

Leon Trotsky

Results and Prospects

(1906)

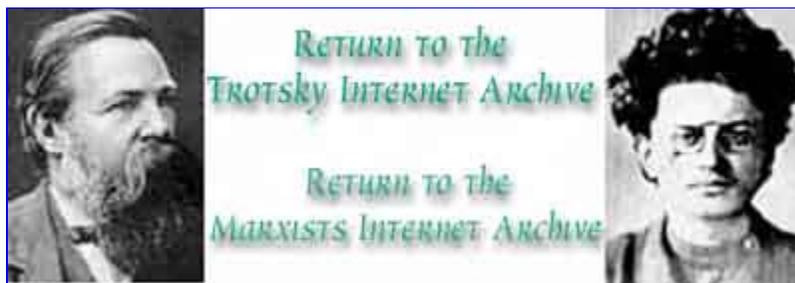
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First publication of **Results & Prospects** was in St. Petersburg in 1906, shortly after the [1905](#) first Russian workers' revolution, lead in large part by Trotsky himself.

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- [Preface to the Re-Issue of This Work Published in Moscow in 1919](#)
- [\[Introduction\]](#)
- 1. [The Peculiarities of Russian Historical Development](#)
- 2. [The Towns and Capital](#)
- 3. [1789 – 1848 – 1905](#)
- 4. [Revolution and the Proletariat](#)
- 5. [The Proletariat in Power and the Peasantry](#)
- 6. [The Proletarian Regime](#)
- 7. [The Prerequisites of Socialism](#)
- 8. [A Workers' Government in Russia and Socialism](#)
- 9. [Europe and Revolution](#)
- 10. [The Struggle for Power](#)

[Permanent Revolution Index](#)



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Leon Trotsky

Results and Prospects

Preface to the Re-Issue of This Work

Published in Moscow in 1919

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The character of the Russian Revolution was the fundamental question in relation to which the various ideological trends and political organizations of the Russian revolutionary movement grouped themselves. Even in the social-democratic movement itself this question aroused serious disagreements from the moment events gave it a practical character. From 1904 onwards these differences took the shape of two fundamental trends, Menshevism and Bolshevism. The Menshevik point of view was that our revolution would be a *bourgeois* revolution, i.e., that its natural consequence would be the transfer of power to the bourgeoisie and the creation of conditions for bourgeois parliamentarism. The point of view of Bolshevism, while recognizing the inevitability of the bourgeois character of the coming revolution, put forward as the task of the revolution the establishment of a democratic republic by means of the dictatorship of the proletariat and the peasantry.

The social analysis of the Mensheviks was extremely superficial and in essence reduced itself to crude historical analogies – the typical method of ‘educated’ philistines. Neither the fact that the development of Russian capitalism had created extraordinary contradictions at both its poles, reducing the role of bourgeois democracy to insignificance, nor the experience of subsequent events, restrained the Mensheviks from an indefatigable search for ‘true’, ‘real’ democracy, which would place itself at the head of the ‘nation’ and establish parliamentary and so far as possible democratic conditions for capitalist development. Always and everywhere the Mensheviks strove to find signs of the development of bourgeois democracy, and where they could not find them they invented them. They exaggerated the importance of every ‘democratic’

declaration and demonstration, at the same time belittling the forces of the proletariat and the prospects before its struggle. So fanatically did they strive to find this leading bourgeois democracy, in order to secure the 'legitimate' bourgeois character of the Russian Revolution alleged to be required by the laws of history, that during the Revolution itself, when no leading bourgeois democracy was to be found, the Mensheviks themselves undertook, with more or less success, to carry out its duties.

Petty-bourgeois democracy without any Socialist ideology, without any Marxian class preparation, could not, of course, have acted differently under the conditions of the Russian Revolution, than did the Mensheviks in the role of the 'leading' Party of the February Revolution. The absence of any serious social foundation for bourgeois democracy told on the Mensheviks themselves, because they very soon outlived themselves, and in the eighth month of the Revolution were thrown aside by the class struggle.

Bolshevism, on the contrary, was by no means imbued with faith in the power and strength of revolutionary bourgeois democracy in Russia. From the very beginning, it acknowledged the decisive importance of the working class for the coming Revolution, but as to the programme of the Revolution itself the Bolsheviks limited it at first to the interests of the many millions of peasants, without and against whom the Revolution could not have been carried through to the end by the proletariat. Hence their acknowledgment (for the time being) of the *bourgeois*-democratic character of the Revolution.

As regards the estimation of the inner forces of the Revolution and its prospects, the author, at that period, adhered neither to one nor to the other of the main trends in the Russian Labour movement. The standpoint he then supported can be outlined as follows: the Revolution, having begun as a bourgeois revolution as regards its first tasks, will soon call forth powerful class conflicts and will gain final victory only by transferring power to the only class capable of standing at the head of the oppressed masses, namely, to the proletariat. Once in power, the proletariat not only will not want, but will not be able to limit itself to a bourgeois democratic programme. It will be able to carry through the Revolution to the end only in the event of the Russian Revolution being converted into a Revolution of the European proletariat. The bourgeois-democratic programme of the Revolution will then be superseded, together with its national limitations, and the temporary political domination of the Russian working class will develop into a prolonged Socialist dictatorship. But should Europe remain inert the bourgeois counter-revolution will not tolerate the government of the toiling masses in Russia and will throw the country back – far back from a democratic workers' and peasants' republic. Therefore, once having won power, the proletariat cannot keep within the limits of bourgeois democracy. It must adopt the tactics of *permanent revolution*, i.e., must destroy the barriers between the minimum and maximum programme of Social Democracy, go over to more and more radical social reforms and seek direct and immediate support in revolution in Western Europe. This position is developed and argued in the work now reissued, which was originally written in 1904-1906.

In maintaining the standpoint of the permanent revolution during a period of 15 years, the author nevertheless fell into error in his estimation of the contending factions of the social-democratic movement. As both of them started out from the standpoint of

bourgeois revolution, the author was of the opinion that the divergencies existing between them would not be so deep as to justify a split. At the same time, he hoped that the further course of events would clearly prove the weakness and insignificance of Russian bourgeois democracy, on the one hand, and on the other, the objective impossibility of the proletariat limiting itself to a democratic programme. This he thought would remove the ground from under factional differences.

Having stood outside both of the two factions in the period of emigration, the author did not fully appreciate the very important circumstance that in reality, along the line of the disagreement between Bolsheviks and Mensheviks, there were being grouped inflexible revolutionaries on the one side and, on the other, elements which were becoming more and more opportunist and accommodating. When the Revolution of 1917 broke out, the Bolshevik Party constituted a strong centralized organization uniting all the best elements of the advanced workers and revolutionary intellectuals, which – after some internal struggle – frankly adopted tactics directed towards the socialist dictatorship of the working class, in full harmony with the entire international situation and class relations in Russia. As to the Menshevik faction, it had, by that time, just ripened sufficiently to be able to assume, as I said before, the duties of bourgeois democracy.

In offering to the public this reprint of his book at the present time, the author not only desires to explain the theoretical principles which rendered it possible for him and other comrades, who for many years had stood outside the Bolshevik Party, to join their fate with the fate of that party at the beginning of 1917 (such a personal explanation would not provide a sufficient reason for the reprinting of the book), but also to recall the social-historical analysis of the motive forces of the Russian Revolution from which followed the conclusion that the seizure of political power by the working class could and must be the task of the Russian Revolution, long before the proletarian dictatorship had become an accomplished fact. The fact that it is possible for us now to re-issue without alteration this pamphlet written in 1906 and conceived in its fundamental lines already in 1904, is sufficient proof that Marxist theory is not on the side of the Menshevik substitutes for bourgeois democracy but on the side of the party which actually carries out the dictatorship of the working class.

The final test of a theory is experience. Irrefutable proof of our having correctly applied Marxist theory is given by the fact that the events in which we are now participating, and even our methods of participation in them, were foreseen in their fundamental lines some 15 years ago.

As an appendix we reprint an article which was published in the Paris **Nashe Slovo** for October 17th, 1915, entitled *The Struggle for Power*. This article had a polemical purpose and was a criticism of the programmatic *Letter* addressed to ‘Comrades in Russia’ by the leaders of the Mensheviks. In it we drew the conclusion that the development of class relations during the ten years after the revolution of 1905 had yet further undermined the Menshevik hope for a bourgeois democracy, and that thereby, obviously, the fate of the Russian Revolution was more than ever bound up with the question of the dictatorship of the proletariat ... In the face of the battle of ideas of all these many preceding years, one must indeed be a blockhead to speak of the ‘adventurism’ of the October Revolution!

Talking of the attitude of the Mensheviks to the Revolution, one cannot but mention the Menshevik degeneration of Kautsky, who in the 'theories' of Martov, Dan and Tsereteli now finds the expression of his own theoretical and political decay. After October 1917, we heard from Kautsky that, although the conquest of political power by the working class should be regarded as the historic task of the Social-Democratic Party, nevertheless, as the Russian Communist Party had failed to come to power through the particular door and according to the particular timetable fixed for it by Kautsky, the Soviet Republic ought to be handed over for correction to Kerensky, Tsereteli and Chernov. Kautsky's reactionary-pedantic criticism must have come the more unexpectedly to those comrades who had gone through the period of the first Russian Revolution with their eyes open and had read Kautsky's articles of 1905-1906. At that time Kautsky (true, not without the beneficial influence of Rosa Luxemburg) fully understood and acknowledged that the Russian Revolution could not terminate in a bourgeois-democratic republic but must inevitably lead to the proletarian dictatorship, because of the level attained by the class struggle in the country itself and because of the entire international situation of capitalism. Kautsky then frankly wrote about a workers' government with a social-democratic majority. He did not even think of making the real course of the class struggle depend on the changing and superficial combinations of political democracy.

At that time, Kautsky understood that the Revolution would begin for the first time to rouse the many millions of peasants and urban petty-bourgeoisie and that not all at once but gradually, layer by layer, so that when the struggle between the proletariat and the capitalist bourgeoisie reached its climax, the broad peasant masses would still be at a very primitive level of political development and would give their votes to intermediary political parties reflecting only the backwardness and the prejudices of the peasant class. Kautsky understood then that the proletariat, led by the logic of the revolution toward the conquest of power, could not arbitrarily postpone this act indefinitely, because by this self-abnegation it would merely clear the field for counter-revolution. Kautsky understood then that, once having seized revolutionary power, the proletariat would not make the fate of the revolution depend upon the passing moods of the least conscious, not yet awakened masses at any given moment, but that, on the contrary, it would turn the political power concentrated in its hands into a mighty apparatus for the enlightenment and organization of these same backward and ignorant peasant masses. Kautsky understood that to call the Russian Revolution a bourgeois revolution and thereby to limit its tasks would mean not to understand anything of what was going on in the world. Together with the Russian and Polish revolutionary Marxists, he rightly acknowledged that, should the Russian proletariat conquer power before the European proletariat, it would have to use its situation as the ruling class not for the rapid surrender of its positions to the bourgeoisie but for rendering powerful assistance to the proletarian revolution in Europe and throughout the world. All these world-wide prospects, imbued with the spirit of Marxian doctrine, were not made dependent either by Kautsky or by us upon how and for whom the peasants would vote at the elections to the so-called Constituent Assembly in November and December 1917.

Now, when the prospects outlined 15 years ago have become reality, Kautsky refuses to grant a birth-certificate to the Russian Revolution for the reason that its birth has not been duly registered at the political office of bourgeois democracy. What an astonishing fact! What an incredible degradation of Marxism! One can say with full justice that the decay of the Second International has found in this philistine judgment on the Russian

Revolution by one of its greatest theoreticians a still more hideous expression than in the voting of the War credits on August 4, 1914.

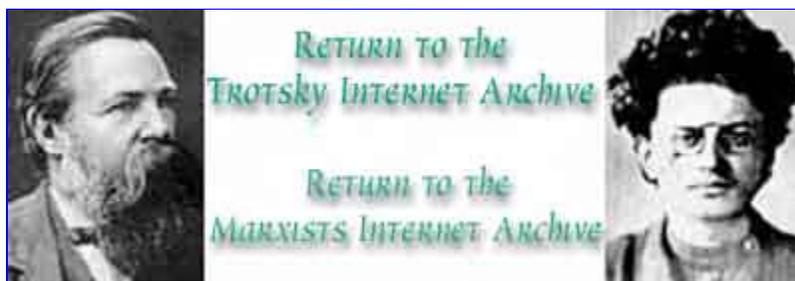
For decades Kautsky developed and upheld the ideas of social revolution. Now that it has become reality, Kautsky retreats before it in terror. He is horrified at the Russian Soviet power and takes up a hostile attitude towards the mighty movement of the German Communist proletariat. Kautsky resembles to the life a miserable schoolmaster, who for many years has been repeating a description of spring to his pupils within the four walls of his stuffy schoolroom, and when at last, at the sunset of his days as a teacher, he comes out into the fresh air, does not recognize spring, becomes furious (in so far as it is possible for this schoolmaster to become furious) and tries to prove that spring is not spring after all but only a great disorder in nature, because it is taking place against the laws of natural history. It is well that the workers do not trust even to the most authoritative pedants, but trust the voice of spring!

We, disciples of Marx, together with the German workers, stand by our conviction that the spring of revolution has arrived fully in accordance with the laws of social nature, and at the same time in accordance with the laws of Marxist theory, for Marxism is not a schoolmaster's pointer rising above history, but a social analysis of the ways and means of the historic process which is really going on.

I have left the text of the two works – that of 1906 and that of 1915 – without any alterations. Originally I intended to supply the text with notes which would bring it up to date; but on looking through the text I had to renounce this intention. If I wanted to go into details, I should have to double the size of the book, for which I have no time at present – and, besides, such a 'two-storeyed' book would hardly be convenient for the reader. And, what is more important, I consider that the train of ideas in its main ramifications very nearly approaches the conditions of our time, and the reader who takes the trouble to get more thoroughly acquainted with this book will easily be able to supplement the exposition it gives with the necessary data taken from the experience of the present Revolution.

L. TROTSKY
March 12, 1919
The Kremlin

[Results & Prospects Index Page](#) | [Introduction](#)



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Leon Trotsky

Results and Prospects

[Introduction]

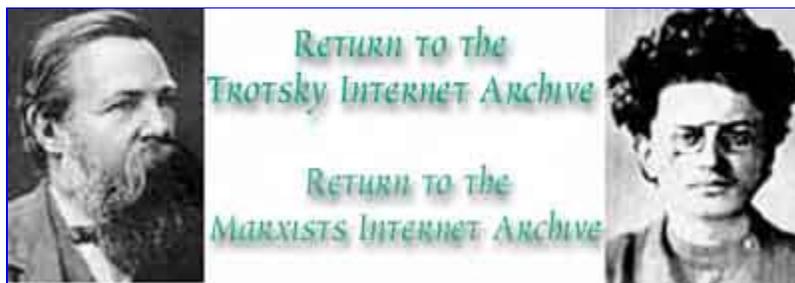
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The Russian Revolution came unexpectedly to everybody but the Social Democrats. Marxism long ago predicted the inevitability of the Russian Revolution, which was bound to break out as a result of the conflict between capitalist development and the forces of ossified absolutism. Marxism estimated in advance the social character of the coming revolution. In calling it a bourgeois revolution, Marxism thereby pointed out that the *immediate objective* tasks of the revolution consisted in the creation of “normal conditions for the development of bourgeois society as a whole.

Marxism has proved to be right, and this is now past the need for discussion or proof. The Marxists are now confronted by a task of quite another kind: to discover the ‘possibilities’ of the developing revolution by means of an analysis of its internal mechanism. It would be a stupid mistake to identify our revolution with the events of 1789-93 or 1848. Historical analogies, by which liberalism lives and is nurtured, cannot take the place of social analysis.

The Russian Revolution has a quite peculiar character, which is the result of the peculiar trend of our whole social and historical development, and which in its turn opens before us quite new historical prospects.

[Preface](#) | [Results & Prospects Index Page](#) | [Next Chapter](#)



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Leon Trotsky

Results and Prospects

I. The Peculiarities of Russian Historical Development

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If we compare social development in Russia with social development in the other European countries – bracketing the latter together in respect of that which their history has in common and which distinguishes it from the history of Russia – we can say that the main characteristic of Russian social development is its comparative primitiveness and slowness.

We shall not dwell here on the natural causes of this primitiveness, but the fact itself remains indubitable: Russian social life has been built up on a poorer and more primitive economic foundation.

Marxism teaches that the development of the forces of production determines the social-historical process. The formation of economic corporations, classes and estates is only possible when this development has reached a certain level. Estate [1] and class differentiation, which is determined by the development of the division of labour and the creation of more specialized social functions, presupposes that the part of the population employed on immediate material production produces a surplus over and above its own consumption: it is only by alienating this surplus that non-producing classes can arise and take shape. Furthermore, the division of labour among the producing classes themselves is possible only at a certain degree of development of agriculture, capable of ensuring the supply of agricultural produce to the non-agricultural population. These fundamental propositions of social development were already clearly formulated by Adam Smith.

Hence it follows that, although the Novgorod period of our history coincides with the beginning of the European Middle Ages, the slow pace of economic development caused by the natural-historical conditions (less favourable geographical situation, sparse population) was bound to hamper the process of class formation and to give it a more primitive character.

It is difficult to say what shape Russian social development would have taken if it had remained isolated and under the influence of inner tendencies only. It is enough to say that this did not happen. Russian social life, built up on a certain internal economic foundation, has all the time been under the influence, even under the pressure, of its external social-historical milieu.

When this social and state organization, in the process of its formation, came into collision with other, neighbouring organizations, the primitiveness of the economic relations of the one and the comparatively high development of the others played decisive parts in the ensuing process.

The Russian state, which grew up on a primitive economic basis, entered into relations and came into conflict with state organizations built upon higher and more stable foundations. Two possibilities presented themselves: either the Russian State was to succumb in its struggle with them, as the Golden Horde had succumbed in its struggle with the Moscow State, or it was to overtake them in the development of economic relations and absorb a great deal more vital forces than it could have done had it remained isolated. The economy of Russia, however, was already *sufficiently* developed to prevent the former happening. The State did not break down but started growing under the terrible pressure of economic forces.

Thus, the main thing was not that Russia was surrounded by enemies on all sides. This alone does not explain the position. Indeed, this would apply to any other European country, except, perhaps, England. In their mutual struggle for existence, these states depended upon more or less identical economic bases and therefore the development of their state organizations was not subject to such powerful *external* pressure.

The struggle against the Crimean and Nogai Tatars called forth the utmost exertion of effort. But this was, of course, not greater than the exertion of effort during the hundred years' war between France and England. It was not the Tatars who compelled Old Russia to introduce firearms and create the standing regiments of Streltsi; it was not the Tatars who later on forced her to form knightly cavalry and infantry forces, but the pressure of Lithuania, Poland and Sweden.

As a consequence of this pressure on the part of Western Europe, the State swallowed up an inordinately large part of the surplus produce; i.e., it lived at the expense of the privileged classes which were being formed, and so hampered their already slow development. But that was not all. The State pounced upon the 'necessary product' of the farmer, deprived him of his livelihood, caused him to flee from the land upon which he had not even had time to settle – and thus hampered the growth of the population and the development of the productive forces. Thus, inasmuch as the State swallowed up a disproportionately large part of the *surplus* product, it hampered the already slow differentiation between estates; inasmuch as it took away an important part of the *necessary* product it destroyed even those primitive production bases upon which it

depended.

