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Zinoviev's Revolutionary Tactics in 1917

In October 1917 the Bolsheviks under Lenin's leadership succeeded in gaining control over the chaotic city of Petrograd. Undoubtedly it was a great triumph for what early in 1917 had been a small, isolated group whose leaders were in exile either abroad or in Siberia. In analyzing the October Revolution, both participants and historians have given major credit to Lenin's brilliant planning and the disciplined, centralized party he had insisted upon as early as 1902. Thus those who opposed Lenin in October 1917 have usually been branded as weak and indecisive with no positive program and no understanding of the real condition of Russia in 1917. As is often the case with the defeated, the opposition's program has received much criticism but little study. One of the revolutionaries so treated is Grigorii Zinoviev.

From 1908 until the February Revolution, Lenin's most loyal supporter and most frequent companion (aside from his wife) was Zinoviev. They had shared the burdens of revolutionaries in exile, at times even living in the same apartment.[1] Learning of the overthrow of the tsarist regime, they managed to traverse Germany on the famous "sealed" train, arriving in Petrograd in early April. Once there they immediately became the two most prominent leaders of the Bolshevik party.[2] Despite their closeness, however, at the crucial moment in the history of Bolshevism, the October Revolution, the divisions between the two men became so profound that Lenin denounced Zinoviev as a strikebreaker and a deserter. Zinoviev, in turn, would charge Lenin with recklessly endangering the life of the party. Their previous close association only makes more perplexing the causes and significance of this cleavage.

Essentially, historians have offered two alternative explanations for Zinoviev's behavior. One explanation, widely held outside of the Soviet Union, is that a prominent feature of Zinoviev's character, his lack of courage in the face of danger, manifested itself in October. In fact, among the lesser lights in the Bolshevik firmament, Zinoviev stands out in Western historical writing as the most conspicuous revolutionary failure. Dubbed "an ass of European notoriety," "a gramophone for Lenin's records," and "merely an agitator and

1. Z. I. Lilina, comp., *Velikii uchitel': Leninskaia khrestomatiia* (Leningrad, 1924), p. 75. Lilina (1882–1929) was Zinoviev's wife. All dates are Old Style.

2. Zinoviev's closeness to Lenin prior to 1917 contrasts markedly with Stalin's position. As late as 1915 Lenin did not even know Stalin's real name. V. I. Lenin, *Polnoe sobranie sochinenii*, 5th ed., 55 vols. (Moscow, 1958–65), 49:101, 161.

neither a theoretician nor a revolutionary strategist,"[3] he is to the early revolutionary period what Beria became for the late Stalinist period.

The most frequent charge against Zinoviev, however, is that he was a perennial coward. The events in Petrograd in the fall of 1917, when Zinoviev and Lev Kamenev, his lifelong friend and fellow Bolshevik, opposed Lenin's call for armed revolution, have provided the clinching evidence for most historians that this image of Zinoviev is correct. In fact, Professor Leonard Schapiro has singled out Zinoviev, remarking that his attitude in October was particularly puzzling, since "there had been nothing to indicate that he shared the doubts of orthodox Marxists like Kamenev and Nogin." The usual explanation for this allegedly puzzling behavior is, of course, that Zinoviev was a coward. Professor Adam Ulam has argued that in October 1917 behind Zinoviev's and Kamenev's "politically sophisticated arguments lurked fear: the fear of responsibility, physical fear for their lives." Isaac Deutscher, following Trotsky, has asserted that Zinoviev's will "was weak, vacillating, and even cowardly."[4] Illustrative of the evidence supporting Zinoviev's general pusillanimity is Trotsky's recollection many years after the event. When discussing General Iudenich's assault on Petrograd, he recalled that Sverdlov had told him, "Zinoviev is panic itself."[5]

The second explanation of Zinoviev's position in 1917, confined mainly to the USSR, is that Zinoviev was a lifelong traitor to the revolution and to Leninism. Thus a recent history of Lenin and the war years in exile, when it mentions Zinoviev at all, chronicles his deviations from the Leninist position.[6] In addition, the short biography of Zinoviev in the index of the fifth edition of Lenin's collected works stresses Zinoviev's deviation from the Leninist line during and after the October Revolution.[7] The Soviet dissident historian, Roy A. Medvedev, has bluntly called on his fellow historians to end such shallow and distorted explanations: "It is ridiculous for Soviet historical scholarship . . . to pretend . . . that Trotsky, Bukharin, Rykov, Tomskii, Pia-

3. See *New York Times*, Feb. 3, 1924, sec. IV, p. 8; Lev Trotsky, *The History of the Russian Revolution*, 3 vols. in 1 (Ann Arbor, 1957), 1:157; E. H. Carr, *Socialism in One Country*, Penguin ed. (Baltimore, 1970), 1:172.

4. Leonard Schapiro, *The Origin of the Communist Autocracy*, Praeger ed. (New York, 1965), p. 60; Adam Ulam, *The Bolsheviks: The Intellectual and Political History of the Triumph of Communism in Russia* (New York, 1965), p. 365; Isaac Deutscher, *The Prophet Unarmed, Trotsky: 1921–1929* (New York, 1965), pp. 77–78; Trotsky, *History of the Russian Revolution*, 2:45–47.

5. Lev Trotsky, *My Life* (New York, 1960), p. 427. Trotsky's statement here is extremely misleading at best. In the context in which it is set it is as though Sverdlov said this in October 1919. Sverdlov, however, had died several months before the assault on Petrograd.

6. See Ia. G. Temkin, *Lenin i mezhdunarodnaia sotsial-demokratiia, 1914–1917* (Moscow, 1968), pp. 383, 385, 427, 443, 447.

7. Lenin, *PSS*, 34:540.

takov, Kamenev, and Zinoviev were not outstanding leaders; that they never worked under Lenin. . . . It is ridiculous that their names are not found even in encyclopedias and handbooks published today, or, if they must . . . , they are followed by a careful list of only sins, blunders, and mistakes."[8]

Neither of these two explanations corresponds to the reality of the events of 1917 or to the position of the Bolshevik opposition to Lenin. Professor Robert V. Daniels has provided convincing evidence for questioning portrayals of the Bolshevik revolution as a well-planned insurrection and has revealed, on the contrary, a party—Trotsky included—willing to vote for Lenin's resolutions but unwilling to act on them. Daniels's conclusions have striking implications for the opposition to Lenin: "The stark truth about the Bolshevik revolution is that it succeeded against incredible odds in defiance of any rational calculation that could have been made in the fall of 1917." Moreover, "certainly the Bolshevik party had a better overall chance for survival and a future political role if it waited and compromised, as Zinoviev and Kamenev wished."[9] These conclusions and the evidence that supports them put the position of Zinoviev and Kamenev in a new perspective. Rather than displaying cowardice, they in fact demonstrated the courage to face Lenin's ragings directly, while others shrank from articulating their rational and well-founded doubts out of fear of Lenin's wrath and retribution. By opposing Lenin in October, Zinoviev did not alter his position, give up his principles, or yield precipitously to fear; in fact, he maintained a steady course, much to Lenin's dismay. He cautiously and consistently argued that a successful socialist revolution demanded mass support, organized and controlled by the vanguard. These arguments found many more adherents in the days leading up to and immediately after the October Revolution than is commonly recognized.

In view of the general, damning image of Zinoviev, it should be noted that Zinoviev could and did manifest courage and leadership during his career. First, one might ask: What kind of person, much less a Jew in anti-Semitic Russia, joins and actively participates in revolutionary movements as Zinoviev did, starting before the age of seventeen?[10] More directly relevant to Zinoviev's courage is Professor Paul Avrich's conclusion from his study of the Kronstadt Uprising in 1921. In this crisis, taking place in and near the city over which he had charge, Zinoviev responded firmly, efficiently, and sensibly: "For all his reputation as a craven, liable to panic when danger

8. Roy A. Medvedev, *Let History Judge: The Origins and Consequences of Stalinism*, trans. Colleen Taylor (New York, 1971), pp. 185–86.

