

“The Bolsheviks Come to Power”: A New Interpretation
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In the weeks leading up to the Bolshevik Revolution of October 1917 Lenin engaged in an intense debate with his comrades. Should and could the provisional government be overthrown? If so, when should it be done? And could the new regime hold power? Lenin, often in the minority, insisted that the Bolsheviks not only should but could successfully lead Russia's workers and peasants to power and that that conquest could be sustained. He also insisted on determining when best to make the overturn. Defending his position, Lenin frequently made reference to “objective facts,” such as “elections to the city councils . . . and soviets” where “the Bolsheviks have majorities.” What exactly was he referring to and what did he mean? What were the assumptions and framework underlying his argument that eventually won over the majority of the Bolshevik Central Committee to his position? To fully understand Lenin's stance it is necessary, I contend, to turn to Marx and Engels.