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Nikolai Sukhanov and the October Revolution: The attitude of Nikolai Sukhanov towards the October Revolution of 1917 in Russia

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Nikolai Sukhanov and the October Revolution

The attitude of Nikolai Sukhanov towards the October Revolution of 1917 in Russia

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Introduction

The Russian Revolution is one of the most significant events of the 20th century, involving the February Revolution that led to the overthrow of monarchy; and the October Revolution that resulted in the power seizure by the Bolsheviks. As the British historian S. A. Smith notes, not only it radically changed the path of Russia as “the world’s first Communist state on a territory covering one-sixth of the globe”, but also inspired “the communist movements and revolutions across the world”.¹

In relation to the October Revolution, the historians J. Daly and L. Trofimov suggest that when the Bolsheviks came to power, they were unsure what to do next.² According to the British historian M. D. Steinberg, at the beginning, many observers were convinced that the new regime could not survive “longer than a few weeks or even days”.³ Nevertheless, Steinberg stresses that the Bolsheviks’ popularity unquestionably was growing.⁴ In particular, this is due to their immediate and highly popular measures, such as the peace negotiations and the land decree.⁵ For instance, the Russian historian A. V. Shubin considers the latter land decree to be a wisely employed “populist move”.⁶ Meanwhile, the moderate socialists were prepared neither to compromise nor to struggle with the Bolsheviks. Therefore, in fear of a civil war - as Shubin further states, - they relied on the yet to be elected Constituent Assembly.⁷ However, “the Bolsheviks did not intend to yield power to the ‘parliamentary talking shop’. Now they were not interested in a compromise and balance of power. They embarked on the most determined and longest-running effort in history to overcome capitalism”.⁸

One of the notable figures of the Russian Revolution was Nikolai Sukhanov. That is not only due to his political involvement, but also due to the extensive historical materials that

¹ Smith, S. A. *The Russian Revolution. A Very Short Introduction*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002, 1.

² Daly J., Trofimov L. *Russia in War and Revolution, 1914-1922. A Documented History*. Cambridge: Hackett Publishing Company, Inc, 2009, 100.

³ Steinberg M. D. *Voices in Revolution, 1917*. New Haven: Yale University Press, 2001, 251.

⁴ Ibid, 170.

⁵ The Decree of the II All-Russian Congress of Soviets on Land, or the land decree, was issued by the Bolsheviks on 16 October (8 November) 1917. It that was based on the agrarian programme of SRs. The decree abolished the private property rights on lands and transferred all lands to the national land fund. All Russian citizens who wish to work on the land were permitted to do so. This decree was announced to be used as the guideline for the land reform until the final decision by the Constituent Assembly. See the section 3.3; see also Lenin, “Decret o zemle” (1917), from website of *the Historical Faculty of the Lomonosov Moscow State University*.

⁶ «популистский ход» - Shubin A.V. *Revolution 1917 god. Ot Fevralya do Otyabria [Revolutionary 1917. From February to October]*. Moscow: Academic project, 2018, 318.

⁷ Shubin, *Revolution 1917*, 321;

All-Russian Constituent Assembly, or a Constituent Assembly, is a representative body elected in November 1917 to determine the state order of Russia - see *Bolshaya Rossiiskaya Entsiklopediya [The Great Russian Encyclopaedia]*. Accessed 27 August 2021. https://bigenc.ru/domestic_history/text/4703995.

⁸ «Большевики не собирались уступать власть ‘парламентской говорильне’. Теперь их интересовали не компромиссы и баланс сил. Они начинали наиболее решительную и долгосрочную в истории попытку преодолеть капитализм» - Shubin, *Revolution 1917*, 321.

Sukhanov left behind. First and foremost, his vast newspaper articles published in *Novaya Zhizn*⁹ and his memoirs *Zapiski o revolutsii*.¹⁰ The former, *Novaya Zhizn*, was a daily newspaper issued from 18 April (1 May) 1917 until 16 July 1918. This was a press organ of a group also known as Novozhiznentsi, which ideologically lied within the Mensheviks-Internationalists and to whom Sukhanov belonged.

This thesis studies the following research question: What was the attitude of Nikolai Sukhanov towards the October Revolution and what does it reveal? It consists of two main parts:

Part I. His views and role in the Executive Committee of the Petrograd Soviet (“Ispolkom”)¹¹ in February-March 1917. During this period, Sukhanov was engaged in the decision-making and could bring his views into practice.

Part II. The views of Sukhanov from April till the October Revolution, including the first months of the Bolshevik rule towards the end of 1917. This was the time when he shifted from the practical politics to the publicist work and expressed his views on the political events through the newspaper *Novaya Zhizn*.

The timeframe from February to December 1917 allows to trace the evolution of his views, which went through a significant change as the political situation was evolving. Thereby, this thesis not only reveals the attitude of Sukhanov towards the October Revolution, but also the basis for this attitude and the way he came to his stance towards the Bolshevism. Because of the word limitation, this thesis focuses on 1917. Any events prior or following this year are outside the scope, and whenever mentioned are only meant to provide a context.

In terms of the primary sources, to consider Sukhanov in the Ispolkom in Part I, a historical analysis has been conducted of the memoirs of Sukhanov¹², as well as the memoirs and notes of his contemporaries and their relatives, such as P. Milyukov¹³, V. Lenin¹⁴, M.

⁹ *Novaya Zhizn* [New Life]. Petrograd, 1917-1918.

¹⁰ Sukhanov, N. N. *Zapiski o revolutsii* [The Russian Revolution, 1917. A personal record by N.N. Sukhanov]. Moscow: Republic, 1991.

¹¹ The Executive Committee of the Petrograd Soviet (Ispolkom) was the managing organ of the Petrograd Soviet of Workers 'and Soldiers' Deputies (Petrograd Soviet). The latter Petrograd Soviet was a representative body formed on 27 February (12 March) 1917. Until the First All-Russian Congress of Soviets of Workers 'and Soldiers' Deputies on June 3 (16) - June 24 (July 7) 1917, the Soviet had the status of a power centre of socialists. See *Bolshaya Rossiiskaya Entsiklopedia*.

¹² Sukhanov, *Zapiski*.

¹³ Milyukov, P. N. *Istoria vtoroi russkoi revolutsii. Protivorechia revolutsii* [History of the Second Russia Revolution. The contradictions of the revolution], Volume 1, Issue 1. Sofia: Russian-Bulgarian book production Sofia, 1921.

¹⁴ Lenin, V. I. *Polnoye sobranie sochinenii* [Complete Works]. Volume 31. Moscow: Political literature, 1969.

Rafis¹⁵, V. Shulgin¹⁶, A. Shliapnikov¹⁷, O. Yermansky¹⁸, and N. Bogdanova¹⁹. In addition, the first part includes a short comparison of some ideas of Sukhanov expressed in *Novaya Zhizn* in 1917 and in his brochure *Our left groups and the war*²⁰ published not long before the revolution, in 1916.

Part II is mainly based on the historical analysis of Sukhanov's articles in *Novaya Zhizn*.²¹ It is complemented by the memoirs of Sukhanov, although to a lesser extent. That is because *Novaya Zhizn* - as a daily newspaper - allows to see his immediate reaction to the political developments, while the memoirs - which were published in 1918-1923 - are rather reflections on the past. Also, both first and second parts contain notes on and references to the primary historical documents, such as *the Manifesto of the International Socialist Conference in Zimmerwald*²²; the manifesto *To Peoples of the World*²³; *the Decree of the II All-Russian Congress of Soviets on Peace*²⁴; and *the Decree of the II All-Russian Congress of Soviets on Land*²⁵.

Both Part I and Part II include referencing to the works of historians considered in this Introduction. Also, Part I includes the mentioning of primary sources collection edited and commented by the American historian M. C. Hickey²⁶, as well as biographical facts about Sukhanov researched by the Russian historian A. Kornikov.²⁷

¹⁵ Rafis, M. "Moi vospominania" ["My memories"]. In *Byloe [The Past]*. No. 19. 1992.

¹⁶ Shulgin V.V. *Dni [Days]*. Leningrad: Priboi, 1926, 141-142.

¹⁷ Shliapnikov, A.G. *Kanun semnadtstogo goda. Semnadsatii god. [Eve of the seventeenth year. Seventeenth year]*. Volume 1, books 1-2. Moscow: Republic, 1992, 192-193.

¹⁸ Yermansky, O. A. 1927. "Iz perezhitogo" ["From experienced"], Moscow-Leningrad, 158. Retrieved from Kornikov, A. A. "Sukhanov, Nikolai Nikolaevich". In *Politicheskie deyateli Rossii, 1917: Biograficheskii slovar [Political figures of Russia 1917: Bibliographical vocabulary]*. Moscow: the Great Russian Encyclopedia, 1993, 311 "Sukhanov", 311.

¹⁹ Bogdanova N.B. *Moi otets – Menshevik [My father – Menshevik]*. 40-42, Saint Petersburg: NITS Memorial, 1994.

²⁰ Sukhanov N. N. *Nashi levie gruppy i voina [Our left groups and the war]*. 1916. The State Public Historic Library of Russia. Accessed on 17 August 2021. <http://elib.shpl.ru/ru/nodes/14192-suhanov-n-n-nashi-levye-gruppy-i-voyna-pg-1916#mode/inspect/page/18/zoom/4>

²¹ Sukhanov, N. Article dated April-December. In *Novaya Zhizn [New Life]*. 1917.

²² *Manifest Mezhdunarodnoi sotsialisticheskoi konferentsii v Tsimervalde. [The Manifesto of the International Socialist Conference in Zimmerwald]*. 1915. The Digital Library of the Historical Documents of the Russian Historical Society . Accessed on 17 August 2021. <http://docs.historyrussia.org/ru/nodes/19489-manifest-mezhdunarodnoy-sotsialisticheskoy-konferentsii-v-tsimmervalde-23-26-avgusta-5-8-sentyabrya-1915-g#mode/inspect/page/2/zoom/4>.

²³ Sukhanov, "Записки о революции" [The Russian Revolution, 1917. A personal record by N.N. Sukhanov], 202-203; The Petrograd Soviet, "Petrograd Soviet's Call to Peoples of the World". 14 (27) March 1917. In *Documents of Russian History 1914-1917*. Golder, A. (ed), translated by Aronsberg, E. 325-326 New York: The Century Co, 1927. The Digital History Reader. Accessed on 17 August 2021. https://www.dhr.history.vt.edu/modules/eu/mod03_1917/evidence_detail_25.html .

²⁴ Lenin V. I. "Decret II Vserossiiskogo siezda Sovetov o mire" ["Decree of the II All-Russian Congress of Soviets on Peace"]. 26 October (8 November) 1917. The Historical Faculty of the Lomonosov Moscow State University. Accessed on 17 August 2021. http://www.hist.msu.ru/ER/Etext/DEKRET/o_mire.htm .

²⁵ Lenin V. I. "Decret II Vserossiiskogo siezda Sovetov o zemle" ["Decree of the II All-Russian Congress of Soviets on Land"]. 26 October (8 November) 1917. The Historical Faculty of the Lomonosov Moscow State University. Accessed on 17 August 2021. http://www.hist.msu.ru/ER/Etext/DEKRET/o_zemle.htm .

²⁶ Hickey, M. C. *Competing Voices from the Russian Revolution. Fight Words*. Santa Barbara: ABC-CLIO, 2011.

²⁷ Kornikov, A. A. "Sukhanov, Nikolai Nikolaevich". In *Politicheskie deyateli Rossii, 1917: Biograficheskii slovar [Political figures of Russia 1917: Bibliographical vocabulary]*. Moscow: the Great Russian Encyclopedia, 1993, 311-312.

The historiography of the Soviet and modern periods reveals diverse views of the Russian, Western, as well as the Russian immigrant authors on the role of Sukhanov in the Ispolkom and his literary legacy, most notably *Zapiski o revolutsii*. The literary activities of Sukhanov in *Novaya Zhizn* are rather little studied. That is in spite that by April 1917 Sukhanov was a prominent public figure and his opinion communicated via *Novaya Zhizn* had a value among the political actors of this time. For example, V. Lenin considered the commentary of Sukhanov expressed in *Novaya Zhizn* and, as discussed further in this thesis, replied to the issues raised.

For example, the Israeli historian I. Getzler refers to Sukhanov as to “the chronicler *par excellence* of Russia’s democratic revolution from February to October 1917”.²⁸ In his book dedicated to Sukhanov, he actively uses the memoirs of Sukhanov as a source and characterises them “universally acclaimed as incomparable” and as “a very honest, penetrating and incisive account of the events of 1917”.²⁹ In terms of the political involvement, Getzler characterises Sukhanov as the leading ideologist of the February Revolution, and the foundation member of the Ispolkom and the advocate of the liberal government in the first weeks of the revolutionary events.³⁰

Sukhanov’s memoirs were also actively used as a reliable historical source by the American historian A. Robinovich³¹, British historian G. Katkov³², Russian historian F. A. Gaida³³, Soviet historian and academician P. Volobuyev³⁴, and the philosopher and representative of the Russian immigrant authors B. V. Yakovenko.³⁵ In particular, Yakovenko states that Sukhanov’s memoirs “is perhaps the most vital, valuable, interesting, and talented of all that has been written so far about the Great Russian Revolution”.³⁶ Volobuyev also expresses a high historical value of *Zapiski o revolutsii* and characterises it a “great work”³⁷ and a typical “Menshevik concept of the October

²⁸ Getzler I. Nikolai Sukhanov: Chronicler of the Russian Revolution. New York: PALGRAVE: 2002, 1.

²⁹ Ibid.

³⁰ Ibid, 225.

³¹ Robinovich, A. *Bolsheviki prihodyat k vlasti: Revoltsia 1917 gods v Petrograde* [*The Bolsheviks Come to Power: The Revolution of 1917 in Petrograd*]. Moscow: Progress publishing house, 1989.

³² Katkov G. *Fevralskaya Revoltsia* [*The February Revolution*]. Moscow: Centerpoligraph, 2006.

³³ Gaida F. A. *Liberalnaya oppozitsia na putyah k vlasti (1814 - vesna 1917)* [*Liberal opposition on the road to power (1914 - spring 1917)*]. Moscow: ROSSPEN, 2003.

³⁴ Volobuyev P. *Economicheskaya politika Vremennogo pravitelstva* [*Economic policy of the Provisional Government*]. Moscow: The publishing house of the Academy of Science of the USSR, 1962.

³⁵ Yakovenko B. V. *Istoria Velikoi russkoi revolutsii. Fevralsko-Martovskaya revolutsia I yeyo posledstviya* [*History of the Great Russian Revolution. February-March revolution and its consequences*]. Moscow: Vikmo-M, 2013

³⁶ «является едва ли не самым жизненным, ценным, интересным, и талантливим из всего того, что пока вообще написано было о Великой русской революции» - Yakovenko, *Istoria*, 34.

³⁷ «большой труд» - Volobuyev, *Economicheskaya*, 5-6.

Revolution”.³⁸ Volobuyev considered that the memoirs of Sukhanov include extensive and well-founded criticism of the Provisional Government from “is petty-bourgeois, reformist positions”.³⁹ The Socialist Revolutionary (SR) and Sukhanov’s contemporary, M.V. Vishnyak, in his historical work in the Russian Revolution, characterises *Zapiski o revolutsii* as one of the most significant existing sources on 1917. Although he also stresses that these are personal memoirs, not a result of an extensive study. Therefore, a certain extent of subjectiveness is to be expected. Not only under the influence of Sukhanov’s ideology but also personal qualities, such a sense of self-administration that Sukhanov tends to naturally have. Also, Vishnyak draws attention to the publication years in 1918-1921, which is spread in time and constitute post-evaluations influenced by that time.⁴⁰

Other historians - such as the Soviet historian E. N. Burdzhhalov⁴¹, and the Soviet and Russian historians V. S Diakin⁴² and V. I. Startsev.⁴³ - while using or positively assessing the literary work of Sukhanov, criticise his willingness to compromise.⁴⁴

Some historians negatively assess both literary and political activities of Sukhanov, such as the Russian historian G. I. Zlokazov⁴⁵, Soviet historian and academician I. I. Mints⁴⁶, American historian R. E. Pipes⁴⁷, the Soviet and Russian historian A. V. Ignatiev⁴⁸, as well as the specialists of the Institute of History of the Academy of Sciences (RAS) of the USSR R. S. Gannelin, V. N. Ginner, O. N. Znamenski, G. L. Sobolev, V. I. Startsev in their collective monograph.⁴⁹ Although Zlokazov uses Sukhanov’s memoirs and articles in

³⁸ «большой труд»; “типичный меньшевистской концепции Октябрьской революции” - Volobuyev, *Economicheskaya*, 5-6.

³⁹ «ведётся с мелкобуржуазных, реформистских позиций и в конечном счете сводятся к осуждению правящих партий за то, что они не смогли предотвратить рост большевизма и революционного движения» - Ibid.