9. Robert V. Daniels, *Red October: The Bolshevik Revolution of 1917* (New York, 1967), pp. 215–16.

10. *Deiateli Soiuza Sovetskikh Sotsialisticheskikh Respublik i Oktiabr'skoi Revoliutsii* (n.p., 1927?), pt. 1, cols. 143–49, provides the best information on Zinoviev's early life.

threatened, Zinoviev appears to have acted with remarkable presence of mind to quell the disorders in his midst."[11] Moreover, the contemporary historical evidence for October 1919 provides substantial evidence for rejecting Trotsky's charge that during Iudenich's assault he found Zinoviev "on the sofa."[12] For a man incapacitated by fear, Zinoviev was amazingly active in organizing the defense of the city.[13] Finally, as will become apparent, Zinoviev's record in 1917 prior to October provides further illustration of his boldness on behalf of Bolshevism. Thus if the stereotype is set aside and Zinoviev's words and deeds are scrutinized, his activities in 1917 gain new meaning and add to our general comprehension of the revolution.

When Zinoviev returned to Russia in April 1917, his political position was by all standards radical. Although he did not immediately leap to support Lenin's April Theses, within a week of his return to Russia he was proclaiming the virtue of the transfer of power to the Soviets, whatever their apparent weaknesses.[14] A forceful advocate of radical change, intolerant of compromise with the moderates, he condemned the Provisional Government as an organ of the bourgeoisie, as an enemy and attacker of revolutionary democracy, as an opponent of land distribution to the peasantry, and as the guardian and continuer of the plundering secret treaties of "Nicholas the Bloody." The only real answer was to transfer all governmental power to the Soviets.[15]

Zinoviev's position on the land question was also far more radical than that of the Provisional Government. He told the peasants that their rulers did not want to give them land and were offering instead new redemption payments. His advice to the peasants was simple and straightforward: "You must understand that you have *to seize* the land. . . . *Seize it in an organized manner, without anarchy—under the control of the peasant Soviets*" (Zinoviev's emphasis).[16]

Though even the Petrograd Bolsheviks before Lenin and Zinoviev's return to the capital had hesitated about what attitude to adopt toward the war, Zinoviev had no such doubts.[17] He denounced all arguments contending that the Russian people had to continue the war—now against German monarchism. For Zinoviev, a convinced revolutionary internationalist, it was still an imperialist war in which the great powers in effect said to one another, "You

11. Paul Avrich, *Kronstadt, 1921* (Princeton, 1970), pp. 50, 142.

12. Trotsky, *My Life*, p. 427.

13. See, for example, Zinoviev's realistic but calm speech to the Petrograd Soviet on the day when the attack on Petrograd was at its peak, October 19, in *Bor'ba za Petrograd: 15 oktiabria–6 noiabria 1919 goda* (Petrograd, 1920), pp. 200–209.

14. Grigorii E. Zinov'ev, *Sochineniia*, 16 vols. (incomplete) (Leningrad, 1923–29), 7(1):63–65, 34–37.

15. Ibid., pp. 94–95, 43–46.

16. Ibid., 7(2):66.

17. Ibid., 7(1):34–37, 96–99.

rob on one side of the street, while I rob on the other." "Defensism," something Zinoviev called the "patriotism of fools," was politically indefensible: "People think that they are defending themselves, their country, their class, but in fact they are defending the purse of the capitalists. . . . When the capitalist tells the worker: 'You are a true patriot,' he is thinking to himself: You are a true ass. You carry water for me and think that you are defending yourself and your fatherland." His antiwar stance was radical enough to include full support for fraternization between German and Russian soldiers, as well as the election of all army officers.[18] Nevertheless, despite his attacks on the Provisional Government and the parties supporting it, he never hinted at solitary Bolshevik control of a Soviet Russia nor at an independent Bolshevik seizure of power. Herein lay what proved to be a crucial difference between Lenin and Zinoviev.

In the months between May and October 1917 Zinoviev had many opportunities to refine his position and thoughts on the organization and structure of the revolution. The first important occasion was the confrontation between the First Congress of Soviets and the Bolsheviks over a pro-Bolshevik demonstration scheduled for June 10. The demonstration itself had its origins not in the cautious Bolshevik Central Committee but among military units sympathetic to the Bolsheviks and anarchists.[19] On June 6, in opposition to Lenin and Stalin, Zinoviev, along with Kamenev and Nogin, spoke against a demonstration. As he would in October, so now Zinoviev warned that the Bolsheviks were poorly organized and lacked strength, that the turning point was only beginning, and that therefore it was foolish to risk the life of the party.[20]

Although three days later he gave way to the overwhelming mood and voted with the majority in approving plans to go ahead with the demonstration,[21] Zinoviev obviously voted with his hand but not his heart. Thus, when he learned that the Bolshevik caucus in the Congress of Soviets was unanimously opposed to the demonstration, he yielded to them. At this point, operating under an ultimatum from the Soviets and forced to make a decision, Zinoviev cast the decisive vote against the demonstration in the belief that the party and the workers had to be restrained, since their strength was not yet sufficient to defy the Central Executive Committee (CEC) of the Petro-

18. Ibid., pp. 31–32, 131; 7(2):44–45, 50–51, 88; 7(1):131–32.

19. See Alexander Rabinowitch, *Prelude to Revolution: The Petrograd Bolsheviks and the July 1917 Uprising* (Bloomington, 1968), for a thorough and perceptive discussion of the June demonstration and the July Days.

20. *Revoliutsionnoe dvizhenie v Rossii v mae–iiune 1917 g.: Iiun'skaia demonstratsiia* (Moscow, 1959), pp. 485–88. Zinoviev's comments are paraphrased and abbreviated but clearly indicate his opposition to the demonstration.

21. Rabinowitch, *Prelude to Revolution*, pp. 72–74; Zinov'ev, *Sochineniia*, 7(1): 143–44.

grad Soviet or carry with them the Congress of Soviets.[22] After years of working to build the Bolshevik party, Zinoviev could not endorse a paroxysm of violence just to relieve frustration. Instead, he warned that the enemies of the revolution would use the first shot from Bolshevik ranks to crush them. It was the Bolsheviks' duty, consequently, to prevent all provocations.[23] Thus, already in June Zinoviev's analysis of Bolshevik strength was more cautious than Lenin's. In fact, Raphael Abramovitch, a prominent Menshevik, has recalled that when Lenin told the First Congress of Soviets that the Bolsheviks were prepared to rule alone, contrary to Tseretelli's assertion, "even some of the Bolsheviks present (Kamenev, Zinoviev, Nogin, and their friends) seemed embarrassed."[24]

Although his speeches were already receiving tumultuous approval from great throngs of people by mid-April,[25] Zinoviev, like most of the other Bolshevik leaders, was keenly aware of the opposition's strength. Clearly in June 1917 they stood more for caution—for building party strength than for any "imprudent" effort to seize power.

If the developments surrounding the proposed demonstration of June 10 had indicated that Zinoviev remained cautious about Bolshevik strength and prospects, the July Days only reinforced that caution. While Bolshevik agitation contributed to the unrest that manifested itself in the July Days, the crisis was a surprise to the Bolshevik Central Committee (Lenin was absent from Petrograd). Once the movement began to accelerate, however, Zinoviev was one of the leading figures trying to halt it as quickly and harmlessly as possible. He had first learned of the demonstration scheduled for the next day, he later wrote, at three in the afternoon of July 3 at a meeting of the united bureaus of the Executive Committees of the Soviets: "We [Zinoviev and Kamenev] announced to the meeting that our organization was against the demonstration and that we, for our part, would take measures in order that it not be permitted."[26] They then sent *Pravda* a short appeal against any kind of action, and only after it became clear that there was no way to stop the demonstration did they remove that appeal from the press. Not until 11:30 that night did Zinoviev seek and receive a Central Committee decision to take part in the demonstrations. It was a telephone call from Fedor Raskolnikov, a leader of

22. Zinov'ev, *Sochineniia*, 7(1):144–47. The decision was made by five members of the Central Committee: Zinoviev, Kamenev, and Nogin for the resolution that ended the demonstration, and Lenin and Sverdlov abstaining. Lenin, however, apparently backed away from the confrontation as well. See Rabinowitch, *Prelude to Revolution*, p. 77.

