

as a social occasion. On the other hand, table manners were strictly enforced among working-class families and among families with large numbers of children.

The one exception to this style of socialization occurred among the Shetland Islanders. There none of the rigid time orientation generally characteristic of Edwardian childrearing was present. Cooperation and integration of work and leisure patterns were general features of community and family life. Children participated in evening, leisure-time activities with adults. Children and women worked in crafts and on the subsistence farms, while the men fished. The lack of rigid role division in work afforded both women and children respected roles in the family. As a consequence, Thompson argued, women were able to mitigate the more brutal aspects of the patriarchal, asymmetrical family life visible in other parts of England. Finally, while Thea Thompson identified the economic role as the most important causal factor here, she acknowledged that religion, community organization, and long-standing cultural traditions may have contributed to the distinctive social life of the Shetland Islanders as well.

Unfortunately, under the confining limitations of such professional meetings, the Thompsons could only begin to describe the impressive scope and complexity of their project. Thea Thompson's presentation, however, offered insight into their work's tremendous potential value to historians of Edwardian Britain.

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THE RUSSIAN MASSES IN THE OCTOBER REVOLUTION 1917

(Participants – Chairman: Paul Avrich, Queens College, City University of New York; *Petrograd* Alexander Rabinowitch, Indiana University; *The Provinces* John Keep, University of Toronto; *The Armies at the Front* Allan Wildman, State University of New York, Stony Brook; Comment: Stephen Cohen, Princeton University.)

As the title indicates the central subject of this panel at the recent AHA meeting was to explore the role of three sectors of the Russian "masses" in the Bolshevik victory of October 1917. It should of course be noted that the readers limited their remarks to the Russian population and did not deal specifically with minority nationalities of the empire. Professors Rabinowitch and Wildman expressed the revisionist view that the Bolshevik program, if not their ideology was heartily supported by Russians in Petrograd and the army, while Professor Keep maintained the traditional Western position that identification with the Bolsheviks, at least among the Russian peasants in the countryside, was minimal.

Rabinowitch's paper developed the theme introduced in his monograph on the July Days, *Prelude to Revolution* which he is continuing in a forthcoming study, *The Bolsheviks Come to Power*, dealing with the revolution from July to October. Tracing the events of the summer and fall of 1917, he sees the Bolshevik success due to the growing mass dissatisfaction with the reaction of the provisional government and other important political institutions in Russia. The Bolsheviks, in part because of their position outside of the government, could more readily appeal to this dissatisfaction than

other parties. The Bolsheviks, in contrast to the traditional view that they constituted a highly rigid extremist party, were flexible enough and represented enough varying points of view to take advantage of a rapidly changing situation. Rabinowitch in his conclusion wonders if indeed this flexibility rather than their supposed rigidity and discipline is not the key to their success. In other words, as Kerensky, Kornilov, and other prominent figures of the revolution moved to the right, the masses in Petrograd saw the Bolsheviks as the saviors of the Revolution. For this reason also their seizure of power came through Soviet rather than party institutions.

With a somewhat contrasting viewpoint, Keep warns against the danger of portraying the masses in economic class terms, as is done by Soviet historians, and of assuming that the peasants viewed themselves in this way. Differences among the provincial masses even excluding nationality, could be found in age, religion, sex, and most importantly in geographical region. Keep stresses especially the latter, pointing out in particular that the peasants' conceptions of property differed from region to region. He concludes that the only general statement that can be made is that the peasants wanted a share of the power.

Wildman like Rabinowitch sees the masses, in this case at the front, as adopting the Bolshevik program when they perceived the Mensheviks and Social Revolutionaries as moving toward the right. The latter parties controlled the soldier committees at the start of the Revolution in February. The soldier masses for their part would have continued to support these groups as long as they did not "betray" the principles of the revolution, but Kerensky's continuance of the war and his attempts to restore army discipline brought about a reaction from below. The government said that the soldiers were "going Bolshevik," but the soldiers themselves, while in general adopting the Bolshevik program, did not adopt the Bolshevik ideology. In fact, in a number of cases they conscientiously differentiated between the two.

Professor Cohen in his comment agreed with the viewpoints of Rabinowitch and Wildman that the Bolsheviks controlled the main thrust of the revolution after late summer. He disagreed with Keep that peasant support for the Bolshevik program in the provinces could be discounted and wondered if Keep was correct in assuming that the Marxists believed that the peasants divided along class lines. Cohen summarized his remarks in two conclusions. First workers, peasants, and soldiers were united by their desire to control localized institutions and brought about the destruction of those institutions when they did not respond to their aspirations. By this he had chiefly in mind the examples of the provisional government in Petrograd, the army committees at the front, and the local governments and estates in the provinces. Secondly, he thought the real seat of power in Russia in October 1917 was not Petrograd but scattered in localities throughout the country. Hence the Civil War, rather than the October Revolution, was the turning point of Bolshevik success.

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