⁴⁰ Vishnyak M. V. “Fevral v ‘Zapiskah o revolutsii’ Nik. Sukhanovs [February in Zapiski o revolutsii of N. Sukhanov]. *Dva puti: Fevral i Otyabr* [Two roads: February and October]. The research programme of NIPTS Memoirial “Socialists and Anarchist - the resistance members to the Bolshevik movement”. Accessed on 17 August 2021. <http://socialist.memo.ru/books/perli/vishnak/v06.htm>.

⁴¹ Burdzhhalov E. N. *Vtoraya Russkaya revolutsia. Vosstanie v Petrograde* [The Second Russian Revolution. The uprising in Petrograd]. Moscow: Nauka, 1967, 313-314.

⁴² Diakin V. S. *Russkaya bourgeoisie i tsarism v godi Pervoi Mirovoi Voini (1914-1917)* [The Russian Bourgeoisie and Tsarism during the World War I (1914-1917)]. Leningrad: Nauka, 1967, 331, 343, 347.

⁴³ Startsev V. I. *Vnutrenniaya politika vremennogo pravitelstva pervogo sostava* [The Internal Policy of the first Provisional Government]. Leningrad: Nauka, 1980, 55-58, 62-67, 70, 88, 90.

⁴⁴ Diakin, *Russkaya*, 331, 343, 347; Burdzhhalov, *Vtoraya*, 313-314 .

⁴⁵ Zlokazov G. I. *Petrogradski Soviet na puti k Otyabru* [Petrograd Soviet on the way to October]. Nauka: Moscow, 1978; Zlokazov, *Petrogradski Soviet rabochih i sikhatskih deputatov v period mirnogo razvitiya revolutsii: fevral- iyun 1917* [Petrograd Soviet of Workers and Soldiers' Deputies during the Peaceful Development of the Revolution: February-June 1917]. Moscow: Nauka, 1960.

⁴⁶ Mints I. I. *Istoriya Velikogo Oktiabria* [The History of the Great October]. Volume 1. Moscow: Nauka, 1978; Mints I. I. *Istoriya Velikogo Oktiabria* [The History of the Great October]. Volume 2. Moscow: Nauka, 1978.

⁴⁷ Pipes R. E. *Russkaya revolutsia* [The Russian Revolution]. Book 1. Moscow: ROSSPEN, 199.

⁴⁸ Ignatiev, A. V. *Vneshnaya politika vremennogo pravitelstva* [Foreign policy of the Provisional Government]. Moscow: Science, 1974

⁴⁹ Gannelin R. SH., Ginner V. N., Znamenski O. N., Sobolev G. L., Startsev V. I. *Revolutsinney Petrograd. God 1917* [The Revolutionary Petrograd. The Year 1917]. USSR: Nauka, 1977.

Novaya Zhizn as a historical source⁵⁰, he states the following: "N. Sukhanov's memoirs also give an extremely distant picture of events. Written from a compromise Menshevik standpoint, his 'Zapiski o revolutsii' in whole greatly distort the situation of those days. However, the facts cited in his memoirs, often despite the desire of their author, refute the false ideas that are stated in this book".⁵¹ As of the political activities, Zlokazov characterises Sukhanov as a person far from the proletarian masses and without a solid support among workers.⁵² Similarly to Zlokazov, Pipes considers Sukhanov as a representative of intelligentsia not supported by any substantial political force. Pipes ironically notes in relation to the contact commission⁵³ where Sukhanov was sitting: "With one stroke of a feast, the will of a group of intellectuals appointed by the socialist parties became the will of the 'revolutionary people'".⁵⁴

Furthermore, while using *Novaya Zhizn* as a source⁵⁵, Mints also negatively assesses the historical value of Sukhanov's memoirs. For example, he states that Sukhanov depicted the creation of the Order No 1⁵⁶ "almost a caricature".⁵⁷ In regard to the political involvement of Sukhanov, Mints considers Sukhanov to be a bourgeoisie who managed to obtain a high post at the beginning of the revolution.⁵⁸ Also, Mints noted that Novozhiznentsi - including Sukhanov - strongly opposed the war but never went beyond verbal statements.⁵⁹

As of Ignatiev, he uses the characteristic given to Sukhanov by V. Lenin as a cowardly reformist who covered "his cowardice with the most reckless projection and braggart".⁶⁰

⁵⁰ Zlokazov, *Petrogradski Soviet na puti*.

⁵¹ «крайне далекую от действительности картину событий дают и мемуары Н. Суханова. Написанные с соглашательско меньшевистских позиций его 'Записки о революции' в целом очень искажают обстановку тех дней. Однако факты приводимые в его мемуарах зачастую помимо желания их автора опровергают ложные идём которые утверждаются в этой книге» - Zlokazov, *Petrogradski*, 24.

⁵² Ibid, 42.

⁵³ On 8 (21) March, the contact commission was created as an organ of the Ispolkom for the control over the Provisional Government. See *Academic*, Accessed on 17 August 2021, <https://dic.academic.ru/dic.nsf/bse/98004/Контактная>.

⁵⁴ «одним росчерком пира, воля группы интеллигентов назначенных социалистическими партиями стала волей 'революционного народа'» - Pipes, *Russkaya*, 354.

⁵⁵ Mints, *Istoriya*, Volume 1, e.g. e.g. 455, 474, 476; Mints, *Istoriya*, Volume 2, e.g. 112, 782, 784, 785.

⁵⁶ The Orde No 1 was passed by the Petrograd Soviet on 1 (14 March) 1917. Among its principle points was the order to the Petrograd garrison, guard, army, artillery and sailors to obey the soldiers' committees and the Petrograd Soviet. The orders of the Military Commission of the State Duma were to be carried out only as long as they did not contradict the orders and decrees of the Petrograd Soviet. See *Bolshaya Rossiiskaya Entsiklopedia*.

⁵⁷ «чуть ли не в карикатурном виде» - Mints, *Istoriya*, Volume 1, 509.

⁵⁸ «мещанин»; «чтобы примкнуть к пробуждающей революции и захватить в ней руководящий пост» - Ibid, 505.

⁵⁹ Mints, *Istoriya*, Volume 2, 103.

⁶⁰ «свою трусость самым бесшабашным прозрением и хвастуном» - Ignatiev, *Vneshnaya*, 94-95.

Both Ignatiev and the authors of the monograph of RAS reproach Sukhanov for his willingness to compromise with the bourgeoisie above ideological principles.⁶¹

In line with the aforementioned, the contemporaries of Sukhanov, the leader of the Constitutional Democratic Party (Cadet) P. Milyukov⁶² and the Bolshevik A. Shliapnikov⁶³, in their historical works also give negative assessment to the political standpoint of Sukhanov. Milyukov barely considers the political involvement of Sukhanov and characterises him as an individual who attempted to be in the lead of the ideological aspects of the Ispolkom, however was not able to achieve the passage of his ideas by the Petrograd Soviet.⁶⁴ Shliapnikov in turn deems that Sukhanov - and those having similar views - falsely sees the cause of problems "not in the class nature of the policy of the Provision Government⁶⁵, but only in the insufficiently close contact between the government of the 'moderate strata of society' and the organs of 'revolutionary democracy'".⁶⁶

Hence, the views of historians on the contribution of Sukhanov in the historical knowledge and political events of 1917 differ among his contemporaries and historians. Further, the following chapters of this thesis will analyse the views of Sukhanov; what it reveals about the October Revolution; and how it correlates with the aforementioned historiography. Thus, the ultimate aim of this thesis is establishing the historical meaning and value of Sukhanov's contested observations on the revolution of 1917.

⁶¹ Gannelin et al, *Revolutsinney*, 52; Ignatiev, *Vneshnaya*, 94-95.

⁶² Milyukov, *Istoria*, 64.

⁶³ Shliapnikov, *Kanun*, 196.

⁶⁴ Milyukov, *Istoria*, 2014, 64;

The Petrograd Soviet of Workers' and Soldiers' Deputies (Petrograd Soviet) was the representative body formed on 27 February (12 March) 1917. Until the First All-Russian Congress of Soviets of Workers' and Soldiers' Deputies on June 3 (16) - June 24 (July 7) 1917, the Petrograd Soviet had the status of a power centre of socialists. See *Bolshaya Rossiiskaya Entsiklopedia*.

⁶⁵ The Provisional Government was the supreme body of the state power in Russia that functioned between 2 March 2 (15) - 26 October (8 November) 1917. See *Bolshaya Rossiiskaya Entsiklopedia*.

⁶⁶ «видели не в классовом характере политики временного правительства, а лишь в недостаточно тесном контакте между правительством 'умеренных слоев общества' и органами 'революционной демократии» - Shliapnikov, *Kanun*, 415.

Part I

1. Views and activities of Sukhanov prior the Russian Revolution

Nikolai Nikolaevich Sukhanov (real surname: Gimmer) was born on 27 November 1882 in Moscow. He has engaged in the revolutionary movement since his youth. In 1903, Sukhanov joined the SR.⁶⁷ In 1906-1907, he left the SRs and focused on his literary activities.⁶⁸ In Sukhanov's own words, at the time, he became "the complete Marxist".⁶⁹ In 1913, Sukhanov he became an editor of *Sovremennik*, a magazine positioned between Narodnichestvo and Marxism. As noted by Sukhanov, he then increasingly engaged in the socialist movement as a publicist.⁷⁰

During the World War I, Sukhanov "without hesitation" ⁷¹ took the ideological (non-factional) stance of the left Mensheviks, or so-called Mensheviks-Internationalists. Sukhanov supported the anti-war Zimmerwald Manifesto that formed the basis for the programme of the Mensheviks-Internationalists and the Bolsheviks on the war.⁷² At the time, Sukhanov promoted his anti-war internationalist ideas through *Sovremennik*, until it was reformatted in 1915 - with the involvement of M. Gorky - into the social democratic magazine *Letopis* and, in 1917, into the newspaper *Novaya Zhizn*, where Sukhanov remained working until its closure in 1918.⁷³

As discussed further, in February 1917, the role of Sukhanov drastically changed – although only for a few weeks – from the passive literary contribution to the decision-making of a high importance. At this stage of the practical politics, Sukhanov brought his political views to life, in particular, through the formation of the Provisional Government and the manifesto *To Peoples of the World*.

⁶⁷ Sukhanov, N. N. Autobiography "Sukhanov, Nikolai Nikolaevich". In *Deyateli SSSR I revoliutsionnogo dvizhenia Rossii. Entsiklopedicheski slovar Granat [Figures of the USSR and the revolutionary movement in Russia. Encyclopedic Dictionary Granat]*. Figatner, Y. Y. (Ed.). Moscow: Soviet Encyclopedia, 1989, 709; Kornikov, "Sukhanov", 311-312.

⁶⁸ Sukhanov, Autobiography, 710.

⁶⁹ «законченным марксистом» – Ibid .

⁷⁰ Ibid.

⁷¹ «без колебания» – Ibid.

⁷² See the section 2.4 for more information on the Zimmerwald Manifesto .

⁷³ Sukhanov, Autobiography, 710 .

2. The views of Sukhanov and his role in the Ispolkom February-March 1917

2.1 Sukhanov entering the Ispolkom

Since 23 February (8 March), mass demonstrations were ongoing on a daily basis. On 27 February (12 March), the armed forces refused to obey their officers and joined the protesters, which became the turning point of the revolution. As of 27 February, Sukhanov was in Saint Petersburg, unlike the leaders of the Russian Social Democratic Labour Party (RSDLP) and the SR that were in exile, prison, or in immigration (incl. I. Tsereteli, V. Chernov, M. Nathanson, J. Martov, and F. Dan).

On that day, the Ispolkom was formed. It acted on behalf of the Petrograd Soviet of Workers' and Soldiers' Deputies ("Petrograd Soviet") and had a great influence among workers and soldiers. The individuals who formed it - mainly Mensheviks and non-fractional social democrats leaning to the Mensheviks, including Sukhanov⁷⁴ - had not been heavily engaged in the anti-government activities and, therefore, were lawfully present in Saint Petersburg. Except for K. Gvozdev and B. Bogdanov who had been arrested not long before the revolutionary events and were freed by the demonstrators on 27 February.⁷⁵ If the leaders of the RSDLP and the SR were in Saint Petersburg, almost all initial members - including Sukhanov, but excluding N. Chkheidze and A. Kerensky - would unlikely have enough authority to join the Ispolkom.

Sukhanov joined the Ispolkom as a representative of the socialist literary group.⁷⁶ As considers the Soviet historian and academician I. I. Mints, Sukhanov took advantage and fled to the Tauride Palace "to join the awakening revolution and seize a leading post in it".⁷⁷ O. Yermansky, one of the Mensheviks-Internationalists, noted that Sukhanov was "a person who did not represent anyone, known only as a journalist and an opponent of the war, not associated with any party organisation, and even had an indefinite political physiognomy".⁷⁸ This reaffirms that Sukhanov was primarily known as a publicist and would unlikely enter the Ispolkom if the leaders of the main socialist parties were present.

⁷⁴ Sukhanov, *Zapiski*, 61-62.

⁷⁵ Bogdanova, *Moi otets*, 40-42, Saint Petersburg: NITS Memorial, 1994, 33.

⁷⁶ Kornikov, "Sukhanov", 311.

⁷⁷ «мещанин»; «чтобы примкнуть к пробуждающей революции и захватить в ней руководящий пост» - Mints, *Istoriya*, Volume 1, 505.

⁷⁸ «... человек никого не представлявший, известный только как журналист и противник войны, ни с какой партийной организацией не связанный, да еще и с неопределенной политической физиономией» - Kornikov, "Sukhanov", 311.

Thus, in the first weeks of the revolution, Sukhanov joined the Ispolkom, one of the key bodies of the time. As shown in the next chapters, in the first weeks of the revolution - until the return of the leaders of the socialist parties, - the seat of Sukhanov in the Ispolkom provided an opportunity to bring his political views into practice.

2.2 The composition of the Provisional Government

All members of the Ispolkom and the Petrograd Soviet generally agreed that a new government should be formed. The solution of the Ispolkom, including Sukhanov, was based on the ideological postulates of the Mensheviks. They were adhered to K. Marx's theory of the socio-economic formations, according to which there are five stages of social evolution - prehistory, slavery, feudalism, capitalism, and communism - that sequentially succeed one another. The Mensheviks believed that Russia has a large share of feudalism and is between the feudal and capitalist formations. Therefore, the socialist government cannot succeed and Russia should be headed by a bourgeois government, till the capitalism is developed enough for the transition to the socialist formation.⁷⁹

Being ideologically close to the Mensheviks, Sukhanov considered the February Revolution as bourgeois.⁸⁰ Moreover, the memories of the 1905 revolution were still fresh in the minds of the Ispolkom members - including Sukhanov, - when the scale of the revolution frightened the bourgeoisie and, following the 1905 October *Manifesto on the Improvement of the State Order*, it ceased to support the revolutionary movement. The Ispolkom members feared that, if the Petrograd Soviet would announce a socialist government, the bourgeoisie – namely, the deputies of the State Duma, students, intellectuals, and officers – would take the side of the tsar in fear that the revolution will radicalise. In that case, the bourgeoisie could form a force substantial enough to resist the revolution.⁸¹

The Bolsheviks that joined the Ispolkom – V. Molotov, A. Shliapnikov, and P. Zalutsky, - believed that Russia could go over to socialism and that the Petrograd Soviet should create a socialist government from the Bolsheviks, Menshevik, and the SRs. However, these individuals could not impact the decision-making as the majority of the Ispolkom members were the Mensheviks.

⁷⁹ Startsev, *Deklaratsia*, 204-205; Bogdanova, *Moi otets*, 40-42; Sukhanov, *Zapiski*, 6-9, 76-81; Volobuyev, O. V. Zhuravlev V.V Gorshkov M. K. Kozlov V.P. Mironenko S.V. Nenarokov A.P. Sorokin A.K., and Shelohaev V.V (Ed.). *Mensheviki. Dokumenti i materialy. 1903 – fevral 1917* [*Mensheviks. Documents and materials. 1903- February 1917*]. Moscow: ROSSPEN, 1996, 15-16.

⁸⁰ Sukhanov, *Zapiski*, 6-9, 76-81.

⁸¹ *Ibid.*, 7.