But in order to exist, to function, and therefore, above all, to alienate the part of the social product it required, *the State needed a hierarchical organization of estates*. This is why, while undermining the economic foundations of its development, it simultaneously strove to force the development of these foundations by Government measures, and – like any other State – strove to turn this development of estates to its own advantage. Milyukov, the historian of Russian culture, sees in this a direct contrast to the history of Western Europe. But there is no contrast here.

The estates-monarchy of the Middle Ages, which grew into bureaucratic absolutism, constituted a state form reinforcing certain definite social interests and relations. But this state form itself, once it had arisen and was in being, had its own interests (dynastic, court, bureaucratic ...) which came into conflict not only with the interests of the lower but even with those of the higher estates. The dominating estates, which constituted the socially indispensable ‘middle wall’ between the masses of the people and the State organization, exercised pressure on the latter and made their own interests the content of the State’s practical activity. At the same time, the State power, as an independent force, also looked upon the interests of the higher estates from *its own* point of view. It developed resistance to their aspirations and tried to subject them to itself. The actual history of the relations between State and estates proceeded along resultant lines, determined by the correlation of forces.

A process identical in fundamentals took place in Russia.

The State strove to make use of the developing economic groups, to subject them to its own specialized financial and military interests. The dominating economic groups, as they arose, strove to use the State to consolidate their advantages in the form of estate privileges. In this play of social forces, the resultant went much more in favour of the State power than was the case in the history of Western Europe. The exchange of services between the State power and the upper social groups, at the expense of the working masses, which finds its expression in the distribution of rights and obligations, of burdens and privileges, was less advantageous to the nobility and clergy in Russia than in the mediaeval estates-monarchies of Western Europe. This is beyond doubt. Nevertheless, it would be a great exaggeration and contrary to all sense of proportion to say that while in the West the estates created the State, in Russia the State power created the estates in its own interests (as Milyukov does).

Estates cannot be created by State action, by law. Before one or another social group can take shape as a privileged estate with the help of the State power, it must have developed economically with all its social advantages. Estates cannot be manufactured according to a previously established scale of ranks or according to the code of the Legion d’Honneur. The State power can but assist, with all its resources, the elementary economic process which brings forward higher economic formations. As indicated above, the Russian State consumed a comparatively large share of the forces of the nation, thus hampering the process of social crystallization, but it needed this process for its own purposes. It is natural, therefore, that under the influence and the pressure of its more differentiated Western milieu, a pressure that was transmitted through the military-state organization, the State in its turn strove to force the development of social differentiation on a primitive economic foundation. Furthermore, the very need

for forcing, caused by the weakness of the social-economic formations, made it natural that the State in its efforts as guardian should have tried to use its preponderant power to direct the very development of the upper classes according to its own discretion. But on the way to the achievement of great success in this direction, the State first found itself baulked by its own weakness and the primitive character of its own organization, which was due, as we have seen, to the primitiveness of the social structure.

Thus, the Russian State, erected on the basis of Russian economic conditions, was being pushed forward by the friendly, and even more by the hostile, pressure of the neighbouring State organizations, which had grown up on a higher economic basis. From a certain moment – especially from the end of the seventeenth century – the State strove with all its power to accelerate the country's natural economic development. New branches of handicraft, machinery, factories, big industry, capital, were, so to say, artificially grafted on the natural economic stem. Capitalism seemed to be an offspring of the State.

From this standpoint it could be said that all Russian science is the artificial product of government effort, an artificial grafting on the natural stem of national ignorance. [2]

Russian thought, like the Russian economy, developed under the direct pressure the higher thought and more developed economies of the West. Since, owing to the natural-economy character of economic conditions, i.e., the poor development of foreign trade, relations with other countries bore a predominantly State character, the influence of these countries found expression in fierce struggle for the existence of the State before expressing itself in direct economic competition. Western economics influenced Russian economics through the intermediary of the State. In order to be able to survive in the midst of better-armed hostile countries, Russia was compelled to set up factories, organize navigation schools, publish textbooks on fortification, etc. But if the general course of the internal economy of this enormous country had not been moving in this same direction, if the development of economic conditions had not created the demand for general and applied science, all the efforts of the State would have been fruitless. The national economy, which was naturally developing from natural economy to money-commodity economy, responded only to those measures of the Government which corresponded to its development and only to the extent that they corresponded to it. The history of Russian industry, of the Russian currency system, and of State credit, are the best possible evidence for the above opinion.

'The majority of the branches of industry (metal, sugar, petroleum, distilling, even the textile industry),' writes Professor Mendeleyev, 'were originated under the direct influence of Government measures, sometimes even with the help of large Government subsidies, but especially because the Government always consciously followed the policy of Protection. In the reign of Alexander, the Government frankly inscribed this policy on its banner ... The higher Government circles, fully accepting the principles of Protection in application to Russia, proved to be more advanced than our educated classes as a whole.' D. Mendeleyev, **Towards the Understanding of Russia**, St. Petersburg 1906, p.84).

The learned panegyrist of industrial Protection forgets to add that the policy of the Government was dictated not by any concern to develop industrial forces, but purely by fiscal and in part military-technical considerations. For this reason, the policy of Protection was often opposed, not only to the fundamental interests of industrial

development but even to the private interests of various groups of businessmen. Thus, the cotton-mill owners openly declared that 'the high duties on cotton are being maintained not with a view to encouraging cotton-growing but exclusively for fiscal interests'. As in the 'creation' of estates the Government was pursuing, above all, the aims of the State, so also in 'planting' industry, its main concern was directed towards the requirements of the State Exchequer. There is no doubt, however, that the autocracy played no small part in transplanting the factory system of production on to Russian soil.

At the moment when developing bourgeois society began to feel a need for the political institutions of the West, the autocracy proved to be armed with all the material might of the European States. It rested upon a centralized bureaucratic machine which was quite useless for establishing new relations but was able to develop great energy in carrying out systematic repressions. The enormous distances of the country had been overcome by the telegraph, which imparts confidence to the actions of the administration and gives relative uniformity and rapidity to its proceedings (in the matter of repressions). The railways render it possible to throw military forces rapidly from one end of the country to the other. The pre-revolutionary governments of Europe hardly knew railways and telegraphs. The army at the disposal of absolutism was colossal – and if it proved useless in the serious trials of the Japanese War, it was nevertheless good enough for internal domination. Not only the Government of France before the great Revolution, but even the Government of 1848, knew nothing similar to the Russian army of today.

While exploiting the country to the utmost by means its fiscal and military machine, the Government brought its yearly budget up to the huge figure of two milliard roubles. Supported by its army and its budget, the autocratic government made the European Stock Exchange its exchequer, and the Russian taxpayer thus became a hopeless tributary of this European Stock Exchange.

Thus, in the eighties and nineties of the nineteenth century, the Russian Government confronted the world as a colossal military-bureaucratic and fiscal – Stock-Exchange organization of invincible power.

The financial and military might of the absolute monarchy overwhelmed and blinded not only the European bourgeoisie but also Russian liberalism, which lost all faith in the possibility of trying conclusions with absolutism in an open measurement of strength. The military and financial might of absolutism seemed to exclude any chance whatever for the Russian Revolution. But in reality just the opposite proved to be the case.

The more a government is centralized and the more independent it is of society, the sooner it becomes an autocratic organization standing above society. The greater the financial and military forces of such an organization are, the longer and more successfully can it continue its struggle for existence. The centralized State with its budget of two milliards, its debt of eight milliards and its army of many millions of men under arms, could continue to exist long after it had ceased to satisfy the most elementary needs of social development – not only the needs of internal administration but even the needs of military security, for the maintenance of which it was originally formed.

The longer such a state of affairs dragged on, the greater became the contradiction between the needs of economic and cultural development and the policy of the Government, which had developed its mighty 'milliard-fold' inertia. After the epoch of the 'great patchwork reforms' – which not only did not eliminate these contradictions but on the contrary for the first time vividly revealed them – had been left behind, it became ever more difficult, and psychologically ever more impossible, for the Government voluntarily to take the path of parliamentarism. The only way out of these contradictions which its situation indicated to society was through the accumulation of sufficient steam within the boiler of absolutism to burst it.

Thus, the administrative, military and financial power of absolutism, thanks to which it could exist in spite of social development, not only did not exclude the possibility of revolution, as was the opinion of the liberals. but, on the contrary, made revolution the only way out; furthermore, this revolution was guaranteed in advance an all the more radical character in proportion as the great might of absolutism dug an abyss between itself and the nation. Russian Marxism can justly be proud of having alone explained the direction of this development and foretold its general forms [3], while the liberals fed themselves on the most utopian 'practicalism' and the revolutionary 'Narodniki' lived on phantasmagoria and a belief in miracles.

The entire preceding social development made revolution inevitable. What, then, were the forces of this revolution?

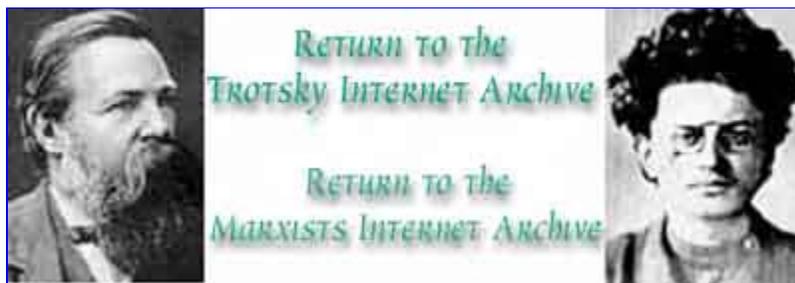
Notes

1. i.e., a section of pre-capitalist society possessing formally laid down rights and duties. cf. the 'third estate', i.e., those who were neither nobles nor clergy, in pre-revolutionary France. – *Trans.*

2. It is sufficient to recall the characteristic features of the original relations between the State and the school to realize that the latter was, at the very least, just as 'artificial' product of the State as the factory was. The educational efforts of the State illustrate this 'artificiality'. Pupils who played truant were put in chains. The whole school was in chains. Study was a form of service. Pupils were paid wages, etc.. etc. – *L.T.*

3. Even such a reactionary bureaucrat as Professor Mendeleyev cannot but admit this. Speaking about the development of industry, he observes: "The socialists perceived something here and even partly understood it, but went astray, following their Latinism [!], recommending resort to force, pandering to the brutal instincts of the mob and striving toward revolutions and power." (**Towards the Understanding of Russia**, p.120)

[Introduction](#) | [Results & Prospects Index Page](#) | [Next Chapter](#)



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II. The Towns and Capital

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Urban Russia is a product of very recent history; more precisely, of the last few decades. At the end of the reign of Peter I, in the first quarter of the eighteenth century, the town population numbered somewhat more than 328,000, i.e., about 3 per cent of the total population of the country. At the end of the same century, it amounted to 1,301,000, about 4.1 per cent of the total population. By 1812 the urban population had risen to 1,653,000, which was equivalent to 4.4 per cent of the total. By the middle of the nineteenth century it was still no more than 3,482,000 – 7.8 per cent of the total. Finally, according to the last census (1897) the population of the towns numbered 16,289,000, i.e., about 13 per cent of the total population. [1]

If we consider the town as a social-economic formation and not merely as an administrative unit, we must admit that the above figures do not give a true picture of urban development: the history of the Russian State shows us numerous instances where charters were granted to or withdrawn from towns for reasons which were far from scientific. Nevertheless, these figures do clearly show the insignificance of the towns in pre-Reform Russia and their feverishly rapid growth during the last decade. According to the calculations of Mikhailovsky, the increase in the urban population between 1885 and 1887 was equivalent to 33.8 per cent, i.e., more than double the increase in the population of Russia as a whole (15.25 per cent), and nearly three times the increase in the rural population (12.7 per cent). If we add to this the industrial villages and hamlets, the rapid growth of the urban (in the sense of non-agricultural) population appears more clearly still.

But the modern Russian towns differ from the old ones not only in the number of their inhabitants but also in their social type: they are centres of commercial and industrial life. The majority of our old towns played hardly any economic role; they were military and administrative centres or fortresses, their inhabitants were employed in one or another form of State service and lived at the expense of the exchequer, and in general the city was an administrative, military and tax-collecting centre.

When a non-service population settled within the precincts of the town or on its outskirts, for protection against enemies, this did not in the slightest degree interfere with their continuing with their former agricultural pursuits. Even Moscow, the largest town in old Russia, was, according to M. Milyukov, simply 'a royal manor, a considerable portion of the population of which was connected in one way or another with the court, either as members of the suite, as guards, or as servants. Out of over 16,000 households, according to the census of 1701, not more than 7,000, that is, 44 per cent, were settlers and craftsmen, and even these lived in the State suburb and worked for the palace. The remaining 9,000 belonged to the clergy (1,500) and the ruling estate'. Thus, the Russian towns, like the towns under the Asiatic despotisms, and in contrast to the craft and trading towns of the European Middle Ages, played only the role of *consumers*. In the same period the towns of the West more or less successfully established the principle that craftsmen had no right to live in the villages, but the Russian towns never strove after such aims. Where, then, were manufacturing industry and the crafts? In the country, attached to agriculture.

The low economic level, with the intense depredations of the State, did not permit of any accumulation of wealth or social division of labour. The shorter summer in comparison with the West allowed a longer winter leisure. Owing to these factors, manufacturing industry was never separated from agriculture and was not concentrated in the towns, but remained in the countryside as an occupation auxiliary to agriculture. When, in the second half of the nineteenth century, capitalist industry began to develop widely, it did not encounter any urban crafts but, in the main, only village handicraft. 'For the one and a half million factory workers, at the most, that there are in Russia', writes M. Milyukov, 'there are still not less than four million peasants engaged in domestic manufactures in their own villages, who continue to carry on at the same time their agricultural occupations. This is the very class from which ... the European factories arose, but which did not in the slightest degree participate ... in the setting up of Russia's factories.'

Of course, the further growth of the population and of its productivity created a basis for the social division of labour. This naturally applied also to the urban crafts. As a result, however, of the economic pressure of the advanced countries, this basis was seized by large-scale capitalist industry, so that the town handicrafts had no time to develop.

The four million rural craftsmen comprised the very element which, in Europe, formed the nucleus of the town population, entered the guilds as masters or journeymen, and subsequently found themselves more and more left outside the guilds. It was precisely the craftsman class that constituted the bulk of the population in the most revolutionary quarters of Paris during the Great Revolution. This fact alone – the insignificance of our urban crafts – had immeasurable consequence for our revolution.

[\[2\]](#)

The essential economic feature of the modern town lies in the fact that it works up raw materials supplied by the country. For that reason conditions of transport are decisive for it. Only the introduction of railways could so greatly widen the sources of supply for the town as to make it possible to concentrate such large masses of people. The necessity for concentrating the population arose out of the growth of large factory industry. The nucleus of the population of a modern town, at least of a town possessing

some economic and political significance, is the sharply differentiated class of wage-workers. It was this class, as yet substantially unknown during the period of the Great French Revolution, that was destined to play the decisive role in our revolution.

The factory industrial system not only brings the proletariat to the forefront but also cuts the ground from under the feet of bourgeois democracy. In previous revolutions the latter found its support in the urban petty-bourgeoisie: craftsmen, small shopkeepers, etc.

Another reason for the disproportionately large political role played by the Russian proletariat is the fact that Russian capital is to a considerable extent of foreign origin. This fact, according to Kautsky, resulted in the growth of the number, strength and influence of the proletariat being out of proportion to the growth of bourgeois liberalism.

As we have said above, capitalism in Russia did not develop out of the handicraft system. It conquered Russia with the economic culture of the whole of Europe behind it, and before it, as its immediate competitor, the helpless village craftsman or the wretched town craftsman, and it had the half-beggared peasantry as a reservoir of labour-power. Absolutism assisted in various ways in fettering the country with the shackles of capitalism.

In the first place it converted the Russian peasant into a tributary of the Stock Exchanges of the world. The absence of capital within the country and the government's constant need for money created a field for usurious foreign loans. From the reign of Catharine II to the ministry of Witte and Durnovo, the Amsterdam, London, Berlin and Paris bankers systematically strove to convert the autocracy into a colossal Stock-Exchange speculation. A considerable part of the so-called internal loans, i.e., loans realized through the home credit departments, were in no way distinguished from foreign loans, because they were in reality placed with foreign capitalists. Proletarianising and pauperising the peasantry by heavy taxation, absolutism converted the millions of the European Stock Exchange into soldiers and battleships, into prisons and into railways. The greater part of this expenditure was, from the economic point of view, absolutely non-productive. An enormous share of the national product was sent abroad in the form of interest, and enriched and strengthened the financial aristocracy of Europe. The European financial bourgeoisie, whose political influence in parliamentary countries during the last ten years has grown uninterruptedly and has forced the commercial and industrial capitalists into the background, converted, it is true, the Tsarist Government into its vassal; but it could not and did not desire to become a component part of the bourgeois opposition within Russia. It was guided in its sympathies and antipathies by the principles formulated by the Dutch bankers Hoppe and Co., in the conditions for the loan to Tsar Paul in 1798: 'interest must be paid *irrespective of political circumstances*'. The European Stock Exchange was even directly interested in the maintenance of absolutism, for no other government could guarantee such usurious interest. State loans, however, were not the only means whereby European capital was imported into Russia. The very money, payment of which absorbed a good part of the Russian State budget, returned to the territory of Russia in the form of commercial-industrial capital attracted by the untouched natural wealth of the country, and especially by the unorganized labour-power, which so far had not been accustomed to put up any resistance. The latter period of our industrial

boom of 1893-99 was also a period of intensified immigration of European capital. Thus it was capital which, as before, remained largely European and which realized its political power in the parliaments of France and Belgium, that mobilised the working class in Russia.

By economically enslaving this backward country, European capital projected its main branches of production and methods of communication across a whole series of intermediate technical and economic stages through which it had to pass in its countries of origin. But the fewer obstacles it met with in the path of its *economic* domination, the more insignificant proved to be its political role.

The European bourgeoisie developed out of the Third Estate of the Middle Ages. It raised the standard of protest against the pillage and violence carried on by the first two estates, in the name of the interests of the people which it itself desired to exploit. The estates-monarchy of the Middle Ages, in its process of conversion into bureaucratic absolutism, relied on the population of the towns in its struggle against the pretensions of the clergy and the nobility. The bourgeoisie made use of this for its own political elevation. Thus, bureaucratic absolutism and the capitalist class developed simultaneously, and when these two came into conflict, in 1789, the bourgeoisie proved to have the whole nation behind it.

Russian absolutism developed under the direct pressure of the Western states. It copied their methods of government and administration much earlier than economic conditions here permitted the rise of a capitalist bourgeoisie. It already disposed of a tremendous standing army and a centralised, bureaucratic and fiscal machine, and had entered into irredeemable debt to the European bankers, at a time when the Russian towns still played an absolutely insignificant economic role.

