

LEON TROTSKY'S THEORY OF PERMANENT REVOLUTION  
AND ITS INCORPORATION INTO  
LENIN'S PARTY PLATFORM IN 1917

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# TABLE OF CONTENTS

	Page
1. BACKGROUND OF THE THEORY OF PERMANENT REVOLUTION.....	1
2. THE REVOLUTION OF 1905 AND ITS PRACTICAL EXPERIENCE.....	7
3. WORLD WAR I AND ITS EFFECT ON LENIN'S THEORIES.....	29
4. REVISION OF LENIN'S THEORIES AFTER THE FEBRUARY REVOLUTION.....	40

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Part	Page
I. BACKGROUND OF THE THEORY OF PERMANENT REVOLUTION....	1
II. THE REVOLUTION OF 1905 AND ITS PRACTICAL EXPERIENCE.	7
III. WORLD WAR I AND ITS EFFECT ON LENIN'S THEORIES.....	29
IV. REVISION OF LENIN'S THEORIES AFTER THE FEBRUARY REVOLUTION .....	40
BIBLIOGRAPHY OF CITED WORKS.....	47
BIBLIOGRAPHY OF OTHER WORKS CONSULTED.....	49

## I. BACKGROUND OF THE THEORY OF PERMANENT REVOLUTION

The idea of permanent revolution was first formulated by Leon Trotsky in 1905. It was based upon an interpretation of Russian history which he found incompatible with Marx's arbitrary historical stages --- feudalism, capitalism, socialism. Trotsky maintained that in Russia these distinct phases would be combined into a continuous revolutionary process culminating in socialism. Consequently Russian socialists would not have to wait until capitalism had been established before beginning the struggle for socialism. Vladimir Lenin incorporated the basic premises of this theory into the Bolshevik party platform in 1917, and after the October revolution they were used to justify the immediate establishment of a dictatorship of the proletariat.

The purpose of this paper is to trace the evolution of the theory of permanent revolution from its conception in 1905 to its incorporation into Lenin's philosophy in 1917. In the process I shall indicate the practical revolutionary experiences which in 1905 made Trotsky's ideas valid and which in 1917 made them necessary.

*Isaac Deutscher, The Prophet Armed, (London: Oxford University Press, 1949), pp. 103f.*



The theoretical foundation for the theory of permanent revolution was provided by one of the foremost Marxist theoreticians, Alexander Helfand (Parvus), an emigrant Russian Jew of an internationalist position within the German Socialist Party.<sup>1</sup> In 1904, Leon Trotsky met Parvus in Vienna.. There developed a short, but intense, relationship out of which Trotsky's theory emerged.

Parvus held the traditional Marxist view that the nation-state had outlived its purpose, but he believed that the European upheaval would come in the near future. Here he differed from the majority of his colleagues, who were just then beginning to enjoy the fruits of legalistic socialist action within the German Government. Parvus placed emphasis on the increasing economic interdependence of the nations of Europe and especially on the economic importance of their colonies. The consolidation of the nation-state and the increasing economic barriers between these states could lead only to open conflict. The Russo-Japanese war, he believed, was the first of a series of like conflicts for survival.<sup>2</sup> The reason for the prolongation of this outdated system was the insufficient education of the toiling masses. He attributed this to the opportunism and passivity of the socialist leadership, who paid less attention to educating the proletariat in

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<sup>1</sup>He was a member of the revolutionary left-wing faction led by Rosa Luxemburg, which opposed the bureaucratic tendencies of the German socialist leadership. Bertram Wolfe, Three Who Made a Revolution, (Beacon Press: Boston, 1949), p.298.

<sup>2</sup>Isaac Deutscher, The Prophet Armed, (London: Oxford University Press, 1945), pp.103f.

its proper role than to securing time serving political demands. And he was not alone among the revolutionary left in also condemning its leadership for allowing petty-bourgeois ideas to infiltrate into the higher strata of the working class. For it was true that in western Europe at the turn of the century many social measures had been adopted and an increasingly high standard of living was evident for certain groups of workers.<sup>3</sup>

Thus Parvus turned to colonial upheaval to give impetus to the revolution. The most powerful and advanced European countries enslaved whole nations of backward peoples in order to maintain their capitalist system in operation. Like the European proletariat, these peoples were beginning to represent a revolutionary force (Parvus used as a basis for observation particularly the Indian and Chinese populations), and would soon be strong enough to rebel against their oppressors. As soon as this happened, the proletariat in Europe would awaken to the plight of capitalism and unite with its oppressed brothers to bring this stage to its conclusion.<sup>4</sup>

Parvus believed that the situation in Russia fitted into this pattern. Although Russia was, of course, an independent monarchy, it was economically dependent on western Europe, especially France. And since the revolutionary situation in Russia was most far advanced, it would probably be a Russian revolution which would set off the socialist revolution in

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<sup>3</sup>Ibid., pp. 104ff.

<sup>4</sup>Ibid., pp. 103-109.

Europe.<sup>5</sup> Parvus, however, keeping in mind Russia's feudalism, said nothing of a Russian socialist revolution. He did feel that a European socialist revolution could not fail to speed up the process of capitalism in Russia, and indeed the necessity of dealing with a socialist Europe would require certain immediate social reforms to be incorporated in a Russian bourgeois democracy.<sup>6</sup>

Trotsky adopted Parvus' view of the coming socialist upheaval in Europe, especially Russia's role in it. However, he went further to put forth certain ideas concerning Russia's history that he believed put her in a unique revolutionary position. Russia was a half-Asian, half-European country whose history was dominated by continual invasion from East and West. Although she had developed as an oriental despotism, increased pressure from the West had forced her to adopt western methods in order to protect herself. And, Trotsky believed, it was this military pressure from superior powers and not Russian society that had molded the state. The state bore the brunt of change. This exacted a high degree of energy and a great deal of wealth.

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<sup>5</sup>"The worldwide process of capitalist development leads to a political upheaval in Russia. This in its turn must have its impact on the political development of all capitalist countries. The Russian revolution will shake the bourgeois world.... And the Russian proletariat may well play the role of the vanguard of social revolution. Parvus quoted by Deutscher, p. 112.

<sup>6</sup>Ibid., p. 104.



A group of landowners, at one time independent princes, became completely dependent upon the state for protection while at the same time the state needed their wealth to resist external powers. This impeded the growth of wealth independent of the state and hampered the natural beginnings of capitalism. Therefore, capitalism, which in Europe was the chief antagonist of feudal society, was in Russia a child of the state encouraged for the purpose of defense.<sup>7</sup> Trotsky explained that the lack of private wealth which comes from capitalist industrialization forced the Russian state to turn to excess European capital in order to finance the degree of modernization necessary to maintain itself.<sup>8</sup>

It was Parvus' belief that Russia possessed no social class comparable to the concentrated mass of urban craftsmen who had formed the backbone of the French middle class and were responsible for the French revolution.<sup>9</sup> Trotsky went on to point out that the Russian town, like the Asian, was not a productive organ, but rather a military, and administrative unit. It neither accumulated wealth nor created a division of labor. The reason was the great expanse of thinly populated territory which relied on cottage craft and the village society.

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<sup>7</sup>Leon Trotsky, History of the Russian Revolution, trans. Max Eastman, (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1932), vol. III, pp. 365-372.

