Leon Trotsky and The Search For

Permanent Revolution

By
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PREFACE

Leon Trotsky was an active student of the Russian Revolution from his early days in secondary school in Odessa until his expulsion from the Soviet Union in 1928. During this time he devised and elaborated his famous theory of permanent revolution, and sought to act in accordance with it. After his expulsion from the USSR, he became a more or less passive critic of Stalin and the totalitarian state that he commanded. Much of Trotsky's literary effort during this second stage of his life was directed toward clarifying and vindicating his positions and actions prior to his forced exile.

This essay is based upon a study of Trotsky's major works written during the first stage of his literary career, which have been translated into English. These works, written between approximately 1904 and 1930, suggest a distinctive outlook toward Russian history of this period. This essay attempts to describe the Russian Revolution and the first ten years of the Soviet regime through Trotsky's eyes and his theory of permanent revolution. It is hoped that this presentation will facilitate an understanding of this period of Soviet history.

INTRODUCTION

The Russian revolutionary movement, which brought the downfall of tsarist absolutism in 1917, had its origins in the first half of the nineteenth century. During this time, politically minded intellectuals, known as the intelligentsia, began to examine critically the nature of the Russian state and society. They were greatly inspired by the ideas of the Enlightenment and the French Revolution, and they came to see a need for major political and social changes at home. At first they hoped that the tsar would invoke the necessary reforms himself, but by 1825 it was apparent that the autocracy would not limit its own powers under a constitution, introduce what were believed to be universal rights, or abolish Russian serfdom.

Members of the intelligentsia took their first political action against the tsarist regime in December 1825. Hoping to capitalize on the succession crisis that followed the death of Tsar Alexander I, certain army officers staged an uprising to challenge the sovereignty of the tsar's designated successor. Though it was unsuccessful, the "December Uprising" became symbolically significant for later Russian revolutionaries who chose to believe that "from the spark [of 1825] shall come the flame" of revolution.

Radical thought continued to develop over the next twenty years, although there was no overt challenge to the Russian autocracy. The most influential thinker during this time was Alexander Herzen, a writer of gentry origin. After going through several phases of development, from revolutionary liberalism to socialism, Herzen became convinced that Russia should not and could not duplicate the political and social evolution the West had undergone. He began to place his faith in Russia's own peasant commune as the basis upon which the intelligentsia should create a peculiarly Russian agrarian socialism.

Herzen was the father of the populist movement that dominated the revolutionary stage during the 1860s and 1870s. With serfdom officially abolished in 1861, the populists hoped to rebuild Russian society upon communal foundations. Inspired by Herzen's call to "Go to the people," hundreds of populists migrated in 1873–74 into the countryside in efforts to aid the poor peasant and spread the communal consciousness. Though reactions varied, as a whole, the peasantry was unreceptive, and the populist crusade failed. Shortly afterwards, the populists attempted to regroup with the formation of the society called "Land and Liberty." In spite of this better-organized effort, the results were not much more encouraging. Support for populism began to wane as some radicals began considering other revolutionary doctrines—above all, Marxism.

As the most influential revolutionary doctrine of the modern era, Marxism provided the Russian radicals with an entirely new revolutionary outlook. According to Marxism, history is divided into a series of stages (slavery, feudalism, capitalism, socialism, and communism) that are based upon successive "modes of production" and corresponding class relationships. History progresses from one stage to the next on the basis of struggle between these classes for control of the state, the society, and the economic forces. When class struggle climaxes in revolution, a new class comes to power and establishes a new political, social, and economic order. Marxism maintains that, during the capitalistic

stage, the bourgeoisie dominates other classes through its control over capital and the state. As capitalism matures, however, the industrial proletariat rises to challenge the bourgeoisie. Karl Marx believed that the capitalistic stage of European society would soon be overthrown by a proletarian revolution, which would usher in the socialist stage.

An epoch in the history of the Russian revolutionary movement was marked in 1883 in Switzerland when George Plekhanov, a former follower of "Land and Liberty," abandoned populism and embraced Marxism.[1] From this point on, Plekhanov emphasized the role of the proletariat rather than that of the peasant in the future Russian revolution.

By the end of the nineteenth century, largely as a result of Plekhanov's influence, Marxism became widely accepted throughout Russian revolutionary circles. It was not until 1903, however, that a permanent Marxist party organization was created. In Brussels during that year, a congress of revolutionaries established the Russian Social Democratic Labor Party.

The debates that occurred during this congress produced a historic split within the party and created contending factions, the Bolsheviks and Mensheviks. Within a few years, a whole range of differences between the two groups materialized. Perhaps the most important of these involved distinctly different views as to Russia's future. While both sides agreed that Russia was far behind Western Europe in terms of economic development, the Bolsheviks led by Lenin argued that Russia could pass with unusual rapidity through capitalism into socialism. Plekhanov, representing the Menshevik position, argued that, given Russia's backwardness, the proletariat could not demand socialist measures until a "significant interval" was allowed for development between the bourgeois and socialist revolutions. The Bolsheviks believed that the proletariat should form a democratic alliance with the peasantry against the bourgeoisie in the course of the struggle to overthrow tsarist autocracy. The Mensheviks sought a temporary working alliance with the liberal and bourgeois elements, which they expected to triumph in the "bourgeois" revolution.

During the Russian Revolution of November 1917, the victorious Bolshevik Party adopted neither of these strategies. It is my contention that Leon Bronstein, who became known as Leon Trotsky, first devised the revolutionary theory upon which the Bolsheviks acted when they seized power in 1917. Though no explicit recognition was given to Trotsky, the Bolsheviks adopted the essence of Trotsky's theory of permanent revolution and based their policies upon it during most of the first decade of Soviet rule. However, by the late 1920s, Trotsky's outlook became a liability to the maturing Soviet regime. A new theory—"socialism in one country"—was adopted in its stead.

This essay does not hold that Lenin and the Bolsheviks deliberately and consciously took over Trotsky's conception. Lenin arrived at the idea of permanent revolution largely through his own analysis; but the stance that he took after the beginning of the First World War was, in essence, identical to the position put forth by Trotsky in 1906. For this reason, Trotsky should be given credit for his theoretical foresight.

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1. Donald W. Treadgold. *Twentieth Century Russia* (Chicago: Rand McNally and Company, 1972), 51.

Leon Davidovich, who later became the chairman of the St. Petersburg Soviet, the leader of the Military Revolutionary Committee in 1917, one of the two leaders of the Bolshevik Revolution, the first Commissar of Foreign Affairs, and the founder of the Red Army, was born into a Jewish farming family in the southern Ukraine in November 1879.[2] At age nineteen, Leon Davidovich, already under the influence of Marxism, founded the Southern Russian Workers Union. Shortly after founding this union, he was arrested for the first time, while carrying a suitcase full of subversive literature. For this crime he spent the next twenty months in various Siberian prisons.

In 1902, Leon Davidovich escaped from exile to join the ranks of the Russian revolutionary emigration in Western Europe. During that year, he secured a forged passport in which he entered as his name the first one that came to his mind. It happened to be the name of one of his jailers, a certain Trotsky, and henceforth Leon Davidovich was known as Leon Trotsky.[3]

It was also in 1902, in London, that Trotsky for the first time met Lenin. He did not reveal, during their first discussion, his mixed feelings toward *What Is to Be Done?*, Lenin's recently published work concerning the character and organization of the revolutionary party. Trotsky's position regarding this matter was made clear during the congress in Brussels in 1903. At this congress, Trotsky sided with the Menshevik faction against the Bolshevik party's focus and disciplinary practices. Later in his life, Trotsky would change his attitude toward Lenin's organizational concepts.

While debates raged in Western Europe among the revolutionary émigrés concerning the role of the party in 1904, tensions were mounting in Russia over long-festering social problems and new discontentment brought on by the Russo-Japanese War. These debates came to a head in January 1905, as disturbances in St. Petersburg touched off a monumental wave of demonstrations, protests, strikes, and mutinies across the country. Earlier, Lenin had recognized that "without a revolutionary theory, there cannot be a revolutionary movement."[4] The events of 1905 crystallized Trotsky's thoughts on Russia's revolutionary future, and afterwards he devised the theory that undergirded the successful Bolshevik drive for power in 1917. It is to these events that one must now turn.

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2. "By a freak of fate, the day on which the boy was born, 26 October (or 7 November, according to the new calendar) was the precise date on which, thirty-eight years later, as Leon Trotsky, he was to lead the Bolshevik insurrection in Petrograd." Isaac Deutscher, *The Prophet Armed*, the first volume of a three-volume biography of Trotsky's life (New York: Vintage Books, 1965), 7–8.
3. Victor Serge and Natalia Sedova, *The Life and Death of Leon Trotsky* (New York: Basic Books, Inc., 1973), 11.
4. Adam B. Ulam, *The Bolsheviks* (New York: MacMillan Publishing Co., 1965), 181.

CHAPTER I
A VISION

On January 22, 1905, a procession of approximately 100,000 men, women, and children moved peacefully, their arms intertwined, through the streets of St. Petersburg toward the Winter Palace of Tsar Nicholas II. Some carried crosses, icons, and religious banners, while others carried Russian flags and portraits of the tsar. This procession of predominately factory workers was led by a youthful priest, Father George Capon. The priest bore a petition to the tsar that made a series of demands. It called for a constituent assembly, universal suffrage, universal education, separation of church and state, an income tax, a minimum wage, and an eight-hour day. These demands represented the workers' own peaceful solution to the oppression they were experiencing under the centuries-old rule of the Romanov dynasty.

The converging processions were scheduled to meet at the Winter Palace at 2:00 p.m. However, the marchers found their way blocked by lines of infantry, Cossacks, and hussars. As the crowd pressed forward in an attempt to move past the soldiers, catastrophe struck. Completely misjudging the mood of the working masses, the infantry opened fire. The official estimate was ninety-two dead and several hundred wounded, yet the true number must have been several times higher.

"Bloody Sunday," as it became known, was one of the major turning points in Russian history. Over the previous several centuries, the Russian masses had maintained the belief that the tsar was sympathetic and responsive to their desires and needs. While not even being present in St. Petersburg to witness the procession toward the Winter Palace, Nicholas II demonstrated to the people that their confidence in him was unfounded. Sidney Harcave in *First Blood* (1964) describes the enduring effects of Bloody Sunday in this way: "Bloody Sunday served as a powerful catalyst that speeded up the tempo of psychological change. It heightened animosity . . . encouraged greater daring in the conception of what could be changed."[5]

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5. Sidney Harcave, *First Blood: The Russian Revolution of 1905* (New York: The Macmillan Company, 1964), 110.

The events of Bloody Sunday are today seen as the beginning of the Revolution of 1905. Lasting throughout that entire year, the revolution was unsuccessful from the perspective of the radicals of the day because Nicholas II remained in power. After making temporary concessions to the demands of the workers, Nicholas was able to restore the autocratic hold on imperial Russia, which he maintained until the upheaval of February 1917.[6] This second Russian revolution was soon to be followed by a third, the October Revolution, in which the Bolshevik Party seized control in Petrograd.[7] The Soviets were then able to extend their control throughout most of imperial Russia.

Many historians, especially Soviet writers, see a link between the 1905 Revolution, the February Revolution, and the October Revolution. This interpretation implies that the demands of the masses that assembled in St. Petersburg on Bloody Sunday could not have been met except through the overthrow of the tsar and the establishment of the Soviet regime.

But much is lost in treating the period between 1905 and 1917 as one continuous stream. In opposition to this view, this essay asks that the reader consider the Revolution of 1905 as a historical phenomenon in its own right and not in the light of the final outcome of 1917.[8] The year 1905 was a crucial one for Trotsky, as well as all Marxists of that time. The revolution that occurred during 1905 gave Trotsky the backdrop upon which to paint his vision of a revolution of the future. Yet the historic conditions of 1917 were in many ways different from those of 1905, as Trotsky would well admit. The reader must treat these years as separate entities in order to make an objective conclusion concerning the extent to which a link exists between them.

At the opening of the twentieth century, a growing crisis threatened the stability of the tsarist regime. Almost every class in Russian society was dissatisfied with tsarist policy. The famine of 1891–92 had rekindled a series of peasant disturbances that continued until and throughout the Revolution of 1905. The peasantry sought an equitable redistribution of the gentry's farmland and relief from the redemption payments to the landlords for the land received after the abolition of serfdom in 1861.

The 1880s and 1890s had witnessed rapid industrialization during which a new class of factory workers arose. These workers began to express their discontent through strikes well before 1900. Conditions within Russia were severely aggravated by Russia's participation in the unsuccessful Russo-Japanese War (1904–1905). The disastrous military performance during this war sparked severe criticism of the tsar from professional groups and government administrators. In November 1904, local self-government (zemstvo) representatives from thirty-two provinces met in St. Petersburg to formulate proposals to

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6. The two revolutions of 1917 are commonly known as the February and October revolutions. The two months designating these events refer to the old Julian calendar used in Russia until 1918. This essay will use dates based upon the modern Gregorian calendar.

7. During World War One, *St. Petersburg* was renamed *Petrograd* in order to drop German connotations. *Petrograd* was later renamed *Leningrad* after Lenin's death. This essay will use the name that fits the historical context.

8. Oskar Anweiller, "The Opening of New Possibilities," *Russia in Transition, 1905–1914*, ed. Robert McNeal (Huntington, New York: Robert E. Krieger Publishing Co., 1976), 10.

be presented to the tsar. The zemstvo congress called for a representative assembly and certain civil liberties. Nicholas's rejection of these proposals brought increased opposition within the ranks of the liberal constitutionalists and the more radical Social Democrats.

When Bloody Sunday took place, Trotsky was living in Geneva. For the previous several months, he had been analyzing the revolutionary temper of the masses and the effects of the war with Japan upon it. To him it seemed that "no better conditions could have been created by history" for a revolution within Russia.[9] Upon hearing the news of Bloody Sunday, Trotsky tuned pale, became unsteady, and nearly fainted.[10] The revolution he had long been calling for appeared to have begun. In February of 1905, he returned to Russia to participate in the workers' movement, which was gaining momentum.

The January massacre in St. Petersburg touched off a long series of workers' strikes and peasant revolts. These disturbances culminated in a mammoth general strike in October. As it spread to all sectors, most notably the railroads, the strike movement brought the Russian economy to a standstill.

Immediately upon his arrival in Russia, Trotsky found himself at the center of revolutionary activities. Prior to the strike, he had lived in St. Petersburg, but the pressure of the tsarist police forced him to find refuge in Finland. In his absence, there sprang up in St. Petersburg an institution that would have the greatest significance in the development of Trotsky's theoretical views: the Council, or Soviet, of Workers' Deputies. Founded on October 13, this body soon gained extraordinary authority as the representative organ of the disenfranchised working class.

With his empire economically paralyzed, and in the face of immense opposition from every social group, Nicholas II, on October 17, 1905, issued the October Manifesto. This document guaranteed civil liberties and provided for a representative Duma with legislative power. At least on paper, the October Manifesto transformed the empire of the Romanovs into a constitutional monarchy. Paradoxically, however, this measure proved to be a strategic victory for the tsar. A significant part of the Russian people accepted the manifesto, the October strike ended, and the revolutionary tide within Russia gradually subsided.

Trotsky had returned to St. Petersburg from Finland by October 15. Almost immediately, he appeared before the Soviet of Workers' Deputies. During his first weeks in St. Petersburg, he condemned the October Manifesto as an empty set of promises that would "be taken away and torn into pieces" by the tsar once his power had been restored.[11] A powerful and effective orator, Trotsky soon became the spokesman of the working class in the city. He was elected chairman of the Soviet and presided over its meetings. But with the end of the October strike, the tsar began to regain his hold upon the empire. On

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9. Leon Trotsky, "The Proletariat and the Revolution," *The Age of Permanent Revolution: A Trotsky Anthology*, ed. Isaac Deutscher (New York: Dell Publishing Co. Inc., 1964), 48.
10. Serge and Sedova, *The Life and Death of Leon Trotsky*, 15.
11. Deutscher, *The Prophet Armed*, 129.

December 3, the entire executive staff of the St. Petersburg Soviet, including Trotsky, was arrested by the tsarist police.

The fifty-one executive members of the Soviet were taken to the Fortress of Peter and Paul in the heart of St. Petersburg to await trial on charges of planning an insurrection against the state. The trial itself did not take place for almost a full year. Trotsky was given comfortable surroundings in which to live and access to a wide variety of literature. At this time, he "entered on a period of systematic scientific and literary work" studying "the theory of rent and the history of social relations in Russia."[12] Trotsky spent much time reflecting upon the recent events and attempted to illuminate them in a work titled *The Permanent Revolution and Results and Prospects*.

This "article" of approximately ninety-three pages is the primary subject of this chapter. In this work, hereafter referred to as *Results and Prospects*, Trotsky provides the most finished statement of the theory of permanent revolution prior to 1929.[13] After analyzing the events of 1905, Trotsky offers, in *Results and Prospects*, his main vision of the Russian historical events to come. *Results and Prospects* may be viewed as an extraordinary piece of literature solely on the basis of the accuracy of its "prophecy." Moreover, it is a crucial literary source, for its axioms were to have a dynamic impact upon the thought and actions of Trotsky himself and upon the Bolshevik Party just prior to and after the establishment of Soviet rule.