Capital intruded from the West with the direct co-operation of absolutism, and in a short period converted a number of old archaic towns into centres of trade and industry, and even created, in a short time, commercial and industrial towns in places that previously had been absolutely uninhabited. This capital frequently appeared in the form of large impersonal shareholding companies. During the ten years of the industrial booms of 1893-1902 the total share capital increased by two milliard roubles, whereas during 1854-92 it had increased by only 900 millions. The proletariat immediately found itself concentrated in tremendous masses, while between these masses and the autocracy there stood a capitalist bourgeoisie, very small in numbers, isolated from the 'people', half-foreign, without historical traditions, and inspired only by the greed for gain.

Notes

1. The figures are taken from Milyukov's **Essays**. The urban population of *all* Russia, including Siberia and Finland, was given by the 1897 census as 17,122,000 or 13.25 per cent of the total. (Mendeleyev, **Towards the Understanding of Russia**, St. Petersburg 1906, 2 vols., table on p.90)

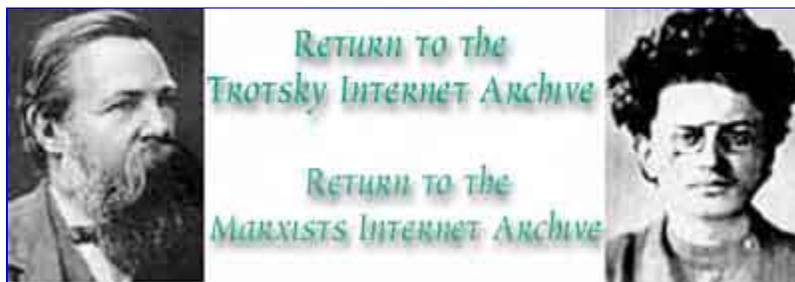
2. At a time when uncritical comparison between the Russian revolution and the

French revolution of 1789 had become commonplace, Parvus very sagaciously pointed out this fact as being responsible for the particular destiny of the Russian revolution. – *L.T.*

[Last Chapter](#)

| [Results & Prospects Index Page](#)

| [Next Chapter](#)



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Leon Trotsky

Results and Prospects

III. 1789 – 1848 – 1905

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History does not repeat itself. However much one may compare the Russian Revolution with the Great French Revolution, the former can never be transformed into a repetition of the latter. The 19th century has not passed in vain.

The year 1848 already differs tremendously from 1789. In comparison with the Great Revolution, the Prussian and Austrian Revolutions surprise one with their insignificant sweep. In one way they took place too early and in another too late. That gigantic exertion of strength which is necessary for bourgeois society to settle radically with the lords of the past can only be attained *either by the power of a unanimous nation* rising against feudal despotism, or by the mighty development of the *class struggle* within this nation striving to emancipate itself. In the first case, which was what happened in 1789-93, the national energy, compressed by the fierce resistance of the old order, was wholly expended in the struggle against reaction; in the second case, which has never yet occurred in history, and which we are considering merely as a possibility, the actual energy necessary for overcoming the dark forces of history is generated within the bourgeoisie nation by means of an 'internecine' class war. The severe internal friction, absorbing a great deal of energy and depriving the bourgeoisie of the possibility of playing the chief role, urges its antagonist the proletariat to the forefront, gives the proletariat ten years' experience in a month, places it at the head of affairs, and hands it the tightly-drawn reins of power. This class, determined, knowing no doubts, imparts a mighty sweep to events.

Revolution can be achieved either by a nation gathering itself together like a lion preparing to spring, or by a nation in the process of struggle becoming conclusively divided in order to free the best part of itself for the execution of those tasks which the nation as a whole is unable to carry out. These are two opposite sets of historical conditions, which in their pure form are, of course, possible only in logical contraposition.

A middle course in this, as in so many cases, is worst of all, but it was this middle course that developed in 1848.

In the heroic period of French history we saw a bourgeoisie, enlightened, active, as yet not aware of the contradictions of its own position, upon whom history had imposed the task of leadership in the struggle for a new order, not only against the outworn institutions of France but also against the reactionary forces of the whole of Europe. The bourgeoisie, consistently, in all its factions, regarded itself as the leader of the nation, rallied the masses to the struggle, gave them slogans and dictated their fighting tactics. Democracy bound the nation together with a political ideology. The people – urban petty-bourgeois, peasants and workers – elected bourgeois as their deputies, and the instructions given these deputies by their constituents were written in the language of a bourgeoisie coming to awareness of its messianic mission. During the revolution itself, though class antagonisms were revealed, yet the powerful inertia of the revolutionary struggle consistently threw the more conservative elements of the bourgeoisie off the political path. No stratum was thrown off before it had transferred its energy to the stratum behind it. The nation as a whole continued therefore to struggle for its aims with sharper and more determined methods. When the upper layers of the rich bourgeoisie, breaking away from the national core which had entered into the movement, formed an alliance with Louis XVI, the democratic demands of the nation were directed *against* this bourgeoisie, and this led to universal suffrage and the republic, as the logical, inevitable form of democracy.

The Great French Revolution was indeed a national revolution. And what is more, within the national framework, the world struggle of the bourgeoisie for domination, for power, and for undivided triumph found its classical expression.

Jacobinism is now a term of reproach on the lips of all liberal wiseacres. Bourgeois hatred of revolution, its hatred towards the masses, hatred of the force and grandeur of the history that is made in the streets, is concentrated in one cry of indignation and fear – *Jacobinism!* We, the world army of Communism, have long ago made our historical reckoning with Jacobinism. The whole of the present international proletarian movement was formed and grew strong in the struggle against the traditions of Jacobinism. We subjected its theories to criticism, we exposed its historical limitations, its social contradictoriness, its utopianism, we exposed its phraseology, and broke with its traditions, which for decades had been regarded as the sacred heritage of the revolution.

But we defend Jacobinism against the attacks, the calumny, and the stupid vituperations of anaemic, phlegmatic liberalism. The bourgeoisie has shamefully betrayed all the traditions of its historical youth, and its present hirelings dishonour the graves of its ancestors and scoff at the ashes of their ideals. The proletariat has taken the honour of the revolutionary past of the bourgeoisie under its protection. The proletariat, however radically it may have, in practice, broken with the revolutionary traditions of the bourgeoisie, nevertheless preserves them, as a sacred heritage of great passions, heroism and initiative, and its heart beats in sympathy with the speeches and acts of the Jacobin Convention.

What gave liberalism its charm if not the traditions of the Great French Revolution? At what other period did bourgeois democracy rise to such a height and kindle such a

great flame in the hearts of the people as during the period of the Jacobin, *sansculotte*, terrorist, Robespierrian democracy of 1793?

What else but Jacobinism made and still makes it possible for French bourgeois-radicalism of various shades to keep the overwhelming majority of the people and even the proletariat under its influence at a time when bourgeois radicalism in Germany and Austria has closed its brief history in deeds of pettiness and shame?

What is it if not the charm of Jacobinism, with its abstract political ideology, its cult of the Sacred Republic, its triumphant declarations, that even now nourishes French radicals and radical-socialists like Clemenceau, Millerand, Briand and Bourgeois, and all those politicians who know how to defend the mainstays of bourgeois society no worse than the dull-witted Junkers of Wilhelm II By the Grace of God? They are envied hopelessly by the bourgeois democrats of other countries; and yet they shower calumnies upon the source of their political advantage – heroic Jacobinism.

Even after many hopes had been destroyed, Jacobinism remained in the memory of the people as a tradition. For a long time the proletariat spoke of its future in the language of the past. In 1840, almost half a century after the government of the 'Mountain', eight years before the June days of 1848, Heine visited several workshops in the *faubourg* of Saint-Marceau and saw what the workers, 'the soundest section of the lower classes', were reading. 'I found there', he wrote to a German newspaper, 'several new speeches by old Robespierre and also pamphlets by Marat issued in two-sous editions; Cabet's **History of the Revolution**; the malignant lampoons of Carmenen; the works of Buonarroti, **The Teachings and Conspiracy of Babeuf**, all productions reeking with blood ... As one of the fruits of this seed,' prophesies the poet, 'sooner or later a republic will threaten to spring up in France.'

In 1848 the bourgeoisie was already unable to play a comparable role. It did not want and was not able to undertake the revolutionary liquidation of the social system that stood in its path to power. We know now *why* that was so. Its aim was – and of this it was perfectly conscious – to introduce into the old system the necessary guarantees, not for its political domination, but merely for a sharing of power with the forces of the past. It was meanly wise through the experience of the French bourgeoisie, corrupted by its treachery and frightened by its failures. It not only failed to lead the masses in storming the old order, but placed its back against this order so as to repulse the masses who were pressing it forward.

The French bourgeoisie succeeded in bringing off its Great Revolution. Its consciousness was the consciousness of society and nothing could become established as an institution without first passing through its consciousness as an aim, as a problem of political creation. It often resorted to theatrical poses in order to hide from itself the limitations of its own bourgeois world – but it marched forward.

The German bourgeoisie, however, from the very start, did not 'make' the revolution, but dissociated itself from it. Its consciousness rose against the objective conditions for its own domination. The revolution could only be carried out not by it but against it. Democratic institutions represented to its mind not an aim to fight for but a menace to its welfare.

In 1848 a class was needed that would be able to take charge of events without and in

spite of the bourgeoisie, a class which would not only be prepared to push the bourgeois forward by its pressure but also at the decisive moment to throw its political corpse out of the way. Neither the urban petty-bourgeoisie nor the peasants were able to do this.

The *urban petty bourgeoisie* was hostile not only to yesterday but also to the morrow. Still enmeshed in mediaeval relations, but already unable to stand against 'free' industry, still setting its imprint on the towns, but already giving way before the middle and big bourgeoisie, steeped in prejudice, deafened by the noise of events, exploited and exploiting, greedy and helpless in its greed, the petty bourgeoisie, left stranded, could not control the tremendous events of the day.

The *peasantry* was to an even larger extent deprived of independent political initiative. Shackled for centuries, poverty-stricken, furious, uniting in itself all the threads of the old exploitation and the new, the peasantry at a certain moment constituted a rich source of revolutionary strength; but, unorganized, scattered, isolated from the towns, the nerve centres of politics and culture, stupid, limited in their horizons to the confines of their respective villages, indifferent to everything that the town was thinking, the peasants could not have any significance as a leading force. The peasantry was pacified immediately its back had been relieved of the burden of feudal obligations, and repaid the towns, which had fought for its rights, with black ingratitude. The emancipated peasants became the fanatics of 'order'.

The *intellectual democrats* lacked class power. One moment this group followed its elder sister, the liberal bourgeoisie, as a sort of political tail, at another it abandoned the liberal bourgeoisie at the critical instant in order to expose its own weakness. It confused itself in unsolved contradictions and carried this confusion around with it everywhere.

The *proletariat* was too weak, lacked organization, experience and knowledge. Capitalism had developed sufficiently to render necessary the abolition of the old feudal relations, but not sufficiently to bring forward the working class, the product of the new industrial relations, as a decisive political force. The antagonism between the proletariat and the bourgeoisie, even within the national framework of Germany, had gone too far to allow the bourgeoisie fearlessly to take up the role of national hegemon, but not sufficiently to allow the working class to take up that role. The internal friction of the revolution, it is true, prepared the proletariat for political independence, but at the time it weakened energy and unity of action, caused a fruitless expenditure of effort, and compelled the revolution, after its first successes, to mark time tediously and then, under the blows of reaction, to retreat.

Austria provided a particularly clear and tragic example of this unfinished and incomplete character of political relations in the period of revolution.

The *Viennese proletariat* in 1848 exhibited wonderful heroism and inexhaustible energy. Again and again it rushed into battle, urged on only by a hazy class instinct, lacking a general conception of the aims of the struggle, and passing gropingly from one slogan to another. The leadership of the proletariat, remarkably enough, passed into the hands of the *students*, the only active *democratic group* which, owing to its activity, had a great influence on the masses, and for that reason also upon events. The students undoubtedly could fight bravely on the barricades and fraternise honourably with the workers, but they were totally unable to direct the progress of the revolution which had

handed them the 'dictatorship' of the street.

The proletariat, unorganized, without political experience and independent leadership, followed the students. At every critical moment the workers invariably offered the 'gentlemen who worked with their heads' the assistance of 'those who worked with their hands'. The students at one moment summoned the workers to battle and at another moment themselves barred their way from the suburbs into the city. Sometimes, using their political authority and relying upon the arms of the Academic Legion, they forbade the workers to put forward their own independent demands. This was a classically clear form of benevolent revolutionary dictatorship *over* the proletariat. What was the outcome of these social relations? Why, this: when, on 26th May, all the workers of Vienna, at the call of the students, rose to their feet in order to resist the disarming of the students (the Academic Legion), when the whole of the population of the capital, covering the entire town with barricades, showed remarkable power and took possession of Vienna, when all Austria was rallying to armed Vienna, when the monarchy was in flight and had lost all importance, when as a result of the pressure of the people the last of the troops had been withdrawn from the capital, when the government of Austria resigned without nominating a successor – there was no political force found to take the helm.

The *liberal bourgeoisie* deliberately refused to take the power secured in such brigand-like fashion; it only dreamed of the return of the Emperor who had fled to the Tyrol.

The *workers* were sufficiently brave to beat the reaction, but were not sufficiently organized and conscious to occupy its place. A powerful labour movement existed, but proletarian class struggle with a definite political aim had not yet been sufficiently developed. The proletariat, incapable of taking the helm, could not accomplish this great historical task and the bourgeois democrats, as often happens, sneaked away at the moment of greatest urgency.

To compel these deserters to fulfil their obligations would have required on the part of the proletariat not less energy and maturity than would have been necessary for the setting up of a provisional workers' government.

Altogether, a position was created concerning which a contemporary accurately said: 'A Republic had actually been set up in Vienna, but unfortunately no one saw this.' The Republic that nobody noticed departed for a long time from the stage, giving place to the Habsburgs ... An opportunity, once missed, never returns.

From the experience of the Hungarian and German revolutions Lassalle drew the conclusion that from now on revolutions could only find support in the class struggle of the proletariat. In a letter to Marx dated 24th October, 1849, Lassalle writes: 'Hungary had more chances than any other country of bringing its struggle to a successful outcome. Among other reasons this was because the party there was not in a state of division and sharp antagonism as it was in Western Europe; because the revolution, to a high degree, had taken the form of a struggle for national independence. Nevertheless, Hungary was defeated, and precisely as a consequence of the treachery of the *national party*.'

'This, and the history of Germany during 1848-49,' continues Lassalle, 'brings me to

the conclusion that no revolution can be successful in Europe, unless it is from the very first proclaimed to be purely socialistic. No struggle can be successful if social questions enter into it only as a sort of hazy element, and remain in the background, and if it is carried on under the banner of national regeneration or bourgeois republicanism.'

We shall not stop to criticise these very decided conclusions. It is undoubtedly true, however, that already in the middle of the nineteenth century the problem of political emancipation could not be solved by the unanimous and concerted tactics of the pressure of the whole nation. Only the independent tactics of the proletariat, gathering strength for the struggle from its class position, and only from its class position, could have secured victory for the revolution.

The Russian working class of 1906 in no way resembles the workers of Vienna of 1848. The best evidence of this is the springing up all over Russia of the Soviets of Workers' Deputies. These were not previously-prepared conspirative organizations for the purpose of seizure of power by the workers at the moment of revolt. No, these were organs created in a planned way by the masses themselves for the purpose of co-ordinating their revolutionary struggle. And these Soviets, elected by the masses and responsible to the masses, are unquestionably democratic institutions, conducting a most determined class policy in the spirit of revolutionary socialism.

The social peculiarities of the Russian revolution are particularly evident in the question of the arming of the nation. A militia, the National Guard, was the first demand and the first gain of every revolution, in 1789 and in 1848, in Paris, in all the states of Italy, in Vienna and in Berlin. In 1848 the National Guard, i.e., the arming of the propertied and the 'educated' classes, was the demand of the whole of the bourgeois opposition, even of the most moderate, and its object was not only to safeguard the liberties won, or rather, subject to 'conferment', against reversals from above, but also to protect bourgeois private property from attacks by the proletariat. Thus the demand for a militia was clearly a class demand of the bourgeoisie. 'The Italians very well understood', says the English liberal historian of united Italy, 'that an armed civil militia would make the further existence of despotism impossible. Besides this it was a guarantee for the propertied classes against possible anarchy and any sort of disorder from below.' [1] And the ruling reaction, not having a sufficient number of troops in the centre of operations to deal with 'anarchy', that is with the revolutionary masses, armed the bourgeoisie. Absolutism first allowed the burghers to suppress and pacify the workers and then it disarmed and pacified the burghers.

In Russia the demand for a militia found no support in the bourgeois parties. The liberals cannot help understanding the serious significance of arms; absolutism has given them some object-lessons in this respect. But they also understand the absolute impossibility of creating a militia in Russia apart from or against the proletariat. The Russian workers do not resemble the workers of 1848 who filled their pockets with stones and armed themselves with picks while the shopkeepers, students and lawyers had royal muskets on their shoulders and swords at their sides.

Arming the revolution, in Russia, means first and foremost arming the workers. Knowing and fearing this, the liberals altogether eschew a militia. They even surrender their position to absolutism without a fight just as the bourgeois Thiers surrendered Paris and France to Bismarck simply to avoid arming the workers.

In that manifesto of the liberal-democratic coalition, the symposium called **The Constitutional State**, Mr. Dzhivelegov, discussing the possibility of revolutions, quite rightly says that ‘Society itself, at the necessary moment, must be prepared to stand up in defence of its Constitution’. But as the logical conclusion from this is the demand for the arming of the people, this liberal philosopher finds it ‘necessary to add’ that ‘it is not at all necessary for everyone to bear arms’ [2] in order to prevent reversals. It is only necessary that society itself shall be prepared to offer resistance – in what manner is not indicated. If any conclusion at all can be drawn from this, it is that in the hearts of our democrats the fear of the armed proletariat is greater than the fear of the soldiery of the autocracy.

For that reason the task of arming the revolution falls with all its weight upon the proletariat. The civil militia, the class demand of the bourgeoisie in 1848 is, in Russia, from the very first a demand for the arming of the people and above all for the arming of the proletariat. The fate of the Russian Revolution is bound up with this question.

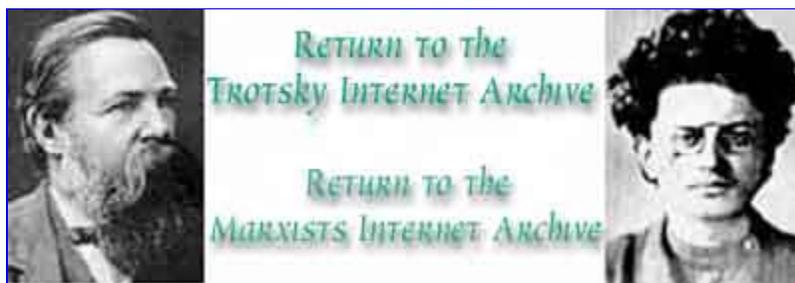
Notes

1. Bolton King, **History of Italian Unity**, Russ. trans., Moscow 1901, vol.1, p.220. – *L.T.*
2. **The Constitutional State**, a symposium, 1st edition, p.49. – *L.T.*

[Last Chapter](#)

| [Results & Prospects Index Page](#)

| [Next Chapter](#)



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Leon Trotsky

Results and Prospects

IV. Revolution and the Proletariat

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Revolution is an open measurement of strength between social forces in a struggle for power. The State is not an end in itself. It is only a machine in the hands of the dominating social forces. Like every machine it has its motor, transmitting and executive mechanism. The driving force of the State is class interest; its motor mechanism is agitation, the press, church and school propaganda, parties, street meetings, petitions and revolts. The transmitting mechanism is the legislative organization of caste, dynastic, estate or class interests represented as the will of God (absolutism) or the will of the nation (parliamentarism). Finally, the executive mechanism is the administration, with its police, the courts, with their prisons, and the army.

