

# WHY DID THE PROVISIONAL GOVT FALL?

~~PROVINCIAL INTERLUDE~~

~~THE PROVISIONAL GOVERNMENT AND ITS PROBLEMS~~

There are 2 ~~parts~~ parts to the Answer:

- (1) It fell partly because of the things it did, or failed to do.
  - (2) ~~It~~ <sup>also</sup> fell because of the things that the Bolsheviks did.
- ~~Let's~~ Let's look first at the <sup>former</sup> ~~part~~ -- the failings of the Prov Govt.

## I. THE WAR.

1. Continuing to fight the war was probably their No. 1 mistake.
2. Made the solution of other problems impossible, such as solving the economic problem.
3. Tried to do too much at once: (a) Fight a war.  
(b) Carry out a political and social revolution.
4. Bolsheviks -- ~~essentially the Bols,~~ <sup>The Bols gained power, in part,</sup> partly because they promised to get out of the war, ~~gained power.~~
5. Why, then, did the Prov. Govt foolishly ~~remain~~ remain in the war?
6. Miliukov -- the 1st Foreign Minister -- Wanted to gain territories promised to Russia by the Allies, especially the Turkish Straits.  
"Paul Dardanelsky" (History professor)  
He was ousted in May because of his openly annexationist views.  
Yet his successors followed much the same policies. Why?
7. The Threat of a German-Austrian Victory --
  - a. If Russia had quit the war, this might have ensured a ~~victory~~ victory for the Central powers, for Russia's enemies.
  - b. A harsh Peace (like Brest-Litovsk?) -- Might have meant giving up large areas of Russian territory, such as Lenin had to give up ~~in~~ in the Treaty of Brest-Litovsk.

Lenin had a hard time convincing even the Bolsheviks to agree to the loss of large pieces of territory.

(the War)

8. Allied Pressure -- Constantly pressuring the Prof Govt not only to remain in the war, but to fight harder, launch more offensives.

9. A Separate Peace -- would have meant the violation of Russia's treaty obligations to the Allies, and the desertion of her friends to German and Austrian "aggression".

10. Acceptance of 2nd <sup>class</sup> Power Status for Russia

11. Fighting a Defensive War -- That's what the Prov. Govt should have done.

Such a policy would have met with the support of the vast majority of the ~~population~~ population.

12. But Kerensky, instead fought an Offensive War --

-- "July Offensive" --

-- Kerensky misled by the power of his own oratory, & his own fiery patriotism.

- It failed. Antagonized the common soldiers, as well as the officers.

13. Desertions-- "the soldiers voted for peace with their legs."

14. Bolsheviks -- promised peace, and won the support of the masses.

(failures of Prov. Govt)

## II. THE FAILURE TO GIVE LAND TO THE PEASANTS.

1. Lenin -- When Lenin seized power in October 1917, one of his first acts was to issue the Decree on Land, telling ~~the~~ the peasants to seize the land from the landlords.

Why didn't the Prov. Govt do this?

2. Prov Govt -- was in favor of land reform.

Kerensky -- a member of the SR Party, whose main plank was "Land to the peasants!"

Victor Chernov -- the head of the SR Party, was for <sup>4 months</sup> ~~the~~ the Minister of Agriculture. Favored land reform. Drew up a law. (Min of Agr from May to Sept.)

Why, then, didn't they do it?

3. Caution of the Bourgeois Members of the Prov. Govt.

- Impressed by the sacredness of private property.
- Wanted to make sure that nobody was done an injustice.
- Compensation -- Thought that owners should receive some compensation.
- Feared Chaos -- Afraid that if they simply told the peasants to take the land, this would lead to complete chaos in the countryside.
- Constituent Assembly -- Some members of Prov. Govt argued that, since their govt was only a "provisional" one, i.e., a temporary one, they had no authority to carry out such a far-reaching reform. Must be done by the Constituent Assembly.

4. Chernov Wanted to ~~Carry Out~~ Carry Out the Land Reform Properly --

- His goal -- Equitable distribution of the land, so that every peasant would have an equal income from the land.
- Incredibly complex -- Land varied in quality & quantity from place to place.
- Agricultural Census ordered -- to find out just how much land, there was in each area, and how many people.
- Asked the peasants to wait until the census was completed. But the peasants wouldn't wait.

(The Land)

5. Opposition to Chernov -- from conservative members of Prov. Govt.

- Chernov - issued orders to local Land Committees to take over land which the landowners were unable to ~~cultivate~~ cultivate themselves, and to distribute it to the peasants.
- \* Minister of Justice -- denounced this move. Chernov's order ~~was~~ *was cancelled.*
- Chernov - resigned in protest. Kerensky failed to support him.

