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**The revolutionary year of 1917 in Russia – reaction to events  
and everyday life in the diaries and memoirs of political figures of the era:  
From the Kadets to monarchists**

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*Abstract.* The article is devoted to consideration and reflection upon the image of historical figures and revolutionary events of 1917 in diaries, memoirs and letters by political figures of that period: Members of the People's Freedom party, Union of October 17, monarchist and social democratic movements.

The focus of the author's attention is the reaction of the Russian society, representatives of the political space of Russia in the early 20<sup>th</sup> century, revolutionary events of 1917 and their perception of the image of 'revolutionary changes'. The article emphasizes that these events left strongly pronounced emotional coloring in the memory of contemporaries, which passed on to the historiography of the Russian Revolution from the private sources. The author notes that an important place in the memoirs and diaries of contemporaries of the revolutionary upheavals in the early 20<sup>th</sup> century in Russia is taken by the question regarding responsibility for these historical events; also, reflections on their results for Russia are provided.

*Keywords:* revolution of 1917, party of People's Freedom, the Russian Empire, diary, memoirs, history of Russia

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*From October 1917 in Russia ... everything turned out as in France:  
there was not only its own Bastille, its Directoire, but also its Marats and Robespierres.  
A.V. Yeropkin*

### **Introduction**

After a lapse of 100 years, the revolutionary events of February-October 1917 in Petrograd, which historically transformed the development of Russian statehood, still belong to the most controversial and politicized pages of Russian history of the 20<sup>th</sup> century.

The interest of modernity in the events of the Russian Revolution of 1917 is dictated not only by the need for some 'consensus' in the assessments of this historical

phenomenon by modern Russian society, but also by the recent activation of studies of the everyday life of Russia in the early 20<sup>th</sup> century and its representation to the public.

A huge research work on archival materials and personal sources concerning the place, role and activities of Russia's political parties and movements in the early 20<sup>th</sup> century in the context of the revolutionary events of 1917 occupies an important place today in the study of domestic political history of this period. The researchers' interest in the diary entries of politicians of the era and their contemporaries is aroused by the synchronous nature of fixation of the information as well as auto-communicativeness (identity of the author and the addressee), which allows them not only to reconstruct the facts of the revolutionary upheavals of the early 20<sup>th</sup> century in Russia, but also to penetrate the world of emotions and feelings of the participants and witnesses of the era that surrounded them<sup>1</sup>. In addition, the possibility of analyzing the reactions of contemporaries to the changes that took place in Russia in 1917 is even more valuable, since notes in the diaries were, as a rule, "freshly traced" and, consequently, unlike memories, are not distorted by later late-time recreations.

Thus, the search and introduction of not only diaries, but also memoirs, notes, letters of contemporaries of the revolutionary upheavals in the early 20<sup>th</sup> century in Russia is an important matter in the process of studying the revolutionary everyday life as well as social-psychological aspects of the revolution of 1917. Within the scope of this article, we will present the image of everyday life and reaction to the revolutionary events of 1917 in Russia reflected in the diaries and memoirs of various repre-

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<sup>1</sup> Aksenov V.B. *The Daily Life of Petrograd and Moscow in 1917*: Dissertation... PhD in Historical Sciences. Moscow, 2002. 231 p.; Andreev L.N. *SOS: The Diary (1914–1919). Letters (1917–1919). Articles and Interviews (1919). Memoirs of Contemporaries (1918–1919)*. Moscow, St Petersburg, 1994. 598 p.; Brutskus E.O. "Well, that's enough for me to guess the course of history..." (From "The diary of the mother-landlady during the Revolution in Russia"). *National History*, 1997, no. 3, pp. 76–95; Buldakov V.P. *Krasnaya Smuta (Red Times of Trouble). The Nature and Consequences of Revolutionary Violence*. Moscow, 1997. 376 p.; Krivolapova E.M. *Literary Diary of 'Russian Smuta' of 1917. Bulletin of Vyatka State Humanities University. Ser.: Philology and Art History*. Kirov, 2009, no. 4 (2), pp. 105–108; Mishnin V.A. "It's such a blessing, to remain alive in this gigantic war." The diary of a soldier, 1 October 1915 – 29 January 1918. *Zemstvo (Penza)*, 1995, no. 2, pp. 84–157; Prishvin M.M. *The Diaries. 1914–1917*. Moscow, 1991. 448 p.; Rostokovsky F. Y. *Diary for Writing (1917: Revolution through the Eyes of a Retired General)*. Moscow, 2001. 496 p.; Tyrkova A.V. *The Petrograd diary. Links. Historical almanac. Issue 2*. Moscow, 1992, pp. 319–339; Khin-Goldovskaya R.M. *From the diaries: 1913–1917. The Past. Issue 21*. Moscow; St Petersburg, 1997, pp. 521–596; Finogeeva N.A. "When I write in my diary everything that I have in my heart, I somehow calm down...". From the diary of a high-school girl, 22 February 1915 – 6 May 1921. *Zemstvo: Archives of Provincial History of Russia*. Penza, 1995, no. 3 (7), pp. 43–66; 'Black notebooks' of Zinaida Gippius. *Links. Issue 2*. Moscow; St Petersburg, 1992, pp. 1–173.

sentatives of the political space of Russia in the early 20<sup>th</sup> century (the Kadets, monarchists, socialists etc.), publicists and public figures of the epoch.

