  
Leon Trotsky

1905  
OUR  
REVOLUTION

Incorporating

**RESULTS & PERSPECTIVES  
BEFORE & AFTER  
AND OTHER ARTICLES**

A LANKA SAMASAMAJA PUBLICATION



*Leon Trotsky*

1905

**RESULTS  
AND  
PERSPECTIVES**

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## **PUBLISHER'S NOTE**

Trotsky put forward his theory of the "permanent revolution" in 1904. The Revolution of 1905 confirmed his prognoses.

This book, written in 1906 while Trotsky was in gaol awaiting trial for his role in the 1905 Revolution as Chairman of the St. Petersburg Soviet, further amplifies and develops the theory of the "permanent revolution".

It was originally published under the title "Results and Perspectives" in a volume entitled "Our Revolution" (Petersburg, 1906).

Our edition follows the English translation by M. J. Olgin entitled "Prospects of a Labour Dictatorship" published in "Our Revolution" (New York, 1918). The translation is defective and some portions of the book have been summarized by the translator. Unfortunately, however, as far as we are aware, no other English translation exists.

**Lanka Samasamaja  
Publications.**

March, 1954.

# RESULTS & PERSPECTIVES

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**Introduction by M. J. Olgin**

This is, perhaps, the most remarkable piece of political writing the Revolution has produced. Written early in 1906, after the great upheavals of the fall of 1905, at a time when the Russian revolution was obviously going down hill, and autocracy, after a moment of relaxation, was increasing its deadly grip over the country, the essays under the name **Results and Perspectives** aroused more amazement than admiration. They seemed so entirely out of place. They ignored the liberal parties as quite negligible quantities. They ignored the creation of the Duma to which the Constitutional Democrats attached so much importance as a place where democracy would fight the battles of the people and win. They ignored the very fact that the vanguard of the revolution, the industrial proletariat, was beaten, disorganized, downhearted, tired out.

The essays met with opposition on the part of leading Social-Democratic thinkers of both the Bolshevik and Menshevik factions. The essays seemed to be more an expression of Trotsky's revolutionary ardour, of his unshakable faith in the future of the Russian revolution, than a reflection of political realities. It was known that he wrote them within prison walls. Should not the very fact of his imprisonment have convinced him that in drawing a picture of proletarian dictatorship he was only dreaming?

History has shown that it was not a dream. Whatever our attitude towards the course of events in the 1917 revolution may be, we must admit that, in the

main, this course has taken the direction predicted in Trotsky's essays. There is a proletarian dictatorship now in Russia. It is a **proletarian** dictatorship, not a "dictatorship of the proletariat and the peasants". The liberal and radical parties have lost influence. The workers' and peasants' government has put collective ownership and collective management of industries on the order of the day. The workers' and peasants' government has not hesitated in declaring Russia to be ready for a Socialist revolution. It was compelled to do so under the pressure of revolutionary proletarian masses. The Russian army has been dissolved in the armed people. The Russian revolution has called upon the workers of the world to make a social revolution.

All this had been outlined by Trotsky twelve years ago. When one reads this series of essays, one has the feeling that they were written not in the course of the first Russian upheaval (the essays appeared in 1906 as part of a book by Trotsky, entitled **Our Revolution**, Petersburg, N. Glagoleff, Publisher) but as if they were discussing problems of the present situation. This, more than anything else, shows the **continuity** of the revolution. The great overthrow of 1917 was completed by the same political and social forces that had met and learned to know each other in the storms of 1905 and 1906. The ideology of the various groups and parties had hardly changed. Even the leaders of the major parties were, in the main, the same persons. Of course, the international situation was different. But even the possibility of a European war and its consequences had been foreseen by Trotsky in his essays.

Twelve years ago those essays seemed to picture an imaginary world. To-day they seem to tell the history of the Russian revolution. We may agree or disagree with Trotsky, the leader, nobody can deny the power and clarity of his political vision.

**LEON TROTSKY**

# **RESULTS & PERSPECTIVES**

## **I: PECULIARITIES OF OUR HISTORIC DEVELOPMENT**

**(Summary by M. J. Olgin)**

In the **first** chapter, entitled "Peculiarities of Our Historic Development", the author gives a broad outline of the growth of absolutism in Russia. Development of social forms in Russia, he says, was slow and primitive. Our social life was constructed on an archaic and meager economic foundation. Yet, Russia did not lead an isolated life. Russia was under constant pressure of higher politico - economical organisms — the neighbouring Western states. The Russian state, in its struggle for existence, outgrew its economic basis. Historic development in Russia, therefore, was taking place under a terrific straining of national economic forces. The state absorbed the major part of the national economic surplus and also part of the product necessary for the maintenance of the people. The state thus undermined its own foundation. On the other hand, to secure the means indispensable for its growth, the state forced economic development by bureaucratic measures. Ever since the end of the seventeenth century, the state was most anxious to develop industries in Russia. "New trades, machines, factories, production on a large scale, capital, appear from a certain angle to be an artificial graft on the original economic trunk of the people. Similarly, Russian science may appear from the same angle to be an artificial graft on the natural trunk of national ignorance." This, however, is a wrong conception. The Russian state could not have created something

out of nothing. State action only accelerated the processes of natural evolution of economic life. State measures that were in contradiction to those processes were doomed to failure. Still, the role of the state in economic life was enormous. When social development reached the stage where the bourgeoisie began to experience a desire for political institutions of a Western type, Russian autocracy was fully equipped with all the material power of a modern European state. It had at its command a centralized bureaucratic machinery, incapable of regulating modern relations yet strong enough to do the work of oppression. It was in a position to overcome distance by means of the telegraph and rail roads — a thing unknown to the pre-revolutionary autocracies in Europe. It had a colossal army, incompetent in wars with foreign enemies, yet strong enough to maintain the authority of the state in internal affairs.

Based on its military and fiscal apparatus, absorbing the major part of the country's resources, the government increased its annual budget to an enormous amount of two billions of rubles, it made the stock-exchange of Europe its treasury and the Russian tax-payer a slave to European high finance. Gradually the Russian state became an end in itself. It evolved into a power independent of society. It left unsatisfied the most elementary wants of the people. It was unable even to defend the safety of the country against foreign foes. Yet, it seemed strong, powerful, invincible. It inspired awe.

It became evident that the Russian state would never grant reforms of its own free will. As years passed, the conflict between absolutism and the requirements of economic and cultural progress became ever more acute. There was only one way to solve the problem: "to accumulate enough steam inside the iron kettle of absolutism to burst the kettle." This was the way outlined by the Marxists long ago. Marxism was the only doctrine that had correctly predicted the course of development in Russia.



## II: CITY & CAPITAL

(Summary by M. J. Olgin)

It the **second** chapter, "City and Capital," Trotsky attempts a theoretical explanation of the weakness of the middle-class in Russia. Russia of the eighteenth, and even of the major part of the nineteenth, century, he writes, was marked by an absence of cities as industrial centres. Our big cities were administrative rather than industrial centres. Our primitive industries were scattered in the villages, auxiliary occupations of the peasant farmers. Even the population of our so-called "cities" in former generations maintained itself largely by agriculture. Russian cities never contained a prosperous, efficient and self-assured class of artisans—that real foundation of the European middle class which in the course of revolutions against absolutism identified itself with the "people." When modern capitalism, aided by absolutism, appeared on the scene in Russia and turned large villages into modern industrial centres almost overnight, it had no middle-class to build on. In Russian cities, therefore, the influence of the bourgeoisie is far less than in western Europe. Russian cities practically contain great numbers of workingmen and small groups of capitalists. Moreover, the specific political weight of the Russian proletariat is larger than that of the capital employed in Russia, because the latter is to a great extent **imported** capital. Thus, while a large proportion of the capital operating in Russia exerts its political influence in the parliaments of Belgium or France, the working class employed by the same capital exert their entire influence in the political life of Russia. As a result of these peculiar historic developments, the Russian proletariat, recruited from the pauperized peasant and ruined rural artisans, has accumulated in the new cities in very great numbers, "and nothing stood between the workingmen and absolutism but a small class of capitalists, separa-

ted from the 'people' (i. e., the middle-class in the European sense of the word), half foreign in its derivation, devoid of historic traditions, animated solely by a hunger for profits."

### III: 1789 - 1848 - 1905\*

History does not repeat itself. You are free to compare the Russian revolution with the Great French Revolution, yet this would not make the former resemble the latter. The nineteenth century passed not in vain.

Already the year of 1848 is widely different from 1789. As compared with the Great Revolution, the revolutions in Prussia or Austria appear amazingly small. From one viewpoint the revolutions of 1848 came too early; from another, too late. That gigantic exertion of power which is necessary for the bourgeois society to get completely square with the masters of the past, can be achieved either through powerful **unity** of an entire nation arising against feudal despotism, or through a powerful development of **class struggle** within a nation striving for freedom. In the first case — of which a classic example are the years 1789 - 1793 — the national energy, compressed by the terrific resistance of the old regime, was spent entirely in the struggle against reaction. In the second case — which has never appeared in history as yet, and which is treated here as hypothetical — the actual energy necessary for a victory over the black forces of history is being developed within the bourgeois nation through "civil war" between classes. Fierce internal friction characterizes the latter case. It absorbs enormous quantities of energy, prevents the bourgeoisie from playing a leading role, pushes its antagonist, the proletariat, to the front, gives the workingman the experience of decades in a month, makes them the central figures in political struggles,

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\* Trotsky's text begins. -- Ed.

and puts very tight reins into their hands. Strong, determined, knowing no doubts, the proletariat gives events a powerful twist.

Thus, it is either - or. Either a nation gathered into one compact whole, as a lion ready to leap; or a nation completely divided in the process of internal struggles, a nation that has released her best part for a task which the whole was unable to complete. Such are the two polar types, whose purest forms, however, can be found only in logical contraposition.

Here, as in many other cases, the middle road is the worst. This was the case in 1848. In the French Revolution we see an active, enlightened bourgeoisie not yet aware of the contradictions of its situation; entrusted by history with the task of leadership in the struggle for a new order; fighting not only against the archaic institutions of France, but also against the forces of reaction throughout Europe. The bourgeoisie conciously, in the person of its various factions, assumes the leadership of the nation, it lures the masses into struggle, it coins slogans, it dictates revolutionary tactics. Democracy unites the nation in one political ideology. The people—small artisans, petty merchants, peasants, and workingmen—elect bourgeoisie as their representatives; the mandates of the communities are framed in the language of the bourgeoisie which becomes aware of its Messianic role. Antagonisms do not fail to reveal themselves in the course of the revolution, yet the powerful momentum of the revolution removes one by one the most unresponsive elements of the bourgeoisie. Each stratum is torn off, but not before it has given over all its energy to the following one. The nation as a whole continues to fight with ever increasing persistence and determination. When the upper stratum of the bourgeoisie tears itself away from the main body of the nation to form an alliance with Louis XVI, the democratic demands of the nation turn **against** this part of the

bourgeoisie, leading to universal suffrage and a republican government as logically consequent forms of democracy.

The Great French Revolution is a true national revolution. It is more than that. It is a classic manifestation, on a national scale, of the world-wide struggle of the bourgeois order for supremacy, for power, for unmitigated triumph. In 1848, the bourgeoisie was no more capable of a similar role. It did not want, it did not dare take the responsibility for a revolutionary liquidation of a political order that stood in its way. The reason is clear. The task of the bourgeoisie of which it was fully aware - was not to secure its **own** political supremacy, but to secure for itself **a share** in the political power of the old regime. The bourgeoisie of 1848, niggardly wise with the experience of the French bourgeoisie was vitiated by its treachery, frightened by its failures. It did not lead the masses to storm the citadels of the absolutist order. On the contrary, with its back against the absolutist order, it resisted the onslaught of the masses that were pushing it forward.

The French bourgeoisie made its revolution great. Its consciousness was the consciousness of the people, and no idea found its expression in institutions without having gone through its consciousness as an end, as a task of political construction. It often resorted to theatrical poses to conceal from itself the limitations of its bourgeois world — yet it marched forward.

The German bourgeoisie, on the contrary, was not doing the revolutionary work; it was "doing away" with the revolution from the very start. Its consciousness revolted against the objective conditions of its supremacy. The revolution could be completed not by the bourgeoisie, but against it. Democratic institutions seemed to the mind of the German bourgeois not an aim for his struggle, but a menace to his security.

Another class was required in 1848, a class capable of conducting the revolution beside the bourgeoisie and in spite of it, a class not only ready and able to push the bourgeoisie forward, but also to step over its political corpse, should events so demand. None of the other classes, however, was ready for the job.

**The petty middle class** were hostile not only to the past, but also to the future. They were still entangled in the meshes of medieval relations, and they were unable to withstand the oncoming "free" industry; they were still giving the cities their stamp, and they were already giving way to the influences of big capital. Steeped in prejudices, stunned by the clatter of events, exploiting and being exploited, greedy and helpless in their greed, they could not become leaders in matters of world-wide importance. Still less were the **peasants** capable of political initiative. Scattered over the country, far from the nerve centres of politics and culture, limited in their views, the peasants could have no great part in the struggles for a new order. The **democratic intellectuals** possessed no social weight; they either dragged along behind their elder sister, the liberal bourgeoisie, as its political tail, or they separated themselves from the bourgeoisie in critical moments only to show their weakness.

**The industrial workingmen** were too weak, unorganized, devoid of experience and knowledge. The capitalist development had gone far enough to make the abolition of old feudal relations imperative, yet it had not gone far enough to make the working class, the product of new economic relations, a decisive political factor. Antagonism between bourgeoisie and proletariat, even within the national boundaries of Germany, was sharp enough to prevent the bourgeoisie from stepping to the front to assume national hegemony in the revolution, yet it was not sharp

enough to allow the proletariat to become a national leader. True, the internal frictions of the revolution had prepared the workingmen for political independence, yet they weakened the energy and the unity of the revolution and they caused a great waste of power. The result was that, after the first successes, the revolution began to plod about in painful uncertainty, and under the first blows of the reaction it started backwards. Austria gave the clearest and most tragic example of unfinished and unsettled relations in a revolutionary period. It was this situation that gave Lassalle occasion to assert that henceforward revolutions could find their support only in the class struggle of the proletariat. In a letter to Marx, dated October 24, 1849 he writes: "The experiences of Austria, Hungary and Germany in 1848 and 1849 have led me to the firm conclusion that no struggle in Europe can be successful unless it is proclaimed from the very beginning as purely Socialistic. No struggle can succeed in which social problems appear as nebulous elements kept in the background, while on the surface the fight is being conducted under the slogan of national revival of bourgeois republicanism".

We shall not attempt to criticize this bold conclusion. One thing is evident, namely that already at the middle of the nineteenth century the national task of political emancipation could not be completed by a unanimous concerted onslaught of the entire nation. Only the independent tactics of the proletariat deriving its strength from no other source but its class position could have secured a victory of the revolution.

The Russian working class of 1906 differs entirely from the Vienna working class of 1848. The best proof of it is the all-Russian practice of the Council of Workmen's Deputies (Soviets).<sup>\*</sup> Those are no organizations of conspirators prepared beforehand to step forward

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<sup>\*</sup> The first **Council of Workmen's Deputies** was formed in Petersburg on October 13th 1905, in the course of the great general October strike that compelled Nicholas Romanoff to promise a Constitution. It represented individual factories, labour unions, and included also delegates from the Socialist parties. It looked upon itself as the centre of the revolution and a nucleus of a revolutionary labour government. Similar Councils sprang up in many other industrial centers. It was arrested on December 3rd, having existed for fifty days. Its members were tried and sent to Siberia.

in times of unrest and to seize command over the working class. They are organs consciously created by the masses themselves to coordinate their revolutionary struggle. The Soviets, elected by and responsible to the masses, are thoroughly democratic institutions following the most determined class policy in the spirit of revolutionary Socialism.

The differences in the social composition of the Russian revolution are clearly shown in the question of arming the people.

**Militia** (national guard) was the first slogan and the first achievement of the revolutions of 1789 and 1848 in Paris, in all the Italian states and in Vienna and Berlin. In 1846, the demand for a national guard (i. e., the armament of the propertied classes and the "intellectuals") was put forth by the entire bourgeois opposition, including the most moderate factions. In Russia, the demand for a national guard finds no favour with the bourgeois parties. This is not because the liberals do not understand the importance of arming the people: absolutism has given them in this respect more than one object lesson. The reason why liberals do not like the idea of a national guard is because they fully realize the impossibility of creating in Russia an armed revolutionary force outside of the proletariat. They are ready to give up this demand, as they give up many others, just as the French bourgeoisie headed by Thiers preferred to give up Paris and France to Bismarck rather than to arm the working class.

The problem of an armed revolution in Russia becomes essentially a problem of the proletariat. National militia, this classic demand of the bourgeoisie of 1848, appears in Russia from the very beginning as a demand for arming the people, primarily the working class. Herein the fate of the Russian revolution manifests itself most clearly.

#### **IV: THE REVOLUTION AND THE PROLETARIAT**

A revolution is an open contest of social forces in their struggle for political power.

The state is not an end in itself. It is only a working machine in the hands of the social force in power. As every machine, the state has its motor, transmission, and its operator. Its motive power is the class interest; its motor is propaganda, the press, influences of school and church, political parties, open air meetings, petitions, insurrections; its transmission is made up of legislative bodies actuated by the interest of a caste, a dynasty, a guild or a class appearing under the guise of Divine or national will (absolutism or parliamentarism); its operator is the administration, with its police, judiciary, jails, and the army.

The state is not an end in itself. It is, however, the greatest means for organizing, disorganizing and reorganizing social relations.

According to who is directing the machinery of the State, it can be an instrument of profoundest transformations, or a means of organized stagnation.

Each political party worthy of its name strives to get hold of political power and thus to make the state serve the interests of the class represented by the party. Social-Democracy, as the party of the proletariat, naturally strives at political supremacy of the working class.

The proletariat grows and gains strength with the growth of capitalism. From this viewpoint, the development of capitalism is the development of the proletariat for dictatorship. The day and the hour, however, when political power should pass into the hands of the working class, is determined not directly by the degree of capitalistic development of economic forces, but by the relations of class struggle, by the international situation, by a number of subjective elements, such as tradition, initiative, readiness to fight.....



It is, therefore, not excluded that in a backward country with a lesser degree of capitalistic development, the proletariat should sooner reach political supremacy than in a highly developed capitalist state. Thus in middle-class Paris, the proletariat consciously took into its hands the administration of public affairs in 1871. True it is, that the reign of the proletariat lasted only for two months. It is remarkable, however, that in far more advanced capitalist centres of England and the United States, the proletariat never was in power even for the duration of one day. To imagine that there is an automatic dependence between a dictatorship of the proletariat and the technical and productive resources of a country, is to understand economic determinism in a very primitive way. Such a conception would have nothing to do with Marxism.

It is our opinion that the Russian revolution creates conditions whereby political power can (and, in case of victorious revolution, **must**) pass into the hands of the proletariat before the politicians of the liberal bourgeoisie would have occasion to give their political genius full swing.

Summing up the results of the revolution and counter-revolution in 1848 and 1849, Marx wrote in his correspondence to the New York **Tribune**: "The working class in Germany is, in its social and political development, as far behind that of England and France as the German bourgeoisie is behind the bourgeoisie of those countries. Like master, like man. The evolution of the conditions of existence for a numerous, strong, concentrated, and intelligent proletariat goes hand in hand with the development of the conditions of existence for a numerous, wealthy, concentrated and powerful middle class. The working class movement itself never is independent, never is of an exclusively proletarian character until all the different factions of the middle class, and particularly its most progressive faction, the large manufacturers, have conquered political power,

and remodeled the state according to their wants. It is then that the inevitable conflict between employer and the employed becomes imminent, and cannot be adjourned any longer."\* This quotation must be familiar to the reader, as it has lately been very much abused by scholastic Marxists. It has been used as an iron-clad argument against the idea of a workers' and peasants' government in Russia. If the Russian capitalistic bourgeoisie is not strong enough to take governmental power into its hands, how is it possible to think of an industrial democracy, i. e., a political supremacy of the proletariat, was the question.