The State is not an end in itself, but is a tremendous means for organizing, disorganizing and reorganizing social relations. It can be a powerful lever for revolution or a tool for organized stagnation, depending on the hands that control it.

Every political party worthy of the name strives to capture political power and thus place the State at the service of the class whose interests it expresses. The Social-Democrats, being the party of the proletariat, naturally strive for the political domination of the working class.

The proletariat grows and becomes stronger with the growth of capitalism. In this sense the development of capitalism is also the development of the proletariat towards dictatorship. But the day and the hour when power will pass into the hands of the working class depends directly not upon the level attained by the productive forces but upon relations in the class struggle, upon the international situation, and, finally, upon a number of subjective factors: the traditions, the initiative and the readiness to fight of

the workers.

It is possible for the workers to come to power in an economically backward country sooner than in an advanced country. In 1871 the workers deliberately took power in their hands in petty-bourgeois Paris – true, for only two months, but in the big-capitalist centres of Britain or the United States the workers have never held power for so much as an hour. To imagine that the dictatorship of the proletariat is in some way automatically dependent on the technical development and resources of a country is a prejudice of ‘economic’ materialism simplified to absurdity. This point of view has nothing in common with Marxism.

In our view, the Russian revolution will create conditions in which power can pass into the hands of the workers – and in the event of the victory of the revolution it must do so – *before* the politicians of bourgeois liberalism get the chance to display to the full their talent for governing.

Summing up the revolution and counter-revolution of 1848-49 in the American newspaper [The Tribune](#), Marx wrote:

‘The working class in Germany is, in its social and political development, as far behind that of England and France as the German bourgeoisie is behind the bourgeoisie of those countries. Like master, like man. The evolution of the conditions of existence for a numerous, strong, concentrated and intelligent proletarian class goes hand in hand with the development of the conditions of existence for a numerous, wealthy, concentrated and powerful middle class. The working-class movement itself never is independent, never is of an exclusively proletarian character until all the different factions of the middle class, and particularly its most progressive faction, the large manufacturers, have conquered political power, and remodeled the State according to their wants. It is then that the inevitable conflict between the employer and the employed becomes imminent, and cannot be adjourned any longer ...’ [\[1\]](#)

This quotation is probably familiar to the reader, for it has been considerably abused by the textual Marxists in recent times. It has been brought forward as an irrefutable argument against the idea of a working class government in Russia. ‘Like master, like man.’ If the capitalist bourgeoisie is not strong enough to take power, they argue, then it is still less possible to establish a workers’ democracy, i.e., the political domination of the proletariat.

Marxism is above all a method of analysis – not analysis of texts, but analysis of social relations. Is it true that, in Russia, the weakness of capitalist liberalism inevitably means the weakness of the labour movement? Is it true, for Russia, that there cannot be an independent labour movement until the bourgeoisie has conquered power? It is sufficient merely to put these questions to see what a hopeless formalism lies concealed beneath the attempt to convert an historically-relative remark of Marx’s into a supra-historical axiom.

During the period of the industrial boom, the development of factory industry in Russia bore an ‘American’ character; but in its actual dimensions capitalist industry in Russia is an infant compared with the industry of the United States. Five million persons – 16.6 per cent of the economically occupied population – are engaged in manufacturing industry in Russia; for the USA the corresponding figures would be six million and 22.2 per cent. These figures still tell us comparatively little, but they

become eloquent if we recall that the population of Russia is nearly twice that of the USA. But in order to appreciate the actual dimensions of Russian and American industry it should be observed that in 1900 the American factories and large workshops turned out goods for sale to the amount of 25 milliard roubles, while in the same period the Russian factories turned out goods to the value of less than two and a half milliard roubles. [2]

There is no doubt that the numbers, the concentration, the culture and the political importance of the industrial proletariat depend on the extent to which capitalist industry is developed. But this dependence is not direct. Between the productive forces of a country and the political strength of its classes there cut across at any given moment various social and political factors of a national and international character, and these displace and even sometimes completely alter the political expression of economic relations. In spite of the fact that the productive forces of the United States are ten times as great as those of Russia, nevertheless the political role of the Russian proletariat, its influence on the politics of its own country and the possibility of its influencing the politics of the world in the near future are incomparably greater than in the case of the proletariat of the United States.

Kautsky, in his recent book on the American proletariat, points out that there is no direct relation between the political power of the proletariat and the bourgeoisie, on the one hand, and the level of capitalist development on the other. 'Two states exist' he says, 'diametrically contrasted one with the other. In one of them there is developed inordinately, i.e., out of proportion to the level of the development of the capitalist mode of production, one of the elements of the latter, and in the other, another of these elements. In one state – America – it is the capitalist class, while in Russia it is the proletariat. In no other country than America is there so much basis for speaking of the dictatorship of capital, while the militant proletariat has nowhere acquired such importance as in Russia. This importance must and undoubtedly will increase, because this country only recently began to take a part in the modern class struggle, and has only recently provided a certain amount of elbow room for it.' Pointing out that Germany, to a certain extent, may learn its future from Russia, Kautsky continues: 'It is indeed most extraordinary that the Russian proletariat should be showing us our future, in so far as this is expressed not in the extent of the development of capital, but in the protest of the working class. The fact that this Russia is the most backward of the large states of the capitalist world would appear', observes Kautsky, 'to contradict the materialist conception of history, according to which economic development is the basis of political development; but really', he goes on to say, 'this only contradicts the materialist conception of history as it is depicted by our opponents and critics, who regard it not as a *method of investigation* but merely as a ready-made *stereotype*.' [3] We particularly recommend these lines to our Russian Marxists, who replace independent analysis of social relations by deductions from texts, selected to serve every occasion in life. Nobody compromises Marxism so much as these self-styled Marxists.

Thus, according to Kautsky, Russia stands on an economically low level of capitalist development, politically it has an insignificant capitalist bourgeoisie and a powerful revolutionary proletariat. This results in the fact that 'struggle for the interests of *all* Russia has fallen to the lot of the *only now-existing strong class in the country* – the industrial proletariat. For this reason the industrial proletariat has tremendous political

importance, and for this reason the struggle for the emancipation of Russia from the incubus of absolutism which is stifling it has become converted into a *single combat between absolutism and the industrial proletariat*, a single combat in which the peasants may render considerable support but cannot play a leading role.

Does not all this give us reason to conclude that the Russian 'man' will take power sooner than his 'master'?

There can be two forms of political optimism. We can exaggerate our strength and advantages in a revolutionary situation and undertake tasks which are not justified by the given correlation of forces. On the other hand, we may optimistically set a limit to our revolutionary tasks – beyond which, however, we shall inevitably be driven by the logic of our position.

It is possible to limit the scope of all the questions of the revolution by asserting that our revolution is *bourgeois* in its objective aims and therefore in its inevitable results, closing our eyes to the fact that the chief actor in this bourgeois revolution is the proletariat, which is being impelled towards power by the entire course of the revolution.

We may reassure ourselves that in the framework of a bourgeois revolution the political domination of the proletariat will only be a passing episode, forgetting that once the proletariat has taken power in its hands it will not give it up without a desperate resistance, until it is torn from its hands by armed force.

We may reassure ourselves that the social conditions of Russia are still not ripe for a socialist economy, without considering that the proletariat, on taking power, must, by the very logic of its position, inevitably be urged toward the introduction of state management of industry. The general sociological term *bourgeois revolution* by no means solves the politico-tactical problems, contradictions and difficulties which the mechanics of a *given* bourgeois revolution throw up.

Within the framework of the bourgeois revolution at the end of the eighteenth century, the objective task of which was to establish the domination of capital, the dictatorship of the *sansculottes* was found to be possible. This dictatorship was not simply a passing episode, it left its impress upon the entire ensuing century, and this in spite of the fact that it was very quickly shattered against the enclosing barriers of the bourgeois revolution. In the revolution at the beginning of the twentieth century, the direct objective tasks of which are also bourgeois, there emerges as a near prospect the inevitable, or at least the probable, political domination of the proletariat. The proletariat itself will see to it that this domination does not become a mere passing 'episode', as some realist philistines hope. But we can even now ask ourselves: is it inevitable that the proletarian dictatorship should be shattered against the barriers of the bourgeois revolution, or is it possible that in the given *world-historical* conditions, it may discover before it the prospect of victory on breaking through these barriers? Here we are confronted by questions of tactics: should we consciously work towards a working-class government in proportion as the development of the revolution brings this stage nearer, or must we at that moment regard political power as a misfortune which the bourgeois revolution is ready to thrust upon the workers, and which it would be better to avoid?

Ought we to apply to ourselves the words of the 'realist' politician Vollmar in connection with the Communards of 1871: 'Instead of taking power they would have done better to go to sleep' ...?

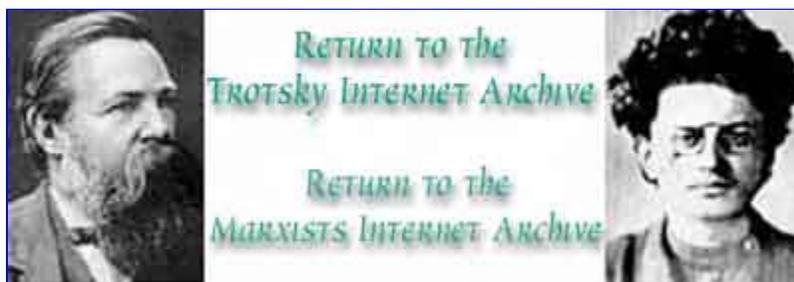
Notes

- 1.** Marx, **Germany in 1848-50**, Russ. trans., Alexeyeva edition, 1905, pp.8-9. – *L.T.* [i.e. **Germany: Revolution and Counter-Revolution**, Ch.1; **Selected Works of Karl Marx**, 1942 edition, Vol.II, p.46.]
 - 2.** D. Mendelejev, **Towards the Understanding of Russia**, 1906, p.99. – *L.T.*
 - 3.** K. Kautsky, **American and Russian Workers**, Russian translation, St. Petersburg 1906, pp.4 and 5. – *L.T.*
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[Last Chapter](#)

| [Results & Prospects Index Page](#)

| [Next Chapter](#)



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Leon Trotsky

Results and Prospects

V. The Proletariat in Power and the Peasantry

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In the event of a decisive victory of the revolution, power will pass into the hands of that class which plays a leading role in the struggle – in other words, into the hands of the proletariat. Let us say at once that this by no means precludes revolutionary representatives of non-proletarian social groups entering the government. They can and should be in the government: a sound policy will compel the proletariat to call to power the influential leaders of the urban petty-bourgeoisie, of the intellectuals and of the peasantry. The whole problem consists in this: *who will determine the content of the government's policy, who will form within it a solid majority?*

It is one thing when representatives of the democratic strata of the people enter a government with a workers' majority, but it is quite another thing when representatives of the proletariat participate in a definitely bourgeois-democratic government in the capacity of more or less honoured hostages.

The policy of the liberal capitalist bourgeoisie, in all its waverings, retreats and treacheries, is quite definite. The policy of the proletariat is even more definite and finished. But the policy of the intellectuals, owing to their socially intermediate character and their political elasticity; the policy of the peasantry, in view of their social diversity, their intermediate position and their primitiveness; the policy of the urban petty-bourgeoisie, once again owing to its lack of character, its intermediate position and its complete lack of political tradition – the policy of these three social groups is utterly indefinite, unformed, full of possibilities and therefore full of surprises.

It is sufficient to try to imagine a revolutionary democratic government without representatives of the proletariat to see immediately the senselessness of such a conception. The refusal of the social-democrats to participate in a revolutionary

government would render such a government quite impossible and would thus be equivalent to a betrayal of the revolution. But the participation of the proletariat in a government is also objectively most probable, and permissible in principle, only as a *dominating and leading participation*. One may, of course, describe such a government as the dictatorship of the proletariat and peasantry, a dictatorship of the proletariat, peasantry and intelligentsia, or even a coalition government of the working class and the petty-bourgeoisie, but the question nevertheless remains: who is to wield the hegemony in the government itself, and through it in the country? And when we speak of a workers' government, by this we reply that the hegemony should belong to the working class.

The National Convention, as an organ of the Jacobin dictatorship, was by no means composed of Jacobins alone. More than that – the Jacobins were in a minority in it; but the influence of the *sansculottes* outside the walls of the Convention, and the need for a determined policy in order to save the country, gave power into the hands of the Jacobins. Thus, while the Convention was *formally* a national representation, consisting of Jacobins, Girondists and the vast wavering Centre known as the 'marsh', *in essence* it was a dictatorship of the Jacobins.

When we speak of a workers' government we have in view a government in which the working-class representatives dominate and lead. The proletariat, in order to consolidate its power, cannot but widen the base of the revolution. Many sections of the working masses, particularly in the countryside, will be drawn into the revolution and become politically organized only after the advance-guard of the revolution, the urban proletariat, stands at the helm of state. Revolutionary agitation and organization will then be conducted with the help of state resources. The legislative power itself will become a powerful instrument for revolutionizing the masses. The nature of our social-historical relations, which lays the whole burden of the bourgeois revolution upon the shoulders of the proletariat, will not only create tremendous difficulties for the workers' government but, in the first period of its existence at any rate, will also give it invaluable advantages. This will affect the relations between the proletariat and the peasantry.

In the revolutions of 1789-93 and 1848 power first of all passed from absolutism to the moderate elements of the bourgeoisie, and it was the latter class which emancipated the peasantry (*how*, is another matter) before revolutionary democracy received or was even preparing to receive power. The emancipated peasantry lost all interest in the political stunts of the 'townspeople', that is, in the further progress of the revolution, and placing itself like a heavy foundation-stone at the foot of 'order', betrayed the revolution to the Caesarist or *ancien-regime*-absolutist reaction.

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. All the 'enlightened' efforts of reformer-bureaucrats like Witte and Stolypin are nullified by their own struggle for existence. Consequently, the fate of the most elementary revolutionary interests of the peasantry – even the peasantry *as a whole*, as an *estate*, is bound up with the fate of entire revolution, i.e., with the fate of the proletariat.

The proletariat in power will stand before the peasants as the class which has

emancipated it. The domination of the proletariat will mean not only democratic equality, free self-government, the transference of the whole burden of taxation to the rich classes, the dissolution of the standing army in the armed people and the abolition of compulsory church imposts, but also recognition of all revolutionary changes (expropriations) in land relationships carried out by the peasants. The proletariat will make these changes the starting-point for further state measures in agriculture. Under such conditions the Russian peasantry in the first and most difficult period of the revolution will be interested in the maintenance of a proletarian regime (workers' democracy) at all events not less than was the French peasantry in the maintenance of the military regime of Napoleon Bonaparte, which guaranteed to the new property-owners, by the force of its bayonets, the inviolability of their holdings. And this means that the representative body of the nation, convened under the leadership of the proletariat, which has secured the support of the peasantry, will be nothing else than a democratic dress for the rule of the proletariat.

But is it not possible that the peasantry may push the proletariat aside and take its place? This is impossible. All historical experience protests against this assumption. Historical experience shows that the peasantry are absolutely incapable of taking up an *independent* political role. [\[1\]](#)

The history of capitalism is the history of the subordination of the country to the town. The industrial development of the European towns in due course rendered the further existence of feudal relations in agriculture impossible. But the countryside itself never produced a class which could undertake the revolutionary task of abolishing feudalism. The town, which subordinated agriculture to capital, produced a revolutionary force which took political hegemony over the countryside into its hands and spread revolution in state and property relations into the countryside. As further development has proceeded, the country has finally fallen into economic enslavement to capital, and the peasantry into political enslavement to the capitalist parties. These parties have revived feudalism in parliamentary politics, converting the peasantry into a domain for their electoral hunting expeditions. The modern bourgeois state, by means of taxation and militarism, throws the peasant into the clutches of usurers' capital, and by means of state priests, state schools and the corruptions of barrack life makes him a victim of usurers' politics.

The Russian bourgeoisie will surrender the entire revolutionary position to the proletariat. It will also have to surrender the revolutionary hegemony over the peasants. In such a situation, created by the transference of power to the proletariat, nothing remains for the peasantry to do but to rally to the regime of workers' democracy. It will not matter much even if the peasantry does this with a degree of consciousness not larger than that with which it usually rallies to the bourgeois regime. But while every bourgeois party commanding the votes of the peasantry hastens to use its power in order to swindle and deceive the peasants and then, if the worst comes to the worst, gives place to another capitalist party, the proletariat, relying on the peasantry, will bring all forces into play in order to raise the cultural level of the countryside and develop the political consciousness of the peasantry. From what we have said above, it will be clear how we regard the idea of a 'proletarian and peasant dictatorship'. It is not really a matter of whether we regard it as admissible in principle, whether 'we do or do not desire' such a form of political co-operation. We simply think that it is unrealisable – at least in a direct immediate sense.

Indeed, such a coalition presupposes either that one of the existing bourgeois parties commands influence over the peasantry or that the peasantry will have created a powerful independent party of its own, but we have attempted to show that neither the one nor the other is possible.

Notes

1. Does the fact of the rise and development first of the Peasant Union and then of the Group of Toil (Trudoviki) in the Duma run counter to these and subsequent arguments? Not in the least. What is the Peasant Union? A Union that embraces some elements of the radical democracy who are looking for masses to support them, together with the more conscious elements of the peasantry – obviously *not* the lowest strata of the peasantry – on the platform of a democratic revolution and agrarian reform.

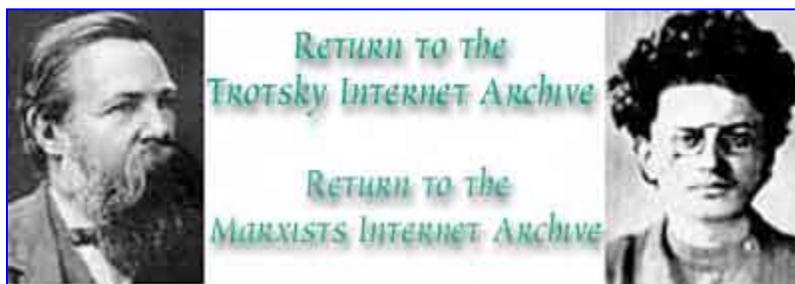
As to the agrarian programme of the Peasant Union ('equality in the use of land'), which is the meaning of its existence, the following must be observed: the wider and deeper the development of the agrarian movement and the sooner it comes to the point of confiscation and distribution of land, the sooner will the process of disintegration set in the Peasant Union, in consequence of a thousand contradictions of a class, local, everyday and technical nature. Its members will exercise their share of influence in the Peasants' Committees, the organs of the agrarian revolution in the villages, but needless to say the Peasants' Committees, *economic-administrative* institutions, will not be able to abolish the *political* dependence of the country upon the town, which forms one of the fundamental features of modern society.