### Main body

The historical events of February-October 1917 in Russia left a strongly pronounced emotional coloring in the minds of contemporaries, which passed on to the historiography of the Russian Revolution from the private sources<sup>2</sup>. The public opinion in Russia in the period of 1917 divided into two camps: Some stood for the revolution and praised it in their works; others, on the contrary, despised and hated it. Thus, the professor of St Petersburg University, the Russian philosopher S.A. Askoldov writes the following about the events of 1917: “Russian public figures, whilst trying to rebuild Russia, never bothered to understand Russia as a country of great ideas and potentialities, both in good and evil. They also measured the soul of their homeland with their own model of souls neatly tailored to foreign universities. They always proceeded from a clear or not so clear conscious assumption that as soon as the old masters left, it was they who would take their place as the new masters, who, of course, would also set up a new order. And yet, not only did the experience of Revolutions in Western and Central Europe, but even the Russian revolutionary movement of 1905, taught absolutely the opposite, namely that Russian public figures who fought the old regime, if successful, would prove to be an insignificant group that had no real influence over the people, and that with the fall of the old order, new forces would arise that would sweep away experienced and wise with their own experience and in their own way and, at any rate, would be politically honest fighters for Russian freedom.”<sup>3</sup>

The everyday routine of the revolutionary events in February-March of 1917 in Russia is described by members of the Party of People's Freedom (the Kadets) in their diary entries and memoirs as follows: “I was met with a fantastic spectacle”, the

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<sup>2</sup> The death of Tsarist Petrograd: The February revolution through the eyes of the mayor of A.P. Bulk. *Russian past*, 1991, no. 1, pp. 7–72; Pipes R. *The Russian Revolution*. In 2 vol. Part 1. Moscow, 1994. 399 p.; Goldenweiser E.A. *The Russian Duma. Political Science Quarterly*, 1914, vol. 29, pp. 408–422; Riha T. Miliukov and the Progressive Bloc in 1915: A Study in Last-Chance Politics. *The Journal of Modern History*, 1960, vol. 32, no. 1, pp. 16–24; Pearson R. Miljukov and the Sixth Kadet Congress. *The Slavonic and East European Review*, vol. 53, no. 131 (Apr. 1975), pp. 210–229; Treadgold D.W. The constitutional democrats and the Russian liberal tradition. *American Slavic and East European Review*, vol. 10, no. 2 (Apr. 1951), pp. 85–94; Tuck R.L. Paul Miljukov and negotiations for a Duma Ministry 1906. *American Slavic and East European Review*, vol. 10, no. 2 (Apr. 1951), pp. 117–129; Rosenberg W.G. *Liberals in the Russian Revolution: The Constitutional Democratic Party, 1917–1921*. Princeton, 1974; Figs O. *A people's tragedy: The Russian revolution 1891–1924*. Leningrad, 1996.

<sup>3</sup> *Manifestoes of Russian Idealism. Problems of Idealism. Milestones. From the Depth*. Moscow, 2009, p. 56.

deputy of the First State Duma A.R. Lednitsky writes about the events of 26 February 1917 in his diary, “Nevsky is totally filled with people. Cossacks are in the center of the avenue. The crowd was either scowling or threatening... Again, and again shouting “Long live the army!” Hats were being thrown up... Rumors were spread about shootings with cheval de frise, strikes and rallies; they told about the Minister of Interior Protopopov placing machine guns on the roofs of the houses...”<sup>4</sup>

In his turn, a member of the Kadet Party since 1905, deputy of the First State Duma V.A. Obolensky continues the description in his memoirs: “On 27 February (old style) 1917, I left home at 8 am .... It was a wonderful clear frosty day. The snow that had fallen on the previous day covered the streets and glistened brilliantly in the sun. The absence of tram noise and bells gave a feeling of strange silence, which together with the bright sun and invigorating frosty air somehow settled the nerves wrought-up by the events of the previous days ...

When I arrived at the office, I started doing usual things ... Suddenly at 11 o'clock the phone rang: the husband of one of our employees informed her that the State Duma had been dissolved, and that in the army barracks, the rebellious Volinsky Life-Guards Regiment was lining up opposite their house in the street. Having received this hard-hitting news, I kept it brief and went through the city to Tauride Palace.

...I turned to Liteynaya. There, a young officer on a beautiful bay horse approached each house and gave the order to the yard-keepers: “Shut the gate, shut the gate”. Some people rushed along the sidewalks, knocking at locked entrances and begging to let them in ...

I hastened steps among the set-up machine guns. They were aimed along Baskov Street, where at the back, the rebelling soldiers who had left the army barracks was seen to be lining up. Having passed beyond those machine guns, I crossed the geographical line that was separating the city that still lived in the old regime from the one that was overwhelmed with the revolution.”<sup>5</sup>

The ‘baton was handed over’ to the member of the Central Committee of the Kadet Party, A.V. Tyrkova-Williams, who wrote the following in her diary entries and memories about the first days of the revolutionary events of February-March 1917 in Russia: “We came up to Tauride Palace without any gunfire (that day the police machine guns still guarded the passers-by). In Tavricheskaya Street, near the palace there was a bunch of soldiers and passers-by, and a car with soldiers was circling around. Commander Yakubovich told them, “Go to the army barracks. The sooner you return, the more order there will be. We got liberty, now we must make order. And for this we need cars. You cannot drive them in vain.” The soldiers’ eyes shined

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<sup>4</sup> Zakharov A.M. The February Revolution of 1917 in ‘The Diary’ of A.R. Lednitsky. *Revolution of 1917 in Russia: New Approaches and Opinions*. St Petersburg, 2011, p. 17.

