

## Option 4: Organize for a Second Revolution

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The ideology of Karl Marx provides a superb framework for action, but it must be adapted to Russian conditions. It is true that, at present, Russia's urban lower class lacks sufficient class-consciousness to overthrow capitalism. However, precise, skilled organization of the lower classes can and will make a decisive difference. With the February Revolution, the time is ripe for radical change. The workers can be taught and led to achieve this all-important goal.

We will stop at nothing in our quest to reach the broad, sunlit uplands of socialism. The hard, sharp edge of determination of this vanguard has been forged during years of tsarist oppression. Toughened by persecution, imprisonment, and exile, the revolutionary vanguard understands that now is the time for courage, sacrifice, and boldness, not just in thoughts, but in heroic deeds!

The brave workers of Petrograd showed us the way in February. When they acted, bloody Nicholas and the other Romanov wolves turned tail and ran. But our work is far from done. A second revolution is needed in Russia! All Russians should join the cause of the Bolsheviks! All power to the soviets! Peace, land, and bread!

The Provisional Government is a powerless empty shell. We are told to wait until its leaders see fit to devise elections for a Constituent Assembly, and that this Assembly will be the true government of a new Russia. Political participation in this deceptive farce is laughable. The aims of the Provisional Government are to perpetuate the leadership of the ruling class and to oppress the workers and peasants. After a period of organization and subversion, the lower classes, led by its vanguard, will send the Provisional Government where it belongs—into the dustbin of history.

The present war is a horrible example of bloody imperialist competition over the means of production. Russia should immediately renounce its role in this carnage and conclude a peace. Then we can turn our attention to the daily needs of the real masters of Russia: its workers, peasants, and soldiers. Under the leadership of the soviets, land should be confiscated from the nobles and redistributed by the peasants themselves. Private property is the root of all evil. Class struggle is the only avenue to real social change. Familiar with great personal hardships, the Russian workers and peasants possess the will and stamina for the coming conflict. They only need to be guided by a reliable core of trained revolutionaries. All of Europe is poised for the brave new world of socialism. Russia can show the way through decisive action now! Long live the international socialist revolution!

### Beliefs and Assumptions Underlying Option 4

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1. Russia's suffering people cannot wait any longer. Only a fervent, uncompromising, disciplined elite of trained revolutionaries can organize the urban lower class and peasants for a final successful revolt against the forces of capital.

2. Private property is the root of all evil. The workers and peasants are the ones who make property economically productive. Therefore, they should control that property.

3. Ultimately, the success of international socialism will transform national self-determination into an irrelevancy.

4. The war has been a horrible example of bloody imperialist competition over the means of production. Russia should immediately renounce its participation in this carnage and look after the daily needs of its real heroes: the workers, peasants, and soldiers.

## Supporting Arguments for Option 4

1. Familiar with great personal hardships, the Russian workers and peasants possess the will and stamina for the coming conflict. They only need to be taught and led by an effective revolutionary vanguard.

2. It is useless to work with the bourgeois Provisional Government. Its aims are simple: to perpetuate the leadership of the ruling class and to oppress the workers and peasants. In due time, its fate will be sealed.

3. The Provisional Government has denied the right of self-determination to Finns, Ukrainians, and other national minorities. This is nothing less than a mindless continuation of the immoral policies of the hated former tsar.

4. The war is already a lost cause. It is better to admit it now, save the lives of our surviving soldiers, conclude a peace with Germany, and focus our energies on building the brave new world of socialism.

## From the Historical Record

*Lenin, "Who Are the 'Friends of the People' and How Do They Fight Against the Social Democrats?," 1894*

"The Russian worker, rising at the head of all the democratic elements, will overthrow absolutism and lead the Russian proletariat [property-less laborers] (together with the proletariat of all countries) along the direct road of open political struggle to the victorious Communist Revolution."

*Lenin, 1895*

"The democratic struggle is inseparable from the socialist one; (it is) impossible to wage a successful fight for the cause of labor without the attainment of full liberty and the democratization of Russia's political and social regime."

*Lenin, 1900*

"No single class in history has ever attained mastery unless it has produced political leaders...capable of organizing the movement and leading it.... It is necessary to prepare men who devote to the revolution not only their free evenings, but their entire lives."

*Lenin, 1907*

"Revolution is a difficult matter. It cannot be made with gloves and manicured fingernails.... A political party is no girls dormitory. Party members should not be measured by the

narrow standard of petty-bourgeois morality. Sometimes a scoundrel is useful to our party precisely because he is a scoundrel."

*Lenin, during the early months of World War I*

"Is the feeling of national pride alien to us, Russian class-conscious proletarians? Certainly not. We love our language and our motherland."

*Leon Trotsky, September 1915*

"Working men and women! Mothers and fathers! Widows and orphans! Wounded and crippled! To all who are suffering from the war or in consequence of the war, we cry out, over the frontiers, over the smoking battlefields, over the devastated cities and hamlets: WORKERS OF THE WORLD UNITE!"

