

Module 03: 1917 — Did the War Cause a Revolution?

Evidence 25: Petrograd Soviet's Call to Peoples of the World, March 14/27, 1917

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Introduction

Even as the Provisional Government began to function, the Petrograd Soviet expanded its claim to speak for the Russian people. Using the nomenclature of the Socialist movement, the Soviet summoned proletarian toilers in all countries, but especially in the Austro-German armies, to overthrow their own repressive governments and bring the war to an end. This "Peace Platform," which promoted a democratic peace without territorial annexations or losses for Russia, ran directly counter to the Provisional Government's hopes of revitalizing the war effort and realizing the Imperial government's original war aims.

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Petrograd Soviet: Call to the Peoples of the World
March 14/27, 1917

Comrade-proletarians, and toilers of all countries:

We, Russian workers and soldiers, united in the Petrograd Soviet of Workers' and Soldiers' Deputies, send you warmest greetings and announce the great event. The Russian democracy has shattered in the dust the age-long despotism of the Tsar and enters your family of nations as an equal, and as a mighty force in the struggle for our common liberation. Our victory is a great victory for the freedom and democracy of the world. The chief pillar of reaction in the world, the "Gendarme of Europe," is no more. May the earth turn to heavy granite on his grave! Long live freedom! Long live the international solidarity of the proletariat, and its struggle for final victory!

Our work is not yet finished: the shades of the old order have not yet been dispersed, and not a few enemies are gathering their forces against the Russian revolution. Nevertheless our achievement so far is tremendous. The people of Russia will express their will in the Constituent Assembly,

which will be called as soon as possible on the basis of universal, equal, direct, and secret suffrage. And it may already be said without a doubt that a democratic republic will triumph in Russia. The Russian people now possess full political liberty. They can now assert their mighty power in the internal government of the country and in its foreign policy. And, appealing to all people who are being destroyed and ruined in the monstrous war, we announce that the time has come to start a decisive struggle against the grasping ambitions of the governments of all countries; the time has come for the people to take into their own hands the decision of the question of war and peace.

Conscious of its revolutionary power, the Russian democracy announces that it will, by every means, resist the policy of conquest of its ruling classes, and it calls upon the peoples of Europe for concerted, decisive action in favor of peace.

We are appealing to our brother-proletarians of the Austro-German coalition, and, first of all, to the German proletariat. From the first days of the war, you were assured that by raising arms against autocratic Russia, you were defending the culture of Europe from Asiatic despotism. Many of you saw in this a justification of that support which you were giving to the war. Now even this justification is gone: democratic Russia cannot be a threat to liberty and civilization.

We will firmly defend our own liberty from all reactionary attempts from within, as well as from without. The Russian revolution will not retreat before the bayonets of conquerors, and will not allow itself to be crushed by foreign military force. But we are calling to you: Throw off the yoke of your semi-autocratic rule, as the Russian people have shaken off the Tsar's autocracy; refuse to serve as an instrument of conquest and violence in the hands of kings, landowners, and bankers — and then by our united efforts we will stop the horrible butchery, which is disgracing humanity and is beclouding the great days of the birth of Russian freedom.

Toilers of all countries: We hold out to you the hand of brotherhood across the mountains of our brothers' corpses, across rivers of innocent blood and tears, over the smoking ruins of cities and villages, over the wreckage of the treasuries of civilization; — we appeal to you for the reestablishment and strengthening of international unity. In it is the pledge of our future

victories and the complete liberation of humanity.

Proletarians of all countries, unite!

PETROGRAD SOVIET OF WORKERS' AND SOLDIERS' DEPUTIES

Source:

Izvestiia, No. 15, March 28, 1917. Alfred Golder, ed., *Documents of Russian History, 1914-1917*, translated by Emanuel Aronsberg (New York: The Century Co., 1927): 325-326.