Another question was whether the socialists should join the government. On 28 February (13 March), the Ispolkom had a meeting on the government formation. The speakers were Sukhanov and a non-fractional Bolshevik, Y. Steklov. As stated by one of the participants, M. Rafis of the Jewish Labour Bund, both Sukhanov and Steklov reported that they had semi-official negotiations with individual members of the Provisional Committee of the State Duma ("Provisional Committee"). Sukhanov said that the participation of the socialists in the government is out of the question since this would mean their participation in the imperialist war.⁸²

Although the majority of the Ispolkom shared the view of Sukhanov, the social democrats decided to discuss this issue with the governing bodies of their political parties. On the night of 28 February (13 March) to 1 (14) March, a meeting was held with the Organisational Committee of the RSDLP and the majority decided that the social democrats should join the government. However, on the morning of 1 March, the members of the Ispolkom were informed that Sukhanov, Steklov, and the non-fractional member of the RSDLP, N. Sokolov, had already held negotiations with the Provisional Committee and had agreed that the socialists will not join the government. This caused a discontent of some Ispolkom members, but the majority agreed with this arrangement.⁸³

The Provisional Committee feared the Petrograd Soviet as the insurgent troops voluntarily came under the authority of the latter and, therefore, the Petrograd Soviet had the armed forces at its disposal.⁸⁴ Therefore, the Provisional Committee suggested to form the new government from the fractions of the State Duma, including the leaders of the two socialist parties seated in the State Duma: Chkheidze from the Mensheviks and Kerensky from the Trudoviks. The Ispolkom restricted them from joining, and Sukhanov was among those voicing for this restriction. Nevertheless, Kerensky - who desired to join the government - convinced the Ispolkom of the necessity to take the ministerial post.⁸⁵ As Sukhanov recalls, when Kerensky approached him, Sukhanov "did not give him hope and still spoke against it".⁸⁶

⁸² Full name: The General Jewish Labour Bund in Lithuania, Poland and Russia.

⁸³ Rafis, "Moi vospominania", 194-196.

⁸⁴ Chermensky E. D. *Fevralskaya burguazno-demokraticheskaya revoliutsia 1917 g. v Rossii* [February bourgeois-democratic revolution of 1917 in Russia]. Moscow: State Educational and Pedagogical Publishing House of the Ministry of Education of the RSFSR, 1959, 146-150.

⁸⁵ Chermensky, *Feralskaya*, 146-150.

⁸⁶ «было ясно, как он поступит» "его вопрос сводился ни к тому быть ему или не быть министром. [...] Цель его разговора было узнать, поддержит ли его Совет в лице его руководителей»; «я его не обнадеживал и по-прежнему высказался отрицательно» – cited from Sukhanov, *Zapiski*, 101.

Thus, Sukhanov considered that Russia should be headed by a bourgeois government. As a member of the Ispolkom, Sukhanov could bring this into practice. He pro-actively engaged into the arbitrary negotiations with the Provisional Committee and made a significant contribution to the formation of the government.

2.3 The programme of the Provisional Government

On 2 (15) March, the representatives of the Provisional Committee and the Ispolkom agreed on the eight principles of the programme of the Provisional Government: the amnesty for political and religious cases; freedom of speech; cancellation of class, religious, and national restrictions; convening of the Constituent Assembly; replacement of the police by the militia; elections to the local self-government bodies; non-disarmament and non-withdrawal of military units from Petrograd; and the provision to soldiers of the same public rights as those granted to all other citizens.⁸⁷

V. Shulgin - one of the members of the Provisional Committee – recalls that from the side of the Provisional Committee, the negotiations were mainly led by P. Milyukov.⁸⁸ The Provisional Committee easily agreed with almost all suggestions of the Ispolkom as they were in line with the programmes of their parties, except for the proposal to declare a republic. This proposal was confronted as the Provisional Committee considered it necessary to save the monarchy and demand Nicholas II to abdicate in favour of his underage son, who would not be able to undertake the responsibilities in full.⁸⁹ As Milyukov explains in his memoirs, the Provisional Committee was convinced that the monarchy, as a symbol known for centuries, is needed for the established the Provisional Government that will be composed of the ministers yet unknown to and having no trust of the population. According to Milyukov, the Provisional Government without a monarch “is a ‘fragile boat’ that can drown in the ocean of popular unrest”.⁹⁰ As a result, the representatives of the Provisional Committee and the Ispolkom agreed that the Constituent Assembly will decide on this matter.⁹¹

⁸⁷ Chistyakov O. I. ed. “Zakonodatelstvo epohi burguazno-demokraticheskikh revolutsii” [“Legislation of the era of bourgeois-democratic revolutions”]. In *Rossiiskoye zakonodatelstvo X-XX vv* [Russian legislation X-XX centuries]. Volume 9. Moscow: Legal literature, 1994, 124-125.

⁸⁸ Shulgin, *Dni*, 141-142.

⁸⁹ Sukhanov, “Zapiski”, 114; Milyukov, *Istoria*, 53-54.

⁹⁰ «Временное правительство без монарха [...] является ‘утлой ладьей’, которая может потонуть в океане народных волнений, стране при этих условиях может грозить потеря всякого сознания государственности и полная анархия, раньше чем соберется учредительное собрание» – Milyukov, *Istoria*, 54.

⁹¹ «Временное правительство одно, без монарха, говорил он, является «утлой ладьей», которая может потонуть в океане народных волнений, стране при этих условиях может грозить потеря всякого сознания государственности и полная анархия, раньше чем соберется Учредительное собрание, Временное правительство одно до него не доживет» – Ibid.

Sukhanov's efforts to create a bourgeois government have always been the subject of criticism of Soviet authors, starting with his contemporary A. Shlyapnikov and ending with the specialists of the Institute of History of the Academy of Sciences (RAS) of the USSR R. S. Gannelin, V. N. Ginner, O. N. Znamenski, G. L. Sobolev, and V. I. Startsev in their collective monograph. In particular, the latter monograph sharply criticises the willingness of Sukhanov to compromise with the bourgeoisie on the form of government, which is considered as an acceptance by Sukhanov of the idea to retaining the monarchy as demanded by P. Milyukov.⁹²

On 3 (16) March, the Provisional Committee announced the formation of the Provisional Government and the eight principles as basis for its programme. No statements were made on the burning issues of immediate peace negotiations; introduction of the 8-hour workday; and transfer of land to peasants. The Ispolkom - and Sukhanov in particular - feared that such radical proposals would be refused by the Provisional Government, and that it would withdraw from the existing agreements with the Ispolkom and would join the tsar.⁹³ For Sukhanov, the most important was to agree on the political freedoms, amnesty, and the convening of the Constituent Assembly, while “any other requirements, undoubtedly less essential, could disrupt the combination [... as] many of them could not be accepted by Milyukov and Co”.⁹⁴ Indeed, one of the core points of the political programme of the Cadets - one of the largest parties of the Provisional Committee headed by Milyukov, - was the war till victory. Another large party, the Octobrists – that was representing the interests of landlords, such as its chairman M. Rodzianko, - would also firmly refuse. As the historian V. Startsev notes, “it was necessary to force the bourgeoisie to assume power, and this could be done by appearing very accommodating to them and not putting forward such demands that could frighten the bourgeoisie”.⁹⁵

The Bolshevik and Ispolkom member, A. Shliapnikov, recalls that “they [Sukhanov, Sokolov, Chkheidze, and Skobelev] maintained a very close relationship not only with the committee of the State Duma and served not only as a link between the organisation of the bourgeoisie and the revolutionary democracy, but also as conductors of many wishes of the bourgeoisie in the Soviet itself. They brought the message that the bourgeois parties

⁹² Gannelin et al. *Revolutsinney*, 52.

⁹³ Sukhanov, *Zapiski*, 6-9, 80.

⁹⁴ «Всякие иные требования, несомненно, менее по существу могли сорвать комбинацию [... так как на] многие из них Миллюков и Ко не могли бы пойти» - Ibid, 81.

⁹⁵ «Нужно буржуазию заставить взять власть, а сделать это можно тем, что показаться им очень сговорчивыми и не выставляя таких требований, которые могут буржуазию испугать» –Startsev, *Deklaratsia*, 204.

had finally decided to make the revolution happy and take power into their hands. N. Sukhanov was especially excited and happy about this proposal”.⁹⁶ Shliapnikov, as one of the members who considered that the socialists should assume power, noted about Sukhanov: “the fears of N. Sukhanov about the fact that the bourgeoisie would give up power seemed ridiculous to us”.⁹⁷ Shliapnikov criticises Sukhanov for willing to create a bourgeois government at any cost, and therefore not raising the issues of land and peace during the negotiations with the Provisional Committee.⁹⁸ Shliapnikov ironically described Sukhanov in meetings of the Ispolkom: “was giving speeches like a statesman free from a party’s ‘narrowness’, N. Sukhanov, warning the Executive Committee and especially nodding in our direction that our agitation could scare off the bourgeoisie and it would not agree to take power. He concluded: not to aggravate relations with the committee of the State Duma, not to conduct ‘left’ (our) anti-Duma and anti-war agitation, otherwise the cause of the revolution will perish. All these vulgar thoughts were accompanied by references to the fact that he was an internationalist at all times of the war, he shares our views, but considers agitation for them to be premature”.⁹⁹

Similarly to Shliapnikov, the willingness of Sukhanov to compromise was criticised by the Soviet historian E. N. Burdzhakov¹⁰⁰, and the Soviet and Russian historians V. S Diakin¹⁰¹, V. I. Startsev¹⁰², and A. V. Ignatiev.¹⁰³ In particular, Ignatiev characterises the Ispolkom’s strategy of compromise on the foreign policy as “a miserable policy of compromise with the bourgeoisie, waisting the international authority of the Russian revolution”.¹⁰⁴

It should be added that, at the time of manifestations – prior the formation of the Ispolkom, – public figures and publicists organised meetings to discuss the reasons, possible development and outcomes of the ongoing social movements. One of such meetings was

⁹⁶ «они держали весьма тесную связь не только с комитетом государственной думы и служили не только придаточным звеном между организацией буржуазии и революционной демократии, но и проводниками многих пожеланий буржуазии в самом Совете. Они принесли сообщение, что буржуазные партии решили наконец осчастливить революцию и взять власть в свои руки. Особенно волновался и радовался этому предложению Н. Суханов» – Shliapnikov, *Kanun*, 192-193

⁹⁷ «нам казались смешными страхи и опосения Н. Суханова по поводу того, что буржуазия откажется от власти» – Ibid, 195.

⁹⁸ Ibid, 209

⁹⁹ «выступал с видом государственного человека свободного от партийной ‘узости’, Н. Суханов, предупреждая Исполнительный комитет и особенно кивая в нашу сторону, что наша агитация может отпугнуть буржуазию и она не согласится взять власть. Из этого он делал вывод: не обострять отношений с Комитетом Государственной Думы, не вести ‘левой’ (нашей) антидумской и антивоенной агитации, иначе дело революции погибнет. Все эти пошленькие мысли сопровождалась ссылками на то, что он все время войны был интернационалистом, сам разделяет наши взгляды, но считает агитацию за них преждевременной» - Ibid, 194

¹⁰⁰ Burdzhakov, *Vtoraya*, 313-314.

¹⁰¹ Diakin, *Russkaya*, 331, 343, 347.

¹⁰² Startsev, *Vnutrenniaya*, 55-58, 62-67, 70, 88, 90.

¹⁰³ Ignatiev, *Vneshnaya*, 94-95 .

¹⁰⁴ «жалкую политику соглашательства с буржуазии, растрчивавшую международный авторитет русской революции» - Ignatiev, *Vneshnaya*, 99.

held by Sukhanov, Kerensky, V. Chernolussky, N. Rusanov, and V. Zenzinov, among others. The participants concluded that the revolutionary movement will win only if the bourgeoisie joins. They also expressed the fear that the anti-war slogans could distant the bourgeoisie from the revolutionary movement.¹⁰⁵ This pragmatism on the issue of war greatly shaped the decision-making of Sukhanov in the Ispolkom. As the Soviet and Russian historian A. V. Ignatiev stresses, on 28 February, the Ispolkom not only decided to leave the issue of war aside, but removed all anti-war slogans deployed at the very beginning of the revolutionary movement, as otherwise these slogans would lead to an inevitable breakdown of the government coordination.¹⁰⁶

Thus, Sukhanov believed that the formation of the bourgeois government is the priority and is absolutely necessary for the success of the revolution. Therefore, he considered that the proposals of the Ispolkom on the programme of the new government should not be too radical, which is reflected in the eight principles listed in the declaration of the Provisional Committee.

2.4 The manifesto *To Peoples of the World*

As discussed above, Sukhanov was an opponent of the war and supporter of the anti-war Zimmerwald movement. He stated: "During the war, I was one of two or three authors who managed to appear in the legal press in defence of the anti-defensive Zimmerwald position. I have never sinned, not a single minute, with the defence and condescension to the war. [...] from the beginning of the war till the revolution, every of my public appearances (literary and otherwise) was a feasible struggle against the war, a struggle to eliminate it".¹⁰⁷

The Zimmerwald Conference was held by anti-militant socialist parties in Zimmerwald, Switzerland, on 5-8 September (23-26 August) 1915. At this conference, *The Manifesto of the International Socialist Conference in Zimmerwald* was adopted. In accordance with this manifesto, Sukhanov believed that the World War I is aimed at the division of the colonial powers and annexation of the economically backward or politically weak nations by the developed capitalist countries. The manifesto states that, at the same time, the capitalists "claim that the war serves to defend the fatherland, democracy, and

¹⁰⁵ Ignatiev, *Vneshnaya*, 68; See also Sukhanov, *Zapiski*, 6-9.

¹⁰⁶ Ignatiev, *Vneshnaya*, 73.

¹⁰⁷ «В течение войны я был одним из двух-трех авторов, которым удалось выступать в легальной печати с защитой антиоборонческой циммервальдской позиции. Оборончеством и снисходительным отношением к войне я не грешил никогда, ни одной минуты. [...] с начала войны и до революции каждое мое публичное выступление (литературное и всякое иное) было посильной борьбой против войны, борьбой за ее ликвидацию» – Sukhanov, *Zapiski*, 7.

the liberation of oppressed peoples. They lie.”¹⁰⁸ Therefore, a peace without annexations and indemnities must be concluded, and workers and peasants must turn their weapons against the exploiters in order “to begin the fight for their own cause, for the sacred goal of socialism”.¹⁰⁹

In 1916, Sukhanov published his brochure named *Our left groups and the war*.¹¹⁰ This brochure was published by the legal press and, therefore, has a censored nature. In this brochure one can see not a typical Sukhanov, although it was published not long before the February Revolution, when Sukhanov already strongly voiced for Zimmerwald. It states that the reasons why Russia engaged in the war are comprehensively expressed in *The Highest Manifesto on Russia's Entry into the War* of the tsar Nicholas II dated on 20 July (1 August) 1914. Namely, following the aggression of Austria-Hungary against Serbia, Russia brought the army and navy to martial law in the attempt to protect its friendly Slavic nation and negotiate the retrieve of the Austria-Hungarian army. However, these negotiates failed and the allied Germany and Austria declared the war against Russia. Sukhanov also argues that any other reasons of the war – in particular, those multiple reasons deemed by left parties (he apparently means the Cadets), - are not true. Although it is very unusual to see these statements from such an active supporter of Zimmerwald and opponent of the war as Sukhanov, the key idea that he tried to communicate in this brochure is that Russia has no economic interests in the war.¹¹¹

Despite the adherence to Zimmerwald, Sukhanov deemed that the anti-war slogans should be temporarily set aside and the war issue should not be included in the programme of the Provisional Government. This was in fear that the Provisional Committee would withdraw from the agreements with the Ispolkom.¹¹²

On 3 (16) March, after the Provisional Government was formed, Chkheidze suggested Sukhanov to issue an appeal to the proletarians of Europe to call for peace. Sukhanov supported this idea with much enthusiasm.¹¹³ Initially, Sukhanov asked the famous Russian writer and political activist M. Gorky to draft the manifesto. However, both Sukhanov and Chkheidze found Gorky’s draft rather a consideration of the cultural aspects

¹⁰⁸ «Капиталисты всех стран, которые из пролитой народной крови чеканят червонное золото барыша, утверждают, что война служит защите отечества, демократии, освобождению угнетенных народов. Они лгут.» – *Manifest*, (1915), the Digital Library

¹⁰⁹ «...начать борьбу за свое собственное дело, за священную цель социализма» – Ibid .

¹¹⁰ Sukhanov, *Nashi levie*

¹¹¹ Ibid, 10-13.

¹¹² Sukhanov, *Zapiski*, 6-9; see also the section 2.1.