<sup>5</sup> Obolensky V.A. *My Life. My Contemporaries*. Paris, 1988, pp. 511–512.

joyfully, and they shouted, “That’s right, sir! That’s right!” But those who were in the car sat tight.”<sup>6</sup>

At the same time, A.V. Tyrkova-Williams says the following about further events: “The fifth day of the Russian Revolution. There is more order in the city. There was no shooting yesterday. There was no absurd car racing. We have been asked a pass several times. Street rallies are arranged throughout the city. You cannot understand what they say, because the speakers got hoarse. Soldiers and workers are carrying red slogans: ‘Land and Will’, ‘Democratic Republic’. Singing can be heard everywhere. The sun shines frosty. There is some kind of ease that you had never experienced before. I never thought that you can feel this way.”<sup>7</sup>

The revolutionary routine and the events that took place in Petrograd in Tauride Palace during the first days of the February Revolution of 1917 were not to be lost on A.V. Tyrkova-Williams: “The rallies in the Duma often get people angry and burdensome. Yesterday afternoon I ran to the Catherine Hall for a moment. The soldiers next to me chuckled indifferently. Behind them, in the middle, there was a small crowd of workers, among whom were female workers. A frenzied, screaming and frustrated female voice could be heard from there. A woman, elderly, ugly, with a square gray face, screamed: “Com-ra-aa-a-des... Land... Wi-ii-ill!” (They say it is Groman’s wife. In this case there is nothing surprising about her behavior). She threw back her straight cut hair with her hand and, evidently, she no longer understood what, how and where. Not in her words, but in her frenzy, there was something ridiculous and stupid, and for me it was disgusting.”<sup>8</sup>

The view of “Russian monarchists” on the events of 1917 in Russia is also quite interesting. A political and public figure, publicist, deputy of the State Duma of the Russian Empire of the second, third and fourth convocations, a well-known figure in the monarchical movement of Russia at the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, V.V. Shulgin wrote the following about them in his memoirs: “We were born and brought up to praise or blame it under the wing of power... As a last resort, we were able to move painlessly from deputy seats to the ministerial benches... However, before the possible fall of power, before the bottomless abyss of this collapse, our heads were going around and my heart got numb... From the first moment of this flood, my soul was poured with disgust... God, how disgusting! ... it was so disgusting that, clenching my teeth, I felt only miserable, powerless and therefore even more vicious rage inside. “Machine guns!” The machine guns – that’s what I wanted. I felt that only the language of the machine guns was understandable to the street crowd and that only

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<sup>6</sup> Tyrkova A.V. Available at: <http://staging.project1917.ru/persons/890> (access date: 15.06.2017).

<sup>7</sup> Tyrkova A.V. Available at: <http://staging.project1917.ru/persons/890> (access date: 20.06.2017).

<sup>8</sup> Ibid.

this – its lead – can bring to bay the terrible beast that had escaped to freedom, back to its lair... Alas, this beast was... Their Majesty the Russian people <....> Then, what we were afraid of, what was worth trying to avoid at all costs, became already a fact. The revolution had begun.”<sup>9</sup>

Proceeding from the entry of 2 March 1917 in the diary of the ideologist of “monarchical statehood” L.A. Tikhomirov, the news of the fall of the autocracy was received with joy: “...It is hoped that the Provisional Government will support the order and protection of the country. If this is so, then we must admit that the coup was made remarkably cleverly and gracefully... The dynasty, apparently, perished up to its roots...”<sup>10</sup>

In his turn, whilst lamenting his hopes crumbled to dust, which he attributed to the February Revolution, a prominent right-wing politician, leader of the Black-Hundred movement in Russia at the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, V.M. Purishkevich would write in late December 1917 in the plan for his speech before the Revolutionary Tribunal: “On 27 February, we could become citizens and could come alive again. Alas!”<sup>11</sup>

Equally remarkable are the words of the famous Russian religious philosopher, literary critic and publicist Vasily Vasilyevich Rozanov regarding the revolutionary upheavals of 1917 in Russia. “...It held ground for a thousand years. And suddenly only “there are not enough buns in Petrograd”. From Rurik to Nicholas II it was the same development, the same course and same meaning, in fact: and suddenly “on the Vyborg side there was not enough bread” – and everything collapsed at once.”<sup>12</sup>

In the light of this, we shall quote the words of the outstanding politician of his time, a member of the Kadet Party, V.D. Nabokov, who noted the following: “...does not mean, of course, that during the first two months, when on the ruins of the autocracy – formally obsolete on 17 October 1905, but in fact for 11 whole years trying to maintain its importance – the new, free Russia, – that everything went well within this short period. On the contrary: an attentive and objective look could find the symptoms of future decomposition in the first days of the “bloodless revolution”.”<sup>13</sup>

Equally interesting is the image of the post-February revolutionary reality of 1917 in Russia. The idea of this can be obtained from the diary of B.V. Nikolsky, a promi-

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<sup>9</sup> Shulgin V.V. *Days*. 1920. Moscow, 1989, p. 445.

<sup>10</sup> Repnikov A.V. *Conservative Ideas about the Reorganization of Russia (late 19<sup>th</sup> – early 20<sup>th</sup> centuries)*. Moscow, 2006, pp. 308–309.

<sup>11</sup> Ivanov A.A. V.M. Purishkevich and the Provisional Government: From support to frustration. *Revolution of 1917 in Russia: New Approaches and Opinions*. St Petersburg, 2011, p. 70.

<sup>12</sup> Rozanov V.V. Available at: <http://staging.project1917.ru/persons/59> (access date: 20.06.2017).