<sup>8</sup>Although the beginning of capitalism in Europe was similar to the beginning of capitalism in Russia, Trotsky felt that in Russia it did not arise from the free play of economic forces but was a forced change and therefore unnatural. This meant that Russian capitalism would differ from European at its base. Leon Trotsky, My Life, (New York: Schribner's Sons, 1931), pp. 221-224.

<sup>9</sup>Trotsky, History of ..., pp. 369-372.

These villages acted for the most part as autonomous entities, troubled by the city officials only in times of great stress, for food and military personnel. The advance of modern industry had no significant effect on the middle class as an independent force because most of the new industry was tied to foreign investment and controlled by the state. The bourgeoisie therefore did not represent an independent middle class tradition based on a common alliance against the government. However, industrialization financed by the government did suffice to bring together a working class body. Also, because Russia had entered the industrial scene late, she benefited from the most advanced western technology and her working class was quickly influenced by western socialist activity.<sup>10</sup>

From his association with Parvus, Trotsky gained a belief in the imminent European socialist revolution in which Russia would have a major part. In addition his own analysis of Russian history led him to reconsider the role of the bourgeoisie as a revolutionary force. He intimates at this point that in Russia the working class has more revolutionary potential than the bourgeoisie. These two ideas will become basic to his theory of permanent revolution after the revolution of 1905.

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<sup>10</sup>Ibid., pp. 228-230.

## II. THE REVOLUTION OF 1905 AND ITS PRACTICAL EXPERIENCE

It was not until a real revolutionary situation had developed in 1905 that Trotsky saw the necessity of a specific revision of Marxism. As an active participant in this uprising, Trotsky was made aware of the actual strength of the peasantry, the proletariat, and the bourgeoisie. The events of 1905 therefore provided concrete experience from which he drew when formulating his basic theory of permanent revolution. To understand Trotsky's attitude and also revisions made by Lenin in his main body of theory, it is necessary to examine the revolution of 1905 in some detail.

Conditions in Russia preceding the revolution of 1905 were fraught with growing unrest and political agitation. The rapid expansion of Russian industries in the 1890's, made possible by increased European loans, was succeeded by a period of depression in which industrial conflicts were intensified. 1903 witnessed an expansion of the working class movement both in scope and intensity. A strike in the Baku oil-fields in the summer of 1903 rapidly spread to Tiflis, Batum, and other Caucasian towns. In addition there were strikes in Kiev and Odessa and other southern cities. These

strikes are important for their intensity ( there was extensive street-fighting), but more particularly for their political nature. There were increasing demands for constitutional reforms, especially for a legislative body and a democratic constitution.<sup>1</sup>

At the same time the peasants were becoming active. In 1902, in some parts of Kharkov and Poltava provinces, raids and vandalism caused extensive destruction ( 54 manor houses were destroyed in Poltava and 28 in Kharkov). In addition student disorders and political assassinations spread.<sup>2</sup> All of this added to the growing demand for reform from liberal aristocrats. One of the measures which the government felt would release tension was a short victorious war. However, the Russo-Japanese war had different consequences.

The war which began in February, 1904 was a series of defeats for the Russian armies culminating in the battle at Muckden in the winter of 1905 and the destruction of the Russian fleet at Tuschima. Government prestige dropped greatly, especially among the educated classes. In order to avoid catastrophe and to divide the opposition, the government made certain limited concessions. In 1904, Prince Sviatopolk-Mirsky was put in charge of the Interior and an All- Zemstvo Congress was allowed to meet.<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>1</sup>William Henry Chamberlin, The Russian Revolution, 1917-1921, (New York: The Macmillan Company, 1935), vol.I. p. 46.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid., pp. 47f.

<sup>3</sup>The Zemstvo was an organization of the gentry which at one time laid a basis for a certain amount of self-government, but by 1900 their proposals and central organization were continually opposed by the government.



However, at the same time that the gentry was being appeased, the lower classes were in a state of increasing agitation. The first event of the revolution, popularly known as "Bloody Sunday", took place when the priest, Gapon, led a procession of working men in St. Petersburg to petition the Tsar for a solution to their grievances. The petition ended with the words: "If Thou wilt not answer our prayers we shall die here on the Square before Thy palace."<sup>4</sup> The guards fired upon the crowds when they would not disperse and caused between 200 and 1500 casualties.

The reaction to "Bloody Sunday" was an intensification of unrest, expressed in the cities by increasingly violent strikes in which 64.4 per cent of the strikers were involved in a political way. A climax was reached in October when on the twentieth a railroad strike reached three-fourths of a million workers. The strike was unusual for the predominance of political objectives -- free elections, constituent assembly, and amnesty for political prisoners.<sup>5</sup> By October 23, it began to turn into a general strike which reached even the white collar workers, lawyers, jurists, and several government officials. Up to this time the activity had had the active support, or at least the sympathy, of a majority

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<sup>4</sup>Quoted in Chamberlin, p.48. Father George Gapon was a member of Zubatov's police directed unionism, who had a real attachment to the people and a sincere desire to help them.

<sup>5</sup>Ibid., p.46.

of the middle class and some landowners.<sup>6</sup>

At this point the government played its hand and on the thirtieth, at Count Sergei Witte's suggestion, it issued a manifesto intended to pacify all but the most active revolutionaries. Among the provisions was the summoning of a Duma, an elected consultative body.

The most significant event of this period was the spontaneous formation of the St. Petersburg Soviet (the word in Russian means council). On October 26, between thirty and forty delegates of workers and opposition parties met at the Technological Institute. Although the leadership was primarily Menshevik, as a whole the body cut across political parties and worked as a single unit. Its primary purpose was to continue and co-ordinate the revolutionary movement wherever the rebellion had taken hold.<sup>7</sup> It had a short but brilliant career and brought Trotsky, still of the Menshevik faction, into prominence as a revolutionary leader. Although the Soviet organized the strikers and sent revolutionary proposals to the workers, the October manifesto had had its effect and the tide began to turn. The radicalism of the Soviet threw the gentry and landowners back into the arms of the government, and by the middle of December the Central Committee of the Soviet was safely imprisoned in the Peter and Paul Fortress.

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<sup>6</sup>E.H. Carr remarks that "employers often encouraged their workers to take part in political demonstrations and paid them for days of absence. The Bolshevik Revolution, 1917-1923, (New York: The Macmillan Company, 1951), vol. I, p.95.

<sup>7</sup>Trotsky, History of..., vol. I, pp.93-96. For a good description of the personalities involved in the Soviet in 1905, see N.N. Sukhanov, The Russian Revolution, (Oxford University Press, 1955).

