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Press/Journalism (Russian Empire)

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Tsarist censorship strictly limited the information about military operations that could appear in the press. However, it could not stem the increasing criticism of the government. One of the main features of the Russian press during the First World War was the search for an internal enemy. The press understood the aim of the war to be the transformation of the world in accordance with, depending on the publication's politics, Slavophile, liberal-democratic, or socialist ideals.

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Introduction

The low level of literacy among the broad mass of Russia's population meant that the press was most developed in the large towns, above all the capitals: a third of all publications appeared in Petrograd and Moscow. Despite inflation and a lack of paper, the war gave the press a boost, arising out of an interest first in the war and then the revolution. In 1916, the Petrograd daily papers had an average circulation of one million per day; by 1917, it had risen threefold. This increase only partially reveals the upsurge in the size of the audience: with the entry of the masses into politics, one copy of a newspaper was often read aloud to groups of peasants, soldiers, and workers.

Before the February Revolution in 1917, censorship hindered the development of the left-wing press and criticism of the war. After the February Revolution declared the freedom of the press, there was a considerable increase in the number of publications and their circulation. This was above all true of the left-wing press, where one often found propaganda against the war under the slogan "peace without annexations and reparations on the basis of national self-determination." After the Bolshevik seizure of power on 25 October, the non-Bolshevik press experienced much worse censorship and persecution than it had under the Tsar; Bolshevik publications became instruments of state propaganda.

Main Publications and their Circulations

There were several very important, opinion-forming newspapers among the pre-revolutionary periodicals. The conservative nationalist paper *Novoe vremia* (*The New Era*), published in St. Petersburg, had considerable influence. In 1916, it had a circulation of 70,000-100,000, which largely remained steady after the February Revolution. Its opponents were the two major newspapers of the Constitutional Democratic Party (Kadets): Petrograd's *Rech'* (*Speech*; the organ of the party's Central Committee; its circulation in 1916 was 40,000-45,000; in 1917: 50,000-100,000) and Moscow's *Russkie vedomosti* (*The Russian Gazette*; circulation in 1916: 80,000; in 1917: up to 180,000). During the war, the liberal nationalist Progressists' *Utro Rossii* (*Russia's Morning*), published by Moscow industrialists, acquired considerable influence (circulation in 1916: 40,000-45,000; in 1917: up to 150,000). *Novoe vremia* and *Utro Rossii* represented different forms of nationalist ideology. They actively pushed the subject of "German atrocities" on the military front and "German domination" in the Russian rear, while also advocating Slavophile ideas about Russia's war aims. Most newspapers, highbrow and lowbrow, came under the influence of such ideas in the beginning of the war.

Among the leading newspapers were *Russkoe slovo* (*The Russian Word*) and *Birzhevye vedomosti* (*The Stock Exchange Gazette*). Both represented the whole gamut of opinions from socialist defencists to national patriots. *Russkoe slovo* was published in Moscow and distributed widely in the provinces, even making its way into the army. Its circulation in 1916 was 600,000-700,000, reaching one million in 1917. *Birzhevye vedomosti* appeared in Petrograd. The total print run of all three editions (morning, evening, and provincial) was about 260,000. *Birzhevye vedomosti* granted a considerable amount of space to the national liberal ideas of the Vekhovstvo, an intellectual group

which decried the Russian intelligentsia's support for revolution and opposition to the state.

Among the urban working classes, tabloid newspapers were popular. The largest had circulations in the hundreds of thousands. These included *Gazeta-Kopeika* (*The Penny Paper*), *Vechnee vremia* (*Evening Time*), and *Petrogradskii listok* (*The Petrograd Sheet*) in Petrograd and *Ezhednevnaia Gazeta-Kopeika* (*Gazeta dlia vsekh*) (*The Daily Penny Paper* and *The Newspaper for All*), *Trudovaia kopeika* (*The Labourer's Penny*), and *Ranee utro* (*Early Morning*) in Moscow. In 1917, the tabloid *Malen'kaia gazeta* (*Little Newspaper*) gained popularity in Petrograd. In 1916 its circulation was 30,000-50,000, but in 1917 this rose to 100,000-160,000. Its readership included the workers and soldiers of the Petrograd garrison.

