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| Radicalization by ‘moderates’ |
| Moderate revolutionaries in the French and Russian Revolutions |
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Joost den Hertog – 3691802  
[j.denhertog@students.uu.nl](mailto:j.denhertog@students.uu.nl)  
Professor: Dr. L. Behrisch  
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**Introduction**

Revolutions are unique by definition, as is any historical event. Different people, ideas and ideals give every revolution its own identity. The circumstances of every revolution differ, even in the same country, think of the revolutions of 1830 and 1848 in France alone. This gives rise to the question whether looking for a common set of developments in revolutions is useful to understand these turning points in history. Although the search for patterns in historical developments always brings with it the danger of partisan writing, like for example as the result of teleological ideas, it can be fruitful to look for repetition. Revolutions must have something in common, as the word revolution itself comprises a number of events in different countries at different moments in history.   
 Figuring out what it is that all revolutions have in common, by trying to define them, is not what this essay is about. Rather it will show patterns in revolutions, by looking at factions within revolutionary movements. Academics agree that none of the revolutions in history was shaped by one homogeneous group of people with common goals and ideas. Different political and social groups formed alliances or became enemies, pushing the revolutions along. Some revolutionaries were radical, others moderates. One would think the radicals were always the ones to radicalize a revolution. But this essay will show that repeatedly moderates with their actions contributed to the escalation of revolutions. Two moderate factions in two different revolutions prove this point. In the summer of 1791 a group of revolutionaries split from the radical Jacobin Club. Their more moderate ideas did not fit the political line of people like Maximilien Robespierre and Louis Antoine Saint-Just. The new moderate faction soon became known as the Feuillant Club, after the former monastery of the Feuillants monks where they held their meetings. The essay will show how the Feuillants first had the upper hand, even calling for the end of the revolution, but by their own politics unintentionally lost control over the revolution, leaving the initiative to the Jacobins. A similar development can be seen in the Russian revolution of 1917. Two major socialist factions strived for dominance, not only during the revolution, like in the French case, but even earlier. The Mensheviks and Bolsheviks were formed in the first years of the twentieth century, after the Russian Russian Socialist-Democratic Labour Party split over seemingly minor questions. It is not correct to label the Mensheviks as moderate, like the Feuillants they were revolutionaries, but compared to the Bolsheviks, the Mensheviks were less radical and more open to political collaboration with liberal opposition. The Mensheviks, like the Feuillants, initially had the upper hand in the socialist faction before the October revolution, which they lost, partly because of their own actions and politics. This essay will show the striking resemblance between the developments in the two revolutions in the case of relatively moderate factions.   
 Of course, many academics have written about the recurring patterns in revolutions. Generally speaking there are those who look for recurrences in revolutions to try to understand them and those who think looking for patterns does not contribute to a better understanding of revolutions. A member of the former is Crane Brinton, who in 1938 wrote ‘The Anatomy of Revolutions’. Brinton describes four stages which he applies to four revolutions, the English Revolution of 1640, the American, French and Russian Revolution. Brinton first distinguishes the *Preliminary Stage*, which is characterized by a dominant role of the old order, often lead by a weak ruler. In this phase oppositional groups begin to form, acquiring the loyalty of elites. In the *First Stage* moderates peacefully take over power, while protests against the government continue and radicals gain the support of the people. In the *Second Stage* or *Crisis Stage* the radicals seize power, while foreign and civil war break out and the government centralizes, often using terror to do so. In the final *Third Stage* or  *Recovery Stage* peace is restored and the country is often again ruled by an autocrat.[[1]](#footnote-1) Although Brinton acknowledges that revolutions do not always follow his theory is to the letter, it helps understand the order of events in revolutions in general. What Brinton’s theory does not do however, is explain why a revolution unfolds in this manner. This, explaining a revolution, is the main reason Theda Skocpol wrote her applauded work ‘States and Social Revolutions’. She argues the best way to understand revolutions is not to find out what the chain of events during revolutions is or what the goal of revolutionaries is, but rather to look at the structural behavior of different groups, which shapes revolutions.[[2]](#footnote-2) Not the standardization of the revolutionary process, but understanding motives of different groups and how they affect each other can help understand revolutions. This essay will make an effort to close the gap between the line of thought of Brinton and Skocpol. In order to provide a more sound basis for Brinton’s four stages theory, attention will be paid to why exactly one phase in the revolution follows after another. Specifically, why is Brinton’s *First Stage* followed by the *Second* or *Crisis Stage*. By looking at motives and ideologies, like Skocpol does, of the both ruling moderate revolutionaries and their radical adversaries we can explain why Brinton’s model makes sense. As we will see, the actions of the moderates unintentionally lead to radicalization of the revolution.  