However, the narrow franchise of the Duma, and the failure to deal adequately with the land question contributed to the growing unrest. The peasants were seriously involved in the crisis, but were independent of the workers organizations in the cities. In August peasants' delegates met near Moscow as a Constitutional Assembly of the All-Russian Peasants' Union. The main feature of their program was the abolition of private property in land. By November their activity had become more widespread and violent. A total of two thousand estates were looted or burned. The particular characteristic of this peasant movement was its class nature, which showed allegiance to the political philosophy of no particular revolutionary group, nor did it distinguish between friend or foe among the gentry. The peasants felt that the lack of land was the cause of all their hardships. It was not until the return of the peasant soldier at the end of 1905 that any political ideas were added to their platform.<sup>8</sup>

In St. Petersburg on November 15, a general strike was called to secure the eight-hour day. It was not effective and was followed by lockouts of the workers, employers' action which pointed up dramatically the changed character of the revolt. The classes were now divided and the government forces were able to take advantage of the disunity to restore order, though not without considerable bloodshed. On December 19, the Moscow workers in a last desperate effort

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<sup>8</sup> Chamberlin, pp. 47-49.



went to the barricades, led primarily by Bolshevik agitators. This too was suppressed and the revolutionaries went back underground to reunite their forces.<sup>9</sup>

Both the success and failure of the revolutionary upheaval in 1905 brought forth increased theoretical speculation on tactical proposals for the next revolt. Both Trotsky and Lenin spent many hours writing polemical and theoretical works on the events just witnessed. The conclusions which they drew, as will be seen below, were in part manifested from a differing world view. Trotsky was above all a worshipper of reason, his intellectual route being that of critical rationalization. This enabled him to grasp the most varied facts and link them together to a core generalization without losing sight of his directing principle. So it was with his theory of permanent revolution, an idea which he propounded until his death. Lenin, a revolutionary pragmatist, could never lose sight of a given situation. Truth was to him everywhere concrete. Thus the dictatorship of the proletariat and the peasantry was a truth as long as it was a necessity. Trotsky perhaps gazed upon a distant goal too fixedly, thereby overlooking present necessities, but by looking into the distance he saw the straightest path.

While Trotsky was in the Peter and Paul fortress awaiting trial, he wrote the book, Our Revolution, stating what he

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<sup>9</sup>Ibid., pp. 48-51.



determined to be the revolution's practical and theoretical results. This is the first time he formulated fully the theory of permanent revolution.<sup>10</sup> We have already mentioned Trotsky's analysis of Russian history. Those conclusions were now bolstered by the events of the 1905 revolution itself. The experience of 1905 showed that the bourgeoisie was both too feeble and too frightened of the proletariat to direct its own war against autocracy. It realized its weakness as a class and was forced to turn back to the autocracy for protection against the socially more mature proletariat. The proletariat, on the other hand, was more advanced than, for example, its counterpart in Germany in 1848, for it had already assimilated the teachings of European socialism. Its organization and social awareness, as seen by its boldness in 1905, promised its leadership in the coming revolution. Once having seized power for the bourgeoisie, could this class then relinquish the government to its class enemies in order for them to restore a feudal regime under the guise of constitutionalism? Rather Trotsky felt that after

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<sup>10</sup>Trotsky explains: " This abstruse term (permanent revolution) represented the idea that the Russian revolution, whose immediate objectives were bourgeois in nature would not, however, stop when these objectives had been achieved. The revolution would not be able to solve its immediate bourgeois problems except by placing the proletariat in power. And the latter, upon assuming power, would not be able to confine itself to the bourgeois limits of the revolution.... The contradiction in the position of a workers' government in a backward country with an overwhelming majority of peasants can be solved only on an international scale, in the arena of the world proletarian revolution" quoted in Joseph Stalin, Leninism: Selected Writings, (New York: International Publishers, Company, Inc., 1942), p. 15.

the revolutionary proletariat had gained power, in the bourgeois-democratic stage, it would begin immediately to enact social legislation in keeping with its class consciousness. The bourgeois capitalists would be unwilling to accept such action. They would close down their factories. The proletarian leadership would then be forced to take over ownership of these factories, thereby perpetuating itself in power as a workers' and not a bourgeois government. This speculation was again the direct result of incidents in 1905.<sup>11</sup>

Trotsky did realize that a proletarian dictatorship would be a dictatorship of a minority, something he had only recently condemned with regard to Lenin's centralization plan.<sup>12</sup> Trotsky's world view, however, led him to believe that, with the majority of the European world under the control of the dictatorship of the proletariat, going back to Parvus, the workers of Russia would join hands with these more socially advanced workers. Out of their class alliance the gains of the Russian revolution would be perpetuated, and the process of socialization and industrialization in Russia accelerated.<sup>13</sup>

Trotsky was not here advocating a leap past the bourgeois

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<sup>11</sup>Wolfe, pp. 154ff.

<sup>12</sup>Trotsky was opposed to Lenin's plan for a revolutionary party made up of professional revolutionists while the masses and more elementary organizations would be controlled by this underground group of professionals. Trotsky took the side of the Mensheviks who wanted the Party to extend to these masses and subsidiary organizations.

<sup>13</sup>Deutscher, pp. 155-149.

stage. He believed that the revolution was not a series of specifically defined stages, but a continuous process in which phases would dove-tail and be telescoped into continuous revolutionary action. "Between the minimum and maximum programmes of social democracy, a revolutionary continuity is established. This is not a single stroke, it is not one day or one month, it is a whole historical epoch."<sup>14</sup>

Trotsky manifested an obvious mistrust of the peasantry which perhaps came from his anti-populist and pro-international Marxist ideals. He did believe that the peasantry was a distinct revolutionary force, evidenced by the growing land revolution in the late months of 1905. Nevertheless, he felt that as an independent revolutionary body, the peasantry was incapable of any long range theoretical ideas. He therefore concluded that it was the task of the educated proletariat to direct the revolutionary ardor of the peasantry as long as peasant demands were in accord with proletarian revolutionary interests. However, the proletariat should realize that, when the petty-bourgeois desires of the peasants were satisfied, they would become passive to the increased revolutionary activity of the workers. Later when the proletariat began to recognize certain of its revolutionary goals, for example the collectivization of agriculture, the peasantry would become reactionary. With the Russian revolution thus endangered, only a world-wide proletarian revolution could safeguard Russia's efforts.<sup>15</sup>

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<sup>14</sup>Trotsky as quoted by Carr, vol. I p.51.

<sup>15</sup>Deutscher, loc. cit.

The experience of 1905 had direct bearing upon Trotsky's view of the peasantry. He noted that it was in the towns that the revolution would receive its first impetus, and in the towns that revolutionary initiative would establish new workers' governments. The country masses would be drawn in at a later date by the revolutionary energy of the workers. "The proletariat will appear before the peasantry as its liberator."<sup>16</sup> In addition he realized that it was the peasant- in- uniform who had finally defeated the 1905 revolution by siding against the worker in favor of the Tsar. He therefore assumed that the conservatism of the peasantry would not allow it to take an independent stand, that only the radicalism of the working class could spur the peasant to action. For this purpose, he advocated that peasants' soviets be set up in the villages on the pattern of the workers' soviets in the cities. Trotsky was fully aware that the revolution could not succeed without the support of the peasant majority, and along with Lenin he advocated distinctly peasant measures such as nationalization of the land to lure them away from the bourgeoisie.<sup>17</sup>

At the same time that Trotsky was formulating these ideas, Lenin was incorporating into his program the practical results of 1905. The revolution had given him a basis for revising many of his former prejudices, particularly concerning the revolutionary capacity of the peasantry. In the

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<sup>16</sup>Trotsky quoted in Ibid., p. 155.

<sup>17</sup>Trotsky, History of..., vol. III, p. 393.