<sup>13</sup> Nabokov V.D. *Before and after the Provisional Government: Selected works*. St Petersburg, 2015, p. 221.

ment participant in such right-wing organizations as the Russian Constituent Assembly and the Union of Russian People, to which he was a member of their main council for a long time. “They have run out of money, there's a terrible feeling about food; I have not drunk milk for a long time, I forgot its taste. You can see what time we are going through,” exclaimed B.V. Nikolsky on 19 August 1917.<sup>14</sup>

Noteworthy in the context of the history of everyday life is the situation of “work with the new power” after the February events of 1917 and the fall of the monarchy. Thus, on 7 March 1917, the Kadet newspaper *Rech'* wrote: “It seems that there was not a single person who declared that they could not remain in the service according to their beliefs after all that happened. On the contrary, everyone tries to assure that they almost dreamed about the revolution from the cradle and about the overthrow of the old system.”<sup>15</sup>

“They formally triumphed,” writes the member of the labor party V.B. Stankevich in his memoirs, “we praised the revolution, shouted “hurray” to the fighters for freedom, decorated themselves with red bows and walked under the red banners... The ladies prepared nutritious dishes for the soldiers. Everyone said ‘we’, ‘our’ revolution, ‘our’ victory and ‘our’ freedom. But in my heart, in private conversations, I was horrified, shuddered and felt captured by the hostile element that was going in some unknown way... I will never forget the figure of Rodzyanko, this burdensome gentleman and noble person, when with dignified merit but also with an expression of deep suffering and despair on his pale face, he passed through the crowd of ungirded soldiers along the corridors of Tauride Palace. Officially it was said that “the soldiers came to support the Duma in its struggle against the government,” but in fact the Duma was disbanded since the very first days. And the same expression was on the faces of all the members of the Provisional Duma Committee and of those in the circles close to them. They say the representatives of the Progressive Bloc were crying at home in hysterics from impotent despair.”<sup>16</sup>

An important place in the ego documents of contemporaries of the revolutionary upheavals of the early 20<sup>th</sup> century in Russia takes the question of responsibility for these historical events. “For the revolution in February 1917, the Russian people, not the lower classes, not the so-called masses, but the leaders, the intelligentsia, literate people of all ranks are held responsible: professors, lawyers, writers, artists, legal counsels and even generals. They all yearned for change and insisted that it was impossible to live like this any longer. But they did not understand the need, they could not immediately form a strong government capable of waging a war and governing the country, giving orders, forcing themselves to obey. They were obliged to prevent

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<sup>14</sup> *Russian State Historical Archive* (RGIA), F. 1006, Op. 1, D. 4a, L. 11a.

<sup>15</sup> *Rech'*. 1917, 7 March.

<sup>16</sup> Stankevich V.B. *Memoirs. 1914–1919*. Leningrad, 1926, p. 33.

that break in the continuity of authority. The Russian intelligentsia did not cope with this duty. And is it not for this that history turned it into dust as punishment?” the member of the Central Committee of the Kadet Party A.V. Tyrkova-Williams wrote in her diary.<sup>17</sup>

We shall note that in 1917 Tyrkova-Williams described the whole course of this revolution in some detail and once again stressed her favorite idea of a strong state: “The Kadet Party, even during the revolution, failed to nominate people for action; it is one of the reasons for failure of the Provisional Government. Long-standing opposition eroded the liberals... they were too scrupulous about the means. Therefore, they were so conscientious about their name – the Provisional Government. They considered themselves only trustees, to whom the people, temporarily, until convocation of the Constituent Assembly, entrusted the state affairs. All major events, all significant changes in the laws were postponed until the convocation of the Constituent Assembly... Lenin did not acknowledge any ‘yet’, and certainly did not apologize to anyone. He seized power, and immediately it became clear that he would not give it away to anyone without a fight. This military clarity was present neither in the Kadet speeches, nor in their actions or in their hearts.”<sup>18</sup>

This ‘position’ is also reflected to some extent by the representative of the camp of political opponents of the Kadet Party, L.D. Trotsky. In his work ‘The History of the Russian Revolution’, he wrote: “The history of the February Revolution is the history of how the October core was liberated from its conciliating covers. If vulgar democrats dared to describe the course of events objectively, they could hardly call on anyone to return to February, same as one cannot make a spike return to the grain that gave birth to it. That is why the inspirers of the bastard February regime are now forced to turn a blind eye to their own historical culmination, which has turned out to be the culmination of their insolvency.”<sup>19</sup>

In the light of this, the words of the leader of the Kadet Party P.N. Milyukov are also noteworthy, which he wrote on 20 October 1919 in a letter to the “patriarch of Russian liberalism” I.I. Petrunkevich: “The revolution of 27 February was carried out not by us and against our will.”<sup>20</sup>

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<sup>17</sup> A lady against Lenin. *Russian Newspaper*, 2017, 20 April, no. 7252(86). Available at: <https://rg.ru/2017/04/20/k-stoletiiu-revoliucii-gosarhiv-opublikuet-vospominaniia-ariadny-tyrkovoj.html> (access date: 18.06.2017).

<sup>18</sup> A lady against Lenin. *Russian Newspaper*. 20 April 2017, no. 7252(86). Available at: <https://rg.ru/2017/04/20/k-stoletiiu-revoliucii-gosarhiv-opublikuet-vospominaniia-ariadny-tyrkovoj.html> (access date: 18.06.2017).

<sup>19</sup> Trotsky L.D. *The History of the Russian Revolution*: in 2 vols. Vol. 1: The February Revolution. Moscow, 1997, p. 101.

