

# 1905 and the Origin of the Theory of Permanent Revolution

Wed, 30/11/2005 - 23:00

The Russian Revolution of 1905 was a titanic event that shaped the 20th century and the history of the working class movement. It set the pattern for the many revolutions of the twentieth century. Within a few years it had revolutionary repercussions from Mexico to China. In central and western Europe, it provoked a radicalisation of the trade union movement and inspired the struggle for bourgeois democracy. Even in ultra-conservative Britain, it was warmly welcomed in the newly formed Labour Party, inspired the women's suffrage movement and contributed to the rise of syndicalism in the trade unions. Here, Richard Brenner and Dave Stocking examine its impact on the international revolutionary movement itself and, in particular, the development of the theory of permanent revolution.

Although the 1905 revolution did not succeed in overthrowing Tsarism, it was one of those defeats which are more valuable than many victories. This was because of the combination of the remarkable creativity of the Russian workers, who developed the mass political strike and the workers' council or soviet, and the presence of a political force capable of playing a leading role in it and then of drawing the lessons of both success and failure and embedding these in the political consciousness of the working class vanguard.

Lenin famously called 1905 the 'dress rehearsal' for the revolution of 1917. In 1905, and the years which followed, the Bolsheviks not only developed new tactics, indeed a new strategy, they considerably developed the model of a new type of party. This had been initiated by the Iskra group, Plekhanov, Axelrod, Lenin, Martov and others (1900-03) and, after the split with the Mensheviks at the second congress of the Russian Social Democratic Workers' Party, by the Bolsheviks. In 1905, Leon Trotsky developed the strategy of permanent revolution which was to be definitively validated in 1917. Rosa Luxemburg developed the analysis of the mass strike which she was to take back into the German Social Democracy and was to be one of the key axes of the revolutionary left wing there. These advances were made by the Russian and international Marxist movement (then called Social Democrats) in the process of keen analysis and sharp polemic, but also in the thick of revolutionary actions. The issues included:

- ? the role of the working class and its party in a bourgeois-democratic revolution; to be the party of extreme opposition or leader of the struggle for power?
- ? the relationship of the working class to the liberal bourgeoisie, the peasantry, the oppressed nationalities and races.
- ? the revolutionary potential and limits of the mass strike and the political general strike
- ? the development and role of soviets; organs of workers' self-government or organs for the seizure of power?
- ? can the working class arm itself, plan and execute an uprising?
- ? what is the nature of a revolutionary vanguard party and what is its role in the soviets, general strike and armed uprising?
- ? can the 'stage' of capitalist development and bourgeois democracy be transcended in a revolution

which is continuous or permanent??

? can socialist measures be commenced in an underdeveloped country and how does this relate to an international revolution?

These issues continue to have great significance today, not least because capitalism has been unable to raise the whole globe to a uniform level of developed capitalism and bourgeois democracy. Chronic economic backwardness, brutal dictatorships, mass movements and uprisings to establish democracy, the existence of differing exploited classes, nationalities and races, are all still with us. So, too, are imperialist wars and economic crises; in short, all the elements of a revolutionary epoch. They present us with many of the same fundamental questions as they did the Russian Marxists. Thus, one hundred years on, the mad year of 1905 can teach us invaluable lessons for the mad years to come in the 21st century.

## **Russia in revolution**

One hundred years ago, a vast social upheaval was gathering force in Europe's most conservative state, the Russian Empire. It was a sprawling, economically backward collection of territories with a huge peasantry and a landowning nobility that exploited them cruelly. Politically, it still retained an absolutist regime, similar to those of Europe before the French revolution, but one equipped with a fearsome secret police, the Okhrana, and a huge army and vast bureaucracy. Yet the cost of maintaining such an empire and its repressive apparatus had compelled a rapid modernisation in the 1890s and the first years of the twentieth century. Modern industries sprang up in the twin capitals, St Petersburg and Moscow; metal working and textiles, a modern rail network and, further afield, coal mines and oil wells and with them, inevitably, a modern proletariat.

Indeed, a very modern proletariat since these factories and mines incorporated the most advanced technologies available, financed by the state or by investments from British and French millionaires. Foreign capital was lured by the low wages (one third those of British or French workers) and by the ban on striking or forming trade unions or parties which was enforced by the Tsarist police. Thus, though the Russian proletariat was still small as a percentage of the population (5 per cent) and was, in most cases, the sons and daughters of peasants straight from the countryside, it was concentrated in some of the largest factories in the world.

At the head of the Russian social pyramid stood the Tsar, Nicholas II, a vicious but indecisive autocrat. In 1904, an unpopular war with Japan over who should occupy Manchuria in the Far East had broken out. It led to a series of crushing military reverses for Russia. Opposition to the autocratic, corrupt but now plainly inept and weak dictatorship of the Tsar, erupted across the Russian Empire.

By the end of 1904, the country was in a state of great excitement. Public meetings were illegal so a series of banquets was organised by the local Zemstvo councils (rural gatherings of the more modern landowners and liberal professions). They heard radical speeches from liberal agitators who called for greater checks and controls over the Tsar, with some speakers going so far as to call for a Constitution or even the election of a Constituent Assembly. Emboldened, the Zemstvos had begun to send petitions to the Tsar, demanding reform. Then the working class emerged onto the stage, but led at first not by Social Democrats or populists but by a police agent.

Father Gapon, paid by the Okhrana, had founded the Assembly of Russian Factory and Plant Workers in 1903. This was part of a project by the Tsarist police chief S V Zubatov to create a fake workers' organisation to prevent workers becoming engaged in revolutionary activities. However, it proved difficult to coordinate the plans of the police, the government and the factory managers. Moreover, Gapon himself was not simply an agent. He had come to believe in his mission and been radicalised by the workers themselves.

When four members of the Assembly of Russian Workers were dismissed from the huge Putilov iron works in St Petersburg, 110,000 workers came out on sympathy strike. By January 8, the city had no electricity and no newspapers. Gapon announced a peaceful 'workers' procession' to the Winter Palace to deliver a petition to the Tsar. Local and district meetings of his Assembly discussed and amended his draft of the petition. The document commenced with a plea:

"Sire: We, the workers and inhabitants of St. Petersburg, of various estates, our wives, children, and our aged, helpless parents, come to Thee, O SIRE, to seek justice and protection. We are impoverished; we are oppressed, overburdened with excessive toil, contemptuously treated...We are suffering in despotism and lawlessness. O SIRE, we have no strength left, and our endurance is at an end. We have reached that frightful moment when death is better than the prolongation of our unbearable sufferings."<sup>1</sup>

The petition included calls for the release of political prisoners, freedom of the press, association, speech, free state education, separation of church and state, abolition of indirect taxation and its replacement with a progressive income tax, the transfer of land to the peasants, the 'termination of the war in accordance with the will of the people', the formation of legal workers' committees in the factories with a veto over all dismissals, an eight-hour day, universal suffrage and a constituent assembly. Thus, though signed by 150,000 people, it included nearly the whole minimum programme of the Social Democrats and the Socialist Revolutionaries, the peasant populist party.

This was a clear testimony to the impact that their agitation had had over the previous few years, yet the actual organisations of the Social Democrats in the city, both Bolshevik and Menshevik factions, were in a dire state, due to police arrests and the disruptive effects of factional strife in 1904.

On the appointed Sunday, January 9th, the striking workers and their families gathered at six points in the city. Carrying religious icons and singing hymns, they proceeded towards the Winter Palace. A huge procession of workers, led by Gapon himself, set off from the factory district around the Putilov ironworks which, alone, employed some 12,000 workers. At the Narva gate, in the south of the city, the procession was repeatedly charged by Cossacks. When the unarmed crowds refused to disperse, serried ranks of the guards regiments poured repeated volleys into the defenceless mass of unarmed men, women and children. Forty people were killed at once. The scene was soon repeated in other areas of the city centre, including in the square in front of the Winter Palace itself.

Exact figures of the number killed and injured are unknown. Estimates vary between 429, the government's figure, and 1000, that of the liberal press. The revolutionaries put the number at over 4,000 dead and wounded. The events turned the Tsar from the 'little father' into Nicholas the Bloody.

The carnage in the streets of St Petersburg on Bloody Sunday unleashed a storm of strikes across the Russian Empire. In January, 414,000 and in February, 291,000 workers struck in 122 towns and localities. Strikes were spread by the militant rail workers to all the industrial centres of Russia, from the huge metalworking plants in the capital to the mines of the Donetz basin. They broke out, too, in the non-Russian areas, especially in Poland, Finland and the Baltic provinces. In Riga, 70 strikers were killed on January 13 and in Warsaw, a few days later, over 100 strikers were shot down. By February, there were strikes in the Caucasus and, by April, in the Urals and beyond. In March, all the universities were forcibly closed as students joined the striking workers.

This mass strike wave was a remarkable phenomenon; nothing like it had been seen before. Not in Britain, Germany or the United States had such a huge, prolonged and spontaneous wave of strikes taken place. Starting as political protests, they also raised demands for higher wages, the recognition of workers' leaders, an end to the war, the legalisation of trade unions and a constitution. Russian workers were

breaking new ground in the class struggle. Of course, in other countries, there had been heroic strikes, even general strikes, and workers' uprisings, but the Russian workers' mass strikes, which linked immediate economic demands, and demands for democratic rights, to calls for the overthrow of the autocracy, opened the perspective of a nationwide revolution to bring down the entire Tsarist regime. In January and February, over 13,000 enterprises were affected by strikes. Workers' demands included increases in pay, a maximum eight-hour working day, provision of medical care, an end to verbal and physical abuse by managers and foremen, and the election of recognised workplace representatives. Then, strike figures fell in March and April. Was the revolution over? As if to give a resounding 'no', the strike wave quickly resumed with 220,000 workers striking in May. Strike figures remained high in June and July, 142,000 and 150,000 respectively, and then fell back again in August and September. Lenin, in a lecture he gave on the 1905 revolution twelve years later, remarked that in these months, 'Russia was transformed into a Russia of a revolutionary proletariat and a revolutionary people. (...) The principal factor in this transformation was the mass strike.'<sup>2</sup>

The mass strikes had given birth to another new phenomenon, one that was to prove of historic importance for the world working class, the soviet. On May 12, a strike of textile workers broke out in Ivanovo-Voznesensk which lasted for a staggering 72 days. Textile workers were some of the poorest, worst paid, most downtrodden industrial workers in Russia. A large majority of them were women. On May 15, 110 delegates from the various factories met in a sort of council (in Russian, soviet). Initially, this was a meeting of elected workers' representatives to put their case to the government factory inspector but it decided to continue in existence as a strike committee. It took on more and more tasks in the city. It arranged food and supplies, created a militia to keep order, issued its own press and held daily mass meetings of the strikers. On June 3, fierce fights occurred with the police and the Cossacks. Eventually, the strike was defeated and the soviet dissolved but the example it set to the whole of Russia was to be copied in the next great upsurge of mass strikes in the autumn.