The radicalism and formlessness of the Group of Toil was the expression of the contradictoriness in the revolutionary aspirations of the peasantry. During the period of constitutional illusions it helplessly followed the 'Cadets' (Constitutional Democrats). At the moment of the dissolution of the Duma it came naturally under the guidance of the Social-Democratic Group. The lack of independence on the part of the peasant representatives will show itself with particular clearness at the moment when it becomes necessary to show firm initiative, that is, at the time when power has to pass into the hands of the revolutionaries. – *L.T.*

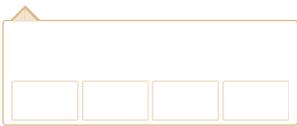
[Last Chapter](#)

| [Results & Prospects Index Page](#)

| [Next Chapter](#)



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Leon Trotsky

Results and Prospects

VI. The Proletarian Regime

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The proletariat can only achieve power by relying upon a national upsurge and national enthusiasm. The proletariat will enter the government as the revolutionary representative of the nation, as the recognized national leader in the struggle against absolutism and feudal barbarism. In taking power, however, it will open a new epoch, an epoch of revolutionary legislation, of positive policy, and in this connection it cannot at all be sure of retaining the role of the recognized expressor of the will of the nation. The first measures of the proletariat, cleansing the Augean stables of the old regime and driving out its inmates, will meet with the active support of the whole nation, in spite of what the liberal eunuchs may say about the tenacity of certain prejudices among the masses of the people.

This political cleansing will be supplemented by a democratic reorganization of all social and state relations. The workers' government will be obliged, under the influence of direct pressures and demands, to intervene decisively in all relationships and events ...

Its first task will have to be the dismissal from the army and administration of all those who are stained with the blood of the people, and the cashiering or disbandment of the regiments which have most sullied themselves with crimes against the people. This will have to be done in the very first days of the revolution, that is, long before it is possible to introduce the system of elected and responsible officials and organize a national militia. But the matter will not end there. Workers' democracy will immediately be confronted by questions of the length of the working day, the agrarian question, and the problem of unemployment.

One thing is clear. Every passing day will deepen the policy of the proletariat in power, and more and more define its *class character*. Side by side with that, the revolutionary ties between the proletariat and the nation will be broken, the class disintegration of the peasantry will assume political form, and the antagonism between

the component sections will grow in proportion as the policy of the workers' government defines itself, ceasing to be a general-democratic and becoming a class policy.

Though the absence of accumulated bourgeois-individualistic traditions and anti-proletarian prejudices among the peasantry and intellectuals will assist the proletariat to come into power, it is necessary on the other hand to bear in mind that this absence of prejudices is due not to political consciousness but to political barbarism, social formlessness, primitiveness and lack of character. None of these features can in any way create a reliable basis for a consistent, active proletarian policy.

The abolition of feudalism will meet with support from the *entire* peasantry, as the burden-bearing estate. A progressive income-tax will also be supported by the great majority of the peasantry. But any legislation carried through for the purpose of protecting the agricultural proletariat will not only not receive the active sympathy of the majority, but will even meet with the active opposition of a minority of the peasantry.

The proletariat will find itself compelled to carry the class struggle into the villages and in this manner destroy that community of interest which is undoubtedly to be found among all peasants, although within comparatively narrow limits. From the very first moment after its taking power, the proletariat will have to find support in the antagonisms between the village poor and village rich, between the agricultural proletariat and the agricultural bourgeoisie. While the heterogeneity of the peasantry creates difficulties and narrows the basis for a proletarian policy, the insufficient degree of class differentiation will create obstacles to the introduction among the peasantry of developed class struggle, upon which the urban proletariat could rely. The primitiveness of the peasantry turns its hostile face towards the proletariat.

The cooling-off of the peasantry, its political passivity, and all the more the active opposition of its upper sections, cannot but have an influence on a section of the intellectuals and the petty-bourgeoisie of the towns.

Thus, 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 ...

The two main features of proletarian policy which will meet opposition from the allies of the proletariat are *collectivism* and *internationalism*.

The primitiveness and petty-bourgeois character of the peasantry, its limited rural outlook, its isolation from world-political ties and allegiances, will create terrible difficulties for the consolidation of the revolutionary policy of the proletariat in power.

To imagine that it is the business of Social Democrats to enter a provisional government and lead it during the period of revolutionary-democratic reforms, fighting for them to have a most radical character, and relying for this purpose upon the organized proletariat – and then, after the democratic programme has been carried out, to leave the edifice they have constructed so as to make way for the bourgeois parties and themselves go into opposition, thus opening up a period of parliamentary politics, is to imagine the thing in a way that would compromise the very idea of a workers'

government. This is not because it is inadmissible 'in principle' – putting the question in this abstract form is devoid of meaning – but because it is absolutely unreal, it is utopianism of the worst sort – a sort of revolutionary-philistine utopianism.

For this reason:

The division of our programme into maximum and minimum programmes has a profound and tremendous principled significance during the period when power lies in the hands of the bourgeoisie. The very fact of the bourgeoisie being in power drives out of our minimum programme all demands which are incompatible with private property in the means of production. Such demands form the content of a socialist revolution and presuppose a proletarian dictatorship.

Immediately, however, that power is transferred into the hands of a revolutionary government with a socialist majority, the division of our programme into maximum and minimum loses all significance, both in principle and in immediate practice. A proletarian government under no circumstances can confine itself within such limits. Take the question of the eight-hour day. As is known, this by no means contradicts capitalist relations, and therefore it forms an item in the minimum programme of Social Democracy. But let us imagine the actual introduction of this measure during a period of revolution, in a period of intensified class passions; there is no question but that this measure would then meet the organized and determined resistance of the capitalists in the form, let us say, of lockouts and the closing down of factories.

Hundreds of thousands of workers would find themselves thrown on the streets. What should the government do? A bourgeois government, however radical it might be, would never allow affairs to reach this stage because, confronted with the closing-down of factories, it would be left powerless. It would be compelled to retreat, the eight-hour day would not be introduced and the indignant workers would be suppressed.

Under the political domination of the proletariat, the introduction of an eight-hour day should lead to altogether different consequences. For a government that desires to rely upon the proletariat, and not on capital, as liberalism does, and which does not desire to play the role of an 'impartial' intermediary of bourgeois democracy, the closing down of factories would not of course be an excuse for increasing the working day. For a workers' government there would be only one way out: expropriation of the closed factories and the organization of production in them on a socialized basis.

Of course, one can argue in this way: we will suppose that the workers' government, true to its programme, issues a decree for an eight-hour day; if capital puts up a resistance which cannot be overcome by the resources of a democratic programme based on the preservation of private property, the Social Democrats will resign and appeal to the proletariat. Such a solution would be a solution only from the standpoint of the group constituting the membership of the government, but it would be no solution for the proletariat or for the development of the revolution. After the resignation of the Social Democrats, the situation would be exactly as it was at the time when they were compelled to take power. To flee before the organized opposition of capital would be a greater betrayal of the revolution than a refusal to take power in the first instance. It would really be far better for the working-class party not to enter the government than to go in so as to expose its own weakness and then to quit.

Let us take another example. The proletariat in power cannot but adopt the most energetic measures to solve the question of unemployment, because it is quite obvious that the representatives of the workers in the government cannot reply to the demands of unemployed workers with arguments about the bourgeois character of the revolution.

But if the government undertakes to maintain the unemployed – it is not important for us at the moment in what form – this would mean an immediate and quite substantial shift of economic power to the side of the proletariat. The capitalists, who in their oppression of the workers always relied upon the existence of a reserve army of labour, would feel themselves *economically* powerless while the revolutionary government, at the same time, doomed them to *political* impotence.

In undertaking the maintenance of the unemployed, the government thereby undertakes the maintenance of strikers. If it does not do *that*, it immediately and irrevocably undermines the basis of its own existence.

There is nothing left for the capitalists to do then but to resort to the lockout, that is, to close the factories. It is quite clear that the employers can stand the closing down of production much longer than the workers, and therefore there is only one reply that a workers' government can give to a general lockout: the expropriation of the factories and the introduction in at least the largest of them of State or communal production.

Similar problems arise in agriculture by the mere fact of the expropriation of the land. In no way must it be supposed that a proletarian government, on expropriating the privately-owned estates carrying on production on a large scale, would break these up and sell them for exploitation to small producers. The only path open to it in this sphere is the organization of co-operative production under communal control or organized directly by the State. But this is the path to Socialism.

All this quite clearly shows that Social Democrats cannot enter a revolutionary government, giving the workers in advance an undertaking not to *give way* on the minimum programme, and at the same time promising the bourgeoisie not to *go beyond* it. Such a bilateral undertaking is absolutely impossible to realize. The very fact of the proletariat's representatives entering the government, not as powerless hostages, but as the leading force, destroys the border-line between maximum and minimum programme; that is to say, it *places collectivism on the order of the day*. The point at which the proletariat will be held up in its advance in this direction depends upon the relation of forces, but in no way upon the original intentions of the proletarian party.

For this reason there can be no talk of any sort of *special* form of proletarian dictatorship in the bourgeois revolution, of *democratic* proletarian dictatorship (or dictatorship of the proletariat and the peasantry). The working class cannot preserve the democratic character of its dictatorship without refraining from overstepping the limits of its democratic programme. Any illusions on this point would be fatal. They would compromise Social Democracy from the very start.

The proletariat, once having taken power, will fight for it to the very end. While one of the weapons in this struggle for the maintenance and the consolidation of power will be agitation and organization, especially in the countryside, another will be a policy of collectivism. Collectivism will become not only the inevitable way forward from the

position in which the party in power will find itself, but will also be a means of preserving this position with the support of the proletariat.

When the idea of uninterrupted revolution was formulated in the socialist press – an idea which connected the liquidation of absolutism and feudalism with a socialist revolution, along with growing social conflicts, uprisings of new sections of the masses, unceasing attacks by the proletariat upon the economic and political privileges of the ruling classes – our ‘progressive’ press raised a unanimous howl of indignation. ‘Oh!’ it cried, ‘we have put up with a lot, but we cannot allow this. Revolution,’ it cried, ‘is not a road that can be “legalized”. The application of exceptional measures is only permissible under exceptional circumstances. The aim of the movement for emancipation is not to make revolution permanent but to lead it as soon as possible into the channel of *law*,’ etc., etc.

The more radical representatives of this same democracy do not risk taking up a stand against revolution even from the point of view of already-secured constitutional ‘gains’. For them this parliamentary cretinism, preceding the rise of parliamentarism itself, does not constitute a strong weapon in the struggle against the proletarian revolution. They choose another path. They take their stand not on the basis of law but on what seems to them the basis of facts – on the basis of historical ‘possibility’, on the basis of political ‘realism’ and, finally ... finally, even on the basis of ‘marxism’. And why not? That pious Venetian bourgeois, Antonio, very aptly said:

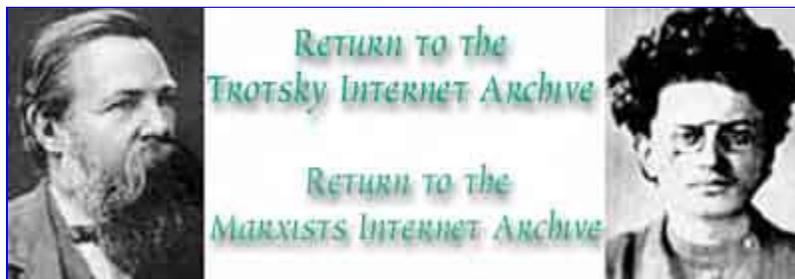
‘The devil can quote Scripture to his purpose.’

These radical democrats not only regard the idea of a workers’ government in Russia as fantastic, but they even deny the possibility of a socialist revolution in Europe in the historical epoch immediately ahead. ‘The pre-requisites of revolution’, they say, ‘are not yet visible.’ Is that true? Certainly there is no question of appointing a dateline for the socialist revolution, but it is necessary to point out its real historical prospects.

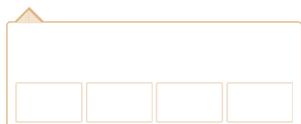
[Last Chapter](#)

| [Results & Prospects Index Page](#)

| [Next Chapter](#)



Last updated on: 22 February 2009



Leon Trotsky

Results and Prospects

VII. The Pre-Requisites of Socialism

Transcribed and HTML markup for the [Trotsky Internet Archive](#), a subarchive of the [Marxists' Internet Archive](#), by [Sally Ryan](#) in 1996.

Marxism converted socialism into a science, but this does not prevent some 'Marxists' from converting Marxism into a Utopia.

Rozhkov, arguing against the programme of socialization and co-operation, presents the 'necessary pre-requisites of the future society, firmly laid down by Marx', in the following way: 'Are there already present,' asks Rozhkov, 'the material objective pre-requisites, consisting of such a development of technique as would reduce the motive of personal gain and concern for cash [?], personal effort, enterprise and risk, to a minimum, and which would thereby make social production a front-rank question? Such a level of technique is most closely connected with the almost complete [!] domination of large-scale production in all [!] branches of the economy. Has such a stage been reached? Even the subjective, psychological pre-requisites are lacking, such as the growth of class-consciousness among the proletariat, developed to such a level as to achieve the spiritual unity of the overwhelming mass of the people. We know,' continues Rozhkov, 'of producer associations such as the well-known French glassworks at Albi, and several agricultural associations, also in France, and yet the experience of France shows, as nothing else can, that even the conditions of so advanced a country are not sufficiently developed to permit the dominance of co-operation. These enterprises are of only the average size, their technical level is not higher than ordinary capitalist undertakings, *they are not at the head of industrial development, do not lead it*, but approach a modest average level.

'Only when the experience of individual productive associations points to their leading role in economic life can we say that we are approaching a new system, only then can we be sure that the necessary conditions for its existence have been established.' [1]

While respecting the good intentions of Comrade Rozhkov, we regretfully have to

confess that rarely even in bourgeois literature have we met such confusion as he betrays with regard to what are known as the pre-requisites of socialism. It will be worthwhile dwelling to some extent on this confusion, if not for the sake of Rozhkov, at least for the sake of the question.

Rozhkov declares that we have not yet reached 'such a stage of technical development as would reduce the motive of personal gain and concern for cash [?], personal effort, enterprise and risk, to a minimum, and which would make social production a front-rank question'.

It is rather difficult to find the meaning of this passage. Apparently Rozhkov wishes to say, in the first place, that modern technique has not yet sufficiently ousted human labour-power from industry and, secondly, that to secure this elimination would require the 'almost' *complete domination* of large state enterprises in all branches of the economy, and therefore the 'almost' *complete proletarianization of the whole population of the country*. These are the two prerequisites to socialism alleged to have been 'firmly laid down by Marx'.

Let us try and imagine the setting of capitalist relations which, according to Rozhkov, socialism will encounter when it arrives. 'The almost complete domination of large-scale enterprise in all branches of industry', under capitalism, means, as has been said, the proletarianization of all small and medium producers in agriculture and industry, that is to say, the conversion of the whole of the population into proletarians. But the complete domination of machine technique in these large undertakings would lead to the reduction of the employment of human labour-power to a minimum, and therefore the overwhelming majority of the population of the country – say, 90 per cent – would be converted into a reserve army of labour living at the expense of the State in workhouses. We said 90 per cent of the population, but there is nothing to prevent us from being logical and imagining a state of affairs in which the whole of production consists of a single automatic mechanism, belonging to a single syndicate and requiring as living labour only a single trained orang-outang. As we know, this is the brilliantly consistent theory of Professor Tugan-Baranovsky. Under such conditions 'social production' not only occupies 'front rank' but commands the whole field. Under these circumstances, moreover, *consumption* would naturally also become *socialized* in view of the fact that the whole of the nation, except the 10 per cent who own the trust, will be living at the public expense in workhouses. Thus, behind Rozhkov we see smiling the familiar face of Tugan-Baranovsky. Socialism can now come on the scene. The population emerges from the workhouses and expropriates the group of expropriators. No revolution or dictatorship of the proletariat is of course necessary.

The second economic sign of the ripeness of a country for socialism, according to Rozhkov, is the possibility of the *domination* of co-operative production within it. Even in France the co-operative glassworks at Albi is not on a higher level than any other capitalist undertaking. Socialist production becomes possible only when the co-operatives are *in the forefront of industrial development*, as the *leading* enterprises.

The entire argument from beginning to end is turned inside out. The co-operatives cannot take the lead in industrial progress, not because economic development has not gone far enough, but because it has gone *too far* ahead. Undoubtedly, economic development creates the basis for co-operation, but for what kind of co-operation? For

capitalist co-operation, based on wage-labour – every factory shows us a picture of such capitalist co-operation. With the development of technique the importance of such co-operation grows also. But in what manner can the development of capitalism place the co-operative societies ‘in the front rank of industry’? On what does Rozhkov base his hopes that the co-operative societies can squeeze out the syndicates and trusts and take their place in the forefront of industrial development? It is evident that if this took place the co-operative societies would then simply have automatically to expropriate all capitalist undertakings, after which it would remain for them to reduce the working day sufficiently to provide work for all citizens and to regulate the amount of production in the various branches in order to avoid crises. In this manner the main features of socialism would be established. Again it is clear that no revolution and no dictatorship of the working class would be at all necessary.

The third pre-requisite is a psychological one: the need for ‘the class-consciousness of the proletariat to have reached such a stage as to unite spiritually the overwhelming majority of the people’. As ‘spiritual unity’, in this instance, must evidently be regarded as meaning conscious socialist solidarity, it follows therefore that Comrade Rozhkov considers that a psychological pre-requisite of socialism is the organization of the ‘overwhelming majority of the population’ within the Social-Democratic Party. Rozhkov evidently assumes therefore that capitalism, throwing the small producers into the ranks of the proletariat, and the mass of the proletarians into the ranks of the reserve army of labour, will create the possibility for Social Democracy spiritually to unite and enlighten the *overwhelming majority* (90 per cent?) of the people.

This is as impossible of realization in the world of capitalist barbarism as the domination of co-operatives in the realm of capitalist competition. But if this were realizable, then of course, the consciously and spiritually united ‘overwhelming majority’ of the nation would crush without any difficulty the few magnates of capital and organize socialist economy without revolution or dictatorship.

But here the following question arises. Rozhkov regards Marx as his teacher. Yet Marx, having outlined the ‘essential prerequisites for socialism’ in his **Communist Manifesto**, regarded the revolution of 1848 as the immediate prologue to the socialist revolution. Of course one does not require much penetration after 60 years to see that Marx was mistaken, because the capitalist world still exists. But how could Marx have made *this* error? Did he not perceive that large-scale undertakings did not yet dominate in all branches of industry; that producers’ co-operatives did not yet stand at the head of the large-scale enterprises; that the overwhelming majority of the people were not yet united on the basis of the ideas set out in the **Communist Manifesto**? If we do not see these things even now, how is it then that Marx did not perceive that nothing of the kind existed in 1848? Apparently, Marx in 1848 was a Utopian youth in comparison with many of the present-day infallible automata of Marxism!

We thus see that although Comrade Rozhkov by no means belongs among the critics of Marx, nevertheless he completely discards the proletarian revolution as an essential pre-requisite of socialism. As Rozhkov has only too consistently expressed the views shared by a considerable number of Marxists in both trends of our party, it is necessary to dwell on the bases in principle and method of the errors he has made.