 It seems contradictory to state moderates can push a revolution towards radicalization. Yet this is what this essay is about. Comparing relatively moderate revolutionary factions in the French and Russian revolution will show how both went through the same process, in line with Brinton’s theory of four stages. However, no attention will be paid to a chain of stages, but rather the focus will be on one particular stage or development, the radicalization by the hand of relative moderates. Because this essay only focuses on this specific phase in two revolutions, developments leading up to or following up on this process will not receive as much attention. To look closer at the position of moderate factions is interesting, as it can tell more about the sequence of events revolutions go through. In some concluding remarks the uses for further research will be exemplified.   
 The essay will follow the chronology of history, by starting with the Feuillant Club in the French Revolution in the first chapter and the Mensheviks in the Russian revolution in the second. Both chapters will shortly discuss how the moderate factions came into being, after which each individual case will get more detailed attention. Also the use of language by radicals will be considered, in regard to the moderate revolutionaries. Finally in a conclusion the overlap between the two cases will be examined, to show how the moderate revolutionaries contribute to the radicalization of revolutions.

**War for power – Feuillants in the French Revolution**

During his reign, King Louis XVI never proved to be a strong monarch. At the first gathering of the Estates General in May 1789, his most essential act was not acting at all, leaving the three estates without agenda or instructions. This, among other factors, made possible that the Third Estates would declare itself the Assemblée Nationale. In the same way his indecisiveness lead to a royal policy in which the Revolution was neither supported nor attacked by the king. On June 20th 1791 Louis finally made a strong decision, he would leave the country. We now know that his flight would end in his arrest at Varennes. Not only would this event have great consequences for the king, also the radical Jacobin Club would feel the impact of it. After the flight to Varennes, tensions in the Jacobin faction surfaced over the political direction the Club should head. Moderates, like Antoine Barnave, wanted to hold on to the constitution in which the King held an important role, while radicals, most notably Maximilien Robespierre, rather dispelled the monarchy altogether. The widening gap in the Jacobin Club would prove to be the matter that eventually split the Club. Prominent moderates, like Barnave, split from the radical Jacobins, followed by most of the moderate deputies of the Assemblée Nationale Constituante, creating the ‘true’ *Friends of the Constitution* (the official name of the Jacobin Club was *Société des amis de la Constitution*).[[3]](#footnote-3) Because the moderates decided to use the old monastery of the Feuillant monks as their conference hall, they soon became known as the Feuillant Club in popular language. It is important to realize the Feuillants was in no sense a modern political party. It had no members, but was rather a loosely affiliated group of men with shared ideas. In the constituent and legislative assemblies, the Feuillants did not form a marked out faction. The gatherings in the Feuillants conference hall prepared like-minded men for the debates in Assemblies.[[4]](#footnote-4) Both the Feuillants and the radicals left in the Jacobin Club strived for the support of the Jacobin adherents. History tells us the Jacobins would win the race, but the Feuillants did not give in without a fight.