Newspapers of the far-right Black Hundred were not popular during the war. After the February Revolution, only *Groza* (*The Thunderstorm*) continued in circulation. The Petrograd Soviet closed the right-wing nationalist papers *Moskovskie vedomosti* (*The Moscow Gazette*), *Russkoe znamia* (*Russian Banner*), *Zemshchina*, *Kolokol* (*The Bell*) and *Golos Rusi* (*The Voice of Rus'*), and the journal *Rossiiskii grazhdanin* (*The Russian Citizen*, which had been published since 1915).

Petrograd's *Novaia malen'kaia gazeta* (*New Little Newspaper*), which appeared in 1916, changed its name to *Zhivoe slovo* (*The Living Word*; circulation: 30,000-85,000) after the February Revolution; in the summer of 1917, it was financed by circles around General [Lavr G. Kornilov \(1870-1918\)](#).

The left-wing press suffered the most under Tsarist censorship: their publications were closed and those that were left had considerable limitations placed on their ability to express their opinions. Before the revolution, [Maksim Gorki \(1868-1936\)](#) tried to put forward an anti-war position in the journal *Letopis'* (*The Chronicle*), which appeared beginning in 1915. Among the prominent liberal-socialist pre-revolutionary publications it is worth mentioning the Narodniks' (Populist) journal *Russkoe bogatstvo* (*Russkie zapiski*) (*Russian Riches [Russian Notes]*) and the newspaper *Den'* (*The Day*), whose political position was set by Menshevik defencists.

After the February Revolution, the left-wing press spread rapidly, representing all shades of opinion from right-wing socialists to left-wing radicals. The central organ of the agrarian populist Socialist Revolutionaries (SRs) was *Delo naroda* (*The People's Cause*; circulation: 60,000-80,000), that of the Mensheviks was *Rabochaia gazeta* (*The Workers' Newspaper*; circulation: 25,000-100,000). One of the most popular left-wing publications was the anti-war newspaper of the Menshevik internationalists *Novaia zhizn'* (*New Life*; circulation: 60,000-115,000) edited by Gor'kii. The main Bolshevik newspapers were the organ of the party's Central Committee and Petrograd committee *Pravda* (*The Truth*) (circulation: 40,000-100,000) and the organ of its Moscow committee and the Moscow regional bureau of the Central Committee *Sotsial-demokrat* (*Social-Democrat*; circulation: 40,000-55,000). The Bolsheviks published newspapers for soldiers containing their readers' letters: the organ of the Central Committee's military organisation *Soldatskaia pravda* (*The Soldier's Truth*; circulation 50,000-75,000) and *Okopnaia pravda* (*The Truth of the Trenches*; circulation: 4,000-10,000) published in Riga.

Right-liberal publications defending the Russian nation as great power idea were *Golos Moskv*

(*Voice of Moscow*) edited by the leader of the constitutional monarchist party of Octobrists [Aleksandr Guchkov \(1862-1936\)](#) (appearing until the middle of 1915) and the journals of [Petr Struve \(1870-1944\)](#): before the revolution *Russkaia mysl'* (*Russian Thought*) and in the period of the February Revolution *Russkaia svoboda* (*Russian Freedom*).

Illustrated weeklies were extremely popular during the war. Containing many [photographs](#) alongside drawings, they allowed the reader at home to become witnesses to the events on the military fronts throughout the world. The largest were the Petrograd magazines aimed at families: *Niva* (*The Field*; circulation: 200,000-225,000 in 1916 and 240,000-270,000 in 1917) and *Ogonek* (*The Flame*; circulation: 290,000-380,000 in 1916, 250,000 in 1917). Many newspapers published weekly illustrated supplements. The largest were *Iskry* (*Sparks*; supplement to *Russkoe slovo*), *Novaia illiustratsiia* (*The New Illustration*; supplement to *Birzhevye vedomosti*) and *Illiustrirovannoe prilozhenie k gazete "Novoe vremia"* (*The Illustrated Supplement to the Novoe vermia Newspaper*). Among the magazines devoted to satire, literature, and art, *Novyi Satirikon* (*The New Satyricon*) and *Lukomor'e* (*The Curved Shore*) were popular; they paid a lot of attention to military topics. There were also illustrated magazines devoted exclusively to the war. The most popular were *Letopis' voiny* (*The War Chronicle*; edited by the official annalist of the emperor Major General Dmitrii Dubenskii) and *Velikaia voina v obrazakh and kartinakh* (*The Great War in Figures and Pictures*).

