is such vital importance to keep Russia even as purely a passive partner in the war that we must have patience and await developments.13

And, there is but one course open to us and that is to support [Kerensky]....if by doing so we can keep Russia in the war. If [the Eastern front collapses the] Central Powers will gain a new lease on life... Even support which the United States will be able to give us next year will not counter-balance this loss to us. I do not however think it likely that a Socialist Government will...make a proposal for separate peace. What I fear is that they will bring pressure on the Allies to conclude peace by threatening to make a separate peace if the Allies refuse to do so.14

The Kornilov incident was a blow to the representatives' hopes for a strong leader. The moderate view expressed by the Ambassador was that Britain should now throw in its lot with Kerensky, if only to maintain that government and keep the Bolsheviks out. The Provisional Government could not be forsaken because the Bolsheviks had as their stated policy an immediate peace. Thomas believed that Kerensky would in the end triumph over the "Maximalists," as the Bolsheviks were often referred to in this era. The diplomat argued that it was urgent for the Allies to give Russia support.

Some [of the Allies] allow themselves unconsciously to be dominated by sentimental hostility to [the] revolution. [The] Press should avoid offending Russian susceptibilities. Rumours have spread in Russia that [the] Allies think of [a] separate peace at Russia's expense. A conference with Russia is [therefore] urgently required... for revision of war aims... [The] Western Governments [should]... appreciate [the] enormous effort accomplished by [the] men of Russia... [and stop making] useless remonstrances... It is vital for [the] cause of [the] Allies that during [the] coming months active, intelligent, and affectionate collaboration should without delay support [the] efforts of Kerensky... [A] Few months after [the] lamentable collapse of 1915, Broussiloff [sic] made his victorious attack [in] May 1916. Revolutionary Russia is capable of [a] similar effort.15

The idea, that Russian super-human efforts would once again win the day continued at this late date, if only the right leader appeared.
Ambassador Hardinge in San Sebastion transmitted a conversation that he had with his Russian colleague, reiterating a theme seen earlier in 1917 initiated by Major Neilson.

[The] Present so called Government is incompetent; even Kerensky [is] a mere talker; [the] Soviets (evil?) [sic] influence supreme; . . . At [the] present rate [the] Germans will have Petrograd in a few months . . . and if they can restore order will be welcomed as liberators by landowners and commercial classes, especially the Jews. [The] Allies ought to act within a fortnight if Russia is to remain a factor in Europe. They should. . . . demand. . . . dissolution of Soviet, restoration of former Provisional Government, convocation of Duma and summons of Cossacks of whom 800 crushed Lenine’s [sic] partisans and who can be trusted to restore order. . . . and. . . . occupation by American Japanese forces.16

This rather more radical argument, advocating intervention and occupation, still places the only hope on the Provisional Government and strong loyalist elements.

Reminiscent of a report authored by Lockhart in December 1916, Buchanan wrote in early October:

At [the] present moment [the] only recognized Government is [the] Council of Five. . . . Kerensky has now to choose one of three courses. One, to disregard [the] resolutions of [the] Congress [Soviet] and to govern in spite of them; two, to resign and allow Socialists to form a Government; or three, to endeavor to compromise by consenting to Government composed of Socialists and representatives of propertied classes who do not belong to Cadet party. . . . Of the three the last seems most likely but I have been unable to ascertain anything as to his intentions.17

That such speculation existed suggests that support for Kerensky and maintenance of the eastern front was still very much a part of this representative’s views - if only the Russian politicians could re-group.

The Ambassador, therefore, began an onslaught of extensive and persuasive 'encouragement'. One of the most famous of these was the Allied representation to Kerensky, with Buchanan as Doyen in mid-October. Upon citing their common and general grievances regarding the chaotic state of affairs in Russia, Kerensky jumped up and with wave of his hand signified that our interview was at an end. . . . I stopped him and. . . . wished him to understand our communication had been inspired solely by the desire to strengthen his hands. He did not (?) reply [sic] and after shaking hands. . . . left the room. Kerensky is very fond of theatrical effects and he evidently wished to mark his displeasure (?) with [sic] Napoleonic touch which he gave to our dismissal.18
On another occasion, the Ambassador told Kerensky that iron discipline had to be introduced at all costs, and Bolshevisim, which was the root of all evils, had to be eradicated. Alluding to the fact that Kerensky had failed to suppress Bolshevism in July, Buchanan informed the Prime Minister that he hoped he would not let any opportunity to do so slip by again. This was an expression of the naive view that the Bolsheviks could be stamped out if only force was used, and in doing so the fighting vigor of the army would miraculously be restored. In this respect, it is hardly surprising that once the Bolshevik revolution arrived the British considered the new government would be short-lived. After all, there had been more than one abortive uprising since the monarchy had fallen.

The following were typical responses from those who considered the Russians incapable of maintaining the eastern front. Bagge in Odessa wrote:

I have the honour to report that it has become much worse, and as winter comes on, will grow still more serious. . . . The Central Authorities do not appear to have any firm grasp of power. Orders issued by them are not only disregarded, but disputed. . . . I am convinced that [members of the government] only sit on the committees for the salaries obtainable and for purposes of self profit. Their standard and manner of living justifies these accusations. The Maximalists have obtained the upper hand in all the committees.

Here the theme of corruption was hinted at again.

Towards the end of October Buchanan observed that Kerensky will cling to power as long as he can, but there have been of late such persistent attacks against him that he may himself have to go. His chief hope of safety lies in fact that now that Korniloff is no longer eligible candidate, there is no one to succeed him. . . . [leading politicians] tell me the present state of things cannot continue for long and that before many months are over there will be strong reactionary movement. . . . We shall have. . . to pass through another acute crisis attended by much bloodshed before order is finally restored.

The day before the Bolshevik coup Buchanan wrote that all the Russian Ministers had spoken as if the Government had sufficient force behind them to take strong action... and gave me to understand something would be done in the course of a couple of days. [one Minister] spoke disparagingly of Kerensky who he said had repeatedly allowed psychological moment of striking to pass. Though he recognised services which Kerensky had rendered in the earlier days of [the] revolution [Kerensky] was too much of a socialist to be counted on to put down anarchy with a firm hand. On my remarking as I have frequently done... that I could not understand how a Government that respected itself could allow men like Trotsky [sic] to incite masses to murder and pillage without (?arresting)
In reply to my question as to whether Russia in spite of grave situation could continue in the war he said that she certainly could provided there was [a] strong Government.

Thus, Kerensky's political convictions as well as his personal manner were blamed for inaction. These were strong words, suggesting honour, faith, and belief in a 'right' and 'wrong' way of governing. Buchanan's source of information obviously remained optimistic.

On 7 November Buchanan informed his superior that the Government had been defeated the previous evening in the Soviet. The Ambassador reported that "In view of the political situation,"

they did not attempt to arrest [the] revolutionary military Committee. [The] Soviet meets to-day and will probably form Government themselves. Nearly all troops of Garrison are on their side and I am told that half the town is in their hands. . . .[The] Government will have to choose between complete surrender and attempt to suppress [the] Soviet by Cossacks who have offered their services. . . .Government have I fear deferred acting until it is too late and they are no longer masters of the situation.

Thus, at the eleventh hour, Buchanan concedes that the Provisional Government is not in control of the situation.

It is worthy of note that Buchanan predicted the above scenario in early September, when Kornilov was attempting to restore discipline.

If the Commander-in-Chief fails. . . .civil war is unavoidable but if [he] succeeds in gaining possession of Petrograd. . . .[the] crisis would soon be over as [the] Army and attitudes of [the] country will be decided by what happens here.

Upon his return to England in early September Lockhart informed the Under Secretary for Foreign Affairs, Lord Cecil, of the grave and very real consequences of the Kornilov episode.

Lockhart considers Korniloff acted too soon and that ultimate result will be civil war. . . .Kerensky in his judgement was a perfectly honest and straightforward man, with a genuine belief in Socialist ideals. . . .[and] in favour of going on with the war, not only on the ground that he approved of it, but because the problem of demobilisation in Russia would be so terrific. . . .[that] their retreat [into the interior] would be to let loose a horde of savages without any control of them.