<sup>20</sup> Dumova N.G. *The Failure of Policy of the Kadet Party in the Race for the Bourgeoisie Power (February–October 1917)*: Dissertation ... PhD in Historical Sciences. Moscow, 1970,



In his turn, speaking of responsibility for what happened in Russia in 1917, the famous representative of the conservative forces of Russia at the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, Nikolai Yevgenyevich Markov wrote: “Yes, Russia collapsed on the threshold of already gained victory; it collapsed because it was eaten up alive by worms from the inside... These worms were deliberating and irresponsible agents of the dark Judeo-Masonic power, which most feared the victory of Russia and for which its defeat was the greatest achievement. This mean and disgusting role of worms eating the fleshy white body of Mother Russia was played by the figures of the ‘Progressive Bloc’.”<sup>21</sup>

The revolutionary events of October 1917 formed an entirely new ‘mood’ in Russia in the minds of the masses, which, on the one hand, would be maximally exploited by various political forces to achieve their own ‘Olympus’ at the time; however, on the other hand, subject to their achievements, they would also undergo its orderly and systematic ‘consolidation’ in the context of triumph of the victorious ideology.

Let us emphasize that the image of the October Revolution of 1917 and the interpretation of these events during the Soviet period was of great importance in the context of legitimization of the new Soviet power, turning into a “myth of foundation” and thus obtaining its colossal symbolic destiny. Moreover, proceeding from the theory of “two revolutions”, October 1917 was interpreted not only as the beginning of “triumphal procession of the Soviet power” and the logical completion of the revolutionary process in Russia, but also as the most important step of humanity towards the new fair society and the bright future of communism. In the Soviet period, the image of the October Revolution of 1917 acquired a universally inclusive character and underwent its sacralization, including both revolutionary heroes and various revolutionary symbols (the cruiser *Aurora*, the revolutionary Red Banner and the anthem). The most important part of the official policy of remembrance was the memorable dates related to the revolution and the associated festive rituals. As an example, 7 November, the anniversary of the October Revolution, was the most important date in the daily life of the Soviet era.

The image of everyday reality in Russia in the light of October events of 1917 was reported in the notes by a member of the State Duma of the Russian Empire of the first and third convocations, the Octobrist, Russian publicist and public figure A.V. Yeropkin. He wrote: “Since October 1917, landlord pogroms began in Russia: the social revolution has entered its own rights, and the history of the second Russian

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p. 34.

<sup>21</sup> Bogoyavlensky D., Ivanov A. ‘The Kursk Bison’. Nikolay Yevgenyevich Markov (1866–1945). *The Warrior Host of Saint George. Lives of Russian Monarchists in the Early 20<sup>th</sup> Century*. St Petersburg, 2006, pp. 133–134.

revolution will bring on its pages such cruelties, such barbarity of destruction of the cultural centers of the Russian rural areas, when valuable libraries were thrown to the four winds page by page: pianos and mirrors were divided per capita, a string per head; fruit gardens and age-old parks were cut down to the root; buildings were burned or sorted out by log and brick; the landowners, their clerks and managers were beaten with such incredible brutality that the apologists of the Russian revolution can calm down: everything turned out as in France: there was not only its own Bastille, its Directoire, but also its Marats and Robespierres.”<sup>22</sup>

In his works, an outstanding Russian sociologist, the globally renowned scientist, an active political figure who was in the very midst of the revolutionary events of 1917, member of the Constituent Assembly of the Socialist Revolutionary Party, Piti-rim Alexandrovich Sorokin noted that after the revolution “the political throats and demagogues” live best: “constant speeches at rallies, revolutionary speeches, slogans, appeals give them the reputation of irreconcilable fighters for a just cause. And this is a public career, and therefore means power, money and privileges. Here is another paradox, more precisely, the dead end of the revolution: it pushes not the most hard-working, but the most talkative, to the public arena. Tribunes and not specialists are the true heroes of the revolution.”<sup>23</sup>

Speaking about the factor of violence as a characteristic feature of the revolutionary transformations of 1917, P.A. Sorokin maintained: “The revolution proclaimed ‘peace’ in October – in fact, it turned out to be a brutal and merciless war, merciless and heartless that lasted for three years, after the other peoples stopped fighting.”<sup>24</sup>

In the light of the opened question on the “revolutionary violence”, the position regarding this phenomenon expressed by the leader (‘vozhd’) of October 1917, V.I. Lenin, is also interesting. Thus, in March 1919, whilst delivering a speech in memory of Y.M. Sverdlov at the extraordinary meeting of the All-Russian Central Executive Committee, he noted: “There is no doubt that without this trait – without revolutionary violence – the proletariat could not have won, but also there is no doubt that the revolutionary violence was a necessary and legitimate move of the revolution only at certain moments of its development, whereas organization of proletarian masses and the working people was and still remains a much deeper and permanent property of this revolution and the condition for its victory.”<sup>25</sup>

In his memoirs M.A. Gorky wrote: “I often had to talk with Lenin about the cruelty of revolutionary tactics and life.

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<sup>22</sup> Yeropkin A.V. *Notes of a Member of the State Duma: Memoirs. 1905–1928*. Moscow, 2016, p. 112.

<sup>23</sup> Sorokin P.A. *Sociology of the Revolution*. Moscow, 2005, p. 489.

<sup>24</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 464.

<sup>25</sup> Lenin V.I. *Full Collection of Writings*. Vol. 22. Moscow, 1973, p. 221.