Political and Legal Conditions

The Influence of the Government and Military Command on Information in the Press

The military command sought to limit the press's access to information. At the beginning of the war, [correspondents](#) were rarely allowed into the army; instead, the press received day-to-day details through private channels. During the war, two military press bureaus aimed to influence the character of publications, one operating under the Main Administration of the General Staff and the other under the Staff of the Commander-in-Chief. The press was unhappy with the insufficient material offered by the military and could not check the accuracy of the information.

The [Tsarist government](#) also tried to influence the contents of the press through its press bureaus (under the Ministry of Internal Affairs and the Ministry of Foreign Affairs), but above all through the Petrograd Telegraphic Agency (PTA), which was the main source of information for the press, particularly in the provinces. The agency's bulletins provided publications with scraps of tendentious and often unreliable information. For the provincial press, the PTA disseminated political and economic circulars prepared by the Bureau of Russian Journalists. This operated unofficially under the Ministry of Internal Affairs' Main Administration for Press Matters from 1912 until the February Revolution.

The government and military authorities published a large number of periodicals. The official military press in 1914-1917 totalled around 100 newspapers and journals, and in 1917 more than 180. The

Ministry of War published the paper *Ruskii invalid* (*The Russian Invalid*); which then appeared under the title *Armiia i Flot svobodnoi Rossii* (*The Army and Fleet of Free Russia*) in July 1917, a paper for the lower ranks *Voennaia letopis'* (*The Military Chronicle*); which in March 1917 was replaced by *Soldatskoe slovo* (*The Soldier's Word*), and the journal *Voennyi sbornik* (*The Military Digest*). The staffs of the military districts, Cossack hosts, fronts, armies and corps had their own publications, as did divisions and regiments from 1917. The *Biulleten' Shtaba Verkhovnogo Glavnokomanduiushchego* (*Bulletin of the Commander-in-Chief's Staff*) appeared between April and August 1917 (under the name *Izvestiia deistvuiushchei armii* (*Bulletin of Army on the Front*) beginning in May). The military publications had little content. Only a small number made their way into the army and their late arrival reduced the interest in them.

For peasants, the Ministry of Internal Affairs published *Sel'skii vestnik* (*The Village Herald*). The paper printed peasants' letters and answered readers' questions. As a consequence, it was quite popular, with 70,000 paying subscribers. In addition, it was distributed to *volost'* (district) administrations. In April 1917, it received a new title: *Narodnaia gazeta* (*The People's Newspaper*).

The Tsarist government tried to informally set up its own press in order to influence other parts of the population. The Ministry of Internal Affairs financed a newspaper for workers called *Ruskii rabochii* (*The Russian Worker*), which appeared at the end of 1915. For educated readers, the Minister of Internal Affairs [Aleksandr Protopopov \(1866-1918\)](#) helped create the oppositional but patriotically minded paper *Ruskaia volia* (*The People's Will*), appearing in the end of 1916, edited by the writer [Leonid Andreev \(1871-1919\)](#). Before the February Revolution, the government bought up shares in the newspaper *Novoe vremia* in order to turn it into its unofficial organ.

Many members of the [Provisional Government](#) were closely connected to the periodical press; therefore, they valued it as a means of both influencing society and receiving information. Among them the minister of war, and later head of government, [Aleksandr Kerenskii \(1881-1970\)](#) actively worked with the press. The main channel for disseminating information on the Provisional Government's activity was the Committee of Journalists. Its members were representatives of publications that paid a monthly fee, for which they would receive a bulletin. About forty publications participated, including the most significant newspapers. The work of the Committee of Journalists led to press conferences becoming a normal part of government practice (this had been the exception before 1917). All Committee members received the same materials from government representatives. This led to the custom whereby newspapers placed identical notices regarding government activity, significantly reducing the amount of information about the government in the press.