Regarding the Henderson fiasco, Lockhart argued that

The Socialists that Britain sent over were not trained Socialist[s] in the continental sense. . . .and the result was that they left on the minds of the
Russian Socialists the conviction that they were the agents of a capitalist Government bent on a career of conquest.

Lockhart demonstrated his level of understanding of the Russian character when Cecil asked him whether there was any patriotism left in Russia.

there [is] a great deal of village patriotism, but that Russians [do] not really rise to the conception of any larger unity than, at the most, the District Government under which they lived.25

In late October the Foreign Office telegrammed Buchanan asking for the Ambassador's opinion of Kerensky himself. The telegram read:

Disquieting rumours have reached us from more than one source that Kerensky is in German pay and that he and his Government are doing their utmost to weaken and disable Russia, so as to arrive at a situation when no other course but a separate peace would be possible. Do you consider that there is any ground for such insinuations and that the Government by refraining from any effective action are purposely allowing the Bolshevist elements to grow stronger? If it should be a question of bribery we might be able to compete successfully [with Germany] if it were known how and through what agents it could be done. . . .26

And the Ambassador promptly replied:

I do not believe there is a word of truth in these rumours which have I expect been spread by Mrs. Pankhurst. She was snubbed by Kerensky whom she had rubbed the wrong way and her ruffled vanity could find no better explanation but that he was anti-Ally. Kerensky is greatly to blame for having failed to suppress Bolshevists after July riots and for [not going with Kornilov] . . . but he is not a traitor, nor is he working for [a] separate peace with Germany anymore than did Emperor Nicholas who was also accused of treason.27

Obviously the variety of reports could create confusion. Others, for example, were not as magnanimous about Kerensky's character as Lockhart and Buchanan. One Henri Simpson, whose claim to comment on the affairs in Russia rested in the fact of his being a "Lett" and "living in London", had the following to say:

...no further effective military cooperation must be expected from the Russians in the present war. The Government [is] completely fooling the Allies. The game played by M. Kerensky and his partisans was to assert a firm determination to continue the war and thus to deceive the Allies, while all the time they [are] doing the utmost to weaken and disorganise Russia. . . . [the government's policy] has been to keep matters simmering without taking effective action and thus to allow the Bolshevist elements to become stronger until all power was in their hands. When the Extremists are supreme M. Kerensky [will] make a separate peace with Germany. [He] is a scoundrel . . . a tuberculous and syphilitic. He [has] recently divorced his wife to marry a German ballet dancer, a Russian subject, who [has] been carefully chosen to
attract him by German agents.28

And according to Mr. Leslie Urquhart, an Englishman who owned the two largest copper and iron corporations in the Urals,

...a separate peace lived all its life in Russia...the whole of the directing element in the Soviet consists of Jews, and for the most part German Jews: that Kerensky's private secretary...is a Jew undoubtedly in the pay of the Bolshevik organisation; that Kerensky was formerly in the pay of the International, and that he continues to be in sympathy with the Kiethal [sic] group, that he is purely an opportunist and self seeking man and that he is merely awaiting the moment when Russian opinion will welcome even a separate peace in return for the introduction of order and tranquility...The more moderate elements [are tolerated] for the gratification of the Allies, and will be swept away as soon as they have fulfilled their function of maintaining the illusion of a possible Russian recovery.29

This type of reaction was associated, as previously discussed, with those who had most to lose. Consistently, businessmen refer to Jews as being in league with the Germans for their own personal gain. This view was fostered by the idea that Germany would, in the event of a Russian collapse, control Russia and the market would no longer be available to British investment. The failure of Kornilov triggered a fear that the eastern front in fact could collapse, because its impact on the military was devastating.

B. Military

A direct result of the Kornilov incident was the complete and final breakdown of relations between officers and soldiers. Seeing that a General, the Commander-in-Chief, had gone 'against the Revolution,' the soldiers now looked upon the officers and higher command not only as 'counter-revolutionists,' but as the chief obstacle to an immediate end to the war.30 The breakdown was nearing its completion. News of robberies, pillaging of estates, demolition of railroad stations, riots accompanied by disorderly firing and looting, and the wanton beating and killing of officers clearly demonstrated the state of anarchy.31

Little optimism about the military sphere is evident in the reports. In early October, Buchanan assured that Kerensky was now "fully alive to the seriousness of the situation and was doing everything in his power to re-organise the Army."32 General Barter, who had by now replaced Hanbury-Williams as head of the British military mission at the
Stavka, reported that an extraordinary scheme was in the works regarding the rejuvenation of the army.

Each division on [the] front approximately 175 in number has been asked to form a company of volunteers who shall belong...to [a] definite area...has so far progressed that [a] number of companies equal to these divisions has already been formed. The men individually bind themselves on oath to bar agitators of any kind and to occupy themselves with nothing but the war.33

On a more pessimistic note, General Barter represented his concerns to Kerensky over the situation at the front. The meeting, recalled the representative, was satisfactory if his statements can be depended on...In reply to [a] direct question [regarding the affect the political situation was having on the military] Kerenski replied that he was confident [the] Army was behind him and would obey his orders...He however remarked, evidently with a view to eliciting a statement, that many people thought France and England were disposed to make Peace with Germany and to leave Russia in the lurch. I protested most emphatically against possibility of such action on the part of Allied Powers and added that if they [the Allies] could count on Russia as surely as they could count on us we should be well satisfied.34

In a conversation with the Minister for Foreign Affairs, Buchanan told his Russian colleague that the Kornilov fiasco had "destroyed hope I had entertained of improved conditions." When the Ambassador intimated that he could not see how Russia could continue in the war unless a "strong and stable Government were formed", Tereshchenko replied that he "did not believe there was any danger of [the] soldiers deserting 'en masse'."35

A number of representatives now suggested remedial schemes, of a highly interventionist nature. General Knox, for example, submitted a lengthy memo in which he described an elaborate plan for the nationalisation of forces.

Russia has...on her borders various races who...understand the necessity for continuing the struggle to a real peace. It is the duty of the Russian Government to its Allies to foster the fighting spirit of these people to...defend their homes.36

Consul Stevens' scheme involved

the formation of a brigade of infantry, each of Armenian and Georgian troops. ...[For] unless an almost superhuman effort is immediately made and pressure is brought to bear on the Russians to remedy the existing evils...the danger to the cause of the Allies...is very grave.37
Another idea was for the Allies to send a force to Russia to put things right. Colonel Blair, the Acting Military Attache, considered this to be the only salvation. R.A.L. in the Political Intelligence Bureau argued that the surest defense force were the Cossacks, as they were the most compact and united force in Russia. . . .[they] were prepared to act against any Government that proved itself incapable of [ruling and]. . . .will yield to no threats from Petrograd.

On the eve of the Bolshevik revolution, Spring-Rice reported that the "Russian situation is worse than hitherto," and argued that the only way to save the situation was for the Allied governments to dispatch immediately several hundred thousand Japanese and American troops, to rejuvenate the reliable troops which remained there.

The raising of the morale of the Russian Army is of the highest importance and . . .by no means hopeless.

Several insights surfaced which demonstrate that the British did have accurate information available on which to base their decisions for new schemes and remedies. Buchanan, for example, wrote that Tereshchenko had explained to him that one of the most unfortunate facts in Russia’s inability to conduct the war successfully and efficiently was that the Old regime. . . .had adopted [a] policy of Frederick the Great with disastrous results. The country was quite unable to support an army of twelve million men that were at present mobilized, owing to the economic conditions. Of these . . .there were only one and a half million rifles actually on the Front and no more than two and a half million all told.

On another occasion the Ambassador warned that he thought it not a good idea for Britain to send a force to Russia to assist with the reorganisation of the Navy: "Their lives would not be safe on board ships which were under [the] complete control of [the] Bolsheviks." The Ambassador recognised that discipline and respect for authority figures was non-existent. Regarding the connection between revolutionary defensism and the rise in Bolshevik influence, Lindley observed that:

The whole of the Kornilov movement is firmly believed by the masses to have been purely counter-revolutionary and the Generals are even accused of having been privy to the fall of Riga. . . .In conditions such as these it is idle to talk of restoration of the. . . .army, which can only come about when the authority of the officers, which has just received the worst blow since the famous Order No. 1
was issued by the Sovyet, is firmly established. Before the Kornilov adventure, it was possible to regard a Bolshevik rising with a certain confidence in its failure; now that the gathering forces of order have been split from top to bottom it would be a bold man who would predict the result of such a rising which has become more probable [sic] than ever before.43

This view reflects the idea that the Bolsheviks were not feared as a viable contender by the representatives until now. Hence, confidence in the Provisional Government could well have existed under the premise that no serious competition existed.