¹¹³ Ibid, 138.

of the revolution than a political call to establish peace.¹¹⁴ Therefore, Sukhanov prepared another version of the manifesto named *To Peoples of the World*, which was approved by the Soviet on 14 (27) March and published on 15 (28) March.¹¹⁵

According to Sukhanov, this manifesto has two key ideas. The first one is the commitment of the Russian Revolution to fight against the imperialism in Russia and in the world at large. This includes the call on behalf of the Russian Revolution to accept the principles of Zimmerwald and take collaborative and decisive actions by all peoples of Europe to establish peace. The second idea is the commitment of the democracy to confront the military attacks, which Sukhanov considered necessary to address in the manifesto in order to maintain the military capacity of the army.¹¹⁶

Although Sukhanov stressed in his memoirs that the two points do not contradict but complement each other¹¹⁷, their inclusion of is considered by the Soviet and Russian historian A. V. Ignatiev as evidence of an untruthful adherence of Sukhanov to Zimmerwald: “[Sukhanov] tried to formulate the document in such a way as to please both the ‘right’ and ‘left’ in the Ispolkom: both to ‘observe Zimmerwald’ and convince the soldiers to keep the front”.¹¹⁸ In line with the criticism of Ignatiev, the Bolshevik and Ispolkom member Shliapnikov ironically used quotation marks when referring to Sukhanov as a false “leftist” and “follower of Zimmerwald”, which is why he did not discuss the issue of peace during the negotiations with the Provisional Committee in the first place.¹¹⁹

As Sukhanov notes, he “attached great importance to this act and this document.”¹²⁰ As pointed by the historian M. C. Hickey, the expectation was that this manifesto would influence the German workers and would help to end the war.¹²¹ The hopes of Sukhanov were unfulfilled as the manifesto did not bring the ending of the war any closer. Lenin criticised this manifesto as he did not foresee how it could end the war: “The call of Soviet of Workers' Deputies, - [...] There is nothing but empty phrase!”¹²²

114 Ibid, 165, 172.

115 Ibid, 199-204; see the text of the manifesto in *Appendix*.

116 Sukhanov, *Zapiski*, 190.

117 Ibid.

118 «стремился сформулировать документ таким образом, чтобы угодить и ‘правым’ и ‘левым’ в исполкоме: и ‘циммервальд соблюсти’ и убедить солдат держать фронт» - Ignatiev, *Vneshnaya*, 95.

119 Ibid, 209.

120 «Я придавал очень большое значение этому акту и этому документу» – Ibid, 165.

121 Hickey, *Competing*, 182.

122 «Воззвание Совета Рабочих депутатов, - [...] Там сплошная фраза!» – Lenin, *Polnoye* (1969, volume 31), 108.

Thus, although Sukhanov considered the necessity to not make radical proposals for the programme of the new government, such as to end the war, he was a strong supporter of Zimmerwald. Shortly after the formation of the government, Sukhanov prepared the manifesto *To Peoples of the World* to call for peace on the basis of Zimmerwald. However, the manifesto did not have a significant impact on the course of the war.

2.5 The loss of the decision-making role of Sukhanov in the Ispolkom

All aforementioned reveals not only the faith of Sukhanov in the absolute necessity of a bourgeois rule, but also the fragile political situation formed at that time in the revolutionary Russia. Neither the socialists - as stressed by the British historian S. A. Smith¹²³, except for the Bolsheviks, anarchists, and other who's authority was not significant enough at that moment - nor bourgeoisie were willing to assume the full power.

The active involvement of Sukhanov into practical politics only lasted for a few weeks, until the end of March and the begging of April, when the leaders of the Mensheviks and SRs started to return to Saint Petersburg from the immigration and prisons, including V. Chernov, I. Tsereteli, F. Dan and others. These leaders took over the control in the Ispolkom. In particular, Tsereteli started re-directing both the Ispolkom and the Petrograd Soviet towards the policies of the right Mensheviks (i.e. necessity to continue the war; closer cooperation with the Provisional Government). These right policies sharply contradicted the leftist views of Sukhanov.

On 7 (20) March, the Ispolkom established a contact commission to ensure control over the Provisional Government. Sukhanov was one of the representatives of the Ispolkom in the contact commission. Later, Chernov and Tsereteli also entered the contact commission, who's political authorities Sukhanov could not oppose. Thereby, Sukhanov ends the stage of the practical politics and begins the next stage of his involvement in the revolutionary events as a publicist, or in other words, not by taking an active role in the political events but by commenting on them.

Thus, as noted by I. Gezler, the February Revolution brought Sukhanov to the leading positions in the Ispolkom.¹²⁴ As mentioned by S. A. Smith, the majority of the Ispolkom was represented by the moderate socialists, mainly Mensheviks and non-fractional social democrats leaning to the Mensheviks, including Sukhanov. This majority deemed that the February Revolution is destined to be headed by a bourgeois government, while the

¹²³ Ibid. 18, 19.

¹²⁴ Getzker, *Chronicler*, 225.

Petrograd Soviet has the role of an oversight body.¹²⁵ Sukhanov made particularly significant efforts and concessions in order to convince the bourgeoisie to assume the full power. Although he was criticised for this by some of his contemporaries and historians, for example V. S Diakin¹²⁶, V. I. Startsev¹²⁷, A. V. Ignatiev.¹²⁸, and A. Shliapnikov.¹²⁹ And even when the accord on the government formation was reached, Sukhanov made substantial efforts to not scare the bourgeoisie with too radical demands. This reveals the fragile situation that was formed in Russia in 1917, whereby neither the socialists nor the bourgeoisie were willing to assume the full power.

¹²⁵ Smith, *Introduction*, 18, 19.

¹²⁶ Diakin, *Russkaya*, 331, 343, 347.

¹²⁷ Startsev, *Vnutrenniaya*, 55-58, 62-67, 70, 88, 90.

¹²⁸ Ignatiev, *Vneshnaya*, 94-95.

¹²⁹ Shliapnikov, *Kanun*, 192-193.

Part II

3. The views of Sukhanov from April till the October Revolution, including the first months of the Bolshevik rule towards the end of 1917.

In the aforementioned period – following the return of the socialist leaders, - Sukhanov entered the new role of a bystander who has critical remarks on the ongoing political events but does not take an active role in them. At that time, Sukhanov focused on his work as a columnist and mainly expressed his views via the newspaper *Novaya Zhizn*.¹³⁰ There are two main questions considered by Sukhanov in this period: power structure and the war. Also, he rather briefly touched upon the land issue, which is another significant subject of tensions at the time and is also considered in this chapter.

3.1 Structure of power

The views of Sukhanov on power structure went through a significant change from the February Revolution to the October Revolution. At the beginning, Sukhanov was a supporter of the bourgeois government, and by the October Revolution he deemed that the power should pass to the socialists.

3.1.1 The first Provisional Government

As discussed in the chapter 2.2, Sukhanov considered the February Revolution to be bourgeois and believed that the power should pass to a bourgeois government. This is exemplified by his pro-active role in the arbitrary negotiations with the Provisional Committee, which contributed to the formation of the first Provisional Government by the bourgeoisie, except for Kerensky.

- Following the April crisis

The April crisis - that was triggered by the so-called Milyukov note, which was sent by the Foreign Minister P. Milyukov to reassure the Allied Powers of the Provisional Government's intention to fulfil their agreements - forced Sukhanov to reconsider his position towards the composition of the government. Shortly after the April crisis, he argued that this crisis reveals "the absence of solid ground under a purely bourgeois power".¹³¹ Although Sukhanov considered no necessity to pass the power to another social class, some "corrections"¹³² should be made in the composition of the

¹³⁰ See also *Introduction* and chapter 2.

¹³¹ Sukhanov, N. "Coalitsionnoye ministerstvo" ["The Coalition Ministry"]. *Novaya Zhizn* [*New Life*]. No 8. 27 April (May 10) 1917, 1.

¹³² «коррективами» - Ibid.

government.¹³³ In particular, the replacement of Milyukov. If these corrections are not enough, Sukhanov suggested that a coalition should be formed.¹³⁴

If creating a coalition, Sukhanov warned that the bourgeoisie will attempt to engage only a minor number of socialists. This would legitimise the imperialist agenda while not allowing the socialists to influence the decisions of the government. Hence, the socialists would be held as “hostages”¹³⁵, and this should never happen. Therefore, Sukhanov considered that the coalition should not be formed at any costs and that the socialists should insist on the adoption of the socialist programme by the bourgeois political circles.¹³⁶

Thus, in the beginning, Sukhanov was a supporter of the bourgeois government. The April crisis made Sukhanov to reconsider his views. He suggested to replace several ministers, and otherwise to form a coalition. To prevent that the socialist minority has no influence, Sukhanov suggested the socialists to insist on the adoption of the socialist programme by the bourgeois political circles.

3.1.2 The second Provisional Government

On 5 (18) May, following the political crisis caused by the publication of the Milyukov note, the second Provisional Government (or first coalition) was created and the socialist ministers formed a minority. Sukhanov positively assessed the programme of the new government. In particular, the will for peace without annexations and indemnities, as well as the maintenance of the fighting capacity of the army. Sukhanov also expressed his doubts about the implementation of this programme, given the bourgeois majority and the fact that the will for peace is only a compromise with the socialist minority.¹³⁷

Over time, the fears of Sukhanov that the new government will lack action due to the insufficient influence of the socialist ministers were confirmed. For example, on 26 (8) June, Sukhanov stressed that the government is in office for three weeks and still nothing is done for peace, except for sophistry from its leaders.¹³⁸

- Following the July crisis

On 16-20 July (3-7 July), the armed anti-government demonstrations took place, which are also known as the July crisis. It was caused by the accord between the Provisional

¹³³ Ibid.

¹³⁴ Sukhanov, “Democratia”, *NZ* (1917, 3), 1.

¹³⁵ Sukhanov, “Coalitsionoe”, *NZ*, (1917, 8), 1.

¹³⁶ Ibid.

¹³⁷ Sukhanov, “O nastupatelnih”, *NZ* (1917, 19), 1.

¹³⁸ Sukhanov, “U razbitogo”, *NZ* (1917, 32), 1.

Government and the Central Rada of the Ukraine¹³⁹ about the recognition of the Rada's general secretariat as the highest administrative body of Ukraine. In a broader sense, Sukhanov considered the July crisis to be a result of the inability of the government to implement the socialist policy. He also considered this crisis to be a significant reverse of the revolutionary achievements and the beginning of the reactionary movement.¹⁴⁰

Indeed, the July crisis weakened the position of the socialists - especially the Bolsheviks who joined the protesting masses, - and revealed the desire of the bourgeois circles to remove the All-Russian Central Executive Committee of the Soviets of Workers' and Soldiers' Deputies (CEC) from power. For example, this was manifested by the arrest of the leaders of the Bolsheviks; closure of the Bolshevik newspapers; more aggressive bourgeois publicity in relation to the CEC; confrontation of the bourgeoisie with the leader of the SRs V. Chernov, etc. According to Sukhanov, the reactionary movement is especially dangerous to the revolution. It does not aim to restore the old tsarist order, but to establish a new regime. And it would be led not by the petty bourgeoisie, as it should, but by the grand bourgeoisie, as it is in Europe.¹⁴¹ Aside from the July crisis, the lack of influence of the socialists was demonstrated by the June offensive¹⁴² and the failure of the land projects of Chernov who then served as the Minister of Agriculture.¹⁴³

On the night of 10 (23) July, the United All-Russian Executive Committee of Workers Soldiers' and the United All-Russian Executive Committee of Peasants' Deputies announced the formation of the Provisional Government for the Salvation of the Revolution that will be given with full authority. Sukhanov suggested that, to resolve the crisis and revive the revolution, this government should be socialist; it should acknowledge the danger of the counter-revolution, also within the government; and it should immediately act

¹³⁹ After the February Revolution, the Central Rada of Ukraine was the representative body of the Ukrainian political, social, cultural and professional organisations. From November 1917 it became the legislative organ of the Ukrainian People's Republic (UPR). See the Great Russian Encyclopaedia https://bigenc.ru/domestic_history/text/4675036.

¹⁴⁰ Sukhanov, "V poriadke dnya", *NZ* (1917, 71), 1.

¹⁴¹ Sukhanov, "Crizis", *NZ* (1917, 75), 1.

¹⁴² The June offensive (or so-called Kerensky offensive) was a large strategic offensive of the Russian army, which also became the last offensive of the Russian army during the World War I. It was initially planned to be held in the end of April - beginning of May 1917. However, due to the disintegration of the Russian troops, the offensive was postponed and eventually took place on 18 June (1 July) – 6 (10) July. The June offensive failed due to a catastrophic breakdown in the military discipline of the Russian army. See also the section 3.2 on the June offensive; Sukhanov, *Zapiski*, 544.

¹⁴³ V. Chernov was the leader of the Socialist Revolutionary Party (SR), a party of the agrarian socialists that was widely supported by the Russian peasantry. In the first and second Provisional Governments, Chernov was the Minister of Agriculture, which gave hope to people for the positive changes in the land issue. In the course of time, Chernov showed no progress on the land issue, including the ban on land transactions, which was largely due to the resistance of the bourgeois ministers. See also the section 3.3 on the land projects of Chernov; Sukhanov, "Pobeda", *NZ* (1917, 48), 1.

to entirely eradicated the reactionary movement from the government, judicial system, and the military apparatus.¹⁴⁴

Thus, the inability of the socialist minority to fully implement its programme, as well as the great danger of the reactionary movement as a result of the July crisis - all this completely convinced Sukhanov that the only way forward is the socialist government.

3.1.3 The third Provisional Government

As a result of the July political crisis, the third Provisional Government (or second coalition) was formed on 24 July (6 August). As noted by Sukhanov, unlike the first coalition that had been using the revolutionary slogans while making the reactionary decisions, the second coalition also proclaimed the reactionary slogans. Namely, “freedom and revolution” are now replaced with “statehood and order”.¹⁴⁵

In line with these slogans, the government implements reactionary decisions, such as repressions and resumption of the death penalty at the front, while the CEC remains silent with inaction. As stressed by Sukhanov, this indicates that the majority of the CEC has also discarded the slogans of the revolution.¹⁴⁶

- Following the Kornilov affair

In July, the office of the Supreme Commander-in-Chief was given to General L. Kornilov. On 27–30 August (10–13 September), he undertook an unsuccessful attempt to establish a military dictatorship, also referred as the Kornilov affair. This event once again convinced Sukhanov that the coalition has completely outlived its usefulness and “it is necessary to take all measures to finally expose the coalition policy, so that its complete collapse, its shameful bankruptcy would become vivid even for a blind”.¹⁴⁷ Therefore, the dictatorship of the socialists is the only way to end the war; give land to peasants; and overcome the economic devastation.¹⁴⁸

Sukhanov stressed that the CEC persuades, asks, swears, and even threatens that the Bolsheviks will liquidate the revolution at the very moment when the power is passed to the socialists. As Sukhanov notes, this claim disregards the fact that the coalition could

¹⁴⁴ Sukhanov, “V poriadke”, *NZ* (1917, 71), 1.

¹⁴⁵ Sukhanov, “Pirrovi”, *NZ* (1917, 104), 1.

¹⁴⁶ *Ibid.*

¹⁴⁷ «Необходимо принять все меры к окончательному разоблачению коалиционной политики – дабы ее полный крах, ее позорное банкротство стало очевидным и для слепых» - Sukhanov, “Nakanune”, *NZ* (1917, 3), 1.

¹⁴⁸ *Ibid.*; Sukhanov, “Grom”, *NZ*, (1917, 142), 1; Sukhanov, “O borbe”, *NZ* (1917, 140), 1; Sukhanov, “Novyi” *NZ* (1917, 145), 1; Sukhanov, “K sudbe”, *NZ* (1917, 154), 1.

only succeed to drag the revolution and all country into “an abyss”¹⁴⁹, while none of its promises could be implemented, including bread, peace, freedom, and a prosperous state.¹⁵⁰

- Following the creation of the Pre-parliament

In the article dated on 5 (18) September, Sukhanov considers the recent resolution of the CEC whereby it declares itself the only source of power via its subordinated institutions. He notes that this resolution is passed in spite of the “dreams”¹⁵¹ of the SR-Menshevik majority of the CEC about the coalition. Although another coalition might be created, from now on any executive body will be accountable to a socialist institution. One can only hope that it will be duly executed.¹⁵²

In this article, Sukhanov also discusses the yet to be convened Provisional Council of the Russian Republic (or Pre-parliament).¹⁵³ He refers to it as “democratic parliament” and positively assesses its creation. Sukhanov positively assesses its creation, and he considers that it will exercise control over all decisions of the government and will force it to pursue the socialist policy. To implement this effectively, Sukhanov suggests to determine its composition; functions and competences; channels of communication with the government; implementation of the control over the government; and accountability of the government to the parliament.¹⁵⁴

The proposal of Sukhanov to form a full-fledged socialist parliament has never realised. At the meeting of the Presidium of the Democratic Conference on 20 September (3 October), the Pre-parliament was created as an advisory body to the Provisional Government. As Sukhanov aptly noticed, the leaders of the SRs and Mensheviks did not believe that the coalition had outlived its usefulness. On the contrary, they deemed that the new government should be formed on the basis of the existing coalition. Furthermore, at the meetings held from 22 to 23 September (5 to 6 October) on the creation of the new coalition, the Cadets and Kerensky strongly opposed the idea of the Pre-parliament as a supervisory body. Unwilling to break with the Cadets, the leaders of the SR-Menshevik

149 «[кроме] пропасти» - Sukhanov, “Novyi” NZ (1917, 145), 1.

150 Ibid.

151 «[лелея] мечту» - Ibid.

152 Ibid.

153 «демократический парламент» - Ibid.

154 Ibid.

bloc – primarily, I. Tsereteli - yielded to the Cadets and agreed that the future Pre-parliament will become no more than an advisory body.¹⁵⁵

Thus, unlike the previous government, the second coalition not only had the reactionary decisions, but also slogans. Following the Kornilov affair, Sukhanov was once again convinced that the power should be assumed by the socialists. The announcement that the CEC becomes the ultimate source of power and that the Pre-parliament will be created gave hope to Sukhanov that the socialist policy will be enforced. That, however, has not been the case.