The textile workers of Ivanovo had spontaneously created an instrument excellently adapted to the new means of struggle that workers were already using, the mass strike. Of course this does not mean that organised revolutionaries played no part in this 'spontaneity', only that the initiatives, discussions and plans remain anonymous, hidden from history. Ivanovo was something of a stronghold of the Bolshevik faction of the Russian Social Democracy and Bolsheviks played an important role in the Soviet. It was a body which was a standing challenge both to the employers and the Tsarist police as to who ruled in the factories and streets of the city. This new instrument of struggle would soon be taken up by workers in the main cities, particularly in St Petersburg and Moscow and become an instrument of the struggle for power. The soviet was the embodiment of working class democracy, democracy for the class struggle.

#### [b]Karl Kautsky and the 1905 revolution

The Russian revolution of 1905 faced the Second International with the first workers' revolution since the Paris Commune of 1871. Few of the leading Marxists in Europe had paid much attention to Russia since the 1880s, regarding it as just a bastion of reaction from which nothing could be expected in the short run. A great spontaneous strike wave in 1903, and then the Russo-Japanese war and the social ferment, however, led the most far-sighted of them to focus their attention on the weakening Russian colossus. Perhaps it was not immune to revolution after all. What would revolution in Russia mean for central and western Europe, which still had semi-absolutist kings and emperors and virtually no fully fledged democracies? These issues spurred a deep debate in the Marxist movement, not just in Russia but in the German Social Democratic Party (SPD) the leading party of the Second International.

At the turn of the twentieth century, Karl Kautsky was indisputably the leading theoretician of the Second International. This stemmed from his close collaboration with Engels in the last decade of the latter's life

and his editorship of the weekly (!) theoretical journal *Die Neue Zeit* (The New Era). From the 1880s onwards, articles from this journal were regularly translated into Russian and Russian revolutionaries eagerly learned German, the language of Marxism. Kautsky's major works, including the Erfurt Programme of the SPD and the commentary on it, *The Class Struggle*, and *The Economic Teachings of Karl Marx* had been translated into Russian and were devoured by a generation of revolutionaries in the social-democratic, populist and radical-democratic milieu. Above all, his tour-de-force *The Agrarian Question* had a huge impact in Russia, still predominantly a peasant country with only a small, though highly concentrated, urban proletariat and revolutionary-minded intelligentsia. Among the young activists of the small RSDWP, Kautsky had greatly enhanced his revolutionary prestige through the role he had played, admittedly under the urging of the Russian leader, Georgi Plekhanov, in combating the gradualist and reformist views of the German Social-Democrat Eduard Bernstein in the so-called 'Revisionist Controversy' of 1898-99.

Kautsky's renegacy in 1914, and his vituperative attack on the October Revolution in 1917, should not cause revolutionaries today to misestimate his views in the first years of the twentieth century. In fact, in the years prior to 1905, Kautsky predicted, encouraged and welcomed the outbreak of revolution in Russia and, in doing so, he helped overturn elements of the established perspectives of the Marxist movement at that time. He was close in those years to Rosa Luxemburg, not only a 'German' revolutionary but also a 'Russian' one. Through her, he became much more interested and embroiled in the doings of the Russian party and its warring factions, getting to know the positions and analyses of Lenin, Axelrod, Martov, Parvus and Trotsky.

Marx and Engels had regarded Russia as the main force for reaction in the Europe of their day, the Tsarist regime standing as an obstacle to economic development and political liberty alike. They ardently hoped for its destruction, at first in a war and then at the hands of the courageous populist terrorists of the *Narodnaya Volya*, whom Marx warmly admired. This estimate led them to respond coolly to the first stirrings of Marxist organisation in Russia. This initial view was finally to change in Engels' later years, when he gave direct support to Plekhanov's efforts, but, nevertheless, even into the mid-1890s, the general view among German socialists about Russia and other Slavic nations was that they were non-revolutionary peoples, mired in economic backwardness and semi-Asiatic despotism.

In the years 1902-04, Kautsky systematically demolished this negative assessment of the revolutionary potential of the Slavic proletariat, the Great Russians, the Poles, Ukrainians. In a series of works, including an article 'The Slavs and Revolution' and a major book, *The Social Revolution*, both published in 1902, Kautsky maintained that, since Russia had begun to undergo real capitalist development, Marx and Engels' views were outmoded. Development had already given rise to a revolutionary and working class movement. As a result, western capitalism was now seeking not to undermine, but to prop up, the Tsarist regime. At the same time, Kautsky observed, in *The Social Revolution*, the new role played by mass strike action in Belgium, in 1902. Commenting on the general strike he said, 'In my opinion it will play a great role in the revolutionary battles of the future.'<sup>3</sup> He gave space in *Neue Zeit* to articles by Rosa Luxemburg (*The Belgian Experiment* and *A Second Time on the Belgian Experiment*)<sup>4</sup> which outlined how such mass action by the proletariat could not only win gains like universal suffrage but bring the revolution itself from a distant goal into the perspective of actual struggles in the here and now.

All this was, for Kautsky, an integral element of a new revolutionary phase of world history, in which great powers like Britain, and emerging industrial powerhouses like Japan and the USA, would pursue aggressive, expansionist policies, which would, in turn, lead to war and revolution. This could also affect Russia, not because of its strength, but because of its weakness. Just as Marx had shown how Louis Napoleon of France had launched a desperate war to stave off revolution at home, so the Tsar might do

likewise in the face of rising opposition to autocracy. Though Kautsky framed this in the language of possibilities, rather than a fixed timescale for definite events, the perspective of war and revolution in Russia was, nevertheless, one he expected to be realised soon enough, "We must reckon with the possibility of war within a perceivable time, and thereby also the possibility of political convulsions which will end directly in proletarian uprisings, or at least open the way to them."<sup>5</sup>

An examination of the conditions pertaining in 1902 caused Kautsky to conclude that, contrary to the "orthodoxy" of German socialist thinking at the time, Russia was closer to revolution than Germany, not further from it. The small size of the Russian proletariat was offset by its concentration in large, often foreign owned, enterprises. Its lack of education and consciousness when contrasted with the organised German workers was offset by its terrible oppression and exploitation, which were driving it to rebellion alongside the downtrodden, land hungry, Russian peasant. In an intriguing comment, pregnant with meaning in the context not only of the revisionist controversy but also later disputes on the fate of the German party and the rise of a conservative labour aristocracy, he observed that the Russian worker was "still at the stage at which he had nothing to lose but his chains."<sup>6</sup>

In 1904, in a preface to a Polish edition of the Communist Manifesto, entitled *To what extent is the Communist Manifesto Obsolete?* Kautsky extracted from the archives, and drew attention to, Marx and Engels' views on permanent revolution, published in 1850. These were important because, unlike the Manifesto itself, they were based on the experience of the counterrevolutionary role of the German bourgeoisie in 1848-49. This had forced the two founders of scientific communism to substantially modify their view that the German revolution was a bourgeois one both in its historic goals, clearing the way for capitalism and destroying all the feudal relics of the petty states into which Germany was divided, but also in respect to its leading force, that is. the bourgeoisie. By 1850, Marx and Engels had come to the view that this was a hopeless expectation, that the petit bourgeois democrats were likely to lead the revolution in the period ahead but that the working class had to drive them forward, build up and arm its own committees, keep the democrats under control and when they, in their turn, betrayed or tried to halt the revolution, take over the leadership, seize power, and socialise production. This process they called "maintaining the revolution in permanence."

The modification to the Manifesto's strategy was explained by Marx in his March 1850 address of the central authority of the Communist League:

"While the democratic petty bourgeois want to bring the revolution to a conclusion as quickly as possible, and with the achievement, at most, of the above demands, it is our interest and our task to make the revolution permanent, until all more or less possessing classes have been forced out of their position of dominance, the proletariat has conquered state power and the association of proletarians, not only in one country but in all the dominant countries of the world, has advanced so far that competition among the proletarians in these countries has ceased and that at least the decisive productive forces are concentrated in the hands of the proletarians. For us the issue cannot be the alteration of private property but only its annihilation, not the smoothing over of class antagonisms but the abolition of . . . classes, not the improvement of the existing society but the foundation of a new one."<sup>7</sup>

They concluded by warning that the workers must not allow themselves, ". . . to be misled for a single moment by the hypocritical phrases of the democratic petty bourgeois into refraining from the independent organisation of the party of the proletariat. Their battle cry must be: The Revolution in Permanence."<sup>8</sup>

Kautsky explained how the long years of the development of capitalist society in western Europe, a process of evolution not of revolution, made Marx and Engels abandon this perspective. The bourgeoisie became reconciled to the political rule of the landowner-aristocrats, providing the latter cleared the road for

capitalist development and suppressed the workers' movement. Thus, in central and western Europe, in his view, only a socialist revolution was to be expected. This would be led, naturally, by the working class. The strengthening of the working class and its elevation to the altitude which would enable it to conquer the political powers and maintain them, can no longer be expected from a bourgeois revolution, which, becoming permanent, grows beyond its own limits and develops out of itself a proletarian revolution.

"After June, 1848, a bourgeois revolution which could form the prelude of a proletarian revolution, is no longer possible in Western Europe. The next can only be a proletarian revolution." 9

However, he pointed out that the situation for the Russian working class had not fundamentally altered from 1848-50 and that, therefore, the particular tactics Marx and Engels had devised for Germany still applied in Russia. There, the revolution would indeed still start as a bourgeois revolution and could, indeed must, grow beyond its own limits because of the weak and treacherous nature of the Russian bourgeoisie. "The (Russian workers) live under political and economic conditions which still greatly resemble those of Germany on the eve of the revolution of 1848. For that reason the Manifesto is still far more valid for them than for the Socialists of Western Europe, not only as regards its fundamentals and methods and its presentation of the general character of the capitalist mode of production, all of which at present still form the firm foundations for every consciously proletarian movement of every country, but also in many details which for Western Europe have become obsolete."10

He thus concluded, "... the initiative for a revolution can only emanate from the industrial proletariat, even if as yet it does not lead to its exclusive domination."11,

Moreover, Kautsky added a powerful emphasis on the international context of any revolution in the twentieth century.