In 1905–1906, however, "permanent revolution" was not a central issue of debate within the Russian Social Democratic Labor Party (RSDLP). Some were familiar with this theory, which was "first tentatively suggested by the German-Russian socialist Parvus [A. L. Helphand] in 1905," but debate largely concerned the more specific and immediate problems of the land and the peasant.[14] Many radical Russians in 1906 sought to envisage the future revolution that would bring down the tsarist regime. But none was as prescient as the scheme Trotsky laid out in *Results and Prospects*. This work represents his own rationale of revolution.

Although the ideas expressed in *Results and Prospects* produce a definite conceptual framework, they do not provide precise predictions based upon exact historical calculations. Even after several careful readings of *Results and Prospects*, one is hard put to describe the essence of Trotsky's theory. To facilitate understanding, Trotsky's theory has been reduced here to five postulates. Of course, one will find some inconsistencies and flaws, but one must remember that in 1906 permanent revolution was less a logical, precise theory than an exposition of possibilities supplemented by a vast amount of hope and faith. During the 1920s, permanent revolution would become more fully developed, articulated, and coherent.

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12. Leon Trotsky, *My Life* (New York; Pathfinder Press, Inc., 1970), 187.

13. This is the date of the publication of Trotsky's work, *The Permanent Revolution*. *Results and Prospects* and *Permanent Revolution* differ in content. The latter shows how historical events, especially since 1917, had shaped or refined his theory.

14. This issue is discussed by Adam Ulam in *The Bolsheviks*, 244 and 245. It is not within the scope of this paper to describe these issues as perceived by various Social Democrats.

The first postulate of Trotsky's theory in *Results and Prospects* is perhaps the most significant for its overall contribution to European Marxist thought. Trotsky states that a socialist revolution could occur within Russia before it occurs in Western Europe. In Chapter IV, "Revolution and the Proletariat," Trotsky attempts to refute those "textual Marxists" who treat Marxism as a dogma rather than as a method of analysis of social relations.[15] According to these Marxists, the advance toward socialism within any particular country is a long and gradual process. Commercial development within the feudal economy creates a strong middle (trading) class that eventually, with the support of the lower social classes, overthrows the monarchy and establishes bourgeois constitutional democracy. As capitalism produces industrialization, an urban working class develops. This class is destined to bring about the socialist revolution, but only after several hundred years of capitalistic economic development. At the turn of the nineteenth century, almost all Russian Marxists asserted, since Western Europe was far more advanced than the Russian empire, that socialist revolution would certainly come first in Western Europe. Only later, after perhaps decades, would a similar revolution follow within Russia. Indeed, by 1906, Russia had not even experienced bourgeois revolution and the downfall of absolute monarchy.

For reasons to be treated later, Trotsky asserts that it would be possible within Russia to combine the bourgeois and socialist revolutions into one, and that this revolution would precede the socialist revolutions in Western Europe. It is primarily this conclusion that makes *Results and Prospects* perhaps the "most radical restatement, if not revision, of the prognosis of Socialist revolution undertaken since Marx's Communist *Manifesto*, that is, since 1847."[16]

Nicholas II helped to defeat the Revolution of 1905 by proclaiming the October Manifesto, which called for the establishment of a legislative assembly, a Duma. This momentarily satisfied the most powerful social elements within Russia, the liberal bourgeois opposition and the more conservative industrial-commercial elements. Their acceptance of the tsar's promise to institute some degree of constitutionality meant only one thing to Trotsky: Most influential Russians believed and hoped that their oppositional demands could be met through a form of constitutional evolution rather than through violent revolution. In response to this fact, Trotsky expresses, in *Results and Prospects*, a second postulate of permanent revolution. The "peculiarities" of Russian history had made revolution, in the best interests of the masses, the only means by which absolutism could be destroyed within Russia.

Trotsky came to this conclusion through a historical analysis of the evolution of Russian economic variables and social classes. He began from the assertion that "the main characteristic of Russian social development is its comparative primitiveness and slowness" with respect to that of the Western economies.[17] The Russian people had been forced to deal with natural economic disadvantages (a sparse population scattered over an

15. Leon Trotsky, *Results and Prospects* (New York: Pathfinder Press, 1969), 64 and 66.
16. Deutscher, *The Prophet Armed*, 150.
17. Trotsky, *Results and Prospects*, 37.

immense landmass, the inaccessibility of natural resources, unfavorable climatic conditions, the lack of natural defense points, etc.) while in competition with the developing nations in Western Europe. As the Russian state, "which grew up on a primitive economic basis," entered into relations with other European nations, it "came into conflict with state organizations built upon higher and more stable foundations" and thus experienced a powerful external pressure.[18]

Two possibilities then presented themselves to the Russian autocracy in the early stages of its development: Either the Russian state could succumb to the West, or it could attempt to overtake the Western nations in the development of economic relations.[19] Naturally choosing the latter option, the state began swallowing up, especially since the end of the seventeenth century, an inordinately large part of the Russian economic surplus product. It accomplished this largely by establishing a hierarchical organization of estates based upon service to the tsar. The peasant became the landowner's slave, and the noble landowning gentry was made servant to the tsar. In this way, the autocracy lived at the expense of the privileged classes and robbed the peasant of his agricultural surplus.

A Marxist axiom states that during the capitalist stage, the division of labor or the differentiation of class relations develops as surpluses are created in the economy. There must be sufficient agricultural produce to support life in the towns, and there must be some means of accumulating capital within the towns for industrial development. In snatching up most of the surplus produce within the economy, the tsarist regime had greatly hampered the natural development of class or estate relations. The Russian nobility and peasantry had been robbed of the means necessary to develop a capitalistic economy. By the time society ". . . began to feel a need for the political [democratic] institutions of the West," the autocracy had developed the military might of European states using the economic surpluses it had extracted.[20] With its powerful military, the tsar became capable of carrying out systematic repressions of all classes of society.

Feeling the financial and military might of the absolute monarchy, the nobility, by the last half of the eighteenth century, had lost faith in its ability to break the chains of autocracy. For this reason, it began to cooperate fully with the tsar in the exploitation of the lower working and peasant classes. In capitulating to the tsar after his issuance of the October Manifesto in 1905, the upper-class elements had demonstrated that they were uninterested in improving the lot of the poorer classes. A tremendous gap had developed in society that could not be easily closed. Trotsky's call for "single combat" with absolutism shows that insurrection or revolution from below constituted the only means by which the oppressive, absolutist rule in Russia could be destroyed.[21] Trotsky was by all means not the only member of the Social Democratic Party to draw this conclusion.[22] Importantly, though, his disavowal of the Russian upper-class elements would become a deciding factor in

18. Ibid., 38.
19. Ibid.
20. Ibid., 43.
21. Ibid., 66.
22. ". . . Lenin in 1906 'also' lusted for a full, final revolution." Ulam, *The Bolsheviks*, 249.

determining his political affiliations within the RSDLP prior to the October Revolution of 1917.

The question at this point in *Results and Prospects* becomes the following: Who is to lead the future revolution? Trotsky answers this question through an analysis of the development of the Russian urban centers. In their earliest stages of development, Russian towns are portrayed to have been merely military and administrative centers or fortresses that played only the role of consumers living off the wealth of the countryside, unlike the craft and trading towns of the European Middle Ages. As conflict and competition with the more modern Western countries increased, the autocracy was forced to attempt to industrialize the Russian towns, thus changing the role of the towns from that of consumers to that of producers. This was accomplished largely through the importation of foreign, European capital. In essence, in an effort to compete with the West, the Russian autocracy grabbed control of industrialization without letting it evolve naturally, as it did in the West, under private enterprise. Russia was not given the time to develop a class of petty-bourgeois urban craftsmen, which had played such a large role in the French Revolution in 1789.[23]

In its "artificial" attempt to industrialize through the importation of foreign capital, the autocracy, without an urban labor force, faced a severe shortage of labor. Largely during the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, the state began to import serf labor from the countryside in order to meet the increasing labor demand. The pace of this importation of foreign capital and peasant labor was highly accelerated during the recent period between 1893 and 1902.[24] This created within Russian cities a large and highly concentrated class of workers, a proletariat. Forced to work for meager wages and under poor conditions, this class had become highly dissatisfied with the tsarist regime.

The potentialities or capabilities of the proletariat as a revolutionary class is the central concern in all of Trotsky's major works involving Marxist analysis. The third postulate of permanent revolution as described in *Results and Prospects* holds that the Russian Revolution will be led by the Russian proletariat. "Arming the revolution, in Russia, means first and foremost arming the workers. . . . The revolution falls with all its weight upon the proletariat."[25] Later in his life, Trotsky gained an almost mystical reverence for the proletariat as a class. It would become to him not only the guardian angel of the revolution within Russia, but, with perhaps less justification, of world revolution as well.

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23. Trotsky discusses the social forces of the French Revolution in *Results and Prospects* in the third chapter, "1789–1848–1905." This chapter describes how the leading roles of the European revolutionary movement had been moving steadily from West to East in his analysis of the French Revolution of 1789, the revolution in Germany in 1848, and the Revolution of 1905 in Russia. The crucial element in this West-East swing, as described later in the first chapter of this essay, is the decline of the bourgeoisie and the rise of the proletariat as the leader of the European revolution.

24. Trotsky, *Results and Prospects*, 51. Trotsky elaborates here using statistical data in his work, *1905*, written in Vienna between 1908 and 1909. Leon Trotsky, *1905*, trans. Anya Bostock (New York: Random House, 1971), 16 and 17.

25. Trotsky, *Results and Prospects*, 61.

The proletariat had conclusively demonstrated during the October strike of 1905 that it occupied a position of great strength within the Russian economy. Its ability to shut down the factories, transportation, and communication throughout the empire had brought the tsar to his knees. The working class had demonstrated its political consciousness in the formation of the Soviets during the first crucial weeks of the general strike. In the absence of a powerful bourgeoisie, the future task of the overthrow of absolutism could only fall to the proletariat. They would succeed in their task because of their virtually indispensable, irreplaceable role in the Russian economy.

Results and Prospects also accounted for the role of the peasantry in the coming Russian revolution. In nineteenth-century Russian thought, the peasantry holds a problematic, contradictory place. Some Russian intellectuals characterized peasants as ignorant and lazy, while uncontrollably drawn to vodka. Others characterized them as instinctively wise and innately conscious of the essence of life. Trotsky never had illusions about the peasantry. His position is summed up in this way: "Historical experience shows that the peasantry are absolutely incapable of taking up an independent political role."[26] The peasantry could never lead a revolution because of its diffusion and isolation in the countryside. The autocracy had revolutionized or "proletarianized" the peasantry by placing a severe burden of taxation upon it, but without the political leadership and coordination supplied by the proletariat in the cities, revolution would be impossible.[27] In *1905*, a major work of Trotsky written in 1908–1909 that elaborates on the essentials of *Results and Prospects*, Trotsky offered this characterization of the future Russian revolution:

> The Russian Revolution is a "bourgeois" revolution because it sets out to liberate bourgeois society from the chains and fetters of absolutism and feudal ownership. But the principal driving force of the Russian Revolution is the proletariat, and that is why so far as its method is concerned, it is a proletarian revolution.[28]

Using this excerpt from *1905* as an introduction, it is necessary now to formulate the fourth, and possibly the most central, aspect of the 1906 version of permanent revolution. After seizing political power from the autocracy, the Russian proletariat will establish a dictatorship that will accomplish the goals of a bourgeois revolution and prepare Russia for a direct movement into socialism. Taken at its face, this statement may seem complicated, perhaps even convoluted. Yet it is a concise summation of what Trotsky took many pages to describe in *Results and Prospects*.

In *Results and Prospects*, Trotsky never precisely outlines the means by which the proletariat would seize power. Before 1917, he continually resisted going into much detail in this respect because he felt a revolution ". . . is the result of social relations and not the product of a plan. It is impossible to manufacture it; it is possible to foresee it."[29] Trotsky

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26. Ibid., 72.
27. Ibid., 49.
28. Trotsky, *1905*, 49.
29. Leon Trotsky, *In Defense of Insurrection*, trans. unknown (Maradana: A Lanka Samasamaja Publication, 1954), 12.

did elaborate somewhat on the means of revolution two years later in an essay called "The Soviet of 1905 and the Revolution."[30] The proletariat, under the leadership of the Soviet, will employ the political strike, as it did in October of 1905, to weaken autocratic strength in the urban areas. The Revolution of 1905 was unsuccessful for two reasons, according to the above essays: (1) the urban strike failed to spread into the peasant countryside, and (2) the proletariat failed to win over the Russian military, which was largely composed of peasant elements. With a revolution isolated in the cities and with control of the military, Nicholas II had defeated the proletariat in 1905. The future revolutionary tasks for the proletariat were therefore to incite and gain the confidence of the peasantry and military.

At this juncture in *Results and Prospects*, however, the point is that political control in Russia would by some means inevitably pass to the proletariat. With the primary goal of a bourgeois revolution accomplished, i.e., the destruction of absolutism, "The first thing the proletarian regime must deal with on coming to power is the solution of the agrarian question, with which the fate of the vast masses of the population of Russia is bound up."[31] The primary issue for the peasantry since their emancipation from serfdom in 1861 had been the distribution of farmland. The terms of the emancipation had allowed the wealthy noble landowners to keep much of this land, so that most peasants were left free but without an adequate means of support. Trotsky felt that the first task of the proletarian regime would be to redistribute the land in favor of the peasantry. In accomplishing this, "The proletariat in power will stand before the peasants as the class which has emancipated it."[32] Solving the agrarian problem would fulfill the second goal of a bourgeois revolution.

But what form of government will this so-called proletarian regime entail? If the impending Russian revolution were to be typically bourgeois, constitutional democracy must be established.[33] It is at this point, according to *Results and Prospects*, that the Russian case would break away from the traditional course of the bourgeois revolution: "The Russian revolution does not, and for a long time will not, permit the establishment of any kind of bourgeois-constitutional order that might solve the most elementary problems of democracy."[34] Instead, the proletariat would establish a workers' democracy or, as more frequently referred to by Trotsky throughout his writings, a dictatorship of the proletariat.

The two terms, *democracy* and *dictatorship*, may appear contradictory, but Trotsky used them interchangeably. In immediately redistributing the land after coming to power, the proletarian regime would represent the best interests of the vast majority of the population, the peasantry. The regime would be democratic to the extent that it received the support of this majority.

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30. *The Age of Permanent Revolution: A Trotsky Anthology*, examines Trotsky's essay "The Soviet of 1905" beginning on page 51.
31. Trotsky, *Results and Prospects*, 102.
32. Ibid., 71.
33. "Bourgeois constitutional democracy" is a Marxist term that connotes a certain "false" democracy that totally favors the upper-class, bourgeois elements of society. Such a democracy is based upon a constitution that excludes the lower classes as voting elements, thus giving the wealthy the dominant political hand.
34. Ibid., 71.

The revolutionary regime would be also democratic in a political-administrative sense. Trotsky felt that the Soviets of 1905 were the forerunners of the workers' regime of the future. The Soviets had functioned along democratic lines as representative of the working class as a whole, electing its leaders and debating policy. The workers' democracy would follow the precedent of the Soviet of 1905, allowing free elections, free debate, and majority rule. In the years following the Revolution of 1905, when the revolution had subsided and the Soviets had disbanded, Trotsky foresaw a new wave of revolutionary fervor that would lead to the creation of Soviets all over the country.[35] The workers' democracy to be established after the overthrow of the autocracy would be an offspring of the Workers' Soviets.

Importantly, however, the revolutionary regime would strive to protect itself from being influenced from within by the non-proletarian elements of society. The proletariat as a class would attempt to dictate policy to the other classes. It wou1d disenfranchise the previous ruling classes from the ranks of government, seize their property, and place the burden of taxation upon them. The governmental positions within the regime would be staffed only by members of the working class or those who demonstrated working class consciousness.[36] As a dictatorship, the revolutionary government would directly represent only the workers, a small minority within the Russian population, though initially greatly benefiting the majority of peasants.

The coming Russian revolution therefore would be bourgeois only by virtue of immediate tasks accomplished, while not bourgeois in terms of the class composition of the government established. Trotsky basically proposes that the "dictatorship of the bourgeoisie as in a constitutional democracy would be replaced by the dictatorship of another class, the proletariat." How does Trotsky legitimize this startling substitution? He feels that the existence and maintenance of the dictatorship would be essential for direct advancement into socialism. The revolution of the proletariat would be a "permanent revolution" in the sense that it would not stop with bourgeois revolutionary tasks.[37] The liquidation of absolutism and feudalism would open up a new historical epoch in which the Russian revolution would become directly linked with the socialist utopia.[38] In *Results and Prospects*, Trotsky goes on to describe how this transformation from feudalism to socialism would take place.

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35. Trotsky, *The Age of Permanent Revolution: A Trotsky Anthology*, "The Soviet of 1905," 56.