“What would you like?” He would ask indignantly. “Is humanity possible in such a fierce fight that no one saw before? Where would be the place for kindheartedness and generosity? We are blocked by Europe, we are deprived of potential assistance of the European proletariat, the counter-revolution is getting upon us, from all sides, like a bear, so what shall we do? Should not we, do not we have the right to fight and resist? Well, forgive me, we're not stupid. We know that no one can do what we want, except us. Do you really think that if I was convinced otherwise, I would be sitting here?”<sup>26</sup>

Considering the position of ‘vozhd’ of the October Revolution of 1917, Vladimir Ilyich Ulyanov (Lenin), in relation to one of the constituent elements of its everyday life, brings his image to consideration, in relation to those historical events. Controversial from the point of view of political sympathies or antipathies, but at the same time bright and ambiguous, symbolic and provocative, the personality of V.I. Lenin, with all its diversity, is undoubtedly one of the most iconic in the history of Russia of the 20<sup>th</sup> century.

Evaluation of V.I. Lenin in the ego documents of the epoch are ambiguous, as well as his personality itself. On the one hand, in the diaries and memoirs of contemporaries we find his “charm by the masses” in this figure, recognition of his historical role and significance, and on the other hand – direct and utter disregard.

Russian religious and political philosopher N.A. Berdyaev, who did not accept the events of 1917 in Russia and moved to France, described the personality of V.I. Lenin as follows: “...Lenin was a typical Russian person. In his specific, speaking face there was something Russian-Mongolian. In Lenin's character, there were typically Russian features and not specifically those of intelligentsia, but rather Russian people: simplicity, integrity, rudeness, dislike for embellishments and rhetoric, practicality of thought, propensity for nihilism on the moral basis.”<sup>27</sup>

Nobel laureate in literature, Russian writer and poet I.A. Bunin, speaking in Paris in 1924, said in his turn: “... A degenerate, a moral idiot from birth, Lenin showed to the world, just in the midst of his activity, something monstrous, terrific; he ruined the world's greatest country and killed several million people – and yet the world has already gone so mad that in broad daylight they argue, whether he is a benefactor of humanity or not?”<sup>28</sup> On the other hand, Maxim Gorky (Peshkov), a Russian writer, in his essay “Days with Lenin” in 1934 wrote: “Lenin was a man of enormous signific-

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<sup>26</sup> Gorky M.A. *About Lenin*, 1934. Available at: [http://maxim\\_gorkiy.narod.ru/lenin.htm](http://maxim_gorkiy.narod.ru/lenin.htm) (access date: 19.06.2017).

<sup>27</sup> Berdyaev N.A. *The Origins and the Meaning of Russian Communism*, 1937. Available at: <http://h.120-bal.ru/literatura/5254/index.html> (access date: 22.02.2014).

<sup>28</sup> Bunin I.A. Available at: <http://www.runivers.ru/philosophy/chronograph> (access date: 20.06.2017).

ance. Only history will have the opportunity to evaluate it. He was a great statesman and great man. I consider it honor to be his friend!”<sup>29</sup>

Moscow philistine N.P. Okunev, who kept his personal diary in 1917-20, left the following entry regarding the image of V.I. Lenin dated 17-30 April 1918: “Lenin always writes, always talks... The energy of this man is outstanding, and as a speaker he, like Trotsky, is truly remarkable. No longer only dull Bolsheviks go to their speeches, but also the “motley audience”. The performance halls literally burst with thirsty listeners. Neither the Kadets, nor Kerensky had such a prolonged and indisputable success.”<sup>30</sup>

In the context of this let us note the arguments of V.V. Rozanov, who in his article ‘To the Position of the Moment’ writes that “the Leninist revolts are not so despicable as one might have thought of them for a while; this sealed lord, thrown by Germany on our shore, at first seemed to many as kind of dangerous fire that indicates a particularly dangerous place, an underwater rock or a strand to a ship sailing in the darkness, from where it should keep as far as possible and in no case come close to it. Thus, almost the whole press and the inhabitants of the capital, conscious of their responsibility as being citizens, reacted to it. However, quite obviously that Lenin was not meant to be for them. He was tailored for the lowest classes, for the last philistine illiteracy. And he disturbed them and raised it to the surface.”<sup>31</sup>

Quite an interesting image of V.I. Lenin can be found in the memoirs of a member of the Central Committee of the People's Freedom Party A.V. Tyrkova-Williams. Her view of the leader of the Bolsheviks is interesting not only from the representative of the liberal ideology of Russia at the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century and their main political opponent – the Kadets, but also because she was a school mate of his wife N.K. Krupskaya.

In her memoirs, she describes the leader of the Bolsheviks as follows: “I had not met or read Lenin before. He primarily interested me as Nadya's husband. A short man, seems shorter than her, squat, has broad cheek-bones and deeply hidden little eyes. A nondescript person (prune face). Only his forehead is Socratic and protruding. <...> I immediately felt that there, behind the door, where one could hear the occasional rustling of paper, the owner was sitting, and that the life of both daughter and mother revolved around him. When he went out to dinner, Nadya's ugly face brightened and got prettier. Her small blue eyes were lit up by girlish, shy love. She was absorbed in him, drowned, and dissolved in him, although she herself had a very specific character, her own personality, dissimilar to him. Lenin did not suppress it,

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<sup>29</sup> Gorky M.A. *About Lenin*. 1934. Available at: <http://maxim.gorkiy.narod.ru/lenin.htm> (access date: 19.06.2017).

<sup>30</sup> Okunev N.P. *Diary of a Muscovite*. Vol. 1. 1917–1920. Moscow, 1997, p. 174.