Development of Capitalism in Russia, 1899, Lenin had set out to show that the old Russian peasant commune was breaking down into divisions of petty-bourgeois and laboring peasants (those with land and those without). In order to meet with traditional Marxist theory, Lenin laid especial stress on the petty-bourgeois nature of the hatted villager. The growing peasant unrest in 1905, however, caused Lenin to recognize a hitherto latent revolutionary potential. While both he and Trotsky agreed that this potential must be harnessed, they disagreed on what was to be done. In 1905, when the Duma was called, Lenin found that the peasantry, for lack of a suitable political party<sup>18</sup>, elected representatives of bourgeois parties or, more significantly, members from its own midst. The radicalness of these peasant representatives can be seen in the words of one of them on the Duma floor:

We are told... that property is sacred, inviolable. In my opinion it cannot possibly be inviolable, nothing can be inviolable one the people will it.... Gentlemen of the gentry, you have stolen our land.... This is what the peasants who sent me here say: 'The land is ours, we have come here not to buy it, but to take it.'<sup>19</sup>

Indeed, if carefully perused, peasant social history is a record of long periods of abject passivity alternating with abortive, albeit violent, rebellions. Count Witte, one of the most able administrators of the period, admitted that "... the most important part of the Russian revolution of

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<sup>18</sup>Both the Bolsheviks and the Mensheviks refused to take part in the elections to the first Duma.

<sup>19</sup>Quoted in Wolfe, p.350.

1905 was... in the slogan of the peasantry: 'Give us land.'<sup>20</sup> To this end the Prime Minister, P.A. Stolypin, succeeded in instituting certain land reforms which he hoped would further tie a certain segment of the peasantry to the regime. At the Stockholm Conference in 1905, Lenin brought attention to this and concluded his remarks by calling for the radical measure, nationalization of land, intended to persuade the majority of the peasants to support the Bolshevik platform.<sup>21</sup> By nationalization Lenin referred to "the transfer of all land into State property. Property means the right to a rent, and the determination of the part of the state authority of the rules concerning possession and use of the land, which are valid for the entire state."<sup>22</sup> In other words Lenin meant this measure to be democratic and in keeping with the bourgeois phases, rather than the socialist.

More importantly, in his pamphlet, Two Tactics of Social Democracy in the Democratic Revolution, 1906, Lenin called for an alliance with the poorest peasantry as a measure necessary for the success of the bourgeois revolution. Lenin and Trotsky agreed on the necessity of combining the proletarian forces with the peasant. However, they were of diverse opinions as to the exact relation between the two classes. Lenin advocated an alliance in which a peasant party and a proletarian party would work in equal coalition, whereas

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<sup>20</sup> Trotsky, My Life, p.175.

<sup>21</sup> Vladimir Ilyich Lenin and Leon Trotsky, Proletarian Revolution in Russia, (New York: International Publishers Company, Inc., 1918), p.135.

<sup>22</sup> Ibid., pp.139f.

Trotsky believed that an enlightened proletariat should lead the peasantry.<sup>23</sup> One can assume that Lenin, for tactical reasons, did not articulate the desire that his party leadership should in actuality direct such an alliance. However, he did refer to such an idea several times. "We support the peasant movement to the end, but we ought to remember that this is the movement of another class, not that class which can and will achieve the socialist revolution."<sup>24</sup> This is only the first in a series of tactical manoeuvres in which Lenin advocated measures contrary to Trotsky's views while at the same time moving logically toward them.

The second tactic stressed in the pamphlet was "last but not least to carry the flames of revolution across Europe."<sup>25</sup> With this all Russian Social Democrats agreed. Trotsky, we have said, believed that the revolutionary upheaval in Russia would upset the western economic system and stir the proletariat to action, which in turn, would protect the nascent socialist revolution in Russia.<sup>26</sup>

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<sup>23</sup>Both theoretically ascribed to Tkachev's belief that: "... neither in the present nor in the future can the people, left to their own resources, bring into existence the social revolution. Only the revolutionists can accomplish this.... Social ideals are alien to the people (peasants); they belong to the socialist philosophy of the revolutionary minority (enlightened proletariat)." quoted by Wolfe, p.364.

<sup>24</sup>Lenin quoted in Trotsky, History of..., vol.III, p.355.

<sup>25</sup>Vladimir Lenin, Collected Works, authorized Eng. trans. Lenin Institute, Moscow, (New York: International Publishers Company, Inc., 1929), vol. VII, p. 186.

<sup>26</sup>Trotsky, My Life, p.18.



Lenin went further to propound that only a revolution in Europe would enable a socialist revolution to begin in Russia; and he reiterated the words of Marx that, "... the industrially more developed country shows the less developed only the image of its own future."<sup>27</sup> Like most Mensheviks and Bolsheviks, Lenin was always careful to define two distinct stages in the Russian revolution, which Trotsky had already telescoped into one. "In Europe, the real political content of social democracy is the preparation of the proletariat for the struggle for power with the bourgeoisie which now has full rein in the state. In Russia, the problem so far is only the creation of the modern bourgeois state."<sup>28</sup> Lenin's attachment to western socialism's position of leadership was destroyed only with the outbreak of the world war, at which time, contrary to accepted socialist principles, German Social Democrats voted war credits.

The most important achievement of the revolution of 1905 in the light of the integral part it was to play in 1917, was the St. Petersburg Soviet. In the beginning this body represented fifteen hundred workers, but as the strike spread, it grew to include workers in all fields, as well as all shades of opinion. In addition brother soviets sprang up all over the country. In the beginning the Petersburg Soviet was under the leadership of the Mensheviks; however, the president, Krustalev-Nosar, was a non-party lawyer, and

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<sup>27</sup> Marx quoted by Trotsky, History of ..., vol.III, p.378.

<sup>28</sup> Lenin, Collected Works, vol.XX, pt. 1, p.29.



Trotsky, its most outstanding member, was a radical Menshevik.<sup>29</sup>

Because of his close association with the Soviet, Trotsky gave it a special place in his analysis of the events of 1905. He saw in the soviet, which united all working groups in opposition, a prospective workers' parliament capable of controlling the revolutionary movement when it reappeared and leading it toward a socialist victory. He cited the soviet as one proof of his theory of permanent revolution, for it showed the proletarian predilection for the seizure of government~~al~~ power.<sup>30</sup> In actuality the Soviet became the pawn of a small group of revolutionary elite, of which Trotsky is the prime example, but it did serve as a rallying point for revolutionary activity. Trotsky himself pointed out that the Soviet was more like a council of war than a parliament.

That Soviet as a revolutionary council of war was exactly Lenin's attitude. He said that the action of the soviet, while it did have a maximum of power, was not that of a workers' parliament nor that of an organ of self-government, but rather of a fighting organization for the realization of revolutionary ends. Lenin feared for his party organization,

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<sup>29</sup> Trotsky was technically of the Menshevik faction, but it did not accept his theory of permanent revolution and he was at odds with its leadership.

<sup>30</sup> "The soviet was in reality an embryo of revolutionary government....Prior to the soviet, there had been revolutionary organizations among the working men... but these were organizations in 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." Trotsky quoted in Wolfe, p.360.

and the soviet, gathering together diverse and perhaps antagonistic parties, was not what he felt could become a working proletarian organization. However, he was ready to accept the soviet as the instrument of proletarian action as long as it did not interfere with his own party plans.<sup>31</sup> In other words Lenin saw the soviet not as superior to the Party, but as a means by which the Party could gain power (this proved to be the case in 1917), and after it had served its purpose it would "wither away." Of course the soviet was in accordance with the Menshevik idea of initiative from below, which Lenin opposed, but he did accept its practical value as a revolutionary tactic, and would later put it to effective use in his attempt to seize power.