*Lenin, March 30, 1917*

"It has fallen to the Russian proletariat to have the great honor of beginning a series of revolutions.... Russia is a peasant country, one of the most backward in Europe. It is not possible for socialism to triumph there directly, presently. But the peasant character of the country...can lead a vast sweep to the bourgeois-democratic revolution in Russia and make our revolution a prologue to the worldwide socialist revolution, a step toward it."

*Lenin, March 16, Cable to the Petrograd Bolsheviks:*

“Our tactics; complete mistrust. No support for the new government. We especially suspect Kerensky. The arming of the proletariat provides the only guarantee.... No rapprochement with the other parties.”

*Lenin, Pravda, April 3 and 4, 1917*

The first stage of the Revolution has ended. This first stage will certainly not be the last stage of our Revolution.... The Russian working class has as its first ally the mass of the... peasant population of Russia, which numbers many millions and constitutes the enormous majority of the population. This mass must have peace, bread, freedom and land.”



## Options in Brief

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### Option 1: Create a Liberal Democracy

The time has come to build a liberal democracy in Russia! We support the Provisional Government until a Constituent Assembly can be elected to enact needed political and social reforms. Representatives of the people must be chosen by universal suffrage; government is best guided by the ballot box, not mob violence. Educated persons can provide necessary leadership. Russia deserves to be guided by the rule of law—law that respects the freedom and dignity of every human being. Individual rights, such as the right to speak, write, and worship freely, should be safeguarded. Private property should be protected and free enterprise should be encouraged. The civil and cultural rights of minority peoples should be respected, but the integrity and unity of the Russian state has to be preserved. The sacrifices of our brave soldiers and sailors must not be in vain. We will defend the fatherland!

### Option 2: Respect the Peasants

The exploitation of the peasants must end! Land and liberty! The peasants are the backbone of Russia, yet it is they who suffer the most. All land should be granted to the peasants without compensation to the nobility. The traditions of the commune will be observed; the equality of all peasants will be guaranteed, while private ownership of land will not be reintroduced. Peasants and workers share the brotherhood of toil. Agriculture is more important than urban industries, which will only grow if the rural economy progresses first. We support the civil and cultural rights of minority peoples. Participation in the soviets, the Provisional Government, and the upcoming Constituent Assembly will help to achieve these aims. We should work with the Socialist Revolutionary Party to advance the cause of the peasants. Abroad, Russians must fight to defend their country and, after the war, we will work internationally for a peace of justice.

### Option 3: Work Toward a Future Socialist Society

Karl Marx's ideas mirror what is happening now in Russia. Russia is industrializing rapidly, and this process is both creating an urban lower class and exacerbating class conflict. However, Russian capitalism is still in its infancy, and it will be a long time before Russia is ready for socialism. We must trust in our wise Menshevik leaders to guide us to that eventual goal. For now, active participation in the soviet's development of a strong labor party to prepare for future Constituent Assembly elections, and cooperation with the Provisional Government will move Russia toward a better tomorrow. We support self-determination for minority groups, but this must be decided by the Constituent Assembly. Russia should defend itself against aggression. After the war, together with our brothers throughout the world, we will strive for a just peace.

### Option 4: Organize Now for a Second Revolution

Marxist theory is sound, but must be adapted to Russian conditions. With the February Revolution, the time is ripe for radical change. It is true that, at present, Russia's urban lower class lacks sufficient class-consciousness to overthrow capitalism. However, an elite group of well-organized, highly-disciplined, dedicated revolutionaries can teach and lead the workers to achieve this goal. A second revolution is needed in Russia! All power to the soviets! Peace, land, and bread! All peoples of Russia should join the cause of the Bolsheviks! The Provisional Government is an empty shell; after a period of organization and subversion, we can topple it. Russia must withdraw from the war and conclude an immediate peace. Land should be confiscated from the nobles and redistributed by the peasants themselves. City workers must be fed. Long live the international socialist revolution!

## Presenting Your Option

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**The Setting:** It is late April 1917. Crowds have gathered in Znamenskaya Square in Petrograd and are making speeches and arguing about the future of Russia.

**Your Assignment:** Your group comprises a variety of individuals who share a common vision for Russia. Your assignment is to persuade the undecided citizens that your option should become the basis for action. On Day Four, your group will be called upon to present a persuasive three-to-five minute summary of your option to these individuals. You will be judged by the undecided citizens on how well you present your option. This worksheet will help you prepare. Your teacher will moderate discussion.

**Organizing Your Group:** Each member of your group will take a specific role. Below

is a brief explanation of the responsibility of each role. Before preparing your sections of the presentation, work together to address the questions below. The **group director** is responsible for organizing the presentation of your group's option to the undecided citizens. The **political expert** is responsible for explaining why your option is most appropriate in light of the current domestic and international political climates. The **economic expert** is responsible for explaining why your option makes the most sense for the country economically. The **social expert** is responsible for explaining why your group's option offers the best route in terms of social issues. The **military expert** is responsible for explaining why your group's option offers the best route in terms of security.

**Consider the following questions as you prepare your presentation:**

1. What will be the impact of your option on the people of Russia?
  
2. What will be the impact of your option on foreign relations?
  
3. What is your option's long-term vision for Russia?
  
4. What are your option's short-term strategies for Russia?
  
5. What potential difficulties might your option's strategy encounter?
  
6. On what values is your option based?