Despite the fact that the central issues were correctly identified, they were often attributed to 'things' other than the fact that Russia was played out and that the revolution was more important to the masses than anything else. General Knox was inclined towards the employment of national units in the Russian Army because:

The cause of the decline of the fighting power of the Russian troops is the permission by the Government of anti-war agitation such as no power at war has ever allowed. Such agitation is particularly dangerous in an army like the Russian where the low general level of education prevents the mass of the men from understanding the necessity for fighting.44

Considering that the British foreign service was compromised of men who were products of the public educational system, it is not surprising that Knox wrote as though the level of education determined the level of patriotism.

And Consul Stevens concurred:

The likelihood of [military operations] resumption by the Russian forces...even under the most favourable circumstances, is very remote so long as the Army remains under the influence of [the Soviet]...and Maximalist propaganda. ...The higher Russian Military authorities alive to this dangerous situation...have finally decided to remove the purely Russian element...and to substitute it by men...[from the Caucusus] who are prepared to defend [Russia] and lose their lives in doing so against an incursion of the much-hated foe.45

Stevens made no mention of the fact that the Russian authorities had the organisational ability to remove thousands of Russian soldiers, but did not possess the ability to remove Maximalist agitators.

This last period of Provisional Government rule was not only marked by the simultaneous political and military crisis which the Kornilov episode triggered. In the field of the economy, the deepening of the revolution was apparent also.
C. Economy

Rural unrest was once again on the rise, after a temporary lull in late August to gather the harvest. During this period peasant activities included thefts of harvested grain and live and dead stock from farms, the felling of trees, and collective ultimatums to estate owners demanding they either transfer their estates over, or pogroms would be resorted to.\textsuperscript{46}

In the sphere of labour, the factory committees were by now largely under Bolshevik influence and were so influential that hardly any step could be taken without their permission.\textsuperscript{47} Factory closures were common, due in part to the drop in government war orders. Given that they could not possibly meet worker demands, the owners were often forced to close. Syndicalism then often resulted. Productivity dropped further when this occurred because the workers possessed no managerial skills. Despite this, worker control enabled the Bolsheviks to control industry, labour and the transport system by November.

Optimistic reports for this period were at best scanty and of little consequence. On 30 October Buchanan wrote that "though some factories may have to close for lack of coal," a Russian Minister told him "it would be possible to go on furnishing [the] army with [the] necessary material and supplies."\textsuperscript{48} Stevens wrote in the latter part of October that the rail system was "satisfactory," and added that

\begin{quote}
Pressure in competent quarters by foreign Military attaches has latterly somewhat improved matters and an increase in the flow of supplies, especially of food stuffs for the army, has been the result. This improvement...has arrested the threatened self withdrawal of the troops from the Front.\textsuperscript{49}
\end{quote}

The Consul went on to say, however, that

\begin{quote}
No words that I can employ would adequately represent the absolute state of decay into which everything connected with the movement of trains is falling. ...The chaos prevailing at the stations is also indescribable. The dislocation of goods traffic is also complete. Robbing and pilfering goods and luggage during transit has recently assumed alarming proportions. ...[however] some hope of salvation exists. [But only through] prompt action.\textsuperscript{51}
\end{quote}

In another highly descriptive dispatch, the Batoum Consul conveyed his observations of the economic disorder:

\begin{quote}
...shortage of foodstuffs and fuel, supplies...masses [are] grumbling under
[the] burden of excessive cost of living. Unrest in industrial spheres is becoming general. . . . the outlook is very black and if to this is to be added the likelihood [sic] . . . of the undisciplined and . . . uncontrollable masses. . . . getting loose on their homeward track, the situation may become very grave indeed.51

Stevens’ conclusion displayed a cool sense of reserve. He went on to argue, however, that
the reasons for the deplorable state of affairs were as follows:

The Russian as a general rule is by nature not capable of a long-sustained effort. He has no backbone, is easily swayed along the line of least resistance, and is practically devoid of patriotism. Agitators have had a favourable soil in this soft pliable character for their intrigues, either pro-German, or inter-class, and no power on earth can now undo the harm done in the army and the people.

. . . [The peasants] have grown rich through the high prices they have obtained during the war for their produce, and are not obliged, for want of money, to sell their grain. . . . the peasant’s life is dictated solely by self interest, and . . . he will not part with anything below its proper value as estimated by him unless obliged.52

These disparaging characteristics attributed to the Russians are by now familiar.

Laziness, lack of conviction and patriotism, and greed are implied in this extract.

In this period the Kornilov incident at first stimulated optimism because many believed him to be the ‘last chance’ of finding the one strong leader capable of turning the situation around. Upon learning of his failure, as well as the adverse political and military repercussions, a level of pessimism emerged once again and exasperation turned into desperation. Its affect in the economic sphere was also severe in that it threw labour and the peasants into the Bolsheviks’ camp. Frustration over the government’s complete loss of control over labour and peasant unrest stimulated much prejudice. To be sure, there was much disappointment, irritation and frustration. Diversity of opinion was apparent over which policy to pursue. Buchanan, for example, considered it best to support Kerensky and the Provisional Government because they were moderates and in favour of the war’s prosecution. Others argued that the Russians could no longer be counted on, and ‘other’ forces would have to be relied upon to maintain the eastern front.

In any case, Russia was still regarded as being important.

So long as it is our object to keep Russia in the war, so long must we avoid breaking with the body of moderate Socialist opinion which is in favour of acting in union with the Allies. . . . [For even if a Bolshevik Government comes,] things cannot be worse than they are at present. Such a Government would not be of
long duration and would before long provoke counter-revolution.53

Thus, on the eve of the Bolshevik revolution Lindley intimated that a Bolshevik government was almost preferable to the existing conditions because then an inevitable counter-revolution would presumably eradicate the problem of Bolshevism altogether.
CHAPTER V ENDNOTES


3. Warth, Allies, p. 129. Some units were sent in the wrong direction, others were stopped because railroad tracks had been torn up or blockaded. The troops could not proceed on foot because the need for a food supply had not been anticipated. Insubordination invariably resulted from the ubiquitous propagandists. Soldiers formed their own committees, arrested their officers, and thus, the counter-revolutionary threat collapsed.

4. See Katkov, Kornilov, pp. 121-35 for a full description of the aftermath and havoc created by the Kornilov episode.

5. Gill, Peasants, p. 132. Kerensky and Tereshchenko remained as Prime Minister and Minister for Foreign Affairs; a Menshevik became Minister of Interior; and two non-party members became Ministers of the Army and Navy.


7. Buchanan to FO, 11 September 1917, FO 371/2999/177198. [6:3] And the Foreign Office minute on this report read: "One can only agree with Sir George Buchanan that General Korniloff's action in warning Kerensky instead of bringing off [a coup?] is astonishing. . . .So far he seems to have played his cards very badly."

8. FO to Buchanan, 10 September 1917, FO 371/2999/178763. [6:26]

9. Buchanan to FO, 10 September 1917, FO 371/2999/178875 & 178876. [6:40 & 44]


13. Buchanan to FO, 14 September 1917, FO 371/2999/179508. [6:62]

14. Buchanan to FO, 16 September 1917, FO 371/2999/181403. [6:105-7] In this report Buchanan wrote that he was inclined to believe that Kornilov was the "unconscious tool of others who wished to overthrow the Government."

15. Buchanan to FO, 1 October 1917, FO 371/3011/189063. [18:153] and see Ibid. The Foreign Office authorised Buchanan to deny any reports that the Western Allies were contemplating making a separate peace at the expense of Russia.