Let us give this objection closer consideration.

Marxism is primarily a method of analysis - not the analysis of texts but the analysis of social relations. Applied to Russia, is it true that the weakness of capitalistic liberalism means the weakness of the working class? Is it true, not in the abstract, but in relation to Russia, that an independent proletarian movement is impossible before the bourgeoisie assume political power? It is enough to formulate these questions in order to understand what hopeless logical formalism there is hidden behind the attempt to turn Marx's historically relative remark into a super-historic maxim.

Our industrial development, though marked in times of prosperity by leaps and bounds of an "American" character, is in reality miserably small in comparison with the industry of the United States. Five million persons, forming 16. 6 per cent. of the population engaged in economic pursuits, are employed in the industries of Russia; six millions and 22. 2 per cent. are the corresponding figures for the United States. To have a clear idea as to the real dimensions of industry in both countries, we must remember that the population of Russia is twice as large as the population of the United States, and that the output of American

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\* Karl Marx, *Revolution and Counter-Revolution in Germany.*

industries in 1900 amounted to 25 billions of rubles whereas the output of Russian industries for the same year hardly reached 2.5 billions.

There is no doubt that the number of the proletariat, the degree of its concentration, its cultural level, and its political importance depend upon the degree of industrial development in each country.

This dependence, however, is not a direct one. Between the productive forces of a country on one side and the political strength of its social classes on the other, there is at any given moment a current and cross current of various socio-political factors of a national and international character which modify and sometimes completely reverse the political expression of economic relations. The industry of the United States is far more advanced than the industry of Russia, while the political role of the Russian workingmen, their influence on the political life of their country, the possibilities of their influence on world politics in the near future are incomparably greater than those of the American proletariat.

In his recent work on the American workingman, Kautsky arrives at the conclusion that there is no immediate and direct dependence between the political strength of the bourgeoisie and the proletariat of a country on one hand and its industrial development on the other. "Here are two countries," he writes, "diametrically opposed to each other: in one of them, one of the elements of modern industry is developed out of proportion, i. e., out of keeping with the stage of capitalistic development; in the other, another; in America it is the class of capitalists; in Russia, the class of labour. In America there is more ground than elsewhere to speak of the dictatorship of capital, while nowhere has labour gained as much influence as in Russia, and this influence is bound to grow, as Russia has only recently entered the period of modern class

struggle." Kautsky then proceeds to state that Germany can, to a certain degree, study her future from the present conditions in Russia, then he continues: "It is strange to think that it is the Russian proletariat which shows us our future as far as, not the organization of capital, but the protest of the working class is concerned. Russia is the most backward of all the great states of the capitalist world. This may seem to be in contradiction with the economic interpretation of history which considers economic strength the basis of political development. This is however, not true. It contradicts only that kind of economic interpretation of history which is being painted by our opponents and critics who see in it not a **method of analysis**, but a **ready pattern**." \* These lines ought to be recommended to those of our native Marxists who substitute for an independent analysis of social relations a deduction from texts selected for all emergencies of life. No one can compromise Marxism as shamefully as these bureaucrats of Marxism do.

In Kautsky's estimation, Russia is characterized, economically, by a comparatively low level of capitalistic development; politically, by a weakness of the capitalistic bourgeoisie and by a great strength of the working class. This results in the fact, that "the struggle for the interests of Russia as a whole has become the task of **the only powerful class in Russia**, industrial labour. This is the reason why labour has gained such a tremendous political importance. This is the reason why the struggle of Russia against the polyp of absolutism which is strangling the country, turned out to be a single combat of absolutism against industrial labour, a combat where the peasantry can lend considerable assistance without, however, being able to play a leading role.†

Are we not warranted in our conclusion that the "man" will sooner gain political supremacy in Russia than his "master"?

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\* K Kautsky, *The American and the Russian Workingman*.

† D. Mendeleev, *Russian Realities*, 1906, p. 10.

There are two sorts of political optimism. One over-estimates the advantages and the strength of the revolution and strives towards ends unattainable under given conditions. The other consciously limits the task of revolution, drawing a line which the very logic of the situation will compel him to over-step.

You can draw limits to all the problems of the revolution by asserting that this is a bourgeois revolution in its objective aims and inevitable results, and you can close your eyes to the fact that the main figure in this revolution is the working class which is being moved towards political supremacy by the very course of events.

You can reassure yourself by saying that in the course of the bourgeois revolution the political supremacy of the working class can be only a passing episode, and you can forget that, once in power, the working class will offer desperate resistance, refusing to yield unless compelled to do so by armed force.

You can reassure yourself by saying that social conditions in Russia are not yet ripe for a socialist order, and you can overlook the fact that, once master of the situation, the working class would be compelled by the very logic of its situation to organize national economy under the management of the state.

The term **bourgeois revolution**, a general sociological definition, gives no solution to the numerous political and tactical problems, contradictions and difficulties which are being created by the mechanism of a **given** bourgeois revolution.

Within the limits of a bourgeois revolution at the end of the eighteenth century, whose objective was the political supremacy of capital, the dictatorship of the **Sans-Culottes** turned out to be a fact. This dictatorship was not a passing episode, it gave its stamp to a whole century that followed the revolution, though it was soon crushed by the limitations of the revolution.

Within the limits of a revolution at the beginning of the twentieth century, which is also a bourgeois revolution in its immediate objective aims, there looms up a prospect of an inevitable, or at least possible, supremacy of the working class in the near future. That this supremacy should not turn out to be a passing episode, as many a realistic Philistine may hope, is a task which the working class will have at heart. It is, then, legitimate to ask: is it inevitable that the dictatorship of the proletariat should clash against the limitations of a bourgeois revolution and collapse, or is it not possible that under given **international conditions** it may open a way for an ultimate victory by crushing those very limitations? Hence a tactical problem: should we consciously strive toward a workers' and peasants' government as the development of the revolution will bring us nearer to that stage, or should we look upon political power as upon a calamity which the bourgeois revolution is ready to inflict upon the workingmen, and which it is best to avoid?

## **V: THE PROLETARIAT IN POWER AND THE PEASANTRY.**

In case of a victorious revolution, political power passes into the hands of the class that has played in it a dominant role, in other words, it passes into the hands of the working class. Of course, revolutionary representatives of non-proletarian social groups may not be excluded from the government; sound politics demands that the proletariat should call into the government influential leaders of the lower middle class, the intelligentsia and the peasants. The problem is, **Who will give substance to the politics of the government, who will form in it a homogeneous majority?** It is one thing when the government contains a labour majority, which representatives of other democratic groups of the people are allowed to join; it is another, when the government has an outspoken bourgeois-democratic character where labour representatives are allowed to participate in the capacity of more or less honourable hostages.

The policies of the liberal capitalist bourgeoisie, notwithstanding all their vacillations, retreats and treacheries, are of a definite character. The policies of the proletariat are of a still more definite, outspoken character. The policies of the intelligentsia, however, a result of intermediate social position and political flexibility of this group; the politics of the peasants, a result of the social heterogeneity, intermediate position, and primitiveness of this class; the politics of the lower middle class, a result of muddle-headedness, intermediate position and complete want of political traditions—can never be clear, determined, and firm. It must necessarily be subject to unexpected turns, to uncertainties and surprises.

To imagine a revolutionary democratic government without representatives of labour is to see the absurdity of such a situation. A refusal of labour to participate in a revolutionary government would make the very existence of that government impossible, and would be tantamount to a betrayal of the cause of the revolution. A participation of labour in a revolutionary government, however, is admissible, both from the viewpoint of objective probability and subjective desirability, **only in the role of a leading dominant power.** Of course, you can call such a government "dictatorship of the proletariat and peasantry," "dictatorship of the proletariat, the peasantry, and the intelligentsia,"\* or "a revolutionary government of the workingmen and the lower middle class." This question will still remain: Who has the hegemony in the government and through it in the country? **When we speak of a labour government we mean that the hegemony belongs to the working class.**

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\* **Intelligentsia** is a term applied in Russia to an indefinite, heterogeneous group of "intellectuals", who are not actively and directly involved in the industrial machinery of capitalism, and at the same time are not members of the working class. It is customary to count among the **Intelligentsia** students, teachers, writers, lawyers, physicians, college professors, etc. However, the term **Intelligentsia** implies also a certain degree of idealism and radical aspirations.

The proletariat will be able to hold this position under one condition: if it broadens the base of the revolution.

Many elements of the working masses, especially among the rural population, will be drawn into the revolution and receive their political organization only after the first victories of the revolution, when the revolutionary vanguard, the city proletariat, shall have seized governmental power. Under such conditions, the work of propaganda and organization will be conducted through state agencies. Legislative work itself will become a powerful means of revolutionizing the masses. The burden thrust upon the shoulders of the working class by the peculiarities of our social and historical development, the burden of completing a bourgeois revolution by means of labour struggle, will thus confront the proletariat with difficulties of enormous magnitude; on the other hand, however, it will offer the working class, at least in the first period, unusual opportunities. This will be seen in the relations between the proletariat and the peasants.

In the revolutions of 1789-93, and 1848, governmental power passed from absolutism into the hands of the moderate bourgeois elements which emancipated the peasants before revolutionary democracy succeeded or even attempted to get into power. The emancipated peasantry then lost interest in the political ventures of the "city-gentlemen," i. e., in the further course of the revolution; it formed the dead ballast of "order", the foundation of all social "stability", betraying the revolution, supporting a Cæsarian or ultra-absolutist reaction.

The Russian revolution is opposed to a bourgeois constitutional order which would be able to solve the most primitive problems of democracy. The Russian revolution will be against it for a long period to come. Reformers of a bureaucratic brand such as Witte and Stolypin\*, can do nothing for the peasants, as their

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\* **Witte** was the first prime-minister under the quasi-constitution granted on October 17th, 1905. **Stolypin** was appointed prime-minister after the dissolution of the first Duma in July 1906.



"enlightened" efforts are continually nullified by their own struggle for existence. The fact of the most elementary interests of the peasantry—the entire peasantry as a class—is, therefore, closely connected with the fate of the revolution, i. e., with the fate of the proletariat.

**Once in power, the proletariat will appear before the peasantry as its liberator.**

Proletarian rule will mean not only democratic equality, free self-government, shifting the burden of taxation on the propertied classes, dissolution of the army among the revolutionary people, abolition of compulsory payments for the church, but also recognition of all revolutionary changes made by the peasants in agrarian relations (seizures of land). These changes will be taken by the proletariat as a starting point for further legislative measures in agriculture. Under such conditions, the Russian peasantry will be interested in upholding the proletarian rule ("labour democracy"), at least in the first, most difficult period, not less so than were the French peasants interested in upholding the military rule of Napoleon Bonaparte who by force guaranteed to the new owners the integrity of their land shares.

But is it not possible that the peasants will remove the workingmen from their positions and take their place? No, this can never happen. This would be in contradiction to all historical experiences. History has convincingly shown that the peasantry is incapable of an independent political role.

The history of capitalism is the history of subordination of the village by the city. Industrial development had made the continuation of feudal relations in agriculture impossible. Yet the peasantry had not produced a class which could live up to the revolutionary task of destroying feudalism. It was the city which made rural population dependent on capital, and which produced revolutionary forces to assume

political hegemony over the village, there to complete revolutionary changes in civic and political relations. In the course of further development, the village becomes completely enslaved by capital, and the villagers by capitalistic political parties, which revive feudalism in parliamentary politics, making the peasantry their political domain, the ground for their pre-election huntings. The modern peasantry is driven by the fiscal and militaristic system of the state into the clutches of usurers' capital, while state-clergy, state-schools and barrack depravity drive it into the clutches of usurers' politics.

The Russian bourgeoisie yielded all revolutionary positions to the Russian proletariat. It will have to yield also the revolutionary hegemony over the peasants. Once the proletariat becomes master of the situation, conditions will impel the peasants to uphold the policies of a labour democracy. They may do it with no more political understanding than they uphold a bourgeois regime. The difference is that while each bourgeois party in possession of the peasants' vote uses its power to rob the peasants, to betray their confidence and to leave their expectations unfulfilled, in the worst case to give way to another capitalist party, the working class, backed by the peasantry, will put all forces into operation to raise the cultural level of the village and to broaden the political understanding of the peasants.

Our attitude towards the idea of a "dictatorship of the proletariat and the peasantry" is now quite clear. It is not a question whether we think it "admissible" or not, whether we "wish" or we "do not wish" this form of political co-operation. In our opinion, it simply cannot be realized, at least in its direct meaning. Such a co-operation presupposes that either the peasantry has identified itself with one of the existing bourgeois parties, or it has formed a powerful party of its own. Neither is possible, as we have tried to point out.

## VI: PROLETARIAN RULE.

The proletariat can get into power only at a moment of national upheaval, of sweeping national enthusiasm. The proletariat assumes power as a revolutionary representative of the people, as a recognized leader in the fight against absolutism and barbaric feudalism. Having assumed power, however, the proletariat will open a new era, an era of positive legislation, of revolutionary politics, and this is the point where its political supremacy as an avowed spokesman of the nation may become endangered.

The first measures of the proletariat—the cleansing of the Augean stables of the old regime and the driving away of their inhabitants—will find active support of the entire nation whatever the liberal castraters may tell us of the power of some prejudices among the masses.\* The work of political cleansing will be accompanied by democratic re-organization of all social and political relations. The labour government, impelled by immediate needs and requirements, will have to look into all kinds of relations and activities among the people. It will have to throw out of the army and the administration all those who had stained their hands with the blood of the people; it will have to disband all the regiments that had polluted themselves with crimes against the people. This work will have to be done immediately, long before the establishment of an elective responsible administration and before the organization of a popular militia. This, however, will be only a beginning. Labour democracy will soon be confronted by the problems of a normal workday, the agrarian relations and unemployment. The legislative solution of those problems will show the **class character** of the labour government. It will tend to weaken the revolutionary bond between the proletariat

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\* "Some prejudices among the masses" referred to in this essay is the alleged love of the primitive masses for their Tzar. This was an argument usually put forth by the liberals against republican aspirations.

and the nation; it will give the economic differentiation among the peasants a political expression. Antagonism between the component parts of the nation will grow step by step as the policies of the labour government become more outspoken, lose their general democratic character and become **class policies**.

The lack of individualistic bourgeois traditions and anti-proletarian prejudices among the peasants and the intelligentsia will help the proletariat assume power. It must not be forgotten, however, that this lack of prejudices is based not on political understanding, but on political barbarism, on social shapelessness, primitiveness, and lack of character. These are all qualities which can hardly guarantee support for an active, consistent proletarian rule.

The abolition of the remnants of feudalism in agrarian relations will be supported by all the peasants who are now oppressed by the landlords. A progressive income tax will be supported by an overwhelming majority of the peasants. Yet, legislative measures in defense of the rural proletariat (farm hands) will find no active support among the majority, and will meet with active opposition on the part of a minority of the peasants.

The proletariat will be compelled to introduce class struggle into the village and thus to destroy that slight community of interests which undoubtedly unites the peasants as a whole. In its next steps, the proletariat will have to seek for support by helping the poor villagers against the rich, the rural proletariat against the agrarian bourgeoisie. This will alienate the majority of the peasants from labour democracy. Relations between village and city will become strained. The peasantry as a whole will become politically indifferent. The peasant minority will actively oppose proletarian rule. This will influence part of the intellectuals and the lower middle class of the cities.

Two features of proletarian politics are bound particularly to meet with the opposition of labour's allies: **Collectivism** and **Internationalism**. The strong adherence of the peasant to private ownership, the primitiveness of their political conceptions, the limitations of the village horizon, its distance from world-wide political connections and interdependences, are terrific obstacles in the way of revolutionary proletarian rule.

To imagine that Social - Democracy participates in the provisional government playing a leading role in the period of revolutionary democratic reconstruction, insisting on the most radical reforms and all the time enjoying the aid and support of the organized proletariat—only to step aside when the democratic programme is put into operation, to leave the completed building at the disposal of the bourgeois parties and thus to open an era of parliamentary politics where Social-democracy forms only a party of opposition, to imagine this would mean to compromise the very idea of a labour government. It is impossible to imagine anything of the kind, not because it is "against principles"—such abstract reasoning is devoid of any substance—but because it is **not real**, it is the worst kind of Utopianism, it is the revolutionary Utopianism of Philistines.

Our distinction between a minimum and maximum programme has a great and profound meaning only under bourgeois rule. The very fact of bourgeois rule eliminates from our minimum programme\* all demands incompatible with private ownership of the means of production. Those demands form the substance of a Socialist revolution, and they presuppose a

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\* Under the **minimum programme** the Social Democrats understand all that range of reforms which can be obtained under the existing capitalist system of private ownership of the means of production, such as an eight hour workday, social insurance, universal suffrage, a republican order. The maximum programme demands the abolition of private property and public management of industries, i. e., Socialism.

dictatorship of the proletariat. The moment, however, a revolutionary government is dominated by a Socialist majority, the distinction between minimum and maximum programmes loses its meaning both as a question of principle and as a practical policy. **Under no condition will a proletarian government be able to keep within the limits of this distinction.**

Let us take the case of an eight hour workday. It is a well established fact that an eight hour workday does not contradict the capitalist order; it is therefore, well within the limits of the Social-democratic minimum programme. Imagine, however, its realization in a revolutionary period, when all social passions are at the boiling point. An eight hour workday law would necessarily meet with stubborn and organized opposition on the part of the capitalists — let us say in the form of a lock-out and closing down of factories and plants. Hundreds of thousands of workingmen would be thrown into the streets. What ought the revolutionary government to do? A bourgeois government, however radical, would never allow matters to go as far as that. It would be powerless against the closing of factories and plants. It would be compelled to make concessions. The eight hour workday would not be put into operation; the revolts of the workingmen would be put down by force of arms.....

Under the political domination of the proletariat, the introduction of an eight hour workday must have totally different consequences. The closing down of factories and plants cannot be the reason for increasing labour hours by a government which represents not capital, but labour, and which refuses to act as an "impartial" mediator, the way bourgeois democracy does. A labour government would have only one way out — to expropriate the closed factories and plants and to organize their work on a public basis.

Or let us take another example. A proletarian government must necessarily take decisive steps to

solve the problem of unemployment. Representatives of labour in a revolutionary government can by no means meet the demands of the unemployed by saying that this is a bourgeois revolution. Once, however, the state ventures to eliminate unemployment—no matter how—a tremendous gain in the economic power of the proletariat is accomplished. The capitalists whose pressure on the working class was based on the existence of a reserve army of labour, will soon realize that they are powerless **economically**. It will be the task of the government to doom them also to **political** oblivion.

Measures against unemployment mean also measures to secure means of subsistence for strikers. The government will have to undertake them, if it is anxious not to undermine the very foundation of its existence. Nothing will remain for the capitalists but to declare a lock-out, to close down factories and plants. Since capitalists can wait longer than labour in case of interrupted production, nothing will remain for a labour government but to meet a general lock-out by expropriating the factories and plants and by introducing in the biggest of them state or communal production.

In agriculture, similar problems will present themselves through the very fact of land-expropriation. We cannot imagine a proletarian government expropriating large private estates with agricultural production on a large scale, cutting them into pieces and selling them to small owners. For it the only way open is to organize in such estates co-operative production under communal or state management. This, however, **is the way of Socialism**.