After the socialists joined the Provisional Government, the soviet newspapers published by Menshevik-SR committees acquired the status of official organs. When on 13 June the Provisional Government limited the number of columns in daily newspapers due to the shortage of paper, it made an exception for two publications: *Vestnik Vremennogo pravitel'stva* (*The Herald of the Provisional Government*) and *Izvestiia* (*The Bulletin*) of the Petrograd Soviet. The central soviet's

publication thereby began to resemble a government organ. The *Izvestiia* of the Petrograd Soviet and the Central Executive Committee of Soviets was published with a circulation of 100,000-215,000. *Golos soldata* (*Voice of the Soldier*), published by the Petrograd Soviet, had a circulation of up to 70,000. After the February Revolution, a number of executive committees of soviets of soldiers' deputies took part in publishing the front and army newspapers together with the staffs. In August 1917, the staffs of the fronts and armies were deprived of the right to print newspapers; this was transferred to the executive committees. These papers covered general political topics and voiced Menshevik-SR opinions.

Censorship

The "Provisional resolution on military censorship" adopted on 20 July 1914 allowed the military censors to exercise pre-publication censorship. In the territories where military operations were taking place, there was blanket censorship; in the rear, it was partial. At first the Petrograd press was in a more difficult position compared to its Moscow equivalent as Petrograd was declared to be in an area of military operations from the beginning. However, in March 1915, Moscow acquired the same status.

The staffs of the commanders of the armies, fronts, and military districts were responsible for censorship in the areas of military operations. The commander-in-chief and army commanders could ban the appearance of periodicals. Behind the front regions, the Main Military Censorship Commission under the Main Administration of the General Staff, local military censorship commissions (under the staffs of the military districts), and the military censors in the local and provincial capitals were responsible for censorship. The censorship organs followed lists of information that could not appear in the press; for example, any writing on [Grigorii Rasputin \(1869-1916\)](#) was banned.

At the very beginning of the war, censorship was unleashed with full force. Because the Kadet paper *Rech'* had protested against the escalating militarism in the conflict over [Serbia](#) on the eve of the war, the newspaper was closed the day after the declaration of war on 20 July. However, it appeared again on 22 July and joined the chorus of patriotic unity. Persecutions of the left-wing press were more serious. Not long after the beginning of the war, the authorities closed, among others, the Bolshevik *Pravda*, the Menshevik *Nasha rabochaia gazeta* (*Our Workers' Paper*), the Narodniks' (Populist) journal *Russkoe bogatstvo* (which changed its name to *Russkie zapiski*) and the SR journal *Zavety* (*The Precepts*).

The press experienced persecution in a number of ways. Its publications appeared with gaps where the censors had removed passages. The blank areas often only piqued readers' interest, giving rise to many rumours. In general, the censorship organs could not prevent increasing criticism of the government. This is partially explained by the fact that military censorship was only concerned with protecting the military sphere, while on the home front the government lacked an adequate staff of qualified censors and the necessary powers to combat criticism, which at the time made its way into

the press via patriotic slogans.

The February Revolution abolished censorship. On 27 April 1917, the Provisional Government passed a resolution “On the Press”, declaring the freedom of the press and allowing the free trade of its products. However, from the very beginning of the revolution the soviets and committees placed limits on press freedom. The Petrograd Soviet introduced measures severely restricting the appearance of publications, closing a series of Black Hundred papers on 5 March. On the ground, local soviets and committees also closed publications they did not like. After the Kornilov affair, this practice became even more commonplace.

After the [July Days](#), the government introduced an extrajudicial regime for implementing repressive measures against the press. On 12 July 1917, the resolution “On the Press” was amended: now the minister of war and minister of internal affairs had the right to close publications that incited insubordination and refusal to carry out military duties and contained calls for violence and civil war. In July and August, the authorities shut down many Bolshevik newspapers (including *Pravda*, *Soldatskaia pravda* (and its successors), *Okopnaia pravda* and *Volna (The Wave)*), the newspaper of the anarchists *Kommuna (The Commune)*, the newspaper of the Menshevik internationalists *Novaia zhizn'* (which appeared under the name *Svobodnaia zhizn' (Free Life)* between 2 and 6 September before returning to its original name), and the tabloids *Zhivoe slovo* and *Malen'kaia gazeta* (and its successors). In addition, the military authorities hindered the dissemination of Bolshevik newspapers in the army. In this way, between March and October 1917, the conditions for publishing became less free. However, in comparison to the pre-revolutionary period and, even more so, the period after the October Revolution, the press under the Provisional Government largely remained free.