6. Meanwhile the Peasants were Seizing the land.

- Provisional Govt -- found itself in the position of telling the peasants not to ~~do~~ do what they wanted to do -- to take the land.
- Kerensky like King Canute -- ordering the tide not to come in.

7. Bolsheviks -- Had no scruples about being completely fair.

- No reservations about the sacredness of private property.
- Told the peasants to do what they wanted to do, and were in fact already doing.-- to seize the land.

### III. ECONOMIC PROBLEMS.

1. February Revol -- had been caused largely by economic problems.  
Yet the Prov. Govt was unable to improve economic conditions.  
Why?
2. The War -- As long as the Prov. Govt remained in the war, it was impossible to raise the standard of living or increase the quantities of consumer goods.

### IV. THE CONSTITUENT ASSEMBLY.

1. Provisional Govt -- considered itself "provisional," i.e., temporary.  
-- Had no mandate from the people. Therefore had no right to enact sweeping reforms.
2. Constitutional Assembly -- elected in a democratic way, representing all the people, would draw up a constitution, determining the form of govt that Russia would have.  
The proper way to do things. The democratic way.
3. Promised a Constit. Assembly immediately after the Feb. Revol.  
- But not elected until after the Bol. Revol. Why?
4. Wanted to do Things Properly -- Collect population data, set up electoral boards. Distribute regulations & instructions.  
- Russia had never had a democratic national election before.
5. Delay, delay, delay

### V. TARDINESS -- one of the chief failures of the Prov. Govt.

- The Prov. Govt moved slowly, while events moved rapidly.

VI.

THE NATIONAL MINORITIES -- DISINTEGRATION OF THE RUSSIAN EMPIRE.

1. Half of Russia was non-Russian --  
-- Ukrainians, Belorussians, Georgians, Armenians, Turks, Poles, Latvians, Lithainians, Estonians, Finns, etc., etc.
  2. Many of them wanted Independence.
  3. After the fall of the Tsar -- Many of the nationalities demanded autonomy or independence.
  4. Elected National Govts -- proclaimed their independence.  
Refused to recongize the authority of the Prov. Govt.
- This was
5. Another problem plaguing the Prov Govt.  
- Felt this issue also should wait for the Constituent Assembly.
  6. Prov Govt trying simultaneously to:
    - fight a war.
    - carry out a revol.
    - prevent the Russian empire from disintegrating.



VIILEADERSHIP --V. WEAKNESSES OF KERENSKY1. Well-intentioned man. Spell-binding orator.

(Kerensky at U.Va. -- speaking in Cabell Hall)

But not a great thinker, not a good organizer.

Preferred ~~making~~ making speeches to the hum-drum work of running a govt.

Emotional  
- ~~rather than~~ /rather than rational.

- Idealistic rather than calculating.

- Impulsive rather than level-headed.

- Utopian in his faith in the "Russian soul", ~~in~~ in the Russian people, and in the cause of the Revolution.

- A socialist, but felt that he had to keep the liberals in the Provisional Govt., partly because he did not want to antagonize the Army Officers.

- Democratic -- even to the point of not wanting to arrest those who were openly trying to overthrow his govt.

- Not Tough Enough -- Unlike Lenin, he was not willing to shoot thousands of people in order to retain power.

*(Lived too long - 50 yrs a failure. Had him to dinner, asked him: "why didn't you?")*

2. The Other Leaders of the Provisional Govt

~~At first~~  
At first

a. Most of them were much more Conservative than the masses.

- Miliukov, Lvov, Guchkov, -- all later resigned.

- Tereshchenko, Nekrasov, etc. -- not much different.

b. Cadets, Octobrists -- Opposed socialism.

Believed in sacredness of private property  
Wanted to continue the war.

c. Socialists -- At first Kerensky was the only socialist. Later others were added -- Mensheviks and SR's. Socialists were 11 out of 18 from August 7 on.

But the conservatives still remained in the cabinet, and Kerensky felt he had to keep them in the cabinet.

Thus the Prov. Govt was still more conservative than the masses,  
~~especially the conservative Party.~~

# Opponents of the Prov. Govt. on the Left:

VII.

## DIVIDED AUTHORITY -- THE PETROGRAD SOVIET. "Dual Power"

1. Prov. Govt was not ~~the only~~ the only organ of govt.

Its authority was challenged by:

2. Petrograd Soviet of Workers' and Soldiers' Deputies

-- A mob of about 3,000 delegates elected by the workers in the factories and the soldiers and sailors stationed in and around Petrograd.

-- Plus 100's of Soviets throughout the country.

3. Soviet did not try to overthrow the Prov Govt

~~Did not~~ -- But didn't fully support it either.