17. Buchanan to FO, 4 October 1917, FO 371/2999/192435. [6:159] See endnote #16 in Chapter I. Also reminiscent of the pre-March period was Buchanan to FO, 10 October 1917, FO 371/3011/196775. [18:171]

18. Buchanan to FO, 10 October 1917, FO 371/3011/19554. [18:165] A Foreign Office Minute read "In spite of M. Kerensky's loss of temper it may have brought things home to him and thereby have done good." Incidentally, Kerensky was so provoked by this and other instances, that on one occasion he told Buchanan he intended to send a telegram of support to the Sinn Fein; see Buchanan to FO, 30 October 1917, FO 371/3016/208214. [23:569] And see Bertie to FO, 14 September 1917, FO 371/2999/178873. [6:35] where Consul Bertie (Paris) warned against intervention of Ambassador, as the situation in Russia was "purely an internal affair."


21. Buchanan to FO, 24 October 1917, FO 371/2999/203607. [6:186] Buchanan to FO, 29 September 1917, FO 371/2999/189372. [6:147] where Buchanan informed his superior that Lenin had "declared that Civil War was preferable to war at the Front. . .[and for the] Soviet to take power into their own hands. . . .I rather doubt however whether Bolshevists will dare attempt a rising at Petrograd if they know the Government are prepared to put it down by force." And see also Buchanan to FO, 22 October 1917, FO 371/2999/204266. [6:191] where Buchanan warned of a Bolshevik coup attempt before the 2 November, but it "will be supressed as German advance on Northern Front has had useful effect."

22. Buchanan to FO, 5 November 1917, FO 371/2999/212589. [6:205-7] The same day the Foreign Office received news that Kerensky declared that Russia "was exhausted". Upon receipt of this news, a Foreign Office clerk noted not to take any "notice of it." The Morning Post, 5 November 1917, FO 371/3011/211459. [18:242]

23. Buchanan to FO, 7 November 1917, FO 371/2999/213313. [6:209] The Provisional Government was not the only institution to be scolded at this late date for failing to act. In HGN to FO, 26 October 1917, FO 371/3016/208373. [16:576] one civil servant admonished: "When separate peace comes the Foreign Office will be blamed by British public opinion. . . .The Foreign Office has acted as if we were so afraid of making a mistake that we did nothing." This is consistent with Warman, et. al. Introduction Endnote #35.

24. Buchanan to FO, 10 September 1917, FO 371/2999/178260. [6:8]

25. Lockhart to Cecil, 15 September 1917, FO 371/2999/180248. [6:71-81] And see Endnote #64 Chapter II


27. Ibid., [6:184] and Buchanan to FO, 10 September 1917, FO 371/2999/178875. [6:40] In this report Buchanan did argue that the moment was favourable to detach the Bolsheviks, and hence bribery was a viable tactic.

29. HGN to FO, 26 October 1917, FO 371/3016/208373. [23:576] A Foreign Office Minute pointed out that the above two views coincided and that Mr. Urquhart was a sensible man, whose observations "are intelligent and not reactionary." And see Gennadius to FO, 31 October 1917, FO 371/3016/210021. [23:582].


32. Buchanan to FO, 10 October 1917, FO 371/2999/197166. [6:179]

33. Barter to CIGS, 28 October 1917, FO 371/3017/209501. [23:14] and see Buchanan to FO, 3 November 1917, FO 371/2999/210769. [6:204]

34. Buchanan to FO, 18 September 1917, FO 371/2999/181056. [6:92-4]


36. Buchanan to Balfour, 1 November 1917, FO 371/3012/218506. [19:182] The General considered that the Poles in particular could be induced to defend their homeland.

37. Buchanan to Balfour, 31 October 1917, FO 371/3012/225901. [19:185]

38. Acting Military Attache to Buchanan, 29 September 1917, FO 371/3012/200673. [19:95] and see Buchanan to Balfour, 30 October 1917, FO 371/3012/226683. [19:200]


40. Spring-Rice to FO, 1 November 1917, FO 371/3016/209501. [23:47]

41. Buchanan to FO, 21 September 1917, FO 371/3012/184460. [19:70]

42. Buchanan to FO, 9 October 1917, FO 371/3016/196008. [23:129]

43. Buchanan to Balfour, 16 September 1917, FO 371/2997/187501. [4:375]

44. Buchanan to Balfour, 1 November 1917, FO 371/3012/218506. [19:182]


47. Chamberlin, Russian, p. 272.

48. Buchanan to FO, 30 October 1917, FO 371/3012/209349. [19:166]

49. Buchanan to Balfour, 22 & 31 October 1917, FO 371/3012/226679 & 225901.
50. Ibid., p. 186.

51. Stevens to Bagge, 16 October 1917, FO 371/2997/210733. [4:407] It is worthy of note that the workers' demands could be paralleled in nonrevolutionary trade union movements of other countries.

52. Buchanan to FO, 13 October 1917, FO 371/2999/197166. [6:177] and see Townley to FO, 8 September 1917, FO 371/2999/175892. [6:1]

53. Buchanan to Balfour, 1 November 1917, FO 371/2997/218507. [4:420] and Buchanan to FO, 6 November 1917, FO 371/2999/213355. [6:216]
CHAPTER VI

The Bolshevik Revolution - Year End

A. Political

During the night of 6/7 November the Bolsheviks, supported by the Petrograd Garrison, overthrew the Provisional Government. By morning Kerensky had already fled the capital hoping to rally troops from the front. That evening, at the opening of the Second Congress of the Soviets, two motions on peace and on the land were passed. The Decree on Peace called "for a just, democratic peace...without annexations...without the seizure of foreign lands and without indemnities," while the Decree on Land stated that "landlord property is abolished forthwith without compensation."¹ Less clear as to how far to go in socialising industry, the leaders of the new regime nationalised the banks and transport, but left most industries under the dual control of management and labour. An armistice agreement was formally signed on 15 December with Germany. Bolshevik victory was certain inasmuch as they had won the support of the soldiers, workers, and peasants by the promise of an immediate end to the war, worker control, and land. Many of the British representatives recognised this in their assessments. However, more emphasis was placed on the Bolsheviks' agitation and propaganda than on the fact that their message was what the masses wanted to hear. Instead of viewing the rise and success of the Bolsheviks as an indication of Russia's war weariness, the representatives in late 1917 viewed it as a cause rather than a consequence of Russia's turmoil. Perhaps this was rooted in the basic belief that, initially anyway, the bulk of the Russian population, and later segments of it, were for the war. The year had completed a full revolution and the problem yet consisted of finding the right authority to get the job done.

This belief influenced the way in which the British representatives responded to the Bolshevik coup. Historian Roger Petybridge has written that "In times of great trouble men's sense of balance leaves them, and they run to a strange kind of apocalyptic optimism."² Some examples of this trend are in the diplomatic reports. Coverage of the
revolution itself was meagre owing to a news 'black out'. Once reports began filtering through, the emphasis was on the revolution's meaning for the future of the Eastern front. The belief that if a Bolshevik coup occurred it would be a temporary thing and would be followed by counter-revolution was expressed in dispatches immediately after the revolution. This is hardly surprising considering the British had witnessed more than one uprising during the course of 1917. For example, on the day of the revolution, Buchanan wrote:

Even if they [the Provisional Government] make an attempt to arrest [the revolutionaries]...and fail and if they have to make way for a Bolshevist Government things cannot be worse than they are at present. Such a Government would not be of long duration and would before long provoke counter-revolution. As it is, [the] present Government is a Government only in name and unless [Kerensky] is prepared to throw in his lot...with those...who advocate firm...policy the sooner he goes the better as otherwise it will be impossible to keep Russia in the war.3

And on 10 November the Ambassador expressed the view that:

There seems now good reason to hope that so far as [the] Bolcheviks are concerned [the] situation will be reestablished by tomorrow. All the various groups belonging to [the] Committee of Public Safety are agreed that they have got to be put down. ...According to all accounts Kerensky will not return to power and Sav (?)Savenkoff) [sic] seems [the] most likely man to be able to form [a] strong Government. I do not know him personally but if all I hear about him is correct he will restore order with an iron hand.4

On the same day, General Knox submitted two reports which contained the news that:

[The] Cossacks have made it quite clear that they are ready to suppress [the] Bolchevists but will not fight for restoration of Kerensky [sic].