36. It is clear that Trotsky felt that the working class, after taking political power, should attempt to expand outward into society, spreading its "consciousness." Trotsky, *Results and Prospects*, page 73. Trotsky must have believed that non-workers who gained a proletarian consciousness should be allowed to participate in political affairs. After all, he himself was a non-worker with a worker's consciousness. Such a policy presents obvious problems, however. How can one absolutely verify who has a proper "consciousness"? This is the problem that the Communist Party faced in attempting to maintain its dictatorship after the October Revolution. Stalin, using his own "flexible" definition of "consciousness," was later able to construct a dictatorship in the more normal, non-Trotskyist, sense of the word.

37. The term "permanent revolution" entails two separate, though related, concepts. Trotsky's revolution is "permanent," first of all, because it involves an uninterrupted drive to socialism. The second aspect of the revolution's permanence is explained later in this chapter.

38. Pages 77 to 81 in *Results and Prospects* may help clarify this concept, as well as pages 81 and 82.

Clearly, a proletarian government could not merely seize power, pass several laws, and sit back to watch socialism develop within Russia. Trotsky feels instead that the future revolution would shift conditions so that various social forces could pull or push Russia into socialism. The proletarian regime, in coming to power, should strive to create and facilitate this change in social relations. "The state is not an end in itself, but is a tremendous means for organizing, disorganizing, and reorganizing" social forces.[39]

Upon coming to power, the proletarian regime would rid the country of ". . . the army and the administration of all those who are stained with the blood of the people."[40] With the abolition of the tsarist bureaucracy, the dynamics of social forces would cause support from major sectors of society to gravitate toward the proletarian regime. Previous supporters of the tsarist regime, the industrial managers, would throw their allegiance to the proletariat in order to side with the most powerful social element. The revolutionary government would be moved toward the introduction of state management of industry as it accumulated support in the cities.

During this initial stage of legislation, the proletarian dictatorship also would be supported by the entire peasantry in abolishing the last remnants of feudalism and redistributing the land. However, in going beyond mere redistribution in its agrarian policy, the new regime ". . . cannot at all be sure of retaining the role of the recognized expressor of the will of the nation."[41] Opposition to the regime would develop as its agrarian policy becomes more specifically defined.

Trotsky saw the Russian peasantry divided into two groups of the "rich" and "poor." In an attempt to secure the support of the majority of the peasantry, the "poor" peasants, the proletarian government would begin collectivizing much of the land during the redistribution process. After collectivizing the estates of the landlords, the regime would eventually attempt to collectivize the property of the "rich" peasants. At this point these peasants would join the ranks of the opposition already filled by the previous ruling classes. Eventually the "poor" peasants might also join the opposition, feeling that they would be losing too much in submitting their own property for collectivization. Trotsky describes this general process in the following way:

> One thing is clear. Every passing day will deepen the policy of the proletariat in power, and more and more define its class character. . . . The more definite and determined the policy of' the proletariat in power becomes, the narrower and more shaky does the ground beneath its feet become. All this is extremely probable and even inevitable.[42]

With resistance to its policy in the countryside, the dictatorship of the proletariat would be experiencing its first counterrevolutionary wave. Industry cannot function and survive without food from the countryside. As a small minority in a predominately agricultural country, the proletariat would find itself in a dangerous position if serious turmoil does

39. Ibid., 62.
40. Ibid., 75.
41. Ibid., 75.
42. Ibid., 77 and 78.

develop in the agricultural sector. In this way, Trotsky leads one to the fifth and final postulate of his theory of permanent revolution. The Russian proletarian dictatorship must secure the aid of proletarian revolution in Western Europe, and perhaps the world, if socialism in Russia is to be realized. This is the most widely known aspect of Trotsky's theory, and on this point Trotsky's future career as a revolutionary within Russia would depend.

There are several reasons Trotsky concludes that a Russian revolution must be followed by revolution in the Western European countries. The Russian economy's "peculiar" structure and its shortage of the necessary resources or capital made it incapable of an independent leap into socialism. In 1906, Trotsky felt, as did many Marxists at that time, that the "objective conditions" had been created in Western Europe for a socialist revolution.[43] In *Results and Prospects*, Trotsky feels that the Russian revolution would destroy the conservatism of the working classes in Europe and spark similar revolutions there. With the destruction of European capitalism, Russia could then receive economic and cultural aid from the West, and advance to socialism. European revolution is to Trotsky the panacea that would make up for Russia's own social and economic inadequacies.

Trotsky feels also that the Russian revolution would need the support of European revolution its order to survive the internal (Russian bourgeois) and external (Western European bourgeois) counterrevolutionary action. The development of the reaction from the property-owning elements of the Russian countryside has been described already. To this extent, Trotsky foresees the possibility of a civil war developing within Russia if the revolution there remains isolated for an extended length of time. As an added danger, Russia might also experience external intervention from several Western European capitalistic countries. Realizing the dangers to themselves posed by the Russian revolution, these countries might take military action to put out the fire before it could spread. However, Trotsky felt that "a war between feudal-bourgeois Germany and revolutionary Russia would lead inevitably to a proletarian revolution in Germany."[44] In 1917 and 1918, many other Russian revolutionaries would hold this same belief.

Results and Prospects does not predict exactly how a European revolution would occur. In summing up his description of the future Russian revolution, Trotsky portrays the world as a single economic organism that has been bound together by the capitalistic mode of production and its commerce.[45] According to the Marxist dialectic, an organism based upon capitalism cannot remain in a stable, peaceful state. Trotsky feels that no matter what occurs within Russia during the years to come, world capitalism would destroy itself:

> Conflicts are ripening everywhere, and if up till now they have been allayed by diplomatic means, there is no guarantee, however, that these means can be successful for long. But a European war inevitably means a European revolution.[46]

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43. Ibid., 108.
44. Ibid., 109.
45. Ibid., 107.
46. Ibid., 112.

The Russian revolution would therefore be a "permanent" one not only in the sense that it would move directly into socialism. It would be permanent also in its transcendence of national boundaries. Russian revolution would bring European revolution, perhaps even world revolution. It is clear from *Results and Prospects* that Trotsky feels that this series of revolutions, once getting under way, would take place over a relatively short period of time, possibly over a period of several months.[47] No matter how long the European revolution would take, Trotsky does not want his readers to forget one extremely important point. "Permanent revolution" does not mean "inevitable revolution." The Russian revolutionary endeavor can fail, and it will, without European revolution:

> Left to its own resources, the working class of Russia will inevitably be crushed by the counter-revolution. 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 socialist revolution in Europe.[48]

In expounding, in *Results and Prospects*, his version of the future mission of the Russian revolutionary struggle, Trotsky is describing therefore the process through which the dream of every Russian socialist, the attainment of socialism, would be fulfilled. Almost by definition, all revolutionaries need a dream in order to buoy them as they go about their daily tasks. Probably the primary attraction of permanent revolution was the dream that it supplied.

The trial of the executive committee members of the St. Petersburg Soviet took place in October and November of 1906. Trotsky successfully used the trial as a platform from which to address the public on the tasks of the future revolution. Fifteen members of the Soviet were found guilty of planning an armed insurrection and were sentenced to lifelong exile in Siberia. Trotsky began his journey to Siberia at dawn on January 5, 1907.

As every student of Russian history knows, exile to Siberia during the tsarist era presented minimal problems to the revolutionary who was bold and clever enough to attempt an escape. With the aid of a drunken peasant and several reindeer, Trotsky eluded his escort en route and managed his way back to St. Petersburg. From Russia he escaped with his wife and eventually settled in Vienna. There he would live as a Russian émigré for the next seven years.

Since the arrest of the members of the Soviet in December 1905, Nicholas II had made much progress in reestablishing his absolutist hold on Russia. The Fundamental Laws, issued in 1906, had provided the framework of the new Russian political "constitutional" system. According to these laws, the tsar retained control of executive administration, the armed forces, the church, foreign policy, and succession to the throne. He also had authority to assemble and dissolve the new Duma, as well as veto its legislation. In the first election (1906), a Duma was established that was heavily in opposition to the tsar. Nicholas

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47. This is conveyed in sentences such as the one on page 105 of *Results and Prospects*. ". . . There cannot be any doubt that a socialist revolution in the West will enable us *directly* to convert the temporary domination of the working class into a socialist dictatorship." [emphasis mine]

48. Ibid., 115.

dissolved this Duma after only seventy-three days. A second Duma was elected in 1907, but this body was even more radical than the previous one. After abolishing the Second Duma, the tsar changed unconstitutionally the electoral law so that the Third Duma (elected in 1907) was weighted more in the interests of the gentry, as opposed to the peasants and workers. Nicholas allowed this Duma to serve its full five-year term, since it was highly responsive to his wishes. He had reconstructed the autocracy using the disguise of constitutionalism.

In spite of these developments, Trotsky, in Vienna, "was characteristically optimistic: he was sure that the convalescence of Tsarism was superficial."[49] While maintaining the belief that another Russian revolution would come, Trotsky's attention during his life in Vienna strayed away from serious research on political and social questions, and he failed to elaborate extensively on his idea of permanent revolution.[50] In his editorials for the Russian periodical *Pravda*, he avoided discussions of theory and emphasized appeals for unity within the RSDLP.[51] The factional disputes within the Social Democratic Party concerned an issue that Trotsky had barely touched upon in *Results and Prospects*, the role of the Marxist political party in the upcoming revolution. It is necessary to understand how Trotsky stood on this highly controversial issue.

In *Results and Prospects*, Trotsky deliberately deemphasized the role of the party in order to underscore the social forces of the masses as the primary determinant of historical events. Concerning the party, Trotsky writes, in *Results and Prospects*, "The function of the socialist parties was and is to revolutionize the consciousness of the working class, just as the development of capitalism revolutionized social relations." The party should attempt to organize the workers, lead strikes, and publish revolutionary literature. Clearly, the party could play an extremely important role in the future revolution. Yet Trotsky feels that ". . . the work of agitation and organization among the ranks of the proletariat has an internal inertia."[52] The proletariat's own inertia would make revolution possible without, or even in spite of, the efforts of the revolutionary intelligentsia.

The debate over the role of the party versus that of the masses had been of primary concern within the ranks of the Social Democratic Party since the Bolshevik-Menshevik split that occurred at the party's 1903 congress.[53] Lenin's *What Is To Be Done?* held that the working class as a whole is incapable of developing a political consciousness beyond that which concerns rudimentary, economic struggles with employers. A true revolution could only take place under the leadership and guidance of a tightly knit hierarchical organization of single-minded revolutionaries. ". . . Indeed the Party is likened to an army sending its detachments in all directions. Under the network of the local committees controlled by the central organs Lenin envisages a body of professional revolutionaries."[54]

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49. Joel Carmichael, *Trotsky—An Appreciation of His Life* (New York: St. Martin's Press, Inc., 1975), 127.
50. Robert D. Warth, *Leon Trotsky* (Boston: Twayne Publishers, 1977), 49.
51. Carmichael, *Trotsky—An Appreciation of His Life*, 127.
52. The contents of and the quotes within this paragraph come from *Results and Prospects*, 114.
53. Ulam, *The Bolsheviks*, 180–181.
54. Ibid., 181.

In 1903, Trotsky allied himself in opposition to this Bolshevik view of the party's role. Taking the Menshevik stance, Trotsky called for a broadly based party of workers and intellectuals, rather than a party of professional revolutionaries alone. After the Second Congress, Trotsky assumed an independent stance between the Bolshevik and Menshevik parties, which he maintained until after the outbreak of World War One. Trotsky persisted in accusing Lenin of "substitutionism"—the view that the party could substitute itself for the revolutionary role of the masses. In 1904, Trotsky issued this warning concerning Lenin's party concept:

> Lenin's methods lead to this: the party organization at first substitutes itself for the party as a whole; then the Central Committee substitutes itself for the organization; and finally a single "dictator" substitutes himself for the Central Committee. . . .[55]

Today as this portent is read, one cannot help feeling the black cloud of the Stalinist era looming overhead.

Trotsky's own model of the revolutionary political party was taken from that of the German party and implied that it would be coextensive with the working class.[56] Revolution would be impossible unless it erupted from the masses. After 1905, Trotsky looked more to the Soviets than to the party as the instruments of revolution. Trotsky felt that the party was an organization within the proletariat. "The Soviet was, from the start, the organization of the proletariat, and its aim was the struggle for revolutionary power."[57] The proletariat would someday destroy absolutism within Russia using the organizational structure of the Soviets and with the backing of the peasantry.

Lenin and Trotsky were probably not as distant from each other during the bitter debates prior to 1914 as they both supposed at the time. Lenin did not deny the importance of the masses, and Trotsky did argue that the party could play an important role. Both acknowledged the view that the general is derived from the particular. Yet Trotsky's emphasis is on "the supremacy of the general over the particular" in all his writings and thinking, whereas Lenin again and again emphasizes the view that "the truth is always and everywhere concrete."[58] The severe accusations that Trotsky hurled at Lenin during this time would come back to haunt him once he was forced to operate within the Bolshevik party machine. But their agreement over the necessity for, and the basic character of, the upcoming revolution would make a revolutionary partnership possible. As events would later permit, Lenin's acceptance of Trotsky's "generals" and Trotsky's acceptance of Lenin's "particulars" present a merger of theory and practice with few parallels in history.

In response to Germany's declaration of war upon Russia on August 1, 1914, Nicholas II ordered an offensive into East Prussia. This marked the beginning of Russian participation

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55. Deutscher, *The Prophet Armed*, 90. No other statement describes as clearly what actually did happen within the Soviet regime during the 1920s.
56. Nicolas Krasso, "Trotsky's Marxism," *Trotsky: The Great Debate Renewed*, ed. Krasso (St. Louis, Missouri: New Critics Press, Inc.,1972), 14.
57. Trotsky, *1905*, 251.
58. Bertram D Wolfe, *Three Who Made A Revolution* (New York: The Dial Press, 1964), 193.

in World War One. This war would drastically alter social relations throughout Europe and largely decide the fate of the tsarist regime. It would also give Trotsky the opportunity to test the theory that he had set forth in 1906.

CHAPTER II
THE CONFIRMATION

A swarm of excited people gathered in the center of Vienna in the morning on August 3, 1914. Trotsky observed the crowd's hysteria at the outbreak of war intensify as he made his way to the socialist editorial offices. Recalling that morning's rally, Trotsky comments in his autobiography:

> War affects everybody, and those who are oppressed and deceived by life consequently feel that they are on equal footing with the rich and the powerful. It may seem a paradox, but in the moods of the Viennese crowd that was demonstrating the glory of the Hapsburg arms I detected something familiar to me from the October days of 1905, in St. Petersburg. No wonder that in history war has often been the mother of revolution.[59]

Trotsky and his family boarded a train for Zurich, Switzerland, in order to avoid arrest after the declaration of war between Austria-Hungary and Russia. In Zurich, he wrote the first extensive antiwar statement by a Russian socialist, *War and the International*. After the years of frustration and disappointment since the defeat of the Revolution of 1905, Trotsky felt that the war foretold the victory of Marxist theory. The capitalistic organism described in *Results and Prospects* had entered the stage of self-destruction: "The war heralds the breakup of the nation-state; and, at the same time, also the crackup of the capitalist form of economy."[60] The alternatives confronting the world's populace were "either permanent war over the narrowing imperialist foundation or—the [worldwide] proletarian revolution."[61]

During the years preceding the war, fundamental differences had developed within socialist circles on the basis of different attitudes toward war and the related question of loyalty to the nation-state. Right, Center, and Left Socialists had been loosely bound together in the

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59. Trotsky, *My Life*, 234.
60. Trotsky, *The Age of Permanent Revolution: A Trotsky Anthology*, 72.
61. Ibid., 79.

Second International.[62] The Right, composed predominately of German Social Democrats, felt that the capitalist state grows into the socialist state mostly through peaceful means. The interests of the proletariat and the state tend to become identical as this transformation takes place. For this reason, the Right's position did not preclude socialist support of a national war effort. The Left felt that war between capitalistic nations could not be prevented. They took the most extreme antiwar position, advocating that the international proletariat utilize a war crisis to wage civil war between classes and exterminate capitalism. The Center, with which Trotsky and certain Mensheviks were associated, also rejected nationalistic support of a war. On the other hand, they had believed that socialists could prevent war by influencing and possibly redirecting capitalistic trends.

World War One permanently divided the international labor movement. When war broke out, the socialist parties of all belligerents, except Russia and Serbia, voted to support their nation's participation in the war. This forced many of the Centrists to ally with the Left. A congress of the labor movement's Second International, scheduled to meet on August 9, was canceled as a result of the cleavage between the "nationalists" and "internationalists." Most Russian émigrés looked with horror as other leaders of European socialism betrayed the International's pre-1914 antimilitarist resolutions in favor of the capitalistic interests of their home country.[63] The Second International was wrecked.

Trotsky wrote *War and the International* in denunciation of the pro-war socialists who believed that Germany was fulfilling its progressive, historic mission in the battle against tsardom. Opposing this view, Trotsky felt that socialists should stand for peace without annexations or indemnities. This settlement should be governed by self-determination for the subject nations, but without a return to the capitalistic status quo. Trotsky called for the revolution of the belligerent peoples against their rulers to achieve a peace.