Social-Democracy can never assume power under a double obligation: to put the **entire** minimum programme into operation for the sake of the proletariat, and to keep strictly **within the limits** of this programme, for the sake of the bourgeoisie. Such a double obligation could never be fulfilled. Participating in the government, not as powerless hostages, but as a leading

force, the representatives of labour **eo ipso** break the line between the minimum and maximum programme. **Collectivism becomes the order of the day.** At which point the proletariat will be stopped on its march in this direction, depends upon the constellation of forces not upon the original purpose of the proletarian Party.

It is, therefore, absurd to speak of a **specific** character of proletarian dictatorship (or a dictatorship of the proletariat *and* the peasantry) within a bourgeois revolution, viz., a **purely democratic** dictatorship. The working class can never secure the democratic character of its dictatorship without overstepping the limits of its democratic programme. Illusions to the contrary may become a handicap. They would compromise Social-Democracy from the start.

Once the proletariat assumes power, it will fight for it to the end. One of the means to secure and solidify its power will be propaganda and organization, particularly in the village; another means will be a **policy of Collectivism.** Collectivism is not only dictated by the very position of the Social-Democratic Party in power, but it becomes imperative as a means to secure this position through the active support of the working class.

When our Socialist press first formulated the idea of a **Permanent Revolution** which should lead from the liquidation of absolutism and civic bondage to a Socialist order through a series of ever growing social conflicts, uprisings of ever new masses, unremitting attacks of the proletariat on the political and economic privileges of the governing classes, our "progressive" press started a unanimous indignant uproar. Oh, they had suffered enough, those gentlemen of the "progressive" press; this nuisance, however, was too much. Revolution, they said, is not a thing that can be made "legal"! Extraordinary measures are allowable only on extraordinary occasions. The aim of the revolutionary



movement, they asserted, was not to make the revolution go on forever, but to bring it as soon as possible into the channels of **law** etc., etc. The more radical representatives of the same democratic bourgeoisie do not attempt to oppose the revolution from the standpoint of completed constitutional "achievements": tame as they are, they understand how hopeless it is to fight the proletarian revolution with the weapon of parliamentary cretinism **in advance** of the establishment of parliamentarism itself. They, therefore, choose another way. They forsake the standpoint of law, but take the standpoint of what they deem to be facts—the standpoint of historic "possibilities", the standpoint of political "realism," even.....the standpoint of "Marxism." It was Antonio the pious Venetian bourgeois, who made the striking observation:

"Mark you this, Bassanio,

The devil can cite scriptures for his purpose."

Those gentlemen not only consider the idea of labour government in Russia fantastic, but they repudiate the very probability of a Social revolution in Europe in the near historic epoch. The necessary "pre-requisites" are not yet in existence, is their assertion.

Is it so? It is, of course, not our purpose to set a time for a Social revolution. What we attempt here is to put the Social revolution into a proper historic perspective.

## **VII: PRE-REQUISITES TO SOCIALISM**

Marxism turned socialism into a science. This does not prevent some "Marxians" from turning Marxism into a Utopia.

(Trotsky then proceeds to find logical flaws in the arguments of N. Roshkov, a Russian Marxist, who had made the assertion that Russia was not yet

ripe for Socialism, as her level of industrial technique and the class-consciousness of her working masses were not yet high enough to make Socialist production and distribution possible. Then he goes back to what he calls "prerequisites to Socialism," which in his opinion are: (1) development of industrial technique; (2) concentration of production; (3) social consciousness of the masses. In order that Socialism become possible, he says, it is not necessary that each of these prerequisites be developed to its logically conceivable limit.)

All those processes (development of technique, concentration of production, growth of mass-consciousness) go on simultaneously, and not only do they help and stimulate each other, but they also **hamper and limit** each other's development. Each of the processes of a higher order presupposes the development of another process of a lower order, yet the full development of any of them is incompatible with the full development of the others.

The logical limit of technical development is undoubtedly a perfect automatic mechanism which takes in raw materials from natural resources and lays them down at the feet of men as ready objects of consumption. Were not capitalism limited by relations between classes and by the consequences of those relations, the class struggle, one would be warranted in his assumption that industrial technique, having approached the ideal of one great automatic mechanism within the limits of capitalistic economy, **eo ipso** dismisses capitalism.

The concentration of production which is an outgrowth of economic competition has an inherent tendency to throw the entire population into the working class. Taking this tendency apart from all the others, one would be warranted in his assumption that capitalism would ultimately turn the majority of the people into a reserve army of paupers, lodged in prisons. This

process, however, is being checked by revolutionary changes which are inevitable under a certain relationship between social forces. It will be checked long before it has reached its logical limit.

And the same thing is true in relation to social mass-consciousness. This consciousness undoubtedly grows with the experiences of every-day struggle and through the conscious efforts of Socialist parties. Isolating this process from all others, we can imagine it reaching a stage where the overwhelming majority of the people are encompassed by professional and political organizations, united in a feeling of solidarity and in identity of purpose. Were this process allowed to grow quantitatively without changing in quality, Socialism might be established peacefully, through a unanimous compact of the citizens of the twenty-first or twenty-second Century. The historic pre-requisites to Socialism, however, do not develop in isolation from each other; **they limit each other**; reaching a certain stage, which is determined by many circumstances, but which is very far from their mathematical limits, they undergo a qualitative change, and in their complex combination they produce what we call a Social revolution.

Let us take the last mentioned process, the growth of social mass-consciousness. This growth takes place not in academies, but in the very life of modern capitalistic society, on the basis of incessant class struggle. The growth of proletarian class consciousness makes class struggles undergo a transformation; it deepens them; it puts a foundation of principle under them, thus provoking a corresponding reaction on the part of the governing classes. The struggle between proletariat and bourgeoisie has its own logic; it must become more and more acute and bring things to a climax long before the time when concentration of production has become predominant in economic life. It is evident, further, that the growth of the political consciousness of the proletariat is closely related with its numerical

strength; proletarian dictatorship presupposes great numbers of workingmen, strong enough to overcome the resistance of the bourgeois counter-revolution. This, however, does not imply that the overwhelming majority of the people must consist of proletarians, or that the overwhelming majority of proletarians must consist of convinced Socialists. Of course, the fighting revolutionary army of the proletariat must by all means be stronger than the fighting counter-revolutionary army of capital; yet between those two camps there may be a great number of doubtful or indifferent elements who are not actively helping the revolution, but are rather inclined to desire its ultimate victory. The proletarian policy must take all this into account.

This is possible only where there is a hegemony of industry over agriculture and a hegemony of the city over the village.

Let us review the prerequisites to Socialism in the order of their diminishing generality and increasing complexity.

1. Socialism is not only a problem of equal distribution, but also a problem of well organized production. Socialistic, i. e., co-operative production on a large scale is possible only where economic progress has gone so far as to make a large undertaking more productive than a small one. The greater the advantages of a large undertaking over a small one, i. e., the higher the industrial technique, the greater must be the economic advantages of socialized production, the higher, consequently, must be the cultural level of the people to enable them to enjoy equal distribution based on well organized production.

The first prerequisite of Socialism has been in existence for many years. Ever since division of labour has been established in manufactories; ever since manufactories have been superseded by factories employing a system of machines — large undertakings

become more and more profitable, and consequently their socialization would make the people more prosperous. There would have been no gain in making all the artisans' shops common property of the artisans; whereas the seizure of a manufactory by its workers, or the seizure of a factory by its hired employees, or the seizure of all means of modern production by the people must necessarily improve their economic conditions — the more so, the further the process of economic concentration has advanced.

At present, social division of labour on the one hand, machine production on the other, have reached a stage where the only co-operative organization that can make adequate use of the advantages of collectivist economy, is the State. It is hardly conceivable that Socialist production would content itself with the area of the State. Economic and political motives would necessarily impel it to over-step the boundaries of individual states.

The world has been in possession of technical equipment for collective production — in one or another form — for the last hundred or two hundred years. **Technically**, Socialism is profitable not only on a national, but also to a large extent on an international scale. Why then have all attempts at organizing Socialist communities failed? Why has concentration of production manifested its advantages all through the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries not in Socialist, but in capitalist forms? The reason is that there was no social force ready and able to introduce Socialism.

2. Here we pass from the prerequisite of industrial technique to the **socio-economic** prerequisite, which is less general, but more complex. Were our society not an antagonistic society composed of classes, but a homogeneous partnership of men consciously selecting the best economic system, a mere calculation as to the advantages of Socialism would suffice to make people start Socialist reconstruction. Our society, however, harbours in itself opposing interests. What is good for one class, is bad for

another. Class selfishness clashes against class selfishness ; class selfishness impairs the interests of the whole. To make Socialism possible, a social power has to arise in the midst of the antagonistic classes of capitalist society, a power objectively placed in a position to be interested in the establishment of Socialism, at the same time strong enough to overcome all opposing interests and hostile resistance. It is one of the principal merits of scientific Socialism to have discovered such a social power in the person of the proletariat, and to have shown that this class, growing with the growth of capitalism, can find its salvation only in Socialism ; that it is being moved towards Socialism by its very position, and that the doctrine of Socialism in the presence of a capitalist society must necessarily become the ideology of the proletariat.

How far, then, must the social differentiation have gone to warrant the assertion that the second prerequisite is an accomplished fact ? In other words, what must be the numerical strength of the proletariat ? Must it be one-half, two-thirds, or nine-tenths of the people ? It is utterly futile to try and formulate this second prerequisite of Socialism arithmetically. An attempt to express the strength of the proletariat in mere numbers, besides being schematic, would imply a series of difficulties. Whom should we consider a proletarian ? Is the half-pauperised peasant a proletarian ? Should we count with the proletariat those hosts of the city reserve who, on the one hand, fall into the ranks of the parasitic proletariat of beggars and thieves, and, on the other hand, fill the streets in the capacity of peddlers, *i. e.*, of parasites on the economic body as a whole ? It is not easy to answer these questions.

The importance of the proletariat is based not only on its numbers, but primarily on its role in industry. The political supremacy of the bourgeoisie is founded on economic power. Before it manages to take over the authority of the state, it concentrates in its hands the national means of production ; hence its specific weight. The proletariat will possess no means of production of its own before the

Social revolution. Its social power depends upon the circumstance that the means of production in possession of the bourgeoisie can be put into motion only by the hands of the proletariat. From the bourgeois viewpoint, the proletariat is also one of the means of production, forming, in combination with the others, a unified mechanism. Yet the proletariat is the only non-automatic part of this mechanism, and can never be made automatic, notwithstanding all efforts. This puts the proletariat into a position to be able to stop the functioning of the national economic body, partially or wholly—through the medium of partial or general strikes.

Hence it is evident that, the numerical strength of the proletariat being equal, its importance is proportional to the mass of the means of production it puts into motion; the proletarian of a big industrial concern represents—other conditions being equal—a greater social unit than an artisans' employee; a city workingman represents a greater unit than a proletarian of the village. In other words, the political role of the proletariat is greater in proportion as large industries predominate over small industries, industry predominates over agriculture, and the city over the village.

At a period in the history of Germany or England when the proletariats of those countries formed the same percentage to the total population as the proletariat in present day Russia, they did not possess the same social weight as the Russian proletariat of today. They could not possess it, because their objective importance in economic life was comparatively smaller. The social weight of the cities represents the same phenomenon. At a time when the city population of Germany formed only 15% of the total nation, as is the case in present-day Russia, the German cities were far from equalling our cities in economic and political importance. The concentration of big industries and commercial enterprises in the cities, and the establishment of closer relations between city and country through a system of railways; has given the

modern cities an importance far exceeding the mere volume of their population. Moreover, the growth of their importance runs ahead of the growth of their population, and the growth of the latter runs ahead of the natural increase of the entire population of the country. In 1848 the number of artisans, masters and their employees, in Italy was 15% of the population, the same as the percentage of the proletariat, including artisans, in Russia of to-day. Their importance, however, was far less than that of the Russian industrial proletariat.

The question is not, how strong the proletariat is numerically, but what is its position in the general economy of a country.

(The author then quotes figures showing the numbers of wage-earners and industrial proletarians in Germany, Belgium and England; in Germany, in 1895, 12.5 millions proletarians; in Belgium 1.8 millions or 60 per cent, of all the persons who make a living independently; in England 12.5, millions.)

In the leading European countries, city population numerically predominates over the rural population. Infinitely greater is its predominance through the aggregate of means of production represented by it, and through the qualities of its human material. The city attracts the most energetic, able and intelligent elements of the country.

Thus we arrive at the conclusion that economic evolution — the growth of industry, the growth of large enterprises, the growth of cities, the growth of the proletariat, especially the growth of the industrial proletariat — have already prepared the arena not only for the **struggle** of the proletariat for political power, but also for the **conquest** of that power.

3. Here we approach the third prerequisite to Socialism, the **dictatorship of the proletariat**.

Politics is the plane where objective prerequisites intersect with the subjective. On the basis of certain technical and socio-economic conditions, a class puts before



itself a definite task—to seize power. In pursuing this task, it unites its forces, it gauges the forces of the enemy, it weighs the circumstances. Yet, not even here is the proletariat absolutely free: besides subjective moments, such as understanding, readiness, initiative which have a logic of their own, there are a number of objective moments interfering with the policies of the proletariat, such as the policies of the governing classes, state institutions (the army, the class-school, the state-church), international relations, etc.

Let us first turn our attention to the subjective moment; let us ask, **Is the proletariat ready for a Socialist change?** It is not enough that development of technique should make Socialist economy profitable from the viewpoint of the productivity of national labour; it is not enough that social differentiation, based on technical progress, should create the proletariat, as a class objectively interested in Socialism. It is of prime importance that this class should **understand** its objective interests. It is necessary that this class should **see** in Socialism the only way of its emancipation. It is necessary that it should unite into an army powerful enough to seize governmental power in open combat.

It would be folly to deny the necessity for the preparation of the proletariat. Only the old Blanquists could stake their hopes in the salutary initiative of an organization of conspirators formed independently of the masses. Only their antipodes, the anarchists, could build their system on a spontaneous elemental outburst of the masses whose results nobody can foresee. When Social-Democracy speaks of seizing power, it thinks of **a deliberate action of a revolutionary class.**

There are Socialist-ideologists (ideologists in the wrong sense of the word, those who turn all things upside down) who speak of preparing the proletariat for Socialism as a problem of moral regeneration. The proletariat, they say, and even "humanity" in general, must first free itself from its old selfish nature; altruistic motives must

first become predominant in social life. As we are still very far from this ideal, they contend, and as human nature changes very slowly, Socialism appears to be a problem of remote centuries. This view seems to be very realistic, evolutionistic, etc. It is in reality a conglomeration of hackneyed moralistic considerations.

Those "ideologists" imagine that a Socialist psychology can be acquired before the establishment of Socialism; that in a world ruled by capitalism the masses can be imbued with a Socialist psychology. Socialist psychology as here conceived should not be identified with Socialist aspiration. The former presupposes the absence of selfish motives in economic relations, while the latter is an outcome of the class psychology of the proletariat. Class psychology, and Socialist psychology in a society not split into classes, may have many common features, yet they differ widely.

Co-operation in the struggle of the proletariat against exploitation has developed in the soul of the workingmen beautiful sprouts of idealism, brotherly solidarity, a spirit of self-sacrifice. Yet those sprouts cannot grow and blossom freely within capitalist society: individual struggle for existence, the yawning abyss of poverty, differentiations among the workingmen themselves, the corrupting influence of the bourgeois parties—all this interferes with the growth of idealism among the masses.

However, it is a fact that, while remaining as selfish as any of the lower middle class,\* while not exceeding the average representative of the bourgeois classes by the "human" value of his personality, the average workingman learns in the school of life's experience that **his most**

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\* **Lower-Middle-class** is the only term half-way covering the Russian "Mieshchanstvo" used by Trotsky. "Mieshchanstvo" has a socio-economic meaning, and a flavour of moral disapproval. Socially and economically it means those numerous inhabitants of modern cities who are engaged in independent economic pursuits, as artisans (masters), shopkeepers, small manufacturers, petty merchants, etc. who have not capital enough to rank with the bourgeoisie. Morally "Mieshchanstvo" presupposes a limited horizon, lack of definite revolutionary or political ideas, and lack of political courage.

**primitive desires and most natural wants can be satisfied only on the debris of the capitalist order.**

If Socialism should attempt to create a new human nature within the limits of the old world, it would be only a new edition of the old moralistic Utopias. The task of Socialism is not to create a Socialist psychology as a pre-requisite to Socialism, but to create Socialist conditions of human life as a pre-requisite to a Socialist psychology.

### **VIII: A REVOLUTIONARY GOVERNMENT IN RUSSIA AND SOCIALISM.**

The objective pre-requisites of a Socialist revolution, as we have shown above, have been already created by the economic progress of advanced capitalist countries. But how about Russia? Is it possible to think that the seizure of power by the Russian proletariat would be the beginning of a Socialist reconstruction of our national economy?

A year ago we thus answered this question in an article which was mercilessly bombarded by the organs of both our factions. We wrote:

"The workingmen of Paris, says Marx, had not expected miracles from the Commune. We cannot expect miracles from a proletarian dictatorship now. Governmental power is not almighty. It is folly to think that once the proletariat has seized power, it would abolish capitalism and introduce socialism by a number of decrees. The economic system is not a product of state activity. What the proletariat will be able to do is to shorten economic evolution towards Collectivism through a series of energetic measures.

"The starting point will be the reforms enumerated in our so-called minimum programme. The very situation of the proletariat, however, will compel it to move along the way of collectivist practice.

"It will be comparatively easy to introduce the eight hour workday and progressive taxation, though even here the centre of gravity is not the issuance of a 'décreé', but the organization of its practical application. It will be

difficult, however — and here we pass to Collectivism — to organize production under state management in such factories and plants as would be closed down by their owners in protest against the new law.

"It will be comparatively simple to issue a law abolishing the right of inheritance, and to put it into operation. Inheritances in the form of money capital will not embarrass the proletariat and not interfere with its economy. To be, however, the inheritor of capital invested in land and industry, would mean for a revolutionary government to organize economic life on a public basis.

"The same phenomenon, on a vastly larger scale, is represented by the question of expropriation (of land), with or without compensation. Expropriation with compensation has political advantages, but it is financially difficult; expropriation without compensation has financial advantages, but it is difficult politically. Greater than all the other difficulties, however, will be those of an economic nature, the difficulties of organisation.

"To repeat: a revolutionary government does not mean a government of miracles.

"Public management will begin in those branches where the difficulties are smallest. Publicly managed enterprises will originally represent a kind of oases linked with private enterprises by the laws of exchange of commodities. The wider the field of publicly managed economy will grow, the more flagrant its advantages will become, the firmer will become the position of the new political regime, and the more determined will be the further economic measures of the proletariat. Its measures it will base not only on the national productive forces, but also on international technique, in the same way as it bases its revolutionary policies not only on the experience of national class relations but also on the entire historic experience of the international proletariat".

**Political supremacy of the proletariat is incompatible with its economic slavery.** Whatever may be the banner under which the proletariat will find itself in

possession of power, it will be compelled to enter the road of Socialism. It is the greatest Utopia to think that the proletariat, brought to the top by the mechanics of a bourgeois revolution, would be able, even if it wanted, to limit its mission by creating a republican democratic environment for the social supremacy of the bourgeoisie. Political dominance of the proletariat, even if it were temporary, would extremely weaken the resistance of capital which is always in need of state aid, and would give momentous opportunities to the economic struggle of the proletariat.

A proletarian regime will immediately take up the agrarian question with which the fate of vast millions of the Russian people is connected. In solving this, as many another question, the proletariat will have in mind the main tendency of its economic policy: to get hold of the widest possible field for the organization of a Socialist economy. The forms and the tempo of this policy in the agrarian question will be determined both by the material resources that the proletariat will be able to get hold of, and by the necessity to coordinate its actions so as not to drive possible allies into the ranks of the counter-revolution.