<sup>31</sup> Rozanov V.V. *To the Position of the Moment*. Available at://staging.project1917.ru (access date: 20.06.2017).

he absorbed it. Nadya, with her soft loving heart, remained true to herself. But in her husband, she found the embodiment of her dreams. Was not she the first one to see a leader in him? She recognized this fact and had since become his indefatigable, devoted collaborator. She helped him to build the team of like-minded people, who in 1917 forged the Communist Party, the foundation of ruthless Soviet power.”<sup>32</sup>

Characterizing V.I. Lenin, Tyrkova-Williams writes: “In 1904, when I met Lenin in Geneva, who could foresee the future brutal dictator in him? It was one of the emigre journalists who succeeded, despite the Central Committee of their party, in seizing the *Iskra* party newspaper. Even then, in the revolutionary circles, they knew that Lenin was power-hungry and very unscrupulous regarding the means to achieve it.”<sup>33</sup>

The personal sketches by A.V. Tyrkova-Williams from direct communication with V.I. Lenin are also interesting. She writes: “After dinner, Nadia asked her husband to accompany me to the tram, since I did not know Geneva. He took off his shabby cap, like those worn only by the workers, and went with me. He began to tease me about my liberalism and my bourgeoisness. I paid back with his own coin and attacked Marxists <...> Lenin was a ‘toothy’ polemicist and got tough with me, especially as my words touched and angered him. His smile – he was smiling without opening his lips, only his Mongolian eyes squinted a little – it was becoming more and more sarcastic. A sharp and unkind expression flashed through his eyes.

I remembered how my brother, returning from Siberia, told me that in Minusinsk the exiled Lenin was behaving in a completely uncomfortable way. He rudely stressed that the former exiles, the members of ‘Narodnaya Volya’ (‘People’s Will’), were trash, that the future belonged to them, the Social-Democrats. His disdain for the old exiles, for their traditions, was especially clear when he had to account to the local police for the flight of one of the exiles. Usually the whole prison settlement helped the fugitive, but did it so that the police could not punish those who gave him money or footwear. Lenin ignored this and because of a pair of shoes he let down the exile, who was imprisoned for two months for his assistance in escaping, although unsuccessful. The exiles demanded Lenin to a comrades’ court. He appeared, only to say that he did not recognize their courts and did not give a damn about their opinion.

My brother, with his usual humor, described this storm in an exile ‘anthill’, but at the end he added seriously:

“This Lenin is an evil man. And his eyes are wolfish, evil”.

The memory of my brother's story egged me on, and I began to tease Nadia's husband even more boldly, not suspecting that he would be the future autocrat of all Russia. And he, when the tram had already arrived, suddenly jerked his head and, looking me straight in the eye, said with curl of his lips:

“Now wait, we'll hang people like you on the street lamps.”

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<sup>32</sup> Tyrkova-Williams A.V. *On the Way to Freedom*. Moscow, 2007, p. 180.

<sup>33</sup> *Ibid.*

I laughed. That time it sounded like a ridiculous joke.

“No. I will not let myself be caught.”

“We'll see about that.”

With this we parted”<sup>34</sup>

Reflecting on V.I. Lenin, A.V. Tyrkova-Williams continues: “Could it have occurred to me that this doctrinaire, the follower of a fictitious theory, possessed by a demon of leadership mania, and perhaps even many other demons, already carried in his cold heart the terrible schemes of indiscriminate destruction of dissidents. He planned a lot in advance. It is possible that he already nourished his main idea of support, the Cheka.”<sup>35</sup>

Within the context of this article, as an example of not only personal, but also political opposition (revolutionary and counter-revolutionary), we shall consider the mutual view of each other by the leader of the Kadet Party, P.N. Milyukov and the leader of the Bolsheviks V.I. Lenin on the basis of memoirs and diary entries. P.N. Milyukov was personally acquainted with V.I. Lenin and met him. Thus, at the meeting devoted to the political development of Russia, which was held in 1903, they discussed the possible options for cooperation. In his memoirs, P.N. Milyukov described this meeting as follows: “Even Lenin, “Lenin himself”, looked at me at that time as if we felt each other out, and considered me possibly a temporary (rather ‘brief’) fellow-traveler – on the way from the ‘bourgeois’ revolution to the socialist one. At his request, I saw him in 1903 in London in his squalid lodgings. Our conversation turned into a dispute about feasibility of the tempo of the forthcoming events, and the dispute proved useless. Lenin kept hammering his way, throwing weight over the arguments of the opponent.”<sup>36</sup>

The revolution of 1905-1907 has significantly changed the political situation in Russia. In 1906, under new political realities, V.I. Lenin called on the Bolsheviks to fight the Kadets. He saw an acute need for disengagement from the liberals, because he feared that people who sympathized with the socialist ideas could move to the camp of the Kadets. The leader of the Bolsheviks was especially worried by the positive reviews by the Kadets about Marxism and G.V. Plekhanov. “Yes, yes, it's not for nothing that the Kadets are now cherishing Plekhanov!” V.I. Lenin wrote. “The price of this cherish is obvious. Doudes, as the Latin proverb says: *Do ut facias* (I give that you may do; I give [you] that you may do or make [for me.] – *translator's note*) ....”<sup>37</sup>

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<sup>34</sup> Tyrkova-Williams A.V. *On the Way to Freedom*. Moscow, 2007, p. 181.

<sup>35</sup> Ibid.

<sup>36</sup> Stepanov S.A. The Kadets (the Constitutional Democratic Party). *Bulletin of the Peoples' Friendship University of Russia. Series Political Science*, 2006, no. 8, pp. 71–82.

