

LETTERS

TO THE EDITOR:

Failing to comprehend Lenin's accelerated drive for power after September 1917 has flawed Myron W. Hedlin's "Zinoviev's Revolutionary Tactics in 1917" (*Slavic Review*, March 1975). Kornilov's fiasco, coinciding with the fall of Riga and the resultant threat to Red Petrograd, aroused Lenin's suspicions that the Russian capital would be sacrificed to the Germans. Lenin now needed governmental power to make an immediate peace with the Germans, and desperately turned to the Bolshevized Latvian Rifles. His staunch allies since the April Theses, they controlled unoccupied Latvia by June, and Latvian Bolsheviks were prominent among those who tried to force Lenin's hand in taking power in July, before he wanted a coup d'état.

Riga's fall, immediately preceding the Kornilov coup, convinced the Latvians that the Russian government and army had deliberately withdrawn Russian forces in face of the German attack to betray both Latvia and the revolution. The aims of Lenin and the Latvians to seize power thus coincided, and the conspiracy is obvious from the predominant role of the Latvians in the police and military forces of the first Soviet Government. In short, Lenin's plans en route to the coup d'état were predicated not only on the potential readiness of his Petrograd or other following to move with him, but on his knowledge that he had behind him the sole remaining disciplined body of troops in the Imperial Army. Zinoviev and many others in the Bolshevik Central Committee apparently knew nothing about the Lenin-Latvian understanding. And since Hedlin makes no reference to such ignorance on Zinoviev's part, he has failed to construct a sound debate on the wisdom or courage of Zinoviev's judgment versus that of Lenin, with regard to a call for an immediate rising.

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PROFESSOR HEDLIN REPLIES:

I fear I must persist in the "error" of my ways regarding Zinoviev's position in October 1917. While I agree that Latvia was a strong center of Bolshevik support and therefore a consideration in the revolutionary equation, I must reject the "Latvian connection" as a decisive factor in Lenin's decision to push for a seizure of power. There are several reasons for my rejection of Professor Page's criticism. First, there is a lack of evidence to support his contention. It is scarcely accidental that L. D. Trotsky, N. N. Sukhanov, John Reed, Adam Ulam, Robert V. Daniels, S. P. Melgunov, Louis Fischer, and Marcel Liebman, among others, all failed in their accounts of the Revolution to assert the vital importance of the Latvian forces for Lenin's calculations. In fact, in his own *Lenin and World Revolution*, Professor Page curiously fails to mention the Latvians as an essential factor for revolution. Instead, he notes that in a bid for power, Lenin had available on the military side "only the Kronstadt sailors and various Petrograd units" (p. 61). Surely if Professor Page has solid evidence proving the Lenin-Latvian connection, he will wish to share it in detail with the scholarly community. Professor Page's logic, in