And,

It is feared that [the] Socialists are only using [the] Cossacks to suppress Bolshevists and will insist in the event of success on the establishment of a Government more democratic than the last. It is hoped that Savinkov backed by the Cossacks may insist on strong measures.5

Clearly, from these accounts the representatives were now prepared to throw their weight behind Savinkov, just as they had done previously with Prince Lvov, Kerensky, and Kornilov, in the hope that he would prove to be the one strong leader capable of turning the situation around.

Other reports gave further credence to the view that certain segments in the Russian nation could still be encouraged to effect some kind of action on the Eastern front.
Various organisations in Russia are appealing for funds to enable them to carry on hostilities irrespective of the attitude taken up by the mass of [the] Russian Army at the instigation of the present Bolshevist Government.6

Constantine Nabokoff, the Charge d' Affaires at the Russian Embassy in London, informed his British colleagues that the "Russian Army in the Caucusus has remained absolutely loyal to [the] Provisional Government", thus echoing Consul Stevens's report in Chapter V that this was a force which could be turned to.7 And Douglas in Kiev transmitted a telegram from the Citizens of the Town of Kiev expressing the hope that the Allies will not blame the whole of Russia for what is happening here at present. . . .We beg you to believe that the conclusion of a separate peace is regarded here as the grossest treachery to our Allies and if, in spite of our efforts, it is actually realized, we shall do all in our power to atone for it.8

In an interview with the mayor of Petrograd, Buchanan recounted that the former had begged me to remember that neither Petrograd nor Moscow represented Russia. [The] Provinces were practically free of Bolshevism [sic]. . . .It was even possible that [the] Bolcheviks might cease before the Constituent. . . .met as there was a decided revulsion of feeling among [the] troops of the Garrison in favour of more moderate parties. . . .It was necessary however to have patience and not force the pace.9

These accounts fit with the premise that the Bolsheviks were not the authentic voice of Russia, and that there were honourable, patriotic, and 'right-thinking' people in Russia, deserving of British support.

The views of the "President of the Provisional Council", one Mr. Avksentiev, were conveyed shortly after the revolution. The politician was quoted as saying:

that although [the] Bolshevists had succeeded in overthrowing the Government they would break down altogether as soon as they commenced to work the Government as they could never fulfill their promises to the people. They have been abandoned by all other Socialist parties in all Russia. . . .They were in fact completely isolated and. . . .they will not last many days.10

In his closing remarks of this report, the Ambassador did, however, caution that the situation was "still too obscure to justify any speculations as to [the] final issue." This message was reiterated in another report, where Buchanan, after recounting that the moderate socialists had assured him that "Russia would go on fighting to the end," resolved that "there is nothing to be done except to await events."11 The posture of
'watching' and 'waiting' throughout the entire year of 1917 demonstrates that the representatives in fact could do no more than react to events, rather than predict and stimulate policies based on those predictions.

Other reports were not so optimistic and hopeful in outlook, especially when prospects of an agreement between the "Extremists" and "Moderates" in Russia diminished and the formation of a "regular" government was rendered impossible. The remainder of the year witnessed speculation regarding what steps should be next taken, the continuance of remedial schemes, and words of resentment.

The Ambassador questioned his superior about how to deal with the Bolshevik Government: "To recognise?... or not?... or partly?" He suggested that the Duma be an intermediary between the two governments as this body was, in Buchanan's estimation, the only "legally constituted" one left in Russia. But he soon discounted this idea after considering that if in the event of a rupture occurring between the Bolsheviks and the "Duma", Britain would be cut off. Furthermore, the Bolsheviks would most likely consider the Duma an illegal body, and this dismissed the idea altogether. Still, Buchanan believed that the British Government could not afford to take up an "openly hostile attitude" and had to deal with the Bolsheviks one way or the other. The extreme example of the 'pessimistic' perspective for this period was authored by Buchanan, no longer the eternal optimist:

The situation is becoming more and more hopeless. Bolchevists are masters in the North and according to latest reports are regaining the upper hand at Moscow. Negotiations for the formation of [a] Coalitionist Ministry have come to a standstill owing to Bolchevists insisting on keeping...Trotski in the Government...Though Kaledin is still master in the South there seems to be no chance of his marching on the Bolchevist North. Bolchevists have more energy and organizing talent than any of the other parties and however new Government may be constituted real power will be in their hands. They will doubtless in their own interest continue their efforts to maintain order but with breakdown of all machinery of Government and with famine threatening they are bound to discredit themselves before many weeks are over...We shall however have to enter into unofficial relations with [them] as the only de facto authority and explain we must defer recognition until Constituent Assembly has come to decision. We are so entirely in the dark as to what is going on outside Petrograd that it is impossible to foretell turn of events.
Still, schemes for action were submitted. Balfour sent a telegram to Buchanan in late
November, explaining that the War Cabinet had considered the Russian situation so grave
that

all our efforts should be concentrated on trying to prevent Russia from making a
separate peace... They believe that the only hope of doing this is to strengthen
by every means in our power those elements who are genuinely friendly to the
Entente of whom the chief are Kaledin... and their group... If on the other
hand a Southern block could be formed consisting of the Caucasus, the
Cossacks, the Ukrainians, and the Roumanians it would probably be able to set
up a reasonably stable Government and would in any case through its command
of oil, coal, and corn control the whole of Russia... You are therefore authorised
to take whatever steps you regard as possible with a view to carrying out this
policy either directly or through such agents as you select. No regard should
be had to expense. 15

The policy of non-intervention and 'wait and see' was transformed into its opposite, a
highly interventionist one where money was no object. This passage also demonstrates the
level of desperation at this late date.

Other remedial schemes were prepared which were often unrealistic and convoluted,
but nevertheless indicated the level of desperation. One civilian in London submitted a
proposal to the Foreign Office which entailed the sending of a secret diplomatic mission to
Generals Kaledin and Kornilov "provided with ample funds which would" render a "speedy
overthrow of the Lenin-Trotsky regime." 16 Another scheme proposed sending "Jewish
elements to the Ukraine" to encourage the Jews there to maintain

a pro-Entente attitude and resisting German advances which are being made
with, a view to obtaining the commercial and economic advantages which would
result from a separate peace. 17

Spring-Rice confirmed "in the strictest secrecy," that certain Zionist leaders in America
had arranged with the State Department to

send over a certain number of Jewish emissaries of assured fidelity to Russia to
(?overthrow) [sic] Bolsheviks whose principal leaders come from New York. 18

On a frank and grim note, the Ambassador wrote in late November:

I... see no prospect of Bolshevists being turned out before... Assembly meets
nor is it at all certain that they will bow to majority vote of Constituent... should
they fail to secure majority in it. So long as they can count upon armed support
of workmen and soldiers they will remain masters of the situation. That they
will be able to maintain themselves in office indefinitely is unlikely but they
might hold out for two or three months. 19
This passage demonstrates that the Bolsheviks were viewed as a dedicated band of dishonest renegades.

On 1 December the Foreign Office took note of a dispatch from the Daily News' war correspondent, Arthur Ransome, the famous children's author. Cecil minuted that as Ransome had lived in Russia for five years, he "knows Russia well" and "is a reliable" source. Ransome considered that the future of the Eastern front was "as black as possible." He was quite convinced that "any public attempt" on the part of British officials to assist Kaledin would do the General "great harm." Ransome offered some interesting insights regarding the future of Russia. He believed that Russia would surely split up into quasi-states: the South would separate from the North of Russia; the Ukraine, Poland, Lithuania, and Courland (now Latvia) were examples the author cited which would secede. Ransome maintained that, while the Russians were religious, "the Church" had no political importance to the people, and he predicted that the Cadets and parties of the "right" had no future in Russia. Finally, he believed that a separate peace was unlikely, as "Russia would not allow Germany to draw fresh supplies, however they might settle on self-determination for Poland, Lithuania, and Courland."