23. Zinov'ev, *Sochineniia*, 7(1):143–44.

24. Raphael R. Abramovitch, *The Soviet Revolution, 1917–1939* (New York, 1962), pp. 53–54.

25. Zinov'ev, *Sochineniia*, 7(2):298–99.

26. Ibid., 7(1):202–5.

the radical sailors, that forced his hand. Raskolnikov informed him that the choice was no longer between a demonstration and no demonstration but only whether it would take place with or without Bolshevik guidance. Faced with the inevitability of the protest Zinoviev sought to turn it into a "peaceful and organized armed demonstration"—armed only because there was no way to disarm it. And, as Raskolnikov recalled in 1923, Zinoviev stressed the words "peaceful demonstration" and demanded that this order be carried out.[27] Although Zinoviev could still agitate for the slogan "All Power to the Soviets," his main preoccupation was not fomenting a revolution but a desperate concern to save the Bolshevik party from disaster. As he later stressed, he felt the Bolsheviks had lacked the organizational strength to take to the streets. What he feared was that the demonstration would be used by the "counterrevolutionaries" to drown the workers' movement in blood.[28]

Zinoviev's performance during the July Days was little short of spectacular. Even Trotsky admitted that during the July Days Zinoviev was "extraordinarily active, ingenious, and strong," that he found for the thoughts and feelings of the masses a "somewhat prolix, perhaps, but very gripping expression," and that at party meetings Zinoviev could "conquer, convince, bewitch." He was able even "in a hostile meeting . . . to give the most extreme and explosive thoughts an enveloping and insinuating form, making his way into the minds of those who had met him with preconceived distrust."[29]

Shortly after the July Days, Zinoviev himself recalled with satisfaction two speeches he had given during those tumultuous days. One was delivered to a regiment that had been demanding Kerensky's appearance before them. Refusing anything less, they declined to allow anyone else to speak to them until someone with a loud voice announced that Zinoviev wanted to address them. The regiment agreed, expressing its consent by applause. The other speech was one he gave on July 4 to the Putilov workers, milling around outside the Tauride Palace, where the Soviet met. They had sent a delegation to the Central Executive Committee asking for Iraklii Tseretelli, the Menshevik. Tseretelli's colleagues, however, refused to allow him to go. Zinoviev's comrades urged him to go instead, and he later recalled the result with obvious delight: "I went. There was a sea of heads such as I had never seen. Several tens of thousands were crowded together. The cries 'Tseretelli' continued. They recognized me and the cries began to fall silent. I began: 'I have

27. Ibid., pp. 201–11; F. Raskol'nikov, "V iiul'skie dni," *Proletarskaia revoliutsiia,* 1923, no. 5(17), pp. 58–59.

28. Zinov'ev, *Sochineniia,* 7(1):188, 201–2.

29. Trotsky, *History of the Russian Revolution,* 2:45–57. On July 4 Zinoviev was also the sole Bolshevik representative at a joint session of the executive committees of the workers' and soldiers' and peasants' deputies. See A. Shliapnikov, "Iiul'skie dni v Petrograde," *Proletarskaia revoliutsiia,* 1926, no. 5(52), pp. 5–17.

come to you in place of Tseretelli.' Laughter. This broke the mood. I could deliver a fairly long speech."[30]

While imploring the Petrograd Soviet meeting inside the Tauride Palace to take power, he also pleaded with the workers and soldiers outside the palace to disperse peacefully and to avoid Nevsky Prospect, where many incidents had already occurred. He also warned against the "foolish opinion" that the leaders of the Soviet were merely disguised landlords, obviously indicating a conciliatory position on his part toward the Soviets and their Menshevik leaders. Concurring in the wisdom of a dispersal, Trotsky, Kamenev, and Zinoviev all agreed late in the evening of July 4 that the Kronstadt sailors ought to return to their naval base, thereby ending the demonstration.[31]

Long past midnight Zinoviev further clarified his position on a Bolshevik seizure of power. He had supported a resolution put forward by Anatolii Lunacharsky, the future commissar of education, at a meeting of the All-Russian Central Executive Committee about the transfer of power to the Soviets. Fedor Dan, the Menshevik, shot back, "Let the Bolsheviks take power." Zinoviev replied, "Lenin at the All-Russian Congress told you that our party has never thought of taking power against the will of the majority of the population. It would take it only with the agreement of the majority."[32] Even a year later Zinoviev acknowledged that the Bolshevik position had been one of restraining the demonstration, although future historians might reproach them for their actions.[33] Significantly, Zinoviev throughout the July Days had set forth and held to another of the positions he would adhere to in October. It is ironic that his July position in regard to revolution earned him plaudits, but much the same position in October, whatever the intervening changes in the political climate, brought him scorn and a reputation for cowardice.

The July Days have additional relevance for the question of Zinoviev's revolutionary tactics in 1917. On July 5, as the charges of being German agents spread first against Lenin and later against Zinoviev and others, the two Bolsheviks felt compelled to go into hiding. Professor Ulam has charged that when Zinoviev arrived at Sergei Alliluev's apartment, where he and Lenin would spend a few days before leaving the city, "Zinoviev was at first suffering from fright to the point of incoherence, but Lenin's calm demeanor restored his spirits."[34] The obvious conclusion to be drawn is that Zinoviev was overwhelmed by fear and incapable of action. Yet the source Ulam cites,

30. Zinov'ev, *Sochineniia*, 7(1):211–12.
31. Ibid., pp. 201–15.
32. Ibid., p. 213.
33. Ibid., p. 227.
34. Ulam, *The Bolsheviks*, p. 348.

an article by Alliluev, makes no comment about Zinoviev's incoherence.[35] What Alliluev says is, "Comrade Zinoviev obviously was extremely fatigued; therefore I decided not to question him about anything. . . ." That he was fatigued, after the previous two days and nights, is scarcely surprising. Not only has Zinoviev's behavior at this point been misrepresented, but there is ample evidence that he did not collapse under the stress of the July Days. It was, after all, Zinoviev whom the Bolshevik Central Committee chose to represent it before the leaders of the Petrograd Soviet in defending Lenin against the charge of being a German agent. The memoirist of the Russian Revolution, N. N. Sukhanov, was present and testified that Zinoviev "looked wretched, upset and confused and was plainly in a great hurry." Yet he was able to give his plea coherent expression and to await a reply.[36] The moment was indeed a trying one. Even a decade after his defense of Lenin, Zinoviev could remember the malicious joy on the face of one delegate who kept repeating, "Where there is smoke, there is fire."[37] Sukhanov admitted there had been reason for the Bolsheviks to fear the Black Hundreds. In fact, Zinoviev's brother-in-law, the managing editor of a Bolshevik press, was severely beaten at this time.[38] If Zinoviev was upset, so were his comrades. Sukhanov reported that Raskolnikov was confused to the point of incoherence, that Kamenev, Trotsky, and three or four others at the Tauride Palace were in a "miserable, confused, and dejected state," and that Lunacharsky was "very shaken" and thinking seriously of fleeing the city.[39] Against this background Zinoviev's conduct appears commendable and courageous.

After a few days in the capital, Zinoviev and Lenin moved to a hiding place near the Russo-Finnish border. There in a hut made of sticks and hay they spent the days between July 10 and August 8 reading, writing, and chatting with visiting party comrades. For these weeks immediately after the July Days little information exists on Zinoviev's political position. Under attack by some of its members, Zinoviev, like Lenin,[40] discontinued his support

35. S. Ia. Alliluev, "Kak skryvalis' tov. Lenin i tov. Zinov'ev v iiul'skie dni 1917 goda," *Krasnaia letopis'*, 1924, no. 9, pp. 13–17.