<sup>37</sup> Lenin V.I. The victory of the Kadets and the tasks of the workers' party. *Full Collection of Writings*. Moscow, 1968, vol. 12, p. 232.

M.A. Gorky writes in the memoirs of his conversations with V.I. Lenin: “With astonishing ever-present liveliness and clarity, he spoke of the Duma, of the Kadets, who “are ashamed to be Octobrists”, that “there is the only way for them to turn right” ...”<sup>38</sup>

In 1912, V.I. Lenin on the pages of the newspaper *Pravda* broke out with criticism of P.N. Milyukov, reproaching him for departing from liberalism toward the monarchy. Analyzing the program of the Kadet Party, he wrote: “The leader of the Kadet Party lost his way in the broad daylight! Does Mr. Milyukov really ‘not understand’ this difference, which is known even from the history textbooks? Does he really ‘not realize’ that the program of the Kadets is already a program of not democrats, but of liberal-monarchist bourgeoisie; that only liberals (and bad liberals) could vote for the budget in the Third Duma, could declare themselves a loyal opposition? etc. Mr. Milyukov understands this perfectly well and ‘distracts with smooth talk’, pretending that he forgot the ABC of difference between the liberalism and the democracy. To consolidate this pathetic equivocation of the Kadets in the press, we shall note to Mr. Milyukov that in the entire official press of the Social-Democrats (not counting, of course, the liquidators, who we will gladly return to Mr. Milyukov), in all the resolutions of the leading authorities of the Social-Democrats, throughout the entire line of the Third Duma Social-Democrats we always and constantly, in thousands of forms, are faced with protection of the old tactics, which the Social-Democrats, according to Mr. Milyukov, allegedly gave up. This is an indisputable historical fact, Mr. Scholar Historian! We are to reinforce the idea in the press of how low the Kadets must have fallen if they try to deceive the public regarding the issues so elementary and well-established by the history of political parties in Russia.”<sup>39</sup>

In 1913, V.I. Lenin in his article ‘An Attempt at a Classification of the Political Parties in Russia’ describes a member of the Kadet Party as follows: “The Kadet is a typical bourgeois intellectual and, in some respect, even a liberal landowner. The deal with the monarchy, the cessation of the revolution is his main aspiration. Unable to fight at all, the Kadet is a real broker. His ideal is perpetuation of bourgeois exploitation in orderly, civilized and parliamentary forms. Their political force is unification of the vast mass of bourgeois intelligentsia necessary in every capitalist society, but, of course, they are absolutely incapable of seriously affecting the actual changes of order of things in this society.”<sup>40</sup>

In his turn, the leader of the Kadet Party P.N. Milyukov wrote the following in relation to V.I. Lenin: “The logic of events was undoubtedly on the side of Lenin.

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<sup>38</sup> Gorky M.A. *About Lenin*. 1934. Available at: <http://maxim.gorkiy.narod.ru/lenin.htm> (access date:19.06.2017).

<sup>39</sup> *Pravda*, 1912, 6 October, no. 136. Available at: <http://www.mysteriouscountry.ru> (access date:18.06.2017).

<sup>40</sup> Lenin V.I. *Full Collection of Writings*. Vol. 22. Moscow, 1973, p. 283.

“Clearly seeing, perceiving, feeling the existence of the situation of the civil war”, he gave a signal. Calling the newly formed coalition a “civil war government”, Trotsky evidently meant this: not that the coalition will start the civil war itself, but that with this coalition the “objective conditions of the moment” have developed in the sense of ‘inevitability’ of a civil war with incomparably greater chances for the victory of ‘proletariat’.” “...The judgments of Lenin,” P.N. Milyukov wrote, were “deeply realistic.” He is “centralist and a believer in a strong state” and mostly counts on the measures of direct state violence.”<sup>41</sup>

At the same time, from the standpoint of political opposition, the leader of the Kadets, P.N. Milyukov said: “I prefer to see my enemy in the best light, to better understand and, more accurately, crush him”<sup>42</sup> However, one cannot disagree with the following words of M.A. Gorky: “Vladimir Lenin was a man who prevented people from living their usual life so much, as no one before him could manage”<sup>43</sup>

### Conclusion

In one article, it is difficult to reflect the perception of Russia's space, that was changed in the light of the revolutionary events of 1917, by its contemporaries and participants of this ‘history’. Enlightened through ego documents, Russia in 1917 was not just a country at the parting of the ways or at the change of epochs. This routine of the tide of life, balancing between ‘no longer’ and ‘not yet’, the changed attitude of the Everyman of the epoch towards the time, expressed through separation from the normal calendar, new ‘before’ and ‘after’. The leader of the Kadet Party P.N. Milyukov wrote in emigration: “Let Russia be devastated, thrown out of the 20<sup>th</sup> century to the 17<sup>th</sup> century; let the industry, trade, urban life, higher and lower culture be destroyed. When we compute and balance gain and loss of the massive coup that we are going through, we are very likely to see what the study of the Great French Revolution showed. The entire classes were destroyed, the tradition of the cultural layer ended up, but the people passed into the new life enriched with a stock of new experience...” We think that in 100 years, the reflection upon this experience will still be one of the main things in the persevering search for an answer to the question: “What is the Russian Revolution?”

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<sup>41</sup> Milyukov P.N. *Memoirs*. Moscow, 1991, p. 326.

<sup>42</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 327.

<sup>43</sup> Gorky M.A. *About Lenin*, 1934. Available at: <http://maxim.gorkiy.narod.ru/lenin.htm> (access date: 19.06.2017).



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