

LETTERS

TO THE EDITOR:

Failing to comprehend Lenin's accelerated drive for power after September 1917 has flawed Myron W. Hedlin's "Zinoviev's Revolutionary Tactics in 1917" (*Slavic Review*, March 1975). Kornilov's fiasco, coinciding with the fall of Riga and the resultant threat to Red Petrograd, aroused Lenin's suspicions that the Russian capital would be sacrificed to the Germans. Lenin now needed governmental power to make an immediate peace with the Germans, and desperately turned to the Bolshevized Latvian Rifles. His staunch allies since the April Theses, they controlled unoccupied Latvia by June, and Latvian Bolsheviks were prominent among those who tried to force Lenin's hand in taking power in July, before he wanted a coup d'état.

Riga's fall, immediately preceding the Kornilov coup, convinced the Latvians that the Russian government and army had deliberately withdrawn Russian forces in face of the German attack to betray both Latvia and the revolution. The aims of Lenin and the Latvians to seize power thus coincided, and the conspiracy is obvious from the predominant role of the Latvians in the police and military forces of the first Soviet Government. In short, Lenin's plans en route to the coup d'état were predicated not only on the potential readiness of his Petrograd or other following to move with him, but on his knowledge that he had behind him the sole remaining disciplined body of troops in the Imperial Army. Zinoviev and many others in the Bolshevik Central Committee apparently knew nothing about the Lenin-Latvian understanding. And since Hedlin makes no reference to such ignorance on Zinoviev's part, he has failed to construct a sound debate on the wisdom or courage of Zinoviev's judgment versus that of Lenin, with regard to a call for an immediate rising.

STANLEY W. PAGE
City College, CUNY

PROFESSOR HEDLIN REPLIES:

I fear I must persist in the "error" of my ways regarding Zinoviev's position in October 1917. While I agree that Latvia was a strong center of Bolshevik support and therefore a consideration in the revolutionary equation, I must reject the "Latvian connection" as a decisive factor in Lenin's decision to push for a seizure of power. There are several reasons for my rejection of Professor Page's criticism. First, there is a lack of evidence to support his contention. It is scarcely accidental that L. D. Trotsky, N. N. Sukhanov, John Reed, Adam Ulam, Robert V. Daniels, S. P. Melgunov, Louis Fischer, and Marcel Liebman, among others, all failed in their accounts of the Revolution to assert the vital importance of the Latvian forces for Lenin's calculations. In fact, in his own *Lenin and World Revolution*, Professor Page curiously fails to mention the Latvians as an essential factor for revolution. Instead, he notes that in a bid for power, Lenin had available on the military side "only the Kronstadt sailors and various Petrograd units" (p. 61). Surely if Professor Page has solid evidence proving the Lenin-Latvian connection, he will wish to share it in detail with the scholarly community. Professor Page's logic, in

addition, seems flawed. The predominance of the Latvians in the police and military forces of the first Soviet government *after* the October Revolution is quite unconvincing evidence that Lenin counted on the Latvians *prior to* the event. Indeed, at least one important contingent of Latvians, the Sixth Latvian Rifle Regiment, arrived in Petrograd only on November 22 (December 5), 1917, and only four days later, according to Melgunov, did they take over guard duty at the Smolny.

Another reason for persisting in my interpretation is the substantial evidence within Lenin's own works arguing against Professor Page's position. In "The Crisis Has Matured," in "Can the Bolsheviks Retain State Power?," in his October 7 (20) letter to the Petrograd City Conference, in his arguments before the Central Committee on October 10 (23) and October 16 (29) and elsewhere, Lenin failed to mention the Latvian argument. Instead, he consistently asserted growing Bolshevik support among workers, soldiers, and peasants, the weaknesses of the opposition and the imminent eruption of the world revolution as the factors favorable to a seizure of power. Zinoviev was quite aware of these factors, around which the intra-party debate revolved. Following Professor Page's line of reasoning, one would have to presume that Lenin refrained from using one of the strongest arguments on behalf of revolution (the Latvians) even in a *closed* meeting of *his own party's* hesitant Central Committee, a scenario too improbable for me to accept.

TO THE EDITOR:

My friend and one-time colleague at Indiana University, Maurice Friedberg, has drawn my attention to a big howler committed by me (and overlooked by you) in my review of Andrew Field's *Nabokov: A Bibliography* (*Slavic Review*, June 1975, pp. 440–42). He has just written to me asking: "Did Field really write that the change of calendars was *from* (rather than *to*) the Gregorian?" On checking this passage in Field's book (p. xvii), I saw that this was indeed what he wrote and that, hypnotized apparently by his use of terms and intent primarily on exposing his mistake about the use of the Old Style calendar by the Russian émigré press even after the calendar change in Soviet Russia, I did not notice Field's egregious and more important error. Instead of writing "no Russian publications in the West ever used the Gregorian calendar alone," I should have written ". . . used the *Julian* calendar alone." Mr. Field's double error does not excuse my own slip, and I am very grateful to Maurice Friedberg for drawing my attention to it in such a roundabout diplomatic way.

GLEB STRUVE

University of California, Berkeley (Emeritus)