After two months in Zurich, Trotsky moved to Paris, where he began to write for the prominent socialist newspaper *Nashe Slovo* (Our Word). Trotsky's participation on the editorial staff was extremely important for the development of his political career. He disassociated himself from the leading Mensheviks, who had thrown their support to the national war efforts.[64] Trotsky now proposed the creation of a "United States of Europe" after the international proletarian revolution. He hoped either to rebuild the old International or construct a new Third International to help steer Europe toward revolution.[65]

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62. A description of the positions of these three groups is provided in Merle Fainsod's *International Socialism and the World War* (New York: Octagon Books, Inc., 1966), 11–17.

63. Deutscher, *The Prophet Armed,* 212.

64. This was a painful time for Trotsky. Parvus, his long-standing friend who had greatly influenced him in developing the theory of permanent revolution, had declared solidarity with the Right faction. Trotsky was forced to break connections with him as well as others (Plekhanov, for example) who were associated with the August Bloc, a group of Mensheviks that had participated in the Vienna socialist unification conference held in August 1912. Lenin had boycotted this conference in order to pursue solidarity within his Bolshevik organization.

65. It is difficult for me to document properly this period in the development of Trotsky's thought. Few of his articles written at this time are translated into English. I have therefore relied heavily on secondary sources.

However, Lenin proved to be the most radical internationalist among the Russian Social Democrats. Before the downfall of the Second International, Lenin had been the recognized spokesman for the Left Socialists. Living in Switzerland after the outbreak of war, he repeated his calls for civil war to erupt out of world war, feeling that revolution could occur first within a few countries, or even in one isolated country. With the capitalistic chain broken, the victorious proletariat of that one country then could ignite revolutions throughout the rest of Europe. He deemed Russia the weakest link in the chain because of its peculiar class structure. Therefore, it might take the leading role in the series of revolutions.

Since the Revolution of 1905, Lenin had argued for another Russian revolution to complete the tasks of the previous bourgeois revolution. He felt that a revolutionary provisional government must be established afterwards, free of liberal bourgeois elements, in order to help guide Russia during the transition to socialism. The realization of Russian socialism would be possible only with the support of a revolutionary Western European proletariat.

It may be difficult to understand why an alliance between Trotsky and Lenin did not occur at this time, given the obvious similarity of permanent revolution to Lenin's position described above. No alliance occurred in 1915 partly because "Lenin was thinking of revolution in one country, at the weakest point of the imperialist chain, and only thereafter of its spread to other countries. The [antiwar] Mensheviks, and Trotsky, were thinking of coordinated, simultaneous risings of a united . . . proletariat" on a European or worldwide scale.[66]

However, a much more fundamental theoretical difference separated Lenin and Trotsky at this time. During the years preceding the war, Lenin had argued that the size and strength of the peasant population in Russia determined that the future Russian revolutionary government must consist of both workers and peasants. He had advocated the creation of a "democratic dictatorship of the proletariat and the peasantry" in opposition to Trotsky's proletarian dictatorship. "A revolutionary dictatorship can only be stable when it rests upon the support of the overwhelming majority of the people. However, in Russia at the moment the working class is only a minority of the population. . . ."[67]

In a democratic alliance with a basically bourgeois peasantry, the proletariat would be forced to exercise restraint in introducing socialist, collective measures during the period of land redistribution. Lenin felt that a "dictatorship of the proletariat" would be realized only with the attainment of true socialism.[68] Lenin's and Trotsky's views would not merge during World War One until Lenin abandoned his theory of a "democratic" alliance.

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66. Leonard Schapiro, *The Communist Party of the Soviet Union* (New York: Random House, 1960), 147.

67. V. I. Lenin, *Sochineniya* (Moscow-Leningrad, 1934–5), viii, 40, as quoted in J. L. H. Keep, *The Rise of Social Democracy in Russia* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1963), 197.

68. Keep, *The Rise of Social Democracy in Russia*, 197.

In Paris during 1915, Trotsky tried to hold a middle position between the antiwar Mensheviks and the Bolsheviks. The first conference of socialists since the destruction of the Second International was held in Zimmerwald, Switzerland, in September 1915. At this conference, Trotsky was in agreement with Lenin on many points.[69] However, Trotsky still sought a compromise between Lenin and the Mensheviks in order to achieve a unanimous condemnation of the war. Trotsky would not give up the illusion of a "United States of Europe" until he concluded that a theoretical consensus between the antiwar socialists could not be achieved.

The First World War was disastrous for the stability of the tsarist regime as well as the unity of the Social Democratic Party. Nicholas II and his ministers failed to harness to their military efforts the national support that followed the outbreak of the war. The Russian army quickly ran out of weapons and ammunition. Many Russian soldiers were sent to the eastern front unarmed with instructions to pick up what they could from the dead. The incompetency of the tsarist generalship, along with the supply deficiencies, greatly contributed to the many Russian defeats of 1915 and 1916.

While the Russian command made many military mistakes, the tsar's political mistakes proved to be even more damaging. Nicholas II would not cooperate with the Duma members who tried to assist him in the conduct of the war. Instead, he came to rely heavily upon his wife, Empress Alexandra, and her infamous advisor, Gregory Rasputin. Nicholas committed his most serious error in taking personal command of the armed forces in the field, while leaving control of activity in Petrograd to Alexandra. In Nicholas's absence, Alexandra altered the ministerial positions according to Rasputin's personal whims.

Russian losses during the war were staggering—approximately 1,600,000 killed, 3,850,000 wounded, and 2,400,000 taken prisoner. Civilians also suffered greatly because of the shortage of food and fuel. With inflation rampant, transportation bogged down, and the Russian army in retreat, it was obvious that the imperial government, as in the Russo-Japanese War, had failed. Between March 8 and 11, a popular revolution occurred in Petrograd, and the tsar was forced to abdicate his throne. The members of the tsarist Duma formed a Provisional Government in an attempt to restore order in the city.

Before the February Revolution, *Nashe Slovo* was closed down by the French police, and Trotsky was ordered to leave the country. He and his family went first to Spain, then across the Atlantic to New York City. Trotsky was writing for the Russian newspaper *New World* in New York when the news of the February Revolution reached him.

The pages of *New World* record Trotsky's daily reactions to the revolutionary events in Petrograd. In the article "The Lessons of the Great Year" (January 20, 1917), Trotsky showed how his hatred for the Russian Duma liberals had grown since 1905. Having heard the news of the revolution, Trotsky proclaimed in "Two Faces" (March 17) that the liberals within the Provisional Government had found themselves in possession of power "contrary to their own policies and against their will" because monarchical rule constituted the most

69.. Deutscher, *The Prophet Armed*, 226.

secure form of government for the wealthy bourgeoisie in Russia.[70] *Results and Prospects* had shown that Russia lacked a large and powerful bourgeoisie. Given the class character of the Provisional Government, as Trotsky thought it would be compelled to continue the war, and given the shaky social-political foundation upon which that government stood, ". . . the Russian revolution will not stop. Time will come, and Revolution will make a clean sweep of bourgeois liberals . . ."[71]

Trotsky saw the spontaneous uprising of the February Revolution as the beginning of the Second Russian Revolution. The bourgeois revolution had begun with the overthrow of absolute monarchy. A second revolution would be necessary to complete the tasks of the bourgeois revolution and provide a connecting link to socialism. Trotsky restated his internationalist outlook: "The further progress of the revolutionary struggle in Russia and in the creation of a Revolutionary Labor Government . . . will give a powerful stimulus to the revolutionary movement of the German proletariat and of the labor masses of all other countries."[72]

Although it had replaced the tsarist regime, the Provisional Government did not hold uncontested authority. On March 12, the Petrograd Soviet of Workers and Soldiers Deputies was created based upon the 1905 model. Moderate socialists (Mensheviks and Socialist Revolutionaries, or SRs) dominated the new Soviet.[73] In direct contradiction to the war efforts of the Provisional Government, the Soviet issued the notorious Order No. 1, which proclaimed that the military units on the front should be run by elected committees with officers entitled to command only during tactical operations. The order was largely carried out by the Russian troops, demonstrating the Soviet's considerable influence. Following the creation of the Petrograd Soviet, other Soviets began forming, so that within a few months there were hundreds scattered throughout Russia.

In New York, Trotsky called for the Russian proletariat to unite itself with the rising masses and to seize governmental power. "Luckily for Russia and Europe, there is another face to the Russian Revolution . . . the Provisional Government is opposed by a Workmen's Committee which has already raised a voice of protest.[74] The proletariat must use the Soviets to wrest authority from the liberals.

The abolition of the monarchy brought a period of relative freedom for the socialist radicals in Russia. Those in exile began to pour back into the major Russian cities. Immediately the Bolshevik Party began setting up its organizations. Under the leadership of two long-standing Bolsheviks, Stalin and Kamenev, the Party supported the Petrograd Soviet in attempting to control the activities of the Provisional Government. At that time, the

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70. Leon Trotsky, *Our Revolution*, ed. Moissaye S. Olgin (New York: Henry Holt and Co., 1918), 193.
71. Ibid, 197.
72. Ibid, 211–212.
73. The Socialist Revolutionaries (SR's) represented essentially the older populist tradition of Russian radicalism. They were influenced by Marxism, but they emphasized the importance of the peasant in Russian society rather than the worker.
74. Trotsky, *Our Revolution*, p. 196.

Bolsheviks did not press for another revolution because they felt that a rather long period of bourgeois democratic government had begun.[75]

This position would begin to change radically on April 16, when Lenin arrived in Petrograd's Finland Station from Switzerland. Immediately Lenin resumed his position of authority within the Bolshevik Party. The following afternoon, before a joint session of Bolsheviks, Mensheviks, and other socialists, Lenin delivered a speech communicating his famous "April Theses." Using the slogan "All power to the Soviets!" Lenin first of all rejected any idea of support, however conditional, of the liberal government. He called for an end to the imperialist war, a seizure of the factories by committees of workers, and a redistribution of land following the confiscation of estates. Soon Lenin's "April Theses" became the foundation of the Bolshevik Party's revolutionary program.

"All power to the Soviets" was highly disruptive within the Bolshevik ranks because it implied that the Party must attempt to take power front the Provisional Government and place it in the hands of the Soviets. In 1905, Lenin had viewed the Soviets as spontaneous creations of the masses and had rejected them as revolutionary organizations in favor of the party machine. Upon Lenin's arrival in Petrograd in 1917, the Mensheviks and SRs held a majority within the city's Soviet. Why would Lenin advocate total power for an assembly dominated by oppositional parties?

Lenin's support of the Soviets constituted a clever scheme to gain political support for his party. In calling for "All power to the Soviets," Lenin was forcing his opposition to expose their political hands. "Why are the Mensheviks and the Socialist Revolutionaries afraid of the slogan? Isn't it because they are afraid of the responsibility, plotting with the capitalists from the Provisional Government" to support the war, etc.[76] In presenting the Soviets as the rightful heirs to tsarist rule, Lenin placed his party close to the hearts of many discouraged workers and soldiers.

The "April Theses" provided the first indication that Lenin had jettisoned his old theory of a "democratic dictatorship of the proletariat and the peasantry."[77] Since the Soviets were urban organizations primarily representing the workers, Lenin was advocating the establishment of a "dictatorship of the proletariat." To Lenin, this adjustment was less a theoretical concession than a tactical maneuver exploiting an opportune political situation. In designating the Workers' Soviets as the future revolutionary governing bodies, Lenin was not advocating that the peasantry would hold no power. His "April Theses" called for the "confiscation of all lands belonging to the landlords" and "the management of the land by local Soviets of Farmhands and Peasants Deputies."[78] Lenin probably felt that some sort of dual worker-peasant rule would first be established, but that the proletariat would become dominant and greatly influence the peasantry following the international revolution. At any rate, the Bolsheviks' acceptance of the "April Theses" signified that

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75. Schapiro, *The Communist Party of the Soviet Union*, 162.
76. Ulam, *The Bolsheviks*, 330.
77. Keep. *The Rise of Social Democracy in Russia*, 296.
78. Lenin, "April Theses," from the appendix of William Henry Chamberlin's *The Russian Revolution, 1917–1921*, two volumes. (New York: The MacMillan Co., 1935), I., 443.

"openly or implicitly they embraced Trotsky's theory of permanent revolution, with all the ultra-revolutionary hopes for Russia which this idea implied."[79]

In order to become an active participant in the "Second Russian Revolution," Trotsky left New York on March 27 and arrived in Petrograd on May 4. He was given a rather cool reception by all socialist groups because of their uncertainty over his views. Since the February Revolution, the Mensheviks and SRs had favored the system of dual authority between the Provisional Government and the Petrograd Soviet. The Provisional Government had accepted representatives from these two parties in order to broaden its own political base. Actively participating in both bodies, the moderate socialists had pursued highly contradictory policies. They had assisted the Provisional Government's continued war efforts while attempting, at the same time, to soothe the popular longing for peace.

Trotsky believed that the revolution that he had described in 1906 was in its initial stages. In supporting the Provisional Government, the Mensheviks and SRs had demonstrated their failure to comprehend the nature of the developing Russian revolution. On the other hand, under Lenin's leadership, the Bolsheviks were diagnosing correctly the events as they unfolded. Trotsky felt it would be a waste of precious time to debate further theoretical technicalities in an effort to unify the Social Democrats.

In 1905, eleven days after Bloody Sunday, Trotsky had written the following:

> The Russian Revolution has approached its climax—a national uprising. The organization of this uprising, which would determine the fate of our entire revolution, becomes the day's task of our party.[80]

In this passage, "our party" referred to the RSDLP. In 1917, the stance held by the Mensheviks finally bankrupted the RSDLP in Trotsky's eyes. Trotsky felt it was therefore in the best interests of the Russian revolution to substitute the "Bolshevik Party" for "Social Democracy." Given the theoretical merger that had taken place between Bolshevism and permanent revolution, Trotsky's transformation into a Bolshevik was inevitable.

Trotsky's gifts as an agitator, propagandist, and tactician made him a highly desirable recruit to the Bolshevik Party. When on May 10 they met for the first time since the Zimmerwald Conference in 1915, Lenin asked Trotsky and his associates to join his party immediately. Out of pride and because of his lingering distaste for Bolshevik regimentation, Trotsky declined Lenin's offer at that time. The Bolshevik Party had adopted permanent revolution in principle, though not in name. Trotsky probably resented gaining no recognition or acknowledgment for his theory. He did not formally join the party until just before his election to the presidency of the Petrograd Soviet early the following October. By that time, Trotsky's name was solidly identified with the aspirations of Bolshevism, both inside and outside the Party's ranks.

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79. Robert Vincent Daniels, *The Conscience of the Revolution* (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 1960), 38.

80. Leon Trotsky, "The Events in Petersburg," *The Basic Writings of Trotsky*, ed. Irving Howe (New York: Random House, 1963), 66.

The Provisional Government lasted for approximately eight months. The liberal government never addressed itself adequately to the extraordinary problems that beset Russia. It continued the war in spite of the defeatist attitude of the people and the army. An offensive was launched in late June that resulted in yet another military disaster. The land issue was put off until a permanent governing Constituent Assembly could be elected in November. In the meantime, the peasantry began appropriating the land of the gentry on its own. The economy continued to slide, with rampant inflation, a crippled transportation system, and plummeting industrial output.

Mobs attempted to seize control of the government in Petrograd during the so-called July Days (July 16 to 18). Still holding the loyalty of certain military units, the Provisional Government managed to put down the revolt. The Bolshevik Party never officially endorsed the mob action of the July Days, though certain Bolsheviks did participate in the crowds. For this reason, the Provisional Government arrested many Bolsheviks and forced the rest into hiding. In August, the newly appointed commander in chief, General Kornilov, moved his army toward Petrograd in order to help restore order. The head of the Provisional Government realized the significance of the general's move and called upon the people of Petrograd to defend the city. The Bolsheviks were released from prison in order to aid in the defense. Kornilov's advance collapsed without a shot being fired. As a result of the role it played in the city's defense, the Bolshevik Party drew many more adherents from the increasingly radicalized masses. The Bolsheviks captured a majority in the Petrograd Soviet for the first time on September 13. Five days later, it also had a majority in the Moscow Soviet.

The rise of the Bolshevik Party to the dominant position within these Soviets signified to Lenin that the time was ripe for a coup to establish his party and the Soviets as the sole governing forces within Russia. Trotsky supported Lenin's view. At a secret meeting of the Bolshevik Central Committee on October 23 (Trotsky had been elected to the Central Committee during his imprisonment after the July Days), Lenin presented his case for an immediate seizure of power. Lenin's impassioned pleas for insurrection gained the necessary support by a vote of ten to two. No date was set. The Bolsheviks first needed to construct a plan.

Lenin and Trotsky were not in total agreement in planning for the next revolution, however. They both felt that there would be no conflict after the coup between Soviet constitutionalism and a Bolshevik dictatorship.[81] The Bolsheviks, constituting a majority in the Soviets, would be the ruling party. They did disagree over the timing of the revolution. Trotsky wanted the uprising to coincide with the convening of the next Congress of Soviets, which finally took place on November 7. Lenin felt that the revolutionary moment might pass by early November.

