

Option 1: Create A Liberal Democracy

The time has come to build a liberal democracy in Russia! With the February Revolution and the abdication of the tsar, we can create a society guided by the rule of law. In the spirit of our French, British, and American historical ancestors, we have the opportunity to establish here, in our beloved Russia, a state characterized by limited government and the protection of individual rights.

The days of tsarist coercion are gone, never to return. We support the Provisional Government until a Constituent Assembly can be elected to enact needed political and social reforms. Already, Russia has transformed itself into a beacon of freedom. The Provisional Government has passed measures

- a. to guarantee freedoms of speech, press, and assembly;
- b. to rescind legal restrictions based on class, race, and religion;
- c. to provide a general amnesty;
- d. to establish universal adult suffrage;
- e. to reform the justice system (including abolishing capital punishment); and
- f. to introduce democratic local self-rule.

We have an optimistic faith in the goodness of the Russian people. Despite the many challenges that face us, the resilience and cooperative spirit of our people will carry us through the difficult days ahead. Our liberal leaders seek to look after the welfare of all people, not just one class. The people can be relied upon to be patient while a legal framework is put in place to safeguard public order and private property.

Private property should be protected and free enterprise should be encouraged. Russia's economy will thrive when the people become aware that entrepreneurial initiative will be rewarded. Previously, the Russian state has spearheaded the process of modernization. Today, economic leadership roles need to be assumed by individuals themselves—whether they are peasants, workers, landholders, or industrialists. Capitalism is the wave of the future in Russia. The integrity and unity of the Russian state must be preserved. We support the authority of the state and oppose federalism. The blood of many gallant soldiers and sailors has been spilled in defense of the Russian Empire. Their sacrifices must not be in vain. All Russians must unite to defeat the Central Powers. We will defend our fatherland!

Beliefs and Assumptions Underlying Option 1

1. Liberal democracy and capitalism represent the leading edge of modern political and economic thought. Russia needs to look forward, not backward.

2. The road of revolution is fraught with danger to law and order. We must proceed cautiously, with an eye to appropriate historical precedent.

3. The current international borders of the Russian state must not be altered, and there should be no concessions to those ethnic groups seeking even limited autonomy within Russia.

4. We must honor our dead by defending Russia against the Central Powers.

Supporting Arguments for Option 1

1. The February Revolution has provided Russia with an opportunity to join the family of civilized western nations. Our political and economic models can be such successful countries as France, Great Britain, and the United States.

2. All the peoples of Russia need to be a part of this process. Hasty elections to the Constituent Assembly would produce a poorly-designed legislature. The Provisional Government will serve ably as temporary

guardian of the state until a fair electoral process is established.

3. Russians have long been the dominant ethnic group within the old Russian Empire. Russian political and cultural leadership needs to be maintained as a basis for unity within the new Russian state. At the same time, the civil and cultural rights of minority peoples must be respected.

4. With military victory, the Russian people will have higher regard for their new government.

From the Historical Record

N.V. Nekrasov, January 1917

“In the trials Russia will face, we will not appear in the role of suppressors of the revolution. The government has destroyed itself. Our task will be entirely constructive; in the storm and chaos we will have to create a new government that will be able to calm the country immediately and get down to vast creative work.”

Paul Miliukov, January 1917

“Revolution must not take us by surprise. We are the only restraining and organized force, the only force that could save the government and reconcile it with the rough raging sea of people.”

Declaration of the Provisional Government, March 27, 1917

“The old regime has gone. The State Duma has forgotten its party differences, has united in the name of the salvation of our homeland and has taken upon itself the creation of a new regime. All citizens should have confidence in this regime and should combine their efforts to allow the government created by the Duma to complete its great task of liberating Russia from the external enemy and establishing peace inside Russia, on the basis of law, equality and freedom.... Forget all your party, class, estate and national differences! The

united Russian people should rise up and create conditions in which all citizens can live peacefully....”

Central Committee of the Constitutional Democrats in connection with the formation of the Provisional Government, March 3, 1917

“Citizens!... The old regime left the defense of the country in a seriously disorganized state. Its criminal inaction and clumsy measures have brought ruin to our finances, to production and transport and to supplying the army. It has seriously damaged our economic structure. The Provisional Government, with the vigorous and active cooperation of the people, will devote all its strength to remedying these defects which the old regime left behind. But time does not stand still. The blood of many sons of Russia has been needlessly spilt over the last 2 1/2 long years of war, but the country is still exposed to a powerful enemy, occupying whole regions of our state and now, at the birth of Russian freedom, threatening us with new and decisive pressure. The defense—at whatever cost—of our own national honor and the expulsion of the enemy from inside our borders: this is the first urgent and vital task of our troops, defending the freedom of the people.”

Prince Georgii E. Lvov, head of the first Provisional Government, April 27, 1917

“The great Russian revolution is truly miraculous in its majestic, quiet progress under the red glow of the World War.... The miraculous thing about it is not the fairylike unbelievableness of the change itself, not the colossal alterations that have taken place... but the very essence of the guiding spirit of the revolution. The freedom won by the Russian revolution is permeated by elements of a world-wide, universal nature.... The soul of the Russian democracy has turned out to be, in its very nature, the soul of the world democracy. It is ready not only to merge with the world democracy but also to take a position of leadership and guide the world democracy on the road of human development laid out by the principles of liberty, equality and fraternity.”

Options in Brief

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

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?