"With modern conditions of international intercourse, however, no country, and least of all a capitalist country, is moved along the path of its domestic development by its internal motive power alone. Outside influences, and above all the reaction of the class wars of foreign countries, become almost equally important for its class struggles."12

Kautsky returned to these themes several times in the period preceding the outbreak of the 1905 revolution and during its progress. In *Neue Zeit*, he responded to a critique by the Polish social-democrat, Michael Lusnia, who had argued that the Polish national question was vital because an independent Poland could prevent the Tsar from suppressing revolution in the west, as he had done in 1848-9. Kautsky conceived of an alternate, directly opposite, possibility, that revolution in the Russian Empire's would free its oppressed nations and thus help to extend a Russian revolution westwards:

"[the Polish national question] will again become acute, but not in the sense that Lusnia thought. It will be directed not against Russia but against Austria and Germany, and in so far as Poland will serve the cause of revolution its task will be not to defend the revolution against Russia, but to carry it further into Austria and Germany".13

In his polemic with Lusnia, he also grasped the nettle of what the Russian workers should do if they led the bourgeois revolution in alliance with the peasantry. "A revolution in Russia cannot at once establish a Socialist regime. The economic conditions of the country are not sufficiently developed for that. The best it can do is to bring a democratic government into existence, behind which would be a strong and impetuous and progressive proletariat that would be able to demand important concessions..."

"Such a regime in Russia could not but have powerful counter effects upon neighbouring countries. First by reviving and inspiring the proletarian movement itself, giving it thereby the impulse to attack the political obstacles to an actual democracy - in Prussia, primarily, the 'three-class' electoral system. Secondly, through the release of the manifold national questions of Western Europe."14

Considering that this was written in February 1904, it should be quickly apparent to the modern reader not only that Kautsky's perspective of war leading to revolution was prescient, but that his estimate of the

fighting capacity of the Russian workers and the likely impact of their struggles on Western Europe was about to be verified. Startlingly, he went on to predict that revolution in Russia might spark social revolution in Germany, placing the proletariat in power.

Thus, before assessing the contrasting viewpoints of other leading Marxist thinkers such as Plekhanov, Martov, Trotsky and Lenin, it is worth bearing in mind the principal theses of this foremost theoretician of the Second International. In summary, he asserted that:

- \* Russia was on the verge of revolution, closer to an uprising than more economically developed countries with more established working class movements such as Germany and Britain.
- \* A Tsarist military debacle in the east would probably lead to an uprising in Russia.
- \* The peasants would side with the workers against absolutism and landlordism.
- \* Although the worker-led revolution could not establish socialism, it could put a strong democratic regime in place.
- \* Because of the leading role it had played in the downfall of the Tsar, the working class would demand major social concessions from the democratic regime.
- \* The liberation of oppressed nations, such as Poland, could help spread revolution westwards.
- \* The democratic revolution in Russia could lead to a workers' social revolution in Germany and, indeed, in Europe.

In his reply to Lusnia, Kautsky had defined the coming revolution in Russia as 'democratic' without attributing a major role in it to the bourgeoisie. As we have seen, he emphasised the clash of interests between the peasants and the Tsarist regime and the potential of the working class. As the revolution itself unfolded, it continued to produce developments in his thinking.

For Kautsky, Bloody Sunday was a mighty vindication of his perspective. He immediately set to work on a string of articles reinforcing his view that the working class must play a leading role in the revolution. At this time, he still regarded the coming revolution as bourgeois; it would be a political revolution to overthrow the regime, but not a social revolution that would transform the economic basis of society. Nevertheless, the Russian capitalist class was too weak, too connected to Tsarism, too cowardly, to carry through its own revolution to a conclusion. In February 1905, he wrote: 'Despite its bourgeois objectives, the Russian revolution finds its driving force in the proletariat.'<sup>15</sup>

By July, Kautsky had gone even further. The Tsarist regime had failed to pacify the proletariat and peasantry; the liberals were terrified by 'chaos and disorder'. The dynamic unleashed by the revolution could not end in a 'normal bourgeois-democratic regime'. The process was one of 'permanent revolution' in which the working class was coming to the fore. He concluded: 'Even though the dominance of the proletariat can only be transitory in a country as economically backward as Russia, it leaves effects that cannot be reversed, and the greater the dominance, the longer those effects will last.'<sup>16</sup>

The hegemony of the proletariat in the revolution, Kautsky insisted, arose from real material foundations. In his article *The American Worker*, Kautsky explained that the industrialisation of Russia had been very largely financed by foreign rather than domestic loans. The interest paid by the government, therefore, did not go to Russian capitalists but to foreign financiers. The net effect was that the growth of a strong Russian proletariat was not matched by the growth of a strong Russian bourgeoisie. This, in turn, meant that the bourgeoisie was not able to buy off a section of the workers, distracting them from class struggle through hopes of economic advancement under capitalism. 'That is why in Russia the struggle for the emancipation of the people from the absolutist hydra has taken on the character of a dual between the government and the industrial proletariat.'<sup>17</sup>

We will see that this perspective of Kautsky's, because it fitted so nearly the actual development of the revolution, because it characterised so accurately the role of the various classes, exerted a powerful attractive influence on most of the leading Russian revolutionaries. They all took it up and developed it in



differing ways. All, that is, except, most importantly, the fathers of Russian Marxism, Georgi Plekhanov and Pavel Axelrod and their younger companion, Yuli Martov.

Plekhanov - the bourgeois revolution and the role of the proletariat.

For Russian Marxists, the question of what role the proletariat could be expected to play in a bourgeois revolution had been raised, even if without a sense of urgency or precision, as long as the actual revolution still seemed far distant. As early as 1883, Plekhanov wrote that "we by no means believe in the early possibility of a socialist government in Russia."<sup>18</sup> The reason for this was the lack of development of capitalist production in Russia and the concomitant lack of a large working class: "In other words, socialist organisation, like any other, requires the appropriate basis. But that basis does not exist in Russia."<sup>19</sup>

The coming revolution against Tsarism was, therefore, a "bourgeois revolution", in the same sense that the French revolution of 1789 or the revolutions of 1848 were, that is, revolutions with the historic aim of overthrowing the vestiges of pre-capitalist political and state organisation, bringing the bourgeoisie to political power, and clearing the path for capitalist development. It was in the direct interests of the proletariat to secure the victory of the democratic bourgeois revolution, because:

- \* this would secure the best conditions for its own growth as an indispensable condition for an expanding capitalist economy; and

- \* because democratic liberties and an end to feudal privileges and prerogatives would provide the best possible political conditions for the proletariat to organise itself as a class engaged in political struggle.

In class terms, the difference between the revolutions of 1789 and 1848 was easy to comprehend. In 1789, the revolutionary bourgeoisie was able to contain and subordinate the revolutionary forces associated with the artisan precursors of the modern proletariat but, by 1848, the proletariat existed as a young class, with its own interests, its own methods of struggle and its own historic goals. Plekhanov had read his Marx and was well aware that fear of the proletariat would weaken the bourgeoisie's resolve in fighting the feudal nobility. The early Plekhanov openly warned of the likelihood of bourgeois treachery in the revolution: "...whenever the 'red spectre' took on at all threatening forms the 'liberals' were ready to seek protection in the embraces of the most unceremonious military dictatorship."<sup>20</sup>

Therefore, the young Plekhanov insisted, the working class must take the leading, hegemonic, role in the struggle for democracy, summarising this at the founding Congress of the Second International in 1889 with the famous and prophetic words: "The revolution in Russia will triumph as a working class movement or not at all!"<sup>21</sup>

This phrase, however, was open to divergent interpretations and very different tactical expressions. Already, in 1895, V.I. Lenin, later to lead the Bolshevik faction in the RSDWP, had alarmed Plekhanov and his lifelong collaborator Pavel Axelrod, by expressing an attitude towards the bourgeois liberals that the pair regarded as excessively harsh. While Axelrod stressed the need for the social democrats to work in "support and alliance" with democratic forces, including the liberals, Lenin spoke of "utilising" the liberals to help achieve social-democratic goals. Axelrod and Plekhanov remarked that Lenin appeared in their view to draw an insufficient distinction between the liberals of Russia and those of the west, and that the Russian bourgeois liberals had not yet abandoned their revolutionary potentialities. Plekhanov reportedly summed up the difference by telling Lenin: "You turn your back to the liberals and we our face."<sup>22</sup> Yet, the three men remained united and, in the coming years, jointly waged a struggle against the "Economist" trend in Russian social-democracy, which argued for the workers to give precedence to the economic struggle, thereby ceding the leading role in the democratic struggle to the bourgeoisie.

Nevertheless, the different emphases on the question of the liberals expressed in 1895 were to re-emerge subsequently with renewed force. This occurred in 1900 in the context of the RSDWP's conflict with the

former Marxist and now liberal Pyotr Struve; 23 in the first schism between the Bolshevik and Menshevik trends in 1903-04; and as increasingly counterposed strategies for the Russian revolution in 1905. Notwithstanding Plekhanov's 1889 declaration, by 1905 he was firmly of the view that no class but the bourgeoisie could play a leading role in the revolution. Bolshevik insistence on the leading role of the working class and on the need to denounce the liberals, as expressed in Lenin's criticism of the Mensheviks' softness towards them in the Zemstvo banqueting campaign, seemed to Plekhanov nothing less than a violation of Marxist orthodoxy. According to his biographer, S. Baron, Plekhanov said of this time that, "If Marx and Engels came incognito to one of those meetings at which our 'Bolsheviks' hold forth with revolutionary eloquence, they would be castigated for their 'moderation' and declared to be 'Cadet-like Marxists', or, in a fit of anger, simply 'Cadets'."24 ?

The source of Plekhanov's approach was a too rigid application of Marx's theory of historical development, reducing Marx's flexible notion of economic determination mediated through the dialectic of class struggle to a much cruder model, a fixed schema of predetermined stages. Baron describes this as follows: "His stand was a logical consequence of an unshakeable attachment to Marx's theory of an economically determined sequence of historical stages. In that context, Russia's upheaval could be only a 'bourgeois' revolution. His line, he contended, merely implemented Marx's admonition that the proletariat ought to support the bourgeoisie to the extent that it was revolutionary in the struggle against absolutism. So consistently did Plekhanov cleave to the basic premise and the tactic it required that he found himself for the first time in the extreme right wing of the Social Democratic Party."25

From the more dialectical and historically fitting conception of the bourgeois democratic revolution in Russia as requiring the proletariat to play a leading role, Plekhanov developed an undialectical and doctrinaire pseudo-orthodoxy; that, because the Russian Revolution was a bourgeois revolution, therefore the bourgeoisie must play a leading role in it. When it did not, Plekhanov even went so far as to blame the Bolsheviks (and Trotsky in his capacity as leader of the St. Petersburg soviet of workers' deputies) for frightening the liberals away.26

It may surprise many today to discover that Kautsky's views were far closer to Bolshevism than to Menshevism. After all, Kautsky had initially sympathised with the Mensheviks in the 1903 split, which he regarded as a scandal lacking any principled political basis. It was this error of judgement, arising from a misestimate of the theoretical significance of the organisation question in revolutionary politics, which enabled Kautsky simultaneously to reject the legitimacy of the Bolsheviks' factional struggle against Menshevism while essentially upholding a critique of Menshevik strategy very similar in many respects to that of Lenin and the Bolsheviks.