**Losing the initiative**  
The Feuillant Club was lead by a triumvirate of erstwhile radical revolutionaries. Alexandre Lameth, Adrien Duport and the afore-mentioned Antoine Barnave came together in national politics in the autumn of 1789, when the three displayed great commitment to the Assemblée Nationale. In the Assemblée Constituent, a well known saying was: ‘What Dupont thinks, Barnave says and Lameth does’, although none of the three was a deputy in this Assemblée.[[5]](#footnote-5) Due to the continuing radicalization of ideas since the beginning of the Revolution, the three men shifted from the radical to the moderate side of the revolutionary movement. The flight of the King showed how much the radicals and moderates had drifted apart. Like mentioned above, the Feuillants Club split itself from the Jacobin Club, claiming the ‘true’ heritage of the Jacobins, even taking over the official name. Yet apart from the name, the two Clubs had little political resemblances. The Feuillants developed an own interpretation of the revolutionary legacy. The flight to Varennes had been the result of a lack of room for compromise between authorities. To save the accomplishments of the revolution it was necessary to create a cooperation between monarchy and democracy by finishing the constitution and thus ending the revolution.[[6]](#footnote-6) With prophetic foresight, Barnave stated in the Assemblée: '(…) any change today is fatal: any prolonging of the Revolution is disastrous; this is the question that I put here, and it is indeed here that it is marked by national interest: are we going to finish the Revolution, are we going to recommence it? If you defy the Constitution once, at what point will you stop, and more importantly, where will our successors stop?...'[[7]](#footnote-7). So the Revolution should come to an end to save its accomplishments and the monarchy should still be a righteous part of the government in the eyes of the Feuillants. It is not surprising therefore, that the triumvirate corresponded regularly with the royal family, especially with Marie-Antoinette.[[8]](#footnote-8)  
 At the signing of the constitution in September 1791, the Feuillants received what they had been working for, a constitution that ensured a prominent place for the monarchy. The triumph of the Feuillants would turn out to be a Pyrrhic victory. The fact that republicanism for the moment had been defeated, made that moderate deputies of the new Assemblée Legislative now no longer feared the spread of anti-monarchal tendencies. Moreover, the Jacobins showed a willingness to purge themselves of their most radical elements.[[9]](#footnote-9) In this light, the Feuillants were no longer able to justify their moderate policy to their colleagues, who were afraid counterrevolutionary threats would undo the achievements of the revolution. In the public opinion it seemed as though the Feuillants tried not only to stop the revolution, but to nullify it.[[10]](#footnote-10) They lost control over Parisian politics without noticing, as the triumvirate believed it had successfully stopped the radicalization of the revolutionary process.   
 It is in the first months of the new constitution that the politics of the Feuillants, most notably of the triumvirate, would contribute to the escalation of the revolution. They were utterly convinced that a new balance was found, not realizing they had successfully isolated themselves from the Assemblée. The most remarkable evidence of confidence in the new constitution and peace in politics, was the closing of the Feuillant Club after the signing of the Constitution, when the triumvirate concentrated only on the royal family, losing interest in other political arenas.[[11]](#footnote-11) Also, by September it was clear the Jacobins successfully maintained the support of the provincial Jacobin Clubs throughout France. The resignation of the triumvirate from the Jacobin Club had sparked massive correspondence from Paris to the Jacobin societies and had caused a drop in attendance.[[12]](#footnote-12) However, in autumn the Feuillants generally lost provincial support. By now it was clear the Jacobins had been building up momentum during the royal and moderate inactivity.

**Regaining the upper hand**To take back the initiative, the Feuillants guided the king towards taking up his constitutional duties as executive power, most prominently foreign policy. In order to do so, the triumvirate advised Louis XVI to handle the *émigré* question with firm language. Outside the borders of France gathered a considerable amount of emigrants, among others, the brother of the king, the Comte d’Artois. Politicians, both radical and moderate feared these men would rally forces, both in and outside France, for counterrevolutionary purposes. The king was eager to follow the line of the Feuillants, and on November 10th 1791 he used his veto to nullify a decree from the Assemblée Legislative on the *emigrés*, which placed him at the center of foreign policy action. After a few weeks of lingering on the question, Louis XVI came to the Assemblée to read a speech proposed by Duport, but shortened by minister of war Narbonne. The king announced he had send an ultimatum to the Elector of Trier, giving him a month to break all ties with the *emigrés* on his territories. Failure to do so would cause him to be considered an enemy of France. To fortify the ultimatum, Narbonne ordered the build of an army on the border. The intervention by Louis XVI was coordinated by the triumvirate and was, to be sure, not at all meant to cause war. Rather, it served the purpose of the Feuillants and supporters of the constitution, underlining the executive role of the king. In an effort to take back the initiative from the radical Left, the Feuillants concentrated on the power over foreign policy the king had, thus strengthening the constitution.[[13]](#footnote-13) The second phase of the Feuillant grasp for power was to make sure the Germans played along. The triumvirate sent Marie-Antoinette a letter for her to forward to her brother, Leopold II, the German Emperor, justifying the kings ultimatum and calming fears. France would carry out a warlike attitude internally, while maintaining peace abroad. At this point in the revolution, the Feuillants were convinced they held all the cards. Despite the fact that they had no support from provincial societies, they had successfully regained their position in Parisian politics, supporting the king in the position their constitution guaranteed him.   