-- Looked upon it with suspicion, as a "bourgeois" govt.

4. Soviet did not try to set itself up as THE GOVT of Russia

-- But at times acted as though it was the govt.

-- Issued orders, <sup>as if</sup> ~~as if~~ it were a govt.

-- Order No. 1 -- calling for democratization of the Army.

-- Destroyed discipline. Undermined the authority of officer

-- Increased desertions.

5. In general, the Petrograd Soviet weakened the authority of the Prov Govt and lessened its prestige.

-- Workers and Soldiers -- looked upon the Soviet as "their" govt.

Looked upon the Prov. Govt as the govt of the "bourgeoisie".

6. The Bolsheviks -- Eventually the Bols got control of the

Petrograd and Moscow Soviets and used them as the vehicle for the overthrow of the Prov Govt and the establishment of their own rule.



IX

IX, OPPONENTS OF THE PROV. GOVT. ON THE RIGHT.

1. If to the Petrograd Soviet and to the masses the Prov. Govt seemed too conservative, to many elements in the population the Prov Govt seemed too radical.

2. Army Officers -- Many felt that way.

Kerensky needed their support in order to continue the war.

3. Nobility and Bourgeoisie --

Most of them had favored the abdication of Nicholas, and many had even favored the abolition of the monarchy, but they were horrified at the chaos and disorder that reigned in Petrograd.

-- Repulsed by the peasants seizing the land, & workers seizing factories.

-- Fearful of the Soviets.

4. Advocates of "Law and Order"

-- Many began to say that what Russia needed was a "Strong Man" who would arrest the trouble-makers, stop illegal seizures of private property, and bring order to Russia.

5. General Kornilov -- seemed to be the "Strong Man" needed.

-- Attempted a coup in September.

-- Supported by some army officers, other conservatives.

*But!* -- Fiasco -- the troops refused to fight for him.

6. Results of the Kornilov Uprising --

-- Bolsheviks -- Kerensky freed the Bolsheviks from prison in order to help rally support against Kornilov.

-- Swing to the Left -- The threat of "counter-revolution" seemed genuine. Thus there followed a swing to the left in popular sentiment.

-- Petrograd Soviet -- Bols became a majority on Sept. 13  
Moscow Soviet -- " " " " " Sept. 19

BASIC, UNDERLYING CAUSES FOR THE FAILURE OF THE PROV. GOVT.

I. WEAKNESS OF THE MIDDLE CLASS.

1. Small in numbers. Reflecting the fact that economically Russia was an under-developed country.
2. The Traditional Champions of Democracy --
  - In England, France, America, and other countries it has been the Middle Class that has fought against feudal privilege, & absolute monarchy, and has established representative democratic institutions.
  - In Russia -- The Middle Class tried, through the Duma, and through the Prov. Govt. But they were too few in numbers, and were unable to win ~~enough~~ enough support from the masses.

II. THE LOW LEVEL OF POLITICAL CONSCIOUSNESS IN RUSSIA.

1. Lack of a Democratic Tradition.
  - except for the short period of time that the Duma tried to function.
2. Lack of Experience with Democratic Institutions
  - Had never had <sup>really</sup> free, democratic elections.
  - Did not understand the meaning of such phrases as "democracy," "representative govt," or "constitution".
3. Utopianism -- naive belief that the overthrow of the tsar would solve all their problems, and solve them immediately.
4. Didn't Understand What was Happening --
  - When the Prov Govt was removed from power and replaced by a new cabinet led by the Bolsheviks, the masses didn't really understand what that meant.
5. Receptive to Demagoguery -- Supported those that promised the most, without thinking very much about whether or not those promises would be kept.

III. THE ANARCHISM OF THE MASSES.

- 1. Although the majority of the people, when they voted for the first time in free elections, supported the Socialist Revolutionaries, in fact ~~the~~ most of the peasants were really Anarchists,

Even though they were not ~~the~~ supporters of the Anarchist party, and did not even know what the word "anarchist" meant.

- 2. Didn't want any govt. All central govts were bad.

What did govt's do? -- Collected taxes.  
-- Drafted you into the army.

Did the ~~the~~ peasants derive any benefit at all from the central govt.? -- None, as far as they could see.

Govts did only bad things, not good things.

So why have a govt?

- 3. Favored Local Self-Govt. -- the peasant commune

Let the peasants run their own affairs, without interference by those people in the cities.

- 4. National Issues, International Issues -- ~~the~~ were beyond the peasants' intellectual capacities. Incomprehensible.

- 5. Getting the Land -- that was the only issue they understood.

-- Once the Bolsheviks gave them the land, they were satisfied, at least for the moment.

NEXT TIME -- Why the Bolshviks won.