The most devastating blow to the Mensheviks' theory, and to Plekhanov in particular, was delivered in late 1906 by Kautsky himself. On 11 October 1906, Plekhanov sent a questionnaire to leading social-democrats in the International, which included the question whether in their view Russia was experiencing a bourgeois or a proletarian revolution. Kautsky's response was not at all to Plekhanov's liking. He wrote a serious reply which he published in *Neue Zeit*.

In it, Kautsky stunned the 'orthodox' Mensheviks by claiming that the Russian revolution was neither bourgeois nor socialist. Social-democrats should "look upon it not as a bourgeois revolution in the usual sense of those words, nor to look upon it as a socialist revolution, but as a completely new process happening on the boundary between bourgeois and socialist society, furthering the liquidation of the former, preparing the conditions for the foundation of the latter, and in any case giving a powerful impetus to the progressive developments of the countries of capitalist civilisation."27

It was not a bourgeois revolution in the established sense because the bourgeoisie was not its 'driving

force?, but nor was it socialist because it could not lead to the rule of the working class alone. The class with which the workers should ally themselves was primarily the peasantry, not the bourgeoisie. The suffering of the peasantry could not be resolved without the confiscation of the landed estates, with no compensation to the former landowners, and a huge programme of state subsidies to the peasants. Only a worker-peasant alliance could carry this out.

His guidance on the nature, purpose and limits of alliances with the liberal bourgeoisie was startlingly clear and directly opposed to Menshevik tactics, "United action with the liberals is possible only when and where it does not prevent united action with the peasantry."<sup>28</sup> In a passage that could have been (and maybe was?) deliberately aimed at Plekhanov's schematism, he defended the Marxist legitimacy of his approach, saying it contradicted only "the sort of economic materialism attributed to us by our critics and opponents who are in the habit of seeing it as a ready made formula for each and every occasion, not as a method of analysis."<sup>29</sup>

The radicalism of Kautsky's perspective was clear; the revolution's principal bourgeois tasks (the land question and destruction of the autocracy) necessitated that it make massive inroads into bourgeois as well as feudal property rights,

"Without the abolition of the standing army, without a halt to naval rearmament, without the confiscation of the entire patrimony of the imperial family and the monasteries, without the liquidation of the state debts, without the confiscation of the great monopolies that remain in private hands - the railroads, the oil wells, the mines, the steel factories, and so on - [it would be impossible to raise ] the enormous sums needed to rescue Russian agriculture from its terrible plight."<sup>30</sup>

By all accounts, Plekhanov was infuriated by this. He made a lame reply claiming that his difference with Kautsky was merely semantic, and attempting to represent Kautsky's views as essentially similar to his own. It was a weak, defensive gesture and obviously so. By contrast, Lenin greeted Kautsky's pamphlet with undisguised enthusiasm. The Bolshevik leader rushed to translate it into Russian and then published it with a foreword of his own, confidently claiming that:

"These propositions of Kautsky's are a brilliant confirmation of the tactics of the revolutionary wing of the Russian Social-Democratic Party, i.e., the tactics of the Bolsheviks. And this confirmation is the more valuable because Kautsky, putting aside the concrete and practical questions, concentrated all his attention on a systematic exposition of the general principles of socialist tactics in our revolution. He shows that Plekhanov's threadbare method of argument - "the revolution is a bourgeois revolution, therefore we must support the bourgeoisie", has nothing in common with Marxism."<sup>31</sup>

### **Lenin and the character of the Russian Revolution**

Pro-Menshevik historians, while not denying that *Driving Forces* was a blow to Plekhanov, are at pains to suggest that Lenin was exaggerating in claiming Kautsky's pamphlet as a "brilliant confirmation" of Bolshevik views. Indeed, there is no lack of material demonstrating that Lenin, too, believed at the onset of 1905 that the character of the revolution was bourgeois. Even in July 1905, he wrote: "Only the most ignorant people can ignore the bourgeois character of the present democratic revolution (. . .) a socialist revolution is out of the question until the masses become class conscious, organised, trained and educated by the open class struggle against the entire bourgeoisie."<sup>32</sup>

In answer to the latter day apologists of Menshevism, one need only point out that for Lenin, as for Kautsky in his writings of 1902-04, this recognition in no way attested to the need for the working class to refrain from seeking to play a leading role in the revolution. In the same article, he added that the victory of the bourgeois revolution would in a certain sense be more to the advantage of the working class than the bourgeoisie, and explained,

"We must be perfectly clear in our minds as to what real social forces are opposed to Tsarism? (which is a real force, perfectly intelligible to all) and are capable of gaining a decisive victory? over it. Such a force cannot be the big bourgeoisie, the landlords, the factory owners, society? which follows the lead of the Osvobozhdentsi. We see that these do not even want a decisive victory. We know that owing to their class position they are incapable of waging a decisive struggle against Tsarism; they are too heavily fettered by private property, capital and land to enter into a decisive struggle. They need Tsarism with its bureaucratic, police and military forces for use against the proletariat and the peasantry too much to be able to strive for its destruction. No, the only force capable of gaining a decisive victory over Tsarism,? is the people, i.e., the proletariat and the peasantry, if we take the main, big forces and distribute the rural and urban petty bourgeoisie (also part of "the people") between the two."<sup>33</sup>

This led Lenin to a radical conclusion,

"No, the only force capable of gaining a decisive victory over tsarism,? is the people, i.e., the proletariat and the peasantry (. . .) . A decisive victory of the revolution over tsarism? is the revolutionary-democratic dictatorship of the proletariat and the peasantry."<sup>34</sup>

This was a break with a further "orthodox" concept, still advanced by the Mensheviks throughout the first nine months of 1905, that Marxists should not participate in a bourgeois government, in the way that the reformist Alexandre Millerand had done in France, but should remain the party of "extreme opposition". Lenin acknowledged this, but pointed out that, in the specific circumstances of Russia, in the midst of revolution, it was impossible to be an extreme oppositionist without actively seeking to overthrow the government. Since the bourgeoisie would not do this, an agreement had to be sought with the most radical peasant forces for an uprising, which could only result in a provisional revolutionary government. To renounce this was tantamount to renouncing a "decisive victory" over Tsarism. Kautsky, too, was to endorse this view in *Driving Forces*, when he wrote that it would be impossible to struggle effectively for leadership of the working class without openly striving for victory. However, the Mensheviks stuck to their view that the Social Democrats should do all in their power not to seize power, whilst allowing for an episodic or local seizure to cover the obvious dangers of entrusting the fate of the revolution totally to the bourgeoisie.

"It follows that the party should not aim to seize power or share it within a provisional government, but should remain a party of the extreme revolutionary opposition. This tactical line of course does not rule out the desirability of a partial episodic seizure of power and the formation of revolutionary communes in a particular town or area, purely with the object of extending the scope of the rising and disorganizing the government."<sup>35</sup>

This equivocal position could unravel in two directions; either the temporary and exceptional seizure might be forced to become a full-scale dictatorship or it could become a constant waiting for the bourgeoisie to play its predestined role and meanwhile accepting, however critically, its compromises with Tsarism.

However, the Mensheviks, too, were able to pose an awkward question for the Bolsheviks. How would the RSDWP in government, even one shared with revolutionary democratic representatives of the peasants, that is, the Socialist Revolutionary Party, respond to the inevitable demands from the workers for socialist measures against the private capitalists?

Here Lenin was, frankly, in a quandary. His revolutionary instincts and dialectical method militated against the non-revolutionary conclusions the Mensheviks drew from this dilemma; to leave the leadership of the revolution in the hands of the anti-revolutionary bourgeoisie, to refuse to take power. Yet, the answer he gave to the question reads in retrospect like an unconvincing stop gap; if the workers demanded to know

what socialist measures the government was taking, "we shall reply by pointing out that socialism is still alien to the mass of the people, who are democratically inclined, that class contradictions are still insufficiently developed, and that the proletariat is still deficient in organisation."<sup>36</sup>

J.L.H Keep claims to detect in Lenin's response "an undertone of reluctant and dutiful conformity to precepts with which he was emotionally out of sympathy".<sup>37</sup> In fact, there is no need to resort to such amateur psychology. Lenin's strategic views rested on certain key postulates. The economic and political tasks of the coming revolution indeed remained bourgeois, land and freedom. Concretely, this meant the destruction of the continued social exploitation of the landowners by a peasant uprising to seize and confiscate their estates and the combination of this with a workers' uprising to smash the autocracy, its army and secret police and winning the fullest and most radical democracy. From this it flowed that the driving forces of the revolution were, as Kautsky had already said, the working class and the peasantry, not the big capitalists and the liberal landowners.

Hence, for Lenin, the absolute necessity of an alliance between the proletariat and the peasantry to carry out the insurrection, to install a revolutionary provisional government, which would take dictatorial measures to smash the Tsarist dictatorship to pieces, recognise the confiscation of the land and convene a constituent assembly. The alliance with the peasantry and, in his view, the inevitability that this would take a governmental form, was what held Lenin back from any promise to carry out socialist measures, not adherence to a rigid "stages theory." In fact, Lenin was prepared to go as far and as fast as this alliance allowed.

This can be seen in an article he wrote in September on the peasant movement and what attitude the Social Democrats should adopt towards it. Lenin made it clear that the RSDWP should encourage and support the seizure of the land by peasant committees and accept whatever solution they resorted to, whilst nevertheless advocating the party's own agrarian programme and building its party organisations amongst the rural proletariat. What he went on to say indicates that he was not binding the working class to enduring a long epoch of capitalism, quite the opposite.