Villiers came to grips with the real issue when he stated:

The Russian people do not wish for war any longer. Not only the Maximalists but all Parties who may succeed them must reckon with this feeling. It would be highly imprudent to restore military importance to Russia. ... Violent language [coming from abroad and] accusations of treason ... have no effect and result only in irritating pro-Ally Russian opinion.21

However adept these observations were, no account was identified which included the vision that the Bolsheviks would remain supreme. The belief, that the Bolsheviks would not last, was perhaps also based on the fact that this was a completely new historical phenomenon. Reason pointed to this being just another phase.

Commander Wedgewood echoed much of the above to Cecil in mid-December when the full impact of the Russo-German armistice was felt. Contemplating the consequences of a separate peace and future British policy he wrote
business Russians speak German; the Jews speak Yiddish, a bastard
German. Jews and Germans will do the organising and financing of Russia.
Russia in effect will become a German Colony, much as India is dependent on
us. It is therefore to our interest that Russia be as small as possible. Any bits
which can be induced to chip off should be encouraged to do so - Trans-Caucasia,
Ukraine, Don Cossacks, Finland, Turkestan, and above all Siberia. . . .the
country of the future, the extension of the American Far West. . . .The situation
is that of India in 1750.22

Although an interesting vision, Wedgewood’s reasoning reflected the widespread
Edwardian view of Jews as members of an international conspiracy expressed by Eustace
Percy and quoted in the first Chapter. Wedgewood concluded that it was vital to
strengthen any and all of the Bolsheviks’ opponents to continue the struggle “against our
enemy, whatever our feeling’s about Russia’s betrayal of the Allies.” •

The feeling of betrayal was most likely responsible for extreme criticisms and
derogatory comments that emerged during this period. Kerensky received his share of the
blame.

His vacillation had alienated all reliable elements of the population. When [a]
handful of Cossacks at [?] were about to attack and would without doubt have
driven [out a] crowd of Bolsheviks before them Kerensky dashed in between
[them] in his car to make his usual speech, which immediately resulted in
fraternisation.23

Consul Young in Archangel submitted a telegram on the last day of the year which
clearly conveyed his desperation.

. . .trains crammed with deserters from Northern Front. Ministries and
Bolshevik organizations filled with Jews while thousands more await German
occupation of Petrograd which is now clearly indicated by activities
of this bilingual element together with concentration in Petrograd of German
speaking Lettish regiments and German prisoners. Latter are being armed on
pretext of growing so called counter-revolution. All indications point to cunning
plot now rapidly maturing for unopposed German landing in vicinity of
Petrograd. Gradually increasing reign of terror with ultimate pogroms will
assure German occupation joyful welcome. . . .Petrograd [British]
representatives fail to appreciate real peril.24

Mr. Lindley put it most succinctly when describing members of the new government in
Russia: "Not much is known of most of these gentlemen except that they are
Israelites."25 Ariadna Tyrkova-Williams, wife of Hanbury-Williams, ardent admirer of
Miliukov, and opponent of Bolshevism, echoed and deepened this opinion.
Bolshevism's ideology is based upon the half-scientific hypothesis of the German Jew, Karl Marx. Thus Germany becomes the motherland of Bolshevism. After Lenin, the most influential Bolshevik is Trotsky Bronstein. Being ambitious, he knew it would be easier for him to obtain a prominent place among the Bolsheviks. among the Bolshevist wirepullers, few men imbued with the all-Russian culture and interests of the Russian people. In the Soviet Republic all the committees and commissaries filled with Jews.

And a "resident Englishman's view of the situation" in Russia was submitted by the Department of Information:

The whole directing element of the Sovyet consists of Jews and for the most part German Jews. Kerensky's private secretary is a Jew undoubtedly in the pay of the Bolshevist organisation. Kerensky himself was formerly in the pay of the International. Tereshchenko and other moderate elements are put in the Government to deceive the Allies.

Thus, by the end of 1917 the majority of reports contained blatantly prejudiced perspectives. German, Bolshevik, and Jewish deception and intrigue were seen everywhere, and Jews were blamed for conspiring simply as a means to their own ends.

The themes of desperation and anti-Semitism were no less apparent in the military and economic spheres.

B. The Military

Success of the Bolshevik revolution in some parts of the country was uncertain as centres of opposition had sprung up in the Cossack territories of the Don and the Kuban and in Kiev where power had been taken over by the Ukrainian Rada (Parliament). These and other sources of dissent, such as the small propertied class and intelligentsia, confirmed to the British representatives that there still existed in Russia 'loyal' and 'patriotic' elements. Reports concerning military matters in this period were scant. This was most likely due to the preoccupation with political events in the capital, as well as the fact that news from the Provinces was simply not getting through. A typical report read as follows:

...thirty or more [wagons] were to be sent to-day to [the] Northern Front which was actually starving. ...[the] situation at every front was very uncertain but six Siberian Corps and several regiments had expressed themselves entirely adverse to peace. Many Generals appeared to hold the opinion that all was not yet lost but...do not take a hopeful view as all depend[s] on...food and political
Conversely, in mid-November General Knox had a long conversation with the Russian Chief of Naval General Staff about the general situation in that country. "He was ashamed to say it" recalled the General, but it was perfectly obvious that the Russian forces would do no good in the future. If Russia continued in the war, Germany would take Petrograd in the Spring and large slices of littoral Russia. Germany would then extend her markets to England's disadvantage and Russia would not be in a position to pay interest on her debts.

Highly reminiscent of Major Neilson's report of January 1917, this line of thinking was now taken to the point where it was crucial that the Eastern front be kept alive in order to prevent German annexation of the Russian economy and the protection of British economic interests.

C. The Economy

On 14 November Buchanan wrote that "The news from the Provinces is so scanty and unreliable that Mr. Lindley has thought it better not to include them in his summary." Lindley in fact stated that Lenin's Agrarian Reform represented a formal declaration of civil war in every village of the country. The vagueness of the instructions as to the amount of land to be allowed to each cultivator is an invitation to endless disputes, and it is certain that the very large numbers of peasants who already possess more than the amount fixed will defend their property by force of arms and will call on their relatives in the trenches and depots to join them. It is, in fact, difficult to imagine more disastrous proposals.

Another writer was equally pessimistic:

In [the] existing state of chaos war is almost forgotten and nothing whatever is being done to ward off the danger of famine in large towns, to provide coal for railways and factories or supply [the] army at the front with food and warm clothing.

This excerpt clearly demonstrates that in spite of the desperate situation, the war's prosecution on the eastern front remained as a priority.

Anti-Semitism was frequently evident in reports on the economy. Blakey, in Kharkov, transmitted a lengthy report regarding the chaotic state of the industrial situation, and asserted that
The Jews, both workmen and Intelligencia, [sic] have taken a part out of all proportion to their numbers in the country, [and] have proved themselves to be clever agitators and efficient organisers, and have had an extraordinary influence over the masses of workmen, in spite of the traditional dislike of the Russian for the Jew. They have, in my opinion, largely used the workmen merely as a pawn on the political chessboard, and without having the interest of the workman as a class or as an individual principally before their mind.34

As before in 1917 the word 'Jew' was frequently used in a derogatory way to describe any perceived troublemaker. Naturally, the idea was reinforced when the agitator or anarchist was actually Jewish. It is not within the scope of this paper to attempt to ascertain how many Jews, in comparison to other nationals within the Russian empire, participated in the deepening of the revolution. Suffice it to say that no attempt was made to ascribe blame to, say Finns, Ukrainians, or Poles.

The British perspectives in this period were marked by grim acceptance of events mingled with a strong resolve to act. This resolution was motivated by the representative's fear of a German takeover of Russia and the fear that Russia would be incapable of repaying her substantial foreign debts. On the last day of the year, Lindley wrote: "Russia is still the greatest factor in the war. The chief asset in Germany's future is the Russian market."[35]

On the basis of these reports, Secretary of State Balfour drafted an elaborate scheme regarding Britain's future line of policy towards Russia. In short, the scheme was designed to imitate the "method of the Germans": to infiltrate the military, industrial and civilian spheres with pro-Allied agents.36 Balfour's report is filed in the Foreign Office Correspondence along with a confident and optimistic account of the situation in Russia by one Monsieur BasileSCO, a "rising and ambitious young Minister" in the Rumanian Parliament. BasileSCO asserted that the situation, bad as it was, could in fact be saved, and that the mass of the Russian population was for the war and a firm and resolute government. The remedy, concluded the Minister, was one of proper organisation - and it was up to the Allies to "take Russia boldly in hand, and to give her assistance."37 Once again the problem was one of better military and economic organisation and management.
which demanded a firm and resolute authority to get the job done. Thus hope of 'turning the situation around' never disappeared.