36. N. N. Sukhanov, *The Russian Revolution, 1917*, ed. and trans. Joel Carmichael (New York, 1955), pp. 460–61.

37. Grigorii Zinov'ev, "Lenin i iiul'skie dni," *Proletarskaia revoliutsiia*, 1927, no. 8–9 (67–68), p. 64.

38. K. T. Sverdlova, *Iakov M. Sverdlov* (Moscow, 1957), p. 320.

39. Sukhanov, *Russian Revolution*, pp. 462–68.

40. Lenin, *PSS*, 34:10–17. Zinoviev seems to have accepted the temporary impossibility of supporting the slogan of power to the Soviets, but he was reported to be in disagreement with Lenin on "several points," possibly opposing Lenin's call for the party to prepare for "armed uprising." See *Revoliutsionnoe dvizhenie v Rossii v iiule 1917 g.: Iiul'skii krizis* (Moscow, 1959), pp. 186 and 452, n. 1. Further substantiation of Zinoviev's

of the Petrograd Soviet, but he did not discontinue his plea for the creation of democratic power based on a kind of united front from below, nor did he forget to emphasize the international basis of the revolution.[41]

Still more important, however, was his cautious stance on the development of the revolution. Though Lenin in mid-July felt that the revolutionary wave had only momentarily receded, Zinoviev was deeply convinced that the revolutionary forces were on the defensive. He saw the counterrevolutionaries as a menace seeking to provoke the workers' movement into premature and disastrous action. In an article written under the influence of the Kornilov Affair at the end of August, entitled "What Is Not To Be Done," Zinoviev saw similarities between existing conditions and those leading up to the Paris Commune in 1871, and he predicted a similar outcome for any uprising at present. "That is why," he wrote, "in our ranks arguments are perhaps possible over what is to be done at the present moment, but there can be no arguments over what is not to be done."[42] Even before Lenin had written his article "On Compromises," Zinoviev had announced, "We, as the representatives of the revolutionary proletariat . . . once again publicly suggest a fraternal union to all revolutionary forces of the country for the creation and solidification of the power of the workers, soldiers, and poor peasants." This union he considered a defensive, not offensive, measure.[43]

With Lenin in Finland and Zinoviev back in the environs of Petrograd, the differences between the two men became apparent. Lenin, stressing Bolshevik strength, presented a number of arguments against any comparison of the existing situation to the Paris Commune, and thought the comparison "very superficial and even foolish." Moreover, within four days of Zinoviev's suggestion of a "fraternal union," Lenin began to doubt if compromise with the Mensheviks and S.R.'s was any longer possible.[44] In what appears to have been a direct response and challenge to Lenin, Zinoviev publicly reaffirmed his article, "What Is Not To Be Done." While admitting the growth in Bolshevik influence, he rejected as slanderous the claims that the Bolsheviks intended

greater caution is given in Alexander Zhenevsky, "Rukopis' V. I. Lenina 'O konstitutsionnykh illiuziiakh,'" *Krasnaia letopis'*, 1925, no. 3(14), p. 193.

41. Zinov'ev, *Sochineniia*, 7(1):283–84, 289–92, 267–68. Zinoviev and Lenin hid in Sergei Alliluev's apartment at least from July 7 to July 9 before N. Emelianov moved them out of the city to their hut. There they stayed until August 8, when Zinoviev went back to Petrograd and Lenin to Finland. To Zinoviev ten years later, his political hopes in near total collapse, these were glorious days. See Zinov'ev, "Lenin i iiul'skie dni," pp. 66–69. It is interesting that although Zinoviev stayed in the more dangerous Petrograd, Lenin went into hiding in Finland. Originally the Central Committee had sought accommodations in Finland for both men. See Gustav Rovio, "Kak tov. Lenin skryvalsia u gel'singforskogo 'politseimeistera,'" *Krasnaia letopis'*, 1923, no. 5, pp. 303–10.

42. Lenin, *PSS*, 34:16; Zinov'ev, *Sochineniia*, 7(1):301–3.

43. Zinov'ev, *Sochineniia*, 7(1):309–11.

44. Lenin, *PSS*, 34:137–39.

to seize power in the name of a small minority of workers. For the present, he argued, they were obliged to propose an honest coalition of all fundamentally revolutionary forces in the country, excluding, of course, those who sought agreement with the bourgeoisie.[45] Clearly, what Zinoviev meant when he endorsed a coalition of this kind was not what Lenin was beginning to advocate.

By mid-September the long-term differences in their evaluations of Bolshevik strength began to assume importance for the final crisis. Lenin had become increasingly inclined toward forcing the pace of revolutionary development and demanded that the Bolsheviks seize power.[46] Zinoviev, however, repeatedly emphasized the need to defend the revolution against the powerful forces of counterrevolution. The Kornilovshchina, he said, had only begun.[47] Despite the defeat of Kornilov, no wise person could doubt, he said, that "Kornilov and his gang" had thousands and tens of thousands of supporters and that these opposing forces were better organized than their own.[48] Bolshevik influence indeed mounted rapidly in the weeks following the Kornilov Affair: the Petrograd and Moscow Soviets for the first time voted for the Bolsheviks. To Lenin, safely ensconced in Finland, these victories were the signal to initiate the armed revolution. Although Zinoviev was aware of these triumphs and welcomed them, to him, in direct contact with the movement, they were only signs of the long-term trends, not a signal for revolt. He cautioned against announcing the transfer of power to the Soviets, something he had not been afraid to call for in July when trying to avert disaster. Now he said such a call would be either an empty paper resolution or a proclamation of the decisive struggle: "The party of the proletariat does not play with paper resolutions. And it in no way intends to advise the Petrograd workers to demonstrate in the streets, something the allies of Kornilov desperately await in order through a 'Bolshevik insurrection' . . . to expiate their own 'sins' by means of a bloody suppression of the Petrograd workers."[49] Zinoviev greatly overestimated the cohesion and support of the forces on the right, but that was one of the commonest mistakes in the fall of 1917.[50]

Zinoviev's approval of Bolshevik participation in the Democratic Con-

45. Zinov'ev, *Sochineniia*, 7(1):347–50.

46. Lenin, *PSS*, 34:239–41.

47. Zinov'ev, *Sochineniia*, 7(1):357–59. As late as October 6 Zinoviev was warning that the Kornilovshchina had righted itself and was preparing another assault (ibid., p. 421).

48. Ibid., p. 322.

49. Ibid., pp. 343–44.

50. One internationalist Menshevik, Raphael Abramovitch, recorded that he was so sure the Provisional Government could handle any attempted Bolshevik insurrection that he warned one official against excesses in the suppression of the anticipated uprising (Abramovitch, *Soviet Revolution*, p. 90).

ference in September, when Lenin denounced it, must have stirred further distrust between the two men.[51] Chafing to come out of hiding so that he could work more effectively,[52] Zinoviev in mid-September explicitly laid out his program for the future activity of his party. The Bolsheviks had finally won a clear majority in both the Petrograd and Moscow Soviets. The question now, he said, was what kind of program the Bolsheviks would follow when they changed from the opposition to the ruling party. Quite contrary to any policy of a Bolshevik seizure of power and in keeping with his earlier pledges about a democratic coalition of the left, Zinoviev suggested that his party should share the seats on the presidium of the Petrograd Soviet with the Mensheviks and S.R.'s, however despicable their past actions toward Bolsheviks, on a proportional basis, despite a Bolshevik majority in the Soviet: "We proposed an honest coalition on the basis of proportional representation. . . . And such a policy our party, in my opinion, must continue in the future." In this instance it was the desire to carry the revolution forward peacefully that dictated the coalition with the Mensheviks and S.R.'s. That coalition would be an alliance of the working class, following the Bolsheviks, and the mass of petty-bourgeois democrats, following the S.R.'s and Mensheviks. He denied charges that he opposed such a coalition: "We never said that the proletariat by its own strength alone—and what is more 'in the presence of the opposition of the other classes' . . . —could solve the basic questions of the revolution." The Bolsheviks did not forget, he continued, that there were three forces contending in their revolution. In addition to the urban and rural revolutionary proletariat and the counterrevolutionary bourgeoisie, there was a third, ill-formed, but enormous force, the petty bourgeoisie of the cities and countryside. The outcome of the struggle between the first two forces, he argued, would be decided by the third. Consequently, "*the working class must, is obliged to do everything that depends on it in order to incline this third force to its side*" (Zinoviev's emphasis). To fulfill its obligation, the working class had to refuse to enter any coalition with the counterrevolutionary bourgeoisie, while under certain circumstances accepting an "honest agreement" with the petty-bourgeois democrats, without which a peaceful development of the revolution was impossible. The chances for a peaceful development of the revolution were minimal, but they still existed.[53]

51. Zinov'ev, *Sochineniia*, 7(1):351–54; Robert V. Daniels, *The Conscience of the Revolution* (Cambridge, Mass., 1960), p. 58; *Protokoly Tsentral'nogo komiteta RSDRP (b), avgust 1917–fevral' 1918* (Moscow, 1958), pp. 46–47, hereafter *Protokoly TsK*. The Democratic Conference, called by the Mensheviks and S.R.'s, was supposed to be a broad assembly of the left that would lead to the construction of a socialist cabinet, excluding the Kadets.