"... from the democratic revolution we shall at once, and precisely in accordance with the measure of our strength, the strength of the class-conscious and organised proletariat, begin to pass to the socialist revolution. We stand for uninterrupted revolution. We shall not stop half-way. If we do not now and immediately promise all sorts of "socialisation", that is because we know the actual conditions for that task to be accomplished, and we do not gloss over the new class struggle burgeoning within the peasantry, but reveal that struggle."<sup>38</sup>

Likewise, it is clear that Lenin accepted the perspective Kautsky had elaborated on the impact that a successful democratic revolution in Russia might have on western Europe.

"What great perspectives will be opened up before the European working class by such a victory! The flame of our revolution will set light to Europe ... then the revolutionary upheaval in Europe will in turn have an effect upon Russia, and years of revolution will be prolonged into decades. With the help of the socialist workers of Europe we shall be able, not only to defend our democratic republic, but also to go on to socialism with seven-league strides."<sup>39</sup>

In this, Lenin, like Kautsky, recognised with extraordinary clarity how the 1905 revolution brought the contours of social revolution into view, how the newness of the events illuminated the "boundary of bourgeois and socialist society". Yet, both men continued to believe that the boundary must first be crossed in the West, though a socialist revolution in Germany might, they conceded, allow Russia to "skip" a stage in her development and join in a socialist commonwealth.

It fell to Alexander Helphand ("Parvus") and Leon Trotsky to develop Kautsky's reasoning to the full and

embrace the radical conclusion that, in coming to the head of the democratic revolution, the proletariat could form a workers' government and proceed to implement socialist tasks.

Breaking through the boundaries - permanent revolution

Parvus was a remarkable figure. Born and educated in the Russian empire, he had from the mid-1890s, worked within the German Social Democracy. He also played a role within the Russian movement. He had a remarkable ability to initiate, or pick up from others and creatively reformulate, very fruitful political ideas. However, their further development often fell to others. In 1895, he developed the idea that the mass strike would play a central role in working class strategy in the new century, a theme later taken up by Rosa Luxemburg. In early 1898, he made the first serious and sustained Marxist response to Eduard Bernstein's Revisionism, in which he was followed by Plekhanov, Rosa Luxemburg and, tardily, by Karl Kautsky.

In the early years of the century, Parvus developed the idea that the global development of the productive forces was, more and more, entering into conflict with the borders of national states. This would, he predicted, lead to a whole new period of economic and military convulsions. He argued that the Boer war (1899-1901) heralded this new period and that it would be one of 'permanent war' out of which a permanent series of revolutions would develop. As early as 1895, he had predicted the outbreak of a Russo-Japanese war, that Russia would suffer defeat in it and that the outbreak of revolution there would be inevitable.

"Helphand's thesis on the development of capitalism into a universal system, on the decline of the importance of national states and on the parallel extension of both the bourgeois and the proletarian interests outside the framework of these states, all this Trotsky took over in toto. But he was most strongly influenced by his friend's conception of the mass strike, the starting point of the coming revolution."<sup>40</sup>

Parvus wrote:

"The worldwide process of capitalist development leads to a political upheaval in Russia. This in 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."<sup>41</sup>

In September, Leon Trotsky, still a member, if a disaffected one, of the Menshevik faction of the RSDWP, moved from Switzerland to Munich where he met and spent a considerable time with Parvus who had, like himself, originally supported the Mensheviks over the 1903 split. Like Parvus, he had come to the conclusion that the Mensheviks were at least as responsible as Lenin for maintaining it. The Russo - Japanese war and the prospect that it would end in revolution convinced both men that a divided social democracy would be a disaster. Trotsky was already developing what was to be a long term view on party organisation; Lenin and the Bolsheviks were, in his view, sectarians who underestimated the spontaneous creativity and socialist instincts of the working class. The Mensheviks, on the other hand, were prone to opportunism, to softness on the liberals, an issue that was made clear in the different tactics the two factions advocated with regard to the Zemstvo campaign of the liberals. Trotsky's position was much closer to the Bolsheviks than the Mensheviks. The issue of the respective roles of the liberal bourgeoisie and the working class was to separate him from Menshevism. In October, he formally broke from them. Thereafter, he sought collaboration with those Bolsheviks who favoured reconciliation with the Mensheviks and likewise attracted around him the more left wing Mensheviks. He became a 'conciliator' in Lenin's terms, a position he only finally abandoned in 1917. This earned him endless brickbats from both sides who resented and resisted his attempts to 'unify' them.

In the November and December of 1904, Trotsky wrote a series of articles, which analysed the mounting

revolutionary wave. The publishers of the Menshevik Iskra delayed their publication because of their antipathy to his view on the liberals. The articles were fiercely critical of them, rejecting the idea that they could or should play the leading role in the coming Russia revolution and asserting that the working class, via mass strike action, would take the lead. These articles were collected into a draft pamphlet that outlined the potential of the mass strike in terms so graphic that it reads like a description of what was to happen in the coming months, rather than a prophecy. He wrote,

"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 they 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."<sup>42</sup>

And the objective? ?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"<sup>43</sup>

In the first days of 1905, Trotsky returned to Munich and showed Parvus his draft. The latter was hugely impressed with Trotsky's writing and, fortunately, had an illegal printing press in his Munich home. He offered to publish the pamphlet as soon as possible. Then came Bloody Sunday. The pamphlet was renamed Before the Ninth of January and Parvus drafted a preface for it which took its argument one stage further than Trotsky. He addressed the issue of who should take power in the coming revolution and answered the question thus,

"The Social-Democracy will be confronted with this dilemma: to assume responsibility for the provisional government or to stand aloof from the labour movement. The workers will regard that government as their own, no matter what the attitude of the Social-Democracy. In Russia, only workers can accomplish a revolutionary insurrection. In Russia, the revolutionary provisional government will be a government of the workers' democracy. That government will be Social-Democratic, should the Social-Democracy be at the head of the revolutionary movement of the Russian proletariat."<sup>44</sup>

However, Parvus did not break with the idea that the Russian revolution was, and must remain, a bourgeois revolution. He referred to the Australian Labor Party which had recently formed a minority national government in April 1904, as a workers' government which did not adopt socialist tasks.

"The Social-Democratic provisional government cannot accomplish a socialist insurrection in Russia, but the very process of liquidating the autocracy and establishing a democratic republic will provide it with fertile ground for political activity."<sup>45</sup>

Shortly after this, Parvus wrote a leaflet entitled 'No Tsar and a Workers' Government' in which he defined such a government's tasks; destroying the autocracy, introducing full democratic rights and convening the elections to a Constituent Assembly.

On March 17, for the first time, Trotsky, too, outlined his prognosis that the working class must take power.

"The revolution is moving the proletariat into the forefront and giving it hegemony. . . . only the proletariat can ensure the victory of the uprising and the triumph of the revolution as a whole. Other groups of the urban population, as well as the peasantry, will play their role in the revolution to the extent that they follow

the proletariat, support it, facilitate its work. Neither the peasantry, nor the petty bourgeoisie, nor the intelligentsia will play an independent role in the revolution at all comparable with that of the proletariat. Consequently, the makeup of the provisional government will depend mainly on the proletariat. This means . . . that the development of the revolution is leading the proletariat, and with it our party, towards temporary political supremacy.? 46

But Trotsky said nothing as yet of the provisional government's tasks.

In July, Trotsky indicated that he rejected Lenin and the Bolsheviks' conception of a two class dictatorship and made it clear that the 'workers' government' would be the dictatorship of the proletariat. Moreover, he added another dimension, the international extension of the revolution, though he still did not say what this might mean for the programme of the proletarian dictatorship in Russia.

"The working class will have to assume the role of hegemon, if the country is to have a radical democratic rebirth at all. Under such conditions we have the supremacy of the fourth estate. Of course the proletariat, like the bourgeoisie, fulfils its mission with the backing of the peasantry and the petty bourgeoisie. It directs the peasantry, draws it into the movement, interests it in the success of its plans. But it remains inescapably the leader. This is no 'dictatorship of the proletariat and the peasantry?'; this is a dictatorship of the proletariat leaning on the peasantry. The proletariat's work is of course not confined to state limits. The logic of its position will immediately propel it into the international arena.? 47

### **The general strike**

After a summer lull in revolutionary activity in the cities, the Moscow printers began a strike for higher wages on 19 September. On 2 October, printers in St. Petersburg struck in solidarity with them. On 22 September, serious clashes occurred with the police, firearms were reportedly used by the workers. Spurred by a police attack on a meeting of the bakers' union, delegates of the strikers convened a council of delegates, a soviet in Russian. A railway strike began on 7 October and the lines between Moscow-Kiev-Voronezh, Moscow-Brest and elsewhere stopped. Along the rail lines, the telegraph spread news of the mounting action. As the strikes in various sectors gathered force, the strikers themselves began to elect delegates.

Trotsky arrived from Finland in time to attend a meeting of about forty delegates, held in the St. Petersburg Technological Institute on October 13. The first chairman was a lawyer and Menshevik sympathiser, Khrustalyov-Nosar but the real political influences on the soviet soon became Leon Trotsky and Parvus who arrived in the city shortly thereafter. The soviet set out to draw in delegates from as many factories and trade unions as possible on the basis of one delegate per 500 workers. By November, it had 562 delegates from 147 factories and 16 trade unions. The example was followed in Moscow and about 50 other cities and towns and there were also examples of peasants' and soldiers' soviets.

The Bolshevik faction in St Petersburg was initially cautious about the call for an all out general strike and downright suspicious about the formation of the soviet. It was not until 13 October that the Petersburg Committee of the RSDWP issued an actual call for a general strike. By then, some 750,000 workers, across the entire rail network, were already on strike. Hundreds of thousands of workers from enterprises of every type walked out alongside them. The principal Bolshevik leader then present in St Petersburg, Alexander Bogdanov, was quite hostile to the idea of a soviet. The Bolsheviks had correctly opposed the Mensheviks' idea of creating what they called 'organs of self-government' whilst there was still a fully blown Tsarist dictatorship in operation and as an alternative to an armed insurrection. For the Bolsheviks, insurrection was central to winning democratic liberties and then it would not be a matter just of self-government but of power over the whole of the country.

Bogdanov came up with the idea of issuing an ultimatum to the nascent soviet; adopt the party programme



of the Social Democrats or convert itself into a purely trade union body. Above all the soviet must not claim to represent or lead the political struggle, that was the task of the revolutionary party. However, this wooden schematic approach fell apart the moment the Bolsheviks tried to apply it. It soon became clear to them that if their ultimatum were passed an important minority of Socialist Revolutionaries and the majority of non-party delegates might well be driven away from the soviet. The soviet itself did not even vote on the proposal and the Bolsheviks hastily abandoned it.