Trotsky made one important observation on the role of the soviet in the next revolutionary situation. The soviet had been most effective as an urban organization, but Trotsky had no doubt that the success of the Petersburg Soviet and the number that appeared in rapid succession in other cities would mean that in the next rising not only soviets of workers, but of peasants and of soldiers, would spring up all over the country. Representatives of these soviets would send delegates to a national council which would serve to co-ordinate revolutionary activity all over the country. Then when the revolution was achieved, they could transform themselves into organs of self-government.<sup>32</sup> The soviet

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<sup>31</sup> Lenin as quoted by Wolfe, p.368.

<sup>32</sup> Deutscher, pp.149ff.

itself originally was an idea of the Mensheviks for local revolutionary administration. Trotsky enlarged its powers to that of a revolutionary government, an idea which Lenin eventually adopted, and in 1918, after the Bolshevik Party had taken power, it did go into decline as Lenin had predicted.

Both Lenin and Trotsky drew important general conclusions from their 1905 experience. We have already touched upon Trotsky's basic theory; it should be added that the uprising in 1905 did provide him with certain results to justify these views. He found the proletariat to be the chief force behind the uprising. In addition the soviet provided the necessary structure for proletarian dictatorship. This dress rehearsal for the revolution gave the proletariat additional revolutionary training which no amount of revolutionary propaganda could produce. Meanwhile, in the growing revolutionary ardor of the peasantry, Trotsky discovered the manpower necessary to carry the next uprising to its conclusion.

In order to realize the soviet state, there is required a drawing together and mutual penetration of two factors belonging to two completely different historic species: a peasant war -- that is, a movement characteristic of the dawn of bourgeois development -- and a proletarian insurrection, the movement symbolizing its decline.<sup>33</sup>

For Trotsky, there could be no more straightforward evidence of the telescoping of these developments into one socialist revolution in Russia.

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<sup>33</sup>Trotsky, History of ..., vol. I, pp.50f.

Lenin's reactions were along less rigid lines, primarily because he incorporated what he learned from the revolution into a new plan of action. Whereas Trotsky's theories were based on a thorough appraisal of the situation and its resulting play of forces, Lenin's were in a continuous process of evolution dependent upon new evidence. In speaking of the results of 1905, he said, "... the revolution revealed to the workers and peasants, as well as to the world, all the classes (and all the principal parties) of the Russian society in their true character."<sup>34</sup>

Only once in the flush of victory in 1905 did Lenin remark that " from the democratic revolution we shall pass at once, according to the degree of our strength, the strength of the class-conscious and organized proletariat, begin to pass over to the socialist revolution. We stand for continuous revolution; we shall not stop halfway."<sup>35</sup> Although future Trotskyites within the Bolshevik Party would use Lenin's phrase to justify Trotsky's views, Lenin had no intention of dismissing the bourgeois stage as these Trotskyites would allege; rather he is referring back to the continuous movement of the dialectic and also to a traditional Populist belief expressed by Alexander Herzen, " a republic which did not lead to socialism would seem absurd, a transition taking itself for an end."<sup>36</sup>

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<sup>34</sup> Lenin, Collected Works, vol. XX, pt.1, p.27.

<sup>35</sup> Lenin quoted by Wolfe, pp.292f.

<sup>36</sup> Herzen quoted by E. Lampert, Studies in Rebellion, (New York: Frederick A. Praeger, 1957), p.219.



The gulf still separating Lenin from Trotsky can be found in Lenin's attack on the "... semi-anarchist view that the maximum program, the conquest of power for a socialist revolution, can be achieved immediately."<sup>37</sup> Lenin would later modify his words, but in the period between 1905 and 1914 he was a confirmed democrat. That the Russian revolutionary movement was at this point democratic he had no doubt. It was necessary for all Russian Social Democrats to support this bourgeois democratic revolution in order to create a democratic political atmosphere. In this atmosphere the proletarian parties could freely continue to educate the masses for the struggle for power. He had in mind, again, the position of the Social Democrats in Germany; although, he believed that the revolutionary ardor of the Russians as well as the imminent socialist revolution in Europe would accelerate the process. The main difference between Trotsky and Lenin concerned timing. Lenin required a period between phases which Trotsky felt was unnecessary and indeed improbable in a real revolutionary situation.

Lenin and Trotsky were in general agreement on the necessity of proletarian leadership in the bourgeois revolution. To this end Lenin realigned the Marxian forces of revolution to meet peculiar Russian demands. A good example of the revolutionary dynamism of both these men was their

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<sup>37</sup>Lenin quoted by Wolfe, pp.292f.

emphasis on the revolution as a distinct movement of social forces only generally dependent on Marxian economic forces. Trotsky believed that the Russian revolution would be dependent "not upon the level obtained by the productive forces, but upon relations in the class struggle, upon the international situation, and finally upon a series of subjective factors -- traditions, initiatives, preparedness for fighting."<sup>38</sup>

Lenin's dictatorship encompassing the peasantry, differing from Trotsky's narrowly proletarian one, was a working hypothesis in a series of as yet undefined experiments in revolution. Lenin himself spoke of the democratic dictatorship of the proletariat and the poorest peasantry as "a special form of class alliance between the proletariat, the vanguard of the toilers, and the numerous non-proletarian strata of toilers; ... aiming at the final establishment and consolidation of socialism."<sup>39</sup> How long this would take, or by what means it would continue in motion, Lenin was not ready to say. He could not yet accept the rigidity of Trotsky's theory, preferring the freedom to move from one idea to the next in a more ambiguous context. However, as the year 1917 approached Lenin slowly gravitated to Trotsky's view, indicating the exactitude of its revolutionary logic in a widening revolutionary experience.

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<sup>38</sup> Trotsky, History of..., vol. III, p.421. And Lenin admits that "the seizure of power is the point of the uprising. Its political task will be clarified after the seizure." Quoted in Wolfe, p.396.

<sup>39</sup> Lenin quoted by Stalin, p.13.

Lenin believed that the proletariat should strive directly for a share of the revolutionary government and enter a provisional government. He concluded that it could not be a workers' government without becoming a dictatorship of a minority. Although Trotsky also saw the dangers of dictatorship, he was more realistic in his belief that, once this government of workers was in power, it would not relinquish control. He rationalized its minority position at that point by regarding the Russian leadership as a segment of the European proletarian dictatorship of the majority. Lenin's attitude, on the other hand, presupposed a minority rule by the party leadership or a relinquishing of power, once it was attained, to the petty-bourgeois interests of the majority of the people, the peasants. Ideally Lenin wanted the establishment of a bourgeois freedom and bourgeois democracy which had no social roots in Russia. He admitted that the petty-bourgeoisie was incapable of ruling without the enlightened proletariat just as he knew that the proletariat could not promulgate a revolution without the peasant.<sup>40</sup> It is also unlikely that once it had gained power the proletarian leadership would turn its back on proletarian goals and submit to limited peasant desires, all the while biding time until the majority of the peasantry was transformed into an enlightened proletariat. Inconsistencies

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<sup>40</sup>Lenin, Collected Works, vol. XX, pt.1, pp.27-31.

such as these can be accepted if one looks at Lenin in these instances as a practical revolutionary searching for the most immediate means of achieving his goal.