One must observe in passing that Rozhkov’s argument concerning the destiny of the

co-operatives is his very own. We have never and nowhere met socialists who both believed in such a simple irresistible progress of the concentration of production and proletarianization of the people and at the same time believed in the dominating role of producers' co-operative societies prior to the proletarian revolution. To unite these two pre-requisites is much more difficult in economic evolution than in one's head; although even the latter had always seemed to us impossible.

But we will deal with two other 'pre-requisites' which constitute more typical prejudices. Undoubtedly, the concentration of production, the development of technique and the growth of consciousness among the masses are essential pre-requisites for socialism. But these processes take place simultaneously, and not only give an impetus to each other, but also retard and *limit* each other. Each of these processes at a higher level demands a certain development of another process at a lower level. But the complete development of each of them is incompatible with the complete development of the others.

The development of technique undoubtedly finds its ideal limit in a single automatic mechanism which takes raw materials from the womb of nature and throws them at the feet of man in the form of finished articles of consumption. If the existence of the capitalist system were not limited by class relations and the revolutionary struggle that arises from them, we should have some grounds for supposing that technique, approaching the ideal of a single automatic mechanism within the framework of the capitalist system, would thereby automatically abolish capitalism.

The concentration of production arising from the laws of competition inherently tends towards proletarianizing the whole population. Isolating this tendency, we should be right in supposing that capitalism would carry out its work to the end, if the process of proletarianization were not interrupted by a revolution; but this is inevitable, given a certain relationship of forces, long before capitalism has converted the majority of the nation into a reserve army, confined to prison-like barracks.

Further – consciousness, thanks to the experience of the everyday struggle and the conscious efforts of the socialist parties, undoubtedly grows progressively, and, isolating this process, we could in imagination follow this growth until the majority of the people were included in the trade unions and political organizations, united by a spirit of solidarity and singleness of aim. If this process could really increase quantitatively without being affected qualitatively, socialism could be realized peaceably by a unanimous, conscious 'civil act' some time in the 21st or the 22nd century.

But the whole point lies in the fact that the processes which are historically pre-requisite for socialism do not develop in isolation, but limit each other, and, reaching a certain stage, determined by numerous circumstances – which, however, is far removed from the mathematical limit of these processes – they undergo a qualitative change, and in their complex combination bring about what we understand by the name of social revolution.

We will begin with the last-mentioned process – the growth of consciousness. This takes place, as we know, not in academies, in which it might be possible artificially to detain the proletariat for fifty, a hundred or five hundred years, but in the course of all-round life in capitalist society, on the basis of unceasing class struggle. The growth

of the consciousness of the proletariat transforms this class struggle, gives it a deeper and more purposeful character, which in its turn calls out a corresponding reaction on the part of the dominant class. The struggle of the proletariat against the bourgeoisie will reach its denouement long before large-scale enterprises begin to dominate in all branches of industry.

Further, it is of course true that the growth of political consciousness depends upon the growth of the numbers of the proletariat, and proletarian dictatorship presupposes that the numbers of the proletariat will be sufficiently large to overcome the resistance of the bourgeois counter-revolution. But this does not at all mean that the 'overwhelming majority' of the population must be proletarians and the 'overwhelming majority' of the proletariat conscious socialists. It is clear, of course, that the conscious revolutionary army of the proletariat must be stronger than the counter-revolutionary army of capital, while the intermediate, doubtful or indifferent strata of the population must be in such a position that the regime of proletarian dictatorship will attract them to the side of the revolution and not repel them to the side of its enemies. Naturally, proletarian policy must consciously take this into consideration.

All this in its turn presupposes the hegemony of industry over agriculture and the domination of town over country.

We will now endeavour to examine the pre-requisites of socialism in diminishing order of generality and increasing order of complexity.

1. Socialism is not merely a question of equal distribution but also a question of planned production. Socialism, that is, co-operative production on a large scale, is possible only when the development of productive forces has reached the stage at which large enterprises are more productive than small ones. The more the large enterprises outweigh the smaller, i.e., the more developed technique has become, the more advantageous economically does socialized production become, and, consequently, the higher must the cultural level of the whole population be as a result of equal distribution based upon planned production.

This first objective pre-requisite of socialism has been in existence a long time – ever since the time when social division of labour led to the division of labour in manufacture. It has existed to an even greater extent since the time when manufacture was replaced by factory, machine production. Large undertakings became more and more advantageous, which also meant that the socialization of these large undertakings would have made society more and more wealthy. It is clear that the transition of all the handicraft workshops to the common ownership of all the handicraftsmen would not have made the latter one whit richer, whereas the transfer of manufactures to the common ownership of their detail-workers, or the transfer of the factories into the hands of the workers employed in them – or, it would be better to say, the transfer of all the means of large factory production into the hands of the whole population – would undoubtedly raise the people's material level; and the higher the stage reached by large-scale production, the higher would be this level.

In socialist literature the instance is often quoted of the English Member of Parliament, Bellers [\[2\]](#) who, in 1696, i.e., a century before the conspiracy of Babeuf, submitted to Parliament a project for establishing co-operative societies which should

independently supply all their own requirements. According to this measure, these producers' co-operatives were to consist of from two to three hundred persons. We cannot here test his argument, nor is it necessary for our purpose; what is important is that collective economy, even if it was conceived only in terms of groups of 100, 200, 300 or 500 persons, was regarded as advantageous from the standpoint of production already at the end of the 17th century.

At the beginning of the 19th century Fourier drew up his schemes for producer-consumer associations, 'phalansteries', each consisting of from 2,000 to 3,000 persons. Fourier's calculations were never distinguished by their exactness; but at all events, the development of manufacture by that time suggested to him a field for economic collectives incomparably wider than in the example quoted above. It is clear, however, that both the associations of John Bellers and the 'phalansteries' of Fourier are much nearer in their character to the free economic communes of which the Anarchists dream, the utopianism of which consists not in their 'impossibility' or in their being 'against nature' – the communist communes in America proved that they were possible – but in that they have lagged 100 to 200 years behind the progress of economic development.

The development of the social division of labour, on the one hand, and machine production on the other, has led to the position that nowadays the only co-operative body which could utilize the advantages of collective production on a wide scale is the State. More than that, socialist production, for both economic and political reasons, could not be confined within the restricting limits of individual states.

Atlanticus [3], a German Socialist who did not adopt the Marxist point of view, calculated at the end of last century the economic advantages that would accrue from applying socialist economy in a unit such as Germany. Atlanticus was not at all distinguished by flights of fancy. His ideas generally moved within the circle of the economic routine of capitalism. He based his arguments on the writings of authoritative modern agronomists and engineers. This does not weaken his arguments, rather is it his strong side, because it preserves him from undue optimism. In any case, Atlanticus comes to the conclusion that, with proper organization of socialist economy, with employment of the technical resources of the mid-nineties of the 19th century, the income of the workers could be doubled or trebled, and that the working day could be halved.

One should not imagine, however, that Atlanticus was the first to show the economic advantages of socialism. The greater productivity of labour in large undertakings, on the one hand, and, on the other, the necessity for the planning of production, as proved by the economic crises, has been much more convincing evidence for the necessity of socialism than Atlanticus's socialistic book-keeping. His service consists only in that he expressed these advantages in approximate figures.

From what has been said we are justified in arriving at the conclusion that the further growth of the technical power of man will render socialism more and more advantageous; that sufficient technical pre-requisites for collective production have already existed for a hundred or two hundred years, and that at the present moment socialism is *technically advantageous* not only on a national but to an enormous extent also on a world scale.

The mere technical advantages of socialism were not at all sufficient for it to be realized. During the 18th and 19th centuries the advantages of large-scale production showed themselves not in a socialist but in a capitalist form. Neither the schemes of Bellers nor those of Fourier were carried out. Why not? Because there were no social forces existent at that time ready and able to carry them out.

2. We now pass from the productive-technical pre-requisites of socialism to the *social-economic* ones. If we had to deal here not with a society split up by class antagonism, but with a homogeneous community which consciously selects its form of economy, the calculations of Atlanticus would undoubtedly be quite sufficient for socialist construction to be begun. Atlanticus himself, being a socialist of a very vulgar type, thus, indeed, regarded his own work. Such a point of view at the present day could be applied only within the limits of the private business of a single person or of a company. One is always justified in assuming that any scheme of economic reform, such as the introduction of new machinery, new raw materials, a new form of management of labour, or new systems of remuneration, will always be accepted by the owners if only these schemes can be shown to offer a commercial advantage. But in so far as we have to do here with the economy of society, that is not sufficient. Here, opposing interests are in conflict. What is advantageous for one is disadvantageous for another. The egoism of one class acts not only against the egoism of another, but also to the disadvantage of the whole community. Therefore, in order to realize socialism it is necessary that among the antagonistic classes of capitalist society there should be a social force which is interested, by virtue of its objective position, in the realization of socialism, and which is powerful enough to be able to overcome hostile interests and resistances in order to realize it.

One of the fundamental services rendered by scientific socialism consists in that it theoretically discovered such a social force in the proletariat, and showed that this class, inevitably growing along with capitalism, can find its salvation only in socialism, that the entire position of the proletariat drives it towards socialism and that the doctrine of socialism cannot but become in the long run the ideology of the proletariat.

It is easy to understand therefore what a tremendous step backwards Atlanticus takes when he asserts that, once it is proved that, 'by transferring the means of production into the hands of the State, not only can the general well being be secured, but the working-day also reduced, then it is a matter of indifference whether the theory of the concentration of capital and the disappearance of the intermediate classes of society is confirmed or not'.

According to Atlanticus, immediately the advantages of socialism have been proved, 'it is useless resting one's hopes on the fetish of economic development, one should make extensive investigations and start [!] a comprehensive and thorough preparation for the transition from private to state or "social" production'. [\[4\]](#)

In objecting to the purely oppositional tactics of the Social Democrats and suggesting an immediate 'start' in preparing the transition to socialism, Atlanticus forgets that the Social Democrats still lack the power needed for this, and that Wilhelm II, Bülow and the majority in the German Reichstag, although they have power in their hands, have not the slightest intention of introducing socialism. The socialist schemes of Atlanticus are no more convincing to the Hohenzollerns than the schemes of Fourier were to the

restored Bourbons, notwithstanding the fact that the latter based his political utopianism on passionate fantasies in the field of economic theory, whereas Atlanticus, in his not less utopian politics, based himself on convincing, philistinely-sober book-keeping.

What level must social differentiation have attained in order that the second pre-requisite for socialism may be realized? In other words, what must be the relative numerical weight of the proletariat? Must it make up a half, two-thirds or nine-tenths of the population? It would be an absolutely hopeless undertaking to try to define the bare arithmetical limits of this second prerequisite for socialism. In the first place, in such a schematic effort, we should have to decide the question of who is to be included in the category 'proletariat'. Should we include the large class of semi-proletarian semi-peasants? Should we include the reserve masses of the urban proletariat – who on the one hand merge into the parasitical proletariat of beggars and thieves, and on the other fill the city streets as small traders playing a parasitical role in relation to the economic system as a whole? This question is not at all a simple one.

The importance of the proletariat depends entirely on the role it plays in large-scale production. The bourgeoisie relies, in its struggle for political domination, upon its economic power. Before it manages to secure political power, it concentrates the country's means of production in its own hands. This is what determines its specific weight in society. The proletariat, however, in spite of all co-operative phantasmagoria, will be deprived of the means of production right up to the actual socialist revolution. Its social power comes from the fact that the means of production which are in the hands of the bourgeoisie can be set in motion only by the proletariat. From the point of view of the bourgeoisie, the proletariat is also one of the means of production, constituting, in conjunction with the others, a single unified mechanism. The proletariat, however, is the only non-automatic part of this mechanism, and in spite of all efforts it cannot be reduced to the condition of an automaton. This position gives the proletariat the power to hold up at will, partially or wholly, the proper functioning of the economy of society, through partial or general strikes. From this it is clear that the importance of a proletariat – given identical numbers – increases in proportion to the amount of productive forces which it sets in motion. That is to say, a proletarian in a large factory is, all other things being equal, a greater social magnitude than a handicraft worker, and an urban worker a greater magnitude than a country worker. In other words, the political role of the proletariat is the more important in proportion as large-scale production dominates small production, industry dominates agriculture and the town dominates the country. If we take the history of Germany or of England in the period when the proletariat of these countries formed the same proportion of the nation as the proletariat now forms in Russia, we shall see that they not only did not play, but by their objective importance could not play, such a role as the Russian proletariat plays today.

The same thing, as we have seen, applies to the role of the towns. When, in Germany, the population of the towns was only 15 per cent of the whole population of the country, as it is in Russia today, there could be no thought of the German towns playing that role in the economic and political life of the country which the Russian towns play today. The concentration of large industrial and commercial institutions in the towns, and the linking of the towns and the provinces by means of a system of railways, has given our towns an importance far exceeding the mere number of their inhabitants; the growth of

their importance has greatly exceeded the growth of their population, while the growth of the population of the towns in its turn has exceeded the natural increase of the population of the country as a whole ... In Italy in 1848 the number of handicraftsmen – not only proletarians but also independent masters – amounted to about 15 per cent of the population, i.e., not less than the proportion of handicraftsmen and proletarians in Russia at the present day. But the role played by them was incomparably less than that played by the modern Russian industrial proletariat.

From what has been said it should be clear that the attempt to define in advance what proportion of the whole population must be proletarian at the moment of the conquest of political power is a fruitless task. Instead of that, we will offer a few rough figures showing the relative numerical strength of the proletariat in the advanced countries at the present time. The occupied population of Germany in 1895 was 20,500,000 (not including the army, state officials and persons without a definite occupation). Out of this number there were 12,500,000 proletarians (including wage-workers in agriculture, industry, commerce and also domestic service); the number of agricultural workers being 10,750,000. Many of the remaining 8,000,000 are really also proletarians, such as workers in domestic industries, working members of the family, etc. The number of wage-workers in agriculture taken separately was 5,750,000. The agricultural population composed 36 per cent of the entire population of the country. These figures, we repeat, refer to 1895. The eleven years that have passed since then have unquestionably produced a tremendous change – in the direction of an increase in the proportion of the urban to the agricultural population (in 1882 the agricultural population was 42 per cent of the whole), an increase in the proportion of the industrial proletariat to the agricultural proletariat, and, finally, an increase in the amount of productive capital per industrial worker as compared with 1895. But even the 1895 figures show that the German proletariat already long ago constituted the dominant productive force in the country.

Belgium, with its 7,000,000 population, is a purely industrial country. Out of every hundred persons engaged in some occupation, 41 are in industry in the strict sense of the word and only 21 are employed in agriculture. Out of the 3,000,000-odd gainfully employed, nearly 1,800,000, i.e., 60 per cent, are proletarians. This figure would become much more expressive if we added to the sharply differentiated proletariat the social elements related to it – the so-called ‘independent’ producers who are independent only in form but are actually enslaved to capital, the lower officials, the soldiers, etc.

But first place as regards industrialization of the economy and proletarianization of the population must undoubtedly be accorded to Britain. In 1901 the number of persons employed in agriculture, forestry and fisheries was 2,300,000, while the number in industry, commerce and transport was 12,500,000. We see, therefore, that in the chief European countries the population of the towns predominates numerically over the population of the countryside. But the great predominance of the urban population lies not only in the mass of productive forces that it constitutes, but also in its qualitative personal composition. The town attracts the most energetic, able and intelligent elements of the countryside. To prove this statistically is difficult, although the comparative age composition of the population of town and country provides indirect evidence of it. The latter fact has a significance of its own. In Germany in 1896 there were calculated to be 8,000,000 persons employed in agriculture and 8,000,000

in industry. But if we divide the population according to age-groups, we see that agriculture has 1,000,000 able-bodied persons between the ages of 14 and 40—less than in industry. This shows that it is ‘the old and the young’ who pre-eminently remain in the country.

All this leads us to the conclusion that economic evolution – the growth of industry, the growth of large enterprises, the growth of the towns, and the growth of the proletariat in general and the industrial proletariat in particular – has already prepared the arena not only for the *struggle* of the proletariat for political power but for the *conquest* of this power.

3. Now we come to the third pre-requisite of socialism, the dictatorship of the proletariat. Politics is the plane upon which the objective pre-requisites of socialism are intersected by the subjective ones. Under certain definite social-economic conditions, a class consciously sets itself a certain aim – the conquest of political power; it unites its forces, weighs up the strength of the enemy and estimates the situation. Even in this third sphere, however, the proletariat is not absolutely free. Besides the subjective factors – consciousness, preparedness and initiative, the development of which also have their own logic – the proletariat in carrying out its policy comes up against a number of objective factors such as the policy of the ruling classes and the existing State institutions (such as the army, the class schools, the State church), international relations, etc.

We will deal first of all with the subjective conditions: the preparedness of the proletariat for a socialist revolution. It is, of course, not sufficient that the standard of technique has rendered socialist economy advantageous from the point of view of the productivity of social labour. It is not sufficient, either, that the social differentiation based on this technique has created a proletariat which is the main class by virtue of its numbers and its economic role, and which is objectively interested in socialism. It is further necessary that this class should be *conscious* of its objective interests; it is necessary that it should *understand* that there is no way out for it except through socialism; it is necessary that it should combine in an army sufficiently powerful to conquer political power in open battle.

It would be stupid at the present time to deny the necessity for the proletariat to be prepared in this manner. Only old-fashioned Blanquists can hope for salvation from the initiative of conspiratorial organizations which have taken shape independently of the masses; or their antipodes, the anarchists, might hope for a spontaneous, elemental outburst of the masses, the end of which no one can tell. Social-Democrats speak of the conquest of power as the *conscious action of a revolutionary class*.

But many socialist ideologues (ideologues in the bad sense of the word – those who stand everything on its head) speak of preparing the proletariat for socialism in the sense of its being morally regenerated. The proletariat, and even ‘humanity’ in general, must first of all cast out its old egoistical nature, and altruism must become predominant in social life, etc. As we are as yet far from such a state of affairs, and ‘human nature’ changes very slowly, socialism is put off for several centuries. Such a point of view probably seems very realistic and evolutionary, and so forth, but as a matter of fact it is really nothing but shallow moralizing.

It is assumed that a socialist psychology must be developed before the coming of

socialism, in other words that it is possible for the masses to acquire a socialist psychology under capitalism. One must not confuse here the conscious striving towards socialism with socialist psychology. The latter presupposes the absence of egotistical motives in economic life; whereas the striving towards socialism and the struggle for it arise from the class psychology of the proletariat. However many points of contact there may be between the class psychology of the proletariat and classless socialist psychology, nevertheless a deep chasm divides them.

The joint struggle against exploitation engenders splendid shoots of idealism, comradesly solidarity and self-sacrifice, but at the same time the individual struggle for existence, the ever-yawning abyss of poverty, the differentiation in the ranks of the workers themselves, the pressure of the ignorant masses from below, and the corrupting influence of the bourgeois parties do not permit these splendid shoots to develop fully. For all that, in spite of his remaining philistinely egoistic, and without his exceeding in 'human' worth the average representative of the bourgeois classes, the average worker knows from experience that *his simplest requirements and natural desires can be satisfied only on the ruins of the capitalist system.*

The idealists picture the distant future generation which shall have become worthy of socialism exactly as Christians picture the members of the first Christian communes.