Resentment, indignation, and mistrust were evident in the British dispatches as well. A Foreign Office minute on one report containing Trotsky's famous statement alleging that England was the perpetrator of the war embodies the general British opinion for 1917: "We may regard Lenin and Trotsky as open enemies of the Allies."^38

Formal peace negotiations between Russia and the Central powers got underway at Brest-Litovsk on 22 December. Owing to his debating tactics, Trotsky, who headed the Russian delegation, delayed signature of the treaty for nine weeks in the hope that revolution would spread to Germany and Austria. Meanwhile, counter-revolutionary armies, the 'Whites', began organising resistance in December. The British eventually landed troops at Murmansk and seized Archangel in the following month, establishing a puppet government and conducting sporadic attacks against the Bolsheviks until October 1919. Owing to their lack of cohesion, the Bolsheviks' opposition contributed to Bolshevik success after nearly three years of civil war.

On 28 December Sir George Buchanan was withdrawn from Russia for reasons of health; F. O. Lindley remained as the Acting Head of the British representatives in that country. The British government sent Lockhart back to Russia in February 1918 for the purpose of maintaining unofficial contact with the Soviet leaders. Lockhart came to believe that one way of restoring resistance to Germany was for Britain to support the Soviet government. In this respect Lockhart truly appreciated the real meaning of expediency. Just because the new leaders of Russia were hostile and provocative, this did not mean that Britain could afford the luxury of having no dealings whatsoever with them. For in the course of one year, the world had become a very small and competitive place.
CHAPTER VI - ENDNOTES


2. Pethybridge, Spread, p. 171.

3. Buchanan to FO, 10 November 1917, FO 371/2999/218522. [6:277] The Ambassador's first report was submitted on 8 November when he advised his superiors that "There is nothing to be done except await events." See Buchanan to FO, 8 November 1917, FO 371/2999/214089. [6:221]

4. Buchanan to FO, 10 November 1917, FO 371/2999/218522. [6:277] and Katkov, February, p. 165. The Committee of Public Safety was a clandestine organisation and created around September 1915 when negotiations between The Progressive Bloc and the Government broke down. A kind of masonic institution and comprised purely of liberals and radicals, the Committee was to infiltrate every sector of national life with the ultimate aim of overthrowing the monarchy. Before March 1917 it worked to win this 'primary' battle. The three persons which this group identified as being the "nucleus of the headquarters for the struggle against the 'internal enemy'. . .were Lvov, Guchkov and Kerensky." Boris Savinkov was the leader of the Russian Socialist Revolutionary Party. Originally a terrorist, Savinkov was responsible for the assassination of Grand Duke Serge in 1905, the tsar's uncle and husband of the tsarina's sister.

5. Buchanan to FO, 6 November 1917, FO 371/2999/218566 & 218640. [6:283 & 292] Regarding the former, a Foreign Office clerk minuted "I expect that the sentiment expressed in the underlined sentence accounts for much of the delay in suppressing the Bolshevists. Many troops will not fight and restore Kerensky." Regarding the latter, a minute read "M. Savinkov seems to be the best hope at present. The French Government have heard that Savinkoff is a person on whom reliance can be placed to reestablish order. And see Buchanan to Balfour, 28 November 1917, FO 371/2997/226682. [4:442] where Lindley complained that had Kerensky made it back to Petrograd from Gatchina (where he was hiding) "the general apathy would have allowed him to gain control."

6. Buchanan to FO, 28 November 1917, FO 371/3019/228348. [24:185] to which a Foreign Office clerk replied "encourage whom you can to prevent [a] separate peace and they can have up to L20,000,000."

7. Nabokoff to Balfour, 2 December 1917, FO 371/3019/229217. [24:214] And the Charge d’Affaires urged that a loan of 300 m. be granted to prevent disruption of such a scheme, to which a Foreign Office clerk replied "Of course we will be happy to oblige."

8. Buchanan to Balfour, 11 December 1917, FO 371/3020/243516. [25:533] In his cover letter, Buchanan confirmed that he had received "a great number of messages from all parts of Russia of this kind."


10. Buchanan to FO, 9 November 1917, FO 371/2999/214457. [6:228] and see Bertie to FO, 12 November 1917, FO 371/2999/215971. [6:253]
11. Buchanan to FO, 8 November 1917, FO 371/2999/214089. [6:220] and see Buchanan to FO, 8 November 1917, FO 371/2999/214264. Both of these reports contained highly descriptive prose of the revolution.

12. Buchanan to FO, 21 November 1917, FO 371/2999/221684. [6:383] A Foreign Office clerk minuted "To give recognition at all to the Bolchevists [sic] would sure dishearten all who are in favour of a return to a more normal regime." While another clerk minuted "It is obvious that if the Bolsheviks remain in power, the foreign missions will be obliged to have some sort of relations with them. But so long as [everyone]. . .are on strike it is difficult to see how the machinery of Government can work at all. I can only suggest that contact should be maintained through the Counselors, and that the Heads of Missions should have no official relations with the Bolsheviks...The Russians as a whole will attach importance to the attitude of the Allied Embassies and if the latter can abstain from all intercourse with the Bolsheviks the effect will be considerable and opposition to the Extremist regime will be considerable. And see Buchanan to FO, 27 November 1917, FO 371/2999/225633. [6:432] for a similar discussion.

13. Ibid.


15. Balfour to Buchanan, 3 December 1917, FO 371/3018/232002. [23:165]

16. Bailey to Cecil, 17 December 1917, FO 371/3020/238124. [25:428] The Foreign Office minute on this report read: "We are practically doing what M. Bailey asks."

17. DMI to Hardinge, 21 December 1917, FO 371/3020/241481. [25:494]


20. Cecil to FO, 1 December 1917, FO 371/2999/228705. [6:475]

21. Villiers to FO, 30 November 1917, FO 371/3000/229689. [7:27]


24. Young to FO, 31 December 1917, FO 371/3017/245577. [23:457]

25. Buchanan to Balfour, 28 November 1917, FO 371/2997/226682. [4:443]


27. Department of Information to FO, 26 November 1917, FO 371/2999/225010. [6:428]


29. Buchanan to FO, 26 November 1917, FO 371/2999/224855. [6:426]
30. Buchanan to FO, 17 November 1917, FO 371/3017/219499. [22:385] Knox also believed that Germany would never make a separate peace with Russia as any attempt to demobilise the Russian Army would result in laying waste to Western Russia and hence nothing would be left for Germany; while another reason the General cited was that the German General Staff feared the Russian Socialists’ propaganda infiltrating their own forces. And see War Cabinet to FO, 31 December 1917, FO 371/3018/246085. [23:424]

31. Buchanan to Balfour, 14 November 1917, FO 371/2997/226682. [4:439]

32. Ibid., p. 443.


34. Buchanan to Balfour, 27 November 1917, FO 371/3015/225904. [22:250]

35. Steed to FO, 31 December 1917, FO 371/3018/246085. [24:424]

36. Balfour to Department of Information, 7 December 1917, FO 371/3000/228812. [7:486-7]

37. Ibid., p. 490.

38. Buchanan to FO, 24 November 1917, FO 371/3011/224350. [18:337]

39. Kennan, Russia, p. 56.
CONCLUSION

This study has not analysed the extent to which the representatives’ reports influenced British foreign policy. It has analysed some aspects of the Foreign Office correspondence as a primary body of literature in its own right. Clearly the documents are valuable because the British representatives witnessed at close hand and reported upon one of the most important events of this century. They reported what they considered important, or were expected to report to their superiors. These documents reflect what they saw, heard and read, but also their own ethos and attitudes.