From abroad, Lenin did all he could to banish this sectarian stance towards the soviet, "It seems to me that Comrade Radin is wrong in raising the question, in No. 5 of *Novaya Zhizn*, (I have seen only five issues of the virtual Central Organ of our R.S.D.W.P.) the Soviet of Workers? Deputies or the Party? I think that it is wrong to put the question in this way and that the decision must certainly be: both the Soviet of Workers? Deputies and the Party. The only question, and a highly important one, is how to divide, and how to combine, the tasks of the Soviet and those of the Russian Social-Democratic Workers? Party. (,,,) I think it would be inadvisable for the Soviet to adhere wholly to any one party. As this opinion will probably surprise the reader, I shall proceed straightway to explain my views." 48

Lenin's remark that his views would surprise his readers indicates the degree of sectarian opposition within the Bolsheviks. To counter this, he patiently explained his view of the role of mass non-party bodies of various sorts, not only the soviets but also the trade unions and the fighting squads that he urged should be built to spearhead the armed insurrection. He pointed out that the principle of the clear, programmatically defined party of cadres, first argued for in *What is to Be Done?*, was never for a moment meant to exclude the building of broad mass organisations whenever this became possible. Quite the opposite, it was meant to avoid confusing the one with the other.

Lenin's arrival from abroad in early November buried the ultimatum approach for good. He attended the soviet and was immediately impressed with both its critical role in leading the general strike and even more importantly its potential. Lenin saw that, far from being obstacle to an insurrection, soviets could become the key organs for launching it and, if it were successful, they could become the foundation of a provisional government.

Trotsky was in agreement with this. He wrote:

"In struggle it is extremely important to weaken the enemy. That is what a strike does. At the same time a strike brings the army of the revolution to its feet. But neither the one nor the other, in itself, creates a state revolution. The power still has to be snatched from the hands of the old rulers and handed over to the revolution. That is the fundamental task. A general strike only creates the necessary pre-conditions; it is quite inadequate for achieving the task itself. The old state power rests on its material forces and, above all, on the army. The army stands in the way of a real, as opposed to a paper, revolution. At a certain moment in revolution the crucial question becomes: on which side are the soldiers - their sympathies and their bayonets?" 49

What months of liberal petitioning and pleading had failed to achieve, the general strike wrung from the Tsar within a matter of days. On 17 October, in a huge volte face, he issued a ukase or decree which became known as the Constitutional Manifesto. In it, the frightened Nicholas promised that he would "grant the people the immutable foundation of civil liberty, based upon genuine inviolability of the person and freedom of conscience, speech, assembly, and union; secondly, while not suspending the appointed elections to the State Duma, to draw to participation in it those classes of the population at present entirely deprived of electoral rights, reserving to the legislative system hereby established further development of the principle of universal suffrage; thirdly, to establish it as an immutable principle that no law shall take effect without the approval of the State Duma." 50 The Tsar followed this initiative with the appointment of

the liberal stockbroker, Sergei Witte, as prime minister.

Trotsky, in a famous speech, contrasted the Manifesto's words with the continued repressive actions of the autocracy and declared "Everything has been given, and nothing has been given." He described the Manifesto not as a step towards democracy but as a gambit of a desperate regime and "a prelude to martial law." 51

In fact, the Tsar carried out a combined strategy to weaken the revolution. Although he appointed Witte as prime minister with responsibility for fuelling illusions in the coming "constitutional" monarchy, he entrusted far greater power to his police chief in Petersburg, General Trepov, who had posted the infamous order to the troops on the eve of the October general strike, "no blank shots: spare no bullets". Likewise, his Minister of the Interior, P N Durnovo, knew far more about what was going on than the hapless Witte. Both ministers for repression reported to, and took their orders from, the Tsar, not the prime minister. The "constitutional regime", which the liberals hailed in delight, was a Potemkin village, a façade. The real democratic freedoms were those established by the soviet; freedom of the press and assembly. They were the practical result of workers' control and the workers' militia.

Durnovo set out, with his imperial master's approval, to unleash the most reactionary forces across Russia to try to poison the consciousness of the workers with anti-Jewish racism and also savagely attack the revolutionaries and the militant vanguard of the working class. Who were these forces, who in many ways pre-figured twentieth century fascism?

The Union of the Russian People united a number of reactionary forces which had sprung up after 1900 as the revolutionary ferment increased. The secret police, the Okhrana, played a large part in organising and arming bands of thugs, the Black Hundreds. It was the Okhrana who had manufactured the bible of antisemitism, the Protocols of the Elders of Zion, in 1903. The Tsar, and the court clique around him, also played a key part in encouraging atrocities against the Jews by launching a furious campaign of pogroms in response to the Manifesto. Lumpenproletarian gangs attacked Jews, students, workers and, in one recorded instance, school students. Hundreds were killed in Kiev, thousands in Odessa. Old women were thrown from the third storey of apartment buildings, babies had their heads dashed against walls by the drunken mob.

By the end of October, there had been more than 57 pogroms in cities and towns across Russia. In St Petersburg, however, the soviet created a workers' militia. It persuaded gunsmiths to sell it revolvers, despite police attempts to stop them. Engineering factories produced large quantities of sabres. Printers stopped the production of pogromist literature. Attempts by the Black Hundreds to march on the soviet were broken up. There was no pogrom in St Petersburg.

### **Lenin and Trotsky**

Lenin arrived in St Petersburg on November 21. Earlier in the year, he had been very harsh in his criticism of Trotsky, calling Before the Ninth of January a pompous pamphlet, describing its author as a "windbag". It is, however, clear that, during the Autumn, a developing political closeness over the practical objectives of the revolution made a difference. So, too, did Trotsky's leadership of the soviet away from any subordination to the liberals and towards becoming an instrument of insurrection. Having attended the soviet, Lenin could see this for himself. Lunacharsky, a leading Bolshevik recalled, in his Revolutionary Silhouettes, the following incident,

"I remember someone saying in Lenin's presence, "Khrustalev's star is waning and now the strong man in the Soviet is Trotsky." Lenin's face darkened for a moment, then he said, "Well, Trotsky has earned it by his brilliant and unflagging work?" 52

A series of coordinated actions led by the St. Petersburg soviet continued throughout late October and November, testimony to the existence of a situation of 'dual power' in the city. On 29 October, just ten days after the end of the first general strike, the soviet launched a struggle for the eight-hour day. Whereas there are reports of democratic bourgeois and property-owners tacitly, and even openly, supporting the first strike, this time elemental economic class interest shattered any vestiges of temporary cross-class solidarity. Most employers fiercely resisted the demand for an eight hour day.

Across the city, workers moved to enforce the soviet's decision by walking off the job after eight hours' work. Employers responded by cutting wages, locking out workers and calling in the troops. The eight-hours campaign lasted until 12 November, punctuated by a four day general strike between 1 and 4 November in support of mutineers among the naval garrison at Kronstadt. At the end of the unsuccessful campaign, Trotsky, on behalf of the Executive Committee of the Soviet, gave the following assessment,

"We may not have won the eight-hour day for the masses, but we have certainly won the masses for the eight-hour day. Henceforth the war-cry: Eight hours and a gun! shall live in the heart of every Petersburg worker."<sup>53</sup>

### **Trotsky completes the theory of permanent revolution**

In the period May to early October, the strengthening of Tsarist police repression in St Petersburg obliged Trotsky to flee to Finland. In October, as we have seen, he rushed back to the capital in time to throw himself into the work of the soviet in leading the general strike. Trotsky and Parvus, who had arrived to join him, were soon invited to write in the mass daily newspaper *Nachalo*. They demanded and received total freedom to argue their own rather than the official Menshevik line. Here, Trotsky was able to develop his views further. In essence, he completed what was soon to be named the theory of permanent revolution.

"The position of the working class as the vanguard in the revolutionary struggle, the direct ties forming between it and the peasantry, the fascination it exerts over the army, all this inescapably pushes it toward power. The complete victory of the revolution means the victory of the proletariat. This in turn means further continuous revolution. The proletariat carries out the basic tasks of democracy and, at a certain point, the logic of its direct struggle to consolidate its political supremacy confronts it with purely socialist problems. A revolutionary continuity is established between the minimal and the maximal programme. This is not one 'coup', not a day or a month: it is whole historical epoch. It would be senseless to assess its duration in advance."<sup>54</sup>

The importance of this quotation is that it was reproduced in the Bolshevik paper *Novaya Zhizn* (New Life) of November 27 1905 with the view that there was no 'sharp or piquant' difference between the views of Lenin and Trotsky.

Towards the end of the year, the term 'permanent revolution', taken from Marx's 1850 address, became affixed to this theory and strategic prognosis. In fact, the term, though not used by Trotsky until early 1906, had been used in differing ways by a number of Social Democratic writers including Kautsky, Franz Mehring and, amongst the Russians, by Martov.

As early as March 1905, Martov had used the term in *Iskra*, when discussing the possibility that the bourgeois parties might prove too weak to take power and 'fade away before they have had time to blossom'. Then, he said, the proletariat would 'not be able to refuse political power.' But, he added 'it is also clear that...it will be unable to restrict itself to the limits of a bourgeois revolution...It cannot help but strive for a Revolution in Permanence."<sup>55</sup>

Martov's tone cannot disguise his opinion that the prospect of proletarian power would be a desperate measure, doomed to speedy overthrow like the Paris Commune, unless it coincided with a socialist

revolution in the west which rapidly spread to Russia. He passionately hoped that this could be avoided if the bourgeoisie only succeeded in organising a party capable of leading the revolution. Trotsky and Martov's views were the exact inverse of one another. For Martov, permanent revolution was a scenario of despair, to be avoided if at all possible. For Trotsky, it was a strategic possibility, more a necessity given the anti-revolutionary nature of the Russian bourgeoisie, to be worked towards with all the energy the proletarian party could muster. For Trotsky, the perspective of permanent revolution, a workers' government committed to advancing towards socialist transformation, was not a tragic fate but the goal of a fighting programme.

In October and November 1905, under the impact of the intensifying revolutionary situation, Trotsky's perspective began to 'infect' the writings of the Menshevik leaders gathered around Fyodor Dan, vice chairman of the soviet, and Alexander Martynov, formerly part of the Rabochye Dyelo group against which Lenin had polemicised in *What is to be Done*, in 1902. Martov found himself totally isolated, in his own faction.