It is evident that the agrarian question, i. e., the question of rural economy and its social relations, is not covered by the **land** question which is the question of the forms of land ownership. It is perfectly clear, however, that the solution of the land question, even if it does not determine the future of the agrarian evolution, would undoubtedly determine the future agrarian policy of the proletariat. In other words, the use the proletariat will make of the land must be in accord with its general attitude towards the course and requirements of the agrarian evolution. The land question will, therefore, be one of the first to interest the revolutionary government.

One of the solutions, made popular by the Social Revolutionists, is the **socialization of the land**. Freed from its European make-up, it means simply "equal

distribution" of land. This programme demands an expropriation of all the land, whether it is in possession of landlords, of peasants on the basis of private property, or it is owned by village communities. \* It is evident that such expropriation, being one of the first measures of the new government and being started at a time when capitalist exchange is still in full swing, would lead the peasants to believe that they are "victims of the reform". One must not forget that the peasants have for decades made redemption payments in order to turn their land into private property; many prosperous peasants have made great sacrifices to secure a large portion of land as their private possession. Should all this land become state property, the most bitter resistance would be offered by the members of the communities and by private owners. Starting out with a reform of this kind, the government would make itself most unpopular among the peasants.

And why should one confiscate the land of the communities and the land of small private owners? According to the Social-Revolutionary programme, the only use to be made of the land by the state is to turn it over to all the peasants and agricultural labourers on the basis of equal distribution. This would mean that the confiscated land of the communities and small owners would anyway return to individuals for private cultivation. Consequently, there would be **no economic gain** in such a confiscation and redistribution. **Politically**, it would be a great blunder on the part of the revolutionary government as it would make the masses of peasants hostile to the proletarian leadership of the revolution.

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\* The **Village community** is a remnant of old times in Russia. Up to 1906 the members of the village were not allowed to divide the land of the community among the individual peasants on the basis of private property. The land legally belonged to the entire community which allotted it to its members. Since 1906 the compulsory character of communal landownership was abandoned, yet in very great areas of Russia it still remained the prevailing system of land-ownership.

Besides having a share in the community land, the individual peasant could acquire a piece of land out of his private means (the seller being, usually the landlord) and thus become a **small private owner**.

Closely connected with this programme is the question of hired agricultural labour. Equal distribution presupposes the prohibition of using hired labour on farms. This, however, can be only a **consequence** of economic reforms, it cannot be decreed by a law. It is not enough to forbid an agricultural capitalist to hire labourers; one must first secure agricultural labourers a fair existence; furthermore, this existence must be profitable from the viewpoint of social economy. To declare equal distribution of land and to forbid hired labour, would mean to compel agricultural proletarians to settle on small lots, and to put the state under obligation to provide them with implements for their socially unprofitable production.

It is clear that the intervention of the proletariat in the organization of agriculture ought to express itself not in settling individual labourers on individual lots, but in organizing **state or communal management of large estates**. Later when socialized production will have established itself firmly, a further step will be made towards socialization by forbidding hired labour. This will eliminate small capitalist enterprises in agriculture; it will, however, leave unmolested those private owners who work their land wholly or to a great extent by the labour of their families. To expropriate such owners can by no means be a desire of the Socialist proletariat.

The proletariat can never endorse a programme of "equal distribution" which on the one hand demands a useless, purely formal expropriation of small owners, and on the other hand demands a very real parceling of large estates into small lots. This would be a wasteful undertaking, a pursuance of a reactionary and Utopian plan, and a political harm for the revolutionary party.

How far, however, can the Socialist policy of the working class advance in the economic environment of Russia? One thing we can say with perfect assurance: it will meet political obstacles long before it will be checked by the technical backwardness of the country.

**Without direct political aid from the European proletariat the working class of Russia will not be able to retain its power and to turn its temporary supremacy into a permanent Socialist dictatorship.** We cannot doubt this for a moment. On the other hand, there is no doubt that a **Socialist revolution in the West** would allow us to turn the temporary supremacy of the working class directly into a **Socialist dictatorship.**

## **IX : EUROPE AND THE REVOLUTION**

In June, 1905, we wrote :

"More than half a century has passed since 1848. Half a century of unprecedented victories of capitalism all over the world. Half a century of 'organic' mutual adaptation of the forces of the bourgeois and the forces of feudal reaction. Half a century in which the bourgeoisie has manifested its mad appetite for power and its readiness to fight for it madly.

"As a self-taught mechanic, in his search for perpetual motion, meets ever new obstacles and piles mechanism over mechanism to overcome them, so the bourgeoisie has changed and reconstructed the apparatus of its supremacy avoiding 'supra-legal conflicts with hostile powers. And as the self-taught mechanic finally clashes against the ultimate insurmountable obstacle—the law of conservation of energy—so the bourgeoisie had to clash against the ultimate implacable barrier—class antagonism, fraught with inevitable conflict.

"Capitalism, forcing its economic system and social relations on each and every country, has turned the entire world into one economic and political organism. As the effect of the modern credit system, with the invisible bonds it draws between thousands of enterprises, with the amazing mobility it lends to capital, has been to eliminate local and partial crises, but to give unusual momentum to general economic convulsions, so the entire economic and political work of capitalism, with its world commerce,



with its system of monstrous foreign debts, with its political groupings of states, which have drawn all reactionary forces into one world-wide co-partnership, has prevented local political crises, but it has prepared a basis for a social crisis of unheard of magnitude. Driving unhealthy processes inside, evading difficulties, staving off the deep problems of national and international politics, glossing over all contradictions, the bourgeoisie has postponed the climax, yet it has prepared a radical world-wide liquidation of its power. It has clung to all reactionary forces no matter what their origin. It has made the Sultan not the last of its friends. It has not tied itself to the Chinese ruler only because he had no power: it was more profitable to rob his possessions than to keep him in the office of a world gendarme and to pay him from the treasury of the bourgeoisie. Thus the bourgeoisie made the stability of its political system wholly dependent upon the stability of the pre-capitalist pillars of reaction.

"This gives events an international character and opens a magnificent perspective: political emancipation, headed by the working class of Russia, will elevate its leader to a height unparalleled in history, it will give the Russian proletariat colossal power and make it the initiator of world-wide liquidation of capitalism, to which the objective pre-requisites have been created by history."

It is futile to guess how the Russian revolution will find its way to old capitalist Europe. This way may be a total surprise. To illustrate our thoughts rather than to predict events, we shall mention Poland as the possible connecting link between the revolutionary East and revolutionary West.

The author pictures the consequences of a revolution in Poland. A revolution in Poland would necessarily follow the victory of the revolution in Russia. This however, would throw, revolutionary sparks into the Polish provinces of Germany and Austria. A revolution in Posen and Galicia would move the Hohenzollerns and Hapsburgs to invade Poland. This would be a sign for the proletariat of Germany to get into a sharp conflict with their governments. A revolution become inevitable.

A revolutionary Poland, however, is not the only possible starting point for an European revolution. The system of armed peace which became predominant in Europe after the Franco-Prussian war, was based on a system of European equilibrium. This equilibrium took for granted not only the integrity of Turkey, the dismemberment of Poland, the preservation of Austria, that ethnographic harlequin's robe, but also the existence of Russian despotism in the role of gendarme of European reaction, armed to his teeth. The Russo-Japanese war has given a mortal blow to the artificial system in which absolutism was the dominant figure. For an indefinite period Russia is out of the race as a first class power. The equilibrium has been destroyed. On the other hand, the successes of Japan have incensed the conquest-instincts of the capitalist bourgeoisie, especially the stock exchange, which plays a colossal role in modern politics. **The possibilities of a war on European territory have grown enormously.** Conflicts are ripening here and there; so far they have been settled in a diplomatic way, but nothing can guarantee the near future. **A European war, however, means a European revolution.**

Even without the pressure of such events as war or bankruptcy, a revolution may take place in the near future in one of the European countries as a result of acute class struggles. We shall not make computations as to which country would be the first to take the path of revolution; it is obvious, however, that class antagonisms have in the last few years reached a high degree of intensity in all the European countries.

The influence of the Russian revolution on the proletariat of Europe is immense. Not only does it destroy the Petersburg absolutism, that main power of European reaction; it also imbues the minds and the souls of the European proletariat with revolutionary daring.

It is the purpose of every Socialist party to revolutionize the minds of the working class in the same way as the development of capitalism has revolutionized social relations. The work of propaganda and organization among the proletariat, however, has its own intrinsic inertia. The Socialist parties of Europe—in the first place, the most powerful of them, the German socialist party—have developed a conservatism of their own, which grows in proportion as Socialism embraces ever larger masses and organization and discipline increase. Social Democracy, personifying the political experience of the proletariat, can, therefore, at a certain juncture, become an immediate obstacle on the way of an open proletarian conflict with the bourgeois reaction. In other words, the conservatism of a proletarian party in limiting itself to propaganda, can, at a certain moment, impede the direct struggle of the proletariat for power. The colossal influence of the Russian revolution manifests itself in killing party routine, in destroying Socialist conservatism, in making a clean contest of proletarian force against capitalist reaction a question of the day. The struggle for universal suffrage in Austria, Saxony and Prussia has become more determined under the direct influence of the October strike in Russia. An Eastern revolution imbues the western proletariat with revolutionary idealism and stimulates its desire to speak 'Russian' to its foes.

The Russian proletariat in power, even if this were only the result of a passing combination of forces in the Russian bourgeois revolution, would meet organized opposition on the part of the world's reaction, and readiness for organized support on the part of the world's proletariat. Left to its own resources the Russian working class must necessarily be crushed the moment it loses the aid of the peasants. Nothing remains for it but to link the fate of its political supremacy and the fate of the Russian revolution with the fate of a Socialist revolution in Europe. All that momentous authority and political power which is given to the proletariat by a combination of forces in the

Russian bourgeois revolution, it will thrust on the scale of class struggle in the entire capitalist world. Equipped with governmental power, having a counter-revolution behind his back, having the European reaction in front of him, the Russian workingman will issue to all his brothers the world over his old battle-cry which will now become the call for the last attack : **workers of the world unite.**

LEON TROTSKY

- 1905 -

# BEFORE & AFTER

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TRANSLATED & EDITED BY M. J. OLGIN

(Originally published in "Our Revolution", 1918)

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# PUBLISHER'S NOTE

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**T**ROTSKY'S writings on the 1905 Revolution were originally published in German.

In October, 1921, the President of the Bureau of Party History, Olminsky, wrote to Trotsky: "The Bureau of Party History will be delighted, of course, to publish your book in Russian, but the question is: Who shall translate it? You can't let the first person you meet translate a book by — **Trotsky!** All the beauty and the individuality of the style will be lost. May be you could dig out a little hour a day from your other work of state importance for this work — also, by the way, of state importance — and dictate the text in Russian to a typist."

Our text is taken from the book "Our Revolution", edited and translated by M. J. Olgin and published in 1918. Olgin probably approached his task as a political opponent of the author, (he later made generous contributions to the slander campaign against Trotsky), for his translation leaves a lot to be desired. He has often quite arbitrarily summarized Trotsky's text and added lengthy and rather irrelevant introductions of his own.

In our edition we have reprinted as much of Olgin's introductions as is necessary for the clarification of the text. The material of the Olgin Edition has been rearranged. A section of it is issued as a companion booklet entitled "Results and Perspectives". The rest of Trotsky's text is printed here. Olgin's introduction to the book and biographical sketch has been omitted.

Lanka Samasamaja Publications is proud to republish this rare work of Trotsky even in inadequate translation. It has been out of print for the last thirty five years. We, however, express the hope that we will soon be able to release a definitive translation with the "beauty and the individuality of style" intact.

# PREFACE BY LEON TROTSKY ..

At the Stockholm Convention of the Social-Democratic Party, some curious statistical data was circulated, showing the conditions under which the party of the proletariat was working:

The Convention as a whole, in the person of its 140 members, had spent in prison one hundred and thirty-eight years and three and a half months.

The Convention had been in exile one hundred and forty-eight years and six and a half months.

Escaped from prison: Once, eighteen members of the Convention; twice, four members.

Escaped from exile: Once, twenty-three; twice, five; thrice, one member.

The length of time the Convention as a whole had been active in Social Democratic work, was 942 years. It follows that the time spent in prison and exile is about one-third of the time a Social-Democrat is active. But these figures are too optimistic. "The Convention has been active in Social-Democratic work for 942 years" — this means merely that the activities of those persons had been spread over so many years. Their actual period of work must have been much shorter. Possibly all these persons had worked, actually and directly, only one-sixth or one-tenth of the above time. Such are conditions of underground activity. On the other hand, the time spent in prison and exile is real time: the Convention had spent over fifty thousand days and nights behind iron bars, and more than that in barbarous corners of the country.

Perhaps I may give, in addition to these figures, some facts about myself. The author of these lines was arrested for the first time in January 1898, after working for ten months in the workmen's circles of Nikolayev. He spent two and a half years in prison, and escaped from Siberia after living there two years of his four years' exile. He was arrested the second time on December 3rd, 1905, as a member of the Petersburg Council of Workmen's Deputies. The Council had existed for fifty days. The arrested members of the Soviet each spent 400 days in prison, then they were sent to Obdorsk "forever"..... Each Russian

.. This Preface was written by Trotsky for his book "My Round Trip" in which he relates the story of his escape from Siberian exile in 1907. It was included in "Our Revolution" and we are using it here as a preface to this collection of Trotsky's early writings. —

Editor, Lanka Samasamaja Publications.

Social-Democrat who has worked in his Party for ten years could give similar statistics about himself.

The political helter-skelter which exists in Russia since October 17th and which the Gotha Almanac has characterized with unconscious humour as "A Constitutional Monarchy under an absolute Czar," has changed nothing in our situation. This political order cannot reconcile itself with us, not even temporarily as it is organically incapable of admitting any free activities of the masses. The simpletons and hypocrites who urge us to "keep within legal limits" remind one of Marie Antoinette who recommended the starving peasants to eat cake! One would think we suffer from an organic aversion for cake, a kind of incurable disease! One would think our lungs infected with an irresistible desire to breathe atmosphere of the solitary dungeons in the Fortress of Peter and Paul! One would think we have no other use for those endless hours pulled out of our lives by the jailers.

We love our underground just as little as a drowning person loves the bottom of the sea. Yet, we have as little choice, as, let us say directly, the absolutist order. Being fully aware of this we can afford to be optimists even at a time when the underground tightens its grip around our necks with unrelenting grimness. It will not choke us, we know it! We shall survive! When the bones of all the great deeds which are being performed now by the princes of the earth, their servants and the servants of their servants will have turned to dust, when nobody will know the graves of many present parties with all their exploits — the cause we are serving will rule the world, and our Party, now choking underground, will dissolve itself into humanity, for the first time its own master.

History is a tremendous mechanism serving our ideals. Its work is slow, barbarously slow, implacably cruel, yet the work goes on. We believe in it. Only at moments when this voracious monster drinks the living blood of our hearts to serve it as food, we wish to shout with all our might:

**WHAT THOU DOST, DO QUICKLY!**

Paris, April 8/21, 1907.



## INTRODUCTION By M. J. OLGIN

THE essay *The Proletariat and the Revolution* was published at the close of 1904, nearly one year after the beginning of the war with Japan. This was a crucial year for the autocratic rulers of Russia. It started with patriotic demonstrations, it ended with a series of humiliating defeats on the battlefields and with an unprecedented revival of political activities on the part of the well-to-do classes. The Zemstvos (local elective bodies for the care of local affairs) headed by liberal landowners, conducted a vigorous political campaign in favour of a constitutional order. Other liberal groups, organizations of professionals (referred to in Trotsky's essay as "democrats" and "democratic elements") joined in the movement. The Zemstvo leaders called an open convention in Petersburg (November 6th), which demanded civic freedom and a constitution. The "democratic elements" organized public gatherings of a political character under the disguise of private banquets. The liberal press became bolder in its attack on the administration. The government tolerated the movement. Prince Svyatopolk-Mirski, who had succeeded Von Plehve, the reactionary dictator assassinated in July, 1904, by a revolutionist, had promised "cordial relations" between government and society. In the political jargon, this period of tolerance, lasting from August to the end of the year was known as the era of "Spring".

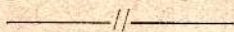
It was a thrilling time, full of political hopes and expectation. Yet, strange enough, the working class was silent. The working class had shown great dis-satisfaction in 1902 and especially in summer, 1903, when scores of thousands in the southwest and in the south went on a political strike. During the whole of 1904, however, there were almost no mass-manifestations on the part of the workingmen. This gave an occasion to many a liberal to scoff at the representatives of the revolutionary parties who built all their tactics on the expectation of a national revolution.

To answer those skeptics and to encourage the active members of the Social-Democratic party, Trotsky wrote his essay. Its main value, which lends it historic significance, is the clear diagnosis of the political situation. Though living abroad, Trotsky keenly felt the pulse of the masses, the "pent-up revolutionary energy" which was seeking for an outlet. His descriptions of the course of a national revolution, the role he attributes to the workingmen, the non-proletarian population of the cities, the educated groups, and the army; his estimation of the influence of the war on the minds of the raw masses; finally, the slogans he puts before the revolution,—all this corresponds exactly to what happened during the stormy year of 1905. Reading *The Proletariat and the Revolution*, the student of Russian political life has a feeling as if the essay had been written *after* the revolution, so closely it follows the course of events. Yet, it appeared before January 9th, 1905, i. e., before the first great onslaught of the Petersburg proletariat.

Trotsky's belief in the revolutionary initiative of the working class could not be expressed in a more lucid manner.

LEON TROTSKY

# THE PROLETARIAT AND THE REVOLUTION



THE proletariat must not only conduct revolutionary propaganda. The proletariat itself must move towards a revolution.

To move towards a revolution does not necessarily mean to fix a date for an insurrection and to prepare for that day. You never can fix a day and an hour for a revolution. The people have never made a revolution by command.

What *can* be done is, in view of the fatally impending catastrophe, to choose the most appropriate positions, to arm and inspire the masses with a revolutionary slogan, to lead simultaneously all the reserves into the field of battle, to make them practice in the art of fighting, to keep them ready under arms,—and to send an alarm all over the lines when the time has arrived.

Would that mean a series of exercises only, and not a decisive combat with the enemy forces? Would that be mere manoeuvres, and not a street revolution?

Yes, that would be mere manoeuvres. There is a difference, however, between revolutionary and military manoeuvres. Our preparations can turn, at any time and independent of our will, into a real battle which would decide the long drawn revolutionary war. Not only can it be so, it *must* be. This is vouched for by the acuteness of the present political situation which holds in its depths a tremendous amount of revolutionary explosives.

At what time mere manoeuvres would turn into a real battle, depends upon the volume and the revolutionary compactness of the masses, upon the atmosphere of popular sympathy which surrounds them and upon the attitude of the troops which the government moves against the people.

Those three elements of success must determine our work of preparation. Revolutionary proletarian masses *are* in existence. We ought to be able to call them into the streets, at a given time, all over the country; we ought to be able to unite them by a general slogan.

All classes and groups of the people are permeated with hatred towards absolutism, and that means with sympathy for the struggle for freedom. We ought to be able to concentrate this sympathy on the

proletariat as a revolutionary power which alone can be the vanguard of the people in their fight to save the future of Russia. As to the mood of the army, it hardly kindles the heart of the government with great hopes. There has been many an alarming symptom for the last few years; the army is morose, the army grumbles, there are ferments of dissatisfaction in the army. We ought to do all at our command to make the army detach itself from absolutism at the time of a decisive onslaught of the masses.

Let us first survey the last two conditions, which determine the course and the outcome of the campaign.

We have just gone through the period of "political renovation" opened under the blare of trumpets and closed under the hiss of knouts\* — the era of Svyatopolk-Mirski — the result of which is hatred towards absolutism aroused among all the thinking elements of society to an unusual pitch. The coming days will reap the fruit of stirred popular hopes and unfulfilled government's pledges. Political interest has lately taken more definite shape; dissatisfaction has grown deeper and is founded on a more outspoken theoretical basis. Popular thinking, yesterday utterly primitive, now greedily takes to the work of political analysis.