Perhaps more the result of coincidence than by plan, Trotsky's view prevailed. In late October, the Soviets took up the defense of Petrograd as German forces became a threat to the city. The Executive of the Soviet formed the Military Revolutionary Committee, with

81. Deutscher, *The Prophet Armed*, 291.

Trotsky as the head, ostensibly to supervise the defense. Trotsky secretly used this committee to prepare for the insurrection. On the night of November 6–7, the Red Guard (the army of the Petrograd Soviet) was ordered to occupy the strategic points within the city. By midday on November 7, the Bolsheviks had become, virtually without bloodshed, the masters of the capital. The Winter Palace, the liberals' last stronghold, was taken that evening as the Second Congress of Soviets opened its proceedings.

The Bolshevik Revolution, relying on the Soviets, spread quickly to numerous other towns and areas throughout Russia. Moscow was taken a week later. For the next few months, the Bolsheviks experienced relatively uncontested control over Russian affairs.

To the Second Congress of Soviets in Petrograd, Lenin and Trotsky proclaimed the Soviets as the sole source of power in Russia. The assembly, with a two-thirds Bolshevik majority, approved the revolution and the establishment of the dictatorship of the proletariat. Two days after the uprising in Petrograd, the Bolshevik leaders created the Council of People's Commissars, which served as the controlling organ of the dictatorship. Notables on this council were Lenin as chairman, Trotsky as Commissar of Foreign Affairs, and Stalin, who assumed charge of national minorities. At this time, "The term 'dictatorship of the proletariat' applied by the Bolsheviks to the regime established by them in Russia . . . carried no specific constitutional implications. It defined the ruling class, but was neutral about the form of government through which that class exercised power."[82] Having engineered the October Revolution, and with the endorsement of the Second Congress, the Bolshevik leaders took for granted that they should preside over the dictatorship. They believed that the near-effortless success of the Bolshevik coup showed that the interests of the Party coincided with the interests of the nation.

Since the proclamation of Lenin's "April Theses," the Bolsheviks had promised to provide the people of Russia with "Peace, Land, and Bread." But immediately after the November coup, they did little more than sanction the actions of the Russian people, actions taken at their own initiative. In the countryside, the peasants broke up the large estates into millions of small holdings. In the cities, workers appropriated the rights and privileges of the previous owners and managers. The economic revolution that occurred was unorganized, utterly chaotic. Instead of providing more "Bread," the October Revolution in time increased the degree of hunger and deprivation.

As a beginning toward the fulfillment of the promise of "Peace," the Second Congress of Soviets proclaimed a "decree on peace," an appeal to the belligerent countries for a democratic conclusion of the World War based upon "no annexations or indemnities." This plea was ignored by the Allies and the Germans, who did not expect the Soviet regime to last. Discipline in the Russian army collapsed. After an armistice was concluded with Germany in December 1917, the Russian troops disbanded and returned home.

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82. Edward Hallett Carr, *The Bolshevik Revolution, 1917–1923*, three volumes. (New York: The MacMillan Co., 1951), I., 151.

The Bolsheviks expected that the severe economic and social problems that gripped Russia during this time would be resolved with the inevitable spread of proletarian revolution into the industrially advanced Western countries. The newly established Narkomindel (the People's Commissariat of Foreign Affairs) contained a branch that published material encouraging the workers of Austria and Germany to revolt. Trotsky pursued international revolution during the peace negotiations with Germany at Brest-Litovsk, which followed the conclusion of the armistice. He drew international attention at the negotiation tables when he called for proletarian revolution in the West. In an unprecedented historical act, Trotsky refused the harsh German peace terms and declared that Russia was simply withdrawing from the war.

The Bolsheviks felt that this "no war, no peace" solution placed Germany in a highly precarious position. During January 1918, Germany experienced a serious wave of industrial strikes that indicated to the Bolsheviks that the situation was ripe for a proletarian revolution. If Germany were to resume its military advance toward Russia in response to "no war, no peace," Trotsky and other Bolsheviks felt that the nature of the German regime would become absolutely clear to the workers of that country. A new German invasion could provide the spark for European revolution.

In response to the breakdown of peace negotiations, Germany did resume its invasion of Russia. Its army advanced rapidly without resistance, seizing enormous amounts of property and military material. No revolution occurred in Germany as many Bolsheviks had expected. At this point, a split developed within the Bolsheviks' leading ranks. Lenin immediately pressed for the acceptance of the German peace terms, feeling that the Soviet regime was in no state to defend itself against the advance. The more radical, idealistic faction of the Party argued for an attempted mobilization effort in order to wage "revolutionary war." Trotsky found himself caught between these two groups. Although his revolutionary spirit inclined him toward the latter position, he eventually sided with Lenin in order to preserve party unity.[83] It appeared to these Bolsheviks that the vote over the peace terms would produce a deadlock. Trotsky determined that the Germans' terms were accepted in abstaining from the vote.

The Treaty of Brest-Litovsk was signed on March 3, 1918. Russia lost over one quarter of its total population and arable land, along with nearly one third of its manufacturing industries.

Trotsky was bitterly disappointed when revolution within Germany did not follow the German invasion.[84] The Brest-Litovsk crisis revealed a harsh reality, which was ". . . the postponement of the European revolution, on which the confident calculations, not merely of a few optimists but of every Bolshevik of any account, had been based."[85] But with the

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83. Deutscher, *The Prophet Armed*, 390. If the Soviet regime were to wage a war under the desperate conditions of that time, opposition to the war would have to be suppressed. This would have meant taking repressive action against Lenin himself.

84. After signing of the Brest-Litovsk Treaty, Trotsky intimated that the Russian Revolution might have come before its time. Ibid., 396. He later abandoned this thought during the Civil War. This is the subject of the next chapter.

85. Carr, *The Bolshevik Revolution, 1917–1923*, III., 59.

counterrevolutionary forces preparing for a campaign to regain control of central Russia, the Bolsheviks had little time to deplore the temporary revolutionary failure in Germany. The responsibilities of the dictatorship on their home soil took an urgent, first priority.

CHAPTER III
THE ABERRATION

The military and political struggles within Russia that took place between 1918 and 1921 would determine the fate of the Soviet regime. During this time, the Bolsheviks were greatly puzzled by the revolutionary failures that occurred in other European countries. However, they tended to glance over another extremely important issue that would have an even greater impact upon their workers' dictatorship. The Bolsheviks never defined precisely the role of democracy within the Soviet political system. In *Results and Prospects*, Trotsky had described workers' democracy as an integral part of the proletarian dictatorship. Yet when the smoke cleared in the Russian battlefields near the end of 1920, no democracy existed in Russia except in the highest organs of the Bolshevik Party. Trotsky and other Bolsheviks would not understand the significance of this until their own votes lost their weight in the establishment of Soviet policy.

While waiting for the outbreak of international revolution during its first months, the Soviet regime, unlike the Provisional Government, did directly address the problems confronting the Russian economy. In their initial decrees, the Bolsheviks attempted to provide Russia with the rudiments of a socialist economy. The state nationalized banks, confiscated large private accounts, and turned over control of the factories to workers' committees. It sanctioned the peasantry's confiscation of land of the large estates with hopes that they would provide the urban areas with much-needed agricultural support.

The tasks confronting the Bolsheviks after the October Revolution were admittedly difficult, since four years of war had already ruined the Russian economy. However, the immediate measures taken by the Soviet regime exacerbated rather than eased the economic strife that plagued the country. Workers' control produced anarchy in the factories. The members of the workers' committees were more interested in settling scores with their old managers or providing for their own needs than addressing themselves to the problems of industrial management.[86] The peasantry refused to cooperate with the

86. Schapiro, *The Communist Party of the Soviet Union*, 190.

government. Food was too scarce to give up, especially since the regime had little or nothing to offer in exchange.

While forced to accept the German peace terms at Brest-Litovsk, the leaders of the Bolshevik Party did not lose faith in the proletariat of Western Europe. They were greatly discouraged by the losses included in the treaty, but they continued to believe that the prospects for international revolution were favorable. The Bolsheviks resumed their attempts to promote European revolution, all believing unquestionably the fundamental ideological axiom that ". . . the survival of the revolution in Russia depended on its prompt extension into central and western Europe . . ."[87]

In March 1919, Lenin and Trotsky brought into being a new organization to replace the defunct and discredited Second International. Approximately forty delegates from various foreign Left Socialist groups met in Moscow to form the Third International (or Comintern). The delegates indicated their perception of Europe's revolutionary potential and the tasks that lay before them in the manifesto adopted on March 6:

> The epoch of final, decisive struggle has come later than the apostles of the socialist revolution had expected and hoped. But it has come. . . . Our task is to generalize the revolutionary experience of the working class, to unify the efforts of all genuinely revolutionary parties of the world proletariat and thereby facilitate and hasten the victory of the Communist revolution throughout the world.[88]

Unrest did spread through Europe during 1918 and 1919, with uprisings occurring in Germany, Austria, and Bulgaria. However, the Bolsheviks were unable to give these events the attention they felt was warranted. Beginning in the summer of 1918, attacks by the counterrevolutionary "White" forces plunged Russia into a civil war that lasted until the end of 1920.

In *Results and Prospects*, Trotsky predicted that civil war could follow the revolution and the establishment of the proletarian dictatorship. Recognizing that ". . . it would be idle . . . at this moment to determine the methods by which the Russian revolution will throw itself against old capitalist Europe," Trotsky did present an illustration of how revolution might spread.[89] He described how the existence of a revolutionary regime in ten provinces of Russian Poland could lead to revolts in Galicia and Poznan, causing Germany and Austria to send military forces into the Polish frontier. Under these circumstances, resistance to the Hohenzollern and Hapsburg armies would be in self-defense. The German and Austrian proletariat, realizing the significance of this, might then rise up to overthrow their country's imperialist regime. In 1918, the Bolsheviks had employed the "no war, no peace" formula to place themselves in a similar defensive position.

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87. Carr, *The Bolshevik Revolution, 1917–1923*, III., 50.

88. Leon Trotsky, *The First Five Years of the Communist International*, two volumes. (New York: Pioneer Publishers, 1945), I., 19.

89. Trotsky, *Results and Prospects*, 108–109.

On the other hand, *Results and Prospects* said little, if anything, concerning how the dictatorship should conduct itself during a prolonged civil struggle. Who should be given a voice in debating policies of the dictatorship? How much discipline should be demanded from peasants, workers, and fellow revolutionaries? What means should be employed in the enforcement of laws? *Results and Prospects* offered few guidelines, and, indeed, no real guidelines existed. The major point in Trotsky's work was that civil war probably would ignite revolution in Europe and that, without this revolution, the Russian attempt would fail.

As they issued decrees during the first weeks of their rule, most Bolsheviks adopted a principle adhered to throughout the Civil War that greatly simplified their outlooks and allowed them to find quick solutions to the above. This principle was one of survival: The Party must do whatever is necessary to preserve the proletarian dictatorship in Russia until it is connected with proletarian revolutions in Western Europe.

Trotsky indicates his attitude toward the survival principle in his work, *Terrorism and Communism*, written in July and August 1920, near the end of the Civil War. He reveals total acceptance of it throughout the work, especially in reference to the debate over the terms concluding the Brest-Litovsk peace:

> We [the Bolsheviks] considered the question from all sides and our sole criterion was the interests of the international revolution. . . . We came to the conclusion that those interests demanded that the only Soviet Government in the world should be preserved.[90]

Since preservation is a natural instinct for any regime under siege, the Bolsheviks' stance throughout the Civil War, in some respects, is not surprising. In applying the principle of survival, however, the Bolsheviks specifically defined the nature of the "dictatorship" and set the Soviet regime on the course that led to the reestablishment of one-man rule in Russia.

The economic system that prevailed during the Civil War is known as "War Communism." The dual nature of this system, reflected in its name, was the result of the balance that the Bolsheviks struck between preservation and socialist economic theory. The severe pressures of civil war forced the Bolsheviks to confront the industrial chaos that grew out of management by the workers' committees. Nationalization of industry was the natural socialist solution, and it became one of the major components of War Communism. However, the methods used to reconstruct Russian industry were not totally socialistic. The imposition of state control saw the restoration of such features of capitalist management as works discipline, one-man management, and modern efficiency systems.[91] The consequences of survival were also demonstrated in the Bolshevik reaction to the peasantry's refusal to participate in food exchanges. The Bolsheviks used military regiments to confiscate what food was needed.

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90. Leon Trotsky, *Terrorism and Communism*, trans. Max Schachtman (Ann Arbor: The University of Michigan Press, 1963), 126.

91. Schapiro, *The Communist Party of the Soviet Union*, 190.

The preservation principle was equally employed outside the economic realm of War Communism. In order to maintain the dictatorship, the Bolsheviks suppressed all "bourgeois" political parties. In *Results and Prospects*, Trotsky had indicated that this would be an inevitable consequence of proletarian rule: "The Russian revolution does not, and for a long time will not, permit the establishment of any kind of bourgeois-constitutional order that might solve the most elementary problems of democracy."[92] The regime banned the newspapers of the oppositional press and outlawed the Cadet Party, an organization of non-Marxist constitutionalists.

It soon became apparent, however, that the Socialist Revolutionaries, as well as the bourgeois Cadets, could have no voice in political affairs. Elections were held to establish a permanent political authority in Russia, a Constituent Assembly, as demanded before the October Revolution by almost all political groups, including the Bolsheviks. When elections produced an overwhelming SR majority, Lenin ordered the dispersal of the Assembly. Trotsky supported Lenin's decision without hesitation because it seemed to effect the replacement of bourgeois democracy with proletarian democracy. Trotsky felt the isolated revolution could not afford the luxury of time, which would allow a plurality of Russian political thoughts:

> If we take the viewpoint of isolated historical possibilities, one might say that it would have been more painless if the Constituent Assembly had worked for a year or two, had finally discredited the Socialist Revolutionaries. . . . But the point is that the pulse of the internal relations of a revolution was beating not at all in time with the pulse of the development of its external relations.[93]

Trotsky took center stage within the Party during the Civil War when he was appointed Commissar of War and President of the Supreme War Council in March 1918. He organized the Red Army and provided the determined leadership at crucial moments, which eventually brought the defeat of the White forces. Trotsky's decisions as War Commissar had no connection to his theory of permanent revolution outside of his intent to ensure the safety of the proletarian dictatorship. He felt little conflict in employing old tsarist officers within the Red Army in spite of Marxist theory, which held that the proletarian revolution would destroy the traditional hierarchical army along with the other organs of the bourgeois state.[94] When his military ideas ". . . clashed with . . . Marxist views, Trotsky managed to ease the latter aside. Only his insistence on the eventual construction of a socialist militia continued to indicate his ideological ties."[95]

During the middle months of 1919, when fighting became especially intense, Trotsky insisted upon strictest discipline within the ranks of the Red Army:

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92. Trotsky, *Results and Prospects*, 71.
93. Trotsky, *Terrorism and Communism*, 43.
94. Neil Heyman, "Leon Trotsky as a Military Thinker," (Ph.D. dissertation, Stanford University, 1972), 3. An army in the Marxist mold would arm the common people and not employ monarchist or bourgeois officers. Leaders would be elected and subject to dismissal by the rank and file.
95. Ibid., 156–157.

> We are approaching the months of greatest difficulty; the pressure exerted by the enemy is increasing. It is possible to keep the army together only by maximum tightening up and maintaining discipline from top to bottom by means of the resolute and, in many cases, savage imposition of order.[96]

Trotsky did not hesitate to use ruthless means to maintain authority in the field. He inflicted the death penalty on traitors and ordered that a register of officers' families be kept so that the army would have hostages if an officer deserted.[97] Outside the Red Army itself, the Bolsheviks also employed terrorist tactics to eliminate the threats of their political opponents.[98] From Trotsky's perspective, "the question of the form of repression, or of its degree, of course, is not one of 'principle.' It is a question of expediency."[99]

Trotsky moved dramatically between battlefronts during the Civil War, often succeeding in altering the balance when it appeared that the Reds were near defeat. Stalin and other Bolsheviks were extremely jealous of Trotsky's power, and it was during this period that political opposition to him within the Bolshevik Party began to mobilize. Trotsky's arrogant and aloof behavior toward his constituents reinforced the hostility these Bolsheviks had developed for him. There were major disagreements within the Party during the Civil War, but disputes were largely confined to matters of strategy and tactics. Lenin eventually concurred with Trotsky on almost every issue. As a token of his confidence during the war, Lenin actually handed an endorsement in blank to Trotsky of any order that he might issue.[100] Even though Lenin was the undisputed leader of the Bolshevik Party, he was only one man. Trotsky would later need more support to stand his ground during the bitter power struggles of the 1920s.

As the Red Army gained control of the fighting in 1920, the policies of War Communism and the burden of civil war brought to the verge of collapse an economy that was already tottering. The food shortage produced near starvation in the towns among the industrial workers. They began moving to the villages in search of food, and their number in the towns was halved. Industrial production fell to a small fraction of the figure for 1913. Strikes and disorders became frequent. Realizing that economic dissatisfaction was developing into political challenges to Soviet rule, the Bolsheviks began to search for the best means to resurrect the Russian economy.