Many years later in his *Origins of Bolshevism*, Dan remarked that, 'Menshevism at this time . . . generally tended towards the views of Parvus-Trotsky about a 'workers' regime' as the historically fore-ordained grave digger and heir of the Tsarist power, and about 'permanent revolution' as a process of the direct transformation of the bourgeois Russian revolution into the Socialist revolution.' 56

He went on to say that, 'the 'Trotskyist' themes began echoing more and more loudly in the utterances and articles of eminent members of the Iskra editorial board (first and foremost Martynov and the author of these lines) with the manifest approval of a substantial segment of the Mensheviks, especially of the Menshevik workers. The general editorial line of *Nachalo* also began becoming more and more 'Trotskyite'.' 57

Confirming the character of Menshevism in those days as a variety of left centrism, Dan and Martynov zigzagged strongly to the left. At the same time, the Bolsheviks, now under Lenin's influence, adopted a friendly tone towards the 'Trotskyite' *Nachalo*. Their paper, *Novaya Zhizn*, referred to *Nachalo* as a 'comrade in arms' and contained no polemics against its line. This was, in essence, because the Bolsheviks agreed with the position of *Nachalo* on the tasks of the provisional revolutionary government which both were fighting for. They agreed that the soviets were the main organs for bringing this about, if they openly set course for and practically prepared an armed insurrection.

Though Lenin still absolutely maintained his position on the democratic dictatorship of the proletariat and peasantry, for him, this meant in practical terms the presence of the Socialist Revolutionaries (representing the revolutionary petty bourgeois intelligentsia and the peasants) within the insurrectionary forces and in a future provisional government too. In the Soviet, Parvus and Trotsky worked with the SRs and counted on them to be involved in the insurrection. Thus this led to no practical disagreements, this side of a successful insurrection.

Nor did this rapprochement between the active leaders of the Mensheviks, Trotsky and Parvus and the Bolsheviks go uncommented upon by Lenin. Only a month or two later he observed, 'The tactics adopted in the period of 'whirlwind' did not further estrange the two wings of the Social-Democratic Party, but brought them closer together. Former disagreements gave way to unity of opinion on the question of armed uprising. Social-Democrats of both factions were active in the Soviets of Workers' Deputies, these peculiar instruments of embryonic revolutionary authority..(. . .). The upsurge of the revolutionary tide pushed aside disagreements, compelling Social-Democrats to adopt militant tactics; it swept the question of the Duma into the background and put the question of insurrection on the order of the day; and it brought closer together the Social-Democrats and revolutionary bourgeois democrats in carrying out immediate tasks.' 58

He went on both to recognise continuing differences and to indicate their relative unimportance at this moment,

"The revolutionary situation itself suggested practical slogans. There were arguments only over matters of detail in the appraisal of events: for example, Nachalo regarded the Soviets of Workers' Deputies as organs of revolutionary local self-government, while Novaya Zhizn regarded them as embryonic organs of revolutionary state power that united the proletariat with the revolutionary democrats. Nachalo inclined towards the dictatorship of the proletariat. Novaya Zhizn advocated the democratic dictatorship of the proletariat and the peasantry. But have not disagreements of this kind been observed at every stage of development of every socialist party in Europe?? 59

Discussions on the correct slogans and perspectives of the revolution were, however, interrupted by its culmination, the attack by the regime on the St Petersburg soviet and the Moscow uprising.

### **The crushing of the Petersburg soviet and the Moscow uprising**

After the defeat of the struggle for the eight hour day, the Petersburg soviet was thrown onto the defensive. It became clear that in the extreme economic conditions little could be won from the employers by sectional or economic strike action. The employers, moreover, had the police, the gendarmes and the Cossacks behind them. The soviet set about preparing for a political general strike which would culminate in an armed insurrection. It tried to communicate with and take action in support of mutinous regiments in the capital and in the naval base of Kronstadt. In reality, these preparations seem to have been far from sufficient to shake the discipline of the huge city garrison and, above all, its elite guards regiments.

Outside of St Petersburg, the revolutionary upsurge continued and increased with peasant revolts, naval mutinies, strikes, such as those of the postal and telegraph workers, and the formation of soviets. Every serious struggle tended to look to the St Petersburg Soviet for advice and aid. Powerful and politically well led as it was, it could not fully play the role of an all-Russian congress of soviets. Likewise, though the two factions of the RSDWP had grown massively and were operating in a united front on an action programme of general strike and armed insurrection and were both on the road to re-unification, they were often still too weak to coordinate the movement effectively. The spread of the soviets and the growth of revolutionary forces nationwide, combined with the temporary weakness of the Petersburg soviet, decided the Tsarist regime to strike hard, whilst there was yet time. In late November, they arrested Krustalev-Nosar, the chairman of the soviet, as a test of its strength and resolve.

On the 3 December, a full week after the arrest, the soviet met again, apparently without conspiratorial planning or secrecy. It came out for an immediate general strike but, then, troops surrounded the building and the deputies were all arrested. A third general strike began, but was not as widespread or as strong as before. The movement in the capital was clearly defeated. In part this was due to the exhaustion of workers after two months of strikes, in part to the huge garrison of elite guards regiments and Cossacks in the capital. But, in no small measure, it was due to the relative weakness of the Bolsheviks and the looseness of the larger Menshevik organisation. Things were different in Moscow. What were resolutions in St Petersburg became deeds in Moscow, thanks largely to Bolshevik organisation and practical preparation.

In Moscow, the Bolshevik Committee took the initiative. For two months, Lenin had been insistently advocating the formation of as many small fighting groups as possible, obtaining weapons and reaching an agreement with the SRs for the timing and launch of a rising.

"What is needed is furious energy, and again energy. It horrifies me, I give you my word, it horrifies me to find that there has been talk about bombs for over six months, yet not one has been made! And it is the most learned of people who are doing the talking.... Go to the youth, gentlemen! That is the only remedy!

Otherwise, I give you my word for it, you will be too late (everything tells me that), and will be left with ?learned? memoranda, plans, charts, schemes, and magnificent recipes, but without an organisation, without a living cause. (, , ) Let groups be at once organised of three, ten, thirty, etc., persons. Let them arm themselves at once as best they can, be it with a revolver, a knife, a rag soaked in kerosene for starting fires, etc."60

By late October, a militia had been organised in Moscow. While accounts differ, it seems it had around 1000 men at arms, mostly with rifles and revolvers, and a small number of bombs, perhaps even as few as 20. The men were poorly trained and accuracy was low. Above all, central coordination of the fighting groups and communications were weak. Through the Moscow soviet, an intra-party leadership committee was established comprising two Bolsheviks, two Mensheviks, two SRs and eight regional delegates, all social-democrats.

Despite the fact that insurrection had been the key slogan of the Bolsheviks since January, and that the entire Moscow organisation was oriented to it, the attack of the regime on the Petersburg soviet on 3 December still caught the party unawares. The next day, this led to a mutiny and rising of one of the Moscow regiments which was quickly suppressed. In the coming days, however, reports indicated to the committee that the mutiny was far from being an isolated instance and that the garrison itself was mutinous.

The Bolsheviks decided in favour of a rising and to devote the following day, 6 December, to agitation in the factories for insurrection and to obtaining the support of the soviet. The soviet meeting of 6 December took place in a sombre atmosphere. Nevertheless, all factions, Bolsheviks, Mensheviks and SRs, voted for the rising.

Against the expectations of the revolutionaries, between 7 and 9 December the rising at first went well. Squads of fighters, *druzhnicki*, spread out across the city in teams of three and four. They attacked police and military units to secure arms; they raided gunsmiths' shops and stores. The general strike promised by the railwaymen and guaranteed by the soviet came good.

"The revolutionaries' tactics were promptly determined by the situation itself. In contrast to this, the government troops showed themselves totally unable, for a whole five days, to adapt themselves to their opponents' tactics, combining bloodthirsty barbarity with bewilderment and confusion."61

Despite the small forces, poor preparation, inexperience, the average age of the Bolsheviks was under 20, and weak central leadership, the insurrection had a real prospect of success. Even so dispassionate a historian as Keep has observed, "The evidence suggests that if the insurgents had made a sudden determined assault on the main centres of authority they could have gained control of the city."62, This vital lesson, one already known to Marx and conveyed in his advice on the art of insurrection, had to be learned again, and would be deployed to epoch-making effect just 12 years later.

Between 10 and 11 December, the fate of the rising hung in the balance. The troops were tired and frustrated, unschooled in responding to low intensity guerrilla operations. Nonetheless, the absence of a central headquarters, lack of communications, a weak strategy and the isolation of the main Bolshevik leader, Lyadov, all contributed to a critical loss of momentum. Between 12 and 15 December, the spirit of the masses weakened as no prospect of a decisive victory could be seen.

As a guards regiment arrived from St. Petersburg along the only railway line secured by the government forces, ever greater numbers of workers began leaving the city. The revolutionaries abandoned their last redoubt, the district known thereafter as Red Presnya, on 17 December. Troops entered and killed anyone suspected of involvement in the rising or the soviet. By official figures, 442 were killed and 822 wounded.

Reprisals began immediately.

Drawing the programmatic lessons - the theory of permanent revolution

In prison from December 3 and for the next two months, Trotsky worked on a pamphlet which was a balance sheet of the preceding year and the strategic issues. Entitled Results and Prospects, in it, Trotsky examined the question addressed unsatisfactorily by Lenin, that is, what should be the response of the social democrats in a revolutionary government to the specific class demands of the proletarians? He had no disagreements with Lenin (or Kautsky) on the initial, that is, democratic, tasks it would have to tackle; destruction of the autocracy, establishing full democratic rights for the masses, convening a constituent assembly.

But, he added, the matter would not end there, "Workers' democracy will immediately be confronted by questions of the length of the working day, the agrarian question, and the problem of unemployment."<sup>63</sup> He went on to use the question of the length of the working day as an example,

"As is known, this by no means contradicts capitalist relations, and therefore it forms an item in the minimum programme of Social Democracy. But let us imagine the actual introduction of this measure during a period of revolution, in a period of intensified class passions; there is no question but that this measure would then meet the organised and determined resistance of the capitalists in the form, let us say, of lockouts and the closing down of factories...For a government that desires to rely upon the proletariat, and not on capital, as liberalism does, and which does not desire to play the role of an 'impartial' intermediary of bourgeois democracy, the closing down of factories would not of course be an excuse for increasing the working day. For a workers' government there would be only one way out: expropriation of the closed factories and the organisation of production in them on a socialised basis."<sup>64</sup>

Now Trotsky was not, of course, the only Marxist theorist aware of the fact that the class struggle between labour and capital would intensify in the aftermath of a successful democratic revolution. Lenin, in the selfsame article in July 1905 in which he had insisted on the bourgeois character of the Russian Revolution, also pointed to the interrelation of democratic and socialist tasks,

"...can it be denied that in the course of history individual, particular elements of the two revolutions become interwoven? Has the period of democratic revolutions in Europe not been familiar with a number of socialist movements and attempts to establish socialism? And will not the future socialist revolution in Europe still have to complete a great deal left undone in the field of democratism?"<sup>65</sup>

The unique element of Trotsky's theory was not that it posited a leading role for the proletariat in the democratic revolution, a position he shared with Lenin, Kautsky and even with Plekhanov's 1889 formulation. Nor was it the notion of the interweaving of democratic and socialist tasks, nor the perspective of revolution spreading westward from Russia to Germany. It was simply that now he was prepared to posit the possibility and necessity that the proletarian party in power could and should proceed directly from democratic to socialist tasks as these became necessary.