3.1.4 The fourth Provisional Government

On 25 September (8 October), as a result of the Kornilov affair, the fourth Provisional Government (or third coalition) was formed. Throughout its short existence – till the October Revolution, - Sukhanov repeatedly stated that it will not make any progress, most importantly on peace, but also on anarchy, hunger, nearly collapse of the railways, etc. Therefore, the socialists should assume power.¹⁵⁶

Sukhanov also criticised the CEC for its call to the local soviets to employ the agitation and armed forces against the rising pogroms as counter-revolutionary acts. Sukhanov stressed that the CEC behaves not as a political but police institution, and that it does not see the root of the problem. Namely, the inability of the coalition to solve the burning issues of war, land, and bread. Thereby, the CEC promotes even further anarchy. Therefore, to the pogroms are political acts and should be dealt with accordingly, by the formation of a socialist government.¹⁵⁷

Thus, Sukhanov lost confidence in the CEC and considered the social unrest and anarchy as a sign of a deep disappointment of the people in the coalition, and continued to point that this model of power structure should be replaced by the socialist rule.

3.1.5 The seizure of power by the Bolsheviks

As stated by the Soviet historian and academician P. Volobuyev, the criticism of Sukhanov “ultimately comes down to condemning the ruling parties for their failure to prevent the rise of the Bolshevism.”¹⁵⁸ Indeed, as a result of the aforementioned events, Sukhanov gave

¹⁵⁵ “Razreshenie pravitelstvennogo krizisa” [“Government Crisis Resolution”]. *Gazeta Rech* [The newspaper Speech], No 226. 26 September 1917, 4.

¹⁵⁶ Sukhanov, “Novyi” *NZ* (1917, 145), 1; Sukhanov, “K sudbe”, *NZ* (1917, 154), 1; Sukhanov, “O borbe”, *NZ* (1917, 140), 1.

¹⁵⁷ Sukhanov, “O borbe”, *NZ* (1917, 140), 1.

¹⁵⁸ “в коечном счете сводятся к осуждению правящих партий за то, что они не смогли предотвратить рост большевизма и революционного движения” - Volobuyev, *Economicheskaya*, 5-6.

up on believing in the success of the coalition. Therefore, the October Revolution on 25 October (7 November) came as no surprise to Sukhanov. He blamed the counter-revolutionary policy of the Provisional Government and the willingness of the Mensheviks and SRs to compromise with the bourgeoisie.¹⁵⁹

At the same time, Sukhanov was extremely concerned about the seizure of power by the Bolsheviks. Below are considered the reasons of his negative assessment of the October Revolution.

3.1.5.1 Why did Sukhanov negatively assess the October Revolution?

- The Bolsheviks concentrate too much power and establish the personal dictatorship of Lenin and Trotsky

One of the reasons why Sukhanov negatively perceived the October Revolution is that he opposed the concentration of too much power in the hands of only one party. Sukhanov considered that such situation leads to the personal dictatorship of the party's prominent leaders, in this case V. Lenin and L. Trotsky. In the view of Sukhanov, this dictatorship is based on false promises to workers and soldiers that the Bolsheviks are unable to implement, as well as on the significant armed forces that the Bolsheviks possess.¹⁶⁰

In particular, Sukhanov opposed the announcement of the Central Committee of the Bolshevik party on the government formation by the Bolsheviks. He also considered it wrong that this government, the Council of People's Commissars, obtains from the CEC both executive and legislative powers, while leaving the CEC with minor powers.¹⁶¹ Meanwhile, the CEC - that is meant to be the highest state institution until the Constituent Assembly – is now disregarded and the People's Commissars do not even inform the CEC about decisions of the highest importance, such as the initiation of peace negotiations and the war with Ukraine.¹⁶²

In December in *Novaya Zhizn*, Sukhanov discussed the election and convening of the Constituent Assembly that was yet to be held by the Bolsheviks on 5 (18) January 1918. He stresses that it is clear to everyone that “under the dictatorship of proletariat that builds socialism on the ruins of capitalism, the bourgeois parliaments are irrelevant and the

¹⁵⁹ Sukhanov, “Rabochie”, *NZ* (1917, 166), 1.

¹⁶⁰ Sukhanov, “Dictatura”, *NZ* (1917, 174), 1.

¹⁶¹ Sukhanov, “Dictatura”, *NZ* (1917, 174), 1.

¹⁶² Sukhanov, “Gde”, *NZ*, (1917, 196), 1.

Constituent Assembly is 'untimely'".¹⁶³ Sukhanov also expressed no hope that the Constituent Assembly could function as "the supreme and sovereign body, as the source of proper politics and proper power, based on the agreement of all consistently democratic groups."¹⁶⁴

Sukhanov predicted two possible scenarios following the convening of the Constituent Assembly: first, the Bolsheviks and their supporters will pass normative acts in accordance with the Bolshevik platform and then will self-liquidate the Constituent Assembly; second, the left-socialists will obtain the majority and, on that basis, will form a new political body named National Convent.¹⁶⁵ It should be noted that the second scenario would ensure more stability. That is, unlike the Council of People's Commissars, the National Convent would be created by the sanction of the Constituent Assembly and not the Congress of Soviets. The latter was not considered by the bourgeoisie and its close political groups as a legitimate body authorised to create an all-Russian government. As history has shown, the left-wing socialists indeed obtained the majority, but instead of creating the National Convent they immediately entered into a sharp conflict with the Bolsheviks. As a result, the Constituent Assembly was soon dispersed by the Bolsheviks.

Thus, Sukhanov considered the October Revolution to be a result of the counter-revolutionary policy of the Provisional Government. He negatively assessed the October Revolution as – among other reasons – he opposed the concentration of too much power in the hands of one party, which leads to the personal dictatorship of the party leaders. Sukhanov especially criticised the CEC for granting the Council of People's Commissars both the executive and legislative powers. As discussed further, Sukhanov also considered this growth of the Bolshevik power at the cost of socialist institutions as a major catalyst for a civil war.

- The anti-Bolshevik forces will mobilise, which could lead to a civil war

The British historian M.D. Steinberg mentions the position voiced by the Mensheviks-Internationalists - to whose ideology belonged Sukhanov - at the Second Congress of Soviets. According to their view, the exclusive Bolshevik power "was a dangerous act that could only divide and weaken the forces of democracy as they prepared to face armies

¹⁶³ «при диктатуре пролетариата строящего социализм на развалинах капитализма, буржуазные парламенты – неуместны и Учредительные Собрания «несвоевременны» - Sukhanov, "Kamen", NZ, (1917, 205), 1.

¹⁶⁴ «верховный и полновластный орган, как источник надлежащей политики и надлежащей власти, основанной на соглашении всех последовательно демократических групп» - Ibid.

¹⁶⁵ Ibid.

already organising in the right”¹⁶⁶. In line with this vision, Sukhanov considered that the rule of the Bolsheviks is based on specific social groups, namely workers and soldiers¹⁶⁷, and later also peasants. Therefore, everyone outside these social groups would become enemies of the Bolsheviks, which makes their one-party rule highly unstable. As a result, given the significant armed forces at the disposal of both the Bolsheviks and their opponents, this one-party rule is likely to lead to a civil war. This was another essential reason why Sukhanov negatively assessed the October Revolution.

On 29 October (11 November), Sukhanov argued that “the consequences of the Bolshevik adventure already manifest themselves in the form of attempts to mobilise all anti-Bolshevik forces for the military defeat of the ‘new regime’, for a civil war. Some of these attempts seem to be successful: the military forces are moving towards their brothers; the country is already plunged into the abyss of internecine conflict, the political disintegration and anarchy”¹⁶⁸. In particular, he sharply criticised the campaigns of Generals L. Kornilov and A. Kaledin against the Bolsheviks. Sukhanov considered this the beginning of the civil war that forced the Bolsheviks to take defensive positions. Although it is an obligation of every person to fight the Bolsheviks, Sukhanov deemed that the civil war must not be an option. It is a criminal act and it only contributes the reactionary movement and puts the revolutionary achievement at risks.¹⁶⁹ Therefore, as discussed further in this section, Sukhanov proposed peaceful solutions¹⁷⁰ to fight against the Bolsheviks.¹⁷⁰

In the course of December, Sukhanov was evidencing the further growth of the Bolshevik power; escalation of tensions between the Bolsheviks and other political groups; and as a result, the increasing danger of the civil war. In particular, the growing power of the Bolsheviks was manifested by the diminishing role of the CEC.¹⁷¹ Sukhanov considered it a “fearsome sign”¹⁷² that the CEC does not function anymore as the highest state institution and as “one of the most important weapons”¹⁷³ against the Bolsheviks. He believed that this will force the anti-Bolshevik movement to employ other “fighting

¹⁶⁶ Steinberg, *Voices*, 258.

¹⁶⁷ Sukhanov, “Dictatura”, *NZ* (1917, 174), 1.

¹⁶⁸ «Последствия большевистской авантюры уже сказываются в виде попыток мобилизации всех анти-большевистских сил для военного разгрома „нового строя“, для гражданской войны. Некоторые из этих попыток, повидимому удаются: военные силы движутся на своих братьев; страна уже ввергнута в пучино муждоусобия, политического распада - анархии» - Sukhanov, “Rabochie”, *NZ* (1917, 166), 1.

¹⁶⁹ Sukhanov, “Grazhdanskaya”, *NZ*, (1917, 190), 1.

¹⁷⁰ See further in this section *How were the solutions suggested by Sukhanov to fight the rule of the Bolsheviks?*

¹⁷¹ Sukhanov, “Gde”, *NZ*, (1917, 196), 1.

¹⁷² «грозный признак» - *Ibid.*

¹⁷³ «одним из важнейших орудий борьбы» - *Ibid.*

methods”¹⁷⁴ against the Bolshevism, which could lead to the further bloodshed and “sweep away not only the Lenin dictatorship and its policy, but also all achievements at hand and all the future prospects of the revolution”.¹⁷⁵

It should be noted that, similarly to Sukhanov, Lenin attempted to prevent the civil war. In his famous article *On compromises* published on 6 (19 September), Lenin called on the Mensheviks and SRs to take power into their own hands and to form a socialist government. Lenin tried to convince them that the creation of such a government is the only bloodless path to the victory of the revolution that would prevent the civil war.¹⁷⁶ However, similarly to the proposals of Sukhanov to transfer power to the socialists, the calls of Lenin have never been fulfilled.

Thus, the prediction of Sukhanov that the seizure of power by the Bolsheviks will mobilise of the anti-Bolshevik forces and lead to a civil war were proven true. In the course of December, he was regretfully evidencing the further escalation of tensions, in particular the anti-Bolshevik campaign of Generals Kornilov and Kaledin. Similarly to Sukhanov, Lenin attempted to prevent the civil war and, back in September 1917, he called the Mensheviks and SRs to assume power. However, as is well known, neither the call of Lenin nor of Sukhanov have been responded.

- The Bolsheviks have no support of the educated classes and, therefore, no apparatus to implement their programme

As the historian M.D. Steinberg noted, it was believed among the Mensheviks-Internationalists that, even if the Bolsheviks will be able to remain in power, they will not have the ability to realise their political programme and establish “the long desired ‘kingdom of labour and freedom’”.¹⁷⁷ In line with this statement of Steinberg, one of the reasons why Sukhanov negatively assessed the October Revolution is because he believed that it is destined to fail as the Bolsheviks will not be able to enforce their decisions and bring their political programme to life. Namely, although the Bolsheviks attracted many workers and peasants into their ranks, they failed to attract the representatives of the educated classes who largely form the state apparatus and

¹⁷⁴ «способы борьбы» - Ibid.

¹⁷⁵ «смести не только ленинскую диктатуру и ее политику, но в придучу и все наличные завоевания, и все будущие перспективы революции» - Ibid.

¹⁷⁶ Lenin V. I. “O kompromissah” [“About compromises”]. In *Polnoye sobranie sochinenii* [Complete works], volume 34, 5th edition, Moscow: The Publishing House of the Political Literature, 1969, 133-139.

¹⁷⁷ Steinberg, *Voices*, 258.

administrative apparatus of the army. Sukhanov considered that without their support it would not be possible to enforce the decisions of the Bolsheviks.¹⁷⁸

Lenin categorically disagreed with the assessment of Sukhanov, and stated that *Novaya Zhizn* acts as an “advocate of the bourgeoisie”.¹⁷⁹ First, Lenin replied that Russia consists of three classes: bourgeoisie, peasantry, and proletariat. Indeed, the proletariat opposes the bourgeoisie, but so does the peasantry.¹⁸⁰ Therefore, the statement about the isolation of the proletariat does not make sense. Also, considering that the bourgeoisie presents the minority, there is no danger in the isolation from this small fraction of the population. Second, to the criticism that the proletariat will not be able to take over the existing state apparatus, Lenin replied that the proletariat has no intention of doing so. It will destroy the existing apparatus and will build a new one. In fact, it already exists in the form of soviets, and it is proven viable.¹⁸¹ Lenin also notes that, prior the revolution, 130 thousands of landlords had been governing 150 million people. It is wrong to assume that 240 thousands of the Bolsheviks will not be able to replace them in this role.¹⁸² Third, Lenin agreed that the situation in the country is exceptionally complex. However, any revolution is a collapse of the old system and creation of a new one. Therefore, there are no revolutions that are not followed by exceptionally complex situations.¹⁸³

The subsequent events have shown that Sukhanov was wrong. Indeed, shortly after the October Revolution, the educated strata, including officials, refused to cooperate with the Bolsheviks. The civil servants organised a sabotage, refusing to carry out the orders of the Leninist government. However, the Bolsheviks defeated this sabotage. They immediately recruited the Bolshevik workers, soldiers, and sailors to the bodies of state power and administration apparatus, and thereby effectively replaced the bureaucrats on strike.

Thus, although Sukhanov did recognise that the Bolsheviks are supported by wide masses, he noted that these masses do not include the educated classes that form the state apparatus and administrative army apparatus. Therefore, Sukhanov believed that the Bolsheviks will not be able to enforce their decisions and implement their programme. As history has shown, Sukhanov was about the attitudes among the educated classes, and

¹⁷⁸ Sukhanov, “Rabochie”, *NZ* (1917, 166), 1.

¹⁷⁹ «[в роли] адвоката буржуазии» - Lenin V. I. “Uderzhat li Bolsheviki gosudarstvennyuyu vlast?” [“Will the Bolsheviks keep the state power?”]. In *Polnoye sobranie sochinenii* [Complete works], volume 34, 5th edition, Moscow: The Publishing House of the Political Literature, 1969, 296.

¹⁸⁰ *Ibid*, 297-298.

¹⁸¹ *Ibid*, 302-305.

¹⁸² *Ibid*, 313.

¹⁸³ *Ibid*, 320-321.

numerous bureaucrats indeed refused to cooperate with the Bolsheviks. However, Sukhanov did not take into consideration that the educated classes represent a minority of the population and - in line with the reply of Lenin - can be effectively replaced the Bolshevik party cadres.

3.1.5.2 What were the solutions suggested by Sukhanov to fight the rule of the Bolsheviks?

The historian M. D. Steignberg noted that many socialists, liberals, and observers deemed that the Bolshevik rule will not last more than a few weeks or even days.¹⁸⁴ In line with this statement, at the very beginning of the Bolshevik rule, Sukhanov believed that the Bolsheviks are destined to fail due “the absence of objective grounds, objective conditions for their power”.¹⁸⁵ However, Sukhanov stressed that it is unknown how long time it will take to replace the Bolsheviks, and - although their failure is inevitable - the timing is crucial for the welfare of the country and the saviour of the revolutionary achievements.¹⁸⁶ Therefore, from the early days of the Bolshevik rule, Sukhanov was using *Novaya Zhizn* to express his views and make proposals on strategies to fight the Bolsheviks. See these proposals considered below.

- The formation of a government from all socialist parties

As P. Milyukov recalls in his book, the Novozhiznentsi group - including Sukhanov - were actively calling socialists to unite with the moderate part of the Bolsheviks in order to create a United democratic front.¹⁸⁷ Indeed, in the early days of the Bolshevik rule, Sukhanov suggested that the power should be retained by a government that consist of all socialist parties. Therefore, the Bolsheviks and other socialist groups should take the most decisive measures to reach agreements and concessions on power structure and policy.¹⁸⁸

Shortly after suggesting the aforementioned, Sukhanov realised that the Bolsheviks and other socialist groups will not be able or willing to reach any agreements and concessions. On 5 (18) November 1917, he stated that the “Both sides have shown extreme intransigence and have already taken back the concessions made. The right currently demand the abolition of the terror regime as a precondition for negotiations. The left

¹⁸⁴ Steinberg, *Voices*, 251; see also Introduction .

¹⁸⁵ «отсутствие объективных оснований, объективных условий для их власти» - Sukhanov, “Rabochie”, *NZ* (1917, 166), 1.

¹⁸⁶ Sukhanov, “Dictatura”, *NZ* (1917, 174), 1.