52. *Protokoly TsK*, pp. 32, 65. The Central Committee at least twice refused to allow Zinoviev, despite his requests, to emerge before Lenin could also surface.

53. Zinov'ev, *Sochineniia*, 7(1):365–67.

At the same time, Zinoviev unquestionably opposed a continuation of the status quo. The only possibility for peaceful development was "if power is immediately and completely transferred to the Soviets." The question remained yet unanswered whether the Menshevik and Social Revolutionary leadership of the Central Executive Committee would consent to an agreement with the Petrograd Soviet.[54] Zinoviev in this article had given the clearest formulation yet of the direction he felt the revolution had to take. It was a program with definite revolutionary goals: the land would pass to the peasants; the factories and banks would be brought under Soviet control; every effort would be made to terminate the war; the police would become a proletarian force; and the property of the bourgeoisie would certainly be expropriated. But Zinoviev diverged dramatically from the Leninist formulation of how these goals were to be accomplished. Although he recognized the rapid growth of Bolshevik strength, he nevertheless accepted the necessity of compromise with the Mensheviks and S.R.'s, because only through reaching some accommodation with them, he believed, could the revolution proceed without civil war.

He was convinced that power would rest primarily in the Soviets and, after its election and convocation, in the Constituent Assembly. For him it was no crime to wait for the Congress of Soviets, scheduled for October 20, 1917; it was through this Congress that the Bolshevik program could be realized. He did not fear that the Congress would come before they were ready. Rather he feared that the Kadets and their allies might prevent it from meeting and thereby from assuming power. He contended that if the revolutionary forces were able to place power in the hands of the Soviets, they would achieve "in practice a combined type of republic of Soviets and of the Constituent Assembly."[55] Although his theory failed to agree with Lenin's, it was scarcely irrational, cowardly, or counterrevolutionary.

His formulation had, moreover, a greater stress on democratic values, on the necessity of majority support, than he would have been willing to acknowledge in the years after the revolution. Certainly Zinoviev was no Western liberal democrat (he was all for eliminating the bourgeoisie's power, including its voting rights and its right to a free press), but neither should his position in 1917 be regarded as a copy of the Bolshevik attitudes in the mid-1920s and 1930s. The rays of democracy, uncertainly flickering in various areas of the Russian Social Democracy and reflected from the European movement, retained some strength in 1917. In April 1917 Lenin, in an article

54. Ibid., pp. 365–69; see also p. 375. It is interesting to note that throughout the fall of 1917, including October 25, Zinoviev had his harshest words for the Mensheviks and S.R.'s in his unsigned articles (ibid., pp. 120–23, 313–15, 381, 426–30; 7(2):153, 158–59, 171–75, 183). He apparently did not want to damage his relations with the two groups unnecessarily.

55. Ibid., 7(1):409–10, 414–16; 7(2):201–6; 7(1):431–35.

"On Dual Power," had said, "In order to win power, the conscious workers must win the majority to their side. So long as the masses are not subjected to violence, there is no other road to power. We are no Blanquists; we are not proponents of a seizure of power by a minority."[56] That continued to be Zinoviev's position, and his reasons for maintaining it—the possibilities of isolation, defeat, and civil war—were real and, as time would demonstrate, in part well founded.

Thus the lines between Lenin and Zinoviev were clearly drawn before October 1. Devoted to Leninist principles of organization and to Marxist theory of the prerequisites for socialist revolution, Zinoviev insisted on making every effort to achieve a peaceful transfer of power from the hands of the Provisional Government into the hands of an "honest coalition" of Bolsheviks, Mensheviks, and Social Revolutionaries. Lenin had already passed beyond the affirmation of a Bolshevik seizure of power by force and now insisted that the Bolsheviks could hold power by themselves.[57]

As is well known, with Lenin and Zinoviev both present, the Bolshevik Central Committee at its October 10 meeting, against the votes of Zinoviev and Kamenev, approved Lenin's resolution putting armed uprising on the agenda. That resolution greatly agitated its two principal opponents. Zinoviev had been working merely to secure the meeting of the Congress of Soviets against attacks from the right. Now Lenin, only recently back in Petrograd, wanted them to seize power before it even met. Seeking to exploit opposition to the uprising outside the Central Committee, Kamenev and Zinoviev composed an appeal against Lenin's resolution, which they then sent to several important party organizations. All this is familiar. Less familiar and less certain are the actual contents and the significance of their appeal.[58] By their circular, Zinoviev and Kamenev were openly taking issue with the majority of the Central Committee, boldly adhering to the position they had maintained for the preceding months. They disagreed with Lenin and those who favored armed uprising in two vital judgments. They denied that the Bolsheviks had either (1) sufficient backing in Russia or (2) the support of the international proletariat necessary for seizing and holding power.

Carefully and with surprising accuracy Zinoviev and Kamenev dissected Bolshevik strength.[59] They agreed that the majority of the workers and a

56. Lenin, *PSS*, 31:147.

57. Ibid., 34:287–339.

58. The letter is in Zinov'ev, *Sochineniia*, 7(1):547–51. The following discussion, except as noted, is based on this letter.

59. Vladimir Nevsky in 1922 recalled a meeting he had with Zinoviev in 1917 (probably October 17) during which he was amazed at how well informed Zinoviev was, how he was able to diagnose weaknesses that others missed in the party organizations and preparations, and how accurately he gauged the mood of the masses despite his isolation. V. Nevsky, "Dve vstrechi," *Krasnaia letopis'*, 1922, no. 4, pp. 142–44.

significant part of the soldiers favored the Bolsheviks. But they warned that if the elections to the Constituent Assembly were allowed to be held, "the peasants in the majority will vote for the S.R.'s." As to the soldiers, the two men accurately perceived why the soldiers were supporting the Bolsheviks: "The mass of soldiers supports us not for a slogan of war, but for a slogan of peace. . . . If we, having seized power at present alone, come (because of the whole international situation) to the necessity of waging revolutionary war [something the Bolsheviks said they would have to do if Kaiser Wilhelm did not agree to a democratic peace], the mass of soldiers will rush away from us." Moreover, Russia could not successfully resist a German seizure of Petrograd. Thus, on the question of Bolshevik domestic forces, their conclusion was that they did not have the strength to seize and hold power. Moreover, they stressed that they failed to see the need for such a seizure at the present time. Although there were times, they admitted, when it was better to go down in defeat than to yield without fighting, the current situation was far from that. Because of the tremendous growth in their party's influence in the cities and in the army, the Bolsheviks had a bright future and should await the Constituent Assembly elections. They judged Bolshevik chances in these elections as "excellent," predicting with surprising accuracy one-third or more of the votes for the Bolsheviks. But they warned against any thought that the Russian working class alone could victoriously complete the present revolution. The workers needed the help of the petty-bourgeois camp, which presently and only temporarily stood closer to the bourgeoisie than the Bolsheviks: "Only by an incautious step, by some poorly considered move that makes the entire fate of the revolution dependent on an immediate uprising, can the proletarian party push the petty bourgeoisie into the embrace of Miliukov for a long time."

Rather than commit such a fatal error, they recommended that the Bolsheviks limit themselves to a defensive position, which, if an attack came, would assure the support of the petty bourgeoisie. Another argument against an uprising was the lack of a fighting mood among the workers. In fact, Zinoviev and Kamenev said that the proponents of the armed uprising themselves admitted that the mood of the workers and soldiers was "by no means reminiscent" of the mood prior to the July Days.[60] They also pointed out grave weaknesses in Bolshevik support among certain key labor organizations, such as the railway and postal-telegraph unions.[61]

Their mistake came not in their estimation of Bolshevik strength but in

60. Fifteen years later Trotsky confirmed that their judgment on the workers' mood was "not unfounded: there was a certain depression in the Petrograd proletariat" (Trotsky, *History of the Russian Revolution*, 3:181).