Whatever the psychology of the first proselytes of Christianity may have been – we know from the Acts of the Apostles of cases of embezzlement of communal property – in any case, as it became more widespread, Christianity not only failed to regenerate the souls of all the people, but itself degenerated, became materialistic and bureaucratic; from the practice of fraternal teaching one of another it changed into papalism, from wandering beggary into monastic parasitism; in short, not only did Christianity fail to subject to itself the social conditions of the milieu in which it spread, but it was itself subjected by them. This did not result from the lack of ability or the greed of the fathers and teachers of Christianity, but as a consequence of the inexorable laws of the dependence of human psychology upon the conditions of social life and labour, and the fathers and teachers of Christianity showed this dependence in their own persons.

If socialism aimed at creating a new human nature within the limits of the old society it would be nothing more than a new edition of the moralistic utopias. Socialism does not aim at creating a socialist psychology as a pre-requisite to socialism but at creating socialist conditions of life as a pre-requisite to socialist psychology.

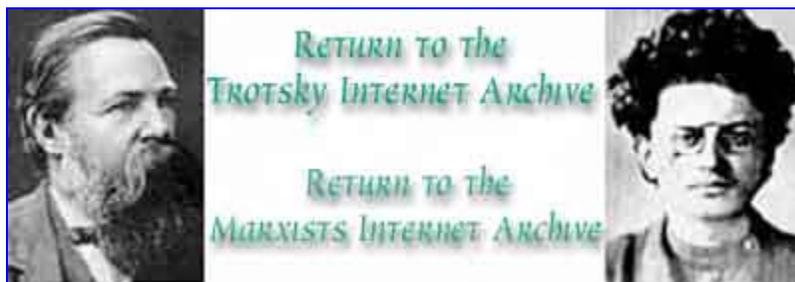
Notes

- 1.** N. Rozhkov, **On the Agrarian Question**, pp.21 and 22. – *L.T.*
- 2.** John Bellers was not an MP, but a Quaker landowner, who published his plan in the form of an address to parliament.
- 3.** G. Jaegkh
- 4.** Atlanticus, **The State of the Future**, published by **Dyelo**, St. Petersburg 1906, pp.22 and 23. – *L.T.*

[Last Chapter](#)

| [Results & Prospects Index Page](#)

| [Next Chapter](#)



Last updated on: 3.3.2007



Leon Trotsky

Results and Prospects

VIII. A Workers' Government in Russia and Socialism

Transcribed and HTML markup for the [Trotsky Internet Archive](#), a subarchive of the [Marxists' Internet Archive](#), by [Sally Ryan](#) in 1996.

We have shown above that the objective pre-requisites for a socialist revolution have already been created by the economic development of the advanced capitalist countries. But what can we say in this connection with regard to Russia?

Can we expect that the transference of power into the hands of the Russian proletariat will be the beginning of the transformation of our national economy into a socialist one? A year ago we replied to this question in an article which was subjected to a severe crossfire of criticism by the organs of both factions of our party. In this article we said the following:

“The Paris workers,” Marx tells us, “did not demand miracles from their Commune.” We, too, must not expect immediate miracles from proletarian dictatorship today. Political power is not omnipotence. It would be absurd to suppose that it is only necessary for the proletariat to take power and then by passing a few decrees to substitute socialism for capitalism. An economic system is not the product of the actions of the government. All that the proletariat can do is to apply its political power with all possible energy in order to ease and shorten the path of economic evolution towards collectivism.

‘The proletariat will begin with those reforms which figure in what is known as the minimum programme; and directly from these the very logic of its position will compel it to pass over to collectivist measures.

‘The introduction of the eight-hour day and the steeply progressive income-tax will be comparatively easy, although even here the centre of gravity will lie not in the passing of the “act” but in organizing the practical carrying out of the measures. But the chief difficulty will be – and herein lies the transition to collectivism! – in the state

organization of production in those factories which have been closed by their owners in reply to the passing of these acts. To pass a law for the abolition of the right of inheritance and to put such a law into effect will be a comparatively easy task. Legacies in the form of money capital also will not embarrass the proletariat or burden its economy. But to act as the inheritor of land and industrial capital means that the workers' state must be prepared to undertake the organizing of social production.

'The same thing, but to a wider degree, must be said of expropriation – with or without compensation. Expropriation with compensation would be politically advantageous but financially difficult, whereas expropriation without compensation would be financially advantageous but politically difficult. But the greatest difficulties of all will be met within the organization of production. We repeat, a government of the proletariat is not a government that can perform miracles.

'The socialization of production will commence with those branches of industry which present the least difficulties. In the first period, socialized production will be like a number of eases, connected with private undertakings by the laws of commodity circulation. The wider the field of social production becomes extended, the more obvious will become its advantages, the firmer will the new political regime feel, and the bolder will the further economic measures of the proletariat become. In these measures it can and will rely not merely upon the national productive forces, but also upon the technique of the whole world, just as in its revolutionary policy it will rely on the experience not only of the class relations within the country but also on the whole historical experience of the international proletariat.'

The political domination of the proletariat is incompatible with its economic enslavement. No matter under what political flag the proletariat has come to power, it is obliged to take the path of socialist policy. It would be the greatest utopianism to think that the proletariat, having been raised to political domination by the internal mechanism of a bourgeois revolution, can, even if it so desires, limit its mission to the creation of republican-democratic conditions for the social domination of the bourgeoisie. The political domination of the proletariat, even if it is only temporary, will weaken to an extreme degree the resistance of capital, which always stands in need of the support of the state, and will give the economic struggle of the proletariat tremendous scope. The workers cannot but demand maintenance for strikers from the revolutionary government, and a government relying upon the workers cannot refuse this demand. But this means paralyzing the effect of the reserve army of labour and making the workers dominant not only in the political but also in the economic field, and converting private property in the means of production into a fiction. These inevitable social-economic consequences of proletarian dictatorship will reveal themselves very quickly, long before the democratization of the political system has been completed. The barrier between the 'minimum' and the 'maximum' programme disappears immediately the proletariat comes to power.

The first thing the proletarian regime must deal with on coming into power is the solution of the agrarian question, with which the fate of vast masses of the population of Russia is bound up. In the solution of this question, as in all others, the proletariat will be guided by the fundamental aim of its economic policy, i.e., to command as large as possible a field in which to carry out the organization of socialist economy. The form and tempo of the execution of this agrarian policy, however, must be determined by the material resources at the disposal of the proletariat, as well as by care to act so as not to throw possible allies into the ranks of the counter-revolutionaries.

The *agrarian* question, i.e., the question of the fate of agriculture in its social relations, is not, of course, exhausted by the *land* question, i.e., the question of forms of landownership. There is no doubt, however, that the solution of the land question, even if it does not predetermine agrarian evolution, will at least predetermine the agrarian policy of the proletariat: in other words, what the proletarian regime does with the land must be closely connected with its general attitude to the course and the requirements of agricultural development. For that reason the land question occupies first place.

One solution of the land question, to which the Socialist-Revolutionaries have given a far from irreproachable popularity, is the socialization of all land; a term, which, relieved of its European make-up, means nothing else than the 'equalization of the use of land' (or 'black redistribution'). The programme of the equal distribution of the land thus presupposes the expropriation of all land, not only privately-owned land in general, or privately-owned peasant land, but even communal land. If we bear in mind that this expropriation would have to be one of the first acts of the new regime, while commodity-capitalist relations were still completely dominant, then we shall see that the first 'victims' of this expropriation would be (or rather, would feel themselves to be) the peasantry. If we bear in mind that the peasant, during several decades, has paid the redemption money which should have converted the allotted land into his own private property; if we bear in mind that some of the more well-to-do of the peasants have acquired – undoubtedly by making considerable sacrifices, borne by a still-existing generation – large tracts of land as private property, then it will be easily imagined what a tremendous resistance would be aroused by the attempt to convert communal and small-scale privately-owned lands into state property. If it acted in such a fashion the new regime would begin by rousing a tremendous opposition against itself among the peasantry.

For what purpose should communal and small-scale privately-owned land be converted into state property? In order, in one way or another, to make it available for 'equal' economic exploitation by all landowners, including the present landless peasants and agricultural labourers. Thus, the new regime would gain nothing *economically* by the expropriation of small holdings and communal land, since, after the redistribution, the state or public lands would be cultivated as private holdings. *Politically*, the new regime would make a very big blunder, as it would at once set the mass of the peasantry against the town proletariat as the leader of the revolutionary policy.

Further, equal distribution of the land presupposes that the employment of hired labour will be prohibited by law. The abolition of wage labour can and must be a *consequence* of economic reform, but it cannot be predetermined by juridical prohibition. It is not sufficient to forbid the capitalist landlord to employ wage-labour, it is necessary first of all to secure for the landless labourer the possibility of existence – and a rational existence from the social-economic point of view. Under the programme of equalization of the use of land, forbidding the employment of wage labour will mean, on the one hand, compelling the landless labourers to settle on tiny scraps of land and, on the other, obliging the government to provide them with the necessary stock and implements for their socially-irrational production.

It is of course understood that the intervention of the proletariat in the organization of agriculture will begin not by binding scattered labourers to scattered patches of land, but with the exploitation of large estates by the State or the communes. Only when the

socialization of production has been placed well on its feet can the process of socialization be advanced further, towards the prohibition of hired labour. This will render small capitalist farming impossible, but will still leave room for subsistence or semi-subsistence holdings, the forcible expropriation of which in no way enters into the plans of the socialist proletariat.

In any case, we cannot undertake to carry out a programme of equal distribution which, on the one hand, presupposes an aimless, purely formal expropriation of small holdings, and on the other, demands the complete break-up of large estates into small pieces. This policy, being directly wasteful from the economic standpoint, could only have a reactionary-utopian ulterior motive, and above all would politically weaken the revolutionary party.

But how far can the socialist policy of the working class be applied in the economic conditions of Russia? We can say one thing with certainty – that it will come up against political obstacles much sooner than it will stumble over the technical backwardness of the country. *Without the direct State support of the European proletariat the working class of Russia cannot remain in power and convert its temporary domination into a lasting socialistic dictatorship.* Of this there cannot for one moment be any doubt. But on the other hand 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.

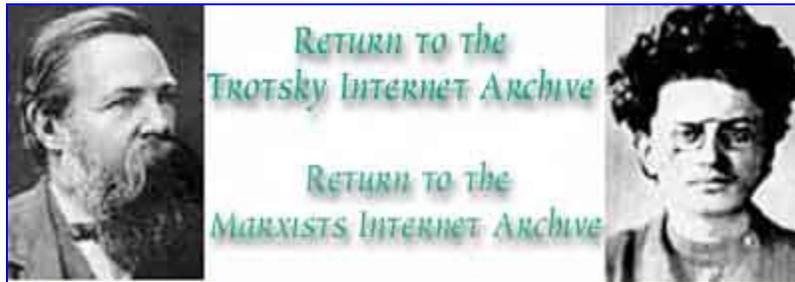
In 1904, Kautsky, discussing the prospects of social development and calculating the possibility of an early revolution in Russia, wrote: ‘Revolution in Russia could not immediately result in a socialist regime. The economic conditions of the country are not nearly mature for this purpose.’ But the Russian revolution would certainly give a strong impetus to the proletarian movement in the rest of Europe, and in consequence of the struggle that would flare up, the proletariat might come to power in Germany. ‘Such an outcome,’ continued Kautsky, ‘must have an influence on the whole of Europe. It must lead to the political domination of the proletariat in Western Europe and create for the Eastern European proletariat the possibility of contracting the stages of their development and, copying the example of the Germans, *artificially setting up socialist institutions.* Society as a whole cannot artificially skip any stages of its development, but it is possible for constituent parts of society to hasten their retarded development by imitating the more advanced countries and, thanks to this, even to take their stand in the forefront of development, because they are not burdened with the ballast of tradition which the older countries have to drag along ... This may happen,’ says Kautsky, ‘but, as we have already said, here we leave the field of inevitability and enter that of *possibility*, and so things may happen otherwise.’

These lines were written by this German Social-Democratic theoretician at a time when he was considering the question whether a revolution would break out first in Russia or in the West. Later on, the Russian proletariat revealed a colossal strength, unexpected by the Russian Social-Democrats even in their most optimistic moods. The course of the Russian revolution was decided, so far as its fundamental features were concerned. What two or three years ago was or seemed *possible*, approached to the *probable*, and everything points to the fact that it is on the brink of becoming *inevitable*.

[Last Chapter](#)

| [Results & Prospects Index Page](#)

| [Next Chapter](#)



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Leon Trotsky

Results and Prospects

IX. Europe and Revolution

Transcribed and HTML markup for the [Trotsky Internet Archive](#), a subarchive of the [Marxists' Internet Archive](#), by [Sally Ryan](#) in 1996.

In June 1905 we wrote:

‘More than half a century has passed since 1848, half a century of unceasing conquests by capitalism throughout the whole world; half a century of mutual adaptation between the forces of bourgeois reaction and of feudal reaction; half a century during which the bourgeoisie has revealed its mad lust for domination and its readiness to fight savagely for this.

‘Just as a seeker after perpetual motion comes up against ever fresh obstacles, and piles up machine after machine for the purpose of overcoming them, so the bourgeoisie has changed and reconstructed its state apparatus while avoiding “extra-legal” conflict with the forces hostile to it. But just as our seeker after perpetual motion eventually comes up against the final insurmountable obstacle of the law of the conservation of energy, so the bourgeoisie must eventually come up against the final insurmountable obstacle in its path: the class antagonism, which will inevitably be settled by conflict.

‘Binding all countries together with its mode of production and its commerce, capitalism has converted the whole world into a single economic and political organism. Just as modern credit binds thousands of undertakings by invisible ties and gives to capital an incredible mobility which prevents many small bankruptcies but at the same time is the cause of the unprecedented sweep of general economic crises, so the whole economic and political effort of capitalism, its world trade, its system of monstrous state debts, and the political groupings of nations which draw all the forces of reaction into a kind of world-wide joint-stock company, has not only resisted all individual political crises, but also prepared the basis for a social crisis of unheard-of dimensions. Driving all the processes of disease beneath the surface, avoiding all difficulties, putting off all the profound questions of internal and international politics, and glossing over all contradictions, the bourgeoisie has managed to postpone the denouement, but thereby has prepared a radical liquidation of its rule on a world-wide scale. The bourgeoisie has greedily clutched at every reactionary force without inquiring as to its origin. The Pope and the Sultan were not the least of its friends. The only reason why it did not establish bonds of “friendship” with the Emperor of China was because he did not represent any force. It was much more advantageous for the bourgeoisie to plunder his dominions than

to maintain him in its service as its gendarme, paying him out of its own coffers. We thus see that the world bourgeoisie has made the stability of its State system profoundly dependent on the unstable pre-bourgeois bulwarks of reaction.

‘This immediately gives the events now unfolding an international character, and opens up a wide horizon. The political emancipation of Russia led by the working class will raise that class to a height as yet unknown in history, will transfer to it colossal power and resources, and will make it the initiator of the liquidation of world capitalism, for which history has created all the objective conditions.’ [\[1\]](#)

If the Russian proletariat, having temporarily obtained power, does not on its own initiative carry the revolution on to European soil, it will be *compelled* to do so by the forces of European feudal-bourgeois reaction. Of course it would be idle at this moment to determine the methods by which the Russian revolution will throw itself against old capitalist Europe. These methods may reveal themselves quite unexpectedly. Let us take the example of Poland as a link between the revolutionary East and the revolutionary West, although we take this as an illustration of our idea rather than as an actual prediction.

The triumph of the revolution in Russia will mean the inevitable victory of the revolution in Poland. It is not difficult to imagine that the existence of a revolutionary regime in the ten provinces of Russian Poland must lead to the revolt of Galicia and Poznan. The Hohenzollern and Habsburg Governments will reply to this by sending military forces to the Polish frontier in order then to cross it for the purpose of crushing their enemy at his very centre – Warsaw. It is quite clear that the Russian revolution cannot leave its Western advance-guard in the hands of the Prusso-Austrian soldiery. War against the governments of Wilhelm II and Franz Josef under such circumstances would become an act of self-defence on the part of the revolutionary government of Russia. What attitude would the Austrian and German proletariat take up then? It is evident that they could not remain calm while the armies of their countries were conducting a counterrevolutionary crusade. A war between feudal-bourgeois Germany and revolutionary Russia would lead inevitably to a proletarian revolution in Germany. We would tell those to whom this assertion seems too categorical to try and think of any other historical event which would be more likely to compel the German workers and the German reactionaries to make an open trial of strength.

When our October ministry unexpectedly placed Poland under martial law, a highly plausible rumour went round to the effect that this was done on direct instructions from Berlin. On the eve of the dispersal of the Duma the government newspapers published, presenting them as threats, communications concerning negotiations between the governments of Berlin and Vienna with a view to armed intervention in the internal affairs of Russia, for the purpose of suppressing sedition. No ministerial denial of any sort could wipe out the effect of the shock which this communication gave. It was clear that in the palaces of three neighbouring countries a bloody counter-revolutionary revenge was being prepared. How could things be otherwise? Could the neighbouring semi-feudal monarchies stand passively by while the flames of revolution licked the frontiers of their realms?

The Russian revolution, while as yet far from being victorious, had already had its effect on Galicia through Poland. ‘Who could have foreseen a year ago’, cried Daszynski, at the conference of the Polish Social-Democratic Party in Lvov in May this year, ‘what

is now taking place in Galicia? This great peasant movement has spread astonishment throughout the whole of Austria. Zbaraz elects a Social-Democrat as vice-marshal of the regional council. Peasants publish a socialist-revolutionary newspaper for peasants, entitled **The Red Flag**, great mass meetings of peasants, 30,000 strong, are held, processions with red flags and revolutionary songs parade through Galician villages, once so calm and apathetic ... What will happen when from Russia the cry of the nationalization of the land reaches these poverty-stricken peasants?'. In his argument with the Polish Socialist Lusnia, more than two years ago, Kautsky pointed out that Russia must no longer be regarded as a weighted ball on the feet of Poland, or Poland regarded as an Eastern detachment of revolutionary Europe thrust like a wedge into the steppes of Muscovite barbarism. In the event of the development and the victory of the Russian revolution, the Polish question, according to Kautsky, 'will again become acute, but not in the sense that Lusnia thought. It will be directed not against Russia but against Austria and Germany, and in so far as Poland will serve the cause of revolution its task will be not to defend the revolution against Russia, but to carry it further into Austria and Germany'. This prophecy is much nearer realization than Kautsky may have thought.

But a revolutionary Poland is not at all the only starting-point for a revolution in Europe. We pointed out above that the bourgeoisie has systematically abstained from solving many complex and acute questions affecting both internal and foreign politics. Having placed huge masses of men under arms, the bourgeois governments are unable, however, to cut with the sword through the tangle of international politics. Only a government which has the backing of the nation whose vital interests are affected, or a government that has lost the ground from under its feet and is inspired by the courage of despair, can send hundreds and thousands of men into battle. Under modern conditions of political culture, military science, universal suffrage and universal military service, only profound confidence or crazy adventurism can thrust two nations into conflict. In the Franco-Prussian war of 1870 we had on the one side Bismarck struggling for the Prussianizing of Germany, which after all meant national unity, an elementary necessity recognized by every German, and on the other hand the government of Napoleon III, impudent, powerless, despised by the nation, ready for any adventure that promised to secure for it another 12 months' lease of life. The same division of roles obtained in the Russo-Japanese war. On the one hand we had the government of the Mikado, as yet unopposed by a revolutionary proletariat, fighting for the domination of Japanese capital in the Far East, and on the other an autocratic government which had outlived its time striving to redeem its internal defeats by victories abroad.