 Despite their best efforts, things did not work out as the triumvirs had planned. The German minister of foreign affairs, Prince Kaunitz, informed the king that the Elector of Triers had received orders to mobilize troops to protect the princedom from French threats. Also, Kaunitz expressed his unwillingness to support the revolutionary developments in France, proposing a European coalition to avoid the spread of revolutionary ideas.[[14]](#footnote-14) The Feuillants immediately realized the implications the German reaction could have. Not only did their plan not work out as planned, but France was on the brink of war. They found themselves in a stranglehold, locking closer and closer. The triumvirate did not yet lose their faith in a happy ending. In fact they continued their policy of tough language internally, while sending appeasing messages to the German Emperor. On the 31st of December, one day after receiving the notice from Kaunitz, the king read a speech written by Dupont, reinforcing his earlier ultimatum to the Elector of Trier.[[15]](#footnote-15) This was greeted with general enthusiasm in the Assemblée, both by moderates and radicals. While the Feuillants were not genuinely happy with the prospect of war, they could not back down yet, as they were the ones who came up with the scheme. But while welcoming the possibility of war in the Assemblée, the Feuillants tried their best to avoid it through correspondence with the Emperor via Marie-Antoinette. A humble and desperate supplement to the earlier message to the Emperor was meant to assure Leopold II again of the peaceful intentions of the king.   
 In November 1791 the situation seemed more under control than ever for the Feuillants. The constitution and position of the king were secured by acting as aggressive patriots, but in January 1792 the situation escalated beyond their reach. They had proposed a war they did not want and now that war was about to break out. The radicals in the Assemblée, however did like the idea of war to prevent a counterrevolution by *émigrés*. The Feuillants and king could not back down, because that would make them look like counterrevolutionaries. So the radicals tied down the Feuillants, by linking approval for war and upholding the constitution and revolutionary achievements. From this point on, the influence of the Feuillant Club diminished. Although it had never been a political party in the sense that it had membership, it lost practically all its followers in the Assemblée. With the radical takeover of power by the Jacobins, any remainders of the old moderates were effectively removed. For the triumvirate this meant the arrest of all three, leading to the execution of Barnave and the exile of Lameth and Dupont. The Terror of Robespierre and his followers would mark out the most radical phase of the French Revolution. In the name of the Revolution, many thousands of Frenchmen were guillotined till the beheading of Robespierre himself.

So, the history of the Feuillants is a short but exiting one. In the summer of 1791 the moderate faction of the Jacobin Club claimed its true heritage, creating the Feuillants Club. Already in September it lost all support from the Jacobin societies, but still managed to install the constitution it desired. To regain power, the Feuillants pushed the king to pursue and aggressive foreign policy, which unintentionally lead to a war effort by radicals. The Feuillants lost control over its own initiative, handing the radicals tools for radicalization, i.e. war with the German Emperor.

**Abdication from power – Mensheviks in the Russian Revolution**

In any revolution in history, there were ‘winners’ and ‘losers’. Both the Feuillants and the Mensheviks are generally classified as the latter. This is not surprising, as both factions eventually had to give way to more radical factions. But the resemblances don’t stop there. Like the Feuillants, the Mensheviks were a result of a split in the revolutionary movement. And like the Feuillants, the Mensheviks got a taste of power before their radical adversaries, in this case the Bolsheviks, seized power. The Bolsheviks formed the radical faction within the revolutionary Russian socialist movements, like the Jacobins had been in the French revolution. In short, the Feuillants and Mensheviks both were moderate factions in the French and Russian revolutions which eventually lost out.