61. Zinoviev and Kamenev correctly diagnosed the opposition of both the postal-telegraph workers and the railway workers. See Robert V. Daniels, ed., *The Russian Revolution* (Englewood Cliffs, 1972), pp. 127–28; Zinov'ev, *Sochineniia*, 7(1):451–52.

their overestimation of the strength of the opposition. They claimed that the military cadets numbered five thousand and were "beautifully armed, *organized*, and desirous of . . . and capable of fighting." They listed as standing against the Bolsheviks the military headquarters, the shock troops, the Cossacks, and a significant part of both the Petrograd garrison and artillery. An armed uprising, they predicted, would cause the Central Executive Committee of the Soviets to join the government in bringing troops from the front. In contrast to the situation during the Kornilov Affair, the Bolsheviks would in the case of an armed uprising have to fight "against the Black Hundreds plus the Kadets plus Kerensky and the Provisional Government plus the CEC (S.R.'s and Mensheviks)." This evaluation erred most dramatically in its judgment of the numerical strength of the opposition, not in their alignment.

If Zinoviev and Kamenev were wrong on some aspects of the domestic situation, they were more perceptive than Lenin about the international support they could expect for an uprising. The leading Bolsheviks would contend after the October Revolution that only with the help of a European proletarian revolution could Soviet Russia become a socialist country. The international situation was thus of great significance in the debate on whether to seize sole power by force. The two principal opponents of the uprising flatly stated that it was untrue that the majority of the European proletariat stood behind the Bolsheviks. The heartening signs in Germany and Italy were still far distant from active support of a proletarian Russia at war with the entire bourgeois world: "Only the growth of the revolution in Europe would make it obligatory for us to seize power immediately. . . . This is the only guarantee of the victoriousness of the uprising in Russia. This will come, but it is not yet." Significantly, by January 1918 Lenin was arguing that indeed no European revolution was on the horizon and that Russia therefore had to sign the peace with Germany.

The positive proposals for the future that Zinoviev and Kamenev made in their letter were far less substantial than their arguments against the uprising. Essentially they stuck to what Zinoviev had outlined in his earlier articles: "The Constituent Assembly plus the Soviets—that is the combined type of state institution toward which we go." In the Constituent Assembly they saw two possible alternatives: either the Bolsheviks would constitute such a strong opposition that the ruling parties would have to yield to them at every step, or they would form a ruling bloc "together with the left S.R.'s, the nonparty peasants, and others," which would then carry out their program.

What was implicit in these proposals is, of course, debatable. But judged against the background of Zinoviev's earlier arguments, their proposals seemed to envision a peaceful development of the revolution and to reflect a conviction that Russia was ill-prepared for a purely Bolshevik government. Bolshevik

support was inadequate; international conditions were unfavorable; and the state of Russian economic development did not permit it. Six years later Zinoviev admitted that in 1917 he had felt that Russia could not pass as quickly as it had to the socialist revolution. Bolshevism had argued from 1905 until 1917 that it was a bourgeois-democratic revolution that was impending: "But in 1917, after the February Revolution, bolshevism completed a sharp transition to the idea of a direct *socialist* revolution. The difficulties of the transition were tremendous. Connected with these difficulties big mistakes were made; in particular, mistakes were made by the writer of these lines in the fall of 1917" (Zinoviev's emphasis).[62] Judging for himself what Marxism meant for Russia, he could not in 1917 accept the possibility of a socialist revolution in a backward country without West European aid. But he was not, on that account, hamstrung into inactivity or passivity toward the Provisional Government. Instead, in an effort to secure an end to the war, in an effort to get economic reform that would lay the foundations for socialism in Russia, Zinoviev was willing to compromise, sure in his belief in the inevitable triumph of the socialist revolution. Lenin had no such patience. The party had already waited longer than he thought advisable, and he was afraid that unless it seized this opportunity, all would be lost.

The struggle against a Bolshevik seizure of power did not end with the October letter, of course. The two men continued their vocal opposition to Lenin's proposals. On October 16 at another meeting of the Central Committee, Zinoviev, repeating many of the arguments he and Kamenev had stated in their letter, stood up against Lenin's demand for a seizure of power prior to the convocation of the Congress of Soviets. Now he added that when the Congress met, the Bolsheviks ought to oppose its dissolution until the Constituent Assembly convened. Meanwhile, they had to guard against isolating themselves politically: "It is necessary to reconsider the Central Committee resolution, if that is possible. We must frankly admit to ourselves that in the next five days [before the Congress of Soviets] we will not organize an uprising."[63] In place of a revolt he defended reliance on the Congress of Soviets and on the Constituent Assembly. Seeking to delay any uprising for more favorable circumstances, he argued: "If the [question of an] uprising is put forward as a future prospect, then it is not possible to object, but if it is a command for tomorrow or the day after tomorrow, then it is adventurism." Again stalling for time, he concluded that until the Central Committee consulted the Bolshevik delegates to the upcoming Congress of Soviets, "we must not begin the uprising." His resolution to that effect was rejected by the

62. Zinov'ev, *Sochineniia*, 1:9.
63. *Protokoly TsK*, pp. 98–99.

expanded committee by a vote of fifteen to six with three abstentions.[64] The division of the party clearly was more far-reaching and significant than the two opposing votes on October 10 had indicated.

Kamenev carried their adamant resistance to Lenin's proposals even further by publishing on October 18 in *Novaia zhizn'*, a leftist, non-Bolshevik paper, a letter that explained his and Zinoviev's position. He repeated their opposition to any armed uprising, remarking that successful uprisings were possible only after one made a clear and definite commitment to them as the task at hand, something the party had not done. He asserted that not only he and Zinoviev "but a number of comrades involved in practical work" considered an armed uprising at present, without the support of the Congress of Soviets, "unallowable and ruinous" for the proletariat and the revolution: "Our party is too strong and has too great a future before it to commit such an act of desperation."[65] Thus did the two men continue to fight the decision to revolt.

One question still remains: why did they discontinue open resistance to Lenin's plan in the last three or four days before the seizure of power, if they were absolutely convinced that it meant the destruction of the party? But another question suggests itself: why did Lenin cease working for his plan? Why did he almost cease to communicate with the party which supposedly was to conduct a revolution prior to the meeting of the Congress of Soviets? The probable answer to the first question is that Kamenev and Zinoviev no longer felt it urgent to continue their labors, because the revolt was simply

64. Ibid., pp. 103–4. Thirty-nine years after the events of 1917, Margarita Fofanova, in whose apartment Lenin hid in October 1917, related that Lenin and Zinoviev continued their dispute prior to the revolution by letter. She recalled one instance when Lenin received a letter from Zinoviev and, before finishing it, hurled it on the table and exclaimed, "He has burst into tears like a slobbery old woman! If necessary, then we will exclude him from the party." See M. V. Fofanova, "Poslednee podpol'e V. I. Lenina," *Istoricheskii arkhiv*, 1956, no. 4, pp. 166–72. The four decades that intervened between the events themselves and the writing of the memoirs leave the reliability of these recollections in doubt.