In the old capitalist countries there are no 'national' demands, i.e., demands of *bourgeois society as a whole*, of which the ruling bourgeoisie could claim to be the champions. The governments of France, Britain, Germany and Austria are unable to conduct national wars. The vital interests of the masses, the interests of the oppressed nationalities, or the barbarous internal politics of a neighbouring country are not able to drive a single bourgeois government into a war which could have a liberating and therefore a national character. On the other hand, the interests of capitalist grabbing, which from time to time induce now one and now another government to clank its spurs and rattle its sabre in the face of the world, cannot arouse any response among the masses. For that reason the bourgeoisie either cannot or will not proclaim or conduct any national wars. What modern anti-national wars will lead to has been seen

recently from two experiences – in South Africa and in the Far East.

The severe defeat of imperialist Conservatism in Britain is not in the last resort due to the lesson of the Boer war; a much more important and more menacing consequence of imperialist policy (menacing to the bourgeoisie) is the political self-determination of the British proletariat, which, once begun, will advance with seven-league strides. As for the consequences of the Russo-Japanese war for the Petrograd Government, these are so well known that it is not necessary to dwell on them. But even without these two experiences, European governments, from the moment the proletariat began to stand on its own feet, have always feared to place before it the choice of war or revolution. It is precisely this fear of the revolt of the proletariat that compels the bourgeois parties, even while voting monstrous sums for military expenditure, to make solemn declarations in favour of peace, to dream of International Arbitration Courts and even of the organization of a United States of Europe. These pitiful declarations can, of course, abolish neither antagonisms between states nor armed conflicts.

The armed peace which arose in Europe after the Franco-Prussian War was based on a European balance of power which presupposed not only the inviolability of Turkey, the partition of Poland and the preservation of Austria, that ethnographical harlequin's cloak, but also the maintenance of Russian despotism, armed to the teeth, as the gendarme of European reaction. The Russo-Japanese war, however, delivered a severe blow to this artificially maintained system in which the autocracy occupied a foremost position. Russia for a time fell out of the so-called concert of powers. The balance of power was destroyed. On the other hand, Japan's successes aroused the aggressive instincts of the capitalist bourgeoisie, especially the stock exchanges, which play a very big part in contemporary politics. The possibility of a war on European territory grew to a very high degree. 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.

During the Russo-Japanese war the Socialist Party of France declared that if the French Government intervened in favour of the autocracy, it would call upon the proletariat to take most resolute measures, even to the extent of revolt. In March 1906, when the Franco-German conflict over Morocco was coming to a head, the International Socialist Bureau resolved, in the event of a danger of war, to 'lay down the most advantageous methods of action for all international socialist parties and for the whole organized working class in order to prevent war or bring it to an end'. Of course this was only a resolution. It requires a war to test its real significance, but the bourgeoisie has every reason to avoid such a test. Unfortunately for the bourgeoisie, however, the logic of international relations is stronger than the logic of diplomacy.

The State bankruptcy of Russia, no matter whether it be the result of the continued management of affairs by the bureaucracy or whether it be declared by a revolutionary government which will refuse to pay for the sins of the old regime, will have a terrible effect upon France. The Radicals, who now have the political destiny of France in their hands, in taking power have also undertaken all the functions of protecting the interests of capital. For that reason there is every ground for assuming that the financial crisis arising from the bankruptcy of Russia will directly repeat itself in France in the form of an acute political crisis which can end only with the transference of power into the hands of the proletariat. In one way or another, either through a revolution in Poland,

through the consequences of a European war, or as the result of the State bankruptcy of Russia, revolution will cross into the territories of old capitalist Europe.

But even without the outside pressure of events such as war or bankruptcy, revolution may arise in the near future in one of the European countries as a consequence of the extreme sharpening of the class struggle. We will not attempt to build assumptions now as to which of the European countries will be the first to take the path of revolution; of one thing there is no doubt, and that is that the class contradictions in all European countries during recent times have reached a high level of intensity.

The colossal growth of Social Democracy in Germany, within the framework of a semi-absolutist constitution, will with iron necessity lead the proletariat to an open clash with the feudal-bourgeois monarchy. The question of offering resistance to a political coup d'état by means of a general strike has in the last year become one of the central questions in the political life of the German proletariat. In France, the transition of power to the Radicals decisively unties the hands of the proletariat, which were for a long time bound by co-operation with the bourgeois parties in the struggle against nationalism and clericalism. The Socialist Party, rich in the deathless traditions of four revolutions, and the conservative bourgeoisie, screening themselves behind the mask of Radicalism, stand face to face. In Britain, where for a century the two bourgeois parties have been regularly operating the see-saw of parliamentarism, the proletariat under the influence of a whole series of factors have just recently taken the path of political separation. While in Germany this process took four decades, the British working class, possessing powerful trade unions and being rich in experience of economic struggle, may in a few leaps overtake the army of continental socialism.

The influence of the Russian revolution upon the European proletariat is tremendous. Besides destroying Russian absolutism, the main force of European reaction, it will create the necessary prerequisites for revolution in the consciousness and temper of the European working class.

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. But the work of agitation and organization among the ranks of the proletariat has an internal inertia. The European Socialist Parties, particularly the largest of them, the German Social-Democratic Party, have developed their conservatism in proportion as the great masses have embraced socialism and the more these masses have become organized and disciplined. As a consequence of this, Social Democracy as an organization embodying the political experience of the proletariat may at a certain moment become a direct obstacle to open conflict between the workers and bourgeois reaction. In other words, the propagandist-socialist conservatism of the proletarian parties may at a certain moment hold back the direct struggle of the proletariat for power. The tremendous influence of the Russian revolution indicates that it will destroy party routine and conservatism, and place the question of an open trial of strength between the proletariat and capitalist reaction on the order of the day. The struggle for universal suffrage in Austria, Saxony and Prussia has become acute under the direct influence of the October strikes in Russia. The revolution in the East will infect the Western proletariat with a revolutionary idealism and rouse a desire to speak to their enemies 'in Russian'. Should the Russian proletariat find itself in power, if only as the

result of a temporary conjuncture of circumstances in our bourgeois revolution, it will encounter the organized hostility of world reaction, and on the other hand will find a readiness on the part of the world proletariat to give organized support.

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

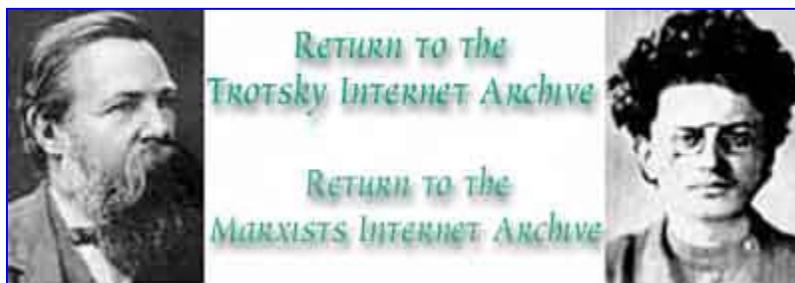
Notes

1. See my foreword to F. Lassalle's **Address To the Jury**, published by **Molot**. – *L.T.*

[Last Chapter](#)

| [Results & Prospects Index Page](#)

| [Next Chapter](#)



Last updated on: 3.3.2007



Leon Trotsky

Results and Prospects

X. The Struggle for Power [\[1\]](#)

Transcribed and HTML markup for the [Trotsky Internet Archive](#), a subarchive of the [Marxists' Internet Archive](#), by [Sally Ryan](#) in 1996.

We have before us a leaflet on our programme and tactics entitled: *The Tasks Confronting the Russian Proletariat – A Letter to Comrades in Russia*. This document is signed by P. Axelrod, Astrov, A. Martynov, L. Martov and S. Semkovsky.

The problem of the revolution is outlined in this 'letter' in very general fashion, clarity and precision disappearing in proportion as the authors turn from describing the situation created by the war to the political prospects and tactical conclusions; the very terminology becomes diffuse and the social definitions ambiguous.

Two moods seem from abroad to prevail in Russia: in the first place, concern for national defence – from the Romanovs to Plekhanov – and secondly, universal discontent – from the oppositional bureaucratic Fronde to the outbreaks of street rioting. These two pervading moods also create an illusion of a future popular freedom which is to arise out of the cause of national defence. But these two moods are in large measure responsible for the indefiniteness with which the question of 'popular revolution' is presented, even when it is formally counterposed to 'national defence'.

The war itself, with its defeats, has not created the revolutionary problem nor any revolutionary forces for its solution. History for us does not commence with the surrender of Warsaw to the Prince of Bavaria. Both the revolutionary contradictions and the social forces are the same as those which we first encountered in 1905, only very considerably modified by the ensuing ten years. The war has merely revealed in a mechanically graphic way the objective bankruptcy of the regime. At the same time it has brought confusion into the social consciousness, in which 'everybody' seems infected with the desire to resist Hindenburg as well as with hatred towards the regime of 3rd June. But as the organization of a 'people's war' from the very first moment comes up against the Tsarist police, thereby revealing that the Russia of 3rd June is a fact, and that a 'people's war' is a fiction, so the approach to a 'people's revolution' at the very threshold comes up against the socialist police of Plekhanov, whom, together

with his entire suite, one might regard as a fiction if behind him there did not stand Kerensky, Milyukov, Guchkov and in general the non-revolutionary and anti-revolutionary national-democrats and national-liberals.

The 'letter' cannot of course ignore the class division of the nation, or that the nation must by means of revolution save itself from the consequences of the war and the present regime. 'The nationalists and Octobrists, the progressists, the Cadets, the industrialists and even part (!) of the radical intelligentsia proclaim with one voice the inability of the bureaucracy to defend the country and demand the mobilization of social forces for the cause of defence ...' The letter draws the correct conclusion regarding the anti-revolutionary character of this position, which assumes 'unity with the present rulers of Russia, with the bureaucrats, nobles and generals, in the cause of defence of the State'. The letter also correctly points out the anti-revolutionary position of 'bourgeois patriots of all shades'; and we may add, of the social-patriots, of whom the letter makes no mention at all.

From this we must draw the conclusion that the Social-Democrats are not merely the most logical revolutionary party but that they are the only revolutionary party in the country; that, side by side with them, there are not only groups which are less resolute in the application of revolutionary methods, but also non-revolutionary parties. In other words, that the Social-Democratic Party, in its revolutionary way of presenting problems, is quite isolated *in the open political arena*, in spite of the 'universal discontent'. This first conclusion must be very carefully taken into account.

Of course, parties are not classes. Between the position of a party and the interests of the social stratum upon which it rests, there may be a certain lack of harmony which later on may become converted into a profound contradiction. The conduct of a party may change under the influence of the temper of the masses. This is indisputable. All the more reason therefore for us, in our calculations, to cease relying on less stable and less trustworthy elements such as the slogans and tactics of a party, and to refer to more stable historical factors: to the social structure of the nation, to the relation of class forces and the tendencies of development.

Yet the authors of the 'letter' completely avoid these questions. What is this 'people's revolution' in the Russia of 1915? Our authors simply tell us that it 'must' be made by the proletariat and the democracy. We know what the proletariat is, but what is 'the democracy'? Is it a political party? From what has been said above, evidently not. Is it then the masses? What masses? Evidently it is the petty industrial and commercial bourgeoisie, the intelligentsia and the peasantry – it can only be of these that they are speaking.

In a series of articles entitled 'The War Crisis and Political Prospects' we have given a general estimation of the possible revolutionary significance of these social forces. Basing ourselves on the experience of the last revolution, we inquired into the changes which the last ten years have brought about in the relation of forces that obtained in 1905: have these been *in favour* of democracy (the bourgeoisie) or *against* it? This is the central historical question in judging the prospects of the revolution and the tactics of the proletariat. Has bourgeois democracy in Russia become stronger since 1905, or has it still further declined? All our former discussions centred round the question of the fate of bourgeois democracy, and those who are still unable to give a reply to this

question are groping in the dark. We reply to this question by saying that *a national bourgeois revolution is impossible in Russia because there is no genuinely revolutionary bourgeois democracy*. The time for national revolutions has passed – at least for Europe – just as the time for national wars has passed. Between the one and the other there is an inherent connection. We are living in an epoch of imperialism which is not merely a system of colonial conquests but implies also a definite regime at home. It does not set the bourgeois nation in opposition to the old regime, but sets the proletariat in opposition to the bourgeois nation.

The petty-bourgeois artisans and traders already played an insignificant role in the revolution of 1905. There is no question that the social importance of this class has declined still further during the last ten years. Capitalism in Russia deals much more radically and severely with the intermediate classes than it does in the countries with an older economic development. The intelligentsia has undoubtedly grown numerically, and its economic role also has increased. But at the same time even its former illusory ‘independence’ has entirely disappeared. The social significance of the intelligentsia is wholly determined by its functions in organizing capitalist industry and bourgeois public opinion. Its material connection with capitalism has saturated it with imperialist tendencies. As already quoted, the ‘letter’ says, ‘even part of the radical intelligentsia ... demands the mobilization of social forces for the cause of defence’. This is absolutely untrue; not *a part*, but *the whole* of the radical intelligentsia; in fact, one should say, not only the whole radical section, but a considerable, if not the greater part of the socialist intelligentsia. We shall hardly increase the ranks of ‘democracy’ by painting-up the character of the intelligentsia.

Thus the industrial and commercial bourgeoisie has declined still further while the intelligentsia have abandoned their revolutionary position. Urban democracy as a revolutionary factor is not worth mentioning. Only the peasantry remains, but as far as we know, neither Axelrod nor Martov ever set great hopes upon its independent revolutionary role. Have they come to the conclusion that the unceasing class differentiation among the peasantry during the last ten years has increased this role? Such a supposition would be flying in the face of all theoretical conclusions and all historical experience.

But in that case, what kind of ‘democracy’ does the letter mean? And in what sense do they speak of ‘people’s revolution’?

The slogan of a constituent assembly presupposes a revolutionary situation. Is there one? Yes, there is, but it is not in the least expressed in the supposed birth, at last, of a bourgeois democracy which is alleged to be now ready and able to settle accounts with Tsarism. On the contrary, if there is anything that this war has revealed quite clearly, it is the absence of a revolutionary democracy in the country.

The attempt of the Russia of 3rd June to solve the internal revolutionary problems by the path of imperialism has resulted in an obvious fiasco. This does not mean that the responsible or semi-responsible parties of the 3rd June regime will take the path of revolution, but it does mean that the revolutionary problem laid bare by the military catastrophe, which will drive the ruling class still further along the path of imperialism, doubles the importance of the only revolutionary class in the country.

The bloc of 3rd June is shaken, rent by internal friction and conflict. This does not

mean that the Octobrists and Cadets are considering the revolutionary problem of power and preparing to storm the positions of the bureaucracy and the united nobility. But it does mean that the government's power to resist revolutionary pressure undoubtedly has been weakened for a certain period.

The monarchy and the bureaucracy are discredited, but this does not mean that they will give up power without a fight. The dispersal of the Duma and the latest ministerial changes showed whoever needed showing how far from the facts this supposition is. But the policy of bureaucratic instability, which will develop still further, should greatly assist the revolutionary mobilization of the proletariat by the Social Democrats.

The lower classes of the towns and villages will become more and more exhausted, deceived, dissatisfied and enraged. This does not mean that an independent force of revolutionary democracy will operate side by side with the proletariat. For such a force there is neither social material nor leading personnel; but it undoubtedly does mean that the deep dissatisfaction of the lower classes will assist the revolutionary pressure of the working class.

The less the proletariat waits upon the appearance of bourgeois democracy, the less it adapts itself to the passivity and limitations of the petty bourgeoisie and peasantry, the more resolute and irreconcilable its fight becomes, the more obvious becomes its preparedness to go to 'the end', i.e., to the conquest of power, the greater will be its chances at the decisive moment of carrying with it the non-proletarian masses. Nothing, of course, will be accomplished by merely putting forward mere slogans such as 'for the confiscation of land', etc. This to a still greater extent applies to the army, by which the government stands or falls. The mass of the army will only incline towards the revolutionary class when it becomes convinced that it is not merely grumbling and demonstrating, but is fighting for power and has some chances of winning it. There is an objective revolutionary problem in the country – the problem of political power – which has been glaringly revealed by the war and the defeats. There is a progressive disorganization of the ruling class. There is a growing dissatisfaction among the urban and rural masses. But the only revolutionary factor which can take advantage of this situation is the proletariat – now to an incomparably greater degree than in 1905.

The 'letter' would appear, in one phrase, to approach this central point of the question. It says that the Russian Social-Democratic workers should take 'the lead in this national struggle for the overthrow of the monarchy of 3rd June'. What 'national' struggle may mean we have just indicated. But if 'take the lead' does not merely mean that the advanced workers should magnanimously shed their blood without asking themselves for what purpose, but means that the workers must take the *political leadership* of the whole struggle, which above all will be a proletarian struggle, then it is clear that *victory in this struggle must transfer power to the class that has led the struggle, i.e., the Social-Democratic proletariat.*

The question, therefore, is not simply one of a 'revolutionary provisional government' – an empty phrase to which the historical process will have to give some kind of content, but of a *revolutionary workers' government*, the conquest of power by the Russian proletariat. The demands for a national constituent assembly, a republic, an eight-hour day, the confiscation of the land of the landlords, together with the demands for the immediate cessation of the war, the right of nations to self-determination, and a

United States of Europe will play a tremendous part in the agitational role of the Social Democrats. But revolution is first and foremost a question of power – not of the state form (constituent assembly, republic, united states) but of the social content of the government. The demands for a constituent assembly and the confiscation of land under present conditions lose all direct revolutionary significance without the readiness of the proletariat to fight for the conquest of power; for if the proletariat does not tear power out of the hands of the monarchy nobody else will do so.

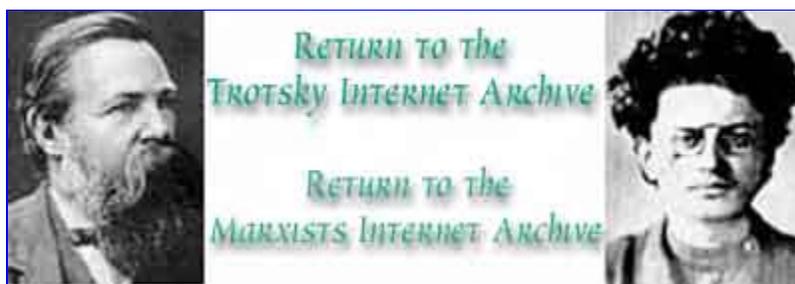
The tempo of the revolutionary process is a special question. It depends upon a number of military and political, national and international factors. These factors may retard or hasten developments, facilitate the revolutionary victory or lead to another defeat. But whatever the conditions may be the proletariat must clearly see its path and take it consciously. Above everything else it must be free from illusions. And the worst illusion in all its history from which the proletariat has up till now suffered has always been reliance upon others.

Notes

- [1.](#) From **Nashe Slovo** (Paris), October 17, 1915. – *L.T.*

[Last Chapter](#)

| [Results & Prospects Index Page](#)



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