All manifestations of evil and arbitrary power are being speedily traced back to the principal cause. Revolutionary slogans no more frighten the people, on the contrary, they arouse a thousandfold echo, they pass into proverbs. The popular consciousness absorbs each word of negation, condemnation or curse addressed towards absolutism, as a sponge absorbs fluid substance. No step of the administration remains unpunished. Each of its blunders is carefully taken account of. Its advances are met with ridicule, its threats breed hatred. The vast apparatus of the liberal press\*\* circulates daily thousands of facts stirring, exciting, inflaming popular emotion.

The pent up feelings are seeking an outlet. Thought strives to turn into action. The vociferous liberal press, however, while feeding

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\* "*The hiss of knouts*" which ended the era of "cordial relations" was a statement issued by the government on December 12, 1904, declaring that "all disturbances of peace and order and all gatherings of an anti-governmental character must and will be stopped by all legal means in command of the authorities". The Zemstvos and municipal bodies were advised to keep from political utterings. As to the socialist parties and labour movement in general, they were prosecuted under Svyatopolk-Mirski as severely as under Von Plehve.

\*\* "*The vast apparatus of the liberal press*" was the only way to reach millions. The revolutionary "underground" press, which assumed towards 1905 unusual proportions, could, after all, reach only a limited number of readers. In times of political unrest, the public became used to read between the lines of the legal press all it needed to feed its hatred of oppression.

popular unrest, tends to divert its current into a small channel; it spreads superstitious reverence for "public opinion," helpless, unorganized "public opinion" which does not discharge itself into action; it brands the revolutionary method of national emancipation; it upholds the illusion of legality; it centers all the attention and all the hopes of the embittered groups around the Zemstvo campaign, thus systematically preparing a great debacle for the popular movement. Acute dissatisfaction, finding no outlet, discouraged by the inevitable failure of the legal Zemstvo campaign which has no traditions of revolutionary struggle in the past and no clear prospects in the future, must necessarily manifest itself in an outbreak of desperate terrorism, leaving radical intellectuals in the role of helpless, passive, though sympathetic on-lookers, leaving liberals to choke in a fit of platonic enthusiasm while lending doubtful assistance.

This ought not to take place. We ought to take hold of the current of popular excitement; we ought to turn the attention of numerous dissatisfied social groups to one colossal undertaking headed by the proletariat—to the *National Revolution*.

The vanguard of the Revolution ought to wake from indolence all other elements of the people; to appear here and there and everywhere; to put the questions of political struggle in the boldest possible fashion; to call, to castigate, to unmask hypocritical democracy; to make democrats and Zemstvo liberals clash against each other; to wake again and again, to call, to castigate, to demand a clear answer to the question, *What are you going to do?* to allow no retreat; to compel the legal liberals\* to admit their own weakness; to alienate from them the democratic elements and help the latter along the way of the revolution. To do this work means to draw the threads of sympathy of all the democratic opposition towards the revolutionary campaign of the proletariat.

We ought to do all in our power to draw the attention and gain the sympathy of the poor non-proletarian city population. During the last mass actions of the proletariat, as in the general strikes of 1903 in the South, nothing was done in this respect, and this was the weakest point of the preparatory work. According to press correspondents, the queerest rumours often circulated among the population as to the intentions of the strikers. The city inhabitants expected attacks on their houses, the store keepers were afraid of being looted, the Jews were in a dread of pogroms. This ought to be avoided. *A political strike, as a single combat of the city proletariat with the police and the army, the remaining population being hostile or even indifferent, is doomed to failure.*

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\* By "legal" press, and "legal" liberals are meant the open public press and those liberals who were trying to comply with the legal requirements of absolutism even in their work of condemning the absolutist order. The term "legal" is opposed by the term "revolutionary" which is applied to political actions in defiance of law.

The indifference of the population would tell primarily on the morale of the proletariat itself, and then on the attitude of the soldiers. Under such conditions, the stand of the administration must necessarily be more determined. The generals would remind the officers, and the officers would pass to the soldiers the words of Dragomirov\*: "Rifles are given for sharp shooting, and nobody is permitted to squander cartridges for nothing."

*A political strike of the proletariat ought to turn into a political demonstration of the population*, this is the first prerequisite of success.

The second important prerequisite is the mood of the army. A dissatisfaction among the soldiers, a vague sympathy for the "revoluters", is an established fact. Only part of this sympathy may rightly be attributed to our direct propaganda among the soldiers. The major part is done by the practical clashes between army units and protesting masses. Only hopeless idiots or avowed scoundrels dare to shoot at a living target. An over-whelming majority of the soldiers are loathe to serve as executioners; this is unanimously admitted by all correspondents describing the battles of the army with unarmed people. The average soldier aims above the heads of the crowd. It would be unnatural if the reverse were the case. When the Bessarabian regiment received orders to quell the Kiev general strike, the commander declared he could not vouch for the attitude of his soldiers. The order, then, was sent to the Cherson regiment, but there was not one half-company in the entire regiment which would live up to the expectations of their superiors.

Kiev was no exception. The conditions of the army must now be more favourable for the revolution than they were in 1903. We have gone through a year of war. It is hardly possible to measure the influence of the past year on the minds of the army. The influence however, must be enormous. War draws not only the attention of the people, it arouses also the professional interest of the army. Our ships are slow, our guns have a short range, our soldiers are uneducated, our sergeants have neither compass nor map, our soldiers are barefooted, hungry, and freezing, our Red Cross is stealing, our commissariat is stealing,—rumours and facts of this kind leak down to the army and are being eagerly absorbed. Each rumour, as strong acid, dissolves the rust of mental drill. Years of peaceful propaganda could hardly equal in their results one day of warfare. The mere mechanism of discipline remains, the faith, however, the conviction that it is right to carry out orders, the belief that the present conditions can be continued, are rapidly dwindling. The less faith the army has in absolutism, the more faith it has in its foes.

We ought to make use of this situation. We ought to explain to the soldiers the meaning of the workingmen's action which is being prepared by the Party. We ought to make profuse use of the slogan which is bound to unite the army with the revolutionary people, *Away with the War!* We ought to create a situation where the officers would

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\* *Dragomirov* was for many years Commander of the Kiev Military Region and was known by his epigrammatic style.

not be able to trust their soldiers at the crucial moment. This would reflect on the attitude of the officers themselves.

The rest will be done by the street. It will dissolve the remnants of the barrack-hypnosis in the revolutionary enthusiasm of the people.

The main factor, however, remains the revolutionary masses. True it is that during the war the most advanced elements of the masses, the thinking proletariat, have not stepped openly to the front with that degree of determination which was required by the critical historic moment. Yet it would manifest a lack of political backbone and a deplorable superficiality, should one draw from this fact any kind of pessimistic conclusions.

The war has fallen upon our public life with all its colossal weight. The dreadful monster, breathing blood and fire, loomed up on the political horizon shutting out everything, sinking its steel clutches into the body of the people, inflicting wound upon wound, causing mortal pain, which for a moment makes it even impossible to ask for the causes of the pain. The war, as every great disaster, accompanied by crisis, unemployment, mobilization, hunger and death stunned the people, caused despair, but not protest. This is, however, only a beginning. Raw masses of the people, silent social strata, which yesterday had no connection with the revolutionary elements, were knocked by sheer mechanical power of facts to face the central event of present-day Russia, the war. They were horrified, they could not catch their breaths. The revolutionary elements, who prior to the war had ignored the passive masses, were affected by the atmosphere of despair and concentrated horror. This atmosphere enveloped them, it pressed with a leaden weight on their minds. The voice of determined protest could hardly be raised in the midst of elemental suffering. The revolutionary proletariat which had not yet recovered from the wounds received in July, 1903, was powerless to oppose the "call of the primitive".

The year of war, however, passed not without results. Masses, yesterday primitive, today are confronted with the most tremendous events. They must seek to understand them. The very duration of the war has produced a desire for reasoning, for questioning as to the meaning of it all. Thus the war, while hampering for a period of time the revolutionary initiative of thousands, has awakened to life the political thought of millions.

The year of war passed not without results, not a single day passed without results. In the lower strata of the people, in the very depths of the masses, a work was going on, a movement of molecules, imperceptible, yet irresistible, incessant, a work of accumulating indignation, bitterness, revolutionary energy. The atmosphere our streets are breathing now is no longer an atmosphere of blank despair, it is an atmosphere of concentrated indignation which seeks for means and ways for

revolutionary action. Each expedient action of the vanguard of our working masses would now carry away with it not only all our revolutionary reserves, but also thousands and hundreds of thousands of revolutionary recruits. This mobilization, unlike the mobilization of the government, would be carried out in the presence of general sympathy and active assistance of an overwhelming majority of the population.

In the presence of strong sympathies of the masses, in the presence of active assistance on the part of the democratic elements of the people; facing a government commonly hated, unsuccessful both in big and in small undertakings, a government defeated on the seas, defeated in the fields of battle, despised, discouraged, with no faith in the coming day, a government vainly struggling, currying favour, provoking and retreating, lying and suffering exposure, insolent and frightened; facing an army whose morale has been shattered by the entire course of the war, whose valour, energy, enthusiasm and heroism have met an insurmountable wall in the form of administrative anarchy, an army which has lost faith in the unshakable security of a regime it is called to serve, a dissatisfied, grumbling army which more than once has torn itself free from the clutches of discipline during the last year and which is eagerly listening to the roar of revolutionary voices—such will be the conditions under which the revolutionary proletariat will walk out into the streets. It seems to us that no better conditions could have been created by history for a final attack. History has done everything it was allowed by elemental wisdom. The thinking revolutionary forces of the country have to do the rest.

A tremendous amount of revolutionary energy has been accumulated. It should not vanish with no avail, it should not be dissipated in scattered engagements and clashes, with no coherence and no definite plan. All efforts ought to be made to concentrate the bitterness, the anger, the protest, the rage, the hatred of the masses, to give those emotions a common language, a common goal, to unite, to solidify all the particles of the masses, to make them feel and understand they are not isolated, that simultaneously, with the same slogan on the banner, with the same goal in mind, innumerable particles are rising everywhere. If this understanding is achieved, half of the revolution is done.

We have got to summon all revolutionary forces to simultaneous action. How can we do it?

First of all we ought to remember that the main scene of revolutionary events is bound to be the city. Nobody is likely to deny this, It is evident, further, that street demonstrations can turn into a popular revolution only when they are a manifestation of *masses*, i. e., when they embrace, in the first place, the workers of factories and plants. To make the workers quit their machines and stands; to make them walk out of the factory premises into the street; to lead them to the neighbouring plant; to proclaim there a cessation of work; to make new masses walk out into the street; to go thus from factory to factory, from plant to plant, incessantly growing in numbers, sweeping police

barriers, absorbing new masses that happened to come across crowding the streets, taking possession of buildings suitable for popular meetings, fortifying those buildings, holding continuous revolutionary meetings with audiences coming and going, bringing order into the movements of the masses, arousing their spirit, explaining to them the aim and the meaning of what is going on; to turn, finally, the entire city into one revolutionary camp, this is, broadly speaking, the plan of action.

The starting point ought to be the factories and plants. That means that street manifestations of a serious character, fraught with decisive events, ought to begin with *political strikes of the masses*.

It is easier to fix a date for a strike, than for a demonstration of the people, just as it is easier to move masses ready for action than to organize new masses.

A political strike, however, not a *local, but a general political strike all over Russia*—ought to have a general political slogan. This slogan is: *to stop the war and to call a National Constituent Assembly*.

This demand ought to become nation-wide and herein lies the task for our propaganda preceding the all-Russian general strike. We ought to use all possible occasions to make the idea of a National Constituent Assembly popular among the people. Without losing one moment, we ought to put into operation all the technical means and all the powers of propaganda at our disposal. Proclamations and speeches, educational circles and mass-meetings ought to carry, broadcast, to propound and to explain the demand of a Constituent Assembly. There ought to be not one man in a city who should not know that his demand is: a National Constituent Assembly.

The peasants ought to be called to assemble on the day of the political strike and to pass resolutions demanding the calling of a Constituent Assembly. The suburban peasants ought to be called into the cities to participate in the street movements of the masses gathered under the banner of a Constituent Assembly. All societies and organizations, professional and learned bodies, organs of self-government and organs of the opposition press ought to be notified in advance by the workmen that they are preparing for an all-Russian political strike, fixed for a certain date, to bring about the calling of a Constituent Assembly. The workmen ought to demand from all societies and corporations that on the day appointed for the mass-manifestation, they should join in the demand of a National Constituent Assembly. The workmen ought to demand from the opposition press that it should popularize their slogan and that on the eve of the demonstration it should print an appeal to the population to join the proletarian manifestation under the banner of a National Constituent Assembly.

We ought to carry on the most intensive propaganda in the army in order that on the day of the strike each soldier, sent to curb the "rebels", should know that he is facing the people who are demanding a National Constituent Assembly.



## INTRODUCTION By M. J. OLGIN

This is an essay of triumph. Written on January 20, 1905, eleven days after "Bloody Sunday", it gave vent to the enthusiastic feelings of every true revolutionist aroused by unmistakable signs of an approaching storm. The march of tens of thousands of workingmen to the Winter Palace to submit to the "Little Father" a petition asking for 'bread and freedom', was on the surface a peaceful and loyal undertaking. Yet it breathed indignation and revolt. The slaughter of peaceful marchers (of whom over 5,000 were killed or wounded) and the following wave of hatred and revolutionary determination among the masses, marked the beginning of broad revolutionary uprisings.

For Trotsky, the awakening of the masses to political activity was not only a good revolutionary omen, but also a defeat of liberal ideology and liberal tactics. Those tactics had been planned under the assumption that the Russian people were not ripe for a revolution. Trotsky, a thorough revolutionist, saw in the liberal movement a manifestation of political superstitions. To him, the *only* way to overthrow absolutism was the way of a violent revolution. Yet, when the liberals proudly asserted that the revolutionary masses of Russia were only a creation of the overheated phantasy of the revolutionists, while the movement of the well-to-do intelligent elements was a flagrant fact, the Social-Democrats had no material proofs to the contrary, except sporadic outbursts of unrest among the workingmen and, of course, the conviction of those revolutionists who were in touch with the masses. It is, therefore, easy to understand the triumph of a Trotsky or any other Socialist after January 9th. In Trotsky's opinion, the 9th of January had put liberalism into the archives. "We are done with it for the entire period of the revolution," he exclaims. The most remarkable part of this essay, as far as political vision is concerned, is Trotsky's prediction that the left wing of the "Osvoboshdenie" Liberals (later organized as the Constitutional Democratic Party) would attempt to become leaders of the revolutionary masses and to "tame" them. The Liberals did not fail to make the attempt in 1905 and 1906, but with no success whatever. Neither did Social Democracy, however, completely succeed in leading the masses all through the revolution, in the manner outlined by Trotsky in this essay. True, the Social Democrats were the party that gained the greatest influence over the workingmen in the stormy year of 1905; their slogans were universally accepted by the masses; their members were everywhere among the first ranks of revolutionary forces; yet events developed too rapidly and spontaneously to make the leadership of a political organisation possible.

# THE EVENTS IN St. PETERSBURG

HOW invincibly eloquent are facts! How utterly powerless are words!

The masses have made themselves heard! They have kindled revolutionary flames on Caucasian hill-tops; they have clashed, breast against breast, with the guards' regiments and the Cossacks on that unforgettable day of January 9th; they have filled the streets and squares of industrial cities with the noise and clatter of their fights.....

The revolutionary masses are no more a theory, they are a fact. For the Social-Democratic Party there is nothing new in this fact. We had predicted it long ago. We had seen its coming at a time when the noisy liberal banquets seemed to form a striking contrast with the political silence of the people. *The revolutionary masses are a fact*, was our assertion. The clever liberals shrugged their shoulders in contempt. Those gentlemen think themselves sober realists solely because they are unable to grasp the consequences of great causes, because they make it their business to be humble servants of each ephemeral political fact. They think themselves sober statesmen in spite of the fact that history mocks at their wisdom, tearing to pieces their school books, making to naught their designs, and magnificently laughing at their pompous predictions.

*"There are no revolutionary people in Russia as yet." "The Russian workingman is backward in culture, in self-respect, and (we refer primarily to the workingman of Petersburg and Moscow) he is not yet prepared for organized social and political struggle."*

Thus Mr. Struve wrote in his *Osvoboshdenie*.<sup>\*</sup> He wrote it on January 7th, 1905. Two days later the proletariat of Petersburg arose.

*"There are no revolutionary people in Russia as yet."* These words ought to have been engraved on the forehead of Mr. Struve were it not that Mr. Struve's forehead already resembles a tombstone under which so many plans, slogans, and ideas have been buried—Socialist, liberal,

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\* *Osvoboshdenie* (Emancipation) was the name of a liberal magazine published in Stuttgart, Germany, and smuggled into Russia to be distributed among the Zemstvo-liberals and other progressive elements grouped about the Zemstvo-organization. The *Osvoboshdenie* advocated a constitutional monarchy; it was, however, opposed to revolutionary methods.

Peter Struve, first a Socialist, then a Liberal, was the editor of the *Osvoboshdenie*. Struve was an economist and one of the leading liberal journalists in Russia.

“patriotic”, revolutionary, monarchic, democratic and other ideas, all of them calculated not to run too far ahead and all of them hopelessly dragging behind.

“*There are no revolutionary people in Russia as yet*”, so it was declared through the mouth of *Osvobozhdenie* by Russian liberalism which in the course of three months had succeeded in convincing itself that liberalism was the main figure on the political stage and that its programme and tactics would determine the future of Russia. Before this declaration had reached its readers, the wires carried into the remotest corners of the world the great message of the beginning of a National Revolution in Russia.

Yes, the Revolution has begun. We had hoped for it, we had no doubt about it. For long years, however, it had been to us a mere deduction from our “doctrine”, which all nonentities of all political denominations had mocked at. They never believed in the revolutionary role of the proletariat, yet they believed in the power of Zemstvo petitions,\* in Witte, — in “bloes” combining naughts with naughts, in Svyatopolk-Mirski, in a stick of dynamite..... There was no political superstition they did not believe in. Only the belief in the proletariat to them was a superstition.

History, however, does not question political oracles, and the revolutionary people do not need a passport from political eunuchs.

The revolution has come. One move of hers has lifted the people over scores of steps, up which in times of peace we would have had to drag ourselves with hardships and fatigue. The Revolution has come and destroyed the plans of so many politicians who had dared to make their little political calculations with no regard for the master, the revolutionary people. The Revolution has come and destroyed scores of superstitions, and has manifested the power of the programme which is founded on the revolutionary logic of the development of the masses.

The Revolution has come, and the period of our political infancy has passed. Down to the archives went our traditional liberalism whose only resource was the belief in a lucky change of administrative figures. Its period of bloom was the stupid reign of Svyatopolk-Mirski. Its ripest

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\* Zemstvo-petition, accepted in form of resolutions at the meetings of the liberal Zemstvo bodies and forwarded to the central government, were one of the means the liberals used in their struggle for a Constitution. The petitions, worded in a very moderate language, demanded the abolition of “lawlessness” on the part of the administration and the introduction of a “legal order,” i.e., a Constitution.

— Sergius Witte, Minister of Finance in the closing years of the 19th century and up to the revolution of 1905, was known as a bureaucrat of a liberal brand.

fruit was the Ukase of December 12th. \* But now, January Ninth has come and effaced the "Spring", and has put military dictatorship in its place, and has promoted to the rank of Governor-General of Petersburg the same Trepov, \*\* who just before had been pulled down from the post of Moscow Chief of Police by the same liberal opposition.