**Seizing the revolution**As this short introduction shows, the split in the Russian Social-Democratic Labour Party is essential to understanding socialism in Russia. As mentioned above, the Mensheviks were the result of this split in the revolutionary movement, or more specifically the split in the Socialist Party. In the summer of 1903 during the Second Congress of the Russian socialist party, Vladimir Lenin drove a wedge between two factions in the party, over seemingly minor questions about party membership. The membership question however represented bigger disagreements. To be short, Lenin and his Bolshevik followers stood on the one side, feeling a socialist revolution should be lead by intelligentsia, who, other than workers, where not tempted by materialism. Furthermore, a ‘bourgeois’ phase prior to proletarian rule, like classical Marxism prescribes, was not necessary, the latter could be installed immediately. On the other side stood the prominent Mensheviks like Pavel Axelrod and Iulii Martov, central ideologist of the Mensheviks, who hung on to the classical Marxist revolution that should be a bottom-up process, in which the workers would be the major instigators. Also, these socialists believed socialism in Russia should be preceded by ‘bourgeois’ rule.[[16]](#footnote-16) The split between these two factions would be widened in the following years, causing a final split in 1912, when the Mensheviks founded their own party. The Mensheviks developed their own intellectual legacy, which was characterized by a couple of distinct features. First the Mensheviks emphasized the need for an independent working class, capable of participating in affairs of the socialist party and the country. In the second place, proletarian rule could not be established before capitalism had run its course, so the liberals, as representatives of the capitalism, needed a place in revolutionary Russia. The final feature was of a theoretical nature and sharply distinguished the Mensheviks from the Bolsheviks. The formers believed that in order to achieve socialist goals, they should not deviate from their party dogma’s.[[17]](#footnote-17)   
 So in the years leading up to the 1917 revolution the Mensheviks created their own philosophy, anticipating on the revolution they were convinced would come. Three characteristics would assure the Menshevik rise to power and their eventual downfall; the goal to eliminate tsarist rule and institutions; a loose party organization, making the Mensheviks independent; and distrust of the liberals, to debunk exaggerated claims by the Provisional Government.[[18]](#footnote-18) By the time the long awaited revolution came, in February 1917, the Mensheviks were ready to take over power. Within two weeks the overthrow of the Tsar was complete, but so was general chaos. In this power vacuum the Mensheviks seized the moment. The famous Petrograd Soviet of Workers and Soldiers Deputies was formed, with the Mensheviks gaining the upper hand. Apart from Mensheviks being abundantly chosen as deputies, they also became the leaders of the Executive Committee and several other important committees.[[19]](#footnote-19) Now the Mensheviks were in the right place at the right time to gain control over the previously uncontrollable revolution. However, the Mensheviks refused to obtain government positions. Because, in contrast to the Bolsheviks, the Mensheviks believed Russia should go through every step of the Marxist theory, they were convinced the liberals had to form a bourgeois Russia, before proletarian rule could be installed. This liberal government was to be formed by the liberal Kadets, who had been active in the Duma since the 1905 revolution. So a situation arose in which the liberal government was depending on the Petrograd Soviet support for ruling. The Mensheviks guided the government along the ‘right’ path, knowing the liberals needed their patronage. In this paradoxical situation, the Mensheviks abdicated from power, to follow the Marxist route to proletarian rule, and thus eventually hoped to come to power. The Mensheviks were still politically very active and worked hard to dismantle the tsarist institutions. In this short-lived period between the beginning of the revolution and April 1917, the Mensheviks believed themselves to be in control over the revolution. Like the Feuillants in November 1791, the Mensheviks were now on the height of their power, convinced they lead the revolution.