After the Bolshevik Revolution in Petrograd, the press experienced a difficult period. A resolution of the Petrograd and Moscow Military Revolutionary Committees of 26 October closed the newspapers *Rech'*, *Den'*, *Novoe vremia*, *Večernee vremia*, *Gazeta-Kopeika*, *Russkaia volia*, *Birzhevye vedomosti*, *Sovremennoe slovo (The Contemporary Word)*, *Russkoe slovo*, and *Utro Rossii*. According to the decree “On the Press” (adopted on 27 October by the Soviet of People’s Commissars), publications had to be closed if they contained calls for passive or active resistance to the new government. The commissariats for press matters under the military revolutionary committees and soviets were in charge of censorship. In Petrograd, presses and paper supplies were confiscated and used to publish the newspapers of the new regime. In addition, in order to deprive the non-Bolshevik press of income, on 8 November the decree “On the Introduction of State Monopoly on Announcements” limited the right to publish announcements to publications of the government and the soviets. The 28 January 1918 Sovnarkom decree “On the Revolutionary Tribunal of the Press” intensified the repression of the press. From the October Revolution to March 1918, the Bolsheviks closed 216 newspapers run by their political opponents.

The Contents of the Press

The External Enemy

At the beginning of the war, the press gave considerable coverage to military matters. However, the military authorities strictly limited publications' opportunities to receive reliable information, while the military censors restricted their ability to publish it. For this reason, publications concentrated on the ideological basis for Russia's participation in the war and the image of "German atrocities". In the first month of the war, when Russians returning from Germany started to bring back news, the theme of "German atrocities" began to appear in the press. *Novoe vremia* and *Birzhevye vedomosti* were particularly diligent in covering this angle. The image of the Germans as barbarians who treated civilians cruelly and destroyed architectural monuments became omnipresent in the press. By contrast, the press wrote that Russian forces tried to avoid damaging architectural monuments and took care of the local population. Numerous photos from all the fronts appeared depicting, for example, Russians burying dead enemies on the field of battle, helping injured enemy soldiers, and feeding children orphaned after the retreat of hostile forces. The photographs of prisoners of war were extremely varied, from smiling captives (aimed to demonstrate the compassion of the Russian forces)^[1] to those who were pathetic and humbled (thus satisfying the thirst for revenge).^[2]

Illustrations depicted the main villain as Wilhelm II, German Emperor (1859-1941), while the simple German soldier sometimes took on the role of the victim. While the Kadet party and left-wing press sought to distinguish between the "German people" and "German militarism", the right-liberal and nationalist press cultivated hatred toward the German people and culture.

Gradually, realistic accounts by military correspondents, injured soldiers, and other eye witnesses increasingly made their way into the press. From the beginning of 1915, coverage of the difficulties of the war on the front and in the rear began to replace the earlier jingoism. Photographs from the Russian forces' positions must have left an ambiguous impression on the readers of the illustrated magazines: while they were often peaceful and sentimental, they also revealed the soldiers' wretched existence – the troops' meagre tea, washing linen, attempts to get rid of lice, and scooping out water from the trenches. The German trenches and field bakeries looked more comfortable than the Russian.^[3] The numerous photos of brothers' graves or, for example, images intended to show the success of facial prosthetics for wounded soldiers must have given the most dispiriting of impressions.^[4]

It was notable how, at the beginning of the war, the enemy was depicted as weak: there were increasing difficulties in Germany, it was claimed, while Austria-Hungary and Turkey would be easy to beat. However, the Russian army's severe military defeats meant that, from the middle of 1915, Germany began to transform from a weak enemy into one that was powerful and, most importantly, extremely well-armed in contrast to the Russian army. At the same time, another change took place in the press: many publications took up as their primary tasks the search for those responsible for defeats and the struggle against the internal enemy.