This relatively small number of men who created a picture of Russia in 1917 all came from a common cultural ethos. These were upper class, highly educated, extremely articulate, and well travelled men who shared certain set ideas. Characteristics such as social solidarity, political continuity and cultural unity, and Edwardian standards of honour, patriotism, integrity, and a strict rule of conduct, influenced their perspectives and interpretations. One example which comes to the fore in this context is the way in which they viewed leadership, which is epitomised in the maxim, ’great men achieve great things.’ The rise to power of Lloyd George in December 1916, as a result of public confidence in his ability as the one strong leader capable of getting the job done, exemplifies this. Similarly, it can be imagined that the one strong leader these representatives felt Russia required was someone in the strain of an Alexander Nevsky or a Peter the Great.

In addition to this ethos, it appears that their status and geographical location influenced their perspectives. The salaried and therefore career diplomats in Russia tended to reside in the major centres disturbed by political unrest. These representatives were also influenced by their sources of information, who most often were Russian liberal politicians out of touch with the real issues that plagued Russia. Their dialogues with these Russian leaders were Britain’s only means of persuasion, which proved futile in light of the turn of events. The representatives were therefore frustrated due to their inability
to have an impact on an uncontrollable situation, even though they were closest to the action. By the same token, these representatives were also furthest from the disintegrating fronts and the peasant and general economic unrest in the interior of Russia. In this respect it must be assumed that their political analyses could be very accurate, but their analyses of the more remote regions would depend heavily on the reports from the unsalaried representatives. Sometimes they had no more than rumour, which had to be mentioned. All of the reportage, whether of solid information or unsubstantiated rumour was filtered through Ambassador Buchanan.

The unsalaried representatives were entrepreneurs and businessmen who, although having their country’s interests as a priority, had their own interests to protect. Their sources of information were Russian and English business colleagues as well as employees, who may well have had certain prejudices similar to their own. Hearsay and rumour played a larger part in their reports. Yet their analyses of the events and issues in the economic sphere were often very accurate and reflected the desperate and chaotic existing conditions, as well as the reality of prejudice.

The military representatives in Russia were typical military men in that they abided by and expected certain standards and rules of conduct, and had little patience with disorder and disobedience. Their sources of information were their Russian colleagues who similarly demonstrated a matter-of-fact approach to war and expressed exasperation and frustration with the progressing state of affairs. Hence, their analyses of the military situation could be accurate, at least in reflecting one side of a very complicated story.

Some representatives outside of Russia also contributed to the overall picture watching the movements of 'pro-Germans', Bolsheviks, and Jews alike.

All of these representatives conveyed the views and opinions of the 'establishment' in Russia, as well as represented certain segments' grievances. However, the disparity between those portrayed in a sympathetic or objective manner, and those portrayed in a harsh or prejudiced manner can only be explained here in terms of the status, source of
information, location and the Edwardian mentality of the writer. Of course the pressure of the war effort and frustration over the general turmoil in Russia, as well as the threat posed by pro-German and Bolshevik propaganda played a part in the formation of their perspectives too. Often, some representatives confused cunning with treachery, patience with indolence, expediency with corruption, weariness with laziness, centuries old grievances with lack of patriotism, and the success of Bolshevism as the cause rather than a symptom of the overall turmoil. The wholesale anti-Semitism identified in many of the reports can only be explained by the historical context in which it appeared.

Conversely, many representatives demonstrated a remarkable grasp of the situation in Russia in 1917, given the quick pace of the turn of events and complex issues behind them. Many of the objective accounts square nicely with recent histories. Vice-Consul Lockhart in particular demonstrated great insight.

The components which motivated perspectives contributed to the overall portrait of the Russians. Certain characteristics were ascribed to the Russians. These included the possession of an inferior or immature political culture and the ability to achieve almost super human feats. The representatives often spoke of the Russians as almost childlike in nature, and in need of firm governing. Sometimes, perhaps out of frustration, the representatives spoke of the Russians in a harsh manner. Sometimes, perhaps out of exasperation, a representative spoke harshly to his Russian colleague.

The chronological format demonstrates a progression of perspectives. The political, military, and economic divisions compartmentalise the range of topics the representatives considered crucial to Russia’s overall war performance. The periods identified in the previous chapters feature peaks of hopeful optimism, and troughs of disappointment and pessimism. The widespread lack of confidence in the tsar’s ability to manage the entire war effort determined the extent to which the Provisional Government was favourably received. Other than a few gentle words of persuasion and support, the representatives generally advocated a policy of 'wait and see'.
The March revolution was well received and the British anticipated that this new democratic government would rejuvenate the war effort. However, new democratic freedoms, such as the return of political exiles, Order #1, land reform, and worker's rights, were considered by most observers too democratic under the circumstances. The squabble between Miliukov and the Soviet highlighted the problem of power and authority, and representatives became disappointed with the tsar's successors. However, no action was taken other than a few words of coaxing support. It was during this period that historian Keith Neilson contends that British officials lost confidence in the Provisional Government's ability to carry on the war.

The fall of Miliukov and the emergence of Kerensky as the one strong leader signaled a peak in optimism from the representatives, who hoped that positive results would be forthcoming. These expectations were gradually replaced by a growing impatience when the first coalition government failed to produce immediate and positive results in the military, industrial, and rural arenas, as well as the supply network. Despite a mixed review of sympathy for, and yet disappointment in Kerensky, as long as the July Offensive held the promise of restoring patriotism and enthusiasm in the war effort, the representatives were generally prepared to 'watch and wait'.

Initial Russian reports of military success at the front sparked a renewed optimism in both the political and military spheres. As the truth became apparent, coupled with the government's failure to suppress the Bolsheviks, a pall of pessimism settled again. Their sense of urgency was apparent when representatives spoke of catastrophe for the first time. Impatience turned into exasperation and gentle words of persuasion turned into badgering. Bolshevik propaganda, soldier disaffection, and labour and peasant unrest were increasingly blamed for Russia's ills. It was at this point that historian L. P. Morris contends that British officials lost confidence in the Provisional Government's capability of carrying on the war. The willingness or readiness with which many British representatives were prepared to throw their support with Kornilov supports Morris'
argument. However, support for Kornilov was not unanimous. The Ambassador and several others were against going with any faction for fear civil war would result.

The Kornilov incident stimulated optimism because many considered him to be the 'last chance' of finding the one strong leader capable of turning the situation around. When Kornilov's failure, as well as its adverse repercussions in the political, military, and economic spheres, were realised, exasperation turned into desperation. This signaled a change in the policy advocated by the representatives, from one of 'watch and wait' to one of intervention, whether verbal or physical. The complete breakdown of order in the interior of Russia stimulated an all time high in prejudiced reportage.

Because they thought the Bolsheviks were a temporary phenomenon and would soon disappear, a short-lived phase of hopeful optimism emerged in the final period of 1917, owing to the fact that common sense suggested that all 'right' thinking people would not tolerate such an evil and contemptible regime. While resentment and indignation were evident in many reports, grim determination to act closed the year out. Two lines of general policy were advocated: the first was that the Russians should not be alienated, nor those groups who might one day, and presumably in the near future, re-group and form another Provisional Government. The second was to persuade all those groups to continue the war against the Germans, or to allow others, whether American, Japanese, or British fight for them. Thus, the kaleidoscopic turn of political events, the progressive and sporadic disintegration of the Russian army, the disorganisation of the supply system, and industrial and rural turmoil, contributed to the variety and complexity of British perspectives.

The focus of this study has been on the variety and complexity of the British perspectives contained within the Foreign Office notes. Although the analyses of official foreign policy by both Neilson and Morris are supported by some parts of the documentation, other parts are quite contrary to their interpretations. In the final analysis, the terms of British foreign policy dictated that no one could give up and no one
could lose hope because winning the war remained their goal. Any deviation from this, such as the supply or withholding of arms for guarantees of one kind or another, or refusals to send Socialist delegates to participate in the Stockholm Conference, were political and diplomatic maneuvers not intended to achieve the immediate goal of winning the war, but rather, to test the political resolve in Russia, with a possible view to future manipulation. In light of the complexity and variety of the components of their various perspectives, this study demonstrates that the British representatives reflected the complex as well as the simple views with which men in that day explained other countries, other peoples, and history itself.
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