**Challenges to authority**But the calm days of March would turn out to be the lull before the storm. A blinded train from Germany carried the notorious Bolshevik agitator, Vladimir Lenin, who only days after arrival published his famous April theses. In it, he renounced the Provincial Government and the Menshevik policy. Some Mensheviks had hoped the socialist movements would be reunited under the banner of the revolution, but soon found out the Bolsheviks would have none of it.[[20]](#footnote-20) Lenin organized Bolshevik meetings for workers and soldiers, set up protests against the Provisional Government and demanded the Mensheviks took over state power. The first actual blow to the Provisional Government and the Mensheviks Soviet came in late April. Liberal minister of Foreign Affairs, Pavel Miliukov, issued a statement to the Allies, claiming: ‘that the Provisional Government (…)will fully observe the obligations taken with respect to our allies...’.[[21]](#footnote-21) In other words, Miliukov wanted Russia to continue the war effort and respect treaties signed by the tsarist regime. The statement immediately caused disturbances throughout Russia and rioters raided the streets of Petrograd. Now the precarious position of the Mensheviks was unveiled, as the protests were directed at their liberal allies, who at the same time were bourgeois adversaries. After all, the socialist dogma was build on the proletarian struggle against the bourgeoisie. How could the Mensheviks thus denounce the protestors. It is from this point on, that the call for socialists to come to power became stronger. The popular Leninist phrase ‘All power to the Soviet’ appeared on pamphlets in the streets of Petrograd.[[22]](#footnote-22) The forced resignation of Miliukov released the buildup tension, but did not hide the fragile position of both the Mensheviks and the Provisional Government. All the more worrisome was the role the Petrograd Red Guard had played in the April crisis. Although like many revolutionary institutions it was lead by Mensheviks, almost the entire Red Guard had actively supported the riots, with only one unit trying to suppress the riots. Other troops had surrendered or even joint the protestors[[23]](#footnote-23). The Menshevik position now began to look like that of the Feuillants in the autumn of 1791, when they had controlled state policy, but lacked support from the revolutionary movement in general.   
 The new situation convinced both the liberals and the Mensheviks that changes had to be made to prevent the revolution from escalating beyond control. The liberals argued that the Mensheviks had to join the government in order to gain additional political support. The Soviet leaders were not so eager to join the government, since it would mean that they had to join a bourgeois government. This went against all theory socialism prescribed. Moreover, Russia was not yet ready for a socialist revolution, the economic conditions had not yet developed sufficiently. Yet the option of a socialist government worked like a magnet on the radical Bolsheviks. They argued the Mensheviks had already operated as state power in the cities where the April crisis had lead to riots and where the Provisional Government had proven itself unable to enforce its authority. But the leaders of the Soviet were not convinced that a Menshevik-liberal coalition would be favorable. Firstly because they did not acknowledge the instability of Provisional Government instability and thus so no need to strengthen it. Secondly because joining the government would mean that they could no longer criticize the government from the hide-out of the Soviet.   
 So the Mensheviks denied the possibility of a coalition. The socialist public however, was not as convinced. The more radical wing of the Mensheviks together with the Bolsheviks took up the idea and gained support from the public. In the wake of Miliukovs and liberal heavyweight minister Alexander Guchkov resignations, the biggest foes of the Mensheviks had left the cabinet of the liberal prince Lvov. The pressure of the public, radicals and liberals would prove too much for the Soviet leaders, who in late April accepted the invitation to join the government. This would be the only time the Mensheviks abandoned their intellectual legacy, by admitting socialist representatives in a government, which they were convinced should be ‘bourgeois’. This did mean, however, that they interweaved their political fate further with that of the liberals.   