The Internal Enemy

At the beginning of the war, the main internal enemy was the many Germans living in Russia, both those with German citizenship and those who had long been Russian subjects. Even before the war, the press had expressed dissatisfaction at German landownership in the [Baltic](#) regions and Germany's economic influence. However, the struggle against "German domination" only got into full swing after the beginning of the war when the right-wing and right-liberal press began depicting all Germans as potential spies. The newspapers *Novoe vremia*, *Vechnoe vremia*, *Golos Moskvy*, and *Utro Rossii*, as well as the far-right Black Hundred publications, were involved in this campaign. *Russkie vedomosti* and *Rech'* opposed it. The struggle against "German domination" was important not only in the context of defending society from [spies](#), but also as a display of [nationalism](#) and as part of the fight against foreign influence. The Black Hundred *Rossiiskii grazhdanin* also exposed [Britain's](#) economic penetration of Russia. The press campaign harassing Germans was, to a large degree, responsible for the mass anti-German pogroms at the end of May 1915 in Moscow.

In addition to the themes of landownership, industry, and finances, there were also demands to purge the state apparatus of German spies. The search for spies received new impetus after the army executed Colonel [Sergei Miasoedov \(1865-1915\)](#) in March 1915 for spying; contemporary historians think that he was probably not guilty. The Miasoedov affair, which the Military Command used to explain its failures on the front, prompted the liberal press to search for German spies around the throne. The Minister of War [Vladimir Sukhomlinov \(1848-1926\)](#), who had connections with Miasoedov, was accused of failing to supply the army adequately and was removed from his post in June 1915; he was then arrested in April 1916 amid a surge of criticism of the government in the liberal press that grew from autumn 1915 to the February Revolution. Because of censorship, the main accusations against Miasoedov, Sukhomlinov, Rasputin and [Alexandra, Empress \(1872-1918\)](#), consort of Nicolas II, Emperor of Russia were only published after the February Revolution. They appeared in the press in 1917 as a form of anti-monarchist propaganda.

After the February Revolution, the Bolsheviks, who promised an immediate peace under a soviet regime, became the main internal enemy for the liberal and right-wing press. Following the failure of the June Offensive and the Bolshevik's concurrent riot in early July, the liberal and right-wing press also continued to discuss German spies. [Vladimir Burtsev \(1862-1942\)](#) published in *Obshchee delo* (*Common Cause*), the newspaper he founded in September 1917, a list of 195 emigres returning to Russia via Germany and led a campaign against the Bolsheviks as German spies. Another source "exposing" [Vladimir Il'ich Lenin \(1870-1924\)](#) as a German spy was the pogromist *Zhivoe slovo* (*The Living Word*).

Before the revolution, there was yet another prominent internal enemy in the press: "speculators". Speculation provided an explanation for inflation and the poor supply of products in the towns. However, attacks on "speculators" had an anti-bourgeois character. The left-wing publications presented the war as the product of the development of world imperialism. After the February Revolution, many left-wing publications portrayed the "bourgeoisie" profiting from the war as the main

internal and external enemy. They accused the “bourgeoisie” in the allied European countries of not wanting to accept a peace agreement founded on the principle of “peace without annexations and reparations on the basis of national self-determination”. This demand had entered the programme of the coalition of the Provisional Government in May 1917 under the pressure of the Petrograd Soviet. After the Bolsheviks’ seizure of power, the struggle against the internal “bourgeoisie” encompassed the persecution of the anti-Bolshevik press.

From Democratic and Slavophile Messianism to Revolutionary Messianism

Ideas about the aims of the war were partially developed during the Russo-German “newspaper war” in February 1914 and the subsequent events surrounding Serbia. The Slavophile view of the meaning of the war concocted in the right-wing press, above all *Novoe vremia*, became well-established in the press (in, amongst others, *Utro Rossii*, *Golos Moskvy*, *Russkoe slovo*, and *Birzhevye vedomosti*) at the beginning of the war. This view of the war stressed the Russian nation’s great power status alongside an anti-Western stance. By contrast, Kadet and the majority of left-wing defencist publications believed that the goal of the war with “Germanism” was the victory of civilised (Western) democracy over militarism. The liberal and left-wing press expected a universal peace to end the war and Russia to undergo a democratic transformation; they began to demand democratic reforms while the war was still in progress as early as autumn 1915.