That liberalism which did not care to know about the revolution, which hatched plots behind the scenes, which ignored the masses, which counted only on its diplomatic genius, has been swept away. *We are done with it for the entire period of the revolution.*

The liberals of the left wing will now follow the people. They will soon attempt to take the people into their own hands. The people are a power. One must *master* them. But they are, too, a *revolutionary* power. One, therefore, must *tame* them. This is, evidently, the future tactics of the *Osvoboshdenie* group. Our fight for a revolution, our preparatory work for the revolution must also be our merciless fight against liberalism for influence over the masses, for a leading role in the revolution. In this fight we shall be supported by a great power, the very logic of the revolution!

The Revolution has come.

The *forms* taken by the uprising of January 9th could not have been foreseen. A revolutionary priest, in perplexing manner placed by history at the head of the working masses for several days, lent the events the stamp of his personality, his conceptions, his rank. This form may mislead many an observer as to the real substance of the events. The actual meaning of the events, however, is just that which Social Democracy foresaw. The central figure is the Proletariat. The workmen start a strike, they unite, they formulate political demands, they walk out into the streets, they win the enthusiastic sympathy of the entire population, they engage in battles with the army... The hero, Gapon, has not created the revolutionary energy of the Petersburg workmen, he only unloosed it. He found thousands of thinking workmen and tens

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\* The Ukase of December 12th, 1905, was an answer of the government to the persistent political demands of the "Spring" time. The Ukase promised a number of insignificant bureaucratic reforms, not even mentioning a popular representation and threatening increased punishments for "disturbances of the peace and order."

\*\* Trepov was one of the most hated bureaucrats, a devoted pupil of Von Plehve's in the work of drowning revolutionary movements in blood.

— George Gapon was the priest who organized the march of January 9th. Trotsky's admiration for the heroism of Gapon was originally shared by many revolutionists. Later it became known that Gapon played a dubious role as a friend of labour, and an agent of the government.

of thousands of others in a state of political agitation. He formed a plan which united all these masses—for the period of one day. The masses went to speak to the Czar. They were faced by Uhlans, Cossacks, guards. Gapon's plan had not prepared the workingmen for that. What was the result? They seized arms wherever they could, they built barricades.... They fought, though, apparently, they went to beg for mercy. This shows that they went *not to beg but to demand*.

The proletariat of Petersburg manifested a degree of political alertness and revolutionary energy far exceeding the limits of the plan laid out by a casual leader. Gapon's plan contained many elements of revolutionary romanticism. \* On January 9th, the plan collapsed. Yet the revolutionary proletariat of Petersburg is no romanticism, it is a living reality. So is the proletariat of other cities. An enormous wave is rolling over Russia. It has not yet quieted down. One shock, and the proletarian crater will begin to erupt torrents of revolutionary lava.

The proletariat has arisen. It has chosen an incidental pretext and a casual leader—a self-sacrificing priest. That seemed enough to *start* with. It was not enough to *win*.

*Victory demands not a romantic method based on an illusory plan but revolutionary tactics. A simultaneous action of the proletariat of all Russia must be prepared.* This is the first condition. No local demonstration has a serious political significance any longer. After the Petersburg uprising, only an all-Russian uprising should take place. Scattered outbursts would only consume the precious revolutionary energy with no results. Wherever spontaneous outbursts occur, as a late echo of the Petersburg uprising, *they must be made use of to revolutionize and to solidify the masses, to popularize among them the idea of an all-Russian uprising* as a task of the approaching months, perhaps only weeks.

This is not the place to discuss the technique of a popular uprising. The questions of revolutionary technique can be solved only in a practical way, under the live pressure of struggle and under constant communication with the active members of the Party. There is no doubt, however, that the technical problems of organizing a popular uprising assume at present tremendous importance. Those problems demand the collective attention of the Party.

[Note by M. J. Olgin:] Trotsky then proceeds to discuss the question of armament, arsenals, clashes with the army units, barricades, etc. Then he continues:

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\* The "political illusions" of George Gapon, referred to in this essay, was his assumption that the Czar was a loving father to his people. Gapon hoped to reach the Emperor of all the Russias and to make him "receive the workingmen's petition from hand to hand."

As stated before, these questions ought to be solved by local organizations. Of course, this is only a minor task as compared with the political leadership of the masses. Yet, this task is most essential for the political leadership itself. The organization of the revolution becomes at present the axis of the political leadership of revolting masses.

What are the requirements for this leadership? A few very simple things: freedom from routine in matters of organization; freedom from miserable traditions of underground conspiracy; a broad view; courageous initiative; ability to gauge situations; courageous initiative once more.

The events of January 9th have given us a revolutionary beginning. We must never fall below this. We must make this our starting point in moving the revolution forward. We must imbue our work of propoganda and organization with the political ideas and revolutionary aspirations of the uprising of the Petersburg workers.

The Russian revolution has approached its climax—a national uprising. The organization of this uprising, which would determine the fate of the entire revolution, becomes the day's task for our Party.

No one can accomplish it, but we. Priest Gapon could appear only once. He cherished extraordinary illusions, that is why he could do what he has done. Yet he could remain at the head of the masses for a brief period only. The memory of George Gapon will always be dear to the revolutionary proletariat. Yet his memory will be that of a hero who opened the sluices of the revolutionary torrent. Should a new figure step to the front now, equal to Gapon in energy, revolutionary enthusiasm and power of political illusions; his arrival would be too late. What was great in George Gapon may now look ridiculous. There is no room for a second George Gapon, as the thing now needed is not an illusion, but clear revolutionary thinking, a decisive plan of action, a flexible revolutionary organization which would be able to give the masses a slogan, to lead them into the field of battle, to launch an attack all along the line and bring the revolution to a victorious conclusion.

Such an organization can be the work of Social-Democracy only. No other party is able to create it. No other party can give the masses a revolutionary slogan, as no one outside our Party has freed himself from all considerations not pertaining to the interests of the revolution. No other party, but Social-Democracy, is able to organize the action of the masses, as no one but our Party is closely connected with the masses.

Our Party has committed many errors, blunders, almost crimes. It wavered, evaded, hesitated, it showed inertia and lack of pluck. At times it hampered the revolutionary movement.

*However, there is no revolutionary party but the Social-Democratic Party!*

Our organizations are imperfect. Our connections with the masses are insufficient. Our technique is primitive.

*Yet there is no party connected with the masses but the Social-Democratic Party!*

At the head of the Revolution is the Proletariat. At the head of the proletariat is Social-Democracy!

Let us exert all our power, comrades! Let us put all our energy and all our passion into this. Let us not forget for a moment the great responsibility vested in our Party: a responsibility before the Russian Revolution and in the sight of International Socialism.

The proletariat of the entire world looks to us with expectation. Broad vistas are being opened for humanity by a victorious Russian revolution. Comrades, let us do our duty!

Let us close our ranks, comrades! Let us unite, and unite the masses! Let us prepare and prepare the masses for the day of decisive actions! Let us overlook nothing. Let us leave no power unused for the Cause.

Brave, honest, harmoniously united, we shall march forward, linked by unbreakable bonds, brothers in the revolution!

About two years after the arrest of the Soviet of 1905, a number of former leaders of that organization, among them Khrustalyov Nossar the first chairman and Trotsky, the second chairman, met abroad after having escaped from Siberian exile. They decided to sum up their Soviet experiences in a book which they called *The History of The Council Workingmen's Deputies*. The book appeared in 1908 in Petersburg, and was immediately suppressed. One of the essays of this book is reprinted here.....

What makes this essay interesting and significant is Trotsky's assertion that "The first new wave of the revolution will lead to the creation of Soviets all over the country." This has actually happened. His predictions of the formation of an all-Russian Soviet, and of the programme the Soviets would follow, have also been realized in the course of the present revolution.

— M. J. O. —

# THE SOVIET AND THE REVOLUTION.

( FIFTY DAYS )

The history of the Soviet is a history of fifty days. The Soviet was constituted on October 13th; its session was interrupted by a Military detachment of the government on December 3rd. Between those two dates the Soviet lived and struggled.

What was the substance of this institution? What enabled it in this short period to take an honourable place in the history of the Russian proletariat, in the history of the Russian Revolution?

The Soviet organized the masses, conducted political strikes, led political demonstrations, tried to arm the workingmen. But other revolutionary organizations did the same things. The substance of the Soviet was its effort to become *an organ of public authority*. The proletariat on the one hand, the reactionary press on the other, have called the Soviet "a Labour government"; this only reflects the fact that the Soviet was in reality *an embryo of a revolutionary government*. In so far as the Soviet was in actual possession of authoritative power, it made use of it; in so far as the power was in the hands of the military and bureaucratic monarchy, the Soviet fought to obtain it. Prior to the Soviet, there had been revolutionary organizations among the industrial workingmen, mostly of a Social-Democratic nature. But those were organizations among the proletariat; their immediate aim was to *influence the masses*. The Soviet is an organization of the proletariat; its aim is to fight for *revolutionary power*.



At the same time, the Soviet was *an organized expression of the will of the proletariat as a class*. In its fight for power the Soviet applied such methods as were naturally determined by the character of the proletariat as a class: its part in production; its numerical strength; its social homogeneity. In its fight for power the Soviet has combined the direction of all the social activities of the working class, including decisions as to conflicts between individual representatives of capital and labour. This combination was by no means an artificial tactical attempt: it was a natural consequence of the situation of a class which, consciously developing and broadening its fight for its immediate interests, had been compelled by the logic of events to assume a leading position in the revolutionary struggle for power.

The main weapon of the Soviet was a political strike of the masses. The power of the strike lies in disorganizing the power of the government. The greater the "anarchy" created by a strike, the nearer its victory. This is true only where "anarchy" is not being created by anarchic actions. The class that puts into motion, day in and day out, the industrial apparatus and the governmental apparatus; the class that is able, by a sudden stoppage of work, to paralyze both industry and government, must be organized enough not to fall the first victim of the very "anarchy" it has created. The more effective the disorganization of government caused by a strike, the more the strike organization is compelled to assume governmental functions.

The Council of Workmen's Delegates introduces a free press. It organizes street patrols to secure the safety of the citizens. It takes over, to a greater or less extent, the post office, the telegraph, and the railroads. It makes an effort to introduce the eight hour workday. Paralyzing the autocratic government by a strike, it brings its own democratic order into the life of the working city population.

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After January 9th the revolution had shown its power over the minds of the working masses. On June 14th, through the revolt of the Potyomkin Tavrichesky it had shown that it was able to become a material force. In the October strike it had shown that it could disorganize the enemy, paralyze his will and utterly humiliate him. By organizing Councils of Workmen's Deputies all over the country, *it showed that it was able to create authoritative power*. Revolutionary authority can be based only on active revolutionary force. Whatever our view on the further development of the Russian revolution, it is a fact that so far no social class besides the proletariat has manifested readiness to uphold a revolutionary authoritative power. The first act of the revolution was an encounter in the streets of the *proletariat* with the monarchy; the first serious victory of the revolution was achieved through the *class weapon of the proletariat*, the political strike; the first nucleus of a revolutionary government was a *proletarian representation*. The Soviet is the first democratic power in modern Russian history. The Soviet is the organized power of the masses themselves over their component parts. This

is a true, unadulterated democracy, without a two-chamber system, without a professional bureaucracy, with the right of the voters to recall their deputy any moment and to substitute another for him. Through its members, through deputies elected by the workingmen, the Soviet directs all the social activities of the proletariat as a whole and of its various parts; it outlines the steps to be taken by the proletariat, it gives them a slogan and a banner. This art of directing the activities of the masses on the basis of organized self-government, is here applied for the first time on Russian soil. Absolutism ruled the masses, but it did not direct them. It put mechanical barriers against the living creative forces of the masses, and within those barriers it kept the restless elements of the nation in an iron bond of oppression. The only mass absolutism ever directed was the army. But that was not directing, it was merely commanding. In recent years, even the directing of this atomized and hypnotized military mass has been slipping out of the hands of absolutism. Liberalism never had power enough to command the masses, or initiative enough to direct them. Its attitude towards mass-movements, even if they helped liberalism directly, was the same as towards awe-inspiring natural phenomena earthquakes or volcanic eruptions. The proletariat appeared on the battlefield of the revolution as a self-reliant aggregate, totally independent bourgeois liberalism.

The Soviet was a *class-organization*, this was the source of its fighting power. It was crushed in the first period of its existence not by lack of confidence on the part of the masses in the cities, but by the limitations of a purely urban revolution, by the relatively passive attitude of the village, by the backwardness of the peasant element of the army. The Soviet's position among the city population was as strong as could be.

The Soviet was not an official representative of the entire half million of the working population in the capital; its organization embraced about two hundred thousand, chiefly industrial workers; and though its direct and indirect political influence was of a much wider range, there were thousands and thousands of proletarians (in the building trade, among domestic servants, day labourers, drivers) who were hardly, if at all, influenced by the Soviet. There is no doubt, however, that the Soviet represented the interests of *all* these proletarian masses. There were but few adherents of the Black Hundred in the factories, and their number dwindled hour by hour. The proletarian masses of Petersburg were solidly behind the Soviet. Among the numerous intellectuals of Petersburg the Soviet had more friends than enemies. Thousands of students recognized the political leadership of the Soviet and ardently supported it in its decisions. Professional Petersburg was entirely on the side of the Soviet. The support by the Soviet of the postal and telegraph strike won it the sympathy of the lower governmental officials. All the oppressed, all the unfortunate, all honest elements of the city, all those who were striving towards a better life, were instinctively or consciously on the side of the Soviet. The Soviet was actually or poten-

tially a representative of an overwhelming majority of the population. Its enemies in the capital would not have been dangerous had they not been protected by absolutism, which based its power on the most backward elements of an army recruited from peasants. The weakness of the Soviet was not its own weakness, it was the weakness of a purely urban revolution.

The fifty days period was the period of the greatest power of the revolution. *The Soviet was its organ in the fight for public authority.* The class character of the Soviet was determined by the class differentiation of the city population and by the political antagonism between the proletariat and the capitalistic bourgeoisie. This antagonism manifested itself even in the historically limited field of a struggle against absolutism. After the October strike, the capitalistic bourgeoisie consciously blocked the progress of the revolution, the petty middle class turned out to be a nonentity, incapable of playing an independent role. The real leader of the the urban revolution was the proletariat. Its class-organization was the organ of the revolution in its struggle for power.

### 3

The struggle for power, for public authority—this is the central aim of the revolution. The fifty days of the Soviet's life and its bloody finale have shown that urban Russian is too narrow a basis for such a struggle, and that even within the limits of the urban revolution, a local organization cannot be the central leading body. For a national task the proletariat required an organization on a national scale. The Petersburg Soviet was a local organization, yet the need of a central organization was so great that it had to assume leadership on a national scale. It did what it could, still it remained primarily the *Petersburg* Council of Workmen's Deputies. The urgency of an all-Russian labour congress which undoubtedly would have had authority to form a central leading organ, was emphasized even at the time of the first Soviet. The December collapse made its realization impossible. The idea remained, an inheritance of the Fifty Days.

The idea of a Soviet has become ingrained in the consciousness of the workingmen as the first prerequisite to revolutionary action of the masses. Experience has shown that a Soviet is not possible or desirable under all circumstances. The objective meaning of the Soviet organization is to create conditions for disorganizing the government, for "anarchy", in other words for a revolutionary conflict. The present lull in the revolutionary movement, the mad triumph of reaction, make the existence of an open, elective, authoritative organization of the masses impossible. There is no doubt, however, that *the first new wave of the revolution will lead to the creation of Soviets all over the country.* An All-Russian Soviet, organized by an All-Russian Labour Congress, will assume leadership of the local elective organizations of the proletariat. Names, of course, are of no importance; so are details of organization; the main thing is: a centralized democratic leadership in the struggle of the proletariat for a popular government. History does not repeat itself,

and the new Soviet will not have again to go through the experience of the Fifty Days. These, however, will furnish it a complete programme of action.

This programme is perfectly clear.

To establish revolutionary co-operation with the army, the peasantry, and the plebeian lower strata of the urban bourgeoisie. To abolish absolutism. To destroy the material organization of absolutism by reconstructing and partly dismissing the army. To break up the entire bureaucratic apparatus. To introduce an eight hour workday. To arm the population, starting with the proletariat. To turn the Soviets into organs of revolutionary self-government in the cities. To create Councils of Peasants' Delegates (Peasants' Committees) as local organs of the agrarian revolution. To organize elections to the Constituent Assembly and to conduct a preelection campaign for a definite programme on the part of the representatives of the people.

It is easier to formulate such a programme than to carry it through. If, however, the revolution will ever win, the proletariat cannot choose another. The proletariat will unfold revolutionary accomplishment such as the world has never seen. The history of Fifty Days will be only a poor page in the great book of the proletariat's struggle and ultimate triumph.

# THE LESSONS OF THE GREAT YEAR

(January 9th, 1905—January 9th, 1917)

Revolutionary anniversaries are not only days for reminiscences, they are days for summing up revolutionary experiences, especially for us Russians. Our history has not been rich. Our so-called "national originality" consisted in being poor, ignorant, uncouth. It was the revolution of 1905 that first opened before us the great highway of political progress. On January 9th the workingmen of Petersburg knocked at the gate of the Winter Palace. On January 9th the entire Russian people knocked at the gate of history.

The crowned janitor did not respond to the knock. Nine months later, however, on October 17th, he was compelled to open the heavy gate of absolutism. Notwithstanding all the efforts of bureaucracy, a little slit stayed open — forever.

The revolution was defeated. The same old forces and almost the same figures now rule Russia that ruled her twelve years ago. Yet the revolution has changed Russia beyond recognition. The kingdom of stagnation, servitude, vodka and humbleness has become a kingdom of fermentation, criticism, fight. Where once there was a shapeless dough — the impersonal, formless people, "Holy Russia," — now social classes consciously oppose each other, political parties have sprung into existence, each with its programme and methods of struggle.

January 9th opens a *new Russian history*. It is a line marked by the blood of the people. There is no way back from this line to Asiatic Russia, to the cursed practices of former generations. There is no way back. There will never be.

Not the liberal bourgeoisie, not the democratic groups of the lower bourgeoisie, not the radical intellectuals, not the millions of Russian peasants, but the *Russian proletariat* has by its struggle started the new era in Russian history. This is basic. On the foundation of this fact we, Social-Democrats, have built our conceptions and our tactics.

On January 9th it was the priest Gapon who happened to be at the head of the Petersburg workers — a fantastic figure, a combination of adventurer, hysterical enthusiast and impostor. His priest's robe was the last link that then connected the workingmen with the past, with "Holy Russia." Nine months later in the course of the October strike,

the greatest political strike history has ever seen, there was at the head of the Petersburg workmen their own elective self-governing organization—the Council of Workmen's Deputies. It contained many a workman who had been on Gapon's staff — nine months of revolution had made those men grow, as they made grow the entire working class which the Soviet represented.

In the first period of the revolution, the activities of the proletariat were met with sympathy, even with support from liberal society. The Miliukovs hoped the proletariat would punch absolutism and make it more inclined to compromise with the bourgeoisie. Yet absolutism, for centuries the only ruler of the people, was in no haste to share its power with the liberal parties. In October, 1905, the bourgeoisie learned that it could not obtain power before the back-bone of Czarism was broken. This blessed thing could, evidently, be accomplished only by a victorious revolution. But the revolution put the working class in the foreground, it united it and solidified it not only in its struggle against Czarism, but also in its struggle against capital. The result was that each new revolutionary step of the proletariat in October, November and December, the time of the Soviet, moved the liberals more and more in the direction of the monarchy. The hopes for revolutionary co-operation between the bourgeoisie and the proletariat turned out a hopeless Utopia. Those who had not seen it then and had not understood it later, those who still dream of a "national" uprising against Czarism, do not understand the revolution. For them class struggle is a sealed book.