The revolution of 1905 provided a point of departure for a revision of theory by both Trotsky and Lenin. Trotsky's theory of permanent revolution was developed by a man keenly aware of the revolutionary situation, and the logic of his views had their effect on Lenin. The remaining years before 1917 see Lenin evolving a practical rationalization toward this view. Trotsky combined his previous analysis of Russian history with concrete examples of the actions of the bourgeoisie, peasantry, and working class. He drew a common denominator from the general revolutionary situation, and upon it built a unified body of theory. Lenin also revised his platform to include the peasantry, and he accepted the soviet as an additional revolutionary instrument. He saw through practical application the strengths and weaknesses of his party machine.



### III. WORLD WAR I AND ITS EFFECT ON LENIN'S THEORIES

The Russo-Japanese war in 1904 had been instrumental in bringing about the Russian revolution of 1905. The threat of European conflict in 1914 aroused hopes in Russian socialists that another revolution would now be set in motion. The Russian Social Democrats felt the need to evaluate the revolutionary potential at their disposal, and make careful judgements concerning a basic plan of action. In searching for a correct appraisal of the revolutionary situation, Lenin somewhat altered the traditional Marxian interpretation of the forces of revolution. These changes brought his theoretical position much closer to Trotsky's.

In Zurich in 1914, Lenin wrote a pamphlet, Imperialism, the Highest Stage of Capitalism, based on Rudolph Hilferding's Finanz-Kapital, the most important addition to Marxist economic theory since Das Kapital. Lenin explained that imperialism was that phase of capitalism in which the sphere of monopoly capital overreached national boundaries to include larger portions of the world economy. The export of capital now became the prime feature of capitalist economy, an economy

in which the division of the world was in the hands of international trusts. This partition of the earth into economic zones by the strongest capitalist powers marked the inevitable limit of the capitalist stage. In addition the international alliance of finance capital provided a practical foundation for the union of workers of all countries into an international labor force for the destruction of capitalism. (This was the same supposition that Parvus put forth in 1904, and which was inherent in the importance attributed to the international revolution by Trotsky.) Because the bourgeoisie was forced to export capital to control the world market into which it flowed, it followed that capitalism was no longer stressing production but consumption. Having lost sight of the forces of production, the bourgeoisie had reached the limit of its capabilities and the time was ripe for the transfer of these forces to the proletariat. Further, following Parvus and Trotsky, Lenin maintained that capitalism in exploiting backward peoples had created an additional revolutionary force. At the same time, by creating a "labor aristocracy" at the expense of these backward peoples, it had further enraged the majority of the European proletariat who would now be ready, under proper leadership, to begin the socialist revolution. Hence the struggle for revolution could no longer be confined to separate revolutionary groups, but a common front was demanded of the people of the oppressor

... stated by Trotsky, *IMPERIALISM*, Vol. II.

Vol. III, p. 378.

countries with those of the oppressed.

Most importantly each country which was an object of capitalist exploitation, despite its stage of industrial development, became a suitable target for revolution.<sup>1</sup> The law of uneven development brought the Russian revolution incontrovertable within the scope of European revolution. Although this was no more than voicing the common belief of Russian revolutionaries, it opened up a new area in which Lenin could theorize. Lenin had made Russia a part of Europe, a Europe which was ripe for the socialist revolution. Here was a bridge to Trotsky's point of view. Marx had said that "no social formation disappears before all the productive forces have developed for which it has room."<sup>2</sup> Trotsky interpreted Marx to mean not a particular country, but a particular time, slavery, feudalism, etc.; the sequence of universal social structures.<sup>3</sup> Lenin agreed with Trotsky on this point, and although he did not dismiss the bourgeois stage of the Russian revolution, he considerably shortened its life.

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<sup>1</sup> Lenin said that; "Uneven economic and political development is an absolute law of capitalism. Hence, the victory of socialism is possible first in several or even one capitalist country, taken singly. The victorious proletariat of that country, having expropriated the capitalists and organizing its own socialist production, would stand up against the rest of the world, the capitalist world, attracting to its cause the oppressed classes of other countries." Selected Works, (New York: International Publishers company, Inc., 1943), vol.V, pp.80-93.

<sup>2</sup> Marx as quoted by Trotsky, History of ..., vol.III, p.378.

<sup>3</sup> Ibid., vol. III, p.378.

Russia is a peasant country, one of the most backward of European countries. Here socialism cannot immediately conquer, but the peasant character of the country ... can, on the basis of the experience of 1905, give enormous scope to a bourgeois democratic revolution in Russia, and make our revolution a prologue to the world-wide social revolution (Russia included); a step leading to it.<sup>4</sup>

By 1915, Lenin had begun referring to the stages of the Russian revolution as an organic transformation, "pererastenie." In connection with the continuous revolution, this meant that the stages would grow into one another, thereby approximating Trotsky's belief that the socialist revolution would be at hand during the next phase of the Russian revolution. At the same time he retained the titles of what had become arbitrary stages.<sup>5</sup> Retaining this belief through 1917, he was able to consider the short period between the February revolution and the Bolshevik seizure of power as the bourgeois democratic stage.

Trotsky too made concessions to a bourgeois stage; however, he turned to the reforms of the revolution of 1905 in which bourgeois freedoms had been granted. Thus both Lenin and Trotsky, after 1914, made certain concessions to Marx which brought them into a more nearly equitable relationship. Indeed Karl Kautsky, one of the leading figures in the German Social Democratic movement, saw 1905 as "a bourgeois revolution in an epoch when bourgeois ideal have come to complete

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<sup>4</sup>Lenin, Collected Works, vol. XX pt.1, p.32.

<sup>5</sup>Lenin, Proletarian Revolution ..., p.375.



bankruptcy, when bourgeois democracy has lost all its faith in itself, when it is only on the soil of socialism that ideas can flourish and energy and enthusiasm develop."<sup>6</sup> He went on to point out, in phrases already familiar to Russian revolutionaries, that the driving force had been the worker and that its achievements were bourgeois, but the class itself was incapable of using the fruits of the revolution made for it by others; therefore they would decay, and in the void that was left the class conscious proletariat would step in.<sup>7</sup> Here is the outstanding European theorist, confirming on at least one occasion, the readiness of the Russian revolution to enter the socialist stage.

In Imperialism, the Highest Stage of Capitalism, Lenin also reaffirmed observations Parvus had made ten years earlier concerning war. Lenin showed that under industrial capitalism, which was concerned with the export of commodities rather than capital, some countries had developed more rapidly than others, while their strength in relation to one another had remained static. However, under finance capitalism this was not the case. It was now possible for any country which could acquire new markets in undeveloped areas to make rapid progress at the expense of countries unable to do so. An increasingly intense struggle for markets destroyed the stability of the capitalist countries as a block, therefore endangering world peace.

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<sup>6</sup>Karl Kautsky, Road to Power, (Chicago: Samuel A. Bloch, 1909), p.21.

<sup>7</sup>Ibid., pp.21f.

