



Russian Revolution: 100 Years

Introduction

Over the years, *Soviet Studies/Europe-Asia Studies* has published articles on different aspects of the Russian revolution. This virtual special issue to mark the hundredth anniversary reproduces a selection of them. Although our journal published contributions that dealt with the revolution on a broader perspective, the present selection limits itself to those that concentrate on the period between February and October 1917, as it is ultimately appropriate in the centenary of that year. Within this framework, it has been attempted to make the choice of articles in such a way as to cover the main landmarks of that year. The complication here is that the coverage of the events is uneven; there are more articles on the February revolution than on any other event. That may well be for the reason that the February revolution is one of the most complex events of 1917, and attracts more attention and controversy.

A further criterion for the selection of articles was the attempt to represent the kind of contributions that featured in the journal over the years. When *Soviet Studies* was first published in 1949 very little had been published in the West on the events of 1917. Symptomatically, in the first volume of his history of Soviet Russia which appeared in 1950, E. H. Carr remarked that a history of the vital period from February to October 1917 was badly needed. He could only refer his readers to a Soviet chronology of events and works by Miliukov and Trotsky. Things were not quite as dire as Carr made out. But beyond William Chamberlin's two-volume *The Russian Revolution*, which had appeared in 1935, there was no academic study of the subject. It was this void that the articles in *Soviet Studies* and *Europe-Asia Studies* helped to fill.

That it was possible for Carr to note in 1950 the dearth of academic studies on the Russian revolution serves to emphasise how late in the day Western interest in the subject developed. One can only regret the opportunities missed: the materials on the revolutionary period that could have been collected, the participants who could have been interviewed. The 1950s was a singularly barren period for the publication of any historical works of any kind in the Soviet Union, and if any veteran of the Russian revolution had survived into the 1950s it is most unlikely they would have shared their experiences with a foreign scholar. This situation was noted by Chamberlin in 1952, when he drew a contrast between the 1920s, when sources on 1917 were relatively abundant, and the present time, when he despaired of its being possible to write a

reasonably objective history of the Russian revolution on the basis of what material was then available.

It was from the 1960s, in the period of the thaw after Stalin's death and the re-emergence of Soviet works on the Russian revolution, that articles on 1917 began to appear in *Soviet Studies*. A number of them were published in 1967 in connection with the fiftieth anniversary of the Russian revolution. With the end of the Cold War, the political atmosphere in which articles on 1917 were written changed considerably. This change, however, does not seem to have had any noticeable effect on the approach adopted by contributors to the journal. Fashions in scholarship, conversely, proved to be more effective in determining the tone of articles. Earlier articles are more inclined to adopt a broad perspective on events, whereas more recent ones are more likely to be narrowly focussed and to include the element of quantification. Increased access to archival materials and availability of new sources were the main ways in which the end of communism affected scholarship on 1917.

After over 50 years of publishing articles on 1917 in *Soviet Studies* and *Europe-Asia Studies*, can it be said that the subject is exhausted? By no means! The Russian revolution is a key episode in modern world history, one which has always had, and will continue to have, far-reaching ideological dimensions. It is a subject that will continue to be studied and analysed along with other great historical landmarks. History, moreover, is not a discipline in which anything can finally be 'established'; there is an infinity of ways to interpret the sources available. It is possible, therefore, that in the future the most significant discoveries about 1917 will be made in exactly those areas that we think we know best.

James D. White

November 2017

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Articles

['We're for the Muzhiks' Party!' Peasant Support for the Socialist Revolutionary Party During 1917](#)

Sarah Badcock

Volume 53, Issue 1 (2001)

[The origins of order no. 1](#)

John R. Boyd

Volume 19, Issue 3 (1968)

[A note on the numerical strength of the Russian red guard in October 1917](#)

D. N. Collins

Volume 24, Issue 2 (1972)

[The Russian general staff and the June 1917 offensive](#)

Robert S. Feldman

Volume 19, Issue 4 (1968)

[The Bolsheviks and the formation of the Petrograd Soviet in the February revolution](#)

Tsuyoshi Hasegawa

Volume 29, Issue 1 (1977)

[1917: The tyranny of Paris over Petrograd](#)

John Keep

Volume 20, Issue 1 (1968)

[The evolution of party consciousness in 1917: The case of the Moscow workers](#)

Diane Koenker

Volume 30, Issue 1 (1978)

[Officers and men. A study of the development of political attitudes among the sailors of the Baltic Fleet in 1917](#)

D. A. Longley

Volume 25, Issue 1 (1973)

[The significance of communications in 1917](#)

Roger Pethybridge

Volume 19, Issue 1 (1967)

[The Russian municipal duma elections of 1917: A preliminary computation of returns](#)

William G. Rosenberg

Volume 21, Issue 2 (1969)

[The Russian Revolutionary Constitution and Pamphlet Literature in the 1917 Russian Revolution](#)

Ian D. Thatcher

Volume 68, Issue 10 (2016)

[Why October? The search for peace in 1917](#)

Rex A. Wade

Volume 20, Issue 1 (1968)

[Early Soviet historical interpretations of the Russian revolution 1918–24](#)

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Volume 37, Issue 3 (1985)