At the end of 1905 the question became acute. The monarchy had learned by experience that the bourgeoisie would not support the proletariat in a decisive battle. The monarchy then decided to move against the proletariat with all its forces. The bloody days of December followed. The Council of Workmen's Deputies was arrested by the Ismailovski regiment which remained loyal to Czarism. The answer of the proletariat was momentous; the strike in Petersburg, the insurrection in Moscow, the storm of revolutionary movements in all industrial centres, the insurrection on the Caucasus and in the Lettish provinces.

The revolutionary movement was crushed. Many a poor "Socialist" readily concluded from our December defeats that a revolution in Russia was impossible without the support of the bourgeoisie. If this be true, it would only mean that a revolution in Russia is impossible.

Our *upper industrial bourgeoisie*, the only class possessing actual power, is separated from the proletariat by an insurmountable barrier of class hatred, and it needs the monarchy as a pillar of order. The Gutchkovs, Krestovnikovs and Ryabushinskys\* cannot fail to see in the proletariat their mortal foe.

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\* Gutchkov, Ryabushinsky and Krestovnikov are representatives of big capital in Russia. Gutchkov is the leader of the moderately liberal party of Octobrists. He was war Minister in the first Cabinet after overthrow of the Romanovs.

Our *middle and lower industrial and commercial bourgeoisie* occupies a very insignificant place in the economic life of the country, and it is all entangled in the net of capital. The Milliukovs, the leaders of the lower middle class, are successful only in so far as they represent the interests of the upper bourgeoisie. This is why the Cadet leader called the revolutionary banner a "red rag"; this is why he declared, after the beginning of the war, that if a revolution were necessary to secure victory over Germany, he would prefer no victory at all.

Our *peasantry* occupies a tremendous place in Russian life. In 1905 it was shaken to its deepest foundations. The peasants were driving out their masters, setting estates on fire, seizing the land from the landlords. Yes, the curse of the peasantry is that it is scattered, disjointed, backward. Moreover, the interests of the various peasant groups do not coincide. The peasants arose and fought adroitly against their local slave-holders, yet they stopped in reverence before the all-Russian slave-holder. The sons of the peasants in the army did not understand that the workingmen were shedding their blood not only for their own sake, but also for the sake of the peasants. The army was an obedient tool in the hands of Czarism. It crushed the labour revolution in December, 1905.

Whoever thinks about the experiences of 1905, whoever draws a line from that year to the present time, must see how utterly lifeless and pitiful are the hopes of our Social-Patriots for revolutionary co-operation between the proletariat and the liberal bourgeoisie.

During the last twelve years big capital has made great conquests in Russia. The middle and lower bourgeoisie has become still more dependent upon the banks and trusts. The working class, which had grown in numbers since 1905, is now separated from the bourgeoisie by a deeper abyss than before. If a "national" revolution was a failure twelve years ago, there is still less hope for it at present.

It is true that in the last years the cultural and political level of the peasantry has become higher. However, there is less hope now for a revolutionary uprising of the peasantry as a whole than there was twelve years ago. The only ally of the urban proletariat may be the proletarian and half-proletarian strata of the village.

But a skeptic may ask, is there than any hope for a victorious revolution in Russia under these circumstances?

One thing is clear — if a revolution comes, it will not be a result of co-operation between capital and labour. The experiences of 1905 show that this is a miserable Utopia. To acquaint himself with those experiences, to study them is the duty of every thinking workingman who is anxious to avoid tragic mistakes. It is in this sense that we have said that revolutionary anniversaries are not only days for reminiscences, but also days for summing up revolutionary experiences.

**Novy Mir, New York**  
**January 20th, 1917.**

# ON THE EVE OF THE REVOLUTION

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The streets of Petrograd again speak the language of 1905. As in the time of the Russo-Japanese war, the masses demand bread, peace, and freedom. As in 1905, street cars are not running and newspapers do not appear. The workmen let the steam out of the boilers, they quit their benches and walk out into the street. The Government mobilizes its Cossacks. And as was in 1905, only those two powers are facing each other in the streets — the revolutionary workmen and the army of the Czar.

The movement was provoked by lack of bread. This, of course, is not an accidental cause. In all the belligerent countries the lack of bread is the most immediate, the most acute reason for dissatisfaction and indignation among the masses. All the insanity of the war is revealed to them from this angle: it is impossible to produce necessities of life because one has to produce instruments of death.

However, the attempts of the Anglo-Russian semi-official news agencies to explain the movement by a temporary shortage in food, or to snow storms that have delayed transportation, are one of the most ludicrous applications of the policy of the ostrich. The workmen would not stop the factories, the street cars, the print shops and walk into the streets to meet Czarism face to face on account of snow storms which temporarily hamper the arrival of food-stuffs.

People have a short memory. Many of our own ranks have forgotten that the war found Russia in a state of potent revolutionary ferment. After the heavy stupor of 1908-1911, the proletariat gradually healed its wounds in the following years of industrial prosperity; the slaughter of strikers on the Lena River in April, 1912, awakened the revolutionary energy of the proletarian masses. A series of strikes followed. In the year preceding the World War, the wave of economic and political strikes resembled that of 1905. When Poincaré, the President of the French Republic came to Petersburg in the summer of 1904 (evidently to talk over with the Czar how to free the small and weak nations) the Russian proletariat was in a state of extraordinary revolutionary tension, and the president of the French Republic could see with his own eyes in the capital of his friend, the Czar, how the first barricades of the Second Russian Revolution were being constructed.

The war checked the rising revolutionary tide. We have witnessed a repetition of what happened ten years before, in the Russo-Japanese war. After the stormy strikes of 1903, there had followed a year of



almost unbroken political silence — 1904—the first year of the war. It took the workmen of Petersburg twelve months to orientate themselves in the war and to walk out into the streets with their demands and protests. January 9th, 1905, was, so to speak, the official beginning of our First Revolution.

The present war is vaster than was the Russo-Japanese war. Millions of soldiers have been mobilized by the Government for the "defence of the Fatherland." The ranks of the proletariat have thus been disorganized. On the other hand, the more advanced elements of the proletariat had to face and weigh in their minds a number of questions of unheard of magnitude. What is the cause of the war? Shall the proletariat agree with the conception of "the defense of the Fatherland"? What ought to be the tactics of the working-class in war time?

In the meantime, Czarism and its allies, the upper groups of the nobility and the bourgeoisie, had during the war completely exposed their true nature—the nature of criminal plunderers, blinded by limitless greed and paralyzed by want of talent. The appetites for conquest of the governing clique grew in proportion as the people began to realize its complete inability to cope with the most elementary problems of warfare, of industry and supplies in war time. Simultaneously, the misery of the people grew, deepened, became more and more acute—a natural result of the war multiplied by the criminal anarchy of the Rasputin Czarism.

In the depths of the great masses, among people who may have never been reached by a word of propaganda, a profound bitterness accumulated under the stress of events. Meantime the foremost ranks of the proletariat were finishing digesting the new events. The Socialist proletariat of Russia came to after the shock of the nationalist fall of the most influential part of the International, and decided that new times call us not to let up, but to increase our revolutionary struggle.

The present events in Petrograd and Moscow are a result of this internal preparatory work.

A disorganized, compromised, disjointed government on top. An utterly demoralized army. Dissatisfaction, uncertainty and fear among the propertied classes. At the bottom, among the masses, a deep bitterness. A proletariat numerically stronger than ever, hardened in the fire of events. All this warrants the statement that we are witnessing the beginning of the Second Russian Revolution. Let us hope that many of us will be its participants.

**Novy Mir, New York**

**March 13, 1917.**

# TWO FACES

## (Internal Forces of The Russian Revolution)

Let us examine more closely what is going on.

Nicholas has been dethroned, and according to some information, is under arrest. The most conspicuous Black Hundred leaders have been arrested. Some of the most hated have been killed. A new Ministry has been formed consisting of Octobrists, Liberals and the Radical Kerensky. A general amnesty has been proclaimed.

All these are facts, big facts. These are the facts that strike the outer world most. Changes in the higher government give the bourgeoisie of Europe and America an occasion to say that the revolution has won and is now completed.

The Czar and his Black Hundred fought for their power, for this alone. The war, the imperialistic plans of the Russian bourgeoisie, the interests of the Allies, were of minor importance to the Czar and his clique. They were ready at any moment to conclude peace with the Hohenzollerns and Hapsburgs, to free their most loyal regiment for war against their own people.

The Progressive Bloc \* of the Duma mistrusted the Czar and his Ministers. This Bloc consisted of various parties of the Russian bourgeoisie. The Bloc had two aims: one, to conduct the war to a victorious end; another, to secure internal reforms: more order, control, accounting. A victory is necessary for the Russian bourgeoisie to conquer markets, to increase their territories, to get rich. Reforms are necessary primarily to enable the Russian bourgeoisie to win the war.

The Progressive imperialistic Bloc wanted *peaceful* reforms. The liberals intended to exert a Duma pressure on the monarchy and to keep it in check with the aid of the governments of Great Britain and France. They did not want a revolution. They knew that a revolution, bringing the working masses to the front, would be a menace to their domination, and primarily a menace to their imperialistic plans. The labouring masses, in the cities and in the villages, and even in the army itself, want peace. The liberals know it. This is why they have been enemies of the revolution all these years. A few months ago Miliukov declared in the Duma: "If a revolution were necessary for victory, I would prefer no victory at all".

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\* The Progressive Bloc was formed in the Duma in 1915. It included a number of liberal and conservative factions, together with the Cadets, and was opposed to the government. Its programme was a Cabinet responsible to the Duma.

Yet the liberals are now in power — through the Revolution. The bourgeois newspapermen see nothing but this fact. Miliukov, already in his capacity as a Minister of Foreign Affairs, has declared that the revolution has been conducted in the name of a victory over the enemy, and that the new government has taken upon itself to continue the war to a victorious end. The New York Stock Exchange interpreted the Revolution in this specific sense. There are clever people both on the Stock Exchange and among the bourgeois newspapermen. Yet they are all amazingly stupid when they come to deal with mass-movements. They think that Miliukov manages the revolution, in the same sense as they manage their banks or news offices. They see only the liberal governmental reflection of the unfolding events, they notice only the foam on the surface of the historical torrent.

The long pent-up dissatisfaction of the masses has burst forth so late, in the thirty-second month of the war, not because the masses were held by police barriers — those barriers had been badly shattered during the war — but because all liberal institutions and organs, together with their Social - Patriotic shadows, were exerting an enormous influence over the least enlightened elements of the workingmen, urging them to keep order and discipline in the name of "patriotism". Hungry women were already walking out into the streets, and the workingmen were getting ready to uphold them by a general strike, while the liberal bourgeoisie, according to news reports still issued proclamations and delivered speeches to check the movement — resembling that famous heroine of Dickens who tried to stem the tide of the ocean with a broom.

The movement, however, took its course, from below, from the workingmen's quarters. After hours and days of uncertainty, of shooting, of skirmishes, the army joined in the revolution, from below, from the best of the soldier masses. The old government was powerless, paralyzed, annihilated. The Czar fled from the capital "to the front". The Black Hundred bureaucrats crept, like cockroaches, each into his corner.

Then, and only then, came the Duma's turn to act. The Czar had attempted in the last minute to dissolve it. And the Duma would have obeyed, "following the example of former years", had it been free to adjourn. The capitals, however, were already dominated by the revolutionary people, the same people that had walked out into the streets despite the wishes of the liberal bourgeoisie. The army was with the people. Had not the bourgeoisie attempted to organize its own government, a revolutionary government would have emerged from the revolutionary working masses. The Duma of June 3rd \*\* would never have

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\*\* June Third, 1907, was the day on which, after the dissolution of the First and Second Dumas, the Czar's government, in defiance of the Constitution, promulgated a new electoral law which eliminated from the Russian quasi-Parliament large groups of democratic voters, thus securing a "tame" majority obedient to the command of the gov-

dared to seize the power from the hands of Czarism. But it did not want to miss the chance offered by interregnum: the monarchy had disappeared, while a revolutionary government was not yet formed. Contrary to all their part, contrary to their own policies and against their will, the liberals found themselves in possession of power.

Miliukov now declares Russia will continue the war "to the end". It is not easy for him so to speak: he knows that his words are apt to arouse the indignation of the masses against the new government. Yet he had to speak them — for the sake of the London, Paris and American Stock Exchanges. It is quite possible that he cabled his declaration for foreign consumption only, and that he concealed it from his own country.

Miliukov knows very well that *under the given conditions he cannot continue the war, crush Germany, dismember Austria, occupy Constantinople and Poland.*

The masses have revolted, demanding bread and peace. The appearance of a few liberals at the head of the government has not fed the hungry, has not healed the wounds of the people. To satisfy the most urgent, the most acute needs of the people, *peace* must be restored. The liberal imperialistic Bloc does not dare to speak of peace. They do not do it, first, on account of the Allies. They do not do it, further, because the liberal bourgeoisie is to a great extent responsible before the people for the present war. The Miliukovs and Gutchkovs, not less than the Romanov camarilla, have thrown the country into this monstrous imperialistic adventure. To stop the war, the return to the pre-war misery would mean that they have to account to the people for this undertaking. The Miliukovs and Gutchkovs are afraid of the liquidation of the war not less than they were afraid of the revolution.

This is their aspect in their new capacity, as the government of Russia. They are compelled to continue the war, and they can have no hope of victory; they are afraid of the people, and people do not trust them.

This is how Karl Marx characterized a similar situation:

"From the very beginning ready to betray the people and to compromise with the crowned representatives of the old regime, because the bourgeoisie itself belongs to the old world;.....keeping a place at the steering wheel of the revolution not because the people were behind

ernment. To say "The Duma of June Third" is equivalent to saying: "a Duma dominated by representatives of rich land-owners and big business," generally working hand in hand with autocracy, though pretending to be representatives of the people. In the Duma of June Third, the Octobrists and all parties to the right of them were with the government, the Constitutional Democrats (Cadets) and all parties to the left of them were in the opposition.

them, but because the people pushed them forward;..... having no faith in themselves, no faith in the people; grumbling against those above, trembling before those below; selfish towards both fronts and aware of their selfishness; revolutionary in the face of conservatives, and conservative in the face of revolutionists, with no confidence in their own slogans and with phrases instead of ideas; frightened by the world's storm and exploiting the world's storm — vulgar through lack of originality, and original only in vulgarity; making profitable business out of their own desires, with no initiative, with no vocation for world-wide historic work..... a cursed senile creature condemned to direct and abuse in his own senile interests the first youthful movements of a powerful people — a creature with no eyes, with no ears, with no teeth with nothing whatever — this is how the Prussian bourgeoisie stood at the steering wheel of the Prussian state after the March revolution."

These words of the great master give a perfect picture of the Russian liberal bourgeoisie, as it stands at the steering wheel of the government after *our* March revolution. "With no faith in themselves with no faith in the people, with no eyes, with no teeth."..... This is their political face.

Luckily for Russia and Europe, there is another face to the Russian Revolution, a genuine face: the cables have brought the news that the Provisional Government is opposed by a Workmen's Committee which has already raised a voice of protest against the liberal attempt to rob the Revolution and to deliver the people to the monarchy.

Should the Russian Revolution stop to-day as the representatives of liberalism advocate, to-morrow the reaction of the Czar, the nobility and the bureaucracy would gather power and drive Miliukov and Gutchkov from their insecure ministerial trenches, as did the Prussian reaction years ago with representatives of Prussian liberalism. But the Russian Revolution will not stop. The time will come, when the Revolution will make a clean sweep of the bourgeois liberals blocking its way, as it is now making a clean sweep of the Czarist reaction.

**Novy Mir, New York**  
**March 17, 1917.**

# THE GROWING CONFLICT

An open conflict between the forces of the Revolution, headed by the city proletariat and the anti-revolutionary liberal bourgeoisie temporarily at the head of the government, is more and more impending. It cannot be avoided. Of course, the liberal bourgeoisie and the quasi-Socialists of the vulgar type will find a collection of very touching slogans as to "national unity" against class divisions; yet no one has ever succeeded in removing social contrasts by conjuring with words or in checking the natural progress of revolutionary struggle.

The internal history of unfolding events is known to us only in fragments, through casual remarks in the official telegrams. But even now it is apparent that on two points the revolutionary proletariat is bound to oppose the liberal bourgeoisie with ever-growing determination.

The first conflict has already arisen around the question of the form of government. The Russian bourgeoisie needs a monarchy. In all the countries pursuing an imperialistic policy, we observe an unusual increase of personal power. The policy of world usurpations, secret treaties and open treachery requires independence from Parliamentary control and a guarantee against changes in policies caused by the change of Cabinets. Moreover, for the propertied classes the monarchy is the most secure ally in its struggle against the revolutionary onslaught of the proletariat.

In Russia both these causes are more effective than elsewhere. The Russian bourgeoisie finds it impossible to deny the people universal suffrage, well aware that this would arouse opposition against the Provisional Government among the masses, and give prevalence to the left, the more determined wing of the proletariat in the Revolution. Even that monarch of the reserve, Michael Alexandrovitch, understands that he cannot reach the throne without having promised "universal, equal, direct and secret suffrage." It is the more essential for the bourgeoisie to create right now a monarchic counterbalance against the deepest social-revolutionary demands of the working masses. *Formally*, in words, the bourgeoisie has agreed to leave the question of a form of government to the discretion of the Constituent Assembly. Practically, however, the Octobrist-Cadet Provisional Government will turn all the preparatory work for the Constituent Assembly into a campaign in favour of a monarchy against a Republic. The character of the Constituent Assembly will largely depend upon the character of those who convoked it. It is evident, therefore, that right now the revolutionary proletariat will have to set up its own organs, the Councils of Workingmen's, Soldiers' and Peasants' Deputies, against the executive organs of

*the Provisional Government.* In this struggle the proletariat ought to unite about itself the rising masses of the people, with one aim in view—*to seize governmental power.* Only a Revolutionary Labour Government will have the desire and ability to give the country a thorough democratic cleansing during the work preparatory to the Constituent Assembly, to reconstruct the army from top to bottom, to turn it into a *revolutionary militia* and to show the poorer peasants in practice that their only salvation is in a support of a revolutionary labour regime. A Constituent Assembly convoked after such preparatory work will truly reflect the revolutionary, creative forces of the country and become a powerful factor in the further development of the Revolution.

The second question that is bound to bring the internationally inclined Socialist proletariat in opposition to the imperialistic liberal bourgeoisie, is *the question of war and peace.*

Novy Mir, New York

March 19, 1917.

# WAR OR PEACE?

The question of chief interest, now, to the governments and the peoples of the world is, What will be the influence of the Russian Revolution on the War? Will it bring peace nearer? Or will the revolutionary enthusiasm of the people swing towards a more vigorous prosecution of the war?

This is a great question. On its solution depends not only the outcome of the war, but the fate of the Revolution itself.

In 1905, Miliukov, the present militant Minister of Foreign Affairs, called the Russo-Japanese war an adventure and demanded its immediate cessation. This was also the spirit of the liberal and radical press. The strongest industrial organizations favoured immediate peace in spite of unequalled disasters. Why was it so? Because they expected internal reforms. The establishment of a Constitutional system, a parliamentary control over the budget and the state finances, a better school system and, especially, an increase in the land possessions of the peasants, would, they hoped, increase the prosperity of the population and create a *vast internal market* for Russian industry. It is true that even then, twelve years ago, the Russian bourgeoisie was ready to usurp land belonging to others. It hoped, however, that abolition of feudal relations in the village would create a more powerful market than the annexation of Manchuria or Korea.