Trotsky wrestled with various solutions throughout 1920. At one point he outlined a reform that proposed the restoration of a degree of freedom to the peasantry, by ending the requisitioning of crops. The plan was meant to encourage the peasants to grow and sell

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96. Leon Trotsky, *The Trotsky Papers, 1917–1922*, edited and annotated by Jan M. Meijer, two volumes (London: Mouton and Co., 1964), I., 335.

97. Deutscher, *The Prophet Armed*, 414.

98. In 1918, after the assassination attempt on Lenin by an SR, the Bolsheviks proclaimed the Red Terror, during which they shot hostages of the oppositional SR Party.

99. Trotsky, *Terrorism and Communism*, 58.

100. Deutscher, *The Prophet Armed*, 436. Trotsky resigned from the Politbureau and gave up his post as Commissar of War in July 1919 when the Central Committee decided to overhaul the Revolutionary War Council. Lenin rejected Trotsky's resignation and issued the "blank order" as a means of pacification. Trotsky stayed in office on these terms.

surpluses in order to make a profit. The Central Committee of the Party rejected Trotsky's proposal. These proposals were taken up a year later by Lenin and put into effect to close the period of War Communism.[101] However, the Party as a whole was unwilling to stop crop requisitioning at this time. Trotsky then became the strongest advocate of the economic solution referred to as the militarization of labor. As civil war fighting ceased, the Soviet regime began employing idle soldiers in nearby mines and factories. Labor became compulsory when the state began recruiting workers into factory regiments to be sent wherever they were needed. The plan for the militarization of labor was based upon the condition that the state would have total control over the lives of the individual workers.

The ease with which Trotsky shifted perspectives shows that "the operative question for" him in 1920 "was not whether Russia could build socialism in advance of the international revolution, but how to devise an optimal planning strategy, taking into account both the existing and future international division of labor."[102] While the militarization of labor eventually did acquire importance from the point of view of principle, Trotsky emphasizes in *Terrorism and Communism* that the Bolsheviks approached "the question of the application of armies to labor . . . by the path of practice, not at all on the foundations of theoretical consideration."[103] The state needed to experiment in order to discover the best economic system. "The sailing ship has to maneuver before the wind; yet no one will see contradictions in the maneuvers which finally bring the ship to harbor."[104] The Bolsheviks were looking no deeper than the strengthening and preservation of their proletarian state.

The militarization of labor did present certain theoretical problems to the Bolsheviks. How can one justify state control over the lives of workers when the workers should be in control of the state? Trotsky offers one solution:

> If compulsory labor came up against the opposition of the majority of the workers it would turn out a broken reed, and with it the whole of the Soviet order. The militarization of labor, when the workers are opposed to it, is State slavery. . . . The militarization of labor by the will of the workers themselves is the Socialist dictatorship.[105]

This logic seems peculiar, particularly when one takes into account the methods of repression that were used to bend the workers to the state's orders.

This passage indicates the traditional Marxist view that the form of political rule is directly related to the existing state of class relations. The government in power must represent the most powerful class within the country. If it does not have this class's support, then its policies are rejected, and it is eventually overthrown. Trotsky felt that the Bolshevik Party could influence the masses, though not substitute itself for them. "Through the

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101. This refers to the institution of the New Economic Policy (N.E.P.), which was adopted during the Tenth Bolshevik Party Congress in March 1921.

102. Richard B. Day, *Leon Trotsky and the Politics of Economic Isolation* (London: Cambridge University Press, 1973), 4.

103. Trotsky, *Terrorism and Communism*, 150.

104. Ibid., 114.

105. Ibid., 147.

consciousness and the will of the vanguard [the party] it is possible to exert influence over the masses, it is possible to gain their confidence, but it is impossible to replace the masses by this vanguard."[106]

As it became apparent that the end of the Civil War would see a Red victory, the Bolsheviks grew increasingly confident that they legitimately represented the interests of the most powerful Russian class, the proletariat. Internalizing their association with the workers, the Bolsheviks felt free to speak and act on their behalf.

Yet between 1917 and 1921, the Bolsheviks severed their political ties to the workers. From the war's outset, the Soviets rapidly became nothing more than a facade that provided official sanction to decisions made by the leaders of the Bolshevik Party. No distinction was made between legislative and executive power; the Congress of Soviets lost most of its authority to the Council of People's Commissars. The executive organs of government simultaneously lost their power to the corresponding Bolshevik Party organs. Within the Party itself, authority gravitated from the annual congresses to the Central Committee and from there to the Politburo, established during the Eighth Party Congress in March 1919. By the end of the Civil War, Russia was ruled, in effect, by decree of the Politburo as registered by the CPC. The Bolsheviks had believed that the centralization of authority was needed to streamline the wartime decision-making process. However, centralization was also a consequence of the Bolshevik regimented mentality that Trotsky had so bitterly opposed during the early years of the Party's foundation. Yet, during the Civil War, Trotsky welcomed the changes that occurred within the Soviet political system. Clearly, he had lost sight of proletarian democracy, an essential ingredient of the dictatorship of the proletariat as described in *Results and Prospects*.

In the spring of 1920, the Civil War was transformed into a national war when Poland invaded Russia and took Kiev. It is interesting to compare the Polish invasion with the hypothetical situation Trotsky presented in *Results and Prospects*, described earlier in this chapter. In self-defense, the Bolsheviks mounted a successful counteroffensive in June, which drove the Polish troops back to their country's ethnographic boundaries. At this point, disagreement arose within the Politburo over whether the drive toward Warsaw should be continued. Trotsky argued for stopping the assault but was overridden by Lenin and the other members of the Politburo who saw an opportunity to establish a Soviet regime in Poland[107] and thereby stimulate proletarian revolt in Germany.[108] The Reds were able to reach the very gates of Warsaw but were forced into swift retreat after White forces broke out of Crimea, threatening the Red southern flank. In the peace concluded with Poland, the Soviet regime lost land that it could have kept had Trotsky's advice been followed.

The Second Congress of the Communist International was held in July and August while the Red Army was locked in the Polish War. The manifesto issued by the Congress indicated that the delegates believed that the situation in Europe was still highly revolutionary. "The world proletariat will not sheathe its sword until Soviet Russia is

106. Trotsky, *The First Five Years of' the Communist International*, 301.
107. Chamberlin, *The Russian Revolution*, II., 308.
108. Louis Fischer, *The Life of Lenin* (New York: Harper and Row, Inc., 1964), 393–394.

incorporated as a link in the World Federation of Soviet Republics."[109] But the Congress showed impatience with the German Social Democrats who, the delegates felt, were failing to capitalize on the revolutionary mood of the masses. Trotsky and other Bolsheviks sought to tighten the internal structure of the International and increase its ideological unity, on the model of the Bolshevik Party itself. The "Twenty-One Conditions" adopted by the Congress established the requirements for a party's acceptance into the International. They demanded strict discipline and ideological unity within the international organization.

The Bolsheviks felt such an international could successfully lead revolutions in Germany as well as other European countries. By this time, Trotsky had been totally converted to Lenin's pre-1917 views concerning the nature and role of the revolutionary party: ". . . I know that the party is indispensable. . . ."[110] He had even come to view the Third International in much the same light as the Bolshevik Party. The ". . . inventory of the party . . . concentrates the entire experience accumulated by the working class. That is how we [the delegates of the Second Congress] conceive of our party. That is how we conceive of our International.[111]

The militarization of labor issue had been shelved at the outbreak of the war with Poland. With the conclusion of the war, attention again turned to the economy. The role of the trade unions within the Soviet system became the issue of primary concern.

Trotsky pushed the line of reasoning used to militarize labor to its extreme in the party debates over the relationship between the trade unions and the state. During the winter of 1920–21, he proposed to fuse the state organs of industrial administration with the trade unions that had existed since the days of the autocracy. Trotsky felt that the October Revolution and the establishment of the proletarian dictatorship had made obsolete the adversary relationship that had existed between the trade unions (labor) and the industrial managers (capital). His intention seems to have been to place the management of industry in the hands of the leading party members in the trade unions, and especially in the hands of the personnel loyal to him.[112]

This proposal met strong opposition from a large fraction of the Party led by Lenin himself. When the plan to militarize labor was first introduced, Trotsky had argued with Lenin's approval that the Commissariat of War be changed into the Commissariat of Labor. His stand on the trade union issue greatly contributed to the spread of the belief throughout the Party that he was maneuvering to gain a position of supreme authority. Lenin, who successfully opposed Trotsky's plan (March 1921), contended that the trade unions, encompassing as many of the proletariat as possible, would be a link between the Party and the masses. The proletarian dictatorship would be carried out by the Party through the state, not through the trade unions.[113] This was one of the few times since the revolution that

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109. Trotsky, *The First Five Years of the Communist International*, I., 122. This quote is taken from the manifesto of the Congress.

110. Ibid., 98.

111. Ibid., 101.

112. Frederick I. Kaplan, *Bolshevik Ideology and the Ethics of Soviet Labor* (London: Peter Owen Limited, 1968), 377.

113. Ibid.

Trotsky stood in opposition to Lenin over an important political-theoretical issue. His stand during the trade union debate provided his growing opposition with ammunition, later used to destroy him politically. The Bolshevik Party as yet was unprepared for the creation of a monolithic state.

In celebration of the first anniversary of the founding of the Third International (March 1920), Lenin affirmed that "the victory of the communist revolution in all countries is inevitable."[114] This seemed to be the case after the Second Congress when the International scored several important successes. In 1920, the Halle congress of German Social Democrats, along with the French Socialist Party, endorsed the "Twenty-One Conditions" and voted affiliation with the International. The Independents were then the largest socialist party in the world.[115]

In spite of the apparent confidence in the world revolutionary situation, the Russian invasion of Poland demonstrated that the Bolsheviks were extremely worried about the consequences of an isolated Russian revolution. After the October Revolution, the Party had supported the principle of self-determination for all countries. With this in mind, Trotsky understood the inconsistency of the Bolsheviks' decision to continue the counteroffensive into Poland. Yet he, as well as the entire Party, saw no deeper significance in it.[116] They saw no connection between their breach of the principle of self-determination and their violations of the democratic rights of the proletariat. At this time, events inside Russia, as well as events in Europe, were incomprehensible to those expecting international revolution. It would be another year before the Bolsheviks reassessed the position of the Soviet regime within a world dominated by capitalism.

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114. Lenin, Sochineniya, Second ed., Vol. XXV, 71–77, as quoted in Louis Fischer's *The Life of Lenin*, 390.

115. Trotsky, *Terrorism and Communism*, taken from the foreword by Max Schachtman, x.

116. Deutscher, *The Prophet Armed*, 476.

CHAPTER IV
THE RESOLUTION

Results and Prospects conveys a sense of urgency in its description of the need for a linkup between a Russian proletarian dictatorship and the international revolution. In 1906, Trotsky probably felt that the dictatorship of a class that constituted a small minority of the Russian population would be unable to survive without European revolution. Yet the Communist workers' dictatorship did survive several years of civil war and foreign intervention.[117]

With the defeat of the Whites by the end of 1920, the Communists at last delivered the peace they had promised to the Russian people in 1917. Peace, of course, came as a relief, but it created serious problems for the Communists relative to their outlook on domestic-economic policy, the nature of the proletarian dictatorship, the international revolution, and the "permanent" Russian move into socialism. They were forced to reexamine their earlier assumption that international revolution was an immediate possibility. By the summer of 1922, the Communists had devised a new outlook on this important matter.

With the end of the war, the practices of War Communism were placed under direct scrutiny when the peasantry began to mount serious challenges to crop requisitioning. Their reluctant submission to requisitions during the Civil War had been largely due to their fear of a "white" restoration and the reestablishment of gentry estates.[118] With that prospect eliminated, peasants began refusing to till the land in protest. By 1921, cultivated land diminished to 62 percent of the prewar acreage and produced a harvest yield of only 32 percent. Outbreaks of peasant unrest became more frequent and severe into the winter of 1920–21.

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117. The Bolshevik Party became known as the Russian Communist Party, or RCP, during the Civil War with the creation of the Third International. From this point on, it will be referred to as such.

118. Carr, *The Bolshevik Revolution*, II., 271.

As Trotsky had envisioned in *Results and Prospects*, the peasantry was placing the workers' dictatorship under extreme pressure. Without agricultural support from the countryside, factory and mining output fell to a mere 20 percent of the pre–World War level. The Communists began to realize that the agricultural policies of War Communism were destroying the essential linkage between the towns and the countryside, and they began to consider policy changes.

Following the initial successes experienced by the International after the Second Congress, revolutionary events in Europe also took a turn for the worse. International revolution suffered a severe setback in March 1921 when the insurrection declared by the German Communist Party, known as the "March action," was defeated. This resulted within months in a decline in the German Party's membership from 450,000 to 180,000.[119] The defeat greatly concerned the Russian Communists, since Germany had always been viewed as the country that would determine whether capitalism in Europe would be liquidated.[120] The Communists were seeing their support wane throughout Europe. Although the Second Congress's "Twenty-One Conditions" were at first received favorably, by 1923 they had alienated many sympathetic European socialists and driven a wedge into most of the European socialist parties.[121] After the failure of the German insurrection, the Russian Communists' hopes of promoting revolution in Western Europe dimmed rapidly.

Domestic unrest and dwindling European support for Communism were the major topics under discussion during the Tenth RCP Congress (March 1921). At this congress, Lenin spoke of two conditions that must be met for a successful transition into socialism within a country that has "a minority of workers in industry and a vast majority of small cultivators":

> A socialist revolution in such a country can be finally successful only on two conditions. First, on the condition of its support at the right moment by a socialist revolution in one or several leading countries. . . .
>
> The other condition is a compromise between a proletariat which puts its dictatorship into practice or holds the state power in its hands and the majority of the peasant population.[122]

This statement indicates that Lenin still assumed, as he had during the Civil War, that socialism in Russia could not be realized without the survival of the dictatorship and the eventual spread of revolution into the West. It follows from the second condition, which speaks of a "compromise," that he believed that the dictatorship, being based upon a healthy industry, would not survive without making concessions to the peasantry's demands.[123] Lenin had resolved by this time that the drive toward socialism begun by the

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119. Ibid., III., 337.
120. Chamberlin, *The Russian Revolution*, II., 383.
121. Ibid., 395.
122. Lenin, *Sochineniya*, xxvi, 237–238, as quoted in Carr, *The Bolshevik Revolution*, II., 277.
123. Although Trotsky states in *Results and Prospects* that the peasantry would never constitute a political force capable of overthrowing the autocracy, he does recognize that the peasantry is capable of acting politically. The challenge that the Russian peasantry presents to a workers' government dictated the need for an offset: the European revolution.

October Revolution had reached an impasse during a period of isolated revolution, and the situation demanded a change of direction. At the Tenth Party Congress, Lenin called for a compromise that would both satisfy the peasantry's demands and ensure his party's continued dominance of Russian political affairs. Trotsky was in absolute agreement with Lenin on all points.

The compromise struck in the spring of 1921 is known as the New Economic Policy (N.E.P.). It abolished the requisitioning of crops and established a tax in kind on grain. Trotsky welcomed this change, having proposed a similar reform the year before. Under the New Economic Policy, the state maintained its control of what was known as the "commanding heights"[124] while it allowed private enterprise in small industry.

Though not immediately, the N.E.P. also decided the issue of the compulsory mobilization of labor. Soldiers and workers had violently resisted attempts to organize labor armies, and the trade union resolution had established the workers' right to have at least partial autonomy over their own lives. The return to the free market under the N.E.P. therefore entailed a return to a free labor market. Trotsky and all Communists agreed that it was time for Russia to take one, small capitalist step backward to prepare for the subsequent giant step forward into socialism. Bringing an end to the economic policies of War Communism, "the N.E.P. implied an entirely new historical perspective for the Soviet regime," which soon encompassed the RCP's program toward European revolution.[125]

While easing control over the economy, the Communists tightened their grip over political affairs to ensure their own dominance. The Tenth Party Congress secured the Party dictatorship by banning all inner-party factions and carrying out the first political purge. In the course of the year, a "Control Commission" expelled about 200,000 RCP members, about one third of the total membership.

This purge was predominately directed toward a group known as the Workers' Opposition. This faction of workers had developed in opposition to centralization and the growing disregard for party democracy. Many of these men had taken part in the October Revolution and had played heroic roles in the Civil War. The purge of the Workers' Opposition therefore signified the end of tolerance and debate within the Party's upper ranks. The suppression of bourgeois constitutional democracy as called for in *Results and Prospects* had moved into the suppression of party, proletarian democracy. Trotsky would not call attention to this development until years later when the political noose began to tighten around his own neck.

By this time, the most powerful Communists had clearly adapted the formula that equated the interests of the Party with the interests of the proletariat. Trotsky had suggested this in *Terrorism and Communism*:

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124. "Commanding heights" refers to large and medium industry, the transportation system, banking, foreign trade, and wholesale commerce.

