

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

Evidence 22: Soviet Order No. 1, March 1/14, 1917

A

Introduction

As disorder spread in the streets, a Soviet (council) organized to coordinate the revolutionary ambitions of the lower classes. Having mutinied against the Imperial government, soldiers in the capital gave their allegiance to the Soviet. The Soviet's Order No. 1 redefined the chain of command in the military and laid the foundation for a system of "dual power" between the Soviet and a committee of deputies from the Duma, which became the Provisional Government. The order also signalled a dramatic shift in power, as the election of representatives by soldiers began a process of democratization "from below."

Question to Consider

- Consider the practical implications of item no. 4 in the Order. What kind of power would the Provisional Government maintain if the Soviet claimed the right to review and approve all of its decisions?

Document

Order No. 1

March 14, 1917

To the garrison of the Petrograd District, to all the soldiers of the guard, army, artillery, and navy, for immediate and strict execution, and to the workers of Petrograd for their information:

The Soviet of Workers' and Soldiers' Deputies has resolved:

1. In all companies, battalions, regiments, parks, batteries, squadrons, in the special services of the various military administrations, and on the vessels of the navy, committees from the elected representatives of the lower ranks of the above-mentioned military units shall be chosen immediately.
2. In all those military units which have not yet chosen their

representatives to the Soviet of Workers' Deputies, one representative from each company shall be selected, to report with written credentials at the building of the State Duma by ten o'clock on the morning of the fifteenth of this March.

3. In all its political actions, the military branch is subordinated to the Soviet of Workers' and Soldiers' Deputies and to its own committees.
4. The orders of the military commission of the State Duma shall be executed only in such cases as do not conflict with the orders and resolutions of the Soviet of Workers' and Soldiers' Deputies.
5. All kinds of arms, such as rifles, machine guns, armored automobiles, and others, must be kept at the disposal and under the control of the company and battalion committees, and in no case be turned over to officers, even at their demand.
6. In the ranks and during their performance of the duties of the service, soldiers must observe the strictest military discipline, but outside the service and the ranks, in their political, general civic, and private life, soldiers cannot in any way be deprived of those rights which all citizens enjoy. In particular, standing at attention and compulsory saluting, when not on duty, is abolished.
7. Also, the addressing of the officers with the title, "Your Excellency," "Your Honor," etc., is abolished, and these titles are replaced by the address of "Mister General, "Mister Colonel," etc. Rudeness towards soldiers of any rank, and, especially, addressing them as "Thou" is prohibited, and soldiers are required to bring to the attention of the company committees every infraction of this rule, as well as all misunderstandings occurring between officers and privates.

The present order is to be read to all companies, battalions, regiments, ships' crews, batteries, and other combatant and non-combatant commands.

THE PETROGRAD SOVIET OF WORKERS' AND SOLDIERS' DEPUTIES.

Source:

Izvestiia, No. 3, March 2/15, 1917. Frank Alfred Golder, ed., *Documents of Russian History, 1914-1917*, translated by Emanuel Aronsberg (New York: The Century Co., 1927): 386-87.