Kautsky was prepared to countenance the possibility of Russia 'skipping' a stage in its development, but only as a consequence of a prior victory of the proletariat, that is, social, revolution in Germany. Lenin enthusiastically described the revolutionising effect on Germany of a victory of the democratic dictatorship of proletariat and peasantry in Russia, but did not complete his analysis in the way Trotsky was able to do. Trotsky's theory, later to be fully developed into his theory of permanent revolution, proposed that the proletariat in power would be unable to restrict its action to democratic goals and would be obliged to effect socialist measures, or would be utterly discredited in the eyes of the proletarian masses.

Objections to this perspective came from all quarters, including from Lenin, who initially regarded the

theory as 'absurdly left' and as a concession to non-materialist Narodnik notions of Russia bypassing capitalist development altogether. He stressed repeatedly the bourgeois character of the revolution, even if the bourgeoisie would not be its leader. Anything else he saw as anarchism or Narodism, which failed to understand what possible interest the workers could have in a bourgeois revolution.

"A bourgeois revolution expresses the need for the development of capitalism, and far from destroying the foundations of capitalism, it does the opposite, it broadens and deepens them. This revolution therefore expresses the interests not only of the working class, but of the entire bourgeoisie as well. Since the rule of the bourgeoisie over the working class is inevitable under capitalism, it is quite correct to say that a bourgeois revolution expresses the interests not so much of the proletariat as of the bourgeoisie. But it is entirely absurd to think that a bourgeois revolution does not express the interests of the proletariat at all. This absurd idea boils down either to the hoary Narodnik theory that a bourgeois revolution runs counter to the interests of the proletariat, and that therefore we do not need bourgeois political liberty; or to anarchism, which rejects all participation of the proletariat in bourgeois politics, in a bourgeois revolution and in bourgeois parliamentarism."<sup>66</sup>

Nevertheless, Trotsky's theory was wholly distinct from any unscientific Narodnik or anarchist theories of this type, precisely because it based itself on the development of the class struggle of the workers against capital, not a utopian schema to avoid capitalism altogether. And if it could be objected that a socialist government in Russia would not be able to withstand internal pressure from the peasantry, given the small size of the domestic proletariat, then could not an answer to this dilemma be found in the European revolution, just as it could for Kautsky and Lenin when considering the fate of a democratic regime of the workers and peasants?

In chapter nine of *Results and Prospects*, Trotsky raised exactly this perspective, but with his own, entirely new element, drawing on, but exceeding, the radical analyses of Kautsky in 1902-05,

"Left to its own resources, the working class of Russia will inevitably be crushed by the counter-revolution the moment the peasantry turns its back on it. It will have no alternative but to link the fate of its political rule, and, hence, the fate of the whole Russian revolution, with the fate of the socialist revolution in Europe. That colossal state-political power given it by a temporary conjuncture of circumstances in the Russian bourgeois revolution it will cast into the scales of the class struggle of the entire capitalist world. With state power in its hands, with counter-revolution behind it and European reaction in front of it, it will send forth to its comrades the world over the old rallying cry, which this time will be a call for the last attack: Workers of all countries, unite!"<sup>67</sup>

This perspective, which was validated only negatively in 1905, in the sense that the bourgeoisie did not rise to the historic task assigned to it by the Mensheviks and the peasant movement did not demonstrate to the full what its role would be politically either in the insurrection or a revolutionary government, was fully confirmed in 1917. Nonetheless, with this first formulation of the necessary strategy of the proletariat, Trotsky completed the essential re-elaboration of the revolutionary programme, purging it of the sterile dogmatism of Plekhanov and Axelrod but also transforming the insights of Kautsky, Helphand and Lenin into a qualitatively superior synthesis. In so doing, he reformulated the programme of Marx and Engels for the new, imperialist, epoch and, therefore, for the present.

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2 V I Lenin, *Lecture on the 1905 Revolution*, Collected Works Vol. 23 Moscow, 1964

3 Karl Kautsky *The Social Revolution*, Chicago 1902 p90

4 Rosa Luxemburg *Gesammelte Werke Band 1 1893 - 1905, Zweiter Halbband*, Berlin 1970, p 212-218 and 229 - 249



- 5 Karl Kautsky, *Die Soziale Revolution und am Tage nach der Soziale Revolution*, Berlin, 1902, p.53
- 6 Quoted in Massimo Salvadori *Karl Kautsky and the Socialist Revolution 1880- 1938*, London 1979, p88.
- 7 Karl Marx and Frederick Engels: "Address of the Central Authority To The Communist League"; March 1850, in *Collected Works*, Volume 10, London 1978, p. 281
- 8 *ibid.* p287
- 9 Karl Kautsky, *To What Extent is the Communist Manifesto Obsolete?* Marxist InternetArchive.<http://www.marxists.org/archive/kautsky/1904/xx/manifesto.ht>
- 10 *ibid.*
- 11 *ibid*
- 12 *ibid.*
- 13 Kautsky *Allerhned Revolution's Kritik* Lusnia, *Neue Zeit* 22 (1) February- March 1904 p 588 - 98, also see Moira Donald *Marxism and Revolution, Karl Kautsky and the Russian Marxists, 1900 - 1924*. Yale 1993, p 71
- 14 *ibid.*
- 15 Kautsky, *The Civilised World and the Tsar*, in *Neue Zeit*, XXIII vol. 1 pp676-7 February 1905
- 16 Kautsky, *The Consequences of the Japanese Victory and Social Democracy*, *ibid.* p 615
- 17 Kautsky, *The American Worker*, *Historical Materialism*, vol. 11, issue 4, London 2003 p15 - 77
- 18 G.V. Plekhanov, *Selected Philosophical Works*, Volume 1, Moscow 1961 pp. 111-112,
- 19 *ibid.*
- 20 *ibid.*
- 21 *Speech to the International Socialist Congress, Paris 1889* cited in J L H Keep *The Rise of Social Democracy in Russia* London 1963 p 20
- 22 Keep *op cit.*
- 23 see S.H. Baron, *Plekhanov, The Father of Russian Marxism*, Stanford, 1963, p.217
- 24 Moira Donald, *Marxism and Revolution Karl Kautsky and the Russian Marxists 1900-1924*, p84 Yale 1993, "Cadets" was the shorthand name for the Constitutional Democrat party, the bourgeois liberal party founded in 1905
- 25 Baron, *op. cit.*, p 273
- 26 See Donald, *op cit*, p84
- 27 Kautsky, *Driving Forces and Prospects of the Russian Revolution* in *Neue Zeit* November 1906, cited in Donald, *op cit*, p. 81
- 28 *ibid.*
- 29 *ibid*, p.81
- 30 Massimo Salvadori *Karl Kautsky and the Socialist Revolution* New Left Books 1979 p 105
- 31 V.I.Lenin, *Preface to Kautsky's Pamphlet The Driving Forces and Prospects of the Russian Revolution* *Collected Works* volume 11 Moscow 1962, p. 411.
- 32 Lenin, *Two Tactics of Social Democracy in the Democratic Revolution* in *Collected Works* Vol. 9, Moscow, 1962, page 28-9
- 33 *ibid* p.56
- 34 *ibid* p.58
- 35 Resolution adopted by the Menshevik conference of April-May 1905, quoted in, *The Mensheviks and the Russian Revolution*, ed. Abraham Aster, London 1976, p 58
- 36 Lenin *Two Tactics* *op cit.* p 29
- 37 J L H Keep, *The Rise of Social Democracy in Russia*, Oxford, 1963, page 197
- 38 Lenin, *Social Democracy's Attitude Toward the Peasant Movement* in *Collected Works* Vol. 9, Moscow 1963, p237
- 39 *ibid.*

- 40 AB Zeman and W B Scharlau, *The Merchant of Revolution; the life of Alexander Israel Helphand* (Parvus) Oxford, 1965, p 66
- 41 Iskra no 82 January 1 1905. Cited in Isaac Deutscher *The Prophet Armed* p 104
- 42 Leon Trotsky, *The Proletariat and the Revolution in The Age of Permanent Revolution: A Trotsky Anthology* ed. Isaac Deutscher. New York, 1964, p48
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- 44 cited in Solomon M Schwarz, *The Russian Revolution of 1905* publication details 1967, p251
- 45 *ibid.*
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- 47 Trotsky, Foreword to the Russian translation of Lassalle's Speech to the Jury, quoted in Schwarz, *ibid.*, p253
- 48 Lenin. *Our Tasks and the Soviet of Workers' Deputies* in *Collected Works*, Volume 10, Moscow, 1962, p 19
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- 50 Sidney Harcave *First Blood: The Russian Revolution of 1905*, London, 1964, p196
- 51 Trotsky, *ibid.*, p 141
- 52 A V Lunacharsky, *Revolutionary Silhouettes* London 1964, p
- 53 Trotsky, *ibid.* p 201
- 54 Trotsky, *Social Democracy and Revolution* in *Nachalo* no 10, November 25, 1905, cited in Schwarz, *op cit.* p. 253
- 55 cited in Schwarz *op cit.*
- 56 T Dan, *Origins of Bolshevism* London 1964 p343
- 57 *ibid.*
- 58 Lenin, *The Victory of the Cadets and the Tasks of the Workers' Party* in *ibid.* pp 254-5
- 59 *ibid.*
- 60 Lenin, *To the Combat Committee of the St Petersburg Committee*, dated October 16th 1905, in *Collected Works* vol. 9 Moscow 1962, p344-5.
- 61 Trotsky, 1905 p255
- 62 *Keep*, *op cit.* p.252
- 63 Trotsky, *Results and Prospects*, London, 1962, p.208
- 64 *ibid.* p.210
- 65 Lenin, *Two Tactics of the Social Democracy in the Democratic Revolution*, *op cit.*, p 85
- 66 *ibid.*, p 49
- 67 Trotsky, *op cit.*, p 247