65. *Protokoly TsK*, pp. 115–16. It was this letter that provoked Lenin to the peak of his rage against the "strikebreaking" of Zinoviev and Kamenev. Zinoviev publicly responded to Lenin's polemics by denying that his views on the disputed question resembled those Lenin had attacked and by suggesting that they close ranks pending more favorable circumstances—something that would again have worked to delay the insurrection. To Zinoviev's letter Stalin, acting on his own, appended a note "from the editors" expressing the hope that Zinoviev's note as well as Kamenev's statement in the Soviet endorsing Trotsky's denial to the same body of a fixed date for an uprising would end the dispute. Seeking to heal the breach, Stalin concluded: "The sharpness of tone in Lenin's article does not change the fact that fundamentally we remain like-minded people." See ibid., pp. 114–15. Trotsky's announcement and Kamenev's response may be found in appendix 19 of Zinov'ev, *Sochineniia*, 7(2):269. What Stalin did not mention was that concluding the argument with Zinoviev's letter and Trotsky's and Kamenev's statements meant ending it largely on the two opponents' terms.

not going to take place before the Congress of Soviets and would occur at no definite time after it.[66] Still, Feliks Dzerzhinsky's comment of October 20 that the Central Committee need not demand Zinoviev's retirement from political activity, because "Zinoviev, as it is, is in hiding and is not participating in party work," again implies a failure of nerve.[67] But it must be noted that as a result of the events in July *both* Zinoviev and Lenin remained in hiding right up to the October Revolution. Moreover, Zinoviev did participate in party work in the week before the revolution. In fact, far from being banished from the party, on October 25, the day of the Bolshevik triumph in Petrograd, Zinoviev was the author of two major articles in the Bolshevik central organ, *Rabochii put'*, one signed and one unsigned.[68] The anonymous article, "The Foreign Policy of 'Revolutionary Democracy,'" was extremely harsh in its denunciation of the Mensheviks and S.R.'s but had nothing to say about a Bolshevik revolt. The Congress of Soviets, which convened that day, would have to give the decisive word on the question of foreign policy, he said. The signed article carried this expression of hope and confidence in the Congress of Soviets much further. The Congress would not only have to solve the question of peace but also of land and bread. The twelfth hour had struck. All Russia put its hope in the Congress. Zinoviev was now pessimistic that they could find a peaceful way out of the crisis, but he had not abandoned his plan for the future. The Bolsheviks might not be able to achieve their goals peacefully, he continued; the Mensheviks and S.R.'s might walk out of the Congress if it refused to accept their plan, thereby completing a cycle of betrayal to the revolution. His main point, however, was that the Congress had to acquire power for the Soviets, because "that alone could secure the convocation of the Constituent Assembly."[69] Zinoviev was still committed to a "combined type of state institution," and his party's paper was still publishing his ideas on the very day of the revolution. All the pressure that Lenin had applied, all Lenin's abuse, had not swayed him from his position. While Joseph Stalin oscillated between revolution and delay in the days before the October Revolution, Zinoviev was consistent and constant.

What weakness Zinoviev did show in 1917 came after the revolution, not before it, and then only after he fought for an additional two weeks against the Leninist majority in the Central Committee. When the Kerensky government fell from the saddle, the Bolsheviks were, however disunited and disorganized, the best prepared of all the remaining political forces to pick up the sword and shield of government. They gained power, but not in the way

66. See Daniels, *Red October*, pp. 81–106.
67. *Protokoly TsK*, p. 106.
68. Zinov'ev, *Sochineniia*, 7(1):426–30, 439–43.
69. Ibid., pp. 439–43.

Lenin had envisioned it. While military power rested, if anywhere, with the Military Revolutionary Committee, political power was vested in the assembled Congress of Soviets—no real departure from what Zinoviev and Kamenev had proposed in their October 11 letter. Kamenev's acceptance of the chairmanship of the new Central Executive Committee of the Soviets is striking evidence to support this conclusion. It is impossible to believe that he would have accepted that post, only to resign a few days later in protest, if he had doubted that the October Revolution signified the transfer of power to the Soviets, representing a broad, genuine coalition of the left. It is difficult to believe, moreover, that Zinoviev would have become editor of *Izvestiia* if he had believed that the paper would promote a position on the new government unacceptable to him.[70]

Naturally, the first few days after the seizure of power were chaotic. When the initial confusion began to abate, the Bolshevik Central Committee decided to confer with other Soviet parties about a coalition government. It was these negotiations that stirred the next round of conflict within the Bolshevik leadership, as one group devoted great effort to fashioning a compromise coalition, while the other group, led by Lenin, refused to consider a coalition except on its terms.[71] The position of the first group, defended first by Kamenev but also by Zinoviev, was that the Bolsheviks could not survive alone and isolated. These oppositionists, with substantial support in the party, believed that a coalition government, a genuinely Soviet government, had to be organized to preserve Soviet power and to prevent massive civil war. In the ensuing conflicts, Lenin demanded that Kamenev cease his opposition, insisting that there were only two choices—"either with the agents of tsarist General Kaledin, or with the lower classes."[72] That was a formulation of the situation that the Central Committee minority was unwilling to accept.

Zinoviev, for his part, asserted that it was extremely important for the party to reach an agreement with the other parties. The moderate group, which was conducting the negotiations with the other parties, had not made

70. See Sukhanov, *Russian Revolution*, pp. 655–56. Deutscher credits Kamenev with placing himself "at the service of the insurgents once the action had started." Deutscher notes that it was Kamenev who proposed that Central Committee members be forbidden to leave the Smolny without permission. See Isaac Deutscher, *The Prophet Armed, Trotsky: 1879–1921* (New York, 1965), p. 307. See also *Protokoly TsK*, p. 119. This presumes that Kamenev violated his stand against a seizure of power. Instead, Kamenev was defending the Bolsheviks against Kerensky's attack on the party.

71. For more information on the extremely controversial and confusing struggle within the party and the Central Executive Committee see *Protokoly TsK*, pp. 125–45, 275–76; Abramovitch, *Soviet Revolution*, pp. 100–129; Daniels, *Red October*, pp. 200–213; Deutscher, *The Prophet Armed*, pp. 331–45; and *Istoriia Kommunisticheskoi Partii Sovetskogo Soiuza*, 6 vols. (Moscow, 1965–), 3(1):343–48.

72. Lenin, *PSS*, 35:43.

any proposals, he said, that should be unacceptable to anyone. "For us two points are ultimatums: our program and the accountability of [the governing] authority to the Soviet as the source of its power."[73] Consistent with his pre-revolutionary program, Zinoviev was again favoring a compromise settlement while insisting that ultimate power go to the Soviets.

The Bolshevik negotiators apparently were unwilling to abide by the restrictive resolutions of the majority of the Central Committee, which had approved of further participation in the negotiations for forming a coalition government but only "with the goal of a last exposure of the unjustifiability of this attempt and a final termination of further negotiations on coalition power."[74] As a result of their efforts to frustrate his will, Lenin angrily secured passage of another Central Committee resolution condemning the opposition for abandoning Bolshevism and for asserting the impossibility of socialist revolution in Russia. Lenin "invited" them to withdraw from all practical party work.[75]

Although information on his activities during the first days of November remains sketchy, Zinoviev participated actively in the negotiations for a coalition government. When the moderate Bolsheviks expressed a willingness to give half the posts in the government to the S.R.'s and Mensheviks and to expand the CEC, he became one of three Bolsheviks on a five-man committee appointed by the CEC to explore further the composition of the government.[76] On the following day he reported on these negotiations to the Petrograd Soviet. From his report it is apparent that the Bolshevik negotiators had made considerable progress toward achieving a compromise settlement.[77] The CEC had approved "with an overwhelming majority," he reported, a resolution to expand the CEC considerably but still to retain it as the body to which the new government would be accountable, not some new pre-parliament, as some Mensheviks and S.R.'s had previously demanded. But it is extremely significant that he insisted only that the ministers of foreign affairs, of internal affairs, and of land be Bolsheviks. His recorded remarks, probably greatly abbreviated, did not mention a proportion of the posts that had to be Bolshevik, nor did he flatly state that Lenin and Trotsky had to be retained in the government. He indicated that he favored continuing the negotiations even as he admitted that he did not know where they would lead: "I think that part of the S.R.'s and Mensheviks will not accept our conditions." The implication was that part of them *would* accept. His concluding statement, "We will not,

73. *Protokoly TsK*, p. 127.
74. See ibid., p. 130, for Central Committee resolution of November 1.
75. Lenin, *PSS*, 34:44.
76. *Protokoly TsK*, pp. 275–76, n. 176.
77. Zinov'ev, *Sochineniia*, 7(2):207.

however, make concessions," could have meant only that the negotiators would not make further concessions.[78] Here was a serious attempt to achieve a settlement that would reflect the real divisions of the country with the exception of the former landlords and bourgeoisie. In its concessions it went far beyond what Lenin wanted, despite his assurances that he was not opposed to all coalition governments.[79]