The democratization of the country and liberation of the peasants, however, turned out to be a slow process. Neither the Czar, nor the nobility, nor the bureaucracy were willing to yield any of their prerogatives. Liberal exhortations were not enough to make them give up the machinery of the state and their land possessions. A revolutionary onslaught of the masses was required. This the bourgeoisie did not want. The agrarian revolts of the peasants, the ever growing struggle of the proletariat and the spread of insurrections in the army caused the liberal bourgeoisie to fall back into the camp of the Czarist bureaucracy and reactionary nobility. Their alliance was sealed by the *coup d'etat* of June 3rd, 1907. Out of this *coup d'etat* emerged the Third and the Fourth Dumas.

The peasants received no land. The administrative system changed only in name, not in substance. The development of an internal market consisting of prosperous farmers, after the American fashion, did not take place. The capitalist classes, reconciled with the regime of June 3rd, turned their attention to the usurpation of foreign markets. A new era of Russian imperialism ensued, an imperialism accompanied by a disorderly financial and military system and by insatiable appetites. Gutchkov, the present War Minister, was formerly a member of the Committee of National Defense, helping to make the army and the navy



complete. Miliukov, the present Minister of Foreign Affairs, worked out a programme of world conquests which he advocated on his trips to Europe. Russian imperialism and its Octobrist and Cadet representatives bear a great part of the responsibility for the present war.

By the grace of the Revolution which they had not wanted and which they had fought, Gutchkov and Miliukov are now in power. For the continuation of the war, for victory? Of course! They are the same persons who had dragged the country into the war for the sake of the interests of capital. All their opposition to Czarism had its source in their unsatisfied imperialist appetites. So long as the clique of Nicholas II, was in power, the interests of the dynasty and of the reactionary nobility were prevailing in Russian foreign affairs. This is why Berlin and Vienna had hoped to conclude a separate peace with Russia. Now, purely imperialist interests have superseded the Czarist interests; pure imperialism is written on the banner of the Provisional Government. "The Government of the Czar is gone," the Miliukovs and Gutchkovs say to the people, "now you must shed your blood for the common interests of the entire nation." Those interests the imperialists understand as the reincorporation of Poland, the conquest of Galicia, Constantinople, Armenia, Persia.

This transition from an imperialism of the dynasty and the nobility to an imperialism of a purely bourgeois character, can never reconcile the Russian proletariat to the war. An international struggle against the world slaughter and imperialism are now our task more than ever. The last despatches which tell of anti-militarist propaganda in the streets of Petrograd show that our comrades are bravely doing their duty.

*The imperialistic boasts of Miliukov to crush Germany, Austria and Turkey are the most effective and most timely aid for the Hohenzollerns and Hapsburgs.....Miliukov will now serve as a scare-crow in their hands. The liberal imperialist government of Russia has not yet started reform in its own army, yet it is already helping the Hohenzollerns to raise the patriotic spirit and to mend the shattered "national unity" of the German people. Should the German proletariat be given a right to think that all the Russian people and the main force of the Russian Revolution, the proletariat, are behind the bourgeois government of Russia, it would be a terrific blow to the men of our trend of mind, the revolutionary Socialists of Germany. To turn the Russian proletariat into patriotic cannon fodder in the service of the Russian liberal bourgeoisie would mean to throw the German working masses into the camp of the chauvinists and for a long time to halt the progress of a revolution in Germany.*

The prime duty of the revolutionary proletariat in Russia is to show that there is *no power* behind the evil imperialist will of the liberal bourgeoisie. The Russian Revolution has to show the entire world its real face.

*The further progress of the revolutionary struggle in Russia and the creation of a Revolutionary Labour Government supported by the people will be a mortal blow to the Hohenzollerns because it will give a powerful stimulus to the revolutionary movement of the German proletariat and of the labour masses of all the other countries. If the first Russian Revolution of 1905 brought about revolutions in Asia — in Persia, Turkey, China— the Second Russian Revolution will be the beginning of a powerful social-revolutionary struggle in Europe. Only this struggle will bring real peace to the blood-drenched world.*

No, the Russian proletariat will not allow itself to be harnessed to the chariot of Miliukov imperialism. The banner of Russian Social-Democracy is now, more than ever before, glowing with bright slogans of inflexible Internationalism:

**Down with the imperialist robbers !**

**Long live a Revolutionary Workers' and Peasants' Government!**

**Long live Peace and the Brotherhood of Nations!**

**Novy Mir, New York,**

**March 20, 1917.**

# LEON TROTSKY

## MAY DAY 1916

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In a society where the very basis of life — which is the process of production — remains without planned organization, all social relations sweep, in the final analysis, over the heads of the people. It is precisely in this sense that the War came. It took place only as the extreme expression of the anarchy and irrationality of the whole capitalist system.

If at the outset, this war did not enter into the conscious plans and calculations of the private property owners as a "continuation of politics by other means", then in the course of the last year, the consequences of this war have swept far above the heads of the propertied classes. And they, by the way, are in all countries represented in the seats of power by mediocrities and nonentities, as if to underscore all the more glaringly how spiritually impotent the bourgeois world is in the face of events, the greatest on record, to which it has itself given birth in its headlong, blind forward rush.

Of this society, based on anarchy, and whose destinies are slipping out of its own hands, the proletariat is a component part. The Socialist movement has, in theory, foreseen this war, and has forecast in the main its social consequences. But when the war broke out, it confronted the working masses not as a lawful historical event, not as a new political condition of the inimical capitalist society, but rather as a catastrophe that has descended from the outside upon the "nation" as a whole.

This temporary confusion of the masses in the face of the unexampled sanguinary explosion of capitalist anarchy has made the ruling classes brimful of self-confidence. But they gained self-confidence only from the moment when it became clear to them that the leading organizations of the world working class were utterly incapable of coping with the meaning and content of the unfolding events and had joined with the ruling classes almost automatically, as if involved were a fire or an earthquake, i.e., some natural, mechanical catastrophe. This "defensive" alliance with the capitalist state at a time when it was subjected to its supreme historical test, the product of its handiwork, already comprised the greatest ideological and political self-abasement on record.

But this self-abasement, most glaringly evident in Germany where the questions of attitude toward capitalist society had been most cle-

arly posed theoretically, this political self-prostration still lacked an adequate ideological form in order that the Socialist proletariat should drain to the dregs its cup of degradation.

The publicists and theoreticians of the Second International have worked might and main to demean the thought of Socialism down to the level of its present political role. Last year's May Day represented the low point in this process of decadence, degradation and treachery. In all languages of Europe the social-patriotic press explained to the proletariat why May Day — the traditional day of protest against militarism — had, on that occasion, to become the day of its national apotheosis. And these preachments met with virtually no resistance.

\* \* \* \*

The emancipation of the proletariat from the dominion of clerico-feudal and later of liberal-bourgeois superstitions and prejudices had taken place slowly, gradually. In the end, Socialism became everywhere for the working class the banner of its spiritual liberation and the herald of its physical emancipation. The loyalty which the working class had formerly bestowed on the Church and the "fatherland" became concentrated on its class organizations, a loyalty illumined by class-consciousness.

But the bourgeois fatherland succeeded in making the class organization of the proletariat its ideological captive. And this has become revealed on a scale and in forms no one had expected.

After the national state had mobilized the proletariat spiritually as well as physically, the internationalist counter-mobilization has unquestionably taken place slower than many of us had hoped for, and in any case, slower than we wish. The immediate reason for it is the savage struggle for self-preservation that social-patriotism wages, relying on state coercion and utilizing all the resources of lies and deception.

But the basic reason is to be found in the depth of that crisis which must reach maturity in mass consciousness before it expresses itself in action. The proletariat can resolve the question of its attitude toward the events in no other way except through action — these events which started by breaking the spine of the Second International and which can end in breaking the foundations of bourgeois law and order.

For the Socialist Parliamentarian or publicist the change of fronts frequently finds its expression in — and is limited by — a formal "hostility" to the war and in refusing to accept any responsibility for it. But for the class as a whole, conscious of how much stands or falls with it, counter-mobilization means the task of **revolutionary action**.

Cognizance of this fact is what actually underlies the ideological war between the revolutionary internationalists and the social-patriotic allies of militarism. For a section of the top Socialist leadership pacifism means a withdrawal to the sidelines and watchful passivity. For the masses pacifism means a time for thinking things over, a stage on the road from slavish patriotism to internationalist action.

Counter-mobilization, which corresponds to the greatest of historical tasks, is taking place slower than we wish it. Nevertheless it is taking place so systematically and lawfully as to leave no room for scepticism..... We are growing stronger. Next year we shall be stronger than this year. The growth of our power will no longer be checked by anything or anybody.

(Excerpts as published in "The Militant", April 23, 1951.)

**Nashe Slovo**

**May 1, 1916.**



# SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT OF RUSSIA

*(This is the first chapter of Trotsky's introduction to the German edition of "Our Revolution". It was written in 1908-9. It was published in The New International, November 1942.)*

## The Czarist State and Capitalism

Our revolution\* has killed our "originality". It has shown that our history has created no special laws for us. And yet the revolution in Russia bears a quite peculiar character, the result of the peculiarities of our social and historical development.

It is not necessary to debate the metaphysical question of whether we are dealing, in the comparison of Russia with Western Europe, with a "qualitative" or a "quantitative" difference; but it is indubitable that the basic feature of Russian social development is its slowness and its primitiveness. Actually, the Russian state is not much younger than the European states. The commencement of Russian state life is put by the chronicles at the year 862, but the extremely slow tempo of economic development, conditioned by the unfavourable natural position of the country and the low density of the population, held up the process of social differentiation and stamped our whole history with the hallmark of the primitive.

It is hard to say what the life of the Russian state would have been had it developed in isolation, only under the influence of internal tendencies. Suffice it that this was not the case. Russian social life — the further it proceeded, the more this was so — was subjected to the continuous pressure of the more highly developed social and state relationships of Western Europe. Since state relations to other countries played an outstanding role

\* It is a question here of the revolution of 1905 and of the changes that it brought about in the life of the Russian state and society: of the formation of parties, the rise of Parliament, the inauguration of open political struggle etc.

under conditions of poorly-developed trade, so also did the social influence of Russia make itself felt primarily through the medium of military technique.

The Russian state, which rose on a primitive economic foundation, came into conflict with state organizations which had developed on a higher economic foundation. Here two possibilities were presented: either the Russian state succumbed in the struggle with the latter, as the "Golden Horde" succumbed in the struggle against the Muscovite empire, or else it outstrips the development of its own economic conditions by absorbing, under pressure from abroad, a relatively large portion of the national resources. For the first solution, Russian economy already proved to be **too far** from primitive. The state was not destroyed, but began to grow by a terrific exertion of the economic forces of the nation.

Up to a certain degree, what has just been said applies of course also to every other European state. But the latter based themselves in their mutual struggles upon approximately equal economic foundations; hence their development did not have to sustain so mighty an **external** pressure.

The struggle of the Muscovite empire against the Crimean and Nogai Tatars called forth a tremendous exertion of forces; but obviously not greater than the century-long struggle of England against France. It was not the Tatars who compelled the land of the Russ to introduce firearms and to create standing Guard regiments; it was not the Tatars who thereafter caused the institution of cavalry and infantry regiments. It was the pressure of Lithuania, Poland and Sweden. In order to be able to exist alongside of better-equipped foes, the Russian state was compelled to create special trades and arts, to employ military experts, to provide counterfeiters for the state, powder manufacturers, text books on fortifications, to found naval schools and factories, to establish privy councillors. Whereas the military instructors and the privy councillors could be ordered from abroad,



the material resources had to be assembled at any cost from the country itself.

The history of Russian state economy is an unbroken chain of essentially heroic efforts, aimed at creating the resources for the military establishment. The whole governmental apparatus was built up and constantly re-constructed for fiscal purposes. It was its task to seize every tiny bit of accumulated labour and monopolize it.

In its search for resources, the government recoiled from nothing: it imposed despotic and always disproportionately high taxes upon the peasants, taxes to which the population could not accustom itself; it introduced the joint responsibility of the community; by pleading and threatening, by exhortation and violence, it extorted the money of the merchants and the monasteries. The peasants fled in all directions, the merchants emigrated abroad, and the censuses of the seventeenth century show a constant decline of the population. Out of a budget of a million and a half in that century, some 85% was expended for the army. At the beginning of the eighteenth century, Peter was forced by the cruel reverses that he suffered to reorganize the infantry on a new model and to create a fleet. In the second half of the century the budget already reached the figure of sixteen to twenty millions, with from 60 to 70% expended for the army and the fleet. These expenditures did not sink below 50% even under Nicholas I. In the middle of the nineteenth century, the Crimean War brought Czarism into conflict with the most powerful economic states of Europe—England and France—and the result was a complete reorganization of the army on the basis of universal military service. In the semi-emancipation of the peasants in 1861, the fiscal and military requirements of the state played a decisive role.

But the internal resources did not suffice. As early as Catherine II, the government found it possible to obtain foreign loans. The European stock exchange thenceforward became increasingly a principal source of the financial operations of Czarism. The accumulation

of vast sums of capital on the Western European markets, which pushed down the rate of interest and sought favourable fields of investment, was thereafter to have a fateful influence upon the political development of Russia. The accelerated growth of the state organization now finds its expression not only in the excessive raising of indirect taxes, but also in the feverish increase of the state debt. In the years 1898 to 1908 it rose 19% and at the end of this period it already reached the figure of nine billion rubles. The extent of the dependency of the state apparatus of absolutism upon Rothschild and Mendelsohn may be seen from the fact that interest payment on the debt now swallows something like a third of the net income of the state treasury. In the budget provisions for 1908, the expenditures for the army and the fleet, together with the interest on the public debt and the costs of liquidating the war amount to 1,018,000,000 rubles, that is, about 40·5% of the total state budget.

Because the state, under the pressure of Western Europe, devoured a disproportionately large portion of the national production, it restricted the vital sources of the privileged classes and hampered their development, which was slow enough as it was. But not only that. It threw itself upon the meagre means of existence of the cultivator, drove him away from the clump of earth he had hardly gotten used to living on, and in this way hampered the growth of the population and the development of the productive forces. Thus did the state protract the already slow differentiation of the estates by swallowing an excessive portion of the **surplus** product, and by appropriating a large portion of the **indispensable** product, it destroyed the very productive forces on which it based itself.

At the same time, however, the state, in order to function, needed the hierarchical estates organization. That is why, while undermining the economic foundations of its growth, it endeavoured at the same time to accelerate its development by state measures, and by employing its own power, to direct this process along lines beneficial to it.

In the interplay of the social forces of Russia, the diagonals moved far more in the direction of state power than was the case in Western European history. That exchange of services, at the expense of the working people, between the state and the upper social groups, expressed in the distribution of rights and duties, of burdens and privileges, brought the nobility and the clergy much fewer advantages in Russia than in the mediaeval feudal states of Western Europe. Nevertheless, it is a downright exaggeration, a complete destruction of all perspective, when Miliukov asserts in his history of Russian culture that whereas in the West it was the estates that created the states, with us it was the state power that created the estates in its own interest.

Estates cannot be produced by legislative or administrative means. Before a social group, with the aid of the state power, can crystallize out as an estate, it must already have been formed with all its social advantages. It cannot be manufactured according to an arbitrarily established hierarchical scale or according to a statute of the Legion of Honour.

What is indubitable is only the fact that in its relationship to the Russian privileged estates, Czarism always enjoyed an incomparably greater independence than did European absolutism which grew out of the estates-monarchy.

Absolutism attained the peak of its power when the bourgeoisie, which has raised itself on the shoulders of the third estate, was able to maintain itself as an equal counter-weight to the feudal nobility. Such a situation, in which the ruling classes kept themselves politically balanced, assured the state organization the greatest independence. Louis XIV used to say: "L'etat, C'est moi!"\* The absolute monarchy of Prussia appeared to Hegel as an aim in itself, as the realization of the idea of the state in general.

Czarism, in its endeavours to create a centralized apparatus of power, did not so much have to repress the

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\* "I am the state!"

claims of the privileged estates, as it had to battle against barbarity, the poverty and the atomized state of the country, whose different parts lead an independent economic life. It was not the equilibrium of the economically ruling classes, as in the West, but their social weakness and political nullity that transformed bureaucratic absolutism into a self-sufficient organization. In this respect, Czarism appears as the intermediate form between European absolutism and Asiatic despotism — perhaps with a greater resemblance to the latter.

But while semi-Asiatic conditions made Czarism an autocratic organization, European technique and European capital provided this organization with all the resources of a European great power. This gave Czarism the possibility of interfering in all the political relationships of Europe, in which its fist began to play a decisive role. In 1815, Alexander I comes to Paris, restores the Bourbons to power and himself becomes the pillar of the "Holy Alliance". In 1848, Nicholas I obtains a splendid loan for the suppression of the European revolution, and sends Russian soldiers to suppress the insurrectionary Hungarians. The European bourgeoisie hoped that the Russian armies would continue to serve it against the socialist proletariat, just as it had formerly served European despotism against the bourgeoisie.

But historical development struck out in another direction. Absolutism shattered itself against capitalism, which it had itself so zealously promoted.

In the pre-capitalist epoch, the influence of European economy upon Russian economy was necessarily limited. The natural character of Russian economy protected it from the influence of higher forms of production. That is also why the structure of our estates did not reach complete development. But when in Europe itself the capitalist relationships predominated, when mobile capital became the missionary of the new economy and absolutism became the assistant of European capitalism out of sheer self preservation, the situation was completely changed.

Those "critical" socialists who have lost their understanding of the significance of the state power for the socialist revolution, can perceive even from the example of the unsystematic and barbaric activity of Russian autocracy the tremendous role that the state power can play on the purely economic field when it is working by and large in the direction of historical evolution.

By becoming the historical instrument of the capitalization of Russia's economic relations, Czarism strengthened its own position primarily.

In the period when the bourgeois classes, now pushed to the foreground, began to feel the need of the juridical and political institutions of the West, Czarism, aided by European technique and European capital, became the greatest capitalist enterpriser, the banker, the proprietor of the railroads and of the whiskey shops. It based itself on a centralized bureaucratic apparatus which, while completely worthless for the regulation of the new relationships, was able to develop a colossal energy in the realm of merciless suppression. The vast expanse of the country was conquered by the telegraph system, which invested the activity of the administration with a certain security, uniformity and speed, while the railroads permitted it to concentrate military power from one point in the country to another in a short time. The governments of the West before the revolution, knew virtually no railroad and no telegraph system. In addition, Russian absolutism had a tremendous army at its disposal, and if it did not meet the serious tests of the Russo-Japanese war, it nevertheless continued to be adequate for domestic use. Neither the government of old France nor the European government of 1848 had such an enormous power at their disposal.

The military and financial forces of Russian absolutism not only blinded the European stock exchanges, they also crushed the Russian liberal bourgeoisie, depriving it of all faith in the possibility of measuring its strength in open combat with that of the government. The power of the old regime seemed to exclude any possibility of a Russian revolution.

In reality, however, it was the contrary that happened. The more centralized a state and the more independent it is from the ruling classes, the sooner does it transform itself into an organization which imagines itself an aim in itself and stands above society. The more substantial the military-financial forces of such an organization, the longer and more successful may be its struggle for existence. A centralized state with a budget of two billions, a debt of eight billions and a standing army of a million, can still maintain itself for some time after it has ceased to satisfy the most elementary requirements of social development — not only the many-sided requirements of the domestic administration but also those of external defence to which it owes originally its existence.

The administrative-military and financial power of absolutism, which enabled it to continue existing in contradiction to social development, therefore not only did not exclude the possibility of a revolution, as liberalism believed but rather made the revolution the only possible way out. At the same time, this revolution was assured in advance of an all the more radical character, the deeper absolutism dug the gulf between itself and the masses of the people who were drawn into the new economic development.

Russian Marxism may be proud that it alone made clear the direction of the historical process at a time when liberalism pursued a utopian "practicalism" and the revolutionary "Narodniki" (Populists) lived on phantasmagoria and faith in miracles.

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May Day 1916

The Social Development of Russia

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