¹⁸⁷ *Ibid*, 538.

¹⁸⁸ Sukhanov, “Bolsheviki”, *NZ* (1917, 166), 1.

decisively refuse to stop the repression and present plans for the formation of the cabinet and the 'controlling body' that are clearly unacceptable to the opposing side. [...] There is no way out of this situation. A voluntary agreement must be considered failed by the patriotic efforts of both parties".¹⁸⁹

For Sukhanov, the further growth of the Bolshevik power in the early days of November has become the final confirmation that the agreement on a joint socialist power cannot be reached. In particular, the announcement that the government will be formed by the Bolsheviks; and that the Council of People's Commissars obtains both executive and legislative power, at the cost of the CEC as the highest state institution.¹⁹⁰ In the article on 7 (20) November, Sukhanov concluded that "at the current phase of 'Bolshevik' rule, there can be no question of liquidating the crisis in the way that seemed possible during the very formation of the 'Soviet power'; the path of peaceful agreement between the existing socialist parties on the platform of a joint democratic government now should be recognised by everyone as hopeless".¹⁹¹

Thus, at the beginning, Sukhanov proposed the Bolsheviks and other socialists to agree on a joint socialist rule. Sukhanov quickly realised that neither of the two parties is able or willing to make concessions, while the power of the Bolsheviks grows rapidly. The final confirmation that the idea of a joint socialist power is failed was the government formation by the Bolsheviks and the granting to this government of both legislative and executive powers.

- Isolation of the Bolsheviks and anti-Bolshevik propaganda among the population

In the articles dated on 7 (20) and 10 (23) November, following the complete disillusion with the negotiations of the Bolsheviks and other socialists, Sukhanov suggested another solution to fight against the Bolsheviks. He noted that, since the very beginning, the Bolsheviks willingly isolate themselves from any other political groups.¹⁹² Namely, "The isolation of this bunch [the Bolsheviks] began from the very moment of its seizure of

¹⁸⁹ «Переговоры о „соглашении“ формально еще продолжаются. [...] Но едва ли сейчас осталось много оптимистов, которые продолжали бы надеяться, что в эти переговоры на нейтральной почве способны привести к благотворному концу. Обе стороны обнаружили крайнюю непримиримость и уже взяли обратно сделанные уступки. Правые ныне требуют отмены режима террора, как предварительного условия переговоров. Левые решительно отказываются прекратить репрессии и выставляют планы конструкции кабинета и „контролирующего органа“, явно неприемлемые для противной стороны. [...] Выхода из положения на этом пути не видно. Добровольное соглашение надо считать сорванным патриотическими усилиями обеих сторон» - Sukhanov, "Krizis" (1917, 173), 1.

¹⁹⁰ Sukhanov, "Dictatura", NZ (1917, 174), 1.

¹⁹¹ «В настоящей фазе „большевистского“ правления не может быть и речи о ликвидации кризиса тем путем, который казался возможным при самом образовании «советской власти»; путь мирного соглашения между существующими социалистическими партиями на платформе общедемократического правительства, ныне пора всем признать безнадежным» - Ibid

¹⁹² Ibid; Sukhanov, "Izolyatsia", NZ, (1917, 177), 1.

power; it continued with the exit from this bunch of those groups (left SRs) that were initially ready to share the responsibility for the adventure; the isolation of the dictators that rely only on the unconscious and captivated mass was further intensified by the disappointment of the 'Bolshevik masses', who began to melt as they acknowledged that instead of socialism, they have fallen into a quagmire of endless civil war and fruitless terror; and, finally, this isolation culminated with the open breakup of the Bolshevik leaders, who support agreements and the creation of a joint democratic power".¹⁹³ Therefore, Sukhanov suggested that "it is necessary to make every effort to expand, deepen, and intensify the process of isolating the 'ruling' bunch—the process begun by the party groups of the Bolsheviks themselves. It is necessary to make every effort to explain to the masses the real state of affairs and to show them the hopeless impasse into which the current 'rulers' and masters of the fate of the state have dragged them into, taking advantage of their darkness and despair".¹⁹⁴

In regard to the inter-party breakup suggested by Sukhanov, it should be noted that Sukhanov exaggerated the scale of disagreements within the Bolshevik Party and underestimated its internal discipline. Therefore, he overestimated the possibility of the split between Lenin and his supporters with other currents within the party, primarily with the right-wing Bolsheviks under the leadership of G. Zinoviev and L. Kamenev.

It is noteworthy that this strategy of isolation and anti-Bolshevik propaganda suggested by Sukhanov is deliberately non-aggressive. As stressed by Sukhanov, he is firmly against any attempts of political groups to act without the prior agreement with Bolsheviks (for example, the attempt to form an Army Committee in the Headquarters of the Supreme High Command by V. Chernov, A. Gots, and others). The reason is that Sukhanov feared that such spontaneous actions could trigger even further terror from the side of the Bolsheviks.¹⁹⁵

¹⁹³ «изоляция этой кучки началась с самого момента захвата ею власти; она продолжалась отпадением от этой кучки тех групп (левый с.-р.), которые первоначально были готовы разделить с ней ответственность за авантюру; изоляция диктаторов, опирающихся на одну лишь увлеченную стихией и бессознательную массу, еще более усилилась разочарованием „бolshevических масс“, которые начали таять, проникаясь сознанием, что вместо социализма они попали в трясины бесконечной гражданской войны и бесплодного террора; и, наконец, эта изоляция получила свое кульминационное выражение в открытом разрыве большевистских вождей, стоящих на почве соглашений и создания общедемократической власти» - Sukhanov, "Izolyatsia", NZ, (1917, 177), 1.

¹⁹⁴ «необходимо употребить все силы на то, чтобы расширить, углубить, усилить процесс изоляции „правлящей“ кучки, - процесс, начатый самими партийными группами большевиков. Необходимо употребить все силы на то, чтобы разъяснить массам действительное положение дела и показать им тот безвыходный тупик, в который завлекли их, пользуясь их темнотой и отчаянием, нынешние „правители“ и вершители судеб государства» - Sukhanov, "Dictatura", NZ (1917, 174), 1; see also Sukhanov "Krizis", NZ (1917, 173), 1 on the inter-party breakup of the Bolsheviks suggested by Sukhanov.

¹⁹⁵ Sukhanov, "Izolyatsia", NZ, (1917, 177), 1.

Soon enough, the left SRs entered the government. On 12 (25) December, Sukhanov stated that by accepting the posts in the Bolshevik government, the left SRs sanction the policy of the Bolsheviks and give the People's Commissars virtually unlimited mandates. He also criticised that the SRs show their loyalty by engaging in the tasks assigned to them by the Bolsheviks, such as the participation in the peace negotiations; declaration of war with Ukraine; imposition of the state of siege and censorship.¹⁹⁶

Thus, when Sukhanov realised that no agreements on the joint socialist power can be reached, he suggested to intensify the isolation of the Bolshevik party and to initiate the anti-Bolshevik propaganda among the population. Sukhanov suggested this strategy as deliberately non-aggressive and he opposed any attempts of political groups to act without the prior consent of the Bolsheviks. This proposal of Sukhanov did not bring any significant results. Soon, the left SRs joined the Bolshevik government, which is why Sukhanov harshly criticised them as he considered them sanctioning the Bolshevik policy.

- Action via the CEC

On 17 (30) November, Sukhanov discussed the new composition of the CEC which, in accordance with the recent decree of the Second All-Russian Congress of Soviets, provides seats to all socialist parties. This includes the Mensheviks and right SRs who left the congress following the seizure of the power by the Bolsheviks. Sukhanov expressed his belief that the new composition creates the ground for the establishment of the joint rule by all socialist groups. He praised the eventual composition of the CEC as the success of the socialists and the retreat of the Bolsheviks. Sukhanov stated that, as a result of the isolation by the socialists, the Bolsheviks now acknowledge the necessity of cooperation between the socialist parties and the harm of the rule under the dictatorship of only one party.¹⁹⁷

He also stressed that the ignorance of the ongoing political events by the Mensheviks and right SRs, while they are waiting for the Constituent Assembly, does not isolate the Bolsheviks. On the contrary, it helps the Bolsheviks to establish an even stronger dictatorship and to freely decide on important matters that cannot wait till the formation of the Constituent Assembly, such as the foreign and domestic policy. Therefore, Sukhanov

¹⁹⁶ Sukhanov, "Rasshirenje", (1917, 199), 1.

¹⁹⁷ Sukhanov, "Novaya", *NZ*, (1917, 183)83 (177), 1.

called the Mensheviks and right SRs to join the CEC in order to use it for the further establishment of the rule by all socialist parties.¹⁹⁸

On 8 (21) December, not long after the aforementioned suggestion, Sukhanov admitted that the CEC in fact is self-liquidated, and that the People's Commissars make decision of high importance – such as the initiation of the peace negotiations and the war with Ukraine – without even informing the CEC. Sukhanov further stresses that this “self-liquidation is a fearsome sign - since its disintegration alive is not the decomposition of the Bolshevik dictatorship, but is the self-destruction of that legislative body, which, under the prevailing conditions, should be one of the most important weapon in the fight against this dictatorship and its policies.”¹⁹⁹

Thus, the new composition of the CEC gave hope to Sukhanov that it will form the necessary ground for the further establishment of rule by all socialist groups. Initially, Sukhanov perceived it as retreat of the Bolsheviks as a result of their isolation from other socialists. However, Sukhanov underestimated the substantial influence that the Bolsheviks already exercised. And very soon, he realised that the CEC is in fact self-liquidated and openly disregarded by the Bolsheviks, and cannot be used in the fight against the Bolshevik rule.

- Mobilisation of the public opinion

By the end of 1917, Sukhanov's confidence in the eventual failure of the Bolsheviks was diminished. In the article published on 28 December (10 January), where he discusses the convening of the Constituent Assembly by the Bolsheviks on 5 January, Sukhanov states: “it is hardly [...] expected that it will be possible to defend it [the Constituent Assembly] as a supreme and sovereign body, as a source of the adequate politics and adequate power based on the agreement of all consistently democratic groups. It is hardly possible to count on this, since the Soviet government still has enough ‘organised force’ for Pyrrhic victories”.²⁰⁰

In the same article, Sukhanov discusses The Third All-Russian Congress of Workers' and Soldiers' Deputies' Soviets and The Third All-Russia Congress of Soviets of Peasants'

¹⁹⁸ Ibid.

¹⁹⁹ «Эта самоликвидация есть грозный признак – поскольку его разложение заживо не есть разложение большевистской диктатуры, а есть самоуничтожение того законодательного органа, который в сложившихся условиях, должен бы быть одним из важнейших орудий борьбы с этой диктатурой и ее политикой» - Sukhanov, “Gde”, NZ (1917, 196), 1.

²⁰⁰ «Едва ли [...] можно рассчитывать, что его удастся отстоять, как верховный и полновластный орган, как источник надлежащей политики и надлежащей власти, основанной на соглашении всех последовательно демократических групп. На это рассчитывать едва-ли можно, так как для пирровых побед у советской власти еще хватит „организованной силы“» - Sukhanov, “Kamen”, NZ (1917, 211), 1.

Deputies planned for January. He calls to use these two congresses, as well as the soviet pre-election campaign to the Constituent Assembly in order to mobilise the public opinion for the fight for the independent status of the Constituent Assembly; the proper rule and policy; and for the future joint work of all socialist parties.²⁰¹ As noted by Sukhanov, “the reconstruction of the ‘Soviet’ common socialist centre at the congresses is the next task of the conscious elements of democracy”.²⁰² This is an obligation of the opposition that cannot be ignored, “no matter how small the chances of success are under the given ‘Bolshevik’ conditions of this campaign”²⁰³

Thus, in the course of time Sukhanov was disappointed not only in the bourgeois, but also coalition government, which eventually led him to the support of a socialist rule. Nevertheless, the October Revolution was negatively received by Sukhanov, in particular as he foresaw the likelihood of the civil war. As M. D. Steignberg noted, many deemed that the Bolshevik rule will fail within the first weeks or even days.²⁰⁴ Sukhanov was not an exception, although he explicitly stressed that their rule could last, while the timing of their removal from the power is crucial for the well-being of the country.²⁰⁵ However, as all Sukhanov’s proposals how to fight the Bolsheviks were failing and the popularity and strength of the Bolsheviks were growing, he became sceptical about the attempts to remove the Bolsheviks. This reveals that - as opposed to a weaker position it other socialists - the strong position of power of the Bolsheviks was significantly underestimated by Sukhanov and others who believed in the destined failure of the Bolsheviks. And yet, Sukhanov considered it an obligation of every conscious socialist to continue the attempts to stand for the independency of the Constituent Assembly and against the rule of the Bolsheviks, regardless how small are the chances for success.

²⁰¹ Ibid.

²⁰² «Воссоздание на съездах «советского» общедемократического центра есть очередная задача сознательных элементов демократии» - Ibid.

²⁰³ «Как бы не малы были малы шансы на успех при данных, „большевитских“ условиях этой компании» - Ibid.

²⁰⁴ Steinberg, *Voices*, 251; see also Introduction.

²⁰⁵ Sukhanov, “Dictatura”, *NZ* (1917, 174), 1.

3.2 The war

The war, following the structure of power, is the most discussed issue in the 1917 publications of Sukhanov in *Novaya Zhizn*. The SR and Sukhanov's contemporary M.V. Vishnyak states: "Of all the 'fronts' of the Russian revolution - land, bread, freedom, national liberation - Sukhanov most acutely perceives the front of war and peace, which he presents to him in reverse, as the front of peace and war".²⁰⁶

Indeed, when looking back in his memoirs, Sukhanov states: "The first and most important slogan of the revolution was peace. If the revolution does not end the war, then the war will strangle the revolution. [...] The continuation and protraction of the war deliberately took away from the people bread, land, and the entire revolution. Dragging out the war meant the destruction of the national economy, it meant hunger, lack of goods, reaction of peasantry, and the triumph of the counter-revolution. Dragging out the war meant the general devastation, civil war, and the elimination of all achievements. Peace was the main demand that swallowed the rest, transformed them into a single, triune slogan of the revolution".²⁰⁷

During the war, many Mensheviks and SRs supported the Revolutionary Defencism. According to this concept, Russia should continue the war against the monarchical regimes in order to defend the socialism. As discussed in the section 2.4, unlike the above mentioned, Sukhanov was a consistent supporter of Zimmerwald. This shaped his views on the foreign policy of the Provisional Government and later of the Bolsheviks. See more details below.

3.2.1 The first Provisional Government

The first Provisional Government consisted of the Cadets, Octobrists, and nationalists, except for Kerensky, and it supported the war till the end. The foreign policy of the first Provisional Government was determined by the leader of the Cadets and the then Foreign Minister, P. Milyukov. He believed that Russia should continue the war and, upon the end, to occupy new territories, in particular the Bosphorus and Dardanelles straits. The approach

²⁰⁶ «Изъ всехъ 'фронтвъ' русской революціи - земли, хлеба, воли, національнаго освобожденія - Сухановъ острее всего воспринимаетъ фронтъ войны и мира, который представляетъ ему обратномъ виде, какъ фронтъ мира и войны» - Vishnyakov, Fevral.

²⁰⁷ «Первымъ же и важнейшимъ лозунгомъ революціи былъ мир. Если революція не кончитъ войну, то война задушитъ революцію. [...] Продолженіе и затягиваніе войны заведомо отнимало у народа и хлебъ, и землю, и всю революцію. Затягиваніе войны означало разрушеніе народнаго хозяйства, означало голодъ, бестоварье, реакцію крестьянства и торжество контрреволюціи. Затягиваніе войны означало всеобщую разруху, гражданскую войну и ликвидацію всехъ завоеванія. Миръ былъ основнымъ требованіемъ, поглощавшимъ остальные, превразавшимъ ихъ въ единый, въ триединыхъ лозунгъ революціи» - Sukhanov, *Zapiski*, 266.

of Milyukov did not differ from the one of the overthrown imperial government. To exemplify, Milyukov did not even make personnel changes in his ministry.

Sukhanov immediately noted that - unlike the internal policy - the foreign policy “continued and enhanced the anti-national cause of autocracy”²⁰⁸ and the government is to be blamed for the continuation of the war.²⁰⁹ Sukhanov stressed that this imperial course contradicts peace without annexations and indemnities in accordance with the position of Zimmerwald chosen by the Petrograd Soviet at the beginning.²¹⁰ Also, he considered it necessary to end the war for the liquidation of the political and economic crisis.²¹¹

- Following the Milyukov note

On 18 April (1 May), Milyukov sent to the Allies the statement of the Provisional Government dated on 27 March (9 April). It was dual in nature and contained both the intend of the full compliance of Russia with its commitments to the Allies, as well as provisions that could be interpreted as the intend to end the war. Also, Milyukov attached an accompanying note (also known as the Milyukov note) that was addressed reaffirmed the intention of Russia to continue the war until the victorious end. This note was sharply criticised by Sukhanov. He considered it “the culminating manifestation”²¹² of the imperialist foreign policy of the government. Sukhanov stressed that it revives “all old, false, and now undeserving of refutation slogans that had been poisoning the minds of the masses during the tsarist era”.²¹³

Thus, Sukhanov criticised the government for the tsarist foreign policy aimed at continuing the war. He considered that the government should align its policy with Zimmerwald, namely to seek a peace without annexations and indemnities.