Lenin responded to this continued defiance with another resolution charging the minority with a breach of party discipline and with sabotage. Now he demanded a written pledge that the minority would submit to discipline or leave the party.[80] A substantial portion of the leading Bolsheviks, including five members of the Central Committee and eight commissars in the new government, considered the policy of the Leninists intolerable, and on the following day the Central Committee minority gave its reply. In a statement signed by Kamenev, Zinoviev, Aleksei Rykov (commissar of internal affairs), Vladimir Miliutin (commissar of agriculture), and Viktor Nogin (commissar of industry and trade) they defended their insistence on a coalition government. They declared that only an immediate agreement to the conditions that they had accepted could possibly secure the conquests of the October Revolution: "We consider that the creation of such a government is necessary for the sake of averting further bloodshed, the approaching hunger, and the destruction of the revolution by the Kaledinites and for the guarantee of the convocation of the Constituent Assembly in the set time and the actual carrying out of the program of peace. . . ." They explained that they had tried to secure a revision of the decision of the majority in the Central Committee, but had met with an insistence on a purely Bolshevik government, "whatever happened and however many the victims for the workers and soldiers." They refused to bear the responsibility for the Central Committee's "ruinous policy," which they insisted ran counter to the will of the great part of the proletariat and soldiers: "We are therefore giving up our positions as members of the Central Committee in order to have the right to give our opinion frankly to the masses of workers and soldiers and to call them to support our call: Long live the government of the parties from the Soviet! Immediate agreement on this condition. We leave the Central Committee at the moment of victory, at the moment of the supremacy of our party. We leave because we cannot calmly watch as the policy of the leading group in the Central Committee leads to the

78. Ibid. The resolution Zinoviev was referring to was almost certainly one proposed by Kamenev to the Central Executive Committee sometime on November 2 or early the following morning (*Protokoly TsK*, pp. 275–76). That resolution, at least in its initial form, allotted half the seats in the government to non-Bolsheviks.

79. Lenin, *PSS*, 35:44–46.

80. Ibid., pp. 47–49. Ten Bolsheviks signed this resolution.

loss by the workers' party of the fruits of this victory, to the ruination of the proletariat."[81]

Thus the opposition desired to broaden the revolution's base of support by expanding the membership in both the CEC and the government while at the same time preserving the dominance of the Soviets and implementing the decrees on peace and land of the Second Congress of Soviets. That this program should be called counterrevolutionary is a serious injustice; that those who proposed it, especially in view of the subsequent Civil War, should be charged with a lack of nerve is one-sided and distorting. This was no resignation by a few cowardly nonentities. These were some of the most important members of the party and of the newly formed government, resigning over specific matters of the greatest consequence—matters that included what frail hopes there were for some form of democratic government based on a broad dictatorship of proletariat and peasantry, without need for mass terror.

Zinoviev has a reputation for being a most unpleasant character. Unquestionably he did a great deal to earn that reputation. His conduct in the 1920s during the intraparty struggle was often self-serving and repulsive. Any concern he might have had for observing the rudiments of intraparty democracy virtually disappeared from view under the corrupting influence of years of desperate struggle to preserve his party's and his own power. But his position in 1917, though not impeccable, has definitely been distorted. He remained surprisingly consistent from June to November. He may not have been a profound democrat concerned for minority rights, but he did manifest an interest in securing majority support. If that interest was motivated by a desire to avoid "class" warfare, then it may better be attributed to pragmatism than to cowardice. It was a pragmatism based on the same evaluation of the forces contending in Russia in 1917 that led so many other leading Bolsheviks to resign their posts at the moment of triumph. No historian would nominate Zinoviev as man of the year in 1917, but neither do he and Kamenev deserve to be remembered as the two cravens of the revolution. Although it may be asserted that other Bolsheviks had repeatedly opposed Lenin in 1917 and

81. *Protokoly TsK*, pp. 135–36. Ivan Teodorovich, commissar of supplies, and Alexander Shliapnikov, commissar of labor, along with the commissar of press affairs, the commissar of printing offices, and the commissar of the Red Guard all resigned their posts in support of the Central Committee minority. They also received the support of Lunacharsky, David Riazanov, and A. Lozovsky, the future Profintern leader. See ibid., pp. 136–37; Deutscher, *The Prophet Armed*, p. 333; S. P. Melgunov, *Bolshevik Seizure of Power*, trans. James S. Beaver (Santa Barbara, 1972), pp. 172–73. For a new government the resignation of one-third of the original fifteen commissars could hardly be anything but an extreme vote of no confidence. See *Istoriia KPSS*, 3(1):335, for the first list of People's Commissars. That all these important and experienced revolutionaries lacked fortitude is scarcely a satisfactory explanation for their resignation.

therefore that it took no fortitude to oppose Lenin in October, such arguments ignore the differences between October and the rest of 1917 and the real courage it took to go against the Leninist majority. Never previously had Lenin raged and threatened as he did in October. Never before had the stakes been so high.

Moreover, in retrospect the plan Zinoviev had for Russian revolutionary development does not seem counterrevolutionary, irrelevant, or out of touch with reality. Although many details remain unclear, he did indeed want a revolution, and it is quite possible that he was pleased by the events of October 24–25, because it seemed to place power where he had been claiming it had to go during the Second Congress of Soviets—namely, to the Soviets. Raphael Abramovitch, an active participant in the negotiations for a coalition government in November 1917 and one of the left-wing Mensheviks willing to work out a compromise with the Bolsheviks, wrote in the early 1960s, "It could be argued that if the further development of Russia had been directed by the Constituent Assembly—as Kamenev and Zinoviev . . . had insisted—the civil war could have been avoided, and Russia would have been spared what she endured in the years that followed. . . ."[82] Although such possibilities cannot be proved, in view of the evidence neither can they be lightly dismissed as the unsubstantiated and wishful ramblings of an octogenarian too far removed from the realities of 1917. The possibilities of compromise, despite Zinoviev's later assertions that the failure to reach an agreement was no fault of the Bolsheviks, were too great. Not all Mensheviks and S.R.'s would have adhered to the compromise settlement, but some would have. The results of such an agreement are, of course, incalculable. Moreover, it is clear that Zinoviev and Kamenev represented far more than themselves in October. Their position was supported by numerous important resignations at the top and by the need for broad support and internal peace at the bottom. Zinoviev's was a genuine, revolutionary alternative for Russia, not a poorly disguised means of avoiding crucial decisions.

In fact, if one must find weakness in Zinoviev in 1917, it would begin on November 7, when, after Lenin had fired two more blasts at the opposition,[83] Zinoviev capitulated to the majority of the Central Committee rather than break party discipline further and cut himself off from the party. Nevertheless, he continued to defend his opposition as a necessary step to prompt his more irreconcilable comrades to enter an agreement with all socialist

82. Abramovitch, *Soviet Revolution*, pp. 124–25. Deutscher recognizes that in the analysis of the situation immediately after the October Revolution "the wrongs and rights of the issue were inextricably confused" and that "Lenin's and Trotsky's opponents in the party were not quite as wrong as they presently professed" (*The Prophet Armed*, pp. 334–35).

83. Lenin, *PSS*, 35:70–76.

parties and groups that recognized Soviet power. Although he now claimed that the Mensheviks and S.R.'s had sabotaged any agreement, and that he was convinced that the left S.R.'s would draw the same conclusions and enter the Bolshevik government, his most telling remark implicitly contradicted this attempt to foist all the blame on the Mensheviks and S.R.'s: "We prefer to make mistakes with millions of workers and soldiers and to die with them than to stand aside at this historic moment. . . . Under the present situation we are obliged, in my opinion, to submit to party discipline. . . ."[84] The elevation of discipline over conviction was the weakness Zinoviev displayed in 1917, not fear for his physical safety. Yet even here Zinoviev's reaction was little different from the reactions of dissidents in more democratic parties the world over to pressures for "party loyalty." It hardly seems fair to expect more of the Bolsheviks, with their tremendous emphasis on party discipline, than one does of Conservatives and Labourites, Christian Democrats and Social Democrats, or Republicans and Democrats. Nevertheless, Zinoviev's capitulation to discipline represented the triumph of Lenin's organizational principles and Iakov Sverdlov's organizational skills over the principles of a more democratic Russia.

84. *Protokoly TsK*, pp. 143–45.