125. Daniels, *The Conscience of the Revolution*, 154.

> We have more than once been accused of having substituted for the dictatorship of the Soviets the dictatorship of the party. Yet it can be said with complete justice that the dictatorship of the Soviets became possible only by means of the dictatorship of the party.[126]

With the declaration of the N.E.P., the Communists—and Trotsky with them—did in fact substitute their own party for the working class.[127] As a non-Bolshevik in 1904, Trotsky had described the subsequent phases of this process: The party organization would then substitute itself for the party as a whole; then the Central Committee would substitute itself for the organization; and finally, a single dictator would substitute himself for the Central Committee.[128]

The economic and political resolutions embodied in the N.E.P. foreshadowed the tactical shift with respect to international revolution, which the Communist International made in the summer of 1921. The delegates to the First and Second congresses had endorsed the rigorous pursuit by communist parties of immediate revolutionary objectives. But the failure of the "March action" in Germany had demonstrated the untimeliness of the offensive method. Therefore, the Third Congress, convened in June 1921, renounced offensive tactics in favor of a less aggressive stance. It called for a period of regrouping in preparation for future attempts to seize political power in the crucial Western European nations.

Trotsky summarized the stance adopted by the Third Congress in a speech delivered on June 23, "The Report on the World Economic Crisis and the New Tasks of the Communist International." He attributed the failure of the European revolution to two factors: (1) the weakness of the European communist parties, which lacked the necessary experience and apparatus; and (2) the uneven and diffused character of the European working class itself as it emerged from the holocaust of the World War.[129] He believed that the International, after its revolutionary failures, was confronted by the following questions: "Does development actually proceed even now in the direction of revolution? Or is it necessary to recognize that capitalism has succeeded in coping with the difficulties arising from the war?"[130] In his report to the Congress, Trotsky concluded in spite of the failures that "on the whole the situation is fully revolutionary."[131]

Trotsky reached this conclusion through a careful analysis of the world capitalistic order. In spite of the momentary recovery taking place throughout the capitalistic world, he believed that history had advanced into the inevitable period of capitalistic decline. The World War had seriously crippled the economies of the Western European nations and caused a shift in bourgeois economic power from Europe to America. America had grown rich through its participation in the war, and the whole world would eventually suffer as a

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126. Trotsky, *Terrorism and Communism*, 109.
127. Deutscher, *The Prophet Unarmed* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1959), 13.
128. The description of the consequences of the Bolshevik regimented mentality is quoted in Chapter 1, footnote number 55.
129. Trotsky, *The First Five Years of the Communist International*, 221.
130. Ibid., 176.
131. Ibid., p. 219.

result. Trotsky noted the increase of American demand for Japanese luxury items during the war and the Japanese industrial expansion that occurred in response. Japan had been thrown into economic turmoil at the war's conclusion when American demand had dropped. Trotsky felt this demonstrated the underlying weaknesses of even the strongest capitalistic systems. He then predicted that economic crisis would eventually erupt within the more powerful economies and spread into the weaker ones of Western Europe. This might lead to the resumption of imperialistic war. Trotsky made the following alarming statement only three years after the Treaty of Versailles: "The preparations for the new world war are proceeding full speed ahead"![132] With or without a new world war, Trotsky believed a world revolutionary situation like the one that existed during and immediately after the First World War would again develop.

Trotsky advised the Congress to treat the present as a "breathing spell" during which the International should reorganize its ranks and expand outward into the working class. The "Forty-One Theses" adopted by the Congress reflect the acceptance of Trotsky's advice. The Communist International adopted the tactic worked out by Lenin and Trotsky known as the "united front." This tactic called for active participation by Communist parties in the day-to-day struggles of the workers for higher wages, shorter hours, and democratic freedoms in efforts to lift the workers' militant energy beyond the self-enclosed capitalist framework. The parties should strive to transform strikes for short-term economic changes into strikes for long-term political change. This new tactic represented a break with the regimenting policies imposed upon the International by the Second Congress's "Twenty-One Conditions," and it reflected the Communists' revised outlook toward the world revolutionary situation.

In his speech to the Third Congress, Trotsky exhibited his extraordinary ability to digest the historical significance of worldwide events. Call to mind the stock market crash of 1929, the worldwide economic depression of the 1930s, and most obviously the resumption of world war on a larger scale. It was indeed safe for all Communists to assume that "in periods of capitalist decline, the crises are of a prolonged character while the booms are fleeting, superficial and speculative."[133]

Being resigned to a period of temporary coexistence with the capitalist world, the Soviet regime in turn changed its outlook toward diplomatic affairs. Since the October Revolution, the Communists had viewed diplomacy as the capitalistic nations' means of extracting economic and political gains from each other during times of peace. They had not bothered to establish traditional diplomatic relations with these regimes because they had assumed that they would be swept aside by proletarian revolution.[134] In accordance with the Third Congress's call for preparation, the Communists decided to use bourgeois diplomacy to

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132. Ibid., 218.

133. Ibid., 201–202.

134. Trotsky indicated his attitude toward diplomatic affairs in 1917 in this amusing remark: "What sort of diplomatic work will we have?" said Trotsky, soon after his appointment as Commissar of Foreign Affairs. "I will issue some revolutionary proclamations to the peoples and then shut up the shop." Leon Trotsky, *Mein Leben*, 327, as quoted in Chamberlin, *The Russian Revolution*, I., 363.

strengthen their own proletarian state. They concluded a commercial agreement with Germany, the Treaty of Rapallo (April 1922), for this purpose.

It must be emphasized that, in the eyes of the Communists, the issues in 1921–22 were tactical rather than theoretical. They had not given up the "unified strategic plan" that Trotsky had laid out in 1906.[135] Trotsky and other Communists tried to remain optimistic in declaring the retreats in domestic and foreign policy:

> A retreat is a movement. Whether one takes ten steps forward or ten steps backward depends entirely on the requirements of the moment. For victory it is sometimes necessary to move forward, sometimes to move backwards.[136]

The Communists merely adjusted their time perspective relating to international revolution after realizing that what lay ahead was not a chaotic, spontaneous assault, the first stage of which had been observed in Europe in 1918–1919. As Trotsky stated (July 1921):

> The present revolution can continue to unfold for years and decades. Not in the sense that the preparation for decisive battle in Germany will last for decades. No, but the same thing can happen to us there that happened to us in Russia.[137]

The Communists' outlook toward permanent revolution had matured in much the same way as did Trotsky's after the Russian Revolution of 1905. Western European revolution, especially a German revolution, was still regarded as essential to pull Russia into socialism. While the Communists felt that the World War had knocked Western Europe off its economic throne, they apparently did not think that objective conditions had been significantly altered for the move into socialism. Socialist revolution in Europe was viewed as inevitable, since the proletariat demanded a standard of living that the capitalist system simply could not produce.[138]

Tactical revisions in 1921–22 did not effect changes in the evolution of the Soviet political system. The Bolsheviks continued to employ the policy adopted immediately after the October Revolution: preserve the dictatorship of the party as disguised by the theoretical construct of the workers' dictatorship. The dictatorship was narrowed even more as political control was drawn up through the Party's ranks. Debate remained within the boundaries established by permanent revolution as upheld by Lenin, the Party's unquestioned leader. However, Lenin's first stroke in May 1922 signaled the Communists that they must begin looking beyond the dictatorship's present-day political concerns. After all, it was admitted that international revolution had been postponed for perhaps decades. Who could possibly take Lenin's place within the Party while Russia remained isolated for this length of time? It was not until the power struggle was openly declared that Trotsky's

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135. Trotsky, "The Report on 'The Balance Sheet' of the Third Congress of the Communist International," delivered at the Second Congress of the Communist Youth International (July 14, 1921), *The First Five Years of the Communist International*, 304.

136. Ibid.

137. Ibid., 308.

138. This is discussed in the "Forty-one Theses" adopted by the Third World Congress. Ibid., 255.

and Lenin's theoretical heritage would be forgotten. In the meantime, the Communists waited for international revolution as forecast by Trotsky in his speech to the Third World Congress.

CHAPTER V
ABANDONMENT

Trotsky wrote *Results and Prospects* in order to explain why a proletarian revolution could occur in Russia before Western Europe. The first half of the work was devoted to an analysis of Russian social and economic conditions, which supported this claim. With the establishment of the Bolshevik dictatorship in 1917, Trotsky believed his analysis in the first half of *Results and Prospects* was confirmed. After the October Revolution, his attention shifted to ideas emphasized in the second half of his work, the essence of which is summarized in Chapter I by axioms four and five: (4) the dictatorship must prepare Russia for its advance into socialism, and (5) the dictatorship must secure proletarian revolution in Western Europe if socialism within Russia is to be realized.

After 1917 the Communists, while responding to the pressures of civil war and foreign intervention, attempted to prepare Russia for the international revolution. They did so by accomplishing the tasks of a bourgeois revolution in the countryside and establishing state ownership of large and medium industry. European revolution did not come to the assistance of the Soviet state, and, in the summer of 1921, the Communists altered their tactics accordingly. But still they clung to the doctrine of permanent revolution.

However, the attitude of the majority of Communists toward Trotsky's theory changed over the next four years. The search for international revo1ution between 1922 and 1926 produced a debate over the validity of the fourth and fifth axioms of *Results and Prospects*. By 1926, the Communist Party altered the fourth axiom of permanent revolution so that the task of the proletarian dictatorship became "the creation of" rather than "the preparation for" Russian socialism. This in turn led to the rejection of the fifth axiom, and its replacement by "socialism in one country."

The Communist Party's acceptance of this slogan represented the abandonment of permanent revolution as the guiding idea of the October Revolution. This theoretical

revolution within the Communist Party is extraordinary when one considers that Lenin, the consistent advocate of the fourth and fifth axioms of permanent revolution, died little more than a year before this new idea was proposed. This development was less the result of a fresh Marxist analysis than a consequence of the power struggle that took place, primarily between Stalin and Trotsky, during and after the period of Lenin's illness. Apart from other possible motives that he might have had, Stalin adopted "socialism in one country" in order to undermine the theoretical base of Trotsky's support.

While the role he played during the October Revolution and the Civil War was second only to Lenin's, Trotsky was never regarded by many Communists as a member of the "Old Guard." Those who had stood alongside Lenin since the early years of the Party's foundation saw Trotsky as an opportunist who, in 1917, was able to exploit the prior achievements of the Bolsheviks and ascend quickly to the highest levels of party authority. To these men, Trotsky appeared to be an outsider who wanted acceptance on his own terms, above all supreme authority, within the Party.

Although there is some question whether his ambitions ever extended this far, Trotsky did little during the early N.E.P. era to allay these fears. Shortly after Stalin was appointed General Secretary in April 1922, Lenin proposed that Trotsky be named deputy chairman of the Council of People's Commissars. This would have been an obvious promotion, but Trotsky haughtily refused it, probably because he did not want to be placed on the same footing as Stalin.[139] By the end of the year, Trotsky was offered the post twice more but each time declined. His conduct was offensive to those who dutifully accepted positions Lenin assigned them, and it reinforced their already considerable suspicions.

The stand Trotsky took toward the N.E.P. by the end of 1922 also adversely affected his position within the Party. As the N.E.P. showed its first successes, Trotsky proposed that the government should work out a comprehensive plan for Russian industry, instead of relying on supply and demand. Although industrial planning later became the cornerstone of the Russian economy,[140] at this time his proposal went contrary to the prevalent mood of the Party, which agreed that Russia needed more time under a market economy. Trotsky also proposed that the burden of "primitive socialist accumulation" be placed upon the workers, the class that had been brought to near ruin by the Civil War![141] Lenin opposed Trotsky on both counts, believing that the Russian people needed more time to recover from the ills of War Communism. Here Trotsky demonstrated an inability to interpret the mood of the country, which surely contributed to his ultimate downfall.

Upon his appointment as General Secretary, Stalin became the only man who was a member of all four major Party bodies: the Central Committee, the Politburo, the Orgburo, and the Secretariat. This put Stalin in a position to exert heavy influence on the Party

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139. Deutscher, *The Prophet Unarmed*, 37.

140. Extensive industrial planning was introduced in the First Five Year Plan in 1928.

141. "Primitive socialist accumulation" refers to the accumulation of capital that must take place for industry to develop in a nationalized economy. As a further note, Trotsky used the same logic here as he used during the trade union debate: The Soviet state is the workers' state. Therefore, with respect to "primitive socialist accumulation," the workers will gladly sacrifice for their own benefit.

apparatus. As Lenin's health worsened during 1922, the General Secretary continued to consolidate his position of authority. Zinoviev and Kamenev, the respective bosses of the Petrograd and Moscow Party organizations, later joined him in a bloc against Trotsky. Having never attempted to create his own party machine, Trotsky would be at a great disadvantage in the impending struggle with the "Triumvirate."[142]

While removed from direct participation in political activity, Lenin kept abreast of the developments within the Party. In his last private meeting with Trotsky in early December 1922, he proposed that the two form a coalition against growing bureaucratization. Lenin's worsened condition cut short this partnership, however, leaving Trotsky alone to combat the growing dictatorial powers of the Secretariat.

As the controversies over the bureaucracy and the need for economic planning grew more acute during October 1923, the cause of international revolution suffered another crushing blow. An attempted German Communist coup, for which the Russians had high hopes, was defeated. To explain this discouraging failure, Stalin held that the German proletariat had been called to revolution before it was ready. On the other hand, Trotsky argued that the conditions were ripe, but the revolutionary moment had been spoiled by faults of leadership.[143] These divergent views foreshadowed the split that later occurred between the two over the fourth and fifth axioms of permanent revolution.

Trotsky first attacked the Triumvirate in a series of articles in *Pravda* in December 1923, which later reappeared in his pamphlet, *The New Course*. Though he resisted mentioning his opposition by name, Trotsky directly attacked the bureaucratic rigidity that these men had come to represent. By this time, Trotsky clearly had begun to draw away from the earlier assumption that the interests of the Party were always and everywhere in accordance with the interests of the proletariat: "The chief danger of the old course . . . is that the apparatus manifests a growing tendency to counterpose a few thousand comrades, who form the leading cadres, to the rest of the mass [most importantly the proletariat] whom they look upon only as an object of action."[144] He believed that the Party could salvage its position only by drawing the greatest possible number of workers into the party and ". . . by developing and consolidating the new course toward workers democracy."[145] Trotsky had finally returned to his earlier belief that workers' democracy was essential for the maintenance of the proletarian dictatorship. Trotsky believed that this "new course" should not be considered a maneuver, a diplomatic stroke, or a temporary concession":[146]

> There is one thing that ought to be clearly understood from the start: the essence of the present disagreements and difficulties does not lie in the fact that the "secretaries" have overreached themselves on certain points

142. Robert D. Warth, *Leon Trotsky*, 116.

143. Edward Hallett Carr, *The Interregnum* (New York: The MacMillan Company, 1954), 228–229.

144. Leon Trotsky. "The New Course," in *The Challenge of the Left Opposition*, ed. Naomi Allen (New York: Pathfinder Press, Inc., 1975), 71.

145. Ibid., 126.

146. Ibid., 73.

> and must be called back to order, but in the fact that the party as a whole is about to move on to a higher historical stage.[147]

While this message was obviously tempered to increase the chances of a favorable hearing, it showed that Trotsky had come to see a difference between a party seeking political power and a party wielding political power. The regimentation that existed within the Communist Party during the October Revolution and the Civil War had been legitimized by circumstances of intense external pressure. As the pressure subsided during the N.E.P. era, Trotsky believed that the Party had a duty to draw the proletariat into its ranks. He had always held that a party without a class base is unjustified and would eventually fall. Trotsky's projection of a new historical stage further enraged his opposition because it suggested that they did not understand the workers' needs and desires.

Trotsky's call for proletarian democracy in *The New Course* was not without its qualifications:

> The "new course" does not at all signify that the party apparatus is charged with decreeing, creating or establishing a democratic regime at such and such a date. No. This regime will be realized by the party itself. To put it briefly: the party must subordinate to itself its own apparatus without for a moment ceasing to be a centralized organization.[148]

Trotsky sought democracy that would not greatly affect centralization within the Party. Here he indicated the dilemma that no Communist could resolve during the 1920s: How does the Party maintain a stable relationship between democracy and centralism? Throughout the first decade of the Soviet regime, the Communists acted as if these two qualities conflicted. Whenever the survival of the Party's dictatorship was at stake, democracy was always sacrificed to centralized control and party unity. To ask the Soviet bureaucracy of 1923 to allow itself to be subordinated to the Party at large, given this past trend, was obviously self-deceiving. On the other hand, perhaps Trotsky had no choice but to make this appeal.

Upon publication of Trotsky's articles in December, Zinoviev urged the other members of the Triumvirate to order Trotsky's expulsion from the Party and his arrest. Realizing that Trotsky had significant backing in the lower party levels,[149] Stalin cool-headedly refused to comply. He understood that Trotsky had too much support to be defeated by fiat at this time.