 The difficult position the Mensheviks had put themselves in, proved to be problematic in July already, when soldiers, sailors and workers took over the streets of Petrograd. Without encouragements from any political party, they demanded the Soviet took over executive power. The refusal of the Executive Committee to abandon the Provisional Government prevented the fall of the regime. To the frustration of the protesting masses and radical socialists, the Mensheviks refused to accept power. A remark to minister of Agriculture Victor Chernov by an angry worker paints a vivid picture: ‘Take power, you son of a bitch, when it is given to you’.[[24]](#footnote-24) Even more problematic was the role the Soviet had played in the turbulent days, acting as *de facto* government. Most garrison units declared loyalty to the Soviet, rather than to the Provisional Government.[[25]](#footnote-25)   
 It became evident that the executive power shifted from the weakening Provisional Government to the socialist Petrograd Soviet. Turmoil in the countryside, which the Government was unable to stop, showed how little control it exercised. Maybe worst of all was the lack of a peace policy, in a time when more and more garrisons deserted or declared loyalty to local soviets. The strength of the government could have been restored, had the Mensheviks given in to the call of the masses. But still they held on to their idea of a rule of ‘bourgeois’, which should create the economic circumstances for a proletarian seizure of power. Ideology did not make way for practical politics. In this way the Mensheviks undermined their own credibility, as they still were prominent in both the soviet and the Government. This explains the faltering popularity of the Menshevik party. The Petrograd Menshevik organizations practically ceased to exist and Mensheviks deputies elected in Congress of Soviets dropped from 248 to 105 between June and October.[[26]](#footnote-26)  
 Unlike the Mensheviks, Lenin had promoted proletarian rule all along. Bolsheviks continued to support fraternization on the front and workers taking over factories, effectively giving power to soviets. Lenin also was prepared to sacrifice party doctrines to gain power. He allowed farmers to seize land, despite the Bolsheviks program of nationalization, and encouraged soviets to take power on the local level, ignoring plans for centralization. These measures, combined with failure of the Mensheviks and Government to act effectively, caused a rise in popularity for the Bolsheviks, thus paving the way for gradual radicalization.[[27]](#footnote-27) The fall of the Provisional Government in October, was almost inevitable. The Mensheviks were shortly represented in the Soviet during the early rule of the Bolsheviks, but soon found themselves exiled or worse.   
 The Mensheviks rise and fall, from the February Revolution till the Bolshevik coup, can be traced back to the distinct characteristics of the Mensheviks. Their willingness to cooperate with the liberals assured a place after the February Revolution, but damaged their popularity after the Provisional Government proved to be unable to keep the masses on their side. Also, a lack of leadership made the Mensheviks less able to act powerfully, like the Bolsheviks were under Lenin’s vigorous rule. Finally, the fact that the Mensheviks continually refused to take on executive rule, because of their ideology of ‘bourgeois’ rule before ‘proletarian’ rule, turned the masses away from the Mensheviks into the hands of the more radical Bolsheviks. The takeover of power by the Bolsheviks ensured the end of Menshevik influence in Russian politics, as the oppressing rule of Lenin and Stalin eliminated political opponents by exile, imprisonment or executions.

**Conclusion**

As stated in the introduction, revolutions are unique by definition, as any historical event. Different people, ideas and ideals give every revolution its own identity. This makes it all the more interesting to look for recurring patterns in these unique events. Scholars like Charles Brinton have looked for a set of developments in entire revolutions, this essay dealt with only one development in two different revolutions. Looking closer at the period of rule by relatively moderate revolutionaries tells us something about radicalization processes and endorses the sequence of events laid down by Brinton.   
 Two moderate revolutionary factions have been reviewed in two subsequent chapters. The Feuillants Club, which played a major role in the French revolution, was the first of these two. As a result of a split in the radical Jacobin Club, the Feuillants had to prove their right to exist from the outset. As explained, by October 1791 the Feuillants had lost support from the provincial revolutionary societies and in the Parisian political arena. This led them to push the king to pursue an aggressive foreign policy to regain his constitutional power, in line with the Feuillant ideology. As turned out, the German Emperor would not back down in the face of tough language. An actual war was never what the Feuillants had wanted; they only wanted to strengthen the king’s position. Now they faced an implicit German declaration of war, but could not back down, as they had challenged the Germans themselves through actions of the king. From this point on the radicals took over the war initiative, and radicalized French foreign policy, dealing a final blow to the Feuillants, who ceded to exist in the summer of 1792.  