Imperialism must inevitably lead to war. The idea of European conflict caused most socialists to consider the acceleration of the revolutionary process.<sup>8</sup>

Marx had said that "... violent outbreaks take place sooner in the extremities of the bourgeois organism, than the heart, because here regulation is more possible."<sup>9</sup> Trotsky in a similar vein said: "... under monstrous burdens of imperialism the state must necessarily fall first which has not yet accumulated a large national capital, but to which world competition offers no special privileges." <sup>10</sup>

All the Russian revolutionaries believed that there was a distinct revolutionary situation in Russia. Those few who believed with Trotsky that this revolution would be a socialist one, feared the reaction of the more powerful bourgeois countries in the West. Therefore a revolutionary situation in Europe was a necessary prerequisite to a successful uprising in Russia.<sup>11</sup> Even Lenin admitted by this time that the proletariat was already struggling to preserve the democratic conquest for the sake of its socialist revolution. " The struggle would be almost hopeless for the Russian proletariat alone, and its defeat would be inevitable,... if the European socialist proletariat did not come to the help of the Russian proletariat."<sup>12</sup>

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<sup>8</sup>It caused Lenin to state that " a correct appraisal of our revolution can now be possible only from an international point of view." Lenin, Selected Works, vol. V, pp.42-56.

<sup>9</sup>Marx, Selected Works, vol.I, p.93.

<sup>10</sup>Trotsky, History of..., vol.III, p.379.

<sup>11</sup>Ibid., p.364.

<sup>12</sup>Lenin, Selected Works, vol.V, p.67.

A European war between capitalist nations would provide the necessary impetus for the uprising. The international proletariat would refuse to support a war of capitalist conquest just as it would refuse to fight its class brothers in Russia. The Russo-Japanese conflict in 1904 had provided the Russian socialists with valuable experience. They immediately accelerated revolutionary propagandist activity among the masses against the capitalist war. Trotsky emphasized that the war would be a blind rebellion of outgrown productive forces in Europe against the framework of the nation-state. Capitalist imperialism could only temporarily break down these barriers, and until these forces were rescued by the world proletariat, mankind would suffer war after war.<sup>13</sup> At the same time the war was deplored, it was hailed as the spark to set off the long-awaited socialist revolution.

The war itself had other consequences: primarily, it caused Lenin's final disillusionment with the German Social Democratic Party which he had taken for so long as his model. The socialists in the German Reichstag had patriotically voted for war credits, and those who had not, such as Karl Kautsky, maintained a pacifist outlook. This was incompatible with the Marxian view of capitalist war. Lenin claimed that the unity of the Second International had been destroyed and

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<sup>13</sup>Trotsky, My Life, p.332.

he disavowed any further connection with its protagonists. Indeed in the Russian Duma, Bolsheviks and Mensheviks had in a body voted against war credits. Lenin therefore broke with the European parties and gave his attention to the independent tendencies of Russian Social Democrats. He who had learned greatly from European Marxism, now regarded its action as reactionary.

The imperialist war, requiring an incredible exertion of strength, so accelerated the course of development of backward Russia that at a single stroke (at least it seems like a single stroke) we have caught up with Italy, England, even France.<sup>14</sup>

Discussion of the fate of the European revolution with its leadership supporting capitalist governments and the fate of a Russian socialist revolution was postponed until 1918. The present practical situation required complete attention of the revolutionaries. The most important task before the Russian socialist parties during the war years was to re-awaken the revolutionary spirit of the masses to the pitch of 1905. Much energy went into reorganizing the underground and a great deal of discussion centered around tactical questions.

By the end of 1916, fifteen million men had been mobilized, the economy was disrupted, but success in the field had been at best sporadic. Russia had joined the allies, who, in order to weaken the assault of the enemy in Europe, repeatedly

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<sup>14</sup> Lenin, Collected Works, vol. XX, pt. 1, p. 32.



called for Russian offensives. Strikes in 1916 grew in number and intensity. Hostile peasant activity had expanded to the army and the front. The conscripted peasants had become sufficiently disillusioned with the prolongation of the war and its increasing slaughter to begin resorting to mass desertions. Discipline was at a minimum, and revolutionary propaganda instilled in them a common spirit of opposition.<sup>15</sup> The victory of the February revolution would lie on the very fact that the peasant-soldiers joined hands with the workers and not with the government.

While practical reality was drawing Lenin and Trotsky closer together, they were forced to take a more intense look at the ideas that each in turn expounded. Lenin accused Trotsky of a preoccupation with the socialist revolution in which he relegated the peasant revolution to second place. Lenin admitted that the socialist goals of his party should not disappear from sight. At the same time he believed that the role of the peasant could not be overemphasized. Lenin could see no way in which socialism could be achieved without

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<sup>15</sup> Karl Radek speaks of the ensuing peasant position as follows: "The war created a chasm between the peasantry, which was striving to win land and peace, and the petty-bourgeois parties; the war placed the peasantry under the leadership of the working class and of its vanguard, the Bolshevik Party. This rendered possible, not the dictatorship of the working class ~~and the peasantry~~, but the dictatorship of the working class relying on the peasantry. What Trotsky had advanced against Lenin in 1905 proved, as a matter of fact, to be the second stage of the historic development." quoted in Stalin, p.23.

a coalition with the peasantry. He felt that a minority dictatorship, such as Trotsky had in mind, was incompatible with socialism.

This cannot be (Trotsky's dictatorship), because only such a revolution can have any stability... as is based on a great majority of the people. The Russian proletariat constitutes now a minority of Russia's population.<sup>16</sup>

And to Trotsky's internationalism Lenin replied that international goals of socialism must always be kept in mind, but complete reliance on European revolution was to encourage passivity. This was not a realistic view that would produce a concrete plan of action. One cannot build a revolutionary force on non-flexible theories, but only upon the revolutionary potential of known ingredients.<sup>17</sup>

Trotsky, on the other hand, feared that Lenin's dictatorship would become a dictatorship of party professionals rather than a dictatorship of the revolutionary proletariat. "The organization of the Party takes the place of the Party itself; the Central Committee takes the place of the organization; and finally the dictator takes the place of the Central Committee."<sup>18</sup> Trotsky had always stressed the open play of forces within the organization of the proletariat which would not allow one group to seize power away from the proletariat at large. His revision of this view was to close the gap between Lenin and himself in 1917.

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<sup>16</sup> Lenin, Collected Works, vol. VII, p. 93.

<sup>17</sup> Lenin, Proletarian Revolution..., p. 63.

<sup>18</sup> Trotsky quoted in Wolfe, p. 253.

The war which drew Russia into the European struggle forced Lenin to reconsider Russia's revolutionary position. By placing her within the framework of European development, Lenin conceded the possibility of a Russian socialist revolution. Such a concession to Trotsky's basic point of view demanded that he consider more seriously Trotsky's other assumptions. Lenin severely criticized what he considered to be Trotsky's impractical attitude toward the peasantry and the organization of the Party. But at the same time he agreed with Trotsky's analysis of the position of the Russian bourgeoisie and of the international revolution.

#### IV. REVISION OF LENIN'S THEORIES AFTER THE FEBRUARY REVOLUTION

The final incorporation of the theory of permanent revolution into Lenin's Party platform came after the February revolution. In order to protect the revolutionary gains of the proletariat, a radical revision of Bolshevik policy became necessary. After a careful perusal of the revolutionary situation, Lenin put forth a new program, which embodied the basic assumptions provided by Trötsky in 1905.