While bedridden during 1922 and 1923, Lenin had come to realize the extent of Stalin's political ambitions. In January 1923, he dictated the following:

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147. Ibid., 68

148. Ibid., 124.

149. Prior to the publication in *Pravda* of the articles contained in *The New Course*, forty-six leading party members had addressed a letter to the Central Committee demanding a ban on inner party groupings and the restoration of democratic practices. This forty-six later joined with Trotsky to form the Left Opposition in response to Stalin's political challenge. These men had been important figures during the October Revolution and the Civil War.

> Stalin is too rude and this defect, although quite tolerable in our midst and in dealings among us Communists, becomes intolerable in a general secretary. That is why I suggest that the comrades think about a way of removing Stalin from that post. . . .[150]

Even with Lenin's support, Trotsky did not challenge Stalin's position within the Party after Lenin's death in January 1924. Perhaps a false sense of security had caused him to back off at times, such as the Twelfth Party Congress, when Stalin may have been particularly vulnerable.[151] On the other hand, he may have been intimidated by the obvious strength of the Triumvirate.

Trotsky probably never realized the importance of Lenin vis-à-vis his own political status. Throughout most of Trotsky's career within the Party, Lenin served as the link between the Old Guard and the "outsider." Lenin had been the mediator during the debates over civil war tactics, the militarization of labor, and the role of state planning under the N.E.P. Most important, it was Lenin who had convinced his party to follow the wisdom of permanent revolution in 1917. Almost immediately after Lenin's death, the Old Guard began reexamining the substance of Trotsky's revolutionary theory.

Trotsky did much to provoke that reassessment of permanent revolution in 1924 with the publication of his *Lessons of October*. In an effort to explain the abortive 1923 German uprising in this work, Trotsky drew invidious parallels with the Russian Revolution of 1917. He compared the German Communists to the so-called Right elements of the Bolshevik Party prior to the October insurrection. Trotsky recalled the letter that Zinoviev and Kamenev, the leaders of the Rights, had sent to Central Committee on October 24, 1917, in opposition to the resolution for an armed insurrection. Trotsky felt that their resistance to Lenin's pleas demonstrated a "passive fatalism," an overestimation of the enemy, and ". . . an underestimation of our own class and its party."[152] *Lessons of October* went so far as to quote Lenin against the members of the Triumvirate:

> Lenin was ruthless in refuting the "old Bolsheviks" who, "on more than one occasion," he said, "played a lamentable role in the history of our party, repeating senselessly formulas they have learned by rote instead of studying the peculiarities of new and living reality."[153]

This was the most serious political mistake Trotsky committed in the work. He held no monopoly on Lenin's writings. By quoting Lenin to discredit his opposition, Trotsky defined the rules of a political game of which Stalin proved the master.

By hailing Lenin as the hero of the Russian Revolution, Trotsky conveyed, in *Lessons of October*, an unmistakably self-serving tone. Trotsky held that, in 1917:

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150. Lenin, "Lenin's Testament," *Lenin's Fight Against Stalinism*, ed. Russell Block (New York: Pathfinder Press, 1975), 65.

151. Deutscher, *The Prophet Unarmed*, 93. "The truth is that Trotsky refrained from attacking Stalin because he felt secure. No contemporary, and he least of all, saw in the Stalin of 1923 the menacing and towering figure he was to become."

152. Leon Trotsky, *Lessons of October*, trans. John G. Wright (New York: Pioneer Publishers, 1937), p.66.

153. Ibid. 36. Trotsky quotes Lenin from *Works*, Vol. XIV, 28.

> Lenin's position was this: an irreconcilable struggle against defensism and its supporters; the capture of the Soviet majority, the overthrow of the Provisional Government; the seizure of power through the Soviets; a revolutionary peace policy and a program of Socialist revolution at home and of International revolution abroad.[154]

In other words, Lenin's position was precisely that of permanent revolution. Trotsky waved this fact in the face of his opposition while disregarding the services of other party members. In resurrecting October, Trotsky showed how his conceit had grown since 1917, whose events he believed had confirmed his theory. Throughout the rest of his life, Trotsky exhibited a degree of dogmatism in analyzing international revolutionary situations in terms of the events of 1917. This was intolerable to the other Communists whose roles had been less glamorous or even inglorious during that decisive year. Trotsky's appeal to history in *Lessons of October* was a dangerous move, for the "facts" of history could easily be transformed into what the party leaders wished them to be.[155]

Indirectly challenged by Trotsky's assault on Zinoviev and Kamenev,[156] Stalin then launched a series of attacks on Trotsky, using the whole machinery of party propaganda at his command. Relying on the disputes between Lenin and Trotsky after the 1905 revolution, he attempted to show that Trotsky had actually been poles apart from Lenin throughout his life. In his emphasis on the role of the proletariat in his early writings, Trotsky supposedly was guilty of the cardinal sin of "underestimating the peasants."[157] Trotsky's present economic proposals, with their accent on large industry, it was then argued, were contrary to Lenin's views concerning the N.E.P., which had emphasized a need to preserve peasant support at all costs. In direct response to *Lessons of October*, Stalin tampered with the historical records to denigrate Trotsky's role in the Bolshevik seizure of power and the Civil War.

The political struggle that resulted in the misrepresentation of history eventually had its logical consequences on the development of Russian Communist doctrine. The diligent research in Lenin's works done in efforts to discredit Trotsky uncovered a passage be had written in 1915 that foresaw that, in view of the unequal development of capitalism in different countries, socialist revolution might first break out in a few countries, or even in one country.[158] Though this statement was obviously consistent with Trotsky's theoretical views, it provided Stalin with the foundation needed to support the doctrine that was diametrically opposed to permanent revolution—that is, "socialism in one country."

In the autumn of 1924, Stalin revised his earlier Leninist views. "Socialism in one country" held that "while it was true that there could be no guarantee against the restoration of the bourgeois world order without alliance with the proletariat of several countries, it would

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154. Ibid., 49.
155. Schapiro, *The Communist Party of the Soviet Union*, 287.
156. Stalin, along with Zinoviev and Kamenev, had wavered over the correct policy in March 1917 before Lenin's arrival in Petrograd.
157. The system of thought that embodied Trotsky's "doctrinal heresies" was labeled "Trotskyism."
158. Schapiro, *The Communist Party of the Soviet Union*, 289.

be perfectly possible to build a complete socialist system within Russian national boundaries. It implied a shift in Communist orientation from "preparation" to "creation," and it denounced belief in the necessity of international revolution.

Stalin's "socialism in one country" forced Trotsky to clarify the reasons international revolution must be the starting point of Soviet policy. He did so in his essay "The Draft Program of the Comintern: A Criticism of Fundamentals" (1928). Its explanation of the necessity of international revolution shows how Trotsky had incorporated new ideas into his theory since 1906.

Trotsky began by citing Lenin's "law of uneven development," formulated in 1915, which stated that the irregular patterns of economic growth were accentuated as world capitalism moved into the epoch of imperialism. Economic growth flourished in imperialistic countries while it was hampered in colonial countries. He explained how increasingly sophisticated technology created bonds between the exploiting and exploited nations. Eventually ". . . capitalism cannot cope with the spirit of the new technology to which it has given rise. . . ."[159] The development of technology and industry during the age of imperialism demanded an end to the international division of labor and capital. Without international proletarian revolutions, military conflicts between imperialistic nations could not be avoided. Trotsky believed that the Soviet Union would be brought into these conflicts because of the West's dependence on Soviet capital imports. Trotsky concluded that socialism could not be realized even within the boundaries of the most advanced industrial nation.

Whether or not Trotsky's rationale was sound, it was much too sophisticated for the average worker or party member. By the end of 1927, Russian hopes for international revolution were almost completely dashed by the revolutionary failures in Germany (1923), Britain (1926), and China (1927). For believers in the doctrine of permanent revolution, the isolation of Soviet Russia was bound to provoke a sense of despair. Russians were weary of the "permanent" struggle against capitalism, and they wanted to begin looking inwards. Stalin's theory provided a brighter outlook—Russians could build socialism on their own and at their own pace. It was therefore no matter of chance that "socialism in one country" was eventually accepted.

At the Fourteenth Party Conference in September 1925, Zinoviev and Kamenev split with Stalin over his new theory. By this time, it was clear that Stalin was seeking absolute control over the Party and the Soviet regime. Trotsky and Zinoviev formed the Left Opposition against Stalin in the summer, but it was already too late. The delegates at the Fifteenth Party Conference, having been handpicked by Stalin himself, adopted "socialism in one country" and urged the Party to redouble the efforts to make the Opposition admit its errors on all points of dispute.

The Fifteenth Party Congress was nearly two years overdue when it was finally scheduled for December 2, 1927. In preparation for the Congress, the Opposition submitted to the Central Committee a statement of policy, which is today known as *The Real Situation in*

159. Leon Trotsky. *The Third International After Lenin* (New York: Pathfinder Press, Inc., 1970), 52.

Russia. In spite of the Central Committee's refusal to print and circulate the document, the Opposition managed to have several copies printed on an underground press. Because Trotsky was its principal author, *The Real Situation in Russia* revealed his conception of the Soviet regime and its place in world affairs prior to his expulsion from the Party.

According to *The Real Situation in Russia*, the Soviet workers' state was experiencing bureaucratic distortion as a result of an influx of "Menshevik" elements: Kulaks, Nepmen, and bureaucrats.[160] The bureaucratic apparatus had come to dominate the Party, robbing the state of inner party democracy as well as workers' democracy. "The Soviets are having continually less and less to do with the decision of fundamental political, economic, and cultural questions. They are becoming mere supplements to the executive committees and the presidiums."[161]

Trotsky believed that the bureaucracy was gradually pushing the state to the Right, greatly affecting Soviet domestic and foreign policy. Stalin was relying heavily on the peasant to revive the Russian economy while not attacking the real problem—the "scissors."[162] The First Five Year Plan, which Stalin had proposed as the beginning step toward the attainment of "socialism in one country," was categorically rejected: "All this, fifteen years after October! To bring forward on the anniversary of the October Revolution such a parsimonious, through-and-through pessimistic plan really means that you are working against socialism."[163] Apparently Trotsky somehow believed that Russian production could far exceed the proposed 4 to 9 percent increase. The Rightward shift also accounted for the failure of the Chinese Revolution. Stalin had demonstrated his Menshevik tendencies after the coup on the Chinese Communists when he proclaimed that "Chiang Kai-shek was a warrior against imperialism. . . ."[164]

Trotsky believed that the Soviet Union must move back toward the Left because of the external military threat that had developed: "A war of the imperialists against the Soviet Union is not only probable, but inevitable."[165] World War One had been a war between capitalist nations. The conflict between capitalism and socialism had grown intense since then, and the next war would be waged between the two.[166] The Party should therefore reaffirm a "Leninist" position toward international revolution and prepare for the upcoming war.

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160. A kulak was a prosperous, wealthy peasant who guarded his private property and resisted collectivization. Nepmen were small businessmen in the towns that profited from the market economy of the N.E.P.

161. Trotsky, *The Real Situation in Russia*, trans. Max Eastman (New York: Harcourt, Brace, and Company, Inc., 1928), 99.

162. The "scissors" designated the price gap that existed between industrial and agricultural goods. This gap inhibited exchange between the town and countryside and slowed the pace of Soviet industrial development.

163. Trotsky, *The Real Situation in Russia*, 81.

164. Ibid., 151.

165. Ibid., 140.

166. This outlook was probably the product of the war scare that hit Russia in 1927. Several factors contributed to this fear of war: the assassination of the Russian ambassador in Warsaw, broken-off diplomatic relations with Britain, and the failure of the Chinese Revolution.

The Left Opposition did not try to conceal the fact that they were aiming at complete renovation of the party leadership, beginning with the removal of Stalin. They proposed to solve the problem of the Rightward shift by increasing the weight of the proletariat in the Soviets and the Party and by restoring workers' democracy. The state should stop the removal of elected Soviet officials. Even by 1927, however, Trotsky and the rest of the Opposition still held a peculiarly contradictory view toward democracy. On one hand, they proposed ". . . to guarantee to the party its right to free discussion and decision . . . of all debated questions."[167] On the other hand, "it is necessary to reorganize the party education along the line of a study of . . . Marx, Engels, and Lenin, *driving out* [emphasis mine] of circulation the false imitations of Marxism and Leninism now being manufactured on a large scale."[168] It is difficult to see how free discussion may be promoted by suppressing the views of one's adversary.

After the publication of *The Real Situation in Russia*, it was only a matter of time before the Opposition would be permanently silenced. Trotsky and Zinoviev were expelled from the Central Committee and the Party by the end of November. The Opposition had stated in *The Real Situation in Russia* that "nobody who sincerely defends the line of Lenin can entertain the idea of 'two parties' or play with the suggestion of a split.[169] Inspired by this advice, the Fifteenth Congress met in December and duly endorsed the expulsions.

After Lenin's death, Trotsky himself was therefore largely to blame for the Communist Party's abandonment of his revolutionary ideas. Trotsky consistently showed an inability to present his ideas in a manner that could have been digested by the Party and complementary with the prevailing moods of the Russian people. Trotsky could have better furthered the acceptance of his ideas concerning international revolution without resorting to sensationalized war predictions. The title of *The Real Situation in Russia* is ironic, for the work shows a lack of understanding of what actually was the "real situation." Trotsky did not realize the extent to which Stalin conformed his political orientation to the demands of the struggle for ultimate power. After Trotsky was forced into exile in 1928, Stalin proceeded to adopt the economic platform of the old Left Opposition. Trotsky demonstrated incredible ability as a prophet throughout his life. But as a politician attempting to sell his ideas, Trotsky, by 1926, proved himself a failure.

167. Ibid., 126.
168. Ibid., 131.
169. Ibid., 195.

CONCLUSION

Until his death in 1940, Leon Trotsky believed that the spirit of permanent revolution and that of Lenin's Bolshevism were one and the same. The year following his exile from the U.S.S.R., Trotsky wrote that "the fundamental train of thought which I developed twenty-three years ago in *Results and Prospects*, I consider confirmed by events as completely correct, and, precisely because of that, in agreement with the strategical line of Bolshevism."[170] During his ten-year membership in the Bolshevik Party, Trotsky attempted to base his stand on important issues upon the principles of his theory, and, even though he was forced to adjust his time perspective on international revolution, he never abandoned his theory's basic axioms. Permanent revolution defined his revolutionary objectives, and he consistently oriented his tactical decisions according to what he believed would bring their most expedient fulfillment.

While Lenin lived, the Bolshevik Party was also committed to international revolution and preparing for the "permanent" move into socialism. Lenin never held that Russia could create its own socialism, a "socialism in one country." However, the founder of the Bolshevik Party was never willing to take as great risks as Trotsky for the purposes of international revolution, as he clearly demonstrated in his immediate support for the acceptance of the German peace terms at Brest-Litovsk. It is certainly true that ideals never carried as much weight for the Party as a whole as they did for Trotsky. As the Bolsheviks held out for international revolution during the Civil War, they proceeded to put a higher value on another principle—the maintenance and, when feasible, the increase of political power. This principle prompted Stalin and his followers to reformulate the Bolshevik theoretical position. The new optimism provided by "socialism in one country" gave the Russian people psychological relief from the hardships of the earlier era of military conflict. To those who had no knowledge of Marxist dialectics and the law of uneven development, Trotsky's theory seemed to mock any efforts to rebuild Russian society without the aid of European revolution.

In order for Trotsky to have stood his ground in the upper ranks of the Party, for one thing, he would have had to have paid much more attention to what he scorned as petty political concerns. As an active revolutionary during the earlier part of his life, he exhibited much daring and energy in the face of his opposition. However, during the 1920s, he shied away from political disputes at crucial times. When political concerns bored him, as was often the case, he would immerse himself in complicated economic or administrative problems. For this reason, Lenin characterized Trotsky as being "too much attracted by the purely administrative aspect of affairs."[171]

Trotsky never understood the consequences of the Party's continual denial of democratic rights until his own authority was challenged. During the Civil War, he rationalized the Bolshevik political monopoly through the concept of the dictatorship of the proletariat. Neither he nor other leading Party members gave any sign of realizing that the denial of democratic rights to those outside a political party could be enforced only by the denial,

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170. Leon Trotsky. *The Permanent Revolution* (New York: Merit Publishers, 1969), 234–235.
171. Deutscher, *The Prophet Unarmed*, 70.

sooner or later, of the same rights to the members of the Party itself. Trotsky, Stalin's arch critic after his expulsion from the Soviet Union, is at least partly responsible for the ascendancy of the dictator.

Permanent revolution and "socialism in one country" are mutually exclusive, and the acceptance of "socialism in one country" represents a fundamental deviation from the line begun by the October Revolution. To Trotsky, the struggle for international revolution was one of life or death for the Russian proletarian dictatorship. When it became established that the Soviet Union no longer needed revolution abroad to achieve the socialist dream, the Communist International lost most of its previous significance, and the Soviet regime began to take a less aggressive stance on matters of foreign policy. As R. V. Daniels recognizes in *The Conscience of the Revolution* (1960), "a Trotsky regime would have been much less hard on Russia. By the same token, it would have been a much more serious challenge to the non-Communist world.[172]

172. Daniels, *The Conscience of the Revolution*, 207.

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