3.2.2 The second Provisional Government

The resignation of Milyukov from the post of Foreign Minister and the creation of the second Provisional Government (or the first coalition) were well received by Sukhanov. He positively assessed the programme of the new government that included the will for peace without annexations and indemnities; and the maintenance of the fighting capability of the

²⁰⁸ «продолжало и углубляло противонародное дело самодержавия» - Sukhanov, “Democratia” *NZ* (1917, 3), 1.

²⁰⁹ Sukhanov, “Coalitsionnoye”, *NZ* (1917, 8),1.

²¹⁰ Sukhanov, “Democratia”, *NZ* (1917, 3), 1; Sukhanov, “Coalitsionnoye”, *NZ* (1917, 8),1.

²¹¹ Sukhanov, “Coalitsionnoye”, *NZ* (1917, 8),1.

²¹² «кульминационным проявлением» - Sukhanov, “Democratia”, *NZ* (1917, 3), 1.

²¹³ «все старые, фальшивые, не заслуживающие ныне опровержения лозунги, которым отравлялась сознание масс во времена царизма» - Ibid .

army to prevent the military defeat. Sukhanov considered both points essential because the army must remain in proper condition until the war is ended by a political agreement.²¹⁴

Sukhanov sympathised more with the new Foreign Minister M. Tereshchenko than with his predecessor, while still being sceptical of his policy. While Tereshchenko makes the right claims, he makes not enough efforts to bring them to life.²¹⁵ As noted by Sukhanov, “the path appears to the minister as a rather long-term perspective: first, communication, on the basis of which trust should appear; on the basis of this trust, preparatory steps will become possible and, in the end, all this will lead to an agreement”.²¹⁶ Sukhanov considered this passive foreign policy to be the main reason of the disintegration of the Russian army.²¹⁷ Also, he stressed that Russia cannot become the centre of the European socialism until it breaks with the imperialism. Therefore, the socialists and the government should immediately include the revision of the military treaties with the Allies on the agenda.²¹⁸

- Following the announcement of the Allies conference

On 6 (19) June, Sukhanov reported that Tereshchenko eventually called the Allies to revise the goals of the war. The Foreign Minister proposed to convene a conference at the earliest convenience. As declared, Russia will speak against any imperialist plots of the enemies. Sukhanov found it unclear why only the plots of the enemies will be opposed, and not those of the Allies. He also criticised this call is delayed and therefore useless. Sukhanov referred to the recent announcements of the ambassadors of the Allies that make clear no intentions of their governments to change the agreed treaties. This is also shown in action, for example, by the annexation of Albania and violence in Greece. Therefore, Sukhanov suggested the government to cease all contacts with the Allies and to continue the war against the Central Powers on its own until the enemy accepts peace without annexations and indemnities. According to Sukhanov, this would allow to revive the Russian army; end the war; and to unify the European socialists on the basis of the revolutionary values.²¹⁹

The suggestion of Sukhanov to isolate from the Allies while continue the full-pledged war with the Central Powers is questionable. In spite that Sukhanov in his articles multiply

²¹⁴ Ibid.

²¹⁵ «Без соответствующих дел – это пустые слова» - Sukhanov, N. “Programma” NZ (1917, 21), 1.

²¹⁶ «путь рисуется министру в виде довольно длинной перспективы: сначала общение, на почве которого должно затем появиться доверие; на почве доверия возможны будут подготовительные шаги, и в конце концов, все это приведет к соглашению» - Ibid.

²¹⁷ Ibid.

²¹⁸ Sukhanov, “U razbitogo”, NZ (1917, 32), 1.

²¹⁹ Sukhanov, “O borbe”, NZ (1917, 146), 1.

stresses the poor conditions of the Russian army²²⁰, the aforementioned proposal does not consider the military force that Russia would have at its disposal shall it cease all contacts with the Allies.

Over time, Sukhanov was even more convinced of the inaction of Tereshchenko. For example, on 9 (22) June, on the basis of the recent interview of the Foreign Minister, Sukhanov concluded that Tereshchenko still did not approach the Allies to convene the conference.²²¹

- Following the June offensive

In the end of April - beginning of May 1917, a large strategic offensive of the Russian army was planned. Due to the disintegration of the Russian troops, it was postponed and eventually took place on 18 June (1 July) – 6 (10) July. This offensive is known as the June offensive (or so-called Kerensky offensive). It failed due to a catastrophic breakdown in the military discipline of the Russian army, and it became the last offensive of the Russian army during the World War I. Sukhanov sharply criticised the June offensive. To some extent, he considered this as an attempt to return to the tsarist and Milyukov's foreign policy. Sukhanov blamed the Minister of War A. Kerensky who "revived all the old hopes" and "defeated the revolution".²²² He deemed that the offensive "not only was a great crime, it was a great folly"²²³ as it puts the revolution at stake.²²⁴

Sukhanov considered important to make it clear to each soldier that the fight is not for the commitment to the agreements made at the tsarist time, but for the motherland and revolution. However, as the government had not declared the Allied agreements invalid, the offensive is run as if for the commitment to the Allied agreements.²²⁵ And the Soviet majority is also to blame for the support of this offensive and lack of action on the prevention of this crime.²²⁶

Thus, the formation of the coalition was positively received by Sukhanov, in particular its programme. Soon, he realised that the Foreign Minister makes promises while not taking actions to realise them or making belated and useless decisions, such as the Allied conference. Sukhanov considered that the Allies show no intention to revise the treaties.

²²⁰ E.g. Sukhanov, N. "Programma" *NZ* (1917, 21), 1; Sukhanov, "Pobeda", *NZ* (1917, 48) 1.

²²¹ Sukhanov, "Politika", *NZ* (1917, 44), 1.

²²² «воскресил вновь все былые надежды», «победил революцию» - Sukhanov, *Zapiski*, 544.

²²³ «не только великим преступлением, оно было великой глупостью» - *Ibid.*

²²⁴ *Ibid.*; Sukhanov, "Nastuplenie", *NZ* (1917, 55), 1.

²²⁵ *Ibid.*

²²⁶ *Ibid.*; Sukhanov, *Zapiski*, 544.

Therefore, he suggested to cease all contacts with them while continuing the full-pledged war with the Central Powers. This proposal is unrealistic as it does not consider the military force of Russia if exiting the alliance. Also, some decisions of the government Sukhanov considered as radically counter-revolutionary. In particular, the June offensive, he considered as an attempt to return to the tsarist and Milyukov's foreign policy.

3.2.3 The third Provisional Government

In the third Provision Government (or second coalition), Tereshchenko continued to serve as the Foreign Minister. Soon after its formation, the government convened the Moscow State Conference on 12 (25) – 15 (28) August. This was the all-Russian political forum aimed at informing the citizens of Russia about the political situation and to unite supporters among different social groups. It was attended representatives of the State Duma, soviets, army, navy, commercial and industrial circles, trade unions, clergy, intellegensia, etc. When discussing the outcomes of this conferences, Sukhanov immediately noted that the government proclaimed the reactionary slogan “statehood and order” instead of “freedom and revolution”, as well as employed the reactionary approaches, such as repressions and resumption of the death penalty in the army. Also, Sukhanov criticised that the foreign policy and issue of war were not even touched upon by the government at the conference.²²⁷

The CEC does not comment on the aforementioned, which - according to Sukhanov - means that the revolutionary slogans are dismissed not only by the government, but also by the CEC. Even more, at the conference, the chairman of the CEC, N. Chkheidze, considered peace not as the most essential stand-alone point of the socialist programme, but as a measure to restore the army.²²⁸ The speech of Chkheidze confirms that “not fight for peace, but continuation of the war is not on the agenda today”.²²⁹

In the course of September, Sukhanov's criticism increased even further. On 8 (21) September - following the appointment by the Foreign Minister of an ambassador to France with the imperialist views, - Sukhanov compared Tereshchenko to a greedy and insatiable wolf, who has been fed with concessions on Zimmerwald and revolutionary slogans.²³⁰

²²⁷ Sukhanov, “Pirrovi”, *NZ* (1917, 104), 1.

²²⁸ Ibid.

²²⁹ «В порядке дня ныне стоит не борьба за мир а продолжение войны» - Ibid.

²³⁰ Sukhanov, “Snova”, *NZ* (1917, 6), 1.

Thus, Sukhanov blamed the second coalition for reactionary slogans and decisions, as well as for leaving the foreign policy and issue of war outside the current topics. He also criticised the CEC for silently accepting the reactionary policy of the government and for dismissing peace as the most important goal of the socialist programme.

3.2.4 The fourth Provisional Government

As previously, Tereshchenko kept the post of the Foreign Minister in the fourth Provisional Government (or third coalition). By this time, Sukhanov had completely lost faith in the coalition and personally Tereshchenko. Even more, Sukhanov accused the government of treason and of pursuing “a criminal policy of war and peace throughout the whole revolution”.²³¹ Sukhanov stated that “the office of Milyukov and Tereshchenko, from the first to the last day, sabotages the cause of peace as much as their abilities and strength allow them”²³², and that the government “fulfils the will of its own and Allied imperialist bourgeoisie that is vitally interested in the elimination of our revolutionary achievements”.²³³

Sukhanov considered that, following the military failures, the perfect moment to call for peace had passed. Nevertheless, now - when the warring countries are exhausted - the government might succeed to establish peace by reaching a political agreement. If not the governments, then the European people could respond the call of Russia. And, not less importantly, the Russian army would be revived under the revolutionary slogans.²³⁴

To revise the goals of the war, military treaties, and agree on peace conditions, the government announced the Allied conference for November. Sukhanov expressed his scepticism about its outcomes. He suggested that the Allies will expect Russia to give up its claims for Constantinople and the Bosphorus and Dardanelles straits, and to agree that the Allies will not anymore be responsible for the integrity of the borders of Russia. Yet, Sukhanov criticised Tereshchenko for continuously postponing this conference.²³⁵

On 16 October, the then War Minister General A. Verkhovsky declared at the Pre-parliament that an “immediate peace is needed to avoid a dire catastrophe at the front”.²³⁶

²³¹ «Преступную политику войны и мира ведет, в течении всей революции» - Sukhanov, “Grom”, *NZ* (1917, 142), 1.

²³² «Ведоство Миллюкова и Терещенко, с первого и до последнего дня, саботирует дело мира, насколько хватает умения и силы» - Ibid.

²³³ «выполняющее волю своей и союзной империалистичнской буржуазии, кровно заинтересованной в ликвидации наших революционныз завоеваний» - Ibid.

²³⁴ Ibid.

²³⁵ Sukhanov, “Novyi”, *NZ* (1917, 145), 1.

²³⁶ «немедленный мир необходим во избежание страшной катастрофы на фронте» - Sukhanov, *Zapiski*, 832.

Sukhanov expressed his absolute support to Verkhovsky, and compared him to Tereshchenko who talked “pompous diplomatic trifles”.²³⁷ Sukhanov noted that the powerful speech of Verkhovsky led to the confrontation from Tereshchenko. On 20 October, Verkhovsky resigned and Sukhanov considered this to be a tragic sacrifice to Tereshchenko.²³⁸

Thus, Sukhanov strongly opposed the coalition and accused it of sabotaging the cause of peace. The only minister supported by Sukhanov was General Verkhovsky who called for an immediate peace.

3.2.5 The road of the Bolsheviks to peace

The October Revolution drastically changed the Russian foreign policy. On the very first day after the revolution, on 26 October (8 November), Lenin issued *the Decree of the II All-Russian Congress of Soviets on Peace*. One of the two main points of this decree is the call to immediately conclude an armistice for at least three months in order to agree on fair peace conditions without annexations and indemnities. The second point is the abolishment of all secret diplomacy and the publication of all secret treaties concluded from February to 25 October 1917 in order to be fully opened to the entire people.²³⁹ Following this decree, the new government immediately instructed the chief of staff of the headquarters, General N. Dukhonin, to conclude the armistice. On 2 (15) December, the armistice was concluded; and on 9 (22) December, the peace negotiations were initiated in Brest-Litovsk.

One could suggest that the aforementioned decisive foreign policy should have been received positively by Sukhanov. In fact, the Bolshevik government put into practice the same idea as the one suggested General Verkhovsky and strongly supported by Sukhanov just 6 days before the decree on peace: an immediate peace.²⁴⁰ Indeed, in *Novaya Zhizn*, Sukhanov stresses that the peace negotiations undoubtedly is a vital progress of a great importance. He states that the negotiations dealt a severe blow to the war and provides a genuine opportunity to end the war. He also expressed his hope that the European states will join the peace negotiations as these negotiations represent “the centre of the current situation”²⁴¹ and cannot be ignored.²⁴²

²³⁷ «высокопарными дипломатическими пустиками» - Ibid.

²³⁸ Ibid, 832-836.

²³⁹ Lenin, “Decret o mire” (1917), from website of the Historical Faculty of the Lomonosov Moscow State University

²⁴⁰ See in the subsection above on *The fourth provisional government* in the section 3.2.

²⁴¹ «центр создавшегося положения» - Sukhanov, “К мирным”, *NZ* (1917, 203), 1.

On the other hand, Sukhanov stressed that this progress cannot be seen as a success of the Bolshevik foreign policy, but as a proof of the “criminal policy led by their predecessor on the issues of war and peace”.²⁴³ This statement exemplifies the overall negative attitude of Sukhanov towards the Bolsheviks despite the aforementioned achievements in the issue of peace. Also, Sukhanov assessed the policy of the Bolsheviks as too one-sided. Namely, he considered it wrong to initiate the negotiations with the Central Powers while not attempting to mobilise the socialist forces of Europe.²⁴⁴ In this respect, Sukhanov reproached the Bolsheviks for their unwillingness to convene the socialist conference and, thereby, to create the socialist centre of Europe in Russia and to end the war not only for Russia, but more broadly in Europe.²⁴⁵

It is noteworthy that when reproaching the Bolsheviks for the peace negotiations with the Central Powers, Sukhanov did not consider the unwillingness of the Entente neither to negotiate peace with the Central Powers, nor to revise the imperialist goals of the war. In fact, this was noted by Sukhanov himself as a part of his critics of the idea of Tereshchenko to convene the Allied conference, the idea which Sukhanov opposed.²⁴⁶

Similarly, when reproaching the Bolsheviks for not creating the centre for the European socialist forces in Russia, Sukhanov did not consider that such attempts to unite the socialists of Europe had been made in the past and all had failed. Including the manifesto *To All the Peoples of the World* written by Sukhanov; and the attempts of the Petrograd Soviet to contact the socialists of the warring countries, such as the Minister of Armaments of France Albert Thomas, and Emile Vandeveld. Especially, considering that the majority of the socialists of the warring countries were supporters of the war till the very end.

As for the reproach that the Bolsheviks neglect the international socialist conference, it was made by Sukhanov in December 1917, only month and a half since the Bolsheviks had come to power, which is a relatively short time. Sukhanov did not consider that the Soviets and the Provisional Government had not been able to manage to organise it once in the course of its existence for eight months, from March till October 1917. Also, as

²⁴² Ibid.

²⁴³ «преступную политику в области войны и мира вели их предшественники» - Ibid.

²⁴⁴ Ibid.

²⁴⁵ «Ограничившись обращением к враждебным правительствам, они упорно отказывались от мобилизации демократических сил Европы в борьбе за мир и пренебрегали созывом социалистической конференции. Теперь, когда слово – за народами Европы, политика большевистской власти не создала того центра, который был бы способен оказать решающее действие на европейский демократический мир... Мы будем надеяться, что народы Европы все же скажут свое слово и положат конец позору человечества в ближайшее время. Но это будет, несмотря на ошибки, а не в результате правильной политики теперешних правителей России» - Ibid.

²⁴⁶ See Sukhanov's criticism of the announcement of Tereshchenko to convene the Allied conference in *The second Provisional Government* and *The fourth Provisional Government* above in this section 3.2 .

discussed earlier in this section on *The first Provisional Government*, the idea of the international socialist conference is rather utopian as the governments of the Allied Powers have shown no interest to align their policies with the position of Zimmerwald and the Russian and European democrats. A good example is the Inter-Allied Socialist Conference convened by the British Labour Party in August 1917. As is well-known, this conference has not led to any substantial results in the revision of the goals of the war, which once again confirms rather limited influence of such socialist conferences on the policies of the Allied governments.