By the end of 1916, riots in Petersburg for bread and peace reached maximum intensity. There were increasingly insistent demands for governmental reform. Rasputin had been assassinated by a group of the nobility, but this and other actions to prevent the revolution were ineffectual. Royal Guards had refused to fire on the rioters, and often joined them; however, the Tsar, rather than grant any demands

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in the face of the war, dissolved the Duma. His government then resigned in protest. A committee of the Duma ( the Progressive Bloc) headed by the Zemstvo Liberal, Prince Lvov, formulated a Provisional Government and the Tsar was persuaded to abdicate. In February, 1917 Tsarist Russia ceased to exist.

As in 1905, most of the revolutionary leaders were in exile; and again the soviets sprang into existence, this time without governmental opposition. The progressive leaders, primarily liberal members of the old regime, did no more than change the face of the government. At the same time the St. Petersburg Soviet, which had in its hands the revolutionary potential of the urban masses, took no independent action. Its Menshevik leadership did not wish to wrest control from the Provisional Government. A void was created between the Provisional Government of bourgeois liberals and the revolutionary potential of the Soviet, which had to be filled.

The above paragraphs, while not attempting to describe the tortuous turns of the February revolution, indicate the practical situation which demanded that Lenin offer a definite plan of action. This plan would show Lenin's fundamental solidarity with Trotsky. At the same time it would show how Lenin arrived at these conclusions through his own practical experience. When Lenin arrived in St. Petersburg in April,

the situation in the Party was one of indecision: whether or not to support the liberal government, what measures should be taken in the Soviet and its relation to the Provisional Government, the relationship of the Bolsheviks to the other socialist and revolutionary parties, and above all what direction the revolution would take from that point. At a caucus of the Bolshevik members of the All-Russian Conference of the Soviet of Workers' and Soldiers' Deputies, Lenin delivered his program of party objectives, the April Theses.

He began by saying that the situation in Russia was at that time one of transition from the first stage of the revolution to the second. Because of the "inadequate organization and insufficient class consciousness of the proletariat"<sup>1</sup> the bourgeoisie had assumed power during the first stage. But the independent class action of the bourgeoisie had been destroyed by its connection with the government before the bourgeois phase; therefore, the second stage which was to place power in the hands of the proletariat and the poorest peasantry was imminent. Although this transition was characterized by "maximum legality (Russia is now the freest of all the belligerent countries in the world)" and by the absence of oppression of the masses, it was also characterized by the ignorance of the masses toward the real aims of capitalist government, "the worst enemy of

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<sup>1</sup>Lenin, Collected Works, vol. XX, pt.1, pp.95ff.

peace and socialism."<sup>2</sup> Lenin found that the bourgeois phase had reached its conclusion because of the inability of the bourgeoisie to move further left. In order for the revolution to survive at all the socialists must lead the way through the second stage. This program is, in the terminology of Trotsky, telescoping the revolution into one continuous movement. But it is also Lenin's "pererasteniya."

He and Trotsky had always felt certain that the bourgeoisie, itself, would be unable to complete the revolution. However, Lenin insisted upon the necessity of bourgeois liberty in order to further the socialist revolution. He found this freedom now in Russia. Trotsky also believed in the necessity of such freedom, but placed it at the beginning of the socialist stage as a prelude to socialism. Surveying the scene from his American exile, he took events to mean that this had been achieved.<sup>3</sup>

Lenin was now calling for a formula to awaken the masses to their socialist goals. He called upon the Party to evaluate logically conditions in Russia. Having done so they would, along with him, call for no support of the Provisional Government and advocate putting power into the hands of the soviets as the "only true form of revolutionary government"<sup>4</sup> -- also Trotsky's analysis after 1905. He

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<sup>2</sup>Ibid., p.97.

<sup>3</sup>New York Times, March 5, 1917, p.5.

<sup>4</sup>Lenin, Collected Works, vol.XX, pt.1, p.99.

went on to say that there could no longer be a parliamentary government because this would necessitate a step backward from the more democratic Soviet of Workers' Deputies. Instead the Party should work toward a "Republic of Soviets of Workers', Agricultural Labourers', and Peasants' Deputies throughout the land from top to bottom."<sup>5</sup> This<sup>is</sup>/the formula called for by Trotsky after his experience in the Soviet of 1905. He went on to advocate extreme measures of social control -- abolition of the police, the army and the bureaucracy -- distinctly geared to rid the Party of opportunist factions as well as to give the workers a concrete platform for reform which had been denied them by the Provisional Government.

The agrarian program was in the same manner geared to satisfy the peasant. Lenin wanted to turn over to a Soviet of Agricultural Labourers' Deputies the confiscation of all private lands. This would alienate all but the poorest peasantry, as Trotsky intimated would happen as soon as a workers' government gained power. Yet Lenin argued that such a course would be the only way to retain the loyalty of the majority of the landless peasants.<sup>6</sup>

In addition he called for the merger of all banks into one national bank over which the soviet would have control. In the process this would alienate the bourgeoisie and, as Trotsky predicted, cause them to take measures against the proletariat. It would be a test of the readiness of the

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<sup>5</sup>Ibid., p.99.

<sup>6</sup>Ibid., pp.99f.



working class to take over production. Lenin too believed that this would require "the immediate placing of the Soviet of Workers' Deputies in control of social production and distribution of goods."<sup>7</sup>

In addition to these changes in the Party line from a minimum to a maximum program, Lenin called for the rebuilding of the International along the lines of the successful Russian revolution, in order to stimulate the European socialist revolution.

Thus the April Theses set the stage for October.

The February regime had demonstrated that it was impossible to break the power of the landlords without breaking the power of the capitalist classes. This meant only a proletarian revolution could succeed. Thus Lenin adopted Trotsky's platform in order to save the revolution. To leave the revolution now to a bourgeois regime would be returning it to hands incapable of retaining its positive achievements. Trotsky had foreseen this situation, and Lenin's actions confirmed his conclusion. It is not surprising to find many Bolsheviki, such as Kamenev, vociferous in their condemnation of Lenin's platform as Trotskyist,<sup>8</sup> nor is it surprising that they were soon forced to accept it, seeing it alone as the way to power.

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<sup>7</sup> Ibid., p.101. *Quoted by Alfred G. Meyer, Leninism (Cambridge: Press, 1957), p.142.*

<sup>8</sup> Deutscher, p.256.

Both Lenin and Trotsky were revolutionaries and both were Marxists. The ultimate end of their struggle was socialism. But Lenin could pay lip service to Marxian tradition while at the same time allying with forces outside the pale, all for the goal of revolution. After it had been achieved, if socialism was in any way possible, he would move in that direction. For Trotsky such an outlook was impossible. His Marxism was more fundamental, a true guide to history. If Marxism was incompatible with the process of history, it had to be revised. His theory of permanent revolution was just such a revision.

It is nonsense to allege that it be entirely impossible to skip stages. Over individual stages resulting from a theoretical dissection of the process of development taken as a whole, that is, in its maximal completeness, the living historical process always makes jumps, and in critical moments demands the same of revolutionary politics. It can be said that the first characteristic trait distinguishing the revolutionary from the vulgar evolutionist is the ability to discern such a moment and to make use of it.<sup>9</sup>

In the final analysis the unified whole which was Trotsky's theory and the practical objective which was Lenin's revolutionism, proved complementary in bringing their socialist state to power in October, 1917.

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<sup>9</sup>Trotsky quoted by Alfred G. Meyer, Leninism, (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1957), p.142.

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