After the February Revolution, the Slavophile direction was still present in *Utro Rossii* and *Birzhevye vedomosti*. The Kadet press tried to infuse the revolution with a patriotic character, maintaining that the people overthrew the Tsar in order to prosecute the war to a victorious end. Justifications of Russia’s continued participation in the war in the Kadet, right-liberal, and right-socialist press were part of the preparations for the June Offensive. As a result, on 18 May *Novoe vremia* was willing to see Kerenskii as a Russian [Napoleon Bonaparte \(1769-1821\)](#). However, the socialist press believed the aim of the Russian Revolution to be the speedy end of the war. In support of the preparation of the June Offensive, the Menshevik and SR press put forward the idea of revolutionary messianism. *Rabochaia gazeta* on 2 June declared the immediate tasks to be the struggle against “Europe’s imperialist bourgeoisie” and “infusing Europe’s broad popular masses with the revolutionary spirit”. The press of the Bolsheviks and leftist Menshevik and SR groups, which did not support the offensive, presented deepening the revolution at home as the main political task. On 4 June, [Vladimir Bazarov \(Rudnev\) \(1874-1939\)](#) declared in *Novaia zhizn’* that if the war did not lead to “the complete collapse of contemporary imperialism”, then a peace agreement would not give anything to Russia; on the contrary, international capital would exploit the country.

The liberal press criticised the socialists’ foreign political slogans as utopian. After the failure of the June Offensive, the liberal and right-wing press called for the establishment of a military dictatorship, arguing that reforming the army on a democratic basis had led to its complete dissolution. General Kornilov’s failed attempt to create such a dictatorship intensified a crisis in the army, and in autumn 1917 the press began to discuss the possibility of Russia’s complete military defeat. The liberal press described this as the result not only of the socialists’ anti-war activity (above all that of the

Bolsheviks), but also the lack of patriotism among the masses.

Conclusion

Summarising the deplorable results of the year of revolution, the liberal publicist [Isaak Levin \(1887-1945\)](#) wrote in *Russkaia mysl* that the February Revolution in Petrograd was an expression of the masses' unwillingness to continue the war and that the Provisional Government's refusal to realise this was the reason for its weakness and ultimate failure.^[5] This understanding was present in the socialist press from the very beginning of the revolution. On 17 March, *Rabochaia gazeta* wrote that "the war overthrew the old regime, but it will also topple the new regime" if the people become convinced that the new order will not deliver it from the death, deprivation, and impoverishment created by the war. Here it is important to remember that the anti-war mood in the 1917 press often represented not pacifism but rather revolutionary messianism, based on the desire to conduct a struggle against the internal enemy, seeing the war with the external enemy merely as a hindrance to this. In the end, the difficulties of war led Russian society not to patriotic unity but to the search for internal enemies, which resulted in the [Civil War](#). The press was an active participant in this process and its victim.

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Notes

1. ↑ For example, there was a whole series of such photographs in a 1915 issue of the magazine *Niva*. Two injured soldiers talk peacefully in the photograph "A Russian and a German" (*Niva*, 1915, 4, p. 66). Next to this is a photograph of a wounded German being helped by a Russian soldier with the inscription "Mercy for the former enemy". On the next page, there are two photos showing German and Austrian POW officers. In No. 6, a group of Russian soldiers and Austrian POWs warm themselves by a campfire (p. 106). The Turkish POW officers on the Caucasian front seem cheerful (*Niva*, 7, p. 129).
2. ↑ *Niva*, 1915, 14, p. 269; *Niva*, 1915, 20, p. 395; *Niva*, 1915, 22, p. 422; *Niva*, 1915, 37, p. 689.
3. ↑ The photograph "At our enemies. In the German trenches. Officers' dugouts" shows smiling faces: the enemy does not appear barbaric (*Niva*, 1915, 22, p. 437). "German field bakery" (*Niva*, 1915, 7, p. 138). Russian field bakeries looked much more modest (*Niva*, 1915, 9, p. 172; *Niva*, 1915, 11, p. 214; *Niva*, 1915, 29, p. 559).
4. ↑ *Letopis' voiny*, 1 October 1916, 111, p. 1771.
5. ↑ Levin, Issak: Nekotorye itogi [Some results], in: *Russkaia mysl'*, 1917. 11/12 (November-December). Division 2, pp. 51-56.

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