 The relatively moderate socialists in early twentieth century Russia, the Mensheviks, played a similar role in the Russian revolution. Also the result of a split in the revolutionary movement, they strived for dominance with the Bolsheviks. When the revolution came in 1917, the Mensheviks were quick to install the Petrograd Soviet in which they held the most prominent offices. Supporting the Provisional Government, they formed an alliance with the liberals. However, the Mensheviks refused to take on governmental positions, as they adhered to traditional Marxist theory, in which ‘bourgeois’ rule should create the economic preconditions for a ‘proletarian’ coup. The Provisional Government soon proved to be a faltering institution. Protesting masses in April in July 1917 called for a socialist takeover of power. The only thing standing between the fall of the regime and the rioters, was the Menshevik dominated Soviet. The Mensheviks continued to refuse executive power, even though the Soviet often practically functioned as government and the Provisional Government continued to lose power. At the same time the Mensheviks linked their political fate to that of the liberals. So when in October the Provisional Government fell, the demise of the Mensheviks was inevitable.   
 At first glance, there don’t seem to be many similarities between these moderate factions. However, a closer look reveals some striking resemblances. The most obvious of these is of course the fact that both the Feuillants and the Mensheviks were the results of a split in the revolutionary movement. In the French and the Russian case, the revolutionaries split over differences in opinions about the course the revolution should follow. The moderate split of the movement was able to gain power before the radical faction, but in both cases eventually had to hand over power to the radicals. One of the reasons the moderates initially were able to seize power, was the willingness to embark on coalitions with existing institutions or political parties. In the French case this was of course King Louis XVI, in the Russian case the liberals, who had been an active part of Russian politics in the years leading up to the Revolution. By linking their fate to an existing party or institution, the power of the moderates declined with the fall of the French monarchy and the Russian liberals.   
 After a short period of fragile power, both moderate revolutionary factions slowly lost their momentum and gave way to more radical factions. This was the result of their own attempts to hold on to power. The Feuillants did so by reinforcing the position of the king, the Mensheviks desperately hung on to their ideology of ‘bourgeois’ rule. They would ultimately seize power through a socialist revolution, for which they did not thing the time was right. By pursuing these policies, both moderate revolutionary factions lost the confidence of their former adherents, who instead rallied behind radical factions. It is remarkable to conclude that the policies of the moderate revolutionaries involuntarily lead to a shift in revolutions. During the period of moderate dominance, the Feuillants and Mensheviks slowly lost control over the revolution, while the Jacobins and Bolsheviks thankfully seized the opportunities given to them. The very similar developments in both revolutions not only support the theory of Brinton, showing that revolutions indeed first go through a phase in which moderates control the revolution, but masses continue to radicalize, rallying behind radical factions. But also, this essay shows why exactly this happens. The moderate revolutionaries desperately hold on to their policy, not realizing the basis for their power grumbled under their feet. Both the Feuillants and the Mensheviks in the end operated without the support of the general revolutionary movement. Without support, they continued to work for their own ideology. By trying to restore the power of the king, the Feuillants handed the radicals an opportunity to escalate the revolution with foreign war and by refusing executive powers the Mensheviks created a situation in with the radical Bolsheviks could seize power. The motives and ideologies of the moderate revolutionaries in both cases involuntarily lead to radicalization. By presenting causal explanations for Brinton’s model, the four stages theory becomes significantly more plausible.   
 Explanations for radicalization should also be given for the other revolutions Brinton discusses in ‘Anatomy of a Revolution’, the English Revolution of 1640 and the American Revolution, to add even more weight to the four stages model. There is the possibility that explanations for radicalization in other revolutions will lead to alternative conclusions. For instance, are there examples in history where the moderate revolutionaries successfully held on to power, leaving the radicals empty handed? And what would that mean for the radicalization process of that revolution? Moreover, some interesting questions can be raised for further research. For example, did semantics play a role in the relations between moderate and radical factions and in what way did this affect the revolutionary process? We saw in the quotation by Barnave, that he stated further radicalization of the revolution would damage the revolutionary process. Does he state that radicals are thus in fact anti-revolutionary? And do the radicals do the same for the moderate revolutionaries? In what way did the Bolshevik anti-Menshevik propaganda use the term counterrevolutionary?   
 There are thus many fields of research on revolution this essay touches, many new entries for new research, based on the premise that revolutions radicalize, partly because of the role played by moderate revolutionaries.

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