Thus, while Sukhanov considered the foreign policy of the Provisional Government as a sabotage of the cause of peace due to its inaction and reaction²⁴⁷, as soon as the Bolsheviks came to power, they took decisive actions to establish immediate peace. Although Sukhanov recognised the significant progresses of the Bolsheviks in the peace negotiations, he criticised them for not attempting to involve the Allies in the negotiations with the Central Powers, as well as for not creating the centre of socialist forces of Europe in Russia. However, if looking more closely into Sukhanov's criticism of the Provisional Government and the Bolsheviks, it reveals more complex conditions at the international stage. Namely, while the Allies had shown no interest in establishing peace, the socialists of the Entente had no significant influence on the governments of their states.

²⁴⁷ Sukhanov, "Grom", *NZ* (1917, 142), 1.

3.3 The land question

The issue of land is minorly discussed by Sukhanov, as he considered it to be secondary in relation to the issues of power structure and war.²⁴⁸ Yet, Sukhanov consistently criticised the Provisional Government for its unwillingness to address the issue of land. See more details below.

3.3.1 The Provisional Government

On 19 March (1 April), the first Provisional Government issued an appeal on the land that declared the following steps: 1) to make all preparation for the future land reform; 2) to entrust this matter to the Minister of Agriculture; and 3) to form a land committee under the Ministry of Agriculture.²⁴⁹ The government stressed that “the deadly path of seizures”²⁵⁰ is not an option and the land reform should be implemented by the Constituent Assembly.²⁵¹ Sukhanov noted: “The view of the government itself remained unknown to the people. The entire subsequent policy of the bourgeois government was increasingly less satisfying and more concerning to the people”.²⁵²

In the memoirs, Sukhanov talks about the unrest among the peasants in April 1917, and he considers that they had good reasons for it.²⁵³ On 23 April (6 May), the government issued an appeal similar to the previous one: “The land issue will be solved by the Constituent Assembly; therefore, ‘it is necessary to collect the preliminary information’; for these purposes, land committees are established with the main land committee at the head; ‘only this way... the great and complex land issue can be properly prepared for the solution’”.²⁵⁴

Sukhanov mentioned that the unrest of peasants was mainly due to their fear of the loss of lands as a result of unjust schemes by landlords and the land acquisition by foreigners at low prices. On 25 April (8 May), a meeting was held at the Ministry of Agriculture. It was agreed that some regulations can be introduced before the Constituent Assembly, namely

²⁴⁸ Sukhanov, *Zapiski*, 266; see also the section 3.2 on the priority to the issue of war above the land.

²⁴⁹ Sukhanov, *Zapiski*, 219.

²⁵⁰ «гибельным путем захвата» - Ibid, 219.

²⁵¹ Ibid.

²⁵² «Взгляд на дело самого правительства оставался народу неизвестным. Вся дальнейшая политика буржуазной власти менее утешала и все более питала народное беспокойство» - Ibid.

²⁵³ Ibid, 397-398.

²⁵⁴ «Земельный вопрос решит Учредительное собрание; для него ‘необходимо собрать предварительные сведения’; в этих целях учреждаются земельные комитеты с главным земельным комитетом во главе; ‘только таким путем... может быть правильно подготовлен к разрешению великий и сложный земельный вопрос’» - Ibid, 398.

the ban on the sale of lands to foreigners.²⁵⁵ As Sukhanov notes, no regulations have followed: “none of this was serious. [...] The publication of this act ran into insurmountable obstacles.”²⁵⁶

On 6 (19) May, shortly after the formation of the second Provisional Government (first coalition), it was announced that the land issue will be solved by the Constituent Assembly. Meanwhile, the government will implement all preparatory work; ensure the production of bread; and will regulate the lands use.²⁵⁷ As Sukhanov noted, while “the ‘land people’ did not demand much on the land policy”²⁵⁸, there is not a “single hint of the pressing agrarian problem, the ban on land transactions”.²⁵⁹

Despite the unpromising land programme of the government, the leader of SRs, V. Chernov - who was the Minister of Agriculture in the first and second coalition, - gave hope to people. However, Chernov showed no progress on the land issue over time.²⁶⁰ Sukhanov stressed that since the July crisis - when the reactionary movement began, - Chernov is the primary target of the bourgeois ministers, such as the Minister of Justice I. Efremov. This effectively prevents the implementation of his land projects, including the ban on land transactions.²⁶¹

On 9 (22) July, the government made the long-awaited statement: “the land reform should be based on the idea of the transfer of land to the working people”.²⁶² The government further suggested: 1) to eliminate the previous disorganising land management policy; 2) to ensure the freedom of the Constituent Assembly in managing the land fund; 3) to strengthen the land committees to address the issues unrelated to the land ownership, as the latter remains within the competence of the Constituent Assembly; 4) to fight against seizures and other unauthorised actions.²⁶³ Sukhanov stresses: “After all, again - yes, again! - there is no even a promise to issue a trifling decree on land transactions!”²⁶⁴

On the night of 13 (26) July, the government declared all land transactions outside urban areas made after 1 March 1917 to be non-binding. Any of these transaction could be

²⁵⁵ Ibid.

²⁵⁶ “все это было не серьезно. [...] Издание же акта наткнулось на непреодолимые препятствия” - Ibid, 398.

²⁵⁷ Ibid, 433.

²⁵⁸ «требовалось „людьми земли“ в области земельной политики очень немногое» - Ibid, 455.

²⁵⁹ «на аграрную злобу дня, на восприятие земельных сделок нет ни намека» - Ibid.

²⁶⁰ Ibid.

²⁶¹ Sukhanov, “Pobeda”, NZ, (1917, 48), 1.

²⁶² «в основу земельной реформы должна быть положена мысль о переходе земли к трудящимся» - Sukhanov, Zapiski, 602.

²⁶³ Ibid.

²⁶⁴ «Ведь тут опять – да, опять! – нет даже обещания издать пустяковый декрет о земельных сделках» - Ibid.

cancelled by the Constituent Assembly. Sukhanov states: "it is a defeat of the Minister of Agriculture. [...] At best, it has no content, since the Constituent Assembly will dispose of land as it pleases".²⁶⁵ In fact, the above does not ban but sanctions land transactions, and "land can be sold to foreigners, it can be fragmented below the labour norm by fictitious deals".²⁶⁶

On 18 (31) August in *Novaya Zhizn*, Sukhanov discussed the Moscow State Conference convened by the third Provisional Government (second coalition). Sukhanov critically notes that, after three months of work of Chernov, the government reaffirmed that the land reform cannot be implemented until the Constituent Assembly.

Thus, throughout the existence of the Provisional Government, the criticism of Sukhanov remained the same. He deemed that the government lacks action and unfairly postpones the burning issue of land until the Constituent Assembly. In particular, the ban on land transactions, which he considered a relatively modest request of peasants that would give some certainty and reduce the scale of unrest.

3.3.2 The land policy of the Bolsheviks

On 16 October (8 November), the next day after the seizure of power, the Bolsheviks issued *the Decree of the II All-Russian Congress of Soviets on Land*. The agrarian programme of SRs served as a basis for the decree on land. The main points of the decree are the following: the private property rights on lands are abolished forever; all lands become a part of the national land fund; any damage to the confiscated property will be published by the revolutionary court; all Russian citizens who wish to work on the land have the right to do so; the distribution of lands among workers shall be implemented by the local and central self-governing bodies; the wage labour is prohibited; this decree shall be used as the guideline for the land reform until the final decision by the Constituent Assembly.²⁶⁷

In the memoirs, Sukhanov states that he generally supports the agrarian programme of the SRs. On the other hand, Sukhanov stressed that some of the points of the programme are utopian, and these exact points are very evident in the decree issued by the Bolsheviks. Namely, he deemed that the attempt to bring the economy under the state control and to

²⁶⁵ "поражение министра земеделия. [...] Он в лучшем случае не имеет никакого содержания так как Учр Собрание будет как угодно распоряжаться землей" - Sukhanov, "Pobeda", NZ, (1917, 48), 1.

²⁶⁶ "земля может продаваться иностранцам, может дробиться ниже трудовой нормы финктивными сделками." - Sukhanov, "Pobeda", NZ, (1917, 48), 1.

²⁶⁷ Lenin, "Decret o zemle".

modify the current economic foundations – in particular, to prohibit the land ownership and lease, as well as wage labour - will inevitably lead to economic disasters, including the undermining of the agrarian productive forces. Sukhanov states the following.²⁶⁸

Sukhanov also suggests that the Bolsheviks did not have a clear strategy for their rule after the power seizure. Sukhanov considers the land policy, amongst others, to be spontaneously made out of the lack of understanding how to govern the country. In spite that prior the revolution Lenin had been an opponent of the anarchist tactics and the SR agrarian programme, Lenin abounded his ideological principles and employed the anarchist tactics, such as the land confiscation. That is to please the peasants “who was by no means a fanatical supporter of Marxism”²⁶⁹ and stay in power.²⁷⁰

This vision of Sukhanov is fully in line with the statement of the historians J. Daly and L. Trofimov who suggested that the Bolsheviks were unsure about what to do next when they came to power.²⁷¹ Daly and Trofimov further state: “They [the Bolsheviks] hated the old institutions and the old order - that much was clear. Among their pressing tasks was to abolish the landed estates, to nationalise the factories and banks, to end the war, to publish all secret treaties, to disband the traditional courts and replace them with people’s courts. But what exactly should emerge in their place? How could one build socialism in a country populated mostly by peasants? And who exactly should build it? The Bolsheviks did not always know the answers to these questions”.²⁷² Also, consistent with the aforementioned vision of Sukhanov, the historian A.V. Shubin suggested that the land decree was a measure of populist nature. Although Shubin, as opposed to the great economic significance and impact attached to the land decree by Sukhanov, considered this decree rather a postponement of the actual land reforms, which only came in January 1918.²⁷³

In relation to the suggestion of Sukhanov that the land policy of the Bolsheviks is too drastic, it should be noted that the transfer of land to peasants is the long-standing demand that served as one of the core reasons of the Russian Revolution, and that it remained one of the foremost slogans throughout 1917. The further ignorance of this

²⁶⁸ Sukhanov, *Zapiski*, 925.

²⁶⁹ «[Было любезно и понятно мужичку, который]отнюдь не был фанатическим сторонником марксизма» – Ibid, 843.

²⁷⁰ Ibid, 843, 856.

²⁷¹ Daly and Trofimov, *Russia*, 100.

²⁷² Ibid.

²⁷³ Shubin, *Revolutsionney*, 318; these land reforms of January 1918, as clarified by Shubin, were adopted according to the draft of the Left SRs and determined the problems of property and the order of land use – Ibid.

demand could increase the social unrest among the peasants – who presented the absolute majority of the population, - and deteriorate the already deeply unstable situation in the country. The ban on land transactions - which Sukhanov expected to be implemented by the Provisional Government as a relatively modest demand that could provide some sense of certainty and decrease the unrest - would presumably serve to temporarily calm the unresting peasants, while it would ignore the core of the problem on land.

Thus, Sukhanov considered that the Bolsheviks's land decree employs too drastic measures that modify the existing economic foundations and therefore will cause the economic dysfunction. On the other hand, the transfer of land to peasants was one of the long-standing problems that led to the Russian Revolution and remained among the foremost slogans throughout 1917. The further ignorance of this issue could deteriorate the instability in the country, while the measure suggested earlier by Sukhanov to the Provisional Government – to the ban on land transactions – would only temporarily decrease the scale of unrest.

Conclusion

The views and criticism of Sukhanov allow to reveal a number of broader considerations in relation to the October Revolution of 1917. First, the inactive and reactionary policies of the Provisional Government, as well as the unwillingness of the moderate socialists to assume the full power have become one the key reasons for the October Revolution. Therefore, as pointed by P. Volobuyev²⁷⁴, Sukhanov ultimately condemns the ruling parties for their failure to prevent seizure of power by the Bolsheviks.

Second, the analysis of Sukhanov's views reveal that the October Revolution manifested and radicalised the opposition of two unequal powers. On the one hand, the strong position, internal discipline, and substantial armed forces of the Bolsheviks, whose popular support was growing "unquestionably", as aptly phrased by M. D. Steignberg.²⁷⁵ On the other hand, this essentially irresistible Bolshevik power was opposed by the weaker force of moderate socialists who - as stressed by A.V. Shubin - were prepared neither to compromise nor to struggle resolutely with the Bolsheviks in fear of a civil war.²⁷⁶ Consequently, all Sukhanov's proposals to the socialist forces how to fight the Bolsheviks failed and he realised that the moderate socialists will unlikely stand against the Bolsheviks.

Third, a closer analysis of Sukhanov's criticism of the foreign policy of the Provisional Government and the Bolsheviks reveal complex conditions at the international stage, including those faced by the Bolsheviks as of the October Revolution. Namely, although Sukhanov recognised the significant progresses of the Bolsheviks on the peace negotiations, he criticised them for not attempting to involve the Allies in the negotiations with the Central Powers, as well as for not creating the centre of socialist forces of Europe in Russia. However, while the Allies had shown no interest in establishing peace - which had also been aptly observed by Sukhanov as a part of his criticism of the Provisional Government, - the socialists of the Entente had no significant influence on the governments of their states.

Fourth, a closer look into Sukhanov's criticism also reveals the complicity of the socio-economic realities at that time, including the October Revolution. On the one hand, Sukhanov considered that the Bolsheviks's land decree employs too drastic measures that

²⁷⁴ Volobuyev, *Economicheskaya*, 5-6.

²⁷⁵ Steinberg, *Voices*, 170.

²⁷⁶ Shubin, *Revolutsionney*, 321.

will cause the economic dysfunction. On the other hand, the transfer of land to peasants - that tellingly was a highly popular measure, as discussed A.V. Shubin²⁷⁷ - was one of the long-standing problems that led to the Russian Revolution and remained among the foremost slogans throughout 1917. The further ignorance of this issue could deteriorate the instability in the country, while the measure suggested earlier by Sukhanov to the Provisional Government – to the ban on land transactions – would only temporary decrease the scale of unrest.

²⁷⁷ Shubin, *Revolutsionney*, 318.

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Appendix

The manifesto *To Peoples of the World* translated from Russian to English²⁷⁸:

“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

²⁷⁸ Petrograd Soviet, "to Peoples of the World"

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!"

The original text the manifesto *To Peoples of the World* in Russian²⁷⁹:

«К народам всего мира

Товарищи пролетарии и трудящиеся всех стран!

Мы, русские рабочие и солдаты, объединенные в Петербургском Совете рабочих и солдатских депутатов, шлем вам наш пламенный привет и возвещаем о великом событии. Российская демократия повергла в прах вековой деспотизм царя и вступает в вашу семью полноправным членом и грозной силой в борьбе за наше общее освобождение. Наша победа есть великая победа всемирной свободы и демократии. Нет больше главного устоя мировой реакции и «жандарма Европы». Да будет тяжким гранитом земля на его могиле! Да здравствует свобода! Да здравствует международная солидарность пролетариата и его борьба за окончательную победу!

²⁷⁹ Sukhanov, *Zapiski*, 202-203

Наше дело еще не завершено: еще не рассеялись тени старого порядка и немало врагов собирают силы против русской революции. Но все же огромны наши завоевания. Народы России выразят свою волю в Учредительном собрании, которое будет созвано в ближайший срок на основе всеобщего, равного, прямого и тайного избирательного права. И уже сейчас можно с уверенностью предсказать, что в России восторжествует демократическая республика. Русский народ обладает полной политической свободой. Он может ныне сказать свое властное слово во внутреннем самоопределении страны и во внешней ее политике. И, обращаясь ко всем народам, истребляемым и разоряемым в чудовищной войне, мы заявляем, что наступила пора начать решительную борьбу с захватными стремлениями правительств всех стран. Наступила пора народам взять в свои руки решение вопроса о войне и мире.

В сознании своей революционной силы российская демократия заявляет, что она будет всеми мерами противодействовать захватной политике своих господствующих классов, и призывает народы Европы к совместным решительным выступлениям в пользу мира. И мы обращаемся к нашим братьям пролетариям австро-германской коалиции, и прежде всего к германскому пролетариату.

С первых дней войны нас убеждали в том, что, поднимая оружие против самодержавной России, вы защищаете культуру Европы от азиатского деспотизма. Многие из вас видели в этом оправдание той поддержки, которую вы оказали войне. Ныне не стало и этого оправдания: демократическая Россия не может быть угрозой свободе и цивилизации.

Мы будем стойко защищать нашу собственную свободу от всяких реакционных посягательств – как изнутри, так и извне.

Русская революция не отступит перед штыками завоевателей и не позволит раздавить себя внешней военной силой. Но мы призываем вас: сбросьте с себя иго вашего самодержавного порядка, подобно тому как русский народ стряхнул с себя царское самовластие, откажитесь служить орудием захвата и насилия в руках королей, помещиков и банкиров – и дружными усилиями мы прекратим страшную бойню, позорящую человечество и омрачающую великие дни рождения русской свободы.

Трудящиеся всех стран! Братски протягивая вам руку через горы братских трупов, через реки невинной крови и слез, через дымящиеся развалины городов и деревень, через погибшие сокровища культуры, мы призываем вас к восстановлению и укреплению международного единства. В нем залог наших грядущих побед и полного освобождения человечества...

Пролетарии всех стран, соединяйтесь!»